



GLOBAL EDUCATION MONITORING REPORT

2020

GENDER REPORT

A new generation: 25 years of efforts for gender equality in education



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Global
Education
Monitoring
Report

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2020

Gender report

A NEW GENERATION: 25 YEARS OF EFFORTS
FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

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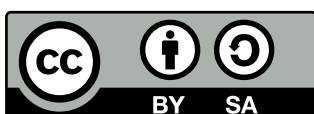
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Gender Report of the Global Education Monitoring Report series

- 2020 *A new generation: 25 years of efforts for gender equality in education*
- 2019 *Building bridges for gender equality*
- 2018 *Meeting our commitments to gender equality in education*
- 2016 *Education for people and planet: Creating sustainable futures for all*

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Cover photo: Johanna de Tessières / HI

Caption: An infection at birth led to Grace's leg being amputated and she was fitted with an artificial leg. Having overcome many challenges in the first eight years of her life, Grace is now making the most of her time at school. She is in her second year at Carmen Salles primary school, which is one of the schools participating in Humanity & Inclusion's inclusive education project in Kinshasa.

Mariam, aged 17 years, taking her son home after playing football with his friends. She got pregnant at 12 years old and dropped out of school because of her pregnancy. She was encouraged to go back to school as a result of the encouragement from Mother Groups working with the NORAD funded Reducing Teenage Pregnancies (RTP) project in Mangochi district, Malawi.

CREDIT: Jonas Gratzner / Save the Children



Foreword

Those working in the education sector know that the way we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic today will have implications for years – and potentially decades – to come.

COVID-19 related school closures are posing huge challenges for education systems. Even more concerning, the pandemic is aggravating chronic difficulties already faced by the most marginalized – especially girls. Girls are more likely to experience gender discrimination in the allocation of household chores, gender-based violence, early and forced marriage, and early and unintended pregnancy.

As a result of the extra challenges caused by the pandemic, an additional 11 million girls and young women may never return to school.

For this reason, the timing of this 2020 GEM Gender Report is critical. It looks at progress made since 1995, when the international community made a landmark commitment to advancing women's rights by adopting the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. This progress is real: over the past 25 years, 180 million more girls have enrolled in primary and secondary school, and girls' learning outcomes have improved. Female enrolment in tertiary education has risen three times.

However, we are still a long way from fulfilling our commitments to gender equality. The Report also shows where progress has faltered, and where difficulties risk being exacerbated by the current health crisis. Three-quarters of primary-school-age children who may never set foot in school are girls. Women still account for almost two-thirds of all adults unable to read – 515 million of them lack basic reading skills. Today, it is a global failure that only 2% of the poorest rural females in low-income countries complete upper secondary school.

The message is clear: much work remains to be done to achieve gender equality in education. We must not let the pandemic reverse our efforts, or wipe out the progress made since 1995.

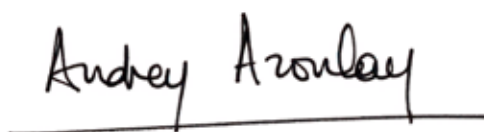
We need to take action – we owe it to the girls and women of today, and to those of future generations. We know that progress we make now creates a virtuous circle over time: the GEM Report calculates that girls born in low-income countries in the 1980s acquired seven more months of education for every year of education their mothers received. In other words, the daughters of educated mothers remained in school longer. By supporting this generation, we support the next generation as well, compounding benefits in health, empowerment and participation.

This more than justifies using education as a springboard to achieve the goals of the six Action Coalitions for the Generation Equality Forum scheduled to take place in 2021, where the next iteration of the Beijing Declaration will be produced.

In these unprecedented times, we need an unprecedented mobilization for equality. We need to ensure that education does not regress, and that millions of girls can choose their future – instead of having it chosen for them. We need to leverage the incredible potential of girls' education, which transforms societies so effectively, making them fairer and more prosperous.

We call on governments to step up their efforts and, even as they respond to the current crisis, place special emphasis on the education of girls and women. Every child should have access to quality education, no matter their identity, background, ability – or gender.

Audrey Azoulay
Director-General of UNESCO



KEY MESSAGES

Over the past 25 years, girls' access to education has dramatically improved, closing a four percentage point gap in enrolment ratios. In addition, girls have reached or overtaken boys in terms of learning outcomes in reading and mathematics.

However, girls, particularly those with intersecting disadvantages in terms of poverty or disability, still face the worst forms of acute exclusion in the world's poorest countries.

Education is a critical lever for women's rights. A focus on education, particularly that of girls, can break the cycle of disadvantage between generations, as children tend to acquire more education than their parents. At the same time, the extent to which parental education determines children's education, while declining slowly, is still high, which calls for interventions to prevent inequality from persisting.

Gender equality in education cannot be achieved by the education sector alone. Residual negative gender norms in society bring gender bias in education, influencing teachers' attitudes, subject and career choices, and affect women's opportunities later in life.

Countries need to focus on making schools more inclusive for all students, whatever their background, ability or identity. This requires better sanitation facilities in schools, greater attention to school-related gender-based violence, including online, and policies encouraging pregnant girls to go back to school. The message of inclusion resonates strongly at a time when COVID-19 has exacerbated inequality.

Key findings

There has been a generational leap in access to education for girls over the past 25 years.

- Since 1995, the number of girls enrolled in primary and secondary school has risen by 180 million.
- Globally, equal numbers of girls and boys were enrolled in primary and secondary education in 2018, whereas in 1995 around 90 girls were enrolled for every 100 boys; significant increases in Southern Asia, and India in particular, drove this growth.
- Female enrolment tripled in tertiary education; at the country level, gender disparity at men's expense exists in 74% of the countries with data.
- Between 1995 and 2018, the percentage of countries with gender parity in education rose from 56% to 65% in primary, from 45% to 51% in lower secondary and from 13% to 24% in upper secondary education.
- Among the 56 countries with data for 2000–18, primary completion rates improved faster for girls than boys. In one-third of the 86 countries with 2013–18 data, girls were more likely to complete primary school than boys.

Girls' learning outcomes are improving faster than boys', but new gender gaps are developing in digital literacy skills and a majority of illiterate adults are still women.

- Girls' advantage over boys in reading widened in more than half of the 38 countries and territories that took part in PISA in both 2000 and 2018. Girls now perform as well as boys in mathematics in over half of countries and do better than boys in one-quarter of countries.
- Disparity in ICT skills is emerging. Among 10 low- and middle-income countries with detailed data, women are less likely to have used a basic arithmetic formula in a spreadsheet in the 7 poorest countries, while parity exists in the 3 richest countries.
- The share of women among illiterate youth has decreased since around 2005, especially in Eastern and South-eastern Asia. But the share

of illiterate adult women has remained constant for the past 20 years at around 63%. And in 2018, fewer than 80 adult women were literate for every 100 adult men in 12 countries, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

Despite progress, girls continue to face the worst forms of exclusion.

- Globally, three-quarters of children of primary school age who may never set foot in school are girls.
- In 2018, fewer than 90 girls were enrolled for every 100 boys in 7 countries in primary, 14 countries in lower secondary and 23 countries in upper secondary education.
- Fewer than 80 girls for every 100 boys completed primary in 4 countries, lower secondary in 15 countries and upper secondary in 22 countries.

Gender interacts with other disadvantages to exacerbate exclusion from education.

- In at least 20 countries, hardly any poor, rural young woman complete upper secondary school.
- In 24 countries participating in PISA 2018, over 70% of poor boys did not achieve the minimum reading proficiency level.
- The most disadvantaged women are further left behind in terms of literacy skills. In 59 countries, women aged 15 to 49 from the poorest households are 4 times more likely to be illiterate than those from the richest households.
- Women with disabilities tend to be particularly disadvantaged. In Mozambique, 49% of men with disabilities can read and write, compared with 17% of women with disabilities.

Some subjects are still male-dominated, which affects equality in work and adult learning opportunities.

- Globally, the share of females in TVET enrolment declined from 45% in 1995 to 42% in 2018.

- Globally, the percentage of females studying engineering, manufacturing and construction or ICT is below 25% in over two-thirds of countries.
- Gender segregation by field of study constrains girls' choice of career. In OECD countries only 14% of girls who were top performers in science or mathematics expected to work in science and engineering, compared with 26% of top-performing boys. Women account for less than 1% of the applicant pool for technical jobs in artificial intelligence and data science in Silicon Valley.
- Previous learning experience, personal disposition towards learning, life circumstances and structural barriers all have an impact on whether adults participate in education. Women in European countries are almost twice as likely as men not to participate in adult education for family-related reasons.

Policy interventions can reduce the chance of education disadvantage being passed to the next generation.

- The gender gap in the share of children who have attained a higher education level than their parents – absolute intergenerational mobility – decreased for each 10-year cohort born from the 1940s to the 1980s. Globally, a slightly higher percentage of daughters (52%) than sons (51%) had higher education levels than their parents in the 1980s cohort, although mobility is still lower for girls in low- and lower-middle income countries.
 - Children's education relies less and less on the education of their parents – relative intergenerational mobility – although girls' years of schooling are still more aligned to their parents' than boys', and particularly to that of their mothers.
 - Girls are more influenced by their mothers' than their fathers' education in low- and middle-income countries. In the cohort of girls born in the 1980s, an extra year of maternal education leads to seven extra months of education in low-income countries.
 - Policy interventions can reduce the extent to which education disadvantage is passed on to the next generation. Potentially successful interventions include quotas in tertiary enrolment for vulnerable groups, scholarships and cash transfers, and removal of user fees in primary education. The correlation between mothers' education and their children's fell by 12.5% when user fees were lifted.
- Increasing numbers of laws and policies promotes gender equality in education on paper, but still often fails in practice.**
- Globally, 105 countries have ratified the 1960 UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education and 23 have signed since 1995.
 - Education ministries have sponsored laws promoting gender equality in 50% of countries and policies to that effect in 42%. About 46% of countries have legislation and 58% policies promoting gender equality in education under other ministries' leadership.
- Strong political commitment has reduced early pregnancy rates and provided education for pregnant girls and young parents.**
- The prevalence of early pregnancy fell by one-third between 1995 and 2020, from some 60 to 40 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19.
 - The share of women aged 20 to 24 who married before age 18, a factor contributing to early pregnancy, fell from 25% in 1995 to 20% in 2013–19.
 - In Argentina, a holistic approach combining two laws, flexible learning programmes, nurseries in schools, re-entry programmes for vulnerable children and non-formal alternative secondary education programmes has helped protect pregnant girls' and young parents' right to education; meanwhile the adolescent fertility rate fell from 61 in 1995 to 49 in 2018.
 - Activism and accountability mechanisms can help protect pregnant girls' right to go to school. In Sierra Leone, official policy in 2015 banned pregnant girls from school. In 2019, after several years of activism, the ban was ruled discriminatory by the Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States and was lifted.
 - Multisectoral cooperation and ties between government departments help address the intersecting needs of many girls and young women of child-bearing age. In the United Kingdom, measures to address these needs included a protective legal framework, a teenage pregnancy unit and strategy, better childcare, awareness-raising programmes, advocacy aimed at young men, and support from the non-government sector. These measures helped reduce the number of conceptions per 1,000 15- to 17-year-olds from 42 to 18 between 1995 and 2017.

The prevalence of early pregnancy can be linked to lack of access to sexual and reproductive health education.

- Ambiguous language in laws and weak accountability in enforcement can enable schools to avoid teaching comprehensive sexuality education. Argentina made the subject compulsory in 2006, but only 16 out of 23 provinces adhered to the policy or passed their own legislation on the subject, likely because of opposition among religious schools.
- In Sierra Leone, the number of married and sexually active 15- to 19-year-old women using contraception doubled from 10% to 20% between 2008 and 2013, but dropped to just 14% in 2019, possibly due to a 2008 decision to end comprehensive sexuality education in schools.
- Clear guidance on sexuality education can help. In the United Kingdom, relationship and sex education was made compulsory in all secondary schools from 2019. Guides were published to help schools inform and work with parents to overcome resistance.

Gender-responsive school counselling could improve gender balance in subject choices.

- Counsellors often promote gender stereotypes, which affect students' education and career choices. A survey of secondary school counsellors in the US state of Wisconsin found that, even though school counsellors believed female students were more likely to succeed in mathematics than males, they were less likely to recommend mathematics over English to female students.
- Clear gender-responsive strategies are needed to redress the balance. Botswana has a comprehensive guidance and counselling programme and a Gender Reference Committee but lacks an overall framework on ways to help girls and women who wish to pursue TVET and STEM subjects.
- A lack of gender-specific measures in counselling and career advice at the state level in Germany means the increase of the share of girls in STEM subjects between 1999 and 2017 is more likely related to an online information hub on STEM for girls and collaboration between ministries of women, youth, labour and social affairs.
- National strategies on TVET and STEM in the United Arab Emirates make no reference to gender or gender-responsive counselling practices and women are still under-represented in these fields of study.

Countries still produce textbooks with gender-based stereotypes and limited references to women and girls.

- The share of females in secondary school English language textbook text and images was 44% in Malaysia and Indonesia, 37% in Bangladesh and 24% in Punjab province, Pakistan.
- Partnerships and participatory processes at all phases of textbook development and delivery need to be in place for successful reform.
- In Comoros, textbooks still contain gender stereotypes, partly because textbook developers have not received training or sensitization.
- Ethiopia has shown commitment to gender equality in education, including through textbook revision. Yet stereotypes remain, which can be attributed to women being excluded from textbook review and development, lack of training on processes, and insufficient commitment from authorities in challenging discriminatory norms.
- Nepal has made materials more gender-sensitive by introducing guidance for gender-responsive learning materials and a gender expert to review content, as well as gender audits and formal reviews of all materials every five years, although some of these measures have not been fully implemented.
- In Europe, 23 out of 49 countries do not address sexual orientation and gender identity explicitly in their curricula.

Gender inequality exists in teacher recruitment and promotion to leadership, and more gender-sensitive teacher education is needed.

- Women make up 94% of teachers in pre-primary, 66% of teachers in primary, 54% in secondary and 43% in tertiary education.
- There is a glass ceiling for women trying to attain leadership positions. In a case study of schools in Brasilia, Brazil, 75% had only male candidates for school leadership positions. For the past 25 years, all federal education ministers have been men. In Bulgaria, just 5 of 96 education ministers in 140 years have been women.
- Teachers still expect girls and boys to have different academic abilities, which affects academic outcomes. In Italy, girls assigned to teachers with implicit gender bias underperformed in mathematics and chose less demanding secondary schools, following teachers' recommendations.

Millions of schools are not inclusive, often due to poor infrastructure and unsafe learning environments.

- Globally, over a fifth of primary schools had no single-sex basic sanitation facilities in 2018. Some 335 million girls attend primary and secondary schools lacking facilities essential for menstrual hygiene.
- Even when single-sex sanitation facilities exist, they may not be accessible to all students: less than 1 in 10 schools with improved sanitation had accessible facilities for students with disabilities in El Salvador, Fiji, Tajikistan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen.

School-related gender-based violence impedes inclusive education of good quality.

- Girls are more likely to experience verbal and sexual harassment, abuse and violence, while boys are more often subject to physical violence.
- Violence is often directed at those whose gender expression does not fit binary gender norms. In the United Kingdom, 45% of lesbian, gay and bisexual students and 64% of transgender students were bullied in schools.
- The rapid advancement of technology has increased risks of threats, intimidation and harassment. In European Union countries, one in five 18- to 29-year-olds reported having experienced cyber-harassment.

Change in education will not happen until unequal gender norms in society are stamped out.

- Gender discrimination was considered the most important global problem by 8% of adults in the latest World Values Survey. A return to traditional values is an increasing threat to women's rights. The proportion of people with moderate and intense bias against gender equality increased between 2005–09 and 2010–14 in 15 of 31 countries surveyed.
- Attitudes towards female foeticide have not improved with education. In urban India, the male to female child sex ratio is inversely associated with female education.
- Gender discrimination is a threat to inclusive education. In 11 former republics of the Soviet Union and in Mongolia, the level of discrimination in social institutions is 24%, on average, which has reduced women's average years of schooling by 16%.
- Parents' gender stereotypes can stand in the way of inclusion. In Sokoto, Nigeria, some parents believe access to secondary school would prevent girls from marrying. In Fiji, parents expect boys to assist with cash crop farming, which can lead them to disengage with school.

Shumi, 16 years old, who avoided early marriage, sits on a bed reading a book at home in Sylhet, Bangladesh. Shumi benefited from a Save the Children project funded by UK aid.

CREDIT: Tom Merilion / Save the Children



Introduction

Education changed my life from being a child living in a village facing poverty and trying to survive early marriage and violence to a university instructor, activist and advocate for education trying to support and develop education in her country and use it as a tool for change. I believe in education. Just as it changed my life, it could change the lives of all children in the world.

Ahlam, Yemen

In the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the world pledged to leave no one behind. As part of the agenda, the international community committed to achieve the fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4): 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.' SDG target 4.5 pledges, moreover, to 'eliminate gender disparities in education'. And SDG 5 makes a commitment to 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'.

These goals and targets express an aspiration towards equality, equity and inclusion. Equality is a state of affairs (*what*): a result that can be observed in inputs, outputs or outcomes. Equity is a process (*how*): actions aimed at ensuring equality. The concept of inclusion, on the other hand, involves both means and ends. In this report, inclusion is defined first and foremost as a process, relating to actions that embrace diversity and build a sense of belonging, rooted in the belief that every person has value and potential and should be respected. Yet inclusion is also a state of affairs, a result, with a multifaceted nature that makes it difficult to pin down.

A comprehensive analysis of inclusion in education from a gender perspective must involve more than simply noting gender parity levels (that is, equality of participation or achievement rates in various education levels and strands). It also requires a review of potential sources of discrimination in education, such as those involving teaching and learning materials, water and sanitation facilities, and laws and policies. It necessitates examining other potential forms of disadvantage and discrimination, such as poverty, location, ethnicity and disability, which intersect with gender to leave some boys and girls, women and men behind in education (**Box 1**).

Building on the 2020 *Global Education Monitoring Report*, this report investigates how inclusion in education can advance gender equality in and through education, which is critical to make progress towards gender equality in society. The goal of gender equality is, of course, not new. It was enshrined in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and was at the core of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, whose 25th anniversary is marked in 2020 (**Box 2**).

BOX 1:

Gender intersects with other characteristics to exacerbate education exclusion

Gender disparity and inequality in education are one manifestation of exclusion in education systems. In many, mostly poorer countries, girls are less likely to have access to, participate in and complete education, while in other, mostly richer countries, boys are more likely to be disengaged from education. However, girls and boys, women and men are not homogenous groups. Their experiences of exclusion and discrimination in education are shaped not just by gender but also by a combination of political, economic, social and cultural factors, which affect individual opportunities and collective institutions. It is important, therefore, to look both at micro-level experiences, such as development of personal identity and relationships with others, and macro-level factors, such as policies and practices in education and beyond (Grant and Zwier, 2017).

Some policies focus only on the dynamic of exclusion associated with a single form of social division and associated identity, such as gender, disability, ethnicity or poverty. These policies may not be sufficiently fine-grained to allow recognition of differences within each group, which generate particular forms of exclusion. They may focus on simple interventions without inquiring whether and how deep-seated inequality has resulted in similar interventions failing to achieve desirable outcomes.

Looking at policy through the lens of intersectionality – which captures overlapping differences between groups, analyses interlocking institutional formations of power and criticizes existing descriptions of gender, race, ethnicity or disability – can help address these deficiencies and thus prompt deeper engagement with ideas about inclusion. At the same time, it requires actors to have broader background knowledge to implement the kind of joined-up action that can deliver change.

Consider, for example, a teenager who becomes pregnant. Among the challenges she may face are the risk of serious health complications, lack of maternity care, lost income, exclusion from education and political participation, and cultural marginalization. She may or may not find it easy to obtain contraception or information about sexual and reproductive health. A pregnant young woman who has not finished school will have her experiences shaped in major ways by the financial and emotional resources that her family, her child's father and his family can provide, her country's legal provisions regarding a return to school, the attitudes of her teachers and peers, the health facilities to which she has access, the level of community acceptance of teenage motherhood outside marriage and the perception by those in power of the community to which she belongs and of her status as a young mother. All these intersecting relationships have an important impact on her opportunities (Unterhalter, 2020).

The core insight from the concept of intersectionality is that social inequality and the exercise of power draw on axes of social division in a given society at a given time. These axes do not operate as discrete and mutually exclusive entities; they build on each other and work together, taking particular historically inflected forms in particular locations. These regimes of inequality, their overlaps, and the ideas that make them seem justified require continuous processes of critical reflection to understand embedded assumptions and help guide work towards programmes that support inclusion and substantive gender equality (Piketty, 2019).

BOX 2:**Beijing was a turning point for gender equality, but challenges remain**

The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action established a visionary agenda for women's empowerment. It states: 'The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community' (UN Women, 2014). The declaration and platform provide the most comprehensive global policy framework on gender equality in 12 key areas, including education. In this framework, 189 Member States committed to 6 strategic objectives on education and training (Table 1).

Education is also included in other key areas of the programme, such as under strategic objective D.1, in which governments commit to preventing and eliminating violence against women, including by developing 'programmes and procedures to eliminate sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women in all educational institutions' (UN Women, 2014, p. 84).

The UN Secretary-General's latest five-year report on implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action finds that the top priorities among all strategic objectives, especially in low- and middle-income countries, include elimination of violence against women and girls; access to healthcare, including sexual and reproductive healthcare; political participation and representation; and good quality education, training and lifelong learning. In high-income countries, more emphasis is placed on women's right to work and rights in the workplace; addressing unpaid care and domestic work; reconciliation of work and family; and the need to change negative social norms and gender stereotypes. Overall, countries have given least attention to reinforcing women's participation in environmental sustainability; gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and resilience; and digital and financial inclusion (United Nations, 2020).

TABLE 1:
Education- and training-related strategic objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

B.1	Ensure equal access to education
B.2	Eradicate illiteracy among women
B.3	Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education
B.4	Develop non-discriminatory education and training
B.5	Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms
B.6	Promote life-long education and training for girls and women

Source: UN Women (2014).

This report takes stock of progress towards gender equality in education but also towards implementation of selected Beijing strategies since 1995, informed by country case studies on early pregnancy, school counselling, teaching and learning materials, women in the education workforce and school-related gender-based violence, developed with the support of UNESCO and the Global Working Group to End School-related Gender-based Violence. In particular, the report aims to answer the following questions:

- How far have the world, regions and countries moved from the situation girls and women experienced in education 25 years ago?
- Has progress benefited all, and if not, who remains left behind and why?
- How have countries been implementing the strategic objectives to improve the education and training of girls and women?
- What remains to be done to fulfil the Beijing promise and keep advancing gender equality in a precarious and uncertain world?

While important progress has been made towards gender equality over the last 25 years, gains have been uneven across and within countries. Moreover, the progress made remains fragile, as reversals are occasionally observed in some contexts. The Covid-19 global pandemic, which risks deepening existing inequality, also has adverse implications for gender equality in many countries.

This photo symbolises the potential strength, power and confidence of the many girls in Solomon Islands if we are given the chance to complete our secondary education.

CREDIT: Plan International / Adolescent girls from the Solomon Islands



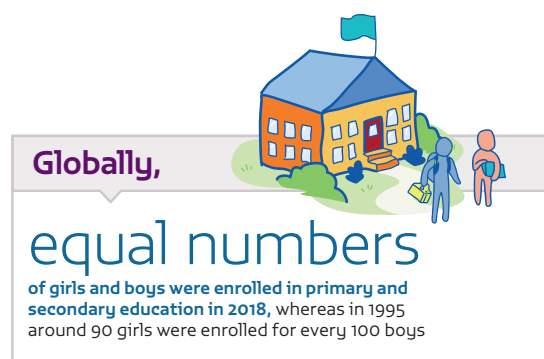
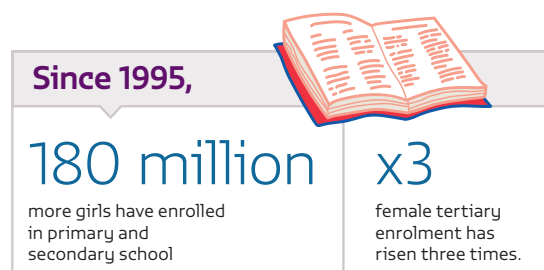
Progress towards gender parity in education is undeniable

In 1995, the education world was a very different place from a gender perspective. The glaring discrimination to which millions of girls and women were subjected in many parts of the world had repercussions that are still with us today: directly, in the guise of the stubbornly high share of women in the total population of illiterate adults, and indirectly, with women counting the consequences of having had no say in matters related to fertility or participation in economic, social and political activities.

“ Female enrolment accounted for 55% of the total increase in primary and secondary between 1995 and 2018, growing by 180 million ”

A generation later, the daughters of those young women enjoy the benefits of major progress towards parity in a range of education indicators, especially in primary and secondary education. Still, new potential areas of inequality are emerging in access to digital learning opportunities. These need to be monitored closely and addressed in coming years. This section reviews the latest status of gender disaggregated data and some of their main trends in education. A short presentation also discusses whether and how some education-related indicators could be affected by Covid-19.

MORE GIRLS ENROL IN AND COMPLETE SCHOOL THAN EVER BEFORE

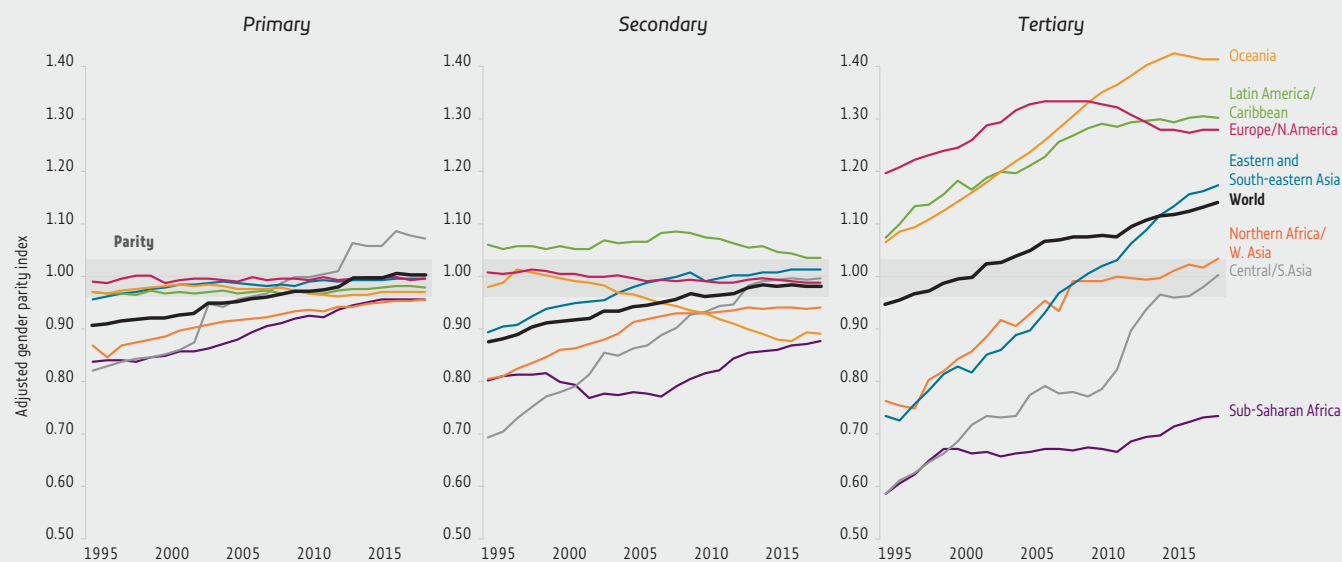


Globally, female enrolment accounted for 55% of the total increase in primary and secondary enrolment between 1995 and 2018, growing by 180 million, from 469 million to 649 million. Central and Southern Asia accounted for 47% of the total increase and sub-Saharan Africa for 38%. The global increase in women's enrolment corresponds to a combined gross enrolment ratio in primary and secondary education from 73% to 89%. The world has thus moved towards gender parity (**Figure 1**). Globally, the gender parity index in primary and secondary education increased from about 90 girls enrolled for every 100 boys in 1995 to an equal number of both in 2018. At both levels, the global trends were led by Southern Asia, particularly India, where more girls than boys are now enrolled in primary and secondary education. Significant improvement has also been observed in other countries. For instance, in 24 countries where in 1995 there were fewer than 80 girls enrolled in primary education for every 100 boys, including Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Djibouti and Nepal, parity has been achieved.

Girls continue to be more likely than boys to have never enrolled in school at all. Globally, of the 59 million primary school-age children who were not enrolled in 2018, 12 million, or 20%, have never attended school and will probably never start if current trends continue. Girls made up three-quarters (9 million) of such children, and over 4 million of those girls were in sub-Saharan Africa (UIS, 2019).

