

BEIJING+25:

**GENERATION
EQUALITY BEGINS
WITH ADOLESCENT
GIRLS' EDUCATION**

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FOREWORD

Girls' education, particularly that of adolescent girls, is now widely recognized as the foundation of a virtuous circle of sustainable development. However, while significant progress has been made since the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in terms of access to education for adolescent girls, it is still not sufficient to achieve gender equality and the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. In 2018, 130 million girls worldwide were out of school, and only two out of three girls were enrolled in secondary education. The crisis related to the COVID-19 pandemic may further widen the gaps and threatens to disrupt the education of more than 11 million girls.

Numerous obstacles continue to impede adolescent girls' access to education in some parts of the world, including the persistence of unequal gender norms. These lead to a preference for the education of boys, sexual and gender-based violence, including in the school environment, restrictions on sexual and reproductive health and rights, child marriage and early pregnancy, restrictions on adolescent girls' freedom of movement from puberty onwards as well as burdening them with unpaid care and domestic work. The lack of adequate infrastructure, especially sanitation facilities- in schools, also constitutes a major obstacle to their education.

The education of adolescent girls is a priority for the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE), Plan International France and UNESCO. Our organizations have collaborated extensively in the past to promote the education of girls, especially adolescent girls, around the world. We have joined forces in recent years to organize major events on occasions such as the International Day of the Girl Child and during the G7 Education and Development Ministers Meeting under the French presidency, in 2019. We have coordinated our efforts within UNESCO's flagship programme on gender equality in

the framework of the Global Education Coalition in response to the COVID-19 crisis. We are participating together in the Gender at the Centre Initiative launched in July 2019 to support gender-transformative education sector planning, and collaborating in joint advocacy to support gender equality in and through education.

This report, the product of our partnership, has been prepared for International Day of the Girl Child on 11 October 2020. It links with the Day's theme, "My voice, our equal future", which aims to give adolescent girls the opportunity to speak out. Our objective: to make their priorities and proposed solutions heard, as highlighted in this report, so that they can be taken into account in the framework of commitments of the Generation Equality Forum, to be held in 2021. Adolescent girls have made it clear: education is at the heart of their priorities.

Our report also aims to provide the different stakeholders of the Generation Equality Forum, in particular the Action Coalitions, with an analysis of the challenges and progress made over the past 25 years in the field of adolescent girls' education in relation to the six themes selected for this Forum: gender-based violence, economic justice and rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights, climate justice, technology and innovation, and feminist movements and leadership. It also highlights evidence-based practices and concrete levers of action, and recommendations for advancing the education of adolescent girls at the global level and for achieving all the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Education, especially girls' education, is severely affected whenever an economic, political, security or health crisis erupts and develops. It is also an essential part of the solution for the reconstruction and sustainable development of societies.

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SUMMARY

Adolescent girls' education contributes to a virtuous cycle that has proven positive impact on sustainable development.

This report aims to examine progress and persistent gaps in our efforts to achieve gender equality in and through education since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995, and to identify priority actions to be implemented within the Beijing+25 process, the Generation Equality Forum's Action Coalitions, and the Sustainable Development Goals. It shows the importance of adolescent girls' education and provides recommendations for collective action – in particular on three priority levers: Comprehensive sexuality education; the participation of adolescent girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); and the development of adolescent girls' leadership – drawing in particular on consultation processes among international organizations, civil society and adolescent girls in the run-up to the Forum. In all areas, specific levers, intersectoral approaches and multi-stakeholder partnerships are promoted.

The first chapter provides a broad analysis of the major progress made in adolescent girls' education, which remains tainted with disparities at the regional and national levels, and faces persistent obstacles, which have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. Indeed, the burden of unequal social norms, gender-based violence, especially in schools, early and unintended marriages and pregnancies, restriction of sexual and reproductive health and rights, economic inequalities, climate change, limited access to STEM education, and the insufficient development of adolescent girls' leadership (both in and out of school), all pose challenges to ensuring access to quality education for adolescent girls.

The second chapter focuses on the three key levers to achieving the Beijing+25 commitments. It outlines key issues and highlights operational solutions arising from policy measures and programmes implemented by a variety of stakeholders, and amplifies adolescent girls a voice on these issues by sharing their priorities and expectations. It calls for the integration of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) into formal education, teacher training, and the development of inclusive and participatory programmes. With regard to STEM and innovation, the report stresses the importance of freeing education from gender stereotypes, which may include female role models, as well as activities for girls, parents and communities, in order to demystify stereotypes about women's capacities and careers in STEM. To develop adolescent girls' leadership, the report calls for the implementation of formal and non-formal gender-transformative education that promotes the development of social and civic skills, and for the creation of an environment conducive to the exercise of their citizenship through adolescent girls' participation in governance processes.

Finally, in the third chapter, technical and political recommendations for adolescent girls' education are proposed on the basis of an analysis of the obstacles and levers identified:

- **Place adolescent girls' education at the heart of the Action Coalitions and 5-year action plans that will be launched at the Generation Equality Forum.**
- **Invest financially in gender-transformative education systems.**
- **Establish national policies and strategies for adolescent girls' education in terms of curricula (CSE and STEM), educational infrastructure, teacher training and the prevention of school-related gender-based violence, but also at the community and family levels to promote an enabling environment for leadership development.**
- **Produce, collect and make available age- and sex-disaggregated data for improved planning, monitoring, evaluation and budgeting of public policies.**
- **Develop and implement intersectoral education policies and initiatives, including through collaborations and partnerships.**
- **Promote the inclusion of all stakeholders in their diversity.**
- **Promote civic engagement and integrate feminist youth organizations in their diversity, especially those representing the most marginalized adolescent girls.**
- **Take into consideration the specific situations and risks faced by adolescent girls in contexts of crisis and fragility, including the risks of permanent school dropout.**

In conclusion, this report, which is intended to advocate for adolescent girls' education, does not overlook the issue of adolescent boys' education, which is an integral part of gender equality, notably by preventing their dropout in secondary school.

It is only by guaranteeing the right to education for all adolescent girls and boys that we can ensure a better future for them and achieve the generation equality.

INTRODUCTION

2020 marks a major milestone in the fulfilment of global commitments to gender equality. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), which is the most comprehensive plan of action on gender equality to-date.

Built around 12 priority action areas, it has made girls' education and access to training a global priority since 1995.¹ This global priority was then reaffirmed in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000 and in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, in particular through SDG 4, which aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education”, and SDGs 3 and 5 on health and gender equality.

Twenty-five years on, although great progress has been made, there is still a long way to go to achieve gender equality in education. Around 258 million children and adolescents were out of school in 2018² — or nearly one-fifth of the world's population in this age group. In 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic spread around the world, the closure of schools and universities in an attempt to contain the spread of the virus affected more than 90 per cent of the world's student population, or more than 1.5 billion students, including 743 million girls.³

The Generation Equality Forum, a global gathering for gender equality which carries forward the Beijing Platform for Action, is a key moment of international mobilization organized by

UN Women and co-chaired by France and Mexico. Postponed until 2021, it will enable the launch of a set of specific, ambitious and transformative actions to achieve sustainable gender equality. On this occasion, multi-stakeholder Action Coalitions involving governments, civil society, international organizations, and the private sector shall work together to achieve concrete and measurable results within five years on the following six themes: gender-based violence; economic justice and rights; bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights; feminist action for climate justice; technology and innovation for gender equality; and feminist movements and leadership. Education was identified as a cross-cutting theme for these six Action Coalitions.

Adolescent girls and young women are central to the Generation Equality Forum. Recognized by its organizers as key players in achieving gender equality and the SDGs, adolescent girls will be the focus of a specific action within each Action Coalition; this action should respond to the priorities identified by adolescent girls themselves. Education is one of priority themes.⁴

This report, produced by Plan International France, the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE) and UNESCO, aims to provide food for thought for the stakeholders involved in achieving gender equality and the SDGs, and to make specific recommendations for the inclusion of adolescent girls' education in the action plans to be announced at the Generation Equality Forum.



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CHAPTER I

ANALYSIS

OF PROGRESS, OBSTACLES AND LEVERS
IN ADOLESCENT GIRLS' EDUCATION



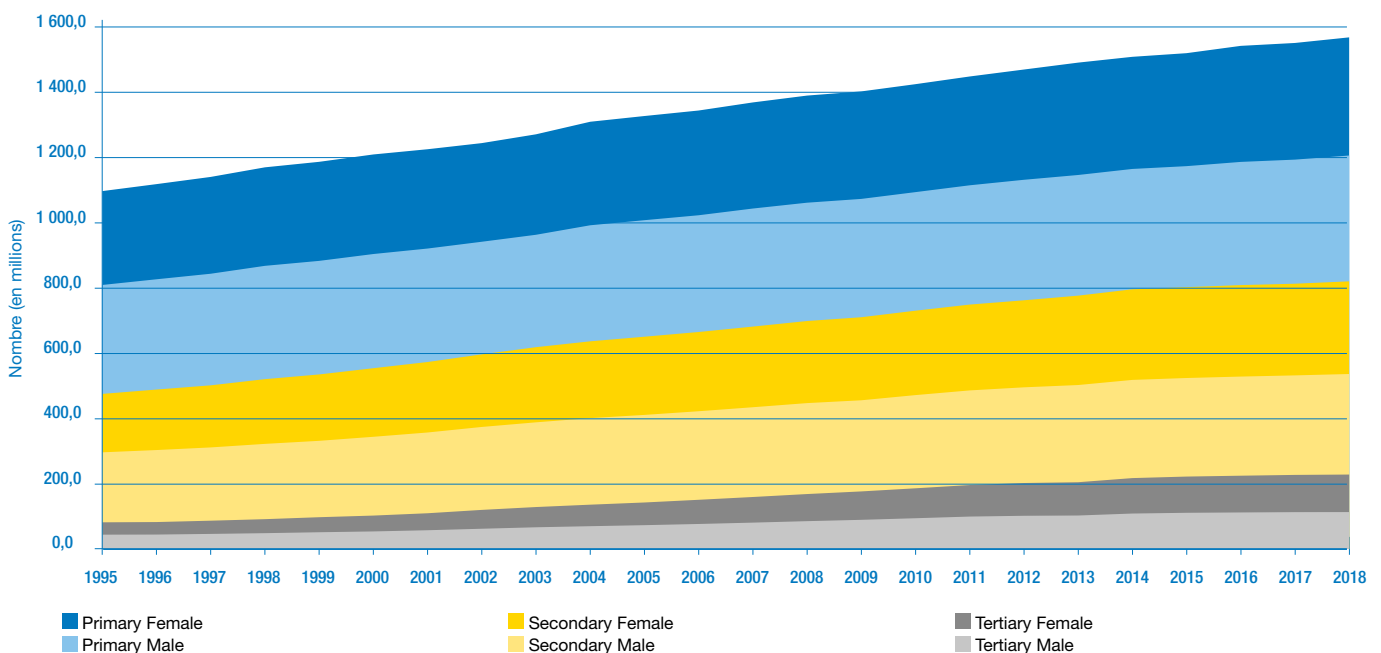
1. MAJOR BUT UNEVEN PROGRESS REGARDING GENDER PARITY AND REDUCED SCHOOL DROPOUT RATES FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Significant progress has been made in expanding access to education for girls – particularly adolescent girls – since the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Globally, gender parity in primary and secondary education was reached in 2009⁶ and 180 million more girls were enrolled in primary and secondary education in 2018 than in 1995, accounting for over half (55 per cent) of the overall increase (327 million).⁷ Two in three girls are enrolled in secondary school compared to one in two in 1998.⁸

