

GENDER AT THE CENTRE INITIATIVE (GCI) ANNUAL REPORT 2025



PRIORITÉ À L'ÉGALITÉ
GENDER AT THE
CENTRE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2025 has been an unprecedented year for the world and for the Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI). We have witnessed unimaginable human suffering and grave human rights violations, including the roll-back of gender equality around the world and in GCI partner countries. The international development sector has encountered significant challenges, with reductions in funding leading to shifting priorities. The grassroots organizations and civil society actors who are key partners for GCI's work have been particularly impacted by this loss in resources.

However, despite these challenges, GCI Alliance members showed remarkable resilience in continuing their efforts to advance gender equality in and through education. We have been humbled by the perseverance of young leaders, the unwavering commitment of many government officials, and the determination of our civil society partners. 2025 has been a year of transformation for GCI, in which it took stock of the findings of the external evaluation of Phase 1 (2020-2023), evolved its ways of working based on lessons learned, became further embedded in IIEP's and UNGEI's strategies and adapted to a changed funding environment.

Two new countries, Senegal and South Africa, emphasized their commitment to gender-transformative education by endorsing GCI's Freetown Manifesto for Gender-Transformative Leadership in Education. We also saw Mali confirm its leadership on this issue by hosting GCI's first country-to-country learning visit on gender-responsive education planning. These examples show the strong political will that African countries continue to demonstrate for advancing gender equality through their education systems.

Since GCI's launch in 2019, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) has played a central role in GCI's governance and technical leadership. In 2025, GPE's contribution grew further, through its funding and support for the GCI Gender Equality Technical Assistance Initiative (TAI). Initially piloted in Chad and Côte d'Ivoire, the initiative will be expanded to Jordan and Pakistan in 2026.

This year GCI adopted a more focused and collaborative way of working at country level, with close engagement in Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Benin, Madagascar, Mauritania, Senegal and Nigeria, while maintaining a continental scope through regional learning, ad-hoc support to new countries and institutional partnerships. For example, the newly forged partnership with the African Union International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa (CIEFFA) aims at strengthening institutional and technical capacity among Member States and strengthening the evidence base for gender-transformative education. New thematic focus areas were consolidated, such as women's leadership in education, and partnering with young feminists.

Through the challenges that 2025 brought, GCI continued its core mission to bring governments, civil society and young feminists together around our shared goal of inclusive and transformative education for all. Within GCI's multiple convening spaces, gender and education champions are learning from each other, supporting each other, and delivering meaningful progress across Africa and beyond. We look forward to continuing this journey together with you!



Eline Versluys

GCI Lead, UNGEI



Fabricia Devignes

GCI Lead, IIEP UNESCO

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ACRONYMS

ANCEFA	Africa Network Campaign on Education for All
AU	African Union
AU CIEFFA	African Union International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa
CAR	Central African Republic
CEC	Continental Education Conference
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CIG	Gender Institutionalization Committee
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
EIE	Education in Emergencies
ESDP	Education Sector Development Plan
FME	Federal Ministry of Education
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
GCI	Gender at the Centre Initiative
GDO	Gender Desk Officer
GES	Gender Equality in Education Snapshot
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
GRES	Gender-Responsive Education Sector Planning
IIEP-UNESCO	UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning
LEG	Local Education Group
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
MYRP	Multi-Year Resilience Program
NIRAP	National Institute for Research and Pedagogical Animation
PANCOGED	Pan-African Conference on Girls' and Women's Education
PGD	Participatory Gender Diagnosis
STG	System Transformation Grant
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
Will	Women in Learning Leadership

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 About the Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI)

The Gender at the Centre Initiative (GCI) applies a whole system approach to gender-transformative education, championing the leadership of ministries of education (MoE), civil society organizations (CSO), technical experts, and young feminists to develop and implement plans, policies, and interventions towards advancing gender equality in and through education.

GCI is based on a shared vision: All learners should benefit from quality, safe, inclusive and transformative education that contributes to gender equality and more just societies.

Jointly coordinated by the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) and UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO), GCI operates as a multi-stakeholder partnership of education ministries, civil society partners, the African Union International Center for Girls & Women's Education in Africa (AU CIEFFA), donors (GPE, Education Cannot Wait, France, Norway), and technical partners (UNESCO, UNICEF). Together, these partners form the GCI Alliance.

“GCI shaped a new vision in relation to gender equality across the education sector in terms of how gender equality is approached as being more systematic, more operational, and having more clarity on what can work.”

(GCI Phase 1 External Evaluation)

GCI Impact: Phase 1 Evaluation

The GCI Phase 1 (2020-2023) Final External Evaluation was published in early 2025. Carried out by an external agency, it was wide-ranging in scope, using a theory-based and mixed-methods approach which entailed document review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, an online survey, story-telling techniques, and deep-dive studies in Chad, Niger, and Sierra Leone. As GCI was a new initiative with the first phase always envisaged as a pilot, a full external evaluation was felt crucial to inform the continuation and evolution.

The evaluation drew four key conclusions:

1. GCI is externally coherent within the context of education and gender.
2. GCI demonstrated strategic alignment but faces some challenges around internal coherence.
3. GCI made a significant contribution to MoEs' and CSOs' capacity to commit to gender equality as a priority in education planning, policies, and programmes, and made some early progress towards systemic gender equality changes, but transformational impact requires continued commitment and time.
4. The GCI has promoted systemic change through its policy work and by fostering personal commitments to gender equality, but limitations in terms of continuous financing and support undermine its effects' sustainability.

