



GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP
for EDUCATION



GPE/Kelley Lynch

Educating girls: The path to gender equality

GPE BRIEF

May 2019

Overview

Despite significant gains in recent years, education outcomes for girls in developing countries continue to lag behind those of boys. Adolescence is a particularly critical stage for girls, marked by rapid biological and psychological changes¹ as well as powerful social expectations of how their lives should unfold. For many girls in developing countries, adolescence also marks a time of extreme vulnerability: to child marriage, teenage pregnancy, sexual violence, nutritional deficiency and exposure to HIV/AIDS.² It also marks a time when pressures of social norms and cultural practices place new restrictions on what girls can do and who they can be. Lack of access to education increases vulnerability to these risks and constraints. Conversely, being in education acts as a powerful protective factor as well as a route to empowerment for girls to determine their own destiny.

The economic costs of not educating girls are considerable. According to a recent World Bank report, co-funded by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), limited educational opportunities for girls and barriers to completing 12 years of education are costing countries between \$15 trillion and \$30 trillion in lost lifetime productivity and earnings.³ Conversely, increased educational attainment by girls and women has multiple positive impacts: increased earnings and standard of living; reduction in child marriage and early pregnancies; reduced fertility and population growth; improved health and nutrition; heightened agency and decision-making power; and strengthened participation in social, economic and political life and institutions.⁴

Achieving gender equality means delivering on three inter-linked areas for girls: health, education and safety. GPE uses its results-based partnership model to work with developing countries to prioritize planning and spending on girls' education throughout the education cycle, to achieve gender equality. Ensuring girls and boys have equal access to inclusive, quality education is a core principle of *GPE's strategic plan, GPE 2020*⁵, and *GPE's Gender Equality Policy and Strategy 2016-2020*⁶. At the advocacy level and in conjunction with its partners, GPE is also promoting working across sectors to meet the holistic needs of girls, from a gender equality perspective.

The obstacles girls continue to face are numerous and daunting, with multiple intersecting barriers preventing them from being educated, healthy and safe. The negative consequences impact not only the girls, but also their families, communities and society at large. Achieving all the sustainable development goals depends on gender equality, which in turn hinges on realization of rights to, within and through education⁷.



Kenya

GPE/Kelley Lynch

In Kenya 4,000 low-performing primary schools have received GPE grants to help meet needs that are specific to their communities. In many cases, these grants have been directed at reducing barriers to girls' education by waiving school fees, building toilets for girls, hiring female teachers and providing programs to counter sexual harassment and violence against girls.

1 Health for the world's adolescents: A second chance in the second decade, World Health Organization, 2014.

2 From childhood to womanhood: Meeting the sexual and reproductive health needs of adolescent girls, UNFPA factsheet, December 2012.

3 Wodon, Q., Montenegro, C., Nguyen, H., and Onagoruwa, A. 2018. Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of Not Educating Girls. The Cost of Not Educating Girls Notes Series. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/29956> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.

4 Ibid.

5 <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/gpe-2020-strategic-plan>

6 <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/gender-equality-policy-and-strategy-2016-2020>

7 CEDAW general recommendation no. 36 (2017) on the right of girls and women to education, November 2017.

Barriers to learning

On average girls are still disadvantaged in accessing and completing both primary and lower secondary education. GPE's 2019 Results Report⁸ reveals that while completion rates are rising for both girls and boys, the gender gap has not changed over the past year. In 11 GPE partner countries fewer than 88 girls for every 100 boys are completing primary school. For lower secondary completion, the number of girls is 83 for every 100 boys. By contrast, there are five countries above the gender parity index⁹ threshold, where boys are disadvantaged at primary, and six countries where boys are disadvantaged at lower secondary level.

