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R E A L

Research for Equitable Access and Learning

Report

Transformative Political Leadership to Promote 12 Years of Quality Education for All Girls

February 2020

Authors:

This report was written by Pauline Rose, Rebecca Gordon, Lauren Marston, Asma Zubairi and Phoebe Downing of the Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge. The summary was produced by Gloria Diamond of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI).

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Foreword by Co-Chairs of the Platform for Girls' Education

Education has the ability to empower, inspire and ensure a society that benefits everyone. But too often, girls are being left out of classrooms, and left behind. Today, over 130 million girls around the world are out of school. Even with access to education, many more lack the basics of literacy and numeracy. This problem has a real cost – not only in loss of talent and potential -- but on communities, societies and the global economy.

The Platform for Girls' Education, which we are proud to co-chair, was launched in the margins of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London in April 2018. There, the leaders of all 53 Commonwealth nations affirmed their commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals. We agreed that empowering young people is the best investment in our future. And we committed to expanding opportunities for 12 years of quality education for all, especially for the world's most marginalised girls.

The Platform has already published two papers: the first paper examined the state of girls' education in the Commonwealth,[1] the second focused on the importance of taking girls' needs into account when designing education reforms.[2] This third paper is crucial. It reveals the urgent need for political leadership to address the global learning crisis. With only 10 years left to achieve the Global Goals, we are falling behind the curve. It is time for leaders to step up and act.

As co-chairs of the Platform for Girls' Education, we are steadfast in our commitment to this agenda. But we cannot solve this crisis alone. It will require deeds, not words, to transform our classrooms into places where all future generations, and societies, can thrive. As the proud and present bearers of this monumental baton, we invite other world leaders to join this race and deliver the promise of universal education for all.

Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP
Secretary of State for Foreign and
Commonwealth Affairs and First
Secretary of State, United Kingdom

Amb. (Dr.) Amina C. Mohamed, EGH, CAV
Cabinet Secretary for Sports, Culture and
Heritage, Kenya

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[1] Gordon, R. Marston, L., Rose, P. and Zubairi, A. 2019. 12 Years of Quality Education for All Girls: A Commonwealth Perspective. REAL Centre. University of Cambridge. https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/real/publications/

[2] Global Partnership for Education and UNGEI, 2019. Gender-Responsive Education Sector Planning: A Pathway to Gender Equality in Education. https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2019-09-ungei-gpe-policy-note-gender-responsive-education-planning_0.pdf

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Acronyms

ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
BBOG	Bring Back Our Girls
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DFID	Department for International Development
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FGM/C	Female genital mutilation/cutting
G7	Group of Seven
GCI	Gender at the Centre Initiative
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
PAL	People's Action for Learning
REAL	Research for Equitable Access and Learning
SADC	South African Development Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TB	Tuberculosis
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative

Summary

"It starts with educating a girl, and hopefully ends with a woman leader."
Julia Gillard
27th Prime Minister of Australia

How can political leadership promote 12 years of quality education for all girls? This report from the Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre, University of Cambridge, seeks to answer this question. The study is based on a review of global evidence, with a focus on low- and lower-middle income countries where most action is needed to achieve the world's development goals. The researchers also conducted interviews with 11 current and former political leaders involved in championing girls' education. On the basis of this research, this report outlines seven recommendations on how political leadership can be leveraged to achieve 12 years of quality education for all girls.

Introduction

National and international leaders' commitment to girls' education has been gathering momentum since 2015, when UN member states adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG4 (to "ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning") and SDG5 (to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" by 2030). At the same time, evidence about barriers to girls' education, in particular for marginalised girls, is growing, along with a consensus on "what works" to advance girls' education. However, this new knowledge is not being translated into reforms that will put the world on track to achieve its shared development goals.

Across the world, over 130 million girls are out of school, and over half of all school-aged girls do not achieve minimum proficiency in reading and mathematics, even if they are attending school. Achieving gender equality in education requires an approach that goes beyond gender parity, ensuring that girls and boys not only gain equal access to education but are empowered equally in and through education. With global commitment for girls' education at an all-time high, there is an urgent need to identify the ways in which high-level political leadership can be harnessed to generate concrete, sustainable and effective action to achieve 12 years of quality education for all girls, especially the most marginalised girls.

A framework for understanding the influence of political leadership for girls' education

The framework for this research draws on a **transformative leadership approach**, which seeks to transform power structures, social norms and ideologies that justify and perpetuate gender inequality and power imbalances. Figure 1 shows the key actors that have been identified by the report, and the processes through which they can use political leadership to advance girls' education through a **whole-system approach**. This framework identifies the roles of **individual leadership** (heads of government, ministers, members of parliament, senior civil servants) and **collective leadership** (collaboration among ministries, cross-parliamentary coalitions and cross-country coalitions of political leaders).

Figure 1: Transformative Leadership to Promote Girls' Education
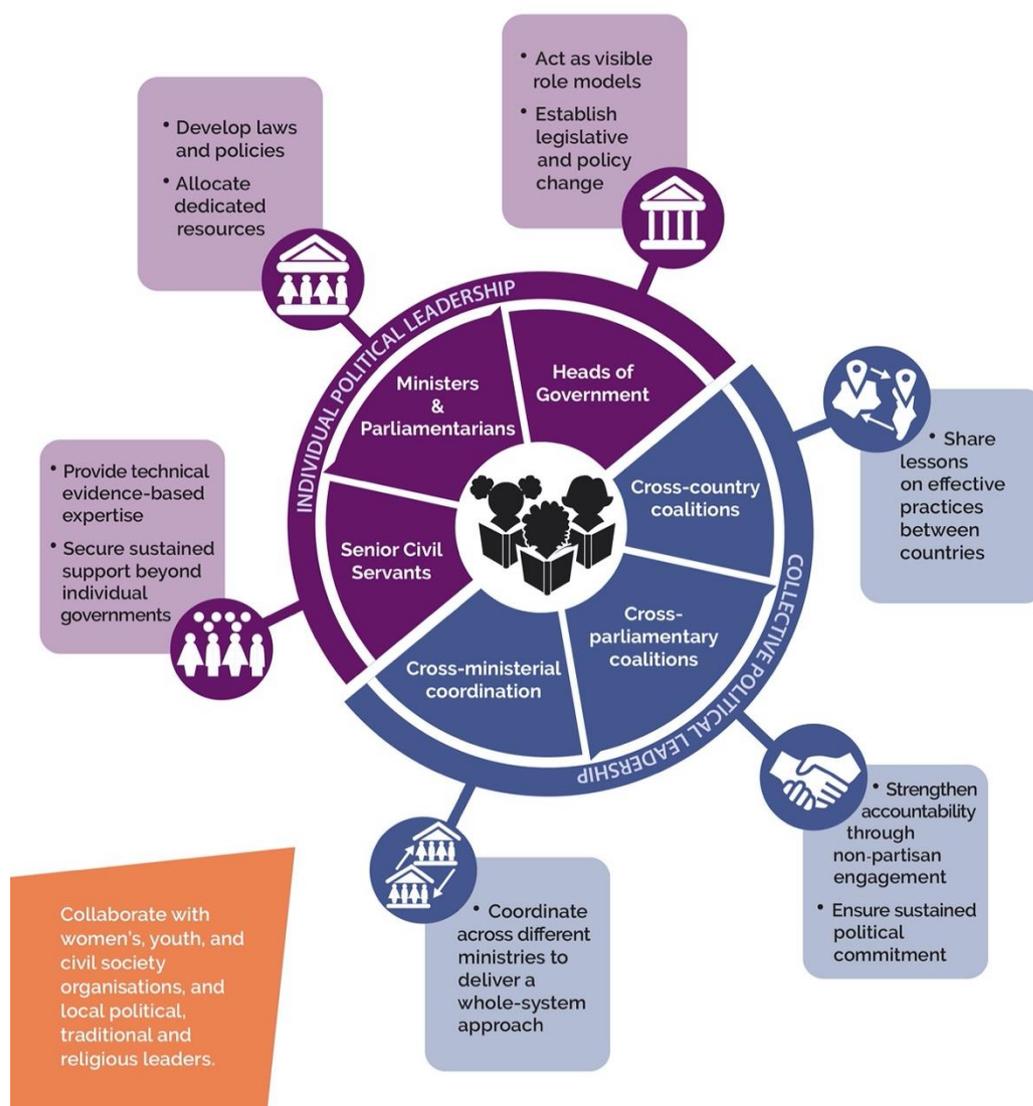
The framework emphasises the importance of engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, such as women's, youth, and civil society organisations, and local political, traditional and religious leaders. The engagement of political leaders with these stakeholders establishes the conditions for sustainable change, and ensures relevance, ownership and effective implementation of strategies to promote girls' education.

Acknowledging the diversity of political systems and processes across the globe, this framework offers one approach to understanding the political leadership needed to influence and accelerate progress for girls' education.

Political leadership for girls' education is understood in this research as 'the strategic process through which political leaders, both **individually** and **collectively**, convert political commitment into meaningful action on, and accountability for, achieving 12 years of quality education for all girls'.

Individual political leadership

Heads of government are essential for achieving legislative and policy change for gender equality. Their strategic and visible role means that they have the capacity to galvanise support for girls' education, creating a vision for change.

Alongside heads of government, **ministers and parliamentarians** have a mandate with which to develop legislation and policies to accelerate progress for girls' education, as they are instrumental in setting the direction of priorities, plans and strategies.

As non-elected staff within government structures, **senior civil servants** tend to hold longer-term positions in office and can therefore sustain support for girls' education beyond individual governments and election cycles. They play an important role in using current evidence and research, and building working relationships with civil society organisations and communities.

The role of women leaders

Although there is still a considerable lack of female representation in political positions at every level across the world, several countries have recently introduced quotas to improve gender balance in political participation and decision-making. While the presence of female leaders does not automatically improve outcomes for women and girls, women's political leadership can change social norms and challenge patriarchal structures that are holding back progress on gender equality.

Collective political leadership

Successful reform depends rarely on individuals acting alone. It relies on alliances, collective action and advocacy. Therefore, networks and coalitions of political leaders are vital to tackle issues that are beyond the capacity of individuals to resolve, as well as to provide a stronger collective voice.

Cross-ministerial coordination, for example between ministries of education, public health and social affairs, is important for the development of coherent and coordinated policies for girls' education.

Cross-parliamentary coalitions, such as the Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians, can ensure sustained political commitment and accountability for girls' education beyond individual governments through bi-partisan engagement.

Cross-country coalitions can play a vital role in sharing and scaling up effective practices across countries. The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), for example, has facilitated cooperation between sub-Saharan African countries to realise a shared vision for girls' and women's education, promoting positive programming examples that have been used in numerous contexts. FAWE was established in 1992 by five women ministers of education. The Forum's members include ministers of education, university vice-chancellors, education policymakers, researchers, gender specialists and human rights activists.

Factors that underpin political leadership for girls' education

The pathways to policy change and political support for a social issue are rarely linear and can be difficult to trace, as they often involve numerous complex processes, influences and actors. This report therefore highlights some of the factors that may, individually or in conjunction with other factors, motivate political leaders to step up action for girls' education.

1.   National political and institutional influences

Voter pressure, in particular at key points in the electoral cycle, can motivate high-level political leaders to commit to girls' education reforms in line with societal demands.

> *"Providing sanitary towels was an election issue in the 2016 Ugandan elections, because there was an outcry at the time...so during the campaign all presidential candidates made the announcement to provide free sanitary towels to all girls in schools."*
> Florence Malinga
> *Former Commissioner for Planning, Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda*

More generally, critical junctures provided by economic, institutional and political shifts offer opportunities to galvanise political action on girls' education and initiate reforms to advance gender equality and transform social norms.

2.   International influences

International networks and initiatives have a vital role to play in bringing together expertise to support the work of political leaders. To give one example, the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) has played a pivotal role in bringing together senior civil servants in ministries of education for workshops to build capacity on designing and implementing gender-responsive education sector plans.

Gender at the Centre Initiative

Launched in July 2019, the Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI) was developed by the G7 Ministers of Education and Development in collaboration with multilateral and civil society organisations committed to advancing gender equality in and through education. Together with ministries of education in eight pilot countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone), the partnership forms the **GCI Alliance**. Rooted in gender-responsive education sector planning, the GCI mobilises expertise and other resources to help the leadership of ministries of education and other national actors to advance gender equality in education through sector planning and monitoring. In addition, it aims to ensure that country-owned interventions, strategies and plans are financed, implemented and monitored for sustainable results.

The ratification of international treaties, standards and conventions can give national and international communities a way to pressure individual governments to act. For example, the Right to Education Initiative measures a country's commitment is to gender equality in education on whether it has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Discrimination in Education, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Signing up to these treaties alone is not enough, but it does enable others to hold political leaders accountable to the treaties that they have ratified. Accountability mechanisms developed by regional communities can also provide a way to strengthen the implementation of policies, programmes and legislation for girls' education, and hold governments to account on these commitments.

Regional accountability mechanisms

In 2008, 13 member states from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) signed and adopted the **SADC Protocol on Gender and Development**. The protocol seeks to consolidate the various commitments and instruments that SADC member states have subscribed to into one comprehensive regional instrument to plan, implement and monitor the SADC gender agenda. To track progress towards these commitments and hold governments to account for their progress, the **Gender Protocol Barometer** has been established as a regional monitoring tool, providing data, insights and analysis.

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3.   Data and evidence

"You cannot make decisions or interventions in a factual vacuum. Evidence capturing the real situation of girls in marginal areas is very crucial in determining what the situation is, why it is as it is, what needs to be done, what resources are required, including finances, human resources and other materials."
Dr Amina Mohamed
Cabinet Secretary for Sports, Culture and Heritage, Kenya

Research evidence can provide political leaders with direction for policy and reform by presenting information on the challenges affecting girls' access to education and successful interventions to support them. Data on education outcomes, in particular data disaggregated by gender and other forms of disadvantage, provide empirical grounding to prompt political action. The use of data in advocacy and influencing strategies by civil society organisations can be a key way of encouraging policymakers to take evidence-informed courses of action, for example through high-profile media campaigns or social movements.

Citizen-led education data

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) is a household-based annual survey administered in Pakistan, providing information on the schooling status of children aged 5 to 16 and basic learning levels for each province and district. ASER is able to generate a broader picture than data collected solely in schools, as it counts out-of-school children and includes data disaggregated by gender and disability. This information is written up in gender reports and gender justice cards that are provided to government officials, parliamentarians and media, to clearly show the extent of disparities and inequalities in education.

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4.   Campaigns, media and advocacy

Digital campaigns, advocacy and media attention can trigger action for girls' education by bringing attention to cases of political inaction or crises facing girls' education. Increasingly, 'hashtag activism' and the use of social media

platforms such as Twitter are being recognised for their impact on national and global politics, allowing social actors to override or expose media inattention or bias. By mobilising support around key messages and suggested courses of action, and drawing attention to specific issues, activists can make powerful demands for change to political leaders through these online platforms.

