

## **Acknowledgements**

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## Foreword

Gender equality in education is about both girls and boys having equal entitlements to access education. It is about the processes in education facilitating the realisation to provide a range of equal opportunities to expand capacities of all children to the fullest. This in turn will contribute to the development of a just, responsible and compassionate society. Equality of opportunity refers to access to schooling, learning and other experiences within schools and to the wider opportunities that are available through education and schooling.

The present book, based on case studies of selected schools in seven Commonwealth countries: India, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Samoa, Seychelles, and Trinidad and Tobago, attempts to unpack issues of gender equality within schools. Gender analysis of classroom and other schooling processes is an under-researched area and this book makes a modest attempt to address this. Although all stages of schooling are important for the formation of gender-related ideas and norms, the secondary stage of education is important in that it targets an age group which is at a critical stage of identity formation and the development of decision-making skills. This is the stage that provides a link between childhood and adulthood, and so issues related to empowerment and relations can be addressed more effectively. The research explored in this publication focuses on gender analysis of schooling processes in secondary schools.

Of particular interest is that the book covers countries with diverse contexts and situations. For example India, Pakistan and Nigeria are struggling to achieve gender parity in school enrolment and completion figures, and in these countries girls continue to have lower participation rates than boys at all stages of education. Other countries such as Malaysia, Samoa, Seychelles, and Trinidad and Tobago have achieved near universal primary education with therefore almost complete gender parity at that level. However, these countries face gender disparity at secondary level, with boys often having lower rates of participation and tending to relatively under-perform. The research therefore set out to undertake gender analysis of school processes in this diversity of contexts in order to consider similarities and differences.

The case studies aim to provide interesting and useful insights into many issues related to classroom and other schooling processes. Schools considered in the study were found to be often reinforcing gender stereotypes, norms and attitudes. A pilot action project was designed as a follow up to the study in a small number of schools in four of the seven countries (India, Malaysia, Seychelles, and Trinidad and Tobago). Its objective was to develop school-based solutions to help make schooling processes more gender-responsive. The documented experiences from these pilot projects have also formed the basis for another publication: *The Gender-responsive School: An Action Guide*. This guide identifies a range of possible actions at various

levels that can help a school to become more gender responsive and as such have a positive impact on the learning, experiences and achievements of both girls and boys. The action guide can therefore be read alongside this publication, as this would combine a situational analysis with a discussion of potential action orientated responses.

Caroline Pontefract  
Director,  
Social Transformation Programmes Division.  
Commonwealth Secretariat