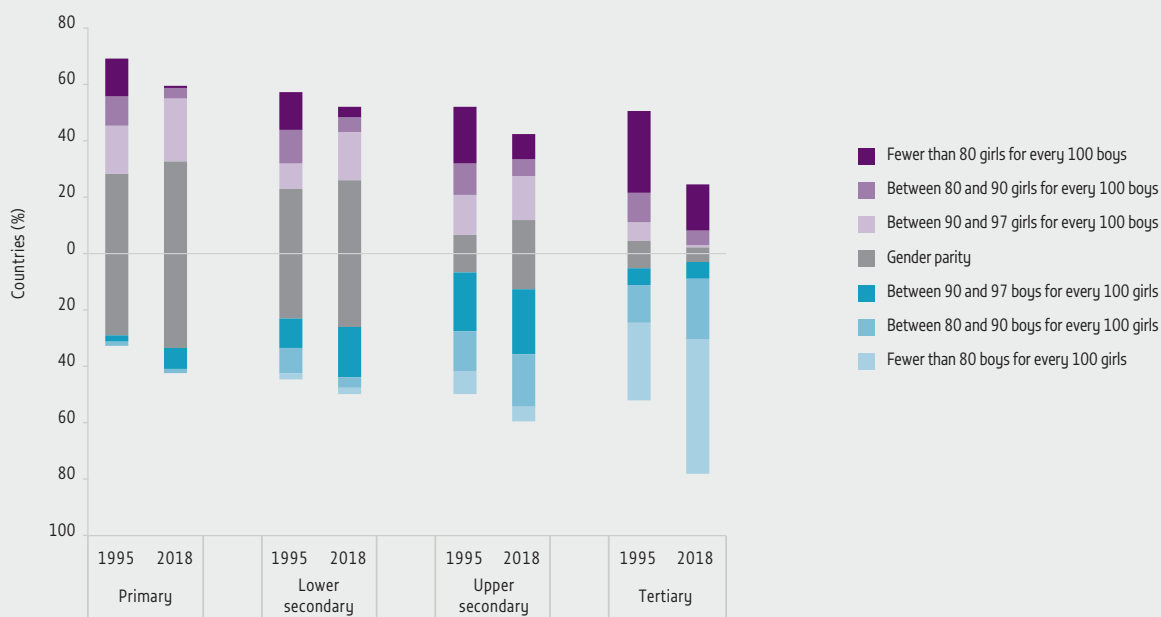
Between 1995 and 2018, the percentage of countries that had achieved gender parity rose from 56% to 65% in primary, from 45% to 51% in lower secondary and from 13% to 24% in upper secondary education (**Figure 2**).

FIGURE 1:
Progress towards gender parity has been uneven across region and education levels
 Adjusted gender parity index of gross enrolment ratio, by region and education level, 1995–2018



Source: UIS database.

FIGURE 2:
More countries have moved towards gender parity in basic education, but much remains to be done in upper secondary and tertiary education
 Percentage of countries having achieved gender parity worldwide by level of education, 1995 and 2018

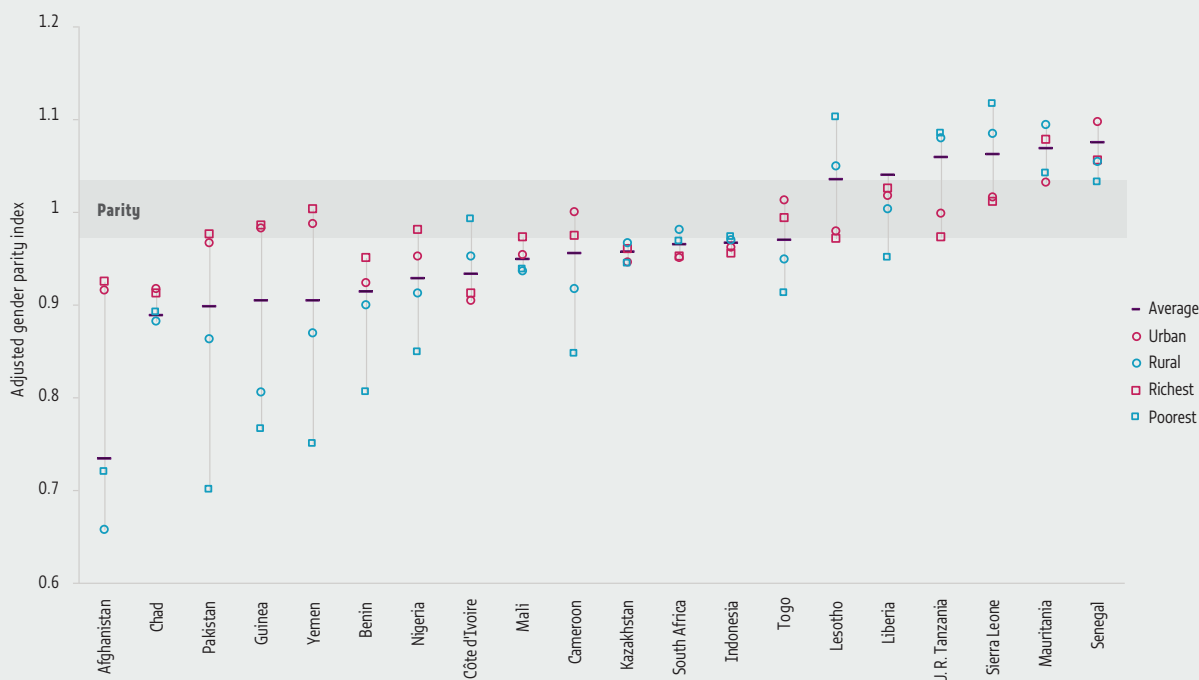


Source: UIS database.

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, 2013–18



Source: World Inequality Database on Education.

Still, considerable disparity at girls' expense remains, mostly in low-income sub-Saharan African countries. In 2018, fewer than 90 girls were enrolled for every 100 boys in 7 countries in primary, 15 countries in lower secondary and 22 countries in upper secondary education. Fewer than 90 boys were enrolled for every 100 girls in 24% of the 152 countries with data for upper secondary education in 2018, a situation that has hardly changed since 1995.

The intersection of gender with other factors of disadvantage compounds disparity. In a group of low- and middle-income countries with gender disparity in primary school attendance, the parity index was even lower among the poorest and those living in rural areas, mostly at the expense of girls (Figure 3). In Cameroon, Guinea, Pakistan and Yemen, gender parity existed among the richest 20% of households and those living in urban areas, but high levels of gender disparity were apparent among the poorest 20% and those living in rural areas. In Pakistan, only 70 of the poorest girls attended primary school in 2018 for every 100 of the poorest boys. In a few countries, including Lesotho, Sierra Leone and the United Republic of Tanzania, disparity at boys' expense at national level is further exacerbated among the poorest and those in rural areas.

Among 56 countries with data for 2000–18, primary completion rates improved faster, on average, for girls (by 17 percentage points) than for boys (by 15 percentage points). In Burundi, Cambodia and Sierra Leone, completion rates for girls rose by more than 40 percentage points. While overlapping vulnerabilities persist over time, completion rates for disadvantaged girls have been improving relatively in many countries. In Guatemala, the primary completion rates of the poorest girls increased from 21% to 54% between 2000 and 2015, faster than the rate of the poorest boys (from 35% to 58%), which meant the parity index increased from 0.60 to 0.92 (Figure 4).

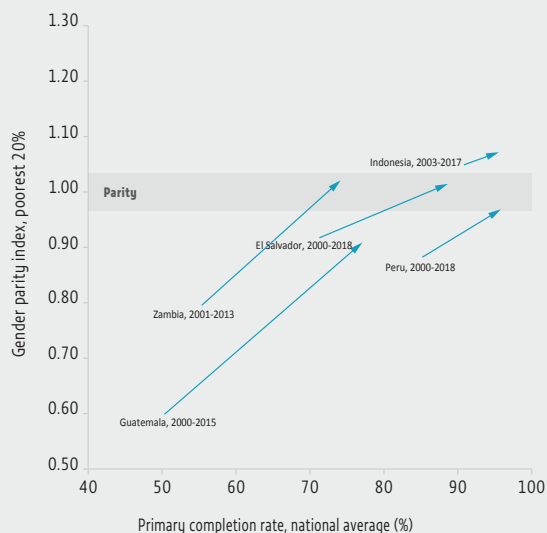
“

In Pakistan, only 70 of the poorest girls attended primary school in 2018 for every 100 of the poorest boys

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FIGURE 4:
The poorest girls have been catching up in primary completion

Primary school completion rate and gender parity index of poorest 20%, selected countries, 2000–18



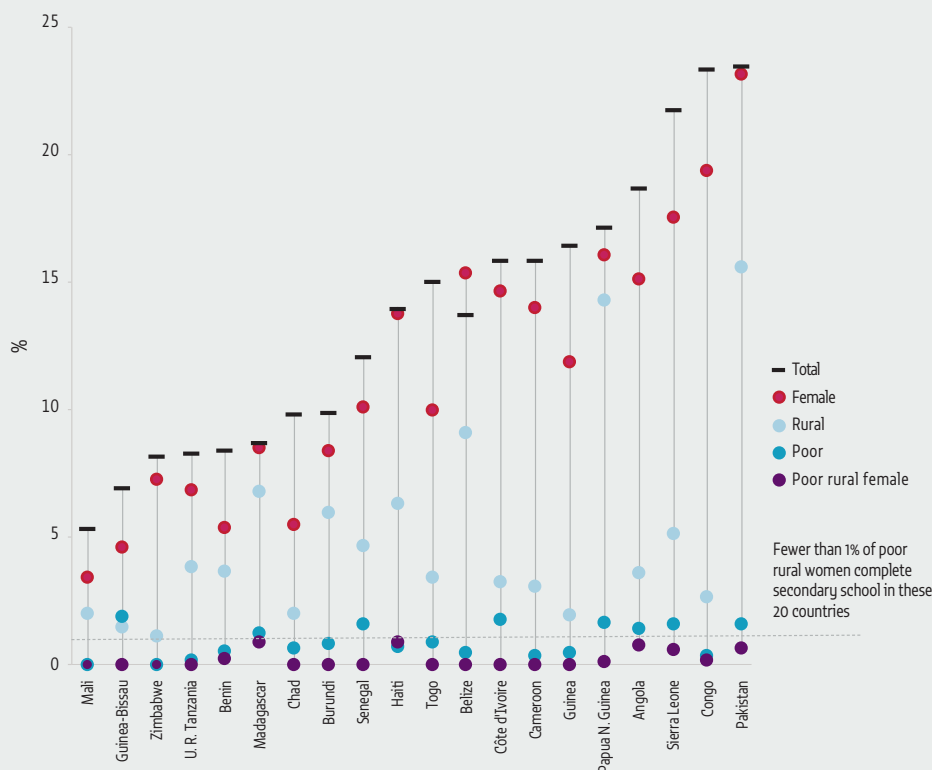
Source: World Inequality Database on Education.

In one-third of the 86 countries with household survey data for 2013–18, girls were more likely to complete primary school than boys. But significant disparity at girls' expense still exists in many countries. Fewer than 80 girls for every 100 boys completed primary in 4 countries (Afghanistan, Chad, Guinea-Bissau and Yemen), lower secondary in 15 countries and upper secondary in 22 countries.

At the upper secondary level, male completion rates were more than twice the level of female completion rates in Afghanistan, Benin, Chad and Togo. In Chad, 14.6% of boys and 5.5% of girls completed upper secondary school. In at least 20 countries with data, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa but also in Belize, Haiti, Pakistan and Papua New Guinea, hardly any poor, rural young women completed upper secondary school (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5:
In at least 20 countries, hardly any poor, rural young women completed upper secondary school

Upper secondary school completion rate, by sex, location and wealth, selected countries, 2013–18



Source: World Inequality Database on Education.

GIRLS OUTPERFORM BOYS IN READING AND EQUAL THEM IN MATHEMATICS

Globally, girls continue to outperform boys in reading, according to the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Among 15-year-old students, 80 boys achieved the minimum proficiency level in reading for every 100 girls across the 80 participating countries and territories. Girls' advantage in reading was very large in, for example, North Macedonia and Thailand, where about 60 boys achieved the minimum proficiency level in reading for every 100 girls. In more than half the 38 countries and territories that took part in PISA in 2000 and 2018, girls extended their advantage in reading over boys in 2018. In Israel, the number of boys achieving the minimum proficiency level in reading fell from 91 to 71 for every 100 girls.

Girls and boys perform equally well in mathematics in more than half of countries. Girls do better in one-quarter of countries, especially in South-eastern Asian countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. Boys maintain a strong advantage in Latin American countries such as Colombia and Costa Rica (Figure 6). Boys (12.3%) are more likely than girls (9.5%) to be among the highest performing students (levels 5 and 6 in PISA) across OECD countries (OECD, 2019).

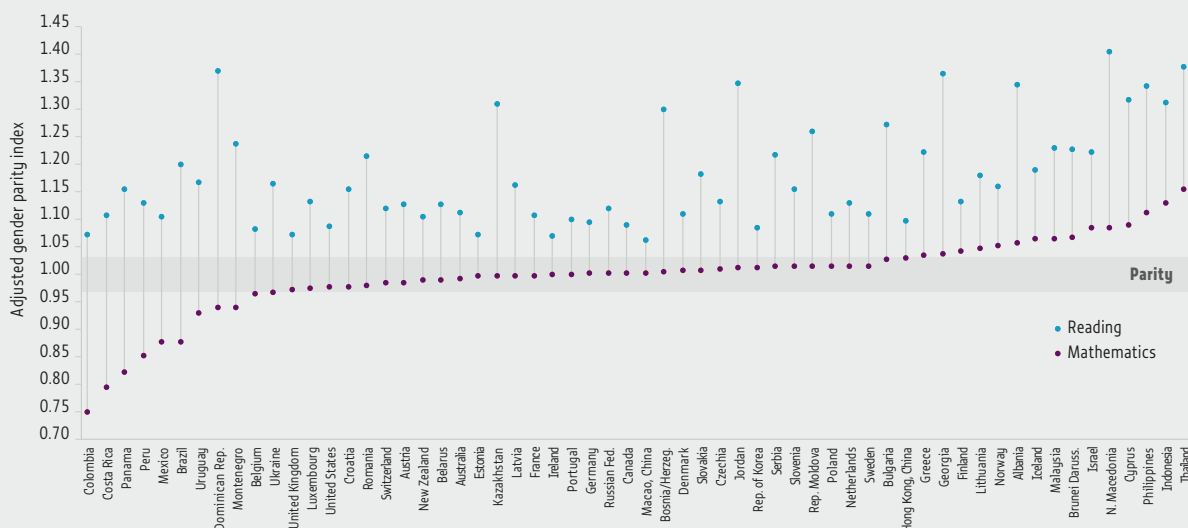
Gender disparity in learning outcomes intersects with other forms of disadvantage. In 24 countries, over 70% of poor boys scored below the minimum level of proficiency in reading in 2018, and in 24 countries, over 70% of poor boys scored below the minimum level (Schleicher, 2019). Detailed administrative data linked with school records have shown how boys from disadvantaged families in Denmark and in Florida, United States, had lower achievement scores and were less likely to complete secondary school than girls from similar backgrounds (Autor et al., 2019; Brenøe and Lundberg, 2018).

“ In 24 countries, over 70% of poor boys scored below the minimum level of proficiency in reading in 2018 ”

An important caveat is that the increasing gap in education attainment and reading achievement between girls and boys in some contexts does not necessarily seem to lead to disadvantage in adult skills for men. A study in the United States found that boys had more problems at school than girls, including lower learning aspirations and more frequent suspensions, when they were in households without a father, in poor quality schools and in less educated neighbourhoods. However, no evidence was found that this disadvantage had a greater impact on tertiary education, employment and income for men compared to women (Lei and Lundberg, 2020).

FIGURE 6: Girls outperform boys in reading and are mostly at par with them in mathematics

Adjusted gender parity index of the percentage of 15-year-olds achieving minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics, 2018



Source: UIS database.

ACCESS TO CERTAIN FIELDS OF STUDY IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION REMAINS GENDER-SEGREGATED

Education opportunities for women have expanded even more strikingly at tertiary education level. Globally, women's enrolment in tertiary education tripled, from 38 million to 116 million, between 1995 and 2018, accounting for 54% of the total increase in enrolment. The female gross enrolment ratio increased from 15% to 41% between 1995 and 2018, with the adjusted gender parity index rising from 0.95 to 1.14. Disparity at the expense of men was observed in all regions except Central and Southern Asia, where there is parity, and sub-Saharan Africa, where disparity at the expense of women persists, with 73 female students enrolled for every 100 males in 2018 (Figure 1). At the country level, gender disparity at men's expense is recorded in 74% of the countries with data (Figure 2).

Northern Africa and Western Asia has seen rapid expansion of tertiary education participation, outpacing the global average in recent years. Yet country experiences vary. Tunisia had among the highest participation rates as recently as 2010 but has since stagnated at around 35%. Saudi Arabia's enrolment rate more than doubled

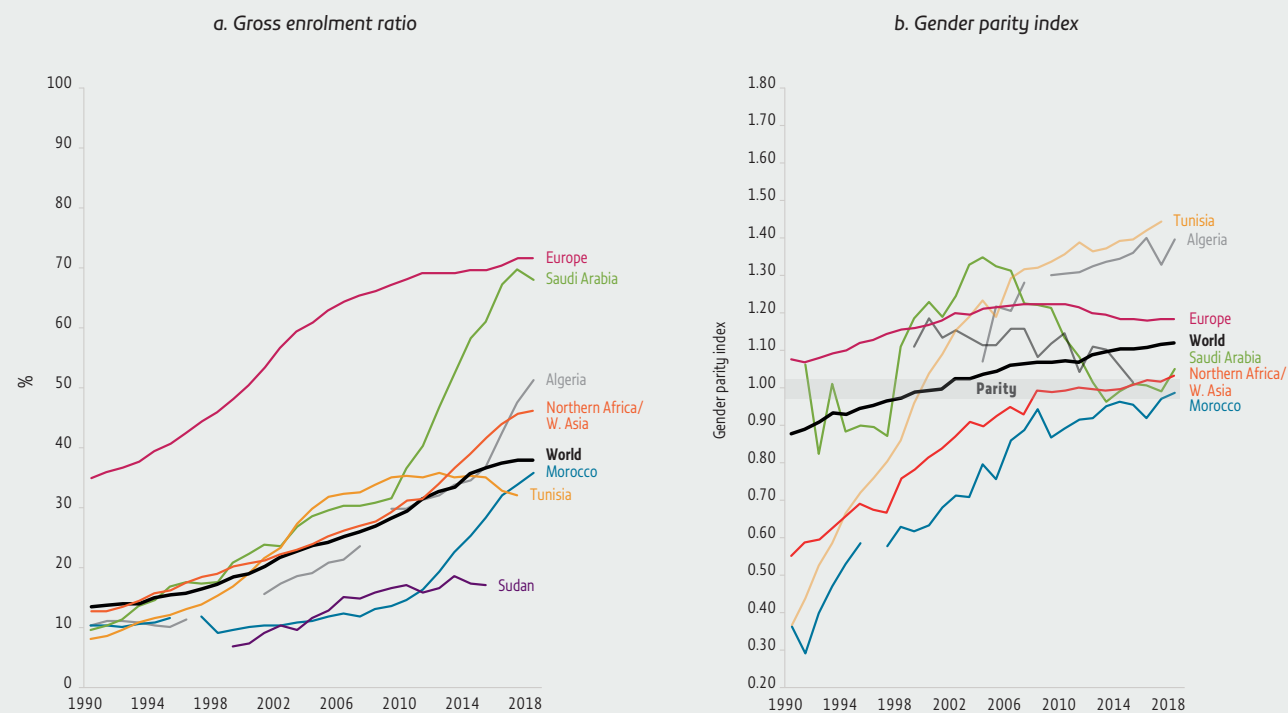
“ The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action made improvement of women's access to vocational training and science and technology a strategic objective ”

between 2009 and 2017, from 32% to 70%. In some countries in the region, such as Algeria, women have been the main beneficiaries of rapid increases in tertiary education enrolment. By contrast, Saudi Arabia, with some of the highest gender disparity levels (albeit at men's expense), increased enrolment while achieving gender parity. Morocco, which in the early 1990s had one of the most gender-unequal tertiary enrolment ratios (30 women for every 100 men), reached parity in 2017. As recently as 2011, Morocco had the same low participation rate as Sudan (16%), but while the latter stagnated, Morocco more than doubled participation in seven years to 36% (Figure 7).

FIGURE 7:

In Northern Africa and Western Asia, tertiary education expansion patterns vary by gender

Tertiary education indicators, selected Northern African and Western Asian countries and regional averages, 1990–2018



Source: UIS database.

The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action made improvement of women's access to vocational training (**Box 3**) and science and technology a strategic objective. But while global expansion of tertiary education has favoured women, their subject choices are still heavily influenced by perceptions of their abilities to pursue certain types of studies. Girls and women face barriers that restrict their engagement in male-dominated fields (CEDAW, 2017). The perception of science, technology and mathematics as 'male' subjects turns gender differences into self-concepts. At all education levels, girls show lower values in self-efficacy – that is, *perceived* as opposed to *actual* abilities – in mathematics and science subjects, aside from life sciences.

Women are over-represented in education, health, arts, humanities and social sciences, and under-represented in some science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields of study. It varies from less than 1% in Maldives to 41% in Oman. In OECD countries, just 20% of new entrants to short-cycle tertiary programmes and 30% of new entrants to bachelor's programmes in STEM fields in 2017 were women (OECD, 2020).

Engineering, manufacturing, construction, and information and communication technology (ICT) programmes are highly male-dominated: globally, the percentage of females studying engineering, manufacturing and construction or ICT is below 25% in over two-thirds of countries. In OECD countries, on average, women account for less than 20% of entrants in tertiary computer science programmes and about 18% of engineering entrants (OECD, 2017). The share of female students in ICT programmes is around 10% to 12% in high-income countries, including Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland, compared with 58% in Myanmar and 51% in Tunisia.

BOX 3:

Technical and vocational education is characterized by gender segregation in many programmes

Globally, only 1 in 10 students enrolled in secondary education was in a technical and vocational education or training (TVET) programme in 2018, a figure that has slightly declined since 1995 when enrolment stood at 12%. The share of girls in secondary TVET enrolment declined from 45% in 1995 to 42% in 2018, when it ranged from 29% in Central and Southern Asia to 52% in Latin America and the Caribbean. In sub-Saharan Africa, the share increased from 35% to 41%. At the country level, in 20 of the 159 countries with data for 2018, girls' share ranged from zero to over 60% in the Dominican Republic and Lesotho.

Different countries have seen very different changes since 1995. The share of girls in secondary TVET declined in 40 of the 70 countries with data for both years. In Germany, where it fell from 44% to 36%, girls accounted for 11% of new apprentice contracts in TVET-related occupations in 2018, a percentage unchanged for two decades. One explanation for the discrepancy may be that girls acquire better school leaving certificates, meaning they choose to go to university and avoid TVET-related occupations, especially in fields seen as male-dominated (Faulstich-Wieland, 2020). In the United Republic of Tanzania, the share of girls in TVET dropped by over 40 percentage points, from 53% to 12%.

Girls' share in TVET improved in 30 countries, with large increases in some where it had stood at zero in 1995, such as Peru and the Philippines, as well as the United Arab Emirates, where it reached 38% in 2017, a change potentially due to development of TVET infrastructure to support a knowledge-based economy and evolution

in social and cultural attitudes and perceptions towards these fields. However, girls' enrolment remained relatively low in some fields (Labid, 2020).

Girls are often predominantly enrolled in specific fields. In Botswana, the share of female students enrolled in Brigades, a TVET programme that absorbs students who do not meet senior secondary admission criteria, increased from 18% to 43% between 1995 and 2018. But girls were concentrated in secretarial, accounting, business, textiles and human resource programmes, while boys dominated programmes such as car mechanics, engineering, electronics, carpentry, welding and fabrication (Mokgolodi, 2020). In Germany, analysis of the 30 most popular new apprenticeship contracts indicates that while women and men equally favour business occupations, women prefer health occupations and men prefer skilled crafts and trades and technical occupations (Faulstich-Wieland, 2020).



The share of women in secondary technical and vocational education

declined to 42% in 2018
from 45% in 1995

“ Women account for less than 1% of the Silicon Valley applicant pool for technical jobs in artificial intelligence and data science ”

Results from the 2018 International Computer and Information Literacy Study of grade 8 students in 21 mostly high-income countries showed that although girls performed better than boys on measures of digital skills, they were less likely to want to study or find a job in an ICT-related field (Faulstich-Wieland, 2020).

Girls are less likely than boys to study in STEM fields

Gender segregation in fields of study affects career prospects and equality in work opportunities. In the 37 OECD countries participating in the 2018 round of PISA, 7% of girls but 15% of boys expected to work in science and engineering professions. The gender gap was particularly high in Colombia (10% of girls, 25% of boys) and Mexico (11% of girls, 30% of boys). The PISA results also showed that less than 1% of girls in OECD countries, but nearly 8% of boys, wanted to work in ICT-related occupations, with especially wide differences reported in Bulgaria, Estonia and Lithuania and in Poland, where 1% of girls but 19% of boys expected to work in ICT professions (OECD, 2019b).

These expectations were unrelated to performance. PISA results showed that in OECD countries, only 14% of girls who were top performers in science or mathematics expected to enter a professional field in science and engineering, compared with 26% of top-performing boys (Encinas-Martin, 2020). The gender gap among top performers persists even in countries that score highly on common gender equality measures, such as Norway (12% of girls, 33% of boys) and Sweden (20% of girls, 37% of boys).

Women account for less than 1% of the Silicon Valley applicant pool for technical jobs in artificial intelligence and data science. They are largely absent from the frontiers of technological innovation, where job growth is expected and pay typically is highest. Globally, only 6% of mobile application and software developers are female. At Google, women fill 21% of technical roles but account for only 10% of employees working on machine intelligence (UNESCO, 2019b).

Lack of gender diversity can have a serious multiplier effect as big data and algorithms become influential in day-to-day life (Rosenberg, 2017). Technology reflects its developers' values, and there is an urgent need to avoid gender bias in deep learning systems. More diversity on artificial intelligence technology development teams could help prevent bias and empower women to become digital creators (UNESCO, 2019b; European Union, 2016).

Gender gaps in career expectations are related to deeply ingrained gender-stereotyped norms about which careers are suitable for men and women. They are passed on to children by families, teachers and wider societies (OECD, 2017). According to 2015 PISA data, parents are more likely to expect adolescent sons to work in STEM occupations, even when daughters perform as well as their male classmates in mathematics, science and reading (OECD, 2015, 2017).

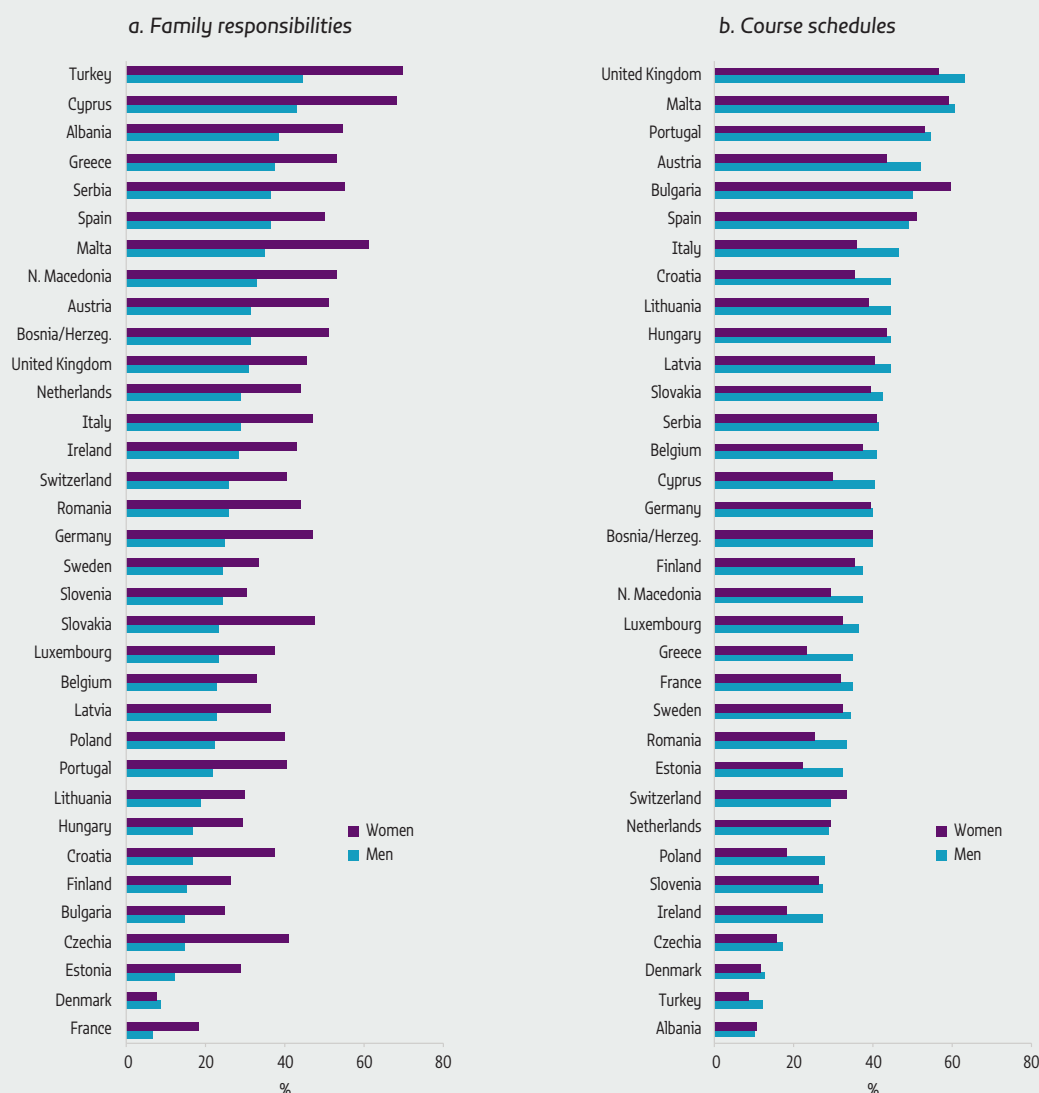
GENDER BARRIERS EXIST IN PURSUING ADULT EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Adult participation rates in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months were below 10% in more than half of the 99 countries with data available for 2011–18, according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics database. Percentages ranged from less than 1% in 13 countries, mostly in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, to over 60% in the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and Switzerland. Women's participation rates exceed those of men in Baltic states (e.g. by 14 percentage points in Estonia, 9 in Latvia) and Scandinavian countries (e.g. by 12 percentage points in Finland, 9 in Sweden) (Eurostat, 2019). One potential reason is gender segregation in education and employment. Too few males in these countries attend health, education and welfare courses: 9% in Estonia and 16% in Finland, well below the European Union average of 23% (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2019). In addition, these countries have higher than average labour market gender segregation by occupation and/or by sector (Burchell et al., 2014). Women are more likely to work as nurse and healthcare assistants and/or in the public sector, where opportunities for training are higher.

