

How is gender equality included in education sector planning?

An analysis of power, voice and social change in Mali

Mali Country Report

Annex D.8 Mali Country Report

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List of Acronyms

APE	Association des Parents de Eleves
CGS	Comites de gestion scolaire/School Management Committee
CSO	Civil society organisation
EFA	Education for All
ESA	Education Sector Analysis
ESP	Education Sector Plan
FONGIM	Forum des ONG Internationales du Mali
LEG	Local Education Group
MOE	Ministry of Education
PAPB	Plan d'actions pluriannuel budgétisé
PRODEC	Programme Décennal de Développement de l'éducation
PRODEC II	Programme Décennal de Développement de l'éducation et de la Formation Professionnelle deuxième génération
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TFP	Technical Financial Partner/Partenaires Techniques et Financiers
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO-IIEP	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation - Institute of International Educational Planning

Context and overview of planning process

Although the last two decades have seen considerable progress on global commitments to address gender disparities in education, many challenges remain. Girls in Sub-Saharan Africa are still furthest from equality in educational access and achievement, with factors such as poverty and location compounding with discriminatory gender norms to exclude girls from education (UNESCO 2022b). Through the [Gender at the Centre Initiative \(GCI\)](#), a program that encourages Ministries of Education to embed gender equality at the heart of education systems, a study was commissioned to examine how gender equality is integrated in education sector planning in 8 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nigeria, Niger and Sierra Leone). The synthesis report identifies examples of good practice, opportunities and threats to promote gender transformative education systems. This country report presents the findings of the analysis for Mali.

The analysis focuses on the Education Sector Planning (ESP) process 2019-2028 for the Programme Décennal de Développement de l'éducation et de la Formation Professionnelle deuxième génération (PRODEC II) in Mali. It is based on fifteen interviews with ministry stakeholders, civil society organisations (CSOs), donors and technical partners directly involved in the process.

The ESP process was led by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The MOE set up a technical committee for the elaboration of PRODEC II comprising 16 members from three ministries in charge of education. The process started with the education sector analysis (ESA) in 2017 and the evaluation of the implementation of the previous ESP (PRODEC). A multi-year budgeted action plan/Plan d'actions pluriannuel budgétisé (PAPB) accompanied the PRODEC II. It lists and allocates funding to actions of the PRODEC II which will be implemented over the next 4 years. The first PAPB was developed during the PRODEC II planning process.

The PRODEC II includes the programme 3: promoting equitable and inclusive education access for all. To reach this goal, seven strategies are detailed, of which two clearly mentioned girls: (i) the consideration of gender equity in school buildings and equipment, and the allocation of teachers; (ii) the introduction of rewards for deserving girls. Programme 3 of the PRODEC II focuses on equity in particular between girls and boys. In addition to the strategies already mentioned above, it foresees actions to maintain girls at school and actions against gender-based violence at family and school/university level. Other programmes have gender concerns such as (i) developing inclusive curricula, though strategies mentioned do not inform how and (ii) support girls' access to scientific training through incentives.

Statistics show that in 2019, the total population was 19,66 million of which 51% are girls and women. In 2017, 48,8% of the population was below 15 years old. The country also regularly ranks low on global indices such as the Gender Inequality

Index¹ (ranking of 155 out of 191 was achieved in 2020) which is a composite index of health, empowerment economic participation and educational attainment.

Thematic findings

Political Economy

Political will

The PRODEC II takes into consideration key areas highlighted in Mali's gender policies such as the national gender policy and the national policy on girls' schooling. Stakeholders agreed that there were gender-based inequalities in education, including disparity in access and retention of girls in schools. They also highlighted the existing consensus in the Ministry of Education to work towards the objective of an education system to be inclusive for all. Ministry stakeholders further endorsed this by stating that no opposition towards provision of equal opportunities to girls is present from the Ministry staff. Despite this, some stakeholders emphasised that there is a lack of commitment towards gender issues at the highest levels of the Ministry.

