

# Gender Transformative Education in Zimbabwe's Fast-Track Land Resettlement schools: Reimagining Gender norms and Social Inclusion

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## ABSTRACT

Many developing countries continue to battle with issues of social inclusion, gender equity, and equality in primary and secondary schools. For Zimbabwe, the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) executed in 2000 ushered a problematic context that exacerbated social exclusion and gender inequalities in Education. The unplanned, politically motivated, and hastily executed FTLRP created disruptive learning environments affecting female and male students disproportionately. This study aimed to investigate how the FTLRP hindered opportunities for gender-transformative education in fast-track resettlement schools. It also aimed to promote social inclusion and gender justice in rural fast-track resettlement schools. The study adopted a participatory qualitative approach to triangulate data from in-depth interviews, observations, and desk reviews of curricula materials. It also adopted intersectionality feminism lens to illuminate gender dynamics in fast-track resettlement schools. Such a holistic approach provided critical insights into how gender overlaps with poverty and rurality to diminish opportunities for gender-transformative education. Findings show that poor infrastructure in the fast-track resettlement schools continues to obstruct gender-transformative education. Teachers are not conversant with gender-responsive pedagogies, let alone gender-transformative education practices. It also reveals that informal boarding facilities in fast-track resettlement schools are havens for sexual harassment. The study concludes that the FTLRP in Zimbabwe created disruptive learning environments that continue to obstruct initiatives for gender justice and social inclusion in schools. Female students tend to suffer from social exclusion because of their gender, poverty and rurality. Conducting a gender audit in fast-track resettlement schools would help in developing a robust gender-transformative education policy framework.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Most developing countries including Zimbabwe continue to battle with issues of social inclusion, gender equity and equality in primary and secondary schools. For Zimbabwe, the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) executed in 2000, ushered a peculiar and problematic context in this Sub-Saharan country that exacerbated social exclusion, gender inequity and inequality in Education. The Fast-track Land Resettlement context is explained in greater detail in the background section. The unplanned, politically motivated, and hastily executed FTLRP created disruptive learning environment affecting female and male students disproportionately. It thus created a rare learning context that has not been adequately studied. We argue that parity in terms of enrollment is not enough and does not translate to gender

equality in education. This study therefore seeks to gather evidence on how the FTLRP obstructed opportunities for gender transformative education; gender-responsive curriculum, and pedagogies in fast-track resettlement schools. It explores the nuances and complexities of certain contextualised, and subtle systemic barriers in fast-track resettlement areas that continue to disadvantage female learners. Against this backdrop, prospects of a gender transformative education become inevitable. According to UNICEF (2021), Gender Transformative Education seeks to utilize all the parts of an education system: the curriculum, policies, pedagogies and community engagement among others. In harnessing these, stereotypes, attitudes, norms and practices are transformed by challenging power relations, rethinking gender norms and binaries, and raising critical consciousness about the root causes of gender inequality and systems of gender oppression. It is therefore important to interrogate opportunities for inclusive and gender-responsive curriculum, and pedagogies to redress gender injustice in fast-track resettlement schools in Zimbabwe. The study thus generates evidence from schools in fast-track resettlements in Zimbabwe that informs a policy framework on gender transformative education. In doing so, it addresses the provisions of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4; to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all. Notably, female students are not a homogeneous group, they possess multiple and diverse identities, hence a framework on gender and intersectionality has been adopted to illuminate pathways for promoting gender transformative education, gender justice and social inclusion in primary and secondary schools in fast-track resettlement schools.

