

Towards a radical transformation: Promoting gender equality when children start school

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Two of the current United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim for quality education and gender equality, which are inextricably linked. Education efforts in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) have rarely addressed issues of gender equality as children start school, except to expand access for girls. The authors explore how gender equality can be addressed within schools and communities in LMICs at the start of primary school. The authors offer promising strategies to make early grade education efforts more gender transformative and thus more effective.

Keywords: gender, gender equality, reading, early grade education, early primary, literacy

Two of the current United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim for quality education and gender equality. These goals are inextricably linked. Other than efforts at expanding access for girls, education efforts in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) have rarely addressed issues of gender equality as children start primary school. Interest in gender equality in education often begins with female adolescents, who may drop out due to child marriage and/or pregnancy (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization – UNESCO, 2017). However, gender inequality, is manifested in all aspects of the lives of children, their families, and their schools. For example, textbooks may only show women in sex-stereotyped roles as caretakers. Teachers may seat boys at the front of the class. The authors explore how gender equality can be addressed within schools and communities in LMICs starting in early primary levels. The authors point to promising strategies and opportunities to make early grade education efforts gender transformative and thus more effective.

By way of background on international goals, the Dakar Framework in 2000 adopted Education for All (EFA) and the goal of achieving equality in education by 2015 (UNESCO, 2000). The SDGs in 2015 then set out seventeen goals, to include SDG4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunity for all and SDG5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (United Nations, 2015). Movements to address school quality and the lack of student learning, dubbed the global learning crisis, proposed to address not only increasing access to education, but ensuring the learning of basic skills, such as literacy. Amidst these global movements to improve access and quality of education, donors and their implementing partners have also addressed the need for education to be gender transformative so as to actively promote gender equality (Save the Children, 2014).

As this issue of the *Current Issues in Comparative Education* points out, “education for” movements, efforts, and frameworks such as those mentioned above contain an aspirational element that looks toward a future in which change will have occurred and a gender-transformative, universally literate society will be in place in which girls and boys will have equal opportunities and equal reading abilities so as to lead equally prosperous lives in societies that benefit from their improved equality of status and learning. Gender equality and individual, familial, and systems/structural change are needed to achieve education for all, reading for all, and gender-transformative approaches within those movements. Barriers to gender equality must be addressed in the present, and are critical for the future vision to be achieved.

With international efforts outlined above as background and the call delineated above for a radical transformation to meet the goals laid out, the authors of this article aim to review why gender considerations are important in early primary education programs in LMICs. Attention to promoting gender equality is critical for building an effective early elementary program, focused especially on students in Grades 1 and 2, generally aged 6 to 8.

While, ideally, gender-transformative education should begin even prior to age six, efforts at universal access to primary schools allows countries to assure that children can be exposed to a gender-transformative education. In recent years, donor efforts have focused on school quality in early primary through early grade reading programs in national languages. Teaching children to read in a language they speak and understand – a national language or sometimes alternately referred to as a local language, home language, first language or a mother tongue – is also a way to encourage family members to engage and support young children in learning to read. When gender differences in early reading outcomes are not statistically significant,

programs may believe there is no further work needed in gender-transformative efforts. In fact, girls outperforming boys in early grade reading outcomes is common across countries (McGraw-Hill, 2020; Price-Mohr & Price, 2016; OECD, 2015; Brown Center on Education Policy, 2015) and does not eliminate or mitigate the gender issues embedded in the society and systems. Gender issues must be addressed, understood, and transformed.

While not attempting to be complete, this article will elaborate on some of the gender-related issues within early primary reading programs. Some of the issues addressed include: women in teaching, women in leadership in school systems, household chores, norms, differential amount of time for play, school-related gender-based violence, and parent and community support to learn to read. This article draws from literature on this topic as well as the authors' experience in integrating gender approaches within an early grade reading program in Senegal, the USAID-funded All Children Reading (ACR) program or, in French, the *Lecture Pour Tous* program. In this article, the authors discuss why this topic is important, the methods used to gather data, and then move to the findings and conclusions that point to steps toward the radical transformation of actualizing gender equality individually, familially, and structurally in early grade reading education.

We hope that this article leads to more implementation efforts to integrate gender equality into early primary reading programs. Additionally, we hope that there will continue to be more documentation of these efforts and, finally, a scale-up of evidence-informed gender-transformative education at the start of children's primary education.