These conclusions and their accompanying recommendations affirm GCI's validity and credibility and have been pivotal in shaping GCI's second phase during 2025, ensuring impact for gender equality in and through education is maximised. The over-arching lesson from the pilot phase is that lasting progress requires both top-down policy reform and bottom-up leadership, not imposing solutions but developing sustainable capacity and enabling transformative change.

GCI 2025 Impact in numbers:

In 2025, GCI supported 843 Ministry of Education staff, civil society actors, and young feminists across 37 countries to strengthen their capacities in gender equality within education systems and to support their advocacy for gender-transformative education. This highlights GCI's commitment to fostering collaboration and building the technical skills and political will of key stakeholders.

IN 2025 GCI REACHED 37 COUNTRIES, ENGAGING WITH:

570 GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS 90 CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS 183 YOUNG FEMINISTS
3160 TEACHERS 3425 STUDENTS 2700 COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Where GCI Sparks Change: 2025 Map



1.2 The Context We Face

2025 reflected a dual reality of ongoing challenges and opportunities for advancing gender equality in and through education across Africa.

Challenges

Political instability, economic pressures, and humanitarian crises—driven by conflicts, climate change, and food insecurity—continued to disrupt education systems in GCI partner countries. As of September 2025, nearly 15,000 schools remained closed across West and Central Africa due to insecurity, affecting the education of approximately 3 million children (UNICEF, 2025). Girls are disproportionately affected, facing heightened risks of child marriage, gender-based violence, and exclusion from education.

Gender inequality remains an urgent and systemic challenge, intersecting with political, economic, and social vulnerabilities. While boys and men also face barriers, girls are disproportionately impacted, with far fewer opportunities for education and self-determination. Economic hardships often force families to prioritize boys' education over girls', perpetuating cycles of gender inequality and limiting girls' potential to contribute to societal progress.

The international education sector, as part of the wider international development sector, has encountered an increasingly challenging environment over the course of this year due to significant reductions in spending on Overseas Development Aid. For initiatives seeking to change gendered paradigms to be more equitable, such as the Gender at the Centre Initiative, resistance has increased globally and become more complex.

Opportunities

The continued political commitment from GCI countries to advance gender equality in and through education – as shown through new endorsements of the Freetown Manifesto and high-level support to new initiatives – has enabled GCI to continue to deliver and grow.

The GCI Alliance continues to play a pivotal role in steering the GCI initiative, particularly in the context of a shifting global education and gender equality landscape. The Alliance serves as a knowledge-sharing platform, as well as to strengthen coherence and joint ownership of the GCI's goals. Young feminists are increasingly claiming their space within the GCI Alliance and partnering with governments and civil society to drive a joint agenda for gender-transformative education.

GPE's Gender Equality Technical Assistance Initiative has allowed GCI to provide targeted additional support to specific countries, while extending learning across the GCI community. A new partnership with Education Cannot Wait (ECW) aims to strengthen the crisis and resilience lens within GCI activities, engaging education-in-emergencies actors into our capacity building and advocacy work. Continued partnerships with France and Norway have strengthened GCI's footprint in several partner countries. GCI has also moved into new areas

of investment, such as leadership support for women teachers and school leaders.

1.3 2025 Headline Results

- ➔ Senegal and South Africa endorsed the **Freetown Manifesto**, strengthening high-level commitment to gender-transformative education and confirming Africa's leadership on this issue.
- ➔ Through the **Women in Learning Leadership (WiLL)** applied research initiative, GCI is supporting nine ministries of education and partners to promote gender-equitable and effective school leadership across Africa, drawing on evidence that women in school leadership can positively influence students' aspirations, challenge gender stereotypes, and foster improved education outcomes.
- ➔ Mali Ministry of Education launched its first-ever **leadership support program for women teachers and school leaders**, intentionally addressing the gender imbalance in school leadership and supporting women to take up and keep leadership positions.
- ➔ Côte d'Ivoire Ministry of Education launched a **Participatory Gender Institutional Diagnostic**, to assess how gender equality is embedded in both the governance of the education system and the internal organization of the Ministry.
- ➔ Chad Ministry of Education adopted a national **code of conduct for teachers and school leaders**. Additionally, fifteen provinces are now covered under a national training programme on gender-responsive education planning and transformative leadership for education officials.
- ➔ Senior government officials in Chad, Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal developed key **leadership skills for gender equality in education**. As a result, the Senegal MoE Direction of Human Resources requested additional support to make their recruitment and career development practices more gender-responsive. In Chad, gender-transformative education has become a standing item on the agenda of the Local Education Group.
- ➔ **Young feminists** are actively contributing their expertise and voices to Ministries of Education in five countries through GCI-supported Feminist Youth Coalitions (Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Senegal).
- ➔ After a unique **country-to-country learning visit**, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Chad governments and civil society decided to accelerate actions towards gender equality in education and strengthen their collaboration.
- ➔ **The Community of Practice in Gender Transformative Education** grew to over 100 members situated in over 30 countries, making use of an interactive online platform and constituting a valuable forum for exchange.

