



SADC Policy Framework on Care and Support for Teaching and Learning

The CSTL Boys and Young Men Vulnerability Framework
Building resilience in boys and young men

ABSTRACT

A planning framework towards achieving gender equality through the provision of protection and support services for boys and young men in the SADC region



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Abbreviations

AU	African Union
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSTL	Care and Support for Teaching and Learning
CSTL PF	[SADC] Care and Support for Teaching and Learning Policy Framework
GBV	Gender-based violence
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
MER	Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRH[R]	Sexual and Reproductive Health [and Rights]
VMMC	Voluntary medical male circumcision

1 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that by 2050 Africa will be home to one billion children.¹ It is therefore essential that education systems be substantially strengthened to reverse development losses and delays and accelerate sustainable progress.

Adolescence (the ages of 10 to 19) is a critical stage of human development during which children experience rapid social, physical, psychological, and emotional changes on the path from childhood to adulthood. The decisions that are made during this period affect not only the individual wellbeing of young people, but also the wellbeing of the entire society. When household and community environments are positive, children will thrive during adolescence and transition to adulthood with ease, bringing great benefits to the community. However, while adolescence is a time of accelerated human development, it is also a time of confronting great risks, not only for girls but also for boys.

Boys and young men face dangers of early fatherhood and child marriage, are at higher risk of dropping out of school, are more prone to high risk-taking behaviour, thereby acquiring a variety of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV&AIDS.² Boys and young men are also prone to drug and substance abuse.³ 27/01/2023 Typically, men are more likely to abuse illicit drugs and alcohol – 11.5% of boys and men over 12 have a substance use disorder, compared to 6.4% of women and girls. However, women are more likely to go to the emergency room or fatally overdose due to substance abuse.⁴ A recently published systematic review found that the overall prevalence of ‘any substance use’ among adolescents in sub-Saharan African is 41.6%, with alcohol and tobacco being the highest prevailing substances (i.e. 40.8% and 45.6%, respectively) across the continent compared to any other substance use.⁵ More interestingly, a few region-specific patterns of substance use were identified, highlighting the need for region (or country)-specific and culturally appropriate interventions and policies, for example, khat use only in East Africa and using tranquilisers in Southern Africa.⁶ Around 11 people per 100 000 per year die by suicide in the African region, higher than the global average of nine per 100 000 people. This is due in part to insufficient action to address and prevent the risk factors.⁷ Southern African Development Community (SADC) Member States have also been recording high numbers of mental health and psychosocial challenges, including suicide and depression, among boys and young men.⁸ All these challenges decrease the opportunities adolescent boys have and jeopardise their future. The Southern African region is a cluster of LMICs that suffer heavily from not only these phenomena, but also additional risk factors such as high HIV prevalence, violence, conflict, and high numbers of adolescent pregnancy.⁹ Moreover, the region is impaired by a substantial lack of contextually appropriate and youth-focused mental health services.¹⁰ The age range of 14 to 25 (hereby referred to as youth or young people) is however a critical

time for mental health. Approximately 50 % of mental health disorders present as early as age 14, with almost 70 % of disorders being diagnosed by the age of 25.¹¹

Effectively supporting children and young people to successfully navigate this stage of life can help break the cycle of poverty and produce great benefits for individuals, communities, and countries. Therefore, investments to help young people make informed and healthy decisions in the early stages of development is directly related to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, AU Agenda 2040 and related international human rights instruments.

Achieving SDG 5 on Gender Equality requires a rights-based approach where boys and young men are viewed as *rights holders* and is critical for the realisation of the rights of girls and young women. Africa's Agenda 2063 provides a continental blueprint for achieving an inclusive and sustainable development vision—where there is an urgent need for Africa to adopt people-centred development, and a greater focus on gender equality and youth empowerment.¹² Africa's Agenda 2063 documents the rights-based sustainable development vision shared by all Member States of the AU: to unlock the full potential of the continent's greatest wealth, which is its people—through the realisation of their rights, so that they may establish and sustain peaceful, inclusive and prosperous families, communities and countries. Realising this pan-African vision depends on ensuring that girls, boys, women, and men live in equal societies that consider their needs and priorities.

There has been an increasing emphasis internationally and regionally, both in policy and in practice, on engaging boys and young men in promoting and achieving gender equality. The importance of education systems in shaping the gender perspective of boys was underscored in the landmark Dakar Framework for Education for All.¹³ An explicit goal (Goal 5) of the Dakar Framework was to ensure that education systems contribute to and promote gender equality, instead of reinforcing gender stereotypes. The same principles have since been applied in the SDG and the AU Agenda 2063 development agendas, as well as supported in the interpretation of international and regional human rights instruments. In Article 14, the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development provides that State Parties shall adopt and implement gender-sensitive educational policies and programmes addressing gender stereotypes in education and gender-based violence (GBV), among others.

SADC Member States therefore have committed to gender transformative education systems that seek to address the structural barriers that impede the full and equal development of girls, young women, boys and young men. This means societies where the structural gendered norms, values, beliefs, and practices that impede the full realisation of girls' and women's rights are addressed, while also ensuring the rights and needs of boys are not neglected.

The term “gender” refers to the socially and culturally constructed meanings and roles assigned to persons of different biological sexes: males and females.¹⁴ It also includes

the expectations held about the characteristics, attitudes and behaviour of both women and men. The notion of gender equality thus refers to all human beings developing their personal abilities and making life choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid roles, and prejudices. In other words, gender equality means that the differences in behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men should be valued and treated equally. It does not mean that women and men must become the same, but that their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities will not depend on whether they were born male or female. Hence, gender equality starts with equally valuing girls *and* boys. It is based on women and men being full partners in their homes, their communities, and their societies.

While the concept of gender equality is not new, what is relatively new is the concerted effort to revisit boys' and young men's vulnerabilities and needs to ensure they are not left behind in the quest to accelerate gender equality for girls and young women.

To this end, this *Boys and Young Men Vulnerability Framework* provides a contextual analysis of the current challenges boys and young men face in the SADC Region, setting the rationale of why the Framework has been developed. Thereafter, it draws on the normative frameworks, together with a wealth of evidence on the role the education systems and other services play in providing a conducive learning and supportive environment for supporting boys and young men in efforts to achieve gender equality. The Framework then seeks to translate these various requirements into appropriate focus areas aligned to the SADC Policy Framework for Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL PF) and the SADC Child and Youth Agency Framework.