"Some leaders are reluctant to gender. They do not give a lot of importance to gender issues." - Mali

Commitment towards the SDGs has encouraged the Ministry to commit itself to include all children including girls. Financial and technical partners reminded the Ministry of the country's commitment to endorse the SDG to invite the technical team to embrace the inclusive and equality goals and also evoked possible penalty such as withdrawal of funding if the international commitment towards the SDG is not respected. Actions under PRODEC II won't be implemented unless financed by a technical and financial partner.

Accountability

Stakeholders said that the background studies for PRODEC II guide the development of the plan. The recommendations from the evaluation of the Programme Décennal de Développement de l'éducation (PRODEC) presents guidelines for the development of PRODEC II. These include the enrolment of girls, recruitment of more female teachers, the appointment of women by quota, etc.

¹ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>

These considerations provided a roadmap for the stakeholders engaged in the development of PRODEC II. Along with the recommendations, other preparatory studies were also discussed in the technical commissions. The technical and financial partners, international organizations and the cadres of the Ministries discussed and validated all information together, setting out the educational context on which PRODEC II was to be built. Stakeholders from the technical committee said that they followed the recommendations from those background studies.

The technical and financial partners validated the planning process and the document itself. The technical committee members have been identified based on the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation - Institute for International Education Planning (UNESCO-IIEP) guidelines. The technical and financial partners validated the roadmap setting out the planning process for PRODEC II. It gives a credibility to the how and by who the PRODEC II has been developed. Finally, the PRODEC II document is endorsed by the Technical and Financial Partners and is validated by the various parties supporting education in Mali such as Forum des ONG Internationales du Mali (FONGIM) and the Education for All (EFA) coalition representing international and national NGOs. This gives legitimacy to the PRODEC II document by organizations that are cited as committed to gender.

Relationships

Power and Decision-making

Ministry's stakeholders said that the decision of approving the document was mutually agreed and that PRODEC II was very inclusive; the stakeholders though did not agree with this assessment.

The committee members of the budgeted action plan (PAPB) made final strategic choices about the plan at a later stage, where both participatory approaches and gender expertise were limited. PRODEC II covers a 10-year period and includes many strategies. The filtering of these studies and the final decisions about what goes in were done at the level of the PAPB.

The lower priority strategies are not programmed in the PAPB, which only covers 4 years. The PAPB was developed by the PAPB committee which brings together planning technicians with limited gender expertise and for the development of which the participatory approach was restricted. Only one expert from the Ministry of Finance who has gender expertise was included in the committee.

The main consultations were held at the later stages of the process, at which point leading actors were reluctant to change their draft. Consultative workshop within the Ministries and the partners gathered many people (approx.80-100). NGO

representative said that documents were shared prior to the meeting but may not have been read extensively due to their size. The technical committee responsible for writing the document led the consultative processes. Participants said that the committee itself was reluctant to make detailed changes. For example, stakeholders requested that inclusion issues to be integrated differently in the document, but this request was not granted as it would have required a change to the main structure of the document.

Despite these concerns on gender and inclusion, a NGO representative said that major changes were made to the preschool sections. It required a concerted strategy between various actors from the Ministry, the UN and the NGOs to request those changes during the workshop. They decided to sit in different places in the room. One person asked for a change with regards to preschool, when it was pushed back by the technical committee, then another person asked for the same change and another person supported that, and in the end they succeeded to get the change made. They developed a strategy to bring the changes requested by different people representing different organizations with an aligned message for change.

Representatives of the Technical and Financial Partners shared those different versions of the document were shared within the LEG for comment but that *"in the end it was the members of the technical team who validated the final version without explaining whether the proposals made had been taken into account or not"*.

Decisions during the planning process were taken by the technical committee in consultation with the directors of each department engaged. It is important to note that due to communication issues, decisions are sometimes not accepted by the rest of the department, which can explain hurdles faced in implementation (e.g. teacher reform work).

