

Advancing Gender Equality in Education Across GPE Countries

Highlights

- Gender equality in education has substantial proven impacts on many other Sustainable Development Goals, including economic growth, health, nutrition, agricultural productivity and reduced inequality.
- Global actors recognize the Global Partnership for Education as a key vehicle for delivering on the global goal for education and as having an important role to play in advancing gender equality in education by 2030, with its focus on financial and technical support to strong and well-planned education systems, inclusive policy dialogue, and effective and efficient funding.
- Since the Global Partnership for Education's inception in 2002, the percentage of girls in GPE countries who manage to enter the last grade of primary school has risen from 57 percent to 71 percent. For boys, this number has risen from 68 percent to 75 percent. For lower secondary school, the percentage of girls who manage to enter the last grade has increased from 35 percent to 47 percent, and the percentage of boys has gone from 41 percent to 52 percent.¹
- GPE countries are making investments aimed at advancing gender equality with support from at least 33 GPE education sector program implementation grants that are currently active, totaling US\$1.5 billion.
- The Global Partnership for Education is funding research and global public goods that promote gender equality, including a global literature review on school-related gender-based violence and tools to help countries identify which girls and boys are out of school and why.
- *GPE 2020*, GPE's five-year strategic plan, holds achieving gender equality as one of its eight principles. In order to deliver on this principle, the Board of Directors approved the *Gender Equality Policy and Strategy 2016-2020* in June 2016.

¹ Population-weighted averages for 2002 and 2014 calculated by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics on July 5, 2016 for the 61 partner countries of the Global Partnership for Education as of February 2016. Entry into the last grade is used as a proxy for completion by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

1. Introduction

Gender equality in and through education is critical to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as many experts have observed,² and investing in this area yields substantial public and private returns. It is a key driver of economic and social development and leads to gains in health, nutrition and many other areas.

Advancing gender equality in education has long been a priority of the Global Partnership for Education.³ GPE supports country investments in more equitable and gender-responsive systems in order to improve outcomes in access, retention and learning for all girls and boys. Children in developing countries continue to face significant barriers to gender equality in educational opportunities, both inside and outside of the classroom. These barriers can include intersectoral complexities such as health, poverty or security issues, as well as intersecting inequalities involving ethnicity, region or disability that can compound gender disparities. In this context, GPE provides funding and technical assistance to governments facing considerable challenges, including many in countries affected by fragility and conflict. This support has contributed to an additional 9.3 million girls now in school across GPE countries,⁴ and increased gender parity in both primary and lower secondary completion rates, since 2002. In that time, the number of girls completing school for every 100 boys has risen from 83 to 94 for primary, and from 86 to 91 for lower secondary.⁵

With the advent of the Sustainable Development Goals, there has been an appreciable shift in the global agenda from a narrower focus on girls' education to a focus on gender equality more broadly. While the systematic marginalization of girls and women necessitates a continued emphasis on girls, the commitment to gender equality also includes areas where boys are

➤ **Gender equality** refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men, girls and boys, and equal power to shape their own lives and contribute to society. It encompasses *gender equity*, which primarily concerns fairness and justice regarding benefits and needs. Gender equality also refers to the transformational commitment needed to make equal rights and equal power a reality. Gender equality benefits women and men, girls and boys, and should be of concern to all.

➤ **Gender equality in education systems** means equal educational opportunities (including access, retention and learning) for all girls and boys, as well as gender equality for teachers and administrators. This includes gender-responsive curriculum, teaching and learning materials, and teacher training. It also refers to gender equality and gender-responsiveness in the leadership, governance, operations and financing of the education system itself, including the government, local education groups, school management committees and other interfaces with local communities.

disadvantaged, as well as gender issues concerning teachers, administrators and systems, and looking at gender in combination with other categories to ensure that we reach the most marginalized girls and boys. The Global Partnership for Education's approach is to analyze and address gender alongside other forms of marginalization, based on factors like ethnicity, poverty or disability, that prevent children and youth from receiving a quality education.

² Hanushek and Woessman have argued that education, along with economic growth, are the two key Sustainable Development Goals most critical for the rest of the goals to be achieved: see Eric Hanushek and Ludger Woessmann, *The Knowledge Capital of Nations: Education and the Economics of Growth* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015). In addition, a recent report from the International Monetary Fund notes the centrality of gender equality to economic growth: see Katrin Elborgh-Woytek et al., *Women, Work, and the Economy: Macroeconomic Gains from Gender Equity* (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2013).

³ Girls' education was one of the three strategic directions adopted by GPE in 2011. Support mechanisms spanned sector planning, funding and monitoring process; for example, they included making sure that the appraisal guidelines then being developed would ensure that issues pertaining to girls' access to school and learning are given due consideration. Girls' education then became one of the strategic objectives of the 2012-2015 strategic plan, and is carried forward in the gender-equality focus of GPE 2020.

⁴ Data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics on out-of-school children for primary and lower secondary in 2002 and 2014, calculated July 5, 2016.

⁵ Population-weighted averages calculated by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics on July 5, 2016 for the 61 members of the Global Partnership for Education as of February 2016. Gross intake ratios in the last grade of an education level are used by UIS as a proxy for completion rates.