Gender-transformative early primary education: Why is this important?

EFA goals were not met in 2015 with over 260 million children still not in school and more than 480 million women 15 years or over lacking basic literacy skills. Fewer than half of countries had reached gender parity in primary and secondary education in 2015, with no country in sub-Saharan Africa projected to achieve it at both levels. Around 66% of countries achieved parity in primary education, only 50% in lower secondary, only 29% in upper secondary, and only 4% in higher education. Girls, and particularly girls from the lowest-income families, faced the largest challenge in gaining access to primary education. Secondary education gender disparities had improved, but persisted, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Arab States. Half of adult women in South and West Asia and in sub-Saharan Africa were not able to read or write (UNESCO, 2015).

It is important to note that, often, global emphasis on gender and education starts after a girl reaches puberty, but, in fact, gender differences are marked at the earliest

ages, even before school starts, with boys allowed more mobility and freedom of movement and girls tasked with domestic chores (UNESCO, 2016). Discrimination between boys and girls – how they are socialized into different gender roles from birth – can also have negative effects on both boys’ and girls’ development even at a very young age (WHO, 2018). A study of young adolescents in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, and North America found that in all areas of the world, unequal gender norms are entrenched by age 10 (Moreau, et al., 2019). It makes sense therefore to start promoting gender equality at the earliest ages across all subject areas, including early primary reading. Nevertheless, “despite a considerable literature documenting gender-related barriers, gaps in knowledge exist regarding the degree to which interventions to reduce gender-related barriers to schooling in LMICs are effective in improving education outcomes for girls” (Chuang, Mensch, Psaki, Haberland, & Kozak, 2019), which is particularly true for early grade reading. It is more cost effective to address the causes for the divergence in learning outcomes in early primary grades when these differences are small than in later years as students drop out, repeat, or fail their school exams. Girls in particular drop out in larger numbers during this period between primary and secondary school, often due to obligations societies and families place on girls to do more domestic work as well as fewer economic opportunities for young women (DFID, 2015).

As the academic focus area of the early elementary programs of interest in this article is reading, the prevailing thinking on reading and literacy should be considered next. Literacy can be defined along a continuum – from a set of skills or cognitive processes that form the ability to read, to write, and to calculate on to literacy as applied within a context, within a family, within a set of cultural or social practices, and on to a set of capabilities, and then finally to a tool for critical thinking (UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2013; Mount-Cors, 2016). Literacy, or the cognitive abilities that allow a person to read and understand a text, has been the focus of early grade reading programs in which children learn to read ideally in a language they speak and understand. By gaining this opportunity, the rationale is that the children will be able to transfer those reading skills to other languages, such as to the official language of schooling in that context, and continue learning. Often, the differential experiences of girls and boys from birth and certainly from the beginning of their schooling, may be ignored or considered nonexistent.

The deeper connections between reading skills in the early grades of elementary education and girls’ education may not have received adequate attention, but girls’ education has nonetheless been the focus of many multilateral and bilateral actors since 2000. There are numerous global actors in the space: including multilateral actors such as UN Girls’ Education Initiative (UNGEI) and UNESCO, and bilateral actors such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United

Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), who have contributed to this field. UNGEI advocates for girls' education globally and is a learning hub (UNGEI, 2020). UNESCO conducts ongoing monitoring of gender equality. USAID requires gender assessments and plans across all of its sectors (USAID, 2017), including education. Gender assessments and plans as a USAID donor requirement for all projects (USAID ADS Chapter 205) tend to focus on attendance, retention, and quality to identify any gender-related barriers that early primary students may face (Chemonics, 2016) or to develop and implement a gender plan that "reaches all aspects of the project and instill gender equality throughout each level to achieve lasting and sustainable impacts" (Diop, Gay, & Mount-Cors, 2017. p.5). Gender plans often include whether gender is part of the education sector strategic plan, if teachers facilitate equal access for boys and girls inside the classroom, or if assessment data are analyzed for boys and girls. If grade repetition is high, then overage girls in primary levels may pose a specific area of concern. The support of a local gender and social inclusion expert within the project structure is critical to provide ongoing areas of training and embedding of critical gender components into teacher preparation, teacher and student materials, and parental, family and community literacy efforts. Girls' access to education is responsive to changes in cost and distance as well as improvements to pedagogy and teacher practices. In addition, "programs can be mindful of gender issues without being specifically targeted to girls" (Evans & Yuan, 2019, p.4).

