



ECHIDNA GIVING STRATEGY

MARCH 2018

THE PROMISE OF GIRLS' EDUCATION

Echidna Giving's mission is to get more girls into better schools to live better lives. Girls with a high quality education can envision new life paths and grow up to raise healthier, wealthier families. Understanding the value of education, they pass it on to the next generation, ensuring that their

own children, and their children's children, have the opportunity to learn.

Educated girls help generate more resilient and equitable societies that benefit everyone: men, women, and children, of this generation and the next.

ACCELERATING THE NEXT CHAPTER

Extraordinary gains have already been made in girls' education. It is now time to build on everything that dedicated actors worldwide have learned, course correct as needed, and deliver on the promise of high quality education for girls.

Over the past quarter century, passionate individuals and organizations have helped to make girls' education one of development's huge success stories, making gender parity in primary and secondary education the norm in countries as of 2014.¹ The pace of change in girls' education has been impressive. In the United States, it took 40 years for girls' enrollments to increase from 57 percent to 88 percent. It took only 11 years for Morocco to achieve the same.²

The progress in girls' education has been remarkable, but it's not enough.

For education to realize its transformative potential across generations, the evidence shows that girls must complete secondary education with the full range of skills and mindsets they need to thrive.³ Through our extensive review⁴ of the evidence, we have found three critical obstacles to realizing the full promise of education:

1. Many girls who do go to school are not learning (and even those who are learning don't always retain their learning post-schooling);
2. Even in places where as many girls attend school as boys, overall levels of education remain quite low; and
3. Schooling often reproduces gender inequality.

World leaders have committed to solving these problems. In 2015, the 193 member countries of the United Nations signed onto the Sustainable Development Goals, committing to ensuring all girls and boys complete free, equitable, and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant learning outcomes. They also committed to providing all girls and boys with access to quality early childhood development. And they signed on to achieve gender equality, ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere. These commitments demonstrate that governments have the will to make significant positive change. There is still momentum around education and gender equality. We now aim to support the next steps, helping to channel the continued commitment of communities and funders toward the most effective strategies.

1 UNESCO. 2015. Gender Summary: Achievements and Challenges: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015. Paris: UNESCO.

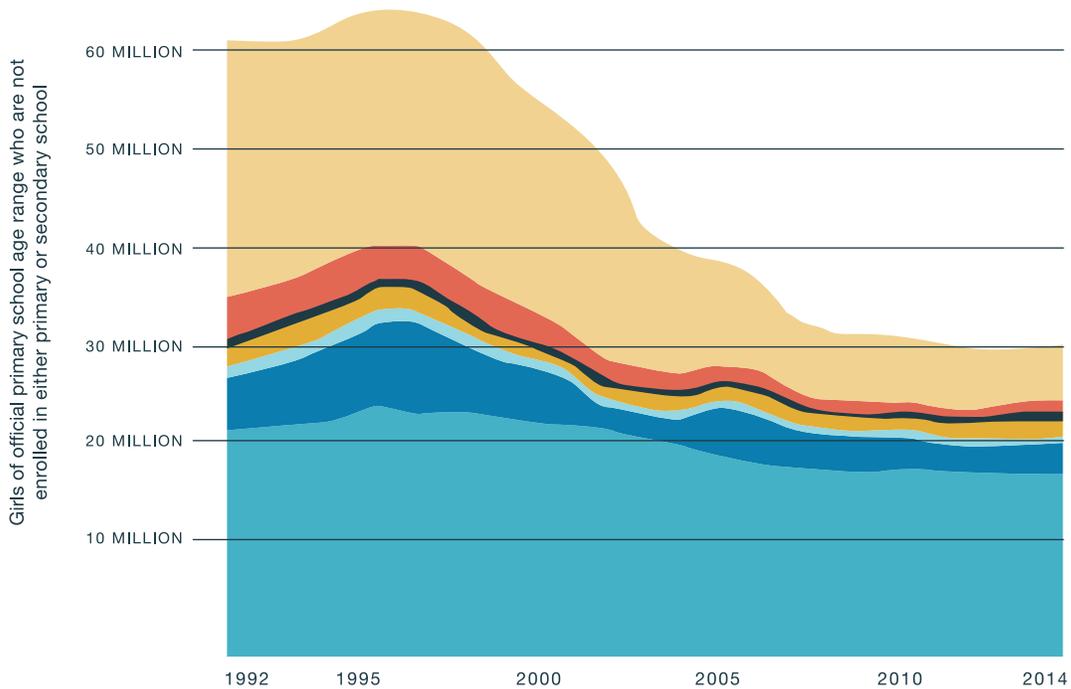
2 World Bank. 2018. World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1096-1. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO

