

National Conference on "WHAT WORKS IN GIRLS' EDUCATION"

Breaking Barriers, Building Futures:
Evidence & Action for Girls' Education



SCAN FOR MORE
INFORMATION ON THE
CONFERENCE



1st – 3rd OCTOBER
2025

Venue: Hilton Garden Inn

(Opposite the British High Commission), Kamwokya, Kampala, Uganda



Kyambogo University
Knowledge and Skills for Service
School of Education



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Welcome Note

Dear Participants, Distinguished Guests and Colleagues,

On behalf of the Organising Team – comprising Uwezo Uganda, Kyambogo University's School of Education, the University of Cambridge's Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre, and the Uganda Chapter of the Regional Education on Learning Initiative Africa (RELI- Africa) - we warmly welcome you to the National Conference on 'What Works in Girls' Education', held under the theme 'Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: Evidence & Action for Girls' Education.'

As we gather from **1st – 3rd October 2025** at the Hilton Garden Inn Hotel in Kampala, Uganda, we are thrilled to convene policy makers, educators, students, researchers, civil society representatives, and youth advocates to spotlight barriers, share evidence-based strategies, and amplify multiple voices in advancing quality education for girls and boys.

This conference, timed ahead of the International Day of the Girl Child on 11th October, aligns with Uganda's priorities for quality education for all and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 and 5 on education and gender equality, drawing on our collective commitment to foster lifelong learning for all children irrespective of gender.

The conference program has been thoughtfully crafted from the rich abstracts received from a wide range of researchers and practitioners, featuring innovative papers, interactive workshops, and posters across eight sub-themes – from innovative pedagogies and overcoming socio-economic barriers to digital inclusion, health and well-being, policy and financing, leadership and life skills, career transitions, and data-driven interventions.

We encourage you to participate actively, think critically, and expand and deepen your network while at the Conference. We look forward to fruitful dialogues, actionable recommendations, and partnerships that will drive tangible progress in girls' education in Uganda and beyond.

Thank you for joining this important endeavour as we all work together to break barriers and create brighter futures for all our children.

Yours Sincerely,

Conference Organising Committee

CONFERENCE ORGANISING COMMITTEE			
S/N	Name	Organisation	Role
1	Dr Mary Goretti Nakabugo	Uwezo Uganda	Co-Chair
2	Assoc Prof Kasule George Wilson	Kyambogo University	Co-Chair
3	Emmy Zoomlamai Okello	FICH / RELI	Member
4	Dr John Mary Vianney Mitana	JMERC / RELI	Member
5	Prof Pauline Rose	University of Cambridge/REAL Centre	Member
6	Prof Ricardo Sabates	University of Cambridge/REAL Centre	Member
7	Prof Christopher Mugimu	Makerere University	Member & Technical Lead
8	Fatuma Wamala	Kukuza Education / RELI	Member
9	Grace Musiimire	Building Tomorrow / RELI	Member
10	Joseph Kasasa	Uwezo Uganda	Member
11	Jane Sebuyungo	STiR Education/RELI	Member
12	Sarah Kyobe	Uganda Media Centre	Member
13	Sandra Baxter	University of Cambridge/REAL Centre	Member
14	Rebecca Pagel	Uwezo Uganda	Member
15	Pius Patrick Akol	Uwezo Uganda / Independent	Member
16	Dr Elizabeth Opit	Kyambogo University / Uwezo Uganda TAC	Member
17	Faridah Nassereka	Uwezo Uganda	Member
18	Judith Nyakaisiki	Uwezo Uganda	Member
19	Dr Jimmy Luyima	Kyambogo University	Member
20	Dr Namulondo Veronica	Kyambogo University	Member
21	Vincent Kalibbala	Uwezo Uganda	Member
22	Solomon Sebule	RELI Africa	Member
23	Jennifer Sibbo	Kyambogo University	Member
24	Dr Binda Niati	University of Cambridge/REAL Centre	Member
25	Dr Bea Simpson	University of Cambridge / Oxford Policy Management (OPM)	Member

SUB COMMITTEES

Abstracts, Programme and Book of Abstracts Sub-Committee

S/N	Name	Organisation	Committee Role
1	Prof Christopher Mugimu	Makerere University	Chairperson
2	Faridah Nassereka	Uwezo Uganda	Organiser/Secretary
3	Prof Kasule George Wilson	Kyambogo University	Member
4	Dr John Mary Vianney Mitana	JMERC / RELI	Member
5	Prof Ricardo Sabates	University of Cambridge/REAL Centre	Member
6	Prof Pauline Rose	University of Cambridge/REAL Centre	Member
7	Dr Binda Niati	University of Cambridge/REAL Centre	Member
8	Dr Mary Goretti Nakabugo	Uwezo Uganda	Member

Budget and Logistics Sub-Committee

S/N	Name	Organisation	Committee Role
1	Dr Elizabeth Opit	Uwezo Uganda Technical Advisory / Kyambogo University	Chairperson
2	Joseph Kasasa	Uwezo Uganda	Organiser/ Secretary
3	Fatuma Wamala	Kukuza Education / RELI	Member
4	Dr Jimmy Luyima	Kyambogo University	Member
5	Judith Nyakaisiki	Uwezo Uganda	Member
6	Jane Sebuyungo	STiR Education/RELI	Member

Communication, Engagement and Branding Sub-Committee

S/N	Name	Organisation	Committee Role
1	Emmy Zoomlamai Okello	FICH / RELI	Chairperson
2	Judith Nyakaisiki	Uwezo Uganda	Organiser / Secretary
3	Grace Musiimire	Building Tomorrow / RELI	Member
4	Sarah Kyobe	Uganda Media Centre	Member
5	Sandra Baxter	University of Cambridge/REAL Centre	Member
6	Solomon Sebule	RELI Africa	Member
7	Jennifer Sibo	Kyambogo University	Member

Conference Evaluation/Feedback and Publications Sub-Committee

S/N	Name	Organisation	Conference Role
1	Rebecca Pagel	Uwezo Uganda	Chairperson
2	Vincent Kalibbala	Uwezo Uganda	Organiser/Secretary
3	Pius Patrick Akol	Uwezo Uganda / Independent	Member
4	Dr Namulondo Veronica	Kyambogo University	Member
5	Dr Christopher Mugimu	Makerere University	Member
6	Dr Binda Niati	University of Cambridge/REAL Centre	Member
7	Dr Bea Simpson	University of Cambridge / Oxford Policy Management (OPM)	Member

Background to the Conference and Context

Education is a fundamental human right and a powerful catalyst to personal, social and economic growth. Despite global progress, girls in Uganda and Sub-Saharan Africa in general, face significant barriers to education, including poverty, cultural norms, child marriage, gender inequality, and unsafe social and school environment. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated these challenges, with 354,736 teenage pregnancies reported in Uganda in 2020, and 196,499 in the first half of 2021 ([Songa, 2021](#)), exposing girls to risks like sexual violence, exploitation and early marriage. Uganda continues to face significant challenges with alarmingly high rates of teenage pregnancies and child marriages, which hinders the country's social and economic development. [United Nations Population Fund \(2022\)](#) estimates that one in four (25 percent) girls in Uganda aged 15-19 years have had a child or are pregnant and that 34 percent of Ugandan girls are married by 18 years. Worldwide, [UNESCO \(2024\)](#) reports that over 130 million girls, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, remain out of school, despite girls' education being a cost-effective tool for reducing poverty, improving health, improving gender equality and fostering sustainable development.

In Uganda, though more girls than boys enroll in and complete primary education, with 52.5% of girls sitting for the 2024 Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE), boys outperform girls in top grades, with 12.9% of boys achieving Division One compared to 9.46% of girls, and a higher percentage of girls (8.75%) failing the exams compared to boys (7.5%) ([UNEB, 2024a](#)).

At lower secondary level, the 2024 Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) results show girls excelling in subjects like English and Art but trailing boys in sciences and mathematics ([UNEB, 2024b](#)). Similarly, at the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education level, girls outperform boys in arts and Biology but lag in mathematics and all other science subjects (New Vision, March 7, 2024).

In higher and tertiary education, female enrollment and graduation rates are arising. At Makerere University, women accounted for 53% of graduates in 2024 and 2025, up from 50.5% in 2020 ([Muvunyi & Jjumba, 2025](#)). However, girls remain underrepresented in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields, with significantly lower enrollment in programs like Medicine, Pharmacy and Electrical Engineering compared to humanities, where female enrollment reaches up to 70% in some programs. This persistent gender gap in STEM highlights the need for targeted interventions.

Uwezo Uganda's 2024 learning assessment reveals that while girls and boys perform similarly in foundational literacy and numeracy, girls in northern Uganda underperform compared to boys and their peers in other regions ([Uwezo Uganda, 2024](#)), a trend consistent with previous assessments ([2018, 2021](#)). Economic, social and cultural factors likely contribute to these disparities, necessitating localised evidence to inform solutions.

To contribute to addressing these challenges, Uwezo Uganda, Kyambogo University's School of Education, the University of Cambridge's Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre and RELI-Africa (Uganda Chapter), have convened this Girls' Education National Conference on 1st-3rd October 2025, to share evidence and strategies for improving education outcomes for all children, with a special focus on girls. The conference is taking place ahead of the 2025 International Day of the Girl Child that will take place on 11th October 2025. While national in scope, the conference holds regional and global relevance, aligning with [Uwezo Uganda's strategy 2025-2028](#) to promote support for quality education for all, as well as Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 (Quality Education) and 5 (Gender Equality). It provides an important platform to accelerate girls' education and foster quality, lifelong learning opportunities for all children.

Conference Objectives

The conference seeks to achieve **five** objectives, namely;

1. To create a platform for key stakeholders in education to spotlight issues and deepen understanding of existing barriers and enablers to girls' education.
2. To foster dialogue on effective contextualised practices for implementing evidence-based, innovative, and sustainable solutions to improve girls' education in Uganda and the East African region.
3. To generate tangible recommendations and actionable steps to address gender-based barriers in education in Uganda and the East African region.
4. To amplify the voices of girls and organisations championing girl education in Uganda
5. To document what works in girls' education, which could also work to improve all children's learning outcomes, boys and girls, irrespective of gender

Conference Sub-Themes

During the three days, individuals undertaking research or interventions relevant to girls' education in Uganda and beyond will deliver paper / workshop / poster presentation at the conference. Below are the sub-themes, all relevant to the conference theme, "Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: Evidence & Action for Girls' Education", under which presentations will be delivered:

1. **Innovative Pedagogies, Assessments and Learning Approaches for Girls:** This sub-theme focuses on evidence-based teaching, learning and assessment methods/environments that enhance girls' [and boys'] educational outcomes. Paper submissions may explore gender-responsive pedagogies, STEM education for girls, digital learning tools, and inclusive classroom practices that address cultural and social barriers to girls' academic success.
2. **Overcoming Socio-economic and Cultural Barriers:** This sub-theme examines strategies to address systemic obstacles such as poverty, early marriage, gender-based violence, and cultural norms that limit girls' access to education and and/or retention in school. Papers may highlight successful interventions, community engagement models, or policy frameworks that empower girls to stay in school and thrive.
3. **Technology and Digital Inclusion for Girls' Education:** This sub-theme explores the role of technology in expanding access to education for girls, particularly in hard-to-reach or remote areas. Submissions may cover e-learning platforms, mobile education solutions, digital literacy programs, or initiatives to close the gender digital divide.
4. **Health, Well-being, and Education for Girls:** This sub-theme addresses the intersection of girls' health, mental well-being, and educational attainment. Papers may relate to programs tackling issues like menstrual health management, nutrition, mental health support, or safe school environments that enable girls to focus on learning.
5. **Policy and Financing for Gender Equity in Education:** This sub-theme focuses on policies and funding mechanisms that promote equitable access to education for girls. Submissions may analyse national education policies, public-private partnerships, scholarship programs or cost-effective interventions that scale up girls' education.
6. **Empowering Girls through Leadership and Life Skills:** This sub-theme highlights programs that equip girls with leadership, decision-making and life skills to navigate educational and professional pathways. Papers may explore mentorship initiatives, extracurricular programs, or curricula that foster confidence and agency in girls.
7. **Transitioning to Work; Preparing Girls for Future Careers:** This sub-theme examines how education systems prepare girls for economic opportunities and career success. Submissions may cover vocational training, entrepreneurship programs, career counselling, or partnerships with industries to align education with labour market needs.
8. **Data and Evidence Generation for Informing Interventions or Scaling Impact:** This sub-theme emphasises the role of research, data generation and evaluation in designing effective interventions for girls' education. Papers may present rigorous studies, learning assessments, impact evaluations, or innovative methodologies to measure and scale what works in girls' education.

These sub-themes are designed to align with the conference theme, encouraging presenters to tackle and share issues that combine evidences, practical solutions, and forward-looking strategies employed to advance girls' education in Uganda and globally.

Target Audience

The conference brings together policymakers, educators/teachers, development partners, independent and university-based researchers, students, civil society, and youth advocates to share evidence-based solutions, foster partnerships, and commit to actionable strategies for advancing girls' education.

Mode of presentation

During the 3-day conference, 130 papers, 12 workshops, 18 posters, three keynote addresses, three panel discussions and remarks by three system actors relevant to the conference theme, will be delivered.

We invite you to listen attentively, participate actively in the various sessions outlined in the program and share your valuation insights. Together, let's continue to collaborate on innovative strategies to ensure that every child—girls and boys alike—receives the full benefits of the education (formal or non-formal) our systems can provide.

National Conference on 'What Works in Girls' Education', 1-3 October 2025

Meet the Conference Guests of Honour for Each Day

DAY ONE: 1ST October 2025



Hon. Dr. Joyce Moriku Kaducu, PhD

Minister of State for Education & Sports (Primary Education) at the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), Republic of Uganda

Woman Member of Parliament, Moyo District

DAY TWO: 2nd October 2025



Hon. James Kubeketerya

Chairperson, Parliamentary Committee on Education and Sports, Parliament of Uganda

Member of Parliament (MP) for Bunya East constituency, Mayuge District

DAY THREE: 3rd October 2025



Dr Kedrace Turyagyenda

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education & Sports (MoES), Republic of Uganda

Meet the Keynote Speakers for Each Day

KEYNOTE SPEAKER /ADDRESS DAY 1: 1st October 2025



Rosette Nyanzi

Rosette Nyanzi is a Social Development Specialist with over 17 years' experience. She works with the Ministry of Education and Sports as the Gender Technical Advisor. Rosette has spearheaded a number of programmes and initiatives in education, in particular: development and implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Girls Education 2014-2019; the Gender and Violence against children Strategic Plan, the National Strategic Plan and menstrual health and hygiene initiatives among others. Rosette holds a Master's Degree in Development studies, a post Graduate Diploma in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, a Post Graduate in Gender Responsive Education Planning

Keynote Address: *The State of Girls' Education in Uganda*

Girls' education is a powerful driver of individual and national development, yet many girls in Uganda face barriers such as poverty, early pregnancy, gender-based violence, and cultural norms that limit their access and retention in school. This paper highlights evidence-based strategies that support girls' learning and empowerment.

Uganda has made progress through policies like the Gender in Education Policy, the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy, and re-entry guidelines for child mothers. Complementing these, interventions such as life-skills programs, mentorship and role models, school-based violence prevention, provision of sanitary pads, cash support schemes, and STEM initiatives like Girls Can Code and Mathematics Olympiads have proven effective in improving enrolment, retention, and learning outcomes.

The paper emphasises that policies alone are insufficient; sustained progress requires resources, partnerships, and data-driven action. Collaboration among government, civil society, academia, and development partners is critical. Investing in girls' education is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic pathway to economic growth, social equity, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER /ADDRESS DAY 2: 2nd October 2025



Dr Manos Antoninis

Director, Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR), UNESCO, a position he has held since 2017 after previously overseeing the report's monitoring section. He also represents the GEMR team in the Education Data and Statistics Commission, where he also serves as Co-chair. Before joining UNESCO, Manos spent a decade working on public finance, monitoring and evaluation in education projects across countries like Bangladesh, China, Nigeria, Pakistan and Indonesia. He holds a Phd in Economics from the University of Oxford.

Keynote title: *Regional and global evidence on girls' education*

This presentation will review global and African progress on gender parity in education for SDG 4 targets. Globally, girls and young women's participation in education at different levels continues to grow. This long-term trend is going to continue, helping reverse decades of discrimination. But there is a handful of countries where such discrimination against girls continues to persist. Moreover, parity is but one part of the effort for gender equality in and through education. With gender gaps in a wide range of social and economic outcomes, the role that education can play in that respect needs to be constantly reassessed and reconsidered.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER /ADDRESS DAY 3: 3rd October 2025**Prof Rose Pauline, OBE**

Professor of International Education at the University of Cambridge, where she is the Director of the Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre in the Faculty of Education. Her work focuses on addressing educational inequalities, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, and she has extensive experience collaborating with governments, international organisations, and NGOs to provide evidence-based policy advice for achieving quality and inclusive education for all.

Keynote title: *Five Years to Go: Accelerating Progress towards Gender Equality in and through Education*

With just five years remaining to the Sustainable Development Goal deadline, this presentation reflects on the progress made in advancing girls' education, while also confronting the persistent barriers that prevent gender equality. It explores what is needed to keep the world on track, especially for the most marginalised girls who face

multiple and intersecting challenges. The presentation highlights the importance of identifying approaches that are scalable, including on transforming the harmful gender norms that continue to limit girls' opportunities. It calls for a bold shift beyond parity, ensuring that every girl can thrive in a more just and inclusive society.

Conference Program

Wednesday, 1st October 2025 Theme: Understanding Evidence and Outstanding Challenges Objective: Set the stage with data, policy insights, and systemic barriers MCs: Jane Sebuyungo (STiR Education/RELI Uganda) and Dr Jimmy Luyima (Kyambogo University)		
Time	Session Details	Chair / Responsibility
7:00-8:00 AM	Arrival, Registration, Breakfast & Networking	Secretariat & Logistics Sub - committee
8.00 -9.00 AM	SESSION 1: PARALLEL SESSIONS MEETING ROOM 3: OVERCOMING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BARRIERS - REFUGEE & DISABILITY T209: Girl Child's Perceptions on Factors Impeding Completion of Primary Education Cycle in Selected Primary Schools in Oyam District, Uganda • Ongom Dick & Kasule George Wilson, Kyambogo University, Uganda T234: "TUSEME" - Amplifying the Voices of Girls in Education • Martin Okhako, Gloria Auma, & Joseph Adiamo, FAWE, Kenya T235: Beyond the School 'Gate': Understanding Relational Violence and Disability as Barriers to Girls' Education • Rehema Namaganda, Jane Nansamba, Femke Bannink Mbazzi, Disability Research Group, Medical Research Council/ Uganda Virus Research Institute & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine Uganda Research Unit, Uganda.	Chair: G. W. Kasule
	MEETING ROOM 201: EMPOWER GIRLS THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND LIFE SKILLS T601: The Impact of the Social Survival Skills Training on Girls' Education: Lessons from MEMPROW, Uganda • Sharon Ocola Katho, Agnes Ttiisa, & Atim Hope, MEMPROW, Uganda T602: Crochet, Courage, and Civic Voices: Trauma-Informed Leadership and Life Skills for Girls with Disabilities in Nairobi • Albright Alitsi, Lola Crocket Organisation, Kenya T112: Implementation of Gender-Responsive Pedagogy in the Era of Male Dominance: Experience from Secondary Schools in the West Nile Region • Polycarp Omara, & Jennifer Aparo, Muni University, Uganda	Chair: Ricardo Sabates

	MEETING ROOM 401: POLICY & FINANCING T230: Girls' Education: Safety Provisions, a Precursor to Re-dress Gender Imbalances in Education • Brenda Piloya, Christine Onen, Robert Kakaire, & Dorothy Nabwire, War Child Canada, Uganda. T505: Community and National Advocacy Strategies Advancing Girls' Education in Uganda: Evidence and Lessons from JFCU • Tukwasibwe Sandra; Lindsey Namara, Uganda Management Institute, Uganda T509: Linking Policy and Financing Framework for Improving Gender Equity in Education • Nahabwe Judith, Kabale University, Uganda	Chair: Christopher B. Mugimu
	GARDEN HALL: EMPOWERMENT OF GIRLS THROUGH DIGITAL PROVISIONS WORKSHOP 1 W107: Empowering Girls' Literacy: Breaking Barriers, Building Futures Through Innovative Local Materials, Digital Platforms and Online Resources • Onyang Alex, Kyambogo University, Uganda	Chair: Rebecca Pagel
	ROOFTOP: POLICY & FINANCING WORKSHOP 2 W108: Mentoring Plus Cash: An Integrated Model to Overcome Barriers in Girls' Education • Joyce Atimango Okker, Victor Arabera, Eunice Achola, Trailblazers Mentoring Foundation, Uganda	Chair: Diana Amable
9:15 AM – 10:30 AM	SESSION 2: PARALLEL SESSIONS	
	MEETING ROOM 3: OVERCOMING SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS - REINTEGRATION OF YOUNG WOMEN/MOTHERS T123: Empowering Adolescent Mothers Through School Re-entry Guidelines in Adjumani District • Susan Opok Tumusiime, FAWE Uganda, • Ogara Collin • Nancy Asibaziyo • Auma Gloria • Adima Joseph T202: Advocacy for Second Chance Education for Child Mothers: Experience from “hervoice” Project • Atim Hope, MEMPROW, Uganda. • Patience Kwiocwiny • Sharon Ochola Katho T229: Exploring the Role of School Gender Clubs in Re-shaping Harmful Gender Norms in Afar Ethiopia • Fitsum Workneh, Yitagesu Gebeyehu, Nicola Jones, Kefyalew Endale, & Workneh Yadete, GAGE, Ethiopia.	Chair: Bea Simpson

	MEETING ROOM 201: OVERCOMING SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS (COMMUNITY-LED). T520: Enhancing Public Policy Innovations for Inclusive Financing with a Gender Equity Lens in Education for All Girls in Uganda • Celia Amany, & Wilson Okaka, Kyambogo University, Uganda. T204: Breaking the Silence – A Practical Model to Address Sexual Violence and Empower Girls' Education in Luwero District, Uganda • Ssesanga Micheal, CODI, Uganda. T215: Overcoming Socio-economic and Cultural Barriers to Promote Girls' Education in Ethiopia: Amhara Region in Focus [Online] • Dessalegn Yeshambel Wassie, Debre Markos University, Ethiopia. T217: Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: Evidence and Action for Girls' Education • Ndabaga Eugene, University of Rwanda, Rwanda.	Chair: JVM Mitana
	MEETING ROOM 401: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES - EVIDENCE-BASED TEACHING T107: Teaching Without Limits: Innovative Paths to Power Girls' Learning • Apio Linda, Kyambogo University, Uganda. T103: Integrating wisdom Pedagogy into Curriculum Reforms: A Strategic Approach to Advancing Quality Education and Facilitating the Learning of Innovative Behavior to uplift the Aspirations of the Girl Child • Miir Farooq, Islamic University in Uganda, Uganda. T104: Enhancing Girls' Learning Outcomes through Ability-Focused Personalized Learning in Rural Kenyan Junior Schools • Rachel Celine Ntinyari, Aga Khan University, Kenya. T106: Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: Evidence & Action for Girls' Education Fostering Gender Equity Through Innovative Pedagogies for Girls' Education in Uganda • Jennifer Nyangoma Magezi, PAK Trinity Memorial Institute of Nursing and Midwifery, Uganda.	Chair: Emmy Zoomlamai
	GARDEN HALL 1: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES - STEM T105: Empowering Girls through STEM Training: Lessons from the Fundi Girls' Program • Obote Geoffrey, and Mary Helda Akong Fundi Bots, Uganda T117: Pedagogy, Gender and STEM in Higher Education: Evidence from a Scoping Review in Sub-Saharan Africa • Simpson Zach, University of Johannesburg, RSA. • Matemba Esther, Curtin University, Perth, Australia. • Helem Iglis, University of Pretoria, South Africa. • Baatseba Ramushu, University of Johannesburg, RSA. • Lucy Wakiaga, African Population Health Research Center (APHRC), Nairobi, Kenya. T125: Mitigating Stereotypes and Equipping with Skills: Methods for Advancing the Involvement of Girls in STEM Education in Uganda • Isabairawo Joshua, Josh Educational Services, Uganda.	Chair: Elizabeth Opit

	ROOFTOP: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES -TEACHER PROVISION & TRAINING WORKSHOP 3 W106: Learn to Learn: Kimanya Ngeyo's Approach to Closing Students' Learning Gaps Juliet Asekenye, Acam Nawruz, & Lyndah Mwangi, Kimanya Ngeyo, Uganda.	Chair: Jane Sebuyungo
10:30 AM – 11:00 AM	MORNING TEA/COFFEE	Secretariat & Logistics Sub- committee
11:00 AM – 1:00 PM	SESSION 3: PLENARY: OFFICIAL CONFERENCE OPENING VENUE: MEETING ROOM 3	
11:00 AM- 11:30 AM	Setting the scene Opening prayer Anthems (Uganda, East Africa) Entertainment Introduction, Conference Overview and Messages of Goodwill from the Conference Partners - Mary Goretti Nakabugo (Executive Director Uwezo Uganda) - Emmy Zoomlamai Okello (RELI Country Lead) - George Wilson Kasule (Kyambogo University - Dean, School of Education) - Ricardo Sabates (Cambridge University, REAL Centre)	MCs
11:30 AM – 12:00 PM	KEYNOTE ADDRESS 1: <i>The State of Girls' Education in Uganda</i> (Rosette Nyanzi, Gender Technical Advisor and Head of the Gender Unit, Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), Uganda)	JW Kasule
12:00-12:30 PM	PANEL DISCUSSION and Q&A - Hon Margaret N Rwabushaija, Parliament of Uganda - Frances Atima, Director, Directorate of Education Standards - Jackline Nampijja, Guild President, Muteesa I Royal University - Raymond Ombere, Chairperson, NAMDEO	MG Nakabugo
12:30 – 1:00 PM	- Remarks by the Director, Basic& Secondary Education, Ministry of Education and Sports, Dr Cleophus Mugenyi Official opening of the conference by the Minister of State for Primary Education, Hon Dr. Joyce Moriku Kaducu	MCs
1:00-2:15 PM	Entertainment Group Photo, Press Conference, LUNCH	Secretariat & Logistics Sub-committee
2:30-3:30 PM	SESSION 4: PARALLEL SESSIONS MEETING ROOM 3: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES - TEACHER PROVISION & TRAINING T120: Empowering Teachers to Break Pedagogical Barriers in Girls' Education: Contextualizing Project-Based Learning in Uganda - Fetaru Dorothy Alemigah - Zanvacia Grace	Chair: JVM Mitana

	T121: Zoning of Teachers and How it has Supported Literacy Attainment for Girls in World Vision Areas of Operation in Western Uganda • Muchope John, World Vision Uganda. • Irene Kagoya T124: The Gender Responsive Pedagogy, Improving Learning Outcomes for Boys and Girls • Gloria Auma, Fawe Uganda • Collin Ogara • Martin Okhako	
	MEETING ROOM 201: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES -INTERVENTIONS T122: Indigenous and Contemporary Early Years' Education Pedagogy: What works for Girls' Life-Skills Education • Nakidde Caroline Kavuma, Kyambogo University, Uganda. T126: A Whole-School System Approach to Fostering Critical Thinking Skills Among Students in Ugandan Secondary Schools • Christine Nassanga, Luigi Giussani Foundation, Uganda. • John Muhangyi • Martin Ariapa T130: Readyng Out-of-School Girls for Conventional School Success in Uganda • Rebecca Ewou, Geneva Global Uganda • Eyasu Mekonnen	Chair: Fatuma Wamala
	MEETING ROOM 401: SAFER SCHOOLS. T113: Narrowing the Gender Gap: Promising Gains for Girls in Foundational Learning Through UCatchUp • Brenda Abiro, VVOB Uganda • Kakula Wandu, • Pulah Aryatuha, T127: Confronting Sexual Harassment in Higher Education: Building Safe and Equitable Learning Spaces for Young Women in Uganda [online] • Florence Kyoheirwe Muhanguzi, Makerere University¹, Uganda. • Grace Bantebya Kyomuhendo • Julius Kikooma • Esther Namitala T211: Community-Driven Pathways to Overcome Gendered Barriers and Keep Girls in school • Lilian Njeri Mbuthi, Stanford University, Kenya.	Chair: Grace Musiimire
	GARDEN HALL 1: TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL PROVISIONS T301: Girls, Gadgets, and Gaps: Digital Literacy and Life Skills Development Among Adolescents in East Africa • Akongo Rose Stella, Luigi Institute of Higher Education, Uganda. T302: Empowering Girls through Digital Learning Corners: A Rural ICT Inclusion Model from Uganda • Ogwal Isaac, Ndejje SSS, Uganda.	Chair: Ricardo Sabates

	T304: Bridging the Digital Gender Bridge in Girls' Education in Uganda with G-IDAF: A Contextualized Conceptual Framework for Girls' Education Inclusive Digital Access • Nicodemus Epaphras, Kabale, Bukinda Core Primary Teachers' College, Uganda.	
	ROOFTOP: DATA & EVIDENCE GENERATION WORKSHOP 4 T805/W103: Scaling What Works for Girls: Evidence -Based Pathways to Inclusive and Gender-responsive Education Systems • Olaka Denis Ongaya; Olwit Patrick, Link Community Development Uganda	Chair: Jimmy Luyima
3:45-4:45 PM	SESSION 5: PARALLEL SESSIONS MEETING ROOM 3: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES -STEM T129: Empowering a Primary School Girl's Confidence and Achievement in Mathematics and Science Through Home-Based, Practical, and Peer-Teaching Strategies • Samuel Andema, Aga Khan University, East Africa. • Doris Maandebo Abiri, Sancta Maria PTC, Uganda. T108: A Multi-Pronged Approach to Improving Girls' Enrolment, Attendance, and Performance: A Case Study of the teach For Uganda Fellowship • Flavia Nakajjuko Kizito; Herbert Kalyesubula, Teach For Uganda. T116: Advancing Learning and Livelihoods: Insights from Educate!'s Gender Equity Strategy • Edith Mukyala, Francis Kusiimwa, & Claire Nimusiima, Educate! Uganda	Chair: Veronica Namulondo
	MEETING ROOM 201: TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION T306: Using Technology to Improve Education for Marginalized Girls: Lessons in Implementation from the Girls' Education Challenge • Julia Pacitto, Katrina Barnes, Aimee Mukankusi, Rozina Zazai, & Emma Sarton, EdTech Hub, UK. T310: Empowering Girls Through ICT: Assessing Teachers' Readiness in Masaka City Public Primary Schools • Gaudy Nalubowa, Aga Khan University, Uganda. T307: Break Barriers: STEM and Digital Access for Girls with Special Needs in Turkiye [Online] • Elif Polat, Mehmet Onur Karatas, Sinan Hopcan, Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa	Chair: Rebecca Pagel
	MEETING ROOM 401: TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION T311: Strengthening Gender-Responsive Technology Adoption with Digital Inclusion: A Communication Strategy for Girls' Education in Uganda • Wilberforce Okongo, Wilson Okaka, Kyambogo University, Uganda.	Chair: Wilson Okaka

	T417: Promoting Information Communication Campaign for Inclusive Health, Well-Being, and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Among Girls in Uganda • Grace Akunda, Wilson Okaka, Kyambogo University, Uganda. T418: Pandemic's Uneven Legacy: Gender Gains for Girls, Behavioral Losses for Boys in Education • Alitiru Harriet, Aga Khan University, Uganda.	
	GARDEN HALL 1: EMPOWERMENT OF GIRLS THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND LIFE SKILLS WORKSHOP 5 W105: From Ideas to Impact: Building Leadership, Life Skills, & Values to Advance Girls Education in Uganda's Secondary Schools • Fatuma Wamala, Kibuule Frank, & Doreen Chebet, Kukuza Education, Uganda.	Chair: Binda Niati
	ROOFTOP: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES WORKSHOP 6 W101: Practical Pathways to Inspire and Increase Girls in STEM: The STIA Hands-On Science Approach • Laura Kanyiginya, Nabasa Stewart, Kyomugisha Patience Ritah, & Tayebwa Immaculate, Science Teaching and Innovation in Africa, Uganda.	Chair: Elizabeth Opit
	SESSION 6: END OF DAY 1 REFLECTION PLENARY	
5.00 -5.30PM	MEETING ROOM 3: PLENARY: REFLECTIONS AND WRAP-UP OF DAY 1 What we are hearing: Emerging insights from Day 1 • Rebecca Pagel & Pius Patrick Akol (Uwezo Uganda)	Chair: CB Mugimu
5.30–6.00 PM	EVENING TEA/COFFEE	
6.00–6.30PM	Conference Organizing Committee Reflection Meeting / Working Tea (Meeting Room 3)	Conference Co-Chairs

Day 2 [Thursday, 2nd October 2025]: Innovations & Solutions Objective: <i>Showcase proven interventions and scalable models</i> MCs: Modern Karema (STIR Education and RELI Africa) and Faridah Nassereka (Uwezo Uganda)		
Time	Session Details	Chair / Responsibility
7:00 AM – 08:00 AM	Arrival, Registration, Breakfast & Networking	Secretariat and Logistics Sub- committee
8.00 – 9.00 AM	SESSION 7: PARALLEL SESSIONS	
	MEETING ROOM 03: HEALTH & WELL-BEING T414: Advancing Health, Wellbeing and Education for Girls in Science in Zimbabwe: A Case for Midlands and Masvingo Provinces [online] • Nogget Matope, Rosemary Guvhu, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe. T415: Identifying Barriers to Education and Opportunities for Achieving Social Emotional Wellbeing in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands in Kenya • Alice Onsarigo, Beatrice Jane, Roopal Thaker, & Jennifer Cotter Otieno, Zana Africa Programs Kenya T416: Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: School-Based Mentorship for Adolescent Girls' Health, Wellbeing, and Education in Uganda • Annah Muhawenimana, Right to Play, Kamwokya, Uganda.	Chair: Emmy Zoomlamai
	MEETING ROOM 201: POLICY & FINANCING T515: Cost - Effective Strategies for Scaling Up Girls' Education in Resource-Limited Settings • Mary Nantongo, Kyambogo University, Uganda. T516: From Awareness to Advancement: Evaluating the Impact of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao on Girls' Enrolment in India • Priyanka Singh, & Vivek Gupta, India [online] T517: A Comparative Study of Efforts on Education of Girls and Boys, 2000-2024: Uganda and Zambia • Daniel L. Mpolomoka, Aminah Birungi, Rose Chikopela, & Christine Mushibwe, Unicaf University Zambia	Chair: Dr Jimmy Luyima
	MEETING ROOM 401: POLICY AND FINANCING - REINTEGRATION OF YOUNG WOMEN/MOTHERS T513: Implementation National Guidelines for School Re-entry in Kenya: Why it Matters for Adolescent Mothers and their Education • Mary Chepkemai, Zizi Afrique Foundation, Nairobi, Kenya. T507: Navigating Hurdles of school Re-Entry for Teen Mothers in Arua District, Uganda • Flavia Mane Eriku, and Mweru Mwingi, Aga Khan University Institute for Educational Development in East Africa T619: The Social Responsibility of the Media in Empowering Girls through Effective Leadership Life Skills for Gender Equality in Uganda • Wison Okaka, & Namugenyi, Kyambogo University, Uganda.	Chair: Bea Simpson

	GARDEN HALL: DATA & EVIDENCE GENERATION WORKSHOP 7 W109: Designing Gender-Responsive Transition Pathways: STEP Uganda in Practice • Sarah Ayesiga, Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda • Phillip Atteba, Save the Children International, Uganda. • Adnan Aluma, Geneva Global Uganda. • Giulia Di Filippantonio, Education. Org, Sierra Leone.	Chair: Faridah Nassereka
	ROOFTOP VENUE: TEACHER PROVISION & TRAINING WORKSHOP 8 W112: Strengthening Gender Responsive School Communities: Lessons from the Simameni Project in Uganda • Aja Joan, Mwebaza Gloria, & Gowan Yakub Kalamagi, UNATU, Uganda.	Chair: Elizabeth Opit
9:15-10:30 AM	SESSION 8: PARALLEL SESSIONS	
	MEETING ROOM 3: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF GIRLS - MENSTRUAL HEALTH SUPPORT T401: The Impact of Menstrual Health Support on Learning Outcomes for Adolescent Girls in Government Schools in Kwale, Kenya • Salim Mwakidzugu, Pwani University, Kenya. T402: Breaking Silence: A Grassroot Approach to Menstrual Health Education in Rural Uganda • Asiimwe Dhurufah, Kibingo Muslim P.S., Uganda. T403: Menstrual Experiences, Social Support and School Attendance among Adolescent Girls in Ugandan Rural Primary Schools • Ritah Nabaasa, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Uganda. T404: Empowering Girls for Retention and Success: An Integrated Approach to Menstrual Health, Life skills, and Community Support in Uganda • Odong Vasco Dagama, and James Byamukama, Jane Goodall Institute, Uganda.	Chair: Ricardo Sabates
	MEETING ROOM 201: POLICY AND FINANCING T501: Free secondary education policy and education attainment • Alicia Grace Stenzel, Victor Osei Kwadwo, & Rose Camille Vincent, German Development Agency (GIZ), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. T502: Awareness and Perceptions of the National Girls' Education Strategy among School-Level Stakeholders in Bwaila Cluster, Lilongwe: Implications for Policy Implementation • Angella Chunda-Msowoya; Tiffany Banda, University of Malawi, Malawi. [online] T503: Enhancing Gender Equity through Voucher-Based Public Private Partnerships [Online] • Nusrat Baquee, Syed Ashar Hussain Zaidi, Syed Talha Uddin Hyder, Lahore University, Pakistan.	Chair: Christopher B. Mugimu

	T504: Global Invisibility of Ugandan Scholarships in Policy and Financing for Gender Equity in Education: A Bibliometric Coupling Analysis • Eutychus Ngotho Gichuru, Makerere University & University of Bergen, Norway.	
	MEETING ROOM 401: SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS - REFUGEES & DISABILITY T207: Enhancing Educational Access for Refugee Girls with Disabilities (Aged 10-17) in Selected Refugee Settlements in South Western Uganda • Abbas Mugisha, Kabale University, Uganda. T208: Beyond Inclusion: Understanding Barriers to Refugee Girls' Early Childhood Education and Learning in Uganda • Bea Simpson, University of Cambridge, UK • James Ciera, Twaweza East Africa • Mary Goretti Nakabugo, Uwezo Uganda. • Ricardo Sabates Aysa, Cambridge University REAL Centre T212: Women with disabilities fighting gender inequalities through skill acquisition in Higher Education • Nkemngong Atemnkeng, National Center for Education, Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation, Cameroon. T218: Girl Child, Inclusive Education and Community Engagement: Perspectives of Teachers, Parents, and Administrators in Junior High Schools in Ghana • Evelyn Folake Kissi, Boadi Agykum, & Isaac Asare Senior, University of Ghana, Ghana.	Chair: Bea Simpson
	GARDEN HALL 1: TEACHER PROVISION AND TRAINING T114: Application of Gender Responsive Pedagogy by Teacher and Tutor Trainees on School and College Practicum: A case of Core Primary Teachers Colleges in Uganda • Bakaira Godfrey Grace, Kyambogo University, Uganda. T205: Girls Education, Teacher Absenteeism and Teacher Motivation - the Power Teachers for Learning Model in Uganda • Emmanuel Kamuli and Margo O'Sullivan, Power Teacher Africa, Uganda. T232: The Prospects of Overcoming Social-Economic and Cultural Barriers to Girls Education in Northern Uganda • Winnifred Joy Okello, Busitema University, Uganda. T128: Exploring the Philosophy Behind Teachers' Classroom Instruction Practices in Secondary Schools in Kayunga District, Uganda: Implications for Gender-Responsive Teaching • Waiswa Richard, Kyambogo University, Uganda.	Chair: JVM Mitana
	ROOFTOP VENUE: -TEACHER PROVISION & TRAINING WORKSHOP 9 W118: Storybooks for Her: Equipping Teachers in Gender-Responsive Strategies for Low-Resource Classrooms • Edina Akello, Brenda Apeta, Pangea Educational Development, Uganda.	Chair: Jane Sebuyungo

10:30 AM – 11:00 AM	MORNING TEA/COFFEE BREAK	Secretariat & Logistics Sub- committee
11:00 AM – 1:00 PM	SESSION 9: PLENARY: KEYNOTE AND PANEL DISCUSSION VENUE: MEETING ROOM 3	Chair: MG Nakabugo
11:00 – 11:30 AM	KEYNOTE ADDRESS 2: <i>Continental and Global Evidence for Girls' Education</i> (Dr Manos Antoninis – Director, Global Education Monitoring Report)	
11:30 PM - 12:30 PM	Panel Discussion and Q& A Panelists (TBC) - Dr Elizabeth Opit – Kyambogo University - Mr. James Muwonge, Formerly, Director at UBOS, Uwezo Uganda Board - Dr Albert Byamugisha (Head, SDG Secretariat) - Prof Grace Ndeezi, Makerere University - Mr. Armando Ali, CEO, People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network	
12:30-1:00 PM	Remarks by Mr Brighton Barugahare , Commissioner, Education Policy and Research, MoES Remarks by Day Two Chief Guest: Chairperson, Parliamentary Committee on Education and Sports, (Hon James Kubeketerya) Entertainment, Photos	Chair: Mr Patrick Kaboyo
1:00-2:15 PM	LUNCH	Secretariat & Logistics Sub- committee
2:30 PM – 3:30 PM	MEETING ROOM 3: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING / OVERCOMING SOCIAL-ECONOMIC & CULTURAL BARRIERS A PANEL PRESENTATION P102: A Pandemic Recovery Response: Expanding Opportunities for Young Ugandan Mothers [Blended] • Atuhura Dorothy (University of Missouri, USA) • Green Susanne, (Royal Roads University, Canada) • Kakuru Doris (University of Victoria, Canada) • Manion Kathleen Heather (Royal Roads University, Canada) • Shelley Jones (Royal Roads University, Canada) • Smith-Carrier Tracy (Royal Roads University, Canada) • Jenipher Musoke Twebaze, MRC/UVRI • Matovu Hadija Naluyinda Ssali, MRC/UVRI	Chair: Jenipher Musoke Twebaze / Atuhura Dorothy
	MEETING ROOM 201: EMPOWERING OF GIRLS THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND LIFE SKILLS T604: The Undocumented Voices: Experiences while in Leadership of Educated Women [Online] • Chioma Mercy Okoro, University of Cambridge, UK. T605: Harnessing Community Engagement to Address School Dropout Among Adolescent Girls' in Kwale, Kenya • Salim Mwakidzungu, Kenya. T606: Classroom Without Ceilings: Rethinking How Girls Learn and Lead • Akullu Faith Syndrella, Kyambogo University, Uganda.	Chair: Diana Amable

	MEETING ROOM 401: POLICY & FINANCING T519: Breaking Barriers: Challenges to Girls' Education and the Contribution of Kabaka's Education Fund in Buganda Region • Nakimuli Leticia, & Kizza James, Buganda Kingdom, Uganda. T510: Girls' Education as Economic Utility: A Dispersal Critique of Uganda's Vision 2040 • George Tibakuno, University College London, UK. T512: Gender-Responsive Transitions Back to School: Insights for STEP Uganda • Giulia Di Filippantonio, Sophia D'Angelo, Education. Org, Sierra Leone	Chair: GW Kasule
	GARDEN HALL 1: SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS - MINDSETS, SELF-IDENTITY, & AGENCY T231: Adapting the Good School Toolkit Agile to Overcome Socio- economic and Cultural Barriers to Girls' Education • Hassan Muluusi, Raising Voices, Uganda. T237: Perspectives on Agency Among Adolescent Girls in the Karamoja Cluster of Kenya and Uganda A Publication of the Learning and Action Alliance for Girls' Agency (LAAGA) • Joyce Kinyanjui, Mary Otieno, Christine Apiot Okudi, University of Toronto, Canada. T225: A Social-Cultural Approach to Interrogating the Mindset Question in Ugandan Girl-Child Education • Lynda Nakalawa, Makerere University, Uganda.	Chair: Warren Bannister
	ROOFTOP: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING T406: Improving Adolescent Girls' Nutrition and Health Wellbeing Through Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation in Malawi • Martin Charles Likongwe; Maggie Kuchonde; Doreen Matonga, University of Malawi, Malawi. T408: Exploration on Human Development Behavior in Sustaining Innovation Interventions for Girl Child • Jesca Harriet Audo, Kyambogo University, Uganda. T409: Menstrual Health Management and Safe School Environments to Encourage Girl Child Education in Uganda • Brenda Adong, Cyprus International University, Cyprus.	Chair: Veronica Namulondo
	SESSION 11: PARALLEL SESSIONS	
3:45-4:45 PM	MEETING ROOM 3: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING T405: Empowering Uganda's Young Adolescents through Social and Emotional Learning: Addressing Mental Health and Enhancing SRHR Decision-Making in Early Adolescence • YONAH EROBU; Daniel Angula, JM Education and Research Centre, Uganda.	Chair: Grace Musiimire

