



Integrating gender into pre-primary education systems: Tools for gender-transformative policy and programming

Key findings

- **Gender-transformative strategies should be integrated throughout the whole system of pre-primary education.**
- **Several tools, presented in this brief, exist and can be used by policymakers and/or practitioners to progress towards gender-transformative pre-primary education.**
- **The tools should be connected to one another.** The transformation of a gender-responsive pre-primary education system to a gender-transformative one requires all components to work together coherently.
- **Achieving a gender-transformative pre-primary education is a process, and not an immediate change.** It is first important to identify immediate country priorities and then work progressively towards system-level integration.

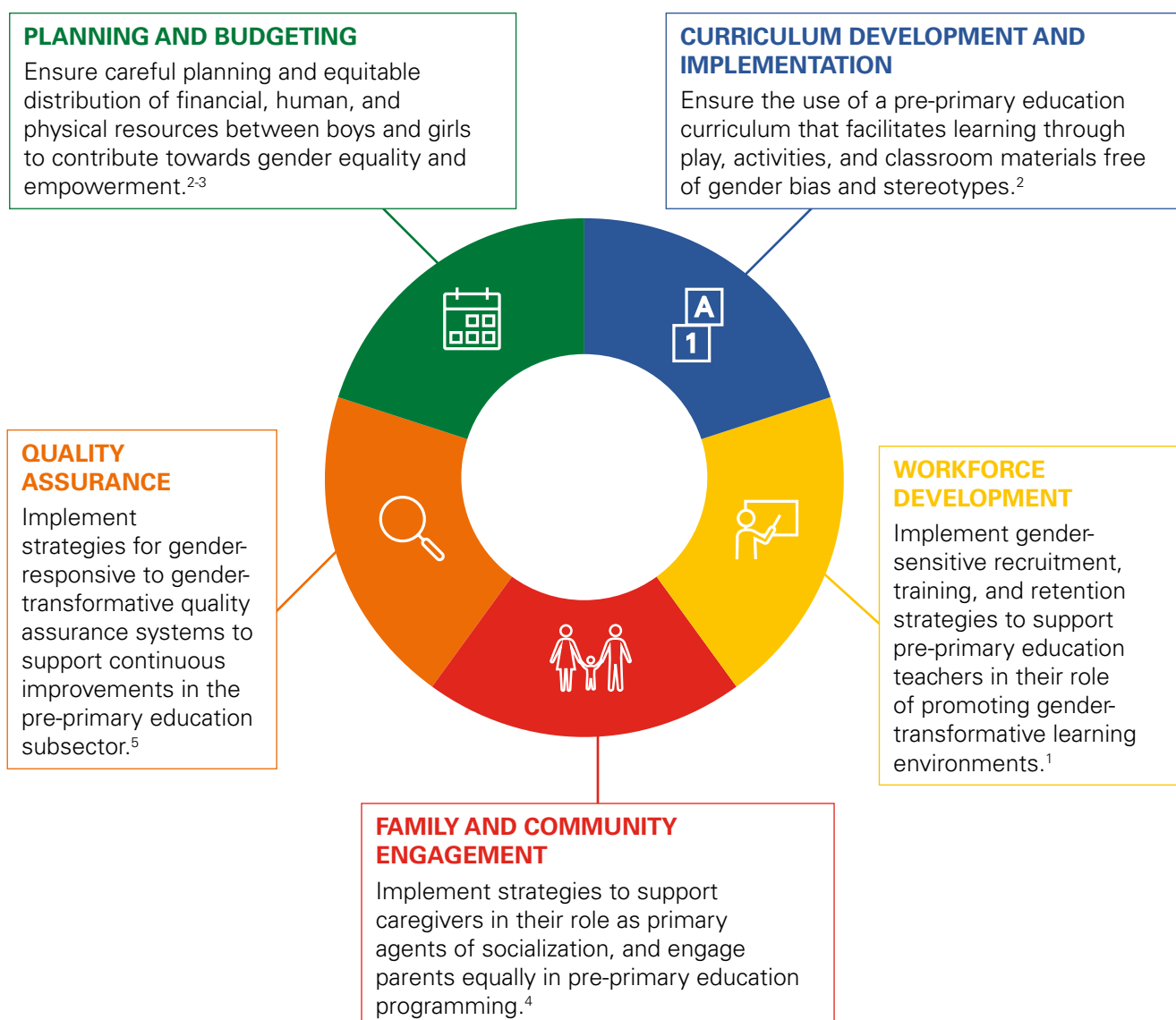
Context

Access to pre-primary education has increased considerably in the past two decades and, based on global enrolment rates, girls and boys are participating equally. Nevertheless, **despite this gender parity in access, pre-primary education does not always deliver on its potential to tackle gender inequalities and challenge common gender norms and stereotypes** while they are being acquired by the youngest learners.

Pre-primary education can have a transformative power over gender inequalities. It is crucial to **develop a coherent pre-primary education system that integrates gender considerations across all its core components for a quality service delivery:** Planning and Budgeting, Curriculum Development and Implementation, Workforce Development, Family and Community Engagement, and Quality Assurance.¹

How can gender be integrated in the pre-primary education system?

A variety of gender-focused strategies can be implemented **across the five core components** of pre-primary education systems (see below). Taken and applied together, these **strategies can have a gender-transformative effect by making sure all parts of the system work towards this goal.**



Tools practitioners and policymakers can use to incorporate gender in pre-primary education

The following table lists a set of tools that practitioners and policymakers can use to incorporate gender in pre-primary education policy and programming, organized by the five components of a quality system. These provide key gender considerations to strengthen each core component and advocate for gender-responsive and gender-transformative policies and practices.

Tool	What gender considerations does the tool provide?	Main user
PLANNING AND BUDGETING		