For the poorest rural girls, the challenge is even greater. Primary completion rates for these girls are significantly lower than for comparable boys in 31 GPE partner countries, with boys' 9 percent more likely to complete primary school.¹⁰ Even for wealthier urban girls completing primary school remains a challenge. In 30 GPE partner countries, wealthy, urban boys are on average 7 percent more likely than girls to complete primary school.¹¹

Conflict compounds the challenges girls face. Globally girls are almost two and a half times more likely to be out of school if they live in countries affected by conflict, and young women are nearly 90 percent more likely to be out of secondary school than their counterparts in countries not affected by conflict.¹² Girls also make up a sizable number of the refugee population in some regions, with a growing feminization of displacement. However, the work of GPE partners helps – in countries affected by fragility and conflict the number of girls completing school for every 100 boys rose from 74 to 88 for primary and from 67 to 83 for lower secondary between 2002 and 2015.¹³ Around half of GPE's developing country partners fit into this category.¹⁴

For learning outcomes, the picture is more mixed, suggesting that if girls are given the right environment, they can be successful learners in any subject. According to the 2018 Global Education Monitoring Report Gender Review, girls do better at

reading than boys at both primary and lower secondary school. In mathematics, boys outperform girls at the primary level, but not in lower secondary.¹⁵ In GPE partner countries, the 2019 report finds that whether girls' or boys' performance is stronger in a given subject can vary greatly from one country to the next.

The gender of teachers can have a significant impact on whether girls go to school and how well they are able to learn. The presence of female teachers often makes parents more willing to send their daughters to school and these teachers also serve as role models for girls.¹⁶ Scarcity of female teachers is most acute in Sub-Saharan Africa, while in Southeast Asia male teachers tend to be in short supply.



Pakistan

Vicki Francis/Department for International Development

In Pakistan GPE supports the provincial governments of Sindh and Balochistan to establish 'gender neutral' or 'gender free' schools in which boys and girls are not segregated. These schools have enrolled over 28,000 children previously out of school.¹⁷

8 Forthcoming, June 2019.

9 GPI threshold level: 0.88 and below (girls disadvantaged); 1.12 and above (boys disadvantaged).

10 UIS data: http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=edulit_ds

11 Ibid.

12 Global Education Monitoring Report, Policy Paper 21, Humanitarian aid for education: Why it matters and why more is needed, June 2015, p.3.

13 GPE estimate based on UIS data.

14 <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/list-gpe-partner-countries-affected-fragility-and-conflict>

15 UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report Gender Review 2018: Meeting our Commitments to Gender Equality in Education.

16 Haugen, C.S., Klees, S.J., Stromquist, N.P. et al. (2014). Increasing the number of female primary school teachers in African countries: Effects, barriers and policies. *International Review of Education*, 60: 753-776. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-014-9450-0>

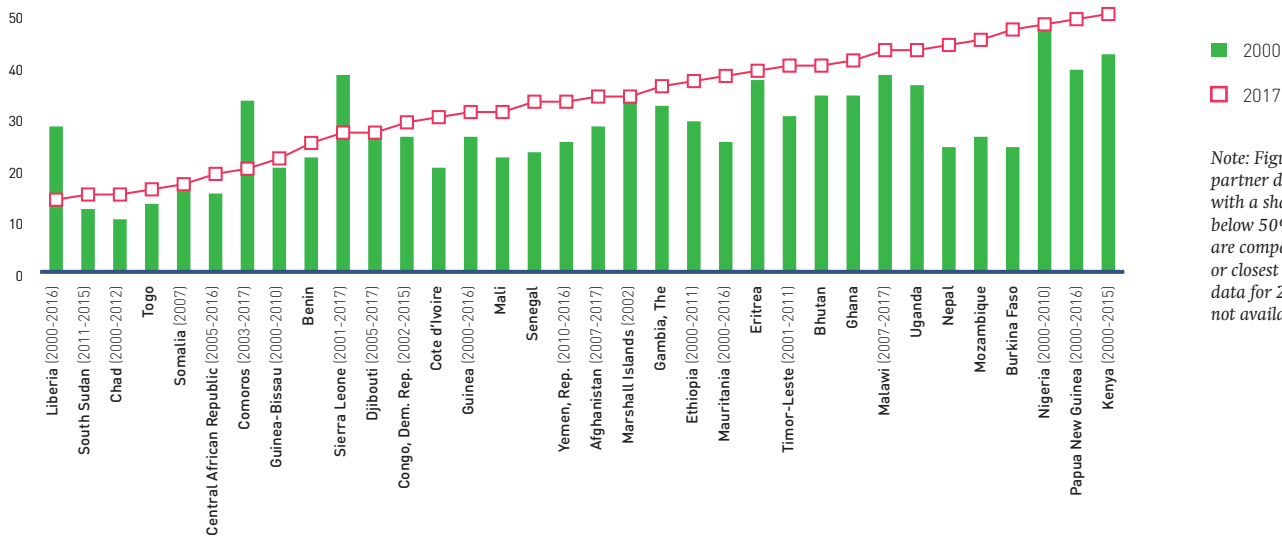
17 Universal Management Group, GPE country-level evaluations: Synthesis report, financial year 2018. February 2019.

