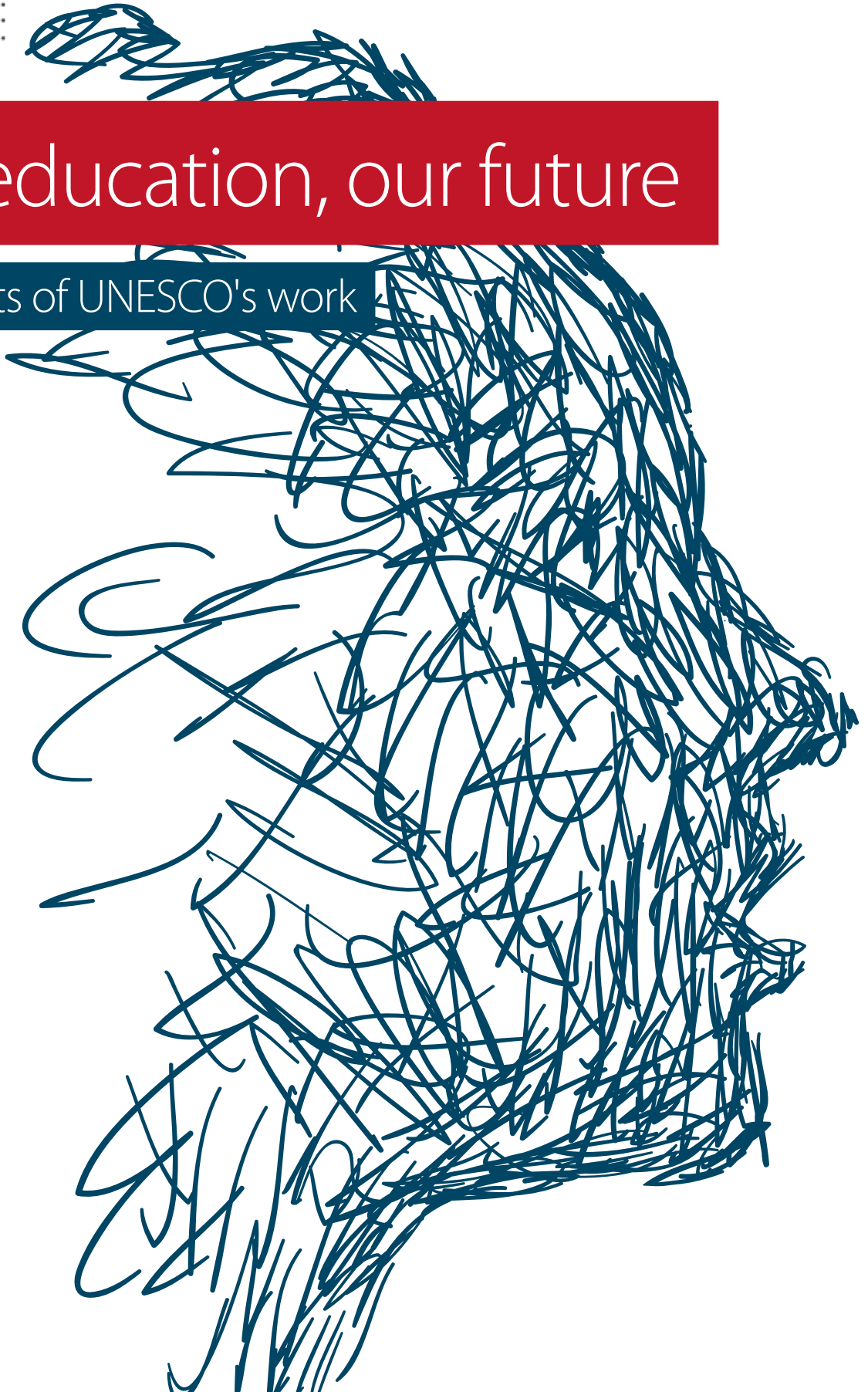




United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# Her education, our future

Snapshots of UNESCO's work



# Introduction

Education and gender equality are central concerns in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly emphasized through Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5. There are large gender gaps in access, learning achievement and continuation in education in many settings, most often at the expense of girls and women. Some 16 million girls will never set foot in a classroom and women account for 2/3 of the global adult population without basic literacy skills.