3 Ibid

4 Echidna Giving. 2016. Background Literature Review & Interview Findings. Available at: <http://www.echidnagiving.org/our-blog/2016/12/20/what-we-gleaned-in-2016>

THE PROGRESS HAS BEEN REMARKABLE

As this chart demonstrates, the number of girls out of school has declined rapidly. We now know that school attendance is one piece of a larger puzzle.



NOW IT'S TIME TO DELIVER ON THE PROMISE

Girls need to be in school—and they need to be learning the skills that prepare them for a successful adulthood.

Source: World Bank OurWorldInData.org/primary-and-secondary-education · CC BY-SA

WHO WE ARE

We are a private funder who is committed to deploying \$500 to \$700 million towards these new horizons in girls' education over the next 40 years, in lower-income countries where girls are most disadvantaged. ***Our vision is a world in which the promise of girls' education has been delivered: girls grasp greater opportunities to learn and earn, passing on the value of education to their own children, thereby enabling better prospects for each successive generation.***

We are a lean, dynamic team—we do not plan to build an institution that will outlast our 40-year effort. Our small staff means we are unburdened by bureaucracy, able to take a flexible approach,

quickly course correct, and seize windows of opportunity. We don't shy away from risk, and we are willing to try unconventional approaches. At the same time, we are rigorous: outcome-oriented, analytical, nuanced, and data-driven. Our trusted advisors bring diverse perspectives to our work. We respect our grantees and their expertise, which is critical given that we are located far away from the communities we hope to serve.

These aspirations and capabilities inform the strategy laid out below, which will guide our learning, grantmaking, and partnerships over the next four to seven years.

Our role in delivering on the promise of girls' education is two-fold:

1. To be a catalyst for high-potential accelerators: programs and initiatives to fast-track improvements in education outcomes for girls.
2. To support a robust ecosystem in girls' education so that effective ideas can take root and thrive.

OUR STRATEGY

Meeting the UN's ambitious Sustainable Development Goals will require transitioning from a focus on *why* girls' education is important (with an emphasis on getting girls into schools) to a focus on *how* to make girls' education a reality (with an emphasis on providing girls opportunities for learning).

We see our role in this transition as two-fold. First, we want to be a catalyst for high-potential accelerators: issues that could fast-track improvements in education outcomes for girls. We will generate knowledge and develop system-level solutions around selected issues, including strategies that have begun to show promise and new strategies that have yet to be tested. Second, we will support a robust ecosystem in girls' education so that these powerful ideas can take root and thrive. Here, we will drive more and better use of global and regional resources for girls' education, while supporting the most capable local leaders to effect ground-level change. To identify which accelerator issues to focus on first we have looked at pivotal moments in a girl's development.

Current evidence reveals two time periods that are especially critical for girls.

1. **Early Childhood:** During these years, children's brains are rapidly developing and they can build cognitive and socioemotional skills that set the stage for later success. Young girls' experiences, both in terms of their education and the larger context of their care, can strongly influence their trajectory later in life.

2. **Adolescence:** During this life stage, the brain is primed for higher-order cognitive development and socioemotional learning around identity, self-esteem, and leadership.

The cognitive and socioemotional skills and mindsets that girls develop during both these periods are critical to academic learning and engagement both in and beyond the classroom.⁵ Examples of these skills and mindsets include self-regulation, agency, resilience, self- and social awareness, problem solving, and critical thinking.