CHAPTER 2: KEY THEMES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

2.1 Driving Gender Equality in Education with Data and Evidence

GCI's support to partner countries to generate, collect and analyze key data on education and gender equality has helped governments and education actors increase their understanding of existing inequalities and fostered evidence-driven education planning. The Women in Learning Leadership (WiLL) applied research is fostering policy changes to promote women school leadership. As a result, Cote d'Ivoire for example has decided to develop a national strategy to strengthen women school leaders. GCI's gender assessments - using the GES Toolkit - for the 16 Freetown Manifesto signatory countries are now featured on the Global Accountability Dashboard. GCI also supported the development of a research agenda on gender-transformative education, including through innovative research on school drop-out and the potential for employing early warning systems in Sierra Leone.

Women in Learning Leadership Initiative

In 2025, GCI implemented the Women in Learning Leadership (WiLL) applied research project in partnership with UNICEF Innocenti and GPE/IDRC in 9 countries: Benin, Madagascar, Ethiopia, Guinea, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Ghana and Mali.

In both Benin and Madagascar, institutional and policy analyses revealed that women remain underrepresented in school management positions (17.9% of school heads in Benin and 35% in Madagascar), while regression analyses confirmed a positive correlation between female leadership and higher student learning outcomes, particularly for girls. Building on these findings, in Benin, a quantitative survey was conducted in 220 schools to explore the management practices that make a difference in student success. Further qualitative surveys and analyses in Madagascar and Côte d'Ivoire will inform the development of strategies to strengthen women school leadership. In Senegal, a national workshop was held this year to lay the foundations for the upcoming institutional analysis, with strong participation from the Ministry of Education and key education stakeholders.

Beyond generating evidence, WiLL is consolidating its role as a catalyst for policy reform and capacity development, contributing directly to ongoing national and regional education strategies and interventions on gender-transformative school leadership across African countries.

Scaling the reach and impact of GCI's gender rapid assessments

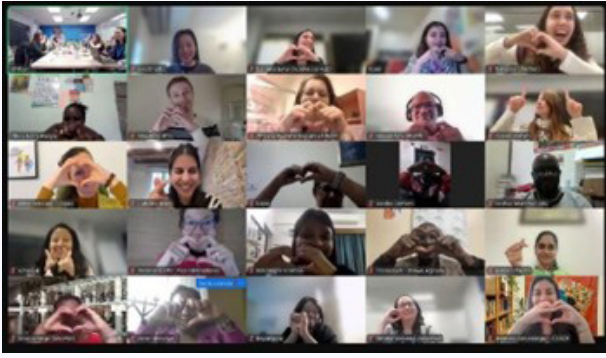
This year GCI continued to support countries to assess gender equality in and through their education systems, among others through the [Gender Equality in Education Snapshot \(GES\) Toolkit](#). GCI delivered capacity building and amplified impact through:

- Training MOE officials in Mali to use the GES toolkit and act on the results in two separate capacity building sessions. Participants reviewed progress since the 2023 GES assessment, identified persistent gaps, and put forward [concrete recommendations](#) to inform the Ministry's 2024–2028 Gender Action Plan.
- Delivering a webinar on the use of the GES Toolkit for the GPE KiX Gender Equality Community of Practice.
- Developing a harmonized Gender Rapid Analysis methodology, building on the GES Toolkit and IIEP analytical tools to provide faster and more actionable gender diagnostics assessing both policy intent for gender equality in education as well as outcomes. The tool will be tested in Côte d'Ivoire and Chad under the GPE TAI initiative in early 2026.



Amplifying research and addressing critical evidence gaps

- Ahead of International Day of Education, UNGEI and Accelerate Hub hosted a dynamic hybrid workshop in New York. 88 researchers, policymakers, and activists gathered to identify critical research gaps in gender-transformative education. Outcomes included a proposed [joint research agenda](#) to guide future work and concrete next steps to advance progress.
- GCI was part of two events on gender-transformative education at the UKFIET 2025 conference: i) Countering resistance to gender equality in education convened by the UK Overseas Development Institute ALIGN platform and ii) Counting on education data to help build accountability for gender equality in and through education convened by University College London.
- GCI learning was integrated in the [3rd G7 Global Objectives Report](#).
- GCI's upcoming paper, 'School dropout as a process: Strengthening Prevention through Improved Analytical Tools and Policy Action (Theoretical framework and pilot case application in Sierra Leone)' has been internally and externally reviewed in preparation for publication in 2026 as a public good,



2.2. Building Capacity and Commitment for Gender-Responsive Education

GCI's combined efforts to strengthen both technical capacity and leadership skills for gender-transformative education led to several strong results in 2025. In Chad GCI built capacity at the decentralized level, reaching school administrators from a total of fifteen provinces with training on gender equality in education. Through its Gender-Transformative Leadership approach GCI strengthened personal commitment and leadership skills among senior government leaders in Senegal, Chad and Cote d'Ivoire. We organized GCI's first country-to-country learning visit, where Mali inspired its Sahel partner countries with on-the-ground examples of gender-responsive education planning. Mali was also the first GCI country to launch a gender-transformative leadership support program for women teachers and school leaders. And GCI engaged with Local Education Groups to strengthen coordination on gender-responsive education planning. As a result, gender equality is now a standing item on the LEG agenda in Chad.

