



## Towards a gender transformative education for empowering adolescent girls:

strengthening national capacities in ensuring adolescent girls’ access to, participation and achievements in secondary education in Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia

<b>Geographical scope/benefitting country(ies):</b>	3-5 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia
<b>Duration (in months):</b>	36 months
<b>Partner(s) institutions:</b>	Ministries of Education, national curriculum development centres, teacher training institutes, etc.  Other potential partners: FAWE, Camfed, Plan, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA, UNGEI, etc.
<b>Total estimated budget inclusive of Programme Support costs (13%)</b>	<b>US\$3,000,000</b>
<b>Name and unit of project officer</b>	UNESCO Regional offices in Africa and Asia-Pacific UNESCO country offices concerned UNESCO HQs

### *Rationale and background*

Despite significant progress towards achieving gender parity in primary education and a clear upward trend in gross enrolment ratio (GER) in secondary education in almost all regions, evidence from research and practice indicates that in general, girls continue to have fewer opportunities than boys to gain access to, complete and benefit from education.

According to the 2013/14 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, there are still 57 million out-of-school children, the majority being girls. The situation is even worse in rural areas where poverty and gender stereotyping impacts greatly on a girl’s education opportunities. The EFA GMR 2012 reported that, up until 2010, gender parity had not been achieved in 68 countries at the primary education level, and in 97 countries at the secondary education level. The level of female adult illiteracy has remained unchanged over the last two decades, with illiterate women representing 64% (or 493 million) of the world’s adult illiterate population. With the current pace of progress in girls’ education the gender targets in education set for 2015, the ultimate goal of which is gender equality in education, will not be achieved.

Education is a fundamental human right of all learners, both girls and boys, women and men, and is first and foremost a moral and political obligation of the state to ensure the fulfilment of this right. Denying girls access to quality education cannot be justified.

***The issue: obstacles to girls' education are multi-layered***

The stark inequalities in education are both a cause and a result of wider discrimination to which girls are subject. There are multiple reasons why girls are not accessing education, which are all interconnected in one way or another - poverty, geographical isolation, early marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence and other discriminatory socio-cultural practices, attitudes and perceptions about the role and status of girls and women. In school, negative gender stereotypes and discrimination in education laws and policies, learning contents, teaching practices and attitudes, together with unsuitable and unsafe learning environments and school-related gender-based violence, all are factors that compromise girls' retention in school, their educational choices and achievement and, consequently, their work and life opportunities.

The lives of millions of girls, especially the most marginalized, are molded by multiple layers of disadvantages, as they live at the intersection of all these obstacles. Unfortunately, statistics do not reveal these enduring challenges girls face in accessing education opportunities and performing and achieving equally as boys. The non-educational factors particularly come into stronger play in post-primary level than at primary, which makes technocratic educational solutions difficult to produce success with sustainable results for girls' education.

Besides ensuring sufficient allocation of funds to expand and improve learning opportunities, education must also be promoted beyond traditional establishments through alternative modes of delivery. Targeted policies that ensure girls, particularly from the poorest households and/or living in rural areas, have the opportunity and means to go to school, stay in school, and to perform and complete the full cycle of basic education, are required. It is vital that girls have equal access to learning opportunities that are gender-sensitive, in terms of education contents, teaching practices and the learning environment so that girls feel welcomed, respected, confident and secure and can equally benefit from education as their boy peers.

Findings from various studies on girls' education on the ground continue to reveal that adequate resources, both human and financial are lacking and that national capacity, especially at the local level, remain weak. Most importantly, policy-makers, practitioners, teachers, lack relevant knowledge and skills to develop, deliver and monitor gender-sensitive and responsive education at different levels in a sustainable manner.

In order to reverse the effects of chronic discrimination against girls to, in and through education, intensive actions are required at multiple levels whether economic, legal, political, cultural or attitudinal.

The project is therefore proposed to address and remove the multiple barriers preventing adolescent girls from accessing, continuing and achieving in education, by ensuring gender-responsive holistic approaches in three intervention areas: (1)

improving the quality of teachers; (2) expanding non-formal equivalency education; and (3) mainstreaming gender in technical vocational education (TVE) and science, mathematics, engineering and technology (STEM) education.

