

DREAM WITHOUT LIMITS

ADVANCING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR THE GIRL CHILD

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Hosted by: Bliss Empowerher Initiative

The women-focused program of the Bliss for the Needy Foundation

Ownership of: Bliss For The Needy Foundation

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**BLISS FOR THE NEEDY
FOUNDA TION**

INTRODUCTION

Globally, girls continue to face systemic barriers to education, particularly in urban and underserved communities. From unsafe infrastructure to cultural expectations and financial hurdles, these obstacles prevent girls from reaching their full potential. Recognizing this challenge, the Bliss Empowerher Initiative, the women-focused program of the Bliss for the Needy Foundation, convened the Dream Without Limits: Advancing Inclusive Education for the Girl Child virtual conference on 22nd January 2026, to mark the International Day of Education. The event aimed to address equitable education for girls, amplify local and global voices, and foster collaborative solutions. The conference brought together 103 registrants and 55 active participants from 11 countries across 4 continents, demonstrating the global relevance and urgency of inclusive education.

CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

The event featured keynote speeches and a panel discussion with experts in education, advocacy, and leadership:

- Dr. Roxanne St. Clair, Chairperson of the Commonwealth Girls Education Fund (CGEF) UK
- Mr. Chikezie Nwosu, Founder of HSI Energies Limited
- Dr. Maimoona Salim, Executive Director of Beyond Mentors Community Care Initiative
- Ms. Lala Rukhman, Founder and CEO of Science Fuse

The conference was moderated by Liven Muhumuza, with Olasunkanmi Opeifa co-convening and supporting facilitation.

The Event Host



Bliss Celestine
Convener
Girls' Education Activist
Founder, Bliss For The Needy

Bliss Celestine is a distinguished Girls' Education Activist and Child Rights Advocate, recognized for her transformative impact across Africa. Through the Bliss for the Needy Foundation, she has directly empowered over 3,000 women, championing education, leadership, and social inclusion.

An accomplished leader, Bliss has received multiple awards for her exemplary leadership and advocacy. She holds a BSc in International Relations and Strategic Studies with First Class Honours and graduated as the Best Graduating Student of the College of Arts and Social Sciences at Igbinedion University, Okada.

Bliss has facilitated scholarship opportunities for over 100 students, positioning herself as a catalyst of hope and a prominent voice in youth and women's empowerment. She is the Founder of Bliss for the Needy Foundation and the Convener of the Dream Without Limits Conference, a platform advancing inclusive education for girls. Her work continues to inspire systemic change, bridging opportunity gaps, and creating sustainable pathways for young women to thrive.



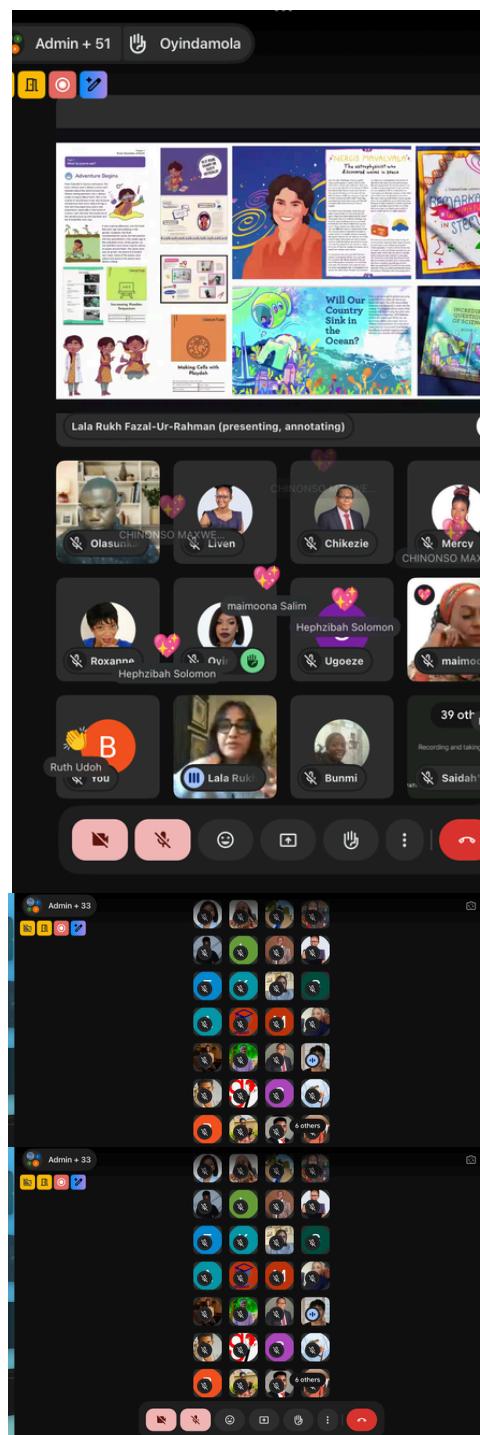
Olasunkanmi Opeifa
Co-Convener
Education Consultant and
Advocate

