



Knowledge hub - Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI)

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Mozambique

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and IIEP-UNESCO

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

The Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI) champions the leadership of education ministries and other national actors to advance gender equality in and through education.

6. What makes it a best practice? *

Rooted in gender-responsive education sector planning, GCI brings together diverse, national stakeholders (young feminist activists, CSOs, ministries, community groups) to build social demand for education, and make education systems more gender responsive.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the

i) Which population was affected?

ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?

iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

In Sub-Saharan Africa, 52 millions girls and young women are still missing the chance to go to school and facing significant barriers to their education. In low-income countries, less than two-thirds of girls complete their primary education and only one in three complete secondary school. And girls are 2.5 more likely to be excluded from primary school in countries affected by fragility and conflict. Girls with disabilities are the most educationally marginalised of all. On the basis of the above considerations, eight Sub-Saharan countries were invited to participate to the Gender at the Center Initiative (GCI), namely: five in the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania), Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Mozambique.

Despite global advances in gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment, there are still significant gender gaps in education between and within countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and in fragile contexts.

While the eight selected countries are linguistically, economically, culturally and politically diverse, they also share characteristics that have a negative impact on girls' education, specifically fragility and conflict, and a high prevalence of sexual violence and gender discrimination. School related gender-based violence is prevalent across all 8 partner countries. Patriarchy and gender-discriminatory norms, contextual factors like poverty and conflict-affected situations, discriminatory or non-existent institutional laws and practices are some of the root causes and reinforcing factors of SRGBV .

GCI builds on the gender-responsive education sector planning (GRESPE) approach championed by the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and with the technical support of UNESCO, UNICEF, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and civil society organizations. Through the GCI Alliance, education partners have connected at global, regional and national levels in order to align their initiatives and increase their impact. In several countries GCI partners have developed plans for joint activities, under the coordination of the Local Education Groups.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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GCI strengthened the technical capacity of Ministries of Education (MoEs) to mainstream gender equality in education sector planning, and laid the foundations to change organizational culture for gender equality through the development of gender participatory diagnostics and institutionalization strategies in GCI countries and the design of a program on Transformative Leadership. Strong relationships with Ministries of Education were built, which have reinforced country ownership of GCI and increased commitment to gender equality within MoEs. Through its CSO Consortium and network of young feminist activists, GCI undertook significant action on the ground, effectively advocating for gender equality in education and raising awareness among community members. GCI has also served as an effective platform for advocacy at the regional and global levels, as well as an innovative research hub.

In 2021 the above activities were carried out in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Chad, Mauritania, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Mozambique. Similar activities will be implemented in the eight countries in 2022. As needed, detailed on the dates of implementation of all these activities are available. The GCI programme is implemented by the partner countries who choose to take part, with support from a multi-stakeholder partnership which includes UNGEI, GPE, UNESCO-IIEP, UNESCO, Plan International, the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), the African Network Campaign for Education for All (ANCEFA), and the African Union - International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa (AU/CIEFFA). Together with the G7 donors and participating countries, this partnership of agencies forms the GCI Alliance.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

Ministries of Education demonstrated political leadership on gender equality. They were strengthened in their technical capacity to mainstream gender equality in education sector planning and management, both through regional and national-level capacity building. GCI's CSO Consortium (formed by the Africa Network Campaign on Education for All (ANCEFA), the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and Plan International) increased demand for gender equality in education and advocated for gender-transformative education systems in their communities.

With help from GCI, Sierra Leone and Nigeria mainstreamed gender in their Education Sector Analysis. Sierra Leone demonstrated both political leadership and ownership of the planning process, in particular with the preparation of its new Education Sector Plan. In Niger, the relationship with various key partners in the field was strengthened thanks to a mission that opened collaboration to support the government in gender-responsive education planning and to strengthen the sector dialogue on gender in education. Two innovative Communities of Practice (French and English) now bring together around 60 managers of Ministries of Education from the GCI countries and beyond (more than 20 countries from Francophone and Anglophone African countries). Community members apply their knowledge on gender-responsive education sector planning in their professional context and further share lessons learnt and good practices on gender mainstreaming.

In Burkina Faso and Mozambique, the CSO Consortium supported the government to make Covid-19 education response plans more gender-responsive. In Nigeria, thanks to CSO Consortium advocacy, the governments of Adamawa and Sokoto states signed a declaration to 'build back better' and ensure girls' return to school after Covid-19. Through radio spots, television debates, community theater and meetings with young activists, parents and teachers, the Consortium successfully raised awareness on the right for every girl and boy to complete a quality education. In the words of 13-year-old Fatoumata from Mali: "Thanks to GCI's sensitization activities in our community, several girls have found the way to school again after the Covid-19 school closure".

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

GCI provided an opportunity for knowledge generation and sharing around advancing gender equality in education between countries and partners to support broader public awareness, learning and application in other settings. Furthermore, CSOs (including teachers', children rights' and youth organizations) played a key role in education sector processes. They contribute to the development and delivery of sector plans, often as members of the Local Education Group (LEG), and promote accountability through advocacy and public engagement. Also, there was a political will to promote gender equality in education given the eight GCI countries, as member states of the African Union, have all approved the Continental Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) and its associated Gender Equality Strategy. Collaboration among relevant stakeholders, including ministries of education, other relevant ministries local and regional governmental bodies, and national civil society actors, as well as other traditional and community leaders was encouraged. States were encouraged to dedicate sufficient human, technical and financial to improve policies and plans for development of education sectors and gender equality.

GCI has developed into a coordinated, well-known initiative that manages to leverage the collective efforts of its Alliance members. This was facilitated by a great collaboration and coordination between implementing partners, robust workplan, availability of resources and commitment of MoEs and CSOs. On the other hand, GCI has lacked capacity for in-country coordination and communication among all GCI partners. With a limited, mainly regionally-based team, GCI didn't have enough in-country presence to ensure effective country coordination. In 2022, GCI MoE focal points will be supported to ensure this coordination. Moving forward, GCI would benefit from having country coordinators in each of the GCI countries.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a "best practice".

What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented "best practice" or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

The Initiative is based on the values of human rights, addresses to the needs and rights of marginalized and vulnerable girls and promote gender equality in and through education. It has the support of the GCI Alliance members. These members include youth representatives' bodies and coordinate to deliver the GCI objectives. GCI has supported its implementing partners to deliver projects on gender equality in COVID context and other crises. The results of GCI intervention are visible. The is implementable over a long period with the use of existing resources, or few additional resources and replicable elsewhere in the country or region.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

<https://www.ungei.org/what-we-do/gci>