Through its Strategy for Gender Equality in and through Education, UNESCO aims to promote gender equality, strengthen education systems, as well as to empower girls and women. The Strategy is based on three key pillars – (i) better data to inform action; (ii) better, legal, policy and planning frameworks to advance rights; and, (iii) better teaching and learning practices to empower.

This collection provides snapshots of some of UNESCO's efforts to empower women and girls through education. It highlights core areas of work undertaken, as profiled on the next page. The aim is to give the reader a flavour of what it is that UNESCO, including its 53 field offices and specialized institutes, is doing to transform her education and our future.



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# Financial independence for women in Madagascar



“  
*I no longer depend on my parents, I am financially independent.*  
”

Natacha Obienne, 21, has been able to build a house and is now planning to construct a new fishpond.

**CONTEXT:** Madagascar has a rapidly growing population that is set to increase by 10 million people by 2030. Population growth represents economic potential, but could also be a challenge for the country. Madagascar's young population puts pressure on education and training systems to provide quality education for all. Another challenge the nation faces, like many other low-income countries, is a precarious labour market.

**ACTION:** UNESCO is supporting the country to develop vocational training for out-of-school rural youth in areas of economic opportunity. The subjects taught at the learning centres include masonry, carpentry, mechanical engineering, pig farming, sewing and wickerwork. Following the training, each learner receives a starter kit with seeds, cooking equipment or other materials, depending on their area of study, to help them kick-start their enterprises.

The initiative challenges gender bias, helping women to have access to careers that are traditionally occupied by men.

**IMPACT:** Since the programme began, approximately 3,000 youth have been trained, some of whom have used the training to set up their own businesses and as a result, become financially independent.

Following on from this initiative, UNESCO, alongside partners, started a project to contribute to equipping women living around the Tsingy Nature Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with vocational skills relevant to the job market. The project provides access to training and opportunities in the sustainable tourism sector to improve learners' livelihoods and help them become financially independent.

The initiative will train hundreds of women to grow vegetables or to produce handicrafts, ensuring the preservation of local traditions and culture, which are then sold in local hotels and markets. The women will also benefit from literacy and accounting lessons.

# When schools meet learners in Nigeria

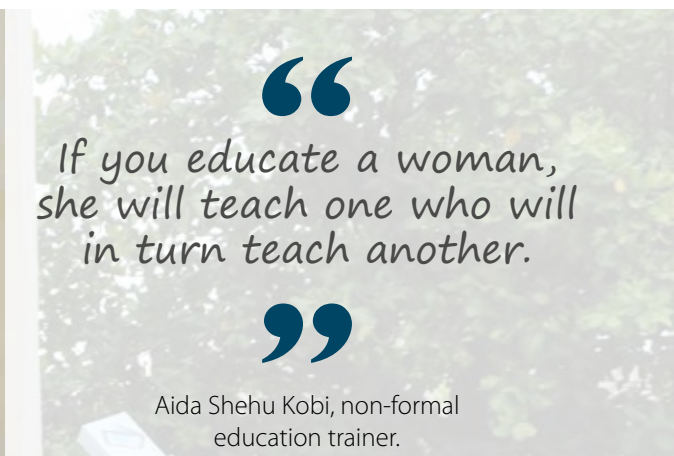
**CONTEXT:** Nigeria has the highest rate of out-of-school children in the world – 10.5 million, 60% of which live in the northern part of the country. Almost two thirds are female. Nigeria's northern states suffer from violence that targets education. Compounding the problem are cultural, religious and socio-economic barriers which lead to poor enrolment or early drop out.