Political leaders can also take advantage of online campaigns to advance their priorities. For example, the former U.S. First Lady Michelle Obama, who launched the U.S.-led Let Girls Learn Initiative in 2015, joined the Nigerian campaign Bring Back our Girls (which used the hashtag #BBOG) in 2014. Her remarks at a roundtable discussion on girls' education, published by the Washington Post, made public not only her support for the #BBOG campaign, but also her focus on advancing educational opportunities for women globally: *"Now that we have a bit of the world's attention on this issue, we have to seize upon this moment and take the opportunity to make some significant changes. Right now, today, there are millions and millions of girls around the world who are not in school."*

5.   Personal experience

First-hand experience of the challenges that girls face can be a factor in motivating leaders to take action in support of girls' education, particularly women leaders who have experienced educational disadvantage themselves.

> *"I saw [the power of girls' education] myself, I experienced it myself as an individual, as a student, then as a teacher and a headteacher. This gave an opportunity for me to be part of that process that will bring about change"*
> Barbara Chilangwa
> *Former Permanent Secretary for Education, Zambia*

6.   Engagement with key stakeholders

A transformative and whole-system approach to political leadership requires the engagement of key stakeholders. Their meaningful participation is critical to ensuring that policies and programmes developed for girls' education match the requirements and capacities of those they seek to support. This report highlights the vital roles of stakeholders such as women's organisations, youth-led networks, civil society organisations, local political leaders, traditional leaders and religious leaders. The particular 'key stakeholders' that high-level political leaders should engage with will vary according to the context.

Women's organisations and women's movements have played an important role in putting pressure on national leaders to enact legislation, policies and programmes for gender equality. For example, across 70 countries, the impact of women's movements on legal reform against gender-based violence has been found to be more critical to outcomes than other factors considered, such as numbers of women legislators, or national wealth.

Young people are directly affected by the resulting policy and legislative reforms, so the voices of **youth-led organisations** must be heard by decision makers. This helps to ensure that national leaders develop appropriate policies that align with the needs of young people.

Civil society organisations and networks that take a community-centered approach can play a role in ensuring that national leaders develop programmes that are supported by communities.

Local political leaders play a crucial role in supporting the implementation of policies for girls' education. They are closest to the point of implementation, and more closely embedded within local governance structures, and potentially linked with schools. In Ethiopia, for example, school directors often have a seat on the Kebele (local)

Council, so there are strong links between policymakers, schools and communities, which help to ensure community investment and collaboration in providing education.

Engaging with **religious and traditional leaders** can have a particularly important impact in helping to change the social norms that hold back girls' education. Religious and traditional leaders occupy positions of authority due to the influence afforded to them by their communities. They can engage with and influence families and communities to mobilise support for policy reform and the transformation of social norms.

In summary, the report identifies the following roles that key stakeholders play in influencing political leadership for girls' education:

1. Putting pressure on national leaders to enact legislation, policies and programmes for gender equality in education;
2. Ensuring that national leaders develop appropriate policies that align with the needs of the community;
3. Supporting the effective implementation of policies for girls' education;
4. Holding national leaders to account, particularly to ensure sustainability of reforms beyond election cycles;
5. Supporting high-level political commitment to achieve widespread and sustained social norm change and tackle gender-based discrimination.

Political leadership can ensure that national planning and financing promotes 12 years of quality education for all girls

Embedding gender in national planning

The framework developed for this research to understand the influence of political leadership on girls' education highlights the importance of a **whole-system approach** that tackles gender-based discrimination and harmful social norms beyond the education system itself. Given the multi-dimensional nature of the barriers to girls' education, **collaboration between ministries** is crucial to ensure coherence across national legislation and policy. Such collaboration can be achieved through coordination between the social protection, public health and labour ministries, for example, in conjunction with engagement with civil society organisations and other key stakeholders.

National policies and plans outline the long-term vision for a country's development. Therefore, integrating girls' education and gender equality into national policies and plans will influence how these issues are dealt with in sector plans, as well as the reporting structures that monitor progress towards national targets. An **overarching policy environment** that recognises and seeks to address the multiple barriers to girls' education will therefore help to support and reinforce the effectiveness of policies related to education specifically.

Uganda's commitment to gender mainstreaming at the national level is an example of creating an enabling environment for a whole-system approach to promote girls' education. The country's *Second National Development Plan* (2015/6) points to the need for integration of cross-cutting issues related to gender in sectoral plans, programmes and projects to ensure coherence across sectors and local governments.

Cross-sectoral measures to tackle child marriage

In Ethiopia, the *National Growth and Transformation Plan II* (2015/16 - 2019/20) outlines cross-sectoral measures to strengthen girls' participation in education by tackling barriers beyond the education system, in particular the eradication of harmful traditional practices, including early and forced marriage. This approach

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includes public education and awareness programmes, engagement of women's movements, and enforcement of legal measures. In 2013, the National Alliance to End Child Marriage was established, and a national platform for the prevention and elimination of harmful traditional practices (including child marriage) was announced in 2015. Launched under the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs, the national platform includes representatives from civil society, women and youth associations and national federations, faith-based organisations and national associations.

Mobilising increased resources for girls' education

Appropriate policy reform for girls' education must be supported by sufficient resources. The majority of spending on education in low- and middle-income countries comes from domestic government budgets and is therefore allocated through the national budgeting process. The research identified three funding mechanisms that can be used to promote gender equality and girls' education.

1.   **Gender-responsive budgeting**

Public expenditure often supports boys and girls in unequal ways. The restructuring of spending and taxation to redress these imbalances and advance issues of gender equality, guided by gender-based assessments of the differential impact of budgets on males and females, is known as **gender-responsive budgeting**. According to the International Monetary Fund, 47 countries across the globe have implemented some form of gender-responsive budgeting.

This approach to government spending can mobilise domestic resources for girls' education. Enshrining such funding commitments in constitutional or legal provisions can ensure that they are sustained beyond the terms of individual governments.

Gender-responsive budgeting in Uganda

In Uganda, a dedicated gender unit was established within the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) in 2012, offering technical guidance to ensure gender issues were considered by other departments.

- Through technical and political support from within the MoES, as well as from parliamentarians and the Ministry of Finance, the gender unit now participates in several working groups across the MoES, including the budgeting working group.
- The gender-responsive budgeting process led to the MoES securing funding to implement an ethical code of conduct for teachers and to integrate a violence-reduction component within the new National Teacher Policy programme.
- Enshrining gender-responsive budgeting in the Public Finance Management Act has played a key role in ensuring its sustainability.

2.   **Formula funding and social cash transfers**

Formula funding and social cash transfers have provided effective ways to redistribute and target funding towards marginalised women and girls, including in education.

Funding priorities for girls' education in India

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan ('Education for All Movement'), is India's flagship programme to achieve universal primary education. The programme is a collaborative effort of the central, state and local governments, as well as civil society organisations, non-profit organisations, and the private sector.

- Phase I was launched in 2001-2002. The funding formula approach targeted more funding to districts with large out-of-school populations, wider gender disparities and greater minority populations together with poor infrastructural conditions.

- The National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level component, launched in 2003, prioritised girls.

- Budgetary provisions were integrated to disburse additional support to the hardest-to-reach girls in Grades 1 to 8.

- Following the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act in 2009, the second phase of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was extended until 2011–12 to meet the challenges of equitable access, retention and quality.

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3. Donor targets for funding gender equality in education

Donor governments can support the delivery of policy and programmes for girls' education. Visible backing from heads of government in donor countries has shown to be significant for securing commitment to gender equality in international aid spending. Bilateral assistance also allows donor countries to demonstrate leadership for issues of gender equality at the international level, and coherence with national positions on gender equality.

For example, the Canadian government launched the Feminist International Assistance Policy in 2017, which ensures that by 2021-22, 95 percent of Canada's bilateral international development assistance initiatives will target or integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In 2014, the UK government became one of the first donor countries to enshrine in law its commitments to advancing gender equality through bilateral aid spending, through the International Development (Gender Equality) Act. The legislation had high-level bipartisan political support.

"We are working closely with DFID, the Department for Education and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to mobilise our global network to carry forward the high-level political commitment to girls' education. The Gender Equality Unit draws on DFID's expertise in technical areas, and we use the FCO's strong experience on the diplomatic side to galvanise support for girls' education in political multilateral situations."
Senior Civil Servant
UK government

Conclusions and Recommendations

The report identifies five areas of action to ensure that political leadership for girls' education is translated into concrete, sustainable and effective action:

1. INDIVIDUAL ACTION

RECOMMENDATION A: Heads of government, **government ministers** and **parliamentarians** must use their platform to demonstrate visible commitment to, and public advocacy for, the development and implementation of policies in support of 12 years of quality education for all girls. **Senior civil servants** must be supported and given appropriate resources to provide technical expertise and promote girls' education in ways that can be sustained across election cycles.

RECOMMENDATION B: Women leaders should be represented at every level of government to improve the gender balance in political participation and decision-making, contribute to social norm change and challenge patriarchal structures.

2. COLLECTIVE ACTION

RECOMMENDATION C: A global coalition of parliamentarians should be established to advocate for girls' education. Such a coalition should work across geographical and political divides in a non-partisan and inclusive fashion. It should engage with women's and youth organisations and civil society stakeholders, and share their commitment to tackling the barriers that hold back progress for girls' education, particularly the most marginalised girls.

3. RESEARCH AND DATA

RECOMMENDATION D: Senior civil servants need to promote investment in and use of data on education, in particular data disaggregated by gender and other sources of disadvantage, to build evidence-based options for policy and reform. **Heads of government and parliamentarians** should adhere to global accountability mechanisms in order to strengthen the implementation and sustainability of reforms for girls' education and use data and evidence so that they can be held to account for their commitments.

4. ENGAGEMENT WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS

RECOMMENDATION E: All political leaders must engage with and create space for key stakeholders, including women's and youth organisations, civil society organisations and local political, traditional and religious leaders. This will ensure that the voices of those directly affected by reforms are heard by decision makers, and that communities develop a sense of ownership of policies and programmes for girls' education.

5. PLANNING AND FINANCING

RECOMMENDATION F: Government ministers and senior civil servants need to establish innovative, whole-system approaches to embedding gender equality in national plans and policies, in order to tackle the multi-dimensional barriers to girls' education and ensure coherence across sectors.

RECOMMENDATION G: Heads of government and **government ministers** must implement gender-responsive budgeting, ensuring sufficient domestic resources are allocated to girls' education and appropriately distributed to the most marginalised groups. **Heads of government** and **parliamentarians** need to enshrine such funding commitments in constitutional or legal frameworks so that their implementation continues beyond individual government cycles, within a longer-term accountability framework.

Introduction

High-level political advocacy for girls' education is stronger than ever, but there is an urgent need to convert this advocacy into leadership that ensures no girl is left behind. This report argues that transformative political leadership aimed specifically at promoting girls' education can disrupt the deep structures that perpetuate gender inequality and shift the power dynamics within decision-making processes, changing social norms and accelerating progress towards 12 years of quality education for all girls.

Faster progress is crucial: 130 million girls are still denied their right to go to school and many girls are not learning the basics even if they are spending time in school (UNESCO, 2014; World Bank, 2018a). In terms of girls' education, there is a long way to go to reach Sustainable Development Goal 4, the education goal ('Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all') (UNESCO, 2015).

The problems are well-known: A substantial evidence base identifies the barriers to marginalised girls' education. Solutions are also increasingly apparent: a growing evidence-base shows what works to support marginalised girls in education (Unterhalter et al., 2014; Sperling & Winthrop, 2016; Gordon et al., 2019). However, governments are not always putting reforms that are known to work into practice on a sufficient scale. Nor are these reforms reaching the most marginalised girls – those denied the opportunity of a quality education because of factors such as poverty, disability, ethnicity or where they live.

This report is based on a review of evidence in low- and lower-middle income countries where most action is needed to achieve the goal of 12 years of quality education for all girls. There is little evidence that directly links political leadership to education, so the report draws on findings from other relevant social sectors where appropriate. This evidence is complemented by interviews with 11 current and former political leaders who have been involved in promoting girls' education (see Appendix 1 for a list of interviewees).

In the report we focus specifically on the role of high-level political leaders, such as heads of government, ministers, parliamentarians and senior civil servants through their work as individuals as well as collectively. We also stress that it is vital for these political leaders to work with a wide range of stakeholders, such as women's organisations and movements, youth-led organisations and networks, civil society organisations, as well as local political, traditional and religious leaders. (While these stakeholders often exercise important leadership responsibilities in their own right, it is beyond the scope of this report to examine those responsibilities.)

> "It starts with educating a girl, and hopefully ends with a woman leader."
>
> *Julia Gillard – 27th Prime Minister of Australia*

The report also highlights the crucial role of women leaders, who act as role models, contributing to a broader change in perceptions about the roles that women can play in society. We recognise the importance of a gender balance in political participation and decision-making, which was an internationally agreed target in the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (United Nations, 1995).

Since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted 25 years ago, high-level advocacy to promote girls' education has intensified. The education Sustainable Development Goal (SDG4) includes a strong focus on leaving no one behind, with the pledge to ensure that 'all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes,' which is complemented by the focus of SDG5 to 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). The Education 2030 Framework for Action, adopted by 184

UNESCO member states in 2015, affirms the importance of ending gender-based discrimination and ensuring that girls can realise their right to education (UNESCO, 2015). The current report focuses on the role of political leadership in response to the recommendations of the Platform for Girls' Education Report on *12 Years of Quality Education for All Girls: A Commonwealth Perspective* (Gordon et al., 2019), which summarised the barriers and what works for girls' education.

High-level advocacy has been driven in part by a deepening realisation that beyond education's immediate benefits – the knowledge and skills it develops – its wider advantages for girls and women are extensive. Child mortality, child marriage and early childbearing all tend to fall when women have higher levels of education (Wodon et al., 2018). Education increases women's ability to make decisions within their households, access basic services, develop networks within communities and earn higher wages (UNESCO, 2014). Girls' education plays a key role in boosting progress towards all of the SDGs (UNESCO, 2016).

Section I of this report presents a framework for understanding the influence of political leadership on girls' education. Section II reviews evidence about the factors that underpin political leadership to promote girls' education. It highlights the importance of political leaders engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to establish the conditions for sustainable change, and ensure relevance, ownership and effective implementation of strategies to promote girls' education. Section III provides evidence on how political leaders have prioritised and accelerated progress for girls' education by embedding gender considerations when planning and mobilising resources. The report concludes with recommendations on how they can ensure that no girl is left behind by using their political leadership to transform education systems and tackle gender discrimination more broadly.

Section I: A framework for transformative political leadership to promote girls' education

This section presents a framework for understanding political leadership needed to influence and accelerate progress towards 12 years of quality education for all girls. Such leadership needs to tackle entrenched patriarchal norms and structures that create barriers to girls' education and create resistance to change (Gordon et al., 2019). A transformative leadership approach is vital to bring about wider shifts in power within and beyond the education system. The framework identifies the types of political leaders who have the potential to influence change, highlighting the importance of political leaders working collaboratively to leave no girl behind.

