THEMATIC CASE STUDY

# Gender and Education

Studies of gender in the implementation of INOVASI's pilot programs to improve students learning outcomes

June 2020



INOVASI
Innovation for Indonesia's School Children
Australia Indonesia Partnership

KEMENTERIAN
PENDIDIKAN DAN KEBUDAYAAN

Australian Government

**Thematic Case Study**

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June 2020

# Table of Contents

# List of Figures

# List of Tables

# List of Acronyms, Abbreviations and Bahasa Indonesia Terms

| | |
|---|---|
| ACDP | Analytical and Capacity Development Partnership Indonesia |
| Bappenas | Ministry of National Development Planning |
| DFAT | Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade |
| GESI | gender equality and social inclusion |
| ICRW | International Center for Research on Women |
| INOVASI | Innovation for Indonesia's Schoolchildren |
| KKG | teachers' working group |
| MERL | monitoring, evaluation, research and learning |
| MoRA | Ministry of Religious Affairs |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PIRLS | Program in International Reading Literacy Study |
| PISA | Program for International Student Assessment |
| TASS | Technical Assistance for Education System Strengthening |

# 1 Executive Summary

This paper is both a look back and a look forward. At the juncture between INOVASI's first and second phases, we reflect on what INOVASI learned over 2016–2020 and look ahead to how phase two will approach **gender**. Our intended audience is internal, primarily INOVASI management and staff, and secondarily, our colleagues at Technical Assistance for Education System Strengthening (TASS) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Unlike the themes of continuing education, disability, literacy, numeracy and problem-driven iterative adaptation (PDIA) (the other thematic study topics), we did not focus on gender equality in phase one. Therefore, this paper is an opportunity to reflect and to look ahead, rather than to dive deep into 'what works' for gender equality.

INOVASI took a relatively light touch in its treatment of gender in the first phase for several reasons. However, phase two presents the opportunity for INOVASI to build on what we have learned and focus on two areas that we are uniquely positioned to consider from a gender perspective: educational leadership and character education. An energised contribution in phase two means that INOVASI will need to invest in new in-house skills and forge alliances with new partners in government and civil society.

In phase one we embedded gender in our wider gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) strategy. This strategy outlines our scope of work in the following areas: gender equality and empowerment; disability and social inclusion; and child protection. It advocates a twin-track approach for inclusion of both mainstreaming and targeting individuals and groups potentially at-risk. Key elements of this strategy included:

- Investing heavily in basic literacy for the many children who do not speak Bahasa Indonesian at home (multi-language pilots);
- Improving how teachers identify and teach children with disabilities;
- Piloting approaches in communities that have difficult educational contexts (for example, high absenteeism, low parent engagement, child labour);
- Identifying innovations that improve teaching and learning in schools in remote areas.

Although we included gender equality and women's empowerment in the strategy and to a certain degree we have put the gender mainstreaming track in place, our phase one program has not been targeting gender equality. We have nonetheless:

- Celebrated a modest reduction in the 'boys' achievement gap' in numeracy and literacy (in INOVASI pilot schools);
- Ensured that most of our data collection and analysis was sex-disaggregated (and also tracked other dimensions of disadvantage such as disability, mother tongue and socio-economic status);
- Screened all our pilot materials to ensure the final versions are 'inclusive' and gender-balanced;
- Periodically discussed with our team how a gender perspective is relevant in our own workplace (harassment), in operations (recruitment) and pilots (learning days).

In phase two, we intend to build on this experience and to deepen our work on gender equality with renewed commitment by taking action to:

- Involve a full-time gender specialist from the beginning of phase two (to ensure pilot designs and policy work take account of gender from the outset);

- Ensure that we include gender-focused activities and events in the workplan and dedicate a realistic budget to support these activities;
- Seek out allies in government and civil society who can help us make wise choices about how we engage on gender;
- Explore the feasibility of designing and delivering a gender-focused pilot (grant, short-course or other) in the second phase;
- Strengthen the school leadership pilot to both improve leadership and management skills for all principals, *and* promote women's empowerment;
- Consider the potential for 'character education' to provide opportunities for children to practise values of equality, respect and team working – these can and should include a gender dimension.

# 2 Background: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy in Phase One

INOVASI's gender equality and social inclusion strategy in the first phase treated gender as one element among a wider constellation of inclusion issues. INOVASI invested in three dimensions of social exclusion: multi-language communities, children with disabilities and socially disadvantaged communities. Phase one delivered pilots to address disability issues, multi-language situations, as well as the BERSAMA pilot to target communities with large out-of-school populations and multigrade pilots in particularly remote areas.

In the first phase, understanding and addressing gender issues was included in our brief but not as a top priority. INOVASI's baseline surveys provided the team with sex-disaggregated baseline assessments. As in many other parts of the world, INOVASI's maths and reading data showed that boys were behind girls in all four provinces. This was particularly marked for boys from disadvantaged backgrounds.

However, the team did not focus on the gender gap in learning outcomes and in retrospect, there were some reasons for this omission:

- INOVASI had other, more pressing inclusion issues to focus on (such as mother tongue transition and disability).
- The gender gap was noticeable but not dramatic. The gap between the percentage of girls and the percentage of boys who passed the basic literacy test was 11 points overall, ranging from 9 to 13 points across provinces: 13 points in West Nusa Tenggara and East Nusa Tenggara and 9 points in North Kalimantan and East Java. The girls had a slightly higher average score for comprehension than the boys with the gap closing to 4 points. The largest gap was in West Nusa Tenggara with more than 6 points while there was no disparity in East Nusa Tenggara. In numeracy the girls did better but the gap closed to 2.4 points (INOVASI, 2018).
- Our main government partners did not prioritise the gender gap in either pupils' performance or teachers' career trajectories.
- INOVASI pilot content was already mostly developed by the time the gender gap became clear.
- Adding more than a basic gender lens to the pilots could well have 'crowded out' the basic numeracy and literacy content that all teachers desperately needed. The teachers' working group (KKG) courses were limited to a maximum of ten or fewer sessions. In those sessions, the team prioritised basic subject knowledge and the fundamentals of child-centred teaching practices. Given the limited time with local facilitators and teachers, the short courses could not meaningfully cover extra gender content that was not part of the 'core' material.

Although gender was not a primary focus in the first phase INOVASI used some good practice, for example:

- A large proportion of INOVASI senior management were women and the team leader was supportive of including gender where possible and appropriate. (While this does not guarantee that gender will be mainstreamed, it makes gender issues more likely to be considered and analysed seriously).
- The monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL) team consistently collected sex-disaggregated data through its wide range of instruments. The team leader's

knowledge and commitment to gender equality was a big part of ensuring that this happened.

- The operations team applied a gender lens to routine activities such as advertising jobs, interviewing candidates, reviewing travel policies and staff training on dealing with bullying and sexual harassment.
- The Education Team also screened all INOVASI's short course materials using gender and social inclusion lens to ensure: people with disabilities were appropriately represented; the images and content were sensitive to local culture; and gender stereotypes were avoided (see annex 4 for the guidance note used).
- Grant partners were asked to participate in a day-long GESI sensitivity training session that covered basic concepts in disability, gender and child protection. (This training was delivered in a compliance capacity, alongside training in reporting and financial management).
- All INOVASI-funded print materials were screened for inclusion issues: cultural sensitivity; potentially harmful gender stereotypes; representation of people with disabilities and from different ethnic backgrounds.
- In East Java, local facilitators attended a half-day introductory session on gender and social inclusion that covered gender, disability and child protection.

# 3 Gender Equality in Indonesian Education: A Snapshot

Indonesia includes diverse social, economic and religious contexts with a wide range of gender dynamics. Girls and boys have different experiences, advantages and disadvantages in different parts of the country. In some areas, girls are particularly at risk of child marriage and dropping out of school as a result. In other parts of Indonesia, boys – especially those from low-income families or disadvantaged communities – are more likely than girls to repeat school years and to leave school early. The evidence base on gender issues in education is limited, especially for the early primary years. More is known about how gender and education intersect after adolescence and in secondary school. Research has been done on trends for boys and girls with regard to early marriage, school dropout rates, child labour, sexual harassment, school violence and absenteeism. INOVASI's understanding of the gender issues in education are informed both by our own surveys and project-related research, and by published academic research.

## Primary school pupils

The gender gaps are not as pronounced in the early primary school years – the focus of INOVASI programming – as they are in the higher grades. Boys and girls enrol in equal numbers and differences in attendance rates are minimal. In some INOVASI schools, even the younger boys are at risk of missing school due to work. With a few exceptions, we also found a gender gap in basic maths and literacy scores across the four provinces we work in. Grade three boys who took INOVASI's baseline basic literacy assessment were on average 11 points behind the girls who took the same test. These gaps are broadly in line with trends in many other middle-income countries.

## Primary school teachers – overwhelmingly female

In much of the world, women are welcomed by and encouraged to join the teaching profession, parents are happy to see their daughters pursue this career and it is generally considered a 'good' job for a woman. In many countries, it is one of the only fields in which women are employed outside the home. Almost universally, women make up the majority of teachers in primary schools and particularly in the early primary grades.[1] Indonesia is no exception. INOVASI's survey of 1,078 teachers showed that only 18 per cent were men.

## Principals and supervisors – overwhelmingly male

A simple look at the number of men and women principals shows that gender is a major factor when it comes to who holds the formal authority in a school and who has the best-paid jobs. INOVASI's survey across 385 schools in four provinces showed that women made up 82 per cent of the grades one, two and three teaching staff but only 39 per of the school principals (INOVASI, 2018).

