

# Our work in girls' education

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# About us

We support peace and prosperity by building connections understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide.

We uniquely combine the UK's deep expertise in arts and culture, education and the English language, our global presence and relationships in over 100 countries, our unparalleled access to young people, creatives and educators, and our own creative sparkle.

2024 marks 90 years of the British Council. Over these years we have created opportunities for millions of people and developed deep and long-lasting relationships. We continue to adapt to meet the needs of a changing world, while remaining committed to the principles on which we were founded.

We share our values and explore ideas. We have difficult discussions and find common ground. We create mutually beneficial relationships between the people of all four nations of the UK and other countries. This helps strengthen the UK's global reputation and influence, encouraging people from around the world to visit, study, trade and make alliances with the UK.

We work directly with individuals to help them gain the skills, confidence and connections to transform their lives and shape a better world in partnership with the UK. We support them to build networks and explore creative ideas, to learn English, to get a high-quality education and to gain internationally recognised qualifications.

We work with governments and our partners in the education, English language and cultural sectors, in the UK and globally. Working together we make a bigger difference, creating benefit for millions of people all over the world.

We take a long-term approach to building trust and remain at arm's length from government. We work with people in over 200 countries and territories and are on the ground in more than 100 countries. In 2022–23 we reached 600 million people.

The majority of our income comes from partnership agreements, contracts, philanthropy, teaching and exams, and we also receive grant-in-aid funding from the UK government.

Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

Our work in girls' education is driven by the British Council's purpose of building trust and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries.



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# Our work in girls' education

We support educators and communities in the UK and worldwide to work together to enrich the quality of education in schools and equip young people to live and work successfully in a global society, as well as supporting the learning of English to open access to opportunities. We are well-placed to build on our existing work to make a significant difference to the access girls have to education, their quality of learning and opportunities outside formal education and their options following school education.

We are proud to be central to the UK's commitment to supporting education systems to improve access to 12 years of quality education for all. The British Council contributes to girls' education priorities by addressing gender inequality in education as part of interventions that drive up overall education performance as well as programmes focused specifically on gender equality and girls' education. We have a number of key strengths that we draw on to build innovative approaches and address the complexity of the girls' education challenge. Our relationships on the ground and long-standing partnerships with governments, development partners, teaching professionals and expertise, complemented by our extensive record of innovation in programme design and management, make us a unique organisation to partner with.

We work with governments, ministries of education, school leaders, teaching professionals, students and communities and non-government educational organisations across the globe to address the multiple barriers to girls' education, improve access to education for girls and to ensure that they are supported to learn and reach their potential in school and beyond. Our work empowers young people to gain the skills, confidence and connections they are looking for to realise their potential and to participate in strong and inclusive communities.

We believe in the power of education to transform gender relations and contribute to more equal and inclusive societies. However, we also acknowledge the role of education systems in replicating and reinforcing gender and other inequalities and disproportionately excluding girls. That is why we promote a holistic and multi-pronged approach to girls' education.

**With extensive experience of working on inclusive education, we have capability and expertise in:**

- supporting gender equitable education systems
- instructional leadership for girls' education
- professional development of teacher educators and teachers in gender sensitive teaching practice
- gender-sensitive curriculum and resources
- interventions to enable girls' access to education
- engaging with communities to support girls' education
- engaging girls in subjects where they are under-represented including science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM)
- supporting girls' empowerment in and out of school
- supporting research and policy dialogue to create an enabling environment for girls' education.



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## Our expertise

# Strengthening national education systems to support girls' education



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Working with education systems is an effective way of enabling changes at scale that impact on the quality of education for both boys and girls. There is good evidence that systems-wide improvements can disproportionately benefit girls in terms of access to and outcomes of education.

