



GIRLS' PARTICIPATION IN BASIC EDUCATION IN GHANA: WHAT ARE THE GAPS?

JULY 2023

This report was developed by Africa Education Watch with support from



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About Africa Education Watch

Africa Education Watch is an Education Policy Research and Advocacy Organization working with Civil Society Organizations, Governments and the Private Sector to promote an equitable, accountable and responsive education system that assures quality and equal opportunities for all. Working with partners in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Kenya and Nigeria, we envision a continent with globally competitive human capital that drives economic and social development.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	-	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BCC	-	Behaviour Change Communication
CBOs	-	Community-Based organizations
CPD	-	Continuing Professional Development
CSE	-	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSO	-	Civil Society Organization
CSRHE	-	Comprehensive Sexuality and Reproductive Health Education
FBO	-	Faith-Based Organization
FGD	-	Focus Group Discussion
GES	-	Ghana Education Service
GEU	-	Girls Education Unit
GRE	-	Gender Responsive Education
HIV	-	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	-	Information Communication Technology (ICT)
JHS	-	Junior High School
KG	-	Kindergarten
LEAP	-	Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty Programme
LMIC	-	Lower Middle-Income Country
MHM	-	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MoE	-	Ministry of Education
MoGCSP	-	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
NCCE	-	National Commission for Civic Education
PTA	-	Parents-Teachers Association
SDA	-	Seventh Day Adventist
SDG	-	Sustainable Development Goal
SMC	-	School Management Committees
SRHR	-	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SRGBV	-	Sexual and Reproductive Gender-Based Violence
STEM	-	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
STI	-	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UIS	-	UNESCO Institute of Statistics
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	-	United Nations Fund for Population Affairs
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Target 4.5 calls for gender equality and inclusion in education, and over the years, most countries, including Ghana, have achieved gender parity at the pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary school levels. Ghana's Gender Parity Index as of 2021 at the Kindergarten (KG), primary, and Junior High School (JHS) levels was one (1), meaning that for each level, 100 girls in Ghana are enrolled in school for every 100 boys.

While this is commendable, ensuring gender equality in education goes beyond equalizing enrolment between boys and girls. Girls still face multiple barriers to their full participation in education including educational outcomes, retention, progression, and choice of academic programmes, which pose challenges to the realization of gender equality in education.

Some of the barriers that widen the gender inequality gap between girls' and boys' opportunities to education include negative socio-cultural norms, gender-based violence including child marriage and teenage pregnancy, and poverty. These factors are outside the school setting, however, the most important barriers to gender equality in education remain mainly within the school system – curriculum, textbooks, and teaching and learning materials illustrating perpetuating gender stereotypes, teaching pedagogy that is shaped by teachers' assumptions and stereotypes, school-related gender-based violence, and power relations.

The potential of Ghana's education system can be harnessed to transform the barriers to gender inequality by equipping education stakeholders, students, teachers, community members, and policymakers to rethink gender norms, challenge power relations, and raise awareness about gender inequality, especially biases against girls in and around the school environment.

This report assesses the responsiveness of Ghana's pre-tertiary education system in addressing barriers that limit girls' full participation in education – enrolment, retention, participation in curricular and co-curricular activities, progression, and completion. It identifies existing systems and practices that facilitate and discriminate against girls in school, the effectiveness of existing laws, policies, rules, and regulations that exist to prevent girls from being discriminated against in and around the school environment, and make recommendations for systemic, policy and administrative actions to protect girls from discrimination in and around the school environment.

The study combined desk and field research by reviewing laws, policies, and regulations, and collecting field data from eight (8) basic schools, one (1) Senior High School (SHS), and two (2) Colleges of Education (CoE) – in six (6) districts – Nkwanta South, Tolon, Krachi East, New Juabeng, Savelugu, and Yendi Municipality.

Findings:

The findings are presented in two parts – a desk review of existing laws, policies, rules, and regulations that exist to prevent girls from being discriminated against, while promoting their full participation in education, and field research findings.

Review of laws, policies, rules, regulations.

The 1992 Constitution of Ghana and the Pre-Tertiary Education Act, Act 1049:

The Constitution of Ghana guarantees education as a right (Article 25), and so is the Education Act, (Section 2.2). They both provide for free, Compulsory, Universal Basic Education (fCUBE). Since the inception of the fCUBE in 2005, the number of primary schools increased from 14,664 to 15,623, with primary school enrolment increasing from 3.6 million to 4.9 million by 2021¹.

Despite the progress, education is not universal as there are 1.2 million children who have never been to school before, with girls constituting 48 per cent². Partly, this is because physical access to basic school is beyond the recommended reach for many children, especially girls in deprived and underserved communities who commute for long distances on foot to access a school. Also, the deprived state of many public schools in Ghana is a disincentive to some parents from enrolling their children in school.

National Gender Policy:

The National Gender Policy (NGP) mandates the Ministry of Education (MoE) to among other things, integrate gender equality into its budget, programmes, and plans, introduce gender into its curriculum at all levels of education, and train teachers through conferences, short courses, and seminars to effectively handle gender issues at various levels of education. The influence of the Policy has led to the integration of girl friendly topics into initial teacher education, and to a large extent the addressing of gender inequality issues in the Ghanaian school curriculum. However, the capacity of in-service teachers to effectively respond to issues girls face in schools continues to receive low attention in teachers' Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes.

The Domestic Violence Act, 2007, Act 732:

The Domestic Violence Act (DVA) was enacted in 2007 to protect vulnerable groups, especially, girls against domestic violence such as sexual abuse and child marriage – two major impediments to girls' access to education and participation in school. Despite operating for almost 16 years, some families still consider child marriage as an accepted social norm in certain traditions.³

Guidelines for Prevention of Pregnancy Among School Girls and Facilitation of Re-Entry into School After Childbirth:

Among others, the Guidelines seek to promote measures to prevent pregnancy among schoolgirls and facilitate their re-entry into school after childbirth. Since its

¹ MoE [EMIS] 2006 and 2022.

² Ghana Statistical Service (2021). 2020 Population and Housing Census.

³ Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Ghana Statistical Services (GSS) and Associates (2016), Domestic Violence in Ghana: Incidence, Attitudes, Determinants and Consequences, Brighton: IDS.

introduction, the policy has promoted the re-entry of 10,869 pregnant girls into public basic schools from 2018 and 2020. However, between 2016 and 2020, 555,575 teenage pregnancy cases were recorded by the Ghana Health Service (GHS), suggesting a high rate of Out of School teenage pregnancies, which is preventing girls from either enrolling or completing basic school.

Key challenges limiting the effectiveness of the policy include inadequate funding by the Government of Ghana as the policy is largely donor-funded, inadequate staff capacity at the Girls' Education Unit, low budgetary allocation, misconception about the policy as a means of encouraging pregnancy among schoolgirls, and lack of material (economic) support for economically vulnerable teenage mothers to return to school.

Ghana Education Service Tool for Positive Discipline in Basic Schools:

To promote a child-friendly school environment that encourages among others, girls' participation in school, the Ghana Education Service (GES) banned the use of corporal punishment in schools, and introduced a Positive Discipline Toolkit that provides alternative ways of ensuring discipline in Ghanaian pre-tertiary schools. Despite the banning of corporal punishments, some teachers still prefer using them for the fear of losing their authority over the learners, and for the lack of capacity to implement the positive discipline toolkit. The banning of corporal punishment and the introduction of the positive discipline toolkit were not accompanied by a change management process to enhance its acceptance by teachers. Corporal punishment continues to make the school environment unfriendly for many learners, especially girls.

Findings from the field:

The Curriculum, Textbook, and Pedagogy:

The field study indicated that the representation of women in textbooks is low compared to male representation, and in some cases where women are represented pictorially, they were portrayed to be engaged in gendered roles like sweeping, bathing of babies, selling/buying in the market, while the males were mostly represented to be engaged in office or engineering works. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with teachers and learners also pointed out that, at times, teachers' practices during teaching and learning are shaped by gender assumptions and stereotypes (mostly against girls) such as their failure to use gender-neutral languages in teaching. Some teachers also observed that, in some cases, their gender biases against girls affected how they teach, group, and assign classroom roles to boys and girls. Additionally, teachers hardly have CPD on gender-responsive pedagogy to ensure gender inclusiveness in their lesson preparation, teaching, and assessment.