Girls in lower secondary school in Savelugu, Ghana.

GENDER EQUALITY POLICY AND STRATEGY 2016-2020

In an effort to reinforce and expand its existing commitment to advancing gender equality, the Global Partnership for Education recently adopted the *Gender Equality Policy and Strategy 2016-2020*. This policy and strategy, which will be implemented through annual action plans, supports GPE's vision of inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning for all. The policy focuses on four aims:

1. Increase gender equality in access, participation and learning achievement for all girls and boys.
2. Improve gender equality in education systems.
3. Strengthen gender equality in education sector legal frameworks, policy and planning processes.

4. Ensure robust execution of commitment to gender equality across the Global Partnership for Education.

These aims are aligned to the strategic goals and objectives of GPE 2020. Some planned activities include expanded support to gender-responsive sector planning, and sharing evidence and lessons learned on how to address factors contributing to different types of disadvantage related to gender equality.

2. Progress Toward Gender Equality in GPE Countries

Despite the importance of gender equality to education and other development goals, significant gender gaps and challenges remain in many areas. At the primary level, only 26 percent of low-income countries show gender parity in enrollment; 58 percent show disparity and 16 percent do not have data available. At the secondary level, only 10 percent of low-income countries show gender parity in enrollment; 68 percent show disparity and 22 percent do not have data available. The largest gender gaps in enrollment are in the poorest countries, many of which are GPE partner countries. Within and across countries, the poorest girls are generally the most excluded, and even more so in remote or conflict-affected areas. School dropout is a problem for both boys and girls in many GPE partner countries, and boys can fare worse in certain countries, particularly at the secondary level (*see map on page 5*). Gender gaps in learning outcomes also exist in varied and changing forms across countries.⁶

⁶ These variations suggest that the gender gaps stem largely from environmental factors, such as gender bias in instructional practices and materials, and sociocultural factors, such as gender bias in adults' expectations of children and *stereotype threat*, the documented negative impact of gender or ethnic stereotypes on learners' testing performance. See J. Benjamin Hinnant, Marion O'Brien and Sharon R. Ghazarian, "The Longitudinal Relations of Teacher Expectations to Achievement in the Early School Years," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 101, no. 3 (2009): 662; Pascal Huguet and Isabelle Regner, "Stereotype Threat Among Schoolgirls in Quasi-Ordinary Classroom Circumstances" *Journal of Educational Psychology* 99, no. 3 (2007): 545.

PROGRESS TOWARD GENDER PARITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOL COMPLETION

The Global Partnership for Education supports partner developing countries in designing education sector plans that address barriers to gender equality, and significant progress has been made in many GPE partner countries since 2002.

The table to the right illustrates gender parity gains made in the completion of primary school across all of the countries that joined the partnership with a gender imbalance in primary completion and have data available for these years.⁷

Gender parity indices like this one are calculated by dividing the rate for girls by the rate for boys, so perfect gender parity would be at 1. Many countries have reduced the disadvantage of their girls in completing primary school since joining GPE, and others, such as Lesotho, have addressed their disadvantaged boys while also increasing the average primary completion rates for all children.

PROGRESS TOWARD GENDER PARITY IN LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL COMPLETION

Gender disparities tend to be particularly pronounced in secondary school, as social, economic and health-related barriers put increased pressure on students' ability to stay in school and learn. The map on the next page from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics shows areas of balance or imbalance in the ratio of girls to boys who make it into the last grade of lower secondary school.

In the face of these challenges, GPE partner developing countries have made progress on improving gender parity in lower secondary completion in recent years. The chart on the next page shows the progress made

