Sida

> Gender equality is achieved when women and men, girls and boys, have equal rights, life prospects and opportunities, and the power to shape their own lives and contribute to society.

The Gender Tool Box gathers knowledge material and method support on gender equality in the form of Tools, Briefs and Thematic Overviews.

[TOOL]
Gender Equality in the Education Sector – Focusing on issues of quality of education and Completion

A key element in Swedish development cooperation is ensuring that children living in poverty and in other vulnerable situations, particularly girls, complete quality education without discrimination.[1] *Gender equality in education* strengthens quality, provides an appropriate learning environment for both girls and boys, and ensures that students leaving secondary school have an awareness of gender equality. This is in line with the global commitment to "leaving no one behind" as set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs strongly encourage countries to focus on both achieving inclusive and quality education (SDG goal 4) and gender equality (SDG goal 5), putting the poorest and most marginalized women and girls at the forefront of development efforts. Gender equality in education also has a multiplier effect impacting future opportunities and outcomes in relation to economic growth, good health, well-being and poverty reduction.

While considerable progress has been made in the enrolment of both girls and boys in primary and secondary school worldwide, actual completion rates at the secondary school level remain low, especially for girls, due to numerous factors. For example, living in rural or disadvantaged areas often puts children and adolescents at great risk of not completing school[2] and gender disparity in participation in school increases in secondary school.[3]

In 2014, 54 % of countries had not achieved gender parity in lower secondary education and 77 % in upper secondary school.[4]

This Gender Tool applies a gender perspective to the challenges faced by girls and boys in obtaining a quality education and in completing secondary education. Proposed dialogue questions are provided to raise awareness on improving quality of education in pre-primary, primary and secondary education. These questions have been selected taking into consideration Sida's most likely entry points but priorities should be further informed by contextual analysis and identified gender gaps.

WHAT CHALLENGES DO GIRLS AND BOYS FACE IN ACCESSING AND COMPLETING PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION?
Despite the general positive trends, girls in, particular, still face numerous challenges and barriers in enrolling in school at different levels:

Policy level
Inadequate legislation and lack of policies supporting girls to remain in school is still a serious issue. In addition, the development of legislation and policies needs to be matched with the institutional capacity to effectively implement and monitor these. The lack of policy and/or lack of implementation creates a void that cannot safeguard the rights of girls or the quality of education in the classroom.

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1   Aid Policy Framework – the direction of Swedish Aid p. 24
2   Global Education Monitoring Report Creating Sustainable Futures for all, p. 15
3   According to the Global Education Monitoring Report, in Nigeria, Pakistan and Yemen, only about 25 % of rural girls complete lower secondary education but nearly 50 % of rural boys do. In contrast, in countries including Mexico, Mongolia and the Philippines, boys in rural areas are less likely to complete lower secondary schooling – although in these countries overall levels of completion tend to be higher and gender gaps narrower

4   GEM p. 17

School/Community level

Communities are often unable to give girls and boys the protection they need to go to school. School Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV)[5] is a risk for both girls and boys. Girls who travel alone to a distant school risk being the victim of harassment and different forms of violence. Once in school, both girls and boys may face SRGBV at the hands of staff and classmates with limited or no recourse. A lack of physical and emotional security negatively impacts the capacity to learn and motivation for continuing education. Girls who have reached puberty may face restrictions and challenges such as menstrual hygiene management with the lack of access to toilets, and/or social and cultural challenges such as perceptions of impurity.

Family level

Poverty forces families to make difficult choices, such as taking their children out of school, which causes education to be a sustaining factor for the cycle of poverty. Here, gender norms play a crucial role, with girls and boys being relegated to traditional gender roles at a very young age to meet the families' immediate needs. For both girls and boys, puberty is often the point when they are expected to work both in- and outside the home to contribute to the family's livelihood. Moreover, for girls in particular, early marriage and pregnancy means that they are no longer permitted to go to school.

WHAT CONDITIONS ARE NECESSARY FOR GIRLS AND BOYS TO OBTAIN A QUALITY EDUCATION AND COMPLETE SECONDARY SCHOOL?

While there has been considerable investment in increasing enrolment in primary school, less attention has been paid to quality education throughout the education system for girls and boys to complete secondary education with the knowledge, skills, values, and critical thinking needed to become resilient and productive members of society.

An effective policy framework is key to a fully functioning education sector.
Such a policy framework also provides an appropriate entry point for Sida. It requires the application of a gender perspective at all levels, ensuring that:
- Teachers receive adequate initial teacher education and on-going in-service training throughout their career;
- School leadership receives support and resources needed to implement policy and is held accountable;
- Curricula are appropriate, regularly evaluated and updated accordingly. Changes to curricula are accom-

panied by in-service training and the resources needed to implement any changes;
- School resources are sufficient and in line with the needs of both female and male students;
- Prevention and remedies against corruption integrate a gender perspective and are in place at all levels of the education system;
- Schools are child-friendly and safe from all forms of violence and harassment,
- Community and families receive information and learn about the policies and rules affecting children's education. They are encouraged to contribute to discussions on school policies, rules, etc. through appropriate participation mechanisms (e.g. parent associations and teacher unions etc.)

TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION: DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

The following questions can be used in policy dialogue regarding the quality of education and secondary school completion rates.

How is sex-disaggregated data collected and analyzed?

Before defining any intervention an analysis of the specific context, including existing norms is essential to understand and identify gaps. Linked to this is gender responsive data collection and analysis to understand the needs and identify appropriate responses, informing policy and tracking progress. It should form the basis of all interventions.[6]

What mechanisms are in place for accountability and transparency at the national, local and school levels?