Analysing gender barriers to adult education and learning requires a clear methodological framework. The way barriers are categorized matters. One long-standing categorization (Cross, 1981) describes factors preventing participation as situational (e.g. life circumstances such as family responsibilities and lack of time), dispositional (e.g. determined by previous learning experiences and personal disposition towards learning) and institutional (e.g. structural conditions hampering access, such as cost, lack of support, rigid schedules and limited provision) (UIL, 2019). Dispositional barriers are less often investigated in surveys and thus are frequently underestimated (Rubenson, 2011). But when they are measured, they are shown in most countries to be the strongest factor hindering adult learning.

On average, across EU countries, almost 60% of adults surveyed said they did not participate in adult learning mainly because they saw no need for it. Cost and inconvenient schedules or locations were the most pressing institutional barriers. Among those willing to participate who did not, lack of time and family responsibilities were the most common situational barriers, according to data from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies and the Adult Education Survey. While men were slightly more likely to mention scheduling as a barrier, women in all countries except Denmark were far more likely to mention family responsibilities. The tendency

FIGURE 8:
Women in European countries were almost twice as likely as men not to participate in adult education for family-related reasons
Adults citing family responsibilities and course schedules as barriers to participation in adult education, by sex, selected European countries, 2016



Source: Eurostat (2016).

was higher in southern Europe, with up to two-thirds of female respondents in some countries unable to participate because of family commitments (**Figure 8**).

A comparative study based on 14 time-use surveys and 5 household surveys in 19 countries found that men allocated slightly more time to learning, leisure and social activities. Albania, Ghana, Pakistan and the Republic of Moldova reported the highest gender imbalances: Ghanaian women, for example, spent almost two hours less than men per day on these activities (Rubiano-Matulevich and Viollaz, 2019). Women were more likely to see cost as an obstacle and less likely to have scheduling conflicts, probably reflecting their lower labour force participation and higher part-time employment rates.

“ In sub-Saharan Africa, only 81 adult women were literate in 2018 for every 100 literate men ”

GENDER GAPS IN ADULT LITERACY SKILLS ARE CLOSING BUT THEIR LEGACY PERSISTS

Despite the expansion of education across the globe, progress in literacy skills acquisition has been relatively slow, largely because much of the progress has been offset by rapid population growth in countries with low literacy rates. Globally, the number of illiterate adults fell by nearly 16%, from 916 million in 1995 to 773 million in 2018. The adult literacy rate increased from 76.5% to 86.3%. In Eastern and South-eastern Asia, the number of illiterate adults fell by two-thirds, from 228 million to 78 million. However, in sub-Saharan Africa the number of adult illiterates increased by 46%, from 139 million to 204 million, despite the literacy rate rising from 55% to 66%.

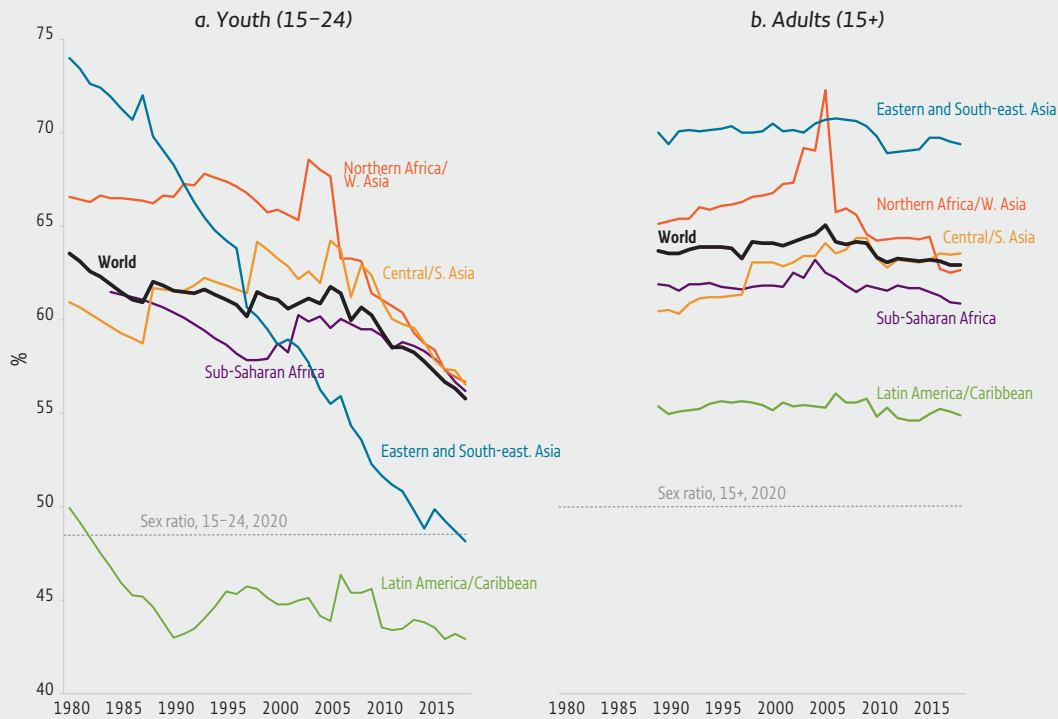
Gender disparity in adult literacy still prevails worldwide. Globally, the adult literacy gender parity index increased from 0.84 in 1995 to 0.92 in 2018. But while parity has been achieved in Latin America and the Caribbean and is about to be achieved in Eastern and South-eastern Asia, disparity persists in Central and Southern Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa, where 81 adult women were literate in 2018 for every 100 literate men.

The share of females among illiterate youth has decreased globally since around 2005, although in Eastern and South-eastern Asia, a sharp decrease has been evident since 1990 (**Figure 9a**). The share of women among illiterate adults, however, has remained constant for the past 20 years at around 63%. Eastern and South-eastern Asia has the highest adult female literacy rate and may be moving towards parity, but it also has the highest share of women among illiterate adults. Among women over age 65 in the region, 75% are illiterate (**Figure 9b**).

In 2018, fewer than 80 women were literate for every 100 men in 12 countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa. In Afghanistan, Benin, the Central African Republic, Chad and Mali, female literacy rates were around or below 30% and the gender parity index was below 0.60. In Chad, the women's literacy rate in 2016 was as low as 14%, compared with 31% for men. The extremely low rate was confirmed by direct literacy assessments: 15% of women aged 15 to 49 had attended secondary school and so could be assumed to be able to read a simple sentence without difficulty. Of those who had not attended secondary school, 1.7% could read a simple sentence without difficulty and 5.5% could read part of the sentence. In Guinea, 4% of women aged 15 to 49 had attended tertiary education. Of those who had not, 11% read without difficulty and 9% could read part of a sentence. In both countries, one in six women could read a sentence without difficulty. In 12 of 20 regions in Chad, only 1 in 10 females could read, falling to 1 in 100 in the Lac and Wadi Fira regions (**Figure 10**).

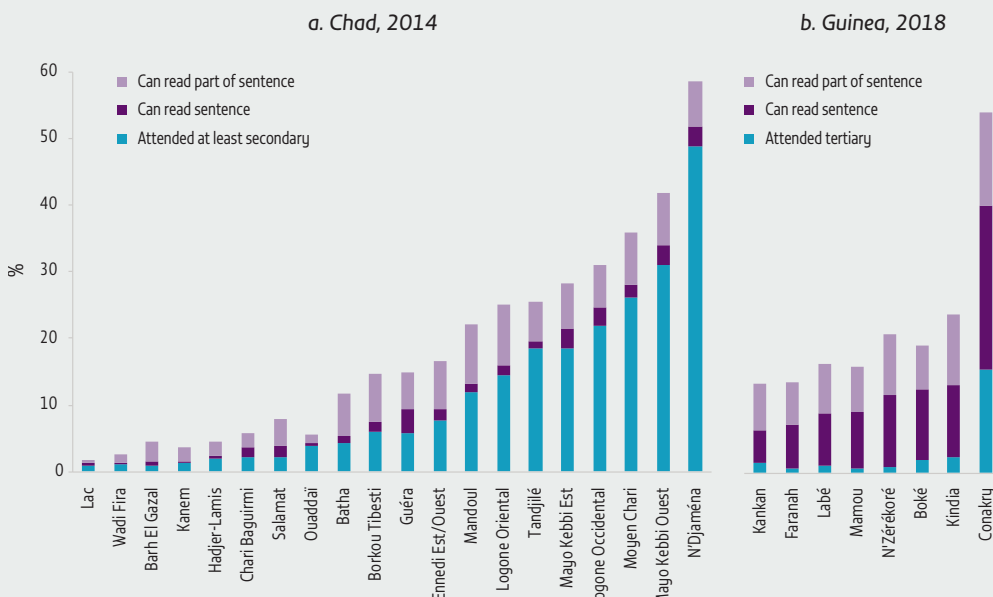
The most disadvantaged women are further left behind in terms of literacy skills. In 59 countries, women aged 15 to 49 from the poorest households are four times more likely to be illiterate than those from the richest households (UN Women, 2020a). In Nepal, while the literacy rate of the richest women at 75% was more than twice that of the poorest women at 30%, it remained substantially lower than that of the richest men at 93% (UNESCO, 2019). Women with disabilities tend to be more disadvantaged. The widest gap was seen in Mozambique, where 49% of men with disabilities, but only 17% of women with disabilities, could read and write (UIS, 2018).

FIGURE 9:
The share of women among illiterate adults has been constant for 20 years
Share of illiterate females, by region, 1990–2018



Source: UIS database.

FIGURE 10:
Just 1 in 10 women can read a sentence in most regions of Chad and Guinea
Female literacy rate, adults aged 15 to 49, by region



Source: Demographic and Health Surveys reports.

“ Even when women have access to the internet, they may be less able to use it for various reasons related to gender disparity ”

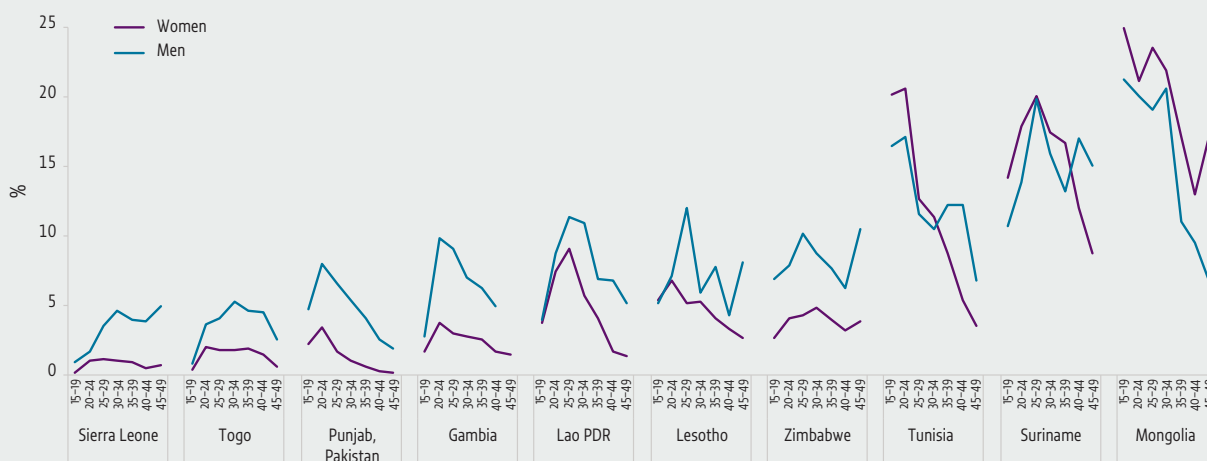
A number of countries have attempted to improve women’s access to adult literacy programmes as well as to expand the content of these programmes to make them more relevant. In Cambodia, a programme for women has expanded its scope from basic literacy to functional and information literacy, including financial literacy. In Eritrea, women and girls have been the primary focus of new literacy programmes offered through learning centres, resulting from collaboration with communities in remote areas. Morocco has prioritized women’s literacy programmes focused on developing socio-economic skills. Saudi Arabia has established equal access to high-quality education and has improved literacy rates among women. Systems have been shifting from a focus on eradicating illiteracy to increased concentration on continuing education (UNESCO, 2019).

NEW GENDER GAPS IN DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS ARE DEVELOPING

Besides basic literacy and numeracy, ICT skills are increasingly seen as essential to function in and navigate a knowledge-based world. Access to and use of ICT tools have become indispensable in day-to-day life and, even more so, in emergency contexts such as the Covid-19 crisis (Box 4). Wide gender disparity exists in ICT skills distribution. Worldwide, 327 million fewer women than men have a smartphone. Even when women have access to the internet, they may be less able to use it for various reasons related to gender disparity. For example, when multiple members of a household need access to limited computing resources at home, women and girls may receive less access (UNESCO, 2020b).

The sixth round of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) includes a module with questions on the nine ICT skills being monitored as part of SDG global indicator 4.4.1. The data cover adults aged 15 to 49 and allow disaggregation of skills by individual characteristics. Clear gender patterns emerge across the 10 countries that have included the module in their survey. For instance, women in the seven poorest countries covered are less likely to have used a basic arithmetic formula in a spreadsheet, while parity exists in the three richer countries: Mongolia, Suriname and Tunisia. There are two additional features of interest in these three countries. First, young women are slightly more likely than men to have this skill. Second, there is a distinctive age profile, showing the rapid pace of ICT adoption by younger people (Figure 11).

FIGURE 11: Women in low- and lower-middle-income countries are less likely to have basic information and communication technology skills
Percentage of 15- to 49-year-olds who could use a basic arithmetic formula in a spreadsheet, selected countries, by age and sex, 2017-19



Source: MICS Survey Findings reports.

The data also show wide socio-economic disparity in the distribution of basic ICT skills. In the seven poorer countries, the probability of women in the poorest 60% of the population having the spreadsheet skill is below 1%. In the three richer countries, 3% of women from the poorest quintile had this skill as compared with 27% in the richest in Tunisia, 35% in Suriname and 39% in Mongolia.

BOX 4:

COVID-19 is an additional layer to the gender equality in education challenge

Uncertainty over the contagiousness and deadliness of COVID-19 led governments around the world to impose lockdowns, curtail economic activity and close schools and universities. In April 2020, 91% of the global student population was affected in 194 countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has precipitated an education crisis, fuelled by deep and multiple forms of inequality. Some of these forms have gender roots and gender implications. While the extent of the implications is difficult to predict with precision, they need to be monitored closely.

The first of these implications is concern that the extended periods families spent at home during lockdown increased gender-based violence (Chandan et al., 2020; IRC, 2020; Taub, 2020). Whether such violence affects mothers or girls, the consequences for girls' ability to continue learning are clear.

Second, sexual and gender-based violence coupled with restricted access to reproductive health, police, justice and social support services may increase early pregnancy (Women's Link Worldwide et al., 2020). The number of teen pregnancies reported between March and June in Turkana county, Kenya, tripled from the previous year (Smith, 2020). During the 2014–15 Ebola epidemic, some studies in Sierra Leone indicated localized rises in teen pregnancy (Elston et al., 2016), although nationally the rate of women aged 15 to 19 who had a live birth continued to fall, from 26.4% in 2010 (Statistics Sierra Leone and UNICEF-Sierra Leone, 2011) to 19.3% in 2017 (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2018). A UK-funded programme in Sierra Leone is developing a national radio show to improve knowledge and understanding of gender norms, including via messages on gender-based violence prevention (Boost et al., 2020).

Third, the potential increase in early pregnancy is likely to be a result of increased early marriages, a consequence of households being plunged deeper into poverty due to the pandemic. One estimate is that COVID-19 could cause 13 million more child marriages over the next 10 years (UNFPA, 2020). There have been attempts, based on previous knowledge of the links between poverty and school attendance, to project the potential effect of COVID-19 on dropout. UNESCO suggests that 3.5% of adolescent girls of lower secondary school age and 4.1% of young women of upper secondary school age in sub-Saharan Africa are at risk of not returning to school (UNESCO, 2020e). The World Bank concluded that girls aged 12 to 17 are more at risk than boys of not returning to school in low- and lower-middle-income countries (Azevedo et al., 2020). Recognizing the need to maintain contact with girls during the pandemic to support their eventual return to school, CAMFED, an international NGO, has deployed community workers in five sub-Saharan African countries (CAMFED, 2020).

Fourth, the shift to online distance learning could disadvantage girls. In low- and middle-income countries, women are 8% less likely than men to have a mobile phone and 20% less likely to use the internet on it (GSMA, 2020; World Bank, 2020). Afghanistan's COVID-19 education response includes provision of tablets and smartphones directly to women in households (UNESCO, 2020a).

Finally, school closures have led to increased childcare and chore responsibilities at home, which are likely to disadvantage girls more. A study of secondary school students in Ecuador during lockdown showed boys and girls were equally likely to continue their education in the morning but more girls did chores in the afternoon, while boys were engaged in leisure activities (Asanov et al., 2020).

“When a girl child is given a chance, she can do what a boy child can do,” says 14-year-old Harriet. In a refugee settlement in Uganda this confident, smiling student is showing just what girls are capable of.

CREDIT: Louis Leeson / Save the Children



The cycle of intergenerational transmission of education inequality can be broken

Education has helped me survive living in poverty. Thanks to my mother's efforts I managed to pursue a different career and apply for a position as a teacher in my nation of Guatemala. As a professional, I helped my siblings to become professionals as well.

Lidia, Guatemala

Inequality is reproduced across generations. There is a high probability of poor parents passing their disadvantage on to their children, undermining the children's health, nutrition and education prospects. But inequality arising from intergenerational transmission of income, education, social relations, personality traits and genetic attributes can be influenced by policies on education, care, health, immigration and other social issues. Policies can limit the extent to which inherited advantage or disadvantage determines socio-economic status (D'Addio, 2007; OECD, 2008).

Parents pass along not only genes but also human capital (e.g. knowledge and health), cultural capital (e.g. skills and awareness that help shape social status and expectations), social capital (e.g. networks that facilitate cooperation) and financial capital. They do this through direct endowment (of traits, abilities, attitudes, connections, etc.) and investment linking the generations' income and well-being. In particular, parents can transfer financial assets and invest in children's human capital. Education mediates the influence of many other factors and is a major channel for intergenerational transmission of socio-economic status (Narayan et al., 2018). Increased education mobility is associated with income growth and greater equality of opportunities (Torche, 2019). Poor families' financial constraints on investment in their children, by contrast, are a key factor in transmission of disadvantage.

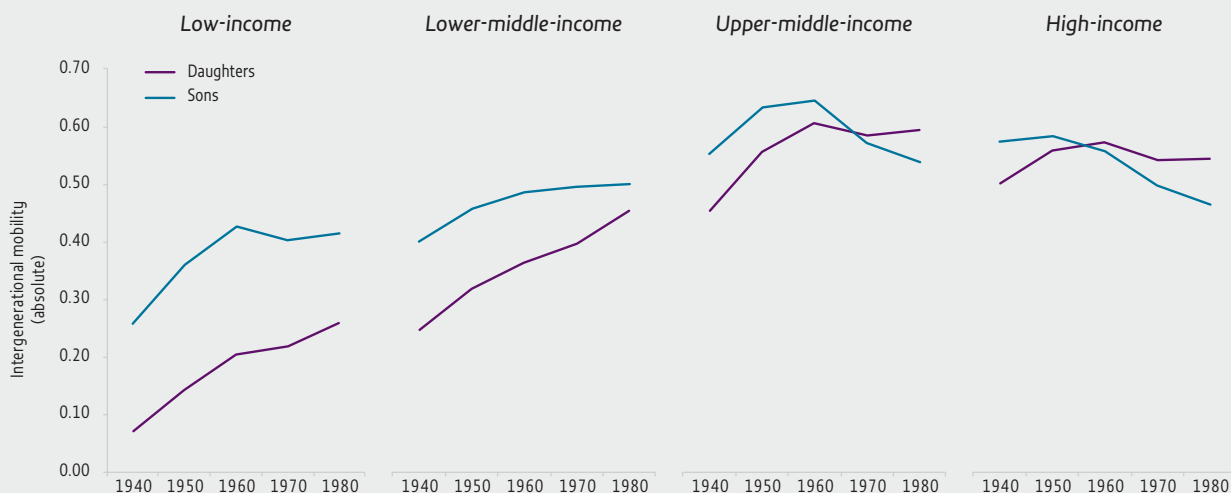
A variety of data and methods can be used to assess the education relationship between generations. One approach is to look at the share of children who have higher education levels than their parents, a measure known as absolute or intergenerational mobility. Analysis for this report of the World Bank's Global Database on Intergenerational Mobility shows that, internationally, the gender gap in this measure decreased for each 10-year cohort born from the 1940s to the 1980s. A slightly higher percentage of daughters (52%) than sons (51%) experienced absolute mobility in the 1980s cohort. This change occurred first in high-income countries for the 1960s cohort and in upper-middle-income countries for the 1970s cohort. It has yet to occur in low- and lower-middle-income countries, although the gap is closing in the latter (**Figure 12**).

Another approach is to examine the extent to which children's education depends on their parents' education, a measure known as relative mobility or intergenerational persistence. Lower values of this coefficient imply lower persistence, which means higher mobility. Globally, relative mobility has been increasing for daughters and sons, but is still lower among daughters in relation to both maternal and paternal education, especially mothers' years of schooling (**Figure 13a**).

FIGURE 12:

Absolute education mobility has been rising but a gender gap remains in low- and lower-middle-income countries

Share of a generation cohort achieving a higher education level than parents (absolute mobility), by sex, cohort and country income group



Note: All mobility measures reported are simple averages unweighted by population. Adults whose parents have tertiary education are excluded.
 Source: GEM Report team estimates based on the Global Database on Intergenerational Mobility (World Bank, 2018).

Focusing on mothers, while there is almost no gender gap in relative mobility among children in high-income countries, such a gap exists in low- and middle-income countries (Figure 13b). The impact of mothers’ schooling on the schooling outcomes of daughters and sons is more robust than that of fathers’ schooling in low- and middle-income countries. In the case of the 1980s cohort, one additional year of maternal education influences girls more than boys: the coefficient of persistence is 0.59 for daughters (equivalent to seven months) and 0.54 for sons in low-income countries, compared with 0.29 for both in high-income countries (equivalent to four months).

Overall, the relationship between absolute intergenerational mobility and intergenerational persistence is negative (Figure 14). However, there is considerable variation in terms of relative mobility between countries at the same level of absolute mobility. For instance, while 64% of children achieved a level of education higher than their parents in Sweden, Palestine and Cambodia, the levels of relative mobility are among the highest in Sweden and among the lowest in Cambodia, where parental education determines children’s education.

“ Relative mobility is still lower among daughters in relation to both maternal and paternal education, especially mothers’ years of schooling ”

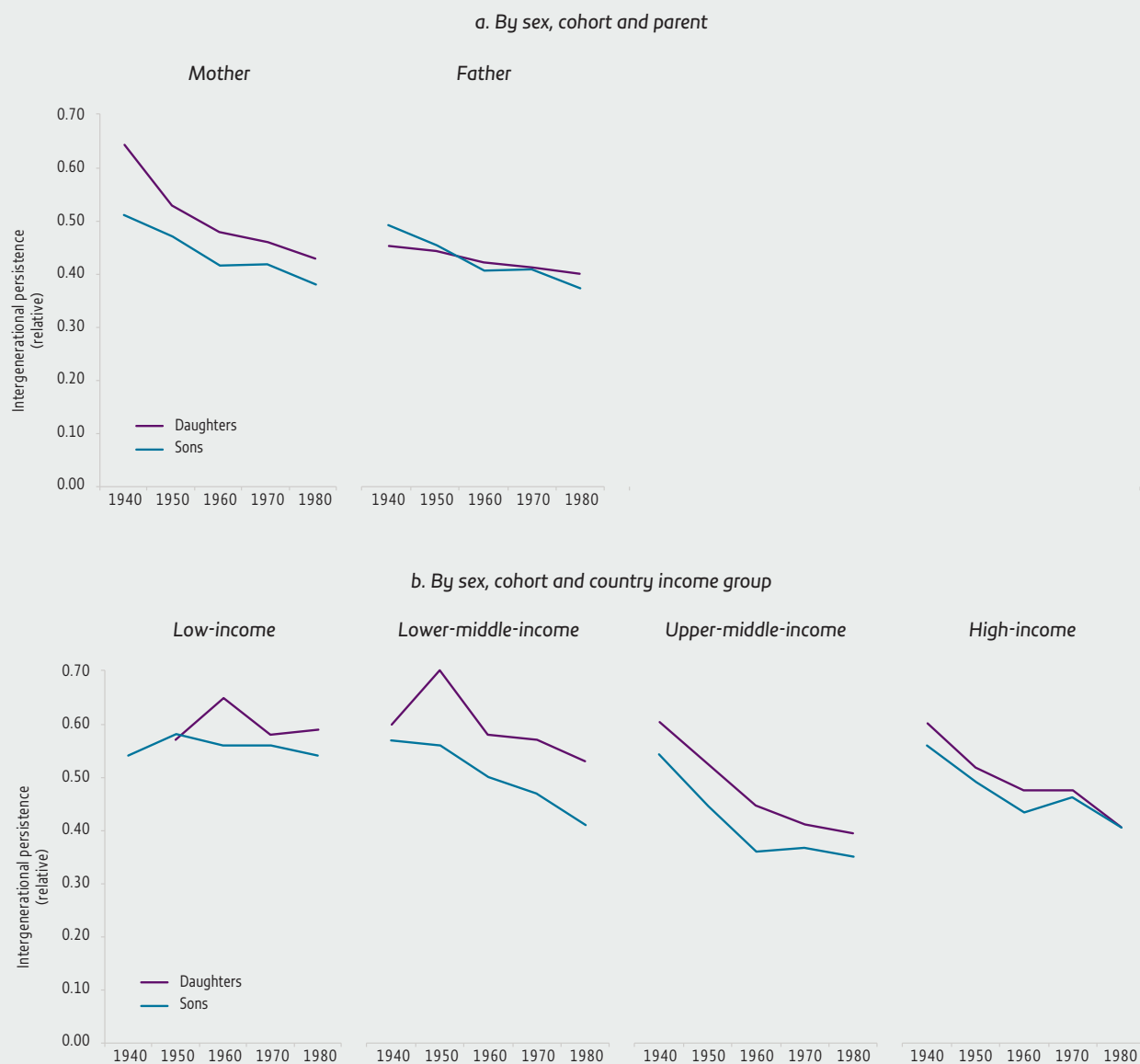
The benefits of maternal education accumulate

Girls born in low-income countries in the 1980s acquired **7 more months** of education for every year of education their mothers received.

FIGURE 13:

Relative education mobility has been rising but daughters are less educationally mobile than sons

Regression coefficient of daughters' and sons' years of schooling on parents' years of schooling (relative mobility)



Note: All mobility measures reported are simple averages unweighted by population. Adults whose parents have tertiary education are excluded. A lower value of the coefficient means higher relative mobility.