"I get goose bumps when I realize that 25 years ago women were already fighting for our rights. Knowing what happened 25 years ago encourages us to keep on fighting for the rights of girls," said an adolescent girl in Paraguay.⁵

FIGURE 1

Girls' and women's enrolment has improved significantly since 1995
Enrolment by sex and level of education, 1995-2018



Source: UNESCO Global education monitoring team (based on data from UNESCO Institute for Statistics).

GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION⁹

In the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, education and training are built around six strategic objectives:

- Ensure equal access to education;
- Eradicate illiteracy among women;
- Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education;
- Develop non-discriminatory education and training;
- Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms;
- Promote lifelong education and training for girls and women.

Education and health are mentioned in the following points:

- Promote people-centred sustainable development, including sustained economic growth, through the provision of basic education, lifelong education, literacy and training, and primary health care for girls and women;
- Ensure equal access to and equal treatment of women and men in education and health care and enhance women's sexual and reproductive health as well as education.

This progress conceals geographical disparities and persistent significant obstacles at secondary level.

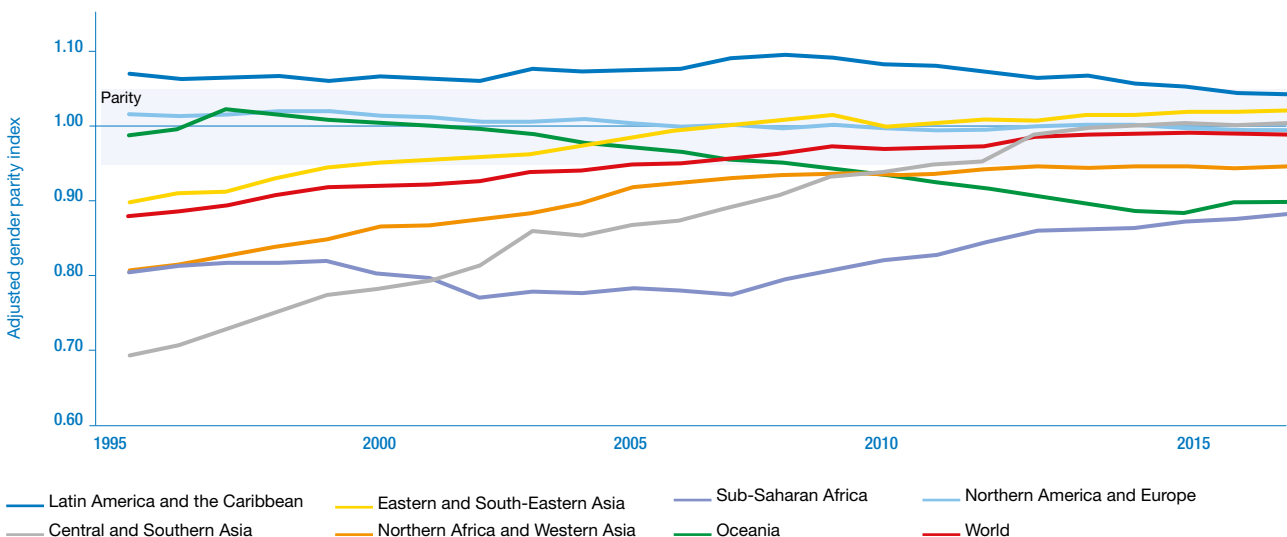
While gender parity has been achieved globally, on average, the situation varies from one region to another and by level of education. Only one in two countries in lower secondary education and one in four countries in upper secondary education have achieved gender parity. In Central and Southern Asia, the gender parity index, driven by India's progress, has

improved rapidly at all three levels of education.¹⁰ Conversely, sub-Saharan Africa is far behind when it comes to gender parity at all levels of education, particularly in upper secondary education, where progress has been very slow.¹¹

Many girls are out of school in low-income countries. Northern Africa and Western Asia, which have experienced stagnation due to conflict, are, after sub-Saharan Africa, the regions furthest from gender parity in primary education.

FIGURE 2

Progress towards gender parity in secondary education has been uneven across region
Adjusted gender parity index for gross enrolment ratios in secondary education by region



Source: UNESCO. 2020. Global Education Monitoring Report: Gender Report. Paris, UNESCO.

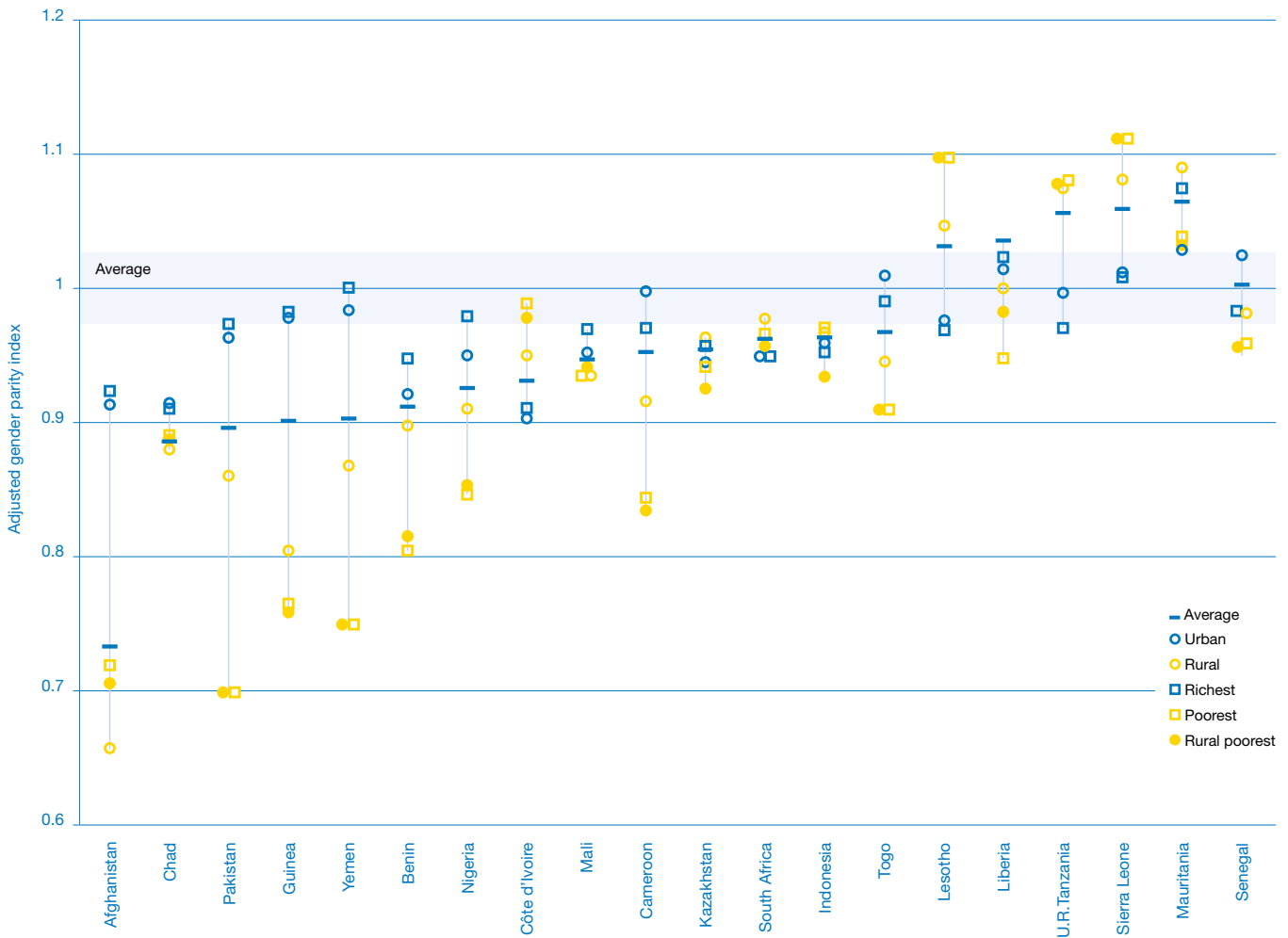
This progress masks national disparities, between urban and rural areas, for example. At secondary-level, the interaction of gender with poverty or location worsens disparities. Poorer

girls, particularly those living in rural area, are among the most marginalized groups.

FIGURE 3

Gender disparity in primary school attendance among poor and rural children in low- and middle-income countries is higher than average, mostly at girls' expense

Gender parity in primary school attendance by location and wealth, selected countries, 2013-2018



Source: UNESCO. 2020. Global Education Monitoring Report: Gender Report. Paris, UNESCO.