The project contributes to the overall advancement of UNESCO's Gender Equality Priority Action Plan II (GEAP II) 2014-2021, and to the specific expected result for Priority Gender Equality in education under Major Programme I for 2014-2017 Programme and Budget (37 C/5): "Education policies, processes and practices in Member States developed, implemented and evaluated through the lens of gender equality and empowerment".

## **Why UNESCO?**

UNESCO is a United Nations specialized agency with the core mandate of promoting education for all as a fundamental human right. In pursuing this mandate UNESCO provides policy advice and technical support to Member States to strengthen national capacity in developing and reviewing policies and strategies to eliminate all forms of discrimination and exclusion in education at all levels, be they based on sex, age, ethnicity, disability, socio-economic status or location of residence, etc. In particular, UNESCO has been one of the leading agencies in promoting girls and women's rights to education, with its mandate to monitor the implementation of the Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) and Article 10 of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). UNESCO is also the only UN agency with the mandate and long experience to promote literacy and non-formal education, as well as teacher education and technical and vocational education (TVET).

Since 2008, gender equality has been UNESCO's global priority, and is explicitly recognized as an absolute prerequisite to realize the right to education as a human right for all girls and boys. For UNESCO, gender equality is embedded in its efforts to promote Education for All. UNESCO launched the Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education in May 2011, guided by the conviction that educating girls and women can break the cycle of poverty and foster greater social justice. The Partnership seeks to increase learning opportunities for adolescent girls and women and to find solutions to some of the biggest challenges and obstacles to their education. The Partnership addresses two main areas which require increased attention: literacy and secondary education. UNESCO has established dynamic partnerships to support marginalized girls and women in Africa and Asia

UNESCO's leading role in the promotion of girls' and women's education and gender equality to, in and through education, is backed by its substantial experience in supporting Member States in mainstreaming gender in teacher training institutions and programmes, conducting gender analysis and review of curriculum and textbooks, and providing policy advocacy and fostering networking on gender in education issues at country, regional and global levels. It also has extensive experience in delivering literacy and non-formal education for women and girls. It is also a pioneering organization in proactively applying ICT to allow flexible and effective delivery of educational opportunities to girls and women who otherwise may not be reached through conventional modalities. UNESCO has produced, tested and disseminated various training materials, advocacy toolkits and policy guides tools

that aim at building the capacity of policy makers and practitioners, as well as researchers on gender mainstreaming, raising awareness and knowledge on the state of girls and women's education.

Under the framework of the Global Partnership, UNESCO has launched a number of projects focusing on expanding education opportunities for adolescent girls and women in remote rural areas through both formal and non-formal education. In order to expand the outreach and promote South-South cooperation in girls' and women's education, especially to keep adolescent girls in education and to ensure their successful transition to and completion of secondary level education, UNESCO will build on the experiences of the projects under the Global Partnership through public-private partnership in Sub-Saharan African and South and West Asian countries, with the ultimate aim of realizing a gender transformative education in these regional countries.

### **Overall Goal/Objectives:**

The development goal of the project is to realize gender transformative education in the Sub-Saharan African and South and West Asian countries.

The overall objective of the project is to improve adolescent girls' overall educational attainment in terms of access, participation and achievement in education, with particular attention to the fragile transitioning periods from primary to lower secondary and to upper secondary education through targeted policies and interventions.

The Specific Objectives of the project are:

- to strengthen the institutional capacity of ministries of education in the targeted countries in reviewing and reforming education policies and developing/designing gender-responsive formal and non-formal secondary education;
- to create a safe, enabling and gender-responsive learning environment for girls and boys, especially to eliminate school-related gender-based violence;
- to mainstream gender and institutionalize gender training in teacher training institutions;
- to develop, adapt and expand gender-responsive non-formal equivalency (lower) secondary programmes for adolescent girls;
- to mainstream gender in TVE programmes and STEM subjects;
- to build national capacities in guidance and counselling for adolescent girls and ensuring their smooth transitions between education levels, and into the world of work;
- to create regional communities of practice/network and promote south-south cooperation in adolescent girls' education especially in the fields of TVET and STEM education for girls.

