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equality for girls



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GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES AND PROTRACTED CRISES: GLOBAL REVIEW AND LEARNING BRIEF

PART 1:

INTRODUCING THE LEARNING BRIEF AND GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE EIEPC

Martha, 15, learning in class at her
school in Lakes State, South Sudan

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ECW	Education Cannot Wait
EiE	Education in Emergencies
EiEPC	Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises
GTE	Gender transformative education
MYRP	Multi-Year Resilience Programme
GAM	Gender with age marker
GBV	Gender-based violence
INEE	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
PGI	Protection, gender and inclusion
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
LWOs	Local women's organisations
MHH	menstrual health and hygiene
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas



I. INTRODUCTION

Gender Transformative Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises: Global Review and Learning Brief documents promising practices drawn from the UNICEF-led Education Cannot Wait (ECW) Gender Acceleration Facility grant. It features five case studies of gender transformative interventions implemented under ECW's Multi-Year Resilience Programmes (MYRPs), specifically in Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan and Uganda. Each example provides concrete illustrations of how gender transformative approaches are being applied within Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises (EiEPC) settings.

To enhance accessibility and usability, the Learning Brief is presented as a three-part resource. Together, the three parts form a comprehensive resource to support the integration of gender transformative approaches in EiEPC. Each document can be used independently or as part of a cohesive package, depending on the user's needs.

HOW THE LEARNING BRIEF WORKS

This Learning Brief is a three-part package that offers practical insights and guidance on integrating gender transformative education in emergencies and protracted crises.

Part 1: Introducing the Learning Brief and gender transformative EiEPC

introduces the Learning Brief and outlines the foundations and frameworks for gender transformative education (GTE), as well as the rationale, methodology and limitations that informed the development of the Learning Brief.

Part 2: Promising practices and enablers for gender transformative EiEPC

presents five programme examples with gender transformative potential, highlighting how GTE is being implemented across diverse EiEPC contexts. It also identifies key enablers in programme design – such as policy, coordination, local leadership and financing – and includes examples, best practices and challenges drawn from five MYRPs (Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan and Uganda) and global interviews.

Part 3: Strategic recommendations

provides actionable recommendations and synthesises key enablers to strengthen the integration of gender transformative approaches in both programme design and implementation.

Additionally, the Learning Brief has six appendices, providing further depth and detail:

1. Five detailed case studies, offering an in-depth examination of the gender transformative practices implemented in different EiEPC programmes.
2. The methodology, outlining the systematic approach taken in conducting the research and synthesising findings.

The appendices serve as valuable resources for practitioners who are seeking a deeper understanding of the case studies and the methodological framework underpinning the Learning Brief.

WHY THIS LEARNING BRIEF IS NEEDED

A key commitment of Education Cannot Wait is to promote gender transformative education (GTE) in emergencies and protracted crises. The aim of GTE is to leverage education as a key driver for challenging power relations, rethinking gender norms, addressing power imbalances, creating critical awareness on the root causes of inequalities and promoting inclusive practices. ECW commits to embedding a gender transformative approach whenever possible, according to its *Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls' policy and accountability framework 2023-2026*. The framework defines gender transformative programming as “working with key stakeholders to identify and address the root causes of gender inequality and exclusion, tackle harmful social and gender norms, and shift unequal power relations by working with a variety of actors across various sectors to address structural inequalities and discrimination”.¹

However, despite growing interest in gender transformative EiEPC, many EiEPC actors still face a fundamental question: what actually works? Guidance and evidence remain limited – especially in humanitarian contexts. This brief aims to answer that question and to build evidence on what works. It offers examples, insights and tools for operationalising gender transformative programming in crisis-affected settings.

The brief is intended to inform and inspire a broad range of EiEPC actors – including education practitioners, policy makers and donors – by documenting what has worked and why. It seeks to support the adoption and adaptation of gender transformative approaches across diverse emergency and protracted crisis contexts, beyond ECW-supported programmes.

