Gender-responsive Education in the Context of COVID19

Framework and Progressive Standards for South Asia

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1. Introduction and areas of evidence

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The audience for *Gender and Education in the Context of COVID19: Progressive Framework and Standards for South Asia* is the region's Ministry of Education officials and UNICEF Country Office practitioners and implementing partners; especially those working with education clusters, school leaders, women's organisations., and youth organisations. These colleagues are playing key roles in ensuring marginalized, vulnerable, and excluded girls and boys are identified and access continuous learning in the context of COVID19. Based on a child-centered, cross-sectoral framework, this document sets forth evidence-informed progressive standards to support gender-responsive actions that address the unique needs of girls and boys at risk of not engaging in education, training or employment.

The progressive standards can and should be contextualized for local-level realities and needs; specifically, responding to the differential barriers that impact South Asia's girls' and boys' ability to access and complete safe schooling and transition to meaningful employment. When and where progressive standards cannot be achieved, it is expected that Ministries of Education, district-level authorities, and school leaders will incorporate them into sector plans as longer-term strategic objectives.

Before the progressive framework and standards for gender-responsive education are introduced, South Asia's educational context is outlined. Drawing on comprehensive research and guidance from humanitarian partners, the *areas of evidence* provide an overview of the important progress achieved over the past decade, the gender oriented educational challenges that COVID19 has compounded, and the priorities needing sustained investment in the weeks and months ahead. For the progressive standards in chapter 3, the *areas of evidence* are used as an organizing schema; highlighting why these *areas of evidence* need urgent attention and how corresponding gender-responsive strategies and actions can be carried out at school and in alternative education centres, in the community, and at home.

1.1. Gender and education in South Asia before COVID19

At the turn of the 21st century there were more out-of-school girls in South Asia (86 million) than out-of-school boys (69 million)[1]. By 2020, sustained effort on the part of governments, United Nations agencies, and non-governmental partners had reduced the number of out-of-schoolgirls by nearly 50 per cent; this advance in reducing the number of out-of-school children points towards strong political commitments to education, gender parity, and the systemic capacity to prioritize and pursue education reforms.

These sustained efforts have helped countries reach near parity for primary aged children in Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, with a slight advantage for girls[2]. Today, the number of out-of-school boys (47 million) in the region is marginally larger than girls (45 million). However, these figures are very misleading, because of the variability of gender parity in the region. For every 100 boys in primary school in Bangladesh there are 128 girls; whereas in Afghanistan only 56 girls for every 100 boys makes it to primary school or alternative education.[3] Overall, it is a fact that 90 million children and adolescents in South Asia are still not receiving an education.[4] Therefore, as we contend with the impact of COVID19 on girls' and boys' learning it is crucial that we build upon pre-pandemic political momentum for equal, equitable, and inclusive education opportunities for all, as well as develop new strategies to address the specific challenges presented by COVID19.

Notwithstanding these gains in participation, South Asia is still facing a "learning crisis."[5] Experiencing some of the lowest levels of learning outcomes in the world, before COVID19 millions of enrolled girls and boys in South Asia contended with poor quality education and were not on course to meet minimum proficiency in basic reading and math, let alone the secondary-level 21st Century skills or knowledge needed for a productive and fulfilling life.[6]

After leaving school, South Asia's adolescent girls and young women (aged 15-24 years) are also less likely than boys to be in education, training and employment.[7] As such, the gains made to achieve parity in school enrolment do not translate to gender equality in transitions to further training, employment, or independent income, condemning girls and women to cycles of poverty, exploitation, and socioeconomic disadvantage.[8] Entrenched gender norms continue to limit women and adolescent girls' contributions to domestic and reproductive roles and exclude them from civic participation and other related elements of the public sphere.[9]

Since the outbreak of COVID19, a large number of guidance documents have been produced, drawing on the consolidation of global policy, advocacy, and research evidence. In this document's development, this guidance has been analysed using a gender-responsive education lens. The following *areas of evidence* represent a synthesis of common trends, statistics, and recommendations which have been organised as:

▶ The disproportionate impact of school closures on girls

▶ Learning continuity and the digital gender divide

▶ Getting all boys and girls back into education

▶ By investing in gender-responsive teachers, we invest in learners

[1] United Nations Children's Fund, UNWOMEN, Plan International. *A New Era for Girls: Taking stock of 25 years of progress.* January 2020, New York

[2] World Bank (2020). *Gender parity index (GPI) - School enrolment, primary (gross).*

[3] United National Children's Fund, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, UNWOMEN. *Gender Counts: A quantitative assessment of gender inequality and its impact on children and adolescents.* 2019, New York.

[4] Ibid

[5] World Bank (2018) *World Development Report: Learning to realize education's promise.* Washington DC

[6] Ibid; United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Education, Science, and Culture Organisation , Plan International. *Building Back Equal: Girls back to school guide* 2020. New York; United Nations Children's Fund. *Addressing the Learning Crisis: An urgent need to better finance education for the poorest children.* 2020. New York.

[7] United National Children's Fund, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, UNWOMEN. *Gender Counts: A quantitative assessment of gender inequality and its impact on children and adolescents.* 2019, New York.

[8] Ibid

[9] Ibid

1.2. The disproportionate impact of school closures on girls

The loss of hard-won gains in terms of gender parity and enrolment due to COVID19 is likely to have a severe long-term impact on girls' education in the region. A World Values Survey shows that approximately 91 per cent of men and 86 per cent of women sampled from 75 countries hold at least one bias against gender equality in areas such as politics, economic, education, violence, and women's reproductive rights[10]. These biases are detrimental to educational and national development outcomes and it is important to consider how humanitarian crises affect women, girls, men, and boys in different ways due to the inequitable roles and privileges ascribed to gender.[11] Beyond lost learning, vital public health measures and associated economic shocks are also worsening existing inequalities, meaning vulnerable girls are the most adversely affected by school closures.[12] Prevailing gender norms mean girls and young women are devoting more time than boys to unpaid care work and caring for younger siblings, older populations, and those who are ill within the household rather than focusing on education.[13] Furthermore, health systems' near-total focus on COVID19 outbreak prevention and response has diverted attention from routine services such as sexual and reproductive health and the clinical management of gender-based violence. During the Ebola crisis, girls and women in affected countries experienced a 65 per cent increase in gender-based violence, early and forced marriages, and transactional sex.[14]

> **For proposed progressive standards to address the disproportionate effect of school closures on girls see pages:** 32, 36, 39, 46, 49.

1.3. Learning continuity and the digital gender divide

One of the key outcomes of school closures due to COVID has been a shift in focus to allow children to learn outside the school. This has involved much more emphasis on technological solutions. While this presents opportunities the massive scale of school closures in South Asia has laid bare the uneven distribution of technology needed to facilitate digital and even broadcast-based learning.[15] Although rates of access to mobile technology in South Asia are high (e.g. 78 per cent in Pakistan, 86 per cent in Bangladesh, and 84 per cent in Afghanistan[16]) the region also has the world's widest gender divide in terms of mobile phone ownership.[17] This divide emerges as girls enter puberty, broadens as they reach older adolescence, and persists after marriage.[18] Research in India has found almost twice as many boys have phones as girls, and in Bangladesh about two-thirds more.[19] Overall, women in South Asia are 26 per cent less likely to own a mobile than men and 70 per cent less likely to use the internet.[20] Even where sufficient technologies are available, the gender divide means girls benefit less from online or broadcast-based learning, especially where families have limited devices.[21] During COVID19 lockdowns in South Asia, at least 147 million children or 38 per cent of all learners cannot access remote learning and only 7 per cent can access online modalities.[22] The actual number without access to learning is much higher, as household access to technology does not guarantee children within the household have regular access, nor does it guarantee they are using the technology for learning. We know that girls are under-represented in terms of access to technology. This data confirms that a move to digital and

[10] United Nations Development Program. *Gender Social Norms Index.* 2020. New York

[11] CARE and International Rescue Committee. *Gender Global Rapid Analysis for COVID19.* 2020. Geneva.

[12] United Nations Girls Education Initiative. *Putting Gender at the Forefront of the COVID19 Education Response.* 2020. New York

[13] UNWOMEN. *The first 100 days of COVID19 in Asia and the Pacific.* 2020. New York

[14] United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation. *Addressing the Gendered Dimensions of School Closures.* 2020. Paris

[15] United Nations Children's Fund. *COVID19: Are Children Able to Continue Learning During School Closures?* August 2020. New York

[16] GSMA *Mobile Gender Gap Report.* 2020

[17] United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia. *Guidance on Distance Learning Modalities to Reach all Children and Youth During School Closures.* June 2020. Kathmandu.

[18] See also: Vodafone. *Real Girls, Real Lives Connected: A global study of girls' access to and usage of mobile.* 2019. London.

[19] Vodafone. *Real Girls, Real Lives Connected: A global study of girls' access to and usage of mobile.* 2019. London.

[20] United National Children's Fund, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, UNWOMEN. *Gender Counts: A quantitative assessment of gender inequality and its impact on children and adolescents.* 2019, New York.

[21] UNWOMEN. *The first 100 days of COVID19 in Asia and the Pacific.* 2020. New York

[22] United Nations Children's Fund. *COVID19: Are Children Able to Continue Learning During School Closures?* August 2020. New York

online learning compounds educational inequalities for girls, as well as vulnerable and marginalised learners, and will continue to do so without widescale investment in communications infrastructure, rollout of devices, and free or subsidised data plans.[23] Until this happens, strategies for continued learning must explore alternative ways to access education materials, and take into account and challenge the prevalence of the region's digital gender divide.[24] On the one hand, strategies for continued learning must explore alternative ways to

access education materials. Yet on the other hand, we must recognise that improved access to devices will not resolve a pervasive digital gender divide without also addressing the harmful stereotypes and norms that cause it.[25]

> **For proposed progressive standards to address learning continuity and the digital gender divide, see pages:** 33 and 43.

1.4. Getting all girls and boys back into education

Despite promising progress towards universal primary and basic education, the numbers of out-of-school children in South Asia were staggering even before COVID.[26] Children from the poorest households are already five times more likely to be out of primary school than those from the wealthiest,[27] and the longer marginalized girls and boys are out-of-school due to COVID19, the less likely they are to return. Factors contributing to out-of-school status in South Asia, pre-COVID included:

1. **Household wealth**: Low economic status is negatively correlated with school exclusion
2. **Gender:** Gender gaps are largest for the poorest families and for lower secondary school-age children. School attendance rates are lower for girls in Pakistan throughout the basic education cycle. In rural India, older girls are more likely to be excluded than older boys. Girls in rural areas, particularly those from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India also have higher rates of exclusion. In Bangladesh, boys are more excluded in both levels of education.
3. **Urban-rural location:** Children living in rural areas and in urban slums have a higher chance to be out of school.
4. **Children with disabilities:** Children with disabilities are less likely to enrol and complete a full cycle of basic education.

5. **Child labour:** The incidence of child labour varies from 3 per cent in Sri Lanka to 16 per cent in Pakistan. In India and Bangladesh, an estimated 12 per cent and 9 per cent of children are engaged in child labour. Across the region school attendance rates for child labourers are lower than for other children of the same age.[28]

Additionally, cultural beliefs and social practices also inhibit girls' opportunities for learning.[29] Child marriage, for example, is a strong contributor to girls not attending school. Many are forced to drop out soon after marriage due to family expectations or in some cases because of discriminatory practices on the part of schools; this is especially common with early pregnancy. Often, girls are also prevented from attending school due to perceived stigma. In some contexts, an educated girl can be a deterrent to suitors due to the mobility that education represents. Mobility is seen as a male privilege, and for girls a catalyst for romantic relationships outside of the community, which is prohibited.[30] Due to the risk of school-related gender-based violence as well as religious beliefs around gender mixing, many families are also reluctant to send girls to school if they are not gender-segregated.

For girls, schools are promoted as more than an access point for education. They should also provide a lifeline and safe haven, delivering essential health information and services, nutrition, and protection from domestic exploitation and violence.[31] To make it possible for the

[23] United Nations Children's Fund. *The State of the World's Children: Children in a Digital World*. 2017. New York.
[24] United Nations Girls Education Initiative. *Putting Gender at the Forefront of the COVID19 Education Response*. 2020. New York.
[25] Ibid
[26] United Nations Children's Fund. *Out-of-school Children Initiative: South Asia Report*. 2016. UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu.
[27] United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations High Commission for Refugees, World Bank, World Health Organisation & World Food Program *Framework for Reopening Schools*. May 2020
[28] United Nations Children's Fund. *Out-of-school Children Initiative: South Asia Report*. 2016. UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu.
[29] UNICEF and UNESCO Institute for Statistics. *Global Out-of-School Initiative: Operational Manual*. 2015. New York
[30] Bajracharya, A., S. R. Psaki and M. Sadiq, *Child marriage, adolescent pregnancy and school dropout in South Asia*. 2019. UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu.
[31] United Nations Girls Education Initiative. *Putting Gender at the Forefront of the COVID19 Education Response*. 2020. New York.

most vulnerable girls to return to school, more needs to happen than simply opening safer classrooms. Writing for the Brookings Institution, UNICEF Education Director Robert Jenkins and Rebecca Winthrop believe this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform education and reimagine the way girls and boys learn.[32] They promote:

▶ Actions to get girls back to school, which include lifting the financial barriers that prevent girls from going to school.

▶ Scaling evidence informed and gender-responsive distance and blended education;

▶ Intensifying community mobilization and support for girls' education, and in doing so prioritize girls' safety and protection;

▶ Ensuring the meaningful participation of children and adolescents, parents and caregivers, and teachers and school leaders in the development of school reopening strategies and procedures.

