

Transforming Patriarchy:

Engaging Men and Boys in Promoting
Gender Equity in and through
Education



Inter-agency
Network for Education
in Emergencies

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Acronyms

ECW	Education Cannot Wait
EiE	Education in emergencies
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
GBV	Gender-based violence
IAWG	Interagency Working Group
INEE	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KEEP	Kenya Equity in Education Project
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual & Agender
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ORAM	Organization for Refuge, Asylum & Migration
RWAMREC	Rwanda Men's Resource Centre
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WRO	Women's Rights Organization

About the Brief

This brief offers practical guidance for how to engage men and boys in promoting gender equity in and through education in emergencies (EiE). Over the past decade, efforts to achieve gender equity in this field have focused predominantly on women and girls—and rightly so, given the myriad barriers to education they face as a result of persistent patriarchal gender norms and power dynamics. However, centering efforts exclusively on women and girls may inadvertently reinforce the idea that working to achieve gender equity is primarily women's responsibility.

Men and boys in all their diversity (see below) need to be involved in advancing gender-equitable education environments. By providing men and boys with opportunities to examine their beliefs around gender and holding them accountable to gender-equitable behaviors, they can become powerful agents of change. They can contribute to safer, more equitable schools and learning spaces, advocate against gender-based violence (GBV), model equitable relationships, and share responsibility for advancing gender equity.

This brief proposes two complementary pathways that will enable men and boys to engage in promoting gender equity in and through EiE:

- **Pathway 1: Address men's and boys' specific gendered needs and vulnerabilities.** This pathway identifies the specific gendered needs, vulnerabilities, and pressures young men and boys (in all their diversity) face in education, and provides corresponding targeted support for their health, wellbeing, protection, education access, and learning.
- **Pathway 2: Engage men and boys in promoting gender equity.** Men are part of both the problem and the solution. This pathway provides men and boys with the time and support they need to understand and reflect on the roles they play in patriarchal systems, to recognize how patriarchy benefits them, and to examine the attitudes and behaviors that reinforce male dominance over women and girls. This may include interventions that challenge harmful attitudes or behaviors toward women and femininity, coaching and mentoring other men and boys, collaborating with women's organizations, and lobbying, advocating, and influencing policies at all levels for, with, and on behalf of women (Concern Worldwide, 2018a).

Audience

The brief is designed for a wide range of EiE stakeholders, including, education and child-protection practitioners, teachers and other education personnel, community- and faith-based organizations, governments, and funders of EiE. Each stakeholder group has an important role to play in fostering inclusive, gender-equitable education, particularly in emergency settings.

Structure

The brief is in two parts. The first defines “engaging men and boys” in EiE contexts and responds to frequently asked questions (Chapter 1). The second provides practical guidance on how to engage men and boys in and through EiE, including entry points (Chapter 2) and approaches to integrating their engagement across the humanitarian program cycle (Chapter 3).

Key



Good Practice: Brief examples of good practice and strategies for engaging men and boys



Case Studies: More in-depth examples of engaging men and boys, including project description, education challenge addressed, approach, and impact



Tools: Links to practical tools to operationalize guidance



Pointers for Diversity and Inclusion: Additional recommendations to support marginalized teachers and learners

Contextualization

Strategies for engaging men and boys in promoting gender equity in and through EiE will vary widely, depending on the context, on a population's specific gendered education needs and barriers, and on the human and financial resources available. In order for interventions to be effective, they must be:

- **Context specific and sensitive** to the local cultural norms, beliefs, and social structures and the challenges faced, while also taking into account what resources and actors are available. Engagement methods should align with cultural norms by using familiar formats such as community dialogues or religious gatherings, and account for the target population's varied literacy levels and preferred learning styles. Sustainability can be promoted by building local capacity and linking short-term efforts to long-term changes in social norms.
- **Culturally appropriate** and aligned with community aspirations. Interventions must be framed in ways that resonate culturally. Rather than focusing solely on one gender or age group, interventions should highlight the broader benefits for families and for community resilience. Programs should address locally relevant issues, such as men's role in child care or preventing GBV, while also considering the impact crises have on the traditional expectations of men and boys.
- **Conflict-sensitive** in order to avoid exacerbating tensions or creating new protection risks.
- **Age-appropriate**, with content and strategies designed for different age groups, such as boys, young men, and adult men. Interventions must recognize each group's unique needs, experiences, and roles within their families and communities.
- **Evidence-based**. Data should be collected and analyzed regularly to assess how well strategies are working, and programs adjusted as needed.
- **Accountable to women and girls** by involving women's rights organizations (WROs), feminist youth groups, women's movements, and women activists in the design, planning, implementation, and monitoring phases of all interventions. This means clearly defining the points at which women and WROs will be involved (e.g., during program development, implementation, or evaluation), and the extent to which their voices will guide the program's direction and outcomes. Interventions supporting men and boys should complement, not compete with, efforts to support women and girls.

- **Proactive in addressing resistance.** Plans should be put in place to address any resistance that people may face when challenging traditional gender norms. This may include peer pressure, backlash from family or community members, or ridicule of men and boys who deviate from conventional norms of masculinity (Myrttinen, 2023).



TOOLS

Navigating Resistance to Gender Transformative Education in Emergencies: 10 Tips for Practitioners (INEE, 2025). This brief highlights common types of resistance to gender-equity programming and provides practical guidance for anticipating and responding to resistance to gender-transformative EiE.

1. Toward a Shared Understanding of “Engaging Men and Boys”

Central African Republic, August 31, 2023. © GPE_Eduardo Soteras, AP

This chapter explores key concepts and questions and aims to build a shared understanding of what it means to engage men and boys in promoting gender equity in and through EiE.



TOOLS

Glossary: See **Annex A** for definitions of concepts such as gender equity, intersectionality, patriarchal masculinities, and more.

1.1 How do gender norms affect men and boys?

“Masculinity” refers to the characteristics, behaviors, and roles expected of men in a given culture. In many societies, these expectations are rooted in patriarchy, which values masculinity over femininity and gives men more power and authority. In addition to putting men in positions of power, masculinity also pressures them to conform to certain behaviors. The table below illustrates the most common gendered roles, norms, and expectations placed on men and boys, and women and girls. Each plays a critical role in shaping their vulnerability, risks, and opportunities.

MEN

Emotional stoicism: Men are often expected to suppress emotions, particularly vulnerability, sadness, or fear. Showing emotions by crying is perceived as a weakness, and men are typically expected to express only anger or aggression when feeling emotional (Barker & Pawlak, 2011).

Provider and protector: Men are often expected to be the primary breadwinners and protectors of their families. This expectation can lead to feelings of inadequacy or frustration when men are unable to fulfill these roles, particularly in times of economic crisis or instability (Connell, 2005).

Dominance and authority: Men are often expected to take on leadership roles, both in the household and in the public sphere. This can lead to societal bias, wherein men are seen as more competent or deserving of power and control in various domains (Kimmel, 2008).

WOMEN

Nurturing and caregiving: Women are expected to fill the caregiving roles, such as taking care of children, elderly family members, and the household. This stereotype puts the burden of emotional labor and domestic duties predominantly on women (Barker & Pawlak, 2011).

Physical appearance: Women are often judged by their physical appearance, with many societal norms emphasizing beauty, thinness, and youthfulness. Women are encouraged to conform to these beauty standards, which can lead to body image issues and pressure to “perform femininity” (Gill, 2007).

Submissiveness: In many cultures, women are expected to be submissive and passive rather than assertive or outspoken. This can limit their participation in public and private decision-making and perpetuate gender inequalities (Connell, 2005).

BOYS

Toughness and aggression: Boys are often taught to be tough and assertive, and showing vulnerability is discouraged. Rough play and risk-taking behaviors are seen as normal for boys, whereas showing sensitivity or fear may be considered “feminine” (Barker & Pawlak, 2011).

Independence: Boys are socialized to be independent and self-reliant. This may discourage them from seeking help or support when they need it, and can lead to mental health issues when they do not feel comfortable expressing their emotional needs (Barker, 2005).

Competitive and dominant: Boys are often expected to compete and be dominant in both academic and social settings. This can foster a culture of rivalry and discourage cooperation and emotional connection (Connell, 2005).

GIRLS

Passivity and obedience: Girls are often expected to be polite, well-behaved, and obedient. This stereotype can limit girls' autonomy and discourage them from expressing opinions or asserting themselves (Gill, 2007).

Domesticity and beauty: Girls are often socialized to prioritize homemaking skills, appearance, and nurturing behaviors over academic or career ambitions. This perpetuates gendered expectations about what roles women should take in society (Barker, 2005).

Emotional sensitivity: Girls are often expected to be more emotionally expressive, compassionate, and relational. While this can be positive, it also puts pressure on girls to conform to an ideal of emotional caretaking. If they are not naturally inclined toward such behaviors, it can contribute to feelings of inadequacy (Barker & Pawlak, 2011).

These norms, which dictate that “real men” should never show emotion or vulnerability, are harmful to men and can contribute to violence against women and girls. As gender roles shift during crises, men may experience a “**crisis of masculinity**.”

Crisis of masculinity: A situation in which a man feels unable to fulfill traditional male roles and expectations. This often leads to feelings of powerlessness, frustration, and loss of identity. Men may struggle with their inability to be providers or protectors, which can sometimes lead to negative coping mechanisms, such as aggressive behavior and substance abuse.

It is important to note that **men and boys are not a homogenous group**. They have different experiences, opportunities, and access to power in accordance with their age, nationality, race, ethnicity, ability, socio-economic status, language, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex characteristics (SOGIESC), and other factors (UNICEF et al., 2021). To ensure that EiE programming is equitable and inclusive, it must consider the needs of **men and boys in all their diversity** (UN Women, 2020).

1.2 How do gender norms affect young men’s and boys’ access to and experience of education in emergencies?

Men and boys face specific gendered challenges in accessing education and learning opportunities during humanitarian crises, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

Direct Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Young men and boys are at high risk of being recruited into armed groups, militias, or gangs. They may also experience physical violence, forced labor, or exploitation, which may keep them out of school.• Young men and boys are more likely to experience violent forms of corporal punishment at school.• Gay, bisexual, and transgender boys are more likely to experience violence, harassment, and bullying in and around their schools than their heterosexual, cisgender peers. Learners who do not feel safe or supported in school are at higher risk of absenteeism and dropout.• Men are disproportionately affected by conflict-related violence, including physical harm, imprisonment, and forced disappearance, often due to their roles as perceived protectors and leaders (XCEPT, 2024). The recruitment, death, or displacement of male teachers and community leaders disrupts the delivery of education and protection services.
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Indirect Threats

- Families often prioritize income-generating work over school for boys, viewing their education as secondary to their role as breadwinners.
- Cultural norms around masculinity may discourage young men and boys from expressing vulnerability or seeking help. They may instead turn to harmful coping mechanisms that affect their wellbeing, school attendance, and learning, such as unsafe sexual behavior, violent acts, and alcohol and drug abuse (Barker & Pawlak, 2011).
- Displacement breaks up communities and peer networks, which are key for young people's social development and academic engagement. This can lead to a decline in their academic engagement and social integration.
- The recruitment, death, or displacement of male teachers and community leaders may leave boys without positive role models, opportunities for socialization, and intergenerational relationships.



TOOLS

Experiences, Roles, Risks, and Needs across the Education Lifecycle: Women, girls, men, and boys experience different risks and opportunities at different stages of their lives. In order to meet these changing life factors and ensure that programming is effective and age appropriate, strategies for engaging them in promoting gender equity in and through EiE should be adaptable. See **Annex B** for key considerations by age group, with a focus on experiences, roles, risks, and educational needs.