2 CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF BOYS' AND YOUNG MEN'S VULNERABILITIES

During the implementation of the SADC Care and Support for Teaching and Learning (CSTL) Programme, it became increasingly apparent to CSTL partners (SADC Member States, UN agencies and development and NGO partners) that there was a major gap in the delivery of school-based care and support to boys and young men and that this gap was hindering programme and regional goals for gender equality, HIV reduction and overall improved educational outcomes for all children. Evidence was growing in SADC Member States of increasing dropouts among boys, and global discussions on GBV, gender norms and "toxic masculinity" indicated the need to explore the issue of vulnerability among boys, particularly those in secondary school, and especially concerning their sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) knowledge, mental health, and access to services.¹⁵

Current evidence suggests that boys are mainly involved in "male engagement" strategies for social norms transformation, for example, as "agents of change" or partners to girls and young women's interventions. While these may be necessary means of engagement as core strategies for addressing the embedded discriminatory norms and attitudes that impede the full realisation of equality and equity in the SADC

Region, an unintended consequence is that boys and young men are seldom addressed as direct beneficiaries of holistic support programmes for their own needs.¹⁶ Furthermore, boys are made vulnerable by rigid norms related to manhood. For example, society “trains” boys to be emotionally naïve and inexpressive, especially when it comes to vulnerable feelings. Through how their caregivers,* teachers and peers relate to them, by the games they play, and by what they experience in the media and more recently on social media, boys learn to be “ashamed” of expressing feelings. This shame can manifest itself in resentment, hate, self-loathing and low self-esteem, and without an outlet, the frustration can lead to depression, behaviour disorders, loneliness, problematic relationships, and violence.¹⁷

Much of boys’ violent behaviour is explained by social and environmental factors during their childhood and adolescence years. “Toxic masculinity” is a term that has been used to refer to a specific model of manhood geared toward dominance and control.¹⁸

Many boys in the SADC Region drop out of school, engage in violent and criminal behaviour and unsafe sex, or they may practise other risky behaviour because this is what they believe they have to do to be regarded as “real men” by their peers and their communities. Gender norms also have a negative effect on the SRH practices of boys and men: according to the UNAIDS report *Blind Spot: Reaching out to men and boys*, “the concept of masculinity and the stereotypes associated with it creates conditions that make having safer sex, taking an HIV test, accessing and adhering to treatment—or even having conversations about sexuality—a challenge for young men.”¹⁹ In addition to hurdles related to SRHR, another area where greater understanding is needed is how vulnerabilities impact on the educational outcomes of boys and young men. Challenges exist in the educational performance of boys, although the reasons underlying these challenges remain undocumented and unclear.

The vulnerabilities of boys and young men in the region are presented below, clustered in themes. These vulnerabilities provide the basis for the Framework.

2.1 Socioeconomic vulnerabilities

In the SADC Region, when household income suddenly drops in poor families, boys (rather than the girls) are likely to pull out of school to provide for the family. A recent study by MIET Africa on youth agency in the region indicated that young people are particularly concerned with rising levels of unemployment.²⁰ Boys and young men’s social recognition, and their sense of manhood, suffer when they are unable to work and provide for their families, with increasing reports of feeling emasculated when they cannot contribute to family income. The desire or need to work can prevent boys from continuing their education, or it may lead to irregular attendance and eventually to

* In this Framework, “caregivers” include parents, other members of the family, guardians or other adults who provide daily care to the learner.

dropping out of school. In many Member States, boys are taken out of school to herd cattle, go fish farming, do carpentry or to support small-scale family businesses.

Male customary initiations and the path to manhood can sometimes be a brutal journey of violence, disabling illness, horror, heartbreak and even death, rather than of cultural fulfilment and celebration. Humiliation by girls may also make up the daily experiences of some vulnerable boys in school settings. Perceived masculinity is regulated by a boy's ability to maintain and provide for the girl, but their poor economic backgrounds affect their ability to provide, leading to an increased sense of inadequacy, often manifested through violent behaviour.

2.2 Educational vulnerabilities

Boys and young men from poor backgrounds who leave school before the age of 16 are more likely to be unemployed and unemployable; to be in conflict with the law, leading to incarceration; to engage in domestic violence (and violence in general); to father children out of wedlock, with limited to no support provided to the children born out of such circumstances.²¹ Boys and young men who have not completed their education are also most likely to hold discriminatory, racist and sexist views; and they are at a higher risk for recruitment by gangs and extremist groups.²² Peer pressure can result in boys disengaging from school and placing less value on achievement and sustained efforts to be retained and to transition into next grades within the education system.

Across the SADC Region, boys are more likely to repeat a primary grade than girls are. Teachers may have low expectations of boys' academic ability. The use of corporal punishment as a behaviour corrective mechanism by teachers is inequitably antagonistic towards vulnerable boys; it is often administered to boys rather than girls. Furthermore, learners who are bullied may show poor academic performance as their interest and participation in school decreases.²³ Unexplained injuries and self-destructive behaviour can occur when bullying is concerned. Emotional effects include struggles with low self-esteem, insomnia, depression, and suicide. In addition, learners who are bullied are twice as likely to suffer from health problems, such as gastrointestinal issues or headaches.²⁴ The lack of expertise regarding the facts and social realities of vulnerable children was found to play a major role in unfair and insensitive responses teachers made towards the transgressions committed by vulnerable boys and girls; most of the offenses committed were due to circumstances beyond the learners' control.

2.3 Emotional and physical violence vulnerabilities

Boys are as vulnerable or even more vulnerable than girls to specific forms of violence and abuse: six in ten children aged 2–14 are regularly physically punished by caregivers, and boys are more likely to experience violent discipline than girls.²⁵ Boys and young men make up 70% of adolescent and young adults' homicide and suicide

cases. In sub-Saharan Africa, over 50% of boys are physically abused by an adult relative, intimate partner, or authority figure during their childhood.^{26,27}

Boys suffer violence and sometimes exhibit violent behaviour because that is what they learn from the environment in which they grow up. Boys' and young men's emotional challenges come as result of drug and alcohol abuse, broken relationships, loss or limited employment opportunities, and lack of supportive SRH and mental health information services, among others.²⁸ While many governments in the SADC Region have been partnering with civil society organisations (CSOs) to offer youth-friendly health services, the challenge persists that health centres often do not address boys' and men's emotional distress resulting from societal pressures of what is expected of them. As a result, boys and men have become more vulnerable, leading many to develop violent behaviour and, in extreme cases, to committing suicide or to taking the lives of their partners and/or children.