## **Background**

The Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) implemented the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) in the year 2000 to redress a colonial land ownership pattern in the country that was skewed in favour of Whites (Matondi, 2012; Mutema, 2014). Over 700 million hectares of land, previously owned by only 4,000 White commercial farmers, were rapidly redistributed to over 300,000 indigenous Zimbabwean households (Moyo, 2011; Mutema, 2014). In a very short period, the former White dominated Large Scale Commercial Farming Areas (LSCFAs) were transformed into Fast Track Land Reform Resettlement Areas (FTLRRAs) for the fast track land reform beneficiaries. The resettlement of the land beneficiaries in former White-owned LSCFAs where schools were very few presented the government with an urgent need to establish schools for the children of the land beneficiaries (Chakanyuka, Chung & Stevenson, 2009; Parliament of Zimbabwe [PoZ], 2012; Mutema, 2014). However, the government had neither the capacity nor resources to establish conventional schools and other social amenities in FTLRRAs. For expediency and as a stopgap measure, the government allowed the land beneficiaries to convert old farmhouses and tobacco barns into temporary school infrastructure and promised to construct conventional schools within 10 years (Chakanyuka et al., 2009; PoZ, 2012). The unconventional and unregistered schools are officially known as satellite schools in Zimbabwe's education system. The promise to construct these schools has not been fulfilled up to this day. In some cases, some informal boarding facilities (IBFs) were erected near schools to accommodate students from faraway settlements. IBFs are makeshift structures near the school where learners live on their own to avoid walking long distances to and from school every school day (Fry, Hodzi, & Nhenga, 2016). This study assumes that the informal boarding facilities expose female and male students to sexual abuse, substance and drug use and sexual exploitation. Further, this study assumes that the unplanned FTLRP was gender blind and exacerbated social exclusion, gender inequities and inequalities which affected female and male students and teachers disproportionately. The FTLR context has been further compounded by climate change which instigated unpredicted weather

patterns causing incessant droughts in the fast-track resettlements. Under these circumstances, initiatives for gender transformative education are compromised.

The unplanned and hastily executed FTLRP inadvertently culminated in the mushrooming of satellite schools and IBFs in Zimbabwe's FTLRLAs. There are 1,855 satellite schools in Zimbabwe, comprising 839 satellite secondary schools and 1,016 satellite primary schools (Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education [MoPSE], 2017). Table 1 shows the distribution of satellite schools in Zimbabwe by province. In comparative terms, Mashonaland West Province has the highest number of satellite schools in the country both at primary and secondary school levels, 417 satellite schools comprising 236 and 181 primary and secondary schools, respectively (see Table 1). It is the reason this study was conducted in Mashonaland West province.

Table 1. Number of Satellite schools in Zimbabwe by province

Province	Primary schools	Secondary schools
<b>Bulawayo</b>	5	4
<b>Harare</b>	4	5
<b>Manicaland</b>	72	134
<b>Mashonaland Central</b>	108	98
<b>Mashonaland East</b>	88	105
<b>Mashonaland West</b>	236	181
<b>Masvingo</b>	173	94
<b>Matebeleland North</b>	132	77
<b>Matebeleland South</b>	67	39
<b>Midlands</b>	131	102
Grand Total	<b>1,016</b>	<b>839</b>

Source: MoPSE (2017:4)

This FTLR context is of great interest to this study as we interrogate gender transformative education in primary and secondary schools in FTLRLAs in Zimbabwe. It is thus important to address gender injustices in fast-track resettlement schools by developing a model for gender responsive pedagogies and a gender transformative policy framework. Gender-sensitive pedagogy holds the key to ensuring equitable quality education for all learners (Nabbuye, 2018, Chapin & Warne, 2020). Against this backdrop, the following objectives guided the study:

- 1) To interrogate challenges which hinder social inclusion and gender justice in Fast-Track Land fast-track resettlement schools in Zimbabwe.
- 2) To establish the effects of the FTLRP on gender transformative education in primary and secondary schools in fast-track resettlement areas.
- 3) To explore how gender intersectionality help us understand circumstances of female students in fast-track resettlement schools beyond gender binaries.
- 4) To suggest a gender transformative education policy framework and a statutory instrument to promote gender responsive pedagogies in fast-track resettlement schools.

The study answers the following questions:

- 1) What are the challenges hindering effective implementation of gender transformative education in fast-track resettlement schools?
- 2) How does gender intersectionality help to understand the circumstances of female students in fast-track resettlement schools?

- 3) What innovative strategies can be employed to realise inclusive and gender transformative education in fast-track resettlement in Zimbabwe?

