Bridging AGEE

National report Summary 2024-2025: Kenya



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Acknowledgements:

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The Bridging Accountability for Gender Equality in Education (henceforth, 'Bridging AGEE') project is a three-year initiative (2024–2027) implemented in Indonesia, Kenya and Malawi by University College London (UCL) in partnership with UNESCO and the University of Malawi. ***Bridging AGEE*** **seeks to bridge the gaps between global, national, and local data processes on gender equality in and through education.** It aims to strengthen accountability for gender equality in and through education by improving how and what data are generated, shared, and used within and across these different levels. The project uses the AGEE Framework (gendereddata.org) and participatory process to identify data gaps, facilitate participatory reflection on needs and priorities, and build the capacity of government ministries, civil society, and women's rights groups through developing innovative dashboards, new measurement tools, and enhancing data flow and awareness between stakeholders[1].

This report highlights the key results, opportunities, and challenges from the first year of activities in Kenya (from March 2024 to March 2025), with a particular focus on the initial meetings of the National Advisory Committee (NAC) and the first national workshop, held in Nairobi on 24-25 February 2025.

1. Background

Kenya has nearly achieved gender parity in education at all levels, ensuring inclusive, quality education for all by 2030 in line with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 4. Legal and policy provisions including the Constitution of Kenya 2010, and the Basic Education Act 2013 outline the right to education for all children, both boys and girls. The *Bridging AGEE* project aims to build on existing Ministry of Education commitments to address gender equality in and through education. This includes aligning with ongoing national policy reviews and developments, contributing to new evidence generation and supporting the review of the national education information dashboard.

The establishment of the NAC, under the leadership of the UNESCO Field Office in Nairobi as the project lead in Kenya, unfolded over several months over through a stakeholder mapping exercise, partner identification, and engagement with the Ministry to formalize member selection. This process was developed from the existing coordination mechanism of the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge Innovation Exchange (GPE-KIX) Africa 19 Hub, in which Kenya is a participating country. The final and approved composition of the NAC includes 14 members: five from the Ministry of Education, six from NGOs, one from a research institution, and two from CSOs. The NAC comprises nine female members and five male members.

The project's methodology is based on participatory approaches. The NAC is primarily intended to guide the project's work in Kenya, including at subnational and local levels during its second year. Additionally, joining the NAC was recognized as a valuable opportunity for capacity building among gender and education stakeholders, aimed at strengthening their knowledge and skills in these areas related to data collection and analysis.

[1] The AGEE Framework was developed with funding from the UK ESRC between 2018-22, as part of the Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Research Programme (grant number 172694).

2. Building a community of practice

The first *Bridging AGEE* national workshop in Kenya also provided the opportunity to hold the inaugural NAC meeting. The event took place on 24–25 February, with the NAC meeting scheduled for the morning of the 24th.

The workshop was attended by a total of 21 participants, including members of the NAC. Several key sectors were represented: Ministry of Education (6), Research Institution (1), civil society (4), NGOs (4) and county and neighbourhood representatives (6). Among the participants, 43% (9) were female and 57% (12) were male.

Discussions highlighted that the Ministry has identified gender-related education data as a priority area for increased focus, particularly to address gaps in gender equality metrics. The AGEE framework was recognized as a strategic opportunity to generate gender-specific data within the education sector – especially given that the country's current reliance on general health and demographic data produced by Kenya National Bureau of statistics (KNBS). Such data will inform national agenda planning and support the evaluation of existing interventions. Participants also viewed the participatory approach as a practical means to translate policy into action, with the goal of aligning initiatives more closely with the diverse and evolving needs on the ground.

