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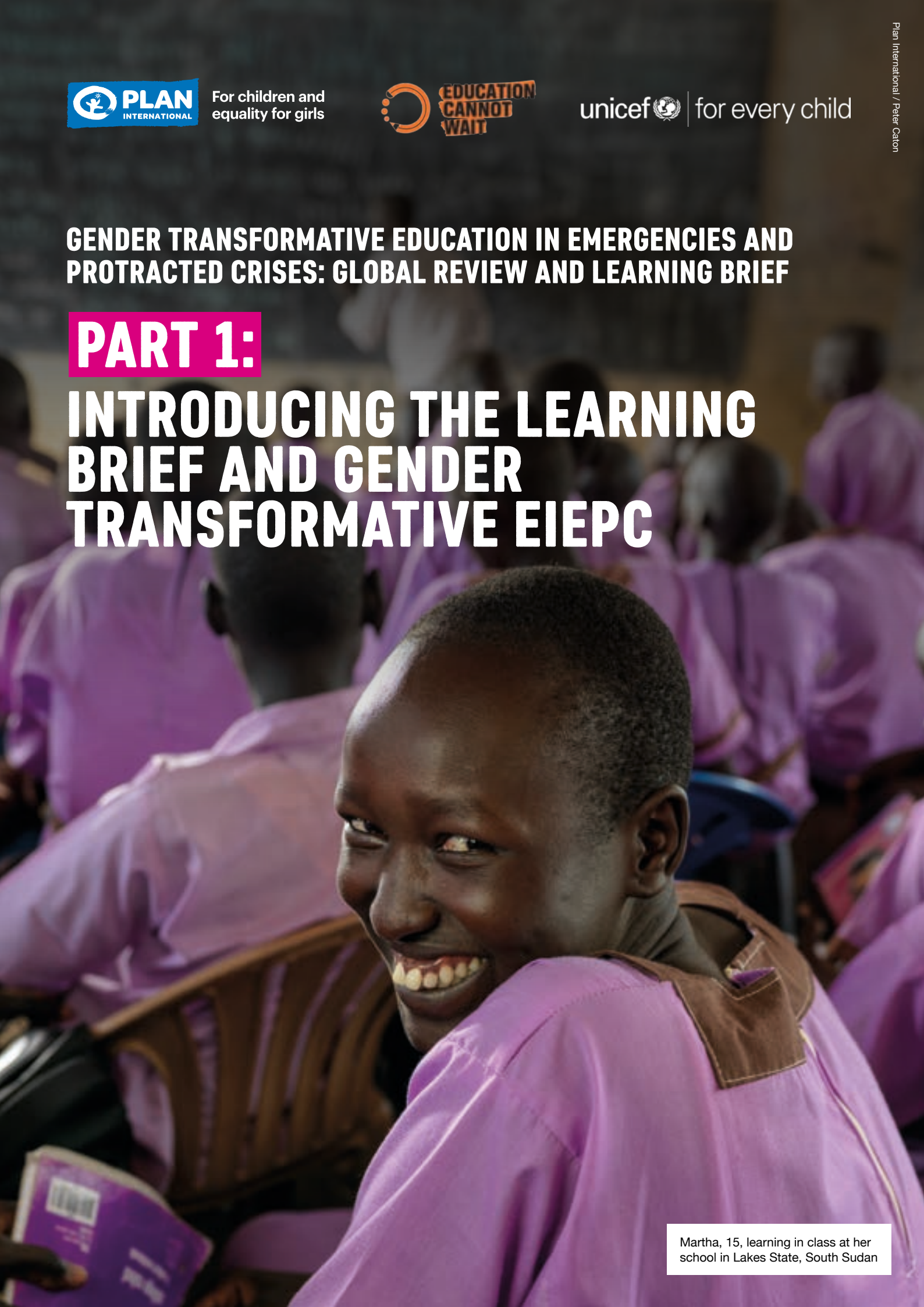
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GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES AND PROTRACTED CRISES: GLOBAL REVIEW AND LEARNING BRIEF

PART 1:

INTRODUCING THE LEARNING BRIEF AND GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE EIEPC



Martha, 15, learning in class at her school in Lakes State, South Sudan

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ECW	Education Cannot Wait
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EiEPC	Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises
GTE	Gender transformative education
MYRP	Multi-Year Resilience Programme
GAM	Gender with age marker
GBV	Gender-based violence
INEE	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
PGI	Protection, gender and inclusion
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
LWOs	Local women's organisations
MHH	menstrual health and hygiene
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender Transformative Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises: Global Review and Learning Brief documents promising practices drawn from the UNICEF-led Education Cannot Wait (ECW) Gender Acceleration Facility grant. It features five case studies of gender transformative interventions implemented under ECW's Multi-Year Resilience Programmes (MYRPs), specifically in Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan and Uganda. Each example provides concrete illustrations of how gender transformative approaches are being applied within Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises (EiEPC) settings.

To enhance accessibility and usability, the Learning Brief is presented as a three-part resource. Together, the three parts form a comprehensive resource to support the integration of gender transformative approaches in EiEPC. Each document can be used independently or as part of a cohesive package, depending on the user's needs.

HOW THE LEARNING BRIEF WORKS

This Learning Brief is a three-part package that offers practical insights and guidance on integrating gender transformative education in emergencies and protracted crises.

Part 1: Introducing the Learning Brief and gender transformative EiEPC
introduces the Learning Brief and outlines the foundations and frameworks for gender transformative education (GTE), as well as the rationale, methodology and limitations that informed the development of the Learning Brief.

Part 2: Promising practices and enablers for gender transformative EiEPC
presents five programme examples with gender transformative potential, highlighting how GTE is being implemented across diverse EiEPC contexts. It also identifies key enablers in programme design – such as policy, coordination, local leadership and financing – and includes examples, best practices and challenges drawn from five MYRPs (Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan and Uganda) and global interviews.

Part 3: Strategic recommendations
provides actionable recommendations and synthesises key enablers to strengthen the integration of gender transformative approaches in both programme design and implementation.

Additionally, the Learning Brief has six appendices, providing further depth and detail:

1. Five detailed case studies, offering an in-depth examination of the gender transformative practices implemented in different EiEPC programmes.

2. The methodology, outlining the systematic approach taken in conducting the research and synthesising findings.

The appendices serve as valuable resources for practitioners who are seeking a deeper understanding of the case studies and the methodological framework underpinning the Learning Brief.

WHY THIS LEARNING BRIEF IS NEEDED

A key commitment of Education Cannot Wait is to promote gender transformative education (GTE) in emergencies and protracted crises. The aim of GTE is to leverage education as a key driver for challenging power relations, rethinking gender norms, addressing power imbalances, creating critical awareness on the root causes of inequalities and promoting inclusive practices. ECW commits to embedding a gender transformative approach whenever possible, according to its *Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls' policy and accountability framework 2023-2026.* The framework defines gender transformative programming as "working with key stakeholders to identify and address the root causes of gender inequality and exclusion, tackle harmful social and gender norms, and shift unequal power relations by working with a variety of actors across various sectors to address structural inequalities and discrimination".[1]

However, despite growing interest in gender transformative EiEPC, many EiEPC actors still face a fundamental question: what actually works? Guidance and evidence remain limited – especially in humanitarian contexts. This brief aims to answer that question and to build evidence on what works. It offers examples, insights and tools for operationalising gender transformative programming in crisis-affected settings.

The brief is intended to inform and inspire a broad range of EiEPC actors – including education practitioners, policy makers and donors – by documenting what has worked and why. It seeks to support the adoption and adaptation of gender transformative approaches across diverse emergency and protracted crisis contexts, beyond ECW-supported programmes.

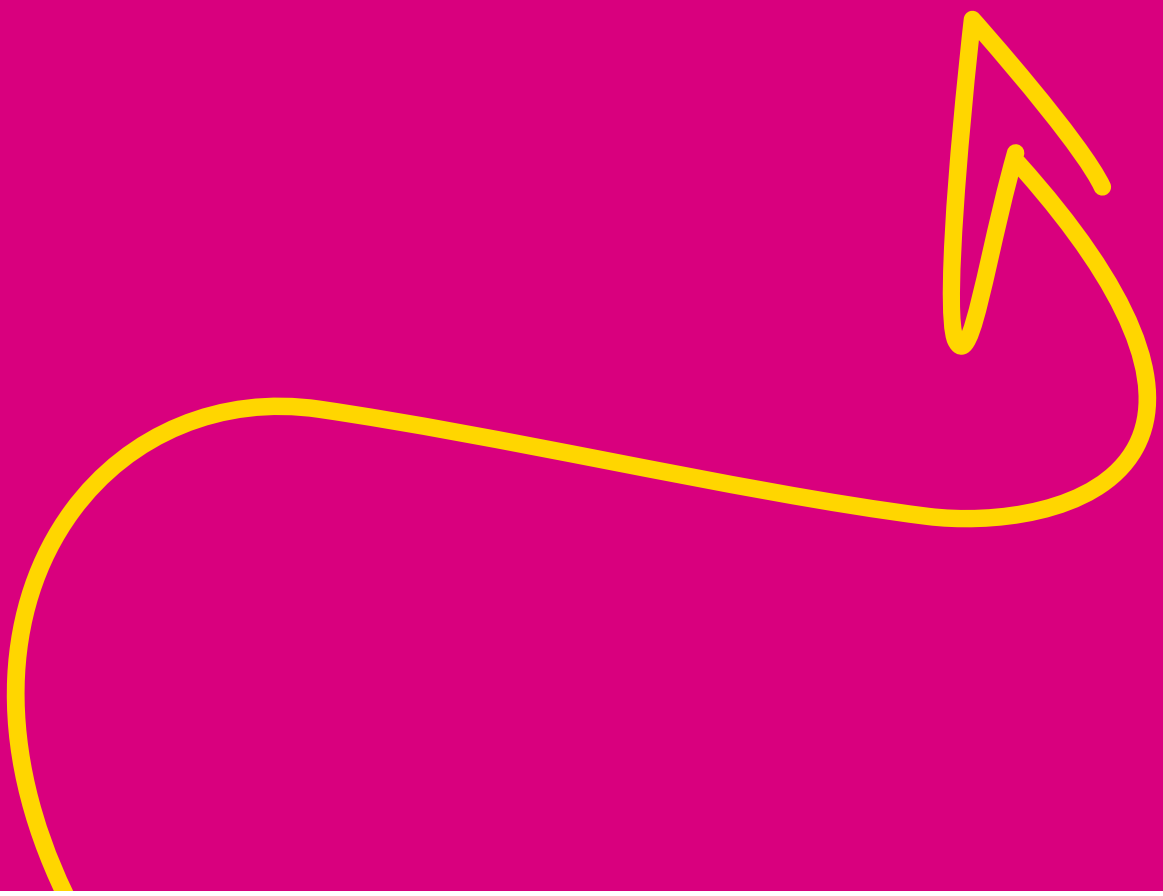
CREATING THE LEARNING BRIEF

This Learning Brief was developed through a three-phase, participatory research process inspired by the Grounded Theory approach. The process included a desk review to analyse 27 programme documents, a survey, and 25 key informant interviews conducted between December 2024 and January 2025 across five ECW-supported Multi-Year Resilience Programmes (MYRPs) in Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan and Uganda, as well as with global actors. A total of nine organisations contributed to the interviews, namely PAGE Pakistan, UNICEF, ECW, the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), Plan International, Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children, VSO International and Finn Church Aid. Data were coded using qualitative analysis software and triangulated across sources to ensure rigour and reliability. A technical advisory group – including ECW, UNICEF, INEE and Plan International – provided strategic validation.

Limitations included the absence of final evaluations for some MYRPs, time and budget constraints that limited the sample size and number of interviews, restricted direct engagement with participants beyond MYRP and global staff, and limited detail in narrative documents and interviews, which sometimes constrained deeper exploration of pedagogical practices and impacts on gender transformative programming.

1 Source: ECW (2023). *Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls. Policy and Accountability Framework 2023-2026,* p.8

II. INTEGRATING A GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH IN EIEPC: FOUNDATIONS AND FRAMEWORKS



WHAT IS GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES AND PROTRACTED CRISES?

Gender transformative education practice in emergencies and protracted crises explicitly aims to transform unequal power relations to foster a sustainable positive change. It operates within the framework of education in emergencies and protracted crises with the principles of INEE minimum standards, to ensure equitable, inclusive and quality learning opportunities for individuals of all ages, from Early Child Development (ECD) onwards, during crises. It spans preparedness, response and recovery phases. Gender transformative education practice prioritises challenging and changing harmful gender norms and addressing systemic barriers to accessing and participating in quality education while responding to affected populations' immediate and long-term educational needs.[2]

UNDERSTANDING WHETHER PROGRAMMES ARE GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE

To better understand how gender considerations are integrated into education programming, it is helpful to view interventions along a continuum of gender integration. Figure 1 illustrates this continuum, highlighting the varying degrees to which gender is considered in programme design and implementation.

ECW's MYRPs aim to position themselves towards the transformative end of this continuum. By addressing not only access and participation but also the root causes of gender inequality – such as social norms, unequal power dynamics and structural barriers – MYRPs have the potential to drive meaningful, sustainable change.

> **"In the responsive [approach], when we are talking about gender responsive things, we are only focusing on the present.… We are only focusing on that. But in [gender transformative approaches], we are focusing on the long-term effects of gender discrimination and gender inequalities. So, how do we reduce that particular thing?"**
>
> Bangladesh MYRP member interview

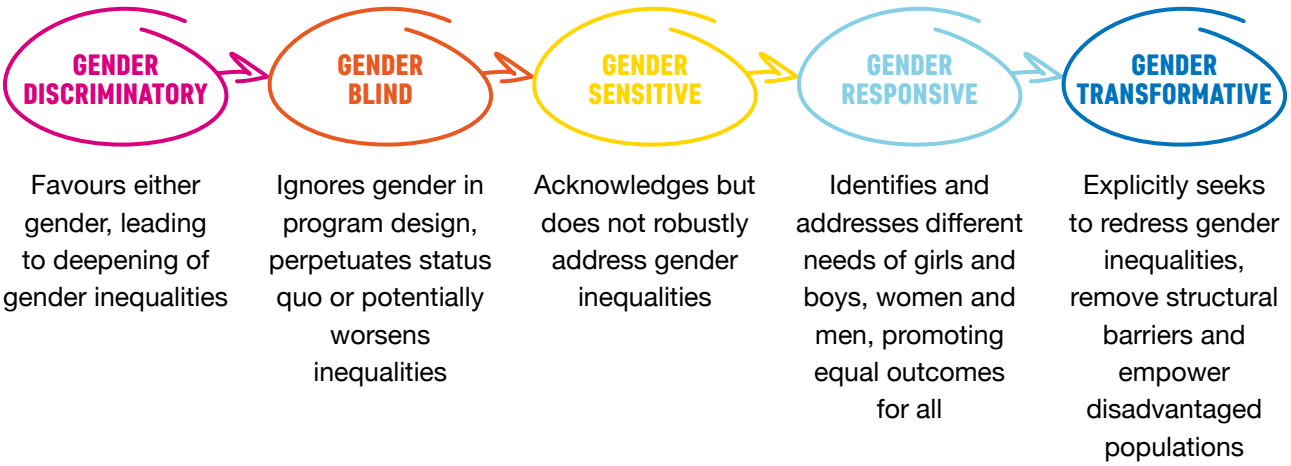


Figure 1. The gender continuum[3]

2 Inspired by: ECW (2023). *Delivering on Our Ambition to Advance Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls: An Implementation Guide for Secretariat Staff and FER and MYRP Grantees;* Plan International (2022). Frequently Asked Questions: Gender Transformative Change in Emergencies, p.2

3 Source: UNICEF (2022). *Background Paper Series UNICEF Gender Policy and Action Plan 2022-2025 Gender-Transformative Programming*

Gender transformative approaches are sometimes perceived as overly ambitious or burdensome.[4] However, gender equality is a cross-cutting issue, not a stand-alone component. In an Education in Emergencies programme that takes a gender transformative approach, the core educational activities remain the same – but they are conducted in a way that is not discriminatory and that actively promotes gender equality.[5]

Moreover, integrating a gender transformative lens does not require an entirely separate process. Many essential components of quality education programming – such as needs assessments, child safeguarding, inclusive pedagogy and accountability to learners and populations – already offer opportunities to embed gender considerations. The key is to intentionally apply a gender lens to existing education systems, ensuring that they become more equitable without adding unnecessary complexity.[6]

KEY FRAMEWORKS FOR IMPLEMENTING A GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH IN EIEPC

To articulate and implement a clear vision of what a gender transformative approach in education in emergencies and protracted crises entails, five essential **Gender Domains**[7] have been identified. These domains are interconnected and mutually reinforcing:

Gender norms: understanding and addressing how gender norms influence the access, continuity and quality of education of girls and boys throughout their life course, from birth to adulthood.

The transformative element of this dimension is to work with and support boys, young men and men to embrace positive masculinities and to promote gender equality in education, while also achieving meaningful results for them.

In education, this dimension is reflected by working on negative gender norms and attitudes towards girls' education, challenging them through school clubs with girls and boys, ongoing community engagement and dialogue, teacher training, and parenting sessions on gender equality.

Agency: working to strengthen girls' and young women's agency over the decisions that affect them, particularly those related to their education, by building their knowledge, confidence, skills and access to and control over resources.

In education, this dimension is reflected through mentorship and leadership programmes in schools, by girls developing confidence, decision-making skills, and the ability to advocate for their right to education, ensuring they can stay in school and pursue their aspirations. As part of this process, safe spaces for girls' participation are established to engage them in decision-making and advocacy.

4 Sources: MYRP team members, interviews, December 2024
5 Sources: Global actor, interview, December 2024
6 Sources: Global actor, interview, December 2024
7 The domains derive from Plan International's gender transformative approach framework, in Plan International (2022). *Frequently Asked Questions. Gender Transformative Change in Emergencies,* p.2.



Shamsa, 13, attends the temporary learning centre in her IDP camp, Sudan

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Diversity: considering girls, boys, young women and young men in all their diversity when identifying and responding to their needs and interests.

In education, this dimension is reflected by training teachers on diversity and inclusion, and reviewing and adapting the curriculum to be inclusive and responsive to the needs of all students where possible.[8] Additionally, learning facilities are rehabilitated following a consultative process with girls, boys, teachers, parents/caregivers and is accompanied by awareness-raising initiatives with girls and boys.

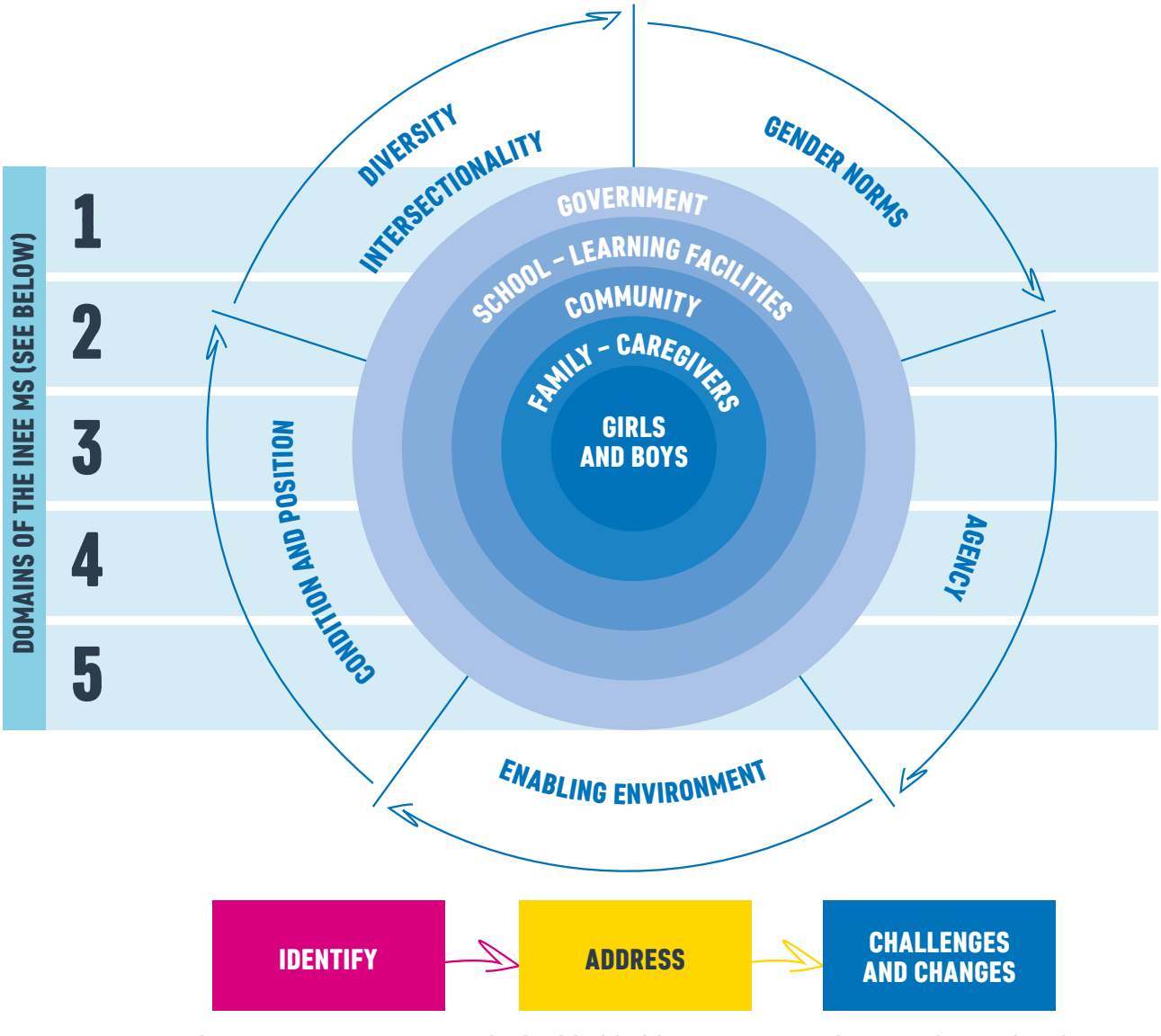
Condition and position: improve the conditions (daily needs) and social position (value or status) of girls and young women.