1.3 How do men and boys benefit from gender equity?

Men and boys experience systematic privileges as a result of gender inequity. These privileges may include men's expectations of being dominant, of having mobility and agency, and of being in control, including over female family members (Myrntinen, 2023). Men may decide whether girls can attend school, whether male teachers will replace female teachers, or whether female teachers are allowed to hold leadership positions.¹ However, **the same rigid social norms that contribute to the oppression of women and girls also affect men's and boys' quality of life.** The pressure to conform to patriarchal norms can

¹ Women have been socialized in the same context as men and therefore also need to be part of the transformative process. At times women assume the role of "gatekeeper" for patriarchy, thereby perpetuating the status quo and exacerbating gender inequalities. It is important that women have the space they need to reflect and become empowered, individually and collectively, and that people of all genders feel supported in eliminating restrictive gender roles and expectations in order to foster more equal, cooperative relationships (Concern Worldwide, 2018, p. 23).

have a negative effect on men's and boys' physical and emotional health and wellbeing, and can even reduce men's life expectancy (Holter, 2014). Moreover, men are significantly more likely than women to die by suicide (Holter, 2014).

It is crucial to move beyond the “zero-sum” mindset that views gender equity as a loss for men and to see it instead as having mutual benefits for all genders. Men living in societies that are more gender equal are half as likely to be depressed, less likely to commit suicide, and have about a 40 percent lower risk of dying a violent death (Holter, 2014). Adolescent boys in these countries are more likely to use contraceptives and thus less likely to contract sexually transmitted infections or become young parents. Men and boys who uphold gender-equitable beliefs and practices not only help dismantle harmful norms, they also experience personal fulfillment and social recognition for contributing to a more just society.



GOOD PRACTICE: Padare/Enkundleni/Men's Forum on Gender

Padare is a men's movement that started in Zimbabwe in 1995, when a group of men came together after the Beijing World Conference on Women to explore how they could support gender equality. Initially self-funded, they organized informal public meetings to discuss women's rights and mobilize other men. By 1996, the group had expanded and had a clear action plan to challenge traditional gender roles and promote a more just society.

Today, Padare has more than 65 chapters across Zimbabwe. The men meet regularly to address issues such as GBV, HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health, and men's mental health. Research shows that engaging men in promoting gender equality benefits men and children in addition to women. Harmful gender norms often prevent men from seeking health care, opposing violence, or supporting their partners. Padare works with men and boys to change these behaviors, promote human rights, and improve overall well-being.

Source: African Capacity Building Foundation, 2016

1.4 How can men and boys help transform harmful gender norms, roles, and power dynamics?



TOOLS

Timeline of approaches to engaging men and boys: Rationales and strategies for engaging men and boys in promoting gender equity have changed over the years. See [Annex C](#) for a timeline of how approaches have shifted from the 1980s to now.

Harmful gender norms and patriarchal beliefs often deepen during and in the immediate aftermath of crises. This exacerbates barriers to education, such as early marriage, early pregnancy, GBV, and increased opportunity costs when sending learners

to school. However, moments of societal disruption enable humanitarian emergencies to offer unique opportunities to challenge entrenched stereotypes and set new precedents for equity.

Gender transformation: Gender transformation actively examines, questions, and changes rigid gender norms and power imbalances that advantage boys and men over girls and women. It aspires to tackle the root causes of gender inequity and reshape unequal power relations. It moves beyond individual self-improvement to redress the power dynamics and structures that reinforce gender inequalities (INEE & UNGEI, 2019).

When men and boys are given the opportunity to examine their beliefs around gender and are held accountable for their gender-equitable beliefs and behaviors, they can become powerful agents of change. They can contribute to safer, more equitable schools and learning spaces, advocate against GBV, model equitable relationships, and promote shared responsibility for advancing gender equity. For example:

- Men and boys can challenge misogynistic attitudes and behaviors (e.g., public harassment, early and forced marriage, workplace discrimination) within their families, communities, and society at large, and hold their friends and peers accountable to gender-equitable standards of behavior.
- Men can model equitable behaviors and relationships within their families by taking an active role in caregiving and domestic labor, and sharing household decision-making with female family members.
- Men and boys can support and amplify the women's and girls' leadership in education by nominating them for leadership roles and providing access to critical networks, mentorship, and advocacy platforms.

Meaningfully involving men and boys in changing the attitudes, behaviors, and gate-keeping structures that sustain inequity can mitigate the backlash that often accompanies such changes. This transformation empowers women and girls and helps to reshape the harmful gender norms that affect all genders (Cartier Philanthropy et al., 2019).

Engaging men and boys in promoting gender equity can take place at different levels: in the individual, in the family, among peers, at school, and within the community, state, and society. The graph below examines the risks and protective influences at various levels (UNESCO, 2022).

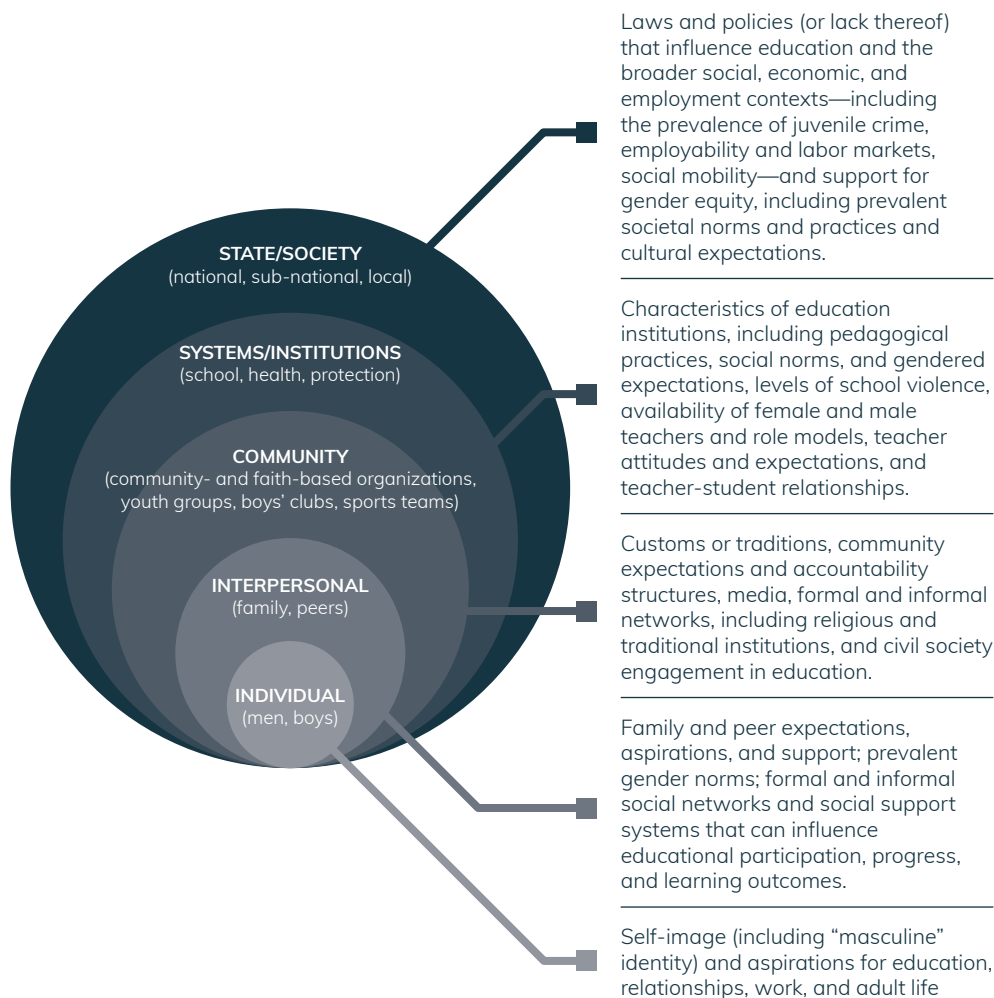


Figure 3: Socio-ecological model and opportunities for engaging men and boys in promoting gender equity. Adapted from United Nations Population Fund and UNICEF (2020) Technical Note on Gender-Transformative Approaches in the Global Programme to End Child Marriage Phase II

All education stakeholders have a role to play in supporting young men's and boys' gendered education needs and their gender equity journey:

- **Learners** can act as agents of change by promoting gender equity among their peers through peer mentorships, student councils, school clubs, and community youth groups. Encouraging leadership among boys who model gender-equitable behavior can help shift harmful norms from within.
- **Teachers and education personnel** play a critical role in creating safe, protective, gender-responsive learning environments and in reinforcing egalitarian messages within teaching practices, classroom management, formal and informal curricula, and extracurricular activities. They can challenge stereotypes, use inclusive language, and address discriminatory behavior when it arises.
- **Parents and caregivers** can serve as positive role models by demonstrating healthy relationships, and by making gender-equitable decisions about their children's schooling. Fathers, in particular, can challenge traditional gender roles by actively supporting their daughters' education and sharing caregiving responsibilities.
- **Community leaders, including traditional and religious leaders**, have significant influence over community norms and decision-making related to education, gender roles, and social behavior. Their public support for gender-equitable and inclusive education can be pivotal in shifting norms and behaviors around gender equity and education.
- **Local government and education authorities**, who influence policy implementation at the community level, can ensure that education services are inclusive, safe, and aligned with humanitarian and development frameworks, and that funding and resources are equitably distributed.
- **Civil society, WROs, and feminist youth organizations** can advocate for equitable and quality education, and also provide expertise and community-based support.



GOOD PRACTICE: Do's and Don'ts of Engaging Men and Boys in Promoting Gender Equity

DO NOT:

- ✗ Justify equal programming for men based on “fairness.” Targeted programming for women and girls does not disadvantage or take away from men and boys.
- ✗ Treat gender-responsive or transformative programming as optional, or as an add-on to existing programming.
- ✗ Assume that equal access means equal participation.
- ✗ Rely on simplistic messages and stereotypes that portray men only as perpetrators of violence.
- ✗ Only celebrate male gender champions. Men and boys who model gender-equitable attitudes and behaviors can be positive role models for their peers. However, women and girls continue to bear the majority of the responsibility for advancing gender equity. Their successes should be celebrated and they should be positioned as role models for children of all genders.

DO:

- ✓ Identify men's and boys' specific gendered needs and challenges, and entry points for addressing them (see Chapter 2). Targeted support for men and boys should go hand-in-hand with broader efforts to promote gender equity.
- ✓ Integrate gender-responsive or transformative practices across all levels and types of education programming. Equitable and inclusive practices are a necessary part of quality education.
- ✓ Directly address power dynamics in learning spaces, community fora, and other decision-making spaces. Men and boys may need to be reminded to listen to and make space for women and girls.
- ✓ Provide men and boys with opportunities to examine their power and privilege within patriarchal systems and to explore their attitudes and behaviors toward women and girls. Help them to become allies against gender-based violence.
- ✓ Celebrate gender champions of all genders!



2. Entry Points for Engaging Men and Boys in Promoting Gender Equity in and through EiE

Vanuatu, July 2021 © GPE, Arlene Bax

2.1 Community Outreach and Advocacy

This section explores entry points for engaging men and boys in education-related decision-making, planning, implementation, and advocacy.

This component contributes to following INEE Minimum Standards (2024):

DOMAIN 1: FOUNDATIONAL STANDARDS FOR A QUALITY RESPONSE

Standard 1	Participation: Community members participate meaningfully, transparently, and without discrimination in the analysis, planning, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the education response.
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CHALLENGES

- **Limited involvement of learners in the design and implementation of education programs:** Young people are often excluded from making decisions about education programming and policy. Failure to involve learners at the planning stage can result in programming that is not relevant or appropriate and does not address the specific gendered needs and barriers that may be preventing learners from continuing in school during emergencies (Cartier Philanthropy et al., 2019).
- **Limited involvement of fathers and male caregivers:** As a result of gender roles that position women as the primary caregivers, fathers and male caregivers may not be involved in school management committees and parent groups, and may not have access to the awareness-raising and information sessions on gender equity that are delivered in these spaces.
- **Resistance to gender equity:** The resistance of religious and community leaders (often men) can undermine the implementation of gender-responsive education initiatives and opportunities for younger men to explore more egalitarian expressions of masculinity. Adult gatekeepers often feel most threatened by strategies to empower women in the community, as they see this as a direct challenge to their own power and privilege (IASC, 2018).

