

PRIORITÉ À L'ÉGALITÉ
GENDER AT THE 
CENTRE 

SOCIAL NORMS AND GIRLS' EDUCATION: A STUDY OF EIGHT SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

**GENDER AT THE CENTRE INITIATIVE (GCI)
POLICY PAPER | APRIL 2022**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication is supported by the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), co-coordinator of the Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI).

The paper was researched and written by Gloria Diamond. Its publication benefitted from the expertise and guidance of Sujata Bordoloi, Antara Ganguli, Eline Versluys and Kelly Yotebieng. The GCI Reference Group provided invaluable insight and detailed comments which have shaped this publication. In particular, thanks go to: Houraye Mamadou Anne, Rita Bissoonauth, Margherita Boccalatte, Fabricia Devignes, Woppa Diallo, Cecile Giraud, Shreyasi Jha, Khadijah Sidibe, and young feminist activists Maryjacob Okwuosa and Ezihe Ozichukwu.

This paper was designed and formatted by Daniel Pomlett at The Space Room, translated by Nathalie Montagu and Inês Cunha Jorge, and copyedited by Julia Stewart.

Published by:

United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
3 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
www.ungei.org
© United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
April 2022

Suggested citation:

Diamond, G. (2022). *Social norms and girls' education: A study of eight sub-Saharan African countries*. GCI Policy Paper. United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), New York.

INTRODUCTION

Social norms that reinforce gender biases are extremely prevalent globally and deeply internalized from an early age. Social norms can be defined as ideals that create shared expectations and dictate informal rules that influence how people should behave. Norms are reinforced through social approval and good standing in a community for the people in the group who adhere to them, and ostracization and punishments for those who go against them. Gender norms are a subset of social norms that relate specifically to gender differences, reinforcing systemic inequality that undermine the rights of women and girls and restrict opportunities for people of all genders to express their authentic selves. As such, gender norms also reflect and contribute to gendered inequalities in the distribution of power and resources (UNICEF and UNFPA, 2020; Marcus and Harper, 2015).

Restrictive social and gender norms feed into perceptions around the value of girls' education and influence investments into and support for girls' education at the household and community levels (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016; Marcus and Harper, 2015). At the local and national levels, unequal gender norms intersect with norms linked with social and economic institutions, including religion, marriage, employment and livelihoods, to influence outcomes around girls' education and gender equality. These norms can be exacerbated by the realities of poverty, conflict, climate change, insecurity, economic opportunities and education quality, resulting in persistent barriers to girls' access, participation and achievement in education and gender equality (Yotebieng, 2021). As microcosms of wider society, schools are spaces where entrenched gender roles and power dynamics are played out, which can manifest in various forms of gender-based discrimination and violence.

Quality, gender-transformative education has the potential to address harmful gender norms and imbalances of power. Gender-transformative education goes beyond access to education for girls and women, leveraging the whole education system to transform harmful norms and stereotypes. It challenges power dynamics and empowers stakeholders to nurture an environment of gender justice. In the context of gender-transformative education, the school environment can be a space for learners, teachers, school leaders, parents and communities to challenge gender inequalities and promote positive norms and practices (UNICEF et al., 2021). Therefore, to bridge existing gender gaps in education—including in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic—and unlock education's gender-transformative potential, there is an urgent need to better understand the complex social norms that limit girls' access, participation and achievement in education, and the reasons for their persistence.

This was the rationale behind the desk study on social norms and girls' education in eight countries in West and Central Africa, commissioned by the Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI) (see Box 1).¹ The study reviews existing literature on gendered social norms, the underlying values that keep them in place, and the ways in which they affect access, participation and achievement in quality education for girls. This includes research and reports from academic and research institutions, as well as international organizations, and a range of quantitative, mixed-method and qualitative studies and reports. Identified as being among the major barriers to gender equality and girls' education in the eight GCI partner countries, the desk study focused on social norms relating to: (1) child marriage; (2) perceived low economic relevance of girls' education; (3) school-related gender-based violence; and (4) domestic and child labour. The study identified significant gaps in research on social norms and education with regards to female genital mutilation (FGM), boys, disability and LGBTQI+ children and youth.

1 Yotebieng, K. (2021). What we know (and do not know) about persistent social norms that serve as barriers to girls' access, participation and achievement in education in eight sub-Saharan African countries. New York: UNGEI. For a full list of references and studies reviewed, [refer to the report](#).

This policy paper combines the main findings from the literature review with new evidence, including in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The paper begins with a brief situational update of the key challenges to girls' education and gender equality in the region, underpinned by social norms, and an analysis of the continental and regional policy architecture relevant to the advancement of girls' education and gender equality in Africa. Case studies from the eight GCI countries follow, each of which includes a snapshot of the national policy and legal framework for gender and education. The case studies explore country-level, existing evidence on social norms and girls' education in more detail, identifying potential entry points and promising approaches for social norm transformation. The paper concludes with broad findings from across the eight GCI country case studies and actionable recommendations. This policy paper and its recommendations are targeted towards the GCI Alliance, policymakers, education and gender practitioners, ministry personnel, (I)NGOs and civil society.

BOX 1: GENDER AT THE CENTRE INITIATIVE (GCI) - STRENGTHENING GENDER-RESPONSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

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. Education can play a key role in challenging these gender norms, but it can also reinforce and reproduce them if resource distribution, policies and systems are not grounded in the principles of gender equality. As such, transforming deeply entrenched gender norms and developing more equitable education systems requires a deep and context-specific understanding of the issues, committed leadership and transformative action (Rodway et al., 2021). Specialized skills and abilities are needed for education ministries to integrate gender considerations into the overall functioning of the institutions, and those with these skills require an appropriate level of seniority to drive these changes forward. Sufficient gender expertise is often not present in education ministries or is located within structures that are unable to advocate for action or access adequate resources (Gordon et al., 2019; Rodway et al., 2021). If education is to deliver on its gender-transformative potential, gender-responsive education sector planning (GRESP) must take social and gender norms into account.

Launched in July 2019, the Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI) was developed by the G7 Ministers of Education and Development, in collaboration with multilateral and civil society organizations. GCI supports education ministries and other national actors to advance gender equality in and through education. It mobilizes expertise and resources for country-owned, gender-responsive education sector interventions, strategies and plans. The GCI approach is rooted in gender-responsive education sector planning (GRESP), a systematic way of hard-wiring gender equality into education systems. GRESP puts in place policies and strategies to tackle gender disparities in education and ensures the required resources, capacity, oversight and accountability are available to make this happen. Progress in this field helps countries to achieve Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 and meet the gender targets of the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa. Between 2020 and 2023, GCI is being implemented in eight countries in Africa—Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone—by a multi-stakeholder partnership known as the GCI Alliance. The GCI Alliance is composed of ministries of education, the CSO consortium,² G7 donors³ and multilateral agencies.⁴ GCI is jointly coordinated by UNGEI and the International Institute for the International Institute for Educational Planning of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IIEP-UNESCO).

2 The CSO consortium is composed of the Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA), the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and Plan International.

3 The European Union, France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.

4 UNGEI, IIEP-UNESCO, UNESCO, the Global Partnership for Education and UNICEF.

SOCIAL NORMS THAT SERVE AS BARRIERS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA - A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Countries in West and Central Africa have registered notable progress in girls' education over the last two decades. The proportion of girls entering the last grades of both primary and secondary schools has increased from 2000 to 2017. Trends in gender parity indices (GPI)⁵ of completion rates in primary and lower secondary school also show a closing gap in most countries, although progress has slowed in recent years (UNICEF, 2020a). However, access to education remains highly inequitable in West and Central Africa, especially for marginalized and adolescent girls, children from the poorest wealth quintile, children living in conflict areas and children with functional difficulties. Girls account for 52 per cent of the 38.8 million out-of-school children in the region (UNESCO, 2020; UNICEF, 2021b). Data as evidence is crucial to better monitor, understand and respond to gender gaps in education. An Education Management Information System (EMIS) is the main tool used for data in education for most African countries. However, when it comes to monitoring progress towards gender equality in and through education, the EMIS may have several weaknesses. This includes a lack of sex-disaggregated and gender-specific data, weak reporting (e.g., gaps in out-of-school children, non-formal education, and literacy), and weak linkages with the MIS of other sectors (e.g., health, nutrition, justice, labour).

Early pregnancy

Early pregnancy is driven by a combination of social, economic and educational factors. This includes limited or biased sexual and reproductive health services and knowledge, gendered social norms around adolescence and sexual behaviour, and vulnerability to power and coercion. Gender roles and girls' own construction of their identity and agency play major roles in the persistence of early pregnancy, as do the political, cultural and religious climates and individual household and community dynamics in which they are situated (Denney et al., 2015). Often linked to child marriage, early and unintended pregnancy can be a consequence of girls being forced to drop out of school. Early pregnancy is also a major cause of school drop-out due to discriminatory policies, laws and social norms that prevent pregnant girls and young mothers from continuing their education (Versluys, 2019).

Sub-Saharan Africa has seen an overall fall in early pregnancy rates over the past 25 years. However, early pregnancy rates in many of the GCI countries, including Chad, Mali and Niger are some of the highest in the world presently (UNESCO, 2020). Even in countries in which discriminatory laws and policies have changed (such as in Mozambique and Sierra Leone), negative teacher, peer, parent and community attitudes and norms can continue to ostracize pregnant girls and young mothers in education. Stigma, fear and even the criminalization of pregnancy out of wedlock (such as in Mauritania) shape parental decisions around girls' education. For example, while earlier education for girls is generally valued by parents and widely encouraged, at puberty norms around girls' gendered roles and responsibilities in society take precedence. When pregnancy becomes a risk, social norms regarding the customary age for girls to stay at home to prevent mixing with boys can impede girls from staying in school and completing their education (Goulds, 2020).

5 [The Gender Parity Index \(GPI\)](#) refers to the ratio of female to male values of a given indicator. A GPI between 0.97 and 1.03 indicates parity between the genders. A GPI below 0.97 indicates a disparity in favour of males. A GPI above 1.03 indicates a disparity in favour of females.

Child marriage

Child marriage is driven by gender inequality and unequal power dynamics. It is exacerbated in societies and communities experiencing high levels of gender-based violence, restrictive socio-cultural norms, poverty, insecurity (including attacks on schools) and displacement. Child marriage is even more prevalent among women living in rural areas, the poorest households and with no or low levels of education (UNICEF, 2020a). Child marriage is both a cause and a consequence of girls' school drop-out rates and is often associated with early childbearing (Versluys, 2019). Social norms put pressure on girls to drop out of school at the time of marriage and govern different educational and employment expectations for boys and girls who have children (Goulds, 2020). West and Central Africa has among the highest rates of child marriage in the world. Although rates are declining, the pace remains too slow: even if progress doubled, one in three girls in the region would still be a child bride in 2030. In the Sahel region,⁶ regardless of wealth or religion, women with more education were less likely to be married in childhood. Conversely, an estimated 95 per cent of married adolescent girls in the Sahel region are not attending school (UNICEF, 2020b).

Female genital mutilation⁷

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is underpinned by socio-cultural norms and persists despite legislative measures banning the practice in some countries. In societies with a high prevalence, FGM is a rite of passage to womanhood and is thus linked to norms around marriage, financial security and social status and integration (Ahinkorah et al., 2020; Gathara and Kurumbi, 2020). Increased education, higher socioeconomic status and wealth and exposure to mass media (e.g., newspapers, television and radio) are linked to a decreased likelihood of FGM. However, more research is needed to understand the nature and direction of the relationship between social norms, girls' education and FGM (UNICEF and UNGEI, 2021).

According to UNFPA, FGM is known to be practiced among certain communities in 33 African countries. Mixed trends are seen in the GCI countries where FGM is prevalent. In recent years, Chad, Mali and Mauritania have shown no or only a slight decline in FGM, while Burkina Faso, Nigeria and Sierra Leone have seen a significant decline, possibly due to shifting norms, awareness-raising campaigns, legislation against the practice and education that has increased awareness of its harm and led to resistance against the practice (African Union, 2021a).

School-related gender-based violence

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) occurs in every country across the world and cuts across cultural, geographic and economic differences in societies. SRGBV can be defined as acts or threats of sexual, physical or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated as a result of gender norms and stereotypes and enforced by unequal power dynamics (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016). SRGBV can be perpetrated by both teachers and learners. Female learners are the main victims of unwanted sexual touching and non-consensual sex attempts perpetrated by classmates and teachers. In sub-Saharan Africa, girls report instances of male teachers demanding sexual favours in exchange for good grades, preferential treatment in class, money and gifts. Fear of retaliation can prevent girls declining teachers' demands (UNESCO, 2020). Violence is also often directed at lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students and other learners who exhibit non-binary gender identities, however data on SRGBV among LGBTQI+ students in the GCI countries is limited.

6 Geographic definitions of the Sahel generally include northern Senegal, southern Mauritania, central Mali, northern Burkina Faso, southern Algeria, south-western Niger, northern Nigeria, northern Cameroon, central Chad, central Sudan and northern Eritrea. This paper follows the definition of the Sahel used in the referenced UNICEF report.

7 The World Health Organization defines FGM as all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

Disability

For learners with disabilities, school environments, curricula and teaching practices are often not adapted to their needs, creating additional barriers to learners' participation and achievement in education (GPE, 2018). Schools also reproduce societal power structures and hierarchies, reinforcing harmful norms, stigma and stereotypes regarding both disability and gender. Girls with disabilities also experience higher rates of gender-based violence compared with boys with disabilities and may face additional barriers to reporting and referral services. As such, families may resist sending girls with disabilities to school for fear of their safety. In addition, unequal gender norms and division of household labour can mean that the opportunity cost of educating girls with disabilities is considered too high (Sightsavers, 2021; Humanity and Inclusion, 2021).

A significant number of children with disabilities in sub-Saharan Africa are estimated to be out of school. In West and Central Africa, menstrual hygiene management facilities in schools are often not adapted for girls with disabilities, leading to repeated absences during menstruation. All GCI countries have committed to ending the exclusion of children with disabilities in education by signing and/or ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. However, significant gaps exist between policy commitments and implementation, compounded by a lack of systematic and reliable data.

Fragility, conflict and climate emergencies

Existing, unequal gender norms are often intensified during conflict, exacerbating gender disparities in education. This can increase girls' risk of sexual and gender-based violence and abuse. Insecurity and displacement reduce girls' access to school and increase demand for child labour, and marriage may be seen as a coping mechanism to protect girls from violence, or as a strategy to face income shocks. Insufficient water and sanitation facilities in schools, exacerbated discrimination towards girls with disabilities in particular, and a heightened risk of violence mean that girls are more likely to be confined to the home and excluded from education in conflict and crisis situations (Perezniето et al., 2017; Goulds, 2020).

West and Central Africa, and particularly the Sahel region, faces some of the world's most complex humanitarian challenges, including food insecurity, conflict and instability, internal displacement, and the impact of climate change. Humanitarian emergencies are also impacting access to, and quality of, education in the region (OCHA, 2021; UNICEF, 2019). Even before COVID-19, over 9,290 schools in West and Central Africa were already closed due to insecurity (Save the Children, 2020). Children are facing complex trauma due to forced displacement and witnessing or experiencing violence. Among the GCI countries, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Nigeria are experiencing a surge in threats and attacks against students, teachers and schools (UNICEF, 2019).

Covid-19

The Covid-19 crisis is likely to undermine efforts to advance gender equality in and through education. Pre-existing, unequal gender norms—including those underpinning the de-prioritization of girls' education and child marriage—are exacerbated during health and financial crises (Psaki et al., 2017; Corno et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2020). As evidenced by the Ebola crisis, this may lead to an increase in school drop-out, child marriage, early pregnancy and a heavier burden of domestic responsibilities for girls (Bandiera et al., 2020). The impact on girls' education is therefore likely to be deepened in countries with pre-existing bans, strong social stigma or a lack of clear policies regarding the attendance or re-entry of pregnant and marriage girls and young mothers to school.

Despite concerted efforts by governments and other stakeholders in the West and Central Africa region, access to remote learning during Covid-19 school closures was uneven. Available data so far only partly captures the impact of the pandemic on girls' education and gender equality in education,⁸ however emerging evidence highlights that gender norms and expectations determined whether girls and boys were able to participate in, and benefit from, remote learning strategies (UNESCO, 2021). Gender disparities in enrollment and re-entry also appear more pronounced among low-income groups and adolescent learners, with girls disproportionately affected due to increases in early pregnancies and child marriage (Brookings, 2022). Teachers also experienced a loss of employment during the pandemic, with female teachers disproportionately affected due to their dual role as professionals and primary caregivers in their households (KIX Observatory, 2022).

Poverty and child labour

Economic disadvantage is a pervasive barrier to girls' education, particularly when combined with entrenched gender norms regarding the role of women in society and beliefs about the value of girls' education (Gordon et al., 2019). Perceptions around low social and economic relevance of girls' education versus boys', linked to more limited economic opportunities and accepted life pathways for girls, mean that in times of financial hardship, parents may choose to prioritize boys' education (Amili and Di Paolo, 2019). Gender norms and discrimination increase child labour risks, particularly for girls, related to domestic work and unpaid household labour (ILO and UNICEF, 2021). Household poverty and limited access to quality education are also root causes of child labour, which is both a major cause and consequence of school drop-out and has a direct negative impact on learners' educational outcomes and achievement for both boys and girls (Lee et al., 2021). Insecurity and crisis also heighten demand for child labour, and estimates suggest that rising poverty due to Covid-19 will increase its prevalence (ILO and UNICEF, 2021).

