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Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Education
Sector



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COVID-19 Education Response Webinar

Addressing the gender dimensions of COVID-related school closures

3 April 2020

SYNTHESIS REPORT

Context

Evidence tells us that public health outbreaks have distinct gendered impacts, and that preparedness and response efforts must understand the gender dimensions of these crises to avert widening inequalities.

The COVID-19 pandemic is no different. COVID-related school closures across 188 countries have the potential to exacerbate existing gender inequalities in education or create new ones unless measures are taken to understand and address the gender dimensions.

The COVID crisis has shed light on particular and existing challenges still facing girls and boys. While swift measures are needed now, the situation can also prove to be a window of opportunity to better target actions in our path to advance the 2030 Agenda, and in particular Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 on inclusive quality education and lifelong learning and gender equality and our collective aim to leave no one behind.

This report presents the main ideas and key results of the webinar.

Related links

Watch the [webinar recording](#)

Read the [article](#)

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Objective and guiding questions

This webinar, the third in the UNESCO COVID-19 Education Response webinar series, examined the gender dimensions of COVID-related school closures, and facilitated knowledge exchange on how countries can ensure gender-responsive, evidence-based actions during and after this unprecedented educational disruption. The following questions guided the exchange:

- What are the gender dimensions of COVID-related school closures? How is this crisis particularly affecting girls, adolescents and young women?
- What can we learn from previous crises and health outbreaks, and how can we apply lessons to the current situation?
- What efforts are governments making to ensure that all learners, especially the poorest girls, are able to continue their education?
- For countries supporting online learning, what steps are being taken to address the gender digital skills divide? For other countries where this option is not feasible, what innovations are underway to ensure continuity of learning for the most marginalised?
- How will gender figure in future education financing mechanisms aiming to mitigate the impact of COVID-19? What priorities should domestic financing take?
- What actions are needed to ensure we do not reverse 20 years of gains on girls' education, and further deepen gender inequalities in education?

What are the gender implications of school closures?

“We are living a period of high uncertainty during which we know that COVID-19 related school closures will exacerbate gender inequalities.”

-- Suzanne Grant Lewis, Director of UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), in the opening

Recent reviews of evidence on efforts to mitigate education effects of disease outbreaks¹ tell us that both gender and education are neglected in responses.

According to [UNESCO's global monitoring of school closures](#), as 10 April 2020, 1.57 billion or 90% of enrolled learners from pre-primary to tertiary education are out of school due to the COVID-19 pandemic, out of which 763 million are girls. This adds on to the 258 million children, adolescents and youth who were already out of school, including the 9 million girls who never had never set foot in a classroom.

¹ These include: Smith, J. 2019. Overcoming the 'tyranny of the urgent': integrating gender into disease outbreak preparedness and response, *Gender & Development*, 27:2, 355-369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2019.1615288> and Hallgarten, J. 2020. Evidence on efforts to mitigate the negative educational impact of past disease outbreaks K4D Helpdesk Report 793. Reading, UK: Education Development Trust. <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/15202>

COVID-19 has no borders. This is a universal issue. All countries must consider how this crisis may widen gender inequalities and all countries need to take action to address them.

In the wake of school closures, we know that:

- Women and girls are more exposed to the virus, as they are the primary health care providers, at home and in healthcare facilities
- Women and girls may be overburdened by unpaid work (including domestic tasks and childcare) and less able to continue with educational activities
- Women and girls confined in their homes are more exposed to domestic violence
- Adolescent girls and boys may be more likely to turn to criminal or illicit behaviours
- Adolescent girls face increased risk of early and forced marriages, and early pregnancy, jeopardizing their return to school
- Vital services and resources such as feeding programmes or maternity and reproductive health can be expected to be diverted to fight the epidemic.

The crisis is underlining existing challenges, particularly the gender digital divide. There is also a risk of boys' disengagement from education due to the associated economic hardships caused by the pandemic as boys turn to income-generating activities to provide for their families, leaving school behind.

