



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
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Sustainable
Development
Goals

Bangkok Office
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for Education



Gender and the National Education Sector Plan: Analysis



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Table of Contents

Objectives	1
Key information	1
Setting the scene	1
Gender-responsive NESPs	2
Self-study and/or group activity: Analyse your country's NESP	3
Box 1: Gender and stakeholder analysis examples from the Asia-Pacific region.....	4
Further reading	6
Handout 1: Stakeholder mapping – National Education Sector Plan	7
References	8



Objectives

The objectives of this tool are to:

- raise awareness about the importance of having clearly defined national education policy regarding gender equality;
- introduce gender analysis in the context of education policy;
- identify key issues within policy for gender equality;
- help trainees think about education policy-making for gender equality in their own context.

Key information



Setting the scene

The National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) is a tool to guide the sector's development over a time-bound period, usually 3–5 years. The NESP presents government priorities, targets, policies and strategies for implementation.

It is a powerful tool for designing strategic interventions, coordinating partners, and for mobilizing additional resources, both domestic and external. NESPs are very effective means for attracting investors and so need to be credible to investors, sustainable and worthy of investment.

The essential features of a NESP have been defined by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and UNESCO IIEP (2015).¹ In summary, these are:

- **Guided by an overall vision:** The mission statement indicates overall direction, the government's policy, the approach to be taken and the principles and values that will guide it.
- **Strategic:** Based on sound analysis of the context, the NESP sets priorities and identifies the resources and capacities required for achieving the objectives and vision.
- **Holistic:** The NESP covers all subsectors of education in a lifelong learning approach (early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary education, non-formal education, etc.). It recognizes the need for coherence among subsectors.
- **Evidence-based:** The NESP starts from an education sector analysis that provides data and assessments that form the information base on which strategies and programmes are based. These analyses are often carried out in partnership with stakeholders working across the sector (government, donors, INGOs, civil society groups).
- **Achievable:** The NESP is based on an analysis of current trends and projections for overcoming the barriers to effective implementation.
- **Sensitive to context:** It includes an analysis of the risks and vulnerabilities that may affect implementation. The identified risks are mitigated in the NESP.
- **Inclusive and pays attention to disparities:** A credible NESP must identify and attend to gender considerations, disparities and inequality across the plan, including where gender disparities intersect with other sources of marginalization and address the specific needs of different groups. (See also [Tool 3](#).)

¹ Global Partnership for Education and UNESCO IIEP. 2015. *Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Preparation*. Paris: UNESCO IIEP.

Gender-responsive NESP

The NESP preparation process

The NESP preparation process has four main characteristics (Global Partnership for Education and UNESCO IIEP, 2015):

1. **Country-led process:** The NESP is a national policy instrument and as such is the responsibility of the national government.
2. **Participatory process:** The process should be designed to involve education sector stakeholders, including various levels of the education system, selected ministries, civil society and international partners. Participation should involve structured discussions based around drafts of the NESP document. In many countries these processes are coordinated by the Local Education Group (LEG).
3. **Well-organized process:** A well-organized process will enable the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. This requires effective coordination in the form of a steering committee, a planning committee and working groups to focus on specific subsectors or themes.
4. **Capacity-development process:** Capacity building at all levels needs to be addressed. The NESP preparation is a form of capacity building and the process is arguably as important as the product.

Education sector analysis

GPE and UNESCO IIEP (2015) guidance on NESP preparation recommends that work begins with a focus on sector analysis. The core components of this are:

- **Context analysis:** This includes the macroeconomic context, the demographic context, the sociocultural context, the political context and a risk/vulnerability analysis.
- **Analysis of existing policies:** This includes policies on national development, international commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (see [Tool 4](#)), education policies and implementation of policies.
- **Cost and finance analysis:** This includes the national budget for education and its distribution by subsector/level, trends in expenditure, share of expenditure by stakeholders, and average spending per student by level.
- **Education system performance:** This involves analysis of statistical data demonstrating performance against key benchmarks such as access, equity, efficiency (internal and external) and quality.
- **System capacity analysis:** This includes key organizational aspects of education system delivery at all levels. It also involves analysis of all stakeholders relevant to the performance of the education sector (stakeholder analysis).