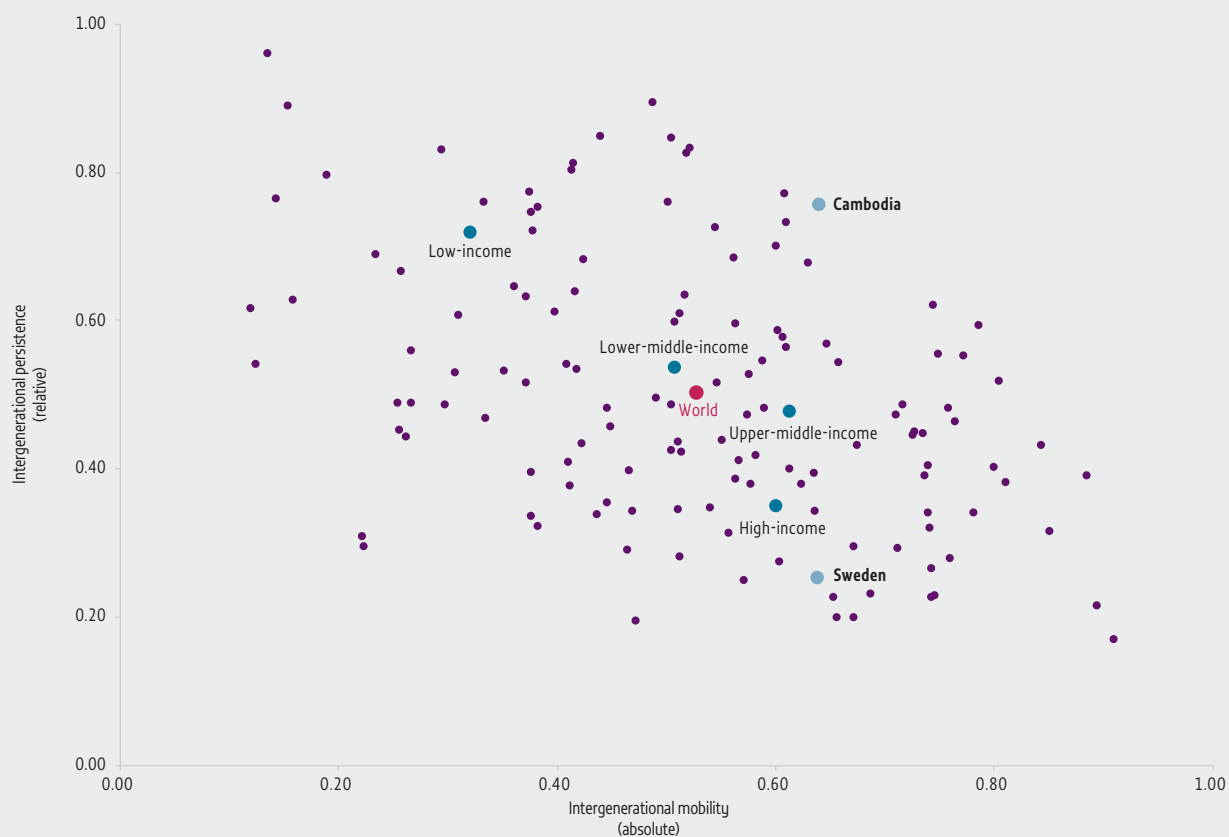
Source: GEM Report team estimates based on the Global Database on Intergenerational Mobility (World Bank, 2018).

This variation suggests there is scope for policy interventions, and several have proved useful in a range of contexts and at different levels. For example, some countries reserve a certain proportion of places in tertiary education for vulnerable groups. Countries that removed user fees for primary education saw a direct effect on schooling, with increased supply of education and improved distribution. The largest gains were reported for the least educated mothers, whose children had the greatest starting disadvantage: the intergenerational correlation of education fell by 12.5% when user fees were lifted (Bhalotra et al., 2014). Another option is to reduce indirect costs for disadvantaged groups through scholarships or cash transfers conditional on school attendance. For example, Progresar, a government cash transfer programme in Argentina, supports poorer and indigenous 18- to 24-year-olds.

FIGURE 14:

Despite a clear relationship between absolute and relative mobility, there is large variation among countries

Absolute and relative educational mobility by country and country income group, 2018



Source: GEM Report team estimates based on the Global Database on Intergenerational Mobility (World Bank, 2018).

However, to protect the right to education for all, much more is needed. The rest of this report is dedicated to potential additional measures. The issues such measures are designed to address include early pregnancy, school counselling, teaching and learning materials, women in the education workforce and school-related gender-based violence, which can affect the chances of girls in low- and lower-middle-income countries.

This is one of many stories of girls who are the first in their family to graduate. It was collected by the GEM Report as part of a campaign, #Iamthe1stgirl, aiming to demonstrate progress in gender equality in education since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years ago.

FIRST GENERATION GRADUATE:

Tsogo Bakamoso from South Africa

I was born and bred in the Alexandra Township, one of the poorest townships in South Africa. I am the youngest sibling in my family; I have 4 siblings from both my parents and 2 older sisters from my late father. My mother is retired and my father passed away 2 months ago. My mother used to be the main breadwinner. She worked as a store cashier all her life. My father was unemployed for years, and financially, it was always a challenge to afford everything.

In 2008, when I was completing my final high school year (Grade 12), I desired to study at a university in South Africa, but my mother could not afford university fees. I also realised that the information I needed in order to seek higher education did not exist. It took me quite a long time to navigate through all the options.

Thanks to scholarships and hard work, I was the first girl in my family to graduate. I have a Master's, PGCE, BA Honours, Btech and a National Diploma. With my PGCE I became a teacher at Maryvale College in Johannesburg. While a teacher, I also mentored students from the public school in the township. I organised open days at universities, I helped students pick their courses, helped advise them on careers and ran mentorship programmes.

In 2014, at the age of 24 I established a Non-Profit Organisation called Tsogo Ya Bokamoso Foundation to assist and encourage young people in the community who wish to further their studies. It has helped to shape lives of many young people from Kwa-Bhekilanga Secondary School in Alexandra Township with academic and career development.

Hard work, determination and a desire to learn are the traits that have helped me overcome all my challenges and break down the barriers in my family. Having access to an education has developed my skills and broadened my knowledge. It has created platforms and opened bigger opportunities for myself, including international exposure. Education has spread my wings and helped me use my network to my advantage. It has given me access to endless opportunities and put me in the forefront of achieving my dreams. Today, I am among the 15% of Top Achievers at the University of Johannesburg and have previously been featured in a noble magazine – Destiny to represent women in their 20's. I have also been featured in a local newspaper post completing my master's in the UK.

What I hope and aspire for my children is a better, stable and secure future. I desire for my children to stand up and be able to do things for themselves, just as I did. I wish for them to be independent, and not receive everything on a silver platter. Instead, to work hard and avoid being spoon-fed. My hope is that they do not let fear and doubt stand in the way of achieving their dreams. I hope they will think out of the box, not be limited by their circumstances but to believe in themselves and their dreams. To believe that they can be anything and anyone they want to be in the entire universe.

Sanwara Begum has been living in a Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh for the past two years. She has not been able to formally study, as the Bangladesh government has not provided refugee status to the Rohingyas living in Bangladesh. She thinks that “everyone has right to study further, if they are capable”.

CREDIT: Mohammad Rakibul Hasan



Laws and policies promoting gender equality in education are inadequately implemented

Laws and policies determine the framework for achieving inclusion in education. At the international level, the global community's aspirations are expressed in binding legal instruments and non-binding declarations, primarily led by the United Nations but also by regional organizations. These agreements have strongly influenced the national legislative and policy actions on which progress towards inclusion hinges.

However, in spite of the good intentions enshrined in laws and policies on inclusive education, governments often do not take the follow-up actions necessary to ensure implementation. Barriers to access, progression and learning remain high, and they disproportionately affect more disadvantaged populations. Within education systems, these populations face discrimination, rejection and reluctance to accommodate their needs. This section gives a brief overview of key international instruments and examines the evolution of legislative and policy development on two areas with a bearing on gender equality in education: early pregnancy and school counselling.

INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS HAVE SHAPED INCLUSION AND GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action have been and continue to be influential in driving legislative initiatives towards gender equality around the world. In the past decade, 131 countries have enacted 274 legal and regulatory reforms supporting gender equality. In 80% of the countries with data, national plans to achieve gender equality are in place, although only one-third are costed and resourced (UN Women, 2020a).

Progress has been made towards eliminating gender discrimination in education. Building on the 1960 UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education, which has been ratified by 23 more countries since 1995 for a total of 105 (UNESCO, 2020d), Article 10 of CEDAW asks signatories to 'take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education'. Yet many countries entered reservations when ratifying CEDAW (Keller, 2014). Over time, all reservations on Article 10 have been withdrawn, but many reservations remain on other articles limiting the education opportunities of women and girls (Freeman, 2009).

Overall, 90 countries now prohibit gender discrimination in their constitutions. An analysis by the GEM Report team shows that education ministries have sponsored laws promoting gender equality in 50% of countries and have issued policies to that end in 42% of countries. Another 46% of countries have legislation and 58% policies promoting gender equality in education under other ministries' leadership.

The right to inclusive education is enshrined in the 2006 UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In 2016, General Comment 4 by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities broadened the concept of inclusion, stating that among the core features of inclusive education must be respect for the diversity of all learners, irrespective not only of disability but also of other characteristics, such as sex. Still, many governments have yet to establish this principle in their laws, policies and practices: 68% of

“ Education ministries have sponsored laws promoting gender equality in 50% of countries and have issued policies to that end in 42% of countries ”

countries have a definition of inclusive education in their laws and policies but only 57% of these definitions cover multiple marginalized groups. In 25% of countries, the definition of inclusive education only covers people with disabilities or special needs.

EDUCATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES CONTINUE TO FAIL GIRLS WHO EXPERIENCE EARLY PREGNANCY

Early or teenage pregnancy can be a consequence of early school leaving, but it is also one of its causes: pregnant girls and young mothers are not always able to return to school to continue or complete their education, especially in poorer countries, but also in some rich ones. Strategic objectives B.1 and B.4 of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action called on countries to remove all barriers to formal education for pregnant adolescents and young mothers, including by promoting affordable and physically accessible childcare facilities and parental education to encourage those responsible for the care of children and siblings to return to, continue and complete their education.

Globally, the prevalence of early pregnancy declined by one-third between 1995 and 2020, from some 60 to 40 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19 (UNPD, 2019). Yet early pregnancy rates remain high in many countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, where, despite an overall fall from 133 to 97 births per 1,000 15- to 19-year old women over the past 25 years, rates remain at levels higher than the 1995 regional average in countries including Chad (145), Mali (157) and Niger (171). Early pregnancy is often linked to early marriage (**Box 5**).

Case studies from Argentina (Ginestra, 2020a), Sierra Leone (Bah, 2020) and the United Kingdom (Freedman, 2020) show how early pregnancy hinders girls' education, and what steps have been taken to ameliorate the problem. Strong political commitment has led to progress in reducing early pregnancy rates and providing education for pregnant girls. Support to pregnant teenagers to address issues with childcare and with social, health and psychological problems has to be holistic to keep them in education. It requires cross-government cooperation, backed up with adequate funding and coordination with partners.

BOX 5:

Early marriage remains a concern in many countries

Early marriage is both a cause and an effect of early pregnancy. Globally, the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 married before age 18 fell from 25% in 1995 to 20% in 2013–19; 5% were married before age 15. In sub-Saharan Africa, 35% of women between 20 and 24 were married before age 18 and 11% before 15. The corresponding figures in Southern Asia were 29% and 8% (UNICEF, 2020).

The poorest girls and those living in rural areas are most affected. In Bangladesh, 95% of the poorest rural women aged 20 to 49 in Rangpur division were married by age 18, compared with 41% of the richest urban women in Sylhet division (UN Women, 2020a). Early marriage also exists in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. In Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, 14% of women aged 15 to 19 are married, divorced or widowed (OECD, 2019d). The practice is more prevalent in some ethnic and religious groups. For instance, in

Belarus, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, arranged marriages under common law are practiced in some Roma communities, with Roma girls married at age 15 or younger, often to grooms who are also minors (Cârstocea and Cârstocea, 2017). In Armenia, where the early marriage rate is 5%, it is more common among the Yezidi, for whom it is considered an aspect of cultural identity (Council of Europe, 2014; UNFPA, 2014).

While Article 16 of CEDAW asks signatories to 'take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations', 27 countries, including many with high early marriage prevalence, such as Bangladesh and Niger, have entered reservations on the article in full or in part (United Nations, 2020).

“ Early pregnancy rates remain at levels higher than the 1995 regional average in some sub-Saharan African countries ”

“ In Argentina, among 15- to 29-year-olds, about 16% said pregnancy, maternity, paternity or engagement was their main reason for not completing secondary school ”

In Argentina, legislation and flexible programmes have supported pregnant girls and young parents

Argentina recorded 61 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19 in 1995; the figure had fallen to 49 by 2018. An initial decline was followed by an increase between 2003 and 2011, then the rate decreased again. Most early pregnancies occur among 15- to 19-year-olds but pregnancies among younger girls also exist. The number of births per 1,000 girls below 15 fell from 2.1 in 1995 to 1.4 in 2018 (Ginestra, 2020a). The probability of early pregnancy depends on region, education level, socio-economic status and access to sexual and reproductive health education and services. In 2011/12, 18% of the poorest 20% of women aged 15 to 19 were pregnant, compared with 3% of the richest 20% (UNICEF and Argentina Ministry of Social Development, 2013). As of 2017, young mothers represented 4.4% of students in urban areas but 8.7% in rural areas. Young fathers represented 3.1% of students in urban areas and 4.5% in rural areas (Argentina Ministry of Education, 2017). Girls' risk of early pregnancy is increased by poverty, limited access to adequate health services, low school retention rates, work at early ages, childcare responsibilities and general inequality of opportunity (Azevedo et al., 2012).

For girls aged 15 to 17 who had attended school, maternity was the main reason for early school leaving, cited by 38% (UNICEF and Argentina Ministry of Social Development, 2013). Among 15- to 29-year-olds of both sexes, about 16% said pregnancy, maternity, paternity or engagement was their main reason for not completing secondary school. However, while 30% of females mentioned dropping out due to maternity, only 5% of males cited paternity as the reason (INDEC, 2014).

The proportion of pregnant girls and young mothers decreases as the level of education attained increases (UNICEF and Argentina Ministry of Social Development, 2013). While 57% of young mothers had completed primary and 38% had completed secondary, only 4% had continued into post-secondary education. Conversely, 55% of 20- to 29-year-old women who had not experienced early pregnancy had completed secondary education and 15% had continued their studies beyond secondary (UNFPA, 2020).

Pregnancy during adolescence also has a detrimental effect on school achievement. Pregnant girls and young mothers achieve lower grades and fail more often than girls without children. For instance, 64% of young mothers did not achieve basic proficiency in mathematics, compared with 45% of other female students. Young parents are also more likely to repeat grades (Argentina Ministry of Education, 2017).

Paternity in adolescence has received much less attention than maternity. Qualitative studies have struggled to reach a consensus on its impact. Some research indicates that young fathers leave school to provide for their children (Fernandez Romeral, 2017), while other studies suggest that most had already left school and that the pregnancy encouraged them to re-enter school (Argentina Ministry of Education, 2019).

Argentina has enacted two laws that protect pregnant girls' and young parents' right to education. Its 2002 Law 25584 prohibits any institutional action that prevents pregnant students and young mothers and fathers from school entry or continuation. They have the right to permitted absences during pregnancy, breastfeeding or any matter related to the health of mother or child (Argentina Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, 2002). Law 26206 in 2006 guaranteed school entry, progression and completion for female students during and after pregnancy, making available breastfeeding rooms, home- and hospital-based education, special regimes of absences and flexibility with regard to examinations. It also made it possible for young mothers to attend classes with their child and envisaged including out-of-school adolescents in non-formal education before full reintegration in formal school (Argentina Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, 2006).

Flexible learning programmes at the provincial level have enabled pregnant girls and adolescent parents to return to school. In 2008, Buenos Aires province introduced the programme Salas maternales: madres, padres y hermanos/as mayores, todos en secundaria (Nurseries: mothers, fathers and siblings, all in secondary school) in cooperation with UNICEF. Nurseries are set up in schools that can accommodate them or in nearby kindergartens. While students attend classes, their children receive care in an environment that stimulates early learning. At school, adolescent parents receive support to help them carry out their role as parents or caregivers and continue studying. In 2017, there were 82 nurseries across the province. An evaluation found that school retention had increased, generating higher school completion without interruption. Furthermore, young parents' attitudes towards studying had changed, with school completion seen as allowing adolescents to be independent of their families, find a good job and begin university. The programme is unique in also targeting young fathers (UNICEF, 2017). The Autonomous City of Buenos Aires has also implemented interventions to address the education implications of early pregnancy (**Box 6**).

BOX 6:**Flexible learning programmes in Buenos Aires have enabled pregnant girls and young parents to return to school**

In 2001–02, Argentina went through a severe financial crisis, with devastating social consequences. The proportion of people living below the poverty line increased from 24% in 1998 to 57% in 2002 (ILO, 2011). In this context, the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires created the Puentes escolares (Education bridges) programme, which sought to provide homeless and vulnerable children and adolescents with access to education and prepare them for re-entry into education through workshops run by non-government organizations (NGOs). The programme accompanies future students individually, from school selection and registration to graduation, acting as a bridge between adolescents and formal or non-formal education. Although the programme is not specifically targeted to pregnant adolescents or young parents, many participate in the workshops. It also helped create a nursery at one education centre where young parents could leave their children while they themselves attended school (Autonomous City of Buenos Aires Government, 2011).

Following the 2001 crisis, an alternative secondary education programme, Bachilleratos populares (Popular baccalaureates), was established in vulnerable neighbourhoods, with students coming predominantly from low-income families. Most female students are young and adult mothers excluded from mainstream schools due to early motherhood (Peker, 2006). The programme's key advantages are flexibility and close contact between teachers and students. It lasts three years and students attend four hours a day five times a week, usually in the evening to accommodate work and childcare needs (Sverdlick and Costas, 2007). Although most Bachilleratos started as non-formal learning programmes, 40 were officially recognized in 2011, providing students with formal education certificates. As of 2016, there were 2,293 graduates and 93 Bachilleratos, with 20% offering play areas for children (GEMSEP, 2015)

Sierra Leone overturned an education ban on pregnant girls and young mothers

In Sierra Leone, the percentage of 15- to 19-year-olds who have given birth fell from 34% in 2008 to 21% in 2019. More rural teenagers (29%) than urban (14%) have early pregnancies, and teenagers from the poorest 20% of households (33%) are more likely than their richest counterparts (11%) to have children. Early pregnancy rates decrease with education: 44% of adolescent girls with no education have already had a child, compared with 17% of those with secondary education.

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In Sierra Leone, at least 20%
of school-age girls are not in
education because of pregnancy
”

At least 20% of school-age girls are not in education because of pregnancy (Statistics Sierra Leone and ICF, 2019). When pregnant girls leave school, it is rarely due to lack of motivation or interest. Instead, it is because they lack social support, childcare assistance and legitimate financial means to support themselves. They may become more dependent on men, which increases the risk of rapid repeat pregnancies, jeopardizing their health and that of their children.

“
In the UK, women who have children before 18 are 20% more likely than other women to have no education qualification by age 30
”

Forced exclusion during pregnancy has been a long-standing practice, rooted in societal gender norms and cultural practices. Reports of degrading treatment of girls, such as urine testing and physical examinations in schools, exist have existed since at least the 1990s. Before 2010, expulsion was widespread but not universal; many schools and head teachers did allow girls to stay in school and take examinations, and there was no written policy or ban stopping pregnant girls from attending school, although dealing with negative teacher, peer, parent and community attitudes and behaviours on teen pregnancy was challenging.

In August 2010, however, Sierra Leone's cabinet agreed that the minister of education, youth and sports should issue a directive preventing pregnant girls from attending school and taking examinations. The ban became official policy in April 2015, just as schools reopened after the 2014 Ebola outbreak. It remained operational until 2019. At that time in sub-Saharan Africa, Sierra Leone, Equatorial Guinea and the United Republic of Tanzania totally banned pregnant girls and young mothers from public schools (Human Rights Watch, 2019). In addition, 20 countries had no laws, policies or strategies supporting girls' right to go back to school after pregnancy (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

Activists brought a case against Sierra Leone at the Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States, which ruled the ban discriminatory in December 2019 and ordered its immediate lifting. In March 2020, the government complied, overturning the 2010 ban and announcing two new policies focusing on 'radical inclusion' and 'comprehensive safety' of all children in the education system, to take effect from the 2020/21 school year (Sierra Leone Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education, 2020).

In the United Kingdom, tackling early pregnancy required cooperation between government departments

The early pregnancy rate has more than halved in the United Kingdom: the number of conceptions per 1,000 women aged 15 to 17 declined from 42 in 1995 to 18 in 2017, although the level is still above that in other western European countries. Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act requires parents of young women who become pregnant while in school to make sure their daughter receives a full-time education until she turns 16.

However, despite the legal framework, many adolescent girls who become pregnant are still de facto excluded from education institutions because of lack of access to childcare or school facilities, as well as discriminatory and stigmatizing attitudes. Women who have children before 18 are 20% more likely than other women to have no education qualification by age 30 (Cook and Cameron, 2015). The combination of lack of education qualifications and the demands of motherhood results in lower employment opportunities and higher likelihood of living in poverty (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007).

The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy, which ran from 1999 to 2010, was an important initiative to address early pregnancy and meet young parents' needs. Part of broader efforts to tackle social exclusion, it took a wide-ranging, holistic approach. It included a national awareness-raising campaign; better coordination between government departments and tiers; improved prevention of the causes of teenage pregnancy through measures such as better education in and out of school, access to contraception and targeting of at-risk groups, including young men; and a focus on young mothers' return to education through childcare support. A national and local structure was set up to implement this strategy, including a national Teenage Pregnancy Unit established with cross-government funding and consisting of a team of civil servants and external experts from the non-government sector.

Comprehensive sexuality education is crucial in addressing early pregnancy

While most early pregnancies occur within marriages or unions, their prevalence can indicate lack of access to sexual and reproductive health education and services to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Global evidence shows that comprehensive sexuality education programmes can help young people to choose to delay having sex, reduce the frequency of unprotected sexual activity and increase the use of protection against unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (UNESCO, 2018).

In Argentina, 83% of female and 74% of male secondary school students reported in 2017 that the subject they would most like the school to address was sexual and reproductive health (Argentina Ministry of Education, 2017). Such education has been compulsory in public and private schools at all levels since 2006, and a National Programme of Comprehensive Sexual Health Education began in 2008 (Argentina Ministry of Justice and Human Rights, 2006). However, as evidenced by the students' responses, provision in schools is still variable and only partial. Out of 23 provinces, 16 adhered to the national law or had passed their own legislation; Formosa, Mendoza and Jujuy had ministerial resolutions instead of provincial laws; Córdoba formed a commission to boost provision of sexual and reproductive health education in schools and created a provincial programme in 2009; and Salta, Santiago del Estero, Tucumán and Tierra del Fuego had no sexual and reproductive health education legislation, even though their early pregnancy rates are among the country's highest.

The high number of religious (mostly Catholic) schools opposed to the law is a key obstacle to implementation. Some provincial governments have also lacked political commitment for religious reasons. Inconsistency in provincial education laws regarding religious education contributes to unequal provision of sexual and reproductive health education: while some provinces encourage Catholic education in schools, others support pluralistic, non-dogmatic, scientific and secular education. Moreover, the national law on sexual and reproductive health education is somewhat ambiguous. Although it establishes binding curriculum content for each education level, it says each school can adapt the content depending on its sociocultural contexts, ideologies and beliefs, with no explanation of how they should be reconciled (Esquivel, 2013).

Argentina has a remarkable range of measures intended to guarantee adolescents' right to sexual and reproductive health services. However, some are only partially implemented, while others lack accountability and transparency mechanisms (Human Rights Watch, 2010).

Knowledge and access to contraceptives continue to be huge challenges for girls and women in Sierra Leone. Between 2008 and 2013, the share of married and sexually active women aged 15 to 19 using modern means of contraception doubled from 10% to 20%. By 2019, however, a precipitous drop to 14% had taken place, possibly associated with a 2008 government decision to essentially end comprehensive sexuality education in schools. Reduced access to services across the country due to the Ebola outbreak may have been a further factor (Bah, 2020), a concern exacerbated by the school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic (**Box 4**).

In the United Kingdom, the 2017 Children and Social Work Act introduced compulsory relationship education in primary schools and compulsory relationship and sex education in secondary schools from September 2019. Statutory provision was expected to start in September 2020, with guidance applying to all schools, including free schools, academies and faith schools. The guidance obliges schools to increase the time spent teaching about menstrual health and informed consent, addresses risks related to social media and the internet, such as sexting and image-based sexual abuse, and outlines what pupils should know at the end of each level of schooling. Two parents' guides were published so that schools could engage with parents to try to avoid resistance to relationship and sex education.

For the next generation of girls, I wish for less taboos! Let's talk about sex! Let's talk about contraception! Let's talk about pregnancy! Let's talk about menstruation! Let's talk about gender! Let's talk about FGM and GBV! Let's talk! Openly. Together. And without shame.

Corinna, Netherlands

SCHOOL COUNSELLING POLICIES HAVE NOT BEEN SUFFICIENTLY GENDER-RESPONSIVE

Strategic objective B.1 of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action called on countries to make available non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive professional school counselling and career education to encourage girls to pursue academic and technical curricula in order to widen their career opportunities and ensure equal access to education. The influence of teaching practices and teachers' perceptions on girls' and boys' school orientation has been well studied, but the role of school counsellors and the extent to which countries have made this institution more gender-responsive have been less frequently considered.

As part of a general support system, counsellors can play an important role in steering young people towards tertiary education and helping them make the best choices for their future studies and career. Yet too few students benefit. In the United States, the median number of students per counsellor is 455, nearly twice the recommended level of 250 (American School Counselor Association, 2019; Chrisco Brennan, 2019). Access to counsellors is even more limited in France, with 1,200 students per counsellor in some secondary schools (Mayer, 2019). High workloads limit advisers' time with students and their ability to provide academic guidance. A 2018 survey by the National Council for School System Evaluation showed that half of 18- to 25-year-olds were dissatisfied with the counselling they had received in secondary school and did not feel supported by the institution at this critical stage (Hoibian and Millot, 2018).

Recognizing and accepting diversity is another important challenge. Counsellors' perceptions, sociocultural biases and gender stereotypes can affect students' education and career choices (United States Department of Education, 2018). An online random survey of secondary school counsellors in the US state of Wisconsin found that, even when school counsellors believed female students outperformed males in mathematics and were more likely to succeed, they were less likely to recommend mathematics over English to female students (Welsch and Windeln, 2019).

School and career counselling frequently lack gender responsiveness. Initiatives and programmes to help students make informed choices, free of gender bias, about their future fields of study and career frequently come from outside of education systems. This is confirmed by case studies of Botswana (Mokgolodi, 2020), Germany (Faulstich-Wieland, 2020) and the United Arab Emirates (Labib, 2020).

Gender patterns in TVET and STEM enrolment have evolved to varying degrees over the past 25 years, and countries have adopted a variety of approaches on using school counselling to orient more girls and women towards TVET and STEM.

In Botswana, the overall share of women in TVET increased marginally over 1995–2018, from 31% to 35%. Their numbers also remain low in STEM subjects, despite improvement over the period. In recent years, women have outnumbered men in tertiary education: in 2017, they accounted for 59% of the student population. However, in 2018 women still made up a lower share of those enrolled in science (40%), and even lower in engineering, manufacturing and construction (29%).

A Gender Reference Committee was set up in 2006, with representation from all departments of the Ministry of Education and Skills Development to conduct gender awareness campaigns and make education gender-sensitive. Its work was guided by recommendations made in the 10th National Development Plan and the 1994 Revised National Policy on Education, which advocated for inclusive education and career guidance for the world of work (Botswana Ministry of Education, 1994; 1996). Since 1995, a comprehensive and compulsory guidance and counselling programme, which includes material on gender stereotypes, has

“ The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action called upon countries to make available non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive professional school counselling and career education ”

been offered at all levels from pre-primary to tertiary education (Gysbers and Henderson, 2014). Its curriculum was developed in 1995, and pre-service and in-service guidance and counselling training was offered to teachers.

In 2011, the Gender Reference Committee revisited its strategy to enhance female participation in traditionally male-dominated careers and improve stakeholders' understanding and participation. It developed a policy, an action plan and a poster campaign. In partnership with industry and tertiary education institutions, it organized science and mathematics fairs, career fairs, and forums on girls in mathematics and science to change views about careers and gender. The Human Resource Development Council, the semi-autonomous body responsible for skills development in the country, provides annual training to help school and career counsellors provide career guidance free of gender bias and stereotypes. Despite these coordinating structures, policies, plans and initiatives, an overall framework on how to facilitate inclusion of girls and women into TVET and STEM is lacking.