Lack of female teachers and school leaders

School leaders play a critical role in creating safe, high-quality, gender-responsive teaching and learning environments and in fostering strong relationships between their schools and communities. Across the Programme for the Analysis of Education Systems (PASEC), learning outcomes at the end of primary school for both girls and boys in female-led schools are higher. In Mozambique, schools with a female school leader have lower dropout rates than schools with a male school leader (UNICEF Innocenti, forthcoming).⁹ Yet, in the GCI countries women remain underrepresented in school leadership. UNICEF Innocenti's 'Data Must Speak' research shows that in Niger and Mali only about 1 in 10 school leaders are women. Early analysis show how that women-led schools may perform better than men-led schools.

Since 1995, the share of female teachers in the overall teacher workforce has fallen in both secondary education (from 32 per cent to 30 per cent) and tertiary education (from 26 per cent to 24 per cent) in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2020). Additionally, while it is understood that gender norms and stereotypes are learned in early childhood, few countries in West and Central Africa adequately address gender issues in early childhood teaching and learning.¹⁰ Evidence from African countries has shown that girls are more likely to go to and stay in school and that

8 Montoya, S. and Chakroun, B. (2021) The pandemic's impact on enrolment is yet to unfold. Global Education Monitoring (GEM) <https://world-education-blog.org/2021/12/06/the-pandemics-impact-on-enrolment-is-yet-to-unfold/>

9 Brossard, M., and Bergmann, J. (2022) an more women in school leadership improve learning outcomes? <https://blogs.unicef.org/evidence-for-action/can-more-women-in-learning-leadership-improve-education-outcomes/>

10 The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) has promoted gender-responsive pedagogy through the GRP4ECE Toolkit: [Gender-Responsive Pedagogy for Early Childhood Education and Gender-Responsive Pedagogy Toolkit](#).

parents are more willing to support girls' education when female teachers are present. Driving factors include perceptions and norms around male teachers teaching female students, realities of SRGBV experienced by girls and that female teachers can be important role models for girls. Data from ten francophone West and Central African countries girls who are taught by a female teacher show improved performance in mathematics and reading. For boys, a teacher's gender has no effect on learning outcomes (Lee et al., 2019; UNESCO, 2020).

SECTION 2

KEY CONTINENTAL POLICIES, LEGISLATION AND ACTORS ADDRESSING SOCIAL NORMS AND GIRLS' EDUCATION

Across the African continent, support for gender equality and girls' education has been gathering momentum since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. SDG 4 and SDG 5 are contextualized within the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016–2025, and its associated Gender Equality Strategy, both of which cater to African education realities. CESA, combined with three other major strategies—African Union Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want; African Union Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (GEWES) 2018–2028; and African Union International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa (AU/CIEFFA) strategic plans—make up the primary continental policy architecture for gender equality and girls' education in Africa (see Annex 1).

The Africa Gender Index (AGI)¹¹ a tool that supports implementation and monitoring of the 2030 SDG Agenda and Agenda 2063 in Africa indicates a dramatic improvement towards gender parity at primary education level (96.2 per cent), but a widening gap at secondary level. Youth literacy rates vary across the continent, but gender gaps are pronounced in Guinea (AGI 43.6 per cent), Chad (AGI 41.2 per cent) and the Central African Republic (AGI 36.0 per cent) and where strong socio-cultural norms have led to much lower literacy rates for young women. The gender gap in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects is particularly marked in Africa (AGI 37.9 per cent), where cultural expectations and social norms in households, schools, colleges and workplaces discourage girls from studying these subjects (AfDB and UNECA, 2020).

Ending all harmful social norms and practices, increasing skills and qualifications for African youth and reimagining education sector processes, curriculum and qualification frameworks are key Agenda 2063 objectives. Agenda 2063 adopts an Afro-centric approach to education delivery that forms a pillar of the African Renaissance: rather than leaning toward 'Western' and 'Eurocentric' dimensions historically imposed on African education systems, it embraces social and cultural contexts, while also promoting gender equality (African Union, 2016). Although the CESA does not specifically address the issue of social norms, its associated Gender Equality Strategy calls for "a renewed effort and targeted approach to push against discriminatory gender norms in education" and highlights the role of teachers in transforming discriminatory norms, particularly in relation to STEM subjects and career paths. Gender-responsive pedagogy and curriculum reform are noted as strategies to achieve these goals (FAWE, 2018).

The African Union Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (GEWES) addresses education primarily in the context of economic empowerment. Although the strategy does recognize gender inequalities and stereotypes in education, particularly with regards to STEM, the education sector interventions focus more on gender parity than equality or norm transformation. In terms of advancing the rights of women and girls and ending harmful practices,

¹¹ The Africa Gender Index (AGI) is produced jointly by the African Development Bank, African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). It measures parity between women and men across three dimensions: economic, social and representation and empowerment. The social dimension measures gaps in access to education and health services. A score of 1 represent parity between women and men. A score between 0 and 1 means gender inequality is in favour of males, while a score above 1 means that women are doing well compared to men.

the GEWES notes improved implementation and enforcement of the Maputo Protocol¹² as a primary objective and challenge. Many African countries, including the GCI countries, operate on a dual legal system. Customary laws govern the daily lives and realities of women and girls, while statutory laws are increasingly supportive of the rights of women and girls. Tensions between customary and statutory laws (including regional charters like the Maputo Protocol) mean that meaningful enforcement of legal and policy instruments to support girls' education and prohibit gender-based discrimination and harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation, cannot be achieved without strengthening social and community support. Cross-cutting strategies to transform harmful social norms in the GEWES are mostly focused on campaign and media-based interventions. This includes addressing biases in women's representation in the media, a continental campaign to declare illiteracy a harmful traditional practice and social and traditional media programmes to address attitudes, mindsets and social norms that discriminate against women and girls (FAWE, 2018).

Coordinated advocacy and activism efforts have helped to elevate issues of gender equality and girls' education to the political stage in Africa. In November 2021, the African Union Commission held the 3rd African Girls' Summit. Representatives from 35 African Union member states, international organizations, traditional and religious leaders, members of civil society, girls and youth activists called on African leaders to prioritize education for pregnant girls and married adolescents and commit to stronger human rights protections for girls' education. The Summit and resulting call to action show the power of collective action and activism to increase political will among African leaders to advance gender equality in and through education (HRW, 2021a; African Union, 2021b).

The movements to end child marriage, early pregnancy and female genital mutilation in West Africa have often run in parallel with efforts to advance girls' education. In recent years, convergence has been increasing in recognition of the important relationship between social norms, harmful practices and girls' education. Increasing the participation of religious and traditional leaders in decision-making and public influence on the promotion of gender equality in education is important for targeting social and cultural norms which may serve as barriers to girls' education. Several influential groups are working on this agenda across the continent, including: the Committee of Ten Heads of State and Government (C10) Championing Education, Science and Technology in Africa; the Pan-African Parliament; the West African Federation of Disabled Persons Organizations (FOAPH); the Council of Traditional and Religious Leaders (CoTLA) and young African activists and young feminist organizations.

12 In 2003, the Member States of the African Union adopted the [Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa \(Maputo Protocol\)](#) to advance and safeguard the rights of women and girls across the continent. To date, 42 countries have signed and ratified the Maputo Protocol.

SECTION 3

GENDER AT THE CENTRE INITIATIVE PARTNER COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

Each GCI country case study begins with a snapshot of gender and education statistics for the main challenges outlined in Section 1 (see Annex 3 for key data sources). Complementing the brief overview of policy and legal instruments guiding gender equality and education objectives at the continental level in Section 2, each case study provides an overview of the policy and legal context for gender equality and education at the national level (see Annex 2 for plans and policies reviewed). This is followed by an analysis of existing evidence on the social and gender norms that impact girls' education and gender equality in each country context. Important considerations and/or promising approaches for social norm transformation and the advancement of girls' education and gender equality are highlighted.

BURKINA FASO

Snapshot of gender and education

Female teachers

Primary



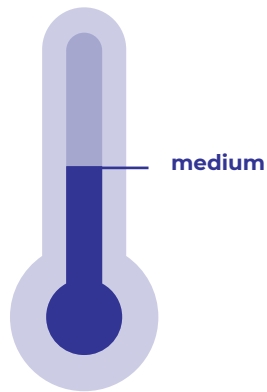
Secondary



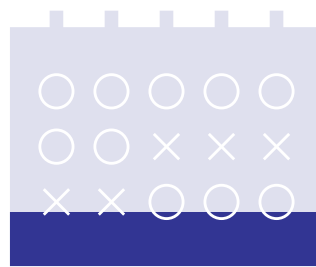
(UNESCO, 2020)

Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) level of gender discrimination

(UNESCO, 2020)



Menstrual hygiene management



(UNICEF and UNFPA, 2019)

21%

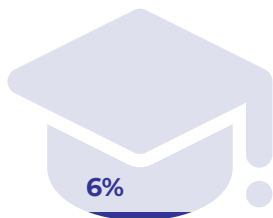
of girls are absent from school during their menstrual period

Lower secondary level completion rate

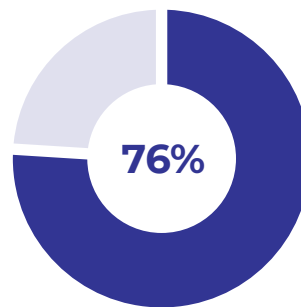
Boys



Girls



(UNICEF, 2021)

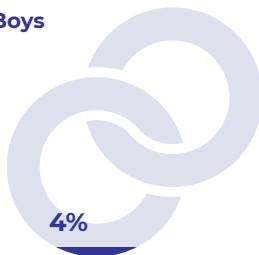


Women and girls aged 15–49 who have undergone some form of FGM

(DHS, 2010)

Child marriage rate

Boys



Girls



(DHS, 2010)



Early childbearing rate

(UNESCO, 2020)

OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICY AND LEGAL CONTEXT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND EDUCATION

Burkina Faso's current Education Sector Plan is the **Programme sectoriel de l'éducation et de la formation (PSEF) 2012–2021**. It integrates aspects linked to gender and disability, noting harmful norms and stigma as major barriers to education for learners with disabilities.

Burkina Faso has a specific national strategy targeting girls' education, the **Stratégie nationale d'accélération de l'éducation des filles (SNAEF)**. An inclusive education policy is being developed.

In response to Covid-19, Burkina Faso produced the **Plan de réponse du MENAPLN pour la continuité éducative dans le contexte du COVID-19**, which identifies child marriage as a key risk factor for girls and girls' education in particular. It complements Burkina Faso's existing national strategy to end child marriage, the **Strategie Nationale de Prevention et D' Elimination du Mariage d' Enfants (2016-2025)**.

Under Burkina Faso's Family Code (1989), the minimum age of marriage is 17 years for girls and 20 years for boys. With authorization by civil courts, girls can marry as young as 15 years and boys at 18 years. In 2018, the Burkina Faso National Assembly adopted a revised Penal Code that penalizes all forms of child marriage. However, it does not amend the minimum age of marriage.

Article 1 of the Constitution of Burkina Faso, reinforced by a national decree issued in 1974, prohibits the dismissal of pregnant girls from school. However, Burkina Faso lacks a re-entry policy or law to protect pregnant girls and adolescent mothers' right to education.

KEY FINDINGS: SOCIAL NORMS AND GIRLS' EDUCATION

Since 2016, Burkina Faso has faced insecurity, affecting the Sahel, Nord, Centre-Nord and Est regions in particular, with the number and severity of recorded attacks on Burkinabè schools surging since 2017. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, over 2,500 schools had closed due to attacks or insecurity. All schools then closed temporarily in response to the Covid-19 outbreak in March 2020. **Conflict and attacks on education—in addition to the pandemic—have compounded the challenges for gender equality and education.** Insecurity has caused fear-induced withdrawals from school for both teachers and learners, particularly women and girls, as well as long-term psychosocial consequences. Children affected by school closures have enrolled in schools farther away from home, with girls particularly at risk of sexual harassment and violence when walking to and from school. Girls may also be less likely to re-enroll in school than boys following closures (HRW, 2020; OCHA, 2020).

High rates of female genital mutilation, child marriage and early pregnancy continue to limit the rights and opportunities of young women and girls. Its persistence can be explained by high levels social acceptance, with 44 per cent of the population believing a girl can be married before reaching the age of 18. This restricts girls' education opportunities—indeed, girls' school enrolment is lower in provinces where the practice of early marriage is widespread (OECD, 2018). In crisis situations, with schools closed, the risk of child marriage and female genital mutilation increases, while access to sexual and reproductive health and protection services decrease (OCHA, 2020; Goulds, 2020; UNICEF and UNFPA, 2021). Other factors associated with child marriage include girls' agency, the timing of girls' sexual initiation and community norms, specifically views on child marriage among fathers (Misunas et al., 2021). **Social norms and expectations around child marriage and pregnancy soon after marriage place restrictions on girls' education and aspirations,** and girls' negotiation of alternative pathways. In addition, the lack of a clear school re-entry policy for pregnant girls and adolescent mothers means that school officials often ban pregnant girls from school because of social norms, as well as stigma attached to having children outside of wedlock (HRW, 2018).

Recognizing the **transformative potential of community-led approaches to address harmful socio-cultural norms underpinning child marriage and limiting girls' education** in Burkina Faso, the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage has engaged nearly 10,000 community leaders in training and sensitization sessions, building their capacity to become agents of change in social norm transformation. Community dialogues (involving women, men, girls and boys) have been held to **build social consensus for the abandonment of child marriage and the promotion of the rights of women and girls,** including the right to education. Given that male figures (e.g., husbands and fathers) tend to hold decision-making power and authority, the Thanks to Us initiative provides training to men and boys, covering issues such as positive masculinity and their role in harmful traditional practices (UNFPA and UNICEF, 2021). While effective programmes to influence men's behaviours and attitudes combine group education with community mobilization and mass-media campaigns, sustaining **men's and boys' support for gender equality requires progressive policies that influence norms, behaviours and attitudes at multiple levels** (UNFPA et al., 2020).

Faith-based and secular private schools are important educational structures in Burkina Faso, with approximately 54 per cent of the country's primary to lower secondary school-aged population attending such schools, which function outside of the public education system (Universalia, 2018). Among certain communities, **formal or 'Western' schooling is equated with a disregard of indigenous knowledge, raising fears among parents that children will break away from their traditional roots and roles.** Furthermore, formal schooling is often perceived to better meet the needs of boys than girls, based on the normative assumption that later in life, more boys than girls will participate in economic activity outside of the home (Kazianga et al., 2012).

Poverty remains a key obstacle to education for both boys and girls, with the cost of school uniforms, materials and fees representing significant barriers to education for many households (UNDP, 2020). However, **perceptions regarding the social and economic relevance of formal education, linked to social acceptance and availability of post-educational opportunities, are highly gendered.** More than 44 per cent of the population report a preference for their first child to be a boy, compared to 17 per cent for a girl. Son preference also translates into preferential treatment of sons over daughters with respect to education and school-related expenditures, which intensifies gendered differences in educational outcomes and the employment and training opportunities that are available to girls and young women (OECD, 2018). In Burkina Faso, 49.1 per cent of young women aged 15-24 are not in education, employment or training, compared to 30.5 per cent of young men (UN Women, 2020).

Social norms justifying spousal violence against women are widespread in Burkinabè society. For instance, 34 per cent of the population agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife under certain circumstances (OECD, 2018). Physical and sexual violence and harassment against girls and women is often normalized, and socio-cultural norms around shame, male privilege and preference for handling things privately in the home or between families compounds a lack of accountability and legal enforcement against violence against women and girls (Steiner and Spear, 2020). Rooted in the social norms and trends that exist in wider society, SRGBV is a key issue affecting girls' education. Many teachers in Burkina Faso report being unaware of SRGBV and an even lower number report it to the authorities when they do become aware of it. Although teachers often do not condone SRGBV, in instances of SRGBV involving teachers and learners, prevailing norms and assumptions mean that female learners tend to be blamed more than male teachers. **Teachers report feeling that they lack the tools and knowledge to tackle SRGBV,** citing pressure not to betray their fellow teachers and grey areas around the perceived acceptability of love relationships between teachers and learners. Better training and support to teachers to transform such norms and attitudes in and around schools is therefore an important entry point to address SRGBV in Burkina Faso (Spear, 2019).

Women-led, grassroots movements have started to confront the silence around gender-based violence, including in and around schools. Female high-school teachers formed the Association Pour le Promotion de les Filles et les Femmes¹³ (APEFF) to speak out against violence and transform social norms to protect survivors and stigmatize perpetrators. In line with prevailing social and cultural norms to find resolutions through informal systems at the interpersonal level, APEFF does not promote accountability using official state systems, but rather works with schools and families to negotiate compromises. Larger organizations could work with movements like APEFF to help local communities respond to violence at the school level and disrupt norms around SRGBV and demand accountability on a larger scale (Steiner and Spear, 2020).

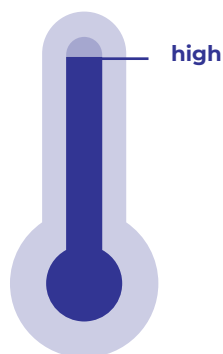
13 Association for the Promotion of Girls and Women.