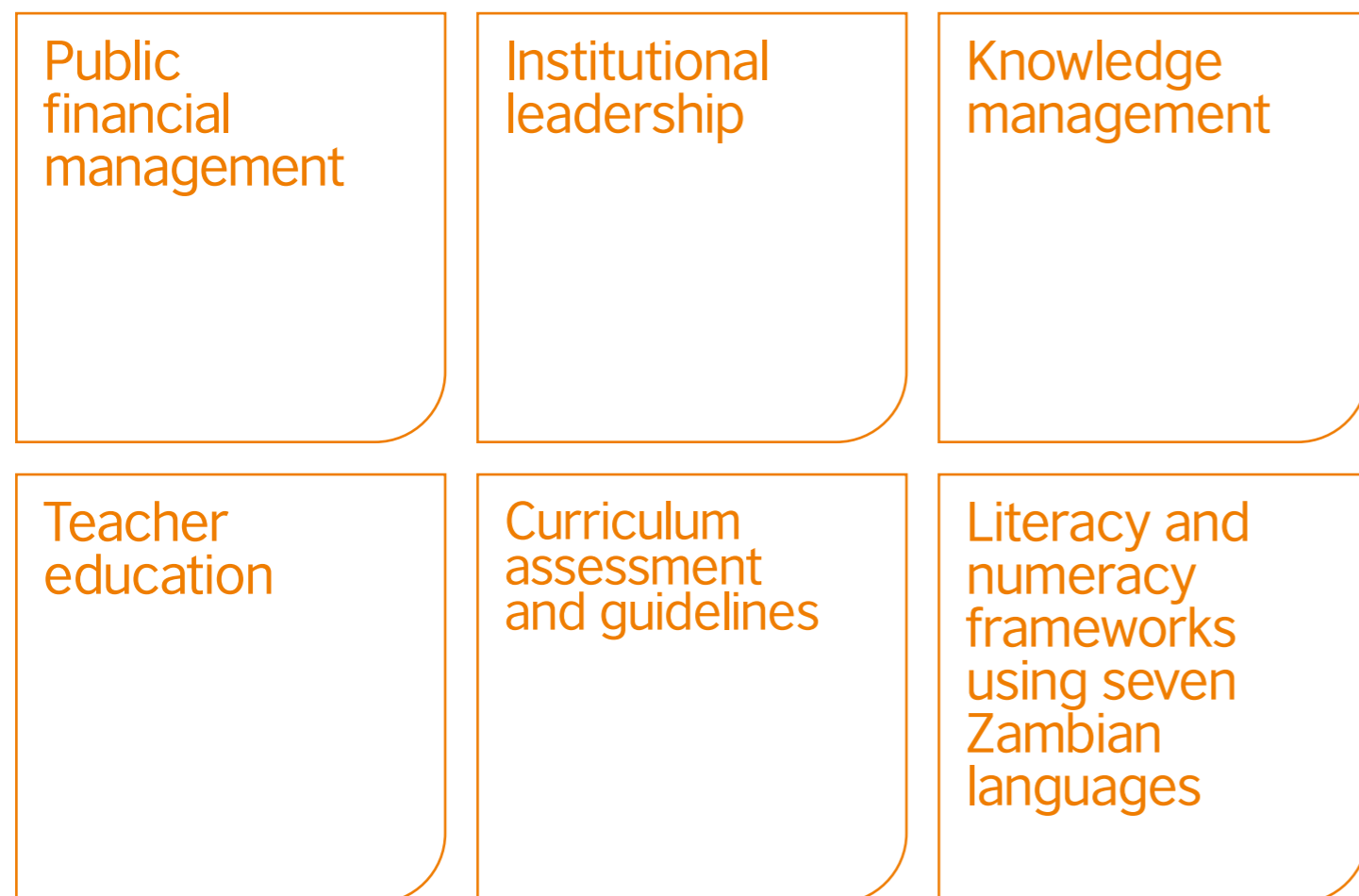
The British Council has extensive experience of working with national and state level education systems to support improvements to the provision and quality of education. We successfully managed two FCDO-funded projects providing flexible education technical assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa:

The **Quality Education Strategic Support Programme in Ethiopia (QESSP)** (FCDO, £10 million, 2015-18) provided ongoing, demand-driven capacity building support by placing experienced advisers in key departments in the Ministry of Education (MoE). Through a detailed capacity assessment exercise and a review of strategic priorities, areas of support were identified and agreed with the Ministry and regional education bureaus with a focus on the differentiated impact on girls and boys. In its four years up to June 2019, QESSP successfully responded to diverse demands from all the states and the federal MoE and supported schools throughout Ethiopia to build successful community engagement on key issues of education inclusion.

The programme followed a problem-driven, iterative adaptation approach, responding to the emerging strategic needs of the education sector. It used an evidence basis and adopted 'a working with and not for Ministry staff' approach and has built both institutional and individual capacity sustainably.

Through the **Zambia Education Strategic Support Technical Assistance (ZESSTA)** (FCDO and Global Partnership for Education, £5.2 million, 2015-18) we supported the Ministries of General Education and Higher Education in Zambia to strengthen their capacity in education policy, planning, implementation and management. The British Council provided technical assistance in public financial management, institutional leadership, knowledge management, teacher education, and curriculum assessment. The programme supported the curriculum department to develop key curriculum documents including curriculum guidelines and literacy and numeracy frameworks using seven Zambian languages of instruction and initial literacy.

**Key components of the Zambia Education Strategic Support Technical Assistance programme (ZESSTA)**



The programme led to improved leadership, management systems, improved availability of gender disaggregated data for evidence-based planning and budgeting, enhanced professional standards, qualifications and capacity and skills of teachers.

The **FCDO Empowerment and Development for Girls' Education (EDGE) in Zambia** (£1.8 million, 2022 – ongoing) is designed to support the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) and its partners to deliver political and economic commitments on secondary education. The British Council leads a component which supports the government to identify and share effective practice through learning visits (local and international), brokers relationships with experts and stakeholders and enables networking. This includes exploring and scaling financing models that focus on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable secondary school students, especially girls and learners in hard-to-reach rural areas. A separate component led by the Promoting Equality in African Schools organisation is a test bed for ideas on how to reach more girls through low-cost but high-quality secondary education and provides opportunities for evidence-based policy decisions to support girls' education informed by good practice. *'Support towards girls' education makes a difference between a girl dropping out of school or completing school. EDGE is working together with other stakeholders and donors interested in the education of girls to support the Ministry of Education to reach girls with education which is a right.'* Namenda Malupande – CAMFED Zambia National Director.

