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Gender and education practice in Kenya

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GENDER AND EDUCATION PRACTICE IN KENYA

Key Takeaways

- The majority of the gender and education practice landscape in Kenya is composed of projects and programs (61 percent of total programs or 295 programs total), followed by advocacy campaigns (29 percent of total programs or 141 programs).
- Most programs target girls and boys who are both in and out of school, as well as mothers, and community members. Few programs aim to target out-of-school children/youth specifically (7 percent). Most programs (66 percent) aim to target children and adolescents with mixed enrollment statuses (i.e. some are in school and some are out).
- The majority of programs target primary and secondary school (though this may be biased due to EGER's inclusion criteria)—more specifically Upper Primary (71 percent) and Lower Secondary (72 percent).
- Groups that are the least targeted across all programs mapped are migrants and refugees (both internal and external).
- Very few gender and education programs that target adolescent mothers or address child marriage, target spouses/partners in their programming (2 percent). Many of these programs target mothers, female teachers, and community members as a support against child marriage. Fathers are sometimes targeted by interventions (9 percent for child marriage and 8 percent for adolescent childbearing) but are more often the targets of advocacy campaigns—27 percent of child marriage and adolescent childbearing campaigns target fathers.

Background and Introduction

Toward realization of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, the Constitution of Kenya guarantees the right to free and compulsory basic education (Article 53 (1) (b)). In particular, Article 55 (a) ensures access to relevant education and training for all youth, including through affirmative action programs and more. Through these articles, the Government of Kenya has demonstrated its commitment to developing the education, training, and research sector through continued investment.

However, despite the substantial allocation of resources and notable achievements in enhanced access, retention, quality, and completion rates, the sector still faces gender and regional disparities. To meet these

challenges, Kenya hosts a robust network of education actors, including the government, private sector, civil society, and development partners, who are driving initiatives to address gender disparities in education. Understanding this landscape is important for informed decision-making and coordinated efforts to improve gender and education outcomes.

As part of a four-brief series, this brief assesses current data from the Population Council's Evidence for Gender and Education Resource (EGER) Database to provide a snapshot of the current gender and education practice landscape in Kenya. It highlights where programs are being implemented, which interventions they are using, and what outcomes they are aiming to achieve. By better

understanding who is doing what, where, and how, we can ensure that limited resources are invested in the most effective solutions to achieve gender equality in education.

Methodology

Since EGER's launch in April 2020, EGER has gathered information on over 710 organizations and 1,027 programs working in the gender and education landscape in over 100+ low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). In Kenya specifically, EGER has conducted ecosystem mappings at both the national and county levels. Initial county-level mappings were conducted in March 2022 in Homa Bay, Kilifi, Narok, and Turkana and four additional counties (Kericho, Kisumu, Laikipia, and Machakos) were mapped in January/February 2023. Information was collected directly from the organizations and programs themselves, or through desk-bound research whenever organizations or programs were unreachable. To be included in this landscaping analysis, organizations must have gender and education programs that are active as of July 1, 2018, and must also focus on at least one of three gender and education dimensions: girls' education specifically; gender and education activities that focus on structural barriers such as child marriage; and/or general education programs for girls and boys (provided they have improvement in girls' education as an outcome). Programs that ended prior to July 1, 2018, may still be included if data dissemination of their programmatic efforts has continued past the cutoff date. As many of the counties mapped in this study are in arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) regions, the program sample is biased toward these regions and biased toward county-level programming.

Overview of the Research and Findings

The general gender and education landscape

In total, EGER has mapped 342 organizations and 486 programs in Kenya's gender and education landscape. Of these programs, 63 percent are implemented at the county level, 24 percent are national-level programs, and 12 percent are global-level programs implemented in Kenya. The majority of programs are classified as general projects/programs (61 percent), followed by advocacy campaigns (29 percent). Research projects (5 percent), funding initiatives (4 percent), and networks (1 percent) constitute only 12 percent of the total program sample combined.

Who are programs aiming to target?