The intersectional approach, which makes it possible to take into account the many forms of discrimination to which individuals may be subjected, shows that the decline in school dropout rates hides disparities.

The overall gender parity figures conceal significant disparities such as disadvantage for girls with disabilities.¹³ In India, among students with disabilities, only 75 girls are enrolled in school for every 100 boys. In Ethiopia, only 4 per cent of children with

disabilities are enrolled in school, and the ratio of girls with disabilities to boys with disabilities in lower primary school is 1 for 3.¹⁴ Girls in the context of migration also face specific barriers in terms of access to and retention in school. For example, in the Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, enrolment rates vary greatly: 7 per cent for girls aged 14 to 17 compared to 22 per cent for boys in the same age group.¹⁵

"Education is the key to the future achievements of every human being and is linked to the fulfilment of all other rights. It is also a means to break free from poverty and vulnerability," said an adolescent girl from Sierra Leone.¹⁶



2. EDUCATION FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS AND GENDER EQUALITY: A VIRTUOUS CIRCLE

There is ample evidence that education for girls, particularly adolescent girls, has a positive impact on other aspects of development. Girls who have access to comprehensive, quality education are more likely to fulfil their sexual and reproductive health rights, say no to early and forced marriage, avoid early pregnancy, access a job or an income-generating activity and economic empowerment, participate in decision-making in the family and community, and take part in public life.¹⁸ For instance, in Burkina Faso, women with secondary education (35 per cent) are twice as likely as those who have never attended school to have their reproductive health rights respected, not to have been subjected to domestic violence and not to have experienced female genital mutilation/cutting.

In the economic sphere, 21 per cent of women with secondary education have a bank account in their name, compared to 5 per cent of those who have never attended formal education.¹⁹

Educating adolescent girls also helps to reduce child marriage. According to the World Bank, each additional year of educational attainment reduces the likelihood of marriage before the age of 18 by 5 per cent or more in many countries;²⁰ it also can increase a woman's future earnings by 10-20 per cent.²¹

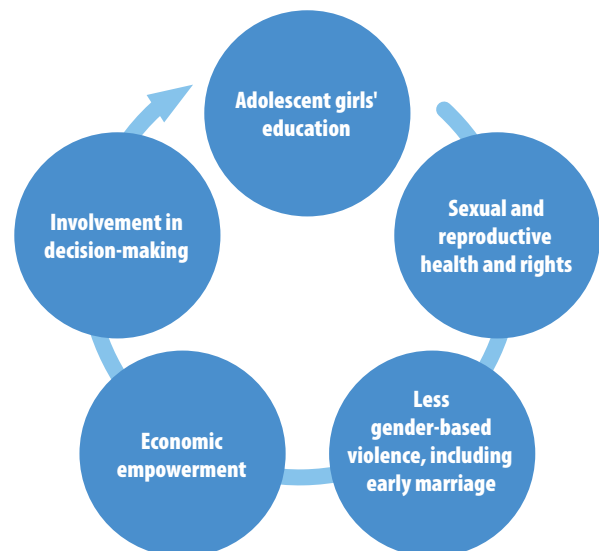
It also increases a country's economic growth, particularly in developing countries. Africa could add 316 billion US\$ or 10 percent to GDP in the period to 2025 if each country makes advances in women's equality to match the country in the region that has achieved the most progress towards parity.²²

Lastly, education for adolescent girls and young women has a positive impact on future generations, as children with an educated mother are more likely to go to school.

"There is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls and the empowerment of women." Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations.¹⁷

FIGURE 4:

Adolescent girls' education and gender equality: a virtuous circle





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3. PERSISTENT BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES TO EDUCATION OF ADOLESCENT GIRLS

3.1 The weight of unequal gender social norms

"The community believes that a boy's education is better than a girl's because boys remain in the home while girls get married off," said an adolescent girl in Kenya.²³

Adolescence represents a key time where girls are assigned the roles of wives and mothers as they reach puberty. Adolescent girls themselves identify the weight of social norms as one of the major obstacles to their education.

Unequal gender norms are a major barrier to adolescent girls' access to and retention in education. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly and ratified by 189 countries to-date, provides clear guidelines on measures and policies to be implemented in order to eliminate discrimination against girls and women, which, in the field of education, are mainly of an ideological, cultural and structural nature.²⁴

Families and societies often see education for boys as a priority over that for girls. However, the sharp increase in girls' enrolment has also led to a reversal of gender disparities, with fewer boys than girls enrolled in many countries, including in primary school.²⁵

3.2 School-related gender-based violence and early and forced marriages

"My mathematics teacher asked me to fall in love with him, but I found it difficult for me to do that. This became a problem between us. I am almost always punished after any small mistake or bad thing I did. This was one of the reasons I hate school and dropped out,"

said an adolescent girl in lower secondary education in Sierra Leone.²⁶

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), whether physical, sexual or psychological, is also a key factor in adolescent girls dropping out of school.

Globally, one in three students have been bullied by their peers at school at least once in the last month.²⁷ Further analysis shows that between 20-37 per cent of students aged 11-17 years old experienced bullying, physical, emotional and/or sexual violence in the past year.²⁸ Given that more than one in three women globally have experienced gender-based violence in their lifetime,²⁹ it is clear that school is not always a safe place and it has been shown that gender-based violence affects the quality of learning.

Adolescent girls with disabilities are at increased risk of SRGBV: in a study of 3,706 primary school students in Uganda, 24 per cent of adolescent girls aged 11-14 years with disabilities reported being targets of sexual violence at school, compared to 12 per cent of adolescent girls without disabilities.³⁰

For some adolescent girls, study opportunities are diminished as a result of unequal gender norms and social expectations around marriage and motherhood. **Child marriage and early pregnancy are barriers to retaining girls in secondary school.**³¹

In 2016, approximately 650 million women and girls worldwide were married before their eighteenth birthday.³² It should be noted that, over the past decade, the global rate of child marriage has declined by 15 per cent - from one in four young women (aged 20-24 years) married as children to around one in five. Nevertheless, in West and Central Africa – where this practice is most widespread – more than four in ten young women were married before their eighteenth birthday. Child marriage often results in early pregnancy and social isolation, interrupts schooling, limits adolescent girls' professional and socio-professional integration opportunities and increases their risk of experiencing domestic violence.³³



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3.3 Restriction of adolescent girls' sexual and reproductive health rights

Adolescent girls are particularly affected by political and social restrictions on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) because of the specific forms of discrimination they face: laws that criminalize adolescent sexuality, unequal gender norms, perceptions around their sexuality, a lack of information, as well as restricted access to services, especially family planning. The percentage of students and young people with an understanding of sexual and reproductive health issues is particularly low, with the median ranging from 23 per cent in Southern Asia to 46 per cent in Latin America.³⁵ While early pregnancy among adolescents aged 15-19 has declined, with prevalence decreasing by one-third between 1995 and 2020,³⁶ it remains both a cause and a consequence of dropout in many low-income countries,³⁷ particularly when school for young pregnant girls is prohibited.

Many adolescent girls are forced to miss school during their period. Menstruation is a taboo subject and a period where girls are often stigmatized and discriminated. They suffer from a lack of access to menstrual hygiene products, often for economic reasons, as well as a lack of adequate sanitation facilities, which often leads them to stay home during menstruation. A 2014 UNESCO report estimates that one in ten girls in sub-Saharan Africa miss school during menstruation - or up to 20 percent of the school year.³⁸ Stress and lack of self-confidence during menstruation can also reduce girls' ability to concentrate and affect the quality of learning.

"Adolescents and young women who want to access contraceptives are viewed with prejudice due to their age,"

said an adolescent girl in Ecuador.³⁴

"Even my mother did not know about sanitary pads,"

said Tenaye, an adolescent girl from Ethiopia.³⁹

3.4 Economic inequality and domestic work expose adolescent girls in particular to the risk of exclusion from education

Globally, girls aged 5-14 years spend 40 per cent more of their time, or 160 million hours more per day, than boys their age on unpaid household chores, including fetching water or firewood.⁴⁰ These disparities increase as girls get older, with girls aged 10-14 years spending 50 per cent more of their time, or 120 million hours more per day, than boys on these chores. Time spent on household chores can take a toll on their learning. It also perpetuates stereotypes surrounding the roles of women and men and creates a dual burden on women and girls across generations.





3.5 Climate change affects adolescent girls' access to education

"During drought periods, we sell firewood. It takes an hour to collect the firewood and then another two hours to walk to Lalibela. [...] And if we don't manage to sell the firewood in the morning, we will have to stay in the market all day and it stops me from going to school," said Melkam, a 14-year-old girl in Lalibela, Ethiopia.⁴²

Climate change affects adolescent girls, particularly those from marginalized communities, and represents a barrier to their education. Girls and families living in rural areas are highly dependent on the environment, especially agriculture. Their income is directly dependent on natural resources, the availability of which is particularly threatened by climate change. Furthermore, deforestation and water scarcity are increasing the amount of time young and adult women spend on domestic work, leaving them no time for their education.⁴¹

3.6 Access to STEM education is key for economic empowerment, but underutilised by adolescent girls

Once they reach higher education, girls make up only 35 per cent of all students enrolled in STEM courses worldwide. The UNESCO report "Cracking the code: Girls' and women's education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)" girls are often brought up to believe that STEM are 'masculine' topics⁴³ and that female ability in this field is innately inferior to that of males. This can undermine girls' confidence, interest and willingness to engage in STEM subjects.

Access to STEM education is vital for girls' access to decent and quality jobs. Globally, the percentage of female STEM graduates is less than 12 per cent in half of the 112 countries with data for 2016-2018 and less than 15 per cent in over two-thirds of these countries.⁴⁴ The percentage of female STEM graduates varies considerably, from less than 1 per cent in Maldives to 41 per cent in Oman.⁴⁵

Furthermore, adolescents in many countries have a strong interest in new technologies. This holds great potential when it is linked to access to employment, information and essential services, and adolescents receive adequate support. In Malaysia, female representation in STEM fields has increased as a result of government policies to encourage women to pursue STEM subjects, where they are now integrated, with the support of UNESCO.

