



United Nations  
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Cultural Organization



# Promoting Gender Equality through Textbooks

A methodological guide

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*A methodological guide*

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# Introduction

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# Introduction

**T**his guide is based on scientific work and field actions carried out in partnership with research centres in the North and South within the framework of the International Network for Research into Gendered Representations in Textbooks (Réseau international de recherche sur les représentations sexuées dans les manuels scolaires – RIRRS). It draws primarily on results from regional seminars on “gender and textbooks” organized by UNESCO in Cameroon in November 2005, Togo in December 2006 and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in July 2007<sup>1</sup>, as well as on projects undertaken in the wake of these seminars .

## WHY ANOTHER TEXTBOOK GUIDE?

### Textbooks at the heart of education policy

All of the evidence points to the enduring importance of textbooks as basic tools for education in the twenty-first century. Therefore textbooks should be at the heart of education policy through mobilization of:

- ◆ national and international policies to achieve the goal of Education for All (EFA), not only in its educational and economic dimensions but also in its political dimension;
- ◆ a large number of actors to implement these policies, ranging from policy-makers to publishing houses to distributors, and possibly donors;
- ◆ the whole of the teaching profession, together with pupils, their families and communities.

## Renewed importance of textbooks

Over and above their educational implications, textbooks have economic and ideological implications. It has long been understood that textbooks are a basic vehicle of socialization, conveying knowledge and values.

Textbooks have thus always been the subject of numerous studies and guides, whether with a view to revise their content in order to improve learning, take better account of values held to be universal (such as peace and equality), or meet demands for technical assistance through the provision and distribution of teaching materials; textbooks enable technical and educational skills to be passed on and national policies for publishing, distribution and use to be established and developed.

Today the goal of Education for All and the priority given to girls' education make textbooks even more important.

### Aim of this guide

In any particular society and across the world, textbooks have an impact far beyond the immediate confines of school and learning. We must consequently take account of the extent of their influence: a textbook is a basic learning tool for pupils and teachers; a tool of negotiation between the various actors involved in its production and use; and an element of communication within families, especially for values.

The aim here is therefore to consider the textbook's overall environment and all the actors involved and to explore the possibilities of the textbook as a vehicle for gender equality in meeting EFA goals. In this context, textbooks are powerful levers of social change in propagating universal values.

There are two objectives in practical terms:

- ➔ to show how gender inequality is constructed in textbooks through the curriculum;
- ➔ to give actors involved the tools to revise textbooks or use existing textbooks critically, whether in the teacher/learner relationship, among individuals involved in the textbook chain (from design to use), or outside the school in families and the community.

This guide mainly concerns everybody responsible for preparing and/or revising textbooks, including Ministries of Education and publishing bodies. It will also be of interest to anyone associated with textbooks and having occasion to use them: at school, at home, in the community, in research institutions and elsewhere.

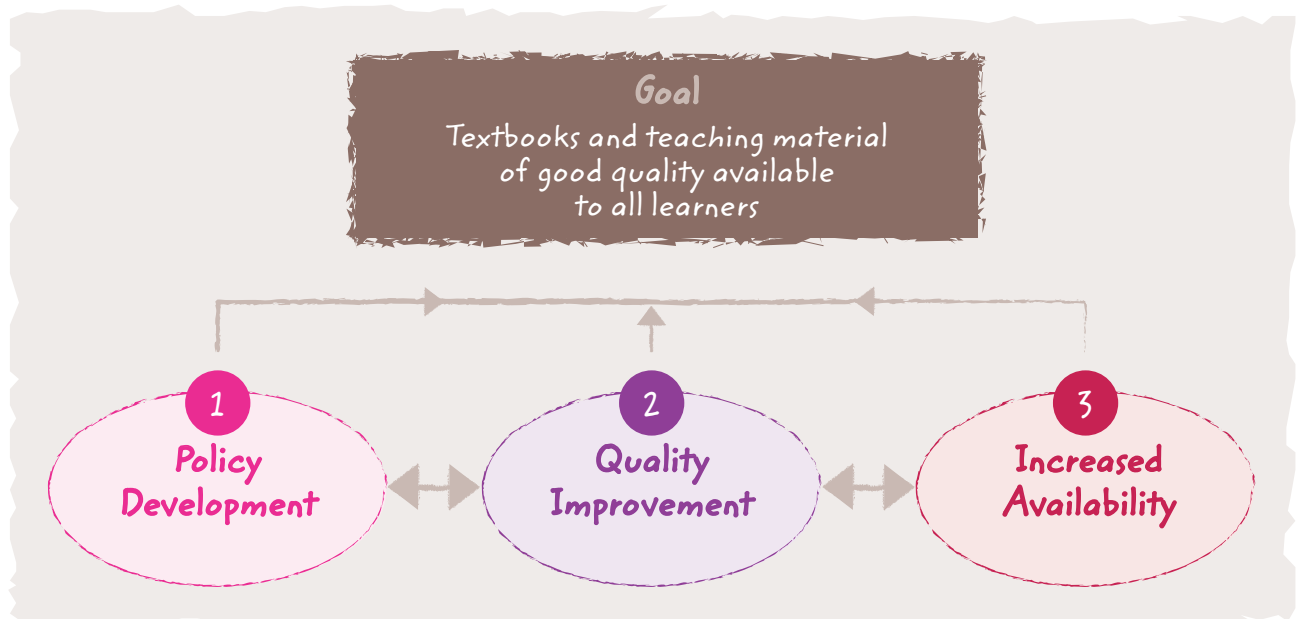
It is intended to be practical and specific, offering examples of action and experience in Africa, although it is designed to be distributed in other regions as well.

This guide meets UNESCO's priorities regarding the promotion of education policies and practices that respect gender equality and result in the production of quality text books. Drawing on 60 years of experience, UNESCO has highlighted three key elements to be taken into account when developing textbook policy: quality, availability and inclusion of human rights education. UNESCO advocates "an approach grounded in the core concepts of peace, human rights and sustainability. Its primary aim, in firm support of Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals, is to help facilitate a process that enables learners to take charge of their lives, make substantial and meaningful contributions to their communities, participate in creating cultures of peace, and become knowledgeable citizens of the world."<sup>2</sup>

## UNESCO and textbooks: historical background

- ◆ First UNESCO General Conference and programme for the improvement of textbooks and teaching materials as aids in developing international understanding, Paris, (1946).
- ◆ Convention against Discrimination in Education, UNESCO, (1960).
- ◆ UNESCO General Conference, Paris, (1983): The General Conference invited the Director General "to promote the strengthening of action in school education, including technical and vocational education, through, more especially, the revision and improvement of curricula, textbooks, teaching materials [...]."<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ UNESCO General Conference, Paris, (1995): "All people engaged in educational action must have adequate teaching materials and resources at their disposal. In this connection, it is necessary to make the necessary revisions to textbooks to remove negative stereotypes and distorted views of 'the other'."<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ An expert meeting on "Textbooks and learning materials: components of quality education that can foster peace, human rights, mutual understanding and dialogue", Paris, 12-13 December 2002.
- ◆ Comprehensive Strategy for Textbooks and Learning Materials, Paris, UNESCO, (2005).

## Goal and objectives of the UNESCO Strategy for Textbooks and Learning Materials





## Outline of the guide

This guide is divided into three parts, with annexes at the end.

Part 1 draws attention to the importance of textbooks in good quality education policy, together with their various implications for Education for All and gender equality. It concludes that a critical review of textbook content must be conducted.

Part 2 focuses on gender discrimination in textbooks. Using RIRRS research findings, it endeavours to analyse existing gendered representations. Ideas are suggested for representations promoting gender equality. Tools for identifying and monitoring textbook representations are also offered.

Part 3 explains the textbook environment. It highlights the actors involved throughout the textbook chain (those who produce and use textbooks) and the role they can play in the recognition of gender equality. It is illustrated with examples of activities and projects currently under way or already completed.

Each part includes a “further reference” section with a selection of reference works on the subject under discussion.

Last but not least, the annexes contain general resources.

*The aim of this guide is therefore to promote the use of textbooks as key tools for achieving international goals relating to Education for All, gender equality and education for human rights and peace.*

## Notes

1. See annex for a fuller description of the Seminar in Cameroon, (2005).
2. *A Comprehensive Strategy for Textbooks and Learning Materials*, Paris, UNESCO, (2005).
3. 22 C/Resolution 13.1.2(c)(ii): Peace, international understanding, human rights and the rights of peoples, (1983).
4. 28 C/Resolution 5, Annex 2: Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, (1995).

Part 1



Part 2



Part 3





## The Implications of Textbooks for Gender Equality

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# Part 1 : The Implications of Textbooks for Gender Equality

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**W**hile textbooks may be the object of debate and controversy, everybody accepts their key role in society. Not only do they contribute to learning through dissemination of knowledge, but they also play a role in children's upbringing by directly or indirectly transmitting models of social behaviour, norms and values. Textbooks are therefore a tool for both education and social change. To monitor their content, ensure that they are distributed and guarantee their use in society, a clear policy is necessary.

## I. TEXTBOOKS AS TOOLS FOR EDUCATION

A textbook – usually consisting of text and/or illustrations – reviews, structures and renders accessible the state of knowledge in a given subject for a given age group in order to lay the foundations for standard learning and a shared culture. It thus transmits a society's cultural capital to its youngest citizens at a particular moment.



**Textbook:** The core learning medium composed of text and/or images designed to bring about a specific set of educational outcomes; traditionally a printed and bound book including illustrations and instructions for facilitating sequences of learning activities.

**Learning materials:** Any form of media used to support a programme of learning, often as supplements to the core text. Examples include workbooks, charts, educational games, audio and video tapes, posters and supplementary readers.

Definitions from *A Comprehensive Strategy for Textbooks and Learning Materials*, Paris, UNESCO, (2005)



## An unrivalled teaching aid

As a basic medium of knowledge in all societies, textbooks have proved to be a vital teaching aid.

A number of studies in the last 30 years or so<sup>1</sup> have shown that a greater supply of educational materials, especially textbooks, is the most cost-effective way of improving the quality of education. In other words, in a context of budget constraints (particularly severe in situations of poverty), it is one of the most efficient variables, in terms of education, among the so-called policy variables, i.e. those which can be influenced.

According to the Programme of Analysis of Education Systems (PASEC) of the Conference of Ministers of Education in countries sharing the French language (CONFEMEN), other educational measures have had a moderate effect in comparison with the provision of textbooks, although combined measures can strengthen the role of the textbook (use of teachers who speak the language of the region, feminization of the teaching profession, and others).

*Les facteurs de l'efficacité dans l'enseignement primaire: les résultats du PASEC (Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Educatifs de la CONFEMEN) sur neuf pays d'Afrique et de l'Océan Indien. Dakar, CONFEMEN, (1999).*

## Why textbooks are so efficient

Textbooks allow access to all sorts of information. Not only do they develop the ability to read and write but they also encourage critical thinking, independence and creativity. For many pupils and their families, textbooks are the only introduction to the written word in homes where there are no books, whatever the reason: the culture, distribution or supply problems, cost, etc. Because the poorest children do not have access to teaching aids, they often face the greatest difficulties in learning. Thus access to textbooks is usually one of the first recommendations made by policy-makers.

For teachers, textbooks have been the basic – and sometimes only – teaching resource, extending their means of instruction, since textbooks contain the general components of the curriculum, structure the teaching sequence and form the basis of assessment. In fact, they may play a part in self-education and compensate for lack of teacher qualifications. In this respect, the teacher's handbook is a valuable contribution which strengthens the textbook's impact on pupils.

Textbooks are still the cheapest of available media, and they are easy to carry and use. Nevertheless, a number of problems have yet to be solved. Producing a good textbook is a long and difficult task; it involves a set of substantial costs, from manufacturing to transporting to the monitoring of its technical and educational qualities. Textbook accessibility and its availability throughout an area may also pose a problem.



**Good-quality textbooks and learning materials:** "A more current and comprehensive view identifies quality learning materials as those which actively engage the learner in the process of acquiring the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to become responsible citizens of their communities and of the world."

Definition from *A Comprehensive Strategy for Textbooks and Learning Materials*, UNESCO, (2005)

Textbooks must be available, understandable and of good quality, both technically and educationally.

- ➔ Making provisions for a widespread and sustainable supply of textbooks, supplementary readers and teaching materials for each pupil means mastering the complexity of sustainable development for textbooks and the textbook chain using appropriate human and financial resources.
- ➔ Ensuring good-quality teaching means verifying that content is relevant and adapted to national context by taking the following questions into account:
  - What kind of knowledge is to be conveyed?
  - What kind of teaching sequence should be adopted?

*In such circumstances, textbooks – which are a valuable source of information and skills – can be a genuinely efficient variable in terms of Education for All.*

## II. TEXTBOOKS AS TOOLS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

Over and above the educational questions raised by textbooks, there are also policy questions, which may be less obvious but are equally crucial.

### **A vehicle for socialization**

In a world increasingly dominated by multimedia, the written word ensures access to the dominant culture. Thus textbooks play a key role in all societies. In countries where written documents are uncommon, the textbook's impact is all the greater.

Moreover, in their interpretation and presentation of knowledge, textbooks are (more or less consciously and deliberately) a vehicle for norms, values and models of social behaviour through the representations that they contain. "Creating a textbook is therefore tantamount to choosing the values, norms and representations that underpin hopes of maintaining social cohesion and a harmonious relationship between human beings and institutions; textbook literature is purposive and committed."<sup>2</sup> Textbooks thus contribute to socialization.

Already in the early twentieth century, international bodies held that textbooks had a role to play in upholding peace and mutual understanding among people, two major goals of UNESCO since its founding in 1946.

### **The human rights imperative**

The concept of universal values, as reflected in "human rights", is promoted by international bodies by means of instruments ratified by numerous countries. In practical terms, guaranteeing human rights means not only monitoring bias and discrimination, which are human rights violations, but also expressly promoting human rights and ensuring that all representations further equality.

Textbooks must therefore integrate this rights-based approach. According to *A Comprehensive Strategy for Textbooks and Learning Materials*: "Inherent to a rights-based approach to textbook development, therefore, is a commitment to eliminating all forms of bias, intolerance and stereotyping which threaten to undermine human rights and foster negative attitudes and violent behaviours. Textbooks and learning materials which incorporate

rights-based values thus become a central vehicle for the delivery of quality education, which in turns seeks to fulfil the promise for all members of the human family to live in dignity and peace.<sup>3</sup>”



**A rights-based approach:** For the United Nations system, a rights-based approach implies that all programmes of cooperation, policies and technical assistance should further the realization of human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.

Definition from *A Comprehensive Strategy for Textbooks and Learning Materials*, Paris, UNESCO, (2005)



## III. EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

It is therefore essential to know and use the international instruments adopted since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights which underpin and explain these rights.

### **Human rights, women’s rights, children’s rights**

While the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the cornerstone of human rights, two other basic texts complement the rights system with emphasis on women and children: the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

In addition, the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna, called for “the full and equal enjoyment by women of all human rights” (Part 3, “The equal status and human rights of women”, para. 36, Declaration and Programme of Action).

Two years later, the Beijing Declaration, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, reaffirmed the commitment to ensure “the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.” Inherent in all these texts is the right to education as access to education is a prerequisite for achieving equality and other basic human rights.

## The right to Education for All: a priority for girls and women

Equality of rights between men and women, especially as it applies to access to education, has contributed to the development of the concept of the right to Education for All. As a result, the education sector's greater openness to girls has made it possible to re-examine the issue of social justice and promote egalitarian gender relations.

Viewed under a wider lens, gender equality is a means to combat underdevelopment and ensure sustainable development, as girls' and women's education has a positive influence in all areas of social activity: health, demography, the economy, children's education and community welfare. Education therefore plays an important role in transforming social relations and supporting economic, social and political development. "Providing African girls and women with the mental and intellectual tools of development is the best guarantee for reducing poverty in Africa in the long term, increasing family incomes, planning births, bringing down infant mortality, improving family health, reducing the likelihood of conflict, raising life expectancy and giving greater dignity to African women and men."<sup>4</sup>

Thus girls and women must be given priority in the field of education, as analyses and reports reveal persistent gender inequality in this sphere.

A few key stages in this process are listed below:

- ◆ **1960.** Convention against Discrimination in Education (Paris).
- ◆ **1979.** United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (United Nations, New York).
- ◆ **1990.** World Declaration on Education for All (Jomtien, Thailand).
- ◆ **1995.** Declaration and Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, China).
- ◆ **2000.** Dakar Framework for Action, "Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments", World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal).
- ◆ **2000.** United Nations Millennium Declaration (United Nations, New York).
- ◆ **2005.** Plan of Action of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (United Nations, New York)<sup>5</sup>.





### **Convention against Discrimination in Education, UNESCO, Paris, 1960**

Article 1 defines discrimination in education as follows:

"[...] The term 'discrimination' includes any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth, has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education [...]"

Article 5 states:

"Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; it shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups [...]"



### **United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979**

Article 10 reads as follows:

"States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education and in particular to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women:

- (a) The same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas; this equality shall be ensured in pre-school, general, technical, professional and higher technical education, as well as in all types of vocational training;
- (b) Access to the same curricula, the same examinations, teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard and school premises and equipment of the same quality;
- (c) The elimination of any stereotyped concept of the roles of men and women at all levels and in all forms of education by encouraging coeducation and other types of education which will help to achieve this aim and, in particular, by the revision of textbooks and school programmes and the adaptation of teaching methods.



### **World Declaration on Education for All, Jomtien, 1990**

In Article 3, "Universalizing access and promoting equity", paragraph 3 states:

"The most urgent priority is to ensure access to, and improve the quality of, education for girls and women, and to remove every obstacle that hampers their active participation. All gender stereotyping in education should be eliminated."



