

# The State of Girls' Education in Post-2021 Afghanistan: Digital Learning as an Alternative Pathway

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## Abstract

Since 2021, the state of girls' education in Afghanistan has undergone a severe and systematic decline, particularly at the secondary and higher education levels. Recent estimates indicate that over 2.5 million girls are currently denied access to formal education beyond primary school, making Afghanistan the only country where girls are institutionally excluded from secondary education. This prolonged educational disruption represents not only a denial of a fundamental right but also a structural challenge with long-term social, economic, and governance implications.

This study examines the governance-related constraints shaping girls' education in Afghanistan in the post-2021 context, with a particular focus on the emergence of digital and alternative learning pathways as coping mechanisms. The study draws on qualitative analysis of secondary data, including academic literature, international organization reports, and policy documents. The paper explores how policy uncertainty, socio-cultural pressures, economic hardship, and infrastructural limitations collectively restrict educational access for girls.

The findings reveal that while community-based learning initiatives, online education platforms, and non-formal programs have enabled limited continuity of learning for some girls primarily in urban and semi-urban areas, their reach remains uneven. Structural barriers such as limited internet connectivity, unreliable electricity, lack of digital devices, low digital literacy, and absence of formal accreditation significantly constrain the effectiveness and sustainability of these alternatives. Evidence suggests that fewer than 30 percent of Afghan households have reliable internet access, further exacerbating rural-urban disparities in educational opportunity.

The study argues that continued exclusion from education risks creating long-term consequences, including increased early marriage, reduced labor force participation, deteriorating mental health outcomes, and weakened institutional capacity. At the same time, adaptive educational responses demonstrate resilience and agency among girls and women, highlighting the potential of technology-supported and non-formal education models when appropriately supported.

This paper concludes that restoring girls' education in Afghanistan requires an integrated approach combining international engagement, community participation, technological innovation, and policy frameworks that ensure recognition and continuity of learning. Education for girls is not only a humanitarian concern but a strategic prerequisite for sustainable development, social stability, and long-term recovery.

**Keywords:** Afghanistan; Girls' Education; Digital Learning; Non-formal Education; Gender Inequality.

## 1. Introduction

Education plays a foundational role in human development, social mobility, and effective governance. For girls, access to education is closely associated with improved health outcomes, economic participation, and civic engagement. In Afghanistan, however, girls' educational opportunities have historically been shaped by political instability, prolonged conflict, and deeply rooted socio-cultural constraints (UNESCO, 2025). These structural challenges intensified significantly following the political transition in August 2021, which resulted in the suspension of formal secondary and higher education for girls across much of the country (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

Recent estimates indicate that **more than 2.5 million girls are currently excluded from secondary education**. Access to universities and higher education institutions also remains largely inaccessible to women, positioning Afghanistan as the only country where girls are institutionally denied education beyond the primary level. This large-scale exclusion has produced far-reaching consequences, not only for individual learners but also for Afghanistan's broader social, economic and institutional capacity. The prolonged denial of education undermines human capital formation, weakens governance capacity, and exacerbates

gender inequality. In the absence of formal schooling opportunities, digital and online education platforms have emerged as an alternative pathway that enable limited educational continuity for some Afghan girls (Ahmadi. S & Agarwal. N K, 2025). Online classes, virtual learning environments, and technology-supported initiatives, often operated by non-governmental organizations, diaspora networks and international actors, have become critical mechanisms through which girls continue to access learning opportunities.

Despite their potential, these alternative educational pathways operate within a highly restrictive governance environment characterized by policy uncertainty, economic hardship, limited infrastructure, and heightened social surveillance. Unequal access to internet connectivity, digital devices and reliable electricity further exacerbates educational inequality, particularly for girls in rural and marginalized communities. In addition, unresolved issues related to accreditation, quality assurance, data security, and long-term sustainability continued to limit the effectiveness and legitimacy of digital education initiatives (Hasin. B A, 2025).

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to analyze girls' education in Afghanistan in the post-2021 context by examining both the barriers and opportunities associated with digital learning under restrictive governance conditions. By focusing on the intersection of education, technology and governance, the study contributes to ongoing debates in public administration, development studies, and education policy regarding the protection of educational rights in fragile and politically constrained environments (McLean. J & Cooper. M, 2025).

