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Policies for Senior Women Teachers to Improve Girls' Secondary Education

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Girls' education is a critical issue on the global agenda, and particularly so for countries in sub-Saharan Africa. While working for an organization that was trying to provide low-cost, quality secondary education to girls, I became aware of various gaps in our programs: One gap involved the way we were using the position of senior woman teacher (SWT) and how we could make it better. Had I studied it alone, I would not have had enough support to review the subject properly. Thus, I want to thank the Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution and Echidna Giving for the opportunity to write and publish this paper, where I hope to shed light on the issues surrounding the SWT and suggest ways it can be strengthened to improve girls' education in Uganda.

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INDEX OF ACRONYMS

ASRHR	adolescent sexual reproductive health and rights
CHATS	Creating Healthy Approaches to Success
EFA	Education for All
GEM	Girls' Education Movement
GU	Gender Unit
MOESTS	Ministry of Education, Sports, Technology and Science
NGO	nongovernmental organization
PEAS	Promoting Equality in African Schools
SWT	Senior Woman Teacher
NSGE	National Strategy for Girls' Education in Uganda
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization

OVERVIEW

Many girls in sub-Saharan Africa drop out of school due to early marriages, pregnancies, and the inability of their parents to pay school fees. Also, violence, such as teachers caning children, is common and causes some girls to leave. To support girls' education and improve their attendance and completion patterns, Uganda created the post of senior woman teacher (SWT). At present, although SWTs are employed in slightly more than half the schools, the National Strategy for Girls Education (NSGE) found the position was weak, since their responsibilities were not well defined. As a result, the SWTs' role is not well understood or, for that matter, appreciated.

Studies have shown that schools, governments, and NGOs like PEAS (U), BRAC, Age Africa, and Discovery Learning Alliance that support girls' education have had positive results. Also, global evidence finds that, in general, female teachers are crucial to girls' education—particularly in countries with entrenched cultural norms against mixed-gender classrooms. In addition, research from various NGOs on Ugandan schools have found that SWTs have been important for advocating for girls' rights, helping girls develop an array of skills, providing counselling, and teaching health education. However, they have limited effectiveness because they do not have enough time to devote to this role since they already carry a full teaching load. Also, training, placement policies, and responsibility guidelines are poorly defined, and women are not compensated for taking on any additional roles.

Thus, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, and Sports (MOESTS) needs to explicitly define the policies for recruitment and selection, duties, remuneration, and the appropriate amount of time that should be devoted to each role. The government also needs to train and supervise them, and monitor and evaluate their performance. Further, the ministry should view them as professionals in the field of gender equity.

Policies for Senior Women Teachers to Improve Girls' Secondary Education

Christine Apiot Okudi

Girls' Secondary Education in Uganda

Although more students are now enrolled in sub-Saharan African secondary schools, the region has the world's fewest students at this level and the number of girls attending is particularly low (UNESCO, 2016). Similarly, in Uganda, girls' enrolment at this level is low. (MOESTS, 2016). UNESCO notes in their latest report (2016) that the 2030 goal on secondary education will not be achieved, given current trends. Further, the National Strategy for Girls' Education in Uganda details the rate at which girls drop out of secondary schools, which is high.

There are numerous problems, including economic, like children leaving school in order to work; religious, like families depending on the religion for education instead of sending girls to school; physical, like long distances to travel to school; emotional, like bereavement and looking after the sick; traditions, like bride fees; and physical, like menstruation—all of which affect girls' ability to attend and complete secondary school (MOESTS, 2016). The National Strategy for Girls' Education 2014-19 (NSGE) (MOESTS, NSGE, 2015-2019), places these causes into three categories (see Figure 1).

Since Uganda is a patriarchal society, girls are taught early not to directly look at people, not to freely interact with boys and men, to speak only when spoken to, and, in many tribes, to kneel in front of men and elders. Further, menstruation in some of the cultures is viewed as negative, which adds to girls' feelings of inferiority (PLAN, 2015). Thus, they lose self-confidence, self-esteem, and the ability to communicate effectively; they also have little opportunity to pursue secondary education.

Students need to attend secondary school to perform well in the 21st century. As noted by UNESCO's Director-General Irina Bokova, poverty cannot be escaped without a vast expansion of secondary education, which is the minimum level required to secure decent livelihoods in today's globalized world (UNESCO, 2011). Studies also found that adolescent girls who attend school and delay marriage and childbearing are at less risk of acquiring diseases like HIV. Also, education leads to increased earning power: a year of secondary education for girls' correlates to a 25 percent increase in wages (UNGEI, 2014).