**ACTION:** UNESCO has developed an innovative method called the *School Meets the Learner Approach* in an effort to increase access to education for women and girls, improve retention and avoid dropouts. The method is being applied in northeast Nigeria. The focus is on bringing education to women and girls through an offline application on mobile devices or tablets. This means that they can learn without an internet connection or the physical presence of a teacher, wherever they are.

**IMPACT:** The programme has directly reached more than 250,000 women and girls in northeast Nigeria that are out-of-school, at high risk of dropping out or performing poorly in class. Many families have also benefitted from the approach through non-formal education that supports intergenerational learning through tablet sharing. Tablet devices have been distributed with the support of partners.

The offline application provides content that builds skills for life and work, including literacy, and can be updated to include any level of education. It has also been adapted for television and has been broadcasted on various networks, reaching around 8 million users.

Going forward, the approach aims to reach another 1 million girls and women, with possibilities of expanding to neighbouring states.



*If you educate a woman,  
she will teach one who will  
in turn teach another.*

Aida Shehu Kobi, non-formal  
education trainer.

# Championing girls' right to education in Nepal



“

*Getting an education has enabled me to live a better life and help my community.*

”

Bonita Sharma, learner on the Female Champions Fellowship.

**CONTEXT:** Although gender parity in primary enrolment has been achieved in Nepal, girls tend to drop out from school, especially in higher grades. Factors include living in remote districts, coming from low income families, early marriage, gender-based violence and poor learning environments. Women also suffer from significantly lower literacy rates than men.

**ACTION:** UNESCO is tackling this wide-ranging challenge through the *Female Champions Fellowship Programme*, providing a leadership platform to young women across the country. The programme offers educational opportunities to support girls in leading community-based projects. The champions design and lead projects on empowering adolescent girls at community and school levels through campaigning, flash mobs, social media surveys, case studies, peer learning and volunteering.

**IMPACT:** To date, over 150 women, aged 19 to 25, have strengthened their community mobilization skills, delivering awareness-raising activities directly reaching hundreds of thousands of adolescent girls, students, teachers and community members. The champions have benefitted from a series of motivation-enhancing exercises such as campaigning strategies, project management, team-building and personal development, as well as lectures on sexual and reproductive health, women's rights and the involvement of women in the education sector.

In the future, to maintain the programme's sustainability, the champions will themselves work with marginalized adolescent girls and train them to become champions in their communities.

# Mali's first ever Miss Science competition

**CONTEXT:** The low participation and learning achievement of girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education is a major concern in West Africa. Girls are often raised to believe that STEM are 'masculine' subjects and that female ability in this field is innately inferior. Education systems and schools play a central role in determining girls' interest in STEM and in providing equal opportunities to access and benefit from quality STEM education.

**ACTION:** In a joint effort, the Malian government and UNESCO launched the country's first ever *Miss Science* competition to encourage girls to pursue STEM subjects, advocate for access and to celebrate young girls' achievements in scientific disciplines. This was inspired by the *Miss Science* competition in neighbouring Senegal.

With all 20 of Mali's teaching academies involved, 80 of the highest-achieving female students from both primary and secondary levels were invited to compete. Their schools helped prepare them for the national competition.

**IMPACT:** The four winners were 10-year-old Rokiatou Moussa Bagayoko, 13-year-old Djénèba Coulibaly, 14-year-old Aïssata Doumbia and 15-year-old Mariam Diarra, who will each become ambassadors in their respective schools to encourage their peers to engage in STEM.

All 80 competitors received either tablets or computers during the awards ceremony in Bamako, offered by the Malian government. After the success of this event, a new *Miss Science* competition is planned to take place in September 2019.

This is just one of many examples of UNESCO's work to empower women and girls in Mali. UNESCO, UN Women and the UNFPA, for example, have developed a Joint Programme to deliver as one on education, health and gender equality. The Joint Programme has empowered over 2,500 students and reached 250,000 community members to date.