CHAD

Snapshot of gender and education

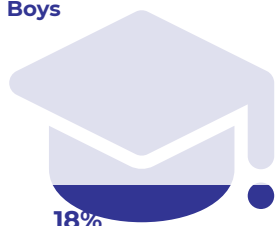
Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) level of gender discrimination

(UNESCO, 2020)



Lower secondary level completion rate

Boys



(UNICEF, 2021)

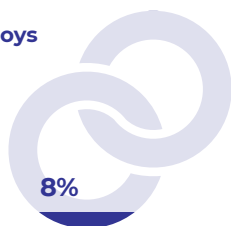
Girls



10%

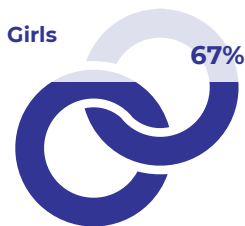
Child marriage rate

Boys



(DHS, 2014-15)

Girls



67%

Disability and inclusion



Only **18%** of children with disabilities are enrolled in primary school

(GPE, 2018)

Female teachers

Primary



Secondary



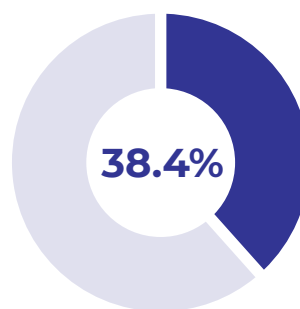
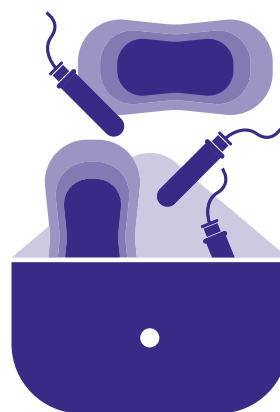
(UNESCO, 2020)

Menstrual hygiene management

8 out of 10

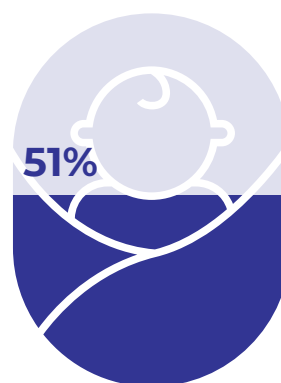
adolescent girls do not have adequate facilities and/or knowledge to effectively manage their menstruation

(Republic of Chad, 2018)



Women and girls aged 15-49 who have undergone some form of FGM

(28 Too Many, 2019)



Early childbearing rate

(UNESCO, 2020)

OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICY AND LEGAL CONTEXT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND EDUCATION

Chad has a five-year **Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Gender Policy (2019—2023)**. It calls for the development of initiatives to reduce gender gaps in education, eliminate sexist stereotypes in schools, promote sexual and reproductive health and rights, and combat GBV and other harmful practices.

Chad's current education sector plan (ESP) is the **Plan intérimaire de l'éducation au Tchad (PIET) 2018—2020**. It outlines mobilization of parents, communities and religious leaders to transform social norms, incentives for girls' school attendance and capacity building of teaching staff on gender and GBV as key measures to close gender gaps in education.

The country issued an emergency response plan for the education sector in April 2020 to address the COVID-19 pandemic, the **Plan de réponse nationale du secteur éducation à l'épidémie de COVID 19 au Tchad (PRNSE C19)**. It recognizes GBV and school drop-out as key risks for girls in particular and proposes a communication strategy with a focus on sexual exploitation, GBV, discrimination and stigmatization to address these risks.

To tackle the issue of menstrual hygiene management in schools, the **2018-2030 Stratégie nationale de l'eau, de l'assainissement et de l'hygiène en milieu scolaire** aims for more inclusive and gender-responsive water, sanitation and hygiene programmes (WASH) in schools. This includes the creation of separate sanitation facilities for girls and boys (which is also identified in the ESP) and the supply of feminine hygiene products for girls.

In 2015, the Parliament of Chad approved an ordinance to increase the age of marriage from 15 to 18 years old. However, according to Article 277 of the Criminal code, customary law marriages of girls above 13 years of age are legal.

Chad lacks a re-entry policy or law to protect pregnant girls' and adolescent mothers' right to education.

KEY FINDINGS: SOCIAL NORMS AND GIRLS' EDUCATION

Although education is a priority for the Chadian government, with gender equality and girls' education noted as salient points for development in both the current ESP and Gender Policy action plan, progress has been slow. Internal conflict and fragility, as well as insecurity in neighbouring countries, has resulted in significant population movements that place a strain on Chad's already limited resources. In a country dependent on farming and livestock, the climate crisis has exacerbated poverty and hunger for vulnerable communities (WFP, 2019). At primary and lower secondary level, 48 per cent of girls are out of school compared to 29.6 per cent of boys and young women aged 15–24 are almost twice as likely (46.6 per cent) as young men (24.8 per cent) to not be in education, employment or training (UN Women, 2020). Unequal access to education is reflected in the much higher female (86 per cent) illiteracy rate compared to that of males (69 per cent) and in the **chronic lack of female teachers in the education system** (UNICEF, 2019a). In addition, many schools are perceived by parents as 'poor quality' or conflicting with traditional and religious values and education.

Child marriage, instability, gender-based violence and poverty are also primary challenges for the advancement of girls' education and gender equality. Chad has the third highest prevalence of child marriage globally, which is closely linked to low levels of education among women and girls. According to Girls Not Brides, girls with no education marry at the age of 16 on average, compared to 19 years for girls who have completed secondary education. Increasing women's voice and agency is widely recognized as an important strategy to reduce gender inequalities and improve education outcomes. In Chad, women express less desire for autonomous decision-making compared to men. This is perhaps due to an internalization of gender norms limiting women and girls' autonomy and decision-making in the Chadian context, or because they are socialized from an early age that it is not appropriate or desirable for them to do so (Vaz et al., 2016). As such, **strategies to promote girls' education and gender equality through the empowerment of women and girls in Chad must be informed by a context-specific and deep understanding of the social norms shaping girls' agency**. Strategies should also seek to target not just women and girls, but also men and boys' desire for autonomous decision-making, particularly those which impact decisions around girls' education and life pathways.

Research among refugee communities in Chad shows that **a preference for boys' education is linked to social norms that devalue the importance of education for girls**. This intersects with factors such as poverty and a lack of safe, gender-responsive learning environments. As such, awareness raising around girls' education and gender equality needs to be conducted in a culturally sensitive manner and is more effective if combined with community dialogue and structural reforms. The **promotion of successful women role models to challenge and transform deeply seated social norms** regarding girls' capabilities and social role is another promising strategy to promote girls' education and gender equality (Watson et al., 2018). Government ministries in the Lake Chad Basin territories continue to implement measures to prevent GBV and early pregnancy among adolescent girls. These include delivering dignity kits and contraceptive supplies for girls and boys, safe spaces and service-provision hubs to offer digital services and telephone helplines and increased psychosocial support services (Ismael, 2020). However, Covid-19-related restrictions are disrupting or ending programmes to reduce early pregnancies and child marriages. **Covid-19 has also heightened the causal drivers of early pregnancy and child marriage, including household poverty, school closures and harmful socio-cultural norms** (ADEA et al., 2021).

MALI

Snapshot of gender and education

Female teachers

Primary



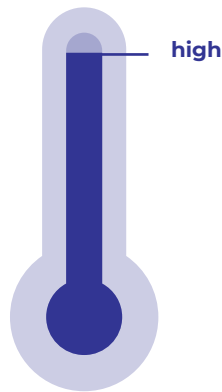
Secondary



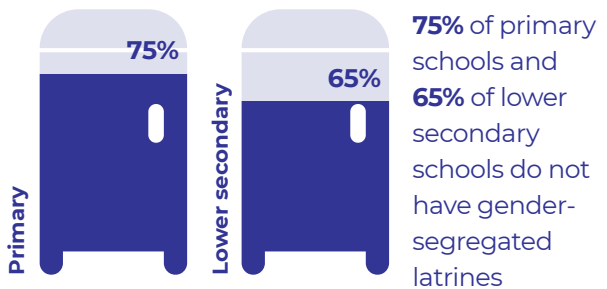
(UNESCO, 2020)

Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) level of gender discrimination

(UNESCO, 2020)



Menstrual hygiene management

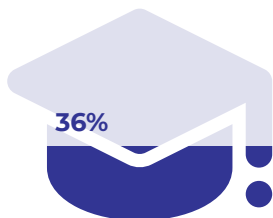


75% of primary schools and 65% of lower secondary schools do not have gender-segregated latrines

(Turner et al., 2020)

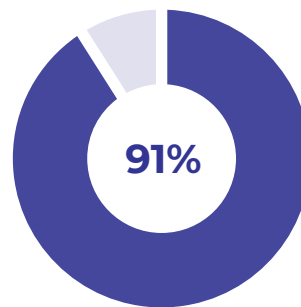
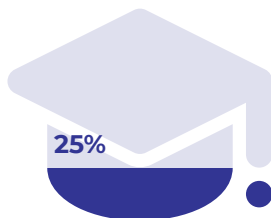
Lower secondary level completion rate

Boys



(UNICEF, 2021)

Girls

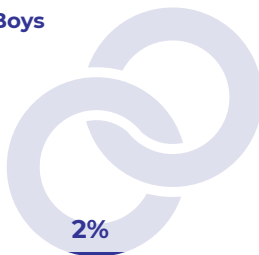


Women and girls aged 15-49 who have undergone some form of FGM

(DHS, 2012-13)

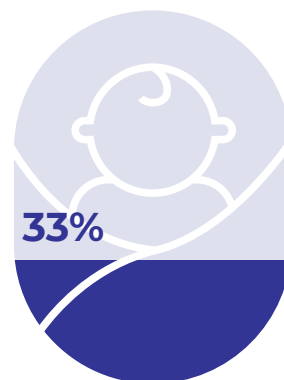
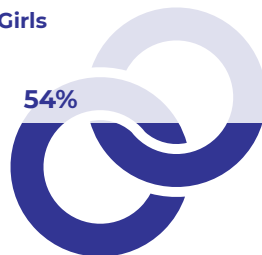
Early marriage rate

Boys



(DHS, 2018)

Girls



Early childbearing rate

(UNESCO, 2020)

OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICY AND LEGAL CONTEXT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND EDUCATION

Mali's current education sector plan is the **Programme décennal de développement de l'éducation et de la formation professionnelle deuxième génération (PRODEC II), 2019—2028**. It includes strategies to address gender gaps in education, including promotion of gender-responsive learning environments and facilities, social mobilization on girls' education and initiatives to combat violence against girls in school, university and community settings

A national gender policy frames the work of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education is in the process of reviewing the **2007 National Policy on Girls' Schooling**.

Mali launched a national strategy to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19 on education, the **Stratégie de lutte contre la pandémie du COVID 19 en milieu scolaire (2020)**. This strategy does not take gender into account.

Mali's Family Code (2011) sets the minimum age of marriage at 16 years for girls and 18 years for boys. In 2018, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights found it to be in violation of Articles 6 and 21 of the Maputo Protocol.¹⁴

¹⁴ See African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, *APDF and IHRDA v. Republic of Mali*, App. No. 046/2016, Judgment of 11 May 2018, paras. 78, 95, 115, 125.

Mali has a conditional re-entry to school policy for pregnant girls and adolescent mothers.

KEY FINDINGS: SOCIAL NORMS AND GIRLS' EDUCATION

Mali's humanitarian situation and political instability have worsened in recent years, with several coups and increased conflict leading to displacement, violence and a lack of access to basic services, including education. Even prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, school closures due to insecurity were affecting more than 450,000 children and 9,000 teachers (UNICEF, 2021). This forces learners to travel farther or stay away from home, a solution that is often not normatively acceptable for girls. Indeed, eight per cent of parents of girls listed distance as a key reason for their child dropping out of school, compared to just two per cent for boys (Republic of Mali, 2017). However, research shows that **girls' exclusion from education is not just due to school closures and safety concerns, but also social norms that dictate the customary age for girls to stay at home to prevent mixing with boys.** In Malian society, husbands and fathers are often those who hold decision-making authority on issues such as marriage and education, in addition to girls' and women's roles in the household (Goulds, 2020; GPE, 2020).

Child marriage is a major challenge for girls' education and gender equality, and **the ongoing humanitarian crisis is likely to exacerbate some of the driving factors of child marriage, such as poverty, unequal gender norms and instability.** According to Girls Not Brides, low levels of education are important determinants of child marriage, whereby 50 per cent of women who completed only primary education were married before the age of 18, compared to 18 per cent who had completed the second cycle of secondary education. However, most customary marriages in Mali—especially those involving children—are unregistered due to a lack of birth registration documents. Polygamy is a common practice in some regions and is associated with larger age differences between spouses, which may negatively impact women and girls' influence in household decision-making, including with regards to education. **Social norms and expectations around marriage are influences on girls' engagement in child labour and absence from education.** For both in-school and out-of-school girls, temporary migration for the purpose of earning money to build a marriage “trousseau” is a common practice (Melnikas et al., 2019; Girls Not Brides, n.d.).

Sanitation and hygiene infrastructure deficits in schools intersect with gender and social norms around menstruation to limit girls' access, participation and achievement in education. Cultural beliefs in Mali oblige the proper disposal of menstrual hygiene material and girls emphasize the need for privacy, water and soap. When this is not available in school settings, adolescent girls' absenteeism may increase, further exacerbating gender inequalities in education at the secondary level transition and beyond (Trinies et al., 2015). In addition, **adolescent girls, particularly those who have been displaced, often have little or no access to information about sexual and reproductive health, mental health and menstruation.** This is compounded by feelings of embarrassment and shame regarding menstruation (Goulds, 2020).

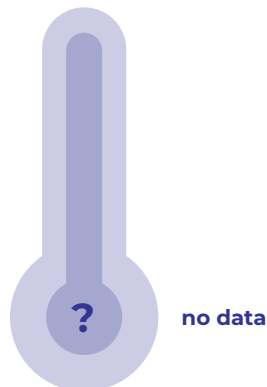
The practice of son preference is widespread in Mali and relates to material investments in education. This reflects girls' significant contribution to household labour, whereby educating girls often represents an opportunity cost. **Eleven per cent of parents of girls listed cost as a reason for their child dropping out of school, compared with four per cent of parents of boys** (République du Mali, 2017). The expectation of early marriage and a reality that schools are high risk environments for abuse and exploitation of girls contribute to perceptions of a low social and economic return on girls' education. Furthermore, many schools are perceived by parents as poor quality or conflicting with traditional and religious values and education. As such, **partnering with local civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations, religious and traditional leaders and parent associations** will be important to amplify efforts to challenge these realities and push for reforms that can increase demand for and confidence in the education system (Pearce et al., 2009).

MAURITANIA

Snapshot of gender and education

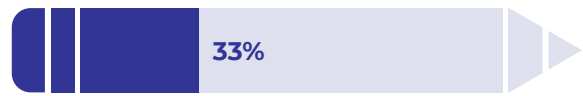
Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) level of gender discrimination

(UNESCO, 2020)



Female teachers

Primary



Secondary



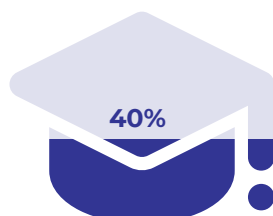
(UNESCO, 2020)

Lower secondary level completion rate

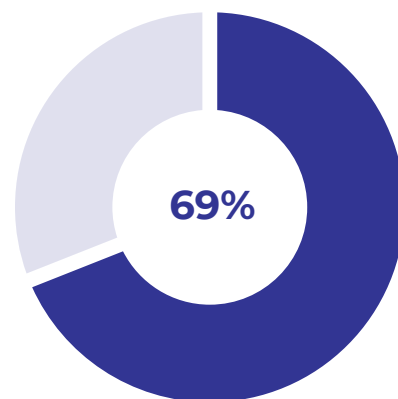
Boys



Girls



(UNICEF, 2021)

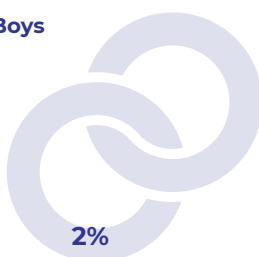


Women and girls aged 15–49 who have undergone some form of FGM

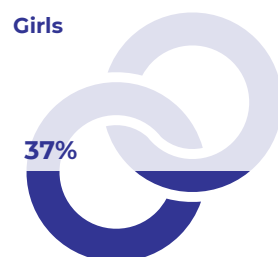
(MICS, 2011)

Child marriage rate

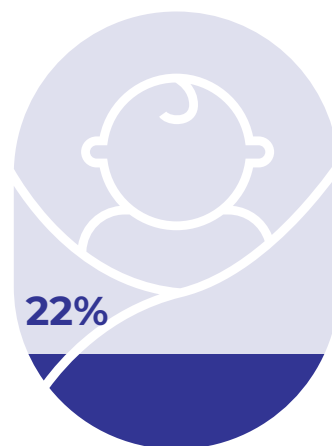
Boys



Girls



(UNICEF, 2017)



Early childbearing rate

(UNESCO, 2020)

OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICY AND LEGAL CONTEXT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND EDUCATION

Mauritania's current education sector plan is the **Programme national de développement du secteur de l'éducation (PNDSE II) 2011—2020**. It includes a strategy to reduce gender gaps in education and improve girls' transition rates to secondary education.

An emergency response plan for the education sector was launched in May 2020 to address the COVID-19 crisis, the **Plan de riposte de l'éducation en réponse à la pandémie du Covid-19 (2020)**. The plan does not take gender into consideration.

Mauritania has a law that protects pregnant girls' right to stay in school or resume education. However, no policy stipulates the re-entry process to be followed by schools.

Under the Personal Status Code Act 2001 the minimum legal age of marriage is 18 years with no exceptions. Pregnancy outside of wedlock is criminalized in Mauritania.