### **Conceptual framework: Gender perspective and intersectionality**

Tackling gender inequalities in education requires dealing with the breadth and depth of gender intersectionality. While strategies for achieving equality in gendered educational institutions have become increasingly professionalised (Ikävalko and Kantola 2017), a further debate on gender equality and equity has taken place. This study explores how gender, poverty and rurality intersect to diminish the prospects for gender justice and social inclusion. The study argues that female students in fast-track resettlement schools are not only affected by their gender but by poverty and rurality in the fast-track resettlement schools. Intersectional approaches acknowledge the complexity of different structural, cultural and institutional factors affecting female learners (Schmidt and Cacace 2018). Focusing on narrow social categories such as gender binaries limits understanding factors that affect female students in fast-track resettlements thereby obstructing prospects for gender transformative education. The growing literature devoted to the importance of an intersectional approach seeks to widen the general discourse around equality, diversity and inclusion. In order to explore the gendered processes of exclusion inherent in education, incorporating an intersectional approach becomes inevitable because female and male students are not homogeneous groups. The increasing complexity of advancing gender equality in education requires going beyond gender to interventions that develop intersectionality and critical approaches to equality (Shields, 2008).

The idea that learners are often disadvantaged by multiple and overlapping sources of oppression and in this case, their gender and social class, creates a reflective and critical analysis of the circumstances of male and female learners in rural fast-track resettlement schools. Intersectionality has a place in recognising and celebrating differing interwoven identities in teaching and learning, in how schools are designed and managed, how safe they are for those who attend them, how they are funded, who gets admitted to them, who the teachers are, what is taught and how, the ways in which gender transformative education is framed and enhanced in primary and secondary schools.

### **Theoretical framework: Intersectional Feminism**

The nuances and complexities of gender dynamics in FTLR resettlements can be further understood through the lens of intersectional feminism. Intersectionality is the perspective which recognises that individuals have multiple identities which may include gender, race, social class, sexuality and social locations in hierarchies of power and privileges (Aira & Pascua, 2020; Carastathis, 2014). Thus intersectional feminism recognises the multiple axes of intertwined discrimination and the diversity of women's experience. It acknowledges that women face diverse types of repression that produce unique experiences of marginalisation (Tyagi, 2023). This study sought to demonstrate how gender intersect with rurality and poverty to obstruct the education for female students in FTLR resettlement schools. Further, intersectional feminism emphasises the importance of understanding the specific socio-cultural and economic milieu for both men and women (Aira & Pascua, 2020; Tyagi, 2023). We apply intersectional feminism to inform gender-transformative education practices in fast-track resettlement schools in Zimbabwe. Dismantling structural gender inequalities requires a holistic approach that addresses the interconnected nature of existing inequalities in fast-track resettlement schools. Thus Intersectional feminism encapsulates rethinking gender discourse by demonstrating how gender intersect with poverty and rurality to obstruct gender-transformative education in fast-track resettlement schools.

## Related literature

The importance of girls' education began gaining traction in economic discussions during the early 1990s, notably through the work of Lawrence Summers (Murphy-Graham, 2024). In Summers' writings, he argued that education for girls and women might offer the highest return on investment available in the developing world. Ever since, gender-transformative education has become a global topic perceived as a panacea for empowering girls and women. Thus, the importance of girls' education has galvanized action among individuals, organizations, and governments that span a wide range of academic disciplines and political dispositions (Nabbuye, 2018; Chapin & Warne, 2020; UNICEF, 2021). Looking strictly at gender parity in education—that an equal number of male and female children are enrolled in school—it would appear that girls' education is a global development success story (Murphy-Graham, 2024). However, a deeper analysis would reveal that cultural norms and gender stereotypes constitute systemic and structural barriers that continue to perpetuate gender inequalities and inequities in school. Although education has massive transformational power, its potential to achieve gender equality and fulfill its promise to all children has not been fully harnessed in any country (UNESCO, 2022). Against this backdrop, transforming educational systems in fast-track resettlement schools in Zimbabwe becomes an inevitable endeavour.

Gender-transformative education seeks to utilize all parts of an education system, from policies to pedagogies to community engagement, to transform stereotypes, attitudes, norms, and practices by challenging power relations, rethinking gender norms and binaries, and raising critical consciousness about the root causes of inequality and systems of oppression (Nabbuye, 2018; UNICEF, 2021). It aims to go beyond simply improving access to education and instead utilizes the entire education system to challenge gender norms, power imbalances, and stereotypes, fostering a more equitable and inclusive environment for all learners.