- **Lack of awareness of existing resources and capacity:** External education stakeholders may not be familiar with the capacity and support that already exist in communities (e.g., refugee-led organizations, women's and LGBTQIA+ rights organizations, organizations of people with disabilities). New programming may duplicate or draw funding and attention away from existing local initiatives.

ACTIONS

Pathway 1: Addressing men's and boys' gendered needs and vulnerabilities

- **Engage learners:** Involve learners of all genders at all stages of planning and implementation, not just during needs assessments. Their insights are crucial to ensuring that education programming and policies are relevant, effective, and meet their actual rather than the perceived needs. Where possible, learners should be supported in designing and implementing their own initiatives to promote gender equity in schools, which will empower them to be active agents of change.
- **Engage fathers and male caregivers:** Implement fatherhood campaigns such as “MenCare” to promote men's positive involvement as fathers and caregivers. Promote positive, nurturing, and collaborative images of men and boys as fathers, and challenge traditional gender roles around caregiving responsibilities. Encourage fathers and male caregivers to volunteer as teaching assistants² in pre-primary and primary schools, where there may be fewer male role models. Emphasize what men can gain from gender equity at the individual, household, and societal levels (Concern Worldwide, 2018a).



GOOD PRACTICE: Campaigns, Posters, and Postcards Concern Worldwide, Sierra Leone and Zambia



Posters and postcards were used in Concern's project in Sierra Leone and Zambia to promote positive images of masculinity, and to signal safe environments in which men can challenge inequitable versions of masculinity and be supported in demonstrating positive behaviors. In Sierra Leone, six different versions were printed and framed. They depicted images of men engaged in caretaking and domestic roles traditionally perceived as female roles. The

images depict men not by themselves but as helping partners with children and other family members. Each has a unique “Be a man” slogan and highlights a quotation from the men who were identified and interviewed for this purpose. The posters and postcards printed in February 2014 were disseminated through Living Peace Groups and at all training events.

Source: Concern Worldwide, 2018a

² Child Safeguarding measures and relevant trainings should be available and required for all teachers and teaching assistants of all genders.

Pathway 2: Engaging men and boys in promoting gender equity

- **Set up community outreach projects:** Community dialogues can facilitate discussions on how to collectively address gender issues, build empathy, and promote understanding between genders. Mixed-gender community projects (e.g., community art projects and clean-up projects) can encourage girls and boys to work together, and can set the scene after the project for discussions about gender roles and power dynamics (Cartier Philanthropy et al., 2019). This allows the group to reflect on how gender norms and roles affected them in their daily interactions with others.
- **Create parent/caregiver groups:** These groups can give parents a space where they can discuss the challenges they face in parenting, examine their beliefs around gender, and create community. Some groups even start self-help sub-groups in which parents (usually mothers) can support each other in seeking loans to start small businesses to promote household economic growth. This helps to reduce the effects of poverty on keeping their children out of school (Cartier Philanthropy et al., 2019).
- **Engage fathers and male caregivers in school management committees:** Include men on school management committees and in parent groups, and provide gender training to ensure their meaningful participation. Engaging in these fora may motivate men to prioritize education for all of their children and to advance action for safer, more equitable learning spaces. Ensure that men's participation does not dissuade women and girls from participating meaningfully in these spaces. Awareness-raising campaigns may be needed to address and counter cultural restrictions on women's involvement in decision-making spaces (IASC, 2018).
- **Work with community and faith leaders:** Religious leaders—who are primarily men—are highly influential figures in their communities. Engaging with moderate religious leaders and those who already support women's rights can be a starting point for raising community awareness on gender equity and on the importance of education for children and youth of all genders. Working with community leaders of all genders helps to identify gendered barriers to education and to find culturally appropriate solutions. Engage men, especially religious and community leaders, in outreach activities that focus on gender-related education issues, and as allies in promoting girls' education and challenging harmful practices (IASC, 2018). Individuals who publicly and privately support gender equity can serve as ambassadors, which involves sharing key messages and participating in campaigns to engage men and women in gender equity efforts, thereby broadening their impact (UN Women, 2019).
- **Collaborate with community-based organizations:** Identify other relevant local actors working on gender equity and education (e.g., WROs, youth organizations, GBV responders, village savings and loan associations) and learn about existing gender equity initiatives. New programming should seek to strengthen or supplement existing capacity and build on existing initiatives.

- **Collaborate with male role models and influencers:** Trusted male public figures (actors, musicians, athletes, etc.) can have a profound impact on how young boys understand masculinity, relationships, and their roles in promoting gender equity (UNESCO, 2022). Collaborate with male social media influencers to spread messages about positive masculinity and gender equity through popular platforms as a way to reach youth audiences.
- **Leverage social and mass-media for advocacy:** Working through popular culture, social media, and community influencers can amplify gender justice messages in ways that traditional education or policy interventions often cannot (Equimundo et al., 2010). Digital advocacy can be leveraged to amplify voices, share stories, and mobilize support for gender equity initiatives, as has been seen in campaigns such as those that address period poverty (the lack of access to menstrual products, hygiene facilities, and education on menstruation) or promote girls' education (UN Women, 2021). Other approaches include incorporating gender equity messages and jingles into radio and television programs.



POINTERS FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- **Be mindful of barriers** such as child care and elder care, inaccessible infrastructure, lack of safe transportation, risk of backlash, etc., that can hinder the safe participation of women, girls, people with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ people in community fora (IASC, 2018).
- **Advertise education meetings through media that are accessible** to those with disabilities, low literacy, and from linguistic minority groups. If needed, engage interpreters to support these individuals so they are able to participate in school management committees and community fora (IASC, 2018).



GOOD PRACTICE: UN Women HeForShe Solidarity Movement

Launched in 2014 by UN Women, the HeForShe solidarity movement for gender equality is an international platform that encourages men and boys to take action in support of gender equality. HeForShe invites men and boys to complement the work of the women's movement and to be equal partners in crafting and implementing a shared vision of gender equality that will benefit all of humanity (UN Women, 2024). The following activities of male allies encompass both everyday actions and efforts for structural change:

1. **Communicate with women and girls:** Listen to and support the women in your life, ask how you can help, and act in solidarity.
2. **Mentorship and sponsorship:** Actively mentor and support female colleagues in their career advancement.
3. **Ensure diverse representation:** Advocate for women to be included as speakers and decision-makers.
4. **Respectful communication:** Demonstrate respect by actively listening, avoiding interruptions, and giving credit where it is due.
5. **Inclusive meetings:** Foster an environment in which all voices are heard and diverse perspectives are encouraged.
6. **Use egalitarian language:** Avoid language that belittles or discriminates against women.
7. **Avoid normalizing violence:** Refrain from sharing or supporting content that portrays violence against women.
8. **Support women's organizations:** Volunteer with and support local women's associations.
9. **Be proactive against violence:** Intervene and report appropriately when witnessing violence against women.
10. **Self-reflect and educate yourself:** Examine your own behaviors for gender-based stereotypes and learn about the women's rights movement.

Source: UN Women, 2024



CASE STUDIES

Engaging Male Gatekeepers as Champions for Girls' Education

Dadaab & Kakuma refugee camps, World University Service Canada, and Windle International Kenya

Project description: The Kenya Equity in Education Project (KEEP) was implemented by World University Service Canada and Windle International Kenya in Northern Kenya's Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps and the surrounding communities. KEEP aimed to create conducive learning environments for approximately 20,000 marginalized girls, focusing on improving their access to education, retention in school, and successful transitions to further education or employment. The project, funded by the UK Government Girls' Education Challenge initiative, ran from 2017 to 2023.

Education challenge addressed: KEEP addressed the significant barriers to education faced by refugee and host-community girls in Northern Kenya. These challenges included conflict, displacement, and extreme poverty, which made access to and continuation of education particularly difficult for girls in these areas. The project recognized that cultural norms and lack of support from male family members and community leaders were additional obstacles to girls' education in refugee camp settings.

Approach: KEEP implemented an innovative approach to engage men and boys in supporting girls' education in refugee camp settings. KEEP established a network of 52 community mobilizers who worked full time to communicate with families and the wider community about the importance of girls' learning. KEEP staff members were trained to engage specifically with male religious and local political leaders to sensitize them about girls' education, with the aim of encouraging these influential men to become champions for girls' education. KEEP also trained role models, including young Kenyan refugee women who had relocated to Canada to pursue higher education. These role models dedicated their time and returned to the refugee camps to inspire and motivate girls. By showcasing successful female role models, the project aimed to shift perceptions among boys and men about girls' capabilities and potential.

Difference it makes: The approach of engaging men and boys as part of KEEP's broader strategy contributed to significant positive outcomes for girls' education in the target areas. More than 2,500 girls and their families received financial assistance through conditional cash transfers, which reduced their economic barriers to education. The project also helped to improve refugee households' access to financial institutions; 90 percent of conditional cash transfer recipients were women. Importantly, KEEP enhanced the participation of vulnerable refugee and host-community girls in household decision-making, which empowered them to negotiate for resources and support within their families to meet their education-related needs.

Source: UNICEF, 2021



CASE STUDIES

Engaging Men and Boys in Preventing GBV through the Arts

Rwanda, Rwanda Men's Resource Centre

Project description: Rwanda Men's Resource Centre (RWAMREC) is a nongovernmental organization founded in 2006 that works to promote gender equality and prevent GBV in Rwanda by engaging men and boys as allies and partners. RWAMREC implements various programs across Rwanda that aim to transform harmful gender norms and promote positive masculinity.

Education challenge addressed: Despite progress on gender equality in Rwanda, deeply entrenched patriarchal attitudes and high rates of GBV persisted. To challenge harmful norms and behaviors, it was necessary to directly engage men and boys, who are often the primary perpetrators of violence.

Approach: RWAMREC took an innovative approach to engaging men and boys by using interactive and creative methods to convey messages about gender equality and nonviolence. This included tactics such as “ambush theater”—surprise dramatic performances in public spaces—as well as songs, dramas, and other forms of artistic expression. They also implemented programs such as Bandebereho, which engaged expectant and new fathers in group education sessions on gender equality, violence prevention, and positive parenting

Difference it makes: RWAMREC's male engagement approaches have shown significant positive effects. The Bandebereho program led to sustained reductions in intimate partner violence and physical child punishment, even six years after implementation. Participants reported less physical, sexual, economic, and emotional violence against women, as well as improved maternal health outcomes and fathers' engagement, and more equitable household dynamics. By creatively engaging men as partners in promoting gender equality, RWAMREC has helped shift attitudes and behaviors and to create safer, more equitable families and communities in Rwanda.

Source: Rwanda Men's Resource Centre, 2023



TOOLS

Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality and Health (Equimundo et al., 2010): This toolkit presents conceptual and practical information on engaging men and boys in promoting gender equality and health. Specific topics include sexual and reproductive health; maternal, newborn and child health; fatherhood; HIV and AIDS prevention, care and support; and prevention of gender-based violence.

2.2 Safety, Protection, and Wellbeing

This section explores entry points for engaging men and boys in providing access to safe, protective, and equitable learning opportunities.

This component contributes to following INEE Minimum Standards (2024):

DOMAIN 2: ACCESS AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Standard 8	Equal and equitable access: All individuals have access to quality and relevant education opportunities.
Standard 9	Protection and wellbeing: Learning environments are secure and safe, and they promote the protection and psychosocial wellbeing of learners and teachers and other education personnel.
Standard 10	Facilities and services: Education facilities promote the safety and well-being of learners and teachers and other education personnel, and are linked to health, nutrition, psychosocial, and protection services.