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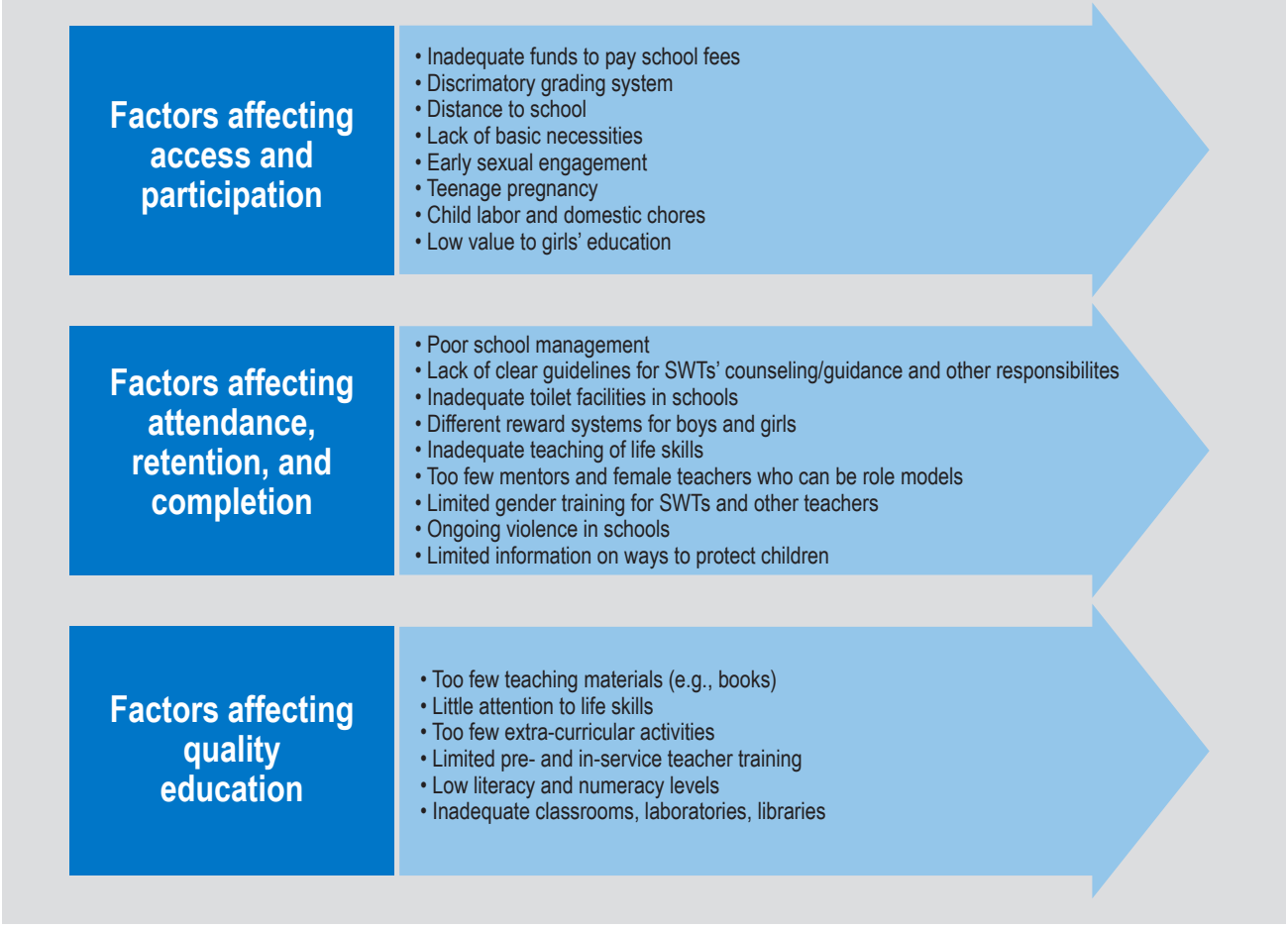
Education Quality Manager at Promoting Equality in African Schools

Ms. Christine Okudi is an active member of the education community in Uganda, and has over 20 years of experience in education and development. Having worked with many agencies in various capacities in the past, Ms. Okudi has planned and implemented programs that support quality education with a focus on gender responsive pedagogy for teachers and the development of life skills and literacy curricula at the secondary education level. She has also been involved in promoting community engagement and child protection as a means of improving educational outcomes for girls, and advocates for supplementary literacy and numeracy learning opportunities to support girls in school. Ms. Okudi holds a B.A. from Makerere University and M.A. in development studies from Uganda Martyrs University.

