

UNESCO's efforts to achieve gender equality in and through education

2023 Highlights



UNESCO – a global leader in education

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education, providing global and regional leadership to drive progress, strengthening the resilience and capacity of national systems to serve all learners. UNESCO also leads efforts to respond to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.



The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to *“ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”* The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.



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This report presents highlights of UNESCO's work in 2023 to advance gender equality in and through education. These achievements would not have been possible without the support of our partners, including governments, civil society organizations and the private sector. With this report, we warmly thank our partners for their support to realizing the right to education for all, and gender equality in and through education.

Strategic context

2023 marked the mid-point in the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Globally, gender parity in enrolment was achieved in primary and lower secondary education in 2009 and in upper secondary education in 2013 and has been maintained since. However, 128 million boys and 122 million girls of primary and secondary school age remain out of school. In sub-Saharan Africa, gender parity has not been achieved at any level of education and more girls are out of school than boys. In Central and Southern Asia, a long trend of a rapidly-declining out-of-school population came to an end as girls remain officially banned from secondary education in **Afghanistan**. *UNESCO estimates* that the decision to limit female participation in the workforce will result in a significant economic impact, with the Afghan economy projected to lose two-thirds of the current gross domestic product (GDP) by 2066.

In the face of global mega-trends such as automation, a shrinking labour force and digital transformation, skills development was at the centre of government priorities. But gender disparities persist across education levels and pathways, and skills. In technical and vocational education and training (TVET), of the 146 countries with data, 40 have a sizeable gap in favour of boys and young men in contrast to just 3 in favour of girls and young women. In tertiary education, globally, 114 women were enrolled for every 100 men in 2020. In reading, globally, 115 girls were proficient for every 100 boys at the end of lower secondary education. In science and mathematics, there is near parity at average levels of learning achievement, but boys have an advantage over girls at higher levels of achievement. And in 2018–23, the share of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) graduates who were female was only 35 percent globally. Closing gender gaps in access, learning and outcomes remain a priority for UNESCO.

2023 also witnessed a surge in global, regional and national conflicts with devastating and gendered impacts on education. In 2023, over 1 in 6 children were living in

areas affected by armed conflict. Incidents of military use of educational facilities increased in 2022–23, rising to over 1,000. Girls and women were reportedly targeted because of their gender in attacks on education in at least 10 countries. On 20 November 2023, the 194 UNESCO Member States adopted the *Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development* which outlines changes needed to education amidst contemporary threats and challenges. UNESCO's work to support educational continuity, support skills development and psychosocial assistance to those affected by crisis, including learners and teachers, and other work expanded significantly in 2023.

UNESCO's work on gender equality in and through education continues to be more relevant than ever.



UNESCO's strategic approach

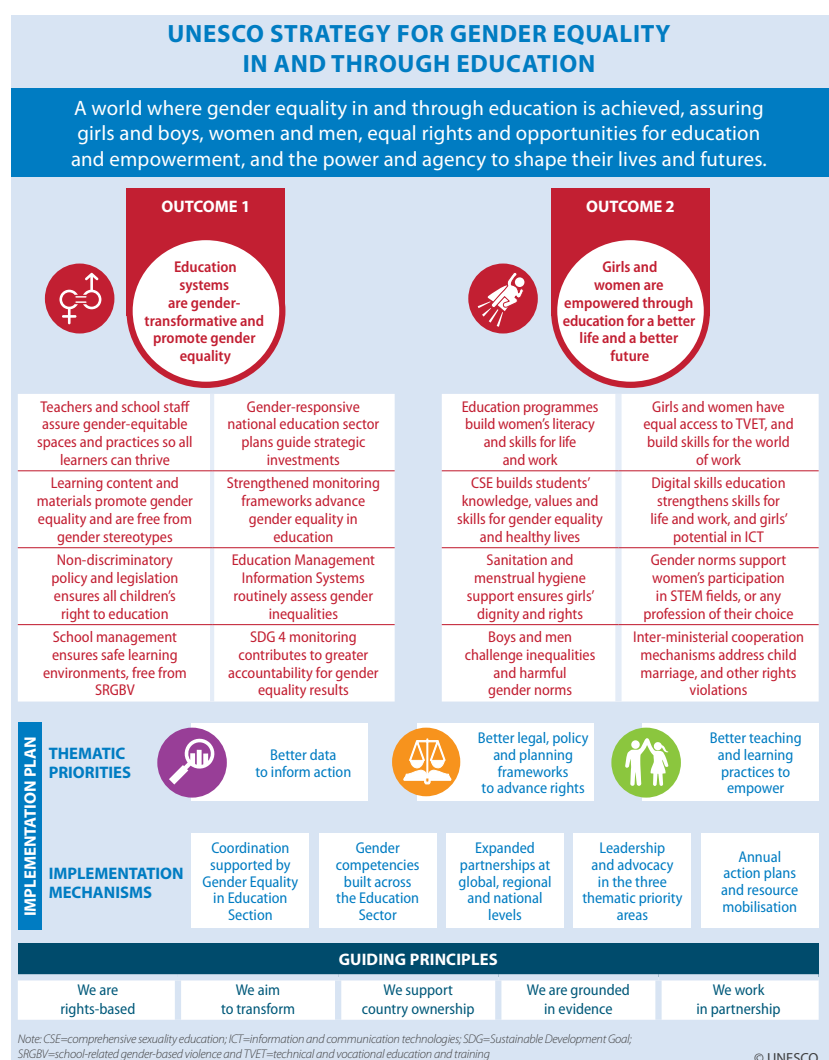
UNESCO's work on education and gender is guided by the *UNESCO strategy for gender equality in and through education 2019-2025*. The strategy aims to guide UNESCO's programmes and actions for "a world where gender equality in and through education is achieved, assuring girls and boys, women and men, equal rights and opportunities for education and empowerment, and the power and agency to shape their lives and futures".

The strategy considers the entire education process, at all levels and delivery modalities, to ensure equality in access, including equal representation of boys and girls, men and women, at all levels and in different aspects of education; the learning

experience through gender-transformative teaching and learning content, processes and environments, and policies, plans and resources that support equality; and educational outcomes, including the translation of education into broader societal gains, such as participation in public life and decision-making, access to decent work and resources, and autonomy. The strategy is underpinned by a broad theory of change (see **Figure 1**), which was launched in parallel with the strategy to leverage political and financial commitments, cooperation and joint action for girls' and women's education.