The **Nepal Provincial Support to Strengthen Girls' Education Response (PSSGER)** (FCDO, £75,000, 2019-20) project supported two of Nepal's most disadvantaged new federal provinces to embed gender responsive education plans, tackle gender-based violence and ensure girls are provided with safe learning spaces. The project used awareness-raising and action learning workshops for local government representatives to sensitise and build their capacity for gender-responsive education planning. The project approach and delivery model were adapted, based on the needs of stakeholders identified through stakeholder consultations during the inception phase.

Through these action learning experiences, workshops and interventions, PSSGER has successfully motivated the target community to develop gender responsive action plans for their respective provinces. Results shows that the participants have enhanced knowledge, attitude and technical skills and recommended a second phase of PSSGER should be developed, building on the many learnings from this intervention and working towards more sustainable knowledge and skills development for the local education boards.

The British Council delivered the **Gender Equality in Education project in Turkey** (EU, £3 million, 2014-16) which focused on developing tools to take a whole-school approach to gender sensitivity. It developed recommendations to ensure gender equality by reviewing education policies, legislation, curricula and textbooks and built the capacity of the Ministry of National Education to promote equality and gender sensitive approaches in the overall education system. It trained 230 trainers and over 8,000 educators. It raised awareness about gender equality in different segments of society, starting from schools and their context. A school 'gender audit' and materials packs were among resources produced, including a Gender Equality Assurance Tool for Schools for teaching and non-teaching staff. The project conducted analysis and produced a report on Gender Equality in Curricula and Textbooks, a Gender Equality Certificate Programme along with a Training of Trainers (ToT) handbook, a handbook for Gender Equality in Education, an In-Service Training Handbook for Leadership and Entrepreneurship Training for Female Teachers, and a School-Based Gender Equality Campaign Guide and Good Practices Booklet, as well as a public education campaign that included two short films broadcast on national television.

## Our expertise

# Enabling girls' access to education



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Girls and young women face multiple barriers to access quality education. We use different strategies to address those barriers and enable girls and young women to benefit from countries' investments in education. We have experience of implementing different approaches including incentives schemes, non-formal education initiatives targeted at girls as well as engaging with communities to address barriers including gender and social norms.

Through our **ILMPOSSIBLE: Take a Child to School programme in Pakistan** (Education Above All, \$19 million, 2014-21) we have implemented a rights-based and participatory community engagement approach to addressing entrenched social issues. By working with partners to build a deep understanding the local context, we have supported appropriate **community-led approaches** to enable the hardest to reach girls to access education. The British Council has supported the enrolment and retention of 195,750 girls between the ages of 6-11 years in Government primary schools since the programmes launch in 2014. Pakistan has over 22 million children who are out of school and it ranks second to Nigeria in terms of the ratio of Out of School Children. The situation for girls between the ages of 5-16 years is much worse than that for boys exacerbated by both supply and demand-side challenges.

The ILMPOSSIBLE: Take a Child to School programme focuses on building links and partnerships between communities and provincial governments to develop a network of support for out-of-school girls and boys across the country. The programme engaged 27 civil society partners and over 30,000 trained youth volunteers in 65 districts across the four provinces to **address harmful gender norms and attitudes towards girls' education** including harmful practices such as early forced marriages.

The programme also built the capacity of teachers, facilitators, youth volunteers and coaches to deliver life skills, education, and sports as part of the curriculum, to make education more relevant and enjoyable for both girls and boys. Inclusive community support forums (Mohalla Committees) were formed, trained, and strengthened to establish linkages with local authorities and education departments, and to address supply side issues related to lack of amenities such as boundary walls, toilets and water filters in schools that create barriers to access and participation for girls.

Across South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan) – we have worked with partner organisations on the **English and Digital for Girls' Education** programme (Aga Khan and FCDO, £1.1 million, 2016-21) – which is a peer-led, non-formal education initiative which provides opportunities for learning foundational and leadership skills (including English) and improving both access and capacity for digital and remote learning for girls. We deliver this work through a network of civil society and government partners, building their capacity during the journey, facilitating scalability and impact. We support accelerated and remedial learning programmes to help girls catch up on lost learning and support those adolescents who need to master basic skills, and/or to **access non-formal and community-based educational opportunities** where formal education is not an option. Our priority age range is adolescent girls, though we also work to support younger girls and young adult women. Our goal is to also best understand what the communities' priorities are within the educational and life skills sphere, for example gaining practical skills including business, financial and life skills. Through this programme we have enabled over 18,000 girls to build their skills and access learning opportunities. Key to the programme's success has been an approach of working closely with communities, particularly parents, to support change in attitudes towards girls' education.