KEY FINDINGS: SOCIAL NORMS AND GIRLS' EDUCATION

Ongoing security challenges, driven primarily by longstanding ethnic tensions and the presence of extremist groups around Mauritania's borders, have created significant challenges to financial and food security, education and infrastructure in affected areas. In addition, Mauritania hosts approximately 50,000 refugees from Mali who reside mostly in its food-insecure southern regions (GPE, 2018). Despite some progress in recent years, **issues of low-quality basic education, low access to and quality of secondary education, including a lack of qualified teachers at secondary level**, are persistent challenges for Mauritania's education sector (Yotebieng, 2021).

Child marriage, a lack of gender-responsive school infrastructure, poverty and distance to school present the greatest challenges for girls' access, participation and achievement in education. **Pregnancy outside of marriage is a crime in Mauritania, further driving the persistence of child marriage** and reinforcing harmful norms underpinning the practice. According to Girls Not Brides, girls from poor households are nearly twice as likely to marry before the age of 18 compared to those from wealthier households. 22 per cent of women who had completed at least some secondary education were married as children, compared to 43 per cent of women with no education. A study on gender norms and land ownership in Mauritania notes that tensions between customary law and official law (particularly in rural areas), combined with women's low status and education, mean that **women face many barriers in accessing land. This can in turn lead to lower social and economic expectations towards girls' future life pathways**, a dampening of girls' own aspirations and reduced motivation for households to invest in girls' education (Bal et al., 2015).

According to the UNFPA FGM Dashboard, 69 per cent of women and girls aged 15–49 have undergone some form of FGM in Mauritania and prevalence of FGM appears to decrease as level of education increases. Several mechanisms through which **girls' education can be a protective factor against FGM exist and contribute to social norm transformation**, for example empowerment, a protective school environment and life skills programmes (UNICEF and UNGEI, 2021). A case study comparison of Mali and Mauritania, two countries with similar practices of FGM, looks at the effectiveness of national policies to transform social norms underpinning the practice. In 2005, Mauritanian law banned FGM, while Mali has no such anti-FGM law. The findings suggest that FGM in Mauritania began to decline several years before the law, indicating a pre-existing social norm shift, with only a slight acceleration after the law was instituted in 2005. However, they found a similar pattern in Mali, indicating that the national legal framework was not the only factor in this declining trend (Cetorelli et al., 2020).

Tostan International's Community Empowerment Programme in West Africa uses informal education programmes, alongside other community mobilization activities, to support communities to achieve self-identified objectives. Among several communities in West Africa (including Mali and Mauritania), the Community Empowerment Programme has been effective in changing the gender norms that sustained child marriage and FGM. In addition to support for ending FGM and child marriage, the programme has led to increasing access to health and education services for women and girls, increased awareness and changes in attitudes towards human rights, gender equality and girls' education and has shifted harmful social norms underpinning gender-based violence. Tostan's approach aims to **avoid cultural imperialism and instead support communities to achieve self-determined goals**. It also demonstrates the importance of working with men and boys and traditional and religious leaders to achieve and sustain social norm change and promote positive outcomes for gender equality and girls' education (Cislaghi, 2019; Butt, 2020).

MOZAMBIQUE

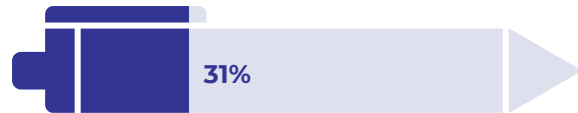
Snapshot of gender and education

Female teachers

Primary



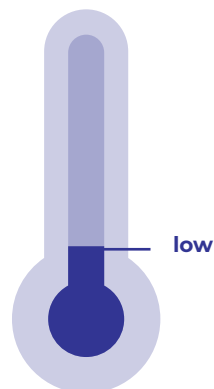
Secondary



(UNESCO, 2020)

Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) level of gender discrimination

(UNESCO, 2020)



Disability and inclusion



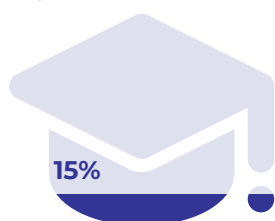
14%

14% of out-of-school children have disabilities

(GPE, 2018)

Lower secondary level completion rate

Boys



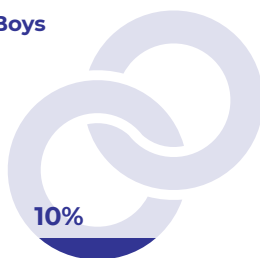
Girls



(UNICEF, 2021)

Child marriage rate

Boys



Girls



(AIS, 2015)



Early childbearing rate

(UNESCO, 2020)

OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICY AND LEGAL CONTEXT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND EDUCATION

Mozambique's current education sector plan is the **Plano Estratégico da Educação (PEE) 2020—2029**. It addresses gender throughout and includes gender as one of the plan's main pillars.

An emergency response plan for the education sector was issued in 2020, in response to Covid-19 and post-cyclone recovery: **Programa de Educação em Emergência (EeE) 2020—2021**.

In December 2018, Mozambique revoked a national decree that required pregnant girls to study in night-shift schools. There is currently no policy protecting girls' right to remain in school or governing how schools should support pregnant girls and adolescent mothers.

As a result of years of efforts by the government, civil society and rights-based organizations, in December 2019 the Mozambican Parliament approved its **first law criminalizing child marriage**. The minimum age of marriage is 18 without exceptions.

In 2021, Mozambique launched a new multisectoral mechanism for the prevention, reporting, referral and response to violence against children in schools.

KEY FINDINGS: SOCIAL NORMS AND GIRLS' EDUCATION

Mozambique has faced several crises in recent years, including natural disasters and insecurity, compounding issues of poverty and vulnerability across the country (OCHA, 2021a). Challenges of **poor sanitation and long distances to school have been exacerbated in areas affected by natural disasters**, such as when cyclones Kenneth and Idai destroyed classrooms and schools (UNICEF, 2019b). Due to Cyclone Idai, schools in Manica and Gaza Provinces were shut, even prior to Covid-19, resulting in some girls being out of school for over a year. **Most girls have very limited access to the technologies** needed to engage with the distance learning programmes that were put in place by the national government, and so were unable to participate in remote education (GEC, 2021).

Child marriage, early pregnancy and school-related gender-based violence are key issues impacting girls' access to, participation in and achievement in education. According to national survey data, around 1 in 4 women in Mozambique have experienced violence within their lifetime. Rates of violence in schools are even higher, with 80 per cent of schoolgirls reporting having experienced some form of violence (Parkes and Heslop, 2013). For girls in particular, sexual exploitation and abuse are major concerns, including instances of male teachers asking girls for sexual favours in exchange for passing grades (Van Deijk, 2007). The **high risk of SRGBV in Mozambique may further exacerbate parents' skepticism around the quality of education for girls and perceived low benefits of girls' education**, reinforcing existing gender disparities (Roby et al., 2009).

Insights from ActionAid's Stop Violence Against Girls in School project in Mozambique, Ghana and Kenya highlight the importance of identifying the economic, socio-cultural, political and educational structures that underpin violence against girls in school. Exploring SRGBV in this way can increase understanding of the ways in which gender norms and societal acceptability of violence influence girls' propensity to report violence in school settings, as well as their families' interpretations of this violence (Parkes and Heslop, 2013; Parkes et al., 2016).¹⁵ These studies **highlight the need for multi-level approaches to better understand the root causes of SRGBV and to challenge and transform the harmful social norms that underpin it**. Building capacity of learners, teachers, parents and policymakers to identify, prevent and respond to SRGBV is crucial. In 2022, the Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI) is providing support to the Mozambican Ministry of Education to strengthen efforts to tackle SRGBV. UNGEI is working with the Ministry of Education, UNICEF country office and gender experts to conduct a mapping of existing prevention and response mechanisms to SRGBV. Based on the results of the mapping, a contextualized course on preventing and responding to SRGBV will be developed and delivered by UNGEI to Ministry of Education staff at central and decentralized levels (UNGEI, 2022).

Similar to findings from other GCI country case studies, **media and communication is understood to be an important platform through which social norm transformation initiatives can be delivered in culturally appropriate and context-specific ways in Mozambique**, with wide diffusion possibilities (Riley, 2017). According to UNICEF, most young Mozambicans' beliefs, attitudes and behaviour on issues, including health and gender roles, are shaped by local cultures and traditions. Community institutions, religious leaders and opinion leaders such as *madrinhas* (godmothers) and *matronas* (traditional birth attendants) who are involved in girls'

15 The outcomes and nuances of the Stop Violence Against Girls in School programme in Ghana and Mozambique are documented in the [Technical Brief: Engaging communities in dialogue on gender norms to tackle sexual violence in and around schools](#) (2016) prepared by the Global Working Group to End SRGBV.

initiation rites are key actors in transmitting and sustaining these norms and behaviours. **Low levels of literacy, especially among females, mean that access to information is mainly oral, highlighting the importance of community-level communication**, especially radio broadcasts in local languages, as well as face-to-face communication to promote positive attitudes regarding gender equality and girls' education.

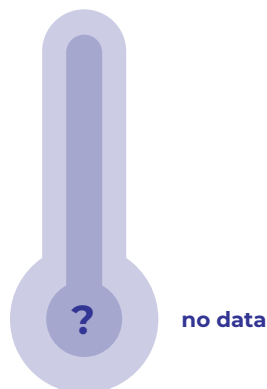
In Zambezia Province, Oxfam Novib has been supporting local organizations, through funding and technical support, to strengthen their institutional capacity to promote gender equality, particularly in education. The Mozambican Women and Education Association (AMME) selected and trained 30 activists (men and women) to promote discussions in communities, schools and churches on reproductive health, sexually transmitted infections and gender-based violence. Through a combination of community-based approaches, AMME was able to promote socio-economic and cultural changes that contributed to girls' continuation in school (Taimo, 2015).

NIGER

Snapshot of gender and education

Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) level of gender discrimination

(UNESCO, 2020)



Female teachers

Primary

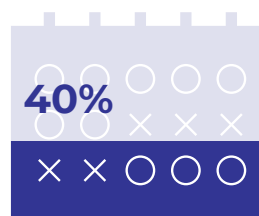


Secondary



(UNESCO, 2020)

Menstrual hygiene management



40% of girls surveyed in four regions reported having missed school at least one day per month due to their periods and a lack of gender-responsive sanitation at schools

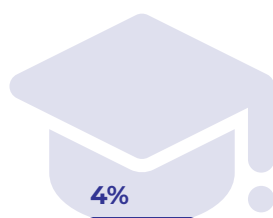
(UN Women and WSSCC, 2017)

Lower secondary level completion rate

Boys



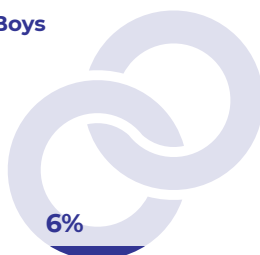
Girls



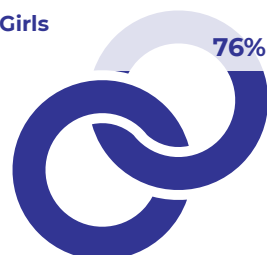
(UNICEF, 2021)

Child marriage rate

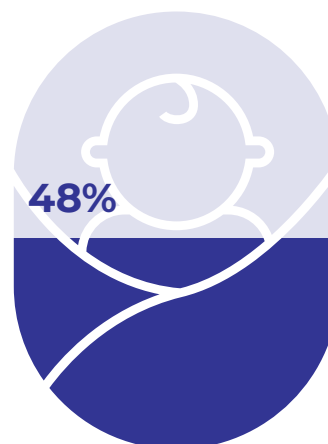
Boys



Girls



(DHS, 2012)



Early childbearing rate

(UNESCO, 2020)

OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICY AND LEGAL CONTEXT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND EDUCATION

Niger's current education sector plan is the **Plan de transition du secteur de l'éducation et de la formation (PTSEF) 2020—2022**. Niger does not have an inclusive education policy.

In 2017, Niger adopted a decree on protecting and supporting schoolgirls, the **Décret présidentiel pour la protection, le soutien et l'accompagnement de la jeune fille**.

Niger has a **National Strategy for the Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence (2017—2021)** and a **National Strategy on the Prevention of Adolescent Pregnancy (2015—2020)**.

Niger lacks a clear re-entry policy or law to protect pregnant girls' right to education.

Under the 1993 Civil Code, the minimum legal age of marriage is 15 years for girls and 18 years for boys. Exceptions exist for minors to be married earlier with parental consent. However, the majority of unions in Niger take place under customary law and are therefore unregistered.

KEY FINDINGS: SOCIAL NORMS AND GIRLS' EDUCATION

Decades of political instability, armed conflict, food insecurity and climate-related crises have contributed to complex humanitarian challenges and large population displacements in and to Niger. Drought and floods have caused severe damage to school infrastructure, increasing the already long distances many children must travel to school (UN Women and WSSC, 2017; UNICEF, 2020c). Child marriage, early pregnancy and social norms governing girls' and women's roles contribute to stark gender inequalities in Niger, including in education. **Girls' value is often aligned with caregiving, potential marriage prospects and their contributions to the household economy** (Perlman et al., 2018; Samandari et al., 2019). Although major laws, policies and strategies to combat gender-based violence and promote gender equality have been enacted in recent years, competing customary laws create ambiguities for rights holders and duty bearers, resulting in uneven enforcement (UNICEF, n.d.).

Niger has the highest rate of child marriage globally. Poverty, the upholding of social and religious traditions and norms and the fear of dishonour from pregnancy outside of marriage are important driving factors (Perlman et al., 2018). The link between low levels of education and child marriage is particularly evident in Niger. According to Girls Not Brides, 81 per cent of women aged 20–24 with no education and 63 per cent with only primary education were married or in union at age 18, compared to only 17 per cent of women with secondary education or higher. Adolescent girls' agency in life decisions, including marriage and education, is heavily constrained by external social and economic factors. **The Nigerien context stresses parental consent and community approval, gender norms that dictate distribution of labour and household roles and dominant social norms that promote an early and narrow 'window of opportunity' for marriage** (Saul et al., 2021). Marriage can be perceived as a pathway to freedom for girls, albeit in contradictory ways. Marriage gives a girl freedom because she is liberated from her parents' authority and can manage her own household. At the same time, girls' freedom—including to pursue social, economic and educational opportunities—can be restricted according to her husband's will (Versluys, 2019). **While social norms are an important driver of child marriage, they are also reinforced through its practice.** Girls who are married early may be more likely to endorse unequal gender norms (Shakya et al., 2020).

Stigma, restrictive norms and legal ramifications of contraceptive use and pregnancy outside of marriage drive the persistence of child marriage, early pregnancy and school drop-out for adolescent girls. Marriage and childbearing are emphasized as important rites of passage to achieving status in Nigerien society, and **few female role models, such as female teachers at the secondary level, are available to demonstrate alternate paths** (Perlman et al., 2018). Newly married couples often feel pressure from their communities to get pregnant right away and many individuals believe that the timing of pregnancies is up to 'God's will' (Samandari et al., 2019). As such, **a holistic approach is needed to delay early marriage and childbearing and promote girls' education.** Knowledge-building and awareness-raising efforts alone will be insufficient to transform the norms underpinning these practices. Rather, **interventions must work both to transform community norms and address structural factors influencing these decisions** (Saul et al. 2021; Shakya et al., 2020). Interventions should also target girls' immediate family members (e.g., husbands, parents, in-laws), influential local and religious leaders and the community at large to support social norm transformation and explore alternative and acceptable pathways for girls that promote education and economic empowerment (Samandari et al., 2019).

Social norms define the meaning of girl's education in Niger, which is often emphasized through non-formal traditional and religious education. Marriage can be seen as the final accomplishment of the 'good education' a family has offered their daughter and, once a girl is

married, it is her husband who becomes her main ‘educator’ (Versluys, 2019). Formal schooling for girls is valued in principle, but in practice, there is a perceived incompatibility between formal education, tarbiyya (education in the home) and mahamadiya (Islamic education). **Recognizing these tensions, and the post-colonial context within which they are rooted, is essential to adapt or develop strategies that promote education for girls without compromising important values** (Hartman-Mahmud, 2011). Girls’ husbands are important stakeholders who must be engaged in these efforts. Some areas of concern cited by husbands regarding formal education include the amount of time girls spend in school versus at home, the distance of the school from the village and the need for more female teachers (Versluys, 2019). A case can be made for **greater recognition of the rising demand for non-formal education** at the state level. Increased financial resources, data collection, monitoring and quality assurance measures are important for non-formal education to be organized, resourced and regulated in the same manner as formal education.

Save the Children’s Marriage No Child’s Play programme promotes education and empowerment for girls who were married before the age of 18 in the Maradi and Tillaberi regions of Niger. Girls undertake literacy classes, awareness-raising sessions on child marriage, children’s rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights, and training on income generating activities. The programme emphasizes literacy and vocational training, rather than reintegration into the formal education system. Girls who participated in the programme indicated the **positive impacts of literacy classes in enabling them to read and write and apply these skills to their economic activities**. They also reported being better able to help their children with homework and encourage them to do well in school (Versluys, 2019).