Olasunkanmi Opeifa is a distinguished Nigerian educator, consultant, and convener of The Phenomenon Conference, a transformative gathering that empowers teachers as changemakers.

With nearly two decades of classroom and leadership experience, he rose to national prominence as the 2018 Maltina Teacher of the Year and earned global recognition as a Top 10 Finalist for the 2020 Global Teacher Prize. A passionate advocate of fun-based and tech-driven learning, Opeifa has pioneered innovative approaches such as edutainment, flipped classrooms, and digital literacy initiatives.

His work extends beyond the classroom—training thousands of teachers through professional development programs, fostering Communities of Practice across Nigeria, and inspiring educators to see themselves as intrapreneurs

and nation-builders. Through his foundation and platforms, he champions quality education, teacher empowerment, and inclusive learning, shaping the future of African education with creativity, resilience, and vision.



Honourable Speakers of the Event



Dr. Roxanne St Clair
Chairperson Commonwealth Girls Education Fund, UK

Financial constraints persist despite varying national education expenditures. Resources often fail to reach the most vulnerable girls due to bureaucratic leakage across government levels. The Commonwealth Girls Education Fund (CGEF), established in 1967, addresses this gap by sponsoring top-performing but financially disadvantaged girls, covering tuition, uniforms, books, transport, and meals. This support has enabled sponsored girls to become doctors, leaders, and change-makers in their communities, demonstrating the transformative power of targeted interventions.

Drawing on personal experience, he highlighted the influence of Mrs. Sophia Weaver, Executive Director and Group Chief Commercial Officer of HSI Energies, as an example of how female role models inspire leadership in male-dominated fields.

He outlined three pillars of inclusive education: access, removing barriers like cost and distance; belonging and safety, creating harassment-free, dignified classrooms; and agency and aspirations, fostering confidence, leadership, and problem-solving skills to empower girls to lead.

Key Discussion & Insight

System Barriers to Girls' Education

Systemic Barriers to Girls' Education: Infrastructure, Culture, and Finance

Millions of girls remain out of school not from lack of aspiration, but due to entrenched systemic barriers. Dr. Roxanne St. Clair, Chairperson of the Commonwealth Girls Education Fund (CGEF), challenges conventional notions of educational access: can we claim a girl has equal opportunity when she must walk two hours on unsafe roads to reach a school lacking clean toilets and drinking water?

Key barriers include unsafe infrastructure, and inadequate sanitation, which disproportionately affect girls during puberty.

Cultural and geographic factors further restrict access. Long, dangerous commutes raise safety concerns for families, while societal expectations such as household responsibilities, childcare, or early marriage limit girls' schooling. Tribalism and exclusion exacerbate inequities for minority groups, affecting school fees and a sense of belonging.



Dr. Chikezie Nwosu
Founder HSI Energies Limited

Key Discussion & Insight

The importance of constructing educational systems without barriers

Mr Chikezie emphasized that education is the foundation for inclusion, equity, leadership, and dignity. To enable girls to "dream without limits," he argued, educational systems must be designed without barriers.

Mr. Nwosu shared concrete actions from his career: ensuring 45% female representation in senior leadership at Walter Smith, 50% female participation in executive interviews at HSI Energies, and protecting pregnant employees.

Championing women in STEM, he highlighted sponsorship of the Society of Petroleum Engineers Girls in STEM and Women Leadership Program, which has helped women reach historic leadership roles, including the first African regional director and first female chairperson of the Nigerian Council.

Addressing girls directly, he affirmed that education is their right and called for systemic action to remove barriers, providing mentorship, opportunities, and pathways to leadership "from the cradle to the top of the executive ladder."