### Statement of the Problem

Following the political transition in Afghanistan in August 2021, girls access to formal secondary and higher education has been significantly constrained through changes in governance policies and institutional frameworks. According to estimates by UNESCO<sup>1</sup> and UNICEF<sup>2</sup>, more than 2.5 million Afghan girls are currently excluded from secondary education, while tens of thousands of female students have been denied access to universities and other institutional of higher learning. This large-scale educational exclusion represents one of the most significant disruptions to girls' education globally and has transformed access restrictions into a long-term governance and development challenge (UNESCO, 2025) (UNICEF, 2026).

As formal education pathways have been inaccessible, digital and online education has emerged as a primary often the only digital learning mechanism through which Afghan girls can continue learning. However, the expansion digital education has occurred within a highly constrained environment characterized by limited connectivity, widespread economic hardship, technological inequality, security concerns, and the absence of institutional recognition for non-formal and online learning. Structural barriers such as unreliable electricity, lack of access to digital devices, low levels of digital literacy, and restrictive socio-cultural norms further limit girl's participation in rural communities.

While digital learning initiatives have enabled limited educational continuity and demonstrated adaptive responses to formal exclusion, their effectiveness, accessibility and long-term suitability remain uncertain under restrictive governance conditions. Existing studies predominantly focus on educational exclusion and policy constraints but offers limited systematic analysis of digital and online education as an alternative pathway for girls' education in Afghanistan. in particular, there is insufficient empirical and policy-oriented research examining how governance constraints interact with technological, economic, and institutional factors to shape the outcomes of digital learning initiatives.

### Objective of the Study:

1. To examine the impact of post-2021 governance restrictions on girls' access to formal secondary and higher education in Afghanistan.
2. To identify the key technological, economic, socio-cultural, and institutional barriers affecting Afghan girls' participation in digital and online education.
3. To analyze the role of digital learning as an alternative mechanism for sustaining educational continuity for girls excluded from formal schooling.
4. To assess the potential and limitations of digital online education in ensuring inclusive, sustainable, and meaningful learning opportunities for Afghan girls.

### Research Questions

1. How have post-2021 governance policies and institutional changes affected girls' access to secondary and higher education in Afghanistan?
2. What technological, economic, socio-cultural, and institutional barriers limit girls' participation in digital and online education?

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO (United Nations Children's fund)

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF (United Nation Educational, Scientific and cultural Organization)

3. In what ways has digital learning functioned as an alternative pathway for educational continuity for girls excluded from formal schooling?
4. To what extent can digital online education address educational exclusion and contribute to sustainable learning outcomes for girls under restrictive governance?

## 2. Literature Review

Scholarly literature on girl's education in Afghanistan highlights, a persistent interaction between political authority, socio-cultural norms, economic constraints, and institutional capacity. Earlier studies emphasize that gender inequality in education is deeply rooted in prolonged conflict, patriarchal social structures, and inconsistent government frameworks (Shayan. Z, 2015). Textbook analyses and policy-oriented inquiries further reveal that educational access and content have historically reflected shifting political ideologies, particularly during periods of political regime transitions, reinforcing restrictive gender norms within formal education systems (Sarvarzade. S & Wotipka. C M, 2017). These structural vulnerabilities create a fragile educational foundation even prior to 2021, leaving girls' educational highly susceptible to political policy shocks.

During the post-2001 period, several studies documented significant increases in girls' enrollment alongside persistent qualitative deficits. Asadullah et al. (2019) argue that expanded enrollment did not necessarily translate into meaningful learning outcomes, citing deficiencies in school quality, teacher training, and learning environment (Asadullah. M N, 2019). Lyons (2022), drawing on household and student level survey data, similarly observes that although access to secondary education improved prior to 2021, Dropout rates among girls remained high due to poverty, early marriage, and security concerns (Lyons. E, 2023). Hassan's (2023) qualitative study in Kandahar province further demonstrates that parental support for girls' schooling was often driven by pragmatic considerations such as literacy or marriage prospects rather than broader commitments to gender-equality, revealing the fragility of educational gains (Hassan. N, 2023).

Recent literature strongly focuses on the post-2021 period, documenting a sharp regression in girls' educational access following the re-imposition of restrictive governance. Hamidi (2024) and Amiri (2023) provide detailed analyses of policy measures affecting girl's secondary and higher education, identifying them as systematic and institutionalized forms of gender discrimination (Amiri. M H, 2023) (Hamidi. A B, 2024). Jawed et al. (2025) characterize these restrictions as part of a broader pattern of exclusion affecting women and girls across education, employment, and public life (Javed S. Quraishi T & Hakimi N, 2025). Hasin et al. (2025) similarly emphasize that the exclusion of women from education undermines Afghanistan's long-term social development, governance capacity, and human capital formation (Hasin. B A, 2025).

