



**AREA OF GLOBAL DISTINCTIVENESS:
INCLUSIVE QUALITY EDUCATION**

OUR GOAL

Vulnerable and excluded children – particularly girls – access and complete inclusive quality education from pre-primary to secondary level. This encompasses formal, non-formal and informal provision, in development and humanitarian settings, including displaced and crisis-affected communities.

- One-third of all out-of-school primary-age children have a disability.

Girls from poor and vulnerable groups, and those affected by conflict, face the biggest barriers to education. Girls are still less likely than boys to enrol in school, stay in school or have their educational needs met.

Millions of children are in school but are not learning properly. Their lack of achievement is due to many factors – including poor teaching, often in a language that is not their mother tongue, limited resources, and being subjected to violence or abuse.

- More than 617 million children and adolescents of primary and lower secondary age do not achieve minimum proficiency levels in reading and mathematics.

WHY DOES ALL THIS MATTER?

Education is a fundamental human right. It is also a vital tool for achieving the Agenda 2030 development goals. Sustainable Development Goal 4 emphasises the need for inclusive quality education. This is because quality education gives young people the skills, knowledge, competences and values to help them to break cycles of

poverty, discrimination, social and gender inequality. They are empowered to make positive changes, overturn oppressive gender norms and promote equality. This benefits individuals, families and communities. Health, nutrition and life expectancy improve. Educated girls tend to delay marriage, have fewer but healthier children and contribute more financially. Quality education includes comprehensive sexuality education, informs young people about citizenship and climate change, and helps to safeguard them in conflict and disaster situations.

ROOT CAUSES OF INEQUALITIES IN ACCESSING EDUCATION

- **Gender inequality** intensifies the negative effects of exclusion, making it worse for girls and LGBTIQ+ children and youth. Girls drop out or are excluded due to child marriage and adolescent pregnancy. Poor sanitation facilities prompt girls to drop out or miss school when they are menstruating.
- **Financial exclusion** occurs when poverty and the costs of education force millions of children to drop out or to work while in school, compromising their progress.

THE ISSUE AT STAKE

Inclusive quality education means that all children, regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional or linguistic abilities, learn and participate equally and effectively, in safety and free from gender bias.

However, a range of often intersecting factors including gender, poverty, location, disability, language and ethnicity create barriers that prevent millions of children from accessing and completing quality education.

- 263 million children, adolescents and youth were out of school in 2016 – nearly one-fifth of the young global population.
- 15 million primary-age girls will never get the chance to learn to read or write compared to 10 million boys.

- **Children with a disability** are more likely to be excluded and marginalised; the related disadvantages are further magnified for girls, children living in poverty and in remote locations.
- **Disasters and conflicts** severely disrupted the education of more than 80 million children in 35 countries in 2015. Education in emergencies is severely under-funded. Among refugees, girls and children with disabilities suffer the most. Without education, children and youth are less resilient and more vulnerable to shocks and instability.
- **Girls who are out of school** are particularly vulnerable to violence and abuse; child, early and forced marriage; adolescent pregnancy; and early motherhood.
- **Violence** – physical, sexual or psychological – occurs in school, on the way to or from school, or online. It particularly affects girls, especially those with disabilities. Schools and learning centres are increasingly targeted in violent attacks or used for recruitment by armed groups.





OUR THREE KEY INVESTMENT AREAS



Effective approaches for out-of-school children and adolescents to access education

- Focusing on girls from vulnerable and excluded groups, especially regarding child, early or forced marriage and adolescent pregnancy
- Developing, delivering and scaling up accelerated education models, non-formal equivalency programmes and flexible modes of delivery, like ICT and digital
- Mobilising and engaging communities to make schools more inclusive and more responsive to children's needs
- Collecting disaggregated data to assess gaps in access and learning outcomes, and where interventions have been effective



Gender transformative content, practices and behaviours in schools

- Mainstreaming gender issues in teacher training and ongoing support
- Revising curricula and materials to remove gender bias or stereotypes
- Recruiting more female teachers and promoting more into management
- Increasing participation by girls, their mothers and other women in school governance
- Supporting married girls, pregnant girls and young mothers to stay in school, using flexible schedules, study and assessment models
- Encouraging communities to support girls' education by curbing child marriage, reducing pregnancy rates, reducing girls' household duties, monitoring girls' attendance and teachers' behaviour



Safe and resilient learning environments

- Developing innovative approaches, including mobile teams and IT, when formal education is not feasible or safe
- Promoting disaster risk reduction, increasing preparedness for response, recovery and resilience through schools and education systems
- Promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices, education for sustainable development and climate change adaptation
- Promoting safe and resilient school infrastructure, including water, sanitation and menstrual hygiene management facilities
- Eliminating violence in schools through school policies, training, codes of conduct, and by changing behaviour and social norms



that poor, vulnerable and marginalised girls in particular, along with all children, achieve their rights to inclusive quality education.

We do this by:

- improving the daily condition and social position of girls, helping them to challenge discriminatory gender norms and barriers throughout their life cycle;
- engaging with families, communities, leaders, school teams, children and young people to identify gender norms that impede children's education, and help to construct alternative, positive ones;
- identifying and supporting "norm trendsetters" and challenging discrimination in education;
- strengthening girls' and women's agency, promoting their role in decision-making and enabling them to challenge gender-based power inequalities;
- ensuring that resource allocation (including trained teachers) is gender responsive and equitable, prioritising the most vulnerable and marginalised;
- working with Ministries of Education and other partners to influence, strengthen and contribute to gender responsive education sector planning and budgeting processes;
- influencing governments to tackle legal barriers to education for girls who are pregnant, young mothers and/or married, and to support their entry and re-entry into the education system.

OUR GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH

Restrictive gender norms and practices affect girls' access to education, their sense of self-worth and social value. Girls in rural areas are particularly affected. In schools, teaching methods and materials may not be gender sensitive and may contain gender bias. At home, girls shoulder more domestic duties, limiting their time to study. Child marriage and adolescent pregnancy also drive girls' dropout from education.

Plan International is committed to applying a gender transformative approach to ensure

GLOBAL INFLUENCING PRIORITIES

We want global, regional and national actors – such as governments and global institutions – to collectively make commitments on these actions:

- Ensure that girls (including those who are pregnant, mothers and/or married) can access and complete primary and secondary education.
- Ensure that the barriers to education for girls during crises are prioritised through global, regional and national-level policy and financing commitments.
- Increase global, regional and national-level awareness of, action and investment to prevent school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV).
- Support and partner youth-led organisations and youth activists to hold governments to account on commitments to gender equality and education.
- Ensure that comprehensive sexuality education is delivered within the formal curriculum.