"I want to be a civil engineer. I want to own my own surveying company, where pregnant women and women with children will be able to work without restrictions. There will be a nursery so that women can work while their children are taken cared for," said 19-year-old Jennifer from Ecuador.⁴⁶



3.7 Education systems that do not sufficiently encourage adolescent girls' leadership

"We must all unite, raise our voice loudly, in Colombia and the world, to show that we adolescent girls have power and a mandate," said an adolescent girl from Colombia.⁴⁷

Adolescent girls' education is a key element of their leadership and access to spaces for debate and decision-making, but it is not enough; the school environment and curriculum must support the leadership development of girls just as well as boys. However, girls and boys are not always treated equally in the classroom. For example, girls may be given fewer opportunities to speak in class.

In a consultation process conducted by Plan International in preparation for the Generation Equality Forum, female respondents identified that restrictions on freedom of expression and autonomy early in life were clearly linked to the absence of women in decision-making processes and in women's participation in public life.⁴⁸ A recent study by Plan International in West Africa found adolescent girls with lower levels of education in rural areas with limited access to information and communications technology (ICT) were the least likely to be involved in feminist movements.⁴⁹

3.8 Impact of the COVID-19 crisis on adolescent girls' education

Adolescent girls are particularly affected by the global socio-economic effects of the COVID-19 crisis due to unequal social norms and the specific forms of discrimination they face. In addition, girls are less likely to have access to the Internet and online learning. UNESCO estimates that more than 11 million schoolgirls are at risk of dropping out of school.⁵⁰ Other estimates put the figure higher at up to 20 million girls and young women in low- and middle-income countries.⁵¹ Although the numbers are not yet certain, it is clear that school closures due to COVID-19 will have devastating effects on girls' futures, as well as intergenerational repercussions on health and nutrition, economic growth, and many other outcomes.⁵²

Moreover, adolescent girls are particularly at risk of domestic violence, cyberbullying and sexual violence during lockdowns, as lockdowns are exacerbating domestic violence. In France, for example, reported cases of domestic violence have increased by 30 percent.⁵³ Preliminary estimates show that the COVID-19 crisis could lead to almost 13 million early marriages in the next decade and, for every additional three months of lockdown, to 15 million more cases of gender-based violence.⁵⁴

In Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the Ebola crisis from 2014 to 2016 led to a 75 per cent increase in maternal mortality, mainly due to early and unintended pregnancy.⁵⁵ The COVID-19 crisis could have similar consequences in some contexts.



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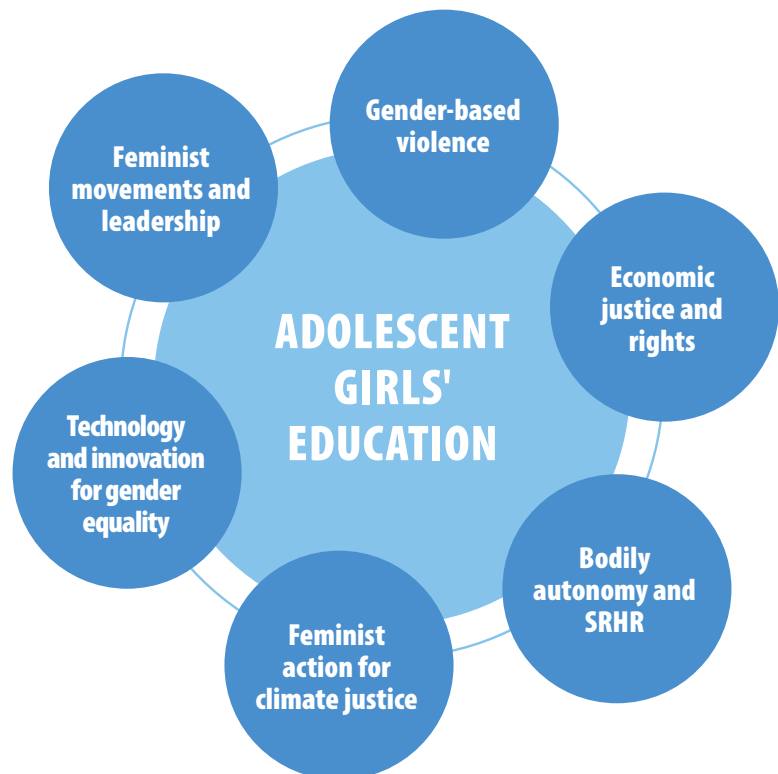
4. LEVERS OF ACTION FOR EACH ACTION COALITION ON EDUCATION

Ensuring adolescent girls' access to quality education is closely intertwined the six priorities of the Action Coalitions⁵⁶ for the Generation Equality Forum in 2021, the Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Adolescent girls' education also figures in SDG targets under each of the Action Coalitions, as highlighted in the table on the next page.

FIGURE 5

Adolescent girls' education at the heart of the Action Coalitions



ACTION COALITIONS	TARGETS RELATED TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE	5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND RIGHTS	4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.
BODILY AUTONOMY AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR)	<p>5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.</p> <p>3.7 By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.</p>
FEMINIST ACTION FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE	<p>4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable life-styles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.</p> <p>13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.</p>
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY	5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.
FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AND LEADERSHIP	<p>5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.</p> <p>4.7. (mentioned above) Specifically the aspects on education for citizenship and gender equality.</p>

Different levers for girls' education were identified in June 2020 as part of an extensive consultation process engaging 100 international and civil society organizations in the education sector all around the world, including Coalition Éducation (France), Education Cannot Wait, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), the Global Campaign for Education (GCE), the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), the Malala Fund, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Plan International, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNICEF France, Save the Children, national and regional GCE coalitions and local partners.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, Plan International⁵⁸ carried out a consultation process with 700 adolescent girls aged 14 to 19 across 12 countries.⁵⁹ This consultation process aimed to gather their views on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years on and to ensure that their expectations and recommendations are taken into account as part of the Generation Equality Forum. All aspects of education emerged as a very high priority for adolescent girls. In general, adolescent girls want to be encouraged to stay in school through equitable access to free, quality, gender-sensitive secondary education that does not leave the most marginalized girls behind. The following table summarizes their recommendations for each Action Coalition.

ACTION COALITIONS	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADOLESCENT GIRLS' EDUCATION FROM OVER 100 INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY STAKEHOLDERS, SUPPLEMENTED BY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM ADOLESCENT GIRLS ACROSS 12 COUNTRIES*
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE	<p>Ensure that gender-based violence is taken into account in all school curricula and training of teachers and educational staff, collect sex-disaggregated data, and improve legal frameworks and mechanisms for alerting and taking care of victims.</p> <p>Strengthen child protection mechanisms, raise awareness among all communities, and provide genuine access to justice through laws that protect adolescent girls and criminalize the perpetrators of all forms of gender-based violence.</p>
ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND RIGHTS	<p>Strengthen and equip education systems to provide adolescent girls with technical and vocational training and skills including entrepreneurship, ensure access to fully funded, quality non-formal education, address unequal social norms, and provide social protection for adolescent girls.</p> <p>Combat unequal social norms and the burden of care and housework, which hold adolescent girls back from fulfilling their social, economic and political potential in the long run, through appropriate public policies, education and awareness-raising.</p>
BODILY AUTONOMY AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR)	<p>Ensure comprehensive sexuality education for all children in and out of school – appropriate teaching materials, health services, training for teachers and school staff, monitoring and evaluation, safe environments and youth engagement – through a community-based approach to raise awareness, address parental and community resistance and create common spaces for dialogue.</p> <p>Ensure access to comprehensive sexuality education, free sanitary products, safe and legal abortion and contraceptives.</p> <p>Ensure government investment in sexual and reproductive health and rights and education to end early and forced marriages, sexual violence, early and unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, and challenge the social norms that perpetuate these practices.</p>
FEMINIST ACTION FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE	<p>Protect girls' right to education before, during and after climate related disasters and invest in girls' education in response to climate change through curricula that incorporate gender inequalities, ecological skills, STEM skills and dedicated budgets, education on sustainable development (SDG target 4.7) and enable adolescent girls to be co-creators of climate solutions by equipping teachers to address climate change from a gender-transformative perspective.</p> <p>Key decision-makers need to take into account the gender dimensions of climate change and see how women and girls from all walks of life and single mothers are included in response programming.</p>
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY	<p>Provide girls with equal opportunities to study and work in STEM and to become social innovators through gender-responsive ICT and STEM education, access to role models and mentors who encourage girls to choose this path and look for STEM jobs, involve parents in creating programmes against gender stereotypes in STEM and awareness building on the importance of girls' digital skills.</p> <p>Help adolescent girls to pursue careers in STEM through adequate information and guidance, the development of technical skills, appropriate vocational training, as well as access to mentoring and scholarships in the STEM sector and companies.</p>
FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AND LEADERSHIP	<p>Incorporate gender-responsive education into the right to education to encourage leadership and social, political and economic participation among adolescent girls by creating an enabling community environment, promote education and non-formal initiatives that enable girls to express themselves and develop their critical thinking skills, and include feminist leadership principles in pre- and in-service teacher training.</p> <p>Invest in and strengthen girls' voices as a matter of priority, support their leadership by enabling them to access platforms and spaces to build their self-confidence and leadership skills, both at school and within formal systems at national and regional levels.</p> <p>Help strengthen girls' voice and collective power by making it a priority, so that they can be the agents of the change they want to see.</p>

* The recommendations of international organizations and civil society actors appear in black; those of adolescent girls are shown in blue in the table.