In Germany, the share of girls in STEM increased from 12% in 1999 to 19% in 2017. Germany is a federal republic in which the states are in charge of education. Schools have been responsible for providing counselling for vocational or career orientation and guidance since 2010. However, gender aspects are not central to these measures, and regional education authorities leave it up to individual schools, teachers or counsellors as to how and whether to conduct gender-responsive activities. School counselling does not seem so far to have much effect on the career directions of girls and women.

However, two nationwide activities supported by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research aim to improve the situation. The first, *Komm-mach-MINT* (Come do STEM) is an online platform intended to support girls and women in choosing further study and careers. It provides information on STEM for secondary and university students, parents, teachers and organizations (National Pact for Women in STEM Occupations, 2019; Großkopf and Struwe, 2019). The second, *Klischeefrei* (Cliché free), is a collaboration between the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth and the Federal Ministry for Employment and Social Affairs. Launched in December 2017, it aims to remove gender stereotypes in all career and study paths for girls and boys starting from the pre-primary level all the way up to university and employment. It offers material for teachers and counsellors to use in their classes.

In the United Arab Emirates, women's access to and participation in TVET and STEM grew between 1995 and 2017. However, women are still under-represented, particularly in engineering and construction. While the share of men and women is equal in ICT, female students are over-represented in certain STEM fields, including health and mathematics.

The government has developed education infrastructure and initiated national strategies to promote STEM and TVET education for boys and girls. The Ministry of Education Strategy 2010–2020 introduced a formal student counselling structure and programme to be implemented in schools (UAE Ministry of Education, 2020). In 2014, the National Admissions and Placement Office of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research began providing annual academic counselling for secondary school students and their parents in public and private schools (UAE Ministry of Education, 2014, 2015). However, neither the strategy nor its implementation makes any reference to gender or to whether programmes and counsellor training and support include gender-responsive practices. The same is true of more recent policies and long-term plans drafted at the federal level, including the Education 2020 Strategy, UAE Vision 2021, National Strategy for Higher Education 2030 and 2018 National Strategy for Advanced Innovation.

One gender-focused initiative is a collaboration between the Dubai Society of Engineers, a semi-government body which plays an active role in engaging Emirati women in science, technology, engineering and robotics, and the national section of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Women in Engineering Committee, which coordinates events and activities to inspire and engage young female Emirati students in STEM fields (Margheri, 2016).

“ Countries need to include mandatory gender-responsive school counselling and career orientation to deconstruct false images of technology and their biased connection to gender stereotypes ”

Countries need to include mandatory gender-responsive school counselling and career orientation to deconstruct false images of technology and their biased connection to gender stereotypes. Such measures should nurture girls' talents and interests in STEM and TVET. A key element of this kind of gender-sensitive orientation is professional training in gender-responsive guidance for teachers and counsellors (Driesel-Lange, 2011). Career guidance programmes should aim to raise awareness among parents, the most influential socialization agents, to enable them to play supportive roles free of biased notions of gender-appropriate careers. Hands-on experiences and internships can allow female students to see that their skills are valuable in technical occupations (Neuhof, 2013). The impact of school counselling necessarily has limitations, since it cannot change labour market realities where the responsibility for hiring lies with companies, but it can play an important part in encouraging young women and girls to break through barriers and fulfil their potential in traditionally male-dominated fields.

This is one of many stories of girls who are the first in their family to graduate. It was collected by the GEM Report as part of a campaign, #Iamthe1stgirl, aiming to demonstrate progress in gender equality in education since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years ago.

FIRST GENERATION GRADUATE:

Rabia from Pakistan

I am from a small town in a remote village in South Punjab. When I was three years old, I was so eager to go to school that I went by myself to the local school at the end of my street and demanded that I attend. I started school at the age of four and did really well. Right before I graduated from secondary school, I decided to study engineering. This was met with some resistance by my parents and my community who thought it was a better idea to study medicine and get married.

I resisted on both counts and enrolled at the University in Lahore to study engineering. I am graduating next year, I am the second in my family to graduate, but the first in my village to study engineering at University, something I am really proud of. I also won a scholarship so all my fees and expenses were paid.

At University, one particular lecturer at the department of Electrical Engineering became my mentor. He was the one to encourage me to pursue my masters and eventually my PhD which I am planning to do once I graduate. I won a contest to become cultural ambassador of Pakistan which allowed me to travel to 10 American states and talk about my country. This was an incredible experience and allowed me to really understand how my engineering degree can help me contribute to my country and my community.

A 12 year old girl studying in Grade-VII at Doulatdia Model High School. Her father is working in construction labor and mother is a housewife.

CREDIT: GMB Akash / Save the Children



Countries are still falling short in developing textbooks free of gender-based stereotypes

“ The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action called on countries to develop curricula, textbooks and teaching aids free of gender-based stereotypes for all levels of education, including teacher training ”

Textbooks can perpetuate stereotypes by associating certain characteristics with particular groups. Inappropriate images and descriptions can make students from non-dominant backgrounds feel misrepresented, misunderstood, frustrated and alienated.

Textbooks are powerful factors in construction of gender identities. They transmit knowledge and present social and gender norms, shaping the world view of children and young people. Gender norms and values not only shape attitudes and practices but also influence aspirations and dictate expected behaviours and attributes for males and females (Heslop, 2016). In some contexts, textbooks are the first – and sometimes only – books a young person reads, and so can have a lasting impact on their perceptions. That means that, through textbooks, discriminatory norms and values can be challenged. Strategic objective B.4 of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action called on countries to develop curricula, textbooks and teaching aids free of gender-based stereotypes for all levels of education, including teacher training, in cooperation with all concerned – publishers, teachers, public authorities and parents' associations.

WOMEN ARE UNDER-REPRESENTED IN TEXTBOOKS

In many countries, girls and women are under-represented in textbooks, and when they are included, they are depicted in traditional roles. In Afghanistan, women were almost completely absent from grade 1 textbooks published in the 1990s. Since 2001, they have been represented more frequently, but usually in passive and domestic roles, shown as mothers, caregivers, daughters and sisters. They are mostly represented as dependent, with teaching being the only career open to them (Sarvarzade and Wotipka, 2017). A review of 95 primary and secondary compulsory education textbooks in the Islamic Republic of Iran showed that women accounted for 37% of images. About half the images showing women were related to family and education, while work environments appeared in less than 7%. There were no images of women in about 60% of Farsi and foreign language textbooks, 63% of science textbooks and 74% of social science textbooks (Paivandi, 2008).

In 2013, Hungary's government revised textbooks for grades 1 to 8 to remove gender stereotypes and develop awareness of gender equality. New content included chapters in biology textbooks describing the work of female scientists to illustrate women's contribution to science (OECD, 2017). In India, the Maharashtra State Bureau of Textbook Production and Curriculum Research revised many textbook images in 2019. For instance, grade 2 textbooks now show men and women sharing household chores, and depict a female doctor and a male chef. Students are asked to note these images and talk about them (News18, 2019).

The share of females in secondary school English language textbook text and images was 44% in Malaysia and Indonesia, 37% in Bangladesh and 24% in Punjab province, Pakistan. Women were represented in less prestigious occupations and depicted as being introverted and passive (Islam and Asadullah, 2018). One Malaysian primary

“ The share of females in secondary school English language textbook text and images was 44% in Malaysia and Indonesia, 37% in Bangladesh and 24% in Punjab province, Pakistan ”

school textbook suggested girls risked being shamed and ostracized unless they protected their modesty. The Ministry of Education acknowledged weaknesses in quality control and sent out a sticker to cover the graphic (Lin, 2019).

Respondents in a public consultation on gender discrimination in textbooks in the Republic of Korea pointed out that doctors and scientists were shown as mainly male while dancers, homemakers and nurses were shown as mainly female. Early childhood education textbooks depicted rabbits and foxes as female and lions and tigers as male (Republic of Korea Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, 2018). In the United States, a study of introductory economics textbooks found that 18% of characters mentioned were female, and most were portrayed in relation to food, fashion or entertainment (Stevenson and Zlotnick, 2018). A study of how the country's pre-primary, primary and secondary social studies textbooks reflected women's history found that 53% of mentions of women referred to domestic and family roles and 2% to entry into the workforce (Maurer et al., 2018).

Chilean grade 4 history textbooks had 2 female characters for every 10 males, and women's historical contributions were represented with stereotyped views linked to domestic chores. The grade 6 science textbook had 2 female characters and 29 males (Covacevich and Quintela-Dávila, 2014). Women's under-representation was also evident in Italy, despite the country's participation in an EU project in which textbook publishers agreed to a code to improve gender equality (Scierrì, 2017). In Spain, the share of female characters was 10% in primary school textbooks and 13% in secondary school textbooks. One-fifth of more than 12,000 images were of women (López Navajas and López García-Molins, 2009).

An analysis of preschool textbooks in Morocco found that 71% of images depicting women showed them doing voluntary work and 10% showed them doing paid work (Cobano-Delgado and Llorent-Bedmar, 2019). In Turkey, primary school textbooks unquestioningly presented unequal social roles and a patriarchal understanding of family, and sexist language was seen in secondary school textbooks, although a 2004 curricular reform reduced this problem somewhat (Çayır, 2014). Biases continue to exist in social roles assigned to women in mathematics textbooks (İncikabi and Ulusoy, 2019). In Uganda, secondary school physics textbooks generally did not mention the gender of objects and subjects. However, use of gendered nouns (e.g. boy) and pronouns (e.g. his) gave the text gender connotations, and illustrations largely depicted men (Namatende-Sakwa, 2018).

COUNTRIES TEND NOT TO ACT ON THEIR COMMITMENT TO BIAS-FREE TEXTBOOKS

Inclusion is served by an approach to textbook development that employs inclusive language, represents diverse identities and integrates human rights. But several factors need to be aligned for inclusive textbook reforms to succeed. Capacities need to be developed so that stakeholders work collaboratively and think strategically. Partnerships need to be in place so that all parties own the process and work towards the same goals. Participatory processes must be followed during design, development and implementation.

Countries have used a range of strategies to make their teaching and learning materials more gender-responsive. Case studies from Comoros (Ballini, 2020), Ethiopia (Melesse, 2020) and Nepal (Bhattarai, 2020) show mixed progress. In Comoros and Ethiopia, no significant change was achieved in gender representation in texts, illustrations or roles assigned. But learning materials in Nepal have become much more gender-responsive, though more needs to be done as gender stereotypes are still present.

In Comoros, teaching and learning materials used to be imported from France. National production of textbooks began in 2015, financed by the European Union and managed by UNICEF. The education ministry prioritized textbook quantity per pupil over content. While the ministry aims to promote gender equality through education, it has provided no explicit guidance on how to reflect this in curricula and textbooks. However, staff of the entities involved in production pushed for integrating a gender dimension into the material. The Francophone Initiative for Teacher Distance Training distributed gender-responsive teacher training manuals and financed education officials' participation in a UNESCO-conducted regional training programme aimed at increasing girls' participation in STEM. Slight improvements in gender-responsiveness since 2015 have largely been the result of individual commitment; by the same token, lack of further progress can be attributed to difficulties faced by those involved in textbook development in overcoming personal familial, social and religious influence. Efforts have been further hindered by a lack of opportunities for those involved in development to be sensitized or trained on eliminating gender stereotypes (Ballini, 2020; Hassani Ahmed, 2019).

Ethiopia's government has shown commitment to gender equality in education through education sector development programmes, curriculum frameworks and policy reforms. As part of reform efforts, textbooks were developed and revised, teachers were provided with gender-responsive professional development and gender-responsive pedagogy was mainstreamed in teacher education colleges. Among other institutions, the Forum for African Women Educationalists, Plan International, UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa and the US Agency for International Development financed gender-related interventions, including in research, community training, in-service gender-responsive professional development and advice to policymakers. However, studies show that gender stereotypes remain (FAWE, 2019; Mehari, 2016; Tesema and Braeken, 2018).

Ethiopian textbooks are male-dominated and regularly portray men as powerful, assertive and intelligent leaders, doctors, engineers and politicians. By contrast, women have been portrayed as weak, passive and submissive and are mostly depicted in domestic, caregiving and supportive roles. A study of social studies textbooks in grades 5 to 8 found that only 12% of names were female. Mainly male pronouns were used, with female pronouns accounting for only 25% (Wondifraw, 2017). Stories of African kings, male freedom fighters and leaders were prevalent, whereas females actively involved in the independence struggle were forgotten. An analysis of the grade 8 English textbook concluded that it was gender-biased at women's expense. Most illustrations and stories narrated men's fame, contributions and achievements, and role models were almost exclusively male (Mulugeta, 2019). Women did not participate in textbook development or review, training in processes was lacking and authorities showed little commitment to challenging discriminatory social and gender norms. Few textbook revision processes since 1995 have included evidence from gender studies or research (Melesse, 2020).

Nepal introduced guidance in 1999 on drafting gender-responsive teaching and learning materials in grades 9 and 10 for English, Nepali, history and social studies (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2000). A gender expert was appointed that year to review gender responsiveness in textbooks. The guidelines said textbooks should represent men and women similarly. Gender-biased words such as headmaster, chairman and salesman should be replaced with words such as principal, chairperson and salesperson (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2002). The guidelines were later applied to other grades and accompanied by gender audits and the appointment of a gender link officer. A policy introduced in 2007 called for all materials to be reviewed every 5 years and revised every 10.

As a result of these reforms, textbooks have become much more gender-sensitive. Current textbooks use pictures of women extensively to represent all professions. However, a holistic overhaul of all gender stereotypes has not yet happened. Terms like 'clever' and 'responsible' are often used only for males, while females are shown to be passive and submissive. In social studies, science, English and education in grades 1, 3 and 5, for example, women are shown in jobs like treating sick people, cooking, caring for infants and organizing the community (UNESCO, 2017). Even in 2017, most textbook writers were male, and gender audits have been completed only twice since 1999 (Bhattarai, 2020).

“ In Ethiopia, despite government commitment to reduce gender bias in textbooks, women have not participated in reforms and a study on social studies textbooks in grades 5-8 found only 12% of names were female ”

Developing gender-responsive teaching and learning materials requires strong national leadership and has to be embedded in general policies on gender equality in education. Gender audits of teaching and learning materials should be conducted regularly. Textbook revision processes must be inclusive: women's equal participation must be ensured and women's views heard. Revisions should be based on research, and those participating should receive training in development of gender-responsive materials. The gender dimension has to be explicitly inscribed in tenders, terms of reference and contracts relating to the drafting of teaching and learning materials. Last but not least, teachers need to be trained in the use of gender-responsive teaching materials.

PROGRESS IN RECOGNIZING SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY AND GENDER EXPRESSION IS MIXED

Countries worldwide struggle to address sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression in curricula and textbooks, which tend to lack affirmative inclusion of such identities and realities. An inclusive education index covering 49 European countries found that 19 had inclusive national curricula that made it compulsory to address sexual orientation, 7 made it optional and 23 did not address the issue explicitly (Ávila, 2018).

Many curricula either ignore homosexuality, bisexuality and non-binary gender identities or treat them as deviant or abnormal. Coupled with stereotypes and discrimination in everyday school life, this can have negative effects on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) students. In the United States, the 2017 GLSEN School Climate survey found that two-thirds of students had not been exposed to representation of LGBTI people and history in school. It also found that students in schools with inclusive curricula were less likely to feel unsafe at school because of their sexual orientation (42% vs 63%) or to be often or frequently exposed to biased language (52% vs 75%) (Kosciw et al., 2018).

A survey of 6,000 teachers in Japan showed that between 63% and 73% felt the curriculum should cover sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (Doi, 2016). The current curriculum does not properly reflect diversity in sexual orientation. The 2016 curriculum revision missed an opportunity to address this issue (Doi and Knight, 2017). A 2011 review of curricula in 10 eastern and southern African countries found that none addressed sexual diversity appropriately (UNESCO and UNFPA, 2012). Namibia's life skills curriculum in grades 8 and 12 at least refers to the issue of diversity in sexual orientation (UNESCO, 2016).

Around the world, countries realize the need to embed sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression in curricula. High-income countries are taking the lead. Following recommendations by the LGBTI Inclusive Education Working Group, Scotland (United Kingdom) announced it would be 'the first' to embed LGBTI-inclusive education in the curriculum in all state schools by 2021 (Scotland Government, 2018). Germany's Berlin state focused on concepts such as difference, tolerance and acceptance to introduce sexual diversity in the primary curriculum. In Canada's Ontario province, grade 8 students learn to connect sexual orientation and gender identity with the concept of respect (UNESCO, 2016).

California was the first US state to introduce a regulatory framework for inclusion of LGBTI people's contributions in history and social science curricula. In 2019, Colorado, Illinois, New Jersey and Oregon followed (Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, 2019). However, seven states have discriminatory curriculum laws. South Carolina's school board guidelines on sexuality education say that 'the program of instruction ... may not include a discussion of alternate sexual lifestyles from heterosexual relationships' (South Carolina Code of Laws, 2013). The Texas Health and Safety Code states that sexuality education content should emphasize 'that homosexuality is not a lifestyle acceptable to the general public and that homosexual conduct is a criminal offense' under a state law that was found unconstitutional in 2003 yet remains on the books (Texas Health and Safety Code, 2018). Discriminatory language can also be found in the state's education regulations and curriculum guidelines (Rosky, 2017). In Utah, civil society mobilization led to the repeal of a statutory prohibition against 'advocacy of homosexuality' as a step towards stopping discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in public schools (Wood, 2017).

Some low- and middle-income countries have inclusive curricula with respect to sexual orientation and gender identity. Mongolia includes sexual behaviour and diversity in its sexual and reproductive health curriculum in grades 6 to 9. In Nepal, the health and physical education curriculum in grades 6 to 9 discusses health and well-being of sexually and gender diverse learners, with a particular focus on hijras, members of a transgender/intersex group recognized in Southern Asia as a third gender (UNESCO, 2015). Thailand's course and textbooks on physical and health education in grades 1 to 12, introduced in May 2019, cover sexual diversity (Thai PBS News, 2019).

This is one of many stories of girls who are the first in their family to graduate. It was collected by the GEM Report as part of a campaign, #Iamthe1stgirl, aiming to demonstrate progress in gender equality in education since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years ago.

FIRST GENERATION GRADUATE: Monika Sharma from India

I was one of three children born to a lower-middle class family in India. My father graduated but was jobless. He tried to start a business many times but failed. My mother got married when she was in 10th standard so dropped out of school. The only source of income in my family was my grandfather, who had a job.

I have an M.A. (English), B.Ed., and am pursuing a Masters of social welfare. The major challenge in getting educated was a lack of finance and the orthodox society. My grandfather wanted me to get married when in 8th standard, but my father kept protecting me and my mother saved money as much as she could. Whenever her parents offered her gifts, she demanded money instead so that she could spend that money on our education. Later on I started earning on my own by giving tuition. When I was doing my Masters, I also gave tuition. It was very surprising to others. When I was doing my Diploma in education in another city, my sister continued my tuition classes and arranged money for my studies.

Now I am a government teacher in primary section and a unionist also. I am at the post of state chairperson of the network of women in my union. All is achieved with the joint efforts of me and my family. I am grateful to my parents and my sister.

Education always leads to a better life. So it did the same for me too. It changed my logical thinking, my perspective on life, my attitude, my personality and my lifestyle. Now I have a respectable job and position in society. I need not to struggle like my mother did throughout her life. Now I am independent just thanks to my education.

I have arranged for quality education for my kids. I teach them myself every day. I have not big dreams for them, I just want them to be good human beings who can feel the pain of others. I am not going to force them to be a doctor or some other prestigious job. I have asked them to work hard to achieve what they want and what they can do best.



Kabukabu, 9, at school, which she now attends regularly as a result of the school feeding program and food distribution program.

CREDIT: Malama Mwila / Save the Children

Teachers' attitudes on gender affect student education experiences

In strategic objective B.1, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action called on countries to make education systems gender-sensitive, take measures to increase the proportion of women participating in education policymaking and decision making, and boost the share of female teachers in all education levels and fields, including traditionally male-dominated STEM disciplines. Educators also need to be open to girls' and boys' choices and help them explore who they are, connect to people around them and gain self-confidence, well-being, peer acceptance and social support (Lahelma, 2011). School experiences should not undermine the message that students can do any work they want and become anything they want to be.

Gender norms and stereotypes are learned in early childhood. But few countries pay attention to gender equality in early childhood teaching and learning. In Australia and Norway and in Hong Kong, China, preschool teachers manifest traditional gender values in the classroom (Chi, 2018). A study of 6-year-olds in the United States showed they had stereotyped views about boys being better than girls at robots and programming. There was no gap in interest and self-efficacy in technology between Grade 1 boys and those girls who were offered programming experience (Master et al., 2017). The Forum for African Women Educationalists has promoted gender-responsive pedagogy in several countries, encouraging teachers to bring gender awareness to the classroom to enhance girls' self-esteem. In Malawi, attention has focused on early years to overcome constraints created by lower societal expectations that negatively affect girls' development before they reach adolescence (Banda, 2018).

Gender shapes teacher perceptions of student academic ability and behaviour (Bettie, 2002; Ispa-Landa, 2013; Cherng and Han, 2018). For instance, teachers are more likely to characterize boys' behaviour as disruptive than girls' (Jones and Myhill, 2004; Schaeffer et al., 2006). A study of 527 teachers in 27 primary schools in three Chinese provinces found that female teachers rated boys as more disruptive and inattentive in class than girls, while differences in male teacher ratings were smaller (Caldarella et. al 2009). Teacher attitudes can mirror societal biases. In Mexico, teachers' negative attitudes about inclusion of Maya children, as well as prejudiced behaviour towards Mayan girls with darker skin tones, reduced the girls' self-esteem and capacity to concentrate in class (Osorio Vázquez, 2017). A study on culturally diverse high schools in the United States showed that white teachers believed black boys more frequently talked in class, were late and broke the dress code; as a result, black boys systematically experienced racial insults and invalidation (Hotchkins, 2016).

Teacher attitudes affect student achievement, even when they are not explicit. In Italy, girls assigned to teachers with implicit gender bias underperformed in mathematics and chose less demanding secondary schools, following teachers' recommendations (Carlana, 2019). Teacher attitudes also lead to increased disciplinary action and suspensions. In the United States in 2013/14, black boys were suspended 2.4 times as often as white boys and black girls 3 times as often as white girls (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), suggesting that the intersection between gender and race is more significant for females than males (Crenshaw et al., 2015).

“ The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action called on countries to make education systems gender-sensitive and take measures to increase the proportion of women participating in education policymaking and decision making ”

“ Globally, women represented 94% of teachers in pre-primary, 66% in primary, 54% in secondary and 43% in tertiary education in 2018 ”

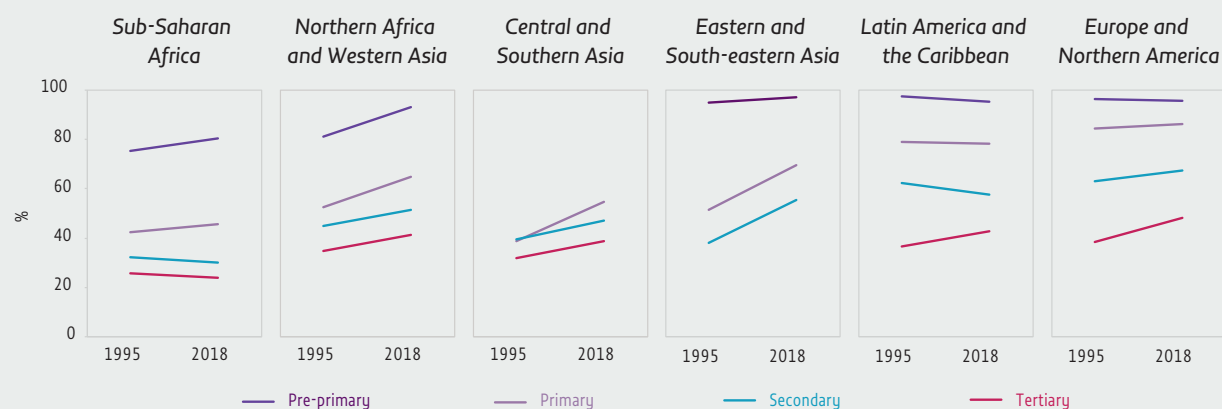
Teachers thus need to acquire knowledge and skills to address pressing inclusion issues such as gender equality. Chile's 2015–2018 Education for Gender Equality Plan introduced ongoing teacher education at the national level on gender, discrimination, inclusive schooling, sexuality and sexual diversity in the classroom (Chile Ministry of Education, 2017). Cuba's Sexuality Education Programme seeks to strengthen teacher education on sexuality as well as on preventing HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, using a gender and sexual rights approach throughout the basic curriculum, electives and post-graduate studies (Cuba Ministry of Education, 2011). In Nepal, the National Centre for Educational Development incorporated a gender awareness module in its teacher professional development programme (OHCHR, 2017). Uganda's 2019 National Teacher Policy has developed and piloted guidelines to equip teachers with basic knowledge about gender concepts and skills for gender-responsive pedagogy in STEM (UNESCO, 2019c).

Whole-school approaches can be even more effective than those targeting only teachers. The Lifting Limits Programme was piloted in 2018/19 in five primary schools in London. Using a whole-school approach, it aimed to increase awareness and provide 270 staff and 1,900 students with tools to recognize and correct unintentional gender bias that could limit aspirations and expectations. An independent evaluation showed increased awareness of a more diverse range of possible roles for girls and boys, for themselves and others, as well as enhanced critical ability to challenge gender stereotypes. For example, the share of 7- to 11-year-olds reporting that nursing is 'for everyone' rather than 'for boys' or 'for girls' increased from 35% to 71%. The share of boys reporting that they could be a teacher increased from 24% to 42%, while that of girls reporting that they could be a footballer rose from 36% to 47%. Key drivers of the change included the whole-school approach, the effectiveness of staff training, the appointment of a gender champion in school and the breadth and quality of programme resources (Lifting Limits, 2019). The programme shows that a whole school approach is needed to change gender norms that boys and girls learn from a young age.

FIGURE 15:

The percentage of women in teaching positions is increasing worldwide at all levels

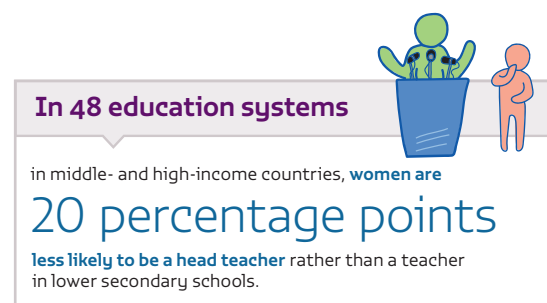
Percentage of female teachers, by region and level of education, 1995 and 2018



Note: The data on percentage of female teachers in tertiary education for sub-Saharan Africa are for 2016.
Source: UIS database.

GENDER BALANCE AND DIVERSITY IN TEACHING AND MANAGEMENT FORM A KEY COMPONENT OF GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

Gender representation in teaching and education management positions is characterized by high gender segregation. Women are over-represented among teaching staff at lower education levels, while their presence is markedly lower in upper secondary and tertiary education (vertical segregation). Women are also under-represented in certain fields of study, notably traditionally male-dominated vocational programmes and STEM (horizontal segregation). The same is true in school management and education policymaking and decision-making positions.



Globally, 94% of pre-primary education teachers were female in 2018. Women represented 66% of teachers in primary, 54% in secondary and 43% in tertiary education. While the share of female teachers in pre-primary education has remained more or less the same since 1995, it has increased at other levels in almost all regions except sub-Saharan Africa, where it decreased in secondary (from 32% to 30%) and tertiary (from 26% to 24%) despite already being the lowest globally at both levels (**Figure 15**). Even in primary education, the share of female teachers

in 2018 was below 30% in Benin, Comoros, Djibouti and Sierra Leone and less than 20% in Togo. Evidence from African countries has shown that girls are more likely to go to school, and parents are more willing to send them to school and keep them there, when female teachers are present, since female teachers are important role models for girls (Haugen et al., 2014).

Elsewhere, male role models are lacking. In Germany, an initiative to increase the number of men working in early childhood care and education began in 2010, including through the Mehr Männer in Kitas (More men in day-care centres) programme in 2011–13 and Quereinstieg – Männer und Frauen in Kitas (Lateral entry – Men and women in day-care centres), a programme to reorient men seeking to change career, in 2015–20 (OECD, 2019a). While the share of men working in early childhood care and education increased from 3.1% in 2006 to 6.6% in 2019, parity is still far out of reach (Koordinationsstelle Chance Quereinstieg, 2019).

In some countries, diversity has been held back by corrupt hiring practices. In Afghanistan, many teaching positions are reportedly gained through bribery or nepotism. Financial and other obstacles to entry may effectively block candidates from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and can also exacerbate gender disparity. For every 100 male teachers in the country, there are 66 female teachers, and the ratio drops as low as 100:10 in some provinces, including Uruzgan and Zabul. This creates an obstacle to girls' education in regions where traditional values prohibit girls being taught by men. The Ministry of Education has taken measures to reduce corruption in teacher recruitment (Bakhshi, 2020).