For boys' disengagement from education is strongly linked to poverty, which leads to demands for work to supplement family incomes, most often in high-risk and exploitative informal employment. There is also pronounced disaffection with school among boys, with classroom learning often being experienced as dull and ill-suited to a variety of learning styles and needs, not to mention the persistent ascription of harmful masculine stereotypes.[33] In addition, school related violence often involves physical aggression, with boys experiencing comparatively high incidences of corporal punishment at the hands of teachers and bullying by peers.[34] Quality gender-responsive schooling therefore offers

boys academic advancement, pathways to meaningful employment and social mobility, as well as positive peer relationships, opportunities for inter-gender socialisation, and exposure to helpful gender norms.

Communities, caregivers, girls, and boys will be variably informed and incentivized in their attitudes towards returning to school. First and foremost, the risk of transmission of COVID19 within schools needs to be minimized. In the transition, authorities are asked to consider dividing classes into shifts, amending seating arrangements, establishing temporary learning spaces, or collaborating with community leaders to identify additional learning sites to reduce classroom density.[35]

Authorities also need to ensure all schools have access to adequate safe water, handwashing stations, cleaning supplies, and establish or expand sex segregated and disability friendly toilets, including provisions for menstrual hygiene management.[36] 2019 statistics reveal, however, that 51 per cent of schools across South Asia lacked access to basic handwashing with soap and water: a key condition for schools to be able to operate safely in the midst of the COVID19 pandemic. Further to this, only 67 per cent of schools in South Asia had access to clean drinking water and only 63 per cent of schools had access to sanitation facilities.[37] Menstrual hygiene and health (MHM) is also weak in South Asia. As schools prepare to reopen, this opportune moment can be leveraged to strengthen the supply of MHM products in a graduated approach, prioritizing those in most need of support, but with a plan to meet minimum standards by 2030.

> **For proposed progressive standards to get all girls and boys back into school see pages:** 33, 37, 40, 44, 47, 50.

1.5. By investing in gender-responsive teachers, we invest in learners

While several duty bearers will have an impact on girls' and boys' return to school and retention at school, no other actor is more significant than teachers. However, teachers will need to expand their functions to help ensure a successful and safe return to school. Hence

the focus on investing in and supporting teachers' professional development and well-being in this section.

For teachers, the COVID19 pandemic may result in psychological distress, which can stem from related

[32] The Brookings Institution. *Five actions to bring the most marginalised girls back to school after COVID19.* 2020. Washington DC.

[33] United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation. *Addressing the Gendered Dimensions of School Closures.* 2020. Paris

[34] Clarke, David (2020) *School-related Gender Based Violence South Asia Study and Lessons from Nepal* Leave No Girl Behind Webinar Series: Webinar 2-Understanding Violence, Safety, and Protection for Girls

[35] Save the Children. *Safe Back to School: A Practitioner Guide.* 2020. London.

[36] Ibid

[37] World Health Organisation and United Nations Children's Fund. *Joint Monitoring Report: Progress on drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene in schools.* August 2020

health risks and the increased workload of teaching in new and challenging ways. Addressing new issues such as providing psycho-social support and advice on health issues, often with inadequate professional support[38]. Multiple studies illustrate the positive effects on child and adolescent well-being and performance associated with teachers' own mental health and well-being.[39] Additionally, teachers with high levels of self-worth and self-efficacy in a time of crisis are better able to implement new and innovative teaching strategies, which leads teachers to feel more satisfied, motivated, and committed to their work.[40] As such, it is critical that policy makers, practitioners, school leaders, and communities establish professional conditions and support structures that prioritise teacher health, financial security, well-being, professional development and retention.

Teachers are also essential public health allies; they have communicated and coordinated measures that help prevent the spread of COVID19 and have helped ensure that girls and boys feel seen, safe, and supported. As education systems move to reopen, school-based health and safety measures will be facilitated by school leaders and teachers. From gender-responsive WASH provisions, classroom reconfiguration and social distancing, to initial triaging of COVID-related health risks, teachers are at the forefront of the recovery. Consequently, and keeping female teachers' own domestic pressures and priorities in mind, adequate investment in professional development and support during the reopening phase will result in long-term benefits as teachers act as community thought leaders, ensuring safety, health and learning continuity.[41]

> **For proposed progressive standards for investing in gender-responsive teachers, see pages:** 35, 38, 41, 45, 48, 51.

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[38] United Nations Education, Science, and Culture Organisation Task Force for Teachers 2030 and International Labour Organisation. *Supporting teachers in back-to-school efforts: Guidance for Policymakers.* 2020. Paris.

[39] Hone, L. Quinlan, D. *Working towards well-being.* In SET: Student and Staff Well-being. 2019:1 NZCER, Wellington. P50.

[40] Frisoli, P. Finder, J. Falk, D. Varni, E. *Landscape Review: Teacher Well-being in low resource, Crisis, and Conflict-affected Settings.* Education and Equity Research Initiative. 2019. Washington DC.

[41] Save the Children. *Safe Back to School: A Practitioner Guide.* 2020. London.

2. Gender responsive education framework and progressive standards

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This conceptual model is designed with a whole-of-system, cross-sectoral, and holistic child-centered way of working in mind. The whole of system and cross sectoral component is represented by the outer frame and refers to the system-level drivers determining policies, funding, and coordination needs between public, private and civil society actors. It also refers to the need for cohesive and coherent communication of evidence, advocacy, and outcomes relating to inequities in girls and boys education.

A holistic, child-centered way of working is represented by the inner part of the model. Here, girls and boys are identified and supported at school, in the community, and at home by connected and collaborative professionals and caregivers. Surrounding the triangle, the progressive standard goals reinforce a cross-sectoral approach, acknowledging that for girls and boys to realize their full potential, their health, protection, and learning needs should be addressed together. The inner frame then represents the principles that guide policies and practices across the gender-responsive distance learning and return to school activities.

Figure 1: Gender-responsive Education Framework for South Asia
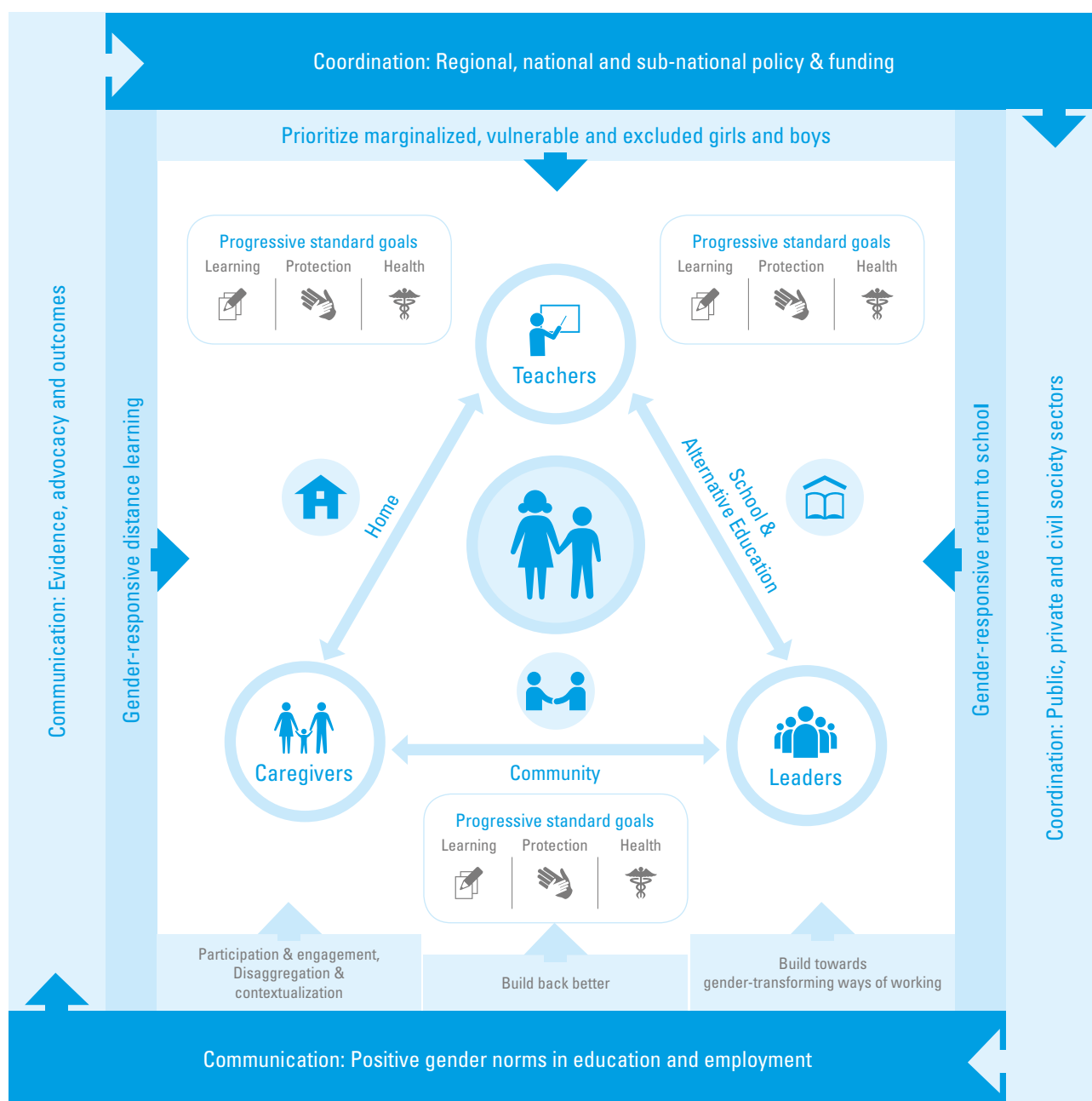
2.1 System-level drivers

The system-level drivers detailed below are elements of *coordination* and *communication* in the above diagram. In effect, these drivers should outline, establish, and guide the policy, financial, and organisational actions that create the conditions in which all vulnerable, marginalized, and excluded girls and boys are identified, engaged, and supported to continue learning in the context of COVID19. As noted in the introduction, South Asia has achieved promising progress in reducing the number out-of-school girls and boys; as such, the political will and momentum needs to be harnessed to finance system-wide and evidence-informed policy and practice throughout South Asia.

2.1.1 Coordination: Regional, national, and sub-national policy and funding

With the advisory support of multi-lateral and bi-lateral development agencies at country and regional levels[42], national ministries of education can identify and prioritise locations with the greatest gender inequities in terms of girls' and boys' access to school or alternative education. Coordination with sub-national authorities to facilitate rapid analysis of out-of-school girls and boys should inform the contextualisation of national COVID19 learning continuity contingency plans, targeting those most at risk of dropping out and those not previously engaged in education. These assessments should integrate gender analysis across all indicators.

The opportunities to introduce online options, even if in a blended learning environment[43] may expand education reach to more children and introduce gender-responsive education approaches. The distribution of remote learning materials, WASH, and COVID19 contagion prevention provisions should be urgently provided to districts least able to fund and facilitate such services independently or at scale.

Adopt a system-wide approach...

to school reopening which brings a gender lens to education analysis, and takes steps to remove gender bias and discrimination within and across education systems, from teacher recruitment and training to curriculum and materials development, and to ensure school environments are resilient, safe, secure and free from violence.[44]

UNICEF, New York (2020)

Where distance learning policy, programming, and associated resources are centrally controlled, allowances should be made for the inclusion of mother-tongue language materials, the representation of local ethnicities and worldviews, the promotion of positive gender norms, and the adaptation of curriculum for remedial or accelerated learning purposes. From the sub-national level right up to national government, planning and decisions should be informed by the voices and experiences of girls, boys, teachers and caregivers so that support mechanisms are equitable, needs-based, and fit for purpose.

For sector planning and programming purposes, the Global Partnership for Education[45] offers a strong gender-responsive framework outlining seven characteristics of credible planning within a two-pronged approach. In the context of COVID19 these characteristics can be used as a checklist to plan and monitor planning activities and achievements:

1. **Guided by an overall vision**, a mission statement that indicates overall direction
2. **Strategic,** identifying strategies for achieving the vision and setting priorities;
3. **Holistic**, covering all subsectors including formal and nonformal education, and recognizing the need for a coherent balance among subsectors;
4. **Evidence-based**, starting from an education sector analysis forming the information base on which strategies and programs are developed;
5. **Achievable**, based on an analysis of current trends and thoughtful hypotheses for overcoming financial, technical and political constraints to effective implementation
6. **Sensitive to the context**, including an analysis of the vulnerabilities specific to a country such as conflicts, disasters and economic crises; and
7. **Pays attention to disparities**, recognizing that within a country there may be significant gender differences between girls and boys, as well as inequalities between groups of students in their participation in education and the quality of education they receive.

Gender should be mainstreamed or **integrated** in each these characteristics, which involves identifying and responding to gender differences and inequalities during every phase of an intervention; from analysis, planning, and design through to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. In a gender integrated approach, every policy and programme are evaluated based on whether it increases or decreases gender inequality. Planning and programming should also be **gender-targeted**; interventions should address the specific and evidence informed challenges, risks, and disadvantages experienced by girls or boys because of their gender, such as those outlined in section 1 above.[46] Where

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[42] Regional refers to the South Asia region, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.
[43] Classroom-based learning where digital or online technologies are used alongside traditional teaching methods.
[44] United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Education, Science, and Culture Organisation , Plan International. *Building Back Equal: Girls back to school guide* 2020. New York
[45] Global Partnership for Education, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Girls Education Initiative. *Guidance for Developing Gender Responsive Education Plans.* 2017. New York.
[46] Global Partnership for Education, United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Girls Education Initiative. *Guidance for Developing Gender Responsive Education Plans.* 2017. New York.

governments are also developing specific plans around return to school or continuity of learning, these plans should reflect considerations or gender and issues of equity more broadly.

