

GENDER AT THE CENTER INITIATIVE (GCI)

ADVOCACY BRIEF

A whole-system approach to Gender-Transformative Education

THE CHALLENGE

Before the Covid-19 pandemic, there were 15 million girls who had never been to school compared to 10 million boys (UNESCO Institute of Statistics) and only 19% of low-income countries had achieved gender parity in education (UNICEF).

But gender parity is not the only issue. Even when a girl is able to stay in school, she is often at risk of school-related gender-based violence, experiences gender-biased teaching and is not able to make her own choices for her life and future. Gender-blind education systems also impact boys, reproducing harmful notions of masculinity and depriving them of the chance to imagine alternative futures. For education systems to unlock their transformative power and contribute to gender equal societies, we need a whole-system approach that addresses the root causes of gender inequality both within the system and its surroundings.

THE GCI APPROACH

The Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI) is an innovative program working with governments, civil society, young feminist activists and local actors to advance gender equality in and through education. The initiative strengthens technical gender capacity, fosters political will and supports the transformation of harmful gender norms. Jointly coordinated by [UNGEI](#) and [IIEP-UNESCO](#), GCI is currently implemented in eight countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone). Through a unique partnership model called the GCI Alliance, GCI is building a strong social movement for gender-transformative education. GCI's vision is to bring this powerful initiative to more countries, strengthening education systems towards gender equality, so that **all girls and boys experience a full, high quality and gender-transformative education.**

Through four strategic focus areas, GCI will leverage its strong networks and proven evidence-based strategies to accelerate genuine shifts in the way gender equality is pursued in and through education, mobilizing and enabling civil society organizations and governments in this ambition:

- 1. Support Ministries and CSOs to use data and evidence to progress gender equality in and through education.**
- 2. Develop the technical capacity of Ministries and CSOs to develop effective tools for gender responsive education policy and planning.**
- 3. Strengthen alliances between key actors to build a strong movement for gender-transformative education.**
- 4. Promote dialogue between communities, governments, civil society, young feminist activists and local media to transform harmful gender norms and foster social demand for gender equality in and through education.**

“Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI) has enabled the Ministry for Basic and Senior Secondary Education in Sierra Leone to mainstream gender in the national education system, accelerating learning for all children through a Gender-Responsive Education Sector Plan.

GCI also moved Sierra Leone to our 2021 commitment to not just achieve gender parity but reach every child through our Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools.”

Dr. David Moinina Sengeh,
Chief Minister and Former Minister of
Basic and Senior Secondary Education,
Sierra Leone



GCI IMPACT AND RESULTS



An [independent evaluation](#) found that the Gender at the Centre Initiative “has been extremely effective in putting gender on the agenda and building awareness and support for the idea that education sector planning should not be gender blind”. Some of GCI’s key accomplishments are highlighted here:

Gender Responsive Policy & Planning

GCI pioneered the concept of gender-responsive education sector planning or GRESP and [Gender-Transformative Leadership](#) to support education ministries to center gender in their education planning and policies. As a result of a unique consultation and partnership approach, several GCI countries have included strong gender equality strategies in their [Education Sector Analyses and Plans for the first time](#). GCI also partnered with Sierra Leone’s Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education to host a regional high-level Meeting on Gender-Transformative Leadership in Education which resulted in the groundbreaking [Freetown Manifesto](#), an ambitious commitment to advance gender equality in and through education signed by fourteen African countries. Bridging national and community level interventions, GCI supported the development of National Feminist Youth Coalitions in Mali and Niger, which will now engage with Ministries of Education on crucial gender equality issues through Local Education Groups.

Gender Analysis

GCI supported Local Education Groups to conduct a rapid assessment of gender equality in and through education using the [GES Toolkit](#), a user-friendly, interactive tool which enables countries to quickly gather and analyse gender equality data. GCI also provided Ministries of Education with [gender institutional diagnostics tool](#) that measure the extent to which gender is taken into account at programmatic and organizational levels and provide appropriate recommendations for gender institutional changes. Finally, GCI supported gender-responsive budget analysis to help Ministries of Education integrate gender equality throughout the education budget cycle, and created a space for dialogue between education and finance ministries.

