



UNIVERSITY OF
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Faculty of Education



Report

12 Years of Quality Education for All Girls: A Commonwealth Perspective

January 2019

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For more information on the Platform for Girls' Education and its members, please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-hosts-first-platform-for-girls-education-meeting>

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Foreword by Co-Chairs of the Platform for Girls' Education

More children are in school globally than ever before, but 262 million are not and 617 million – over half the school-age population worldwide – are not reaching minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics. The Agenda for Sustainable Development agreed by all UN member states in 2015 includes a commitment to quality primary and secondary education for all children by 2030.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London in April 2018, Leaders of the 53 Commonwealth nations affirmed their commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals and stressed the need for action to empower young people and expand opportunity for 12 years of quality education. As home to over half of the world's out of school children, Commonwealth countries have a major role to play in realising the global goals on education and there is much they can do to learn from and support one another – from bilateral cooperation between countries such as the UK and Kenya, to meetings of the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers.

Guided by the “leave no one behind” principle, Commonwealth Leaders recognised the particular importance of expanding educational opportunities for marginalised groups including disadvantaged girls. The Platform for Girls' Education, which we are proud to co-chair, is a response to that challenge. At the Platform's inaugural meeting in September 2018, we asked Professor Pauline Rose to prepare a report on the state of girls' education in the Commonwealth to guide our collective work ahead of CHOGM 2020 in Rwanda. We are grateful to Professor Rose and her team, as well as to others involved, for the quality of the resulting product.

As set out in the report, many Commonwealth countries have made good progress towards gender parity in education, with girls out-performing boys in some countries. There is an overarching imperative to expand educational opportunities for both girls and boys. However, girls remain particularly disadvantaged in many countries and there is a compelling case for targeted efforts to support them. Not only is this the right thing to do, it is also one of the smartest investments we can make in building more prosperous, fair and resilient societies based on an “invisible chain” of shared values. Educated girls marry later, earn more, and have healthier families.

Sadly, 12 years of quality education remains a distant reality for millions of girls. Urgent action is needed and this report points the way forward through a comprehensive survey of “what works” in breaking down the barriers. We will do all we can, along with other members of the Platform for Girls' Education, to keep this issue high on the political agenda and to promote concrete action. We invite you to join us.

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Acronyms

ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CCTs	Conditional Cash Transfers
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CONFEMEN	Conference des ministres de l'Éducation des États et gouvernements de la Francophonie
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
ERIC	Education Resources Information Centre
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEC	Girls' Education Challenge
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HCI	Human Capital Index
LAYS	Learning Adjusted Years of Schooling
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NSGE	National Strategy for Girls' Education
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PASEC	Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Éducatifs de la CONFEMEN
PEAS	Promoting Equality in African Schools
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SACMEQ	South and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UCTs	Unconditional Cash Transfers
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Summary

In 2015 leaders from across the globe pledged to achieve inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. The first target of this education Sustainable Development Goal committed to ensuring that all children – regardless of their gender and circumstances within which they are born – should complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education. The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in April 2018 affirmed the importance of 12 years of quality education for all, particularly marginalised groups including disadvantaged girls. The Platform for Girls’ Education was launched in response to this commitment to “leave no girl behind”, with the aim of driving forward action in the run-up to CHOGM 2020.

To support the Platform for Girls’ Education, this Report aims to situate the current evidence on girls’ education across the 53 countries in the Commonwealth, with a particular focus on low- and lower-middle income countries where the challenges are the greatest. It identifies the current situation of access to school and learning together with trends in domestic and aid financing to support the targets. It then presents evidence on interventions aimed at tackling barriers to girls’ access and learning in order to move forward towards achieving the commitments that have been made. It notes the distinction between gender *parity* in education – i.e. an equal proportion of girls and boys in school and learning – and the more ambitious goal of gender *equality* which involves wider steps to end discrimination and create a truly level playing field.

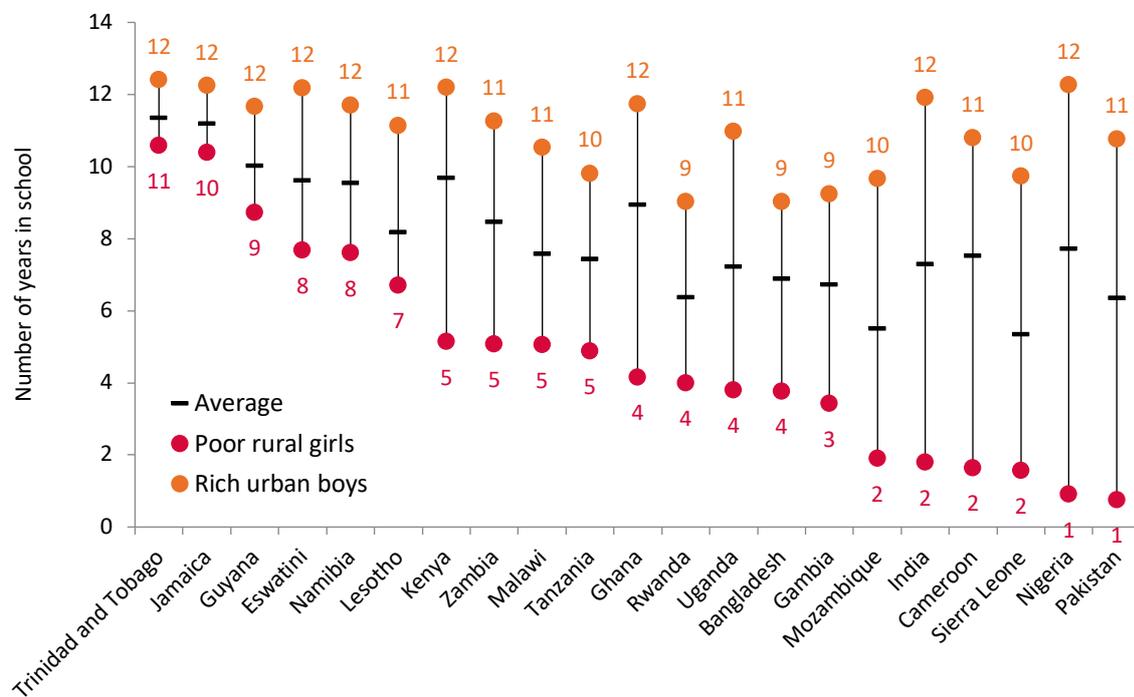
Where are we now in achieving gender parity? Trends in access, learning and finance

Over the past 20 years, considerable progress has been made in increasing access to primary schooling, with gender parity in primary enrolment being achieved in 31 out of 44 Commonwealth countries with data.

Despite this progress, 12 years of schooling remains a distant reality for many of the most disadvantaged girls residing in Commonwealth countries. Gender parity has sometimes been achieved even though primary schooling is still not universal: in 12 of the 31 countries that have achieved gender parity more than 10 out of every 100 primary-aged girls are not in primary school. Moreover, in 2017, 137 million primary-and-secondary school aged children were out of school in these countries, of which approximately half were girls. These children represented just over half of the global out-of-school population, despite comprising just over one-third of the world’s school-aged population. In 15 out of 21 Commonwealth countries with available data, poor rural girls spend no more than five years in school, and so have little chance of making the transition to secondary school (Figure S1). Children and adolescents affected by conflict are most likely to be out of school. Refugee girls are particularly at risk: they are half as likely as their male counterparts to be in secondary school.

Figure S1: In 15 Commonwealth countries, a girl from a poor rural household has no more than five years of schooling

Mean years of schooling by group as reported by 20 – 24-year olds

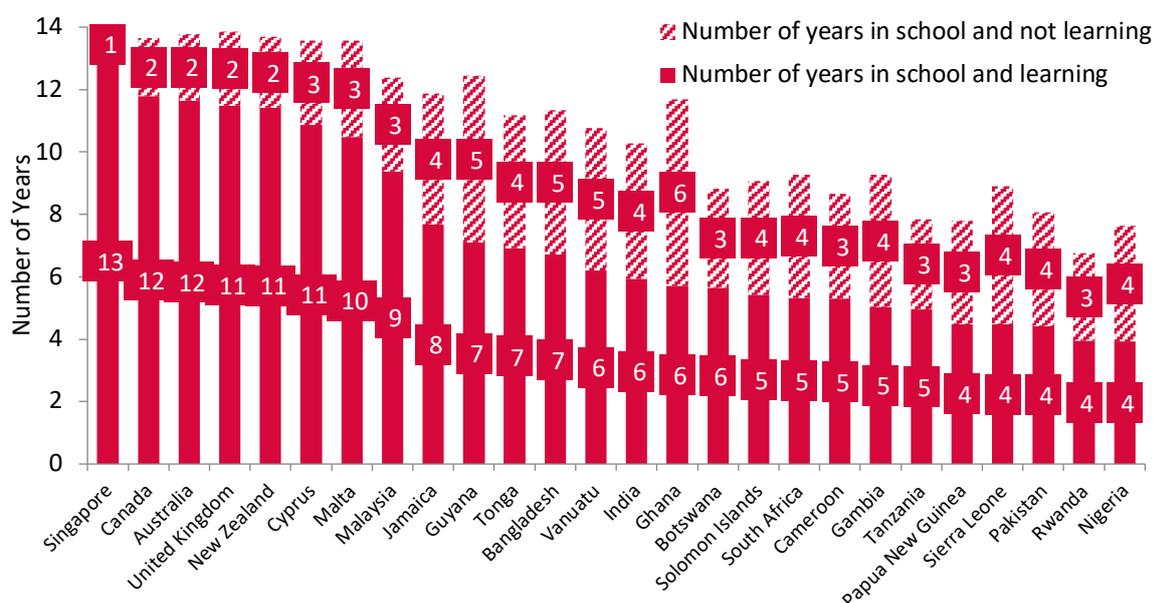


Source: UNESCO-WIDE database (2018). Accessed November 2018.

Even for those children in school, too often they are not learning the basics. The recently launched Human Capital Index shows that girls’ education fares far worse when years in school is adjusted for whether or not children are learning (Figure S2). In 14 out of the 26 countries with data, girls who are in school are learning for the equivalent of six years or less. The picture is likely to be even starker for girls in rural areas and those facing other forms of disadvantage.

Figure S2: Girls are far from the 12 years target of being in school *and* learning

Learning adjusted years of schooling for girls, latest year



Source: World Bank (2018). Accessed November 2018.

Disadvantage starts early. Evidence shows that greater investment in the early years of a child’s life can play a significant role in addressing the challenges faced by the most disadvantaged children in access and learning in later stages of the education system. However, the chances of girls attending pre-primary school are strongly contingent on where she is born. In eight of 14 Commonwealth countries with data, no more than 40 percent of poor rural girls have access to pre-primary education. In three out of these eight countries, fewer than 10 percent are enrolled.

Even where progress has been made towards gender parity in access and learning, gender equality remains elusive. The Right to Education Initiative has developed a six-tier classification on whether states have ratified relevant human rights treaties which guarantee the rights of women and girls to education. While these ratifications are a proxy measure of whether governments are committed to gender equality in education – and do not reflect a state’s actual commitment, political will or implementation – just 20 out of the 53 Commonwealth countries have ratified the highest level of de jure commitment to gender equality in education.

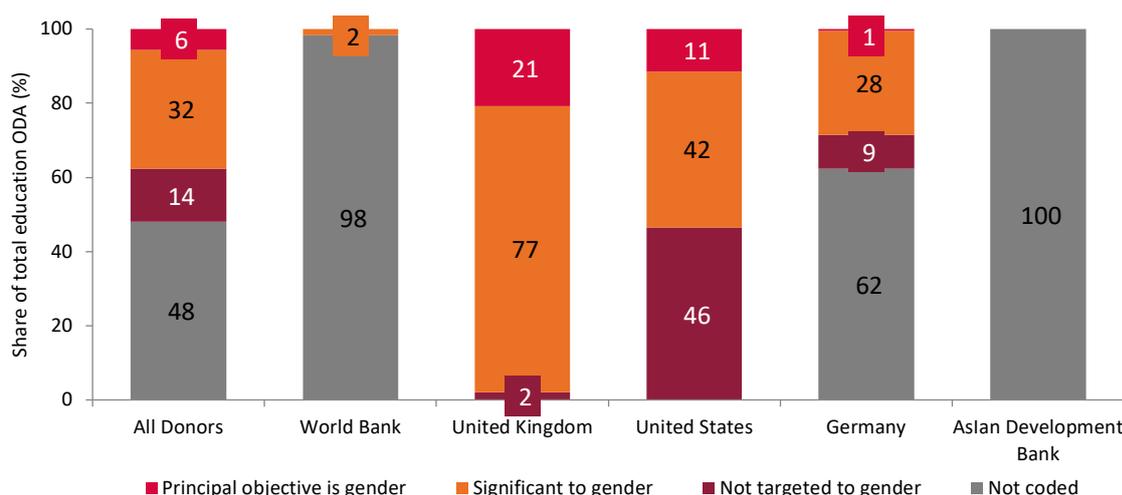
Governments rarely target funding to lower levels of education and to marginalised groups. In 33 out of 45 Commonwealth countries with data, governments are spending far more on post-primary levels of education than on primary schooling, even though the probability of the most disadvantaged girls reaching these levels of education is extremely low. In 13 Commonwealth countries, governments are spending at least 25 percent of their education budgets on post-secondary education. In most of these countries, access to higher education is extremely limited, particularly for the most disadvantaged. Very few governments are prioritising early childhood education in their budgets. Of the 35 Commonwealth countries with data on pre-primary spending, 25 governments are spending less than five percent of their education budgets on pre-primary education.

Education aid does not prioritise the early years and does not show a consistent commitment to gender in its spending. Even though the majority of the most disadvantaged girls in many Commonwealth countries still do not make it to the end of primary school, donors have reoriented their funding from primary to post-primary education levels. In 2002, almost two-thirds of education aid to Commonwealth countries was spent on primary education. By 2016, this fell to 47 percent. Moreover, just 0.4 percent of education aid to Commonwealth countries was spent on pre-primary education, By contrast, 10 percent is spent on scholarships to allow students from aid-recipient Commonwealth countries to study in donor countries, even though only the most privileged benefit from these scholarships.

In addition, only around five percent of total education aid appears to be disbursed with the main objective of achieving gender equality for those donors who report on this. This is far below the recommendation made by the G7’s Gender Equality Advisory Council, which, in 2018, called for at least 20 percent of aid to target gender equality. However, around half of education aid to Commonwealth countries is uncategorised (Figure S3).

Figure S3: Very little education aid to Commonwealth countries is specifically targeted for girls

Share of education ODA disbursed according to the extent to which it targets gender equality, 2016



Source: Authors’ calculations based on OECD-CRS (2018). Accessed November 2018.

Data gaps make it hard to track global and national progress. For over half of all 53 Commonwealth countries internationally-comparable household data disaggregated by gender intersecting with poverty and location is not available on completion rates at primary and lower secondary level, nor on average years of schooling. The new data on Learning Adjusted Years of Schooling disaggregated by gender is only available for just under half of all 53 Commonwealth countries, mainly due to the lack of recent learning data. Moreover, this indicator is currently not disaggregated by poverty, location or other forms of disadvantage that girls may face. Even more limited data are available for other dimensions of disadvantage, such as disability.

What Works for Marginalised Girls’ Education?

Based on a review of available evidence, we identify interventions that have been found to improve access and learning, particularly to address the barriers that marginalised girls face. As many of the barriers are mutually reinforcing, there is a need to tackle these simultaneously through a combined

package of reforms that tackle the multiple disadvantages that marginalised girls face. It is important to recognise that what works in some contexts might not work in the same way in other settings. While it is possible to identify interventions that work, visible political commitment and sustained investment is needed for them to have impact at scale.

A. Leadership and financing

1. Visible high-level political commitment backed up with resources. In Uganda, national level plans and priorities have called for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women through gender responsive strategies such as improving retention and participation rates for girls in school and reducing harmful practices such as child labour and child marriage. This has been accompanied by *The National Strategy for Girls' Education in Uganda*. In the Gambia, high-level political commitment to girls' education from senior levels of government supported specific policies and programmes including high-level visible commitment through the *President's Empowerment of Girls' Education Project*.

2. Grassroots leadership increasing awareness about the value of girls' education. Grassroots leaders have an important opportunity to promote girls' education. For example, a grassroots organisation in Ghana supports former girl programme participants as role models to help raise awareness and demonstrate the success of educational interventions for girls. Grassroots leaders have also effectively collaborated to put pressure on governments to provide the resources needed to improve the quality of girls' education.

3. Formula funding targeting resources at those most at risk of being left behind. The cost of reaching the most marginalised girls is likely to be higher than their peers given the multiple disadvantages they face. Governments in India, Pakistan, South Africa and Sri Lanka have all adopted funding approaches that prioritise additional funding to the most disadvantaged groups. In India, for instance, the government moved away from a funding formula where each district received equal funding per pupil towards one where districts with high out-of-school populations, large gender disparities and large disadvantaged groups were allocated additional resources. This resulted in improved access to primary schooling for girls.

4. Use of data to inform policy change. A recent evaluation of national, regional and international assessment programmes on education policies found that where there was continuity, stability and regular cycles for conducting learning assessments, this facilitates their greater use for policy-making. In Tanzania, the annual citizen-led learning assessment (UWEZO) has served as a catalyst towards greater critical dialogue in recognising the poor quality of education in Tanzania's public primary schools. UWEZO's findings contributed to the government's decision to introduce assessments in grade 2 in order to track progress, together with providing additional training of teachers in grades 1 and 2. This has the potential to benefit marginalised girls who are at risk of being left behind from the early grades.

B. Targeted approaches

5. Prioritising early childhood education and early learning. Poverty often combines with insufficient provision of pre-school facilities, particularly in rural areas, limiting access to quality provision. A successful intervention in Rwanda found that pedagogical early childhood care and development programmes benefited both girls' and boys' learning, whilst a parent outreach programme led to

higher literacy gains for girls in particular. Despite these positive effects, very few domestic and aid resources are spent on the early years of education where disadvantage for marginalised girls starts.

6. Addressing multifaceted challenges that girls face when they reach puberty. A lack of sanitation materials in school can lead to absenteeism during menstruation, and so adversely affect learning and lead to dropout. Such problems are likely to start in primary school given that marginalised children often start school above the official enrolment age. In Uganda, a project giving girls in primary and secondary schools a package of sanitary pads and teaching them how to use them led to reduced absenteeism during menstruation and greater confidence and less distraction for girls during their period. In late adolescence, early marriage and early pregnancy particularly affects the poorest girls, where financial pressure and the influence of social norms may lead families or girls to choose early marriage. In Jamaica, the Women's Centre Foundation helps to reintegrate girls into secondary school after they have given birth, through a combination of academic tuition, nursery provision, and other health services. Participants are more likely to complete their education and less likely to have a second pregnancy.

7. Eliminating cost barriers. Even when fees are abolished, there are additional costs of schooling, such as uniforms, school supplies, sanitation and transport, that act as a barrier to education for girls from the poorest families. In some contexts, poverty has been found to lead to some girls having sex with men who provide them with the essentials for secondary schooling that their families cannot afford. Girls from the poorest families may also be more likely to have increased childcare and domestic work responsibilities which reduces their attendance at school and may cause them to drop out. A cash transfer programme in Nigeria targeted areas with high numbers of out-of-school girls with benefits paid to their caregivers. The programme was found to have a positive impact on household consumption and welfare and led to a significant change in caregivers' spending in favour of girls' education. In Bangladesh, a conditional incentives programme targeting adolescent girls found that financial incentives led to reduced levels of early marriage and pregnancy, whilst a support and training programme increased the likelihood of girls being in school.

8. Tackling disadvantages that intersect with gender, such as disability, location, poverty. In addition to poverty, barriers to girls' education are further exacerbated by disability, rural location and other factors. For example, girls in rural areas are more likely to face barriers in travelling to schools. For girls with disabilities, insufficient infrastructure, appropriate aids and transport to school, alongside potentially lower parental aspirations can reduce their ability to access education. In Kenya, an intervention specifically focused on girls with disabilities engaged with multiple stakeholders, including families, communities and schools, to tackle the attitudinal and practical barriers to enrolment for girls with disabilities. Providing transportation, and information and arguments on the right to and potential of education for girls with disabilities, led to an increase in enrolment.

C. Tackling discrimination

9. School environments that are safe spaces. Girls face additional barriers to both access and learning due to vulnerability to gender-based violence during travel to school and in school, with such risks becoming greater when they reach adolescence. In Pakistan, providing schools with female staff, locations within walking distances of homes, security through boundary walls, and free door-to-door transportation enabled families to feel more comfortable sending their daughters to school and led to an increase in girls' enrolment. Providing safe spaces for girls are particularly important in conflict

settings. A project in Sierra Leone directly tackled gender-based violence in schools attended by refugee children by providing schools with female staff who had an explicit mandate to mitigate abuse and exploitation of students and support a girl-friendly school and learning environment. This led to girls stating that classrooms were friendlier and more encouraging spaces to learn.