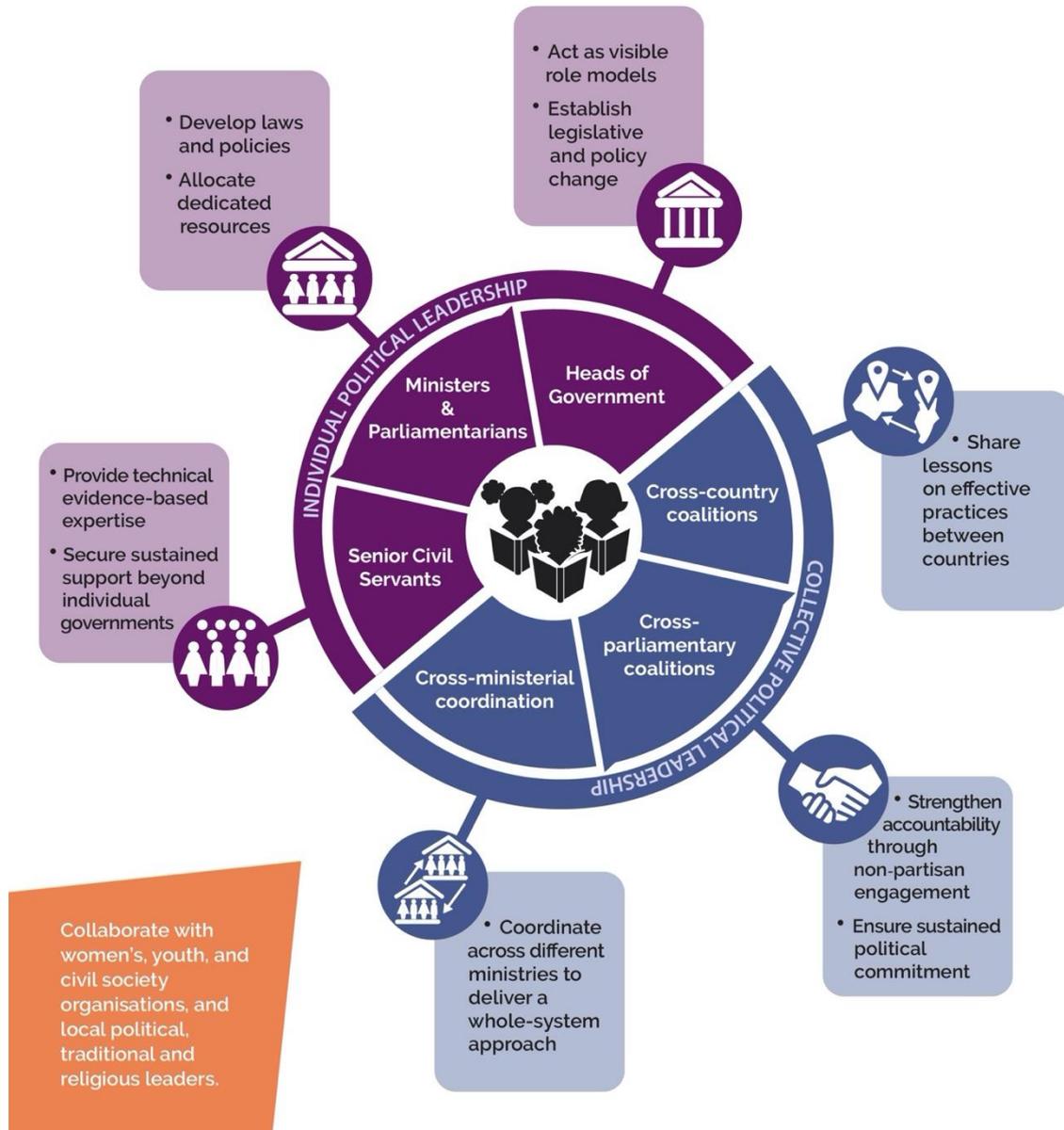## What is transformative political leadership?

Transformative leadership is vital to dismantle entrenched power structures that prevent all girls from accessing 12 years of quality education. Such leadership draws on an approach that "raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspirations of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both" (Burns, 1978: 20). Transformative leadership is associated with feminist approaches to leadership, which arise from the struggle to tackle power relations, to advance gender equality and to create feminist structures that would not "reproduce the patriarchal models that dominated most societies and cultures" (Batliwala, 2011: 21). As transformational leadership is also concerned with influencing social change, it seeks to transform structures and ideologies that justify and perpetuate gender inequality and power imbalances (Oxfam, 2014). Such an approach uses a gender lens to address the gender inequities in power that undermine progress, recognising that transformation takes time.

As identified in our framework developed for this report, such transformative leadership is a strategic process through which political leaders, both individually and collectively, convert political commitment into meaningful action on, and accountability for, achieving 12 years of quality education for all girls (Figure 1).

To achieve lasting legislative and political change that tackles social norms, transformative leadership needs to sustain support and momentum for girls' education beyond individual governments and electoral cycles. That means taking a collaborative, bipartisan approach, including politicians and civil servants from across the political spectrum. Without such collaborative leadership, widespread and sustained change is unlikely to be achieved. Additionally, as the challenges facing girls' education go beyond ministries of education, ministries need to collaborate to achieve whole-system reform. Given that restrictive gender norms hinder girls' access to education globally, learning from cross-country coalitions about approaches that have worked in other countries is important.

Figure 1: Transformative Leadership to Promote Girls' Education

Transformative Leadership
to promote *Girls' Education*

INDIVIDUAL POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

COLLECTIVE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Ministers & Parliamentarians
- Develop laws and policies
- Allocate dedicated resources

Heads of Government
- Act as visible role models
- Establish legislative and policy change

Cross-country coalitions
- Share lessons on effective practices between countries

Senior Civil Servants
- Provide technical evidence-based expertise
- Secure sustained support beyond individual governments

Cross-parliamentary coalitions
- Strengthen accountability through non-partisan engagement
- Ensure sustained political commitment

Cross-ministerial coordination
- Coordinate across different ministries to deliver a whole-system approach

Collaborate with women's, youth, and civil society organisations, and local political, traditional and religious leaders.

In addition, the framework identifies the need for high-level political actors to engage with a wide range of stakeholders, and make space for such engagement. These stakeholders include women's organisations and movements, youth-led organisations, civil society organisations, as well as local political, traditional and religious leaders. Collaboration between national political leaders and local leaders is particularly important. By challenging imbalances in power, such coordination can disrupt the gender norms that hold women and girls back. It also ensures the relevance, ownership and effective implementation of strategies to promote girls' education.

Transformative leadership to promote girls' education applies to leaders of any gender. However, women leaders deserve particular attention. In many contexts, women continue to be under-represented in political leadership positions. Women's political leadership not only improves the gender balance in political participation and decision-making, but also helps to change social norms and challenge patriarchal structures that are hindering girls' education.

We acknowledge that different types of leadership are valued in different locations: Leadership "is always situational, evaluated in a particular political setting, cultural environment and through the lens of gender power relations" (Hudson & McLoughlin, 2019: 1). Additionally, political systems and electoral processes vary from country to country, so no framework will fit all contexts.

Drawing on the work of the Developmental Leadership Programme, our framework includes three interconnected perspectives:
- **individually, leaders who are motivated** to promote girls' education take the opportunities and adopt strategic approaches to push for change;
- these motivated individuals **form and engage collectively in coalitions that have power, legitimacy and influence;** and
- they use these **coalitions to contest ideas underpinning the status quo** and promote change – in the case of gender equality in education, by tackling social norms holding back progress.

These coalitions may form as a result of coordination to bring on board those with relevant expertise – either individuals or groups – to achieve a shared goal (Hudson, McLoughlin, Roche & Marquette, 2018).

Drawing on these three perspectives, our framework focuses on different types of individual and collective political leadership:
- **Individual leaders** can include heads of government, ministers of education (and other sectors), members of parliament, and senior civil servants (such as permanent secretaries).
- **Collective leadership** can include cross-ministerial coordination and coalitions within countries; cross-party and cross-country coalitions of politicians; and other forms of collective action across countries.

Individual political leadership

Heads of government have an essential role in advancing gender equality by achieving legislative and policy change. Alongside heads of government, ministers and parliamentarians have a mandate from which to develop legislation and policies to accelerate progress for 12 years of quality education for all girls. Senior civil servants

have a vital role in sustaining the development of policies and programmes that embed gender equality beyond election cycles, ensuring that progress outlives individual heads of government, ministers and parliamentarians.

<u>Heads of government</u>

Heads of government of any gender are uniquely positioned to drive progress for girls' education. Their strategic and visible role can ensure that national planning, both within education and across the whole government agenda, is coherently aligned to achieving tangible targets for improving girls' education. In the health sector, heads of government have played key roles in mobilising campaigns and introducing legislation that has protected vulnerable groups. An analysis of leadership practices in 14 countries showed that the involvement of high-level political leaders had a vital impact on HIV/AIDS campaigns (Karan et al., 2017). For example, in Uganda, political leaders took a bipartisan approach to policymaking to addressing HIV/AIDS, including open and visible high-level support from President Yoweri Museveni, which placed the issue on the national agenda. Museveni talked openly about HIV/AIDs in his public speeches around the country, and in published articles. This was seen to be crucial to putting the reduction of HIV prevalence high on the national agenda (Parkhurst & Lush, 2004). High-level political commitment to HIV/AIDS showed its potential to reduce stigma and to demonstrate the importance of testing, and to provide leadership for other government officials to follow.

Commitment, visibility and messages from heads of government are similarly vital for promoting positive social attitudes and stimulating the action required to dismantle the entrenched power dynamics that impede girls' education. Leaders can be influential in speaking out to reduce stigma about issues that are barriers to girls' education, such as early marriage. President Edgar Lungu of Zambia has shown vocal support for the African Union Campaign on ending Child Marriage and has been praised for bringing visibility to the work of the campaign.[1] He has also spoken out prominently about the need to end child marriage by 2030 and linked this to making sure girls have access to education.[2] The president's interventions have been accompanied by government action. In 2013, the government launched a nationwide campaign to end child marriage. The campaign was led by the Ministry of Chiefs and Traditional Affairs, and prioritised engagement with traditional leaders and law reform. In 2015, Zambia began to develop a five-year national action plan to end child marriage.[3]

> "Our President here [in Zambia] has been called a champion for ending early marriage, in particular for attending meetings on early marriage."
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> ***Barbara Chilangwa – Former Permanent Secretary of Education, Zambia***

> "When there is leadership at the top, it can change everything. When elected Prime Minister Trudeau declared himself a feminist, he offered Canadians a very simple definition of what it means… It was helpful to bring this definition on the loaded term of being feminist. I think many more people became much more at ease in declaring themselves a feminist once they heard the definition suggested by Prime Minister Trudeau"
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> ***Ambassador Isabelle Hudon – Former Co-Chair Gender Equality Advisory Council for the G7***

Heads of government can ensure that such vocal commitment is accompanied by mobilisation and prioritisation of resources. To give one example, during Canada's presidency of the G7 in 2018, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau committed to prioritising gender equality across all key policy areas identified for the G7 Summit, including the economy, peace and security, and health. The G7 Summit in Charlevoix, Quebec, was unique in integrating gender equality and women's empowerment, together with an emphasis on the public participation of women and girls, across all G7 themes, commitments and initiatives. Highlighting the importance of cross-country collective action, Trudeau also succeeded in mobilising resources from other heads of government for gender equality, and specifically for girls' education. Notably, US$2.9 billion was pledged for girls' education by the world's richest economies (ICRW, 2018). A youth-led online campaign also contributed. Once Trudeau announced that investing in girls' education in crisis situations was a key priority at the G7, the activist Fatuma Omar Ismail started a petition on the advocacy website change.org to compel high-level political leaders to commit to a G7 Declaration to Educate and Empower Girls in Crises backed with concrete financial investments.[4] The G7's commitment to gender has been maintained, as France continued the Gender Advisory Council into the 2019 G7 Summit. The 2019 G7 Summit Communiqué made extensive reference to women's empowerment and gender equality, and reiterated support for increasing women and girls' access to quality education for all (Ruthrauff et al., 2019).

The visibility of women as heads of government can encourage greater political engagement and mobilisation of a broad spectrum of women. Women heads of government can also challenge male-dominated concepts of leadership. For example, after Dilma Rousseff became president of Brazil in 2011, the number of women mayoral candidates increased in 2012, referred to as 'The Dilma Effect'. Her leadership meant that women were no longer seen as outsiders, indirectly inspiring women to run for mayoral positions (Jalalzai & dos Santos, 2015). By changing the perception of women in society, women leaders can contribute to shifts in gender norms

> "…because I am the first female President, people prick up their ears. They have heard five male Presidents before me, and so people are listening to hear what I will bring to the table."
>
> ***Her Excellency Paula Mae Weekes – President of Trinidad and Tobago***

and social norms, benefiting girls and women worldwide. Across the world, however, only around seven percent of heads of state are women. Of these, only three heads of state and government in low and lower middle-income contexts are women (UN Women, 2019).

> "The role-modelling effect of women political leaders matters. I know this from the Australian environment. The number of girls interested in politics increased from the experience of having one female national political leader, me!"
>
> ***Julia Gillard – 27th Prime Minister of Australia***

Ministers and parliamentarians

On its own, political will at the highest level is insufficient for change. Heads of government do not act alone. To design, pass and implement laws, policies and plans they must engage with, or be influenced by, their government ministers and parliamentarians.

> "One of the first things my team [at the Ministry of Education] and I did was to talk to the girls themselves to ask them about the barriers to their education… Talking to the teachers themselves was also very important. Finally engaging the parents of girls is very important."
>
> ***Professor Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang – Former Minister of Education, Ghana***

Ministers of education have a crucial role in developing legislation and policies, and ensuring these enhance gender equality in education by reflecting the needs of communities. For example, Professor Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang, Minister of Education in Ghana from 2013 to 2017, emphasised using a gender-inclusive lens in planning for her role as minister. This involved dismantling hierarchies by directly speaking to girls who were not able to access education.[5]

Parliamentarians, too, have a critical role in spurring and sustaining action for girls' education by supporting the development of comprehensive legal frameworks to enhance women's equality and rights. In Zimbabwe, Member of Parliament Hon. Jessie Majome met the Minister of Justice and Vice-President of Zimbabwe to elicit his commitment to eliminate the inconsistencies between the constitutional ban on child marriage and statutory and customary provisions. Together with other parliamentarians, she also moved a motion on the Unlawful Practice of Child Marriage, successfully mobilising 70 Zimbabwean male MPs to sign a petition personally disavowing child marriage. As a result, the Minister of Justice and Vice-President committed to amend all marriage laws to reflect the constitutional positions (Girls Not Brides, 2016a). The commitment was realised in 2019, with the publication of the Government's Marriages Bill.[6]

Women political leaders may also be more likely than their male colleagues to tackle cross-sectoral social issues that affect gender equality and girls' education. A study in 17 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa showed that female representatives were significantly more likely than male representatives to prioritise poverty reduction, health care and women's rights (Clayton et al., 2018). While specific evidence on education is not available, a study assessing data from 102 low- and middle-income countries found that countries where at least 20 percent of parliamentarians were women had a ten percentage point increase in rates of measles immunisations and a one percentage point increase in child survival, compared with countries where no women were in Parliament (Swiss, Fallon & Burgos, 2012).