2.4 Health vulnerabilities

SHRH and mental health

The pressure to adhere to traditional and stereotypical norms of masculinity has direct consequences for men's mental and other health, and for their health-seeking, help-seeking, and risk-related behaviour. Boys and young men often perceive SRHR services as female-centric and uninviting for men. Furthermore, many young men fear judgment and feel their masculinity is threatened if they seek SRHR services.²⁹ This leads to poor health-seeking behaviour among boys and young men in the region. Boys and young men visit general health-care facilities less frequently than women do, have fewer health checks, and are diagnosed with life-threatening conditions at later stages than women. In Sub-Saharan Africa, HIV prevalence is consistently higher among men in certain key populations. Around 80% of the people who inject drugs are men and HIV prevalence among people who inject drugs exceeds 25% in several countries.³⁰ Only half of men living with HIV are on treatment, compared to 60% of women. Men are more likely than women to start treatment late, to interrupt treatment and to be lost to treatment follow-up.

Recently, the number of boys and young men committing suicide in the SADC Region has increased, which arises from failure to seek the necessary mental health and psychosocial support services required to overcome emotional challenges.³¹ This, and other challenges such as depression, needs to be urgently addressed as it has a negative impact on the health of boys and young men. Abuse of alcohol and various substances is also common among boys and young men: this too must be addressed.

2.5 Information and lack of positive role models vulnerabilities

The available literature indicates that peers are an important source of information for boys and young men; yet often, the members of the peer group are themselves misinformed. Boys and young men require models of *positive masculinity*.³² This is

particularly important in the absence of positive male role models within the home and community settings. An absence of positive role models often has a negative effect on where boys and young men access and receive information about their health, emotions and treatment of girls and young women, thereby affecting how their attitudes, perceptions and behaviour are shaped. Too often what they see at home and in communities is contrary to what is being taught at schools and it also negatively impacts how they relate with the outside world.

The increased digitisation and ICT-penetration rates in the region have also led to increased vulnerabilities for boys. While boys are most likely to have a mobile phone, they are at higher risk of accessing wrong information and are more likely to access pornographic material, which often leads to misinformed sexual expectations. Moreover, individuals and formations concerned with boys and young men—including caregivers, teachers, churches, and youth-led groups—are often poorly mobilised and miss opportunities to communicate effectively and to address the information needs of boys and young men.

3 EDUCATION SYSTEMS: ENTRY POINTS TO GENDER TRANSFORMATION

Achieving gender equality in the SADC Region requires systemic changes in policy and modes of social interactions at all levels of the society including at home, schools, public services and communities and in the media. Gender equity also requires Member States to ensure equal access to information, opportunities and services to girls and young women who have long been disadvantaged by structural and unequal gender norms and practices. But it also places an obligation for Member States to ensure that the needs of boys and young men do not become deprioritised; they must be considered of equal importance.

Promoting gender equality in all spheres of life, including family and community life, requires enabling policies, practices and programmes that support boys and young men to take an active part in their own personal development and in the development of their female peers. The education system is therefore a particularly important area where boys and young men can have an impact on addressing gender disparities. Various international and regional normative standards (see below) recognise that the full realisation of the rights of boys, men, girls, and women, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised, requires effective implementation of laws that provide for their full development in accordance with their evolving capacities.

Examples of international and regional normative standards and technical guidance on gender equality

- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
- AU Agenda 2063
- AU Agenda 2040
- Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016–2025
- East and Southern Africa Ministerial Commitment on Education and Health for the Well-being of Adolescents and Young People (ESA)
- SADC CSTL PF
- SADC Declaration on HIV and AIDS
- SADC Protocol on Education and Training
- SADC Protocol on Gender and Development
- SADC Protocol on Health
- SADC Minimum Package of Services for Orphans and other Vulnerable Children and Youth
- SADC Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

Education systems must fulfil their role as engines of sustainable development by addressing gendered barriers that exclude both boys and girls from their full potential and development. This can be achieved by delivering a 21st century education that develops all children’s capacities to overcome challenges to inclusive and sustainable development. To fulfil their mandated legal and developmental responsibilities, SADC Member States must ensure that their education systems utilise a “gender lens” in the provision of comprehensive care and support to ensure that no child (either girl or boy) is excluded from accessing relevant, quality, and appropriate education due to social, economic, gendered or any other factors that exacerbate education exclusion. SADC Member States have taken collective action to realise this responsibility.

The SADC CSTL PF provides detailed guidelines as to the measures that should be taken by all Member States to address access barriers that are common across the region. Member States have implemented many of these measures in addressing social and economic access barriers, resulting in a substantial increase in education enrolment rates. However, concerted efforts are still required to ensure that gendered responses are provided within the education systems to address the particular vulnerabilities of boys and young men. Through targeted financial, technical (human resources) and infrastructure investments in addressing boys and young men’s vulnerabilities, Member States will contribute to the reduction of socioeconomic inequalities in the region.

While the CSTL PF directs that education systems must provide relevant, quality education to build human capital, it does not provide the same level of detailed guidance on the measures necessary and outcomes that should be achieved to realise

this goal. The gendered aspects of ensuring that education is accessible to all is not fully explained to support Member States to implement the Framework effectively. As an addendum to the CSTL PF, this Boys and Young Vulnerability Framework provides guidance on the required measures to strengthen access to inclusive quality education and services for boys and young men to reach their full potential.

To achieve this, considerations of boys and young men's vulnerabilities must be *mainstreamed* within the system through their integration into all components of the education system, including in:

- Curriculum and pedagogy
- Teaching and learning materials.
- Basic social services, including access to age appropriate SRH and mental health services.
- The teaching and learning environment, including infrastructure and teaching and learning support materials
- Teacher qualifications, qualities, attitudes and practices, and the support provided to teachers to support boys and vulnerable young men
- National policies and values governing multisectoral collaboration at all levels of the system, including with schools, caregivers and communities
- Decision-making, leadership and governance policies, practices, and institutions
- Partnership arrangements (with UN agencies, NGOs, academia, and the private sector) defined by the Member State

4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BOYS AND YOUNG MEN VULNERABILITY FRAMEWORK

4.1 Purpose

The *Boys and Young Men Vulnerability Framework* has been developed to:

- Provide and promote the rationale for the focus on boys and young men's vulnerabilities to ensure no one is left behind in SADC's sustainable development agenda.
- Highlight the importance of ensuring that education reform measures initiated within the CSTL PF pay equal and focused attention to the needs, vulnerabilities, and constraints of boys to achieving their full potential and the role they play in contributing to gender equality.
- Provide practical guidance on the standards and measures required for effective mainstreaming of gender in education systems.

