



# Gender Equality in Teaching and Education Management

A summary report of research undertaken by PRO-FEMMES TWESE HAMWE and VSO Rwanda



PRO-FEMMES/TWESE HAMWE

The Rwandan government's efforts on girls' education have been widely praised as being among the most progressive on the continent. Girls' access to both primary and secondary education is among the highest in Africa, with net enrolment rates in 2011 at 94.3% for boys and 97.5% for girls at primary level (Ministry of Education, 2012: 8), and at 24.2% for boys and 27.2% for girls at secondary level (Ministry of Education, 2012: 17). Part of the explanation for increased access to education for girls may be found in the bold and progressive measures taken by the government. For example, all schools now have access to funding for the provision of sanitary pads to menstruating girls. The Head Teachers we talked to reported very positive progress since the introduction both of free sanitary pads and of a system of female counsellors called 'Matrons' who provide girls with menstruation-related support, including reductions in the number of times that girls have to return home during their menstruation periods. The government has also implemented ongoing high-profile campaigns against gender-based violence in schools and communities and backed that up with a free gender-based violence hotline. The hotline is managed by the Rwandan police who have also visited schools to train teachers and students in preventing and reporting gender-based violence (UNICEF, 2008).

Despite these efforts, the Ministry's statistics show that girls still perform less well than boys in exams. In end of primary school exams in 2010, 85% of boys passed compared to 80.7% of girls – a gap of 4.3% (Ministry of Education, 2012: 11). The gap becomes much larger by the end of lower secondary level exams, with 91.6% of boys passing Senior 3 exams compared to 78.2% of girls – a gap of 13.4%. And at upper secondary level, 90.6% of boys passed Senior 6 exams compared to 83.8% of girls – a still large gap of 6.8% (Ministry of Education, 2012: 20–2).

So what is causing these performance gaps? This summary of research undertaken by Pro-femmes Twese Hamwe and VSO Rwanda attempts to answer that question by presenting the reasons students, teachers, Head Teachers and other district-level education managers themselves gave us for girls' underperformance. It also presents the solutions these frontline stakeholders proposed when we asked them what they think should be done to reduce gender inequality and improve girls' performance. The objectives of the research were:

**1. To identify barriers to gender equality in the teaching and education management workforce and document successful policy initiatives that have contributed to the goal of gender equality in the teaching force and in education management at primary and secondary levels of education.**

**2. To assess how well Rwanda's 2008 Girls' Education Policy, and accompanying 2009 Girls' Education Strategic Plan is being implemented; and the impact of the Affirmative Actions that are the pillars of the Strategic Plan.**

By documenting the perspectives of a small but representative sample of teachers and education managers, students and parents, it is hoped that policy dialogue will become better informed by the realities faced by the frontline providers and consumers of Rwandan education.

## National context

Gender equality is enshrined in the National Constitution of Rwanda, and the 2004 National Gender Policy made gender mainstreaming in all the programmes and projects of government and civil society organisations mandatory.

The National Constitution also stipulates that 30% of all positions at different levels of decision-making should be reserved for women. As a result, above 30% of Senators, 40% of Ministry Permanent Secretaries and Supreme Court Judges, 83.3% of all Vice Mayors of Social Affairs and 56.3% of parliamentarians are women (NISR, GMO and UN Women, 2012: 11).

**Table 1: Gender imbalances in teaching staff at pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary levels**

	Number of female teachers	%	Number of male teachers	%
Pre-primary	2,354	80.0	537	20.0
Primary	20,786	51.6	19,513	48.4
Secondary	5,704	27.8	14,818	72.2
Tertiary	483	18.7	2,100	81.3

(Ministry of Education, 2012: 2–44)

However, posts traditionally occupied by men are still male-dominated: 90% of District Mayors, 83.3% of Vice Mayors of Economic Affairs, 71.4% of Ministers and 84.3% of Directors General and Executive Secretaries of Public Institutions are men (NISR, GMO and UN Women, 2012: 11–12).

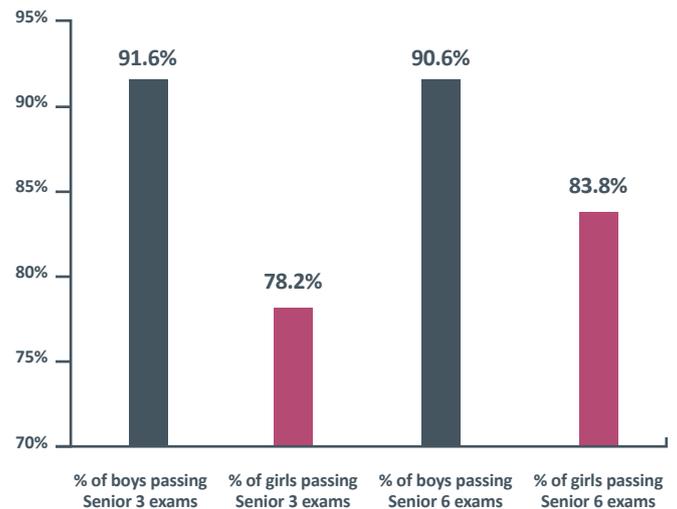
This pattern is repeated in the education sector, where more traditionally male-dominated leadership roles (Head Teachers, Sector and District Education Officer roles) are dominated by men. Only 29% of Heads of public primary schools, 16.7% of Heads of public secondary schools and 5.9% of Rectors in public higher education institutions are women (NISR, GMO and UN Women, 2012: 24–32). Women are outnumbered by men in secondary and higher education teaching roles, whereas women dominate in lower-skilled, lower-paid early childhood education roles and primary level teaching roles.