2.2.1 Partnering with GPE to deliver results

2.2.1.1 Technical Assistance Initiative on Gender Equality

In 2024–2025, the GPE Technical Assistance Initiative (TAI) on Gender Equality entered full implementation following the endorsement of national work plans for Côte d'Ivoire and Chad, focusing on strengthening institutional foundations and capacities for gender transformative education policies.

Cote d'Ivoire

- IIEP-UNESCO supported the Ministry of Education to launch a Participatory Gender Institutional Diagnostic, to assess how gender equality is embedded in both the governance of the education system and the internal organization of the Ministry. The process engaged over 700 staff at central and decentralized levels and has generated actionable insights to inform upcoming reforms, including the integration of gender in performance-based contracts (COPs) and the creation of a Gender-Based-Violence protection mechanism for Ministry staff.
- IIEP-UNESCO and UNGEI gathered over 40 regional gender officers from the Gender Equality and

Equity Services (SEEG) to strengthen their skills in promoting gender equality. Participants reviewed key gender concepts, indicators, explored gender-transformative leadership, and planned concrete actions to implement the Ministry's Gender Policy on the ground. IIEP-UNESCO also strengthened the capacity of the directorate of planning to support decentralized gender-responsive education sector planning.

“This training reflects the Ministry’s commitment to implementing a profound, structured, and coherent change in the integration of gender equality at all levels.”

- Coulibaly Adama, Inspector General and General Coordinator, Ministry of Education Côte d'Ivoire

- UNGEI and the Ministry of Education organized a series of trainings on Gender-Transformative Leadership in Education. 24 directors and 32 deputy directors were trained, as well as a pool of 27 trainers who will replicate the training to other departments and levels of the Ministry. Participants identified gender stereotypes and power dynamics within their professional environments, reflected on their personal commitment to gender equality and developed corrective measures to promote more equitable education practices. Significantly, all Ministry Directors signed an official commitment to systematically integrate gender equality into educational policies, programs, and governance practices.



Chad

- Implementation of the Gender Equality Technical Assistance Initiative has advanced rapidly, with fifteen provinces now covered under a national training programme on gender-responsive education planning and transformative leadership for provincial education officials. IIEP-UNESCO and UNGEI jointly delivered two trainings for 80 school administrators, inspectors and pedagogical advisors. Participants analyzed gender inequalities and developed

strategies to tackle issues such as girls' school dropout, child marriage and gender-based violence. Each participant made a personal commitment to gender equality, tailored to their responsibilities: integrating more inclusive practices in their schools, promoting awareness-raising actions within communities, or supporting girls in their educational journey.

- UNGEI and UNICEF Chad delivered a training on Gender-Transformative Leadership for 22 senior officials from the Ministry of Education. The training aimed to support education officials' commitment and leadership skills to promote gender equality in the education system.
- A key milestone this year was the official launch of the development of a national Code of Conduct for teachers and school leadership supported by IIEP, designed through a participatory, inclusive, and gender transformative process that ensures national ownership and alignment with international standards.
- In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, GCI organized an orientation session for the Local Education Group, bringing together 14 Ministry officials, civil society actors and technical and financial partners. The session strengthened the collective understanding of gender equality issues in education and consolidate the role of the LEG as a key coordination platform for advancing inclusive and equitable education in Chad. Gender equality will now be a standing item on the LEG's meeting agenda going forward.

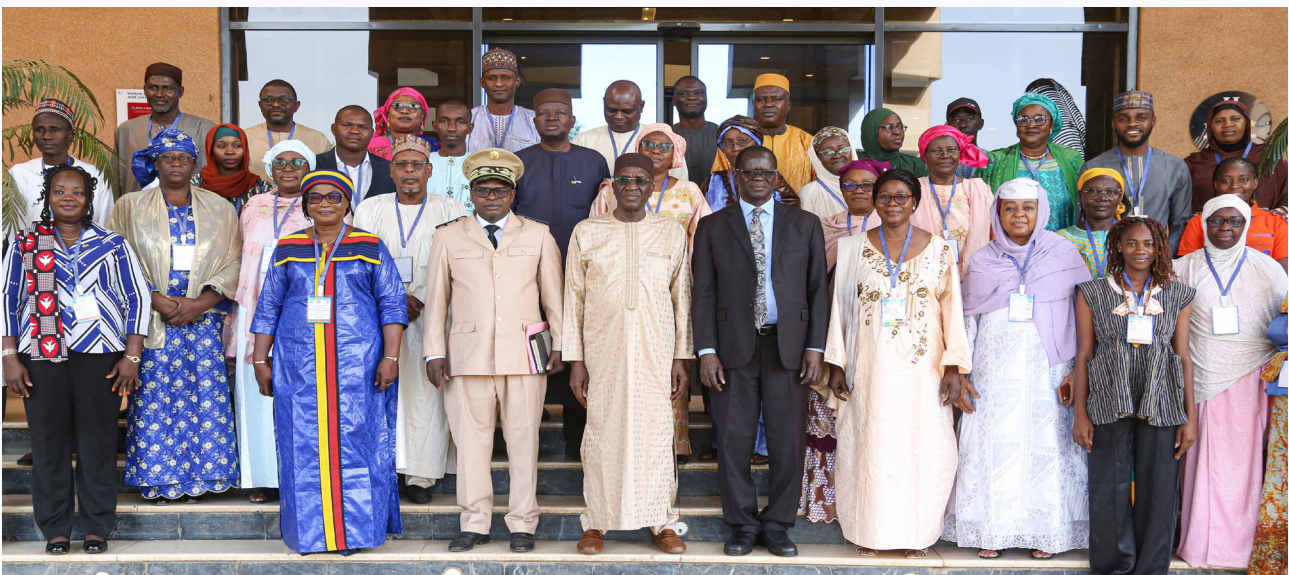
2.2.1.2 Support to implementation of System Transformation Grants

A significant part of GCI's contribution to IIEP's technical cooperation involves its engagement in the implementation of the GPE System Transformation Grants (STG), notably in ensuring that gender and equity considerations are fully integrated across all activities.