### **World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995**

Platform for Action, Chapter IV, Section B, paras. 69-79, in particular paragraph 74:

“Curricula and teaching materials remain gender-biased to a large degree, and are rarely sensitive to the specific needs of girls and women. This reinforces traditional female and male roles that deny women opportunities for full and equal partnership in society. Lack of gender awareness by educators at all levels strengthens existing inequities between males and females by reinforcing discriminatory tendencies and undermining girls’ self-esteem.”



### **Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments, 2000**

Provision of textbooks and other materials of good quality is a necessary condition for achieving the six EFA goals, especially Goals 2 and 5:

“Goal 2: Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.”

“Goal 5: Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.”



### **Millennium Declaration, United Nations, New York, 8 September 2000**

Goal 2: Ensure primary Education for All.


Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empowerment of women.

“We, Heads of State and Government, have gathered at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 6 to 8 September 2000, at the dawn of a new millennium [...]

We resolve [...]

To ensure that, by [2015], children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education [...]

To promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable [...]



**Plan of Action of the World Programme  
for Human Rights Education, 2005,  
United Nations General Assembly, Fifty-ninth session,  
A/59/525/Rev.1**

“The international community has increasingly expressed consensus on the fundamental contribution of human rights education to the realization of human rights [...]

[...] human rights education can be defined as education, training and information aiming at building a universal culture of human rights through the sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills and moulding of attitudes directed to:

- (a) the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- (b) the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity;
- (c) the promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups;
- (d) the enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free and democratic society governed by the rule of law;
- (e) the building and maintenance of peace;
- (f) the promotion of people-centred sustainable development and social justice.”

### **Textbooks: an important variable in girls’ education and gender equality**

Despite progress in the last decade, there is still much to be done to “eliminate gender disparities” and, even more, to achieve equality, especially in education.

The crucial problem is girls’ underachievement, measured by access to schools, academic performance and “survival” within the education system. Many factors hold back girls’ education: the economic situation and low income, a family and social environment with traditional patriarchal structures, and operational failures in the education system (shortages of schools, teaching materials and teachers, sexual abuse of girls, and so on).

There is also a link between girls’ underachievement and textbooks, to the degree that gender inequality and discrimination are reinforced by textbooks, whose power of legitimation is all the greater because they are a rare commodity:

- ◊ girls have fewer books than boys, since textbooks are expensive and in short supply;
- ◊ the representations of both genders in textbooks, reinforced through teacher/pupil interaction with the teacher, continue to put girls at a disadvantage (see Part 2).

For these reasons, girls must have equal access to textbooks and gender representations must be changed. Teachers must also be trained to avoid contributing to the transmission of representations that convey inequality, whatever textbook is used.

In a study of a Côte d'Ivoire textbook, researchers noted that: "the analysis of obstacles to girls' enrolment and academic achievement shows that much of the literature has been devoted to the influence of cultural and socio-economic factors, while little is said about the influence of factors directly associated with the school environment [...] [Educational performance] also depends on the extent to which education systems encourage and perpetuate discrimination against girls." Djangone R., Talnan E. and Irié M. (2001), *Système scolaire et reproduction des rôles sexués: une analyse du manuel scolaire du Cours Préparatoire deuxième année en Côte d'Ivoire*.

Adama Ouedraogo has based his study of the image of girls conveyed by the educational establishment on the following theory: "one wonders whether some factors internal to the delivery of education, such as the content taught, are not detrimental to girls' access to and inclusion in the education system." He concludes: "A narrow and incomplete image of girls and women within a context of strictly defined roles can have various consequences. On the one hand, it may give rise to feelings of frustration and hinder the development of a girl's personality. These feelings of frustration may also affect the process of integration into the education system. On the other hand, the straitjacket of the female stereotype deprives girls of their potential for intellectual, emotional and volitional creativity. In social terms, the community is thus denied significant reproductive human capital which will be unable to contribute fully to its development."

Ouedraogo A. (1998), "Les contenus sexistes des manuels scolaires. Au malheur des filles et des femmes dans les manuels burkinabé" in Lange M.-F. (ed.), *L'école et les filles en Afrique*. Paris, Khartala, pp.121-140.

**U**nder a quality education policy the textbook is understood as an educational tool of prime importance, being instrumental to culture, to educational attainment and to in-service teacher training. It is also a tool for social change because it disseminates universal values.

In terms of social change, international instruments give priority to combating gender inequality, which contradicts the ideal of justice and impedes development.

Thus it is essential for textbooks to be covered by policies which respect and include the rights of girls and women for their full enjoyment of a good-quality education.



## FURTHER REFERENCE... Human rights, gender equality and education

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## Notes

1. See Ian Montagnes's survey (2001), *Textbooks and Learning Materials 1990-1999*, Thematic Studies, UNESCO, World Education Forum 2000.
2. Mollo-Bouvier, Pozo-Medina (1991), *La discrimination et les droits de l'homme dans les matériels didactiques: guide méthodologique*. Paris, UNESCO, Educational Studies and Documents, No. 57, p.12.
3. *A Comprehensive Strategy for Textbooks and Learning Materials*, Paris, UNESCO (2005).
4. Aïcha Bah Diallo, preface to Alice Tiendrébéogo/Kaboret (2003), (*Inventaire des expériences novatrices en matière d'éducation des filles et des femmes en Afrique de l'Ouest et Centre*). Ouagadougou, CIEFFA (International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa).
5. Annex 3 contains an outline of the World Programme.



## Gendered Representations in Textbooks

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## Part 2 : Gendered Representations in Textbooks

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**T**he use of textbooks as a lever to achieve social change is predicated on sound knowledge of their content and reflection on the messages that they convey. Based on the concept of gender, which must first be defined, the analysis of textbooks in this part of the guide draws on the work of the International Network for Research into Gendered Representations in Textbooks (RIRRS). It puts forward arguments for revising textbooks and provides tools for developing messages to promote gender equality.

### **I. UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SEX AND GENDER**

In many cultural contexts, the differences between girls and boys, and between men and women, are regarded as natural. Children are classified at birth – usually by observing their genitals – into two categories: male and female. On the basis of the category to which they belong, society will consider them qualified to do certain things and expect certain attitudes and behaviour of them. Their rights and duties and their social, economic and political roles will be different during their childhood and throughout their adult lives. All societies are organized around this basic social differentiation, which dominates the life of individuals to a considerable extent.

These categories have been pondered by philosophers, anthropologists and sociologists, who have shown that “femininity” and “masculinity” have no universal definitions: a certain quality ascribed to men in one context will be ascribed to women in another; a particular task patently considered to be female in one place will be regarded as male in another. Thus the anthropologist Margaret Mead, studying traditional societies in Oceania in the first half of the twentieth century remarked on “the conspicuous facts of age and sex ..., whether it be the convention of one Philippine tribe that no man can keep a secret, the Manus assumption that only men enjoy playing with babies, the Toda prescription of almost all domestic work as too sacred for women, or the Arapesh insistence that women’s heads are stronger than men’s.”<sup>1</sup> In many contemporary societies, these assertions could be reversed: women are considered more talkative than men, they are supposed to be naturally maternal and they are also thought to be better qualified to do domestic work. In some cultures, women carry a heavy load (in the Maghreb, for example) or maintain the roads (in Russia), whereas in others, they are believed to be physically too weak for such work. This calls into question the naturalization of gendered identities. Differentiation between boys



and girls and between men and women is based on anatomical differences, but it is also a social construct. The concepts of “sex” and “gender” lead to a clearer understanding of the two elements in gendered identities.



**“Sex”** refers to the biological differences between males and females. It relates to the observable difference between their genitals and to their physiological functions in procreation.



**“Gender”** is related to culture and the social division into “masculine” and “feminine”. Gender therefore pertains to the qualities, tastes, aptitudes, roles and responsibilities associated with men and women in a society. Definitions of masculine and feminine vary enormously – demonstrating their social origin – since every society develops its classification on the basis of its own criteria and principles. The concepts of masculinity and femininity are not developed independently of each other but are mutually dependent.

It is common for sex and gender to be confused. Biological differences between the sexes are the basis on which social differentiation of masculine and feminine is naturalized, and this is then considered beyond question.

The fact of being born male or female is, therefore, not sufficient in itself for a person to become a girl or a boy and, subsequently, a woman or a man within the social roles laid down by the society in which that person lives. For this to happen, a learning process must take place from the moment that he or she is born. The person will be confronted with expectations and requirements and also experience treatment, opportunities and events that will differ according to that person’s sex. This experience will enable the person to assimilate all characteristics and roles assigned to both genders. The daily learning process begins in the family and is continued by the institutions and members of society as a whole. The gendered constraints imposed by society are thus internalized as natural. As Simone de Beauvoir said, “One is not born a woman, one becomes one”<sup>2</sup>; similarly, one is not born a man but one becomes one.

These internalized gendered constraints provide a new understanding of the inequalities which exist between men and women. These inequalities lead to a male/female bipolarization in all societies which is accompanied by the construction of a hierarchy. Like social differentiation between the sexes, this hierarchy ought not to be legitimized by biological differences. It is not natural; it is a social construct. Unequal relations between men and women – male domination, female subordination – are therefore neither predestined nor immutable. They are the outcome of a society’s “gender relations”. These relations are usually unfavourable to women and detrimental in economic, social, legal, health and cultural terms. Consequently, gender-sensitive policies and measures are designed to promote women in all spheres. It should be noted that gender relations and gender identities can also have adverse effects on men: excess male mortality, for example, can be explained in part by types of social behaviour associated with masculinity: drinking, smoking, speeding, and so on.

Schools and textbooks are fundamental to the learning of gendered roles. Representations of male and female are legitimized here by a high-status medium. Once assimilated by children, the “gender system”, that is “the set of norms, beliefs, practices and knowledge that organizes relations between men and women”,<sup>3</sup> will have repercussions on girls’ academic achievement and choices as well as on their experience as a whole. It is from this angle that textbooks may be investigated as potential vehicles for gender equality.





## II. STUDYING THE GENDER SYSTEM IN TEXTBOOKS

### A traditional approach: exposing gender stereotypes

Numerous studies have been devoted to textbook content. Focusing on racial discrimination and xenophobia in the 1960s, they subsequently turned their attention to sexism, that is, discrimination based on a person's sex, especially the female sex. Research in this area expanded from 1981 onwards, thanks in particular to the wide-ranging programme of national research launched by UNESCO after the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (Copenhagen, 1980). It analysed textbooks on all subjects and at all levels in countries throughout Africa, America, Asia and Europe. The research was summarized in a book entitled *Down with stereotypes! Eliminating sexism from children's literature and school textbooks*.<sup>4</sup> Numerous studies have been published more recently, but it is impossible to list them all here.<sup>5</sup>

These studies are at one in exposing sexism and the existence of considerable bias against women: the number of female characters in general education textbooks is small while, conversely, they are overrepresented in vocational courses in the health and social welfare fields;<sup>6</sup> men and women remain confined within the personalities, roles and socio-economic activities with which they are traditionally associated. Women, often unnamed, are trapped in the domestic sphere and display coquetry, frailty, emotionality and dependence. Men embody moral and physical strength, authority and independence. Most research publications conclude with recommendations for action to eliminate gender bias: awareness campaigns, training measures, recommendations for publishers and designers, and so on.

The majority of these studies have methodological features in common.

- ◆ They are intended mainly to expose gender stereotyping, such as simplified, simplistic or hidebound representations of certain characteristics ascribed to an individual or group on the basis of gender (e.g. "women are talkative"; "men take no interest in their appearance").
- ◆ Information is often collected, and sometimes analysed, on the basis of pre-established categories such as "traditional/non-traditional role" or "high-status/low-status role".
- ◆ The studies are based on passages from textbooks deemed to contain the type of sexism and/or stereotyping that should be exposed.
- ◆ The studies are often qualitative or quantitative to a limited extent, counting only the number of male individuals or female individuals, for example.

Methodological problems thus arise.

- ◆ In order to list discriminatory and gender stereotypes, it is first necessary – no easy task – to define all forms of sexism in relation to an ideal of equality. Moreover, how is it possible to incorporate pre-established categories such as "high-status/low-status" and "traditional/non-traditional"? Information-gathering depends both on the cultural context and on the sensitivity of the person collecting the information.
- ◆ Only stereotypes and obviously discriminatory situations are likely to be noted and exposed. This introduces a methodological bias, which raises the question of whether it is possible to register the omissions which lead to sexism or discrimination on account of missing information.



- ◊ As they are based on extracts, these approaches offer a narrow scope for comparison:
  - they do not allow for study and rigorous comparison of an extensive corpus;
  - they do not make it possible to identify overall themes or trends. Although, the most glaring stereotypes may be removed, gender relations in the textbook may not be egalitarian as a result, moreover definitions and expressions of sexism change.

These studies, which are nevertheless extremely perceptive and have led to progress in combating sexism, could easily be perceived as too subjective and incapable of demonstrating recurrent bias in representations of gendered roles and identities. They may consequently lack the force to convince publishing houses, design teams, teacher training institutes and government ministries of the need to take action to change textbooks.

## **A new approach: studying gendered representations**

On the basis of these findings, the International Network for Research into Gendered Representations in Textbooks has proposed a new approach.

This approach uses a quantitative method to study and compare large amounts of material with a view to studying gendered identities and gendered social roles as a whole versus simply identifying sexism or discrimination against one sex. The aim here is to reveal a textbook's gender system. This method is based on an understanding of how representations of male and female are developed in a textbook. This development process rests on two basic principles.

- ⇒ **Gendered representations are embodied in characters, and it is therefore through these that gender equality must be promoted.**

Characters, key elements of literature for young people, are used even in short texts such as textbook exercises, which constitute miniature stories. They have skills, roles, statuses, ways of acting and attributes; they move in certain settings or territories and are caught in a network of interactions with other characters. It is through all of these characteristics taken together that one discovers what it means to be a man, woman, girl or boy in a given society.

- ⇒ **Inclusion of a character in a teaching aid – in this case a textbook – contributes to the development of gendered representations. The internal structure and purpose of the aid should therefore be considered.**

A character may appear in texts or illustrations. This distinction is important for a number of reasons:

- a character's characteristics will be expressed differently in words than in images;
- texts and illustrations do not represent male and female in the same way;
- illustrations have a higher profile; being few in number and taking up more space on the page, they are easier to monitor.

Attention should therefore be paid to both texts and illustrations and the connection between them.

Texts and illustrations have different educational purposes. It is therefore necessary to understand how the knowledge is organized. For example, do textbooks have a "lesson" section and an "exercise" section? In this case, a character appearing in the lesson section, studied by the whole class with the teacher, will have a higher profile than one included in the exercise section.

In practice, an exhaustive inventory of characters must be compiled, on the basis of a questionnaire:

→ **Count the characters according to sex and age:**

- men;
- women;
- boys;
- girls;
- ungendered (pupil, child, etc.);
- unspecified (characters not defined by sex or age).

The count shows where the characters feature in the textbook (whether in the text, pictures, lessons or exercises).

→ **Note the features of gender description:**

- character type: individual or group (“children”, for example);
- educational function: “companion figure” supporting the pupils through the textbook, “pictogram” helping pupils to find their way around the textbook, or “substitute” representing teacher or pupil in the illustrations;
- role: “hero” or minor figure;
- social, occupational and/or family functions, shown by the way in which a person is designated (first name, surname, family relationship, status, occupation, and so on);
- gendered attributes in terms of hairstyle, adornments such as jewellery and make-up, clothes, and so on;
- attributes in terms of physical characteristics or items;
- character and personality traits;
- activities and actions;
- interaction with other characters;
- geographical and cultural areas and places in which character is set.

These various elements contribute to the development of the multi-faceted portraits and portrayal of an imaginary society to be found in textbooks. It is by comparing and contrasting these various indications that an analysis reveals the gendered roles, identities and gender system conveyed by a textbook.

Once this analysis of gendered representations has been completed it will be possible, on the basis of comparable quantitative data, to expose the mechanisms by which one gender is discredited or discriminated against.

## **Gendered representations in mathematics textbooks**

The International Network for Research into Gendered Representations in Textbooks has chosen to study mathematics textbooks for a number of reasons.

◊ **To prove that it is important to cover all subjects.**

Reading, history, geography and civics textbooks are held to be full of social representations. However, although mathematics lessons may seem to be neutral and lacking in representations, abstract ideas are translated into examples drawn from the children’s everyday life in order to make learning easier. These lessons thus present characters with gendered identities. Mathematics textbooks convey many representations of society, which are all the more pernicious for not being consciously registered.



◊ **To help to deconstruct the naturalization of skills in scientific subjects.**

The ability to understand mathematics is a good example of the naturalization (or gender-based attribution) of intellectual skills. In many cultures, it is commonly thought that boys and men are “naturally” good at technical and scientific subjects, while girls and women are good at literature and social sciences.

◊ **To study a subject that is particularly discriminatory against women.**

Naturalization of mathematics skills has significant consequences, which are particularly disadvantageous to women. This partly explains the failure to direct girls towards scientific subjects and the problems that they may encounter when entering occupations which are valued economically, socially and symbolically and for which selection is based on mathematical ability.

### III. **GENDERED REPRESENTATIONS IN MATHEMATICS TEXTBOOKS: EXAMPLES FROM FOUR COUNTRIES**

This methodology was applied to study 24 mathematics textbooks used in primary education in three French-speaking countries of sub-Saharan Africa – Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire and Togo – and one country in North Africa – Tunisia.