In addition to the performance gaps between the genders at secondary school level, there are also differences between the percentages of girls and boys selected for upper secondary at the end of Senior 3, and the percentages selected for public universities. In 2010, 46.7% of boys who sat their exams at the end of the lower secondary level were selected for Senior 4 compared to 41.1% of girls; and 18.2% of boys who sat their exams at the end of the upper secondary level were selected for public universities compared to only 8.1% of girls (Ministry of Education, 2012: 20–2).

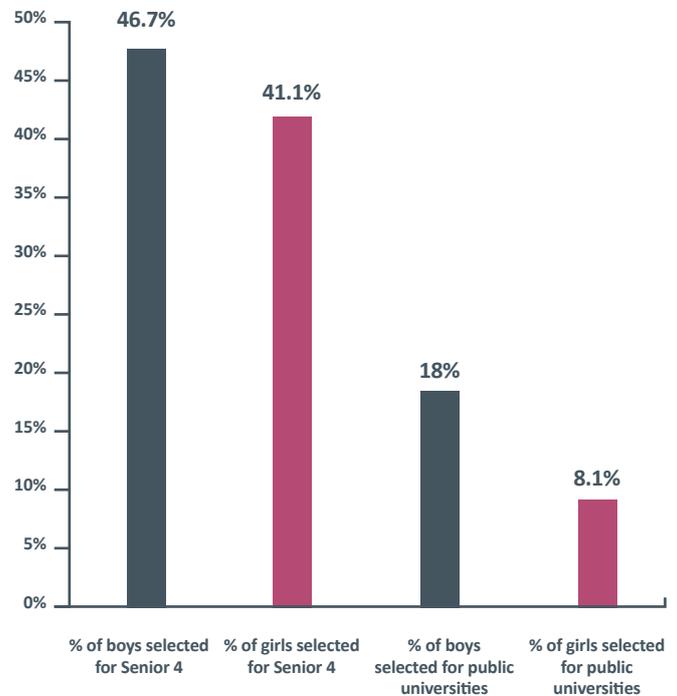
The government recognises that the gender disparities in its teaching staff need to be addressed and has made a clear policy commitment to attend to the issue. For example, the 2009 Girls’ Education Strategic Plan states that **“The number of female teachers qualified to teach at the secondary and higher education level also needs to be expanded to provide role models for girls”** (Ministry of Education, 2009: 20). Yet it is unclear exactly what specific measures, if any, are being taken to increase the number of female role models occupying secondary teaching roles and leadership positions at all levels.

According to the District Education Officers, Sector Education Officers and Head Teachers that we visited for this research, there are no procedures for positive discrimination in recruitment and promotion in place, nor any programmes or mechanisms for identifying women with management potential. Similarly, none of the teachers were aware of any distance learning programmes or management skills training specifically for women, nor were they aware of the government’s policy to reserve 50% of higher education

Secondary education performance by gender



Transition to upper secondary and public universities by gender



places for women. While distance learning and other training opportunities are ostensibly available equally to both men and women (JICA, 2012), the teachers and Head Teachers who participated in this research told us that because of the disadvantages faced by women – for example, the burden of domestic work, pregnancy and childcare which they shoulder – such opportunities are far more easily taken up by men than by women.

There was widespread agreement among the research participants – at school, district and national levels – that currently neither pre-service teacher training nor in-service training and professional development equips teachers with the skills they need to effectively address the gender inequalities they encounter in the classroom, the schoolyard and the wider community. As a result, teachers, since they are themselves products of a society that – like all societies – has deeply ingrained attitudes to gender roles and behaviours, treat girls and boys differently, encouraging submissiveness and conformity in their female students and confidence and individuality in their male students. Teachers' lack of training in addressing gender inequality means they are not equipped to identify and address gender bias in classroom interactions, in curriculum content, in learning materials or in their own approach to behaviour management.

In the same way that teachers are ill-prepared for tackling gender inequality in the classroom and schoolyard, it is clear from the literature reviewed (Huggins and Randell, 2007; Ministry of Education, 2009) and from the stakeholders who participated in this research that education managers are similarly ill-equipped to address gender inequality in teacher management (ie in recruitment and promotion processes, and in pay and conditions or access to training).

This lack of attention to gender equality in teacher management has clearly contributed to the pattern – which reflects the trend in many other countries – that sees more women in early childhood education and in primary teaching positions, and more men in secondary and tertiary teaching positions.