Figure 1: Gender issues affecting girls' education in Uganda



SWTs Can Improve Girls' Education

Various organizations have launched programs to provide secondary school education so as to resolve the issue of parity and enroll as many girls as boys. However, UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report 2015[1] says the focus should shift from parity to gender equity programs that can remove barriers and long-standing discriminatory social norms; this is crucial for women's economic growth, leadership, relationships, and well-being (UNESCO, 2016). To this end, governments and groups have designed policies and actions to challenge gender stereotypes and empower girls at all levels of education.

Uganda signed the Education for All (EFA) Movement and since 2000 has taken substantial steps to meet its obligations under Goals 4 and 5 (UNESCO, 2000). One initiative involves developing the NSGE (MOESTS, NSGE, 2015-2019): Its main goal is to help MOESTS fine-tune its roles and programs, and those of its partners supporting girls' education. Based on a 2014 study, the NSGE identified five areas for interventions: (1) Effective policy implementation framework for girls' education; (2) Harmonization of education sector programs on girls' education; (3) Commitment of requisite resources to girls' education; (4) Institutionalized/routine research in girls' education and (5) Capacity enhancement and involvement for all critical actors in girls' education.

Despite the policies and programs, girls still face enormous challenges in their families, schools, communities and countries that prevent them from obtaining secondary education. For example, it is recognized that more female teachers are needed and the Ugandan government has suggested that SWTs are one way to improve gender discrimination and help girls overcome these challenges.

However, the NSGE has not yet solidified the SWT role. Until now, SWTs were assigned to primary schools and later to secondary ones, as required in the Basic Requirements and Minimum Standards (BRMS) in Education Institutions document in Uganda, revised in 2009. The role was designed to ensure equal opportunities for girls and boys; and, although SWTs have de facto been performing the tasks, the government has not developed job descriptions for the position. Instead, the role has evolved over time, with SWTs assuming extra duties.

Besides the lack of a clear job description, SWTs get little support from other teachers and the community, little or no training, no budget for activities or salary for the extra work; their work load is huge, since they are full-time teachers of two subjects in all grades. Thus, the SWTs' effect is limited, given that the time they can apply to it is limited, and that there are no specific aims or support.

As mentioned earlier, although the SWTs' impact has not yet been measured in Uganda, a good deal of research has demonstrated the positive effect of female teachers (Kirk, 2008). Thus, Uganda would be wise to invest further in the position—although some studies suggest that a teacher's gender is less important than her/his qualifications and training (Sperling, Winthrop, & Kwauk, 2016). However, in the Ugandan context, using female teachers does have a positive impact on girls' education because of its cultural and traditional context.

According to the author's 2016 survey of SWTs, head teachers, parent-teacher association (PTA) members, boards of governors, government officials, and NGOs, the SWT performs the roles of counselor, advocate, role model, health teacher, and skills teacher. To explore their effectiveness, the study surveyed 32 secondary schools throughout the country. Each school had one SWT, some of whom were supported by NGOs such as UNICEF, Plan International, and PEAS. The study tried to determine (1) the SWTs' responsibilities, (2) the financial support and training each received, and (3) the SWTs' effect on girls' education. It included 386 girls, 32 SWTs, 32 head teachers, 17 parent-teacher associations' and boards of governors, and 15 NGO and government officials, focus group discussions and questionnaires. It also reviewed the literature and policies that support SWTs and girls' education in Uganda and the world over.

Policies and Guidelines that Support SWTs

Although Uganda's policies commit to improving girls' secondary education, the problem rests with actual practice. The main document affecting the SWT position is the NSGE 2014-19 (MOESTS, *Policy Brief*, 2013), which also admits there is a lack of clarity about which professionals (e.g., teachers, SWTs, and the head teacher) are responsible for specific tasks[2] and a lack of gender-specific information. The NSGE thus proposes developing guidelines and training for the SWTs as well as defining their responsibilities (see Table 1).

Table 1: NSGE interventions

Education sub-sector	Area of focus	Key issue	Proposed actions
Pre-school and primary education	Quality of education, girls' enrollment & retention.	• The SWTs role is not standardized • SWTs do not have adequate skills, since they are only trained as teachers. • Unclear whether SWTs or subject teachers provide counseling.	• Develop guidelines on the SWTs' and school counsellors' roles.
Secondary education	SWTs' educational results.	• Inadequate training for SWTs in gender issues.	• Train SWTs to identify and respond to girls' needs and interests—e.g., how to cope with physical development.