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[1] This is the case in all but four of the 150 countries that we have data for. See Le Nestour (2020)

# 4 The Policy and Political Context

Gender equality in education is not a new topic in Indonesia. More than 120 years ago, Raden Ajeng Kartini boldly advocated for girls to have access to education. The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action introduced the concept of gender mainstreaming to many line ministries across the world – including the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) and Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) in Indonesia. Since Beijing, there have been occasional efforts to examine the education sector through a gender lens, for instance: in drafting policies; designating a budget for activities; establishing working groups on gender in some districts; and gender training sessions for some staff in the education sector (see for example: Bappenas, 2013 and Immajati, 2016).

However, evidence of the impact of these initiatives at district level is limited. A 2013 review found that out of five districts sampled, none produced sex-disaggregated data for the district education office and they had not been asked to (Bappenas, 2013). This indicates a lack of interest in gender issues but also a lack of awareness of how they could use the sex-disaggregated data.

Furthermore, the absence of an official policy on gender equality at the district education and religious affairs offices level makes the centrally-recommended gender mainstreaming activities: 'highly dependent on the awareness of the staff or the officials concerned, as opposed to being systematic, with no indicators of performance, and monitoring and evaluation … As a consequence, various key issues pertaining to gender equality … cannot be identified and responded to adequately, comprehensively or effectively' (Immajati, 2016).

Overall, INOVASI colleagues working at provincial, district and school levels reported little interest in or evidence of gender issues when they were working in East Nusa Tenggara, West Nusa Tenggara, North Kalimantan and East Java. In a discussion at the Jakarta office in May 2019, they reflected that 'the policy officials know about gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) but do not really understand [it]. GESI has been introduced since the Millennium Development Goals, however it was not properly implemented, for example … in staff recruitment, promotion, budgeting.' Also, some colleagues suggested that '… we should make an effort to work with local governments on gender mainstreaming through [pilot] design, scale out… and designing monitoring and evaluation. Such processes may trigger improvement and awareness on gender equality.'[2]

Looking for national-level leadership and action on gender equality in education may not be a fruitful starting place for INOVASI – although we should not rule it out.

In contrast, INOVASI could converse and develop relationships with officials and organisations at the sub-national level who have some enthusiasm for gender equality.

In phase two, INOVASI's gender specialist can work closely with the MERL team and the policy specialist to find opportunities to connect with decision makers in government and activists in civil society, using INOVASI's growing body of sex-disaggregated data to inform policy, budgets and activity planning in the education sector.

District-level women's rights networks or universities in the four INOVASI provinces could work with INOVASI and some gender champions to create an empowering educational leadership pilot or this network could inform how we call for grants, for example. This collaboration could also consider how to incorporate locally-relevant gender equality messaging into a character education pilot. In some locations, we may need to recruit resources from outside the district or province as

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[2] Minutes from internal meeting in INOVASI's Jakarta office – email from Rasita Purba, May 2019.

short-term technical support but still work closely with local champions who can give us insights and access to local decision makers.

INOVASI should join forces with departments and individuals that want to promote gender equality and thus we can amplify their efforts. For instance, Probolinggo district[3] has a handful of senior women administrators in the district government and schools who may be interested in working with INOVASI to develop a school leadership short course with an additional set of resources to support and encourage aspiring women principals. Other organisations, such as UNICEF, might be well-placed to work with INOVASI on content for a character education pilot that models positive masculinities and builds skills in non-violent conflict resolution.

Schools and officials under the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) may require a different approach from their counterparts in MoEC. The Ministry of National Development Planning observes that 'the term "gender mainstreaming" immediately evokes a negative response from conservative Islamic parties' in MoRA, and recommends terms like 'equal opportunities' (Bappenas, 2013:3). The intersection of Islam and feminism in Indonesia is well explored in the literature and reflects a range of perspectives on whether Islam and gender equality can be reconciled. The ongoing debate can be volatile and engaging in it is high risk for the most skilled diplomat. Rather than take an ideological approach to gender in education, INOVASI needs to use its own quantitative data to highlight the emerging gender issues. That way we can gauge whether our MoRA counterparts are prepared to examine the issues and to invest in more qualitative work to understand the gaps and decide how to address them.

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[3] The district head, the head of the education department (who was recently transferred and replaced by a man), and her secretary

# 5 Boys and Girls' Learning Outcomes

## Boys are falling behind

In almost all countries, girls now outperform boys in numeracy and literacy tests, attendance and completion rates, and increasingly in the levels of education they achieve. There are important exceptions to this story but the trend is clear and it is not new.[4] The gap exists in rural and urban areas, and in rich and poor countries. The gap between boys and girls appears in data from the Program in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), in the reading literacy test of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and in a range of one-off studies of particular countries and school districts.

These patterns are largely true in Indonesia and for almost all the locations where INOVASI worked in its first phase. INOVASI's baseline numeracy and literacy tests in four provinces showed that girls consistently performed better than boys, albeit by a relatively small margin.[5] In terms of literacy and numeracy gender gaps, INOVASI's data for children in grades one to three were broadly consistent with national data (that is gathered for older children).

Exceptions are evident in other parts of the country but the national statistics mask gender inequalities that are specific to location or age. In some districts, for instance, girls and boys in their early teens are vulnerable to the pressures of child marriage and this increases the dropout rates. Socio-economic status in the United States (and possibly in Indonesia and other countries) tends to intensify boys' disadvantage – the wealthier the families, the smaller the gender gap in education (Iritani, 2019).[6] Also, an emerging view is that the gender gap is more prominent in younger children and tends to disappear in upper secondary school. However, boys who fall behind in primary and lower secondary school are most at risk of dropping out before they finish secondary school. If the school system gave them a stronger start in early primary school – or even in preschool – would they have a better chance of finishing secondary school?

## Why are boys falling behind? Or are girls just doing particularly well?

The reasons for the achievement gap between boys and girls are not well understood internationally or in Indonesia and although the theories abound,[7] no single explanation has emerged as dominant. There are different reasons in different contexts and, as noted, even within Indonesia the gender gaps are significant in some areas and minimal or non-existent in others.

Researchers from the Brookings Institution identified three families of explanations that can be applied to the Indonesian context to greater or lesser extents (Kuper, 2018):

*Biological or developmental*: Even before they start school, boys evidence more problems in learning how to read than girls. This explanation is based on the belief that the sexes are hardwired differently for literacy. Studies with a biological focus suggest different rates of cognitive and motor development stages account for much of the gender gap in the early years of school.

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[4] This is a recent phenomenon therefore relevant to *younger* women and girls. In almost all countries, older women have on average fewer years' education than men – but the trends show that younger women and girls have more years in school than boys. The biggest (global) gap between men and women in terms of schooling years was in 1970 when men had an average of 1.53 schooling years more than women. See Evans *et al.*(2020)

[5] INOVASI baseline studies, 2018.

[6] Interestingly, the wealthier the country, the more likely there will be a gender gap that favours girls.

[7] Most of these studies tend to focus on the gap in literacy, especially reading.

*School practices*: Boys are inferior to girls on several school measures – behavioural, social and academic – and these discrepancies extend all the way through to college. This explanation is based on the belief that even if schools do not create the gap, they do not help to lessen it. These studies emphasise the significance of the following: classrooms that accommodate more physical activity and don't place a high value on sitting still and being quiet; schools that make an effort to link book learning to finding employment in the local 'male' job market; and teachers that make an effort to stock the class with books appealing to a wide range of readers (especially boys). INOVASI's own partnership study showed that girls and boys often had different tastes in books and schools tended to provide titles that were more attractive to girls. In nearby Malaysia, researchers have questioned whether the school environment is designed to favour self-regulation and discipline (Mazjub, 2009) – qualities that many cultures value in girls more highly than in boys.

*Cultural influences*: Cultural influences often steer boys towards non-literary (often more physical) activities (sports, music) and define literacy as a feminine characteristic. This explanation is based on the belief that cultural cues and strong role models could help close the gap by portraying reading as a masculine activity. Others argue there are not enough male role models in school or that 'at home parents supervise girls more than boys' (Majzub, 2009:3162.). Reading is perceived as a 'girls' activity or girls are conditioned to be docile, please others and follow directions. Girls also do more hours of homework than boys (at every age and in every country) (Nelson, 2015). Furthermore, role models in the home may contribute to gender differences. INOVASI's baseline data showed that even in families where fathers had higher levels of education, the mothers helped the children with learning (INOVASI, 2018).

## What will 'fix' boys' underachievement?

A silver bullet solution to boys underachieving does not exist. Some researchers have noted that the options for schools to 'fix the boy problem is inevitably fumbling in the dark' (Kuper, 2018). Boys in the United Kingdom are nearly twice as likely as girls to have fallen behind by five years old, with the gap particularly stark for boys from lower-income families. Several studies focus on the importance of the preschool years for boys' later reading outcomes. For instance, a 2016 study found: 'High quality preschool provision has the best protective effect for boys at most risk of lower attainment in language and literacy. High quality in the home learning environment can substitute for high quality in the preschool environment, and vice versa' (Moss *et al.*, 2016). The suggested policy is to provide quality preschool and early years education for boys in particular.[8]

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) suggests that we need to make teachers more aware of their own gender biases. For instance, a teacher might assume that all boys are reluctant readers. 'Boy-friendly' classroom management techniques include strategies to respond to fidgety pupils (who are often boys) and forms of discipline in controlling classrooms that do not 'turn boys off' school (OECD, 2015).