Premised on international and normative frameworks that protect the rights of children, this *Boys and Young Men Vulnerability Framework* is intended to augment and guide an education curriculum reform process, and to identify basic social and other services to ensure that all education and protective systems in the region serve their purpose

in contributing to achieving gender equality. In addition, it is intended to bring about a whole-system reform process to position education and the curriculum as the engine of inclusive sustainable development, working closely with other key sectors that have an impact on boys' and young men's lives (including ministries responsible for gender, health, social development and children and youth affairs, and the Ministries of Labour, Finance and Planning). As part of broader development efforts of achieving gender equality, the Framework does so through a multisectoral approach of mainstreaming boys and young men's rights in the social and economic, as well as the civil and political, dimensions of society. A CSTL-sensitive, 21st century curriculum should therefore consider the particular gendered needs and vulnerabilities of boys and young men and should provide holistic and sustainable pathways for effectively addressing these vulnerabilities to ensure that boys remain in school and reach their full potential.

The Framework also seeks to identify programmatic links that exist between the mandates of different sectors seeking to achieve the delivery of appropriate services for boys and young men.

4.2 Goal, specific objectives, and guiding principles

4.2.1 Goal

The goal of this *Boys and Young Men Vulnerability Framework* is.

The risks of boys and young men in the SADC Region are reduced and their resilience strengthened so that they can realise their basic human, education, protection and SRH rights and fulfil their corresponding responsibilities.

4.2.2 Specific objectives

The objectives of this *Boys and Young Men Vulnerability Framework* are to:

- Provide a strong evidence base of boys' and young men's vulnerabilities in the region that impede 21st century learning, and overall human development as envisaged by the CSTL PF
- Secure commitment among SADC Member States and their Ministries of Education to the importance of a gender transformative approach to the provision of education, where the needs and vulnerabilities of boys and young men are prioritised within the education system and curriculums.
- Provide practical guidance on education and social sector reform aimed at strengthening available services for boys and young men as part of achieving gender equality and equity
- Provide Member States and their Ministries of Education, Health and other related Ministries with a guide to:
 - Determining the contextual and specific challenges and risks facing boys and young men

- Establishing standard protective, supportive services for vulnerable boys and young men using a multisectoral approach
- Set benchmarks against which Member States can measure their progress towards achieving gender equality.
- Serve as an advocacy tool to inform policymaking and macro-level resource allocation for social services for vulnerable boys and young men

4.2.3 Guiding principles

The following guiding principles underpin this Framework:

- Adopt a rights-based approach that recognises the best interests of vulnerable boys and young men decision-making processes.
- Ensure gender equity in education, health, social services, justice and law enforcement and in access to employment/ decent work.
- Ensure meaningful participation and engagement of boys and young men in programme design that recognises the unique circumstances of all children, including vulnerable and marginalised boys and young men.
- Ensure that interventions for vulnerable boys and young men are complementary and “add value to” those that focus on girls and young women.
- Align socioeconomic interventions for vulnerable boys and young men with national school curriculums and ensure synergy with all school-based activities that involve boys and young men.
- Respect and reinforce positive African social norms and values.
- Leave no one behind
- Invest in boys from an early age and ensure that all services are age appropriate.
- Consider the multiple dimensions of vulnerability (such as disability, orphanhood or migrant status) in programming for boys and young men
- Promote health-seeking and risk reduction behaviours for boys and young men
- Adopt a whole-systems and integrated approach.

4.3 Focus areas and guidelines for implementing the Framework

To achieve gender equality and to address the vulnerabilities of boys and young men, schools should provide a basic package of services, and where possible, provide appropriate information and referrals to other social services.

This means that a gender analysis of the needs of boys and girls must be undertaken constantly, and that identified services must be accessible within the education system. The planning, implementation and monitoring of a 21st century-learning-sensitive package of care and support for teaching and learning should at a bare minimum consider the specific needs of girls and boys and make efforts to address the particular and neglected needs of boys that impede their consistent and quality learning.

This section of the *Boys and Young Men Vulnerability Framework* requires that all SADC Member States, acting through their Ministries of Education, utilise their education systems to identify contextual vulnerabilities of boys and young men, and provide a basic package of services to support their needs and constraints. This requires the development of a caring and supportive teaching and learning environment where the CSTL pillars, as described in the CSTL PF, are implemented to enable, and empower every learner, including vulnerable boys, to receive tailored and supportive services and interventions that support their retention, transition and school completion.

Practical guidance for addressing five focus areas is provided.

4.3.1 Focus Area 1: Utilisation of the education curriculum

Education, in all its diverse formats and contents—formal, non-formal, supplementary, informal, lifelong learning—is widely recognised as a key contributing factor to addressing gender inequality. While their delivery mode, governance structures, or programmatic contents may vary across Member States, both formal and non-formal educational programmes should incorporate some basic principles of a gender equitable teaching-learning experience. Through specially designed texts and learning tasks, curriculums should allow boys to examine notions of masculinity and gender relations, and they should provide them with basic information about sexuality, mental health, and services available specifically for them.

By engaging in a process of review and reform of education curriculum, and ensuring that it is inclusive and relevant, the transformational aims of education can be achieved. The *Boys and Young Men Vulnerability Framework* has been developed at an opportune time when many Member States are undertaking education curriculum reforms to ensure curriculums are responsive to 21st century learning and development needs.

Tailored gender-transformative curriculum content plays an essential role in addressing boys' vulnerabilities. There are at least three levels at which a curriculum response can be effective.

- At the most basic level, even relatively simple interventions in resource-poor environments can usefully address stigma and discrimination.