> "Bringing women to deal with women's affairs is proven to be successful. The presumption is that because women experience these issues, they are in a good position to positively relate to them and proffer workable solutions."
>
> ***Professor Naana Jane Opoku- Agyemang –Former Minister of Education, Ghana***

Women ministers and parliamentarians can also boost girls' education through their significant influence on gender norms. Where there are high rates of women's participation in political roles, the effect of these role models could have a particular influence on shifting gender norms. For example, 61 percent of seats in Rwanda's parliament are held by women (IPU, 2019). Such high-level representation of women has shifted cultural practices in ways that promote gender equality. In interviews with members of women's civil society organisations, women reported that higher representation of women in Parliament increased the respect that family and community members showed to them, enhanced their capacity to speak and be heard in public forums, gave them greater autonomy in decision-making, and increased access to education for girls (Burnet, 2011).

> "I was worried that if I didn't do well, I might be a hindrance for the women who are coming, because people would say 'Ha, these women are given responsibility, but they don't perform well,' so I was very worried."
>
> *Genet Zewdie – Former Minister of Education, Ethiopia*

Given the continued under-representation of women in leadership positions, they often face greater scrutiny both publicly and within the political institutions that they are operating in. For example, in a global survey of national legislators from parliaments in 84 countries, women were more likely to report that their gender hurt them in their political careers, while more than 70 percent of men thought it made no difference to their own careers. In addition, women in politics were caught within gendered social expectations and had to operate within narrow bands of acceptable behaviour. They faced both overt and covert sexism, affecting their aspirations to take up political roles and their experiences within those roles (Rosenbluth, Kalia & Teele, 2015).

It is also important not to overstate how much the presence of women leaders advances transformative leadership to promote girls' education. Women may not always prioritise or be able to accelerate changes in gender equality. In some cases, they may even actively hinder progress towards a more gender-equal society. According to Florence Malinga, former Commissioner for Planning at the Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda, it was a woman in the Ministry who had strong opinions against letting pregnant girls re-enter education and was an obstacle to the introduction of support for young mothers.[7] In Rwanda, the majority female Parliament approved a new labour code in 2009 that reduced paid maternity leave from eight to two weeks and increased the working week from five to six days and from 40 to 45 hours (Republic of Rwanda, 2009 cited in Burnet, 2011). Members of women's civil society organisations pointed to this legislation as an example of how female parliamentarians put their individual interests (e.g. staying in their leadership positions) ahead of the interests of the average Rwandan woman (Burnet, 2011).

Women ministers may also be limited in the positions they hold. Women are often confined to portfolios stereotypically seen to be 'feminine' or that are viewed as low-prestige policy areas (Krook & O'Brien, 2012). In relation to girls' education, this can also mean that women ministers of education can drive policy change, but not exercise power with the Ministry of Finance to influence budgetary decision making.

Senior civil servants

Cultivating positive social norms and attitudes towards the rights of girls and women is likely to take longer than most individual governments and parliamentarians will be in office. Civil servants therefore play a crucial role in providing stability and continuity in the design, development and delivery of policies and programmes for girls' education. Ministers direct high-level decision-making about strategic priorities, but do not always possess technical expertise, often move between departments, and are affected (along with parliamentarians) by the election cycle. Civil servants also have a key role in using the latest evidence to inform policies and programmes for girls' education. In addition, they may be able to develop the most relevant and effective interventions by linking with civil society organisations working within local communities.

For example, Barbara Chilangwa, former Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education in Zambia, said how her earlier role as a civil servant leading a girls' education programme enabled her to shape subsequent actions when she became Deputy Permanent Secretary in charge of technical cooperation.[8] Her recognition of the importance of girls' education and experience of working on this programme enabled her to galvanise support for it to be part of the Basic Education Sub-Sector Investment Programme. This led to gender equality becoming a key performance

indicator for the programme. The programme also included several objectives that specifically targeted gender equality in education in Zambia, such as offering more bursaries to vulnerable children (including girls), reducing school costs for parents by providing grants to schools, and constructing new schools to reduce the distance girls had to travel (Mwanza, 2015).

Gender units within ministries have been one approach to the calls of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action to establish or strengthen national mechanisms that support gender equality (UN Women, 2014). In many countries, dedicated gender units have been established to provide specialised skills and attention needed for education ministries to integrate gender considerations into the overall functioning of the civil service and the government (UNGEI & GPE 2017). In Ethiopia, a gender unit within the Ministry of Education has played a key role in promoting gender champions among senior civil servants. Ethiopia's gender unit has a director and six staff with expertise in training and capacity building in gender mainstreaming, planning, monitoring and evaluation. It also has a direct budget allocation. The unit is reported to have built capacity in the Ministry of Edcuation, regional and district departments and schools to mainstream gender in programming and monitoring and evaluation (UNGEI & GPE, 2017).

Gender units can face resistance, however, and often are not provided with enough resources to implement gender analysis and mainstreaming. An assessment in eight West African countries indicated that a lack of financial, human and material resources had limited the ability of gender units or gender focal points to influence policy and programme development (UNICEF, 2015 cited in UNGEI & GPE, 2017). For civil servants to be effective in these positions, they must be provided with sufficient resources and authority to act for gender equality.

Collective political leadership

Achieving reform is rarely an individual action. It relies on alliances, and collective action and advocacy (Hudson et al., 2018). Networks and coalitions of political leaders who come together with the aim of achieving common goals are vital not only to tackle issues that are beyond the capacity of individuals to resolve, but also to provide a stronger collective voice.

"I remember that there was a big resistance from the main department heads when I first presented the proposal that we need a women's affairs department in the Ministry of Education… They questioned 'why do we need a women's department? In Ethiopia, women are not discriminated against in education.'"

Genet Zewdie – Former Minister of Education, Ethiopia

"Normally they would put the 'gender person' in a department that was least important… in many cases they would give the positions the lowest rank so that they had no influence in the decisions that were being taken. So, although there was a focal point in the ministries, they didn't really have the teeth to bite."

Barbara Chilangwa – Former Permanent Secretary of Education, Zambia

Cross-ministerial coordination

To develop coherent and coordinated policies for girls' education that use a whole-system approach, cross-ministerial coalitions are crucial. Many barriers to girls' education are influenced by factors outside the education system, such as child labour, early marriage and gender-based violence. In Ethiopia, the National Girls' Education Forum was established to enable the cross-ministerial coordination necessary to ensure that the government's Education Sector Development Programme goals related to girls' education are realised. The forum includes representations from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and other relevant departments, as well as from civil society and donor communities (UNGEI & GPE, 2017).
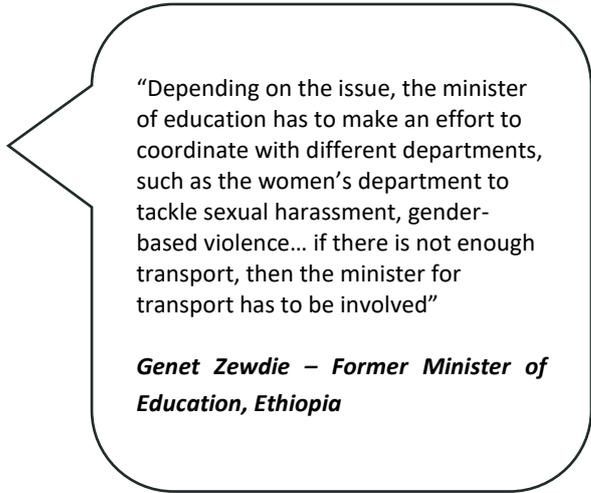
"Depending on the issue, the minister of education has to make an effort to coordinate with different departments, such as the women's department to tackle sexual harassment, gender-based violence… if there is not enough transport, then the minister for transport has to be involved"

Genet Zewdie – Former Minister of Education, Ethiopia

Cross-parliamentary coalitions

Cross-parliamentary coalitions, when appropriately established and formalised, can provide a stable, non-partisan platform for mobilising for girls' education that endures beyond individual governments or parliamentarian's terms. By brokering new working relationships, they can build bridges across diverse political interest groups, and provide platforms for politically-informed engagement (Roche et al., 2018).

For example, women from cross-parliamentary committees in Malawi played a key role in advocating for amendments to the HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Management) Act. Juliana Lunguzi, the Chair of the Health Committee, argued that the legislation would affect women disproportionately. Similarly, Esther Jolobala, the Deputy Chairperson of the HIV, AIDS and Nutrition Committee argued against the imposition of compulsory testing of pregnant women. Members of Parliament from across political parties liaised with civil society organisations to gain further insights into the issues facing women, and to provide a way for non-governmental organisations to engage in parliamentary processes. The expertise of these women leaders working through cross-parliamentary coalitions enabled successful amendments to be made to the bill that particularly benefited women (Dodsworth & Cheeseman, 2019).

The Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians is another such example of collective political leadership that has mobilised to improve the lives of women and girls. This cross-party women's caucus aimed to unite women in the Rwandan Parliament in championing gender equality, including for drafting and introducing the Gender-Based Violence Bill. In early 2005, the Forum mobilised its members and reached out to civil society organisations and experts across the country to collect evidence and ideas from the general population on how to address gender-based violence. Forum members also undertook a mass media campaign to raise awareness about gender-based violence, broadcasting panel discussions of experts and legal professionals on the television and radio. The forum established a consultative committee that involved the Ministry of Gender and the Ministry of Justice, together with representatives of the legal community and civil society organisations, among others, to present the Draft Law on Prevention, Protection and Punishment of Any Gender-Based Violence to Parliament in 2006 (Pearson, 2008).

Another example of a cross-parliamentary coalition is the UK International Development Committee. In 2017, after extensive collation of written and oral evidence, the Committee developed a report on the work by the Department for International Development (DFID) on leaving no one behind in education. The report influenced DFID's 2018

Education Policy, Get Children Learning, including its focus on the most marginalised girls. In particular, the report highlighted the importance of focusing on drop-out and transition points for girls, and of integrating approaches to tackling school related gender-based violence in the second phase of the Girls' Education Challenge. Supporting girls at transition points subsequently became a core focus in the extension of this programme and DFID's new education policy recognised the need to tackle school violence (House of Commons, 2018a).

<u>Cross-country coalitions</u>

Non-partisan cross-country coalitions bring together political leaders from different contexts into a formal network with a common agenda of promoting girls' education. These can play a vital role in sharing effective practices between countries and scaling them up. Collective engagement can support effective collaboration with civil society organisations internationally, and to promote discussions on gender equality among high-level sectoral and government leaders.

One example is the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), which was established in 1992 by five women ministers of education as a pan-African organisation aimed at promoting girls' education.[9] FAWE initially brought together key prominent women leaders in education to share ideas and experience, and to promote positive programming examples that could be translated into other contexts.[10] As a cross-country coalition, FAWE has also led the development of initiatives to support girls' education. For example, their gender-sensitive pedagogy has improved gender dynamics in schools, shifting the attitudes of boys and girls. FAWE's networks across sub-Saharan Africa enabled this programme to be scaled up in several countries (Wanjama & Njuguna, 2015).

FAWE has achieved continued recognition due to long-term engagement by key senior women, notably ministers of education, permanent secretaries and vice chancellors of universities, all of whom were active in establishing the Forum. These women shared a commitment to furthering the coalition's objectives, sensitivity to the socio-political terrain and strong bonds of trust. FAWE's reputation as bringing together people with the necessary knowledge and skills enabled it to mobilise support for reform and change.

"FAWE began its existence in order to galvanise women Ministers of Education to support girls' education as a whole with a particular emphasis on marginalised girls."

Dr Fay Chung – Former Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, Zimbabwe

"We thought that we [FAWE] can share ideas, experience and support each other especially in ideas and experiences… We were a critical mass that could make a difference in advancing girls' education in Africa."

Genet Zewdie – Former Minister of Education, Ethiopia

"[FAWE meant that] voices were no longer just localised. Good things that were happening in other countries were beginning to benefit us as well. At regional meetings we would hear other countries speaking about girls' education and come back home with more energy I think in promoting and creating policies that would get things to develop"

Barbara Chilangwa - Former Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Zambia

Just as with women leaders in government, cross-country action by women parliamentarians can be influential in tackling barriers to girls' education. Within the Inter-Parliamentary Union, over the past 30 years the Forum of

Women Parliamentarians has aimed to redress the gender imbalance in political representation in national parliaments, and help women MPs learn about how other countries are addressing gender inequality.[11] In November 2018, women parliamentarians from around the world met at the UK House of Commons to promote the importance of girls' education, as well as identify actions needed to tackle cross-sectoral barriers holding back girls' progress, such as gender-based violence (House of Commons, 2018b; Figure 2).

The Global TB (Tuberculosis) Caucus provides lessons for cross-country political action that could be applied to girls' education. Established in 2014, the caucus has brought together political representatives from 150 countries to fight the TB epidemic by working across geographical and political divides in a non-partisan and inclusive fashion. The caucus engages with civil society and all other stakeholders involved and aims to confront stigma and social isolation associated with the disease. The caucus has raised significant additional funds to fight TB and has been successful in advocating for TB action by the G20 group of countries (Weil et al., 2018).[12]

Figure 2: Strengthening Visibility of Women Parliamentarians across the Globe

Source: Illustration by @juliainclusion. House of Commons (2018b)

Section II: Factors that underpin political leadership to promote girls' education

Political leaders, both individually and collectively, have the potential to play strategic and influential roles in promoting 12 years of quality education for all girls. This section identifies key factors that underpin political leadership for leaving no girl behind – leadership that ensures progress is initiated and sustained.

National political and institutional influences

Voter pressure, in particular at key points in the electoral cycle, can motivate high-level political leaders to commit to girls' education, including heads of government and parliamentarians. In Kenya, evidence that girls were dropping out of school because of the stigma associated with their inability to obtain sanitary products, resulted in free sanitary towels becoming an election issue. As a result, an amendment to the Education Act was signed into law by President Uhuru Kenyatta in 2017 to provide "free, sufficient and quality sanitary towels." This was reported in the media to have been accompanied by US$5 million budgeted specifically for this purpose in 2017-18.[13] Other countries, including Uganda, have also made the provision of sanitary towels an election issue, according to Florence Malinga.[14]

> "Providing sanitary towels was an election campaign issue in the 2016 Ugandan elections, because there was an outcry at the time…So during the campaign all the presidential candidates made the announcement to provide free sanitary towels to girls in schools."
>
> *Florence Malinga - Former Commissioner for Planning, Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda*

The wider political environment can also present opportunities for reform. For example, Dr Fay Chung, former Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, Zimbabwe, noted how FAWE in Zambia had developed several programmes to support girls' education, including one that brought mothers and daughters together for educational purposes.[15] When the Government of Zambia then received debt relief, and the World Bank advised that this money should be spent on education and HIV/AIDS, Dr Chung reflected on the fact that, because FAWE had these education programmes already in place, they could be scaled up by the government with the debt relief funds.

Critical political moments and changes in political and institutional contexts provide opportunities to compel political action on girls' education and initiate reforms to tackle gender norms. These critical junctures can alter what is possible and feasible. For example, in post-war contexts, education is widely regarded as essential not only for civic reconciliation, but also as a key force for gender equality. In Sierra Leone, during the post-war period, the policy of educational expansion provided a unique opportunity for improving women's long-term social and economic livelihoods (Maclure & Denov, 2009). The government had secured a series of grants and loans to embark on an intensive programme of school construction, renovation and replenishment. The Ministry of Education undertook several measures to swiftly boost primary school enrolments and retention rates. To focus on girls' education, the government extended supplementary financial and material assistance to female pupils in disadvantaged and rural regions and provided free junior secondary enrolment to girls in the North and East regions (MEST, 2007). In the immediate post-war period, the focus on education was supported by donor agencies and international non-governmental organisations (Maclure & Denoy, 2009).