There is no consensus in the international literature on the most effective ways to close the gap but no shortage of proposed solutions. These are being trialled in various contexts and some might be worth considering in Indonesia. Further, INOVASI would need to invest in research in multiple field sites where it works to understand the key drivers of the gender gap in grades one and two. Many of the explanations for the literacy gender gap are likely to relate to cultural norms and practices that are deeply embedded in families and communities, and INOVASI has limited power to influence at scale. Nor is INOVASI able to tackle the possible biological explanations. **We can, however, help ensure our pilots do their part to ensure classroom materials and**

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[8] See also Read (2016)

**teaching methods are effective, attractive and practical for *both* boys and girls – and do not further disadvantage boys, especially in reading.**

## The literacy gender gap in phase one of INOVASI: getting smaller

INOVASI's basic literacy test results, disaggregated by gender, show that girls consistently outperformed boys in both the baseline and the endline tests across the four provinces. However, the gender gap is smaller in the endline test. In the baseline test, the gap ranged from 8 to 13 points across provinces but by the endline, it ranged from 2 to 11 points for INOVASI's first batch of pilots. For both the INOVASI and grant pilots together, the gap ranged from 5 to 20 points. This increased gap is due to results from East Nusa Tenggara and may be attributed to the greater gap between girls and boys in one of the grant pilots for multi-language teaching.[9]

**Table 1: Percentage of students who passed the basic literacy test, by gender: Boys and girls both improve but lower-achieving boys improve most**

| Province | All students | | Girls | | Boys | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Baseline | Endline | Baseline | Endline | Baseline | Endline |
| East Nusa Tenggara | 23% | 54% | 29% | 64% | 16% | 45% |
| North Kalimantan | 50% | 78% | 54% | 82% | 46% | 74% |
| West Nusa Tenggara | 57% | 77% | 64% | 83% | 51% | 72 |
| East Java | 82% | 93% | 86% | 95% | 78% | 90% |

INOVASI's apparent contribution to more gender-equal outcomes in basic literacy is encouraging. Research from other countries shows that when the quality of teaching improves generally the children furthest behind benefit most. The phase one literacy and numeracy pilots were developed and delivered with little or no gendered analysis so it is unclear *why* or how low-achieving boys benefitted slightly more than the girls. Would a literacy pilot designed after a deliberate gender analysis make the gender gap smaller still? Or might that give girls a further advantage? Or would the effort on a gender analysis contribute so little that it would not be worth the time and expense? In phase two, INOVASI could commission qualitative research to find out what about our pilots helps to close the gender gap in early literacy (and numeracy, although the pattern is not quite as strong). INOVASI's monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL) team leader had valuable reflections that could help shape the hypotheses for qualitative research in this area:

> 'My assumption is it's because the teachers learn to map students' skills and treat them differently and provide additional support for those in need. When boys tend to lag behind, they will be the target, even if there is no gender-based awareness on this. This is confirmed by Provincial Manager of Kaltara during the learning day session.

> 'If teachers are more aware about gender differences, they may be better at reviewing book availability, representation of boys and girls when group work is set up, ensuring that they are not endorsing stereotyping both in learning material and in their daily behaviour or conversation. As the gap may be due to various and complex factors, I think raising awareness on how gender may work in learning performance is progress in itself. When teachers can explore, for instance, future careers that challenge the current construction, it is a long term investment. Further, textbooks have improved with regard to simple representation, yet many books still send messages of stereotypes and male domination.'

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[9] The endline result of the Summer Institute of Linguisics (SIL) multi-language teaching pilot in West Sumba shows greater gender gaps, while in Bima in West Nusa Tenggara, the endline result of the multi-language pilot shows decreased gaps.

***Do teachers perceive boys and girls differently? Do they treat boys and girls differently in the classroom?***

How effectively teachers use the teaching practices and how they interact with pupils have a significant influence on learning outcomes. INOVASI's endline data show that partner teachers applied a more child-centred approach and provided better learning environments after participating in INOVASI's short courses. The child-centred approach is reflected in the following variables and the figures show the percentages of women (W) and men (M) teachers who use these techniques:

- Ask students to demonstrate – 70 per cent (W) and 56 per cent (M);
- Pose open questions – 90 per cent (W) and 84 per cent (M);
- Explore students' responses more deeply – 69 per cent (W) and 61 per cent (M);
- Verify students' understanding on sessions delivered – 84 per cent (W) and 75 per cent (M);
- Check students' assignments – 86 per cent (W) and 79 per cent (M);
- Provide verbal or written feedback – 62 per cent (W) and 56 per cent (M);
- Use relevant teaching materials – 56 per cent (W) and 41 per cent (M);
- Appreciate students' efforts – 84 per cent (W) and 76 per cent (M).

Women also tend to have more obvious 'literate' classrooms as shown in the following two variables:

- Expose students' work – 75 per cent (W) and 57 per cent (M);
- Readings corners in the classroom – 48 per cent (W) and 41 per cent (M).[10]

A 2020 INOVASI partnership study found that teachers and principals perceive differences between boys and girls in their passion for learning. Girls appear to have more 'school-friendly' attitudes, such as discipline, diligence and obedience. In contrast, boys are associated with less favourable characteristics, such as naughtiness, preferring playing to learning and being difficult to discipline. Although almost all the respondents acknowledged that girls perform better than boys, our school and government partners are either unaware of these gaps or do not consider them important.

Observation data confirms that teachers in INOVASI schools typically interact more with the girls in their classes than with the boys. The INOVASI survey also asked how much girls and boys in grades one to three read at home. The results confirmed that girls are 6 per cent more likely to say they like to read at home than boys (95 per cent of girls compared to 89 per cent of boys). Families said their girls read at home on an average of three days per week, compared to two days per week for the boys (INOVASI, 2018). Again, survey data does not help us understand *why* the differences exist but it does show that the gender gap in literacy plays out at home as well as at school.

**Going forward, what *could* INOVASI do about boys' literacy?**

Researchers have not established 'what works' to bring boys up to the same level as girls and a range of different solutions are being tried in various contexts. We do not know what drives boys' disadvantage in Indonesia and INOVASI is not in a position to do this research. This would involve

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[10] Rasita Purba, February 2020 email: 'Their pedagogical knowledge is improved, as assessed through the pre- and post- pilot tests, following delivery of INOVASI modules.'

recruiting tens of thousands of primary school teachers and working intensively with parents on how they manage their sons' homework time. Furthermore, teams of anthropologists and psychologists would also need to chart how boys perceive their school experiences.

Rather, INOVASI can focus on areas where we have the most direct influence. Several actions fall squarely in the remit of our pilot designs. Some options would not require policy changes, large resource allocations or high-level technical skills. The strategies that might help engage young boys in our literacy pilots (without inadvertently disadvantaging girls) include:[11]

- Some research (but not all) suggests that boys are more likely to read comics and newspapers, and less likely than girls to read fiction. But elementary school reading in particular historically focuses on non-fiction. Nevertheless this selection of texts could be turning boys off reading and widening the gender gap (Nelson, 2015).[12] INOVASI could look more closely at our Big Books, liaise with our literacy partners who procure and distribute books, and with our mobile libraries to check their range of books too. In phase two, we could reconsider all our written materials through the eyes of a little boy and ensure we provide choices that engage boys as much as girls.
- Malaysian school teachers suggestions included: 'reading and writing activities using the multiple intelligence approach that focuses on kinaesthetic skills [tactile or physical activities]; reading sources for boys need to be identified with their needs and interests; opportunities for drama and presentational talks are needed to encourage boys' literacy skills' (Majzub, 2009: 3164). Could INOVASI's phase two pilots emphasise 'embodied learning' and opportunities to integrate learning and movement?
- Indonesian-specific data suggests that 'female students are more active in the learning process as is evident from them being more active when carrying out tasks in a group than the male students who often just spectate' (Immajati, 2016). Could INOVASI's pilots in phase two work on helping teachers manage group work in a way that encourages all students to contribute?[13]

**Boys' underachievement – raise the alarm and push it up the INOVASI agenda? Or focus on other priorities?**

There are arguments both for and against INOVASI prioritising young boys' relative underachievement in phase two.

Arguments *against* focusing on gender in our literacy and numeracy pilots include:

- INOVASI's pilots in their current format evidently help to reduce the gender gap in numeracy and literacy. The pilots are progressive in that schools with the lowest baseline scores show the greatest improvements at endline. While both girls and boys have improved literacy and numeracy scores by the endline, boys have made more progress. We're on the right track, we're helping close the gender gap and we need to keep focused on consolidating the basics of numeracy and literacy for teachers and pupils alike.
- 'Going with the grain' means engaging on issues that people in powerful positions are interested in and tapping into existing energy. Government partners do not seem

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[11] Much of the research on boys' learning has been undertaken in rich countries. That same research usually focuses on adolescents rather than early grades. Therefore, this list should only be applied tentatively to an INOVASI context.

[12] Taken from PISA/ development assistance committee data. Note this is from a survey of 15 year olds.

[13] This skill might be something that appears in a 'character education' curriculum. But it is also a value that can be promoted through progressive school leadership or through a classroom management pilot.

concerned about the gender gap in literacy in grades one and two. We would be better off working with government on gender issues in education that are on their radar. We also know there are partners we can work with on these issues.