Several scholars examine the legal, ideological, and cultural justifications underlying educational restrictions. Nadiry (2025) using an Islamic legal framework, challenges the religious legitimacy of bans on women's education, arguing that such policies reflect political interpretations rather than Islamic principles (Nadiry. S, 2025). Firchow and Urwin (2023) situate debates on women's rights within international intervention narratives, cautioning against simplified portrayals of Afghan women while acknowledging the tangible consequences of restrictive governance. Collectively, these studies underscore the politicization of education and its use as a tool of social control (Firchow. P & Urwin. E, 2023).

The socio-economic consequences of girl's educational exclusion are also widely discussed. Niyazi et al. (2023) link girls' education directly to Afghanistan's future healthcare capacity, warning that restrictions will exacerbate shortages of female health professionals and worsen public health outcomes (Neyazi. A, 2023). Naqawi and Sultani (2025) further identify poverty, unemployment, and household survival strategies as factors that intensify educational exclusion, particularly in rural areas (Naqawi. G. H & Sultani. A, 2025). Bukhari (2023) frames girls' education as both a challenge and an opportunity, highlighting the tension between restrictive policies and community-level aspirations for education (Bukhari S. M. A. S, 2023).

Emerging literature explores alternative and non-formal educational pathways developed in response to institutional bans. Hakimi et al. (2023) and Ahmad and Agarwal (2025) analyze the role of e-learning and virtual education initiatives, suggesting that digital platforms offer limited but meaningful opportunities for continuity in girls' education (Ahmadi. S & Agarwal. N K, 2025) (Hakimi. M, 2023). Mclean and Cooper (2025) similarly examine internet-based education, while noting significant barriers such as the digital divide, internet restrictions, and unequal access to technology (McLean. J & Cooper. M, 2025). Sikandari et al (2025) expand this discussion by highlighting the role of multimedia and community-based learning in fostering female leadership and local development (Sekandari.O, 2025).

International responses to the educational crisis form another important strand in the literature. Azzahrah and Yumoto (2025) analyze the role of the United Nations in addressing restrictions on women's education, noting both advocacy success and structural limitations. While international pressures and humanitarian programs have sustained some educational opportunities, Scholars consistently argue that these efforts lack the capacity to replace a functioning national educational system (Azzahrah A. K & Yumitro.G, 2025).

**Research gap:** Although existing studies provide extensive documentation of policy restrictions, socio-cultural barriers and emerging educational alternatives, the literature remains fragmented across disciplinary and thematic lines. Most studies examine either structural exclusion, ideological justifications or alternative learning mechanisms in isolation. There is limited integrative analysis that simultaneously examines the barriers imposed by restrictive governance and the opportunities created through digital and online learning for girls' education in post-2021 Afghanistan. Moreover, few studies systematically assess the sustainability, accessibility, and limitations of alternative educational pathways in the absence of formal institutional recognition and alongside varying levels of international support. To address these gaps, the present study adopts a comprehensive analytical framework to examine how restrictive governance shapes both constraints and possibilities for girls' education, with particular emphasis on digital learning as a survival and continuity mechanism.

### 3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to analyze girls' education in Afghanistan during the post-2021 period, with particular emphasis on digital learning under restrictive governance conditions. A qualitative approach is appropriate given the political sensitivity of the research context, the absence of reliable primary data access, and the study's focus on policy dynamics, institutional exclusion and alternative educational pathways. The research is exploratory and analytical in nature, aiming to interpret patterns, narratives and structural constraints shaping girls' access to education rather than to measure outcomes quantitatively.

**3.1 Data Sources:** The study relies exclusively on secondary data, collected from two main categories of sources:

- **Scholarly and institutional sources:** these include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, policy briefs and research reports published by international organizations, non-governmental organizations and human rights institutions. Key sources include reports and publications from United Nations agencies, international NGOs, academic research centers and diaspora-led educational initiatives focusing on Afghanistan.
- **Policy documents and legal texts:** official policy statements, decrees, regulations and public announcements issued by the current institutional authorities since August 2021 were analyzed to understand the governance framework regulating girls' education. In addition, international legal instruments, human rights conventions and advocacy documents were reviewed to contextualize Afghanistan's educational restrictions within broader global norms related to gender equality and the right to education.