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5. MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP: AN ESSENTIAL LEVER OF ACTION

A cross-cutting lever of action, identified as part of the Generation Equality Forum, is the multi-stakeholder partnership embodied by the Action Coalitions which bring together governments, civil society, international organizations and the private sector. As exemplified by the Gender at the Centre Initiative, multi-stakeholder partnerships is vital to the advancement of adolescent girls' education.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS ARE A MAJOR LEVER - THE EXAMPLE OF THE GENDER AT THE CENTRE INITIATIVE

Launched at the G7 ministers' meeting on education and development on 5 July 2019, the Gender at the Centre Initiative offers support to developing countries that wish to strengthen gender equality in their education systems. Eight pilot countries were identified: five G5 Sahel countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Chad), in addition to Mozambique, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. The ultimate goal is to improve girls' access to and retention in school and fuel a virtuous circle for development: higher living standards

and healthier families, improved economic growth, later marriages and pregnancies, family planning.

UNGEI and the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, together with other international organizations including GPE, UNICEF and civil society organizations, **innovatively coordinate** this multi-stakeholder partnership through a consortium comprising the Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA), the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and Plan International.



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CHAPTER II

THREE KEY LEVERS

TO ACHIEVE BEIJING+25 COMMITMENTS:

CSE, STEM EDUCATION AND ADOLESCENT
GIRLS' LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



Comprehensive sexuality education, STEM education and career orientation and leadership development are three major educational levers of action in empowering adolescent girls and ultimately achieving gender equality. This chapter provides further analysis of these three themes by sharing lessons learned by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Plan International and UNESCO from studies and programmes carried out with numerous partners across all continents. It considers the main challenges encountered, suggests operational levers of action and makes adolescent girls' voices by sharing their priorities and expectations. Short case studies are included to illustrate the levers of action. This will inspire high-impact commitments through the Generation Equality Forum Action Coalitions and beyond.

1. COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION (CSE) AT THE INTERSECTION OF RIGHTS TO EDUCATION, HEALTH, PARTICIPATION AND PROTECTION

1.1 Key issues

The importance of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is recognized in the monitoring framework for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 3, 4 and 5).⁶⁰ As part of SDG 5, global indicator 5.6.2 refers to the "number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and

equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education". Indicator 4.7.2 refers to the "percentage of schools that provide life skills-based HIV and sexuality education".

WHAT IS COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION?

According to the United Nations, CSE is "a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality. It aims to equip children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will empower them to: realize their health, well-being and dignity; develop respectful social and sexual relationships; consider how their choices affect their own well-being and that of others; and understand and ensure the protection of their rights throughout their lives".⁶¹

CSE is at the intersection of rights to education, health, participation and protection. CSE can also form part of a holistic approach to challenging gender inequalities, as well as preventing and addressing gender-based violence. Sexuality education enables girls to better understand themselves, their bodies, their rights and their capabilities, including how to prevent pregnancy and make choices related to their fertility.

As part of a consultation process carried out by Plan International⁶² with 700 adolescent girls aged 14 to 19 across 12 countries,⁶³ almost half (47 per cent) of the survey respondents identified sexual and reproductive health and rights as a top priority. Adolescent girls agreed that improved knowledge of SRHR topics, notably through CSE, was important to help avoid unintended pregnancy and ensure that girls stayed in school, in addition to a comprehensive package of sexual and reproductive health services and commodities, notably sanitary products, contraceptives and safe legal abortions.

1.2 Levers of action

Research carried out by UNESCO⁶⁴ has shown that school-based CSE programmes contribute to the following outcomes: delayed initiation of sexual intercourse, decreased frequency of sexual intercourse, decreased number of sexual partners, reduced risk-taking, increased use of condoms and increased use of contraception.

CSE has positive effects, including increasing knowledge about different aspects of sexuality, behaviours and risks of pregnancy or HIV and other STIs. It specifically affects behaviour change in relation to family planning.





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a) Accelerating the development of comprehensive sexuality education by incorporating it into education and teacher training



Accelerate the development of comprehensive sexuality education through the design of appropriate CSE curricula and teaching and learning materials, train teachers and school staff on CSE, ensure monitoring and evaluation, foster the creation of safe and enabling physical environments, and meaningfully involve / engage young people.

The International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education produced by UNESCO, UN Women, UNAIDS, WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF and updated in 2018⁶⁵ advocates for quality comprehensive sexuality education that promotes health and well-being, respect for human rights and gender equality and enables children and young people to lead healthy, safe and productive lives.

In times of crisis, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever before that CSE for adolescents remains a priority reflected in school curricula. For instance, in El Salvador, the Ministry of Education and Plan International are collaborating to ensure continuity of CSE: giving teachers pedagogical guidance on how to integrate content on CSE and gender.

IMPLEMENTING THE INTERNATIONAL TECHNICAL GUIDANCE ON SEXUALITY EDUCATION

To strengthen the provision of quality CSE in schools and support the implementation of the International Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education, Plan International has developed programming standards and a guide for professionals involved in education, sexual and reproductive health and comprehensive sexuality education.⁶⁶ Plan International is currently piloting the implementation of these international CSE standards in Bangladesh, Laos and El Salvador, alongside government institutions (Ministries of Education and Health), UNFPA, UNESCO and civil society.

CASE STUDIES

Developing and strengthening CSE teaching: case studies from Thailand and South Africa

Thailand has demonstrated political commitment and leadership on CSE, with the help of the United Nations, including UNESCO, by including CSE and links to sexual and reproductive health services for young people in the national Prevention and Remedial Measures for Adolescent Pregnancy Bill (2016)⁶⁷ and the associated education sector Ministerial Regulation on the prevention and resolution of teenage pregnancy problems (2018).⁶⁸ The multi-sectoral approach to the Act's implementation engages five main ministries. Concrete measures taken by the Ministry of Education include reviewing school textbooks to strengthen content on SRH and gender, alongside the creation and delivery – in collaboration with the government and NGOs – of an e-learning certificate course for CSE teachers. Thus, the government of Thailand, in collaboration with the United Nations, is supporting teachers to build their skills and confidence in teaching a range of life-skills based CSE content, including topics that may be considered sensitive. UNESCO is also beginning to support the Ministry of Education in leveraging the potential of CSE in digital spaces in Thailand to complement learning through formal education. Despite some barriers that remain, Thailand has demonstrated that it is possible to mobilize political support, government leadership and cross-sectoral partnerships for CSE, by recognizing in the law CSE's importance to young people's well-being.



The development of CSE in the early 2000s in South Africa and its progressive strengthening is the result of the government's review of its HIV programming in schools; as well as the increasing new HIV infection among adolescent girls and young women. The South African government led an important pedagogical reform and put in place a plan for training teachers at two levels by establishing 'regional educational advisors' who could transfer their knowledge to the teachers and develop training. This reform of the education policy to strengthen CSE included other key stakeholders from the wider education community (including students' parents, religious representatives, teachers' unions, members of civil society and school principals).⁶⁹ Taking into account the important roles of these stakeholders in education and the transfer of knowledge and values to young people, the South African government applied the guidance by the United Nations, demonstrating the benefits of holistic multi-stakeholder CSE programming that gives a voice to the wider educational community.⁷⁰

b) Supporting the implementation of integrated programmes

LEVER

Support the provision of sexuality education that takes into account community-based approaches, and offer integrated programmes that combine school-based sexuality education, out-of-school health services and actions to prevent school-related gender-based violence, particularly in humanitarian contexts.

The implementation of community-based CSE programmes is well illustrated by the work of local NGOs Aahung and Rutgers in Pakistan, as their programmes have already reached over 500,000 students. Their success stems from their willingness to understand the nuanced context within communities and to work with groups of stakeholders, including parents, school officials, religious leaders, media and adolescents.

Specific strategies include working with communities to select content, tactfully selecting and framing issues with careful consideration for sensitivities, engaging persons of influence, strengthening media presence, showcasing school programs to increase understanding and transparency, and choosing opportune times to introduce messages.⁷¹

CASE STUDIES

Promoting gender equality and the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents in and out of school in Senegal and Togo

The ongoing Solidarity Fund for Innovative Projects⁷² promotes sexual and reproductive health and rights for adolescents in and out of school in Senegal and Togo by supporting access to reproductive health services to reduce early and unintended pregnancy and unmet need for contraception. The project integrates gender equality and CSE into curricula to raise young people's awareness of unsafe practices and address school-related gender-based violence.

The project has enabled ministries and partners to engage in intersectoral dialogue regarding school-related violence while taking into account the gender dimension. Field observations indicate growing awareness of the taboos associated with violence against children, gender inequalities and resulting gender stereotypes. Lastly, the direct beneficiaries of the project indicate there is an increased understanding between teachers, school staff and students, as well as between female and male students at school. School violence including corporal punishment, psychological violence and sexual violence has decreased.



DIGITAL SEXUALITY EDUCATION: THE LOVE MATTERS ARABIC PLATFORM, CREATED BY RNW MEDIA IN THE NORTH AFRICA AND MIDDLE EAST REGION

All around the world, more men use the Internet than women. The Internet user gender gap is small in developed countries and large in developing countries, particularly low-income countries.⁷³ Young people are increasingly turning to digital spaces to seek information on the body, sex and intimate relationships. In recent decades, many digital spaces have emerged with the aim of disseminating educational content to young people about sexuality.

RNW Media (Love Matters Arabic) is a very good example of a digital platform that aims to provide reliable information to answer young people's questions on topics related to

the body, relationships and sexuality. It is a website for young married and unmarried people aged 18 to 30 from Egypt and the Middle East and North Africa region. It aims to get them interested in sexuality education and provide information that they may not have received at school or at home, and help them make informed choices, accept who they are, love and be loved.

In 2019, the Love Matters Arabic website received over 7.4 million visitors and the associated social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram) reached millions of people.⁷⁴

c) Involving parents and communities in favour of CSE

LEVER



Raise communities' and parents' awareness about CSE by getting youth groups, civil society organizations, religious leaders, the media and politicians involved, providing them with accurate information on the advantages and benefits of CSE and with spaces for dialogue.

CASE STUDIES



Plan International's Yes I Do Alliance project in Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan and Zambia

Plan International's Yes I Do Alliance (YIDA) programme aims to strengthen adolescents' decision-making capacities when it comes to choosing to get married and have children. It also aims to combat female genital mutilation (FGM). The programme is being implemented in seven countries: Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Pakistan and Zambia.