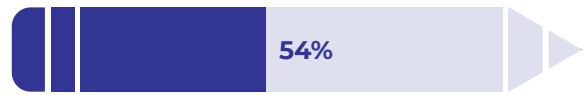
In Niger—and all the GCI countries—vast differences exist in how international goals and discourse around rights, gender and education are interpreted by national stakeholders. As such, **universal girls’ rights and education models can inadvertently sideline and push aside traditional values as unimportant**. Niger’s post-colonial context must therefore be considered in interventions seeking to transform harmful social norms in and through education. There is a need to understand how education, both formal and non-formal, can be adapted in a culturally appropriate manner that is more appealing to families, integrating important aspects of the religious, cultural and material context in which schools are embedded. In addition, to be effective, **any awareness-raising or social mobilization action to address social norms must consider stakeholder understanding of the rights or inequalities being targeted** (Greany, 2008; Hartman-Mahmud, 2011; Amili and Di Paolo, 2019).

NIGERIA

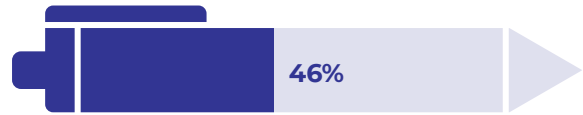
Snapshot of gender and education

Female teachers

Primary



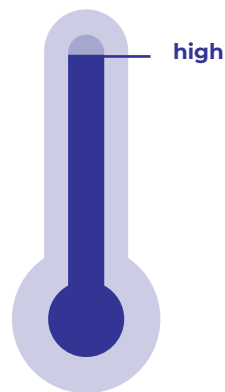
Secondary



(World Bank, 2018)

Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) level of gender discrimination

(UNESCO, 2020)



Disability and inclusion

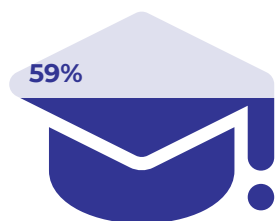


An estimated **50%** of out-of-school children have disabilities

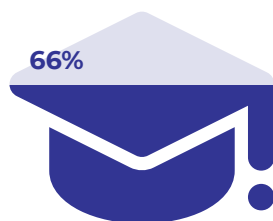
(Mizunoya et al., 2016)

Lower secondary level completion rate

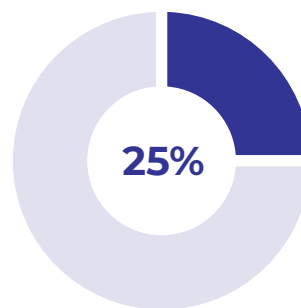
Boys



Girls



(UNICEF, 2021)

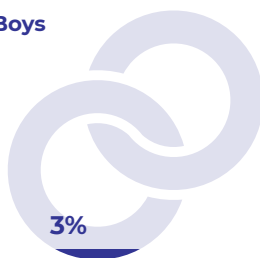


Women and girls aged 15–49 who have undergone some form of FGM

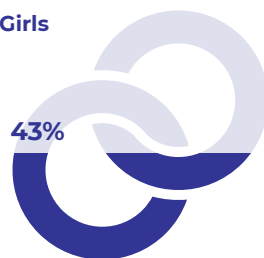
(DHS, 2013)

Child marriage rate

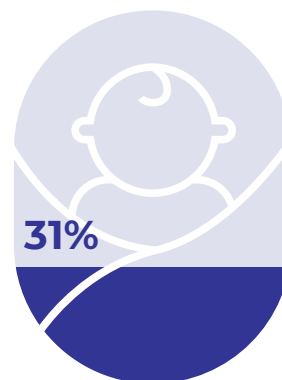
Boys



Girls



(DHS, 2018)



Early childbearing rate

(UNESCO, 2020)

OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICY AND LEGAL CONTEXT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND EDUCATION

Nigeria has a federal-level **Ministerial Strategic Plan (2018—2022)** for the education sector. However, sector planning is largely driven at the state level. The **2006 National Policy on Gender in Basic Education** is in the process of being reviewed.

Two response plans were made in 2020 for Nigeria's education sector : (i) the **Education Sector COVID-19 Contingency Plan**; and (ii) the **Nigeria Education Sector COVID-19 Response Strategy in the Northeast**.

Nigeria has a law that protects pregnant girls' right to stay in school or resume education. However, no policy stipulates the re-entry process to be followed by schools (HRW, 2018).

The federal government has developed a multi-sectoral **National Strategy to End Child Marriage in Nigeria (2016—2021)**.

Although the **2003 Federal Child Rights Act** prohibits marriage below age 18, the Nigerian constitution contains provisions which appear to conflict with this position. Some states have failed to adopt or enforce the federal law.

KEY FINDINGS: SOCIAL NORMS AND GIRLS' EDUCATION

Nigeria is a large, diverse and decentralized country, and the situation of girls' education and gender equality in education varies across states and rural and urban areas. According to the Malala Fund, over 10 million children are estimated to be out of school in Nigeria. Girls account for 60 per cent of out-of-school children, facing barriers such as child marriage, poverty and discriminatory gender norms. 30 per cent of girls aged 9–12 have never been to school at all.

Different legal, traditional, and demographic contexts throughout the country influence the prevalence of child marriage and early pregnancy and the social norms that underpin and practice these and limit girls' education.

For example, Imo State, a predominantly Igbo Christian state in southeastern Nigeria, adopted the Child Rights Law in 2004. However, child marriage is an ongoing problem, with girls reporting that their families were the main drivers of decisions around marriage. Unintended early pregnancy is often considered a dishonour to the family. This may be rooted in Igbo customary law, which deems a child born out of wedlock to be illegitimate, or a “fallen tree.” Child marriage can therefore be a consequence of early pregnancy to prevent shame to the family based on the community's perception that they have broken social norms and to secure the financial future of the girls and their children. In the Sharia-legislated Kano State, discussions are ongoing to implement the Child Rights Act. Girls and young women report that **discriminatory social norms and sexist social attitudes fuel decisions around child marriage** and that poverty increases the likelihood that families will turn to these harmful practices. In Kano State, child marriage is reinforced by unequal gender roles, and girls' limited access to decision-making power, bodily autonomy and rights. Many married girls and young women report having little decision-making power within their homes, with their husbands or their mothers-in-law often making decisions about girls' income-generating activities, health care, education and childbirth (STC, 2021; HRW, 2022).

In Nigerian society, girls' value is often determined by their role as caregivers of children and potential marriage prospects, and conversely girls may be seen as economic burdens on the family until getting married, despite their disproportionate responsibility for household labour (Kainuwa and Yusuf, 2013). The heavy emphasis on marriage can discourage families from investing in girls' education, as girls will eventually become part of someone else's household. **Educated women role models may be absent and, in some communities, higher levels of education are actively shunned.** Even in middle-class families, men often perceive educated women as a threat, and women may lack social support when pursuing educational goals (Ogakwu, 2007). According to the Gender Social Norms Index 2, 46.8 per cent of Nigerians surveyed indicated that university is more important for a man than for a woman (UNDP, 2020). These biases translate into gendered disparities in the education sector and society, including **a large gender pay gap which may further discourage families from investing in girls' education.**

In Makoko, an urban slum community located on the Lagos Lagoon, boys generate income for their families by driving boats. Due to rigid gender norms dictating acceptable pathways for education and income generating activities, girls are often limited to helping their families with petty trading. Girls often fall pregnant or are married off early, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and disempowerment in Makoko. In 2016, the **Kindle Africa Empowerment Initiative recruited traditional and religious leaders and community volunteers, training them in behaviour change techniques to facilitate community and family dialogues around girls' education** and vocational skills training. This has opened opportunities for girls, exposing them to a wide range of skills, from textile designing to shoe making and hairdressing, while also working to transform the social norms that limit expectations around and investment in girls' education and future life pathways (UNICEF et al., 2021).

The northeastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe have been experiencing protracted conflict for over a decade. Since the 2014 abduction of 279 schoolgirls by the extremist group Boko Haram in Chibok, mass kidnappings of schoolchildren, especially girls, has continued, and hundreds of children have been killed, raped, forced into marriage or forced to join Boko Haram. In northern Nigeria, **the links between extremism and education have become particularly pronounced**, with insecurity and direct attacks on schools leading to their long-term closure and destruction. For some families, taking girls out of school or entering girls into marriage can seem like protective safety measures amid targeted attacks on girls' schools, abductions and violence. Parents' ability to pay for school expenses has been further affected, limiting investment in girls' education. Additionally, teachers and learners are facing trauma and complex mental health issues due to the violence (Cartner, 2018; Afzal, 2020; Amnesty International, 2021; Chukwu, 2021).

In northern Nigeria—and in many African countries today—many communities see the state's post-colonial, federally-imposed system of education as ideologically opposed to and insufficiently representative of their beliefs. 'Western' education is also seen as responsible for poor educational outcomes and a lack of job opportunities due to it being imposed on populations during colonization (Izama, 2014; Afzal, 2020; Afolayan, 2021). Despite the important role of non-formal education programmes to provide education for learners in many of the GCI countries, and the strong social demand for non-formal education, alternative learning pathways are often not recognized. In the northeastern and northwestern states, 29 per cent and 35 per cent of Muslim children, respectively, receive Koranic education. The government considers children attending such schools to be officially out-of-school (UNICEF, n.d.).

Non-formal education programming can be particularly important for marginalized adolescent girls who are more likely to drop out of, or not engage in, the formal education system due to early marriage, early pregnancy, financial difficulties and/or social norms. Therefore, non-formal education programmes, including those specifically focusing on life skills, are crucial to ensuring that women and girls are not left further behind in education (Kwauk et al., 2018). For example, in northern Nigerian Islamic conservative communities, non-formal education programmes that respect socio-cultural traditions can increase support for girls' education, in addition to equipping them with literacy and numeracy skills that can promote opportunities for work outside the home. While the need remains to transform the harmful norms that restrict girls' and women's opportunities and freedoms, non-formal education can offer positive outcomes for women and girls within religiously conservative and patriarchal contexts (Afolayan, 2021).

UNICEF Innocenti's Time to Teach research indicates that increasing the number of female teachers in Nigeria could be a promising strategy to foster more positive parental engagement towards education, including for girls. Findings indicate that female teachers might be receiving more support from parents than male educators, suggesting that the gender of teachers matters in terms of parental engagement. These results are consistent with previous evidence suggesting that **female teachers in Nigerian schools are positively perceived by both parents and pupils, especially in rural areas. They are seen as effective community mobilizers who often engage with parents and pupils** and are generally more encouraging and understanding and rely less on corporal punishment (FHI 360 and UNICEF Nigeria, 2017; Akseer and Jativa, 2021).

Implemented from 2013—2017, Voices for Change (V4C) targeted young men and women (ages 16—25) in Enugu, Kaduna, Kano and Lagos States to strengthen the enabling environment for young women's empowerment. Through mass communication and media strategies, V4C **promoted norm change around violence against girls and women, women's leadership and women's role in household decision-making**. In addition, participants were supported through training and workshops to promote alternative thinking and create strategies to challenge social norms using culturally and contextually appropriate concepts, approaches and language.

Advocacy messages developed by key societal constituents were widely diffused by engaging influencers, religious and traditional leaders, radio stations, men and boys (Voices for Change, 2017; Welsh et al., 2017).

Given the focus of the African Union's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (GEWES) 2018—2028 on community and mass media mobilization strategies for social norm transformation, many of the lessons learned from V4C could inform future initiatives in Nigeria and other GCI countries. V4C recommends using an integrated marketing strategy (e.g., combining traditional media with social media) and linking media activities to local action (Desai, 2017). V4C also emphasized the importance of training and awareness-raising on gender and masculinities (i.e. not limited to the importance of girls' education) that use **experiential learning, participatory and action-oriented methodologies to enable men and boys to question and challenge patriarchal attitudes and behaviour**. Other reflections highlight the importance of contextually appropriate language. For example, V4C found that religious and traditional leaders preferred the term “gender justice” to “gender equality” as it resonated better with spiritual values of justice and peace that their religious teachings promote (Welsh et al., 2017).

SIERRA LEONE

Snapshot of gender and education

Female teachers

Primary



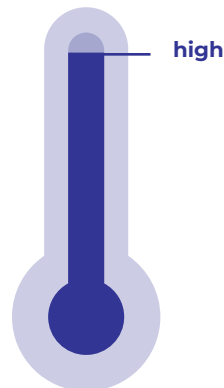
Secondary



(UNESCO, 2020)

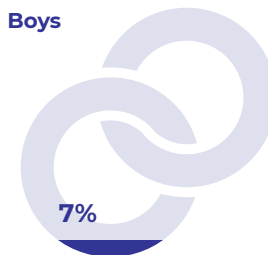
Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) level of gender discrimination

(UNESCO, 2020)



Child marriage rate

Boys



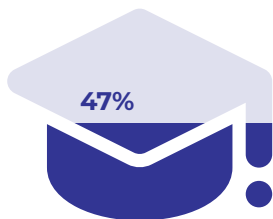
Girls



(MICS, 2017)

Lower secondary level completion rate

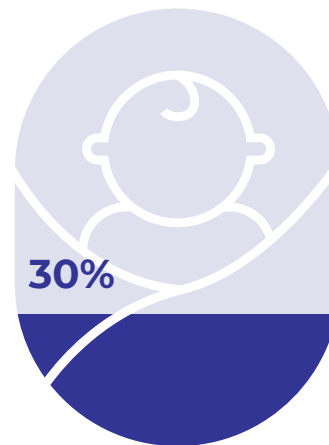
Boys



Girls



(UNICEF, 2021)



Early childbearing rate

(UNESCO, 2020)

OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICY AND LEGAL CONTEXT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND EDUCATION

Sierra Leone's **Education Sector Plan (2018—2020)** contains provisions to support girls in education, with a focus on improving girls' transition rates to secondary education and addressing sexual violence and exploitation in schools. GCI is supporting Sierra Leone to publish its new Education Sector Plan in March 2022.

With support from the GCI, in 2020, the Government of Sierra Leone published its **Education Sector Analysis** which, for the first time, included a chapter devoted specifically to gender analysis.

Sierra Leone's **COVID-19 Education Emergency Response Plan** includes specific actions to mitigate the risks of gender-based violence and early pregnancy, tackle gender norms that hinder learning opportunities for girls in particular and support girls' return to school.

In 2019, a government task force on school-related gender-based violence was launched to address high rates of SRGBV experienced by learners and girls in particular.

Sierra Leone's **National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage (2018—2022)** guides the prioritization of evidence-based interventions to reduce adolescent pregnancy and child marriage. The strategy brings together the ministries of health, education, gender, social welfare and children and youth affairs, development partners and community-based actors, youth groups and non-formal education institutions, to implement it. Actions include increased access to comprehensive sexuality education, improvement of menstrual hygiene management facilities and social behaviour change campaigns to combat norms perpetuating early pregnancy and child marriage.

The **2007 Child Rights Act** sets the minimum legal age of marriage at 18 in Sierra Leone. However, the **2009 Customary Marriage and Divorce Act** allows underage children to be married with parental consent and does not stipulate a minimum age of marriage. The National Strategy for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy and Child Marriage aims to harmonize these legal instruments to better address child marriage and early pregnancy.

Sierra Leone adopted a **National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools** in March 2021. The policy reaffirms pregnant girls and adolescent mothers' right to education, without conditions or restrictions. The policy stipulates that those girls should be supported to make up for lost lessons and are able to delay school examinations until they are ready.

In March 2020, Sierra Leone **revoked its ten-year-old ban on public school attendance for pregnant girls and teenage mothers** following a decision by the Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States.

KEY FINDINGS: SOCIAL NORMS AND GIRLS' EDUCATION

Sierra Leone has made significant progress in education, particularly for girls. From 2000 to 2018, girls' primary completion rates rose by more than 40 percentage points (UNESCO, 2020). **While girls enroll in and complete primary school at equivalent or higher rates to boys, the transitions through junior and senior secondary school reverse these trends**, with greater proportions of boys graduating (Republic of Sierra Leone, 2021). In poor rural areas, girls achieve less in terms of education (almost by half) compared to their male counterparts (IIEP-UNESCO, 2020). Poverty, early pregnancy, child marriage, child labour, SRGBV and unequal gender norms are some of the key factors driving gender disparities in education.

The 1991–2002 civil war, followed by the Ebola epidemic of 2014–2016, resulted in high numbers of deaths, injuries, displacement and sexual violence against women and men (Denney et al., 2015). Nine months of school closures to stop the spread of Ebola brought existing gender inequalities into sharp relief. Girls experienced an increase in school drop-out, child marriage and early pregnancy, gender-based violence, and sexual exploitation for economic survival. Girls also bore a heavier burden of domestic responsibilities, particularly in cases in which a mother died (Rothe, 2015; Universalia, 2018; Bandiera et al., 2020). Even before the Ebola crisis, pregnancy among primary and secondary school girls was noted as a significant factor in girls dropping out of school (Coinco and UNICEF, 2008).

Such **crises trigger long-term and generational social and economic consequences, including for girls' education**: over the next decade, as many as 13 million more girls could be forced into early marriage by economically struggling parents (Republic of Sierra Leone, 2021). Early pregnancy is underpinned by customary norms and practices of initiation (Wessells et al., 2014). Customary law varies across Sierra Leone and, in some cases, views girls as ready for marriage upon completion of initiation, which in turn increases the chances of early pregnancy and consequent school drop-out (Denney et al., 2015). In Sierra Leone, programming to address early pregnancy has often focused on girls' behaviour change through improved access to SRHR services and education around pregnancy, thus placing the responsibility on girls themselves. Such approaches **overlook the socio-cultural norms and economic and justice dimensions that perpetuate this issue** (Denney and Gordon, 2016).