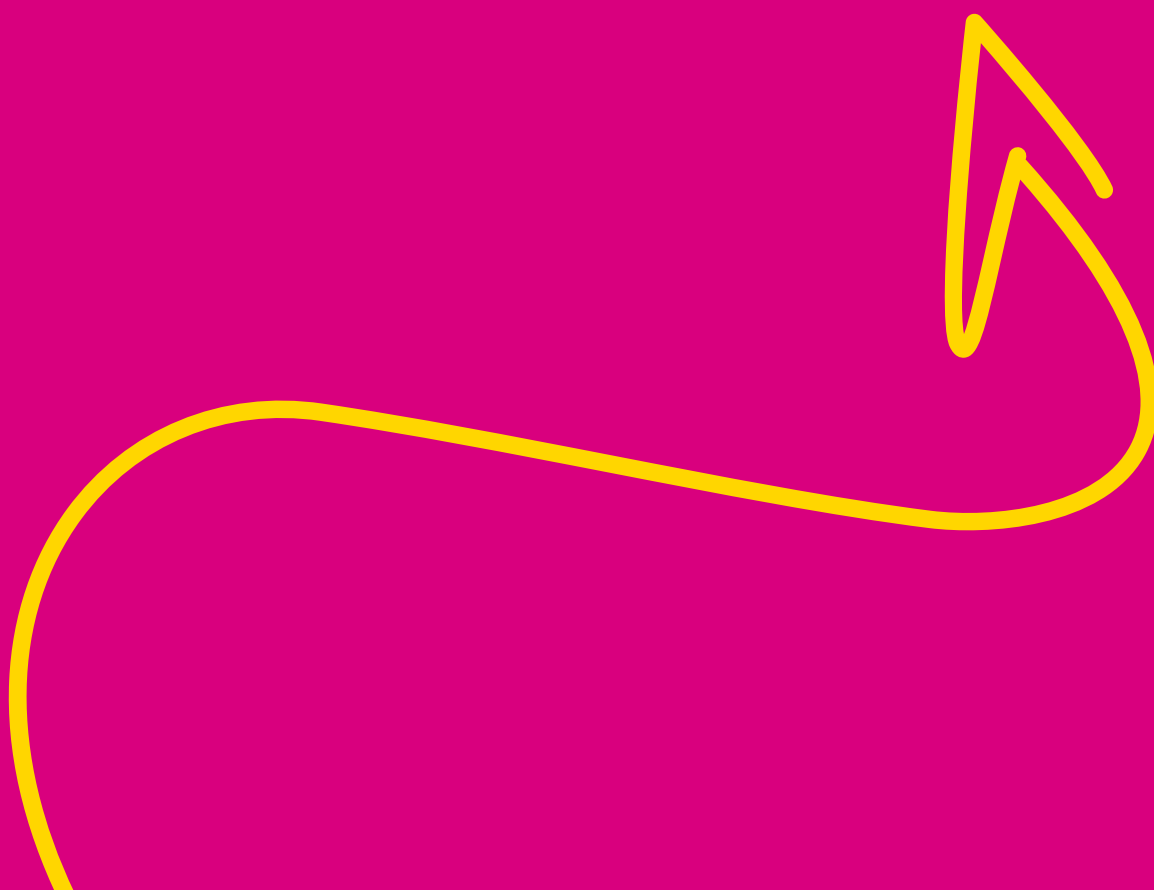
CREATING THE LEARNING BRIEF

This Learning Brief was developed through a three-phase, participatory research process inspired by the Grounded Theory approach. The process included a desk review to analyse 27 programme documents, a survey, and 25 key informant interviews conducted between December 2024 and January 2025 across five ECW-supported Multi-Year Resilience Programmes (MYRPs) in Bangladesh, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan and Uganda, as well as with global actors. A total of nine organisations contributed to the interviews, namely PAGE Pakistan, UNICEF, ECW, the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), Plan International, Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children, VSO International and Finn Church Aid. Data were coded using qualitative analysis software and triangulated across sources to ensure rigour and reliability. A technical advisory group – including ECW, UNICEF, INEE and Plan International – provided strategic validation.

Limitations included the absence of final evaluations for some MYRPs, time and budget constraints that limited the sample size and number of interviews, restricted direct engagement with participants beyond MYRP and global staff, and limited detail in narrative documents and interviews, which sometimes constrained deeper exploration of pedagogical practices and impacts on gender transformative programming.

¹ Source: ECW (2023). *Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls. Policy and Accountability Framework 2023-2026*, p.8

II. INTEGRATING A GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH IN EIEPC: FOUNDATIONS AND FRAMEWORKS



WHAT IS GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES AND PROTRACTED CRISES?