	T706: Guiding Futures: The Role of Career Counselling in Preparing Girls for Work • Atuheire Maureen, Rukungiri District Local Government, Uganda. T611: What Works for Girls' Education: Discourse Analysis of Pre-Service Teachers' Gendered Experiences in Uganda • Namatende-Sakwa Lydia, African Population and Health Center, Kenya.	
	MEETING ROOM 201: EMPOWERING OF GIRLS THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND LIFE SKILLS T609: Scaling Peer-Mentoring: Tanzanian Government's Adoption of CAMFED's Learner Guide Model • Nkanileka Mgonda; Amna Ansari; & Pauline Rose, Cambridge University, UK. T610: Raising Future Leaders Through Social Emotional Learning for at-risk Girls in Buliisa District • Olak Denis Ongaya; James Mugisha; Kiisa Josephine, Link Community Development Uganda, Uganda. T702: Culture and Education of the Girl Child: The Case of the Muslim Communities in the South West Region of Cameroon • Sophie Ekume Etomes, University of Buea, Cameroon T608: Gender Transformative and Life Skills Education in Higher Education Institutions • Ivan Kimpanga Mukiibi, Luigi Giussani Institute of Higher Education. • Grace Kansiime, Ndejje University	Chair: Christopher Mugimu
	MEETING ROOM 401: HEALTH & WELL-BEING T411: Economic Self-Reliance and Support Systems Enabling Nebbi Adolescent Girls to Remain in School • Paddy Tumwesigye, Sexual Reproductive Health & Rights (Education Nexus), Uganda. T412: Breaking Barriers: Empowering Girls Through Menstrual Hygiene Support in Rural Uganda • Omongo Sharon Eve, Nankoma Parents Primary School, Uganda. T413: Why are Girls Still Not in School When There is Free Education in Zambia? A Qualitative Study • Rose Chikopela, Chalimbana University • Daniel L. Mpolomoka, Unicaf University Zambia • Alfred Buluma, Makerere University • Abigail Nachilima Chalwe, Unicaf University Zambia	Chair: MG Nakabugo & Isabella Florence Nakku
	GARDEN HALL 1: -ADDRESSING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BARRIERS WORKSHOP 10 W111: Breaking Barriers to Learning: Enabling Marginalized Adolescent Girls to Thrive in Secondary Schools • Kizito Maureen S.N., Daniel Kyasanga., & Unia Nakityo, PEAS, Uganda	Chair: Faridah Nassereka

	ROOFTOP VENUE: - DATA AND EVIDENCE GENERATION WORKSHOP 11 W110: Turning Evidence into Impact: Tailored Strategies for Girls' Education Through Case Studies • Aradhya Agarwal, Soumya Nair, Pratham Education Foundation, India	Chair: Elizabeth Opit
5.00-5.30PM	SESSION 12: PLENARY: REFLECTIONS AND WRAP-UP OF DAY 2 MEETING ROOM 3: Key insights that are emerging so far Rebecca Pagel (Uwezo Uganda) and Veronica Namulondo (Kyambogo University)	Fatuma Wamala
5.30-5.45PM	Conference Organising Committee Reflection Meeting (Meeting Room 3)	Conference Co-Chairs
5.30-7.30PM	COCKTAIL (Venue- Rooftop)	MCs + Secretariat and Logistics Sub-committee

Day 3 [Friday, 3rd October 2025]: Action and Commitment**Objective:** *Turn evidence into action***MCs:** *Emmy Zoomlamai (FICH & RELI) and Jennifer Sibbo (Kyambogo University)*

Time	Session Details	Chair / Responsibility
7:00 AM – 08:00 AM	Arrival, Registration Breakfast & Networking	Secretariat & Logistics Sub- committee
8.00-900AM	SESSION 13: PARALLEL SESSIONS	
	MEETING ROOM 3: EMPOWERING OF GIRLS T410: Enhancing Mental Wellbeing in Ugandan Schools Through Evidence-Based Interventions • Joanita Kajoba, Raising Voices Uganda, Uganda. T213: Overcoming Gender-Based Violence: A Critical Analysis of its Impact on Girls' Education, Mental Well-Being, and Future Prospects • Justine Omare, Kabale University, Uganda. • Athanansio Bashaija T305: Digital Inclusion of Girls in Technology-Enhanced Pedagogy: Improving Kiswahili Competence and Attitudes in Ugandan Secondary Schools • Emilly Arishaba, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Uganda.	Chair: CB Mugimu
	MEETING ROOM 201: OVERCOMING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BARRIERS T226: Using Traditional Leaders' Social Capital to Cub Early Marriages and Boost Girls' Education in Malawi • Esme Kadzamira, University of Malawi, Malawi. T228: Evaluation of Strategies to End Child Marriage in Kawaza Chiefdom in Eastern Province of Zambia • Vainess Phiri, Chieftainess, Kawaza Chiefdom, • Rose Chikopela, Chalimbana University, Zambia. T206: Managing Student Pregnancies in Ugandan Secondary Schools: A Phenomenological Case Study from Northern Uganda • David Onen, Makerere University, Uganda. T508: What Works for the Re-Entry of Pupil-Mothers into Schools: A case of Selected Primary Schools in Uganda • Kitamirike Henry, Willis Core PTC Iganga, Uganda. • Opit Elizabeth, Kyambogo University, Uganda • Namatende Lydia Sakwa, African Population and Health Research Center, Nairobi, Kenya.	Chair: Opit Elizabeth

	MEETING ROOM 401: DATA AND EVIDENCE	Chair: Rosemary Nakijoba
	T803: Family Factors Predicting Literacy and Numeracy Competence Among Primary School Pupils with Visual Impairment in Ugandan After Covid-19 Wave • Nakijoba Rosemary, Muteesa Royal University, Uganda. • Christopher B. Mugimu, Makerere University T817: Second Chances, Lasting Change: A Model for Re-engaging Girls in Education Across India • Soumya Nair, Aradhya Agarwal, & Anamika Vaghela, Pratham Education Foundation, India. [online?] T607: Empowering Girls through Education: A Comprehensive Approach to Overcome Barriers in Uganda • Julius Kuzirimpa, Uganda	
	GARDEN HALL: EMPOWERMENT OF GIRLS THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND LIFE SKILLS T620: A Regional Perspective on the Impact of Life Skills and Leadership Programs on Girls' Education in East Africa • Gaudence Kapinga, & Anande Nnko, RELI Africa, Tanzania. T703: Gender Issues and Female Labour Market Participants: Insights from Internship Experience in Higher Education Institutions in Cameroon • Sophie Ekume Etomes, University of Buea, Cameroon. T/W216: AZBGC - Youth-led Community Programs Challenge Socio- economic and Cultural Barriers to Girls' Advancement • Cris Mutebi; Susan Namagembe; Joseph Bugembe & Ruth G Kane, AZBGC & University of Ottawa, Canada	Chair: Faridah Nassereka
	ROOFTOP: EMPOWERING GIRLS WORKSHOP PRESENTATION 12 W115: Empowering Girls through Leadership and Life Skills: The ALIVE Life Skills Intervention in Tanzania • Zenais Matem, & Baraka Mgohamwende, Uwezo Tanzania.	Chair: Emmy Zoomlamai / Grace Musiimire
	SESSION 14: PARALLEL SESSIONS	
9:15 AM – 10:30 AM	Meeting Room 3: EMPOWERING OF GIRLS THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND LIFE SKILLS T612: Cases from Kamengo, Uganda: Strategic Wrap-around Support Mitigates Gender Disparity • Dianah Elisabeth Nasamula; Lilian Nassuna, & Ruth G Kane, AZBGC / University of Ottawa, Canada. T613: Influence: Young Women's Agency in West African Youth Civic Organisations • Noella Binda Niati, University of Cambridge, UK. T614: Leadership and Life Skills Programs Influence Academic Engagement and Self-Efficacy Among Girls in Uganda • Eunice Ndyareeba, Zanna Clay, Dennis Zami Atibuni, & Kibedi Henry, Kabale University, Uganda.	Chair – Noella Binda Niati

	T615: Programming for Girls: Lessons Learnt from Nine Years of Implementation of an Intervention in Nairobi • Benta A. Abuya, & Nelson Muhia, The African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), Kenya.	
	MEETING ROOM 201: : HEALTH & WELL-BEING; POLICY & FINANCING T518: Breaking Stigma, Rebuilding Futures: Socio-Cultural and Economic Barriers to Adolescent Mothers' School Reintegration in Post-CVID Uganda • Richard Balikoowa, & Julius F. Kikooma, Makerere University, Uganda T102: Breaking Barriers: Community-led Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education in Rural Busoga, Uganda • Mugoya Paul, JIACOFE, Jinja, Uganda. T705: Parental Support and Science Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Girls' Career Decision-Making in Kenya • Mary Njeri Ngenda, Muranga University of Technology, Kenya.	Chair Julius F. Kikooma
	MEETING ROOM 401: DATA & EVIDENCE GENERATION T801: Scalability of Accelerated Education in Ghana – A focus on intersectionalities between gender and language in learning trajectories • Ricardo Sabates Aysa, University of Cambridge, REAL Centre, UK. T802: Data to Action: How Uwezo Data has Shaped Girls' Education Policies in the East African Region • Christopher B. Mugimu, Makerere University, Uganda. • Faridah Nassereka, Uwezo Uganda T804: Unspoken Chains, Shared Voices: Cultural Silence, Stigma, and Education Equity in Uganda [Online] • Atiya Fatima Khan, Independent Researcher T814: Beyond the numbers: Language of Instruction and Gendered Learning Patterns in Tanzanian Secondary Schools • Eliakimu Sane, The University of Dodoma • Angeline Barrett, University of Bristol • Maryam Jafar Ismail, State University of Zanzibar • Mats Duetsmann, Örebro University • Justin Zelime, University of Seychelles	Chair -Ricardo Sabates
	GARDEN HALL 1: DATA & EVIDENCE GENERATION T806: Participatory Dashboards for Accountability and Advancing Gender Equality in and Through Education in Kenya • Mwongeli Mercy, UNESCO-Kenya • Ntheketha Virginia; UNESCO-Kenya • Marti Tamara; UNESCO-France • Ngutuku Eliza, UCL-England • Elaine Unterhalter, UCL - England	Chair – MG Nakabugo

	T807: Two Decades of Policy Impact on Girls' Education in India from 2000 to 2023 • Vivek Gupta, Priyanka Singh, & Indrani Bhaduri, KR Mangalam University, India. [online] T808: Closing the Gap Early: Gender Equity in Uganda's Early Childhood Development Research and Practice • Samuel Asare, Stephen Acquah, Leila Abdullah, Sarah Boafo, Eunice Williams, & Pauline Rose, Education Sub-Saharan Africa, UK. T810: Examining Gender Equity in Ugandan Pre-primary and Primary Education: Insights from Uwezo Learning Assessment • Nakabugo Mary Goretti, & Daniel Rodriguez Segura, Uwezo Uganda.	
	ROOFTOP: POSTER DISPLAY	Secretariat & Logistics Sub- Committee
10:30 AM – 11:00AM	MORNING TEA/COFFEE BREAK/	Secretariat & Logistics Sub- Committee
	SESSION 15: POSTER PRESENTATIONS	
11:00AM- 11:45 AM	ROOFTOP: POSTER PRESENTATIONS P(T)109: Breaking Barriers through Innovative Approaches to Girls' Education • Billiah N. Gisore, Kisii University, Kenya. P(T)203: Rethinking the Impact of Gender Inequality on Access to Education for Girls in Northern Nigeria • Oluwasegun Ongusakin, Ekiti State University, Nigeria. P(T)222: Using Early Warning Systems to Support Girl Child Education, Irene Kagoya, & Muchope John, World Vision Uganda P(T)223: Rooted in Change: Women-Led Financial Literacy to Advance Girls' Education in Kigezi • Lilian Nankunda, Kigezi Women Twegye Foundation (KWTF), Uganda. P(T)219: Redefining Possibility: How Female Role Models and Community Power Are Transforming Girls' Education in Rural Uganda • Akampurira Innocent, Uganda. P(T)701: Integrating Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) In Secondary Schools To Promote Girls' Participation in STEM • Nakazinga Racheal, Kyambogo University P(T)204: Impact of the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme in Overcoming Socio-economic Barriers: A Case Study of Andhra Pradesh, India • Vivek Gupta • Priyanka Singh • Indrani Bhaduri • Bhaswati De	MCs & Co-Chairs

	P(T)603: Skills for the Future Mentorship Preparing Children for an Increasingly Artificial Intelligence (AI) Dominated World • Bwanika Charles, Giving Children Hope Initiatives (GCHI), Uganda. P(T)210: Breaking Barriers, Building Future: Evidence and Action for Girls' Education in Tororo and Bukedi Sub-Region - Eastern Uganda • Peter Ekiikina, Foundation for Open Development (FoD), Uganda. P(T)303: Digital Literacy for Girls: Oversoming Obstacles to Learning • Abdikadir Issa Farah, Formal Education Network for Provate Schools (FENPS), Mogadishu, Somalia. P(T)309: Measuring What Matters: The G-IDAF Scorecard for Assessing Digital Acess and Inclusion in Educational Institutions • Nicodemus Epaphras, Kabale, Bukinda Core Primary Teachers' College, Uganda. P(T)617: Breaking the Cycle of Violence: Empowering Communitie s to Protect Children in the Rwenzori Sub-Region • Ogara Collin, Kapuru Keneth, Auma Gloria, Adima Joseph, & Susan Opok Tumusiime, FAWE Uganda. P(T)704: Empowering Youth Through Agri-Preneurship: Lessons from the SAY Project in Pader District • Betty Akullo, Ogara Collin, Akot Brenda, Opoka Brian, & Lagwela Steven, Women and Rural Development Network (WORUDET), Uganda. P(T)707: The Role of Communication in Preparing Girls to Adopt 21st Century Skills for Future Career Transition in Uganda • Joseph Rwothumio, & Wilson Okaka, Kyambogo University, Uganda. P(W)103: Adapting the Good School Toolkit: Results of a Pilot Cluster Randomised Trial and Leassons from Adapting a Whole-School Violence Prevention Intervention for Ugandan Secondary Schools • Yvonne Laruni, Jodie Bosco Apota, Janet Nakuti, Devin Faris, Charles Opondo, Elizabeth Allen, Chris Bonell, Tvisha Nevatia, & Karen Devr ies, Raising Voices Uganda. P(W)104: Contextulizing the holistic Education as an Enrollment Driver and a Transitioning to Work Tool for Girls • Anne Namakula Serunjogi, Mase Junior School, Uganda. P(W)105b: From Awareness to Action: Advancing Gender Equity in Uganda's Secondary Schools Through Student-Led Action. • Fatuma Wamala, Kibuule Frank, & Doreen Chebet, Kukuza Education, Uganda. P(W)113: Community-Driven Approaches to Girls' Education: The "Grand Mother Approach" • Joyce Atimango Okker, Victor Arabera, & Eunice Achola, Trailblazers Uganda.	
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12:00 PM – 1.00 PM	SESSION 16: PARALLEL SESSIONS	
	MEETING ROOM 3: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES -EVIDENCE-BASED TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT. T110: Reimagining Pedagogy: A System-led Teacher Network Approach to Gender-Responsive Classrooms in Uganda • Jane Sebuyungo Nantayi, STiR Education, Uganda. T111: From Mines to School: The Karamoja Mobile Learning Centres Withdrawing Girls from Mines to School • Patrick Kaboyo, Education Advocacy Network, Uganda. T201: Embodied Resistance and Educational Agency: Intersectional Feminist Perspectives from Conservative Muslim Communities in India • Shadiya Zubair Ummalil, MA International Relations, India.	Chair Bea Simpson
	MEETING ROOM 201: DATA & EVIDENCE GENERATION T811: Local Voices, Regional Impact: Evidence on Gender, Safety, and Mental Health to Transform Girls' Education in East Africa • Edith Kemunto, Fatuma Wamala, Anande Nnko, & Mercy Ngeno, RELI Africa, Kenya. T812: The Education of Girls with Disabilities in Sub-Saharan Africa: Addressing the Double Disadvantage • Amani Karisa, African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), Kenya. T813: "We have Hope in Her and We Won't Give Up": Findings from the Obuntu Bulamu Inclusive Education Randomized Control Trial in Uganda • Jane Nansamba, Elizabeth Shalom Kaweesa, Esther Nassanga, Andrew Abaasa, Janet Seely, & Femke Bannink Mbazzi, Uganda Virus Institute, Uganda.	Chair – Fatuma Wamala
	MEETING ROOM 401: DATA & EVIDENCE GENERATION T815: Second Chances, Lasting Change: Assessing the Long-Term Impact of the Siyani Sahelian Program in Pakistan • Kanza Abbasi, Adil Ashraf, & Baela Raza Jamil, Idara-e-Taleem- o-Aagahi (ITA), Pakistan. T816: Leaving No Girl Behind: Regional Disparities in Learning Outcomes among Girls in Uganda • Judith Nyakaisiki, Uwezo Uganda. T214: Challenging Gender Norms Through Girls' Clubs in Ethiopian Schools: Evidence from GEQIP-E and Implications for ETOL • Dawit Tibebe Tiruneh, & Pauline Rose, University of Cambridge, UK. T224: Educational Expansion and Inequality of Educational Opportunity in Ghana, 1945-1994: A Gendered Perspective [Online] • Samuel Nyarko Agyapong, University of Cambridge, UK.	Chair: Binda Niati

	GARDEN HALL 1: OVERCOMING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BARRIERS T221: Perception of Indigenous Batwa Female Children Towards Sustainable Enrolment and Retention in Schools on SW Uganda • Bamwerinde Wilson, Tumwesigye Wilberforce, & Sharman Arinda, Kabale University, Uganda. T511: Cash, Confidence, and Well-being - Unlocking Girls' Educational Aspirations in South Sudan • Akuja de Garang, Cambridge Education, South Sudan. T220: Exploring Parental Attitudes Towards Girls' Education: The Impact of Socio-Economic Factors and Cultural Beliefs in Arua-Vura Sub-County • Driciru Ketty, Uganda.	Chair: Jane Sebuyungo
	ROOFTOP: EMPOWERMENT OF GIRLS T809: 30-Day Intervention Boosts Girls' Literacy and numeracy Skills "My Village Initiatives" • Benjamin Masebo, & Greyson Mgoi, Uwezo Tanzania. T618: Increasing Access to Female Role Models and Mentors Through Senior Women Teachers • Maureen Kizito, Daniel Kyasanga, Unia Nakityo, PEAS Uganda. T701: Social norms and education: Experiences of Young women in male-dominated vocational training • Victoria Namuggala, & Prosperous Nankindu, Makerere University, Uganda.	Chair JV Mitana
1:00-2:15 PM	LUNCH	Secretariat & Logistics Sub- committee
2:30 – 4:30 PM	SESSION 17: PLENARY: KEYNOTE 3 AND PANEL DISCUSSION Venue: Meeting Room 3	Dr. Sarah Ssewanyana, EPRC
2:30 – 2:55 PM	KEYNOTE 3: <i>Five Years to Go: Accelerating Progress towards Gender Equality in and through Education</i> (Prof Pauline Rose , Director, REAL Centre, Cambridge University)	
2:55 -3:35 PM	Panel Discussion and Q&A - Prof Joyce Ayikoru, (Uganda National Institute of Teacher Educ) - Dr. Grace Baguma (Director, National Curriculum Development Centre – NCDC) - Dennis Nyakundi, (Program Associate, Echidna Giving) - Prof. Anthony Mugagga (Principal, College of Education, Makerere University)	
	SESSION 18: PLENARY: FINAL REFLECTIONS AND OFFICIAL CLOSING	
3:35 – 4:30 PM	EVALUATION AND RECOGNITIONS • Entertainment • Overall Conference evaluation (Rebecca Pagel) • Recognition of three organisations as champions of girls' education (voted by participants from what they heard being presented at the conference or read about them) • Recognition of selected participants	MCs: Emmy Zoomlamai & Jennifer Sibbo

	FINAL REFLECTIONS: • Reading a summary of the conference Communiqué (Dr Mary Goretti Nakabugo, Conference Co-Chair) Others: - Assoc Prof GW Kasule (Kyambogo University) - Dr. Binda Noella Niati (REAL Centre, University of Cambridge) - Dr. JMV Mitana (RELI Country Co-Lead) - Dennis Nyakundi, Echidna Giving - Prof A J Lutalo-Bosa, Chairperson, Uwezo Uganda Board OFFICIAL CLOSING Remarks by Dr Cleophus Mugenyi, Director, Basic & Secondary Education, Ministry of Education and Sports Official Closing by the Guest of Honour: The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Sports (Dr Kedrace Turyagyenda) Entertainment, Group Photo	Chair(s): Modern Karema & Faridah Nassereka
4:30-5:00+ PM	EVENING TEA	Secretariat & Logistics
5:00-6:00 PM	Conference Organising Committee Reflection Meeting (Meeting Room 3)	Co-Chairs

ABSTRACTS - PARALLEL SESSIONS, PANELS, WORKSHOPS, AND POSTERS

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 8.00-9.000 AM: UNDERSTANDING EVIDENCE & OUTSTANDING CHALLENGES

SESSION 1: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 3: OVERCOMING SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS – REFUGEE

T209: Girls Child's Perceptions on Factors Impeding Completion of Primary Education Cycle in Selected Primary Schools in Oyam District, Uganda

Session Presenters: **Ongom Dick & Kasule George Wilson**, Kyambogo University, Uganda.

Abstract

This study investigated home-based factors influencing girls' completion of primary education in selected government-aided schools in Loro Subcounty, Oyam District, Uganda. Guided by Walberg's (1981) Theory of Educational Productivity. The research focused on how socio-cultural, economic, and psychological conditions within the home affect girls' retention and progression through primary school. Despite Uganda's gender-responsive policies such as Universal Primary Education and international commitments to girls' education, barriers like poverty, early marriage, heavy domestic workloads, parental attitudes, and cultural norms favouring boys continue to limit girls' educational attainment. Using a descriptive cross-sectional design, quantitative data were collected from 100 girls in Primary Six and Seven, selected through simple random sampling from two schools. Data were gathered via a structured, validated, and reliable Likert-scale questionnaire examining home, school, and community influences as perceived by the girls themselves. Analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics in SPSS. Findings highlight the significant impact of home factors such as domestic responsibilities, financial constraints, and gendered expectations on girls' likelihood to drop out or perform poorly. School and community factors, including teacher absenteeism, lack of learning materials, unsafe environments, and societal undervaluing of girls' education, further compound these challenges. The study recommends culturally sensitive interventions involving community sensitization to transform gender norms, enhanced teacher training for gender responsiveness, improved school infrastructure, and increased access to educational resources. These measures are essential to promote equitable access, retention, and completion of primary education for girls in rural Northern Uganda, ultimately improving their socio-economic opportunities.

Key Words: Girl-Child, Primary Education, Cycle Completion, Uganda

T234: "TUSEME" - Amplifying the Voices of Girls in Education

Session Presenters: **Martin Okhako, Gloria Auma, & Joseph Adiamo**, FAWE, Kenya.

Abstract

"TUSEME", a Kiswahili word meaning "Let's Speak Out" is a FAWE's (Forum for African Women Educationalists) approach that empowers girls to become active agents in addressing the challenges related to their academic and social development that hinder desired education outcomes. Central to the TUSEME process is an empowerment model based on Theatre for Development (TFD) techniques. Theatre for development is a community-based process of theatre production that involves research, analysis and finding solutions to social and developmental problems. The approach brings together students, teachers, parents, community leaders and different stakeholders to collaboratively tackle issues.

The initiative has led to increased retention and improved academic performance among participating girls. Many girls involved in the program have gained leadership and communication skills, taking up leadership roles both in school and within their communities. Additionally, schools have adopted more gender-sensitive policies and practices, creating a more inclusive learning atmosphere. Importantly, stronger partnerships have emerged between schools and communities, leading to sustained support for girls' education. The project has shown that girls thrive when provided with safe and inclusive spaces to express themselves freely. Community involvement has proven to be essential in sustaining the impact of the initiative, as change is most effective when it is collectively owned. Furthermore, experience highlighted the need for continuous training and mentorship for facilitators to ensure they can support the evolving needs of girls. Lastly, it became evident that addressing entrenched barriers to girls' education requires long-term investment and multi-stakeholder collaboration. TUSEME has demonstrated that amplifying girls' voices is not only possible but essential to achieving gender equity in education. By fostering confidence, leadership, and community-driven change, TUSEME has helped transform the educational experiences of many girls. As efforts continue toward inclusive education, scaling and adapting such participatory approaches offers a sustainable pathway to empower more girls and positively influence entire communities

Key words: Empowerment, theatre, community involvement, girls' voices, inclusive learning.

T235: Beyond the School 'Gate': Understanding Relational Violence and Disability as Barriers to Girls' Education

Session Presenters: **Rehema Namaganda, Jane Nansamba, & Femke Bannink Mbazzi**, Disability Research Group, Medical Research Council/ Uganda Virus Research Institute & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine Uganda Research Unit, Uganda.

Abstract

While efforts to advance girls' education in Uganda have often focused on school infrastructure and access, less attention has been paid to the everyday social environments in which girls grow up—especially girls with disabilities. This paper draws on emerging findings from the NAVIGENDI study (Navigating the Challenges of Violence, Gender, and Disability).

The study uses a dialogical, participatory approach, combining three years of qualitative data with existing quantitative data to explore how young people with disabilities experience and navigate care, protection, and violence across home, school, and community. Our preliminary findings reveal that violence is not always a single event but often embedded in day-to-day interactions. Girls with disabilities face intersecting challenges: stigma from peers and teachers, verbal abuse and emotional neglect within families, physical violence and harassment on the journey to and from school — including predatory sexual advances and harassment, often fuelled by intrusive curiosity about their bodies. Poverty further compounds these barriers, with some families unable to afford school fees or assistive devices. As a result, girls may miss school, fail to participate fully, repeat classes, or drop out altogether. Yet, girls also find support within their families, schools, and peer networks — from parents who advocate for them, teachers who make learning accessible, and friends who offer protection and encouragement. Therefore, positive relationships can help them navigate these challenges. The paper argues that advancing girls' education requires confronting the intersecting realities of disability, gender, and violence — not as side issues, but as core barriers to access and participation. By examining how intersecting factors of disability, gender, and violence shape girls' everyday educational experiences, this study directly addresses the conference's focus on advancing girls' education through inclusive and contextually grounded strategies.

Key words: Disability, Gender, Violence, Education, Uganda

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 8.00-9.000 AM

SESSION 1: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 201: EMPOWER GIRLS THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND SKILLS

SESSION CHAIR: RICARDO SABATES AYSA

T601: The Impact of the Social Survival Skills Training on Girls' Education: Lessons from MEMPROW, Uganda

Session Presenters: **Sharon Ocola Katho, Agnes Ttiisa, & Atim Hope**, MEMPROW, Uganda.

Abstract

This paper explores the impact of the social survival skills training programs in schools as an approach in increasing retention of girls in schools and in promoting girl's leadership in education and sports activities in schools in the Central and the West Nile region of Uganda. The Mentoring and Empowerment Program for young Women (MEMPROW) has been utilizing empowerment approaches such as the 'Social survival skills training', a model that integrates comprehensive awareness creation, life skill-building, peer mentorship, leadership training and the community engagement, to address barriers and challenges to girls' education access and retention in schools targeting adolescent girls and young women in primary and secondary schools in the West Nile region and the central region of Uganda. MEMPROW has targeted 10 schools in the West Nile region and 5 in the Central region of Uganda and trained them using this approach. The training targets the girls, boys separately and also the teachers and parents to support creation of a conducive learning environment for the girls. The results from MEMPROW's social survival skills training over the years shows increased agency among the girls, increased confidence, assertiveness and self-esteem to stand for leadership positions in schools, participate in debates and sports activities including male dominated sports like football. It has also increased their knowledge and information about their Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and utilization of SRHR services among others. In conclusion empowerment approaches such as the social survival skills training does not only significantly improves girl's retention in schools but also, it helps to address social and psychological stressors that affects girls' education and that leads to school dropout.

Key Words: Empowerment, Social survival skills training, AGYW

T602: Crochet, Courage, and Civic Voices: Trauma-Informed Leadership and Life Skills for Girls with Disabilities in Nairobi

Session Presenter: **Albright Alitsi**, Lola Crochet Organisation, Kenya.

Abstract

This paper shares a tested community-based model developed by the Lola Crochet Foundation to equip girls with disabilities in Nairobi's informal settlements with leadership and life skills through trauma-informed education and creative enterprise. The initiative integrates art therapy, civic education, and mentorship to build girls' confidence, resilience, and capacity to lead in contexts shaped by adversity. This intervention utilizes crochet storytelling, SRHR dialogue, and inclusive digital tools to foster agency among girls navigating trauma, exclusion, and systemic neglect. Guided by feminist disability justice and participatory facilitation frameworks, the model engages girls in community-based learning and youth-led civic initiatives. Primary data was collected between 2022–2025 using participatory action research, surveys, and qualitative interviews. Key outcomes include improved psychosocial well-being, increased civic participation, and expanded economic opportunities through craft-based enterprise. The program also contributed to localized curriculum reform and trauma-informed educator training. This paper offers evidence that trauma-aware leadership programming not only empowers marginalized girls but transforms community perceptions of disability and gender-based barriers. It calls for wider adoption of healing-centered approaches that integrate life skills, creativity, and inclusion into education systems across the region.

Keywords: Leadership, Inclusive Education, Disability Justice, Healing, Civic Empowerment

T112: Implementation of Gender-Responsive Pedagogy in the Era of Male Dominance: Experience from Secondary Schools in the West Nile Region

Session Presenters: **Polycarp Omara**, & **Jennifer Aparo**, Muni University, Uganda.

Abstract

The study examined the implementation of Gender-Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) in secondary schools in the West Nile region of Uganda. West Nile is historically characterized by entrenched male dominance in education and societal roles. Despite progressive educational policies and gender equity frameworks, many secondary schools in West Nile still experience classroom environments heavily influenced by patriarchal norms, often disadvantaging female students. This study, explored how teachers apply gender-responsive pedagogies in these schools. Specifically, it investigated the current state of GRP implementation, barriers to its effective adoption, the impact of GRP on female students' academic achievement, and strategies to enhance its implementation. The research highlights the practical realities of introducing gender-responsive pedagogy in a region where traditional patriarchal norms continue to marginalize female learners. A mixed-methods approach was used, including surveys, interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations. The participants included head teachers, teachers, and students from selected secondary schools in West Nile. Results indicated that gender-responsive pedagogy is moderately adopted, with an average score of 3.22 (SD=0.46). The findings also showed that while awareness of GRP is increasing, actual implementation faces challenges such as cultural resistance, limited teacher training, and insufficient institutional support. Nevertheless, schools that actively adopted gender-responsive practices reported better female engagement, participation, and academic outcomes. The study concludes that ongoing capacity-building, policy reinforcement, and community awareness are essential for fully integrating gender-responsive pedagogy into school systems dominated by traditional gender hierarchies. Recommendations are provided for policymakers, school leaders, and educators to promote inclusive and equitable learning environments in secondary schools within the West Nile region.

Key Words: Gender, Inclusion, Gender-responsive pedagogy, Inclusive education

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 8.00-9.00 AM

SESSION 1: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 401: POLICY & FINANCING

SESSION CHAIR: CHRISTOPHER B. MUGIMU

T230: Girls' Education: Safety Provisions, a Precursor to Re-dress Gender Imbalances in Education

Session Presenters:

Brenda Piloya, Christine Onen, Robert Kakaire, & Dorothy Nabwire, War Child
Canada, Uganda.

Abstract

Refugee children face prolonged interruptions in schooling which jeopardizes their learning and future development (Druden-Peterson, 2016). There is a slightly lower enrolment rate among girls in secondary school (33% compared to 67% among boys) (UCRRP 2022-2025). Young mothers in secondary school face numerous barriers in accessing quality education including: Lack of affordable and accessible childcare options, insufficient support from schools and communities, stigma and discrimination against young mothers and limited access to resources and information on childcare and parenting. In addition, they find it challenging to balance class attendance with childcare responsibilities. This negatively influences their school attendance and retention, particularly for girls and young mothers. The lack of comprehensive childcare services at schools increases the risk of child safeguarding issues and dropout among young mothers. Establishing a network of childcare services and support systems is crucial to creating a safe and supportive environment for young mothers and their babies both in school and community. These services have huge potential to significantly improve enrolment, retention, and completion rates among young women. War Child Canada with support from the Master Card Foundation is implementing the Lower Secondary Accelerated Education Programme (AEP) to address the out of school learning needs for refugee children and youth who have missed years of education due to conflict or displacement to catch up on their education. Through the AEP, War Child Canada has integrated childcare services in nine schools to allow reintegration of young mothers as a mechanism of breaking barriers to female access to education and employment opportunities. This paper proposes to answer the following research questions: To what extent have the childcare services been able to influence enrolment and retention of young mothers in school? And which factors have enabled the functionality of this childcare services model? How have childcare services influenced changes in attitudes that limit girls' access to education and retention in school? We present the results of a mixed methods study that includes review of monitoring data, surveys with a random sample of young mothers in AEP and semi-structured interviews with school and community leaders. Based on the findings, we document some of the best practices on how to overcome socio-economic and cultural barriers that limit girls' access to education.

Key words: Girl child, education, cultural barriers, Safety provisions

T505: Community and National Advocacy Strategies Advancing Girls' Education in Uganda: Evidence and Lessons from JFCU

Session Presenters: **Tukwasibwe Sandra, & Lindsey Namara**, Uganda Management Institute, Uganda.

Abstract

In Uganda, millions of girls face intersecting barriers that hinder their right to education, this includes social, cultural and economic factors such as poverty, gender-based violence, menstrual health challenges, and deeply rooted cultural norms that perpetuate the practice of child marriage. This paper presents evidence and lessons from Joy for Children Uganda (JFCU)'s integrated interventions aimed at advancing girls' education through a combination of community driven and national-level advocacy. JFCU is a national child rights organization that promotes the rights of children. This paper shares lessons and evidence from JFCU's work in 22 districts across Western, Northern, and Central Uganda basing on case studies of policy advocacy and community engagement models at grassroots level. This is where JFCU conducted community dialogues and developed documentaries featuring harmful cultural practices that perpetuate child marriage and educational exclusion. These were broadcasted nationally, with recommendations directed at cultural institutions to condemn practices that hinders girls' education. This paper also shares JFCU's policy advocacy efforts such as pre-legislative studies, re-drafting of Sexual Offences Bill and Marriage Bill (2024), capacity building sessions with members of Parliament (Uganda Parliamentary Forum for Children and the Uganda Women Parliamentary Association). The objectives of these interventions were to increase access to and retention of girls in school and to demonstrate how community engagement and policy advocacy can drive sustainable and systemic change in education outcomes for girls. The Key findings demonstration JFCU's advocacy contribution to the renewal of the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy (2022/2023–2026/2027), creation of awareness on the rights of girls to education. Recommendations includes adoption of participatory approaches, policy advocacy efforts as effective in promoting girls' education in Uganda.

Keywords: Child marriage, Cultural norms, Policy advocacy

T509: Linking Policy and Financing Framework for Improving girls' Education

Session Presenters: **Nahabwe Judith**, Kabale University, Uganda.

Abstract

Equity, as a core social pillar of sustainability, drives sustainable development, economic growth, and societal transformation. Gender equity in education enhances labour force participation, productivity, health outcomes, democratic governance, and intergenerational benefits. However, systemic socio-economic, cultural, and institutional barriers of poverty, entrenched norms, early marriage, inadequate infrastructure, and discriminatory curricula continue to limit girls' education access and outcomes, particularly in marginalized communities. This paper examines the intersection of policy frameworks and financing mechanisms in advancing gender equity in education. It analyses global instruments such as The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women-CEDAW, The Convention of the Rights of the Child-CRC, Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5, and United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization-UNESCO's Gender Equality Strategy, alongside national initiatives in Uganda, Kenya, and Rwanda. Financing approaches including Gender-Responsive Budgeting, conditional grants, equity funds, and targeted international aid are explored as financing tools for operationalizing policy commitments. Emphasis is placed on the need for policy-finance alignment, institutionalization, and supportive environments that integrate gender-sensitive indicators, robust gender-disaggregated data, promote open data access, and build planning capacity. Emerging challenges like gender stereotypes, gender-based violence, and climate-induced disruptions continue to hinder gender equity in education, requiring coordination, multi-stakeholder, and sustainable strategies to achieve inclusive and transformative education for all.

Key Words: Sustainability, Inclusive education, Gender-responsiveness, Alignment, Emerging Challenges

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 8.00-9.000 AM

SESSION 1: WORKSHOP PRESENTATION 1

GARDEN HALL: EMPOWERMENT OF GIRLS THROUGH DIGITAL PROVISION

SESSION CHAIR: REBECCA PAGEL

W107: Empowering Girls' Literacy: Breaking Barriers, Building Futures Through Innovative Local Materials, Digital Platforms and Online Resources

Session Presenter: **Onyango Alex**, Kyambogo University, Uganda.

Abstract

By integrating internet access, digital devices, and phonics flashcards, this session empowers educators to dismantle learning barriers and foster girls' reading and language proficiency. Participants engage in hands-on activities demonstrating scalable, evidence-based literacy strategies. Emphasizing innovation and inclusion, it catalyses digital teaching skills to build futures and expand educational equity. Building upon the vision of harnessing technology to elevate literacy instruction, this session attempts to integrate internet connectivity, digital devices, and locally available materials into a cohesive, interactive workshop (Graham, 2006). Educators are encouraged to master key functional skills in OBS Studio and Google Meet, learning to record and stream high-quality video clips that model phonics-based reading lessons (MacArthur, 2012). Utilizing smartphones or laptops for live virtual engagement, teachers also explore how to incorporate interactive phonics flashcards and video segments within simultaneous online and hands-on activities. Flashcards and stationery are employed to facilitate tactile learning—blending letter sounds, conducting icebreakers, and leading reading games, thus, ensuring an engaging balance between digital innovation and traditional methods (Koehler & Mishra, 2009). The integration of short, dynamic video clips illustrate how online platforms can enhance attention, model pronunciation, and support comprehension for a broader audience (MacArthur, 2012). Throughout the session, guided practice and peer collaboration will reinforce educators' confidence in designing and delivering technology-enhanced lessons (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). Participants receive structured feedback as they create micro-teaching segments, combining OBS-recorded demonstrations with live phonics exercises to reinforce effective instructional strategies (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Finally, each educator will have developed a blueprint for translating these strategies into their classrooms, adapting to varied resource contexts. This practical, evidence-informed workshop demonstrates possibilities of breaking barriers and building futures by empowering teachers to innovate digital reading instruction at scale (UNESCO, 2021; Wenger, 1998).

Key Words: Empowerment, Digital solutions, Technology, Innovation, Inclusion.

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 8.00-9.000 AM

SESSION 1: WORKSHOP PRESENTATION 2

ROOFTOP: POLICY & FINANCING

SESSION CHAIR: DIANA AMABLE

W108: Mentoring Plus Cash: An Integrated Model to Overcome Barriers in Girls' Education

Session Presenters: **Joyce Atimango Okker**, & **Victor Arabera**, **Eunice Achola**, Traiblazers Mentoring Foundation, Uganda.

Abstract

Ugandan adolescent girls face multiple vulnerabilities including poverty, school dropout, violence, and limited access to services that undermine education and safe transition to adulthood. Dropout rates remain high: 10% among 12-year-olds and 43% among those aged 14–17, while only one-third complete A-level education. The COVID-19 pandemic further escalated risks, with UNHCR reporting a 21% rise in teenage pregnancies and an 18% increase in child marriages in Kampala and refugee settlements. The Girls Empowering Girls (GEG) programme was piloted in 21 KCCA schools and 13 parishes to support 3,000 at-risk girls to pursue education, training, and future opportunities. Built on three pillars—peer mentorship, referrals to services, and conditional cash transfers (UGX 164,000 for primary and UGX 240,000 for secondary annually), the model is coordinated by KCCA, supported by UNICEF, and funded by the EU and Government of Belgium. Over six years, two cohorts have benefitted, with 150 mentors facilitating over 340,000 mentoring sessions. Results show 96–98% primary level completion rates, 92% transitioning to secondary, and strengthened agency, leadership, and career aspirations among girls. Cash transfers reduced financial barriers, with 60% of families starting income-

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generating activities, boosting household resilience and sustaining girls' education. Child protection systems were also reinforced, with 3,736 cases of violence documented and 2,604 resolved through school and community mechanisms. Drawing on monitoring data, narratives, and evaluation findings, we argue that combining mentoring, cash support, and referrals effectively addresses drivers of dropout, promotes re-entry (including child mothers), and strengthens community support systems. Aligning with SDGs 4 and 5, the GEG programme offers a scalable, evidence-based model for advancing girls' education in both humanitarian and development contexts.

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 9.15-10.30 AM

SESSION 2: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 3: OVERCOMING SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS -RE-INTEGRATION OF YOUNG WOMEN/MOTHERS

SESSION CHAIR: BEA SIMPSON

T123: Empowering Adolescent Mothers Through School Re-entry Guidelines in Adjumani District

Session Presenters: **Susan Opok Tumusiime, Ogara Collin, Nancy Asibaziyo, Auma Gloria, & Adima Joseph**, FAWE Uganda,
Abstract

This paper draws on the project implemented by FAWE Uganda aimed to facilitate the school re-entry of pregnant girls and young mothers in refugee and host communities in Adjumani district. Between March 2024 and March 2025, the project achieved significant milestones, showcasing its effectiveness in promoting girls' education and reducing teenage pregnancies. The project recorded several notable achievements, including the return of 486 young mothers to school, training of 229 stakeholders on Gender Responsive Pedagogy, and construction of a day care center to increase young mothers' school re-entry. The project reemphasized the need for a multisectoral approach to implementation of school policy and support for girls' education. Stakeholders, including political, cultural, and religious leaders, were engaged, and they publicly committed to advocating for school re-entry, further solidifying community support for the initiative. The project's implementation yielded valuable lessons, highlighting the importance of engaging stakeholders across multiple sectors to raise awareness and foster ownership of key policy frameworks. In addition, engagement with the girls and school leadership was critical to the success of the project. Additionally, financing. Leveraging existing project structures, such as Parent/Caregiver groups, was also found to be effective in increasing school re-entry rates. Furthermore, tailored interventions, including psychosocial counseling and access to childcare services, were deemed essential in supporting young mothers' individual needs. The project's success demonstrates the potential for community-led initiatives to drive positive changes in promoting girls' education and reducing teenage pregnancies. By emphasizing community awareness, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement, the project created a supportive environment that enabled young mothers to return to school and pursue their education.

Key Words: Empowerment, Young mothers, School re-entry, Community support, Gender-responsive pedagogy

T202: Advocacy for Second Chance Education for Child Mothers: Experience from "Her Voice" Project

Session Presenters: **Atim Hope, Patience Kwiycwiny, & Sharon Ochola Katho**, MEMPROW, Uganda.
Abstract

Teenage pregnancy is one of the major barriers to education for young girls globally, in Africa and in Uganda particularly in rural areas like Pakwach district, in the West Nile region being seriously affected. Teenage pregnancy does not only disrupts girls' education but also has a far reaching consequences on their wellbeing. Pregnant girls and child mothers face stigma and rejection from their families, schools and communities, making it difficult for them to stay in school or return to school. According to a 2023 study (Nalubega and Kalanzi 2023), the national rate of teenage mothers not returning to school stands at 25% despite existing legal provisions in Uganda that protects their right to education. The Mentoring and Empowerment Programme for Young Women (MEMPROW) has been implementing "Her Voice" project in Pakwach district aimed at protecting pregnant girls and child mothers' rights to education, and their protection against exclusion from schools.

MEMPROW has engaged key stakeholders such as district education officers, school management, parents, religious and cultural leaders, and girls through activities like community sensitization on existing laws that promotes second chance education, conducted teacher's parent's dialogues, teachers training on child protection and human rights, media engagements to amplify voices of survivors, challenge harmful norms, practices, stigma, discrimination and to inspire other girls to return to school. Our findings shows that pregnant girls and child mothers lack financial support from parents to return to school, inadequate psychosocial support, stigma, and discrimination. For example, some schools still expel pregnant girls, and refer to them as "bad examples". Our recommendation is the need for more sensitization and advocacy about the existing laws and policies, increased mentorship and psychosocial support for girls.

Keywords: Child Mothers, Teenage Pregnancy, Second Chance Education

T206: Managing Student Pregnancies in Ugandan Secondary Schools: A Phenomenological Case Study from Northern Uganda

Session Presenter: **David Onen**, Makerere University, Uganda.

Abstract

The importance of educating girls equally with boys is no longer debatable—it is the cornerstone of sustainable development and social progress. Nevertheless, despite efforts towards gender parity, many girls continue to face disproportionate barriers in education, particularly due to early and unplanned pregnancies. This research examined how student pregnancy is managed and the challenges this presents to administrators in a Northern Ugandan private secondary school. Spurred by frequent repeats—five pregnancies on average per year since school inception in 1998— and the complex reactions they evoke, the research employed a phenomenological case study to capture administrators' lived experiences. Data were obtained from interviews with the headteacher, the school matron (also a nurse), the senior woman teacher, and the disciplinary committee chairperson, as well as through reviewing policy documents and disciplinary records. Thematic analysis yielded four main findings. First, there is no standard pregnancy management; it varies with parental response, student conduct, pregnancy visibility, and information provided. Second, school officials balance disciplinary codes and moral duty to counsel and protect pregnant students, especially those from vulnerable groups or those receiving NGO support. Third, the process is complicated by student and parent refusal, concealed pregnancies, breaches of confidentiality, and abortion cases. Fourth, administrators' attitudes—from empathetic to punitive—largely determine case handling, often resulting in sporadic use of school policy. Although expulsion is the official policy, most pregnant girls are quietly urged to stay or return after birth. The study concludes that student pregnancies require context-sensitive, humane, and coordinated approaches, recommending flexible policy frameworks, more administrator training in adolescent health and counselling, and stronger school-community cooperation for prevention and reintegration of at-risk students.

Keywords: Student pregnancy, school leadership, practice of discipline, secondary schooling, Northern Uganda

T229: Exploring the Role of School Gender Clubs in Re-shaping Harmful Gender Norms in Afar Ethiopia

Session Presenters: **Fitsum Workneh, Yitagesu Gebeyehu, Nicola Jones, Kefyalew Endale, & Workneh Yadete**, GAGE, Ethiopia.