#### **Corpus studied**

##### **Cameroon**

*Champion en mathématiques*. French-language. EDICEF-CLE, 1998.  
Six school years from CP1 to CM2 – Main edition available in Cameroon.

##### **Côte d’Ivoire**

*Mathématiques*. French-language. NEI/CEDA, Ecole et Développement series. 1997-2001.  
Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire.  
Six school years from CP1 to CM2 – Main edition available in Côte d’Ivoire.

##### **Togo**

*Le nouveau calcul quotidien*. French-language. Nathan. 1999-2000.  
Six school years from SIL to CM2 – Main edition available in Togo.

##### **Tunisia**

*Mathematics Book*. Arabic-language. Centre National Pédagogique. 2002/2003.  
Six school years. The only mathematics book in Tunisia.

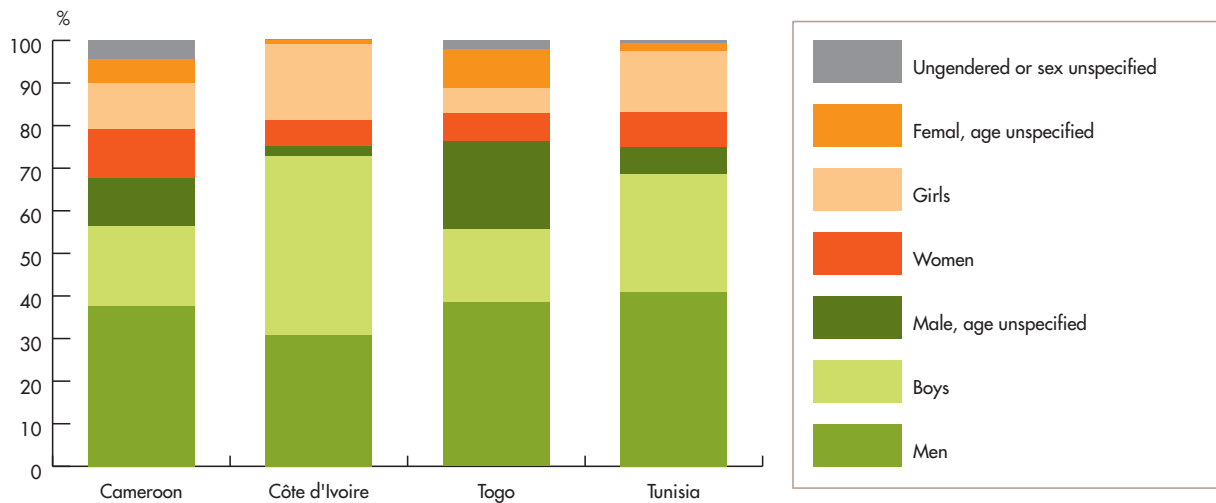
## Some results...

The findings presented below relate to individual characters counted in the texts of textbooks from the four countries.<sup>7</sup> These characters are numerous: 952 in the Togo textbooks, 991 in the Cameroon textbooks, and 1,008 and 1,361 in the Côte d'Ivoire and Tunisian textbooks respectively.

### A MASCULINE WORLD

#### Facts found :

Breakdown of characters in the text by sex and age





- ➔ Almost all the characters are male or female: there are very few ungendered designations, such as “child” or “pupil”, or characters whose sex cannot be determined (owing to the use of a unisex first name, for example). There are also relatively few characters of unknown age.
- ➔ Male characters are substantially overrepresented: between 67.6% in Cameroon and 76.4% in Togo. Apart from Côte d’Ivoire, men outnumber boys; more than one character in three is a man. Men are therefore the preferred characters – the characters most often chosen to teach mathematics.
- ➔ There is a glaring lack of female characters: between 21.4% in Togo and 28% in Cameroon. Girls outnumber women, apart from Cameroon and Togo, where there are an equal number of each. In Côte d’Ivoire and Cameroon, women are largely overlooked representing 6.2% and 11.5% of characters respectively.

### **In conclusion :**

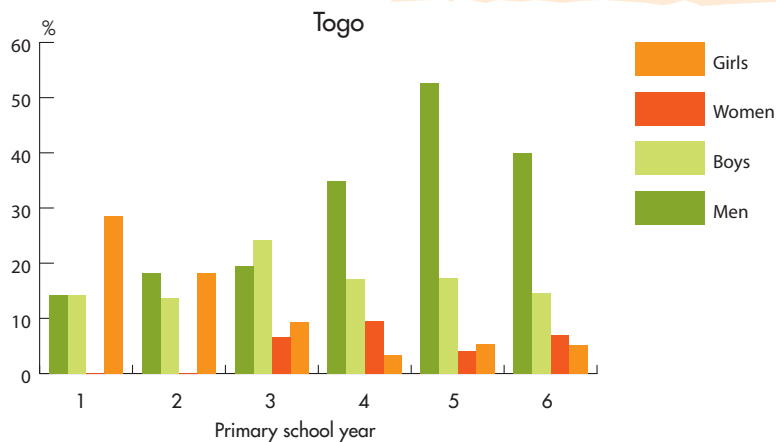
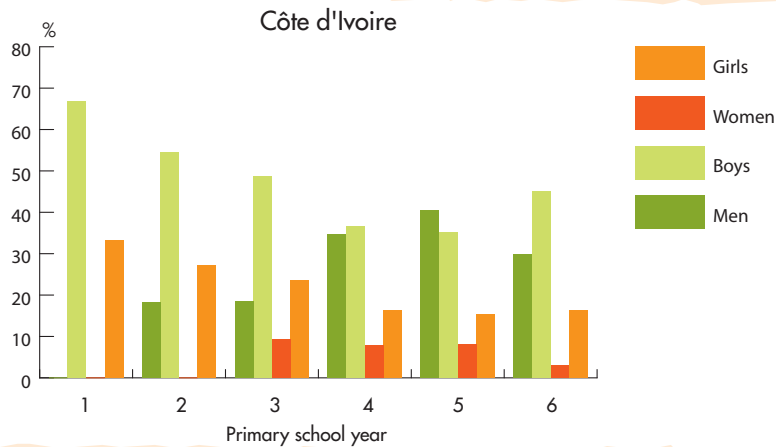
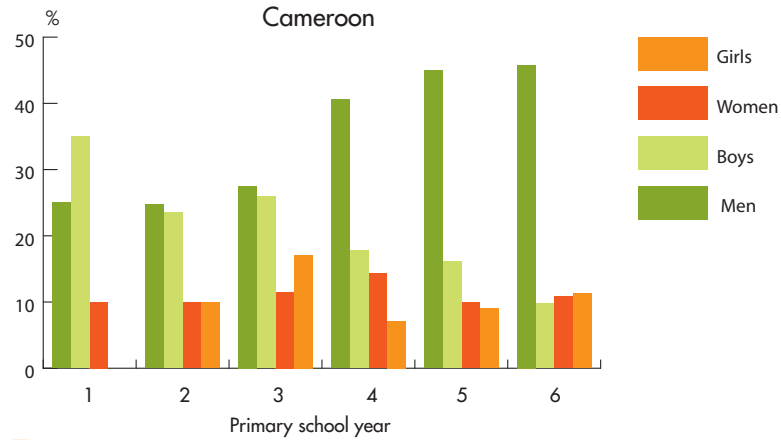
- ➔ Female role models are rare. Girl pupils have little foundation for identification and projection, and boys have no role models from the opposite sex, which is barely visible.
- ➔ The subject – mathematics in this case – is taught by men rather than women. Mathematical knowledge is used mainly by men and boys. Consequently, pupils of both sexes, together with their parents and teachers, perceive that knowledge is legitimate for the male sex rather than the female sex. The textbooks are thus unlikely to make girls interested in learning mathematics.

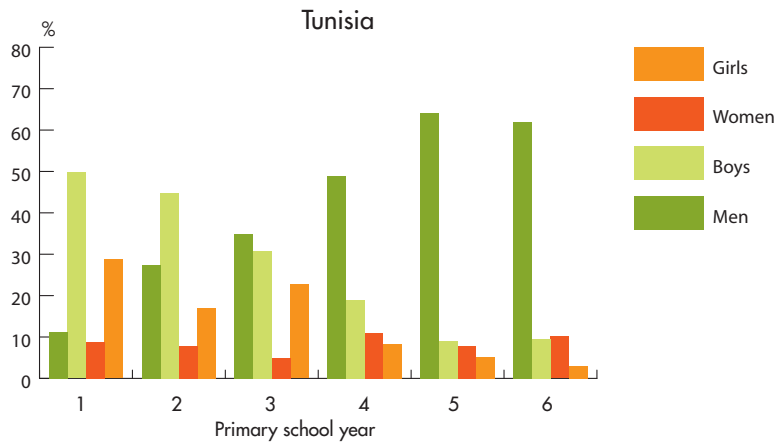
# Some results...

## FEWER FEMALE CHARACTERS AS THE CURRICULUM PROGRESSES

### Facts found :

#### Proportion of girls, women, boys and men by education level





- Whatever the country or school year, male characters are always the majority: the combined proportion of men and boys tends to remain the same (Cameroon) or increase as the curriculum progresses (Côte d'Ivoire, Togo and Tunisia).
- The trend for men and the trend for boys diverge: the proportion of men characters tends to increase over the curriculum, while the proportion of boy characters decreases.
- The proportion of girls follows a similar trend to that of boys, declining in number over the curriculum, except in Cameroon.
- There are very few women characters in all four countries, whatever the school year.

### In conclusion :

- The gender system changes as the curriculum progresses. In many countries where there are few publishers, the same textbook series is used for every school year. It is therefore important to take all school years into account.
- The increasing scarcity of child characters as the curriculum progresses encourages pupils to project themselves into adulthood. This process is possible for boys as they are able to identify with numerous male child character, but less likely for girls who have had insufficient opportunity to identify with girl child characters.
- The exclusion of girls becomes more marked in the course of the curriculum. As learning becomes more complex, female characters are phased out; the most complex mathematical knowledge in textbooks is not taught, learnt or used by women or girls. For girl pupils, this does not build the self-esteem and confidence needed to apply themselves in science subjects.
- The "disappearance" of girls from textbooks as the curriculum progresses goes in hand with the high drop-out rate for female pupils observed in many countries, a seemingly complicit endorsement.



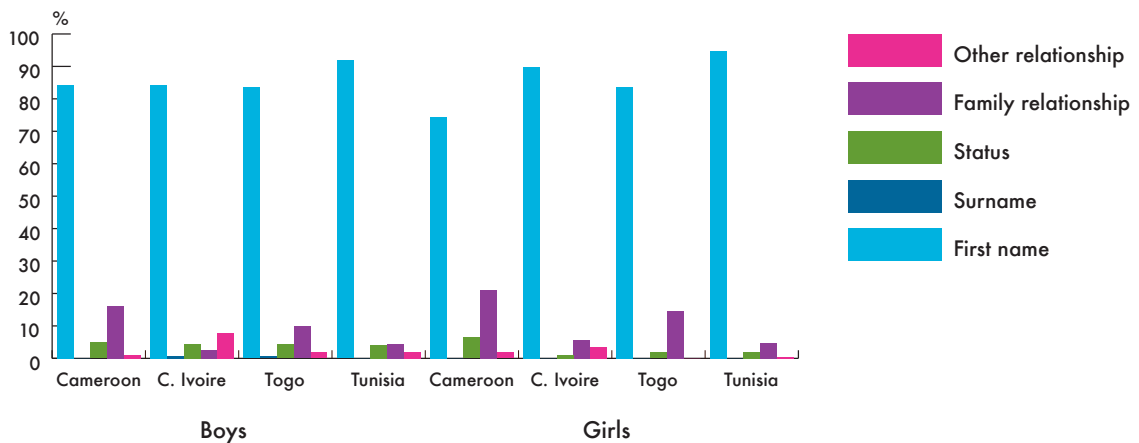
## Some results...

### VERY DIFFERENT DESCRIPTIONS DEPENDING ON THE CHARACTERS' AGE AND SEX

Various elements can be used to paint a portrait of a male or female character. Two examples are given below (designations and activities), in which children are distinguished from adults.

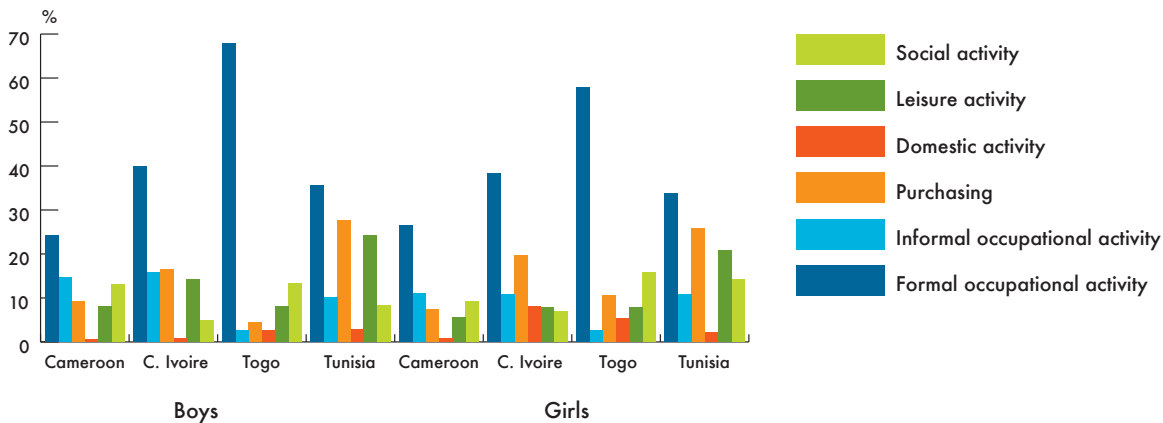
#### Facts found for child characters :

Naming boys and girls



- There is a high degree of consistency between textbooks in the different countries.
- Irrespective of country or sex, the great majority of children are designated by their first names.
- Other designations are less frequent in all four countries. Designation by status, such as "pupil", remains uncommon and is more frequent for boys. Cameroon is distinguished by more frequent use of the family relationship for boys and especially girls, while other relationships (friend, neighbour) are rarely used, irrespective of sex or country.

## Children's activities in text



- School activities predominate in all four countries: at least a quarter of the children are enrolled in a school activity. There is little difference between girls and boys, but school activities are slightly more frequent among boys, other than in Cameroon.
- Pseudo-occupational activities (selling a few wares, for example, but without the child being clearly described as a vendor) are more frequent among boys in Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire, while there is no difference in the other two countries.
- Domestic activities are carried out rarely but are still more frequent among girls, except in Tunisia.
- The differences between countries are more pronounced than those between genders. Thus school activities are particularly in evidence in Togo, while social and leisure activities (talking, visiting friends) are mentioned more often in Tunisia, for both girls and boys.

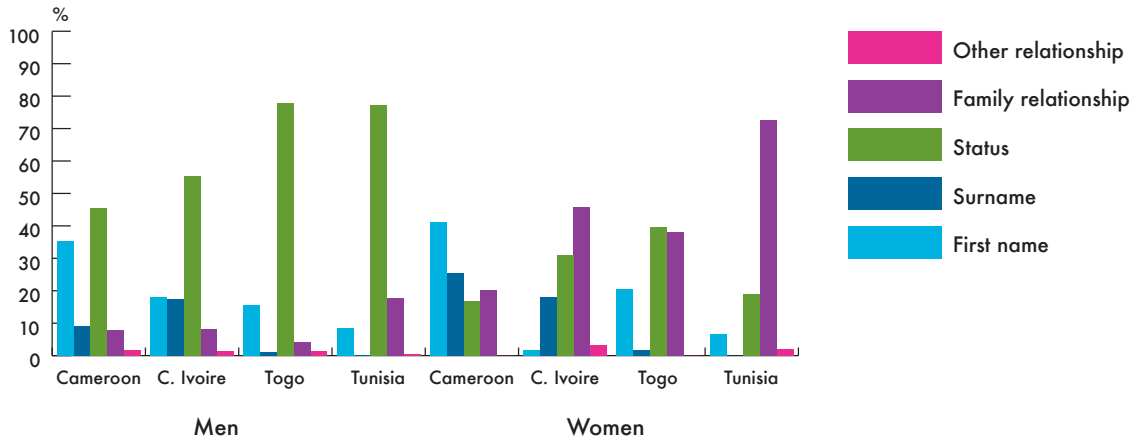
### In conclusion for child characters :

- Designations and activities do not vary by sex; the characters are pupils designated by their first names. Gender discrimination is therefore mainly tied to the difference in the number of boys and girls represented in the textbooks.
- However, small-scale variations do exist, outlining differences that are borne out by adults resulting in more contrasting descriptions, which encourage the learning of different gendered roles.
- The findings for the various countries converge, but the variations show that diversification of representations is possible. Thus the activities of boys and girls in Tunisia are much more varied than those of children in Togo.