High rates of sexual violence against women and girls in Sierra Leone are compounded by a climate of impunity in which survivors are often blamed and justice responses are weak or inaccessible (Denney et al., 2016). Driven by unequal gender norms and power dynamics, these society-wide trends are replicated in school settings. In cases of sexual exploitation for grades by teachers and other forms of SRGBV, the blame is often put on survivors, with perpetrators portrayed as victims who could not control themselves (Reilly, 2014). The **school system itself can also increase girls' vulnerability to SRGBV**, with an absence of quality comprehensive sexuality education, a lack of safe transport to and from school and older girls being sent away to school (Castillejo et al., 2021).

Teachers and school staff often reproduce prevailing gender norms in classrooms. It is therefore **important for teachers to have the training, safe spaces and support to reflect critically on their attitudes and values related to gender equality** and to develop empathy towards students. Education Unions Take Action to End School-related Gender-based Violence, implemented in seven sub-Saharan African countries from 2016 to 2019, was an initiative rooted in Gender Action Learning (GAL)¹⁶ that supported teachers to understand the nature of gender inequality in their

16 Gender Action Learning (GAL) is an approach developed by Gender at Work. GAL uses experiential, peer-based learning to allow people to grapple with gendered power dynamics at individual, organizational and community levels. In the Education Unions Take Action to End SRGBV initiative, the GAL process has allowed each union to test its own approaches to combat SRGBV, while sharing the experience with others (UNGEI et al., 2018).

contexts and establish union-led initiatives to combat SRGBV. The GAL process was introduced to West African teachers' unions in 2018, where efforts to combat SRGBV had been ongoing for several years. The Sierra Leone Teachers' Union has been fighting SRGBV through media and campaigns, leveraging national television, radio, newspapers and the union newsletter to raise public awareness of the need to end SRGBV and empower teachers to become active agents to end violence in schools (UNGEI et al., 2018).

Child labour, underpinned by poverty and gender norms, continues to negatively impact education in Sierra Leone. 39 per cent of boys and 38 per cent of girls aged 5–17 in the country are involved in child labour, with boys more likely to be engaged in economic activities and girls more likely to be engaged in household or informal labour, which can increase their risk of sexual harassment and exploitation (MICS, 2017). 67 per cent of boys and 53 per cent of girls who drop out of school do so for economic reasons (IIEP-UNESCO, 2020). For girls, **a widespread expectation exists that once they reach adolescence, they should start to meet their own material needs and provide financial support for their family.** The social norm that teenage girls contribute to family finances can result in girls being sent out to sell goods through hawking, putting them at risk of sexual harassment, violence and exploitation. Such expectations can also force girls to engage in transactional sex to access goods for themselves (e.g., menstrual hygiene products) or their households. At the same time, **community members and even girls themselves, can overestimate girls' agency** to choose whether to engage in sex or use contraceptives. For example, the notion that “girls should focus on their studies and ignore the advances of men to avoid pregnancy” fails to recognize the social and economic realities that heavily influence girls' decision-making and agency (Castillejo et al., 2021).

In recent years, activism and accountability mechanisms have helped mobilize political will and commitments to protect pregnant girls' right to education in Sierra Leone. In 2015, official policy banned pregnant girls from school. In 2019, after several years of activism, the ban was ruled discriminatory by ECOWAS and the government was found to be in breach of Articles 2 and 12 of the Maputo Protocol, which calls on State Parties to eliminate discrimination against women and girls and to guarantee equal opportunities and access to education. In March 2020, the ban was lifted, and the government announced two new policies focusing on ‘radical inclusion’ and ‘comprehensive safety’ of all children in the education system (Republic of Sierra Leone, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). In the context of the pandemic, these policies have served to facilitate school re-entry for the widening pool of pregnant and parenting school-aged girls. With a predicted surge in teenage pregnancy during the Covid-19 school closures, a heightened focus has been placed on the enabling factors driving such policy advances and their applicability in different contexts (ADEA et al., 2021).

Sierra Leone has one of the lowest rates of child marriage among the GCI countries, however it is typically higher in rural areas due to greater adherence to traditional norms, fewer economic and educational opportunities for girls and higher levels of poverty. Girls from the poorest households and those living in rural areas face twice the risk of being married before turning 18, compared to girls from the richest households and those living in urban areas (Republic of Sierra Leone, 2018). **Child marriage is deeply rooted in dominant social norms that construct gender roles and the process of rites of passage.** It can also occur in response to early pregnancy, so that the husband can provide for the adolescent mother and her baby. Save the Children's Right to be a Girl project in Sierra Leone promotes education and training for girls who were married before the age of 18 and not currently accessing education. Girls participate in vocational and life skills training, safe spaces and awareness raising sessions on child marriage, children's rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights. In Sierra Leone, both married girls and their husbands praised the vocational skills and business training delivered through non-formal education settings. Girls were able to earn an income and feel more confident and self-reliant without compromising their traditional values and responsibilities (Versluys, 2019).

Given the existing evidence about the range of drivers that fuel the issues of teenage pregnancy, child marriage and girls' school drop-out in Sierra Leone, future programming and policy must go beyond strengthening individual knowledge, attitudes and skills of girls. This approach may **over-emphasize girls' agency and power over their social and economic circumstances, while minimizing the role of social norms** and factors such as poverty, limited acceptable economic, educational and social options for girls and gendered power imbalances. While it is important to empower women and girls to not accept negative social norms, it is also imperative to consider and **meaningfully engage men and boys if this change is going to be sustainable**. This can also help to avoid inadvertently increasing violence against women and girls and backlash against social norm transformation efforts in general (Mocan and Cannonier, 2012; Versluys, 2019; Castillejo et al., 2021). Critically, evidence finds that **following the civil war, gender norms in Sierra Leone are in flux**. For example, traditional ideas about the value of early marriage sit alongside newer ideas about the importance of girls' education. Such shifts can create space for new norms and practices that can advance gender equality and girls' education. Instances of positive deviance—for example, where mothers have kept their pregnant daughters living with them rather than sending them to live with the baby's father, so that the daughter can return to school—provide some indication that perceptions about the value of girls' education may be shifting. When power-holders within the community are positive deviants,¹⁷ it can have a significant influence in shifting norms and attitudes of others. Youth groups have also been successful in getting religious leaders to adopt their message and set positive examples with regards to girls' education and gender equality (Branksy et al., 2017; Castillejo et al., 2021).

17 Positive deviance' describes behaviour that deviates from salient norms yet is positive in its intention or effect (van de Fliert and Herington, 2018; Mertens et al., 2016). For example, in a society in which violence against women is highly prevalent and normalized, the motivations and characteristics of non-violent men are factors that may be associated with positive deviance (Jejeebhoy, 2013).

SECTION 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This policy paper examines the existing evidence on social norms and girls' education in eight GCI partner countries, with a focus on harmful practices (including child marriage and female genital mutilation), early pregnancy, school-related gender-based violence and child labour. It confirms that economic and socio-cultural factors, in addition to rigid and gendered structures of power and influence beyond the education system, play a crucial part in the reproduction of the gender inequalities, harmful practices and norms that underpin persistent barriers to girls' access, participation and completion in education.

The studies reviewed in this policy paper indicate that social norms governing girls' education and life pathways are a more powerful influence on behaviour and decision-making than individual knowledge or attitudes. Policy and programming that target individual knowledge and attitudes may overestimate girls' agency to drive decisions regarding their own life pathways and may not adequately address the social, economic, infrastructural and conflict-related factors that exacerbate the persistence of harmful norms and practices. **Transforming patriarchal and restrictive social norms is not the sole responsibility of girls and women.** Authority figures in girls' lives (such as parents, community members, husbands and religious and traditional leaders) often hold decision-making power over girls' education. Their perceptions on the quality and safety of education and its compatibility with their values and beliefs are both key influencing factors and potential entry points for change towards greater gender equality and girls' education in the GCI countries.

While this policy paper offers a broad picture of social norms and girls' education in the GCI countries, large research gaps are evident, particularly in Chad, Mali and Mauritania. Additional, context-specific research can help to identify ways in which those holding power can be engaged to challenge and reconstruct social norms that limit girls' access to, participation in and achievement in education. Research should include a **focus on enabling factors and environments for social norm transformation and the identification of 'positive deviants'** who are forging a different path from conventional norms and behaviours in their communities to advance girls' education and gender equality. This will be critical to develop evidence on 'what works' in building on entry points to support norm change and in terms of addressing and overcoming resistance. This also requires **a context-specific consideration of post-colonial realities, a focus on the promotion of new positive norms rather than criticism of the status quo** and emphasizing the positive gains that can be realized through social norm transformation.

Transforming harmful social norms that limit girls' education and gender equality needs to be an educational goal. To accelerate progress towards greater equality and girls' education and the achievement of the SDGs by 2030, a greater convergence is required between actors working in formal and non-formal education, disability rights, child marriage, female genital mutilation, early pregnancy, SRGBV, domestic and gender-based violence and women's and girls' rights. Education can be a driver of transformative change and it provides an opportunity to form and present alternative visions and possibilities for what girls and boys can aspire to be. The studies reviewed in this paper indicate that multisectoral interventions, working across socio-ecological models, are needed to shift unequal power relations and gender norms. Using a socio-ecological model helps policymakers and practitioners understand and track changes in social expectations of boys, girls and male and female roles and in gender-based values, beliefs and practices. Effective gender-transformative approaches are grounded in strong gender analysis and an understanding of local contexts (UNFPA et al., 2020).

This policy paper mentions several promising approaches for social norm transformation which merit further exploration in the GCI countries, both within and beyond the formal education system (see Table 1). Further building the evidence base is a priority. More context-specific, nuanced and locally led research is needed to inform tailored strategies and plan appropriate, gender-transformative and meaningful interventions, in partnership with local and national actors, to transform social norms and advance gender equality in and through education.

Table 1: Approaches for social norm transformation and the advancement of girls' education—selected case study examples in the GCI countries.

Type of initiative	Case study example	GCI country
Community-based mobilization and activism	Community Empowerment Project—Tostan	Mali Mauritania
	Mozambican Women and Education Association	Mozambique
	Kindle Africa Empowerment Initiative	Nigeria
Media-based education and communication	Voices for Change—DFID	Nigeria
	Africa Educates Her Campaign—AU/CIEFFA	All
Non-formal education and vocational training	Marriage No Child's Play—Save the Children	Niger
Positive masculinity and community dialogues	Thanks to Us Initiative—UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage	Burkina Faso
Teacher training and teacher union-led initiatives	Education Unions Take Action—Education International, Gender at Work, UNGEI, Sierra Leone Teachers' Union	Sierra Leone
	Association Pour le Promotion de les Filles et Les Femmes	Burkina Faso
Strengthening capacity, resources and partnerships among government, civil society and youth	Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI) – UNGEI, IIEP-UNESCO	All

Based on the approaches, studies and evidence reviewed, this policy paper recommends the below actions.

Institutionalize gender training for all teachers and school staff and, to the extent possible, engage national gender expertise to provide the training. Ensure that curriculum, textbooks and learning materials are gender responsive.

Establish training, safe spaces and peer-support initiatives that allow teachers to challenge and transform their own attitudes and beliefs on gender issues, create and uphold gender-responsive learning environments and play a key role in SRGBV prevention and response.

Invest in gender-responsive hiring practices for new teachers, with targeted strategies to increase the number of female teachers in primary, secondary and tertiary education.

Increase investments in gender-responsive, inclusive, quality, school infrastructure, including with regards to addressing harmful gender norms that drive menstrual inequity, school-related gender-based violence and intersectional inequalities for learners with disabilities.

Take greater consideration in education policies, plans and programming of post-colonial realities and norms regarding perceived incompatibility of 'Western education' with traditional values.

Partner with community and youth groups, including adolescent boys and men, to challenge harmful masculinities and to engage these groups as advocates for girls' education and social norm transformation.

Increase financing, data collection and regulations around non-formal education at the state level. This should include research into how religious institutions can be effectively engaged in social norm transformation and girls' education efforts.

Foster supportive policy and legal environments for pregnant girls and young mothers to continue their education, coupled with school- and community-level initiatives to address stigma and promote effective implementation.

Formalize social norm transformation efforts within education sector policies, plans and objectives. Gender-responsive education sector policies and plans should link to and work in tandem with strategies and plans to reduce early pregnancy and child marriage.

Systematically integrate data on knowledge, attitudes and practices around key social and gender norms into measurement, evaluation, accountability and learning in education sector plans. Use the data to inform and implement contextually relevant, gender transformative education strategies.

Develop clear moments in the education planning cycle to listen to, and collaborate with, other ministries and spearhead cross-sectoral coordination to holistically address harmful social norms that limit girls' education.

Reserve seats at all decision-making tables for young feminist activists, male allies, religious and traditional leaders, female teachers and other community figures who have demonstrated strong advocacy and results on the ground for girls' education and gender equality in education.

BOX 2: WHAT'S NEXT?

In 2022, UNGEI will launch a second phase of research on the social determinants of girls' education through the Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI). Designed and implemented in partnership with a research partner in West and Central Africa, this mixed-methods, participatory research will provide further in-depth understanding of the social norms and multi-level determinants influencing girls' education and gender equality in a GCI country context. This research will complement IIEP-UNESCO's forthcoming research on gender norms, power dynamics and resistance to change in education management and planning at the ministry level in a GCI country.

Refer to the [GCI Newsletter Issue #2](#) for more information about upcoming research and activities in 2022.

REFERENCES

- 28 Too Many (2019) FGM in Chad: Short Report. [www.28toomany.org/static/media/uploads/Country%20Research%20and%20Resources/Chad/chad_short_report_v1_\(november_2019\).pdf](http://www.28toomany.org/static/media/uploads/Country%20Research%20and%20Resources/Chad/chad_short_report_v1_(november_2019).pdf)
- ADEA, AU/CIEFFA and APHRC (2021) The Well-being of School Children in Africa during the COVID19 Pandemic. Abidjan, Ouagadougou, Nairobi: ADEA, AU/CIEFFA, APHRC. www.adeanet.org/sites/default/files/school_children_well-being_kix_observatory.pdf
- Afolayan, E. G. (2021) Non-formal education as a tool for empowering girls and women in a religiously conservative context: The case of northern Nigeria. Murdoch University. <https://researchrepository.murdoch.edu.au/id/eprint/61791/>
- African Development Bank and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2020) Africa Gender Index Report 2019: What the 2019 Africa Gender Index tells us about gender equality and how can it be achieved. Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire: African Development Bank Group. www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/africa_gender_index_report_2019_-_analytical_report.pdf
- African Union (2015) Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf
- African Union (2016) Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016 - 2025. https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/29958-doc-cesa_-_english-v9.pdf
- African Union (2018) AU Strategy for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment 2018 - 2028 https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36817-doc-52569_au_report_eng_print.pdf
- African Union (2021a) Getting to Zero Female Genital Mutilation in Africa: Strengthening Human Rights, Accelerating Efforts and Galvanizing Accountability. Policy Brief. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JesLopDe-Kmx-ik3Qwz_-fC1bVtrpja/view
- African Union (2021b) Niamey Call to Action and Commitment on Eliminating Harmful Practices https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/41067-wd-Niamey_Call_to_Action_and_Commitment_on_Eliminating_Harmful_Practices.pdf
- African Union/CIEFFA (2021) Implementation report of the Strategic Plan 2018-20. African Union International Center for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa. <https://cieffa.au.int/en/documents/2021-09-03/implementationreportof-hestategicplan18-20>
- Afzal, M. (2020) From "Western Education is Forbidden" to the World's Deadliest Terrorist Group: Education and Boko Haram in Nigeria. Brookings. www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FP_20200507_nigeria_boko_haram_afzal.pdf
- Ahinkorah, B.O., Hagan, J.E., Ameyaw, E.K. et al. Socio-economic and demographic determinants of female genital mutilation in sub-Saharan Africa: analysis of data from demographic and health surveys. *Reprod Health* 17, 162 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-020-01015-5>
- Akseer, S., Jativa, X (2021) Time to Teach: Teacher attendance and time on task in primary schools. Nigeria. UNICEF Office of Research, Innocenti. www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/Time-to-Teach-Teacher-attendance-and-time-on-task-in-primary-schools-in-Nigeria.pdf
- Alexander-Scott, M., Bell, E., and Holden, J. (2016) Shifting social norms to tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG). DFID Guidance Note. London: UK Department for International Development. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/507845/Shifting-Social-Norms-tackle-Violence-against-Women-Girls3.pdf
- Amili and Di Paolo (2019) Learning about norm change in girls' education in low- and middle-income contexts: Lessons from the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) Fund. ALiGN. www.alignplatform.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/gec_policy_feb_2019_es.pdf
- Amnesty International (2021) Nigeria: Seven years since Chibok, the government fails to protect children. www.amnesty.org/en/news/nigeria-seven-years-since-chibok-the-government-fails-to-protect-children

[amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/04/nigeria-seven-years-since-chibok-the-government-fails-to-protect-children/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/04/nigeria-seven-years-since-chibok-the-government-fails-to-protect-children/)

Bal, S., Baro, M., O'Sullivan, N. (2015) Women's Access to Land in Mauritania: A Case Study in Preparation for the COP. Washington, DC: World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/22938>

Bandiera, O., Buehren, N., Goldstein, M., Rasul, I., Smurra, A. (2020) Do School Closures During an Epidemic have Persistent Effects? Evidence from Sierra Leone in the Time of Ebola. Poverty Action Lab. www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/research-paper/working-paper_720_School-Closures-During-Epidemic_Sierra-Leone_July2020.pdf

Bransky, R., Enoch, J., and Long, C. (2017) Child Marriage in Sierra Leone and Guinea: cultural roots and girl centred solutions. Freetown: Purposeful Productions.