Responsiveness of Initial Teacher Education Curriculum to gender equity and girls' participation:

The National Teacher Education Framework acknowledges the lack of mainstreaming issues of equity and gender inclusion across the curriculum in the CoE. Since the upgrading of CoE programmes from diploma to a four-year degree awarding institutions, two courses on gender were introduced – Gender and Writing and Gender and Development in Africa. However, these courses are elective and

therefore, not taken by all trainees. It implies the majority of the trainees would not have the opportunity to learn about gender issues and how to promote gender equity and equality in schools when they are posted.

Prevalence of school-related gender-based violence:

In all the schools visited, it was noted that Sexual and Reproductive Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) was prevalent. The girls reported in FGD that they experience teasing, sexist comments, inappropriate touches, and bullying from their male counterparts mostly. Engagement with education officials at the District Education Offices in Tolon and New Juabeng South districts indicated that illicit sexual relationships exist between teachers and basic schoolgirls.

Availability of WASH facilities:

In the basic schools visited, there were separate toilet facilities for boys and girls. However, there were no handwashing devices in or near the toilet blocks as required by the GES. Besides, none of the schools had a changing room for adolescent girls, which according to the girls impacted negatively on their school attendance during menstruation. According to them, to avoid the embarrassment that comes from their male counterparts when they stain themselves, they're compelled to stay home.

Distance to school:

By the GES convention, KG and primary school buildings should be 2-3 km accessible to the learners while JHS should be 5 km accessible. Yet, in some of the schools visited, the schools were located further than the recommended distances, causing pupils to commute long distances from home to school. At Dabogashie in the Tolon district, some of the pupils in both primary and JHS had to walk for more than 10 km to school daily. A similar situation existed in Abotareye M/A Primary and Ofosu M/A Basic School in the Nkwanta South municipality where the head indicated that the long distance some of the children had to commute to school was a disincentive, and particularly prevented girls from attending school regularly.

Fosterage and educational inequality:

Fosterage is a traditional cultural practice where children are given to relatives and friends to raise. This is a common practice in the northern parts of Ghana, including some communities sampled for this study. It was noted that girls were the ones that were mostly given out into fosterage, since their parents preferred the boys to stay behind and help with farm activities. In many instances, the foster parents did not send their foster children to school, instead they kept them at home to assist with domestic chores or engage in economic activities for their foster parents.

Role models/mentors:

The availability of accomplished women who serve as role models or mentors to young girls is acknowledged as an effective way of inspiring girls to be more ambitious and aim higher. Role models equally help reduce self-stereotyping among marginalized girls. The study revealed that there is a lack of female role models or mentorship programmes in the schools, thereby limiting the educational aspirations of some of the girls. In an FGD, some girls indicated that, they did not see women from their areas who progressed in their education, and that at times

left them doubtful of their ability to progress in their education. In almost all the schools visited, there was no female staff to even serve as role models or mentors to the girls.

Poverty:

Poverty impacts negatively on both boys' and girls' ability to enroll, remain, and complete basic school. However, in areas where boys' education is valued more than that of girls, girls tend to be most affected. In the study areas, some girls had to drop out of school because of economic reasons and resorted to seeking economic activities in the southern part of Ghana, especially in Accra. Interviews with the teachers also indicated that some girls quit school to cohabit with men for economic reasons.

Girls JHS model: The Oxfam girls JHS approach provides a targeted intervention towards addressing challenges facing girls' participation in basic education in the Northern Region. Since the establishment of one of the Girls Model JHS in Savelugu in 2017, enrolment has increased from 23 to 122, with JHS completion rate almost twice (84%) the district average (46%).

Recommendations:

The following key actions are recommended to drive girls' full participation in education and to promote gender equality throughout the education system.

Policy and institutional

1. The MoE must allocate resources equitably, effectively, and efficiently for girls' education.
2. The MoE should adopt the Girls Model JHS model and scale it up across communities with low girls' transition to JHS. This must be anchored with relevant policy.
3. The MoE and GES should collaborate with the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission and the National Teaching Council to mount compulsory gender-related courses for all teacher trainees at the CoE level and teachers, as part of their CPD.
4. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) should develop and adopt a material support policy for targeted vulnerable teenage mothers under the Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP) programme. The direct cash grants strategy has been proven to have the potential to enhance re-entry.
5. The MoE, in line with the provisions of the Education Strategic Plan, must develop the Safe School Policy that takes cognizance of school-related gender-based violence and sexual harassment prevention in school.
6. The MoE must work with the Ministry of Finance to remove the tax on sanitary pads to make them affordable. This will reduce the situation where some girls skip school because they cannot afford sanitary pads during their menstruation.
7. The MoE must ensure that its annual Education Sector Report monitors, tracks, and reports on progress toward ensuring a girl friendly and gender responsive education system.

8. The GES must review its Code of Conduct for Staff to make corporal punishment a non-sanction act for headteachers as well. This would ensure total abolishment of the act in schools.
9. GES must enhance the capacity of teachers on the understanding and use of the Positive Discipline Toolkit.
10. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment must ensure that approved textbooks and teaching resources for the new curriculum do not perpetuate gender stereotypes.
11. The GES must enforce its Code of Conduct on teachers who are found to sexually abuse learners.
12. Where there are Girls Model JHS, the GES must facilitate teacher-teacher peer learning exchange processes among teachers from the regular mixed JHS and those from the Model JHS for sharing of best practices on transformative classroom practices.
13. GES should establish a formal scheme to incentivize female teachers who accept posting to rural areas. The scheme could include study leave with pay at the shortest possible time, free housing, and extra allowances.
14. The GES must ensure continual auditing of existing interventions for GRE in schools to understand what works, and what does not, and to improve relevant interventions. The outcome of such an audit can inform resource allocation to address barriers to girls' education.
15. The National Commission for Civil Education (NCCE) should identify communities with the prevalence of negative socio-cultural norms that limit girls' full participation in education for community-level civic education on the negative implications of such norms on the girl-child, families, communities, and the nation at large.
16. As part of their programmes and activities, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), should engage in textbook monitoring to ensure they are free from content that promotes unequal representation of women.
17. The GES must develop a gender-responsive pedagogy toolkit to guide teachers on lesson delivery that provides equal opportunities for boys and girls.

School level

18. Schools must ensure a safe and inclusive learning environment by taking a zero-tolerance stance on school-related gender-based violence and bullying.
19. Teachers must adopt inclusive instructional practices that equally place both boys and girls at the centre of lesson planning, delivery, and assessment.
20. Schools must equip children to identify negative social norms in and around the school and become assertive in challenging them.
21. Schools must be encouraged to form clubs where issues related to mutual respect for both genders, the importance of girls' education, adverse effects of school and gender-based violence, negative customary practices, assertiveness, sexual and reproductive health rights, and female leadership, are discussed.

22. Schools must promote girl mentorship programmes and activities where accomplished women in the school catchment areas are periodically brought to the school to interact with the girls on varied issues including career, educational progression, and teenage pregnancy prevention among others.
23. The MoE must ensure that all schools meet the minimum Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) standards instituted by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and ensure in the long term, all schools have changing rooms to provide a safe space for girls during their menstruation in school.
24. The GES must develop the capacity of local school governance structures, i.e., Parents-Teachers Associations (PTA) and School Management Committees (SMC), to identify and confront school practices, by both teachers and learners that reinforce gender inequality.