In education, this dimension is reflected by providing safe transportation to school, provision of menstrual hygiene products and establishment of menstrual hygiene management in school settings, and the creation of flexible learning opportunities for adolescent mothers which directly enhances their ability to continue their education. Looking at social position, promoting female teachers and women in school leadership positions helps to challenge systemic gender inequalities.

Enabling environment: foster an enabling environment where all stakeholders, including female teachers, work together to create inclusive and gender-equitable learning environments, and support children and youth on their journey towards gender equality.

In education, this dimension is reflected by the collaboration with government authorities to revise education policies, ensuring they actively promote gender equality, embedding systemic changes that support inclusive and transformative education for all.

8 Source: UNGEI, ECW, INEE (2021). EiE-GenKit, New York, NY.



DOMAIN 1	DOMAIN 2	DOMAIN 3	DOMAIN 4	DOMAIN 5
Foundational standards for a quality response	Access and learning environment	Teaching and learning	Teachers and other education personnel	Education policy

Diagram produced as part of the Learning Brief, inspired by: UNICEF (n.d.), *Brief on the Social Ecological Model;* Plan International (2022), *Frequently Asked Questions: Gender Transformative Change in Emergencies*, where the six elements of the gender-transformative approach are explained; and the INEE domains.

Figure 2. INEE Minimum Standards and the socio-ecological model

Applying a gender transformative approach in EiEPC also requires interventions that operate across all levels of the **socio-ecological model,**[9] recognising that education does not occur in isolation but is shaped by a complex interplay of factors. Girls', boys' and adolescents' educational opportunities and wellbeing are influenced by the networks of people, structures and systems that surround them, including family, community, sociocultural, economic, political and legal environments. These interconnected influences shape their access to and experiences of education throughout their life course.[10]

A gender transformative approach recognises that learners bring more than just their educational needs – they also contribute skills, assets and resilience in navigating challenges. To create meaningful and lasting change, transformation must go beyond the individual level, actively engaging households, schools, communities, educational administration and infrastructure, and policy frameworks. This ensures that education systems and services not only respond to gender inequalities but actively work to dismantle them, fostering environments where all learners can thrive.[11] Furthermore, it is essential to understand that gender transformative approaches in EiEPC align with and are deeply embedded within the **INEE Minimum Standards domains.** These approaches align with global education quality and equity frameworks, ensuring that all aspects of crisis response, recovery and resilience building actively challenge gender inequalities and power imbalances.

By applying a gender transformative lens to the INEE standards, humanitarian actors can ensure that education interventions do the following:

- **Guarantee safe, inclusive and protective learning environments that address gender-based violence, discrimination and barriers to education.**
- **Ensure equal access, participation and learning outcomes for girls, boys and gender-diverse learners, particularly those facing intersecting vulnerabilities.**
- **Strengthen teacher capacity and curriculum development to challenge harmful gender norms and promote positive masculinities, empowerment and equitable opportunities.**
- **Engage families, communities and local leadership in reshaping gender norms that affect educational access and decision-making.**
- **Influence policy and financing mechanisms to ensure gender transformative education is prioritised in national and international emergency responses.**

SELECTING GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION PRACTICES FOR THE LEARNING BRIEF

Education practices in EiEPC were assessed and categorised into four levels based on their potential to advance gender equality and drive transformative change within education systems and their communities. The classification framework ranges from practices that fail to acknowledge gender dynamics (no potential) to those that actively challenge and reshape harmful gender norms and power structures (high potential).

9 Adapted from UNICEF (2022). *Background Paper Series: UNICEF Gender Policy and Action Plan 2022-2025 – Gender-Transformative Programming,* p.5
10 Source: UNICEF (n.d.). *Brief on the social ecological model*
11 Inspired by: UNICEF (2022). *Background Paper Series: UNICEF Gender Policy and Action Plan 2022-2025 – Gender-Transformative Programming,* p.5; and UNICEF (n.d.). *Brief on the Social Ecological Model*

For this review, only practices classified as having "medium" or "high potential" were selected as these demonstrate concrete progress towards gender transformative programming.

The definitions for each classification level are:[12]



No Potential: education practices that are **"gender unaware",** as they fail to recognise gender-related barriers and exclusion issues that affect access, continuity and quality in education, potentially reinforcing existing inequalities in educational opportunities and outcomes.

Low Potential: education practices that are **"gender neutral",** in that they acknowledge gender-related barriers to access, continuity and quality of education but lack specific design elements to address these barriers and issues, resulting in reinforcing gender inequalities.

Medium Potential: "gender-aware education interventions" identify gender-related barriers to access, continuity and quality of education, and seek to address these barriers to improve education outcomes for diverse groups, particularly women and girls. However, these do not tackle the root causes of these barriers to achieve gender equality. These practices address practical gender and exclusion issues, such as creating safe and inclusive learning spaces, but do not fundamentally challenge systemic inequalities. A medium-potential practice engages with at least four gender domains with medium or high potential and operates at three or more levels of the socio-ecological model (e.g., Girls, Family, School and Community). It aims for a broader but still limited systemic impact.

High Potential: "gender-transformative education interventions" identify gender-related barriers to access, continuity and quality of education while explicitly challenging and changing harmful gender norms and addressing systemic barriers previously identified within education systems. These interventions foster positive change by transforming unequal power relations, promoting equity and inclusion, and ensuring quality education for all learners. They operate across four or more levels of the socio-ecological model (e.g., Individual, Family, Community, School/Learning Environment and System/Institutional), ensuring systemic and sustainable impact. Additionally, they address all five gender transformative domains with medium or high potential, further strengthening their transformative impact.

The rationale for requiring a practice to address at least three gender domains lies in ensuring a robust and meaningful impact across key dimensions of gender equality. Practices that engage multiple domains are more likely to address systemic barriers and foster transformative change. Regarding the socio-ecological model, it is essential to work across multiple levels, as each level influences the others and contributes to social change and transformation. While progress can be achieved by targeting one or two levels, it is unlikely to result in sustained transformation, as long-term impact depends on integrated interventions that address the interconnected dynamics across levels.

12 Inspired by: Plan International (2020). *Introducing the Gender Transformative Marker*

FURTHER RESOURCES ON INTEGRATING GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES IN EIEPC PROGRAMMES

Online courses:

Gender and GBV Risk Mitigation in Education Cluster Coordination and Response

Gender-Responsive EiE Course

UNGEI, Plan International, UNICEF, Transform Education and UN Agencies Gender Transformative Education E-learning Course: Reimagining Education for a More Just and Inclusive World

Documents:

EiE-GenKit

IASC Gender with Age Marker (GAM)

IASC Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action (2024)

IASC Gender Accountability Framework (GAF) Report 2024–2028

ECW PGI self-assessment and quality assurance checklist for MYRPs

ECW Strategic Plan 2023-2026

ECW Policy and Accountability Framework on Disability Inclusion

ECW Gender Implementation Guide

ECW MHPSS Technical Guidance Note

ECW – Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls Policy and Accountability Framework 2023–2026

Guidance Note on the Meaningful Engagement of Local Women's and Girls' Organisations (LWGOs) in ECW-supported Investments

Rapid Gender Analysis Toolkit for Education in Emergencies (pilots conducted in four countries: Mali, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Myanmar) – launching soon

Gender-Transformative Change in Humanitarianism: A View from Inside (White Paper, 2021)

UNICEF Gender Policy and Action Plan 2022–2025 – Gender-Transformative Programming (Background Paper)

Plan International – Gender Transformative Change in Emergencies FAQ (2022)

Plan International – Guidance Note: Gender Transformative Education and Programming (2020)

UNICEF – Gender Transformative Education: Reimagining Education for a More Just and Inclusive World (2022)

Oxfam – Gender Transformative Education Guidance Note (Box Link)

UNPRPD – Inclusive Gender Transformative Approach Guidance Note (Jan 2023)

Transforming Patriarchy: Engaging Men and Boys in Promoting Gender Equity in and through Education | INEE

Building better partnerships | Plan International

Facilitating Partnership Assessments: How to facilitate a partnership assessment process as part of developing new partnerships – Save the Children's Resource Centre

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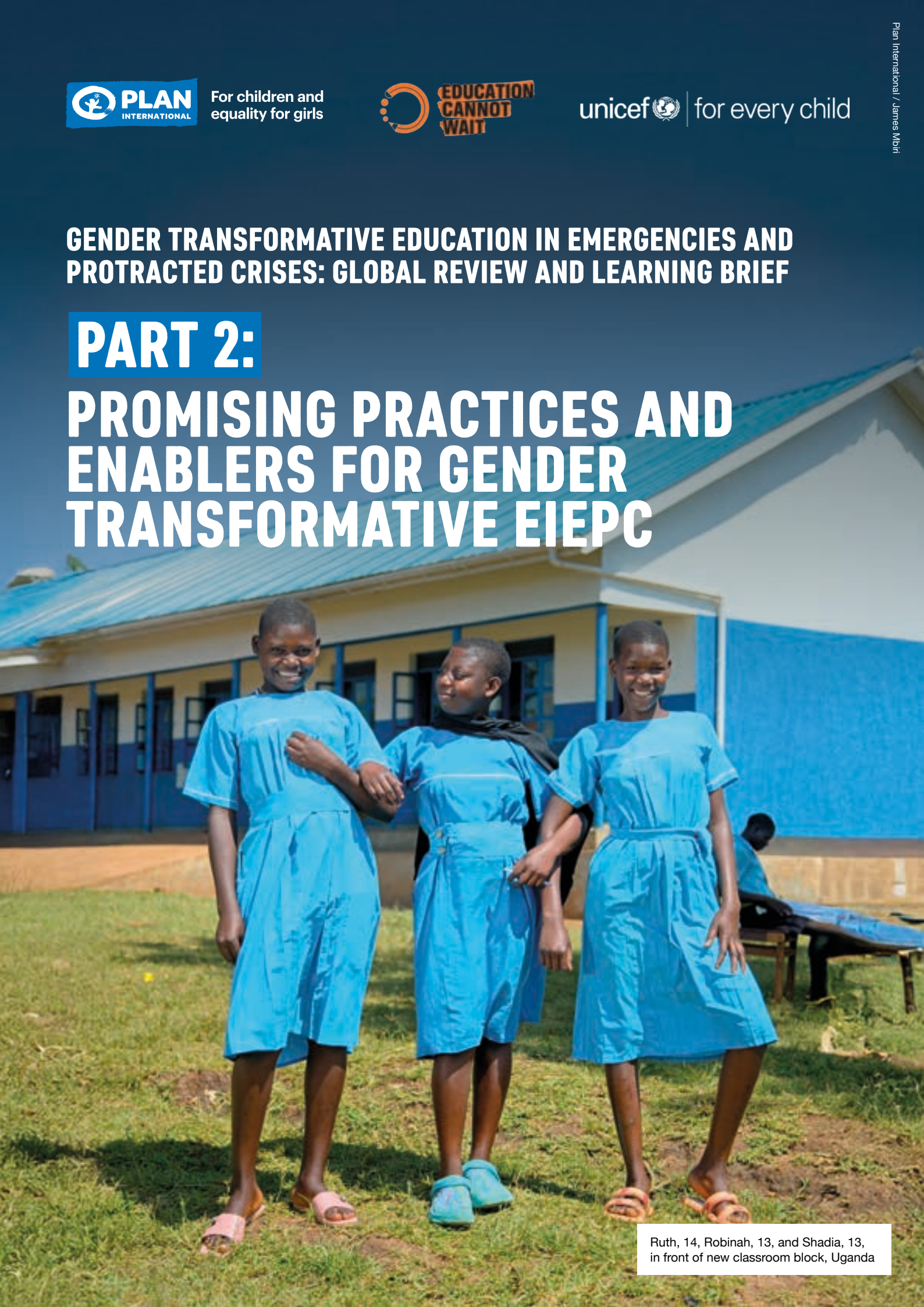
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GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES AND PROTRACTED CRISES: GLOBAL REVIEW AND LEARNING BRIEF

PART 2:

PROMISING PRACTICES AND ENABLERS FOR GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE EIEPC



Ruth, 14, Robinah, 13, and Shadia, 13, in front of new classroom block, Uganda

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CBMCs	Community-based management committees
ECD	Early childhood development
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EiEPC	Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises
GBV	Gender-based violence
GEM	Girls' Education Movement
GLO	Gender lead organisation
GTE	Gender transformative education
INEE	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
LWOs	Local women's organisations
MHH	Menstrual health and hygiene
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
MYRP	Multi-Year Resilience Programme
PGI	Protection, gender and inclusion
SBMCs	School-based management committees
SRGBV	School-related gender-based violence
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

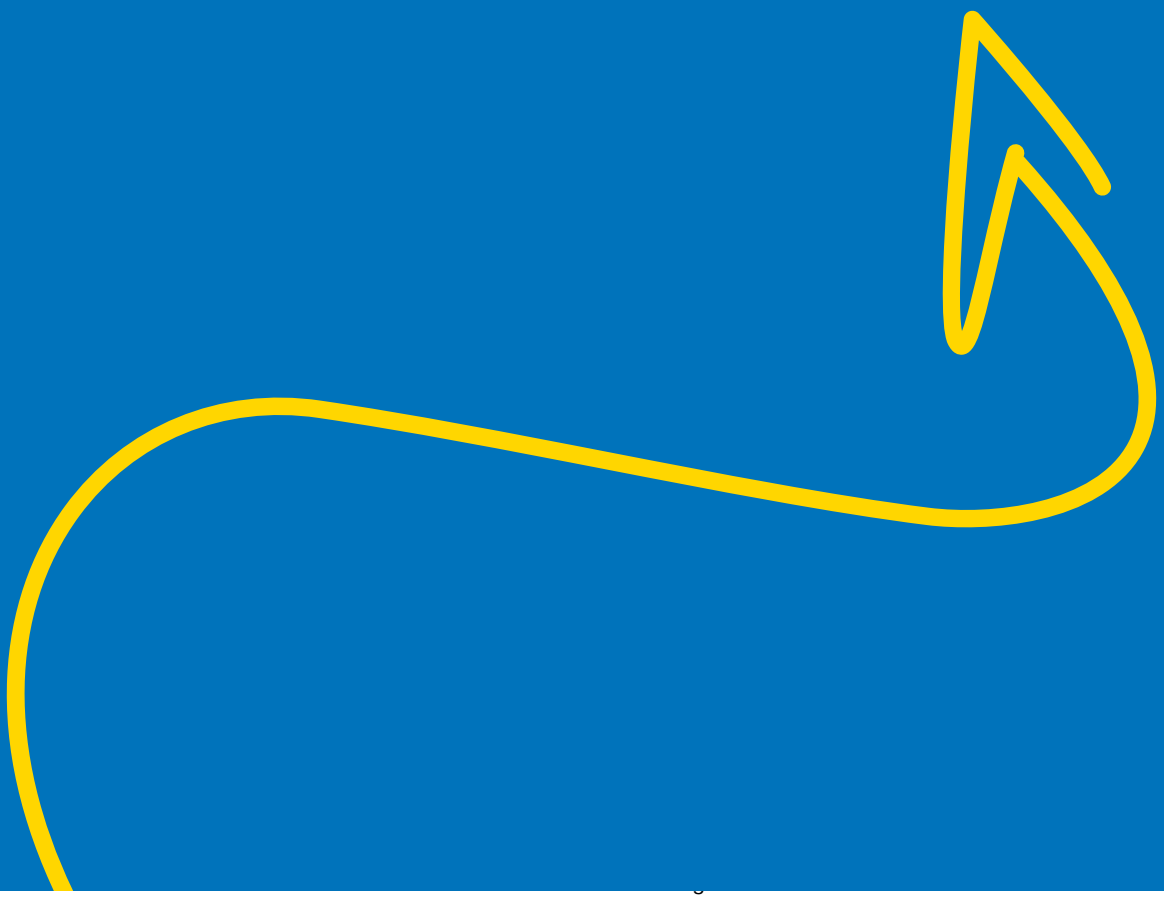
I. INTRODUCTION

This document is Part 2 of the *Gender Transformative Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises: Global Review and Learning Brief,* developed through a global review of promising practices under the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) Gender Acceleration Facility. While Part 1 outlines the conceptual foundations, methodology and rationale for the learning brief, and Part 3 offers strategic recommendations for programme design and implementation, this section presents concrete examples and enabling factors that demonstrate gender transformative potential. It features five case studies from ECW's Multi-Year Resilience Programmes (MYRPs) in Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan and Uganda, alongside a synthesis of key enablers that support the integration of gender transformative education across diverse emergency and protracted crises contexts. Readers may engage with this document independently or as part of the complete Learning Brief package.

Some Education in Emergencies (EiE) programmes have successfully integrated gender transformative principles and domains throughout their design, ensuring that gender equality is central to programme design, implementation and evaluation. Others initially adopted a gender responsive approach that focused on mitigating gender disparities in education access and participation but later evolved to incorporate more promising practices which tackle systemic barriers and gender norms.

II. FIVE KEY PRACTICES WITH GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL

Some Education in Emergencies (EiE) programmes have successfully integrated gender transformative principles and domains throughout their design, ensuring that gender equality is central to programme design, implementation and evaluation. Others initially adopted a gender responsive approach that focused on mitigating gender disparities in education access and participation but later evolved to incorporate more promising practices which tackle systemic barriers and gender norms.





Girls take part in GEMS club meeting at school in Kamuli District

Plan International / James Mbiri

UGANDA:
GEM CLUBS[1]

Overview

In Uganda, deeply ingrained social norms and systemic barriers hinder girls' access to and continuity in education. Child marriage, the undervaluation of girls' education and the expectation that girls prioritise domestic responsibilities over schooling all significantly reduce their opportunities. To address these challenges, the Girls' Education Movement (GEM) Clubs were established under the Education Cannot Wait Multi-Year Resilience Programme II (2023–2025).

"So the entire objective of the GEM Club has been to mobilise children and young people to promote education for girls. It is a girls' movement, but male engagement is very key in terms of boys appreciating and understanding the issues that the girls face."

Uganda MYRP member interview

1 Sources: ECW (2023). *Multi-Year Resilience Programme II: Uganda 2023–2025; ECW (2023). Uganda Annual Joint Narrative Report: 1st January to 31st December 2023;* ECW (2023). Uganda Result Template; and Uganda MYRP team members, interviews, December 2024.

