

Assessing the evidence on addressing gender inequality through girls' education in Sub-Saharan Africa

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About this report

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About GSDRC

GSDRC is a partnership of research institutes, think-tanks and consultancy organisations with expertise in governance, social development, humanitarian and conflict issues. They provide applied knowledge services on demand and online. Their specialist research team supports a range of international development agencies, synthesising the latest evidence and expert thinking to inform policy and practice.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TPD	Teacher professional development
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
MTI	Mother-tongue instruction
EMI	English as the medium of instruction
CAI	Computer Assisted Interventions
TaRL	Teaching at the Right Level
SRGBV	School-related gender-based violence
GBV	Gender-based violence
T4A	Teaching For All
LSP	Language supportive pedagogy
CCT	Conditional cash transfers
GoG	Government of Ghana
COE	Colleges of education
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
PEAS	Promoting Equality in African Schools
ESPs	Education sector plans
KaLMA	Kano Literacy and Maths Accelerator project
QESSP	Quality Education Strategic Support Programme
ZESSTA	Zambian Education Strategic Support Technical Assistance

Foreword

The story of girls' education in Africa is a complex one, full of challenges but also hope. It is a problem that has been exacerbated by Covid-19, the closure of education establishments, early marriages and pregnancies that mean millions of girls may never return to school.

In this series of three research reports, we take different standing points to look at girls' education: the big picture (through our review of literature undertaken with the University of Birmingham), the fine print (through our work with the Education Development Trust investigating girls' education in 477 schools in Kano and Lagos States in Nigeria) and through the opinions and practices of the teachers themselves through our Connecting Classrooms programme.

If we were to draw the broadest of conclusions across this work, it would be that all work to improve the outlook for girls' education needs disciplined data and an acute sense of context. There can be no significant, long-term improvements for girls without working with teachers, school leaders, government ministries and agencies and harnessing the power of local communities. There can also be no improvements without the data to measure them.

Measuring impact and working in the local context are core practices of the British Council across our work but we have an arsenal of other of skills and experiences to turn towards the problem.

Our **long-term presence and commitment to quality education** in the region gives us an in-depth understanding of country education systems and the cultural context. Our relationships with key state and non-state agencies and actors helps to amplify the impact of our work.

Our experience of **strengthening national education systems** through our work with ministries of education enables us to engage strategically and encourage gender responsive approaches and focus on girls' education.

Our inclusion-focused **teacher professional development** includes sensitisation training and gender-responsive pedagogies, with modules on differentiated needs and teaching at the right level – approaches we feel will be essential in post-pandemic catch-up and recovery. This is mirrored in our work building foundational skills (including English literacy) through remedial learning for primary school girls both to help them catch up and to encourage them to stay in education.

Improvements in classroom approaches are underscored by a focus on **Instructional leadership** approaches, which inform and enable school leaders to build an inclusive culture in school and which gives an entry point to encourage a focus on girls' education at school level and in the community. Instructional leadership concentrates on raising the standard of classroom teaching, particularly for literacy and numeracy.

Our experience of **building foundational skills such as English literacy** through remedial learning for primary school girls enables us to contribute to providing catch-up support to help children, particularly girls, who are falling behind (Kano Literacy and Maths Accelerator Nigeria, Building Learning Foundations Rwanda) and motivate them to continue learning.

Of the ten lowest performing countries for girls getting into secondary school, six out of ten are in Africa (UNESCO). The continent also has the highest gender disparity in education in the world across metrics such as literacy and drop-out rates. The problem is there to see, but the solutions require long-term, consistent work across a range of sectors by a range of organisations.

Andrew Zerzan,
Director Cultural Engagement, Sub-Saharan Africa

Executive summary

Purpose of review

GSDRC were commissioned by the British Council to undertake a rapid literature review to:

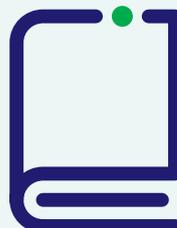
- highlight key research relating to the progress, critical issues and ongoing barriers relating to girls' education in sub-Saharan Africa;
- review evidence on effective interventions in relation to British Council programming areas and UK government priorities and;
- identify potential programming entry points for the British Council to strengthen their impact on girls' education in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA).

Methods

The review collated and synthesised recent relevant literature and international expert thinking in response to the research focus. It is therefore illustrative, not systematic in nature and draws on multiple sources and databases as well as the authors' collective expertise in this area. Databases used included Google and Google Scholar, GSDRC and HEART (Health and Education Advice and Resource Team) websites, journal indexes such as Scopus, Web of Knowledge, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, grey literature and background documents provided by the British Council. Focus countries for the report included: Sudan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Somalia, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Illustrative examples were drawn from these countries and feature throughout the report.

Context of girls' education in SSA

In recent decades, there have been significant improvements made in regard to girls' access, participation and retention in education in SSA. Notwithstanding these achievements, many girls in SSA still face a range of intersecting barriers (at the school, household and community levels) that prevent them from accessing quality education and employment, particularly when they are living in households facing socio-economic disadvantage. These barriers are particularly pronounced for girls with disabilities. The unprecedented disruption to education caused by COVID-19 compounds existing inequalities presents further serious challenges for girls' education and



PROGRAMME SPECIFIC BARRIERS FACING REMEDIAL EDUCATION

and non-formal education programmes mirror the barriers faced in the formal system.

transition to work, due to school closures and increasing economic and livelihoods pressures.

In terms of school-to-work transitions, low education levels tend to form the primary barrier to girls' transition to work, as they prevent girls from developing the foundational and transferable skills required. Gender norms and expectations about the subjects that girls take at school can restrict their choice of livelihoods. In many societies, girls are less likely to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and they are therefore restricted to gendered vocational pathways. Furthermore, there are multiple intersecting barriers that discriminate against girls in the labour market. These include a lack of work opportunities, discriminatory laws and a lack of minimum wage legislation, gender-based violence and inadequate sanitation and hygiene facilities.

Programme specific barriers facing remedial education and non-formal education programmes mirror the barriers faced in the formal system. Issues relating to teacher professional development range from a lack of female teachers to teachers' attitudes, practices and differential expectations of boys and girls in the classroom reproducing gender stereotypes and affect girls' motivation for learning. A lack of gender-sensitive focused professional development, negatively impacts progress in this area.

With regards to strengthening national education systems, a lack of policies and legal enforcement of legal commitments inhibits girls from accessing their right to education. Some countries have even enacted laws and policies that act directly against girls' education such as re-entry to school after pregnancy. Even when governments have made commitments to girls' education, there are not always adequate plans or resources for implementation.

Contextual realities also act as significant barriers to quality language teaching in SSA e.g. policy choice (e.g. English as the medium of instruction vs. early-exit language of instruction policies), political will, stakeholder perceptions of mother-tongue language teaching, education infrastructure, parental and community perceptions, exposure to the language of instruction, opportunities for learner talk, classroom resources and textbooks, teacher skill, capacity and competence and contentions with code-switching. Nonetheless, the British Council is uniquely positioned to address issues in language which is often overlooked in girl focused interventions.

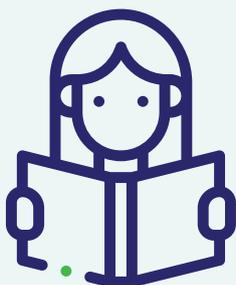
Effective interventions in girls' education

Teacher professional development (TPD) and instructional leadership

Evidence demonstrates that the quality of teaching is the most important school-based influence on student learning followed by school leadership. Where teaching quality is poor, students are more likely to drop out and this is even more pronounced for girls. By increasing teacher effectiveness, TPD has significant potential to impact student outcomes.

What “works” for girls' education in relation to teachers is similar for all children – recruiting and supporting engaged and motivated personnel through high-quality initial teacher education (ITE) and ongoing TPD is key. For girls in particular, due to the multitude of distinct gendered challenges, barriers and stigmas they face, TPD on gender awareness, effective pedagogies and classroom practice is central to improving their overall schooling experiences. This in turn will impact their access, participation, retention and outcomes.

Effective teacher-focused interventions are associated with a ‘quality mix’, that is, a combination of a number of different approaches to enhancing quality; these include explicit concern with gender equality in



WHAT “WORKS” FOR GIRLS' EDUCATION IN RELATION TO TEACHERS IS SIMILAR FOR ALL CHILDREN – recruiting and supporting engaged and motivated personnel through high-quality initial teacher education (ITE) and ongoing TPD is key.

teaching, learning and management; attention to curriculum; adequate resource allocation/teaching and learning materials and pedagogical practices for schools and classrooms; exploration of the role of technology; and close attention to local context. Evidence from the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) Girl's Education Challenge (GEC) fund also supports the high value placed on ‘whole school’ approaches, reflective practice, professional learning communities/communities of practice, coaching, peer learning, mentorship and adaptive management based on teachers' needs.

Many studies highlight the crucial role of the headteacher and the required paradigm shift from administrator and manager to instructional leader to impact learner outcomes. Though the importance of school leaders on learner outcomes is clear, evidence on effective approaches is limited. Deliberate interventions which target the development of headteachers' skills, knowledge and attitudes regarding gender sensitive practices as well as the means in which to track and monitor girls' outcomes at the school level are key to support changes with teachers.

Strengthening national education systems

It is well established that a systematic approach to gender mainstreaming at the policy and implementation levels within a given system is crucial. Work by the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and partners has demonstrated promising trends in this area, for example through gender parity in leadership positions and girls' attendance, though robust evaluation of said programmes is not widely available. There are however some anecdotal examples of how project implementers have successfully worked with governments to embed change at the local, national and system levels. There are typically two primary avenues in this regard:

- working through existing government systems to introduce essential elements of good practice rather than setting up parallel systems;
- working with government to influence policy.

Evidence from the FCDO's GEC Fund demonstrate that these avenues can be particularly impactful in terms of taking a transformative leadership approach to support gender equality in education. This approach seeks to transform power structures, social norms and ideologies that justify and perpetuate gender inequality and power imbalances by identifying key stakeholders and pathways for individual and collective actions to sustain change.

Language and girls' education

Overall, the strength of the evidence on mother-tongue instruction (MTI) and issues relating to English as the medium of instruction (EMI) is strong; however, the evidence relating to best practice is weak. Nonetheless some studies have provided recommendations as starting points such as language supportive pedagogies, translanguaging and working with ministries to support curriculum/materials design.

Accelerated and remedial teaching and learning

There is a small but growing body of literature that addresses remedial interventions, with just a handful focusing on middle- and low-income countries, and even fewer focussing on girls. Low-income countries have typically carried out remediation work through grade repetition, private tutoring, and automatic promotion, despite limited success of these methods. Other methods include small group tutoring, grouping students by ability, peer tutoring, and Computer Assisted Interventions (CAI). One specific pedagogy within 'grouping students by ability' is the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach, which provides foundational literacy and numeracy lessons to groups of children that are divided according to their learning needs. Yet, while the TaRL methodology is widely recommended, including in literature focussed on girls' education, there is very little discussion of the gendered dimensions of this programming, representing an important research gap.

The importance of remedial and non-formal education programming is of increasing importance in the current COVID-19 context as school closures have affected a huge number of children, and as COVID-19 has exacerbated existing inequalities, with girls, poorer students, and those without digital access particularly falling behind. A key point addressed in the literature is how to ensure that remedial programmes are inclusive and target the most vulnerable. Accurate, context-specific needs assessments are key to assessing the specific educational needs of the children, the needs of the educators, and the synergy of the programme with the formal education system and local labour markets. In low- and middle-income countries, the shortage of qualified teachers, and budget limitations, mean that remedial programmes may be delivered by a range of actors including formal education professionals, para-professional or volunteer tutors trained for the specific programme, community and family members, and student peers. Reintegration of remedial students back into the school system is also a key concern, where reintegration can be limited by students dropping out or failing examinations to re-join the formal education system. The problem of stigmatisation is emphasised throughout the literature,

with Sperling and Winthrop (2015) stressing the importance of not unnecessarily separating students. The active mobilisation of the wider community in support of remedial programming is identified as an important element in: reducing stigmatisation; programme oversight; supporting teacher and student recruitment, selection, and retention; and with construction/maintenance of educational facilities (Shah, 2015).

Non-formal/alternative education provision

Overall there is little evidence on the impact of non-formal education programmes, yet it is used in several African countries for adult education, and sometimes for school age children, and in conflict settings it is more likely to be used for school-age children (Yasunga, 2014). Non-formal education often includes vocational training, a skills development component, a focus on indigenous, traditional or religious education, education through informal institutions, and can include remedial or accelerated programmes (Yasunga, 2014). Non-formal education offers an alternative for girls who face barriers to formal education because of early marriage, pregnancy, poverty or cultural bias (Ishaq & Ali, 2014). In general, non-formal education programmes are more successful when they have multiple entry and exit points and close associations with formal education. It is crucial that such programmes be tailored to the local context (Ngware et al., 2018). With the closure of many schools under COVID-19, and an unpredictable return to normalcy particularly in low- and middle-income countries, non-formal education is currently of crucial importance, particularly for girls who face barriers to formal education.



THE IMPORTANCE OF REMEDIAL AND NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMING IS OF INCREASING IMPORTANCE IN THE CURRENT COVID-19 CONTEXT as school closures have affected a huge number of children, and as COVID-19 has exacerbated existing inequalities, with girls, poorer students, and those without digital access particularly falling behind.

Other programming areas

Programmes which address access, quality and retention in girls' education in a comprehensive, multifaceted manner achieve the greatest impact in terms of girls' outcomes. The evidence, particularly from South Asia and SSA, including areas where hardly any girls have ever attended school—shows how community-based approaches can sharply boost girls' enrolment and achievement in just a few years (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015).

Additional areas of programming which have proven successful across systematic evidence reviews include community-based approaches and making schools "girl-friendly". To make schools "girl-friendly", cultural requirements for privacy must be understood. Depending on the context, these may entail separate schools for girls, separate hours for girls in schools shared with boys, boundary walls for girls' schools, female teachers, and the like. This might also include – preschool and childcare programmes, interventions targeting school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) school safety policies and code of conduct for teachers, gender sensitivity and gender responsive pedagogy training, girls' clubs and safe spaces. Evidence from Nigeria suggests that girl-friendly schools must be explicitly defined within any given context, implemented consistently and measured appropriately, as otherwise the practices and beliefs that inform this will not change.

Linked to the concept of girl-friendly schools is the need to address SRGBV. Tackling SRGBV requires cultural change, involving teachers, students, parents, community members, and local organisations. Such an integrated approach also means recognising that gender-based violence (GBV) within schools is related to GBV outside of schools, making it essential to change attitudes and improve awareness around gender violence beyond school walls.

Potential entry points for programming

The following areas have been identified and summarised as key entry points to strengthen the British Council's existing and future programmes in line with UK government priorities. For detailed recommendations see Section 5.

Teacher professional development and instructional leadership

- Pre-service programmes should ensure that gender is mainstreamed, with specific support given to teachers to understand how to ensure gender issues are addressed in training materials and curriculum.

- In-service training programmes should embed gender responsive pedagogies and establish communities of practice in order to encourage ongoing reflection around discipline and classroom practices, active engagement of students and inclusive planning and assessment.
- It is important to ensure that the school curriculum is aligned with student need, to reduce the gap between curriculum expectations and student outcomes. Working with the 'teaching at the right level approach' (TaRL) could support this.
- In addition to measuring changes in teacher practice, all TPD programmes should explicitly measure changes in student outcomes and ensure that data is disaggregated and analysed by gender and other characteristics/forms of disadvantage such as socio-economic background, location or disability.