Community level

25. CSOs, Faith-based organizations (FBOs), and Community-based organizations (CBOs) must intervene at the community level to intensify education against gender-based violence, including child marriage, and other negative social norms.
26. Traditional authorities must pronounce against the refusal of parents or foster parents to enrol their children, especially girls in school, and sanction in accordance with relevant law.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Context

Ghana has over the past decades made significant strides in achieving gender parity in its basic education system as Gender Parity Index in 2020 in KG, primary and JHS has attained one (1). Despite the progress, there are challenges within the system that affect girls' retention, participation, completion and transition.

While Ghana achieved gender parity at all levels of the basic education system in 2015, only 83 per cent of girls completed basic school by 2021. Girls are not only disadvantaged in terms of progression up the educational ladder but also in terms of the academic programme they pursue. Female participation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programmes remains low at the secondary level. As of 2020, only 69,352 girls compared to 122,735 boys offered Science in SHS.

Barriers to girls' education

The underlying barriers to girls' full participation and progression across all levels of education include negative gender norms and stereotypes that work against their participation in both curricular and extra-curricular activities at the school and community levels. In addition, legal, policy and budgetary constraints continue to hamper girls access to, participation and completion of basic education through the lack of girl-friendly school infrastructure and learning environment, poor supervision of gender-responsive school management and pedagogy, low capacity of both student teachers and teachers in gender responsive school management, among others.

There have been various efforts by the government and non-state actors to improve the participation of girls in basic education through initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality. Other approaches have focused on providing a girl-friendly and safe school environment including school infrastructure and water and sanitation facilities. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 and its attendance school closures, there is a policy premium on the re-entry of pregnant girls and teenage mothers into school. However, these approaches are projectized, adhoc, and usually independent, thereby lacking a systemic and transformational outcome.

Also missing a strategy that seeks to utilize all parts of the education system to transform stereotypes, attitudes, norms, and practices by challenging power relations, rethinking gender norms and binaries, and raising critical consciousness about the root causes of inequalities and systems of oppression against girls. Beyond improving access to education for girls, how does the education system equip and empower stakeholders, including students, teachers, communities, and policymakers to examine, challenge, and change harmful gender norms and imbalances of power that offer boys an advantage over girls?

This report examines Ghana's pre-tertiary education system's capability to promote girls' full participation in education, by identifying the existing systems and practices that facilitate and/or discriminate against girls in school because they are

girls, including the root causes of the inequality and oppression of girls. Also, it further assesses the effectiveness of existing laws, policies, rules, and mechanisms in place to protect girls from discrimination in and around the school environment while making recommendations for systemic, policy, and administrative actions to ensure girls' education continuity and progress in educational attainment.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The research design is guided by the following objectives:

- i. identify the existing systems and practices that facilitate and/or discriminate against girls in school on account of their gender.
- ii. identify existing laws, policies, rules, and mechanisms in place to protect girls from discrimination in and around the school environment.
- iii. assess the effectiveness of existing laws, policies, rules, and mechanisms in place to protect girls from discrimination, stereotypes, attitudes, norms, and practices.
- iv. recommend systemic, policy, and administrative actions to protect girls from discrimination and inequality in and around the school environment, including positive masculinity.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis to gain an in-depth understanding of the subject. A comparative case study was also employed to examine best gender practices in a selected all-girls JHS and a SHS.

3.2 Sampling and Sample Size

The study was carried out in 11 purposively sampled schools in the Northern, Oti, and Eastern Regions – eight (8) basic schools (including one Oxfam Girls Model JHS), one (1) SHS, and two (2) CoE as presented in Table 1. Access to the basic and SHS was granted by the GES Headquarters.

Regions	District/Municipal	Schools
Northern	Tolon	Gburumani D/A JHS Kpachiyili Basic School Dabogashie Basic School
	Yendi	Abbatey JHS
	Savelugu	Oxfam Girls Model JHS
Oti	Nkwanta South	Abotareye M/A Primary Ofosu M/A Basic School Jasikan College of Education
	Krachi East	Pai-Katanga RC Basic School Adonkwanta D/A Primary School
Eastern	New Juabeng South	New Juaben SHS SDA College of Education

Table 1: Sampled schools, districts, and regions

A GRE expert's opinion was also sought on the subject matter. In all, 220 respondents participated in the study.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis:

Closed and open-ended questionnaires and a semi-structured interview guide were used to collect the data. One-on-one interviews and in some cases FGDs were also employed in the interview process in some schools. Online interviews were conducted with girls' education experts, the house warden of an SHS and two (2) CoE.

3.4 Limitation of the Study:

Due to time constraints, data was collected from seven (7) out of the 10 basic schools originally earmarked for the survey. These seven basic schools exclude the Oxfam Girls Model JHS. The language was a barrier to effective communication with the participants. Notwithstanding, the service of an interpreter was employed to help achieve the aim of the study.

4.0 ANALYSES OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study are presented in two parts. The first part reviews the effectiveness of various laws, policies, and practices that seek to promote girls' participation in schools, while the second part focuses on the empirical findings on girls' participation in education from the field.

4.1 Existing laws, policies, and regulations that promote girls' participation in education.

To promote the participation of every child in school regardless of their geographical location, ethnicity, socio-economic background, and gender, and to promote a safe and friendly learning environment for every learner, Ghana has over the years adopted various laws, policies, and regulations which include the following.

The Constitution of the Republic of Ghana
Pre-Tertiary Education Act of 2020 (Act 1049)
The National Gender Policy
Domestic Violence Act, 2007 Act 732
GES Positive Discipline Policy
Re-entry policy for pregnant girls and teenage mothers

4.2 Effectiveness of the existing laws, policies, and regulations in protecting girls from discrimination, stereotypes, and negative gender norms and practices

There are noticeable gaps and hindrances to the effective implementation of the laws, policies, rules, and mechanisms that were intended to protect girls from discrimination, stereotypes, attitudes, norms, and practices. This is evident in the following reviews.

4.2.1 The 1992 Constitution of Ghana and the Education Act (2020), Act 1049:

The Constitution of Ghana guarantees education as a right (Article 25), and so is the Education Act (Section 2.2). They also provide for fCUBE, and since 2005, Ghana has been implementing the fCUBE by making basic education free and improving access for all children. Since the inception of the fCUBE in 2021, the number of primary schools increased from ⁴14,664 to 15,623, with primary school enrolment increasing from 3.6 million to 4.9 million within the same period⁵. Despite the progress, education is not universal as there are 1.2 million children who have never been to school before with girls constituting 48 per cent of the number.

⁴ Ministry of Education (2005)

⁵ Ministry of Education (2021)

This is partly because access to schools is beyond the recommended reach for many children, especially those in underserved communities. The dilapidated nature of school buildings in many parts of Ghana is also a disincentive to some parents from enrolling their children in school as noted in Eduwatch's study into the extent of deprivation in Ghana's basic schools.⁶ CDD-Ghana evaluation of the 2018-2021 Education Sector Medium Term Development Plan indicates that there are still over 5,000 schools that exist under trees, dilapidated structures, and sheds with more than 4,000 primary schools lacking JHS, a situation that negatively affects enrolment, retention, transition and completion in Ghana's basic education system⁷.

While basic education is also free as prescribed by the Constitution and the Education Act, there are hidden costs such as admission fees, termly examination fees, cost of writing materials, uniforms, and in some cases, transportation cost, that prevents some parents from poor households from enrolling their children in school.

In the urban areas, the low investment by the government in basic school infrastructure, coupled with the increasing number of private schools continues to price education out of the reach of poor households. As of 2022, the number of public primary schools in Greater Accra was 869 compared to 3,215 private primary schools. The low investment in expanding educational infrastructure and the existence of hidden costs in basic education pose significant challenges to the full realization of the constitutional provision of fCUBE.

4.2.2 National Gender Policy

The NGP derives its powers from Article 17(1) and (2) of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana which guarantees gender equality and freedom of women and men, girls, and boys. Though the MoGCSP is the main implementing Ministry to promote gender equality and safeguard the welfare and full participation of women in the social, political, and economic development processes, it works with the MoE, as well as other ministries, departments, and agencies to operationalize and mainstream gender issues in all its projects and programmes.