Gender transformative education practice in emergencies and protracted crises explicitly aims to transform unequal power relations to foster a sustainable positive change. It operates within the framework of education in emergencies and protracted crises with the principles of INEE minimum standards, to ensure equitable, inclusive and quality learning opportunities for individuals of all ages, from Early Child Development (ECD) onwards, during crises. It spans preparedness, response and recovery phases. Gender transformative education practice prioritises challenging and changing harmful gender norms and addressing systemic barriers to accessing and participating in quality education while responding to affected populations’ immediate and long-term educational needs.²

UNDERSTANDING WHETHER PROGRAMMES ARE GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE

To better understand how gender considerations are integrated into education programming, it is helpful to view interventions along a continuum of gender integration. Figure 1 illustrates this continuum, highlighting the varying degrees to which gender is considered in programme design and implementation.

ECW’s MYRPs aim to position themselves towards the transformative end of this continuum. By addressing not only access and participation but also the root causes of gender inequality – such as social norms, unequal power dynamics and structural barriers – MYRPs have the potential to drive meaningful, sustainable change.

“ In the responsive [approach], when we are talking about gender responsive things, we are only focusing on the present.... We are only focusing on that. But in [gender transformative approaches], we are focusing on the long-term effects of gender discrimination and gender inequalities. So, how do we reduce that particular thing? ”

Bangladesh MYRP member interview

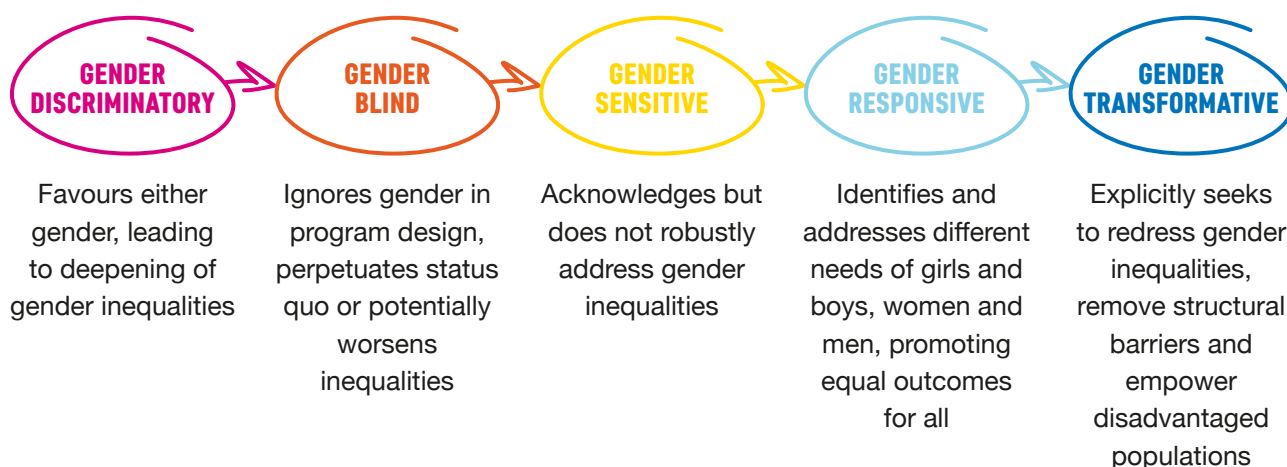


Figure 1. The gender continuum³

² Inspired by: ECW (2023). *Delivering on Our Ambition to Advance Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls: An Implementation Guide for Secretariat Staff and FER and MYRP Grantees*; Plan International (2022). *Frequently Asked Questions: Gender Transformative Change in Emergencies*, p.2

³ Source: UNICEF (2022). *Background Paper Series UNICEF Gender Policy and Action Plan 2022-2025 Gender-Transformative Programming*

Gender transformative approaches are sometimes perceived as overly ambitious or burdensome.⁴ However, gender equality is a cross-cutting issue, not a stand-alone component. In an Education in Emergencies programme that takes a gender transformative approach, the core educational activities remain the same – but they are conducted in a way that is not discriminatory and that actively promotes gender equality.⁵

Moreover, integrating a gender transformative lens does not require an entirely separate process. Many essential components of quality education programming – such as needs assessments, child safeguarding, inclusive pedagogy and accountability to learners and populations – already offer opportunities to embed gender considerations. The key is to intentionally apply a gender lens to existing education systems, ensuring that they become more equitable without adding unnecessary complexity.⁶

KEY FRAMEWORKS FOR IMPLEMENTING A GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACH IN EIIPC

To articulate and implement a clear vision of what a gender transformative approach in education in emergencies and protracted crises entails, five essential **Gender Domains**⁷ have been identified. These domains are interconnected and mutually reinforcing:

Gender norms: understanding and addressing how gender norms influence the access, continuity and quality of education of girls and boys throughout their life course, from birth to adulthood.