As we swiftly take action to ensure that students around the world continue on their education and learning paths, we must learn from Ebola, Zika and other outbreaks to understand how to best integrate gender equality considerations in education responses.

What lessons can we learn from the Ebola crisis?

“Our experience from the Ebola crisis says that if we do not think about girls now, we will suffer serious consequences. We could lose a whole generation. For girls, every day counts.”

-- Cherner Bah, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Purposeful, Sierra Leone in his keynote speech

While the magnitude of the COVID-19 crisis is unprecedented, we look to the lessons learnt from the Ebola epidemic in Africa. At the height of the epidemic in 2014, 5 million children were affected by school closures across Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, countries hardest hit by the outbreak. Poverty levels also rose significantly as education was interrupted.

Speakers remarked the ‘uncomfortably chilling’ parallels of the COVID pandemic with what occurred around the Ebola epidemic in Africa. Today, over 111 million of girls living in the world's least developed countries are currently out of school due to COVID-related closures. These are countries facing extreme poverty, economic vulnerability and are settings where gender disparities in education are highest. In Mali, Niger and South Sudan — 3 countries with

some of the lowest enrolment and completion rates for girls — closures have forced over 4 million girls out of school.

During the keynote speech, the experience of Sierra Leone was shared, beginning with the story of Dorcas, an adolescent girl aged 17 who lived through the Ebola crisis in 2014. Her mother, a community health volunteer, was infected by Ebola as was her family and herself. As the eldest, Dorcas took on the responsibility to provide for her two younger siblings at home. With the community on lockdown and her school closed, she felt isolated and helpless.

School is much more than a place of learning. For Dorcas, school was her social safety net where she could socialize, share experience and access vital services such as school feeding programmes.

Much of the interventions to reinstate education and learning in Dorcas' community during the crisis did not consider the needs of girls. While radio learning programmes were innovative approaches to reach communities in rural areas, most girls and families did not have money to fund the costs of batteries for the radio. For younger girls, the programmes running on the radio were not engaging enough for them to keep listening.

During and after crises like the Ebola outbreak in Africa, the risk of child marriage and early pregnancy increased. In Sierra Leone, adolescent pregnancy increased by up to 65% in some communities. Transactional sex and sexual exploitation also increased. Cherner shared that in Sierra Leone, police officers enforcing the quarantine were often among those demanding sexual favours for passage. Many girls who were in school never returned after the crisis.

UNESCO's Assistant Director-General, Stefania Giannini, and Plan International's Chief Executive Officer, Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen, [co-authored an opinion piece](#) on the importance of applying lessons learnt from Ebola to COVID-19 education responses.

Country experiences

Youth voices from Nigeria

In Nigeria, the Federal Ministry of Education has closed all schools nationwide due to the COVID-19 crisis. Poverty and a lack of information are impacting upon children's lives, in particular girls living in marginalized communities.

The pandemic has placed girls living in contexts with persisting gender discrimination and harmful social norms at greater risk. These risks include exposure to sexual abuse, arranged marriage and unwanted pregnancy, which will have spin-off effects girls' education.

Additionally, girls at home are expected to tend to household chores shifting their attention from education and impacting their academic performance.

“Engage youth in the development of responses to manage the impact of the crisis. This is critical to ensure relevancy and sustainability.”

-- Tinuola Oladebo, Programme manager for OneAfricanChild, Nigeria, during the panel

Young activists, advocates and informal educators are collaborating and co-creating responses to ensure that girls and boys can continue to access education at home. *OneAfricanChild* is currently developing curricula into PowerPoints with a voice-over. An application covering grades seven through nine is also being created in cooperation with young people. Support from civil society is needed to help make these tools a reality and educational responses must be contextualized to consider the gender gap in access to technology.