10. Gender-sensitive teaching practices and materials. Curriculum and school materials can reinforce negative gender stereotypes that lead to girls' exclusion and low levels of learning. These stereotypes can also weaken girls' self-confidence. An intervention in countries in Sub-Saharan Africa designed to equip teachers with knowledge, skills and attitudes to empower them to respond adequately to the learning needs of girls and boys, by using gender-aware classroom processes and practices found evidence of change in the gender dynamics of the school, attitudes of girls and boys in the classroom and also reported improvements in girls' learning outcomes. The programme included gender-sensitive lesson planning, teacher-learner interaction, language use, resources for teaching and assessment and sensitisation of school management on gender. A secondary school-based intervention in India which promoted discussions on gender equality, gender stereotypes, roles and women's employment led to more progressive gender attitudes among students involved.

11. Promoting women's economic empowerment and providing pathways to productive work. Commitments to girls' education are influenced by the reality that women's access to paid employment is often far more limited than that of men. Interventions aimed at expanding labour market opportunities for women can therefore positively influence girls' enrolment. A community-based intervention in rural India provided girls with recruiting services, with the intention of increasing awareness of a specific industry. This led to an increase in women enrolling in vocational and training institutes and an increase in younger girls' enrolment in school.

12. Tackling access and learning simultaneously, with sufficient resources. A programme in government secondary schools in Tanzania provided the most marginalised girls in remote under-served rural communities with a combination of bursaries and pedagogical interventions in school to address barriers to both access and learning. Evidence from the programme suggests an increase in enrolment levels and large gains in scores on learning assessments. Although these programmes are likely to cost more, findings from this programme resulted in two additional years of schooling for every \$100 spent, demonstrating that they can still be cost-effective.

Priorities for further action

Based on the evidence presented in the Report, three overarching priorities are highlighted for further action:

1. Visible political leadership

Ensuring high-level, visible political leadership that promotes education planning adopting a gender equality and empowerment lens and commits sufficient resources to reach the most marginalised girls.

2. Investing in early years' education

Tackling barriers to education for marginalised girls in the early years before they become entrenched, and prioritising domestic and international financing towards this.

3. Making girls' education a national development priority

Anchoring gender-inclusive education strategies in wider national development planning and cross-sectoral collaboration to ensure socio-cultural barriers are tackled, such as those related to gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, girls' unpaid work, and limited productive employment opportunities.

Introduction

The fourth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) pledges to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. The first target of the SDG for education has committed that all children, regardless of background, should have access to free quality primary and secondary education. The fifth target specifically focuses on equity and aims to *“eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training”* (UNESCO, 2016a). With the strong focus on inclusion and equity, the SDG Agenda specifically articulates the importance of reaching those groups most at risk of being left behind. These groups include, amongst others, girls and those affected by other disadvantages such as those relating to poverty, location, disability, ethnicity and indigenous populations. As the 2015 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the education SDG states: *“Inclusive education for all should be ensured by designing and implementing transformative public policies to respond to learners’ diversity and needs, and to address the multiple forms of discrimination, which impede the fulfilment of the right to education.”* Beyond a right, investment in equity reaps benefits for individuals and societies (UNICEF, 2015).

In the context of these global commitments, the Platform for Girls’ Education was launched at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April 2018, co-chaired by the British Foreign Secretary and Kenyan Cabinet Secretary for Education. The Platform was established in recognition of the need for political leadership to promote the implementation of specific actions aimed at achieving the 12 years of quality education for all girls, regardless of their background, by 2030.

The Platform includes twelve influential global leaders who have committed to work together during the UK’s term as Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth (from 2018 to 2020). It aims to focus primarily on the needs of countries where girls are most likely to be missing out on quality education through: galvanising political will to deliver on commitments to girls’ education, highlighting examples of best practice to showcase success in girls’ education; promoting additional commitments and action in the run-up to the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Rwanda in 2020; and producing a report capturing progress achieved and further action required to meet relevant commitments under the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

To support the Platform for Girls’ Education, this Report reviews the current evidence on girls’ education across the 53 Commonwealth countries, with a particular focus on low- and lower-middle income countries where the challenges are the greatest. Within these countries, it is often the most marginalised girls who will face the greatest barriers to equal access to good quality education.

While there has been great progress in girls gaining access to school, the most disadvantaged continue to face many barriers in accessing and staying in school. It is estimated that in Commonwealth countries alone there are 137 million children and adolescents not in primary or secondary school, of which around 67 million are girls and young women. The global numbers of out-of-school children and adolescents appear to be concentrated in Commonwealth countries. While the share of the global school-age population residing in Commonwealth countries is 39 percent, the share of the global out of school population situated in Commonwealth countries rises to 52 percent (UNESCO-UIS, 2018; UN

Population Division, 2017). The 137 million school-aged children and adolescents out of school represent around 60 percent of the total school-aged population in Commonwealth countries.

The first section provides a snapshot of the key trends in girls' access, learning and financing in Commonwealth countries, as well as the patterns of aid financing by Commonwealth donors. The second section identifies evidence on key barriers to achieving 12 years of quality education for all girls, with a particular focus on those who are most marginalised. It highlights that disadvantage in educational access and learning starts from early years, and changes and intensifies at key transition moments notably as girls enter early and later adolescence.

Evidence on what works from interventions is summarised in the third section. Emphasis is given to the importance of system-level political processes that affect the design and implementation of successful reforms. The findings form the basis for summarising 12 areas of what works for achieving 12 years of quality education for all girls, supported by three areas for further action. While the focus of the review is on Commonwealth countries, the conclusions and recommendations are considered relevant to a wider context.

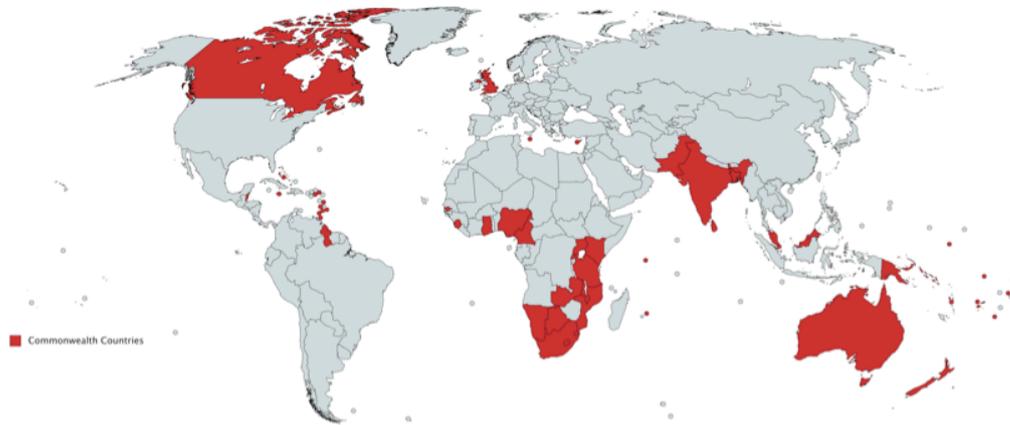
Approach

The starting point of the Report is that it is important to go beyond equal numbers of girls and boys in school and learning. While this is an important first step, it is not sufficient. We use UNESCO's 2003/4 Education For All Global Monitoring Report's definitions to differentiate between gender parity and gender equality:

- **Gender parity:** refers to the same proportion of boys and girls – relative to their respective age groups – entering the education system and participating in the full primary and secondary cycles. It is commonly measured by the ratio between the female and male values for any given indicator, with a parity being equal to one.
- **Gender equality:** equality of opportunity refers to girls and boys being offered the same chances to go to school and enjoying the teaching methods and curricula free of stereotypes and academic orientation and counselling unaffected by gender bias; equality of outcomes refers to equality in learning achievement and academic qualifications, and more broadly, equal job opportunities and earning for similar qualifications and experience.

Achieving gender equality involves a substantive shift not only in the proportions of girls and boys in school, but in the deeper dimensions of societal norms and in girls and boys being valued and respected equally in education.

In terms of the geographical scope of the Report, we include all 53 Commonwealth countries. Where relevant, these are differentiated according to their income status according to World Bank classifications, or their status as an aid recipient or aid donor according to OECD DAC classifications (see Annex 1). In a few instances we refer to examples from countries outside of this geographical focus where examples are not available from Commonwealth countries.



With respect to the literature searches, the Report takes a broad approach, reviewing existing publications in these countries, with a particular focus on low- and lower-middle income Commonwealth countries where challenges are greatest. Our starting point was to draw on existing reviews (such as Sperling and Winthrop 2016; Unterhalter et al., 2014; gender reviews of UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Reports, as well as sources on the UN Girls' Education Initiative website). This was complemented by detailed searches of key bibliographic databases, with literature identified using identified inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Annex 2).

Section I: Where are we now in achieving gender parity? Trends in access, learning and finance

This section identifies trends in educational access and learning to identify the extent to which Commonwealth countries are on track to achieve 12 years of quality education for all girls. The focus is particularly on those at risk of being left behind – to more effectively identify bottlenecks and plan durable solutions. It identifies what is spent on education by governments and donors to understand if commitments are likely to be reaching those who need public funds the most.

We first review educational access and learning in Commonwealth countries, particularly for the most disadvantaged girls to assess their distance to travel in achieving 12 years of quality education. It then looks at education financing trends both within Commonwealth countries and by Commonwealth donors. Lastly, the chapter evaluates data availability and gaps that need to be filled to enable robust monitoring of progress towards ensuring that no girl is left behind.

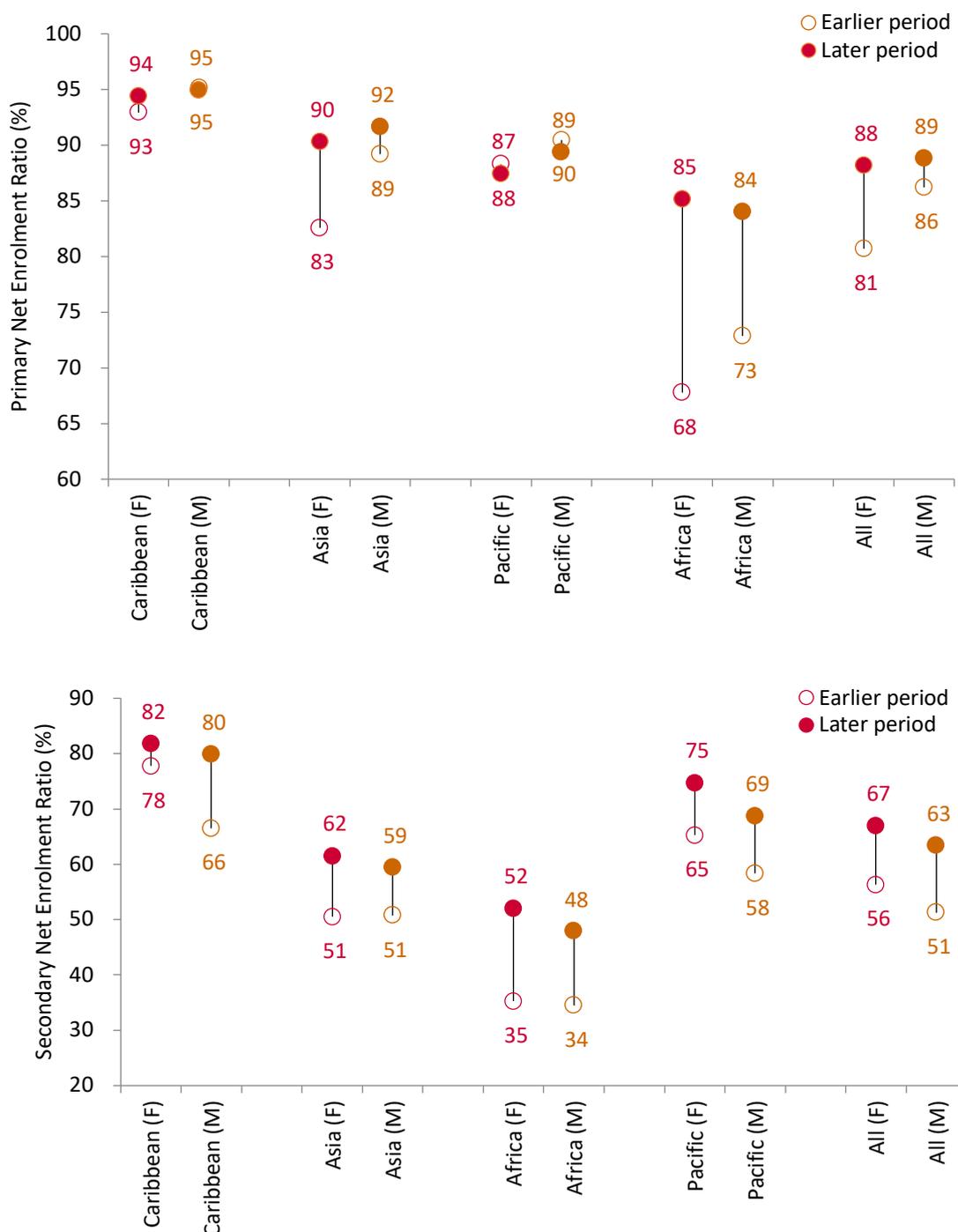
Educational Access and Learning

Over the past 20 years, considerable progress has been made in increasing access to primary schooling

Over the last 20 years, considerable progress has been made in increasing girls' access to primary school. The latest data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics¹ indicate that gender parity in primary enrolment has been achieved in 31 out of 44 Commonwealth countries with data. Comparing changes over time, the largest improvements have been in the Africa and Asia regions that have been furthest behind (Figure 1). In 22 out of 34 Commonwealth countries with data pre-2010 and post-2010, female primary net enrolment has increased. Similarly, in 23 out of 28 Commonwealth countries with equivalent data for female secondary net enrolment ratios, the situation has improved over the period.

Figure 1: While gender parity has been achieved for enrolment, it is still far from universal for with many girls failing to attend primary or secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa

Primary and secondary Net Enrolment Ratios for various Commonwealth regions, latest year



Source: UNESCO-UIS (2018). Accessed November 2018.

12 years of schooling is distant reality for most disadvantaged girls

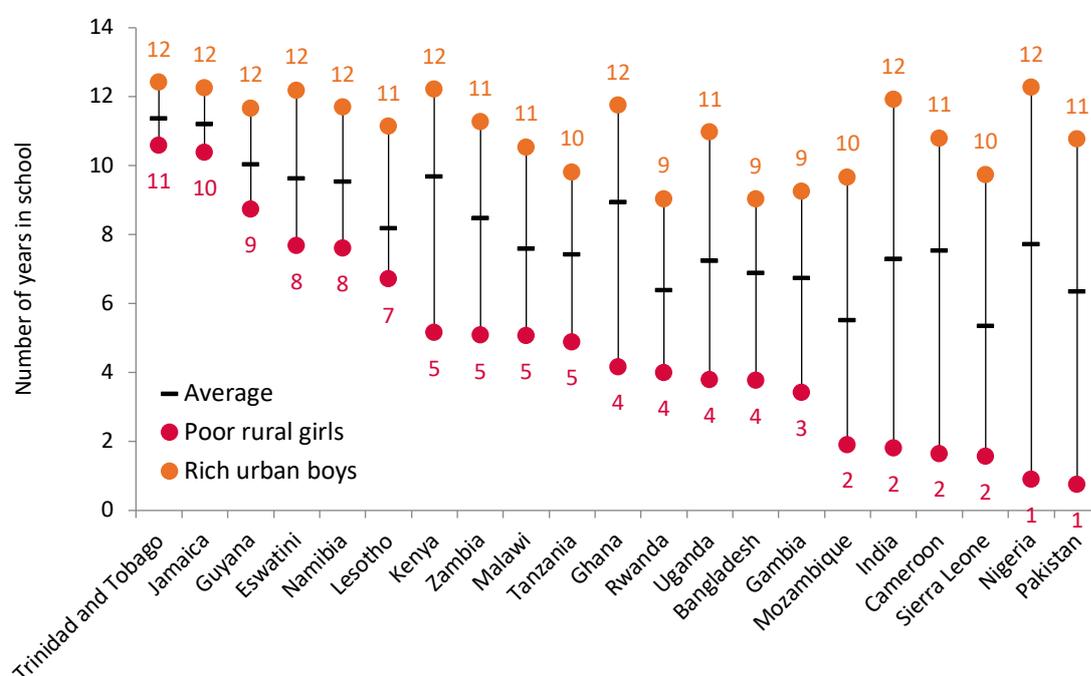
Despite the progress being made, in 12 out of 31 countries that have achieved gender parity, more than ten out of every 100 primary-aged girls are not in primary school. Moreover, gender parity at the

primary level masks the fact that Africa and Asia are still far from achieving universal primary or secondary education for either girls or boys.

In addition, there is wide variation in gender parity in reaching 12 years of schooling across Commonwealth countries. For 21 Commonwealth countries where internationally-comparable household data are available, many of the most disadvantaged are found to be significantly off track (Figure 2).ⁱⁱ Of 21 countries, poor rural girls in 15 countries have five years or fewer of schooling, suggesting they have not even completed primary school. In Pakistan, a poor rural girl has attained less than one year of schooling. A rich urban boy, on the other hand, is close to the target, having spent around 11 years in school.

Figure 2: In 15 Commonwealth countries, a girl from a poor rural household has no more than five years of schooling

Mean years of schooling by group as reported by 20-24 year-olds



Source: UNESCO-WIDE (2018). Accessed November 2018.

The problem begins in primary school with poverty and location being strongly associated with gender. In almost half of the Commonwealth countries with data (most of which are in sub-Saharan Africa), fewer than 50 out of every 100 girls from a poor rural background complete a primary cycle. For the 19 countries with data pre-2010 and post-2010 on primary completion for different groups, improvements in primary school completion for poor, rural girls are evident in 17 countries. In India, for instance, just 42 in every 100 girls from poor, rural households were completing primary school in 2006. A decade later, the equivalent was 80 in every 100 girls. A number of factors contribute to this improvement. In 2006, the Sarva Shiksha Abiyan (Education for All) initiative identified districts to receive additional funding on account of a number of criteria, one of which related to gender disparities (UNESCO, 2014a). Other countries like Zambia have also seen huge improvements from a very low baseline. In 2001, around one in five poor, rural girls were completing primary school. By

2013, this had risen to 45 percent. By contrast, in Cameroon and Malawi, the chances of a poor, rural girl completing primary school has worsened over time: by the latest year, only 24 percent and 29 percent, respectively, of poor, rural girls completed primary school.

In addition to identifying the extent to which poor, rural girls are in school, it is also important to identify whether gaps between them and their more advantaged peers have been closing. In four out of 17 countries (Guyana, Mozambique, Nigeria and Rwanda) where there have been improvements in primary completion for poor, rural girls, the gap between them and rich, urban boys has grown. In Rwanda, for instance, while the percentage of poor, rural girls completing primary school has increased from five percent to just 37 percent between 2005 and 2015 this has not kept pace with the improvements for rich, urban boys for whom completion rates jumped from 30 percent to 68 percent over the same period.

Low levels of primary school completion have knock on effects for secondary school completion. In Cameroon, Malawi, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda, no more than ten out of every 100 girls complete lower secondary school. It is further important to highlight that disadvantaged adolescent girls are still likely to be in primary school. Of the poorest 10- 19 year old girls in sub-Saharan Africa, around one-third are still in primary school. Notably also, by this age a sizeable proportion have never attended school, with a slightly higher proportion for girls than boys (16 percent and 13 percent respectively) (UNICEF, cited in Zubairi and Rose, 2018). This highlights the need to address progress through schooling from the early years of the system if 12 years of schooling for all is to be achieved.

While comparative data for children with disabilities remains sparse, available evidence suggests girls with disabilities are more likely to be out of school. In rural Punjab in Pakistan, one in four girls and one in five boys with a moderate to severe disability were reported to be out of school (Bari et al. 2018).

Girls affected by conflict are also likely to be out of school, with refugee girls half as likely as their male counterparts to be in secondary school (UNHCR, 2018). In Pakistan, a 2011 survey revealed that the primary net enrolment rate for Afghan refugees was just 29 percent and only 18 percent for girls, which was significantly less than the national average in Pakistan, which was 71 percent (UNHCR, 2016).

Even if girls are in school, they are not necessarily learning the basics.

Too often, many children are in school but not learning the basics (UNESCO, 2014a; Education Commission, 2016; World Bank, 2018a). Across 11 Commonwealth countries with internationally comparable data on learning, the poorest girls are less likely to be learning the basics, with wide gaps between them and their richer counterparts (Figure 3). In six of these countries, fewer than half of the poorest girls who are in school are able to achieve the basics in literacy and numeracy.