#### ILMPossible: Take a Child to School testimonies from participants

*'For as long as I can remember, I have seen my family work hard and save up for even the most basic necessities. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine I would be enrolled in a school, but TACS has fulfilled my dream, without burdening our already-limited finances. For this, I consider myself lucky, and eternally grateful.'*

**Aysha**

*'I am delighted to get back to school, and it was only possible because Zarg Bhai (a community volunteer who attended the ILMPOSSIBLE capacity building training) convinced my parents and demonstrated to them the benefits of education; otherwise, I would have stayed at home all my life. Now I will study hard to become a doctor so one day I can serve my community just as Zarg Bhai is doing.'*

**Dua Fatima of Badin**



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#### Simrika Giri, Ranipauwa Secondary School, Dhading, Nepal

*'Before getting involved in the English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE) project, I knew nothing about using laptops and phablets and had no realisation of the existing social issues around us.'*

*I got to travel for the first time to Dhading Bhesi and underwent training as a Peer Group Leader (PGL). After my return to school, I and other PGLs started facilitating EDGE Clubs in our schools and started training our peers on the use of laptops and using all the English learning resources shared with us. Even during the lockdowns, we kept in touch through calls. Parents of the club members were also happy as the learning continued through the booklet distributed by the British Council and the television and radio programmes.*

*My house is very far from school so sometimes I used to feel burdened by the responsibilities but somehow, after being a PGL, understanding social issues and the rights of a girl child, I feel confident and independent. If I become financially independent and services are provided, I can surely make my own clubs for girls and change the lives of many girls.'*



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In **Iraq**, the British Council has worked with federal and provincial education ministries on the **Capacity Building in Education: Improving Quality and Equity** project (EU, €14.7 million, 2017-21). This EU-funded project has worked with education authorities and civil society organisations (CSOs) to implement **community-based initiatives to improve school enrolment and retention** and raise quality and inclusion, including for girls. The project has established a network of 35 community-based organisations to implement initiatives for improving school environments, strengthening the links between schools and communities, activating parent-teacher associations, **improving physical access for disabled children** and lead community campaigns addressing social norms and supporting access for girls. The 'I'm not leaving school' campaign prevented 14,500 children from dropping out of school. At the systems level, we also worked through policy dialogue with the ministries in charge of education and labour (MoE/MoL) to support the introduction of a new policy giving children who are deaf or hard of hearing the right to take national exams and continue formal education. We provided technical assistance to the MoE to develop the country-wide **Strategy for Enrolment**.

The British Council led a programme across the 10 ASEAN countries on **Climate Change and Girls' Education** (FCDO, 2021-22) to raise awareness of the links between girls' education and climate change – building a case for investing in girls' education. A secondary school resource pack was produced with detailed teacher notes explaining the intersectionality and impact of climate change and girls' education which will be translated into eight ASEAN local languages; an ASEAN-wide poster competition was held for young people aged between 14 and 17 years to depict the causal relationships between climate change and girls' education in a simple yet engaging infographic style. The programme also hosted a policy dialogue between key policymakers from the region, including the Ministry of Education and Training Vietnam, climate education experts and young climate activists and NGOs from across ASEAN to discuss how to further youth understanding of and engagement in SDGs. The materials have had just under 2,000 views and the English resource pack has been downloaded just over 400 times.



## Our expertise

# Improving school leadership, teaching and learning outcomes



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Teachers and school leaders play a vital role in ensuring that girls and boys reach their full potential. Supporting them with pedagogical development and curriculum revision tools and frameworks – with a particular focus on tackling gender norms embedded in the classroom and education systems – can have a positive impact on both learning outcomes and gender equality.

The British Council has been working across a number of programmes to **strengthen teacher training** with a particular focus on **teaching foundational skills** – as well as addressing gender norms and attitudes through behaviour change interventions and teacher practice and curriculum reform. Our teaching training initiatives focus on empowering teachers to employ inclusive and gender sensitive approaches in classroom teaching, promoting positive gender norms and behaviours among girls and boys. Furthermore, we have supported children who struggle to access education or whose learning is disrupted because of conflict and migration.

Through **FCDO Building Learning Foundations (BLF)** (FCDO, £59 million, 2017-23) we work with all Rwandan state primary schools. The project aims to improve learner outcomes by enhancing the quality of teaching of English and mathematics at Lower Primary level, strengthening school leadership and systems for learning in Rwanda's state-funded primary schools, so no pupil or teacher is excluded. We have developed a bespoke pupil test of English for the Rwandan education context, designed to address shortcomings of the Early Grade Reading Assessment model used to assess literacy levels in Rwandan Schools. Building Learning Foundations provides all pupils with access to quality inclusive learning resources, even in the most remote schools. The materials developed include positive representation of girls and are designed to challenge gender stereotypes and harmful gender norms. We have provided training and continuing professional development (CPD) materials to over 15,000 Lower Primary English teachers, school-based mentors, head teachers, and education officials, to embed gender-sensitive and inclusive strategies into daily practice. Gender equality and girls' education is a key topic in the English teachers' self-study toolkits and community of practice activities. Our school-based model has equipped educators to run monthly Community of Practice (CoP) sessions where teachers share and learn from each other. At the end of 2019, English CoPs took place regularly in 87 per cent of schools and at the mid-term assessment stage, 87 per cent of schools were holding monthly CoP meetings, 96 per cent of teachers reported effectiveness of these in relation to their teaching practice and most teachers are delivering better English classes. We are expanding our school-based CPD model to Upper Primary with training and CPD materials for English and maths teachers. BLF has improved school-based CPD in all 2,500 Rwandan state and government-aided primary schools using a blended learning approach including face to face, phones, tablets and computers. The programme is having a significant impact on learner outcomes with 46 per cent of learners now reading the standard of Level 3 proficiency – an increase from 18 per cent at the start of the project.