Particularly striking progress has been achieved in the implementation of policies ensuring girls have access to separate toilets and are provided with a supply of sanitary pads. This does not mean that nothing more remains to be done to support girls to remain in school during their

menstruation periods. The students who participated in this research reported that problems associated with menstruation are still the number one issue for girls in Rwandan schools today. A close second, in terms of gender-related school management problems reported by students and teachers alike, is the problem of girls' attendance and studies being affected by pregnancy and childcare responsibilities.

Arguably the biggest influence on girls' performance in school is the role socialisation plays in embedding ideas about gender-appropriate roles and tasks, attitudes towards girls, women, men and boys, and the gendered behaviours learned at home, in the community or at school, reinforced by images and attitudes disseminated in the national media and popular culture.

Deeply ingrained in the society's psyche is the view that cooking, cleaning, fetching water and childcare is women's and girls' work. In addition, responsibility for caring for children orphaned in the genocide falls disproportionately on the shoulders of women and girls. As a result there is a high demand from parents – especially those in rural areas – for girls' domestic as well as agricultural labour which leads to girls' repeatedly being absent from school.

Less is expected of girls (by teachers, by parents and by girls themselves) since society assumes that they will become wives and mothers and not work outside the home. This leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy, where because less is expected of girls, girls expect less of themselves, which leads to a lack of confidence and self-esteem. Male-dominated society expects women and girls to be submissive, shy and subordinate and objects of male sexual pleasure, so that is the role that women and girls adopt (Chege, 2006).

One of the longer-term effects of this has been that men outnumber women by more than two to one at secondary school (where only 28% of teachers are female) (Ministry of Education, 2012: 17) and women form only a very small minority of Head Teachers (Ministry of Education, 2008: 10). This further reinforces society's message that not much is expected of women or girls: the leadership roles are reserved for men, so there is no point in trying to perform well at school.

Attitudes are changing, however – not least because of the government's high-profile efforts to promote gender equality in public and private life.

During the course of this research we asked students, teachers, parents, Head Teachers and District and Sector level Education Officers for their opinions on the causes of gender inequality in teaching and education management. Why are there fewer women teachers in secondary grades? How come there are so few female Head Teachers, and even fewer Sector and District Education Officers? What are the barriers that prevent women from securing these positions? Female and male teachers involved in the research cited the following gender-related barriers:

### Poverty-related barriers

- The inadequacy of teachers' income limits their ability to pay tuition fees for further education for themselves nor can they pay the fees for their children's education.
- Lingering household gender inequalities mean that even in teachers' families, men retain control of the family's finances. Female teachers told us that even where they are the main breadwinner, they do not have an equal say in the management of the household budget. So sometimes women who wish to study for a secondary teaching qualification are forbidden from using money from the household budget to pay for their studies.
- At the time the research was being conducted, primary teachers told us that they were receiving 40,000 Rwandan francs per month (around USD65 or GBP41). Secondary teachers told us they were receiving around 120,000 Rwandan francs per month (around USD195 or GBP125). This compares with a wage of 230,000 Rwandan francs per month for nurses and midwives (around USD375 or GBP239) and 402,000 Rwandan francs per month for doctors (around USD655 or GBP417).<sup>1</sup>

**“Imagine a salary of 40,000 Rwandan francs while one bunch of onions costs 800 Rwandan francs here in the countryside and it costs 1,000 francs in town – the teacher's salary is equivalent to 40 bunches of onions!”** (male teacher, rural Nine Year Basic Education school)

- The inadequacy of teachers' income clearly has detrimental effects on their personal lives and on their ability to perform well in their jobs.

### Pregnancy and childcare

- After female teachers who become pregnant have given birth and completed their maternity leave, they are unable to afford to employ a housemaid or childminder to help with housework and childcare.

**“A female teacher faces a problem when her maternity leave expires and when it is time to return to work. She does not have enough money to hire a babysitter. In addition it is uncomfortable to take her baby to the workplace. And in case her baby gets sick things become worse... sometimes she is overloaded”** (male teacher, rural Nine Year Basic Education school).

- Maternity leave in Rwanda lasts three months and there are three additional months during which the mother has a right to one hour per day out of work time for breastfeeding. However, many teachers and parents complained that the maternity leave period is too short.

**“Another problem which is particular to women is about the three months' maternity leave. This leave is short in a way that because the child is still very young, the mother does not cease to think about her baby that she left at home”** (parent, remote Nine Year Basic Education school).

- New fathers in Rwanda are entitled to only four days' leave – which compares unfavourably with paternity leave entitlement in some other countries in Africa. For example, in Kenya new fathers are entitled to two weeks' paternity leave and in Cameroon new fathers are entitled to ten days' paid leave (ILO, 2010: 46).

Research participants observed that female teachers are getting pregnant at what they felt was an alarming rate, perhaps due to insufficient emphasis on family planning and contraception. This means that women are taking much more time off work than men, giving men an advantage in terms of career advancement.

- “An urgent need exists in Rwanda to address the unmet need for contraception, to strengthen family planning services” (Basinga et al, 2012: 20).

<sup>1</sup> Health worker wage rates sourced from personal communication with Rwandan midwife, February 2013



This fact is recognised by the government who estimate that:

**“25–35% of married women... most of whom are the poorest people in our communities, still have an unmet need for family planning”** (Habumuremyi<sup>2</sup> and Zenawi, 2012: 78).