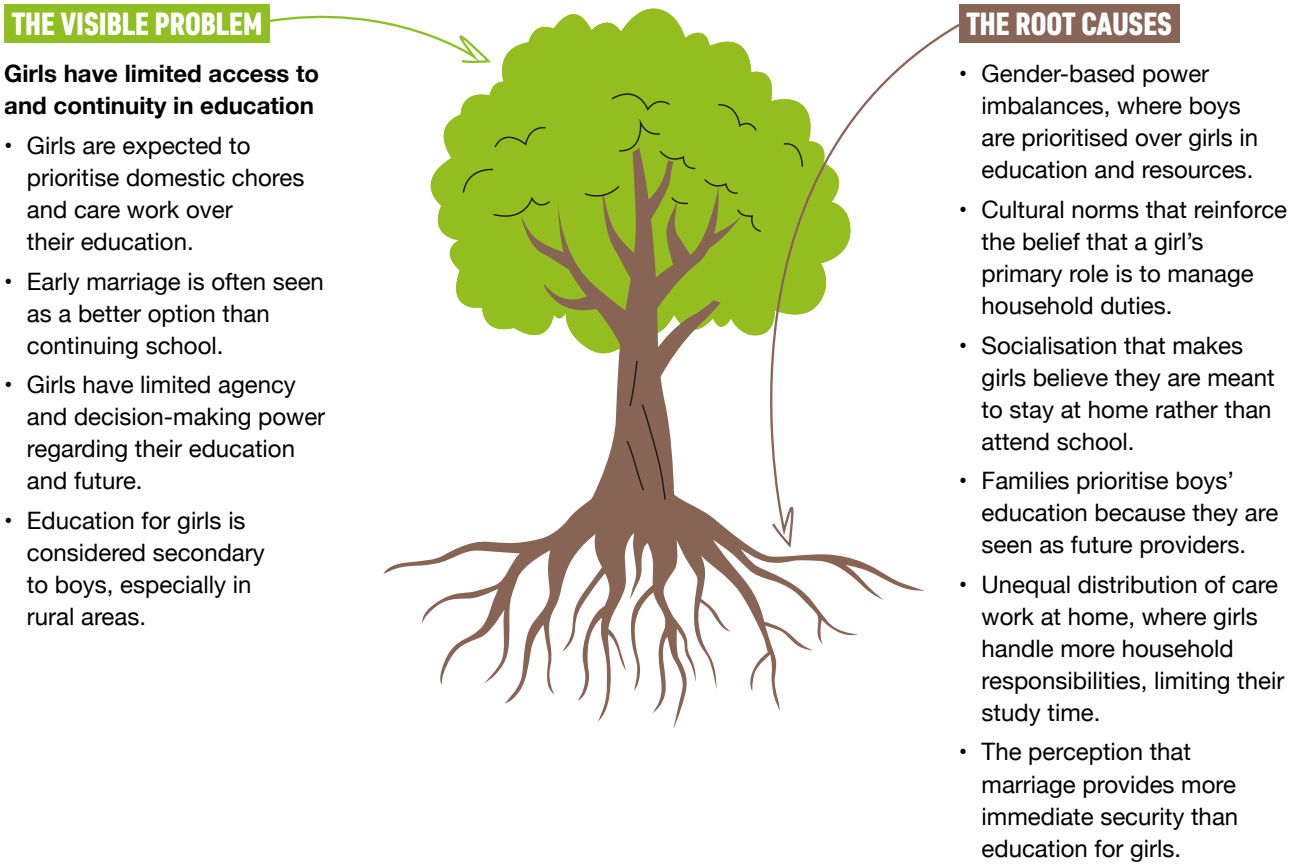


Figure 1. Uganda Problem Tree

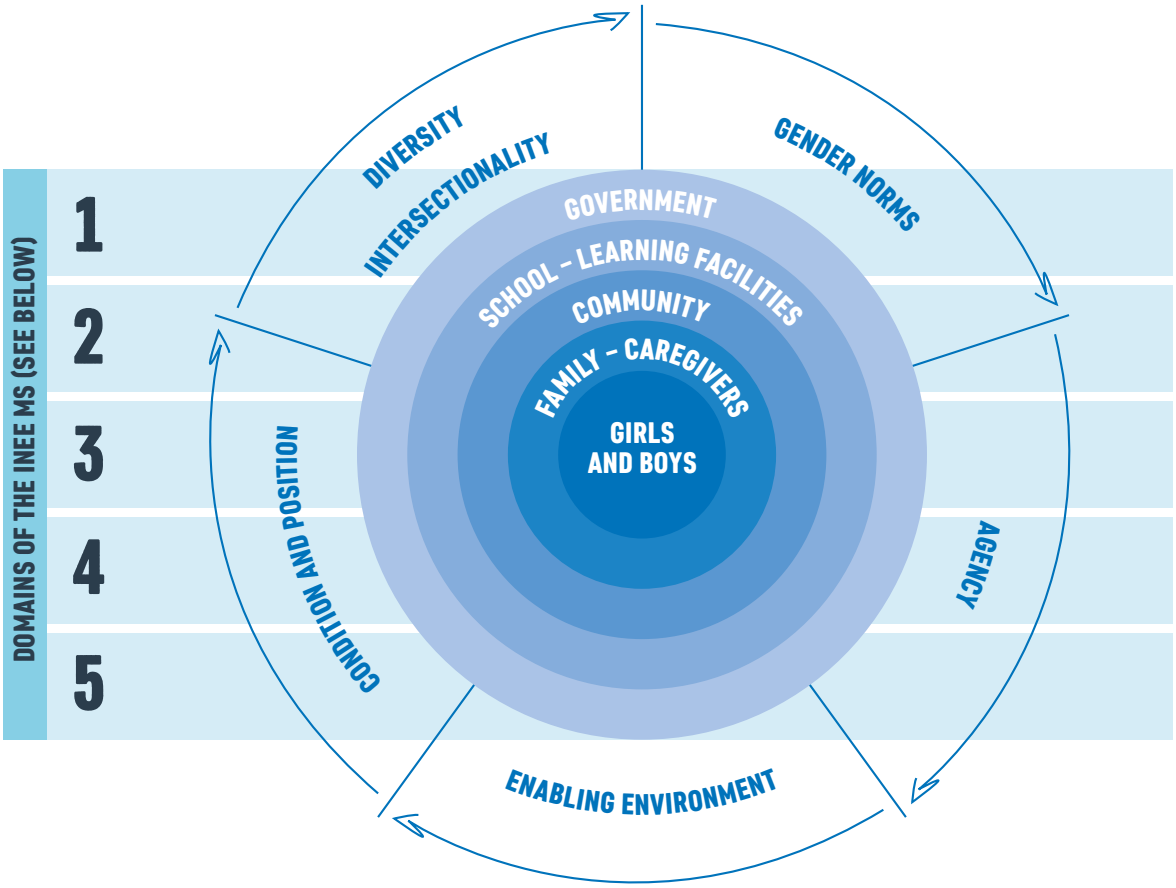
GEM Clubs operate in primary and secondary schools across key refugee-hosting districts of Uganda (Yumbe – Bidibidi, Terego/Madi Okollo – Imvepi, Kyegegwa – Kyaka II, Kikuube – Kyangwali). They engage girls and boys aged 11 to 17 in primary schools and aged 12 to 24 in secondary schools, ensuring that a broad spectrum of learners benefit from the initiative.

Learners participate in structured extracurricular activities within schools, guided by an 11-topic curriculum, covering assertive communication, menstrual hygiene management, life skills, gender equality and preventing school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), among other things.

By embedding GEM Clubs within schools, teachers serve as trained mentors (patrons), receiving training to effectively lead club activities and integrate gender equality principles into daily school practices. Communities and parents play a vital role in supporting these efforts through awareness campaigns and engagement sessions, fostering shared responsibilities at home for girls' education. While GEM Clubs do not directly engage policy makers, they influence policy by identifying and documenting key issues affecting girls' education, feeding into district education forums and coordination meetings to advocate for systemic change.

GEM Clubs' potential to drive gender transformative EiEPC

GEM Clubs are a powerful tool for breaking down gender-related barriers to education. By working across different levels – students, families, schools and policy spaces – the programme ensures that change is not only personal but also systemic. The strategy aims to transform gender inequalities by tackling their root causes, ultimately promoting access, retention and quality education, particularly for girls. This is achieved through a holistic, multi-layered approach grounded in the five **Gender Domains,** which are applied through actions aligned with various INEE Minimum Standards, ensuring that all aspects of gender transformative programming are addressed in a sustainable way.



DOMAIN 1	DOMAIN 2	DOMAIN 3	DOMAIN 4	DOMAIN 5
Standard 1: Participation Standard 2: Resources Standard 3: Coordination	Standard 8: Equal and equitable access Standard 9: Protection and wellbeing Standard 10: Facilities and services	Standard 11: Curricula Standard 12: Teaching and learning processes Standard 14: Training, professional development, and support	Standard 17: Support and supervision	Standard 18: Law and policy formulation

Figure 2. INEE Minimum Standards and the socio-ecological model

Strengthening girls' agency and engaging boys as allies

GEM Clubs create a platform where girls and boys actively engage in discussions about gender equality and harmful social norms, and develop leadership and advocacy skills. Girls are at the centre, strengthening their agency through training in assertive communication, decision-making and self-confidence. This empowers them to challenge the barriers that limit their education, such as early marriage, SRGBV and restrictive gender norms.

> **"And as one of our gender transformative approaches, male engagement is one of the elements of gender transformation. So, in whatever we do, we endeavour to engage the boys to be able to appreciate and also join in addressing the barriers that the girls face, creating a safe environment for the girls to be able to enrol, complete their education, and attain their full potential."**
>
> *Uganda MYRP member interview*

Club activities are guided by a structured curriculum designed to be relevant to the realities of learners. The curriculum was developed by adapting content from Plan International's Champions for Change[2] approach and other gender transformative education models. However, the GEM Clubs carefully contextualised the material to make it child-friendly and appropriate for school-aged learners.

At the same time, boys are engaged as allies in promoting girls' education and in challenging harmful social norms. Male engagement is key; boys take an active role in mobilising their peers, advocating for girls' right to education, and helping to shift school and community perceptions.

The clubs are also inclusive, ensuring that girls and boys with disabilities are part of the movement. Efforts have been made to accommodate learners with disabilities, including the provision of sign language interpreters and visual learning materials. However, some challenges remain in ensuring full accessibility for students with hearing and visual impairments, requiring ongoing support and adaptation of resources.

Parents and communities are key to enabling environments for gender equality

GEM Clubs recognise that overcoming gender-related barriers to education requires a holistic approach; home and community attitudes play a crucial role in determining whether girls stay in school. Through parenting sessions, community dialogues and back-to-school campaigns, caregivers are encouraged to shift harmful gender norms and take shared responsibility for their children's education.

> **"Most times, the GEM Club members – both boys and girls – are in school, and their first target is the learners who are at school, to spread the message of how to mobilise girls to come to school. Then, although not directly one of the activities, GEM Club members engage in back-to-school campaigns. They get to the community with the help of their patrons and talk to their peers, then extend this message to their parents, encouraging them to take responsibility for supporting their children to get to school and promoting balanced household chores."**
>
> *Uganda MYRP member interview*

2 Champions of Change is a Plan International programme active in 41 countries, aimed at promoting gender equality through youth engagement. It seeks to empower girls and engage boys in identifying and challenging harmful masculinities that perpetuate discrimination and inequality. For more information, visit https://plan-international.org/youth-empowerment/champions-of-change/

A key issue tackled is the imbalance of household responsibilities, where girls are often burdened with domestic chores while boys are prioritised for school. Many parents prefer to send their daughters to afternoon school shifts so that they can complete household chores in the morning. GEM Clubs have worked to raise awareness among families, encouraging a more equitable distribution of responsibilities to enable girls to attend school on time and perform better academically.

By encouraging families to distribute household responsibilities equitably, GEM Clubs contribute to an enabling environment whereby girls' education is valued equally to that of boys. Community awareness campaigns also challenge cultural norms that favour boys' education over girls', fostering long-term attitudinal change.

Transforming schools and teachers: institutionalising gender equality

Teachers are critical change agents in gender transformative programming. As trained club mentors, they integrate gender transformative practices into GEM Clubs and everyday school activities, helping to challenge gender stereotypes and ensure that both girls and boys participate equally.

Each GEM Club is led by one male and one female teacher, selected based on their interest and ability to engage students. Teachers undergo training sessions where they learn how to facilitate discussions on gender equality, menstrual hygiene management and assertive communication. They also receive ongoing support through follow-up visits and review meetings, although logistical challenges sometimes limit these gatherings.

Teachers also encourage girls to take leadership roles within clubs, helping to shift perceptions about their capabilities and future potential. With headteachers and school leadership as allies, schools provide a safe space for gender equality advocacy, embedding these principles into extracurricular activities and peer-led learning initiatives led by GEM members. To ensure inclusive learning, GEM Clubs have accommodated students with disabilities, such as through use of sign language interpreters and tailored visual materials.

Elevating girls' voices to influence policy and systemic change

Although GEM Clubs do not directly engage with policy makers, their impact is felt at the policy level. Learners and teachers document key challenges affecting girls' education, such as child marriage, adolescent pregnancy and gender-based violence, and present these at district education forums and coordination meetings. This helps to amplify local voices and push for policy reforms that address structural gender inequalities. Beyond these grassroots efforts, the programme also actively engages in direct advocacy with policy makers, influencing policy discussions and decision-making processes to ensure systemic change.



Resources and tools

- UNESCO – Summary of the Best Practice – GEM clubs
- Girls-led education movement drives school re-enrolment efforts | Plan International Uganda

Early impact[3] of GEM Clubs

Although GEM Clubs were still in implementation at the time of writing this Learning Brief, their contributions to increasing school attendance, shifting gender norms and strengthening girls' leadership could already be seen. Early outcomes include:

- **Stronger male allyship:** boys play a key role in advocating for girls' education, helping to reshape community attitudes.

- **Strengthening girls' agency:** GEM Clubs have empowered girls by building their confidence, leadership skills and decision-making abilities. This has had a direct impact on their access to and continuity in education, including for those who are pregnant or young mothers. This result has been achieved thanks to the systematic approach embedded within the results framework. That framework was designed not only to directly address the needs of girls and adolescents through outputs such as Output 1.6 Access to education for girls expanded by addressing barriers to enrolment, and Output 2.5 Providing enhanced opportunities for supporting students' learning,[4] but also by integrating multiple outputs aimed at creating an enabling environment to foster these changes. Importantly, these outputs were costed during the design phase and included earmarked funding for gender-targeted interventions, in line with ECW's commitment to allocate approximately 25 per cent of MYRP funding to gender priorities.

  > **"We really feel we have contributed to building the agency of the girls, and then we really see their active participation and challenging the barriers to education, and then we see them take up the roles, a position within the school, their leadership […] We are seeing how the clubs are really influencing through the assemblies, parents are really happy. We see the girls' agency being improved nowadays when we have meetings, the girls come out, and they are really able to articulate the issues that are affecting them in terms of education."**
  >
  > *Uganda MYRP member interview*

- **Community support and shifting gender attitudes and practices:** Caregivers and parents are increasingly involved, rebalancing household chores and prioritising education for girls. This progress has been facilitated by the integration of Output 3.1 Community-level engagement strengthened to support sustainability and accountability. The intervention was costed and included in the MYRP design with earmarked gender funding, which was a critical enabler for implementation.

3 The MYRP began its implementation in Uganda in 2023. At the time of interviews and secondary source reviews, no impact evaluation had been conducted because the implementation process was ongoing. Therefore, the results presented are preliminary and reflect the progress made so far, based on the perceptions of the interviewees.

4 The numbered outputs are among the outputs for this particular programme.

- **Teachers as change agents:** Club mentors facilitate learning and advocacy, ensuring that gender equality efforts are sustained within schools. This preliminary result has been made possible due to the programme's initial integration of two specific outputs related to supporting teachers – Output 2.2 on continuous professional development and Output 2.3 on teaching and learning materials – both of which were costed in the MYRP budget with specific funding earmarked for gender transformative work.

- **Policy impact and systemic change:** The programme contributed to the review of Uganda's policy on ending child and adolescent pregnancy by providing data, assessments and strategies to challenge harmful norms. Additionally, MYRP partners developed a policy paper addressing teenage pregnancy and child marriage, which was presented to district officials and policy makers for review, helping to shape systemic responses to gender-based barriers in education. One of the factors influencing the development of activities leading to this progress is the integration of Output 3.4 Policy and regulations advocacy within the results framework. Although this output did not have a specific budget allocation, the progress has been made possible thanks to the capacity of partner organisations and the utilisation of their own resources.

Despite these gains, deeply entrenched social norms, economic barriers and sustainability challenges remain. Continued investment in GEM Clubs is critical to sustain and scale these gains and to ensure that education practices with the potential to drive gender transformative programming reach more communities, fostering long-term systemic change. However, the GEM Club model is a scalable and adaptable strategy, offering a practical blueprint for integrating gender transformative approaches in education in emergencies.



GEM club members visit girls who are out of school

Plan International / James Mbiri



Nuria writes on whiteboard at community-based learning centre

Plan International

BANGLADESH: EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IN COX'S BAZAR[5]

Overview

In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, deeply rooted gender norms create significant barriers to girls' education from early childhood, particularly in the Rohingya refugee camps. To address these challenges, an Early Childhood Development (ECD) initiative was integrated into the Bangladesh MYRP (2022–2024), that focused on tackling harmful gender norms and fostering equitable learning environments from the early years. In this context, ECD is delivered through non-formal, community-based learning centres, which provide structured early learning opportunities outside the formal education system.

> **"In Rohingya, we have to target the root cause [of gender inequality]. If we do not introduce these things to early-age learners, as adolescents, they will have already adopted all the bad practices of society. But if we could address this at an early age with the children and their parents, it would be easier to change those harmful norms."**
>
> Bangladesh MYRP member interview

5 Sources: Bangladesh MYRP team members, interviews, December 2024; ECW and Cox's Bazar Education Sector (2022). *ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) Bangladesh 2022–2024; ECW (2023). Bangladesh Annual Joint Narrative Report: 1st January to 31st December 2023; ECW (2024). Bangladesh Quarterly Reporting – Joint Narrative Report: April 2024 to June 2024.*

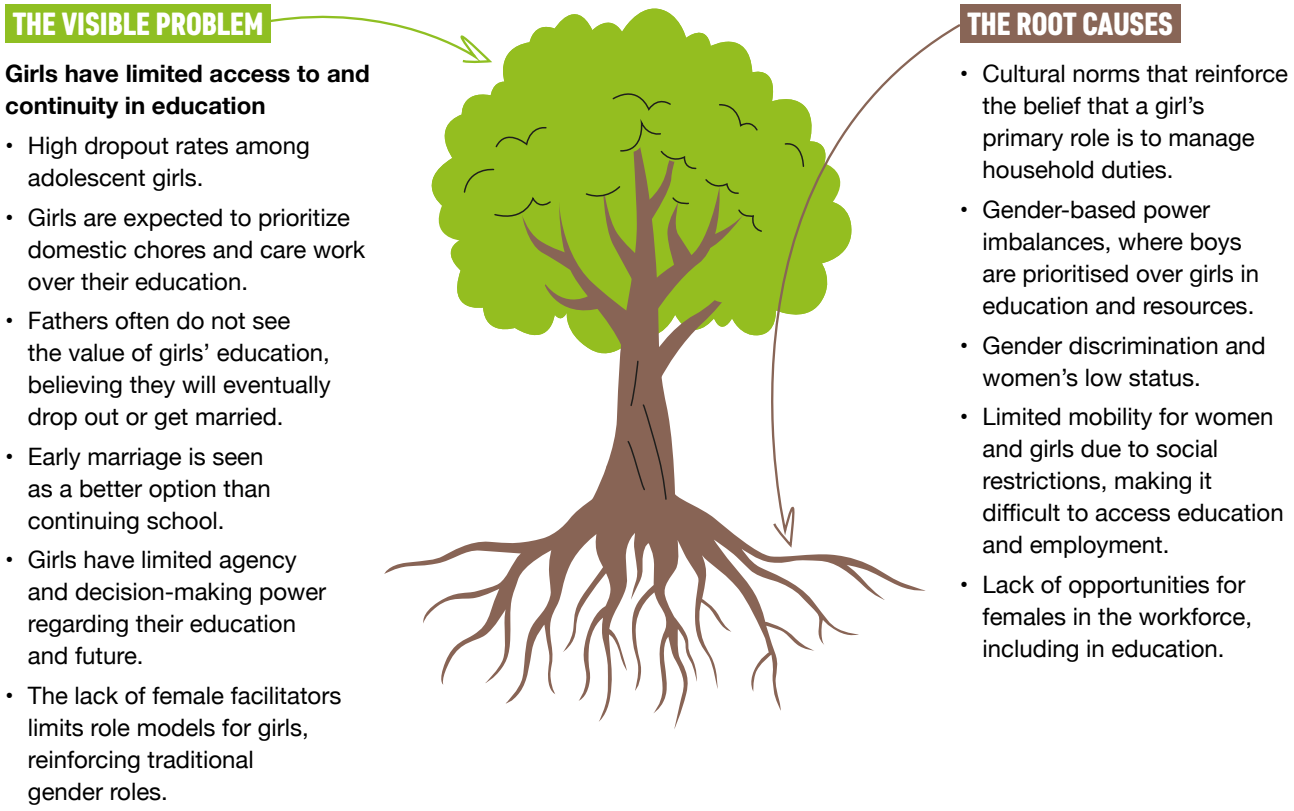


Figure 3. Bangladesh Problem Tree

The MYRP programme aims to support girls, address gender bias and promote gender equality. The ECD initiative within the MYRP does so through training facilitators to create inclusive classroom environments for girls and boys aged 3 to 5, engaging caregivers and communities through Community Support Groups (CSGs), and involving fathers and male community members through the Fathers' Café initiative.