Education Sector Analysis Methodological Guidelines – Volume 2 (UNICEF, World Bank, UNESCO-IIEP, GPE, 2014) Early Childhood Education (ECE) Accelerator toolkit (UNICEF, 2020)	The sector analysis guidelines and the toolkit provide open-source strategies and tools for pre-primary education system analysis and development. Guidelines for developing a sector plan, monitoring and review and revision processes take into account gender equality as a cross-cutting issue. It suggests guiding questions to analyse the extent to which gender considerations feature in pre-primary education policies and legislations, how these contribute to increase gender parity in the workforce and whether the curriculum promotes gender-responsive pedagogy.	Policymakers
Gender-Responsive Public Expenditure Management (GRPEM) tool (Pescina et al., 2021)	The tool acknowledges differences in the impact of education spending on girls and boys, and redirects spending to remedy imbalances and improve gender-responsiveness in the allocation of funds. It provides considerations and recommendations to integrate gender in all four stages of the budget cycle: preparation, approval, execution, and oversight.	Policymakers
Gender Analysis Pathway tool* (Nurhaeni, 2007)	The tool provides a framework for gender mainstreaming in planning and budgeting. It takes policymakers through the process of identifying gender issues related to particular policy areas, formulating policy goals and plans of action, and identifying data and indicators to monitor progress.	Policymakers
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION		
Gender in Education Network in Asia-Pacific (GENIA) toolkit (UNESCO, 2019)	The toolkit mainstreams gender equality in curricula and teaching and learning materials. It proposes guiding questions to analyse gender biases and stereotypes in their content focusing on the activities suggested for students, the pedagogical practices for teachers to use in the classroom, the classroom settings and daily routines promoted, the assessment tools to be used, and the training provided to teachers for curriculum delivery.	Practitioners Policymakers
Gender-Responsive Pedagogy for Early Childhood Education (GRP4ECE) toolkit (VVOB and FAWE, 2019)	The toolkit provides guiding questions for teachers and school leaders to decide on whether the use of books and other written materials contributes to gender equality. The questions are centred on analysing the characters present, how female and male characters are portrayed and whether this perpetuates or challenges gender stereotypes, the roles and relationships between them and the adjectives used to describe them.	Practitioners