- Pregnant or nursing mothers can also be subject to discrimination in recruitment processes for new teaching posts or in the allocation of additional jobs such as supervision duties during the national exams.
- Since society considers it shameful for unmarried female teachers to become pregnant, unmarried teachers tend to leave their jobs and not return. They can also be refused work elsewhere because of the shame associated with childbirth out of wedlock.

**“If you are a woman and give birth when you are not married, they can refuse to give you a job, saying that you may teach those bad behaviours to the students you are teaching. Or the teacher may be given a transfer”** (female teacher, urban 12 Year Basic Education school).

- Unlike other African countries where it is common for grandparents to help with childcare and domestic chores, in Rwanda many families are unable to rely on grandparents, having lost them during the genocide.

### **Fewer opportunities to participate in training**

- Both female and male teachers told us that women have fewer opportunities to participate in training and continuing professional development activities than their male counterparts. The problem is particularly acute for pregnant and nursing mothers who feel unable to attend, or are unable to complete, training courses.
- Teachers who are pregnant or nursing mothers feel unable to attend training or continuing professional development opportunities, whether because of health problems associated with their pregnancy; because training providers don't allow time for breastfeeding; or because they aren't able to afford childcare while they attend the course.

**“If there is an opportunity to increase their career, pregnant women are not given a chance like those who are not pregnant because they think that women cannot finish the**

<sup>2</sup> Pierre Damien Habumuremyi has served as the Prime Minister of Rwanda since October 2011.

**course because of the problems associated with pregnancy. It's true that they are given that opportunity to attend seminars after giving birth, but again she is not given time to breastfeed her baby"** (female teacher, urban 12 Year Basic Education school).

- In a significant number of cases, teachers told us that pregnant women and nursing mothers were simply not allowed to attend such courses – which they felt amounts to serious discrimination.
- Since studying to become a secondary teacher means moving to the city, many women have to leave their family at home. Even with the distance education programme run by Kigali Institute of Education (KIE), the majority of rural primary teachers have no electricity in the home and can't study at night.

### Female teachers shoulder an unequal share of domestic work

- The gendered division of labour in the home means that female teachers and their daughters are responsible for the vast majority of cooking, cleaning, washing and other household chores, while their husbands and sons tend to escape such duties.
- This unequal share of household chores and childcare is perhaps the main underlying cause of the shortage of women in secondary teaching and education management roles.
- Male teachers have fewer domestic and agricultural duties than female teachers and therefore have more time for lesson planning. This can lead to the misconception that in the school setting, men are more productive than women.

**"We are in charge of our children when they are sick for example more than our husbands do, arriving at school late because of many responsibilities. For example we can be absent from school not because we want to but because we take our children to hospital. We have more responsibilities in terms of family chores than men"** (female teacher, rural Nine Year Basic Education school).

- Female teachers are sometimes too tired to be able to plan and deliver lessons effectively. Some of the VSO volunteers who participated in the research mentioned cases of female

teachers falling asleep at school due to exhaustion from their domestic and agricultural responsibilities. Others noted instances of empty classrooms when female teachers were absent because of work they were expected to do at home or in the fields.

- The unequal division of domestic work acts as a powerful barrier to female teachers when considering whether to apply for management roles. One District Education Officer observed that women who have become Head Teachers had either been promoted before they had got married, and had no childcare responsibilities or they were older and unhindered by childcare responsibilities for that reason.

As well as asking research participants about barriers to women's advancement in the teaching and education management profession, we also asked them what they thought were the main barriers to girls performing well in exams. The barriers they identified included:

### Attitudinal barriers to girls' performance in exams

- The division of labour between girls and boys at home impacts negatively on girls' performance, since their domestic responsibilities mean they have far less time after school for homework and revision than their brothers.

**"This division of tasks sometimes favours boys more than girls. A boy can do some small work after school and then go to play football, and then after he even gets time to revise his lessons, while the girls are in the kitchen and doing other stuff and do not get enough time to revise their lesson, and this has an impact on her performance in class"** (male teacher, rural Nine Year Basic Education school).

**"It is not fair at all; a girl can be first in this term and be among the worst students in the following term simply because she is very busy with the tasks assigned to her by her parents"** (female teacher, rural Nine Year Basic Education school).

- Parents in rural areas withhold their daughters from school to act as childminders for their younger siblings during harvesting periods. Boys on the other hand continue to attend school, keeping up with the curriculum, giving them an unfair advantage in exams.

- Cultural attitudes towards gender roles dictate that girls should be passive, deferential and less confident and outspoken than boys. Teachers claimed that this difference in behaviour has a big impact on girls' performance in class and exams.
- There is still a clear gender dimension to the allocation of scarce family resources: boys are still being given preference by their parents when it comes to 'informal fees' – transport costs and materials such as uniforms, notebooks and pens.

**“They feel that the boy will be more useful than the girl if they allow the boy to go to school. There'll be a bigger economic return. According to the culture here the boy is supposed to get married, and normally he remains close to the family. After getting married, the girl goes to the home of the husband's family. She contributes to the husband's development, more than she can contribute to her family”** (national level civil society stakeholder).