Progress and success for girls' education

In GPE partner countries, there was an increase in the average percentage of female teachers in both primary and secondary level. Specifically, the average percentage of female teachers in primary education in 2000 was 45 percent; this had increased to 51 percent in 2017. At the secondary level the average for GPE

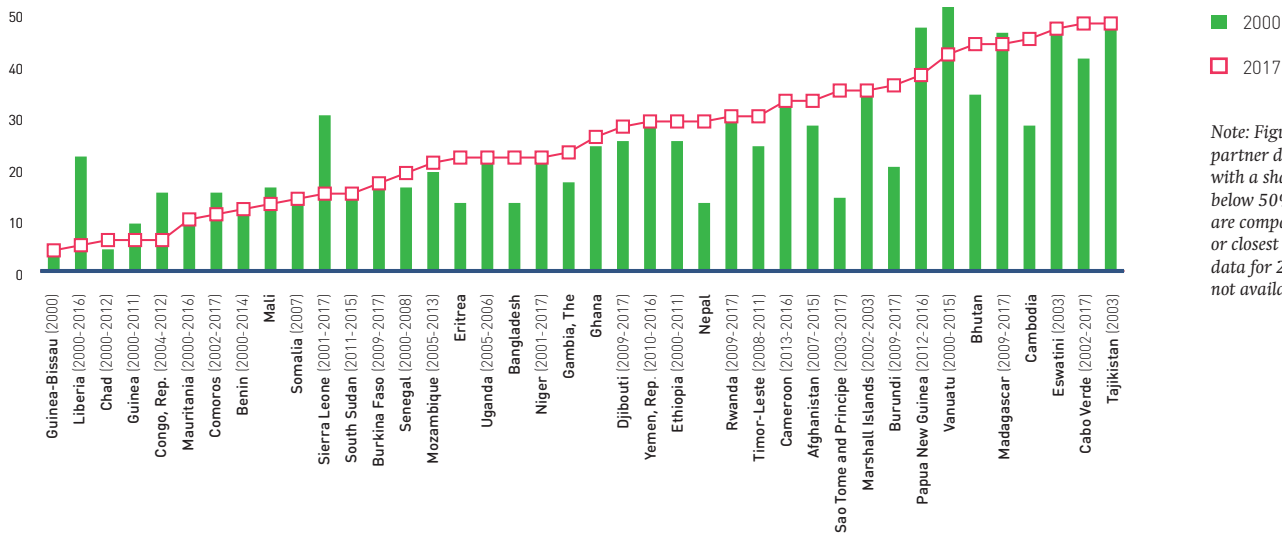
partner countries in 2000 was 35 percent, while in 2017 it had increased to 38 percent – still some way off parity. A number of individual countries have made striking progress, such as Nepal, Mozambique and Burkina Faso. On the other hand, Liberia, Comoros and Sierra Leone have seen the number of female teachers decline in recent years at both primary and secondary levels.

Percentage of teachers in primary education who are female (%)



Note: Figure includes only GPE partner developing countries with a share of female teachers below 50% in 2017. The data are comparing 2000 vs 2017, or closest data available when data for 2000 and 2017 were not available

Percentage of teachers in lower secondary education who are female (%)



Note: Figure includes only GPE partner developing countries with a share of female teachers below 50% in 2017. The data are comparing 2000 vs 2017, or closest data available when data for 2000 and 2017 were not available

Curricula and textbooks are a key influence in reducing gender bias. Similarly, comprehensive sexuality education programs that empower young people to navigate gender inequalities and power relations are vital for helping girls say no to unwanted or unprotected sex, and for reducing sexually transmitted infections and early pregnancies. The UN Human Rights Council requires all countries to periodically review and revise their textbooks, curricula and teaching methods to eliminate gender stereotypes. The Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia and Myanmar include training reforms to address gender bias and eliminate gender stereotypes in their education sector plans (ESPs). Around one quarter of GPE partner countries include activities relating to reproductive and sexual health education in their ESPs.

