

Leave No Girl Behind Webinar Series for South Asia

Thematic Review



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UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia

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About the Leave No Girl Behind Series

At the height of the COVID19 pandemic, between June and August 2020, the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) [Girls' Education Challenge \(GEC\)](#) partnered with UNICEF's [Regional Office for South Asia \(ROSA\)](#) to devise and facilitate a series of webinars focused on girls' education in the context of COVID19. With 28 speakers representing institutional and implementing partners from across the region, the series set out to:

- ▶ Provide a platform for **virtual knowledge sharing** between government, INGOs, UN organisations, research institutions, policy makers, and technical experts in the South Asian region broadly focusing on:
 - safety, security and education for all girls, especially the most marginalised;
 - girls' education in times of crises and safe return to school, post COVID19;
 - alternative education programmes (community-based; non-formal; and accelerated)
- ▶ **Strengthen the evidence-base** around challenges to girls' education in South Asia, coalescing around what works and why, and **explore the contribution of girls' education** to the wider gender equality agenda.
- ▶ **Strengthen partnerships** across and between girls' education advocates, donors, practitioners and policy makers in South Asia.
- ▶ The **thematic consolidation** of participant inputs to inform the development of a co-branded product in the context of COVID19 in South Asia.

Set against a decade of significant progress in girls' education in some South Asian contexts, and acknowledging the pervasive challenges for the region's girls, this document is a brief but important summary of the thematic priorities explored throughout the *Leave No Girl Behind* webinar series. It shines light on the emerging and potentially long-lasting impact of COVID19 on the education, employment and health prospects of vulnerable, marginalised and excluded girls. Drawing upon three of the Girls' Education Challenge's programmatic COVID19 response domains – continuation of teaching and learning, safety and protection, and return to school - this document analyses the different ways in which current evidence gathering and programming efforts build upon a decade of momentum in girls' education, while addressing persistent gaps and shortcomings in school access, engagement, retention, and educational outcomes for girls.

Acknowledgements

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Girls' education and COVID19 in South Asia

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“If we really want to bring all women and girls into the process of our response we must work collaboratively; this must include youth-led organisations, UN entities, government, and NGOs.”

– Johora, Youth Activist, Bangladesh



At the turn of the 21st century, there were more out-of-school girls in South Asia (86 million) than out-of-school boys (69 million).¹ By 2020, sustained effort on the part of governments, United Nations agencies, and non-governmental partners reduced the overall number of out of school girls by nearly 50 per cent; to the extent that there are now more out-of-school boys (47 million) in the region than girls (45 million).² Although positive, these figures hide the variability of gender parity in the region; for every 100 boys in school in Bangladesh there are 128 girls; whereas in Afghanistan only 56 girls for every 100 boys attends school or alternative education.³

Where progress is being made, however, reductions in out-of-school girls points towards strong political

commitments to education and the systemic capacity to prioritize and pursue education reforms.⁴ Therefore, as we contend with the impact of COVID19 on girls' learning it is crucial that we build upon pre-pandemic political momentum for equal, equitable, and inclusive education opportunities for all.

Notwithstanding these gains, South Asia is not immune from the recently coined global learning crisis.⁵ Before COVID19 millions of enrolled girls contended with poor quality education and were not on course to meet minimum proficiency in basic reading and math, nor the secondary-level 21st century skills, knowledge, or opportunities needed for a productive and fulfilling life.⁶ After leaving school, girls and young women (aged

¹ United Nations Children's Fund, UNWOMEN, PLAN. [A New Era for Girls: Taking stock of 25 years of progress](#). January 2020, New York

² Ibid

³ United National Children's Fund, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, UNWOMEN. [Gender Counts: A quantitative assessment of gender inequality and its impact on children and adolescents](#). 2019, New York.

⁴ United Nations Children's Fund. [Out of School Children Initiative: South Asia Report](#). 2016. UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu.