2.1.2 Coordination: Public, private, and civil society sectors

A gender-responsive approach to learning continuity at regional, national, and sub-national levels should leverage the complementary assets of multiple sectors. This includes, but is not limited to: government ministries, non-governmental organisations or civil society organisations, religious organisations, international agencies, and corporate or business sector partners. A cross-sectoral approach requires a shared understanding of situational needs, associated priorities, and the intended impact for target groups. Careful identification of the specific value contributing partners bring to planning, resourcing, and decision making should be agreed on and managed through existing coordination mechanisms such as national education in emergencies working groups or sub-national education clusters. Similarly, the ways in which partners are recognised and benefit from contributions, whether in kind or reimbursed, needs to be institutionalised so that the conditions for future contribution and cooperation are in place and sustainable.

Promote a coordinated approach…

that addresses girls' holistic education, health and protection needs. Catalyse cooperation between teachers, school administration, families and communities, and support cross-sectoral collaboration to ensure an inclusive and gender-responsive school reopening that safeguards rights[47]

UNICEF, New York (2020)

Further to the above, as illustrated in the conceptual model gender-responsive education in the context of COVID19 requires a holistic, child-centred way of working. At a *public-sector* level, health, justice, children and women, finance and labour ministries all contribute in terms of policy, programming, and funding of the conditions which allow for girls' and boys' access to quality, continuous learning. The public sector extends to universities with research and evidence generating capabilities, too.

In terms of the *private sector*, public-private-partnerships and commitments to corporate social responsibility can bring expertise, capacity, and efficiencies in communications infrastructure, supply chain and logistics management (e.g. the distribution of WASH provisions), financing, and systems development. Ideally, contributing partners have existing investments in girls' and boys' access to quality education and stand to benefit – in terms of reputation and value added - from further leadership and influence in this space.

The *civil society* sector brings local-level networks, established connections with advocates, activists, and community leaders, an understanding of cultural and political nuances, and in principle a strong commitment to rights-based and child-centred ways of working. Engaging with women's organisations and identifying women's formal and informal groups within communities can cement community engagement. Involving girl clubs and youth organisations in reopening schools better can create channels for creative input and community-based support for schools. Civil society can also fulfil an accountability function; advocating that policy makers and private sector actors adhere to and promote the ethical, equitable, and transparent distribution of services to those most in need.

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47 United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Education, Science, and Culture Organisation , Plan International. *Building Back Equal: Girls back to school guide* 2020. New York

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Equipping adults to champion child and youth participation

Alongside a cross-sectoral way of working, a cross-societal way of working can and should be inclusive of child and adolescent participation in research, policy development, planning, and decision making. Adults in leadership and decision-making roles can be equipped with knowledge and skills to interact effectively with children and adolescents in a respectful, non-sexist, and anti-racist ways. Adults require a mindset that envisages children and adolescents as partners, experts in their own experiences and aspirations, and as agents of change. Capacity-building for adults should therefore include training in gender-responsiveness, child and adolescent sensitization, and skills such as facilitating experiential participatory processes, prioritising:

- Knowledge of children's rights, adolescent development principles, participation and safeguarding.
- Core skills such as effective communication, active listening, critical self-awareness and self-reflection, conflict resolution, and negotiation.
- Respectful non-discriminatory attitudes towards children and adolescents.[48]

2.1.3 Communication: Positive gender norms in education and employment

In crises, men typically dominate key response and high-profile recovery roles in schools and in humanitarian settings, while women outnumber men as frontline service providers and providers of unpaid domestic work. This reality often renders women's work as invisible and reinforces perceptions that women and girls are only capable of contributing in stereotypical ways.[49]

To challenge such norms and reverse the entrenched effects, girls and women need to be represented as capable, vital, and impactful contributors; their visibility and active engagement must be prioritised, valued and compensated. Doing this has multiple benefits: it can enhance awareness and understandings of the disproportionate risks and challenges women and girls face in crises, as well as highlight their respective strengths, assets and resilience; it also reinforces the valuable role girls and women play in crisis management

48 United Nations Children's Fund. *Engaged and Heard: Guidelines on adolescent participation and civic engagement.* 2020. New York.
49 Girls Education Challenge. *Life Skills for Adolescent Girls in the COVID19 Pandemic.* 2020. London

and recovery.[50] Communications during COVID19 should not reinforce negative stereotypes nor contribute to the side-lining or undervaluing of men's, women's, girls' or boys' roles.

In line with UNICEF India recommendations on gender-responsive content creation (see page 20), this system-level driver relates to the way media, governments, multi-lateral agencies, and implementing partners position women and men, and girls and boys in communications for development, and the central importance of gender-transformative messaging for girls' and young women's empowerment.

It is also vital that religious organisations and their respective leaders have a central role in communications, activities and advocacy initiatives. Religious leaders play an essential role in the spiritual and educational lives of girls and boys and their communities. During difficult times, their respected leadership is critical in influencing values, attitudes and behaviours that affect the safety and wellbeing of children and other vulnerable populations.[51] As such, it is recommended that partnerships are formed, and messages for gender equality are contextualised within the respective religious' theological or scriptural frameworks. Ensure that gender-based messaging and expectations are as compatible as possible, whilst still engendering positive change.

2.1.4 Communication: Evidence, advocacy, and outcomes

Following West Africa's Ebola crisis, many countries struggled to attract girls and boys back to school for the simple reason that parents were unaware of schools' safety protocols and measures.[52] During COVID19, alongside WHO and governmental messaging, a proliferation of conspiracy theories threatens to undermine urgent health communications. These examples demonstrate the importance of clear, evidence-based, and outcome-oriented advocacy for girls' and boys' continuity of learning.

Effective communication builds a culture of belief and compliance; but good communications are most effective when audiences are empowered and enabled to meaningfully participate in information sharing and behaviour forming activities. When communities are disempowered and disenfranchised, a culture of mistrust and cynicism gives rise to misinformation that, in a crisis, works against people's best interests.

In relation to gender-responsive education, this system-level driver emphasises the importance of end-user-oriented communication strategies for behaviour reinforcement or change. That is, the delivery of clear evidence pertaining to the benefits of girls' and boys' learning continuity and return to education, alongside accessible and actionable information on WASH and COVID19 contagion prevention provisions.

2.2 Overarching Principle - Prioritize vulnerable, marginalized, and excluded girls and boys

The overarching principle and guiding principles below should be used as a reference point and quality monitoring mechanism for all gender-responsive education processes and programming. Practitioners and policy makers alike should use these principles to evaluate the overall design and implementation of activities to ensure that girls' and women's needs are integrated, that boys' and young men's differential needs are addressed, that local-level conditions are accounted for, and that the opportunities to reimagine and improve upon gender-responsive education in the South Asia region are fully realized.

The rationale for prioritizing vulnerable, marginalized and excluded girls and boys is as follows:

▶ School closures due to COVID19 could lead to millions more girls and boys dropping out before they complete their education, especially girls living in poverty, with a disability, or living in rural or isolated locations.

▶ We know that in crises, harmful gender norms and power imbalances are exacerbated and that vulnerable groups, including girls, bear the impacts disproportionately.

[50] Girls Education Challenge. *Life Skills for Adolescent Girls in the COVID19 Pandemic.* 2020. London

[51] United Nations Children's Fund. *Religious and faith leaders join hands to protect women and children.* 2020. Nepal

[52] Malala Fund. *Girls' Education and COVID19: What past shocks can tell us about mitigating the impact of COVID19.* 2020. Washington DC

▶ The price of disrupting learning for marginalized girls and boys during school closures is too high, their education can be forever interrupted.

▶ The closure of schools exacerbates the burden of unpaid care work on women and girls in particular, who absorb the additional work of caring for children, the sick, and supporting household chores.

The Malala fund estimates that 20 million girls globally are at risk of not returning when schools reopen.[53] With the world's highest number of out-of-schoolgirls, and concerning research estimating that in Nepal alone 53 per cent of girls are unlikely to return[54] - which could be symptomatic for the South Asia region – this overarching principle informs all other principles, activities, and standards associated with this framework.

2.3 Guiding principles

2.3.1 Build back better

The school reopening process is an opportunity to strengthen and reimagine existing education, health, and protection systems; making schools more accessible, inclusive, engaging, impactful, and participatory, especially for marginalised, vulnerable, and excluded girls and boys.

We also need to get the essentials right. Globally, we know from past crises that adolescent girls are approximately 50 per cent less likely to transition from primary to secondary education, secondary education to

training, or from training into meaningful employment.[55] With such precedents, COVID19 will have a pronounced effect on girls' and young women's well-being and ability to continue schooling or alternative education. We must therefore build on existing strengths and maintain long-term investments in strong education and life-skills, health and protection systems to meet the holistic needs of girls and boys across the age continuum.[56] Central to this endeavour is schools' role in empowering girls and young women prioritise learning and future transitions to training and employment, for which UNICEF's Skills4Girls initiative in Nepal and Bangladesh promotes the following approach:

How can schools empower girls?

Meaningful girl-engagement
Meaningfully engage girls throughout the school; from curriculum decisions, to teaching and learning strategies, and formative assessment activities.

Girl-specific skills
Where possible include digital literacy and digital safety skills for girls; foundational skills for the most vulnerable girls; future-focused skills for girls at the right age, providing details on the local training and employment environment; and tailor skills development to the local context.

Girl-centered spaces
Provide safe, inclusive spaces, with access to mentors and role models, peer networks, and girls clubs and opportunities for leadership.

Figure 2: UNICEF Skills4Girls empowerment model

Meaningful girl-engagement

Girl-specific skills

Girl-centered program components
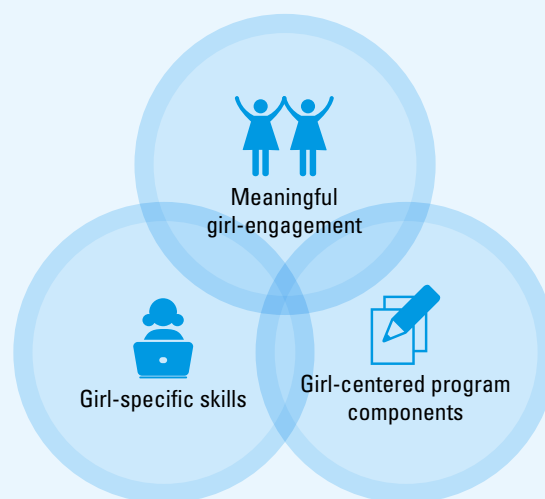
[53] Malala Fund. *Girls' Education and COVID19: What past shocks can tell us about mitigating the impact of COVID19.* 2020. Washington DC.

[54] Room to Read. *Room to Read's Girls' Education Risk Indicator: 1 in 2 girls surveyed at risk of never returning to school.* 2020. San Francisco

[55] Girls Education Challenge, GAGE & CUE Brookings. *Life Skills for Adolescent Girls in the COVID19 Pandemic.* 2020. London

[56] United Nations Children's Fund. *Five Actions for Gender Equality in the COVID19 Response.* 2020. New York.

2.3.2 Build towards gender transformative ways of working

This principle emphasizes gender-responsive ways of relationship building, conducting research, program design, and delivery; that is: acknowledging and addressing girls' and boys' unique and differential learning, protection, and health needs at school, home, and in the community. It requires the building of knowledge around the causes of gender-based inequities with the aim of transforming harmful gender norms, attitudes, roles, and power relations that undermine girls' and boys' progress in education and employment. As outlined by UNFPA below, gender-transformative ways of

working are a long-term objective, for which present day actions make an important contribution towards change.

UNICEF's Gender Continuum Diagnostic Tool is an important visual resource for policy makers and school leaders. Especially as back-to-school plans and standard operating procedures are developed, this continuum can be used to analyse provisions such WASH, psychosocial services and social and emotional learning activities, teaching personnel, and health services for gender-based considerations and necessary adjustments. As the progressive standards on pages 26 – 46 show, a gender-responsive approach is the priority minimum standard, with a gender-transformative way of working being the aspirational progressive standard.

Figure 3: Gender continuum diagnostic tool[57]

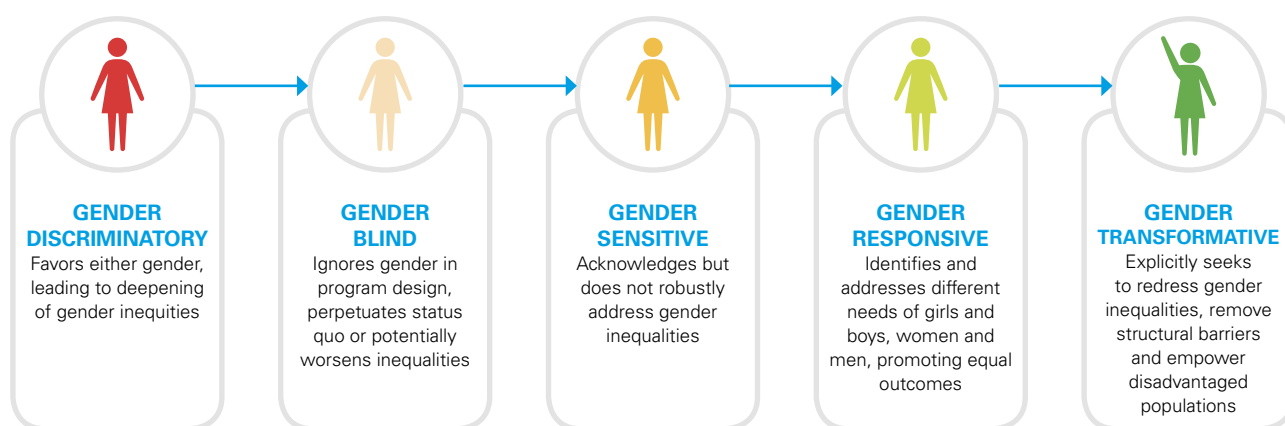| GENDER DISCRIMINATORY	GENDER BLIND	GENDER SENSITIVE	GENDER RESPONSIVE	GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE
Favors either gender, leading to deepening of gender inequities	Ignores gender in program design, perpetuates status quo or potentially worsens inequalities	Acknowledges but does not robustly address gender inequalities	Identifies and addresses different needs of girls and boys, women and men, promoting equal outcomes	Explicitly seeks to redress gender inequalities, remove structural barriers and empower disadvantaged populations

Gender transformative approaches

"Effective gender-transformative approaches are grounded in strong gender analysis and an understanding of local contexts."