CHALLENGES

- **Access to education:** Men and boys may face barriers to accessing safe and quality education, including recruitment into armed forces, school-related gender-based violence, arbitrary arrest, and family pressure to take up paid employment (Global Education Cluster et al., 2024). In some settings, traditional norms prioritize boys' education, making it essential to focus on supporting girls' enrollment to achieve gender equity. In others, education is considered a "feminine" domain, which may discourage boys from expressing interest in education or remaining in school.
- **Corporal punishment:** Young men and boys are more likely to experience severe forms of physical discipline and corporal punishment at school (Cartier Philanthropy et al., 2019). As a result, boys may perceive school as a place where their rights are consistently violated and where authority figures treat them as a threat to the social order. Exposure to physical violence by teachers and school officials may cause boys to drop out of school or to be absent frequently.
- **Sexual violence and the exploitation of young men and boys:** During crises, young men and boys may be targeted for abuse, harassment, and sexual violence due to their reduced power and status (Global Education Cluster et al., 2024). Unaccompanied boys, boys from marginalized households, boys with disabilities, and gay, bisexual, and transgender boys are at a higher risk of experiencing sexual violence and exploitation. Due to the stigma associated with sexual violence, male survivors often do not report it or seek help. Underreporting of these abuses makes it difficult to understand the full extent of sexual violence against boys, which also limits specialized services and follow-up care (INEE & UNGEI, 2019).
- **Men as perpetrators of intimate partner and domestic violence:** There is often an increase in domestic violence and intimate partner violence during and following crises. Engaging men in gender equity efforts can help address the root

causes of this violence, including harmful notions of masculinity and feeling a loss of control (Myrttinen, 2023).

- **Risky and unsafe coping behaviors:** Expectations that “real men” are strong, stoic, and avoid displays of emotion or vulnerability may lead men and boys to respond to the stress associated with living in crisis-affected contexts by engaging in harmful coping behaviors, such as risk-taking, withdrawal, self-harm, or suicide (XCEPT, 2024). Men can therefore be less inclined to seek, or accept, help and support, which increases their risk of developing negative coping mechanisms (Slegh et al., 2022).
- **Health- and help-seeking behaviors:** Harmful gender norms around displaying emotion or seeking help often dissuade men and boys from accessing mental health or support services (Myrttinen, 2023). As a result, men and boys are underrepresented in the psychosocial support services delivered by humanitarian organizations (Care & Equimundo, 2017).



POINTERS FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- **Adolescent boys:** There is a significant gap in the evidence on the needs and vulnerabilities of adolescent boys, particularly in humanitarian settings. Efforts should be made to collect and analyze sex- and age-disaggregated data to strengthen understanding of the challenges adolescent boys face in accessing education in conflict and crisis-affected settings (UNFPA et al., 2020).
- **Children with disabilities:** Children with disabilities are at a higher risk of physical and sexual abuse than their peers without disabilities (Leonard Cheshire Disability, 2017). Parents and caregivers may resist sending their children with disabilities to school out of fear for their safety. Lack of accessible infrastructure may also impede their mobility and disrupt their access to learning spaces. Efforts should be made to ensure that all learners are able to access learning spaces and teaching and learning materials, that families recognize the value of educating children with disabilities, and that teachers are trained to meet their unique learning needs.
- **Separated and unaccompanied boys:** Boys and male adolescents without adult care are highly vulnerable to sexual violence. It is essential to provide them with educational and support services. Child-headed households also require targeted interventions to address their unique challenges (Refugee Council, n.d.).
- **LGBTQIA+ learners:** LGBTQIA+ learners face heightened risks of GBV and harassment, at home and in and around schools (UNESCO & ILGA World, 2021). They are also more likely to be kicked out of their homes by their parents or caregivers. Efforts should be made to ensure that LGBTQIA+ learners are able to access services for unaccompanied children and youth, that they feel safe and supported in their learning spaces, and that teachers are trained to address homophobic or transphobic attitudes and behaviors in learning spaces. LGBTQIA+ learners are not a homogenous group; different sub-populations encounter distinct challenges in education and society, and thus may need different types of education interventions (USAID, 2022).

ACTIONS

Pathway 1: Addressing men's and boys' gendered needs and vulnerabilities

- **Identify and address young men's and boys' psychosocial needs:** Provide tailored support for boys and men by addressing their emotional and psychological needs, especially in dealing with prolonged and toxic stress. This includes offering counseling, mental health services, and programs to help them cope in healthy ways and engage in preventing GBV. Support should be culturally sensitive, age-appropriate, and delivered by trained professionals. Collaboration with health services, community organizations, or nongovernmental organizations is essential to providing high-quality care. Teachers and frontline workers, who may lack proper training, should not have sole responsibility for providing this specialized support.
- **Identify and address young men's and boys' physical protection needs:** Hold focus group discussions with young men and boys (be sure that marginalized boys are represented) to map protection risks in and around schools. Support and conduct research that aims to understand how local gender norms affect the roles of men as the victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and enablers of violence. Violence may be inflicted on them by groups such as armed forces, traffickers, or even humanitarian workers. Challenge the gender norms that facilitate violence and be sure those responsible for violent acts are held accountable.
- **Acknowledge and respond to sexual and gender-based violence against boys:** Address taboos and stigma attached to male survivors of sexual violence. Ensure that teachers and other education personnel are trained to identify signs of sexual violence and refer survivors to support providers. From a longer term perspective, a timely, adequate, and safe intervention may also prevent survivors of sexual violence from resorting to violence themselves—against others and themselves (XCEPT, 2024).
- **Encourage good health and help-seeking behavior:** Ensure that young men and boys are familiar with the services available for mental health and psychosocial support, sexual and reproductive health care, and GBV services (Brennan-Wilson et al., 2024). Encourage them to use these services as needed. Encouraging male role models (teachers, parents, community members, etc.) to model their use of these services will help to destigmatize them. The goal is to provide a safe, nurturing environment that offers sanctuary, friendship, and routine. This includes establishing sensitive mechanisms for reporting sexual abuse that respect boys' experiences and encourage them to seek help without fear of stigma or misunderstanding.
- **Collaborate with mental health and protection colleagues:** Work with organizations and individuals with specialized skills in mental health and psychosocial support and protection to help schools identify and mitigate gender-specific risks, and to ensure that support services are welcoming and accessible to all young men and boys and their families.
- **Adopt, disseminate, and enforce safeguarding standards:** Resource and enable efforts to adopt, disseminate, and enforce safeguarding standards. All education staff members should be trained to safeguard standards and be able to apply them in their given contexts. They also should be trained to address power disparities between teachers, education staff members, and learners that allow the perpetuation of violence, including sexual exploitation and abuse.



GOOD PRACTICE: Cross-Sectoral Collaboration

Health

- Organize joint workshops with health professionals to educate boys and men about sexual and reproductive health, with emphasis on respecting women's bodily autonomy.
- Collaborate on awareness campaigns that address harmful or patriarchal masculinity and its impact on mental health, and encourage men and boys to seek emotional support.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene

- Partner with water, sanitation, and hygiene experts to involve male learners in designing and maintaining gender-responsive sanitation facilities in schools, and include efforts to build peer pressure against the stigmatization of menstruation.
- Develop educational programs that challenge gender stereotypes around doing household chores, and teach boys to take equal responsibility for collecting water and for hygiene practices.

Nutrition

- Work with nutrition specialists to create school meal programs that engage fathers in preparing meals as a way to challenge traditional gender roles.
- Conduct joint awareness sessions on the importance of equitable food distribution within families, and emphasize men's role in ensuring that all family members have proper nutrition.

Shelter

- Collaborate on projects that involve male learners in creating safe spaces for both girls and boys in temporary learning environments.
- Organize community-building activities that encourage men and boys to participate in making shelters and learning spaces more inclusive and accessible for all genders.

Protection

- Develop joint training programs for male teachers and community leaders that include identifying and preventing GBV in education settings.
- Create peer support groups for boys where harmful gender norms are discussed and challenged, and have them facilitated by protection experts.
- Pair positive male role models from various sectors with young boys in mentorship programs that demonstrate respectful behavior and gender equity. Organize inter-sectoral sports events that promote teamwork, respect, and gender equity among the participants.

Pathway 2: Engaging men and boys in promoting gender equity

- **Create safe spaces to talk about gender and GBV:** Create safe and engaging spaces (e.g., sports teams, drama clubs, etc.) where young men and boys can discuss gender norms, healthy relationships, and positive masculinity. This will teach them to identify and challenge harmful stereotypes, promote respectful interactions, and become allies in GBV prevention (IASC, 2018). Engaging men and boys as partners in prevention strategies is essential, as they are both the primary perpetrators of sexual violence and part of the solution. Make them partners and agents for change (Concern Worldwide, 2018a).
- **Help learners to express themselves:** Providing young people with opportunities to express themselves can enhance their recovery and wellbeing and strengthen their resilience and positive coping strategies. Children and youth should be recognized as social actors and active citizens. Their roles and responsibilities within their families and communities may change during emergencies, and they should be encouraged to share their experiences in child-friendly, age-appropriate ways. Safe spaces (e.g., schools, sports teams, peer groups, etc.) that provide access for a range of learners—including all genders, those with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ learners—are particularly important in ensuring that learners feel safe and encouraged to express themselves (Save the Children, 2013).
- **Train teachers to respond to gendered protection risks:** Train teachers to identify and respond to gender-based bullying, harassment, and violence; to link victims to referral services; and to help learners (especially boys) develop a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics (IASC, 2018). Trained teachers and support staff have a role to play in addressing the psychological and social needs of young children and adolescents who are recovering from the trauma of conflict (UNHCR, 2017). Establish peer learning circles where teachers can examine their own gendered beliefs and biases and collectively troubleshoot common challenges.
- **Introduce school safety standards:** Implementing comprehensive, gender-responsive school safety standards and establishing effective complaints and support mechanisms are essential steps in preventing GBV in education settings. Ensure that learners, teachers, and education staff members of all genders are familiar with and comfortable using these mechanisms.
- **Involve parents, caregivers, and community members:** Provide community awareness-raising sessions on gender equity and GBV. Encourage male caregivers and community members to get involved in GBV prevention initiatives and to promote positive gender norms and inclusive attitudes.



CASE STUDIES

Safe Learning Model Sierra Leone, Concern Worldwide

Project description: The Safe Learning Model, piloted by Concern Worldwide in Sierra Leone (2017-2018), integrates education with interventions that address literacy, wellbeing, and gender equality. It emphasizes creating safe, inclusive learning environments while addressing GBV and improving teaching practices.

Education challenge addressed: Boys face unique barriers during emergencies, such as recruitment into armed groups, early labor, and school dropout due to economic pressures. These challenges disrupt their access to education and its quality, which creates a need for targeted interventions.

Approach: The model employs a holistic strategy that combines literacy programs, teacher training, and gender-sensitive practices. It promotes community engagement to address harmful norms. It encourages boys to participate while fostering safe spaces for all children.

Difference it makes: The pilot showed improved literacy rates and reduced violence at the intervention schools. Boys benefited from increased engagement and safer learning environments, although challenges such as corporal punishment persisted.

Source: Concern Worldwide, 2018b



TOOLS

Annotated Bibliography on Engaging Boys to Become Allies in GBV Prevention (GBV AoR, 2022): This annotated bibliography provides an overview of relevant literature, evaluations, and programmatic examples for engaging boys in GBV prevention programming.

Caring for Boys Affected by Sexual Violence (Family for Every Child, 2018): This study outlines the drivers of sexual violence that affect boys, and strategies for ensuring that boys affected by sexual violence recover fully and grow up in a permanent, safe, and caring family or, when needed, with quality alternative care.

Child Protection Rapid Assessment Toolkit (Save the Children, 2012): This toolkit offers structured tools for evaluating child protection needs and responses during emergencies, with a focus on systematic data collection and analysis

Guidance for Children's Participation in Humanitarian Programming (Save the Children 2013): This guidance document includes tips and tools to ensure children's meaningful participation in the emergency response and in the relief, reconstruction, and peace-building processes. It includes a risk assessment tool to support safe participation (Tool 2).



TOOLS

Integrating LGBTQI+ Considerations into Education Programming (USAID, 2022): This document identifies some of the challenges and obstacles that LGBTQIA+ individuals may face in the education sector, and highlights good practices for supporting LGBTQIA+ learners in education.