Gender-transformative education could take the form of gender mainstreaming and other affirmative actions that can be achieved through gender policies, gender-responsive pedagogy, and curriculum development (Openjuru, 2021; Nabbuye, 2018; Aikman & Rao, 2012). Transformation can start with a change in the teaching and learning process and environment, including the learning infrastructure (Wanjama & Njuguna, 2016). This study examines the institutional or contextual transformation in the delivery of learning in makeshift classrooms in fast-track resettlement schools. Further, Gender-responsive pedagogy also ensures, the needs of male and female learners are addressed during the teaching and learning process both inside and outside the classroom, and that the teaching staff are gender responsive in their planning and facilitation of lessons, including their choice of language during the teaching and learning process (Nabbuye2018; Openjuru, 2021; (Wild & Omingo, 2020). Thus, Gender-transformative education aims to remove all gender barriers in the learning of critical thinking and problem-solving and to address the system-supported inferiority complex of female learners (Openjuru, 2021; Mwine, 2019). The different studies above confirm that gender-transformative education increases opportunities for gender equality and social inclusion. However, this study deeps further, exploring contextualised gender dynamics in fast-track resettlement schools in Zimbabwe.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a participatory qualitative approach to triangulate data from in-depth interviews, observations, and desk reviews of curricula materials. The use of different data collection methods offered diverse perspectives to the research issue and promoted participation of different groups of stakeholders like academics in teachers' training colleges, learners, and teachers in primary and secondary schools in fast-track resettlements. A pluralist approach allows multiple voices to be heard,

provides a more holistic picture of the research issue being investigated (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2018). In doing so, it ensures reliability, credibility, and trustworthiness of data. Data from different sources can be compared and any inconsistencies followed upon. Such a holistic approach gathered robust evidence to inform government policy on gender transformative education by providing critical insights into issues of poverty, social inclusion, gender equity and equality in primary and secondary schools in fast-track land resettlement areas in Zimbabwe.

The adoption of multiple methodological practices and perspectives in this study strengthened the rigor, breadth, and depth of the interrogation process. Generally, the multiple data collecting methods allow for data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and lastly, methodological triangulation (Creswell, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

### **Sampling**

Participants of the study were identified through purposive and snowball sampling. Satellite schools in Fast-Track Land Resettlement Areas were purposively sampled. Snowball sampling is used with difficult-to-reach participants (Creswell, 2017) and in this study it was applied to locate female teachers in FTLRAs who are in leadership positions as well as female students who might have dropped out of school due to the unfavourable learning environments in Fast-Track Land Resettlement schools. In snowball sampling, once the researcher has identified one member of the population, other members are identified by this member and then by the next participants, until the researcher reaches data saturation, at which point no new information is revealed (Patton, 2007 & Cohen et al, 2018). One of the strengths of snowball sampling is its efficiency in finding information rich sites relevant to the research issue. The researcher employed several snowballs to avoid bias in identifying participants.

Administrators, teachers in satellite schools and a nurse at a local clinic were purposively sampled. Of most interest are the female learners who are affected by poverty and the rural context of the fast-track resettlements. Further interest focused on female teachers' experiences in teaching multi-grade teachers and how they juggle it with the expected domestic chores. The male students' experiences provided a backdrop to conceptualizing the female students' experiences and lived realities. On the whole, six administrators, eight female teachers, eight male teachers, 10 female students, six male students, and one female nurse (37 participants) constituted the research sample. Contributions from these participants allowed a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of gender transformative education in fast-track resettlement schools.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Data were collected through document reviews and in-depth interviews with key informants.

#### **1. Documents review**

A review of documents on enrollments, curricula materials as well and class records like attendance registers and social records was conducted. Such reviews allowed insights into challenges, lessons learnt and prospects for social inclusion and gender transformative education in fast-track land resettlement schools. More importantly, enrollment statistics by gender in the satellite primary and secondary schools in FTLRAs were collected, and this undergirded the study. Researchers also reviewed instructional materials, including textbooks, charts, and other learning aids to establish the extent to which they are inclusive and gender sensitive. Information from the document review was used to complement data collected through in-depth interviews and observations.