Early planning in Nepal

In Nepal, 8.8 million enrolled learners of all levels are out of school, with all educational institutions closed since 19 March. While there is limited evidence from previous health outbreaks in Nepal, experience has found that girls and boys leave school after an extended absence from school. Economic hardships caused by crises and outbreaks are also believed to contribute to increases in early marriages, domestic violence and the disengagement of boys from school as they turn to income-generating activities.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is putting in place materials for continued learning should school closures endure. The country’s five-step response plan follows:

- Take stock of distance learning materials and resources that already exist
- Develop audio, video, online and printed materials, as well as mobile applications considering the gender digital (skills) divide
- Adapt delivery and implementation through a targeted approach
- Provide intensive support, including psycho-social support
- Plan for the recovery stage including getting schools ready, fostering safety in schools, tracking students, assessing loss and planning to compensate for the loss.

“We are not sure what will happen if this continues... We hope schools will open very soon...but we need to have a Plan B where, even if classes are disrupted, children can continue their learning at home. We are working to use radio, television, online channels, mobile apps or printed materials that offer alternative options for this difficult situation.”

-- Dr Tulashi Prasad Thapaliya, Director General, Centre for Education and Human Resource Development, Nepal’s Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, during the panel

Nepal is also putting needs-based education financing forward and seeking support from local governments in designing appropriate support programmes that improve learning. Additional learning support needs to be provided to the most marginalized, particularly girls, in the form of direct cash transfers, scholarships to help improve and retain their learning. Further research is needed to track the efficacy of these approaches.

Once the situation improves and schools reopen, the country is planning to track students within a week of school reopening to ensure they are reintegrated into the system.

A crisis within a crisis in Afghanistan

Afghanistan has been in a protracted conflict, with new emergencies evolving within the conflict itself. The country counts approximately 3.7 million out-of-school children, and 60% girls and up to 85% of girls in some provinces are out-of-school. Access to education is challenging due to poverty, a limited number of girls-only schools, a shortage of qualified female teachers, long distances to schools, safety issues on the way to and in schools, and harmful social norms such as early and forced marriage. Continuity of education is another significant problem, with many girls and boys unable to progress from one stage of study to the next largely due to capacity limitations in schools.

New policies have been developed including a community-based education policy, a girls' education policy and girls' hygiene guidelines. Programming put in place to increase girls' enrolment in school rests on the following four pillars: (1) social mobilization, including the sensitization of communities on girls' education and psycho-social support, (2) bringing education to girls in their communities, with the establishment of segregated classrooms for girls and the provision of water and sanitation facilities, (3) context-specific interventions addressing female teachers, scholarships and social norms, and (4) protection interventions including trainings on child rights and gender-friendly complaint mechanisms.

The COVID-19 crisis is causing many families to lose their means of livelihood, putting girls at risk of early marriage. Marginalized communities have limited access to electricity, TV, radio and mobile technology, which affect girls' and women's wellbeing and learning. Mobility is limited for female teachers and social norms greatly impact distance learning. In patriarchal communities, women's and girls' access to technology is not allowed nor prioritized.

“The key in times of crisis is to strengthen networks in communities so they can become advocates for the needs and rights of children.”

-- Somaye Sarvarzade, Education Specialist, Education Cannot Wait, Afghanistan, during the panel

The country has integrated the following considerations into COVID-19 educational responses:

- Provision of unconditional cash for households with school-age children
- Provision of learning supplies (in-kind and cash assistance)
- Strengthening SMS and community-based protection mechanisms
- Use of basic technology such as paper-based learning materials, text messages and voice messages to continue education
- Provision of advance technology devices (tablets and smartphones), giving ownership to women in the households
- Community sensitization on girls' education
- Support for chaperons to facilitate female staff mobility
- Continued compensation for female teachers.

Financing gender-responsive COVID-19 education responses

“Education is severely impacted not only by security crises but now with the introduction of this new health crisis.”