International influence

International networks and initiatives have a vital role to play in bringing together expertise to support the work of political leaders. Globally, the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) has been influential in bringing together key partners in promoting policy advocacy in its priority areas. These priorities currently include enhancing the focus on marginalised and excluded groups; reducing and eliminating school-related gender-based violence; improving learning outcomes for girls; and increasing the number of girls reaching secondary education and post-primary opportunities. Launched at the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000, UNGEI was identified as one of nine flagship initiatives to promote progress towards the Education for All goals (Mputum & Lawale, 2004; UNGEI, 2012). To give one example, UNGEI has played a pivotal role in bringing together senior civil servants in ministries of education for workshops on designing and implementing gender-responsive education sector plans. These workshops have focused on helping civil servants to integrate gender more effectively throughout planning processes.[16] The workshops have been supported by UNGEI's Guidance for Developing Gender-Responsive Education Sector Plans, designed to supplement and enhance existing tools for education sector analysis, planning and appraisal (UNGEI & GPE, 2017).

A further example is the Gender at the Centre Initiative, launched in July 2019. The initiative was developed by the G7 Ministers of Education and Development in collaboration with multilateral and civil society organisations committed to advancing gender equality in and through education. Together with ministries of education in eight pilot countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria and Sierra Leone), the partnership forms the Gender and the Centre Initiative Alliance. Rooted in gender-responsive education sector planning, expertise and resources are mobilised to support the leadership of ministries of education and other national actors to advance gender equality in education through sector planning and monitoring. In addition, it aims to ensure that country-owned interventions, strategies and plans are financed, implemented and monitored for sustainable results.[17]

Global frameworks, once ratified, exert pressure on heads of government and parliamentarians to bring about measurable progress towards clear targets for improving girls' education – and to account for that progress. The Right to Education Initiative, a global human rights organisation, developed a classification intended to evaluate a country's commitment to achieving gender equality in education. Their assessment is based on ratification of three treaties: the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education and the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In total, 44 percent of all countries have received the highest classification because they signed all three global treaties (Right to Education, 2018). Signing these treaties alone is not enough, but it does enable others to hold leaders accountable. For example, in Nigeria, the CEDAW coalition, a network of six registered non-governmental organisations, has reviewed the country's implementation record under CEDAW highlighting the gaps in implementation, and submitted a report to the country's CEDAW Committee (WILPF, 2017).

International accountability mechanisms have been used to hold governments to account for their commitments to gender equality. For example, in 2008, 13 member states from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) signed and adopted the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.[18] The objectives of the protocol include advancing gender equality by developing and implementing gender-responsive legislation, policies, programmes and projects. The protocol seeks to consolidate various international and regional commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment into one comprehensive regional instrument that enhances the capacity to plan, implement and monitor the SADC Gender Agenda. To track progress towards these commitments and hold governments to account for their progress, the Gender Protocol Barometer has been established as a regional monitoring tool.[19]

Action by international networks of political leaders can motivate political leaders to advance girls' education. Launched in 2018, the Platform for Girls' Education (for whom this Report is written) has sought to bring together influential global figures to galvanise action at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Rwanda 2020. Her Excellency Paula Mae Weekes, President of Trinidad and Tobago, noted that the potential of joining global networks energised individual work for girls' education in her own context, and increased political will more broadly to deliver on commitments to girls' education.[20]

"I was invited to join the Platform for Girls' Education as a recent Head of State of my country, and I thought it would be a marvellous opportunity, for me to build on my role on the Platform both locally, regionally and internationally to focus on that particular cohort of girls [the most marginalised]".

Her Excellency Paula Mae Weekes – President of Trinidad and Tobago

International frameworks and donor support can provide a supportive environment for change but need to ensure they are adopted in ways that are contextually relevant and do not undermine the legitimacy of local actors working for that change. For example, in Tonga, women's organisations advocating for the ratification of CEDAW faced strong public opposition to its campaign. This public opposition was informed by perspectives that CEDAW threatened Tongan culture and 'tradition.' As a result, the women's organisations adapted their strategy, identifying gatekeepers with influence to renew relationships and build trust (Lee, 2017; Ward & vanHeerde-Hudson, 2016).

Data and evidence

Data and evidence provide political leaders with direction for social policy reform by providing information about the challenges facing girls' access to education, as well as about successful interventions to support them. Even if policy is not always evidence-based, it can be evidence-informed when civil society advocates use influencing strategies, such as supporting social movements to raise issues on the political agenda, undertaking high-profile media campaigns and enrolling expert or influential voices to support policy requests (Mayne et al 2017).

"You cannot make decisions or interventions in a factual vacuum. Evidence capturing the real situation of girls in marginal areas is very crucial in determining what the situation is, why it is as it is, what needs to be done, what resources are required including finances, human resource and other materials."

Dr Amina Mohamed – Cabinet Secretary for Sports, Culture and Heritage, Kenya

Florence Malinga, former Commissioner for Planning at the Ministry of Education in Uganda, noted the important role of evidence in supporting the Ministry of Education to take action for girls' education, and in identifying specific policies that are needed, such as providing budget support to prevent dropout or lack of attendance due to menstruation.[21] Dr Fay Chung, former Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, Zimbabwe, referred to the importance of evidence for identifying problems with policy implementation in Zimbabwe.[22] When research was conducted on enrolment gains in secondary schools, it became clear that more boys were enrolled than girls. The research found that economic barriers were preventing girls from accessing education. This led to the development of a scholarship programme for girls in the most socio-economically disadvantaged communities.

Data on education outcomes can illuminate current challenges in enrolling girls and making sure that they are learning, particularly data that is disaggregated by other forms of disadvantage, such as poverty, location and disability. Analysis of such data has exposed low levels of learning, which have prompted political action and

quality-focused reforms. For example, public outcry over low student achievement in Tanzania spurred the government to gather and use data to inform education reform and prioritise accountability for student learning outcomes (World Bank, 2014: 7).

Data and evidence are also crucial tools with which to hold political leaders to account for the commitments they have made towards girls' education. Evidence has been used effectively by civil society organisations such as the international People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network, which has elicited greater public debate about poor learning outcomes. In Tanzania the annual citizen-led learning assessment, UWEZO, which is part of the PAL Network, has catalysed an increase in attention to the quality of education in Tanzania's primary schools. Its findings have been credited with triggering the government's decision to introduce assessments in grade two as part of the Big Results Now Initiative (Twaweza, 2013).

Baela Jamil, Chief Executive of the Pakistani non-governmental organisation Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (Centre of Education and Consciousness), noted how data are being used for advocacy and action purposes in Pakistan.[23] Citizen-led data collected by the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), an annual household-based survey, provide information on the schooling status of children aged five to 16 and on basic learning levels for each province and district in Pakistan. ASER is able to generate a broader picture than data collected solely in schools, as it collects data on out-of-school children, disaggregated by gender. This information is written up in gender reports and gender justice cards that are used to show government officials, parliamentarians and the media the extent of disparities and inequalities in education (ITA & Oxfam, 2019).

> "ASER data [in Pakistan] a gave us a much wider official lens on who was in school and who wasn't, including the gender perspectives. It enabled us to do some hard-hitting advocacy work with the government. Every ASER report would have a gender report card so we could explore the inequities in more detail. We could say it is not just that girls and boys in the lowest income quartile are far behind the richest, but within that quartile there is a big gap of 20 percent between girls and boys."
>
> "[ASER] has given us a well-rounded approach to evidence-based advocacy plus implementation and service delivery. We are going to start a whole lot of capacity building sessions with the parliamentarians and judges so they have a basic understanding of how to read data so they can use this."
>
> ***Baela Jamil – Chief Executive, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi***

Campaigns, media and advocacy

Campaigns and advocacy that target the news media can be key ways of stimulating political action on gender equality, by publicising new information and highlighting political inaction. Slogans that everyone can get behind, regardless of politics or geography, are vital tools for mobilising action, globally and nationally. 'Leave no girl behind' and '12 years of quality education for all girls' are examples that have sought to galvanise such action.

> "[*The slogan of 12 years of quality education for all girls*] is perfect… It is a good simple catchy one-liner that says it all, and you know exactly what you mean when you say it."
>
> ***Ambassador Isabelle Hudon - Former Co-Chair, Gender Equality Advisory Council for the G7***

Media attention can trigger political action on girls' education by bringing attention to individual girl's cases or wider crises facing girls' education. One example is the online campaign to #BringBackOurGirls (#BBOG), which aimed to pressure the Nigerian and U.S governments to take action to bring back home the 276 girls kidnapped from the town of Chibok (Khoja-Moolji, 2015). At first, the kidnapping received sparse coverage outside of Nigeria. The #BBOG hashtag went viral, and was sustained by the

support of Michelle Obama, First Lady of the United States, who linked it with her #LetGirlsLearn initiative. She referred to the campaign when calling on members of Congress to remember the value of quality education in the United States, and when drawing attention to the need to advance educational opportunities for women globally (Ofori-Parku & Moscato, 2018). Her remarks at a roundtable discussion on girls' education made public not only her support for the #BBOG campaign, but also her focus on advancing educational opportunities for women globally: "now that we have a bit of the world's attention on this issue, we have to seize upon this moment and take the opportunity to make some significant changes. Right now, today, there are millions and millions of girls around the world who are not in school."[24]

More broadly, Michelle Obama's #LetGirlsLearn campaign is reported to have subsequently invested over US$1 billion in programmes on girls' education in over 50 countries.[25] Michelle Obama has continued her commitment through the establishment of the Girls' Opportunity Alliance.[26] Hillary Rodham Clinton, former US presidential candidate, has led another collective effort – Collaborative for Harnessing Ambition and Resources for Girls' Education – alongside Chelsea Clinton and Julia Gillard, which is reported to have mobilised over US$600 million to support girls' education.[27]

Personal experience

First-hand experience of the challenges that girls face can be a factor motivating leaders to take action in support of girls' education, particularly women leaders who have experienced educational disadvantage themselves. In many cases of high-level political leaders who have been strong advocates for girls' education, their motivation for their commitment was related to their personal experience in school, or their experience within the education sector, either as teachers or academics.[28]

"I always thought that education was important and transformative, and that it should be equally available to girls. So, a belief in the power of education joined my early feminist beliefs."

Julia Gillard – 27th Prime Minister of Australia

"I saw [the power of girls' education] myself, I experienced it myself as an individual, as a student, then as a teacher and a headteacher. This gave an opportunity for me to be part of that process that will bring about change"

Barbara Chilangwa – Former Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Zambia

Engagement with key stakeholders

National governments hold the ultimate responsibility for promoting and ensuring gender equality and girls' education, but governments must work with a wide range of stakeholders for social norms and power dynamics to change long-term. Transformative leadership to promote girls' education requires that national political leaders ensure that policies and programmes

> "I can see ministers, governments, senior political leaders and prime ministers engaging with local communities to help carry the message for change. I can see it happening the other way, too, where the more active a community is around education, the more political power that is coming up to the national level of government, the more likely it is the government will respond with greater prioritisation on education. That dynamic is important."
>
> *Julia Gillard – 27th Prime Minister of Australia*

for girls' education are developed that are appropriate to the requirements and capacities of those they seek to support. Such leadership also requires that high-level political leaders create space to amplify the voices of these diverse stakeholders, such as women's, youth, and civil society organisations, and local political, traditional and religious leaders. The particular 'key stakeholders' that high-level political leaders should engage with will vary according to the context.

> "High-level political leaders need a community of people to support their work: the people who are influential at the local level, the traditional leaders, the local councillors, the churches, individuals that are held in high esteem in their communities."
>
> "You could have top-level commitment, but then you need to have also middle-level champions who would then be the ones who would sustain the programme. But most importantly, it is the local leadership, the local district levels, the heads of schools, the ones whose level of leadership is not at the top level, but who are politically connected… Investing in those would help to sustain much longer political commitment."
>
> *Barbara Chilangwa – Former Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Zambia*

By engaging with political leaders, key stakeholders can help advance girls' education by:

1. Putting pressure on national leaders to enact legislation, policies and programmes for gender equality in education;
2. Ensuring that national leaders develop appropriate policies that align with the needs of the community;
3. Supporting the effective implementation of policies for girls' education;
4. Holding national leaders to account, particularly to ensure sustainability of reforms beyond election cycles;
5. Supporting high-level political commitment to achieve widespread and sustained social norm change to address gendered discrimination in education.

Women's organisations and movements

Women's organisations can play a vital role in putting pressure on national leaders to enact legislation, policies and programmes for gender equality. Such action is most effective when such organisations work from the ground up to first change public opinion, and then that of policymakers, by articulating the social perspectives of marginalised women to drive policy change. Across 70 countries, the impact of women's movements on legal reform to counter gender-based violence has been found to be more critical to outcomes than other factors considered, such as left-wing parties, numbers of women legislators, or national wealth (Htun & Weldon 2013).

Women's organisations can be vital for holding national leaders to account for their commitments to girls' education. Their continued pressure can ensure that reforms last beyond election cycles. The Jordanian Coalition for adopting CEDAW, for example, was formed by several women's organisations, including the Human Forum for Women's Rights and the General Federation of Jordanian Women. After the coalition pressed the government to give it full legal force, the government published the CEDAW convention in the Official Gazette on 1st July 2007 (Tadros, 2011).

Youth-led organisations

Youth-led organisations and networks can put pressure on national leaders to promote gender equality in education, by mobilising young peoples' collective voice. In northern Nigeria, YouthHubAfrica campaigned for two years to advocate for a new law that guarantees primary education for girls. The campaign was supported by the Gulmakai Network, funded by a grant from the Malala Fund, founded by the girls' education activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai. YouthHubAfrica focused on Kaduna State given that is where the majority of out-of-school girls live. It worked with local radio and television journalists to inform citizens about the proposed bill. Once the proposed bill had been passed by the State House, it stepped up advocacy with Governor Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai of Kaduna State to sign the Child Rights Act into law. Advocacy was successful, and on Friday 20th April 2018, the Child Rights Act was passed by Governor El-Rufai. This law guarantees all children in Kaduna the right to free, quality basic education and prevents marriage under the age of 18.[29]

Engagement by youth-led organisations is also vital to ensure that national leaders develop policies that align with the needs of young people. The Education We Want: An Advocacy Toolkit features real-life stories of young people who have advocated to expand national education programmes to reach the most marginalised. Launched at the Countdown to 2015 Summit in Washington DC, it aimed to influence high-level political leaders who were attending the summit. The Youth Advocacy Group, a group of young leaders, shared this toolkit with young people around the world. It also co-convened a Global Citizenship Working Group with key stakeholders in education to ensure that the voices of young people are included in education decision-making processes.[30]

Civil society organisations and networks

Civil society organisations that take a community-led approach can ensure that national leaders develop appropriate policies that align with the needs of the community. For example, the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) has adopted a collaborative approach within the countries in which it operates. The campaign partners with government officials, traditional leaders, teachers and parents in a holistic approach to overcoming barriers facing girls, such as child marriage and gender-based violence. In this way, CAMFED aims to develop a deeper understanding of community perspectives on this issue, and to communicate these to political leaders (CAMFED, 2017). Barbara Chilangwa spoke about her perception of the work that CAMFED has done in influencing government policy on child protection.[31] She gave an example of a case of child abuse where the school had not taken action. When this case went to court, the judge emphasised the need for guidelines to be put in place.