Some examples:

- Côte d'Ivoire: GCI supports the PATEB project (Programme d'Appui à la Transformation de l'Education de Base), contributing to work on human resource management, the development of an equity-based allocation formula for students entering lower secondary education, and decentralized education sector planning with a gender lens.
- Chad: GCI provided technical inputs to the System Transformation Grant (STG), ensuring that data collection, analysis, and capacity-building activities are gender-responsive.
- Senegal: GCI supported the finalization of the national Education Sector Analysis.
- Guyana: GCI contributes to the STG with a project aiming to develop a new leadership academy for district and school leaders and to improve the education system (through a funding formula for equitable allocation of resources to districts and schools, policy paper on leadership roles and responsibilities for district and school leaders.) Additionally GCI supports the Quality Assurance and Project Management Committees and the review of project documents from a gender equality perspective.



2.2.2 Expanding capacity strengthening across Africa and beyond

Country-to-country learning visit results in commitments for gender equality

UNGEI, in partnership with the Ministry of Education of Mali, convened a country-to-country learning visit on Gender-Responsive Education Planning in Bamako. For the first time in GCI's history, country delegations were invited for a week of on-site learning within a partner country's Ministry of Education. The activity brought together 40 participants, including government officials, civil society partners and young feminist leaders, from Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad. The visit resulted in concrete commitments to strengthen regional cooperation, improve accountability in education policies, and institutionalize meaningful partnerships with young gender experts. The strong political commitment demonstrated by the Malian authorities, reaffirmed through a high-level dialogue with the Minister of Education, reflects a clear determination to translate the Freetown Manifesto commitments into concrete and measurable action.

Integrating Gender Equality into Education in Democratic Republic of Congo

This year GCI has developed a new capacity-strengthening relationship with the Ministry of Education in partnership with UNESCO to strengthen the capacity of the Congolese education system to consistently and sustainably integrate gender considerations into educational planning, teacher training, and pedagogical tools. The first workshop took place in-person in early December 2025 with 26 education officials from six of the country's 26 education provinces. Further results will be available in 2026.

Supporting girls and young women in Madagascar and Togo

The African Union-CIEFFA, with the technical support of UNESCO-IIEP through GCI, delivered two workshops on Gender-Transformative Education Planning for AU-CIEFFA focal points. This activity is part of the World Bank's EAGER programme, implemented by AU-CIEFFA, which aims to support girls and young women by transforming policies, institutions, and social norms, particularly in the education sector. It is aligned with the joint roadmap developed in 2024 between AU-CIEFFA and IIEP, and follows several joint activities with AU-CIEFFA: the Pan-African Conference on Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (2024) and the Continental Report on Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (2024), co-produced by IIEP and CIEFFA (2024–2025).

The first workshop took place in Madagascar in June 2025 and trained 37 participants on the concepts, tools, and strategies for integrating gender into education planning. The agenda covered the foundations of gender-transformative education planning, tools and methodologies for analyzing gender disparities,

mainstreaming gender in education plans and policies, gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and monitoring and evaluation.

The second workshop was held in Togo in November 2025 with 23 participants from the ministries of education and gender equality of Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Algeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Chad, Tunisia, and Mauritania. Similar topics were covered, with an additional focus on the exchange of good practice, given the wide range of countries represented. Again, the group exercises were much appreciated, giving rise to rich and well-argued debate which illustrated the participants' ability to link analysis, planning, and budgeting.



“Thanks to this training, I feel equipped to inspire my colleagues and my students. The WhatsApp group is already helping us share our successes and challenges every day.”

- Fatoumata Diallo, Teacher, Sikasso

“I am strongly committed to supporting our women teachers so that they have the necessary skills to become leaders capable of transforming their environment, as well as our education system, and to driving a radical transformation where girls have not only the right to continue their studies but also to become change makers for development.”

- Issoufi Harber Toure, Director of Basic Education, MoE Mali

Training women school leaders in Mali

UNGEI, UNICEF Mali, Gender At Work and the Ministry of Education conducted a four-day training of trainers on Gender-Transformative Leadership for women teachers and school leaders. This new training aims at supporting women teachers to grow into school leadership positions and promote gender equality in their schools. It responds to the underrepresentation of women in school leadership in Mali, as well as evidence from the WILL research that schools led by women have better learning outcomes and wellbeing for children (UNICEF, 2022).

“Now I understand that it is important to ensure that the gender dimension is better taken into account in the recruitment practices of our Ministry. This goes beyond simply recruiting women. We also need to ensure that women are represented at every level.”

- HR Director, Ministry of Education, Senegal

The training shows the Ministry's strong commitment to supporting women leadership in education. The training brought together 28 women teachers and school leaders from the Kayes and Sikasso regions, and young feminists from GCI's Youth Coalition for Gender Equality in Education. They now constitute a pool of trainers who will roll out the training to women teachers in Sikasso and Kayes in the coming months.