"Evidence shows that gender transformation is possible, but can also be long term, is often generational, and needs sustained investments over time." [58]

UNFPA (2020)

Gender-transformation also relates to boys' harmful experiences in education and disaffection with school, meaning interventions need to affirm and promote positive masculine identities with and for boys.[59] Similarly for girls, where possible, curriculum content and pedagogies should promote ideas, behaviours, representations, and experiences that symbolise

and make gender transformation and empowerment possible; that is, classroom or distance learning activities and materials that challenge harmful stereotypes and normalize positive gender norms and relationships; develop social-emotional competencies such as self-awareness, empathy, and critical thinking; engender regular participation in class, school, or community decision making and leadership; and allow for participation in gender-related problem solving through entrepreneurship and enterprise opportunities.

In line with the broader content creation guidelines below, it is also important to carry out a curriculum audit. Its purpose is not just to assess the extent to which harmful gender norms are present, but to determine how transformative gender norms can be included; i.e. promoting females in traditionally male dominated roles, or to portray boys and men carrying out traditionally female roles. An example could be text and images in learning materials showing women as engineers, computer programmers, or cricket stars, or portraying men as early childhood teachers, nurses or caregivers.

[57] UNICEF Headquarters, New York, June 2020

[58] UNFPA. *Technical Note on Gender Transformative Approaches in the Global Programme to End Child Marriage.* 2020

[59] World Bank. *Transformative Resilience Guide: Gender, Violence, and Education.* 2013. Washington DC.

Gender-responsive content creation on COVID19

For audio-visual content:

▶ In the entire material, are an equal number of girls and boys depicted?

▶ Are children, adolescents, adults and senior citizens equally represented? If possible, include at least one transgender person.

▶ Does the material have at least one or two pictures of children or adults with disabilities?

▶ In particular, for girls and boys:

  ▫ For images of children playing, there should be an equal number of girls and boys. Girls should be kicking the football or holding the cricket bat, not just in the background.

  ▫ For images of children fetching water, sweeping, cutting vegetables, or helping younger siblings, show more boys than girls.

  ▫ For images of children being caring and loving, show boys more than girls.

  ▫ For images of children challenging a norm (e.g. giving guidance to an adult on handwashing) show more girls than boys

  ▫ For images of children with smartphones or laptops, show girls more than boys.

  ▫ For images of large groups, ensure that an equal number of girls and boys also reflects religious and ethnic diversity and disability.

▶ In particular, for women and men:

  ▫ In images of parents with children, emphasize fathers, particularly in images related to going to an ECD centre/childcare, school, primary health centre, visiting a doctor.

  ▫ In images of leaders, prioritize woman leaders.

  ▫ In pictures of households, show men doing housework.

  ▫ In pictures of women as frontline workers, show them as confident, wise and strong

  ▫ In pictures of schools, emphasize women principals and superintendents. Show women teaching older students and men teaching younger students.

  ▫ In pictures of doctors, emphasize women doctors.

For text and language:

▶ Use "she/he" or "they", make sure the male pronoun is not used throughout and either use gender-neutral or she/he every time.

▶ When giving scenarios related to work, describe women in non-traditional roles; e.g. women migrating back to the village after a factory shut down or the technology company closing.

▶ When giving scenarios related to home, describe men as caregivers; e.g. when the child started coughing, the father noticed and took him to the doctor.

▶ When describing adolescents taking up leadership roles and giving guidance, ensure equal representation of girls and boys

▶ When depicting a person giving guidance, also describe men listening and women giving guidance

▶ When depicting a person who is scared or anxious, ensure that person is a man or boy just as often as it is a woman or girl.

▶ When describing interactions with teachers, use a male teacher for younger students and a female teacher for older students.[60]

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[60] United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, UNWomen. *Gender-responsive content creation on COVID19*. 2020. New Delhi.

2.3.3 Participation and engagement, disaggregation, and contextualization

This principle reinforces the importance of including girls and women in gender-responsive continuous learning and school reopening planning and decision making, as well capturing and documenting all at-risk girls', boys', and caregivers' experiences during COVID19 lockdowns and transitions back to school.

The unique voices, experiences, and needs of girls and boys can meaningfully inform the funding, design, and delivery of gender-responsive programs. As such, project scoping, monitoring, and evaluation data should be disaggregated by characteristics such as gender, age, wealth quintile, and location (among others) to understand the intersectional and differential impacts of COVID19 on girls' and boys' learning, protection, and health.

Participation and engagement: Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child - the provision that all children and adolescents have a right to express their views and have those taken seriously - is best realised when researchers, policy makers, and practitioners include and respond to the inputs of children and adolescents in relation to their health, well-being, and learning needs. For the purposes of this principle, in the short- to medium- term this represents the active involvement of girls and boys in needs analysis and monitoring research; the accurate and authentic inclusion of their voices in recommendations, reporting, and associated media; as well as timely feedback and follow up relating to the ways in which their contributions affect change. In experiencing this, at-risk girls and boys can better understand their identity, agency, and insights as having both meaning and influence, thereby establishing or reinforcing a sense of belonging, value, and purpose in their school and community.

Participation and engagement serves two purposes: one involves the identification of short- to medium-term experiences and needs of children and adolescents during school closures, and the other supports the medium to long-term learning, development, and leadership of children and adolescents in civic and educational spaces. In the medium- to long-term, with proper processes and supports in place, authentic participation also develops girls' and boys' sense of self-efficacy and encourages further engagement and leadership in matters pertaining to their own health, protection and learning, as well as that of their peers.

Disaggregated data: The limited availability of disaggregated (including gender disaggregated) data across education systems is a key obstacle to the development of evidence-informed policies, financing, and strategies that reduce exclusion for vulnerable and marginalized girls and boys.[61] Disaggregated data is necessary to identify the specific and contextual characteristics of girls and boys at risk of dropping out, which can then be used as the basis for reaching, re-engaging, and retaining these girls and boys in distance learning, school or alternative education.[62]

In addition, it is important to create and contextualize Early Warning Systems (EWS) to track boys and girls at risk of dropping out.[63] If school information management systems are digitized (including, for example, keeping digital records of absenteeism), this system should be integrated within such systems as well as Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) at national level, if feasible. As part of the reopening process, schools policies and procedures for safe school re-opening and student absenteeism/dropout monitoring should be audited and tracked for gender-responsiveness and intersectional risk-factors such as socio-economic status and persons with disabilities. Monitoring questions and school-level information collection methods should be adapted accordingly.

2.3.4 Gender-responsive distance learning (preparing for school reopening)

As illustrated in the conceptual model on page 10, the inner part of the framework relates first to closed or partially closed schools and distance learning during COVID19, followed by the process of reopening schools and girls and boys returning safely to classrooms. In which case, *Gender-responsive distance learning* and *Gender-responsive return to school* are used as scenarios to frame the minimum standards for gender and education in the context of COVID19.

Within and across the domains of learning, protection and health, school leaders, teachers, and caregivers must **Prioritise:**

▶ Equitable access to continued distance learning for all girls and boys

▶ Establish alternative and effective referral processes for girls and boys at risk of gender-based violence

[61] UNICEF & UIS (UNESCO Institute for Statistics). *Monitoring Education Participation: Framework for Monitoring Children and Adolescents who are Out of School or at Risk of Dropping Out*. 2016. Geneva.
[62] Ibid
[63] Ibid

▶ Preventing and responding to violence against girls and boys

▶ Integrating psycho-social support and social-emotional learning into distance learning strategies[64]

▶ Addressing online safety risks

For planning and delivery purposes, it is important to understand the differential access girls have to digital devices by sub-national levels, by rural and urban locations, and, where possible, by ethnic or caste identity and wealth quintile. Evidence-based gender analysis is also an important component of national or district-level plans and provisions for the continuity of learning during school closures.[65] Where technology reach is limited, non-existent, or inequitable, alternative methods for engaging girls and boys with continuous learning, protection support, and vital health information are required.

2.3.5 Gender-responsive return to school (preparing for future closures)

In this scenario, schools are in the process of reopening or are already open. Within and across the domains of learning, protection, and health, school leaders, teachers, and caregivers must **Prioritise:**

▶ The role of communities, school leaders, and teachers in identifying children at risk of not returning

▶ Planning for the return to school, reopening better for girls

▶ Responding to the wider societal and long-term impacts of school closures, especially[66]
  ◦ incidences of gender-based violence and associated trauma
  ◦ loss of learning and the provision of remedial and accelerated learning programs

▶ Including psycho-social services and social-emotional learning activities in the curriculum

▶ Ensuring physical distancing and other gender-responsive hygiene and child protection measures are in place and maintained

▶ Maintaining and further developing blended-learning provisions and capabilities within the school and community.

In preparation for future COVID19 surges and school closures, schools should continue working with community leaders, businesses (such as device providers and telecommunications companies) and caregivers to ensure all girls and boys have equitable access to distance learning modalities to enhance continuous learning between school, home, and the community.

2.4 Sites – School & alternative education, home & community

To the extent that learning happens at school, in the home, and within communities, key actors at each site also contribute to girls' and boys' ease of access to education, the quality and relevance of the education they experience, and their eventual transitions to meaningful employment. This framework and the accompanying minimum standards promote each site as a vital and complementary part of girls' and boys' continuous learning in the context of COVID19:

School & alternative education: The progressive standards required of school leaders, teachers, and caregivers to ensure boys and girls are prepared for classroom or community-based learning after lockdown,

are provided with psycho-social care and social-emotional learning support, taught curriculum content aligned with learning level and progress, have access to referral systems for school related gender-based violence, and that gender-responsive WASH and COVID19 provisions are in place.

> **See progressive standards for school and alternative education on pages:** 26-36 to 32-41.

Home: The progressive standards required of school leaders, teachers, and caregivers to ensure girls' and boys' equitable access to distance learning modalities at

[64] United Nations Girls Education Initiative. *Putting Gender at the Forefront of the COVID19 Education Response.* 2020. New York.

[65] United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia. *Guidance on Distance Learning Modalities to Reach all Children and Youth During School Closures.* June 2020. Kathmandu.

[66] United Nations Girls Education Initiative. *Putting Gender at the Forefront of the COVID19 Education Response.* 2020. New York.

home, protection from domestic gender-based violence at home, and the prevention of risks pertaining to COVID19 and other preventable, transmissible diseases at home.

Community: The progressive standards required of school leaders, teachers, and caregivers to ensure communications infrastructure supports distance learning modalities, transport routes are safe and affordable, alternative learning sites have WASH provisions and COVID19 prevention measures in place, and that child-

focused services are connected and collaborating effectively.

Where individual access to digital learning is not possible, community-based platforms and centres can offer children a link back to school.

See progressive standards for home and community on pages: 37-46 to 42-51.

2.5 Domains - Learning, protection, & health

For vulnerable, marginalized, and excluded girls and boys, education represents more than basic learning; it provides access to a system of complementary services that, when working together, create the conditions for holistic child development. In providing continuous distance learning and a safe return to school, it is paramount that the services and factors determining positive outcomes for all children and adolescents are fully included in planning and delivery:

Learning: The progressive standards required of school leaders, teachers, and caregivers to ensure that girls and boys do not miss out on learning during lockdown, that distance learning delivery is pedagogically sound, at a level appropriate to girls' and boys' progress, that learning relationships are physically and emotionally safe, and that pathways for accelerated learning remediation and to further learning or employment are maintained.

See progressive standards for the learning domain on pages: 26-29, and 27-40 to 32-35 and 42-45.

Protection: The progressive standards required of school leaders, teachers, and caregivers to ensure that symptoms or signifiers of violence, abuse, or COVID19 related trauma are identified, and that adequate referral mechanisms and support services are in place. Ensuring that school re-opening communications and key messaging relating to COVID19 promote positive gender norms and prevent all forms of stigma or discrimination.

See progressive standards for the protection domain on pages: 30-32, 41-43, to 36-38, 46-48.

Health: The progressive standards required of school leaders, teachers, and caregivers to ensure equitable access to public health messaging and personal protection provisions at home, at school, and in the community, accounting for language, cultural, disability, and income related diversity and needs. This includes WASH, nutrition, and sexual and reproductive health services.

See progressive standards for the health domain on pages: 33-35, 44-46, to 39-41, 49-51.

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2.6 Key actors and their roles

2.6.1 Leaders

Much of the guidance on education in the context of COVID19 has focused on the vital role of teachers. To the extent that this is based on good evidence, teachers are limited in their capacity to act without informed direction, clear communication, remunerative security, administrative systems, and psycho-social support provided by education sector leaders and the support of communities.

In the context of COVID19, school leaders need to be **aware of the additional risks faced by girls**, the digital gender divide, and available local strategies or services to address associated inequities.[67] In terms of a gender-responsive approach to distance learning and a return to school, leaders are **vulnerable and excluded girls' and boys' best champions and strongest advocates**; they can strengthen links with community-sector providers, as well as motivate, inform, and guide teachers' and caregivers' own gender-responsive efforts through distance learning and classroom management approaches.

