



LEARNING BRIEF

Gender-Responsive Education Sector Planning (GRESP): Community of Engagement and Practice for Turning Policies into Action

This Learning Brief was compiled by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) following the launch of GCE's Gender Learning Community on the 25th of May 2023. The information presented in this Learning Brief is a consolidation of gender-related learning insights, lessons learned, best practices and recommendations that were generated from the presentations made by panellists and inputs from participants.

**JULY
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About the webinar: Gender Learning Community Launch

On the 25th of May 2023, GCE hosted an official launch of the Gender Learning Community, under the theme, “*Gender-Responsive Education Sector Planning (GRES P): Turning Policies into Action*”. The webinar brought together education policy experts and activists from five different organisations implementing interventions that are focused on gender equality and inclusion, including:

- Teresa Omondi Adeitan, from the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE),
- Penipeni Tshabalala, from the South Africa Higher Education Queer Alliance (SAHEQA), Gabriela Arrunategui from La Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación (CLADE),
- Eline Versulys, from the Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI)/United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), and
- Jorge Ubaldo, from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).

Key Highlights and Successes

Through the discussions moderated by Phumza Luthango who is GCE Policy, Research and Advocacy Coordinator, the following highlights and successes were achieved from this engagement:

1. The webinar cultivated a proactive community made up of GCE members, partners, and interested parties leading and participating in gender transformative education work that are willing to collaborate in advancing the agenda through targeted gender-conscious learning.
2. The launch of the community successfully provided the preamble to facilitate constant collaborations and contributions that align with one of GCE's foundational advocacy asks on equality and inclusion, building linkages from local to regional and global advocacy levels.
3. It managed to identify good practices, the training and capacity-building strengths and gaps on mainstreaming gender within the movement and promoting gender responsive policies.
4. It also drew attention to inclusive education as an integral part of the human right to education and raised awareness of inequity and exclusion broadly based on gender.
5. Most importantly, the webinar enabled the GCE movement to jointly respond to the demand for greater learning, sharing, collaborative advocacy and campaigning on GRES P.

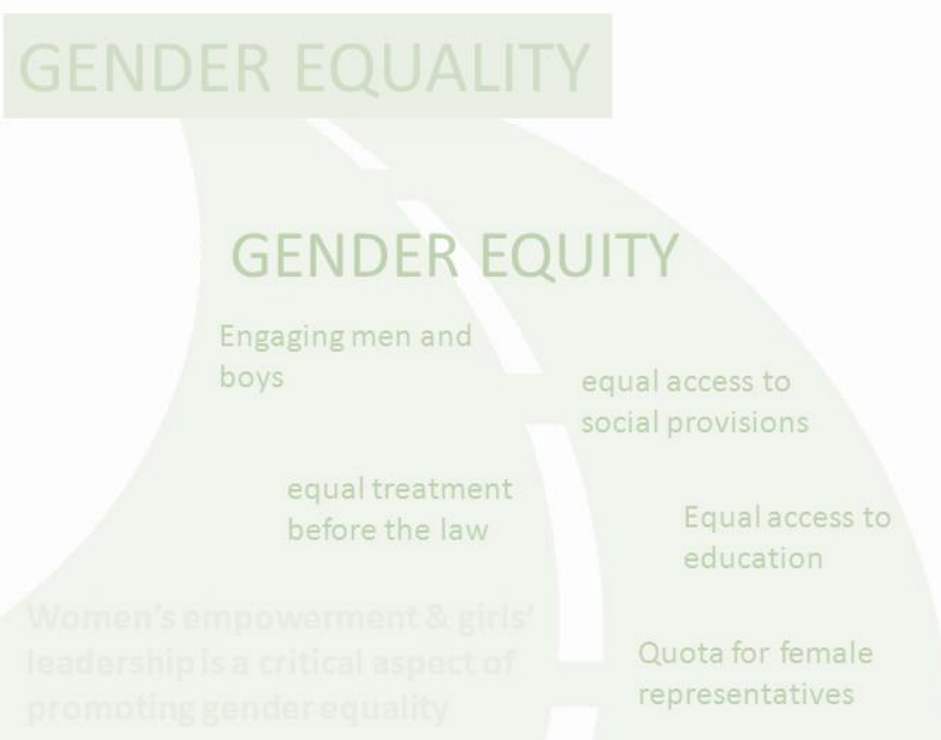
Contextual Analysis

The struggles in favour of the right to education include in a central way, the elimination of all forms of inequality and inequity and are aimed at building the necessary conditions so that the recognition and respect for diversity allow us to overcome exclusion. Patriarchal frameworks are at the centre of preventing progress in constructing transformative societies. Due to the rise of growing conservative movements, the political momentum of not closing gender disparities is unprecedented. For this reason, it is urgent to move education towards a culture of human rights in which the notions of equality and non-discrimination are at the centre of pedagogical actions.