# Some results...

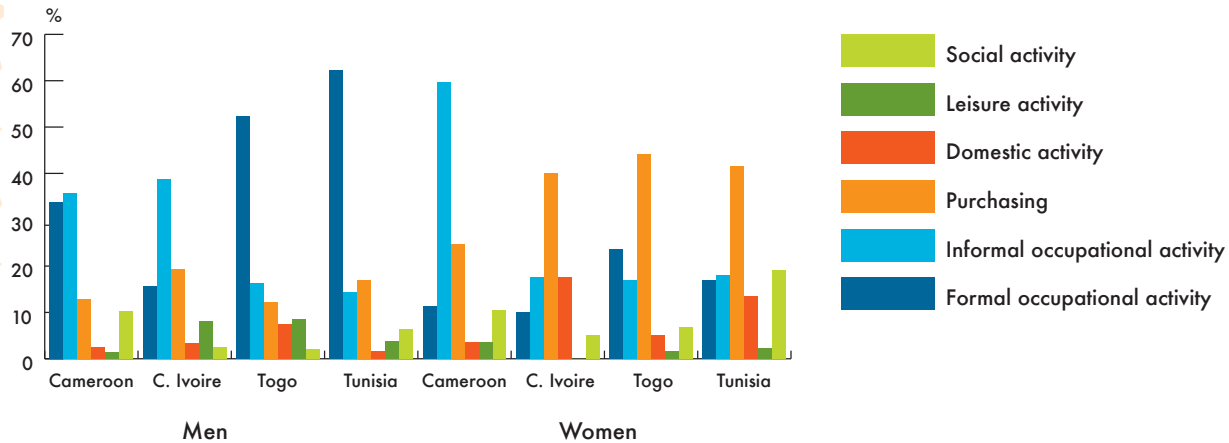
## Facts found for adult characters :

### Naming men and women



- Two forms of designation predominate among adults: status and family relationship. They are distributed very unequally on the basis of sex.
- Men are for the most part designated by status, usually occupational. On the other hand, very few are designated by their family relationship: under 10%, apart from Tunisia (17.6%).
- While designation by status is not ruled out for women, use of the family relationship is much more common. Only the Togo textbooks contain as many women designated by status as by family relationship.

## Adults' activities in textbooks



- Two activities dominate: occupational activities and purchasing. As with designations, distribution varies according to the character's sex.
- Men are engaged in occupational activities – usually formal, but not always. While they may participate in domestic chores by making purchases, their involvement in housework is minimal.
- Women form part of the domestic sphere and their most common activity is shopping, except in Cameroon. They are not excluded from occupational activity but are usually engaged in it informally, without being designated by occupational status. Consequently, occupational activity does not make them an integral part of the public sphere.

## In conclusion for adult characters :

- Descriptions of adults differ considerably. The two sexes have neither the same role nor the same place in society. Moreover, as there are few women characters, there are few female adult role models.
- Role models for girls are women in the domestic and family spheres, while for boys, they are independent men relieved of domestic tasks.
- Reading between the lines, the descriptions of women reveal that less importance is attached to the academic performance of girls. This can have an impact on girls' motivation to study, on their self-confidence and on the legitimacy and value ascribed to girls' education by boys, teachers and parents.

### These few findings show that :

- textbooks convey unequal gendered representations constructed on the basis of the characters' characteristics;
- even those subjects that seem most gender-neutral contribute to the learning of gendered roles;
- all school years are affected. The learning of gendered roles begins very early. Moreover, the gender system presented by textbooks changes as the curriculum progresses.

### They also reveal a dual imbalance, namely :

- an imbalance between the discourse on girls' education – the subject of broad international consensus (see Part 1) – and the messages conveyed by textbooks;
- an imbalance between contemporary social realities and those contained in textbooks. These textbooks lag behind social and economic changes and changes in the role of women in various spheres, especially public life. Thus the textbook is not so much a reflection as a structuring of a legitimized social representation.

*By presenting this kind of gender system, textbooks standardize, reinforce and legitimize gender inequality. They convey the idea that girls' education is not as important as boys' education. This idea is likely to be assimilated not only by the pupils but also by the teaching profession and parents, who will not necessarily view it critically. Requirements, demands and incentives for girls will be fewer. In order to achieve the goal of Education for All, it is essential to alter these representations and design textbooks that promote gender equality.*



## IV. SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING AN EGALITARIAN GENDER SYSTEM IN TEXTBOOKS

On the basis of existing work and research done by the International Network for Research into Gendered Representations in Textbooks, a number of suggestions have emerged for developing textbooks that can promote egalitarian gender relations. These suggestions form a complete framework of action.

### Criteria for promoting gender equality

- The elimination of stereotypes and the most blatant sexism is insufficient. All representations of men, women, boys and girls must be monitored.
- Characters embody representations of male and female, and it is on characters that action must be taken.
- All characters form part of the gender system presented in a textbook, but the system is not present in the same way throughout the textbook. All gendered representations of males and females must therefore be monitored accordingly, taking into account:
  - every part of the textbook such as passages of text, lessons, exercises and appendices;
  - both texts and illustrations. While it may seem easier to monitor illustrations (especially in terms of the number of characters), which are scarcer and take up more space than text, this does not imply more balanced representations. In addition, the connection between text and illustration must be analysed carefully. A gender-neutral text may be accompanied by an inconsistent illustration. Texts and illustrations may be redundant or conflicting; they may reinforce or, conversely, weaken each other's messages.

### Choice of characters in a textbook

A number of options – not mutually exclusive – exist regarding the choice of characters. Although this choice may depend on educational considerations, it should be realized that this can have an impact on gender equality.

#### Characters or no characters ?

There is no obligation to use characters. Abstract ideas (such as distance and speed) and examples drawn from various subjects (life sciences, technology, geography) for the purpose of teaching and demonstrating the usefulness of mathematics can be used without recourse to a human being and can still enrich the pupils' world.

Non-recourse to characters avoids the issue of gendered representation. Use of characters, on the other hand, requires thought to be given to the gendered representations that they may convey.

## Gendered or ungendered characters ?

As well as male and female characters, it is possible to use an “ungendered” character, such as “pupil”, “child” or “person”, or to include an element of uncertainty, for example, by using a first name that could belong to either sex.

Recourse to ungendered characters emphasizes the universality of characteristics and behaviour patterns, by regarding them as neither male nor female. Use of gendered characters automatically raises the question of equality.

## Individual or group characters ?

A character may be an individual or a party of individuals, a group, either gendered (“the girls”) or ungendered (“the class”, “the family”).

Use of a group character creates a group identity conducive to generalizations and the production and reproduction of stereotypes. Care must therefore be exercised when presenting gendered group characters. An ungendered group, in addition to its collective identity, implies a mixture of men and women, which is often a factor of gender equality.

## Gendered characters: four basic questions

If it is decided to use gendered characters, two core principles must be taken into account.

- ➔ Few representations are status-enhancing or status-eroding in themselves. But if a representation is not to be status-eroding or negative, it must be conveyed by both sexes. All representations must be “embodied” by characters of either sex, and role models must be diversified for each sex: both male and female characters can do housework and have an occupation.
- ➔ Textbooks do not reflect reality but rather structure a representation of society that they legitimize. They can offer social behaviour models, individual and collective identities, and gender-sensitive values. Two non-mutually exclusive options are available:
  - The first option is to relate textbook representations to reality, that is, situations actually observed in the countries concerned. This is useful if these situations indicate progress in terms of gender equality: the number of individuals of both sexes is roughly equivalent, the number of women in certain professions has increased dramatically, etc.;
  - The second option is to use situations in other countries, for although gender bipolarization exists in all societies, it does not always take the same form: the diversity of male and female role models shows that there is no such thing as a natural or universal role for men and women. However, the models offered must not seem absurd to the population because they mark too great a break with behaviour considered to be acceptable by that society. These models would then be counterproductive.



Four basic questions arise:

## 1. How should characters be gendered ?

### In text...

A character's sex is indicated by the grammatical gender of the pronoun, proper noun or common noun. These different designations also define a character's social identity and immediately place the character in the public or private sphere. Therefore, language (grammar and vocabulary) plays a vital role here.

Various types of designations can be combined:

- a pronoun: he/she;
- a first name: male/female/unisex;
- a surname;
- a family relationship;
- another relationship: friend, neighbour, colleague;
- a profession or occupation;
- a political or religious office;
- another status: landlord, tourist, and so on.

- ✓ Use the same type of designation for male and female characters. For example, the term "housewife", which has no proper masculine equivalent, should be avoided. If the word "mother" is used, then so too must "father".
- ✓ Vary the designations of male and female characters while taking care to place them in a variety of spheres and social functions.
- ✓ If characters of both sexes appear in the same text, do not automatically start with the male character.
- ✓ Avoid sexist language:<sup>8</sup>
  - use the masculine and feminine forms in the case of a masculine plural, for example, "sportsmen" and "sportswomen";
  - use a neutral or feminine form of titles and functions if one exists, for example, chairperson;
  - pay attention to the meaning of the words employed, which must not ridicule, demean or imprison a character in a role.

### In illustrations...

The question of how to gender characters in illustrations is complex and calls for careful thought. It is a matter of knowing which symbols to use to indicate male and female. This must be resolved with reference to the cultural context while bearing in mind the gulf between tradition and modernity. Choices may consistently convey bias, for example, if female characters are shown wearing traditional African garments while male characters wear European clothes, if girls are never shown in trousers, and so on.



## 2. How should parity be ensured between men, women, girls and boys ?

### Parity must be ensured...

- ✓ between men, women, girls and boys in both text and illustrations;
- ✓ in all the different parts of the textbook, such as, the lessons, passages of text and exercises;
- ✓ in the casting of “hero” characters and minor figures;
- ✓ in the position and size of characters in illustrations;
- ✓ in the distribution of educational functions:
  - the companion figure who supports pupils throughout the textbook and therefore throughout the school year. Pupils are at home with this character, present in both text and illustrations, and can identify with him or her;
  - the character who appears in the pictograms to help pupils find their way through the various sections of the textbook (“I must learn”, “I must remember”, etc.). The same characters appear throughout the book;
  - the substitute, who is present in the illustrations and represents the teacher or pupil, interacts with the child, attracts the latter’s attention and provides guidance and advice (for example, on how to solve a problem);
- ✓ in presenting or referring to well-known figures in the fields of politics, science, literature, sport, the arts and economics.

## 3. How should egalitarian descriptions be presented ?

In addition to designations indicating occupational, family, social and political status, descriptions are defined by actions, attributes (characteristics, items, etc.) and settings.

### These features all confer roles on the characters and indicate whether they belong to the public or private sphere...

- ✓ Emphasize features that both sexes have in common – rather than their differences – by developing identical ranges of characteristics with no exclusions or preferences.
- ✓ Highlight the interchangeability, rather than the complementarity, of roles.
- ✓ Introduce characters with multiple identities, combining a number of characteristics such as a mother who is a doctor, a father who is a builder, and so on.
- ✓ As to characters’ physical and psychological characteristics, do not draw portraits that:



- ascribe gender-specific psychological features, defects or moral qualities. On the contrary, show, for example, boys who are afraid or who cry, girls who are brave, and so on;
- link certain intellectual abilities to one sex. It seems very important to present cultivated female characters who have mastered not only traditional but also the most up-to-date techniques and technology;
- emphasize the importance of dress and external appearance to female characters.

✓ In terms of rights, ensure that all characters have:

- the same rights in every area of their lives, above all, the same political rights (to participate in politics, exercise power, and so on);
- the same autonomy to make decisions for themselves and their immediate circles.

✓ As far as their economic situation is concerned, all characters must be shown to be financially independent and self-sufficient and to have access to resources and property.

✓ In the domestic sphere, promote equal, and joint, involvement of men and women in domestic work and in their children's upbringing.

✓ In the employment sphere:

- show men and women in a variety of similar occupations;
- do not confine women to employment that is an extension of their domestic and maternal activities. The lowest-status and poorest-paid traditional female occupations are those which demand the qualities/skills most closely related to the domestic sphere;
- emphasize the occupational status of women and the payment of their work: for the same work, they must receive the same pay as men. Women's lack of occupational status and their unpaid or underpaid work is a factor of their lower status.

✓ Opportunities to engage in non-occupational and non-domestic activities (leisure, sports, etc.) must be equal, whatever the character's sex.

✓ In illustrations, do not reproduce the common association between certain types of space and gender. For example, female characters are often associated with private, enclosed, interior spaces and male characters with public, open, exterior spaces.

## Two common context: family and school

Family and school are both closely related to the child's world and encourage identification with and assimilation of gendered roles.

### In the family...

The family relates to the domestic sphere, however, owing to the parents' professions, in particular, it involves other spheres.

- ✓ Fathers and mothers must have the same rights and duties. For example, managing family resources, making decisions on an equal footing, and sharing domestic and child rearing equally. Their relations must be based on respect and independence.
- ✓ Children must have the same rights and duties whatever their sex:
  - do not introduce gender discrimination in access to resources (food, care, etc.), activities (educational, recreational, etc.), task-sharing, etc;
  - do not portray different treatment: greater demands on children of one sex, rebukes or encouragements depending on the sex, etc.
- ✓ Show relations between parents and children to be of the same nature and intensity whatever their sex. Do not gender parental tasks and involvement: both fathers and mothers are entitled to provide daily care (washing, feeding) for their sons and daughters, to rebuke or reward them, etc.
- ✓ As to the composition of a family:
  - show families composed of a father and a mother and not only families composed of a mother and her children;
  - vary the composition of the siblings and the sex of the eldest to avoid showing a gender preference;
  - diversify family relationships: grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins (of both sexes) feature rarely. They could bring variety to the models offered.

### At school...

In portraying schools in textbooks attention can be drawn to equal opportunities for girls and boys and the need for the right to Education for All.

- ✓ Paint a picture of the school, in text and illustrations, as welcoming for both sexes (e.g. schools with separate lavatories for girls and boys).
- ✓ Ensure parity and gender diversity among both pupils and teachers:
  - the presence of girl pupils in textbooks legitimizes the presence of girls in the classroom, who can look to them as role models;
  - the presence of teachers of both sexes legitimizes the possession and transmission of knowledge by both sexes. Both girls and boys can project themselves into the teaching profession.
- ✓ As far as teachers are concerned, avoid showing a division of labour that is an extension of their traditional roles: for example, female teachers taking charge of the youngest children and domestic chores within the school, while male teachers take charge of the older children and management tasks.
- ✓ Teacher/pupil interactions must show pupils as subject to the same demands and the same degree of interest whatever their sex and whatever the subject matter.
- ✓ All pupils must have the same school materials: textbooks, stationery, computer equipment, etc.
- ✓ Show that both girls and boys are interested in and succeed in mathematics, science, literature, history, and other disciplines; school subjects are gender-neutral.
- ✓ Pupil/pupil interactions must not result in a gender-based hierarchy but must show egalitarian mixed relations based on cooperation and sharing.



#### 4. How should egalitarian interactions be promoted ?

Now that parity has been considered, gender diversity and relations between characters must now be addressed.

- ✓ Present as many male as female characters on their own, that is, not in a relationship. The fact of occupying a “space” (text or illustration) on his or her own strengthens a character’s independence.
- ✓ Pay attention to the age and sex of the characters interacting:
  - ensure that there is gender diversity in relationships;
  - do not place male characters solely, or mainly, in relationship to other male characters;
  - do not introduce, or define, female characters solely in relation to male characters;
  - do not place women solely, or mainly, in relationship to children.
- ✓ Pay attention to the nature of relationships between characters of both sexes:
  - show situations in which both sexes cooperate and assist each other on an equal footing in various fields;
  - reverse the skills traditionally ascribed to a particular sex: show female characters advising male characters on scientific matters, for example;
  - avoid competition and rivalry between the sexes (especially through comparisons);
  - do not confine women and girls to positions of obedience, dedication to others and deference to men and boys.
- ✓ Distribute speaking and listening roles equally, as well as the various types of speech (imperative, argumentative, interrogative, etc.).

#### **From non-sexist materials to an egalitarian offensive**

In addition to eliminating discriminatory gendered representations and portraying an egalitarian gender system – thus resulting in non-sexist teaching materials – a more ambitious stand can be taken in textbooks by, on the one hand, exposing common forms of sexism in society and, on the other, promoting girls and women and the right to gender equality. A number of approaches are therefore possible.

- ✓ Explicit incorporation into school curricula of references to citizenship, human rights and democracy and action to combat all forms of discrimination, including sexism.
- ✓ Promotion of a positive image of women by emphasizing their contribution to a country’s history and to its economic, social, scientific, cultural and artistic wealth: women politicians, symbolic figures of history, etc.
- ✓ Exposure and correction of gender inequality and discrimination against women in textbooks.

- ✓ The most common sexist stereotypes – women are gentler, more sensitive and better than men at taking care of children and the home; they are weaker than men; they are not clever; they have no authority, etc. – may be countered by portraying positive female role models and men in non-traditional situations, thus contradicting such assertions.
- ✓ Present situations that upset learned ideas, are at variance with social norms (childless women, for example) and run counter to certain proverbs and popular songs that discriminate against girls and women.

*Promoting gender equality remains a complex task. Tools can help to monitor gendered representations when textbooks are being designed or evaluated.*

## **V. TOOLS FOR MONITORING GENDERED REPRESENTATIONS IN TEXTBOOKS**

In the design and evaluation of textbooks, attention tends to focus on the need to follow the curriculum. This should not, however, obscure the fact that the promotion of egalitarian gendered representations demands special tools. Based on the RIRRS methodology,<sup>9</sup> simplified and adapted tools are proposed below. These tools,<sup>10</sup> presented in the form of interpretation grids and tables for summarizing information, can be useful when designing or evaluating a textbook or drafting a specification for an invitation to tender.

Gendered representations are conveyed by characters. Compiling a list of characters and noting their characteristics makes it possible to check parity, the balance of roles, and involvement in various spheres of life (private/family and public/professional). It is thus possible to monitor the diversity of situations and ensure that one sex is not excluded, with emphasis on the basic characteristics that reveal the gender system:

- in texts: sex, age, designation, actions, attributes, relations with other characters, position in chapter;
- in illustrations: sex, age, actions, attributes.

Designations do not exist in illustrations, and character interactions need not be recorded for illustrations, since they are harder to discern and describe than in text. There is only one kind of character, the individual character, who is not associated with any specific part of the textbook (lesson or exercise).