-- Aida Orgocka, Manager, Gender and Development, Education Cannot Wait during the panel

Education Cannot Wait has announced the allocation of about US\$15 million to support the education response to countries affected by the COVID-19 crisis. First Emergency Response will support more than 20 countries facing a health crisis on top of a security crisis to ensure educational opportunities. The model is similar to the [Central Emergency Response Fund](#), and will disburse funding through existing inter-agency humanitarian coordination structures, such as Education Clusters or Education in Emergencies Working Groups. Emerging themes around girls' education which will be addressed by this fund include: addressing the gender gap through distance programming, with consideration to girls' care burden, resources and digital literacy; hygiene awareness and improving water and sanitation facilities; mental health programming, with a specific focus on gendered dimensions; and addressing the care burden facing women teachers.

The Global Partnership for Education has also announced this week a funding window of US\$250 million to help developing countries mitigate both the immediate and long-term disruptions to education being caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The current pandemic and the expected economic difficulties are likely to exacerbate the education finance shortage for years to come. As countries establish national education contingency plans, it will be important to ensure support for gender-responsive planning and budgeting to better understand how gender roles, responsibilities and dynamics may impact on continuity of learning and return to school.

Summary of the discussion

A discussion took place following the speakers' presentations via the chat function of the webinar platform. Attendees shared questions, comments and resources relevant to the issues. Shared resources have been integrated into the resources section below.

"To date, much of the education analysis on COVID-19 has been gender blind."

-- Yona Nestel, Senior Education Advisor, Plan International, during the discussion

A concern shared by all was that swift responses often do not integrate gender. For example, the move to distance learning, such as digital solutions, but also low-tech approaches like radio, are not considering the lived realities and inequalities facing girls.

This crisis is an opportunity to face the existing challenges which COVID-19 is exposing, such as the gender digital divide. Proposed digital solutions supporting continuity of learning must consider the more limited access to technological devices, lower levels of self-efficacy, and lower digital skills often found among girls. A recommendation was made to look to learning from youth-based responses and solutions. Youth are innovating and using creative responses that should be capitalized on, including digital solutions.

"Girls and boys need to gain basic technological skills, and this should be a priority now."

-- Tinuola Oladebo, during the discussion

The discussion highlighted the harmful effects of embedded gender norms and attitudes on girls, which can be exacerbated during a crisis situation. One speaker shared that as social capital diminishes during confinement, girls may be likely to use contraception and more likely to suffer from sexual violence. These considerations must be recognized and addressed in response planning.

"These types of crises are the product of a patriarchal structure that places girls at the bottom of the pyramid."

-- Chernor Bah, during the online discussion

There was a consensus that gender inequality – and addressing it – goes beyond the education sector itself, and should bring together various sectors.

Webinar participants also raised questions regarding the role of parents and communities, especially in the prevention of violence and support to girls' education. In Afghanistan, where there is a lack of institutionalized social services to protect children, many rely on the community to provide this protection. In all countries, parents and communities must be

engaged and supported to enable the transfer of knowledge, access to resources, and wellbeing of learners.

Regarding the financing of gender-responsive educational responses, concerns were voiced about funding formulas. Participants call for financing that focuses not only on out of school children in general, but considers those who may be most marginalised and at risk of disengagement from education. In Niger, for example, the potential impact of COVID-related school closures on girls must consider the already high rate of early and forced marriage when designing a response. Other considerations may be required in other settings.

Other questions posed by participants through the chat function included:

- What other challenges are countries facing? What other solutions have you seen in action or do you think are needed?
- How we can help female teachers who are at home spending time for online teaching and at the same time keeping after their children?
- How can we accelerate responses while also taking the time to analyze gender considerations, when much of the analysis on COVID-19 from the sector to date has been gender-blind?
- What are the challenges of integrating gender considerations and the reality of girls lives into educational responses?
- How can we break down the digital divide so that girls may have access to technology/continued learning?

While time limitations did not make it possible for all of these questions to be addressed, a set of resources was prepared for webinar participants to direct them to other sources of information to address some of these concerns.

Call for action

The webinar demonstrated that the issues vary across settings, reflecting the universal nature of the pandemic, resourcing, extent of enforced isolation measures, duration of school closures to-date, and the differing realities of families and households.