GENDER PARITY INDEX OF PRIMARY COMPLETION

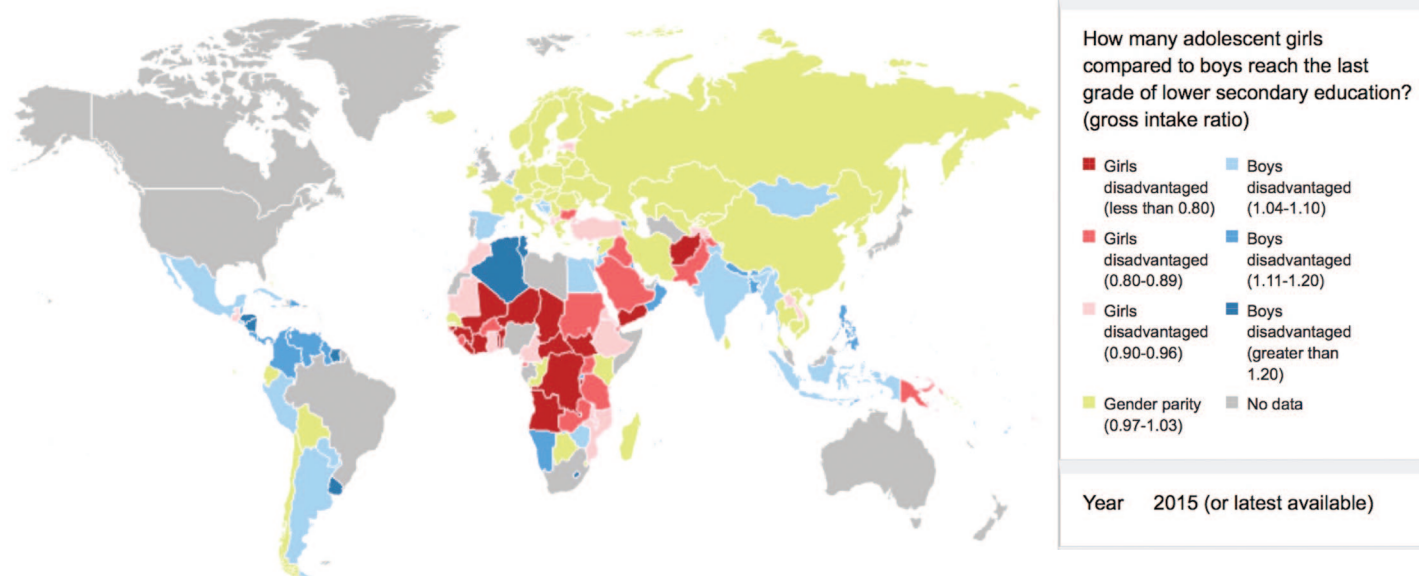
COUNTRY (JOIN DATE)	2002	JOIN DATE	2014
Benin (2007)	0.53	0.71*	0.85
Burkina Faso (2002)	0.71	0.71	1.05
Ethiopia (2004)	0.55	0.63	0.99
The Gambia (2003)	0.83	0.89	1.05
Ghana (2004)	0.90	0.86	0.98
Guinea (2002)	0.53	0.53	0.82
Lao PDR (2009)	0.89	0.90	0.97
Lesotho (2005)	1.39	1.44	1.27
Mali (2006)	0.66	0.70	0.89
Mauritania (2002)	0.92	0.92	1.04
Mozambique (2003)	0.63	0.67*	0.88
Niger (2002)	0.67	0.67	0.79
Senegal (2006)	0.80	0.92	1.13

between 2010 and 2014 on this indicator for all GPE partner countries that had gender disparity in 2010 and have data available for that time period.⁸ In addition, GPE's new strategic plan places increased emphasis on achieving equity in secondary education as well as in primary.

While almost all countries shown have made progress toward gender parity during this time period, the wide variance in the gender parity index from one country to the next illustrates how complex and challenging it is

⁷ Data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics for 2002, the join date, and 2014, calculated July 5, 2016. Please note that primary completion rates are calculated by proxy of gross intake ratios in the last grade of primary school. Many more countries joined GPE with a gender imbalance in primary completion but did not have data available for both 2002 and 2014. Data marked by asterisk for Benin is from 2008, and for Mozambique is from 2004.

⁸ Data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics for 2010 and 2014, calculated July 5, 2016. Lower secondary completion rates are calculated by proxy of gross intake ratios in the last grade of lower secondary school.



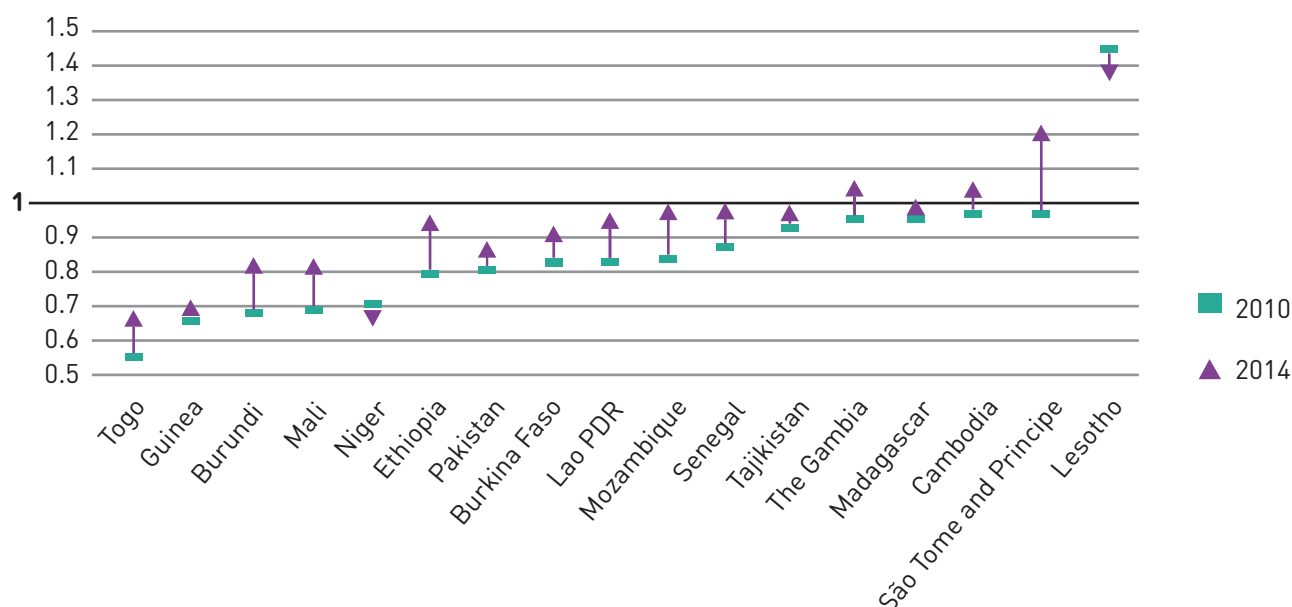
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS).

to address this issue, and how crucial it is to empower each country to assess, analyze and address its own particular needs.