2.3 Curricula, Teaching, and Learning Materials

This section explores entry points for engaging men and boys with good-quality, relevant curricula and teaching and learning materials.

This component contributes to following INEE Minimum Standards (2024):

DOMAIN 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING

Standard 11	Curricula: The curricula used to provide formal and non-formal education are culturally, socially, and linguistically relevant, and appropriate to the context and learners' needs.
Standard 12	Teaching and learning processes: Teaching and learning processes are learner centered, participatory, and inclusive.

CHALLENGES

- **Teaching and learning materials may not include information on gender:** Topics such as gender equity, GBV, sexual and reproductive health and rights, positive/egalitarian masculinities, consent, and healthy relationships are often absent from or barely present in teaching and learning materials (UNICEF et al., 2021).
- **Teaching and learning materials may reinforce harmful gender norms:** Curricula often perpetuate traditional gender roles by failing to address or challenge stereotypes that discourage boys from valuing gender equity. Educational content may prioritize male perspectives or omit topics that address boys' vulnerabilities, such as forced recruitment or mental health.
- **Teachers may not be prepared to discuss gender:** Teachers may have limited knowledge of gender equity concepts or may not feel comfortable talking about sensitive topics such as GBV or sexual and reproductive health and rights (INEE, 2023). Teachers need space to examine their own gendered beliefs and biases before they can be expected to model gender equitable behaviors in the classroom.
- **There is a lack of male role models in education:** A shortage of male teachers during emergencies (especially in early childhood and primary education) can reduce boys' engagement in education and reinforce perceptions of education as a "female" domain (INEE, 2023). Involving male role models who exemplify positive, egalitarian masculinity can help to reinforce these values beyond the classroom.



GOOD PRACTICE: Developing Gender-Responsive Curricula

- **Challenge traditional gender roles:** Identify opportunities to challenge traditional gendered stereotypes based on the subordination of women and girls, and promote women's leadership in education during a crisis (IASC, 2018). Promote a culture of inclusion, nonviolence, and respect for all, including groups not at risk.
- **Encourage reflection among learners:** Encourage self-reflection and reflection with peers on gender norms and equity, the harmful effects of patriarchal norms, and male privilege. Also address gender-transformative leadership opportunities for women, men, and gender-diverse people who can serve as role models and change agents, and thereby contribute to more inclusive and supportive environments.
- **Disseminate messages on the benefits of gender equity for all** at the individual, household, and community level, including how to reduce domestic violence, encourage joint decision-making, and promote the advantage of having different members of the household contribute to the family income and perform domestic chores.

ACTIONS

Pathway 1: Addressing men's and boys' gendered needs and vulnerabilities

- **Revise curricula and teaching and learning materials to include diverse experiences, including those of young men and boys in all their diversity:** Teaching and learning materials should be revised to include positive and diverse representations of children and youth of all genders, including children with disabilities and other marginalized learners. The revisions should include challenges to traditional gender norms and stereotypes (e.g., boys washing dishes, girls playing sports).
- **Revise curricula to include opportunities for young men and boys to have open conversations about gender norms, healthy relationships, and positive masculinity:** Embed gender-transformative content in curricula and in teaching and learning materials, and include exercises that promote reflection on gender norms and power dynamics. Young men should be encouraged to reflect critically on how gender stereotypes and power dynamics have affected their identity, behavior, and perception of masculinity and femininity. Teachers, curriculum developers, academic supervisors and school inspectors should be given clear and actionable guidance and training on how to facilitate open conversations about acknowledging gendered inequalities, understanding privileges, and ways to challenge violence (OECD, 2019).
- **Revise health and sexuality education curricula:** Health and sexuality education curricula and teaching and learning materials should be reviewed and revised to ensure that they are age appropriate, medically accurate, address the specific health and psychosocial concerns of girls, boys, and gender-diverse youth, and do not perpetu-

ate harmful stereotypes (FAWE et al., 2020). For example, boys are often pressured to be aggressive, assertive, and to engage in sex before they are ready, so curricula should include activities on consent, bodily autonomy, healthy relationships, and sexual diversity (FAWE et al., 2020).

- **Connect teachers and learners with specialized service providers:** External stakeholders working on adolescents' sexual and reproductive health and rights services (e.g., healthcare providers, WROs, LGBTQIA+ youth organizations) can provide critical technical support for teachers and education personnel. Consider collaborating with them on awareness-raising and information-sharing initiatives.



POINTERS FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- **Representation:** Use diverse images, examples, and success stories in educational materials to ensure that learners see positive representations of people who share their identities.
- **Different literacy levels:** For those with lower literacy levels, consider using multiple means of communication, such as radio and television programs, video clips, comics, theater, etc.
- **Context-specific localization and adaptation:** Gender-transformative education curricula are often designed in the Global North for use in the Global South, and thus may not be culturally relevant or appropriate. Curricula can and should be adapted to include locally resonant examples, languages, and practices. Ideally, curricula should be developed by education stakeholders in a given community, for use in that community.

Pathway 2: Engaging men and boys in promoting gender equity

- **Integrate gender-transformative content into education plans:** Leaders should put gender equity at the heart of education-sector plans, budgets, and policies (UNICEF et al., 2021). Gender-responsive or transformative content should be tailored to different age groups as a way to promote respect and understanding for all genders at all education levels. By framing gender equity as a shared goal that benefits everyone, curricula can inspire young men and boys to champion fairness, respect, and inclusivity as part of their identity, even in the face of adversity.
- **Provide ongoing teacher professional development:** Education staff members should be trained to recognize and challenge gender stereotypes in teaching and learning materials, and to facilitate constructive conversations about gender norms, stereotypes, and power dynamics (IASC, 2018). Even problematic teaching materials can present an opportunity to start a productive conversation about gender equity.
- **Create opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes, and to expand roles and responsibilities in the classroom:** Teachers can encourage learners to pursue careers in which their gender is underrepresented, such as encouraging young women to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and

young men to pursue opportunities in the healthcare and caregiving fields. Efforts must be taken to prevent ridicule, retaliation, or violence against learners who choose non-traditional paths.

- **Provide and resource extracurricular activities:** Art, music, theater, sports, and religious clubs can provide fun and interactive opportunities to reflect on gender roles and promote positive attitudes and behaviors toward gender equity. Teachers can direct learners to use art, role-playing, and peer-to-peer discussions to explore gender norms and power dynamics, and to learn about topics such as sexual and reproductive health, consent, and healthy relationships.



CASE STUDIES

Champions of Change—Gender Equality through Life Skills Northeastern Nigeria, Plan International

Project description: Plan International's Education in Crisis project in Northeastern Nigeria aims to provide quality education and safe learning environments for children, especially girls, in conflict-affected areas. The project focuses on improving access to education, enhancing the quality of teaching, and addressing the psychosocial needs of learners in Borno and Yobe states.

Education challenge addressed: The project addresses the critical education crisis in Northeastern Nigeria, where ongoing conflict, forced displacement, and economic uncertainty have resulted in widespread poverty and years of missed education. The situation has particularly affected girls, who face additional barriers to education due to cultural norms and safety concerns.

Approach: The project takes a complementary approach by engaging men and boys through life-skills programs to promote gender equality and support girls' education. This includes training boys to be "Champions of Change," where they learn to identify their privileges, understand gender equality, and play a part in supporting girls' rights to education. The program also educates boys about issues such as preventing teenage pregnancy and the importance of respecting girls and women.

Difference it makes: The approach of engaging men and boys has led to significant changes in attitudes and behaviors. Boys who participated in the program have reported a shift in their understanding of gender roles, as they have come to recognize that girls have capabilities and rights that are equal to theirs. This has reduced discrimination against and the harassment of girls, and created a more supportive education environment. The program also has fostered a sense of responsibility among boys on such issues as preventing teenage pregnancy and addressing educational barriers for girls with a more holistic approach.

Source: Plan International, 2018



CASE STUDIES

Learning Passport—Gender-Responsive Social and Emotional Learning Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, UNICEF, University of Cambridge, Microsoft

Project description: The Learning Passport is an innovative education model developed by UNICEF to provide quality education for children affected by displacement and emergencies. In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, this initiative has been adapted to address the unique challenges faced by Rohingya refugees and host communities, with a particular emphasis on gender-responsive education and social and emotional learning.

Education challenge addressed: The project aimed to address the livelihood challenges and educational gaps experienced by Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar, with a specific focus on gender disparities. Boys often face unique risks in emergency settings, such as recruitment into armed groups or pressure to work, which can lead to school dropout. The project sought to engage boys and young men in promoting gender equality while working to ensure that they continued their education.

Approach: The Learning Passport in Cox's Bazar incorporated gender-responsive social and emotional learning components to engage boys, male adolescents, and young men in promoting gender equality. This approach included:

- Developing life-skills modules that challenge harmful gender norms and practices
- Training teachers and instructors in psychosocial support and gender-responsive pedagogy
- Implementing community-based activities, such as the Theatre for Development program, where adolescent boys and girls work together to address social issues through cultural productions
- Engaging male youth in decision-making processes and as advocates for gender equality

Difference it makes: The gender-responsive approach of the Learning Passport in Cox's Bazar has had a significant impact: improved school attendance for both boys and girls; enhanced understanding of gender equality among male participants; boys' increased participation in educational activities, which reduced their risk of dropout and involvement in harmful activities; fostered a more inclusive learning environment that addressed the needs of both genders; and empowered male youth to become agents of change in their communities, including challenging traditional gender norms.

Source: UNICEF and Cambridge University, n.d.; UNICEF, 2018



TOOLS

Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Toolkit for Humanitarian Settings (IAWG, 2020): This toolkit provides strategies and tools to help close the provision gap for adolescents in sexual and reproductive health services.

Many Ways of Being Sex Education Curriculum (Equimundo, 2022): A sex education program for all young people ages 15 to 19 that promotes healthy, consensual, and violence-free relationships among youth while reducing the incidence of sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancies.

2.4 Teacher Recruitment, Support, and Professional Development

This section explores entry points for engaging men and boys in teacher professional development, recruitment and selection, and conditions of work.

This component contributes to following INEE Minimum Standards (2024):

DOMAIN 3: TEACHING AND LEARNING	
Standard 14	Training, professional development, and support: Teachers and other education personnel receive regular, relevant, and structured training in line with their needs and circumstances.
Standard 15	Recruitment and selection: A sufficient number of appropriately qualified teachers and other education personnel are recruited through a transparent and fair process, based on selection criteria that reflect diversity and equity.
Standard 16	Conditions of work: Teachers and other education personnel have clearly defined conditions of work and receive appropriate compensation.
Standard 17	Support and supervision: The support and supervision mechanisms in place for teachers and other education personnel function effectively.

CHALLENGES

- **There is a lack of qualified teachers in emergency settings:** Teachers are often in short supply in crisis and post-conflict settings, and many are new recruits with minimal experience or education to prepare them for teaching under tough conditions (INEE, 2022). Those who do have a teaching background or qualifications may have to teach content outside of their areas of expertise, and they may be unprepared to respond to the additional complexities of teaching in a crisis-affected context.
- **There is a significant gender imbalance on the teaching staff:** There is a particular shortage of male teachers at the pre-primary and primary levels, and of female teachers at the secondary and post-secondary levels (INEE, 2022). This imbalance can hinder girls' attendance due to cultural norms or safety concerns when female teachers are in short supply, and limit boys' motivation due to a lack of male role models.
- **Teachers have inconsistent professional development opportunities:** In crisis and post-conflict settings, teachers and education personnel often do not have access to consistent support or quality, or to ongoing professional development on gender-responsive pedagogy and gender equity concepts (UNHCR, 2017).
- **Teachers may reinforce harmful gender norms:** As members of the community, teachers have been socialized according to the same gender norms, roles, and power dynamics as their learners. They may intentionally or unintentionally perpetuate harmful norms through their choice of teaching and learning materials, pedagogy (e.g.,

calling on boys more than girls), and classroom management techniques (e.g., corporal punishment). Additionally, as authority figures, male teachers may have a vested interest in perpetuating inequalities that privilege them (e.g., the assumption that men are “leaders” may contribute to more male teachers being promoted to school leadership roles). Before addressing gender norms and power dynamics in their classrooms, teachers and education staff members first need time and space to reflect on and adjust their own attitudes and behaviors around gender in order to avoid reinforcing harmful norms and stereotypes in their classrooms (UN Women, 2024).