It is based on five goals stemming from Plan International's theory of change. The programme aims to change the attitudes of community members, gatekeepers and other stakeholders so that they take action to prevent child marriage, early pregnancy and FGM, engage adolescent boys, and enable adolescent girls to make more informed decisions about their sexual health and choose alternatives to marriage, early pregnancy and FGM. Finally, it calls on policymakers to harmonize, strengthen and implement laws and policies on child marriage, FGM and sexual and reproductive health.

YIDA works with a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, religious and traditional leaders, community members, parents, teachers, health workers, and young girls and boys, to enhance dialogue on the harmful effects of child marriage, FGM and early pregnancy. According to the results of the YIDA Midterm Review, 32,000 young people received sexuality education and 751 were trained and supported as peer educators between 2016 and 2018. The programme has contributed to increasing the self-confidence of young people and the openness of community leaders to the perspectives of young people.

"My expectations, my dreams in relation to marriage are to finish my studies, to get a job and then to get married and have my children because, without a job I cannot have children, I will not be able to support them,"

said an adolescent girl, in Mogovolas, Mozambique.⁷⁵





2. ADOLESCENT GIRLS IN STEM EDUCATION

2.1 Key issues

While STEM and innovation are high on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, studies show that adolescent girls do not participate equally in these areas of education. The STEM participation gap between girls and boys becomes more apparent in lower secondary education, when specialization begins and students make choices about the subjects they will study.⁷⁶ Girls seem to lose interest in STEM subjects with age, especially between early and late adolescence. This decline in interest affects participation in advanced studies at the secondary level.⁷⁷

Different factors influence girls' and women's participation, performance and progress in STEM studies and careers:

At the individual level, stereotypes characterizing technology as a male field are predominant in many contexts. The best indicator of the incidence of STEM-related gender stereotyping is the difference between girls and boys with regard to confidence in their own abilities, even though in primary and lower secondary education, the actual digital skills gap is either non-existent or in girls' favour.⁷⁸

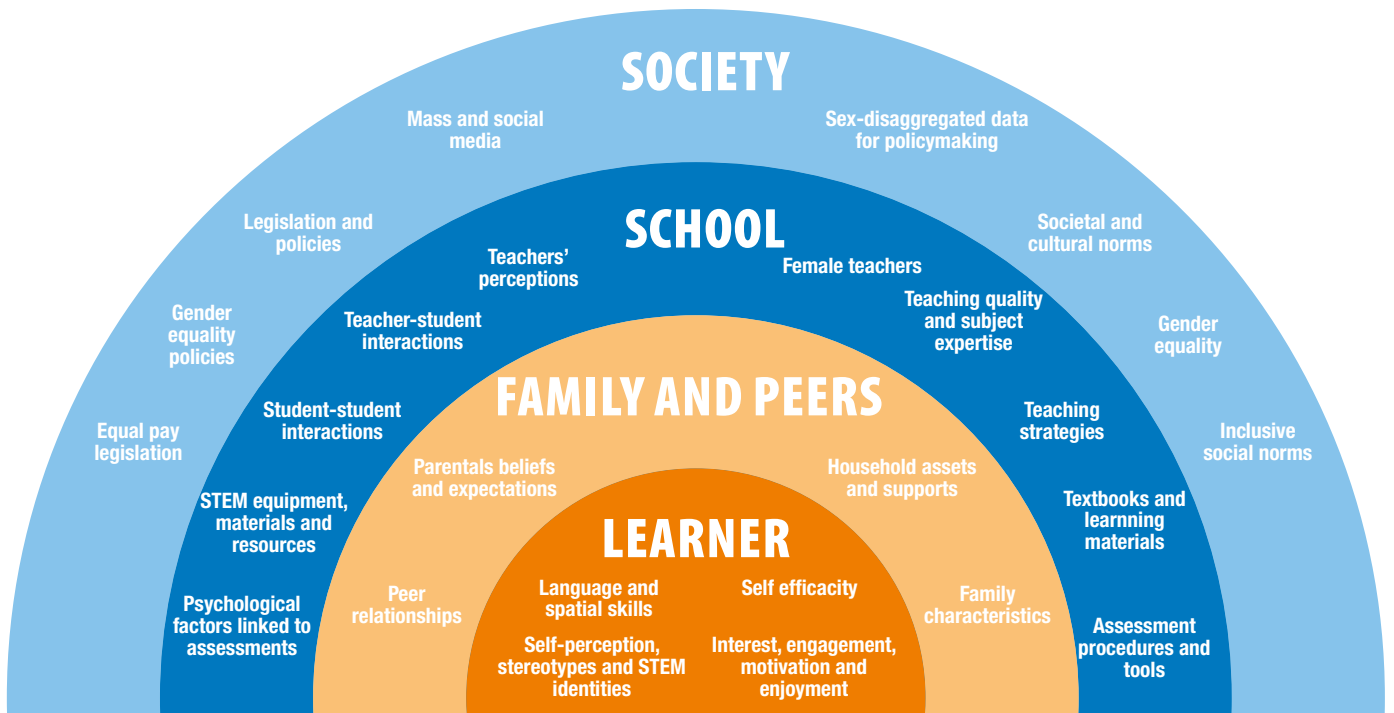
At the family and peer level, parents' beliefs and expectations, as well as their educational attainment and socioeconomic status, play a key role in adolescent girls' participation, achievement and progression in STEM studies.

At the school level, the learning environment plays a key role: the presence of female STEM teachers, with whom girls can identify, is important. In sub-Saharan Africa, women teachers become already a minority (46 per cent) in primary education and even a smaller minority (30 per cent) in secondary education.⁷⁹ Teachers' profiles, teachers' experience, teachers' beliefs, teachers' expectations, curricula, learning materials and resources, educational strategies and student-teacher interactions, assessment practices, and the overall school environment are all essential factors.

At the societal level, several factors play an important role: social and cultural norms; stereotypes perpetuated by the media and by advertising for digital products and other technologies, for example; communication campaigns by educational establishments and institutions; legislation; and educational policies.

FIGURE 7 :

Ecological framework of factors influencing girls' and women's participation, achievement and progression in STEM studies



Source: UNESCO. 2017. Cracking the Code: Girls' education in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. Paris, UNESCO.

2.2 Levers of action

Nearly a quarter (22 per cent) of the adolescents who participated in the consultation conducted by Plan International in preparation for the Generation Equality Forum⁶⁰ consider technology and innovation for gender equality to be a key issue. Adolescent girls share the aspiration to work in non-traditional fields, including STEM and entrepreneurship. Several actions can be taken to help adolescent girls to access ICT and STEM.



a) Developing ICT and STEM education without gender stereotypes

LEVER



Develop gender-responsive ICT and STEM education and promote learning environments which encourage girls to take ICT and STEM courses.

CASE STUDIES



Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics - Girls Can Do IT! (China)

In China, Plan International has launched a STEM project known as "Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics - Girls Can Do IT!" Its objective is to create STEM education programmes for girls in rural areas in order to spark their interest and potential to succeed in STEM subjects, as well as to dismantle gender

stereotypes in STEM education. By having children participate in pre-STEM education offered at extracurricular clubs in the counties of Chunhua and Pucheng, the programme has made it possible to improve the abilities of 1,200 girls and boys (65 per cent/35 per cent) and to increase their interest in STEM.



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An Information-communication Revolution in the Pacific
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CASE STUDIES



The African Centres of Excellence Project (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria)

The African Centres of Excellence Project, funded by the French Development Agency, aims to develop quality university education centred on themes which are key to economic development. The project seeks to reach a maximum number of African students by making quality STEM training available. It also supports the improvement of scientific production and research. Gender issues are taken into account at different levels of the project. Collective reflection with the students makes it possible to examine the causes of women's under-representation in industrial technology and science and to cooperatively devise measures for increasing their presence. For example, a US\$ 2,500 bonus is paid to the Centres of Excellence for each woman enrolled in post-graduate studies. The programme also enables the development of a policy to combat sexual harassment within institutions and to make such a policy mandatory for all African Centres of Excellence.

b) Organizing meetings and dialogues with scientific role models and mentors and organizing field trips to combat gender stereotypes and self-limitation

LEVER



Organize meetings with scientific role models and mentors and organize field trips to debunk stereotypes about women's abilities and careers and help girls to enter the STEM labour market.

CASE STUDIES



A project to empower girls through STEM education in Kenya

Since 2014, as part of a mentoring project for girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, "scientific camps of excellence" have been organized annually by the UNESCO Office in Nairobi in collaboration with the Government of Kenya, the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, and the University of Nairobi. The objective of these science camps is to demystify science, motivate girls to take an interest in it, and train them to become future professionals and leaders in STEM. These week-long camps include scientific experiments, laboratory and industry visits, and discussion and sharing workshops with academics to discuss opportunities and possible career paths in scientific fields.

A total of more than 2,000 girls from 161 schools in 41 counties have benefited from the project. Around 100 STEM teachers have been trained in gender-sensitive educational methods. New partnerships have been established at the national level with ministries, government institutions and the private sector in order to increase women's participation in science and technology. The Ministry of Education has identified model STEM schools in each county and the programme has been deemed a good practice by the United Nations country team in Kenya, which made a new programme was launched on 15 June 2020, using distance-learning technology so that girls could continue being mentored in STEM.

c) Raising awareness of STEM among girls, parents and communities

LEVER



Raise awareness of STEM among girls, parents and communities so that girls can access STEM studies.

CASE STUDIES



The Miss Science competition: encouraging girls' access to STEM in Mali

The Government of Mali and UNESCO launched the first Miss Science competition in 2018 and renewed it in 2019 to encourage girls to pursue studies in STEM subjects, to advocate for their access to these subjects and to celebrate girls' achievements in scientific disciplines. This project was inspired by the Miss Science competition in neighbouring Senegal. All 20 teaching academies in Mali participated in the competition, and 80 of the

best primary and secondary school students were invited to compete. This event challenges the stereotypes that STEM fields are "masculine". It has been a great success and has made parents and all members of the community aware of the importance of girls' access to STEM. Four winners of the competition have become ambassadors in their respective schools and are encouraging other girls to participate in STEM.