The MoE is thus mandated by the Policy to among others:

- i. integrate gender equality into its budget, programmes, and plans.
- ii. introduce gender into its curriculum at all levels of education.
- iii. train teachers through conferences, short courses, and seminars to effectively handle gender issues at various levels of education.
- iv. cooperate with the MoGCSP, as well as the Ministry of Finance to draw up and sponsor programmes that keep needy children in school.
- v. coordinate with MoGCSP to mobilize resources for children and women empowerment issues in schools.

⁶ Africa Education Watch. 2021. A Study into The Extent of Deprivation In Basic Schools In Deprived Areas And Its Impact On Learning Outcomes

⁷ CDD-Ghana. 2022. Review of the Education Sector Medium Term Development Plan (ESMTDP) 2018-2021

The Policy has made some gains by influencing the mainstreaming of gender issues in initial teacher education programmes and addressing gendered roles in curriculum development to some extent. Equally, the GES's Code of Conduct for teachers, drawing from NGP, forbids the discrimination of students by teachers on the grounds of gender.

Notwithstanding the gains, there are noticeable gaps in the implementation of the NGP. For instance, while the NGP provides for the integration of gender equality into budgeting, Ghana's education budget does not adopt a gender equity approach in education resource allocation and distribution. Unlike most Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries that have adopted economic models and tools like gender-responsive public expenditure management systems to ensure gender equity in the distribution of education resources, Ghana currently does not have any tool or model.

Besides, the capacity of many teachers in the GES is still limited in addressing issues that affect girls within the school system. This is manifested in how they teach and manage the classroom and how school-related gender-based violence should be addressed given that between 14 per cent and 52 per cent of girls in pre-tertiary schools continue to experience various forms of sexual abuse, and gender-based violence⁸.

The Policy also mandates the MoGCSP to promote gender equality and safeguard the welfare and full participation of women in social [including education], political, and economic development processes, however, the Ministry is budget-constrained to sufficiently safeguard the welfare of girls.

4.2.3 The Domestic Violence Act, 2007, Act 732

The law on Domestic Violence (DV) was passed in 2007 to provide protection for vulnerable groups particularly, Ghanaian women and children against domestic violence. It thus criminalizes various acts of physical and sexual violence, economic and psychological abuse, and intimidation in domestic relations. Despite almost 16 years of operationalization, a series of evaluation studies, including a study by the Institute of Development Studies and the Ghana Statistical Services indicate the following gaps in the law⁹:

Inadequate awareness.

The misconception of domestic violence to mean only physical violence. Lack of a fully functioning legal and social protection system necessary for the full operationalization of the DV Law. The current legal and social protection system does not provide adequate protection, shelter, and sanctions for victims, survivors, and perpetrators of child marriage, leading to a very low conviction rate. High cost of domestic violence case management to victims, especially medical care and shelter.

⁸ Owusu Adjah, E. S., & Agbemafle, I. (2016). Determinants of domestic violence against women in Ghana. *BMC public health*, 16(1), 1-9.

⁹ Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Ghana Statistical Services (GSS) and Associates (2016), *Domestic Violence in Ghana: Incidence, Attitudes, Determinants and Consequences*, Brighton: IDS.

Interviews with teachers, opinion leaders, and students in the data-collecting communities indicated that although some of them know Ghana has a law on domestic violence, they did not know its content. Most of the girls interviewed said they preferred keeping issues of violence to themselves rather than reporting for fear of victimization.

4.2.4 Guidelines for Prevention of Pregnancy Among School Girls and Facilitation of Re-Entry into School After Childbirth

In 2018, the GES adopted the Guidelines for Prevention of Pregnancy Among School Girls and Facilitation of Re-Entry into School After Childbirth. The policy aims to:

- I. Standardize the approaches for:
 - (a) Handling cases of pregnancy among schoolgirls; and,
 - (b) Re-entry of girls into school after childbirth.
- II. Promote measures to prevent pregnancy among schoolgirls at the pre-tertiary level.
- III. Increase support to in-school pregnant girls and young mothers.
- IV. Promote the re-entry of adolescent mothers to school after childbirth.
- V. Strengthen the capacity of teachers in the management, accountability, and support of pregnant schoolgirls and those who re-enter after childbirth.
- VI. Promote supportive environments for pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers by reducing stigma and discrimination towards them.

Since its adoption in 2018, there have been modest gains in facilitating pregnant girls and teen mothers' school re-entry. A review of the policy indicates that, between 2018 and 2020, the policy has facilitated the re-entry of 10,869 pregnant girls into public schools.

The policy, however, exhibits marked challenges, among which are the following:

- a. Inadequate funding: Though adopted by the Government of Ghana, the Re-entry policy is almost solely funded by development partners with Government providing only institutional support.
- b. Staffing deficit: Currently, the District Girls' Education Officer of the GES is the only person mandated to ensure the re-entry of pregnant schoolgirls and teen mothers in an entire district. This poses a challenge to the effectiveness of the Unit and the enrolment of out-of-school teen mothers and pregnant girls.
- c. Misconceptions about the purpose of the Re-entry Policy: The policy is yet to receive acceptance from some sections of the public who believe that the policy rather encourages girls to get pregnant knowing well that they can still return to school even when they are pregnant. This affects, in some communities, the support the policy needs for full effectiveness.

- d. Infrastructural deficit: The infrastructure in the schools is not consistent with the policy objective given that pregnant girls cannot share with another student the dual desks currently being used in most of the basic schools. Besides, 98 per cent of the basic schools do not have nurseries to enable teen mothers to leave their babies in nurseries while they are in school.
- e. Distance to school: In instances where schools are located far from the community, pregnant girls or teenage mothers have to commute long distances on foot to school, thereby disincentivizing re-entry.
- f. The communication strategy of the policy emphasizes abstinence and frowns on safe sex. This conflicts with the Ghana Health Services' communication strategy targeting the same girls but at the community level. The incongruity affects policy effectiveness.

4.2.5 The GES Tool for Positive Discipline in Basic Schools

Under the child-friendly school environment programme which is aimed at creating a safe protective school environment for all learners, the GES outlawed corporal punishments as a means of disciplining students in school and introduced a Positive Discipline Toolkit in 2016 to provide positive alternative ways of disciplining learners. The negative effects of corporal punishment are well documented, and they include emotional and physical damage to learners with serious implications on girls' school attendance and academic performance in class. Despite the implications of corporal punishment and the provisions of the Positive Discipline Toolkit, the use of corporal punishment remains a preferred tool by some teachers for disciplining learners.

The reasons include the fear of losing control over their class, an erroneous perception of some teachers that the application of the tool is complicated and time-wasting, and the support some parents still lend to corporal punishment in schools¹⁰. A study conducted in some parts of Ghana reveals that some school administrators, parents, and PTA chairmen still endorse corporal punishment as they believe it builds character, and conscience, and instils adult authority in children.

¹⁰ CoverGhana.Com (2022). Key issues from the stakeholder engagement workshop on Positive Discipline Toolkit



4.3 Empirical findings from the Field

The analysis of the empirical data from the field regarding girls' participation and gender equity in education is presented as follows:

4.3.1 How Curriculum, textbooks, and pedagogy supports girls' participation in education.

School curricula and textbooks are important components of any educational system with the potential to challenge or propagate gender biases, stereotypes, and gender discrimination in society. It is therefore crucial to ensure the contents of the curriculum and textbooks are designed to encourage children to question and challenge negative gender norms, violence, and gender discrimination including promoting positive masculinity and femininity. Similarly, promoting gender-aware classroom practices using gender-responsive pedagogy by teachers is key to addressing the specific learning needs of both sexes.

i. The curriculum and teaching pedagogy

In 2019, the GES adopted a new curriculum that focuses on helping learners attain key learning standards at the end of each grade level. The curriculum development was guided by the National Pre-tertiary Education Curriculum Framework developed in 2018. Among the rationale behind each subject of study is the structuring of the curriculum to ensure "learners have an appreciation of equality...

because they have experienced an inclusive educational system where individual strengths and potentials are valued and maximized, regardless of ...gender..."¹¹

To ensure inclusion, especially gender equity at the school level, the curricula were thus designed to match the needs and interests of all learners, including taking into consideration "the different needs of boys and girls". Equally, the curricula promote teaching and learning processes that promote active girls' participation and progress throughout the stages of education in Ghana with an emphasis on inclusive and gender-responsive pedagogy.