ACTIONS

Pathway 1: Addressing men’s and boys’ gendered needs and vulnerabilities

- **Invest in teacher professional development on gender equity:** Provide teachers with ongoing professional development on gender-transformative pedagogy, including how to address gender issues in the classroom and extracurricular activities, challenge male privilege, provide information on rights, and productively manage mixed-gender learning spaces. Teachers may need help in encouraging young men to open up about their vulnerabilities as men and to explore how a desire to mask these vulnerabilities can be a driver of gender-inequitable behaviors (Cartier Philanthropy et.al, 2019).
- **Provide teachers and learners with asynchronous opportunities to track their progress:** For example, provide journals for teachers to track what they taught and how students reacted (to both content and pedagogical approach) and for students to track what they have learned. Compare the journals to identify areas of miscommunication and where improvement is needed.
- **Engage school leaders in advocating for gender-responsive teacher training:** Engage school leaders in raising awareness and generating buy-in for gender-responsive teacher training. Without such buy-in, teachers incorporating gender discussions into their classroom lessons may face a backlash from other teachers or administrators, which could put their work and their students at risk (Cartier Philanthropy et al., 2019). Coach male education officials and providers on how to examine their own attitudes about masculinity and gender equity. Advocate for additional follow-up support for teachers on gender-responsive pedagogy, and set up peer learning and mentoring opportunities to enhance learning and hold teachers accountable.



GOOD PRACTICE: Soft Skills for Teachers

A gender-responsive, learner-centered focus requires additional sensitivities, skills, and capacities

- **Conflict resolution and peace-building:** Teach conflict-resolution skills and promote nonviolent communication. Engage boys and men in making schools safe from attack and military use in conflict situations.
- **Vocational and entrepreneurship skills:** Include vocational training and entrepreneurship skills that challenge gender stereotypes in career choices. Provide flexible, alternative, and accelerated learning opportunities for out-of-school boys, including those affected by child labor or recruitment into armed groups.
- **Critical thinking and media literacy:** Teach critical analysis of male stereotypes in the literature and media. Develop the ability to challenge and reshape harmful gender, cultural, and social norms.
- **Emotional intelligence and wellbeing:** Create safe spaces for boys and young men to have open conversations about gender norms, healthy relationships, and positive masculinity. Address topics such as mental health, emotional wellbeing, and coping strategies specific to male experiences in crisis situations.
- **Leadership:** Train male learners to be peer educators who engage other boys and young men in discussions of gender equity and positive masculinity. Involve male learners in designing and implementing their own initiatives to promote gender equity in schools, thereby also fostering leadership skills.

Source: INEE & UNGEI, 2019; INEE, 2022



POINTERS FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Recruit and support more male teachers, especially from marginalized groups, to serve as role models, especially at the pre-primary and primary levels.

Establish leadership pathways for individuals from marginalized groups, including women, people with SOGIESC, and individuals with disabilities, to take on decision-making roles in emergency education programs.

Prioritize diverse recruitment strategies to ensure that leadership teams reflect the communities they serve, including diversity in gender, age, ethnicity, and abilities.

Create opportunities for adolescents and youth from diverse backgrounds to contribute as leaders in shaping education programs and policies during emergencies.

Pathway 2: Engaging men and boys in promoting gender equity

- **Review, revise, or advocate for gender-responsive school policies and codes of conduct:** Work with teachers and learners to develop a school code of conduct, including a zero-tolerance policy for GBV against teachers and learners. The code of conduct should include clear consequences for any violations and information on how to report incidences of school-related GBV (IASC, 2018).
- **Engage male teachers as allies for girls' education:** Train male teachers and education personnel on gender-responsive pedagogy, menstrual hygiene management and GBV prevention and reporting. Encourage male teachers to model gender-equitable behavior and act as role models for learners of all genders, and to advocate for girls' education in their communities. Where possible, recruit women from the community to serve as mentors or para-professionals as a way to support equitable education access for girls (INEE & UNGEI, 2019).
- **Establish pathways for female teachers to enter and remain in school leadership positions:** Education leaders and school administrators—often men—play a pivotal role in implementing and scaling programs. Even when women occupy these positions, they may have internalized regressive gender norms that can hinder their progress (INEE, 2023). Provide opportunities for school leaders to explore and address their own gendered biases, attitudes, and behavior toward female teachers and women in leadership positions (Concern Worldwide, 2018b). School administrators must be equipped with the skills to examine, challenge, and change harmful gender norms and imbalances of power that advantage boys and men over girls and women.



CASE STUDIES

Radio-Based Education Programming for Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality in Emergency Settings Democratic Republic of the Congo, ACCELERE! project

Project description: The ACCELERE! project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was implemented jointly by USAID and UK AID, launched an interactive radio instruction program to promote continued education during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on empowering women and girls. As part of this initiative, the project incorporated specific content and approaches to engage boys, male adolescents, and young men in discussions around gender equality.

Education challenge addressed: In emergency contexts, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional gender norms and inequalities are often exacerbated. There was a need during that period of school closures and lockdowns to ensure that boys and men were actively involved in promoting gender equality, rather than in reinforcing harmful stereotypes or behaviors.

Approach: The interactive radio instruction program to promote continued education during the COVID-19 pandemic, which focused on empowering women, utilized interactive radio lessons that specifically targeted male listeners with content designed to challenge gender stereotypes, promote equitable attitudes, and encourage supportive behaviors toward women and girls. Lessons included role-playing scenarios, discussions on healthy masculinity, and practical ways for boys and men to support gender equality in their homes and communities.

Difference it makes: By intentionally engaging male listeners, the program helped shift boys' and young men's attitudes and behaviors. Anecdotal evidence suggested that there was increased support for girls' education, more equitable division of household responsibilities, and greater male allyship in promoting gender equality. The radio format had a widespread reach, even to remote areas, which helped to create a broader social movement for gender equality that was led by both male and female youth.

Source: UNICEF et al., 2021



Gender-Responsive Pedagogy: A toolkit for teachers and schools (FAWE et al., 2020): This toolkit provides practical guidance and tools for teachers and education personnel to start using gender-responsive pedagogy in their classrooms and schools.

Gender Training Manual (INEE, 2021): This training manual orients education practitioners to the INEE Guidance Note on Gender. It outlines 4-8 hours of facilitated training activities and materials on key gender concepts, along with strategies for gender-responsive education in emergencies.

EiE-GenKit (UNGEI et al., 2022): This core resource package offers tools for practical and immediate use, including checklists, tipsheets, and assessment templates that help practitioners ensure that each phase of an EiE intervention is gender responsive. For guidance on teacher recruitment and support, refer to the following sections: **5.4 Teacher and education personnel recruitment, conditions of work, training, and support and supervision**, and **5.5, Teaching and learning self-assessment checklist for teachers**.



3. Considerations across the Humanitarian Program Cycle

Zanzibar, Tanzania 27 February 2024 © GPE, Feruzi (Trans.Lieu)

This section identifies and explores opportunities to foster an enabling environment, along with practical ways to engage men and boys in promoting gender equity in and through education, across the Humanitarian Program Cycle.

This chapter addresses the following INEE Minimum Standards (2024):

DOMAIN 1: FOUNDATIONAL STANDARDS FOR A QUALITY RESPONSE

Standard 2	Resources: Community resources are identified, mobilized, and used to implement age-appropriate learning opportunities.
Standard 3	Coordination: Education coordination mechanisms are in place to support the stakeholders who are working to ensure access to and continuity of quality education.
Standard 4	Assessment: Timely education assessments of the emergency situation are holistic, transparent, and participatory.
Standard 5	Response strategies: Inclusive education response strategies include a clear description of the context and of the barriers to the right to education, and strategies to overcome those barriers.
Standard 6	Monitoring: There is regular monitoring of education response activities and of the evolving learning needs of the people affected.
Standard 7	Evaluation: Systematic and impartial evaluations improve education response activities and enhance accountability.

3.1 Assessments and Analysis

Before planning or implementing gender equity and/or EiE programming, the implementers should conduct gender-responsive assessments to identify the capacities, resources, vulnerabilities, gaps, and challenges affecting access to education for learners of all genders. Assessments should be aligned with existing or planned education-sector analyses, and be facilitated by the Education Cluster or sector working group to ensure coordination and avoid duplication. Care should be taken to ensure that the experiences and perspectives of education stakeholders (teachers, learners, parents, community members, etc.) of all genders are represented.



GOOD PRACTICE: Data-Driven and Evidence-Based Approach to Identifying Patterns of Support and Resistance Somalia, CARE

The Somali Girls' Education Promotion Program–Transition implemented by CARE took a data-driven approach to engaging boys and men in supporting girls' education. The project's monitoring and evaluation system explored gender-focused disaggregated data and identified data “blind spots” related to boys' and men's attitudes and behaviors. To address this, the project invested in qualitative research and community-led tracking of more than 1,200 girls in order to understand patterns of support or resistance from male family and community members. Based on these insights, the project developed interventions to engage boys and men as allies in girls' education. This included awareness-raising activities with fathers, brothers, and male community leaders that challenged harmful gender norms and promoted the value of girls' schooling. Recognizing that creating a supportive environment for all learners was crucial to help shift attitudes, the project also worked to improve facilities at schools in ways that addressed the needs of both girls and boys.

Source: UNICEF, 2021

ACTIONS

- Assess the gender, age, and ethnic and linguistic diversity of your implementation team, as well as their professional qualifications and level of gender knowledge (Myrttinen, 2023). Ensure that the team is representative of the population and capable of accessing target beneficiaries and key stakeholders effectively.
- Collect sex-, age-, and disability-disaggregated data on education needs, priorities, roles, and capabilities from a variety of sources, such as data from education management information systems, classroom observations, interviews with teachers and other education personnel, and community workshops.
- Analyze pre-existing and evolving gender norms in the emergency context, including norms of masculinity and femininity (Cartier Philanthropy et al., 2019). Use quantitative and qualitative methods to explore power dynamics, shifts in gender roles due to crises, and boys' attitudes toward gender equity.
- Use participatory methods to explore boys' specific needs and aspirations and the gendered impact crises have on male teachers and other education personnel. Collaborate with women and girls, men and boys to co-create recommendations for equitable education programming.
- Engage with women's rights groups, LGBTQIA+ rights organizations, feminist youth groups, and inter-agency gender working groups to utilize existing information and identify knowledge gaps (IASC, 2018).
- Encourage men and boys to reflect on harmful norms, such as unequal caregiving roles and decision-making dynamics, as a way to promote positive forms of masculinity,

such as caregiving and expressing emotions (Cartier Philanthropy et al., 2019). Utilize expertise from women's rights groups, feminist youth groups, LGBTQIA+ rights organizations, and inter-agency gender working groups to analyze, validate, and address their specific educational needs during emergencies.

- Mitigate backlash by maintaining open communication with beneficiaries and implementing measures to address tensions (IASC, 2018). This can include setting up feedback mechanisms during field-based data collection to help identify potential areas of tension or resistance early on.

TOOLS

Gender Equality in Education Snapshot Toolkit (UNGEI, 2022 [not in reference list]): This toolkit enables planners and practitioners to produce an overview of relevant gender data and to catalyze a dialogue among education stakeholders at the country level. Its Excel-based format enables users to rapidly generate a visual overview of the status of gender equality in education.