Gender experts held parallel meetings were held with national and international NGOs on gender issues, to share expertise for the preparation of PRODEC II.

Networks and Coalitions

Being a respected and senior (even sometimes retired) staff of the MoE is a key element to be part of the technical committee and to have power into it. The technical and financial partners have also a large influence due to their funding and some have more influence than other due to their role in the Local Education Group.

It was reported that the views of some members had more weight than others because of their position on the Technical Committee for PRODEC II and years of experience. Seniority and hierarchy were emphasized by stakeholders as a key driver of influence, rather than gender expertise. The member of the committee are key resource persons for the MoE; they have extensive experience in the

education sector, have been in senior positions, participated in the development of PRODEC I and either at the end of their careers or retired. None of them had an expertise on gender. The technical committee for PRODEC II counted 1 woman from UNESCO who was not there is any gender expertise capacity, amongst 16 members.

In the fora for discussing the PRODEC II, stakeholders said that a certain power was given to facts and to data and consequently the institutions that can commission studies can influence debates. Therefore, members having associations and experience with national and international organisations were considered important in discussions. Similarly, on the gender dimension, the expertise of financial and technical partners and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) was considerably more influential in discussions.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was cited as a leader in education due to its leadership of the Local Education Group (LEG) and its funding to the MOE. A respondent stated that, "*UNICEF has access to the MOE's cabinet and Permanent secretary to push files.*" Together with the MOE's gender expert, the technical and financial partners have succeeded in influencing PRODEC II and integrating Programme 3 "*Promoting Equitable and Inclusive Access to Quality Education for All*".

The technical and financial partners (TFPs) have had a huge influence on the content of the PRODEC II and PAPB through their funding. The importance of the influence of TFP funding has sometimes been minimized by the fact that it takes place within the framework of partnership agreements that follow the country's orientations.

Voice

Gender Expertise

Gender expertise was scarce in the planning process. Few members of the technical committee had a background in gender analysis or had taken any courses or attended workshops on the subject. Some were very unreceptive to gender issues.

"Gender is folklore, there is no gender issue in education, we always talk about girls and boys" - Representative of Ministry of Education quoting a Technical Committee Member

Staff of the Ministry of Education (MOE) were consulted at a decentralized level. Interviewees said that these staff also did not have specific gender training. At each decentralized level (AE and CAP), there are girls' schooling focal points. While these

focal points lack the gender expertise needed to inform the planning process, they may have a certain knowledge of on the ground reality. Nonetheless, they have not been involved in the development of PRODEC II.

One gender expert from the Ministry of Economy and Finance, trained by UNESCO/IIEP, supported the development of the PAPB. He supported the Ministry to integrate gender sensitive activity into the plan, to develop gender sensitive indicators and to measure the budget allocated to gender. He considered the MoE far from being a leader on those questions.

Technical and financial partners and NGOs did assign a gender expert to contribute to the development of the process. They relied on their staff and called on their regional gender experts, if needed. There was no mention of a gender expert supporting the process from any other avenue than the government, but there was general recognition that staff in the INGOs and the Technical and financial partners has a good understanding of gender issues. Gender expertise was not always solicited in planning processes. Two gender experts from the Ministry had a sufficient rank to be invited to the development of the PRODEC II. Only one expert participated actively, while the other one attended only the consultative workshop. Preference was given to the person in charge of girls' schooling rather than the person in charge of gender.

Gender has been seen as something that goes beyond education and therefore the PRODEC II. Respondents stated that the presence of gender experts in the workshops provokes remarks such as *"you will start with your gender problems"*, boxing out the the gender dimension. There is a misunderstanding of the gender approach, which is often seen as *"women standing up against men"* as stated by a Ministry's official.