UNESCO is influencing global, regional and national agendas to advance gender equality. In 2023, this included the G7 Agenda through leadership of the Gender Equality Advisory Council's Working Group on Education, the *Transforming Education Summit (TES)*

Figure 1: Theory of change



Box 1: Mid-term review of the UNESCO strategy for gender equality in and through education

In 2023, UNESCO initiated an external mid-term evaluation of the strategy with the aim to:

- Assess the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and results of initiatives spearheaded by UNESCO since the issuance of the strategy.
- Consider the strategic role and positioning of UNESCO in support of gender equality in and through education at global, regional and country levels.
- Provide conclusions and recommendations to shape ongoing and future programming under the present strategy and in preparation for the next strategy.
- Results are expected in 2024, drawing a wide range of consultations within UNESCO, and with Member States, partners, funders and other key stakeholders.



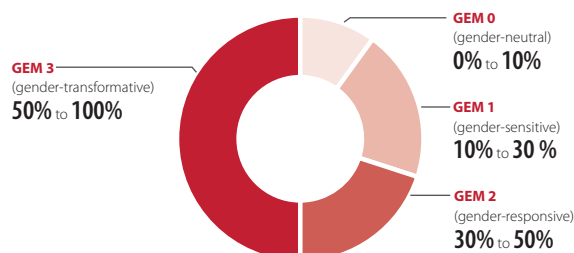
Source: UNESCO. 2019. *From access to empowerment: UNESCO strategy for gender equality in and through education 2019-2025*. Paris, UNESCO, p. 9.

follow-up through co-leadership of the *Global Platform for Gender Equality in and through Education*, technical leadership of the *Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI)* in sub-Saharan Africa, and co-convening of the *Global Working Group to End School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV)* and the *Global Partnership Forum for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)*. UNESCO also influenced other international agendas through the UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the Commission on the Status of Women, the Forum for African Women Educationalists' (FAWE) Triennial International Conference on Girls' Education in Africa and other major events.

Funding highlights

UNESCO has adopted a mechanism – the Gender Equality Marker (GEM; see **Figure 2**) – for tracking the proportion of funds devoted to advancing gender equality. In 2023, contributions to Priority Gender Equality – at US\$61.5 million – made up nearly 31 percent of the Education Sector's total expenditure. This contribution also represents around half of the gender-related expenditure of the five UNESCO Major Programmes.

Figure 2: Gender Equality Marker budget range



Source: UNESCO. 2021. *From access to empowerment: operational tools to advance gender equality in and through education*, p.32. Paris, UNESCO.

**In 2023, UNESCO's Education Sector
invested US\$61.5 million to advance
Priority Gender Equality**

While gender equality cuts across all education outputs, Education Output 2 is entirely dedicated to gender equality in and through education: "Gender-transformative education systems empower learners, ensure safe learning environments and address the educational barriers, particularly for girls and women, exacerbated by the learning crisis." The regular programme budget for this output was slightly over US\$6 million for the 2022-2023 biennium and voluntary contributions totalled approximately US\$17.2 million at the end of the year 2023 – leaving a funding gap of US\$5.6 million.

Voluntary contributions are critical to the implementation of UNESCO's work on gender equality in and through education, as evidenced by the many donors supporting projects across a wide range of settings and programme areas. This includes the governments of Bulgaria, Finland, France, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Monaco, Norway, Pakistan, People's Republic of China, Sweden, and Wallonie-Bruxelles International. CJ Group remained the primary funder to the multi-donor UNESCO Malala Fund for Girls' Right to Education, which supports equal access to education for girls and women with a focus on the hardest-to-reach and those affected by conflict and disaster. Other companies and organizations supporting UNESCO's work on gender equality in and through education in 2022-2023 include Dior, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Huawei, Intel, Mazarine, Plan International, Porticus Foundation, Prada, UN Women, UNAIDS and UNDP. UNESCO will continue to mobilize resources for gender equality in and through education to achieve the ambitions outlined in the *UNESCO strategy for gender equality in and through education 2019–2025*.



Highlights: Better data to inform action

High quality and timely data and evidence are essential to policymaking, planning and the delivery of strategic interventions to advance gender equality in and through education. This section presents highlights of UNESCO's work in 2023 to ensure better data to inform action.

Monitoring Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4

UNESCO's Institute for Statistics (UIS) led the global monitoring of progress towards SDG 4. In 2023, UIS' education data release in the *SDG 4 Data Explorer* included a focus on equity, with a wider availability of disaggregated SDG 4 indicators based on sex, location, socio-economic status and other factors.

UIS and the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report published the first *progress report* on national benchmarks for SDG 4 indicators. It notes that gender gaps in upper secondary completion at girls' expense are closing, while those at boys' expense are widening by as much as 0.5 percentage points each year among countries with a completion rate between 40 and 50 percent. This may be one of the obstacles preventing these countries from setting a national target to eliminate gender disparity.

UNESCO also supported regional monitoring of SDG 4 progress in Africa. In collaboration with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat, UNESCO drafted a progress report on SDG 4 data gaps among SADC Member States, drawing on case studies in **Malawi, South Africa and Zambia**.

Strengthening national data capacity to understand and address gender inequality

UNESCO built countries' capacities to collect, analyse, and use sex-disaggregated data, including through education monitoring and information systems (EMIS), to better promote gender equality in and through education. In 2023, UNESCO provided technical support and guidance to **Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Uganda, Vanuatu, Yemen and Zambia** to better collect sex-disaggregated data and improve analysis and reporting on gender gaps and progress in education.

A new tool, developed end-2023, will help inform the collection of sex-disaggregated data and its use in gender-responsive education planning, management and monitoring. The *EMIS-Progress Assessment Tool for Transformation* has been implemented in **Guinea, Kiribati and Vanuatu**; lessons learned from these contexts can inform its further roll-out.

UNESCO also supported countries to identify and close knowledge gaps in data. For example, in **Egypt**, UNESCO supported the ministry of education to conduct an enabling factor analysis which identified a lack of granular and disaggregated data on learning experiences and outcomes by gender and disability, and the need for more data on gender-based violence (GBV) and factors for school dropout, including early marriages. In **Jordan**, UNESCO helped the Ministry of Education ensure the school maintenance system integrate the needs of all learners in public schools, taking into account gendered and accessibility barriers for children with disabilities.