⁵ World Bank (2018) [World Development Report: Learning to realize education's promise](#). Washington DC

⁶ Ibid; United Nations Children's Fund, United Nations Education, Science, and Culture Organization, Plan International. [Building Back Equal: Girls back to school guide](#) 2020. New York; UNICEF (2020) [Addressing the Learning Crisis: An urgent need to better finance education for the poorest children](#)



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“Rights are never given; you have to take them. You are here, never give up, we will fight together”

– Roya, Youth Activist, Afghanistan

15-24 years) in South Asia are much less likely than boys to be in education, training, or employment.⁷ And as such, gains made to assure equality in school enrolment and completion do not translate to gender equality in transitions to further training, employment, or independent income, condemning girls and women to cycles of poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage.⁸ Differences in schooling outcomes therefore reflect the impact of historic and entrenched gender norms that limit women and girls’ contributions to domestic and reproductive roles. These norms also continue to exclude adolescent girls and young women from civic participation and related elements of the public sphere.⁹

Despite promising progress towards universal primary and basic education, the numbers of out-of-school girls in South Asia are still staggering. Girls from the poorest households are already five times more likely to be out of primary school than those from the wealthiest, and the longer marginalised girls are out of school due to COVID19, the less likely they are to return. In Nepal, for example, government projections estimate that a three-month school closure will result in 8 per cent of vulnerable girls not returning to the classroom. Scenarios with longer closures predict that as many as 30-50 per cent of vulnerable girls and boys will discontinue their schooling. Independent research conducted by Right to Play projects a worst case scenario of 53 per cent of adolescent girls not returning to school after lockdowns

owing to economic hardship, increased domestic burden, and child-marriage.

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“For a lot of girls in my community, especially those who belong to the most marginalised groups, school was the only place where they could access nutritious food. So, closing down school means closing down their only means to get food to survive”

– Bonita, Youth Activist, Nepal

⁷ United National Children’s Fund, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, UNWOMEN. [Gender Counts: A quantitative assessment of gender inequality and its impact on children and adolescents](#). 2019, New York.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ United National Children’s Fund, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, UNWOMEN. [Gender Counts: A quantitative assessment of gender inequality and its impact on children and adolescents](#). 2019, New York.

The loss of hard-won gains due to COVID19 will have a severe long-term impact on girls' education in the region. As almost 90 per cent of the world's population continues to hold biases towards women and girls that are detrimental to educational and development outcomes, it is important to consider how humanitarian crises affect women, girls, men, and boys in different ways due to the inequitable roles and privileges ascribed to gender. For example, one such projection shows that the loss of just six months' learning will have a proportionally greater impact on girls in low and middle income countries. Due to the compounding impact of learning loss, marginalised and vulnerable girls in particular could lose 50 per cent of their total years of education.

Beyond lost learning, vital public health measures and associated economic shocks are also worsening existing inequalities, meaning vulnerable children are the most adversely affected by school closures. Prevailing gender norms mean girls and young women are devoting more time than boys to unpaid care work, looking after younger siblings, older relatives and dependent neighbours, and those who are ill within the household rather than focusing on education. This means vulnerable girls have less time to study and may miss out on educational broadcasts on radio and television, not to mention critical public health and safety messages. COVID19 therefore increases the possibility of millions more girls in South Asia not re-enrolling in school; effectively dropping out before the completion of their education.

Thematic analysis: COVID19's disruptions to girls' education in South Asia

In each of the four webinar sessions, presenters' topics were aligned with one of the four following themes. To the extent that COVID19 has consumed much energy and attention, each session reminded us that present challenges are not isolated from pre-existent policy and programming priorities, much of which has been adapted to promote continuity of learning and contingencies for girls' protection, health, and wellbeing at this critical juncture. The webinar themes covered:

- [Alternative Education Approaches and Gender Equity in the COVID19 Response](#)
- [Understanding Violence, Safety and Protection for Girls](#)
- [Equity Issues and National Responses to Girls' Education in Afghanistan](#)
- [Skills Building, School to Work Transitions, and Girls' Empowerment](#)

The following five output domains were proposed by the Girls' Education Challenge to consider all programmatic responses to support girls' security and progression during COVID19, while keeping connected with girls during lockdowns and coordination with national government and others' efforts.

Reflective of the thematic strengths of the webinar series and for the purposes of this analysis, output domains 1: continuation of teaching and learning, 3: social protection and safety, and 5: return to school, are used to frame the key messages arising from each of the webinars; this does not discount the importance of wellbeing and resilience or influencing society and institutions, but it

does highlight that further attention and dissemination of current programming is required for these two themes.

Figure 1.