The transformative element of this dimension is to work with and support boys, young men and men to embrace positive masculinities and to promote gender equality in education, while also achieving meaningful results for them.

In education, this dimension is reflected by working on negative gender norms and attitudes towards girls' education, challenging them through school clubs with girls and boys, ongoing community engagement and dialogue, teacher training, and parenting sessions on gender equality.

Agency: working to strengthen girls' and young women's agency over the decisions that affect them, particularly those related to their education, by building their knowledge, confidence, skills and access to and control over resources.

In education, this dimension is reflected through mentorship and leadership programmes in schools, by girls developing confidence, decision-making skills, and the ability to advocate for their right to education, ensuring they can stay in school and pursue their aspirations. As part of this process, safe spaces for girls' participation are established to engage them in decision-making and advocacy.

⁴ Sources: MYRP team members, interviews, December 2024

⁵ Sources: Global actor, interview, December 2024

⁶ Sources: Global actor, interview, December 2024

⁷ The domains derive from Plan International's gender transformative approach framework, in Plan International (2022). *Frequently Asked Questions. Gender Transformative Change in Emergencies*, p.2.



Shamsa, 13, attends the temporary learning centre in her IDP camp, Sudan

Diversity: considering girls, boys, young women and young men in all their diversity when identifying and responding to their needs and interests.

In education, this dimension is reflected by training teachers on diversity and inclusion, and reviewing and adapting the curriculum to be inclusive and responsive to the needs of all students where possible.⁸ Additionally, learning facilities are rehabilitated following a consultative process with girls, boys, teachers, parents/caregivers and is accompanied by awareness-raising initiatives with girls and boys.

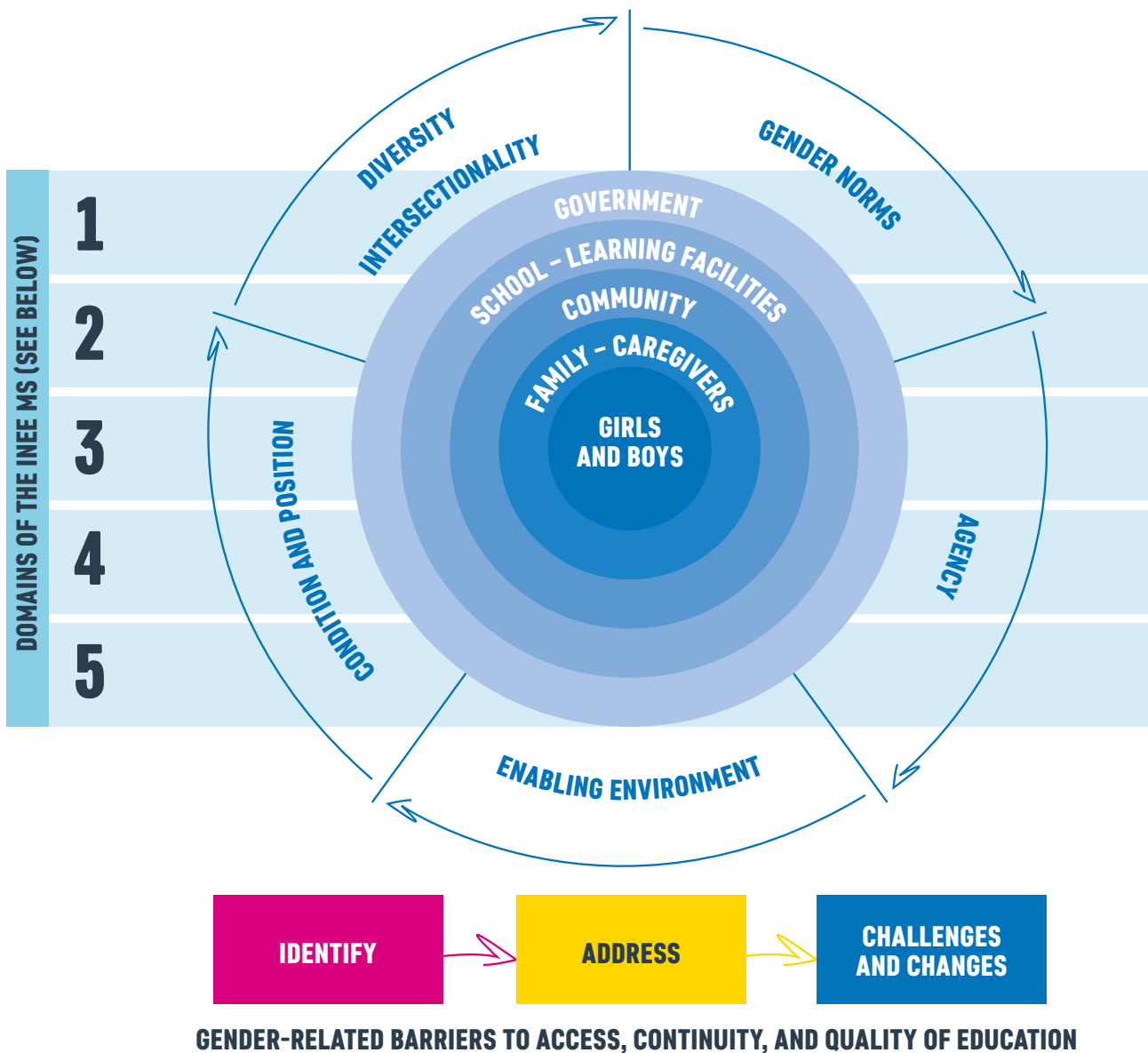
Condition and position: improve the conditions (daily needs) and social position (value or status) of girls and young women.