The majority of facilitators are women recruited and trained through comprehensive programmes tailored to the camp context. Additionally, technical specialists provide ongoing one-on-one coaching sessions to ensure continuous professional development. Facilitators deliver a pedagogy with a gender transformative focus in community-based learning centres, which are temporary learning spaces set up in shelters provided by facilitators or community members within the refugee camps, and which follow humanitarian standards to ensure safety, accessibility and a conducive learning environment. Children attend sessions for up to two hours daily. The pedagogy used within these learning centres follows a structured, interactive approach that encourages children to engage through storytelling, play and movement-based activities.

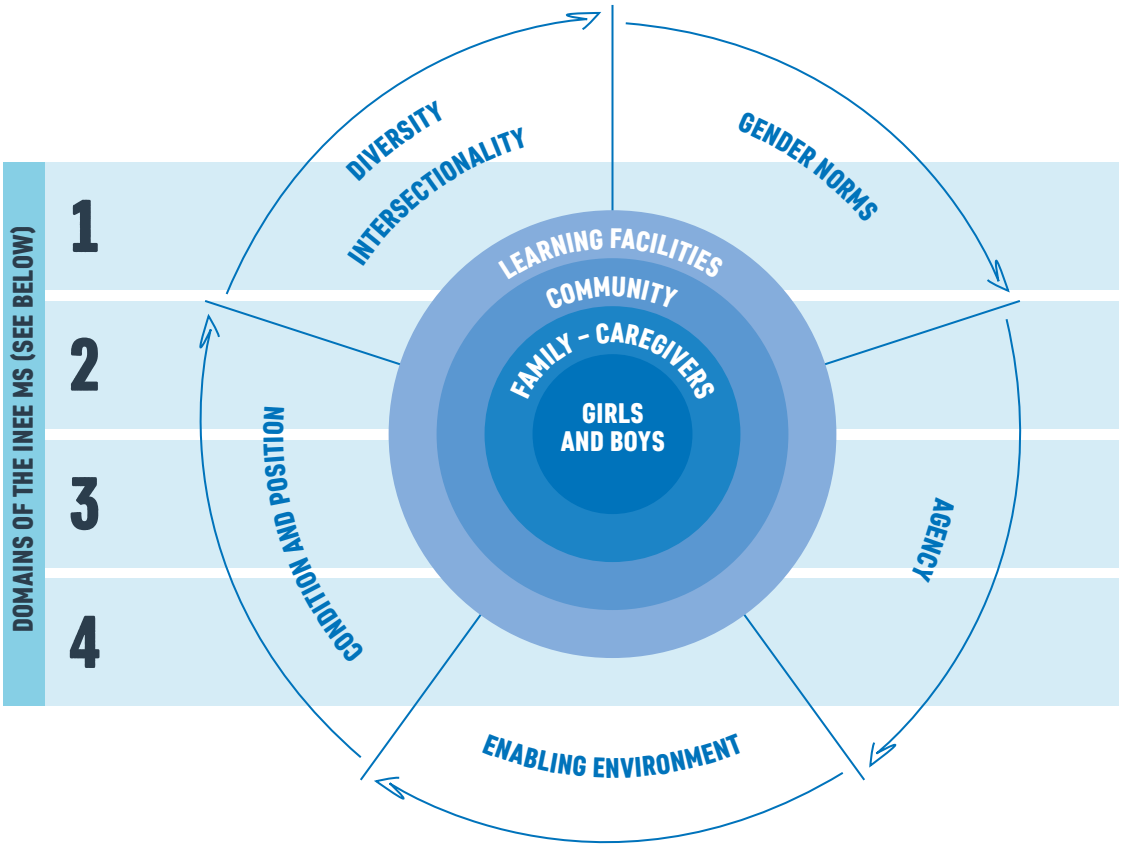
The initiative takes a holistic approach by integrating with the nutrition, health and protection sectors to support children's physical, social and emotional wellbeing.

Furthermore, families, caregivers and communities actively participate in awareness-raising sessions delivered through a structured 12-session curriculum. Particular emphasis is placed on engaging fathers and male community members through the Fathers' Café initiative, where they attend monthly sensitisation sessions with groups of 25 participants and follow a 16-session curriculum on key topics such as childcare and development, shared household responsibilities and promoting fathers as role models and advocates for gender equality.

The ECD initiative's potential to drive gender transformative EiEPC

Early childhood is a critical phase of human development, when cognitive, social and emotional skills are shaped that will influence lifelong educational achievement and wellbeing. Gender inequalities during this period can have long-term effects, limiting girls' opportunities from the start. Unequal access to nutrition, play and early learning reinforces traditional gender roles, preparing boys as future providers and girls as caregivers.

By addressing these disparities early, the ECD strategy seeks to break cycles of discrimination and foster gender equity from the start by reaching the youngest learners and addressing inequality from an early age (3 to 5 years), laying a strong foundation for inclusive and equitable education and opportunities.



DOMAIN 1	DOMAIN 2	DOMAIN 3	DOMAIN 4
Standard 1: Participation Standard 2: Resources Standard 3: Coordination Standard 5: Response strategies Standard 6: Monitoring	Standard 8: Equal and equitable access Standard 9: Protection and wellbeing Standard 10: Facilities and services	Standard 11: Curricula Standard 12: Teaching and learning processes Standard 13: Assessment of holistic learning outcomes Standard 14: Training, professional development, and support	Standard 15: Recruitment and selection Standard 16: Conditions of work Standard 17: Support and supervision

Figure 4. INEE Minimum Standards and the socio-ecological model

Facilitators use a child-centred approach, ensuring that girls and boys have equal opportunities to explore learning materials, engage in creative expression and develop foundational skills that will support their transition to further education. By integrating teaching methods that incorporate a gender transformative approach, children experience a learning environment that challenges traditional expectations, addresses the root causes of gender inequalities and promotes collaboration across genders.

To ensure a sustainable and harm-free transformation, the strategy extends beyond children to actively engage key stakeholders: families, caregivers, communities and facilitators, who play a vital role in shaping gender norms and educational outcomes, particularly for girls.

This is achieved through a structured approach based on the five **Gender Domains** that are applied through actions aligned with various INEE Minimum Standards.

Girls and boys: challenging gender norms from early childhood

The ECD initiative strengthens girls' agency by challenging traditional gender roles through play-based learning, storytelling and interactive activities, delivered through non-formal education that provides structured early learning opportunities. These activities reinforce girls' sense of self-worth and equality with boys. Girls develop confidence, leadership skills and an understanding of their rights. In the classrooms, facilitators encourage both boys and girls to participate in non-traditional gender roles, fostering an inclusive learning environment where equitable behaviours are reinforced from an early age. For instance, boys are introduced to activities that challenge gender stereotypes, promoting shared responsibilities and mutual respect.

Strengthening facilitators by training educators

The strategy places community-based learning facilities (CBLF) at the core of its implementation, operating as non-formal education spaces that serve as safe environments where trained facilitators create inclusive classrooms, model equitable behaviour and challenge stereotypes.

> **"We are trying to mainstream this process so that females could participate in the learning facilitation process. Females could also be learning members and participate in the decision-making process in the community, the learning centres, the Community Education Support Group, and the family. So this is how we are trying to change those harmful norms through these initiatives."**
>
> *Bangladesh MYRP member interview*

Facilitators are trained in gender responsive pedagogy. However, the programme goes beyond merely addressing immediate disparities, and aims to challenge and change the root causes of gender inequality by integrating transformative elements into training sessions. This approach encourages facilitators to actively reflect on and address deeper gender issues, ensuring that both boys and girls feel equally valued in learning environments that focus on inclusive behaviours, challenging stereotypes and creating safe spaces for learning and participation.

With an emphasis on female facilitator recruitment, the programme also works to shift community perceptions about women's roles in education by positioning CBLFs as central hubs for gender transformative programming, where facilitators actively engage girls and boys, caregivers and community members in discussions on gender equality.

Engaging families and communities to shift household and social norms

To create a lasting impact, the initiative extends beyond the classroom, engaging caregivers and communities in gender equality dialogues where gender norms are challenged. Community Support Groups (CSG) hold regular discussions to challenge harmful gender norms and advocate for girls' education, ensuring an equitable environment for all. This is achieved through a 12-session curriculum, which provides structured engagement and learning opportunities to address gender disparities at the household and community levels.

> **"We develop our parenting session and parenting awareness modelling accordingly to address all the gender-related errors and gender transformation-related things in their sessions. Implementing partners are doing their role to address these specific things in their regular meetings and sessions so that they can show their awareness to their little kids [...] and use it in their daily life habits. So, if parents treat girls and boys equally, it would be very good for those learners."**
>
> *Bangladesh MYRP member interview*

Recognising that men play a crucial role in perpetuating gender inequalities and hindering girls' right to education, the strategy incorporates the Fathers' Café initiative, which plays a key role in shifting patriarchal perspectives by encouraging men to recognise the importance of supporting their daughters' education and girls' education by reducing the caregiving burden on women and girls. By fostering an enabling environment, these efforts contribute to long-term shifts in attitudes and behaviours within families and communities, promoting sustained gender equality.



Resources and tools

- Transforming the role of fathers in early childhood development

Early impact of the ECD initiative[6]

Although a formal evaluation of the initiative's impact is not available at the time of writing this report, the ECD initiative in Cox's Bazar has demonstrated promising early outcomes:

- **Increased girls' participation:** By June 2024, 2,267 girls (out of 4,294 total learners) were enrolled in ECD and Functional Literacy and Numeracy programmes, indicating a significant rise in girls' educational engagement. This increase has been facilitated through Outcome 1 Access: Improved access to learning opportunities in a safe and protective environment for girls and boys, which was costed in the MYRP budget with earmarked funding for gender-targeted interventions.

6 The early outcomes presented are based on partial progress information drawn from available reports, as well as from the analysis of interviews conducted. These results are preliminary and reflect the perceptions of the interviewees regarding the progress made to date.

- **Empowerment of female facilitators:** Of 607 facilitators recruited by the programme, 66 per cent are women, providing positive role models for girls and challenging traditional gender roles within the community and education system. This achievement has been made possible through the integration of Output 1.3 An increased pool of qualified teachers, supported by a budget allocation of $1,378,969 and of Output 3.1 Teaching competencies (including remote/COVID-safe and inclusive training options) improved. Both were costed during the programme design phase, with dedicated gender-targeted funding aligned with ECW's commitment.

> **"I think it has already created some impact. Men are actually supporting their wives for the household course, and they are actually coming to the centre and supporting the learner."**
>
> Bangladesh MYRP member interview

- **Community attitude shifts:** Initiatives like the Fathers' Café have led to increased paternal involvement in childcare and education, contributing to a more supportive environment for girls' learning. This positive change has been facilitated through the integration of Output 1.4 Community-level planning, sensitisation and involvement to promote return to school (post COVID-19) and continuity of access, and Output 2.1 Teachers, communities and key stakeholders have increased capacity and awareness on gender equity, inclusion and child protection and safeguarding. Both were included in the MYRP budget with earmarked gender funding.

- **Gender transformative teaching practices:** Facilitators are actively challenging gender stereotypes through classroom activities, fostering an inclusive learning atmosphere. This progress has been achieved through the integration of Output 2.1; Output 2.3 Teaching and learning materials/curriculum and pedagogy practices are gender responsive and inclusive; and Output 3.1. These outputs were costed and resourced with gender-targeted allocations as part of the MYRP design.

- **Enhanced caregiver engagement:** Regular CSG sessions have led to sustained awareness and shifts in attitudes among families, promoting gender equality in education.

Despite these positive developments, challenges persist, including deeply entrenched cultural norms that limit women's participation as facilitators, and resource constraints affecting the scalability and sustainability of facilitator training. Continued investment, especially in the exact locations and with the same communities, and multi-sectoral collaboration are essential to continue driving gender transformative programming. Notwithstanding the challenges, the Bangladesh ECD initiative offers a scalable and impactful model for promising practices of gender transformative education in emergency settings.

> **"We are changing the things, changing the context, changing their thinking, their beliefs. We must work for gender transformation; we need more work. It is remarkably changing, and we must continue this type of intervention in this context."**
>
> Bangladesh MYRP member interview



Ria, 17, and Shifla, 15, in front of the new school wash block

Plan International

PAKISTAN:
MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY THROUGH THE EDUCATION CHAMPIONS AND SISTER-TO-SISTER MODE[7]

7 Sources: ECW (2023). *ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) Pakistan 2022–2024;* ECW (2023). *Pakistan Annual Joint Narrative Report: March 2022 – 31 December 2023;* and Pakistan MYRP team members, interviews, December 2024

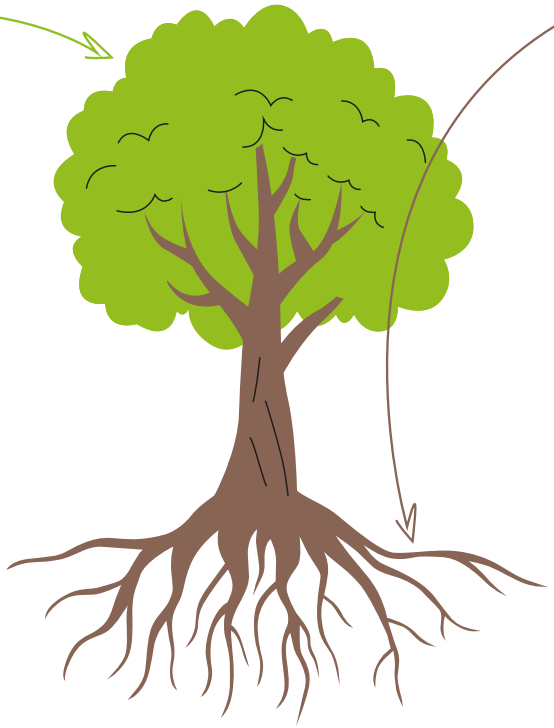
Overview

In Pakistan, girls face persistent barriers to accessing and continuing education, particularly in rural and marginalised communities. Social norms, security concerns and inadequate school facilities often force girls to drop out, especially after puberty. To address these challenges, the ECW MYRP (2022–2024) was implemented in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, focusing on inclusive and equitable education for marginalised boys, girls and refugee populations.

The Menstrual Hygiene Management strategy (MHM) stands out as a key intervention with significant potential for driving gender transformative programming.

THE VISIBLE PROBLEM

- Girls face significant barriers to education, as they are often expected to prioritise caregiving and household duties over schooling.
- Many families see investing in girls' education as futile, anticipating their early marriage and relocation.
- Security concerns and mobility restrictions further limit their access to school.
- Menstruation remains a major challenge, with taboos preventing open discussions, leaving girls unprepared and increasing dropout rates.
- Limited access to sanitary products forces many to rely on unhygienic materials, leading to health risks and absenteeism.
- In conservative regions, concerns over harassment and family honour discourage education post-puberty.



THE ROOT CAUSES

- Deeply ingrained gender norms that prioritise boys' education over girls', reinforcing cycles of inequality.
- Economic constraints lead families to invest in sons' education while keeping daughters at home.
- Security risks and mobility restrictions make school attendance unsafe for girls, particularly in conflict-prone regions.
- Lack of gender responsive school infrastructure, including inadequate toilets, lack of water, and unsafe sanitation spaces, discourages girls from attending school, especially post-puberty.
- Cultural stigma surrounding menstruation prevents girls from receiving proper information, fostering fear, misinformation, and school absenteeism.
- Misinformation and myths about menstrual hygiene contribute to poor health, discomfort, and low self-esteem among adolescent girls.
- Social expectations limiting girls' autonomy, encouraging early marriage over education.

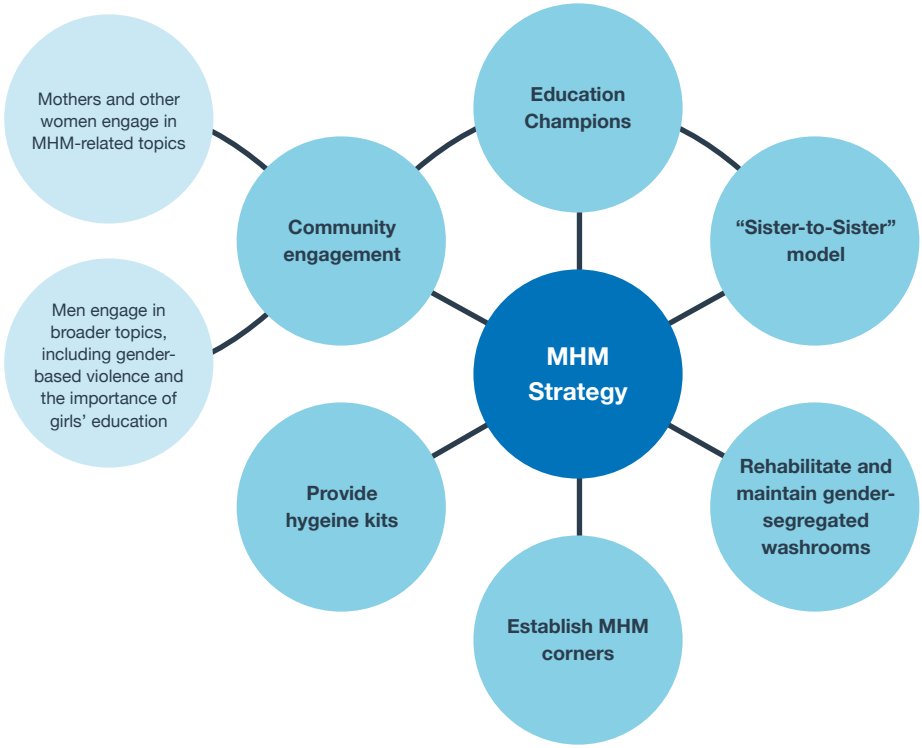
Figure 5. Pakistan Problem Tree

The MHM strategy is implemented through Education Champions – trained local women responsible for running community-based catch-up learning centres, where they serve as educators. In addition to their teaching role, they facilitate activities for girls and boys and engage with community members to promote gender equality and menstrual health awareness.

Community-based catch-up learning centres are safe and flexible learning spaces that operate in informal learning spaces established within Education Champions' homes or other community members' spaces. The community and partner organisations validate these centres to ensure they are safe, accessible and secure for girls and boys. Partner organisations also continuously monitor the process within the communities to ensure the effectiveness and safety of these initiatives. The centres primarily serve out-of-school children, helping them catch up on missed education before transitioning into formal schools. This model provides flexibility and allows for innovative approaches, such as the MHM strategy, to be implemented in a culturally sensitive and locally relevant manner.