Dr. Maimoona Salim
Executive Director of Beyond
Mentors Community

Key Discussion & Insight

Strategies for Retaining Girls' in School and transitioning them into Leadership Roles

Defining "Dream Without Limits" for the Girl Child

Drawing from her background in a conservative Islamic community, Dr. Maimoona Salim defined dreaming without limits as reaching for the sky and breaking the glass ceiling to achieve success without barriers. She emphasized that true empowerment begins when girls are encouraged to aspire beyond societal restrictions and are given the tools to realize their potential.

Addressing strategies to keep girls in school, Dr. Salim underscored the need for holistic, context-specific interventions, stressing that there is no universal solution. She highlighted initiatives such as the Literacy as a Vaccine to Ending Child Marriage summit, which engages communities in reframing education as a pathway to empowerment. Drawing from Nigeria, she referenced the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE), where conditional cash transfers have been used to improve school attendance in northern states, alongside the provision of free sanitary products to remove gender-specific barriers to education.

Using South Africa as a policy case study, Dr. Salim examined how a government grant intended to support single mothers inadvertently contributed to increased teenage pregnancies, illustrating the importance of adaptive policy design. She noted that effective interventions must extend beyond access to include peer education, psychosocial support, safe learning environments, and integrated health services.

Dr. Salim further argued that education alone does not automatically translate into leadership. The transition of educated girls into leadership roles, she noted, requires the deliberate cultivation of leadership identity, beginning within the home and reinforced through mentorship and institutional support. She emphasized the role of structured mentorship and sponsorship pipelines in encouraging girls to pursue leadership opportunities, while highlighting economic stability as a critical enabler. Financial literacy, access to seed funding, grants, and credit, she asserted, are central to sustaining leadership pathways.



Ms. Lala Rukh Fazal Ur Rahman
Founder and CEO of Science
Fuse

Key Discussion & Insight

Strategies for Retaining Girls' in School and transitioning them into Leadership Roles

Lala Rukh Fazal-Ur-Rahman reflected on her personal experience overcoming gender-specific barriers within a South Asian context, where family expectations often dictated career paths, such as medicine. She described her journey as one of self-discovery, driven by a passion for science communication that enabled her to build a successful career through unconventional choices, including opting not to have children.

Addressing the role of local STEM programs in shaping inclusive education, Lala Rukh Fazal-Ur-Rahman highlighted challenges in government and low-cost private schools in Pakistan. Through an interactive audience exercise, she demonstrated how prevailing stereotypes portray scientists as white males in lab coats. She also showcased educational resources developed by her social enterprise, Science Fuse, featuring diverse female STEM role models such as Sara Kureshi and Arafa Kurim, aimed at inspiring girls and democratizing access to science education.

In her concluding remarks, Lala Rukh Fazal-Ur-Rahman asserted that access to education for girls should never be contested, emphasizing that denying it constitutes a profound social injustice. She called for sustained advocacy and the development of scalable, community-driven solutions to ensure girls can fully realize their potential in STEM and leadership.

The Urban Education Context

A recurring theme throughout the conference was the unique nature of educational barriers in urban settings. While urban areas often have more schools and resources than rural communities, girls in underserved urban neighborhoods face distinct challenges: overcrowded classrooms, long commutes through unsafe neighborhoods, higher costs of living that pressure families to prioritize boys' education, and limited community networks that traditionally support girls' schooling in rural areas. Panelists emphasized that urban solutions must address these specific barriers while leveraging cities' advantages, such as better digital connectivity, proximity to mentors and role models, and opportunities for public-private partnerships to create scalable models of inclusive education.

Practical Outcomes

The conference successfully facilitated dialogue among youth leaders, educators, and policymakers, providing actionable insights for inclusive education. Participants shared experiences and reflections through interactive activities, such as "One Dream, One Word," which revealed the value of education in terms like "knowledge," "opportunity," "liberation," and "empowerment."

The event demonstrated tangible outcomes:

- Global reach: 55 active attendees from 11 countries across 4 continents
- Knowledge transfer: Exchange of strategies to overcome barriers in girls' education
- Impact amplification: Practical examples of mentorship, STEM programs, and inclusive policy initiatives shared with participants

This reach reinforced the mission of the Bliss Empowerher Initiative and the Bliss for the Needy Foundation, showing how virtual platforms can extend local advocacy into global conversations.