Figure 3: Gender and poverty interact in many Commonwealth countries, resulting in wide learning gaps for those in school

Share of children who are in school and learning the basics, latest year



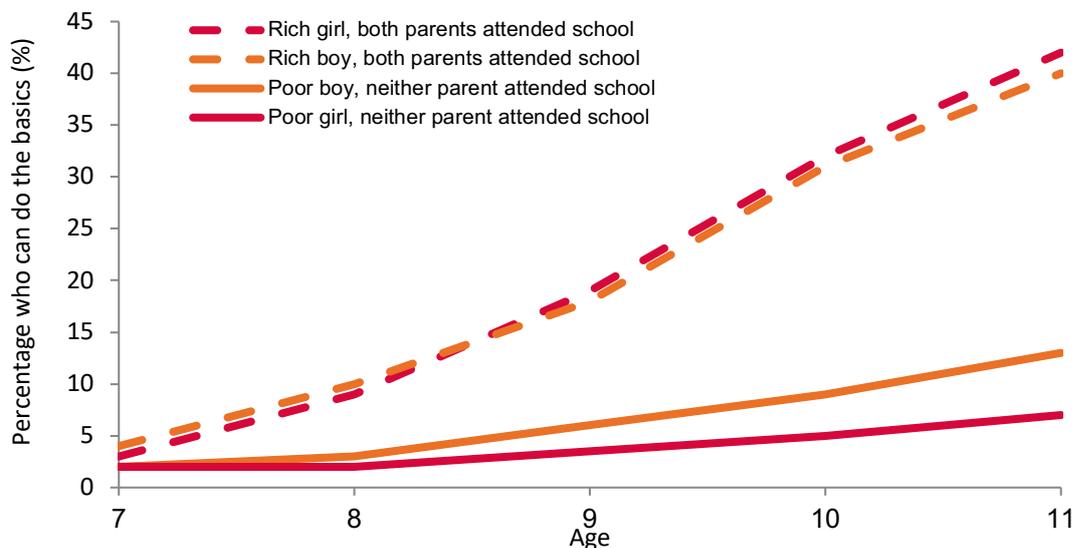
Source: Rose et al. (2016)

Note: Data for India and Pakistan are for rural areas.

Gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged children often start before they enter school. In rural India, for example, many are failing to learn the basics. However, the gap widens as children get older, with extremely limited progress for the most disadvantaged girls. As a result, by age 11 just seven percent of poor rural girls have acquired the basics compared with around 40 percent of rich rural boys (Figure 4).

Figure 4: In rural India, gaps in learning apparent in the early years widen as children get older

Percentage of children in and out of school who have achieved the basic learning outcomes in division and reading a story in rural India



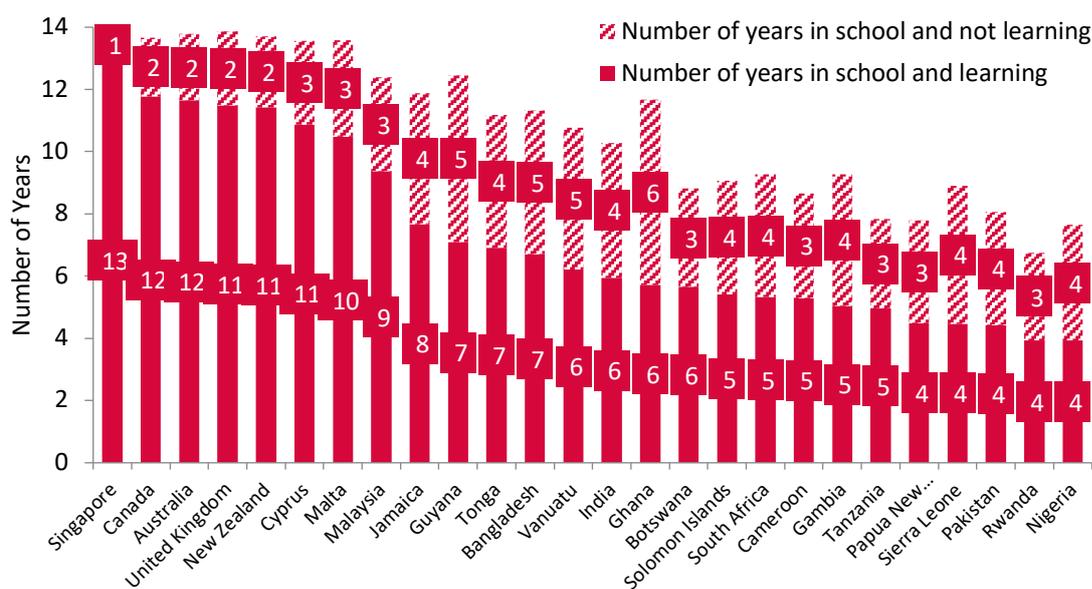
Source: Rose and Alcott (2015).

In October 2018, the World Bank launched the Human Capital Index, including an indicator on Learning Adjusted Years of Schooling – taking account not only whether a child is in school but also if they are learning (World Bank, 2018a).ⁱⁱⁱ For 14 out of the 26 Commonwealth countries for which this information is available by gender, girls are in school and learning for the equivalent of six years or less (Figure 5). At one extreme are countries like Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda and Sierra Leone where the total number of years girls spend in school is already well below the recommended 12 years, and declines even further when learning is also taken into account. In all five countries, girls only achieve four years of learning. The number of years adjusted for learning is likely to be even smaller when poverty and other forms of disadvantage that girls face are also taken into account. However, these data are not currently available.

At the other extreme are high-income Commonwealth countries such as Australia, Canada and Singapore, which appear to have achieved the target of 12 years of quality education for girls, on average.

Figure 5: Girls are far from the 12 years target of being in school and learning

Learning adjusted years of schooling for girls, latest year



Source: World Bank (2018a). Accessed November 2018.

Despite the widespread benefits of attending pre-primary education, few marginalised girls gain access in many low-income Commonwealth countries

Evidence shows that greater investment in the first five years of a child’s life can play a significant role in addressing the challenges faced by the most disadvantaged children in access and learning (Zubairi & Rose, 2017). In this regard, SDG Target 4.2 on access to pre-primary education seeks to “ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education” (UN, 2015).

However, according to UNESCO Institute for Statistics data, pre-primary education is free and compulsory for at least one year in the legal frameworks of just three out of 53 Commonwealth countries (Cyprus, Ghana and Nauru). The latest pre-primary enrolment data available for 37 Commonwealth countries indicates that the probability of girls accessing pre-primary education is strongly contingent upon where she is born. In Jamaica, Malta, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenadines, Seychelles, Tuvalu and the United Kingdom access to pre-primary education is universal for girls. At the other extreme are ten Commonwealth countries where less than 50 percent of girls are accessing pre-primary education, eight of which are in the sub-Saharan African region.

Internationally-comparable household data on female pre-primary access that also takes account of disadvantage related to household wealth and location are available for just 14 Commonwealth countries (UNESCO-WIDE, 2018). In eight of these countries (Bangladesh, Cameroon, Gambia, Guyana, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Eswatini) no more than 40 percent of poor rural girls have access to pre-primary education. In three out of these eight countries (Cameroon, Gambia, Sierra Leone), fewer than ten percent are enrolled.

Trends in domestic and aid spending

Governments rarely target funding to lower levels of education and to marginalised groups.

Domestic resources comprise the majority of financing for education. To reach the financing needs of countries, public spending needs to be increased through a widening of the domestic tax base and ensuring an adequate allocation of these resources are available to education (Zubairi & Rose, 2016). Importantly also, funding needs to be targeted towards those most at risk of falling behind. This requires a commitment to distributing public education spending in a way that adequately targets those levels of the education system to which the majority of disadvantaged girls are likely to gain access. This relates to one of the main recommendations of the Education Commission's *Learning Generation* report, namely for governments to distribute scarce resources according to the principle of progressive universalism. Progressive universalism highlights the importance of the expansion of a good quality education for everybody, but through a targeted approach, which prioritises the allocation of resources to those most in need (Education Commission, 2016).

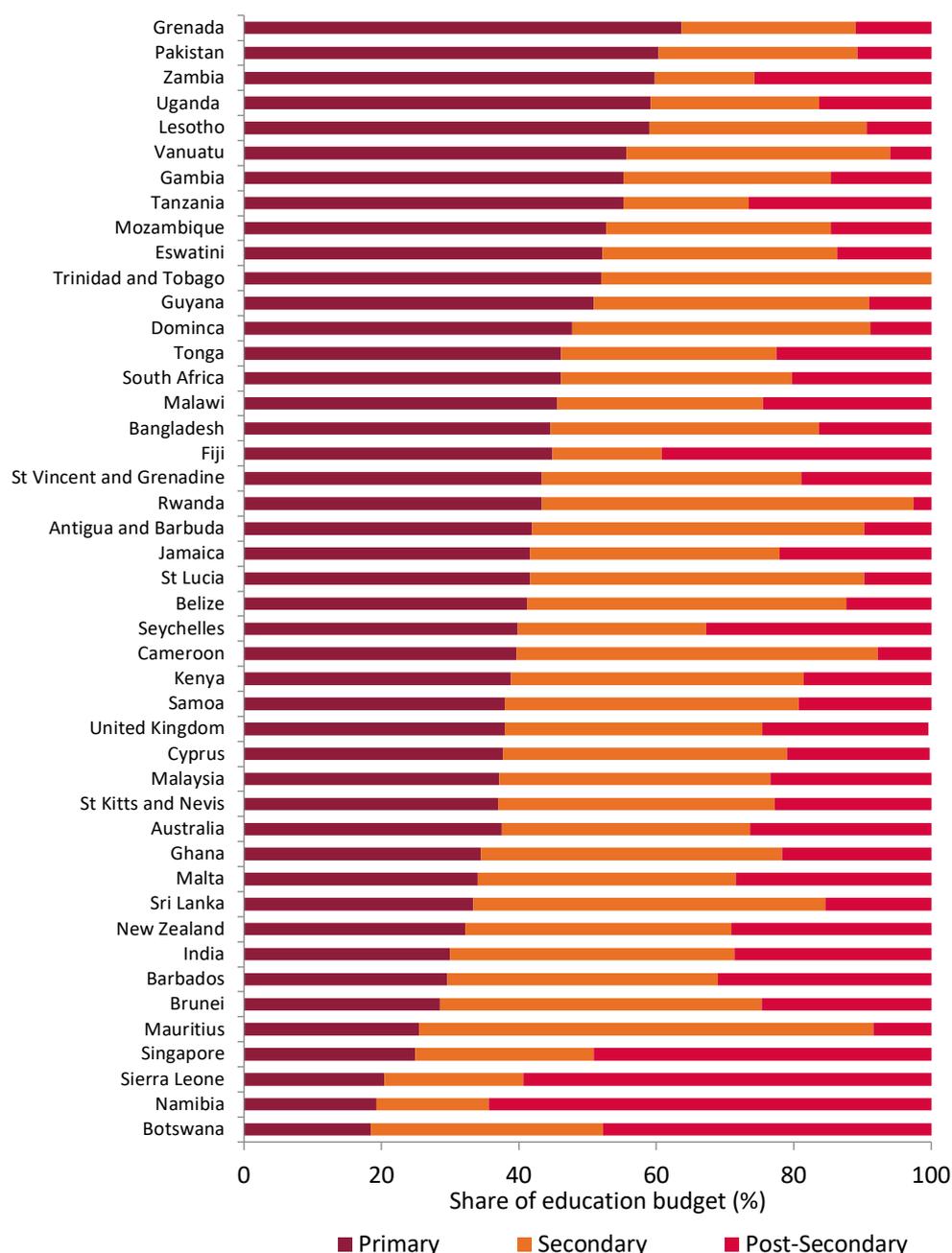
As previous sections illustrate, many disadvantaged girls in low and middle-income Commonwealth countries do not make it beyond primary schooling suggesting public resources need to prioritise the lower levels of education. However, many budgets are skewed towards higher levels of education (Figure 6). The latest data available for 45 Commonwealth countries show that 33 governments are spending far more on post-primary levels of education than on primary schooling. In 13 countries, governments are spending at least 25 percent of their education budget on post-secondary education alone. In Sierra Leone where many of the majority of disadvantaged girls are not even completing primary school, the overwhelming majority of the education budget goes to post-secondary education.

The greater focus of governments on access to secondary education has, in recent years, led to some countries increasing the share of the secondary education budget compared to primary education. Between 2000 and 2018, 15 out of 34 countries have increased the share of secondary education's budget while spending on primary schooling has declined. Amongst these countries are those in sub-Saharan Africa which have, in recent years, introduced fee-free secondary education for all, but where there remains much unfinished business at primary level. In September 2018 the Government of Malawi, for instance, announced that secondary school tuition fees would be abolished with immediate effect, despite the poor rates of progression in the early years of the primary school system (Zubairi & Rose, 2018).

Moreover, in many Commonwealth countries, governments are spending far more for each post-primary student than on a primary school student (Figure 7). Unit costs are higher at secondary level compared to primary schooling in most education systems, which is not surprising given the higher costs of provision. However, it is important to identify the extent to which the high secondary education costs are due to resources being utilised inefficiently. One study estimates that universal access to secondary education would not be achieved in any country where secondary to primary unit costs is more than three to one (Lewin, 2007). Governments in Ghana and Mozambique, however, spend three times or more on a secondary school student than they do on children attending primary school, and Rwanda spends nearly seven times more (Zubairi & Rose, 2018).

Of particular concern is the limited focus given to pre-primary education. In 35 countries with data, 25 countries spend less than five percent of their education budget on this level. Of these 25 countries, nine spend less than one percent of their education budgets on this level.

Figure 6: Education budgets are often skewed towards post-primary levels of education
Share of education budget to different sub-sectors, latest year

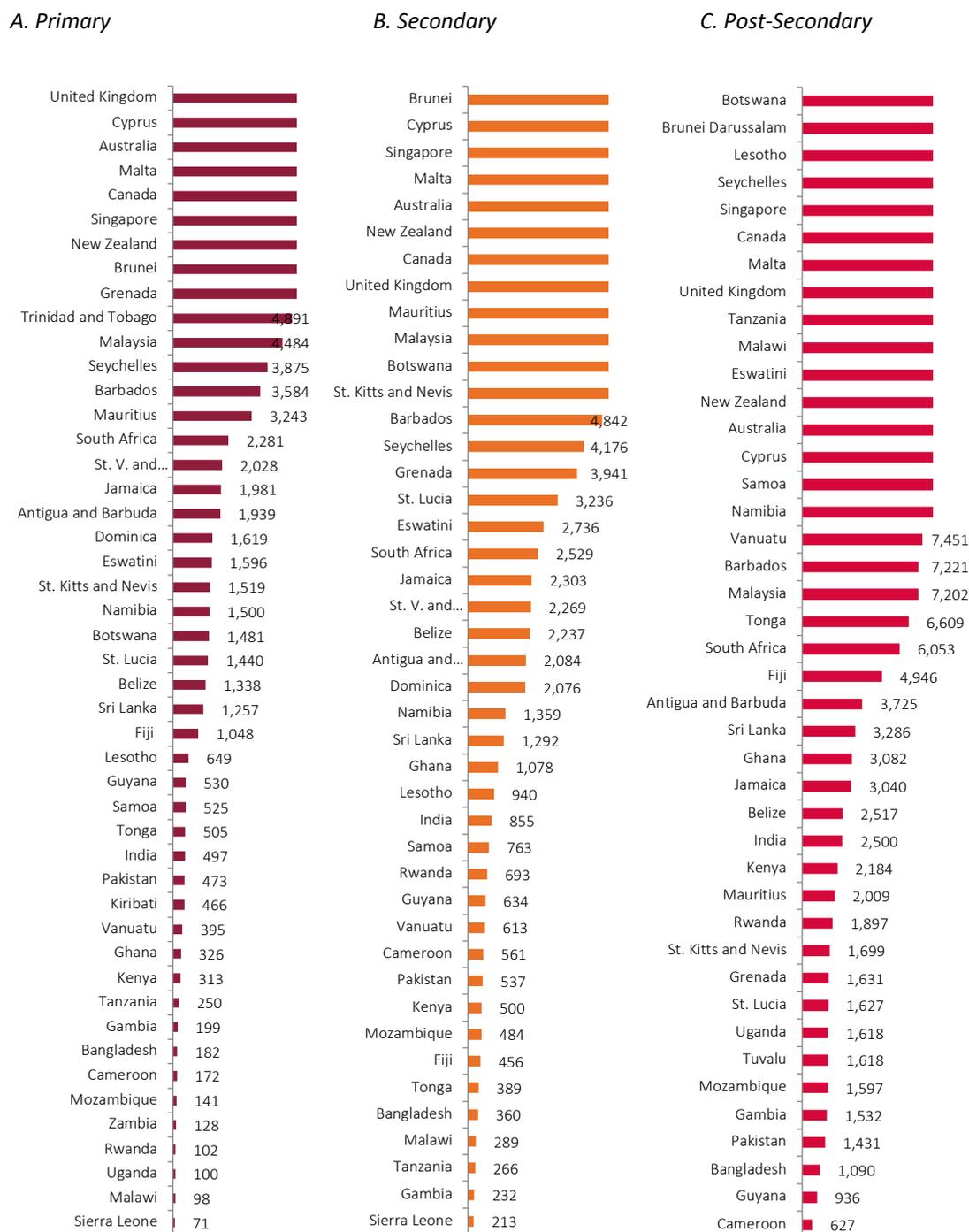


Source: UNESCO-UIS (2018). Accessed November 2018.

Note: [1] Primary education includes the domestic share of budget disbursed to pre-primary education for countries where this information is available. In most countries, this is a small proportion of their spending. [2] The share of the education budget which is classed as “unspecified” has been imputed into the education levels of primary, secondary and post-secondary education.

Figure 7: Public spending per post-primary school student far exceeds the amount spent per primary school student

Per capita spending on students per level of schooling, US\$ constant PPP



Source: UNESCO-UIS (2018). Accessed November 2018.

The poorest households often pay the largest share from their own pockets

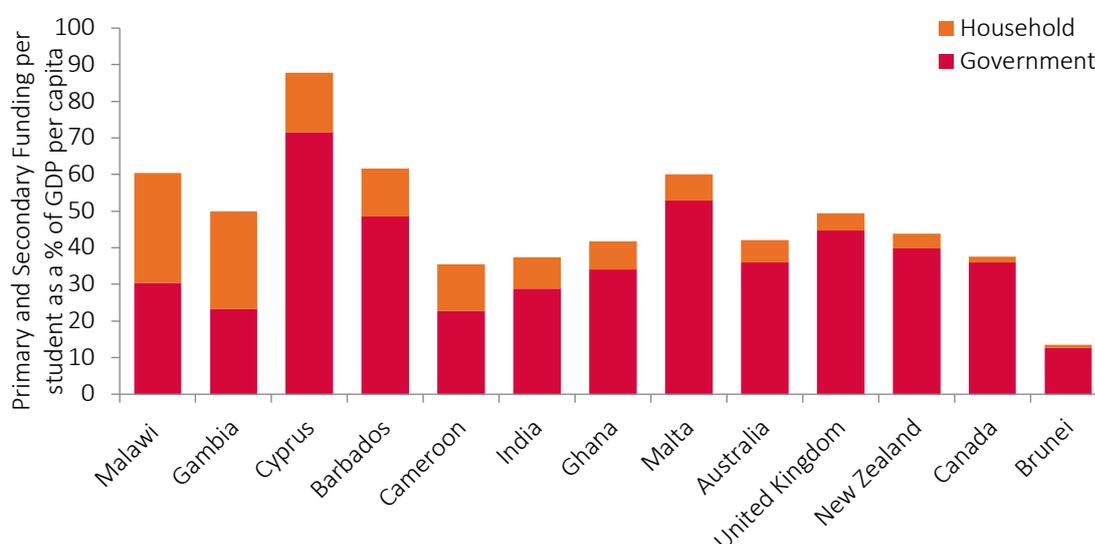
High financial household cost of education is one of the main reasons why girls from poor families drop out of school. Even where fee-free education has been made mandatory, household contributions are often still significant (Transparency International, 2013).

In some of the poorest countries where tax collection is poor and governments are off-track in meeting their commitments to education, households can bear a large share of the cost burden (Zubairi & Rose, 2016). The government of Uganda, for instance, currently spends just 2.6 percent of GDP and 12 percent of the national budget on education. In this context, a recent National Education Accounts study found that household spending in Uganda made up 57 percent of total funding for education (UNESCO-UIS, 2016).

Internationally-comparable data on household spending is limited. The available data indicate that household spending on primary and secondary education is higher in low-income countries than in high-income countries. In Malawi, for example, households spend approximately the same as the government per primary and secondary student as a share of GDP per capita. In Gambia, households pay more. At the other extreme in Canada, household contributions are a fraction of the amount that government invests (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Households bear a greater burden of spending on their children's education in low-income countries compared to high-income countries

Primary and secondary funding per student as a % of GDP per capita, latest year



Source:

UNESCO-UIS (2018). Accessed November 2018.

Education aid does not prioritise early years nor show commitment to gender in its spending

In 2018, donors made a number of high-profile commitments to support the removal of barriers to achieving 12 years of quality education for all girls. Notably, the 2018 Charlevoix Declaration at the G7 Summit committed US\$3 billion to supporting girls living in crisis zones. It also pledged to improve the quality of data on women and girls' education (G7, 2018a).