Abstract

This paper explores the strengths and weaknesses of a school-based gender club model focused on fostering gender equity and girls' agency so as to tackle harmful gender norms and practices, including female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage, in Ethiopia's Afar region. We analyse the efficacy of a multi-year school-based gender club initiative implemented as part of a broader multi-level INGO intervention to eradicate harmful gender norms and practices in Hari Rasu Zone in Afar. This study utilized mixed-methods research conducted in 2022 and 2024 in 18 rural communities in three districts of Ethiopia's Afar region. Survey data were collected from 1,022 adolescents and their caregivers. Qualitative interviews were also conducted with approximately 270 adults and adolescents. Research ethics approval was secured from the Ethiopian Association of Sociologists, Social Workers and Social Anthropologists and ODI Global. The finds of the study revealed that in communities where there are functioning schools with regular teacher attendance (predominantly those close to district towns) gender clubs played an important role in shaping more gender equitable attitudes among both boys and girls, thus, promoting girls' education and eschewing child marriage and FGM. However, in communities where schools suffer from poor infrastructure, high teacher absenteeism and low parental commitment to education, lacked the basic conditions to implement effective life skills sessions through school-based gender clubs. Overall the findings highlight the need for tailored life skills programs that is embedded within a broader package of education support for first generation learners especially those living in remote rural localities in Ethiopia and East Africa region.

Key words: life skills, gender norms, child marriage, education

National Conference on 'What Works in Girls' Education', 1-3 October 2025

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 9.15-10.30 AM

SESSION 2: PARALLEL SESSIONS

**MEETING ROOM 201: OVERCOMING SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS
(COMMUNITY-LED)**

SESSION CHAIR: JOHN V. MITANA

**T520: Enhancing Public Policy Innovations for Inclusive Financing with a Gender Equity Lens in Education for All
Girls in Uganda**

Session Presenters: **Celia Amanya, & Wilson Okaka**, Kyambogo University, Uganda.

Abstract

Uganda's education system continues to face challenges in ensuring equitable access to quality education for girls, despite progressive national frameworks and global commitments. Barriers such as poverty, gender-based discrimination, limited financing, and inadequate policy implementation restrict opportunities for girls across early childhood, primary, secondary, and higher education. Applying a gender equity lens to public policy innovations is critical to bridging these gaps. The objectives are to: (1) analyze the effectiveness of current national education policies and financing models, (2) assess gender-responsive funding interventions, (3) identify lessons from best practices and case studies, and (4) recommend cost-effective strategies to scale up inclusive education for all girls. A systematic literature review and policy analysis were employed, drawing evidence from government reports, scholarly studies, and international frameworks. Case studies of scholarship programs, bursaries, and public-private partnerships (PPPs) were examined. The communication theory of change was applied to map how policy reforms and financing innovations can transform access and outcomes. Findings indicate that gender-responsive budgeting, conditional cash transfers, and community-driven scholarship schemes enhance retention and completion rates. PPPs in Uganda have provided scalable models for resource mobilization, though gaps remain in sustainability and equity. The study anticipates that effective policy interventions, inclusive funding mechanisms, and accountability frameworks will promote equitable access to quality education for all girls. Strengthening cross-sector partnerships and integrating communication for social change will accelerate national progress toward Education for All.

Keywords: gender equity, inclusive financing, girls' education, public policy, Uganda

**T204: Breaking the Silence – A Practical Model to Address Sexual Violence and Empower Girls'
Education in Luwero District, Uganda**

Session Presenter: **Ssesanga Micheal**, CODI, Uganda.

Abstract

Despite progress in expanding access to education in Uganda, girls—particularly in rural areas like Luwero District—continue to face systemic challenges that limit their educational success. These include economic hardship, harmful social norms, gender-based violence, and inadequate menstrual hygiene support. Sexual violence, early marriage, and stigma against pregnant learners are major drivers of school dropout. Deeply rooted cultural attitudes prioritize boys' education, while girls are burdened with domestic roles or married off early. Inadequate access to sanitary products and safe school facilities causes many girls to miss school during menstruation. This paper presents a community-led, prevention-focused model that addresses these barriers through coordinated, evidence-based strategies under the Coalition for the Rights and Violence Prevention Framework (CRVPF). Four practical innovations are highlighted: (1) **Positive Parenting Training** has been rolled out in over 15 villages, engaging 2,400 parents in structured sessions that promote gender equality and support for girls' education. (2) **Teen Parent Empowerment** through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and life skills programs has helped 1,650 teen parents overcome stigma and provide for their children's education. (3) **School-Based Clubs** in 10 government-aided schools have created safe spaces for 3,800 students, promoting rights advocacy and reducing bullying and corporal punishment. (4) **Safe Space Engagements** for 1,140 girls build agency, promote peer protection, and support school reintegration or skills development for out-of-school girls. Our recommendations include formalizing community parenting models in local policy, scaling up safe spaces and VSLAs, and embedding GBV prevention in local education and health systems. In conclusion, this model aims to break the silence surrounding sexual violence and systemic exclusion by empowering girls, families, and communities to create safer, more supportive educational environments.

Key Words: Systemic challenges, Community-led, Safer spaces, Empowerment

T211: Community-Driven Pathways to Overcome Gendered Barriers and Keep Girls in school

Session Presenter: **Lilian Njeri Mbuthi**, Stanford University, Kenya.

Abstract

This paper investigates which combinations of community, school, and policy levers most effectively remove socio-economic and cultural barriers that keep adolescent girls out of school in Uganda, with transferable lessons for East Africa. The objectives are to (i) identify context-fit approaches that reduce early marriage and school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), (ii) increase re-entry after pregnancy, and (iii) improve attendance and completion. I conducted a realist evidence synthesis (2013–2025) of peer-reviewed and grey literature on girls' education in Uganda/East Africa; a scan of Uganda's policies and education budgets on re-entry, SRGBV prevention, and social protection; and two practice vignettes compiled from implementer reports and stakeholder consultations (one urban low-income, one rural). The analysis asks "what works, for whom, under what conditions," attending to heterogeneity by region, disability, and wealth quintile. The key findings of the investigation revealed that effective efforts cluster around three design features. (1) Pairing economic relief with social empowerment, such as fee waivers or bursaries plus girls' clubs and caregiver dialogues, shifts household decisions toward schooling and strengthens persistence. (2) Proximity and safety matter: safe-journey initiatives, learner-centred remedial support, and trusted female mentors (e.g., Senior Woman Teachers) reduce drop-out and improve weekly attendance. (3) Accountability changes behaviour: functional SRGBV reporting and case management, backed by district-level response, increases re-entry and reduces repeat incidents. The proposed outcome of this inquiry include; a practical "3-3-3 bundle" for scale in Uganda: three enabling policies (cost relief, operationalised re-entry, enforced SRGBV protocols), three school practices (targeted remediation, mentoring, attendance tracking), and three community supports (girls' clubs with livelihoods components, caregiver savings groups for education costs, safe-journey initiatives). The paper specifies roles for ministries, districts, and CSOs and outlines low-cost adaptations for diverse Ugandan and East African contexts.

Keywords: Girls' education; socio-economic barriers; SRGBV; school re-entry; community engagement

T215: Overcoming Socio-economic and Cultural Barriers to Promote Girls' Education in Ethiopia: Amhara Region in Focus [online]

Session Presenters: **Dessalegn Yeshambel Wassie**, Debre Markos University, Ethiopia.

Abstract

Empowering girls with education is a fundamental human right and a crucial component for sustainable development worldwide. Despite divergent progresses made in recent years, socio-economic and cultural barriers continue to hinder girls' access to quality education in Ethiopia besides prolonged conflict and war. This paper explores evidence-based strategies to overcome these barriers and promote girls' education, focusing on breaking barriers, and building Futures in Ethiopia. Using qualitative exploratory research methods, and a comprehensive review of existing data (community interviews and case studies), the finding identifies key socio economic and cultural factors that significantly impede girl's education in Ethiopia, particularly in Amhara region Wogihmira Zone. The result of the finding indicates that poverty, early marriage, and deep rooted gender norms are found to be the dominant problems that critically hinder girl's education in the study area. Furthermore, lack of media access, lack of access to schools, prolonged conflict and war, low level of community empowerment, and inadequate resources makes girl's education most difficult. Understanding the situation, this study recommends tailored interventions to overcome the identified challenges by employing integrated community-based approaches. Evidence based multi-sectorial solutions such as mentoring girls, empowering the community, facilitating the access to media and schools, supporting girls with awareness creation, and easing community engagement programs are important for better enhancement of girl's education. This intervention project helped to empower girls, challenged societal norms, and used to create a supportive environment for their better education. Moreover, collaborations with governmental and non-governmental organizations, communities, international partners and stakeholders are essential to drive sustainable change in girl's education in Ethiopia. **Key Words:** Empowerment, Community-based, Gender norms, Cultural barriers

T217: Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: Evidence and Action for Girls' EducationSession Presenter: **Ndabaga Eugene**, University of Rwanda, Rwanda.**Abstract**

Girls' education is a cornerstone of sustainable development, empowering individuals and societies while intersecting with health and well-being. Globally, over 130 million girls remain out of school, facing barriers like poverty, cultural norms favoring boys, gender-based violence, early marriage conflict, inadequate facilities, and poor infrastructure. These obstacles perpetuate cycles of inequality, with evidence linking low female education to higher fertility rates, poorer health outcomes, and reduced economic participation. In Rwanda, post-genocide gender equality policies have achieved near parity in primary enrollment, yet challenges persist. Dropout rates for girls reached 6.8% in 2022-2023, driven by academic pressure, adolescent pregnancy (affecting 2% of girls), HIV infections three times higher among females aged 15-24 than males, and gender stereotypes limiting STEM pursuits like medicine. Uneducated mothers face doubled fewer than 5 child mortality risks, underscoring education's role in health and well-being. Actions to break barriers include interventions addressing financial hurdles through scholarships and norm-shifting campaigns, alongside improved school environments. In Rwanda, programs like Safe Schools for Girls (SS4G), Building Learning Foundations, Adolescent Girls Initiative, and Komera provide safe spaces, reproductive health education, and empowerment training to boost retention and skills. These efforts yield high returns: educated girls drive economic growth, healthier families, and reduced inequalities. Building futures requires scaling evidence based actions, integrating health services into education, and challenging biases. By prioritizing girls in Rwanda and beyond, we foster resilient, equitable societies

Key words: Girl's education, Barriers, empowering individuals, post-gender equality

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 9.15-10.30 AM

SESSION 2: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 401: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES -EVIDENCE-BASED TEACHING

SESSION CHAIR: EMMY ZOOMLAMAI

T107: Teaching Without Limits: Innovative Paths to Power Girls' LearningSession Presenter: **Apio Linda**, Kyambogo University, Uganda.**Abstract**

This paper investigates the question “How can innovative pedagogy, assessments, and learning approaches effectively remove barriers and improve educational outcomes for girls?” Its objectives are to identify teaching methods that actively engage girls, explore inclusive assessment techniques reflecting diverse abilities, and propose scalable strategies for embedding innovation in classrooms. The study highlights how gender-responsive and learner-centered methods can dismantle stereotypes and foster an empowering learning environment for girls. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining classroom observations, teacher interviews, and focus group discussions with female learners in three Ugandan districts. Participatory action research guided co-development of teaching interventions, while pre- and post-intervention assessments measured changes in girls’ engagement, confidence, and academic performance. Key findings revealed that integrating storytelling, collaborative problem-solving, and culturally relevant content increased girls’ classroom participation by 35% and improved retention rates. Gender-sensitive assessments provided a more accurate reflection of girls’ competencies, boosting self-confidence and aspirations. The paper proposes a replicable teacher training model that incorporates these innovations into daily practice. This work demonstrates that innovative pedagogy and assessment are powerful tools for breaking gender-based educational barriers. By equipping educators with evidence-based strategies, the paper contributes to creating inclusive classrooms where every girl’s potential is recognized and nurtured, ultimately building futures without limits.

Key Words: Innovative pedagogy, Assessment, Learning approaches, inclusive classroom

T107: Teaching Without Limits: Innovative Paths to Power Girls' Learning

Session Presenter: **Apio Linda**, Kyambogo University, Uganda.

Abstract

This paper investigates the question “How can innovative pedagogy, assessments, and learning approaches effectively remove barriers and improve educational outcomes for girls?” Its objectives are to identify teaching methods that actively engage girls, explore inclusive assessment techniques reflecting diverse abilities, and propose scalable strategies for embedding innovation in classrooms. The study highlights how gender-responsive and learner-centered methods can dismantle stereotypes and foster an empowering learning environment for girls. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining classroom observations, teacher interviews, and focus group discussions with female learners in three Ugandan districts. Participatory action research guided co-development of teaching interventions, while pre- and post-intervention assessments measured changes in girls’ engagement, confidence, and academic performance. Key findings revealed that integrating storytelling, collaborative problem-solving, and culturally relevant content increased girls’ classroom participation by 35% and improved retention rates. Gender-sensitive assessments provided a more accurate reflection of girls’ competencies, boosting self-confidence and aspirations. The paper proposes a replicable teacher training model that incorporates these innovations into daily practice. This work demonstrates that innovative pedagogy and assessment are powerful tools for breaking gender-based educational barriers. By equipping educators with evidence-based strategies, the paper contributes to creating inclusive classrooms where every girl’s potential is recognized and nurtured, ultimately building futures without limits.

Key Words: Innovative pedagogy, Assessment, Learning approaches, inclusive classroom

T103: Integrating wisdom Pedagogy into Curriculum Reforms: A Strategic Approach to Advancing Quality Education and Facilitating the Learning of Innovative Behavior to uplift the Aspirations of the Girl Child

Session Presenter: **Miir Farooq**, Islamic University in Uganda, Uganda.

Abstract

In an era where education often fails to produce graduates equipped with the mindset, skills, and moral compass necessary for personal and socio-economic transformation, the future of the African girl child remains increasingly vulnerable—particularly within the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world. Despite growing access to formal education, many girls leave school without acquiring the competencies, confidence, or character needed to lead meaningful lives. A critical gap exists between education as it is delivered and the facilitation of learning innovative behavior—the process by which learners are empowered to think critically, act ethically, and create value in a changing world. Contributing factors such as poverty, gender-based violence, collapsing family structures, and moral decay have compounded the challenges facing the girl child. Many girls, even those who complete school, remain ill-prepared for real-life demands, unable to sustain themselves or contribute positively to their communities. The absence of morally grounded and visionary male peers further exacerbates this issue, making it difficult for girls to realize aspirations around family, leadership, and stability. This paper advocates for the integration of Wisdom Pedagogy into curriculum reforms as a strategic intervention to advance quality education and effectively facilitate the learning of innovative behavior. Wisdom Pedagogy goes beyond content delivery—it focuses on nurturing holistic human beings through the cultivation of ethical reasoning, emotional intelligence, spiritual grounding, and practical life skills. It positions education as a tool for human flourishing, not just economic advancement. Additionally, the paper presents a framework to guide policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators in redesigning learning systems that nurture both boys and girls, with a deliberate emphasis on elevating the aspirations of the girl child. It repositions motherhood, family values, and societal contribution as vital components of the educational journey. Through this transformative approach, the paper calls for a shift from mechanistic schooling to a wisdom-driven, inclusive, and life-affirming educational paradigm—building a future rooted in both humaniversity and communitiversity ideals.

Key Words: Wisdom Pedagogy; Curriculum Reforms; Girl Child Education; Learning Innovative Behavior; Quality Education

T104: Enhancing Girls' Learning Outcomes through Ability-Focused Personalized Learning in Rural Kenyan Junior Schools

Session Presenter: **Rachel Celine Ntinyari**, Aga Khan University, Kenya.

Abstract

The research presents findings from a mixed-methods case study about Ability-Focused Personalized Learning (AFPL) implementation under Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum in Imenti South Sub-County's large rural public junior school. The learner-centered pedagogy of Ability-Focused Personalized Learning (AFPL) shows great promise to reduce gender-based learning disparities in areas with limited resources because it tailors instruction to individual cognitive abilities and interests and learning speeds. The research examined teachers' views about Ability-Focused Personalized Learning as well as their instructional methods and challenges that hinder AFPL implementation. The research collected quantitative data from 50 students through questionnaires while gathering qualitative information through teacher interviews and head teacher interviews and learner FGD and lesson observations. The researchers conducted statistical analysis of SPSS descriptive statistics while using NVivo for thematic coding of qualitative data. The research showed data for that teachers while grasped the theoretical aspects of AFPL and its ability to involve all students, but their classroom methods remained traditional and did not engage in differentiation of instruction. The classroom implementation of learner profiling and flexible grouping and formative feedback was restricted by three main systemic barriers which included large class sizes and insufficient learning resources and limited ICT infrastructure. The educational limitations affected girls most strongly because they received less differentiated instruction especially when they lacked academic confidence or came from disadvantaged backgrounds. The paper also demonstrates that complete implementation of AFPL leads to enhanced learner engagement and motivation and outcomes for girls through its ability to establish learning environments that support diverse needs. The research recommends teacher capacity-building programs that focus on gender-responsive materials and formative assessment tools to enhance equitable participation. The Kenyan case may provide transferable approaches to improve girls' education in comparable rural educational settings.

Keywords: Ability-Focused Personalized Learning; gender-responsive pedagogy; inclusive education; rural schools; Competency-Based Curriculum

T106: Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: Evidence & Action for Girls' Education Fostering Gender Equity Through Innovative Pedagogies for Girls' Education in Uganda

Session Presenter: **Jennifer Nyangoma Magezi**, PAK Trinity Memorial Institute of Nursing and Midwifery, Uganda.

Abstract

This study investigates how innovative, gender responsive pedagogies and inclusive classroom practices can enhance girls' educational outcomes in Uganda, addressing persistent socio-cultural barriers, limited STEM participation, and high dropout rates. Despite significant progress, girls in East Africa, particularly in rural areas, continue to face profound educational challenges exacerbated by gender norms, poverty, and geographical isolation. The research explores how evidence-based teaching methods and participatory assessments improve girls' engagement, retention, and academic performance. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study analysed data from classroom observations, teacher training workshops, and learner focus groups across 12 Ugandan primary schools in Butiiti coordinating centre. Preliminary findings indicate that gender-responsive pedagogies, which integrate collaborative learning, female role models, and culturally relevant curricula, significantly increase girls' classroom participation and interest in STEM fields. Inclusive assessment strategies, such as project-based evaluations, further empower girls by valuing diverse skills, reducing performance anxiety, and fostering confidence. These approaches also create equitable learning environments that benefit boys, promoting holistic educational outcomes for all learners. The paper proposes scalable solutions, including comprehensive teacher professional development in gender-sensitive teaching and the strategic integration of digital tools to support inclusive classrooms. These findings align with the conference's goal of identifying actionable, evidence-based strategies to dismantle barriers and enhance girls' education in Uganda and the East African region.

Keywords: Gender-Responsive Pedagogies, Girls' Education, Inclusive Assessments, STEM Engagement, Uganda

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 9.15-10.30 AM

SESSION 2: PARALLEL SESSIONS

GARDEN HALL: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES -STEM

SESSION CHAIR: ELIZABETH OPIT

T105: Empowering girls through STEM Training: Lessons from the Fundi Girls' Program

Session Presenter: **Obote Geoffrey**, Fundi Gots: Accelerating Science Learning in Africa, Kampala, Uganda.

Abstract

Across Uganda and much of Sub-Saharan Africa, girls continue to face deep rooted barriers when it comes to accessing and thriving in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Education. The Fundi Girls program by Fundi Bots is working to change this by intentionally creating opportunities for girls to learn, build confidence and explore STEM through hands-on training and mentorship. The Fundi Girls program combines direct support like Robotics training, digital Literacy and mentorship with broader commitment to gender equity. This paper shares lessons and insights from the Fundi Girls Program, drawing on feedback from students, teachers and families, as well as participation and performance data. It highlights how gender-responsive teaching practices combined with female mentorship fosters a sense of visibility, support and capability among girls in spaces where they have historically been underrepresented. The results are encouraging. Girls involved in the program not only stay engaged in class, but many begin to see themselves as future Engineers, scientists and problem solvers. The program has also sparked shifts in the mindset among teachers and the communities about what girls can do. This paper provides practical insights for schools, educators and policy makers with intention to make STEM and Education in general more equitable. With an ambitious goal of reaching over 125,000 African girls and young women by 2030, Fundi Girls program offers a model of what is possible when we intentionally design programs and create learning environments where girls can thrive.

Keywords: STEM-Education, gender inclusion, Equity and Robotics.

T117: Pedagogy, Gender and STEM in Higher Education: Evidence from a Scoping Review in Sub-Saharan Africa

Session Presenters:

Simpson Zach, University of Johannesburg, RSA.

Matemba Esther, Curtin University, Perth, Australia.

Helem Iglis, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

Baatseba Ramushu, University of Johannesburg, RSA.

Lucy Wakiaga, African Population Health Research Center (APHRC), Nairobi, Kenya.

Abstract

STEM disciplines are widely recognized as critical drivers of economic growth and thus occupy a central place in higher education policy and practice. Yet, women remain significantly underrepresented in these fields worldwide, including in sub-Saharan Africa. While regional and national policy initiatives have encouraged gender-responsive approaches to STEM teaching and learning, empirical evidence on effective pedagogical models within higher education institutions in the region remains scarce. This paper shares findings from a study conducted by APHRC and the University of Johannesburg, and supported by IDRC. The objective of the scoping review was to determine the current state of evidence on the intersection of gender, diversity, inclusion and pedagogy in STEM-focused disciplines in African universities. The review was anchored on followed Westphaln et al's (2021) adaptation of Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) six-stage scoping review framework, that integrates stakeholder consultation at all stages. Literature was identified through targeted searches of established academic databases using predefined search terms. Findings highlight the need for more inclusive teaching, learning, and assessment strategies. Approaches such as peer tutoring and mentoring have been shown to enhance female students' engagement and persistence in STEM problem and inquiry-based learning to promote equitable participation in collaborative settings, while blended and e-learning formats offer flexibility for students balancing academic and caregiving responsibilities. Although these strategies are present in bridging and extended programs, their integration into mainstream curricula is limited. Recommendations include expanding lecturer training in gender-responsive pedagogy, investing in the scholarship of teaching and learning to surface and scale effective practices, and conducting targeted research on the role of open, distance, and hybrid learning in supporting women in STEM. Further investigation into the impact of preferential access policies is also warranted. The persistent gap between policy commitments and classroom practice underscores the need to examine how gender intersects with race,

class, ethnicity, and ability, and to translate policy intentions into transformative pedagogical change.

Key words: Innovative Pedagogies; STEM; Girls; Sub-Saharan Africa

T125: Mitigating Stereotypes and Equipping with Skills: Methods for Advancing the Involvement of Girls in STEM Education in Uganda

Session Presenter: **Isabairawo Joshua**, Josh Educational Services, Uganda.

Abstract

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) is central to national development, yet in Uganda, girls remain significantly underrepresented. Persistent socio-cultural stereotypes, limited exposure to STEM careers, and the scarcity of female role models contribute to this gender gap. Addressing these barriers is essential for achieving equitable access to quality education and fostering inclusive future career opportunities for girls. The study aims to propose and evaluate strategies that effectively encourage interest, enrollment, and retention of girls in STEM subjects at both primary and secondary school levels. A mixed-method research design was used, combining a survey of 200 students and 50 teachers from urban and rural schools with in-depth interviews of women professionals in STEM. Additionally, a six-month intervention was conducted in three schools, involving mentorship programmes, hands-on STEM club activities, and community engagement initiatives. Findings reveal a 35% increase in girls' interest and participation in STEM activities in intervention schools. Qualitative data suggest that role model mentorship, parental sensitisation, and practical STEM engagement significantly improve confidence and aspiration among girls. The paper proposes that scaling these interventions nationally could contribute to narrowing the gender gap in STEM education, thereby enhancing Uganda's human capital for future development.

Keywords: Girls' education, STEM, gender equity, Uganda, mentorship

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 9.15-10.30 AM

SESSION 2: WORKSHOP PRESENTATION 3

ROOFTOP: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES -TEACHER PROVISION & TRAINING

SESSION CHAIR: JANE SUBUYUNGO

W106: Learn to Learn: Kimanya Ngeyo's Approach to Closing Students' Learning Gaps

Session Presenters: **Juliet Asekenye, Acam Nawruz, & Lyndah Mwangi**, Kimanya Ngeyo, Uganda.

Abstract

Although primary enrollment is high in Uganda, only 35.5% of students reached the final primary grade by 2016, and just 59% of them transitioned to lower secondary (UNESCO, 2020), with girls facing greater barriers. Kimanya Ngeyo's (KN) "Learning to Learn" approach is addressing these disparities through a one-year in-service teacher training program in Jinja and Buikwe districts. Rigorously evaluated through a randomized controlled trial led by Prof. Vesali Nourani (Harvard Graduate School of Education), the program shows that training teachers to apply scientific principles to their own teaching practice yields lasting improvements in student outcomes for both boys and girls. These include improved outcomes in numeracy, literacy, higher order learning and scientific competencies; uniform gains in PLE scores by 0.5 standard deviations and 24 percentage point increases in pass rates; and nearly one extra effective year of schooling per student—delivering 9.62 learning-adjusted years of schooling for every \$100 invested. Beyond academic results, the finds also revealed improved school progression, classroom attendance and engagement, and critical thinking among students in participating schools. The program comprises three 10-13 days-intensive training sessions during school holidays, complemented by in-school reflective accompaniment during school-terms. Teachers explore the purpose of education beyond subject mastery, considering its broader relevance for the learners' lives and society. They are assisted in immersing scientific inquiry: posing incisive questions, forming precise hypotheses, and drawing on evidence from daily life to address and overcome learning barriers.

Keywords: Innovative and reflective pedagogies, Evidence-based gender-neutral interventions, Two-fold aims of education

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 2.30-3.30 PM

SESSION 4: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 3: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES -TEACHER PROVISION & TRAINING

SESSION CHAIR: JOHN V MITANA

T120: Empowering Teachers to Break Pedagogical Barriers in Girls' Education: Contextualizing Project-Based Learning in Uganda

Session Presenters: **Fetaru Dorothy Alemigah, & Zanvacia Grace**, Uganda.

Abstract

In Uganda, gender stereotypes continue to constrain girls' aspirations, limiting their participation in the knowledge economy. Project-Based Learning (PBL), with its multidisciplinary and inquiry-driven approach, holds strong promise for fostering girls' academic, creative, and socio-emotional development while dismantling these barriers. Yet, the transformative potential of PBL is often undermined by teacher misconceptions, inadequate professional development, and systemic resource limitations. To unlock this potential, this study positioned teacher empowerment through reflective and context-specific professional learning as the central strategy for advancing girls' educational equity. Guided by Lewin's cyclical model of action research, the study was conducted in an urban girls' secondary school. Six teachers engaged as co-researchers in two structured PBL cycles. This participatory design enabled teachers to diagnose pedagogical barriers, co-develop responsive strategies, and adapt PBL to girls' real-world contexts. Data from focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and reflective journals were thematically analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six step framework. Findings demonstrate that, contextually adapted PBL empowered girls through three interconnected outcomes: (1) Integrated learning and skill development bridged knowledge across disciplines, dismantling stereotypes that certain careers are "not for girls"; (2) engaging in real world projects heightened engagement and motivation, boosting girls' confidence, persistence, and proficiency; and (3) Personalized and inclusive learning environments, enabling intellectual risk-taking, leadership growth, and recognition of girls' unique contributions in non-traditional fields. The study affirms that multidisciplinary, PBL rooted in authenticity, collaboration, and learner autonomy; not only advances equitable girls' education but also builds critical thinking, creativity, ethical awareness, and technical competence. It offers actionable recommendations for integrating contextualized PBL into teacher training, curriculum design, and education policy to achieve Uganda's goals for inclusive, high- quality education.

Keywords: Project-Based Learning, Girls' Education, Teacher Empowerment, 21st-Century Skills, STEAM, Action Research

T121: Zoning of Teachers and How it has Supported Literacy Attainment for Girls in World Vision Areas of Operation in Western Uganda

Session Presenters: **Muchope John, & Irene Kagoya**, World Vision Uganda.

Abstract

Despite interventions to improve literacy in Uganda, a 2021 Uwezo report revealed that only 39.5% of learners from P.3 to P.7 had acquired competence in reading. This meant that a whopping 60.5% of children could not read. Equally 25.1% of children in grade three were non-readers an increase from 12.8% in 2018. The paper highlights how capacity building of teachers was successfully done through zoning in order to support literacy attainment for boys and girls including performance results. The approaches used included: (1) Training of Teacher Trainers in Unlock literacy methodology -Teachers are trained to manage gender in a literacy lesson and also promote social emotional learning. The program organized and conducted a 5-day training for 102 Unlock Literacy trainers (64M, 38F) in the month of March, 2022. (2) Zoning of teachers -Schools were zoned by dividing all schools equally amongst the literacy trainers for effective support. Each trainer was allocated 3-4 schools for support. (3) Follow up and mentorship support to teachers - Each teacher trainer continued to follow-up and provide mentorship to teachers in his/her catchment area, providing hands on support. (4) Assessment of children in literacy in selected area programs - Assessment was done annually, at mid strategy and at the end of the strategy. Results revealed that through the zoning program, 18,252 children, 235 teachers of lower grades have been reached in 71 schools in Western region. Overall, the proportion of children in Grade three achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in reading improved from 35.8% in 2021 to 54% in 2025 **with girls contributing 49% of the overall results in World vision Uganda**. In conclusion, when teachers have skills of managing gender in literacy lessons, it supports girls to perform better.

Key Words: Intervention, Zoning of teachers, Assessment, Mentorship

T124: The Gender Responsive Pedagogy, Improving Learning Outcomes for Boys and Girls

Session Presenters: **Gloria Auma, Collin Ogara, & Martin Okhako**, FAWE Uganda

Abstract

Gender-Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) is a model developed by Forum African Women Educationalists (FAWE) in 2005 to address the quality of teaching in African schools. The GRP model trains teachers and pre-service teachers to be more gender aware and equips them with the skills to understand and address the specific learning needs of both sexes. It develops teaching practices, language use, and learning materials that engender equal treatment and participation of girls and boys in the classroom and in the wider school community. It advocates for classroom practices that ensure equal participation of girls and boys, including a classroom environment that encourages both to thrive. Teachers are trained in the design and use of gender-responsive lesson plans, classroom interaction, classroom set-up, language use in the classroom, teaching and learning materials, management of sexual maturation, strategies to eliminate sexual harassment, gender-responsive school management systems, and monitoring and evaluation. GRP is now implemented in primary, secondary, institutions and universities in 13 countries across Africa. GRP has led to noticeable improvements in learner engagement, confidence, and academic performance, particularly among girls who had previously been marginalized. Teachers reported increased awareness of their own biases and improved classroom management that supported equal participation for girls and boys. Schools developed gender action plans and adopted gender-sensitive policies and practices, while communities began to shift their attitudes around gender and education. Importantly, both boys and girls benefited from the more inclusive learning environment. Successful implementation of GRP requires continuous teacher support and mentorship, as changing mindsets and teaching habits is a gradual process. Buy-in from school leadership and community stakeholders proved essential for sustainability. Additionally, contextualizing the training materials to reflect local realities greatly enhanced relevance and uptake. Scaling such interventions offers a pathway to more just, inclusive, and high-performing education systems.

Key Words: Pedagogy, Teacher training, gender action, planning

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 2.30-3.30 PM

SESSION 4: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 201: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES -INTERVENTIONS

SESSION CHAIR: FATUMA WAMALA

T122: Indigenous and Contemporary Early Years' Education Pedagogy: What works for Girls' Life-Skills Education

Session Presenter: **Nakidde Caroline Kavuma**, Kyambogo University, Uganda.

Abstract

The study sought to explore the pedagogies that work best in developing girls' life-skills. An exploratory sequential approach was used to explore how indigenous (IP) and contemporary pedagogies (CP) prepared girl-children for life. Specifically, it explored how families and formal schools nurtured five categories of six-year-old girl-children's life skills, namely, productive work-skills, social, intellectual, health and safe living as well as character formation life-skills. Mixed-methods design was used to gather qualitative data through observations, interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), from 20 key informants 44 stakeholders, 36 home-girls and 36 school-girls from 85 schools; and quantitative data through surveys from 76 teachers and 76 parents. Qualitative findings revealed that personal beliefs, principles, and societal values influenced parents' pedagogical choices. Conversely, learning theories, academic excellence, parental and proprietor interests influenced teachers' classroom choice. The study found IP to contribute 46.2% ($R^2 = .462$) to life-skills development, whereas contemporary methods contributed 17.6% ($R^2 = .173$). The study established specific indigenous methods that still work to cultivate girls' life-skill; including heart-to-heart talk, situational modelling and intergenerational approach. Accordingly, current methods like video -watching, animated stories and cartoons worked fairly in skilling girls. The study recommends integration of IP and CP to have a hybrid pedagogy and assessment model guided by the theory of selective restoration for pedagogical complementarity for more impactful skilling; towards repositioning CP, driven by global demands, on indigenous philosophical foundations, to empower African girls' discernment and negotiating power and economic proficiency, towards minimizing their vulnerability. While hybrid pedagogy may be comprehensive, there are deep epistemological differences between IP (holistic, oral, spiritual) and CP (rationalist, fragmented, text-based) paradigms which may conflict during integration (Odora Hoppers, 2002).

It is imperative to have robust teacher education, curriculum reforms, and community dialogue with knowledge bearers to have cognitive justice; for participatory knowledge validation to fulfill the promise of hybrid pedagogy.

Key words: Indigenous Pedagogy, Contemporary Pedagogy, life-skills development, girls' education, hybrid pedagogy

T126: A Whole-School System Approach to Fostering Critical Thinking Skills Among Students in Ugandan Secondary Schools

Session Presenters: **Christine Nassanga, John Muhangyi, & Martin Ariapa**, Luigi Guissani Foundation, Uganda.
Abstract

Amid rapidly evolving societal demands, higher-order competencies are essential for young people's academic, professional, and civic success (Castek et al., 2018; Lipman, 2003). To cultivate such competencies, pedagogical approaches that position learners at the center of the learning process, and encourage inquiry and reflection are recommended (Paul & Elder, 2008). In Uganda, the competence-based curriculum reflects this emphasis but implementation is hindered by teachers' difficulties in lesson planning, content adaptation, and assessment, largely due to limited training—prompting continued reliance on traditional methods (Wambi et al., 2024; Muhwezi, 2023). Against this background, Luigi Guissani Foundation (LGF) has implemented the *Critical Thinking Enhancement Initiative* in Ugandan secondary schools in Central and Eastern Uganda. The initiative aims to improve teacher pedagogy and enhance learning outcomes for secondary school boys and girls. The intervention adopts a whole school system approach, supporting teachers to adopt gender transformative pedagogical approaches that nurture critical and other higher order thinking skills in learners. This paper examines the effectiveness of the gender transformative whole school system approach in fostering critical thinking skills among learners in Ugandan secondary schools. The paper addresses the research question: *How is gender transformative pedagogy implemented in the classroom to enhance students' learning outcomes?* Using a qualitative design, data were collected from 34 schools through group discussions, interviews, lesson plan review and classroom observations. The findings revealed a shift in teachers' gender perceptions, with reduced biases towards girls' participation in science subjects. Through continuous coaching and support supervision, teachers demonstrated improved lesson planning, delivery, and assessment which integrate inclusive strategies such as mixed gender grouping and presentations, equitable distribution of roles, responding to questions and sensitivity in language usage. These strategies heightened learners' awareness of gender, with students constantly advocating for equitable participation in class activities. The study also showed that a whole school system approach focusing on gender transformative education effectively enhances boys and girls learning outcomes.

Keywords: Critical thinking, secondary schools, whole-school system, skills

T130: Readyng Out-of-School Girls for Conventional School Success in Uganda

Session Presenters: **Rebecca Ecwou, & Eyasu Mekonnen**, Geneva Global Uganda
Abstract

Geneva Global has operated Speed School, an accelerated education program, in Uganda since 2016 and Ethiopia since 2011 to bring out-of-school children aged 9 to 14 into mainstream classes after one year. Evidence from all sources point to the program's consistent success. Not only do 90% of Speed School enrollees transition yearly to mainstream classes but they tend to excel there academically and socially. Last year, Geneva Global sought to understand better why these results keep repeating. In each country, they surveyed about 120 teachers who had taught former Speed School students (FSSS) at least two years to compare their learning strategies and behaviors to those of their fully mainstream schooled classmates. Reporting on about 37,000 students (just over half of whom are girls), the teachers also shared the percentage of FSSS in the top-ten and top-twenty academic rankings of their classes. While about 20% of the 37,000 students had completed Speed School classes (15% in Uganda), nearly 35% occupied a top-ten ranking (30% in Uganda) and 55% were in the top twenty (49% in Uganda). Of the top-ten and top-twenty FSSS, nearly half (49.3% and 48.3%, respectively) were girls. Concerning their learning strategies and behaviors—e.g., collaboration, inquiry, and critical thinking—the teachers confirmed that FSSS surpassed their classmates greatly in every aspect. While reviewing the findings a bit more deeply, the paper's authors will spend more time illuminating the three key elements of the Speed School model that Geneva Global believes to foster the superior learning strategies and behaviors that explain these greater learning outcomes, especially for girls, who usually face greater barriers. These are (i) the pedagogic model, which features highly active, genuinely competency-based instruction and learning, (ii) a highly inclusive, joyous approach to classroom management, and (iii) the energetic involvement and support of students' mothers.

Keywords: accelerated education; learning; pedagogy; transition

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 2.30-3.30 PM

SESSION 4: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 401: SAFER SCHOOLS

SESSION CHAIR: GRACE MUSIIMIRE

T113: Narrowing the Gender Gap: Promising Gains for Girls in Foundational Learning Through UCatchUp

Session Presenters: **Brenda Abiro, Kakula Wandi, & Pulah Aryatuha**, VVOB Uganda

Abstract

The persistent gender disparities in foundational literacy and numeracy remain a barrier to equitable learning outcomes in Uganda's primary schools ([UNESCO, 2023](#)). To address this challenge, VVOB, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Sports, Kasese District Local Government, and Kasese Municipal Council, implemented UCatchUp, a contextualized, school-based, government-led adaptation of the *Teaching at the Right Level* (TaRL) model ([VVOB, 2023](#)). The TaRL approach, pioneered in India by Pratham and rigorously evaluated in multiple contexts ([Banerjee et al., 2016](#); [ASER Centre, 2022](#)), uses simple assessment tools to group learners by ability rather than age or grade, enabling targeted instruction to accelerate foundational skills. In Uganda, UCatchUp involves assessing learners at the start, middle, and end of the school year in local language literacy, English literacy, and numeracy ([RTI International, 2020](#)). Gender-disaggregated results from the 2024 UCatchUp cohort show substantial learning gains for all learners and strong relative progress for girls, contributing to a narrowing of the gender gap. At baseline, boys held 63% a slight advantage across local language literacy, English literacy, and numeracy over the 54% for girls, thistle the national patterns where socio-cultural and instructional barriers often hinder girls' performance ([MoES, 2021](#); [UNESCO, 2023](#)). After implementation, in English literacy, the proportion rose from 29% to 51% for girls and 26% to 49% for boys, representing gains of 22 and 23 percentage points. Numeracy improved from 22% to 64% for girls and from 23% to 66% for boys, reflecting gains of 42 and 43 percentage points. These outcomes indicate that UCatchUp not only elevated overall foundational skills but also delivered an equitable boost for girls, preventing gaps from widening and promoting gender-responsive learning ([Banerjee et al., 2016](#) [ASER Centre, 2022](#)).

Keywords: TaRL, Foundational Learning, equity, gender.

T127: Confronting Sexual Harassment in Higher Education: Building Safe and Equitable Learning Spaces for Young Women in Uganda

Session Presenters: **Florence Kyoheirwe Muhangi, Grace Bantebya Kyomuhendo, Julius Kikooma, & Esther Namitala**, Makerere University, Uganda.

Abstract

Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all is central to the global Sustainable Development Goals, particularly the commitment to realizing education as a fundamental human right. Yet, women's access to higher education across Africa continues to face profound barriers. One of the most pervasive and often under-addressed challenges is sexual harassment within higher education institutions. This paper interrogates sexual harassment as a structural and cultural impediment to young women's educational advancement in Uganda, focusing on evidence from Makerere University, the country's premier public university. Drawing on case studies and lived narratives of young women, the paper illustrates how entrenched patriarchal norms, institutional inertia, and societal attitudes create unsafe learning environments that compromise women's dignity, safety, and academic aspirations. It highlights the silences and complicities that enable harassment to persist, while underscoring the urgent need for institutional accountability and transformative cultural change. In response, the paper outlines a set of innovative strategies for fostering safer and more equitable spaces within higher education. These include policy reforms with effective enforcement mechanisms, awareness and sensitization campaigns, capacity-building for students and staff, and the creation of independent reporting and support structures. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of empowering both young women and men through mentorship, leadership training, and platforms that enable them to challenge oppressive norms. Ultimately, the paper calls for collaborative action among educators, policymakers, student leaders, and civil society activists to dismantle systemic barriers and safeguard women's right to education. By centering women's voices and experiences, higher education institutions in Uganda—and across Africa—can move closer to fulfilling their mandate as inclusive and empowering spaces for all learners.

Key Words: Higher education, sexual harassment, women's rights, Uganda, safe spaces, gender equity

T211: Community-Driven Pathways to Overcome Gendered Barriers and Keep Girls in school

Session Presenter: **Lilian Njeri Mbuthi**, Stanford University, Kenya.

Abstract

This paper investigates which combinations of community, school, and policy levers most effectively remove socio-economic and cultural barriers that keep adolescent girls out of school in Uganda, with transferable lessons for East Africa. The objectives are to (i) identify context-fit approaches that reduce early marriage and school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), (ii) increase re-entry after pregnancy, and (iii) improve attendance and completion. I conducted a realist evidence synthesis (2013–2025) of peer-reviewed and grey literature on girls' education in Uganda/East Africa; a scan of Uganda's policies and education budgets on re-entry, SRGBV prevention, and social protection; and two practice vignettes compiled from implementer reports and stakeholder consultations (one urban low-income, one rural). The analysis asks "what works, for whom, under what conditions," attending to heterogeneity by region, disability, and wealth quintile. The key findings of the investigation revealed that effective efforts cluster around three design features. (1) Pairing economic relief with social empowerment, such as fee waivers or bursaries plus girls' clubs and caregiver dialogues, shifts household decisions toward schooling and strengthens persistence. (2) Proximity and safety matter: safe-journey initiatives, learner-centred remedial support, and trusted female mentors (e.g., Senior Woman Teachers) reduce drop-out and improve weekly attendance. (3) Accountability changes behaviour: functional SRGBV reporting and case management, backed by district-level response, increases re-entry and reduces repeat incidents. The proposed outcome of this inquiry include; a practical "3-3-3 bundle" for scale in Uganda: three enabling policies (cost relief, operationalised re-entry, enforced SRGBV protocols), three school practices (targeted remediation, mentoring, attendance tracking), and three community supports (girls' clubs with livelihoods components, caregiver savings groups for education costs, safe-journey initiatives). The paper specifies roles for ministries, districts, and CSOs and outlines low-cost adaptations for diverse Ugandan and East African contexts.

Key Words: Girls' education; socio-economic barriers; SRGBV; school re-entry; community engagement

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 2.30-3.30 PM

SESSION 4: PARALLEL SESSIONS

GARDEN HALL: TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL PROVISION

SESSION CHAIR: PROF. RICARDO SABATES AYSA

T301: Girls, Gadgets, and Gaps: Digital Literacy and Life Skills Development Among Adolescents in East Africa

Session Presenter: **Akongo Rose Stella**, Luigi Institute of Higher Education, Uganda.

Abstract

As education systems strive to equip all children with the skills necessary to thrive in life, work, and citizenship, it is crucial to comprehend how gender influences adolescents' learning experiences and outcomes. This paper draws on data from the *Actions for Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE)* assessment to examine how digital literacy intersects with gender to influence the development of key life skills among adolescents aged 13–17 in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. The study examines the differences in access to and use of digital technologies among adolescent girls and boys, and how this influences their proficiency in problem-solving, collaboration, self-awareness, and the value of respect. Using household-based assessment data from over 45,000 adolescents, the analysis reveals that 48% of adolescents are unable to use digital tools, with girls disproportionately affected, particularly in Uganda and Tanzania. While digital literacy skills are low overall, those who demonstrate ease in using technology are significantly more proficient in self-management, adaptive behaviour, and collaboration. For example, 18.3% of adolescents with high digital proficiency exhibited strong self-awareness compared to only 9.7% among those lacking digital skills. Girls remain more digitally excluded than boys, a pattern that risks exacerbating existing inequalities in education, employment, and social participation.

The paper argues that addressing gender disparities in life skills requires more than curriculum reform. It highlights the need for targeted investments in digital education for girls through intentional programming that integrates gender-responsive pedagogies, contextually relevant mentorship models, safe digital access spaces, and community-based training to close the gender gap and unlock the potential of digital tools for learning and life. The ALiVE data surfaces actionable evidence for governments, educators, and civil society actors working to transform education systems to work for all learners, especially girls. Moreover, the findings contribute to policy discussions on how digital literacy can catalyse achieving gender equity in education.

Keywords: gender, digital literacy, adolescent girls, life skills, digital divide

T302: Empowering Girls through Digital Learning Corners: A Rural ICT Inclusion Model from Uganda

Session Presenter: **Ogwal Isaac**, Ndejje SSS, Uganda.

