

GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

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A system-wide approach to tackling inequalities from the early years

Key findings

- **Mainstreaming gender within pre-primary education is a priority in tackling gender-related inequalities from the early years.**
- **Such mainstreaming requires the commitment of a variety of stakeholders within the education system and beyond**, such as different units within education ministries, pre-service and in-service teacher training providers and teacher unions, other ministries, academia, and civil society organizations.
- **Advocacy for gender-transformative pre-primary education should centre on the five core components of quality pre-primary education systems:** planning and budgeting, curriculum development and implementation, workforce development, family and community engagement, and quality assurance.

Context

Pre-primary education can have a transformative power over gender inequalities, tackling them and challenging common gender norms and stereotypes while they are being acquired by the youngest learners.¹ This policy brief aims to support education ministries to advocate with and engage partners within and outside the education sector on how pre-primary education can deliver on this potential. It presents key 'asks' or advocacy points to engage these partners, as well as enabling conditions to achieve them following a system-wide perspective.

Key asks and advocacy points

Key 'asks'/Advocacy points	Enablers	Key partners to engage
<p>1.</p> <p>Mainstream gender within pre-primary education policy and programming.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use multiple sources of gender-disaggregated data, to showcase gender differences in access and learning, highlight the need for gender-transformative systems, increase political buy-in and inform pre-primary education sector planning.² In addition to EMIS data, national census data, household surveys and administrative data from other sectors can provide information on the intersection of gender and other factors of disadvantage. • Involve donors, NGOs, private providers, families and communities in gender-responsive and/or transformative programming to create a shared view of the system and increase ownership. Identify and enable champions among community leaders to pursue and promote gender-transformative approaches and strategies. • Apply a gender-responsive lens for pre-primary education budgeting processes to restructure expenditures and redirect funding allocation to promote gender equality.³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education, including Education Management Information System (EMIS) unit • National Statistics Office • Ministry of Finance • Civil society organizations and development partners • Private pre-primary education providers • Pre-primary teachers • Families and communities
<p>2.</p> <p>Improve the working conditions and professionalization of the pre-primary education workforce.⁴</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse the feasibility and availability of funds for a progressive increase of teachers' salaries. • Involve different stakeholders within and beyond the education sector to design and implement accredited training programmes for pre-primary education teachers according to their needs. • Engage teacher unions and organizations working for women labour participation to advocate for continuous improvements in the working conditions of the highly feminized pre-primary education workforce. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education, including Human Resources/Workforce Development Unit • Ministry of Finance • Ministry responsible for civil service/public service • Pre-service and in-service teacher training providers • Teacher unions • Civil society organizations

Key 'asks'/Advocacy points	Enablers	Key partners to engage
<p>3.</p> <p>Attract more men to teach in pre-primary education, as well as more women to other parts of the education system where they are under-represented.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement communication campaigns to reinforce the importance of pre-primary education and build the case for male participation.⁵ • Engage teacher unions and organizations from civil society to advocate for gender-balanced recruitment processes in all levels of education. • Engage secondary schools and pre-service teacher training institutions, including providers of career counselling, to provide gender-transformative information and strategies for teaching career pathways. • Increase research to understand the root causes of the under-representation of men in the pre-primary education workforce and of women in other education levels and/or streams (e.g., science, technology, maths) to develop context-specific recruitment strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education • Pre-service teacher training providers • Career counselling institutions • Media • Teacher unions • Civil society organizations, community leaders • Universities/Research centres
<p>4.</p> <p>Leverage pre-primary education as a platform to engage fathers and male caregivers in gender-transformative parenting.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve public and private pre-primary education providers on developing gender-transformative strategies to engage male caregivers. • Engage civil society organizations representing parents and caregivers and parent-teacher associations to support fathers' and male caregivers' involvement in pre-primary education. • Implement communication campaigns on the importance of fathers' and male caregivers' role in early learning.⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public and private pre-primary education providers • Media • Civil society organizations • Parent-teacher associations
<p>5.</p> <p>Design a gender-transformative quality assurance system for pre-primary education.</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage a wide spectrum of stakeholders within the education system to develop quality assurance standards that are aligned to the aims of the curriculum, including gender-transformative principles.⁷ • Involve gender experts in the design of quality assurance indicators and assessment tools to monitor gender-responsive pedagogical practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Education • Quality Assurance Department • Curriculum Department • EMIS unit • Universities/Research centres

These key 'asks' or advocacy points are aligned with the five core components of pre-primary education systems: planning and budgeting, curriculum development and implementation, workforce development, family and community engagement, and quality assurance. Following a system-wide perspective, the related enablers should be activated together to contribute towards the progressive mainstreaming of the gender perspective within pre-primary education systems.

Given the impact of pre-primary education in children's development, in tackling social inequalities and in providing a solid foundation for economic growth⁸, the establishment of a strong pre-primary education system should be a national interest. This implies a high level of participation and commitment of a variety of stakeholders within and beyond the education system to ensure the equitable provision of quality pre-primary education services.

Further reading

Tackling Gender Inequality from the Early Years: Strategies for building a gender-transformative pre-primary education system. Nugroho, Anindita, Delgado, M., Baghdasaryan, B., Vindrola, S., Lata, D. and Mehmood Syed, G., UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight, 2022.

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3. Jorge Pescina, Ubaldo Colin, Lucia Fry, and Nora Fyles, 'Spending Better for Gender Equality in Education: How Can Financing Be Targeted to Improve Gender Equality in Education?', United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, New York, 2021a.
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UNICEF Innocenti receives financial support from the Government of Italy, while funding for specific projects is also provided by other governments, international institutions and private sources, including UNICEF National Committees.

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For readers wishing to cite this document, we suggest the following form: *A system-wide approach to tackling inequalities from the early years*; UNICEF Innocenti – Global Office of Research and Foresight, 2022.

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