IDRC-GPE Knowledge & Innovation Exchange (KIX)

Strategic Issues and Key References on Gender Equality and Inclusion in Education October 2021[1]

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Purpose of this resource

Girls' education and gender equality is an evolving field of study and practice. The evidence base continues to grow, funded by bilateral donors, philanthropic funds, multilateral organizations, and academic institutions with a goal of defining effective programming to justify investments and influence global and domestic policy and financing.

This note provides a short list of strategic and emerging issues in gender and education, as well as a brief explanation of the relevance of the issue. It also introduces associated research findings, reports, and analytical/opinion pieces such as blogs. As the field is expanding rapidly, we focused on the most recent material as of October 2021, but this will need to be refreshed frequently. Most of the material is in English, with a few exceptions. It also mentions some of the leading organizations in the field where more information can be found if needed.

The document's layout allows the reader to quickly locate the fields of particular interest to them and the most succinct sections in each resource. Brief introductions explain the strategic importance of each field for advancing gender equality in and through education systems change.

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[1] This document was prepared by Nora Fyles as a resource to KIX staff and research partners as part of the GEI consultancy undertaken by Gender at Work May through October 2021.

1. Introduction to the field: overall trends and good practices

- The most current and expansive resource on girls' education is the **Girls' Education Roadmap** (Population Council 2021). The Roadmap summarizes research, analysis and practice in girls' education gathered from over 250 organizations and 550 girls' education programmes. The report provides an overview of 1) the state of girls' education in terms of gender gaps in access and learning and the drivers of gender inequality in education; 2) current practices including a mapping of organizations, programmes, and target groups; and 3) a systematic review of evidence on effective programming to address gender-related barriers to education. Perhaps most useful is Section 6, which provides examples of where needs, practices and evidence are not well aligned, and offers thoughts on gaps in evidence and challenges programmes face in applying research findings.

- The annual UNESCO **Global Monitoring Report** is the 'go-to' resource for trends in education statistics, policy and practice. Every report also summarizes the state of the world in a specific (education) theme ie Migration (2019) Inclusion and Education (2020); Non-state Actors (2021/2022). An in-depth study of gender and education trends and the gendered nature of the selected theme is published annually in the **Gender Report**. Often authored by key academics in gender and education, Gender Reports are informative, accessible sources of up-to-date research and experience on gender and education, available in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Arabic.

- **Echidna Giving blog** is a monthly update/analysis of English language research on education and gender. This is a useful quick way of checking current research findings on gender and education, albeit with a bit of a US slant and a preference for rigorous research.

- The **SIDA Brief on Gender Equality and Education** provides a short and accessible overview of gendered barriers to education including issues, practices and policies at individual/household, school/community and policy/system levels, and suggests effective interventions to mainstreaming gender to improve school access and retention.

2. Gender norms and education

Education is a powerful tool for gender norm change. A well-established body of evidence confirms the importance of education in changing damaging gender norms. At the same time, however, entrenched gender norms in families and communities affect both access to education and learning; and education itself can reinforce gender norms where curriculum and textbooks reproduce negative stereotypes and teachers and other school personnel consciously or unconsciously act on their own gendered beliefs and biases. Gender equality in education will only be achieved when entrenched gender norms change. Understanding the link between gender norms and education is key to addressing gendered barriers to education and creating gender transformative education systems which provide equal opportunities for all students.

- The **Align** (Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms) website focuses entirely on gender norms and development, and includes a specific section on education. The blog, '**We need to focus on gender norms to reach the global goal on education**' is a good, concise overview of the field.

- Another useful document is **Learning about norm change in girls' education in low- and middle-income contexts**, *a* review of 21 projects funded by the DFID/FCDO Girls' Education Challenge (2019). This assesses the experience of programs/projects which target gender norms as a key mechanism for addressing gender barriers to education.

- A summary of a recent household survey in Pakistan shows the policy relevance of gender norms for addressing gender gaps in education. See the Centre for Global Development blog, '**Promoting Gender Equality in Pakistan Means Tackling Both Real and Misperceived Gender Norms**', August 2021.

3. Gender Transformative Education – Beyond girls' education; engaging men and boys

- In 2012, Promundo a Brazilian NGO, with the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) and CARE International, published the landmark article, **Boys and Education in the Global South: Emerging Vulnerabilities and New Opportunities for Promoting Changes in Gender Norms**. This article analyzes newly released data on gendered trends in education enrollment and participation, which showed that boys as well as girls are educationally disadvantaged depending on the context. In Latin America and the Caribbean, and in Middle Income Countries, boys are more likely to drop out of school and underperform than girls. Rather than shift the focus from girls to boys, the paper argues that the key gender question for education policy is no longer who was able to study, and its focus on girls' disadvantages relative to boys', but rather, the gendered nature of the classroom. The article proposes that to achieve gender equality in education, decision makers and practitioners need to understand how gender rigidities and disparities affect both boys and girls, and how to create safe, violence-free learning environments where boys and girls have equal opportunities. Three examples of evaluated, school-based approaches for engaging boys and girls in reducing gender-based violence and promoting greater support for gender equality were also presented. While dated, the paper raises key gender and education questions and provides constructive analysis based on evidence and experience, which remain relevant today.