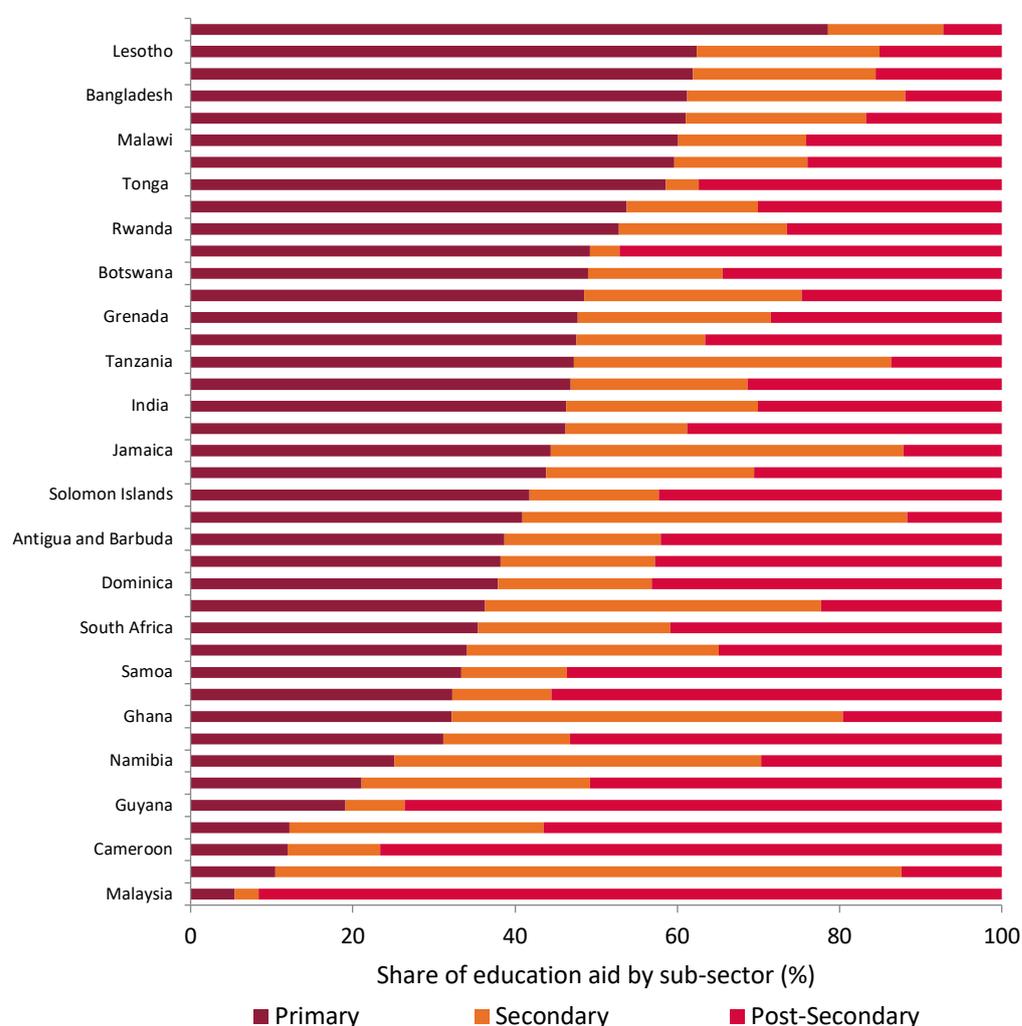
An analysis of aid to education for 40 aid-recipient^{iv} Commonwealth countries shows an overall rise in donor spending in these countries. However, the share of education aid between the different sub-

sectors of education has changed over the last 14 years away from an approach that is consistent with progressive universalism. In 2002, primary education made up 62 percent of total education ODA to Commonwealth countries and, by 2016, this had declined to 47 percent. There are variations in this pattern across Commonwealth countries. In countries such as Cameroon and Uganda, the majority of aid is for post-secondary education even though very few of the poorest reach this stage (Figure 9).

As with domestic spending, pre-primary education makes up a very small share of total education aid. In 2016, just 0.4 percent of total aid to education in Commonwealth countries was spent on pre-primary education. By contrast, the share of education ODA disbursed for scholarships to allow students from aid-recipient Commonwealth countries to study in donor countries made up close to 10 percent of the total. In volume terms, aid disbursed to scholarships was 23 times more than that disbursed to pre-primary education (Figure 10).

Figure 9: Aid is skewed towards higher education in some Commonwealth countries

Share of education ODA by education sub-sector, 2016

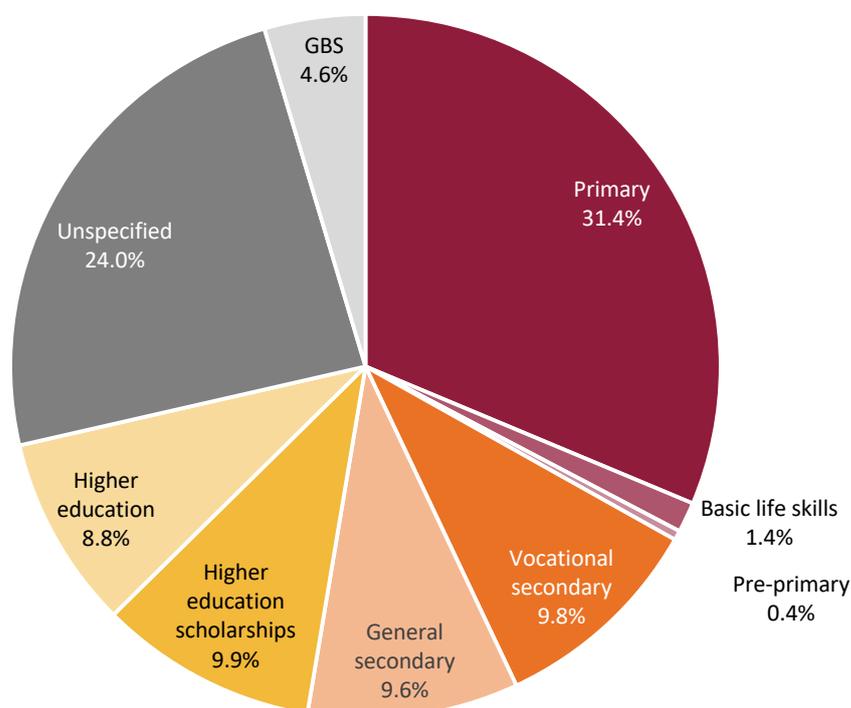


Source: OECD-CRS (2018). Accessed November 2018.

Note: Primary education includes aid spent on pre-primary, primary and basic life skills education.

Figure 10: Pre-primary education makes up a very small share of total education aid

Share of education ODA disbursements by education sub-sector, 2016



Source: OECD-CRS (2018). Accessed November 2018.

Note: GBS = General Budgetary Support. 'Unspecified' relates to spending not attributed to a particular level of education, such as support to teacher education or education planning.

Education aid to Commonwealth countries is concentrated among a few donors. In 2016, the five largest donors of education aid to Commonwealth countries disbursed almost three-quarters of education aid. These donors were the World Bank, United Kingdom, United States, Germany and the Asian Development Bank (Figure 11).

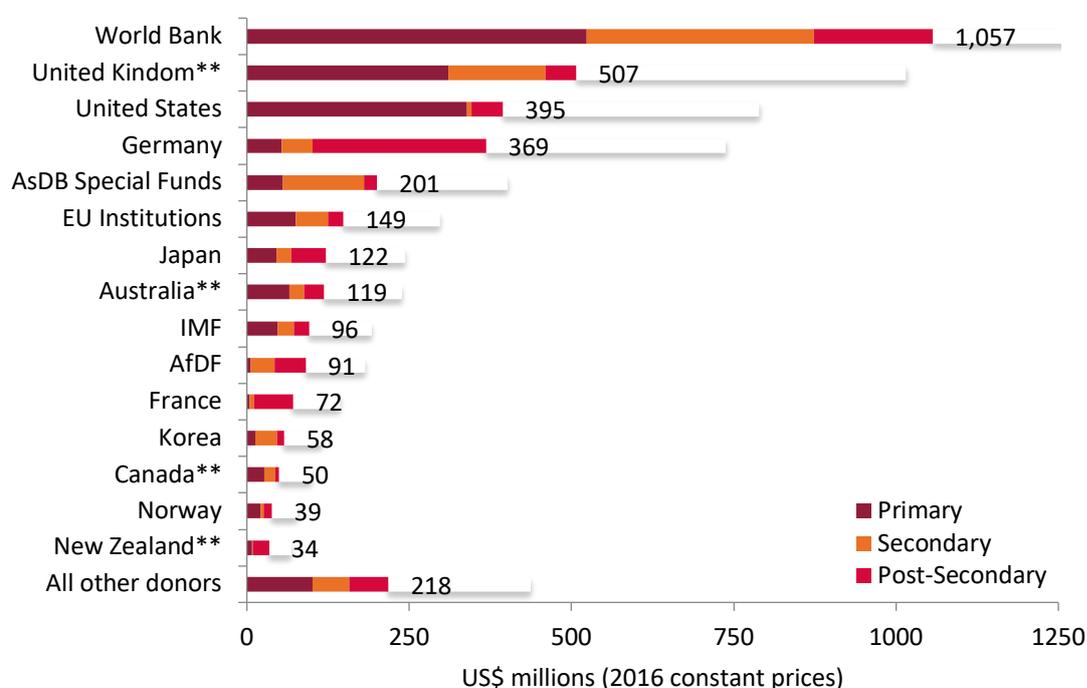
Some of these donors have put in place initiatives targeted at supporting girls' education. In 2016, the World Bank committed to invest US\$2.5 billion over a five-year period on education projects that directly benefit adolescent girls aged 12-17 years old. Of this total investment, 75 percent of resources are expected to be disbursed to low-income countries primarily in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2016). In 2012, the United Kingdom launched the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) as part of a 12-year commitment aiming to improve the learning opportunities and outcomes of over one million of the most marginalised girls worldwide. It is currently the largest global fund specifically dedicated to girls' education and works in 15 countries,^v of which nine are Commonwealth countries in the sub-Saharan African region. As of April 2017, it had reached 2.3 million girls (GEC, n.d.).

The Global Partnership to Education (GPE) – whose aid disbursements to recipient countries appear under the volumes disbursed by other donors rather than as a specific budget line in the OECD CRS database – is also an important donor to 18 Commonwealth countries. Between 2004 and 2017, GPE disbursed US\$1.4 billion to Commonwealth countries which was equivalent to 36 percent of its' total global disbursements. Of all Commonwealth countries over the period, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique,

Rwanda and Tanzania were the top five recipients of GPE aid accounting for just over half of the disbursements.

Figure 11: The five largest donors of education aid in Commonwealth countries are responsible for the vast majority of aid spending

Largest donors of education to Commonwealth countries, 2016



Source: OECD-CRS (2018). Accessed November 2018.

Note: (**) denotes donor governments who are part of the Commonwealth

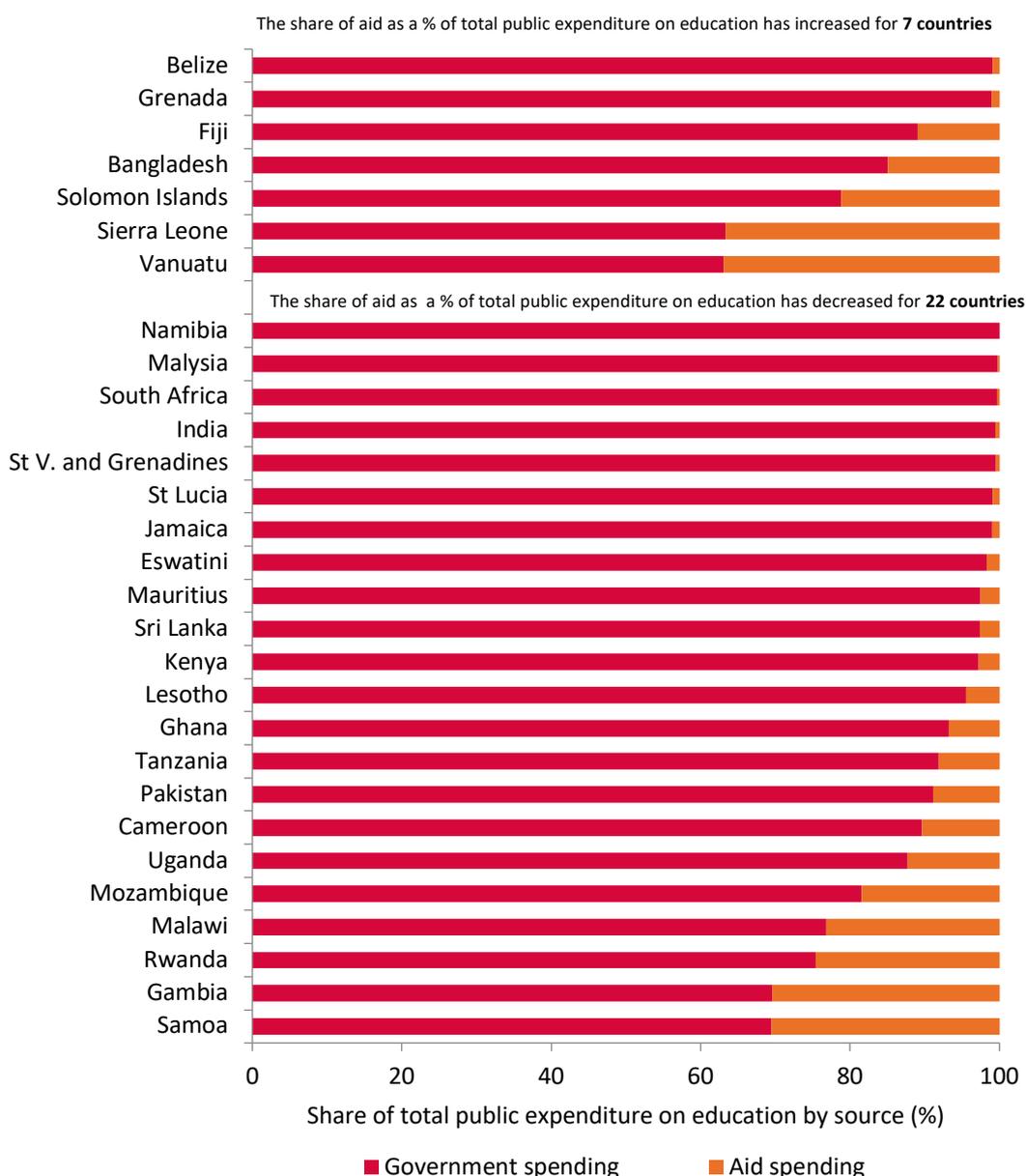
Education aid is also concentrated among a few Commonwealth recipients. Notably, South Asian Commonwealth countries have seen their share of total education ODA to the Commonwealth increase from 31 percent in 2002 to 56 percent in 2016. By contrast, Commonwealth countries situated in sub-Saharan Africa saw their share decrease from 61 percent to 39 percent. Bangladesh, India and Pakistan receive the largest share, and account for the increase in overall education aid spending between 2015 and 2016. In 2002, these countries accounted for 29 percent of total education ODA to Commonwealth states. By 2016 their share had increased to 53 percent. By contrast, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia – the top three Commonwealth countries from the sub-Saharan African region in 2002 – accounted for 29 percent of total education ODA to Commonwealth states. By 2016, their share had fallen to nine percent.

While Bangladesh, India and Pakistan – as populous countries – received the lion’s share of education ODA disbursed to aid-recipient Commonwealth countries, comparing levels in per capita terms is also instructive. Comparing the level of aid per student at each level, small island states in the Pacific receive a much higher level of aid. Tonga, Vanuatu and Samoa appear as top recipients of education of aid per student across all levels. Students in populous countries like India and Nigeria, on the other hand, receive comparatively little in per capita terms.

Combining aid and domestic spending for the 29 countries with data reveals that the proportion of aid has declined for 22 of these countries over time. In most of these countries, domestic spending far outweighs aid spending (Figure 12).

Figure 12: In the majority of Commonwealth countries, domestic spending far outweighs aid spending

Share of spending by governments and donors on public education, latest year available



Source: UNESCO-UIS (2018) and OECD-CRS (2018). Accessed November 2018

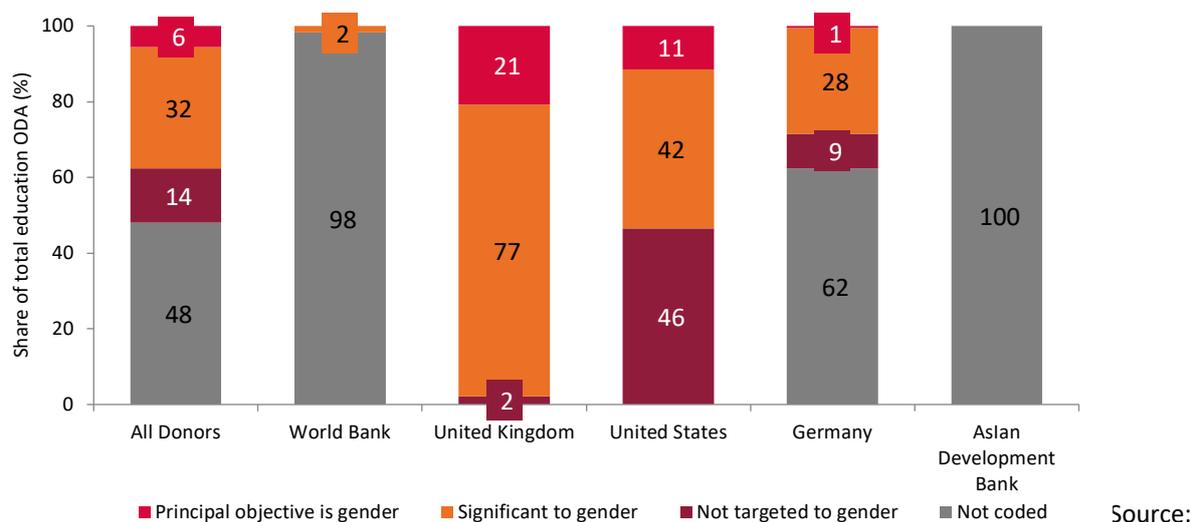
In 2018, the Gender Equality Advisory Council for Canada’s G7 Presidency recommended that donors allocate sufficient resources towards women and girls – particularly those facing multiple vulnerabilities. It proposed that at least 20 percent of aid should target gender equality as a principal objective (G7, 2018b; OECD, 2018). Monitoring the extent to which donors prioritise girls and women

in their ODA disbursements is currently done through a voluntary reporting system captured under the OECD-CRS aid reporting system.^{vi}

While this reporting has markedly improved since the gender marker was introduced in 2008, a number of projects still remain un-coded (Development Initiatives, 2016). For Commonwealth countries, the share of total and education aid^{vii} in 2016 that remain un-coded was 38 percent and 48 percent respectively. The World Bank – the largest donor to education – did not report 98 percent of its’ education projects according to one of the three gender markers provided for under the OECD-CRS. The United Kingdom, on the other hand, as the second largest donor to education in Commonwealth countries, reported all of its aid under one of the three gender markers, with 21 percent going to projects specifically intended to address gender equality (Figure 13). In order to track progress towards gender commitments by donors, it will be important that they make full use of the available gender markers when reporting their ODA to the OECD-CRS aid reporting system to allow for better monitoring.

Figure 13: Very little education aid to Commonwealth countries is specifically targeted for girls

Share of education ODA disbursed according to the extent to which it targets gender equality, 2016



Donors disbursed US\$1.4 billion of ODA to Commonwealth countries in 2016 where the primary intention of the projects was to achieve gender equality. Of this amount, 13.4 percent – US\$191 million – was for the education sector. Within total education aid spending to Commonwealth countries, this was equivalent to just 5.6 percent which is far below the recommendation made by the G7's Gender Equality Advisory Council in 2018. Within this, the primary education sub-sector received the largest share (47 percent). Secondary education received a relatively small share (nine percent) and post-secondary education an even smaller share (2.5 percent). Ten projects received 65 percent of the resources identified for gender equality. Of these projects, Pakistan was the largest recipient for five of those projects, and the United Kingdom was the largest donor for six out of these projects.

Data availability and gaps in educational access, learning and financing

Data gaps need to be filled to track global and national progress

Earlier sections have indicated there are significant data gaps that limit the possibility of tracking progress in access and learning that enables an assessment by gender intersecting with other dimensions of disadvantage. Household data tracking access to pre-primary access is unavailable for nearly three-quarters of all Commonwealth countries in this way. In the UNESCO-UIS database, over half of all 53 Commonwealth countries have no household data on completion at the primary and lower secondary level disaggregated by multiple disadvantage (Table 1).

Similarly, three-fifths of all 53 Commonwealth countries have no data on the mean years of schooling for 20-24-year olds using this data source. Data gaps are particularly prevalent in the Caribbean and Americas and Pacific region.

A review of the data from UNESCO-UIS – which documents the proportion of children who have achieved at least a minimum proficiency in reading or arithmetic by level over the period 2000-2017 – suggests poor availability of data which worsens at the lower secondary level. These data are disaggregated by gender but not other forms of disadvantage.

A large number of Commonwealth countries do not have learning assessment data needed to construct the Learning Adjusted Years of Schooling indicator. In over half of all 53 Commonwealth countries there are no data on the number of years children and adolescents learn while in school. A large number of sub-Saharan African countries lack these data. This is partly because there has not been a recent regional assessment in East and Southern Africa, and data are not available disaggregated by gender for the most recent SACMEQ data. Similarly, a large number of Commonwealth countries from the Caribbean region do not take part in regional or international assessment.

Data on internationally-comparable household contributions towards education are extremely limited even though this is important information for understanding whether spending is equitable. For nearly three-quarters of Commonwealth countries, there is no data on household spending at either primary or secondary level.