EiE-GenKit (UNGEI et al., 2022): This core resource package offers tools for practical and immediate use, including checklists, tipsheets, and assessment templates that help practitioners ensure that each phase of an EiE intervention is gender responsive. For guidance on gender-responsive assessments, see these sections: 2.1 Gender-responsive needs assessment checklist and **2.2 Questions for gender-responsive analysis**.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Education (World Vision, 2022): This reference guide provides step-by-step guidance on how to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate an education project or program to address gender equality and social inclusion. The structure of this reference guide starts with a review of key GESI concepts, which are covered in detail in the above documents, and then covers the stages in the program cycle aligned with the toolkit:

3.2 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

Education needs, barriers, and opportunities can change rapidly during crises, so continual monitoring is needed to ensure that programming is meeting learners' actual rather than their perceived needs. Data disaggregated by sex and age should be collected and reviewed regularly to deepen understanding of gender dynamics and how they may be changing.



GOOD PRACTICE: Accountability to Women and Girls in Monitoring

The Engaging Men through Accountable Practice program is a one-year primary prevention intervention developed by IRC. Designed for humanitarian settings, the Engaging Men program uses an evidence-based curriculum and field-tested methods to foster transformative changes in men's behavior. Some of the tools designed to ensure that the process is guided by women's voices and to monitor accountability to women and girls include:

- Reflection surveys conducted after women's discussion groups to gather feedback and recommendations from female participants
- Accountability checklists facilitators and supervisors use to conduct weekly self-assessments and to evaluate accountable practices in areas such as women's input, facilitator-participant relationships, and personal accountability
- Monthly observation forms used by supervisors during site visits to assess program delivery and guide improvements through feedback sessions with facilitators
- A form used to gather women's comments for creating a framework facilitators use to incorporate feedback and key messages from female participants into the men's discussion curriculum

Source: IRC, 2013

ACTIONS

- Design monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems that capture outcomes and impacts, not just activities and outputs, to ensure that the gender analysis promotes a gender-responsive approach through program design, implementation, and evaluation
- Develop indicators that reflect progress, such as reduced vulnerabilities, stronger local systems, and improved outcomes for gender equity. Measure shifts in attitudes toward gender equity among male and female learners, teachers, community members, and education officials. This may include tracking enrollment rates, dropout rates, and the completion of education among different gender groups. To enhance understanding and effectiveness, include data-collection mechanisms to track boys' specific experiences and program outcomes.

- Assemble data-collection teams with a mixed composition or in groups disaggregated by sex and age, as appropriate, based on cultural norms and the type of data required.
- Gather and analyze data on outcomes disaggregated by sex to identify gaps, measure progress, and inform program adjustments. Monitor how effective programming has been in advancing gender equity, and adjust the approaches used as needed.
- To ensure accountability to the affected communities, use participatory approaches to evaluate impact. Engage people of all genders in the evaluation process to gather feedback and insights, validate findings, and refine interventions that will have a more inclusive and sustainable impact.
- Document lessons learned, successes, promising practices, and challenges so they can be shared with future practitioners. Create mechanisms such as toolkits, handover notes, or mentorship programs to ensure continuity and build institutional memory.

TOOLS

Gender-Equitable Men Scale (FHI360, 2011): The Gender-Equitable Men Scale uses a collection of statements developed to measure attitudes toward gender norms in intimate relationships. Although the scale was developed for young men living in low-income countries, it also has been used successfully with adult men, women, and girls.

EiE-GenKit (UNGEI et al., 2022): This core resource package offers tools for practical and immediate use, including checklists, tipsheets, and assessment templates to help practitioners ensure that each phase of an EiE intervention is gender responsive. For guidance on gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation, see the following sections: **3.2 Gender in theory of change and M&E frameworks** and **6.3 Gender-responsive EiE indicators**.

3.3 Budgets and Financing

In today’s challenging funding environment for human rights and social justice, organizations need flexible, creative, and diverse ways to mobilize their resources (Arutyunova, 2022). Donor-driven mandates for “holistic” approaches can strain WROs and undermine their core work on gender justice (IRC, 2023). To avoid perpetuating inequities, costing and funding strategies must prioritize the empowerment of women and girls, while simultaneously engaging men and boys in ways that support and are aligned with feminist priorities. Male-focused programming should complement, not compete with, efforts to dismantle structural inequalities and support women and girls (UN Women, 2015).

ACTIONS

Gender Analysis and Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include the costs of conducting gender assessments, such as hiring gender experts and collecting disaggregated data.• Budget for participatory methods that engage diverse groups in identifying needs (IASC, 2018).
Capacity-Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allocate funds for training on gender analysis, gender budgeting, and inclusive programming.• Provide resources for workshops, toolkits, and ongoing technical support on gender equity (UN Women, 2015).• To create sustainable local ownership, invest in capacity-building for local organizations and grassroots groups, including women’s rights organizations, feminist youth groups, community- and faith-based organizations, and organizations of persons with disabilities.
Gender Expertise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budget for gender advisors or focal points within project teams.• Include the cost of consulting experts during project design, implementation, and evaluation.
Program Design and Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include costs for activities such as engaging teachers in critical discussions about patriarchal masculinity or setting up community-based educational opportunities for adolescents on GBV prevention.• To encourage collective ownership and reduce pressure on individuals, share resource mobilization tasks across the team members, boards, and networks.• Fund programs that actively challenge harmful gender norms, such as workshops for boys on positive masculinity and peer-led initiatives that promote gender equity in education settings. These programs can also engage communities in creating more inclusive education environments for all.• Fund initiatives that help to ensure equitable participation, such as transportation stipends for at-risk youth or language translation services.

Monitoring and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget for tools and methodologies to track progress on gender outcomes. • Include funds for conducting gender audits or evaluations. • Ensure that resources are available to conduct participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches that involve diverse stakeholders (OECD, 2021).
Targeted Funding Streams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish separate budget lines for programs aimed at research and innovation in the area of engaging men and boys in EiE as an evolving field. • Allocate resources to programs that recognize boys' unique vulnerabilities during emergencies (e.g., recruitment into armed groups). To foster resilience, provide specialized support, such as vocational training or mentorship programs. • Create contingency funds for unexpected needs, such as a cash fund to protect boys at risk of recruitment by local militias, or on a more systemic level for measures that will manage backlash.
Advocacy and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget for local stakeholders' and donors' awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts. Include funding for materials, events, and media outreach. • Focus on addressing the systemic barriers to funding rather than blaming individual organizations for their shortcomings. • Enter funding discussions with appreciation for the expertise and impact grassroots organizations bring, and support them as equal partners. • Advocate for long-term, sustainable funding for gender-equitable EiE. • To ensure that WROs and feminist youth organizations have equitable access to resources, advocate for funders to mitigate bias in their funding mechanisms that might perpetuate gender inequity.
Coordination and Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fund coordination meetings with WROs, feminist groups, LGBTQIA+ rights organizations, organizations of people with disabilities, and other local actors. • Budget for joint programming or capacity-sharing initiatives (UNFPA, 2019). • Build collaborative networks to share strategies and address systemic funding challenges collectively, rather than competing for resources. • Strengthen connections with broader communities and networks to open new funding opportunities. • Form strategic partnerships with feminist funders or progressive donors that prioritize transformative gender equity outcomes.



TOOLS

Handbook on Costing Gender Equality (UN Women, 2015): A comprehensive guide to estimating the financing gaps and requirements for achieving commitments to gender equality. The handbook includes a rationale for costing gender equality, key strategies, and a step-by-step process for undertaking a costing exercise.

4. The Way Forward

Somaliland, May 2023. © GPE, AP

Because men occupy positions of privilege in patriarchal systems, their active participation in gender-equity initiatives is vital to sustainable change. Entire communities benefit when men engage as allies in driving progress toward a more equitable and inclusive society. Education serves as a powerful entry point to influence these dynamics. Engaging men and boys in promoting gender equity in and through EiE is a critical step toward challenging patriarchal masculinities and fostering more egalitarian norms.

The following recommendations are intended to guide humanitarian actors who seek to adopt gender-transformative approaches and ensure the meaningful engagement of men and boys in promoting gender equity in and through EiE:

1. Reframe men's role in gender equity

- Rather than positioning men and boys as optional allies, emphasize their fundamental responsibility to address gender inequity. Engage men and boys in actively challenging patriarchal systems and power dynamics, not just as passive supporters of women's empowerment.

2. Focus on transformative change

- Prioritize addressing the root causes of gender oppression, such as harmful social norms and economic and political systems. Move away from focusing exclusively on changing individual behavior and focus instead on dismantling the patriarchal systems and structures that perpetuate gender inequity.
- Engage men and boys through existing social networks and institutions to challenge dominant norms of masculinity and promote alternative, nonviolent models. Ensure that interventions to engage men and boys are carried out at all levels of society, from the individual to the political sphere, especially as men continue to hold positions of power at all levels (MenEngage Alliance, 2022).
- Transformative change often takes time. To address both urgent needs and the root causes of inequity, combine immediate humanitarian actions with development and peacebuilding goals.

3. Ensure accountability to feminist movements

- Encourage male allies to work in partnership with feminist organizations and movements.
- Ensure that initiatives that engage men are fully accountable to the women and girls affected by crises, WROs, and feminist movements. Men's involvement should complement efforts focused on women and girls rather than undermining or diverting resources from them. Men's engagement should be designed to strengthen initiatives that promote gender equity, women's empowerment, and women's and girls' access to rights and services.

4. Adopt intersectional approaches

- Recognize men's and boys' diversity and consider how gender intersects with other identities and systems of oppression.
- Take an intersectional approach to understanding the various ways men are positioned relative to patriarchy and other forms of social power.

5. Support collective action

- Support initiatives that foster collective action among men and women, and ensure that people of all genders are equally invested in the transformation of gender relations. Programs should position women and men not as adversaries but as partners in the process of dismantling GBV and inequity.
- Support initiatives that encourage men and women to challenge restrictive gender roles and collaborate on developing more equitable relationships. Women also need to self-reflect on gender roles and identify ways they may be holding up patriarchal norms.

6. Build evidence and evaluate impact

- Invest in developing rigorous evidence to assess the impact men's engagement has on women's lives and gender equity outcomes. This will provide insights into the effectiveness of such approaches and help develop strategies that have a greater impact.

Annex A: Glossary

Crisis of Masculinities	A “crisis of masculinities” is a situation in which men feel unable to fulfill traditional male roles and expectations. This often leads to feelings of powerlessness, frustration, and loss of identity. Men may struggle with their inability to be providers or protectors, which can sometimes result in negative coping mechanisms such as aggression or substance abuse.
Gender Diverse	“Gender diverse” refers to individuals whose gender expression, behaviors, or appearance do not align with societal or cultural expectations traditionally associated with the gender assigned to them at birth.
Gender Equity	“Gender equity” is the process of being fair to women, men, girls, boys, and gender minorities to create a fair society. Strategies and measures must be available to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that prevent women, men, girls, boys, and gender minorities from operating on a level playing field.
Gender Equality	“Gender equality” refers to the equal enjoyment of socially valued goods, opportunities, resources, and rewards by women, men, girls, boys, and gender minorities. It means that all people, regardless of their gender, enjoy the same status in society, are entitled to the same human rights, enjoy the same level of respect in the community, have the same opportunities to make choices about their lives, and have the same amount of power to shape the outcomes of these choices.
Gender Identity	“Gender identity” refers to how an individual perceives their own gender. Individuals may identify as a man, woman, or something else, and their gender identity may or may not be the same as the sex that they were assigned at birth. Everyone has a gender identity and expresses their gender in a uniquely personal way.
Gender Transformation	“Gender transformation” is the active examination, questioning, and changing of rigid gender norms and imbalances of power that advantage boys and men over girls and women. It aspires to tackle the root causes of gender inequity and reshape unequal power relations. It moves beyond individual self-improvement among girls and women to redress the power dynamics and structures that reinforce gendered inequalities (UNFPA et al., 2020).