- Almost ten years later, education stakeholders are still grappling with the concept of the gendered nature of the classroom, how to address the different needs of students from diverse genders depending on the context, and how to provide learning opportunities for adults and students to explore, challenge and redefine different, more equitable norms.

- Despite the potential of education programmes to change gender-based attitudes and practices, the effectiveness of implementing gender transformative programming in school settings remains an under-researched area. Education programming that focuses on evaluating educational achievement rarely analyzed the effect of gender on such programming. Girls' focused education programming often insufficiently recognizes gender diversity and sexual orientation, and how power dynamics and patriarchy reproduce gender inequality, making boys and young men's roles as allies invisible. With a few exceptions, programmes to engage men and boys in shifting gender norms in education settings are rarely integrated into public school systems.

- The short blog, '**What about the boys? Educating boys for gender justice**', introduces the debate and describes one of the rare school-based gender programmes for boys implemented. in India by

Study Hall Foundation. A longer workshop report, **Promoting gender equality through education**, examines evidence from common approaches to advancing gender equality in education and identifies gaps in research and programming. While detailed, it is a useful resource to understand the field. The one-page conclusion summarizes findings and recommendations.

- The concept and practice of Gender Transformative Education was debated during a **roundtable** hosted by GPE during the July 2021 Education Summit. Key education and gender actors (Plan International, FAWE, Education International, FCDO, Pratham and Transform Education represented by Aspire Youth Network) define gender transformative education and its relevance to advance gender equality in education and share examples from their work from across a range of subsectors and geographies. Engaging and informative, it is worth listening to at least some of this hour-long debate.

4. Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP)

The term pedagogy often covers all aspects of education, but really comes down to teaching, and what goes on in the classroom: how teachers interact with students around content, and the beliefs teachers have about students and their role in sharing knowledge or facilitating learning. Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) takes into account the learning needs of girls and boys and aims to be free from or challenge gender stereotypes in textbooks, curriculum, or teaching practices. GRP is a common feature of girls' education programmes which address negative gender norms in the classroom and break down gender-based barriers to girls' participation and learning.

- In 2005, the Forum for African Women Educationalists published the first manual on Gender Responsive Pedagogy to address the quality of teaching in Africa, and particularly the role of teachers in reinforcing patriarchal values common in their communities. The GRP model trains teachers to be more gender aware and equips them with skills to better address the learning needs of girls and boys.   The manual was updated in 2020, **Gender Responsive Pedagogy – A Toolkit for Teachers and Schools,** to reflect changing trends in education systems and teaching/learning processes, and to include pre-service as well as in-service education. While the manual is designed to be a practical tool for teachers, teacher educators and school administrators, it is also a rich resource on gender and education more generally. It addresses key concepts such as gender and power, issues in gender responsive schools and education management systems including protection and safety issues, inclusive education, school related gender-based violence, and SRHR. The manual is accessible and easy to navigate.

- The **Gender Responsive Pedagogy for Early Childhood Education toolkit** (GRP4ECE) published jointly by VVOB and FAWE is a practical and informative one-stop shop on gender, early learning and education. The manual, which is downloadable in multiple formats, provides an excellent introduction to gender and education with a focus on the African context. It also includes an overview of the evidence on the impact of prevailing gender stereotypes on young children and their expectations about future lives and thus choices; and the role played by teachers and teaching material in reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes. While the manual is designed for teachers and school leaders, it is a useful and accessible introduction to the field of early learning and the value of

gender responsive pedagogy. A variety of education stakeholders reviewed and provided input to the toolkit, and it was trialed by teachers in Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia.

5. Gender Responsive Education Sector Planning (GRESP)

Education Sector Planning is the primary policy and budgeting tool for Ministries of Education. Ensuring that Education Sector Plans (ESPs) are gender responsive can have a lasting impact on national education systems and take gender change to scale. Key education actors including UNICEF, GPE, UNGEI and UNESCO Institute for Education Planning (IIEP) have sought to strengthen the capacity of Ministries of Education to lead this reform approach, in collaboration with civil society actors. Gender Responsive Education Sector Planning (GRESP) is at the heart of the GPE 2025 Strategic Plan, and attention to gender in education policy, plans, budgets and monitoring is a requirement for future financing through all GPE mechanisms.