“  
The *Miss Science* competition encouraged me to study and appreciate scientific subjects even more than I did before.  
”

Coulibaly Seydou, 11, wants to pursue a career as a mining engineer.

## Second chance at education in Guatemala



“

*Women's desire to learn is stronger than the obstacles. They will attend workshops regardless of the distance or whether food is provided.*

”

Lucero Chivalán, UNESCO Malala Centre coordinator.

**CONTEXT:** In Guatemala, 11% of adolescent girls have not received formal education. They also represent the highest proportion of those who cannot read or write. Indigenous girls are at a particular disadvantage – they suffer from lower levels of school attendance and have limited opportunities for learning in their own language and cultural contexts. This prevents them from fully participating in society and reaching their aspirations.

**ACTION:** UNESCO established two UNESCO Malala Centres in the Totonicapán department, where 98% of the population is indigenous. These Centres facilitate access to education for adolescent girls and indigenous young women, especially those marginalized from education because of gender, ethnicity, rurality and poverty. They offer basic non-formal education in indigenous languages, including workshops on health and well-being, literacy, numeracy as well as financial autonomy.

The Centres are also challenging patriarchal beliefs that women do not need an education.

**IMPACT:** The UNESCO Malala Centres have empowered indigenous girls, adolescents and young women in the western highlands of Guatemala by expanding their educational opportunities and building skills for personal and socio-economic development. This has helped to boost their self-confidence and improve their living conditions, while also benefiting their families and communities.

The programmes at the Centres are flexible, which allows women to adapt them to their needs and interests. This model is being replicated across the country with municipalities, aiming to reach over 1 million females, including 650,000 indigenous adolescent girls and young women.

In parallel, UNESCO is supporting the Guatemalan government to develop a policy on gender equality to promote girls' and young women's education, nation-wide.



# Young Syrians learning amidst conflict

**CONTEXT:** Some 2.1 million children are out of school in the Syrian Arab Republic, and a further 1.3 million are at risk of dropping out. Girls are almost 2.5 times more likely to be out of school in conflict zones. More than one in three schools are damaged and school safety remains a critical barrier, especially among girls. Despite significant challenges, the education system in the country is continuing.

**ACTION:** Through the *Second Chance Programme*, UNESCO is providing primary school students who failed their final exams with an opportunity to catch up and progress to the next grade. This is an intensive, eight-week summer programme that combines classroom and extra-curricular activities, such as music, games and sports. Students also receive gender-responsive psychosocial support by trained counsellors and teachers to help them overcome conflict-related trauma and stress.

**IMPACT:** Close to 115,000 students, more than half of whom are girls, have benefitted from the *Second Chance Programme* in Syria, with around 80% of them able to progress to the next grade. The programme has allowed the learners to continue their education and has provided support to families who otherwise could not have afforded additional tutors. This year's programme alone is expected to reach another 65,000 learners in all 14 governorates. Also, 10,000 teachers have been trained in programme delivery and gender-sensitive psychosocial support, and 40,000 teacher handbooks have been distributed to others.

However, the need in the country still outweighs what relief the *Second Chance Programme* is providing. As part of its strategy to help rehabilitate Syria's education system, UNESCO is supporting the development of a transitional education plan and national policy for non-formal education. This also includes the revision of curricula, training of teachers, catch-up programmes and provision of school equipment.



“  
I am very happy because I did not have to repeat grade 7. Otherwise, I would have lost one year of my life.  
”

Fatima Kurdi, 13, made it to grade 8 and also did well in subjects where she previously had difficulties.



# Women learn while earning in Cambodian garment factories

“  
Before, I was unable to keep proper records, but after finishing this course I am able to accurately count and record the numbers for my work.  
”

Sreyleap Chin, 25, inventory officer at the Sabrina Garment Factory.