Access to safe, clean sanitation has a huge impact on adolescent girls' school attendance and learning. In Africa it is estimated that 10 percent of girls miss school during menstruation.¹⁸ Among GPE partner countries, 43 include building water points and providing sanitation facilities, including private latrines, in their national ESPs, while 13 partner countries include girl-friendly sanitation and menstrual hygiene management activities.¹⁹

School-related gender-based violence is a particularly concerning form of discrimination, affecting an estimated 246 million boys and girls in 2014.²⁰ Girls and boys often face different types of violence, which can be sexual, physical or psychological and can include sexual harassment and assault, bullying, corporal punishment, gang activity, and verbal and emotional abuse.²¹

Globally there is little comprehensive data on school-based sexual violence.²² However, UNICEF has data on forced sex that provides a proxy indicator of the prevalence of sexual violence against women and girls in society. Worldwide, around 8 percent of adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 have experienced forced sex in their lifetime – around 15 million girls.²³ Issues of *pupil-pupil sexual harassment and teacher-pupil sexual harassment* are also of serious concern and can be exacerbated by poverty and conflict. In Kenya, for example, nearly 50 percent of all school principals



Cambodia

When we met Sier Leap in 2015, she was in 9th grade. She used to struggle in school because she couldn't see the blackboard clearly and hence couldn't understand what the teacher was explaining.

She was one of approximately 13,000 Cambodian students that benefitted from a vision screening pilot project in schools, which is being scaled up thanks to a GPE grant. Since she received glasses through the program, Sier Leap has been doing much better in school and hopes to become a lawyer.

Girls with disabilities face the greatest barriers to education.

reported pupil-pupil sexual harassment, with a difference of 40 percentage points between schools serving children from the poorest and richest backgrounds.²⁴ Patterns of teacher-pupil sexual harassment can vary: in Tanzania, for example, rates are twice as high in areas of poverty than in wealthier areas, while in a number of other countries, teacher-pupil sexual harassment is more rife in the richer schools.²⁵ Girls may also be coerced by male teachers to exchange sex for grades or to cover school-related expenses.²⁶

18 UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report Gender Review 2018: Meeting our Commitments to Gender Equality in Education.

19 GPE (2017) Girls' education and gender in education sector plans and GPE-funded programs

20 Ibid.

21 UNESCO (2019). Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying. UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report Gender Review 2018: Meeting our Commitments to Gender Equality in Education.

22 Ibid.

23 UNICEF global databases, 2017, based on Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and other nationally representative surveys, 2005-2016.

24 School-related gender-based violence is preventing the achievement of quality education for all, Policy Paper 17, UNESCO, GEMR, UNGEI, 2015.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

In GPE partner countries on average 9 percent of girls aged 15 to 19 reported having experienced forced sex, with almost two-thirds of countries reporting rates higher than 10 percent and in some cases reaching 23 percent.²⁷ Sexual violence damages girls' physical, psychological and emotional health and is correlated with lower academic achievement.²⁸ It also impacts wellbeing and self-esteem. Globally women lack legal protection against sexual harassment in employment, education and public spaces, which affects 350 million, 1.5 billion and 2.2 billion women respectively.²⁹



Afghanistan

Brishna, 9, lives in Helmand, one of the most volatile regions in Afghanistan. She has always wanted to go to school, but there wasn't one in her village and poverty and cultural barriers were keeping her family from prioritizing her education.

A GPE-funded program recruited, trained and deployed qualified female teachers and helped establish 249 community-based classes, one of which Brishna now attends.

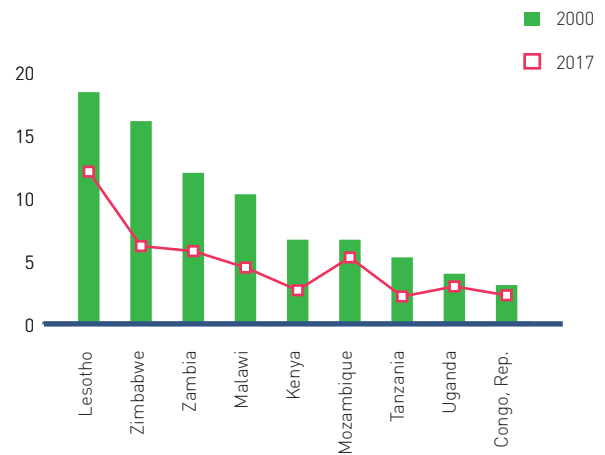
"I am happy because I can learn now. I have learned how to offer prayer and my feeling of happiness doubled when I first wrote Kalima [the Islamic declaration of faith] on paper".