These developmental stages are also significant for girls as they craft their understanding of themselves in relationship to larger societal norms and expectations. Early childhood experiences shape the way girls understand gender norms, which has a lasting influence on their sense of self. In adolescence girls become subject to social norms that can hamper their educational success.



EARLY CHILDHOOD

- Cognitive skills most malleable before age 10
- Primed for social and emotional learning
- Formative time for understanding gender norms



ADOLESCENCE

- Higher-order cognitive skills most malleable
- Primed for social and emotional learning on positive identity, self-esteem, leadership
- Gender norms become more restrictive, limiting where girls travel, what they may pursue, and how they spend their time

⁵ Stafford-Brizard. 2016. Building Blocks for Learning: A Framework for Comprehensive Student Development. Turnaround for Children.

OUR STRATEGY

Our first two accelerator areas are designed to discover what can happen when:

- 1. Young girls participate in quality, gender-sensitive early childhood programs.**
- 2. Adolescent girls learn skills and mindsets to thrive in school and beyond.**

These are two specific issues that we think hold promise and that we have committed to further developing, but they are not the only efforts needed in girls' education.

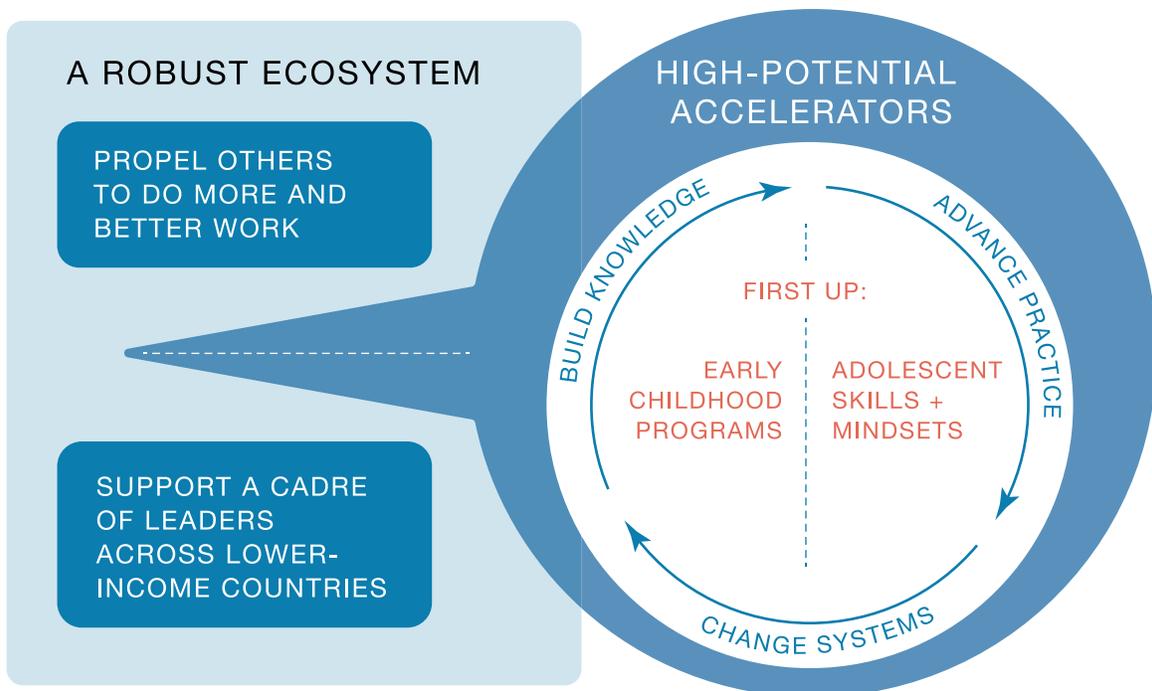
To advance progress, we will propel others to do more and better work. This means funding

researchers to generate and stack-up evidence on our accelerator areas alongside other issues, in order to identify the most effective ways to advance girls' education. We will also work with advocates to take these insights to decision makers. **And we will support a cadre of leaders across lower-income countries who understand girls' education and effectively promote it in their contexts.** We will support all of these things as part of a broader effort to cultivate a robust ecosystem for girls' education.