Women are under-represented as senior faculty and in higher education decision-making bodies in many countries. While this reflects women's history of lower access to education, it is also often a sign of institutional cultures that are neither inclusive nor geared towards broader social and cultural change for greater gender equality. Conventional faculty recruitment processes that reward linear, full-time, uninterrupted academic trajectories contribute to women's under-representation in senior academic positions, even when women outnumber men as students. Women are more likely to be disadvantaged by norms that fail to recognize competing commitments such as care responsibilities. In 2010, Australia's Group of Eight leading universities embraced the principle of merit relative to opportunity in faculty recruitment and assessment. The approach encourages a holistic, multidimensional evaluation of academic achievement beyond a narrow focus on publication numbers and considers career breaks, other commitments and individual circumstances (Rafferty et al., 2010).

Official EU guidance endorses incentives and legal sanctions to encourage use of gender quotas and targets in universities (European Commission, 2018). In Ireland, under so-called performance compacts, higher education institutions risk losing up to 10 % of annual state funding if they do not meet certain objectives, including some related to gender equality. Between 2019 and 2021, 45 posts of women-only professorships will be created (European Commission, 2019).

The education sector is not unique in that the interaction of gender with other factors further exacerbates disparity at women's expense in leadership and management positions. Despite some progress, globally women occupy only 25% of seats in parliament and 36% of senior private sector management positions (World Economic Forum, 2020).

The share of women in leadership positions in schools overall steadily increased in the United States from 25% in 1987/88 to 52% in 2011/12, but the shares of Hispanic head teachers only rose from 3% to 7% and of black head teachers from 8.5% to 10% (Hill et al., 2016). A study of Asian American women in school leadership shows that they had to negotiate their aspirations to leadership and advancement through both gender- and race-related expectations. Many chose a career in school administration because of family responsibilities. While they did not aim for leadership positions when entering teaching, they were encouraged by others, especially mentors who recognized their potential (Liang et al., 2018). Teacher unions have a role to play in promoting gender equality through enhanced social dialogue (avlovaite and Weber, 2019).

Lack of teacher diversity can be partly explained by structural factors, reflecting disparity and exclusion within education. Low representation of a particular group among students in higher education or specific fields translates into low representation among graduating teachers, which in turn contributes to low representation in the teaching profession (UNESCO, 2020c). Lack of female teachers in STEM-related subjects has been mentioned as a factor in low female participation in STEM (UNESCO, 2016). But it is also a consequence of low representation of women in STEM-related fields.

FEMINIZATION AND LEADERSHIP GLASS CEILINGS COEXIST IN EDUCATION

Countries have used various strategies to promote vertical and horizontal gender balance in teaching and education management. Case studies from Brazil (Louzano, 2020) and Bulgaria (Delinesheva, 2020) show there is still a long way to go to achieve equality between women and men in the education workforce, despite some positive developments since 1995.

In Brazil, no specific policies, programmes or measures to increase the share of women in teaching have been put in place since 1995, since women were already over-represented at all levels except tertiary education. The share of women among university professors increased from 41% in 1999 to 46% in 2018.

Feminization of the teaching profession could be expected to lead to greater numbers of women in education leadership positions. This is in fact the case in Brazil, where 82% of head teachers overall were female in 2019. However, the higher the level, the fewer the female head teachers: data from the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey indicate that 77% of lower secondary but 68% of upper secondary head teachers were women. A case study of head teacher selection in lower and upper secondary schools in the Brasilia Federal District, where 76% of teachers are female, found that all candidates for head teacher positions were women in only 11% of the schools. In 75% of the schools, all school leader candidates were men (de Freitas, 2019).

Overall, Brazilian women are as qualified as men, or more so, to occupy leadership positions in tertiary education, yet only 28% of federal university presidents were women in 2018. In addition, women hold 72% of education leadership positions at the municipal level but only one-third of state secretary of education positions. For the past 25 years, no women have occupied the position of federal education minister (Louzano, 2020).

In Bulgaria, the share of women among teachers increased from 81% in 1995 to 85% in 2018, when it ranged from 98% in pre-primary to 80% in secondary education. Women dominate school management positions, accounting for over 96% in pre-primary, 80% in primary and 75% in secondary education. Women also constitute 73% of

“ In Brazil, for the past 25 years, no women have occupied the position of federal education minister ”

head teachers, 85% of assistant head teachers with teaching responsibilities and 74% of assistant head teachers without teaching responsibilities.

In Bulgarian tertiary education, the share of women holding academic positions increased from 41% in 1995 to 50% in 2018, or from about 8,000 to 11,000. However, a closer look reveals a more nuanced picture. Women accounted for the majority of academic staff in humanities (60%), medicine (55%) and natural and social sciences (54%) in 2015 but for a minority in engineering and technology (34%) despite a significant increase since 2000 (16%). And vertical segregation continues, although there has been considerable improvement. Between 1995 and 2018, the shares of women among assistant professors increased from 44.5% to 53%, among associate professors from 28% to 47% and among professors from 12.5% to 40%. The glass ceiling effect is stronger in decision-making and top leadership positions. Women accounted for 21% of university rector positions in 2018, up from 8% in 2000. Since the establishment of the ministry in 1879, only 5 of 96 education ministers have been women. Since 1995, there have been 4 female ministers, with a total length of service of 2 years and 8 months.

Bulgaria developed a national action plan to meet its Beijing commitments (Bulgaria Government, 1996). In the case of education, it focused on ensuring equal access to education and encouraging vocational education for girls. It made no reference to the feminization of the teaching profession or to male dominance in tertiary education. While the share of women in higher academic positions has increased significantly, leadership positions are still held predominantly by men. In 2017/18, the government carried out a first phase of teacher salary increases (by 15%), aiming to double salaries by 2021. This measure resulted in increased numbers of students in pedagogical faculties, especially in master's programmes for acquisition of pedagogical qualifications: the number increased by 19% (from 4,866 to 5,775) in 2018/19, although sex disaggregated data are not available (Delinesheva, 2020).

Feminization of the teaching workforce is rooted in traditional expectations about women's roles in society. Teaching is considered a female occupation, allowing women to fulfil their obligations as wives and mothers. Family environments strongly influence women's education and professional choices. Men do not want to become teachers because the profession is perceived as typically female, underpaid and with low prestige. Yet women in education face prejudice related to capacity and competence. Gender-related attitudes towards failure and competition also have a role to play in career expectations. In nearly all countries participating in PISA in 2018, girls reported more often than boys that they were afraid of failure, a mindset that could curb their ambition. In over 80% of 79 countries, girls had less positive attitudes than boys to competition (OECD, 2020). Nevertheless, the glass ceiling on women's advancement in education careers is not seen as part of the education policymaking agenda.

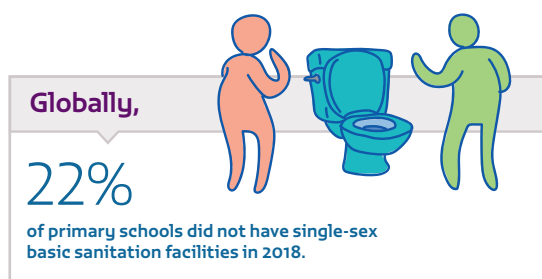


Adam, 12, attends English learning class in his local Makani centre. He attends classes in the morning and works in the afternoon. "I don't go to school but I come here to learn English and Arabic," he said. "I play football with my friends and the teachers are awesome. They inspire me and make my happy.

CREDIT: Christopher Herwig / UNICEF

School facilities and environments need to be more inclusive

In an inclusive school, all students are welcome, feel they belong, realize their potential and contribute to daily school life. Inclusive schools ensure that all students, regardless of background, ability or identity, are engaged and achieving by being present, participating and learning. However, many schools fall short, including in terms of gender inclusion, for reasons ranging from poor infrastructure to unsafe learning environments.

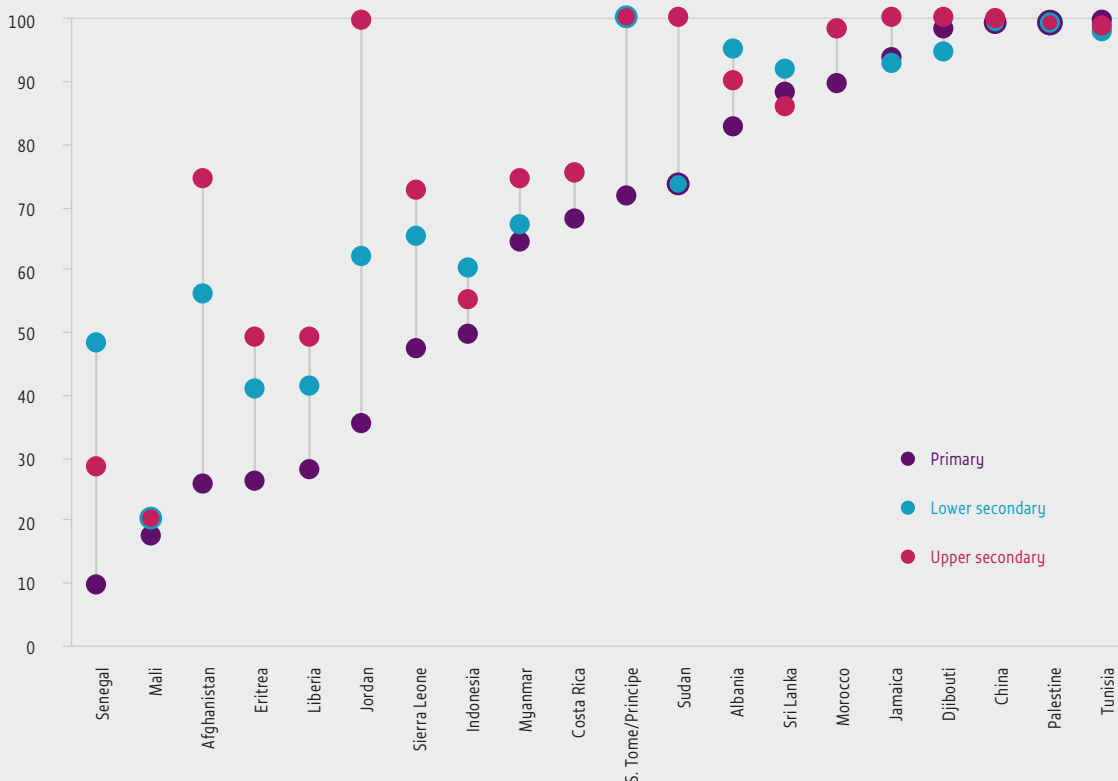


Globally, 78% of primary schools had single-sex basic sanitation facilities in 2018, although availability varies by education level; facilities are less common in primary than secondary schools, with a gap of over 10 percentage points at the global level. In Afghanistan, Jordan and Senegal, the percentage of upper secondary schools with single-sex toilets is about three times that of primary schools (**Figure 16**). Overall, some 335 million girls attend primary and secondary schools lacking facilities essential for menstrual hygiene (UNICEF, 2019).

FIGURE 16:

Fewer primary schools have single-sex toilets

Percentage of schools with basic single-sex sanitation facilities, by education level, selected countries, 2018 or latest available year



Source: UIS database.

“ The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action called upon governments to ‘take measures to eliminate incidents of sexual harassment of girls in educational and other institutions’ ”

The Philippines has had challenges in ensuring adequate menstrual hygiene management (Harver et al, 2013). According to the UIS database, just 39% of schools had basic sanitation and 46% had basic hygiene facilities in 2016. The Department of Education monitors implementation of its 2016, which committed schools to ensuring that menstrual hygiene management conditions were met. More than one-third of 35,000 schools did not have water during all school hours in 2018/19. Moreover, on average, there are 125 girls per functional toilet, much higher than the national standard of 50 students per toilet. However, improvements were reported relative to 2017/18 with respect to quality indicators such as lighting, ventilation, security and privacy, as well as availability of wrapping materials and disposal facilities (Philippines Department of Education, 2020).

Even where single-sex sanitation facilities exist, they may not be accessible to all students. The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme database, which provides information on accessibility for students with disabilities in 18 countries, reported that less than 1 in 10 schools with improved sanitation had accessible facilities in El Salvador, Fiji, Tajikistan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen.

SCHOOL-RELATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE UNDERMINES INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Gender-based violence remains pervasive, even though less than 40% of women who experience it report it or seek help (UN Women, 2020c). School-related gender-based violence consists of acts or threats 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 (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016). In strategic objective L.7, the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action called on governments not only to ‘take effective actions and measures to enact and enforce legislation to protect the safety and security of girls from all forms of violence at work, in training and support programmes’ but also to ‘take measures to eliminate incidents of sexual harassment of girls in educational and other institutions’.

In spite of this commitment, millions of female and male children and youth experience gender-based violence in and around schools and online. Girls are more likely to experience verbal and sexual harassment, abuse and violence, while boys are more often subject to physical violence, including corporal punishment.

In many surveys, physical appearance is the most common reason for bullying, with female students more at risk of being bullied for this reason (UNESCO, 2019a). In Argentina, obese 9- to 10-year-old children were at significantly higher risk of bullying, with boys more common victims of physical bullying than girls (Kovalskys et al., 2016). In the United States, 30% of overweight girls and 24% of overweight boys in the final year of primary school had daily experience of teasing, bullying or rejection due to their size, with the rates rising to 63% for girls and 58% for boys in secondary school (Stevelos, 2011). Self-perception as underweight or overweight and dissatisfaction with personal appearance are positively correlated with the experience of bullying. Adolescent girls are more likely than boys to perceive themselves as overweight (Lin et al., 2017).

Girls are the main victims of unwanted sexual touching and non-consensual sex attempts perpetrated by classmates and teachers, respectively. In sub-Saharan Africa, girls reported that male teachers demanded sexual favours in exchange for good grades, preferential treatment in class, money and gifts (VACS, 2020). In Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique, girls reported it was difficult to decline teachers’ proposals as they feared retaliation (Heslop et al., 2015).

Violence is often directed at lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students and other learners who exhibit non-binary gender identities. In the United Kingdom, 45% of lesbian, gay and bisexual students and 64% of transgender students were bullied in schools (Bradlow et al., 2017). In the United States, 17% of heterosexual students reported having been bullied, compared with 24% of those unsure about their gender identity and 33% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex students (CDC, 2017).

Technology has opened up new spaces in which children and youth are threatened, intimidated and harassed. In EU countries, one in five 18- to 29-year-olds reported having experienced cyber-harassment (UN Women, 2020b). Data from the 2013/14 WHO Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (UNESCO, 2018) and the more recent Global Kids Online project (covering Bulgaria, Chile, Ghana, Italy, Montenegro, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Africa and Uruguay) (UNICEF, 2020) show that girls especially suffer from violence online. Global Kids Online found that 54% of girls experienced online harassment, compared with 48% of boys. Among victims, 36% reported that the incidents occurred on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, 18% reported harmful text messages and 14% said they received bullying mobile phone calls. Girls were more likely to be treated in a hurtful or nasty way via social networks (38%), text messages (21%), mobile phone calls (16%) and chat rooms (5%) while boys reported more mistreatment in online games (10%) and on media-sharing platforms (5%) such as YouTube, Instagram and Flickr (Global Kids Online 2020; Ginestra, 2020b).

School-related gender-based violence damages well-being and learning

School-related gender-based violence undermines the achievement of inclusive and equitable education of good quality for all children and young people. Consequences may include severe health and psychological harm, pregnancy, HIV or other sexually transmitted infections. Violence can lead to loss of interest in school, disrupted studies or early school leaving. In Honduras, 55% of girls reported not attending school at some point due to physical violence perpetrated by teachers, while 22% of female students in Malawi reported missed school due to unwanted sexual experiences (VACS, 2017). For victims who continue their studies, low achievement is common, as they try to avoid attention from teachers and peers (Ginestra, 2020b). According to 2018 PISA data, bullied students in OECD countries scored 21 points lower in reading on average than their peers who had not been bullied (OECD, 2019c).

Countries have introduced laws, policies, programmes and initiatives to combat school-related gender-based violence. In Namibia, the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, with the support of UNICEF, introduced a National Safe Schools Framework in 2018 including seven safe learning and teaching space standards. One refers to prevention of and actions against violence and self-harm through maintaining safe schools and encouraging the school community to report violence. National frameworks of this kind need to be translated into local action. However, experience in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique shows that this is often uneven, as lack of clarity in laws and programmes contributes to school staff not having access to necessary tools (UNESCO, UNGEI and UNICEF, 2019).

Changes in curricula can prevent and address school-related gender-based violence, challenging gender norms to help create a non-violent culture. These changes can encourage students to reflect on their own gender biases and roles in society and help them understand different gender identities. Connect with Respect, a programme in the Kingdom of Eswatini, Thailand, Timor-Leste, the United Republic of Tanzania, Viet Nam, Zambia and Zimbabwe, supports students in challenging harmful practices through practical learning activities involving critical thinking, reflections among small groups and role playing (UNESCO, UNGEI and UNICEF, 2019). The Lights4Violence project, developed in 2017 by a cluster of universities in Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom, aims to prevent gender-based violence among adolescents by developing communication, anger management, and non-violent conflict resolution skills (Vives-Cases et al., 2019).

“ Right to Play, a school-based programme in Hyderabad, Pakistan, using sports and games to empower students to reduce violence in school and change gender norms, decreased peer victimisation by 33% among boys and 59% among girls ”

“ Students, parents, communities and teacher unions should be involved in training that helps them to reflect critically on their attitudes and values towards gender equality ”

Measures can fit into existing curricula and be used in the classroom or in extracurricular activities. A Right to Play, a school-based programme in Hyderabad, Pakistan, uses sports and games to empower students to reduce violence in school and change gender norms. As of 2018, the programme had reached 8,000 children in 40 public schools and resulted in decreases in peer victimization by 33% among boys and 59% among girls. Symptoms of depression fell by 10% among girls and 7% among boys (Heslop et al., 2017).

Access to comprehensive sexuality education is key to preventing school-related gender-based violence. Comprehensive sexuality education promotes gender-equal attitudes among students, including understanding and respect of other gender identities; improves life skills, teaching students to negotiate the terms of sexual activity, understand the importance of consent and resist peer pressure to engage in or accept violence; transforms teachers' and parents' attitudes by engaging them in school interventions; and improves reporting of and response to incidents of violence by providing information and explaining the importance of coordinating with other organizations and services (Plan International UK and SDDirect, 2015). Program H, for example, is an intervention developed by Brazilian-based NGO Promundo, which engages young men in changing inequitable and violent norms related to masculinity through critical reflection and dialogue about gender equality in participatory meetings. Since 2002, the programme has been implemented in 9 countries, while 26 countries have carried out training, activities or partial adaptations. Evaluations in eight African, Asian, Latin American and south-eastern European countries indicate positive changes in attitudes on gender equality and in self-reported behaviour such as couples communication, violence, condom use and caregiving (Promundo et al., 2013).

Violence can become normalized and accepted as part of school life by students and authorities, which results in it being under-reported and unpunished. Students fear victimization, punishment or ridicule, and teachers may discourage complaints to protect colleagues (UNGEI et al., 2018). Confidential, independent and easily accessible reporting mechanisms can provide victims and witnesses with secure channels to report incidents of gender-based violence. These mechanisms can include school-based focal points, suggestion boxes, telephone helplines, confidential counselling and online reporting methods, linked to strong referral and support systems (UNESCO, UNGEI and UNICEF, 2019).

The Zero Tolerance Programme in Nepal incorporated a suggestion box as a reporting mechanism to encourage students to inform authorities of any incident. Students felt more comfortable sharing their concerns and suggestions, and teachers changed their mindsets and attitudes towards students and teaching practices (USAID, 2018). In 2013, Peru implemented the programme *Si se ve* (Yes I can see), which included an online platform and a helpline to encourage reporting of violence in school. Thanks to this tool, schools can avoid hiring teachers who have been sanctioned for having perpetrated any type of violence. In 2013–2018, the programme responded to more than 26,000 cases of violence reported from the 53,000 participating schools (Peru Ministry of Education, 2019). An innovative approach in Pikine, Senegal facilitated reporting and connected child victims with protective services. More than 700 volunteers were trained and organized into a network connected to social welfare services. The programme increased the reported number of child protection cases and established a real-time monitoring system via an online dashboard (UNICEF, 2018b).

Programmes should also teach young people to intervene when violence occurs. Bystander approaches involve teaching life skills to enable people to identify, report or involve others in responding to incidents of violence. In Hong Kong, China, the project Positive Adolescent Training through Holistic Social Programmes focused on teaching secondary school students to become helpful social bystanders. It provided awareness-raising activities on bullying, space for self-reflection and opportunities to practice new behaviour. A gender perspective in the design was considered essential, as boys are more likely to drop out of such programmes in societies where masculine role models are prevalent (Tsang, Hui and Law, 2011).

School staff sometimes reproduce prevailing gender norms in classrooms. Therefore, it is important to train teachers to reflect critically on their attitudes and values related to gender equality and to develop empathy towards students. Students, parents, communities and teacher unions should be involved in this training. The Education Unions Take Action to End School-related Gender-based Violence programme, implemented in Ethiopia, the Gambia, Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia, aims to empower teachers to become active agents to end violence in schools. Between 2016 and 2018, over 30,000 participants were reached through awareness-raising workshops in schools and union meetings (UNGEI et al., 2018).

Codes of conduct are being developed. In Sierra Leone, the government and the teachers' union developed a code of conduct by holding multi-stakeholder consultations in all regions, which legitimized the code as a tool to support teacher professionalism (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016). South Africa's teacher code of conduct was revised to identify ways to deal with perpetrators of violence (UNGEI et al., 2018). In Zambia, the Ministry of General Education launched teacher standards of practice in 2019. Standard 1.5 expects teachers to promote a safe and inclusive school environment, free from school-related gender-based violence, and to be able to prevent, identify and respond to incidents of violence in schools (Zambia Ministry of General Education and UNESCO, 2019).

Modifying or adapting school settings could prevent school violence and improve student safety. Shifting Boundaries is a programme created in 2010 in response to high levels of teen dating violence in schools in the United States that increases staff presence in spots where violence is likely to occur, as previously identified by students and teachers. An evaluation in New York found that the programme helped reduce sexual violence victimisation in dating relations by 50%, sexual violence perpetration by peers by 47% and sexual harassment by 34% (Holditch Niolon et al., 2017).

Progress in recognizing and responding to school-related gender-based violence in recent years has helped in developing a broader understanding of violence in schools. It is important to pay closer attention to girl-on-girl and girl-on-boy violence and to reconsider the female-victim/male-villain dichotomy. Further research is also needed on school violence directed at lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex students and on interventions that address it. Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms need to be strengthened if understanding of programme effectiveness is to improve. When education systems and schools make a concerted effort to address gender-based violence, they contribute to broader societal efforts to eliminate such violence and promote equality and respect. Schools should be a place where students feel safe and welcome, which is not possible if they remain sites of violence and gender inequality (Ginestra, 2020b).

This is one of many stories of girls who are the first in their family to graduate. It was collected by the GEM Report as part of a campaign, #Iamthe1stgirl, aiming to demonstrate progress in gender equality in education since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years ago.

FIRST GENERATION GRADUATE:

Gifty from Ghana

Both my parents were peasant farmers who lived in a small village in the upper East of Ghana. I am one of two girls who survived out of fourteen children. The rest of my siblings died before age one. I am the eldest of the two surviving children. My father died when I was twelve years old, my mother never married again. Life without my father was never easy. My sister had to drop out of school. But I have a degree and a post graduate diploma in labour studies.

There were many financial, cultural and emotional problems to achieve this. But I had the encouragement and support from my mother, sister and all the teachers who taught me. Self-determination was the over-riding factor that helped. It has brought me out of the village. I now have a regular job. My social status has improved. My world view has improved. I am in a position to contribute to the development of my nation and immediate community. It has helped me to maintain a healthy family. I have four children who have all graduated with Masters Degrees and still aspiring. I want them to achieve even higher and be able to support their families and society at large.

A group of girls in a circle at a peer-led village workshop designed to inform and empower girls, in Sylhet, Bangladesh.

CREDIT: Tom Merilion / Save the Children



Partnerships are needed to fight unequal gender norms in education

Gender norms shape beliefs about how women and men should behave and determine attitudes and behaviours. While norms can change, those who benefit from the status quo often strongly resist such changes (Harper, 2020a). Girls and women are discriminated against in social, economic and political spheres, with negative effects on their positions and roles in society.

The World Values Survey provides evidence on gender discrimination and the evolution of unequal gender norms. While discrimination against girls and women ranked last among five global problems, after poverty (58%), the environment (12%), education (12%) and health (10%), it was considered the most important global problem by 8% of adults (10% of women and 6% of men), with shares ranging from less than 1% in Japan to 19% in Pakistan.

“ Discrimination against girls and women was considered the most important global problem by 8% of adults in the latest World Values Survey ”

Undeniable progress has been made in the 40 years since the adoption of CEDAW and the 25 years since the Beijing Declaration. However, more progress is needed. Moreover, women’s rights are being eroded in some countries in the name of a return to traditional values (Roggeband and Krizsan, 2019; UN Women, 2020a). Negative gender attitudes are directed not only at women but also at gender identity and gender expression (Box 7). The United Nations Development Programme’s Gender Social Norms Index, drawing on the World Values Survey, shows that the proportion of people with moderate and intense bias against gender equality increased between 2005–09 and 2010–14 in 15 of 31 countries. The share of men with no gender norm bias increased in countries including Argentina, Australia, the Netherlands and the United States, but declined in India, Romania, South Africa and Sweden. About half of men and women globally believe men are better political leaders, over 40% think men are better business executives and 28% think it is justified for men to beat their wives (UNDP, 2020).

The most extreme form of gender discrimination is sex-selective abortion, which may have led to 45 million fewer female births, mostly in China and India but also in 10 other countries, particularly in the Caucasus (Chao et al., 2019). Attitudes towards female foeticide have not improved with education. In urban India, the male to female child sex ratio is inversely associated with female literacy and female economic activity. An analysis of women’s attitudes in Patna, India, finds that women with lower than tertiary education justify sex-selective abortion based on coercion by their in-laws or husband, while women with at least tertiary education justified it as their own choice, comparing it to family planning (Kumari, 2015). The decline in desired fertility among educated women in India may in fact have increased their desire to have just one child, a son (Jayachandran, 2017).

Social expectations usually assume men should not take on care responsibilities and women should be confined to reproductive roles. In Uzbekistan, 28% of adults think it is not acceptable for a woman to work outside home for pay. In Georgia, 65% of adults reported that children with working mothers suffer. In Azerbaijan, 79% think that when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women (OECD, 2019d). In Lebanon, 77% of secondary school students said women should work mostly on becoming good wives and mothers and 66% said there were many jobs women should not do (UNESCO and Université La Sagesse, 2012).

Analysis for the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index assessed the level of discrimination in social institutions in 11 former republics of the Soviet Union and in Mongolia at 24%. One effect of this discrimination is that it reduces women’s average years of schooling by 16% (OECD, 2019d).

BOX 7:**Negative attitudes about sexual orientation and gender identity contribute to opposition to comprehensive sexuality education in Europe and Latin America**

Negative attitudes to gender equality also affect attitudes to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, not only in countries where same-sex relationships are illegal, but even in countries in Europe and Latin America where they are legal.

According to Eurobarometer, 76% of European adults believe LGBTI persons should have the same rights as others, but the shares are 39% in Bulgaria, 38% in Romania and 31% in Slovakia (European Commission, 2019). Poland is trying to pass a bill that would make sexuality education a crime (Amnesty International, 2020). In the United Kingdom, after Parliament voted in favour of mandating sex and relationship education in schools in 2019, demonstrations started in front of a primary school in Birmingham that had introduced lessons about same-sex relationships. After about 400 parents signed a petition and threatened to withdraw their children, the classes were suspended (Stewart, 2019; The Economist, 2019; The Guardian, 2019). Protests spread across the country and many schools were targeted. Ofsted, the education standards office, backed the curriculum, arguing that all children should be taught about same-sex relationships regardless of religious background (Freedman, 2020). Parents have the right to withdraw their children from relationship and sexuality education classes but the decision has to be approved by the head teacher. Local education authorities have developed strategies to support schools. Nottingham has developed information for social media and has a communication strategy to handle media queries for schools if problems occur (Local Government Association, 2019).

In Peru, explicit inclusion of a gender perspective in the curriculum and educational materials at a time when conservative groups were becoming more influential generated a political and legal dispute over the treatment of sexuality and gender relations, affecting the materials' production process. Peru reformed its national curriculum in 2016, incorporating a gender equality approach based on the idea that every person has the same potential to fully learn and develop, regardless of their gender identity. It included a statement that while 'feminine' and 'masculine' were seen as being based on biological difference, they are in fact concepts that people build day by day in their interactions (Peru Ministry of Education, 2016).