Strengthening national education systems

- Support governments through capacity building initiatives and move towards a whole system approach to ensure that girls' education is anchored in national development policies to address socio-cultural barriers to girls' education, alongside gender-responsive education sector plans.
- Engage in advocacy and -high-level stakeholder engagement to ensure that sufficient resources, and gender-targeted funding are allocated to ensure long-term system change to achieve sustainable gains for girls' education.
- Engage in advocacy to strengthen and develop laws to tackle discrimination in the labour market can also strengthen perceived value for girls' education and support their transition to safe and secure livelihoods.
- Support the creation of better linkages between women's and youth organisations, civil society organisations and local political, traditional and religious leaders through stakeholder engagement. This is essential for ensuring that the voices of those directly affected by reforms are heard by decision makers.

Language and girls' education

- Interventions need to actively engage with language policy and move towards formulating more holistic language-in-education policies that promote 'sustainable additive bilingualism' or 'mother tongue-based multilingual education.' This requires in-service support for teachers in delivering multilingual lessons and advocacy to governments to strengthen these approaches at the national level.

- Additional gender-sensitive and age-appropriate resources that facilitate English learning should be developed, and they should incorporate local contexts, multiple languages and be aligned to student need.
- Systematically collect gender-disaggregated data on language and ensure that language indicators feature prominently in programme monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) frameworks as well as national benchmarks and assessment systems for school quality and education outcomes.
- Support the inclusion of content that relates to language teaching in initial teacher education programmes such as Teaching For All (T4A) for teacher, headteachers and school facing government staff.
- Move towards language supportive pedagogy (LSP) approaches and encourage translanguaging in policy and in classrooms through systematic research and evidence.

Accelerated & remedial teaching and learning

- Ensure that TaRL, and other remedial programmes, integrate a gender lens
- Consider targeting TaRL programmes at girls facing increased gender inequalities under COVID-19 to help girls stay engaged in education, and to help those that have already left to return.
- Actively facilitate the participation of female educators in programming.
- Develop pathways for ‘unqualified’ teachers in programmes so they can bridge the informal/formal education sectors to help entry into the formal school system. This is particularly important for remedial teachers who are often para-professional, volunteers, community or family members, or student peers (Shah, 2015; Schwartz, 2012).
- Address important research and programming gaps in mainstreaming gender analysis and gender-sensitive programming in remedial activities.

Non-formal/alternative education provision

- Actively engage the broader community in programming around girls’ education to ensure continued support in contexts of resource scarcity where girls often also have work and care responsibilities, drawing on the British Council’s (2021) experience working with civil society and communities.
- Engage the community to challenge stigmatisation around remedial and non-formal learning, and societal norms around girls’ roles and skills.
- Address important research and programming gaps in mainstreaming gender analysis and gender-sensitive programming in non-formal activities.

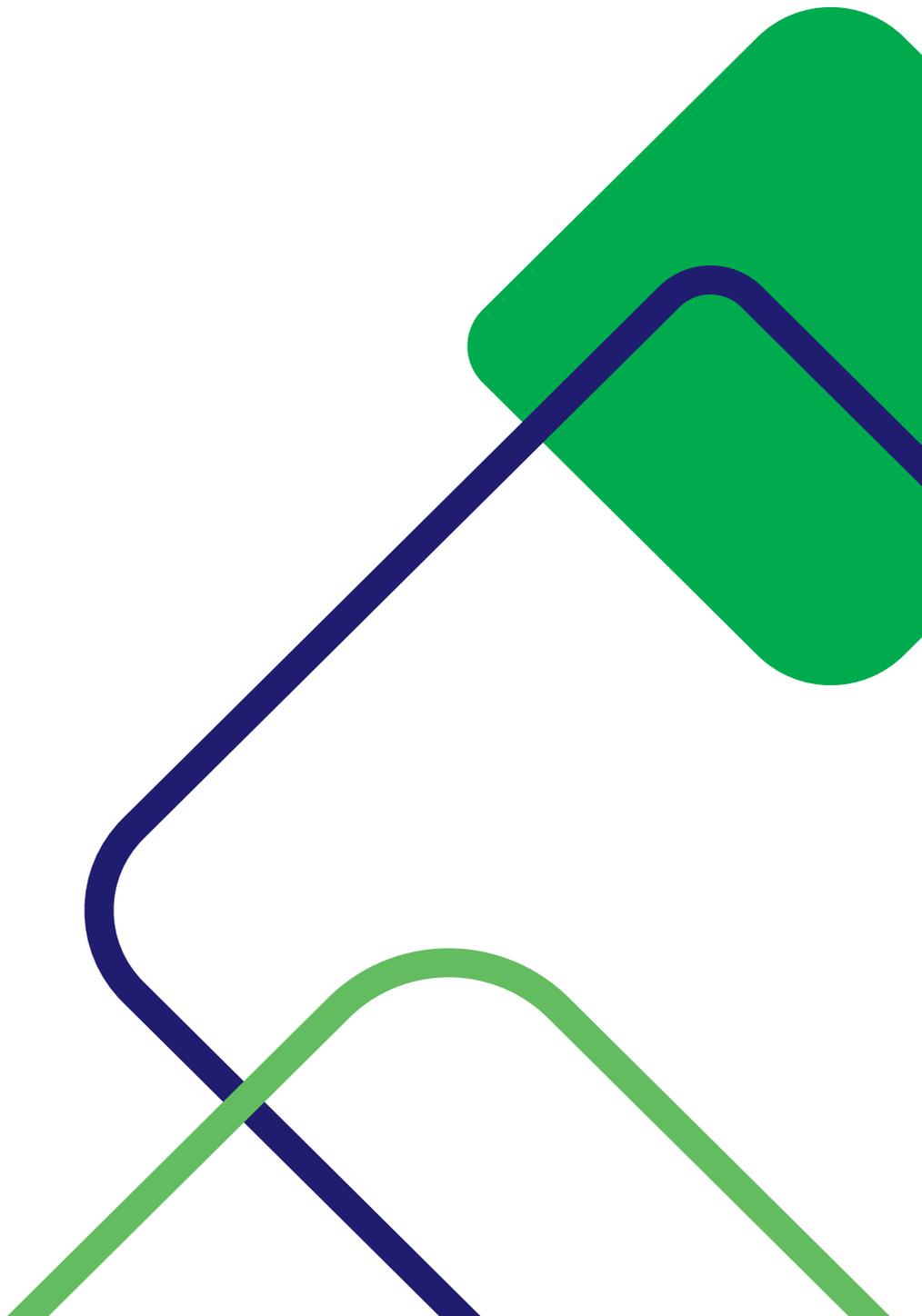
Other programming areas

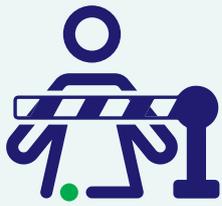
- Programmes need to be multi-dimensional in order to tackle disadvantages that intersect with gender, such as disability, location, poverty and to improve both enrolment and learning.
- Consider addressing issues of access and cost reduction of schooling via un/conditional cash transfers (CCTs) and merit-based scholarships.
- Consider embedded community engagement programme components to sustain any impact from chosen interventions.
- Gender-sensitive and girl-friendly schools need to be clearly defined, tailored to the context and embedded within school leadership practices. It is essential that interventions engage the community and provide safe facilities and menstrual hygiene management for girls.
- Promote safe and secure pathways to productive and fulfilling work through a transformative education system which integrates skill development, including opportunities for those who have not completed education. This should be contextually driven, and support connections with specific vocational areas or labour market opportunities.

PART 1

Policy Brief

April 2021





HOWEVER, GIRLS STILL FACE NUMEROUS BARRIERS in completing 12 years of quality education.



GIRLS ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE UNPAID CARE and domestic responsibilities which can disrupt girls' attendance at school.



SCHOOL-RELATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE affects girls' access to school and impacts their learning.

In 2015, world leaders committed to achieving inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. With global commitment for girls' education at an all-time high, there is an urgent need to identify and mobilise for the approaches which have demonstrated potential for ensuring 12 years of quality education for all girls. This policy brief is supported by a longer report: Boateng, P., Herbert, S. & Gordon, R. (2021). Assessing the evidence on addressing gender inequality through girls' education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

Overview of the Progress in Girls' Education

Globally, there have been large increases in girls' enrolment in education. Since 1995, the number of girls enrolled in primary and secondary school has risen by 180 million. Between 1995 and 2018, the percentage of countries with gender parity in education increased from 56 per cent to 65 per cent at the primary level, 45 per cent to 51 per cent at the lower secondary level and from 13-24 per cent in upper secondary education.

Girls' learning outcomes have also improved globally. In more than half of the countries that took part in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2000 and 2018, girls perform equally as well as boys in reading and mathematics and do better than boys in mathematics in one quarter of countries.

However, girls still face numerous barriers in completing 12 years of quality education. For example, data from Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) found that in many countries, no more than 10 girls out of every 100 girls complete lower secondary school. Additionally, one third of girls aged 10-19 from the poorest households are still in primary school.

Girls also face barriers to the labour market and a longer and more unstable school to work transition. On average, it takes an average of 7.8 months for a young woman to find work, in comparison to 6.9 months for young men. In low- and middle-income contexts 31 per cent of young women are not in education, employment or training, in comparison with 16 per cent of young men.

Overview of Challenges in Girls' Education

Barriers at the Household and Community Level

- **Economic factors exacerbate barriers to girls' education.** Girls' education is more vulnerable to income shocks, and more likely to be mediated by low expectations about the potential returns from educating girls in comparison to boys.
- **Girls are more likely to have unpaid care and domestic responsibilities which can disrupt girls' attendance at school.** For example, girls who spend 28 hours or more per week in domestic and care work spent 25 per cent less time at school than those involved in 10 hours or fewer.
- **Social expectations and norms, particularly for adolescent girls, can lead to dropout.** For example, social pressure surrounding marriage, or related to early pregnancy are often cited reasons for dropout in many countries in SSA.

Barriers at the School Level

- **School-related gender-based violence affects girls' access to school and impacts their learning.** The most recent data demonstrates high levels of violence in schools with incidences of sexual violence seen to be higher in schools in the poorest communities.

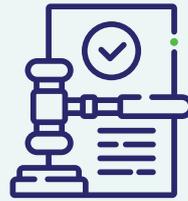
- **Lack of gender sensitive school environment with insufficient sanitation facilities can affect attendance and lead to dropout.** In particular, inadequate menstruation management methods, such as lacking access to sanitary pads, or toilets and water supply leads to girls experiencing anxiety and discomfort in schools.
- **Classrooms that are not gender-sensitive may reinforce gender stereotypes and exacerbate girls' exclusion.** In many contexts the 'hidden curriculum', or gender bias from teachers or gendered stereotypes in learning resources, can reduce girls' motivation for learning and their self-esteem. Insufficient training often limits teachers and school leaders' ability to promote a gender-sensitive school environment.

Barriers at the Systems Level

- **A lack of legal enforcement of commitments inhibits girls from accessing their right to education.** For example, just 20 out of 53 countries in the Commonwealth have ratified the highest level of de jure commitment to gender equality in education.
- **Gender-specific laws and policies in education are essential, but they have to be accompanied by strong plans for implementation.** Although education ministries globally have sponsored laws promoting gender equality in 50 per cent of countries, or policies to that effect in 42 per cent of countries, often these are criticised for their lack of implementation in practice.

Barriers in School-to-Work Transitions

- **Low education levels form the primary barrier to girls' transition to work.** For example, one in five unemployed adolescent girls in SSA reported that their entry requirements for their career path exceeded their education and training.
- **Gender norms can restrict girls' choice in the labour market.** Girls are less likely to access free vocational training than boys, and vocational training often reinforces social norms by offering training in stereotypically female and low-paid trades.
- **Gendered discrimination within the labour market acts as a barrier to girls' participation.** This includes discriminatory laws, a lack of minimum wage or employment security legislation, gender-based violence and inadequate sanitation and hygiene facilities.



GENDER-SPECIFIC LAWS AND POLICIES IN EDUCATION ARE ESSENTIAL, BUT THEY HAVE TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY STRONG PLANS FOR IMPLEMENTATION.

Although education ministries globally have sponsored laws promoting gender equality in 50 per cent of countries, or policies to that effect in 42 per cent of countries, often these are criticised for their lack of implementation in practice.

What should be done to enhance access, participation, quality and retention in girls' education?

Teacher professional development and instructional leadership

- There is limited literature on what constitutes effective teacher professional development. However, existing evidence emphasises the importance of a sustained approach which establishes and promotes the agency of teacher professional learning communities with the support of external expertise. Evidence also suggests that focussed and context-specific content which integrates gender awareness, effective pedagogies and reflection on classroom practice is also key.
- A whole-school gender responsive approach requires working with teachers, school leaders and community stakeholders to mainstream gender into all aspects of school leadership and management.

Strengthening national education systems

- Gender-responsive education sector planning and funding should be prioritised. For example, Uganda's approach to enshrining gender-responsive budgeting in the Public Finance Management Act has been considered an important step to ensuring sustainability in resource-commitment to girls' education.

- Cross-sectoral interventions are important for ensuring that barriers to girls' education are tackled beyond the education system. For example, Ethiopia's cross-sectoral measures to strengthen girls' participation in education included working to eradicate early and forced marriage through the development of a national platform across ministries.

Language and girls' education

- Language of instruction/medium of instruction models have significant implications for girls' education. Several studies demonstrated that offering instruction in the mother tongue has a positive impact on girls' enrolment and transition rates, primarily because girls are less exposed than boys to other languages outside the home.

Accelerated and remedial teaching and learning

- The small but growing literature on remedial interventions in low- and middle-income countries highlights the importance of these programmes for foundational literacy and maths skills, with current needs for these programmes even greater due to school closures and widening inequalities under COVID-19. A key evidence-based approach is Teaching at the Right Level, but this has tended to lack a gender lens, and mostly targets both girls and boys.
- Remedial programmes should be inclusive and target the most vulnerable. In contexts with limited budgets, they can be delivered by formal education professionals, para-professional, volunteers, community and family members, and student peers. However, reintegration of remedial students back into the school system should be a key focus, as should addressing stigmatisation, and actively mobilising the wider community in programming.

Non-formal/alternative education provision

- The evidence base is generally weak on non-formal education provision. There is some cross-over between non-formal and remedial programming however.
- In general, non-formal education programmes are more successful when they have multiple entry and exit points, close associations with formal education, are tailored to the local context, and engage the wider community to ensure support for girls' education, especially in resource scarce contexts where girls have work and care responsibilities.

Other programming areas

- Financial and in-kind support, fee elimination, scholarships and stipends and flexible cash transfers have all shown promising impacts on improving girls' access to, and retention in education.
- Multidimensional approaches, which focus on access and learning, are essential for tackling multiple dimensions for disadvantage. For example, CAMFED's approach has demonstrated the positive impact of bursaries combined with pedagogical interventions inside schools.
- Engaging with multiple community stakeholders can address socio-cultural norms which affect aspirations and support for girls' education.
- Girl-friendly schools can promote equality in enrolment and achievement for all children. These approaches should focus on eliminating gender stereotypes, providing inclusive facilities, curricula and learning processes and involving key stakeholders to address socio-cultural barriers that prevent girls' participation.