### ***Expected outcomes and results:***

At the end of the project, it is expected that the level of participation and performance of girls in secondary education, whether through formal or non-formal provisions, in the target countries will have increased.

It is also expected that the project outcomes and results will contribute to strengthening south-south/sub-regional cooperation in gender mainstreaming in the education sector and in advancing the joint advocacy towards a gender transformative education.

### ***Expected results:***

- Institutional capacity of ministries of education strengthened in mainstreaming gender in policies, programmes and in the monitoring of educational process and outcomes;
- Secondary curriculum and textbooks, including TVE programmes and STEM subjects, reviewed and revised to be gender-responsive;
- Gender mainstreaming institutionalized in teacher training institutes for secondary teachers;
- Teacher training curriculum revised to integrate gender responsive pedagogical approach;
- A regional community of practice/network on education for adolescent girls, particularly focusing on TVE/STEM education, created and functioning.
- A monitoring and evaluation mechanism established to ensure effective gender mainstreaming.

### ***Beneficiaries and stakeholders:***

Principal institutional partners and beneficiaries of the project will be the national ministries of education and teacher training institutes in the project countries.

Individual beneficiaries include secondary school teachers, teacher trainees at the teacher training institutes. The ultimate beneficiaries of the project are the adolescent girls, transitioning from primary to lower secondary and in secondary education, as well as their parents, families, and community members.

The project will adopt a participatory process from the outset as a crucial factor to ensuring ownership by key stakeholders and beneficiary groups.

### ***Implementation strategy:***

The project will be implemented along four different strands of activities, in alignment with the overall strategic framework and the following overarching strategies of UNESCO's support to girls' and women's education projects and programmes: 1) Ensuring a multi-sectoral approach to lay a strong foundation for girls' education at

all levels – national, provincial and community; 2) Exploring effective use of non-formal and flexible delivery of gender-sensitive education and training; and 3) Fully engaging community-level stakeholders in the promotion of girls' education.

The project will be implemented along four different axes and hence activities are organized in four components, all of which will contribute to the achievement of the expected results. The four main components are the following:

Component 1: Institutional capacity building for gender mainstreaming and delivering gender-responsive secondary education;

Component 2: Improving the quality of teachers as agents for promoting girls' education;

Component 3: Development and expansion of non-formal equivalency programmes for adolescent girls;

Component 4: Fostering gender responsive TVE and STEM education for adolescent girls.

The project will be managed, implemented and coordinated by UNESCO regional and national offices, with technical support from UNESCO Headquarters. A core project team will be set up in each project country:

- UNESCO regional and/or country offices concerned
- Relevant UN agencies at country level (UN Women and UNICEF)
- Ministry responsible for gender equality and women's empowerment
- Ministry of Education Science and Technology representative
- Relevant stakeholders in each country, with interest on mentoring girls in STEM

Monitoring and evaluation mechanism will be put in place, making use of the existing national system to the extent possible, in order to ensure that the project's activities will be institutionalized as part of the regular M&E exercise by the ministry as well as at the school level.

Advocacy will also be important as part of the project overall, in view of the need to change the mind-sets of policy-makers, teachers, parents, and community as a whole, as well as adolescent girls themselves, on the expectation of girls' performance in secondary education. For this purpose, a media and communication strategy will be developed to ensure that the outputs and findings from the project activities will be widely shared and disseminated for advocacy and awareness raising, but also for informing policy and programmes on the ground. Close partnership will be formed with local media in order to encourage gender responsive reporting with a view to eliminating gender stereotyped messaging, particularly on girls education in the field of TVE and STEM education.

### ***Sustainability and exit strategy:***

The project will have to be owned by the Ministries of education and the local authorities at county level to ensure sustainability and continuity. UNESCO will encourage partnerships with civil society and other community-based organizations for support and shared ownership by partners. Schools and teacher training institutions will be encouraged to put in place structures for continuous review and updating of the existing strategies to incorporate any emerging issues.