### Menstruation-related barriers to girls' performance in exams

- Teachers and Head Teachers complained that the funding intended for the purchase of pads is both insufficient to meet the demand and often arrives late, preventing schools from keeping a constant supply in place.

**“When you run out of sanitary pads during your period here at school, you get that dirtiness on you! This time we do not have sanitary pads, but they used to bring them here at school but now they do not have money”** (female student, rural Nine Year Basic Education school).

- The shortage of adequate washing facilities prevents girls being able to stay in school during menstruation. Of the four basic education schools we visited, while all had gender-segregated toilets, none had showers or washing facilities available for girls to use.
- Schools are short of funds to purchase painkillers to relieve period pains, soap for girls to clean themselves with, spare underwear to change into, and mattresses to allow girls who are in pain to rest and recuperate at school, rather than having to return home and miss more lessons than is necessary.

- Girls told us that sometimes male teachers do not understand why girls need to leave the class, and refuse them permission to leave. Understandably this makes girls feel uncomfortable and less likely to want to come to school when their period is due.

**“School counsellors should be women; when they are males you cannot feel free to tell them everything; besides with a sweater around your waist, females can detect the problem from distance and immediately tell you what to do”** (female student, rural Nine Year Basic Education school).

- As a result of inadequate materials, facilities and support during menstruation, girls miss many hours of teaching and learning compared to boys – up to six days a month. “It is like boys have more time than girls” (female teacher, remote Nine Year Basic Education school).

**“We are not present in class all the days of a month. The shortest menstrual period takes between three and four days and there are some with a longer one who have painful period that can last a whole week without attending class. This can result in getting less marks than the girl should get because the teachers explained many things when she was absent”** (female student, rural secondary school).

- In addition the symptoms associated with menstruation – uterine cramps, fatigue, nausea, mood swings, etc – can affect girls' ability to concentrate on learning when they are able to attend lessons.

### Pregnancy<sup>3</sup>-related barriers to girls' performance in exams

- It is common for parents to reject a pregnant daughter on discovery of her condition. Even if they don't expel her from home, they often decide to stop paying school fees for her. If they have other daughters, the pregnancy may also weaken their willingness to pay their school fees too.
- Despite Head Teachers' claims that they welcome girls back to school after the child has been born, we were told of a number of cases in which both the girl and the boy involved were permanently expelled.

**“There happened a case in this school in which a male student made a female student pregnant from their home area...**

<sup>3</sup> While research conducted in 2010 reported that there were over 600 unintended pregnancies among students from primary and secondary schools, it also reported that a single district in the Western Province had 300 teenage pregnancies (The Rwanda Focus, 2012). Given this the nationwide estimate of 600 is clearly a huge underestimate.

**The school administration decided to expel them from school in order to give a lesson for anyone who would dare do so”** (male teacher, rural secondary school).

- If a girl falls pregnant she is condemned to miss at least six months of lessons while she gives birth and nurses her infant child. When this happens, girls are forced to repeat the entire year as there is no system in place for them to catch up on the lessons they have missed.
- While in theory and in policy, girls are welcome to return to school after childbirth, in practice this is very difficult – because their family cannot or will not help with childcare or because of the attitude of the community which frowns upon unmarried mothers going to school.

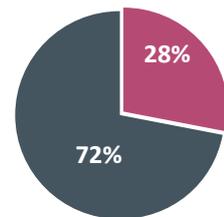
## Gender balance

By far the biggest issue that research participants reported to us, in terms of school and district level management issues, was the lack of gender balance in teaching and administrative staff both in schools and in Sector and District level Education Offices:

- Girls lack positive role models within schools. Research participants told us that the lack of gender balance in teaching staff at secondary schools and in secondary grades at Nine Year Basic Education schools, and in management positions across primary and secondary levels means that girls have few female role models.
- Participants felt that traditional gender norms that dictate that leadership positions should be reserved for men are being continually reinforced by the absence of women occupying such roles.
- The female students who participated in this research told us that they feel less able to talk to their male teachers about their problems, which becomes particularly problematic when girls are menstruating or pregnant.

**“When you bleed on your skirt during your menstrual period, there is no male teacher who can tell you anything, only females tell you how to cope with that situation. Even when you go to answer a question on the blackboard before students, male teachers do not notice your problem”** (female student, rural Nine Year Basic Education school).

## Secondary education



■ Female teachers ■ Male teachers

(Ministry of Education, 2012)

- Research participants felt that female Head Teachers are more likely to take girls’ issues seriously. There is a perception that they are more likely to take action to ensure girls are supported to remain in school during menstruation and pregnancy, more likely to encourage girls to study traditionally male subjects, and more likely to provide the materials and support they need to perform well in their studies.
  - However, the dominance of male Head Teachers – whose relationship with their female teaching staff is still constructed in line with the traditional pattern of male dominance and female submission – results not only in an absence of positive female role models, but also in a powerful negative role model that serves to strengthen and sustain, rather than challenge, gender norms.
- “The problem is due to the recruiting staff in the past. Their mentality was that no female manager can exist; a manager must be a man. But there is also inferiority complex among women. A woman says that she cannot dare managing a large number of men”** (male Head Teacher, remote Nine Year Basic Education school).
- There is also a gender imbalance in membership of parent–teacher committees. In all but one of the schools we visited, men outnumbered women on parent–teacher committees, and all were chaired by men – who had the final say on any decisions taken by the committees. In all cases women were represented and Head Teachers claimed that they were striving for gender balance, but only one school had achieved equal representation of men and women.