Recommendations

Teacher professional development and instructional leadership

- Pre-service programmes should ensure that gender is mainstreamed, with **specific support given to teachers to understand how to ensure gender issues are addressed** in training materials and the curriculum.
- In-service training programmes should **embed gender responsive pedagogies and establish communities of practice** in order to encourage ongoing reflection around discipline and classroom practices, active engagement of students and inclusive planning and assessment.
- It is important to ensure that the **school curriculum is aligned with student need**, to reduce the gap between curriculum expectations and student outcomes. Working with the 'Teaching at the Right Level' approach could support this.

Strengthening national education systems

- A **whole system approach** is needed to ensure that girls' education is anchored in national development policies to address socio-cultural barriers to girls' education, alongside gender-responsive education sector plans.

- **Sufficient resources, and gender-targeted funding**, need to be allocated to ensure long-term system change to achieve sustainable gains for girls' education.
- Advocacy to **strengthen and develop laws to tackle discrimination in the labour market** can also strengthen perceived value for girls' education and support their transition to safe and secure livelihoods.
- Supporting the **creation of better linkages between women's and youth organisations, civil society organisations and local political, traditional and religious leaders** is essential for ensuring that the voices of those directly affected by reforms are heard by decision makers.

Language of instruction and girls' education

- Interventions need to **actively engage with language policy and move towards formulating more holistic language-in-education policies** that promote 'sustainable additive bilingualism' or 'mother tongue-based multilingual education.' This requires in-service support for teachers in delivering multilingual lessons and advocacy to governments to strengthen these approaches at the national level.
- Additional **gender-sensitive and age-appropriate resources that facilitate English learning should be developed**, and they should incorporate local contexts, multiple languages and be aligned to students needs. It should also be ensured that student learning materials are gender-sensitive and do not reinforce harmful stereotypes.

Accelerated and remedial teaching and learning and non-formal education

- **Contextualise programme design to take into local conditions** regarding specific community/school-level barriers facing girls.
- **Disaggregate project data and explicitly measure girls' outcomes** as well as intersecting forms of disadvantage to strengthen the evidence base.
- **Actively engage the broader community in programming** around girls' education on an ongoing basis to secure buy-in and support for programme activities.
- **Actively facilitate the participation of female educators** in programming.

- **Develop pathways for 'unqualified' teachers** to bridge the informal/formal education sectors and to help entry into the formal school system.
- Carefully **consider language of instruction** and how this might be approached from the lens of teacher training and ongoing professional learning and support.
- Ensure projects provide sufficient, sustainable, scaffolded **teaching and learning materials incorporating language supportive** pedagogical approaches.
- Enact **gender-sensitive approaches in lesson delivery**, resources and wider school policies.
- **Establish girls' clubs where girls can develop wider life skills**, vocational training and other relevant skills.

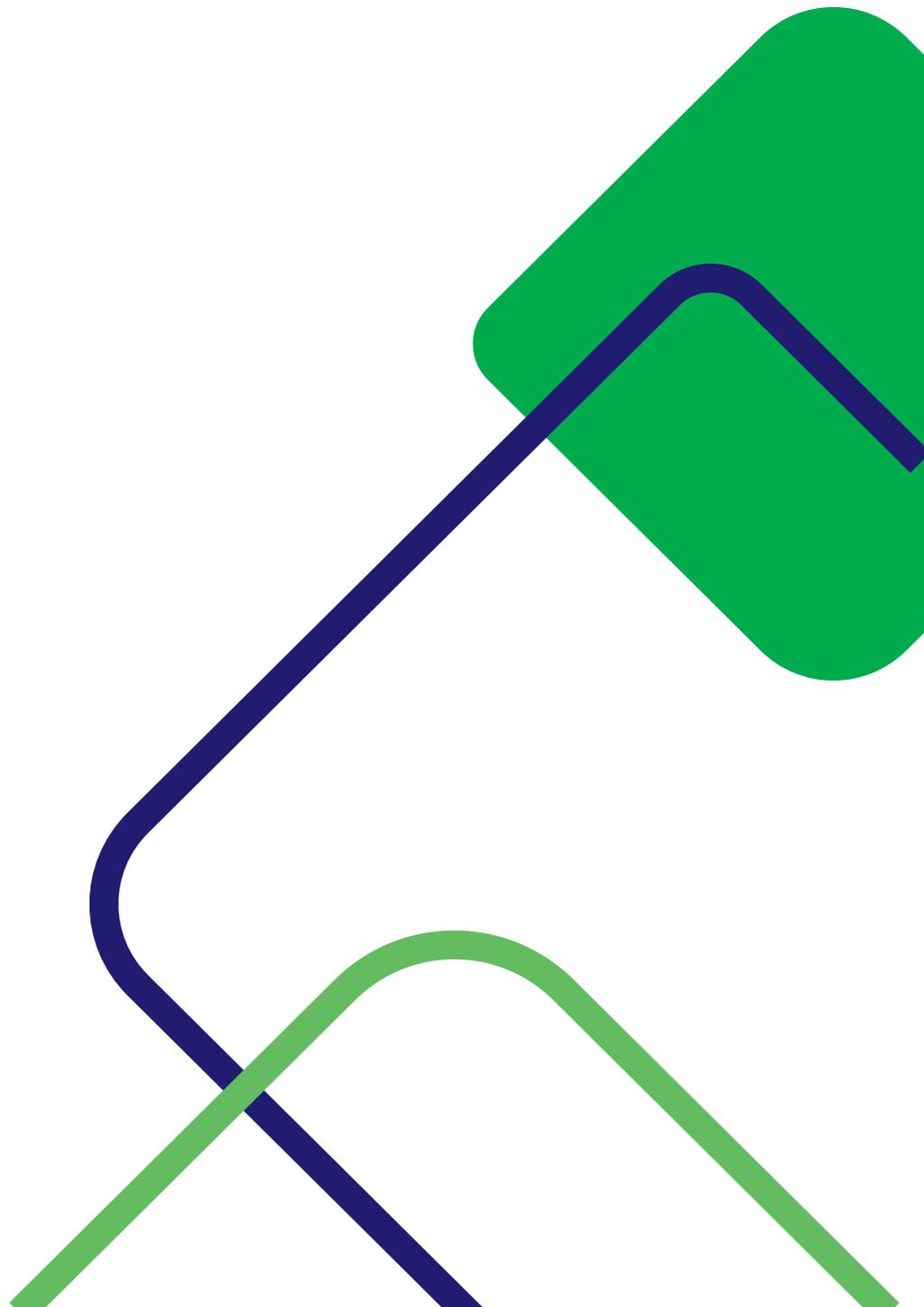
Other programming areas

- **Programmes need to be multi-dimensional** in order to tackle disadvantages that intersect with gender, such as disability, location, poverty and to improve both enrolment and learning.
- **Gender-sensitive and girl-friendly schools** need to be clearly defined, tailored to the context and embedded within school leadership practices. It is essential that interventions engage the community and provide safe facilities and menstrual hygiene management for girls.
- **Promote safe and secure pathways to productive and fulfilling work** through a transformative education system which integrates skill development is essential, including opportunities for those who have not had the opportunity to complete education. This should be contextually driven, and support connections with specific vocational areas or labour market opportunities.

PART 2

Literature Review

March 2021



Chapter 1

Introduction

This purpose of this literature review is to:

- Highlight the ways in which girls' educational experiences, learning outcomes and transition to tertiary education, work and/or entrepreneurship can be enhanced in relation to the British Council 's programming areas and the UK government's priorities for girls' education;
- Identify other critical issues and barriers, not covered within identified British Council programming areas, that need to be addressed if girls are to have positive learning experiences, outcomes and transition to tertiary education or work;
- Review the evidence of effective interventions implemented by governments and practitioners to address the identified barriers, gaps and needs pertaining to girls' educational experiences, learning outcomes and transition to tertiary education and/or work and;
- Identify potential programming entry points that address barriers and gaps to enhancing girls' educational experiences, learning outcomes and transition to tertiary education and/or work through British Council programmatic areas.

The report begins by outlining the methods used for the literature review followed by an overview of the progress and challenges facing girls' education in Sub-Saharan Africa. The report continues with a discussion of the evidence relating to effective interventions focused on girls' education and then suggested potential entry points for British Council programming. Finally, the report concludes with recommendations and ways forward.

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The report begins by outlining the methods used for the literature review followed by an overview of the progress and challenges facing girls' education in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Chapter 2

Methods

The report used a rapid synthesis of a selection of recent literature¹ and international expert thinking in response to the research focus. It is illustrative in nature and draws on multiple sources and databases as well as the authors' collective expertise in this area. Databases used included Google Scholar, GSDRC and HEART websites, journal indexes such as Scopus, Web of Knowledge, ProQuest, ScienceDirect, grey literature and internal background documents provided by the British Council. The British Council identified focus countries in alignment with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)'s priorities. These included: Sudan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Somalia, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Case study examples were drawn from these countries as they appeared in the literature and feature throughout the report as well as pertinent examples from Asia where relevant. The report focused on six intervention types, in line with the British Council's focus areas: teacher professional development and instructional leadership; strengthening national education systems; language and girls' education; accelerated and remedial teaching and learning; non-formal/alternative education provision; and other programming areas



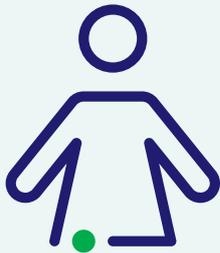
The report used a rapid synthesis of a selection of recent literature and international expert thinking in response to the research focus. It is illustrative in nature and draws on multiple sources and databases as well as the authors' collective expertise in this area.

¹ Search criteria included but was not limited to "gender", "sub-Saharan Africa", "girls", "women", "school-to-work transition", "learning outcomes for girls", "teachers and school leaders impact on learning", "entrepreneurship". Searches were also conducted on the specific policy intervention areas, and additional literature was identified through snowballing. The British Council also provided some internal documents, to support the development of recommendations made in this report in Section 5. The main inclusion/exclusion criteria was the report's areas of focus and geographical areas of interest. Research from geographies which were not in focus and/or evidence which was published over 15 years ago was also excluded unless they were key seminal pieces which have significantly contributed to our collective understanding of what works in girls' education in SSA.

Chapter 3

Context of Girls' Education in sub-Saharan Africa: Issues and Barriers

In recent decades, there have been large increases in girls' enrollment in education.



56
to **65**
per cent at
the primary
level

45
to **51**
per cent
at lower
secondary

13
to **24**
per cent
in upper
secondary
education

3.1 Overview/Progress Thus Far

In recent decades, there have been large increases in girls' enrolment in education. UNESCO's (2020) Gender Monitoring Report highlighted that since 1995, the number of girls enrolled in primary and secondary school globally has risen by 180 million. Additionally, between 1995 and 2018, the percentage of countries with gender parity in education increased from 56 per cent to 65 per cent at the primary level, 45 per cent to 51 per cent at lower secondary level and from 13 per cent to 24 per cent in upper secondary education. In some contexts, this increase has been larger than the average. For example, in Zambia in 2001, only one in five girls from poor households in rural areas were completing primary school, but this rose to 45 per cent in 2013 (Rose et al., 2017).

Girls learning outcomes have also improved, and in many contexts are rising faster than boys' learning outcomes. For example, in more than half of the countries that took part in PISA in 2000 and 2018, girls perform equally as well as boys in reading and mathematics and do better than boys in mathematics in one quarter of countries (UNESCO, 2020).

However, many girls in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) still face a range of intersecting barriers that prevent them from accessing quality education, particularly when they are living in households facing socio-economic disadvantage. For example,

in Cameroon and Malawi, data demonstrated that only 24 per cent and 29 per cent of girls from poor households in rural areas completed primary school respectively (Ngware et al., 2018). Additional barriers intersect with discriminatory gender norms; in Ethiopia, only 4 per cent of children with disabilities are enrolled in school, with boys outnumbering girls three to one in lower primary school (Plan International et al., 2020).

Low levels of primary school completion have a knock-on effect for girls' ability to access and finish secondary school. Data from 2018 showed that in Cameroon, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda, no more than ten out of every 100 girls complete lower secondary school; of the poorest 10–19-year-old girls in sub-Saharan Africa, and around one-third are still in primary school (Gordon et al., 2019).



MANY GIRLS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA (SSA) STILL FACE A RANGE OF INTERSECTING BARRIERS that prevent them from accessing quality education, particularly when they are living in households facing socio-economic disadvantage.

Even when girls are able to access school, there remain gender disparities in learning outcomes.

In Ghana, in 12 years of schooling, on average girls experience only six years of learning; in Tanzania, of an average of eight years in school, girls' experience only five years of learning and in Nigeria, it is only four years of learning (Gordon et al., 2019). In countries where fewer than 50 per cent of children complete primary school, learning gaps between boys and girls are the widest, with poverty compounding these gaps (Rose et al., 2017).

The transition from school to work is longer and less stable for girls than for boys. The International Labour Organisation's school-to-work transition survey which took place in more than 30 low- and middle-income countries found that it takes an average of 7.8 months for a young woman to find work, but only 6.9 months for young men (Elder & Kring, 2016). Additionally, in low- and middle-income contexts, the rate of young people not in education, employment or training is twice as high for women (31 per cent) as for men (16 per cent) (ILO & UNICEF, 2018).

The unprecedented disruption to education caused by COVID-19 presents serious challenges for girls' education and transition to work. It is estimated that more than 120 million girls have been affected by school closures across Africa and economic opportunities for all young people have been reduced (Tsegaye Tesemma, 2020). COVID-19 is exacerbating existing inequalities, with girls and women, the poor, and those without digital access, particularly affected (Herbert & Marquette, 2021).

3.2 Ongoing Issues and Critical Barriers to Girls' Education

3.2.1 Barriers at the Household and Community Level

Economic factors underpin and exacerbate numerous barriers to girls' education, which is more vulnerable to income shocks. For example, in Uganda, negative deviations in rainfall had highly significant effects on girls' enrolment in primary

schools. Even when schooling is free of charge and girls are enrolled in school, a study found that a negative income shock had an adverse effect on the test scores of girls, while boys were not affected (Björkman-Nygqvist, 2013) and in Tanzania, a study found that agricultural shocks led to girls experiencing a more than 70 per cent increase in the probability of quitting schooling (Bandara et al., 2015).

Poverty often influences parental aspirations for girls' education.

As gender norms define the roles that women have within their families and communities, these expectations shape parental preferences for girls' education. Parents may have low expectations around the potential returns from educating their daughters; for example, in Gambia, one study found that there is profound tension due to the values parents assign to girls' education as being less necessary for their future roles as mothers and caretakers for their families (Njie, Manion & Badjie, 2015). Additionally, in rural Kenya, the perception of low career opportunities for girls to find work in the formal sector led to parents withdrawing girls from school (Coffey, 2017).

Girls are more likely than boys to have unpaid care and domestic responsibilities, which can disrupt their schooling.

In Rwanda, girls spend on average four hours more than boys each week on household chores at age 10 to 14, which increases to a six-hour gap by the age of 15 (Stavropoulou & Gupta-Archer, 2017). Time-consuming domestic responsibilities can reduce girls' attendance at school. Girls who spend 28 hours or more per week in domestic and care work were found to spend 25 per cent less time at school than those involved in fewer than ten hours per week (UNESCO, 2019).

Social expectations and norms can be a barrier to girls' education, with early marriage particularly affecting girls from the poorest households.