School leaders' most vital roles are **effective communication and guidance** to communities, teachers, and caregivers. By using appropriate communication formats to reach girls, women and other vulnerable groups who have less access to information channels,[68] and by ensuring messages are gender-sensitive (at the very least) and promote positive gender norms, school leaders can **influence vulnerable girls' and boys' access to distance learning modalities and improve their sense of belonging and likelihood of returning to school**.

Clear, early, and regular communications to teachers and caregivers can ensure clarity about learning priorities in the context of COVID19. Specifically, their respective roles in the success of safe, inclusive return-to-school efforts, including overall well-being of school populations, and the teaching and learning recovery process. School leaders should **contextualize communications in ways that support caregivers' confidence sending girls and boys back to school** in the context of COVID19. This might include detailing gender-segregated WASH

provisions, or sensitising caregivers to the long-term social and economic benefits of girls and boys returning to school.

As a part of a gender-responsive return to school planning, leaders will need to set priorities and **recognize that compromises may be needed to ensure equitable access to learning** for vulnerable, marginalized and excluded girls and boys. For example, to facilitate physical distancing and reduce the number of teachers and students on site, schools may have to privilege certain population segments or learner groups, such as vulnerable and at-risk girls and boys and the children of essential workers.[69]

School leaders also need to **recognize the specific challenges of girls and boys with recent family history of COVID19** as they might face stigma and discrimination upon their return to school. Similarly, recognizing and addressing the symptoms of girls and boys who have been exposed to violence or abuse during the lockdown requires community support and strengthened linkages between schools and social protection systems for efficient referrals.

Ensuring teachers are empowered to make decisions about teaching and learning is another key role; a component part of which is advocating for and/or providing the financial security and health and safety assurances that demonstrate for teachers the importance of their role, expertise, and well-being. It will also involve the inclusion of teachers in planning the school calendar to ensure buy in and ownership of the process. For vulnerable groups, including low-income families, girls, those with special needs, ethnic or cultural minorities, and those living in remote rural areas, teachers will be expected to implement flexible curriculum approaches, accelerated learning and remedial education strategies, as well as psycho-social and social-emotional learning activities. **School leaders need to be at the forefront of in-service teacher professional development** to address these additional expectations.

Finally, with the added burden of child-care and caring for sick family members carried by women teachers, effectively managing teaching workload and stress is

[67] United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia. *Guidance on Distance Learning Modalities to Reach all Children and Youth During School Closures*. June 2020. Kathmandu.
[68] Save the Children. *Safe Back to School: A Practitioner Guide*. 2020. London.
[69] United Nations Education Science Culture Organisation Task Force for Teachers 2030 and International Labour Organisation. *Back to School Toolkit for School Leaders*. 2020. Paris

central to teacher well-being, retention, and capacity to support girls' and boys' own unique learning and well-being needs. School leaders need to have compassionate awareness of this reality and ensure teacher relief contingencies are in place wherever possible.

2.6.2 Teachers

During COVID19 lockdowns, **teachers have worked to ensure learning continues through distance modalities**, and that girls' and boys' health and well-being is monitored and addressed.[70] Continued teacher engagement has also helped **girls and boys to feel seen, supported and valued during school closures**, and they have helped establish a sense of routine for girls and boys as much as for parents/caregivers.[71]

For teachers, continued interaction with girls, boys, and their families also provides their own sense of routine, purpose, and value, and helps them **maintain professional identities amidst the uncertainty**. The consistency of these connections will help teachers to re-establish relationships once schools reopen and will also provide teachers with a better sense of how much their students have learned or missed out on during closures.[72]

It is vital that **teachers have a central role in planning and decision making** as a part of back to school efforts. With ongoing consultation, school leaders and district authorities need to act on teachers' experiences, expertise, and unique knowledge of girls' and boys' learning and well-being needs. At the same time, teachers must **receive adequate professional training and preparation** to effectively facilitate back-to-school processes at a classroom level. This includes health and sanitation protocols, the requirements for teaching and learning in reconfigured schools and classrooms, the challenges of reduced classroom sizes and instructional time, and how to best conduct hybrid face-to-face and remote instruction.[73] Professional development support should also **recognize teachers' key role in identifying learning gaps** and organizing rapid assessments and accelerated instructional strategies, including remedial

support to disadvantaged learners.

Additional care and compensation is needed for female teachers who play a vital role in girls' health, protection, and wellbeing. Female teachers are a major contributor to girls' enrolment in and retention at school. For such teachers, **training should also be provided in the identification of child protection risks and relevant referral pathways**; this includes preparedness for and management of school-related gender-based violence reflecting the unique experiences, needs, and vulnerabilities of girls and boys returning to school after COVID19 lockdowns.[74] It is also vital, wherever possible, that teachers are able to work effectively with trained counsellors and social workers in school and across the community.

2.6.3 Caregivers

A central role for caregivers in the context of COVID19 is supporting their children in distance and continuous learning. In particular, **allowing girls to access all forms of technology available at home, and providing practical learning and psycho-social support**.[75] The importance of continuous learning during school closures needs to be reinforced with parents and caregivers, along with guidance on effectively enabling girls' and boys' learning progress at home. **Caregivers also need to understand the distance learning modalities being rolled out and how to access them** (e.g., which TV channels, for which grades, and at what time) and should be engaged through a combination of strategies, such as phone calls by teachers, newspapers, TV and radio broadcasts, or social media campaigns.[76]

The reality, however, is that some caregivers may not be in the position to support learning if they need to work, are not literate in the language of instruction, and/or themselves experiencing a disability. Also, many vulnerable, marginalized and excluded girls and boys are first generation learners whose parents did not complete their own education and may be illiterate. Written guidance may therefore be inappropriate, and many

[70] United Nations Education Science Culture Organisation Task Force for Teachers 2030 and International Labour Organisation. *Supporting teachers in back-to-school efforts: Guidance for Policymakers.* 2020. Paris

[71] United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia. *Guidance on Distance Learning Modalities to Reach all Children and Youth During School Closures.* June 2020. Kathmandu.

[72] United Nations Education Science Culture Organisation Task Force for Teachers 2030 and International Labour Organisation. *Supporting teachers in back-to-school efforts: Guidance for Policymakers.* 2020. Paris

[73] Ibid

[74] See Inter-agency Standing Committee. *How to support survivors of gender-based violence when a GBV actor is not available in your area.* The guide is also downloadable as an interactive app on *Google Play*

[75] United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia. *Guidance on Distance Learning Modalities to Reach all Children and Youth During School Closures.* June 2020. Kathmandu.

[76] United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia. *Guidance on Distance Learning Modalities to Reach all Children and Youth During School Closures.* June 2020. Kathmandu.

families will also have minimal resources to work with.[77] As such caregivers' unique needs, abilities and strengths should be taken into account and addressed through alternative methods of engagement when schools determine and delegate caregiver support roles.

Gender-responsive and inclusive distance learning strategies that caregivers can facilitate at home might include:

▶ Establishing a timetable and routine that gives girls' and boys' agency, including times or activities where choice-making or changes are possible;

▶ In contexts where girls still experience inequitable access to learning, focused, separate parent-daughter activities to demonstrate importance of girls' education and the importance of uninterrupted attention to their learning;

▶ Where technologies permit, supporting girls' and boys' understanding of cyber-safety and the prevention of abuse and exploitation online.[78]

In many South Asian contexts mothers account for upwards of 80 per cent of distance-learning support. To the extent that mothers' vital roles should be celebrated, these gender norms also need to be challenged; as much for women's well-being and the expectations placed on girls as for the benefits for children of fathers' increased engagement. Emerging evidence on the positive impact of fathers' involvement in their children's learning includes, but is not limited to: better school attendance and behaviour, less criminality, better school results, better mental health and a higher quality of father-child relationships later in life.[79]

2.6.4 Girls and boys

The economic impact of COVID19 has hit low-income families hardest, putting vulnerable women and girls at greater risk of child marriage, sexual exploitation and abuse, and early pregnancy. Being confined at home also has psychosocial impacts and can increase the risk of gender-based violence. For boys and young men, the

need to supplement family incomes through informal employment, often in the form of high-risk, exploitative, and temporary informal labour, also exposes them to increased levels of violence and abuse.

For all girls and boys, the experience of lockdown and concomitant isolation from peers, teachers, and social support services increases the prevalence of psycho-social distress. Consequently, the ability to focus on and progress through distance learning modalities is severely compromised. As such, during school closures and through reopening and return to school processes **it is vital that the voices, experiences, and aspirations of vulnerable girls and boys informs planning, decision making, and the delivery of continuous learning activities.**

As introduced above, the **participation and engagement** of girls and boys is about more than just having a voice. It is about being informed, engaged, and having an influence in decisions and matters that affect one's life.[80] **Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines participation as a fundamental human right.**[81] The State, as the ultimate duty-bearer, has obligations to create an enabling environment (such as schools) that allows the views of girls and boys to be heard on practices and policies that directly or indirectly concern them. In the context of COVID19, having both the right and the space to be heard is a powerful means through which **girls and boys can challenge discrimination, violence, exploitation or injustice,** as well as guide teaching and learning strategies that they know will be most effective in their respective circumstances.

In the context of South Asia, engaging girls and boys in return to school planning and decision making requires that **school leaders, teachers, and caregivers shift their mindset, and value girls and boys as partners and experts in their own experiences**. For this to happen, however, a culture change in teaching and public schools more broadly is needed to dismantle rigid, authoritative, and hierarchical teaching and learning models, towards a relational reframing of girls and boys as partners.[82] As well as allowing for channels to voice concerns relating to curriculum and assessments, or harassment and violence, ensuring equitable access to information and

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[77] United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia. *Guidance on Distance Learning Modalities to Reach all Children and Youth During School Closures*. June 2020. Kathmandu.

[78] See also Epstein's (2009) synthesis of six different dimensions of parental and community involvement to prevent drop out in United Nations Children's Fund. *Improving Education Participation: Policy and Practice Pointers for Enrolling All Children and Adolescents*. 2017. New York. pp 66, 70, 84.

[79] United Nations Children's Fund. *Improving Education Participation: Policy and Practice Pointers for Enrolling All Children and Adolescents*. 2017. New York.

[80] United Nations Children's Fund. *Engaged and Heard: Guidelines on Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement*. 2020. New York.

[81] Articles 12 – 17 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child represent key principles of a democratic education where children and adolescents are both informed and engaged. See chapter 3:
[Save] the Children and United Nations Children's Fund. *Every Child's Right to be Heard*. 2011. London.

[82] Susanna Brinkmann's work on child-centered learning offers invaluable perspectives on teachers' cultural beliefs in India. See: Brinkman, Susanna. *Learner Centered Reforms in India: The missing piece of teachers' beliefs*. in Policy Futures in Education. Vol. 13 (3). 2015.

decision-making processes will help harness their unique insights for more effective, sustainable, and gender-responsive approaches to schooling.

For vulnerable, marginalized, and excluded girls and boys **to feel empowered, they first require healing and a belief in their own agency and efficacy** at school, in the community, and at home.[83] Achieving this requires enabling, nurturing spaces, trusting relationships, and support systems established and maintained first and foremost by school leaders, teachers, social workers, and caregivers.

83 World Bank. *Transformative Resilience Guidance: Gender, Violence, and Education.* 2013. Washington DC.

3. Gender-responsive education: Progressive standard goals

The goals and progressive standards below are overarching or aspirational outcomes, which are the sum of each intersecting site and domain's respective strategy and action recommendations. The conceptual model, corresponding framework, and progressive standards that follow emphasise an inter-sectoral and holistic approach to girls' and boys' access to and engagement in quality education in the context of COVID19.

The progressive standard tables that follow are organised first by the *site* and *domain*. Then, the recommended strategies and actions are categorised by *gender-responsive distance learning* or *gender-responsive school opening*, and the relevant *areas of evidence*.

The *areas of evidence* categories represent a synthesis of research findings, policy recommendations, and programming considerations from a broad repository of humanitarian guidance documents relating to girls' education, gender-responsive education, and COVID19 (see section 5, page 55). The minimum standards are organised by these categories to emphasize and address the most urgent issues in the context of COVID19. These categories are:

► *The disproportionate impact of school closures on girls*

► *Learning continuity and the digital gender divide*

► *Getting all girls and boys back into education*

A – School & alternative education	
1. Learning	▶ Curriculum progress and accelerated learning programmes are balanced with social-emotional learning activities that identify and address girls' and boys' differential schooling experiences during COVID19.
2. Protection	▶ School leaders and teachers can identify and address the needs of girls and boys who are vulnerable to or have experienced violence and are at risk of dropping out of school.
3. Health	▶ School leaders and teachers communicate and act on COVID19 infection prevention measures and ensure adequate WASH and sexual and reproductive health provisions for girls.
B – Home & Community	
1. Learning	▶ The infrastructure, devices, and delivery systems to support continuous distance learning and blended learning are provided at low-cost or free of charge. ▶ Girls and boys have equal access to safe spaces and digital devices to engage with distance continuous learning activities.
2. Protection	▶ Partnerships and efficient communication channels between child protection services, schools, and households are established and strengthened. ▶ Teachers communicate with caregivers, girls, and boys, and are able to monitor risks of violence, exploitation, and abuse.
3. Health	▶ Provision and continuity of sexual and reproductive health services to vulnerable girls and women and distribution of PPE to teachers and caregivers ▶ Schools establish or strengthen communication channels with public health services and prevent incidences of stigma or discrimination relating to COVID19.

▶ *By investing in gender-responsive teachers, we invest in learners*

Additionally, at the end of each section broad recommendations relating to the *monitoring* of girls' and boys' learning, protection, and health at school and alternative education or in the home and community are detailed.