Table 1: Data availability for primary and secondary completion and on the proportion of children who are learning by level of education

	Indicator	Disaggregation	Information available (2010 onwards)	Information available (pre-2010)	No information available
	Pre-primary enrolment	Gender + Poverty + Location	12 countries (23%)	2 countries (4%)	39 countries (74%)
	Primary completion	Gender + Poverty + Location	21 countries (40%)	2 countries (4%)	30 countries (57%)
	Secondary completion	Gender + Poverty + Location	20 countries (38%)	2 countries (4%)	31 countries (58%)
	Mean years of schooling	Gender + Poverty + Location	19 countries (36%)	2 countries (4%)	32 countries (60%)
Early years	% who have mastered basic literacy	Gender	20 countries (38%)	2 countries (4%)	31 countries (58%)
	% who have mastered basic numeracy	Gender	22 countries (42%)		31 countries (58%)
Primary	% who have mastered basic literacy	Gender	11 countries (21%)	11 countries (21%)	31 countries (58%)
	% who have mastered basic numeracy	Gender	10 countries (19%)	11 countries (21%)	32 countries (60%)
Lower Secondary	% who have mastered basic literacy	Gender	10 countries (19%)	3 countries (6%)	41 countries (77%)
	% who have mastered basic numeracy	Gender	11 countries (21%)	3 countries (6%)	39 countries (74%)
	Learning Adjusted Years of Schooling	Gender	24 countries (45%)	2 countries (4%)	27 countries (51%)
	Household funding per primary student	N/A	12 countries (23%)	2 countries (4%)	39 countries (74%)
	Household funding per secondary student	N/A	11 countries (21%)	3 countries (6%)	39 countries (74%)

Section II: Barriers to Education for Marginalised Girls

The previous section highlights that while there has been progress towards gender parity in education, there is still a long distance to achieving 12 years of quality education for girls from disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition, these data are unable to take full account of whether progress has been made towards gender equality, for which countries are likely to be even further behind. Gender inequality is more difficult to measure but is affected by discrimination and social norms that reinforce and sustain the low status of girls and women in society across the household, community, school and systems levels – and often cutting across these. Although tackling barriers at each specific level is needed, a concerted effort to challenge gender inequality throughout society and across all levels is essential to tackle barriers to education for disadvantaged girls.

This section reviews available evidence from Commonwealth countries on barriers towards both gender parity and equality, with a particular focus on low- and lower-middle income countries which are furthest from the target. It identifies barriers that exist at the level of households and communities, schools and systems, recognising that barriers are often linked and mutually reinforcing across these levels. In addition, while many of these barriers are well-known and documented, their recognition has not yet led to progress on the scale needed. Reasons for this can include discrimination in society more generally, affecting effective implementation. This highlights the need for greater attention to be paid to the wider structures that affect gender inequality that are likely to be associated with barriers linked with political processes and other systems-level issues that hold back such progress.

Household and Community-Level Barriers

Economic barriers to marginalised girls' education start in the early years. There is clear evidence on the importance of early childhood education for school readiness for all children, as well as benefits for later life. However, disadvantaged girls are less likely to access early childhood education (see Section I). In Andhra Pradesh, India, girls are more likely to be enrolled in government pre-schools and boys are more likely to be enrolled in private pre-schools, which are generally of better quality (Vennam et al., 2009). Poverty combines with insufficient provision of pre-school facilities, particularly in rural areas of poor countries, to reinforce inequitable access. In Peru, distance to pre-school, combined with school costs and son preference for pre-schooling, meant that girls were less likely to attend pre-school (Ames, Rojas & Portugal, 2010). In Malawi, identification of the linkages between early school failure and higher rates of child marriage and early childbearing mean that there is a need for focusing on girls' educational outcomes from the early years (Glyn et al., 2018).

Even though primary school fees have formally been abolished in many countries, other costs adversely affect girls' enrolment and learning. A study in Ghana found that girls were more likely to drop out of primary school because they had to do chores and housework and because they were unable to pay school fees. Girls were also more likely to drop out of school when a family member was sick (Wolf et al., 2016). Girls' schooling is also vulnerable to income shocks, particularly for families affected by poverty and insecure livelihoods. A study in Uganda found that negative deviations in rainfall had negative and highly significant effects on female enrolment in primary schools. Even when schooling is free of charge and girls are enrolled in school, it found that a negative income shock had

an adverse effect on the test scores of female students, while boys were not affected (Björkman-Nyqvist, 2013). In Tanzania, a study found that agricultural shocks led to girls experiencing a more than 70 percent increase in the probability of quitting schooling (Bandara et al., 2015). This suggests that households may respond to income shocks by varying the amount of schooling and resources provided to girls, whilst boys are less likely to be affected.

In adolescence, girls are often required to take on an ever-growing burden of domestic responsibility which can impact on their attendance and learning at school. Often girls are faced with increased responsibility in the household during adolescence, with their own labour being substituted for that of their mothers (Harper et al., 2018). In Rwanda, girls spend on average four hours more than boys each week on household chores at age 10 to 14, which increases to a six-hour gap by the age of 15 (Stavropoulou & Gupta-Archer, 2017). In some cases, girls are withdrawn from their education completely, whereas in others, they are more likely to be absent as a result. Girls' engagement in domestic chores at age 12 has been found to be the biggest contributory factor for the persisting gender gap in access and learning in secondary schools in India (Singh & Mukherjee, 2018). A study in Ghana found that time taken by girls fetching water had a detrimental impact on their school attendance at both primary and secondary schools, and that halving of water fetching time led to an increase in girls' school attendance by 2.4 percentage points on average, with stronger effects in rural communities (Nauges & Strand, 2013). A study on girls' education in Siaya, a rural county in Kenya, observed that morning domestic chores can make girls distressed and unable to focus in class, which at times resulted in punishment, and to avoid this, girls sometimes chose not to go to school (Oruko et al., 2015).

Poverty intersects with household attitudes towards girls' education. Social norms define the roles that women have in the family and in the community, and these expectations shape parents' preferences for girls' education. Parents may have low expectations of the potential returns from educating their daughters, particularly due to deeply entrenched ideas about the role of women in society and labour market opportunities for women. In Pakistan, parents have been found to be less interested in educating daughters because they may leave the family after marriage (Naveed, 2018). In West Bengal, India, parents are 45 percent less likely to state that they would like their girl to graduate or study beyond secondary school compared to a boy (Beaman et al, 2011). In the Gambia, one study found that although access to girls' schooling has increased, there is still a profound tension due to the values parents assign to female education as being less necessary for their future roles as mothers and caretakers for their families (Njie, Manion & Badjie, 2015).

In some settings, it appears that such attitudes are changing. Recent evidence from the Girls' Education Challenge in Kenya found that a lack of parental aspirations or desire for girls' education was rare, due to the fact that parents saw girls' schooling as part of a diversified livelihood strategy. However, even where attitudes are changing, commitments to girls' education are influenced by the reality that girls' and women's access to paid employment is often far more limited than that of boys and men. Analysis of baseline surveys from the Girls' Education Challenge in Kenya identified a relationship between low career aspirations for girls' education and lower enrolment and attendance, which was reportedly a major barrier leading to parents withdrawing girls from school in rural Kenya, because the opportunities for girls to find and secure employment in the formal sector were low (Coffey, 2016).

Girls are particularly vulnerable to harassment and violence during their travels to and from school.

Harassment and violence towards girls can be sexual, physical, psychosocial and psychological in nature, whereas gang activities are more often associated with boys (Younger & Cobbett, 2014; UNESCO and UN Women, 2016). Greater distance to school has stronger negative effects on girls' access to education due to concerns about the safety of girls on the journey to school. Distance is more likely to be a constraint in rural areas. It often becomes more serious in adolescence when girls have to travel further to the nearest secondary school, particularly in contexts where the availability of these schools remains inadequate. For example, as the distance to school increased in Uganda, girls' attendance at primary school decreased at a higher rate than that of boys (UNESCO, 2012). At the secondary level, girls in Malawi are significantly less likely to attend school than boys, as the distance from school increases. In Nigeria a study found that living more than 20 minutes away from the nearest secondary school reduced the odds of school attendance by 52 percent overall and had a greater impact on girls' school attendance than boys (Kazeem et al., 2010). Given safety concerns, the need for transportation can also add to greater costs for girls' education in comparison with boys. Particular vulnerability to harassment on the way to school for girls with disabilities has also been highlighted (Plan International, 2016).

Instability and conflict within countries also contributes to a rise in gender-based violence, and national governments may lack the capacity to meet the need for protection. For example, Séléka and anti-balaka fighters in Central African Republic have been found to commit sexual violence against women and girls who were conducting their daily tasks, such as going to market, farming, or going to school or work (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Community socio-cultural norms and expectations reduce girls' access to education and learning from the age of school entry to adolescence. Some communities do not place the same value on girls' and boys' education, with evidence of discriminatory gender norms that restrict girls' access to education at the pre-primary and primary level. For example, in Tanzania, community perceptions that education would reduce girls' marriage prospects and thus raise dowry payments meant that girls were sometimes forced to drop out of school. In this context, *Unyago*, a local rite of passage for girls, was found to negatively affect education, increasing absenteeism and dropout of girls in school (Mollel & Chong, 2017). Harmful socio-cultural practices, such as female genital mutilation can intersect, and cause, other barriers to girls' education. In Kenya, some girls who had experienced female genital mutilation have missed school to recover and medical complications also led to reduced class attendance and performance (ActionAid, 2018).

In some communities, schooling itself may be considered a threat to a girls' honour and thus to her marriage if single-sex education spaces are not available. For example, in rural Pakistan, community religious beliefs meant that girls' attending school, and in particular mixed schools or schools without a female teacher, can be viewed negatively, particularly by fathers (Jamal, 2016). In some communities in South Asia, more education increases the price a girl's family has to pay for marriage, due to social norms that require husbands to have more education than wives (King & Winthrop, 2015). The fear that sending girls to school could negatively affect her marriage prospects and therefore her reputation in the community emerged strongly from interviews in a study in South India. In this context, a rumour or allegation of an affair with a boy at school could bring shame to a girl, her family

and the community was mentioned as a reason for girls' dropout of school (Bhagavatheeswaran et al., 2016).

In adolescence, social norms become more rigidly enforced, particularly due to the proximity to the age of marriage. In Uganda, communities perceived the onset of menstruation as the end of a girl's childhood, and the start of her womanhood, meaning she then has to fulfil her responsibilities as a woman (Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2013). Similarly, early marriage and parental and community negative attitudes towards girls' education can result in girls' loss of interest in education (Pesambili & Mkumbo, 2018).

Cultural stigma and a lack of awareness can be particularly damaging for access to education for girls with disabilities. In some areas, communities perceive that girls with disabilities are not expected to work, and this can sometimes lead to the view that there is no need for their education. In addition, it is often assumed that girls with disabilities will not marry, and this can contribute to the further devaluation of these girls in the community (Al Ghaib, 2017).

Early marriage in late adolescence is often a barrier for girls' education, particularly affecting the poorest girls. Child marriage is often perpetuated by attitudes and social norms within communities. It is estimated to affect 15 million girls every year.^{viii} In Bangladesh, for example, 59 percent of girls are married by 18, and 22 percent are married by age 15.^{ix} The decision to marry early and drop out of school are often jointly determined (Wodon et al., 2017). In Sub-Saharan Africa, marrying at age 16 reduces the likelihood of completing secondary education by 7.8 percentage points (Wodon et al., 2017). Child marriage in Nigeria and Uganda accounts for 15 percent to 20 percent of drop-outs (Nguyen & Wodon, 2012).

The intersection of gender and poverty is reported to lead to early marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa, often due to parents either 'marrying girls off' or girls choosing to marry early to escape the poverty of their parents' household (Coffey, 2017). In Bangladesh, the factors associated with higher rates of child marriage included being Muslim, being in the poorest wealth group and living in a rural area (Islam & Gagnon, 2014).

Being a member of particular ethnic and cultural group has been found to make girls particularly vulnerable to early marriage in some settings, and this links to their more limited education opportunities. In Belize, Mayan and Mestizo girls are most vulnerable to early marriage. Evidence of strong correlations between limited schooling and early marriage, measured using literacy indicators, found that one-third of Mayan and Mestizo girls are in child marriages and that one in five gives birth to a child before age 18 (Weiner & Hallman, 2013).

Early pregnancy also poses risk for girls' dropout from school. In 23 countries in Sub Saharan Africa, pregnancy accounts for at least 18 percent of female dropouts from secondary school, and in Mozambique and South Africa it has been found to be the leading cause of dropout (GPE, 2013). In one study in Uganda, 23 percent of those questioned said pregnancy was the primary reason for dropping out of school at the upper secondary level (cited in Wodon et al., 2017). In the Kingdom of eSwatini, pregnancy accounted for 41 percent of the reasons why girls dropped out of secondary school (Ministry of Education and Training, 2015). A study in the Kavango, Kunene and Omaheke

regions in Namibia, which have large rural populations, found that 83 percent of all female dropouts from school were due to pregnancy (Nekongo-Nielsen & Mbukusa, 2013).

Not only does early pregnancy have a significant impact on girls' dropping out of education, it can also impact on their learning if they have the chance to re-enter the schooling system. Many education systems lack flexible schooling arrangements for young mothers, and policies for the reintegration of mothers are not always effective, making learning difficult. For example, although Botswana has a long-standing re-entry policy, pupils are still not allowed to sit for examinations or sit for examinations while pregnant or within six months of delivery (Birungi et al., 2015). In Jamaica, despite the National Policy for the Reintegration of School-Age Mothers into the Formal School System in 2013, teen mothers, especially from low socio-economic backgrounds, find it difficult to effectively return to school given the lack of financial and social support, particularly with childcare, from their parents and birth fathers (Kennedy, 2017).

High costs of schooling exacerbate risks of girls from poor households engaging in coercive relationships. In Kenya, poverty has been found to lead to some girls having sex with men who provide them with the essentials for secondary schooling that their families cannot afford, such as sanitary pads or transportation to school (Oruko et al., 2015). Similarly in Fiji, girls have been found to be sexually 'blackmailed' in return for transport to school, school fees and other costs associated with their education, leaving girls vulnerable to health risks and to early pregnancy (UNESCO, 2014b).

School-Level Barriers to Girls Education

A lack of female teachers in some settings can lead to lower aspirations for girls from early childhood. Female teachers can serve as role models for younger girls and for changing societal perceptions on girls' education. Evidence from Sierra Leone found that female staff are important for reassuring parents that schools are a safe and welcoming environment for girls, which affects their initial access to education (UNGEI, 2017 cited in UNESCO, 2018). However, in some areas, a lack of female teachers persists. For instance, in Fiji, government policy required that 20 more males than females be trained each year due to a perception that male primary teachers would be better at maintaining discipline in schools, arguably contributing to the perpetuation of gendered stereotypes (Nilan, 2009).

Teachers' attitudes, practices and differential expectations of boys and girls in the classroom can reproduce gender stereotypes and affect girls' motivation for learning. A study assessing the way in which early years educators in Pakistan perceive girls' abilities reported that teachers' views are rooted in dominant patriarchal ideologies, seeing boys as active and assertive and girls as passive and quiet (Pardhan & Pelletier, 2015). In Ghana, when asked who their top five students were, the teachers named more than twice as many male students as female students (Lambert, Perrino & Barreeras, 2012). Among classrooms in the Caribbean, boys were also observed to dominate the classroom space, successfully garnering both more positive and more negative attention from teachers, meaning girls get less support for learning (Younger & Cobbett, 2014).

A lack of gender-sensitive curriculum and materials can reinforce stereotypes that lead to girls' exclusion and low levels of learning throughout the life course. Often curricula portray women in a passive and discriminatory manner. Review of the curriculum in Antigua and Barbuda, Jamaica and

Trinidad and Tobago found that it lacked specific references to issues of gender and gender differences (Younger & Cobbett, 2014). A content analysis of representation in textbooks in Malaysia, Pakistan and Bangladesh found a strong male bias, with female occupations shown as being traditional and less prestigious, and females shown as having more passive personality traits. Female share in picture content was only 35 percent in Malaysia and Bangladesh, with the proportion of female characters in Pakistan textbooks being only 24 percent (Islam & Asadullah, 2018).

School-related gender-based violence remains a pervasive issue for girls in schools, particularly once they reach adolescence. In some countries, violence is directed at girls specifically because they are pursuing an education. Girls and women are found to be targets of attacks on education because of their gender in 18 countries, including Cameroon, India, Nigeria and Pakistan (Kapit, 2018). Targeted attacks on girls' schools comprised approximately one-third of reported attacks on schools in Pakistan between 2013 and 2017 (Kapit, 2018). The situation of girls' education in conflict and war affected areas of Pakistan close to the Afghan border is worsened due to vulnerability to violence, schools under attack and parental concerns for girls' safety (Razzaq, 2016). Fragile contexts are also linked with girls' vulnerability to early marriage. All but one of the top ten countries with the highest child marriage prevalence rates are on the OECD list of fragile states, including Bangladesh (Lemmon, 2014).

In South Africa, a national survey found that eight percent of secondary school girls had experienced severe sexual assault or rape in the previous year while at school (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). In Ghana and Senegal, three-quarters of students report that teachers are the primary perpetrators of school violence (Fancy et al., 2012). Similarly, in the Pacific region, the number of girls reporting that they have experienced violence at the hands of their teachers ranged from seven percent in the Solomon Islands to 29 percent in Fiji and Kiribati (UNESCO, 2014b). This also appears to be more prevalent in the most disadvantaged communities. An analysis of SACMEQ data found that the incidence of sexual violence was 40 percentage points higher for schools in the poorest communities (Jere, 2015). One survey in Malawi found that 61 percent of girls who experienced gender-based violence said that it affected their school performance (Bisika et al., 2009).

In Sierra Leone, when girls were not able to pay for school-related expenses, evidence found that they were coerced into sexual relationships with male teachers (Reilly, 2014). In the Caribbean, girls reported being sexually harassed by boys in school and experiencing punishment from teachers for defending themselves (Younger & Cobbett, 2014), and in Cameroon, it was reported that 30 percent of sexual violence experienced by schoolgirls was committed by male students (Devers et al., 2012). In Kingdom of eSwatini, a survey that found that 17 percent of girls aged 13-17 were pulled out of school because of pregnancy. It also found that one-tenth of these women reported being raped, and that 20 percent of these incidents took place in or on the way to school (Perezniето et al., 2010).

Vulnerability to violence is exacerbated for girls with disabilities. In Uganda, 24 percent of girls with disabilities reported experiencing sexual violence at primary school in comparison with 12 percent of their peers (Devries et al., 2014). During baseline data collection for the Girls' Education Challenge in Kenya, Leonard Cheshire Disability found that only three percent of girls with disabilities said that they were never afraid in school (Leonard Cheshire Disability cited in DFID, 2018c). In Papua New Guinea, girls with disabilities were also reported to be more vulnerable to violence in schools as they were less likely to seek advice and the appropriate support (Clarke & Sawyer, 2014).

A poor school environment, including a lack of appropriate menstrual hygiene facilities, leads to absenteeism and dropout among girls, especially when girls' reach adolescence. In Zambia, inadequate menstrual hygiene and sanitation facilities, such as inadequate toilets and water supply in schools resulted in higher drop out ratios for girls than boys in grades five- eight when girls started to experience their menstrual cycle (Agoi, Harvey & Maillo, 2017). In Sierra Leone, inadequate menstruation management methods, such as lacking access to sanitary pads, and resulting leaks and stains were reported to lead to girls experiencing anxiety and discomfort in schools, which could have a negative impact on their ability to concentrate or participate (Caruso et al., 2013). In Fiji, girls not only lacked the facilities and the sanitary materials, but also the knowledge and the support to manage their menstruation with confidence and without shame, due to curriculum lacking the necessary information for girls. Often, this resulted in girls opting to leave school early, not fully participating in classes, sports or social outings, and in difficulties concentrating in classes for fear of stained uniforms (Francois et al., 2017).

In Bangladesh, 41 percent of girls missed an average of 2.8 days of school due to their period each month (Alam et al., 2017). In interviews with key policymakers in Uganda, all identified both poverty and menstruation as the key factors associated with school attendance, with many highlighting the intersections between the two (Miuro et al., 2018). Even when there are regulations and separate facilities that are mandated, they may not be enforced. For example, in Bangladesh only 12 percent of girls reported access to female-only toilets with water and soap available (Alam et al., 2014).

Girls' learning is negatively affected by a lack of psychosocial support from their schools. In Vanuatu, adolescent girls and boys report suffering from high levels of depression and suicide due to high unemployment rates, insufficient secondary school places, conflicts between traditional ideas and modern trends. For adolescent girls specifically, high pregnancy rates further add to these already high levels, and are also compounded by the limited support or counselling that they receive (Government of Vanuatu & UNICEF, 2005). Limited psycho-social support is also evident in the Caribbean, where girls tend to suffer by becoming withdrawn or by engaging in dangerous activities such as engaging in sexual relationships with older men. Suffering quietly and without support can lead to girls becoming less visible in their schools, and in a context where there is already a preoccupation with boys' underachievement, this is likely to further exacerbate the neglect of girls and their learning (Younger & Cobbett, 2014). The ability to give girls support in schools is compromised by schools' capacity, for example, there is evidence of overburdening counsellors with teaching and administrative duties in Jamaica (UNESCO & UN Women, 2016).

Systems-Level Barriers to Girls' Education

Systems-level barriers to girls' education are likely to be key to implementation. However, overall there is less evidence currently available on these barriers. Relationships and forms of power beyond the education system play a crucial part in reproducing gender inequalities and in creating and replicating barriers to girls' education. Limited political action on girls' education and limited legal frameworks to protect their rights are likely to hold back progress on girls' education.