Technical Assistance and Capacity Development

GCI delivered a number of contextualized trainings on gender equality to over 1000 government and civil society officials, and technical assistance to governments on issues including GRESP, gender-responsive sector reforms, gender in local funding mechanisms and the prevention of school-related gender-based violence.

Transforming Social Norms within Communities

GCI’s civil society partners joined forces with community leaders and young activists to foster a dialogue on transforming the harmful social norms that keep learners from reaching their full potential. Using community-based research, radio and TV communication and dialogue sessions with students, parents and school staff, GCI reached an estimated 2 million people with information on girls’ education and harmful gender norms.

“One of the most important results of the GCI initiative is the number of leaders and directors in Ministries of Education who have been trained in gender responsive sector planning. What is also remarkable is the commitment, the ownership at the highest State levels of this initiative.”

Jennifer Hofmann, Basic Education Advisor and Task Team Leader, French Agency for Development (AFD), France



I am a Feminist Leader! - MoE official from Burkina Faso at a regional workshop on Gender-Transformative Leadership



3

Nigerian States transformed the National Policy on Gender and Education into concrete action plans

Over

1000

MoE and CSO actors trained on gender-responsive sector planning and gender-transformative leadership

Over

2M

people

Sensitised on gender equality in education through radio, TV and community engagement

GCI'S IMPACT IN NUMBERS

4

countries integrated comprehensive gender data in their education sector planning processes

14

African governments committed to achieving gender equality in and through education through the Freetown Manifesto

5

countries have included strong gender equality strategies in their education sector plans and/or organizational policies

"GCI has allowed civil society to bring in their unique gender expertise and strengthen collaborations with governments through their participation in Local Education Groups, and to increase social demand for gender equality in education at the community level."

Solange Akpo, ANCEFA Regional Coordinator



PARTNERSHIP WITH GCI

We are looking for ambitious and collaborative partnerships to continue GCI's groundbreaking work and achieve genuine progress in the way gender equality is pursued in and through education. With a strong foundation of knowledge, best practice and on-the-ground tools for data gathering, policy development and program implementation, GCI has a proven track record of accelerating real and lasting progress towards gender equality in and through education systems. We call on partners, funders and policy makers to join GCI in its mission to empower civil society actors and education policy makers around the world to ensure all learners experience a full, high quality and gender-transformative education.

HOW CAN YOU WORK WITH GCI?

1. **Providing technical and financial support for the development and implementation of gender-responsive education programs at national and decentralized levels.**
2. **Mobilizing GCI expertise to provide technical support to countries and develop national capacities on gender equality to transform national education systems.**
3. **Advocating for policy change for gender transformative education and for governments to fund education programs that prioritize gender equality and promote gender-responsive policies and guidelines.**
4. **Supporting GCI campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of gender equality in and through education.**

CURRENT GCI ALLIANCE MEMBERS

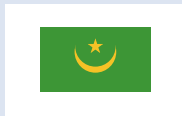
Ministries of Education:



Burkina Faso



Mali



Mauritania



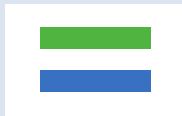
Mozambique



Niger



Nigeria



Sierra Leone



Chad

Development Partners:



European Union



Government of France



Government of Germany



Government of Italy



Government of the United Kingdom



Plan International



IIEP-UNESCO



UNGEI



UNESCO



UNICEF



GPE



Agence Française de Développement



Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA)



Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)



African Union - International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa (AU-CIEFFA)

“Its gender capacity building is one of GCI’s unique selling points. A lot of our system leaders and community leaders want to be gender-transformative leaders, but they are not sure of how they can do this. GCI works with youth activists to design capacity building that shifts how leaders understand gender-transformative leadership in practice.”

Woppa Diallo, Lawyer & Executive Director of the Association for Keeping Girls in Schools AMFE, Senegal