"The Miss Science competition encouraged me to study and appreciate scientific subjects even more than I did before,"⁸¹

says eleven-year-old Coulibaly Seydou from Mali, who wants to pursue a career as a mining engineer.



3. ADOLESCENT GIRLS' LEADERSHIP THROUGH FORMAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION, IN CONNECTION WITH FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AND LEADERSHIP: A LEVER FOR ACHIEVING ALL THE OBJECTIVES OF THE BEIJING+25 AGENDA

3.1 Key issues : Young women's movements receive less funding and face inclusion-related challenges

"We want to see women and girls in higher positions of power and decision-making,"⁸²
says an adolescent girl in Uganda.

Throughout the world, the leadership and political participation of women and adolescent girls are limited and women are underrepresented as voters and in leadership positions. Only 24.3 per cent of national parliamentarians are women, and only three countries have 50 per cent or more women in parliament in the single or lower chamber.⁸³ Furthermore, feminist movements are increasingly coming up against negative reactions, both nationally and internationally, which threaten the hard-won social, political and economic rights of women and girls. Adolescence and early adulthood provide an opportunity to invest in girls' civic education and leadership development.

In addition, adolescent girls' activist organizations⁸⁴ face gender and age stereotypes which exclude these girls from decision-making in their communities, as well as in other activist movements.

Access to funding is also a major barrier. While there is little data on funding for adolescent girls' organizations, a 2012 World Bank report indicates that less than 2 per cent of international aid funds is allocated to adolescent girls.⁸⁵ A 2014 report shows that young women's organizations have an average annual budget of US\$ 5,000 and that adolescent girls receive even less funding.⁸⁶ Despite these barriers, adolescent girls organize creatively and innovatively; the use of new technologies and social networks is essential to their mobilization.

Finally, inclusion is another challenge for young female activists' organizations: it is the most educated, most affluent, and least geographically isolated adolescent girls who tend to become activists.⁸⁷

A PLAN INTERNATIONAL STUDY ON GIRLS' AND YOUNG WOMEN'S ACTIVISM IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA (GUINEA, LIBERIA, NIGERIA, SENEGAL AND TOGO)

A study, launched in 2019 by Plan International's West and Central Africa office, looked at activism in the region among girls and young women aged 16 to 22 years. It shows that there is a strong link between higher levels of education and social and economic advantage and activism among girls and young women. Girls' organizations founded by girls with higher levels of education have a greater capacity for mobilization and are more independent than those created by girls in secondary school. The study

emphasizes that digital media constitutes the preferred channel for activist action. These girls and young women use Facebook, WhatsApp or Twitter to promote their work and connect with other activists. However, the study also shows that not all girls' voices are represented in these activist organizations. Girls who are under the age of 18 years or who live in more remote areas do not have the time, autonomy or permission to become activists. Moreover, they do not have

access to the Internet or to the organizing options afforded by university or secondary education. For example, girls and young women with poorer backgrounds, belonging to minority groups such as LGBTQIA+, or living with a disability are all less likely to be involved in activism.

"Digital technology is not accessible to everyone - some people need physical contact," ⁸⁸ explains a 21-year-old female activist.

3.2 Levers of action

In the consultation process conducted by Plan International in preparation for the Generation Equality Forum, almost three in ten (28 per cent) adolescent girls selected feminist movements and leadership as key issues of concern. They identified clear linkages between restrictions of self-expression and autonomy and women's overall lack of participation in public life and understood real progress as directly tied to shifting discriminatory norms at the local level.⁸⁹

Efforts to support girls' and women's leadership – including their ability to participate in politics and public affairs – must begin in childhood by creating an enabling environment and be stepped up and adapted as girls become young adults. A key lever in this regard is the education for citizenship and gender equality reflected in SDG target 4.7.⁹⁰

"My vision is to contribute to the birth of a new generation of young girls who are development stakeholders. Girls who have access to learning opportunities and sexual health education to make decisions and develop healthily, girls who fight to make their dreams come true and who tackle inequalities,"

said Chancelline at the Young Women Leaders Academy initiative in Benin.

a) Providing gender-transformative education that teaches girls to express and develop their social and civic skills

LEVER



Provide gender-transformative education at school and through non-formal education from childhood to enable adolescent girls to learn how to express themselves, structure their thoughts, develop their opinions and critical thinking, listen to others and acquire the social and civic skills they need to become active and inclusive members of their communities and societies.

CASE STUDIES



The Champions of Change project in Peru

In Peru, Plan International is carrying out a political empowerment and leadership project for indigenous adolescent girls.

Champions of Change enables 540 indigenous adolescent girls and young women aged between 14 and 21 years to get organized and strengthen their capacity to influence decisions affecting them.

CASE STUDIES

The Young Leaders against Child Marriage project – a cross-border initiative in Guinea, Mali and Senegal

In West and Central Africa, Guinea, Mali and Senegal have very high rates of child marriage (31-52 per cent of marriages take place before the age of 18), with rates ranging from 57 to 87 per cent in cross-border areas in the three countries.

In Guinea, Plan International France, with the financial support of the International Organization of The Francophonie (OIF), supported the Young Girl Leaders of Guinea Club in 2018 by providing training on advocacy, gender and ending child marriage. The project also enabled the Club to strengthen its regional roots through the creation of three new branches. Awareness-raising (radio programmes and social mobilization activities) and advocacy activities carried out by the Club reached approximately 12,000 girls throughout the country and 35,000 others (boys, parents, religious and traditional leaders, and local and administrative authorities) across the country's eight administrative regions. The project has prevented 12 early marriages in the Conakry, Faranah and Labé regions. Lastly, advocacy meetings were held with the government and religious leaders to urge them to take a stand against child marriage.

A second phase of this project carried out by Plan International France, with the financial support of OIF, enabled young leaders from the Malian and Senegalese borders from various youth organizations to network with the Young Women Leaders of Guinea Club. A youth-led workshop provided an opportunity for peer-to-peer sharing of experiences and skills around child

marriage, related gender issues, advocacy techniques and risk management. A regional action plan with a follow-up committee was developed by the young leaders, as well as actions to be carried out in their respective countries. During their meeting in Dakar, Plan International also facilitated a space for intergenerational dialogue, which was livestreamed on social media, where young people could share their recommendations on combating child marriage with Senegalese and regional institutions.



b) Non-formal education initiatives such as sports groups or discussion groups are levers of empowerment and leadership for adolescent girls



Recognize and support the role of education and non-formal initiatives in empowering adolescent girls as active individuals and champions of gender equality.

Sport can be used as a symbolic lever to change gender stereotypes in a patriarchal environment. Sport can have a direct impact on self-confidence and reduce gender stereotypes and violence in schools.

CASE STUDIES

The Niger Youth Olympics project

The Niger Youth Olympics project funded by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs is helping young people to develop and socialise through sport. A major goal of this project is to

reduce gender inequalities: it seeks to achieve full gender equality for all the activities on offer and change people's image of women's sports.

CASE STUDIES

Empowering adolescent girls through football: the “Championnes” project (Benin, Guinea and Togo) and the La League project (Brazil and Nicaragua)

The “Championnes” project (2020-2023), supported by the French Development Agency (AFD), uses sport as a lever to empower girls and transform gender norms through a mixed approach that includes women's socio-economic empowerment. Girls who take part in sport overcome their isolation and gain life skills such as self-confidence, teamwork and assertiveness. Awareness-raising activities outside of training sessions enable girls to gain knowledge and skills that empower them to make decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and rights. By becoming role models, these young women are challenging gender norms in their communities. Positive masculinities are supported using a participatory approach involving communities, parents' associations and school staff. The project also creates sports-related jobs, such as physical education teachers, coaches and referees. Furthermore, the project helps the beneficiaries to set up tontines (collective savings), which are important spaces for socialization and empowerment.

The La League project (2018-2021) in Brazil and Nicaragua organizes football camps to help adolescent girls develop and boost their self-confidence, break stereotypes and defend their rights. La League uses football to reduce child marriage and early pregnancy and promote access to vocational training. The project's inclusive approach includes fathers, brothers and young men from the community in the young female footballers' success. The project provides information on girls' rights in an innovative, inclusive and positive way at the regional and national levels. Plan International's Champions of Change methodology,



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"The project has taught me that I do have power, that we should not feel inferior to boys, that we must be respected, and that it is up to each of us to highlight and defend our rights. I have learned what empowerment is about and it has helped me to be self-confident,"

said Violeta, 14 years old, Brazil.

enables young girls and boys to become agents of change in their communities (training courses, training sessions, awareness-raising workshops on gender equality and sexual and reproductive health rights). Lastly, the project enables young girls' economic empowerment by creating employment opportunities in the football and sports sector.

c) Parents, community leaders and the media: vital partners in promoting girls' education and leadership development through education

LEVER



Create an enabling environment for girls and women and establish direct partnerships with local communities, traditional and religious leaders and parents to discuss the importance of adolescent girls' education.

CASE STUDIES

The Drumbeats project in Senegal – promoting education and citizen inclusiveness through entertainment and edutainment

Drumbeats is an innovative project carried out by the African Network for Education, Health and Citizenship (RAES), a Senegalese NGO, underpinned by a national communication campaign for social change. It promotes more participatory and inclusive democracy, particularly for women and girls. The project includes the production of a television series and a radio soap opera, as well as local, community-based initiatives and

social media activities. It aims to raise questions and encourage debate in order to challenge stereotypes and social habits that hinder women's and young people's political participation and to develop the target groups' capacities for action. This project is supported by the French Development Agency (AFD), as well as Canal France International (CFI), the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF) and TV5Monde for the period 2018 to 2021.⁹¹



CHAPTER III

RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed recommendations are addressed to all stakeholders involved in policies and programmes for adolescent girls' education and, more broadly, initiatives to promote gender equality and the SDG as a whole. They are of a more political nature and complement the more technical recommendations presented as “levers” throughout the report. In particular, they will provide food for thought for the members of the Generation Equality Forum Action Coalitions when developing and implementing new commitments and action plans for adolescent girls.