CAMFED developed these guidelines, which subsequently become part of government policy thanks to CAMFED's engagement with the Ministry of Education.

Civil society networks also have a key role in putting pressure on national leaders to advance gender equality in and through education (see, the example of advocacy by Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi in the section on Data and Evidence above).

Local political, traditional and religious leaders

Local political leaders play a crucial role in supporting the effective implementation of policies for girls' education. They are closest to the point of implementation, more closely embedded within local governance structures, and potentially linked with schools. In Ethiopia, for example, kebele councils (local councils) encourage enrolment in early learning and primary education, in part through annual community conferences and mobilisation campaigns (Young Lives, 2015). School

> "When Ministers make their pronouncements, we can't expect them to come to the grassroots to implement. …There should be ways of showing that once a policy has been put in place, it is the responsibility of those that are closest to it happening who should take it up and ensure that it is being implemented."
>
> ***Barbara Chilangwa – Former Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Zambia***

directors often have a seat on the kebele council, along with other influential people in a community, so there are strong links between policymakers, schools and communities, which ensure that communities invest and collaborate to help provide education (Rossiter et al., 2018).

> "There is legislation against marriage of girls below the age of 18 years. This has just not been adhered to in some communities either because they are not aware of the law or they are driven by poverty as they get dowry by marrying off their young daughters. Urgent community led sensitisation will go a long way in stopping these practices."
>
> ***Florence Malinga – Former Commissioner for Planning, Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda***

Engaging local religious and traditional leaders can be particularly important in changing social norms to support girls' education, and in promoting the enforcement of legislation. Religious and traditional leaders can engage with and influence families and communities in ways that contribute to gender equality. For example, in Malawi, a senior chief of Dedza District, Theresa Kachindamoto, became known as the 'child marriage terminator' when she annulled 850 child marriages and suspended all village

heads who refused to ban the practice of child marriage (Muriaas et al., 2017).

Section III: Political leadership for national planning and financing to promote girls' education

To achieve the ambitions of the education SDG and leave no girl behind, gender-responsive education sector plans must be implemented (UNGEI & GPE, 2017).[32] Recognising the need to tackle discrimination and social norms beyond the education system itself, this section identifies approaches that adopt a whole-system approach to national planning. It focuses on the importance of transformative leadership for girls' education that brings ministers together across different sectors to make policy and plans. Recognising that sufficient resources are a requirement for successful implementation, the second part of the section identifies how political leadership has contributed to ensuring such resources are available and distributed in a way that should benefit gender equality in education.

Embedding gender in national planning

Addressing multi-dimensional barriers to girls' education in national plans

National development plans should tackle the multi-dimensional barriers that hold back girls' education. Uganda's commitment to gender mainstreaming at the national level is an example of creating an enabling environment for a whole-system approach to promote girls' education and gender equality (UNGEI & GPE, 2017). Uganda's Gender Policy (2007) provided the basis for gender mainstreaming in the updated Second National Development Plan (2015/6). Cross-cutting issues related to gender need to be integrated in this way in sectoral plans, programmes and projects to ensure coherence across sectors and local governments on what priorities are to be undertaken (The Republic of Uganda, 2015; UNGEI & GPE, 2017).

The Second National Development Plan acknowledged the low completion rate in primary schools and high dropout rate for girls, and called for the institutionalisation of gender planning and collection of gender disaggregated data in response (The Republic of Uganda, 2015). The Second National Development Plan highlighted the formulation of Uganda's gender responsive regulatory framework, which has influenced gender planning in all sectors. The fact that gender is embedded in national plans, and that girls' education needs are recognised, means that government departments prioritise action beyond the education sector to overcome the barriers to girls' education. For example, the National Action Plan on Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Uganda (2012/2013-2016/2017) provided a strategic framework to eliminate all forms of child labour and make school the primary occupation for children (The Republic of Uganda, 2012).

Uganda's National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy (2014/15-2019/20) is also relevant to girls' educational progress in seeking to eliminate child marriage and other forms of violence against girls, including teenage pregnancy as a consequence of child marriage (The Republic of Uganda & UNICEF, 2015). The strategy has been shared through a number of regional and district meetings in northern, eastern and western Uganda with government officials and technical staff to raise awareness of the national strategy and build consensus and support for implementation. In some cases, districts were noted to have started allocating their own resources to address child marriage locally, within the parameters outlined in the national strategy (Girls Not Brides, 2016b).

These cross-sectoral policies have been supported by high-level political leaders. President Museveni was vocal in his support for the National Sexuality Education Policy Framework, launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Education and Sports. At the International Conference on Population and Development in 2019, he highlighted this policy and announced Uganda's commitment to promoting universal access to family planning, which was in line with his calls to reduce teenage pregnancy, child marriage and all forms of gender-based violence.[33] Strong

> "In the Ministry of Education and Sports, the discussions about gender might originate in the planning department, because it is the department that would collect and analyse the education statistics. That is where the disparities are glaringly found and that is when the discussion begins. The Ministry has also adopted a multi-sectoral approach to planning which involves other stakeholders/sectors such as Gender, Labour, Youth and Social Services, Health, Justice, Law and Order, Office of the Prime Minister, etc."
>
> *Florence Malinga – Former Commissioner for Planning, Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda*

cooperation and coordination between political leaders and civil society partners has also been essential to the success of Uganda's policies to support girls' education. For example, the Menstrual Hygiene Management Committee, chaired by the Ministry of Education and Sports, has bought together the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Ministry of Water and Environment, civil society organisations and the Ugandan parliament in order to develop key indicators to monitor menstrual hygiene in schools (UNGEI & GPE, 2017). In recent meetings, ministers have highlighted areas of progress, including teaching girls how to make reusable and eco-friendly sanitary towels. They have also noted that insufficient resources mean implementation of all the actions has been problematic.[34]

The overall policy environment, and high-level recognition of the multiple barriers to girls' education, supports and reinforces the effectiveness of policies related to education specifically, which have a clear focus on gender, such as the Ugandan Gender in Education Sector Policy (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2016). Uganda's efforts to mainstream gender throughout national and sectoral plans are noteworthy. They are reinforced by high-level political support from the president, by cooperation and coordination between Ministries, and by consultation with a diverse range of stakeholders, including civil society organisations and international donor agencies – consultation that can hold the government accountable for its policy commitments on gender equality (UNGEI & GPE, 2017).

<u>Policies beyond the education sector: early pregnancy, early marriage and gender-based violence</u>

Early pregnancy

One of the key barriers preventing some girls from continuing in school is whether they are allowed to remain in school during pregnancy and return to school after they have given birth. In many contexts, girls are prevented from returning to school after giving birth, so pregnancy not only leads to girls' dropping out of education but also cuts short their learning (Birungi et al., 2015). Even where re-entry policies have been developed, the reality is often more complex. A study in Kenya found that stigma continues to exist and ridicule from teachers, peers and communities can prevent girls from remaining in school after pregnancy. Such findings highlight the importance of better engagement between national and local leaders and schools to reduce stigma and increase support for girls' re-entry (Wanyama & Simatwa, 2011).

"In FAWE Uganda, we focused on girls who had dropped out of schools due to pregnancies… We identified a number of schools which became 'FAWE schools' and worked closely with the headteachers to help re-admit admit these girls. FAWE would give them bursaries and also found them homes with FAWE members as mentors. We worked with communities to identify the girls and then would send a team to talk to the parents."

Florence Malinga -– Former Commissioner for Planning, Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda

Several examples show how transformative individual and collective leadership can contribute to reforms that enable girls to go back to school after giving birth. In Uganda, the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy was developed (see above). FAWE Uganda played a vital role in engaging with communities to identify girls who had dropped out of school because of pregnancy. Florence Malinga detailed how FAWE members would work directly with schools and with girls' families to garner support for the girls' continuing education.[35]

Harnessing the power of collaborative leadership and coordination within the community was crucial in improving the options for pregnant schoolgirls.

In 1996, FAWE Zambia began campaigning for policy change for pregnant schoolgirls, working with prominent women leaders from other African countries and from other sectors within Zambia. Barbara Chilangwa explained that there were many obstacles to re-admitting girls who had become pregnant.[36] FAWE's campaign contributed to convincing the minister of education that a re-entry policy was necessary (Banda & Nowanga, 2017). The minister announced the new policy in 1997 (Box 1). Alongside advocacy from FAWE, the re-entry policy was supported by numerous international and national policy declarations that Zambia had signed.[37] Further considerations included evidence that teenage pregnancy was a significant contributor to high dropout rates for girls (Ministry of Education et al., 2004). As in other countries, in Zambia, the re-entry policy alone has been insufficient to change social norms, and pregnant girls and adolescent mothers still face stigma and bullying. Support services are also needed, such as safe and affordable childcare. Additionally, there is reported to have been a lack of awareness and training on the policy in schools and communities.[38]

Zambia's most recent Education Sector Plan includes steps to promote comprehensive sexuality education to stem teenage pregnancies alongside training teachers in guidance and counselling skills. It also highlights the need to enforce the re-entry policy and sets out key indicators to ensure that there is sensitisation on the policy in schools and communities (The Ministry of General and the Ministry of Higher Education, 2017-2021). This is a strong example of a government building on the data and evidence on the need for efforts alongside the re-entry policy to reduce the numbers of girls dropping out of school due to pregnancy.

The sustainability of potentially politically sensitive policies such as these can also be at risk unless reforms have been embedded beyond political cycles. President John Magufuli of Tanzania stated in 2017 that "as long as I am

> **Box 1: Re-Entry Policy - Zambia**
>
> - Zambia's re-entry policy for pregnant schoolgirls was announced in 1997 by the Minister of Education Dr Syamujaye at a conference on girls' education.
> - Schoolgirls who became pregnant would no longer be expelled, and those who had already been expelled would be allowed to return to school (Banda & Nowanga, 2017; Ministry of Education, FAWEZA, & UNICEF, 2004).
> - Guidelines were developed, including information and documentation to assist schools and other stakeholders to ensure implementation (Ministry of Education et al., 2004).
> - Flexible learning arrangements were also offered (access to either morning or evening shifts) to remove some of the barriers that might prevent young mothers from returning to school (Martínez, Odhiambo, & Human Rights Watch, 2018).

president… no pregnant student will be allowed to return to school… After getting pregnant, you are done" (Ratcliffe, 2017). This appears to be at odds with the 2015 draft policy on the re-entry of adolescent mothers (Birungi et al., 2015). The president's stance has potential serious implications for girls' education: recent evidence found that 8000 pregnant girls are forced to leave school annually in Tanzania (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Trinidad and Tobago's National Policy on Gender and Development (2009) highlights the high incidence of teenage pregnancy in the country and its impact on school dropout. The plan prioritises mechanisms that support students who become pregnant. It recognises that the right to return school is not sufficient on its own, noting that many of these students do not have the support of families and face other barriers to re-entering education systems. Her Excellency President Paula-Mae Weekes noted the importance of providing a strong social safety net, childcare in particular, so that mothers can safely turn their attention to schooling.[39] The safety net requires the coordination of numerous ministries, as well as adequate resourcing nationwide.

Early marriage

Early marriage is another barrier to schooling, which particularly affects the poorest adolescent girls. An estimated 15 million girls every year are married before their 18th birthday, preventing them from remaining in school and completing 12 years of quality education.[40]

In Ethiopia, four in ten young women are married or in a union before their 18th birthday (UNICEF, 2018). The government has shown multi-level commitment to ending child marriage, in collaboration with civil society organisations (Box 2). Legislation introduced to curb this harmful practice includes the revised Family Code (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2000), which sets the minimum age of marriage at 18 years, and Article 648 of the Criminal Code, which criminalises early marriage. In September 2013, Ethiopia launched the National Alliance to End Child Marriage. A national platform on the prevention and elimination of harmful traditional practices (including child marriage) was announced by the deputy prime minister at the National Girls Summit in June 2015. Launched by the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs, the national platform comprised representatives from relevant stakeholders such

> **Box 2: Ethiopia's multi-level approach to ending early marriage**
>
> - The legal age of marriage was set at a minimum age of 18 years in the *Revised Family Code* in 2000.
> - Ethiopia's *Growth and Transformation Plan II 2015/6-2019/20* (National Planning Commission, 2016) notes that while early marriage has been significantly reduced, it is an ongoing problem.
> - The plan sets out an approach to eliminating early and forced marriage through public education, awareness creation programmes, public mobilisation and engaging women in the fight against these practices, alongside enforcement of legal measures (National Planning Commission, 2016).
> - The Government of Ethiopia has committed to end child marriage by 2025 and has established the *National Alliance to End Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting* (Marshall, Lyytikainen, & Jones, 2016).

as civil society, women and youth associations and national federations, faith-based organisations and national associations (Marshall et al., 2016). The leadership shown by the Deputy Prime Minister and Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs has set the stage for continuing improvements as laws are taken up into local policies and practice.

"[When I was minister of education], I set up an educational committee in every district, which included a woman representative from a teaching association, a women's association for the woreda [district], and a woman teacher, so that they could follow what's going on with the girls' education. They used to go house to house and see if there is any girl that is not put in school, or if there is any girl taken out of school to be married before she reaches a certain age. This advocacy and affirmative action worked well."

Genet Zewdie – Former Minister for Education, Ethiopia

Legal enforcement in Ethiopia has succeeded in some cases in shifting values and attitudes related to traditional practices. However, these efforts alone are not sufficient to combat early marriage and, in many communities, girls still face significant pressure to marry at a young age (Boyden, Pankhurst & Tafere, 2012). Genet Zewdie, former Minister for Education in Ethiopia, noted that her approach to limiting the impact of child marriage on education involved women representatives in educational committees who could ensure accountability of government legislation and policies.[41]

Gender-based violence

Tackling gender-based violence, in particular sexual violence, is of utmost importance to enable girls to attend school regularly and learn (Leach, Dunne & Salvi, 2014). It is particularly important for the most marginalised girls. In Kenya, for example, incidence of pupil to pupil sexual harassment was 40 percentage points higher for schools in the poorest communities (Jere, 2015).

Recognising the high prevalence of such gender-based violence and its negative impact on girls' education, the Kenyan government developed a comprehensive policy framework to ensure effective prevention of and response to sexual gender-based violence. In addition, Kenya has ratified several international treaties and regional conventions on the elimination of sexual and gender-based violence and gender equality, and the Constitution prohibits any form of violence (National Gender and Equality Commission, 2017). In 2011 an act of Parliament established the National Gender and Equality Commission, a non-partisan coalition that promotes gender equality by ensuring compliance with policies, laws and administrative regulations. The commissioners are appointed by the president, demonstrating commitment of high-level political leadership.[42] Kenya's collaborative, non-partisan approach to ending sexual and gender-based violence is an example of cohesive embedding of gender in policies, legislative frameworks, plans and programmes.