- The gender gaps in grades one and two are (arguably) not *that* big. There are other bigger equality and inclusion fish for INOVASI to fry (mother tongue transition, for instance).
- The potential reasons for the gender gap are numerous, not well understood and will play out differently for different sub-populations of boys. The most important reasons boys are not testing as well as girls are factors from outside the classroom. Our model relies heavily on pilots delivered through teachers' continuing professional education and we have limited access or authority in communities and households.
- INOVASI can't work on everything. We have limitations in terms of staff, budget, audience with district education offices and time in the teachers' working group settings. Boys do not lag *that* far behind girls. We should use our resources on the inclusion issues of greatest need – for instance on multi-language teaching or on serving the large numbers of children with disabilities who get inadequate education.

The argument in favour of the 'raise the alarm and focus on the gender learning gap' position is:

- If we fail to reflect on the gender dimensions of our new pilots, we could inadvertently become part of the 'boys left behind' problem or we could fail to adjust our pilots in important ways that would benefit boys. If we *do* help close the gender gap for young boys, the boys would get a boost at a point when it is arguably most important – in their first few years of education.

# 6 Gender and Educational Leadership[14]

**Women teachers are as qualified, smart and reliable as men teachers … but few will become principals**

INOVASI staff and some of our partners have noted the dramatic gender gap between women and men in educational leadership roles. They commented particularly on the relatively small numbers of women principals – they make up 31 per cent of the principals in INOVASI locations across the four provinces. Table 2 shows East Nusa Tenggara as an interesting outlier, with near parity between women and men principals. In all other provinces, women principals are relatively rare.

| Table 2: Women principals in INOVASI schools: Men occupy most principal posts - except in East Nusa Tenggara | |
|---|---|
| **Province** | **% of principals who are women** |
| East Java (MoEC schools) | 30 % |
| East Java (*madrasahs*) | 13 % |
| North Kalimantan | 38 % |
| West Nusa Tenggara | 20 % |
| East Nusa Tenggara | 47 % |

No of principals in INOVASI schools = 385
Source: INOVASI (2020)

Colleagues note that the wider educational leadership ecosystem, beyond the role of the principal, is a universe of men. Women are rarely found in senior roles as district-level education officers, school inspectors, regents and governors or in responsible positions in parents' associations. In this section we try to find some explanations.

Are women under-represented in senior positions because there are not enough qualified women teachers to apply for principal roles? **No**, most teachers in Indonesian primary schools are qualified women.

Are women under-represented in senior positions because they have inferior academic qualifications? **No.** Women teachers worldwide are, on average, just as qualified as men teachers (Le Nestour, 2020).[15] There is a small gap between the percentage of women and men teachers who are certified (women are four percentage points behind men). INOVASI's data sets showed no significant difference between men and women teachers in: education levels achieved, competence in local languages and fulfilment of the government certification requirements.

Is a gap in subject knowledge the reason that women are not advancing to principal positions? **No**. In Indonesia, qualified teachers do not have better subject knowledge than teachers without teaching certification (INOVASI, 2017).[16] INOVASI's own 2017 Indonesian education and learning survey (SIPPI) of teachers participating in INOVASI pilots found that most teachers – both men

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[14] For more insight on the issue of gender and educational leadership, see INOVASI's essay published in *The Conversation* (30 April 2020) and the *Jakarta Post* (3 May 2020).

[15] In the East Asia-Pacific region, 99.9 per cent of women primary school teachers are qualified; 99.3 per cent of men primary school teachers are qualified; country-specific data was not published for this measure.

[16] Baseline SIPPI survey's teachers' test – data based on 689 teachers' tests and surveys across ten districts and three provinces

and women – performed badly in the grade four level tests in maths and literacy knowledge – but the women overall still had marginally better subject knowledge than the men (INOVASI, 2017).[17]

Are women more likely to quit teaching jobs than men? **No**. In 31 out of 45 countries with available data, the teacher attrition rate is actually lower for women than for men. (Indonesia was not part of this survey but Brunei, Malaysia and India were and show equal or lower attrition rates for women teachers) (Le Nestour, 2020). INOVASI's SIPPI data showed that, on average, school principals who are men have 28 years of teaching experience and women principals have an average of 30 years' experience.

### Social norms: the main drivers for over-representation of male principals?

Individual women school principals in Indonesia have overcome significant social and institutional barriers, often challenging what the society constitutes 'appropriate' female behaviour. These barriers include but are not limited to: a national marriage law that enshrines men as head of the family and women as mother of the household; a strong religious or cultural norm that a woman's *kodrat* (nature or role) requires her to serve her husband and family above all; a growing perception that women need to have 'superpowers' to add a responsible job on top of performing domestic roles to a high standard; and widely held stereotypes about women's inherent traits (gentle and nurturing but not 'leaders') (Andajani, 2016).

### Do men often feel more entitled to senior positions than women do?

**Yes**. A 2018 study of garment factories in Bangladesh showed that 80 per cent of the factory floor jobs were held by women but 95 per cent of the supervisor roles were held by men. Most men entering the garment sector tended to believe their career path would most certainly include a supervisor position while most women did not see themselves in those roles. When women started being prepared for – and taking up those roles, there was some backlash from the men who felt 'their' jobs were under threat. INOVASI might need to manage this type of negative response if our phase two leadership pilot incorporates a serious women's empowerment component.

A 2006 analysis of 12 studies in Turkey, China and a selection of Muslim countries found that latent discrimination results in women opting out of further professional advancement. Some leadership positions were perceived as 'belonging' to men and this discouraged women from attempting to achieve these positions (Oplatka, 2006).

We do not have data on Indonesian men's perceptions and expectations for career progression or their views on whether more women should hold the post of principal. Answers to this kind of research question could help INOVASI improve the design of our leadership pilot in phase two.

### Women's own views of their future – shaped by social context – may also hold them back

The factors that prevent women and men from achieving equality in leadership positions are complex. Individual ambition, organisational rules, government policies, discrimination and social norms all determine whether women and men rise to the top. However, the power of each of these factors and the outcome in terms of equality of opportunity, varies dramatically from place to place. Teaching is no different. A 2018 article on women leaders in Aceh boarding schools noted that 'analysing female leadership in education needs highly contextual approaches' (McNae and Vali, 2015, cited in Lopes Cardozo and Srimulyani 2018). In some Indonesian contexts, women

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[17] Baseline SIPPI survey's teachers' test. Women teachers' average scores on the maths and literacy tests was better than men teachers' average scores in all four provinces, except in North Kalimantan where the men's average score was slightly higher in maths. SIPPI stands for *Survei INOVASI Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran Indonesia* (Indonesian education and learning survey).

may feel that aspiring to be a principal conflicts with fulfilling their own and their families' expectations of what a 'good woman in the community' does and says. Individual women's identities are created as a diverse 'assemblage of obligations, authority and autonomy' that inform her desire and ability to pursue leadership roles (Lopes Cardozo and Srimulyani, 2018:5). INOVASI staff regularly reflected on conversations with women school principals about their combined domestic and professional workloads.

**Women teachers and principals appear to be 'better' at teaching children and managing schools**

INOVASI's own data and informal discussions within the INOVASI team, suggests that this impression of women teachers and principals is not unreasonable. However, our data is indicative rather than conclusive as the instruments they come from were not designed to systematically observe gendered differences in teaching quality or management results. Nevertheless, the data suggest that having more women leading schools could enhance school quality and children's achievement – and raises the question of whether school performance overall would improve if we had a balance of men and women principals. One INOVASI colleague who observed classrooms regularly commented as follows:

> 'Female teachers [generally] show better teaching practices than male teachers; they are more appreciative, encouraging and they endorse students being more active by using learning media and posing triggering questions.'[18]

Another colleague reflecting on different teaching styles in videos recorded as part of INOVASI studies on literacy and numeracy pilots observed:

> 'The man seems to rely naturally on the authoritativeness of being both male and the teacher. Both the men had an interrogation style of asking questions — spraying questions at individual students — and seemed to evaluate, rather than encouraging students in their answers. The male teacher … himself was the cause of the students giving him answers he rejected because he was twice on a different page from the students when he asked the question. But he did not acknowledge the mistake was his when he queried the answer a student gave. The woman teacher by contrast, I thought, used a rather coercive strategy of assuming engagement of all students and working to keep it that way. I thought the coercive part was her statement at the end that they all were going to love reading and read lots — cemented by the high five— was an example of coerced enthusiasm. But generally the management of kids' interest was benign, like the little rituals she used when the page was to be turned and her appropriate acknowledgement of thoughtful answers. I also thought she was genuinely task focused and wanted to maximise children's learning in what her questions drew their attention to.'[19]

This observation is consistent with research that found the close link between gender and principals' sources of authority. Women principals are more likely to rely on their instructional knowledge and experience while men principals are more likely to trust their own decision-making ability and use their hierarchical authority (Shaked, Glanz and Gross, 2018).[20]

INOVASI data showed that men teachers were more likely to use teachers' handbooks while women teachers were more often found in teacher reference groups. One measure of teacher

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[18] SIPPI classroom observations
[19] This observation was shared by Mary Fearnley-Sanders, author of INVOSI's 2020 thematic study on literacy.
[20] This study drew data from surveys of Israeli principals. Arguably, the social context in Israel is less patriarchal than the Indonesian context (in Israel, women have effectively equal legal rights, prominence in a wide range of professional, cultural and political spheres, and they serve in the army alongside men). Yet even in Israel these highly gendered perceptions of leadership and performance persist.

quality –preparedness – showed that more men claimed to have developed learning scenarios than women (33 per cent of men and 29 per cent of women) but more of the women were able to present the written document (55 per cent women and 44 per cent men).