In education, this dimension is reflected by providing safe transportation to school, provision of menstrual hygiene products and establishment of menstrual hygiene management in school settings, and the creation of flexible learning opportunities for adolescent mothers which directly enhances their ability to continue their education. Looking at social position, promoting female teachers and women in school leadership positions helps to challenge systemic gender inequalities.

Enabling environment: foster an enabling environment where all stakeholders, including female teachers, work together to create inclusive and gender-equitable learning environments, and support children and youth on their journey towards gender equality.

In education, this dimension is reflected by the collaboration with government authorities to revise education policies, ensuring they actively promote gender equality, embedding systemic changes that support inclusive and transformative education for all.

⁸ Source: UNGEI, ECW, INEE (2021). EiE-GenKit, New York, NY.



DOMAIN 1	DOMAIN 2	DOMAIN 3	DOMAIN 4	DOMAIN 5
Foundational standards for a quality response	Access and learning environment	Teaching and learning	Teachers and other education personnel	Education policy

Diagram produced as part of the Learning Brief, inspired by: UNICEF (n.d.), *Brief on the Social Ecological Model*; Plan International (2022), *Frequently Asked Questions: Gender Transformative Change in Emergencies*, where the six elements of the gender-transformative approach are explained; and the INEE domains.

Figure 2. INEE Minimum Standards and the socio-ecological model

Applying a gender transformative approach in EiEPC also requires interventions that operate across all levels of the **socio-ecological model**,⁹ recognising that education does not occur in isolation but is shaped by a complex interplay of factors. Girls', boys' and adolescents' educational opportunities and wellbeing are influenced by the networks of people, structures and systems that surround them, including family, community, sociocultural, economic, political and legal environments. These interconnected influences shape their access to and experiences of education throughout their life course.¹⁰

A gender transformative approach recognises that learners bring more than just their educational needs – they also contribute skills, assets and resilience in navigating challenges. To create meaningful and lasting change, transformation must go beyond the individual level, actively engaging households, schools, communities, educational administration and infrastructure, and policy frameworks. This ensures that education systems and services not only respond to gender inequalities but actively work to dismantle them, fostering environments where all learners can thrive.¹¹ Furthermore, it is essential to understand that gender transformative approaches in EiEPC align with and are deeply embedded within the **INEE Minimum Standards domains**. These approaches align with global education quality and equity frameworks, ensuring that all aspects of crisis response, recovery and resilience building actively challenge gender inequalities and power imbalances.