The intersection between gender and poverty is reported to lead parents to either 'marrying girls off' or girls choosing to marry early to reduce vulnerability to poverty (Coffey, 2017). Early pregnancy also influences girls' dropout from school. In 23 countries in SSA, pregnancy accounts for 18 per cent of female dropouts from secondary school, and in Mozambique and South Africa it has been found to be the leading cause of dropout (GPE, 2013). Even if girls are able



ECONOMIC FACTORS UNDERPIN AND EXACERBATE NUMEROUS BARRIERS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION, which is more vulnerable to income shocks.



SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS AND NORMS CAN BE A BARRIER TO GIRLS' EDUCATION, with early marriage particularly affecting girls from the poorest households

to remain in school after pregnancy, a lack of flexible schooling for young mothers can make learning difficult. For example, although Botswana has a long-standing re-entry policy, pupils are still not allowed to sit for examinations while pregnant or within six months of delivery (Birungi et al., 2015).

Girls are vulnerable to harassment and violence on their journeys to and from school. Greater distance to school has stronger negative effects on girls' access to education due to concerns about the safety of girls on the journey to school, particularly in rural areas. In Malawi, girls are significantly less likely to attend secondary school than boys, as the distance away from school increases, whilst in Nigeria, a study found that living more than 20 minutes away from the nearest secondary school reduced the odds of school attendance more for girls than boys (Kazeem et al., 2010).

3.2.2 Barriers at the School-Level

SRGBV remains a pervasive issue for girls in school, particularly once they reach adolescence. In South Africa, a national survey found that eight percent of secondary school girls had experienced severe sexual assault or rape in the previous year while at school (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). In Ghana and Senegal, three-quarters of students report that teachers are the primary perpetrators of school violence (Fancy et al., 2012). This also appears to be more prevalent in the most disadvantaged communities. The most recent data demonstrates that school-related violence affects both boys and girls, with 32 per cent of girls in Malawi, and 47 per cent of boys reporting physical or sexual violence from a teacher or classmate (Know Violence in Childhood, 2017). An analysis of Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) data found that the incidence of sexual violence was 40 percentage points higher for schools in the poorest communities (Jere, 2015).

Vulnerability to violence is exacerbated for girls with disabilities. In Uganda, 24 per cent of girls with disabilities reported experiencing sexual violence at primary school in comparison with 12 per cent of their peers (Devries et al., 2014). During baseline data collection for the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) in Kenya, Leonard Cheshire Disability found that only three percent of girls with disabilities said that they were never afraid in school (Leonard Cheshire Disability cited in DFID, 2018a).

A lack of a gender-sensitive school environment can influence girls' absenteeism, dropout and learning. For example, in Zambia, inadequate menstrual hygiene and sanitation facilities, such as inadequate toilets and water supply in schools resulted in higher drop out ratios for girls than boys

in grades five- eight when girls started to experience their menstrual cycle (Agoi, Harvey & Maillou, 2017). In Sierra Leone, inadequate menstruation management methods, such as lacking access to sanitary pads, and resulting leaks and stains were reported to lead to girls experiencing anxiety and discomfort in schools, which could have a negative impact on their ability to concentrate or participate (Caruso et al., 2013).

Additional barriers at the school level are explored in more detail in Section 3.3.

3.2.2 Barriers related to COVID-19

Currently, the effects of economic pressures caused by COVID-19 are compounded by the impact of school closures. Since the pandemic, concerns have also been raised that girls may be at greater risk of not returning to school as a result of rising poverty, increased rates of early marriage or pregnancy, or increased household care responsibilities (Malala Fund, 2020). Data from the Ebola outbreak in Liberia showed that 21 per cent of girls who dropped out did not return to school at all, even after the crisis (Tsegaye Tesemma, 2020).

In some cases, gender norms that already limit girls' access to technology have had a disproportionate impact on their learning opportunities during lockdowns (Amaro et al., 2020; Naylor et al., 2020). For example, studies have shown that 37 per cent of girls contacted in Uganda had no access to television and radio-based study material provided by the Minister of Education during COVID-19 and 50 per cent of them reported not having any home school help (Tsegaye Tesemma, 2020).

More broadly, unless gender is considered at every stage of the introduction of education technology interventions, there are concerns that it will increase segregation, rather than promote equality. For example, gendered access to technology outside school influence girls' technological literacy and some studies have also demonstrated that girls have come to self-regulate their own access to technology due to gendered beliefs and attitudes about its use (Webb, Barringer, Torrance & Mitchell, 2020).

3.3 Ongoing Issues and Critical Barriers: School to Work Transitions

Low education levels tend to form the primary barrier to girls' transition to work, as they prevent girls from developing the foundational and transferable skills required (Rose, 2021). For example, one in five

unemployed adolescent girls in SSA reported that their entry requirements for their career path exceeded their education and training (ILO & UNICEF, 2018).

Gender norms and expectations about the subjects that girls take at school can restrict their choice of livelihoods. In many societies, girls are less likely to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), due to gender norms and stereotypes that limit girls' motivation and engagement with these subjects (UNICEF ITU, 2020). This subsequently affects their ability to choose this area of employment. For example, only 7 per cent of young women surveyed in 2012-2016 in ILO's School to Work Transition Surveys conducted in 34 countries had chosen career paths in STEM, in comparison with 18 per cent of young men (ILO and UNICEF, 2018).

Gender norms also restrict girls' ability to access vocational training opportunities, particularly for girls from the poorest backgrounds. In Ghana, only 11 per cent of the poorest one-fifth of young people had access to an apprenticeship, compared with 47 per cent of the wealthiest fifth, and men are more likely than women to receive free training (UNESCO, 2012; Palmer 2007). Adolescent girls with disabilities are even less likely to obtain access to training. For example, in southern Africa nearly half of 15- to 29-year-olds with disabilities who were surveyed reported that they needed but could not gain access to vocational training services (Eide, 2012). Vocational training and apprenticeships also often reinforce social norms by offering girls training in stereotypically female and low-paid trades such as arts and crafts, tailoring and beauty salons (Fox et al., 2011).

Furthermore, there are multiple intersecting barriers that discriminate against girls in the labour market. These include a lack of work opportunities, discriminatory laws and a lack of minimum wage legislation, gender-based violence and inadequate sanitation and hygiene facilities (Rose, 2021).

3.4 Programme-Specific Critical Barriers

Overall, evidence in the literature on the gender-specific barriers in accelerated and remedial learning programmes and in non-formal education is similar to those faced by girls in accessing and thriving in the formal education system. However, in relation to the British Council's programming there is additional evidence on the critical barriers that influence the quality of girls' educational experiences and outcomes in teacher professional development, instructional leadership, national education systems and policies and language teaching.



VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND APPRENTICESHIPS ALSO OFTEN REINFORCE SOCIAL NORMS

by offering girls training in stereotypically female and low-paid trades such as arts and crafts, tailoring and beauty salons

Teacher professional development (pre-service and in-service)

Once marginalised girls have overcome the barriers they face in getting to school, their quality of learning largely depends on their teachers and on the classroom environment. However, the literature focused on the knowledge and skills gaps of teachers and school leaders in relation to girls' education is more limited than other areas.

A lack of female teachers in some settings can lead to lower aspirations for girls from early childhood.

In many contexts, female teachers can serve as role models for younger girls and for changing societal perceptions on girls' education. For example, evidence in Sierra Leone found that female staff were important for reassuring parents that schools are a safe and welcoming environment for girls, which affects their initial access to education (UNGEI, 2017 cited in UNESCO, 2018). However, considering how the school promotes gender equality requires supportive teachers that enable this.

Teachers attitudes, practices and differential expectations of boys and girls in the classroom can reproduce gender stereotypes and affect girls' motivation for learning.

In Ghana, when asked who their top five students were, the teachers named more than twice as many male students as female students (Lambert, Perrino & Barreeras, 2012). This often-unconscious enactment of certain values and norms is known as the 'hidden curriculum' and is also evident in gendered stereotypes perpetuated by textbooks and learning materials (Harper et al., 2020). For example, a content analysis of representation in school textbooks in Malaysia, Pakistan and Bangladesh found a strong male bias, with 'female' occupations being shown as traditional and less prestigious, and women shown as having more passive personality traits. In addition, the share of women in picture content was only 35 per cent in Malaysia and Bangladesh, with the proportion of women in Pakistani textbooks only 24 per cent (Islam & Asadullah, 2018).

Girls' learning is negatively affected by a lack of psychosocial support from teachers and school leaders. Although the evidence in this area is not directly from SSA, evidence from the Caribbean found that the ability to give girls support in schools is often compromised by school's capacity, or by the availability of school leaders with appropriate counselling skills (UNESCO & UN Women, 2016).

A gap in skills and knowledge for teachers in gender-sensitive pedagogy may reinforce gender stereotypes and exacerbate girls' exclusion. Often classrooms are based on a hierarchical organisation rather than on child-centred pedagogy. A study regarding the role of the Post Graduate Diploma in Secondary School Teaching for improving the quality of teaching in secondary schools in Eastern Ethiopia found that in most of the observed schools, teaching was dominated by traditional teacher centred methods and in response, students were passive and unreflective due to a lack of enjoyment in learning (Sisay, Anwar & Tamrat, 2016). Indeed, training on child-centred and gender sensitive pedagogy is considered an important mechanism for preparing teachers to create gender equitable classrooms, yet this is rarely integrated in pre-service and in-service training, or at scale (UNESCO, 2020b).

There is often a lack of training and professional development available for school leaders, which may limit their ability to create a gender-sensitive school environment. There is evidence that there is ineffective training of school principals who lack basic management skills and follow a system of trial and error to lead within secondary schools in SSA (Maphoto, 2016). In Kenya, a study revealed that headteachers employed inadequate supervision methods of teachers which resulted in lower education quality in the schools (Awiti & Raburu, 2013).

A lack of understanding about gender-sensitive school environment and teaching in practice negatively impacts progress in this area. For example, one evaluation in Nigeria found that gender biases among school facilitators persist, and that training for facilitators does not address gender in teaching practice. In addition, teacher development

programmes did not actively integrate a gender-sensitive approach. This was attributed to a lack of understanding and to programme design not defining gender-sensitivity, and also the fact there are difficulties in defining and collecting information on gender-sensitive factors and the 'girl-friendliness' of schools (Bolton, 2019).

Strengthening national education systems

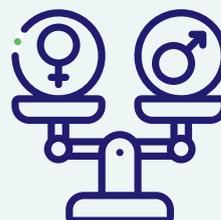
Specific laws and policies that promote gender equality in education are important. By 2020, 50 per cent of countries had educational inclusion laws that covered gender equality explicitly, and 71 per cent of countries had education policies targeted at gender equality (UNESCO, 2020b). However, systems-level barriers to girls' education remain a key barrier to girls' education, and overall, there is less evidence in this area (Rose et al., 2020).

A lack of legal enforcement of legal commitments inhibits girls from accessing their right to education. For example, just 20 out of 53 countries in the Commonwealth have ratified the highest level of de jure commitment to gender equality in education (Gordon et al, 2019). Education ministries globally have sponsored laws promoting gender equality in 50 per cent of countries and policies to that effect in 42 per cent. However, these policies are often criticised for their lack of implementation in practice (UNESCO, 2020b).

Some countries have enacted laws and policies that act directly against girls' education. In Sierra Leone and Tanzania, for example, schools expel pregnant girls from school (Martínez, 2018); although Sierra Leone lifted its ban on pregnant schoolgirls in 2019, this has had long-lasting implications for girls' access to education (Makintosh, 2020). In Tanzania, schools are reported to regularly give girls pregnancy tests, and it is reported that up to 8000 girls are expelled each year due to pregnancy (Martinez, 2017; UNGEI, 2018). Even where re-entry policies are in place for pregnant girls, some countries in SSA have been criticised for requiring specific conditions from girls and the renegotiation of rights to re-entry



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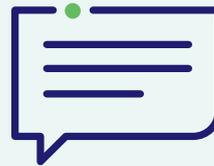
(Mchaju Liwewe, 2012; Omwancha, 2012; Ramulumo & Pitsoe, 2013). In Kenya, research found that there was low awareness among girls in particular about national policies on re-entry, and that even among headteachers, only 83 per cent of headteachers were aware of the re-entry policy (Undie, Birungi, Odwe & Obare, 2019). In Zambia too, the implementation of school re-entry policy is uneven, and there is low awareness of the policy, particularly among young girls (Zuilkowski, Henning, Zulu & Matafwali, 2019).

Even when governments have made commitments to girls' education, there are not always adequate plans for implementation. For example, although Uganda's National Strategy for Girls' education outlined its approach to tackling inequalities in education, in the immediate aftermath of the legislation it was not incorporated into the Education Sector Investment Programme, with gaps reported between policy and practice and low awareness about the existence of the strategy (Apiot Okudi, 2016).

In any context, the climate of support for girls' schooling (politically, culturally, economically and socially) and the existence of complementary legal and regulatory frameworks are crucial in supporting wider gender outcomes. Furthermore, the state's capacity to implement policy, translate commitments into viable programmes and engage the widest range of stakeholders in inclusive dialogue about these processes are critical for the successful development and implementation of interventions for girls' education in the long term. Gender focused interventions are also affected by issues of diversity and the particular needs of different groups of girls and women within any given context (Unterhalter et al, 2014; DFID, 2018b).

Language and girls' education

There is a breadth of literature and evidence which discusses the debates, current status, challenges and complexities of language teaching across SSA however issues related to language and gender are under-researched. Contextual realities can act as significant barriers to quality language teaching. These include: policy challenges and political will, stakeholder perceptions of mother-tongue language teaching, education infrastructure, parental and community perceptions, exposure to the language of instruction, opportunities for learner talk, classroom resources and textbooks, teacher skill, capacity and competence and contentions with code-switching. Nonetheless, available research does raise some important points. For example:



IT IS ESTABLISHED THAT LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION ISSUES (including English as the sole medium of instruction and early-exit policies) present additional barriers to learning which results in further marginalisation for disadvantaged children and girls in particular.

It is established that language of instruction issues (including English as the sole medium of instruction and early-exit policies) present additional barriers to learning which results in further marginalisation for disadvantaged children and girls in particular.

Some studies demonstrate that offering instruction in the mother tongue has a positive impact on girls' enrolment and transition rates, primarily because girls are less exposed than boys to languages outside the home and therefore face a tougher barrier when the mother tongue is not used in school (Holley, 2011; UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011; RTI, 2015; UNESCO IIEP, 2018).

Significant evidence demonstrates that teachers' English proficiency impacts on the quality and type of teaching that teachers can engage in. Several authors have argued that low levels of proficiency of both teachers and learners can lead to less effective pedagogical practice and a reliance on teacher-centred interaction (for example see, Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015). Similarly, teacher training is largely theoretical and lacks practical focus on supporting the realities of the classroom, such as more multilingual and ethnically diverse groups who may not share a language with themselves nor the teacher. Addressing this challenge is increasingly important as access to schooling becomes more universal (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015; Erling et al., 2016). There is also said to be frequent assumptions from policymakers and international agencies about the capacity, language ability and wider teaching skills of teachers in English versus the mother tongue and required support is lacking (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015; Erling et al., 2016; Boateng, 2019).

Chapter 4

Effective Interventions – Evidence on “what works” in girls’ education in sub-Saharan Africa

Building on Section 3, this section discusses some key principles and considerations to meaningfully impact girls’ educational outcomes and experiences. The section begins with evidence-based insights on what works in girls’ education generally, followed by examples of effective interventions according to the British Council’s programmatic areas.