Girls are physiologically more susceptible to contracting HIV.

Every week, approximately 7,000 adolescent girls and women aged 15 to 24 become infected. The five countries with the highest prevalence of HIV for females are in Sub-Saharan Africa with rates ranging from 5 percent to 17 percent. In GPE partner countries in 2017, the prevalence of HIV among females aged 15 to 24 was slightly lower at 1.5 percent.³⁰ Female HIV prevalence has declined since 2000 and half of GPE's developing country partners include HIV/AIDS prevention education activities and mitigation services in their national ESPs to help continue this downward trend.

Child marriage is a major contributor to school drop-out rates among girls, especially for poorer girls living in rural areas. Most countries outlaw child marriage; however, globally as many as 7.5 million girls are still married illegally each year.³¹ Marriage in adolescence not only marks the end of a girl's education, but also brings increased health risks, including greater risk of injury and death in pregnancy and childbirth, as well as exposure to sexually transmitted infections.³²

Prevalence of HIV, female (% ages 15-24)- 2017



27 UNICEF global databases, 2017, based on DHS, MICS and other nationally representative surveys, 2005-2016.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid.

30 Eswatini, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Mozambique.

31 Wodon, Q., Tavares, P., Fiala, O., Le Nestour, A., and Wise, L. (2017). *Ending Child Marriage: Legal Age for Marriage, Illegal Child Marriages, and the Need for Interventions*. London and Washington, DC: Save the Children and The World Bank.

32 Marrying too young: End child marriage, UNFPA, 2012.



Cameroon

UN Women/Ryan Brown

In Cameroon GPE finances campaigns on life skills and gender equality. These include promoting gender-friendly learning environments, management of sexual maturation, health and hygiene, and encouraging parents to educate girls. GPE also supports the strengthening of institutional capacities and evaluation of gender equality in education.

Approximately one in 16 adolescent girls in GPE partner countries is married before the age of 15 while a third of girls are married before they are 18. In 35 GPE partner countries more than 30 percent of girls are married before they reach 18, with 29 of these countries³³ in Sub-Saharan Africa. Globally, even after considering exceptions for the age of marriage with parental or judicial consent, approximately 100 million girls are not legally protected against child marriage in their country.³⁴ Customary law in some contexts continue to take precedence over statutory laws in terms of observance by communities.