3. Reflecting on gender equality in and through education in Kenya

Participants acknowledged that gender parity alone does not equate to gender equality in education and emphasized that interventions should target both boys and girls. While enrolment data remains essential, discussions highlighted the importance of examining deeper systemic inequalities through the AGEE framework. For instance, the lack of drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities continues to hinder girls' attendance and participation, while broader psychosocial factors, such as mental health, further exacerbate educational exclusion. A summary of key reflections is provided in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Summary of reflections on gender equality in and through education in Kenya

Key ideas about gender equality in and through education	• Key challenges to achieve gender equality: poverty, the "triple threat" (rising teenage pregnancy, gender-based violence and HIV infections), and poor resourcing of education-related issues. • Promote boys' education alongside girls' initiatives: continue enhancing girls' access to education while ensuring fairness by providing equal educational opportunities for both boys and girls. • Foster consensus on gender concepts: definition, understanding and interpretation of gender within the education sector.
Values emphasized	• Cultural awareness, sensitivity, self-efficacy, inclusivity, protecting dignity of persons.

	• Societal expectations and power dynamics often inhibit progress, particularly in rural and conservative communities. • Need to challenge harmful gender norms and stereotypes, especially those affecting girls' safety, self-esteem, and career aspirations. • Acknowledgement of the critical role educators play in promoting gender equality. Their lived experiences and empathy are important in shaping education spaces.
Areas of practice to develop	• Emphasis on wide dissemination of existing policies and strategies: Basic Education Act, Free primary school education, Education sector Gender policy, transition policy, national school re-entry guidelines, and guidance and counselling policy. • Need to build on the gains made with respect to the attainment of 100% transition levels, and the school re-entry policy – which includes a special focus on marginalized persons and communities – to strengthen interventions and ensure attainment of gender parity in education and across the country. • Critical need for policy and implementation coherence: align strategies and responsibilities to avoid duplication or conflict. • Need for more actionable frameworks that can translate national-level commitments into local-level results.
Networks to be built	• Participants shared examples of intersectoral collaboration with the health sector to inform inclusive education frameworks, particularly to address adolescent health, menstruation and nutrition. • Leverage line ministry regulations – such as policies from ministries of gender, health and youth – to reinforce education sector efforts. • Challenges persist around limited coordination and implementation capacity, especially at the county levels.

After attending the first part of the participatory workshop and reflecting on these four key areas, participants expressed enthusiasm for developing grassroots feedback mechanisms, including participatory gender dashboards, to empower learners and teachers in shaping policy outcomes. Nonetheless, there was recognition of change fatigue and scepticism, particularly in contexts where previous initiatives had lacked sustained follow-through.

4. Building the AGEE national dashboard: data concerns and supporting good practice

During the discussions, participants noted that in addition to exploring the values surrounding gender equality in Kenya, it is equally important to examine whether additional competencies are needed to effectively analyse gender equality in education. This exploration will support a more integrated and systemic approach to designing interventions that respond to data needs within the education sector. Further discussed details have been included in **Table 2.**

Table 2: Summary of issues raised concerning data in Kenya

Suggested improvements in data collection building from the AGEE framework and process	**Data challenges to be addressed**	**Good practice to be developed**
Applying learnings from other countries and regions where gender-responsive education policies have been scaled through strong political will and data use.	Impact on the overall education system.	Cross-regional/continental sharing of best practices and learning (particularly from Asia), through the *AGEE* initiative (Indonesia, Malawi and South Africa), as well as the GPE-KIX mechanism and hubs.
Provide a platform to inform gender-transformative interventions and accountability.	Knowledge sharing on data and data sources to inform gender-sensitive interventions.	Leverage Kenya's education data systems, building on the example of KEMIS and innovative platforms like the Dat/Evidence APP.
Facilitate knowledge sharing across diverse ministry sectors such as education and health to enhance coordination and sustainability.	Fragmented nature of data strategies among ministry sectors leading to disjoined policymaking.	Participatory approach to knowledge exchange on data collection and use to strengthen education systems.

5. Focus on neighbourhood work

The national meeting also served to validate the selection of the 4 neighbourhoods identified for local research implementation, according to diverse criteria. This effort aims to localize the AGEE framework by narrowing its focus to sub-county and school levels. The objective is to better understand each county's perspectives and needs regarding gender equality in and through education, data collection and use, as well as good practices – supporting both horizontal (expansion to other counties) and vertical scalability (policy institutionalization). Insights from the local research will be shared with national stakeholders to help bridge the national and local.