**CONTEXT:** Cambodia has one of the fastest urbanization rates in Asia. In recent decades, Phnom Penh's population has doubled and the urban population is now at 21%. Many of these rural-urban migrants are women coming to work in factories, often with low literacy levels. According to national figures, 85% of the 605,000 workers in garment and footwear factories are women, most of them under the age of 30. Some 50% have no or low levels of literacy.

**ACTION:** UNESCO's *Factory Literacy Programme* provides female garment workers, mostly between the ages of 15 and 45, with basic functional literacy skills and empowers them to better understand their rights. Classes take place over a period of four to six months, at times when workers are available to learn. Literacy, numeracy and life-skills are taught through interactive learning.

The programme is in line with Cambodia's Non-Formal Education and Lifelong Learning Policies, which encourage employers to find the means to open literacy classes for workers.

**IMPACT:** Close to 2,000 young female garment workers across 25 factories in nine provinces have completed the *Factory Literacy Programme*. This is recognized by the Cambodian government as the equivalent to grade 4 of formal schooling. Teachers, teacher trainers, Ministry officials and employers have also been involved.

Apart from gaining literacy and numeracy skills, learners reported increased confidence and being more comfortable in daily situations. Managers also noticed better motivation and productivity among employee learners, as well as improved employer-worker relationships.

Training materials have been developed to ensure that learning continues throughout Cambodia's factories. The Cambodian government has also encouraged the extension of the programme to other factories, offering to allocate trained teachers, and its continuation is underway.

# Learning literacy as a family in Mozambique

**CONTEXT:** In Mozambique, adult illiteracy is at 45% and is twice as common among women than men. Illiteracy has a significant impact on individuals' daily lives. It prevents them from accessing high-paying jobs, as well as equal involvement in their local community, and social and political discourse. It perpetuates intergenerational transmission of poverty and slows long-term economic growth. Another issue is early childhood education, with only 4% of under 5-year-olds receiving it.

**ACTION:** UNESCO is supporting a *Family Learning Programme* in rural areas in Mozambique. The programme aims to equip young people and women with literacy, numeracy and life skills, such as hygiene techniques and nutrition, as well as entrepreneurial and vocational skills. To reduce gender inequality within families and communities, the initiative raises awareness on women's rights.

The programme also addresses the lack of early childhood education by providing parents with the skills they need to support the development of their children and prepare them for primary school education through joint learning.

**IMPACT:** The *Family Learning Programme* has benefitted hundreds of caregivers and children, most of whom are women. Six communities were reached through advocacy campaigns that raised awareness on girls' and women's rights, while over 500 learners benefitted from literacy classes in communities where no access had previously been provided.

More than 200 learners also gained entrepreneurial skills, which led to 11% of them taking the step to launch their own business. Ministry representatives also received training on the family learning approach.

Learners have stated that they are applying the newly acquired knowledge on health, sanitation and nutrition in their everyday lives. The programme has now been integrated by the government as part of the country's National Education Plan, ensuring its continuous and sustainable impact for years to come.



“  
We don't have an appropriate place to learn but my students come anyway. I am now also more motivated to oversee and support my children with homework, discuss issues and what they learn at school.  
”

Zanaida Ayuba, 27, responsible for 24 learners in the programme.

# Gender mainstreaming in teacher education in Uzbekistan

“

*The initiative is empowering teachers with clear guidance on gender-balanced and gender-sensitive classroom teaching and improving school textbooks with gender-balanced content.*

”

Nodira Egamberdieva, teacher.



Getty/robias

**CONTEXT:** Teachers and learning content are the most important in-school factors that determine education quality. Gender biases and stereotypes embedded in teaching and learning materials undesirably reinforce mindsets, thus perpetuating gender inequality. In Uzbekistan, teacher education textbooks often contain stereotypical representations of gender, with male characters portrayed as strong and responsible and females as more gentle and subdued. Some 49% of illustrations in these textbooks are male-dominated, 29% show females and 22% are gender-neutral.