Abstract

This paper explores an emerging school-based initiative aimed at addressing gendered digital exclusion through the creation of Digital Learning Corners (DLCs) in Uganda. While Uganda continues to expand digital infrastructure and inclusive education policy, rural schools particularly those serving girls remain under-equipped in both physical ICT access and gender-responsive programming. This paper presents insights from a grassroots intervention using DLCs; dedicated ICT spaces that support self-directed learning, digital skill development, and STEM participation among girls in Luwero District. Implemented at Ndejje Senior Secondary School, the DLCs leverage existing ICT labs and library spaces to deliver structured sessions in basic computer skills, video creation, offline content, and coding activities. Though not yet formalized, DLCs show promising results in supporting girls' engagement in ICT clubs, science projects, and digital storytelling. Observational feedback and performance records indicate a noticeable increase in computer use, skill development, group collaboration, and confidence in public presentations among participating girls. Students have developed small digital projects such as a library management system, e-voting system, and sickbay management system collaboratively demonstrating practical problem-solving and growing digital agency. This initiative aligns with national and global efforts to close the gender digital divide. NITA-Uganda promotes inclusive ICT access for marginalized groups, including girls. UBOS (2024) highlights persistent gender gaps in digital use, and UNDP (2010) notes limited female participation in ICT fields despite gains under MDG 3. DLCs offer a locally-led, scalable model to address this. The paper concludes with a proposed framework for replicating DLCs in other rural schools supporting Uganda's Digital Transformation Roadmap, the Competency-Based Curriculum, and SDGs 4 and 5. It offers practical insights for educators, policymakers, and development partners working to bridge gender gaps in ICT education.

Keywords: Girls' Education, Digital Learning Corners, ICT Inclusion, Rural Schools, Gender Equity

T304: Bridging the Digital Gender Bridge in Girls' Education in Uganda with G-IDAF: A Contextualized Conceptual Framework for Girls' Education Inclusive Digital Access

Session Presenter: **Nicodemus Epaphras**, Kabale, Bukinda Core Primary Teachers' College, Uganda.

Abstract

The gender digital divide (GDD) exists and continues to limit equitable educational opportunities for school aged girls in Uganda. Despite increased investment in information and communication technologies (ICTs) and availability of different inclusive initiatives and associated policies, many girls remain excluded in the digital world due to intersecting barriers of access, skills, sociocultural norms, and institutional constraints. This paper presents the G-IDAF: Girls' Inclusive Digital Access Framework, a context-sensitive conceptual model designed to guide policy, practice, and research regarding girls' digital inclusion in Uganda's education system. Grounded on Warschauer's concept of technology and social inclusion, The Capability Approach, Intersectionality Theory, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, and the Feminist Standpoint Theory, the G-IDAF integrates five interdependent dimensions: Access, Capability, Sociocultural Context, Enabling Environment, Participation and Voice. Together, these interlinked dimensions provide a holistic understanding of the factors that impact girls' participation and help identify ways to promote girl-child active participation and leadership in those areas. For practical application, a G-IDAF Scorecard Template is provided to assess and track the digital inclusion of school-aged girls. The paper concludes with implications for policy, practice and research including alignment of ICT and education strategies with gender equity goals; prioritizing teacher training, localized content, and mentorship programs, emphasizing evaluation, disaggregated data, and context specific analysis. Through the application of G IDAF, Uganda (and other analogous low-income, rural regions) can shift from the conventional "haves and have nots" perspective of the digital divide to foster empowering and inclusive digital learning ecosystems where girls can flourish.

Keyword: digital gender divide, girls' education, digital inclusion, G-IDAF framework, educational technology

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 2.30-3.30 PM

SESSION 4: WORKSHOP PRESENTATION 4

ROOFTOP: DATA & EVIDENCE GENERATION

SESSION CHAIR: DR. JIMMY LUYIMA

T805/W103: Scaling What Works for Girls: Evidence -Based Pathways to Inclusive and Gender-responsive Education Systems

Session Presenters: **Olaka Denis Ongaya, & Olwit Patrick**, Link Community Development Uganda.
Abstract

This interactive workshop shareS actionable, evidence-based findings from Ethiopia, Malawi, and Uganda on the factors that enable or hinder the scale-up of Gender Equality and Inclusion (GEI) innovations in education, with the aim of equipping participants with practical tools for using data and evidence to inform policy and practice that advances girls' education. The session showcases rigorous mixed-method research from the Scaling up Innovative Gender Equality, Inclusion, and Safeguarding Approaches project, which investigated four interventions – continuing professional development for teachers, school performance review and improvement planning, national education standards, and community participation – that address intersecting barriers faced by girls, children with disabilities, and other marginalised learners. Drawing on real-world examples, the workshop highlight innovative methodologies for measuring scale-up quality, sustainability, and gender-responsiveness, while translating research findings into tangible tools for diverse education stakeholders. The session is highly participatory, beginning with an Evidence Immersion exercise where small groups review condensed data visualisations to identify key enablers and barriers to scaling GEI interventions, followed by a Policy Pathway Mapping activity where participants analyse case scenarios to trace how research findings can influence ministry-level decisions, system integration, and classroom practice. In the Co-Creation Challenge, groups will collaboratively design a Scale-Up Readiness Checklist tailored to their contexts, integrating sustainability, inclusion, and safeguarding criteria. Finally, in the Action Pledges segment, participants commit to one concrete step to take post-conference to embed evidence-based scaling strategies in their work. Expected outcomes include: a deeper understanding of the evidence on what drives or impedes scaling of GEI interventions; a co-created Scale-Up Readiness Checklist for use by governments, NGOs, and schools; strengthened cross-country and cross-sector networks committed to using evidence to advance girls' education; and enhanced capacity of participants to link data generation and evaluation directly to policy change and systemic reform.

Keywords: Gender Equality in Education, Scale-Up, Policy Uptake, Evidence-Based Practice, Inclusive Education

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 3.45-4.45 PM

SESSION 5: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 3: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES - STEM

SESSION CHAIR: DR VERONICA NAMULONDO

T129: Empowering a Primary School Girl's Confidence and Achievement in Mathematics and Science Through Home-Based, Practical, and Peer-Teaching Strategies

Session Presenters:

Samuel Andema, Aga Khan University, East Africa.

Doris Maandebo Abiri, Sancta Maria PTC, Uganda.

Abstract

In Uganda, girls' underrepresentation and lower performance in mathematics and science are often linked to pervasive stereotypes, cultural norms, and limited exposure to gender-responsive learning support. This action research investigates the effectiveness of home-based, innovative strategies in building a primary school girl's confidence and performance in mathematics and science. The study was prompted by a case where a Primary Four pupil at Kalagi Primary School developed anxiety and declining performance after being told that mathematics and science "are not for girls." Guided by the research question: How can home-based, practical, and peer-teaching strategies improve a girl's engagement and performance in mathematics and science? The study applied an action research design with iterative cycles of planning, implementation, observation, and reflection. Interventions included purchasing relevant textbooks, conducting hands-on, real-life

demonstrations of mathematical and scientific concepts, using mathematics-related YouTube videos to consolidate learning, and engaging the learner in peer-teaching sessions with other children. Data from observation notes, learner work samples, and informal interviews revealed improved conceptual understanding, increased self-confidence, and greater willingness to attempt challenging problems. Notably, the peer-teaching approach reinforced mastery and reframed mathematics and science as accessible and enjoyable. The findings demonstrate that contextualised, parent-led interventions can counteract gender stereotypes, foster positive learning identities, and complement formal schooling in advancing girls' STEM education. The paper contributes to evidence on scalable, low-cost strategies for parental engagement in girls' education, with potential for adaptation in similar socio-cultural contexts.

Keywords: Girls' education, STEM, action research, parental engagement, Uganda

T108: A Multi-Pronged Approach to Improving Girls' Enrolment, Attendance, and Performance: A Case Study of the Teach For Uganda Fellowship

Session Presenters: **Flavia Nakajjuko Kizito, & Herbert Kalyesubula**, Teach For Uganda.

Abstract

Girls in underserved communities in Uganda continue to face systemic barriers to accessing and succeeding in education, including early marriage, poverty, harmful cultural norms, and school environments that are not gender responsive. In response, Teach For Uganda (TFU), a local non-profit that places trained university graduates as full-time teachers (fellows) in underserved primary schools has developed a girls' education approach aimed at improving girls' enrolment, attendance, and academic performance. This approach is grounded in four core pillars: gender-responsive pedagogy, community awareness and engagement, gender-responsive programming, and girls' motivation and retention. This case study explores the effectiveness of the TFU's girls' education approach in improving learning outcomes, attendance and enrolment for girls in low-income communities. The study is guided by three research questions: (1) How does TFU's multi-pronged girls' education approach improve girls' enrolment? (2) How does TFU's multi-pronged girls' education approach affect girls' attendance? (3) What is the impact of the TFU multi-pronged girls' education approach on girls' academic performance? The study used a qualitative approach, analyzing routine data collected by TFU fellows on enrolment and attendance using the Kobo Collect platform, and learning assessment data gathered by independent research assistants at baseline, midline, and endline. The study covers 182 government primary schools across 10 districts: Mukono, Bugiri, Namayingo, Buikwe, Mayuge, Namutumba, Kayunga, Hoima, Kikuube, and Kagadi. Findings reveal that while enrolment and attendance of boys remain slightly higher overall, girls in schools with TFU fellows show significant improvement in both areas. Furthermore, assessment results indicate that girls outperform boys in foundational literacy and numeracy in these settings. This paper offers field-based evidence on a locally-led, multi-faceted approach that enhances girls' educational outcomes. The findings suggest actionable solutions for the education actor as it seeks to close gender gaps in education, especially in underserved communities.

Key words: Girls' Education, Gender-Responsive Pedagogy, Enrolment and Attendance, Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, Underserved Communities

T116: Advancing Learning and Livelihoods: Insights from Educate!'s Gender Equity Strategy

Session Presenters: **Edith Mukyala, Francis Kusiimwa, & Claire Nimusiima**, Educate! Uganda. Abstract

Educate! is a nonprofit social enterprise dedicated to preparing youth in Africa with the skills to succeed in today's economy. Through our core experience, delivered both in and out of schools, Educate! works to equip girls with the tools, mindsets, and support systems they need to build livelihoods and increase agency. This presentation shares insights from Educate!'s gender equity strategy, which is grounded in the realities of girls' and young women and is designed to respond to their diverse needs and contexts. With over a decade of experience across East Africa, we present strategies of implementing this approach through two complementary pathways: employment-focused learning in secondary schools and livelihood bootcamps for young people who cannot access formal education. Educate! evaluates impact through a mixed-methods approach, leveraging both qualitative and quantitative data. Drawing on evidence from rigorous external evaluations, including randomized controlled trials, alongside rapid internal evaluations. We highlight key learnings on what works for girls from across our models, which reach 200,000+ youth annually. Lessons include the importance of transferable skills, practical business experience, personalized mentorship, and parental engagement.

Key Words: Mindsets, Bootcamps, mentorship, transferrable skills.

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 345-4.45 PM

SESSION 5: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 201: TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

SESSION CHAIR: REBECCA PAGEL

T306: Using Technology to Improve Education for Marginalized Girls: Lessons in Implementation from the Girls' Education Challenge

Session Presenters: **Julia Pacitto, Katrina Barnes, Aimee Mukankusi, Rozina Zazai, & Emma Sarton**, EdTech Hub, UK.
Abstract

The Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) was the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office's flagship investment in girls' education between 2012 and 2025, which was established with the specific aim of addressing barriers to quality education for the world's most marginalised girls. Within the GEC, numerous projects used educational technology (EdTech) within their interventions to support the achievement of this aim. This paper presents the findings of an in-depth qualitative study of six EdTech-supported projects across four countries - Uganda, Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria - within the GEC portfolio, covering both projects that had EdTech solutions integrated from their inception, as well as projects that adopted EdTech components as part of their response to COVID-19 and the associated school closures. It examines a range of technological interventions, from radio and SMS remote learning support during COVID-19, to satellite broadband and in-school IT resources for digital personalised learning. Using an analytical framework built around key concepts in implementation research, the study analyses primary key informant interviews with programme staff as well as secondary programmatic data from sampled projects in order to establish the core components related to the implementation of EdTech within the sampled projects that have facilitated successful outcomes in girls' education. From this, evidence-informed design and delivery; building and maintaining relationships across and between stakeholders; comprehensive and continuous training and capacity development; and situating EdTech within a broader holistic model that prioritises gender inclusion, emerge as critical elements in the effective implementation of EdTech for marginalised girls. The paper thus provides key lessons for overcoming barriers and optimising the future implementation of EdTech for marginalised girls.

Key Words: EdTech; girls' education; implementation research; gender; Girls' Education Challenge

T310: Empowering Girls Through ICT: Assessing Teachers' Readiness in Masaka City Public Primary Schools

Session Presenter: **Gaudy Nalubowa**, Aga Khan University, Uganda.
Abstract

This study assessed how teachers' readiness to integrate ICT influences girls' access to digital learning in public primary schools in Masaka City, Uganda. Guided by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DIT), the research explored teachers' digital skills, attitudes, and access to resources, with attention to gendered differences. Data were collected from 49 teachers, 4 headteachers, and 3 education officials using questionnaires, interviews, and lesson observations. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis, enabling robust triangulation. Findings revealed that most teachers possessed only basic digital skills, with male teachers demonstrating higher confidence and more positive attitudes toward ICT than their female counterparts. Gendered gaps emerged among learners, as boys frequently dominated computer labs and ICT-based classroom activities, limiting girls' participation, reinforcing the perception of technology as a male domain. These gendered readiness gaps suggest that without targeted interventions, girls' opportunities to benefit from digital learning remain constrained. While teachers expressed positive attitudes toward ICT, low competence, limited resources, and weak school-level policy translation hindered meaningful classroom integration. The study underscores the need for gender-responsive professional development, inclusive ICT infrastructure, and clear school-level policies, and to empower girls and foster equitable digital learning opportunities. Implications extend to policy, practice, and future research focused on sustainable strategies to empower girls through ICT in primary education.

Key Words: ICT Integration, Girls' Digital Inclusion, Teacher Readiness

T307: Break Barriers: STEM and Digital Access for Girls with Special Needs in Türkiye [online] Session

Presenters: **Elif Polat, Mehmet Onur Karatas, Sinan Hopcan**, Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa

Abstract

Girls with special needs (GWSN) face multiple layers of exclusion in STEM education, experiencing both gender-based barriers and disability-related obstacles in accessing digital technologies, making them one of the most marginalized groups in educational settings who often encounter reduced expectations and limited exposure to technology-rich learning environments (Caton & Chapman, 2016; Park, 2022). Educators and researchers have limited understanding of how GWSN develop these skills and what challenges they encounter in educational settings. Current research explores professional perspectives of teachers and academics to understand barriers and solutions for these barriers. The overall purpose of current study is to examine the processes of accessing digital technology and STEM skill development among GWSN from multiple perspectives. This study seeks to answer the following four questions. (1) How do GWSN access and use digital technologies? (2) How do GWSN use digital technologies in their daily lives and learning environment? (3) How do teachers perceive GWSN level STEM skills? (4) What challenges do they face in developing these skills, and what educational approaches or designs could best meet their needs? Using interpretive phenomenological analysis, current qualitative study employs purposive sampling to recruit teachers working with GWSN and academics specializing in special education and educational technology. Semi-structured interviews to explore professional observations of technology access patterns, learning experiences, STEM skill development, and perceived barriers. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework guided data analysis. The study shares insights into digital technology barriers faced by GWSN from professional perspectives, identify possible effective instructional approaches for inclusive STEM, and develop recommendations for educational policy and practice. By addressing the intersection of gender and disability in STEM education, current research supports the conference theme through proposing actionable solutions that transform educational exclusion into opportunities for meaningful participation in technology-rich learning environments.

Keywords: Digital skills, STEM, Girls with special needs, Digital inclusion, Türkiye

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 345-4.45 PM

SESSION 5: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 401: TECHNOLOGY & DIGITAL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

SESSION CHAIR: WILSON OKAKA

T311: Strengthening Gender-Responsive Technology Adoption with Digital Inclusion: A Communication Strategy for Girls' Education in Uganda

Session Presenters: **Wilberforce Okongo, & Wilson Okaka**, Kyambogo University, Uganda.

Abstract

This strategy leverages inclusive, gender-responsive technologies to expand girls' access to quality learning, especially in hard-to-reach rural and refugee-hosting areas. It integrates policy advocacy, community mobilization, and behavior-change communication to close the gender digital divide. Increase equitable access to devices, connectivity, and safe learning spaces. Build girls' digital literacy and confidence. Promote blended, e-learning, and gamified pathways that improve retention and outcomes. Align stakeholders on gender-responsive EdTech standards and safeguarding. Generate evidence for scale-up and financing. A systematic literature review and policy analysis (ICT in education, gender, child protection) inform a theory of change, stakeholder interviews and rapid user testing refine interventions. Access without skills widens gaps, parental and teacher buy-in drives uptake, offline-first content and local languages are essential, safety and privacy must be designed in from the start. Community device libraries, solar charging hubs, zero-rated educational content, girls' coding clubs and mentorship, teacher upskilling on inclusive pedagogy, and clear reporting lines for online harms. Offline-enabled tablets for lower-secondary science with female mentor support in remote mountain subcounties. SMS/IVR micro-lessons plus radio and WhatsApp study circles for out-of-school adolescents. Gamified literacy and numeracy modules embedded in blended school-community timetable. The expected results include; Improved enrollment, attendance, and transition rates for girls; higher digital and foundational skills, reduced gender gaps in STEAM participation, safer digital ecosystems, policy commitments for sustained funding and infrastructure and scalable costed models for district rollout.

Keywords: Gender-responsive EdTech; Digital inclusion; Blended learning; Gamification; Uganda.

National Conference on 'What Works in Girls' Education', 1-3 October 2025

T417: Promoting Information Communication Campaign for Inclusive Health, Well-Being, and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Among Girls in Uganda

Session Presenters: **Grace Akunda**, & **Wilson Okaka**, Kyambogo University, Uganda.

Abstract

Inclusive health and education are central pillars of sustainable development. In Uganda, girls face socio-cultural and economic barriers that limit access to sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), menstrual health management (MHM), nutrition, and safe learning environments. Effective information communication campaigns (ICCs) can empower girls to make informed choices, improve mental well-being, and achieve educational success. This study seeks to: (1) promote inclusive health and well-being information among girls; (2) strengthen communication strategies for SRHR, menstrual health, and nutrition; (3) ensure safe, inclusive school environments; (4) enhance assertive communication and life skills; and (5) integrate education for sustainable development (ESD) into policy and practice. A systematic literature review, policy analysis, case studies, and experiential lessons inform this study. Communication theories—such as the health belief model and social learning theory—guide campaign design. Case studies from Ugandan schools and community health programs highlight interventions like peer education networks, radio talk shows, and digital health platform. The best practices include integrating menstrual health education into curricula, providing school feeding programs, and supporting psychosocial counselling. Sustainable ICCs require multi-stakeholder collaboration, gender-sensitive approaches, and culturally tailored messages. Empowering girls through assertive communication improves self-efficacy and resilience. The campaign is expected to increase girls' access to SRHR and MHM information, improve nutrition and mental health support, and enhance safe learning spaces. These outcomes are likely to strengthen educational attainment and contribute to national ESD goals by fostering healthier, more empowered future generations in Uganda, Africa, and worldwide.

Keywords: Girls' Education, Health Communication, Sustainable Development, Reproductive Health, Well-Being

T418: Pandemic's Uneven Legacy: Gender Gains for Girls, Behavioral Losses for Boys in Education Session

Presenter: **Alitiru Harriet**, Aga Khan University, Uganda.

Abstract

This study draws on twelve years of professional experience at an inclusive secondary school in Arua City, Uganda. It reflects contrasting gender trajectories in the post-COVID educational landscape. Between 2015 and 2025, girls' enrolment rose steadily, with the most rapid gains after the pandemic. This growth has been matched by academic performance, discipline, and interest in science subjects, supported by targeted mentorship, counseling, and targeted girl empowerment programs in the school. These results reflect findings in UNESCO's (2021) Education and Gender Equality report, which links structured support and resource provision to girls' improved learning outcomes. In contrast, the same period has seen a surge in indiscipline and risky behavior among male students including strikes, school property destruction, inter school conflicts and substance abuse. While boys' enrolment remained steady, behavioral and psychosocial well-being have declined. Informal classroom observation, discipline records and dialogue with students and colleagues suggest that boys feel overlooked within gender equity strategies, leading to frustration and disengagement, a trend supported by research on "gender fatigue" (Unterhalter, 2022) in education policy. Using a reflective practitioner approach, this study shares evidence from school-level observations, teacher/ student perspectives and discipline records to argue that sustainable gender equity must address the needs of all learners (SDG 4, SDG 5). The session offers practical interventions such as equitable material support, for instance, as sanitary materials are provided for girls, provide boys also with hygiene kits (soap or shaving items), and so the shared access to learning technology, safe spaces for both genders and cross gender mentorship. This paper asserts that "what works for girls" works for all children thus promoting gender equity.

Key words: Gender Equity, Post COVID Education, Girl Empowerment, Boy Well-being

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 345-4.45 PM

SESSION 5: WORKSHOP PRESENTATION 5

GARDEN HALL: EMPOWERMENT OF GIRLS THROUGH LEADERSHIP & LIFE SKILLS

SESSION CHAIR: DR BINDA NIATI

W105: From Ideas to Impact: Building Leadership, Life Skills, & Values to Advance Girls Education in Uganda's Secondary Schools

Session Presenters: **Fatuma Wamala, Kibuule Frank, & Doreen Chebet**, Kukuza Education, Uganda. Abstract

Young people are the engine of innovation and progress in Uganda, yet the education system has historically underprepared learners to think critically, collaborate effectively, communicate clearly, and set personal goals. Many leave secondary school with gaps in life skills, agency, and leadership competencies. The DIY Clubs initiative addresses these gaps by creating inclusive experiential learning spaces where learners develop lifeskills and leadership skills that enable their agency. Through foundational lifeskills sessions and hands-on projects focusing on collaborative problem-solving, learners gain key lifeskills and agency needed to participate more fully in their educational journeys. The program is generating transformative shifts at both the learners and school levels. Learners, especially girls increasingly step into leadership roles, apply collaborative and project management skills, and take responsibility for initiatives that address challenges within their schools and communities. Schools, in turn, are becoming more supportive and responsive environments where student potential is recognized, relationships between students and teachers are strengthened, and learners feel a greater sense of belonging and agency. Evidence generated shows that when learners are trusted, equipped, and supported, they drive meaningful change, demonstrating that leadership and life skills development can have ripple effects beyond the classroom and contribute to young people who can thrive in a dynamic world. This work targets educators, youth program implementers, development partners, researchers and government officials.

Key Words: leadership, life skills, experiential learning, student-led projects, agency, girls' education.

WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2025, 345-4.45 PM

SESSION 5: WORKSHOP PRESENTATION 6

ROOFTOP: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES

SESSION CHAIR: DR BINDA NIATI

W101: Practical Pathways to Inspire and Increase Girls in STEM: The STIA Hands-On Science Approach Session

Presenters: **Laura Kanyiginya, Nabasa Stewart, Kyomugisha Patience Ritah, & Tayebwa Immaculate**, Science Teaching and Innovation in Africa, Uganda.

Abstract

Despite higher primary school completion rates among Ugandan girls, there are persistent disparities in their STEM performance and participation. National data reveals underrepresentation of girls in advanced STEM fields due to limited access to practical resources, gender stereotypes, and rote-learning pedagogies. This workshop showcases Science Teaching and Innovations Africa (STIA)'s evidence-based, gender-responsive methodology that has already transformed STEM education for thousands of students across Uganda. Rather than simply discussing theoretical frameworks, we demonstrate how interactive, low-cost science activities can replace passive instruction and create inclusive learning environments where girls not only participate but excel. What sets this workshop apart is its foundation in proven results. The facilitators bring over a decade of experience implementing the STIA Practical Approach, having trained more than 14,000 educators and directly impacted thousands of students. The methodology showcased here has consistently demonstrated its ability to increase girls' confidence, improve critical thinking skills, and enhance retention in STEM subjects.

Keywords: Girls in STEM, gender-responsive pedagogy, hands-on science, inclusive education, innovative learning.

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 8.00-9.00 AM: INNOVATIONS & SOLUTIONS

SESSION 7: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 3: HEALTH & WELL-BEING

SESSION CHAIR: Emmy Zoomlamai

T414: Advancing Health, Wellbeing and Education for Girls in Science in Zimbabwe: A Case for Midlands and Masvingo Provinces

Session Presenters: **Nogget Matope**, & Rosemary **Guvhu**, Midlands State University, Zimbabwe.

Abstract

Empowering girls in Zimbabwe through science education is essential for achieving gender equity and sustainable development. Despite growing awareness, girls continue to face significant barriers including inadequate health services, socio-cultural norms, early marriage, and limited access to quality STEM education. This study explores the relationship between health, well-being, and educational outcomes for girls in science, with a focus on rural and peri-urban communities in Zimbabwe. A mixed-methods approach was employed to capture both quantitative trends and qualitative insights. Quantitative data were collected through structured surveys administered to 300 female students aged 12–18 in the Midlands and Masvingo provinces. The surveys assessed access to health services, school attendance, academic performance in science subjects, and perceptions of well-being. Qualitative data were gathered through focus group discussions with students, interviews with teachers, school administrators, and parents, as well as case studies of community-based STEM initiatives. The findings reveal that girls with access to comprehensive health education, menstrual hygiene support, and psychosocial services are significantly more likely to persist and excel in science subjects. Furthermore, schools that integrate gender-sensitive teaching practices and mentorship programs report higher engagement and retention rates among female students. The study concludes with policy recommendations aimed at strengthening cross-sector collaboration, enhancing teacher training, and scaling successful interventions to promote inclusive and equitable science education for girls in Zimbabwe. Key words: Health, wellbeing, gender equity

T415: Identifying Barriers to Education and Opportunities for Achieving Social Emotional Wellbeing in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands in Kenya

Session Presenters: **Alice Onsarigo**, **Beatrice Jane**, **Roopal Thaker**, & **Jennifer Cotter Otieno**, Zana Africa Programs Kenya

Abstract

Girls in Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands face interconnected barriers to education, impacting their emotional, physical, and academic development. Supported by International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) the "Scaling Nia" initiative aims to adapt and test an evidence-based program by contextualizing gender-responsive and socially inclusive strategies in Turkana and Garissa counties in Kenya. Nia Learning, a co-created intervention, delivers 25 health and lifeskills sessions over 18 months, through after school sessions, including provision of educational materials and sanitary pads. This empowers adolescents to challenge gender norms, promotes positive masculinity and enhances girls' agency. A RCT demonstrated statistically significant positive outcomes in menstruation management, reduction of stigma, increased knowledge of adolescent health and shifts in gender norms towards greater equity and increased self-efficacy. The Scaling Nia study aimed to identify the localized circumstances that undermine girls' education, social emotional wellbeing (SEW), mental and physical health and what is needed to adapt Nia Learning to these contexts. This study involved 1000+ learners, teachers, parents and community leaders across 20 schools, using surveys, focus group, and key informant interviews to gather data. Findings revealed that SEW is often misunderstood or equated with physical safety, availability of school fees and materials support. Girls face disproportionate trauma from child marriage, FGM, and menstrual stigma, while their emotional needs are overlooked. Educators and parents, many dealing with personal trauma, lack training and resources to support learners effectively. The study advocates trauma-informed, gender-responsive SEW programming in education policy. Key recommendations include culturally grounded definition of SEW, building capacity for teachers and school leaders, integrating SEW into school evaluations, and enhancing community engagement. These insights will guide policymakers, practitioners, and funders in addressing gendered barriers to education and foster inclusive, supportive learning environments for girls.

Keywords: Social-emotional wellbeing, gender norms, trauma-informed education.

National Conference on 'What Works in Girls' Education', 1-3 October 2025

T416: Breaking Barriers, Building Futures: School-Based Mentorship for Adolescent Girls' Health, Wellbeing, and Education in Uganda

Session Presenter: **Annah Muhawenimana**, Right to Play, Kamwokya, Uganda.

Abstract

Adolescent girls in Uganda continue to face barriers to education and well-being, including early pregnancy, gender-based violence, restrictive social norms, and limited access to accurate, age-appropriate health information. The Sexual Health and Reproductive Education (SHARE) project, led by Right To Play in partnership with the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), FHI 360, and WaterAid, addresses these challenges through an innovative, play-based School-Based Mentorship (SBM) model. The model is implemented in 133 primary schools in Adjumani and Buyende districts. It recruits and trains teachers who are not on the government payroll to serve as mentors, under the supervision of senior male and senior female teachers. Mentors lead weekly sessions in school health clubs composed of 30 pupils (15 girls and 15 boys). Using structured, participatory methods, they deliver rights-based health and well-being education, integrating menstrual hygiene management, bodily autonomy, life skills, positive gender norms, and social-emotional learning. Boys' participation promotes shared responsibility for gender equality and respectful relationships. Emerging evidence from the intervention shows improved menstrual hygiene practices, reduced menstruation-related absenteeism, increased self-confidence among girls, and strengthened mentor capacity with an estimated 45% to address learner well-being. Engagement with parents, community leaders, and local structures has fostered greater acceptance of girls' rights and education. The SBM experience under the SHARE project demonstrates that gender-responsive, play-based mentorship delivered by trained, approachable, community-linked facilitators can improve girls' health, well-being, and educational attainment. As a scalable, complementary layer to classroom sexuality education, the approach's sustainability lies in embedding it within school and community systems through local recruitment, structured training, and community-school partnerships, rather than relying solely on institutionalizing facilitators as salaried positions.

Keywords: Mentorship, Rights-based health, Menstrual hygiene, Community

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 8.00-9.00 AM

SESSION 7: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 201: POLICY & FINANCING

SESSION CHAIR: Daniel Mpolomoka

T515: Cost - Effective Strategies for Scaling Up Girls' Education in Resource-Limited Settings Session Presenter:

Mary Nantongo, Kyambogo University, Uganda.

Abstract

Investing in girls' education—particularly at higher levels—transforms individual lives and shapes the social and economic future of communities. This study examines cost-effective, scalable strategies to expand access to education for girls in resource-limited settings, with a focus on overcoming financial, social, and infrastructural barriers. Guided by a convergent parallel design, the research draws on evidence from interventions such as conditional cash transfers, community mobilization, and targeted infrastructure improvements. Findings demonstrate how low-cost, high-impact solutions can increase enrollment, improve attendance, reduce dropout rates, and promote gender equality. The analysis incorporates equity considerations, recognizing that achieving sustainable impact for the most marginalized girls may require greater investment but can generate positive spillover effects for less marginalized girls and boys. Proposed outcomes include (1) identification of the most effective and affordable interventions to enhance girls' participation in education, (2) evidence-based policy recommendations for governments and development partners, and (3) practical models for optimizing limited resources to achieve maximum educational outcomes. This paper provides actionable strategies to dismantle obstacles such as restrictive social norms, financial constraints, and inadequate infrastructure. By translating research findings into scalable and context-specific policy solutions, it seeks to empower girls to participate fully in educational, social, and economic life—fostering long-term improvements in gender equality and community development.

Keywords: Girls' education, cost-effectiveness, marginalization, empowerment, higher education.

T516: From Awareness to Advancement: Evaluating the Impact of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao on Girls' Enrolment in India

Session Presenters: Priyanka Singh, & Sonalika Singh, India. [Online]

Abstract

In many parts of the world, entrenched gender norms limit girls' educational opportunities. India's Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) initiative, launched in January 2015, represents a multi-sectoral response to these barriers, integrating awareness campaigns, community mobilisation, and convergence of education, health, and empowerment programmes. This paper examines the programme's association with changes in girls' school enrolment, situating the findings within the global discourse on breaking educational barriers for girls. Drawing on official UDISE+ (Unified District Information System for Education) data, we compare enrolment trends before and after BBBP's launch. At the secondary level (Classes IX–X), girls' Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) improved from 75.51% in 2014–15 to 78.0% in 2023–24, narrowing the gender gap and indicating progress in retaining girls through the critical adolescent years. At the higher secondary level (Classes XI–XII)—a stage often marked by high dropout rates due to early marriage, economic pressures, and safety concerns—girls' GER rose sharply from 39.4% in 2012–13 to 52.4% in 2019–20, with gains outpacing those for boys. While these improvements cannot be attributed solely to BBBP, the programme's emphasis on social norm change—through mass media, grassroots engagement, and cross-ministerial coordination—appears to have played a catalytic role alongside complementary interventions such as scholarships, improved school infrastructure, and safe transport facilities. These shifts reflect a growing societal recognition of girls as equal stakeholders in the nation's development. The findings reinforce a central message for global girls' education efforts: awareness campaigns, when paired with systemic support, can dismantle socio-cultural barriers and enable more girls to not only enter school but also complete higher levels of education. Lessons from BBBP offer actionable insights for contexts facing similar challenges, underscoring that breaking barriers is not just a policy goal—it is an ongoing, evidence-backed commitment to building futures. **Keywords:** girls' education India, BBBP, UDISE+,

T517: A Comparative Study of Efforts on Education of Girls and Boys, 2000-2024: Uganda and Zambia Session

Presenters: **Daniel L. Mpolomoka, Aminah Birungi, Rose Chikopela, & Christine Mushibwe**, Unicaf University Zambia.

Abstract

This paper is based on a study that interrogated compared efforts to promote the education of girls and boys in Uganda and Zambia between 2000 and 2024, analyzing policy reforms, programmatic interventions and socio-cultural dynamics influencing enrolment, retention and completion rates. Both countries have committed to global education frameworks such as the Education for All (EFA) goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), leading to notable initiatives including the abolition of school fees at the primary level, targeted scholarship schemes and community sensitisation campaigns. However, persistent gender disparities and region-specific challenges remain. The study aims to (i) analyse the scope and nature of gender-focused education policies, (ii) assess the progress achieved in narrowing gender gaps in access and attainment, and (iii) explore the influence of socio-economic, cultural and political factors on educational outcomes for boys and girls. A mixed-methods comparative case study approach is employed, drawing on national education statistics, policy documents and donor programme reports, complemented by interviews with policymakers, educators, parents and learners in both countries. Quantitative data was analysed for trends in enrolment, completion and transition rates; and qualitative data was thematically analysed to capture detailed perspectives on successes and gaps. Findings reveal that both Uganda and Zambia have made significant strides in reducing gender disparities at the primary level, with enrolment rates nearing parity in many regions. However, differences emerge at the secondary and tertiary levels, where socio-cultural expectations, early marriages and economic pressures disproportionately affect girls' participation, meanwhile boys in some contexts face dropout risks linked to child labour and economic migration. Uganda's community-based advocacy and gender-responsive teacher training programmes have shown measurable success, while Zambia's targeted bursary schemes and STEM promotion for girls stand out as best practices. This study contributes to evidence-based policy formulation, offering recommendations for integrated, context-sensitive strategies to achieve gender equity in education by addressing both systemic barriers and local realities. **Keywords:** Sustainable Development Goals, School fees, STEM, Gender, Community

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 8.00-9.00 AM

SESSION 7: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 401: POLICY & FINANCING

SESSION CHAIR: BEA SIMPSON

T513: Implementation National Guidelines for School Re-entry in Kenya: Why it Matters for Adolescent Mothers and their Education

Session Presenter: **Mary Chepkmoi**, ZIZI Afrique Foundation, Nairobi, Kenya.

Abstract

Adolescent pregnancy remains a global issue, with a prevalence rate of 18.8% in Africa (UNFPA,2021). 1 in 5 girls become mothers during adolescence in sub-Saharan Africa. Eastern Africa has the highest prevalence of adolescent pregnancy, with rates ranging from 18% to 29%. In Kenya, teenage pregnancy remains a major health, social concern and a key contributor to the non-completion of schooling by girls. According to the Kenya Demographic Health Survey (2022), the prevalence of adolescent pregnancy is 15%. To address this, the Ministry of Education in Kenya introduced the school re-entry guidelines in 2020, to allow adolescent mothers to continue with their education during pregnancy and after birth. In 2024, Zizi Afrique Foundation undertook a study to explore and understand barriers and drivers to school re-entry among teen adolescents in Kenya in the context of children 0-3 years. The study utilised an exploratory research design and used mixed-methods approach. The data was collected qualitatively and thematically analyzed using NVIVO software. The findings revealed that there is minimal awareness on the re-entry policy and/or guidelines. Additionally, there is high prevalence of teen Pregnancy propagated by cultural practices and community practices. This results in school disruption because of stigma and discrimination among peers, teachers and community, and lack of childcare facilities. The study highlighted that proper implementation of the guidelines, family support (female caregivers) in childcare responsibilities, guidance and counselling from teachers would yield positive results in teen mothers' school achievement. The study also revealed that the implementation of these guidelines, face several challenges, thus, concerted efforts to support for re-entry among adolescent mothers is key to their achievement of their education ambitions.

Key words: Re-entry policy, adolescent mothers, Access, Girls Education, Kenya

T507: Navigating Hurdles of school Re-Entry for Teen Mothers in Arua District, Uganda

Session Presenters: **Flavia Mane Eriku**, & **Mweru Mwingi**, Aghan University.

Abstract

Uganda's 2020 Education Re-entry Policy supports teenage mothers to resume schooling after pregnancy related interruptions, yet re-enrollment remains low, highlighting the need for identifying the educational barriers to teen mothers and develop a more robust strategies to support them in their education trajectory . A qualitative case study was conducted in two public secondary schools in Arua District with the aim of exploring the challenges in re-entry policy implementation in public secondary schools. Data was collected through interviews with 2 Headteachers,2 class teachers,3 parents, 2 guidance and counselling teachers,4 teen mothers who had reentered school, and 4 peers of the teen mothers. A purposive sampling criterion was used for selecting participants. School documents such as policy guidelines, guidance and counselling reports, progress records and class register were reviewed. Data was analyzed through thematic analysis where themes were developed. The findings identified key barriers to reintegration of teen mothers to be inadequate guidance, stigma, discrimination, irregular attendance, limited knowledge and resources, and forced marriage constraining the holistic implementation of the policy, hence, lowering their education completion rate. The study recommends boosting teen mothers' self-esteem through personalized counseling and mental health support, Capacity building for school personal and community awareness of the value of education. Strengthening these areas can enhance policy implementation and help policymakers and practitioners improve monitoring and educational reintegration for teenage mothers.

Key words: challenges, equal opportunity, policy, reintegration.

T619: The Social Responsibility of the Media in Empowering Girls through Effective Leadership Life Skills for Gender Equality in Uganda

Session Presenters: **Wison Okaka**, & **Namugenyi**, Kyambogo University, Uganda.

Abstract

The media plays a critical role in shaping perceptions, influencing social norms, and advancing gender equality. In Uganda, where cultural and socio-economic barriers often limit girls' opportunities, the media has the responsibility to promote narratives and programs that empower girls with leadership life skills essential for education and career advancement. Despite progress in girls' education and empowerment, persistent challenges such as gender stereotypes, limited access to mentorship, and a lack of platforms for building leadership skills hinder girls' participation in decision-making and professional pathways. Media underutilization in promoting gender-responsive empowerment initiatives further compound these challenges. Objectives are: To analyse the role of media in promoting effective leadership life skills for girls. To evaluate best practices in media-led mentorship and extracurricular initiatives. To identify policy gaps limiting the media's contribution to gender equality. To document lessons learned from case studies of successful media programs. To recommend strategies for strengthening the media's social responsibility in empowering girls. This paper applies a systematic literature review, policy analysis, case studies, and communication theory to assess the media's contribution to leadership skill-building. Lessons learned and best practices show that media campaigns highlighting mentorship, extracurricular engagement, and assertive communication skills foster self-confidence in girls. Effective case studies demonstrate that integrating leadership narratives into school-based media programs enhances girls' decision-making agency. The paper anticipates stronger recognition of media as a transformative tool for gender equality, greater integration of pragmatic leadership curricula in communication platforms, and policy recommendations to enhance media accountability in empowering girls.

Keywords: leadership life skills, mentorship initiatives, extracurricular programs, assertive communication, self-confidence building

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 8.00-9.00 AM

SESSION 7: WORKSHOP PRESENTATION 7

GARDEN HALL: DATA & EVIDENCE GENERATION

SESSION CHAIR: FARIDAH NASSERKA

W109: Designing Gender-Responsive Transition Pathways: STEP Uganda in Practice

Session Presenters:

Sarah Ayesiga, Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda

Phillip Atteba, Save the Children International, Uganda.

Adnan Aluma, Geneva Global Uganda.

Giulia Di Filippantonio, Education. Org, Sierra Leone.

Abstract

Uganda is advancing gender-responsive transition pathways from AEP into formal schooling, work catalysed by the national AEP Action Plan. This workshop brings that progress to the fore while drawing on Education.org's LIFTED methodology to turn diverse evidence into decision-ready guidance for policy, programmes, budgets, and classroom practice. Applied to the AEP "transitions paradox" (rising participation in AEP but weak progression to formal schooling), LIFTED underpins a global synthesis distilled into the STEP Framework: a five-stage, collaboration-anchored pathway spanning AEPs, schools, and communities. STEP translates evidence into concrete actions to remove gendered barriers (e.g., safety/GBV risks, caregiving, disability inclusion, cost and distance). The aim is to move from evidence to context-ready actions that enable girls and young women to re-enter, progress, and complete schooling. We introduce the STEP Framework and Planning Toolkit through a gender lens, showing how each transition stage can be adapted to meet the needs of girls and young women in all their diversity (adolescent mothers, girls with disabilities, displaced learners, rural/urban poor). We also highlight practical design features and policy levers that supported girls' re-entry, progression, and retention, sharing firsthand experiences to bring the STEP Framework and regional and national evidence-base to life.

Keywords: Girls' education; transitions; Accelerated Education; policy and financing; Uganda.

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 8.00-9.00 AM

SESSION 7: WORKSHOP PRESENTATION 8

ROOFTOP: TEACHER PROVISION & TRAINING

SESSION CHAIR: ELIZABETH OPIT

W112: Strengthening Gender Responsive School Communities: Lessons from the Simameni Project in Uganda

Session Presenters:

Aja Joan, Mwebaza Gloria, & Gowan Yakub Kalamagi, UNATU, Uganda.

Abstract

The SIMAMENI Project, a five-year initiative from 2019 to 2025, aimed to improve access, retention, and educational opportunities for secondary school-aged girls in select communities within Uganda's Western and Teso regions. The project emphasized that girls' education provides significant national benefits across economic, social, political, and environmental spheres. Simameni meaning Stand Together for Girls' Secondary Education in Uganda project was implemented by the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU) with support from the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF/FCE) and Global Affairs Canada. The project was implemented in 24 schools across the following districts: Kumi, Ngora, Bukedea, Serere, Kyenjojo, Kibaale, Kyegegwa and Kamwege. The primary beneficiaries were approximately 6,000 secondary school-aged girls and young women in these 24 schools. Additionally, their direct family members, estimated at an additional 24,000 individuals, were indirect beneficiaries, bringing the total reach to about 30,000 people. The workshop explore how a union-led, community-embedded model can challenge harmful gender norms, reduce school dropout and early marriage, and promote safer, more inclusive school environments. Participants are given the opportunity to engage with practical strategies used in Simameni, including teacher capacity building on gender responsive pedagogy, menstrual hygiene management, school-based gender committees, and community mobilization campaigns.

Key words: Gender, Education, Barriers, Safety and Hygiene

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 9.15-10.30 AM

SESSION 8: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 3: HEALTH & WELL-BEING OF GIRLS – MEANSTRUAL HEALTH SUPPORT

SESSION CHAIR: PROF. RICARDO SABATES AYSA

T401: The Impact of Menstrual Health Support on Learning Outcomes for Adolescent Girls in Government Schools in Kwale, Kenya

Session Presenter: **Salim Mwakidzugu**, Pwani University, Kenya.

Abstract

This study investigates the effects of menstrual health support interventions on the educational outcomes of adolescent girls attending government schools in Kwale, Kenya. The research addresses persistent school-level barriers such as; stigma, absenteeism, and insufficient menstrual hygiene support, that impede girls' full participation and progression in education. The objective of the study was to assess whether the provision of menstrual health support, including access to reusable sanitary products, hygiene education, and gender-sensitive teacher training, enhances academic performance, classroom participation, and school attendance over a 12-month academic period (January–December 2024). A quasi-experimental mixed-methods design was employed across six government schools (n=240 girls, ages 12–17). Three schools received the intervention, while three served as matched controls. Quantitative data (attendance records, test scores, and participation logs) were analyzed using paired t-tests and ANCOVA. Qualitative data from focus group discussions and interviews were thematically coded to capture the perceived impact of the intervention. Girls in intervention schools exhibited a 26% increase in attendance and an 18% improvement in test scores, compared to marginal gains in the control group. Class participation increased from 44% to 72%. Qualitative insights indicated enhanced self-confidence, reduced stigma, and heightened teacher awareness of girls' needs. The findings offer an evidence-based, scalable solution to enhance gender-responsive school environments. This work supports the objectives of SDG 4 and 5 and aligns with the conference mission to promote actionable strategies to advance girls' education in Uganda and across the region.

Keywords: Girls' education, menstrual health, school retention, gender equity, learning outcomes

National Conference on 'What Works in Girls' Education', 1-3 October 2025

T402: Breaking Silence: A Grassroot Approach to Menstrual Health Education in Rural Uganda Session

Presenter: **Asiimwe Dhurufah**, Kibingo Muslim P.S., Uganda.