Education officials can now better identify and address issues that hinder gender equality and inclusion. In **Yemen**, where no country-wide data has been produced since the 2015/2016 school year, UNESCO, with UNICEF and the World Bank, is strengthening EMIS and data collection and analysis capabilities with the aim for a national education census by the 2024/2025 school year.

UNESCO's work on gender and education data is expected to grow. In 2023, UNESCO and University College London (UCL) were awarded a GPE Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE-KIX) grant to address the disconnects between global, national and local processes for data generation and use on gender, education and inclusion. The project will support **Indonesia, Kenya and Malawi**, building on previous cooperative work with UCL, including a *partners meeting* to improve high-quality data on gender and education.

Building the evidence base on gender equality in and through education

UNESCO advanced evidence to inform actions for gender equality in and through education.

As the only UN agency with a mandate in higher education, UNESCO published reports reviewing *women's participation in higher education in Eastern Africa* drawing on case studies from **Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda** and on *challenges and policy responses to higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean*. UNESCO also conducted an *analysis* of the impact of the suspension of female learners' university access in **Afghanistan**, and initiated research on gender-based violence in higher education institutions in **Cuba, Mexico, Zambia and Zimbabwe**.

The gender dimensions of teaching also took centre stage. A factsheet by UNESCO and the International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030 considered the *gender dimensions*

of the teaching workforce, while UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO), GCI and UNICEF Innocenti published a report on *the role of women school principals in improving learning* covering 14 Francophone African countries, followed by a case study of *women's leadership in learning* in **Chad**.

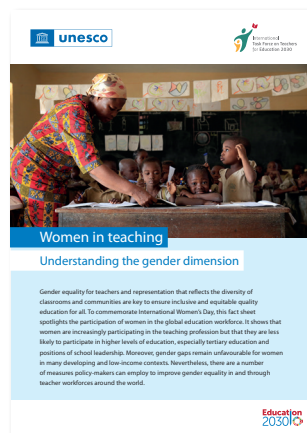
Additional policy-oriented materials on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education on *gendered play and achievement in maths and science* and *gender disparities in innovation and technology* were published in 2023 and informed action. The latter drew on the 2023 *Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report's Gender Report* focusing on technology.

UNESCO and the GEM Report also launched *50 country profiles* considering the delivery of sexuality education, along with a *comparative analysis report*. A report on *school-based sexuality education* inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression also offer examples of efforts to foster holistic development and supportive spaces for all learners.

UNESCO also expanded evidence of good practice since the TES, including an analysis of how *gender figures in TES country commitment statements* and the launch of a *Global Accountability Dashboard* which monitors action across 193 countries, based on indicators from the TES *Call to Action*. The dashboard features more than 1,000 promising practices by over 700 organizations in promoting gender equality in and through education.

Gender also figured in other reports considering equity and inclusion. This included consideration of *gender equality and educational technology*, the *educational situation of girls, adolescents and women with disabilities* in Latin America and the launch of policy briefs considering what large-scale assessments tell us about *equity and equality in learning* in Asia-Pacific.

Examples of UNESCO resources



Highlights: Better legal, policy and planning frameworks to advance rights

The right to education lies at the heart of UNESCO's mission. This section presents highlights of UNESCO's work in 2023 to ensure better legal, policy and planning frameworks to advance rights.

**46 million learners across 32 countries
had access to gender-transformative
teaching and learning through better
laws, policies and plans**

Monitoring the right to education

UNESCO monitors the right to education through its global platforms and mechanisms, including the monitoring of national legal frameworks for girls' right to education through *HerAtlas*. Efforts in advocacy continued throughout 2023, which saw an increase of almost 40 percent in the number of views and nearly 70 percent in the number of users compared to 2022.

UNESCO's 2023 report on the *implementation of the right to education*, focusing on minorities, also had a strong gender lens. Based on the findings of the 10th Consultation on the implementation of the 1960 Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, the report notes actions taken by governments to prohibit discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, language and many other factors.

As part of *UNESCO's initiative on the impact of climate change and displacement on the right to education*, a *global report* was launched in 2023, following a series of regional reports. Presented at COP28, this report notes the severe disruption caused by climate change to girls' and women's right to education as women comprise 80% of those displaced by

climate-related events. Comprehensive policy guidance is included in the report.

Fostering gender-responsive education sector planning (GRES P)

UNESCO played a leading role in strengthening country capacity to integrate gender into education sector analyses (ESAs), budgets and plans, including in **Burkina Faso, Chad, Dominica, Egypt, Grenada, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Sudan** and the **Syrian Arab Republic**.

In **Burkina Faso**, IIEP-UNESCO supported a participatory gender diagnosis with the Ministry of National Education, Literacy, and the Promotion of National Languages, with results published in a *Policy Brief*. In **South Sudan**, UNESCO and GPE conducted a screening questionnaire and ESA, which identified significant gender disparities. The resulting General Education Sector Plan 2023-27 calls for a study to identify factors contributing to gender disparities, the development of a gender-affirmative action policy, awareness campaigns and scholarships for pre-service teacher trainees (at least 20% women), among others.

Capacity-development remained a core component of UNESCO's work. Over 100 ministry actors from a wide range of African countries took IIEP-UNESCO's *online course* on GRESP. Through GCI trainings and events, IIEP-UNESCO and its partners reached 638 representatives from ministries of education and civil society and over 22,000 community members in **Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria** and **Sierra Leone**. 2023 was a pivotal year for the GCI, which undertook a *review* in preparation for a phase 2 launch in 2024. The next phase, with the support of France and GPE, will have



a revised implementation strategy to enhance country-level coordination, improve policy impact, enhance learning and expand the alliance.

Support also focused on sub-national and different levels of education. In **Nepal**, the Capacity Development for Education (CapED) programme and IIEP-UNESCO successfully facilitated the development and endorsement of local education plans in eight pilot municipalities that are home to over 625,000 learners, focusing on gender-responsiveness, accessibility for learners with disabilities and special needs, and indigenous knowledge and skills. In **Egypt**, UNESCO provided technical assistance for the preparation of the ESP for basic education levels and technical and vocational education and training (TVET), including gender analysis and sex-disaggregated performance indicators.