Of the Kenya programs mapped in EGER, it is important to highlight who is generally being targeted most by gender and education programs and who is not. From our sampling, a majority of gender and education programs are implemented at secondary (76 percent) and primary school levels (73 percent), with fewer programs targeted at preschool (23 percent) and tertiary school levels (33 percent). Girls (64 percent) and boys (37 percent) of mixed school enrollment status, mothers (29 percent), and female community members (23 percent) are most frequently targeted by programs, while spouses and partners (5 percent) and out-of-school boys specifically (5 percent) are the least targeted populations. Some gender and education programs specifically support different vulnerable populations. The most targeted populations of interest are orphans (54 percent), adolescent mothers (48 percent), and people with disabilities (38 percent). The least targeted groups across mapped gender and education programs in Kenya are internal (4 percent) and external migrants (1 percent), as well as internal refugees (3 percent).

Which barriers do programs aim to address?

Despite programs' best efforts, a multitude of barriers may inhibit children from realizing their educational futures. A majority of programs in the Kenyan gender and education landscape address the following barriers most often: inadequate life skills (73 percent), lack of support for girls' education (72 percent), lack of safe spaces (59 percent), inadequate menstrual hygiene management (55 percent), and inadequate health and childcare services (53 percent). The least addressed barriers were inadequate school access (28 percent), lack of water and sanitation (20 percent), child marriage/adolescent childbearing (19 percent), inadequate sports programs for girls (18 percent), and ineffective/poor pedagogy (10 percent).

Specific Interventions as per the Government's Priority Thematic Areas

While it's helpful to understand the general contours of Kenya's gender and education landscape, it is imperative to explore how programs are specifically trying to improve educational outcomes on the ground. The following sections outline how the gender and education community is working to achieve these outcomes, where

they're focusing their work, and for whom—according to the government's priority areas.

Access – Enrollment and Attainment

Of all 486 gender and education programs EGER has mapped in Kenya, 77 percent aim to improve enrollment and/or attainment. Of the 209 on-the-ground programs that aim to improve enrollment and/or attainment, 62 percent aimed to increase re-enrollment, while 54 percent and 43 percent aimed to increase enrollment in primary and secondary school, respectively. These programs also aim to improve attainment by increasing progression to secondary school (58 percent), as well as increase primary (58 percent) and secondary school completion (44 percent).

Programs that aim to improve enrollment and attainment primarily target girls (64 percent) and boys (37 percent) who are in and out of school. The most targeted populations of interest were orphans (61 percent), adolescent mothers (46 percent), people with disabilities (39 percent), and people living with HIV/AIDS (34 percent). However, gaps exist in program reach as only 3 percent of enrollment/attainment programs specifically target out-of-school boys, internal refugees (2 percent), and external migrants (<1 percent).

Gender and education programs that aim to increase enrollment/attainment tend to employ approaches like community mobilization/engagement (63 percent), gender rights and power education (55 percent), general awareness-raising to improve access to schooling (51 percent), sexual reproductive health education (49 percent), and menstruation education for girls (46 percent). However, approaches such as tuition/fee waivers and school feeding, which tend to be effective in improving school access—according to the evidence—are only implemented in 43 percent and 18 percent of programs respectively.

Quality – Learning

Once children are enrolled in school, it is imperative all children receive a quality education and are able to learn. Of the programs we've analyzed, a total of 285 programs (59 percent of all programs mapped) focus on improving learning. In particular, projects/programs (n=186) in our sample are aiming to improve learning outcomes by increasing literacy (54 percent), increasing numeracy (36 percent), and improving test scores (30 percent).

Programs that aim to improve learning primarily target groups of girls (63 percent) and boys (36 percent) of mixed enrollment status as primary populations. However, 25 percent of learning programs target girls who are in school specifically. These projects/programs also commonly provide programming to orphans (62 percent), people with disabilities (40 percent), and adolescent mothers (46 percent). While trained and supported teachers are integral to quality learning, only 12 percent and 11 percent target female and male teachers respectively.

Projects/programs focused on learning use approaches such as community engagement (62 percent) and general awareness-raising (53 percent) most frequently. However, approaches that are often considered to improve learning, such as literacy or numeracy interventions and remedial education/skills building are employed by 17 to 35 percent of all learning projects/programs. Additionally, very few programs implement teacher-focused approaches (<11 percent) that could further improve the quality of learning.

