



TECHNICAL BRIEF

GENDER-SENSITIVE POLICIES REQUIRE ENGAGEMENT FROM LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS AND SCHOOL PERSONNEL

Successful and sustainable gender sensitive policies that promote equity require commitment from all stakeholders and a thorough understanding of country context. Often, policies exist at the national level, but local school personnel, parents, caregivers, and community members aren't aware of them. The lack of awareness means these community members cannot know how to support the policies. While

policies that exist nationally might aim to address gender inequality; without commitment by all stakeholder levels in the education ecosystem, there is no guarantee that policies created during a project will be sustained. STEP-UP Zambia, a USAID-funded education project, first assessed existing policies that could play a part in gender sensitive programming. They then worked with local institutions, stakeholders, and government counterparts to assess the best policy solutions to challenges of gender inequality and gender norms in schools. They conducted research on gender parity, perceptions of boys and girls in the classroom, and children's experiences in schools. Based on the research and analysis, they provided recommendations to the Ministry of General Education (MOGE) to improve access to education, increase student retention, and improve student performance. The project implemented an approach that focused on examining the broader context and using that information to identify pre-existing entry points for protective measures — ensuring stakeholder ownership and sustainable, effective, and relevant solutions.

ABOUT CHEMONICS

Founded in 1975, Chemonics is one of the world's leading international development consulting firms. In 70 countries around the globe today, our network of approximately 4,000 specialists pursue a higher standard in development every day to help clients, partners, and beneficiaries achieve results.



CONDUCTING AN OVERALL ANALYSIS OF EXISTING POLICY

An overall analysis of country context and existing policy has proven to be key to creating responsive gender programming throughout Chemonics education projects. In Zambia, education policies like the MOGE's Educating our Future, Sixth National Development Plan (GRZ, 2011), the National Implementation Framework from the MOGE in 2012, and the Curriculum Framework (CDC, 2012) all provide context and base level protections and guidelines for education standards in Zambia. Chemonics is implementing the *Accès, Lecture, Redevabilité et Rétention* project (ACCELERE!) in the DRC, and a recently completed annual update to the Gender Analysis and Implementation Strategy stated that the first step in implementing gender-responsive projects is understanding “local beliefs, cultural norms, and the context

into which programs are designed.” Utilizing existing policies related to gender and education — including the National Policy on Gender, the National Strategy on Gender Based Violence, the DRC Family Code of 1981, the report on the State of Education in the DRC, and the Interim Plan of Education — ACCELERE! designed a gender-responsive project implementation strategy grounded in the local context. Establishing a foundation for what exists, and identifying gaps, is essential when working towards sustainable gender integration programming.

ENGAGING LOCAL PARTNERS AND RESEARCHERS

Engaging local partners, school personnel, and existing programs in the research to find responsive policy solutions ensures effective implementation. In both Zambia and the DRC, to provide relevant gender integration and recommendations, programs involved local partners to provide context and guidance to the gender analysis and implementation. To properly prioritize research goals alongside the MOGE, the STEP-UP program engaged the University of Zambia, the Zambia Institute for Special Education, and Charles Lwanga College of Education. This ensured responsiveness when recommending development of policies on a national and local level. In the DRC, the ACCELERE! program consulted other donors and implementers such as BUMI, an NGO for the protection of vulnerable children; *Réseau Femme et Développement* (REFED), the Network for Women in Development; and the department head of the Ministry of Gender, Family, and Children that also execute programs in country. The consultations were valuable for comparing methodologies and needs. Commitment, partnerships with local school personnel and organizations working in the communities, and conversations with key stakeholders affected by the policies allow communities to feel greater commitment and protection over the policy implementation and recommendations — and ensure policies will be carried out beyond the project lifecycle.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS WITH COMMITMENT AND CONTEXT

The research on both projects identified gaps that needed to be addressed through gender sensitive policies. In order to address needs at both the micro (individual, school, and community) and macro level (national level policy recommendations relating to safe schools), ACCELERE! developed an implementation strategy with clearly defined stakeholders for each recommendation. As a result, the implementation strategy provides a holistic response to gender-related barriers to education like low enrollment, completion rates, and school-related gender-based violence. The strategy also actively ensures key stakeholder engagement. Similarly, STEP-UP provided recommendations to key stakeholders to improve gender sensitivity in the classroom. These recommendations included a more equitable distribution of teachers at the district level and assigning role model teachers to provide support and encouragement to both boys and girls in schools.

Projects integrate gender sensitive programming in various ways, but without context of climate, key stakeholder participation, or knowledge of existing policies, that programming is less effective or sustainable. STEP-UP and ACCELERE! are examples of how analyzing a broad context and then diving deeper into micro level engagement with the community makes for a more successful and responsive gender implementation approach.