At a slightly higher level, provisional evidence suggests that strategic information or actionable knowledge can have an important impact on strengthening boys and young men's skills to identify their needs and to access services where appropriate. Provision of gender sensitive information that is useful, targeted, and relevant to learners is one factor that influences caregiver and learners' perceptions of school quality.^{33, 34}

- At the highest level of complexity, education curriculums may embed a clear and sound theoretical framework for providing a comprehensive educational

package that aims to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills specifically aimed at changing negative gender norms and questioning harmful gender practices.

They can also provide basic skills to boys and young men on prevention of violence, positive decision making, healthy life skills and for promoting health-seeking behaviour for SRHR and for mental health.

Every Member State should review its curriculum framework to identify the promotion of gender equality and the importance of addressing boys' particular needs and constraints as an explicit educational priority. Education curriculums must define and mandate the development, resourcing, and implementation of basic content on addressing context specific boys' challenges. This could be achieved through inclusion in subjects such as Life Skills and Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE).

Each national curriculum framework should:

- Ensure that education content address stigma and discrimination of both boys and girls as informed by *gender responsive pedagogical* approaches.
- Ensure that health education—specifically education about HIV&AIDS and sexual reproductive health for boys and young men—are an integral part of any formal or nonformal education offering.
- Make explicit the necessary learning areas and content that develop resilience of boys and young men, including subject knowledge relating to the relevant gendered challenges boys experience, including:
 - Laws governing rights and responsibilities for boys in achieving gender equality
 - Role-players that can support boys with their needs (healthcare and social welfare)
 - Provide a comprehensive career guidance process, including aptitude testing, teaching of entrepreneurial skills, and vocational training.
- Identify core subjects or extra-curricular activities in which concepts of “good masculinity” are dealt with, including topics on:
 - Financial independence (earning, spending, saving money, etc.)
 - Male health (SRH, drug and substance abuse, addressing mental health, non-communicable diseases, etc.)
 - Social responsibility (how to have good relationships, leadership, and opposing GBV, etc.)
- Integrate into an existing monitoring framework relevant national indicators for tracking interventions specific to boys and young men, including disaggregated education data (e.g., applying a specific lens to access, retention, and outcome data)
- Ensure teacher training (pre- and in-service) includes specific components of addressing gender equality, including boys and young men’s vulnerabilities

4.3.2 Focus Area 2: Access to age-appropriate support and services

- Discuss normative developmental milestones (such as puberty), drug and substance abuse, etc.
- Partner with Ministries of Health to encourage creative approaches to health service delivery workers, judicial systems, traditional leaders, etc.)
- Include strategies for professional training for teachers and programme coordinators to interact with learners in gender equitable ways, both in the learning environment and in broader social settings
- Establish technical guidance on specific extra-curricular activities for male and female engagement to discuss gendered norms and practices that affect their development.
- Provide gender-specific programmes for boys that enable them to have a greater freedom to discuss specific issues affecting them, and opportunities to explore gender equitable behaviour.
- Define the relationships that should be cultivated and maintained between schools, the education system and families and communities to establish the necessary educational ecosystems made up of a continuum of co-educators who support boys and young men.
- Provide clear strategies for equipping teachers to deal sensitively with vulnerable boys and young men who, for example, are disabled, have been abused, have additional family responsibilities or are young fathers, and to be respectful and sensitive to their needs.
- Provide guidance to school leadership structures on ways of introducing positive role models for boys and young men – such as inviting well known sportsmen, artists, successful male in identified professions to give talks to the boys, and encouraging positive behaviour—such as introducing incentive “rewards” (for example, conditional cash transfers for enrolment and regular attendance, for instance) that have been shown to improve learning for adolescent boys, taking into account their expressed desires for confidentiality
These approaches include utilising staff who are sensitive to adolescents’ needs, providing waiting areas that are welcoming and operating during accessible hours.
- Ensure any new programme for boys and young men coordinates with existing service providers.
Existing programmes for boys should be coordinated so that there is no duplication of effort.
- Collaborate with partners to provide alternative ways to bring services closer to boys and young men or the communities they stay in

This is of particular importance for out-of-school boys.

4.3.3 Focus Area 3: Addressing gendered social norms and practices.

Schools can help create young people’s gendered identities. When schools practise gender equality (such as ensuring female and male representation in school

leadership and administration, or in teaching subjects stereotypically reserved for males (such as Science and Physical Education) to girls and boys, they can build more positive gendered expectations and create more supportive environments. Furthermore, informal education and community engagement can play an important role in shifting social and gender norms so that both boys do not feel the traditional societal pressures of “manhood”, while girls are also supported to develop to their full potential. Addressing social norms and practices is effective if the school is considered as an education ecosystem. Schools should be networked within communities and broader society to link learners (and teachers) with a diversity of co-educators in formal and informal education settings.

A vibrant and dynamic relationship between the school and the community is key to addressing embedded cultural norms, values and practices that increase girls’ and boys’ vulnerabilities. Schools should become ecosystems of learning whereby they serve as a conduit for sharing gender sensitive.

The vulnerabilities facing boys and young men will vary according to the social, economic, and cultural context of each Member State and therefore different services must be prioritised to address the gendered constraints of boys and young men.

The SADC Secretariat calls upon Member States, with the Ministries of Education taking a lead, to develop a country-specific boys’ and young men’s vulnerability framework, where an analysis of the immediate and root causes of boys’ vulnerabilities in the Member State is conducted to provide a comprehensive picture of the challenges boys and young men face. Based on this analysis, a multisectoral coordination mechanism at ministerial level should be established to map out a standard referral pathway to ensure boys and young men receive the necessary support and services at all levels (national, district, local and community). Such referral pathways should emanate from a government-led multisectoral approach at national level, with, for example, close collaboration between the Ministries of Health and Education, or the Ministry of Education with multisectoral focal points within social development, health, child protection and gender sectors.

Targeted education programmes have been successful in changing boys and young men’s attitudes on their role in achieving gender equality, and how they can overcome the challenges that they face. Providing boys and young men with crucial information on available tailored services for them has the potential of increasing uptake of services that address *their* needs. Expansion of carefully designed and evaluated school-based services can help to reduce stigma and have the potential to promote safe sexual behaviour and reduce other vulnerabilities.