Furthermore, girls are benefiting at better levels than boys with 48 per cent of girls reaching the required level – compared to 45 per cent of boys. *'I applaud the role BLF is playing to support the learning of English and Maths in early grades in our schools.'* **Hon. State Minister for Basic Education, I Munyakazi,**

We delivered the **Kano Literacy and Maths Accelerator (KaLMA)** (FCDO, £3.2 million, 2019-21) project in partnership with Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Africa. The project provides **foundational maths, Hausa and English literacy skills** to a planned 37,000 primary girls and boys, including the hardest to reach, in two full local government areas in Kano State, Nigeria. The programme is rooted in a 'teaching at the right level' evidence approach, which involves assessing children on foundational skills and grouping them by learning level rather than age or grade level. This runs for two hours per day, focusing on foundational skills in reading and numeracy. KaLMA is testing two innovative models focused on student-teacher facilitation and a dual-language approach to English learning. The dual-language approach to foundational skills in English deploys the children's home language to assist their learning of an additional language (English). This is carried out by listening and doing.

All learning materials in KALMA have been created to portray girls positively and to challenge gender stereotypes. The programme has also strengthened teachers' capacity to use gender responsive pedagogies in teaching foundational skills. During the pandemic we rolled out **home-based learning assistance** to over 4.8 million households via radio broadcasts, text messages, automated voice messages on a toll-free line and worksheets for home learning. As gender gaps in learning outcomes in Kano State are partly driven by reduced learning time for girls due to school absenteeism, this approach has been instrumental in increasing their learning time. Furthermore, recognising the important role of communities and parents to support children's learning, especially girls, the programme strengthened grassroots accountability. This involved working with school-based management committees to share report cards of student performance at town hall meetings, involving parents/caregivers in supporting children's learning through the home-based learning assistance programmes and through radio phone-in programmes to build support for foundational learning and girls' education.

**“I see this experience as a big surprise. It is unbelievable! I and my daughter have seen real transformation from the KaLMA radio programmes. If it wasn't for the programme, I wouldn't have bought a blackboard.”**

These are the words of Umar Ibrahim Danguguwa, father to Hassana, a Primary Five pupil at Danguguwa Central Primary School in Dawakin Tofa local government area. Umar has given a lot of support to his daughter, Hassana, so that she can listen to and understand the English by radio programme. Despite the financial hardships caused by Covid-19, Umar bought a blackboard for Hassana to use when they listen to the broadcasts. He writes out words from the radio activities on the board so that his daughter can see the connection between the written and spoken words in both Hausa and English. He explains tasks from the programme that can be a bit difficult for children to do on their own, such as forming a sentence, and has created a study timetable for Hassana and her siblings.

The programme has had impressive results in terms of learning outcomes for both girls and boys with an increase in the percentage of children at the beginner level who could recognise English letters from 19 per cent to 61 per cent. At the higher levels, the percentage of children who could read English words increased from 11 per cent to 40 per cent. The baseline data showed that a lower percentage of girls had foundation skills in both reading and listening and speaking. While this difference persisted at the endline in reading, the differences in listening and speaking had virtually disappeared, with the learning levels of boys and girls being almost identical.



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The **EU-funded Teaching for All project, South Africa** (£1 million, 2016-20) was a partnership project between British Council, universities, three government departments and civil society organisations (CSOs). The aim of the project was to contribute to a more inclusive education system in South Africa by facilitating the training of teachers. The project employed a social model of inclusive education and inclusive pedagogies to ensure that every teacher becomes an inclusive teacher that supports the needs of all learners in the classroom. Comprehensive research on the state of inclusive education in South Africa was carried out which informed the development of open educational resources for universities and provincial education departments. This included the production of a 240-hour Bachelor of Education core module and materials including videos, a student guide, lecture notes and assessments. Teacher training universities were supported to integrate the modules into their curricula in creative and diverse ways, embedding inclusive education within existing course and module offerings. Teacher educators also benefited as the materials provided a sound conceptual and theoretical foundation to help them reach a broader understanding of diversity and inclusion in practice. Examples of content that facilitated this include the focus on socio-economic factors, racism, sexual orientation and gender equality in the materials. Universities that are using the materials have all reported that the materials improve their pre-service programmes and more than 30,000 student teachers at ten institutions have studied Teaching for All modules and materials in their degree programmes to date. The project has also engaged over 2,000 in-service teachers and 150 senior government, academic and civil society managers, and our advocacy for inclusion media campaign reached 2.3 million members of the public.