Brookings (2022). What do we know about the effects of COVID-19 on girls' return to school? <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2021/09/22/what-do-we-know-about-the-effects-of-covid-19-on-girls-return-to-school/>

Brossard, M., and Bergmann, J. (2022) Can more women in school leadership improve learning outcomes? <https://blogs.unicef.org/evidence-for-action/can-more-women-in-learning-leadership-improve-education-outcomes/>

Butt (2020) Communities changing social norms to end female genital cutting in West Africa. Oxfam. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/communities-changing-social-norms-to-end-female-genital-cutting-in-west-africa-621088/>

Cartner, H. (2018) "I Will Never Go Back to School". The Impact of Attacks on Education for Nigerian Women and Girls. Global Coalition to Prevent Education from Attack. http://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/documents_attacks_on_nigerian_women_and_girls.pdf

Castillejo, C., Buell, S., Bash-Taqi, R., Denney, L., Fraser, T., Kamara, M., Komora, H., (2021) Social norms and the problem of teenage pregnancy in Sierra Leone: learning from an SLRC action research project. Briefing Note. Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium. <https://securelivelihoods.org/wp-content/uploads/SLRC-SierraLeone-SocialNormsTeenagePregnancy-BN-Apr21-Proof05.pdf>

Cetorelli, V., Wilson, B., Batyra, E., and Coast, E. (2020) Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in Mali and Mauritania: Understanding Trends and Evaluating Policies. Studies on Family Planning, 51(1): 51-69.

Cellule de Planification et de Statistique (CPS/SSDSPF), Institut National de la Statistique (INSTAT/MPATP), INFO-STAT et ICF International, 2014. Enquête Démographique et de Santé au Mali 2012-2013. Rockville, Maryland, USA: CPS, INSTAT, INFO-STAT et ICF International. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR286/FR286.pdf>

Chukwu, O (2021) New Dangers to Girls' Education in Northern Nigeria. INEE. <https://inee.org/blog/new-dangers-girls-education-northern-nigeria>

Cislaghi (2019) The potential of a community-led approach to change harmful gender norms in low- and middle-income countries. ALiGN. www.alignplatform.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/community_led_approach_report.pdf

Coinco/UNICEF (2008) 'The out-of-school children of Sierra Leone,' Freetown: UNICEF.

Diawara, A. T., Compaore, M., De Cecco, L., and Rouamba, O. K.-Z. (2013) Étude sur les Grossesses Non Désirées et les Cas D'Évanouissement des Jeunes Filles en Milieu Scolaire. Burkina Faso.

Denney, L., and Gordon, R. (2016) How to reduce teenage pregnancy in Sierra Leone. Briefing Paper 18, Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium. https://securelivelihoods.org/wp-content/uploads/BP18_How-to-reduce-teenage-pregnancy-in-Sierra-Leone.pdf

Denney, L. Gordon, R., and Ibrahim, A. (2015) Teenage Pregnancy after Ebola in Sierra Leone: Mapping responses, gaps and ongoing challenges. ODI Working Paper 39, Researching livelihoods and services affected by conflict. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI). https://securelivelihoods.org/wp-content/uploads/Teenage-Pregnancies-after-Ebola-in-SierraLeone_-Mapping-responses-gaps-and-ongoing-challenges.pdf

Denney, L., Gordon, R., Kamara, A., Lebby, P. (2016) Change the context not the girls: Improving efforts to reduce teenage pregnancy in Sierra Leone. Researching livelihoods and services affected by conflict. Report 11, Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/RR11_Change%20the%20

[context%20not%20the%20girls_Improving%20efforts%20to%20reduce%20teenage%20pregnancy%20in%20Sierra%20Leone.pdf](#)

Desai, P. (2017) Voices for Change Legacy Paper: Using social marketing to shift discriminatory gender norms. Voices 4 Change. www.sddirect.org.uk/media/1922/1624-v4c-lp-social-marketing-web.pdf

FHI 360 and UNICEF (2017) "What is the Effect of Female Teachers on Girls' Enrolment and Retention in Northern Nigeria? A mixed-methods research study," UNICEF/Nigeria Girls' Education Programme, Phase 3, Final Research Report, FHI 360, UNICEF Nigeria and UK Aid.

Gathara, D., and Karumbi, J. 2020. "Associations between Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting and Early/Child Marriage: A Multi-Country DHS/MICS Analysis." Evidence to End FGM/C: Research to Help Women Thrive. New York: Population Council.

Girls' Education Challenge (2021) Country Briefing: Mozambique. https://girlseducationchallenge.org/media/yw4n3s5n/gec_country_briefing_mozambique_march-21_final.pdf

Girls Not Brides (n.d.) Atlas: Burkina Faso
<https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/burkina-faso>

Girls Not Brides (n.d.) Atlas: Chad
<https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/chad>

Girls Not Brides (n.d.) Atlas: Mali
<https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/mali>

Girls Not Brides (n.d.) Atlas: Mauritania
<https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/mauritania/>

Girls Not Brides (n.d.) Atlas: Mozambique
<https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/mozambique>

Girls Not Brides (n.d.) Atlas: Niger
<https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/niger>

Girls Not Brides (n.d.) Atlas: Nigeria
<https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/nigeria>

Girls Not Brides (n.d.) Atlas: Sierra Leone
<https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/sierra-leone>

Global Partnership for Education (2018) Disability and Inclusive Education: A Stocktake of Education Sector Plans and GPE-Funded Grants.
www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2018-07-gpe-disability-working-paper.pdf

Goulds, S. (2020) Adolescent girls in crisis: Voices from the Sahel. Working: Plan International. Accessed 08/12/2021.
<https://plan-international.org/publications/adolescent-girls-crisis-sahel#download-options>

Gordon, R., Marston, L., Rose, P., and Zubairi, A. (2019) 12 Years of Quality Education for All Girls: A Commonwealth Perspective. REAL Centre. University of Cambridge. Accessed 08/12/2021.
www.ungei.org/publication/12-years-quality-education-all-girls-commonwealth-perspective

Greany, K. (2008) Rhetoric versus reality: exploring the rights-based approach to girls' education in rural Niger. Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 38(5): 555-568.

Hartman-Mahmud, L. (2011) Pounding millet during school hours: Obstacles to girls' formal education in Niger. European Journal of Development Research, 23(3): 354-370.

Heise, L., and Manji, K. (2016) "Social norms." GSDRC Professional Development Reading Pack no. 31. Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/597f335640f0b61e4800023/Social-Norms_RP.pdf

Herington, M. J., van de Fliert, E. (2018) Positive Deviance in Theory and Practice: A Conceptual Review, Deviant Behavior, 39:5, 664-678. www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01639625.2017.1286194?scroll=top&needAccess=true

Humanity and Inclusion (2021) Education, Girl, Disability: an equation to solve. Factsheet. https://blog.hi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/factsheet_2021-GirlsInEducation-EN-review-AB.pdf

Human Rights Watch (2018) Leave No Girl Behind in Africa: Discrimination in Education against Pregnant Girls and Adolescent Mothers. USA. www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/au0618_web.pdf

Human Rights Watch (2020) "Their War Against Education:" Armed Groups Attacks on Teachers, Students and Schools in Burkina Faso. USA. www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2020/05/BurkinaFaso0520_web.pdf

Human Rights Watch (2021) Africa: Rights Progress for Pregnant Students. News. www.hrw.org/news/2021/09/29/africa-rights-progress-pregnant-students

Human Rights Watch (2021a) African Leaders Meet in Niger to Support Girls' Rights. News. www.hrw.org/news/2021/11/15/african-leaders-meet-niger-support-girls-rights

Human Rights Watch (2022) Nigeria: Child Marriage Violates Girls' Rights. News. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/01/17/nigeria-child-marriage-violates-girls-rights>

IIEP-UNESCO Dakar and UNICEF (2020) Education Sector Analysis of the Republic of Sierra Leone: Assessing the enabling environment for gender equality. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000375434/PDF/375434eng.pdf.multi>

Institut National de la Statistique et de la Démographie (INSD) et ICF International (2012) Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Burkina Faso 2010. Calverton, Maryland, USA. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR256/FR256.pdf>

Institut National de la Statistique (INS) et ICF International (2013) Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples du Niger 2012. Calverton, Maryland, USA. www.dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR277/FR277.pdf

Institut National de la Statistique, des Études Économiques et Démographiques (INSEED), Ministère de la Santé Publique (MSP) et ICF International (2014-2015) Enquête Démographique et de Santé et à Indicateurs Multiples (2014-2015). Rockville, Maryland, USA. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR317/FR317.pdf>

Institut National de la Statistique (INSTAT), Cellule de Planification et de Statistique Secteur Santé-Développement Social et Promotion de la Famille (CPS/SS-DS-PF) et ICF (2019) Enquête Démographique et de Santé au Mali 2018. Bamako, Mali et Rockville, Maryland. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR358/FR358.pdf>

International Labour Organization and UNICEF (2021) Child Labour: Global Estimate 2020, Trends and the Road Forward. <https://childhub.org/sites/default/files/library/attachments/Child-Labour-Executive-Summary-EN.pdf>

Izama, M. P. (2014) Muslim Education in Africa: Tends and Attitudes towards Faith-Based Schools. Review of Faith and International Affairs, 12(2), 38 -50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2014.918749>

Jejeebhoy, S. J., Santhya, K. G., and Sabarwal, S. (2013) Gender-based violence: A qualitative exploration of norms, experiences and positive deviance. Technical report. New Delhi: Population Council. https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1150&context=departments_sbsr-rh

Kainuwa, A., and Mohammad Yusuf, N.B. (2013) Cultural Traditions and Practices of the Parents as Barriers to Girl-child Education in Zamfara State Nigeria. International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications, 3(11), 1-8.

Kazianga, H. (2012) Income risk and household schooling decisions in Burkina Faso. Oklahoma State University Economics Working Paper Series. Stillwater: Oklahoma State University. World Development, 2012, vol. 40, issue 8, 1647-1662. https://econpapers.repec.org/article/eeewdevel/v_3a40_3ay_3a2012_3ai_3a8_3ap_3a1647-1662.htm

KIX Observatory (2021) Policy Brief on School Reopening in Africa during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and African Development Bank Group (AfDB). www.adeanet.org/sites/default/files/publications/policy_brief_kix_observatory_school_reopening.pdf

KIX Observatory (2022) Policy Brief on Teacher Training and Support in Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic. Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and African Development Bank Group (AfDB). www.adeanet.org/sites/default/files/publications/policy_brief_teacher_training_and_support.pdf

Kwauk, C., Braga, A., Kim, H., Dupuy, K., Bezu, S., Knudsen, A. (2018) Non-formal girls' life skills programming: Implications for policy and practice. Center for Universal Education, Brookings.
www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Non-formal-girls-life-skills-programming_letter.pdf

Lee, J., Kim, H., Rhee, D. (2021) No harmless child labor: The effect of child labor on academic achievement in francophone Western and Central Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development*. 80. 102308. 10.1016/j.ijedudev.2020.102308.

Lee, J., Rhee, D., Rudolf, R. (2019) Teacher Gender, Student Gender and Primary School Achievement: Evidence from Ten Francophone African Countries, *The Journal of Development Studies*, 55:4, 661-679.

Malala Fund (n.d.) Nigeria. <https://malala.org/countries/nigeria>

Marcus, R. and Harper, C. (2015) Social norms, gender norms and adolescent girls: a brief guide. London: Overseas Development Institute. <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/9818.pdf>

Marcus, R., Gupta-Archer, N., Darcy, M. and Page, E. (2017) GAGE Rigorous Review: Girls' clubs, life skills programmes and girls' well-being outcomes. London: Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence. www.gage.odi.org/publication/rigorous-review-girls-clubs-life-skills-programmes/

Melnikas, A.J., Saul, G., Singh, S., Mkandawire, J., Gueye, M., Diarra, A., Amin, S. (2019) More than Brides Alliance: Midline Evaluation Report. New York: Population Council.
https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1469&context=departments_sbsr-pgy

Mertens, W., Recker, J., Kohlborn, T., Kummer, T.F (2016) A Framework for the Study of Positive Deviance in Organizations, *Deviant Behavior*, Volume 37, 2016 - Issue 11, 1288-1307.
www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01639625.2016.1174519?scroll=top&needAccess=true

Ministério da Saúde- MISAU, Instituto Nacional de Estatística - INE, and ICF (2018) Inquérito de Indicadores de Imunização, Malária e HIV/SIDA em Moçambique - IMASIDA, 2015. Maputo, Moçambique. <https://dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-ais12-ais-final-reports.cfm>

Misunas, C., Erulkar, A., Apicella, L., Ngô, T., Psaki, S. (2021) What Influences Girls' Age at Marriage in Burkina Faso and Tanzania? Exploring the Contribution of Individual, Household, and Community Level Factors. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 69 (2021) S46-S56. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2021.09.015>

Mizunoya, S., S. Mitra and I. Yamasaki (2016) Towards Inclusive Education: The impact of disability on school attendance in developing countries, Innocenti Working Paper No. 2016-03, UNICEF Office of Research, Florence. www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/IWP3%20-%20Towards%20Inclusive%20Education.pdf

Mocan, N.H., and Cannonier, C. (2012) Empowering women through education: Evidence from Sierra Leone. Working Paper 18016. www.nber.org/papers/w18016. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.

National Office of Statistics (Mauritania), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2015) Mauritania Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2011. New York: UNICEF.

National Population Commission (NPC) [Nigeria] and ICF (2019) Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2018. Abuja, Nigeria, and Rockville, Maryland, USA. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR359/FR359.pdf>

OECD (2018) Burkina Faso Social Institutions and Gender Index (Burkina Faso - SIGI). OECD Development Centre. www.genderindex.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/BurkinaFasoSIGI-20x20-EN-web.pdf

Ogakwu, V. N. (2007) Cultural Barriers to Gender Equity in Nigeria: An Obstacle for Achieving Education for All. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Academic Excellence*, 6(1), 11-21. Accessed 08/12/2021.

Parkes, J. and Heslop, J. (2013) Stop Violence Against Girls in School: A cross-country analysis of change Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique. ActionAid International.
https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/10023454/1/svags_review_final.pdf

Parkes, J., J. Heslop, F. Johnson Ross, R. Westerveld and E. Unterhalter (2016) A Rigorous Review of Global Research Evidence on Policy and Practice on School-Related Gender-Based Violence. New York, UNICEF. www.unicef.org/media/66546/file/SRGBV-review.pdf

- Pearce, C., Fourmy, S., and Kovach, H. (2009) Delivering Education for All in Mali. Oxfam Research Report. London.
- Pereznieto, P., Fyles, N., Magee, A. (2017) Mitigating threats to girls' education in conflict-affected contexts: current practice. Evidence review. New York: UNGEI.
www.ungei.org/publication/mitigating-threats-girls-education-conflict-affected-contexts-current-practice
- Perlman, D., Adamu, F. and Wodon, Q. (2018) Why do adolescent girls drop out of school in Niger? A combined quantitative and qualitative analysis. *Marché et organisations*, 2(32): 179-194.
- Reilly, A. (2014) Adolescent girls' experiences of violence in school in Sierra Leone and the challenges to sustainable change, *Gender & Development*, 22:1, 13-29. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13552074.2014.902239>
- Roby, J.L., Lambert, M.J. and Lambert, J. (2009) Barriers to girls' education in Mozambique at household and community levels: an exploratory study. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 18: 342–353.
- Rodway, F. (2021) Independent Review of GRESP Programme: Final Report. New York: UNGEI.
- Rothe, D. (2015) Ebola: beyond the health emergency. Summary of research into the consequences of the Ebola outbreak for children and communities in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Plan International.
<https://plan-international.org/publications/ebola-beyond-health%20emergency#download-options>
- Riley, A.H. (2017) New directions for entertainment-education: Results from a mixed methods study investigating the role of narrative persuasion and social norms from a radio program on individual and social change in Mozambique. Drexel University Doctoral Dissertation.
- Samandari, G., Grant, C., Brent, L. et al. (2019) "It is a thing that depends on God:" Barriers to delaying first birth and pursuing alternative futures among newly married adolescent girls in Niger. *Reprod Health* 16, 109. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-019-0757-y>
- Saul G, Diarra A, Melnikas AJ, Amin S. (2020) Voice Without Choice? Investigating Adolescent Girls' Agency in Marital Decision-making in Niger. *Progress in Development Studies*, 20(4):270-281.
- Save the Children Nigeria (2021) State of the Nigeria Girl Report: An Incisive Diagnosis of Child Marriage in Nigeria. https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/state_of_the_nigerian_girl_report_save_the_children.pdf
- Shakya et al. (2020) Spatial analysis of individual- and village-level sociodemographic characteristics associated with age at marriage among married adolescents in rural Niger. *BMC Public Health*. 20:729. <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1186/s12889-020-08759-6.pdf>
- Sightsavers (2021) Promoting inclusive education for girls and boys with disabilities in West and Central Africa. Policy brief. <https://research.sightsavers.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2021/01/Policy-Brief-EN-Inclusive-Education-in-West-and-Central-Africa.pdf>
- Spear, A. M. (2019) Teachers as change agents? Assessing teachers' perceptions of and responses to sexual gender-based violence in schools in Burkina Faso. *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education*, Vol. 5, Issue 2. pp. 195-213. Accessed 08/12/2021. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1233679.pdf>
- Spotlight Initiative (2021) Community leaders become allies in ending child marriage in Mozambique. News. <https://spotlightinitiative.org/news/community-leaders-become-allies-ending-child-marriage-mozambique>
- Statistics Sierra Leone (2018) Sierra Leone Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017, Survey Findings Report. Freetown. www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/sierra_leone_mics6_2017_report.pdf
- Steiner, J. J. and Spear, A. M. (2020) *IDS Bulletin*, Vol. 51, No. 2. Institute of Development Studies. Accessed 08/12/2021. <https://bulletin.ids.ac.uk/index.php/idsbo/article/view/3102/3103>
- Taimo (2015) Keeping Girls in School: Building the capacity of the women and education association in Mozambique. Oxfam. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/keeping-girls-in-school-building-the-capacity-of-the-women-and-education-associ-560597/>
- Trinies, V., Caruso, B., Sogore, A., Toubkiss, J., Freeman, M. (2015) Uncovering the challenges to menstrual hygiene management in schools in Mali. *Waterlines*, 34: 31-40.

