

GCE Statement on International Women's Day 2026

Gender Transformative Education as a Pathway to Justice



Rights. Justice. Action. The theme of International Women's Day 2026 comes at a critical moment. Despite progress in many places, a recent report by UN Women warns that overall, the very systems meant to protect women and girls are failing, leaving millions exposed to discrimination, violence and impunity, as backlash against gender equality intensifies and violations of fundamental rights rise worldwide.

On this International Women's Day (IWD), the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) reaffirms that education is one of the most powerful tools to achieve gender justice and equality. Every girl, adolescent, woman and people with gender diverse identities has the right to access education, and learn in environments that are safe.

Education systems must address the root causes of inequality, beyond simply enrolling girls in schools. Education must prepare to question discrimination, challenge harmful norms, and build a just world. This requires a comprehensive, whole-system approach that advances gender justice across all stages of learning — from early childhood care and education (ECCE) to higher education, including youth and adult education. It means ensuring that curricula challenge harmful gender norms, that schools are safe and inclusive spaces, and that teachers and education workers are equipped, supported and fairly compensated to promote gender-transformative learning environments.

Despite important progress, millions of girls around the world still face barriers to education due to poverty, conflict, discrimination, early marriage, gender-based violence, and unequal social norms.

Today, over 122 million girls remain out of school globally, while millions more attend school without being able to learn in safe and inclusive environments. In contexts affected by conflict and crises, girls are more than twice as likely to be out of school, and one in five girls worldwide is married before the age of 18, severely limiting their educational opportunities and life choices.

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A Call to Action: Prioritising Gender-Transformative Education

In the 2026 IWD, the GCE movement underscores Gender-Transformative Education (GTE) as a fundamental aspect of the right to education and a pathway for gender justice. It addresses the root causes of inequality by challenging harmful stereotypes, attitudes, norms, and practices. It integrates gender equality into curricula, strengthens teacher training, promotes girls' participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, and ensures safe and inclusive learning environments. It empowers all genders alike to challenge stereotypes, respect rights, and become agents of change in their communities.

GCE reaffirms its commitments with GTE and calls on governments, the international community, policymakers, and educators to prioritize gender-transformative education by:

- **Financing GTE:** invest in equitable public education systems adopting gender transformative policies, ensuring adequate funding for education and allocating resources for gender equality initiatives in education.
- **Promoting Inclusive Curricula and Pedagogies:** Engaging communities in challenging harmful stereotypes, attitudes, and norms. Inclusive curricula also mean challenging patriarchal narratives and recognizing women's participation in history, science, politics and all aspects of our social life.
- **Integrating gender equality into curricula** across all educational levels, from ECCE to higher education, including Adult Learning and Education (ALE), particularly expanding age-appropriate Comprehensive Sexuality Education.
- **Creating Safe and Inclusive Learning Environments:** Ensuring that educational institutions are free from gender-based violence and discrimination, also offering students safe spaces to express their concerns.
- **Implementing GTE Policies in Conflict and Emergency Settings:** Recognising that women and girls are particularly vulnerable in crises and ensuring protective education measures.
- **Supporting Female Leadership in Education:** Increasing the representation of girls and women in decision-making roles to shape inclusive education policies.
- **Investing in Gender-Transformative Teacher Training:** Equipping educators with feminist and anti-oppressive pedagogies, while addressing gender inequalities in working conditions and salaries.
- **Strengthening and funding gender-sensitive data collection** on inequality, and gender-environment links, to inform Gender Transformative Education.

GCE invites civil society, educators, and youth to co-create solutions that prioritize gender equality and through education, amplify advocacy campaigns ensuring no one is left behind in the pursuit of justice and opportunity.

When girls and women learn, lead, and thrive, communities prosper, and democracies grow stronger. This International Women's Day, let us recommit to building education systems that are inclusive, equitable, and truly transformative for all.