**ACTION:** UNESCO is supporting Uzbekistan to achieve gender equality in teacher education, with a particular focus on gender-sensitive policymaking, teacher development and pedagogical innovations. This is being done through gender assessments of policies, pedagogy, curricula and textbooks as well as the capacity development of teachers and school leaders.

**IMPACT:** A gender assessment of the teacher education system was conducted. More than 200 education policy makers, planners and teacher educators in Uzbekistan have gained knowledge on mainstreaming gender in teacher policies and plans, as well as through training and development. In turn, this is helping teachers promote gender-sensitive and enabling learning environments for girls and young women.

The same approach is being applied in Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka and peer-learning exchanges are held among the five countries. A Training Manual on Gender Mainstreaming in Teacher Education in Asia-Pacific has been developed, based on assessment findings, and translated into Uzbek and Russian to help mainstream gender in teacher preparation and development.

# Students in Viet Nam speak out about gender equality

**CONTEXT:** While the Vietnamese government has made significant legislative progress in promoting gender equality, challenges remain. Women are less likely to be in formal employment, earn lower wages, and generally have less access to resources, education and skills development than men. The harmful practice of son preference is resulting in a skewed sex ratio at birth of 112 boys to 100 girls.

**ACTION:** UNESCO, in partnership with Viet Nam's Ministry of Education and Training launched the *Young Journalists Programme* to raise awareness and promote gender equality through educational activities. The programme empowers students to express their ideas and questions on media and gender equality. It also guides them on how to produce written news stories, magazine articles and to carry out and broadcast TV interviews. These students are then supported to develop and publish their own media products on sexuality education, bullying, domestic violence and gender equality, to be disseminated in Vietnamese newspapers, radio and television.

**IMPACT:** Students from the Ha Noi Experiemental Secondary School, as well as teachers, were trained to produce communication content and messages on gender equality. Following this, more than 200 students, over half of whom were female, participated in a communication campaign on gender equality, called 'True Color', led by trained students. The campaign consisted of musical performances, plays and a workshop with parents. The Ministry has helped expand the programme by promoting it across schools in the country.