Senegal's MOE Directors train in Gender-Transformative Leadership

UNGEI and UNICEF Senegal organized a training on Gender-Transformative Leadership for 40 senior decision makers within the Ministry of Education. The training focused on strengthening knowledge and leadership skills for advancing gender equality in the education system. In 2026 UNGEI and UNICEF will organize a follow-up session with the same participants, to allow them to share experiences from the implementation of their commitments. The HR Director requested GCI's additional support to ensure the department's recruitment and promotion practices become fully gender-transformative.

'Building a Gender-Transformative School' with Global School Leaders

As part of GCI's work on women leadership in education, UNGEI joined Global School Leaders for a virtual workshop on 'how to build a Gender-Transformative School'. 20 women school leaders from around the world came together to analyze gender barriers in education

and share good practices on how to tackle them in their schools. They discussed how they can use feminist school leadership approaches in their contexts and developed personal action plans to make their schools gender-transformative.



New online course on Gender-Responsive Education Planning launched

This year IIEP developed a new French language online course 'Planification et Politiques Educatives Transformatrices de Genre' (PETG), an evolution of the previous Short Course in Gender Responsive Education Sector Planning, which was developed and tested during the first phase of GCI. Organised in 4 modules across 10 weeks, the PETG is a more in-depth course covering analysis, planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation through the ambitious lens of gender transformative education.

“Senegal's endorsement of the Freetown Manifesto is a decisive turning point for girls' education in Senegal and beyond, placing their right to education at the heart of national and international priorities.”

- Moustapha Mamba Guirassy, Minister of Education, Senegal



Using practical examples, the course requires participants to complete a range of individual and group activities to apply and demonstrate their learning. Integrated into the IIEP global training offer, the course awards students IIEP micro-credits on completion, which can be used towards a range of diplomas, enhancing its appeal.

2.3 Strengthening the Gender-Transformative Education Movement

In 2025 GCI further strengthened the Africa-wide movement for Gender-Transformative Education, welcoming new partners and deepening collaboration between GCI Alliance members. The Community of Practice on Gender-Transformative Education expanded its membership and further developed its powerful platform for learning and experience sharing. GCI also co-developed the G20 side-event 'Education for Gender Equality and Peace: Advancing Gender-Transformative Education For All', making gender-transformative education into a key G20 agenda item.

Senegal joins the Gender at the Center Initiative and endorses the Freetown Manifesto

On National Girls' Education Day, 9 January, Senegal became the 11th member of the Gender at the Centre Initiative. By endorsing the Freetown Manifesto, Senegal reaffirmed its dedication to advancing gender-transformative leadership in education. The National Girls' Education Day, organized by Senegal's Ministry of Education in coordination with GCI, UNICEF Senegal and AU-CIEFFA, brought together 2,558 people from 16 regions in Senegal. During the youth panel discussion young girls, including girls with disabilities, expressed their needs and aspirations for quality, inclusive learning opportunities. The Ministry of Education and partners positioned gender-transformative education as a key strategy to ensure safe and quality education for all girls across the country.



South Africa endorses Freetown Manifesto and puts GTE on the G20 agenda

On July 1st, 2025, South Africa's Department of Basic Education announced it was signing the Freetown Manifesto, a landmark commitment by African leaders to advance gender equality in and through their education systems, policies and budgets. The announcement was

made at the G20 Side Event, Education for Gender Equality and Peace: Advancing Gender-Transformative Education For All, held on 1 July 2025 in Durban. Under South Africa's G20 presidency, the Departments of Basic Education and Higher Education and Training, UNGEI and UNICEF South Africa brought together education ministries, civil society and youth to champion gender-transformative education (GTE) as a pathway to equality, peace, and prosperity in a dynamic day-long event. GCI learnings and best practices were highlighted throughout the event, with high level speakers from GCI partners Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso and Teenage Network (Nigeria) taking the stage to share best practices on integrating GTE through education budgets, policies and plans. The programme, opened by the South African Deputy Ministers for Basic Education and Higher Education and Training, was attended by 320+ participants including G20 country representatives.

European Parliament advocates for gender equality

On 9 April UNGEI visited the European Parliament to advocate for ambitious gender equality priorities in the next EU budget. The meeting brought together European policymakers, civil society actors, feminists and technical partners to rally support for gender equality and women's rights organizations across the world. Members of the European Parliament will now aim for the launch of a European Fund for Women's Rights Organizations. UNGEI will continue to partner with the EU to make this happen.

Feminist Network for Gender Transformative Education strengthens its regional leadership and presence

FemNet4GTE, the network of 350 organisations worldwide working to achieve gender equality in and through education, strengthened its regional network in 2025. The Africa Regional Action Workshop for FemNet4GTE, led by FAWE, Oxfam, Plan International and Usawa Agenda, brought together 81 participants from 22 African countries, including representatives from civil society, NGOs, governments, National Education Coalitions, multilaterals, academia, the African Union, Regional Economic Communities and young feminist experts. The workshop created space for a diverse range of actors to reflect critically on persistent and emerging barriers to advancing gender equality in and through education. The discussions highlighted systemic issues that continue to undermine inclusive, transformative education across the continent. As a result of the workshop, the FemNet4GTE Africa network is formally established and built a roadmap to 2030 including regional and national level advocacy actions.