Source: Extract from NSGE 2019

Another problem is the lack of supervision and resources. To correct this, various groups launch gender programs and assign SWTs with responsibilities that correspond to each group's goals. As mentioned, the policies for SWTs lack guidelines (MOSETS, RTRR, 2014). However, in a new law dealing with violence against children in schools, there are guidelines about the SWTs' role as school coordinator. Their task is to listen to victims of violence and abuse, report the incidents, and provide children with support, such as counselling and medical care. This adds another dimension, specifically of child protection, to the SWTs' tasks.

The MOESTS Gender Unit has held community dialogues focused on strategies to tackle the problems of early and forced marriages and teenage pregnancies. Also, it noted that it had trained 740 SWTs from various districts on menstrual hygiene (MOESTS, 2016). However, not all schools' SWTs received training (most of which is done or supported by NGOs such as UNICEF, Plan International, World Vision International, and Save the Children). Courses are given on adolescent sexual reproductive health and rights (ASRHR), menstrual hygiene and management, how to report incidents of school violence, overall health

Table 2: Policies that support the SWTs in Uganda schools

Policy and guidelines	Overview	Application to role of SWT	Drawbacks of the current policies
The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda	This sets Ugandan laws.	Not referenced.	While it promotes affirmative action at all levels for women and girls, it has not been realized in secondary schools; the SWTs help accomplish the goal of affirmative action.
The 2007 Universal Secondary Education Policy	This ensures that children can access secondary education.	Not referenced.	Guidelines could be written to allocate funds specifically for SWT activities such as visiting girls' parents, checking on attendance, etc.
The 2009 Gender in Education Policy	This provides a framework to launch and monitor a gender-sensitive education system.	It recognizes the SWT as key to achieving gender equity in schools.	While it gives an overview of gender issues, it does not include details (and assumes MOESTS will provide them).
The 2014 – 2019 National Strategy for Girls Education (NSGE)	This was created to meet the national goal of providing a framework for strategies to narrow the gender gap in education, particularly through promoting girls' education as a form of affirmative action.	It recognizes the SWT as a stakeholder that can help launch the policy.	It mentions the gender gap but does not explain how to institutionalize the SWT position in schools.
Basic requirements and minimum standards' indicators for educational institutions	To guide government, community, and private institutions as they create a positive learning environment, alleviate or eliminate barriers to quality education.	SWTs are required in all schools.	Indictors do not describe the SWTs' responsibilities or placement.
Guidelines on SWTs' responsibility to launch guidance and counselling activities	To help SWTs participate in these programs.	SWTs are responsible for counselling and guidance in primary schools.	The guidelines do not include secondary schools.
Reporting, tracking, referral and response (RTRR) guidelines re: school violence	To create a violence- free learning environment.	The SWT was assigned the role of coordinator of anti-violence actions.	Beyond assigning the role, no guidelines exist on how RTRR is to be implemented.

and safety, children's rights and protection (MOESTS, 2014), and ways to use the information.

MOESTS is reviewing some of its policies, such as (1) the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2007-2015, and (2) the Gender in Education Policy 2009 (MOESTS, 2016). During this time, the ministry should use the opportunity to assign the SWTs specific responsibilities and to provide them with support. Table 2 highlights some existing policies that could strengthen the SWT position and identifies the policies' shortcomings.

The 2016 Survey

The dearth of female teachers in Uganda's secondary schools is hampering the NSGE. According to MOESTS 2015 Statistical Abstract, secondary schools had 58,051 teachers (26,210 in public and 31,841 in private schools), of which only 23.6 percent were female. Further, only 21 percent of secondary head teachers were female. And, as SWTs are only in 54 percent of Ugandan schools, this means that nearly half do *not* have them. Where there is only one female teacher, she automatically assumes the role of SWT; where there are none, such as in Buyende district in 2011, head teachers were asked to appoint men to this role. Some did not want to do this, since they believed girls would not share some problems, such as those that deal with physical issues (Mugooda, 2011).

The Global Education Monitoring Report gender review notes that there are relatively few female teachers in developing countries and regions, and a declining number in secondary schools, with each progressing grade. The need for SWTs thus resonates with the calls for equal numbers of female teachers and leaders in the education sector. The review also acknowledges that in countries with rigid gender norms, female teachers can attract girls to school, and improve their learning outcomes (UNESCO, 2016).