4.1 Overview

Due to the multiple intersecting forms of disadvantage faced by girls in SSA, several authors highlight that interventions focused on girls’ education should be holistic in nature to achieve significant impact (Unterhalter et al, 2014; Sperling & Winthrop, 2015; UN, 2015; DFID, 2018c). Where interventions address one core issue in a discreet manner, outcomes have been modest, particularly for girls. For the purposes of this report, girls’ learning outcomes encompasses a broad range of outcomes, including basic skills, life skills, socio-emotional and mental-health skills (Habler et al, 2020).

Once the direct and indirect costs of schooling are addressed, having girl-friendly schools² near to where girls live is an important first step to get girls to school. Other key areas to support girls’ outcomes include addressing girls’ health (inc. nutrition and WASH/sanitation facilities); reducing the time and distance to school; improving the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom; increasing community engagement and sustaining girls’ education during conflict and crises (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015; Evans & Yuan, 2019). Though there is mixed evidence on the impact of menstrual health management (MHM) on girls’ attendance and therefore

“lost” learning, evidence is unequivocal in emphasising the importance of MHM in improving girls’ quality of life and enhancing their sense of dignity (Unterhalter et al, 2014; Sperling & Winthrop, 2015).

Girls with disabilities represent some of the most marginalised children across various SSA contexts.

In supporting girls with disabilities, it is important to identify them with the support of local stakeholders, create access and support their individual needs. According to learning from DFID’s Girls’ Education Challenge projects, attitudes in particular are key. Children, parents (especially fathers), schools and governments all need to share a common belief that children with disabilities can and should be included in mainstream education (DFID, 2016).

4.2 Teacher professional development and instructional leadership

Evidence continually demonstrates that the quality of teaching is the most significant school-based influence on student learning and outcomes (Hattie, 2003; British Council, 2021a). Where teaching quality is poor, students are more likely to drop out and this disproportionately affects girls. As such, increasing teacher effectiveness via teacher professional development (TPD) is strongly linked to improved student outcomes.

² In ‘girl-friendly’ schools, cultural requirements for privacy must be understood. Depending on the context, these may entail separate schools for girls, separate hours for girls in schools shared with boys, boundary walls for girls’ schools, female teachers, and the like. This might also include – preschool and childcare programmes, eliminating SRGBV, school safety policies and code of conduct for teachers, gender sensitivity and gender responsive pedagogy training, girls’ clubs and safe spaces (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015).



GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES represent some of the most marginalised children across various SSA contexts.

The evidence on what constitutes effective TPD is limited in low-income contexts and in SSA in particular. Much of the emerging research in this area takes inspiration from design principles based on more rigorous research from high-income contexts. Nonetheless, this presents a useful starting point to understand how TPD can be more effective in delivery contexts such as SSA. The key characteristics for effective TPD can be summarised as:

- recognition of teachers as professionals, learners and individuals; school-based; involves targeted, context-specific design which is directly linked to pupil curricula;
- uses active and collaborative learning; includes models of effective practice (through relevant videos, observations);
- provides coaching and external expertise (where possible);
- provides opportunities for feedback and reflection;
- is sustained in duration (i.e. not ad-hoc or one-off workshops); and

- uses student outcomes as a key evaluation measure/criterion (Naylor & Sayed, 2014; Burns & Lawrie, 2015; Darling-Hammond et al, 2017; DFID, 2019; Allier-Gagneur et al, 2020).

Few studies measure the link between initial teacher education (ITE) and learner outcomes let alone for girls' specifically. With regards to ITE, rigorous literature reviews have identified that evidence on effective TPD tends to focus on teacher educators, mode of delivery, quality and effectiveness, mentorship support for newly qualified teachers, teacher behaviours and alignment with wider system policies such as pupil curriculum, teacher working conditions, pedagogy and assessment (see Akyeampong et al, 2013; Orr et al, 2013; Westbrook et al, 2013). Some other studies (see UNESCO IICBA, 2012) have highlighted that though there might be gender responsive approaches enshrined in policy, in practice they are rarely implemented or monitored and stark gender inequities exist throughout many of Africa's education systems. Notwithstanding, Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (T-TEL Ghana) has demonstrated some promising practice with gender mainstreaming throughout the teacher education system.

Box 1:

Strengthening ITE and gender mainstreaming at the teacher education level in Ghana:

To support a series of recent education reforms and enhance the efficacy of existing policies, T-TEL Ghana (2014-2020) worked at the teacher education level to enhance institutional capacity and transform the way pre-service teacher education is delivered in Ghana. Funded by the FDCO and led by the Government of Ghana (GoG) and Cambridge Education, T-TEL focused on seven key areas in the teacher education sector - policy and institutional development, leadership and management, challenge and payment by results fund, tutor professional development, school partnerships and teaching practice, curriculum reform and gender and inclusion. Practically, this entailed tutors participating in weekly professional

development sessions led and run by the tutors themselves, supporting college improvement plans and executing through challenge funds, observations of tutors' teaching practice at colleges of education (CoEs), mentoring of trainees, regular school-based visits to partner schools to support teacher trainees, as well as wider national policy activities such as gender mainstreaming policies and action plans. Through these mechanisms, T-TEL aimed to build institutional capacity, transform the delivery of pre-service teacher education and move towards a high quality, practicum focused pre-service education system.

With regards to in-service TPD, many studies/evaluations focus on the fidelity of implementation rather than learner outcomes. Some studies have identified that most TPD initiatives focus on changed teacher practices and have the implicit assumption that these changed behaviours will impact learner outcomes which is not always the case (Naylor & Sayed, 2014; DFID, 2018c).

What “works” for girls’ education in relation to teachers is similar for all children – recruiting and supporting engaged and motivated personnel through high-quality ITE and ongoing TPD is key. For girls’ in particular, due to the variety of distinct gendered challenges, barriers and stigmas they face, training on gender awareness, effective pedagogies and classroom practice is central to improving their overall schooling experiences (Evans & Yuan, 2019). Evidence from systematic reviews such as Westbrook et al (2013), Unterhalter et al (2014) and Snilstveit et al (2015) point to the importance of having thriving teachers who are adequately supported to enhance girls’ schooling through education, training, reflection on attitudes and quality in-service professional development. Sufficient resources for gender mainstreaming at different levels

of the education system are also important to help embed a concern with gender within educational institutions.

Effective teacher-focused interventions are associated with a ‘quality mix’, that is, a combination of a number of different approaches to enhancing quality. These include explicit concern with gender equality in teaching, learning and management; attention to curriculum, adequate resource allocation/teaching and learning materials and pedagogical practices for schools and classrooms; exploring the role of technology; and close attention to local context. Evidence from the FCDO’s Girls Education Challenge fund also supports the high value placed on whole school approaches, professional learning communities, coaching, peer learning, mentorship and adaptive management based on teacher need (DFID, 2019).

At the classroom level there is strong evidence that group learning and dialogic teaching supports girls’ participation and outcomes. Learning outside the classroom including formal and informal extra-curricular activities such as tutoring and/or girls’ clubs also positively impacts girls’ learning experiences (Unterhalter et al, 2014; DFID GEC, 2018b).

Gender Responsive Schools - Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) in Africa.

Starting in 1999, FAWE began to transform both girls only and co-ed schools across African countries into gender-responsive schools that address the physical, academic, and social dimensions of both girls’ and boys’ education. These Centres of Excellence provide girls (and boys) with teachers who are trained in gender-responsive pedagogy, school directors who are trained in gender-responsive school management, learning materials that portray girls and women in positive and equitable ways, a school environment that is welcoming and conducive to learning, and a community of stakeholders who support them and are engaged in school management.

Additional features include stipends for underprivileged girls; puberty and menstrual hygiene management education; a science, mathematics, and technology program for girls; and empowerment training for both girls and boys.

Although no formal external evaluations have been conducted, FAWE’s own program evaluations have demonstrated improved academic performance and achievement for girls, greater participation by girls in classroom processes, higher retention rates, more girls in school committees and leadership roles, a reduction in teenage pregnancies, and higher gender awareness among boys. Centres of Excellence have now been introduced in Burkina Faso, Chad, Comoros, the Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zanzibar. FAWE continues to work closely with the association of African ministers of education to advance policy and practice on girls’ education issues across the continent (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015).

After quality classroom teaching, school leadership is the second biggest influence on pupil learning.' (Leithwood et al, 2008; 2019; Global School Leaders, 2020). Successful school leadership which has the greatest impact on student outcomes focuses on developing teachers' skills, providing instructional support and monitoring student learning. As such, a school's ability to improve and sustain student outcomes is dependent on its approach to instructional leadership.

Many Southern focused studies also highlight the crucial role of the headteacher and the required paradigm shift from administrator and manager to instructional leader to impact learner outcomes (Westbrook et al, 2013; Naylor & Sayed, 2014; Allier-Gagnier et al, 2020; Haßler et al,

2020). The leadership and governance of schools has a crucial impact on teacher classroom practices both in terms of general teaching and learning as well as gender specific strategies. Though the importance of school leaders on learner outcomes is clear, evidence on effective approaches is limited. Deliberate interventions which target the development of headteachers' skills, knowledge and attitudes regarding gender sensitive practices as well as the means in which to track and monitor girls' outcomes at the school level are key. In this regard, the British Council's Connecting Classrooms instructional leadership programme provides ample opportunity to strengthen its gender sensitive awareness training and gender responsive pedagogy at the school level thus improving girls' learning experiences.

Box 2:

In-service school support, training and supervision for teachers and headteachers– Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS) Uganda:

To assess whether TPD in gender sensitive pedagogies has been embedded at the school level PEAS Uganda held annual school inspections to assess whether schools are becoming more gender-responsive through consulting with female students and teachers and making recommendations for improvement to school leadership teams.

Through the package of girl-focused school support, training and supervision interventions, school leaders, staff, and male students have become more aware of and sensitive to girls' needs, and have notably changed their behaviour towards girls as a result. Across the board, focus groups with girls in PEAS schools noted female students reporting that they feel safe at school, and that their teachers support them as much as boys to succeed in their studies.

Anecdotal evidence from PEAS staff about school leaders speaking openly about the girls' progress in their schools and asking what else they can do to support them suggested a shift in school culture. There were also examples of boys in classrooms

reminding their teachers to call on girls as much as the boys. As one headteacher explained, "The girls' policy has made girls go forward. They are very sure everyone is concerned about them." (DFID, 2018b, p. 8)

PEAS' gender sensitive support and supervision approach consisted of teacher and school-leader TPD, training on embedding gender responsive pedagogy and a focus on helping all students access the curriculum; the introduction of PEAS Girls Policy within school child protection policies, and training for school leads in child protection (new policies introduced included e.g. re-entry policy for young mothers); the appointment and training of female leads within the school setting to advocate for the rights of girls, as well as serve as a focal point for girls to express their needs; girls' clubs: after-school clubs providing girls a safe space for peer-to-peer support, mentoring by senior female teachers; skills development through club projects (e.g. craft-making, enterprise projects) and the re-development of school inspections process to focus on gender and the needs of girls.

4.3 Strengthening national education systems

A gender equality analysis of education sector plans (ESPs) undertaken in 2015 and 2018 by the GPE Secretariat across 65 countries shows promising trends and suggests that ESPs are becoming more gender responsive (GPE, 2019).

There is a growing availability of data on gender as well as a broader range of activities aiming to increase gender equality by addressing the barriers to education faced by adolescent girls in particular. The number of countries with no sex-disaggregated data also decreased dramatically between 2015 and 2018 at both primary and lower secondary school levels, while the number of countries with two or more sex-disaggregated data points increased significantly.

There has also been a significant increase in activities to promote gender equality from 2015 to 2018 in GPE country partner ESPs. These include awareness-raising campaigns, recruitment of female teachers, and incentive measures to offset indirect costs of schooling, such as grants or scholarships for girls, school kits, uniforms and distribution of food to girls. Similarly, there has been an increase in

construction of sex-segregated latrines and water access points, and establishment of girls' clubs, as well as development of national policies benefiting girls.

Implementation grants from the GPE include results-based financing incentives to implement transformational ESP strategies, and link financing to meeting priority results, including for gender equality. For example, Malawi has used this results-based part of its grant to incentivise an increase in the female-to-male teacher ratio in grades 6 to 8 in the eight most disadvantaged districts. In Ethiopia, the results-based portion has addressed gender imbalances in school leadership by increasing the number of trained female primary school principals. Zimbabwe has also used the mechanism for increasing the number of girls in secondary education as a priority. In Tanzania, the results-based portion aims to increase the proportion of female students transitioning from primary to secondary school, a key point in determining whether or not a girl is likely to complete a full cycle of education (GPE, 2019).

Though the statistics above display a positive trend, it should be noted that many of these figures mask intra-regional/district inequalities and the qualitative nature of existing barriers as highlighted in earlier sections.

Box 3:

Gender Responsive Sector Planning in Uganda.

Uganda's commitment to gender mainstreaming at the national level is one example of creating an enabling environment for a whole-system approach to promote girls' education. The country's Second National Development Plan (2015/6) emphasised the need for the integration of cross-cutting issues related to gender in sectoral plans, programmes and projects to ensure coherence across sectors and local governments. Their approach to cross-sectoral working, political advocacy, gender responsive budgeting led to the Ministry of Education and Sport (MoES) securing funding to implement an ethical code of conduct for teachers and to integrate a violence-reduction component within the National Teacher Policy programme. This was

also reinforced by the enshrining gender-responsive budgeting in the Public Finance Management Act which has played a key role in ensuring its sustainability (Rose et al, 2020).

Evaluations have shown that in Uganda gender budgeting has had positive impacts in access to education and health. To build on the success and go further, it has been suggested that the Government of Uganda consider improving collection and use of gender-disaggregated data, publishing more financial information to enable expenditure monitoring, and building capacity in gender offices at the district level to enable monitoring of local programmes (UNGEI, Malala Fund & FCDO, 2021).

Though the overall evidence based detailing the impact of strengthening national education systems from a gender lens is emerging (Unterhalter et al, 2014) there are some anecdotal examples of how project implementers have successfully worked with governments to embed change at the local, national and system levels. There are typically two primary avenues in this regard – one, working through existing government systems to introduce essential elements of good practice rather than setting up parallel systems and two, working with government to influence policy (DFID, 2018b). One example of this is Leonard Cheshire (Kenya), a Girls' Education Challenge funded organisation who was instrumental in influencing the Government of Kenya to introduce numerous new inclusive education policies, supported the integration of disability indicators into the government's education monitoring system and contributed to the broadening of the mandate and resources of a Special Needs Directorate within the Ministry of Education (DFID, 2018b).

Policies, training and interventions concerned with shifting gender norms and enhancing inclusion, by for example, increasing participation

in decision making by the marginalised, are under-researched and under-resourced. Further research on faith communities, work with boys on gender equality, and strategies to include marginalised girls and women in decision making, reflection and action, notably with regard to gender-based violence is needed (Unterhalter et al, 2014). There is promising evidence that gender mainstreaming as an approach to changing institutional culture may have a positive impact on girls' learning experiences but adequate resourcing (time, skill, money, support and critical reflection) must be provided to support implementation (Unterhalter et al, 2014). Similarly, women's participation in school and community governance structures does have a positive effect on girls' schooling. However, there are too few studies of long-term effects to draw definitive conclusions in these two areas specifically.