Further characteristics may be added if this is considered necessary: first-name origin, places (e.g. rural/urban), character's posture, etc.



For the inventory, famous figures are counted separately (to avoid confusion with fictional characters). Pictograms and the cover – the book's most important page – should also be considered separately. The question arises of whether it is advisable to show gendered characters here; if so, parity must be ensured and equal gender relations represented.

### The procedure for monitoring the gender system comprises four stages:

1. Select the character's main features to be recorded and compile a list of details relating to each of these characteristics.
2. Make an inventory of characters using pre-established grids.
3. Summarize information on characters and their characteristics using summary tables.
4. Analyse gendered representations and, if necessary, amend the textbook to increase gender equality.

### Stage 1: Selecting characteristics and compiling lists of details

The characteristics mentioned above – sex, age, designation, actions, attributes, relations with other characters, position in chapter – need not all be selected; this will depend on the financial and human resources available. On the other hand, other characteristics may also be included.

Each characteristic is linked to numerous details. Consideration must be given to the degree of precision required (for example, the detail "domestic activity" or its subdivision into "cooking", "shopping", "housework", etc.). Too many details should not be recorded for a character's main features. On the one hand, drawing detailed portraits of characters is a lengthy and complex task and the extra work does not always yield relevant information. For example, it is enough to know, at least to start with, that a child is engaged in a school activity, regardless of whether this is reading or writing. On the other hand, characters are not all described with the same exactness: some descriptions are rich in detail while others are lacking in it. Besides, it seems impossible to record exhaustively and very specifically all the activities of a character present in a passage several pages long, for example, whereas this is possible for a character who takes up six lines in an exercise. For this reason, broad categories are employed.

Below, by way of example, are the categories most frequently encountered in RIRRS studies. They must be adapted and/or supplemented according to context and subject, and additions may be made while the textbook is being written or evaluated.

## 1. Category, sex and age of the character

There may be two kinds of characters in the text (individual characters and collective characters), and one kind in the pictures (individual characters). A distinction is drawn between male and female characters. Taking two age categories – child and adult – we may thus distinguish between:

- women
- men
- boys
- girls

We may also wish to use other categories: teenagers, the elderly, etc.

Ungendered characters and characters of unspecified sex (such as those designated by a unisex first name) can be counted but without studying their characteristics, since they do not convey gendered representations. These characters can be used to emphasize the universality of behaviour.

Characters in the masculine plural, such as “tradesmen”, who may be either male characters or characters of both sexes (tradesmen and tradeswomen) must also be counted. These characters tend to add to the male element, and it is therefore useful to count them in order to limit their use. In addition, a person’s age is not always known, hence the need to record male or female characters of unspecified age.

## 2. Designations

- First name/Surname or title
- Family relationship (mother, uncle, etc.)
- Other relationship (friend, neighbour, etc.)
- Occupational status (occupation, political or religious office)
- Other status (customer, traveller, etc.)

These broad categories can be narrowed down. Thus occupational status can be refined by distinguishing between sectors and occupations, for example:

- Agriculture: farmer, farm manager;
- Education: primary-school teacher, secondary-school teacher;
- Trade: shopkeeper, salesman/saleswoman, bookseller;
- Small business: painter, electrician, blacksmith;
- Health: doctor, pharmacist;
- Art, culture, science, media: artist, engineer, journalist;
- Office work: office worker, secretary, librarian.

## 3. Activities (actions)

- School activity
- Occupational activity, formal or non-formal
- Domestic activity
- Buying activity
- Care or caring activity
- Leisure, recreational or sports activity
- Social activity
- Routine personal activity (washing, eating)
- Negative activity (making a mistake, breaking something, doing something inappropriate, causing problems)
- Successful activity



#### 4. Attributes

- School materials
- Occupational equipment or item
- Domestic item
- Money
- Food
- Leisure, recreational or sports equipment or item
- Physical characteristic
- Psychological characteristic

#### 5. Interactions

- Occupational interaction
- School interaction
- Cooperative interaction (acting together, helping each other)
- Affective interaction (expressing affection, cuddling)
- Social interaction (talking, celebrating, inviting, sharing)
- Violent interaction (quarreling)

#### 6. Location in the lesson

As regards text, it is important to take the overall organization of the textbook into account and to note the location of the character in the lesson. A distinction is made between:

- the parts concerning lessons;
- the parts concerning exercises.

Other parts can be defined on the basis of the structure of the lesson in the textbook. Some textbooks contain additional elements, such as tests, assessments, and experiments.

For illustrations, the distinction between lessons and exercises is useless as pictures are not always limited to a specific section in textbooks.



## Stage 2: Use of grids to inventory characters

Grids allow characters to be counted and their characteristics to be recorded.

When designing a manual, it is advisable to proceed chapter by chapter in order to be able to readjust any gender imbalance immediately. When evaluating a textbook that has been published or is awaiting approval, two or three chapters should be selected and the evaluation findings compared.

Depending on the resources available, it may be decided that only certain types of character will be studied.

Possible grids: Type of grid to be used

TEXT			
Type of grid to be used	Grid No	Characters by age and/or sex	Character type
<b>A</b>	<b>A1</b>	Adults: women, men	Individual
	<b>A2</b>	Children: girls, boys	Individual
	<b>A3</b>	Age unspecified: female, male	Individual
<b>B</b>	<b>B1</b>	Adults: female, male	Group
	<b>B2</b>	Children: female, male	Group
	<b>B3</b>	Age unspecified: female, male	Group
<b>C</b>	<b>C *</b>	Ungendered or sex unspecified	Individual
		Ungendered or sex unspecified	Group
		Masculine plural	Group

ILLUSTRATIONS		
Type of grid to be used	Grid No	Characters by age and/or sex
<b>D</b>	<b>D1</b>	Adults: women, men
	<b>D2</b>	Children: girls, boys
	<b>D3</b>	Age unspecified: female, male
<b>E</b>	<b>E *</b>	Sex unspecified

\* Grids C and E can be refined by considering child and adult characters separately.

If one or more companion figures are portrayed in a textbook, a grid should be drawn up to record their characteristics in order to determine how they are described.

The categories adopted in Stage 1 must be used to complete these grids. The list of these categories may be supplemented as the inventory progresses. Care should nevertheless be taken not to use too many categories, otherwise it will be impossible to process them without recourse to information technology.











### Stage 3: Compiling summary tables

The information gathered using the grids is condensed into summary tables. A distinction is drawn between tables for the simple counting of characters and tables for each of the characteristics recorded in text and illustrations.

This work may be carried out either manually or by using simple spreadsheet software (such as Excel). However, the latter assumes that all the characteristics recorded have been entered into a computer.

#### TABLES FOR COUNTING CHARACTERS

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| <b>1</b> | Individual characters by sex and age and ungendered characters or characters of unspecified sex as well as in lessons and exercises, in text and illustrations |
| <b>2</b> | Group characters by sex and age and ungendered characters and characters in the masculine plural in text   |

#### TABLES RELATING TO CHARACTERS' CHARACTERISTICS

##### Text

##### Individual characters

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| <b>3</b> | Designations by sex and age for individual characters           |
| <b>4</b> | Actions by sex and age for individual characters                |
| <b>5</b> | Attributes by sex and age for individual characters             |
| <b>6</b> | Interactions by sex and age for individual characters           |
| <b>7</b> | Nature of interactions by sex and age for individual characters |

##### Group characters

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| <b>8</b>  | Designations by sex and age for group characters           |
| <b>9</b>  | Actions by sex and age for group characters                |
| <b>10</b> | Attributes by sex and age for group characters             |
| <b>11</b> | Interactions by sex and age for group characters           |
| <b>12</b> | Nature of interactions by sex and age for group characters |

##### Illustrations

- |           |                           |
|-----------|---------------------------|
| <b>13</b> | Actions by sex and age    |
| <b>14</b> | Attributes by sex and age |

## Tables for counting characters

**Table 1. Number of individual characters by sex and age in texts and illustrations and by position in chapter**

Individual characters	TEXT			ILLUSTRATIONS
	Lesson	Exercise	Total	
Women				
Men				
Girls				
Boys				
Female, age unspecified				
Male, age unspecified				
Ungendered or sex unspecified				
Total				

**Table 2. Number of group characters by sex and age in texts and by position in chapter**

Group characters	TEXT		
	Lesson	Exercise	Total
Female children			
Male children			
Female adults			
Male adults			
Female, age unspecified			
Male, age unspecified			
Ungendered			
Masculine plural			
Total			

## Tables relating to characters' main features

**Table 3. Number of characters by sex and age in texts and by type of designation and position in chapter**

TEXT																		
Character designation	Girls			Boys			Women			Men			Female Age unspecified			Male Age unspecified		
	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total
First name/Surname																		
Family relationship																		
Other relationship																		
Occupational status or social office standing																		
Other status																		

**Table 4. Number of characters by sex and age in texts and by activities and position in chapter**

TEXT																		
Activities	Girls			Boys			Women			Men			Female Age unspecified			Male Age unspecified		
	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total
School activity																		
Occupational activity																		
Domestic activity																		
Buying activity																		
Care or caring activity																		
Leisure activity																		
Social activity																		
Routine personal activity																		
Negative activity																		
Successful activity																		
Other activity																		







**Table 7. Number of characters by sex and age in texts: nature of interaction and position in chapter**

TEXT																			
Nature of interaction	Girls			Boys			Women			Men			Female Age unspecified			Male Age unspecified			
	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total	Lesson	Exercise	Total	
Occupational interaction																			
School interaction																			
Cooperative interaction																			
Affective interaction																			
Social interaction																			
Violent interaction																			

Tables 8 to 12 for group characters can be drawn up on the same pattern as the tables for individual characters (Tables 3 to 7). Simply replace the column headings:

- "Girls" with "Groups of female children";
- "Boys" with "Groups of male children";
- "Women" with "Groups of female adults";
- "Men" with "Groups of male adults";
- "Female, age unspecified" with "Female group, age unspecified";
- "Male, age unspecified" with "Male group, age unspecified".

Similarly, Tables 13 and 14 concerning the activities and attributes of individual characters in illustrations can be produced on the pattern of Tables 3 and 4.



## Stage 4: Making an assessment of gendered representations

The summary tables must be analysed and an assessment made of parity and gendered representations. This quantitative assessment may be complemented by a more qualitative interpretation. The suggestions in Section IV of Part 2 may be considered. The analysis must take into account combinations of characteristics. If, for example, equal numbers of girls and boys are engaged in school activities, it is necessary to check that they have the same school materials and that the status of characters of one sex is not undermined through interaction (requests for help, etc.).

The purpose of this assessment will depend on the angle from which it is approached:

- In designing a textbook; on the basis of the findings, the design and rereading teams must rebalance the number of characters by age and sex, as well as by the representations of male and female presented. It is easier to proceed chapter by chapter;
- In evaluating a textbook; the assessment must be communicated to and discussed in the bodies involved in producing textbooks. It may be used as the basis for advice on restoring the balance of representations. Recommendations or specifications can then be drawn up for the design of future textbooks.

*There is a broad consensus within the international community in favour of promoting gender equality – a guarantee of sustainable social and economic development and of respect for the dignity of all human beings. Scientific studies have revealed a contradiction between this commitment and the content of textbooks that portray unequal gender relations, whatever the educational level or subject. This research is thus helping to bring about social change by providing arguments to demonstrate the need for change and offering tools to transform gendered representations. It is also encouraging awareness and providing food for thought for the various actors in the textbook environment presented in Part 3.*



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- 7 The research carried out on these four corpuses also covers characters in illustrations and group characters in text.
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- 9 For details of the methodology used in scientific studies, see Brugeilles C. and Cromer S. (2005). For a sample analysis of a textbook series, see Brugeilles C. and Cromer S., *Les manuels scolaires de mathématiques ne sont pas neutres. Le système de genre d'une collection panafricaine de l'enseignement primaire*, Autrepap, No. 39-2006, pp. 149-166.
- 10 These tools can be used for readers, grammar books and mathematics textbooks. However, as they stand, they cannot be applied to history textbooks, for example, whose choices may be questioned but whose analysis of gendered representations must be placed in the context of the societies that are under consideration and the output of scientific knowledge in the subject (for example, history books may be criticized for obscuring the place of women in history in order to focus on "great men" but not for portraying situations in which gender relations are unequal; a history textbook may, however, question these relations and show how they have changed). A more qualitative approach is therefore desirable.



## Social Uses of Textbooks as Levers for Gender Equality

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## Part 3 : Social Uses of Textbooks as Levers for Gender Equality

66

**P**art 1 showed the capital importance of textbooks in good-quality education policy and concluded that it was necessary to change textbook content with a view to both Education for All and gender equality. Part 2 focused on quantitative analysis of gender-based discrimination in textbooks today and suggested some ideas and tools for monitoring gendered representations.

Part 3 rests on the premise that textbooks are a medium of communication, discussion and dialogue for conveying and mainstreaming gender equality. Through an examination of the stages and activities that lead from the conception of a textbook to its end use, together with the processes influencing actors in the textbook environment, consideration is given to viable ways and means of increasing the textbook's social uses beyond its traditional educational role. This is supported by suggestions for action and ongoing or completed projects that embrace this broad view of the textbook as mediator.



## I. TEXTBOOK CHAINS

### Textbooks from conception to end use: various and dynamic channels

The “textbook chain” consists of the processes that take a textbook from the hands of its author into those of the end user and the links between authors, users and all intermediaries.

Five activities are deemed essential for producing the final textbook, whatever the country, the national context, the constraints or the national policy.

1. Curriculum development for each level and subject on the basis of national values and policy guidelines.
2. Financing the textbook.
3. Design by the creative team of manuscripts (text, illustrations) on the basis of the curricula.
4. Setting and producing the textbook in quantity (layout, printing, forwarding).
5. Distributing the textbook throughout the country (storage, dispatch, transport, promotion).

In addition, there are two possible cross-cutting activities at each stage:

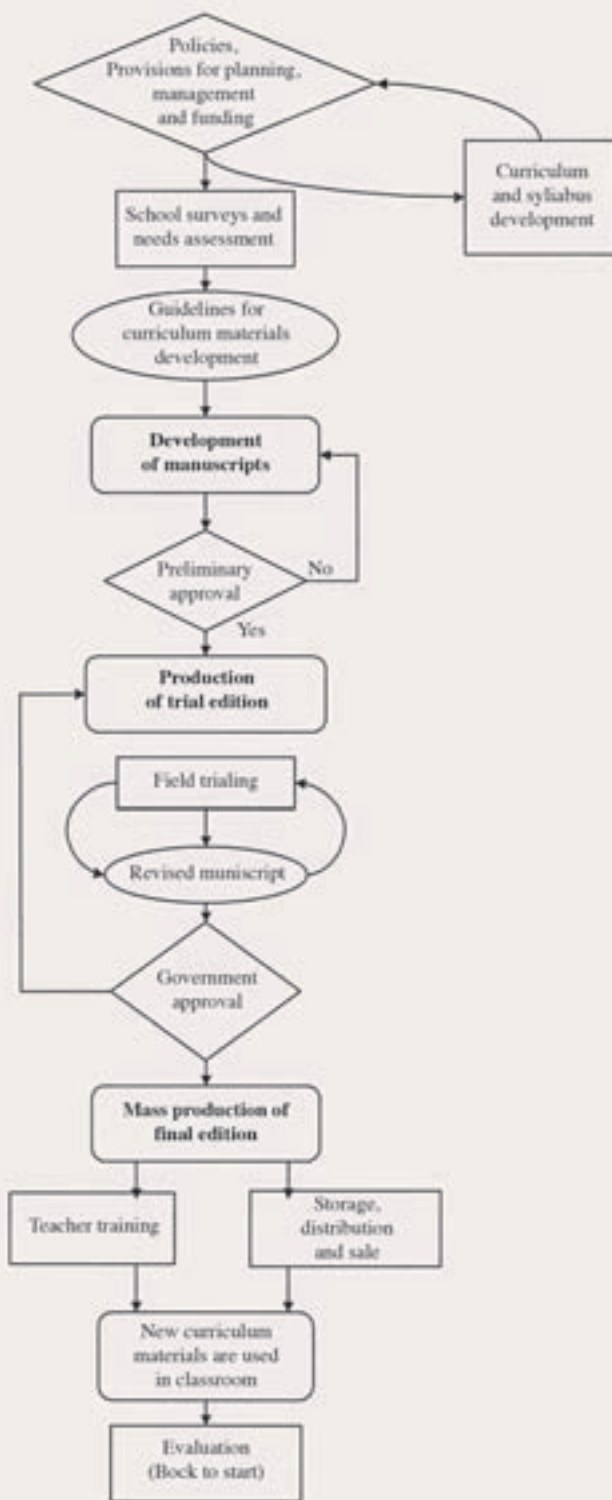
- (a) management/planning for coordination and consistency;
- (b) training/evaluation (of authors, publishing teams, users, and others).

A textbook will always reflect an education policy or even a book/reading policy. Such policies, tailored to national needs and realities, are embedded in the curriculum. Within this framework, a textbook may be offered for tender by the Ministry of Education. At the various stages of its development it may be monitored, approved (or not), validated and evaluated.

It is only once all such operations have been completed that the textbook can eventually be used by the teaching profession, pupils, families and even the community.

There is no single channel leading from the design of a textbook to its issue and use: the textbook chain is dependent on the educational, financial and political choices of governments. Situations therefore vary considerably, depending on the relationship between the public and private sectors and their respective involvement in the various stages of the chain as well as on the role played by donors. Textbook chains consist of changing channels with many different interactions.