The sections that follow describe each of the strategy areas in turn.

Our Ambition:

A world where the promise of girls' education has been delivered: Where girls grasp greater opportunities to learn and earn, passing on the value of education to their own children, thereby enabling better prospects for each successive generation.



OPERATING PRINCIPLES

1 BE ACCOUNTABLE TO GIRLS

We focus on girls because of the disadvantages they face. We recognize the importance of educational outcomes for boys and will support interventions targeting girls *and* boys if they are attentive to gender and improve educational outcomes for girls more than other approaches.

4 ENABLE SYSTEMS CHANGE

Fund experimentation outside the formal school system if it cultivates new ideas that ultimately connect with helping school systems improve

2 FOCUS ON ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Support non-academic interventions *if* they have strong ties to academic progress and outcomes.

5 TAKE AN ADAPTIVE AND EVOLUTIONARY APPROACH

informed by data and evidence.

3 TARGET PRE-TERTIARY EDUCATION IN LOWER-INCOME COUNTRIES

where the need is greatest and our dollars go farthest.

6 PROVIDE SUPPORT IN A WAY THAT EMPOWERS LOCAL INSTITUTIONS, COMMUNITIES, AND LEADERS

who have the most intimate knowledge and influence, and therefore ultimately drive development.

EARLY CHILDHOOD: QUALITY GENDER- SENSITIVE PROGRAMS

Healthy early childhood development lays the groundwork for a lifetime of health, learning, and wellbeing. When marginalized children (including girls) receive high quality pre-primary opportunities, they are more likely to have a lifetime of outcomes on par with their more privileged peers. And when children are exposed to social and emotional learning that promotes more equal gender relationships, it can help break the cycle of gender discrimination. Early childhood care and education also indirectly serve mothers and older sisters who are typically caregivers, freeing up their time for employment or their own education.⁶

If early childhood programs are done well, they can help break the cycle of gender discrimination at lower cost than later interventions, which often have to overcome early childhood deficits.

Despite the promise of early childhood programs to have ripple effects for girls, there has been relatively little work to understand how early childhood might influence girls' education. We are eager to accelerate work in this area, where additional research and development could be especially informative.

THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Investments in high-quality programs during children's early years pay off



SOURCE: WDR 2018 TEAM, BASED ON CARNEIRO, CUNHA, AND HECKMAN (2003); MARTIN (2012).

6 Plan International. 2017. Gender Inequality and Early Childhood Development. Surrey, U.K.: Plan International.

EARLY CHILDHOOD: QUALITY GENDER-SENSITIVE PROGRAMS

BUILD KNOWLEDGE AND ADVANCE PRACTICE

We hope to build knowledge and advance practice around three questions:

1. Do high quality pre-primary opportunities disproportionately help girls?
2. Can high quality pre-primary opportunities protect girls from the education obstacles they typically face later in life?
3. What programmatic approaches to social and emotional learning at this early stage promote gender equality?

We will take a learn-by-doing approach to this work, supporting implementers and researchers who can experiment and test around these questions. With the results of research in hand, we will support the synthesis and translation of what we learn into evidence-based approaches that others can adopt.

We will look to fund work in countries where we find strong implementing partners and evidence that governments or other providers are open to taking up successful approaches. Ideally, we will support research in multiple locations, so that we can understand the interplay between these issues and local contexts.

CHANGE SYSTEMS

Only 19% of children in lower-income countries have access to pre-primary education.⁷ This leaves lots of space for experimentation around how to design and deliver high quality, gender-responsive early childhood experiences aligned with how children best learn at that age.

Over time we hope to identify opportunities to scale high quality early childhood programs that align with evidence from what we learn. In addition to helping implementers position themselves for policy influence, we will look to support other actors that can help translate evidence to public policy.

7 World Bank. 2018. World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise. Washington, DC: World Bank. doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1096-1. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO

ADOLESCENCE: SKILLS AND MINDSETS TO THRIVE

To persist in their education and succeed in developing academic skills, girls must develop a wider array of skills and mindsets. Self-regulation, agency, resilience, self- and social awareness, problem solving, critical thinking, and joy in learning help girls unlock the value of their education.