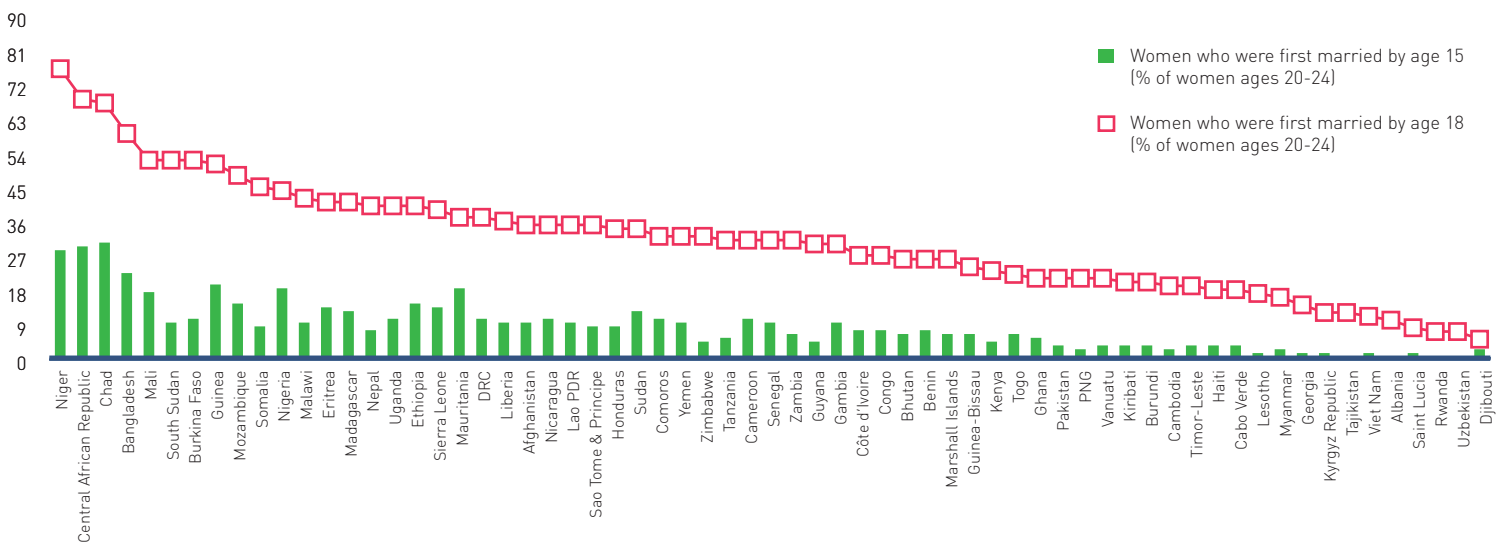


100 million

girls are not legally protected against child marriage in their country

Countries with high rates of early marriage also have high rates of adolescent births.³⁵ In GPE partner countries, on average 21 percent of adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 give birth each year; for almost a third of these countries, the rate is higher than 25 percent. There has been a disturbing trend of countries banning pregnant girls from attending school or from returning after giving birth. Kenya and Sierra Leone include support programs for girls' re-entering school in their ESPs.

Child marriage (before age 15 and age 18) – 2018



Source: UNICEF global databases, 2018, based on Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) and other nationally representative surveys

33 Niger, Central African Republic, Chad, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, South Sudan, Mali, Guinea, Mozambique, Somalia, Nigeria, Malawi, Madagascar, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mauritania, Liberia, Sao Tome and Principe, Lao PDR, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Sudan, Honduras, Zimbabwe, Yemen and Comoros.

34 Wodon et al. (n29) <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/134161519943385981/WBL2017-Child-Marriage-Laws.pdf>

35 UNFPA, 2012 (n30)

Achieving gender equality across the Global Partnership for Education

Anchored in the Sustainable Development Goals agenda, GPE is committed to *gender equality* and ensuring all girls and boys enjoy *equal opportunities* that education can bring.

Over the past decade gender parity in completing school has improved, especially in GPE partner countries. Between 2006 and 2016, primary completion rates increased for girls by more than 9 percent globally and by 12 percent in GPE countries. At lower secondary level, the completion rate for girls increased by nearly 10 percent globally and by more than 11 percent in GPE countries.³⁶

To help developing country partners achieve more gender-equal results both within and beyond the education sector, **GPE offers a suite of grants** to help advance learning, equity, gender equality and inclusion goals, and build more efficient and effective education systems.



Democratic Republic of Congo

In the Democratic Republic of Congo GPE is funding the revision of education programs and textbooks to remove gender stereotypes and supports a set of performance indicators to promote girls' education. Along with other partners, GPE supports communication around girls' schooling, including issues of violence, discrimination and early marriage.

GPE education grants

The GPE operational model supports country progress toward large-scale and sustainable education outcomes. The three pillars of the approach are:

- i. support and financing for education sector analysis and planning,
- ii. support and financing for ESP development and implementation, and
- iii. incentivizing sector plan implementation and monitoring.