Table 3: SWT responsibilities and activities

Advocate	Counsellor	Role Model	Health Teacher	Skills Teacher
• Hold mediation meetings between parents, schools, teachers and girls. • Celebrates special events that advocate for girls rights (i.e 11th October). • Promote girls giving talks on the value of education. • Talk to collegues about gender responsive pedagogical teaching. • Interpret and state concerns about girls issues (eg for clean, separate toilets). • Periodically patrols of dormitories and classrooms to ensure girl-friendly enviroment.	• Create, organize, and oversee girls' clubs where they get group counselling on gender-related issues. • Provide group counselling in assemblies. • Meet with individual girls who have problems. • Participate on school's discipline committee. • Make attendance reports to promote girls regular attendance. • Report incidents of school violence.	• Share own experiences with girls. • Invite female community leaders to meet with girls. • Present/encourage courtesy and accepted manners. • Participate in cultural activities.	• Provide girls with information on general, menstrual, and sexual health/ hygiene. • Identify and help treat girls who are ill. • Order pharmacy items. • Supervise/help dorm matrons to ensure girls' health.	• Create free time for peer to peer involvement and for girls to work on projects (e.g. animal breeding, crafts making, baking, crop cultivation). • Support skills and talent development through sports, games, music, dance, drama, debates, assemblies and students leadership.

The survey found that the subjects studied viewed SWTs in highly gendered terms—usually as a mother figure who would protect children. Survey subjects also said the SWTs' functions included (1) promoting advocacy, (2) being a role model, (3) giving counselling and guidance, (4) teaching health issues, and (5) teaching skills. Each function involves various activities (see Table 3).

Guidance and counselling

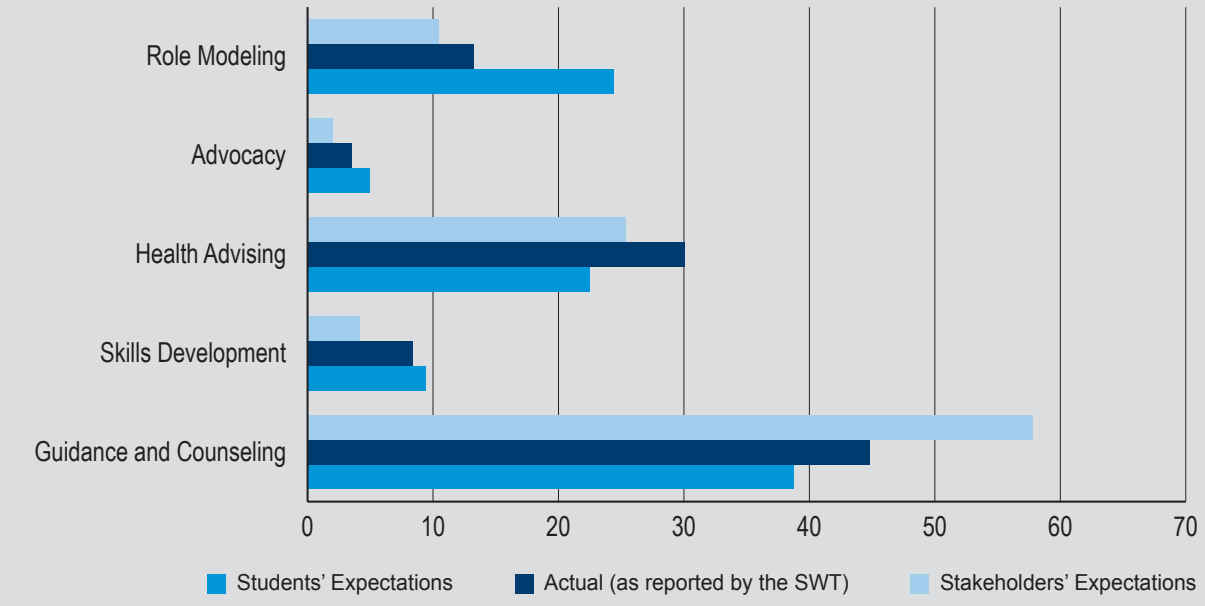
SWTs advise and support girls so they overcome their challenges and make important decisions: 50 percent of survey subjects (girls, Parent Teachers Associations, Board of Governors, Education officers, and NGOs), thought this was the SWTs' main function (see Figure 2). This is not surprising since the SWTs can offer counselling any time of the day, at no cost, and are expected to do so (MOESTS, 2010). The girls agreed, saying they provide it either in group sessions such as assemblies, or meetings with individual girls facing special problems.

The survey also found more positive assessments of SWTs in schools where they were supported with training and supervision. For example, 92 percent of girls in these schools said they approached SWTs at least twice a term about issues such as menstruation, health, family problems, career choices, ASRHR, child rights and protection, and school violence. Where the SWTs were not supported, only 60 percent of the girls met with them. Further, 40 percent of the girls said it was the SWT's *character* that made them comfortable when asking for advice.