In addition, it is worth noting that completion rates of a level of schooling are normally calculated by proxy

of intake into the last grade of that level, since actual completion data are not as widely reported. Quality education for all will require sustained attention to disadvantaged girls and boys to prevent dropout in the last grade and ensure successful transition from primary to lower secondary education.

GENDER PARITY INDEX OF LOWER SECONDARY COMPLETION RATES



3. GPE Support to Gender Equality

Sound education systems are gender-responsive education systems that advance equity, gender equality and inclusion for all. Through its focus on education systems, the Global Partnership for Education has been equipping countries to make progress toward these goals through interventions tailored to their own context. Support to advancing gender equality is offered to countries primarily through activities that support GPE’s three country-level strategic objectives: sector planning and policy implementation, mutual accountability, and effective financing.

GPE SUPPORT TO GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH SECTOR PLANNING

GPE provides both financial and technical support for sector analysis and planning. Education sector plan development grants (ESPDGs) help to fund the process, beginning with an education sector analysis (ESA) that includes disaggregated data that can reveal disparities facing a country’s education sector. For example, an ESA can look at which girls or boys are most likely to be out of school, or suffering from poor learning outcomes, and examine the most common barriers for these vulnerable groups. This information then informs the education sector plan. The graph below shows how GPE partner

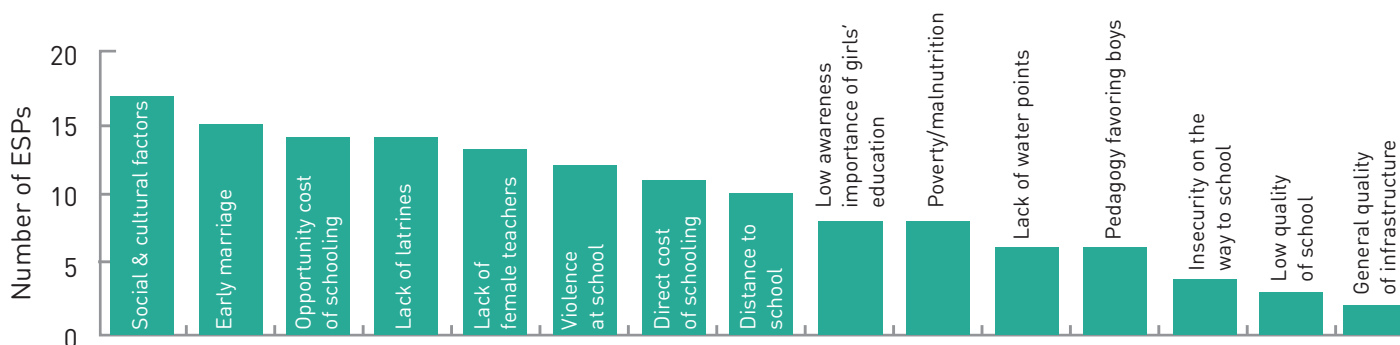
developing countries have been identifying barriers to girls’ education in their education sector plans.⁹

Technical support in facilitating the consultative planning process helps to build a common understanding of issues like these, and consensus around the strategies that will address them most effectively. The GPE Secretariat also provides feedback on the education sector plan as it is drafted, as well as on the appraisal report produced by partners. As of September 2016, there are 15 active ESPDGs totaling over US\$6.3 million, respectively.

To enhance countries’ capacity to advance gender equality through their education systems, the Global Partnership for Education and the United Nations Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI) have developed a *Guidance for Developing Gender-Responsive Education Sector Plans*. This guidance, developed jointly as a complement to the existing *Methodological Guidelines for Education Sector Analysis, Volumes 1 and 2*, and *Education Sector Plan Preparation and Appraisal Guidelines* provides case studies and recommendations to help policymakers understand and apply the core principles of gender equality to education sector planning. This incorporates gender analysis as well



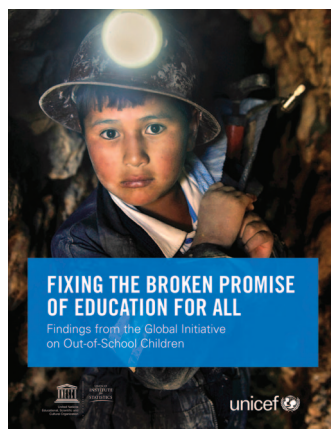
BARRIERS TO GIRLS’ EDUCATION IDENTIFIED IN GPE PARTNER COUNTRIES’ EDUCATION SECTOR PLANS



⁹ Based on analysis conducted in 2015 of 42 education sector plans: C. Sedel and M. Ginolin, *Gender and Girls’ Education in Grants and Education Sector Plans of the Global Partnership for Education* (manuscript).

as gender-responsive plan preparation and appraisal, including resource allocation and monitoring.