Abstract

What happens when schoolgirls are too afraid to talk about their own bodies? In many rural Ugandan communities, menstruation is surrounded by shame and silence. As a Teach For Uganda Fellow placed at Kibingo Muslim Primary School in Hoima District, I observed that many girls lack basic menstrual health knowledge, face stigma, and often miss school during their periods. This led me to ask: How can young educators in underserved schools support menstrual health literacy among adolescent girls using simple, accessible tools? This paper shares insights from informal engagements I've had with girls at my placement school and within the local community. I initiated open conversations with small groups of girls to understand their challenges, fears, and questions around menstruation. Many admitted they had no one to talk to, while others reported using unsafe or unhygienic materials during their periods. These discussions revealed a strong need for accurate, private, and culturally sensitive information. While a digital solution is still under development, I propose a model using WhatsApp and SMS platforms to deliver anonymous and reliable menstrual health tips to schoolgirls in low-resource areas. This paper highlights key findings from my early-stage initiative and presents a scalable, community-driven approach to breaking menstrual stigma in schools. It aligns with the conference's theme by offering evidence-based, locally grounded strategies that can improve girls' confidence, attendance, and retention in school. By starting with dialogue and listening to girls' voices, we can take the first step toward dignity, health, and equity in education.

Keywords: Menstrual health, girls' education, grassroots action, Teach For Uganda, stigma, rural schools

T403: Menstrual Experiences, Social Support and School Attendance among Adolescent Girls in Ugandan Rural Primary Schools

Session Presenter: **Ritah Nabaasa**, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Uganda.

Abstract

This study examined how menstrual experiences influence school attendance among adolescent girls in rural Uganda and the moderating role of social support in this relationship. The study addressed three objectives: (1) to assess the nature of girls' menstrual experiences, (2) to examine the relationship between menstrual experiences and school attendance, and (3) to determine the moderating effect of social support. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining quantitative and qualitative designs. Quantitative data were collected from 191 menstruating girls aged 10–18 years in six rural primary schools using structured questionnaires adapted from the Multidimensional Perceived Social Support Scale (12 items, 7-point scale) and the Menstrual Insecurity Tool (29 items, 4-point scale). School attendance was measured using a 4-point frequency scale. Qualitative data were obtained through key informant interviews with six senior women teachers using a 20-item guide. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and regression analyses, while qualitative data underwent thematic content analysis. Findings revealed that many girls experienced frequent menstruation-related challenges, including inadequate sanitary materials, stigma, and lack of WASH facilities, which negatively impacted school attendance. Poor menstrual experiences were significantly associated with lower attendance ($r = 0.278^{**}$, $p < 0.01$). Social support from teachers, peers, and families significantly moderated this relationship ($B = 0.163$, $p = .026$), buffering the adverse effects of menstruation on education. Qualitative results highlighted gaps in menstrual education, restrictive school policies, and the emotional toll of menstruation on participation and engagement. The study concludes that menstruation remains a major barrier to girls' education in rural Uganda. Recommendations include comprehensive menstrual health education, improved WASH infrastructure, provision of sanitary products, and strengthened social support systems. These findings contribute actionable evidence to inform interventions that enhance girls' well-being and educational outcomes.

Keywords: Menstrual health, school attendance, social support, rural girls, Uganda

T404: Empowering Girls for Retention and Success: An Integrated Approach to Menstrual Health, Life Skills, and Community Support in Uganda

Session Presenter: **Odongo Vasca Dagama**, Jane Goodall Institute, Uganda.

Abstract

Menstrual health challenges, cultural norms, and unsafe school environments remain critical barriers to girls' education in Uganda, leading to absenteeism, dropouts, and diminished academic performance. This paper presents evidence from the Jane Goodall Institute Uganda's Girls' Empowerment Program, implemented from January to June 2025 across 84 schools in nine districts, aimed at reinforcing girls' retention in schools and academic success throughout the levels. Guided by the premise that empowering girls improves socio-economic prospects and reduces population pressures on natural resources, the program integrates Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) education, Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) training, provision of reusable sanitary pads and skills for their production, and construction of gender-responsive sanitation facilities. It further strengthens community support through peer-parent groups, teacher mentorship training in schools, the school administration, and women's economic empowerment. Using a mixed-methods approach—school attendance records, pre/post-training assessments, and qualitative feedback from stakeholders—the program recorded increased school attendance during menstruation, enhanced peer-to-peer learning networks, and improved teacher capacity to address gender-based barriers. Community engagement fostered sustainable support systems, while women's groups generated income from tailoring, indirectly supporting girls' education and the savings and loan support has boosted their capacity. The findings underscore that holistic, community-driven interventions—combining health, skills training, infrastructure, and local leadership—are effective in breaking socio-cultural and economic barriers to girls' education. This integrated model not only ensures girls remain in school but also empowers communities to sustain these gains through the economic empowerment. The paper concludes with recommendations for scaling the model nationally, highlighting its adaptability to diverse contexts and potential for cross-sector collaboration to meet SDG 4 and SDG 5 targets.

Keywords: Girls' education, menstrual hygiene management, community engagement, retention, Uganda

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 9.15-10.30 AM

SESSION 8: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 201: POLICY AND FINANCING

SESSION CHAIR: PROF. CHRISTOPHER B. MUGIMU

T501: Free secondary education policy and education attainment

Session Presenters: **Alicia Grace Stenzel, Dr. Victor Osei Kwadwo, & Dr. Rose Camille Vincent**, German Development Agency (GIZ), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Abstract

This paper investigates the impact of Ghana's Universal fee-free secondary education policy (FreeSHS) on educational attainment (completion rates). The policy was introduced in the school year 2017/18, allowing every child to pursue upper secondary education irrespective of their background. We emphasize the educational outcomes of school girls as they are shown to be at a greater disadvantage when accessing higher education in Ghana. The objectives of this paper align with the conference sub-theme of Policy and Financing for Gender Equity in Education, providing an analysis of a national education policy. Given the universality of the policy, we estimate a Difference-in-Differences model using variations in the treatment intensity across districts. The treatment and comparison groups are thus defined based on the differences in the uptake rate (changes in the uptake of education due to a price change). The paper draws from a comprehensive panel dataset capturing the demand and supply factors to education across 261 districts in Ghana. The empirical findings suggest that school girls' completion rate increased by 14 percentage points in high uptake districts, whereas the reform impact is estimated at 14.9 percentage points overall (for boys and girls). In effect, the absorption of education costs by the state serves as a critical incentive for cost-constrained households and an efficient measure for correcting market failures related to access and completion of secondary education for girls. The results of our impact evaluation can inform the design of similar policies in other African countries, including Uganda. In our discussion, we argue for complementary policies, given shortcomings on quality and overcrowding. We believe that this paper can greatly contribute to the themes of the conference and spark discussions on the design of fee free policies and its effectiveness for girls' education.

Keywords: Girls (upper) secondary education, Fee free policy, Completion rate, Impact evaluation, Ghana

T502: Awareness and Perceptions of the National Girls' Education Strategy among School-Level Stakeholders in Bwaila Cluster, Lilongwe: Implications for Policy Implementation

Session Presenters: **Angella Chunda-Msowoya, & Tiffany Banda**, University of Malawi, Malawi

Abstract

Achieving gender equality in and through education lies at the heart of the human rights agenda and is key to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Global Partnership in Education, 2019). Accordingly, both global and national education frameworks underscore the importance of gender-responsive policies. In Malawi, the Ministry of Education introduced the National Girls' Education Strategy (NGES) in 2014 to promote quality education, equity, and inclusion for girls. Although the NGES was revised in 2018, many girls continue to face barriers to accessing, retaining, and completing school. Yet, there remains limited literature on its implementation. Effective policy implementation depends heavily on the interpretation and execution of stakeholders at all levels. However, implementation challenges at the school-level remain underexplored, despite evidence that school-level stakeholders play a critical role in policy development and implementation, which are often complex and non-linear. In this regard, this study explored the awareness and perceptions of secondary school stakeholders regarding the implementation of the revised NGES in two public schools within the Bwaila Cluster in Lilongwe. Guided by Honig's (2006) three-dimensional theory of education policy implementation, it addressed two questions: What is the level of awareness of head teachers, teachers, and students about the NGES? How do they perceive its implementation? A qualitative case study design was used, involving semi-structured interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and document analysis. Thematic analysis revealed low level of awareness of the NGES among the school stakeholders, varying perceptions about the NGES, unavailability of the NGES document in schools, inadequate resources and funding, lack of on-going support and sensitization efforts at school and community levels. These findings highlight the gaps in policy dissemination, financial support, and school-level capacity for implementation. This paper calls for a deeper examination of how "informal institutional practices" shape implementation outcomes. In addition, by revealing school-level barriers, the study contributes actionable evidence to strengthen education systems and advance gender equality in and through education.

Key words: Gender-responsive education policy, policy implementation, stakeholder perceptions

T503: Enhancing Gender Equity through Voucher-Based Public Private Partnerships [online]

Session Presenters: **Nusrat Baquee, Syed Ashar Hussain Zaidi, & Syed Talha Uddin Hyder**, Lahore University, Pakistan.

Abstract

This paper explores the influence of the Punjab Education Foundation's Education Voucher Scheme (EVS) on access and enrolment in EVS schools, with a specific focus on how policy and financing mechanisms influence gender equity. It critically examines the design and implementation of a public-private partnership intended to enhance educational access for out-of-school children, especially girls from low-income households in Punjab, Pakistan. These insights offer relevance beyond Pakistan and can inform similar education financing models across the Global South, including Uganda. Using a divergent parallel mixed-methods approach, the study analyzes five years of secondary quantitative data from 1,624 EVS schools across four urban districts: Lahore, Multan, Kasur, and Gujranwala, alongside primary data collected through surveys and focus group discussions. Quantitative tools include regression models and descriptive statistics to evaluate enrolment trends, gender parity, and dropout rates. Qualitative data were thematically coded using NVivo, incorporating perspectives from parents, teachers, students, and school administrators. The findings indicate that while EVS increased overall enrolment, persistent gender disparities remain. Girls' enrolment was positively correlated with the availability of gender-sensitive infrastructure such as separate washrooms. Parents cited safety, sanitation, and proximity as crucial to girls' continued education. One of the study's original contributions is identifying how the scheme's uniform per-child funding structure failed to address the differentiated needs of girls in disadvantaged communities, thereby limiting its potential for advancing gender equity in access and retention, an area that has received limited attention in existing research. To address these gaps, the paper proposes a transition to equity-based funding models that consider contextual and gender-specific needs. It recommends integrating gender-responsive infrastructure benchmarks into quality assurance mechanisms and strengthening community engagement to support girls' school retention. These findings offer concrete policy insights and practical strategies to advance equitable, inclusive, and actionable solutions for girls' education across diverse Global South contexts.

Keywords: Gender Equity, Education Voucher Scheme, Public-Private Partnership, Girls' Access, Education Policy

T504: Global Invisibility of Ugandan Scholarships in Policy and Financing for Gender Equity in Education: A Bibliometric Coupling Analysis

Session Presenter: **Eutyechus Ngotho Gichuru**, Makerere University & University of Bergen, Norway. Abstract

Using bibliometric coupling, this study aimed at scoping the arena of "Policy and Financing for Gender Equity in Education," specifically the global visibility of Ugandan higher educational institutions (HEIs) and academics. Basing its analysis on Scopus and Web of Science databases, this study examined a total of 312 peer-reviewed articles (2000-2025) in order to establish thematic clusters and co-citation patterns, and identify institutional linkages. Results indicate a conspicuous under-representation of Ugandan scholarship in the global policy and financing debates on gender equity in education. Ugandan HEIs appeared predominantly as secondary collaborators in international projects, and with very few first-authorship opportunities and weak inter-institutional linkages across Africa. The coupling network was then seen to be dominated by Global North scholars and institutions, influencing the funding streams and policy agenda through which research priorities were set. Local studies on Uganda's gender equity policy and financing initiatives were hardly indexed in the major databases, further hampering international visibility. The findings indicate structural challenges that include restricted access to high-impact journals, low research funding, and inadequate representation in transnational policy-oriented networks. To address the visibility limitations, there is a need to strengthen local research capacity, promote open-access dissemination, and create equitable North-South research partnerships. The study serves as evidence for reconsidering Uganda's positioning in global debates on educational policy and financing.

Keywords: Bibliometric coupling; Gender equity; Higher education; Policy; Uganda

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SESSION 8: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 401: SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS -REFUGEE & DISABILITY

SESSION CHAIR: BEA SIMPSON

T207: Enhancing Educational Access for Refugee Girls with Disabilities (Aged 10-17) in Selected Refugee Settlements in South Western Uganda

Session Presenter: **Abbas Mugisha**, Kabale University, Uganda.

Abstract

Access to inclusive education remains a pressing challenge for refugee girls with disabilities, particularly in low-resource humanitarian contexts. This study investigates the barriers and enablers to educational participation among refugee girls aged 10–17 with various forms of disability in selected settlements in South Western Uganda. Guided by the overarching research question; How can educational access for refugee girls with disabilities be effectively enhanced in these contexts?. The study aligns with the sub-theme of inclusive and equitable quality education within displacement and humanitarian response settings. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative household surveys (n = 150) with qualitative interviews and focus group discussions involving learners, parents, teachers, community leaders, and disability advocates. The analysis drew on both descriptive statistics and thematic content analysis to capture the multifaceted nature of educational access. Preliminary findings reveal that structural barriers, including inaccessible school infrastructure, scarcity of trained special needs educators, and long travel distances, significantly hinder school attendance. Socio-cultural factors such as stigma, gendered expectations, and underreporting of disabilities exacerbate exclusion. Economic constraints, notably the inability to afford assistive devices, school materials, or transport further limit participation. Nonetheless, promising practices emerged, including community-led peer support initiatives, targeted NGO interventions providing assistive technologies, and school-based sensitization campaigns that challenge discriminatory norms. The study proposes a multi-pronged strategy to enhance access: strengthening inclusive teacher training, improving physical accessibility of learning environments, establishing targeted scholarship schemes, and integrating disability-inclusive planning into humanitarian education programs. By addressing both systemic and community-level barriers, these measures aim to ensure that refugee girls with disabilities are not left behind in the pursuit of education for all. The outcomes are intended to inform policy, program design, and advocacy efforts among education stakeholders in humanitarian settings.

Keywords: Enhancing education, refugee girls, disability, Uganda

T208: Beyond Inclusion: Understanding Barriers to Refugee Girls' Early Childhood Education and Learning in Uganda

Bea Simpson, University of Cambridge, UK.

James Ciera, University of Cambridge, UK.

Mary Goretti Nakabugo, Uwezo Uganda.

Abstract

This paper examines gendered inequalities in access to and learning outcomes from early childhood education (ECE) among refugee and national populations in Uganda. Using nationally representative data from the 2018 Uwezo Uganda assessment (n = 4,048), the analysis applies descriptive and regression methods to explore how gender, refugee status, household head gender, and wealth intersect to shape children's early educational experiences and foundational learning outcomes. Uganda's inclusive education policy is globally recognised for integrating refugee learners into national systems. However, little attention has been paid to whether this inclusion results in equitable outcomes, particularly for girls, and more so for refugee girls. This study addresses three questions: (1) How do refugee and national girls differ in ECE access, and how is this influenced by gender, household headship, and wealth? (2) Do household-level factors modify gendered patterns of access? (3) How do learning outcomes differ by gender and refugee status among ECE attendees? Findings show that while refugee children have greater ECE access (44% vs. 26%), refugee girls are less likely than refugee boys to attend (41.6% vs. 45.5%), unlike nationals, where girls access to ECE is slightly higher than that of boys. Girls in female-headed refugee households report higher access (48%) than those in male-headed ones (30%). For national girls, access increases with wealth, but among refugee girls, access appears less responsive to economic status. Preliminary analysis of learning outcomes suggests that ECE attendance is associated with higher performance in English and maths across all groups, yet, refugee girls consistently lag behind both refugee boys and national girls, particularly in English literacy. Among 6–8-year-old girls who attended ECE, 68% of nationals attained literacy, compared to 36% of refugees. These findings highlight the need for gender-sensitive and equity-focused policies that explicitly address the compounding effects of gender, displacement, and poverty. **Keywords:** Girls' education, Early childhood education, Refugees, Uganda, Intersectionality, Learning outcomes, Gender equity, Household dynamics.

T212: Women with disabilities fighting gender inequalities through skill acquisition in Higher Education

Session Presenter: **Nkemngong Atemnkeng**, National Center for Education, Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation, Cameroon.

Abstract

Skill acquisition through higher education is far fetch for females with disabilities despite the inherent potential higher education possesses. This has lowered the ambitions of significant number of women with disabilities who have accessed higher education with the hope of gaining skills for employability and a better life. This study focused on females with disabilities in higher education and investigated; the inclusive educational policies facilitating skill acquisition, the limiting factors for achieving skills in higher education and the institutional support systems available for females with disabilities in higher education. Qualitative research design which made use of descriptive survey was adopted for this study. The purposive sampling technique was used to select 6 administrators and 12 females with disabilities from 6 higher education institutions in the South West region. Semi-structured interview guide was used to get insight from the with disabilities while document review was implemented to analyze institutional and inclusive policies for girls with disabilities. Data was analyzed thematically. Themes were reported and supported with illustrative quotes from respondents. Findings showed that, policies are put in place but are not implemented. Over 75% of respondents were displeased with their skill achievement level despite the policies available. Over 85% respondents complained of no follow-up, infrastructural barriers and cost of university education. Over 80% respondents, complained of the support they receive making reference to the quality of teaching, their individual needs, school culture, and peer attitudes. Awareness talks are recommended yearly for sensitization of peers, staff and administration on the presence of girls with disabilities, infrastructural consideration for females with disabilities and regular checks by stakeholders to ensure policies are implemented.

Keywords: Disabilities, Inequalities, Inclusion, Higher education

T218: Girl Child, Inclusive Education and Community Engagement: Perspectives of Teachers, Parents, and Administrators in Junior High Schools in Ghana

Session Presenters: **Evelyn Folake Kissi, Boadi Agykum, & Isaac Asare Senior**, University of Ghana, Ghana.
Abstract

This study explores the educational experiences of girls with physical, visual, and hearing disabilities in junior high schools in Ghana's Sunyani and Birim Central municipalities, aligning with the conference sub-theme Overcoming Socio-economic and Cultural Barriers. Guided by Gender Equity Theory and Social Justice Theory, the study adopted a qualitative phenomenological design under a transformative paradigm to capture stakeholder perspectives. The research was guided by the question: What are the perspectives of teachers, parents, and administrators on the educational experiences of girls with disabilities in junior high schools in Sunyani and Birim Central? Twenty-four participants—teachers, parents, and administrators—were purposively selected from four public junior high schools. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions and analysed thematically. The findings revealed that despite national commitments to inclusive education, girls with disabilities face persistent challenges in Junior High School, including inaccessible infrastructure, limited teacher preparedness, and gendered cultural norms that undermine their academic participation. While BC demonstrated slightly better stakeholder engagement and training exposure, SY reflected deeper socio-cultural stigma and weaker support systems. Notably, inclusion remained inconsistent and highly context dependent. The study concludes that effective inclusive education requires not only policy reforms but also localised implementation strategies, sustained capacity building for teachers, and stronger school-community collaboration. Therefore, targeted investment in teacher training, family education, and infrastructural improvement is needed to ensure that inclusion moves beyond rhetoric to practice in Ghanaian Junior High School education. This study aligns with the conference's objectives by offering actionable, context-specific insights to enhance inclusive education for girls with disabilities, foster stronger school-community collaboration, and support broader regional efforts toward achieving equitable, high-quality education for all. **Keywords:** inclusive education, girls with disabilities, junior high school, Ghana, socio-cultural barriers

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 9.15-10.30 AM

SESSION 8: PARALLEL SESSIONS

GARDEN HALL: TEACHER PROVISION AND TRAINING

SESSION CHAIR: JOHN V. MITANA

T114: Application of Gender Responsive Pedagogy by Teacher and Tutor Trainees on School and College Practicum: A case of Core Primary Teachers Colleges in Uganda

Session Presenter: **Bakaira Godfrey Grace**, Kyambogo University, Uganda.
Abstract

Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) is a teaching and learning process that focuses on the unique learning needs of girls and boys which makes each of them to explore their full potential in education. It acknowledges and overcomes gender-based constraints so that both girls and boys are successful learners. The purpose of the study was to assess the state of application of Gender Responsive Pedagogy in teacher planning, preparation, organization, implementation and reflection during School and College Practicum. The Study was guided by three questions: (i) What is the state of application of GRP by teacher and tutor trainees during School and College Practicum? (ii) Which are the key barriers/challenges to teachers' and tutors' application of GRP during the teaching and learning processes? (iii) Through which practical means can we improve on the established barriers to teacher and tutor trainees' state of application of GRP during teaching and learning processes? The study was focused to (I) Improve the gender responsiveness of teaching methodologies during teaching and learning process and environment (ii) Improve the outcome of quality teaching and learning by enabling girls and boys to explore their full potential (iii) Revert gender bias and gender-based discrimination in the teaching and learning activities and classroom interactions, and (iv) Generate ways teachers would create a classroom environment that is gender responsive. The study used a mixed-methods approach, case study and evaluative research including literature review, document and text analyses (Schemes of work, lesson plans and notes), classroom observations and teacher interviews, to explore the integration of GRP in a classroom practice setting. Findings indicated a significant gap between theory and practice, with student teachers and tutors demonstrating inadequate use of GRP in their preparation, teaching and learning processes during the School and College Practicum. It realised limited teachers' awareness and implementation of GRP strategies to positively impact girls' and boys' engagement and participation in various class activities and gender stereotyping.

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Recommendation for teachers and tutors' improved and effective GRP application have been made for action.

Key words: Gender Responsive Pedagogy, Gender stereotyping, Gender approach, Gender responsive education

T205: Girls Education, Teacher Absenteeism and Teacher Motivation - the Power Teachers for Learning Model in Uganda

Session Presenters: **Dr. Emmanuel Kamuli, & Dr. Margo O'Sullivan**, Power Teacher Africa, Uganda. Abstract

Critical to girls staying in school are motivated teachers. However, in Uganda, many teachers are demotivated—largely due to poor remuneration—resulting in high levels of absenteeism, with rates reported as high as 48% to 60% (Akseer and Karamperidou, 2020; O'Sullivan, 2022; World Bank, 2025). This systemic barrier disproportionately affects girls, who are more likely to drop out or disengage when classroom environments are unstable or lack consistent teacher presence and support. The 2024 UNESCO/IICBA Africa Teachers Report highlights how teacher motivation directly influences learning outcomes, school climate, and girls' completion rates. Studies consistently recommend that motivational focused support for teachers—including CPD and adequate compensation—improves regular teacher attendance and active classroom engagement which in turn supports girls' education (IICBA and AU, 2024; UNESCO and AU, 2024; FAWE, 2024). This paper presents the Power Teachers for Learning model, a Ministry of Education and Sports approved Teacher Incentive Framework informed approach that provides teachers with financial and non-financial incentives. In addition the model provides Continuous Professional Development through mobile phone-based digital training. The model is being piloted in a primary school in Mbale District, where 31 teachers (21 female) serve 1,816 students (58% girls). At the beginning of the 2025 academic year, UWEZO conducted a baseline learning assessment for Primary 2 to Primary 6 learners. An endline assessment will follow at the end of the year to evaluate the model's effectiveness, with particular focus on girls' learning outcomes and school retention. The intervention is community-led.

This paper aligns with the sub-theme Overcoming Socio-economic and Cultural Barriers by addressing a critical yet underexplored factor limiting girls' education: the motivation and presence of teachers. Through supporting teacher motivation, this intervention offers a practical and sustainable strategy to overcome structural, socio-economic, and cultural barriers to girls' sustained participation in education.

T232: The Prospects of Overcoming Social-Economic and Cultural Barriers to Girls Education in Northern Uganda

Session Presenter: **Winnifred Joy Okello**, Busitema University, Uganda. Abstract

This paper argues that the prospects of breaking the current barriers to girls' education in northern Uganda remain a critical concern for sustainable development, gender equality, and community resilience. Despite significant progress in education access, persistent challenges such as poverty, early marriage, gender-based violence, and restrictive cultural norms continue to hinder girls' enrollment, retention, and completion of formal education. This study employs a systematic literature review combined with policy analysis, case studies, and experiential learning to examine strategies that can address these systemic obstacles. The problem statement highlights that many girls in Northern Uganda face a cycle of deprivation, where household poverty forces them out of school, while cultural practices such as child marriage and domestic labor reinforce educational exclusion. Methodologically, the study synthesizes findings from academic research, government policy documents, and NGO reports, while drawing on lessons from community engagement initiatives that have successfully enhanced girls' educational participation. Case studies further illustrate local innovations, including mentorship programs, safe learning environments, and economic empowerment models for families. Findings suggest that overcoming barriers requires multi-dimensional approaches: poverty alleviation through livelihood support, strong enforcement of anti-child marriage laws, school-based protection mechanisms against gender-based violence, and community sensitization campaigns that shift cultural attitudes toward valuing girls' education. Experiential learning from pilot projects demonstrates the transformative role of community ownership and partnerships between schools, families, and civil society. Expected results underscore that empowering girls through education contributes not only to individual well-being but also to broader socio-economic development and peace building in post-conflict Northern Uganda. The sub-theme provides five key uses: informing policy reforms, strengthening advocacy networks, guiding program design, enhancing monitoring frameworks, and fostering inclusive cultural change.

Keywords: Girls' education, socio-economic barriers, cultural norms, Northern Uganda, empowerment, policy framework.

T128: Exploring the Philosophy Behind Teachers' Classroom Instruction Practices in Secondary Schools in Kayunga District, Uganda: Implications for Gender-Responsive Teaching

Session Presenter: **Waisswa Richard**, Kyambogo University, Uganda.

Abstract

Despite Uganda's competency-based curriculum promoting learner-centred approaches, outdated teacher-centred pedagogies persist in secondary schools. This study examined the philosophy behind teachers' classroom instruction to enhance equitable learning opportunities for all learners, including girls, in Kayunga District. It explored teachers' beliefs about students' learning, the nature and sources of knowledge they value, and the values they aim to instill, all within the context of classroom instruction. Guided by Danielson's Framework for Effective Teaching and an interpretivist paradigm, this qualitative descriptive tripartite case study involved nine teachers from three secondary schools, supplemented by insights from head teachers, directors of studies, and students. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Findings reveal that the philosophy behind teachers' instruction practices is predominantly essentialism, emphasising structured, content-driven teaching aligned with national curriculum content and institutional expectations. Teachers prioritised meeting externally set standards, defining valuable knowledge primarily from the curriculum rather than learners' experiences. Instruction focused on transmitting foundational content and instilling values such as discipline, respect for authority, academic achievement, and responsibility. This approach reflects both the need to meet curriculum requirements and the pressure from parents and foundation bodies to secure high examination performance. While maintaining academic rigour, it limits active participation, collaboration, and critical thinking—factors essential for girls' engagement, confidence, and long-term success. The study recommends that the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB), and school administrators provide professional development, resources, and regular lesson reviews to integrate essentialist structure with learner-centred, gender-responsive approaches, thereby supporting equitable learning while advancing the goals of the competency-based curriculum.

Keywords: Teachers' classroom instruction practices; Philosophy of education; Competency-based curriculum; Gender-responsive pedagogy; Girls' education.

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SESSION 8: WORKSHOP PRESENTATION 9

ROOFTOP: TEACHER PROVISION AND TRAINING

SESSION CHAIR: Jane Sebuyungo

W118: Storybooks for Her: Equipping Teachers in Gender-Responsive Strategies for Low-Resource Classrooms

Session Presenters: **Edina Akello**, & **Brenda Apeta**, Pangea Educational Development, Uganda.

Abstract

In low-resource classroom contexts, girls often face gender and social issues such as early pregnancy, exploitative relationships, and barriers to leadership, while teachers lack the tools and confidence to address these challenges effectively. Storybooks for Her offers a culturally grounded, innovative solution by leveraging Africa's rich oral storytelling tradition to transform familiar storybooks into powerful instructional tools in the classroom. Additionally, this workshop intends to utilize storybooks to explore gender roles, challenge stereotypes, and foster equitable classroom dynamics. This interactive workshop equips teachers with gender-responsive strategies using accessible, low-cost storybooks. It illustrates how story-based learning can spark meaningful dialogue on gender equity and social issues while building participants' confidence to adapt storybooks for sensitive topics and promote equitable participation that fosters gender-equitable attitudes among girls and boys. Participants actively engage in role-play to practice facilitating sensitive issues, group discussions to analyze the influence of socialization agents on gender norms, storybook analysis to identify messages and adapt content for inclusivity, and a focused lesson design session to create ready-to-use, gender-responsive plans. Designed for primary and pre-primary teachers, trainers, NGO educators, curriculum developers, policymakers, and practitioners in low-resource or refugee settings. By the end, participants are inspired to use storybooks to foster inclusivity, critical thinking, and engagement. **Keywords:** Gender-responsive pedagogy, Storytelling, Girls' education, Inclusive classrooms, Low-resource contexts.

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 2.30-3.30 PM

SESSION 10: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 3: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING/OVERCOMING SOCIAL-ECONOMIC & CULTURAL BARRIERS

A PANEL PRESENTATION

SESSION CHAIR: JENIPHER MUSOKE TWEBAZE/ATUHURA DOROTHY

**P102: A Pandemic Recovery Response: Expanding Opportunities for Young Ugandan Mothers
[blended]**

Atuhura Dorothy, (University of Missouri, USA)

Green Susanne, (Royal Roads University, Canada)

Kakuru Doris, (University of Victoria, Canada)

Manion Kathleen Heather, (Royal Roads University, Canada)

Shelley Jones, (Royal Roads University, Canada)

Smith-Carrier Tracy, (Royal Roads University, Canada)

Jenipher Musoke Twebaze, MRC/UVRI

Matovu Hadija Naluyinda Ssali, MRC/UVRI

Abstract

To examine how the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) scheme has expanded residential schooling opportunities for girls from disadvantaged backgrounds, and to assess its measurable impact in overcoming entrenched socio-economic and cultural barriers in Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh, India. Overcoming socio-economic and cultural barriers by addressing poverty, early marriage, and restrictive gender norms through targeted residential education models. A mixed-methods approach combining analysis of secondary data from the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE), National Sample Survey (NSS), and Census reports with field-based case evidence from Vizianagaram district. Assessed indicators include Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), dropout and transition rates, and alumni career trajectories. Since 2004, KGBVs in Vizianagaram have achieved notable shifts in upper-primary GER for girls rose from 67% (2005-06) to over 95% (2020-21), while dropout rates fell from 18% to under 5%, and higher secondary transitions improved by 30 percentage points. The April 2025 tracking of 508 alumni from 26 KGBVs shows lasting transformation of 25% now in government roles, 73.6% in the private sector, and 1.5% in other fields. Alumni careers span medicine, teaching, aviation, software, accounting, and agriculture, reflecting both academic and socio-economic mobility. The Vizianagaram KGBV experience illustrates how sustained, evidence-based interventions can dismantle systemic gender barriers, empower girls, and catalyse community-wide change. Its outcomes offer scalable insights for improving girls' education in similarly marginalised contexts.

Keywords: KGBV, Residential schools, UDISE, Vizianagaram

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 2.30-3.30 PM

SESSION 10: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 201: EMPOWERING GIRLS THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND LIFE SKILLS

SESSION CHAIR: DIANAH AMABLE

T604: The Undocumented Voices: Experiences while in Leadership of Educated Women [online]

Session Presenter: **Chioma Mercy Okoro**, University of Cambridge, UK.

Abstract

This study critically examines the lived experiences of educated women leaders in Nigeria. It investigates how formal education, when intersecting with gender, converges to produce what is theorised as “double erasure”— where women, as educated professionals, are dismissed from knowledge recognition and leadership legitimacy. Drawing on intersectional, postcolonial feminism and African feminist theories, the study explores how gender norms and colonial legacies shape women's leadership experiences in Nigeria. Using a qualitative methodology and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), the study examines the experiences of five educated women leaders from various professional sectors in Nigeria. The findings suggest that while education symbolically admits women in leadership spaces, it simultaneously reproduces exclusion through its demand for conformity to entrenched patriarchal and colonial power structures. Participants described how they engaged in emotional labour, alternated leadership styles, and switched personalities to navigate these challenges and gain legitimacy. Others actively engaged mentors, strategic silencing and knowledge activism to survive and influence. Thus, this study contributes to the literature by centring the voices of African women and challenging the dominant epistemologies in leadership discourse. I conclude by arguing for a fundamental reimagining of what constitutes leadership and knowledge credibility, particularly in the context of women leaders situated in regions where education can intersect with their gender to produce double erasure.

Keywords: Education, Leadership, Gender, Epistemic Exclusion.

T605: Harnessing Community Engagement to Address School Dropout Among Adolescent Girls' in Kwale, Kenya

Session Presenter: **Salim Mwakidzungu**, Kenya.

Abstract

This study examines how structured community engagement influences school retention among adolescent girls in Kwale, Kenya over a 12-month period. It aligns with the conference sub-themes on Overcoming Socio-economic and Cultural Barriers and Empowering Girls through Leadership and Life Skills, addressing persistent gender-based barriers to education. Using a mixed-methods design, the study engaged 120 at-risk adolescent girls, 40 parents, and 10 community leaders across three public secondary schools. Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-intervention attendance records and surveys; qualitative data through focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Variables assessed included dropout status, perceived parental and community support, and school attendance. Quantitative findings were analyzed using inferential statistics; qualitative data were thematically analyzed to extract community-driven solutions. Results revealed a 28% decrease in dropout rates among participating girls. Those who experienced higher levels of parental and community involvement were significantly more likely to remain in school ($p < 0.05$). Community dialogues, mentorship programs, and school-parent partnerships emerged as critical mechanisms for shifting attitudes and sustaining girls' school attendance. The study concludes that community engagement is a scalable, low-cost intervention that tackles socio-cultural norms limiting girls' education. Findings support Uwezo Uganda's mission to promote evidence-based, equity-driven approaches that accelerate learning outcomes and reduce exclusion. While limited to a single county, the study provides actionable insights for education policymakers and advocates working in similar contexts across East Africa. Further research is needed to validate long-term impact and scalability. However, the results offer a compelling case for integrating community structures into national education strategies, contributing to both SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

Keywords: Girls' education, Dropout prevention, Community engagement, School retention, Kenya

T606: Classroom Without Ceilings: Rethinking How Girls Learn and LeadSession Presenter: **Akullu Faith Syndrella**, Kyambogo University, Uganda.**Abstract**

In a world where education is often confined by walls and gendered expectations, This papers addresses the question: What if learning wasn't just about books, but about becoming? I explore how integrating leadership and life skills into girls' education is not just an enhancement it's a necessity. Through a mix of qualitative case studies, program evaluations, and participatory research, we also examine the question: How do leadership and life skills interventions impact girls' educational persistence, agency, and leadership trajectories? The paper highlights proven models from schools, non-formal education, and community programs that have successfully built competencies such as confidence, communication, decision-making, and resilience. The objectives of the study include identifying scalable approaches, sharing practical tools, and mapping policies that support holistic education for girls. The key findings demonstrate that when girls are equipped with these skills, they are more likely to stay in school, challenge gender norms, delay early marriage, and become change-makers in their communities. We engage participants in dynamic discussions with practitioners, youth leaders, and educators who are transforming education systems from within. By rethinking how girls learn and lead, we aim to dismantle ceilings literal and figurative that limit their potential. The outcome this presentation is a shared blueprint for empowering a generation of girls not just to succeed academically, but to lead boldly, live resiliently, and shape a future where no one is left behind.

Key Words: Empowerment, Leadership, Life skills**THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 2.30-3.30 PM****SESSION 10: PARALLEL SESSIONS****MEETING ROOM 401: POLICY & FINANCING****SESSION CHAIR: GW KASULE**

T519: Breaking Barriers: Challenges to Girls' Education and the Contribution of Kabaka's Education Fund in Buganda Region

Session Presenters: **Nakimuli Leticia, & Kizza James**, Buganda Kingdom, Uganda.**Abstract**

In line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on Quality Education and SDG 5 on Gender Equality, this study explores barriers to girls' education and strategies for inclusive, equitable learning opportunities in Uganda. According to the UNDP Gender Inequality Index (2020), progress on gender equality has slowed, partly due to harmful social norms that disadvantage girls' education. Uganda has expanded access through Universal Primary Education (1997) and Universal Secondary Education (2007), reinforced by policies such as the National Strategy for Girls' Education (2004, revised 2013) and the Gender in Education Sector Policy. Despite these efforts, dropout rates for girls remain high, particularly in rural districts. The COVID-19 school closures worsened the situation, with districts like Luweero reporting sharp rises in teenage pregnancies, exposing the fragility of earlier gains. Persistent socio-economic constraints, household poverty, and cultural norms that prioritize boys' education continue to undermine girls' retention in school (Yotebieng, 2021). This study examines socio-economic and cultural factors affecting girls' education in the Buganda region, focusing on the role of the Kabaka Education Fund (KEF). It was relaunched in 1998, KEF seeks to expand access to affordable, quality education, particularly for girls. The study objectives are to: 1) To explore socio-economic and cultural factors affecting girls' education in Buganda, 2) To evaluate KEF's impact on school retention, and 3) To recommend practical, region-specific strategies to address barriers. The research is guided by Bourdieu's Social Reproduction Theory (1977), which explains how inequalities are sustained through disparities in economic, social, and cultural capital, and the Gender and Development (GAD) Theory, which highlights structural and cultural barriers privileging boys' education. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study used school records, household surveys, and stakeholder interviews across selected Buganda districts. Preliminary findings indicate that KEF's scholarships and community sensitization have improved girls' school retention, particularly in rural sub-counties. However, entrenched cultural attitudes, financial hardship, weak school infrastructure, and early marriage are still obstacles. The study concludes by proposing region-specific strategies, including expanding KEF's scholarship reach, deepening community engagement to shift norms, strengthening government traditional institution partnerships, and improving rural school facilities.

National Conference on 'What Works in Girls' Education', 1-3 October 2025

Key words: Cultural barriers, Girl education, Kabaka Education Fund, Buganda region, School retention

T510: Girls' Education as Economic Utility: A Dispersal Critique of Uganda's Vision 2040

Session Presenter: **George Tibakuno**, University College London, UK.

Abstract

Education in Uganda's Vision 2040 is framed as a key ingredient in the country's transformation from low-income status to middle-income status (National Planning Authority, 2013). This article reviews the Vision to examine how girls' education and equality are framed within the national development agenda. It explores the neoliberal orientation embedded in the blueprint, focusing on the depiction of girls' education primarily as an economic utility (National Planning Authority, 2010, 2024, 2013, 2015, 2020). Using dispersal lens, a framework that exposes contradictions that "disorganise" education strategies (Unterhalter, 2023, p.145), the article argues that the Vision's neo-liberal stance on girls' education obscures and masks structural inequalities. Girls and the proposed solutions to their challenges are framed in a one-size-fits-all manner that tends to overlook the specific issues shaped by their ethnicity, social class, and geographical location. The article acknowledges potential benefits of neo-liberal strategies, for instance, increased private investment in education. However, it also questions their limitations in alleviating entrenched social and gender inequalities that girls grapple with. By exposing these discursive constructions, the paper argues that such instrumentalist framings constrain the potential for transformative policy change. Drawing on documentary and contextual analysis of Uganda's Vision 2040, the article calls for a blended approach to girls' education and equality that connects "what works" with "what matters" to advance a justice-driven approach to education policy that centres equity, care and meaningful social justice (Unterhalter, 2017, 2023). This critique offers critical insight into how education policies can move beyond economic utility to address gender justice and equity more effectively in Uganda and comparable contexts.

Keywords: Girls' education, Neoliberalism, Education policy, Gender equity, Uganda Vision 2040

T512: Gender-Responsive Transitions Back to School: Insights for STEP Uganda

Session Presenters: **Giulia Di Filippantonio**, & **Sophia D'Angelo**, Education. Org, Sierra Leone Abstract

Uganda is advancing gender-responsive transition pathways from AEP into formal schooling, catalysed by the national AEP Action Plan. To turn evidence into action across policy, budgets, and classroom practice, Education.org's LIFTED methodology distils high-quality evidence, translates it for decision-makers, and co-designs practical responses. Applied to the "transitions paradox" (rising AEP participation but weak progression), LIFTED informs a global synthesis and the STEP Framework - a five-stage, collaborative pathway across AEPs, schools, and communities - with concrete, budget-aware actions to tackle gendered barriers (safety/GBV, caregiving, disability inclusion, cost, distance) and support girls' re-entry, progression, and completion. We examine how gender-responsive adaptations of STEP strengthen transitions from AEP to formal schooling for girls and young women in Uganda. The study is guided by the following questions: (1) Which design features most effectively address stage-specific barriers to re-entry, progression, and retention? (2) Which policy/financing levers enable sustainable adoption at scale? A Mixed-methods synthesis (documents, stakeholder consultations, program data) applying a gender lens to STEP's stages; Uganda case study anchors practical applicability. The key findings show effective features of transitions, such as, flexible timetables/bridging supports, re-entry and anti-discrimination policies; safe transport and school safety protocols; GBV referral pathways; targeted fee relief; mentorship/psychosocial support, and teacher practices that reduce stereotype threat. Furthermore, findings also revealed some enablers of transitions, such as, transition targets in sector plans, budget lines for AEP/transition supports, inter-agency coordination (AEP - school - community), simple monitoring of entry, attendance, and progression disaggregated by age/sex/disability/parenthood. The STEP framework provides a pragmatic route to operationalise the conference theme, moving from evidence to action on gender-responsive transitions in Uganda and similar contexts.

Keywords: girls' education; transitions; AEP; policy; Uganda.

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 2.30-3.30 PM

SESSION 10: PARALLEL SESSIONS

GARDEN HALL: SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS -MINDSETS, SELF-IDENTITY, & AGENCY
SESSION CHAIR: WARREN BANNISTER

T231: Adapting the Good School Toolkit Agile to Overcome Socio-economic and Cultural Barriers to Girls' Education

Session Presenter: **Hassan Muluusi**, Raising Voices, Uganda.

Abstract

The Good School Toolkit (GST) is an evidence-based program developed to prevent violence against children in Ugandan schools. Over a decade of research and implementation, GST has evolved into GST Agile—a streamlined, adaptable, and scalable version tailored for both primary and secondary schools. GST Agile focuses on creating safer learning environments for girls' education by addressing key barriers including school gender-based violence, socio-cultural norms, fear, and discrimination. The program has content on power, sexual harassment, and gender-based violence specifically designed for adolescent girls, responding to critical challenges of high rates of teenage pregnancy, child marriage and gender inequities that contribute to school dropout and underachievement. Initial piloting in five Ugandan schools shows promising quantitative and qualitative outcomes: reductions in corporal punishment, increased adoption of positive, non-violent disciplinary methods, improved gender equity indicators, and strengthened relationships between teachers and students. These changes contribute to safer learning spaces where girls report decreased fear and greater engagement, which are critical in promoting retention and academic success. Despite these strengths, challenges remain, including the influence of entrenched cultural norms, power imbalances, and resource constraints. Addressing these requires ongoing contextual adaptation, capacity building, and stakeholder sensitization to ensure sustained impact and inclusivity. By demonstrating a program that can be optimized for scalability and gender responsiveness, GST Agile offers a replicable approach that aligns with Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5.

Key Words: Gender-based violence, Learning environment, Sensitization

T237: Perspectives on Agency Among Adolescent Girls in the Karamoja Cluster of Kenya and Uganda A Publication of the Learning and Action Alliance for Girls' Agency (LAAGA)

Session Presenters: **Joyce Kinyanjui, Mary Otieno, & Christine Apiot Okudi**, University of Toronto, Canada.

Abstract

The Karamoja case study, is part of the Learning and Action Alliance for Girls' Agency (LAAGA), which explored what agency means for girls aged 10–19 in marginalized contexts. Conducted in Abim district, Karamoja and Kenya's Loima Sub-County, a region marked by insecurity, poverty, and patriarchal norm, the research aimed to understand how girls define and exercise agency. With only low school enrollment and low literacy among girls, the study highlighted the challenges they face, including early marriage, sexual violence, and limited educational access. Using girl-centered methodologies such as school and community mapping, focus group discussions, and proverb analysis, researchers engaged girls from seven secondary schools. Findings revealed that most girls viewed education as their primary goal and a pathway to a better future. They defined agency as the freedom and ability to set and pursue goals despite adversity. Key attributes supporting agency included self-confidence, decision-making, perseverance, and leadership. However, agency was found to be situational, dependent on safe spaces and supportive relationships. Girls reported feeling unsafe in many environments due to poverty, harassment, and violence. The study concluded that the Karamojong community has its own term for brave, hardworking women, indicating cultural relevance. Recommendations included developing a localized framework for agency, distinguishing between survival and agency, and advocating for policy reforms for girls. The Karamoja case study aligns closely with several workshop sub-themes by offering evidence-based insights into girls' agency in marginalized. Finally, the research itself exemplifies a rigorous, context-sensitive approach to understanding and scaling girls' agency. Overall, the Karamoja case provides a rich, multi-dimensional contribution to the workshop's themes, grounded in participatory research and community engagement.

Key words ; Agency, Gender, Girls Education, marginalized girls

T225: A Social-Cultural Approach to Interrogating the Mindset Question in Ugandan Girl-Child Education

Session Presenter: **Lynda Nakalawa**, Makerere University, Uganda.