1. Continuation of teaching and learning

Driving continuity of learning using quality materials and accessible approaches, including professional development of educators



2. Wellbeing and resilience

Supporting social-emotional learning, positive coping skills and social networks



3. Social protection and safety

Ensuring equitable and safe access to basic services including health, SRHR, WASH, including bursaries, cash transfers and nutrition programmes



4. Influencing society and institutions

Combatting exclusionary norms and advocating for continued investment in education (formal and informal), positive support networks and enabling environments for girls to flourish.



5. Return to school / learning centres

Mitigating drop-out, preparing girls and families/caregivers, and supporting schools/centres for the return to formalised learning

Continuation of teaching and learning

The [first webinar](#) of the series reflected on programmes that target marginalised girls and the ways in which they are adapting to school closures during the COVID19 pandemic. UNICEF ROSA Director Jean Gough's opening speech set the scene, reminding participants that where gains have been made in girls' access to basic education, we have been much less successful in ensuring women access meaningful jobs, leadership positions, and opportunities for political participation. Highlights included Baela Raza Jamil's discussion of how [Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi's](#) Siyani Sahelian initiative leverages technology to ensure girls' continuous access to learning, and [UNGEI](#) Secretariat Nora Fyle's session including five inspiring youth activists from the region, who's key messages are included throughout this document. Overwhelmingly, they expressed a shared desire to see more women and girls at the decision-making table, being taken seriously as partners and leaders for girls' education. UNICEF's Chris Henderson then closed the session with a proposed gender-responsive education minimum standards framework for COVID19, in which health and child protection sector actors are a central part of operationalising learning continuity and school reopening processes.

At the conclusion of the webinar, facilitator Ian Attfield (FCDO) summarised that a significant challenge has been ensuring that any new approaches, particularly the use of distance learning, do not further marginalise vulnerable and excluded girls, which could include girls in camps, rural and remote locations without power or connectivity, and girls without access to necessary technology. Additionally, it can be challenging to combine self-study with heavy domestic burdens, particularly for girls who have added complications such as disabilities and those in households facing hunger. Supporting teachers to undertake remote working is also a challenge, ensuring they have the techniques and resources to carry out their jobs and to maintain their own mental health and well-being is also crucial.

The massive scale of school closures in South Asia has laid bare the uneven distribution of technology needed to facilitate digital and broadcast-based learning.¹⁰ Although rates of access to mobile technology in South Asia are high (e.g. 78 per cent in Pakistan, 86 per cent in Bangladesh, and 84 per cent in Afghanistan¹¹) the region also has the world's widest gender divide in terms of mobile phone ownership.¹² This divide emerges as girls enter puberty, broadens as they reach older adolescence, and persists after marriage.¹³ Research in India has found almost twice as many boys have phones as girls, and in Bangladesh about two-thirds more.¹⁴ Overall, women in South Asia are 26 per cent less likely to own a mobile than men and 70 per cent less likely to use the internet.¹⁵ Even where sufficient technologies are available, the gender divide means girls benefit less from online or broadcast-based learning, especially where families have limited devices.¹⁶ During COVID19 lockdowns in South Asia, 147 million children or 38 per cent of all learners cannot access remote learning and only 7 per cent can access online modalities.¹⁷ We know that girls are overrepresented in these numbers. This data confirms that a move to digital and online learning compounds educational inequalities for vulnerable learners, and will continue to do so without widescale investment in communications infrastructure, rollout of devices, and free or subsidised data plans.¹⁸ Until this happens, strategies for continued learning must explore alternative ways to access education materials, and take into account and challenge the prevalence of the region's digital gender divide.¹⁹

Reflective of the above realities, in Punjab, Pakistan, Siyani Sahelian (a programme of Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi) has outlined both their pre and post-pandemic [models](#). They undertook a rapid pivot in their programming to exploit new content and technology to continue operations and keep connected with students during school closures. At the other end of the spectrum, the GEC-supported [Steps Towards Afghan Girls' Education Success \(STAGES\) project](#) in Afghanistan undertook

¹⁰ United Nations Children's Fund. [COVID19: Are Children Able to Continue Learning During School Closures?](#) August 2020. New York

¹¹ GSMA [Mobile Gender Gap Report](#). 2020

¹² United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia. [Guidance on Distance Learning Modalities to Reach all Children and Youth During School Closures](#). June 2020. Kathmandu.