Therefore, it is important for us to work tirelessly to expose and draw policy attention to inequity, discrimination, and exclusion in education – both in terms of access and in terms of quality. This can be done by strengthening the movement's capacity to mainstream gender through targeted gender-conscious learning and generating knowledge that is centralized around the education sector through transforming education, education in emergencies, and education financing.

The Gender Learning Community (GLC) has been established by GCE to provide a virtual platform for members and education partners to exchange knowledge, lessons and collaborate on integrating gender thematic areas in GCE's advocacy actions. This is aimed at advancing the commitment of the GCE movement on gender equality in education, as documented in the GCE's 2023-2027 [Strategic Plan](#) and [Gender Strategy](#). The GCE defends and promotes education as a basic right for all people – including for people of all genders, sexual orientation, gender expression, identity or characteristics (SOGIESC) with an understanding that that gender inequality intersects with many other factors that can exclude a person from education in the course of their life.

Gender equity leads to gender equality



Gender Parity in African School: Experience & Practices from FAWE

As a Pan-African Girls Education Rights organisation working in 34 Chapters across Africa, FAWE is at the forefront of promoting gender-responsive policies, practices and attitudes and foster innovations which provide opportunities for African girls and women to prosper in all realms of their lives. However, many realities that are unique to the African context such as poverty, climate change, conflicts, immigration/refugee status, among other factors have broadened gender inequalities in education and negatively impact access, enrolment, retention, performance, transition and completion. Both boys and girls are affected. FAWE identified and shared top five gendered vulnerabilities faced by girls and boys in Africa that continue to prevent them from accessing their right to education:

<p>1. Dropping out of school and child labour</p>	<p>According to UNICEF (2021), 244 million children and youth between the ages of 6 and 18 worldwide were out of school in 2021, of which 118.5 million were girls and 125.5 million were boys. 40 per cent of children in Eastern and Southern Africa are not in school and mostly this is due to the after effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Girls drop out mostly to take up caregiving roles. That is, to take care of their siblings and other household chores like fetching water, firewood and sometimes accompany their mothers to other income generating activities. Some drop out of school as a result of child marriage, teenage pregnancy and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).</p>
<p>2. Climate change</p>	<p>Climate change is rapidly manifesting itself through prolonged droughts, famine, and human-wildlife conflict among others and has immensely affected education in Africa. School support programs that are affected include school feeding programs, provision of sanitary pads and provision of other gender friendly services. This often leads to increased poverty, hence lack of money to pay for education needs.</p>
<p>3. Poor implementation of education policies</p>	<p>Poor implementation of education policies in Africa has increased gender inequalities in school. Lack of enough personnel, motivated teachers, limited/low quality learning materials, inadequate gender responsive budgeting and planning has played a big role in widening the gap of gender inequalities in education.</p>
<p>4. Negative attitudes and cultural practices</p>	<p>Negative attitudes towards girls' education are still entrenched in the African Education system. Girls still get less support from the communities than boys to access education including enrolment to STEM subjects, whilst boys get harassed for failing it. Long initiation ceremonies and harmful cultural practices such as FGM still denies both boys and girls their right to education and keep them out of school.</p>
<p>5. War/armed conflicts and the global pandemic</p>	<p>Recent times has seen countries such as Burkina Faso, Sudan, Mali Somalia, Ethiopia, Central Republic, DRC, Nigeria and others experiencing coups, civil unrest and insurgences. In recent years, the COVID-19 pandemic led to the closure and suspension of learning. In every situation of conflict/pandemic, schools are among the first to close and in general, education not being funded. The impact of COVID- 19 will undoubtedly haunt Africa for years to come.</p> <p>During wars/armed conflicts, boys are recruited as child soldiers or bandits to fight in wars which forces them out of school. Girls and young women are vulnerable in conflict situations as they are prone to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) such as sexual harassment and abuse, early marriages, under-aged mothers, get infected with diseases such as HIV/AIDS, among other things which deprive them their right to education.</p>

Lessons Learned

FAWE considers gender as a critical and cross-cutting component in the provision of education and some of lessons that can be drawn from the implementation of FAWE's interventions with other education partners and stakeholders in Africa include:

- ◆ Signing Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) with governments to facilitate good working relationships with various Ministries of Education and other education departments in countries where FAWE is active.
- ◆ Development of partnership agreements with other education stakeholders and partners both in the private and civil society space to promote collaboration and engagements at various levels.
- ◆ Training members and other interested education partners on gender-responsive pedagogy.
- ◆ Capacity building on inclusion of gender in the planning, implementation and evaluation of education sector plans.
- ◆ Stakeholders' commitment and capacity to integrate gender-responsive sector planning considerations into their own strategic planning, programmes and advocacy initiatives.