Research Sites and Methods

The three authors collaborated on gender planning in a national language reading program in early primary grades in Senegal, the USAID-funded All Children Reading (ACR) program, which serves 3,572 schools and 59 *daara* (Koranic schools) in six regions of Senegal. In this paper, the authors discuss barriers to gender-transformative early primary approaches and present a goal-based conceptual framework for early grade reading programs, based on literature review, consultations, and classroom and school-based observations. The paper draws on the authors' collaborative work on the ACR program, as well as the expertise of the three authors in education, gender, early grade reading and literacy.

A mixed methodological approach allowed the authors to collect and examine the quantitative and qualitative data available at central and decentralized levels. The authors conducted a thorough literature review, which included grey literature from bilaterals, especially USAID, and multilaterals such as UNICEF; government of Senegal policies and reports; donor-funded projects' training modules and publications authored by implementing partners; and peer-reviewed literature.

The authors held consultations at the sub-regional level in the intervention areas at the start of the program in 2017 to develop a plan to promote gender equality and to allow

the plan to be updated and progress to be tracked. These consultations included over 50 stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, school directors, school management committees, parents' associations, mothers' associations, women teachers' networks, ministry of education authorities and ACR program staff to collect information and/or recommendations for the development of the ACR gender plan. Sampling was based on the research area and the objectives of the project.

In addition to individual interviews with representatives as described above, the team conducted interviews and classroom observations with school directors and teachers from the ten public elementary schools and *daara*, in the regions of Louga, Kaolack, Kaffrine, and Dakar. In each of these schools, classroom dynamics, teacher interactions with students, number of girls and boys in the classroom, teacher behavior toward girls and boys (for example, if girls were called on more often than boys) and teacher attitudes toward gender roles were assessed. Focus groups also included representatives from the ministry of education, local parent associations, the network of women teachers, mothers' associations, school management committee representatives, community liaisons and community supervisors tasked with the parent/community engagement objective of the ACR program.

Discussion

Between 2005 and 2011 in Senegal, primary school enrollment rates soared from 79% to 93%, with a higher number of girls enrolling than boys (USAID, 2014; UNICEF Senegal, 2016). However, only 13% of students had sufficient reading skills (Jàngandoo, 2017). On a national level, there are sometimes concerns that the focus on promoting girls' access to education resulted in boys falling behind: in 2004, girls were 79.6% and boys were 81.2% of primary school students, but by 2015, girls constituted 92.2% and boys 81% (PASEC, 2016). Yet, girls' and boys' rates of access, performance, and dropout differ by region; of those who repeat first grade in Diourbel, a region of Senegal, 16.5% are boys and 19.2% are girls (IA, 2015). Intersecting areas of girls' lives in addition to geographic location, such as socioeconomic status and disability, can also compound the disadvantage of girls in school access and performance. World Inequality Database in Education (WIDE), indicates that in Senegal, Guinea, Pakistan, Mali, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Benin, Chad, and Nigeria, the poorest girls spend less than two years in school on average, which includes Senegal at 1.87 mean years of education for girls with the lowest socioeconomic status. In addition, in Senegal, 55% of the poorest girls are out of school at the primary school level, 58% at lower secondary, and 83% at upper secondary (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2020).

In Senegal, both girls and boys have shown they are making progress in early grade reading skills in national languages on the Senegal Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) midline study (Mount-Cors, Rousseau & de Galbert, 2020) with no appreciable

gender differences demonstrated at midline. Thus, rather than showing that there are no gender disparities, hence no gender-transformative programming needed within a given intervention, it is of note that girls are not outperforming boys as this does not follow patterns that have been established across many different countries (McGraw-Hill, 2020; Price-Mohr & Price, 2016; OECD, 2015; Brown Center on Education Policy, 2015).

The gender plan for the Senegal program was organized according to the project outcome structure and this same structure is used to organize the discussion sections below. The key components, or inputs, of the program's intervention connected to each area below are as follows:

- Improve Early Grade Reading Instruction in Schools, including providing evidence-based teaching and learning materials to students in public schools and *daaras* and supporting comprehensive, professional development for teachers through pre-service and in-service training, coaching, and supervision
- Improve policies and systems to scale up and sustain quality reading instruction, materials, and community engagement
- Strengthen the support students receive from family and other community members as they learn to read (Mount-Cors, Rousseau & de Galbert, 2020)

The sections below illustrate some of the goals toward gender equality in early primary reading, and examples of evidence-informed interventions to reduce gender-related barriers to early grade reading efforts in each of the key component outcome areas in early grade reading.