GPE has also invested in global public goods to support gender equality through its Global and Regional Activities (GRA) program, including grants for the creation and dissemination of tools and best practices that can help countries target key barriers to gender equality in education as they design their sector plans. A portfolio of three complementary grants, totaling nearly US\$6 million, expands countries' capacity to identify and address out-of-school children.



Partnering with UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, as well as the World Bank, these grants support tools to help countries to close the data gap on out-of-school children. They also help identify the barriers that lead to exclusion as well as new strategies and policies to address barriers, and identify and plan policies to get more children into school and improve learning, especially among vulnerable groups.

The tools to which these grants have contributed help countries identify which girls and boys are not in school and why, and how they can best close gender and other equity gaps through evidence-based sector planning. These tools include a global website, www.allinschool.org, a substantial report and an operational manual on how to conduct a study on out-of-school children (both pictured above), as well as a host of country-level reports.

Another GRA grant, partnering with UNICEF and UNGEI, provides US\$800,000 to analyze school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) in Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia and Zambia. This grant's purpose is to develop and promote a common and systematic approach to identifying, designing and monitoring interventions as part of the countries' education sector plans. This is

achieved through the completion of baselines on the nature and incidence of SRGBV in each country, and a global literature review of evidence on understanding and addressing SRGBV.

GPE SUPPORT TO GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT

In supporting inclusive policy dialogue, GPE further encourages the representation of diverse voices so that policies are more likely to be rooted in local concerns and address locally relevant issues regarding the most disadvantaged children. Policy dialogue is anchored in local education groups, led by the national government and including civil society and other local stakeholders as well as development partners. Local education groups also participate in joint sector reviews—that is, periodic assessments of progress on the national education sector plan. These are conducted collectively by all partners in the sector, ensuring that implementation of activities on gender equality, among other issues, is monitored, assessed and adjusted as needed.

Key to strong mutual accountability is the inclusion of civil society voices; these have been very successful to date in advocating for girls' education at the country level. With this in mind, GPE funds the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF), which aims to build stronger and more effective civil society engagement in education sector processes. With an allocation of US\$29 million from the GPE Fund for 2016-2018, the CSEF gives grants to 62 national civil society coalitions to support their advocacy activities, build their capacity to strengthen planning, implementation and impact, and promote cross-country learning and networking. Coalitions supported by the CSEF represent a wide variety of members, including teachers unions, grassroots organizations, women's groups, parents associations and youth groups. A recent external evaluation of the CSEF noted, regarding gender equality, "Coalitions have strong input on putting this issue on the agenda of governments through research into education and the girl child and advocacy initiatives undertaken, including campaigns against violence."¹⁰

¹⁰ Institute for Development Impact, *Independent Evaluation of the Civil Society Education Fund (CSEF) Programme 2013-2015 for the Global Campaign for Education: Evaluation Report (Volume 1)*, 2015.

GPE SUPPORT TO GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH EFFECTIVE SECTOR PLAN FINANCING

Once the government and the rest of the local education group have reached a consensus on a new education sector plan, GPE partner developing countries are eligible to apply for an education sector program implementation grant (ESPIG) of up to US\$100 million to supplement domestic resources in funding a three-year program for the implementation of the education sector plan. They may also request a program development grant for the design of the programs to be supported by the Global Partnership for Education.

ESPIGs fund a variety of activities to remove barriers to gender equality, such as those shown in the graph on page 6. The barriers most often identified in the sector plans of GPE partner developing countries represent an even mix of structural barriers that are tied to the education system (such as the lack of latrines and female teachers), and environmental barriers that originate outside the education system but affect children's educational opportunity (such as child marriage or malnutrition). Accordingly, activities currently funded in GPE's ESPIG grant portfolio include the following:

- School construction and upgrading in areas where there are not enough schools that girls can attend
- Recruitment of female teachers, particularly in countries where cultural norms require female-only school environments for girls
- In-service teacher training in gender-responsiveness
- Encouragement of women in administrative leadership
- Separate latrines and/or sanitary kits for girls
- Uniforms and school kits to reduce direct costs of schooling

- Cash transfers incentivizing girls to attend and remain in school, and/or rewarding high achievers
- Awareness-raising campaigns and community discussion groups to address sociocultural factors
- National studies to help develop targeted gender strategies.

As of September 2016, there are at least 33 active ESPIGs, totaling US\$1.5 billion, that fund programs with gender components such as these. The GPE Secretariat also provides technical support in the form of quality assurance reviews with support from local partners, and participates in annual joint sector reviews. With this support, GPE partner developing countries can pursue targeted interventions, such as the activities above, as well as the *mainstreaming*, or full and systematic integration, of gender equality considerations into their core planning and implementation processes.

With the introduction of a results-based funding model for the 2015-2018 cycle, GPE is also helping to galvanize the prioritization of gender equality and other equity issues in education. This model includes a specific incentive to demonstrate significant performance results on equity issues as part of its 30 percent variable funding tranche (i.e. funding contingent on targets being met), either in outcomes or in strengthened policies and strategies, depending on what is most appropriate for each country context. For example, Malawi recently set a target of increasing the female-to-male teacher ratio in grades 6-8 in its eight most disadvantaged districts. Nepal's aim is implementing targeted interventions in its ten most disadvantaged districts according to its newly developed Equity Index, and reducing the number of out-of-school children, including girls, by 20 percent in these ten districts. The variable tranche also includes targets on learning and efficiency, either of which could also concern gender equality.