The strategies and actions within each table are organised by *prioritise* and *where possible*. This is to account for the diversity of contexts and systems in which these progressive standards can be applied.

In line with the gender-transformative principle, the *prioritise* strategies and actions represent gender-responsive approaches to distance learning and school reopening, or at least what is realistic and achievable in resource, facility, and capability limited contexts. The *where possible* strategies and actions then represent gender-transformative approaches, or what might be more realistic and achievable for contexts with fewer health and social barriers, and greater access to resources, facilities, and capabilities.

These progressive standards do not represent the full scope of strategies and actions required for distance learning or the reopening of schools. They are specific to gender-responsive and gender-transformative practices and represent an amalgamation of recommended strategies and actions from UNICEF and partner agency publications, as well as research findings and recommendations inclusive of child and adolescent, caregiver, teacher and school leader voices.

Note: The standards are *not* organised as a linear set of actions to be followed from start to finish. Instead, relative to the context, readers are recommended to find relevant standards and adapt and integrate them on a situational basis. For example, if planning for or addressing issues relating to girls' vulnerability to gender-based violence during school closures, the relevant site is *Home and Community,* and the domain would be *Protection,* meaning the progressive standard tables on pages 46-48 will provide required recommendations.

3.1 Progressive standards for gender-responsive education in the context of COVID19

A1: SCHOOL & ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION – LEARNING

Curriculum progress and accelerated learning programmes are balanced with social-emotional learning activities that identify and address girls' and boys' differential schooling experiences during COVID19.

Learning – A1.1: The disproportionate impact of school closures on girls	
Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	**Gender-responsive return to school** *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

▶ Prioritize girls and boys identified as **vulnerable** at home or at risk of not re-enrolling in school for **alternative community learning sites** during lockdown.

▶ Integrate or prepare to integrate **social and emotional learning activities** into daily lessons through distance modalities, such as labelling emotions, understanding feelings, and developing self-care strategies.

▶ Ensure distance learning resources and materials are aligned with girls and boys **actual learning levels** and promote appropriate progress.

▶ Review curriculum and learning materials **for gender bias and stereotypes** and establish a process for materials and curriculum reform that also considers content missed during school closures.

Where possible:

▶ Ensure learning activities are **flexible and self-paced** to account for additional domestic or economic burdens vulnerable boys and girls will face.

▶ Access pre-COVID19 literacy and numeracy data, and where possible provide **remedial support** to girls and boys most at risk of falling behind.

▶ Plan for **flexible formative assessments** when schools reopen, focus assessments on **essential academic development** such as proficiency literacy and numeracy.

▶ For adolescent girls and boys transitioning to training or employment, provide access to distance **employability, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement skills training.**

▶ Where possible, ensure girls and boys receive **one-on-one learning support** from a teacher as well as opportunities to connect and learn co-operatively with peers.

Prioritise:

▶ Allow sufficient time for girls and boys to get **reacquainted with classroom learning**; re-establish routines, relationships, and focus on well-being, resilience and safety.

▶ **Adapt accelerated learning** in literacy and numeracy activities to girls' and boys' knowledge, experience of, and coping with COVID19 school closures.

▶ **Strengthen child-centred, gender-sensitive behaviour management strategies**; many girls and boys will be experiencing trauma and need time to acclimatize to classroom rules, peer relationships, and teacher instruction. Promote and work towards conflict de-escalation and restorative practice strategies in the classroom. **Ensure no tolerance for corporal punishment.**

Where possible:

▶ Use strategies such as talk circles, mind maps, role plays, or local collaborative learning methods to **explore and contextualise** how, if at all, COVID19 exacerbated gender biases or harmful gender roles.

▶ Without gender-bias, increase the balance of arts, music, creative games, and sports with academic learning to allow girls and boys **creative and physical outlets** and to re-connect with peers.

▶ Due to isolation, a lack of freedom, and time possibly spent under strict or stressful home environments, it is important to introduce activities that give girls and boys some **classroom agency**; for example, choice or leadership in learning content, timetables, or activity styles.

▶ To manage physical spacing requirements, **prioritize vulnerable girls' and boys' access to school-based classrooms** over alternative community learning sites.

Learning – A1.1: The disproportionate impact of school closures on girls

Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	Gender-responsive return to school *(prepare for future closures)*
▶ Plan to introduce a holistic approach to learning when school reopens, integrating key **life-skills** such as critical thinking, communication skills, and self-awareness.	

Learning – A1.2: Learning continuity and the digital gender divide

Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*

Prioritise:

▶ Ensure **learning provisions align** with availability of and access to distance modalities.

▶ Ensure distance learning activities include opportunities for girls and boys to **make choices and experience agency** in what and how they learn.

▶ Develop or deploy teaching materials that are **free from gender bias and stereotypes, challenge negative social norms, and promote gender equality.**

Where possible:

▶ **Work with electricity and digital infrastructure providers and local government** to budget and prepare for future shocks through investment in internet connectivity and device access for girls and boys most at risk of dropping out.

▶ Empower boys and men to **speak up for girls' right to access digital and broadcast devices** to support continuous distance learning.

▶ Ensure distance learning resources are inclusive to girls' and **boys' language, religion , ability, or gender identities and promote positive norms.**

▶ Communicate statistics on the **digital gender divide** and the importance of girls' access to digital devices at home.

Gender-responsive return to school *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

▶ **Maintain blended learning approaches** (e.g. incorporating online or broadcast-based learning in the classroom) and ensure girls' access to devices at school and home; **prepare for hybrid approaches** for girls and boys who cannot return to school immediately or consistently due to health precautions or domestic pressures.

▶ **Plan protocols / processes for future lockdowns** and identify girls and boys needing resource support and ongoing care.

Where possible:

▶ Through **social dialogue**, document from girls' and boys' perspectives what worked in distance learning, what was challenging and what can be improved.

▶ **Update records** of girls' and boys' learning progress; triangulate with access to and engagement with distance learning modalities.

Learning – A1.3: Getting all girls and boys back into education

Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	Gender-responsive return to school *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

- **Devise and activate an action tree** for teacher / support staff to follow up with at-risk girls and boys; designate point staff for oversight and delegation of key EMIS tasks.

- **Provide free access to low-tech and no-tech distance learning modalities** to ensure continuity of learning for all children. Investigate availability of **GIGA** zero-rated data services and prioritise girls most at risk of not reintegrating due to family duties, early marriages, pregnancies.

Where possible:

- **Plan alternative class schedules** to accommodate girls and boys contributing to **domestic care or informal income earning.**

- **Co-ordinate with a district / regional cluster** to ensure EMIS systems allow school leaders and support staff to monitor and track **at-risk girls and boys.**

- For adolescent girls at educational transition points, ensure learning activities include **information on further training and employment pathways**; explore possibilities for online, SMS-based, or phone-based career counsellors with skills in adolescent development.

- Where available, link distance learning activities with **TVET and other short-term vocational training**. Assess activities for compatibility with labour market needs.

- Budget for and prepare **conditional cash transfers** for families at risk of keeping girls' and boys' from attending school.

Prioritise:

- **Update and iterate school plans and strategies** for prioritizing, engaging and re-enrolling at-risk girls and boys.

- Implement **alternative or flexible class schedules** to accommodate girls and boys contributing to **domestic care or informal income earning.**

Where possible:

- Prioritise, with adequate salary, the **deployment of female teachers** in remote and rural areas, in higher levels of education, and in managerial and leadership posts, as they play a key role in girls' participation and retention.

- Explore a range of **non-traditional subjects** that relate to **local industries and contextual challenges** (such as social entrepreneurship, electronics, small business, small-scale manufacturing, food science etc.); provide a vision for girls' education and employment transitions. **Ensure that school-based or community-based career counsellors are accessible.**

- Establish more robust **gender-responsive risk analysis, standard operating procedures and contingency plans** for future shocks, drawing on feedback and lessons learned.

- Safely provide **social and emotional learning support** that labels and addresses fears, anxieties, and instances of loss relating to COVID19.

- Get girls' and boys' **input on remedial or accelerated learning options** that work best for their life situation, peer relationships, and learning preferences; where possible provide choices.

Learning – A1.4: By investing in gender-responsive teachers, we invest in learners

Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	Gender-responsive return to school *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

- Introduce teachers to or **strengthen skills in social and emotional learning,** specifically managing emotions and relationships in preparation for return to school.

- **Facilitate online, radio based, or SMS-based teacher professional development** for WASH, COVID19 prevention, and inter-personal communications (IPC) in schools and classrooms.

- **Recognise and adapt for the double role that female teachers play** in ensuring continuity of learning for students, while facing larger burden of unpaid domestic and caring responsibilities during school closures. Explore options for **additional financial support or community-based care services.**

- **Facilitate communication between teachers, learners and caregivers** to assess participation in remote learning, difficulties and needs for learning and other support, particularly for girls.

- Prepare teachers for the facilitation of **rapid remedial learning and assessment** upon a return to school. For example: running diagnostic assessments, differentiated pedagogies to adapt to learner's levels, continuous formative assessments, accelerated learning.

Where possible:

- Develop teachers' ability to **differentiate online learning** to meet diverse learner needs.

- Ensure **associations of female teachers are represented in the crisis response**, particularly in the design, delivery and monitoring of distance learning programmes.

- **Review teacher education curriculum** and learning materials for gender bias and stereotypes and establish a process for materials and curriculum reform, along with prioritisation of content to be delivered when schools reopen.

- During lockdowns many teachers, particularly those in private schools, may have found alternative work and income; **identify and advocate for those teachers' return to school** and salary resumption as soon as possible.

Prioritise:

- **Include teachers' ideas and recommendations** on managing girls' and boys' classroom behaviour; encourage gender-responsive, trauma informed, and child-centred approaches.

- Support initiatives **that build teachers' resilience, instructional capacities, and access to technical and skills training** in rural, remote and other marginalised contexts to ensure their ability to assure continuity of learning in the event of future shocks.

- Provide **direct support in the design and facilitation of gender-sensitive formative assessment** tasks to measure girls and boys learning progress and gaps; prioritise flexibility, accessibility, and a "low-stakes" approach to minimise stress or further trauma.

- Promote **ongoing professional development for teachers to develop their ICT skills**, while assessing the e-readiness of educators and schools in future school closures.

Where possible:

- Where possible, **provide co-teaching or observation and feedback** opportunities for teachers teaching socio-emotional learning content for the first time.

- Provide ongoing coaching support on **"Teaching at the Right Level"** to ensure learners who fall behind during lockdowns are not further marginalized in the classroom.

- Provide training, coaching and mentoring where possible on **differentiated learning** in the classroom and teaching using **hybrid modalities** (mixed classroom and home learning).

- Identify and **document the needs and experiences of teachers in rural, remote and marginalised contexts,** to find out what worked during school closures and address gaps in skills, resources, and infrastructure as schools reopen.

- For teachers at the secondary level, provide **training on supporting girls' transitions from school, to training and meaningful employment.**

A2: SCHOOL & ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION – PROTECTION

School leaders and teachers can identify and address girls and boys who are vulnerable to or have experienced violence and are at risk of dropping out

Protection – A2.1: The disproportionate impact of school closures on girls	
Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	**Gender-responsive return to school** *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

▶ Ensure girls and boys at risk of or experiencing gender-based violence at home or in the community are **aware of and can access helplines and alternative support services.**

▶ Update and disseminate with teachers and school-support staff school-level **child safeguarding policies** for the distance learning context.

▶ Update and **disseminate with caregivers** safeguarding and violence prevention policies in place for girls.

Where possible:

▶ Co-ordinate with a district / regional cluster to ensure **EMIS systems** allow school leaders and support staff to **monitor and track at-risk girls and boys.**

▶ Ensure EMIS has an integrated **Early Warning System (EWS) for at-risk girls and boys**, with clear step-by-step guidance on policies and processes.

Prioritise:

▶ Place particular emphasis on **quality relationships between girls, boys, and trusted adults and professionals**; relationships are an entry point for vital information relating to COVID19 and gender-based violence support.

▶ **Ensure continuity of alternative referral systems from lockdown to reopening**; with the input of girls, review systems and strengthen in preparation for future lockdowns.

▶ Ensure teachers use **psycho-social support strategies** to help girls regain a sense of stability and belonging at school.

Where possible:

▶ Establish more **robust gender-responsive risk analysis, standard operating procedures and contingency plans for future shocks**, drawing on feedback and lessons learned.

▶ Prioritise, with adequate salary, the **deployment of female teachers** in remote and rural areas, in higher levels of education, and in managerial and leadership posts, as they play a key role in girls' participation and retention.

Protection – A2.2 Getting all girls and boys back into education

Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	Gender-responsive return to school *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

- Work with relevant experts to **develop / strengthen school-based standard operating procedures for managing gender-based violence and mental health** concerns.

- Through distance learning modalities, **prioritize the inclusion of Comprehensive Sexuality Education**, including information on gender-based violence, gender and rights, and life skills for girls.

- Prepare culturally appropriate **prevention and support procedures relating to COVID19 stigma and discrimination,** with special considerations for girls' and female teachers providing care to sick relatives.

Where possible:

- Where possible, introduce age appropriate learning activities that **safely explore and unpack harmful cultural norms and power imbalances** between boys and girls.

- Encourage school leaders, teachers, and school support staff to download the **Gender-Based Violence Pocket Guide App;** guide them to pages 16-20: *Reference for children's age and ability to make decisions.*

- Establish or strengthen systems for the **safe sharing of information between child-focused service providers**; ensure inputs of women and girls in design and management of systems.

