UK Aid Match Round Five theme guidance: Girls' education

Girls' education is a key development strategy and a priority for the UK government. Investing in girls' education transforms communities, countries and the entire world. Girls who receive an education are less likely to marry young and more likely to lead healthy, productive lives. They earn higher incomes, participate in the decisions that most affect them and build better futures for themselves and their families. Gender-equitable education can contribute to a reduction in gender-based violence and other harmful practices such as child marriage. Girls' education strengthens economies and reduces inequality. It contributes to more stable, resilient societies that give all individuals the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Although significant progress has been made towards achieving gender parity in the first few years of primary school, over the following years, girls' presence and participation in school starts to drop, leading to poor completion and transition rates. Gender parity in enrolment does not translate into parity in learning and boys are far more likely than girls to have acquired basic literacy skills after having completed primary school[1]. In countries affected by conflict, girls are more than twice as likely to be out of school than girls living in non-affected countries[2].

Reasons for this are multiple and lie in and beyond schools. At the household level poor families often invest in boys' education as girls' education is not valued. Even when girls enter school, they may not feel safe. Sexual harassment, predation or violence can be directed towards them by teachers and students. Long distances to school increase their vulnerability to harassment and abuse by community members. Girls often do not have the life skills and confidence to claim their rights in such instances and policies may not exist to protect them.

Although some barriers to schooling, such as cost, may be reasonably consistent across settings, gender-related barriers to education often reflect local gender norms, as well as other structural and policy-related factors. A theory of change for projects working on girls' education should be context driven.

Girls' education is not only about ensuring girls can go to school (access) but that they participate in education. Participation refers to the related issues of access (enrolment) persistence (attendance, retention, and completion) and outcomes (attainment, transitioning

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[1] Chuang, E; Mensch, B; Psaki, S; Haberland, N; Kozak, M (2019) Policies and interventions to remove gender related barriers to girls participation in low and middle income countries: A systematic review of the evidence.
[2] UNICEF (2020) https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education

to higher educational levels or into the labour market). Applicants should be working towards these key outcomes.

A theory of change should also demonstrate how applicants will work holistically at multiple levels - individuals, households, communities, schools and government - to implement discrete but overlapping pathways for change. Depending on context, this may also include alternative education services such as non-formal, equivalency or complementary education providers.

As the gender-related barriers to schooling vary between settings so do appropriate interventions to address those barriers. Where relevant, the theory of change may include working across the different levels to:

- Increase resources to support girls' participation in education, for example at the household level through addressing the direct and opportunity costs related to education
- Tackle infrastructure issues that present an obstacle to girls' participation such as improving WASH facilities in schools so girls can better manage menstrual hygiene practices
- Change school level or government policies that prevent girls from participating, such as re-entry policies for young mothers
- Improve gender sensitive practices and cultures within schools, for example recruiting female teachers and introducing gender responsive pedagogies, curricula and materials
- Tackle the broader cultural practices and gender norms which prevent participation, such as challenging dominant gender traditions in the national/local/religious culture
- Strengthen the voice of individuals - especially girls - to claim their rights through introducing or extending access to life skills education or sexual and reproductive health services through school or other settings for example
- Empower communities with evidence-based, locally tailored knowledge about the rights to education and benefits of girls' education so they continue to advocate for equitable education services
- Support national and/or local governments to ensure plans prioritise gender equality, budgets are gender responsive and robust data is collected and used to eliminate gender gaps.

Applicants should also demonstrate how they will:

- Strengthen and support existing civil society groups or community mechanisms, such as school management committees or parent-teacher associations, to hold schools

and education providers to account and monitor services to ensure they are more responsive to needs of all children

- Ensure that the benefits brought about by the project will be sustainable
- Align and coordinate with the Ministry of Education's transformative approach to ensure the greatest reach, scope and reduction of duplication.

Applications focusing on girls' education will be for organisations that can demonstrate they can:

- Achieve their outcomes by, at a minimum, doing no harm to national education systems and wherever possible engaging with and strengthening those systems
- Effectively target and engage with the most poor and marginalised groups in communities
- Use inclusive and empowering approaches for people with disabilities
- Propose mechanisms to allow projects to be adapted based on feedback from communities to achieve better outcomes
- Use evidence and learning from project approaches to contribute better outcomes for increasing girls' participation in education.
- Strengthen the capacity of local organisations to achieve better educational outcomes.

Appendix one: Example theory of change

A generic theory of change for improving girls' participation in education

Girls are not adequately participating in education

Education system and Policy activities
Example Support National or local government to ensure budgets are gender responsive

Schools (alternative education providers)
Example: Create gender sensitive curricula, learning materials and pedagogies; establish links to the labour market

Activities to tackle gender norms and practices
Example: Conduct Community outreach and advocacy campaigns on the importance of girls' education

Household and Community level activities
Example: Cash transfers or income generating activities

Individual level activities
Example: Extending access to improved life skills education through the school setting.

Gender responsive education system
which prioritises girls' education

Gender responsive schools and education providers
Girls are protected and participate in an equitable learning process

Gender responsive social norms and practices
Broad societal values, attitudes and practices support girls' education

Gender responsive households and communities:
Parents, guardians and community support girls to participate in education

Empowered individuals and groups:
Advocate for girls' education and challenge gender-based violence

Access
More girls **attend** education at the right age

Persistence
More girls **stay in** and **complete** their education

Outcomes
More girls **learn**, **graduate** and **transition** into the next level of education or to the labour market

A better educated and more empowered female population

Underlying project assumptions: Climate of change to support girls' education exists; Legal and regulatory frameworks are in place or can be created; Senior key stakeholders are receptive, endorse and open doors in their context