The validated counties and their characteristics were:

- Kilifi: Presence of diverse partners and stakeholders in education, health and development. However, gender balance in education with more boys than girls completing secondary education despite notable parity in enrolment.
- Samburu: Cultural diversities and the direct impact to gender equality in and though education.

- Turkana: Socio-environmental and cultural factors impacting gender equality beyond parity in and through education with notable high enrollment of girls at early childhood level, and lower completion levels at basic and secondary levels.
- Wajir: Socio-cultural diversities impacting attainment of gender equality in and through education as gender parity noted in enrollment but not completion.

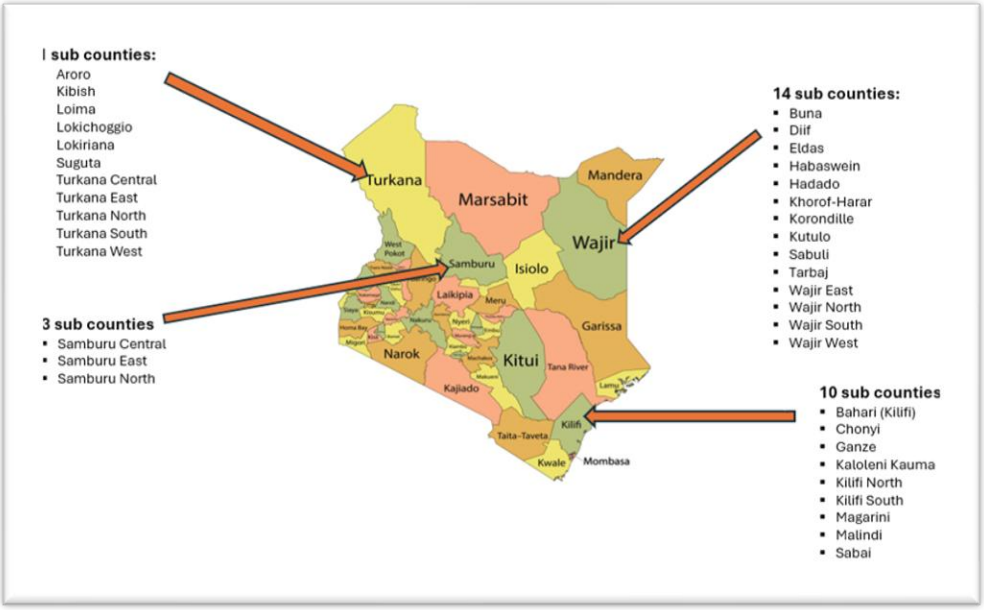


Figure 1: Map of Kenya's counties and areas selected for neighbourhood work through the *Bridging AGEE* project

The 4 county directors highlighted shared factors that hinder girls' participation in education. Gender disparities in access to education were noted in Wajir, Samburu and Turkana where girls are falling behind. In contrast, Kilifi shows a different trend, with more girls than boys accessing primary education.

Participants expressed strong expectations for the project to address disparities in county-level readiness and resource availability to ensure sustained impact. Prioritizing grassroots data collection in target counties was seen as essential to strengthening the national education system.

6. Conclusion and way forward

In Kenya, the project will build on the MoE's existing commitment to addressing gender equality in and through education by aligning the AGEE framework with ongoing national policy reviews and developments. This alignment will contribute to new evidence generation and inform the review of the national education information dashboard. Bridging national and local knowledge on gender and data will support national government in identifying and addressing policy implementation gaps more effectively.

Next steps will include collecting key national indicators to populate the AGEE dashboard, with validation from the government, and organizing neighbourhood workshops in 4 selected counties. Another critical

step will involve continued advocacy around the project's aim and initial findings targeting various levels such as the MoE's planning unit (closely working with NEMIS), Local Education Coordination Groups, and partners and stakeholders in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) – to foster a more critical and informed approach to data use, particularly in academic publications.

Continued progress reporting to the MoE and NAC was requested, reflecting engagement and increased interest in the project's impact in Kenya.