



Global Girl Leading: Investing in Girls' Education

# Executive Summary

By Dr V J Ogden, CEO, Mulberry Schools Trust

**“Investing in girls’ secondary education  
is one of the most transformative  
development strategies.”**

Unicef 2023

## Introduction

This executive summary provides highlights from a full report titled Global Girl Leading: Investing in Girls' Education. It is a Mulberry Changemaker programme for girls aged 11-18. The programme is dedicated to promoting equality for girls through rich educational opportunities that connect girls across the world, bringing them together as a sisterhood, advocating for each other.

## The Problem

Girls' well-being, autonomy and power of choice are negatively impacted by a global social framework that preferences males. This not only places limitations on their freedoms and rights, but it also affects their safety and security. Change — equality for girls and women — must happen, but it is slow and fraught with institutional barriers. In the meantime, the negative impact on girls' lives is considerable.

## The Solution

Through education with targeted activity, girls can be given the tools both to encounter, challenge and overcome many of the obstacles to their freedoms. Girls can also be empowered to lead the change they want to see for themselves, and for other girls, across the globe.

## The Global Girl Leading Programme

The Global Girl Leading programme is a leadership development programme 'by girls, for girls'. Supported by teachers, girls together learn to lead change. They co-create learning activities which include negotiation skills, teamwork, risk-taking and campaigning. They are given platforms and coaching to make their voices heard. Through this programme, they experience the power of successfully influencing change, learning resilience and self-confidence.

## The Impact of the Programme

The Global Girl Leading programme has had a significant impact on the lives of girls who have participated. They have reported feeling more confident, empowered and capable of leading change. They have also developed new skills and knowledge that have helped them to navigate the challenges they face.

## Next Steps

The Global Girl Leading programme is a valuable resource for girls who are looking to make a difference in the world. We are embarking on a year-long schedule of activity. We commence with a virtual online conference on International Day of the Girl 2023. The programme, with a variety of opportunities to bring girls together, culminates in 2024 with a live-streamed and in-person summit in the UK with which girls and schools from around the world can engage through our free website and resources.

**We invite you to join us and support girls to lead change for themselves and others, in the interests of a true partnership of equals – girls with boys, women with men – creating a healthier, more secure and more spiritually and materially prosperous future for all.**

**Thank you for your support.**

The full report on the Global Girl Leading programme can be found [here](#) or scan the QR code.

SCAN ME



# Global Girl Leading: Investing in Girls' Education

By Dr V J Ogden, CEO, Mulberry Schools Trust

Global Girl Leading is a Mulberry Changemaker programme for girls aged 11-18. It is dedicated to promoting equality for girls through rich educational opportunities that connect girls across the world, bringing them together as a sisterhood, advocating for each other. Global Girl Leading is a leadership development programme 'by girls, for girls'. Supported by teachers, girls together learn to lead change. They co-create learning activities which include negotiation skills, teamwork, risk-taking and campaigning. They are given platforms and coaching to make their voices heard. Through this programme, they experience the power of successfully influencing change, learning resilience and finding self-confidence.



# Context

Global Girl Leading exists because of the inequality across the world faced by girls and women. The challenges in every country range in their character and shape and are deeply entrenched in every society<sup>1</sup>. Spheres of work, home, healthcare, political voice and basic education all reflect this. Violence against women and girls is prevalent. The human rights of girls are violated across the globe in many ways, including child marriage, FGM, forced sex, barriers to education, period poverty, infringement of economic independence, bars to decent employment, poor access to maternal healthcare.

In the UK, the issues for girls are still widespread, despite better protections than in many places. Whilst there is textural difference in girls' situations globally, often linked to the economic and political context in different countries, nevertheless, concerning inequalities remain. In recent years, shockwaves have included: the 'Me Too' movement 2017; the NEU / UK Feminista report 2017 on girls' experience of sexual harassment or abuse in schools by peers; 'Everyone's Invited' 2020, publishing further similar revelations about school communities and their social spaces; the 2021 rapid review by Ofsted into girls' experience of sexual abuse in schools and colleges; and a recent 2023 report from the Children's Commissioner on the experience by children of online pornography, causing significant harms to girls. Doing nothing about this is not an option.



<sup>1</sup> [www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women](http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women) 2/3/23

# Approach

Global Girl Leading is led by girls, for girls on the issues that matter to them, supported and scaffolded by school staff. Its theory of change works towards gender equality and the eradication of misogyny by investing in girls and their agency. Institutional social and political change can be glacial, so equipping girls to be changemakers themselves will help to accelerate progress on these issues, benefitting girls individually, and collectively, with lots of smaller changes adding up to a bigger shift more quickly.

## Global Girl Leading Theory of Change

**The Problem:** Girls' well-being, autonomy and power of choice are negatively impacted by a global social framework that preferences males. This not only places limitations on girls' freedoms and rights, it also affects their safety and security. Change is slow, fraught with institutional barriers. Meanwhile, the negative impact on girls' lives is considerable. Through education with targeted activity, girls are given the tools both to encounter, challenge and overcome obstacles to their freedoms. Girls are empowered to lead change for themselves, and for other girls, across the globe.