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) remained a key part of capacity-development support. In **Jordan**, UNESCO supported the Ministry of Education to undertake comprehensive GRB, covering capacity-building, gender analysis, the inclusion of gender-responsive indicators in the TVET budget, and the mainstreaming of gender across other programme budgets. The Ministry extended its sector plan until 2025, emphasizing educational inclusion, diversity, and gender equality.

UNESCO is also strengthening its cooperation with GPE, building the capacity of national education systems to deliver results. This included support to **17 partner countries** in 2023 to advance results for gender equality. For example, with technical assistance from IIEP-UNESCO, the government of **Côte d'Ivoire** has developed its GPE Partnership Compact, with a strong gender lens. GPE will allocate US\$110 million including US\$22.5 million as part of the Gender Equality Accelerator. The Compact and the GPE grants allocated to Côte d'Ivoire include provisions to advance gender equality through reforms in gender-responsive pedagogy and curriculum development, support to female school leadership, comprehensive sexuality education at the secondary level, as well as the strengthening of school clubs to prevent and respond to GBV, early pregnancies and marriages, and dropouts.

Advancing national legislation and strategies for gender equality in and through education

UNESCO assisted countries to advance legislation and strategies for gender equality in and through education. In 2023, this included support to the validation of **Liberia's** Girls' Education Strategy, **Mexico's** Gender Equality Curriculum Strategy, and **Nigeria's** National Strategy on the Transition, Retention and Completion of Adolescent Girls and Boys in Secondary Schools. UNESCO also supported **Nigeria** to develop its first standard operating procedures for the prosecution of perpetrators of SRGBV.

Other support addressed inclusion in education. In **Jordan**, UNESCO supported the Ministry of Education and the Higher Council for the Rights of People with Disabilities (HCD) to draft a National Framework on Inclusion and Diversity in Education. Capacity development sessions in 2022-2023 reached 30 pilot schools and 203 Ministry and HCD staff (51% women). Cascading sessions reached 1,123 teachers and school staff (58% women), 952 parents (61% women), 2,748 students (81% girls), 298 field directors (51% women) and 168 Ministry staff (55% women). UNESCO also helped the **State of Palestine** to conduct a policy review to support gender-transformative and disability-inclusive TVET. Recommendations call for better disaggregated and longitudinal data, budgets to scale up inclusion and gender mainstreaming policies, and priority funding to support women's entry into non-traditional fields.

A significant milestone was achieved in 2023 with the validation and launch of the *African Union Strategy on Education for Health and Well-being of Young People*, which provides a unified framework for African nations to improve health, well-being, and learning outcomes for young people.



Box 2: Advocating for the removal of gendered barriers to learning

UNESCO's advocacy to remove gendered barriers to learning continued in 2023. The *Keeping Girls in the Picture* campaign, launched in 2020 during COVID-19, has reached over **24 million people** in Africa and Asia. In 2023, in **Benin**, UNESCO supported the training of facilitators and community radio journalists, the production of broadcasts, and awareness-raising interventions in 562 schools. In **Ghana**, 105 pregnant girls were assisted to return to school and awareness raising reached 83,000 community members on responsible parenting, early and unintended pregnancy, and Ghana's girls' re-entry policy.

In **Viet Nam**, the campaign's *Youth Advocacy Toolkit* was adapted to the national context and integrated into 13 schools reaching 4,230 (52% girls) primarily indigenous students. Each school created action plans for gender-responsive communication campaigns, aligned with the national curriculum. Nearly 50 activities, including 20 schoolwide events, are planned to reach over 80,000 students by the end of the 2024-2025 school year.

UNESCO also dedicated the 2023 International Day of Education (24 January) to girls and women in **Afghanistan** who have been deprived of their right to pursue secondary and higher education. 'No country in the world should bar women and girls from receiving an education,' said UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay.

Highlights: Better teaching and learning practices to empower

For education to empower, it must challenge and change unequal power relations, as well as address practices, norms and expectations that prevent all persons – regardless of their gender or other intersecting characteristics – from realizing their full potential. This section presents highlights of UNESCO's work in 2023 to ensure better teaching and learning practices that empower.

Building teacher capacity for gender-transformative education

UNESCO supported countries' efforts to enhance teachers' capacity on gender in their teaching and learning practices in **Afghanistan, Brazil, Burundi, Iran, Jordan, Kenya, Lao PDR, Mali, Niger, Pakistan, Rwanda, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan and Zambia**.

For example, in **Burundi, Niger, Uganda and Zambia**, through the CapED programme, 4,241 teachers and education personnel (42% women) were trained to deliver gender-responsive pedagogies (GRP). **Burundi** was supported to integrate STEM and GRP in teacher education and training, and to finalize a national teacher motivation framework. In **Niger**, efforts focused on framework and interventions to keep girls in school. In **Uganda**, a gender-in-education module was developed to support in-service teachers. In **Zambia**, UNESCO is supporting a new teacher policy to address emerging issues.

UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (UNESCO-IICBA) in 2023 also released with UNICEF and FAWA an online self-paced and free-of-charge [eLearning course on GRP](#). The course can be adapted to country needs, and used by teachers, school principals and administrators.

UNESCO's support to GRP also was linked to different thematic areas, modalities and groups of learners. For example, in **Pakistan**, as part of the Girls' Right to Education Programme, 878 teachers from 110 girls' primary schools were trained in activity-based learning and multi-grade teaching methods, and additional female teachers were hired to manage increased student enrolment. In **Brazil**, efforts focused on strengthening the Gender and Diversity Nucleus which is responsible for promoting gender-inclusive practices in the Municipal Education Department in all stages of basic education. In **Jordan**, 2,803 teachers (64% women) benefited from teacher training on gender mainstreaming.



Box 3: Supporting Afghan teachers in challenging contexts

In **Afghanistan**, UNESCO supported the development of a teacher support mechanism and interim competency framework, benefiting 617 teachers (44% women) in five provinces. Around 1,000 teachers (40% women) from 23 provinces were trained on social-emotional learning and blended pedagogies, including on inclusive education, the role of teachers and curriculum in inclusive education, among other topics. Around 250 teachers (40% women) from five educational zones of Kabul province were trained on the roots and consequences of SRGBV and actions to prevent it.

In addition, the [UNESCO Afghan Teacher Training Programme](#) has made significant progress in fostering a brighter future for displaced Afghan teachers and students. Since 2021, the programme has trained around 500 Afghan refugee teachers in **Iran**, including 150 in 2023.