¹³ See also: Vodafone. [Real Girls, Real Lives Connected: A global study of girls' access to and usage of mobile](#). 2019. London.

¹⁴ Vodafone. [Real Girls, Real Lives Connected: A global study of girls' access to and usage of mobile](#). 2019. London.

¹⁵ United National Children's Fund, United Nations Fund for Population Activities, UNWOMEN. [Gender Counts: A quantitative assessment of gender inequality and its impact on children and adolescents](#). 2019, New York.

¹⁶ UNWOMEN. [The first 100 days of COVID19 in Asia and the Pacific](#). 2020. New York

¹⁷ United Nations Children's Fund. [COVID19: Are Children Able to Continue Learning During School Closures?](#) August 2020. New York

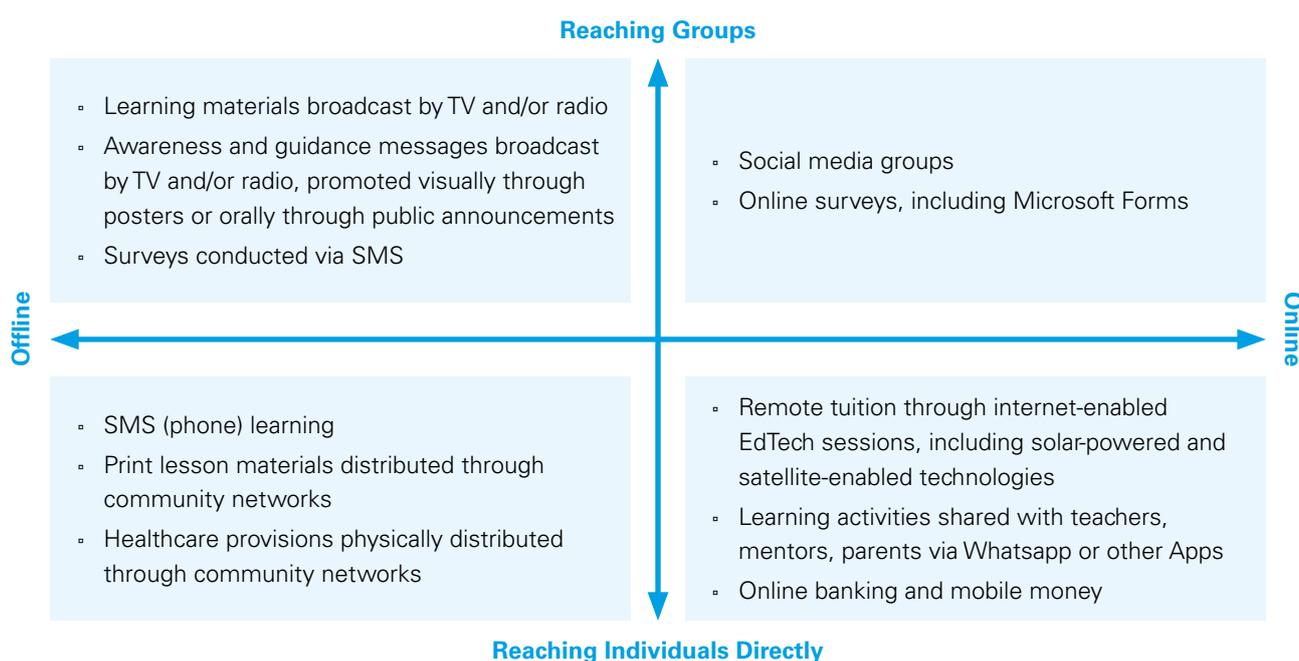
¹⁸ United Nations Children's Fund. [The State of the World's Children: Children in a Digital World](#). 2017. New York.

¹⁹ United Nations Girls Education Initiative. [Putting Gender at the Forefront of the COVID19 Education Response](#). 2020. New York.

a comprehensive gender analysis to adapt its response to COVID19. This included a blended learning approach with supplementary learning packs coupled with small group learning and remote, call-based teacher mentoring, offered weekly.