## Gender clubs

- While it is clear that the Tuseme (gender empowerment) club model works when it is implemented well, clubs exist in only 47 secondary schools, 54 UNICEF Child Friendly Schools (Nine Year Basic Education schools) and the two Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) Centres of Excellence.
- However, it seems that even in those few schools, implementation of Tuseme clubs has been patchy, with the success of the clubs depending largely on the enthusiasm and goodwill of the (usually) female teachers who are charged with organising the clubs.
- Political will is now needed to scale up the programme so that all schools in Rwanda can organise and sustain their own gender clubs. FAWE reported that they are receiving support from Plan International to scale up the programme to all schools in Bugasera district. However, this is only one of 30 districts, and the civil society stakeholders we asked felt that the programme needs to be adopted and implemented by District Education Officers and Sector Education Officers in all districts if it is to reach all schools.

## The need for management training in gender issues

- Since none of the Head Teachers, Sector Education Officers or District Education Officers we interviewed had received any training in gender issues, it is hardly surprising that only slow progress is being made.
- There is a need for managers to be trained in gender-responsive recruitment, posting and promotion procedures, and in identifying women with potential and encouraging them to upgrade their qualifications or apply for management positions in order to improve the gender balance in teaching staff at secondary level and in management roles. But there is also a need for broader gender training for managers.

## Affirmative Action(s)

As some time had passed since the launch of the Girls' Education Strategic Plan<sup>4</sup> we decided to test how well known

the Plan's Affirmative Actions<sup>5</sup> were among the Head Teachers, Sector Education Officers and District Education Officers that we visited, and asked what if anything they were doing to implement these actions:

**Affirmative Action 1:** Working towards 50–50 balances of appointments of females as Head Teachers and principals

**Affirmative Action 2:** Identifying and training women with potential at entry and middle management levels and fast-tracking them into education management positions

**Affirmative Action 3:** Remedial courses for girls seen as 'at risk' of failing or dropping out, and procedures for re-entry for girls who become pregnant during their education

**Affirmative Action 4:** Review of teaching methods and assessment of learning achievement to ensure girl participation is not inhibited

**Affirmative Action 5:** Sensitising families and local communities through parent–teacher committees about the importance of girls' completing formal education

**Affirmative Action 6:** Providing mentors to girls in secondary and higher education, especially for girls in the area of science and technology

- Overall while it seems there is some knowledge of the Affirmative Actions included in the Girls' Education Strategic Plan, it seems that not all the information has reached the education managers whose job it is to implement the Strategic Plan. It is unfortunate that three years after the Strategic Plan was launched, even the District Education Officers who are presumably charged with implementing it at the district level were not aware of all the Affirmative Actions that are the very pillars of the Plan.

**"I know we have a girls' education policy. But some people do not know it is there, so that they look at it and get inspired while they are preparing their syllabuses... One thing MIGEPROF could do is tell MINEDUC to disseminate that policy. I know FAWE has been doing it, they've started doing it, but still it is not sufficiently disseminated across the country. So they are not known. And if they are not known, then it doesn't make any impact"** (national level government stakeholder).

<sup>4</sup> Published in 2009, the Girls' Education Strategic Plan details the Rwandan government's strategy for implementing the 2008 Girls' Education Policy.

<sup>5</sup> The term Affirmative Actions is used to denote strategies that aim to reduce (in this instance) gender-related inequality and discrimination, or, put differently, strategies that positively discriminate in favour of women and girls.

<sup>6</sup> The Girls' Education Task Force is the name given to the network of mainly governmental organisations – the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Gender Promotion and Family Planning, FAWE, the Imbutu foundation, the National Youth Council, the National Women's Council and UNICEF.

## The Girls' Education Task Force

The Girls' Education Task Force<sup>6</sup> has clearly been the driving force behind some of the progressive steps that Rwanda has taken towards gender equality in schools. However, some civil society stakeholders felt that the Task Force is not transparent enough and feel information about proceedings at Task Force meetings is not well disseminated.

- Others felt that the pace of change is too slow given the urgency of the situation that girls face in Rwandan schools and that guidance given to Head Teachers is sometimes not clear enough.

**“I think the Girls' Education Task Force... they kind of grind to a halt sometimes. I know everything does take a while but when it comes to actually actioning clear practical policies... for instance there was a big campaign on sanitary pads... but actually what is each Head Teacher supposed to be doing? – you know: some support and systems. It's not there: so it's down [to] the individual Head Teacher's initiative”** (national level civil society stakeholder).