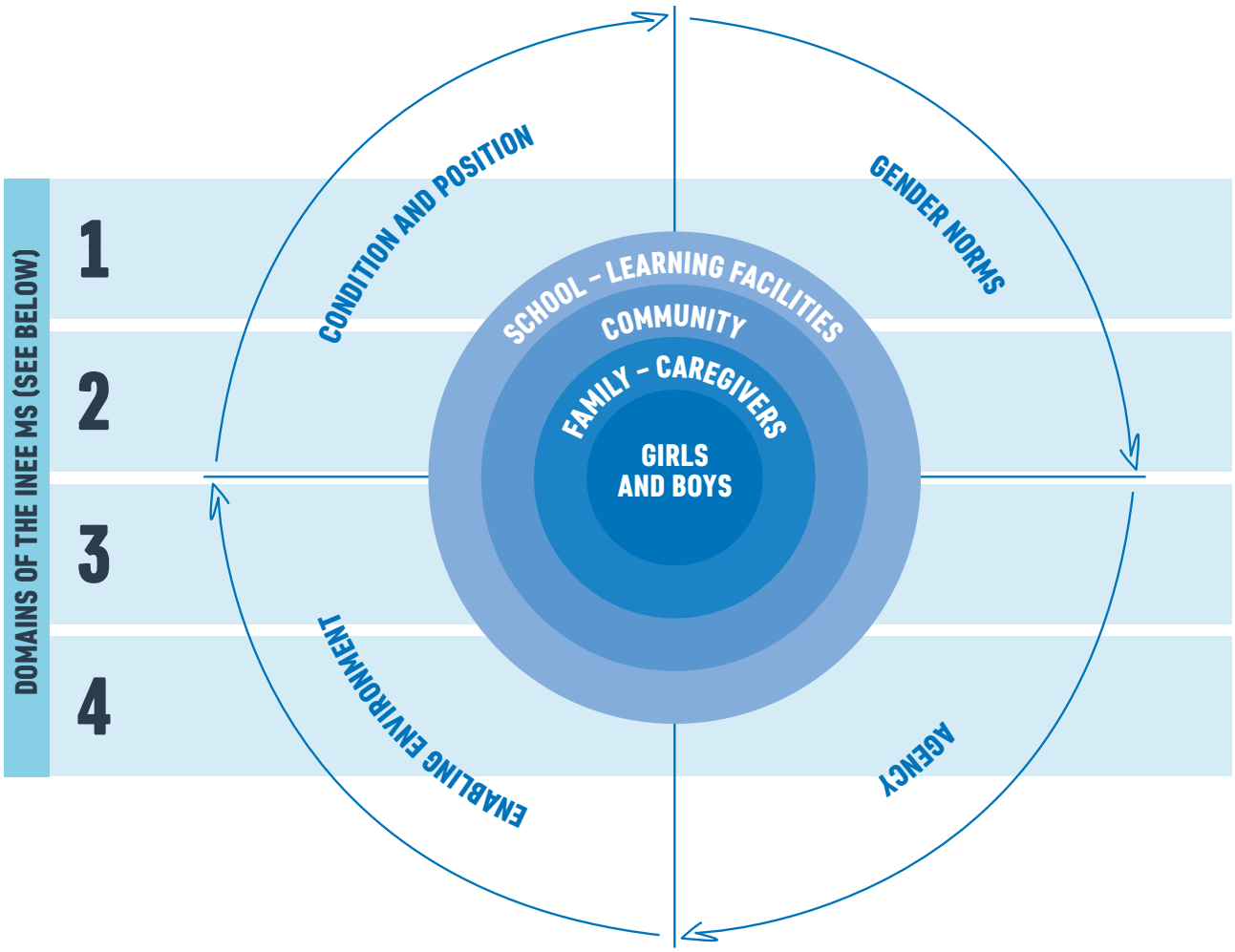
As part of the MHM strategy, Education Champions implement the Sister-to-Sister Model,[8] a peer mentoring approach in which they guide younger girls ("Little Sisters") on menstrual hygiene management and personal development. Beyond mentorship, they also engage with mothers and female community members to foster open discussions on menstruation and gender norms, further strengthening community support for girls' education. While much of their community engagement focuses on women, Education Champions also involve men by addressing broader gender equality issues, such as the importance of girls' education and the role of fathers in creating safe spaces. However, due to cultural sensitivities, MHM-specific topics are not discussed with male community members.

Key components of the MHM Strategy



8 The Sister-to-Sister Model was developed by VSO and implemented in Nepal. For more details, see: https://www.vsointernational.org/sites/default/files/vso-summary-sisters-for-sisters.pdf and https://www.vsointernational.org/our-work/inclusive-education/system-strengthening/sisters-for-sisters. VSO in Pakistan adapted the model for the MYRP.

To complement these efforts, the programme integrates practical interventions, such as distributing hygiene kits, establishing MHM corners, and rehabilitating gender-segregated washrooms, to ensure that girls have access to essential hygiene resources and safe sanitation facilities. The following sections explore each of these components in detail.



DOMAIN 1	DOMAIN 2	DOMAIN 3	DOMAIN 4
Standard 2: Resources Standard 5: Response strategies Standard 6: Monitoring	Standard 8: Equal and equitable access Standard 9: Protection and wellbeing Standard 10: Facilities and services	Standard 14: Training, professional development, and support	Standard 15: Recruitment and selection Standard 16: Conditions of work

Figure 6. INEE Minimum Standards and the socio-ecological model

The MHM strategy's potential to drive gender transformative EiEPC

The MHM strategy has the potential to drive gender transformative programming because it actively challenges harmful social norms and systemic barriers that limit girls' education. By addressing the intersection of menstruation, gender inequality and education, the strategy implements various actions aligned with the INEE Minimum Standards across multiple levels of the socio-ecological model, driving both individual and systemic change. To ensure a gender transformative approach, the strategy is structured around four **Gender Domains:** gender norms, agency, condition and position, and enabling environment.

Education Champions: Role models creating an enabling environment

The Education Champions initiative not only strengthens the agency of young female volunteers by increasing their knowledge, improving their skills and promoting access to and control over resources. It also contributes to the creation of an enabling environment for girls.

> **"The entire classroom comes from their neighbourhood, they know each other, speak the same language, and have a relationship of trust. So, these Education Champions mentor and counsel within their classrooms. They raise awareness about health and hygiene and, when needed, address menstrual health concerns and dispel myths."**
> Pakistan MYRP member interview

Furthermore, Education Champions play a fundamental role in improving the position of girls and women within their communities. By serving as role models, they become respected figures, shifting perceptions about women's leadership and capabilities.

Sister-to-Sister model: Strengthening agency and peer support

The Sister-to-Sister Model provides peer mentorship, equipping adolescent girls with knowledge on menstrual hygiene management, self-confidence and decision-making skills. By increasing their understanding of their own bodies and rights, the programme enhances their confidence and strengthens their agency, helping them to recognise and challenge harmful gender norms.

Community engagement: Raising awareness and breaking taboos

The work carried out with female community members and mothers fosters an enabling environment that helps dismantle taboos around menstruation, enabling these women to challenge harmful gender norms that hinder girls' access to and continuation of education. By working collectively, they contribute to creating a more supportive framework for girls' education.

Although men are not directly involved in MHM discussions, tailored conversations focus on the importance of girls' education, the role of fathers in creating safe spaces for girls, and the need to address community-level barriers that limit girls' opportunities.

Transforming learning facilities: Institutionalising gender equality

The programme ensures that girls have access to safe, gender-segregated washrooms and MHM corners, reducing absenteeism due to menstruation-related challenges. By addressing a key structural barrier, this intervention makes schools more inclusive, reinforcing the importance of creating educational spaces that prioritise girls' dignity, safety and participation.

> **"MHM work is exclusively handled by female champions. It is challenging to involve male champions in this area; however, we engage men in discussions on gender-based violence, child protection and safeguarding.**

> **"[An] Education Champion has that kind of connection where she can even hold one-on-one sessions with mothers because it's her own neighbourhood, where she is trusted and socially known. This gives her the outreach needed to conduct these sessions. […] How do we engage with fathers? In Pakistan, the areas where [the] MYRP is working are highly culturally conservative. In some parts of the country, bringing men and women together is easier, but in regions like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, interactions must be separate. How do we engage with men – whether fathers, male family members, or community influencers – on women's rights, girls' education, protection or gender-based violence? We do have male Education Champions, and we also have village support groups around each non-formal school. We raise awareness, participate in the 16 Days of Activism, and conduct campaigns on gender-based violence."**
> Pakistan MYRP member interview

Early impact of the MHM strategy[9]

The MHM strategy has contributed to significant improvements in access to education and increased community support for girls. While there is not an impact evaluation in place, the following outcomes highlight its positive impact:

- **Empowered female leadership:** Education Champions have gained confidence, knowledge and economic opportunities through their roles, enhancing their agency within their families and communities. Their involvement has shifted perceptions of women's leadership and capacity to drive social change. This progress has been made possible due to the intentional integration of outputs targeting teachers across four of the six outcomes within the programme's results framework, each with associated budget allocations.

> **"Education Champions´ lives are turned around. They are getting jobs within their homes in a safe environment. They are earning, and that earning has helped them increase their voice and agency […] their leadership positions in the community, which further inspires the community to send children to school because these girls are from the refugee community itself […] when the community sees that these girls are getting paid while they are doing something within their homes. Education champions inspire other girls to join, and they, you know, the girls want to become teachers or the families want their daughters to come across too. So …what I strongly feel is that this model has not only helped the students but the teachers [Education Champions] as well."**
> Pakistan MYRP member interview

9 The information presented is based on the perceptions of the interviewees. At the time of the review, no impact evaluation had been conducted.

- **Increased confidence among girls:** Participants in the strategy now feel empowered to ask questions, seek support and challenge the stigma surrounding menstruation.

- **Increased school retention:** The provision of hygiene kits, gender-segregated washrooms and MHM corners has reduced menstruation-related absenteeism, allowing more girls to continue their education uninterrupted. This positive outcome has been supported by the integration of Output 3.1 The most vulnerable girls and boys have access to safe water and gender-appropriate sanitation and hygiene spaces in their learning environments, and Output 5.4 Girls and adolescent girls are provided with menstrual health and hygiene products that ensure safety and comfort at school and at home. Both outputs were costed and included in the MYRP budget with earmarked gender funding, in line with ECW's approach to gender responsive planning.

- **Changing community attitudes:** Mothers and female community members have become more engaged in discussions on menstrual health and education, fostering a supportive environment that encourages girls to remain in school. The programme has also helped to challenge harmful gender norms surrounding menstruation and girls' education. This positive shift has been supported through the integration of Output 4.3 Schools are more resilient and provide more relevant support to learners through the establishment and support of parent teacher associations/school management committees, promoting community engagement. The output was included in the design with a dedicated gender responsive budget line.

- **Infrastructure improvements:** The rehabilitation of gender-segregated washrooms and the establishment of MHM corners have provided girls with safe spaces to manage their hygiene needs, reducing barriers to attendance and participation. This progress has been facilitated through the integration of Output 3.1, which was costed and included in the MYRP budget with dedicated funding for gender appropriate infrastructure.

> **"We are doing our maths in terms of our impact and evaluations. However, this has already told us that school enrolment has significantly improved, particularly among girls. When we worked on the WASH facilities within schools, so it also includes water facility as well […] that really, really helps us. Mainstreaming girls, you know, back to education."**
>
> Pakistan MYRP member interview

However, challenges persist, including deeply entrenched social norms and economic barriers. Continued investment in the **MHM strategy** is crucial to sustaining and scaling these efforts, ensuring that more girls can access education in a supportive and gender equitable environment.



Fatima takes part in gender-based violence workshop in Gombe state

Plan International



NIGERIA:
HOLISTIC APPROACH WITH THE POTENTIAL TO DRIVE GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE[10]

Overview

The MYRP in Nigeria (2021–2024), funded by ECW, addressed critical barriers to education for both girls and boys in crisis-affected areas. Operating in Borno (Jere LGA), Adamawa (Michika LGA), and Yobe (Fika and Bade LGA) States, the programme worked across multiple levels to tackle gender-related educational challenges.

The programme implemented a multi-level intervention strategy to ensure a meaningful and lasting impact. First, teachers working within formal education systems received specialised training to equip them with the necessary skills to create gender equitable and inclusive classrooms. The training incorporated strategies for integrating practices aimed at challenging and changing gender roles, social norms and power imbalances in teaching settings, ensuring that teachers could actively promote gender equality in their classrooms. Additionally, customised training materials were developed to address gender equality in teaching and learning, providing educators with context-specific tools to integrate inclusive practices effectively. Beyond the classroom, students participated in leadership and life skills sessions aimed at empowering girls while also engaging boys in discussions on gender equality. For instance, role-playing sessions were conducted in schools.

10 Sources: ECW (2023). *ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme: Nigeria 2021–2023;* ECW (2023). *Nigeria Annual Joint Narrative Report: March 2022 – 31 December 2023;* ECW (2024). *Annual Joint Narrative Report: 1 June 2024 – 31 August 2024;* and Nigeria MYRP team members, interviews, December 2024

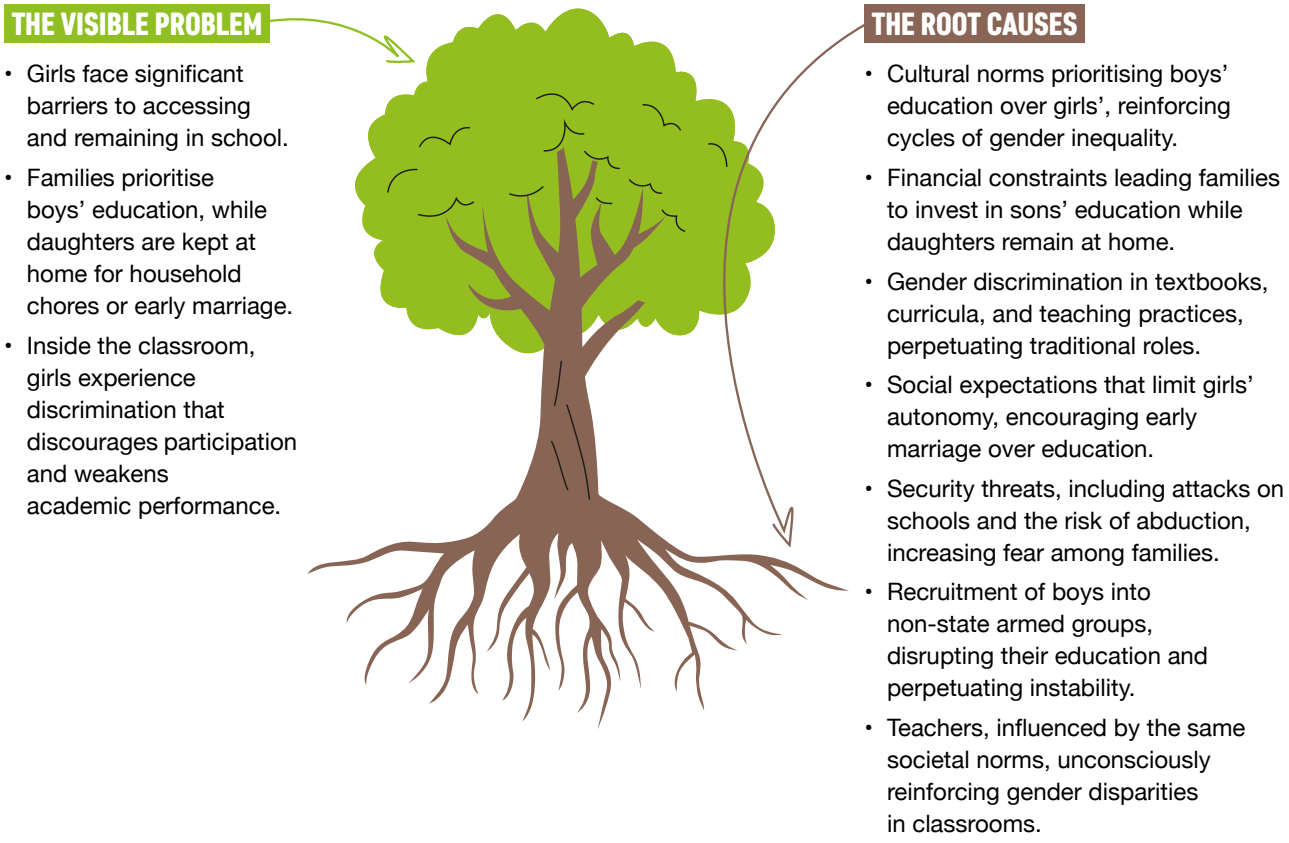


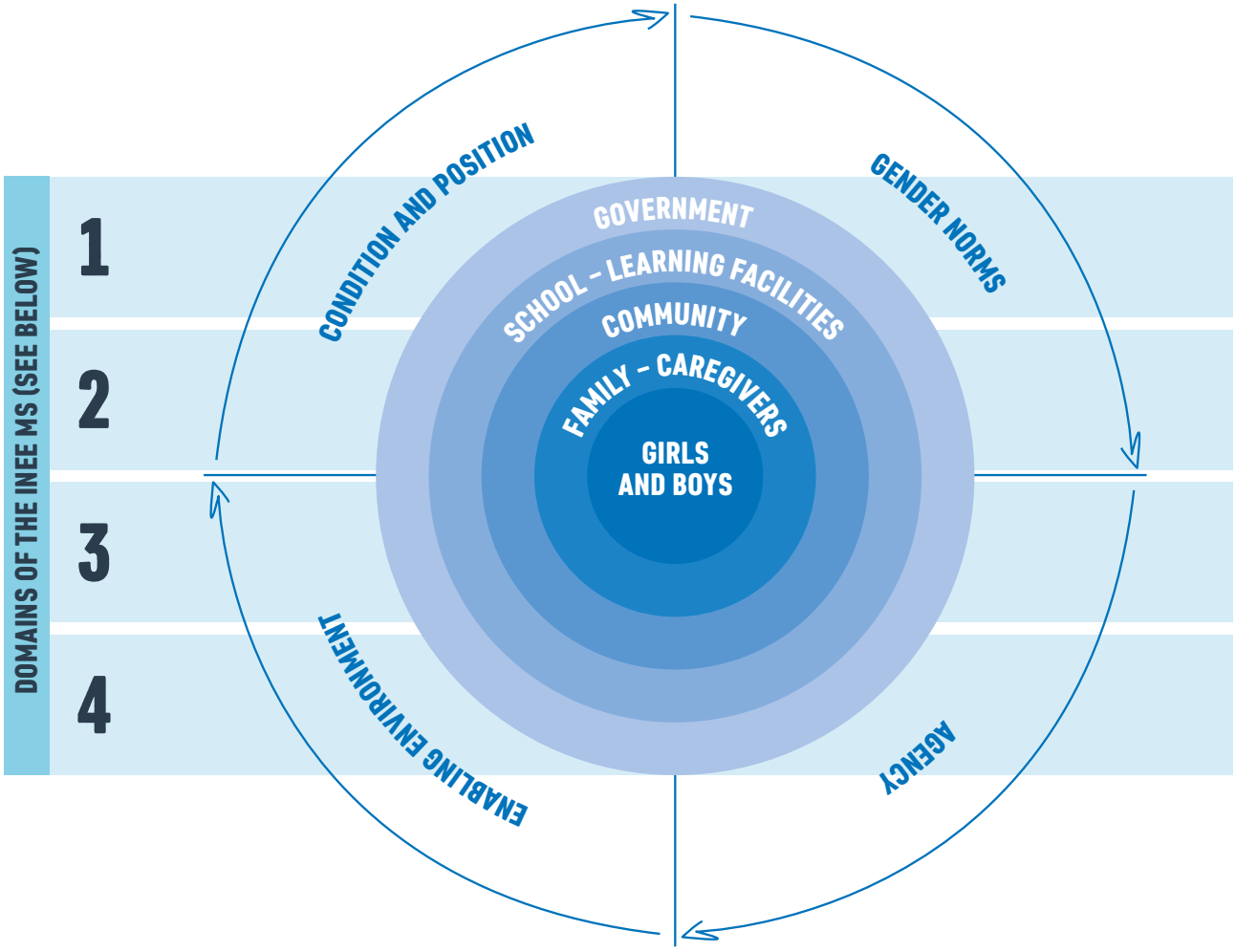
Figure 7. Nigeria Problem Tree

Meanwhile, families played a crucial role in supporting this transformation. They attended regular parenting sessions, held weekly or bi-monthly, which promoted positive parenting practices and encouraged a fairer distribution of responsibilities at home. These sessions used participatory discussions to encourage caregivers to reflect on their beliefs and practices regarding girls' education, creating a gradual shift in parental attitudes. At the community level, advocacy efforts were reinforced through training sessions, interactive discussions and awareness initiatives. School-Based and Community-Based Management Committees (SBMCs/CBMCs) were also trained and empowered with the knowledge and skills needed to advocate for gender equality in education.

Finally, policy makers were actively engaged in advocacy efforts to integrate gender equity into local education policies and planning frameworks, ensuring that these systemic changes were implemented and sustained over time.

The holistic approach's potential to drive gender transformative EiEPC

The holistic approach of the MYRP in Nigeria addressed gender norms that hinder girls' education by working across multiple levels: girls and boys, families, communities, teachers and policy makers. This was achieved through integrated interventions aligned with some INEE Minimum Standards, tackling restrictive gender norms, improving learning environments and strengthening community and institutional support systems. The approach aligns with the four **Gender Domains:** gender norms, agency, condition and position, and enabling environment, to ensure sustainable and systemic gender transformative change.