Despite having made some significant progress in promoting gender parity in education, FAWE recorded minor setbacks which include slow integration of climate change and refugees in education programmes. In addition, there has been limited financial resources and lack of goodwill to implement effective education plans, especially in government (s).

The Importance of Diversity in the Learning Curriculum: SAHEQA's Perspective on Transformation in Education for the Queer Community

Diversity is generally understood to encompass race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, age, political and religious beliefs. And while in the past it has focused on strengthening inter-cultural tolerance, new ideas about diversity and inclusion have developed, shifting the focus towards enriching human learning and experience. In recent years, calls to transform education to promote and protect the rights of the queer community has occupied centre stage. Diverse classrooms help develop tolerance, a greater sense of security, improve student performance or creativity and combat prejudice for historically marginalised groups/people who are discriminated against within the education sector.

At tertiary and higher learning levels, it is important to accommodate the queer community and reform the curriculum to address their exclusion as diversity also implies representation, a sense of belonging, inclusivity, equity and equality to meet their needs and expectations despite a person's background or sexuality.

In addition, diversity allows learners to have the power to express themselves and propose new ideas which suit their learning needs, mitigates divisions and encourages collaboration among learners of all backgrounds. Safe spaces for the queer community should be established through the creation of 'safe zones' in Universities and colleges where teachers and lecturers are equipped with skills to talk about and promote diversity, adopting 'pronouns' not tied to one's gender and finally having champions at campuses who promote and protect the rights of queer students.

Civil Society Actions on Gender and Inclusion: Good Practises and Tools from CLADE

Gender issues have always been at the centre of CLADE's intervention strategies since the beginning of the network, including events, studies, publications, and training on the relationship between gender and education. In the last two years, the training of CLADE members on the subject has been intensified. Training was offered on gender mainstreaming; a Gender Working Group was created which collectively built an Institutional Gender Policy for the network and training was provided on gender-sensitive educational budgets. Through these interventions, CLADE achieved the following successes relating to gender mainstreaming:

- ◆ Strengthened gender equity in the network's daily work and political action as an indispensable step towards gender equality in the education sector.
- ◆ Promoted the implementation of organic strategies with a de-colonial, communitarian and inclusive perspective, which assumes intersectionality as an analytical strategy, to show how the various systems of oppression are intertwined, starting from patriarchy - this structure articulating other oppressions, deepening inequalities.
- ◆ Mainstreamed and specified the gender perspective in the strategic, political-programmatic, political-institutional, and administrative-financial areas of the network.

Best Practices and Lessons

1. Advocating for a non-sexist and non-discriminatory education

- Education can play a central role in the transformation of gender stereotypes, roles and practices, hence the importance of advocating for a non-sexist and non-discriminatory education. CLADE does this through its participation in congresses, communication, and in its experience of advocacy against gender violence in rural schools in Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua.

2. Strengthen institutional to intensify external influence

- In addition to strengthening the gender perspective within the network, it is essential to advocate for policy change, contributing to overcoming gender discrimination. However, even though all the States in the region have made international commitments to overcome gender inequalities, not all of them have adequate policies and budgets to transform political discourse into concrete practice.

3. Take follow-up and monitoring actions

- To monitor the implementation of gender responsive and sensitive education policies in its region, CLADE actively participates in Gender Working Groups which have been formed to follow-up on agreements regarding public policy, classroom practices and research.

4. Create awaness to change narratives and midsets

- As support for the dispute of meanings and narratives, productions are made with diverse information which share and problematize the reflections to promote debates on gender and education. Specials newsletters, podcasts and news are released through the web, social networks (instagram and facebook) and instant messaging (whatsapp groups). CLADE also disseminates news on the current education situation and coverage for national, regional or international events.

5. Identify limitations

- To keep the momentum going, CLADE acknowledges that challenges such as bullying and sexual violence in schools, pregnancy in girls and adolescents, punishment and harmful practices need to be dealt with as a matter of urgency. These are aggravated by gender discrimination and the normalization of violence against children.