Community of practice for gender transformative education

The Community of Practice in Gender Transformative Education (CPGTE) adopted a new strategy in 2025 to engage its 100+ members more deeply on specific thematic issues. The prioritised themes include: Planning for gender equality in STEM subjects, Education as a tool

to prevent gender-based violence, Positive masculinities in and through education and Strategies in education planning for reducing early pregnancies and marriage.

The CPGTE is expected to grow over the coming months through invitations to new cohorts of IIEP, UNGEI and AU CIEFFA course alumni, in particular from the new Planification et Politiques Educatives Transformatrices de Genre course and the upcoming MOOC on Gender and Education. Technical support is offered to new members as needed, so that they can familiarise themselves with the multi-language online platform and the resources on offer. Eventually, it is envisaged that the community will extend to LAC, Arab states and Asia and become a global network.

Building a collective call to action with the GCI Alliance

On 4 June 2025 the GCI Alliance organized a virtual meeting to reflect on the achievements of GCI so far and discuss ways forward for the initiative. Civil society and government partners shared their lessons learnt from implementing GCI and reflected on joint action moving forward. France, under which G7 presidency GCI was founded, emphasized the importance of the initiative and the need for continued support for its activities. The Alliance agreed on a collective call to action: to amplify the results from the external evaluation at global and regional levels (G7, G20, AU), to mobilize additional resources for the sustainability of GCI beyond 2026, and to strengthen solidarity among partners to scale gender-transformative approaches.

2.4 Catalysing Demand for Gender Equality in and through Education

In 2025 GCI continued its efforts to transform harmful gender norms and increase demand for gender equality in and through education. In Senegal GCI engaged with 360 teachers, 2700 community members and over 3400 students to end School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV). In Mali the Feminist Youth Coalition launched a digital campaign on gender stereotypes and SRGBV. This year GCI put a specific emphasis on its partnership with young feminists, launching new Feminist Youth Coalitions in Senegal and Chad and supporting them in their groundbreaking work to shift the gender dialogue within their communities. At our Feminist Youth Coalition regional meeting young leaders came together to inspire and support each other in feminist solidarity. Next year GCI will continue to grow and support this movement of young feminists across Africa.

Senegal community and school action to end School-Related Gender-Based Violence

UNICEF Senegal and UNGEI have rolled out a series of interventions to end School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) and engage communities in ensuring safe learning environments for all children. The activities were implemented in the Ziguinchor, Sédhiou, Kédougou regions and included teacher capacity development

on ending SRGBV, community dialogues and school talks on gender equality in education and protecting children against gender-based violence. A total of 360 teachers were trained. 3425 students and around 2700 community members participated in the dialogue sessions. These activities will be continued in 2026, with a specific focus on strengthening women teachers as role models and persons of trust for girls in schools.

Training youth leaders in Senegal

UNICEF Senegal and UNGEI delivered a training on gender equality for youth-led organizations in partnership with the Senegal Youth Consortium (Consortium Jeunesse Sénégal, CJS) and Generation Unlimited. A total of 60 young people participated in the training. The training strengthened the capacity of youth organizations across Senegal to (1) integrate a gender and intersectionality approach in the design, implementation and evaluation of their projects, (2) prevent and protect against sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PEAHS), and (3) promote safe, inclusive and equitable learning and work environments for young people. This activity was a first step towards the set-up of a Feminist Youth Coalition in Senegal, which will support the Ministry of Education to promote gender-transformative education and work towards the transformation of harmful gender norms.



“This training is a turning point for us as changemakers. It has been decisive in helping us understand how digital advocacy works and how we can use it to drive social change.” - Sira Séjourner Touré, young feminist, Mali

Launching a youth-led digital campaign to end School-Related Gender-Based Violence in Mali

With support from UNGEI and UNICEF Mali, GCI's Youth Coalition for Gender Equality in Education in Mali conducted a [U-report survey](#) which showed alarming results. Two in three young people say they have experienced or witnessed gender-based violence in school, and half of respondents don't know how to report SRGBV. In response, UNGEI and UNICEF Mali decided to support a youth-led campaign to promote safe and inclusive education for all. The campaign includes training for digital advocacy against SRGBV for



youth activists. With 20,682 views and 1900 interactions to date, it has already reached a large number of young people, teachers and community members.

Mali's Youth Coalition trains young people on SRGBV

As part of its digital campaign against SRGBV, and with support from UNGEI, the Mali Youth Coalition for Gender Equality in Education organized two thematic webinars: Understanding and Deconstructing Gender-Based Violence in Schools (23 July) and GBV in Schools: What Impact on Girls' Education? (30 July). The online events brought together approximately 60 young people and gender experts from Mali and the sub-region. The discussions strengthened participants' understanding of the different forms of school-related gender-based violence and examined their direct impact on girls' education.

Cross-country youth coalitions meet and share

Ahead of the West and Central Africa Girls Summit in Dakar, UNGEI organized a regional meeting of the GCI Feminist Youth Coalitions for Gender-Transformative Education. Representatives from the Mali, Niger and Nigeria coalitions came together with young feminists from Senegal to share experiences in advancing gender equality in education, discuss challenges and opportunities, and support each other in their common fight for gender equality.