While promoting gender equality is at the centre of the curriculum objectives and rationale, the challenge, however, is that the capacity of teachers is not adequately developed to promote gender-inclusive teaching practices in the classrooms. Some of the teachers interviewed indicated that, the two-week training given to them on the implementation of the new curriculum didn't touch on gender-inclusive teaching practices with some also noting that, the Continuous Professional Development they have been receiving since the introduction of the curriculum hardly emphasizes promoting gender-focused teaching approaches.

Some teachers, in their attempt to encourage female participation in the teaching process, tend to give more attention to girls than boys. This was noted in Ofosu M/A Basic School where the male pupils said they felt their teachers paid more attention to the girls than them.

It is important, however, to state that, promoting gender equality in the classroom is not about giving more attention to girls than boys but instead, ensures gender-responsive lesson plans, gender-responsive teaching and learning resources design, classroom set-up, classroom interaction, and gender-sensitive language use in the classroom, among others.

ii. The Textbooks

It is worth mentioning that at the time of the data collection in December 2022, available textbooks in use at schools were those of the old curriculum. Schools were yet to receive textbooks in the new curriculum. While to a large extent, the contents were gender-sensitive, there still exists negative stereotyping in some of the textbooks, as there were pictorial depictions of some careers as the preserve of males and females. For instance, in the French textbook, "Soleil French for Junior High Schools 1" on pages 45 and 46, professions like judge, policing, architecture, and engineering were all presented as male with women drawn going to the market and the farm (see Appendix 5).

Some girls expressed concerns that the portrayal of women as market women in their textbooks reduced their self-esteem in school and affected their career considerations.

¹¹ NACCA. 2018. National Pre-tertiary Education Curriculum Framework

One student in New Juaben SHS remarked:

"When I was in JHS, most of our textbooks either have pictures of all the people selling in the market to be women, or represented the women to be carrying firewood, or walking from farms while the men were dressed in white long coats as doctors. It did have a negative impact on my career thoughts those days."

Case study: A rapid gender-responsive textbook content review under the new objective-based curriculum

iii. **Illustrations and diagrams**

- i. Golden English Basic 1 Book (2021), Page 108: There was a diagram depicting a market center with only females present. (See Appendix 1).
- ii. Our World Our People for Kindergarten 2 (2020, by Masterman), Page 85: In explaining the uses of water, pictures of women cooking and bathing babies were used (See Appendix 2).
- iii. Creative Arts for Kindergarten 2, (2020) Page 100: In explaining the principles of design, the author used drawings of women washing and serving a king (See Appendix 3).
- iv. French textbooks, "Soleil French for Junior High Schools 1", Pages 45 and 46: Professions like law judge, police officer, architect, and engineer were all presented as males (See Appendix 4).
- v. Pictorial/image illustrations in other books (Le français Compréhensif, Science for Basic Schools, Golden English for Junior High School 1, 2 &3) depicted the profession of males as lawyers, police officers, headteachers, and engineers, while the women were mostly drawn selling in the market (See Appendix 5).

4.3.2 Responsiveness of Initial Teacher Education Curriculum to GRE

Ensuring that pre-teacher education sufficiently equips potential teachers to address gender inequality at the school level is crucial in achieving a gender-inclusive education system. However, one of the concerns raised about the teacher education curriculum is the lack of issues of equity and gender inclusion.¹²

In 2012, all Teacher Training Colleges were upgraded to tertiary CoE through the Colleges of Education Act, 2012, Act 847. Afterwards, in 2018, CoE went through a transition and were upgraded from a 3-year Diploma in Basic Education to a 4-year Bachelor of Education degree programme with the adoption of a new curriculum that offered specialization in three main areas: Early Grade Education, Primary Education, and Junior High School Education.

¹² National Teaching Council (2018). The National Teacher Education Curriculum Framework.

The National Teacher Education Framework which provided the guidelines for the development of the current CoE curriculum acknowledged as a concern, the lack of mainstreaming issues of equity and gender inclusion across the curriculum in the CoE".¹³ The new CoE curriculum, therefore, now prioritized gender inclusion in initial teacher education and aims to equip trainees to have a sound understanding of how to recognize and address barriers to learning (including gender barriers). It emphasized that teacher trainees were to be trained "to overcome their biases, experience-related beliefs and develop professional capacities to focus on the diverse characteristics of the individual learner(s) and provide opportunities that will ensure equity and inclusivity"¹⁴ including gender inclusivity.

Accordingly, unlike the previous curriculum, the current CoE curriculum now provides two elective courses on gender, namely, Gender and Writing, and Gender and Development in Africa. In Gender and Writing, the students are exposed to concepts like the definition of gender, the differences between gender and sex, the gendering process, gender identities, gender roles acquisition channels, gender institutions, gender stereotyping, gender norms, etc. The scope of the Gender and Development in Africa curriculum includes gender roles, gender, sex, gender statements about sex, what gender is and what gender is not, gender misconception and stereotyping in society, how to challenge gender stereotyping, and gender misconception in the classroom, among others.

While the introduction of these courses in CoE is commendable, having them as elective courses implies that only students who choose them as their elective courses could take them, and not all students. To equip all teacher trainees to have the skill to address gender inequities and promote girls' participation in school, gender responsive courses must be mainstreamed into all programmes run in the CoE.

4.3.3 Safe School Environment

An effective school climate is crucial in achieving quality education. This entails providing adequate school infrastructure, teaching, and learning resources, zero-tolerance for bullying and violence, and the existence of WASH facilities. This section presents the findings from the field about some safe school-related indicators.

i. Prevalence of school-related gender-based violence

To achieve quality education, the school must be a safe place for every child, yet one of the challenges affecting the quality of schools is the issue of gender-based violence in and around schools that come in the form of sexual, physical, and psychological violence. While school violence affects both boys and girls, girls are more likely to have experienced psychological and sexual violence than boys while the opposite is true for physical violence.¹⁵ School violence is associated with lower academic achievement and overall attainment of the student population of a school with girls being the most affected.

¹³ National Teaching Council (2018). The National Teacher Education Curriculum Framework.

¹⁴ National Teaching Council (2018). The National Teacher Education Curriculum Framework.

¹⁵ UNESCO (2019). Behind the numbers: Ending school violence and bullying



The FGD revealed the prevalence of a wide range of SRGBV against girls which included gender-specific expectations placed on boys and girls, the use of gendered statements to tease girls, teacher-to-student and student-to-student sexual harassment, inappropriate touches, and the use of sexually suggestive words.

The girls also indicated that assigning certain school chores to only girls, including sweeping classrooms and fetching water, while boys are expected to concentrate on leadership roles, limited their self-worth and agency – a situation that is largely viewed as psychological violence.

In Tolon and New Juabeng South Districts, there were reported illicit sexual relationships between some teachers and basic schoolgirls. In most cases, the girls felt either intimidated to discontinue the relationship or found it rewarding as the teachers provided economic incentives.

As indicated during one of the FGDs at Abbatey JHS in Yendi, girls also experienced sexual harassment from their male counterparts in the school. A girl indicated, "Some of our male classmates make attempts to sleep with me, but consistently I have escaped their bait. I know some of my female classmates who fell victim to them and became pregnant".

ii. Availability of sexual harassment policies in school

In all the seven schools visited, there was no sexual harassment policy. However, there existed school regulations on reporting issues of SRGBV. Some of the girls in Dabogashie Basic School (Tolon District) recounted instances where they reported harassment by their male counterparts to their teachers only for the issue to be trivialized with no disciplinary action taken against the perpetrators, or counselling offered to the female victim.