All sources were selected to ensure analytical depth, credibility and relevance to the post-2021 educational landscape.

**3.2 Method of Data Analysis:** data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis, enabling the identification of recurring patterns, policy trends and institutional responses affecting girls' education post-2021.

**3.3 Scope of the Study:** the study focuses on girls' education in Afghanistan during the post-2021 period, with particular emphasis on secondary and higher education.

### 4. Barriers to Girls' Education in Afghanistan Post-2021

Following the political transition in August 2021, access to education for girls in Afghanistan has experienced a significant and systematic decline. While barriers to girls' education existed prior to this period, recent developments have transformed these challenges into institutionalized constraints embedded within policy frameworks, socio-cultural norms, economic realities, and structural limitations. The literature consistently identifies these barriers as interconnected and mutually reinforcing, collectively restricting educational opportunities for girls (Ullah. N, 2025).

The policy-level restrictions constitute the most decisive barrier to girls' education in post-2021 Afghanistan. The suspension of secondary schools and higher education institutions for girls has effectively eliminated formal educational pathways beyond the primary level. In the absence of a clear legal framework guaranteeing girls' rights to education, access has become dependent on localized interpretations and enforcement practices. This institutional uncertainty discourages families, educators, and community actors from pursuing or supporting alternative educational arrangements. Furthermore, restrictions on women's employment have reduced the availability of female teachers further undermining the feasibility of girl's schooling even at the primary level (Hamidi. A B, 2024).

Socio-cultural barriers have intensified alongside formal policy restrictions. Conservative gender norms, reinforced through political authority and social surveillance, have narrowed the socially acceptable space for girls' education. Fear of punishment, stigma and social pressure has reduced parental willingness to support girls' schooling, particularly in rural and conservative regions (Kayen H.S, 2022). Although regional variations exist, shaped by local histories, ethnic composition and degrees of ideological enforcement, the broader socio-cultural environment has become increasingly restrictive, limiting both participation and educational aspirations among girls (Ahmadi. M A, 2024).

Economic instability has further contributed to the educational exclusion of girls. Widespread poverty, unemployment, and declining household incomes have forced families to prioritize basic survival over education. In such contexts, girls are more likely than boys to be withdrawn from schooling, assigned domestic labor or pushed into early marriages as coping strategies (Ebrahimi. N, 2024). The rising cost of education whether formal, non-formal or digital has further reduced accessibility particularly for marginalized and displaced population.

Structural weaknesses within Afghanistan’s education system have compounded policy and socio-economic barriers. These include deteriorating school infrastructure, lack of learning materials and weakened administrative capacity. The dismissal or exclusion of qualified educators particularly women has further undermined educational quality and continuity (Amiri. M H, 2023). Moreover, the absence of independent monitoring mechanism and professional oversight has reduced accountability, resulting in uneven educational provision and declining learning outcomes.

Digital and online education initiatives have emerged as alternative pathways in response to school closures; however, their effectiveness remains limited. Poor internet connectivity, lack of access to digital devices, unreliable electricity and low digital literacy significantly restrict participation, especially for girls in rural areas (Haqbeen. J, 2023). Gender norms further constrain girls’ access to technology within household, while emerging AI-supported and virtual education platforms remain largely inaccessible to the majority of girls (Karimy. A U, 2024).

**Table 1: Major Barriers to Girls’ Education in Afghanistan Post-2021**

Barrier category	Key characteristics	Impact of girls’ education
Policy and legal barriers	School and university closures; lack of legal guarantee; inconsistent enforcement	Elimination of formal education pathways
Socio-cultural barriers	Conservative gender norms; fear of punishment; social pressure	Reduced participation and parental support
Economic barriers	Poverty; unemployment; early marriage; domestic labor	Increased dropout rates and long-term exclusion
Institutional barriers	Shortage of female teachers; weak governance; poor infrastructure	Declining quality and sustainability
Digital and structural barriers	Limited internet access; lack of devices; rural-urban divide	Restricted reach of alternative education

Sources are provided below: (Ahmadi. M A, 2024), (Amiri. M H, 2023), (Haqbeen. J, 2023), (Hasin. B A, 2025).