#### **2. In-depth Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**

In-depth interviews with administrators, female and male teachers teaching multigrade classes, as well as female students residing in IBFs and those in fast-track resettlement schools. Identified female



learners who dropped out of school were interviewed to gain an understanding of their lived realities in the informal boarding schools and in the resettlement schools in general. The purpose of in-depth interviews with the identified key informants was to gather critical insights into barriers that obstruct social inclusion and gender transformative education. The intention was also to get insights into government policy on social inclusion, gender equity, and equality in primary and secondary schools.

### Data Analysis

Although data were collected separately from in-depth interviews, document reviews, and observations, the thematic approach was used to combinely present and analyse data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme captures something important about the data concerning the research question. Thus, data from interviews, document reviews, and observations were presented as emerging themes. In this regard, data on challenges experienced by female students in fast-track resettlement schools were segmented and categorised. A segment refers to a meaning unit or an analysis unit and a category is a construct that refers to a certain phenomenon (Cohen et al 2007). We therefore coded corresponding segments from the different data sets. Segments with a corresponding code formed the emerging pattern or theme from the data. By extension, data from the three sources that addressed a particular identified theme were assigned the same code and in the process, formed a particular subheading. The collected data were analysed through the gender perspective and intersectionality feminism to illuminate gender norms and how gender overlaps with other sociocultural identities such as poverty and rurality to obstruct gender justice, social inclusion, and, subsequently gender transformative education in fast-track resettlements. Participation was entirely voluntary and the study sought informed consent from the research participants who completed consent forms. To protect the anonymity of the participants, we used job titles as well as aggregating and generalising the data. Schools were represented by the alphabet letters.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings of the study show that there are several challenges that tend to obstruct full realisation of gender transformative education in fast-track resettlement schools. In that regard, issues of gender justice and social inclusion become greatly compromised and the realisation of SDG 4 (to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education) remains a pipedream. The findings demonstrate how gender tend to overlap with other sociocultural identities such as poverty and rurality to obfuscate opportunities for social inclusion in schools.

### Gender and Infrastructure in fast-track resettlement schools

The make-shift schools in fast track resettlements tend to be characterised by extreme poverty and unconducive learning environments. It has been observed that some tobacco sheds and barns have been improvised into classrooms. The improvised infrastructure does not guarantee safety for children thereby violating their rights as enshrined in the convention on the rights of the children. An interview with one acting head reveals:

*We use the tobacco sheds as classrooms and a total of 211 learners are served by two blair toilets with one squatting hole each. The holes are too big for infant learners and there is danger that they may fall in. In fact we had one case of an infant learner who fell into the latrine some three years ago.*

One senior female teacher at one secondary school in the fast-track resettlements shared her observations:

*We don't have wash rooms, neither do we have sanitary wear at the school. All what we have are blair toilets. We have female students who stay away from school during their menstruation period.*

*Imagine a learner losing three to four days of learning time per month. As you can see, the infrastructure is real an issue here. We can't talk of incinerators. Remember, we have female students in the Informal Boarding Facilities around the school.*

A female student at one secondary school had this to say:

*We don't have access to pads but we improvise with pieces of cloth. The challenge comes when you want to change the cloth. The only toilet for girls is always busy and dirty. So many of us stay at home during menstrual periods.*

Further issues involving furniture in fast-track school were noted in an interview with one teacher: *Many schools in the fast-track resettlements do not have proper desks and chairs for learners. Some sit on bricks when attending lessons. For now, we can't think of gender-sensitive desks for our learners. To us, that's a luxury. We need decent chairs and desks.*