A JHS girl in Gburumani Basic School indicated, "Anytime we tried to report sexual harassment cases to the teachers, we were mocked, and the teachers took the issues lightly."

To address sexual harassment in schools, the Abbatey JHS in Yendi required perpetrators, be they teachers or students, to sign a bond of good behaviour. Where the action is repeated by the perpetrator, that child or teacher may be reported to the police for further action. While the signing of the bond may be seen as an attempt to handle possible criminal cases of sexual violence at first instance, it is seen by the local community as a step towards deterring boys and men in the school environment from abusing girls.

iii. Availability of WASH facilities

The lack of WASH facilities in schools negatively impacts children's school attendance and educational attainment, yet many schools in Ghana lack good toilet facilities, potable water, and hand washing facilities. In addition, there is inadequate menstrual hygiene management among many girls and schools.

While all the schools visited for the study had separate toilet facilities for boys and girls, there were no handwashing facilities, as well as no changing rooms for adolescent girls.

At Ofosu M/A Basic School, where there was a separate room created for girls to change during their menstrual period during school hours, the room was later converted for another use. Some respondents during an FGD session indicated that, due to the lack of a changing room in their school, they had to skip school when they were in their menstrual period. In all the schools visited, the teachers indicated that some of the girls used pieces of cloth during their menstruation since their parents could not afford sanitary pads, causing some girls to stain themselves in school.

iv. Girls' participation in school leadership

For decades, girls' representation in school leadership has been limited because of the lack of opportunities from the teachers. Recent studies have, however, shown that the situation is improving in the pre-tertiary education system because more girls are now developing leadership skills and consequently taking up positions in schools.¹⁶

However, in all the schools visited, the school prefect position was occupied by boys except for Abbatey Junior High School in Yendi. While the schools allow girls to compete with boys for the various positions in the schools (unlike what used to be decades ago), one challenge, however, was the unwillingness of most girls to show up and contest for the positions. In some schools, to promote the participation of girls in leadership, certain positions were exclusively reserved for them.

¹⁶ Graphic Online (2022). More girls taking leadership positions in school - Study reveals. Retrieve: <https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/more-girls-taking-leadership-positions-in-school-study-reveals.html#:~:text=A%20study%20conducted%20by%20Right,girls%20as%20the%20school%20prefects>.

At the classroom level, the girls indicated that, while the duty of tidying up the classroom was shared among both boys and girls, the boys hardly participated in that because they (the boys) insisted that tidying up the classroom must be the work of the girls. It also emerged that, although girls were allowed to be class prefects, female class prefects faced opposition from some of the boys in the class.

v. Distance to School

The proximity of a school to the learners plays a critical role in their enrolment, retention, and completion. In cases where students, especially girls, walk long distances to school, they are exposed to the risk of sexual harassment. In a study to examine the correlation between school distance and girls' activeness or engagement in physical activities in school, the study found out that, the time spent commuting could explain reduced time for physical activity in the school with girls living more than 5 miles from school having lower levels of engagement in physical activities than those living 3 miles from their school.¹⁷

By the GES convention, primary and KG school buildings should be 2-3 kilometres accessible to the learners while JHS should be 5 kilometres accessible. However, that was not the case in some of the communities visited as some children had to commute more than the recommended distance to school.

In Dabogashie, an isolated community in the Tolon district, some of the pupils in both primary and JHS had to walk for more than 10 kilometres to access school on daily basis with a similar situation observed in Abotareye M/A Primary and Ofosu M/A Basic School in Nkwanta South municipal. The headteacher of Abotareye M/A Primary indicated that the long distance commuted by some girls negatively affected their school attendance.

This situation is prevalent at the JHS level in the Northern Region, as about 60 per cent of primary schools in the region do not have JHS¹⁸.

In Gburumani (Tolon district), the JHS in the community serves four (4) primary schools in the area, limiting access to JHS for some of the pupils, especially girls. According to the headteacher of the school, primary school graduates from the four schools sit for an entrance exam to determine who qualifies for the limited admission slots at the JHS. Apart from the boys outperforming the girls in the exam, the communities preferred the boys to progress than the girls, leading to fewer girls transitioning to JHS.

vi. Teenage pregnancy and re-entry of teenage mothers

According to the Ghana Centre for Democratic Development, about 30 per cent of girls who drop out of school do so as a result of pregnancy.¹⁹ In the study regions

¹⁷ Cohen, D. A., Ashwood, S., Scott, M., Overton, A., Evenson, K.R., Voorhees, C. C., Bedimo-Rung, A., & McKenzie, T.L. (2006). Proximity to School and Physical Activity Among Middle School Girls: The Trial of Activity for Adolescent Girls Study

¹⁸ CDD-Ghana (2022). Review of the Education Sector Medium Term Development Plan (ESMTDP) 2018-2021

¹⁹ CDD-Ghana (2022). Review of the Education Sector Medium Term Development Plan (ESMTDP) 2018-2021

– Northern and Oti, there were 43,533 (Northern) and 19,248 (Oti) teenage pregnancies, between 2016 and 2020.²⁰

It emerged from interviews with the headteachers of the sampled schools that, the incidence of teenage pregnancy was uncommon among the girls, with a few of the girls who got pregnant remaining in school till the last trimester of pregnancy and returning as teenage mothers to continue schooling. According to the headteachers, mothers of the teenage mothers who returned to school supported with childcare for their daughters.

The headteacher of Abotareye M/A Basic School, however, expressed reservation about the re-entry policy, indicating that, the policy encouraged pregnancy among schoolgirls since there were no sanctions. Such perspectives re-enforce the need for more stakeholder education on the re-entry policy to enhance its acceptance.

4.3.4 Negative Social Norms

Girls' disengagement from school in some instances is fueled by social norms. Typically, social norms are deeply rooted in values that serve to bestow power on men and boys while projecting the woman or girl as subordinate²¹ and thereby contributing to the marginalization of girls' education. In Ghana, there exist entrenched social-cultural issues that continue to drive inequality in boys' and girls' education. This section presents the field findings on existing negative social norms in Ghana and how they impede girls' access to education.

i. Fosterage and educational inequality

Fosterage is a traditional cultural practice where children are given to relatives and friends to raise. This is done to foster family and friendship ties, and ensure children are raised under strict conditions by a relative or family friend to prepare them for life, especially in instances where the biological parents perceive themselves as "weak" in raising their children.²² In some cases, child fosterage is an economic venture for poor families who cannot take care of their children. The practice of fosterage is common in the northern part of Ghana and affects children, especially girls' access to education.

A study conducted in the Savelugu-Nanton district shows that a fostered child is 19 per cent less likely to be enrolled in basic school compared to a biological child²³. FGDs with teachers and parents indicated that foster parentage is prevalent in the study communities, with first-born girls being the most likely to be given out into fosterage. It also emerged that some of the girls ended up running away from their foster parents to Accra and Kumasi in particular, to engage in menial jobs, especially head pottering under harsh living conditions.

²⁰ Citinewsroom (2021). Teenage pregnancies in Ghana hit 555,575 in five years. Retrieve: <https://citinewsroom.com/2021/06/teenage-pregnancies-in-ghana-hit-555575-in-five-years/>

²¹ Yotebieng, K., (2021). What we know (and do not know) about persistent social norms that serve as barriers to girls' access, participation, and achievement in education in eight sub-Saharan African countries. UNICEF, New York.

²² Abubakari, A. & Yahaya, A.I. (2013). Fosterage and educational inequality in rural Dagbon, Northern Region of Ghana.