Overall, gaps at the systems level require greater high-level commitment and collaboration to design and deliver a whole-system approach which includes cross-sectional national policies that can overcome barriers to girls' education that lie beyond the education system (Rose et al., 2020; UNGEI & GPE, 2017).

Box 4:

Cross-sectoral measures to tackle child marriage.

In Ethiopia, the National Growth and Transformation Plan II (2015/16 - 2019/20) outlined cross-sectoral measures to strengthen girls' participation in education by tackling barriers beyond the education system, in particular the eradication of harmful traditional practices, including early and forced marriage. This approach included public education and awareness programmes, engagement of women's movements, and enforcement of legal measures. In 2013,

the National Alliance to End Child Marriage was established, and a national platform for the prevention and elimination of harmful traditional practices (including child marriage) was announced in 2015. Launched under the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs, the national platform includes representatives from civil society, women and youth associations and national federations, faith-based organisations and national associations (Rose et al, 2020).

Rose et al (2020) suggest a transformative leadership approach to support gender equality at the education system level. This approach seeks to transform power structures, social norms and ideologies that justify and perpetuate gender inequality and power imbalances by identifying key stakeholders and pathways for individual and collective actions. Detailed recommendations using this approach can be found in Section 5.3.

4.4 Language and girls' education

As highlighted in earlier sections, language of instruction challenges have significant implications for access, participation and equity for all children and girls in particular. Despite this, the gender perspective on language issues are somewhat nascent. A limited number of research, advocacy and training manuals have been developed but there is little robust systematic data evidencing the link between mother-tongue based instruction and girls' access, participation and achievement (UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011). Many programmes do not specifically measure and/or address the link between girls' learning experiences and language until project end (DFID, 2017). Nonetheless, available research does raise some important points including the following:

Providing education in a familiar language facilitates access for all. Experiencing success in the early grades is particularly important for the persistence of children coming from language minorities and non-literate environments. Some evidence also suggests that using the mother tongue as the language of instruction has narrowed the



PROVIDING EDUCATION IN A FAMILIAR LANGUAGE facilitates access for all.

achievement gap between boys and girls in some African countries (RTI, 2015). Mother tongue schooling can therefore help to make education more inclusive and help address the multiple disadvantages faced by girls and women belonging to linguistic minorities (Romaine, 2013).

In the context of languages of instruction, it is rare to find that the use of an African language by teachers or learners is officially sanctioned in education policies once the 'transition' from the mother tongue to English has happened (Milligan et al, 2016). There are numerous examples of informal 'code-switching'³, particularly for the explanation of new concepts to learners who are struggling to comprehend in English (Ssentanda, 2014). However, this practice can be contentious, occurring covertly and with teachers and learners often feeling that

Box 5:

Promising practice – Language Supportive Pedagogy in Rwanda:

Milligan et al. (2016) evaluated a 'language supportive textbooks and pedagogy' intervention in Primary 4 Rwandan classrooms through a mixed methods design.

The language supportive pedagogy approach included intentional textbook design in terms of textual characteristics, the range of activity types, the use of vocabulary, the use of visuals and the inclusion of bilingual practices; a more consistent use of textbooks as teaching and learning materials; increased opportunities for learners and teachers to engage with textbook activities and read simpler content for curriculum understanding and language and teachers scaffolding learning through range of reading, writing and talking activities.

At baseline, nearly three quarters (74.70 per cent) of lessons were characterised as

teacher-led with little learner interaction, discussion or use of learning materials. By contrast, towards the end of the evaluation, less than one-third (31.94 per cent) of lessons were entirely teacher-led. In every lesson, learners engaged in at least one activity and in many learners completed written, talking and reading activities in groups, with the teacher supporting this style of learning. The most significant finding from the study is the impact of the use of language supportive learning on learner outcomes. At the school level, learners achieved 16.09 per cent higher test scores on average than learners at similar comparator schools across Maths, Social studies and Science comprehension tests, based on the topics of the second term of Primary 4. Data was not disaggregated by gender however.

³ Code-switching involves the deliberate alternation between language systems within and between sentences in the same conversation.

they are doing something wrong since this goes against official language policies (Milligan et al., 2016). It is therefore difficult to find examples of good or accepted practice of the use of code-switching or other pedagogical practices that may support effective teaching and learning (see Clegg and Simpson, 2016).

Differences in language competence can often go unnoticed at school, especially if girls are given fewer opportunities to speak, and if teachers expect them to do less well than boys. Any reservedness on the part of girls to speak may be interpreted as lack of academic ability, rather than lack of exposure to the language of instruction. As such, inclusive classroom practices which encourage and support communicative/dialogic teaching and gender sensitive pedagogies are crucial. Similarly, teaching materials which actively address any gender biases in text are also key (UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011; RTI, 2015)

The increased demand for and provision of English – whether as a subject or as the medium of instruction – is not usually accompanied by language enhancement or appropriate training and this presents a distinct gap in terms of programming. This is especially challenging for primary school teachers who are not necessarily language specialists but are expected to teach across a range of subjects (Erling et al., 2016). Although subject-based English teaching materials may be increasingly communicative in their approach, teachers are often more comfortable relying on more familiar, traditional methods in lesson delivery which in turn impacts teaching quality (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015; Erling et al, 2016).

4.5 Accelerated and remedial teaching and learning

There is a small but growing body of literature that addresses remedial interventions, with just a handful focusing on middle- and low-income countries (Fleisch, Taylor, Schöer & Mabogoane, 2017), and even fewer focussing on girls (Ackerman, 2015). This is an important evidence gap which limits the comparability of programmes and generalisability of lessons (Fleisch, et al., 2017; Schwartz, 2012, p.6). Torgesen (1998 in Fleisch, et al., 2017) identify the following elements to evaluate remedial programmes:

- the appropriateness and the quality of the instruction provided,
- the intensity and the duration of the programme;
- the fit in terms of the needs of the students;
- the timing of the intervention.

Low-income countries have typically carried out remediation work through grade repetition, private tutoring, and automatic promotion, despite these methods not being “very successful, particularly for the most disadvantaged” (Schwartz, 2012, p.6). A range of other methods include: small groups tutoring, grouping students by ability, peer tutoring, and Computer Assisted Interventions (CAI) (Schwartz, 2012). In depth exploration of each type is beyond the scope of this review however the main findings are as follows: grade repetition can be ineffective as repeaters are more likely to dropout; private tutoring is widely used, but increases inequality as is generally only available to wealthier families; automatic promotion ensures children pass through school, but does not ensure learning; small group tutoring of three students is thought optimal, but this is extremely costly, and remedial programmes with class sizes of 15-20 have also shown positive results (see the case study box below); grouping students by ability shows mixed results – in some contexts, and when successfully implemented, it has benefited all students, while in others it has had detrimental effects on lower-achieving pupils; peer tutoring is an affordable option that can provide benefits to all involved; and there is some evidence that CAI can address low performance (Schwartz, 2012; J-PAL, 2017).⁴ While some remedial programmes target boys and girls attending mainstream schools (see the examples in the case study boxes below), others target out of school young people, which may link to non-formal education.

One specific pedagogy within ‘grouping students by ability’ is the TaRL approach, which provides foundational literacy and numeracy lessons to groups of children that are divided according to their learning needs. Lessons are targeted to the specific learning needs of the students, rather than a standard curriculum, and regular assessments replace end-of-year examinations (J-PAL, 2017; TaRL, 2021). Evidence from India and Africa (including six randomised evaluations) finds that the TaRL method has improved learning outcomes when effectively “implemented by community volunteers, contract teachers, or by government teachers supported by volunteers during the summer holidays. To date, however, there has been no evidence that this methodology is similarly effective when implemented by government teachers within the formal schooling system” (J-PAL, 2017, p.5; TARK, 2021). Yet, while the TaRL methodology is widely recommended, including in literature focussed on girls’ education (e.g. UNICEF, 2021), there appears to be very little discussion of the gendered dimensions of this programming, representing an important research gap.⁵ The case study boxes below provide examples of TaRL programmes.

⁴ See Schwartz (2012) for a detailed analysis of each of these types of programmes.

⁵ E.g. See the TaRL (2012) website for useful resources on TaRL, yet notably the website includes limited references on the gendered aspects of TaRL, and remedial education more generally.

The importance of remedial and non-formal education programming is of increasing importance in the current COVID-19 context as school closures continue to affect a huge number of children, and as COVID-19 has exacerbated existing inequalities, with girls, poorer students, and those without digital access particularly falling behind (Herbert & Marquette, 2021; Berry & Davis, 2020). Girls' education during the COVID-19 crisis, and during crises more generally, is particularly undermined by factors such as household economic strains increasing rates of child marriage and pregnancy (Herbert & Marquette, 2021; Berry & Davis, 2020). Specific programming should be developed to target these specific challenges – e.g. post-Ebola, the Sierra Leone government set up an education transition programme for the 3,000 girls who had become pregnant during the epidemic. More general lessons from the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone highlight that, during the epidemic, non-formal/alternative education methods were crucial to support education during school closures – e.g. with learning



GIRLS' EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS, and during crises more generally, is particularly undermined by factors such as household economic strains increasing rates of child marriage and pregnancy

continuity programmes broadcast through radio, TV and online (Berry & Davis, 2020). While post-Ebola, large-scale assessments were needed to assess learning gaps for remedial programming, and one initiative from that was the development of a national curriculum for accelerated learning in all schools (Berry & Davis, 2020). Considering the large numbers of students affected by COVID-19 school closures, it may not be possible to use the traditional options of grade repetition and private tutoring for effective remedial responses.

Box 6:

Balsakhi Remedial Tutoring in Vadodara and Mumbai, India:

A successful example of a remediation programme that features throughout the literature is the Balsakhi remedial tutoring programme, which is rooted in the Teaching at the Right Level TaRL approach. Balsakhi remedial tutoring programme was implemented in 122 public primary schools in the city Vadodara and 77 schools in Mumbai, in India. The programme trained up local tutors ("balsakhi", who were normally young woman from the local community) to teach children attending mainstream schools who were identified as falling behind in basic literacy and numeracy. The classes were typically for 15-20 children, and the remedial teaching replaced two hours of their normal four schooling hours. The tutors received two weeks of initial training and a standardised curriculum. (J-PAL, 2017; Banerjee, et al., 2007)

An evaluation based on randomised experiments, comparing the remedial programme to another education programme, found that the remedial programme had substantial positive impacts on the children's academic achievement. Moreover, the primary target of the

programme - the weakest students - gained the most. One year after the programmes were over, though they had reduced, the initial gains remained significant for the targeted children. As the tutors were paid a fraction of the cost of the civil-service teachers, the programme was found to be very inexpensive and cost-effective compared to other education programmes. The Balsakhi programme has subsequently been adapted, re-evaluated, and scaled up across India. (J-PAL, 2017; Banerjee, et al., 2007)

The Balsakhi programme's initial results were very similar girls and for boys, yet one year after the programme the positive impacts remained higher with girls, while they declined in boys. The authors suggest further research should explore what makes the programme effects more durable, this is especially under researched due to the difficulties in monitoring children after they leave the programmes. Notably, there is very little analysis of the gendered aspects of this programme, or of the TaRL method more generally. (J-PAL, 2017; Banerjee, et al., 2007)

Box 7:

Kano Literacy and Mathematics Accelerator (KaLMA), Nigeria:

The British Council's KaLMA programme in Kano state in Nigeria, is also rooted in the TaRL approach. Initiated in 2019, KaLMA aims to build foundational Maths, Hausa, and English literacy skills for 30,000 children attending mainstream schools, using the British Council's dual language approach. A key component is the training of 1,081 educators, including primary teachers, head teachers/deputy head teachers, student teachers, school support officers/school mobilisation officers ("continuing professional development" (CPD). This training, and in-school activities, moved to be remotely delivered from March 2020, due to the COVID-19 crisis. This remote learning programme became known as the Home-Based Learning (HBL) programme.

Two internal policy briefs by the British Council analyse the impact and lessons from KaLMA and the HBL programmes, drawing on various primary research methods – some of which were limited due to COVID-19 restrictions. Analysis between January and March 2020 found the KaLMA programme to be effective in improving learning outcomes for the children, with similar results for girls and boys across all subjects. While analysis of

the HBL programme found that while learning progress was stunted during schools' closures, fewer children regressed than expected, and again, changes in learning levels were similar for boys and girls. It also found that caregiver engagement in children's learning increased over time, and varied by caregiver literacy level and subject.

In terms of CPD, the analysis found that the "programme of CPD delivered via WhatsApp, Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and text messages (SMS) can increase teacher knowledge and engagement, but more research is required to understand how educators - comprising teachers, student teachers, head teachers and school support officers (SSOs) - are engaging, how this engagement varies for different subjects, sub-groups and genders, and what can be done to overcome the barriers to participation, especially with regards to technology" (British Council, n.d.b, p.1). In regards to gendered impacts, female educators were found to have less time for the CPD programmes than their male counterparts, highlighting the critical need to actively facilitate the participation of female educators. (British Council. n.d.a; n.d.b)

A key point addressed in the literature is how to ensure that remedial programmes are inclusive and target the most vulnerable. A meta-evaluation of the Norwegian Refugee Council's (NRC) Alternative Education (AE) programmes for displaced children explains how it integrates gender inclusive practices at all stages of programme design and delivery, this includes e.g., working with the community to socialise messages on the importance of girls attending school, advocating for the increased presence and visibility of female personnel in its programmes, ensuring separate water and sanitation facilities are available for female learners, and providing sanitary packs in schools (Shah, 2015). As a result of these measures, 50 per cent of direct beneficiaries of the NRC's AE programmes were females, even in highly gender unequal contexts (Shah, 2015). Remedial classes can occur outside of schooling (extra-curricular), within the school, but outside of the formal curriculum (co-curricular), or fully integrated

into the curriculum (curricular) (Chabbott, 2006, in Schwartz, 2012). Schwartz (2012, pp.20-23) explains that there is evidence for the success of each of these forms, but does not explore gendered aspects, e.g. whether girls are more or less able to attend classes beyond school hours. A study of remedial education in refugee camps in northern Kenya found that parents were increasingly willing to allow girls to attend remedial classes on the weekends (Kinoti & Philpot, 2018), however this may not be contextually appropriate for girls in other SSA contexts.

The NRC's AE programming was also adapted to be as inclusive and relevant as possible to the most vulnerable and marginalised subgroups, like young mothers and ethnic minority students (Shah, 2015). Yet the programming was not as successful in including children with physical disabilities, with this subgroup making up a very small percentage of the total number, as "identifying and supporting these

learners requires extra resourcing and support, and extensive community mobilisation efforts, which not all programmes have made concerted efforts into doing” (Shah, 2015). To improve the NRC programme’s inclusion, the meta-evaluation recommends that the NRC develop a clear vulnerability criteria for selecting programme beneficiaries, that it also “consider not only the immediate learning gaps of learners, but also the factors that have pushed learners out of schooling or excluded them” in the first place”, and that there needs to be a general focus on better integration of education policies in broader development and peacebuilding plans (Shah, 2015).

Accurate, context-specific needs assessments are key to assessing the specific educational needs of the children, the needs of the educators, and the synergy of the programme with the formal education system and local labour markets (Schwartz, 2012; Shah, 2015). Hattie (2003) finds that the variance in student achievement is mostly shaped by students themselves (in terms of ability, motivation, etc), and then teachers (e.g. through teaching effectiveness, knowledge, etc), with other contributory factors including: family/home-related factors (e.g. illiteracy, poverty); school-related factors (e.g. remoteness, sanitation facilities); principals (e.g. related to student responsiveness, psychological safety to learn); and peer effects (e.g. bullying, pride in learning) (Ndaruhutse, Brannelly, Latham & Penson, 2008).