Poverty at both institutional and individual levels tends to intersect with gender in the rural setting affecting female and male students disproportionately. From an intersectionality feminist perspective, women face diverse types of repression based on their colour, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and other intersecting and interacting social characteristics that produce unique experiences of marginalisation (Tyagi, 2023; Aira & Pascua, 2020). Blair toilets at the make-shift schools may not meet the specific needs of female learners. There are no washrooms for female learners to bath themselves during the menstrual cycles. More so, because of budgetary constraints, the schools may not afford sanitary wear for female students. It was also observed that toilets for boys do not have urinary systems making them user-unfriendly. A quality, gender-friendly school is one in which girls and boys feel equally comfortable in attending school and participating in learning (Yazdani, 2018; Pulizz & Roseblum, 2007). It reflects a conducive social climate and physical conditions for both female and male learners. In a study conducted in India, Rakkee et al (2023) observed that lack of facilities to maintain menstrual hygiene like sanitary napkins vending machines or comfortable arrangements to purchase sanitary napkins or functional incinerators keep female student out of school. Looking through intersectionality feminism lens (Carastathis, 2014), one can observe how gender overlaps with poverty and rurality to obstruct social inclusion for female students in the fast-track resettlement schools. Under these circumstances, gender transformative education remains a pipedream for many schools in fast-track resettlements. Creating a gender-friendly and inclusive environment should be a priority when establishing a learning institution.

### **Gender and Curriculum Materials in Fast-Track Resettlement Schools**

Another critical aspect of gender transformative education has to do with gender responsive curricula materials. However, gender responsive curricula materials seem to be elusive in fast-track resettlement schools. A senior teacher at one school had this to say:

*We are using old textbooks at this school that we received as a donation. Unfortunately, the textbooks are gender blind as they continue to use sexist language. We feel it is better to have these books than to have none.*

One infant teacher also shared her observations:

*The Early Child Development (ECD) books have pictures that continue to portray men in important jobs like pilots, engineers, medical doctors among others. Similarly, in junior text books words like policeman, chairman, headmaster, or Sportsmaster are observed in these textbooks. Such sexist language presupposes that the female gender has no value. The female learner has no role model to identify with in the learning materials.*

Further, it can be observed that knowledge in the fast-track resettlement secondary schools continues to be stratified. An interview with one secondary school teacher reveals;



*While girls in urban areas have changed their mindset to study the traditionally prescribed masculine subjects like Maths and Science, the situation is different in rural areas, especially in the fast-track resettlements. The gender divide remains conspicuous in subject choice by learners. Boys take up science subjects while girls concentrate on Arts and Humanities.*

Knowledge stratification is a result of gender-typing of subjects; high status knowledge for boys and low status knowledge for girls. STEM related subjects (deemed as high status knowledge) are predominantly studied by boys while girls have remained concentrated in Arts and Humanities (deemed as low status knowledge). Current STEM enrollment patterns often show that female students continue to be under-represented in the physical sciences (physics, engineering, mathematics (Gweshe & Chiware, 2023; Muchabaiwa & Chauraya, 2022). While the status quo is improving elsewhere in Zimbabwe (Gweshe & Chiware 2023), it has remained the same in the rural fast-track resettlement schools. The study argues that such gender unresponsive curricula materials tend to obstruct effective implementation of gender transformative education particularly in poor, rural resettlement schools. Poverty at institutional level continues to perpetuate gender inequalities through use of old gender-insensitive text books. Female students in fast-track resettlement schools are thus affected by their gender, poverty and the rural location. Patriarchy which fuels gender inequalities in developing societies tends to permeate educational institutions (Dahal, Topping & Levy, 2021) reproducing individuals fit for the gendered occupational structure. By extension, intersectionality feminism informs us that female students suffer from social exclusion because they are female, poor and reside in rural fast-track resettlements. Gender transformative education thus remains a myth in fast-track resettlement schools.

### **Gender Responsive Pedagogies in fast-track resettlement schools.**

Gender responsive pedagogies occupy a central place in gender transformative education. However, it appears that many teachers in fast-track resettlement schools have no knowledge on what gender responsive pedagogies entail. The following interview excerpts reveal:

*Yes, I have heard about gender responsive pedagogies but I don't have full knowledge on what is involved. What I know is that we have to treat female and male students the same, [teacher A].*

*I may not be able to give an appropriate example but gender responsive pedagogies involve gender equality in teaching. [Teacher D]*

A newly qualified teacher in the fast-track resettlement schools had this to say:

*The teachers' college curriculum does not cover issues on gender responsive pedagogies. I finished college last year and got deployed here in the fast track-resettlements. I am hearing about gender responsive pedagogies for the first time from you. We covered some issues on gender and education of course. [Teacher C].*