Abstract

Academic literature comprehensively addresses the influence of mindset on youth empowerment initiatives, including those focused on education for girls. Evidence suggests that the provision of financial and material assistance to promote girl-child education may not yield desired outcomes, due to mindsets of the girl-child and their social system. Contemporary empowerment programs frequently encounter this obstacle, often advocating for a shift in societal mindsets without articulating clear, research-backed mechanisms for achieving such change. A significant limitation of current conceptualizations of mindset is their predominantly Western-centric orientation, rendering them less suitable for scrutinizing mindsets concerning girl-child education within an African context like Uganda. This research paper explains the development of a socio-culturally relevant model of mindset and, consequently, mindset change. It is grounded in Bakhtin's Dialogic Theory of Mind, which posits that individuals' statements are not solely products of their own minds but are rather adaptations of societal narratives, voices, and collective discourses. To apply this theory to the concept of mindset, a qualitative study was conducted among youth beneficiaries of various Ugandan empowerment programs. Their life stories were elicited, recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using Dialogic Narrative analysis. The findings delineated the narratives prevalent in Ugandan society that shape the mindsets of youth. Certain narratives uncovered in this research, such as "sciences are not for everyone" and "nothing in Uganda ever works," significantly contribute to understanding the mindset issues that girl-child education programmers need to address. The paper further provides recommendations for eliciting and altering youth mindsets through a socio-cultural lens, which are also pertinent to girl-child education in Uganda.

Key Words: Mindset, Mindset Change, Social-Cultural

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 2.30-3.30 PM

SESSION 10: PARALLEL SESSIONS

ROOFTOP: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

SESSION CHAIR: VERONICA NAMULONDO

T406: Improving Adolescent Girls' Nutrition and Health Wellbeing Through Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation in Malawi

Session Presenters: **Martin Charles Likongwe, Maggie Kuchonde, & Doreen Matonga**, University of Malawi, Malawi.

Abstract

The Malawi Demographic and Health Survey 2015/16 showed that almost 35% of adolescent girls (15-19 years) are anaemic, while 13% are underweight. School-aged children and younger adolescents (6-14 years) also face nutritional challenges with anaemia affecting 22% of them (National Statistical Office, Malawi, 2017). According to the University of Sydney et al (2019), dietary quality for adolescent girls is low, with only 17% of girls (10-19 years of age) able to meet the minimum dietary diversity for women (MDD-W). To curb anaemia problems, Malawi government, through the Ministry of Health, initiated a programme of Iron and Folic Acid (IFA) supplementation and deworming for both in and out of school adolescent girls (10 to 19 years). The University of Malawi, funded by UNICEF, facilitated IFA uptake using the Community Behaviour Tracking (CBT) approach aimed at promoting social behaviour change and community engagement in nutrition and other related areas. Previously, communities had misconceptions that IFA is a family planning method, resulting in low uptake. Therefore, many adolescent girls experienced different menstrual problems, including physical discomfort, loss of balance, absenteeism from school and low self-esteem. Through the CBTM intervention (2023-2025), adolescents and parents participated in dialogue sessions and Arts for Life campaigns in four targeted districts of Phalombe, Blantyre, Nsanje, and Chikwawa to promote adolescents' dietary diversification and IFA uptake while demystifying its misconceptions. By June, 2025, there has been an improvement in dietary diversification among adolescent girls consuming animal source foods and legumes from 47% to 86%. Similarly, IFA uptake has increased from 38% to 88%.

This has significantly enhanced adolescent girls' school attendance, immunity and self-esteem, enabling them to focus on learning and remain in school. This calls for the enhancement of integrated services for vulnerable groups to maintain their health well-being, and education outcomes for a sustainable nation.

Key words: Iron Folic Acid Supplementation, Adolescent girls, Adolescents' health, Adolescent nutrition

T408: Exploration on Human Development Behavior in Sustaining Innovation Interventions for Girl Child

Session Presenter: **Jesca Harriet Audo**, Kyambogo University, Uganda.

Abstract

The persistent global imbalance in girl-child education poses a critical challenge to sustainable national development, exacerbated by parental ignorance, restrictive cultural norms like early marriage, and governmental oversights. Girls disproportionately face harmful practices and discrimination in basic needs such as food and healthcare. This paper aims to explore the pivotal role of human development behaviour and innovation interventions in fostering and sustaining girl-child education and empowerment within this context. It critically examines militating factors and proposes practical, research-informed solutions. Methodologically, this exploratory work combines conceptual analysis, drawing on the Capabilities Approach for valuing "being and doing" what individuals have reason to value, and Social Innovation Theory, which addresses unmet needs through new social practices and cross-sectoral collaboration. Empirical insights are derived from action research conducted in Khayelitsha, South Africa, involving qualitative data on women's aspirations and awareness-raising activities. The key outcomes that underscore education's profound benefits include: increased literacy, reduced human trafficking, improved child survival rates, and significant economic upliftment. The research confirms aspirations' capabilities-selecting and agency-unlocking roles. It demonstrates that fostering reflection and deliberation around aspirations, linked to action, mobilizes latent agency and effectively counters adaptive preferences, even amidst structural constraints. This highlights the potential of Design for Behaviour Change as an ethical approach promoting sustainable innovation through influencing actions and reshaping environments. The paper advocates a comprehensive, collaborative strategy, rooted in nurturing girl-child aspirations and capabilities, for holistic national development.

Keywords: Girl-child education, Human Development, Innovation, Behaviour Change, Capabilities Approach, Social Innovation, Aspirations

T409: Menstrual Health Management and Safe School Environments to Encourage Girl Child Education in Uganda

Session presenter: **Brenda Adong**, Cyprus International University, Cyprus.

Abstract

The UNESCO 2025 statistics indicate that globally 133 million girls are out of school. This statistic is due to factors such as poverty, child marriage, sexual violence, poor menstrual hygiene and mental health challenges. SDG4 tackles quality education and aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education by promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. Education for the girl child is more than access to a classroom, rather it is a safe environment in which she is supported even through her natural monthly cycle. An understanding of experiences of menstrual challenges for the girl child is certainly a key aspect of the need for proper menstrual hygiene among girls, but is only part of the picture. A case study with the organization JOY FOR CHILDREN by examining the programs they run in relation to promoting mental health awareness and menstrual health for the girl child in Uganda. It focuses on approaches that have proven effective in the efforts to promote girl child education with the case study of management of menstrual health for girls in school. The purpose of this research was to investigate effective measures that need to be implemented with strategies that ensure menstrual health management and safe school environments for girls in Uganda and worldwide. Data that was gathered from case study of the organizations that protect girl child from early marriages and foster menstrual hygiene in school through Interviews and Focus Group discussions. Through empowerment and awareness creation, the findings from this research can impact the Ugandan policies on girl child education and promote programs that are sustainable for the future generation.

Key Words: Menstrual Hygiene, Implementation, Safe School Environments

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 3.45-4.45 PM

SESSION 11: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 3: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

SESSION CHAIR: GRACE MUSIIMIRE

T405: Empowering Uganda's Young Adolescents through Social and Emotional Learning: Addressing Mental Health and Enhancing SRHR Decision-Making in Early Adolescence

Session Presenters: **YONAH EROBU**, & **Daniel Angula**, JM Education and Research Centre, Uganda.

Abstract

This paper examines how integrating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) into school-based sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) education can improve mental health, SRHR decision-making, and educational outcomes for adolescent girls in Uganda. Early adolescence (ages 10–14) is a critical developmental stage when girls face heightened risks of early pregnancy, HIV, and sexual violence, alongside emotional stress, limited psychosocial support, and entrenched gender norms that threaten their education (UNICEF, 2023; WHO, 2024). Poor mental health and low self-regulation are social determinants that compromise informed SRHR decision-making, perpetuating cycles of gender inequality and school dropout (Patton et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2011). This study investigates the following question: How can a school-based SEL intervention influence mental health resilience and SRHR decision-making among early adolescent girls in low-resource settings? Using a mixed-methods evaluational design in two Eastern Uganda districts, data was collected through learner surveys, focus group discussions, and teacher interviews. Teachers are trained to deliver SEL-integrated SRHR sessions focusing on self-awareness, decision-making, empathy, and gender equity. Preliminary desk review findings reveal strong links between emotional competence, gender-equitable attitudes, and SRHR self-efficacy (Cherewick et al., 2021; WHO, 2021). Anticipated outcomes include improved emotional resilience, increased SRHR self-efficacy, and reduced vulnerability to SRHR risks, enabling girls to remain in school and achieve better learning outcomes. The study generated context-specific evidence to inform national strategies, demonstrating that embedding SEL in SRHR education during early adolescence addresses key social determinants of health and education. The findings offer actionable solutions for policymakers, practitioners, and educators seeking holistic, scalable approaches to advance girls' education in low-resource contexts.

Keywords: Social and Emotional Learning, SRHR, Mental Health, Girls' Education, Uganda

T706: Guiding Futures: The Role of Career Counselling in Preparing Girls for Work

Session Presenter: **Atuheire Maureen**, Rukungire District Local Government, Uganda.

Abstract

While education systems have made progress in increasing girls' enrollment and completion rates, many young women struggle to transition effectively into the labor market. This paper argues that structured career counselling is a critical mechanism for equipping girls with the knowledge, skills, and confidence required to pursue future careers. Drawing on secondary evidence from East African schools and global reports, it highlights how career guidance, through one-on-one counselling, career clubs, mentorship programs, and workplace exposure, supports informed decision-making, aligns educational pathways with labor market needs, and nurtures entrepreneurial and employability skills. Challenges such as limited access to trained career counsellors, societal expectations, and gendered perceptions of careers are discussed. Recommendations focus on integrating career counselling into school curricula, leveraging partnerships with industries, and providing mentorship networks to empower girls to make informed career choices and successfully transition into the workforce.

Keywords: Girls' education, Career counselling, Workforce readiness, Vocational guidance, East Africa

T611: What Works for Girls' Education: Discourse Analysis of Pre-Service Teachers' Gendered Experiences in Uganda

Session Presenter: **Namatende-Sakwa Lydia**, African Population and Health Center, Kenya.

Abstract

Using a discourse analytic lens, this study examines pre-service teachers' narratives of gendered lived experiences in Ugandan schools and universities to identify practices and conditions that enable girls' educational participation and success. Narratives across leadership, discipline, preferential treatment, and sexual harassment reveal how gendered discourses both constrain and create openings for girls' empowerment. While the dominant "male as leader" narrative relegated girls to deputy or domestic-oriented roles, counter-narratives highlighted the transformative potential of teacher recognition, debate participation, and equitable role allocation in fostering girls' leadership confidence. Perceptions of girls as more disciplined—rooted in societal expectations of propriety—translated into less harsh punishments and greater trust from teachers, creating a safer learning climate in which girls could focus on academics. Preferential policies such as affirmative action and teachers' attentiveness to girls' contributions were contested by some male participants yet functioned as compensatory mechanisms to counter entrenched disadvantage and amplify girls' classroom presence. In addressing sexual harassment, narratives underscored the importance of clear reporting pathways, responsive authority figures, and peer support as critical to safeguarding girls, particularly in contexts where fear, victim shaming, and power asymmetries impede justice. By interrogating the language through which these experiences are framed, the study surfaces practices—leadership cultivation, positive teacher-student engagement, equitable discipline, and robust protection systems—that, when institutionalized, can shift gendered schooling cultures toward greater inclusivity and opportunity for girls.

Key words: Discourse, Gender, Uganda, Pre-service teachers, Lived experiences

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 3.45-4.45 PM

SESSION 11: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 201: EMPOWERING GIRLS THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND LIFE SKILLS

SESSION CHAIR: CHRISTOPHER B. MUGIMU

T609: Scaling Peer-Mentoring: Tanzanian Government's Adoption of CAMFED's Learner Guide Model Session

Presenters: **Nkanileka Mgonda, Amna Ansari, & Pauline Rose**, Cambridge University, UK.

Abstract

This paper examines the process by which the Tanzanian Ministry of Education has adapted and adopted CAMFED's Learner Guide programme, a peer-mentoring life skills initiative that has also helped shift harmful gender social norms in the country. The programme has involved female graduates in returning to their former schools to help vulnerable girls learn, thrive and create a better future for themselves and their communities. Its evolution into the government-led Life Skills Facilitator programme now engages both male and female community volunteers in delivering life skills education to girls as well as boys in secondary schools, equipping them with the tools to navigate educational and social challenges. The research employs a qualitative methodology, drawing on 88 key informant interviews with stakeholders at school, local, district, and national levels. The qualitative data are analysed using coding and thematic analysis with the support of Dedoose software. The research explores the adaptation processes of the programme at the district level, as well as the opportunities, challenges, and solutions that emerge as the programme becomes embedded in government secondary schools. The paper provides valuable insights to support sustained educational reform by helping the Tanzanian government strengthen effective aspects of adaptation and scaling of reforms aimed at addressing gender inequalities in education, while identifying strategies to mitigate potential challenges in implementing the Life Skills Facilitator programme through government systems. For example, the research findings highlight the importance of deepening community engagement to build awareness and foster local ownership of the government-led programme. Ultimately, the paper offers evidence to guide continued efforts towards building more gender-equitable educational environments in Tanzania and across Africa.

Key words: Scaling, Peer-mentoring; Secondary education, Tanzania

T610: Raising Future Leaders Through Social Emotional Learning for at-risk Girls in Buliisa District Session

Presenters: **Olak Denis Ongaya, James Mugisha, & Kiisa Josephine**, Link Community Development Uganda, Uganda.
Abstract

In rural Uganda, deep-seated barriers such as poverty, gender norms, child marriage, and unsafe learning environments continue to limit girls' access, retention, and completion of primary education. Buliisa District, home to the Alur and Bugungu communities along Lake Albert's shores, faces particularly high rates of teenage pregnancies and early marriages. According to the District Health statistics, a total of 417 cases of teenage pregnancies were recorded between January and March this year 2025. Recent survey conducted by Makerere University School of Public Health between September 2021 and October 2022 indicates that Bunyoro and Tooro regions lead in teenage pregnancies in Uganda. The survey revealed that Bunyoro alone registered 29,234 cases of early pregnancies among girls aged between 15-19 years in 2022, and the most affected districts were Kikuube, Kibaale, Buliisa, and Kagadi. To address these challenges, Link Community Development Uganda (LCDU) in partnership with Buliisa District Local Government and the Gender Desk at Ministry of Education and Sports introduced an eight-week Social Emotional Learning (SEL) program in 2023, targeting girls in Primary 4 – 7 across 10 pilot schools. The intervention's objective is to equip at-risk girls with leadership, decision-making, and 21st century life skills, fostering resilience and agency to navigate academic and life challenges. Delivered through SEL clubs facilitated by Senior Woman and Senior Man Teachers, the sessions cover self-awareness, emotional regulation, coping with disappointment, building relationships, empathy, goal setting, financial literacy, and savings. Experiential learning activities – including debates, counseling, and peer support – create safe, inclusive spaces for personal growth. Results demonstrate significant impact, over 1,400 vulnerable girls have benefited, with noticeable improvements in positive behavior, emotional wellbeing, peer relationships, participation, and academic performance. Retention and completion rates have improved, and all pilot schools have institutionalized SEL in their timetables. Adoption has expanded to 15 further schools, supported by a SEL manual and best practices guide. This work offer practical, evidence-based strategies to dismantle gendered educational barriers.

Key words: Emotional learning, Leadership, Self-awareness, Teenage pregnancies

T702: Culture and Education of the Girl Child: The Case of the Muslim Communities in the South West Region of Cameroon

Session Presenter: **Sophie Ekume Etomes**, University of Buea, Cameroon.
Abstract

This study investigates the effect of culture on the education of the Muslim girls in the South West region of Cameroon. Specifically, the study examines the beliefs and aspirations of the Muslim parents, justifications for not sending girls to school and the aspirations of the Muslim girls. A survey research design was used of purely qualitative method. The sample included n=30 parents and n=20 girls who have completed primary school. Interview guide was used to collect data for the study. Data was analyzed thematically with the aid of key themes and sampled quotation. Findings revealed that most of the Muslim girls do not attend post-primary education due to the belief that the Muslim community hold about the education of the girl child. They consider the education of the girl child as waste of time and resources since they end up as house wives. In addition, they believe that most educated women lack respect for their spouses. As such, most of the Muslim girls learn a trade after completion of primary education or get married. Most of the Muslim girls inherit the activities of their mothers and get married between the ages of 15 and 20 years. This violates the Sustainable Development Goal 4 and 5 about equal rights to education and gender equality respectively. The findings from the Muslim girls show only n=5 of them aspire to further education if given the opportunity. Vocational skills are good because it promotes entrepreneurship which is very instrumental for economic growth and development, but without education especially higher education, it is difficult for these skills acquired to have a multiplier effect on the individual and the society such as low child mortality rate, low maternal death and a decrease in infectious diseases. Also, when girls remain in school after primary education, it reduces their chance of early marriage and increase their prospect for employment, good healthcare and overall wellbeing.

Key words: Culture, Education, Girl Child Education, Muslim Girls

T608: Empowering Girls through Leadership and Life Skills: Gender Transformative and Life Skills Education in Higher Education Institutions

Session Presenters: **Ivan Kimpanga Mukibi, & Grace Kansiime**, Uganda

Abstract

Ugandan Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are critical spaces for empowering future leaders, yet persistent gender disparities, discriminatory cultural norms, and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) create significant barriers, particularly hindering girls' and women's educational attainment, safety, and future prospects. Empowering girls requires providing holistic education that provides opportunities to participate in community affairs as well as transform social norms and equipping them with critical life skills and values that enable girls to build resilience and thrive in life. This research project directly addresses the conference theme by investigating the integration of Gender Transformative and Life Skills Education (GTLSE) as a core strategy to break these barriers and build equitable futures within four major Ugandan public universities (Makerere, Kyambogo, Gulu, Mbarara). Employing a qualitative hermeneutical-phenomenological approach, the study maps the current scope of Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) and evaluates how gender equality is integrated to (access), in (content/experience), and through (outcomes) education. It systematically identifies existing Life Skills Based Education (LSBE) programmes (e.g., critical thinking, negotiation, SRH, digital skills) and assesses their effectiveness in equipping students, especially girls and women, to navigate challenges and become active change agents. Key findings reflect the extent to which GTLSE is embedded in curricula, policies, and institutional culture. This research also generates actionable, context-specific evidence by proposing concrete measures to mitigate SGBV, discrimination, and harmful norms, fostering safer, more inclusive learning environments. The findings also propose practical frameworks for HEIs to institutionalize GTLSE, including educator capacity building (CPD), policy reform, and integrating essential skills for leadership, employability, and lifelong learning.

Key words: Empowerment, Gender-responsive pedagogy, inclusive spaces

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 3.45-4.45 PM

SESSION 11: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 401: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

SESSION CHAIR: MARY GORETTI NAKABUGO

T411: Economic Self-Reliance and Support Systems Enabling Nebbi Adolescent Girls to Remain in School

Session Presenter: **Paddy Tumwesigye**, Sexual Reproductive Health & Rights (Education Nexus), Uganda.

Abstract

This paper investigates: How do socio-economic self-reliance strategies, combined with targeted sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) interventions, enable adolescent girls in rural Nebbi to remain in school despite systemic challenges? It examines how girls navigate poverty, early sexual exploitation, limited parental support, and cultural pressures that often lead to school dropout or early marriage. One of the problems most cited by girls and teachers at school is the physical challenge of managing their periods under adverse conditions such as schools with inadequate sanitation facilities and frequently with inadequate sanitary protection either at home or at school especially for those experiencing Menarche. This impedes their participation and academic performance. It increases their physical and mental absenteeism. We employed a qualitative case study approach and the paper draws on first-person narratives (e.g., Egitha's story) reported in local media, stakeholder interviews, and program documentation, particularly obtained from the Netherlands-funded PROTECT SRHR initiative. The findings show that girls like Everline Egitha engage in small-scale entrepreneurial activities—such as brewing and selling local beverages during school holidays—to afford menstrual hygiene products and other essentials, enabling continued school attendance despite economic hardship. The lack of consistent parental support, especially from mothers, heightens emotional vulnerability and risk of exploitation. Community and programmatic support structures are critical in bridging these gaps. The PROTECT SRHR project also fosters resilience through life skills training; sexual health education, and psychosocial support, helping girls resist early pregnancy, marriage, and exploitation.

Keywords: Socio-economic empowerment | SRHR education | School retention | Adolescent girls | Early marriage prevention.

T412: Breaking Barriers: Empowering Girls Through Menstrual Hygiene Support in Rural Uganda

Session Presenter: **Omongo Sharon Eve, & Nabatanzi Jane Spacioza**, Nankoma Parents Primary School, Uganda.
Abstract

In rural Uganda, menstruation quietly pushes many girls out of school. One Primary Six pupil's soft confession – "Madam, I missed school because I was bleeding and didn't have anything to use" – mirrors the reality of countless girls. This poster, aligned to the sub- theme Health Well-being, and Education for Girls, shares our lived experience implementing a low-cost, community driven menstrual health intervention in a hard-to-reach school. Working as educators and community partners, we designed a three- part approach:

1. Provision of reusable sanitary pads to menstruating girls.
2. Open, stigma- free discussions with girls, boys, parents, and teachers about menstrual health and gender respect.
3. Practical workshops teaching families to make reusable pads from locally available materials

We adopted a simple mixed-method approach-tracking attendance before and after the intervention, conducting focus group discussions with pupils, and collecting teacher observations. Outcomes were encouraging. Menstrual-related absenteeism dropped by 45% in the first school term; girls reported greater confidence; boys began discretely supporting female classmates; and parents valued the affordability and dignity of reusable pads. Our experience shows that addressing menstrual health openly and practically improves more than attendance- it changes attitudes, builds empathy, and strengthens community bonds. The model is affordable, replicable, and adaptable to other rural contexts. We believe grassroots, community-led solutions are vital to ensuring no girl misses school because of her period.

Keywords: Menstrual health management, Girls' education, Rural Uganda, School attendance, Gender equality.

T413: Why are Girls Still Not in School When There is Free Education in Zambia? A Qualitative Study Session

Presenters:

Rose Chikopela, Chalimana University, Zambia.
Daniel L. Mpolomoka, Unicaf University, Zambia
Alfred Buluma, Makerere University, Uganda
& Abigail Nachilima Chalwe, Unicaf University, Zambia.
 Abstract

This paper uncovers the paradox of persistent non-enrolment and school dropouts among girls despite the removal of tuition fees. This is against the background that the Government of Zambia's introduction of a free education policy for primary and secondary schools in 2022, a significant number of girls remain out of school. Using a qualitative narrative research design, the study collected in-depth personal stories from 30 girls aged 12–18 from three provinces (Eastern, Luapula and Lusaka) representing rural, peri-urban and urban contexts. Additional narratives were gathered from parents, teachers and community leaders to capture diverse perspectives. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and life history timelines. This accorded participants to reflect on their lived experiences and decision-making processes regarding schooling. Thematic narrative analysis revealed that while free education has removed direct tuition costs, indirect barriers persist. These include poverty-related expenses (uniforms, books, sanitary products), early marriages, teenage pregnancies, household labour expectations, long distances to school and safety concerns on the way to and from school. Deeply entrenched cultural norms that undervalue girls' education also emerged as a recurrent theme, alongside gaps in policy implementation, such as inadequate school infrastructure and insufficient teacher capacity to address gender-sensitive issues. The findings suggest that achieving gender parity in education requires going beyond fee abolition to address structural, cultural and socio-economic factors that systematically disadvantage girls. The study recommends integrated interventions combining community sensitisation, targeted financial support, improved school safety and strengthened enforcement of child protection laws. By centring the voices of girls themselves, this research provides evidence-based insights to inform policies and programmes aimed at dismantling the persistent barriers to girls' education in Zambia, ultimately contributing to a future where free education truly translates into universal access.

Keywords: Girl, Education, universal access, Culture, Poverty

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 3.45-4.45 PM

SESSION 11: WORKSHOP PRESENTATION 10

GARDEN HALL: ADDRESSING SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS

SESSION CHAIR: FARIDAH NASSEREKA

W111: Breaking Barriers to Learning: Enabling Marginalized Adolescent Girls to Thrive in Secondary Schools

Session Presenters: **Kizito Maureen S.N., Daniel K., & Unia Nakityo**, PEAS, Uganda.

Abstract

Across rural and underserved communities, adolescent girls face persistent barriers to accessing and succeeding in secondary school. Yet, when schools, communities, and policymakers work together with girls at the centre, the results are transformative. This workshop is intended to bring together practitioners, policymakers, and educators to exchange evidence, share proven approaches, and develop practical, context-specific strategies to dismantle these barriers and drive lasting change. The objectives of this interactive workshop include: (1) To Identify and analyse social, cultural, community, and school-based barriers that limit girls' access, participation, and progression in secondary education. (2) To share and document evidence-based strategies and proven best practices that boost enrolment, retention, and academic achievement. (3) To facilitate peer learning to co-create practical, context-specific solutions for improving outcomes for adolescent girls. Drawing on work from PEAS Uganda, we share evidence and insights on what works, including: (a) Delivering quality in low-resource, rural contexts i.e. Girls' STEM pass rates increased by 12% over three years through targeted support, peer learning clubs, and gender-responsive teaching. (b) Boosting attendance and retention i.e. Safeguarding, community sensitization, and improved menstrual health facilities support girls to stay in school. (c) Pilots such as providing bicycles to girls within a 5-mile radius raised attendance from 84% to 96% in one school. (d) Flexible fees increased overall attendance from 86% to 93%. (e) School success stories i.e. at Bwesumbu PEAS High School, community dialogues were linked to a reduction in student pregnancies from 15 in 2024 to 4 in 2025. (f) Policy Influence & Scaling i.e. Partnership with government is scaling proven strategies, informing Uganda's national Secondary School Improvement Planning Framework, and shaping teenage pregnancy guidelines that enable girls to return and complete school.

Keywords: Girls' participation, retention, school improvement planning, community engagement, gender-responsive pedagogy

THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER 2025, 3.45-4.45 PM

SESSION 11: WORKSHOP PRESENTATION 11

ROOFTOP: DATA & EVIDENCE GENERATION

SESSION CHAIR: ELIZABETH OPIT

W110: Turning Evidence into Impact: Tailored Strategies for Girls' Education Through Case Studies Session

Presenters: **Aradhya Agarwal, & Soumya Nair**, Pratham Education Foundation, India. Abstract

Since 2011, Pratham Education Foundation's Second Chance Program (SCP) has been helping adolescent girls and women, primarily from rural and underserved communities in India, to re-attempt and complete grade 10. Since inception, the program has supported over 50,000 learners from diverse geographies by enabling them to pass high school equivalency examinations and transition to further education and livelihood opportunities. With graduation rates consistently above 70% and learners ranging from 16 to 60+ years, SCP combines academic catch-up, life skills training, and targeted socio-emotional support. A defining feature is its systematic tracking of learner attendance, assessments and analysis, and learner engagement to generate insights for timely, context-specific interventions. We also draw out cross-case insights and common principles for tailoring education interventions to ground realities.

Key words: girls' education, adolescent girls, grade 10, evidence-based interventions, case-based analysis

FRIDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2025, 8.00-9.00 AM

SESSION 13: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 3: EMPOWERING OF GIRLS

SESSION CHAIR: CB MUGIMU

T410: Enhancing Mental Well-being in Ugandan Schools Through Evidence-Based Interventions

Session Presenter: **Joanita Kajoba**, Raising Voices Uganda, Uganda.

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic deeply affected adolescent mental health worldwide, with Ugandan girls among the most affected due to the prolonged school closures, the longest globally. This crisis amplified pre-existing gender vulnerabilities, leading to rise in anxiety, depression, gender-based violence and early pregnancies. These interrelated challenges greatly affected the mental well-being and future opportunities of many girls, deepening inequalities and creating complex barriers to their development. In response to this urgent situation, Raising Voices collaborated with the University of Alabama in 2022 to conduct a qualitative study focused on mental health challenges faced by Ugandan adolescents during and after school closures, with focus on the girls. Engaging 24 adolescents and teachers, the study revealed increases in depression, anxiety, substance use, and various forms of violence. Girls experienced the most severe impact of these challenges, often linked to economic hardships, family stress, and parental trauma. Returning to school brought further challenges; many students struggled academically due to past experiences, and adolescent pregnancies prevented some from resuming education. For those girls who returned to school as young mothers, mental health challenges were compounded by social rejection, shaming and stigmatization that led to isolation and psychological distress. Learnings from this study informed the development of Raising Voices' mental health module in 2023, now an integral component of the widely implemented Good Schools Toolkit. This evidence-based module equips teachers and students, especially girls with practical tools to manage everyday mental health challenges while promoting a safe, inclusive, and empathetic school climate. After a successful pilot in four schools in 2024 that proved its effectiveness, the mental health module is now being implemented across all schools using the Good Schools Toolkit. Endorsed by Uganda's Ministry of Education and Sports, this gender-sensitive mental health module represents a strategic, evidence-based approach to strengthening resilience and improving mental well-being within schools across Uganda and beyond.

Key words: Mental well-being, Gender-based violence, Good Schools Toolkit

T213: Overcoming Gender-Based Violence: A Critical Analysis of its Impact on Girls' Education, Mental Well Being, and Future Prospects

Session Presenter: **Justine Omare**, & **Athanansio Bashaija**, Kabale University, Uganda.

Abstract

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a global crisis that disproportionately affects girls and women, with profound and lasting consequences. The escalating problem of Gender Based Violence acts as a critical impediment to girl's educational attainment and adversely affects their future prospects. Further, it perpetuates a cycle of poverty, inequality, and severely compromises the physical and mental health of young girls in Uganda. The rationale of this study was to assess the complex and devastating impact of Gender Based Violence on girls' education and their overall mental health and well-being and how to overcome this problem. The study collected data from desktop research analysis of secondary sources and prevailing literature which explored the diverse forms of GBV, the social and cultural factors that drive it, and the resulting educational and psychological outcomes. In essence the study sheds light on the urgent need for comprehensive, multi-sectoral approach and interventions tailored on girl's education. The study illuminates a nuanced understanding of how violence in schools, homes, and communities obstructs girls' right to education and a healthy, fulfilling life. The findings affirmed that GBV is crisis that requires a holistic and multi-faceted approach. Therefore policy and programmatic practical interventions must be designed to confront the root causes of GBV, including patriarchal social norms and gender inequality through diverse and proactive engagements.

Keywords: Gender Based violence, girl education, health, well-being

T305: Digital Inclusion of Girls in Technology-Enhanced Pedagogy: Improving Kiswahili Competence and Attitudes in Ugandan Secondary Schools

Session Presenter: **Emilly Arishaba**, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, Uganda. Abstract

Kiswahili, an official language of the East African Community, is mandatory in Ugandan secondary schools to foster regional integration and communication. Despite its importance, girls consistently underperform in the subject, often due to ineffective teaching methods, limited access to digital tools, and sociocultural barriers that restrict participation in technology-enhanced learning. Technology-enhanced pedagogy (TEP) has emerged as a promising strategy to address both language learning challenges and the gender digital divide; however, empirical evidence focusing on girls remains scarce. This quasi-experimental study examined the impact of digital instructional strategies on Kiswahili academic competence and the moderating role of girls' attitudes in government-aided secondary schools in Mbarara City. Participants included 158 Senior Three girls from eight schools, assigned to either experimental or control groups. Data were collected using pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, standardized score sheets, teacher interviews, and student focus group discussions. Results indicated a significant improvement in academic competence among girls in the experimental group, with a 25% increase in mean scores, $p < .001$, and regression analysis showing that TEP accounted for 30% of the variance in test scores, $R^2 = .30$, $p < .05$. TEP also significantly improved student attitudes, $t(78) = 2.50$, $p = .013$, and attitudes moderated the relationship between TEP and academic competence, $p = .053$. Qualitative findings revealed enhanced engagement, listening and speaking proficiency, and research capacity, though challenges such as limited access to devices and technical skills persisted. The study recommends targeted ICT infrastructure investment, gender-responsive teacher training, and scaling of TEP to bridge the digital divide for girls in language learning.

Keywords: Kiswahili, technology-enhanced pedagogy, digital inclusion, girls' education, student attitude, academic competence, Uganda

FRIDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2025, 8.00-9.00 AM

SESSION 13: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 201: OVERCOMING SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS

SESSION CHAIR: ELIZABETH OPIT

T226: Using Traditional Leaders' Social Capital to Curb Early Marriages and Boost Girls' Education in Malawi

Session Presenter: **Esme Kadzamira**, University of Malawi, Malawi.

Abstract

Socio-cultural factors remain a major barrier to girls' education in Sub-Saharan Africa, with early marriage and teenage pregnancy significantly reducing girls' chances of completing school. Cultural norms often underpin these practices, limiting the effectiveness of conventional government interventions such as scholarships and the provision of school materials. While such measures have yielded some progress, many girls continue to drop out prematurely. Emerging evidence from Malawi suggests that leveraging the social capital of traditional leaders—particularly chiefs—can be more effective in curbing early marriage. As custodians of cultural traditions, chiefs hold unique authority to challenge and reshape harmful norms. This presentation highlights case studies of two Malawian chiefs (one female) who successfully used their influence to reduce early marriages and promote girls' education, offering insights into how community-based leadership can drive sustainable social change. Both enacted by-laws prohibiting early marriages and giving sanctions to village heads and parents who allowed their children to enter into matrimony before they had attained the legal age of marriage. **Keywords:** early marriages, cultural norms girl's education

T228: Evaluation of Strategies to End Child Marriage in Kawaza Chiefdom in Eastern Province of ZambiaSession Presenters: **Vainess Phiri, & Rose Chikopela**, Chalimbana University, Zambia.**Abstract**

This study evaluated the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at ending child marriage in Kawaza Chiefdom, Katete District, Eastern Province, Zambia. Objectives of the study were to assess the effectiveness of existing initiatives aimed at ending child marriage in Kawaza Chiefdom, to explore community attitudes towards interventions implemented to address child marriage practices and to identify the challenges in the implementation of child marriage prevention programs in Kawaza Chiefdom. The study adopted an embedded mixed methods research design on a sample of 100 that were randomly and purposively sampled that comprised of girls and young women aged 14-24 years who are or were at risk of child marriage, boys and men aged 15-30 years, village headpersons, religious leaders, traditional marriage counsellors, elderly people aged 60+ who play a significant role in shaping local customs and norms, and parents or guardians within Kawaza Chiefdom to understand family dynamics influencing child marriage. Data was collected using questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGD) and interview guide. Analysis was done using themes and SPSS. Results revealed that initiatives to end child marriages in Kawaza Chiefdom included development of by-laws, awareness campaigns on the dangers of child marriages, establishment of village committees and Gender Based Violence (GBV) secretariat, and taking girls back to school with support from the chiefdom. These initiatives have increased school retention, delayed marriages, improved awareness and reduced teen pregnancies. Results revealed that the chiefdom works in coordination with schools, health facilities and NGOs. The community ensures that the girls registered for marriage are of the correct age, and they report cases of early marriages. The noted challenges in ending child marriages included cultural norms and religious beliefs, inadequate schools and lack of boarding facilities, inadequate teaching and learning resources, illiteracy, poverty, ignorance, lack of safe house for victims of child marriages, and lack of inclusion of the perpetrators (boys and men) in the initial planning, implementation and monitoring of the activities. The study recommends involving boys and men in the initiatives, funding for the program, and development of schools and safe house infrastructure.

Keywords: Child marriage, By-laws, Gender Based Violence, teen pregnancies, school, cultural norms

T508: What Works for the Re-Entry of Pupil-Mothers into Schools: A case of Selected Primary Schools in Uganda

Session Presenters:

Kitamirike Henry, Willis Core PTC Iganga, Uganda**Opit Elizabeth**, Kyambogo University, Uganda**Namatende Lydia Sakwa**, African Population and Health Research Center, Nairobi, Kenya.**Abstract**

This paper examines what works to support pupil mothers' successful re-entry into Ugandan primary schools following COVID-19-related closures. It draws on narrative accounts to document their lived experiences, highlight supportive teacher and peer practices, and identify strategies that enable continuity in girls' education after early pregnancy. The findings reveal that positive teacher engagement is central to girls' educational persistence. Teachers who embraced the re-entry policy cultivated warm, respectful relationships with pupil mothers, demonstrating empathy, understanding, and zero tolerance for discrimination. They created safe, inclusive classrooms and provided targeted academic assistance, psychosocial support, and, in some cases, material and financial help. Such approaches not only boosted pupil mothers' confidence but also reduced absenteeism and dropouts. Peer support emerged as another protective factor. While some classmates engaged in stigma or exclusion, the majority offered encouragement, academic collaboration, and emotional solidarity. These peer alliances created informal safety nets, helping pupil mothers balance school demands with childcare responsibilities. However, structural challenges—including childcare burdens and financial hardship—continued to threaten educational continuity. These pressures risked undermining resilience, especially without school-based support systems or flexible learning arrangements. The study underscores that advancing girls' education requires more than open re-entry policies; it depends on embedding gender-responsive practices into everyday school life. Scalable strategies include empathy-based teacher training, provision of school-linked childcare, targeted financial assistance, and peer mentoring programmes. Such interventions directly advance Sustainable Development Goals 4 (quality education) and 5 (gender equality) by ensuring that motherhood does not end a girl's education. They also align with the conference mission to promote actionable, evidence-based approaches that transform schools into safe, inclusive, and empowering spaces for all girls, regardless of their life circumstances.

Key words: Pupil-mother, school re-entry, teenage pregnancy, Uganda

National Conference on 'What Works in Girls' Education', 1-3 October 2025

FRIDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2025, 8.00-9.00 AM

SESSION 13: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 401: DATA AND EVIDENCE

SESSION CHAIR: ROSEMARY NAKIJOBA

T803: Family Factors Predicting Literacy and Numeracy Competence Among Primary School Pupils with Visual Impairment in Ugandan After Covid-19 Wave

Session Presenters:

Nakijoba Rosemary, Muteesa Royal University, Uganda

Christopher B. Mugimu, Makerere University, Uganda.

Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate family factors as predictors of competences in numeracy and literacy skills among 4-16-year-old pupils with visual impairment after the first Covid-19 Wave in Ugandan primary schools. The objectives of the study were fourfold; to analyse the prevalence rate of pupils with visual impairment, establish the relationship between visual impairment and literacy skills, establish the relationship between visual impairment and numeracy skills, and determine family factors that predict academic performance among 4-16-year-old pupils with visual impairment in Uganda during the first Covid-19 wave. Secondary data from Uwezo 2021 dataset were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlational coefficient and stepwise linear regression to establish the levels of competence in literacy and numeracy skills among pupils with visual impairment. The study findings revealed a visual impairment prevalence rate of 3.6% among 4-16-year-old pupils with a slightly high prevalence among males (3.8%) than females (3.5%). Noteworthy, there were low significant relationships between numbers ($r=.023$, $p=.006$), literacy level ($r=.025$, $p=.003$) and visual impairment. A stepwise linear regression showed that family factors such as source of lighting, household source of income, household level of education and household gender significantly predicted pupils' academic performance. In conclusion, based on the findings, early visual screening should be done and interventions sought to enhance academic performance of pupils with visual impairment. The findings of this study inform education policy review to enhance children's acquisition of basic skills in literacy and numeracy and more particularly those with visual impairment.

Keywords: Visual Impairment, Literacy, Numeracy, Family Factors, Inclusive Education

T817: Second Chances, Lasting Change: A Model for Re-engaging Girls in Education Across India

Session Presenters: **Soumya Nair, Aradhya Agarwal, & Anamika Vaghela**, Pratham Education Foundation, India.

Abstract

In August 2024, 2.8 million students failed to complete grade 10 in India, where a secondary school certificate is a key requirement for entry into higher education, skills training, and career advancement. The Second Chance Program (SCP), facilitated by Pratham, supports older girls, primarily from rural and underserved communities, to complete grade 10. The year-long program provides foundational skills catch up, academic coaching, and life skills training. Pratham believes that by making secondary education attainable for older girls, it is possible for them to overcome logistical and social barriers and ultimately, improve agency. This paper examines the impact of second-chance education initiatives on learning outcomes and post-education transitions for girls and women in rural India. It explores how flexible, scalable models equip out-of-school girls with the skills, confidence, and pathways to re-engage with learning. This paper aligns with the sub-themes 'Overcoming Socio-economic and Cultural Barriers, Empowering Girls through Leadership and Life Skills, Transitioning to Work; Preparing Girls for Future Careers, and Data and Evidence Generation for Informing Interventions or Scaling Impact'. Since 2011, SCP has reached over 50,000 learners. In the last two years alone, over 20,000 girls and women have enrolled, with pass rates consistently above 70%. Attendance, engagement, and assessment scores are tracked throughout the program, allowing early identification of at-risk learners and targeted academic interventions. Real-time data insights drive adaptive strategies for diverse socio-economic and demographic contexts, ensuring relevance and impact at scale. This paper proposes a scalable model that integrates academic catch-up with socio-emotional support, leadership development, and rigorous data use, demonstrating how a second chance at education can break entrenched socio-cultural barriers and create lasting pathways to education and work.

Keywords: girls' education, second-chance learning, socio-cultural barriers, life skills, data-driven scale

T607: Empowering Girls through Education: A Comprehensive Approach to Overcome Barriers in Uganda

Session Presenter: **Julius Kuzirimpa**, Uganda.

Abstract

Girls' education in Uganda faces significant barriers, including socio-economic disparities, cultural norms, and lack of resources. Our study reveals that these barriers perpetuate gender inequality and limit girls' access to quality education. This is a mixed-methods study combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to understand the complexities of girls' education. We used surveys with 1,000 girls to gather quantitative data on their experiences and challenges. We also conducted Focus Groups Discussions (FDGs) with community leaders to explore the cultural norms and perceptions. We also conducted interviews with educators and policymakers to gain insights into existing policies and practices. The key findings of the study revealed that girls in Uganda face significant challenges, including; (1) Socio-economic disparities, such as, poverty and lack of resources which limit girls' access to education. (2) Cultural norms -harmful cultural practices perpetuate gender inequality. (3) Lack of resources - insufficient infrastructure hinders girls' learning experiences. However, this study also highlights opportunities for intervention: (a) Community engagement - mobilizing communities to promote girls' education. (b) Teacher training - equipping educators with skills to support girls' learning. (c) Girls' empowerment - providing mentorship and safe spaces. In conclusion, " Empowering Girls Through Education " offers a comprehensive approach to promoting girls' education in Uganda. By identifying and addressing barriers, and leveraging opportunities for intervention, we can create a supportive environment where girls can thrive. This study provides evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, educators, and communities to promote girls' education and empowerment. By working together, we can break barriers and build futures where every girl has access to quality education and empowerment, ultimately contributing to Uganda's development.

Key Words: Girls' Education, Socio-economic Barriers, Cultural Norms, Uganda, Education Empowerment

FRIDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2025, 8.00-9.00 AM

SESSION 13: PARALLEL SESSIONS

GARDEN HALL: EMPOWERMENT OF GIRLS THROUGH LEADERSHIP AND LIFE SKILLS

SESSION CHAIR: FARIDAH NASSEREKA

T620: A Regional Perspective on the Impact of Life Skills and Leadership Programs on Girls' Education in East Africa

Session Presenters: **Gaudence Kapinga**, & **Anande Nnko**, RELI Africa, Tanzania.

Abstract

Across East Africa, many organisations have made significant strides in empowering girls through leadership and life skills initiatives. This paper evaluates the approaches of three RELI Africa member organisations; GLAMI's Binti Shupavu in Tanzania, Kakenya's Dream in Kenya, and Kukuza Education's Do It Yourself (DIY) Clubs in Uganda—to understand how their distinct methods have advanced girls' education to date. In contexts marked by structural inequalities, gender norms, and socio-economic barriers, equipping girls with competencies in self-advocacy, decision-making, and civic engagement fosters agency and disrupts cycles of exclusion. Leadership development amplifies girls' voices and embeds their perspectives in school and community governance, while culturally relevant, gender-responsive life skills education promotes holistic well-being. Binti Shupavu, a four-year life skills course, boasts an 89% graduation rate and 97% pass rate in Year Two exams, with mentorship provided to 76% of participants. Outcomes include reduced dropout and teen pregnancy rates, alongside increased aspirations for higher education. Kukuza Education's DIY Clubs strengthen youth agency, participation, and enabling environments; members, 58% of whom are girls, dominate school leadership teams and demonstrate improved academic performance under the competence-based curriculum. Kakenya's Dream combines mentorship with life skills covering communication, reproductive health, financial literacy, and decision-making, protecting girls from harmful practices while inspiring them to become agents of change. Its peer-to-peer mentorship model fosters leadership and solidarity across generations. Through comparative analysis, this paper examines the strategies, outcomes, and enabling factors underpinning these successes, drawing lessons for what works in promoting girls' education, and scalable models for tackling the persistent barriers across the region.

Key Words: Girls' Education, Mentorship, Life skills .

T703: Gender Issues and Female Labour Market Participants: Insights from Internship Experience in Higher Education Institutions in Cameroon

Session Presenter: **Sophie Ekume Etomes**, University of Buea, Cameroon.

Abstract

Higher education certification increases the probability of better job opportunity. The exponential increase in female enrolment and graduation rate in higher education institutions (HEIs) should therefore reflect their labour market participation. Internship align skills to labour market needs and open doors for employment opportunities. This study examines the extent to which internship experience enhances labour market participation of females in HEI in Cameroon, grounded in the Dual Labour Market Theory by Doeringer and Piore (1971) that explains gender inequality and stereotype in employment. Using a correlational survey design, the study sampled n=489 (156 male, 333 female) participants, including n=306 Master's graduates and n=183 Master's students from state (n=357) and private (n=132) HEIs, using a Questionnaire. The open-ended questions were analysed through thematic content analysis while the closed-ended questions were analysed using SPSS version 25.0. The Probit Regression Model and the Chi-square test were employed to examine the effects of internship experiences on female labour market participation. Findings revealed that internship duration, mentorship, students' motivation for the internship, and previous work experience enhance labour market participation. However, the results showed gender variation. Of the n=186 participants that were employed, 48.1% were males while 33.3% were females, but the study had more of female (68.1%) than Male (31.9%) participants. Furthermore, the coefficient for gender was positive (0.327) and statistically significant at 5% level of probability. This indicates that being male raises the probability of labour market participation by 0.327 compared to being female. Female interns faced challenges such as gender stereotype, sexual harassment during internship which affected their participation. Most of those employed were in lower positions because of stereotype. This does not support SDG 5 (gender equality). The study recommends a revision of labour market policies to fight against gender stereotype and ensure gender equality.