The [United Nations Secretary General](#) has said that out of this crisis, we should see the primacy of not just ensuring the children displaced by COVID-19 have access to education, but going further and reaching the 258 million children who remain out of school year round.

More than a webinar, the discussion was a call to action. All countries must consider how this crisis may widen existing gender, age, wealth and other disparities in education, and take appropriate action.

“Without focused action, we will lose the momentum we already gained in advancing education and gender equality, and risk going backwards.”

-- Maki Hayashikawa, Chief of the Section for Inclusive Quality Education
at UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education in her closing remarks

Actions shared throughout the webinar called for countries to:

- Ensure equitable representation of women and men in crisis-related decision-making and ensure gender expertise is mobilized at all levels of the education sector response
- Include community sensitization on the importance of girls' education as part of any distance learning programme
- In contexts where digital solutions are less accessible, consider low-tech, gender-responsive approaches including radio and television to reach the most marginalised
- Ensure that girls are trained with the necessary digital skills to close digital divides, including the knowledge and skills they need to stay safe online
- Produce gender-sensitive and sex-disaggregated data on those impacted by school closures and other aspects of the epidemic at country level
- Promote partnerships to address cross-cutting health, social and education issues that impact on continuity of learning
- Give space to youth, particularly girls, to shape the decisions made about their education
- Continue to expand communities of practice and promote cross-country learning on what works, and support financing for equitable, evidence-informed action.

Depending on the situation of a country, its context and the resources available, these actions should be considered in the immediate, medium term and long term.

Resources to learn more

COVID-19 educational disruption and response

- [Global monitoring of school closures caused by COVID-19](#) – UNESCO; see also in: [French](#), [Spanish](#), [Russian](#), [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#) and [Portuguese](#)
- [Global Education Coalition](#) – UNESCO; see also in: [French](#), [Spanish](#), [Russian](#), [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), and [Portuguese](#)
- [National learning platforms and tools](#) – UNESCO; see also in: [French](#), [Spanish](#), [Arabic](#)
- [Distance learning solutions](#) – UNESCO; see also in: [French](#), [Spanish](#), [Russian](#) and [Arabic](#)
- [Stories from the field – Local initiatives and human experiences](#); see also in [Portuguese](#)
- [Key Messages and actions for COVID-19 prevention and control in schools](#) – UNICEF, WHO, IFRC

Girls' education and COVID-19

- [Girls' education and COVID-19](#) – Malala Fund
- [Covid-19 school closures around the world will hit girls hardest](#) – UNESCO and Plan International see also in: [French](#), [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#)

Gender dimensions of COVID-19

- [Five actions for gender equality in the COVID-19 Response](#) – UNICEF
- [COVID-19 Gendered impacts of the outbreak](#) – Gender and COVID-19 Working Group
- [Gender implications of COVID-19 outbreak in development and humanitarian settings - full paper](#) and [executive summary](#) – CARE

Sexual and reproductive health and rights and COVID-19

- [COVID-19- gender lens- Protecting SRHR and promoting gender equality](#) – UNFPA
- [The COVID-19 outbreak: Potential fallout for SRHR](#) – Guttmacher Institute
- [SRHR- Modern Contraceptives and other medical supply needs including for COVID-19- prevention, protection and response](#) – UNFPA

Gender-based violence and COVID-19

- [Impact of COVID-19 on VAWG](#) – UK Department for International Development (DFID)
- [GBV Case Management and the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) – GBV Area of Responsibility
- [COVID-19 and violence against women](#) – WHO
- [Guidelines for integrating GBV in humanitarian action](#) – Inter-Agency Standing Committee
- [Minimum standards for prevention and response to GBV in emergencies](#) – Poster – UNFPA
- [Minimum standards for child protection in humanitarian action](#) – Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action

Gender, water and sanitation (WASH) and COVID-19

- [COVID and the human rights to water and sanitation](#) – Video, Special Rapporteur on the human rights for water and sanitation; see also in [French](#) and [Spanish](#)
- [Gender equality in the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation](#); see also in [French](#) and [Spanish](#)