Equating gender parity to gender equality reduces the much-needed focus on girls' education. In some Commonwealth countries, there has been a shift in the focus on girls' education to that of boys. Where numbers have indicated that girls attend school as much or even more than boys across the education levels, and even outperform them across various subject areas, countries have explicitly stated that the goal of gender parity has been met and have explicitly stated their intentions to shift their focus to male students. In Fiji, for example, its Education For All (EFA) National Review 2015 explicitly states that "areas such as gender parity and equality are seen to be non-issues for Fiji. Within the Fiji education system, boys and girls have equal opportunities to all levels and forms of education. The goal on Gender parity and equality therefore was placed on low priority in the Action Plan" (Ministry of Education, National Heritage, Culture & Arts, 2015). Likewise, despite the goal for gender parity and equality explicitly focusing on girls in Samoa's EFA National Review 2015, the need to focus on males also arises and is based on the premise that gender parity has been met. As a conclusion, the Review states that "the focus of education in Samoa and plans need to shift to the male student" (Government of Samoa, Ministry of Education, Sports & Culture, 2015). This de-prioritisation of girls' education initiatives, at the political level, poses significant risks for girls' education and empowerment. If not corrected, there exists a risk that progress for girls will be halted and that gains made will recede over time.

In some Commonwealth countries, lack of enforcement of legal commitments or policies inhibit girls from accessing their right to education. The Right to Education Initiative has developed a six-tier classification on whether states have ratified relevant human rights treaties guaranteeing the rights of women and girls to education. Tier One – reflecting a country's highest commitment – is where governments have fully ratified the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Convention against Discrimination in Education (CADE) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). While these ratifications are a proxy measure of whether governments are committed to gender equality in education – and do not reflect a state's actual commitment, political will or implementation – just 20 out of the 53 Commonwealth countries have ratified the highest level of de jure commitment to gender equality in education (see Annex 3) (Right to Education, 2017).

Some countries have enacted laws and policies that act directly against girls' education. In Sierra Leone and Tanzania, for example, schools expel pregnant girls from school (Martínez, 2018). In Tanzania, schools are reported to regularly give girls pregnancy tests, and it is reported that up to 8000 girls are expelled each year due to pregnancy (UNGEI, 2018; Martinez, 2017).

Even where re-entry policies are in place for pregnant girls, some countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have been criticised for requiring specific conditions from girls and the renegotiation of rights to re-entry (Mchaju Liwewe, 2012; Omwancha, 2012; Ramulumo & Pitsoe, 2013). In Kenya, one study found mixed results of the implementation of the re-admission policy, with many students unaware of the policy (Wekesa, 2014). This has been found to be due to the lack of legal backing or official communication on how to implement the policy in schools from the Government (Achoka and Njeru, 2012).

Even when governments have made commitments to girls' education, there are not always adequate plans for implementation. In 1999, Uganda's National Strategy for Girls' Education committed to redressing the imbalances and injustices in girls' education. However, in the early years,

it had not made much progress towards removing barriers to girls' education. One reason for this was that the Strategy had not been incorporated into the Government of Uganda's Education Sector Investment Programme. This lack of follow-through to ensure successful implementation of policies was also seen during Uganda's creation of the post of senior women teachers. Whilst praised as a positive move, the role remained undefined, and without a clear job description, little or no training and no budget for additional activities (Apiot Okudi, 2016). More positively, the Ministry of Education and Sports recognised the gap between policy and practice and low awareness about the existence and the utilisation of the National Strategy for Girls' Education, and updates and changes have been made accordingly (see Section III) (MoES, 2015).

A lack of power within governments for those responsible for gender has impeded movement on girls' education. Assessing the capacity of government ministries and their staff has been noted as a critical aspect of a gender analysis of the education sector (UNGEI, 2018). Specialised skills and abilities are needed for education ministries to integrate gender considerations into the overall functioning of the institutions, and those with these skills also need to have an appropriate level of seniority in order to drive forward these changes effectively. In many cases, sufficient gender expertise is often not present in education ministries or is located within structures that are unable to advocate for action accompanied by resources. In Fiji, gender is considered across all budgeted programmes though there is no direct allocation for this in the education budget (Ministry of Education, National Heritage, Culture & Arts, 2015). Additionally, in some countries, gender units and focal points within education ministries are not supported by financial, human and material resources, which limits their roles and abilities to influence policy and programmes. For example, a study by UNICEF in eight West African countries found that core funding and a lack of coordination were key issues for gender units (UNICEF, 2015).

Weak accountability relationships between citizens, the government and education providers lead to an inability to challenge inaction on girls' education. Political reform has often been inhibited by the inability of governments to promote accountability across key stakeholders and unsuccessful attempts to garner stakeholders' commitment to designing and implementing appropriate programmes to support girls' education. In Bangladesh, it has previously been reported that the highly bureaucratic and top-down internal administration and management practices, the education authority is not held accountable to stakeholders – including parents, community and students – for the decisions it makes. The provision of a stakeholders' forum through the National Council for Primary and Mass Education and the Project Coordinating Committee is supposed to ensure that stakeholders' voices are heard in the decision-making processes, but in practice the forum has been found to be ineffective (Chitrakar, 2009).

In Jamaica, despite the National Policy for the Reintegration of School-Age Mothers into the Formal School System, approximately 40 percent of school leaders and administrators did not agree that girls should return to their same school, but rather, that separate institutions should be completed for their continued education and girls had little power to challenge this lack of support (Kennedy, 2017).

Summary

There are multiple barriers to girls' educational access and learning that are apparent at household, community, school and systems levels – and cut across these. They are further reinforced by other forms of disadvantage that girls face – such as related to poverty, disability, and where they live:

Leadership and financing

- **A lack of visible political commitment** has often meant inadequate legal and financial commitments to gender equality and girls' education.
- **Insufficient resources for girls' education** have led to weak implementation of existing policies and has slowed progress on girls' education.
- **Weak accountability relationships between citizens, the government and education providers lead to an inability to mobilise action for girls' education.**

Targeted approaches

- **Economic and socio-cultural barriers to marginalised girls' education begin in early childhood.** If they are not tackled early, girls will not make it to the end of primary school.
- **In adolescence, these economic and socio-cultural barriers are further reinforced by discrimination** associated with increased vulnerability to gender-based violence, increase in domestic work, early marriage and pregnancy.
- **Economic disadvantage is a pervasive barrier to girls' education**, particularly when combined with entrenched ideas about the role of women in society and beliefs about the value of girls' education.

Tackling discrimination

- **A lack of safe school environments for girls, reinforced by insufficient school infrastructure, can limit access and learning for girls.** These barriers increase during adolescence due to an increased risk of violence towards girls who have reached sexual maturity and due to the onset of menstruation.
- **An inequitable classroom environment block girls' ability to learn from the early years.** Discrimination by teachers, and curricula and materials that perpetuate gender biases and stereotypes restrict girls' learning.
- **A lack of employment opportunities for women** can lead to lower perceived benefits of girls' education.

Section III: What Works for Marginalised Girls' Education?

Many of the barriers to girls' education have been well-documented. Accompanying this, the knowledge-base to understand what works for girls' education is expanding, with recent reviews helping to guide principles to inform programming (Sperling & Winthrop, 2016; Unterhalter et al., 2014). However, there are still gaps. Much of the available evidence focuses on individual interventions in one or a few locations. It is important to recognise that what works in some contexts might not work in the same way in other settings. Therefore, there is still limited knowledge on whether interventions will be replicable, scalable, sustainable and cost-effective in their implementation, which requires the support of political leadership and resources. Additionally, in many cases evaluations have more of a focus is on gender parity than gender equality, given the challenges of measuring gender equality. There are also more generally important gaps in evidence on wider systems-strengthening and on the politics of reform processes.

This section provides an overview of current programmes and interventions for which there is evidence on improvements in girls' educational access and learning in Commonwealth countries, with particular attention to low- and lower-middle income countries. It primarily focuses on programmes and interventions for which there is rigorous evidence, including from impact evaluations. However, where relevant and possible, promising interventions are also included, together with their interim or process evaluation results.

We start with evidence on visible political leadership which is vital for the successful implementation of any of the specific interventions at scale. We then identify approaches that are needed to target the specific forms of disadvantage that the most marginalised girls face from early childhood through to adolescence. Finally, we review the evidence on approaches that have aimed to break down barriers to discrimination that girls face affecting their education across the life course.

To be effective, solutions need to tackle barriers across household and community, school and systems levels simultaneously, as these are often overlapping. For example, school-based violence is in part related to social norms reinforced within communities and need to be addressed at the systems level through effective enforcement of legislation.

The evidence presented in this section is then drawn upon to identify 12 key principles for what works to improve gender parity and gender equality in education in the final section of the Report.

A. Leadership and Financing

Visible high-level political commitment backed up with resources

A focus on gender equality throughout policy and programming helps to ensure commitments are put into action. Uganda's *National Development Plan* (2010), the *Gender Policy* (2007), the *National Action Plan on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Uganda* (2012) and the *National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy* (2014) called for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women through gender responsive strategies such as improving

retention and participation rates for girls in school and reducing harmful practices such as child labour and child marriage (MoES, 2015). This has been accompanied by mainstreaming at the sector level, with the *Revised Education Sector Strategic Plan (2007-2015)* outlining the policies and strategies for addressing barriers to girls' education, the *Gender in Education Policy (2009)* which guides the implementation and monitoring of a gender-sensitive and gender-responsive education system, the recent introduction of *The National Strategy for Girls' Education in Uganda (2015- 2019)*, which promotes gender equity and equality and the *Strategy on Violence against Children in Schools (2015-2020)* to eliminate all forms of gender-based violence. As such, Uganda has a large range of national level commitments and sector level commitments to girls' education, and evidence has found cooperation and coordination among ministries, civil society and development partners in order to address cross-sectoral issues affecting girls' education, such as menstrual hygiene management (UNGEI, 2018).

In the Gambia, commitment to girls' education from the senior levels of government has led to National Plans on education being developed using a gender lens. The *National Education Policy 2004 – 2015* focused on non-discrimination and all-inclusive provision of education with particular reference to disadvantaged groups, such as girls and those living in poverty.^x The plan emphasises the rights of the individual, cultural diversity, indigenous languages, and it further promotes ethical norms and values, a culture of peace, and the development of science and technology competencies. This effort to increase enrolment by girls in schools has been further enhanced by the *Girls' Scholarship Trust Fund*, the *Girl Friendly School Initiative*, and the *President's Empowerment for Girls' Education Project*. According to the MDG 2010 report, The *Girls' Scholarship Trust Fund* and the *Girl Friendly School Initiative* have created a conducive environment for girls' education through this high-profile promotion. At the lower levels of education, this also led to the provision of sanitary pads. A study conducted by the Gambia's Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education showed that this initiative significantly increased girls' self-confidence and school attendance rates (EFA, 2014).

Rwanda's long-term planning document, *Vision 2020*, and the associated *Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy* and the *Education Sector Policy and Strategic Plan* recognise gender as a cross cutting issue. The *Education Sector Strategic Plan* has a distinct budget line to support specific initiatives to address barriers facing girls, further elaborated in the *Girls' Education Strategic Plan (2009- 2013)* (Nock & Dusenge, 2012). Overall, gender-sensitive education planning is accompanied by high level leadership; for close to two decades, the First Lady awards the best performing girls in National exams through the *Promotion of the Girls' Education Campaign*.^{xi}

Zambia also provides a strong example of high-level political commitment to girls' education combined with systemic gender-focussed reform. The *Girl-Child Education Campaign* was part of high-level political commitment to redress existing gender disparities in basic schools in Zambia and serves as an example of advocacy being accompanied by policy. Strategies, such as the 50-50 enrolment policy whereby schools were legally compelled to enrol equal numbers of girls and boys at Grades 1, 8 and 10, were introduced. The introduction of the re-entry Policy in 1997, and the extensive classroom construction component of the *Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Programme (BESSIP 1998-2002)* were all part of the focus on improving girls' access to basic education for Grades 1 - 7. The Government of Zambia accompanied these reforms in education, with the formulation of a *National Gender Policy*, aiming to ensure a full participation and equitable benefit of both sexes from the development process. The Government has also reintroduced a number of strategies to improve girls' access to education, including *The Programme for the Advancement of Girls' Education*. Overall, the

campaign achieved its objective of increasing access and retention of the girls in school by creating awareness about the importance of girls' education and encouraging parents and the community to send girls to school and support them once there. Evidence showed that there was a noticeable positive impact of these campaigns on enrolment and retention rates for girls in selected basic schools (Nkosha et al., 2013).

Commitments to gender mainstreaming are important for girls' education. There are a number of promising examples of governments' commitment to gender mainstreaming within education sector planning. The Uganda Gender Policy (2007) situated itself as a guiding framework for gender mainstreaming in Uganda. The Gender in Education Policy (2009) provided direction on the implementation and monitoring of a gender-sensitive and responsive education system and the Ministry of Education and Sport has been seen to highly prioritise gender mainstreaming as a key to the success of achieving equality in education as part of this policy (MoES, 2015).

Kenya has also made a commitment to gender mainstreaming (Kenya Vision 2030, 2016), which is supported by the country's constitution whose set of laws are aligned towards promoting gender equity (Kibui & Mwaniki, 2014). *Kenya Vision 2030* highlights gender, youth and other vulnerable groups as key to social, economic and political development and also contains a commitment to gender responsive budgeting. Access to quality and relevant education is one of the highest priorities on the development agenda. This commitment to gender mainstreaming has followed through to the Ministry of Education, guided by access, equity and quality, building on the *Gender Policy in Education* (2007) which clearly focused on both gender equality, and went further to mention gender empowerment (Wango et al., 2012). The Government of Kenya has shown its commitment towards the achievement of gender equity and equality in the country, through various initiatives, such as legislation, as well as policies and presidential directives. Other measures put in place by the Kenyan government in support of achieving gender equality include the establishment of a gender desk in all Ministry of Education Directorates, all Semi-Autonomous Government Agencies and Teacher Training Colleges (Kibui & Mwaniki, 2014).

When implemented effectively gender-responsive budgeting has the potential to have a positive impact on policy and practice. Examples of gender-based budgeting in education are sparse but, where available, suggest it is important for ensuring resources are available to support gender-sensitive planning (Mirwoba, 2013). Where national programmes are not supported by funding, their implementation is likely to be adversely affected. In Zambia, the Ministry of Education's Sensitisation of Traditional Leaders programme included workshops with leaders that aimed to provide important information and knowledge on re-entry, retention and enrolment policies for girls. While this was reported to result in a significant increase in enrolment, re-entry and retention levels in all Provinces, monitoring and follow ups were either not done or were minimally done, with those involved citing inadequate resources as a major hindrance (UNICEF, 2010)

In India, the National Institute of Public Policy undertook gender budget analysis to measure how women benefit from total government expenditure. In this analysis, the gender-sensitive expenditure framework was modified with consideration of the Indian budget framework, leading to a gender perspective integrated in the National Economic Survey (Sodani & Sharma, 2008). Due to support from UN agencies, a gender perspective was integrated in policy and budget processes, as part of the country's five-year plan (Guha & Goswami, 2006; Ichii, 2010).

There are positive examples of countries changing and updating harmful laws and policies which restrict girls' education. In 2009, the *Behaviour Management Policy for the National Education System of Papua New Guinea* was developed and guided by the right to a safe learning environment free of violence, sexual harassment and exploitation. This policy outlines the responsibilities of all stakeholders and is currently undergoing further revision to specifically address school-related gender-based violence by updating provision for protection aspects (UNGEI, 2017a). Several countries also have comprehensive legislation that specifically addresses forms of school violence that affect girls. In Kenya, for example, the Constitution upholds corporal punishment as unlawful in all settings, including schools, but also has the Sexual Offences Act (2006) criminalises sexual violence by people in positions of authority and means that those in education settings are liable to prosecution (UNESCO & UN Women, 2016).

Existing laws on girls' education are effective where they are supported by enabling policies and strategies to promote their implementation. In Jamaica, the *Women's Centre Foundation* aimed to reintegrate girls into secondary school after they have given birth. As a government agency, this is a successful example of when policy (in line with the law) can provide a combination of services to support girls' education. The Centre offers an academic curriculum in core subject areas, both virtually and face-to-face, and where class attendance is required, provides nurseries to easier facilitate attendance. In addition, it also provides outreach services, skills training, counselling and other health services, and was awarded the 2018 UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education based on findings which indicated that young mothers were more likely to complete their education, establish a career path and find better paying jobs and were less likely to have a second pregnancy (UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education, 2018).

Grassroots leadership increasing awareness about the value of girls' education

Initiatives are particularly influential when they engage with community members, leaders and politicians. In Odisha, India, the *Amar Nani* (Our Child) programme was implemented in ten remotely-located Gram Panchayats (local government structures) chosen specifically for poor rates of girls' education, remoteness and related challenge of accessibility as well as barriers in language. The project engaged a wide range of stakeholders, including girls, adolescents, young women, parents, community leaders, teachers, community-level institutions and organisations, the local government department, the Department of Health, the Department of Women and Child Welfare and the local Department of Tribal Welfare. Extensive participatory rural analysis was conducted prior to the intervention, to understand existing and contextual gender-based inequalities. The programme aimed to develop strong community links, sensitise teachers and trainers, and to promote collaborative actions, including between community members and school governance. Early evidence from the programme suggested that rates of children's absenteeism dropped from 40 percent to three percent and retention increased from six percent to 80 percent. There were also successes in enrolling children who had never enrolled before of whom 67 percent were girls and 76 percent were children from tribal communities (Sajeev & Singh, 2015).

In Bangladesh, Leonard Cheshire's multi-pronged strategy worked with children, their families, schools, civil society, departments of primary education, Health and Social services and other local government agencies. They used an inclusive education model, which led to a rise in girls with

disabilities enrolling at great rates, and of those enrolled, 94 percent of girls appeared for their final examinations during 2014, with 91 percent clearing their respective grades (Peter et al., 2015).

An increase in girls' and women in local leadership can be influential in changing community attitudes and aspirations for girls' education across the life course. Some grassroots organisations support former female participants of their programmes as leaders to help raise awareness on issues affecting girls' education and demonstrate the success of educational interventions for girls. For example, *Achievers Ghana*, set up by a 16-year old advocate for girls' education, focuses on inspiring (including meeting role models), educating and equipping girls in slum communities to pursue their educational opportunities. The founder was nominated for the World Children's Peace Prize for her work.^{xii}

In India, quotas for women were introduced at the local leadership level in 1993. Overall, for villages which had a female leader for two election cycles, the gender gap in aspirations for education closed by 20 percent for parents and by 32 percent for adolescents in comparison to villages that did not have experience of a female leader. In the former villages, the gender gap in adolescent educational attainment was erased and the amount of time girls spent on household activities also declined (Beaman et al., 2011).

Community-based programming helps promote girls' education. The *Pikin-to-Pikin Movement* implemented by Child to Child aimed to provide a five-year community-based early childhood development project in Sierra Leone. Due to the Ebola crisis, this programme evolved and became '*Pikin to Pikin Tok*' aimed at supporting children to continue learning, by delivering early years, hygiene and life skills education content through child-friendly radio broadcasts. The project also sought to transmit these messages to peers, families and communities. A number of the programmes focused explicitly on the importance of girls' education and retention in school. One of the major reported benefits was the increase in self-efficacy for girls, related to education. Girls' support networks also expanded as a result of the programme, which was particularly important as they were less able to access education during the Ebola crisis, and these support networks were reported to be places of learning (Walker et al., 2015).

The Education Development Trust in Kenya used '*Community Conversations*' which aimed to change the attitudes, perceptions and knowledge of communities about the education of girls. These '*Conversations*' aimed to engage community gatekeepers (elders, local administration and politicians) on gender discrimination, girls' rights and the importance of girls' education. Success with pastoralist communities was reported, who, although strongly attached to their livestock, were beginning to barter for girls' education (DFID, 2018). The *Wezesha Vijana* Project in Kenya combined participatory after school workshops for girls which focused on puberty, menstrual hygiene and reproductive rights, mother-daughter meetings to discuss beliefs and practice that limit girls' opportunities to education, such as encouraging conversations about sexual maturation, and girl-led '*Wezesha clubs*' that aimed to support girls through peer learning. Wamukuru and Orton (2015) found significant positive differences in exam performance between intervention and control groups, which they attributed to girls' increased commitment to studying following their involvement with the project.

Formula funding targeting resources at those most at risk of being left behind

Reaching the most marginalised girls will require targeted financing approaches that take into account disadvantage. In the South Asia region, initiatives in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have all used formula funding to target domestic education resources towards prioritizing disadvantaged groups. The “Special District Focus” under the *Sarva Shiksha Abiyan* programme in India, the National Finance Commission Award in Pakistan and the Education Quality Inputs in Sri Lanka are all examples of funding formula, targeting disadvantage (Zubairi & Rose, 2016). Under the *Sarva Shiksha Abiyan* programme in India, for example, the government moved away from a funding formula which disbursed equal per pupil funding to districts. Instead districts with high out-of-school populations, large gender disparities and large disadvantaged groups were allocated additional resources.