Only one of the six districts we visited had an operational Joint Action Forum for Girls' Education (JAFGE). The one example we did find, however, should serve as an example of best practice that could be shared with the other districts as an example of what can be achieved when people work together.

- Given the results that can be achieved, efforts should be made to ensure that a JAFGE is established and sustained in each district, not only to implement the National School Campaign, monitor and discourage teenage pregnancies as in the above example, but as a forum responsible for implementing and monitoring the Affirmative Actions set out in the Strategic Plan.
- The national level Girls' Education Task Force should be the driving force behind the establishment of Joint Action Fora and monitoring JAFGE activities. National level participants at the validation meeting for this research felt that a first step should be to revitalise and strengthen the Girls' Education Task Force so that it is more able to take on this role. One way to do this could be to broaden the membership of the Task Force to enable civil society organisations to attend and hold government representatives to account.

## Best practice in district level coordination on girls' education

**“In a Joint Action Forum for Girls' Education (JAFGE), here at the district level we have a forum and the chair of the forum is the Vice Mayor in charge of social affairs, and the Education Officer is a member. Six people are in the forum. We organise meetings at the district level and choose girls who performed well at the district level and give them gifts or certificates as awards.**

**“We select female students who perform well, we handle problems and we hold a meeting to see how many girls are pregnant and how to handle that problem and how to sensitise female students. We organise meetings with Head Teachers, we visit some schools and sensitise students; for example this year we went to some secondary schools and sensitised students.**

**“Last year, we had 19 pregnant female students but this year we have only one pregnant student. In a period of four months, only one student in primary school is pregnant, but last year there were 17 of them. Through our sensitisation I think we can decrease the number of students who become pregnant”** (District Education Officer, rural district).

# Recommendations

The following summarised recommendations have been generated from our discussions with students, teachers, parents, Head Teachers, Sector Education Officers, District Education Officers and government, academic and civil society stakeholders. Detailed recommendations can be found in Section 4 of the full report.

## Recommendations concerning teachers' poverty

1. Fulfil promises made to teachers to reintroduce seniority fees for teachers, to act as an incentive to encourage teachers to stay in the profession and to bring it in line with the medical profession.
2. Commit to promises to double primary teachers' pay over five years, in order to reduce teacher poverty.
3. Re-focus the Umwalimu saving and credit cooperative (SACCO) towards enabling teachers to build houses, or pay for further education, and away from income-generating projects.

## Recommendations concerning teachers' problems related to pregnancy and childcare

4. Increase the length of paid maternity leave to 12 weeks to bring Rwandan policy in line with that of the more gender-friendly low and middle income countries (eg South Africa).
5. Increase paternity leave to two weeks, to help relieve the burden of childcare borne by female teachers.
6. Establish a system of supply teachers so that children's education doesn't suffer during maternity and paternity leave periods.
7. Consider adding childcare facilities to schools, issuing childcare vouchers or establishing some system of covering the costs of childcare, to allow teachers to have access to childcare.
8. Improve access to family planning information and access to information about women's right to contraception, through medical centres, Umuganda2 meetings or other channels.
9. Prevent discrimination against pregnant women and nursing mothers, married or unmarried, in recruitment procedures and

in allocation of additional duties such as supervision during national exams.

10. Ensure that Head Teachers understand the need for flexibility with the nursing mothers among their female teaching staff.
11. Include a requirement for recording numbers of teachers who are pregnant or nursing mothers in the new National Teacher Registration System, so that their numbers can be monitored.

## Recommendations concerning gender-responsiveness training for teachers

12. Civil society organisations that work on improving teaching methodology and on improving girls' education should work together with the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) to make gender training in pre-service training compulsory.
13. The TSC should take on a coordinating role to ensure that all in-service teacher training providers (both government-managed and (non-governmental organisation (NGO)-managed providers) are delivering gender-responsive teaching methodology training to all serving teachers who attend their courses.

## Recommendations concerning female teachers' opportunities to participate in training

14. The Teacher Service Commission and both government-managed and NGO-managed providers should take steps to end discrimination against pregnant and nursing teachers in access to in-service training opportunities.
15. Ensure that training venues have facilities for nursing mothers or for babysitters to come to the training. Funds for babysitters should be provided to ensure that nursing mothers can attend.

**16.** Consider offering maintenance grants to female primary teachers who wish to study for a secondary level teaching qualification.

**17.** KIE and the two Colleges of Education should provide childcare facilities to enable nursing mothers, and other mothers with young children, to attend residential teacher training courses.

### Recommendations concerning female teachers' and girls' unequal share of domestic and agricultural work

**18.** Redouble gender equality and family planning awareness-raising efforts through Umuganda meetings, storylines in radio and TV soap operas, debates and discussions, or in articles in the print media. Participants at the research validation meeting felt that awareness raising about gender roles in families should be made a national priority.

**19.** Use parent–teacher committee meetings to impress upon parents the importance of sharing domestic and agricultural work equally between their daughters and sons, so that girls are not disadvantaged compared to boys (eg discourage the practice of withholding girls from school during harvest time).

### Recommendations concerning girls' menstruation-related problems

**20.** Increase and improve the reliability of funding for the materials girls need during menstruation. Head Teachers need sufficient funds to ensure: a more regular supply of sanitary pads, painkillers, soap and spare underwear; washing facilities and mattresses.