## Development of textbooks and other learning materials, (Pernille Askerud, 2002).







## Examples of textbook chains and differing degrees of public and private involvement

Four examples<sup>1</sup> demonstrating the range of channels in textbook production are given below.

### Tunisia

The civil service has sole responsibility for textbooks, not only for their design but also for their production and distribution (some of the textbooks distributed are also subsidized), the process being as follows:

- The Ministry of Education defines curricula and content;
- The Centre National Pédagogique (CNP – National Education Centre) does the editorial work, selecting and paying authors (in-service or retired teachers). The illustration team belongs to the CNP;
- A validation committee must give approval before publication;
- The CNP sets the textbooks using desktop publishing (DTP) technology;
- Printers are chosen locally through bidding;
- The CNP checks the quality and then distributes the textbook.

Based on Léguéré, pp. 61-65

### Côte d'Ivoire

Since 2002, following a new liberalization policy and the emergence of new African publishing houses to compete with the two original publishers – CEDA (Centre d'Édition et de Diffusion Africaines) and NEI (Nouvelles Éditions Ivoiriennes), both privatized in 1990 – the book chain has been as follows:

- The Ministry of Education defines curricula and content;
- The Centre Pedagogique (Education Centre) trains authors;
- The government puts the publishing out to tender;
- The various publishing houses design and produce schoolbooks (and other books);
- Printers are selected on the open market;
- The books are distributed by the two main publishing houses and an independent publisher.

Based on Léguéré, pp. 65-68

## Cameroon

- The Ministry of Education defines curricula.
- The Conseil National d’Agrément des Manuels Scolaires et des Matériels Didactiques (National Learning Materials and Textbook Approval Board), an advisory body composed of representatives of public institutions (ministries of higher education, culture and education) and civil society, who are appointed by order of the Prime Minister, selects and approves textbooks and teaching materials for both State and private schools (although some private schools do not comply with its decisions). It may issue invitations to tender.
- Private publishing houses design and produce schoolbooks on the open market or following invitations to tender by the Ministry of Education.
- Textbooks are distributed by private bookshops in both the formal and non-formal sectors; the central government or NGOs may occasionally distribute books.

Based on information from Hélène Kandem Kagno, IFORD

## Democratic Republic of the Congo

- The Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Vocational Education (MEPSP) defines the curricula and keeps school statistics on learners and teachers.
- Authors and editorial managers in the public or private sector design and write textbooks, either on the open market or following invitations to tender from the Ministry, with potential support from outside partners, publishing houses in the North and international organizations.
- A ministerial validation committee validates textbooks before publication.
- Printers are either chosen on the open market or as prescribed, depending on whether or not there has been an official invitation to tender.
- Distribution is through private bookshops or, occasionally, through appropriate departments of the Ministry.

Based on Josué A. Tshiani Mukendi and the National Textbook Research Team: Gender and textbooks project. General report, February 2007, Kinshasa

Three basic facts must be borne in mind regarding this variety of textbook chains.

- ◆ The bodies or organizations performing the five activities may differ from one country to another.
- ◆ One body or organization may be responsible for several activities. For example, the teaching profession includes not only textbook users but also textbook authors, trainers, evaluators, and others. A publishing organization publishes textbooks but may also train its creative teams, have its own guidelines on gender, test its textbooks, etc.
- ◆ Activities, bodies and organizations are interdependent and interactive: existing processes influence each other.

This complexity and entanglement of stakeholders can be turned to account in making textbooks a tool for disseminating gender equality in society generally and not only at school. Operational classifications must be developed to underpin action.



## II. PROCESSES OF INFLUENCE

Beneath the bodies and organizations and behind the activities, there are actors. They are the basic units of the textbook chain, constantly interacting and shifting position.

### Influential or influenceable actors

Actors may:

- ◊ have an influence on textbooks or other actors. Examples: a publisher, through its publishing work directly influences content and indirectly influences teachers through training courses in the use of textbooks. Education policy bodies for their part influence both textbooks and publishing houses through curricula and approval processes;
- ◊ be influenced by textbooks or other actors. Examples: pupils are influenced by textbooks and teachers; publishing houses may be influenced by university research;
- ◊ both have influence and be influenced, since the textbook chain is a dynamic process and interaction works both ways. For example, parents are influenced by textbooks, but they may also request that content be changed.

It is necessary to identify all the actors accurately. It must be noted from the outset that the printing and distribution managers have purely technical roles and therefore cannot influence textbooks or be influenced by them any more than they can influence actors in terms of content. They reproduce and distribute a finished product and have no say in either its content or its use.

### Interactive clusters

Actors are grouped together and operate in “interactive clusters”. These clusters are established on the basis of the three key areas that bring the textbook into “being”. For a textbook to exist, it must be:

- planned on the basis of a policy;
- produced by a creative team;
- used.

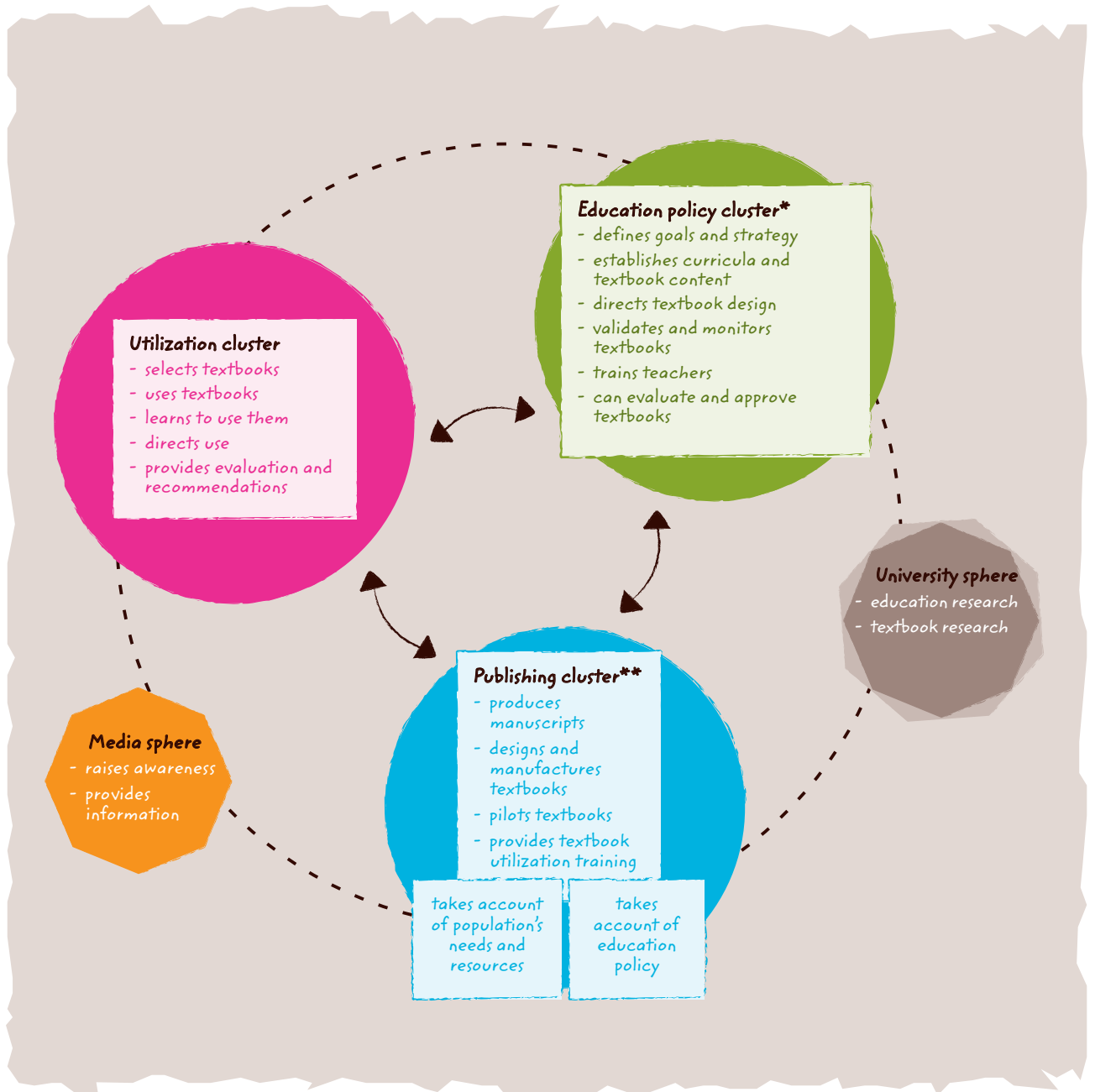
These clusters can be found in every country. They are interdependent and influence each other as well as other sectors of society.

Three crucial clusters and two auxiliary (or support) spheres can thus be identified:

- education policy cluster;
- publishing cluster;
- utilization cluster;
- university sphere;
- media sphere.

The main areas of action for each cluster or sphere of influence can be identified.

## Diagram: Interactive clusters and areas of action for textbooks



\* This cluster may also issue invitations to tender after drafting specifications.

\*\* This cluster brings together the design and creative teams (authors, illustrators, educational advisers, book designers, etc.); it recruits, may provide training, and issues instructions/guidelines (orders).

## **Lists, roles and resources of actors**

Actors may differ in nature: bodies, organizations, associations (of authors, parents, etc.), unions (teachers' unions, etc.), individuals, etc.

They may belong to either the private or the public sector.

They can be found in more than one cluster (e.g. teachers' unions).

### **Education policy cluster**

*As a rule, education policy is the prerogative of the central government and the Ministry of Education.*

- Curriculum/textbook/gender specialists
- Evaluators
- Training/inspection specialists
- Experts: specialists/academics in the field of education/textbooks

### **Publishing cluster**

*The legal status of the publisher varies from country to country.*

- Creative team: authors, illustrators, book designers
- Rereading and proofreading team
- Evaluation and piloting team
- Training team (use of textbooks)
- Experts: education policy specialists, education researchers

### **Utilization cluster**

*This cluster contains two categories: the school and the community.*

- Pupils
- Teaching/education/training team
- Teaching hierarchy: management, inspection
- Community, parents, NGOs

### **University sphere**

- Academics in the fields of educational science, sociology

### **Media sphere**

- Journalists
- Influential figures, intellectuals

Listing the actors is not enough; they must be associated with their roles. By defining their role in the chain, it will be possible to determine the resources at their disposal.

## **Position and influence of actors according to role**

It is necessary, in short, to gauge the "weight" of each actor, which means ascertaining that individual actor's position in the chain (before, during or after textbook design), the actor's authority (advisory/decision-making) and the stage at which the actor intervenes.

Another cross-cutting question which must be resolved, as far as possible, is the nature of the interactive links between actors, that is, how they coordinate – or do not coordinate – their activities.

The answers to these questions can then be used to determine in detail the ramifications of the textbook chain in the country concerned and its dynamic processes of influence.



## III. CLUSTER-BASED PROJECTS AND IDEAS FOR ACTION

Ongoing or completed projects and ideas for action<sup>2</sup> are presented below for each interactive cluster.

### Education policy cluster

The field of education comes within the remit of the central government. It is therefore important that there be a clear government policy – together with support, follow-up and evaluation – for gender equality.

#### Comprehensive guidelines on gender equality

- ✓ The issue of equality, based on national and international standard-setting instruments, falls within the laws that lay down general principles for education. It must be treated comprehensively at all levels. In fact, it concerns not only school curricula – and therefore textbooks – but also girls' educational achievement, equal opportunities, promotion of scientific education for girls, recruitment of women teachers, promotion of women in school management, gender diversity in selection and promotion boards, teacher training in textbook impact and non-sexist teaching methods, the problem of sexual abuse, etc. It is necessary not only to combat discrimination but also to encourage the promotion of women.
- ✓ Equality relates to representations, practices and speech.
- ✓ National and international standard-setting instruments must be circulated.

#### Implementation

- ✓ Gender equality will therefore form part of curricula and syllabuses whatever the subject. It must be reflected clearly and concretely in subject content and in the introduction of new subjects (such as education for citizenship) as well as in modules addressing the topics of gender equality, discrimination, violence in school, etc. The themes of gendered representation, bias and “positive discrimination” in language must be tackled. Examples of gender-neutral teaching activities should be developed and disseminated by subject. In the same way, activities can strengthen girls' self-confidence and help them combat discrimination and abuse. Teaching methods and professional practices – including teacher/pupil interactions – that often discriminate against girls should be questioned, together with relations between pupils.
- ✓ Criteria can be used to select, validate, approve or simply give a seal of approval to egalitarian textbooks. These criteria can serve as an integral part of the criteria for the quality of textbooks.
- ✓ An interdisciplinary booklet can be produced on gender and equality and their impact on education, with examples of activities and a special section devoted to each subject. It can be included with teacher's manuals or in the official bulletin of the Ministry of Education, posted online on an official website.
- ✓ Gender training is useful at all levels of management for curriculum and textbook specialists.
- ✓ Gender equality must be an integral part of teacher training. The following fields may be addressed: the role and interpretation of textbooks in terms of gendered representations; teacher/pupil interaction; pupil/pupil relations; language; subject content; specific modules; etc.



## Evaluation

- ✓ In-house or outside research on curricula and textbooks can be commissioned to review the issue.
- ✓ Provisions must be made for textbook trials and evaluation.
- ✓ Teachers and pupils can be polled on their awareness.

## Resources

To ensure inclusion of gender equality as a value, UNESCO recommends that advantage be taken of opportunities for change concerning, among other things, teaching methods and curricula. Thus the issuing of new textbooks can offer an opportunity to address the question of equality, textbook content and interaction.

The recognition of new values must be covered by publicity and/or training: posters, broadcasts, study days, etc.



### Taking advantage of opportunities for change

“Whenever there is an opportunity for innovation or reform, whether through the complete overhaul of a country’s education system or the reconstruction of a new one, UNESCO will support the development of quality textbooks and learning materials to help implement the new curriculum in optimal ways. In countries emerging from conflict, there is a unique opportunity to encourage the integration of peace and human rights education as well as the concepts of sustainable development into both the design and content of the materials in virtually every subject area at every level [...] Where such opportunities exist, UNESCO will work closely with its partners to assist in the continued development and adaptation of curricula, textbooks and learning materials that are instrumental in the long-term effort to bring about peaceful, prosperous and equitable societies.”

*A comprehensive strategy for textbooks and learning materials, UNESCO, (2005)*

## Senegal

### Multi-level staff training by the Human Resources Department of the Senegal Ministry of Education

Three areas must be addressed to make a curriculum gender-sensitive: syllabuses, learning materials and teaching practices. Since teachers occupy a central position in the education system, they are the target of this action, which comprises a training programme and a handbook designed to help them to manage teaching situations and school projects involving gender issues.

#### Gender-awareness training goals

- analyse the overall direction of the education system: policy and curriculum;
- analyse textbooks and learning materials;
- design and implement methods of evaluation and teaching how to learn;
- manage sexual maturation and abuse at school;
- organize classes and schools in terms of teaching, equipment and administration;
- mobilize the community round schools committed to a gender-neutral or egalitarian approach.

#### Strategy

- Training of trainers;
- Establishment of a training team;
- Training of textbook editors;
- Teacher training;
- Broad dissemination of a handbook available on the Ministry's website.

#### Handbook content

- Teacher's oath: to raise awareness of the need to adopt attitudes conducive to promoting equality as a value;
- Definition of gender;
- Official information and guidance on gender awareness in African education systems;
- Tools for curriculum analysis;
- Teacher-training frame of reference: skills development should result in schools like the FAWE centres of excellence, which include the gender aspect in the way they are run.

Contact: Human Resources Department, Ministry of Education, Dakar





## Publishing cluster

### Editorial principles

- ✓ The principle of equality may be included in publishing charters.

### Implementation

- ✓ A charter should be circulated mainly in-house, especially to the creative team, reading committees and proofreading committees. It may also be worth publicizing selected editorial principles among the general public, users and officials.
- ✓ Principles or specifications for textbook development must be defined.
- ✓ Benchmarks must be developed for analysing existing textbooks or those in preparation.
- ✓ The design and creative teams (including book designers who can alter layouts), the rereading and proofreading teams and the evaluation and piloting teams must be trained to use these tools and even be involved in their design.
- ✓ Gender diversity in teams must be encouraged.
- ✓ As the teacher's handbook is a valuable source of information, an effective way of raising awareness would be to include a module on gender in all teachers' handbooks, whatever the subject, with a specific section for each subject as well as a section common to all subjects (gender equality, gendered representations in text and illustrations, teacher/pupil and pupil/pupil interactions, and the question of language). It could contain examples of gender-neutral teaching activities.
- ✓ Promotion of textbooks can focus on the values they convey and on raising awareness of equality.
- ✓ Textbook pilots and trials must include the gender aspect, which must be reinforced and monitored in teacher/pupil and pupil/pupil interactions.

## Democratic Republic of the Congo

### **Establishment of an interdisciplinary team of gender-awareness trainers – Ministry of Education, with participation of Congo publishing houses and support from UNESCO and the RIRRS.**

#### **Goals**

To set up a permanent interdisciplinary team on gender after a national team has been trained by the Ministry and UNESCO (Ministry officials, curriculum managers, textbook managers, publishing houses, and teacher trainers).

#### **Activities**

- Study of approved textbooks on the market and production of a qualitative report by a committee of some 20 resource persons, managed by the national team and including all the country's publishing houses as well as Ministry officials involved with textbooks and curricula.
- Quantitative analysis of Congolese publishers' French-language textbooks by the RIRRS.
- A three-day training course for trainers, run jointly by the national team and the RIRRS, on gender-sensitive approaches in the development of teaching content. This training has been extended to other ministries as well as to parents' associations, teachers' unions and representatives of NGOs.