In the sub-Saharan Africa region, the National Norms and Standards for School Funding in South Africa is a good example of redistributing non-personnel recurrent expenditure according to disadvantage. Schools are ranked according to the income and wealth quintile of the communities surrounding them. In 2009 all schools in the lower three quintiles were obliged to stop charging pupils fees to attend. From 2014, schools falling in the bottom three income quintiles receive a minimum of US \$83 per pupil. Schools in the fourth highest quintile are entitled to a minimum of US \$42 per pupil. The equivalent for schools falling in the wealthiest quintile is US \$14.3 (McLaren, 2017).

Use of data to inform policy change

Tracking progress of those furthest left behind through the use of data has the potential to bring about policy change. In India the annual citizen-led learning assessment – ASER – has been administered annually since 2006. The reports’ findings highlight that many children are in school but not learning. This has elicited greater public debate to try to understand the reasons for poor learning outcomes. Between 2006 and 2017, politicians raised 70 questions in Parliament in this regard (ASER, 2017; UNESCO, 2017). Similarly, in Tanzania, the annual citizen-led learning assessment (UWEZO) has been undertaken since 2010. It has served as a catalyst towards greater critical dialogue concerning the deteriorating quality of education in Tanzania’s public primary schools. Its findings have in part been attributed to the government’s decision to introduce assessments in grade 2 as part of the former Big Results Now initiative, together with providing additional training of teachers in grades 1 and 2 (Twaweza, 2013). In Uganda, following the SACMEQ assessment, a summary of the results was presented to ministers. Based on the findings of the last completed SACMEQ report, a gender unit was set up in the Ministry of Education (Elks, 2016). More generally, a recent review of literature on the impact of national, regional and international assessment programmes on education policies found that where there was continuity, stability and regular cycles for conducting learning assessments, this facilitated their greater use when it came to policy-making (Best et al., 2013).

Transparent data on spending, where it comes from and whom it is spent on, can instigate positive policy change. National Accounts are one tool that can facilitate identification of spending inequities (Chawla and Forbes, 2010). While National Accounts, are not as institutionalised in the education sector as they have been within the health sector, where they have existed, they have propelled governments to act. In Nigeria, for instance, a National Account was piloted in the states of Kano,

Zamfara, Bauchi and Sokoto. The results from the data collection indicated that in Kano and Zamfara there was a strong bias, by both public and private providers, towards funding schools in urban areas. Consequently, state planners reassigned teachers from urban to rural areas. In Zamfara state the findings from the National Accounts study also led to more funds being channelled towards girls' schools (Chawla & Forbes, 2010). More recently the launch of the findings of the National Education Accounts in Uganda highlighted the large cost burden for households, who were responsible for nearly half of all costs despite the national policy of free education (UNESCO-UIS, 2016). As a result, Ministry officials have made it mandatory for all schools – both public and private – to make available their sources of funding in order to improve resource allocation, planning and budgeting (Diouf, 2016).

B. Targeted approaches

Prioritising early childhood education and early learning

Early childhood education can influence girls' retention and learning in the long term. While the evidence is clear on the importance of addressing disadvantage early, there appear to be limited interventions that have focused specifically on girls' early childhood education nor many examples of programmes that have been assessed and which have results disaggregated by gender. Some programmes do, however, show equal benefits for girls and boys in terms of access and outcomes. In Mozambique, for example, girls and boys in rural areas who enrolled in pre-school were 24 percent more likely to go on to attend primary school, and to show improved understanding and behaviour, as compared with children who had not (Martinez et al., 2012).

In Rwanda, Save the Children's Early Literacy and Maths Initiative focussed on the quality of service delivery at Early Childhood Care and Development Centres, relating to school readiness outcomes. The programme aimed to demonstrate techniques that were pedagogically sound, scalable, and which would ensure that Rwandan children benefited from inclusive, effective teaching and learning during the critical early years. They also designed and piloted a new outreach component for parents in communities where children could not attend Early Childhood Care and Development centres. Children in the Early Childhood Centres showed significantly higher learning scores. While children of those participating in the parenting group started off with the lowest scores, by the end they had almost caught up with children in Early Childhood Centres. Girls in the parenting group had the highest literacy gains overall. The results from the Early Childhood Centres and parenting programmes also found that learning gains were benefitting all families and children, regardless of their socioeconomic status or gender (Save the Children, 2015).

Providing schools within the community in the early years not only help girls to access education, but also increases their learning. In Afghanistan, the introduction of village-based schools meant that enrolment and test scores improved for all students, and girls benefited disproportionately, with the gender gap in enrolment being completely eliminated within a year and the test score disparity between boys and girls being narrowed by over one-third (Burde & Linden, 2013). It is likely that this is due to the fact that girls are usually more affected by the need to travel further distances to school, given safety concerns. Therefore, village schools that are nearer are more likely to lead to positive impacts on girls' ability to access education. A village pre-school programme in India also helped to

boost enrolment rates for girls at the primary level, offering early education classes near or in village primary schools. These programmes were intended to promote early childhood development and to help substitute for childcare that may keep girls from attending primary school (Rugh, 2000). These programmes have also been found to particularly help girls from the most rural and pastoralist communities to access early schooling, by tackling the intersecting disadvantage of gender and geographical location.

Complementary education programmes are able to reach girls who drop out of the formal system early. In Northern Ghana, the School for Life programme aims to provide good quality intensive basic education in nine months, with an intention to mainstream graduates into state schools. The programme specially focused on deprived areas, where girls are least likely to be in school. In the region targeted, approximately 40 percent of school-aged children were out of school, the majority of them girls. The School for Life programme developed a functional literacy programme for out-of-school children between the ages of eight and 14 years. It offered a nine-month cycle of afternoon classes in the mother tongue, aimed at assisting children attain basic literacy, numeracy and life skills, preparing children to join the formal primary education system. Almost 90 percent of the 85,000 children had completed the School for Life programme and become functionally literate, with almost 70 percent transitioning to the formal education system at primary levels. There was also increasing parental and community support for girls. Overall, at least 40 percent of those enrolled in the programme were females, of whom 54 percent entered the formal system of education (Casley-Hayford & Hartwell, 2010).

Addressing multifaceted challenges that girls face when they reach puberty

Life skills and informal learning support for girls during adolescence can help reduce child marriage and teenage pregnancy. An intervention for secondary school girls in Kenya focused on tackling harmful social norms related to early marriage through providing ‘sugar-daddy-risk education’, which included a course on HIV and sexual health risk associated with relationships, particularly with older men. The course led to a 28 percent decrease in the likelihood that girls started childbearing within a year (Dupas, 2011). In Bangladesh, the *Kishoree Kontha* (Adolescent Girls’ Voice) also addressed harmful community attitudes on child marriage, teenage childbearing and education by creating safe spaces in the community for girls to meet to socialise and to receive educational support and social competency training. Another group received a financial incentive to delay marriage. A third group received the *Kishoree Kontha* empowerment programme and the financial incentives. The study found that conditional incentives for delayed marriage led to a significant reduction in child marriage and teenage childbearing. Data from 4.5 years after programme completion showed that girls who received the incentives alone were 25 percent less likely to be married under 18, 16 percent less likely to have given birth under 20 and 24 percent more likely to be in school age 22. Girls who received the empowerment programme were 10 percent more likely to be in school. (Buchmann et al., 2018).

Eliminating cost barriers and tackling disadvantages that intersect with gender, such as disability, location, poverty

Financial and in-kind support for girls has been found to impact girls' enrolment, absenteeism and learning, including for the most marginalised girls. A programme in Kenya provided two free school uniforms to children during the last three years of primary school to help subsidise the cost of education. After three years of receiving the uniforms, the primary school dropout rate fell from 19 percent to 16 percent for girls (by a greater degree than the 13 percent to ten percent drop for boys). The benefit for girls was potentially due to the son-preference in families, meaning that the extra cost of uniforms was less likely to negatively affect boys' education prior to the intervention (Duflo, Dupas & Kremer, 2014). Similarly, a Child Sponsorship programme in primary schools, also in Kenya, provided free uniforms for school children who had experienced one or two parent deaths, and found that absenteeism reduced by seven percentage points, with a larger impact on girls than on boys. This programme had a particularly strong impact on the poorest students, with a 64 percent reduction in school absenteeism for those who did not previously own a uniform (Evans, Kremer & Ngatia, 2008). In Pakistan, a large-scale community-delivered school lunch programme in government primary girls' schools in 29 of the poorest rural districts helped to increase enrolment by 40 percent over the two-year intervention (Pappas et al, 2008).

In Kenya, a girls' Scholarship Programme chose scholarship winners based on their total test score on districtwide exams administered by the Ministry of Education across five subjects, awarding scholarships to the highest-scoring 15 percent of grade six girls in programme primary schools (which were chosen randomly). The scholarship paid school fees for the next two academic years (US\$6.40 paid to the school directly each year) plus a grant for school-related expenses (US\$12.80 paid to the girls' families). These scholarships had the effect of raising test scores for all girls, not only those who were likely to qualify for the scholarship by scoring in the top 15 percent of the district on an academic exam. In addition to the increase in girls' test scores, there was evidence that boys' test scores also increased. These positive externalities are likely to be due to higher teacher attendance, positive peer effects among students, or a combination of these reasons (Kremer, Miguel & Thornton, 2009).

The *Girls' Education Phase 3 Cash Transfer* project in Nigeria was a two-year unconditional cash transfer programme aiming to increase girls' enrolment, retention and completion of basic primary education. The programme used a geographical targeting approach to target areas with the highest proportion of out-of-school girls with a quarterly benefit of approximately US\$30 paid to the caregiver of the girls within the age of six to 15. An evaluation showed that the programme had a positive impact on household consumption and welfare, significantly increasing the income of poor households, allowing them to eat better quality food more frequently. As well as its positive impact on household welfare, the programme influenced household decision-making about sending girls to school, leading to a statistically significant change in caregiver's spending pattern in favour of girls' education (UNICEF, 2017).

Direct payments to girls or their families are found to be particularly impactful when targeted at girls with low attendance levels. For example, the *iMlango* project in Kenya found that those pupils who were attending less than 60 percent of the time before they received a payment made the largest education improvements (DFID, 2018e).

Large-scale stipend programmes have been effective in reducing both economic barriers to girls' access to education. In Pakistan, the *Punjab Female School Stipend Programme* was a conditional cash transfer programme targeted at girls in grades six – eight (middle school) in government schools and in districts with low literacy rates, as a means of responding to gender gaps in education. Eligibility was conditional on a minimum school attendance rate of 80 percent which was monitored regularly by the school. The stipend was paid quarterly to the student via a postal money order. One evaluation saw a 26 percent increase in girls' enrolment compared with a 13 percent increase in boys' enrolment (Hasan, 2010). Girls in the programme were three to six percentage points more likely to complete middle school and four to six percentage points more likely to transition to high school. Girls who were exposed to the programme later, and who were eligible for the benefits given in secondary school, increased their rates of matriculating into and completing high school (Alam, Baez, Del Carpio, 2011).

In Bangladesh, the *Female Secondary School Stipend Programme* was introduced in 1994 to increase girls' enrolment and retention in secondary education. The programme included a multi-pronged strategy providing tuition fees and monthly stipends for unmarried rural girls registered in school until class 10, who attend recognised institutions, remain unmarried, maintain at least 75 percent attendance and who secure at least 45 percent marks in the annual examinations (Mahmud, 2003). The combined stipend and tuition subsidy for each girl was approximately US\$11.06 for girls registered in non-government schools and US\$10.91 for girls registered in government schools. On average, an additional year of stipend programme duration increased female secondary enrolment of an incoming cohort by as much as eight percent (Pitt, Khandker and Fuwa, 2003). However, under this programme there was not an explicit focus on targeting the poorest families, given the high political and administrative costs of targeting, even though donors had warned that this meant the intervention was not necessarily reaching the poorest (Mahmud, 2003).

Targeted fee elimination and scholarships for girls have seen to have a significant impact on reducing economic barriers to girls' enrolment and attendance at secondary school. In Gambia, all girls attending government-run secondary schools in target regions (beginning in a few districts and expanding across the country geographically from east to west) were exempted from paying school fees, which used to be mandatory. The programme had a significant effect on secondary enrolment for female students of all age groups, with girls' secondary enrolment increasing by five percentage points and their years of schooling attained increasing by 0.2 (Gajigo, 2016).

Alongside the government's fee elimination programme, the *Ambassador Girls' Scholarship Programme* alleviated informal fees for girls in a subset of secondary schools, allowing for a comparison between programme recipients and students who paid no tuition fees but who were responsible for other expenses. Scholarships covered any school expenses such as books, uniforms, food, shoes, bags and mosquito nets. Eligible students were informally identified and selected by local committees composed of community leaders based on need, as indicated by vulnerability to economic disadvantage, orphan status, disability and/or affected by HIV/AIDS. The scholarship package, valued at US\$90 per student, increased female enrolment by 13 percent in grades seven - nine and the share of enrolled students who took the ninth-grade exit exam by 11 percentage points (Giordano & Pugatch, 2015). Recent evidence from the Kenya Equity in Education Project found that girls' who received a scholarship increased their retention rate from 86 percent to 90 percent. Qualitative evidence suggested that scholarships acted as a pull factor, positively influencing parents deciding whether to continue sending daughters to school (Coffey, 2017).

Evidence on income generating activities to support girls' education has shown some positive outcomes on reducing absenteeism across the life course. Health Poverty Action Rwanda supported the establishment of school businesses to generate income support for marginalised girls' education. The project's school fee loans were set up to help caregivers manage their cash flow in order to pay school fees and to help them grow their businesses. There was a reduction in absenteeism amongst girls whose parents had benefited from the loans (DFID, 2018e).

Cash transfers need to be flexible in programming to adapt to changes in barriers in adolescence. The *Zomba Cash Transfer Programme* in Malawi involved giving cash transfers, both conditional on schooling and unconditionally, to initially never-married 13 - 22-year-old young women. The amount of the transfer also varied to test the effects of this (Baird et al., 2009). The payments were mostly made to women in the household and took place monthly. Findings after one year of the programme provided evidence of strong positive impacts, showing that a total transfer of US\$5 per household per month led the average girl to be ten percentage points more likely to be in school after one year (Baird, McIntosh & Özler, 2009). One consideration of the study was to identify the effects of whether setting conditions for school attendance made a difference. There was a modest improvement in school enrolment without conditions. The group who faced conditions outperformed those without conditions in tests of reading comprehension. However, the schooling condition led to substantially higher pregnancy and marriage rates (Baird, Garfein, McIntosh & Özler, 2012). The authors suggest that the findings demonstrate the need for conditions for early adolescents while removing conditions for older teenagers to minimise this trade off.

Providing bicycles or other modes of transport for girls to get to school can improve enrolment, attendance and learning for marginalised girls. Provision of bicycles in Bihar, India, increased girls' age-appropriate enrolment in secondary school by 30 percent (Muralidharan & Prakash, 2013). The UNICEF Bicycle Programme in junior secondary schools in rural Ghana also found a positive one percent impact on girls' enrolment in the Afram Plains, eight percent enrolment improvement in Tolon-Kumungu and seven percent in Savelugu-Nanton. It also found a 95 percent increase in regular attendance and that 70 percent of those who received bicycles demonstrated higher academic performance (Boakye & Osei, 2004). Eco-Fuels Uganda, part of the Girls' Education Challenge also self-reported that their free transportation scheme for girls with disabilities led to an increase in girls' attendance (DFID, 2018e).

Changing parents' perceptions on education for girls with disabilities can help increase their enrolment in school. AbleChild Africa in Uganda employed a peer learning approach in which primary school children identified children with disabilities, including some who were kept at home. The self-reported success of identifying and enrolling girls with disabilities through this approach was attributed to the assumption that children do not have the gendered perspective that girls should not go to school (Al-Ghaib, 2017). Leonard Cheshire Disability's project in Kenya used community research workers as focal points, working closely with families, communities and schools to support the attitudinal and practical side enrolment of girls with disabilities. They succeeded in providing information and arguments for the right to and potential of education for children, especially girls, with disabilities. Of those in the intervention, 94 percent of the girls with disabilities were enrolled in school by the endline, compared to 64 percent of the control group (Coffey, 2017).

C. Tackling discrimination

School environments that are safe spaces

A girl-friendly school environment can make a difference to girls' enrolment, particularly where discriminatory socio-cultural norms are pervasive. The Citizens' Foundation in Pakistan provides education with all-female staff in a cultural setting where this is important, locations within walking distances of homes, security through boundary walls, and on-campus toilets. Qualitative research found that families felt more comfortable sending their daughters to school due to their location, security and the all-female teaching staff. Free door-to-door transport was also provided. This maintenance of a girl-friendly environment has led to girls' enrolment at the primary level as being above or equal to the national, provincial and district levels, achieving 40- 50 percent girls' enrolment over three years of school operations. Data and interviews from the Citizens' Foundation school sites also found that communities that were previously not predisposed to girls' education are now more motivated, due to community outreach conducted by the schools (Khan et al., 2015).

Improvements in school hygiene infrastructure and the provision of sanitary products can lead to an improvement in girls' attendance, particularly during adolescence. In Kenya, the *Kenya Equity in Education Project* and *Let Our Girls Succeed* projects provided sanitary wear or menstrual supplies to girls helped to encourage more regular attendance at school (Coffey, 2017). In Ghana, providing sanitary pads with puberty education to girls between the ages of 12 and 18, led to girls' attendance significantly improving after three months and after five months, resulting in an overall nine percent increase in attendance (Montgomery et al., 2012). A study of a trial in Uganda, testing whether girls' secondary school attendance improved when girls were given a) reusable sanitary pads, b) adolescent reproductive health education, c) neither or d) a combination of both, found that better sanitary care combined with reproductive health education increased girls' attendance by an average of 17 percent (Hennegan et al., 2016).

Providing infrastructural support to enhance privacy for girls in addition to the provision of sanitary items is also found to be important (Hennegan et al., 2017). In South Africa, an increase in the number of toilets and spreading out of their locations was found to reduce the number of sexual assaults against women by 30 percent (Gonsalves et al., 2015). Furthermore, water treatment, hygiene and sanitation in Kenya, in which schools had to provide the Government of Kenya standards of one latrine for every 25 girls, resulted in a significant decline in absenteeism for girls (Freeman et al., 2012).

Whole school approaches to targeting school-related gender-based violence, can be effective in improving girls' feelings of safety in school. Such approaches include specific behaviour-change techniques for staff, students and administration. Raising Voices in Uganda delivered a programme aimed at implementing their *Good School Toolkit* in primary schools, which included gender-sensitive teacher training, and primarily focused on reducing corporal punishment, resulting in a significant impact on literacy results for girls involved (DFID, 2018c). Findings from the implementation of the *Good School Toolkit* found that there was a significant reduction in violence and that the intervention helped school staff to encourage desired behaviour among students through alternative non-violent methods (Kayiwa et al., 2017; Kyegombe et al., 2017).

Analysis from the *Transforming Education for Girls in Nigeria and Tanzania* found that adopting a gender-based approach to addressing violence in schools, which focussed both on raising awareness about violence as well as on official reporting mechanisms, increased girls' confidence in reporting incidences of violence (Unterhalter & Heslop, 2012). A community outreach programme, *Stop Violence Against Girls in School*, in Ghana, Mozambique and Kenya worked through campaigning and linking local groups to wider movements. Advocacy partners helped raise awareness of the issue of violence by disseminating research findings through the national media. The community-based partners worked to mobilise parents, teachers, children and local leaders around the issue of violence. An evaluation found that participating in the programme helped girls to become more knowledgeable about what to do when faced with violence, which combined with improved knowledge about child protection processes and community-based structures to reporting, gave girls' increased confidence in school settings (Parkes & Heslop, 2013).

Equipping teachers with the skills needed to prevent and respond to violence against girls in schools helps ensure a safe school environment conducive to girls' learning. Plan International's *Building Skills for Life* project helped to raise teacher and community awareness of the Teacher's Code of Conduct, equipping teachers with knowledge of alternative classroom discipline. This led to a decline in corporal punishment for all students (Reilly, 2014). In the *Doorways* training programme in Ghana and Malawi, important training for teachers raised their awareness of sexual harassment of girls from 30 percent to 80 percent, and positive changes in attitudes were noted by girls (Queen et al, 2015, cited in Sperling & Winthrop, 2016).

Providing safe spaces for girls are particularly important in conflict settings. Recognising that refugee schools tended to be dominated by boys, a project in Sierra Leone directly tackled gender-based violence by training and deploying female classroom assistants to grade 3- 6 classrooms. These classroom assistants had an explicit mandate to mitigate abuse and exploitation of students and to support a girl-friendly school and learning environment. This led to girls stating that classrooms were friendlier and more encouraging spaces to learn (Kirk & Winthrop, 2005).

Gender-sensitive teaching practices and materials

A gender-sensitive learning environment can improve girls' academic performance across the life course and is important in early years to encourage girls' retention and progress through schooling. FAWE's integration of gender-sensitive pedagogy found evidence of change in the gender dynamics of the school and in the attitudes of girls and boys in the classroom, which have led to improved learning for girls (Wanjama & Njuguna, 2015; Bissoonauth, 2016). The intervention includes mainstreaming gender in classroom set-up by training teachers in language planning, teacher-learner interaction, delivery methodology, language use and resources for instruction so that they may be able to understand and address the specific learning needs of both sexes and improve classroom participation for both boys and girls. It also targeted the school management to sensitise them on gender and to support their ability to create a conducive learning environment.