### 5. Opportunities and Alternative Pathways for Girls’ Education in Afghanistan Post-2021

Girls’ education in Afghanistan has experienced a substantial regression following the re-imposition of restrictive policies after 2021. These restrictions particularly affect access to secondary and higher education. These restrictions have been reinforced by entrenched socio-cultural norms, economic hardship, insecurity, and limited institutional capacity, resulting in uneven educational access across regions and social groups (Hamidi. A B, 2024). The prolonged exclusion of girls from formal education has contributed to adverse social outcomes including psychological distress, early marriage, forced migration, and the erosion of future aspirations (Neyazi. A, 2023).

Despite these constraints, alternative educational pathways have emerged, particularly through digital and internet-based learning platforms. These initiatives have enabled limited continuity of learning for girls and women, especially in urban and semi-urban areas (McLean. J & Cooper. M, 2025). However, their effectiveness remains constrained by limited internet connectivity, unreliable electricity, insufficient digital literacy, and the lack of formal accreditation which undermines long-term educational and professional outcomes (Hakimi. M, 2023).

Recent initiatives incorporating artificial intelligence, multimedia tools and non-formal credentialing systems indicate a growing shift toward technology-supported education as an adaptive mechanism under restrictive conditions. AI-supported platforms and blockchain-based education systems demonstrate potential in personalizing learning, securing academic records and expanding access for girls excluded from formal schooling (Karimy. A U, 2024). Nevertheless, these initiatives remain dependent on sustained infrastructural investment, trained educators and policy recognition to ensure inclusivity and scalability.

Socio-cultural factors continue to significantly influence educational participation, as conservative gender norms and mobility restrictions shape household and community attitudes toward girls’ education. At the same time, gradual positive shifts are observable through increased parental awareness, community-level advocacy, religious discourse supportive of girls’ education, and media engagement. Together, these factors contribute to the emerging new, though limited, opportunities for female learning (Frogh. R & Rajath. D V, 2022).

Overall, girls’ education in Afghanistan is characterized by an ongoing tension between systemic exclusion and adaptive innovation. While formal educational pathways remain severely restricted, non-formal, digital, and technology-driven initiatives

provide limited but meaningful opportunities for educational continuity. Long-term progress depends on a pluralistic educational framework that integrates community participation, technological innovation, and international support to safeguard women’s educational rights and broader social development (Hasin. B A, 2025).

**Table 2: Challenges and Emerging Pathways in Girls’ Education in Afghanistan Post-2021**

Dimension	Key Issues	Emerging Response
Policy Environment	Restrictions on Secondary and Higher Education	Non-Formal and online Education Models
Infrastructure	Limited Internet, Electricity, and Devices	E- learning Platforms, Virtual Classrooms
Technology	Digital Divide, Lack of Certification	AI-Supported Platforms
Socio-Cultural Norms	Gender Norms, Mobility Constraints	Community Support, Parental Awareness
Educational Outcomes	Dropouts, Psychological Impact	Multimedia Learning, Online Engagement

Sources are provided below: (Hasin. B A, 2025), (Ahmadi. S & Agarwal. N K, 2025), (Frogh. R & Rajath. D V, 2022), (Hakimi. M, 2023),

## 6. Discussion

Girls’ education in Afghanistan reveals a complex interaction of political, socio-cultural, economic, and infrastructural constraints that collectively restrict educational access, opportunities, and continuity for females. Since the government transition in August 2021, formal education for girls beyond the primary level has been largely suspended, compelling many to seek alternative pathways, particularly through online and digital platforms. Existing studies suggest that while online education initiatives are generally perceived positively in terms of curriculum quality, flexibility, and peer interaction, their effectiveness remains limited by persistent structural barriers. These include inadequate internet connectivity, unreliable electricity, lack of access to digital devices, absence of formal accreditation, and ongoing social restrictions that disproportionately affect girls’ participation (Ahmadi. S & Agarwal. N K, 2025).

Technological innovations, especially AI-supported educational platforms, have emerged as adaptive responses to these constraints. Such platforms demonstrate potential to personalize learning experiences, preserving academic records, and mitigating certain logistical challenges associated with conventional schooling. However, their impact is highly contingent upon substantial investment in digital infrastructure, teacher training, institutional support mechanisms, and policy-level recognition (Karimy. A U, 2024). In the absence of these enabling conditions, technology-driven education risks reinforcing existing inequalities rather than reducing them, particularly for girls in rural and marginalized communities. The literature further emphasizes that technological solutions alone is insufficient to ensure sustainable educational inclusion, as deep-rooted socio-cultural norms and mobility restrictions continue to shape household and community attitudes towards girls’ education. Addressing these challenges requires pluralistic educational approaches that are culturally sensitive, socially inclusive, and aligned with religious and local values while simultaneously promoting gender equality and educational access. Community engagement, parental awareness, and locally grounded advocacy emerge as critical factors in expanding acceptance and support for girls’ learning opportunities (Sekandari.O, 2025).