Safety, Security, and Gender-Based Violence

Of the total number of programs analyzed, 298 (61 percent of all programs mapped) address gender-based violence (GBV). Specifically, the following violence dimensions were addressed by the 175 projects/programs focusing on violence reduction: reduced child violence (54 percent), reduced school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) (48 percent), reduced intimate partner violence (IPV) (32 percent), and improved understanding of sexual harassment, coercion, and consent (57 percent).

Programs that address GBV and safety primarily target girls (75 percent) and boys (39 percent), both in and out of school, as well as, female support figures, such as mothers (33 percent) and female community members (32 percent). In this subset of programs, male community members are also primary targets (21 percent). Other populations of interest targeted by GBV gender and education programs included orphans (70 percent), adolescent mothers (62 percent), people with disabilities (51 percent), and people living with HIV/AIDS (41 percent).

For programs that aim to reduce violence, approaches such as community engagement (71 percent), general awareness-raising (60 percent), gender, rights, and power education (69 percent), sexual and reproductive health education (including puberty education) (60 percent), and menstruation education for girls (57 percent) are implemented most frequently. When looking at violence reduction and safety approaches specifically, roughly a quarter to a third of gender and education programs that aim to address GBV and safety, implement at least one violence-reduction approach. These approaches include anti-violence policies and codes of conduct (26 percent), violence prevention curriculum/activities for students (25 percent), safe and welcoming schools (28 percent), and safe channels/ mechanisms for reporting violence (38 percent).

Equity — Child Marriage, Adolescent Childbearing, and Gender Norms

Many programs in the Kenyan gender and education space strive to reduce harmful gender norms and structural barriers to education such as child marriage and adolescent childbearing. Of the programs analyzed, 42 percent of total programs (n=204) aim to address at least one of these barriers in their programming. More specifically, 42 percent address gender norms and attitudes, 44 percent address child marriage, and 41 percent address adolescent childbearing.

Most programs that aim to reduce child marriage, also aim to reduce adolescent childbearing. Of the 250 projects/programs focusing on these barriers, the majority (66 percent) address both child marriage and adolescent childbearing, while 18 percent and 16 percent focus solely on child marriage or adolescent childbearing respectively.

Programs that aim to shift gender norms, address child marriage, and/or address adolescent childbearing often target the same populations—mostly girls and boys (in and out of school and in school specifically), as well as mothers and female community members. Notably, a

sizeable portion of programs (around 20 percent) that aim to increase gender equity include male community members as a primary beneficiary group.

These programs often use the same approaches to shift gender norms or reduce child marriage and adolescent childbearing. The most common approaches used across programs with these goals are community mobilization/ engagement, general awareness-raising, providing education around gender, rights, and power and sexual and reproductive health education. Nearly 60 percent to 80 percent of programs that focus on gender norms, child marriage, or adolescent childbearing use the approaches listed above.

Nurturing and Mentoring

Of the programs analyzed, 268 programs (55 percent of total programs) address mentorship in their programming. In particular, projects/programs that address mentorship in the sample (n=161) aim to improve the following education-related outcomes: improve social-emotional learning (SEL) skills (76 percent), improve academic skills (60 percent), improve critical thinking (60 percent), reduce absenteeism (55 percent), and increase progression to secondary school (55 percent).

Programs that identify mentorship as a cross-cutting topic in their work primarily target girls and boys that are both in and out of school, as well as, female support figures, such as mothers and female community members. For this subset of programs, approaches such as community engagement (74 percent), gender, rights, and power education (67 percent), and sexual and reproductive health education (62 percent) are implemented most frequently in the sample. However, only a fifth to half of all programs that address mentorship implement some form of mentorship model in their programming. Peer mentors are the most frequently used approach followed by adult and teacher mentors.

Recommendations

- Devise an inclusive (boys and girls) approach in promoting gender in education.
- Build the capacity of teachers to use gender-responsive pedagogy.
- Strengthen the capacity of education managers and educators to embrace gender-responsive planning, curriculum, and assessment.
- Advocate for anti-violence policies and codes of conduct to promote safe channels for reporting violence.
- Provide empowerment programs for out-of-school girls, as well as in pre-unit and tertiary institutions.
- Strengthen mentorship programs in schools and tertiary institutions.
- Establish a multisectoral coordination framework for promoting programs in gender and campaigns against GBV.
- Strengthen parental engagement and empowerment.

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