On average, women teachers in INOVASI studies performed better than men teachers as they were more appreciative of students' work and actively used learning media (INOVASI, 2017, 2018, 2019). A 2020 study shows that women in West Kalimantan and East Nusa Tenggara spend more time actually teaching students than their male counterparts and they are less likely to be absent from the classroom (Susanti, Priebe and Bah, 2020).[21]

In a survey of teachers in INOVASI schools, the results showed consistent differences in quality between men and women principals. Women principals were assessed more positively across four realms.[22] The teachers' perceptions are from those who have women principals (W) and those who have men principals (M), respectively:

- Satisfied with principal's performance: 81 per cent (W) and 75 per cent (M)
- Principal is a good role model: 90 per cent (W) and 83 per cent (M)
- Principal encourages teachers to collaborate: 96 per cent (W) and 91 per cent (M)
- Principal concerned with students' learning outcomes: 97 per cent (W) and 91 per cent (M)

To assess the reliability and credibility of these impressions and to understand the reasoning behind respondents' replies, INOVASI could follow up with more structured research in phase two. Research could explore whether women are more likely to adopt good teaching and school management practices and if so, why. In addition, INOVASI needs to include a high number of women participants in the leadership pilots and integrate gender as a strong element in the approach and content.

**Gender differences in professional development preferences, in-service training and lesson planning**

According to INOVASI survey data, there were some differences in how men and women approached their ongoing professional development. These insights could be useful to build on as we continue to engage in continuing professional development in phase two. A trend that INOVASI monitoring data picked up was that women referred to online sources more often than men (men were 15 points less likely than women to seek professional development from the internet).

**An educational leadership pilot with a gender focus has the potential to contribute to more equitable school leadership – and in turn improve school quality**

INOVASI's relatively short time frame means we cannot tackle fundamental issues like social norms that expect women to play certain roles and take primary responsibility for childcare and housework even if they work outside the home. We need to develop strong relationships to be able to work with the districts on policies that ensure women have equal chances to be prepared for and promoted to managerial positions

There are two reasons why INOVASI wants more women in educational leadership positions. The first relates to efficiency and quality: if most teachers' leadership potential is not acknowledged simply because they are women, then Indonesian schools are drawing from an unnecessarily small pool of talent to select their leaders. Widening the pool of potential principals would

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[21] The study comprised 270 remote primary schools
[22] Compiled data from INOVASI pilots and grants

ultimately lead to higher calibre principals in the future. The second reason is about equality: it is unfair that in the most socially-acceptable profession for women, they do not progress to senior positions at anywhere near the rate of their male counterparts.

In phase two INOVASI can embed the principle of gender equality and women's empowerment at the heart of all our school leadership work. We did not explore gender in the phase one 'Inspirational leadership' pilot but now the basics are in place, we can use a gender lens to review the approach and content.

Actions for INOVASI's leadership pilot in phase two include:

- Acknowledge that 'leadership' is not a gender-neutral concept and that women teachers do not have equal opportunity to progress in their careers – especially in Indonesia. Many men enter professions – including teaching – with realistic expectations that their careers will progress and they will rise to the top. Women rarely have the same sense of promise and entitlement. Further, backlash is common when rules and norms change and more women take on supervisory roles since some men are likely to respond negatively (Woodruff, 2018).

- Design short-course content and pedagogy that understands and responds actively to those gender inequalities.[23] The data show that men have greater opportunities for promotion than women in all our provinces and the women who are promoted had to wait longer for their promotions. If INOVASI delivers a 'gender blind' leadership program, this neutrality would effectively reinforce existing inequalities. If we want to contribute to more diverse and likely more capable leadership, our leadership pilot needs to tackle gender sensitively and strategically at the outset.
  Practical actions might include:
  - Prepare: Find out what women teachers feel would help them qualify and apply for leadership roles (this qualitative research will need expert feminist research skills, applied in observations and interviews conducted in Indonesian languages);
  - Analyse: Which of these obstacles and opportunities could INOVASI address, given the tools we have to work with and our (modest) influence? What can we learn from positive deviance – whether in the East Nusa Tenggara district as an outlier or from individual success stories?;
  - Select and enrol teachers on the leadership short course taking account of gender balance in terms of participants and course leaders and practical gender-related issues, such as family-friendly course times;
  - Provide additional women-only sessions that could include, for example: mentoring; strategies to cope with sexism and harassment in the workplace; sharing tips on balancing domestic and professional roles; and approaches to projecting 'leadership qualities' in the local context;
  - Identify, fund and facilitate short-term technical assistance from gender specialists for regular inputs, reflections and facilitation on gender equality issues in teachers' working groups or on an ad hoc basis, depending the issues emerging in a given district or location.[24]

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[23] It's important that the school leadership pilot's gender analysis and course design is supported by a gender expert who has a deep understanding of the local contexts, including how Islamic values inform women's choice sets. See, for instance, Mieke Lopes Cardozo and Eka Srimulyani (2018).

[24] A leadership program could potentially help participants to identify and understand the traits that are (arguably) different between men and women and explore why the data show women as objectively better school leaders on several important measures. The program could then explore how these positive leadership traits can (and

- Actively promote gender equality and women's empowerment by: seeking out and investing in women teachers with leadership potential; analysing and possibly addressing challenges to women's career progression in the leadership course; documenting and disseminating strong profiles of women leaders to inspire both men and women.

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often are) shared across both men and women – as well as identify constraints women in education typically face when advancing their careers.

# 7 Reflection: Gender and Leadership

While teaching is a major pathway for women to enter the professional workforce in Indonesia, their ambitions and opportunities for career progression in education are subject to a number of powerful variables, including a pervasive 'state *ibuism*' promoted in the New Order period under Suharto. In this period, the government promoted the idea that women's roles were to help men and wife and mother were their most celebrated roles. Many working women still feel they are first valued (and judged) for their performance in the domestic sphere as wife and mother, and that society places less value on their professional accomplishments.

INOVASI is not in a position to overturn powerful forces, such as state *ibuism* and religious fundamentalism at scale. Nevertheless we can help even the playing field for teachers' career progression by developing a leadership pilot that takes account of the many reasons women do not progress to principal positions, and focuses on helping women (and men) prepare to step into leadership roles. As suggested earlier, INOVASI can re-imagine its leadership pilot and focus on helping women fulfil their potential, improve their chances of promotion and ultimately improve the quality of schools.

In phase two, INOVASI needs to grapple directly with the existing inequalities between men and women teachers in the system and work on eliminating those inequalities to avoid inadvertently reinforcing the status quo. If our leadership pilots do not examine the causes and possible solutions to men's over-representation in senior roles, we may well perpetuate these inequalities and miss the opportunity to promote a gender equal leadership cadre.

INOVASI on its own does not have the power – or the time – to confront deeply entrenched and potentially sensitive issues like gender inequality in schools and the teaching profession. But we can contribute if we join with others. Therefore, after some exploratory discussions, we propose starting work on gender and leadership in Probolinggo, where there is likely to be more fertile ground since there are already some strong women leaders. Concentrating on this one area could provide INOVASI with both guidance and inspiration in developing a leadership pilot with a strong women's empowerment dimension. We do not recommend starting women's educational leadership activities in contexts where there is a high risk of backlash, with no political cover.[25] Nevertheless, even in Probolinggo we need to investigate the prospect of working on women in educational leadership or other gender equality issues, and take account of the perspectives of different interest groups and stakeholders beyond the small group of women officials we identified.

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[25]A cautionary tale is the so-called 'gender allergy' that some people in Aceh developed in response to the 'western' 'gender justice' approach humanitarian organisations promoted after the 2004 tsunami (Jaouhola, 2013, cited in Lopes Cardozo & Eka Srimulyani 2018).

# 8 Character Education

> 'An approach to developing a set of values, attitudes, skills and behaviours that are thought to support young people's development and contribute to their success in school and in adult life.' (Walker, et al)

INOVASI has an opportunity to help MoEC develop an approach to character education. This might involve developing a pilot course for teachers in a teachers' working group setting, offering advice on the curriculum or other kinds of assistance. Unlike in the past, the government is interested in extending the concept of character education beyond a narrow religious interpretation of morality and civic behaviour. This section summarises some of the literature on character education – and particularly how gender equality and anti-bullying might fit in with the character education work stream.

Some definitions of character education focus on **moral characteristics,** such as respect, empathy and kindness. Other definitions emphasise **personality traits,** such as innovation and creativity, grit and resilience, organisation, self-regulation and self-confidence. **Skills** feature in many descriptions of character education, for instance, leadership skills, working well with others and communication skills come through in a whole range of actions that may or may not be taught explicitly in character education lessons.

'Life skills' such as financial literacy and internet safety are sometimes included in the topics schools cover as part of their work on character education. Some schools are developing programs to address skills and attitudes that (United Kingdom) employers are asking for, such as resilience, leadership and teamwork. Employers in Indonesia presumably also value these qualities in new recruits.

Other discussions about character education focus less on what the individual students learn and more on taking a whole-school approach by creating a positive school ethos and learning environment. Schools tend to identify a sub-set of qualities and then – with variable levels of commitment and success – try to build a whole-school culture around them. Ideally, the school community develops a discourse, norms and expectations for the student body that forms a core part of what their school does. Strong leadership from a head teacher and a senior leadership team is a key part of effective character education.