There has also been coordination between different stakeholders in Kenya on school-related gender-based violence specifically. The Teachers' Service Commission, the National Union of Teachers, and the Ministry of Education issued a circular to prevent teachers guilty of sex offences from transferring to other schools, and established a database to track offenders.[43] There have been positive examples of the government taking violence against girls in school seriously: between 2008-2010, over 1,000 teachers are reported to have been fired for sexually abusing girls.[44] However, overall implementation has been patchy, with violence against women still prevalent (Aura, n.d). There is a need to ensure that policy and legislative commitments are accompanied by sufficient resources to ensure widespread and sustained implementation.

Harmful socio-cultural practices

Harmful socio-cultural practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting, can cause and intersect with other barriers to girl's education, resulting in absenteeism and lower performance. In The Gambia, legislation has criminalised female genital mutilation/cutting, led by a presidential proclamation in 2015 that banned the practice (Box 3). The Women's Act 2010 was then amended to expressly prohibit and criminalise the practice, with offenders facing fines or imprisonment. This legislation is significant, as the prevalence of female genital mutilation/cutting in The Gambia is high, affecting around three-quarters of women aged 15 to 49 (28 Too Many, 2018; UNFPA-UNICEF, 2016).

The Ministry of Women's Affairs was given authority to strengthen the capacity of everyone involved to respond to gender-based violence and child marriage, and to advocate for the enforcement of the laws prohibiting female genital mutilation/cutting. Since the introduction of the Women's (Amendment) Act 2015, a few cases of female genital mutilation/cutting have been tried and prosecuted, demonstrating some level of legal enforcement of the government's amended legislation (28 Too Many, 2018; UNFPA-UNICEF, 2016).

> **Box 3: Legislation to prevent female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) in The Gambia**
>
> - Legislation outlawed FGM/C, led by a presidential proclamation in 2015.
> - The Women's Act 2010 was updated to expressly prohibit and criminalise FGM/C.
> - The Ministry of Women's Affairs has authority to enforce the laws to prohibit FGM/C (Republic of The Gambia, 2018).
> - The commitment to legislation to end FGM/C was included in the government's most recent National Development Plan (2018-2021).
> - The vice president organised a national conference on FGM/C in 2016.

Political leadership in the Gambia ensured that while action was spearheaded by the Women's Bureau (within the Ministry of Women's Affairs), several government departments also took part. The Ministry of Justice played a key role in sensitising immigration officers to the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting to ensure the effective upholding of the law. High-level political support was maintained throughout, with the vice president leading a national conference on female genital mutilation/cutting in 2016 that also facilitated cross-ministerial collaboration between the Women's Bureau and the Office of the Vice President (UNFPA-UNICEF, 2016). The government also worked closely with civil society partners to implement this legislation, such as The Gambia Committee on Harmful Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children, a network of non-governmental organisations (28 Too Many, 2018).

Commitment has been maintained by high-level political leaders. Fatoumata Tambajang, former Vice President of The Gambia stated that the "the country's position on the former government's laws that were enacted to ban the deep-rooted cultural traditional practice of female genital mutilation/cutting will remain unchanged despite change of government" (Jawo, 2018). Despite progress, female genital mutilation/cutting still occurs, demonstrating a continued need to work more closely with leaders across national and local levels to change cultural attitudes and remove barriers.

These examples show that political leadership can succeed in embedding gender in national plans, as well as introducing legislation and policies to tackle the many barriers outside the education sector that prevent girls from achieving 12 years of quality education. Heads of government have played an important role in showing commitment to tackling often entrenched barriers rooted in social norms that hold back progress towards girls' education. Combined with coordinated and cross-ministerial planning with a diverse range of stakeholders, they have been able to stimulate change and progress. Even so, implementation remains a challenge, requiring ongoing monitoring. As the next sub-section identifies, governments should commit sufficient resources to implementing legislation and policies.

Mobilising increased resources for girl's education

Even the best-designed reforms will not be successful unless backed by sufficient resources, appropriately distributed to the population groups most in need. This section shows how political leaders have promoted gender equality and girls' education using domestic funding mechanisms such as gender-responsive budgeting, redistributive formula funding and social cash transfers. The final sub-section demonstrates how aid targets for gender equality provides signals of commitment from donor governments.

Gender-responsive budgeting

Some governments have structured spending and taxation to advance the cause of gender equality through a process known as gender-responsive budgeting. This process involves analysing the differing impacts of budget activities on men and women and allocating money in a way that advances the cause of gender equality and women's empowerment. In many low-income countries, gender-responsive budgeting initiatives address school enrolment, maternal health, infrastructure and violence (IMF, 2017). According to the International Monetary Fund, 47 countries worldwide have implemented some form of gender-responsive budgeting, with 37 countries that have implemented gender-responsive budgeting in education and health specifically.

Political leadership has ensured successful implementation of gender-based budgeting in some contexts. In 2008, Rwanda piloted gender-responsive budgeting in the Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture, and Infrastructure, before rolling it out across all government sectors. Gender-responsive budgeting was then formally incorporated into budget laws in 2013 and it was mandatory for all ministries to publish Gender Budget Statements (Stotksy, 2017). As a result of this process, in 2010/11 the Ministry of Agriculture spent almost one-third of its budget on gender-targeted outputs, of which the majority was to provide schooling for female farmers. Other programmes that emerged involved providing sanitation in schools, and training parents and teachers to promote the participation of girls in science (Shejavali & Weylandt, 2018).

Particular circumstances may have contributed to the success of the rollout of gender-responsive budgeting in Rwanda. Women are now more visible in public life, and gender roles changed during and immediately after the 1994 genocide (Powley, 2006; Wallace et al., 2008). Increased representation of women has been credited for gender issues featuring more prominently in political discourse. For example, women parliamentarians pushed for the prioritisation of public funding for early childhood education to help provide opportunities in the workplace for women who had been held back due to an absence of childcare (Powley, 2006).

vel of representation in politics in Rwanda cannot be proved to have led directly to the roll-out of gender-based budgeting, it arguably created an enabling environment for its implementation. The institutional management of gender-responsive budgeting may also influence success. Gender-responsive budgeting is much more likely to be sustained if led by the Ministry of Finance. This is the case in Rwanda, where the Ministry of Finance is the lead but works in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion and other ministries to identify gender-related goals in overall public spending. A further key part of Rwanda's initiative is that it engaged civil society organisations and researchers in budget analysis and evaluation of outcomes, providing another feedback mechanism for strengthening the programme (Stotsky, 2017).

Like Rwanda, Bangladesh has succeeded in implementing gender-responsive budgeting, with three key areas of focus:

> 1) Embedding gender issues into the medium-term budget framework used to prepare the national budget;

2) Developing a recurrent capital, gender and poverty model that disaggregates all expenditure items according to which funds benefit women and girls;

3) Publishing a gender budget report alongside the budget to explain how funded activities affect women and girls (Siddique, n.d.).

The success of Bangladesh may be partly due to improved representation of women in political leadership roles, which is reported to have translated into a number of laws and policies aimed at promoting gender equality (Akbar, 2018). As in Rwanda, the Ministry of Finance has a lead role in the gender-based budgeting process, working in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (Sharp et al., 2009).

Gender-responsive budgeting has also been used in education plans to align spending with gender equality objectives. In Uganda, its inclusion in the Public Finance Management Act of 2015 means that all government agencies must be issued a gender certificate by the Equal Opportunity Commission before their budget proposal can be discussed by Parliament. Several political leaders have participated in including gender-responsive budgeting in the Public Finance Management Act, including the chair of the Parliament's Human Rights Committee, the Deputy Speaker and the head of Gender and Equity Mainstreaming for the Ministry of Finance, all of them women. In education, the Gender Unit, created in 2012 within the Ministry of Education and Sports, is seen as key to the relative success in the implementation of gender responsive public expenditure management in education compared with other sectors. The Planning Department together with the permanent secretary, which both have a crucial role in gender-responsive public expenditure management, have shown strong support for the Gender Unit, which has been crucial for its ability to push forward proposals for the budgeting process (Colin-Pescina, Fry & Fyles, 2020).

Formula funding and social cash transfers

Formula funding and social cash transfers have been effective mechanisms for redistributing and targeting funding towards marginalised women and girls. Whereas equality of funding disburses equal amounts to each child, equity of funding distributes additional resources to vulnerable children or populations to mitigate the disadvantages they face (Ilie et al., 2018). In addition to formula funding, demand side financing – usually associated with social protection programmes – redistributes public resources by giving cash payments to low-income families. To receive these payments, households sometimes have to meet conditions, such as ensuring regular school attendance of school-aged children (Gordon & Rose, 2018).

Several countries have introduced differentiated public education funding to ensure the poorest are not left behind, including formula funding mechanisms in Brazil, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Vietnam (Zubairi & Rose, 2016). In India, the government's Savra Shiksha Abhiyan programme, rolled out in 2001, focused on getting girls from disadvantaged communities into school and learning, particularly girls from scheduled castes, tribes, other minority communities and those with special needs. The involvement of the prime minister, together with engagement of civil servants with grassroots civil society groups, were key aspects that contributed to the success of the programme (Box 4).

Box 4: Funding priorities for girls' education in India's Savra Shiksha Abhiyan programme

The funding formula adopted as part of the 2001 Savra Shiksha Abhiyan programme in India took into account gender disparities as one of many types of disadvantage. In particular, it targeted more funding to districts with large out-of-school populations, wider gender disparities and larger minority populations, together with poor infrastructure (Jhingran & Sankar, 2009).

The National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level component, launched in 2003, prioritised girls specifically. Budgetary provisions were integrated to disburse additional support to the hardest-to-reach girls in Grades 1 to 8. Additional funding was targeted to "Educationally Backward Blocks" where girls' enrolment rates were below average (MHRD, 2003).

The programme resulted in some notable successes. In the state of Gujarat, for example, 75,847 girls who had previously been out of school were enrolled at primary school in 2003; by 2006 this had risen to 307,280 (Sinha, 2010, cited in Mangla, 2017). Several factors associated with political leadership are recognised to have contributed to these successes:

1) Prime Minister Narasimha Rao demonstrated visible high-level commitment to primary education in the years preceding the programme. Under Rao's leadership, education and other welfare programmes were prioritised, largely as a result of his previous roles in the education sector (Manor, 2011, cited in Mangla, 2017).

2) Government officials worked closely with civil society and local groups to implement the programme. For example, the Mahila Samakhya Programme enlisted the help of village women's associations to educate girls from disadvantaged communities (Ramachandran & Jandhyala 2014).

3) Development of the programme was supported by growing global activism for child rights and by the movement to universalise educational access, including the Education for All agenda, which had a strong emphasis on primary education (Jha & Rani, 2015). The Education for All Global Monitoring Report, published by UNESCO, showed that India had the world's largest number of children out of school. This helped to galvanise the domestic political will needed to target the most disadvantaged children.[45]

4) A more outward-looking approach to working with international partners enabled the Indian government to draw on World Bank resources. This elevated the prestige and status of Indian government officials working in the education sector, giving visibility to primary education (Mangla, 2017).

Another approach adopted by governments to target resources to the most disadvantaged groups has been the use of cash transfer programmes. In 2018, these existed in 142 countries, with the largest programmes in terms of beneficiaries being Bolsa Familia (Brazil), Prospera (Mexico), Pantawid (Philippines), Mas Familias en Accion (Colombia) and the Stipend programme for primary students (Bangladesh) (World Bank, 2018b). In Zambia, the Social Cash Transfer Programme, operating since 2003, was given a significantly higher share of the national budget after a coalition of key political leaders motivated high-level political leaders to commit further funding to the programme (Box 5).

Box 5: The Social Cash Transfer programme in Zambia

In Zambia, the Social Cash Transfer programme aimed to reduce extreme poverty and the inter-generational transfer of poverty by providing regular cash transfers to vulnerable households (those which include people with a disability, the

elderly, people who are chronically ill, female-headed households, child-headed households and households with three or more children).

Between 2010 and 2014, the programme included the Child Grant Programme, aimed at benefiting mothers or primary caregivers with children (Arrudo & Dubois, 2018). One objective of this programme was to place resources in the hands of women (Bonilla et al., 2017).

In 2013, the Government scaled up its prioritisation in the national budget. Political leadership is recognised to have contributed to these successes in several ways:

1) At the beginning of the programme, there was little support from the Ministry of Finance as it believed that social protection was not as effective as trickle-down economic growth in channelling resources to the poorest households (Kabandula & Seekings, 2014, cited in Pruce & Hickey, 2017). Since 2013, a government elected with a pro-poor agenda has increased domestic spending on cash transfers by 700 percent. High-ranking officials in the Ministry of Finance recognised the failures of trickle-down growth and were more open to the programme (Pruce & Hickey, 2017).

2) The strong evidence base provided by a coalition of the Ministry of Community Development and Mother and Child Health, civil society and donors contributed to shifting political commitment. Political support was stimulated by study tours to other countries where cash transfers had been successful, by findings from randomised control trials of pilots in Zambia, and by World Bank assessments that demonstrated cost-effectiveness in reaching the most vulnerable households (Pruce & Hickey, 2017).

3) The Ministry of Community Development and Mother and Child Health (then called Community Development and Social Services) grew in importance, after not having been considered influential (Barrientos et al., 2005). In 2011, the new government extended the ministry's remit considerably. The ministry retained close institutional influence by placing a desk officer at the Ministry of Finance. In addition, in 2013, the Minister of Finance announced that financing for Social Cash Transfers would increase by 700 percent (Pruce & Hickey, 2017).