The following diagram from Girls' Education Challenge represents tools and technologies being used, whether online and offline, and reaching individuals directly or reaching groups. In many cases, approaches are expanded from more basic check-ins around well-being, to incorporate academic and non-cognitive learning as times of class closures has lengthened.

Figure 2.



With acute conflict and socio-cultural factors inhibiting girls' education in recent decades, [webinar three](#) focused specifically on Afghanistan. Through different case studies, presenters demonstrated how girls' learning continuity needs are increasingly addressed through Community-Based Education (CBE) responses, which are backed by both government and donors to rapidly expand opportunities and improve quality, contextually relevant, and accessible learning for girls in rural or marginalised communities in particular. Frank van Cappelle's presentation on gender-equity in Afghanistan reminded us to celebrate broader progress in girls' education cautiously; with only 56 girls attending school for every 100 boys, Afghanistan remains a regional anomaly in terms of gender parity at school. The Ministry of Education's Dr Wahidyar then outlined how CBE is particularly effective for marginalised girls and why CBE is endorsed by some of Afghanistan's most conservative quarters. A reason for this was summarised succinctly by Aga Khan's Lia van Nieuwenhuijzen: "When girls are provided with access to education close to their homes in a context which recognises community values and concerns, they are more likely to go to school, stay in school, and learn."



"After decades of war, COVID19 has made it harder still for girls to access school. Therefore, it is critical that we include girls in decision making. Let's not talk at girls, let's talk with them. Allow youth to make decisions, but with advice from elders who have had relevant experience"

– Roya, Youth Activist, Afghanistan

The [fourth and final webinar](#) addressed one of the most glaring challenges for girls' education in South Asia: poor transition rates for girls between education, training and meaningful employment. With the possibilities created by girls' collective empowerment defining much of the discussion, Iqbal Hossein's presentation on Bangladesh's apprenticeship-based [Alternative Learning Programme](#) championed the positive impact of training and employment on adolescent girls' life outcomes. Highlights for graduates included a sixfold increase in income, a 9 per cent increase in per capita food expenditure, an enhanced sense of empowerment and self-confidence, and a 62 per cent reduction in child-marriage among participants. Similarly, for GEC [Mercy Corps' GEC project](#)

['Supporting the Education of Marginalised Girls in Kailali II \(STEM II\)](#), previously out-of-school adolescent girls in Nepal reported that education and employment outcomes resulted in improved status and decision-making power in the home, increased respect within the community, and the ability to cover living expenses. At the centre of all presentations, including Binita Shrestha and Maha Muna's work on [WiSTEM](#), [Skills4Girls](#), and [UpShift](#) Nepal, was the urgent need to reverse harmful gender norms, spotlight role models for girls' and women's empowerment, and build sustainable private sector partnerships that enable long-term pathways for adolescent girls' transition to formal, safe, and dignified employment.



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“It is especially important for women and girls to be a direct part of the conversation, to discuss the issues that impact them, and to be the experts of their lived experiences”

– Maryam and Nivaal, Youth Activists, Pakistan

Social protection and safety

Health systems' near-total focus on COVID19 outbreak prevention has also diverted attention from routine services such as sexual and reproductive health and the clinical management of gender-based violence. During the West African Ebola crisis, girls and women in affected countries experienced a 65 per cent increase in gender-based violence, early and forced marriages, and transactional sex.²⁰ In line with these findings, an early assessment of COVID19's impact on women and girls outlines increased incidences of domestic violence, workplace violence in essential and frontline services,

online and offline racial and sexual harassment, and exploitation of vulnerable and informal workers.²¹

The [second webinar](#) focused on violence in school and gender-based violence (GBV) more broadly. GBV is increasingly recognised as an underlying factor that inhibits children, especially girls, from progressing in school, learning and prospering, with enormous social and financial consequences. The prevalence of school-related violence also affects many girls' willingness to return to school after lockdowns end. With

²⁰ United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation. [Addressing the Gendered Dimensions of School Closures](#). 2020. Paris

²¹ DFID. [Impact of COVID19 Pandemic on Violence against Women and Girls](#). 2020. London.

Danielle Cornish-Spencer's summary of [GEC's Learning without Fear strategic analysis](#)²² setting the scene, David Clark (UNICEF) and Pramod Bhatta's (Safe to Learn²³) respective presentations on violence and school safety exposed an uncomfortable tension between the promise of safe schooling and a contrary reality for far too many: that schools are neither safe, nor inclusive. This also illustrated how violence at home, in the community, and schools compounds the many injustices girls face in order to learn.