**Practical examples of character education** in schools in the United Kingdom include the following (Walker *et al.*, 2017):

- Developing a set of four to five '**golden rules'** that the school promotes and celebrates by embedding them in the culture of the school, for example, respect, creativity, communication, effort. Multiple lessons and assemblies then reinforce these values. The golden rules are shared with all new pupils and their families. Teachers look for opportunities to link the values and rules to real life. A 'star of the week' from each class is nominated each week for showing how to live using those skills or values at school.
- One secondary school has weekly lessons in character education. The purpose of the lessons is to help pupils to grasp what is important in situations and how to act for the right reasons so that they become more reflective. Pupils are encouraged to develop 'good sense' and 'wisdom'. The program is founded on a range of virtues, including moral virtues, such as courage, self-discipline and compassion, and civic virtues, for example, community spirit, volunteering and leadership.
- An innovation that one primary school has introduced is the 'backpack of skills' – a metaphor to remind the children that from the moment they arrive at school, they start to develop a range of skills, such as leadership and determination, that they can then carry

through life. These skills can be 'pulled out' of their backpacks as and when they are needed. Every child in the school knows about the backpack and can talk with a common voice about the skills and traits they have developed.

A look at the English-language literature on character education suggests that when character education is most effective, teachers need to have high-level teaching skills to articulate the concepts and help children understand and experience them within lessons and throughout the school day. In many schools it is not taught as a discrete subject but 'embedded into every single element of school life'. The headteacher at one school has implemented an 80:20 rule, whereby 80 per cent of work is proactive and the remaining 20 per cent is reactive. This means that staff are encouraged to think about how best to develop these skills and incorporate this into their planning.

## Impact

When character education is done well and sustained overtime, enthusiasts make great claims for the wider changes that can result. One principal says that, as a result of the character education program in his school:

'We're suddenly better at more things. We're better at sports, parental expectations have improved, attendance records have improved, and work ethic has improved. But this hasn't happened overnight. It takes time.'

'We've seen lots of improvements ... We've seen a big improvement in how students feel about themselves. Student engagement, confidence, resilience, community spirit, integrity and perseverance have all improved.'

> 'Resilience is the value I think that has the most impact, and it's one of the hardest things to teach. You hear teachers in reception and in years one and two saying to their children "show me your resilience", "go back and try it again" or "well done, you've been really resilient."' (Head teacher quoted in Walker, et al)

Another principal reported: 'It [the character education work] has impacted on attendance, on academic achievement, on pastoral welfare and behaviour.'

Studies from Europe emphasise that character education has little impact if it's an 'add on' but can have a significant effect if it is at the centre of what a school does and what is expected of pupils.

Tips on delivering character education suggest that simply treating it like content for a new curriculum will not be effective. Developing and maintaining a deep school-specific culture is important. In addition:
- Senior leaders must drive it and all teachers must deliver it;
- The subset of values or skills should be placed at the core of the school ethos;
- Schools need to take a long-term approach; this is not a quick-win;
- The school needs to build a collective understanding and language around the positive values.

Given the importance of a senior leadership team in making character education work, a character education pilot could complement the phase two leadership pilot. Undertaking the two work streams at the same time (and possibly in the same locations) could provide opportunities for cross-fertilisation and a nuanced understanding of their interaction.

In the SIPPI survey, teachers were asked to reflect on character and specifically on what qualities are most important for students to demonstrate. In order of priority, the teachers responses were: moral and character education; god-fearing; discipline; ability for social interaction.

# 9 Promoting, Practising and Teaching Gender Equality in the Classroom[26]

> 'Gender stereotypes strike early. By the time children reach primary school, they have already developed a clear sense of what is expected of boys and girls and how they are supposed to behave' (Fawcett Society, 2018).

Working with MoEC on character education gives INOVASI the opportunity to bring a gender equality dimension to the collaboration. Character education offers a forum for tackling any harmful attitudes or prejudice. In a regional survey it was estimated that only 9 per cent of boys and 33 per cent of girls in Indonesia had 'gender equitable attitudes'. This result was among the lowest in the five-country survey (Plan/ICRW, 2015)[27] and suggests that Indonesia has a problem (compared to Vietnam, for example, where half the children surveyed had gender-equitable attitudes).

This section provides highlights of research on promoting gender equality in the classroom and in schools. Surprisingly, gender equality does not feature much in the English-language working papers and how-to notes on character education, life skills and core values. The issue of consent and the gender dynamics associated with consent, are sometimes discussed in the context of sex and relationship sessions for teens in Europe, and more recently in Kenya. Some schools have decided that discussing menstruation with mixed groups of pre-pubescent girls and boys will reduce stigma. But on the whole, there is not much written about the intersection of gender equality and character education – especially for younger children.

A few organisations have recently started to reflect on issues that could help INOVASI decide where gender might fit in its character education pilot. Some of these insights and recommendations are summarised in this section.[28]

Harmful gender stereotypes about what is appropriate or 'normal' for girls and for boys starts very young. Education, as it is imparted in many institutions and systems, works not just to impede gender equality but also actively to promote gender *inequality*. By the age of seven, girls and boys' aspirations are often limited by stereotyping, with too few girls believing that the full range of careers is open to them – and too many boys unable to express their emotions.

Schools perpetuate gender inequality in many ways: teachers comment on girls' tidiness or their looks; in playgrounds the world over, boys are 'policed' if they express feelings of vulnerability, enjoy singing and poetry, or are seen as too gentle. Teachers and pupils alike make comments like: 'She is quite good at maths for a girl!'; 'He is so uninterested in sports – unlike regular boys'; 'Girls shouldn't laugh so loud or so hard'; or 'Boys don't cry'.

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[26] Most sources on teaching gender equality in the classroom drew on research in secondary schools with children who were over 12 years old; there is little relevant research on the early primary grades.

[27] The proportion of students with highly equitable gender attitudes (calculated using a gender attitude scale designed for the survey) varies from 49 per cent in Vietnam to 2 per cent in Pakistan.

[28] This section was gleaned primarily from reports by UNESCO, the Fawcett Society and Plan International.

One researcher put it well: 'Schools may not be able to change the world, but they can challenge, encourage and widen horizons.' And it is vital that we use the tools and access we have as INOVASI to help make this change. Studies show that while the environment transmits gender norms to children, using materials that actively challenge traditional gender norms can also undo children's previously-held perceptions (Fawcett Society, 2019). In phase one, we rooted out stereotypes in our partners' library choices and in the materials we developed for teachers' working group short courses. But with more time and resources we can go further and experiment with the opportunities to identify and confront sexism or harmful stereotypes in the character education pilot.

Even the government's own reports found that 'gender-biased textbooks were being used by schools at every level, with depictions of social leadership and technology use reflecting a strong male bias; boys assigned high-status tasks such as time-keeping, and girls assigned lower-status "domestic" tasks such as sweeping' (BAPPENAS, 2013)

Research cited by UNESCO (2020) found that a few short training sessions on gender equality for teachers is unlikely to have a lasting impact if the institutions, incentives and culture that the teachers are working with do not also change. This suggests that stand-alone modules for teachers on gender equality are unlikely to be a good investment.

A project in Turkey entailed multiple efforts to make schools gender-neutral, including: developing tools to make the educational system sensitive to gender inequality; reviewing educational policies, curricula and textbooks to draw up recommendations; and conducting awareness sessions on gender equality for the wider society. Teacher training programmes include a mandatory course on 'how to promote gender-equal classrooms' and mandatory in-service training for teachers already in service. In other countries there is a suggestion that parents should be engaged to discuss gender inequalities and how these inequalities might be addressed at home; activists have suggested that an anti-sexual harassment cell should be established in every educational institution.

These initiatives are all ambitious and potentially worthwhile if used appropriately in different places at different times. INOVASI will need to weigh up what gender issues it can include in its character education pilot but even modest content can be challenging. In collaboration with a local women's rights organisation or similar, the team designing the character education pilot could look for opportunities to:

- Give teachers guidance and practice in **identifying gender stereotypes** (in books, in their own speech, in students' comments, in some of the national stories and songs) and guiding discussions in which children discover for themselves what stereotypes are, and how they can be harmful and limiting.
- Link the issue of gender equality to the bullying and school violence theme, working with UNICEF or others to devise content and methods to **help boys both avoid harm from violence**, and stop perpetrating violence.
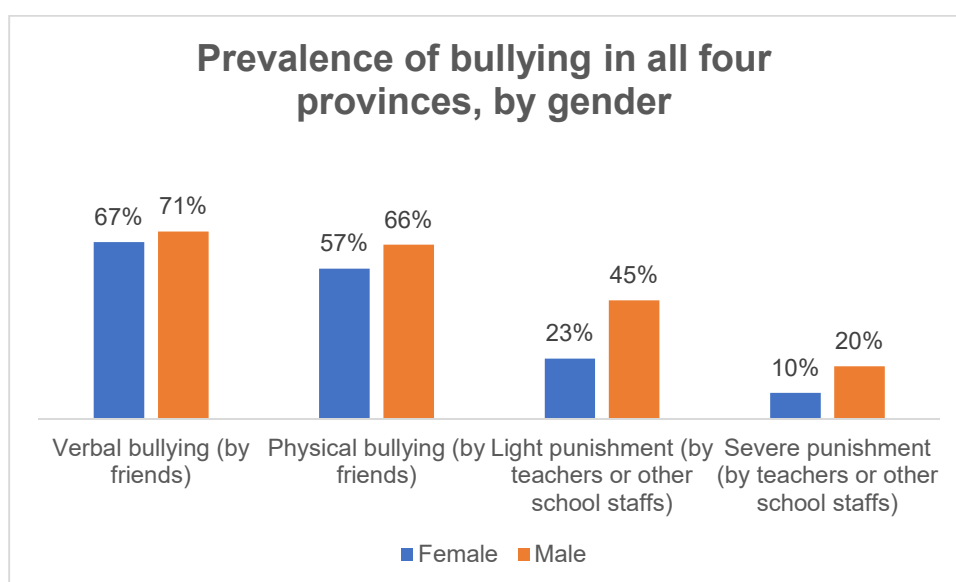
# 10 Combatting School Violence, Bullying and Sexual Harassment

