Meeting the moment: The gender and education community's response to COVID-19

Evidence for Gender & Education Resource (EGER)

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COVID-19: How have we responded?

Across the globe, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to disrupt girls’ education. With sudden school closures, social gathering restrictions, and shifting funding priorities, organizations have had to halt, adapt, or create new girls’ education programming to meet the challenges of this moment. It is more important than ever to coordinate our efforts to ensure girls receive a quality education as we navigate the pandemic’s complex effects. To target COVID-19 response efforts effectively and efficiently, we must first understand who is doing what and where in the global gender and education ecosystem.

This is an initial snapshot of global COVID-19 girls’ education activities as of April 2021. You can explore COVID-19 girls’ education programs and find the latest evidence on gender and education in the EGER web-portal.

Who are COVID-19 girls' education programs trying to reach?

**TARGET POPULATION**  
**7% of programs targeted other groups or did not state a target group**

- **38%** primarily target girls only
- **54%** targets both boys & girls
- **1%** primarily target boys only

**FREQUENTLY TARGETED SUB-POPULATIONS**  
**Only 16% of programs mentioned targeting a specific sub-population**

- Displaced/refugee - Internal: 7%
- Displaced/refugee - External: 6%
- People with disabilities: 6%
- Orphans & vulnerable children: 2%
- Other: 2%

**PARTICIPANTS’ SCHOOL-LEVEL**  
**Programs may target more than one school-level**

- Pre-school: 9%
- Lower Primary: 27%
- Upper Primary: 7%
- Lower Secondary: 6%
- Upper Secondary: 27%
- Tertiary: 8%
- Vocational: 5%

**PARTICIPANTS’ ENROLLMENT STATUS**

- All out of school: 3%
- Some in school: 84%
- All in school: 17%

**7%** of programs targeted other groups or did not state a target group

Of these programs...

- **77%** are newly developed programs
- **23%** are adapted from existing programs

**Regional Distribution**

- **GLOBAL**: 48%
- **SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**: 41%
- **SOUTH ASIA**: 17%
- **MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA**: 12%
- **EAST ASIA & PACIFIC**: 6%
- **LATIN AMERICA & CARRIBBEAN**: 2%

**Program Type**

- **RESEARCH PROJECT**: 33%
- **PROJECT/PROGRAM**: 27%
- **ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN**: 27%
- **FUNDING INITIATIVE**: 8%
- **NETWORK/CONVENING**: 5%

**WHAT'S INCLUDED?**

127 COVID-19 GIRLS' EDUCATION PROGRAMS
How are programs getting girls back in school and learning?

**Both programs that address girls' learning and programs that address enrollment/attainment most commonly use these five approaches:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Programs to improve enrollment/attainment</th>
<th>Programs to improve learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Materials</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Learning Devices</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Learning Materials</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling/ Support in/around schools</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Learning Centers/ Mobile Schools/ Home Schools</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

65% of programs that aim to improve learning use at least one EdTech approach

**Technologies used by girls' learning programs:**
- Digital learning materials
- Digital learning devices
- Digital textbooks
- Digital reading materials (non-textbook)
- Digital skills building/literacy (including coding)
- Educational radio/ television programs
- Computer assisted learning
- Check-in calls or SMS messages by teachers
- General online training

What other goals do COVID-19 programs aim to achieve?

- More equitable gender attitudes and norms: 36%
- Increased agency and empowerment: 28%
- Improved mental health: 20%
- Reduced child, early forced marriage: 20%
- Improved sexual and reproductive health: 20%
- Other health-related improvements: 24%
- Cross-cutting program goals: 36%

Our Methodology

**EGER Program Criteria:**
- Program is implemented in a low-/middle-income country
- Girls' education is a stated program goal

**Methods**

We assessed 280+ global organizations currently included in the Evidence for Gender and Education Resource (EGER) database and gathered information on their COVID-19-response girls' education programs. The EGER database does not currently include country-level government or local-level NGO programs and thus are not reflected in this brief.

For more information on who's included in the EGER database, and how we are expanding to include country-level programs, checkout our website at [www.egeresource.org](http://www.egeresource.org).
How are programs addressing other barriers to girls' education that may be worsened by the pandemic?

**Child Marriage & Early Adolescent Childbearing**

- **24%** address child marriage and/or early adolescent childbearing in their work
- **84%** address both topics
- **13%** only address child marriage
- **3%** only address early pregnancy

**Gender Based Violence (GBV)**

- **31%** address violence in their programming

These programs commonly implement the following approaches:

- **Gender, Rights & Power Education**
- **Counselling/Outreach/Advisory School**
- **Other Violence**
- **Community Engagement**
- **Other Child Marriage**

(Includes multiple forms of violence: SRGBV, violence-unspecified, intimate partner violence, and violence against children)

**Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH)**

- **26%** identify WASH as a cross cutting topic addressed in the program

Of these programs, the most commonly implemented WASH approaches are:

- **Improved Water Access**
- **Distributed Menstrual Hygiene Products**
- **Constructed/Improved Sex-Specific Toilets**

How do we build back better during and after COVID-19?

**Collect and disaggregate data**

As data emerge on COVID-19-related effects on returning to school and learning loss, it will be critical to ensure data are collected and disaggregated by gender, age, geography, and economic status. Disaggregated data on education and related needs of students together with documentation of current activities will help us understand where gaps exist, who is being left behind and where investments need to be made.

**Evaluate COVID-19 girls' education programs**

It is vital to evaluate COVID-19 gender and education programs to assess what programs are improving which outcomes for whom, and to facilitate adaptive learning in the face of COVID-19's complex and ongoing challenges.

**Ensure evidence and practice are aligned**

Programs that address economic barriers to schooling are effective in improving enrollment/attainment before COVID-19 (see Girls' Education Roadmap). However, these approaches do not rank in the top five approaches of programs documented here. In contrast, provision of digital materials and devices figure prominently among strategies employed. Evaluations of these programs are not yet published and will be critical to assess their effectiveness and reach, as well as to build the evidence base on what does and does not work.

Are you in?

Join hundreds of organizations and share your work in the EGER database. To get started, visit https://egeresource.org/signup/

Stay Updated!

Receive the EGER Digest and get the latest evidence, updates, and data from the gender and education community. Sign up here!

Suggested citation


EGER represents a global effort to document and share the latest evidence and ongoing work in gender and education. It was developed by the Population Council’s GIRL Center with Echidna Giving as a founding partner. Core support is also provided by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.