Programmes must therefore be designed across the education spectrum to ensure access to appropriate education for all, including targeting young fathers, boys with disabilities, boys returning to school following expulsion, orphaned boys, HIV positive male learners and young men with learning difficulties. Complementary services

(without which effective teaching and learning for vulnerable children and youth cannot take place because they affect access to educational facilities and opportunities, enrolment, retention, and completion) must be provided when required in collaboration with other relevant sectors and actors. Such services should include social protection policies, ensuring that vulnerable children and youth have access to:

- Basic services, such as social and cash transfers and subsidies, infrastructure development, transport, and identity documents (for example, birth certificates and caregivers' death certificates)
- Psychosocial care and support
- Nutritional needs

Ministries of Education should therefore:

- Develop a comprehensive "menu" of available age-appropriate services, including access to social protection, legal protection and health services that include SRHR information, services and products
- Support open dialogue and access to relevant and up-to-date information on available services with other sectors and disseminate information to boys in schools
- Improve access to and acceptability of services and resources by boys by gathering their views and taking their views into account when designing services for them

Ministries of Health should:

- Sensitise health personnel and others who work with young people on the realities and perspectives of boys, and how to encourage boys to seek health services and help when they need it

This may also include engaging health personnel and other youth-serving staff in discussions about their own possible stereotypes about boys.

- Consider alternative "spaces" (such as the use of community halls or the employment of youth community health workers) for boys outside the school setting to allow them opportunity to 21st century competencies and skills among learners, caregivers and communities to change harmful social norms and practices. Schools should network within communities and broader society to link learners (and teachers) with a diversity of educators in formal and informal education spaces to identify and address embedded cultural norms, values and perceptions. To change social norms, individuals and their referents should be targeted with messages and actions to support girls' education and to provide specific programmes for boys to tackle their vulnerabilities. This will require the building of partnerships and opening of schools to partnerships with a variety of external role-players, such as traditional and religious leaders, NGOs, community leaders and government officials from other sectors.

Ministries of Education should therefore:

- Support schools with standard guidance of communicating boys' vulnerabilities in culturally sensitive materials, using local languages and, where possible,

contextualised information, education & communication and behaviour change materials

- Ensure meaningful participation of communities, which is essential to shift norms towards gender equality

This means engaging with local leaders and identifying positive role models who can influence acceptance of new or changed norms within communities to address the needs of boys.

- Engage boys, caregivers, communities, health and educational personnel and youth-serving personnel in open discussions about longstanding ideas about manhood, recognising both the positive and negative aspects of traditional aspects of gender socialisation
- Facilitate the regular and meaningful inputs from boys and young men, who represent the target groups whose basic human, education and health rights will be protected by the interventions and programmes that are designed, approved and implemented

How this participation is secured will vary.

School clubs may also be a mechanism to foster participation by boys and young men.

- Enhance existing initiatives that target boys and young men.
For example, schools can explore the potential interface between initiation practices and education by working with communities to utilise positive rites of passage to address boys' and young men's vulnerabilities.
- Equip teachers to communicate appropriately with boys and young men and to detect and correct their own biases, including in the delivery of Life Skills curriculum
- Sensitising teachers and education personnel on the possible gender-specific challenges that boys, particularly boys from low-income settings, may encounter in school
- Provide fatherhood and caregiving support to adolescent boys and young men who have become fathers
- Train teachers, parents, and boys on school re-entry policies, and implications for supporting boys and girls who are young parents/ girls who are pregnant to remain in school

4.3.4 Focus Area 4: Enabling legal and policy environment.

An enabling legal and policy environment provides the impetus for educational investments to keep both boys and girls in schools. Gender discriminatory laws relating to child marriage, school re-entry and continuation, as well as on the minimum age of access to age appropriate SRHR information all play a key role in either alleviating or exacerbating boys' vulnerabilities.

Ministries of Education should:

- Conduct regular policy audits and revise laws to ensure they are in line with global and international standards for ensuring boys remain in school
- Implement school re-entry and continuation policies effectively, to ensure teacher and school community attitudes to young fathers and mothers and pregnant girls are addressed, and that there is adequate infrastructure and support in schools to retain young fathers and mothers.
- Lead the transformation of the education system by allocating sufficient funds to gender transformative programmes to address the constraints and challenges of boys and young men
- Identify and embed gender sensitive benchmarks within the CSTL monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) system to ensure that learning is responsive to boys' and young men's vulnerabilities

4.3.5 Focus Area 5: Building partnerships

There is no systematic mechanism in the education sector for sharing the vulnerabilities that boys and young men experience: actions are therefore required to strengthen partnerships and multisectoral collaboration at national level. Networks involving focal point persons from Ministries of Education and representatives of other key sectors is essential. Establishing such a mechanism within Member States provides an important platform for sharing information and optimising the investment in provision of services of boys and young men while avoiding duplication of services and should be a specific area for donor focus.

For programmes to be successful in the long term, there must be a strong link between the national government, the private sector and civil society. Currently, CSOs and government both deliver services for boys and young men; these two sectors must work together (plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate policies, strategies and programmes) to meet the complete needs of vulnerable boys and young men. CSOs' actions should be in line with a government's national education policies and priorities, thus allowing for every level to provide the best care and services and ensure harmonisation, cooperation and effective referral mechanisms between different service providers to ensure marginalised and vulnerable boys stay in school and are provided adequate opportunities to develop the skills required for sustainable development.

5 GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING NATIONAL BOYS' VULNERABILITY FRAMEWORKS

The development process of a Boys and Young Men Vulnerability Framework at national level should at a minimum involve a participatory process involving government officials from key Ministries (with the Ministry of Education leading the process), NGOs and CSOs. Boys and young men should also be consulted to

understand their gendered needs and constraints, as well as the structural and institutional barriers that impede them from fully accessing education.

The development of a national Boys and Young Men Vulnerability Framework within Member States should essentially consist of the following four processes: (i) Understanding child vulnerability; (ii) Examining the vulnerability of boys and young men; (iii) Adopting principles for programming; and (iv) Assessing current interventions and developing a basic framework for comprehensive services for boys and young men. Table 1 details these processes in more detail, while Table 2 provides a template provides examples for assessing the vulnerability of boys and young men and determining existing services.

