

## Leave No Boy Behind

### Technical Consultation on boys' disengagement from education

4 – 6 December 2019, UNESCO Room VIII

The transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda calls for transformative thinking and action. This means moving beyond counting boys and girls in classrooms, to ensuring that girls and boys have equal opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills they need for life and work, and are empowered to fulfil their potential and dreams.

The transformative role of education in tackling unequal power relations, gender stereotypes and restrictive social norms holding girls back is well-recognised by governments, civil society organizations and development partners. However, how these same gender norms and expectations in society, reproduced in schools and classrooms, affect boys' participation, learning achievement and continuation in education, is an area less well-explored.

At the same time, there is increasing evidence that boys' disengagement from education persist in many contexts, with important implications for progress towards gender equality in education and the wider society. UNESCO's *Leave No Boy Behind: Achieving gender equality in education and beyond* initiative aims to review the situation, document good practice and collective action to ensure that no child – boy or girl – is left behind in our efforts to achieve SDG4.

UNESCO is working together with various partners from multilateral organizations, bilateral development agencies, civil society organizations, and academia to understand the many factors – economic, social, and cultural – that influence boys' disengagement from education and develop strategies to tackle this issue. This technical consultation will bring partners, national research teams, and UNESCO staff together to discuss findings of national-level case studies, reflect on key themes, and discuss the way forward for further advocacy and policy dialogue.

## Background

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Despite the increasing evidence on boys' disengagement from education, there is inadequate attention and political will to understand the gender dimensions of boys' disadvantage including the impact of gender stereotypes and restrictive social norms and its implications for progress towards gender equality in education and the wider society. Countries and the international community must not only redouble their efforts to address barriers that keep girls out of school and learning, but also understand and develop strategies to tackle boys' disengagement from education.

Recognising that the patterns of boys' disengagement from education vary significantly by region, UNESCO is undertaking national case studies across four regional contexts (Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Arab States, and Sub-Saharan Africa). In six countries (Fiji, Jamaica, Kuwait, Lesotho, Peru, and the United Arab Emirates), national research teams are examining the nature and root causes of boys' disengagement from education, which groups are particularly at risk, and what policies and programmes are effective to ensure that boys thrive in education and are able to achieve their full potential.

A reference group has been established to contribute to the study through the sharing of key documents and contributing in-kind technical expertise as well as reviewing progress and endorsing milestones throughout the initiative. They will also play a key role in advocacy and efforts to amplify key messages from the initiative.

This technical consultation is being organised in the context of UNESCO's work in achieving gender equality in and through education. It will enable national research teams, reference group members, partner organizations and UNESCO staff to reflect on key findings and opportunities for joint advocacy, policy dialogue and support to countries.

## Objectives

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UNESCO plans to convene a technical consultation meeting to:

- Review progress and elicit feedback on findings of national case studies in six countries (Fiji, Jamaica, Kuwait, Lesotho, Peru, and the United Arab Emirates)
- Reflect on key messages and themes, data and evidence gaps, and effective strategies;
- Discuss the finalisation process and next steps for policy dialogue and national, regional and global advocacy.

## Participants

Participants include:

- National research teams from Fiji, Jamaica, Kuwait, Lesotho, Peru, and United Arab Emirates;
- Reference group members including from the CARE International, the Commonwealth Secretariat, FHI360, Norway, Plan International, Promundo, and the UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), with remote participation from other members including Education International, Sida and the World Bank;
- UNESCO technical consultants supporting the study design and implementation;
- Staff members from UNESCO Field and Regional Offices in Apia, Bangkok, Doha, Harare, Kingston, Lima as well as UNESCO Paris Headquarters;
- UNESCO's partner organizations supporting gender equality in and through education.

## Expected outcomes

- National case studies reviewed and key findings examined focusing on the situation of boys' disengagement from education, the underlying structural and gender-related factors, and good policies, practices and programmes.
- The gender dimensions of boys' disengagement in education, including the impact of gender stereotypes and restrictive social norms and the conceptions of masculinity and gender inequality within society, unpacked and incorporated in national case studies.
- Next steps for finalisation of national case studies and national, regional and global advocacy plan discussed.