Gender discussion was limited to aspects of girls' schooling. Thematic commissions of the LEG were one avenue to prepare and discuss the PRODEC. Gender experts attended the Technical Commission 3 on equitable and inclusive access to education² but not the other commissions. Few discussions have taken place in commissions other than the one on access to quality education for all. For example, gender issues were not discussed in the thematic committee for teachers where the problems of career management, quality etc... were in the foreground.

During consultative workshops, discussions on gender were limited and no major decision has been taken. An NGO representative further cemented this stating, *"Nobody seemed very virulent on gender issues"*.

Although, gender expertise was limited within the development of PRODEC II, most stakeholders interviewed, seemed satisfied with programme 3 of the PRODEC II and highlighted that they have been listened to on the gender dimension. Some proposals put forward have also been included, such as the monitoring of violence against children at a decentralized level.

Stakeholders less committed to gender also endorsed this claim stating that gender experts have been listened to because their requests have been included

² Group 1: Improving the internal and external effectiveness of the system, Group 2: Improving teacher training and management, Group 3: Promoting equitable and inclusive access to quality basic education for all, Group 4: Strengthening sector governance

in PRODEC II. Examples of concrete actions included are: "the construction of separate latrines, access ramps, etc." However, a Ministry's official stated that the gender experts would say that they have not been listened to fully because "*they always want more while there are negotiations to be made*".

Voices of communities & young people

Communities and young people attended presentation of PRODEC II at a later stage where possibility of influence was limited. The School management committee/Comites de gestion scolaire (CGS), the students-parents association/ Association des Parents d'Élèves (APE) and educational advisors at the level of the town hall attended the PRODEC II Presentation workshop at decentralized level.

Students and young people were involved at the end of the process through their unions who were invited to the PRODEC II presentation workshop at central level. In addition, some preparatory studies for PRODEC II, in particular the gender study, held consultations with representatives of local authorities, school principals and girls.

Other than this, consultation with youth and communities during the process was not mentioned by any interviewee.

Society

Social Norms

While, stakeholders from the Ministry said that social norms can be discussed without resistance within the Ministry of Education, this was not what others said about these complex issues.

Social norms was discussed in connection with the PRODEC II girls' schooling programme. In general, social norms are considered as contributing to unequal access to and retention of girls in education. That said, other factors were often cited as more important to limiting access to school, such as poverty, and the impact of social norms was often minimized.

Despite reports that discussions on social norms take place within the MoE, considerations of social norms as barriers to girls' education and how to address, them are not covered in the PRODEC II. The justification for this omission given by respondents is that PRODEC II can give guidance but cannot on its own drive social norm change; this speaks to a lack of understanding of social norms in education. The change in social norms was seen to be part of a community approach and

awareness campaigns to counter the strong resistance of communities, and as such outside of the purview of the education sector.

For others, stakeholders outside the Ministry, the question of social norms appears to be a sensitive issue linked to customary, cultural and religious traditions. The cultural root is so strong that according to one respondent, *"even those who talk about it are not always convinced of what they say"*.

Religious institutions were invited for consultation. However, some stakeholders said that the conflicts and political instability of recent years has made religious debate that includes discussions around social norms very difficult. There are radical religious groups that reject mainstream education and religious institutions favorable to it are very attentive to its content especially in relation to sexuality or discussions such as about the age of marriage. The power of these groups is significant, and it was noted that they have the capacity to conduct media campaigns to launch a protest, stop reforms and overthrow people in high-level positions in the MoE.

There is a distinction that is made between what is validated at the technical level and what is validated at the political level. PRODEC II is a form of political validation. Political validation of measures that change social norms is more difficult. To facilitate this, there needs to be a strong commitment at the ministerial and government levels on advancing gender issues. However, it seems that this did not take place during PRODEC II.

Resistance

As noted above on the discussion of social norms, there is significant a cultural and religious resistance to advance social norms in education.

There is also a technical resistance or inertia as gender expertise is low within the ministry and the concern about gender in education is not well-understood and therefore there is no real commitment.