By applying a gender transformative lens to the INEE standards, humanitarian actors can ensure that education interventions do the following:

- **Guarantee safe, inclusive and protective learning environments that address gender-based violence, discrimination and barriers to education.**
- **Ensure equal access, participation and learning outcomes for girls, boys and gender-diverse learners, particularly those facing intersecting vulnerabilities.**
- **Strengthen teacher capacity and curriculum development to challenge harmful gender norms and promote positive masculinities, empowerment and equitable opportunities.**
- **Engage families, communities and local leadership in reshaping gender norms that affect educational access and decision-making.**
- **Influence policy and financing mechanisms to ensure gender transformative education is prioritised in national and international emergency responses.**

SELECTING GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION PRACTICES FOR THE LEARNING BRIEF

Education practices in EiEPC were assessed and categorised into four levels based on their potential to advance gender equality and drive transformative change within education systems and their communities. The classification framework ranges from practices that fail to acknowledge gender dynamics (no potential) to those that actively challenge and reshape harmful gender norms and power structures (high potential).

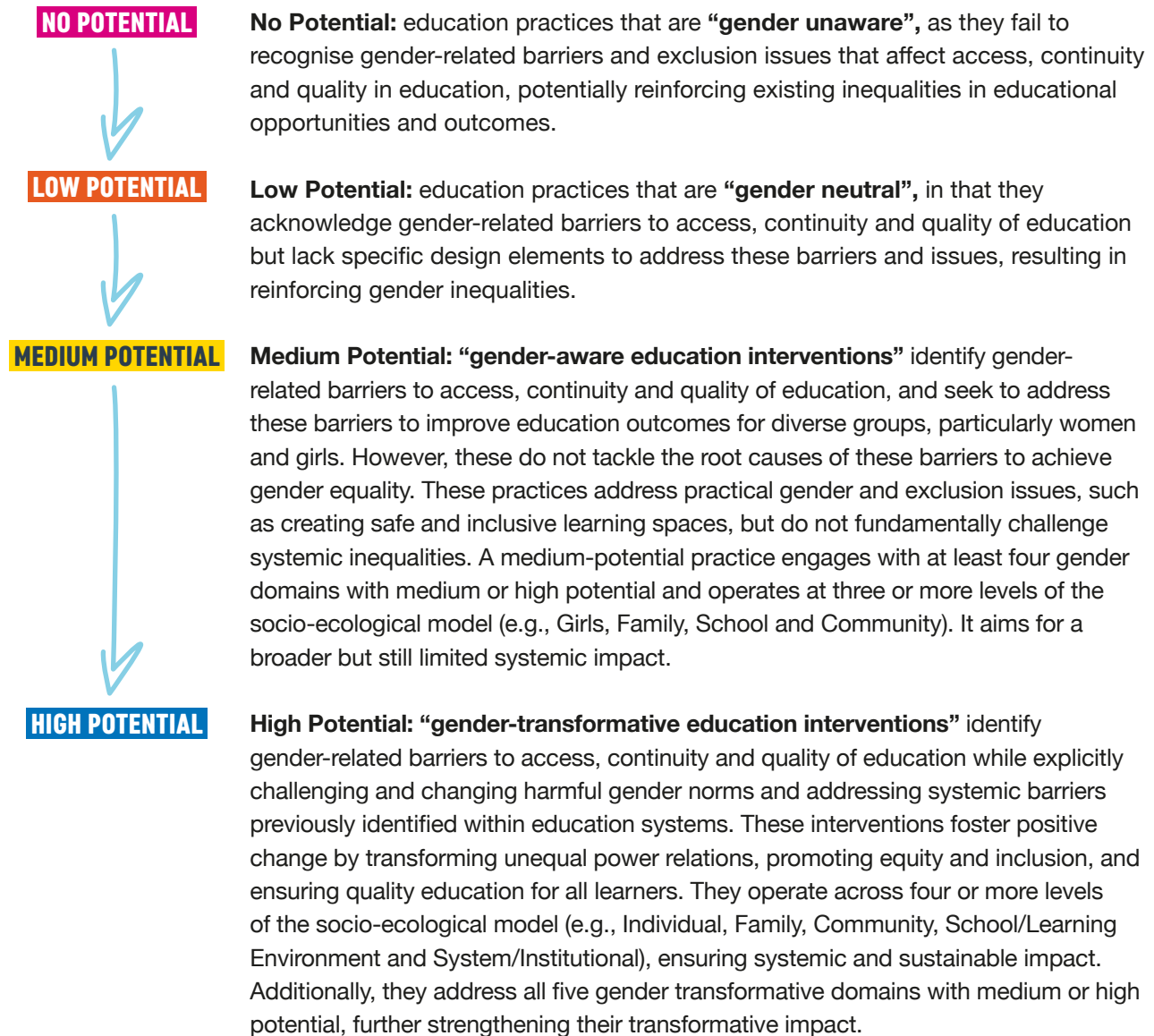
⁹ Adapted from UNICEF (2022). *Background Paper Series: UNICEF Gender Policy and Action Plan 2022-2025 – Gender-Transformative Programming*, p.5