Turner, F., Taylor, G., Outhred, R. (2020) GPE 2020 Country-Level Prospective Evaluations. First Annual Report: Mali. Universalia. www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2020-04-country-level-prospective-evaluations-mali.pdf

UNDP (2020) 2020 Human Development Perspectives: Tackling Social Norms: A game changer for gender inequalities. New York. http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hd_perspectives_gsni.pdf

UNESCO (2020) Global Education Monitoring Report—Gender Report: A new generation: 25 years of efforts for gender equality in education. Paris. <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/2020genderreport>

UNESCO (2021) When schools shut: gendered impacts of COVID-19 school closures. Paris. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379270>

UNESCO and UN Women (2016) Global Guidance on Addressing School-Related Gender-Based Violence. www.unicef.org/media/66506/file/Global-Guidance-SRGBV.pdf

UNFPA (n.d.) Mauritania - Female Genital Mutilation Dashboard. www.unfpa.org/data/fgm/MR

UNFPA (2017) Review of Adolescent and Youth Policies, Strategies and Laws in Selected Countries in West Africa. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) West and Central Africa Regional Office: Dakar, Senegal. https://wcaro.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_WAfrica_Youth_ENG_20170726%20%281%29_0.pdf

UNFPA (2020) Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage. www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19_impact_brief_for_UNFPA_24_April_2020_1.pdf

UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women (2020) Technical Note on Gender-Transformative Approaches in the Global Programme to End Child Marriage Phase II: A Summary for Practitioners. www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Technical_Note_on_Gender-Transformative_Approaches_in_the_GPECM_Phase_II_A_Summary_for_Practitioners-January-2020.pdf

UNGEI, Education International, Gender at Work, Global Affairs Canada (2018) Education Unions Take Action to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence. www.ungei.org/publication/education-unions-take-action-end-school-related-gender-based-violence

UNGEI (2021) Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI) Newsletter, Issue 1. www.ungei.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/GCI-Newsletter-Issue-1-2021-eng.pdf

UNGEI (2021a) Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI) Briefing Note. www.ungei.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/GCI_Briefing_Note_ENGLISH_V5%20%281%29.pdf

UNGEI (2022) Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI) Newsletter, Issue 2. www.ungei.org/publication/gci-newsletter-issue-2-english

UNICEF (2019) Education under threat in West and Central Africa. UNICEF Child Alert. www.unicef.org/child-alert/education-threat-west-central-africa

UNICEF (2019a) Chad: Addressing prejudices against girls' education. <https://blogs.unicef.org/blog/chad-addressing-prejudices-girls-education/>

UNICEF (2019b) Mozambique Humanitarian Situation Report - 15 May 2019. www.unicef.org/media/75226/file/Mozambique-SitRep-Cyclone-Idai-Kenneth-15-May-2019.pdf

UNICEF (2020a) Adolescent Girls in West and Central Africa: Data Brief. New York. www.unicef.org/wca/media/3861/file/Adolescents%20girls%20in%20West%20and%20Central%20Africa.pdf

UNICEF (2020b) Child Marriage in the Sahel. New York. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Child-marriage-in-the-Sahel-brochure-English_2020.pdf

UNICEF (2020c) Niger Humanitarian Situation Report No.12. New York. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Niger%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report%20December%202020.pdf>

UNICEF (n.d.) Adolescent and social norms situation in Mozambique. www.unicef.org/mozambique/en/adolescent-social-norms

UNICEF (n.d.) Adolescents and Social Norms in Niger. www.unicef.org/niger/adolescents-and-social-norms

UNICEF (n.d.) Nigeria, Education. www.unicef.org/nigeria/education

UNICEF and UNFPA (2019) UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage. Burkina Faso Country Profile. www.unicef.org/media/88801/file/Child-marriage-Burkina-Faso-profile-2019.pdf

UNICEF and UNFPA (2020) Technical Note on Gender Norms. www.unicef.org/media/65381/file/GP-2020-Technical-Note-Gender-Norms.pdf

UNICEF and UNFPA (2021) UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to End Child Marriage. Burkina Faso Country Profile. www.unicef.org/media/111366/file/Child-marriage-country-profile-Burkina-Faso-2021.pdf

UNICEF (2021a) Reopening with Resilience: Lessons from remote learning during Covid-19 in West and Central Africa. New York: UNICEF. www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/Reopening-with-Resilience-WCA.pdf

UNICEF (2021b) Analysis of education spending in the West and Central Africa region. A Policy Brief for Ministers of Education and Finance. Dakar: UNICEF Regional Office for West and Central Africa. www.unicef.org/wca/media/7131/file/Reimagining-Financing-for-Education-Policy-Brief.pdf

UNICEF Mauritania (2017) Rapport final - Mauritanie - Enquête par grappes à indicateurs multiples MICS5 2015 - mars 2017. https://mics-surveys-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/MICS5/West%20and%20Central%20Africa/Mauritania/2015/Final/Mauritania%202015%20MICS_French.pdf

UNICEF (2021c) Data: Education Overview. Completion Rates, Lower Secondary. April 2021. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/overview/>

UNICEF and UNGEI (2021) Technical Note on Girls' Education, Empowerment, and the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation. New York: UNICEF. www.ungei.org/publication/girls-education-empowerment-elimination-FGM

UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women (2020) Technical Note on Gender-Transformative Approaches in the Global Programme to End Child Marriage Phase II: A Summary for Practitioners. UNFPA. www.unicef.org/media/58196/file

UNICEF, Plan International and UNGEI (2021) Gender Transformative Education: Brief www.ungei.org/publication/gender-transformative-education

Universal Management Group (2018) Summative Evaluation of GPE's Country-Level Support to Education. Batch 1, Country 1: Burkina Faso. Final Report. Montreal. www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2018-11-26-gpe-cle-final-report-burkina-faso.pdf

Universal Management Group (2018) Summative Evaluation of GPE's Country-Level Support to Education. Batch 1, Country 2: Sierra Leone. Final Report. Montreal. www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2020-04-summative-evaluation-gpe-country-level-support-education-sierra-leone.pdf

UN OCHA (2020) Burkina Faso Protection Crisis Advocacy Brief - Child Protection. Burkina Faso Child Protection Sub-Cluster. www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2026907/cp_aor_note_de_plaidoyer_en.pdf

UN OCHA (2021) West and Central Africa: Situation Report. <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/west-central-africa/>

UN OCHA (2021a) Situation Report: Mozambique. September 2021. <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/mozambique/>

UN Women (2020) Women Count Data Hub SDG Dashboard: Burkina Faso. <https://data.unwomen.org/country/burkina-faso>

UN Women (2020) Women Count Data Hub SDG Dashboard: Chad. <https://data.unwomen.org/country/chad>

UN Women and Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Collective (2017) Menstrual Hygiene Management: The Experience of Nomadic and Sedentary Populations in Niger. www.communityledtotalsanitation.org/sites/communityledtotalsanitation.org/files/MHM_Niger.pdf

- Van Deijk, R. (2007) Protecting children. Community attitudes to child sexual abuse in rural Mozambique. Save the Children UK. <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/protecting-children-community-attitudes-child-sexual-abuse-rural-mozambique/>
- Vaz, A., Pratley, P., Alkire, S. (2016) Measuring Women's Autonomy in Chad Using the Relative Autonomy Index, *Feminist Economics*, 22:1, 264-294.
- Versluys, E. (2019) Gender norms, child marriage and girls' education in West and Central Africa. Save the Children. www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/child_marriage_2019_en.pdf
- Voices for Change (2017) Strengthening the enabling environment for young women's empowerment in Nigeria: Achievements and learning from Voices for Change. www.alignplatform.org/resources/strengthening-enabling-environment-young-womens-empowerment-nigeria-achievements-and
- Walker, J. A. (2016) Why Ending Child Marriage Needs to Be an Educational Goal. Brookings. www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/walker_girls_education.pdf
- Watson, C., Dnalbaye, E., Nan-guer, B. (2018) Refugees and host communities in Chad: dynamics of social inclusion. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/734861563057353544/pdf/Refugee-and-Host-Communities-in-Chad-Dynamics-of-Economic-and-Social-Inclusion-Report-of-Qualitative-Research-Findings.pdf>
- Welsh, P., Abba, U., Bishop, K., Enye, C. (2017) Voices for Change Legacy Paper: 'Our strength is not for hurting:' Engaging men for gender equality. Voices 4 Change. www.sddirect.org.uk/media/1918/1624-v4c-lp-engaging-men-web-1.pdf
- Wessells, M., Manyeh, M and Lamin, D. (2014) 'Preliminary Results of the Community-Driven Intervention to Reduce Teenage Pregnancy in Two Districts of Sierra Leone: Findings from Participatory Review Workshops with Children and Adults,' London: Interagency Learning Initiative on Community Based Child Protection Mechanisms and Child Protection Systems.
- World Bank (2018) World Bank Data. Secondary education, teachers, female—Nigeria. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.TCHR.FE?locations=NG>
- World Food Programme (2019) Faim Zéro: Rapport de l'examen stratégique national Faim Zéro de la République du Tchad. www.wfp.org/publications/chad-strategic-review
- Yotebieng, K. (2021) What we know (and do not know) about persistent social norms that serve as barriers to girls' access, participation and achievement in education in eight sub-Saharan African countries. New York: UNGEI. www.ungei.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/Social-Norms-Barriers-Girls-Education-GCI-2021-eng.pdf

ANNEX 1: CONTINENTAL POLICIES AND LEGISLATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND EDUCATION REVIEWED

African Union (2016) Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016—2025.

https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/29958-doc-cesa_-_english-v9.pdf

FAWE. (2018) Gender Equality Strategy: Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016—2025).

https://issuu.com/fawe/docs/gender_equality_strategy_for_the_co

African Union (2015) Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf

African Union (2018) AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2018–2028.

<https://au.int/en/articles/au-strategy-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>

AU/CIEFFA (2021a) Implementation report of the Strategic Plan 2018–20. African Union International Center for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa.

<https://cieffa.au.int/en/documents/2021-09-03/implementationreportof-hestrategicplan18-20>

African Continental Qualifications Framework: <https://acqf.africa/>

African Union Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol).

https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/37077-treaty-charter_on_rights_of_women_in_africa.pdf

African Union (2021b) Niamey Call to Action and Commitment on Eliminating Harmful Practices.

https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/41067-wd-Niamey_Call_to_Action_and_Commitment_on_Eliminating_Harmful_Practices.pdf

ANNEX 2: GENDER AND EDUCATION PLANS AND POLICIES REVIEWED—GCI COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

Burkina Faso

Programme sectoriel de l'éducation et de la formation (PSEF) 2012—2021.

<https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2013/programme-sectoriel-de-l%C3%A9ducation-et-de-la-formation-psef-2012-2021-5626>

Plan d'urgence pour l'éducation au Burkina Faso 2020—2021.

<https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2020/plan-d%E2%80%99urgence-pour-l%E2%80%99%C3%A9ducation-au-burkina-faso-2020-2021-7079>

Plan de réponse du MENAPLN pour la continuité éducative dans le contexte du COVID-19.

<https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2020/plan-de-r%C3%A9ponse-du-menapln-pour-la-continuit%C3%A9-%C3%A9ducative-dans-le-contexte-du-covid-19-6939>

Strategie Nationale de Prevention et D'Elimination du Mariage d'Enfants (2016—2025).

<https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/documents/487/Burkina-Faso-National-Strategy-2016-2025-Nov-2015.pdf>

SNAEF (Stratégie nationale d'accélération de l'éducation des filles).

Chad

Plan Intérimaire de l'Education au Tchad (PIET) 2018—2020.

https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/chad_plan_interimare_de_leducation_2018-2020.pdf

Plan de réponse nationale du secteur éducation à l'épidémie de COVID 19 au Tchad (PRNSE C19).

<https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2020/plan-de-r%C3%A9ponse-nationale-du-secteur-%C3%A9ducation-%C3%A0-l%E2%80%99%C3%A9pid%C3%A9mie-de-covid-19-au-tchad-prnse-c19-6997>

Mali

Programme décennal de développement de l'éducation et de la formation professionnelle deuxième génération (PRODEC II 2019—2028).

<https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2020/programme-d%C3%A9cennal-de-d%C3%A9veloppement-de-l%E2%80%99%C3%A9ducation-et-de-la-formation-professionnelle-deuxi%C3%A8me>

Stratégie de lutte contre la pandémie du COVID 19 en milieu scolaire.

<https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2020/strat%C3%A9gie-de-lutte-contre-la-pand%C3%A9mie-du-covid-19-en-milieu-scolaire-6971>

Mauritania

Programme national de développement du secteur de l'éducation (PNDSE II) 2011—2020.

<https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2011/programme-national-de-d%C3%A9veloppement-du-secteur-educatif-2011-2020-pndse-ii-plan-daction>

Plan de riposte de l'éducation en réponse à la pandémie du Covid-19 (2020).

<https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2020/plan-de-riposte-de-l%C3%A9ducation-en-r%C3%A9ponse-%C3%A0-la-pand%C3%A9mie-du-covid-19-7071>

Mozambique

Plano Estratégico da Educação (PEE) 2020—2029.

<https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2020/plano-estrat%C3%A9gico-da-educa%C3%A7%C3%A3o-2020-2029-anexo-do-plano-estrat%C3%A9gico-da-educa%C3%A7%C3%A3o-2020-2029-plano>

Programa de Educação em Emergência (EeE) 2020—2021.

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2020-05-18-COVID-19%20AFF%20Request%20Mozambique.pdf>

Niger

Plan de transition du secteur de l'éducation et de la formation (PTSEF) 2020—2022.

<https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2020/plan-de-transition-du-secteur-de-l%E2%80%99C3%A9ducation-et-de-la-formation-2020-2022-7076>

Nigeria

Education for change: a ministerial strategic plan (2018—2022).

https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/nigeria_education_ministerial_plan_2018-2022.pdf

National Strategy to End Child Marriage in Nigeria (2016—2021).

https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/documents/633/Strategy-to-end-child-marriage_for-printing_08-03-2017.pdf

Education sector COVID-19 contingency plan (2020).

<https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2020/education-sector-covid-19-contingency-plan-6863>

Nigeria Education Sector COVID19 Response Strategy in the Northeast (2020).

<https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2020/nigeria-education-sector-covid19-response-strategy-northeast-6998>

Guidelines for schools and learning facilities reopening after Covid-19 pandemic closures (2020).

<https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2020/guidelines-schools-and-learning-facilities-reopening-after-covid-19-pandemic-closures-6982>

Sierra Leone

Education Sector Plan 2018-2020.

<https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/education-sector-plan-2018-2020-sierra-leone>

National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools (2021).

<https://mbsse.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Radical-Inclusion-Policy.pdf>

National strategy for the reduction of adolescent pregnancy and child marriage (2018—2022).

https://sierraleone.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/National%20Strategy%20for%20the%20reduction%20of%20Adolescent%20Pregnancy_final_Oct%202021.pdf

Republic of Sierra Leone: Education sector analysis: assessing the enabling environment for gender equality (2020).

<http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/publication/republic-sierra-leone-education-sector-analysis-assessing-enabling-environment-gender>

COVID-19 Education Emergency Response Plan (2020).

<https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/en/2020/covid-19-education-emergency-response-plan-6954>

ANNEX 3: KEY DATA SOURCES: GCI COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

Education and gender-related plans, policies and strategies

IIEP-UNESCO Planipolis: Portal of Education Plans and Policies.

<https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/>

GCI Baseline Study Country Level Reports.

<https://www.ungei.org/feature-collection/gender-centre>

Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) level of gender discrimination

The SIGI is a multidimensional index capturing both the de jure and de facto discrimination of social institutions through information on laws, attitudes and practices. The index has four sub-indices—discrimination within the family, restricted physical integrity, restricted access to productive and financial resources and restricted civil liberties. Countries are classified into five levels of gender discrimination based on the SIGI values—very low, low, medium, high and very high.

Data and Minimum Legal Age for Marriage

Girls Not Brides Atlas.

<https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/>

Data and Existence of Policies and Laws Banning FGM

UNFPA FGM Dashboard.

<https://www.unfpa.org/data/dashboard/fgm>

Lower secondary level completion rate

UNICEF Education Data - April 2021.

<https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/overview/>

Early childbearing rate

UNESCO GEMR (2020) Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Gender Report. A new generation: 25 years of efforts for gender equality in education.

<https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/2020genderreport>

Female teachers

UNESCO GEMR (2020) Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Gender Report. A new generation: 25 years of efforts for gender equality in education.

<https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/2020genderreport>

PRIORITÉ À L'ÉGALITÉ
GENDER AT THE 
CENTRE 

For more information, please do not hesitate
to reach out to gdiamond@ungei.org

[Gender at the Centre Initiative \(UNGEI\)](#)

[Gender at the Centre Initiative](#)
(IIEP-UNESCO Dakar)