WORKING FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN STATES AFFECTED BY FRAGILITY AND CONFLICT

Settings that involve conflict or fragility often exacerbate gender inequality in educational opportunities, with girls most often at a disadvantage. There are currently 37 percent more girls than boys out of primary school across partner countries affected by fragility and conflict, compared to only 4 percent more girls out in other GPE partner developing countries.*

Countries affected by fragility and conflict make up a large and increasing share of GPE and the partnership has an important role to play in preserving and advancing gender equality for children in these difficult settings. For example, GPE has offered accelerated funding, coordination support and technical support to help the ministries of education of Yemen and South Sudan recover more quickly from their respective crises in recent years and sustain services aimed at getting and keeping more girls in school.

Despite the challenges, substantial progress has been made in gender parity in GPE countries affected by fragility and conflict. The number of girls completing school for every 100 boys in these countries has risen from 74 to 88 for primary, and from 68 to 82 for lower secondary, since 2002.**

*Data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics for 2014.

**Data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics from 2002 and 2014. Completion rates are calculated by proxy of gross intake ratios in the last grade.

4. Advancing Gender Equality in GPE Countries

AFGHANISTAN: SECTOR PLANNING AND COORDINATION FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION

Afghanistan has made remarkable progress since 2001, when the Taliban government was overthrown. At that time, the number of children able to access education was low, especially for girls. Now that number is up to 9 million, of whom 39 percent are girls.¹¹

Afghanistan joined the Global Partnership for Education in 2011, and has received technical support in its sector planning and implementation processes. Its latest sector plan takes a detailed look at gender disparities and the barriers that drive them, and sets a number of concrete goals for advancing gender equality in education. Afghanistan also received a grant of US\$55.7 million for the 2012-2016 period, delegated to UNICEF, which acts as a fiduciary grant agency and supervises the implementation by the Ministry of Education.

Support to the sector planning process has been especially important in ensuring improvements toward coordinated, country-owned, sustainable progress on gender equality in the country's education system. These improvements are achieved through a two-pronged approach: education system strengthening across the board that benefits everyone, and targeted efforts specifically focused on the country's most salient needs regarding gender equality. Targeted programs funded by the current GPE program implementation grant include hiring more female teachers in rural areas as well as increasing the visibility of women in administrative positions in the education system, and engaging religious and cultural leaders as well as families to promote girls' education.

¹¹ Data from the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan.



A girl at Ayno Meena Number Two school in the city of Kandahar, Afghanistan, which was built in late 2008 with support from GPE funding.

GPE's involvement in community-based education in Afghanistan is an example of a systems-strengthening approach that does not target gender equality specifically but is nevertheless a powerful avenue for countering the disadvantage of girls in the country. Community-based schools remove many of the top barriers keeping girls out of school in the country, including parents' worries for their daughters' safety during long walks to school in insecure areas. As a result, they tend to have much higher ratios of girls enrolled—often over half. But these schools are currently funded predominantly by external donors on a project basis. GPE is helping to facilitate the kind of cross-regional alignment, equity and coordination that will ensure the sustainability and readiness of community-based education for incorporation into the government's sector plan and budget.

NEPAL: WORKING FOR COMPREHENSIVE EQUITY FOR ALL GIRLS AND BOYS

Nepal joined the Global Partnership for Education in 2009, and has received GPE implementation grant

allocations totaling US\$177 million. It is currently working on a new education sector plan with financial and technical support from GPE.