²³ CREATE (2010). Fosterage and Educational Access Among the Dagomba of Savelugu-Nanton, Ghana. Available at www.create-rpc.org.

ii. Role models/mentors

The participation of girls from underserved communities in education depends among others on the influence of female role models. In the study areas, since the participation of women in education had been limited over the past decades, there were few women, compared to men, who had progressed in their education to serve as motivation for the girls. Teachers and parents who participated in the FGDs indicated that the few women role models hardly visited the communities to inspire the girls. It was therefore disturbing to observe that none of the basic schools visited during the study had a female teacher to serve as a role model for the girls. This obviously affected the premium the communities attached to girls' education.

iii. Poverty

Poverty is one of the most important factors that determine whether a child can access and complete her education, with girls more at risk, especially in communities where boys' education is prioritized over that of girls. According to the National Development Planning Commission, 81 per cent of rural children are multidimensionally poor²⁴. While basic education is free, there are indirect costs such as PTA levies, cost of writing materials, uniforms, examination fees, admission fees, feeding cost etc., that become difficult for many poor families to afford.

The field data indicates that some girls dropped out of school because of economic reasons, in search of greener pastures in Accra and Kumasi. Such girls sent money regularly to their parents back home for the family's upkeep. Other girls had to quit school and cohabit with their male 'partners' for the partners to provide financial assistance for the girl's families. Such practices, technically child marriage, also keep girls out of school.

iv. Child marriage

There are 2 million child brides in Ghana of which 600,000 married before the age of 15²⁵. The 2021 Population Census Report indicates that 80,000 girls are either married or living with their partners, a situation which affects the ability of girls' pre-tertiary education completion. In all the seven schools visited for the study, there were stories of child marriages.

The headteacher for Abotareye M/A Basic School in the Nkwanta South of the Oti Region indicated that, since he took over as head of the school five (5) years ago, there had been frequent stories of parents giving their girls into marriage, with one of their girls' prefects ever being a victim.

The teachers indicated it was difficult for them to attempt rescuing the victims, since immediately the marriage occurs, it is difficult to talk the parents or the girl out of it. Parents in an FGD session in the same community identified poverty as the main reason behind the practice of child marriage, with some opining that it would be difficult for the practice to stop because of the deep-seated poverty of most of the parents who indulge in the practice.

²⁴ National Development Planning Commission (2020). Multi-Dimensional Child Poverty in Ghana.

²⁵ UNFPA-UNICEF (2020). Global Programme to End Child Marriage

4.3.5 The capacity of the Girls Education Unit to promote girls' education

Following the National Seminar on Girls' Education in June 1995 that led to the adoption of the Accra Accord on Girls' Education in Ghana, which emphasized the prioritization of girls' education in Ghana, the Girls Education Unit (GEU) of the GES was established in 1997 as a unit within the Basic Education Division of GES to give new emphasis on the removal of barriers to girls' education.²⁶ The Unit has a decentralized network of regional and district personnel nationwide mandated to provide coordination, mobilization and sensitization activities in districts, communities and schools to promote girls' education.

While the Unit has worked over the years to improve girls' participation in education, it is saddled with challenges that militate against its effective functioning, the key of which is understaffing. In many districts, there is only one Girls' Education Officer responsible for implementing and coordinating programmes and activities in the entire district²⁷. Even though the Girls' Education Officers liaise with other staff of the GES in the districts, there still exists a huge human resource gap, as the other supporting officials have very congested primary mandates.

Relatedly, the GEU is underfinanced to implement outreach activities at the community level. As indicated in Eduwatch's policy brief on the school re-entry policy, the budget of the GEU is mostly administrative²⁸, with a heavy reliance on unsustainable donor support for programme activities. This affects their effectiveness, as about 500,000 girls are currently out of school.²⁹ Consequently, the Unit relies on funding from donors to implement its programmes and activities. It is, therefore, difficult for the Unit to function optimally without adequate personnel and funding.

²⁶ Atakpa, S.K. (1995). Ghana Ministry of Education National Plan of Action on Girls' Education.

²⁷ Eduwatch (2022). Re-entry of pregnant girls and teenage mothers to school – A critical policy and strategic brief.

²⁸ Africa Education Watch (2022). Re-entry of pregnant girls and teenage mothers to school-A critical policy and strategy brief

²⁹ Ghana Statistical Service (2021). Population and Housing Census Report



5.0 OXFAM GIRLS MODEL JHS IN PERSPECTIVE

Background

To provide a targeted intervention towards addressing challenges facing girls' education in the Northern Region, a Girls Model JHS was established in Savelugu in 2017 by Oxfam to provide a school environment that is sensitive to the needs of girls and young women. The school now has a student population of 122 from 23 in 2017, with more than half of the student population being from deprived communities.

School Performance

- i. The completion rate of the model school is 84.6 per cent compared to the district completion rate for girls of 48 per cent.
- ii. The transition rate to SHS is 94 per cent compared to the district transition rate for girls of 79 per cent.
- iii. The school has always achieved a 100 per cent pass in the Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE)
- iv. In the 2012 BECE, the school had the highest student performance in the Savelugu District.
- v. In 2015, the school was ranked first in the district BECE performance.
- vi. In 2015, the school was first in a National Information Communication Technology (ICT) competition organized by Savana Signatures in collaboration with GES and IICD.

- vii. Since its inception, there have been no cases of unintended pregnancies, child marriage, or dropouts.

Best Practices

The following best practices were observed in the school, contributing to the promotion of a friendly school environment for girls' participation and improved academic performance.

School Infrastructure

- i. The classrooms were spacious enough to promote activity-based learning.
- ii. There were washrooms and changing rooms.
- iii. There was a borehole to ensure constant supply of potable water in the school.

Textbooks and Pedagogy

- i. Class size was limited to 35 students to facilitate regular class assignments, bi-weekly tests, and regular feedback from teachers.
- ii. Teaching was student-centered with adequate time provided for learners to engage in discussion during lessons.
- iii. ICT was largely integrated into the entire teaching process, from lesson planning to delivery, and assessment.
- iv. There was emphasis on life skills to ensure learners, in addition to academic work, develop relevant life skills such as assertiveness, communication, self-worth, etc.
- v. Teachers guided parents who wanted to buy extra reading materials or textbooks for their wards, by recommending books that were gender-sensitive content.
- vi. The school had a well-furnished library with pupils allowed to borrow books to read at home.
- vii. The school had a functioning computer laboratory which is open to all the students. This helps to expose the girls to academic progressions and careers in STEM.

Management

- i. The appointment of the school's head was done through an advertisement for the position by the district GES. The applicants are expected to meet the stated qualifications and be able to meet the job responsibilities.
- ii. The headteacher and teachers signed performance contracts for specified periods which are reviewed annually. The education directorate regularly monitored to ensure that the school was working towards attaining the targets in the contracts.
- iii. There was a background profile on each pupil to enable school authorities to appreciate their socio-economic backgrounds for the necessary assistance.
- iv. There was a strong local governance of the school provided by the PTA and SMC. They are empowered to demand accountability from the school head and teachers.
- v. The school had a sexual harassment policy that was strictly enforced.

- vi. Female teachers constituted the majority of teaching staff. They served as role models and mentors for the girls.
- vii. There was regular interaction between teachers, parents, and community leaders creating shared interests in the academic advancement of the girls.
- viii. The school promoted a cordial relationship between teachers and learners. This ensured pupils were comfortable sharing challenges with their teachers.

Co-curricular activities

- i. There was regular provision of mentorship programmes where accomplished women from the region are brought to the school to interact with the girls.
- ii. The school had a club, where the members met to share, discuss, and debate negative social norms, practices, and cultures in the community that affects them, and how to obliterate them.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Over the past two decades, girls' access to quality education has been top of the global and national education agenda and has received significant attention. Remarkably, the priority given has yielded a significant outcome with most countries, including Ghana, achieving gender parity in basic education.³⁰

Regardless, in many countries, there persist disparities that disadvantage girls over boys in school retention and progression, with Ghana being no exception. While at the start of basic education, the enrolment of girls is higher than that of boys, more girls (57%) drop out along the line compared to boys (43%), due to gaps in existing laws, policies, and programmes aimed at promoting equal educational opportunity for every child, negative socio-cultural practices, economic barriers, unfriendly school environments, and ineffective gender-responsive pedagogy, among others.