Reflections and Call to Action

The conference underscored that inclusive education requires coordinated efforts across local and global actors. It is not enough to increase school enrollment; we must ensure safe, equitable, and supportive environments that enable girls to thrive academically and socially.

As convenor, I reflected on the importance of community-driven solutions, from scholarships and mentorship to safe learning spaces and gender-sensitive policies. Events like this conference highlight the potential of youth-led initiatives to influence policy, inspire future leaders, and advance the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities).

The insights gained from this conference will directly inform the next phase of the Bliss Empowerher Initiative. We are committed to translating dialogue into action through targeted scholarship programs, skill-building workshops, and STEM-focused empowerment initiatives in underserved urban communities. By 2030, every girl in these communities should have the opportunity not just to access education, but to lead, innovate, and shape the inclusive, resilient cities we all envision. This is the future we are building, one empowered girl at a time.

Happy International Day of Education

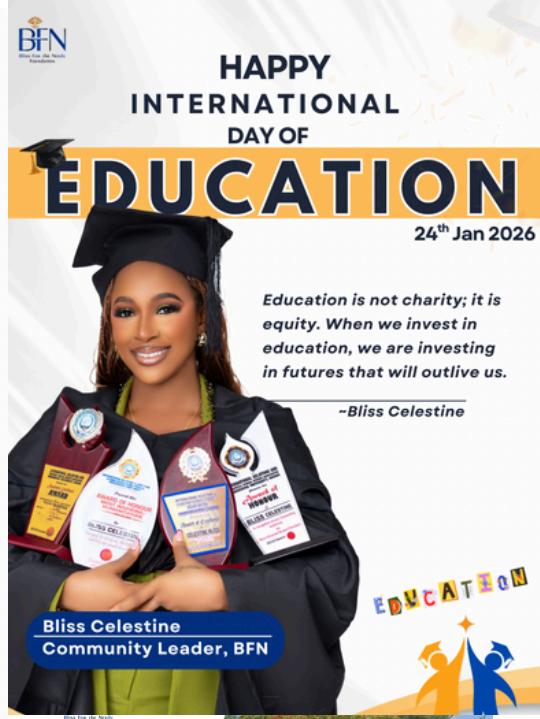


**HAPPY
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF
EDUCATION**

"Education is more than learning ,it is empowerment, opportunity, and hope. On this International Education Day, we celebrate the power of education to break cycles of poverty, uplift families, girls and youth, and build a more just and sustainable world. When we invest in education, we invest in brighter futures for all."



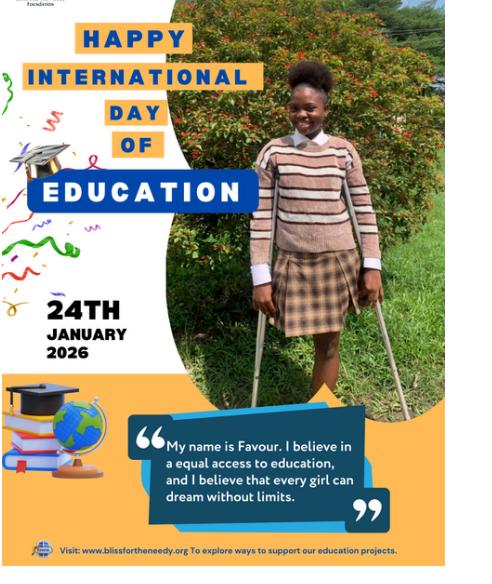


**HAPPY
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EDUCATION**

Education is not charity; it is equity. When we invest in education, we are investing in futures that will outlive us.

-Bliss Celestine



**HAPPY
INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF
EDUCATION**

**24TH
JANUARY
2026**

"My name is Favour. I believe in a equal access to education, and I believe that every girl can dream without limits."

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**HAPPY
INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF
EDUCATION**

**24TH
JANUARY
2026**

"My name is Ibrahim. I believe that the girl child deserves opportunities that empower her to develop confidence, skills, leadership, and the freedom to reach her full potential."



**HAPPY
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**24TH
JANUARY
2026**

"My name is Luyando. I believe that the girl child education is not about access alone but also about quality. It is the right of girls to receive education that is not diluted because of their gender."



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**24TH
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2026**

"My name is Hephzibah. I believe child education is a necessity not a choice. A society that truly desires growth, equity, and sustainable development must invest intentionally in educating its girls."

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