TABLE 1: STEPS FOR DEVELOPING A NATIONAL BOYS AND YOUNG MEN VULNERABILITY FRAMEWORK

STEP	PURPOSE	METHODOLOGY	OUTPUT
STEP 1 Understanding child vulnerability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate debate on the common drivers/causes and consequences of child vulnerability across SADC. To contextualise the debate and understanding by applying a gender lens to the country's context 	Bearing in mind some variables such as age group, gender, disability and membership of a minority grouping, as well as regional and local differences within SADC, discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The causes and consequences of child vulnerability The in-country situation by moving from the general to the specifics 	A checklist of child vulnerability covering the: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> common drivers/causes consequences
STEP 2 Examining the vulnerability of boys and young men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate debate on the common drivers/causes and consequences of the vulnerability of boys and young men as they understand it. To contextualise this understanding by applying a gender lens to the discussion, focusing on boys and young men 	Taking into consideration variables such as age group, disability, and membership of a minority grouping, as well as regional and local differences, discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The evidence on vulnerability, specifically for boys and young men The in-country situation 	A checklist of boys and young men vulnerability covering: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> common drivers/causes consequences
STEP 3 Adopting principles for programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate debate on the principles that will apply to their programming, specifically those that recognise the vulnerability of boys and young men 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss and agree principles that will underpin the vulnerable boys and young men programming 	A set of principles to guide programming for boys and young men in the country
STEP 4 Assessing current interventions and developing a service framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate debate on the potential of existing programmes to address the specific issues that create or compound the vulnerability of boys and young men. To facilitate conversations on what additional services and supports are required to fully address the vulnerabilities of boys and young men 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss relevant existing programmes delivered; assess the potential of each of these programmes to address the rights and needs of vulnerable boys and young men Document any areas or issues that are not recognised or addressed adequately in your programmes Next, identify how your programmes may be modified or reoriented, in some way or another, to correct the shortcomings 	A list of very specific areas where existing programmes can be strengthened, and new programmes initiated to address important risks faced by boys and young men

Table 2: Template for assessing vulnerability and determining existing services.

CAUSE OF VULNERABILITY (EXAMPLES)		CONSEQUENCES	METHODOLOGY		EXISTING OR NEW AREA OF INTERVENTION
			YES, because ...	NO, because ...	
A learner's mother, who is the family's main breadwinner, dies	☞	The learner drops in and out of school to do piece work.	The learner can be enrolled in community education programme run by NGO.		Establish a system that allows for the early identification of such learners and a smooth referral that ensures their education continues.
A learner is sexually abused	☞	The learner's behaviour changes, becoming withdrawn and aggressive at times. The learner has a sexually transmitted infection.		Teacher is not trained (or confident) to counsel the learner. No SRH services are open after school hours.	Enrol teachers in learner abuse management and counselling training course. Establish partnerships and referral system between school and clinic. Provide learners with information about SRH services
A learner becomes a father	☞	The learner's schoolwork deteriorates due to financial and other responsibilities.		The topic not covered in Life Skills There are no relevant support activities at the school,	Add a section on boys as fathers to the Life Skills curriculum. Conduct in-service orientation for responsible teachers. Launch Peer-2-Peer and Boys as Champions programmes
A learner is targeted by gang members	☞	The learner is bullied, mocked, or injured. The learner becomes disruptive in class.	The Safety at School Programme makes provision for: counselling; the identification and disciplining of implicated gang		Involve all boys in writing and publishing a joint statement against gang violence Strengthen referrals to social service and law enforcement agencies

		The teacher identifies that the learner has suicidal thoughts.	members; appropriate referrals.		
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Appendices

The following supplementary material is attached.

1. Sample national framework for boys' and young men's vulnerability
2. Guiding note on MER and costing processes at national level
3. SADC Gender equality policy marker

Sample national framework for boys' and young men's vulnerability

Basic Support Services for Education, Health, Protection and Economic Support

The sample framework draws on the evidence presented in this regional framework, as well as the prevailing consensus on the elements or activities that are appropriate protection and support interventions for boys and young men across the SADC Region. The information is organised under the three topics:

- Basic human rights
- Education rights
- Health rights (with a focus on SRHR)

Note

Interventions in the sample framework cut across more than one category of rights and there is no “right” or “wrong” place for them to appear.

The intention is that this sample framework is used as a basis for deliberations by a Member State, after which the Member State will populate a similar template.

RIGHTS	PROGRAMME AREAS	EXAMPLES OF CURRENT/NEW INTERVENTIONS
<p>Basic human rights</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical and material security – such as shelter, nutrition, safe water, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care and support interventions (ref. CSTL activities) Partnerships to address common contextual drivers of vulnerability
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal safety, protection, and security (ref CSTL) Protection (from maltreatment, neglect, violence, abuse, and all forms of exploitation) Legal protections Psychosocial support, including parenting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about rights, services and support for survivors, referral procedures, etc. Protection and support services and systems, covering. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention Identification Immediate assistance Return, reintegration, and rehabilitation Law enforcement and prosecution Protection from stigma and discrimination Protection regardless of ethnicity, social class, or sexual orientation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Right to information and involvement in decision-making Participation by boys and young men (in all matters concerning them) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National initiatives – including youth-led efforts – to advance gender equality and rights. Youth centres Awareness activities, including using media and social media. Advocacy for family and community mobilisation Involving boys and young men in discourses on social norms, gender, power dynamics and harmful masculinities

RIGHTS	PROGRAMME AREAS	EXAMPLES OF CURRENT/NEW INTERVENTIONS
Education rights	Intellectual, educational, and recreational realisation Interventions to improve education outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-school education • Community-based facilitated education sessions • Innovative rewards for positive behaviour (e.g., school attendance) • School policies on safety at school, zero tolerance for learner abuse, anti-bullying, etc. • Provisions for educationally marginalised groups
	Extra-curricular activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreation and cultural activities • Vocational and technical training • Partnerships with the “world of work” • Peer-2-Peer group sessions • Positive role models (such as “boy champions”) • Partnerships with Ministries of Youth, Sports, Gender, and Health
	CSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life skills education and complementary broader youth development approaches • Regular reviews of life skills education and formal refining of curriculums, materials, teacher training, etc. • Teacher training assessment, at pre- and in-service level • GBV campaigns • Risk reduction and substance abuse information and campaigns • Caregiver–child SRHR interventions

RIGHTS	PROGRAMME AREAS	EXAMPLES OF CURRENT/NEW INTERVENTIONS
Health rights	General health services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information, communication, and education outreach from health facilities • Counselling services • Improvements to clinics
	SRH services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National standards for SRHR services for boys and young men • Active referrals systems between schools and health facilities • Targeted SRHR sessions • HIV and other specialist services, e.g., VMMC and antiretroviral therapy (ART) adherence support groups • Voucher finance interventions (for free or subsidised SRHR services) • Service provider training where perceptions and attitudes create barriers to SRHR services

Guiding note on MER and costing processes at national level

SADC Member States are encouraged to develop contextualised MER frameworks for monitoring the implementation of the national boys' vulnerability frameworks they develop. They are also urged to align the indicators to demographic health surveys (DHS), education management information systems (EMIS) and SDG reporting indicators to ensure that national data is captured and used to report on interventions on a consistent basis. A national costing process should be informed by current interventions that are addressing the needs of boys and young men implemented by the Member State, UN Agencies, CSOs and other partners. Costs estimates should be included for new programmes to influence budget allocation for new interventions suggested in the country-specific boys' and young men's vulnerability framework the Member State has developed.