DOMAIN 1	DOMAIN 2	DOMAIN 3	DOMAIN 4
Standard 1: Participation Standard 5: Response strategies	Standard 8: Equal and equitable access Standard 9: Protection and wellbeing Standard 10: Facilities and services	Standard 12: Teaching and learning processes Standard 14: Training, professional development, and support	Standard 18: Law and policy formulation Standard 19: Planning and implementation

Figure 8. INEE Minimum Standards and the socio-ecological model

Girls and boys: Building confidence and breaking barriers

The programme engages girls and boys in discussions and interactive activities to help boys and girls identify and question harmful stereotypes while reinforcing the importance of mutual respect and collaboration. Students gained a deeper understanding of gender bias and the societal expectations that often limit girls' education. Through tailored activities, girls strengthen their agency and play a key role in the development and delivery of back-to-school campaigns.

> **"There is a need for a community dialogue; this dialogue is with the parents as well as the community influencers, to address the norm that gives rise to early marriage."**
> Nigeria MYRP member interview

Families: Shifting mindsets and strengthening support

Recognising the role of families in shaping girls' education, the programme engaged caregivers in structured parenting sessions to encourage gender equitable household responsibilities. Fathers, in particular, were targeted through community engagement initiatives to support girls' schooling and challenge entrenched biases that prioritise boys' education. These efforts helped to foster a home environment where girls were encouraged to stay in school.

Communities: Changing social perceptions and mobilising action

Communities played a key role in reinforcing gender norms, so the programme prioritised community-wide dialogues, awareness campaigns and direct engagement with traditional and religious leaders. SBMCs/CBMCs were trained to advocate for gender equality, equipping them with the tools to address social barriers that hinder girls' education. According to interviewees, this approach shifts community attitudes and increases support for girls' enrolment and retention in school. For instance, during interviews, stakeholders highlighted success stories where community leaders who initially resisted girls' education changed their perspective after participating in dialogue sessions. One notable example is that of a father, who, after engaging in community discussions facilitated by the programme, allowed his two daughters to enrol in non-formal education, a decision that positively impacted their educational continuity.

> **"So, we had in mind to create some form of change agents among the community members themselves. That was a goal in mind. And then linking it to the school. We also want to ensure that these people do not sabotage the effort of the teachers in school to create a gender-responsive school environment. But they also support it because if they understand what is happening, they stand a better chance of supporting it."**
> Nigeria MYRP member interview

Teachers: Creating safe and inclusive learning environments

The programme trained teachers by equipping them with skills to promote equitable classroom practices and address school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV). Teacher Learning Cycles provided ongoing mentorship to reinforce these inclusive teaching strategies. Additionally, the programme advocated for increased female teacher recruitment, ensuring that girls had positive role models within the school system.

> **"We trained the teachers on how to bring the issues around and how to address the issues around gender in the classroom. For instance, girls and boys in the classroom learned how to provide support to each group in the class.**
> **"The training allowed us to address some of these issues because some are attitudinal issues. They get rooted in beliefs, both personal and collective. So now addressing this in this training helped us, but that was not enough; we had to work with the teachers to do this, and then we also tried to work with the communities to do this because teachers are from communities."**
>
> *Nigeria MYRP member interview*

Policy level: Strengthening institutional frameworks for gender equity

To ensure lasting change, the programme engaged education policy makers in advocacy efforts to integrate gender equity into state-level education frameworks. By addressing structural barriers, the programme contributed to a more inclusive and sustainable education system.



Resources and tools

- Gender Responsive Pedagogy Teacher Training Pack – GRPTT
- EIE Genkit



Plan International / Alma Oj

Salma, 11, attends a specialist class for children with hearing impairments

Early impact of the holistic approach[11]

Although a formal evaluation of the programme's impact was not available at the time of this review (December 2024), according to the perceptions of interviewees, there are some results that indicate positive shifts in attitudes, teacher practices and policy integration:

- **Transforming teaching practices:** The programme equipped teachers with knowledge and skills on how to incorporate a gender approach in the classroom, use inclusive teaching methods and address gender-related challenges in school settings. Additionally, teachers were provided with customised training materials and continuous professional development through teacher learning cycles. This transformation has been achieved through the integration of Output 3.2 Key teaching, education management and partner staff have improved capacities to deliver child-friendly, equitable and inclusive education programming, and of Output 4.2 Teachers have sufficient knowledge and skills to deliver quality education. Both outputs were costed in the MYRP budget with earmarked funding for gender transformative interventions, in line with ECW's approach.

- **Changing community and family attitudes:** Engagement with parents and local leaders has strengthened support for girls' education, challenging harmful social norms and reducing resistance to girls' schooling. As a result, some parents have enrolled their daughters in school due to the programme's awareness-raising initiatives. Although the results framework did not explicitly integrate families and communities within the outputs and outcomes, the programme strategically included actions that target these groups, recognising their fundamental role in creating an enabling environment that promotes gender equality and contributes to challenging gender stereotypes and harmful norms, even after the programme concludes. Although the results framework did not explicitly integrate families and communities within the outputs and outcomes, the programme strategically included actions targeting these groups and ensured their implementation was supported through gender responsive budgeting.

- **Engaging religious and community leaders:** The programme tailored trainings and discussions to address resistance to gender equality, fostering dialogue and engaging local leaders as allies in promoting girls' education. These efforts were delivered as part of the broader gender strategy costed within the MYRP, demonstrating how strategic resource allocation supported community-level change.

- **Policy integration:** The programme's advocacy efforts contributed to the inclusion of a dedicated section on gender in education in Adamawa State's education policy, which was under development at the time of writing this report. This achievement has been supported through the integration of Output 4.3 National, state and LGA educational authorities have sufficient knowledge, capacity and resources to promote, administer and manage quality education, and Output 7.1 Policy and systems barriers to girls' education are identified and addressed. Both outputs were costed in the design phase, with resources earmarked to advance gender responsive policy change.

Despite these gains, significant challenges remain, including deeply rooted gender biases, economic constraints and security threats that disrupt learning. Continued investment, targeted interventions and collaboration with local stakeholders are crucial to sustaining and expanding these achievements.

11 The findings presented on the impact are based on the perspectives of the interviewees. At the time of the review, an impact evaluation was not available.

Story of change: a community leader's journey to supporting girls' education



As part of the MYRP in Nigeria, a notable story of change emerged from a community leader who overcame entrenched gender norms to support his daughter's education. Like many in his community, this father did not initially allow his daughters to attend school, adhering to traditional beliefs that prioritised boys' education and undervalued the role of girls in formal learning.

The turning point came when the leader attended one of the programme's community engagement events. Expecting a typical gathering of men, he found a diverse group that included women, girls and boys actively participating in discussions about education and gender equality. The presence of school-aged girls and the inclusive environment challenged his preconceptions, sparking a shift in his thinking. During the event, he was invited to speak, prompting him to reflect on his role as a father and community leader in shaping attitudes towards education.

Subsequent visits by community mobilisers provided further opportunities for dialogue. These conversations reinforced the value of education for girls and the broader benefits of gender equity for families and communities. Inspired by these interactions, the leader enrolled his two daughters in the programme's non-formal education activities. This marked the beginning of their educational journey.

Today, both daughters are enrolled in formal school, continuing their education with the support of their father. His decision has not only transformed his daughters' lives but has also influenced attitudes within the community. As a respected leader, his actions have inspired other families to reconsider their beliefs and practices, contributing to a broader shift towards valuing girls' education.

This story underscores the importance of engaging community leaders in addressing structural barriers to education. By fostering dialogue and creating inclusive spaces, the MYRP programme empowered this leader to challenge harmful norms and become a champion for gender equity in his community.



Lina, 19, wears t-shirt reading: 'My voice counts, my future counts: protect me'

Plan International / Peter Caton



SOUTH SUDAN:
ENGAGING LOCAL WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS TO FOSTER GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE EIEPC[12]

Overview

In South Sudan, gender inequalities, prolonged conflicts and institutional barriers severely limit access to education, particularly for girls. The 2023–2026 MYRP was launched as a gender transformative programme to address these challenges, yet sustainability remains a key obstacle. To strengthen local and institutional systems and ensure long-term impact, the programme integrates institutional and technical capacity-building for local women's organisations (LWOs), reinforcing their sustainability, accountability and leadership in humanitarian response.

Beyond capacity-building, the programme also incorporates LWOs into implementing community-based activities, ensuring their active participation in shaping education and gender equality initiatives.

> **"In most communities in South Sudan, formal women-led organisations do not exist. In such cases, we look for women actively engaged as gender activists, women from faith-based organisations who champion the rights of girls and women, as well as gender focal points from relevant ministries. [When LWOs were mapped], we had to verify their real presence and actual existence because we realised that some were 'briefcase organisations' without a physical address or any presence in the locations they claimed to operate in."**
>
> South Sudan MYRP member interview

12 Sources: ECW (2023). *ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP): South Sudan 2023–2026;* ECW (2023). *South Sudan Annual Joint Narrative Report: June 2023 – May 2024;* and South Sudan MYRP team members, interviews, December 2024

To ensure the meaningful participation of LWOs and foster long-term gender transformative programming, the programme implemented seven key strategies:

1. **Training gender focal points:** Gender focal points from 14 partner organisations were trained to effectively engage and collaborate with LWOs.

2. **Mapping LWOs:** A comprehensive mapping exercise was conducted to identify and validate LWOs, ensuring their presence across all programme locations and distinguishing genuine organisations from inactive entities.

3. **Needs assessment:** LWOs' capacity in governance, financial management, advocacy and resource mobilisation was evaluated, leading to tailored support plans, including technical training and provision of essential resources.

4. **Capacity-building:** Workshops strengthened LWOs in areas such as gender transformative approach, financial management and governance. Representatives were also trained as trainers to cascade knowledge to communities and schools.

5. **Community engagement and implementation:** LWOs actively led community mobilisation, advocacy campaigns and education access initiatives for marginalised groups, including young mothers and children with disabilities.

6. **Participation in decision-making:** LWOs were integrated into gender task forces, policy discussions and advocacy platforms at local and national levels, allowing them to influence education policies and gender equality strategies.

7. **Ensuring sustainability:** The programme focused on strengthening LWOs' internal systems, enhancing their ability to secure external funding and embedding them in long-term education initiatives to sustain their role beyond the programme's duration.

Why including LWOs is essential for gender transformative EiEPC

The integration of LWOs is essential for ensuring the sustainability of gender transformative actions in education in crises and emergencies, particularly in community-based and temporary learning settings, including those in hard-to-reach or marginalised areas where formal structures are limited or absent. While their role is often associated with community-level engagement, LWOs have a broader reach, as they are already present in schools, working with children, families and community leaders. Their established networks allow interventions to extend across multiple levels, amplifying impact beyond direct programme implementation. Additionally, LWOs have the unique capacity to reach remote and marginalised communities that are often overlooked by larger organisations, ensuring that gender transformative actions are inclusive and accessible to those who need them most.

> **"Women-led organisations are not an add-on that you already build your house, and you are just coming to paste them on. Because they will drop off because they were not in the foundation of this project you are building. So right from assessments and the deciding phase and the implementation phase, women-led organisations needed to have been at the same level of engagement."**
>
> South Sudan MYRP member interview

Despite their strong community presence, LWOs often lack recognition in decision-making spaces. The programme bridges this gap by facilitating LWOs' engagement with policy makers and formal education structures, ensuring that gender transformative education efforts are informed by local expertise and grounded in community realities.



Resources and tools

- Building better partnerships | Plan International
- Facilitating Partnership Assessments: How to facilitate a partnership assessment process as part of developing new partnerships – Save the Children's Resource Centre

Early impact of the LWO engagement strategy[13]

Although still in its early stages, the **LWO engagement strategy** has yielded promising outcomes:

- **Increased mobilisation of marginalised groups:** LWOs have successfully facilitated the return to school of young mothers, children with disabilities and out-of-school girls by engaging directly with families and communities. This engagement was achieved through community mobilisation activities, awareness campaigns and advocacy initiatives, as well as through participation in school management committees and parent-teacher association meetings.

13 The information presented is based on the accounts provided by the interviewees. At the time of the review, no measurement was available to provide quantitative data on the impact.

> **"We've seen cases where women-led organisations support mobilising, especially the girls, to return to school. Like young mothers returning to school. They are also mobilising our children with disabilities to return to school."**
>
> South Sudan MYRP member interview

- **Enhanced women's leadership:** LWO representatives have gained confidence and influence, actively participating in policy dialogues, advocacy events and education coordination meetings.
- **Stronger community advocacy:** LWOs are leading grassroots campaigns against early marriage, gender-based violence and school dropout, shifting societal attitudes towards girls' education.
- **Institutional integration and policy engagement:** Women-led organisations have been formally included in national education planning processes.

> **"LWOs were invited to the General Education Annual Review where they speak to the officials who are coming from all states of the country to push the agenda […] We've also seen these women-led organisations choose to participate in school management committees and also the parent-teacher association meetings. We have seen some of them come forth to participate in the gender task forces at county level"**
>
> South Sudan MYRP member interview

The integration of LWOs within the programme was strategically planned from the design phase, as identified in the results framework. This approach is supported by Output 4.4 Institutional and technical capacity strengthening for local actors, with special attention to women-led and disability-focused organisations, to ensure their sustainability, accountability and leadership in humanitarian response. This output was costed and included with earmarked funding for gender-targeted interventions, which was fundamental to enabling the meaningful engagement of LWOs. Additionally, the results framework includes specific indicators to measure progress, such as the "Number of local organisation staff accessing training in institutional or technical capacity strengthening opportunities" and the "Number of women-led organisations engaged in community mobilisation and other gender-related interventions working in collaboration with ECW-supported programmes".

Yet, challenges remain, including funding constraints, the exclusion of LWOs from some formal coordination mechanisms and limited institutional capacity. Continued investment in LWO capacity-building, resource mobilisation and policy engagement is crucial to sustain progress and ensure a lasting impact on gender transformative education in South Sudan.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE FIVE CASE STUDIES

These five programme examples demonstrate gender transformative potential in education in emergencies and protracted crises (EiEPC), showing possible pathways to move beyond gender responsiveness. Despite diverse contexts, several common insights emerge:

1. Early engagement of gender lead organisations (GLOs) and gender experts

Involving GLOs[14] and gender experts from design to implementation strengthens the integration of gender transformative approaches and ensures contextual relevance.

2. Meaningful engagement of local women's organisations (LWOs)

Engaging local women's organisations early and investing in their capacity is critical for advancing gender transformative change. Their community roots build trust, ensure cultural relevance and strengthen local ownership, while also enhancing the sustainability of education interventions, particularly in marginalised and hard-to-reach contexts.

3. Operate across multiple levels

Across the five programme examples, most recognise that education does not occur in isolation. By engaging girls, families, schools, communities and policy makers simultaneously, they demonstrate pathways to foster systemic and lasting change.

For example, Bangladesh's ECD strategy combines play-based learning with caregiver engagement, while Pakistan's MHM approach links classroom interventions with community dialogues and policy advocacy – showing how multi-level strategies reinforce each other.

From five programme examples, three key observations can be made about what works:

- **Family and community engagement is central:** Parenting sessions, community dialogues and awareness campaigns (Uganda, Bangladesh, Nigeria) foster shared responsibility for girls' education and challenge restrictive norms.
- **Local female leadership drives transformation:** Recruiting and training female facilitators and champions (Bangladesh, Pakistan) creates role models and shifts perceptions about women's roles.
- **Influencing policy and driving systemic change:** Elevating learners' and teachers' voices into district and national forums informs policy reforms and strengthens institutional frameworks (Uganda on adolescent pregnancy; South Sudan via LWOs).

4. Embed gender equality as a cross-cutting component

Gender equality is integrated into education actions, not treated as a stand-alone component. Activities addressing gender barriers are embedded in inclusive curricula, safe facilities, teacher training and community mobilisation, aligned with the INEE Minimum Standards.

14 The gender lead organisation (GLO) is a designated entity within each MYRP responsible for addressing accountability gaps in gender capacity strengthening. It provides leadership, coordination and technical support to ensure effective integration of gender considerations across MYRP country teams.

5. Address all five gender domains

Across the five case studies, the portfolio collectively advances actions within all five domains — gender norms, agency, diversity, condition and position, and enabling environment. This does not mean, however, that each programme is addressing all five domains.

Key strategies include:

- **Strengthening girls' and young women's agency** by building leadership, confidence and decision-making skills. Pakistan's Sister-to-Sister model, for example, equips young women with mentorship, life skills and pathways to higher education.

- **Engaging boys and men as allies,** where relevant, to promote positive masculinities and shift restrictive gender norms. Uganda's GEM Clubs and Nigeria's holistic approach demonstrate the impact of involving boys as partners in gender equality, while Bangladesh's Fathers' Café highlights the role of caregivers.

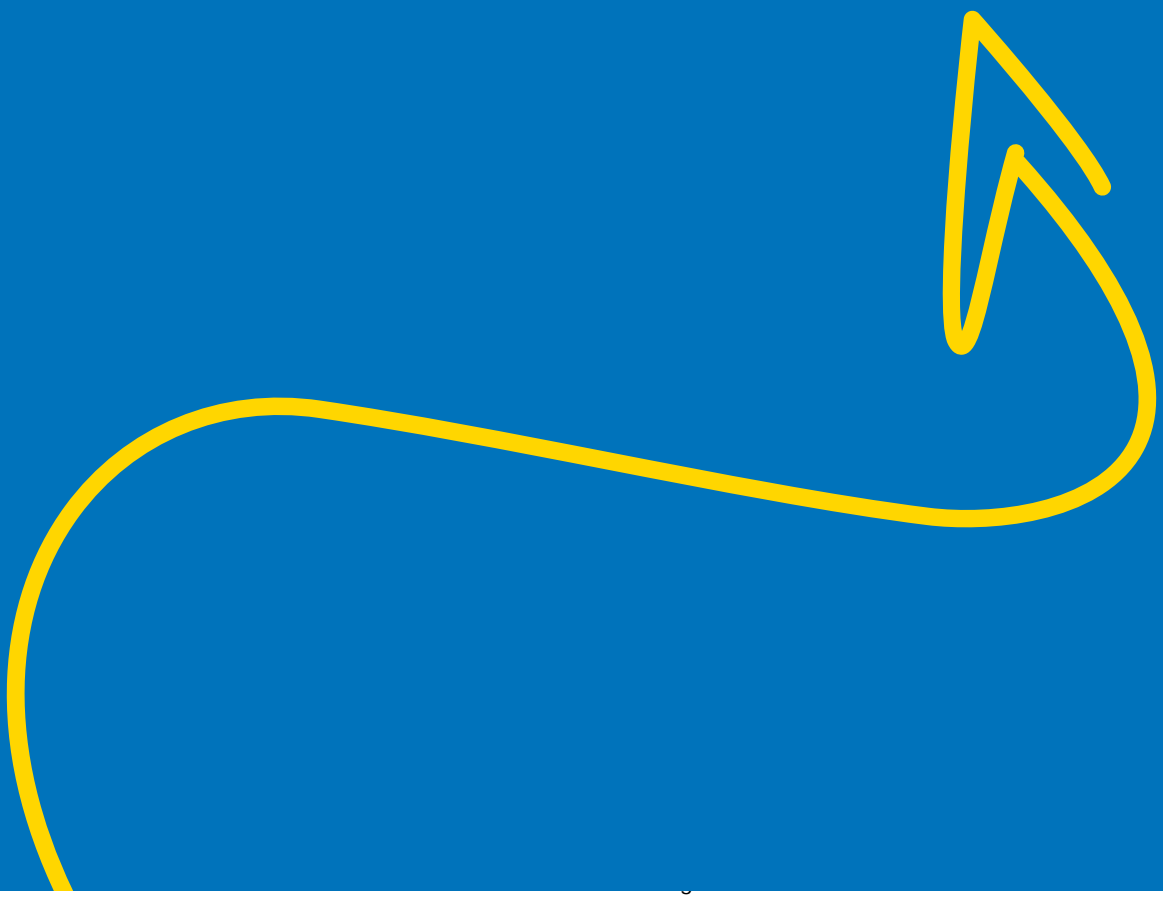
- **Ensuring safe, inclusive learning environments** by providing gender-segregated washrooms, menstrual hygiene kits, disability-friendly resources, and peer support networks (Pakistan, Uganda, Nigeria).