Contact: Mr Josué Tschiani Mukendi, National Team Coordinator, Ministry of Education, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo / UNESCO Office in Kinshasa

## **Utilization cluster**

This third cluster contains two categories: school and community. It covers not only direct users – namely pupils, teachers and unions, the school management and school boards – but also indirect users on the fringes of the school, such as parents and parents' associations, families, communities, NGOs, sponsors, etc.

This cluster is subject to considerable influence by the other two clusters, since its actors use textbooks as finished products. However, their experience of textbooks need not just be passive; it can also be assimilatory through critical reading and can influence various actors within the cluster itself. Moreover, if organized, the actors can influence the other clusters to revise textbooks.

### **Role of actors in the school**

- ✓ Self-educating on the issue of gender equality at school and in society.
- ✓ Self-educating on the role of textbooks in gender equality.
- ✓ Self-training in order to read and use textbooks critically: learning to deconstruct stereotypes and gendered representations and create simple analysis tools.
- ✓ Monitoring textbooks individually and collectively by adapting simple analytical tools (see Part 2) and by making use of the academic community.
- ✓ Self-training to spot discriminatory professional practices in interactions with pupils, guidance on courses, etc.
- ✓ Making equality part of teaching, using textbooks, whatever the subject; pupils can be assessed on this topic.



- ✓ Building community awareness on gender equality by holding school discussions based on new textbooks, curriculum changes, etc. (see “Education policy cluster”: “Taking advantage of opportunities for change”).
- ✓ Participating in or organizing book-related activities and events, such as fairs, readings, reading clubs, or drawing and essay competitions at local, regional and national levels.
- ✓ Conducting research projects jointly with the academic community.
- ✓ Involving women academics and women in positions of authority (professional, social or political) to promote various female role models.
- ✓ Appointing intermediaries to transmit ideas, opinions and recommendations to higher levels.

### Role of the community

- ✓ Convincing teachers of the textbook’s impact on pupils and the impact of teacher/pupil interactions and pupil/pupil relations.
- ✓ Participating in or organizing book-related activities and events, such as book fairs, readings, reading clubs, or drawing and essay competitions at local, regional and national levels.
- ✓ Using the media to publicize innovative trials.
- ✓ Appointing intermediaries to transmit ideas, opinions and recommendations to higher levels.

## Togo

### **Training of educational advisers and inspectors, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the Demographic Research Unit of the University of Lomé, in cooperation with UNESCO and the RIRRS (training seminar, Lomé, Togo, December 2006)**

#### **Goal**

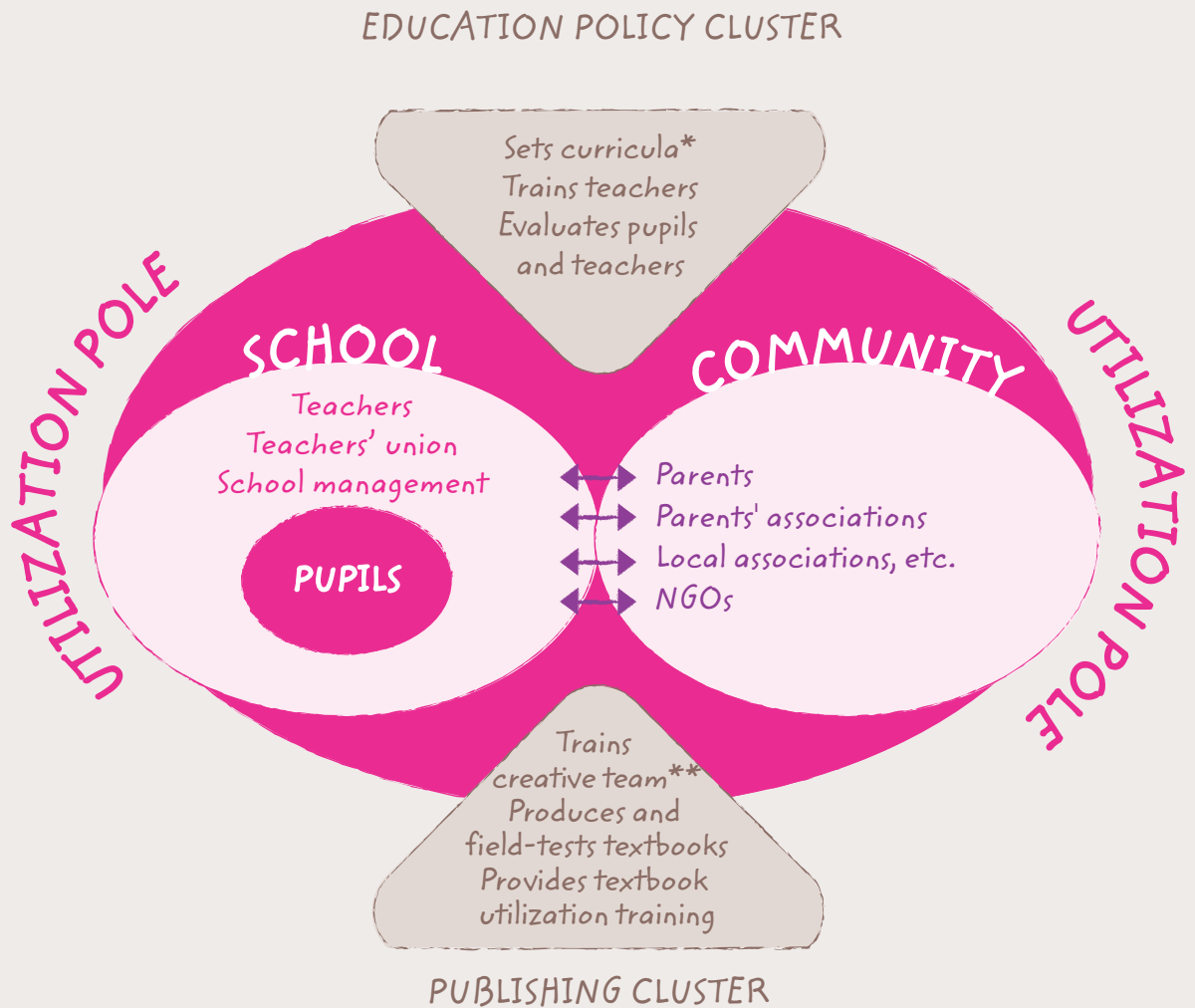
Training and awareness raising for managers of the teaching profession (inspection and training) with regard to gendered representations in textbooks, and debate on professional practices. The seminar was attended by almost half of the educational advisers and inspectors in Togo. Who serve as intermediaries between teachers and Education Ministry officials. During their in-service meetings, they can in turn raise the awareness of teaching staff and management in their areas. In addition, they are consulted on textbook design and can therefore revise textbooks or give reasons to the line authorities to justify such revisions.

#### **Seminar content**

- Dissemination of research findings on primary-school mathematics textbooks in Togo;
- Recognition of gender inequality in textbooks and teacher/pupil interaction;
- Exchange of experience with Guinea, Senegal and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The seminar’s impact is to be evaluated with a view to answering the following questions: How have the new curricula been amended? Has the inspectorate included the question of equality in its assessment criteria? Have awareness-raising meetings with teaching staff been held? What new practices have been observed?

Contact: Demographic Research Unit, University of Lomé



\* this pole may issue invitations to tender and may monitor textbooks

\*\* authors, illustrators and book designers



## Cameroon

### An example of multipolar action with a leverage effect

A Cameroon project currently in progress was initiated by an association of home economics teachers in institutional partnership with the Ministry of Secondary Education and in technical and financial partnership with the Gender and Development Fund of the Canadian Cooperation Support Office. The project is based on the observation that the home economics taught in Cameroon tends to trap girls in discriminatory social arrangements instead of teaching them technical and interpersonal skills to promote social equity and partnership between men and women. Home economics, taught by women, is directed almost exclusively at girls and, in fact, confines women professionals in damaging gender roles.

This project, aims to include gender in the teaching of home economics and reassert the value of the home economics profession, in particular, through capacity-building and empowerment of women professionals. It has two interesting features:

- it is based on a partnership between two clusters: the education policy cluster and the utilization cluster;
- it shows how textbooks can have an impact on different spheres of life.

The Cameroon project thus consists of:

- incorporating the gender aspect in textbooks through an analysis grid and a simple guide to writing gender-neutral textbooks;
- critically examining subjects designed for women only (female teachers and learners), which perpetuate gender roles that belittle women and consequently lower their status, keeping them in the private sphere tied to social reproduction activities involving family and household;
- projecting a positive image of home economics through appropriate training and showing that these skills can lead to income-generating activities;
- discussing how to reform the subject through textbook content and opening it up to both sexes, altering professional practices.

Contact: Association des Conseillers en Economie Sociale et Familiale du Cameroun (Cameroon Association of Home Economics Advisers), ACESF-CA: [acesfca@hotmail.com](mailto:acesfca@hotmail.com). Website: [www.wagne.net/acesfca](http://www.wagne.net/acesfca)

*These various projects show that it is necessary not only to disseminate academic research but also to encourage actors in the book chain to reflect on the issue of equality in their everyday professional practices and to develop tools. These projects have created genuine awareness of gender inequality in textbooks and have highlighted the fact that attitudes and practices can be changed, even before a textbook is revised.*



## IV. PREPARING ACTION TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

When planning to use textbooks as leverage to mainstream gender equality as a value, the approach offered here has the merit of avoiding “shock tactics”, which may be dramatic, but are likely to be short-lived and lack follow-up. It requires action to be thought out realistically, in the medium and long terms, and precise deadlines to be set. This said, a project can change, be expanded, extended, and so on.

This approach is based on a survey of resources and obstacles, followed by an analysis. Suggestions and guidelines for action are then formulated with operational objectives to provide a course of action. Quantitative and qualitative assessment criteria are adopted from the outset.

Partnership and teamwork are crucial. In this respect, it is important to work in a multidisciplinary team to have different viewpoints and seek partnerships, not only to have resources, but also to encourage other actors to adopt change. Action taken will thus have a multiplier effect.

The approach presented below is divided into stages, with questions and/or tables for each stage. These questions and tables should therefore be regarded as aids for reflection and the practical development of action. Depending on the context, the project’s progress and the actors involved, this approach may be simplified or used to create different tools. A comprehensive programme of activities can thus be submitted to partners and funding bodies.

Concrete examples of how these tools are used can be found in the project implemented since 2004 by *l’Unité de Recherche Démographique (URD)* [Demography Research Department] of the *Université de Lomé* (Togo); it is annexed hereto.

### **Preliminary stage: Compiling a bibliography**

This bibliographical work has the following goals in view.

1. Compiling a bibliography on textbooks, both general and country-specific: assembling national and international provisions and legislation on gender equality in education and Education for All; assembling publications (articles, books, etc.) on textbooks and the gender issue.
2. Producing an inventory of existing projects in the country, or even region, in the field of textbooks.
3. Identifying, in outline, the links of the textbook chain in the country concerned.



## **Stage 1: Conducting a survey of the textbook chain to determine guidelines for action**

The survey stage is essential for drawing up an analysis and choosing guidelines for action: the project's feasibility and design therefore depend on this stage, which will also determine your own position in the chain as well as your resources and obstacles to overcome.

### **1. What is the textbook chain and what are its ramifications ?**

You must identify the dynamic ramifications of the textbook chain that you are trying to outline. Several diagrams may be needed to reflect the complexity of the process.

Tools: Taking the diagram of clusters and spheres of influence, together with the list of actors for each cluster, it is possible to plot the actors, their roles and their resources using the table below (table 1, stage 1)..

### **2. What is your position in this chain? What are your resources? Your weaknesses ?**

Clearly identifying your position indicates the origin of the project and enables you to take stock of the resources that can be mobilized. The latter can be financial, human and partnership resources.

### **3. In light of your position, which sector and actors will you choose to target ?**

In relation to your position, you must identify the sectors, upstream and downstream, on which you can act and the actors that you wish to influence.

### **4. What guidelines for action should you choose ?**

This survey should result in the choice of a maximum of four guidelines (table 2, stage 1).

Table 1: Stage 1. Roles, actors and their resources in the field of textbooks

COUNTRY:			
	For textbooks, WHO?	Actors: private or public, official bodies, NGOs, associations, unions, individuals, etc. Specify to which cluster they belong	HOW? Resources
ROLES	decides to commission them		
	advises on their content		
	decides on their content		
	appoints the designers		
	writes them		
	illustrates them		
	lays them out		
	evaluates them		
	pilots them		
	selects them		
	approves them		
	chooses them		
	uses them or has others use them		
studies/analyses them			
Comments:			



To complete this table it is important to identify actors clearly, since they may play the same role at different times. Information must be as detailed as possible. For example, do not simply enter “Ministry of Education” but identify the department(s): National Curriculum Board, Special Committee on Textbooks, inspectorates, expert committees by subject, assessment centre, etc.

Table 2, showing action guidelines, is based on one or more outlines of the textbook chain, listing actors by role and mode of action and indicating the choices made.

Table 2: Stage 1. Action Guidelines

Origin:	Cluster:	Sector:
Resources (financial, human, partnership):		
Weaknesses or obstacles:		
Actors to target:	Guidelines chosen (maximum of four):	
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	
Comments:		





## Stage 2: Setting operational objectives

Once the first stage has been completed, it is necessary to focus on the actual project design by setting operational objectives. These will be targets for action that are sufficiently clear, concrete and realistic to yield practical activities in Stage 3.

### 1. In terms of the actors and their respective areas of activity, what operational objectives should you be setting ?

Objectives must be limited in number (maximum of five).

### 2. What assessment indicators should you lay down for yourself and how can you assess achievement of objectives ?

Indicators must be determined in relation to the objectives. They may be quantitative or qualitative.

Stage 2 will result in a summary table of operational objectives for each of the guidelines, as shown below (Table 3, stage 2).

**Table 3: Stage 2. Summary table of operational objectives by guideline**

Guideline 1 (description):	
Operational objectives (5 maximum), specifying actors concerned and their areas of activity	Assessment methods and indicators
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	



There will be as many summary tables as there are guidelines (maximum of four).

## Stage 3: Preparing a programme of action

This consists of preparing as precise a programme of action as possible for each of the operational objectives selected by identifying: the target audience, resources (human, financial, partnership, etc.), anticipated outcomes and related indicators.

Every project must be based on realistic and achievable targets only. Consequently, the actors concerned, the objectives and the activities must remain limited. It is important to set deadlines.

This last stage will result in a summary table of the programmes of action for each operational objective, as shown below (Table 4, stage 3).

**Table 4: Stage 3: Summary table of programmes of action per operational objective**

<b>Guideline 1 (description):</b>					
<b>Operational Objective No (description):</b>					
<b>Actors concerned</b>	<b>Plan of action</b>	<b>Resources</b>	<b>Anticipated outcomes</b>	<b>Assessment criteria</b>	<b>Needs</b>
<b>Deadlines:</b>					



For each guideline it is necessary to draw up as many tables as there are operational objectives, with a maximum of five objectives per guideline.

**O**n account of their implications, textbooks extend beyond the immediate confines of the school. In addition to their educational use, they may also be employed in a social context to promote gender equality.

It is thus necessary to take account of a textbook's environment and to involve all the actors who contribute to textbooks, from design to use. Through their action and interaction, they constitute three interactive clusters: the initiating policy cluster, the implementing publishing cluster and the using school cluster.

The examples of planned or current projects show that it is not simply a matter of analysing and revising textbook content. For a textbook to provide leverage for change, action must be defined and taken with and for the various actors. Owing to their interaction and overlapping roles, these actors may then produce textbooks or use textbooks critically, resulting in an increased impact on society.



## FURTHER REFERENCE... Strategies for textbooks

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## Notes

- 1 For information on past developments regarding these chains, see Jean-Pierre Léguéré (2003), *Approvisionnement en livres scolaires: vers plus de transparence*. Afrique francophone. IIEP. Only a summary on the present situation is provided here.
- 2 Some of these examples come from the workshops of the regional seminars in Cameroon in November 2005, in Togo in December 2006, and in Democratic Republic of the Congo in July 2007.

# General Conclusion

Printed textbooks – which are still of paramount importance today as the education system’s basic framework of learning and as symbolic reflections of their societies – tend unwittingly and unintentionally to embody a substratum of patriarchal cultures that are discriminatory against girls and women despite all the efforts made in the last few decades. This is because gender equality – like human rights – is a recent value for humanity as a whole and upsets cultures based on dominance. However, no one disputes the need to ensure that socialization aids are consistent with universal human rights principles in order to meet a collective ideal of sustainable development and peace.

Based on the findings of scientific research conducted in a number of African countries and on exchanges between academics and education practitioners at regional seminars, this guide aims to explore the textbook’s possibilities as a vehicle for gender equality in order to meet EFA goals in a gender-sensitive way.

Part 1 drew attention to the key role of textbooks as a tool for education, central to good-quality education policy, and as a tool for social change, having an impact on the school community and even the community as a whole through their content and wide distribution.

Part 2 showed gendered representations in textbooks from a number of countries, using a quantitative approach based on the concepts of gender and social representation, which revealed how masculine and feminine roles were constructed. On the basis of this deconstruction, tools for analysing and monitoring content were introduced.

In Part 3, the overall textbook environment was considered, extending beyond the publishing context and circle of use. Numerous actors influence textbooks from the design stage to their development and use. The examples of projects that have been implemented show that, because of stakeholder interaction and overlapping roles, they can have an increased impact on society by changing attitudes and practices in order to incorporate gender equality.