Improve Early Grade Reading Instruction in Schools

ACR implemented interventions as an early grade reading pilot in a total of approximately 54 *daaras* (Rousseau et al, 2020). One key observation in Senegal is that the number of girls versus boys in *daara* classrooms tends to skew heavily to boys, with girls making up just 30 to 35% of the classroom population, which can lead to inequities when desks or materials are in short supply. The picture here from a *daara* that was part of the pilot described above shows how girls have been placed on the floor while boys are seated in desks.



Figure 1: *Daara* {Koranic school} early primary classroom, Senegal. (Diop, 2019)

Improve textbooks to eliminate or reduce women, men, boys and girls being depicted in sex-stereotyped ways. Findings of a 2015 UNESCO study indicate that gender bias in textbooks is a serious issue: “Textbooks and curricula matter not only for learning new information but also for what perceptions they create about women and their roles” with “study after study showing significant gender bias in textbooks, with women greatly underrepresented and both women and men depicted in gender-stereotyped ways” (Sperling and Winthrop, 2016, p. 254). Studies from developing and developed countries find that females tend to be greatly underrepresented, and both males and females are depicted in gender-stereotyped ways. A recent textbook in Senegal included a text that perpetuated harmful gender norms, suggesting that boys should help their fathers in the fields and girls should help their mothers at home.

Some examples from Senegal show both gender-harmful and gender-transformative messages (Diop, Gay, & Mount-Cors, (2017). The first image below can be considered on a scale between gender harmful and gender neutral as it shows a woman with a baby sleeping on her back while another young child is stirring a pot nearby. While this may be a traditional set of responsibilities for a mother, the depiction does not point to a broader role or set of capabilities possible for the woman.



Mamadou et Bineta (© Editions Edicef)

Figure 2. *Mother cooking with children.* (Editions Edicef, 2015)

At the same time, the next depiction, from an ACR reading book in Wolof for children to take home for practicing reading, is gender transformative, with a girl and boy shown washing dishes together. This illustration shows how gender roles can be transformed so that chores at home are shared. When this sharing happens, the time of girls is not disproportionately placed into domestic tasks; then, they can both practice reading and take part in free play, which boys traditionally have more time to do. Sharing the domestic chores can transform the gender structure, which has ripples into each aspect of a child's day and life cycle.

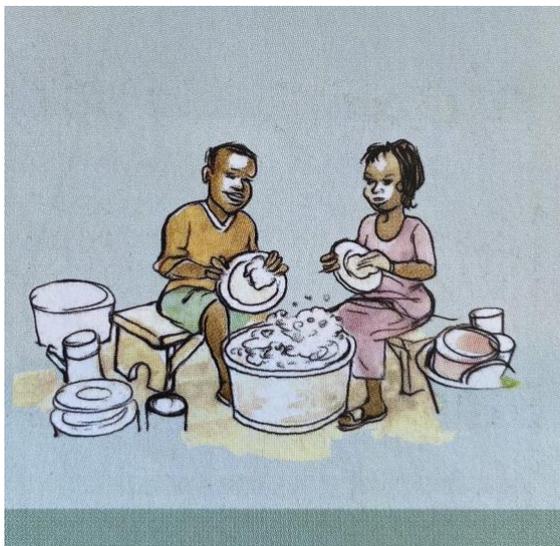


Figure 3. *Boy and girl washing dishes together.* (Ministry of Education of Senegal, 2018)

Address unequal gender norms that affect teacher-student interactions through social-emotional learning approaches as part of any early grade learning program. Positive interactions have physical and mental benefits for child development. Early social interactions help children develop strong language skills, and other important life-course assets, such as the social-emotional skills of communication, confidence,