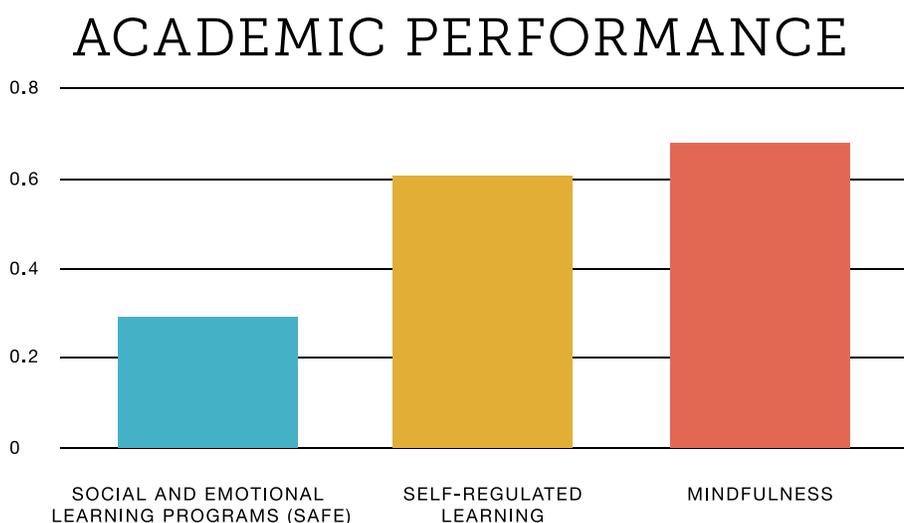
Evidence shows that these skills and mindsets are linked with students' ultimate success in:

- 1. Persistence in school**
- 2. Academic performance**
- 3. Mental and physical health**
- 4. Financial stability**

The same skills also foster more positive relationships and enable girls to take greater agency over their choices.⁸ The impact on these domains is

especially evident for adolescent girls. There is also evidence that it is easier to teach adolescents these skills and mindsets, which in turn improve their academic performance, than it is to directly improve their academic achievement.⁹

The opportunity is clear: By effectively supporting these interconnected skills and mindsets, we can help make good on the promise that girls' education advocates have long embraced. But there are still some important unanswered questions. For instance, exactly what skills and mindsets are complementary to and necessary for academic success? What are the gender-specific outcomes of exposure to these skills and mindsets? And how can school systems effectively assess, encourage, and support the teaching of these skills and mindsets? We will pursue the following work to accelerate efforts in this area.



⁸ Jones and Kahn. 2017. The Evidence Base for How We Learn: Supporting Students' Social, Emotional, and Academic Development. National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, The Aspen Institute.

⁹ Heckman, James J. & Kautz, Tim, 2012. "Hard evidence on soft skills," Labour Economics, Elsevier, vol. 19(4), pages 451-464.

ADOLESCENCE: SKILLS AND MINDSETS TO THRIVE

BUILD KNOWLEDGE AND ADVANCE PRACTICE

We hope to build knowledge and advance practice in three critical areas:

1. Understand and define which skills matter most for adolescent girls, what to call them, and how to measure them.
2. Unpack the links between these skills and academic as well as longer term life outcomes.
3. Understand how to help teachers first gain these skills for themselves and then teach them to their students. Explore how this new, broader skill set affects their teaching methods

and outcomes. Identify ways to teach these skills that complement and do not detract from academic success.

We will identify and support implementers and researchers whose work can help to answer these questions. We will look for organizations willing to collaborate on a shared agenda, implementing and measuring the results of similar interventions in different contexts and geographies in order to create a larger body of evidence. Implementers' efforts will become laboratories for "learning-by-doing," cultivating a shared understanding of the principles of best practice. Our hope is that working in this way we will generate momentum so that the principles we help to define will become obvious solutions for governments and other groups to replicate elsewhere.