¹⁰ Source: UNICEF (n.d.). *Brief on the social ecological model*

¹¹ Inspired by: UNICEF (2022). *Background Paper Series: UNICEF Gender Policy and Action Plan 2022-2025 – Gender-Transformative Programming*, p.5; and UNICEF (n.d.). *Brief on the Social Ecological Model*

For this review, only practices classified as having “medium” or “high potential” were selected as these demonstrate concrete progress towards gender transformative programming.

The definitions for each classification level are:¹²



The rationale for requiring a practice to address at least three gender domains lies in ensuring a robust and meaningful impact across key dimensions of gender equality. Practices that engage multiple domains are more likely to address systemic barriers and foster transformative change. Regarding the socio-ecological model, it is essential to work across multiple levels, as each level influences the others and contributes to social change and transformation. While progress can be achieved by targeting one or two levels, it is unlikely to result in sustained transformation, as long-term impact depends on integrated interventions that address the interconnected dynamics across levels.

¹² Inspired by: Plan International (2020). *Introducing the Gender Transformative Marker*

FURTHER RESOURCES ON INTEGRATING GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES IN EIIEPC PROGRAMMES

Online courses:

[Gender and GBV Risk Mitigation in Education Cluster Coordination and Response](#)

[Gender-Responsive EiE Course](#)

[UNGEI, Plan International, UNICEF, Transform Education and UN Agencies Gender Transformative Education E-learning Course: Reimagining Education for a More Just and Inclusive World](#)

Documents:

[EiE-GenKit](#)

[IASC Gender with Age Marker \(GAM\)](#)

[IASC Policy on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action \(2024\)](#)

[IASC Gender Accountability Framework \(GAF\) Report 2024–2028](#)

[ECW PGI self-assessment and quality assurance checklist for MYRPs](#)

[ECW Strategic Plan 2023-2026](#)

[ECW Policy and Accountability Framework on Disability Inclusion](#)

[ECW Gender Implementation Guide](#)

[ECW MHPSS Technical Guidance Note](#)

[ECW – Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls Policy and Accountability Framework 2023–2026](#)

[Guidance Note on the Meaningful Engagement of Local Women’s and Girls’ Organisations \(LWGOs\) in ECW-supported Investments](#)

[Rapid Gender Analysis Toolkit for Education in Emergencies \(pilots conducted in four countries: Mali, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and Myanmar\) – launching soon](#)

[Gender-Transformative Change in Humanitarianism: A View from Inside \(White Paper, 2021\)](#)

[UNICEF Gender Policy and Action Plan 2022–2025 – Gender-Transformative Programming \(Background Paper\)](#)

[Plan International – Gender Transformative Change in Emergencies FAQ \(2022\)](#)

[Plan International – Guidance Note: Gender Transformative Education and Programming \(2020\)](#)

[UNICEF – Gender Transformative Education: Reimagining Education for a More Just and Inclusive World \(2022\)](#)

[Oxfam – Gender Transformative Education Guidance Note \(Box Link\)](#)

[UNPRPD – Inclusive Gender Transformative Approach Guidance Note \(Jan 2023\)](#)

[Transforming Patriarchy: Engaging Men and Boys in Promoting Gender Equity in and through Education | INEE](#)

[Building better partnerships | Plan International](#)

[Facilitating Partnership Assessments: How to facilitate a partnership assessment process as part of developing new partnerships – Save the Children’s Resource Centre](#)

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