Skills development

Only 8 percent of survey subjects viewed SWTs as those who should teach skills (see Figure 2). This is surprising that girls perceive it this way for two reasons: (1) SWTs are, first and foremost, trained as teachers; and (2) the SWTs do, in fact, teach skills in the after-school girls' clubs that train them in sports, games, music, dance, drama, agriculture, weaving and crafts. On the other hand, it may not be surprising considering in unsupported schools, SWTs cannot use the clubs to teach the skills because (1) most do not receive resources for them; (2) the activities are not compulsory and those that exist are usually for boys; (3) they generally occur at the end of the school day; and, (4) given the long distances to their homes and the many chores that await them, most girls cannot stay after school.

Figure 2: A comparison of different stakeholder expectations of the SWT



Source: Author's survey data 2016

However, in schools typically supported and funded by organizations like BRAC, PEAS, Plan International and UNICEF, the clubs offer platforms through which SWTs can develop the girls' skills such as teamwork, leadership, collaboration, communications, problem solving, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship. In these activities, girls weave baskets and mats, and make jewelry to produce income; they also learn business skills to apply in small projects the SWTs launch like poultry keeping, goat rearing, and vegetable gardening.

Based on the survey, the methods of developing girls' skills vary, depending on each SWT's creativity. However, the best of these activities could be included in a standard work plan for all schools. Although different SWTs may not be able to excel in all the extra-curricular activities, they can ensure that most girls are involved in one or more of the clubs.

Health advising

Those surveyed thought SWTs spend 26 percent of their time teaching health studies, probably because they provide girls with information on sexual and reproductive health and rights, menstruation, and general care (see Figure 2). Also, if girls need medical attention, SWTs are notified, expected to assess the condition, and provide basic first aid; the girls thought it was a critical area of SWT support. Other studies confirm (Humanity Healing International, 2011) that many girls say they get inaccurate information about puberty and menstruation from female relatives, often based on cultural taboos and myths, and need the SWTs to provide facts (Winthrop, Sperling, & Kwauk, 2016).

Although the girls were not directly asked about after-school clubs run by the SWTs, they said the clubs not only help build their skills but also provided space for peer-to-peer interactions. Organizations such as UNICEF, through the GEM Clubs (UNICEF, 2005), and Plan International, through Because I Am a Girl clubs (PLAN, 2016), use these clubs to discuss the issues of early marriages and pregnancies, HIV and AIDs, adolescent body changes, and menstruation. If no SWT is available, these groups appoint facilitators or mentors—usually teachers, community leaders, and local women—to run the clubs (Harper & Marcus, 2015). These provide places where girls' rights and privacy are respected and allow girls to share experiences to help them cope with various problems (Baldwin, 2011).

In this capacity, the SWT is not duplicating the school nurse's services. Rather, SWTs give accurate information about various issues that do not require the input of a medical practitioner.

Advocacy

According to Hounsell (2012), advocacy involves empowering adolescents so they gain a voice in decisions about their lives and secure services. However, survey subjects thought advocacy accounted for as little as 5 percent of the SWTs' responsibilities (see Figure 2).

Again, this perception is surprising because SWTs spend considerable time advocating for girls. Based on the survey, SWTs often speak with parents at school and community gatherings to advocate for their daughters' rights to education. They offer advice about the negative effects of early marriages and pregnancies, safety to and from school, menstruation, payment of school fees, sanitary pads, uniforms, and the importance of providing time for their daughters' homework. Moreover, the SWTs are an important link between the girls, their parents, the schools, and communities: For example, they visit the parents of troubled girls, or invite them to school to discuss the problems. According to Jane L. Rahman (Rahman, 2001), students succeed in school when their parents are involved in their education. They are more likely to get better grades, have better attendance, complete their assignments, display more positive behavior, have higher graduation rates, and have greater enrolment in secondary school.

Experience also suggests that SWTs in supported schools celebrate internationally recognized events like the International Day of the Girl Child on October 11 and the Because I Am a Girl Campaign. The theme in 2016 was Justice Because I Am a Girl, and SWTs, along with the girls, arranged performances to explain their problems to parents and the community, and to ask for solutions. They were also involved in games, sports, exhibitions, and debates in which they

stressed the importance of gender equity. The campaign aimed to create awareness about the threats of violence and how communities can provide girls with the education and support they need to positively change their communities' practices and concepts (PLAN, 2016).