As Cornish-Spencer's presentation highlighted, girls cannot learn in environments where they are living in fear, and as such programming needs to address the root cause of that fear as a central goal of educational improvement efforts. Part of this approach needs to be the attribution of violence to negative masculinities and how they justify men's capacity for violence, control over women and girls, and dominance in the educational sphere. Similarly, the intersectional characteristics of gender-based violence need to be identified and understood in terms of differential ways in which poverty, conflict, disaster, and other forms of crisis exacerbate the propensity for violence at home, at school, and in the community. Cornish-Spencer insists, however, that holistic activities to address gender-based violence cannot isolate and/or elevate men in terms of their allyship or leadership; in many contexts this reinforces male patriarchy and power, excludes girls and women from behaviour change strategies, and makes accountability all the more difficult. As such, this reiterates the importance of girls and women's inclusion, their visibility, their voices, their leadership, and their partnership in behaviour change programming alongside boys and men.

Indicated above, David Clarke's presentation on gender-based violence presented difficult truths about girls' experiences at school. Data shows that in Nepal a majority of girls report living fearful, highly stressed lives, and that schools are unsafe due to the prevalence of fighting, bullying, corporal punishment and sexual harassment. The most recent data from 2015 showed that 46 per cent of girls age 13-17 experience serious bullying at school. An earlier 2012 survey shows that adolescent girls who experience sexual violence do so from male friends, teachers, and family members, with teachers among the most reported perpetrators; 35 per cent of girls reporting that they have been hurt by a teacher. Of further concern is the lack of recent data for this same age group pertaining to sexual violence at home and school, mobile, and online bullying and exploitation.

Although much of this study addressed pre-COVID19 realities, Clarke confirmed that recent school closures exacerbate incidences of violence in the home, with girls being witnesses or bystanders to intimate partner violence, as well as being the victims of sexual and physical violence themselves. Moving forward, Clarke advocated for better inclusion of child protection policies in the sector and the associated strengthening of formal reporting and referral mechanisms. Whereas there is national legislation prohibiting all forms of violence towards children, child protection has not yet been integrated into education legislation, nor is there policy on child protection in schools and it is glaringly missing from more recent education strategies.



“This is a golden opportunity for young girls, and youth like us, to speak up and advocate for our right to quality education. It is also our responsibility to hold stakeholders accountable to reducing the barriers to education”

– Bonita, Youth Activist, Nepal

Pramod Bhatta's following presentation balanced shared aspirations for improved child protection legislation with the reality that even with laws in place, people still commit acts of violence in schools without consequence or condemnation. Furthermore, to the extent that child friendly protocols are included in teacher codes of practice and painted on hallway walls, without child protection and the safeguarding of girls built into teacher professional development and school management strategies change will be slow to arrive. Bhatta then promoted Safe to Learn's [Call to Action](#) - which draws urgent attention to this reality - and the accompanying [Safe to Learn Programmatic Framework](#) which offers policy makers, practitioners, and school leaders practical actions and technical resources to assist in the design of interventions and for monitoring and tracking results.

²² GEC [Learning without Fear: Strategies to address violence in schools](#) 2020 London

²³ See Safe to Learn (2020) [Reopening Schools Safely: Recommendations for building back better to end violence against children in and through schools](#). 2020. New York.



Return to school / learning centres

Schools are promoted as a lifeline and safe haven for girls, providing essential health information and services, nutrition, and protection from domestic exploitation and violence. To make it possible for the most vulnerable girls to return to school, more needs to happen than simply opening safer classrooms. According to UNICEF's Robert Jenkins and the Brookings Institution's Rebecca Winthrop, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to transform education and reimagine the way girls learn. Actions to get girls back to school include lifting the financial barriers that prevent girls from going to school; scaling evidence informed and gender-responsive distance and blended education; intensifying community mobilization and support for girls' education, and in doing so prioritize girls' safety and protection; and, ensuring the meaningful participation of children and adolescents, parents and caregivers, and teachers and school leaders in the development of school reopening strategies and procedures. Once back, authorities are also recommended to strengthen the linkage between schools and community social protection systems, as well as update school-based reporting and referral mechanisms for quick referral of the most vulnerable learners and their families.