**21.** Design and implement a better system for monitoring whether the funds for menstruation-related problems are getting to the schools on time and are sufficient to meet the schools' requirements.

**22.** Ensure gender clubs are established in every school, through which girls can be taught about menstruation-related issues and whom to turn to for advice and counselling, and boys and male teachers can be sensitised to girls' needs. This task should become part of the Head Teacher's responsibilities.

### Recommendations concerning problems related to teenage pregnancy

**23.** Ensure each school has an effective sex and reproductive health education programme that informs girls about how to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy, and teaches both girls and boys about the consequences of sexual relationships.

**24.** Re-communicate to Head Teachers that the policy on re-entry for girls who become pregnant during their education (from the Girls' Education Policy) is mandatory not optional.

**25.** Provide counselling for girls who have become pregnant and for their parents to ensure they look after their daughter during and after her pregnancy and are supportive of her return to school.

**26.** Empower Head Teachers to intervene when it becomes clear that a family has rejected their daughter because of her pregnancy.

**27.** Encourage schools to use their resources to incentivise girls who have become pregnant to remain in school and return after they have given birth.

**28.** Promote peer support visits to girls who have given birth, to demonstrate that the girl has not been shunned by her classmates and to persuade her to return to her studies.

**29.** Consider establishing a hardship fund in each Sector to assist girls who have been rejected by their family, to pay for emergency accommodation and food until reconciliation can be negotiated.

**30.** Reinstate funding for remedial courses or catch-up programmes to encourage girls who drop out due to pregnancy to return to school and complete their education.

**31.** Take steps to ensure that boys who have fathered children through consensual sex are not stripped of their right to an education.

**32.** Healthcare professionals should be sensitised to refrain from stigmatising students who come to them for advice on contraception.

### Recommendations concerning gender balance in teaching and education management staff

**33.** Implement the women's leadership programme, suggested in the Girls' Education Policy, to identify women with potential and fast-track them into leadership positions.

**34.** Establish a gender equality recruitment policy – a system of positive discrimination in favour of women in the teacher and management recruitment processes.

**35.** Provide training for staff responsible for recruiting teachers or education managers on gender equality in teacher recruitment, postings and promotion procedures.

**36.** Increase and sustain sensitisation of male and female teachers about the importance of family planning, to allow female primary teachers to study for secondary level teaching qualifications or apply for management positions.

**37.** Ensure that the new National Teacher Registration System records information about numbers of male and female Head Teachers, Sector Education Officers and District Education Officers so that progress towards gender balance in education management can be monitored.

**38.** Make it easier for female teachers and managers who need to move to a different school after marriage to secure a transfer.

### Recommendations concerning other gender-related school, district and national level management issues

**39.** Consider making it mandatory to reserve half the seats on parent–teacher committees for women, and establishing a rotating chair – alternating between male and female incumbents.

**40.** Provide gender training for education managers in, for example:

- ensuring parent–teacher committees are gender-balanced and that the women attending have an equal say
- using parent–teacher committee events to sensitise parents and teachers to gender equality issues in the home

- establishing and sustaining gender clubs
- ensuring the school infrastructure is gender-sensitive (eg with gender-segregated toilets and a private room with washing facilities)
- providing girls with a sufficient supply of sanitary materials, painkillers, soap and underwear
- encouraging girls to study science and technology subjects
- ensuring girls participate equally in school-organised sporting activities.

**41.** Provide training for District Education Officers, Sector Education Officers and Head Teachers so that they become familiar with the Affirmative Actions and receive practical guidance on how to implement them. Such training could be organised by the Public Sector Capacity Building Secretariat or other relevant training provider after consultation with the TSC, MIGEPROF, Gender Monitoring Office (GMO), MINEDUC, the Rwanda Education Board and members of the Girls' Education Task Force.

**42.** To implement the Affirmative Action regarding mentors for girls in secondary schools, District Education Officers, Sector Education Officers and Head Teachers will need both: guidance on how to establish mentor schemes; and funding that is reserved explicitly for such schemes.

**43.** Ensure that a Joint Action Forum for Girls' Education is established in each district and is responsible for disseminating and monitoring the Affirmative Actions. District level Joint Action Fora could also be involved in ensuring District Education Officers, Sector Education Officers and Head Teachers receive training about the Affirmative Actions.

**44.** Revitalise and strengthen the Girls' Education Task Force and charge it with ensuring Joint Action Fora for Girls' Education are established and active in each district. One way to do this could be to broaden the membership of the Task Force to enable civil society organisations to attend and hold government representatives to account.

**45.** National level participants who attended the validation meeting for this research noted that, as five years have passed since the launch of the Girls' Education Policy in 2008, the time has come for an impact assessment to be conducted to assess in more detail the impact of the Policy and accompanying Girls' Education Strategy.

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**Editing:** Purna Kumar Shrestha, Penny Richards and Ken Moxham.

**Layout:** Mozo

**Photography:** ©VSO/Ben Langdon

ISBN 978-1-903697-53-5



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