The *Kenya Equity in Education Project* provided teacher training in girl-friendly approaches and methods. Participation and confidence increased among girls to answer questions, with 80 percent of in-school girls reporting some improvement in the way teachers interacted and engaged with them

(Coffey, 2017). In a study of thirty co-educational government secondary schools in Bihar, India, gender-sensitive classroom dynamics were positively correlated with academic performance among girls, especially in mathematics (Santhya et al., 2014). Whilst likely to also be beneficial for girls' learning outcomes, there is limited evidence on gender sensitive curricula and reform.

Female teachers can be effective in increasing girls' learning outcomes, particularly in settings where few female teachers exist. A panel study in rural public schools in Andhra Pradesh, India, found that the presence of female teachers is most effective for improving test scores, resulting in an improvement in girls' test scores in years when they are taught by a female teacher, with no adverse effects on boys (Muralidharan & Sheth, 2013). Two studies in Ghana analysed national primary school aggregate data and found that female teachers are significantly associated with improved test scores (Joseph & Wodon, 2012) and school enrolment (Ahiakpor, Nunoo & Alnaa, 2014).

Tackling harmful social norms can change students' attitudes to gender equality in education. An intervention in Haryana (India) aimed to reduce harmful societal gender norms by engaging adolescents in discussions about gender equality. The sessions taught facts and endorsed gender equality and prompted students to reflect on their own and society's views. There were also sessions which focused on teaching communication skills to help students convince others of their views. The intervention increased adolescents' support for gender equality by 0.25 standard deviations, and participation in the programme was also associated with more gender equitable behaviour, such as boys doing more household chores (Dhar, Jain & Jayachandran, 2018).

Initiatives within schools have improved girls' aspirations and sense of school belonging. Initiatives associated with the Girls' Education Challenge have shown benefits in terms of strengthening girls' self-confidence and aspirations, with the potential for improving the quality of the education experience and for enhancing their learning. In Mozambique, girls' clubs supported by Save the Children focused on encouraging the active participation of girls as well as offering peer education and homework help for those who needed it. These were significantly linked to girls feeling increased levels of 'self-belonging'. In addition, it led to an increase of girls' academic self-efficacy. The project believed that each point increase on academic self-efficacy would lead to an average increase in attendance of 5.8 percent (DFID, 2018b). Camfed's *My Better World* programme in Tanzania also led to girls saying that they felt more integrated in schools and confident about their future.

Girls' participating in the girls' clubs as part of the *Kenya Equity in Education Project* felt more empowered to speak up against inappropriate sexual contact (Coffey, 2017). The *Theatre for a Change* project used girls' clubs in Malawi to build girls' self-esteem in schools. On average, married girls in the group attending the clubs increased their oral reading fluency by 31 words per minute, an average of 13 words more than married girls in the group who did not attend the clubs (DFID, 2018b). The *Creating Healthy Approaches to Success (CHATS)* programme in Malawi also delivered skills-based sessions to girls' in schools using participatory approaches covering self-advocacy, leadership skills, sexual and reproductive health, study skills and business skills. CHATS participants had much higher secondary school completion rates compared to the national average. Girls who participated were also more likely to see themselves as leaders and role models (Sidle et al., 2015).

School-based mentors or counsellors can play an important role in helping girls develop self-confidence and encouraging positive attitudes towards studying. Camfed's 'Learner Guides' provide peer mentoring to marginalised girls in the government secondary schools they support. Learner Guides are young women school graduates who are trained by Camfed to support girls in school. Girls

who received support from a Learner Guide saw improvements in their maths and literacy scores (Camfed International, 2016). Enhanced status and increased participation of young women who had previously been among the most marginalised was also observed (DFID, 2018f). Save the Children's programme in Mozambique also found that having a peer mentor was a statistically significant predictor of academic self-efficacy (DFID, 2018f).

Whole school commitments to gender equality, from head teachers and senior leadership through to girls' involvement in school governance, play an important role in promoting gender-egalitarian practices. Evidence from the *Transforming Education for Girls in Nigeria and Tanzania* programme in primary schools showed that a greater presence of women on school management committees and greater activity by school governance structures in relation to gender equality and social inclusion was associated with a larger proportion of girls feeling confident enough to report incidents of gender-based violence (Unterhalter & Heslop, 2012).

A case study of the *My Rights My Voice, Baraza* project, implemented with school councils in Tanzania, highlights the importance of promoting greater representation of girls in school leadership positions. Positive impacts were found both on girls' personal development, including self-esteem, confidence and leadership skills, as well as on school related improvements, including an increase from no female heads in 2011, to 74 female head prefects in project schools. There were also positive changes in the attitudes and beliefs about female students becoming leaders in schools and communities. The number of female students applying and campaigning for leadership increased from 0 to 9789 and the number of female students elected to student leadership positions increased from 1089 to 4688. The project also improved the ability of female students to hold teachers, education officers, and community leaders accountable, as 62 percent of female students asked critical questions about promises made in response to their demands and insisted on receiving feedback on any actions taken (Makunjuna et al., 2015).

School governance reforms are important for an overall focus on gender equality and empowerment. The *Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS)* Project in Uganda implemented a girls' policy, encouraging girls to input into decision making, and held annual school inspections to assess whether secondary schools were becoming more gender-responsive through consulting with female students and teachers and making recommendations to school leadership teams (DFID, 2018). An evaluation found that 92 percent of girls reported that their views were taken up by school management (DFID, 2018d).

Promoting women's economic empowerment and providing pathways to productive work

Interventions aimed at expanding labour market opportunities for women can influence girls' enrolment. An intervention provided three years of recruiting services to the rapidly expanding business processing outsourcing industry to girls aged 15 to 21 in randomly selected rural villages in India, with the intention of increasing awareness of the newly growing industry. Promotion of this industry was chosen based on the fact that it offered new high-paying job opportunities particularly for women. Three years later, women were 2.8 percentage points more likely to have enrolled in vocational or training institutes, and girls aged six to 17 years old were five percentage points more likely to be enrolled in school in villages, with the intervention, perhaps reflective of the response to anticipated higher market returns of the schooling choices of younger girls (Jensen, 2012).

Tackling access and learning simultaneously, with sufficient resources

Economic support needs to be combined with other interventions to tackle multiple dimensions of disadvantage for girls both in and out of school to improve enrolment and learning. Financial support alone might not be enough to keep the most marginalised girls in schools. Save the Children Mozambique noted that only 66 percent of girls receiving bursaries and education kits stayed in school during the entire life of the project, with their average attendance rates being lower than those of girls who did not receive bursaries or kits. They found that funds could not eliminate other key barriers such as pregnancy, death of a parent or distance in school for the most disadvantaged girls (DFID, 2018e).

An assessment of Camfed's programme in Tanzania found that bursaries together with pedagogical interventions in school reduced dropout and improved learning for the marginalised girls receiving them (Alcott, Rose & Sabates, 2016). Camfed's interventions focus on supporting the most marginalised girls in remote under-served rural communities – financial support is exclusively based on needs, not subject to academic performance or potential. Girls are identified by community leaders based on different dimensions of marginalisation (such as income, disabilities, demographic situation of the household and cultural factors). The in-school support provided by Camfed includes training teacher mentors and staff to improve educational quality, developing and distributing low cost educational resources and encouraging young women school graduates to take on leadership roles as 'Learner Guides' to mentor and deliver a life skills curriculum. On average, marginalised girls who received Camfed financial and other forms of support were more likely to stay in school and almost tripled their scores on the learning assessment from 11 to 28 points. The analysis found that while the most advantaged girls receiving support improved their maths scores by 15 points, the most disadvantaged girls improved their maths score by 17 points (Alcott et al., 2016, Alcott, Rose & Sabates, 2016).

While such programmes aimed at improving retention and learning for the most disadvantaged are likely to cost more, this can result in higher overall cost-effectiveness in the long-run. For example, the impact of Camfed's multi-dimensional programme in Tanzania is equivalent to an additional two years of schooling per US\$100 spent (Sabates et al., 2018).

Summary

Based on a review of available evidence, we identify interventions that have been found to improve access and learning, particularly to address the barriers that marginalised girls face. As many of the barriers are mutually reinforcing, there is a need to tackle these simultaneously through a combined package of reforms that tackle multiple disadvantages. It is important to recognise that what works in some contexts might not work in the same way in other settings. While it is possible to identify interventions that work, visible political commitment and sustained investment is needed for them to have impact at scale.

Based on the identification of barriers and evidence of what works, we summarise 12 key principles that need to be addressed to achieve 12 years of quality of education for all girls, together with three areas for action, as follows:

A. Leadership and financing

1. Visible high-level political commitment backed up with resources.
2. Grassroots leadership increasing awareness about the value of girls' education.
3. Formula funding targeting resources at those most at risk of being left behind.
4. Use of data to inform policy change.

B. Targeted approaches

5. Prioritising early childhood education and early learning.
6. Addressing multifaceted challenges that girls face when they reach puberty.
7. Eliminating cost barriers.
8. Tackling disadvantages that intersect with gender, such as disability, location, poverty.

C. Tackling discrimination

9. School environments that are safe spaces.
10. Gender-sensitive teaching practices and materials.
11. Promoting women's economic empowerment and providing pathways to productive work.
12. Tackling access and learning simultaneously, with sufficient resources.

Priorities for further action

1. Visible political leadership

Ensuring high-level, visible political leadership that promotes education planning adopting a gender equality and empowerment lens and commits sufficient resources to reach the most marginalised girls.

2. Investing in early years' education

Tackling barriers to education for marginalised girls in the early years before they become entrenched, and prioritising domestic and international financing towards this.

3. Making girls' education a national development priority

Anchoring gender-inclusive education strategies in wider national development planning and cross-sectoral collaboration to ensure socio-cultural barriers are tackled, such as those related to gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, girls' unpaid work, and limited productive employment opportunities.

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Annex I - Commonwealth Countries

Country	Aid Recipient ^{xiii}	Aid Donor	Income Status (according to WB classifications as of June 2018) ^{xiv}
Antigua and Barbuda	YES	NO	High Income
Australia	NO	YES	High Income
The Bahamas	Yes, UNTIL 1996	NO	High Income
Bangladesh	YES	NO	Lower Middle Income
Barbados	Yes, UNTIL 2011	NO	High Income
Belize	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
Botswana	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
Brunei Darussalam	Yes, UNTIL 1996	NO	High Income
Cameroon	YES	NO	Lower Middle Income
Canada	NO	YES	High Income
Cyprus	NO	YES	High Income
Dominica	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
Fiji	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
Gambia, The	YES	NO	Low Income
Ghana	YES	NO	Lower Middle Income
Grenada	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
Guyana	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
India	YES	NO	Lower Middle Income
Jamaica	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
Kenya	YES	NO	Lower Middle Income
Kingdom of eSwatini	YES	NO	Lower Middle Income
Kiribati	YES	NO	Lower Middle Income
St Kitts and Nevis	Yes, UNTIL 2014	NO	High Income
Lesotho	YES	NO	Lower Middle Income
St Lucia	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
Malawi	YES	NO	Low Income

Malaysia	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
Malta	NO	YES	High Income
Mauritius	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
Mozambique	YES	NO	Low Income
Namibia	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
Nauru	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
New Zealand	NO	YES	High Income
Nigeria	YES	NO	Lower Middle Income
Pakistan	YES	NO	Lower Middle Income
Papua New Guinea	YES	NO	Lower Middle Income
Rwanda	YES	NO	Low Income
Samoa	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
Seychelles	Yes, UNTIL 2018	NO	High Income
Sierra Leone	YES	NO	Low Income
Singapore	Yes, UNTIL 1996	NO	High Income
Soloman Islands	YES	NO	Lower Middle Income
South Africa	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
Sri Lanka	YES	NO	Lower Middle Income
Tanzania, United Republic of	YES	NO	Low Income
Tonga	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
Trinidad and Tobago	Yes, UNTIL 2011	NO	High Income
Tuvalu	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
Uganda	YES	NO	Low Income
UK	NO	YES	High Income
Vanuatu	YES	NO	Lower Middle Income
St Vincent and the Grenadines	YES	NO	Upper Middle Income
Zambia	YES	NO	Lower Middle Income

Annex II – Methodology

References in previous reports were used to identify key authors. In all reports read subsequently, reference lists were reviewed in order to find the most relevant articles and publications.

A literature search was then undertaken, based on the Inclusion and Exclusion criteria. The primary sites used for searches were: Google Scholar, Web of Science, Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC) Collection, iSEEK Education Springer Link, ResearchGate and the Africa Education Research Database. These searches were supplemented by Google searches to ensure that reports from non-academic institutions were not missed.

After a primary web-based search, the websites of key players in girls' education were used to search for key information, for example: UNICEF, Brookings Institute, UNESCO, Global Partnership for Education, the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence project, World Bank, Global Monitoring Reports (and gender reviews), United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, Girls' Education Challenge, and so on.

After originally searching for the relevant literature in relation to the ODA-Commonwealth countries, individual country searches were conducted, to ensure that no key literature was missed. The Ministry of Education Reports (2000-2018) for the ODA-eligible Commonwealth countries were also reviewed, to find information on how girls' education has evolved across them since the Millennium Development Goals.

The *What Works for Marginalised Girls' Education* section is primarily based on evidence from the literature review. However, it also involved following up on programme websites and searching for specific programmatic evaluations of impact. Examples of websites and research institutions/organisations that were searched, and the key search terms that were used for additional scoping can be found below.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

- 1)** The search for the literature was narrowed down to include only literature from 2008 onwards (exceptions to be made for literature providing frameworks, for example).
- 2)** Literature was only reviewed if it referenced girls' education or gender and education across educational levels (pre-school/primary/secondary/higher education).
- 3)** Furthermore, only literature that focused on countries in the geographical scope was included in the review.
- 4)** High quality peer-reviewed journals were prioritised, but grey literature was also utilised, particularly where it covered evaluations for interventions.

Literature Review Search Terms

First Search Term	Second Search Term	Third Search Term	Optional Fourth Search Term	Optional Fifth Search Term
Girls/gender	Education/school/learning	Commonwealth		
Girls/gender	Education/school	Country, e.g. Antigua and Barbuda		
Girls/gender	Education/school/learning	Challenges	Commonwealth	Country, e.g. Jamaica
Girls/gender	Education/school/learning	Barriers	Commonwealth	Country,
Girls /gender	Education/school/learning	Early marriage/poverty/disability/ethnicity etc	Commonwealth	Country, e.g. India
Girls/gender	Education/school/learning	Interventions/Programmes	Commonwealth	Country, e.g. Sierra Leone
Girls/gender	Education/school/learning	Politics/legislation/financing etc	Commonwealth	Country, e.g. Sri Lanka
Girls/gender		Education/school/learning		Commonwealth
Girls/gender		Education/school		Country, e.g. Antigua and Barbuda
Girls/gender		Education/school/learning		Challenges
Girls/gender		Education/school/learning		Barriers
Girls /gender		Education/school/learning		Early marriage/poverty/disability etc
Girls/gender		Education/school/learning		Interventions
Girls/gender		Education/school/learning		Politics/legislation/financing

Therefore, each of the search terms were used with girls/gender and education/school/learning and {geographical term} (either Commonwealth or country-specific), which represents that they were searched by each ODA-Commonwealth country as outlined above.

E.g. Using the example of 'Challenges', the following search terms were used, limited to literature from 2000 onwards:

'Girls' AND 'Education' AND 'Challenges' AND 'ODA-Commonwealth countries'

'Girls' AND 'Education' AND 'Challenges' AND 'Antigua and Barbuda' etc...

'Gender' AND 'Education' AND 'Challenges' AND 'ODA-Commonwealth countries'

'Gender' AND 'Education' AND 'Challenges' AND 'Antigua and Barbuda' etc...

What Works in Girls' Education – Websites Searched

- UNGEI
- Save the Children
- UNESCO and the Global Monitoring Reports (including gender overviews)
- Global Partnership for Education
- Brookings Institute
- J-PAL
- ODI and the GAGE project
- UNICEF
- The World Bank
- Girls' Education Challenge
- ADEA
- Plan International

Additional search terms were also used, based on the known barriers to girls' education, as detailed below:

Primary Search Term	Known Barriers	Potential Additional Search Term
<i>Intervention/Programme/Evidence</i>	Family Level Barriers Economic/Financial	Scholarships Cash Transfers Stipends
	Community Level Barriers	Community Aspiration change Church/Faith-based
	School Level Barriers	Re-entry Gender-sensitive teaching Gender-sensitive pedagogy Gender-sensitive materials Women leaders School Environment Teacher Training GBV
	System Level Barriers	Child Protection Re-entry policy Politics Political/Economy Gender mainstreaming Policy/policies Financing Gender budgeting Women leaders

Annex 3 – Signatories to international treaties

In 2018, the Right to Education developed a classification intended to evaluate how committed a state was to achieving gender equality in education vis-à-vis their ratification of three treaties which refer to these. These three treaties are:

- **1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW):** Article 10 in this Convention sets out the established norms on what governments obligations are in relation to equality in the access to and quality of education, reduction of female drop-out rates and programmes for women and girls who have left school.
- **1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education (CADE):** CADE outlaws discrimination, including between genders, in access to and quality of education.
- **1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR):** Articles 13 lays out what governments must do to counteract any discrimination from taking place, including the need for disaggregated data to identify discrimination where it takes place

The classification refers to six tiers under which governments can fall under. Tier one identifies highest commitment to international treaties. These are:

Tier 1: State/ government is party to CEDAW (with no reservations to Articles pertaining to gender equality), CADE and ICESCR.

Tier 2: State/ government is party to CEDAW (with no reservations to Articles pertaining to gender equality) and either CADE or ICESCR

Tier 3: State/ government is party to CEDAW (with no reservations to Articles pertaining to gender equality) but not to CADE or ICESCR

Tier 4: State/ government is party to CEDAW (with reservations to one or more Articles pertaining to gender equality) and either CADE or ICESCR

Tier 5: State/ government is party to CEDAW (with reservations to one or more Articles pertaining to gender equality) but not to CADE or ICESCR

Tier 6: State/ government is not party to CEDAW, CADE or ICESCR

Tier	State party to CEDAW	No Reservations to CEDAW	State party to CADE	State party to ICESCR	Commonwealth countries	Number of countries
1	✓	✓	✓	✓	Australia Barbados Belize Cyprus Eswatini Dominica Jamaica Mauritius New Zealand Nigeria Rwanda St. Vincent and Grenadines Seychelles Sierra Leone Solomon Islands South Africa Sri Lanka Tanzania Uganda United Kingdom	20
2	✓	✓	State party to one of either CADE or ICESCR		Cameroon Canada Gambia Ghana Grenada Guyana Kenya Lesotho Malawi Namibia Papua New Guinea Trinidad and Tobago Zambia	13
3	✓	✓	✗	✗	Antigua and Barbuda Botswana Fiji Kiribati Mozambique Nauru St. Kitts and Nevis St. Lucia Samoa Tuvulu Vanuatu	11
4	✓	✗	State party to one of either CADE or ICESCR		Bahamas Bangladesh Brunei India Malta Pakistan	6
5	✓	✗	✗	✗	Malaysia Singapore	2
6	✗	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Tonga	1

Source: Right to Education (2017); UNESCO (2018).

Endnotes

ⁱ Taken from over the period 2010 to 2017

ⁱⁱ The indicator is based on years of schooling for those aged 20-24 years old, based on available information. As such, this represents a historical picture of education systems.

ⁱⁱⁱ This indicator uses the “Expected Years of School” as a measure of how many years a child is in school. This may deviate considerably from the number of years a child actually spends in school. In the case of Sierra Leone, for instance, the World Bank reports that the “Expected Number of Years in School” for girls equals 9. However, data from the WIDE database (for 20-24 year olds) reports it as considerably lower at 4.3 years. While this might partly be because progress has been made in more recent years, it is highly unlikely that such vast improvements are possible within this short period of time. One reason for the discrepancy could be because of challenges in adjusting for children repeating years in school. Closer scrutiny of the data would be beneficial to check the reasons for such wide differences.

^{iv} This excludes six Commonwealth countries who are aid donors (Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Malta, New Zealand and the United Kingdom) and seven Commonwealth countries who are no longer aid recipients (the Bahamas, Barbados, Brunei, Seychelles, Singapore, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago)

^v Afghanistan, D.R. Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

^{vi} This paper uses the OECD-CRS’s definitions of the extent to which a project targets gender equality and women’s empowerment. A project marked as **Principal** is where the main objective of the activity and without this objective the activity would not have taken place (Code 2). A project marked as **Significant** is where gender equality is an important but a secondary objective of the project (Code 1). A project marked as **Not targeted** is where the project does not target gender equality (Code 0). There are a number of projects which are left coded.

^{vii} Education ODA in this section is exclusive of General Budget Support.

^{viii} <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/National-strategies-to-end-child-marriage-Girls-Not-Brides.pdf>

^{ix} <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/bangladesh/>

^x <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/fa971d6d4f10e3f432e48e782004dd80cb0263ae.pdf>

^{xi} <http://www.rwanda-podium.org/index.php/actualites/education/2902-kigali-first-lady-pushes-for-more-best-performing-girls-next-year>

^{xii} <https://achieversghana.org/2012/08/08/childrens-peace-prize-nomination/>

^{xiii} http://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/DAC_List_ODA_Recipients2018to2020_flows_En.pdf

^{xiv} <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>



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