School governance and management bodies should be supported to manage the learning environment effectively, so all girls and boys within the catchment area can access and remain in school. Schools are called upon to engage with the community, and have participatory governance and accountability mechanisms in place- where there is active and meaningful participation of both female and male community members, youth, girls and boys, with women and girls in leadership roles.

The SADC Secretariat will utilise the annual CSTL Reporting template to request Member States to report on the status of implementation of the framework as an addendum to the CSTL PF.

The following five indicators should be reported against:

- Number/Proportion of boys and young men in outreach schools supported through a targeted, combination package of health and life skills support services.
- Transition and completion rates to secondary school (disaggregated by gender)
- Number of teachers, caregivers and boys and young men trained on gender equality laws, policies and topics relating to boys' vulnerabilities
- Number of boys and young men, caregivers and communities benefiting from Social and Behavioural Change Communication programmes
- Number of Member States with government strategy documenting a gender-sensitive and gender-positive approach to support the access to SRH (including HIV&AIDS services) among boys and young men

The SADC Gender Equality policy marker

The SADC gender equality policy marker in education will be a key monitoring and accountability tool in the context of 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. It will constitute a common guiding tool available to SADC Members States to track whether the programmes implemented at national level through the boys' and young men's vulnerability frameworks support of the implementation of the SDGs commitments on gender equality. It can also contribute to identifying gendered gaps between policy and financial commitments and incentivise efforts to close them.

The marker is a *qualitative instrument* rather than a quantitative tool. Projects/programmes will be "marked" 0, 1 or 2, based on the extent to which they consider the particular needs of girls and boys in the education system.

The gender marker is based on a government's intentions at the design stage of a programme. It can measure government-financed projects/programmes or those supported by development partners and NGOs. Boys' and young boys' programmes may be ranked as follows:

- **Score 0: Not targeted** (the initiative is gender blind, i.e., it is not targeted to the needs of boys or girls)
- **Score 1: Significant** (the initiative is gender sensitive, i.e. gender equality is a deliberate—but not principal—objective of the initiative)
- **Score 2: Principal** (i.e., the initiative works towards gender transformation)

The criteria recommended for each category of the marker.

Not targeted (Score 0): gender blind

The key activity is gender blind.

There is no consideration of gender equality issues in the project/programme's key activity or its indicators.

A score of 0 is applied if the project/programme:

- Does not consider any needs of males or females.
- Is not aligned to any government priority to achieve gender equality

Significant (Score 1): gender sensitive

The key activity is gender sensitive.

- Gender equality is an important and deliberate objective of the project/programme, but it is not the principal reason for it being undertaken.
- The gender equality objective must be explicit in the project/programme documentation and cannot be implicit or assumed. In addition to its other objectives, the initiative is designed to have a positive impact on advancing gender equality and/or the empowerment of women and girls, as well as boys and men, thereby contributing to national efforts to reducing gender discrimination or inequalities, or meeting gender-specific needs in a Member State.

For example, targeted training of women and girls within broader sectoral, thematic or process areas is captured, and the key activity addresses the root causes of why girls and young women are disadvantaged in that sector; the training also incorporates increased awareness of boys and young men of their respective rights and needs within the topic or sector.

For a score of 1 to be applied:

- A gender analysis of the intervention has been conducted.
- Findings from this gender analysis must have informed the design, and the initiative adopts a “do no harm” approach.
- The intervention must have at least one explicit gender equality objective, backed by at least one gender-specific indicator (or a firm commitment to do this if the results framework has not been elaborated at the time of marking the project).
- The intervention’s data and indicators are disaggregated by sex where applicable.
- There is a commitment to monitor and report on the gender equality results achieved by the intervention in the evaluation phase.

Principal (Score 2): gender sensitive with some gender transformative elements

The key activity is gender sensitive, with some gender transformative elements.

For a score of 2 to be applied:

- The key activity should focus on narrowing gender inequalities, transforming prejudicial gender norms, or the empowering of women and girls, or boys and men.
- It is the main reason the activity is being undertaken. It is a fundamental element in the design of the activity and its expected results.
- The project/programme would not have been undertaken without this gender equality objective.

The initiative must be designed with the principal intention of advancing gender equality and/or the empowerment of women and girls, reducing gender discrimination or inequalities, or meeting gender-specific needs.

Examples of scoring

Examples of projects/programmes to be marked as “not targeted” (Score 0)

- A basic education and literacy project designed to benefit boys and girls but with no specific objectives or activities that aim specifically to address gender-specific barriers to education.
- Scholarships where most of the beneficiaries happen to be girls/women but which are not specifically targeted at supporting girls/women’s enrolment in education

Examples of projects/programmes that can be marked as “significant” (Score 1)

- A basic education and literacy project designed to benefit boys and girls, but with a specific objective and activities that address the gender-specific barriers to girls’ education (for example, through the provision of financial incentives to encourage disadvantaged families to allow girls to attend and stay in school)
- A project designed to respond to adolescent’s SRH needs and reproductive rights by setting up a clinic where they can access information, HIV testing and prevention services, family planning advice, and which includes differential services for girls and boys

Examples of projects/programmes that can be marked as “principal” (Score 2)

- A project that focuses specifically on girls’ access to and performance in education and/or vocational training, with the main objective of empowering women and girls and reducing inequalities between boys and girls
- A social protection project set up with the primary purpose of empowering boys and young men as a particularly disadvantaged group with specific vulnerabilities affecting their school retention

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