1. Include formal and non-formal education for adolescent girls at the centre of the six themes of the Generation Equality Forum Action Coalitions as an indispensable lever for the advancement of all issues: for each Action Coalition, select a specific action to be included in the five-year action plan to be adopted; these specific actions could be based on the levers set out in this report.

2. Invest financially in gender transformative education systems.⁹²

3. Implement plans and specific actions for the establishment of national policies and strategies for the education of girls, especially adolescent girls:

3.1 Ensure, overall, that:

- The curricula taught are gender-sensitive and do not perpetuate gender stereotypes.
- School infrastructure is adequate, including the construction of single-sex sanitation and hygiene facilities that meet the needs of girls, such as safe latrines, access to clean water and soap, and adequate sanitation and waste disposal systems.⁹³
- Pre- and in-service teacher training on gender is strengthened.
- Prevention and management of school-related gender-based violence are enhanced.

3.2 Ensure, at the community and family levels, that:

- Messages are conveyed among the population promoting girls' education.
- Actions are taken to combat harmful practices (early and forced marriages, female genital mutilation) and to remove barriers to access to school for pregnant adolescents or young mothers in order to prevent them from dropping out of school.
- Financial incentives are developed for families to send girls to school, especially in adolescence.

3.3 Ensure that good quality CSE is delivered to all learners:

- Integrate sexuality education, that is comprehensive in its content, into curricula for primary and secondary education that equips learners with the knowledge, attitudes and skills to successfully manage safe interpersonal relationships, to promote gender equality and specifically to prevent early and unintended pregnancy and STIs including HIV.
- Train and support teachers to have the skills, confidence, and materials to deliver good quality, learner-centred CSE.
- Promote awareness and comfort on CSE among parents and communities and help them tackle these topics with ease and confidence.
- Complement CSE with the provision of a full range of youth-friendly SRH services and commodities, especially for menstrual health and hygiene, contraception and early and unintended pregnancy prevention.

3.4 Encourage girls to pursue studies and careers in STEM:

- Stimulate adolescent girls' interest, motivation and self-confidence to pursue education and careers in STEM through improved career guidance, greater exposure to female role models, increased access to mentoring, sponsorship and scholarships, and outreach to girls, parents and school staff.
- Eliminate bias and stereotypes in curricula and teaching materials and strengthen the capacity of teachers to provide gender-responsive pedagogy that is free of prejudice and stereotypes and that engages boys and girls equally. Address the shortage of qualified teachers and promote the recruitment of female teachers.

3.5 Foster leadership development of adolescent girls through the promotion of an environment and programmes, both in and out of school, that promote gender equality and give them the skills and opportunities to assert themselves, organize themselves and be heard at all levels of society.

4. Generate, collect and make available age- and sex-disaggregated data across sectors to inform planning, budgeting, monitoring and accountability of public policies that respond, in an appropriate and holistic manner, to the specific needs of adolescent girls, including in crisis situations:

4.1 Learn from existing education sector plans and programmes on gender-transformative education by investing in their monitoring, evaluation and impact studies.

4.2 Develop robust country-specific and regional diagnoses of the root causes hindering girls' school enrolment and retention.

4.3 Collect qualitative data in addition to quantitative data: include questions on gender norms in existing surveys to understand the reasons why different forms of inequality, discrimination and violence occur against adolescent girls; strengthen education management information systems to collect data on incidents reported and dealt with at school (disaggregated by gender, age, disability, etc.).

4.4 Collect sex- and age-disaggregated data for enrolment at the level of (a) pre-primary school, (b) primary school, and (c) lower secondary school, as well as data on learning achievement, in order to ascertain the proportions of girls, including adolescent girls, who acquire at least the minimum basic knowledge of (i) reading and (ii) mathematics.

5. Develop and implement intersectoral education policies and initiatives that promote gender equality and respond to the multidimensional nature of issues affecting adolescent girls through inclusive multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaborations:

5.1 Ensure, at the national level, collaboration between the education sector and other ministries, such as those of health, social affairs, family, gender equality, and planning and finance, to ensure coherence between laws, policies and plans and the availability of funds.

5.2 Foster multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaborations in favour of gender-responsive education sector plans – technical and financial partners must serve strategies and policies piloted at the national level and strengthen the existing spaces for consultation at the national, regional and local levels, such as local education groups.

5.3 Develop gender-responsive education sector planning for systemic change; guidelines exist at the international level, but experience shows that their implementation requires collective ownership, not only by ministries but also by development partners on the ground.⁹⁴

6. Promote the inclusion of all stakeholders in their diversity: inclusive and gender-transformative education requires the inclusion of all stakeholders – including the most vulnerable. This includes i.e. organizations led by children and young people, especially those led by girls, male and female teachers, staff in educational institutions including school management staff, as well as staff in ministries in charge of steering and governance of the education system in general, parents, community leaders, grassroots organizations, and local and national authorities.

7. Promote citizen participation and explicitly the meaningful involvement of adolescent girls and feminist youth organizations in their diversity – especially those representing the most marginalized adolescent girls – in national and international decision-making spaces regarding the elaboration and monitoring of education policy, including in countries in crisis situations. Marginalized young people are best placed to advise on strategies that meet their needs, but their capacity to act needs to be strengthened:

7.1 Strengthen the capacity of movements, networks and associations led by girls and young women, working to promote gender equality, both formal and nonformal, through increased flexible multi-year funding and technical support, to address their own priorities, including responding to unexpected needs.

7.2 Implement institutionalized mechanisms to ensure the safe and meaningful engagement of adolescent girls and girl-led civil society organizations in decision-making at all levels of governance, from school boards to local councils and global forum delegations, including in the governance of the Generation Equality Forum Action Coalitions.

8.1 In contexts of crisis and fragility, take into account the specific situations and risks faced by adolescent girls, including the risks of permanent school dropout and violence exacerbated by the COVID-19 health crisis:⁹⁵

8.1 Encourage partnerships between humanitarian and development stakeholders to better address the specific education needs of girls and to ensure that girls and boys go to or return to school, where they are safe and secure and in good conditions for learning.

8.2 Collect sex- and age-disaggregated data on incidence, morbidity and mortality rates related to COVID-19; work with schools to develop and implement action plans to get girls back into school and evaluate country response plans.

8.3 Introduce distance learning solutions in the event of school closures using simple and advanced technologies, in order to ensure continuity of education and not exacerbate existing disparities for adolescent girls, including technical skills and the digital divide.



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ACRONYMS

CSE	Comprehensive sexuality education	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
FGM	Female genital mutilation	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
GCE	Global Campaign for Education	UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
GPE	Global Partnership for Education	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ICT	Information and communications technology	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
NGO	Non-governmental organization	YIDA	Yes I Do Alliance
OIF	International Organisation of La Francophonie		
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal		
SRGBV	School-related gender-based violence		
SRH	Sexual and reproductive health		

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- ⁸⁴ Mama Cash et FRIDA, The Young Feminist Fund. 2018. [Girls to the front - A snapshot of girl led organizing](#).
- ⁸⁵ Ibid.
- ⁸⁶ FRIDA, The Young Feminist Fund, and the Young Feminist Activism Program of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). 2014. [Brave, creative, resilient: The global state of young feminist organising](#).
- ⁸⁷ Plan international. 2020. [L'activisme et la mobilisation des filles et des jeunes femmes en Afrique de l'Ouest](#). Woking, Plan International.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid.
- ⁸⁹ Plan International, Terre des Hommes, Defence for Children et ECPAT. 2020. [Setting the agenda: Incubating a girls platform for action](#).
- ⁹⁰ [SDG target 4.7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development](#).
- ⁹¹ [Watch the series and listen to the shows on the RAES website \(available in French only\)](#).
- ⁹² [The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity recommends that bilateral donors increase their official development assistance \(ODA\) for education to close to 15% of total ODA. At the national level, the World Education Forum recommends that States maintain a target of 20% of their budgets devoted to education, i.e. 6% of their gross national income. For more information, see the Dakar Framework for Action](#).
- ⁹³ UNESCO. 2016. [Series on Good Policy and Practice in Health Education. Booklet 9: Puberty Education & Menstrual Hygiene Management](#). Paris, UNESCO.
- ⁹⁴ UNGEI, Global Partnership for Education (GPE) with support from UNICEF. 2016. [Guidance for Developing Gender-Responsive Education Sector Plans](#). New York, UNGEI and UNICEF and Washington, GPE.
- ⁹⁵ [Plan International and its partners from the Adolescent Girls Investment Plan \(AGIP\). Adolescent girls at the centre. Generation Equality Action Coalition priorities for adolescent girls in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic](#). London, Plan International.

BEIJING+25: GENERATION EQUALITY BEGINS WITH ADOLESCENT GIRLS' EDUCATION

Beijing+25: Generation Equality begins with adolescent girls' education is a joint publication produced by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Plan International France and UNESCO.

This publication examines progress and persistent gaps in our efforts to achieve gender equality in and through education since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action 25 years ago. In 2018, 130 million girls worldwide were out of school, and only two out of three girls were enrolled in secondary education. The crisis related to the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to further widen these gaps and threatens to interrupt the education of more than 11 million girls.

This publication demonstrates the importance of adolescent girls' education for the advancement of the Beijing Platform for Action's visionary agenda, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

It provides recommendations to fast-track investments and action on adolescent girls' education during the 2021 Generation Equality Forum, and the related Action Coalitions aiming to accelerate progress for gender equality. It promotes intersectoral approaches and multi-stakeholder partnerships, and focuses on three 'levers of action': comprehensive sexuality education, the involvement of adolescent girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, and the development of adolescent girls' leadership. It shares adolescent girls' own priorities and expectations, and their vision of what is needed for an equal future for us all.

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