In summary

The potential for transformative change in education in emergencies and protracted crises increases when programmes do the following:

- **Engage gender lead organisations (GLOs) and gender experts early,** from design through implementation, to strengthen contextual relevance and embed gender transformative approaches.
- **Meaningfully involve and strengthen local women's organisations (LWOs)** as key drivers of change. Allocating resources to build their institutional and technical capacity fosters sustainability, enhances community ownership and ensures interventions are locally grounded.
- **Operate across multiple levels** – engaging girls, families, schools, communities and policy makers simultaneously – to foster systemic and lasting change.
- **Embed gender equality as a cross-cutting component** rather than a stand-alone activity, integrating actions into curricula, teacher training, community mobilisation and safe learning environments.
- **Address all five gender domains** – gender norms, agency, diversity, condition and position, and enabling environment – through strategies that:
  - strengthen girls' and young women's agency (e.g. Pakistan's Sister-to-Sister model);
  - engage boys and men as allies where relevant (e.g. GEM Clubs in Uganda, holistic approaches in Nigeria, and the Fathers' Café in Bangladesh);
  - ensure there are safe, inclusive learning environments that reduce barriers to education.

III. KEY ENABLERS FOR ENHANCING GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE IN AN EIEPC PROGRAMME



From the programme design stage, specific actions can be incorporated to increase the potential to drive gender transformative education in crises and emergencies. These actions act as enablers that complement each other but, on their own, do not create transformative change.

The following sections outline cross-cutting concerns and key dimensions[15] to be considered when designing an EiEPC programme. They also explain why these dimensions serve as enablers for gender transformative programming. Each section also presents good practices and challenges identified through the interviews with team members from the five MYRPs and global actors, offering insights into how these enablers have been integrated in real-world programming.



Diagram produced as part of the Learning Brief, based on the PGI Self-Assessment and Quality Assurance Checklist for MYRPs from ECW.

15 These dimensions were taken from the *PGI Self-Assessment and Quality Assurance Checklist for MYRPs* from ECW.

CROSS-CUTTING CONCERNS

Several cross-cutting factors have been identified that either enhance or hinder the integration of a gender transformative approach in education in emergencies and protracted crises. These factors go beyond individual programme components and instead shape the overall enabling environment for gender transformative change.

> **"Transformative change doesn't happen overnight. It's something that happens when you've got long-term, flexible funding."**
> *Global actor interview*

The tables below present key good practices that strengthen gender transformative programming, as well as persistent challenges that hinder its implementation.

Good practices	Example
Institutional and donor commitments to gender integration strengthen accountability and prioritisation	ECW considers gender responsiveness a minimum standard for all investments, ensuring that gender is embedded from the outset.[16] In Nigeria, interviewees noted that gender became "non-negotiable" following ECW's requirement for integration across all outputs.
Long-term, flexible funding sustains gender transformative change	In South Sudan, the first MYRP was followed by a second phase in 2023. This continuity enabled the programme to incorporate a gender transformative approach across its strategies. The groundwork laid with partners, communities and stakeholders in Phase 1 – through sensitisation and capacity-building on gender – facilitated stronger integration in Phase 2. Additionally, lessons learned from the first phase informed its design.[17]
Early engagement of donors enhances alignment and reduces revision time	During the design process of South Sudan's MYRP, ECW closely supported the team, particularly through a workshop where they jointly reviewed how to integrate a gender transformative approach across programme strategies.[18]

16 Adapted from: ECW (2023). *Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls: Policy and Accountability Framework 2023-2026,* p.8
17 Source: South Sudan MYRP members, interviews, December 2024
18 Source: South Sudan MYRP member, interview, December 2024

Challenges	Example
Lack of political will, leadership and long-term funding weakens gender transformative commitments	A global actor explained that gender transformative change in emergecies is "about political will and leadership more than programming".[19] In the absence of strong leadership and prioritisation by humanitarian actors, efforts often remain fragmented and underfunded. Limited, short-term funding further restricts the potential for integrated, sustained solutions. "Transformative change doesn't happen overnight... We're swim-ming against a tidal wave,"[20] the interviewee noted. Donors must inten-tionally fund programmes that embed gender transformative approaches as a central goal in order to maximise impact and sustainability.
Geographic shifts between MYRP phases limit continuity and local ownership	Although MYRPs are multi-year initiatives, continuity is sometimes dis-rupted between phases due to changes in targeted schools or communities, even within the same geographic location. This limits the ability to build on previous investments, sustain local partnerships and monitor long-term impact.
Lack of data limits advocacy efforts and stakeholder buy-in	In Bangladesh's MYRP (2022), significant gender gaps were identified, but the absence of reliable references and data limited the programme's ability to advocate effectively and secure funding. In Cox's Bazar, education stakeholders noted that limited disaggregated data on disability and gender made it difficult to prioritise inclusive design.[21]

CAPACITY

Embedding gender and EiE expertise from the outset is essential to enable the integration of a gender transformative approach as a core programme component, not as an add-on. Gender lead organisations (GLOs) provide technical guidance, strengthen accountability and build capacity across partners and stakeholders. However, gender transformative change cannot rely solely on specialists – it must be a shared responsibility across all actors.

Programmes with strong gender transformative potential consistently engage gender experts to challenge and shift gender perceptions, attitudes and practices. They integrate gender considerations throughout design, implementation and monitoring, ensuring interventions actively address systemic inequalities rather than merely responding to them.

19 Source: Global actor interview, December 2024
20 Source: Global actor interview, December 2024
21 Source: Bangladesh MYRP member, interview, December 2024

Good practices	Example
Embedding gender expertise within consortia to drive transformation	In Pakistan's MYRP, PAGE and VSO acted as GLOs. In Uganda, South Sudan, Bangladesh and Nigeria, Plan International played a similar role. These organisations ensured that gender was prioritised in programme design, implementation and monitoring while also strengthening the capacity of designated gender focal points within each partner organisation. In South Sudan, Plan International facilitated dedicated gender sessions during planning phases and supported partners with checklists to ensure that gender was embedded across outputs.[22]
Building gender capacity from the start	In Pakistan's MYRP, teams received early training from ECW on how to incorporate a gen-der approach into the programme. In Bangladesh, the GLO provided consortium-wide training on gender mainstreaming and transformative approaches.[23] In Nigeria, gender focal points were given a structured orientation and tools at inception to ensure consistent application of GTE principles.[24]
Government engagement to align policies and ensure ownership	In South Sudan's MYRP, the Ministry of Education's gender unit played a leading role in programme design, ensuring alignment with national frameworks. In Pakistan, sustained government engagement facilitated policy shifts and programme approvals, strengthening long-term commitment.[25]

Challenges	Example
Untrained gender focal points are often assigned based on gendered assumptions	In Pakistan's MYRP, gender focal points were frequently nominated based on the assump-tion that gender-related work is a women's issue, leading to disengagement among male staff and a lack of ownership beyond those assigned the role.[26]
Resistance from some organisations to adopting a gender approach	In Pakistan, initial resistance was addressed through sustained advocacy and training, gradually shifting organisations towards more gender responsive and transformative practices.[27] In Bangladesh, a few partners were reluctant to adopt gender-specific targets, fearing it would complicate reporting or draw criticism from conservative community actors.[28]

22 Source: South Sudan MYRP member, interview, December 2024
23 Source: Pakistan MYRP member, interview, December 2024
24 Source: Nigeria MYRP member, interview, December 2024
25 Source: South Sudan MYRP member, interview, December 2024
26 Source: Pakistan MYRP member, interview, December 2024
27 Source: Pakistan MYRP member, interview, December 2024
28 Source: Bangladesh MYRP member, interview, December 2024

Challenges	Example
Technical resources not easily applicable in practice	Many resources, including the EiE-GenKit, focus primarily on gender responsive program-ming rather than fully embedding a gender transformative approach. The complexity of technical documents often hinders practical application. In Nigeria, staff mentioned needing simpler tools to understand how to move from responsive to transformative programming, citing the GenKit.

PARTICIPATION AND NEEDS OVERVIEW

Ensuring meaningful participation of affected populations in all their diversity and conducting an intersectional gender analysis are both critical enablers of gender transformative EiEPC.[29] Consulting communities, particularly marginalised groups, allows programmes to identify and address the root causes of gendered barriers to education, rather than just their symptoms.

A robust gender analysis helps to unpack how intersecting factors, such as age, disability, displacement and socio-economic status, exacerbate exclusion. By integrating findings into programme design, education interventions become more relevant, inclusive and impactful, shifting power towards those historically excluded. A gender transformative approach goes beyond identifying gender disparities – it actively shifts power to affected populations, ensuring their voices drive programme design and implementation.



How do I integrate the participation and needs overview dimensions in alignment with INEE standards?

- Prioritise the meaningful participation of specific groups, such as girls, women, female teachers and LWOs, among other highly affected populations (Standard 1).
- Integrate a detailed gender analysis to examine inequalities and their impact on different groups within the community when conducting the holistic, transparent and participatory education assessments (Standard 4).

Good practices	Example
Inclusive and participatory needs assessments to capture diverse experiences	In South Sudan's MYRP, direct consultations with women, girls and people with disabilities ensured gender-related barriers were accurately identi-fied and addressed in programme design. For example, women's groups helped validate programme priorities, and adolescent girls participated in sessions about access to learning spaces and safety concerns.[30]

29 Source: ECW (n.d.). *PGI Self-Assessment and Quality Assurance Checklist for MYRPs*
30 Source: South Sudan MYRP members, interviews, December 2024

Good practices	Example
Tailoring engagement methods to cultural and social contexts	In various contexts, such as the Nigeria MYRP and the South Sudan MYRP, using focus groups, one-on-one interviews and female facilitators enabled safe and meaningful participation of women and girls in assessments. In Nigeria, female facilitators were engaged in conservative communities to enable girls to participate without fear. In South Sudan, one-on-one interviews with women leaders were used in areas where group discussions posed risks.[31]
Investing in research to strengthen gender transformative programming	In Bangladesh's MYRP, a dedicated gender study within the Rohingya refugee response provided evidence to inform advocacy and future programmes design.[32]

Challenges	Example
Marginalised groups often excluded from assessments, limiting programme impact	In several MYRPs, cultural norms and logistical barriers led to the exclusion of adolescent girls and people with disabilities in the consultation process, reinforcing inequalities and requiring mid-implementation adjust-ments. In Bangladesh, engaging Rohingya adolescent girls proved ex-tremely difficult due to language barriers, limited visibility in public life, and the need to find women facilitators fluent in the local dialect. In Nigeria, some communities viewed it as inappropriate for girls to speak openly in public settings, requiring adaptations such as female-led focus groups. In many cases, programme teams assumed consultations would be inclu-sive without systematically examining who was excluded and why. As one global actor noted, "we say consult with all affected children in all their diversity... but the programme proceeds even if that hasn't happened". These gaps often stemmed from time constraints, limited budgets and a lack of technical capacity to adapt tools for diverse groups. In South Sudan, some communities were inaccessible due to conflict, making it difficult to include remote girls and women in assessments. In Uganda, disability-inclusive assessments were constrained by lack of adapted tools and trained personnel.[33]
Over-reliance on secondary data limits gender transformative decision-making	In Pakistan's MYRP, an implementing partner noted, "we used data from other organisations' reports at first, but later had to change activities because the needs on the ground were different". This reliance on secondary sources during programme design led to misaligned interventions, highlighting the need for direct engagement with communities to ensure accu-rate, gender responsive planning.[34]

31 Source: South Sudan and Nigeria MYRP members, interviews, December 2024
32 Source: Bangladesh MYRP members, interviews, December 2024
33 Source: South Sudan and Uganda MYRP members, interviews, December 2024
34 Source: Pakistan MYRP member, interview, December 2024

Challenges	Example
Insufficient budget and time allocated for comprehensive gender analysis	In multiple MYRPs, such as Nigeria Phase I and Pakistan, resource constraints restricted the ability to conduct robust needs assessments, limiting opportunities to develop gender transformative strategies. In Nigeria, one partner explained that "there was pressure to finalise the design quickly, so we didn't have time for a proper gender analysis".[35]

LOCALISATION

Partnering with at least one LWO and allocating resources to strengthen their capacity is a fundamental enabler of gender transformation.[36] LWOs play a critical role in shifting power dynamics, ensuring sustainability and embedding gender transformative approaches within communities. Their deep-rooted presence fosters trust, enhances cultural relevance and strengthens local ownership of education interventions. However, without meaningful engagement, LWOs risk being tokenised rather than empowered as key drivers of change.[37]

How to implement programmes with or through LWOs in alignment with INEE standards?



- Actively engage LWOs to strengthen community participation and ensure inclusive involvement in education initiatives (Standards 1, 2).
- Collaborate with LWOs to support a coherent, locally led response, ensuring that interventions align with community needs and priorities (Standard 3).
- Leverage LWOs' local knowledge and presence to track progress and enhance accountability through participatory monitoring mechanisms (Standard 6).
- When LWOs take on roles as teachers or facilitators, they must be actively involved in efforts to ensure learner-centred, participatory and inclusive teaching and learning processes (Standard 12). Additionally, they should be included in training programmes for teachers and other education personnel (Standard 14).

35 Source: Nigeria and Pakistan MYRP members, interviews, December 2024
36 Source: ECW (n.d.). *PGI Self-Assessment and Quality Assurance Checklist for MYRPs*
37 Inspired by: ECW (2021) *Guidance Note on the Meaningful Engagement of Local Women's and Girls' Organisations (LWGOs) in ECW-supported Investments;* two interviews with members of South Sudan's MYRP team, December 2024; and one interview with a global actor, December 2024.

Good practices	Example
Establishing a lead partner to coordinate LWO engagement	In South Sudan's MYRP, a lead partner was responsible for overseeing LWO involvement. It developed mapping and capacity assessment tools and coordinated all partners to ensure a standardised approach.[38]
Systematic identification and integration of LWOs into pro-grammes	In Nigeria, Plan International maintains a database of women-led organisations detailing their expertise and geographic reach. This database is used during MYRP proposal development to align LWOs with programme needs.[39]

Challenges	Example
Ensuring timely engagement of LWOs	In Uganda, LWOs were not integrated from the design phase. In the second year, efforts to include them were unsuccessful due to the lack of a dedicated indicator and associated budget. It was only in the third and final year that their integration became possible after introducing an indicator to measure LWO engagement and capacity strengthening.[40]
Exclusion from national and humanitarian coordi-nation mechanisms	In South Sudan, LWOs have faced challenges in accessing national and humanitarian coordination spaces, limiting their involvement in decision-making and funding opportunities.[41]

INTERVENTION STRATEGIES AND RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Mainstreaming gender throughout intervention strategies (outcomes and outputs or results) ensures that gender considerations are embedded across all programme elements rather than being treated as isolated components. Such mainstreaming is essential to driving systemic change. Gender-targeted outputs must directly address the gendered barriers identified in the needs overview to enhance a programme's effectiveness and relevance.[42]

Embedding at least one outcome indicator for gender and gender-based violence strengthens a programme's transformative potential by enabling systematic tracking and measurement of progress towards gender equality. Successful gender transformative programmes do not require additional outputs but instead integrate a gender perspective within existing education interventions. However, challenges remain in ensuring consistent and effective implementation.

38 Source: South Sudan MYRP members, interviews, December 2024
39 Source: Nigeria MYRP member, interview, December 2024
40 Source: Uganda MYRP member, interview, December 2024
41 Source: South Sudan MYRP member and global actor, interviews, December 2024
42 Source: ECW (n.d.). *PGI Self-Assessment and Quality Assurance Checklist for MYRPs*



How do I integrate intervention strategies and results frameworks dimensions in alignment with INEE standards?

- Ensure that intervention strategies include a clear description of the context, incorporating an analysis of gender inequalities, their impact on different groups and the gender-related barriers to the right to education. Strategies should outline concrete steps to overcome these barriers, embedding gender considerations across all programme elements rather than treating them as isolated components (Standard 5).
- Mainstream a gender transformative approach when designing strategies to:
  - guarantee equal and equitable access (Standard 8);
  - develop curriculum content that reflects gender considerations (Standard 11);
  - ensure teaching and learning processes are learner-centred, participatory, and inclusive (Standard 12);
  - design training programmes for teachers and other education personnel (Standard 14).
- Integrate gender-related outcomes when developing methods to evaluate and validate holistic learning outcomes (Standard 13).

Good practices	Example
Explicit integration of a gender perspective into programme outputs and outcomes	In South Sudan's MYRP, a gender transformative approach was explicitly integrated into three of the five programme outcomes.[43] In Uganda's MYRP, one outcome explicitly stated: "Improved access and retention to inclusive and gender-transformative learning and training opportunities".[44]
Design of culturally inclusive and community-driven approaches to gender integration	In revised MYRPs, methodologies and curricula were adapted to include at least a gender responsive approach. Some used the EiE GenKit as a reference, while others built on models such as Plan International's Champions for Change or VSO's Sister-to-Sister model.
Design of intervention strategies that work across four or more lev-els of the socioecological model and address at least four gender domains	All reviewed MYRPs include strategies with the potential to drive gender transformative programming. These strategies operate across at least four levels (girls and boys, families and caregivers, communities and teachers or other education personnel) and address at least five gender domains (gender norms, agency, diversity, enabling environment, and condition and position) to tackle the root causes of gender-related barriers to access, continuity and/or quality of education. For example, in Bangladesh, gender-focused community awareness campaigns were complemented with teacher training, parent dialogues and targeted support to girls, especially in Rohingya communities.

43 Source: ECW (2023). *ECW Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP): South Sudan 2023–2026*
44 Source: ECW (2023). *Multi-Year Resilience Programme II: Uganda 2023–2025*

Challenges	Example
Limited capacity and practical guidelines for integrating gender transformative change	Although ECW's Indicator Library includes well-defined indicators to track gender transformative change, many MYRP partners struggled to systematically integrate them into Results Frameworks. In some cases, partners were unaware of the available indicators or unsure how to measure them effectively, and GLOs had limited influence in developing a Results Framework. This highlights the need for strengthened technical guidance, clearer measurement tools and early coordination to ensure gender indicators are effectively selected and applied. In Uganda, the GLO lacked influence during Results Framework development, limiting the inclusion of gender indicators despite prior commitments.
Resistance and backlash against gender transformative approaches	In multiple MYRPs, such as Pakistan, promoting gender equality faced opposition from men who perceived it as a challenge to traditional norms.[45] Without proactive strategies to engage men and boys, resistance often escalates, creating barriers to implementation. In Pakistan, resistance to menstrual health sessions in schools led to parental complaints in conservative areas, requiring renegotiation with commu-nity elders and adaptation of messaging. In Nigeria, initial backlash from male leaders was addressed through strategic male engagement activities.[46]

PARTICIPATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Gender-related barriers to education often originate from challenges in other sectors. Cross-sectoral collaboration is essential to achieving gender transformative change, as education programmes alone cannot dismantle systemic inequalities that limit access, continuity and quality.[47] Integrating education with sectors such as WASH, health, protection and livelihoods is critical to addressing root causes rather than just symptoms.

For example, a common issue may be low school attendance among adolescent girls. Upon further analysis, one of the key barriers identified could be the lack of gender responsive WASH facilities in schools, particularly for menstrual health and hygiene (MHH). Addressing this root cause requires collaboration with the WASH sector from the programme's design phase. By integrating WASH and education interventions – alongside complementary actions that address the underlying causes of gender inequalities – programmes can dismantle systemic barriers that hinder girls' access to and full participation in education.[48]

Most of the reviewed programmes that successfully integrated gender transformative strategies had established cross-sector partnerships, yet challenges persist in ensuring coordinated action and adequate funding.

45 Source: Pakistan and Nigeria MYRP member, interview, December 2024
46 Source: Global actor, interview, December 2024
47 Source: ECW (n.d.). *PGI Self-Assessment and Quality Assurance Checklist for MYRPs*
48 Inspired by: UNICEF (2019). *Guidance on Menstrual Health and Hygiene.*

Key actions from INEE standards related to participation and partnership:

- **Standard 3: Coordination – Collaboration across coordination mechanisms:** Engage with inter-agency coordination mechanisms within the education sector and across other sectors throughout all phases, from preparedness to response and recovery.
- **Standard 4: Assessment – Collaboration within and beyond the education sector:** Ensure that education assessments are coordinated within an inter-agency framework and aligned with assessments from other sectors and actors.
- **Standard 10: Facilities and Services – Multi-sectoral referral mechanisms:** Establish strong connections between schools and other learning spaces with key sectors such as child protection, health, nutrition and social and MHPSS services to facilitate referrals and holistic support.
- **Standard 19: Planning and Implementation – Inter-sectoral links:** Integrate EiE planning and implementation within broader emergency response efforts, ensuring education is not isolated but linked to other critical sectors.