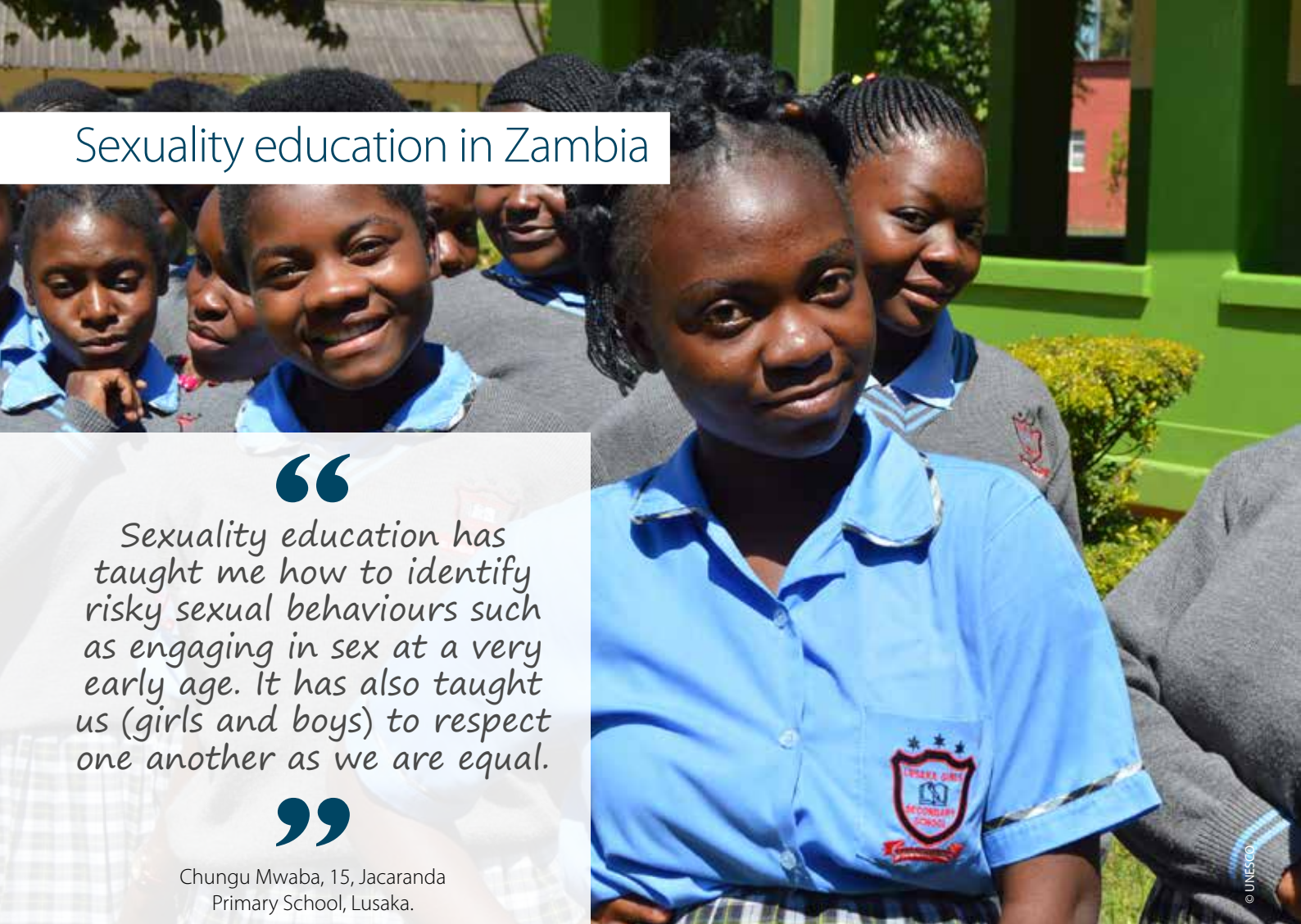
This initiative complements UNESCO's support to Viet Nam to develop an action plan on gender equality in the education sector and revise the curriculum for primary and secondary education, which is expected to benefit 15 million students and 850,000 teachers.



“  
I will have more experience  
to better change people's  
views on gender equality.

”  
‘True Color’ campaign participant.

## Sexuality education in Zambia



“

*Sexuality education has taught me how to identify risky sexual behaviours such as engaging in sex at a very early age. It has also taught us (girls and boys) to respect one another as we are equal.*

”

Chungu Mwaba, 15, Jacaranda Primary School, Lusaka.

**CONTEXT:** Young people remain at risk of early and unintended pregnancy, gender based violence, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV. Young women in Zambia are twice as likely to contract HIV than young men. Physical and/or sexual violence also impacts four out of every ten women in the country and one in three girls are married before they are adults.

**ACTION:** UNESCO is supporting Zambia to strengthen the delivery of quality comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in schools. This is a curriculum-based process of teaching and learning about the cognitive, emotional, physical and social aspects of sexuality. CSE develops young people’s knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, empowering them to protect their health, well-being and dignity, as well as to develop respectful relationships and consider the well-being of others affected by their choices. Importantly, CSE also helps them to understand and act upon their rights throughout their lives.

**IMPACT:** Zambia is one of 31 countries in Africa benefitting from UNESCO’s *Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Future (O3)* programme. The O3 is working to improve sexual and reproductive health, gender equality and education outcomes through sustained reductions in new HIV infections and other STIs, early and unintended pregnancy, as well as gender-based violence.

In Zambia, the programme has already improved access to CSE for 2 million young people between grade 5 and 12, and is expected to benefit another 2 million learners, 115,000 teachers and 4 million members of the wider community.

In the 31 countries involved, O3 is expected to reach over 20 million young people, more than 400,000 teachers, as well as 40 million members of the wider community through engagement and digital platforms.