Violence appears to be commonplace in many Indonesian schools. A Plan/ICRW study in Jakarta city and Serang district in 2015 noted that 'Specific norms in Indonesia treat children as powerless, thus relegating children to the bottom of the power structure. Physical punishment as a means of disciplining children is widely accepted by parents as well as teachers' (Plan/ICRW, 2015). In the survey of five Asian countries, **Indonesian girls and boys reported the highest levels of emotional, sexual or physical abuse in school** (84 per cent) (Plan International, 2015).[29]
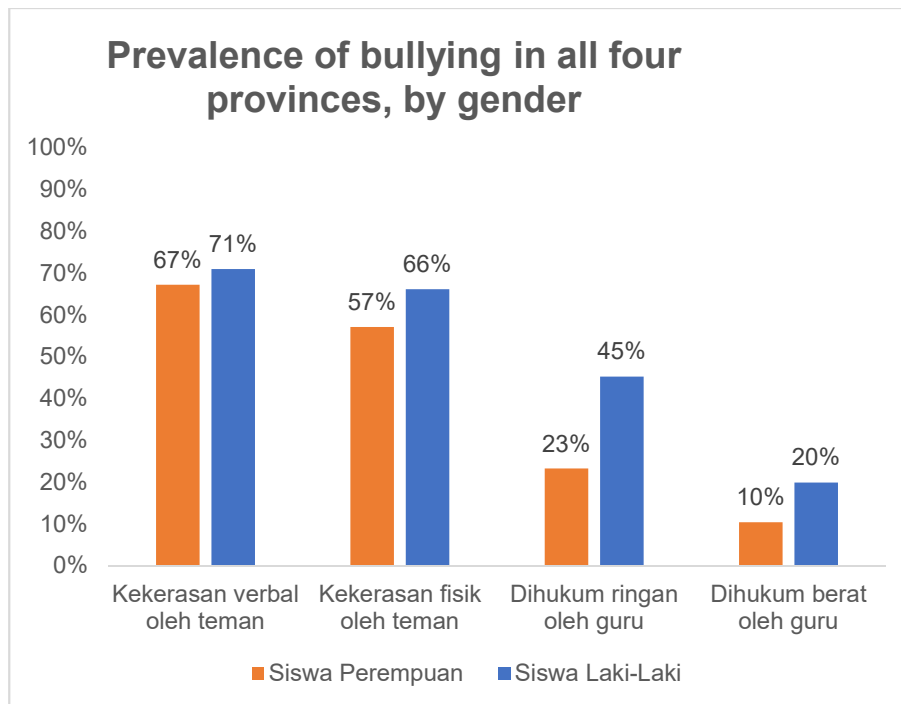
Of the students who reported they experienced violence in school in the last six months, 33 per cent in Indonesia reported teaching or non-teaching staff as the perpetrators. Across all five countries, more boys than girls mentioned teachers or school staff as perpetrators of violence. Indonesia was the only country where more boys (59 per cent) reported violence by a peer than girls (44 per cent).

When it comes to violence and bullying, the INOVASI schools fare no better than the schools in the Plan/ICRW study. INOVASI's own monitoring and evaluation system showed that in East Java 73 per cent of boys in regular school and 77 per cent in *madrasahs* had experienced bullying from peers. Light physical punishment was common, with 39 per cent in *madrasahs* and 26 per cent in regular schools. Prevalence appeared to increase between the baseline and endline survey: verbal bullying by peers increased by 6 points in *madrasahs* and by 7 points in regular schools. Light physical punishment had increased by 10 points in *madrasahs* and 2 points in regular schools. Across all four provinces, boys experienced more bullying than girls (both from verbal or physical abuse by peers and light or heavy physical punishments from teachers). Overall boys experience double the physical punishments that girls do.

**Figure 1: Prevalence of bullying in all four provinces, by gender**



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**Prevalence of bullying in all four provinces, by gender**

| | Kekerasan verbal oleh teman | Kekerasan fisik oleh teman | Dihukum ringan oleh guru | Dihukum berat oleh guru |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Siswa Perempuan | 67% | 57% | 23% | 10% |
| Siswa Laki-Laki | 71% | 66% | 45% | 20% |

Further, the Plan/ICRW study found that 50 per cent of boys and 52 per cent of girls reported witnessing violence in their school in the past six months – making it more common than in other countries in the survey. In contrast to Indonesia, only 12 per cent of Cambodian schoolchildren and 5 per cent of Pakistani schoolchildren had witnessed violence in school in the past six months. When the students in Indonesia witnessed violence, half the children surveyed said they intervened to stop the violence, with 12 per cent more girls than boys. Only 14 per cent reported to teachers although more girls took this action and 10 per cent of boys and 23 per cent of girls said they reported to a teacher when they themselves experienced violence in school. Most of the violence perpetrated by teaching or non-teaching staff was not reported as few victims wanted to raise the issue (17 per cent boys and 25 per cent girls reported to any other teacher or to a principal). Out of those who submitted reports 30 per cent claimed that the school did not take action.

The situation where so few Indonesian pupils report violence to principals, teachers or parents and many violent acts are perpetrated by teachers themselves suggests that the problem is deep-seated and will take more than character education or experiments with restorative justice to be rooted out. Lack of reporting means that 'good' teachers and school administrators may be largely unaware of the extent of the problem. If corporal punishment is legal in schools, that sends a message that violence can be an appropriate way to resolve problems.

The study included recommendations that provide a starting point for a character education pilot that includes violence prevention. The recommendations had a strong gender theme:

- 'Engage girls and boys in collective critical self-reflection and enable them to recognise and challenge inequitable gender norms and the use of violence in their everyday lives. A pivotal feature of this approach is that it goes beyond knowledge provision to creating safe spaces for discussion, to challenge entrenched beliefs and behaviours.'
- Schools needed to enable individuals to recognise 'everyday acts' that are acts of violence and to challenge them.
- 'Given that boys appear to have more rigid and stereotypical attitudes, conduct specific sessions targeted at boys on positive masculinities.'
- 'Train teachers on gender-sensitive teaching methodologies, response mechanisms, codes of conduct and positive discipline.'

> **Positive masculinities**
> 'Widely accepted ideas of masculinity and power have the use of violence at their core, where boys are groomed for engaging in violence from a young age and revel in the use of power "over others". As long as this notion of violence remains central to relationships, including between peers, with adults and in future adult relationships, the move to prevent gender-based violence will remain incomplete.' (Plan and ICRW, 2015)

Confronting and preventing bullying, and navigating pathways from negative to positive masculinities are topics that could fit well in a character education pilot – particularly if there are local officials or organisations that are keen to engage on these potentially-sensitive topics and if INOVASI can find partners to provide the right support.[30]

All of this sets boys up to become violent men who do not have the communication or interpersonal skills to resolve conflicts. Character education is about giving boys (as well as girls) these skills. By improving the boys' interpersonal, conflict resolution and communication skills, character education in parallel addresses the prevalence of violence. Investing in a gender-informed approach to character education could also indirectly boost boys' reading and writing skills. There could be a connection between low literacy outcomes, masculinity and violence. For whatever combination of reasons, most girls find it easier to settle quietly at their desks, express themselves verbally and learn to read. In contrast, there may be value in teachers exploring how they could make the school environment more welcoming to boys, boys (and girls) could learn how to resolve conflicts and negative feelings without violence, and boys might be encouraged to see themselves as good learners with a promising future in school.

If INOVASI can harness good ideas and good practices to help schools keep children physically safe at school, that would have inherent value. A reduction in violence might contribute to children feeling more enthusiastic about school and learning, and possibly improve learning outcomes.

The issue that makes this topic particularly challenging is the many schoolchildren who experience violence from their teachers and other school staff. It is difficult to imagine teachers – some of whom are violent towards students – credibly delivering character education content in a context where their own bad behaviour is not challenged.

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[30] INOVASI staff have raised this issue with central government officials in the context of developing continuing professional development modules with MoRA and the response was not encouraging. That does not mean that bullying and violence are not worth tackling – but it does mean that the question of 'political will', change space, authority, and other elements of our PDIA approach will be particularly important to understand.

# 11 Summary of Reflections and Recommendations for INOVASI Phase Two

1. Consider delivering **one or more pilots with a primary focus on gender.** Our experience in phase one was that grant partners and pilot managers are generally not equipped or inclined to prioritise gender and do not have the supporting networks. Almost without exception, INOVASI's own internal policy documents are silent on gender. Although we prompted partners to reflect on the relevance of gender equality to their work, they typically noted a simple 'no discrimination' in their application forms and used generic language about their commitment to equality. One possibility is that we earmark some of our grant funds to support one or two grants specifically on the issue of gender equality in education.