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

<p>Nordic website for the promotion of gender equality in children's literature and day care* (Nordic Council of Ministers, 2015)</p>	<p>This resource provides guidance forms for pre-primary teachers to analyse children's books in terms of whether they expand or confirm traditional gender norms. Six different strategies for analysis are outlined, including counting the gender of the main and subordinate characters, examining how the characters' gender and environment are pictured, what gender norms are represented in the book, and asking children's opinion about the book.</p>	<p>Practitioners</p>
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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

<p>Gender-Responsive Pedagogy Teacher Training (GRPTT) pack (Plan International Canada, 2018)</p>	<p>The training pack contains materials for a ten-day teacher training programme. While it was not originally developed for pre-primary education, it is currently being contextualized. The programme introduces general concepts related to gender and provides tools and guidelines for teachers to incorporate gender considerations in their teaching skills, such as classroom management, lesson planning, and evaluation and assessment of practices.</p>	<p>Practitioners</p>
<p>ECE Accelerator toolkit (UNICEF, 2019a)</p>	<p>The toolkit includes technical guidance that provides a framework for governments in the process of scaling up or improving provision for pre-primary education, organized around three pillars to support a comprehensive pre-primary workforce strategy: staff qualifications, pre-service training, and continuous professional development. The framework recognizes the pre-primary education workforce as highly feminized and often undervalued; therefore, introducing improvements to their working conditions and professionalization is one way in which pre-primary education can contribute to gender equality.</p>	<p>Policymakers</p>

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

<p>Programming and Influencing Package on Promoting Men's Engagement in Early Childhood Development (Plan International, 2021)</p>	<p>Provides a set of recommendations and steps to support pre-primary education programmes to better engage fathers. These start with understanding prevailing attitudes and practices related to men's engagement, followed by awareness raising and pre- and in-service training to support teachers to promote stronger family-preschool relationships; include fathers in parent activities; and make school and classroom spaces more welcoming for them.</p>	<p>Practitioners</p>
<p>Tip Sheet on Gender-Responsive Parenting* (UNICEF, 2019b)</p>	<p>This tip sheet complements a Technical Note on Gender-Responsive Parenting and provides gender-responsive tips and key messages for primary caregivers of children from zero to five years old. These are focused on gender socialization in child development, gender identity and diversity among children, fathers' engagement in children's care, development and learning, and gender-equitable toys, games and books. Although the resource primarily targets parents, teachers can use it as a reference for relevant content for pre-primary education parental engagement programmes.</p>	<p>Practitioners</p>

QUALITY ASSURANCE

<p>TEACH - ECE (World Bank, 2021)</p>	<p>Free classroom observation tool developed to monitor and improve teaching in pre-primary education, that can be incorporated into external monitoring of system quality. It includes gender bias indicators to measure whether teachers show gender stereotypes in the classroom by not giving children equal opportunities to participate, by expressing unequal expectations about their behaviour or capabilities, or whether they challenge gender stereotypes.</p>	<p>Practitioners Policymakers</p>
<p>National-level documentation tool and assessment form* (Vallberg-Roth, 2015)</p>	<p>The documentation tool and assessment form can be incorporated in pre-primary education quality assurance systems being used by preschool principals. Both resources include a focus on counteracting traditional gender patterns and biases to reflect on whether preschools are contributing towards equality between girls and boys, if they are both given the same opportunities to explore their abilities and interests with no restrictions related to gender stereotypes.</p>	<p>Practitioners</p>

*These tools provide relevant gender considerations to incorporate in pre-primary education systems but need to be adapted to each specific context.

There is a wider variety of available resources addressing gender issues in pre-primary education. The selection of the tools listed above was informed by a literature review focused on a **system coherence perspective for pre-primary education. The fact that the strategies and tools across the five components are connected to one another does not necessarily imply simultaneous implementation**. Countries should initially focus on identifying their immediate priorities in pre-primary education and mapping the progress and challenges already existing in their own contexts, to **work progressively towards the integration of gender at a system-wide level**.

Further reading

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

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