While revising textbooks to convey different gendered representations, and therefore different norms and values, is eminently desirable, textbooks cannot be changed overnight. Nor can there be any question of “getting rid of” humanity’s cultural heritage – tales, fables, works of literature and other creative works – from eras when the right to gender equality was not appreciated. However, inherited textbooks and cultural works may be interpreted from a gender perspective and be recast in a light to encourage and develop a critical mind.

The examples of projects carried out by the various countries show that it is possible to create awareness of inequality and a desire to take action on individual and collective levels, both personally and professionally.

More generally, there are three grounds for optimism. A sharper look at gender sooner or later entails a change in representations and professional practices on the part of those who commission, produce, issue and use textbooks for children and adults. As individuals’ spheres of life are mutually dependent, professional practices, views and principles displayed in public life have an influence on private life, and vice versa. It may therefore be assumed that the act of changing representations in the public sphere will de facto lead to questions being raised in the private sphere. Professionals in the fields of education and culture who have been trained in gender awareness are also parents who feel strongly about bringing up children and working for tomorrow’s society.

Textbooks, taken as a whole, are therefore practical and powerful tools for introducing a process of social change which can help the individual find fulfilment according to his or her potentials and his or her desires rather than according to the attributes of his or her sex and its associated gender.

## ANNEX 1 Resources, conventions and declarations

### Resource websites and publications

- UNESCO: [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org) (see also UNESDOC and UNESBIB)
- International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP): [www.unesco.org/iiep](http://www.unesco.org/iiep)
- International Bureau of Education (IBE): [www.ibe.unesco.org](http://www.ibe.unesco.org)
- Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA): [www.adeanet.org](http://www.adeanet.org)
- Georg Eckert Institute – Institute for International Textbook Research (GEI): [www.gei.de](http://www.gei.de)
- International Association for Research on Textbooks and Educational Media (IARTEM): [www.iartem.no/index.htm](http://www.iartem.no/index.htm)
- International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (CIEFFA): [www.cieffa.org](http://www.cieffa.org)
- Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE): [www.fawe.org](http://www.fawe.org)
- *Gender and education for all: the leap to equality; EFA global monitoring report*, UNESCO, 2003/4: [www.efareport.unesco.org](http://www.efareport.unesco.org)
- *Plan of Action for the first phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education*, UNESCO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2005: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001478/147853e.pdf>
- *A comprehensive strategy for textbooks and learning materials*, UNESCO, 2005: [www.unesco.org/education/en/textbook](http://www.unesco.org/education/en/textbook)

### International conventions and declarations

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948
- Convention against Discrimination in Education, Paris, 1960
- United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979
- International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1989
- World Declaration on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand, 1990
- Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy, UNESCO, 1995
- Declaration and Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 1995
- Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments, adopted by the World Education Forum (Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000), UNESCO, 2000
- Millennium Declaration, 2000

## **ANNEX 2 Presentation of the International Network for Research into Gendered Representations in Textbooks (Réseau international de recherche sur les représentations sexuées dans les manuels scolaires – RIRRS)**

After the Fourth African Population Conference held in Tunis in December 2003 by the Union for African Population Studies (UAPS), an international network for research into gendered representations in textbooks (Réseau international de recherche sur les représentations sexuées dans les manuels scolaires, RIRRS) was established in the form of a partnership between French and African research institutions: in Africa, the Demographic Research and Training Institute (IFORD) in Cameroon, the National School of Statistics and Applied Economics (ENSEA) in Côte d'Ivoire, the Demographic Research Unit (URD) of the University of Lomé in Togo, and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Tunis in Tunisia; in France, the National Institute of Demographic Studies (INED) and the French Centre for Population and Development (CEPED) in Paris, the Centre for Research on Population and Societies (CERPOS) of the University of Paris X-Nanterre, and the University of Lille 2.

It is the network's intention, to change our understanding of textbooks through the application of a common quantitative method and to propose that textbook revision be based on its findings to ensure that equal gender relations are portrayed. In point of fact, the quantitative findings allow textbook design teams and teacher training institutes in the countries concerned to identify bias more effectively in the representation of gendered roles and identities, with a view to promoting girls' education.

The network is supported financially by the French Centre for Population and Development (Ceped), the National Institute of Demographic Studies (INED) and the Union for African Population Studies (UAPS). It has also received support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) through its offices in Abidjan and Yaoundé and from the Demographic Research Unit (URD) in Lomé.

UNESCO has been involved in the network's research since 2005 with the aim of broadening its impact beyond academic and research circles through training and awareness-raising aimed at Education Ministry officials and policy-makers. It is also the organization's intention to strengthen cooperation between Member States.

The RIRRS has carried out the following activities:

- scientific studies of mathematics textbooks in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Togo and Tunisia. A collection of papers is being prepared for publication;
- a methodological guide by C. Brugeilles and S. Cromer, *Analyser les représentations du masculin et du féminin dans les manuels scolaires*, Les Clefs Pour series, Ceped, 2005;
- awareness-raising and training, especially through regional seminars held under the auspices of UNESCO: Cameroon, November 2005; Togo, December 2006; Democratic Republic of the Congo, July 2007; Dakar, December 2007.

Ressources:

- [http://www.cepel.org/cdrom/manuels\\_scolaires](http://www.cepel.org/cdrom/manuels_scolaires)
- *Analyser les représentations sexuées dans les manuels scolaires*, Paris 2008.  
*Analysing gender representations in school text books*. Paris (2009). Ceped Editions.

## ANNEX 3 World Programme for Human Rights Education

In 2004 the United Nations Commission on Human Rights recommended the proclamation of a World Programme for Human Rights Education to take stock of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). On 10 December 2004, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the World Programme for Human Rights Education. The Programme provides a collective framework for action based on the human rights principles laid down by the international community. Its objectives are to support existing initiatives, on the basis of successful practices during the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, and to provide an incentive to continue and/or expand these practices and develop new ones, together with partnerships and cooperation at all levels.

The World Programme defines human rights education as “education, training and information aiming at building a universal culture of human rights”. Human rights education activities should convey fundamental human rights principles such as equality and non-discrimination. At the same time, activities should be practical – relating human rights to learners’ real-life experiences and enabling them to build on human rights principles found within their own cultural context. This initiative emphasizes promotion of gender equality as a key element of human rights education. By promoting respect for human dignity and equality and participation in democratic decision-making, human rights education contributes to the long-term prevention of abuses and violent conflicts.

The Plan of Action for the first phase (2005-2007) of the World Programme was adopted by all United Nations Member States on 14 July 2005 and focuses on primary and secondary school systems. The first phase has been extended for two years (2008-2009) to allow key players to implement the Plan of Action. It highlights human rights education in the school system, which includes incorporating human rights principles in school curricula and textbooks as well as in education processes. Developed by a broad group of education and human rights practitioners brought together by UNESCO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Plan of Action proposes a concrete strategy and practical ideas for implementing human rights education nationally. The Plan provides: (a) a definition of human rights education in the school system based on internationally agreed principles; (b) a user-friendly guide to developing and/or improving human rights education in the school system, by proposing concrete actions for implementation at the national level; and (c) a flexible guide which can be adapted to different contexts and situations and to different types of education systems. Promoting a holistic, rights-based approach, the Plan has identified five key components for success: (a) educational policies; (b) policy implementation; (c) the learning environment; (d) teaching and learning; and (e) education and professional development of school personnel.

The Plan of Action recommends a sequence of coordination mechanisms from the national level (Ministries of Education) to the international level (the United Nations and other regional and international intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and financial institutions). An inter-agency coordinating committee (UNESCO, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNDP, ILO, UNAIDS, UNFPA, World Bank, UNHCR, UNDG, UNDPI and UNRWA) working with other partners, has been established to follow up the implementation of the Plan of Action, mobilize resources, support actions at country level and ensure United Nations system-wide support for the national implementation strategy.

## **ANNEX 4 Recommendations of the regional seminar in Douala, Cameroon on “Promoting gender equality in textbooks”, 15-18 November 2005**

- Having regard to the need to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieve gender equality in education by 2015 with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
- Having regard to the lack of information on the concept of gender;
- Having regard to the lack of social mobilization at national and international level regarding the importance of gendered representations in textbooks and the need to change communities’ attitudes to gender through textbooks;
- Having regard to the urgent need to take account of the gender dimension in textbooks;
- Having regard to the need to promote equal education of good quality for our children, both girls and boys, based on universally recognized general values;
- Having regard to the importance of partnership for development in general and for gender promotion in particular.

### **The Seminar recommends**

#### **I – That the Government**

- establish or strengthen “gender” bodies in all countries;
- take gender into account in the revision and preparation of education policy documents;
- make textbook selection and validation criteria available to authors and publishers;
- organize national awareness and social mobilization campaigns on gender, aimed at politicians, educators, authors, publishers, civil society and the international community.

#### **II – That agencies of the United Nations system (UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNDP, UNIFEM, etc.)**

Support governments:

- in establishing or strengthening African publishing houses;
- in publishing, disseminating and sharing the findings of research work on gender equality in textbooks.

#### **III – That all national and international communities**

- develop and strengthen partnerships at national, regional and international levels in order to achieve EFA and Millennium Development Goals, in particular for an in-depth and sustainable improvement in national policies on textbook design, development and publishing.



# ANNEX 5 Gender equality project of the Demographic Research Unit (URD) of the University of Lomé (Togo), begun in 2004

## Preliminary stage: Bibliography

- ➔ The bibliographical work was made easier by the fact that the URD has its own documentation centre and research assistants. Thus, when the URD joined the RIRRS for research into mathematics textbooks in May 2004, an inventory of works and studies for Togo was drawn up immediately.
- ➔ At the same time, the URD contacted the inspectorate of the Togo Ministry of Education in order to ascertain what measures had already been taken and to identify and understand the Togo book chain and its various stakeholders. An official meeting took place with four inspectors (also book designers) at the May 2004 methodology seminar in Lomé organized by the RIRRS.

## Stage 1: Appraisal of the textbook chain and action guidelines

- ➔ In Togo, it is the Ministry of Education that decides, with donor support, whether textbooks should be changed. A unit consisting of inspectors and educational advisers is then established to design the books (text and illustrations). However, production of the book is entrusted to a publisher/printer in the North, who organizes the writing, edits the work and prints it. The book is first distributed to State and faith schools and then placed on the market.
- ➔ As a university body, the URD began by analysing mathematics books published by Nathan, using the RIRRS quantitative method. It then decided to circulate its findings not only in the academic sphere but also to the Ministry of Education, especially to its inspectors (who also design and recommend textbooks) and to teachers.

## Stage 1: Action guidelines established by URD

<b>Origin:</b> URD, University <b>Cluster:</b> Publishing/Utilization <b>Sector:</b> Education Ministry Inspectorate	
<b>Resources:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- URD financial and human resources: statisticians, sociologists, research assistants</li> <li>- Partnership with RIRRS: INED; Ceped; universities: Paris X-Nanterre and Lille 2</li> <li>- Partnership with Inspectorate of Ministry of Education</li> </ul>	
<b>Weakness or obstacles:</b> Nothing to report	
<b>Actors to target</b>	<b>Guidelines chosen</b>
Inspectors who design textbooks and appraise teachers Trainers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ascertain the textbook situation in Togo (previous measures and bringing knowledge up to date)</li> <li>2. Publicize the survey.</li> </ol>
<b>Comments:</b> Nothing to report	

## Stage 2: Summary tables of operational objectives for Guidelines 1 and 2

Guideline 1: Ascertain the textbook situation in Togo	
Operational objective	Assessment methods and indicators
1) A scientific study of primary-school mathematics textbooks conducted by a URD mixed interdisciplinary team	Report to be produced in the year of study (2004)

Guideline 2: Publicize the survey	
Operational objectives	Assessment methods and indicators
1) Circulate the findings of the scientific study in the scientific community	Publications, conferences, within two years (2005-2006)
2) Train book designers/trainers	Launch of projects by fully trained trainees ("snowball effect") within two years (2006-2007)

## Stage 3: Summary tables of programmes of action by operational objective for each guideline

Guideline 1: Ascertain the textbook situation in Togo					
Operational Objective No. 1: Conduct a scientific study of primary-school mathematics textbooks					
Actors concerned	Plan of action	Resources	Anticipated outcomes	Assessment criteria	Needs
URD mixed interdisciplinary team	Quantitative study of textbooks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Choice of corpus</li> <li>- Data gathering</li> <li>- Data entry</li> <li>- Analysis</li> </ul>	URD in-house resources Partnership RIRRS Ministry of Education	Statistical findings Sociological analysis	Report within the year, with bibliography	Training in quantitative method
<b>Duration: One year (2004)</b>					

**Guideline 2: Publicize the survey****Operational Objective No. 1: Circulate the findings of the scientific study**

Actors concerned	Plan of action	Resources	Anticipated outcomes	Assessment criteria	Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International scientific community</li>   <li>• Ministry of Education, especially:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inspectors and educational advisers in their capacity as textbook designers</li> <li>- Inspectors and educational advisers in their capacity as appraisers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Scientific papers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lectures</li> <li>- Articles</li> </ul> <p>Setting-up of a mixed URD/ Ministry of Education team (Outreach lectures)</p>	<p>URD in-house resources</p> <p>Partnership</p> <p>RIRRS</p> <p>Partnership with Ministry of Education</p>	<p>Scientific recognition of study's validity</p> <p>Greater awareness in Ministry of Education</p>	<p>Requests for training and action</p>	<p>Financial support</p> <p>Joint action with RIRRS</p>

**Deadline: 2 years (2005 2006)****Guideline 2: Publicize the survey****Operational Objective No. 2: Train designers/trainers**

Actors concerned	Plan of action	Resources	Anticipated outcomes	Needs
<p>Ministry of Education, especially:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inspectors and educational advisers in their capacity as textbook designers</li> <li>- Inspectors and educational advisers in their capacity as appraisers</li> </ul>	<p>Awareness seminar</p> <p>Evaluation survey on follow-up</p> <p>Booklet popularizing main findings</p>	<p>URD in-house resources</p> <p>RIRRS partnership</p> <p>Partnership with Ministry of Education</p>	<p>Development of projects by trainees themselves (assimilation)</p> <p>Modification of professional practices</p>	<p>Financial support</p> <p>Joint action with RIRRS</p>

**Deadline: 2007**

# Acronymes

<b>ADEA</b>	<b>Association for the Development of Education in Africa</b>
<b>BREDA</b>	<b>Bureau régional pour l'éducation en Afrique (Regional Office for Education in Africa)</b>
<b>CEDA</b>	<b>Centre d'Édition et de Diffusion Africaines (Publishing and Distribution Centre for Africans Works)</b>
<b>CEDAW</b>	<b>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women</b>
<b>CEPED</b>	<b>Centre français sur la population et le développement (Population and Development Centre of France)</b>
<b>CIEFFA</b>	<b>Centre international pour l'éducation des filles et des femmes en Afrique (International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa)</b>
<b>CNP</b>	<b>Centre national pédagogique (National Education Centre, Tunis, Tunisia)</b>
<b>CONFEMEN</b>	<b>Conférence des Ministres de l'éducation ayant le français en partage (Conference of Ministers of Education in countries sharing the french language)</b>
<b>CRC</b>	<b>Convention on the Rights of the Child</b>
<b>DANIDA</b>	<b>Danish International Development Assistance</b>
<b>EFA</b>	<b>Education for All</b>
<b>ENSEA</b>	<b>Ecole nationale supérieure de statistique et d'économie appliquée (National School of Statistics and Applied Economics, Côte d'Ivoire)</b>
<b>ESF</b>	<b>Economie familiale et sociale (Social and home Economics)</b>
<b>FAWE</b>	<b>Forum for African Women Educationalists</b>
<b>GEI</b>	<b>Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research</b>
<b>GENIA</b>	<b>Gender in Education Network in Asia</b>
<b>IARTEM</b>	<b>International Association for Research on Textbooks and Educational Media</b>
<b>IBE</b>	<b>International Bureau of Education</b>
<b>ILO</b>	<b>International Labour Office</b>
<b>IIEP</b>	<b>International Institute for Educational Planning</b>
<b>IFORD</b>	<b>Institut de formation et de recherches démographiques (Demographic Research and Training Institute, Cameroon)</b>
<b>INED</b>	<b>Institut national d'études démographiques (National Institute for Demographic Studies)</b>
<b>NEI</b>	<b>Nouvelles Editions Ivoiriennes (New Ivorian Publications)</b>
<b>MDGs</b>	<b>Millennium Development Goals</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organization</b>
<b>OHCHR</b>	<b>Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</b>

<b>PASEC</b>	<b>Programme d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN (Programme of Analysis of Education Systems of CONFEMEN)</b>
<b>RIRRS</b>	<b>Réseau international de recherche sur les représentations sexuées dans les manuels scolaires (International Network for Research into Gendered Representations in Textbooks)</b>
<b>UAPS</b>	<b>Union for African Population Studies</b>
<b>UNAIDS</b>	<b>Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS</b>
<b>UNDP</b>	<b>United Nations Development Programme</b>
<b>UNESCO</b>	<b>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</b>
<b>UNFPA</b>	<b>United Nations Population Fund</b>
<b>UNICEF</b>	<b>United Nations Children's Fund</b>
<b>UNIFEM</b>	<b>United Nations Development Fund for Women</b>
<b>UNRWA</b>	<b>United Nations Relief and Works Agency</b>
<b>URD</b>	<b>Unité de recherche Démographique, Lomé, Togo (Demographic Research Unit)</b>
<b>UNHCR</b>	<b>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</b>
<b>UNDG</b>	<b>United Nations Development Group</b>
<b>UNDPI</b>	<b>United Nations Development of Public Information</b>



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