# Promoting safe school environments in Senegal

**CONTEXT:** Every year, an estimated 246 million children are subject to some form of school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) in and around school – including bullying, psychological abuse and sexual harassment. Girls are more likely than boys to experience psychological abuse, cyber-bullying, sexual violence and harassment. In addition to physical and psychological trauma, this contributes to poor school performance, increased drop-out rates, and unsafe school environments.

**ACTION:** In Senegal, UNESCO conducted a diagnosis of the education sector's response to SRGBV in curricula, teacher training, sectoral policies and regulatory provisions. A special imaging tool for analysis was used to convert the information collected into a visual representation of progress, gaps and adjustments that provide a snapshot of the response to SRGBV at a given time. The tool is implemented through a participatory process to generate dialogue, joint planning and resource mobilization. A similar exercise has been carried out in Cameroun and Togo, and the sharing of results across the three countries has been valuable for addressing SRGBV.

**IMPACT:** The diagnostic study revealed areas where improvements can be made, particularly with regard to regulations on SRGBV and educational content, to inform policy-making in the country. Based on the findings, a teacher training module has been designed, which has empowered some 400 teachers and teacher trainers to prevent and respond to violence and ensure safe and inclusive learning environments.

The Global Guidance on SRGBV, developed by UNESCO and UN Women, serves as a reference in their efforts to recognize what constitutes violence and abuse, how to prevent these, and how to protect girls and boys in, around and on the way to school.



“  
*School-related gender-based violence severely hinders access to education, school performance and completion, especially among girls.*  
”

Marie Siby Faye, gender focal point in the Ministry of Education.

# Promoting the right to education in Pakistan



“

*The door-to-door awareness raising campaign helped identify poor families who could not afford to educate their girls.*

”

Misbha Awan, Education Department, Muzaffarabad District.

**CONTEXT:** In Pakistan, girls and women are twice as likely as boys and men to be illiterate, and there are over 1 million more out-of-school girls than boys. School life expectancy in grades 1 through 8 is almost two years less for girls than for boys. Even in the earliest years, girls lack learning opportunities. They are under-represented in pre-primary education, as well as in primary and secondary school. Overall, Pakistan faces some of the starkest gender disparities in education globally.

**ACTION:** UNESCO is working to promote gender equality in education and ensure that girls, as well as boys, have access high quality education. The Malala Yousafzai Funds-in-Trust for Girls' Right to Education Programme in Pakistan is UNESCO's largest country intervention.

The programme seeks to increase girls' enrolment in primary schools in marginalized communities, improve retention and quality of their primary education and improve the capacity of provincial and district officials to create an enabling school environment. Laying foundations for the right to education involves pairing school-based interventions with community actions.

**IMPACT:** To date, the project has enrolled over 26,000 out-of-school girls in more than 300 schools. Retention of enrolled female students has also improved from 55% to 65%. This process is facilitated, in part, through the provision of new or refurbished school facilities and broad improvements to learning environments.

UNESCO is also working with educators to help them implement pedagogical techniques like activity-based learning. Over 600 educators have been trained to engage girls and boys in mixed-grade environments typical of schools in rural areas and to encourage student self- and group-learning. Over 2,600 members of school management committees have been trained on strategies to ensure the inclusion of girls.

Community engagement, social mobilization and advocacy efforts are enabling the identification of local solutions to barriers that prevent girls from realizing their right to education. Innovative methods such as Pakistan 'truck art' are being used to transform parental and community perceptions in favour of girls' education. The project is empowering communities, united in the conviction that education is a right for girls and boys alike.



Published in 2019 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,  
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

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Cover design: Getty/robodread

Designed and printed by UNESCO

*Printed in France*



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

## Education Sector

“

*There is a saying that if you educate a woman, you educate the world. That's why we say if you educate a woman, she will teach one who will in turn teach another. Personally, I have been able to educate my family and fellow women.*

”

Aida Shehu Kobi, non-formal  
education trainer, Nigeria



Sustainable  
Development  
Goals