*'I find the material to be very informative in terms of inclusive education. It's actually trying to help us understand what teachers need to know and also their attitude. It's actually broader. Let me just say it's broader than what we used to cover in our inclusive education [module before] because when I compare it with the previous information ... previously, we used to just focus on the policies and the barriers to learning ... But right now, it's much more than that. It has got a lot of information about the skills, how the teachers should go about teaching and also, it brought knowledge that actually our understanding was quite narrow. So now it is broader, and also with the type of theories we were using to understand inclusive education, most of them were more on psychology like the ecosystem, all those psychological theories. But we did not use like human rights approach, and we did not even see inclusive education as something that is actually the African way of life.'* **Lecturer, UNISA, 2020**

*'The partnership over the last seven years has been healthy in every way, demonstrating a deep mutual respect and a willingness to learn from each other. This contributed significantly to the progress we made on the projects.'*

**Hubert Mathanzima Mwel, Director-General,  
Department of Basic Education, South Africa**

The British Council has also piloted an innovative approach in **Zimbabwe** through the **Leading Learning for Gender Equality (LL4GE)** (British Council, £0.5 million, 2021-22) project in partnership with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the Higherlife Foundation. Only 14 per cent of girls in Zimbabwe complete upper secondary school, and only one per cent of the poorest girls (UNICEF 2021). The aim of the programme is to improve teaching and learning outcomes in the Zimbabwe school system for all young people, especially girls, by providing school leaders and teachers in primary and secondary schools with the opportunity to:

- recognise gendered barriers that affect girls' and boys' access to education and the quality of learning
- shift underlying values and norms that support gender inequality in education
- support all young people to be active, engaged global citizens
- implement gender-sensitive and gender-responsive policies, practices and pedagogy in their respective schools.

In-service continuing professional development (CPD) on gender-responsive approach was delivered to 1,800 teachers and school leaders in low performing government schools in three districts in Zimbabwe. An independent evaluation of the project by the University of Nottingham noted that the programme led to improved awareness and responsiveness of school leaders and teachers to girls' education needs. After the training, school leaders were able to incorporate a gender perspective into the evaluation of teaching and learning. This included adapting lesson observation tools, reviewing learner books, and conducting learning walks. A knowledge gap on policies to support gender equality emerged as a key issue, with teachers reporting limited prior knowledge of policies such as including school re-entry for pregnant schoolgirls. School-based initiatives were delivered by participating schools which included improved reading, improving school attendance and reducing absenteeism and safeguarding for girls and boys implemented by school leaders and teachers – demonstrating that school leaders and teachers can be agents of change in their school community.

The Zimbabwe Minister of Primary and Secondary Education described the LL4GE programme as a 'game changer' in a government blog, as it adds a gender equality dimension to instructional leadership which is considered the most effective school leadership practice for improving pupil learning outcomes.

The British Council-led **In-Service Teacher Development Project (ISTEP)** (EU, £4 million, 2018-21) in **Sudan** was a component of the Education Quality Improvement Project (EQUIP). EQUIP addressed the root causes of irregular migration by strengthening resilience, tackling exclusion, and preventing radicalisation through strengthening basic education services, improving quality in the classroom, increasing the capacity and capability of education systems throughout Sudan, hosting displaced persons and migrants and addressing gender issues. ISTEP worked with federal and state ministries to build the capacity of school supervisors, teacher trainers and teachers to access and implement new textbooks while at the same time addressing equality and diversity issues in the classroom, especially in relation to girls' education via specifically designed courses which raised teachers' awareness of these issues. The project trained 4,400 female teachers (80 per cent of the total intake) and results based on the pre-and post-test assessment data, showed that female teachers benefited more than male teachers from the training sessions, in terms of their own pedagogical content knowledge and approach to gender issues in the classroom.

Qualitative evaluation questions focused on the benefits of the course and what changes the teachers have implemented as a result of the course; how they manage diversity and gender focused teaching in the classroom (following on from the EDI sessions), and suggestions for the future. Teachers participating in the training explained how it had made their lessons more interactive, more enjoyable for the learners and more effective.

*'I benefited from this course - as an example of that is my female students are now able to participate more in the class. After I teach a lesson, the students are keen to attend the next class.'* **Maths teacher**

In the FCDO funded **Supporting Schools Reform project in Algeria (SSRA)** (FCDO, £10 million 2016 – 22), we worked with the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) to support educational reform and built the capacity of Algeria's school inspectors and leaders and, through them, the professional development of teachers, thereby supporting better learner outcomes. There has been a specific focus in the programme on improving female representation in school leadership, inspection and senior ministry positions. This supports the creation of positive female role models for girls across the Algerian system.

SSRA has successfully helped MoNE to address a chronic shortfall of new teachers entering the profession. We co-created a more inclusive pre-service teacher training programme, La Malette, as well as a teacher competency framework that guides and co-ordinates all pre-and in-service teacher training nationally as well as training trainers responsible for teacher CPD nationally. To date, over 124,000 teachers have been trained using La Malette. Phase 4 of the project is now supporting the co-creation of a school principal competencies framework as well as one for school counsellors which will guide standards, competencies and training for school counsellors and psycho-social support to pupils and a system of early warning to identify and support students at risk of dropping out thus improving inclusive practice.

SSRA has initiated a gender disaggregated pupil performance assessment process, to better understand the impact of project interventions and to build MoNE's capacity to generate its evidence base of education outcomes nationally.



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## Our expertise

# Supporting girls' empowerment and equitable gender norms



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There is good evidence that non-formal education approaches can support girls to build the skills, confidence and capabilities of girls to make positive decisions over their lives and to thrive within and outside the formal education system. In addition, work to challenge the gender norms that limit choices and opportunities can have positive effects for the achievements and future prospects.