In low- and middle-income countries, the shortage of qualified teachers, and budget limitations, mean that remedial programmes may be delivered by a range of actors including formal education professionals, para-professional or volunteer tutors trained for the specific programme, community and family members, and student peers (Schwartz, 2012). Schwartz (2012) highlights that results from programmes using any of these actors have been encouraging, with early intervention particularly effective. Shah (2015) recommends that pathways are developed for ‘unqualified’ teachers employed in its programme to enter into the formal school system. An evaluation of remedial programming in Ghana found that using teaching assistants from local communities can raise learning levels (Duflo, Kiessel & Lucas, n.d.). The importance of initial need assessments is also highlighted by the limited success of a Reading Catch-Up Programme in South Africa, where an impact evaluation suggests that the “schoolchildren in the study may have been even further behind than was anticipated” (Fleisch, et al., 2017).

Reintegration of remedial students back into the school system is also a key concern, where reintegration can be limited by students dropping out or failing examinations to re-join the formal education system (Shah, 2015). The meta-evaluation of the NRC’s

AE remedial programmes found that reintegration was lower for those children that remained outside of the formal education system for up to four years (Shah, 2015). In response to these challenges, the NRC worked to:

- develop/refine a remedial curriculum aligned with the national curricula, while adhering to learning competencies, and covering key learning areas;
- establish/reform guidelines for AE programming;
- agree on transition examinations/assessment processes to facilitate reintegration;
- coordinate better with other actors working on this (Shah, 2015).

The problem of stigmatisation is emphasised throughout the literature, with Sperling and Winthrop (2015) stressing the importance of not unnecessarily separating students due to the risk it signals that they have less potential or capacity than other students. Indeed, stigmatisation is a key factor that limits the reintegration of remedial students back into formal education, alongside issues of early marriage, the costs of schooling, or the need to support the family (Shah, 2015).

The active mobilisation of the wider community in support of remedial programming is identified as an important element in: reducing the stigmatisation of older and female learners in accessing education; in programme oversight; in supporting the recruitment, selection and retention of learners and teachers; and in assisted with the construction/maintenance of educational facilities (Shah, 2015). Indeed, remedial education can provide a vehicle to address negative gender norms around girls’ education more generally, as is exemplified by the girls only remedial education provided by the World University Service of Canada WUSC and Windle Trust Kenya (WTK) in the Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps in northern Kenya since 2011 (Kinoti & Philpot, 2018). An evaluation of the programme found that the remedial classes not only increased literacy levels, but also saw families increasingly making the choice to prioritise girls’ education over their household duties (Kinoti & Philpot, 2018).

4.6 Non-formal/alternative education provision

In 2014, it was estimated that 34 per cent of those in the 12 to 14 age group and 58 per cent of those in the 15 to 17 age group were out-of-school in SSA. Moreover, girls are more likely to be out-of-school in every age group. For example, three out of every five girls in the 15 to 17 age group is out-of-school in the

region (Ngware et al., 2018). Non-formal education has been available in several African countries for adult education as well as education of school age children. In conflict settings non-formal education is more likely to be used for school-age children (Yasunga, 2014).

Overall, there is little evidence on the impact of non-formal education programmes (Yasunga, 2014; Sperling & Wintrop, 2015, Ngware et al., 2018). Non-formal education often includes vocational training, a skills development component, a focus on indigenous, traditional or religious education, or education provided through informal institutions (Yasunga, 2014, p. 6). Furthermore, non-formal learning opportunities include remedial or accelerated programmes as well as “second chance” alternative youth literacy or livelihood training (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015). Such non-formal programmes may use a non-standard curriculum or experimental or alternative pedagogy and learning materials. The grading system may be flexible in the schools and programmes are not usually registered, licensed or accredited. Thus, while the structural barriers are lower and the programmes are more accessible to girls from marginalised communities

(Sperling, Wintrop & Kwauk, 2016), a disadvantage is that courses may be short and generally do not lead to formal qualifications (Yasunga, 2014). As such access to further education or employment may be hindered.

Non-formal education offers an alternative for girls who face barriers to formal education because of early marriage, pregnancy, poverty or cultural bias (Ishaq & Ali, 2014). For example in the Gambia in 2002 re-entry programmes were offered to girls who had dropped out of school. These programmes provided them with access to counselling services and vocational assistance. With the closure of many schools under COVID-19, and an unpredictable return to normalcy particularly in low- and middle-income countries, non-formal education is currently of crucial importance, particularly for girls who face barriers to formal education.

In general, non-formal education programmes are more successful when they have multiple entry and exit points and close associations with formal education. It is crucial that such programmes be tailored to the local context (Ngware et al., 2018).

Box 8:

Non-formal education through English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE), in Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan, and SSA:

The British Council's EDGE programme focuses on education and empowerment programmes (improving life prospects and building English, information and communication technology (ICT), and social skills) among adolescent girls that are out-of-school or are living in marginalised communities in Bangladesh, Nepal, India and Pakistan and now also SSA. It trains peer group leaders to facilitate after-school clubs for girls within their communities where the girls discuss social issues, and learn English, digital and other skills such as critical thinking and problem solving. Its peer-led approach means that participants are able to share and learn from each other while also building the leadership skills of a cadre of peer leaders. There is also engagement at community level with parents, community leaders and members and religious leaders, which helps to build trust and to challenges and develop the perception of the value of girls in the

community. British Council policy documents, and its website, details the impact of EDGE in Asia as having benefited over 14,000 girls with an impact study showing that girls are able to use their personal agency to impact their lives, with examples of girls being able to return to school, delay an early marriage or seek paid employment whilst staying in school as a result of the new skills they have gained. The programme participants also demonstrate significant improvement in English language speaking ability; progression from no computer knowledge to being able to perform basic tasks on computers, and using MS office and the internet for basic tasks. The peer group learning model has also given them improved levels of confidence and self-esteem, and more awareness of social issues that affect their communities. A rapid search did not find the impact study online. (British Council (2016; 2021b, p.13; 2021c; 2021d)

Other examples of non-formal education programmes

Ngware et al. (2018) mention the following examples of non-formal education but offer limited insight into the effectiveness of these programmes.

- Biruh Tesfa is a “second chance” schooling programme established in 2006 for girls in the poorest urban areas of Ethiopia and run by the Ethiopian Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs. The programme combines literacy training, life skills and wellness check-ups which are provided in girls only safe spaces. Classes are offered five days a week for two hours in the late afternoon to accommodate girls working in domestic services. Non-formal schooling is provided four days a week and on the fifth day the girls are provided with life skills training, covering issues such as communication, financial literacy, hygiene and menstruation, and violence. The girls are provided with school materials, basic clothing and sanitary towels. A quasi-experimental evaluation of the programme found that it contributed to an increase in formal schooling of 38 per cent in both treatment and control groups. This finding was attributed to a government communication programme that encouraged girls to return to school. However, in communities where the programme was implemented attendance in non-formal schooling increased from 6 per cent, to 49 per cent compared with an increase of only 5 per cent to 12 per cent in control group communities. Moreover, test scores were higher in the treatment group compared with the control group. In 2013 the programme was expanded beyond Addis Ababa to 20 low income areas bordering the city. There are now 3,000 beneficiaries and girls also receive vouchers to subsidise basic healthcare costs.
- The Government of Malawi currently implements a Complimentary Basic Education (CBE) programme for its out-of-school children. Initially the programme was supported by donor agencies, but it is now fully integrated into the country’s National Education Sector Plan. The CBE offers a “second chance” education to out-of-school children and youth via an accelerated curriculum which combines basic education with practical skills for building livelihoods.
- The Government of Tanzania’s Complimentary Basic Education (COBET) programme provides basic education to school aged out-of-school children. The Alternative Learning and Skills Development Project was a five-year programme targeting out-of-school youth in the 15 to 30 age group in Tanzania. Half beneficiaries were women. The programme resulted in improved literacy skills amongst the out-of-school youth.



HOLISTIC PROGRAMMES WHICH ADDRESS ACCESS, QUALITY OF TEACHING and learning and wider socio-cultural/political economy challenges achieve the greatest impact in terms of girls’ outcomes.

- The Zimbabwe Accelerated Learning Programme is a two-year programme targeting out-of-school learners with an accelerated learning approach that aims to reintegrate them into formal education. The key outcome of the programme was that it strengthened non-formal education delivery to support “second chance” education.
- The Second Chances for Girls programme in Zambia targeted young mothers with the aim of helping them re-enter school after pregnancy. It is estimated that between 30 per cent to 60 per cent of girls returned to school as a result of this programme.
- In Uganda, the Basic Education for Urban Poverty Areas was a five-year programme that targeted out-of-school youth in urban areas. The programme offered apprenticeship opportunities and practical experience rather than conventional literacy classes. Half the participants were girls. More than one quarter of the beneficiaries transferred to universal primary education following participation in the programme.
- In Kenya, girls who dropped out of school due to pregnancy were excluded from the education system before 1994. In 1994, the school re-entry policy was adopted to integrate out-of-school youth (especially those who were teenage mothers) in schools. A similar program was launched in the Dadaab refugee camps. Out-of-school children and youth were provided with accelerated learning programmes covering basic literacy and vocational skills. A review of the programme found that 50 per cent of children or youth on the programme re-entered formal education.

4.7 Other programming areas

As highlighted earlier, holistic programmes which address access, quality of teaching and learning and wider socio-cultural/political economy challenges achieve the greatest impact in terms of girls’ outcomes.

Interventions which focus on reducing the cost of schooling can be very effective in addressing girls' access to education. Multiple studies highlight the pros and cons of conditional and unconditional cash transfers as well as merit-based scholarships and the removal of direct school costs altogether (see Sperling & Winthrop, 2015; Evans & Yuan, 2019). Evidence suggests that whilst each generally improve access and attendance they have varying impacts on girls' learning outcomes which points to the overall quality of the school experience as a key determinant in girls' retention in school.

Additional areas of programming which have proven successful across systematic evidence reviews include community-based approaches and making schools "girl-friendly". The evidence, particularly from South Asia and SSA, including areas where hardly any girls have ever attended school—shows how community-based approaches can sharply boost girls' enrolment and achievement in just a few years (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015). A transformative gender approach which includes relevant local community stakeholders including local leaders, parents and so on is also key for any girls' focused interventions to be sustained in the longer term by addressing any harmful beliefs or attitudes. Any desired behaviour change needs to actively promote 'voice and choice' for girls and women, and have high ambition for and expectations of what girls can achieve (DFID, 2018b).

Though a promising strategy, evidence from Nigeria suggests that "girl-friendly schools" must be explicitly defined within any given context, implemented consistently and measured accordingly (Bolton,

2019). As Bolton's review highlights, It is challenging to achieve a reliable measure of the girl-friendliness of schools, as information on gender-sensitive factors is often difficult to define and collect (Bolton, 2019, p. 21). In the projects reviewed, many did not make gender sensitive approaches an explicit part of the project design or implementation. As such, implementation was inconsistent or non-existent at all. Other evidence suggests that even when gender-sensitive approaches are made explicit, many teachers and schools take on the form and not the substance of said reforms i.e. adopting the beliefs underlying the desired change and this requires further interrogation, challenges and reflection over a sustained period.

Girl-friendly schools may include the following characteristics: a transformation of the school climate and culture into one that is not only gender-sensitive but also promotes parity in the enrolment and achievement of girls and boys; reduces constraints on gender equity; eliminates gender stereotypes and provides facilities, curricula, and learning processes that are welcoming to girls.

In creating girl-friendly schools, cultural requirements for privacy must be understood. Depending on the context, this may entail separate schools for girls, separate hours for girls in schools shared with boys, boundary walls for girls' schools, female teachers, and the like. Such efforts are critical not only for increasing enrolment and achieving gender parity but also for creating high-quality learning environments and community cultures for girls. Involving communities has emerged as the best way to find out what matters most to parents and how to proceed (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015)



A transformation of the school climate and culture into one that is not only gender-sensitive but also promotes parity in the enrolment and achievement of girls and boys; reduces constraints on gender equity; eliminates gender stereotypes and provides facilities, curricula, and learning processes that are welcoming to girls.

Linked to the concept of girl-friendly schools is the need to address SRGBV. Effective SRGBV interventions address both prevention and response, which means efforts take on coordinated, multilevel, and multifaceted “whole school” approaches. Tackling SRGBV requires cultural change, involving teachers, students, parents, community members, and local organisations. Such an integrated approach also means recognising that GBV within schools is related

to gender-based violence outside of schools, making it essential to change attitudes and improve awareness around gender violence beyond school walls (UNGEI, UNESCO, and EFA 2015). One study in South Africa revealed that increasing the number of toilets and spreading out their locations could lower the number of sexual assaults against women by 30 per cent (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015).

Box 9:

Multidimensional approaches to supporting the access, retention and achievement of the most marginalised girls:

Camfed Tanzania. Camfed’s multi-pronged approach includes 5 core areas: needs based financial support; supplementary learning materials for core subjects (study guides); a life skills programme; mentorship and learning support delivered by ‘Learner Guides’ and school-community engagement through the training of teacher mentors, parent support groups and local community authorities.

Findings from Tanzania indicate that starting from a very low learning base in English and Mathematics, Camfed’s support improved both the retention and learning rates of marginalised secondary school girls. Results show that combining targeted scholarships along with pedagogical reforms to support learning were key for improving outcomes.

An important finding from Camfed’s work in Tanzania is the significant performance of

marginalised girls with disabilities. Though not a central aim of its intervention, the Camfed Tanzania programme shows that all girls, regardless of whether they reported difficulties in seeing, hearing, concentration or walking, even when these difficulties were moderate to severe, improved their attainment in English and mathematics compared with girls who were not supported by the programme. Even girls with severe disabilities achieved at the same rate as those without disabilities. Results also suggest that it is important to promote attitudes and behaviour that boost learning – learners’ positive self-perceptions are essential to their learning, but this topic remains relatively unexplored in the context of marginalised children in low-income countries (Alcott et al, 2016). Camfed runs its programmes in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Ghana, Tanzania and Malawi.

Chapter 5

Potential entry points for programming

The review thus far has outlined substantial progress in girls' education in SSA however multiple, pervasive intersecting barriers remain. Literature has highlighted areas of effective practice in teacher professional development, instructional leadership, non-formal and remedial education, language and system strengthening and this has provided useful reference points for existing and future programme design. Despite this, there are significant gaps in evidence particularly with regards to effective practice in addressing gender and language, non-formal and remedial education as well as strengthening national education systems.

In line with UK Government priorities and British Council programmatic areas, the most compelling avenues to explore are teacher professional development, instructional leadership and language in particular. Likewise, there is significant scope to contribute to the evidence base of "what works" for non-formal and remedial education through programmes such as EDGE and KaLMA. Due to the nature of political economy structures in many countries in SSA and beyond, strengthening national systems is far more complex to support and evidence and will necessarily be focused on the longer-term.

In this section, we bring together learning from Sections 3 and 4 to synthesise recommendations from literature based on the British Council's core areas of programming.