creativity and empathy. Nevertheless, teachers may be unaware that they are creating gender disparities among their students by what they expect from girls as compared to boys, in addition to prioritizing whether girls or boys can speak, whether girls or boys must listen, and whether girls or boys can ask questions: “Overwhelming evidence now emanates from different parts of the globe to suggest that schools and teachers tend to reinforce gender-loaded perceptions regarding the abilities of boys and girls” (Jha & Pouzevara, 2016). McCracken, Unterhalter, Marquez, & Chelstowska (2015) also suggest the importance of putting attention on this issue of gender stereotypes that are perpetuated by teachers. Girls often do not recognize their right to education and girls are less likely to be forthcoming in class (Aikman & Rao, 2012). Related to the section below on increasing the number of women in teaching early grades, part of this work is to not only improve gender equality in the workforce within the school systems, but to also ensure that teachers treat girls and boys equally in the classroom, using praise and other behavioral approaches rather than relying on corporal punishment (Reichert & Hawley, 2014). In our observations in schools in Senegal, thanks to gender equality training, teachers now are more likely to call equally on boys and girls.

Address the early foundations of school-related gender-based violence. Like all statistics on gender-based violence, school related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is underreported. However, Together for Girls has found that 32% of girls in Malawi, 44% in Nigeria, and 45% in Uganda who ever attended school experienced school-related sexual and/or physical violence perpetrated by teachers and other classmates (Together for Girls, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). Lack of latrines and privacy for girls are also associated with school-related gender-based violence (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016). In Mali, girls who missed school did so because they did not feel safe, and the most-often cited reason for not enrolling in school both among girls and parents was financial constraints, indicating that girls’ education was not prioritized when money was short (EdIntersect, 2019).

Separate latrines for girls and boys, and for female and male teachers, that afford privacy and can lock, need to be provided (Sahoo et al., 2015; IASC, 2015). Referral systems need to be created for schools to effectively address sexual abuse, both among children and teachers, with linkages to counseling, health services, and if desired, legal systems. Girls are more likely to report SRGBV if schools have established mechanisms to report incidents (Sperling and Winthrop, 2016).

Improve policies and systems to scale up and sustain quality reading instruction, materials, and community engagement

The gender plan in Senegal ensured attention to gender equality was incorporated into all forms of education communications, such as posters. Those responsible for communications at the regional and district levels received training on how to create

communication materials that promote gender equality (Diop, Gay, & Mount-Cors, 2020). The project ensured incorporation of gender and inclusion considerations into the sustainability and scale-up plan. The self-analysis and consideration of the belief systems and practices around gender norms of education staff both within the project and in ministry units would be an important activity and metric as well.

Ensure a strong policy environment both in the country and with implementing partners. It is also essential to work with the ministry of education concerning why attention to gender is important and practical steps to take. It is also useful to measure change, such as the percentage of women in school leadership and management positions, and gender parity in teacher pay by sector and level (UNESCO, 2016). It is important that girls and boys have equal amount of time outside school to practice reading. Our observations in Senegal indicate that this is a work in progress.

Address the lack of female teachers as role models. It is necessary to help women educators be part of gender transformation, rather than internalize oppression. It is critical for girls – and boys - to see women teachers as role models. In a number of LMICs, women are a small number of the teachers. Due to gender norms, women are less likely to be literate, less likely to graduate from higher education, and have less rights to mobility to be posted in rural areas of a country. In Ethiopia, a project pilot for quality education included a telling recommendation: increase the number of female teachers who are role models. Often the lack of female teachers keeps girls from attending and persisting in school, especially as they reach secondary school (Save the Children, 2014). The gap in Senegal is especially marked across all language groups (Wolof, Pulaar, and Seereer, the three languages of the ACR program) in the national language reading program in rural schools, with up to 70% in rural areas of first and second grade teachers being men (Mount-Cors, Rousseau & de Galbert, 2020).

In addition, teacher assignment and transfer patterns in the ministry of education tend to be biased against women and need to be addressed also for reading programs in national languages for language match (RTI, 2014; Chemonics & Cambridge Education, 2017; Diop, Gay, & Mount-Cors, 2017.). As a point of comparison, the ministry of health in Senegal has put in place a plan to institutionalize gender by integrating gender equality in human resources management in the health sector (Newman, 2018). The ministry of education must be encouraged to hire, train, and promote women teachers, particularly in rural areas.

Address the lack of women in positions of educational leadership. Women face obstacles to becoming a teacher and then rising within the educational bureaucracy. "Gender-equitable leadership is a major concern in education. Women continue to be underrepresented in senior management positions, on school boards and in education

ministries in rich and poor countries alike” (UNESCO, 2016, p. 43). In Senegal, in the six regions where the early grade reading project is active, over 95% of the school directors are men (Mount-Cors, Rousseau & de Galbert, 2020).