SWOT Analysis

3.1 Strengths

Disaggregated data and gender studies were available and used to inform the development of PRODEC II and to support discussions around gender issues and their inclusion in the document.

While limited, National gender experts at the ministries level and technical and financial partners, including national and international NGO, do exist and were included in the discussion on gender issues and were able to contribute to the integration of a specific Programme 3, around equity and inclusion in the PRODEC II.

The planning process organized various workshop to introduce the document and for the PRODEC II to be shared widely.

3.2 Weaknesses

The involvement of stakeholders included some consultations, but these took place only at a late stage and on advanced documents, where few changes were welcome.

The process to request modifications of the document was difficult and the technical team who wrote the document and led the consultative process was reluctant to make changes.

There was no accountability to stakeholders as to whether a recommendation on the document was integrated in the final or not and why.

There is no evidence of a key person, organization or coalition who played the role of the champion for gender advancement in the process; and therefore, Programme 3 introduced only a few minor actions in support of girls' schooling. No major discussions and modifications to proposals in the plan around gender equity took place; this is in contrast to the level of conversation and changes made to ensure strong inclusion of pre-school.

The participatory process encouraged consultation but discussion on gender equity remained largely internal to the Ministry.

Gender expertise was scarce, and participation limited as these key experts were not part of the more influential technical committee and were asked to keep quiet when attending other workshops.

When data and information is available, there is a need for someone or an organization to pick them up and push them forward during the various workshops.

3.3 Opportunities

While data on girls' participation in school has existed in Mali for many years, UNESCO is planning to strengthen this with further data collection on gender. Stakeholders also mentioned the needs for mapping gender initiatives and capitalizing on all projects that focus on girls' schooling to know what works (menstrual kit over providing a bike or scholarship, etc...) to help programming for evidence-based gender initiatives. Research opportunities like this could help to better position gender experts to advocate for stronger attention to gender transformation in the next Education Sector Plan

Given the frustration and challenges faced by those who were consulted late in the process and did not get their views adequately addressed in the plan, there is an opportunity to ensure that future planning involve stakeholders earlier and in a more inclusive way.

Stakeholders did not strategically build a coalition to advance gender equity, strategy which has been used with success for advancing the consideration of the preschool level within the PRODEC II.

Stakeholders who are key in providing education at local level were not involved. In particular, local authorities (e.g. the Mayor) who have their own education plans at local level, have educational commissions and are also in charge of other areas that may have an impact on schooling may support a better implementation of PRODEC II.