5.1 Teacher professional development and instructional leadership

- In pre-service programmes such as Teaching for All (T4A, South Africa) ensure that gender is mainstreamed at the teacher education level and specific support is given to teacher educators to upskill in this area. It will also be necessary to provide ongoing mentoring and coaching to embed change, particularly at the school level (T-TEL, Ghana, 2020). Gender issues should be both mainstreamed into training materials and studied in detail through additional modules integrated into training curricula (INEE, 2019). This will also require the production of tools and support for national, regional and district level officials (or the equivalent) particularly those at the forefront of any monitoring and supervision activities to improve policy cohesion.
 - Through the open educational resources component of T4A, this can provide an impactful, low cost and sustainable way of producing high-quality gender-responsive materials for use beyond project life.
- **As many teachers and headteachers in SSA have not benefitted from any form of ITE, TPD becomes increasingly important. In any in-service programmes such as Connecting Classrooms, Building Learning Foundations Rwanda and the Kano Literacy and Maths Accelerator project (KaLMA), gender responsive pedagogies and teaching methodologies should be embedded as a cross cutting theme for all teachers and headteachers across education levels (DFID, 2018b). At present the aforementioned programmes (including T4A) refer to other dimensions of inclusion (such as special needs) but do not take a gender-specific lens.**
 - Drawing on evidence of what is effective, TPD approaches should establish teacher communities/professional learning networks at the school/community levels, challenge existing beliefs and practice, encourage ongoing reflective practice, engage with external expertise (where possible) and be supported by wider school based/system processes including monitoring and supervision.
 - **TPD content focused on gender responsive pedagogies and teaching methodologies should be designed so that it can be used across subjects. It should also include positive discipline and classroom management, participatory approaches to ensure active engagement of female and male learners, and inclusive planning and assessment.** It is also imperative that teachers have a grounding in human rights principles and perspectives (and how these relate to learners needs and the responsibilities of all education stakeholders) and are aware of codes of conduct for teachers and other education personnel (INEE, 2019)

- Leverage learning from school-based TPD initiatives such as Building Learning Foundations, Rwanda (BLF Rwanda), ISTEP Sudan and KaLMA to add to the evidence base of what works in TPD generally, how technology can help facilitate this and how gender sensitive issues can be embedded in TPD content moving forward.
- **In addition to measuring changes in teacher practice, all TPD programmes should explicitly measure changes in student outcomes and ensure that data is disaggregated and analysed by gender and other characteristics/forms of disadvantage e.g. socio-economic background/ location/disability etc (Unterhalter, 2014).** This is both to enrich the existing evidence base and to understand how British Council programming can be strengthened to enhance access, retention and outcomes for girls across projects.

5.2 Quality of teaching and learning inside/outside the classroom

- **Where possible, in existing and new programmes the British Council should work with relevant government agencies, headteachers and teachers to align the school curriculum with student need.** The gap between curriculum expectations and what students can actually do significantly affects the quality of learning for students, particularly girls. As such, a TaRL approach may be appropriate in bridging the gap between student curricula and current student competence as evidenced through KaLMA's work.
 - In line with the above, the British Council should ensure textbooks, teacher guides and student learning materials reflect gender equality and that teachers demonstrate and teach gender equality through teaching practice by drawing on language supportive pedagogy approaches (Clegg & Simpson, 2016; Milligan et al, 2016). As highlighted in Section 3.3, textbooks and other learning materials can reproduce harmful gender stereotypes and often undermine transformative approaches to gender so this requires specific attention.
- **In moving towards more girl-friendly schools, it is crucial that “girl-friendly” is clearly defined in the context of each programme, tailored to the delivery context and embedded in school supervisory practices as well as programme monitoring and evaluation tools.** As evidenced in Bolton (2019), when girl friendly approaches are not clearly defined or an explicit measure of success, practice does not change. As defined in Section 4.7, a girl-friendly school can take on a number of characteristics. Below are some additional suggestions for schools-based British Council programmes:
 - **Establish a wider gender sensitive and school supervision approach.** Ensure gendered perspectives are reflected through school child protection policies and that there is sufficient training for school leads in these policies; support the implementation of re-entry policies for young mothers; enable the promotion of female teachers and matrons; appoint and train female leads within the school setting to advocate for the rights of girls, as well as serve as a focal point for girls to express their needs and re-develop school inspections processes to focus on gender and the needs of girls (DFID, 2018c).
 - **Address SRGBV** by engaging boys and men in wider school and community engagement approaches; provide safe facilities for girls and menstrual hygiene management supplies to create more positive learning experiences (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015).
 - **In conflict affected contexts, school safety measures should protect girls from education related attacks.** This might involve the use of escorts, guards and other physical protections such as walls. Community networks (consisting of community leaders, youth and teachers) can also be established and used to monitor attacks and send early warning alerts (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015; INEE, 2019).
- Across school-based programmes provide girls with female mentors and role models, strengthen girls' negotiation and decision-making skills, give all girls the skills to work and provide avenues for developing girls' leadership skills through extracurricular activities and peer support groups (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015). As discussed earlier, due to the multifaceted nature of the barriers girls face, outcomes should be considered more broadly and not only in terms of literacy and numeracy. This is particularly important in programmes such as EDGE.

5.3 Strengthening national education systems

There are typically two primary avenues in terms of influencing policy and system level change – one, working through existing government systems to introduce essential elements of good practice rather than setting up parallel systems and two, working

with government to influence policy (DFID, 2018a). Both are viable options for the British Council as evidenced by previous work through Quality Education Strategic Support Programme (QESSP) in Ethiopia and the Zambian Education Strategic Support Technical Assistance (ZESSTA). In order to strengthen wider system approaches to girls' education, the British Council should:

- **Promote investment in and use of data on education, in particular data disaggregated by gender and other sources of disadvantage, to build evidence-based options for policy and reform through high-level stakeholder engagement (Rose et al, 2020).**
- **Support visible high-level political commitment to gender-focused policies and advocate that this is backed up with resources (Rose et al, 2020).**
- **Support gender responsive coordination across sectors.** This might include engaging in cross-sectoral working groups involving sectors such as health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), psycho-social support, food and security. Capacity building support for government officials and agencies to establish innovative, whole-system approaches to embed gender equality in national plans and policies to tackle the multi-dimensional barriers to girls' education and ensure coherence across sectors would strengthen this further (Rose et al, 2020).
- **Provide capacity building support to government officials to implement gender-responsive budgeting, ensuring sufficient domestic resources are allocated to girls' education and appropriately distributed to the most marginalised groups.** Such funding commitments need to be enshrined in constitutional or legal frameworks so that their implementation continues beyond individual government cycles, within a longer-term accountability framework. Conducting policy analysis, research and leading fora can also strengthen advocacy and commitment in this area.
- **Support the creation of strategies for out-of-school and marginalised girls.** This may include return-to-school policies, nonformal schooling and harnessing technology to maximise learning opportunities for students who are the hardest-to-reach.
- **Collaborate, engage with and create space for key stakeholders, including women's and youth organisations, civil society organisations and local political, traditional and religious leaders at the community level during advocacy efforts.** This will ensure that the voices of those directly affected by reforms are heard by decision makers, and that communities develop a sense of ownership of policies and programmes for girls' education.

- **Support formula funding which targets resources at those most at risk of being left behind.** The cost of reaching the most marginalised girls is likely to be higher than their peers given the multiple disadvantages they face. The Government of South Africa is one example of adopting funding approaches that prioritise additional funding to the most disadvantaged groups to increase equity.

5.4 Language of instruction and girls' education

Overall, the strength of the evidence on mother-tongue instruction (MTI) and issues relating to English as the medium of instruction (EMI) is strong; however, the evidence relating to best practice is weak. Nonetheless some studies have provided recommendations as starting points. It should be noted however, that while recommendations may stem from empirical studies, further trialling and robust evaluation is necessary.

Policy level recommendations:

Across SSA programmes, the British Council should:

- **Actively engage with language policy and move towards formulating more holistic language-in-education policies that promote 'sustainable additive bilingualism', or 'mother tongue-based multilingual education'** (Erling et al., 2016; Clegg & Simpson, 2016; DFID, 2017).
- **Adapt the basic education curriculum to give teachers tools for delivering multilingual lessons.** Where possible, programme teams should support Ministries of Education to start adapting learning standards and curriculum content to a multilingual education approach with gender as a central/cross-cutting theme. This should involve local curriculum development specialists, linguists, teacher training experts and textbook and materials development experts. Collaborations with donors should always strive to stimulate local industry and bridge existing gaps, such as Namibia's German Technical Cooperation (GTZ)-sponsored Upgrading African Languages Project (UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011).
- **Develop resources that facilitate English learning and improve learning across the curriculum (Erling et al., 2016).** Studies recommend that resources should be meaningful to students' lives, incorporate local contexts, multiple languages, feature accessible levels of English and themes that are age-appropriate, interesting and gender sensitive. In programmes such as BLF which create teacher and student materials, this is crucial.

Programme assessments should also be aligned to these materials (Erling et al., 2016).

- **Systematically collect gender-disaggregated data on language and ensure that language indicators feature prominently in programme MEL frameworks as well as national benchmarks and assessment systems for school quality and education outcomes (Pinnock et al, 2009; DFID, 2017).**
- **Engage in sustained advocacy efforts.** Governments need to promote multilingualism throughout the system with the aim that learners acquire high proficiency levels in local, regional and international languages. Parental engagement and advocacy are indispensable as a support mechanism for the child as a learner, teachers' efforts and the overall outcomes of improved literacy. Advocacy approaches could also involve public information campaigns to educate teacher, parents, students, and other stakeholders on the benefits of the policy and dispel any misconceptions/misinformation about the value of local languages (Pinnock, 2009; UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011; Clegg, 2005; Erling et al., 2016). This is particularly pertinent for programmes such as BLF where recent language policies have changed though it is acknowledged that this is very contentious.
- **In addition to advocacy, generate more evidence of education programmes and interventions, with strong evaluative methods and longitudinal data (where possible), disaggregating for gender is important for generating evidence and building the research base for advocacy (Clegg, 2005; UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011; Pinnock et al., 2011).**

Teacher preparation

- **The quality of mother-tongue instruction in ITE and the quality of specialised teacher-education for subject teachers working in English needs improvement.** Programmes such as T4A, KaLMA and BLF where teachers may be teaching in both an African language and English should raise awareness of how language is used in the classroom and awareness of the needs of second language learners (EdQual, 2010; UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011).
- **There is also consensus that teacher supervisors whose role is to support and evaluate teachers should have training in multilingual education and pedagogy, as well as the appropriate assessment and evaluation methods used in bilingual and intercultural education (UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011).** In headteacher TPD, and programmes which support district officials, this should be factored in as content for example KaLMA and BLF.



**ENCOURAGE
TRANSLANGUAGING**
in policy and in
classrooms

Classroom level

In classroom focused interventions, programmes should consider:

- **Moving towards language supportive pedagogy (LSP) approaches.** According to Clegg & Simpson (2016), LSP recognises and compensates for learners' lack of skills in reading, speaking and writing and amplifies classroom meanings beyond the level achieved by conventional pedagogy. Forms of language supportive pedagogy are familiar in various sociolinguistic school contexts, chiefly in minority education, bilingual education, immersion education and content and language integrated learning (Clegg & Simpson, 2016), but rarely in SSA.
- **Encourage translinguaging in policy and in classrooms.** Some authors advocate moving away from the unstructured use of code-switching and towards the conscientious and planned use of two languages (translinguaging). This has been shown to improve development in an additional language as well as strengthening bilingualism, biliteracy, and cultural and affective development (Ssentanda, 2014; Clegg & Simpson, 2016). In contexts which may be more resistant to this approach such as Rwanda, focus on advocacy and providing strong evidence can support this.

5.5 Accelerated and remedial teaching and learning

The small but growing literature on remedial interventions highlights the importance of these programmes for foundational literacy and maths skills, with current needs for these programmes even greater due to the closure of schools under COVID-19, and widening inequalities (including gender inequalities). A key evidence-based approach is the TaRL method (J-PAL, 2017), and internal documents indicate that the British Council's TaRL programme in Nigeria's Kano state has demonstrated some good results, and it has positively innovated to remote application during the COVID-19 crisis (British Council, n.d.a; n.d.b).

The general literature on TaRL has lacked a gender lens, and has mostly been targeted at both girls and boys. Considering the gender inequalities of COVID-19 – e.g. including increased child marriage, pregnancy, sexual and gender-based violence, increased poverty and care responsibilities – remedial programmes can provide a targeted approach to keeping girls engaged in education, with lifelong consequences for them and their families. The British Council's KaLMA programme found that when it shifted to HBL, the women educators, compared to the men, faced greater barriers to participation due to having less time and due to technological barriers. See 5.6 for recommendations for both accelerated and remedial and non-formal education.

5.6 Non-formal education

While the evidence base is generally weak, a range of non-formal education programmes are documented in the literature, including those that cross-over with remedial programming. With the closure of many schools under COVID-19, and an unpredictable return to normalcy particularly in low- and middle-income countries, non-formal education is currently of crucial importance, particularly for girls who face barriers to formal education. **In general, non-formal education programmes are more successful when they have multiple entry and exit points, close associations with formal education, and are tailored to the local context (Ngware et al., 2018).**

The literature emphasises the important role of **engaging the community to ensure continued support for girls' education in contexts of resource scarcity where girls often also have work and care responsibilities.** Engaging the community can contribute to challenging stigmatisation around remedial learning, and societal norms around girls' roles and skills, as is demonstrated e.g. in the British Council's EDGE programme in Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan, with current extension also to the SSA region (British Council, 2021d). The British Council (2021) identifies one of its strengths in its experience working with civil society and communities, which can help programmes to be scaled up and sustained by governments.

Overarchingly, there is a need to address important research and programming gaps in mainstreaming gender analysis and gender-sensitive programming for remedial, accelerated and non-formal activities. Recommendations for the British Council are to:

- **Contextualise programme design to take into local conditions**, which specific community/school-level barriers girls face in particular and how this might be addressed. This is particularly important for timetabling, etc (Schwartz, 2012; Shah, 2015).
- **Disaggregate project data and explicitly measure girls' outcomes** as well as intersecting forms of disadvantage to strengthen the evidence base.
- **Actively engage the broader community** in programming around girls' education on an ongoing basis to secure buy-in and support for programme activities (British Council, 2021d; Sperling & Winthrop, 2015).
- **Actively facilitate the participation of female educators in programming;**
- **Develop pathways for 'unqualified' teachers in its programmes so they can bridge the informal/formal education sectors** to help entry into the formal school system. This is particularly important for remedial teachers who are often para-professional, volunteers, community or family members, or student peers (Shah, 2015; Schwartz, 2012);
- **Carefully consider language of instruction in project communities and how this might be approached from the lens of teacher training** and ongoing professional learning/support (UNESCO UIL & ADEA, 2011).
- **Ensure projects provide sufficient, sustainable, scaffolded teaching and learning materials in incorporating language support** pedagogical approaches (Milligan et al, 2016; Clegg & Simpson, 2016)
- **Enact gender-sensitive approaches in teacher pedagogy lesson delivery**, resources and wider project policies (UNESCO, 2020b)
- **Establish girls' clubs where girls can develop wider life skills**, vocational training, etc.

5.7 Other programming areas

- Consider addressing issues of access and cost reduction of schooling via un/conditional cash transfers (CCTs) and merit-based scholarships
- Consider embedded community engagement programme components to sustain any impact from chosen interventions
- Engage in creating successful transitions from school to work. This may include aligning student curricula with the world of work, technical training, on-the-job training, and apprenticeships and entrepreneurial training and education (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015).

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