Self-study and/or group activity

Analyse your country's NESP

- Find a copy of the NESP for your country. NESPs are often available online or through the ministry of education.
- Read it carefully and think about the following questions. If you are working in groups you may want to give each group 2–4 questions each:
 1. What is the overall vision of the NESP?
 2. What are the priorities identified by the Plan?
 3. Do the priorities include a focus on improving equity and inclusion?
 4. Does the plan address gender? If so, how?
 5. Does it cover all subsectors of education, including TVET and adult/continuing education?
 6. Does it cover all channels of education, such as non-formal education?
 7. What evidence has been used in the analysis which has helped to formulate the plan?
 8. What data is available on marginalized groups? Is this disaggregated by sex?
 9. What marginalizing factors are identified and are steps included to address these?
 10. Do you judge the plan to be achievable? Have there been any major changes in the country's circumstances that mean the plan might not now be achievable?
 11. Did the NESP identify any risks to the Plan's achievement? What mitigating actions were identified?

If working in groups, each group should present their answers and then have a plenary discussion.

Gender analysis must be part of any education sector analysis and planning. Gender issues cut across all of the analyses, and a mainstreaming approach can be taken (see **Tool 10**). However, to make sure that gender equality is given sufficient priority, it is recommended that a separate gender analysis be carried out to complement the other forms of education sector analysis.

The gender analysis should examine gender equality in terms of context, existing laws and

policies (see **Tools 5 and 6**), costs and finance, system performance and system capacity analysis. The stakeholder analysis should focus on the actors involved in promoting gender equality in society and in education. It is important to recognize that gender equality in education generally involves the participation of government ministries beyond the ministry of education, specifically those that are responsible for women, children, gender and human rights. Some examples for the Asia-Pacific region are given in **Box 1** below.



Box 1 Gender and stakeholder analysis examples from the Asia-Pacific region

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (Afghanistan)

This ministry was established in 2001. It takes the lead in women's rights and empowerment. The ministry provides direction, builds inter-ministerial collaboration and develops the capacity of government agencies to ensure that policy formulation, planning, implementation, reporting and monitoring equitably respond to the differential needs and situations of women and men.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (Cambodia)

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) and the Cambodia National Council for Women (CNCW) make up the national machinery for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The MoWA's 3rd Strategic Plan, Neary Rattanak III (2009–2013), focused on economic empowerment of women, gender equality in education, legal protections, public health issues (including HIV prevention and care) and women's political participation. The MoWA also prioritizes CEDAW implementation and mainstreaming gender equality into the general policy framework.

The Ministry of Women and Child Protection (Indonesia)

The vision of the ministry is to "achieve gender equality and child protection". The mission of the ministry is to encourage explicit gender-responsive policies and child care for improving the quality of life and the protection of women, and promote the fulfilment of the rights of the child and protection from violence.

The Ministry of Law and Gender (Maldives)

This ministry, established in 2014, oversees all government functions related to families, children, women, people with special needs, and human rights.

The Ministry of Women and Child Affairs (Sri Lanka)

This ministry was established with the goal of creating a Sri Lankan society that is sensitive to the needs of women and children and works for their betterment to achieve this goal.



Self-study and/or group activity

Step 1

- Working on your own or in groups, carry out a stakeholder analysis in your context. Map out the actors involved in promoting gender equality in society and in education in your country.
- You may wish to group them under the following categories:
 - government – ministries involved;
 - donors;
 - multilateral organizations;
 - international and national NGOs;
 - civil society groups, including teachers' unions/associations and parents' groups.

Step 2

- Think about or discuss the following questions:
 - What role, if any, did these stakeholders play in preparing the NESP?
 - What ongoing role do they play in monitoring the implementation of the NESP (e.g. are they active members of the Local Education Group or similar)?
- Take a piece of paper or flipchart and divide it into four sections (see [Handout 1](#)).
- Map the stakeholders onto the paper, identifying those with the most and the least power/influence and interest in the NESP implementation.

If you are working in small groups, compare your results with other groups.

- Think about or discuss:
 - Do different countries have different patterns of engagement with different stakeholders?
 - What impact might this have on gender equality in the education sector?

Look at [Tool 8](#) for the second part of this tool on gender and NESPs.



Further reading

Global Partnership for Education and UNGEI. 2015. *Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Appraisal*. Paris: UNESCO.

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Handout 1

Stakeholder mapping – National Education Sector Plan

Power/influence of stakeholders	Most power/influence		
	Least power/influence		
		Interest of stakeholders	
		Least interest	Most interest



References

Global Partnership for Education and UNESCO IIEP. 2015. *Guidelines for Education Sector Plan Preparation*. Paris: UNESCO IIEP.



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