Overall, advancing girls’ education in Afghanistan necessitates a multidimensional strategy that integrates international advocacy, technological innovation, community engagement and participation, and culturally responsive educational reform. Such an approach is essential for creating inclusive and resilient learning environments capable of sustaining educational continuity for girls despite persistent political uncertainty and governance constraints.

## 7. Policy Recommendations

Restoring and sustaining girls’ education in Afghanistan requires a multi-layered policy approach that addresses immediate access needs, long-term system rebuilding, and international accountability. First, international organizations and donor agencies should prioritize education as a core component of humanitarian assistance rather than treating it as secondary or optional intervention. Emergency education programs, including community-based learning centres and safe learning spaces, should be expanded with particular focus on reaching rural and marginalized populations.

Second, alternative and digital education initiatives must receive formal support through standardized curricula, quality assurance mechanisms, and credible pathways for certification. International education partners can play a critical role in developing transnational accreditation frameworks that recognize online and non-formal learning outcomes, enabling girls to transition into higher education or employment opportunities in the future.

Third, sustained diplomatic engagement and international pressure remain essential. Education should be framed not only as a human rights obligation but also as prerequisite for public health resilience, economic recovery, and governance capacity. Coordinated advocacy by international institutions, regional bodies and civil society organizations can help maintain global attention on educational exclusion and prevent its normalization.

Finally, policy interventions must engage families and communities by addressing economic vulnerability and social fears associated with girls' education. Conditional cash assistance, community awareness initiatives and psychological support services can reduce household-level constraints and reinforce the social value of educating girls, even under restrictive conditions.

## 8. Limitations of the Study and Future Research

This study is based exclusively on secondary data drawn from academic literature, international organization reports, and policy documents, which limits its ability to capture lived experience through primary fieldwork. Ongoing access constraints and the prevailing political environment in Afghanistan restrict opportunities for direct engagement with affected girls, educators and families.

Future research should incorporate qualitative interviews with Afghan women, teachers and households including those participating in alternative education initiatives and diaspora-led learning networks. Longitudinal studies examining the long-term impact of educational exclusion on health, employment and governance outcomes would provide valuable insights. Additionally, further research on digital and AI-supported education models is needed to assess their scalability, inclusivity and sustainability in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

## 9. Conclusion

The post-2021 exclusion of girls from education represents one of the most severe setbacks to human development in the country's recent history. This study demonstrates that the denial of educational access is not an isolated policy decision but a structural intervention with far-reaching social, economic and governance consequences. Education particularly for girls, functions as a foundational pillar of societal resilience; its removal destabilizes individual life trajectories as well as broader institutional capacity and social cohesion.

The analysis indicates that policy-driven restrictions constitute the central barrier to girls' education, reinforced by socio-cultural pressures, economic collapse and infrastructural limitations. While existing literature documents immediate consequences such as learning loss, early marriage and deteriorating health outcomes, the long-term implications are equally alarming. Sustained educational exclusion risks producing a generation with limited skills, reduced civic participation and constrained economic agency, thereby undermining prospects for sustainable development and peacebuilding.

At the same time, the study highlights the emergence of alternative educational pathways, including online learning, non-formal education initiatives and community-based programs. These adaptive responses reflect resilience and agency among Afghan girls and women, as well as the commitment of international and non-governmental actors to sustain learning under restrictive conditions. However, in the absence of legal recognition, adequate digital infrastructure and policy integration, such initiatives risk remaining temporary mitigation strategies rather than durable solutions.

The finding underscores that restoring girls' education in Afghanistan is not solely a humanitarian imperative but a strategic necessity. Education is closely linked to public health, economic recovery, institutional legitimacy and long-term stability. International engagement must therefore move beyond short-term humanitarian responses toward coordinated strategies that prioritize educational inclusion, protect learning spaces and support credible pathways for formal recognition of alternative education models.

In conclusion, the future of Afghanistan's social and development trajectory is inseparable from the educational rights of its girls. Continued exclusion threatens to entrench inequality and dependency, while inclusive education offers the most viable foundation for recovery, dignity and sustainable peace.

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