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Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Schools Building on what Children value and Aspire to Do and Be



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Overview

The project seeks to identify, adapt, contextualize, test, and scale the Children's Valued Educational Capabilities (CVEC) through the application of the Gender Equality, Equity, and Social Inclusion (GESI) diagnostic tool. Grounded in CVEC, this innovative tool is designed to overcome barriers to gender equality and inclusion while fostering equitable, gender-friendly education.

This adaptable tool will guide the transformation of educational practices and systems, ensuring that schools actively practice gender equality and social inclusion. Grounded in the capability framework, the initiative integrates rights-based and social inclusion perspectives, supporting children's aspirations and enabling equitable learning experiences.

By conducting participatory action research, the project will identify factors influencing the adoption of the tool, build stakeholder capacity, and foster knowledge sharing to enhance GESI-related policies and practices. Led by Kathmandu University School of Arts (Nepal), in partnership with Samtse College of Education (Bhutan) and RDRS (Bangladesh), the project spans 25 schools across Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Nepal. Ultimately, it aspires to position the GESI diagnostic tool as a transformative mechanism for advancing inclusive and equitable education, creating sustainable, safe, and nurturing school environments.

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As part of the project, students (boys and girls) were asked to depict the elements they value most within their school premises in terms of promoting GESI, and the findings are presented in word clouds based on recurring themes.

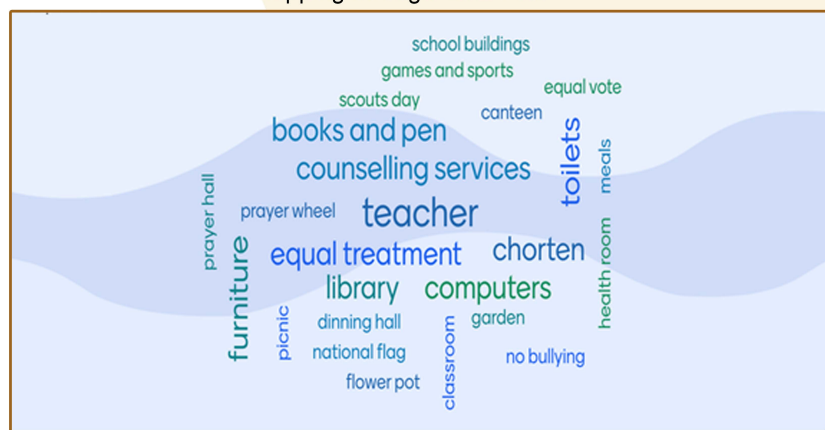
Word cloud of School Mapping through Boys' Arts



Boys placed a strong emphasis on the importance of physical infrastructure, such as 'school buildings', 'playgrounds', 'dining halls' and 'swimming pool', as key factors that promote GESI. Boys highlighted these tangible elements, seeing them as essential to creating inclusive spaces. The role of teachers as a central figure also emerged as important for fostering an equitable and supportive school culture. This focus aligns with Connell's (2009) argument that material conditions play a pivotal role in reinforcing or challenging existing gender norms. By prioritizing tangible elements, boys perceive these spaces as crucial in ensuring equitable participation and comfort for all students. Acker (2006) similarly supports this perspective by discussing how organizational structures, such as school facilities, can either perpetuate or alleviate inequalities, making these tangible resources instrumental in fostering inclusion.



Word cloud of School Mapping through Girls' Arts



In contrast, girls placed greater emphasis on the social and emotional dimensions of the school environment. The word cloud generated from their perspectives highlighted elements such as 'teachers,' 'equal treatment,' 'books and pens,' and 'counseling services' as central to fostering GESI. The emphasis on 'equal treatment' reflects the need for fairness in the learning process, while the focus on 'books and pens' and 'counseling services' underscores the importance of creating a supportive and resourceful school atmosphere. The girls' focus on fairness, mental health support, and equal access to educational resources demonstrate that girls' perceptions of GESI go beyond infrastructure to include crucial relational and emotional components that contribute to an inclusive school environment. The emphasis on social support resonates with Stromquist (2007) notes that for girls, the perception of inclusion is shaped not just by the availability of physical infrastructure, but by the social and emotional support systems in place.

The contrasting perspectives of boys and girls underscore the gendered nature of perceptions of gender equality and social inclusion within schools. These differences reflect broader gendered perceptions of inclusion and are consistent with the discussions by Kabeer (2005) and Acker (2006), who argue that gendered practices within organizational settings shape individuals' understandings of equity and inclusion.