Developing gender-transformative curriculum and teaching/learning materials

Integrating gender perspectives into educational content can develop students' skills to challenge stereotypes and biases and promote equality. UNESCO is driving this transformative effort in **Ethiopia, Honduras, Jordan, Mexico, Nigeria, Somalia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan**.

In **Mexico**, the Ministry of Education has undertaken the first statewide dissemination of a gender curriculum developed with help from UNESCO. UNESCO provided 36 didactic sequences (69 over 2022-23) for teachers to prevent GBV and empower girls and women, along with tools and other support for implementation and monitoring. Nearly 3.7 million students and over 181,230 teachers in basic education will benefit from this programme.

Building the capacity of curriculum developers was another area of UNESCO's focus. In **Jordan**, UNESCO supported the Ministry of Education to review 276 students', teachers' and exercise books; 46% were found to be gender-sensitive. In **Pakistan**, UNESCO trained 113 curriculum and textbook officials and other officers from five districts on materials drawn from UNESCO and its partners' *Girls back to school guide*. Adaptation of this training is underway for roll-out in decentralised areas of **Chad** and **Mauritania**.

Gender, health and well-being were central themes for UNESCO's support. In **Honduras**, UNESCO, with UNICEF and UNFPA, developed a proposal to integrate CSE, nutrition and GBV prevention into curricula. Targeting 28 rural TVET schools, the project involves capacity building workshops for teachers and principals, focusing on vulnerable indigenous communities. UNESCO, with P&G Whisper® **India**, launched 'Spotlight Red' teaching-learning modules on five areas of menstrual health and hygiene management. The intersections of gender and disability is explored in the *module for persons with disabilities*. The modules draw on learnings from a *survey and gap analysis report*. In the **United Republic of Tanzania**, UNESCO partnered with the Ministry of Health and key stakeholders to pilot an "integrated safe school model" in 40 schools.

Ensuring teaching and learning continue in crises and emergencies

In 2023, UNESCO stepped up efforts to promote systemic change for gender- and crisis-sensitive education planning, management and coordination including in **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Chad, Ecuador, Haiti, Iran, Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, Peru, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand** and **Ukraine**.

To ensure learning never stops, in **Ukraine**, UNESCO supported, with Google, the delivery of 50,000 Chromebooks to teachers (84% women), the establishment of an online school learning management information system, and the training of 209,404 educators in digital skills for education. Along the **Thai-Myanmar border**, UNESCO supported digital learning to 7,952 migrant children (74% girls), while in **Chad** UNESCO built and equipped 96 classrooms and 112 separate latrines for girls and boys in crisis-affected situations.

Afghanistan remained a key country for support (see also **Box 3**). The Youth and Adults Literacy and Basic Education initiative reached 14,735 individuals (67% women and adolescent girls) in 11 provinces. The Literacy for a Brighter Future Campaign successfully advocated for girls' and women's education, enrolling 25,000 learners (68% girls) in YALBE Level 1 courses across 20 provinces. The Radio-based Education

Programme benefited 156,000 out-of-school learners, including 125,378 girls aged 13-18, covering lower secondary STEM subjects. UNESCO's advocacy campaign during the 2023 International Literacy Day on 57 radio and 8 TV channels and billboards in 29 key provinces reached 26.7 million through TV and 26.1 million people through radio.

Through the Multi Year Resilience Programme, UNESCO and Education Cannot Wait supported learning for refugees from **Bangladesh, Cameroon** and **Venezuela**. In **Bangladesh**, 26,266 Rohingya children (48% girls) were enrolled in learning facilities, 2,130 secondary school learners (56% girls) were reached via Community Technology Access labs, and 2,880 parents and caregivers (84% women) were trained on child development, gender and disability. In the Rohingya camps, 591 educational stakeholders (25% women) built skills on gender-, crisis- and disability-sensitive education planning, management and coordination. In **Ecuador**, to meet Venezuelan refugees' needs, UNESCO supported the training of 2,041 teachers (70% women) on inclusion and non-discrimination, 16,426 teachers on CSE, and outreach to 2,340 parents and caregivers (84% women) on girls' education. In **Cameroon**, UNESCO helped improve the psychosocial well-being of around 5,773 (55% girls) vulnerable crisis-affected learners.

UNESCO also considered gender in disaster risk reduction and the prevention of violent extremism (PVE), and post-crisis support. For example, in **Iraq**, 852 university students and staff (54% women) were supported to address hate speech and stereotypes, including gender-related ones, and the capacities to deliver PVE education of 285 teachers were strengthened in **Mali**, impacting 15,000 learners, including a commitment to gender equality and inclusion. Following the 2023 earthquake in the **Syrian Arab Republic**, UNESCO with partners supported the rehabilitation of 60 schools in Aleppo (45) and Hama (15), benefiting 44,875 learners (56% girls) and 297 teachers (86% women). In **Haiti**, UNESCO supported teachers to provide psychosocial care to nearly 2,000 students (65% girls) and built the literacy, numeracy and income generating skills of over 5,000 girls, young mothers and women.



Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)

UNESCO led global efforts to scale up gender-transformative CSE, with support to countries including **Bhutan, Botswana, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ethiopia, Ghana, Haiti, Honduras, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria, the Philippines, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Viet Nam, Zambia and Zimbabwe.**

The ***Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Futures (O3)*** programme continues as one of UNESCO's landmark programmes in the Education Sector. After successfully implementing its first phase, a second phase was launched in June 2023: by the end of the year, 20 million learners were reached by teachers who were trained or benefited from UNESCO support under the O3 programme. Other capacity development efforts also bore fruit: in **Haiti**, UNESCO and the Ministry of National Education and Vocational Training reached 5,220 learners through strengthening instructor capacities, while in **Viet Nam**, 3,509 trainers (74% women) reported implementing CSE and life skills education one year after capacity-building interventions.

To improve CSE data and monitoring, UIS and IIEP-UNESCO reviewed data collection/reporting processes for SDG 4.7.2, "Percentage of schools that provided life skills-based HIV and sexuality education within the previous academic year," and presented practical recommendations at a regional meeting in **Côte d'Ivoire**. UNESCO also supported **Dominican Republic** and **Honduras** to identify strengths and gaps in HIV prevention and sexuality education using the *Sexuality Education Review and Assessment Tool (SERAT)*. A comprehensive listening and landscape analysis of sexuality education discourse in **Ethiopia, Kenya** and **Malawi** revealed communities' receptiveness and willingness to support CSE.