**Inputs:** Programmes of learning and training led by girls, co-constructed with school staff, within an education framework that develops:

- Confidence
- Creativity and critical thinking
- Leadership capacity
- Learning about the issues that affect girls and women worldwide and how others have met and overcome the challenges

This model of education is based on that used successfully at Mulberry School for Girls to empower autonomy, self-determination and leadership of change. Activities include:

1. A year-long programme of training and development led by girls, for girls from participating schools. The training is focused on preparation for a summit – in person and virtual – on International Day of the Girl. The summit brings girls together from several countries to consider the world issues that affect them.
2. A visit to another country to build relationships with partner schools and community groups for girls and women. This is to create understanding of context and to cement a strong relationship between the organisations in question. There is then an exchange visit between girls in the UK and those abroad.
3. A final plenary summit, streamed live online from a prestigious venue at which 400 girls from participating schools can be present. It has access to other girls at delegates' base school back home and to girls who may switch in independently from anywhere in the world. There is an associated web-based resource, available freely to all so that the programme can be replicated by those who want to use it with girls, thereby multiplying the possibilities for dissemination.

**Immediate Outcomes:** Girls who participate in Global Girl Leading have:

- Better knowledge of barriers facing girls and women across the world, as well as better understanding of how others have successfully dealt with the challenges
- Developed a range of attributes, skills and capacities to help them encounter discrimination and handle it confidently, powerfully and constructively
- Used the platform of Global Girl Leading to make their voices heard on human rights for girls and women
- Become agents of change in a variety of ways, negotiating the best outcomes for themselves and other girls and women
- Participated in a global sisterhood of girls, advocating for each other's rights and equalities in an ethos of mutuality and reciprocity



**Long-term Outcomes:** Global Girl Leading will have:

- Raised awareness of the need to invest in girls' education – that girls' needs require a specialised response rather than being subsumed into a school culture that reflects the male generic
- Supported cohorts of girls to develop the attributes, skills and capacities that they need to become leaders of change for themselves and others
- Helped more women into key positions of leadership in national and global institutions, so they have decision-making power and control on key issues affecting girls and women
- Achieved a decrease in sexual abuse and violence against women and girls
- Achieved an increase in the number of girls in secondary education across the world

The education framework referred to in this theory of change has been tried and tested over many years at Mulberry School for Girls. It is fundamental to the approach of Global Girl Leading. Combining the teaching of confidence, creativity and leadership with challenging, rigorous learning about the issues girls and women face is very powerful, especially when content and activity are thoroughly planned, co-created with girls.



# Activity

**The quality of curriculum and the method of delivery are premised on giving girls voice and visibility. Thus, Global Girl Leading programmes have the following characteristics:**

- They are student led, co-constructed with, and supported by, school staff
- They consider important global themes affecting girls and women
- They involve writing curriculum and training materials for participants, as well as for the school staff who are supporting the delivery of Global Girl Leading in each participating school
- They work towards a culminating summit lasting one day which covers different areas of women's leadership on global issues
- They include online preparatory workshops dealing with the themes of the summit, as well as workshops on leadership skills and personal development
- There are creative arts projects on which students collaborate from amongst the schools involved, which then form part of the final summit. These can be films or documentaries, published performance poetry, a theatre or dance piece, a 'speakers' corner' piece, student essays, student speeches, the creation of an exhibition
- A visit to each other's schools may take place, sometimes internationally
- There may be a residential camp
- The final summit will include speakers and panellists who are women from a variety of different backgrounds as well as young voices from amongst the girls involved
- There will be a celebration of all the work of those involved, supported by a significant social figure







All activity is designed to ensure that girls have many opportunities to practice leadership confidently, creatively and in an informed way. Developing your 'voice' and having a public platform to make that voice heard in a variety of ways using the arts, literacy and oracy is part of the experience, as is enhancing the capacity for reasoning and critical thinking. Knowing how to 'own' your space and to do your best, without diminishing those around you but bringing them with you, are also fundamental to the learning in Global Girl Leading.

There is rigour in the knowledge acquisition that Global Girl Leading expects, too. The learning covered requires participants to tackle challenging issues that affect women worldwide within six themes:

- Unequal access to education and healthcare
- Harms from abuse and violence, including femicide
- Barriers to economic rights and decent employment
- Under-representation in leadership
- Disenfranchisement in governance
- Restrictions on self-determination

There is a range of world issues within these themes where women are active agents of change: climate change, healthcare, digital inclusion, armed conflict, migration and human rights, to name just a few. Scaffolding allows access to this knowledge at a variety of different levels so that everyone can participate. Underneath it all is the expectation that girls will engage with other girls in the spirit of mutuality and reciprocity, seeking to know and understand each other's contexts and to build collaborative relationships as agents of change.

# Next Steps

**Achieving gender equality requires investment in girls' education. Whilst culture may be hard to shift, doing nothing is not an option when misogyny is so prevalent. Girls themselves are a powerful force for change – Global Girl Leading provides the platform for their voice and visibility on these issues.**

Between 2023 and 2025, Global Girl Leading will:

1. Argue for a commission on girls' experience in schools in the UK, building on the findings of Ofsted's rapid review of peer-on-peer abuse in 2021 and the more recent findings of the Children's Commissioner on pornography. We need to know more about the reality and explore opportunities for systemic changes.
2. Learn more about the experience of girls in schools in other countries than the UK, building strong collaborative relationships between girls, sharing common themes and developing constructive ways to make change. The new partnership with Mexico, the existing partnership with Southeast Asia and the possibility of building partnership with Australia will create exciting new possibilities for girls globally.
3. Run a new 18-month Global Girl Leading programme in partnership with Mexico from September 2023, using the framework set out in this paper and culminating in a summit on 11th October 2024 at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre, streamed live online. Student projects to be focused on:
  - a. Performance poetry competition in Spanish and English
  - b. Student speeches – essay competition
  - c. Closing festival project on disappearing biodiversity and Mexican Day of the Dead
  - d. Speakers' corner
  - e. Female role model exhibition
4. To consider what might be achieved in 2024, in partnership with Australia.







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