To navigate success in education, girls must develop a wide range of skills including emotional resiliency, creative problem-solving, independence, leadership, and many others. We describe these traits as "skill and mindsets." Here's what others call them:

- SOCIOEMOTIONAL LEARNING
- PERSONALITY QUALITIES
- SOFT SKILLS
- LIFE SKILLS
- NON-COGNITIVE SKILLS
- TRANSFERABLE SKILLS
- 21ST CENTURY SKILLS

ADOLESCENCE: SKILLS AND MINDSETS TO THRIVE

CHANGE SYSTEMS

We will look for opportunities to change systems, making the skills and mindsets critical for girls' success integral to the ways that governments deliver education. Such changes would entail influencing the development of school curricula, teacher selection and training, and classroom assessment.

Applying solutions to existing public systems is a complex task that requires a thoughtful constellation of efforts. For instance, it requires not only knowing what should be done differently, but also creating the conditions under which those changes actually take place. A major lever we plan to exploit is shifting the examination systems that dictate what teachers focus on

teaching. In addition, we will fund actors who can help make it easier for governments to integrate key findings and insights into their programs and policies.

To increase our chances of success, we will work in countries where governments already recognize that their education systems must develop the full array of critical skills and mindsets to prepare students effectively for life and the labor market. We see immediate opportunities in East Africa and India, where governments are actively revising their curricula. We will support organizations that can help to inform and influence these changes.

By 2020, we hope to identify other windows of opportunity to influence system change, informed by what we learn across our laboratories.

We will look for opportunities to change systems, making the skills and mindsets critical for girls' success integral to the ways that governments deliver education

ROBUST GIRLS' EDUCATION ECOSYSTEM

Moving the needle on girls' education will require progress on more than just the two issues that we have identified. Although we will not fund direct implementation on other

issues, we will support the broader ecosystem of leadership, research, and advocacy that can enable these and other ideas to thrive.

PROPEL MORE AND BETTER WORK

We will look for global and regional opportunities to draw additional resources to the cause of girls' education and to help identify the most effective and efficient uses of those resources. In particular, we will support advocacy efforts that influence decision-makers to use the best available evidence on how to achieve meaningful learning opportunities for girls in lower-income countries. And we will ensure there is data and evidence on the problems and solutions in girls' education to inform this advocacy.

We will remain open to the possibility of creating or strengthening a field-level resource dedicated to girls' education, such as a specialized learning hub and/or strategic advocacy organization.

SUPPORT LEADERS

Advancing changes in support of girls' education requires individuals who are passionate, connected, and well-informed. Through programs such as the Echidna Global Scholars program at the Brookings Institution, we will support leaders from lower-income countries who are well poised to

effect change. We seek to amplify their efforts to promote girls' education in their contexts by connecting them with knowledge, networks, development opportunities, and other resources.

PROVIDE SUPPORT BEYOND OUR GRANTS

We will seek to build on our grantmaking efforts by dedicating our staff time to informing and supporting the field. Through our blog and other avenues, we will share our discoveries and invite responses from the field. We will seek to connect the dots across people and organizations, by exchanging ideas and sharing knowledge. And we will work with our grantees to ensure they have the resources to thrive as organizations. This includes making small organizational development grants available to select grantees so that they have the organizational stability and resilience needed to make a significant impact over a long period of time.

TAKING THE WORK FORWARD

Advocacy for girls' education has borne remarkable fruit. The first wave of work in girls' education has helped ensure the greatest access to schooling that girls have ever seen, in both absolute and relative terms. The next wave of work needs to ensure that schooling opportunities translate into learning and meaningful life changes for girls and women around the world.

Echidna Giving is excited to contribute to this next wave. First, by building knowledge, advancing practice, and driving system change in our two selected focus areas: expanding opportunities for children to attend quality, gender-sensitive early childhood programs and developing skills and mindsets that will help adolescents thrive. Second, by building a robust ecosystem in girls' education with implementers working effectively, leaders championing the cause, advocates driving more and better use of resources, and researchers generating data and evidence that can inform all of this work.

As we undertake our work, we will continue to take an adaptive and evolutionary approach.