What comes out quite clearly from in depth interviews with teachers in the fast-track resettlement schools is that teachers are not quite conversant with gender-responsive pedagogies, let alone gender transformative education. Under such circumstances, it becomes difficult to initiate gender transformative education in fast-track resettlement schools because the transformative process should be driven by teachers. A gender-responsive pedagogy addresses gender inequalities by integrating gender into the fabric of teaching and learning – including the processes of curriculum design, the management and facilitation of learners in the classroom, and approaches to assessment (Chapin & Warne, 2020; Nabbuye, 2018; UNICEF, 2022). By extension, gender responsive pedagogies are a result of critical reflection on gender transformative education. Gender transformative education implies gender mainstreaming in education which ensures gender sensitive enrolment, gender sensitive budgeting, gender responsive

pedagogies, gender-friendly school environment and an environment that is free from school-related gender based violence. Gender Transformative Education goes beyond acknowledging and responding to gender disparities within the education system and the learning experience of the student, and strives to harness the full potential of education to transform attitudes and practices within and beyond the education system to contribute to a broader environment of gender justice for girls and boys in all their diversity (Donville, 2022; UNICEF, 2021). On the whole, gender transformative education addresses issues of gender justice and social inclusion. However, Gender Transformative Education strategies and intervention packages must be informed by a nuanced understanding of gender intersectionality, the gender roles and norms, and underlying power relations specific to the rural context (fast-track land resettlements).

### **School-Related Gender Based Violence in Fast-track Resettlement school**

The fast-track resettlements are sparsely populated resulting in the establishment of schools very far away from some communities. Consequently, this has seen the sprouting of informal boarding facilities (IBFs) near schools. An interview with one female teacher in the resettlement schools revealed:

*The reason we have informal boarding facilities near many schools in the fast-track resettlement is that learners come from faraway places, as far as 10 to 15 km. unfortunately, the female students in such accommodation are exposed to sexual harassment. Last year we had two students who fell pregnant and dropped out of school.*

At another school in the resettlements one male teacher had this to say:

*Many female students in the informal boarding facilities fall prey to the artisanal miners around this place. They are lured by a few groceries and household provisions. Last year we had two grade seven female learners who eloped with the artisanal miners. One of them has since divorced and now a single teenage mother.*

Without divulging names of learners, one female nurse at the local clinic shared her experience:

*We have treated many female students from both primary and secondary schools with sexually transmitted infections. Usually they come to the clinic when the pain is no longer bearable and the infection is at an advanced stage. Their partners are the artisanal miners who are difficult to track.*

One female student residing in IBFs shared her observations:

*Gender based violence at our school takes the forms of bullying and sexual harassment. There are instances where boys just barge into our rooms unannounced depriving us our privacy. At times they molest girls against their will and when we resist, they beat us up.*

The sociocultural factors (being feminine, poor and living in rural areas) that fuel SRGBV may help to explain why female students' enrolment statistics have remained depressed in fast-track resettlement schools. The table below shows the enrolment of a few selected satellite primary schools in fast-track resettlements.

Table 2. Enrolment statistics in Primary schools by gender (October, 2023)

School	Boys	Girls	Total
A	113	98	211
B	98	90	188
C	88	71	159
D	134	123	257
E	72	69	141
F	58	54	112

Source: Fieldwork

School-related, gender-based violence (SRGBV) can be physical, psychological and/or sexual. Although boys and girls are both affected by these types of violence, unequal gender norms place girls at a much higher risk of experiencing sexual violence (Mills & Tao, 2022). Female students living in IBFs tend to engage in transactional sex for a few groceries and household provisions. In doing so, they expose themselves to sexual infections, unwanted pregnancy or early marriage. Through the intersectionality feminism lens, we observe how gender overlaps with poverty and rurality compromising opportunities for female students' retention in rural resettlement schools. More so, intersectional feminism emphasises the importance of understanding the specific socio-cultural and economic milieu for both men and women (Aira & Pascua, 2020; Tyagi, 2023). As a result of cultural norms and poverty in rural resettlements, SRGBV has become common, exacerbating instances of child mothers or child marriages. This is however, consistent with the trend in Zimbabwe. A report by The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2022) shows that Zimbabwe is among the 20 African countries where child marriages are most prevalent. Child marriage has contributed to high rates of school attrition by female students in fast track resettlement schools. Although it is true that enrolments in primary schools in many parts of Zimbabwe have reached gender parity (UNICEF, 2005), it is not the case with primary schools in the fast-track resettlements as shown on table 2. SRGBV thus becomes one of the factors that affect female students' participation in school. Enrolment statistics show that there are more boys than girls in primary schools thereby defeating the whole purpose of gender transformative education in primary and secondary schools in fast-track resettlements.