- The **Guidance on Developing Gender Responsive Education Sector Plans** provides an overview of the approach, with a focus on integrating gender into all elements education management. It is available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

6. Accelerated Learning/ Alternative Education

Alternative Education is an umbrella term used to describe a range of interventions designed to help overaged, disadvantaged children and youth who cannot access formal learning environments. Alternative education is particularly useful in remote areas and contexts of emergency, conflict or crisis, and to reach marginalized girls.

- A concise "lessons from the field" report by the DFID Girls' Education Challenge Fund, **Alternatives to Formal Education for Marginalized Girls** (December 2019), provides a quick overview of types of Alternative Education as well as a review of five specific DFID-funded programs, with key lessons and recommendations.

Accelerated Learning/Education is a type of alternative education which focuses on learners aged 10-18 who have been out of school for at least one year. Accelerated Education aims to reduce the number of years in a learning cycle and help students re-enter the formal education system once they have completed the equivalent of primary school.

- *The* **Accelerated Education Evidence Review: Strengthening the Evidence Base for Accelerated Learning** (April 2020) provides a broad assessment of effective programming in AE, drawing on published evaluations as well as an analysis of 105 Accelerated Education programmes. Gender is a key factor of analysis in the evidence review. The key findings and recommendations section, as well as the short chapter on addressing and changing gender norms through AE (page 34-37) offer a quick and to the point overview of gender in Accelerated Education programmes. Annex 8 on gender-based barriers, responses and impacts is a more in-depth review of specific AE programmes:

Both Alternative and Accelerated Education are closely associated with the Education in Emergencies literature and field of practice, given the large numbers of out of school children and youth in contexts of conflict and crisis. Up until very recently, resources focusing on gender in the field of Alternative

Education, Accelerated Education or Education in Emergencies have been limited, but this is rapidly changing – see Section 6 below.

7. Gender and Education in Emergencies (EIE)

- The **EIE GenKit** (2021) is the most comprehensive compendium of gender and education in emergencies resources. A joint initiative from the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), Education Cannot Wait (ECW) and the UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), the EiE-GenKit is a core resource package for gender in education in emergencies for practitioners and policy makers. The EiE-GenKit is the first resource of its kind, providing a comprehensive suite of practical tools to promote gender-responsive programming from humanitarian emergencies to protracted crises and development.

- The EIE GenKit builds on the **UNGEI-INEE Guidance Note on Gender** (2019) update to the 2010 Gender Pocket Guide, The *Guidance Note* is a quick reference tool filled with case studies, insights, and experience from a range of partners linked to the INEE Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies. This new edition reflects an evolving landscape of increasingly protracted crises and strengthened coordination mechanisms.

- **Mind the Gap: The State of Girls' Education in Crisis and Conflict** (June 2021) summarizes progress, gaps, challenges and opportunities in improving education and training for girls and women affected by conflict and crisis. The report aims to support the **Charlevoix Declaration on Quality Education's** commitment to enhance the evidence base and monitor progress toward gender-equitable education in crises. The report draws from data on 44 crisis-affected countries, from recent research, and from a set of case studies of interventions in a range of crisis-affected contexts. The most useful for KIX POs and research partners may be Chapter 6: Summary of gaps and progress, which looks at gaps in programme provision, funding and data. For a synopsis of key findings and recommended actions for implementers, policymakers, and donors, please refer to the accompanying policy paper: **Closing the Gap: Advancing Girls' Education in Contexts of Crisis and Conflict.**

8. School Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV)

Violence in schools – including gender-based and sexual violence - is widespread around the world and is a one of most powerful forms of gender discrimination. School-related gender-based violence affects millions of children in and around schools every year, and while all genders are affected, girls are particularly vulnerable. It has significant negative impacts on health and well-being, and also leads to poorer learning outcomes and higher rates of school dropouts. SRGBV refers to 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. Teachers, students and school personnel can all be victims and/or perpetrators of SRGBV.

SRGBV remains an emerging field of study after almost 15 years of documentation, given the sensitive nature of the data and definitional challenges. Still today, data are not systematically collected on sexual harassment, violence and abuse perpetrated in and around school, nor on the impact of school violence on LGBTQI students and those with disability.

COVID-19 highlighted the pervasive nature of GBV including in the lives of girls, boys and youth. The pandemic increased risks of domestic violence, child labour, early and forced marriages, sexual exploitation and violence, and unintended pregnancies among school children, rolling back progress on girls' education and gender equality. Attention to gender violence should be a feature of all research in the field of education and gender.

