

# EdData II: Education Data for Decision-Making

## Brief Guidance on Gender and Inclusiveness in Teaching and Learning Materials

Teaching and learning materials are powerful role models for children, because the images and language with which children interact can impact their understanding of the world. Therefore, it is crucial that materials children are exposed to reflect empowered individuals from all areas of society, and especially from those areas that are marginalized, disadvantaged, and/or underrepresented. In support of this goal, the U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID’s) Bureau for Africa has developed *A Guide for Strengthening Gender Equality and Inclusiveness in Teaching and Learning Materials* to promote inclusivity and equality in teaching and learning materials. The main themes of the Guide are summarized here.

**Gender:** The socially defined set of roles, rights, responsibilities, entitlements, and obligations of girls and women and of boys and men in societies. The social definitions of what it means to be girls and women or boys and men vary among cultures and change over time.

**Inclusion:** A process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities and reducing exclusion within and from education.

### Equal Frequency of Representation

Dominant cultural subgroups are often portrayed in teaching and learning materials more frequently and more positively than are other groups. However, characters in materials should reflect a society’s diversity and distribution and should represent the range of characteristics in a society in positive and inclusive ways. Children identify with characters who are similar to themselves (e.g., are the same sex, have the same physical characteristics); therefore, ensuring equal representation of all children in teaching and learning materials can help expose children to positive messages and provide powerful role models.

Ensure equal representation of male and female characters.



**Sit Sam, sit Pat**

- Pat has a mat.
- Sam has a fat pet.
- Sam said, “Pet, sit here.”
- Pat said, “Sam, sit here.”
- Sam sat.
- Sam said, “Pat, sit here.”
- Pat sat.

Kenya, Primary Math and Reading (PRIMR)

Include illustrations depicting female and male characters in comparable roles.

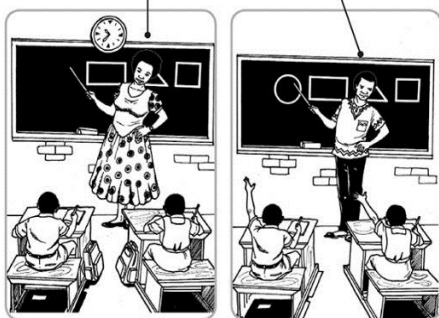


Illustration: USAID/Uganda School Health and Reading Program

### Gender Equitable and Inclusive Illustrations

Within materials intended for students in early grades, illustrations typically have a higher profile than text because of their relative size on a page, frequency, and attractiveness to children. Because of this, it is particularly important to ensure that illustrations represent all social subgroups—whether characterized by sex, religious or ethnic backgrounds, or presence or absence of disabilities—with the frequency in which they occur in the population and in positive, empowering ways. Additionally, the illustrations of each subgroup should be comparable in size, placement, and the types of characteristics that are portrayed.

## Gender Equitable and Inclusive Language

In many languages, the pronouns “he” or “him” are used to refer to boys and men. However, these pronouns are also used to refer to mixed-sex groups of individuals. Doing so subtly attributes greater importance to boys and men, which both boys and girls may internalize at a young age. Alternating “he” and “she” for non-specific characters or mentioning appropriate masculine, feminine, or gender neutral forms can be used (e.g., chairman, chairwoman, chairperson).

Similarly, using negative stereotypes or language about an individual’s disability may impact how individuals with disabilities are viewed in society. Using person-first language, such as “a girl who is blind” instead of “a blind girl” can help avoid focus on a person’s limitations.

## Gender Equitable and Transformational Roles

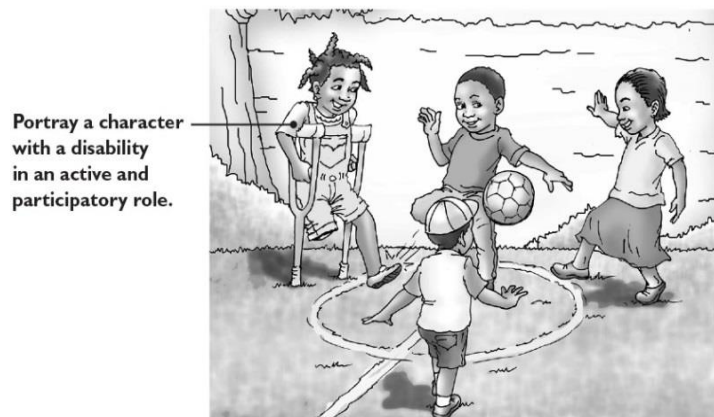


Illustration: Jerry Moise

Often, members of social subgroups are portrayed in stereotypical and at times negative ways. Girls and women are often portrayed in home-based or reproductive roles, while boys and men are often portrayed in more socially productive roles. This trend is often also applied across other social subgroups based on ethnicity, language affiliation, or disability. Consequently, members of marginalized subgroups are subtly discouraged from envisioning themselves in non-stereotypical and powerful roles and are deprived of valuable role models. Similarly, those portrayed in powerful roles are subtly limited in their aspirations. A best practice for teaching and learning

materials is to depict all social groups as equals who interact in respectful ways, through traditional and non-traditional roles. Additionally, characters representing subgroups should be depicted as participating in a broad range of activities, with a range of interests and personal traits.

## Evaluating Materials

Detailed instructions for evaluating the degree of furthering gender equality and inclusiveness in teaching and learning materials are provided in the full *A Guide for Promoting Gender Equality and Inclusiveness in Teaching and Learning Materials* developed for the U.S. Agency for International Development’s EdData II Web site at [eddataglobal.org](http://eddataglobal.org).

USAID’s EdData II project is led by RTI International.

The project Web site is [www.eddataglobal.org](http://www.eddataglobal.org).

RTI International is a registered trademark and a trade name of Research Triangle Institute.

To request information regarding EdData II, please contact:

Penelope Bender, Contracting Officer’s Technical Representative (COTR),  
[pbender@usaid.gov](mailto:pbender@usaid.gov)

Amy Mulcahy-Dunn, Project Director,  
[amulcahy-dunn@rti.org](mailto:amulcahy-dunn@rti.org)

To request information regarding *The Guide for Strengthening Gender Equality and Inclusiveness in Teaching and Learning Materials*, please contact: Kakali (Koli) Banik, [kbanik@usaid.gov](mailto:kbanik@usaid.gov)

USAID contract number for EdData II is EHC-E-00-04-00004-00.