GCI supports the WCA Girls Summit

UNGEI participated in the West and Central Africa Girls Summit in Dakar, organized by UNICEF and Senegal's Ministry of Family, Social Affairs and Solidarities. The Summit aimed to place girls' voices at the heart of public policy and accelerate the implementation of commitments to their rights, thirty years after the Beijing Declaration. The event brought together 100 girls from 24 African countries, as well as representatives from

governments, regional organizations, and technical partners. UNGEI partnered with young feminists from GCI countries to call for Gender-Transformative Education as a key strategy to promote adolescent girls' rights. The summit resulted in the Dakar Declaration, calling for girls to be at the center of political decision making.

Bringing together young feminists, civil society and MOE in Chad

Within the framework of the GPE Gender Equality Technical Assistance Initiative, UNGEI organized a workshop for civil society and young feminists in Chad on Gender-Transformative Education. The workshop brought together 29 participants, including members of the Coalition of Civil Society Organizations for Education Development in Chad, young activists, representatives from the Children's Parliament, and officials from the Ministry of Education. The session fostered mutual trust between CSOs and the Ministry and strengthened their joint commitment to promoting gender-transformative education. It also laid the groundwork for the creation of a Feminist Youth Coalition in Chad, which will join the group of GCI youth coalitions and will contribute to the sustainability of GCI's achievements in Chad.



CHAPTER 3: LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026

In 2026 GCI will expand its activities to new countries, grow the GCI movement and start to pave the way for continued investments in GCI's whole-system model beyond 2026. Building on the strong results from the Gender Equality TAI pilot, GPE has approved a USD 2 million scale-up phase of the initiative for 2026-2027. This next phase will extend technical assistance to two additional countries, Jordan and Pakistan (Balochistan), bringing GCI beyond Africa. It will also include the development of a dedicated learning component to capture, systematize, and disseminate good practices from GPE partner countries through case studies, peer-learning exchanges, and knowledge products. This expanded phase will reinforce GCI's role as a key technical partner in advancing gender-transformative education systems globally.

Through an innovative partnership with Education Cannot Wait (ECW), GCI will engage education-in-emergencies actors throughout its activities and integrate a crisis and resilience lens in its support to countries. In 2026 a crisis-sensitive version of the GES Toolkit will be piloted in a series of countries with Multi-Year Resilience Plans (MYRPs).

GCI will continue to be at the forefront of the investments in women in education leadership. The WiLL research project will be publishing three research studies: 1) an analysis of the quantitative and qualitative WiLL studies in Benin and Madagascar; 2) a comparative analysis of all the countries in the project; 3) an exploratory study of women's access to and success in learning leadership roles in Côte d'Ivoire. Gender-Transformative Leadership support will be provided to women teachers and school leaders in Mali and Chad. GCI will also create regional learning and networking opportunities for women leaders across GCI countries.

The intergenerational partnership with young feminists will be continued and scaled up in 2026. The new Feminist Youth Coalitions in Chad and Senegal will be supported to develop their advocacy and community engagement activities, and opportunities will be created for young feminists from across GCI countries to come together and learn from each other.

FemNet4GTE Africa will be involved in key advocacy campaigns throughout 2026, including through the Gender is my Agenda campaign (GIMAC), the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), Women Deliver and the FAWE International Girls' Education Conference.

A key element of the GCI approach is cross-country learning and movement building. This will continue to

take a central place in the GCI offer in 2026, with a planned in-person GCI Alliance meeting, a second country-to-country learning visit and various virtual exchange events. The Community of Practice on Gender-Transformative Education will welcome new members and offer new learning opportunities. A new French language MOOC (Massive Online Open Course) in Education and Gender will be launched by IIEP-UNESCO in 2026, in partnership with AFD, AU CIEFFA and UNESCO. The course will introduce participants to key concepts and terminology around gender equality in and through education, before taking them on a journey through data collection and analysis, planning and delivery, while also addressing themes such as intersectionality and resistance.

GCI plans to engage with AU-CIEFFA on the second Pan-African Conference on Girls' and Women's Education (PANCOGED2), planned for June 2026. GCI will also support France during its G7 presidency to amplify the lessons learnt from GCI and rally more support for gender-transformative education.

PUBLICATIONS

[Women school leaders driving gender-transformative education \(blog\)](#)

[Mali 2025 GES assessment](#)

[Advancing Gender Equality through Education: a research agenda for Gender-Transformative Education](#)

[Gender-Transformative Education: A Multiple-Impact Investment in a Resource-Constrained World](#)

[La Direction d'école primaire au Bénin : une analyse institutionnelle sensible au genre](#)

[Defending Gender Equality in Education - an Urgent Agenda and Call to Action \(blog\)](#)

[Launch of phase 3 of the WiLL-AGREE project in Madagascar \(GPE News\)](#)

[External Strategic Evaluation of Phase 1 of the Gender at the Centre Initiative \(GCI\)](#)

[Gender-Responsive Education Sector Planning: AU CIEFFA Trains 2nd Cohort of Gender and Education Experts in Lomé \(AU CIEFFA News\)](#)

[Multisector impacts and economic returns of Gender-Transformative Education](#)

[Beyond RCTS: Diversifying rigorous approaches to measure gender norm change in education](#)

[Gender-Transformative Education: transitioning young women to work](#)

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[Gender at the Center Initiative \(UNGEI\)](#)

[Gender at the Center Initiative \(IIEP-UNESCO\)](#)

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