Prioritise:

- Update and iterate **strategies for prioritizing, engaging & re-enrolling at-risk girls and boys.**

- Ensure all school leaders, teachers, caregivers, and civil society partners **encourage pregnant and/or married girls to re-enrol in school and attend.**

- **Establish mechanisms between school health and protection services** to connect girls who have witnessed or experienced violence during school closures with **psychosocial and legal services.**

- Apply **whole-school approaches to ensure schools are safe and supportive,** and prevention and response mechanisms are in place to address school-related gender-based violence.

- Implement culturally appropriate **prevention and support procedures relating to COVID19 stigma and discrimination**. Respect gendered differences in the types of supports girls' and boys' are providing to their families.

Where possible:

- Maintain and **expand budgets and investments aimed at child protection** and ending gender-based violence, and referrals between education, health and child protection systems.

- Before reopening, **clearly display messages and information relating to the prevention of bullying and sexual violence,** as well as hotlines and/or processes for disclosing concerns and accessing support around the school.

Protection – A2.3: By investing in gender-responsive teachers, we invest in learners

Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	Gender-responsive return to school *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

- Use communication platforms popular with teachers to **promote and reiterate local laws relating to child rights** and child protection reporting and referral systems.

- Educate and raise awareness among teachers on how to support children who disclose either experiences of domestic violence, other forms of violence, abuse and neglect. Introduce and support teachers to use the gender-based violence disclosure pocket guide.

- Support teachers **with gender-responsive language, communication and resource selections strategies** to support girls and boys.

Where possible:

- Support teachers' **recognition of trauma from gender-based violence, ensure hotlines for information and counselling services are known** by all teachers and support staff.

- Support teachers' understanding and facilitation **of cyber safety messages**, sensitising girls about the risks of **online abuse and exploitation**.

- **Preserve female teachers' employment,** salaries and benefits, as they will be essential for a rapid and effective recovery when schools reopen.

Prioritise:

- Work with teachers to devise **culturally and contextually relevant self-care strategies**; form or strengthen teacher support groups in or across schools.

- Reinforce for school leaders and teachers the **importance of relationship-based behaviour management strategies;** express zero tolerance for corporal punishment.

- Provide **refresher training** for male and female teachers on **gender-responsive conflict resolution**.

- Support school leaders to create and implement a **teacher well-being and stress management plan.**

Where possible:

- Support teachers to **identify, acknowledge, and communicate signs of stress, anxiety, anger, or risks to personal safety and well-being**; provide safe spaces to explore ways in which responses manifest differently for males and females.

- Introduce or strengthen **restorative-practice based behaviour management strategies** to uphold a positive and child-centred learning environment.

- Ensure school, leaders, teachers, and support staff are familiar with the "Look, Listen, Comfort, and Connect" approach to supporting child and adolescent survivors of gender-based violence; for those who are not, refer them to pages 16-20 of the GBV Pocket Guide.

- Support the establishment of **regular professional development for teachers,** school management and other education sector staff to identify those struggling psychologically, as part of **crisis-sensitive education planning.**

- As schools reopen, if not already included, consider issuing **updated job descriptions** detailing teachers' role in at-risk girl and boy identification and referral, and drop-out prevention.

A3: SCHOOL & ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION – HEALTH

Leaders and teachers communicate and act on COVID19 infection prevention measures and provide adequate WASH provisions for girls

Health – A3.1: The disproportionate impact of school closures on girls	
Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	**Gender-responsive return to school** *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

▶ Ensure **health education meets the needs of the most marginalised girls** by recognising and addressing their realities and enabling skills-building on risk recognition and health-seeking behaviours.

▶ **Address stereotypes or superstitions about persons affected by COVID19**, including girls with heightened caring responsibilities.

▶ Ensure distance learning activities **include opportunities** for girls and boys to make choices and experience agency in their health and well-being.

▶ Provide girls and boys access and the **opportunity to contribute to decision making processes** relating to WASH and COVID19 provisions.

Where possible:

▶ Develop and disseminate **age- and developmentally appropriate, accessible, evidence-based, gender-responsive digital Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE)** to reduce girls' and young women's vulnerability to early and unintended pregnancy, HIV and gender-based violence.

▶ Document good practice, lessons learned and impacts of **alternative school health and nutrition packages** supported during COVID19 on girls' continuity of education and return to school.

▶ Draft a plan with specific benchmarks for the **re-establishment of school nutrition programmes**, including attention for **micronutrient supplementation** for girls and other support, where needed.

Prioritise:

▶ Create a supportive, child-centred, and restorative environment with **meal provisions, appropriate WASH facilities, and positive learning relationships** to improve retention.

▶ Apply proven strategies to **address marginalised girls' health**, providing holistic support to their psychosocial, sexual and reproductive health, and nutrition needs.

Where possible:

▶ Provide time for girls and boys to **seek clarity on COVID19 pandemic**, its causes, its differential medical and social impacts on males and females, and how to stay safe; ensure that **misinformation is respectfully and constructively managed.**

▶ Maintain continuity of **Menstrual Hygiene and Health (MHM) education and services** to ensure girls stay in school, addressing the needs of the most marginalised girls and monitoring how these needs evolve over time.

▶ Ensure **inclusive, evidence-based, non-stigmatising information on COVID19 and other health risks**, that portrays diverse communities and stimulate care and empathy for all.

Health – A3.2: Getting all girls and boys back into education

Gender-responsive distance learning
(prepare for school reopening)

Gender-responsive return to school
(prepare for future closures)

Prioritise:

▶ Plan for **handwashing and/or sex-segregated washroom facilities** in schools if not already in place.

▶ **Communicate to caregivers the plans** to ensure schools reopen with adequate WASH provisions and COVID19 prevention measures. This will help provide caregivers with the **confidence** to send their children back to school.

Where possible:

▶ **Distribute meals to the most marginalized and vulnerable,** either through home delivery or contact-less collection points.

▶ **Prepare stocks of personal protective equipment and girls' menstrual hygiene management products**; where stocks are unavailable devise strategies for local production and dissemination of required products.

▶ **Review location of water facilities** and ensure they are easily **accessible by all** – including those with physical disabilities.

Prioritise:

▶ Create a supportive, child-centred, and restorative environment with **meal provisions, appropriate WASH facilities, and positive learning relationships** to improve retention.

▶ Ensure **water facilities are located in a place visible by teachers** and support staff.

▶ Ensure handwashing facilities and sex-segregated washrooms have **provisions for regular cleaning / sanitising.**

▶ **Clearly communicate COVID19 prevention protocols** and processes to all families, through accessible media channels and information services.

Where possible:

▶ Facilitate the **presence and visibility of and accessibility to social workers, counsellors, and health workers** at school; make their collaboration with school leaders and teachers known to all girls, boys and caregivers.

▶ Provide available **supplies and safe elimination protocols of sanitary napkins and menstrual hygiene products.**

Health – A3.3: By investing in gender-responsive teachers, we invest in learners

Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	Gender-responsive return to school *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

- Support teachers with **management and referral of COVID19 symptom disclosures online**; prepare for this scenario in the classroom.

- Provide teachers and school officials with appropriate **training to manage confidential discussions with girls** who have been affected by violence during school closures.

- **Collect sex-disaggregated data on teachers** to better understand and address the differential impact on teachers' health and well-being during school closures.

- Prioritize **teachers' access to COVID19 testing**.

Where possible:

- Provide **professional learning on child and adolescent mental health concerns**, especially the differential ways it manifests in girls and boys, and how to progress with referrals.

- Develop a simple **health communication script** for teachers to check on girls' access to personal protective equipment, hygiene, and sanitary products.

- Provide **support on teachers' management of their own psycho-social well-being** during COVID19, including self-care strategies and support services if available.

- Devise a **script and supporting evidence to debunk COVID19 misinformation** that may be circulating.

- Engage **associations of female teachers** in preparation for school reopening, ensuring measures address their own health, well-being and needs for a safe teaching environment.

- Monitor teachers and ensure **access to psychosocial, health and other support**, and that their health, rights and entitlements are protected during school closures, after school reopening and in planning for future closures.

Prioritise:

- Create **step-by-step guidelines** on classroom hygiene & disinfection, physical spacing protocols, and sensitive identification and referral of COVID19 symptoms.

- Include **teachers' health, safety and well-being in COVID19 response and recovery plans**, with attention to differential needs by gender, age, underlying health risks, and location.

- Maintain **teachers' prioritized access to COVID19 testing.**

Where possible:

- Identify **school leaders and/or teachers with interest and strength in psycho-social support and socio-emotional learning**; create school-based champions to support & coach other teachers.

- Include **teachers' health, safety and well-being in COVID19 response and recovery plans,** with attention to differential needs by gender, location and other aspects.

- Ensure teachers have **access to free and confidential COVID19 testing** services at a location close to school.

B1: HOME & COMMUNITY – LEARNING

▶ The infrastructure, devices, and delivery systems to support continuous distance learning and blended learning are low-cost or free of charge

▶ Girls and boys have equal access to safe spaces and digital devices to engage with distance continuous learning activities

Learning – B1.1 The disproportionate impact of school closures on girls	
Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	**Gender-responsive return to school** *(prepare for future closures)*

Gender-responsive distance learning
(prepare for school reopening)

Prioritise:

▶ Allocate **funding for, and partner with, girl- and women-led initiatives** that are actively supporting girls' continuity of learning during school closures.

▶ Coordinate with **private sector networks or providers who can offer data and devices** to girls and boys most at risk of not engaging with distance learning or enrolling in school.

▶ Where low-tech and no-tech solutions are unavailable, partner with **teachers' associations or parent groups and identify locations for community-based education centres**. Ensure physical distancing and sanitation protocols can be maintained.

▶ Establish basic requirements and protocols for **ethical participation of adolescent girls and boys** in distance learning planning and delivery.

▶ Once operational, investigate the Generation Unlimited governance mechanism to coordinate activities relating to **adolescent girls' civic engagement and transitions to training and employment.**

Where possible:

▶ With girls and boys, **map and disseminate**, from a gender perspective, respective vulnerabilities risks, capacities and **opportunities to build back better schools.**

▶ With school **leaders, community leaders, religious organisations and women's and youth organisations,** collaboratively plan and prepare for gender-transformative ways of **working together** once schools reopen.

▶ Through TV or other visual media, **normalise home-based distance learning for girls** with gender-positive images of girls learning together with fathers, mothers, siblings and peers.

Gender-responsive return to school
(prepare for future closures)

Prioritise:

▶ Where caregivers remain **uncertain** about school reopening protocols, or girls and boys fear a return to school, **strengthen the provision of community-based education** for the 'at risk' and marginalized.

▶ Ensure **transport routes to school are safe,** monitored by trusted adults, and that girls know how to report incidences of harassment and abuse.

Where possible:

▶ Provide channels to **express experiences and concerns about returning to education**; prioritize and promote themes of learning progress, transitions to training and employment, and school-related gender-based violence.

▶ Facilitate opportunities to establish or **review and revise risk mapping activities** with girls and boys. School leaders and teachers should report back to participants on how their observations or recommendations are acted on.

▶ Create or improve the ways in which girls' and boys' **leadership and participation** in planning and decision making is documented and promoted (e.g., certificates, digital badges, etc.).

Learning – B1.2 Learning continuity and the digital gender divide

Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	Gender-responsive return to school *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

- Coordinate with **media channels to broadcast gender-positive messages,** representations of shared domestic roles and equal access to learning modalities.

- **Expand girls' access to online learning**, through temporary **free internet data** packages, **zero-rate traffic** to educational content or other measures, while safeguarding against online violence and abuse.

Where possible:

- Encourage **women's networks/organisations and/or religious organisations to share gender-positive messaging** about girls continuous learning, access to devices, and return to school.

- Engage **private sector actors to provide access to remote learning**, through various modalities, relating to employability skills, entrepreneurship and pathways to meaningful employment.

Prioritise:

- **Collect feedback from communities on school closures** and the support they received for learning and well-being. Use feedback to inform planning for school reopening.

- Coordinate with private-sector and civil-society partners **to distribute digital devices or low-tech learning tools** to girls without access.

- Provide girls with the **opportunity to lead and support blended-learning pedagogies** in the classroom; ensure continuity and confidence in blended-learning skills between school and home.

Where possible:

- **Narrow the gender digital skills divide** through role models and mentors, gender-responsive ICT-infused curricula and exposure to technology-linked careers.

- Strengthen partnerships with the private sector and provide girls with **pathways into STEM training and apprenticeships.**

Learning – B1.3: Getting all girls and boys back into education

Gender-responsive distance learning
(prepare for school reopening)

Gender-responsive return to school
(prepare for future closures)

Prioritise:

▶ Support schools' facilitation of **rapid assessments** to identify girls and boys at risk of low attendance or drop out due to financial barriers.

▶ Develop targeted **gender-responsive information campaigns to increase girls' participation** in remote learning and create opportunities for community support.

▶ Provide regular, **clear information on school reopening plans** through modalities accessible to and catered for girls, women, boys and men.

▶ Establish / strengthen relationships with relevant agencies to **identify and engage with girls and boys who have migrated into or out of school zones.**

▶ Engage **women's and youth networks** to discuss concerns, suggestions and recommendations relating to girls' continuous learning and return to school or transition to meaningful employment.

▶ **Communicate to parents and learners** the measures undertaken as part of school reopening to ensure a safe return to learning for all girls and boys.

▶ Identify and **mobilize local socio-cultural assets** (leaders, systems, beliefs and resources) for girls and boys return to school.

Where possible:

▶ Use **gender-positive role models or public influencers** to promote importance of girls' engagement in continuous distance learning and returning to school.

▶ **Ensure messaging is informed by girl, youth, and women's organisation recommendations** and wherever possible includes girls' and boys' voices.

▶ Ensure **meaningful participation for adolescent girls** through appropriate online forums (e.g. **U-Report**) or low-tech modalities (**RapidPro SMS surveys**).