Regional guidance, gender and COVID-19

- [Gender and COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean Integrating Gender into the Preparedness and Response Frameworks](#) – UN Women
- [The COVID-19 Outbreak and Gender: Key Advocacy Points from Asia and the Pacific](#) – Asia-Pacific Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group

Adolescents, youth and COVID-19

- [Adolescents and young people and COVID-19-Technical Brief](#) – UNFPA
- [Technical Note- Protection of children during COVID-19 pandemic](#) – Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action
- [My Hero is You: How kids can fight COVID-19!](#) – Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)
- [Voices of youth-Studying at home due to Cor1onavirus? This is how young people around the world are keeping their mood up](#) – UNICEF

Parents and families and COVID-19

- [Parenting in the time of COVID-19](#)

Implications of COVID-19 for marginalized and vulnerable communities

- [How to include marginalized and vulnerable people in risk communication and community engagement](#) – UN Women and Regional Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RRCCE) working group
- [Preventing and addressing social stigma associated with COVID-19](#) – COVID-19 – IFRC, WHO and UNICEF

Mental health and psychosocial support during COVID-19

- [Briefing note on addressing mental health and psychosocial aspects of COVID-19 outbreak](#) – IASC
- [Mental health and psychosocial considerations during COVID-19](#) – WHO
- [Article - How teenagers can protect their mental health during COVID-19](#) – UNICEF

Agenda and speakers

Time	Item
13:00-13:10	<p>Welcoming remarks and introduction of the themes</p> <p>Suzanne Grant Lewis Director, UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP)</p>
13:10-13:20	<p>Keynote Speaker</p> <p>Chernor Bah, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Purposeful</p>
13:20-14:00	<p>Sharing of country experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr Tulashi Prasad Thapaliya, Director General, Centre for Education and Human Resource Development, Nepal's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology • Tinuola Oladebo, Program Manager for OneAfricanChild (OAC), Nigeria • Somaye Sarvarzade, Education Specialist, Education Cannot Wait (ECW) Afghanistan with Aida Orgocka, Gender and Development Manager at ECW <p>Moderated by Justine Sass, Chief, Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality, UNESCO Headquarters with an initial presentation on the data available on COVID-related school closures</p>
14:00-14:20	<p>Discussion, including inputs from an online chat</p> <p>Moderated by Nora Fyles, Director of the Secretariat for the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI)</p>
14:20-14:30	<p>Closing Remarks</p> <p>Maki Hayashikawa, Chief, the Section for Inclusive Quality Education at UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education</p>

Biographies of speakers and moderators

Chernor Bah



Chernor is an acclaimed global advocate for education, a champion for girls and an expert in international development. As a teenager, he founded Sierra Leone's Children's Parliament to centre youth voices in post-war reconstruction efforts. He went on to lead youth-related initiatives across three continents for multiple organizations. He co-founded A World at School and was an influential leader of the "I am Malala" campaign. From 2015 until early 2017, Chernor was at the Population Council leading an initiative to provide solutions for adolescent girls affected by the Ebola outbreak. He has been appointed several times by the United Nations Secretary-General to high-level committees. A former refugee, Chernor has received numerous honors for his service to girls and young people. As Executive Director of Purposeful Productions, Chernor leads programmes, advocacy and partnerships to empower young women around the world.

Suzanne Grant Lewis



Suzanne is Director of UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) since 2014, where she provides strategic vision and leadership, develops strategic partnerships and mobilises resources, and provides oversight of the staff, financial resources, programme and administration of IIEP Paris, Dakar and Buenos Aires. She has over 25 years of experience in improving educational opportunities in the developing world, particularly in education policy and planning in Africa. In 2011, she helped launch the International Education Funders Group, a collaborative of over 50 foundations, which played a catalytic role in advancing Education for All. Suzanne also directed the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa and, as a Harvard University faculty member, co-developed and directed a Master's degree International Educational Policy Programme. She has taught postgraduate courses on gender inequalities in education and education planning and policymaking in international settings.