In South Asia gender inequality is starkly evident through the high numbers of out-of-school girls, alongside the prevalence of child marriage, especially in marginalised communities and restrictive gender norms which limit girls' opportunities and choices. Girls often have less access to information, education and technology compared to their male peers. As well as enhancing adolescent girls' English language and digital skills – **the English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE) programme in South Asia** (Aga Khan and FCDO, £1.1 million, 2016-2021) provides a peer-led, safe space in which girls can explore social issues that affect their lives and build their confidence, voice and leadership skills as well as learning key 21st century skills.

EDGE has been successfully rolled out in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan reaching out to over 18,000 adolescent girls. We work through local organisations to offer the programme in **community run centres or peer-led after-school clubs**. Our partnerships also extend to bilateral donors such as FCDO in Nepal and corporates such as HSBC. Our unique peer-led learning model is critical to developing leadership/mentoring abilities in the girls who then go on to cascade the learnings within their communities. We are also helping to build trust within the communities to change the perception of the value of girls through community engagement events such as ICT fairs.

Data from EDGE club participants show that after completing two thirds of the programme they demonstrate significant improvement in English language speaking ability and progression from no computer knowledge to being able to perform basic tasks on computers, using MS office and the internet. The peer-led learning model has also demonstrated a marked improvement in the girls' reported levels of confidence and self-esteem.

The **Premier Skills**, (Premier League and British Council, £21 million, 2007 – ongoing) partnership between British Council and the Premier League, uses football to develop a brighter future for young people globally, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. The programme empowers coaches to support educational and social cohesion projects delivered with local partners, addressing specific needs and engaging marginalised or at-risk youth, with a focus on women and girls. Teachers and learners are provided with football-based learning materials, face-to-face and digitally, including through <http://premierskills.britishcouncil.org/>. The Premier Skills Schools Club uses football and a focused curriculum to address social issues affecting young people today. Premier Skills focuses on empowering women and girls through the development of an integrated football and empowerment curriculum. It has shown coaches how they can use football to achieve broader social outcomes, including enhanced self-confidence in young people and engagement with education and inclusion of marginalised groups. It has demonstrated impact in improved life skills, keeping young people off the streets in slum areas, getting drop-outs to return to school and bringing together those from different, often conflicting, communities.

The project researched barriers to female participation. Having female coaches has proved critical in encouraging more girls to participate. There is evidence that participation has built confidence of girls and coaches and helped them overcome personal problems. The programme also changed attitudes of others (parents, brothers, others in the community) towards girls participating in football, including in more conservative communities.



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With additional funding from FCDO in Kenya, the Premier Skills programme was designed to specifically address violence against women and girls – working with coaches and educators to build the knowledge and skills of young people and explore their attitudes to gender issues, roles of women, girls, men and boys and worked with local authorities and the wider community to raise awareness and work collectively to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. The programme reached over 4,500 young people of whom 43 per cent were girls. Rates of retention were high, and there were very positive reflections from the young people on the quality of the sessions and what they had learned. There was strong evidence to suggest the programme successfully raised young people's knowledge and awareness about violence against women and girls, built their confidence, self-esteem and life skills, and improved interactions between girls and boys. The programme was successful in engaging **community members** through festivals and a multi-media campaign, reaching an estimated 10,000 people in-person and 300,000 through the radio programmes, stimulating active debate and discussion around gender and violence against women and girls.

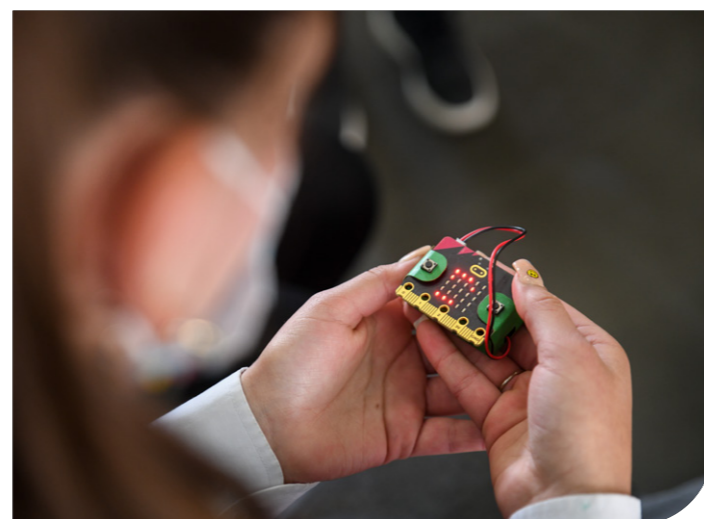
Gender norms can also impact on girls' educational choices and confidence in key subjects and their longer-term career options. Women are underrepresented globally in study of subjects and careers associated with science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) – which are male-dominated. This is reflected within the education system in terms of different expectations of interest and capability of girls and boys, the contribution of women in these fields being largely absent from the curriculum and the lack of encouragement from teachers, parents and fellow students to study and take up careers in STEM as well as the absence of role models. The **Coding for Kids programme in Colombia** (Government of Colombia and British Council, £6.6 million, 2018 – ongoing), which has one of the lowest proportion of women in STEM in the world, attempts to breakdown some of the social barriers to girls' STEM education and careers.