Principles of good governance in the education sector are essential to combat corruption generally and gender-related forms of corruption and extortion. These principles ensure practices that conform with the law at all levels. The monitoring of the implementation of policies, regulation, teacher ethics, functioning systems for salaries to be paid on time etc. are key to promote accountability and transparency.

What coordination functions are in place?

Given the complexity of interventions, mechanisms for coordination among concerned institutions, donors and CSOs need to be in place to ensure that efforts complement each other and collectively move toward a common goal. Creating synergies among such interventions is essential to tackle the norms and cultural issues that hinders the achievement of equality in education.

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5   School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV)is any act or threat of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics.

6   For an overview of how and why to use disaggregated data, please see: www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/43041409.pdf

How are affirmative action measures applied in the education system?

Affirmative action or temporary special measures to address imbalances may include increased hiring of women[7] and ethnic and religious minority teachers to better reflect the make-up of classrooms or promote diversity. They can include scholarships for students from marginalized groups to increase inclusion in the class-room[8]. Increased salaries or financial incentives can also be put in place to boost the interest in becoming teachers.

In what way is initial teacher training and in-service training gender sensitive?

Teachers need to be trained in gender responsive and transformative pedagogies to ensure equal participation and learning of girls and boys as well as any subgroup of girls/boys requiring special attention within a given country context. In schools where rote learning is the norm, training should also include methods to enable teachers to meet the individual student's needs and to be able to identify students with special needs. Soft skills and inter-personal communication are important, in addition to subject knowledge and didactics, to encourage dialogue between teacher and student and enhance interactive learning.

A sense of ownership and active teacher participation in education sector policy dialogue is key to their empowerment, motivation and implementation of changes. Teachers and school management should be trained in handling sensitive issues including harassment and gender based violence as well as in negotiation skills and advocacy.[9]

How is gender and girls in empowering situations reflected in the curricula?

When curriculum reinforces gender stereotypes it also impacts the perception of how girls and boys should behave and engage also in a classroom setting. Furthermore, it fails to showcase the potential of girls and women as empowered individuals. While ad hoc activities promoting gender, equality are important, integrating gender equality generally into the curriculum ensures its sustainability.[10]

How is gender and girls in empowering situations reflected in teaching and learning materials?

Textbooks, classroom materials and lesson plans should be gender sensitive in order to ensure their quality and relevance to the lives of all children.[11] Special attention should be given to minority students requiring resources in their mother tongue and other students with special needs.

What are the mechanisms for child protection in schools?

Girls who have become pregnant, boys and girls who have married early, those who have suffered trauma or abuse may be unable to continue their education because schools do not accommodate them. In addition to programs which support the integration of transitioning and returning students[12], other mechanisms include training to ensure that school management and teachers are prepared to identify and respond to cases of bullying and abuse at an early stage and that school provides education on sexual reproductive health and rights as well as life skills to prevent pregnancy.

How is the community engaged?

While scholarships, stipends, cash transfers and access to credit address access to education and retention issues, they are not always enough to convince parents to embrace attitudinal shifts from deeply entrenched cultural or traditional attitudes and practices such as female genital mutilation, early, forced or child marriages etc., that keep girls from completing their schooling. However, when families feel supported by their communities – CSOs, politicians, religious leaders etc., they are more apt to change and such interventions are far more sustainable.

How can activities outside of school complement investment in gender equality in education?

Mentorship programs can provide inspiration for gender equality in education and can be developed in close cooperation with local communities. Women alumni, women in business and academia are particularly relevant for these types of interventions. It calls for an extended commitment on the part of the mentor, rather than a one-off meeting.[13]

Extracurricular activities, such as sports, cultural and academic activities that take place outside of school hours are known to be empowering in various ways and provide another avenue for education in a less formal setting. While such activities can be linked to the classroom, care

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7   See: Advocacy Brief: The Impact of Women Teachers on Girl's Education, United Nations Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organization he Impact of Women Teachers on Girls' Education, United Nations Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organization

8   See: Safe the Children briefing paper: More Investment in Social Protection (Bangladesh)

9   A guide for Gender Equality in Teacher Education, Policy and Practices

10   Please see: Gender bias in textbooks: a hidden obstacle on the road to gender equality in education, Rae Lesser Blumberg, 2007

11   For a guide on promoting gender equality through textbooks, please see: unesdoc. unesco.org/images/0015/001588/158897E.pdf

12   More targeted action programs include introducing or expanding "second-chance" education programs targeting adolescents, youth and young adults. Such programs allow students who missed out on education in their early years to receive support in re-integrating into the classroom with some tools to enable him or her to remain in school. Similar "catch-up classes" can be introduced in schools where girls and boys leave school for extended periods during the school year, e.g. for seasonal work, and face challenges upon their return

13   For an overview of mentoring, please see: http://dghidsbd.preview.infomaniak. website/mentoring/

must be taken to ensure that they do not lead to increased segregation or exclusion. Dedicated learning spaces such as CSO programs and sponsored school clubs can serve to complement instruction in the classroom.

Women's literacy programs serve multiple important purposes. They provide women with the chance to learn literacy skills later in life. These women may gain a new perspective on the value of education which they can then share with their families. Women participating in such programs can also serve as role models for boys and girls who are seeking guidance as to the value of education.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:
How does the education system accommodate returning students and life-long learning?
National education systems that encourage lifelong learning incorporates different opportunities of learning throughout life and gives opportunities for targeted non-formal education, catch-up training for early school leavers, basic skills training and other forms of "second chance" education to enable those who have left school to develop skills necessary to be active and productive citizens. This is in line with the SDG's principle of leaving no one behind.[14]

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14   https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/leaving-no-one-behind