A parents' collective, *Padres en Acción*, argued that the curriculum was promoting a 'gender ideology' and destroying the concept of family. It filed a lawsuit against the Ministry of Education arguing that families had not been consulted in curriculum development, even though the country's regulations do not provide for such participation (Barea and Dador, 2018). Peru's First Civil Chamber ruled in favour of the collective and asked for the reference to the gender approach in the curriculum to be withdrawn. The ministry temporarily reinstated the 2009 curriculum (Peru Ministry of Education, 2017). But in April 2019, the Supreme Court ruled that the collective's demand was unfounded and that the new curriculum should be kept without modification (OREI, 2019).

PARENTAL ATTITUDES AFFECT GIRLS' EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

Attitudes towards women's education still differ widely by country, but overall they are improving. According to the World Values Survey, the percentage of parents believing 'a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl' fell from 40% in 2001 to 11% in 2011 in Morocco and from 29% in 2004 to 8% in 2013 in Iraq. However, in Egypt, the percentage increased from 16% in 2001 to 26% in 2012.

Social and cultural factors affect parents' attitudes to girls' education (Opoku, 2020). In rural areas of many low- and middle-income countries, girls are expected to get married and take on domestic roles, which impede their education, for instance among indigenous girls in Guatemala and Mexico (Bonfil, 2020). In Sokoto, Nigeria, some parents believed allowing girls to attend secondary school would prevent them from marrying (Onoyase, 2018). In rural Punjab, Pakistan, parents justifying their bias in favour of educating boys said more education would make girls rebellious and inclined to challenge the status quo in society (Purewal and Hashmi, 2015). To change these gender norms, legal institutions must protect girls' rights and education must provide everyone with opportunities and skills for critical thinking. Whether that happens depends on many factors, including the presence of civil society organizations to promote change, the contexts in which they operate and the strength of stakeholders' will to effect change (Harper, 2020b). In addition, gender equality champions can provide the impetus for change (**Box 8**).

I was born in an indigenous community and raised under some gender stereotypes and norms, experiencing several types of violence. Education was to me a way to learn that the world could look different and that I could also help other women and girls for their world to look different.

Tania, Mexico

Parental attitudes can also influence children's career choice. In Germany, parents of high socio-economic status support daughters in choosing TVET or STEM occupations but do not support sons in choosing female-dominated occupations, mainly because the latter tend to be lower paid (Helbig and Leuze, 2012). A survey showed that 10% of parents wanted their sons in technical occupations and 8% in crafts and trades, but only 2% wanted their daughters to make careers in these fields. By contrast, 9% of parents wanted their daughters in office jobs and 6% in medical roles but only 3% and 2%, respectively, wanted to see their sons in these occupations. Fathers want their sons to choose high-income careers with opportunities for advancement but consider these features less relevant when it comes to daughters (Speich, 2014).

In the United Arab Emirates, women's tertiary education choices are primarily based on consultation with family and conform with patriarchal traditions (Labib, 2020). Socio-cultural perceptions of appropriate careers generally fall into two main categories: those that are perceived as suitable for women, and those that are valued and highly regarded in society (Labib, 2019). Typically, careers for women align with cultural and religious norms and codes of modesty, allow for work-family balance and are in sheltered work environments. Parents discourage and disapprove of careers involving physical labour and a lot of interaction with men, such as those in ICT and civil or mechanical engineering (Houjeir et al., 2019; Labib, 2019).

Gender norms and parental expectations can also cause boys to disengage from education. In Fiji, parents expect boys to be breadwinners and to assist the family with cash crop farming, an expectation that provides boys with an incentive not to persist with school (Ali, 2020). In Jamaica, boys resist schooling because they consider it a female pursuit. This resistance is sometimes exemplified in a refusal to develop high levels of proficiency in reading, seen as girls' domain. As one boy put it, 'real men do not like reading' (Clarke, 2020).

Gender biases not only proliferate outside school, but are unintentionally reinforced inside education systems through curricula, teaching and learning materials and practices, and daily interactions with adults and peers.

This is one of many stories of girls who are the first in their family to graduate. It was collected by the GEM Report as part of a campaign, #Iamthe1stgirl, aiming to demonstrate progress in gender equality in education since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years ago.

FIRST GENERATION GRADUATE:

Andrae from Mexico

My father was born in a town in Oaxaca in conditions of poverty. Without enough food or education, he arrived in Mexico City. He paid for his studies by working. My mother was not able to complete her studies. She started working as a secretary at age 20 and later started a family. With their unconditional support, I managed to graduate from university with a scholarship and today I am looking to take a Master's Degree. Neither of my cousins or uncles managed to have a career. I believe that education can change a society from its roots. Education has shown me that there are other worlds and that knowledge is not static. In addition, with knowledge I have managed to return a little to the society that helped my parents to get ahead and to share a little of what I now know with my family that continues to face financial problems.

BOX 8:**Champions of gender equality help fight biased norms in education**

Role models, particularly women leaders, can have a strong impact on girls' education. Female leadership does not automatically translate into improvements for girls, but women leaders can change social and gender norms, both through legislation and policies and by serving as visible examples of what girls can accomplish (Rose et al., 2020). However, championing gender equality and inclusion in education is a job for everyone, and anyone who advocates for rights or provides education opportunities where they do not currently exist is contributing to its achievement. Ultimately, if gender equality is to be achieved, men must support it as well as women. While many boys and men may resist change in gender relations, others may welcome it, seeing gender equality as good for their community's well-being and in line with their principles (Connell, 2011).

Parents who protect their children's right to education play an important role, especially for girls. In Afghanistan, Mia Khan travels 12 kilometres by motorbike every day to take his daughters to school and waits to take them home. He wants to ensure that they get the same education opportunities as his sons. Although he is illiterate and lives on a daily wage, he sees his daughters' education as valuable for them and their community. He hopes one of them will become a doctor, since his village has a shortage of female doctors.

Christinah Hambira, a teacher in Botswana, is driven by the desire to ensure that girls and boys stay in school whatever happens in their lives. Her advocacy work to help young parents complete education has enabled her to advise her country's government as well as to travel the world promoting campaigns about schooling and early and unexpected pregnancy.

In Brazil, Cristiane Cerdera leads an after-school laboratory that hosts discussions and activities promoting better understanding of LGBTI students' situation. It contextualizes gender, race and socio-economic factors to help students understand the complexities their peers face. The laboratory trains teachers to address gender identity and expression in their classrooms. Cerdera's work focuses on highlighting diversity not as a threat but as an opportunity for learning.

Vilma Saloj is a head teacher in Guatemala who provides free education to marginalized indigenous girls. She hires only indigenous women as teachers, believing the best way to motivate her students is to show them that professional success for girls is attainable and to expose them to successful women who speak different languages, teach mathematics and have university degrees. In a society that prioritizes boys' education over that of girls, Saloj, herself an indigenous woman from a marginalized area, notes that her father's support was key to her professional development.

In the United Republic of Tanzania, Lidya Wilbard co-founded the national chapter of a pan-African network of educated young African women and is national director of the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), a large international NGO. She provides leadership to support marginalized girls in learning and driving change.

Practical advice can steer government decisions on inclusive education. In Zambia, Barbara Chilangwa realized during her teaching career that the government was listening to her advice on providing education opportunities for girls who had to leave school due to pregnancy or to help their families at home. She transitioned from teaching into a policymaking role, championing policies to remove barriers that lead to exclusion of children.

This is one of many stories of girls who are the first in their family to graduate. It was collected by the GEM Report as part of a campaign, #Iamthe1stgirl, aiming to demonstrate progress in gender equality in education since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 25 years ago.

FIRST GENERATION GRADUATE:

Mary Otieno from Kenya

My name is Mary Otieno. I was born in Kisumu County in Kenya. I was the first born of a family of 6. As a child, I lived with my parents and siblings in a small village in Kisumu County. My mum was a housewife and my Dad was a tailor and the sole breadwinner. I went to a primary school in rural Kenya. It wasn't easy. At the age of eight, I walked four kilometres daily to and from school. I struggled during my primary education because I had to juggle my schoolwork with the household chores. Sometimes I had to miss school because we couldn't afford the school fees.

It was during this time that my late grandmother, Siprosa Anyango, became my mentor. She guided me through my studies, supported me financially and advised me on sensitive issues like hygiene. She mentored me on how to value and care for myself, and how to become an educated and empowered woman. I successfully finished my primary school, but the challenges remained throughout my secondary education. Very often I would stay home because my dad could not afford the school fees. Luckily, my aunts and uncles helped us financially. At that time, most of my peers that were girls never completed high school – they often got pregnant and married or dropped out of school. It is because of my grandmother's support and mentorship that I not only finished high school, I also completed my graduate studies and eventually earned a PhD in educational planning and economics of education. I am also an alumni of Echidna global scholars program at the Brookings Institution.

I now work and live in Nairobi. I am the first in my family and the first girl in my village (of a population of 1,200 households) to graduate with a university degree (Bachelor of education). I used my education to start the Siprosa School in Nairobi, which provides high quality education to children regardless of their background. I am educating young girls, and also young boys, so that they may become the men that will not be intimidated to work with, marry, and live with these empowered and strong women!

Success in education has changed my life and that of my siblings, children and community. My siblings are also well educated because I set the pace. My children appreciate women because I have supported them throughout their education and development. One of my cousins, who married early, re-enrolled in grade eight and graduated with a degree in veterinary science. Another cousin had dropped out due to early pregnancy - but she re-enrolled and graduated with a bachelor of education. I broke the vicious cycle!

My children are so proud of me. They support girls' education due to the incredible benefits it can bring. I can support my family financially. I get respect from my community for my PhD. I help empower adolescent girls. My youngest son Andrew always says, Oh! Mum you are a positive challenge to the family!

As an educated woman, I am giving back to society. I am an empowered woman who has persevered through difficult circumstances with hard work and determination! I am providing young minds the opportunity to explore their talents, interests and full potential in a quality preschool so that they may have a strong foundation for their future schooling. I am enabling poor families to break the vicious cycle of poverty!

Sara, 9, at a Save the Children-supported school in a village she had been displaced to with her family in Western Aleppo, North West Syria.

CREDIT: Syria Relief



Conclusion

There has been a generational leap in girls' education. Between 1995 and 2018, the cohort of primary and secondary school-age children, adolescents and youth increased by 190 million. Enrolment increased by 150 million boys and 180 million girls, however, resulting in an increase in the gross enrolment ratio from 75% to 89% with gender parity. In tertiary education, for every 100 men, the number of women enrolled increased from 95 in 1995 to 114 in 2018. Girls are not only doing better than boys in reading; they have also caught up with boys in mathematics.

Education systems have expanded opportunities first to privileged populations, while the marginalized, discriminated and excluded, such as girls, those living in rural areas and the poor, have tended to follow. Those with intersecting disadvantages suffer most, and their education trajectory has not even taken off: The report shows that in at least 20 countries, no poor, rural young women complete secondary school, a target which all young men and women should achieve by 2030. The speed with which education gaps have closed varies significantly. In some cases, the pace of change has been unprecedented. In India, there were 75 girls enrolled in primary and secondary school for every 100 boys in 1995, but parity was reached in 2009. In Morocco, there were just 30 women enrolled for every 100 men around the time of the Beijing Declaration, while today there is parity. These changes do not happen automatically. Several factors explain the speed with which the gender gap was closed in education at global level.

Some mechanisms are endogenous: Acquiring an education is a springboard for the next generation to receive more education and for the benefits to compound and be widely shared. The education that some women had in earlier generations empowered them to have their own voice on issues of marriage and childbearing, bringing about a demographic transition to smaller family sizes. Not only were educated women empowered, but they were also able to take better decisions in terms of the survival and health of their children, helping to further accelerate this transition. With fewer children, families could more easily afford to send all their children to school, even those they might have discriminated against in the past, such as their daughters. Smaller family sizes also meant more opportunities for women to work outside the home, with the prospect of paid employment giving women a stronger negotiating position in the household while also increasing the incentives for families to invest in the education of all their children. These economic and social changes spread between and within countries, prompting broader cultural changes in gender norms. Many governments backed these cultural shifts through progressive legislative and policy frameworks that promoted gender equality.

But the drivers of progress were not always necessarily the right ones. Some governments did not act in recognition of their obligation to fulfil the right to education of all girls or to promote social development. Some families who invested in their girls' education may not have wholeheartedly subscribed to the principle of equality of opportunity for men and women; rather, they may have been driven by the prospect of a better marriage or the opportunity for a daughter to work and earn money for the family. In a few countries, the apparent progress for girls may simply be the result of slow progress for boys, especially those from poorer families, who have been pulled into the labour market.

Most importantly, behind the global figures, progress since 1995 has been uneven. Disparities between and within countries persist. Girls are still more likely to suffer the most extreme forms of exclusion; for instance, they make up three-quarters of children who may never set foot in a classroom. There are fewer than 8 young women enrolled for every 10 young men in upper secondary school in 9% of countries and in tertiary education in 16% of countries. Their situation will be fragile in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic that risks deepening existing inequality. The percentage of women in the global population of illiterate adults has remained constant at about 63% for the past 25 years. Women are at a disadvantage in many low- and middle-income countries when it comes to digital skills, a new form of literacy.

For 335 million female students, minimum requirements for water, sanitation and hygiene are not met. Schools may not be safe learning environments for many others, as girls are more likely to experience verbal and sexual harassment, abuse and violence. Girls who fall pregnant are often not supported and encouraged to continue their education. The content of education perpetuates gender stereotypes, portraying girls and women in passive roles. Failure to address implicit and explicit social and gender biases head-on means some teachers are inadequately prepared to help girls overcome barriers. As a result, subsequent career options remain limited. In any case, it is clear that women attain fewer leadership positions in education and elsewhere.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Generation Equality Forum, planned for 2021, is tasked with developing a new text that could replace the Beijing Declaration for the next generation of girls and women. It has identified six so-called Action Coalitions on violence, economic justice and rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights, climate justice, technology and innovation, and feminist movements and leadership. Education may not be among them, but alongside financing, gender norms, law and policies, data, intersectional discrimination and systemic change, it has been designated as a crosscutting theme to help achieve the targets of each Action Coalition.

As we look back at the achievements of the last generation of girls and women, should the international community change its strategic objectives to achieve gender equality, in and through education – and if so how? The journey towards gender equality is a process of ensuring inclusion. All spheres of human activity in all societies need to be aligned toward providing equal opportunities for girls and boys, women and men, and not discriminating against them. The past 25 years have seen progress in many fields, stagnation in others and, regrettably, regression as well. The agenda set in Beijing remains relevant today; the difference may be one of degree: The distance to the goal of equality has shortened in some areas and countries, while it may remain unchanged in other areas and countries. Progress in some areas allows the agenda to be bolder in some demands which a few years ago might not have seemed promising. And progress can no longer be reduced to a superficial assessment of gender parity.

Reflecting the distances travelled and capturing the current context, the report makes six recommendations to help focus planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring efforts in support of the process towards gender equality in and through education for the new generation. Underpinning them is the call made in the *2020 Global Education Monitoring Report* for countries to widen their understanding of inclusion in education, embracing learner diversity as a strength. Education systems should respond to the needs of every child, youth and adult to enable them to learn and fulfil their potential. Gender, whether as a single characteristic in its different expressions of identity, or in combination with other characteristics, such as age, location, poverty, disability, ethnicity, language, religion, migration or displacement, sexual orientation, incarceration, beliefs and attitudes, should not lead to discrimination in education participation or experience.

All girls should complete at least 12 years of education, and gender parity should be achieved in all levels of education and literacy in line with commitments made in SDG targets 4.1, 4.5 and 4.6.

Eliminate gender disparity in education access, participation and completion. There are fewer than 9 females enrolled for every 10 males in 4% of countries in primary, 9% in lower secondary, 15% in upper secondary and 21% in tertiary education. Discrimination, either consciously displayed or the result of inertia of past discrimination, is at the root of the problem girls and women are facing in these countries, unlike the more common case of countries in which men are at a disadvantage in upper secondary and tertiary education. Gaps must be closed with measures that prevent early school leaving, especially through social assistance and social protection programmes that target disadvantaged families, whose daughters are most vulnerable to unequal gender norms that condemn them to care and housework roles. While not sufficient, closing the remaining education gender gaps is a necessary condition for realizing economic justice.

Women should have equal access to technical, vocational and tertiary education, in line with the commitment made in SDG targets 4.3 and 4.4.

Ensure balanced representation of girls and women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields of study. The share of females in engineering or ICT in tertiary education is below 25% in over two-thirds of countries. The percentage of female students in technical and vocational education declined from 45% in 1995 to 42% in 2018 and is highly gender segregated by course. Women are also not pursuing careers in information and communications technology, despite the fact that girls are doing at least as well as boys in mathematics and science in the majority of countries. This discrepancy suggests the urgent need for active measures to ensure teachers, counsellors and the whole school community offer gender-responsive career orientation to deconstruct false images of technology and their biased connection to gender stereotypes. Programmes that redress such imbalances are urgently needed to contribute to technology and innovation for gender equality and prevent the emerging digital literacy gender gaps.

The teaching of knowledge and skills for sustainable development should incorporate gender equality in line with SDG target 4.7, starting from the early years as per SDG target 4.2.

Remove stereotypes and gender bias from teaching and learning materials. Gender bias in textbooks is still rife. The share of females in secondary school English-language textbook text and images was 44% in Malaysia and Indonesia, 37% in Bangladesh and 24% in Punjab province, Pakistan. Not only are girls and women under-represented; when included, they are often depicted in traditional roles, reflecting the inertia of past discrimination, as textbooks are slow to change even when the society around them strives to change. Yet, textbooks are the only books some children may read, and they are thus powerful tools to promote women's rights. Women are shown in passive, dependent and domestic roles. Developing gender-responsive teaching and learning materials and ensuring regular gender audits of teaching and learning materials requires strong leadership. Textbook revision processes need to be inclusive, ensuring that women participate equally and that their views are heard. They must also be based on research and supported by relevant training for curriculum and textbook specialists. A gender dimension must be explicit in tenders, terms of reference and contracts for drafting teaching and learning materials. Teachers need to be trained in the use of gender-responsive teaching materials.

Education facilities need to be gender sensitive and learning environments safe, non violent, inclusive and effective for all in line with the commitment made in SDG target 4.a.

Make schools safe spaces for all girls and boys, free from gender-based violence. Unequal gender power relations are also expressed through gender-based violence, a serious threat to efforts to achieve gender equality. In its school-related manifestation, violence is an obstacle to the achievement of universal secondary education and perpetuates gender-unequal norms. Fighting it requires an inclusive school ethos, respect of clear rules about what is acceptable, preparation of teachers and head teachers so that they take a critical view of their attitudes and values and stand ready to defend gender equality, and engagement with the community, not least in order to improve reporting of and response to incidents of violence. Sanitation facilities need to be improved to strengthen feelings of privacy and safety.

Commit to delivering comprehensive sexuality education at all education levels. In addition to the challenge of school-related gender-based violence, early marriage and pregnancy are further obstacles to universal secondary education. Early pregnancy rates remain high: In 2019, 14% of 20- to 24-year-old women globally had given birth before age 18 and 25% in sub-Saharan Africa. It is necessary but not sufficient to abolish openly hostile laws that ban pregnant girls from school or to make policy environments more supportive of pregnant girls and young mothers. What must be confronted are communities harbouring prejudices, condoning child marriage and tolerating violence. Governments will need to commit to implementing comprehensive sexuality education that promotes bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights but will also need to be prepared to overcome two challenges. First, many people still hold erroneous beliefs, unsupported by evidence, about the appropriate content of education, which are often fuelled and propagated by organized opposition and lobbying. Second, they will need to manage the complex financing, teacher education, curriculum content, assessment, monitoring and evaluation requirements and ensure intersectoral collaboration, particularly between education and health authorities.

Women should have equal access to education management and leadership positions alongside commitments to ensuring adequate supply of qualified teachers made in SDG target 4.c.

Ensure balanced representation of women in education management and leadership positions. While in some low-income countries, especially in rural areas, there are too few women – a legacy of past discrimination in girls' education that acts as a disincentive for the current generation of girls, especially in contexts where traditional norms continue to dominate – the teaching profession is characterized overall by feminization. Such gender segregation contradicts commitments to gender equality in the labour market. It is often linked to perceptions of teaching as a career that better suits women, perpetuating gender-unequal norms about labour market opportunities. These norms are also reflected in the limits women face in attaining education management and leadership positions. In 48 middle- and high-income countries, there is a gender gap of 20 percentage points among teachers and head teachers in lower secondary schools. Measures to promote gender equality in education management and leadership would support progress in gender equality in management and leadership positions in other sectors in line with the Generation Equality Forum's call for feminist movements and leadership. They would also echo the call for feminist action for climate justice, as unbalanced representation in crucial decision-making bodies and processes is one of the obstacles to ensuring these relevant decisions are sustainable and fair.

Taslima, 10, raises her hand at community school in Sylhet, Bangladesh.

CREDIT: Tom Merilion/Save the Children



TABLE 1: Education opportunities

Country or territory	A			B			C				D	
	GPI in gross enrolment ratio			GPI in completion rate			GPI in achieving minimum proficiency				Female tertiary graduates (%)	
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	End of primary		End of lower secondary		ICT	Engineering
						Reading	Mathematics	Reading	Mathematics			
Sub-Saharan Africa												
Angola	0.87	0.64	0.83	0.89	0.76	0.64	...	...	...	...	38	22
Benin	0.94	0.76	0.44	0.87	0.54	0.45	0.78	1.1	...	...	55	55
Botswana	0.98	...	1.3	...	...	...	...	1.15	...	...	...	...
Burkina Faso	0.98	1.00	0.58	...	...	...	0.88	0.74	...	...	...	22
Burundi	1.01	1.10	0.45	1.16	0.75	0.7	1.3	1.47	...	...	27	8
Cabo Verde	0.93	1.09	1.33	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	44	33
Cameroon	0.90	0.86	0.81	0.94	0.88	0.78	1.17	0.94	...	...	...	25
Central African Republic	0.78	0.67	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Chad	0.77	0.46	0.29	0.78	0.55	0.37	0.72	0.32	...	...	...	...
Comoros	1.00	1.06	0.81	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Congo	...	...	0.67	1.04	0.79	0.69	1.11	1.01	...	...	27	16
Côte d'Ivoire	0.93	0.77	0.69	0.89	0.61	0.85	1.15	0.71	...	...	...	...
D. R. Congo	0.99	0.64	0.56	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	37	10
Djibouti	1	1.03	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Equat. Guinea	0.99	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Eritrea	0.86	0.91	0.71	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	28
Eswatini	0.92	0.99	...	1.17	1.13	1.07	...	...	...	...	...	...
Ethiopia	0.91	0.96	0.48	1.01	0.96	1.11	...	...	...	...	...	...
Gabon	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Gambia	1.09	...	...	1.12	1.09	0.90	...	...	...	...	...	...
Ghana	1.01	1	0.77	1.05	1	1.02	...	...	...	...	20	16
Guinea	0.82	0.65	0.43	0.75	0.61	0.51	...	...	...	...	...	...
Guinea-Bissau	...	...	...	0.78	0.69	0.49	...	...	...	...	...	...
Kenya	1	...	0.74	1.06	1.12	0.85	...	...	...	...	30	19
Lesotho	0.95	1.26	1.35	1.25	1.40	1.29	...	...	...	...	31	18
Liberia	0.99	0.77	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Madagascar	1.01	1.03	0.95	1.14	0.98	0.97	...	...	...	...	34	19
Malawi	1.01	0.98	...	1.18	0.92	0.84	...	...	...	...	...	...
Mali	0.90	0.82	0.42	0.81	0.84	0.43	...	...	...	...	...	...
Mauritania	1.05	1.02	0.5	0.85	0.85	0.66	...	...	...	...	41	12
Mauritius	1.03	1.05	1.29	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	32	25
Mozambique	0.93	0.89	0.81	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	21	29
Namibia	0.97	...	1.49	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	38	34
Niger	0.86	0.75	0.41	...	...	...	1.16	0.71	...	...	23	7
Nigeria	0.94	0.9	...	1.00	0.9	0.76	...	...	...	...	...	...
Rwanda	0.99	1.11	0.81	1.22	1.16	0.84	...	...	...	...	39	27
Sao Tome and Principe	0.97	1.13	1.04	1.08	1.1	1.46	...	...	...	...	...	...
Senegal	1.12	1.09	0.68	1.06	0.85	0.69	0.97	0.75	1.11	0.86	...	...
Seychelles	1.06	1.06	1.52	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	21	14
Sierra Leone	1.03	0.97	...	1.03	0.89	0.64	...	...	...	...	...	...
Somalia	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
South Africa	0.97	1.08	1.3	1.03	1.06	1.13	...	1.14	...	...	38	32
South Sudan	0.71	0.54	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Togo	0.96	0.73	0.51	0.89	0.64	0.49	1.14	0.87	...	...	...	...
Uganda	1.03	...	0.73	1.07	0.87	0.79	...	...	...	...	...	...
United Republic of Tanzania	1.03	1.05	0.54	1.1	0.86	0.69	...	...	...	...	...	...
Zambia	1.02	...	...	1.03	0.92	0.80	...	...	1.46	1.26	...	...
Zimbabwe	...	...	0.84	1.06	1.08	0.79	...	...	...	...	46	20
Northern Africa and Western Asia												
Algeria	0.95	...	1.40	...	...	...	...	...	1.46	1.16	49	48
Armenia	1.00	1.04	1.25	1	1.01	1.04	...	1.04	...	1.07	38	22
Azerbaijan	1.01	1	1.13	...	...	...	1.06	...	...	...	46	27
Bahrain	0.99	1.06	1.45	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.17	47	31
Cyprus	1.00	0.98	1.16	1	1	1.09	...	...	1.32	1.09	28	33
Egypt	1.00	0.99	1.03	1.01	1.02	0.97	...	...	...	1.13	37	21
Georgia	1.01	1.01	1.12	1.00	1.00	1.08	...	...	1.37	1.04	21	16
Iraq	...	...	...	0.94	1.01	1.19	...	...	...	...	...	...
Israel	1.01	1.02	1.29	...	...	...	...	...	1.22	1.09	...	...
Jordan	0.98	1.03	1.16	...	...	...	...	...	1.35	1.01	...	35
Kuwait	1.09	1.06	1.53	...	...	...	...	...	...	0.84	...	...
Lebanon	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.22	0.95	...	...