Through *Ready to learn and thrive*, UNESCO with other UN agencies promoted integrated school health and well-being. In **Pakistan**, 264 teachers (79% women) and 40,814 students (64% girls) received training on health and hygiene; hygiene kits were provided to 37,565 students (64% girls). In addition, 4,368 girls were supported to enrol, and 108 mother groups were empowered to support their daughters' education. In **Liberia**, UNESCO identified and provided psycho-socio support, skills training and start-up kits to 220 targets of gender-based violence, and counselled male perpetrators on GBV prevention and response.

Many initiatives leveraged digital content: for example, UNESCO and partners adapted nine *Amaze.org CSE videos* and created lesson plans and facilitator guides in Lao, Thai and Vietnamese, and collaborated with youth groups and activists in **Bhutan, Cambodia, Nepal, the Philippines** and **Viet Nam**. In the **United Republic of Tanzania**, over 5 million listeners accessed SRH

content through broadcasting. In **Uruguay**, UNESCO, UNFPA and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) supported the Ministry of Education and Culture to contextualise 'If I Were Jack', an interactive initiative to engage boys and address masculinities in preventing early and unintended pregnancies.



Source: *Lesson Plan: Gender Stereotypes* (Available under CC BY-SA 4.0) from *AMAZE (video resources online)*

Ensuring safe, inclusive, healthy learning environments

UNESCO supported countries to ensure safe, inclusive and healthy learning environments for all, including **Chad, Kenya, Mexico, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Sierra Leone, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Viet Nam.**

UNESCO took significant steps to advance the evidence base and share good practices to address SRGBV. New guidance produced with UNGEI demonstrates why gender matters and how to *measure SRGBV*. Knowledge-sharing across 22 countries was also enabled through a *Asia-Pacific Learning Symposium* convened through the Global Working Group to End SRGBV. A resulting *technical brief* called on countries "to implement holistic and gender-transformative programmes and policies that can improve school safety for all learners and reduce violence in schools". UNESCO also published a *policy brief on SRGBV*, and a report on *teachers' perceptions and actions on violence in schools*, drawing on a survey of 34,877 teachers in 148 countries and other data.

UNESCO also prioritized teacher capacity development to prevent and respond to SRGBV. In **Mozambique**, UNESCO

supported the revision of the teachers' code of conduct to address gender inequality and prevent SRGBV. In **Viet Nam**, national master trainers, teachers and administrators received refresher courses on GBV in cyberspace, which will benefit at least 1,560 students annually. Through UNESCO's rural secondary programme in **Peru**, Horizontes, 572 teachers were trained to support the socioemotional and intercultural skills of 7,072 students (47% girls, over half from indigenous communities).

In **Mexico**, UNESCO is supporting the creation of inclusive school environments by engaging communities in socio-emotional and self-care development. In the 2023/2024 school year, 9,324 students (51% girls), 546 teachers (64% women) and 13,992 family members, primarily mothers and grandmothers, will benefit from this change process. In **Botswana**, through cooperation between UNESCO and Peking University of China, the *Connect with Respect* programme was piloted in six schools and reached 5,976 learners, leading to tailor-made school safeguarding policies and improved reporting of SRGBV.

UNESCO also tapped into sports' potential to promote health and address gender stereotypes. For example, in **Viet Nam**, UNESCO collaborated with UN Women and Football for All Viet Nam to promote gender equality and safe learning environments through sports. Advocacy and coverage of sporting events reached millions through online/television coverage and articles in 29 newspapers.



Box 4: Advancing inclusive education for LGBTIQ+ learners

UNESCO's *report on school-based sexuality education* highlights the rationale for sexuality education inclusive of SOGIE-diverse learners for the realisation of their right to education as well as their health and well-being, and provides an analytical framework for assessing the inclusiveness of CSE curricula.

UNESCO has also supported youth advocacy to address identity-based exclusion in Asia-Pacific, including based on sexual orientation and a gender identity. For the 2023 International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia, UNESCO released this *video* profiling youth action to champion LGBTIQ+ inclusive education. In addition, UNESCO has been expanding educational opportunities to transgender persons in **Pakistan** to reduce economic and social vulnerability and enhance inclusion in society. Four learner centres have been created, benefitting 110 transgender students.

Ensuring gender-transformative digital skills and STEM education

UNESCO is giving special attention to girls' participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education issue as part of its *UNESCO strategy for gender equality in and through education 2019-2025* and as a response to a related 2016 Executive Board's decision (199 EX/26) calling for UNESCO's leadership in this area.

UNESCO has developed extensive expertise in supporting Member States to deliver gender-transformative STEM education. In the 2022-23 biennium, UNESCO supported 25 countries to improve girls' and women's access to digital skills and STEM education opportunities. This includes support to **Afghanistan, Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Pakistan, Rwanda, Uganda** and the **United Republic of Tanzania**.

This included support to girls and young women through ICT bootcamps, school visits and awareness-raising. In 2023 in **Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda** and **United Republic of Tanzania**, through a UNESCO-Intel cooperation, 189 education actors benefited from participatory training on gender-responsive STEM education, 430 secondary school girls from 85 schools received mentoring from ICT bootcamps, and 8,000 girls, parents, and educational stakeholders were reached awareness-raising activities. Similarly in **Côte d'Ivoire**, with support from the Republic of Korea, UNESCO reached over 2,000 girls in 25 schools with a STEM awareness campaign, and trained STEM Ambassadors to work with each school.

The provision of infrastructure and support to education staff is also primordial for countries in need. In **Kenya**, UNESCO enhanced access to quality education for vulnerable communities through the Pilot Offline Intranet Resource Centre (OIRC), connecting two girls' secondary schools (1,947 girls) to the internet via the national optic fibre backbone infrastructure, facilitating access to open educational resources (OERs). Additionally, five girls' schools (3,305 girls) received OER-preloaded digital library devices. The OIRC in Garissa High School has provided 2,439 learners (47% girls) with digital learning opportunities in a low-tech environment.

Training for teachers and students are another major approach for increasing gender equality in and through STEM education. In **Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda** and the **United Republic of Tanzania**, 498 teachers, school administrators & ministry staff were trained on gender-responsive STEM pedagogies in 2023. In **Brazil**, the #EDUCASTEM2030 project to support girls' education in STEM includes teacher and student through training, advocacy, networking and mentorship. Since its launch in 2022, the project has engaged around 15,000 learners and certified nearly 400 teachers.