Gender-Responsive Education Planning in Practice: A Unique and Transformational Approach from GCI/UNGEI

Considering the increasing resistance and backlash against gender equality in the education sector, it is important that education partners and other stakeholders work together and collaborate to tackle such impediments. Since its launch in 2019 by G7 Ministers of Education and Development, GCI has since established itself as a leading multi-stakeholder initiative to promote gender equality in and through education. Its strategy is rooted in the Gender-Responsive Education Sector Planning (GRESP), a whole-system approach to embed gender equality in the DNA of national education systems.

In promoting its agenda, GCI/UNGEI has been implementing initiatives in eight countries mostly through GRESP and Transformative Leadership training. To date, 667 MoE officials and 446 CSO actors trained to tackle harmful social/cultural norms, promote advocacy and political leadership to ensure that all stakeholders embed gender equality in education plans, budgets and policies and increase political will. GCI/UNGEI has also been conducting community engagement on girls' education and social norms so that gender issues are addressed where people are mostly concentrated. One major win for all stakeholders was the adoption of the [Freetown Manifesto](#) which has seen 14 countries entrenching gender equality in their education system.

Through the Gender Assessments [GES Toolkit](#), GCI/UNGEI helps CSOs and other partners to assess where their country stands and provides statistics on gender equality in education. GCE members are encouraged to access these tools and familiarise themselves on how they can be adapted into their own contexts.

Determining Steps Forward on Country-Level Dialogue: Utilising Themes of GPE's Gender Hardwiring to Contribute to GRESP

To get the ball rolling in GRESP, it is important that we as an education community/movement understand what gender equality in education is. This should be aligned to the ethos of equality and diversity by challenging exclusion through creation of safe spaces for the most vulnerable groups, reforming pedagogy/curriculum and text books which are responsive to the needs of learners. To achieve the aspirations of gender equality, education must be used to create high level societal goals which 'leave no one behind.'

GPE and its partners should also initiate dialogues and see how GRESP is always included in organisational strategies. This important process can be done after conducting thorough assessments of teachers' needs and gender equality in schools so that it informs and guides each partner's interventions because these elements cannot be approached separately.

Q and A Session

Question directed to Teresa: We are noticing an increase in the trend of failures of reintegration of pregnant girls back into school. How do we ensure that this group of learners does not continue being discriminated against and left behind as most learners are expelled from school after falling pregnant or not allowed back after giving birth.

A: To ensure that these young girls get a second chance in education, FAWE showcases successes of the reintegration of pregnant girls in other countries so that other governments learn how other countries are doing it, as this will motivate them to move domestic regional and national policies which ensure that pregnant girls are allowed back in school either before or after giving birth.

Question directed to Eline: When dealing with GRESP, it appears that it is difficult to direct gender mainstreaming to anyone specific. How can this challenge be addressed?

A: There is a need for targeted strategies, advocacy and people to ensure that this information goes directly to someone in government who can take full responsibility for this task. Secondly, GCI/UNGEI always tries to capacitate specific people in gender Ministries so that they have an appreciation of what GRESP is and so that they can run with the initiative (s) in their Units. Jorge from GPE also added that partners can develop a results framework which has a gender section specific so as to ensure that gender mainstreaming is highlighted when conducting assessments against specific results and outcomes.

Question directed to Eline: In low-medium countries, there are so many challenges which confront girls such as harmful cultural practices, early marriages, sexual violence, among others. How are you confronting these issues?

A: GCI/UNGEI works with community influencers such as role models, traditional and religious leaders, elders, community workers and other young girls to promote positive roles for girls and also raise awareness about these harmful practices. We also convene dialogues so that solutions on these scourge come from the community and not prescribed by UNGEI.

Question directed to Eline: How do participants access the Gender Assessments GES tool?

A: This tool is ready to use and accessible on UNGEI's website. Anyone can download it anytime and can adapt it into their context as it allows the user to add indicators and any other data that one deems necessary or thinks is missing.

Question directed to Gabriela: After CLADE conducted some research on gender issues, where have been the results taken to/used to engage government and other stakeholders on issues such as GBV given its intensity in Haiti and Honduras. How have you used this evidence to engage various governments in your region and how has this information cultivated a working relationship with the public sector?

A: In countries such as Haiti and Nicaragua, it has been difficult to engage the government to act on GBV due to political instability. However, in some countries, there has been some progress and engagements are ongoing as CLADE is working through national coalitions and alliances to raise awareness on violence against girls and women.

Q: What is being done to raise awareness and advocacy in education for PWDs, especially girls?

A: We are always trying to push for integration of these vulnerabilities in our approach and promote diversity through our work so as to attend to the needs of vulnerable groups. This is possible by working with teachers to be aware of their needs. We also include this aspect in our assessment tools so that we gather adequate data to assist us in crafting adequate interventions through our partners.

Resources

The webinar recording can be accessed: [here](#).