Notwithstanding the challenges, the modest gains made in achieving gender parity give a strong indication of a strong potential for Ghana to harness community and policy-level support to make the school environment and communities gender responsive in the pursuit of fCUBE for all children. These include repositioning policies (institutional) and changing negative community and school-level attitudes and behaviours, in favour of a truly gender-inclusive basic education system that transcends parity to include sustained levels of retention, participation, improved learning outcomes, completion, and transition.

³⁰ UNICEF (2022). Retrieve. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/gender/gender-disparities-in-education/>

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the findings, the following recommendations are made:

Policy and institutional

- i. The MoE must allocate resources equitably, effectively, and efficiently for girls' education.
- ii. The MoE should adopt the Girls Model JHS model and scale it up across communities with low girls' transition to JHS. This must be anchored with relevant policy.
- iii. The MoE and GES should collaborate with the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission and the National Teaching Council to mount compulsory gender-related courses for all teacher trainees at the CoE level and teachers, as part of their CPD.
- iv. The MoGCSP should develop and adopt a material support policy for targeted vulnerable teenage mothers under the LEAP programme. The direct cash grants strategy has been proven to have the potential to enhance re-entry.
- v. The MoE, in line with the provisions of the Education Strategic Plan, must develop the Safe School Policy that takes cognizance of school-related gender-based violence and sexual harassment prevention in school.
- vi. The MoE must work with the Ministry of Finance to remove the tax on sanitary pads to make them affordable. This will reduce the situation where some girls skip school because they cannot afford sanitary pads during their menstruation.
- vii. The MoE must ensure that its annual Education Sector Report monitors, tracks, and reports on progress toward ensuring a girl friendly and gender responsive education system.
- viii. The GES must review its Code of Conduct for Staff to make corporal punishment a non-sanction act for headteachers as well. This would ensure total abolishment of the act in schools.
- ix. GES must enhance the capacity of teachers on the understanding and use of the Positive Discipline Toolkit.
- x. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment must ensure that approved textbooks and teaching resources for the new curriculum do not perpetuate gender stereotypes.
- xi. The GES must enforce its Code of Conduct on teachers who are found to sexually abuse learners.
- xii. Where there are Girls Model JHS, the GES must facilitate teacher-teacher peer learning exchange processes among teachers from the regular mixed JHS and those from the Model JHS for sharing of best practices on transformative classroom practices.
- xiii. GES should establish a formal scheme to incentivize female teachers who accept posting to rural areas. The scheme could include study leave with pay at the shortest possible time, free housing, and extra allowances.
- xiv. The GES must ensure continual auditing of existing interventions for GRE in schools to understand what works, and what does not, and to improve

relevant interventions. The outcome of such an audit can inform resource allocation to address barriers to girls' education.

- xv. The NCCE should identify communities with the prevalence of negative socio-cultural norms that limit girls' full participation in education for community-level civic education on the negative implications of such norms on the girl-child, families, communities, and the nation at large.
- xvi. As part of their programmes and activities, CSOs, should engage in textbook monitoring to ensure they are free from content that promotes unequal representation of women.
- xvii. The GES must develop a gender-responsive pedagogy toolkit to guide teachers on lesson delivery that provides equal opportunities for boys and girls.

School level

- xviii. Schools must ensure a safe and inclusive learning environment by taking a zero-tolerance stance on school-related gender-based violence and bullying.
- xix. Teachers must adopt inclusive instructional practices that equally place both boys and girls at the centre of lesson planning, delivery, and assessment.
- xx. Schools must equip children to identify negative social norms in and around the school and become assertive in challenging them.
- xxi. Schools must be encouraged to form clubs where issues related to mutual respect for both genders, the importance of girls' education, adverse effects of school and gender-based violence, negative customary practices, assertiveness, sexual and reproductive health rights, and female leadership, are discussed.
- xxii. Schools must promote girl mentorship programmes and activities where accomplished women in the school catchment areas are periodically brought to the school to interact with the girls on varied issues including career, educational progression, and teenage pregnancy prevention among others.
- xxiii. The MoE must ensure that all schools meet the minimum WASH standards instituted by the UNICEF, and ensure in the long term, all schools have changing rooms to provide a safe space for girls during their menstruation in school.
- xxiv. The GES must develop the capacity of local school governance structures, i.e., SMC/PTA, to identify and confront school practices, by both teachers and learners that reinforce gender inequality.

Community level


- xxv. CSOs, FBOs and CBOs must intervene at the community level to intensify education against gender-based violence, including child marriage, and other negative social norms.
- xxvi. Traditional authorities must pronounce against the refusal of parents or foster parents to enrol their children, especially girls in school, and sanction in accordance with relevant law.

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1

UNIT 16 ORAL LANGUAGE
CONVERSATION

A. In pairs look at the picture and talk about it.



A Market Place

B. Converse with a partner and express your views about the picture above.

Learner A: Please, yams and plantains are here come and buy. Buy one, get one free.

Learner B: Please, how much does a tuber of yam cost?

Learner A: Please GHC 5.

Learner B: Please give me two tubers.

Learner A: Okay! Thank you. See you again soon.

Learner B: Good-bye.

Learner A: Good-bye, my customer.

108 English B1

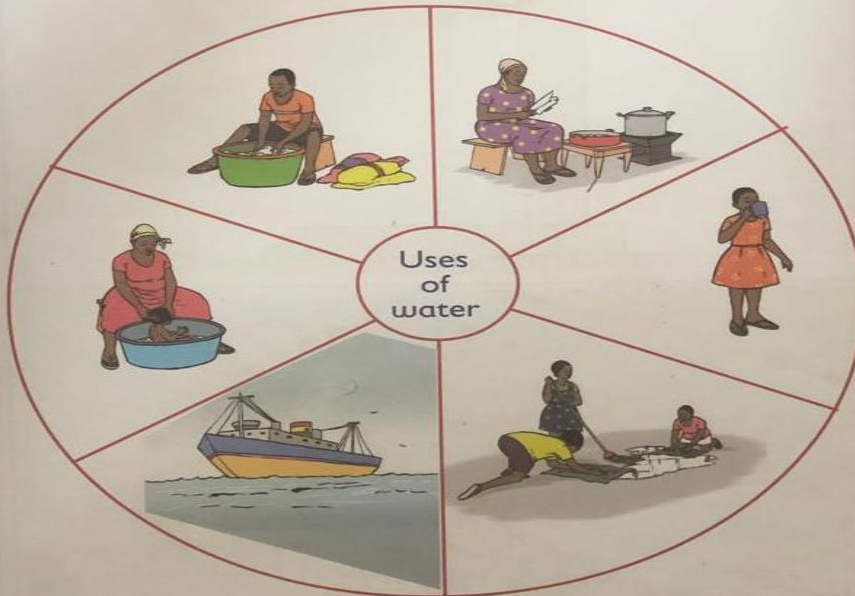
Appendix 2

K2.6.3.1.1
ACTIVITY 85

TERM 3: STRAND 6: ALL AROUND US

Sub-Strand: Water
Uses of Water

What do we use water for?
Talk about these pictures.



Appendix 3

STRAND 4

Sub-Strand 1

ELEMENT AND PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN

DESCRIBING OBJECTS

Content Standard. CA 4.1

Create and organise the elements of design according to the principles to create art forms.

Teacher Learner Activity 6.0

1. Guide learners to identify different kinds of artworks found outside the classroom and help them to mention their names and appreciate them.



washing



king eating



ananse and the hat



stars



tall building



road side

Appendix 4





GIRLS' PARTICIPATION IN BASIC EDUCATION IN GHANA: WHAT ARE THE GAPS?


This report was developed by Africa Education Watch with support from




CONTACT:

 Africa Education Watch, 25 Nii Torgbor Avenue, East Legon

 info@africaeducationwatch.org

 www.africaeducationwatch.org

 0303975 001

  @AfricaEduWatch

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