Nora Fyles



Nora is the Director of the Secretariat for the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), a multi-stakeholder partnership hosted by UNICEF committed to improving the quality and availability of girls' education and contributing to the girls' and women's empowerment through education. Before joining UNGEI, Nora headed the Education Policy team for the Canadian International Development Agency from 2006 to 2012, and served as the Senior Education Specialist for CIDA's Asia Program from 2003. Nora has worked for a multilateral organizations, NGOs, educational institutions and government ministries with a focus on education and gender issues, including extended residential assignments in Bangladesh, Belize, Indonesia and Viet Nam. In Canada, Ms. Fyles worked a Senior Policy Analyst for the Status of Women Canada, taught children and adults, and managed community-based literacy programme.

Maki Katsuno-Hayashikawa



Maki is the Chief of Section for Inclusive Quality Education in UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education since April 2016, overseeing UNESCO's regional programme in the Asia-Pacific in the fields of education policy and planning, ICT in education, learning quality, and inclusion and gender in education, from early childhood to secondary education. She is also the Regional Coordinator for the SDG4-Education 2030 and the Gender Focal Point. Prior to Bangkok, Maki was based in UNESCO Headquarters in Paris looking after UNESCO's global programme on ECCE, inclusive education, gender and education, learning assessment and teacher education. Maki has nearly 25 years of development work experience, mostly working in the Asia-Pacific region with UNESCO, UNICEF and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Tinuola Oladebo



Tinuola is the Program Manager for OneAfricanChild (OAC), Nigeria. OAC promotes the innovative practices in education in Nigeria and Africa at large through the provision of experiential teachers training and learner centered workshops in disconnected communities. She initially combined teaching with taking volunteering roles in OAC before she recently committed to fully volunteering for the organization because of her strong passion to serve those in marginalized communities. She has facilitated various workshops to better teachers' skills and learners' competence in local communities in Nigeria. Tinuola is one of the young people lending their voice to promote gender-responsive education sector planning in Nigeria and is an active member of UNGEI's Youth Advisory Council.

Aida Orgocka



Aida is the Gender and Development Manager at Education Cannot Wait (ECW) since 2018. She is responsible for integrating and targeting gender in ECW financing mechanisms including First Emergency Response, Multi Year Resilience Programming and Acceleration Facility in various crisis-affected settings including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Palestine, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda. Prior to joining ECW, Aida managed programming on university education for refugee and host communities in Dadaab, Kenya and completed various evaluations including joint programs focusing on gender equality and empowerment of women internationally.

Somaye Sarvarzade



Somaye is the Education Specialist for Education Cannot Wait's multi-year resilience programme in Afghanistan where approximately 3.7 million children are out of school, of which 60% are girls. In the last five years, Somaye has focused on improving access to quality education, particularly for girls who need to overcome harmful social and traditional norms, and addressing supply-side limitations. She has worked for other international organizations in Afghanistan including USAID, UNICEF, and World Vision International.

Justine Sass



Justine is currently the Chief of the Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, France. Over the past 25 years, she has championed gender equality, girls' and women's empowerment, and the right to education and health. Within UNESCO, Ms Sass has worked as Asia-Pacific Regional Advisor for Health Education in the UNESCO Bangkok Office, and as Senior Programme Specialist in the Health and Education Section. She worked for other international organizations, NGOs and government agencies in Asia, Sub-Saharan and North Africa and Eastern Europe.

Dr Tulashi Prasad Thapaliya



Tulashi is the Director General, at the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development in Nepal's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST). Prior to his current functions, he headed the Teachers Service Commission to support teacher licensing and selection, was Joint Secretary of MOEST responsible for education planning and policy formulation and the management of higher education, and the Director of the Regional Education Director managing education activities at the regional level. He has also taught at universities and led research in the field of education.