



LIFTING BARRIERS: EDUCATED BOYS FOR GENDER EQUALITY

TACKLING BOYS' DISENGAGEMENT FROM EDUCATION

AIM OF THE PROJECT

The [Lifting barriers: Educated boys for gender equality](#) project will investigate how harmful masculine gender norms impact boys' educational motivation and desire to learn. By means of research and practice, the project will identify the conditions that facilitate the development, successful implementation and scaling-up of strategies to advance positive and inclusive masculinities in and through education. It includes a pilot of a school-based intervention model in **Malawi** and preparing the ground for intervention in **Cambodia** and **Lesotho**.

BACKGROUND

As the UNESCO 2022 Report '[Leave no child behind: global report on boys' disengagement from education](#)' has shown, boys are at high risk of repeating grades, failing to progress in their education, and not learning while in school. Gendered norms and expectations are part of the factors that can negatively impact boys' motivation and desire to learn. While previously boys' disengagement and dropout were concerns in mainly high-income countries, several low- and middle-income countries have seen a reversal in gender gaps. Yet, despite increasing evidence of these dynamics, there has been limited research on effective strategies to combat boys' disengagement from education.

IMPACT

By addressing harmful masculine gender norms and promoting positive and inclusive masculinities, the project aims to reduce gender inequality and harmful masculine gender norms in and through education and strengthen education systems to become more gender-transformative, efficient, safe and inclusive.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

Generate evidence on how to best to address harmful masculine gender norms at the school level to keep boys engaged in school and learning and promote gender equality.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- **Impact of gender norms:** How do gender norms and expectations held by boys, teachers and school personnel influence boys' education trajectories and gender equality more broadly?
- **Promising innovations:** What types of innovations best promote inclusive and positive masculinities, and keep boys engaged in school and learning?
- **Scalability:** What factors enable, incentivize or hinder the scaling of promising or proven innovations?

RESEARCH METHODS

- **Scoping study:** Mapping out key components and enabling factors in successfully implemented interventions.
- **Case studies:** Identifying the problem and its underlying factors at country level.
- **Model intervention design:** Creating a comprehensive school-level intervention to address harmful masculine gender norms and keep boys in school.
- **Implementation and evaluation:** Testing and evaluating the intervention, starting with a pilot in Malawi and with preparations for Cambodia and Lesotho.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- **Knowledge and skills development:** Ministries, teachers, school leaders, and education personnel will gain a deep understanding of how gender norms and expectations influence learners' experiences, academic outcomes and educational trajectories. They will develop the skills to deliver gender-transformative strategies that promote positive and inclusive masculinities.
- **Capacity building:** The project will create global goods including methodological and policy guides as well as curriculum and training material, creating a model intervention that can be scaled, adapted and widely replicated.

ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS FROM MARCH 2024 TO MARCH 2027

- **Formative research outputs:** including a scoping study, case studies, policy briefs, and a global report on gender-transformative approaches.
- **Development of a comprehensive model:** including a methodology for country case studies, key elements of innovations, a global guide for facilitators on addressing harmful and restrictive masculine gender norms in school, and a guide for Ministry of Education staff to review teaching/learning materials.
- **Implementation and evaluation of the pilot:** with adapted materials for the Malawi context, guidance on adaptation and scaling, and an evaluation report.
- **Experience sharing and learning through workshops and webinars:** with national workshops in Cambodia, Lesotho and Malawi, and regional and global webinars to disseminate results and tools.

IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATIONS AND PARTNERS

- **Technical lead:** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- **Consortium partners:** UNESCO, Equimundo, University of East Anglia (UEA)
- **National partners:** Centre for Alternatives for Victimised Women and Children (CAVWOC), Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), Center for Social Research (CSR), University of Malawi.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE UPDATES ON THE PROJECT?

Let us know at gender.ed@unesco.org

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