In November 2023, UNESCO's 42nd Session of the General Conference adopted a resolution to establish a UNESCO Category 1 International Institute for STEM Education in Shanghai, the **People's Republic of China**. Its main functions include promoting inclusive, equitable, relevant and quality STEM education from early childhood to adulthood, and serving as an information exchange centre, a network hub, a resource base and a capacity-building focal point in STEM education.



Boosting gender equality through TVET

UNESCO mainstreamed gender equality and promoted equity in TVET policies and programmes, in line with *UNESCO's strategy for TVET 2022-2029*. In The **Gambia**, UNESCO assessed the consideration of gender in TVET systems, and provided

guidance for the development of a gender mainstreaming strategy. In 2023, UNESCO and the UNESCO International centre for TVET (UNEVOC) also hosted capacity-building workshops with a focus on gender-responsive TVET institutions and programmes, involving policymakers from **British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Guyana, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sint Maarten** and **Suriname**.



In the **State of Palestine**, UNESCO assisted the National TVET Commission to develop a gender-transformative and disability-inclusive TVET system through TVET policy reviews. This includes the production of an *Inclusive TVET Career Guidance and Counselling Manual* in Arabic, and the training and upskilling of 734 youth with disabilities (68% women), including work-based learning and coaching programmes, and awareness-raising activities reaching 692 persons (77% women). In **Uzbekistan**, public outreach interventions to boost TVET programmes resulted in a surge and a more gender-balanced enrolment from 93 learners (37% girls) to 716 learners (45% girls) in the 2023-24 academic year in pilot colleges.

Promoting gender equality in and through higher education

UNESCO supported standard setting within higher education institutions. In **Chile**, UNESCO established an alliance to develop a higher education certification system based on gender equality standards, which is an opportunity to realise commitments in higher education of *the 4th National Plan for Equality Between Women and Men 2018-2030*. In **Iraq**, UNESCO supported awareness-raising on gender as part of the development of quality standards for degree programmes, where the need for clear policies on gender equality and special needs provision are part of the requirements for partner universities. In **Nigeria**, UNESCO supported six universities develop a manual to institutionalize GBV prevention and response protocols for women and girls.

UNESCO is also supporting Afghan young women to continue their higher education through alternative learning providers. In 2023, 240 female higher education students were supported through distance and online modalities.



Box 5: Supporting higher education institutions (HEIs) build competencies, enhance inclusion and promote gender equality

UNESCO, in partnership with the People's Republic of China, is supporting **Côte d'Ivoire**, **Ethiopia**, **Gabon**, **Senegal** and the **United Republic of Tanzania** to enhance HEI's ability to strengthen competence- and labour-marked based learning, while advancing gender equality. In 2023, 13,488 youth (40% girls) and 594 teachers and staff (20% women) benefited from this *project*.

School visits and advocacy are helping to close gender gaps in STEM. In **Côte d'Ivoire** and **Senegal**, over 3,400 girls were reached through awareness-raising activities, including the provision of awards to high-performing girls with strong results. The partner institute in **Côte d'Ivoire** observed a rise in girls' enrolment in STEM studies from 7% to around 20-22%, while in **Senegal**, the partner institute developed a strategy to promote equal participation and retention of female students in STEM disciplines.

Female entrepreneurship and innovation are also encouraged. An institute in **Côte d'Ivoire** established an incubation centre to address local issues in agriculture and technology, while in **Tanzania**, an institute has established the Centre for Gender Studies, equipped with policies and guidelines to systematically address gender-related issues.

Supporting non-formal education and lifelong learning

UNESCO supports non-formal education (NFE) that provides flexible and diverse delivery modes and meets the context-specific learning needs of all age groups, especially adults through lifelong learning opportunities.

In 2023, UNESCO supported **Somalia** to strengthen consideration of gender within the revision of the adult learning and education curriculum framework. In the **Philippines**, 1,900 Alternative Learning System (ALS) module sets (each including 50 teachers' guidebooks and 50 student workbooks) were printed and distributed to deliver NFE to out-of-school girls and youth. By 2023, capacity-building programmes reached 828 ALS teachers and administrators (60% women) and 998 ALS girl learners. In addition, UNESCO supported the construction of the Girls' Education Center, whose official Certificate of Completion and transfer to

Department of Education was finalised in 2023. It can welcome over 1,800 ALS girl learners annually and is equipped with a science and ICT/math laboratory.



Out-of-school children, especially girls, are particularly in need of NFE and links back to formal education. In **Iraq**, 10,686 out of school children (48% girls) were provided with inclusive learning opportunities, and female roles were highlighted in teacher training and parent-teacher associations. In **Afghanistan**, UNESCO accelerated the non-formal education programme with 23,149 beneficiaries (70% women) in 2023 and established 1,538 Village Literacy Committees with 7,689 members across 20 provinces.

Efforts to close gender gaps in literacy are a large part of UNESCO's programmes in **Burundi**, **Cambodia**, **Côte d'Ivoire**, **Honduras** and **Mali**. In **Cambodia**, UNESCO, with the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS), provides work-based classes in 18 factories across 9 provinces to enable 506 garment factory workers (over 90% women) to acquire basic functional literacy and numeracy and improve productivity and employability. In **Côte d'Ivoire**, from 2022-2023, UNESCO supported over 2,000 women traders in markets to read, write, count and use mobile phones for online banking and business development. These women can now help with their children's homework, contributing to a 90% success rate for primary school children. In **Chad**, with UNESCO's support, 5,423 persons, including 4,202 women, became literate, and 6,700 adolescents (46% girls) benefited from various artisanal and agri-food training courses.

UNESCO also continues to expand outreach to international mentoring and education programmes through Women@Dior, reaching around 300 young women from nearly 60 countries annually. In 2023, 69 projects were created addressing financial literacy, gender pay inequity, education access, migrant women's isolation, and preparing girls for green jobs, with expert coaching for mentees.



Box 6: UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education

The *UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education*, funded by the Government of the People's Republic of China, rewards outstanding innovation and contributions made by individuals, institutions and organizations to advance girls' and women's education. The Prize is conferred annually to two laureates and consists of an award of US\$50,000 each.