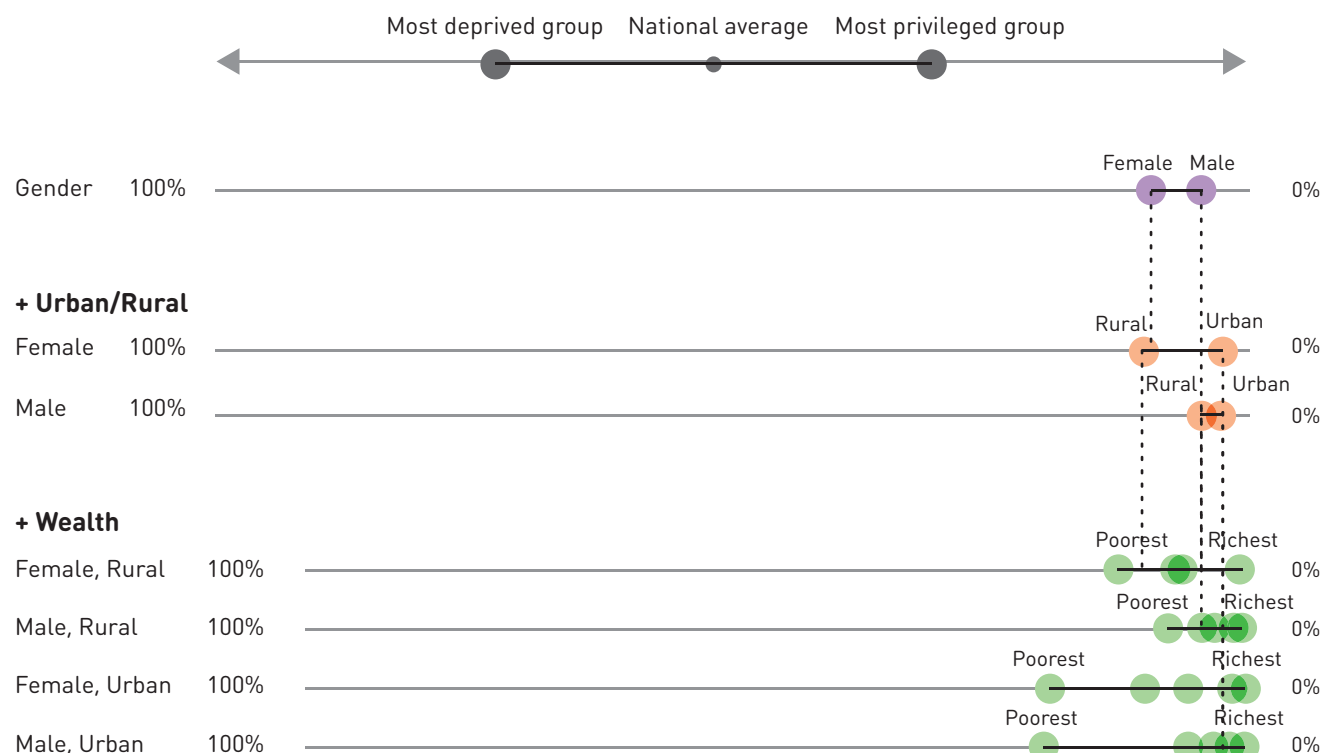
Despite the damage to schools affecting more than 1 million children following the 2015 earthquakes, Nepal's achievements since joining GPE have been robust.¹² Nearly all of its children are in primary school, and enrollment rates for secondary school have increased significantly since 2009, especially for girls, whose rates have increased from 45 percent to 62 percent in that time.¹³ Nepal has now essentially achieved gender parity in enrollment for preprimary, primary and secondary education. This had been accomplished through a variety of strategies including scholarships targeting all girls, the construction of latrines for girls, and "Welcome to School" enrollment campaigns at the beginning of the school year. Nepal has also appointed gender focal points at the District Education Office level, used a quota to increase the number of female teachers and expanded non-formal education that allows out-of-school children to catch up and be mainstreamed in formal schools.

In addition to these achievements, what is remarkable about Nepal's approach during its current education sector plan is the careful attention it has paid to addressing multiple exclusion factors through a thoughtful, integrated equity approach. Through its consolidated equity strategy, the Nepali Ministry of Education has sought to identify its most disadvantaged learners and improve outcomes related to access, participation and learning through specific activities in each area. This includes substantial work to address issues related to six exclusion factors: (1) gender; (2) disability; (3) caste, ethnicity and language; (4) poverty, health and nutrition; (5) geographical location; and (6) other vulnerable groups. For example, targeted activities include monitoring learning outcomes and addressing the causes of disparities in learning for girls and boys, and providing scholarships and psychological support for orphaned learners.

¹² This progress has built on positive trends beginning in the early 2000s.

¹³ Net enrollment rates between 2009 and 2014, according to data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, calculated July 5, 2016.

OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN NEPAL



Visual from latest available data, 2011.

Through substantial, integrated equity efforts such as this, Nepal has achieved high, equitable access rates far above global averages in a remarkably short time. The data visualization above from the UNESCO World Inequality Database on Education shows how low out-of-school rates are overall, and how relatively little spread there is on gender, wealth and rural/urban location.

The largest spread in the graphic, between the most and least disadvantaged groups, is 21 percentage points (22 percent out of school versus 1 percent). For comparison, just 10 years prior, this figure had been 53 points (56 percent versus 3 percent). In addition, girls from the Dalit community had been particularly disadvantaged, and they too have made huge progress.

Going forward, Nepal's emphasis on using disaggregated data to continue to identify and target marginalized learners through tools, such as the equity index, that support its equity strategy will help to ensure that remaining pockets of disadvantage, such as the poorest

girls and boys in urban settings, will get the assistance they need. A recent GPE program implementation grant of US\$59 million was allocated to Nepal under the results-based funding model, in which the equity index is used to identify the 10 most disadvantaged districts as the targets for interventions and results for their equity-focused indicator.

NICARAGUA: IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING DISADVANTAGED BOYS

Nicaragua joined the Global Partnership for Education in 2002, and has received GPE grants totaling US\$40.7 million between 2004 and 2016. It is currently preparing a new strategic plan for its education sector for 2016-2020.