▶ Ensure girls and boys experience a **full feedback loop relating to their participation in forums** where decisions might be made.

Prioritise:

▶ Establish and **strengthen linkages between schools and community networks** to remove structural and cultural barriers to girls' education, engaging religious leaders and caregivers.

▶ Ensure all school leaders, teachers, caregivers, and civil society partners **encourage pregnant and/or married girls to re-enrol in school and attend.**

▶ Update and disseminate with civil society organisations **records of at-risk girls' and boys' learning priorities** and need to re-enrol in and attend school.

Where possible:

▶ (Re)Engage with health, justice, child protection, and population services to ensure a **multi-sectoral approach** to vulnerable, marginalized, and excluded girls and boys is in place.

▶ Establish and/or **strengthen connections** with schools, polytechnic and higher education institutes, industry and small business employers to safeguard transitions; investigate **the Generation Unlimited governance mechanism** to coordinate these activities.

▶ Ensure **child, youth, and women's organisations** have access to schools and **can facilitate or support activities** relating to girls' and boys' participation in planning and decision making.

▶ Maintain **contextualized, inclusive, culturally relevant back to school campaigns** that challenge pervasive gender norms that disadvantage girls' return to school.

Learning – B1.4: By investing in gender-responsive teachers, we invest in learners

Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	Gender-responsive return to school *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

- Encourage and **assist teachers to support caregivers**, in particular mothers, who support learners through distance learning modalities.

- **Support teachers to challenge stereotypes and promote positive gender-norms** relating to distance learning. E.g. the important role men can play in leading learning at home.

- Provide and **promote fun, interactive activities for teachers to share with caregivers**, with a focus on building positive learning relationships and reducing stress and anxiety.

Where possible:

- For teachers, caregivers, and social workers, support the development of **"21st Century Skills"** such as effective communication, critical awareness, creative thinking, and collaboration.

- Identify 'champions' (teachers, youth, or social entrepreneurs) who are **leading effective gender-responsive distance learning interventions;** promote benefits of adolescent participation in planning, decision making, and delivery of distance learning.

Prioritise:

- Deliver training on **adult-learning facilitation**, focused on engaging and supporting caregivers' to better-support girls and boys learning at home.

- Provide space and **opportunity for teachers to plan and prepare for future lockdowns**, in particular, how they can distribute learning resources and provide teaching support in low-tech and no-tech settings.

- Assist teachers to support caregivers in the **facilitation of remedial and accelerated learning strategies at home.**

Where possible:

- Establish and promote local cross-sectoral **communities of practice, consisting of school leaders, teachers, social workers, police, and women's and youth organisation advocates**. Discuss actions that are working and address shortcomings in reaching the most marginalized and excluded boys and girls.

B2: HOME & COMMUNITY – PROTECTION

▶ Partnerships and efficient communication channels between child protection services, schools, and households are established and strengthened

▶ Teachers communicate with caregivers, girls, and boys, and are able to monitor for risk of violence, exploitation, and abuse

Protection – B2.1: The disproportionate impact of school closures on girls	
Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	**Gender-responsive return to school** *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

▶ Where family or **home life is the source of adversity and violence, ensure social workers or teachers have regular contact** with girls and boys. Monitor changes in well-being and refer to services and supports accordingly.

▶ Clearly communicate to caregivers and community/religious leaders the **long-term mental health, safety, well-being, and economic independence benefits for girls** if they remain engaged and progressing in their education during lockdowns.

▶ **Strengthen links between child protection services, health providers and schools** to ensure the whereabouts and well-being of girls is communicated with schools or alternative education programmes.

▶ Provide schools and alternative education programmes with up to date **information on migrant and/or refugee girls and boys**; establish or strengthen mechanisms for their engagement with child protection and education services.

Where possible:

▶ Ensure that girls have **safe, secure and monitored virtual spaces to connect with peers and share experiences and concerns** related to school closures and personal safety and well-being at home.

▶ Make sure distance learning modalities and platforms **do not expose girls to cyber-bullying, online exploitation, or abuse.**

Prioritise:

▶ Establish p**rotection continuity plans with parents/ caregivers and other key community stakeholders**, drawing on lessons learned from COVID19, for future school closures, paying particular attention to risks facing girls.

Where possible:

▶ Establish or strengthen girls' and boys' **peer support partnerships** and care activities; provide age-appropriate support to peer mentors on supporting children and adolescent girls during COVID19.

▶ Work with loc**al actors** (caregivers, teachers, school leadership, community/religious leaders and local government) to **assess and improve their disaster preparedness**, with particular attention to risks and local resources to address girls' protection needs.

Protection – B2.2: Getting all girls and boys back into education

Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	Gender-responsive return to school *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

- Prioritise measures to protect girls from gender-based violence during school closures, including **community awareness campaigns and targeted psychosocial support** through remote methods.

- Document and disseminate with relevant education, health, and child protection authorities the **contextual risk-factors contributing to poor engagement or drop out.**

- Ensure connections and shared ways of working during lockdown are established with **child protection services and women's organisations.**

Where possible:

- In communities where employment is informal or income is significantly reduced, distribute meals to girls homes to minimise time and risk involved with travel to/from school.

- Identify, support and prioritize funding to schools in vulnerable communities where child-marriage, child-labour, or child-trafficking could result from loss of income.

Prioritise:

- Utilize existing **com**munity networks, local knowledge, and different community members' proximity to at-risk, girls, boys, and families to gather information on those unlikely to return to school.

- Establish or maintain communication campaigns targeting the caregivers of vulnerable, marginalized, and **excluded** girls and boys, and promoting the long-term benefits of schooling or alternative education.

Where possible:

- Work with **local actors** (caregivers, teachers, school leadership, community/religious leaders and local government) to **assess and improve their disaster preparedness**, with particular attention to risks and local resources to address girls' protection needs.

Protection – B2.3: By investing in gender-responsive teachers, we invest in learners

Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	**Gender-responsive return to school** *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

- For teachers who distribute paper-based learning packages during lockdowns, provide **guidance and support on how to recognis**e and refer incidences of gender-based discrimination or violence.

- Ensure teachers have access to trained support people and services at easy reach, who can monitor and support their own safety and psycho-social well-being.

- With teacher associations or civil society organisations, establish or update protocols and processes for supporting te**acher safety when working in the community.**

Where possible:

- For teachers working with distressed families, **provide guidance in trauma-informed communication and management skills.**

- Set up a **resource repository of culturally appropriate self-care and self-protection strategies** that teachers can access and utilise during lockdown.

- Support teachers to **analyse their safety and well-being** in the context of COVID19; plan achievable strategies that promote access to and engagement with protective factors, and ways to **minimize exposure and vulnerability to risk factors.**

Prioritise:

- With relevant protection services, **provide access to appropriate psycho-social support to teachers**; focus on coping strategies and long-term resilience.

- Build sufficient time into teacher schedules for **new planning, professional development and self-care.**

- Establish or update standard operating procedures for **managing teacher stress and/or burnout on school premises.**

- Allow for **flexibility**, especially for female teachers, in terms of **workload commitments in relation to domestic care burdens.**

Where possible:

- Ensure **school leaders are trained** and supported to appropriately manage and support teachers with COVID19 related trauma or experiences of gender-based violence.

- **Schedule and fund regular and safe community-based social time** for teachers to connect and strengthen collegial relationships.

B3: HOME & COMMUNITY – HEALTH

▶ Provision and continuity of sexual and reproductive health services to vulnerable girls and women and distribution of PPE to teachers

▶ Schools strengthen communication channels with public health services and prevent incidences of stigma or discrimination relating to COVID19

Health – B3.1: The disproportionate impact of school closures on girls	
Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	**Gender-responsive return to school** *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

▶ Undertake **rapid gender analysis to understand increasing health and nutrition inequalities** resulting from school closures, and plan for community-wide education, health and related interventions.

▶ Generate **sex-disaggregated data on access to alternative school health and nutrition programmes** during school closures to better understand gendered impacts and inform school meal programming that meets girls' needs.

Where possible:

▶ Ensure that the most marginalised girls have access to **menstrual hygiene information and products** while they are out of school.

Prioritise:

▶ Strengthen links between **sexuality education and affordable, youth-friendly and gender-responsive services**, including access to contraception and quality information on and access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Where possible:

▶ Strengthen links with **community-based sexual and reproductive health services**; ensure **free and confidential access** to vulnerable, newly married, or pregnant girls.

▶ Establish, extend, or strengthen **community-based alternative learning** programmes for girls **unable to return to school** due to marriage or pregnancy.

Health – B3.2: Getting all girls and boys back into education

Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	Gender-responsive return to school *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

▶ Maintain **consistent messaging on handwashing** as a key strategy for COVID19 prevention, accessible to **girls with disabilities** and those from **minority language** groups.

▶ Using child, adolescent, and caregiver friendly approaches, communicate the relationship between **engagement in education, girls' and women's health and well-being outcomes, and economic independence.**

Where possible:

▶ Begin working on guidelines to **establish child and adolescent COVID19 committees**; focus on safe reopening of schools, girls and boys agency, leadership, inclusion, representation, and participation in planning and decision making.

▶ Ensure the most vulnerable girls and their families have their food needs met during school closures through **food vouchers, meal deliveries, take home rations and cash transfers.**

Prioritise:

▶ Clearly communicate to families the **sexual and reproductive and psycho-social health services available through school,** and ensure that these services are **free of charge.**

▶ Communicate updates on school reopening protocols and processes and related COVID19 **mitigation measures** through accessible **community news and information channels.**

Where possible:

▶ Establish or strengthen **child and adolescent COVID19 committees** to monitor and provide feedback on school procedures relating to, for example, out-of-school children, WASH, inclusion of marginalized or excluded children and adolescents, and school-related gender-based violence.

Health – B3.3: By investing in gender-responsive teachers, we invest in learners

Gender-responsive distance learning *(prepare for school reopening)*	Gender-responsive return to school *(prepare for future closures)*

Prioritise:

- Monitor **teachers' access to sufficient nutrition during lockdown**; in contexts where salaries have been withheld, supplement diets with regular food packages.

- Provide accessible **information and scripting in teachers' mother tongue** relating to COVID19, its causes, and infection prevention measures; support teachers with strategies to share up to date information with girls, boys and caregivers in the community.

- Support teachers with skills and activities for supporting girls' and boys' mental health and well-being through **meditation, mindfulness and mental relaxation techniques**.

- Keep teachers **fully informed of planning and decision making** relating to health-related school reopening processes and protocols.

Where possible:

- Support teachers with the skills to **mitigate and prevent instances of stigma and discrimination** towards girls and boys with COVID19 infected relatives.

- Support teachers and caregivers with skills to **manage their own emotions and anxieties**; provide culturally relevant professional development support on stress management through **meditation, mindfulness, and mental relaxation activities**.

- Communicate and **celebrate teachers' vital and valued role** in identifying, supporting, and re-engaging girls and boys at risk of dropping out; build teachers' sense of self-efficacy and success.

Prioritise:

- Ensure **personal protective equipment is delivered to teachers** at home prior to school reopening.

- Upon reopening, **ensure teachers can make decisions regarding learning spaces, schedules, and health and well-being strategies,** in line with guidance and protocols. Providing teachers with a supported sense of agency helps to foster motivation and a sense of control over their classroom management.

- Ensure teachers can **review and feed into COVID19 prevention protocols and WASH provisions**; allowing teachers the opportunity to voice concerns and contribute to improvements.

- Exemplify and reinforce the vital and valued role of teachers throughout the COVID19 pandemic; celebrate successes, **recognise and reward teachers who have positively impacted girls' and boys' health and well-being.**

Where possible:

- Provide school leaders and senior teachers with **training in occupational Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS).**

- Curate spaces and times for teachers to **engage and collaborate with health sector and child protection professionals**; facilitate time for the sharing of insights and strategies for leadership, personal health and well-being, and resilience.

C1: Overall Gender-responsive Monitoring Considerations

Prioritise:

▶ Ensure **monitoring modalities** are appropriate to girls and allow girls' **direct participation in feedback or expression of concerns.**

▶ Include questions on **access to distance learning modalities** in return to school formative assessment activities.

▶ Follow UNICEF's Guidance for Monitoring Distance Learning and ensure questions address issues **specific to girls' learning** (domestic burden, poor access to internet, biases towards boy learners, digital gender gap etc.).

▶ Build on and **strengthen current monitoring systems where available**, especially real-time **EMIS and EWS** with functions for **gender disaggregation, and intersecting demographic characteristics** such as location, access to technology, ethnic or caste identity, rural or urban location.

▶ Review **school attendance / absence indicators, drop-out predictors, and thresholds that activate follow-up or further reporting**. Take into account differential domestic pressures on girls and boys in the context of COVID19. Triangulate data on distance learning access with re-enrolment, attendance and MHPSS.

▶ Track and document **school compliance with safe school reopening protocols**; in terms of international guidelines and local policies.

Where possible:

▶ Undertake a **rapid gender-analysis** before school reopening; followed by comprehensive analysis to track the extent to which core concerns are addressed. Ensure a **cross-section of learning, health, and protection considerations are included** (e.g. WASH, MHM, GBV, accelerated learning needs).

▶ **Track school roll-out of agreed activities at a district level**, including but not limited to remedial and accelerated learning activities, child protection referral services, adaption of infrastructure, access to and maintenance of hygiene stocks.

▶ Monitor effectiveness of **curriculum prioritization or adaptation activities,** especially with regards to girls' and boys' differential needs. For example, monitor and disaggregate rates of access to remedial and accelerated learning opportunities, or the subject areas that are prioritized for girls and boys respectively.

▶ In **formative assessment activities**, include questions relating to **well-being, mental health and resilience.** Questions might relate to confidence, self-image, feelings of safety and thoughts about the future.

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