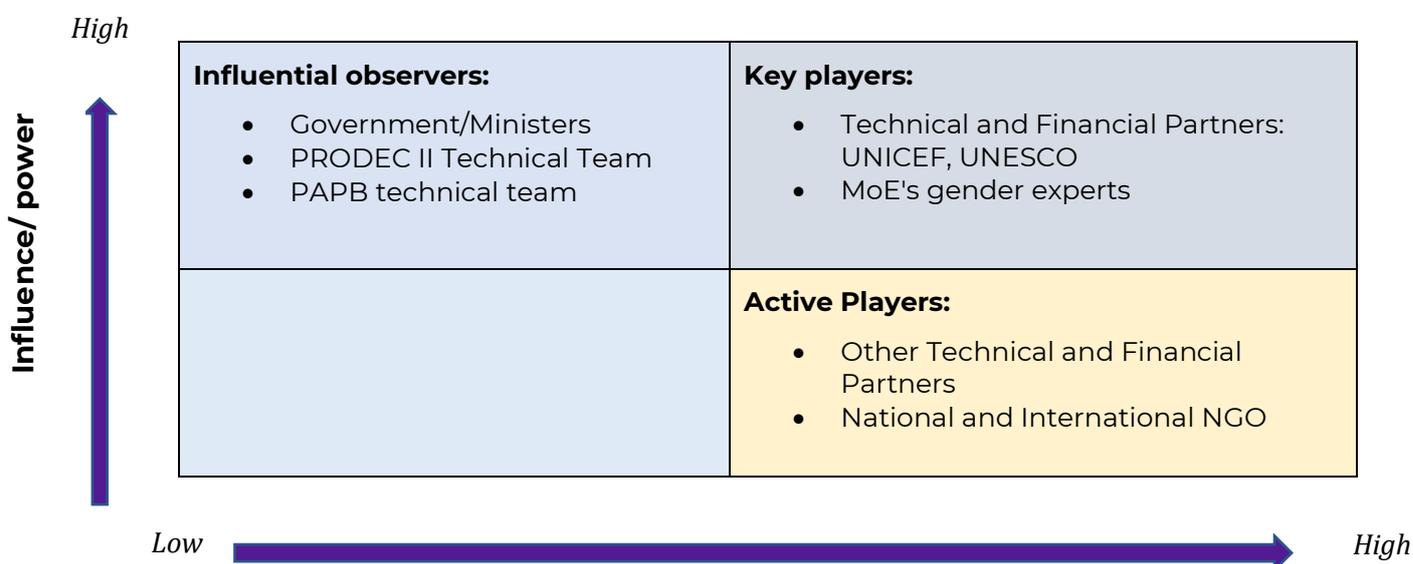
3.4 Threats

The lack of budget is a threat to the implementation of the PRODEC II. The budget is allocated almost exclusively to operating costs, including salaries.

Actions under PRODEC II, especially those few in support of gender equality, will not be implemented unless financed by a TFP.
Resistance to debate around social norms amongst religion leaders is a threat to advancement of discussions about the impact of these norms on children.
Conflict and political crisis made the collection of data harder, such as for the preparatory studies.

Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder Matrix



Commitment to Gender transformative system change: Stakeholders with high influence on the development of the PRODEC II were not the ones the most committed to gender equality in education. The technical and financial partners and MoE's gender experts influenced the discussion around gender equality on an individual basis. However they did not build a coalition to defend gender equality, which is a winning strategy to influence the debate.

Key informants list

Ministry	<p>MAIGA N'Deye Batio SENE, Gender Technical advisor, Ministry of Education</p> <p>Ms Bodo SOUMARE DOUCOURE, Head of the Girls' Education Division, Ministry of Education</p>
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	<p>Ms Fatoumata CISSE, Former Gender Technical Advisor, presently Director of Non-formal Education, Ministry of Education</p> <p>Mr Ismaila BERTHE, Technical Adviser, Ministry of Education</p> <p>Tiéoulé DIARRA, Statistics and planification department (CPS), Ministry of Education</p> <p>Mariam Maiga, Statistics and planification department (CPS), Ministry of Education</p> <p>Sidy DIALLO, General direction of budget, Ministry of economy and finance</p>
CSOs	<p>NAPARE Magnine DIARRA, National Coordinator FAWE Mali, GCI lead in Mali</p> <p>Lazare Charle DJIBODE, Programme Director, Plan International</p> <p>Fily DIALLO, gender expert, Plan International</p> <p>Daouda COULIBALY, Education specialist, Plan International</p> <p>Sandrine TEMBELY, FONGIM Coordinator</p>
Technical and Financial Partners	<p>Olivier KI-ZERBO, Education portfolio lead, European Union</p> <p>Amadou GUTEYE, Research assistant, UNESCO Mali</p> <p>Saip SY, Education program manager, UNESCO Mali</p>

List of documents reviewed

1. Ministère de l'Education Nationale, Aide-Mémoire, Revue conjointe du secteur de l'éducation et de la formation professionnelle 2019, Juin 2019.
2. République du Mali, Analyse du secteur de l'éducation, Juin 2017.
3. Ministère de l'Education Nationale, Programme Décennal de Développement de l'éducation et de la Formation Professionnelle deuxième génération (PRO