Key actors in the effort to get all girls back to school are teachers. But as illustrated above, a minority of

teachers are cause for girls' fear and poor safety at school. As such, Danielle Cornish-Spencer calls for an explicit focus on improving teacher capacity in terms of pedagogy and engaging learners through non-violent classroom management, and promoting more equitable relationships between girls and teachers leading to a reduced tendency for teachers to use corporal punishment. Another strategy is increasing training and recruitment of female teachers (as the Afghanistan case studies highlight in webinar three).

Currently, female teachers are under-represented in many of South Asia's school systems. Where equal representation exists, there is an imbalance across schooling levels with women over-represented in primary years schooling, and men dominating middle and senior schooling. The consequences of this include girls' sense of inclusion at corresponding year levels, with harmful gender norms being inadvertently reinforced within schools and beyond, and a diminished sense of safety for girls who face increased rates of harassment and sexual abuse, perpetrated by a minority of male teachers as their schooling progresses. These gender-disparities reflect current education completion rates for adolescent girls as well as gender-biased recruitment practices. Among other long-term health and economic benefits, attracting more adolescent girls and women to teaching and reversing

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“These issues are not new. But they are more visible than ever. What is new is the understanding that just reopening schools is not enough... we must reimagine new and better schools, which make gender equality and inclusion a first priority. We have also come to understand that young women and girls must have a seat at the table, as their perspective is key to the solution.”

– Nora Fyles, Secretariat, UNGEI

detrimental hiring practices towards female teachers is an essential strategy in attracting at risk girls and boys back to school.

Dependent on the schooling conditions that state and district authorities coordinate with school leaders, teachers, and communities, girls and boys and their caregivers will be variably incentivized to return to school when lockdowns end. First and foremost, the risk of transmission of COVID19 within schools needs to be minimized. In the transition, authorities are asked to consider dividing classes into shifts, amending seating arrangements, establishing temporary learning spaces, or collaborating with community leaders to identify additional learning sites to reduce classroom density.²⁴ Authorities also need to ensure all schools have access to adequate safe water, handwashing stations, cleaning supplies, and establish or expand sex segregated toilets, including provisions for menstrual hygiene management.²⁵ On top of these provisions, administrative staff and teachers are in need of professional development support focused on protocols for implementing physical distancing and classroom hygiene.²⁶

As much as we have the opportunity to reimagine education and open up better schools, we also need to get the abovementioned essentials right. Globally, we know from past crises that adolescent girls are approximately 50 per cent less likely to transition from primary to secondary education, secondary education to training, or from training into meaningful employment.²⁷

With such precedents, COVID19 will have a pronounced effect on girls' and women's well-being and ability to continue schooling or alternative education. We must therefore build on existing strengths and maintain long-term investments in strong education and life-skills, health and protection systems to meet the holistic needs of girls and boys across the age continuum.²⁸



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²⁴ Save the Children and Global Education Cluster. *Safe Back to School: A Practitioner Guide*. 2020. London.

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Girls Education Challenge, GAGE & CUE Brookings. *Life Skills for Adolescent Girls in the COVID19 Pandemic*. 2020. London

²⁸ United Nations Children's Fund. *Five Actions for Gender Equality in the COVID19 Response*. 2020. New York.

Gender-responsive Education in the Context of COVID19:

Framework and Progressive Standards for South Asia



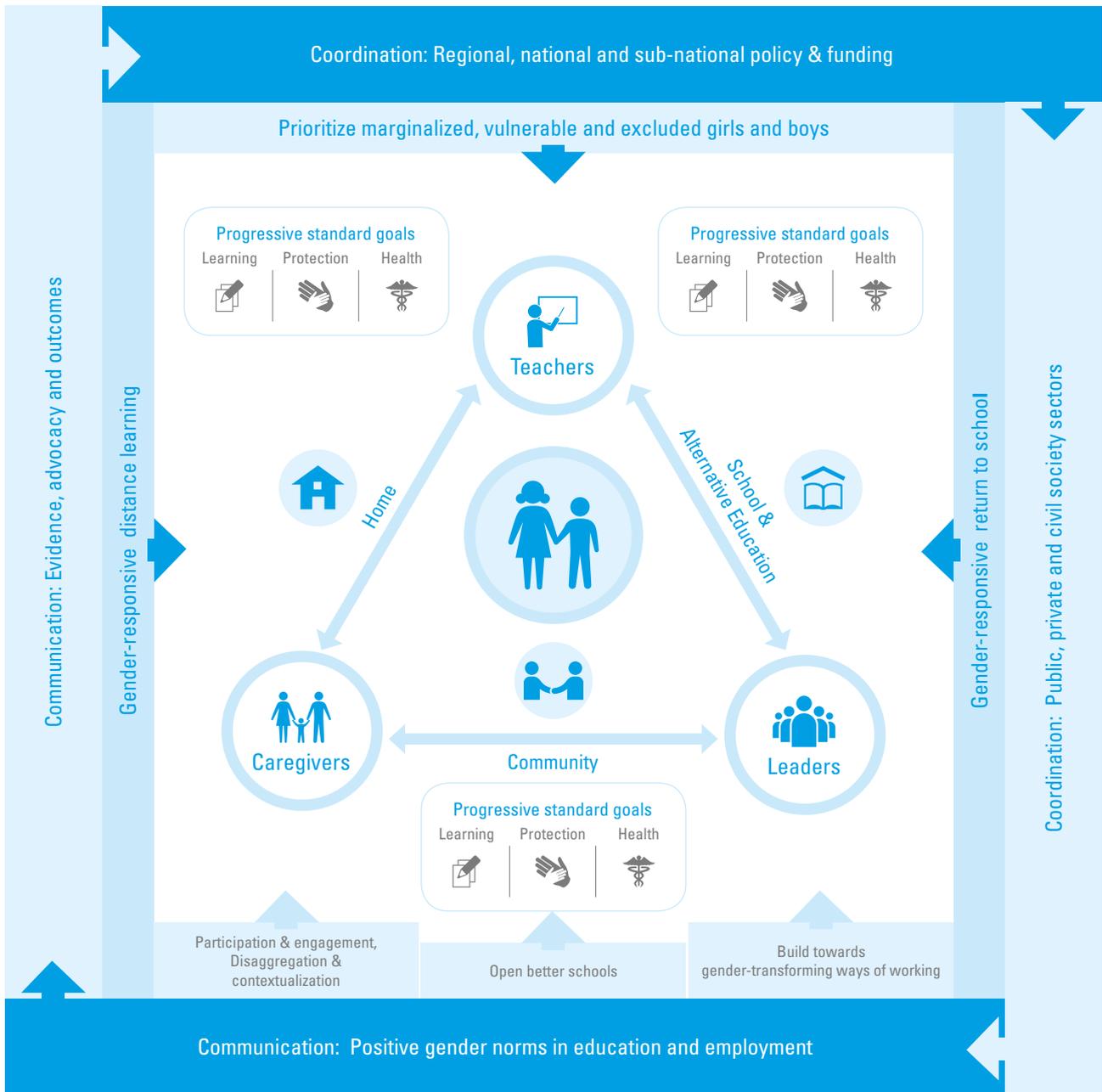
An outcome of the Leave No Girl Behind Webinar Series is the development of comprehensive gender and education guidance resources, which will consist of:

- ▶ A gender-responsive education framework for COVID19
- ▶ Progressive gender-responsive standards for South Asia
- ▶ Evidence on education and gender equity
- ▶ Case studies documenting promising practices in gender-responsive education
- ▶ Comprehensive resource repository on COVID19 and gender-responsive education

The target audience is the region's Ministry of Education officials and UNICEF Country Office practitioners and implementing partners; especially those working with education clusters, school leaders, women's organisations, and youth organisations to ensure marginalized, vulnerable, and excluded girls and boys are identified and access continuous learning in the context of COVID19. Based on the child-centred and cross-sector framework below, this resource sets forth evidence-informed progressive standards to support gender-responsive actions that address the unique needs of girls and boys at risk of not engaging in education, training or employment.

This resource package will be distributed to UNICEF country offices, Girls' Education Challenge partners, and ministries of education throughout the region. It will also be available on [UNICEF ROSA's website](#).

Figure 1: Gender-responsive Education Framework for South Asia



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