### **Gender and Multi-grade Teaching in fast-track resettlement schools**

Many schools in fast-track resettlements are characterised by heterogeneous multigrade classes. Multi-grade teaching refers to a setting where a single teacher is responsible for teaching learners of different grade levels at the same time in the same environment (Jakachira & Muchabaiwa, 2023; Joubert, 2007). Such heterogeneous classes are very much demanding in terms of pedagogical and class management approaches. The following interview excerpts with teachers are revealing:

*Many schools in the fast-track resettlements have composite classes. Two or more grades are combined into one class with one teacher because of low enrolments. I teach grade ones and twos in one class. Teaching two different grades in class is a mammoth task as the learners have different needs.* [Teacher F]

*I am teaching grades 4 and 5 in one class. This class gives me headaches right from planning, teaching and class management. A composite class doubles my workload. More so, for me balancing work and family becomes unbearable. Remember, as a woman I have domestic chores to attend to as well.* [Teacher H]

The findings show that multi-grade teaching in fast-track resettlement schools affect female and male teachers disproportionately. Multigrade classes are a common feature in many satellite schools in fast-track resettlements (Jakachira & Muchabaiwa, 2023). Female and male teachers in fast track resettlement satellite schools are differentially affected by the demands of multi-grade classes. It emerged that balancing the demands of multi-grade classes and the burden of domestic chores becomes a daunting task for most female teachers in fast track resettlement schools. Several studies in Africa (Awung and Dorasamy 2015; Batool and Sajid, 2013; Chilaone-Tsoka, 2010; Muchabaiwa & Chauraya, 2023) show that the gendered social norms in the context of African cultures tend to burden women with domestic responsibilities making it difficult for working women to cope with paid employment. However, the dynamics of multigrade teaching require further study to establish the extent of preparedness by teachers taking up such heterogeneous classes and develop a model for teaching multi-grade classes. For this study, it suffices to conclude that transformative education remains elusive in fast-track resettlement

schools. Juxtaposing the cultural and institutional expectations, one can see how female teachers are caught in dilemma to meet the demands for paid work and domestic responsibilities (Muchabaiwa and Chauraya, 2022). It therefore calls for a robust and holistic approach to reimagine gender norms and gender intersectionality to promote gender justice and social inclusion in primary and secondary schools in fast-track resettlements.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The politically motivated fast-track land resettlements in Zimbabwe in the year 2000 created disruptive learning environments that continue to obstruct initiatives for gender justice and social inclusion in schools. The fast-track land resettlements environment exposes learners and teachers to school related gender based violence and unconducive learning environment which diminish opportunities for gender responsive pedagogies, gender sensitive curricula materials as well as gender-friendly school infrastructure. Re-imagining gender norms and intersectionality, gender justice and social inclusion with the aim of developing a gender transformative policy framework for fast-track resettlement schools becomes inevitable.

#### Recommendations

The following recommendations are made guided by the above findings:

- 1) The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) should develop gender audit toolkits for schools in fast track resettlements. Conducting a gender audit in fast track resettlement schools will help in developing a robust gender transformative education policy framework.
- 2) Further, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is encouraged to develop a statutory instrument that will enforce the implementation of the gender transformative policy framework in fast-track resettlement school.
- 3) MoPSE is also encouraged to develop a model for gender responsive pedagogies and a statutory instrument enforcing its implementation by schools.
- 4) The Education districts are encouraged to orient teachers in fast-track resettlement schools in applying gender responsive pedagogies guided by a practical and pragmatic gender responsive pedagogies model.

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