While both girls and boys can face gender discrimination in Nicaragua, one of its salient gender issues is that of out-of-school boys, particularly adolescents. At the latest survey, only 40 percent of boys completed



Four boys pose in front of their school in Nicaragua.

lower secondary school compared with 52 percent of girls. While children in urban settings are much more likely to complete lower secondary than those in rural areas—and wealthier children are much more likely than poorer children to do so—the girls fare better than the boys in every group except that of the poorest children in rural areas, where girls are slightly disadvantaged. Girls’ advantage is most pronounced among middle-class children in urban settings, where 70 percent of girls completed lower secondary school compared to 48 percent of boys. A similar pattern holds for completion of primary school, which 77 percent of Nicaraguan girls were able to do at the latest survey versus 66 percent of boys.¹⁴

Nicaragua’s most recent education sector plan made note of somewhat higher pass rates for girls at primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels, and a new plan is currently being developed with GPE support. A recent education sector plan development grant helped fund an education sector analysis, completed in April 2016, that takes a much closer look at gender disparities in access, retention and learning for girls and boys, including detailed analysis of the barriers for each. It found, for example, that paid labor becomes a significant factor keeping boys out of school after age 13. This analysis, in combination with technical support

from the Secretariat, partners and the GPE-supported national civil society coalition, will be a valuable resource in the development of the new education sector plan for 2016-2020 that is currently under way.

YEMEN: SUPPORTING GENDER EQUALITY IN EDUCATION DURING CONFLICT

Yemen joined the Global Partnership for Education in 2003, and has received GPE grants totaling US\$122 million. It is currently conducting an education sector analysis for its new transitional education plan, in the wake of the escalated conflict in 2015.

Since joining the partnership, Yemen has gotten many out-of-school children into school, but many still remain without schooling, especially girls. Between 2005 and 2013, the number of out-of-school children decreased from 885,000 to 583,000, but the percentage of out-of-school children who are girls held steady at just over 70 percent.¹⁵

Yemen’s most recent education sector plan has taken measures to address this disparity through strategies aimed at removing barriers to education for girls. These include eliminating school fees, building more classrooms and promoting child-friendly schools especially in the districts where girls are disadvantaged, and



Children in class in Yemen.

¹⁴ Data from the UNESCO World Inequality Database on Education, sourced data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics for 2009.

¹⁵ Data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, calculated July 5, 2016.

developing and implementing a strategy to recruit more female teachers. It also addresses social and cultural factors through campaigns promoting girls' education through local media and traditional leaders, as well as local father-mother councils on education.

Though many Yemeni schools had to close during the conflict, the majority have now re-opened and progress is resuming. The construction of new schools was suspended, but rehabilitation is under way in areas that are now safe: With US\$7.5 million of the current GPE grant, 150 schools are being refurbished with separate sanitary facilities for girls and boys. Psychosocial support is also being provided for children in areas that were particularly affected by the conflict.

5. Next Steps

Considerable progress on gender equality is being made in GPE partner developing countries, and new developments such as the *Gender Equality Policy and Strategy* and the *UNGEI-GPE Guidance for Developing Gender-Responsive Education Sector Plans* will further fortify these efforts. But more will need to be done in the coming years to overcome the many remaining barriers to gender equality worldwide. Of the top 28 countries identified in a recent study as having the largest gender gaps and lowest primary net enrollment rates, 22 are partners of the Global Partnership for Education.¹⁶ In the course of executing its current strategic plan, GPE will focus support for removing barriers and advancing gender equality in these countries especially.

The evidence is strong for specific interventions to remove gender equality barriers—for example, improvements to water, sanitation and hygiene facilities in schools and the recruitment of female teachers where needed—and these types of interventions are being pursued in many GPE countries.¹⁷ Research also suggests that greater gains could be attained through integrated interventions such as conditional cash transfers combined with gender-responsive teacher training, or the provision of menstrual hygiene management facilities combined with teacher training on menstrual hygiene and reproductive health for adolescents. Cross-sectoral collaboration, involving ministries of health, for example, will be particularly important here.

GPE will be working with all partners to explore and assess innovative solutions like these. For example, GPE's areas of focus will include interventions that bridge health and education to ensure the educational success of adolescent girls, partnering initially with the Children's Investment Fund Foundation. It will share good practices and policies that address barriers to gender equality in education, and establish a peer group for countries to share lessons learned—leveraging innovations and approaches that get and keep girls and boys in school and strengthen gender equality throughout education systems.

Working toward greater gender equality in and through education is a critical vehicle for delivering on the vision of the Global Partnership for Education, on the broader sustainable development agenda, and on the basic human rights of all girls and boys. Together we look forward to building a brighter future for all through stronger and more equitable education systems.

¹⁶ Elizabeth King and Rebecca Winthrop, "Today's Challenges for Girls' Education. Global Economy and Development" (Working Paper 90, The Brookings Institution, 2015).

The GPE countries identified as having larger gender gaps are South Sudan, Liberia, Niger, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Chad, Burkina Faso, Pakistan, Guinea, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, the Gambia, Mauritania, Yemen, Papua New Guinea, Togo, Cameroon, Benin and Afghanistan.

¹⁷ Elaine Unterhalter et al, "Interventions to enhance girls' education and gender equality" (Education Rigorous Literature Review, Department for International Development, 2014).

Authors: Louise Banham and Meg Ahern under the technical leadership of Karen Mundy, Chief Technical Officer.

For more information please contact Louise Banham at lbaham@globalpartnership.org



www.globalpartnership.org

 facebook.com/globalpartnership

 twitter.com/gpforeducation

Office Location:

1850 K Street N.W.
Suite 625
Washington D.C., 20006
USA

Mailing Address:

Global Partnership for Education
MSN IS6-600
1818 H Street NW
Washington D.C., 20433
USA