We will try things, learn from our experiences, and then try again—always in close collaboration with local leaders, advocates and other experts closest to the issues.

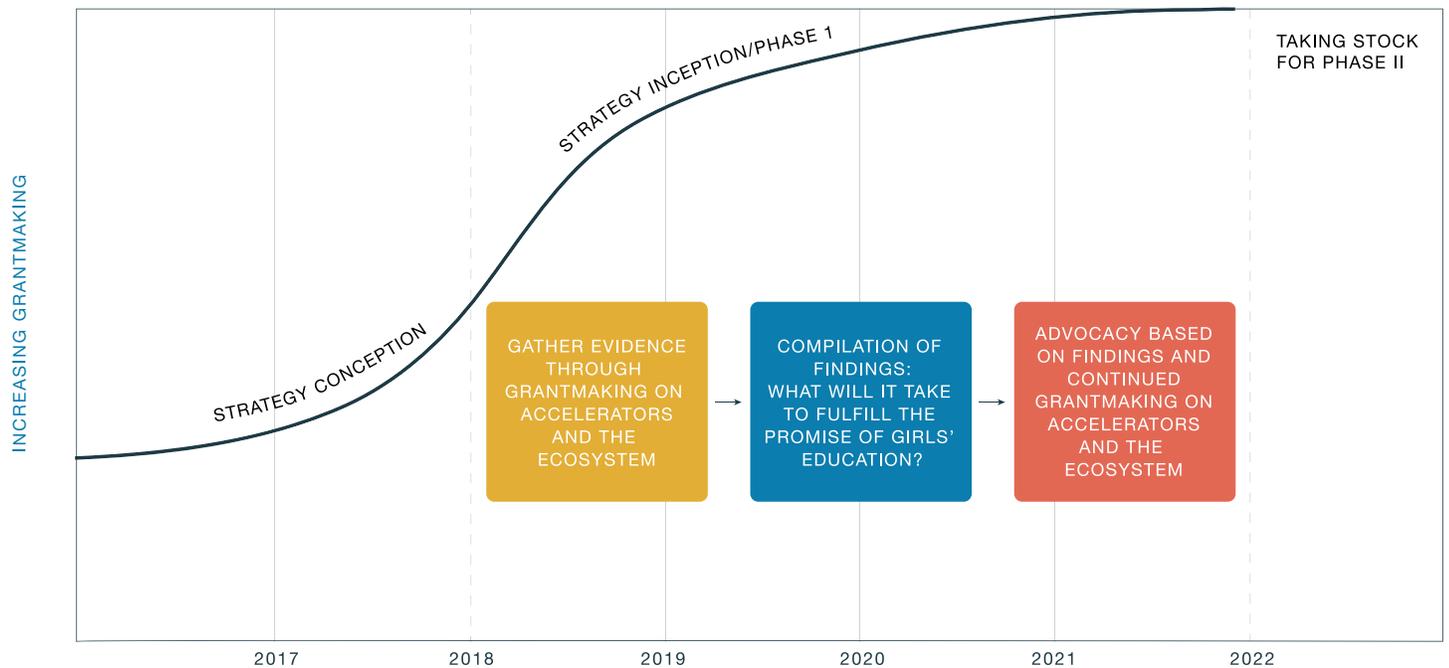
The strategy laid out in this document will guide our efforts for an initial inception period of four years, at which point we will take stock of our progress and other developments in the field. Given that the changes we seek will likely take longer than four years to materialize, we anticipate staying the course beyond this initial period, but we will adapt to new evidence and changing circumstances as required. We will also retain some flexibility in our budget in order to be able to seize unique windows of opportunity.

Although Echidna Giving is a large private funder in the space of girls' education, our resources are small in relation to the scope of the problem. We are committed to sharing and working with others to enable all of us to make faster progress on behalf of girls around the world. Together we can get more girls into better schools to live better lives and deliver on the promise of girls' education.

ROLLING OUT OUR STRATEGY

As we move into our strategy inception phase (Phase One), we will increase our giving levels in order to: first, work to gather evidence; second,

compile and share our findings; and third, support advocacy based on what we have found.





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