Women who do achieve a level of senior leadership in a school or at a local or national ministry level may not be able to affect gender structures inherent in the educational institutions. Often, women even in leadership positions lack voice and agency.

As with the example of the health sector planning highlighted above in Senegal, potential gender-transformative actions could include positive discrimination to promote women to positions of leadership, leadership training for women, and support groups for women who work in the educational system.

Strengthen the support students receive from family and other community members as they learn to read

A family approach can build early reading skills both at home and at school. This means that mothers, fathers, older sisters, older brothers and others in the household can be mobilized to help the young child with letter-sound correspondences, orientation to print, and listening comprehension skills developed by reading stories to the child. A kind of intergenerational learning can be employed in which the family is working together through family literacy efforts on building basic literacy in the national language that the family speaks and learns together (Mount-Cors, 2016). This family literacy approach is recommended to strengthen the effect of early grade reading programs in national languages (Sarr et al, 2020).

In the Senegal ACR program, community members, such as parent associations, have been trained on gender in the 20% of communities where the parent and community component of the project is active. Promotion of gender equality has been part of all community fora, debates, and other community events.

Address unequal gender norms that affect free time, mobility and chores, taking away from learning. As mentioned above, gender-harmful norms often prevail, such as that boys belong outside playing soccer and girls belong around the home with domestic tasks, with more limited mobility. “Girls and women disproportionately bear the burden of household chores, including time-consuming tasks such as collecting water and firewood, even while in school” (UNESCO, 2016, p. 37). Expectations are often quite different for girls compared to boys: “In most countries, girls are more than twice as likely to be involved in child domestic work than boys” (UNESCO, 2019, p. 3). Children’s work, even in limited amounts, adversely impacts a child’s learning (Jha and Pouzevara, 2016). Consultations in Senegal revealed examples such as: when a boy helps with household tasks, he is teased for his lack of masculinity.

With the covid-19 pandemic, these unequal gender norms may be exacerbated. As mentioned above, girls are more likely to be tasked with domestic chores, which have increased due to the pandemic. One way to reduce transmission of covid-19 is through frequent handwashing, which calls for more water. As girls are often tasked with carrying water, this increase in water needed for personal hygiene most affects girls' time and stress. In addition, gender-based violence has increased during the pandemic (UN Women, 2020). It is notable that girls are more likely to suffer from gender-based violence yet may have nowhere to seek shelter or report the abuse.

Community dialogues have been effective in changing gender norms. Effective programs have used participatory methodologies such as that of Tostan (Fernald & Weber, 2015) and Save the Children (2014). It is important to hold community dialogues on the benefits of girls' education, while not neglecting boys. In fact, engaging boys in "girls' education" is one of the best ways to transform gender relations and norms from a young age. Save the Children's Choices curriculum consisted of eight developmentally appropriate activities, supporting children aged 10 to 14 to explore alternative views of masculinities and femininities. Research in Nepal showed an increase in gender-equitable attitudes and behavior changes among both boys and girls relating to discrimination, social image, control and dominance, violence, attitudes to girls' education, and acceptance of traditional gender norms, after participating in Choices (Lundgren et al, 2013). It is also critical that boys and girls be involved in sports clubs and reading clubs, both in single sex and co-ed groups, to learn the equal rights and capabilities of both girls and boys to achieve their human potential no matter what gender norms have been inculcated. Single sex and co-ed clubs such as those sponsored by CARE in various countries, can also be used as models for this type of gender-transformative activity.

Conclusions

Gender-transformative approaches to early primary education are critical to the successful lives of the world's children. Girls getting an education leads to a society's increased wealth, better health for her and her future children and many other positive impacts (Levine et al, 2009), but is also a basic human right. It is critical to act on the whole: at the individual level, the family level, and the structural level, and to recognize that, at the child's level, social-emotional learning incorporating gender-transformative reflection and content alongside reading education would enhance the positive effects for girls and boys and the families and societies in which they live. Actualizing gender-transformative approaches will also make early primary programs more effective and sustainable over the long term as they can also make an impact on familial, community, and structural levels. The goals outlined in this article require acknowledging and addressing the gender-related barriers with an evidence-informed, solution-based

approach that includes documentation, monitoring, and evaluation to ensure effectiveness. Promoting gender equality when children start school will lead to a radical transformation, with progress toward the SDGs for all children.

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