In 2023, the Prize went to the Spring Bud Project in the **People's Republic of China** for its work supporting adolescent girls' schooling and skills training for income generation, mental health and digital literacy, and the Star Schools Programme in **Pakistan** for its efforts supporting girls to go and stay at school in challenging contexts, by empowering girls and women and strengthening communities through education.

Challenges and opportunities

In a global context marked by threats to women's rights and gender equality – set against a backdrop of increasing conflict and natural disasters – UNESCO has redoubled its efforts to protect learners' ability to overcome gendered barriers to educational achievement and meet their learning goals.

Recognizing that data limitations often restrict governments' ability to effectively reach the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach populations, UNESCO promoted the collection and use of disaggregated – and where possible intersectional – data across its programmes. While advocacy and capacity development in many settings were successful in raising awareness of gender data gaps and an understanding of how to address them among key decision-makers, further efforts are necessary to consolidate the progress made and embed gender data capacities across administrative entities responsible for education at the central and decentralized levels. The needs are particularly strong in conflict and emergency settings with high numbers of displaced persons and refugees, to meet the international development community's commitment to leave no one behind.

A second major challenge – and opportunity – observed in 2023 was the heightened recognition that overcoming gendered barriers to participation and achievement in education requires the involvement of sectors outside of education, such as health, labour and justice. Strengthened collaboration is essential to ensure that interventions outside the direct scope of the educational process recognize and respond to the gendered norms that impact on learning. This comprehensive and holistic approach lies at the heart of the transforming education agenda launched at the UN Secretary-General's 2022 Summit.

In an international financial environment characterized by limited and largely earmarked resources, UNESCO leveraged the power of partnerships. As co-lead of the multi-stakeholder Global Platform for Gender Equality in and through Education, the Organization spurred a movement to build powerful, cohesive and coordinated action to drive change. The Platform's *Global Accountability Dashboard*, launched in November 2023, is the first interactive platform to crowdsource and share the data, activities and findings of the full cross-section of the international education and gender community – a veritable one-stop shop for activists, researchers, programme managers and policy-makers looking for evidence on what works. The need now is to translate these research, advocacy and documentation building partnerships into joined-up in-country capacity development that leverages the added-value of each partner.

Finally, UNESCO continues to observe challenges in overcoming setting-specific gender norms that impede learners' full and equal participation and achievement in education. Globally, boys faced increased rates of disengagement and drop-out from general secondary schooling, while girls and women continue to experience structural barriers to success in STEM education fields. Ensuring that interventions build on global knowledge and evidence while identifying and responding to setting-specific needs must remain a priority for UNESCO, whose mandate and delivery capacity straddles these two spheres of action.

Next steps for UNESCO's work

In 2024, UNESCO will conclude the mid-term evaluation of its *Strategy for gender equality in and through education 2019-2025*, ensuring that its findings inform adjustments to the Organization's programme delivery in this field.

Building on the vision and lessons learnt within the context of the 2022 Transforming Education Summit process, it will scale up the ambition and impact of its actions – in particular through expanding the scope of its partnership-building activities, with a particular view to reaching young people and settings across Africa. As co-lead of the *Global Platform for Gender Equality in and through Education* launched during the TES, it will convene stakeholders from across the education sector to advance evidence and knowledge sharing on gendered barriers to education and learning achievement at key moments on the regional and international agendas such as the 2024 Global Education Meeting (among others), consolidate and expand the scope and reach of the crowdsourced *Global Accountability Dashboard*, and kickstart Global Platform-led capacity development opportunities for education actors.

Building on work conducted in 2023, the availability of gender data will continue to be strengthened – in particular through capacity building and cross-sectoral dialogue between key stakeholders on the collection and review of data in selected States in Africa and Asia.

Improving understanding on gendered barriers to education and learning achievement – and commitment to overcoming them – will continue to be a priority. Together with partners, UNESCO will launch a landmark global study measuring the economic, fiscal and social costs of girls' and boys' disengagement from education – thus making the economic case for investing in education for all. Issues of rising concern and interest, such as the impacts of technology on educational opportunity and outcomes, will also be examined through a gender lens in high-visibility publications such as the 2024 Gender edition of the Global Education Monitoring Report on gender equality.

Thanks to new funding received, UNESCO will move forward with efforts to support countries to apply the recommendations of its landmark 2022 report on boys' disengagement from education. Through the UNESCO-led Consortium, the Organization will generate evidence on how to address constraints to boys' participation and engagement in school, support gender-transformative learning, and promote gender equality in schools and society in target countries in Africa and Asia.

A particular light will be shined on the benefits of promoting equal learning pathways for girls and boys, including increasing girls' and women's participation, learning and retention in STEM fields. Decision-makers' commitment to, and understanding of, this sub-sector will be enhanced through advocacy and evidence sharing opportunities at major regional and international fora; they will be accompanied by comprehensive in-country efforts to analyze and revise curricula to address gender-related barriers and bottlenecks; strengthen teacher capacities to provide STEM education that transforms gender stereotypes and norms, attitudes and practices; and deliver targeted role model-based training for adolescent girls and young women in key settings.

Finally, UNESCO will deepen partnerships to expand awareness and the funding available for gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment in and through education. Building on its landmark *Her Education, Our Future* drive to accelerate action, the Organization will leverage advocacy moments such as International Women's Day, the International Day of the Girl and the awarding of the UNESCO Prize for Girls' and Women's Education to launch major communications campaigns and products such as a documentary film on girls overcoming obstacles on their path to an education. With particular attention to the ongoing egregious denial of girls' and women's fundamental right to education in Afghanistan, UNESCO will remind audiences around the globe that education for all, without discrimination, is essential to achieving peace, equality and sustainable development worldwide.

If you would like to support UNESCO's work on gender equality in and through education or have any questions, please contact the Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality: gender.ed@unesco.org

UNESCO's efforts to achieve gender equality in and through education

2023 Highlights

This report presents highlights of UNESCO's work in 2023 to advance gender equality in and through education.

UNESCO's work in this area is guided by the UNESCO strategy for gender equality in and through education 2019–2025, and supported by Her Education, Our Future, which was launched in parallel with the strategy, to leverage political and financial commitments, cooperation and joint action for girls' and women's education.

If you would like to know more about or further support UNESCO's work to achieve gender equality in and through education, please get in touch!

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