Intersectionality	<p>"Intersectionality" is a way of understanding how overlapping aspects of identity—gender, ethnicity, disability, social and economic status, refugee status, etc.—interact with power structures to shape individuals' unique experiences of discrimination or privilege. It recognizes that multiple forms of discrimination can combine to compound the distinct challenges individuals face, even within marginalized groups. By examining these intersections and the structural barriers they reveal, intersectionality promotes a deeper understanding of context and power dynamics. This approach informs more inclusive, equitable, and responsive policies and practices that address diverse and complex needs.</p>
LGBTQIA+	<p>"LGBTQIA+" is an acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual or agender, and other people of diverse genders and sexualities (ORAM, 2016).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Lesbian" refers to women who are sexually and romantically attracted to other women. • "Gay" refers to men who are sexually and romantically attracted to men, and is often used as an umbrella term for all people who experience same-sex attraction. • "Bisexual" refers to individuals who are sexually and romantically attracted to more than one sex or gender. • "Transgender" is an umbrella term that refers to people whose gender identity (a person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender based on societal expectations) differs from their biological sex (chromosomal, hormonal, and anatomical characteristics used to classify an individual as female, male, or intersex). • "Queer" is an umbrella term for people who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender (people who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth). • "Intersex" refers to people whose biological sex does not fit the typical definitions of male or female. For example, some people are born with external organs that are typical of males but internal organs that are typical of females, or vice versa; anatomy that appears to be in between typical male and female anatomy; or chromosomes that aren't typical of either male or female (USAID, 2022). • "Asexual" refers to people who do not experience sexual attraction. • "Agender" refers to people who have an internal sense of being neither a man nor a woman nor some combination of the two.

Masculinities	<p>“Masculinities” refers to the characteristics, behaviors, and roles expected of men in a given culture. In many societies, these expectations are rooted in patriarchy, which values masculinity over femininity and gives men more power and authority.</p> <p>“Patriarchal masculinities” refer to harmful expressions of manhood that reinforce male dominance and gender inequity. Rooted in rigid gender norms, these behaviors often assert control over women, prioritize men’s needs over those of others, and resist women’s leadership and participation. They can become more pronounced during crises or in periods marked by the re-emergence or strong conflation of patriarchy with religious and political doctrines, even in relatively stable times. This exacerbates gender inequalities, perpetuates violence, and restricts women’s access to resources and decision-making opportunities.</p> <p>“Egalitarian masculinities” are expressions of manhood that promote gender equity and reject harmful patriarchal norms. They involve treating all genders as equals, sharing responsibilities and decision-making, opposing violence, supporting women’s leadership, challenging restrictive gender roles, and recognizing privilege. Men who practice this approach serve as positive role models and advocate for justice, help to transform traditional masculine norms, and foster equitable gender relations, even during emergencies.</p>
Patriarchy	<p>“Patriarchy” is a system of power that is rooted in historical, economic, social, and cultural structures. It privileges men and masculinity while subordinating women and femininity, and manifests through institutional, interpersonal, and internalized forms of oppression that reinforce unequal distributions of power, resources, and opportunities.</p>
Positive Parenting	<p>“Positive parenting” involves embracing practices that promote healthy, respectful, and supportive relationships with children. Positive gender-responsive or gender-transformative parenting refers to parenting approaches that foster gender equity and challenge traditional gender norms. These approaches aim to create a more equitable environment by encouraging positive gender socialization and transforming power dynamics within families and communities.</p>
SOGIESC	<p>“SOGIESC” is an acronym for sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics. “People with diverse SOGIESC” is an umbrella term for all people whose sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and/or sex characteristics place them outside socially dominant categories (IOM, 2020).</p>
School-Related Gender-Based Violence	<p>“School-related gender-based violence” is defined as explicit acts or threats of physical, emotional, and sexual violence that occur in and around schools and are perpetrated as a result of unequal gender norms and power dynamics. It includes bullying, corporal punishment, verbal or sexual harassment, non-consensual touching, sexual coercion, assault, and rape. Male and female teachers and learners can be both victims and perpetrators (INEE & UNGEI, 2019).</p>

Annex B:

Lifecycles of men and boys, women and girls— experiences, roles, risks, educational needs

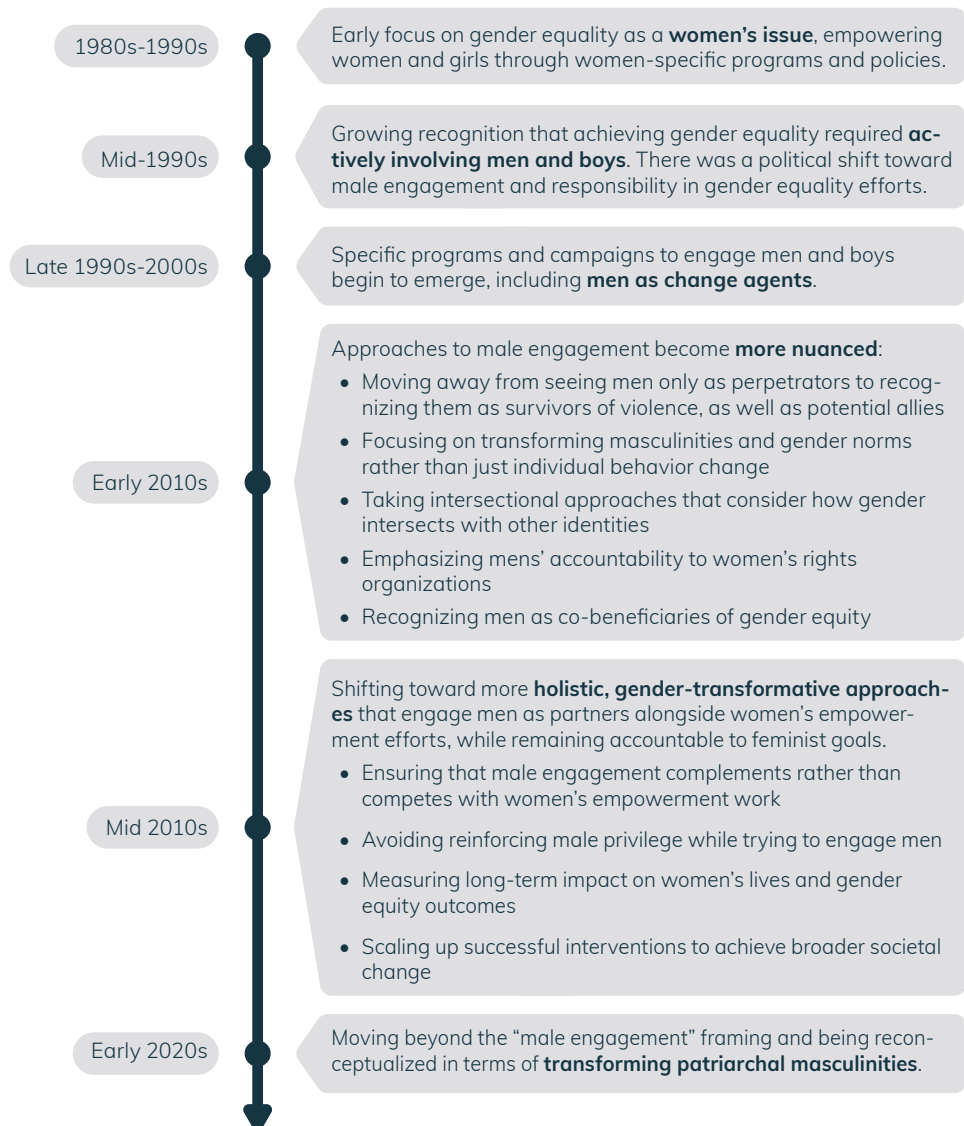
Experiences	Roles	Risks	Educational Needs
Boys (<10)			
Boys' early gender socialization may include the use or acceptance of gendered violence. Boys are often perceived as future breadwinners and are expected to assist with family labor, which limits their time for play and learning.	Sons, brothers, early learners, family helpers	Poor cognitive, social, emotional development Exclusion from education, due to a general lack of opportunities for learners of all genders, especially in displacement contexts and with the economic constraints families face Exposure to violence, including gender-based violence	Foundational skills in literacy and numeracy through gender-responsive curricula
Adolescents (11-17)			
Adolescence marks a critical juncture for boys, as they may take on adult responsibilities, such as heading households, particularly during crises, when the number of child-headed households increases.	Sons, brothers, early learners, family helpers, heads of household	Mental health and psychosocial challenges and maladaptation School dropout Recruitment into armed groups, exploitation, and violence, including sexual violence	Foundational skills for health and wellbeing (UNESCO, UNICEF, 2024 [not in reference list]) Financial literacy skills training/ gender budgeting skills, as well as life skills/employability skills EdTech and digital literacy skills, combined with critical thinking, to help identify trustworthy online resources Digital programs that promote and reinforce gender-transformative values

Experiences	Roles	Risks	Educational Needs
Young men (18-24)			
Young men often must balance education with economic pressures and may experience peer pressure.	Older siblings, community members, potential caregivers, soldiers	Recruitment into armed groups, harmful masculinities Violence, including sexual violence	Life skills, leadership training, gender equity awareness Preparation to be allies for gender justice, such as gender equity awareness initiatives, complemented by practical skills in conflict resolution and positive role modelling
Adult men (above 25)			
Adult men must often navigate crises as breadwinners or heads of households.	Fathers, teachers, leaders, politicians, change agents, gatekeepers	Frustrations that stem from the loss of livelihood may be exacerbated, which increases the risk of domestic violence. Fathers often remain underrepresented in caregiving roles, which perpetuates rigid gender divides.	Positive parenting skills, conflict resolution, and allyship training to encourage men to adopt nonviolent behaviors, share caregiving responsibilities, and contribute to gender-transformative change

Experiences	Roles	Risks	Educational Needs
Girls(<10)			
Girls' early gender socialization may include exposure to gendered expectations, such as bias in feeding practices.	Daughters, sisters, early learners, family helpers	<p>Poor cognitive, social, emotional development</p> <p>Exclusion from education due to a general lack of opportunities for learners of all genders, especially in displacement contexts and the economic constraints faced by families</p> <p>Exposure to violence, including gender-based violence</p>	Foundational skills in (digital) literacy and numeracy, early exposure to a gender-responsive curriculum
Adolescents (11-17)			
Adolescent girls face increased caregiving responsibilities, potential early marriage, exposure to GBV, health risks, trauma and stress, social isolation, and limited decision-making power.	Potential wives, caregivers	<p>Heightened health risks, including exposure to sexual and reproductive health challenges, teenage pregnancy, and unsafe childbirth</p> <p>Limited access to healthcare services, particularly sexual and reproductive health resources</p> <p>Increased vulnerability to malnutrition due to disrupted food supplies</p> <p>Exploitation and abuse</p>	<p>Foundational skills for good health and wellbeing, including menstrual health management, personal hygiene, and nutrition education (UNESCO, UNICEF, 2024)</p> <p>Leadership training for adolescent girls</p>
Young women (18-24)			
Young women encounter gendered attitudes and expectations, and experience controlled mobility and freedom of expression.	Older siblings, community members, potential caregivers, young mothers	<p>Lack of decision-making power</p> <p>Early marriage and other harmful practices</p> <p>Poor access to quality reproductive, maternal, obstetrics, and neonatal health services</p>	Life skills, including leadership, critical thinking, financial literacy, empowerment and independence, and gender equity awareness

Experiences	Roles	Risks	Educational Needs
Adult women (above 25)			
Adult women have limited access to decent paid work and often are overworked at home, due to the triple burden of doing reproductive, productive, and community work, while remaining economically dependent.	Mothers, teachers, leaders, health practitioners, change agents, gatekeepers	<p>Low level of participation in decision-making on all levels</p> <p>Little acceptance of women as leaders</p> <p>Sexual harassment and exposure to gender-based violence</p> <p>Occupational hazards</p> <p>Widows being isolated by society</p> <p>Labor being exploited to ensure low production costs</p> <p>Becoming head of household during emergencies</p>	<p>Parenting skills, conflict resolution, and allyship training</p> <p>Empowerment and competence building (decision-making, leadership building, political awareness, self-awareness, collaboration, resilience building, etc.)</p>

Annex C: Timeline of approaches to engaging men and boys



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