- The **UNGEI SRGBV knowledge hub** is the most comprehensive source of research, field reports, analysis, and case studies, including material in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese:

- A **series of thematic briefs** on the issue, produced in 2019 by UNGEI and UNESCO in collaboration with the Global Working Group to End SRGBV outlines challenges and recommendations in dealing with SRGBV and introduces six key prevention and response approaches:

  o Applying a whole school approach to preventing SRGBV;
  o Engaging teachers to create safe and gender-responsive learning environments;
  o Shifting harmful gender norms through curricular approaches;
  o Establishing safe and confidential reporting mechanisms;
  o Investing in data and evidence to inform the response to SRGBV; and
  o Integrating SRGBV into national policies and education sector plans.

- *'**There is a global school sexual violence crisis and we don't know enough about it**'* (Centre for Global Development blog post, 2020) summarizes current data on SRGBV from a number of surveys, suggests promising interventions to reduce violence in school and explains why more needs to be done to understand and address it.

- One of the most promising approaches to addressing SRGBV is introduced in the UNGEI blog post '**Applying a whole school approach: Strengthening education systems to address gender violence**' (2021). The short blog outlines the key elements of the whole school approach and the findings of a pilot study in Zimbabwe, with links to the more complete research report.

9. Education Technology (EdTech)

In immediate responses to school closures during the early days of COVID-19, discussion turned to the potential for EdTech to be used to address the challenge of providing educational continuity in the absence of in-person teaching. However, it was also acknowledged that the use of EdTech risked exacerbating socio-economic divides, and access to technology constraints are greater in low- and middle-income countries. In fact, on-line learning and other forms of distance education exacerbated learning inequalities around the world. Many governments did not have the policies, resources, or infrastructure to roll out online learning in a fully inclusive manner; and in most LMICs, upwards of 50% of the population had no access to technology, (cellphones, computers, radios, or televisions), or no money to pay for data, electricity or batteries. Girls experienced learning losses during the pandemic to a greater extent, facing multiple barriers in accessing and benefiting from distance education.

- While many reports documented the challenges faced by girls in accessing distance education, **Inequalities in Girls' Learning Opportunities via EdTech: Addressing the Challenge of Covid-19** (April 2021) is one of the more thoughtful and comprehensive resources. This short report

provides a rapid inquiry into factors affecting inequality in relation to girls' education and EdTec in LMICs during the pandemic, with a focus on digital access, freedom, literacy, pedagogies, and design.

10.COVID-19

The closure of schools in response to COVID-19 has had an unprecedented negative effect on education around the world and exacerbated existing socio economic and gender inequalities in and between countries. While before the pandemic, girls were staying in school longer and learning more than at any other time, COVID-19 has threated to slow or reverse the gains achieved over the last 20 years. Based on previous health crises such as Ebola and current research findings, evidence suggests that the pandemic has put girls – in particular adolescent girls in LMICs – at risk of increased GBV and other forms of domestic violence, domestic work, child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, and mental health concerns and reduced access to health services, digital technology and distance education. UNESCO estimates that at least 11 million adolescent girls will not return to school, and Malala Fund put the number closer to 20 million. Poverty, disability, and other factors of exclusion reinforce gender inequality.

Identifying ways to support learning in this context, ensure all girls, boys and youth return to school, and rebuild education systems is the primary concern of all education stakeholders in 2021. Familiarity with up-to-date research on COVID, gender and education and documentation of effective approaches to address gender barriers to education during the COVID pandemic will help the KIX team to support research partners to respond to the changing environment.

- **Building Back Equal; a girls' back to school guide** was published by key authorities in girls' education: UNGEI, Malala Fund, UNESCO, UNICEF and Plan International in 2020. It was designed to supplement less gender responsive global frameworks for education system recovery and is a guide to addressing gendered barriers to exclusion both those existing before COVID-19 and those exacerbated by the pandemic. It focuses on government strategies and policies for cross sectoral approaches during school closure, during school reopening and long-term reform. It is available in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

- A newly released resource **Stemming Pandemic-Related Losses in Girls' Education: Promising Practices from The Amplify Collective** summarizes research conducted in East Africa on the impact of COVID-19 on adolescent girls and education (**Understanding the barriers to girls' school return**, *2021*) and describes practices by community led organizations to address gendered barriers and get girls back into school. This document highlights effective education and social justice programs for marginalized girls in the region and lays out recommendations actions that should halt attrition in the short term, and actions that should be taken in the medium and long term to prevent future dropout.

- The Brookings Institute blog, '**What do we know about the impact of COVID-19 on girls' return to school**' September 22, 2021, summarizes evidence from recent research on the impact of COVID on girls' return to school with a focus on Africa. It also provides a set of recommended actions for government in school reopening to ensure that all children return to school. It is a quick read and helps the reader make sense of often contradictory reports about the impact of COVID-19.