Keywords: Gender; Female employment; Labour market participation; internship experience

T/W 216: AZBGC - Youth-led Community Programs Challenge Socio-economic and Cultural Barriers to Girls' Advancement

Session Presenters: **Cris Mutebi, Susan Namagembe, Joseph Bugembe, & Ruth G Kane**, University of Ottawa, Canada.

Abstract

Challenges facing girls are life-determining; poverty and early pregnancy are exacerbated by isolation, gender discrimination, and lack of education. Girls face sexual violence, exploitation, and early marriage, with the United Nations suggesting 25% of girls in Uganda aged 15-18 become pregnant and leave school. The Agnes Zabali Boys and Girls Club (AZBGC) Kamengo is a youth-led community program that supports vulnerable children and youth to remain in school and reach their full potential. Kamengo is in the Mpigi district, which saw a 1% drop in teenage (<19years) pregnancies between 2019-2021 and ranks 71st out of 146 (UN 2022). AZBGC strategic programs for girls include: (1) Social inclusion – a safe and supportive community learning center for knowledge mobilization, sexual health and wellness seminars, women's and men's sharing circles, library, and computer resources. (2) Building collective knowledge within the community - evidence sharing with parents, girls, and boys to understand the importance of girls' education and the consequences of early pregnancies. (3) Leadership opportunities – girls develop mentoring skills, serve as role models, and contribute to the cultural and social fabric of the community. (4) Fostering sporting excellence – builds personal agency and responsibility. (5) Funding for girls to attend boarding schools ensures safety through vulnerable teenage years. Findings show that since 2015, 50 girls have graduated from secondary school, and 45 girls have completed university degrees in disciplines, such as, midwifery, teaching, and business. Ten young women have secured basketball scholarships to prestigious secondary schools. Providing access to sexual and reproductive health services and ensuring girls' physical and mental well-being is making a difference; there are shifts in how girls and boys view gender roles and expectations. Continuing to prioritize girls in community activities is critical to sensitize community members and influence social norms. Enhancing outreach will ensure girls can contribute to developing long-term solutions for their community.

Key Words: Girls' education, Gender roles, Leadership development

FRIDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2025, 8.00-9.00 AM

SESSION 13: WORKSHOP PRESENTATION 12

ROOFTOP: EMPOWERMENT OF GIRLS

SESSION CHAIR: EMMY ZOOMLAMAI

W115: Empowering Girls through Leadership and Life Skills: The ALiVE Life Skills Intervention in Tanzania

Session Presenter: **Zenais Matemtu**, Uwezo Tanzania.

Abstract

In Tanzania, many adolescent girls leave school prematurely due to poverty, child marriage, gender-based violence, and restrictive social norms. These challenges are acute in rural districts where resources are limited, and gender inequalities entrenched. To address these barriers, UWEZO Tanzania, in partnership with local government, schools, OCODE, Milele Zanzibar and Zizi Afrique, developed the ALiVE Life Skills Project (ALiVE). The project responds to social and cultural constraints preventing girls from completing education. ALiVE equips girls aged 13–17 with the confidence, skills and agency to stay in school and thrive. The project aims to: (1) Strengthen self-awareness, decision-making, and problem-solving. (2) Help girls navigate gender-specific risks that disrupt education. (3) Build school and community environments that support girls' learning. (4) Engage parents and leaders to champion girls' education and reinforce skills at home. The program uses participatory approaches storytelling, debates, role-plays, and games to connect life skills to real challenges. Safe spaces created by local facilitators allow girls to practice leadership, set goals, and build resilience. ALiVE integrates with Jifunze, UWEZO's literacy and numeracy program implemented through the Teaching at the Right Level Initiative (TARLI). This ensures that girls improve academic competencies while also gaining socio-emotional skills like communication and collaboration. The combination builds confidence and agency, while engaging families and communities sustains change beyond classrooms. Since 2021, ALiVE has reached 34 districts. While all were involved in assessments, intensive interventions were piloted in select districts with high barriers. Facilitators collaborated with schools and communities to create safe spaces and strengthen girls' decision-making, leadership, and resilience. Evidence shows positive outcomes: improved attendance, stronger classroom participation, and shifts in community attitudes toward girls' education. Girls emerge as peer role models, demonstrating resilience, assertive communication, and goal setting. Parents and leaders' involvement strengthened ownership and cultural relevance. Integration with Jifunze enhanced literacy and numeracy gains, proving that coupling academics with life skills improves overall learning and confidence.

Keywords: Girls' education, life skills, literacy and numeracy

FRIDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2025, 9.15 -10.30 AM
SESSION 14: PARALLEL SESSIONS
MEETING ROOM 3: EMPOWERMENT OF GIRLS
SESSION CHAIR: NOELA BINDA NAITI

T612: Cases from Kamengo, Uganda: Strategic Wrap-around Support Mitigates Gender Disparity

Session Presenters: **Dianah Elisabeth Nasamula, Lilian Nassuna, & Ruth G Kane**, AZBGC / University of Ottawa, Canada. Abstract

Gender gaps persist in education in sub-Saharan Africa, where more girls than boys are out of school, and boys outnumber girls in tertiary education even though more girls complete primary and secondary school 'on time' (UNESCO, 2025). In Uganda, boys perform better than girls in the Primary Leaving Examination, and while girls outperform boys in English in the Ugandan Certificate of Education (UCE), boys do better in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields (UNEB 2024a, b) and go on to register in greater numbers in university. Using cases of young women from AZBGC Kamengo, we illustrate the wrap-around support necessary to mitigate gender disparity. Strategic activities include: a) Funding for girls to attend boarding schools – safety through vulnerable years. b) Women's center – a safe space for women's circles, building knowledge on sexual and reproductive health, and skill development. c) Personal sanitary products – reduce school absence and dropout. d) Basketball development program – builds skills, fosters personal agency and responsibility, and 10 women have won basketball scholarships to prestige schools. e) Leadership development – volunteering during medical missions, capacity building workshops, and income-generating activities. The findings of this study demonstrate how projects can target education, knowledge, leadership, decision-making, and life skills that enable women to succeed and contribute to the advancement of their community. Fifty AZBGC girls have completed secondary school, and 45 have graduated from university. While girls build confidence to use their voices to identify problems and work with parents and other community members to find solutions, they continue to meet challenges in securing permanent professional appointments. The young women in this presentation identify factors that enabled them to challenge the cultural norms that expect women to finish school early so they can marry and have children young (UNESCO, 2025). They also speak to the continued challenges and gender discrimination they face as they seek to secure professional positions.

Key words: Gender disparity, Girls' agency, Female community leadership

T613: Influence: Young Women's Agency in West African Youth Civic Organisations

Session Presenter: **Noella Binda** University of Cambridge, UK.

Abstract

This study examines the paradox of young women's involvement in West African youth civic organizations, specifically Hip-Hop and Zouglou organizations like Y'en a Marre (YEM) in Senegal and FESCI in Cote d'Ivoire. Despite their seemingly invisible roles, young women demonstrably wield significant influence within groups like Y'en a Marre (YEM) and FESCI. While these organizations are largely male-dominated, mirroring broader societal "African mentalities" that relegate women to domestic spheres (Sophie, 2018), evidence suggests a powerful, albeit often unacknowledged, female agency. For instance, while core leadership in YEM featured few women, many were deeply involved in local branches (esprits), challenging the notion of their submission. Similarly, FESCI's "amazons" were critical female "soldiers" bringing a "gentle and kind" approach to activism (Siaba, 2018), even if their access to external researchers was restricted, raising questions about their autonomy. Through an analysis of participant narratives, this study reveals that women, despite their vital contributions—face significant barriers to leadership and visibility. This analysis problematizes Hip-Hop's dichotomy as both a force for social justice and a culture that marginalizes women (Rose, 1994). By exploring the experiences of young women within these youth movements, this research provides crucial evidence for understanding the barriers to women's and girls' full participation and leadership in social and political spheres in West Africa, offering insights relevant to strategies for breaking barriers and building futures through culturally relevant praxes.

Key words: Barriers to girls, Leadership, Visibility, Social justice

T614: Leadership and Life Skills Programs Influence Academic Engagement and Self-Efficacy Among Girls in Uganda

Session Presenters:

Eunice Ndyareeba, Kabale University, Uganda

Zanna Clay, Durham University

Dennis Zami Atibuni, Muni University

Kibedi Henry, Kyambogo University.

Abstract

This paper presents findings from research on girls' education in Uganda, focusing on the impact of leadership and life skills programs in fostering academic engagement and self-efficacy. Using the Mann-Whitney U test, data from a proportionate random sample of 510 students were analyzed for any significant differences in academic engagement based on gender and socio-economic factors. Our results indicate that female students generally exhibited lower academic engagement compared to their male peers, particularly in low engagement categories ($p = 0.014$). However, being a beneficiary of life skills programs significantly enhanced self-efficacy, with a strong correlation between academic self-efficacy and overall engagement ($r = 0.572$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that when girls develop confidence in their abilities, they are more likely to actively engage in their education. Moreover, beneficiaries of compassion support programs reported higher academic engagement levels ($p = .004$), emphasizing the importance of targeted interventions that support both academic and life skills. Qualitative insights from in-depth interviews further highlight the necessity for nurturing environments that empower girls to advocate for their education. These findings align with Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5, which emphasize inclusive, equitable, quality education and gender equality. Our research advocates for scaling successful leadership and life skills initiatives as effective strategies to overcome socio-economic and cultural barriers. Findings of this study provide valuable insights that enhance learning outcomes for all children, regardless of gender. This conference provides an essential platform for sharing these strategies and fostering collaboration to advance girls' education, ultimately creating a more inclusive and equitable educational landscape for every child. **Key Words:** Life-skills, Self-efficacy, Academic engagement, Girls' Education, Sustainable Development Goals

T615: Programming for Girls: Lessons Learnt from Nine Years of Implementation of an Intervention in Nairobi

Session Presenters: **Benta A. Abuya**, & **Nelson Muhia**, The African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), Kenya.

Abstract

This paper is based on evidence from a community-based after-school support program, "Advancing Learning Outcomes for Transformational Change (ALOT-Change) targeting adolescent girls, boys, and their parents in two urban informal settlements in Nairobi. The program sought to improve learning outcomes, transition to secondary school, career awareness, digital literacy, and socio-emotional outcomes of the adolescents' while enhancing positive parenting skills among their parents. We seek to answer the question: What were the key lessons learned from the intervention in urban informal settlements of Nairobi? Data comes from, the endline evaluation of the program conducted in July-August 2018; and Phase III endline evaluation conducted: November-December 2021, and March-April 2022, including yearly program evaluation meetings with implementing partners and APHRC. Findings demonstrate that integrated approaches reduce inefficiencies and resource wastage associated with program fragmentation. Inclusion of boys gave us a chance for a more comprehensive girls' education approach, motivating girls to complete primary education and make a transition to secondary school. In terms of sustainability, the program maximized the use of local resources, with the community becoming more appreciative of the value of education. Also, the strength of the intervention waned in the 6th year, with sustainability possible in the 4th year, before the onset of Phase III, with the follow-up cohort exhibiting statistically significant bigger gains than the new cohort. On social-emotional efficacy, the new cohort being better equipped to resist negative peer pressure, responded effectively when faced with interpersonal circumstances, and identified supportive adults within the community compared to the follow-up cohort. This showed that the new cohort were receptive to the intervention because of being exposed recently to the intervention. The relevance to the theme is that the integrated program empowered girls and boys to access secondary school and beyond, showing possible adaptation of the intervention for older adolescents.

Key words: Girls, boys, socioemotional, literacy, numeracy

FRIDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2025, 9.15 -10.30 AM

SESSION 14: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 201: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING; POLICY & FINANCING

SESSION CHAIR: JULIUS F. KIKOOMA

T518: Breaking Stigma, Rebuilding Futures: Socio-Cultural and Economic Barriers to Adolescent Mothers' School Reintegration in Post-COVID Uganda

Session Presenters: **Richard Balikoowa, & Julius F. Kikooma**, Makerere University, Uganda
Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing inequalities in Uganda's education sector, with adolescent girls disproportionately affected through heightened risks of early pregnancy and school dropout. This paper interrogates the socio-cultural and economic barriers shaping the reintegration of adolescent mothers into formal schooling in post-pandemic Uganda. Guided by the central question, "What factors enable or constrain girls' return to school after early motherhood?", the study foregrounds the lived experiences of adolescent mothers while situating them within broader community and policy dynamics. Drawing on a qualitative design, the research employed in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with adolescent mothers, parents, teachers, and community leaders. Thematic analysis revealed how stigma, cultural expectations, and household poverty intersect to reinforce exclusion. Adolescent mothers were frequently labelled as "spoilt" and pushed toward early marriage and domestic responsibilities rather than education. Families facing survival pressures often prioritised resources for other children deemed to have greater prospects, while institutional responses were undermined by weak implementation of government re-entry policies and the absence of structured psychosocial and financial support. The paper argues that genuine reintegration demands community-level efforts to dismantle stigma, targeted economic interventions to support young mothers, and stronger accountability mechanisms for schools and local governments in enforcing re-entry policies. By engaging the perspectives of adolescent mothers alongside those of communities and institutions, the study contributes evidence to inform both policy and advocacy. It calls for an integrated approach that recognizes adolescent mothers not as educational "failures" but as rights-bearing learners entitled to equitable opportunities.

Keywords: Adolescent mothers, Girls' education, Reintegration, Socio-cultural barriers, Post-COVID

T102: Breaking Barriers: Community-led Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education in Rural Busoga, Uganda

Session Presenter: **Mugoya Paul**, JIACOFÉ, Jinja, Uganda.
Abstract

In rural Busoga, Uganda, girls face persistent socio-economic and cultural obstacles that undermine their right to education. Factors such as poverty, negative gender norms, long distances to schools, poor menstrual hygiene support, and weak data systems (e.g., EMIS inaccuracies) contribute to school dropout and low academic performance. The lack of Primary Leaving Examination (PLE) centers and inadequate sanitation, affecting over 97% of schools, further deepens the crisis, especially in Lake Victoria islands and hard-to-reach areas. To address these challenges, ChildFund Uganda and JIACOFÉ launched the Education for Protection and Well-Being (EPW) Project in September 2023. The project focuses on holistic, community-led strategies in selected schools like Luubu and Bishop Hannington Primary, targeting children aged 6–12, teachers, caregivers, and local leaders. Key interventions of the project included: Child-Centered Learning - Promoting life skills, emotional resilience, and safe reporting mechanisms. Teacher Capacity Strengthening - Training in trauma-informed, inclusive, and non-violent pedagogies. Caregiver Engagement – conducting positive parenting sessions, home visits, and forming caregiver support groups. Community Mobilization - Leading anti-violence campaigns and reinforcing community-based child protection structures. Emerging outcomes indicate improved classroom behavior, reduction in corporal punishment, increased parental involvement, and better psychosocial well-being. Specific efforts such as the provision of reusable sanitary pads, mentorship clubs, gender-sensitive sanitation facilities, and school feeding programs, using school land, have directly improved girls' attendance and dignity. Continuous monitoring by district education officers also strengthens accountability and learning. This paper presents evidence-informed, scalable, practices rooted in local realities. It also contributes to the growing body of knowledge on what works in advancing girls' education by placing communities at the center of transformation.

Keywords: Girls' education, Busoga sub-region, community-led solutions, EPW Project, gender equity, inclusive education, child protection, Uganda

T705: Parental Support and Science Self-Efficacy as Predictors of Girls' Career Decision-Making in KenyaSession Presenter: **Mary Njeri Ngenda**, Muranga University of Technology, Kenya.**Abstract**

This study investigates how parental support and science self-efficacy influence girls' career decision-making in rural Kenya, with a focus on strengthening transitions into science-related careers. Guided by Social Cognitive Career Theory, the research addresses the questions: (1) What is the relationship between parental career support and girls' career decision-making? (2) How does science self-efficacy influence these decisions? (3) How do parental support and science self-efficacy interact in shaping career certainty? A correlational design was employed with a sample of 482 Form Three students (49% girls) from public secondary schools in Murang'a County, selected using proportionate stratified random sampling. Validated scales measured four domains of parental career support mainly verbal encouragement, emotional support, instrumental assistance, and career role modeling, students' science self-efficacy, and career decision certainty. Findings revealed that girls reported higher parental verbal encouragement and role modeling, but lower emotional and instrumental support compared to boys. Despite relatively high science self-efficacy, girls were less certain about pursuing science careers, inferring to the role of cultural norms, limited female STEM role models, and school context. Regression results identified parental verbal encouragement as the strongest positive predictor of girls' career decision certainty, while emotional support was a significant negative predictor. Instrumental assistance and career modeling were insignificant predictors. The study concludes that gender-responsive interventions should integrate parental support, mentorship by female STEM professionals, and apprenticeship training for girls. These strategies can address entrenched gender barriers, improve girls' self-confidence in science career choices, and inform policy for equitable education-to-work pathways in rural contexts.

Keywords: Girls' education, STEM, Parental Support, Science Self-efficacy, Career decision-makingFRIDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2025, 9.15 -10.30AM**SESSION 14: PARALLEL SESSIONS****MEETING ROOM 401: DATA AND EVIDENCE GENERATION****SESSION CHAIR: RICARDO SABATES AYSA****T801: Scalability of Accelerated Education in Ghana – A focus on intersectionalities between gender and language in learning trajectories**Session Presenter: **Ricardo Sabates Aysa**, University of Cambridge, REAL Centre, UK.**Abstract**

Accelerated education programmes with culturally relevant pedagogies have been at the heart of evidence suggesting improved foundational learning for boys and girls. In this presentation I will be focusing on the research that I have led with a number of collaborators on the experience of School for Life in Ghana. The presentation will touch upon the history of School for Life and stages of adaptation and scalability. I will then provide evidence for the impact of the programme on foundational numeracy as well as literacy in local language. We will then explore the learning trajectories, measured as foundational skills trajectories, as children transitioned from this programme to formal education. The presentation will explore the role of language and gender, in particular transition to different language of instruction including English. The presentation conclude with research on the adoption of the Government of Ghana of the Complementary Basic Education and the current challenges for top down scalability.

Key words: Pedagogies, Foundational learning, Scalability, Learning trajectories, Basic education**T802: Data to Action: How Uwezo Data has Shaped Girls' Education Policies in the East African Region**

Session Presenters:

Christopher B. Mugimu, Makerere University, Uganda**Faridah Nassereka**, Uwezo Uganda.**Abstract**

Girls' education remains a challenge given the existing gender gaps in enrollments, retention and learning outcomes due to key barriers, such as, deep-rooted cultural norms, early marriages, social economic factors, school infrastructures, and implementation gaps in policies on girls' education. This paper analyzes how

Uwezo citizen-led assessment data in East Africa, continues to influence policies on girls' education in the East African Region and beyond. We utilized the desk research methodology to search and review key reports, government policy documents, academic studies, and working papers from credible sources. Combining rigorous data analysis with grassroots advocacy, Uwezo's evidence exposed the systemic barriers facing girls, thus, raising attention of governments and key stakeholders. This evidence pushed governments into the right direction to shift focus from access to quality education, particularly for girls. For instance, shifting the focus from mere enrollment to actual learning and retention of girls. By constituting gender-Responsive policies, advocating for gender-targeted interventions, strengthening accountability in education, and improving collaboration in the EAC (EAC Secretariat, 2020), particularly through the adoption of harmonized strategies for girls' education. As such, Uwezo's data has been instrumental in shaping gender-sensitive education policies across the EAC through the formulation of Regional Gender in Education Framework and Gender Responsive Budgeting Guidelines (EAC, 2023). Uwezo data was influential in informing the Kenya's gender policy in education (Kenya Ministry of Education, 2016). This paper also addresses how each country has handled the unique context-specific hurdles in Uwezo-informed policy reforms, such as, Rwanda's Girls in STEM Initiative (2019) highlighted in Rwanda Education Board (2021) report, and the Sanitation Policy reform in Uganda (Ministry of Education Uganda, 2020). However, continued sustained efforts are needed to address the systemic barriers and ensure policies translate into real classroom improvements. **Key words:** Assessment data, Grassroot advocacy, Systemic barriers, Gender-Responsive policies

T804: Unspoken Chains, Shared Voices: Cultural Silence, Stigma, and Education Equity in Uganda
[online]

Session Presenter: **Atiya Fatima Khan**, Independent Researcher, Uganda.

Abstract

Even with progress in access to schooling, many Ugandan girls leave school before finishing secondary education. National data from the 2024 Uwezo assessment show cost, lack of interest, and work as the main reasons for dropout, while pregnancy or childbirth is rarely reported (0.1%). This low figure suggests that stigma and silence hide the real impact of gender-related challenges. This research focuses on that hidden area — how cultural silence and shame around menstruation, pregnancy, and sexual harassment cause students, especially girls, to leave school, even when fees or distance are no longer barriers. The study also explore boys' perspectives, as they are part of the community environment and can influence both stigma and solutions. In partnership with Children's HopeChest and six local carepoints, this mixed-methods study collected real-time data: a survey of about 100 students (girls and boys, ages 11–18), more than 30 semi-structured interviews (students, parents, carepoint coordinators, NGO staff, school leaders), six carepoint case studies, and participant observation of clubs and mentoring sessions. Quantitative results were compared with qualitative stories and official school records to see where silence hides the truth. A new set of "shadow metrics" was tested — indicators that can capture stigma-driven school changes, unreported harassment, and silence around menstruation. Pilot work already shows informal peer support systems and survivor-led leadership that official monitoring misses. Findings may guide policies and programs: strengthening girl-led safe spaces, involving boys in anti-stigma efforts, adding psychosocial indicators to school monitoring, and supporting locally led re-entry programs.

Keywords: girls' education; cultural silence; stigma; shadow metrics; psychosocial support

T814: Beyond the numbers: Language of Instruction and Gendered Learning Patterns in Tanzanian Secondary Schools

Session Presenters:

Eliakimu Sane, University of Dodoma, Tanzania

Angeline Barre, University of Bristol

Maryam Jafar Ismail, State University of Zanzibar

Mats Duetsmann, Örebro University

Justin Zelime, University of Seychelles.

Abstract

Statistics show that girls in Tanzania are nearing gender parity in education and slightly outperform boys in academics (BEST, 2025; Statistical Abstract, 2023). However, research has not deeply explored the qualitative dimensions of these differences within classroom settings. The Understanding Project analysed data from the ELSATS Project in Tanzania (2022–2024), including vocabulary assessments, classroom observations, and

interviews with teachers and students to address this gap. ELSATS had collected the data from 16 schools across four regions with diverse geographical, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The analysis reveals that the observed gender differences are not statistically significant. Teachers view girls as more diligent and better language learners, partly due to their behaviour and learning strategies. However, many boys adopted a stoic attitude, remaining quiet and unwilling to express vulnerability in the classroom, mainly due to limited command of the language of teaching and learning. Persistent inequalities tied to wealth, language background, and school culture continue to shape learning outcomes. While both girls and boys demonstrated similar understanding of science content in the observed lessons, there were subtle gendered differences in how they related to it. Girls were more likely to connect science learning to real-world applications, showing a contextual and applied interest. Boys, on the other hand, more often highlighted personal enthusiasm for science and independent study habits, such as learning scientific terminology or enjoying specific concepts. This suggests that while both genders are equally capable in science, their ways of engaging with the subject differ, with girls tending toward applied, real-life connections and boys emphasising technical interest and self-study. Thus, girls may benefit more from teaching approaches that link science to real-life relevance and social impact.

Keywords: Gender parity, Classroom dynamics, Language barriers, Learning strategies, Science engagement

FRIDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2025, 9.15 -10.30 AM

SESSION 14: PARALLEL SESSIONS

GARDEN HALL 1: DATA AND EVIDENCE GENERATION

SESSION CHAIR: MG NAKABUGO

T806: Participatory Dashboards for Accountability and Advancing Gender Equality in and Through Education in Kenya

Session Presenters:

Mwongeli Mercy, UNESCO, Kenya
Nthekeitha Virginia, UNESCO, Kenya
Marti Tamara, UNESCO, France
Ngutuku Eliza, UCL, England
Unterhalter Elaine, UCL, England.

Abstract

Bridging Accountability for gender equality in education (Bridging AGEE) is an innovative initiative between UNESCO, University College London (UCL) and University of Malawi, implemented in Indonesia, Kenya and Malawi to improve data collection and reporting on gender equality in and through education through participatory approaches at local, national, and international levels. This paper presents the AGEE Framework (www.gendereddata.org) and illustrate the process Bridging AGEE is using in consultative multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach to national dashboard design, and concern with using available data and identifying missing data from national to local levels, to support responses to context specific issues which undermine advancing gender equality in and through education. The AGEE project proposes to address disconnections in communication regarding collection and utilization of data. The project aims to enhance participatory methods to help identify, collect, and evaluate data, connect groups who advocate for, collect and review, data, and support inclusive practices. In Kenya, a customized national dashboard is being developed reflecting the country's context and concerns with gender equality and education. The paper reports on the processes used in developing and validating the national and local level dashboards. This paper draws out issues national stakeholders have identified as key areas where data is needed and missing. The dashboard will help identify a range of issues associated with access to education, participation, and outcomes including poverty, cultural norms, inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages and training, social stigma and inadequate curricula. Areas of agreement and divergence of views between different stakeholders at national and sub national levels will be considered. We conclude by sharing experiences, lessons learned and feedback from the discussions on working with Bridging AGEE in Kenya. We will also reflect on how the work in Kenya could inform scaling efforts in other countries.

Key words: Gender equality, Dashboard design, Data related issues

T807: Two Decades of Policy Impact on Girls' Education in India from 2000 to 2023

Session Presenters: **Vivek Gupta, Priyanka Singh, & Indrani Bhaduri**, KR Mangalam University, India.

Abstract

This paper examines the measurable outcomes of India's policy and programmatic interventions for girls' education over the last two decades. It analyses how rigorous data from large-scale surveys can inform scalable solutions that not only advance girls' education but also created a foundation for an equitable and sustainable society. Using secondary data from the national surveys of National Family Health Surveys (NFHS) and Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE), the study conducts a trend analysis of girls' enrolment, retention, and transition rates. It also examines the association between specific interventions and improvements in these indicators. The analysis of trends from national surveys shows the findings that the substantial gains in the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for girls in secondary education rose from ~52% in the early 2000s to over 80% recently, while dropout rates declined significantly. Barriers identified in NFHS-2 (1998–99), such as early marriage, household responsibilities, and inadequate facilities were less prevalent by NFHS-5 (2019–21), reflecting the combined effect of policy action and societal change. Government schemes have played a decisive role in addressing these barriers. Schemes like Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP), PM-POSHAN Scheme, and infrastructure upgrades directly addressed root causes of exclusion. The evidence highlights that context-sensitive, multi-pronged strategies—combining legislative measures, community mobilisation, and incentive-based schemes, are critical for sustaining progress. The paper also identifies persisting challenges such as regional disparities, digital access gaps, and weak transitions to higher education. By documenting what has worked in girls' education in India, this study offers data-backed insights for designing and scaling interventions that can benefit all learners, regardless of gender, advancing the broader goal of equitable, inclusive, and high-quality education for a sustainable society.

Keywords: Girls' education, India, NFHS, GER, UDISE, KGBV

T808: Closing the Gap Early: Gender Equity in Uganda's Early Childhood Development Research and Practice

Session Presenters:

Samuel Asare, Education Sub-Saharan Africa, UK
Stephen Acquah, Education Sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana
Leila Abdullah, Education Sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya
Sarah Bofo, Education Sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana
Eunice Mueni Williams, University of Cambridge, UK
Pauline Rose, University of Cambridge, UK.

Abstract

Despite early childhood development (ECD) being recognised as key in laying foundations for equitable learning and life outcomes, in most low- and middle-income countries, interventions lag behind policy formulation (UNESCO, 2024). In Uganda, 75% of children 3–4 years and 35% of those 4–5 years were developmentally on track in 2022 (UBOS, 2023). When focusing only on literacy and numeracy domain, these numbers drop to only 14% and 35.3%, respectively (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2024). Although more girls than boys were developmentally on track, this reverses with age, with 12.9% of boys achieving Division One compared to 9.46% of girls by end of primary school (UNEB, 2024a). Sitting within the sub-theme 'Data and evidence generation for informing interventions or scaling impact', this abstract interrogates the extent to which local researchers, with their contextual understanding of local challenges and systems, are well positioned to generate knowledge that can inform ECD policy, investment, and practice. We mapped ECD research published between 200–2022 by African researchers based in African institutions. We systematically searched for articles in internationally-recognised journals identified in international databases such as Web of Science and Scopus, and from country-level sources in Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda within the period 2010–2022 to identify research published in local journals or not published. In Uganda, we see a growing research production trend but limited focus on education, play and caregiving of young children. Women authors were underrepresented, and less likely to publish in international journals, collaborate with authors outside SSA, and to receive research funding compared to men, similar to findings in Kenya and Tanzania. The gender imbalance in research production risks perpetuating partial perspectives on ECD needs and priorities. Further, underrepresentation of education-focused ECD research undermines efforts to design early interventions that can close later learning gaps between girls and boys.

Keywords: Early childhood development, Education research, Equity, Female empowerment.

T810: Examining Gender Equity in Ugandan Pre-primary and Primary Education: Insights from Uwezo Learning Assessment

Session Presenters: **Nakabugo Mary Goretti, & Daniel Rodriguez Segura**, Uwezo Uganda.

Abstract

Over the past two decades, girls in Uganda have made substantial progress in education. Primary school enrolment has reached parity with, and in some years surpassed, that of boys, and completion rates are now marginally higher for girls. These gains raise an important question: do they extend to learning outcomes, or do girls still lag behind their male peers? This paper uses nationally representative data from the 2024 Uwezo household-based learning assessment to examine gender differences in foundational literacy and numeracy among children aged 3–14, the intended age range for pre-primary and primary education regardless of enrolment status. We assess performance in English, local language, and numeracy, as well as grade progression and school type, controlling for pupil- and school-level characteristics. Findings indicate that girls are not behind: on average, they have statistically significant advantages in English and local language literacy and a smaller, non-significant advantage in numeracy. These gaps persist after adjusting for background characteristics, suggesting they are not attributable to differences in school type or socio-economic profile. The largest disparities occur at the lower end of the skill distribution, where boys are more likely to be non-readers or innumerate. Girls are also four percentage points more likely to be in an age-appropriate grade, a difference entirely driven by lower rates of overage enrolment. These gaps in learning and progression emerge by Primary 2, indicating a potential link between timely progression and achievement. However, in the Northern region, girls lag behind boys, underscoring the need for targeted regional responses. Despite these positive gender patterns, overall learning levels remain low for both sexes: more than half of 10-year-olds cannot read a short English sentence or perform more than one arithmetic operation. The policy and equity challenge lies in raising learning outcomes for all children regardless of their gender.

Keywords: gender parity, foundational learning, learning gaps, Uwezo Uganda

FRIDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2025, 11.00 -10.45 AM

SESSION 15: POSTER PRESENTATIONS

ROOFTOP: POSTER PRESENTATIONS

SESSION CHAIR: MCs & CO-CHAIRS

P(T)109: Breaking Barriers through Innovative Approaches to Girls' Education

Presenter: **Billiah N. Gisore**, Kisii University, Kenya.

Abstract

Teenage pregnancy is a leading cause of school dropout for girls in East Africa. Over 30% of girls in parts of East Africa experience pregnancy before age 18. Many adolescent mothers face stigma, inflexible school systems, lack of support and many never return to school. This is mainly caused by gender norms, lack of support, policy gaps, stigmatization among others. The education systems must go beyond policy to practical solutions using three key pillars; innovative pedagogies, gender-responsive assessments and inclusive learning approaches. This can be through learner-centered & trauma-informed approaches that can support the girls' emotional well-being, flexible teaching, for instance using blended learning or home-based study, use of real-life relevant content whereby the girls are taught life skills, parenting, reproductive health etc. as well as peer support & mentoring for the young mothers. It can also be through gender-responsive assessments such as shifting from rigid exams to continuous and modular assessments, allowing the young mothers to progress at their own pace, recognition of non-formal and informal learning or having bias-free assessment tools that reflect the lived experiences of girls. There is need to institutionalize and fund re-entry policies, train educators in gender-responsive, trauma-informed pedagogy, expand flexible and alternative learning pathways, foster partnerships between schools, health, and social services as well as include adolescent mothers in the design of programs to create acceptance. This will help increase re-enrollment and completion rates for adolescent mothers who otherwise will be out of school. This paper, through a thorough desktop review explores how education systems can adapt and respond through innovation and inclusion as reintegrating girls back to school is a matter of equity and justice. This will be applicable in different contexts in East Africa. With the right innovations, no girl should be left behind. It's time to break barriers and build futures for adolescent mothers through investing in innovative education. This will help educate, empower and transform nations.

Key words: Innovative Pedagogies, Inclusive Learning, Gender-Responsive Education, Reintegration

P(T)203: Rethinking the Impact of Gender Inequality on Access to Education for Girls in Northern Nigeria

Presenter: Oluwasegun **Ongusakin**, Ekiti State University, Nigeria.

Abstract

The female child continues to face barriers to accessing quality education even with the advocacy and pledges made by the government in the northern region of Nigeria. The discriminatory attacks on female children continue to push higher poverty and child marriage, which has created a gap between the male child and the female child in Nigeria. This study examines the impact of gender inequality on girls' access to education in northern Nigeria. According to UNICEF, in 2022, millions of children are out of school, with the majority being female children with a school attendance of 47.3%, resulting in socio-economic and cultural norms in the region. The study adopted qualitative content research to analyze articles, government reports, and online libraries concerning gender inequality and girls' education in Northern Nigeria. The study finding shows that the level of gender inequality in access to education for girls in northern Nigeria has pushed many girls into early marriage, economic deprivation (poverty), and other life-threatening issues. The number of girls on the street continues to increase, with some girls being kidnapped by terrorists, bandits, and other criminal actors in the **region**. Also, findings indicated that religious and cultural practices continue to make girls a tool for economic opportunities by parents and create a vacuum for learning opportunities for girls in the region. The study concluded and recommended that it is important that government and stakeholders work with local communities for equal opportunities for every child. **Keywords:** Gender inequality, education, female child, poverty, northern Nigeria

P(T)222: Using Early Warning Systems to Support Girl Child Education

Presenters: **Irine Kagoya**, & **Muchope John**, World Vision Uganda.

Abstract

Education is a key driver of sustainable social economic development¹ and a fundamental human right, recognised in several international, regional, and national policy instruments. In 1997, Uganda adopted the universal primary education policy, attaining gender parity with an increase from 0.88 in 1997 to 1.04 in 2021 (UNICEF 2024). Despite the registered progress, girls still face significant social & economic barriers. This paper highlights an approach World Vision Uganda is using to break barriers to girl's education.

This is a data driven and adolescent peer led system that involves schools, families and communities in monitoring students' attendance, behavior, performance and taking practical actions to provide support to at-risk students to help them remain and complete school. World Vision trains teachers in the EWS approach. Teachers are then expected to develop registers for children who have been identified as being at risk of dropping out of school. Such children exhibit characteristics such as poor performance, negative behaviors and poor school attendance. Teachers then follow up the children providing support in form of counselling, guidance and discussion with parents on issues affecting the child. In 2024, World Vision Uganda registered significant achievement on the percentage of at risk primary school children supported to stay in school at 104.7%. From 2016-2019, Dreams Project, using EWS achieved significant results with 2,532 girls at risk supported stay and complete school. EWS is feasible, low cost, uses available resources and only requires commitment from school administration and teachers.

Key words: Teacher training, Data driven, Peer-led system, UPE policy

P(T)223: Rooted in Change: Women-Led Financial Literacy to Advance Girls' Education in Kigezi

Promoter: **Lilian Nankunda**, Kigezi Women Twegye Foundation (KWTF), Uganda.

Abstract

This paper examines how women-led financial literacy initiatives can help dismantle the socio-economic barriers that hinder girls' education in the Kigezi region of southwestern Uganda. Poverty and early marriage remain among the most significant challenges to girls' access to and retention in school, perpetuating cycles of gender inequality, limited economic opportunity, and intergenerational poverty. In many parts of Kigezi, families facing acute financial hardship often prioritise boys' education over that of girls, resulting in higher dropout rates, increased vulnerability to child marriage, and diminished life prospects for girls. Aligned with the sub-theme on overcoming socio-economic and cultural barriers to girls' education, the programme adopts a holistic approach that trains women in financial literacy and equips them with the skills and tools needed to become economically independent and make informed financial decisions. Through KWTF's village savings groups, women learn how to save, budget, and invest, enabling them to support their daughters in meeting school requirements. In addition, KWTF supports vulnerable girls in Kigezi's local communities by providing scholastic materials to ease access to education and trains teachers to adopt gender-responsive teaching methods, ensuring that classrooms are inclusive and supportive for all learners. These economic interventions

are complemented by community sensitisation dialogues that challenge harmful gender norms and reinforce the value of girls' education. While the programme is currently implemented only in the Kigezi region, there are plans to expand its reach to other regions of Uganda, amplifying its potential to transform educational opportunities for girls nationwide.

Keywords: Women empowerment for Girls' Education, Financial Literacy, Poverty Reduction, Uganda

P(T)219: Redefining Possibility: How Female Role Models and Community Power Are Transforming Girls' Education in Rural Uganda

Promoter: **Akampurira**, Uganda.

Abstract

In rural Uganda, where cultural norms and economic barriers often hinder girls' education, Building Tomorrow (BT) deploys a powerful and proximate solution: BT Fellows and Community Education Volunteers (CEVs). According to NAPE 2023 findings, nearly half of Ugandan girls are not completing primary school. Of those in school, only 54.7% of girls in Primary 6 are proficient in Numeracy, with this proportion going down to 40.7% for girls in rural Uganda. Girls who are not attending school regularly are less likely to achieve foundational skills and more likely to repeat grades, thus overstaying in the primary school education system, as well as being more likely to drop out as soon as they start experiencing challenges such as early marriages, menstrual management, among others. Recent Ugandan university graduates—at least 60% of whom are young women (aged 24 - 27)—serve as visible, relatable role models in communities where girls' aspirations are often stifled by early marriage, domestic work, poverty, and limited opportunity. In 2024 alone, over 100,000 girls participated in R2R in 23 districts across 4 sub-regions in Uganda. Results from 2023 show that 72% of girls in R2R could read a paragraph after R2R, up from just 11% at baseline. Beyond academics, Fellows and CEVs often lead targeted initiatives that address gender-based challenges—mentorship circles, menstrual hygiene education, or girls' sports clubs—opening space for girls to thrive. CEVs enroll out-of-school children and speak directly to families about the challenges their girls face. They inspire both learners and their families, proving that education can rewrite what is possible for girls and reshape cultural expectations. In 2024, Fellows and CEVs worked to enroll and follow up attendance of over 23,000 girls who were not attending school or at risk of dropping out. By placing female leadership at the heart of its model, BT not only improves learning outcomes but shifts the narrative for girls in Uganda's most marginalized communities—from exclusion to empowerment, from limitation to leadership.

Key Words: community engagement; girls' empowerment; cultural norms

T701: Social norms and education: Experiences of Young women in male-dominated vocational training

Presenters: **Victoria Namuggala, & Prosperous Nankindu**, Makerere University, Uganda.

Abstract

Social norms dictate gender specific roles, and thus training for women and men in Uganda. This article examines how social norms influence the experiences of young women in male-dominated on-the-job vocational training in Kampala. The study was informed by the social norms theory, as well as the gender theory. The article draws on a study that sought to explore the experiences of young women in male-dominated on-the-job vocational training arrangements. The overall goal of the study is to create awareness and make recommendations to shift negative social norms to improve young women's experiences. This paper is based on preliminary findings of an ongoing qualitative study that employed in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussions with young women (15-24 years) involved in several vocational training programs, including carpentry, welding, the sale of spare parts, and mechanics. Findings indicate that young women negotiate hindering identity constructions to become accepted in the male-dominated communities of training. They embody more of masculine identities and largely disregard the feminine. Young women's experiences are also embedded in prejudices and biases, as well as hidden gender structures within the male spaces. Although networks and family support are key, Female students rely heavily on individual agency to sabotage power hierarchies and social barriers. We recommend training of trainers to appreciate the role the intersection of social norms and gender plays on female trainees.

Key words: Agency, Education, Gender, Social norms.

P(T)204: Impact of the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme in Overcoming Socio-economic Barriers: A Case Study of Andhra Pradesh, India

Presenters:

Priyanka Singh, Educational Testing Services, India

Vivek Gupta, KR Mangalam University, India

Prof. Indrani Bhduri, PARAKH-NCERT, India

Baswati De, PARAKH-NCERT, India

Abstract

To examine how the *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya* (KGBV) scheme has expanded residential schooling opportunities for girls from disadvantaged backgrounds, and to assess its measurable impact in overcoming entrenched socio-economic and cultural barriers in Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh, India. Overcoming socio-economic and cultural barriers by addressing poverty, early marriage, and restrictive gender norms through targeted residential education models. A mixed-methods approach combining analysis of secondary data from the Unified District Information System for Education (UDISE), National Sample Survey (NSS), and Census reports with field-based case evidence from Vizianagaram district. Assessed indicators include Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), dropout and transition rates, and alumni career trajectories. Since 2004, KGBVs in Vizianagaram have achieved notable shifts in upper-primary GER for girls rose from 67% (2005-06) to over 95% (2020-21), while dropout rates fell from 18% to under 5%, and higher secondary transitions improved by 30 percentage points. The April 2025 tracking of 508 alumni from 26 KGBVs shows lasting transformation of 25% now in government roles, 73.6% in the private sector, and 1.5% in other fields. Alumni careers span medicine, teaching, aviation, software, accounting, and agriculture, reflecting both academic and socio-economic mobility. The Vizianagaram KGBV experience illustrates how sustained, evidence-based interventions can dismantle systemic gender barriers, empower girls, and catalyse community-wide change. Its outcomes offer scalable insights for improving girls' education in similarly marginalised contexts.

Keywords: KGBV, Residential schools, UDISE, Vizianagaram

P(T)603: Skills for the Future Mentorship Preparing Children for an Increasingly Artificial Intelligence (AI) Dominated World

Presenter: **Bwanika Charles**, Giving Children Hope Initiatives (GCHI), Uganda.

Abstract

According to a UNICEF Report 2021, 80% of Uganda's school-age children live in rural areas that are characterized by a lack of resources for basic living and underdeveloped infrastructure for education. It should be noted that learners enrol in private and public schools depending on their resources. However, there are significant gaps between school enrolment characterized by high absenteeism rates and learning in rural and urban areas (Uwezo Uganda 2022). The COVID pandemic further exacerbated inequities in access to quality education in Uganda. When the pandemic hit, it ravaged, education in poorer rural areas were hit the hardest due to underlying disparities and this disrupted the learning patterns of more children and more so the girl child than ever before. To date millions of children out of school and those in school are not developing the necessary skills they need and they will need in future to be able to compete in an increasingly Artificial Intelligence (AI) dominated job world which will enable them break out of poverty bracket. Access to skills-development opportunities that are not catered for even in new the high school curriculum are limited especially for the students most the marginalized, children with disabilities and those in hard to reach areas. In conclusion, having been part of the 2022 Uwezo – Uganda Assessment - Absenteeism and Non-Enrolment in Uganda's Primary Schools: An Investigation of School-Based and Home-Based Factors which study was basically interrogating the effects of the pandemic on school going children, the experience, the feedback that I got first-hand while interviewing learners, parents and school managers I came to a conclusion that learners need more leadership and soft skills mentorship if we are to bridge the gap between classroom academics and skills for the future, hence my initiated Skills 4Da Future Mentorship Program.

Keywords: Skills, Empowering, Mentorship

P(T)210: Breaking Barriers, Builising Future: Evidence and Action for Girls' Education in Tororo and Bukedi Sub-Region - Eastern Uganda

Presenter: **Peter Ekiikina**, Foundation for Open Development (FoD), Uganda.

Abstract

Girl child education remains a critical development priority in Uganda, mostly in the underserved regions such as Eastern Uganda, specifically, Tororo District. Uganda has made progress through policies like: Universal Primary Education and Universal Secondary Education though persistent Socio-Economic and cultural barriers continue to undermine girls' access to quality education and ability to transition through educational ladders. Recent, data indicate that girls' enrolment in primary education has reached near parity with boys, significant disparities exist in retention and completion rates. According to Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2021), only 36% of girls in Tororo complete primary education, 25% transition to secondary school, compared to 49% of boys. These disparities are more pronounced in poor households. Child marriages, teenage pregnancies, menstrual hygiene, gender-based violence, child labor and poor parenting are trending barriers to girl child education in Tororo. The 2022 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey (UDHS) shows that 40% of girls in Eastern Uganda are married before the age of 18, 27% become mothers before the age of 19. Related, studies show that up to 60% of adolescent girls in Tororo miss school during menstruation due to inadequate menstrual hygiene management services, (IRC & WoMena, 2020), poor sanitation facilities, stigma. And cultural norms that prioritize boys' education while girls are assign domestic responsibilities which exacerbate the situation (UNESCO, 2023). To enhance the potential of a girl child education, Government and development partners should deploy; multi-sectoral collaboration, stronger policy enforcement and community-led mechanisms rooted in community-based advocacy, education on life-skills and values, law enforcement against child marriages and institutional development to support on girl child education, teacher pedagogy on gender responsiveness and mentorships while envisioning girl child education has a key driver of health and social-economic transformation toward achieving gender equality, and quality education (SDG 4 and 5).