2. Build new networks. Identify existing or potential **energy around gender equality in education**.[31] We could seek out people and organisations with expertise in gender and leadership, bullying, boys' literacy or other priority issues where there is passion, knowledge and willingness to collaborate. Which individuals, departments and organisations can we learn from and whose ideas should we reflect in our work on pilots and policy? Who could become an ally for INOVASI and who could we potentially link up with? This collaboration might occur at the district level, for example, in Probolinggo, and at universities or with women's rights groups or organisations such as Plan and UNICEF. We may be able to work with a department or a leader in MoEC or MoRA who is open to discussing what we're learning by generating sex-disaggregated data within INOVASI and seeking out sex-disaggregated data from other sources. Investing in these relationships will help position us to engage credibly in **policy dialogues with a gender dimension**, should the opportunity arise.[32]

3. Integrate a **full-time specialist in gender in all INOVASI activities from the outset**. Phase one showed the limitations of adding a 'light touch' gender analysis from a distance or as a 'bolt on' after the pilots had been identified and were already underway. In phase two, we have the chance to bring gender equality and social inclusion knowledge and skills into the process of identifying and designing the pilots early on, and to collaborate with our policy colleagues in a more regular and creative way. Our own policy dialogues should be enriched by using our sex-disaggregated data and qualitative insights. We can also incorporate gender deliverables in key team members' job descriptions and workplans. For instance, in phase two, the brief for the senior advisor in the system and policy unit could include connecting with relevant government officials and potential champions to work with INOVASI on the question of women principals.

4. Get involved in **gender equality in school leadership** starting in locations that already have some strong women leaders: commission robust *local* analyses of the issues and the levels of interest among women teachers; ensure pilots have content and methods that speak to both 'generic' leadership issues and explicitly to gender and women's empowerment. Find a location where we can first work 'with the grain'.

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[31] ACDP in its 2013 policy brief on gender equality in education states that clear strategic direction for gender mainstreaming in education was lacking and low technical capacity available. Thus, building a network is important.

[32] We do not know of a specific section in MoRA or MoEC with responsibility for gender equality. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection could be approached in an exploratory, informal way. At sub-national level, this section is also available but not attached to the education department. The title and home department of the person with gender responsibilities varies across districts.

5. **Use the opportunity of working on character education with MoEC to incorporate a gender perspective**: for example, in addressing bullying and school violence. And work with Plan or other relevant organisations to understand the nuances of how, where and why boys in particular perpetrate and are victims of violence. Remedies might include: training boys (and girls) in communication skills so they have ways to express their negative feelings other than through violence; and demonstrating 'positive masculinities' that place a high value on empathy.

6. **Continue to monitor the gaps in boys and girls' literacy and numeracy skills** in INOVASI schools and look for results showing that boys are moving forward at the same or a faster pace than girls. The reasons for the gaps are likely to be complex and largely beyond INOVASI's control. Therefore, beware of introducing too much gender content in short courses that already struggle to cover the basic literacy and numeracy content adequately.

7. Continue to collect and generate sex-disaggregated data. In phase one, the data that the **MERL team** produced created an awareness and interest among team members. In phase two the MERL team can continue and also build on these good practices by commissioning research to better understand some of the underlying causes of persistent inequalities. This research could shed new light on how the education system and continuing professional development might advance equality. Through more sustained and intentional networking (see point 2), we will also discover more 'positive deviance' – examples of teachers and schools that are making progress on gender equality in education.

8. Establish strong gender-sensitive **indicators** for the program, include gender activities in the **annual work plan** and lay out gender-specific ke**y performance indicators and deliverables** for senior management to commit to, not just for the gender adviser. **Budget** to hire short-term specialist technical assistance when needed – for example to facilitate regular reflection and action sessions at classroom and policy level, and with pilot managers and grant partners.

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# Annexes

## ANNEX 1: Priorities for our gender specialist in phase two

- **Scope the terrain for promising partnerships and policy relationships.** Which Indonesian researchers and non-governmental organisations are working on gender equality in the classroom, and what are their ideas? To what extent is government interested in boys' 'underachievement'? Which ministry officials are interested in fulfilling Indonesia's commitments to gender equality in teaching? Who (other than UNICEF) is working on bullying and is their work gendered and relevant to INOVASI's prospective 'character development' work?

- **Nurture and maintain those relationships** to ensure our gender focus is relevant to national priorities, emerging local knowledge and sub-national interest (see above).

- **Put considerable effort into empowering women teachers** in the context of INOVASI's leadership pilots. This work could be a substantial contribution in Indonesia – but it will require further analysis and possibly some commissioned research. Our specialist will also need a good deal of diplomacy as the job involves working closely with the INOVASI team, local facilitators, non-governmental organisations and government officials.

- **Work with INOVASI colleagues to ensure gender is considered across our functions and activities,** for example: in strategy testing, pilot iterations and adaptations; and in team learning activities within the teams: education program development, operations, grants, monitoring and evaluation and communications.

# ANNEX 2: COVID19, gender, education and INOVASI

The COVID19 threat could mean that school and teaching look different in phase two. If a vaccine is not developed and school closures are frequent, those closures are likely to have different effects for girls, boys, women and men. With more time at home girls might get further ahead in school (they currently do twice as much homework as boys and might be more inclined to study even in the absence of a regular school schedule). School closures in the United States and Europe appear to be exacerbating educational inequalities, with children from lower-income families less likely to engage in remote learning than children from higher-income families with (usually) higher expectations from parents and peers, more reliable internet and more digital devices in the home. In a remote learning context, boys who are already struggling at school or who think of themselves as 'not good at school' may be more likely to disengage than girls who find school easier or are committed to delivering on teachers' expectations.

Women teachers already have more intense demands on their time outside work than their male colleagues who tend to take on fewer domestic duties. If COVID19 means that teachers' own children are at home all day, the extra parenting responsibilities are unlikely to be shared equally. Men are less likely to have to juggle their work with the additional responsibilities of care, catering and instruction for their own children. Schools may promote physical distancing by running split shifts and women will be at a disadvantage if their children do not have anyone to care for them at home. Further, if many people fall ill from the virus traditionally women would care for the sick meaning women teachers would not be able to come to work.

# ANNEX 3: INOVASI's gender learning day: summary of discussions

April 2020, 38 people

## A. Gender & teaching

More women teachers; many more than men teachers
Women teachers tend to perform better than men teachers

## B. Gender & leadership

The principal posts are dominated by men
This domination is more prominent in the *madrasahs*
Factors: Geographical, political, personal aspirations & training opportunities
Managerial opportunities limited for women
Women principals are better at instructional leadership

## C. Gender & student learning outcomes

Girls have better learning outcomes and are more interested in reading

Boys have more experience of being bullied, being kept back a class and dropping out



## D. What has already been done?

Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) development strategy
Adoption of GESI specialist
Local facilitator selections consider gender
Data analysis & collection disaggregated by gender. However, no gender-specific intervention
INOVASI has been gender sensitive
Some follow-up needed:

## E. What can I do in the next phase?

Gender-sensitive data policy advocacy, cooperation with other non-governmental organisations
Specific study of gender, including identifying root causes of inequality
Vulnerable groups and specific requirements targeted for interventions
The design of a program that targets a specific gender issue (gender-aware)
Integration of gender material in character education module
Recruitment of staff is gender sensitive
Positive deviance documentation
Gender-sensitive indicators are used in program performance indicators

## ANNEX 4: Guidance for gender equality and social inclusion: INOVASI short course materials (developed June 2018)

### A. Gender and inclusion 'essentials' for all our short courses slides and documents:

1. Count all the different images of people in the slide deck or document. (Don't rely on estimates – make sure you physically count.) Make sure the **ratio of males and females** is roughly equal.
2. Make sure at least some of the people in the documents have some kind of **disability**.
3. Make sure the teachers' working group presentations include at least some clear and specific guidance on **practical ways teachers can consider gender and inclusion**.

Note: This essential level of screening is not a big or a difficult job. Doing this level of GESI analysis only takes about 20 minutes total, for a 25-slide deck and a 10-page document. But if we do not pause and do this task, there is a high probability that we will publish materials that omit important groups.

If you have limited time, you can finish your GESI screening at this stage.

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### B. More advanced gender and inclusion screening

But if you want to go even further with your GESI screening, that's great! Here are a few additional things to think about:

1. Are both males and females shown in outdoor spaces and indoor spaces? (Usually boys are shown outdoors and girls indoors.)
2. Are both girls and boys shown in active roles? (If we are not careful, sometimes most boys are shown in active and leadership roles.)
3. Are the roles we show for girls and boys more often stereotypical (for instance a female in the kitchen)? Or are the roles we show more often transformational (for instance a male cleaning or caring for a baby)?
4. Are the games we have designed for teachers to learn in the teachers' working group sessions equally engaging for girls and for boys? Can some games or exercises be modified so that children with mobility issues or other impairments can still participate?
5. Are the video materials we use in our sessions representing a range of Indonesian cultures, or is 'best practice' usually represented by one ethnic group? Do our videos include any images of children with disabilities or mixed classrooms where a child with a disability is included in the lesson?
6. Are our examples of teacher-made teaching materials representative of different local context and do we occasionally use words from languages other than Bahasa Indonesian in Big Books or other learning materials?
7. Is it possible any of our text or images might offend or upset particular cultures?

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### A. You're not alone!

If you would like to discuss any of the ideas above, have questions or need help on GESI topics, feel free to be in touch with Gender Specialist XXX xxx@thepalladiumgroup.com.

# INOVASI

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