Coding for Kids programme is a partnership between the British Council, the Ministry of Information Technologies and Communications (MinICT) and Ministry of Education (MoE). Inspired by the micro:bit methodology, its purpose is to foster innovative, gender sensitive teaching in coding to promote the computational thinking skills of teachers and students from public schools. By the end of 2022, over 20,000 teachers were trained, over 1 million students were reached and 85,000 micro:bit devices have been distributed to public schools in all Colombian states.

The conception and design of teacher training, materials, apps and all other activities in Coding for Kids has been done with a gender sensitive and gender transformative approach. External evaluations have shown that teachers who go through the training have statistically significant reductions in gender bias. Classroom observations have evidenced that 71 per cent teachers were implementing at least one strategy to foster gender equity in the classrooms and in 86 per cent of the classroom interactions, boys and girls were participating equally. Positive results have also been found in students regarding the use of GreenTIC, a free app available worldwide that combines key skills and concepts for coding with an environmental narrative. For example, more girls than boys are playing the challenges (55 per cent of the challenges) and after using GreenTIC, both boys and girls increased their preference towards STEM careers. The Coding for Kids (CFK) programme has also adapted the English Computing Quality Framework from National Centre for Computing Education (NCCE) for our work with 250 CFK schools. One of the changes has been to include a gender equality dimension, so that schools can gauge their level of development and progress in this area.



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## Our expertise

# Strengthening the evidence base to support girls' education



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We contribute by strengthening data collection, analysis and use of evidence-based research to influence policymaking. We partner with universities and researchers internationally to produce quality research and foster thought leadership in a range of different areas, including in education and gender equality.

We use this research and evidence to influence policy change and drive long-term improvements in girls' education (both formal and non-formal) and gender equality via our partners and various networks.

We have the ability and experience to draw together and amplify learning on girls' education from a regional and global perspective, for example on gender transformative teaching, accelerated learning and targeting teaching to learning levels for secondary-school aged adolescents.

The British Council's **Research and Insight** team generates new and relevant knowledge on cultural relations and soft power, helping to inform policy, shape dialogue, and engage our stakeholders. We work in partnership with leading universities, think tanks and organisations to ensure our programmes contribute to evidence-led research and active engagement. We use our own and other organisations research to lead bilateral and multilateral policy dialogues engaging multiple stakeholders including joint British Council and FCDO policy dialogues at **Education World Forum**. In our role as a strategic partner in the **FCDO's What Works Hub for Global Education**, we have organised events in Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa and India aimed at an open discussion and dissemination of evidence-based effective practice. Topics included girls' education, school leadership and foundational learning, drawing from a range of development partners from the Global North and South along with insights from our own programmes.

The British Council completed scoping studies for the **English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE)** to explore the potential for adapting the programme in new contexts. Studies were completed in: Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Myanmar, Indonesia, Vietnam and Syria. The research/scoping studies focused on mapping the education and digital landscapes with respect to access and impact on adolescent girls especially those who came from marginalised communities. Key questions looked at the gendered impact of educational inequalities and agency of girls and most importantly documented the key priorities and concerns of adolescent girls (both in and out of school), the need for programmes such as EDGE and how the design could be contextualised to each country.

A global report has been produced which synthesises information from across the countries and identifies trends and differences in the lives of marginalised girls throughout the world. Key messages from the report include:

1. Skills development for adolescent girls in marginalised communities is crucial at this point and highly in demand, especially the need for language skills and digital literacy as well as soft skills for access to educational opportunities and employment.
2. With increased connectivity and access to devices, the need for digital literacy development especially around safety online and access to learning opportunities is emerging as a core need.

3. Community-based club models present an effective opportunity to develop confidence and agency in this age group.
4. The role of, and opportunities presented by, non-formal education are changing, especially for out-of-school girls.
5. Child marriage and underage pregnancies is one of the biggest barriers to continuation of education for adolescent girls across the globe and Covid-19 has exacerbated this situation.

A MacArthur Foundation study in five Nigerian states – **Teacher Education, Teacher Practice, Approaches to Gender and Girls' Schooling Outcomes** investigated the relationship between teacher training and educational outcomes for girls in secondary school. The study was conducted by the British Council in wide-ranging contexts where teacher education is provided, and teachers work on issues supporting girls' learning. Insights from this study helped in deepening understanding of the relationship between what teachers learn about gender and girls' education through pre-service and in-service teacher training. It evaluated how teacher training creates knowledge, shapes attitudes about girls' issues and creates a climate of support for gender equality and girls' rights in school.

**The Perceptions and approaches of heads and teachers in relation to girls' education in Tanzania** study was published in October 2022 to identify promising approaches and practices being carried out in the classroom and the wider school environment, in addition to understanding the current situation of girls' education in Tanzania. The study methodology was based on a similar study funded by the British Council in 2021, which was conducted in two states in Nigeria (Kano and Lagos) and was adapted to fit the Tanzanian context. The methodology adopted a 'mixed methods' approach, by collecting data through interviews, focus groups, surveys and field observations.



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Our work on girls' education aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all and SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

# Our alignment

**Many of our programmes  
also align with the following SDGs:**

- Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 10: Reduce inequalities – Imagine the world in 2030, fully inclusive of persons with disabilities
- Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.

# Contact us

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