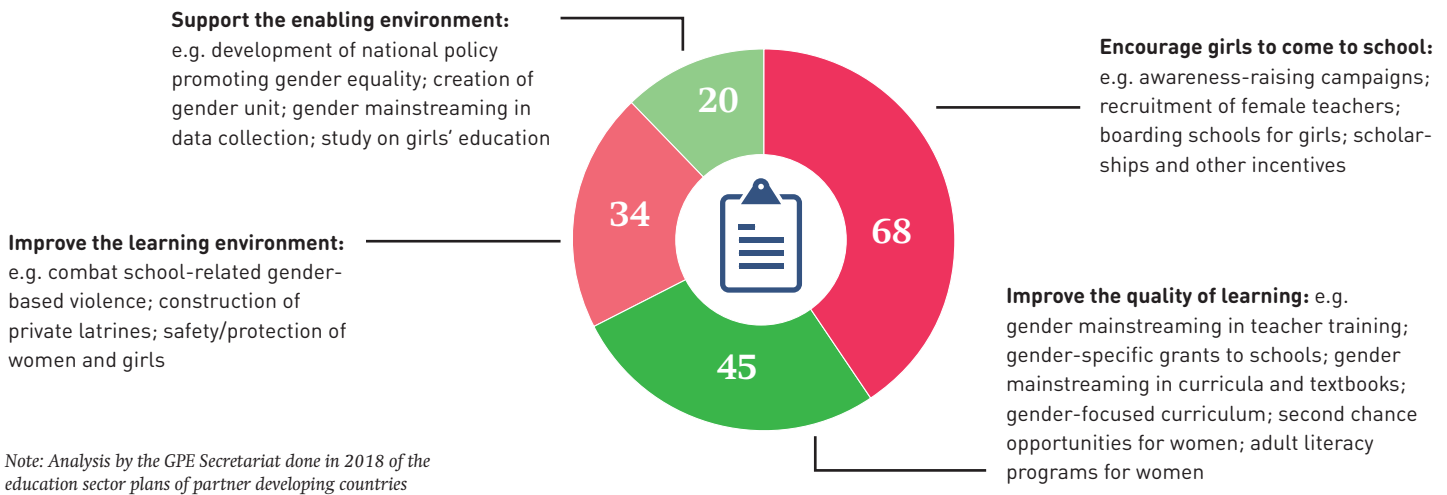
ESPs define a country's vision for education for its people, based on evidence – and include the objectives, the resources required to achieve these, how implementation will be managed and the means for measuring results. Ensuring that ESPs are gender responsive is a powerful lever to transform education systems and deliver sustainable gender results at scale for all girls and boys.

Since 2012, GPE has provided over \$20 million to 65 countries to develop or revise their ESPs in line with the goals of improved and more equitable learning outcomes; increased equity, gender equality and inclusion; and more effective and efficient education systems. A gender equality analysis of ESPs undertaken in 2015 and 2018 by the GPE Secretariat shows promising trends and suggests that ESPs are becoming more gender responsive. 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.

³⁶ Data points represent all 67 GPE developing country partners in aggregate values provided by UIS. Extracted March 21st, 2019.

Number of gender activities in education sector plans – 2018



While the ESP sets out the vision of what the country intends to do, results depend on how well the plan is implemented.

To support countries to implement their ESPs, GPE provides education sector plan implementation grants (ESPIGs). In 2018 GPE provided \$60.2 million to countries through ESPIGs to fund gender equality activities.³⁷ This has included improving enrollment and retention of girls through the provision of learning materials, investments in female teachers and administrators and awareness-raising campaigns including information on early pregnancy, early marriage and gender-based violence. Other plans have included mainstreaming gender sensitivity components in teacher training, curricula and textbooks.



Malawi

GPE/Govati Nyirenda

In Malawi GPE funds are helping to improve retention of girls in upper primary school by placing more female teachers in upper primary grades in remote rural schools.

These major implementation grants 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 incentivize 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 used the mechanism for increasing the number of girls in secondary education as a priority. In Papua New Guinea and 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.

Gender-responsive education sector planning (GRESP)

Ensuring that gender concerns are integrated into every aspect of a country's ESP is a systematic way to generate more gender-equal education outcomes. GPE and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) have developed the Guidance for developing gender-responsive education sector planning³⁸ to help governments, development partners and civil society identify gender barriers in education systems, and in the broader context, and put strategies in place to address these. Regional learning workshops, reaching 25 countries so far, have brought together

³⁷ This figure does not include other activities where gender has been mainstreamed, i.e. that benefit different groups, including girls, without mentioning girls specifically. The \$60.2 million figure includes only activities that target girls specifically.

³⁸ See www.globalpartnership.org/content/guidance-developing-gender-responsive-education-sector-plans.

ministries of education, ministries of gender, and representatives from local education groups and civil society organizations to build capacity for and commitment to applying gender equality principles in education sector analysis and planning.