Donor targets for funding gender equality in education

Funding for girls' education comes overwhelmingly from domestic government budgets, which provide the vast majority of all spending on education in low- and middle-income countries (Education Commission, 2016). However, international donors can play a key role in promoting gender equality and girls' education through their budgetary commitments to countries most in need of additional resources. The OECD-CRS aid database uses a voluntary reporting system to track the share of donor aid that targets gender equality objectives. The volume of aid that donors disburse to projects with a 'principal' or 'significant' objective to achieve gender equality has increased substantially in recent years, from US$24.3 billion in 2010 to US$45.8 billion in 2017, based on 2017 constant prices.[46] The equivalent increase for education was lower, but still notable, from US$4.3 billion to US$5.5 billion. As a share of total education aid spending, projects with a principal or significant objective relating to gender equality increased from 30 percent to 44 percent in 2017. However, aid disbursements where gender equality is a principal objective made up just six percent of education aid disbursements in 2017, far from achieving the G7's Gender Equality Advisory Council target in 2018 of 20 percent. Canada and the United Kingdom are two countries that increased the share of their aid spending that prioritises gender equality between 2010 and 17 (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Significant and Principal Overseas Development Aid (ODA) to gender as a share of education ODA (%)
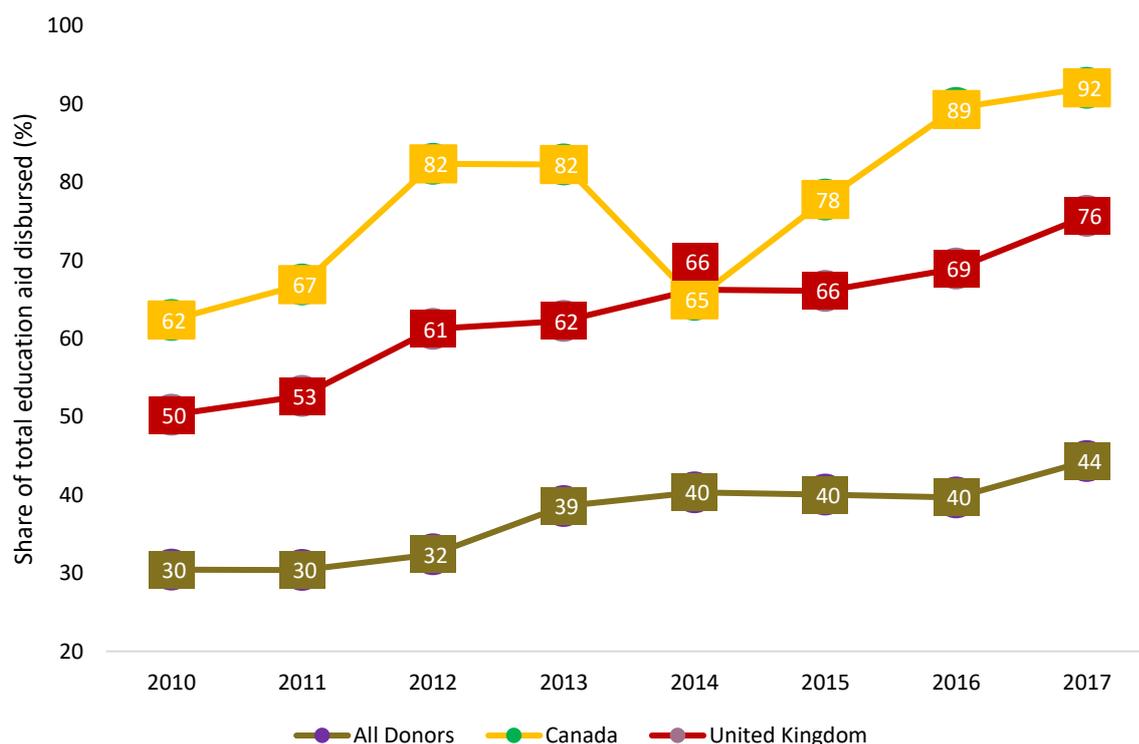
Source: Authors' calculations based on OECD-CRS (2019). *Accessed July 2019*.

> "Prime Minister Trudeau decided to transform international development policy to be more feminist. He thought that it was not enough to create specific programmes for women, because it does not include or enforce all projects to include women in their objectives or their thinking. So, there was a change in the way money would be spent in international development to ensure that in all projects women were being considered and included in the design process. Trudeau also wanted to make sure that Canada gives money to women's organisations on the ground, rather than umbrella organisations."
>
> ***Ambassador Isabelle Hudon – Former Co-Chair Gender Equality Advisory Council for the G7***

There have been important cases of political leadership driving change in ensuring commitment to gender equality in international aid spending. Under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's leadership, the Canadian government passed the Action Plan on Gender-Based Analysis, which set out the objectives to fully implement, evaluate and resource gender-responsive analysis across all government departments.[47] The government also launched its Feminist International Assistance Policy in 2017, which focuses on gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women that is both targeted and cross-cutting.[48] Such an approach ensures analysis of the impacts of policy decisions according to gender (CARE & IWDA, 2019). Canada set a target that 15 percent of all bilateral assistance should be for activities with a principal objective of advancing gender equality. The government also pledged to ensure that more of its aid resources would be channelled through women's grassroots organisations (Global Affairs Canada, 2017; Swiss, 2017).

The United Kingdom has also shown leadership in promoting gender equality through its aid spending. Under the leadership of Justine Greening, DFID advocated for the inclusion of gender equality during the finalisation of the SDGs (Lunn, Downing & Booth, 2015). DFID has also funded the largest programme explicitly focusing on girls' education, the Girls' Education Challenge. This programme was announced in September 2011, with £300 million to help the most marginalised girls gain access to schooling.[49] In June 2017, when the first phase of this programme ended, a further £500 million was allocated for a further eight and a half years.[50] The Girls' Education Challenge has been supported by

> "We are working closely with DFID, the Department for Education and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to mobilise our global network to carry forward the high-level political commitment to girls' education. The Gender Equality Unit draws on DFID's expertise in technical areas, and we use the FCO's strong experience on the diplomatic side to galvanise support for girls' education in political multi-lateral situations."
> *Senior Civil Servant – UK Government*

successive ministers at DFID, as well as commitment from prime ministers, including Theresa May and Boris Johnson. The United Kingdom has also promoted cross-departmental collaboration for gender equality. DFID's Gender Equality Team supports the Gender Equality Unit in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, promoting a joined-up approach (Rowe, 2018). This team supported the launch in 2018 of the Platform for Girls' Education, which is mobilising high-level political commitment and leadership for the most marginalised girls. This mobilisation was successful in promoting signatories for a UK-led joint statement on girls' education at the 38th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in June 2018.[51]

Legislatively, the UK government has also demonstrated its commitment to increased bilateral aid spending to reach the objective of gender equality. In 2014 it became one of the first donors to enshrine these commitments into law, through the International Development (Gender Equality) Act. This requires the Secretary of State for International Development to consider whether any proposed development assistance "is likely to contribute to reducing inequality between persons of different gender."[52] It also legally binds DFID to renew commitments to gender equality and ensure that all its activities follow these commitments. The legislation had high-level bipartisan political commitment, which helped it become law (GREAT, 2015). The text of the bill drew on the expertise of several non-governmental organisations, including WaterAid, Plan, the Gender Rights and Equality Action Trust, and Voluntary Services Overseas, together with officials at DFID (Ford, 2014). Such successful collaboration highlights the importance of working cross-party and with coalitions of experts noted by advocates of transformative leadership to promote girls' education.

Recommendations

This report identifies five ways to ensure that transformative leadership to promote girls' education translates into concrete, sustainable and effective action:

1. INDIVIDUAL ACTION - Commitment, visibility and clear, consistent messages from heads of government and ministers can promote positive societal attitudes that help to overcome barriers to girls' education. Together with the technical expertise of civil servants, leaders can develop and implement the legislation and policies required for sustained advances in girls' education. Women political leaders have a vital part to play as role models. They can contribute to social norm change needed to challenge the patriarchal structures that are holding back progress towards gender equality.

RECOMMENDATION A: Heads of government, **government ministers** and **parliamentarians** must use their platform to demonstrate visible commitment to, and public advocacy for, the development and implementation of policies in support of 12 years of quality education for all girls. **Senior civil servants** must be supported and given appropriate resources to provide technical expertise and promote girls' education in ways that can be sustained across election cycles.

RECOMMENDATION B: Women leaders should be represented at every level of government to improve the gender balance in political participation and decision-making, contribute to social norm change and challenge patriarchal structures.

2. COLLECTIVE ACTION - Girls' education is a non-partisan cause that benefits the whole community. Collaborative action is needed to bring together leaders from different political parties, ministries and countries to accelerate progress for girls' education. Such cooperation will be vital in order to tackle key concerns that are beyond the capacity of individual political leaders, to share evidence-based learning and best practice, to provide a stronger collective voice and to ensure sustainable, long-term progress on girls' education.

RECOMMENDATION C: A global coalition of parliamentarians should be established to advocate for girls' education. Such a coalition should work across geographical and political divides in a non-partisan and inclusive fashion. It should engage with women's and youth organisations and civil society stakeholders, and share in their commitment to tackling the barriers that hold back progress for girls' education, particularly the most marginalised girls.

3. RESEARCH and DATA - Research and data can provide political leaders with options for evidence-informed policy and reforms for girls' education. International accountability mechanisms can offer a way to strengthen the implementation of policies, programmes and legislation for girls' education and hold governments to account on these commitments.

RECOMMENDATION D: Senior civil servants need to promote investment in and use of data on education, in particular data disaggregated by gender and other sources of disadvantage, to build evidence-based options for policy and reform. **Heads of government and parliamentarians** should adhere to global accountability mechanisms in order to strengthen the implementation and sustainability of reforms for girls' education and use data and evidence so that they can be held to account for their commitments.

4. ENGAGEMENT WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS - Barriers to girls' education, particularly for the most marginalised, are often rooted in social norms and gendered power structures. To promote change and shift power dynamics, political leaders must work with a diverse range of stakeholders, such as women's and youth organisations, civil society and non-governmental organisations, as well as local political, traditional and religious leaders. Engaging with stakeholders is essential for developing policies and programmes for girls' education that match the needs and capacities of the girls they seek to support. Stakeholders also play a key role in supporting implementation of policies for girls' education and holding political leaders to account, ensuring sustainability of reforms beyond election cycles.

RECOMMENDATION E: All political leaders must engage with and create space for key stakeholders, including women's and youth organisations, civil society organisations and local political, traditional and religious leaders. This will ensure that the voices of those directly affected by reforms are heard by decision-makers, and that communities develop a sense of ownership of policies and programmes for girls' education.

5. PLANNING and FINANCING - A whole-system approach is needed to develop and implement coherent, cross-sectoral national policies and plans that can overcome barriers to girls' education that lie beyond the education system. Sufficient resources need to be allocated with the explicit identification of domestic funds devoted to gender equality. This embeds gender equality within long-term systems that can achieve lasting gains for girls' education.

RECOMMENDATION F: Government ministers and senior civil servants need to establish innovative, whole-system approaches to embedding gender equality in national plans and policies, in order to tackle the multi-dimensional barriers to girls' education and ensure coherence across sectors.

RECOMMENDATION G: Heads of government and **government ministers** must implement gender-responsive budgeting, ensuring that sufficient domestic resources are allocated to girls' education and appropriately distributed to the most marginalised groups. **Heads of government** and **parliamentarians** need to enshrine such funding commitments in constitutional or legal frameworks so that their implementation continues beyond individual government cycles, within a longer-term accountability framework.

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Appendix 1: List of Interviewees

Name	Relevant affiliation
Barbara Chilangwa	Former Permanent Secretary for Education, Zambia; founding member of FAWE; and of CAMFED Zambia, CAMFED Executive Advisor
Dr Fay Chung	Former Minister for Education, Sport and Culture, Zimbabwe; founding member of FAWE
Julia Gillard	Former Prime Minister of Australia; Chair of Board of Global Partnership for Education; Patron of CAMFED; Member of the Platform for Girls' Education
Ambassador Isabelle Hudon	Former Co-Chair Gender Equality Advisory Council for the G7; Member of the Platform for Girls' Education
Baela Jamil	Chief Executive Office at Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi; Commissioner, Education Commission and Member of the Platform for Girls' Education
Florence Malinga	Former Commissioner for Planning, Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda; founding Member FAWE Uganda; Education Advisor for the Commonwealth Secretariat
Dr Amina Mohamed	Cabinet Secretary for Sports, Heritage and Culture, Kenya; former Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kenya; Co-Chair, Platform for Girls' Education
Professor Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang	Former Minister for Education, Ghana; Chairperson of FAWE
Her Excellency Paula-Mae Weekes	President of Trinidad and Tobago; Member of the Platform for Girls' Education
Genet Zewdie	Former Minister of Education, Ethiopia; founding Member FAWE Ethiopia
Anonymous	Senior UK Civil Servant

Endnotes

[1] https://tiozambia.com/au-commends-president-lungu-for-his-fight-in-child-marriage/

[2] https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/9/news-event-ending-child-marriage-in-africa

[3] https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Fact-sheet-Zambia-national-strategy-May-2015.pdf

[4] https://www.change.org/p/the-government-of-canada-all-girls-have-a-right-to-an-education

[5] Based on an interview for this report.

[6] http://www.veritaszim.net/node/3599

[7] Based on an interview for this report.

[8] Based on an Interview for this report. Known as the *Programme for the Advancement of Girls' Education.*

[9] http://fawe.org/

[10] Currently, FAWE operates through 34 National Chapters, which are registered as non-governmental organisations.

[11] https://www.ipu.org/ipu-structure/forum-women-parliamentarians

[12] https://www.globaltbcaucus.org/our-impact

[13] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-40365691

[14] Based on an interview for this report.

[15] Based on an interview for this report.

[16] http://www.ungei.org/index_6494.html

[17] https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/united-nations/alliance-for-multilateralism-63158/article/gender-at-the-centre-initiative

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[19] https://genderlinks.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Barometer-2018-Executive-Summary.pdf

[20] Based on an interview for this report.

[21] Based on an interview for this report

[22] Based on an interview for this report

[23] Based on an interview for this report.

[24] https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/she-the-people/wp/2014/05/22/michelle-obama-renews-her-call-to-bringbackourgirls/

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[26] https://www.obama.org/girlsopportunityalliance/

[27] https://www.clintonfoundation.org/press-releases/no-ceilings-announces-charge-collaborative-harnessing-ambition-and-resources-girls

[28] Based on interviews for this report

[29] https://blog.malala.org/a-major-win-for-out-of-school-nigerian-girls-6083773d0799

[30] https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2014/04/15/the-critical-voice-of-youth-in-education-advocacy-and-global-citizenship/

[31] Based on an interview for this report.

[32] Gender-responsive education sector planning is a whole-system approach to advancing gender equality in and through education, including learning and learning environments, teacher education and practice, curriculum and materials development and leadership and administration (UNGEI & GPE, 2017).

[33] https://newz.ug/museveni-uganda-is-committed-to-ending-child-marriages-teenage-pregnancy-and-all-forms-of-gender-based-violence/

[34] https://www.girlsglobe.org/2018/06/12/action-time-menstrual-hygiene-management-in-uganda/?doing_wp_cron=1581614165.6215200424194335937500

[35] Based on an Interview for this report.

[36] Based on an Interview for this report.

[37] Education for All (EFA), Zambia National Gender Policy, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the United National Platform for Action, the Beijing Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals and other international conventions.

[38] https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/04/human-rights-watch-letter-zambia-ministry-education

[39] Based on an Interview for this report.

[40] https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/

[41] Based on an interview for this report.

[42] https://www.ngeckenya.org/home/about

[43] https://www.ucl.ac.uk/impact/case-studies/2014/dec/africas-girls-promoting-equality-and-empowerment

[44] https://abcnews.go.com/International/1000-teachers-fired-kenya-sex-probe/story?id=11833823

[45] Email correspondence with former technical lead of UNICEF country office in Delhi (2008-2011)

[46] A project is eligible to be classed as principal or significant to gender equality if the project: (a) reduces social, economic or political power inequalities between women and men, girls and boys; ensures women benefit equally with men from the activity; compensates for past discrimination or (b) develop or strengthen gender equality or anti-discrimination policies, legislation or institutions (OECD, 2019).

[47] https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acs/plan-action-2016-en.html

[48] The strategy explains that a targeted approach focuses on initiatives that fight inequality by supporting gender equality. A cross-cutting approach, on the other hand, are initiatives across all areas that need to be developed in a way that improves gender equality.

[49] https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-202372/

[50] https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-204766

[51] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/human-rights-council-38-girls-education

[52] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/9/section/1/enacted

UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE
Faculty of Education

R E A L

Research for Equitable Access and Learning

REAL Centre
Faculty of Education
University of Cambridge
184 Hills Road, Cambridge
CB2 8PQ, UK

@REAL_Centre

REAL Centre Director: Professor Pauline Rose
Email: pmr43@cam.ac.uk
Telephone: +44 (0) 1223 767511

REAL Centre Administrator
Email: REALCentre@educ.cam.ac.uk
Telephone: +44 (0) 1223 767693

www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/real