SWTs are also key to addressing gender issues and advocating for equal treatment within the school environment. They push to have girls play football and share textbooks and laboratory equipment equally—since these are usually limited to boys. SWTs also ensure there is a girl representative in a leadership position for every activity (sometimes sharing the position with a boy). Girls at supported schools said the SWTs stressed they were equal and could compete favorably with boys. This helps break cultural notions that reduce girls' feelings of importance.

A UNESCO report on the impact of female teachers on girls' education found they are important advocates because they understand the challenges, given their own experiences. Thus, they can enlighten the school managers about how to make the school friendlier for girls (UNESCO, 2006), and help girls remain in school.

Role modelling

The Board of Governors and members of parent-teacher associations surveyed thought the SWTs were role models, which is important but mainly with respect to the information they provide to the girls. On the other hand, the girls said they were more concerned with the role model's general attitudes, lifestyles and outlooks, and if they would want to identify with them.

In fact, others, such as female teachers, often serve as role models. However, women only accounted for 43 percent of primary teachers in sub-Saharan Africa in 2012, and only 31 percent of secondary teachers. The pattern is similar in Uganda, where some schools have no female teachers at all. To bridge the gap, some organizations have invited women from the community to be guest speakers to share information about their lives, jobs, and education paths. The Kavli Trust in Sudan, partnering with the Africa Educational Trust, for example, identified role models or mentors from the community in consultation with the Ministry of Education and trained them to be girls' advocates.

The study also found that in Uganda, in schools where the SWTs were *not* formally supported, the women often presented concepts and values linked to the community's culture, traditions, and religious beliefs—which promoted the standards or norms that approved early marriage or only stressed the importance of being good wives and mothers. If they were properly trained, these SWTs might, over time, change their traditional attitudes and expand the girls' aspirations beyond gender-determined roles.

Thus, the SWTs need to understand that girls will assess all of their actions—not just the lessons they provide—and they must therefore be careful in the way they speak, move, and dress, since girls will model themselves based on all these attributes.

Recommendations

The study identified best practices from various organizations, such as PEAS,[4] BRAC,[5] and Age Africa,[6] which have supported and used SWTs, female mentors, and facilitators to improve girls' education (see text boxes on Pages 8, 9, and 10).

At present, MOESTS can either continue to poorly define the SWT responsibilities or it can develop policies that support it at the national level and provide the resources needed to make it a viable position.

The MOESTS Gender Unit[7] could combine the current disorganized SWT policies into one consolidated set of guidelines to standardize the position in Ugandan schools. In so doing, the position would then encompass the various responsibilities—like counselling and guidance, advocacy, health advising, skills development, and role modelling—that support gender equity and help girls complete secondary school.

The Gender Unit can provide technical assistance to ministry and partner agencies to mainstream gender issues, lobby, and mobilize resources for gender activities and create structures to network with partners

Box 1: Advancing Girls' Education in Africa

Photo credit: AGE Africa

Advancing Girls' Education in Africa (AGE Africa) runs a program, *Creating Healthy Approaches to Success* (CHATS) in Malawi, a 2-3-year extra-curricular activity based on acquiring life and leadership skills. As with other girls' clubs, CHATS is run by a facilitator who may be a teacher or a club member who has been trained to assume this task. The curriculum covers (1) self-advocacy, (2) leadership skills, (3) sexual and reproductive health, (4) study skills, and (5) business skills.

An evaluation of the program found that (1) 87 percent of club members retained their secondary school scholarships, and (2) 58 percent passed their final exams (compared to 26 percent and 46 percent nationwide, respectively). Also, 88 percent delayed pregnancies and marriage well beyond the national average age.

The government and local organizations in Uganda should replicate the CHATS program in schools by training facilitators using existing and proven AGE Africa resources to implement similar programs to improve girls' learning outcomes and completion in Ugandan schools.

to place SWTs in schools. NSGE has recognized that the SWT role needs to be institutionalized and ministry has policies that can support the position in the following ways.