Good practices	Example
Intentional cross-sectoral collaboration ensuring gen-der perspective in the response	In Bangladesh's MYRP, the ECD strategy was designed to integrate nutrition, shelter, protection and health. This would not have been possible without early collaboration, which required specific budget allocations and multi-sectoral planning from the outset.[49]
Leveraging sector working groups for coordination and shared learning	In Pakistan, the ECW programme used the sector working group platform to en-gage cross-sectoral actors during the design phase, including protection, WASH, mental health, and gender and inclusion specialists. This coordination enhanced ownership and integration of gender considerations from the outset. As a result, gender transformative actions – such as safe transport for girls, training on GBV risk for teachers, and inclusive infrastructure – were embedded in the pro-gramme's design and Results Framework. According to stakeholders, this early alignment contributed to stronger government buy-in and positioned gender as a shared responsibility beyond the education sector.[50]
Schools as multi-service cen-tres, integrating education with protection, health and WASH	In Nigeria's MYRP, education facilities were used as entry points for multi-sectoral services, including child protection, GBV response and livelihood support, reinforcing the interconnected nature of the humanitarian response. For example, schools supported by the MYRP offered referrals to health services, psychosocial support and community protection networks, especially for girls at risk of early marriage.[51]

49 Source: Bangladesh MYRP member, interview, December 2024
50 Source: Pakistan MYRP member, interview, December 2024
51 Source: Nigeria MYRP member, interview, December 2024

Challenges	Example
Fragmentation of programming and funding, limiting coordination across sec-tors	In Bangladesh, in Cox's Bazar, lack of cross-sector collaboration led to disjointed efforts, such as gender-segregated latrines being built without lighting due to sectoral silos between shelter and WASH. Education actors reported that while protection partners identified safety risks, they were unable to influence the WASH sector's latrine placement or design due to weak coordination mechanisms.[52]
Limited funding for cross-sectoral approaches	Donors often prefer sector-specific funding, making it difficult to implement holistic, integrated solutions. While consortium approaches have gained traction, securing funding for cross-sector initiatives remains challenging.[53]

BUDGET

Allocating sufficient budget for gender-targeted outputs and for embedding GLOs within programmes is essential to achieving gender transformative outcomes. Without dedicated and flexible funding, gender equality risks being deprioritised, limiting the capacity of programmes to address systemic barriers and drive sustainable change.[54]

Many programmes have included budget allocations for gender-related activities, reinforcing their potential for transformation. However, challenges persist in ensuring sustainable, flexible and sufficient funding, particularly for capacity-building and advocacy efforts.

Good practices	Example
Dedicated budgets for gender outputs and GLOs	In Pakistan's MYRP, a specific output on MHH was included, with a dedicated budget allo-cated for its implementation. This ensured the effective execution of the strategy.[55] Similarly, in South Sudan, budget was allocated to support the GLO in strengthening gender capacity within the MYRP country team.[56]

Challenges	Example
One-time budgeting without consultation limits the sustainability of interventions	In Pakistan, one-time allocations for items like menstrual hygiene kits failed to account for recurring needs, limiting sustained impact. However, this was not solely a budgetary issue. A lack of meaningful consultation with adolescent girls and female teachers during the programme design phase contributed to kits being poorly adapted in terms of frequency, content and delivery mechanisms.

52 Source: Global actor, interview, December 2024
53 Source: Global actor, interview, December 2024
54 Source: ECW (n.d.). *PGI Self-Assessment and Quality Assurance Checklist for MYRPs*
55 Source: South Sudan MYRP member, interview, December 2024
56 Source: South Sudan MYRP member, interview, December 2024

Challenges	Example
Insufficient funding for GLOs, limiting capacity-building and advocacy efforts	In South Sudan MYRP, a representative from the GLO reported that the budget allocated for their role was insufficient to effectively support capacity-building efforts with partners, government stakeholders and other actors.[57] This limitation constrained her ability to provide technical guidance and monitor the integration of gender transformative ap-proaches across programme components. Similarly, in Pakistan, funding restrictions limited GLOs' ability to conduct advocacy, workshops and long-term planning for gender transformative initiatives, weakening their role in driving systemic change.[58]
Lack of flexibility in budget structures	In one MYRP, the GLO reported being unable to reallocate unspent funds to scale up gender-focused advocacy and capacity-building efforts, despite having the capacity to do so. This constraint did not stem from ECW's grant management rules, which allow flexibility, but rather from limitations within the programme's internal implementation arrangement. This reflects a broader challenge in some partnerships, where intermediary structures may unintentionally restrict the ability of local actors to respond adaptively and expand gender transformative work.[59]

RISK MATRIX

Identifying risks to marginalised groups and implementing targeted risk mitigation measures are fundamental enablers of gender transformative programming.[60] A strong risk matrix not only protects participants but also enhances programme effectiveness. Without proactive risk management, programmes may reinforce systemic inequalities, expose participants to harm, or face cultural resistance that undermines gender transformative efforts.



How do I integrate the Risk Matrix dimension in alignment with INEE standards?

Developing a risk matrix that integrates gender-related risks can serve as a foundation for two key activities:

1. Identifying risks to develop strategies that protect learners, teachers and education personnel from dangers in and around the learning environment, while promoting awareness of these risks (Standard 9).
2. Identifying key risks to inform the design of training in risk prevention and mitigation for teachers and education personnel (Standard 14).

57 Source: South Sudan MYRP member, interview, December 2024
58 Source: Pakistan MYRP member, interview, December 2024
59 Source: Pakistan MYRP member, interview, December 2024
60 Source: ECW (n.d.). *PGI Self-Assessment and Quality Assurance Checklist for MYRPs*

Good practices	Example
Integration of gender-related risks into risk matrices	In Nigeria's MYRP, the risk matrix explicitly included gender-related risks, ensuring that challenges linked to gender inclusion were identified and mitigated.[61]
Risk matrix focuses on safe-guarding and protection, failing to capture resistance to gender approach	In South Sudan MYRP there was resistance from partners but after a big effort, those partners did support the safeguarding risk assessment and mitigation plans.[62]

Challenges	Example
Risk matrices often treated as administrative exercises	As one interviewee noted: "It's a tool that gets filled in at a desk. It's not based on real risk assessment, analysis or consultations with communities, women or girls".[63] This lack of community engagement weakens programme safety and impact.
Limited monitoring and infre-quent updates	While risk matrices are updated periodically, infrequent revisions prevent programme teams from identifying and responding to emerging risks in a timely manner.[64]

61 Source: Nigeria MYRP member, interview, December 2024
62 Source: South Sudan MYRP member, interview, December 2024
63 Source: Global actor, interview, December 2024
64 Source: Global actor, interview, December 2024

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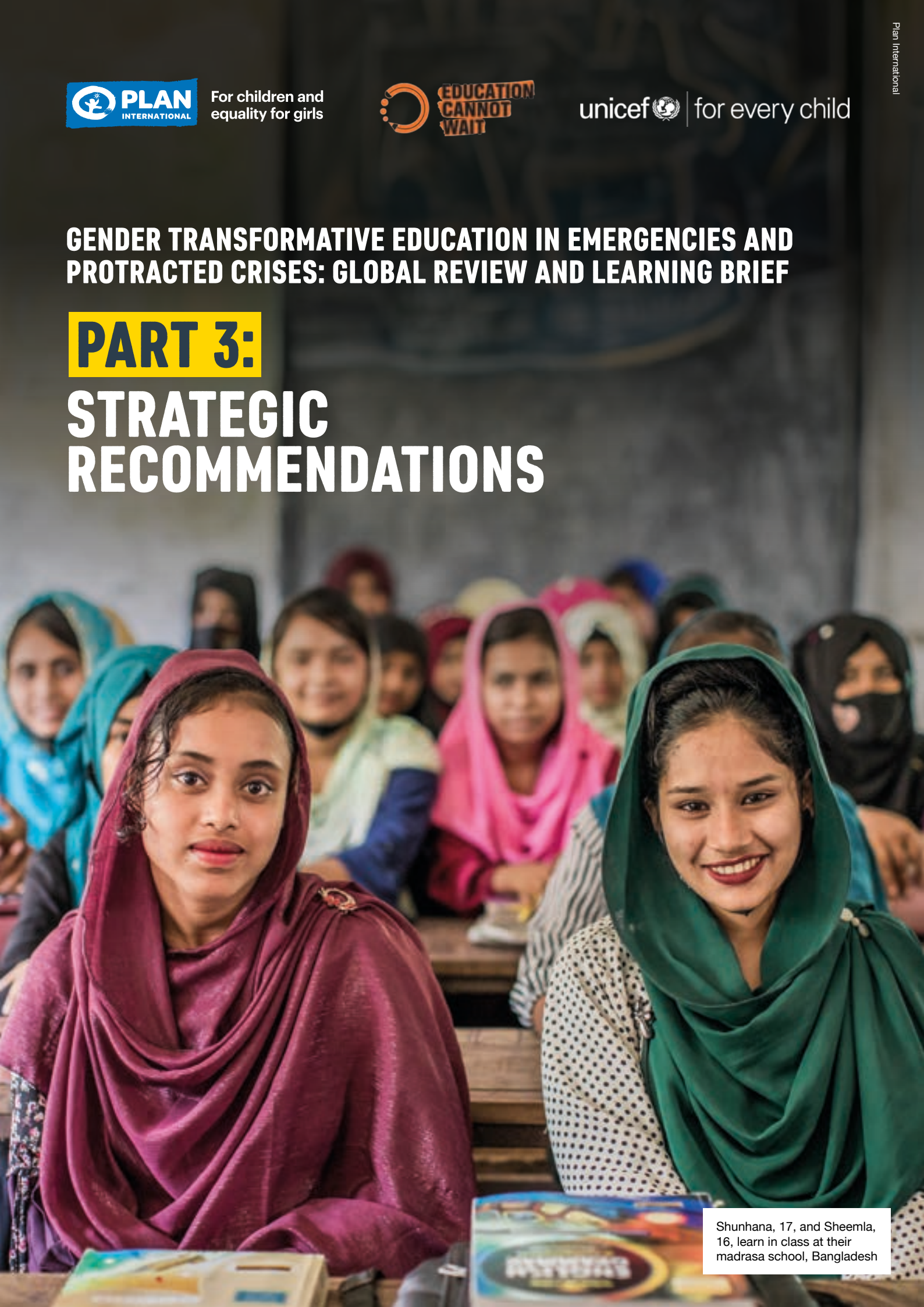
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EDUCATION CANNOT WAIT

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GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES AND PROTRACTED CRISES: GLOBAL REVIEW AND LEARNING BRIEF

PART 3:
STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS



Shunhana, 17, and Sheemla, 16, learn in class at their madrasa school, Bangladesh

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ECW	Education Cannot Wait
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EiEPC	Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises
GBV	Gender-based violence
GLOs	Gender lead organisations
LWOs	Local women's organisations
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
MYRP	Multi-Year Resilience Programme
PGI	Protection, gender and inclusion
SOGIESC	Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

I. INTRODUCTION

This document is Part 3 of *Gender Transformative Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises: Global Review and Learning Brief,* developed through a global review of promising practices under the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) Gender Acceleration Facility. This part provides strategic recommendations for advancing gender transformative approaches. The recommendations are grounded in evidence and experience from ECW-supported Multi-Year Resilience Programmes (MYRPs) and are directed at key actors in the EiEPC ecosystem, including ECW, EiE practitioners, policy makers and donors. This document can be used independently or as part of the full Learning Brief package.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ECW

Top priorities

- Ensure that gender lead organisations (GLOs) are systematically engaged from the strategy and proposal design stage, with clearly defined roles and dedicated funding throughout programme cycles to guarantee consistent gender integration and technical support.
- Strengthen early and iterative engagement of the ECW Gender Equality team in the MYRP design process, avoiding last-minute revisions and ensuring that transformative elements are embedded from the outset.
- Require gender assessment for EiEPC to be conducted during the design of the MYRPs. Additionally, ensure that a budget is allocated for existing MYRPs for this purpose or when a plan is in place to start a new MYRP to ensure that specific gender barriers are considered in the design of the MYRPs. These assessments should include an intersectional analysis that accounts for disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and other intersecting factors affecting access to education.
- Systematically include gender transformative indicators in MYRP results frameworks and provide support for tracking changes in gender norms, attitudes and empowerment, with a particular focus on outcome-level indicators – such as shifts in agency and decision-making power – to clearly distinguish them from output indicators.
- Allocate specific budget and strengthen local women's organisations' engagement in the implementation of MYRPs to ensure that the most marginalised groups and locations are reached under the MYRPs.

Going further: Strengthen ECW's role

Beyond these priorities, ECW should continue to strengthen its role as a global convener by facilitating a community of practice among GLOs, fostering peer learning and the harmonisation of gender transformative strategies across regions. Youth-led and feminist organisations should be actively engaged in these networks to ensure that diverse voices inform programming and drive intergenerational learning. To improve accountability, ECW should ensure consistent use of the PGI self-assessment and quality assurance checklist across all MYRPs and should monitor its application closely. Further efforts are needed to bridge the gap between global frameworks and local realities by developing simplified implementation tools and providing tailored training for country teams and partners.

Finally, ECW should lead **evidence-based advocacy** to influence global and national education policies, with a view to tackling misconceptions about gender transformative education through targeted campaigns and ensuring that **intersectional perspectives** – including disability and SOGIESC dimensions – are integrated across all initiatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EIE PRACTITIONERS

Top priorities

- Convene ECW's Gender team and other gender experts to provide technical guidance on gender transformative frameworks before and during proposal development (when designing an MYRP).
- Include local women's organisations (LWOs) as key actors in programme design and implementation, supported by mapping tools, capacity-building and direct funding.
- Develop intervention strategies that engage multiple levels simultaneously – girls, boys, families, communities, schools and institutional actors – integrating the gender domains (norms, agency, diversity, enabling environment, and condition and position).
- Ensure at least 25 per cent of programme budget is dedicated to gender-targeted outputs and establish budget lines for GLO-led initiatives.
- Design and implement capacity-building initiatives for gender focal points and education staff that are practical, contextualised and focused on daily responsibilities.
- Incorporate participatory monitoring and feedback mechanisms into programme cycles, validating assumptions and adapting programmes based on community input.
- Ensure early and meaningful engagement of LWOs in programme design and implementation, supported by mapping tools, capacity-building and direct funding.
- Foster collaboration across education, protection, WASH, nutrition and health to maximise holistic, gender transformative impact.
- Integrate gender-related risks into programme risk matrices and mitigation strategies, particularly addressing cross-sector vulnerabilities.
- Focus on action rather than terminology: *"A lot of people ask me to explain the difference, and honestly, my advice is don't get caught up in new terminology. The objective remains the same: to promote gender equality, empower girls and women, and address the root causes of power imbalances. Spending too much time debating terminology can distract from the actual work that needs to be done."* (Global actor interview)

Going further: Strengthen gender transformative approaches

Beyond these priorities, EiE practitioners should adopt a systematic approach to integrating gender transformative strategies throughout the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation phases of MYRPs.

Design phase

During programme design, cross-sectoral collaboration – including WASH, child protection, MHPSS and GBV actors – should be prioritised to ensure a holistic approach to gender equality. Programmes should begin with a comprehensive gender assessment, applying an intersectional lens to identify overlapping barriers faced by marginalised groups.

Where it is not feasible to conduct a full intersectional needs assessment during the design phase, relevant research and existing studies should be integrated into programme planning to address evidence gaps. At this stage, implementers should also socialise ECW's PGI self-assessment and quality assurance checklist across all partners, embedding these tools throughout proposal development to improve alignment and quality.

Lessons learned from previous MYRP phases or other similar programmes should inform future design choices. Adopting a dual approach is also critical, combining community participation (bottom-up) with government engagement and policy alignment (top-down) from the outset. This fosters both local ownership and systemic change.

Finally, programmes should mainstream gender across all strategies, aligning outputs with the gendered barriers identified during assessments and applying a rights-based programming and budgeting approach supported by ECW's available tools and guidance.

Implementation phase

During implementation, programme partners should designate gender focal points with the expertise and authority to sustain gender transformative approaches. GLOs should lead capacity needs assessments and provide targeted gender trainings to strengthen staff capabilities.

User-friendly, locally adapted resources – such as infographics, checklists and practical guides – should be co-developed to support gender transformative education. These resources must include tailored content for working with LGBTQI+ youth, children with disabilities and other marginalised groups.

To foster reciprocal learning, education and gender teams should collaborate through cross-training, joint resource development and peer exchange. Integrated programming should also be strengthened by establishing formal partnerships with actors in other sectors, including child protection, GBV, nutrition and health, to deliver cohesive and holistic services.

Finally, programmes should address potential resistance to gender equality by engaging men, boys and community leaders in transformative initiatives and by adapting curricula and training materials to embed gender sensitive elements effectively. Advocacy should be data-driven and based on evidence from needs assessments to ensure credibility and impact.



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Hadiza, 14, Nigeria, is now back in school after support from the child help desk

Monitoring and evaluation phase

Robust monitoring and evaluation systems are critical to ensuring that programmes remain responsive and effective. Participatory monitoring mechanisms should be integrated into programme cycles, enabling communities to validate assumptions and inform real-time adaptations.

Programmes should include gender transformative indicators within results frameworks, focusing on outcomes such as shifts in gender norms, empowerment and decision-making power. Standardised data collection tools should be designed to integrate intersectionality and allow for meaningful comparisons across contexts.

Additionally, enumerators must be trained in gender transformative methodologies and ethical data collection practices to ensure inclusivity and quality. Before interventions are finalised, programmes should test their assumptions with communities, ensuring alignment with local priorities and real needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

Top priorities

- Integrate gender transformation into ongoing policy discussions, ensuring alignment with global priorities such as the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, localisation and GBV prevention.
- Institutionalise the consultation of adolescent girls, women and marginalised groups in the development of education and gender policies, ensuring grounded and inclusive decisions. This should include establishing regular institutionalised mechanisms – such as national youth or adolescent girl councils – rather than relying on isolated or one-off consultations.
- Strengthen and fund gender units within Ministries of Education, mandating their role in driving gender transformative approaches in policy and practice.
- Establish cross-ministerial coordination mechanisms linking education, protection, health and gender to address structural barriers to inclusion.
- Facilitate access for LWOs by streamlining institutional and bureaucratic processes, enabling their meaningful participation in national education planning and coordination platforms.
- Integrate PGI training into education sector capacity development strategies to create sustained ownership at national and sub-national levels.



Hellena, 17, attends a primary school in Lakes State, South Sudan which is supported by Plan International

Plan International / Peter Caton

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DONORS

Top priorities

- Provide flexible, multi-year funding that supports the continuity of gender transformative education initiatives, particularly in protracted crises.
- Fund intersectional needs assessments and research studies that generate disaggregated, context-specific evidence to guide programme design and advocacy. Prioritise data collection that disaggregates by gender identity, sexual orientation and disability.
- Adapt compliance and due diligence procedures to support the meaningful inclusion of LWOs, by co-designing lighter and contextually appropriate compliance mechanisms in collaboration with LWOs, rather than merely adapting existing frameworks. This approach recognises LWOs' unique strengths and constraints while ensuring practical and sustainable engagement.
- Prioritise funding for adolescent-led and youth feminist organisations, recognising the growing role of youth leadership in promoting gender equality and social transformation.
- Allocate funds towards gender transformative education and shift beyond parity-focused metrics to support sustainable and systemic change.

Going further: Strengthen donor contributions to gender transformative education

Donors play a critical role in enabling sustainable gender transformation within education in emergencies and protracted crises. Beyond the top priorities, funding strategies should emphasise flexibility, inclusion and alignment with global priorities.

Investing in accessible, practical guidance materials for implementers at all levels is essential. These tools should be simplified, translated into local languages and tailored to diverse contexts to ensure usability and effectiveness. In addition, donors should support the development and adoption of frameworks that measure deeper shifts – such as transformations in social norms, power dynamics and inclusion – to move beyond surface-level parity indicators and to track genuine gender equality progress.

Furthermore, donor funding strategies should link gender transformative education to broader global priorities, including the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus and GBV prevention frameworks. Strengthening these connections fosters cross-sectoral synergies and maximises the overall impact of investments.

Finally, donors should acknowledge that not embedding gender transformative education carries a high cost. Funding priorities and advocacy efforts must reflect the long-term consequences of underinvestment, positioning gender equality as a strategic imperative rather than a secondary consideration.

For children and equality for girls

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