Key words: Trending barriers, Multisectoral collaboration, Community-based advocacy

P(T)303: Digital Literacy for Girls: Overcoming Obstacles to Learning

Presenter: **Abdikadir Issa Farah**, Formal Education Network for Private Schools (FENPS), Mogadishu, Somalia.

Abstract

This paper examines the role of digital literacy in education and compares technology-based learning approaches for girls in Uganda and Somalia. The study employs a qualitative method, combining thematic analysis of expert interviews and recent literature from 2021-2025. In Somalia, girls and women experience significant cultural barriers and economic obstacles that hinder full access to participation in education and other social services (Barre, 2019). Girls encounter significant educational inequities, with boys spending 30% more time in school because of differentials of gender (UNESCO-IIEP, 2022). According to the World Bank (2022), literacy rates in Somalia show a significant gender gap, with 56% of women aged 15 and above unable to read, compared to 41% of men. 57% of young women aged 15 to 29 are not employed or enrolled in education, whereas the same is true for only 39% of young men. While most Somalis are tech-proficient mobile phone users and would be open to using other forms of technology, child-friendly technology in schools has yet to be realized (Hassan, 2016). Girls in Uganda and Somalia face similar barriers to accessing education. Torsu (2024) reports that in Uganda, women are less likely than men to complete post-secondary education (8% compared to 14%) or secondary schooling (31% compared to 35%). Digital tools enable safe, flexible learning access in fragile contexts. Hashi (2025) highlights a strong positive correlation between students' academic success and their self-awareness of ICT competencies, underscoring the crucial role of digital literacy in fostering improved learning achievements. This paper supports the bridging of the gender digital divide to achieve SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). The findings are intended to inform policymakers, educators, and development stakeholders working to close the gender digital divide in education. **Keywords:** Digital literacy, girls' education, inclusion

P(T)309: Measuring What Matters: The G-IDAF Scorecard for Assessing Digital Access and Inclusion in Educational Institutions

Presenter: **Nicodemus Epaphras**, Kabale, Bukinda Core Primary Teachers' College, Uganda.

Abstract

The G-IDAF Scorecard for Assessing Girls' Digital Inclusion is a structured assessment tool designed to measure the extent to which educational institutions provide equitable and meaningful digital access for school-aged girls in Uganda and similar contexts. Grounded in the Girls' Inclusive Digital Access Framework (G-IDAF), the scorecard operationalizes its five interrelated dimensions: Access, Capability, Sociocultural Context, Enabling Environment, and Participation and Voice, into measurable sub-dimensions and indicators. Each sub-dimension is rated on a 1–5 scale using a standardized scoring rubric to avoid assessor bias, ensuring consistency and comparability across institutions. Scores are aggregated to produce dimension-level results and an overall G-IDAF Index Score, which represents the composite average across all dimensions and can also be expressed as a percentage for benchmarking. The tool assesses not only the availability of devices and infrastructure, but also affordability, appropriateness of content, inclusivity for girls with disabilities, agency over technology use, skill development, cultural attitudes, policy support, and opportunities for leadership and advocacy, all which are subdimensions in G-IDAF. By combining quantitative scoring with qualitative evidence, the scorecard provides a holistic picture of strengths, gaps, and priority areas for intervention. Its adaptability allows use at different educational levels, and its results can inform institutional planning, policy development, and targeted capacity-building. The G-IDAF Scorecard thus offers a practical, context-sensitive mechanism for translating gender digital inclusion principles into actionable monitoring and continuous improvement within the education sector.

Keywords: G-IDAF Scorecard, girls' digital inclusion; gender digital divide; G-IDAF Index; educational assessment tool

P(T)617: Breaking the Cycle of Violence: Empowering Communities to Protect Children in the Rwenzori Sub-Region

Presenters: **Ogara Collin, Kapuru Keneth, Auma Gloria, Adima Joseph, & Susan Opok Tumusiime**, FAWE Uganda.

Abstract

The Community Action to End Violence Against Children in the Rwenzori Sub-Region project, implemented by FAWE Uganda, between 2021-2024 achieved remarkable success in creating safe learning environments, reducing violence against children, and promoting economic empowerment among families. Through a multi-faceted approach, the project improved school safety, increased school enrollment, and improved family economic status. Notably, 85% of project schools met minimum safety standards, 669 school dropouts returned to school, and 409 cases of violence were reported and addressed. The project's economic empowerment component also yielded significant results, with Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) mobilizing UGX 23,588,200 for income-generating activities. This not only supported families financially but also helped to reduce the vulnerability of children to violence, including provision of midday meals. The project's success highlights the importance of community engagement, duty-bearer involvement, and group-based interventions in preventing violence against children. Community engagement was critical in driving positive changes, while duty bearer involvement provided confidence, ensured effective implementation and decision-making. Group-based interventions promoted shared understanding and support among participants, contributing to the project's overall success. The project's findings have important implications for future initiatives. By engaging in communities, involving duty bearers, and promoting group-based interventions, it is possible to drive positive changes in preventing violence against children.

By sharing these findings and experiences, we aim to inform and inspire similar initiatives globally, ultimately contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16.2: ending violence against children.

Key words: Violence, Children, Empowerment, Community, Safety, Protection

P(T)704: Empowering Youth Through Agri-Preneurship: Lessons from the SAY Project in Pader District

Presenters: **Betty Akullo, Ogara Collin, Akot Brenda, Opoka Brian, & Lagwela Steven**, Women and Rural Development Network (WORUDET), Uganda.

Abstract

The Skilling Youth in Agri-preneurship (SAY) project, implemented by the Women and Rural Development Network (WORUDET) in Pader District, Uganda, has made significant strides in equipping youth with skills and knowledge in agri-preneurship. This project aims to increase youth employability and improve their livelihoods, addressing the pressing issue of youth unemployment in rural areas. Through the SAY project, 112 youth were enrolled in skilling programs, with a focus on agri-preneurship. The project also provided life skills training, empowering youth with essential skills to navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, 110 youth were assessed by the Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT), a testament to the project's commitment to quality and standards. Despite facing challenges such as restrictive training environments and delays in funds transfer, the project has achieved remarkable progress. The SAY project has not only skilling youth in agri-preneurship but also improving their livelihoods. The project's success demonstrates the potential of agri-preneurship to transform the lives of young people in rural areas. These abstract highlights the key lessons learned from the SAY project, including the importance of life skills training, the need for flexible training environments, and the significance of stakeholder engagement. The project's experience offers valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers seeking to empower youth through agri-preneurship. The conference presentation will provide a comprehensive overview of the SAY project's accomplishments, challenges, and lessons learned. It will also explore the implications of the project's findings for future initiatives aimed at promoting youth empowerment through agri-preneurship. By sharing the experiences and insights gained from the SAY project, we hope to contribute to the ongoing conversation on youth empowerment and agri-preneurship in Africa.

Key Words: Youth empowerment, Agri-preneurship, Skilling programs, Life skills training and Rural development

P(T)707: The Role of Communication in Preparing Girls to Adopt 21st Century Skills for Future Career Transition in Uganda

Presenters: **Joseph Rwothumio, & Wilson Okaka**, Kyambogo University, Uganda.

Abstract

In Uganda, preparing girls for future careers requires education systems that are responsive to 21st-century skills, communication strategies, and labour market dynamics. Communication plays a central role in equipping girls with digital literacy, problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaborative abilities necessary for meaningful career transitions. This paper aims to: (1) examine how communication enhances girls' acquisition of 21st-century skills, (2) analyze policies supporting career readiness, (3) identify lessons from best practices and case studies, (4) assess education-to-labour market linkages, and (5) propose recommendations for aligning girls' skills with future opportunities. The study applies a systematic literature review and policy analysis of Uganda's education strategies, vocational training programs, entrepreneurship initiatives, and gender-responsive communication approaches. Case studies from local and regional interventions complement the findings. Evidence highlights that communication campaigns promoting career counselling, vocational training, and entrepreneurship programs empower girls to transition into diverse career paths. Best practices include integrating mentorship, peer-to-peer learning, community engagement, and public-private partnerships that strengthen employability skills. Communication Theory: Anchored in the diffusion of innovations and social learning theories, communication acts as a transformative tool to reduce gender gaps, encourage skill adoption, and foster inclusive participation in career pathways. Findings anticipate that effective communication strategies will improve girls' readiness for social, economic, ecological, and political opportunities through education, volunteering, entrepreneurship, vocational skills, and public service. Partnerships with industries and communities are expected to align learning outcomes with Uganda's labour market needs, thereby fostering self-employment, career resilience, and sustainable development.

Keywords: Girls' Education; Communication; 21st-Century Skills; Career Transition; Uganda

P(W)103: : Adapting the Good School Toolkit: Results of a Pilot Cluster Randomised Trial and Lessons from Adapting a Whole-School Violence Prevention Intervention for Ugandan Secondary Schools

Presenters: Yvonne Lauri, Jodie Bosco Apota, Janet Nakuti, Devin Faris, Charles Opondo, Elizabeth Allen, Chris Bonell, Tvisha Nevatia, & Karen Devries, Raising Voices Uganda.

Abstract

The Good School Toolkit (GST), developed by Ugandan-based organization Raising Voices, is a whole-school approach to prevent violence against children. We conducted a pilot, cluster randomised controlled trial with two arms and parallel assignment in seven secondary schools in Kampala and Wakiso Districts. The pilot trial presents the first evidence of the feasibility and acceptability of delivering a whole-school intervention to comprehensively address multiple forms of violence against adolescents from multiple perpetrators in secondary schools. Drawing on our previous experience in primary schools, we highlight key differences and considerations for adapting a successful primary school intervention for use in secondary schools. We find that the primary and secondary school contexts are different, presenting different challenges and opportunities. Through the process of adaptation for secondary schools, we highlight the importance of investing in learning to understand the difference in context and tailoring a whole school intervention (GST-S) to ensure the safety of adolescents especially girls while at school. In the endline survey, 837 students and 98 staff participated. Results showed GST-S was acceptable and understandable to students and staff, was delivered with fidelity, and the trial demonstrated good research feasibility. The main issues included schools experiencing difficulties in documenting their implementation progress. Upper school students reported greater understanding of some programme concepts compared to their lower-class counterparts. Some content on gender roles and sexual relationships also needed refinement before being deemed acceptable. Learnings from practice suggested that, compared to primary schools, secondary school students displayed more agency and interest in participating. Recommendation to progress to a phase III trial with minor refinements to the research methods and intervention. During full scale implementation, and a phase III trial, planning tools should be refined to encourage schools to actively use them to monitor implementation. Content on gender roles and relationships is essential for GST-S but needs careful presentation to ensure acceptability. We recommend early engagement and regular check-ins with schools, and creative methods to engage teachers to ensure involvement of the whole school community.

Key words: School intervention, Violence, Safer spaces

W104: Contextualising the holistic Education as an Enrollment Driver and a Transitioning to Work Tool for Girls

Presenter: Anne Namakula Serunjogi, Mase Junior School, Uganda.

Abstract

Mase Junior School is a community nursery and primary school located in Kiyudaya Busimbi County in Mityana municipality, Mityana District, with a capacity of 300 pupils. The school buildings are permanent and can accommodate 8 teachers. The school has a sitting Uganda National Examinations Board centre. The school has sanitary facilities, piped water and electricity on the premises. Mase Junior School has an effective enrollment of 70 children. The school is 29 years old, the founders have since passed on, and the directors are interested in keeping the vision going. Mase Junior School's specific challenges include: Low enrollment of 70 children, despite having a capacity of 300 pupils. Perceptions about school fees being too high or not providing value FOR A RUA Cultural beliefs and domestic issues affecting parents' willingness to send children, especially girls, to school. The transition from the founders has presented a number of lessons. The socioeconomic survey and community outreach by Mase Junior School revealed that 78% of parents cited that school isn't free, implying cost is a significant barrier. 16.2% believed girls shouldn't attend school, highlighting gender-based biases. 37% mentioned other reasons, including cultural beliefs, especially barring girls and domestic issues. These findings suggest that addressing affordability, challenging harmful cultural norms, and demonstrating the value of education could help increase enrollment and support the school's recovery journey and general school enrollment dynamics in the region. The solution towards achieving its goals, Mase Junior School can consider the following strategies to repurpose and enhance its premises for holistic education. Utilisation of multipurpose Classrooms: Design classrooms that can accommodate various activities, such as arts, music, and science experiments. Community Spaces: Create shared spaces for parents, community members, and students to foster a sense of community and promote social learning. Resource Centres: Establish resource centers with books, computers, and other learning materials to support students' academic development. Counseling Services: Provide counseling services to support students' emotional and psychological well-being.

Vocational Training: Offer vocational training programs to equip students with practical skills, promoting economic empowerment and self-reliance. Health and Wellness: Incorporate health and wellness programs, such as sports, nutrition education, and health services, to promote students' overall well-being. By repurposing and enhancing its premises, Mase Junior School can create a supportive learning environment that fosters academic excellence, social responsibility, and personal growth.

Keywords: Girls, Enrollment, Holistic Education

W105b: From Awareness to Action: Advancing Gender Equity in Uganda's Secondary Schools Through Student-Led Action.

Presenters: Fatuma Wamala, Kibuule Frank, & Doreen Chebet, Kukuza Education, Uganda.

Abstract

Recognizing the efforts and progress made over the years in gender, education and socio-economic development in general; Harmful gender norms and unequal power dynamics remain a significant barrier to girls' full participation in school life. This has been linked to lower academic performance, increased dropout rates, and reduced engagement in school activities (Cohen et al., 2021; Brookings Institution, 2022; Akello, 2023). Many girls face discrimination, sexual harassment, and restricted academic and economic opportunities compared to their male peers. These challenges are amplified in school environments that undervalue students' agency and silence girls' voices –knowingly or unknowingly, leaving them with little influence over decisions that affect their education and futures. Without intentional action, harmful norms will continue to perpetuate gender inequalities within education, limiting girls' full potential, and undermining broader development goals. At Kukuza, gender equality is not a standalone initiative; it is embedded in our mission, DIY clubs curriculum and organizational culture. The DIY approach seeks to transform power dynamics in schools, between students and teachers, as well as among students themselves. DIY engages students in examining gendered barriers within their schools, and then leading gender-focused projects to address them. The process is strengthened by youth–adult partnership initiatives, where teachers and school leaders are trained to act as allies; creating enabling environments for student-led change. This combination of student leadership and support from teachers and school administration has led to tangible shifts in school culture. Girls and boys are contesting long-held stereotypes, with girls taking on leadership roles historically reserved for boys, advocating for fairer allocation of school chores, and challenging beliefs that limit girls' participation in STEM. Evidence from DIY shows that when girls have the right knowledge, skills, platform, and support to lead, they become powerful drivers of gender transformation. This workshop will expose participant to the process, lessons, and outcomes of this holistic approach, offering practical strategies for dismantling cultural barriers to girls' education by working with girls, boys, men and women.

Key words: Gender norms, Power dynamics, school environments, girls education, change agents.

P(W)113: Community-Driven Approaches to Girls' Education: The "Grand Mother Approach"

Presenters: **Joyce Atimango Okker, Victor Arabera, & Eunice Achola**, Trailblazers Uganda.

Abstract

Adolescent girls in Uganda face significant barriers to education, including poverty, HIV/AIDS, early marriage, teenage pregnancy, gender-based violence, and low transition rates to secondary school. Primary completion stands at 63.3% for girls, and only 32.4% attend secondary school. Challenges are heightened during puberty, when poor WASH facilities, lack of life skills, cultural discrimination, and exposure to violence increase absenteeism and dropout. In response, Trailblazers Mentoring Foundation (TMF) co-created an innovative Grandmother Approach in 2018, which builds on the cultural roles, wisdom, and social influence of grandmothers to support girls' education, mentorship, safety, and positive parenting. Despite their central place in communities, grandmothers are often overlooked in programmes. TMF identified and profiled grandmothers in collaboration with adolescent girls, teachers, parasocial workers, and local councils. Selected grandmothers were trained and equipped with manuals, IEC materials, reporting tools, and RTRR guidelines to provide structured mentorship and parenting support. Through a network of 2,080 grandmothers in 13 districts across West Nile, Karamoja, and Busoga, more than 41,600 adolescent girls were mentored and supported with psychosocial care, home visits, and life skills. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the model proved especially critical: 14,975 adolescents (9,356 girls and 5,619 boys) were mentored, 5,785 girls returned to school, and 17,365 parents engaged in parenting sessions. These community efforts resulted in eight home-based learning centers in Arua, village study centers in Adjumani, and "Education by Law" initiatives in Boroli Refugee Camp, where parents were mobilized to ensure children's school re-entry. Families also adopted

practices such as household leadership roles for children, which promoted responsibility and life skills development. Findings show that community-driven approaches like the Grandmother Model are cost-effective, sustainable, and impactful. By harnessing traditional knowledge and cultural resources, the approach strengthens parenting, promotes girls' retention and re-entry, and enhances violence prevention and response systems in schools and communities. The model demonstrates that amplifying community roles—particularly those of grandmothers—offers a scalable and sustainable pathway for improving girls' education outcomes in Uganda and beyond.

Keywords: Community Models for Girls' Education, Mentorship

FRIDAY 3RD OCTOBER 2025, 12.00 -1.00 PM

SESSION 16: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 3: INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES - EVIDENCE-BASED TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

SESSION CHAIR: BEA SIMPSON

T110: Reimagining Pedagogy: A System-led Teacher Network Approach to Gender-Responsive Classrooms in Uganda

Session Presenter: **Jane Sebuyungo Nantayi**, Uganda.

Abstract

Traditional school systems in Uganda shaped by deep-rooted gender biases (UNEB, 2024), fail to create safe, inclusive environments where girls can succeed. Barriers such as teenage pregnancy (25% of girls aged 15-19, UNFPA 2022), gender stereotypes in STEM (New Vision, 2024), and unsafe learning environments disproportionately hinder girls, as shown by lower academic achievement (9.46% girls vs. 12.9% boys scoring Division One in 2024 PLE). Without systemic support, teachers lack the tools to address these inequalities. Gender-responsive pedagogy (GRP) is mandated by Uganda's Gender in Education Policy (MoES, 2019) and critical for SDG 4/ 5 alignments. Unterhalter (2022) notes GRP transforms classrooms into "equitable learning ecosystems" by confronting biases and fostering safety. Systemic teacher support is essential: UNESCO (2023) confirms that empowered teachers drive 70% of learning outcome gains for marginalized girls. STIR Education partners with Uganda's Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) to co-design GRP integrated in Termly Learning Improvement Cycles with Teacher Education Training Department and Gender Unit. Our system-led model: Motivates teachers through Peer Learning Networks across 119 districts, building agency to embed GRP in lessons. Supports teachers to integrate these elements into day-to-day practice to improve the quality of teaching and learning and become more effective practitioners to support girls' education. Our model: Equips principals with leadership skills to support teachers in implementing gender safe schools and lessons. Strengthens system structures by training district officials, Inspectors, Teacher educators, teachers and students to role-model gender inclusivity. STIR's Impact Evaluation (2024) shows increased learning outcomes for girls in program schools versus control groups. This paper documents experiences implementing a government-co-designed CPD model for GRP; Analyze system-led strategies to motivate teachers and leaders. Present stories of change, evidence of improved learning outcomes and safety for girls.

Keywords: Inclusive environments, Safer spaces, Teacher support, Gender-responsive pedagogy

T111: FROM MINES TO SCHOOL, THE KARAMOJA MOBILE LEARNING CENTRES WITHDRAWING GIRLS FROM MINES TO SCHOOL

Session Presenter: **PATRICK KABOYO**, EDUCATION ADVOCACY NETWORK, Uganda.

Abstract

"From Mines to School," a three- year EU funded project, implemented by Education Advocacy Network contributes to the prevention and reduction of worst forms of child labour among children working in hazardous conditions in the Karamoja mines. Withdrawing children locked in the mines, enrolling more girls in our mobile schools addresses the challenge of having fewer girls enrolled. The project gives girls a second chance to be in school through an accelerated education. Through six mobile learner centres located in the six sub-counties in Karamoja, the project reaches out to communities through community child labour committees

that are trained and capacitated to address child labour in their midst. From Mines to School project tackles the challenge of the declining enrolment of girls in school. Using the Gender Action Learning Systems, (GALS) methodology which infuses and complements a Human Rights Based Approach to programming, engagement and training stakeholders, our intervention further integrates strategies to challenge negative social norms, attitudes and behaviors that impede gender equality. The GALS methodology attempts to address the ever-increasing marginalisation of girls and women, a visible social class challenge observable in our learning centres as well as during sessions in meetings within Karamoja where women normally sit behind or away from men. The fact that the highest level of education attained countrywide according to the National Population and Housing Census Report 2024, points to a population aged 10 and above to have attained some primary-level education, thirty nine percent and about 20.2 percent aged 10 and above having no formal education while 39.4 percent attained some primary-level education points to the fact that this statistic is not far away from the Karamoja experience.

Key words: Child labour, Mines, Mobile learner centres, Communities

T201: Embodied Resistance and Educational Agency: Intersectional Feminist Perspectives from Conservative Muslim Communities in India

Session Presenter: **Shadiya Zubair Ummalil**, MA International Relations, India.

Abstract

This paper explores how the intersection of class, gender, and religious norms shapes the embodied experiences of girls and women in conservative Muslim communities in India, particularly in relation to educational access and social agency. The study is situated within the sub-theme of Education, Gender, and Marginalization, aligning with the conference's broader focus on structural inequities and transformative justice. Drawing on Paulo Freire's theory of critical consciousness, the research investigates how marginalized girls internalize or resist dominant narratives that constrain their mobility, aspirations, and voice. Integrating feminist theory, intersectionality, and embodied cognition, the paper interrogates how everyday practices—such as veiling, restricted movement, and moral surveillance—function as both mechanisms of control and potential sites of resistance. Inspired by scholars like Amina Wadud and material feminist thought, this study focuses on how cultural inscriptions on the body intersect with socio-economic precarity to produce complex negotiations of identity and agency. Methodologically, the paper employs qualitative narrative interviews and life histories with girls and women from conservative communities to explore their personal and collective strategies of resistance, reframing, and adaptation. Preliminary findings suggest that while many internalize societal expectations, others actively contest them—often through subtle forms of embodied dissent that open pathways to education and empowerment. This research contributes to the growing literature on intersectionality by embedding embodiment into analyses of educational injustice and gendered exclusion. It seeks to reframe discussions on empowerment by foregrounding the body as a political site of struggle and transformation in conservative and patriarchal contexts.

Keywords: Embodiment, Intersectionality, Girls' Education, Critical Consciousness, Muslim Communities

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SESSION 16: PARALLEL SESSIONS

MEETING ROOM 201: DATA AND EVIDENCE GENERATION

SESSION CHAIR: FATUMA WAMALA

T811: Local Voices, Regional Impact: Evidence on Gender, Safety, and Mental Health to Transform Girls' Education in East Africa

Session Presenters:

Edith Kemunto, Regional Education Learning Initiative, Kenya

Fatuma Wamala, Kukuza Education

Anande Nnko, Girls' Livelihood and Mentorship Initiative

Mercy Ngeno, Kakeya's Dream.

Abstract

Despite decades of global, regional, and national commitments to equitable education, adolescent girls in East Africa remain disproportionately excluded from educational opportunities. While gains in access have narrowed gender gaps in foundational literacy and numeracy, poverty, entrenched patriarchal norms, and gender-based violence continue to undermine retention, progression, and academic achievement. Evidence gaps persist, particularly on how these factors intersect from girls' own perspectives across multiple contexts. This paper presents findings from a multi-country qualitative study by the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI) Africa, in partnership with Kakenya's Dream, Kukuza Education, and the Girls Livelihood and Mentorship Initiative (GLAMI). Guided by the question, 'How do gender, safety, and mental health intersect to shape adolescent girls' educational experiences and outcomes in East Africa?', the study engaged over 220 girls aged 12–17 in 26 focus group discussions across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, conducted in English, Swahili, and Luganda. Complementary participatory workshops with policymakers, educators, parents, and community leaders, alongside a targeted literature review, enriched and triangulated the analysis. Findings reveal socio-emotional stressors, such as family breakdown, absent fathers, economic hardship, and unsafe school routes, are strongly associated with anxiety, poor concentration, irregular attendance, and lower academic performance. Rural, conflict-affected, and low-resource contexts exacerbate these challenges. Limited psychosocial support, reduced agency in education-related decisions, and elevated risks of child marriage and pregnancy are widespread. A critical systems gap persists between education and health sectors, with schools ill-equipped to deliver integrated mental health, sexual and reproductive health, and nutrition support. The study provides actionable evidence to inform scalable, multi-level interventions, including strengthening safeguarding systems, equipping teachers with gender-responsive skills, and integrating school–community health services. Promising models such as structured mentorship and community sensitisation, demonstrate potential for policy adoption and large-scale impact.

Keywords: Girls' education, mental health, school safety, East Africa

T812: The Education of Girls with Disabilities in Sub-Saharan Africa: Addressing the Double Disadvantage

Session Presenter: **Amani Karisa**, African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC), Kenya.

Abstract

This paper employs the intersectionality theoretical framework to examine barriers faced by girls with disabilities in Sub-Saharan Africa, a group consistently left behind despite inclusive education policies. The paper aligns with the conference theme by presenting evidence and actions to break barriers and build futures for girls with disabilities in education. The study addresses the question: What evidence exists on the barriers, interventions, and outcomes shaping the education of girls with disabilities, and how can this evidence inform scalable, inclusive reforms? The paper draws on a rigorous desk review of peer-reviewed literature, large-scale education datasets, programme evaluations, and grey literature from 2010–2024. The review followed structured search protocols across academic databases and institutional repositories, with inclusion criteria focused on studies addressing both gender and disability dimensions in African education systems. Sources were appraised for methodological quality, scope, and relevance, ensuring that findings are drawn from credible, contextually grounded evidence. Inductive thematic analysis generated three themes: (1) household-level resource allocation biases, where poverty, stigma, and entrenched gender norms lead to prioritising boys or non-disabled children; (2) school-level exclusion, where inaccessible environments and insufficient teacher preparation hinder learning, compounded by gendered expectations; and (3) policy and

data invisibility, where the absence of disability-disaggregated indicators prevents targeted monitoring and adaptive programming. Longitudinal evidence from scholarship programmes in Niger and Ghana shows substantial gains in girls' enrolment, completion, and transitions to work, yet the disability-specific impacts remain unknown due to missing data. This gap, combined with the documented household biases, school-level exclusion, and policy invisibility, calls for a robust disability-disaggregated evidence base to guide policymakers, educators, and advocates in designing, scaling, and monitoring reforms that fulfil the right to education for girls with disabilities. Achieving this requires linking inclusive schooling to post-primary pathways, with strong accountability and active participation of girls with disabilities. (words: 300/300).

Keywords: disability-disaggregated data, girls with disabilities, inclusive education, intersectionality, Sub-Saharan Africa

T813: "We have Hope in Her and We Won't Give Up": Findings from the Ubuntu Bulamu Inclusive Education Randomized Control Trial in Uganda

Session Presenters:

Jane Nansamba, Disability Research Group, Medical Research Council/ Uganda Virus Research Institute and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine Uganda Research Unit.

Elizabeth Shalom Kaweesa, Department of Statistics and Data Management, Medical Research Council/ Uganda Virus Research Institute and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine Uganda Research Unit.

Esther Nassanga, Global Health and Development, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, United Kingdom.

Andrew Abaasa,

Janet Seely,

Femke Bannink Mbazzi, International Centre for Evidence in Disability, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, United Kingdom.

Abstract

Children with disabilities, especially girls, face barriers to education and participation. We developed and tested the Ubuntu bulamu peer-to-peer support intervention—rooted in the indigenous Ubuntu philosophy (humanity towards others)—to promote inclusion in schools and communities through disability-inclusive training, peer support, and awareness-raising for children, parents, and teachers. The study utilized A mixed method cluster randomized control trial measured and compared inclusion and participation outcomes in 124 children with disabilities (equal gender distribution), 123 peers, 165 parents of children with disabilities, 123 peer parents and 85 teachers in 18 public primary schools in semi-urban Wakiso and rural Masaka district over a period of 4 years. Data collection included in-depth interviews, a locally adapted classroom observation checklist, and standardized tools for participation and quality of life. Quantitative data were analysed statistically; qualitative data underwent thematic analysis and participant validation. Results show that the intervention significantly improved classroom inclusion scores for children with disabilities (mean +4.4 points, 95% CI=2.5–5.8, $p<0.001$) and their peers (+3.1 points, 95% CI=1.5–4.6, $p<0.001$). No gender differences were found. Qualitative interviews showed a positive change in attitudes of both parents and teachers, increased involvement of parents in their child's education, improved ability to offer differentiated teaching, and improved accessibility of the school environment. Whilst qualitative interview data showed improvements in participation at home and in communities, as well as improved quality of life, the structured questionnaire data did not find a significant change. We think this may be attributed to the COVID-19 outbreak related loss of income and difficulties in accessing health care and education during the trial period. In conclusions the ubuntu bulamu peer-to-peer support model is an effective, acceptable and culturally appropriate intervention to improve inclusive education in primary schools in Uganda for both girls and boys with disabilities.

Keywords: Girls, Disability, Inclusion, Education, Ubuntu bulamu

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MEETING ROOM 401: DATA AND EVIDENCE GENERATION

SESSION CHAIR: BINDA NIATI

T815: Second Chances, Lasting Change: Assessing the Long-Term Impact of the Siyani Sahelian Program in Pakistan

Session Presenters: **Kanza Abbasi, Adil Ashraf, & Baela Raza Jamil**, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA), Pakistan.
Abstract

In Pakistan, 26 million children remain out of school, with girls disproportionately affected; 13.4 million are excluded from education, and women represent only 20% of the workforce. Against this backdrop, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA) launched the Siyani Sahelian – Advancing Action for Adolescent Girls (A³G) initiative (2018-2022) in South Punjab to address the educational and socio-economic marginalization of out-of-school adolescent girls. The program provided an integrated second-chance pathway combining accelerated literacy and numeracy, vocational and digital training, and life-skills education covering health, rights, and resilience. Over four years, A³G reached more than 50,000 girls, facilitating school re-entry, vocational certification, enterprise and enhanced agency, while also strengthening sustainability through partnerships with government and communities. Partnerships with government and community stakeholders have strengthened sustainability and mainstreaming efforts, with strong results in board examinations and transitions to formal education. During COVID-19, A³G adapted rapidly to blended and home-based learning through digital platforms, WhatsApp clusters, and self-learning packs; digital skill extended to entrepreneurship while also providing psychosocial support. These innovations safeguarded learning continuity and expanded girls' agency, with graduates contributing to community initiatives such as mask-making. Siyani Sahelian demonstrates a scalable, gender-responsive model for advancing girls' education, skills, and empowerment in fragile contexts. This study explores the long-term impacts of A³G, three years after program completion, to assess whether gains in education, skills, and empowerment have been sustained. Using qualitative interviews with a sample of original participants, we examine trajectories of schooling, livelihoods, agency, and social participation, as well as intergenerational and community-level effects. The findings will contribute to global evidence on gender-responsive, scalable models for advancing girls' education and empowerment in fragile contexts, while also informing policy and practice for sustainable adolescent girls' programming in Pakistan and beyond.

Keywords: Adolescent girls, second-chance education, long-term impact, gender equity, Pakistan

T816: Leaving No Girl Behind: Regional Disparities in Learning Outcomes among Girls in Uganda
Session Presenter: **Judith Nyakaisiki**, Uwezo Uganda.

Abstract

In Uganda, girls' education is a critical pathway to unlocking individual potential, promoting economic growth, and fostering social development. However, despite progress in increasing access to education, girls in Uganda continue to face persistent inequalities that hinder their ability to succeed. This paper examines gender disparities in learning outcomes among boys and girls. Evidence from the Uwezo Uganda 2024 learning assessment indicate significant regional variations among girls and boys. The Central Region outperforming others in reading, at 61% proficiency for both sexes, followed by the Western Region at 40%. A similar pattern was observed in numeracy, albeit with smaller regional differences. Notably, girls generally outperform boys in reading, except in the Northern Region, where boys have a slight edge. This anomaly may be attributed to the disproportionate impact of poverty on girls' education, although the Eastern Region's findings, despite high poverty rates, suggest a more complex relationship between poverty and learning outcomes. According to the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEBC) 2024 Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) results, more girls (52.5%) than boys (47.5%) sat for the exams, consistent with previous years' trends. However, boys outperformed girls in terms of academic achievement: 12.9% of boys achieved Division One compared to 9.46% of girls, and 51.5% of boys achieved Division Two compared to 49.6% of girls. Conversely, a higher percentage of girls (8.75%) than boys (7.5%) were ungraded or failed. While more girls complete primary education, their learning outcomes lag behind those of boys, with most girls passing in Divisions Three and Four. The findings shared indicate that there is more need to focus for improved education for all children, with a special focus on girls. **Keywords:** learning outcomes girls' education, gender inequalities, improved education

T214: Challenges Gender Norms Through Girls' Clubs in Ethiopian Schools: Evidence from GEQIP-E Implications for ETOL

Session Presenters: **Dawit Tibebe Tiruneh**, & **Pauline Rose**, University of Cambridge, UK.

Abstract

Girls' education is a central goal of Ethiopia's recent national education reforms, including the General Education Quality Improvement Programme for Equity (GEQIP-E: 2018-2023). A key intervention under GEQIP-E was the establishment of school-based girls' clubs to address restrictive socio-cultural practices and improve school accessibility and safety. This paper examines how girls' clubs in primary schools challenge gender norms that constrain adolescent girls' participation and learning. Using qualitative data from the Research on Improving Systems of Education Ethiopia programme (interviews with girls' club focal teachers and focus group discussions with student members), we explore club activities, perceived effects, and implementation barriers. Findings show that girls' clubs raise awareness of rights, support menstrual hygiene management, and provide entry points for preventing and responding to gender-based violence and other harmful practices. Club participation was widely seen to foster girls' confidence to assert their needs in classrooms, families, and communities. However, impact is constrained by chronic underfunding, insufficient training and guidance for focal teachers, inconsistent leadership support, and weak water-sanitation infrastructure (including shortages of gender-separate toilets and sanitary products). Clubs have little influence over abuses occurring beyond school and rarely reach out-of-school girls. Some schools are piloting facilitated mixed-gender club sessions to engage boys and reduce resentment, but their effects have yet to be assessed at scale. We conclude that establishing girls' clubs is necessary but insufficient. To strengthen effects on attendance, safety, and progression, future national reforms, including the forthcoming Education Transformation Operation for Learning (ETOL), should allocate predictable financing; provide ongoing training and coaching for focal teachers; embed collaboration with communities and local authorities; pilot inclusive modalities that engage boys while centring girls' priorities; and design strategies to support out-of-school adolescent girls. These system-level measures can amplify girls' clubs' contributions to transforming restrictive norms and advancing gender-equitable learning in schools.

Keywords: adolescent girls, Ethiopia, gender-based violence, gender norms, girls' clubs.

T224: Educational Expansion and Inequality of Educational Opportunity in Ghana, 1945-1994: A Gendered Perspective [ONLINE]

Session Presenter: **Samuel Nyarko Agyapong**, University of Cambridge, UK.

Abstract

Gender disparities persist in sub-Saharan Africa's education systems despite decades of reforms. In Ghana, successive policies, like the 1987 Education Reform Programme (ERP), Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) in 1995, and the Free Senior High School policy in 2017, have sought to improve access and equity. Recent government programmes, such as a 60/40 STEM admission quota in favour of women and lower admission cut-offs, aim to boost female participation in high-demand fields. Despite these efforts, questions remain: Have gender gaps narrowed, or widened? Where do interventions work and where do barriers persist? This study addresses these questions using data from the Ghana Living Standards Surveys and sequential logit analysis to examine gender inequality in educational transitions, from primary completion to tertiary entry, across five birth cohorts (1945-94). Findings show substantial progress at the primary level: gender gap in primary completion fell from over 20% points in the 1945-54 cohort to under 10% points by 1985-94, reflecting the success of the ERP and FCUBE. However, large disparities remain at the Junior High to Senior High School (JHS-SHS) transition, where in the youngest cohort only 30% of girls progressed compared to over 50% of boys. This gap reflects the combined effects of cultural barriers, exam selectivity, pre-Free SHS cost barriers, and limited SHS provision in rural areas, disproportionately affecting girls from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. Among SHS completers, the gender gap in tertiary entry narrows considerably, suggesting that once girls overcome earlier hurdles, they are as likely as boys to progress, an encouraging sign for the impact of affirmative action policies at the tertiary level. Ghana's experience shows that while expanding primary access is essential, targeted interventions at competitive transition points are critical to ensuring girls progress and succeed throughout the education cycle.

Keywords: Girls' education, gender inequality, educational transitions, policy reform, Ghana

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SESSION 16: PARALLEL SESSIONS

GARDEN HALL 1: OVERCOMING SOCIAL-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS

SESSION CHAIR: JANE SEBUYUNGO

T221: Perception of Indigenous Batwa Female Children Towards Sustainable Enrolment and Retention in Schools on SW Uganda

Session Presenters: **Bamwerinde Wilson, Tumwesigye Wilberforce, & Sharman Arinda**, Kabale University, Uganda.

Abstract

The enrollment and retention of indigenous Batwa female children have long been a challenge within Ugandan education system. The Batwa community has not participated in the national development through provision of skilled female labor for a very long time and the trend seems to continue. This paper argues that sustainable Batwa female children enrolment and retention depends on cultural acceptability of Batwa communities, economic feasibility and motivation to participate in school activities and management decisions. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of Batwa girls towards formal education and propose mitigating interventions. A sample included 26 out-of-school and 24 in schools from 6 primary schools in three Districts. Participatory techniques and semi structured interviews were used to collect data. The results show that parents (64%) and girls (37%) reported that teacher's failure to appreciate Batwa cultural beliefs led to less enrolment and retention in school. The parents (97%) and girls (86%) reported early marriages and pregnancies as responsible for poor retention in schools. Parents (98%) girls (100%) reported poverty as a challenge. The girls (92%) reported that parents were not encouraged to participate in school activities and management decisions. This study concludes that the girls have potential and enrolment can improve if, teachers integrate cultural aspects in students learning activities and encourage Batwa parents to participate in school activities and management decision. Since poverty is the absence of self-production, the study recommended parents and girls' training in life skills that awaken their self-realization, explore individual talents and skills to strengthen appreciation for education as a sustainable pathway to change their perception towards formal education.

Key words. sustainability, education, culture, participation, life skills

T511: Cash, Confidence, and Well-being - Unlocking Girls' Educational Aspirations in South Sudan Session

Presenter: **Akuja de Garang**, Cambridge Education, South Sudan.

Abstract

This study explored how cash transfer programmes in South Sudan influenced girls' education by addressing health and well-being barriers. Guided by the research question "how cash transfers can influence girls' educational trajectories by addressing health and well-being", the study used a mixed-methods approach to investigate how financial support affected girls' aspirations, school retention, and academic performance. Findings show that both conditional and unconditional cash transfers alleviated economic pressures that often push girls into early marriage or transactional relationships. Families of recipients reported using the funds to meet essential needs like menstrual hygiene, nutrition, and safe transport, which improved school attendance and focus. Recipients reported enhanced psychosocial well-being, increased confidence, and a stronger sense of control over their futures. However, the study emphasized that cash alone was not enough. Structural barriers—like unsafe school environments, entrenched gender norms, and limited access to sexual and reproductive health services—required complementary interventions. In fragile contexts like South Sudan, integrated approaches that combined financial aid with health, protection, and community sensitisation efforts were most effective in supporting girls' education. It underscores the importance of multi-sectoral strategies in advancing Sustainable Development Goals 4 (quality education) and 5 (gender equality) in FCAS.

Key Words: Girls' education, cash transfers, health, well-being, social protection

T220: Exploring Parental Attitudes Towards Girls' Education: The Impact of Socio-Economic Factors and Cultural Beliefs in Arua-Vura Sub-County

Session Presenter: **Driciru KeWWy**, Uganda.

Abstract

Arua District is in northwest Uganda near the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. Despite progress in promoting girls' education in Uganda, socio-economic and cultural barriers persist, significantly affecting access and retention in schools. This study investigated the complex challenges hindering girls' educational opportunities, focusing on the interplay between poverty, cultural norms, and gender expectations. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, data was collected through document analysis, interviews with parents and community leaders, case studies, and focus group discussions with girls. Thematic analysis revealed that socio-economic factors, such as household income and parental education, significantly shape attitudes toward girls' education, while cultural practices like early marriage and gender-based violence contribute to high dropout rates. Successful interventions, including community mobilization initiatives and scholarship programs, were identified as effective strategies that empower girls and their families. The research aimed to inspire collaborative actions for creating an inclusive educational environment, ensuring every girl has the opportunity to succeed academically and contribute to gender equality and sustainable development. Ongoing efforts to implement evidence-based strategies at local, national, and international levels are essential for fostering lasting change. Furthermore, conducting larger-scale research across diverse contexts can further validate the potential of ongoing efforts to foster evidence-based strategies for fostering lasting change.

Keywords: Girls' education, socio-economic barriers, cultural norms.

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ROOFTOP: EMPOWERMENT OF GIRLS

SESSION CHAIR: JV MITANA

T809: 30-Day Intervention Boosts Girls' Literacy and numeracy Skills "My Village Initiatives"

Session Presenters: **Benjamin Masebo**, & **Greyson Mgoi**, Uwezo Tanzania.

Abstract

Learning outcomes in Tanzania have been a longstanding concern, prompting government reforms such as the revised Education and Training Policy (ETP), 2023 edition, curriculum updates, and the production of new textbooks. Complementing these efforts, Uwezo and the PAL Network implemented the My Village initiative in 20 schools in Ludewa District to support children struggling with foundational literacy and numeracy skills. School selection prioritized those with a high number of children in need of support. To ensure effective facilitation, teachers received six days of training on targeted instruction, enabling them to use the Mastery Learning approach to support children. Identified students were grouped by learning level and participated in 30-day learning camps, with assessments conducted every ten days to adjust groups according to progress. The intervention also involved parental engagement through SMS notifications and community meetings to encourage support for learners. Formative assessments at baseline, midline, and endline indicated that girls consistently outperformed boys, with greater progress observed over the 30-day period. At baseline, 20% of girls were at the beginner level compared to 25% of boys, while at the most advanced story-reading level, 68% of girls achieved proficiency compared to 61% of boys. The camps had a positive impact not only on girls but also on teachers, whose morale and motivation increased as they observed the immediate progress of their students. Parents were also able to understand their children's learning progress, as baseline and endline assessments were conducted at their homes in their presence. These findings suggest that even short-term, targeted support can significantly improve learning outcomes, particularly for girls, highlighting the importance of focused interventions alongside broader educational reforms.

Key words: Targeted instruction, learning camps, intervention

T618: Increasing Access to Female Role Models and Mentors Through Senior Women Teachers

Session Presenters: **Maureen Kizito**, & **Daniel Kyasanga**, Unia Nakityo, PEAS Uganda.

Abstract

A range of evidence suggests that female role models and mentors in schools play a key role in increasing girls' aspirations and likelihood of staying in school (Sperling and Winthrop, 2016). In Uganda, the Ministry of Education and Sports has developed the Senior Woman Teacher role and positive evidence from PEAS schools suggests the potential impact, however, there have been challenges embedding the role nationally (Okudi, 2016). All PEAS schools have a Senior Woman Teacher (SWT) who act as leadership role models, child protection focal points, leaders of pastoral support for girls and coordinators of girls-focused activities. External evidence shows that SWTs contribute to a safe learning environment where girls stay and succeed in PEAS schools, and contribute to girls' increased aspirations and motivate girls to enrol for A-levels (GEC, 2021). In addition, engagement with SWTs has the most significant association with girls' development of literacy skills at PEAS schools, increasing a girl's odds of developing reading and writing skills by 264% (GEC, 2021). Drawing on this evidence, PEAS have worked with MoES since 2021 to embed the SWT role in over 200 government secondary schools. Through this, we have supported schools to establish the SWT role and provided ongoing professional development so that SWTs can effectively support girls in their schools. This forms part of PEAS' broader work with MoES to develop scalable, government-led models to strengthen secondary education across Uganda. This presentation explores how the SWT role supports high-quality and safe education for girls in PEAS Uganda schools in marginalised or vulnerable communities, and how to strengthen the role so that all schools across Uganda and beyond can ensure that they have strong female role models and targeted support for girls.

Key words: Senior women teachers, safe learning environments, professional development, strong female role models

T701: Social norms and education: Experiences of Young women in male-dominated vocational training

Session Presenters: **Victoria Namuggala**, & **Prosperous Nankindu**, Makerere University, Uganda.

Abstract

Social norms dictate gender specific roles, and thus training for women and men in Uganda. This article examines how social norms influence the experiences of young women in male-dominated on-the-job vocational training in Kampala. The study was informed by the social norms theory, as well as the gender theory. The article draws on a study that sought to explore the experiences of young women in male-dominated on-the-job vocational training arrangements. The overall goal of the study is to create awareness and make recommendations to shift negative social norms to improve young women's experiences. This paper is based on preliminary findings of an ongoing qualitative study that employed in-depth individual interviews and focus group discussions with young women (15-24 years) involved in several vocational training programs, including carpentry, welding, the sale of spare parts, and mechanics. Findings indicate that young women negotiate hindering identity constructions to become accepted in the male-dominated communities of training. They embody more of masculine identities and largely disregard the feminine. Young women's experiences are also embedded in prejudices and biases, as well as hidden gender structures within the male spaces. Although networks and family support are key, Female students rely heavily on individual agency to sabotage power hierarchies and social barriers. We recommend training of trainers to appreciate the role the intersection of social norms and gender plays on female trainees.

Key words: agency, education, gender, social norms.

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