Gender-responsive education planning means looking at every aspect of the education system from the perspective of gender equality. To ensure girls can learn on an equal footing with boys involves considering girl-friendly buildings, including toilet facilities, as well as the gender dimensions of teacher training, curriculum, learning materials, subject choices, pedagogy, assessment systems and management structures. Where girls are disadvantaged it becomes important to recruit qualified female teachers and deploy them where girls are most in need. To level the playing field requires looking at every aspect of a girl's life that prevents her from being educated, healthy and safe, such as social norms that reinforce child marriage and pregnancy, gender-based violence on the way to and from school, taboos surrounding menstruation, and limited opportunities for decision-making, leadership and entrepreneurial roles, among others. Also, strengthening intersectoral linkages between ministries of education and other technical line ministries at the planning, policy, coordination and financing level further leverages gender results.



Nigeria

GPE/Kelley Lynch

In Nigeria GPE is supporting the government and other stakeholders to increase the number of qualified female teachers, improve girls' enrollment and retention rates and promote gender-sensitive planning. GPE funding provides scholarships for female teachers and helps women who are already employed in the system to upgrade their qualifications.

The GRESP approach has been enriched by the participation of technical partners, including UNICEF, UNESCO-IIEP, Plan International, Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), African Union International Center for Girls' and Women's Education (CIEFFA), and the Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA), and is evolving into a movement for transformational change in how gender is framed in the national dialogue.

Global advocacy

Global advocacy is key to mobilizing political commitment and to positively influence attitudes and behaviors around gender equality and girls' education. At global and regional levels, GPE works with a wide range of partners across sectors to galvanize political support for girls' education and gender equality. This includes strong engagement at the Women Deliver Conference in 2019, ensuring that girls' education is a key theme, engaging with the African Union's Campaign to End Child Marriage and Gender is My Agenda Campaign, as well as the Organization of African First Ladies for Development (OAFILD).

GPE's leaders are internationally recognized as passionate and forceful advocates for gender equality. Julia Gillard, GPE's Board Chair is a member of the Commonwealth Platform for Girls' Education and in 2019, Alice Albright, GPE's CEO was invited to join the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council. GPE is a member of the UNGEI and UNESCO-led global working group on school-related gender-based violence and is actively working with the global Safe to Learn campaign. GPE is also increasingly engaging cross-sector partners, including the World Bank, to show how coordinated investments in health and education can multiply benefits for both sectors, using the school as an effective platform.³⁹

³⁹ See for example: Optimizing education outcomes: High return investments in school health for increased participation and learning, <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/optimizing-education-outcomes-high-return-investments-school-health-increased-participation-and-learning>

New GPE funding mechanisms to strengthen gender results

GPE's new funding mechanisms will help to further strengthen gender results through innovation and advocacy.

1. GPE's new **Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX)** mechanism will promote learning exchange across the partnership and provide thematic funding to support global and regional initiatives solving critical educational challenges and filling strategic gaps in global goods. Gender equality is one of six thematic areas, with a focus on capacity development and knowledge exchange, evidence and evaluation, and identification of innovative pilots with potential for scale-up. KIX will be managed by an independent grant agent, the International Development Research Center (IDRC), with a call for proposals anticipated in late 2019.
2. GPE's **Education Out Loud**, a new funding mechanism for advocacy and social accountability, supports civil society to campaign effectively for education for all. Education Out Loud enhances civil society capacity to further goals in learning, equity and creating stronger education systems, as well as improve transparency and effectiveness of national education policy.








Burkina Faso

With GPE support, Burkina Faso has introduced a comprehensive national education strategy for girls, including grants for girls attending grade 1 and awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of girls' education.

Beyond 2020

As GPE develops a new strategic plan for 2021 to 2025, gender equality and adolescent girls' education will remain central themes. Investments in girls' education and gender equality are critical to achieving not only SDG4, but all the Sustainable Development Goals. The costs of gender inequality and of not investing in girls are well documented.⁴⁰ With just 11 years remaining – less than a full cycle of school education – to achieve the 2030 transformative agenda, the time to act is now.

Through its strategic plan, GPE 2020, and its *Gender Equality Policy and Strategy 2016-2020*, GPE takes a firm stand on gender-equal rights to education. As a matter of urgency, the GPE Secretariat will harness the collective power of the partnership to secure political and financial support for gender-responsive education systems and deliver on our joint commitments to leave no girl or boy behind. Achieving gender equality in and through education is the ambition and route to a more gender-just world, where every girl and boy can reach their full potential in life.

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⁴⁰ See for example: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2018-07-gpe-high-cost-of-not-educating-girls.pdf>