TABLE 1: Continued

Country or territory	A			B			C				D	
	GPI in gross enrolment ratio			GPI in completion rate			GPI in achieving minimum proficiency				Female tertiary graduates (%)	
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	End of primary		End of lower secondary		ICT	Engineering
						Reading	Mathematics	Reading	Mathematics			
Libya	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Morocco	0.96	0.91	0.99	...	...	...	...	...	1.31	1.07	41	42
Oman	1.09	0.92	1.53	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.27	76	43
Palestine	1.00	1.09	1.36	1.01	1.14	1.28	...	...	...	...	46	33
Qatar	1.01	...	1.87	...	...	...	...	...	1.41	1.03	53	37
Saudi Arabia	1.01	0.94	1.05	...	...	...	...	...	1.44	0.91	46	3
Sudan	0.94	1.01	1.02	0.96	1.02	0.85	...	...	...	...	...	46
Syrian Arab Republic	...	...	1.12	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	57	44
Tunisia	0.99	1.13	1.45	1.03	1.15	1.30	...	...	1.28	0.87	56	44
Turkey	0.99	0.95	...	...	...	...	...	0.98	1.14	1.05	34	27
United Arab Emirates	0.98	0.92	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.33	1.07	55	33
Yemen	0.87	0.73	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Central and Southern Asia												
Afghanistan	0.67	0.57	0.35	0.56	0.49	0.46	...	...	...	...	...	4
Bangladesh	1.07	1.14	0.71	1.11	1.02	0.82	...	...	0.98	0.84	27	46
Bhutan	1.00	1.11	0.99	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
India	1.13	1.04	1.07	1	0.96	0.85	1.04	1	...	...	46	31
Iran, Islamic Republic of	1.05	0.96	0.86	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.01	39	23
Kazakhstan	1.02	1.01	1.19	1	1	1.02	1.01	1.02	1.31	1.00	30	28
Kyrgyzstan	0.99	1.00	1.23	1.00	1.00	0.95	...	...	...	...	47	18
Maldives	1.02	...	1.72	1.02	1.09	1.29	...	...	...	...	10	10
Nepal	1.02	1.07	1.07	0.99	0.97	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Pakistan	0.84	0.85	0.87	0.87	0.82	0.97	...	...	...	...	...	...
Sri Lanka	0.99	1.04	1.33	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	38	28
Tajikistan	0.99	...	0.76	0.99	0.97	0.79	...	...	...	...	...	...
Turkmenistan	0.98	0.96	0.64	1	1	1.03	...	...	...	...	...	...
Uzbekistan	0.99	0.99	0.70	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	18	18
Eastern and South-eastern Asia												
Brunei Darussalam	1.01	1.02	1.36	...	...	...	...	...	1.23	1.07	42	52
Cambodia	0.98	...	0.90	1.12	0.96	0.97	...	...	1.31	0.83	8	15
China	1.01	...	1.18	1.02	1.08	1.15	...	...	...	...	...	...
DPR Korea	1.00	1.01	0.51	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	36	17
Hong Kong, China	1.04	0.97	1.10	...	...	...	...	...	1.10	1.03	...	...
Indonesia	0.97	1.02	1.13	1.02	1.05	1.03	...	...	1.31	1.13	35	25
Japan	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.09	1.01	...	14
Lao PDR	0.96	0.93	1.07	1	0.98	0.97	...	...	...	...	41	18
Macao, China	0.99	1.00	1.26	...	...	...	...	...	1.06	1.00	23	20
Malaysia	1.01	1.08	1.18	...	...	...	...	...	1.23	1.07	46	27
Mongolia	0.98	...	1.29	1.02	1.10	1.13	...	...	...	...	38	31
Myanmar	0.96	1.08	1.29	1.03	1.03	1.33	...	...	...	...	67	42
Philippines	0.96	1.1	1.24	1.06	1.15	1.11	...	...	1.34	1.11	48	24
Republic of Korea	1	0.99	0.79	...	...	...	...	...	1.08	1.01	24	20
Singapore	1	0.99	1.13	...	...	...	...	...	1.07	1.03	32	28
Thailand	1.00	0.98	1.29	1	1.12	1.19	...	...	1.38	1.16	48	17
Timor-Leste	0.96	1.08	...	1.1	1.1	1.1	...	...	...	...	...	...
Viet Nam	1.02	...	1.2	1.01	1.07	1.18	...	...	1.11	1.04	26	37
Oceania												
Australia	1	0.89	1.3	...	1	1.04	...	0.97	1.11	0.99	22	23
Cook Islands	0.98	1.04	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Fiji	0.98	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Kiribati	1.07	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Marshall Islands	1	1.06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Micronesia, F. S.	0.98	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Nauru	0.95	1.02	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
New Zealand	1	1.06	1.3	...	...	...	...	...	1.11	0.99	23	29
Niue	1	1.18	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Palau	0.88	1.1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Papua New Guinea	0.91	0.73	...	1.02	1	0.88	...	...	...	...	...	...
Samoa	1.00	1.09	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Solomon Is	1.00	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Tokelau	0.83	0.91	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

TABLE 1: Continued

Country or territory	A			B			C				D	
	GPI in gross enrolment ratio			GPI in completion rate			GPI in achieving minimum proficiency				Female tertiary graduates (%)	
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	End of primary		End of lower secondary		ICT	Engineering
						Reading	Mathematics	Reading	Mathematics			
Tonga	0.99	1.03	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Tuvalu	0.92	1.12	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Vanuatu	0.97	1.03	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Latin America and the Caribbean												
Anguilla	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Antigua and Barbuda	0.99	0.96	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Argentina	1	1.04	1.4	...	...	...	...	...	1.11	0.78	...	...
Aruba	0.97	...	1.48	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Bahamas	1.00	1.06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Barbados	0.96	1.04	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Belize	0.95	1.04	1.38	1.13	1.27	1.23	...	...	...	...	19	9
Bolivia, P. S.	0.99	0.98	...	1.01	0.99	1.03	...	...	...	...	...	...
Brazil	0.97	1.03	1.27	1.09	1.1	1.19	...	...	1.20	0.88	15	37
British Virgin Islands	0.96	1.1	1.44	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Cayman Islands	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Chile	0.97	1	1.13	1	1.01	1.05	...	...	1.13	0.74	13	18
Colombia	0.97	1.05	1.14	1.04	1.1	1.12	...	...	1.07	0.75	23	35
Costa Rica	1.01	1.07	1.18	1.02	1.05	1.16	...	...	1.11	0.80	20	35
Cuba	0.96	1.02	1.37	1	1.01	1.03	...	...	...	...	33	42
Curaçao	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Dominica	0.97	0.99	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Dominican Republic	0.94	1.07	1.44	1.07	1.15	1.27	...	...	1.37	0.94	39	38
Ecuador	1.02	1.03	1.14	1.00	1.01	1.05	...	...	1.09	0.71	37	21
El Salvador	0.97	0.99	1.12	1.05	1.02	1.08	...	...	...	...	26	19
Grenada	0.98	1.03	1.20	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	24	13
Guatemala	0.97	0.95	1.15	0.95	0.87	0.91	...	...	1.15	0.84	21	35
Guyana	...	...	...	1.03	1.09	1.23	...	...	...	...	...	...
Haiti	...	...	...	1.16	1.17	0.97	...	...	...	...	...	...
Honduras	1	1.13	1.27	1.07	1.09	1.24	...	...	1.11	0.66	27	39
Jamaica	0.96	1.03	1.43	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Mexico	1	1.07	1.02	0.99	0.99	0.97	...	...	1.11	0.88	28	28
Montserrat	1.09	1.11	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Nicaragua	...	...	...	1.22	1.17	1.3	...	...	...	...	...	...
Panama	0.98	1.05	1.36	1.01	1.07	1.11	...	...	1.16	0.82	44	40
Paraguay	...	...	...	1.07	1.09	1.13	...	...	1.12	0.56	...	...
Peru	0.97	0.95	1.05	1.00	1.01	1.01	...	...	1.13	0.85	50	47
Saint Kitts and Nevis	0.97	1.03	1.5	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Saint Lucia	1.01	1.00	1.49	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Saint Vincent/Grenadines	0.99	1.03	1.4	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Sint Maarten	1.01	0.95	1.7	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	75	...
Suriname	1.00	1.24	...	1.11	1.27	1.35	...	...	...	...	...	...
Trinidad and Tobago	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.28	1.16	...	...
Turks and Caicos Islands	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Uruguay	0.98	1.1	...	1.02	1.13	1.27	...	...	1.17	0.93	18	46
Venezuela, B. R.	0.98	1.07	...	1.02	1.13	1.15	...	...	...	...	...	...
Europe and Northern America												
Albania	1.04	1.01	1.36	1.01	1	1.02	...	...	1.35	1.06	44	38
Andorra	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Austria	1	0.96	1.16	1	1.02	0.98	1.01	...	1.13	0.99	14	22
Belarus	1.00	0.99	1.16	...	...	...	...	...	1.13	0.99	23	23
Belgium	1	1.11	1.23	1.02	1.02	1.04	...	...	1.08	0.97	10	23
Bermuda	0.98	1.11	1.33	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	33	6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.30	1.01	28	39
Bulgaria	0.99	0.97	1.19	...	0.99	1.01	1.02	1.03	1.27	1.03	39	29
Canada	1	1.01	1.26	...	...	...	...	...	1.09	1.00	30	20
Croatia	1	1.05	1.27	1	0.99	1	...	0.92	1.16	0.98	21	36
Czechia	1.01	1.01	1.29	1	1.01	1.08	...	...	1.13	1.01	16	34
Denmark	0.99	1.01	1.27	1	1	1.19	...	...	1.11	1.01	24	29
Estonia	1	1.02	1.35	1	1.03	1.08	...	...	1.07	1.00	29	32
Finland	0.99	1.09	1.15	1	1	1.08	...	...	1.13	1.04	21	22
France	0.99	1.01	1.19	...	1.02	1.05	1.02	0.97	1.11	1.00	16	26
Germany	1	0.94	1.01	...	0.97	1.06	1.01	0.98	1.10	1.00	19	21
Greece	1	0.94	1.01	1	1.01	1.01	...	...	1.22	1.04	36	34

TABLE 1: Continued

Country or territory	A			B			C				D	
	GPI in gross enrolment ratio			GPI in completion rate			GPI in achieving minimum proficiency				Female tertiary graduates (%)	
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	End of primary		End of lower secondary		ICT	Engineering
						Reading	Mathematics	Reading	Mathematics			
Hungary	0.99	1	1.2	...	0.98	1.04	1.01	0.99	1.12	0.95	17	30
Iceland	1	0.99	1.46	1	1	1.32	...	...	1.19	1.07	...	...
Ireland	1	0.98	1.1	1	1.01	1.04	...	...	1.07	1.00	21	18
Italy	0.97	0.99	1.26	1	1	1.02	...	...	1.11	0.96	16	32
Latvia	1	0.99	1.31	0.99	1.02	1.14	...	...	1.16	1.00	23	27
Liechtenstein	0.97	0.81	0.63	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Lithuania	1	0.96	1.27	...	0.99	1.12	1.01	1.03	1.18	1.05	17	25
Luxembourg	0.99	1.02	1.1	...	0.97	1	...	...	1.13	0.97	20	20
Malta	1	1	1.27	...	1.02	1.05	...	...	1.26	1.03	16	28
Monaco	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Montenegro	0.95	1.01	1.26	...	...	...	...	...	1.24	0.94	...	...
Netherlands	1	1.01	1.13	1	1.05	1.03	...	...	1.13	1.02	14	23
North Macedonia	1	0.97	1.24	...	...	...	...	...	1.41	1.09	35	48
Norway	1	0.96	1.33	1	0.99	1.05	...	0.99	1.16	1.05	15	24
Poland	1	0.97	1.34	1	1	1.02	...	...	1.11	1.02	21	42
Portugal	0.97	0.98	1.11	1.01	1	1.1	...	...	1.10	1.00	17	32
Republic of Moldova	1	0.99 ⁱ	1.25	...	...	...	...	...	1.26	1.02	23	30
Romania	0.99	1	1.21	...	1	0.98	...	...	1.22	0.98	33	35
Russian Federation	1	0.98	1.16	...	...	...	1.01	1	1.12	1.00	...	...
San Marino	1.14	0.89	0.74	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	36
Serbia	1	1.01	1.28	1	1.01	1.02	...	1.01	1.22	1.01	29	39
Slovakia	0.99	1.01	1.34	1	0.99	1.01	1.01	0.93	1.18	1.01	12	28
Slovenia	1	1.02	1.3	1	1	1.03	...	...	1.16	1.01	14	27
Spain	1.02	1.01	1.16	0.94	1.03	1.05	...	...	1.08	1.00	13	27
Sweden	1.01	1.06	1.36	1	1	1.06	...	...	1.11	1.02	30	33
Switzerland	0.99	0.96	1.02	1	1	0.96	...	...	1.12	0.99	10	16
Ukraine	1.02	0.98	1.13	...	...	...	...	...	1.16	0.97	17	25
United Kingdom	1	1.03	1.27	1	1	1.1	...	...	1.07	0.97	19	23
United States	0.99	0.99	1.26	1	1.01	1.03	...	...	1.09	0.98	24	20

A Adjusted gender parity index in the gross enrollment rate by level

B Adjusted gender parity index in the completion rate by level [Source: GEM Report team analysis of household surveys]

C Adjusted gender parity index in the percentage of students achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading and mathematics

D Percentage of female graduates in tertiary education in a) information and communication technologies b) engineering, manufacturing and construction

Note: UIS is the source unless noted otherwise.

(i) Estimate and/or partial coverage

TABLE 2: Norms, institutions, laws, policies and systems

Country or territory	A Adults who value university for boys over girls (%)	B PI of adolescents engagement in household chores	C Early marriage rate (%)	D Early childbearing rate (%)	E Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) level of gender discrimination	F Schools that provide HIV and sexuality education (%)		G GPI of students experiencing bullying	H Female teachers (%)		I Gap in share of female teachers vs. head teachers (percentage points)	J Lower secondary schools with no sanitation (%)
						Primary	Lower secondary		Primary	Secondary		
Sub-Saharan Africa												
Angola	...	1.20	30	38	...	...	...	...	47	29	...	...
Benin	...	1.45	26	19	Medium	...	...	1.08	26	10	...	...
Botswana	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	74	...	...	...
Burkina Faso	...	1.68	52	28	Medium	2	21	...	47	17	...	35
Burundi	...	1.32	19	13	...	99	100	...	50	26	...	18
Cabo Verde	...	...	...	22	...	59	100	...	71	47	...	2
Cameroon	...	1.62	31	28	Very high	...	...	...	53	35	...	...
Central African Republic	...	1.40	68	45	High	...	...	...	19	47	...	...
Chad	...	1.51	67	51	High	...	...	...	18	7	...	...
Comoros	...	1.47	32	17	...	...	...	...	29	17	...	...
Congo	...	1.05	27	26	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Côte d'Ivoire	...	1.62	27	25	High	...	...	...	30	16	...	0
D. R. Congo	...	1.62	37	27	Medium	0	0	...	29	12	...	...
Djibouti	...	...	5	...	...	...	...	...	29	26	...	5
Equat. Guinea	...	...	30	42	...	...	...	...	44	...	...	...
Eritrea	...	...	41	19	...	...	...	...	39	24	...	59
Eswatini	...	1.16	5	17	...	100	100	...	68	49	...	3
Ethiopia	...	1.16	40	21	Low	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Gabon	...	1.13	22	28	High	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Gambia	...	...	30	19	...	...	...	...	36	19	...	14
Ghana	30	1.74	21	17	Medium	...	...	...	43	25	...	...
Guinea	...	1.37	51	37	Very high	...	...	...	31	...	...	...
Guinea-Bissau	...	1.62	24	28	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Kenya	...	...	23	23	Medium	...	...	...	50	42	...	...
Lesotho	...	...	17	14	Medium	...	...	...	75	55	...	...
Liberia	...	1.81	36	37	High	...	...	...	18	6	...	59
Madagascar	...	...	41	36	High	...	...	...	53	42	...	52
Malawi	...	1.53	42	31	High	...	...	...	44	23	...	...
Mali	...	1.44	50	33	High	...	...	...	32	14	...	80
Mauritania	...	1.49	37	22	...	0	0	...	33	13	...	68
Mauritius	...	...	...	...	...	0	0	...	79	59	...	0
Mozambique	...	...	53	40	Low	...	...	1.03	46	31	...	...
Namibia	...	...	7	15	Low	...	...	...	68	54	...	...
Niger	...	1.31	76	48	...	6	100	...	53	22	...	42
Nigeria	46	1.20	44	31	High	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Rwanda	36	1.29	7	6	Low	100	100	...	55	28	...	28
Sao Tome and Principe	...	1.20	35	27	...	50	100	...	55	33	...	0
Senegal	...	1.73	29	16	Medium	100	76	...	32	27	...	52
Seychelles	...	...	...	...	...	90	81	1.11	89	58	...	0
Sierra Leone	...	1.20	30	30	High	23	53	...	30	14	...	35
Somalia	...	...	45	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
South Africa	39	1.25	6	15	Low	...	...	...	79	58	38	...
South Sudan	...	...	52	28	...	...	...	...	15	13	...	...
Togo	...	1.41	22	8	High	...	...	...	17	...	...	17
Uganda	...	1.61	34	28	High	0	0	...	43	24	...	...
United Republic of Tanzania	...	1.45	31	22	High	...	...	1.11	50	33	...	...
Zambia	...	1.09	31	31	Medium	62	...	...	50	...	...	...
Zimbabwe	16	...	32	22	Medium	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Northern Africa and Western Asia												
Algeria	37	1.32	3	1	...	0	0	...	81	...	...	...
Armenia	25	1.64	5	1	Low	0	100	0.60	100	80	...	...
Azerbaijan	31	...	11	4	Low	...	...	...	93	74	...	0
Bahrain	...	...	...	...	...	100	100	0.64	74	58	...	0
Cyprus	14	...	...	...	Low	...	...	...	84	66	22	...
Egypt	36	1.82	17	7	...	0	0	...	61	48	...	0
Georgia	18	1.58	14	6	Low	...	...	...	91	80	23	0
Iraq	31	1.84	28	14	Very high	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Israel	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0.49	85	...	25	0
Jordan	29	1.81	8	5	Very high	...	...	...	79	57	...	38
Kuwait	36	...	...	...	...	...	...	0.77	89	57	...	0
Lebanon	31	...	6	...	Very high	...	...	0.49	88	68	...	...

TABLE 2: Continued

Country or territory	A Adults who value university for boys over girls (%)	B PI of adolescents engagement in household chores	C Early marriage rate (%)	D Early childbearing rate (%)	E Social institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) level of gender discrimination	F Schools that provide HIV and sexuality education (%)		G GPI of students experiencing bullying	H Female teachers (%)		I Gap in share of female teachers vs. head teachers (percentage points)	J Lower secondary schools with no sanitation (%)
						Primary	Lower secondary		Primary	Secondary		
Libya	32	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Morocco	20	...	13	8	Very high	...	...	0.72	57	37	...	2
Oman	...	...	4	2	...	0	99	0.87	71	69	...	0
Palestine	27	1.78	15	22	...	...	3	...	75	57	...	1
Qatar	28	...	4	...	...	100	100	...	80	54	...	0
Saudi Arabia	...	...	...	...	...	100	100	...	52	51	1	0
Sudan	...	1.41	34	22	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	27
Syrian Arab Republic	...	...	13	9	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Tunisia	24	0.83	2	1	High	...	...	...	64	54	...	2
Turkey	32	...	15	6	Low	...	...	...	61	53	49	...
United Arab Emirates	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0.67	90	68	11	0
Yemen	45	...	32	17	Very high	...	...	0.71	33	...	...	...
Central and Southern Asia												
Afghanistan	...	1.58	35	20	Very high	...	...	1.06	36	36	...	44
Bangladesh	...	...	59	36	Very high	0	100	0.64	61	22	...	4
Bhutan	...	1.51	26	15	...	...	...	0.93	39	42	...	...
India	35	...	27	9	Medium	...	...	...	51	43	...	6
Iran, Islamic Republic of	...	...	17	5	Very high	...	...	...	67	54	...	...
Kazakhstan	22	...	7	2	Low	...	...	...	95	75	23	...
Kyrgyzstan	41	1.08	12	4	Low	100	100	...	99	77	...	...
Maldives	...	...	4	1	...	0	100	0.97	70	...	...	0
Nepal	...	1.57	40	16	Medium	...	...	0.81	45	24	...	...
Pakistan	51	...	21	7	Very high	...	...	...	54	60	...	...
Sri Lanka	...	...	10	4	High	...	100	0.57	88	71	...	8
Tajikistan	...	...	9	1	Medium	...	...	...	76	...	...	...
Turkmenistan	...	...	6	1	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Uzbekistan	49	...	7	2	...	...	...	...	92	61	...	9
Eastern and South-eastern Asia												
Brunei Darussalam	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0.86	78	68	...	...
Cambodia	...	1.74	19	7	Low	...	...	...	57	...	...	...
China	22	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	67	55	...	1
DPR Korea	...	...	...	...	Low	...	...	...	82	40	...	...
Hong Kong, China	23	...	...	...	...	100	95	...	77	56	...	0
Indonesia	...	...	11	7	High	...	...	0.80	68	56	...	40
Japan	16	...	...	...	Low	...	...	...	...	...	35	...
Lao PDR	...	1.07	33	18	Low	...	...	0.74	52	51	...	...
Macao, China	...	...	...	...	...	100	100	...	82	59	...	0
Malaysia	43	...	...	...	...	97	100	...	70	67	...	0
Mongolia	...	1.20	5	3	Low	...	...	...	95	73	...	...
Myanmar	...	...	16	5	High	84	85	0.95	80	86	...	33
Philippines	39	...	17	11	Very high	...	...	0.92	88	71	...	...
Republic of Korea	26	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	78	60	48	0
Singapore	26	...	...	...	Low	...	...	...	81	65	16	0
Thailand	29	...	23	9	Medium	...	...	0.73	71	71	...	...
Timor-Leste	...	...	15	7	...	...	...	0.64	41	37	...	...
Viet Nam	...	1.43	11	5	Low	...	...	...	78	...	38	...
Oceania												
Australia	4	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	...	...	...	...	0
Cook Islands	...	...	...	...	...	0	32	1.08	90	58	...	0
Fiji	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0.78	...	...	...	...
Kiribati	...	...	20	9	...	...	...	...	82	...	...	...
Marshall Islands	...	...	26	21	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Micronesia, F. S.	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	56	...	...	...
Nauru	...	...	27	22	...	...	50	...	78	50	...	50
New Zealand	5	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	...	84	63	12	...
Niue	...	...	...	...	...	0	100	...	92	57	...	0
Palau	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Papua New Guinea	...	...	21	14	...	...	...	...	49	38	...	...
Samoa	...	...	11	6	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0
Solomon Is	...	1.31	21	15	...	...	...	...	44	33	...	...
Tokelau	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.01	73	...	...	...

TABLE 2: Continued

Country or territory	A Adults who value university for boys over girls (%)	B Pl of adolescents engagement in household chores	C Early marriage rate (%)	D Early childbearing rate (%)	E Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) level of gender discrimination	F Schools that provide HIV and sexuality education (%)		G GPI of students experiencing bullying	H Female teachers (%)		I Gap in share of female teachers vs. head teachers (percentage points)	J Lower secondary schools with no sanitation (%)
						Primary	Lower secondary		Primary	Secondary		
Tonga	...	...	6	2	...	...	...	0.67	72	58	...	...
Tuvalu	...	...	10	3	...	...	...	...	80	55	...	...
Vanuatu	...	0.47	21	13	...	...	...	...	57	42	...	...
Latin America and the Caribbean												
Anguilla	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.26	...	...	...	...
Antigua and Barbuda	...	...	...	...	...	100	100	...	92	73	...	0
Argentina	17	...	...	12	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Aruba	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Bahamas	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	93	74	...	...
Barbados	...	...	11	7	...	...	...	...	77	66	...	0
Belize	...	1.56	34	17	...	...	...	...	75	63	...	...
Bolivia, P. S.	...	...	20	20	Low	...	...	...	65	52	...	...
Brazil	9	...	26	...	Low	...	...	...	89	64	-8	...
British Virgin Islands	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	91	67	...	0
Cayman Islands	...	...	...	...	...	...	100	...	90	68	...	0
Chile	20	1.18	...	...	Medium	...	...	...	81	60	15	...
Colombia	11	1.74	23	20	Very low	...	...	...	77	51	18	...
Costa Rica	...	1.83	21	13	Low	0	73	...	79	60	...	24
Cuba	...	...	26	6	...	100	100	...	81	63	...	0
Curaçao	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Dominica	...	...	...	...	...	100	100	...	87	73	...	0
Dominican Republic	...	1.53	36	21	Very low	...	...	0.85	81	63	...	...
Ecuador	23	...	20	...	Low	...	...	...	77	58	...	...
El Salvador	...	1.65	26	18	Low	...	...	...	74	55	...	...
Grenada	...	...	...	...	...	73	92	...	82	65	...	...
Guatemala	...	...	30	20	Low	...	...	0.75	65	49	...	...
Guyana	...	1.26	30	16	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Haiti	60	0.67	15	14	Medium	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Honduras	...	...	34	22	Low	...	...	...	74	59	...	...
Jamaica	...	0.68	8	15	Low	100	0	0.94	90	72	...	7
Mexico	21	0.94	26	21	Low	...	...	...	68	...	21	...
Montserrat	...	...	...	...	...	0	0	...	93	69	...	0
Nicaragua	...	...	35	28	Very low	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Panama	...	...	26	...	...	...	...	...	77	59	...	...
Paraguay	...	1.56	22	...	Medium	...	...	0.76	...	...	...	...
Peru	14	1.29	19	16	Low	...	...	...	67	45	...	...
Saint Kitts and Nevis	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	92	69	...	...
Saint Lucia	...	0.38	8	...	...	...	...	...	87	71	...	0
Saint Vincent/Grenadines	...	...	...	...	...	100	96	...	84	68	...	4
Sint Maarten	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	58	...	...
Suriname	...	0.77	19	...	...	...	...	...	95	73	...	...
Trinidad and Tobago	6	...	11	...	Low	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Turks and Caicos Islands	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	90	66	...	0
Uruguay	9	1.61	25	...	Low	100	100	...	...	...	...	...
Venezuela, B. R.	...	...	...	24	...	100	...	...	...	...	...	...
Europe and Northern America												
Albania	...	1.73	12	3	Low	79	95	0.77	85	67	...	5
Andorra	...	...	...	...	...	100	100	...	80	67	...	0
Austria	...	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	0.83	92	66	21	...
Belarus	21	...	3	3	Low	...	...	...	99	80	...	0
Belgium	...	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	...	82	63	26	...
Bermuda	...	...	...	...	...	46	100	...	88	67	...	...
Bosnia and Herzegovina	...	...	4	...	Low	...	...	...	87	62	...	...
Bulgaria	...	...	...	5	Low	...	...	0.92	94	79	7	...
Canada	...	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	1.15	...	...	...	...
Croatia	...	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	0.94	94	70	26	...
Czechia	...	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	0.91	...	...	24	...
Denmark	...	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	1.02	69	56	25	0
Estonia	16	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	0.95	90	76	27	0
Finland	...	...	...	...	Very low	100	100	0.79	80	67	23	0
France	...	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	0.95	...	...	24	0
Germany	16	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	1.03	87	63	...	0
Greece	...	...	...	...	Low	...	...	0.93	71	61	...	...

TABLE 2: Continued

Country or territory	A	B	C	D	E	F		G	H		I	J
	Adults who value university for boys over girls (%)	PI of adolescents engagement in household chores	Early marriage rate (%)	Early childbearing rate (%)	Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) level of gender discrimination	Primary	Lower secondary	GPI of students experiencing bullying	Primary	Secondary	Gap in share of female teachers vs. head teachers (percentage points)	Lower secondary schools with no sanitation (%)
Hungary	...	...	...	...	Low	...	...	1.00	97	70	16	0
Iceland	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	0.86	82	...	13	...
Ireland	...	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	1.09	...	...	...	...
Italy	...	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	0.80	96	70	9	0
Latvia	...	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	1.02	92	83	5	0
Liechtenstein	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	78	59	...	...
Lithuania	...	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	0.99	97	82	28	...
Luxembourg	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	1.09	76	54	...	...
Malta	...	...	...	...	Low	...	...	0.71	86	64	24	...
Monaco	...	...	...	...	...	100	100	...	82	58	...	0
Montenegro	...	2.00	5	3	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Netherlands	5	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	1.03	87	53	15	0
North Macedonia	...	1.46	7	2	...	...	...	0.73	84	59	...	...
Norway	...	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	0.90	75	63	10	0
Poland	12	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	0.89	85	69	...	0
Portugal	...	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	0.84	81	70	30	0
Republic of Moldova	...	...	12	4	Low	100	100	1.04	98	78	...	0
Romania	21	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	0.85	90	72	12	...
Russian Federation	23	...	...	...	Low	...	...	0.90	96	...	16	...
San Marino	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	92	72	...	0
Serbia	...	1.58	3	1	Very low	...	...	...	86	66	...	...
Slovakia	...	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	0.87	90	74	16	0
Slovenia	8	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	0.74	97	74	16	0
Spain	12	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	0.70	77	58	13	0
Sweden	3	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	1.17	76	64	-3	...
Switzerland	...	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	0.96	83	50	...	0
Ukraine	18	1.02	9	4	Low	...	...	0.96	97	81	...	...
United Kingdom	...	...	...	...	Very Low	...	...	...	85	61	...	...
United States	6	...	...	...	Very low	...	...	...	87	63	17	...

- A Percentage of adults that agree or strongly agree that university is more important for boys than girls [Source: World Values Survey]
- B Percentage of adolescents aged 10–14 years who, during the reference week, spent at least 21 hours on unpaid household services, adjusted gender parity index [Source: UNICEF]
- C Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were first married or in union before age 18 [Source: UNICEF]
- D Percentage of women aged 20 to 24 who gave birth before age 18 [Source: UNICEF]
- E Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) [Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2019]
- F Percentage of schools that provide HIV and sexuality education by level
- G Percentage of students experiencing bullying, adjusted gender parity index
- H Percentage of female teachers by level
- I Difference between share of lower secondary female teachers and female head teachers [Source: OECD TALIS and national sources]
- J Percentage of lower secondary schools with no sanitation service

Note: UIS is the source unless noted otherwise.

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Gender Report

A NEW GENERATION: 25 YEARS OF EFFORTS FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

The 2020 Gender Report monitors progress towards gender parity and equality in education from early childhood to adulthood. It showcases major advances but also cases of stagnation or regression. It draws attention to good policies and practices to protect the right to education for all but also to areas that need attention in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Coinciding with the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a visionary agenda for the empowerment of women, adopted in 1995 by 189 governments, the Report reviews the intergenerational mobility of education attainment. It assesses the implementation of selected strategies agreed in Beijing, informed by country case studies on early pregnancy, school counselling, teaching and learning materials, women in teaching, management and leadership positions, and school-related gender-based violence.

Fed by this overview of progress toward gender equality in and through education over the past 25 years, the analysis highlights that not all have benefited, and many are still left behind, especially when gender intersects with other characteristics, such as poverty, location, ethnicity or disability. Building on the 2020 *Global Education Monitoring Report*, this edition demonstrates how the principle of inclusion in education can advance gender equality in education and beyond.

Policy-oriented recommendations are aimed at guiding those working on a new text, to be determined at the Generation Equality Forum in 2021, that could replace the Beijing Declaration for the next generation of girls and women.



United Nations
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Global
Education
Monitoring
Report



United Nations Girls'
Education Initiative



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