1. **Training and certification**
   - SWT training should be standardized and focused on the activities they are expected to run. This training can be offered by different educational and child-care organizations and the government and should be focused on adding to the SWTs' skill set.
   - MOESTS Gender Unit (GU) should continue to regulate the various organizations' training of SWTs to ensure it is relevant. The regulations are listed in ASRHR[8] and menstruation management and hygiene[9] documents. At present, some of the documents' contents, particularly about sexual health, contradict some Ugandan laws and need to be vetted before they are distributed.
   - Training for SWTs should include advocacy, role modelling, counselling and guidance, and entrepreneurial skills. The role can be strengthened if training guides include these functions, along with materials on health. (MOESTS, 2014). Also, SWTs need in-service training that includes the subjects of transitioning into life after school, the connection between school and work, hazards of the informal work sector, financial literacy, and the misuse and underuse of technology (Larson, Wilson, Brown, & ET, 2002) (See Appendix I for a list of topics that should be included in a training program for SWTs). Resources include materials produced by Age Africa, PEAS (U)'s *Senior Woman Guide Handbook*, BRAC's *Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents*: *Changing Mind-Sets* and *Going to Scale with Social and Financial Skills for Girls* (Kashfi, 2012), and Kavli Sudan's *GEM Girls Education Clubs.*
   - Training should offer a separate certificate, beyond the one obtained from teachers' colleges. This will help to build the female teachers portfolios in preparation for management level roles.

Box 2: BRAC Uganda

Photo credit: Stephan Gladieu/World Bank; BRAC Uganda

BRAC runs an *Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents* program that tackles girls' economic and health challenges. It teaches life and vocational skills, along with training on how to start small businesses.

Sessions are held after school either by the trained mentors and/or BRAC's own professionals, and are attended both by girls who are enrolled and those who have dropped out. They include peer-to-peer mentoring, and discussions about the challenges and possible solutions on the following: (1) sexual and reproductive health, (2) menstruation, (3) pregnancy and family planning, (4) sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDs, (5) rape, (6) management skills such as negotiation and conflict resolution, (7) leadership skills, and (8) the laws that cover women's issues, such as bride fees, child marriage, and violence.

The peer mentoring program aims to develop girls' self-esteem, perceptiveness, self-discipline, attentiveness, partnering, sharing, leadership, imagination, and creativity. A recent study of the clubs and BRAC's program found they have positive effects and that girls who were members for two years are (1) 72 percent more likely to be involved in income-generating activities, such as getting a job or being self-employed, than other girls, (2) 26 percent less likely to have teenage pregnancies and (3) 58 percent less likely to marry early or move in with a boyfriend (BRAC, 2016).

Other organizations in Uganda and the government could replicate the BRAC program or obtain manuals from its website on the subjects of entrepreneurial skills, financial and business management, and sexual and reproductive health to increase opportunities for girls in Uganda to develop a wider breadth of skills critical for improved health and economic outcomes.

2. **Recruitment and selection**
   - The Education Service Commission, which is the statutory body accorded the responsibility of recruitment, should formalize the position of SWT, create a position of SWT within the education service, and provide all the necessary structures for appointing SWTs and later supervising them at the schools.
   - The commission could also improve on the recruitment and selection criteria by writing a clear SWT job description. At present, the head teacher, who serves as the supervisor, appoints the SWTs and each school has its own recruitment and selection criteria—considering age, maturity, and teaching experience of the female teacher. (See Appendix II for a proposed job description).

3. **Evaluation and compensation**
   - MOESTS should supervise the head teachers to ensure that they properly evaluate the SWTs' performance, offer regular feedback, and link performance to compensation. Nationwide, SWTs should be better compensated, which will make the role more attractive to young female teachers. At present, SWTs are

Box 3: Promoting Equality in African Schools

PEAS (Uganda) formalized the SWT position in its schools according to government policy. It also described the SWTs responsibilities in its 28 secondary schools in Uganda, which include:

- Provide guidance and counselling.
- Teach hygiene management.
- Help girls with adolescence.
- Identify relevant issues and speakers to broaden students' horizons.
- Help the school administration manage student discipline.
- Help the matron (the woman who sleeps in the girls' dormitories), the nurse, and class teachers achieve their goals for girls.
- Organize and run girls' clubs.

SWTs in PEAS schools help run the after-school girls' clubs that (1) facilitate information and awareness raising sessions, (2) promote peer-to-peer support, (3) link girls with mentors and community role models, (4) provide opportunities for girls to conduct community-based awareness campaigns about gender issues, (5) promote girls' life skills development, including leadership, communication, collaboration, and entrepreneurial skills, and also the development of self-esteem. PEAS has improved attendance and grades: As a result of the project's first two years, the girls' pass rates increased by 6 percent (PEAS, 2016)

This program has provided valuable insights into the possible roles for SWTs, about their training and about issues such as child protection, menstruation, and setting up and running girls' clubs.

motivated by small monthly allowances, training, and tangible benefits like free accommodations, in addition to their teacher's salaries.

- SWTs should be given special time and space in schools to do activities like meeting with girls who need individual counselling. In addition, extra-curricular activities should occur earlier in the school day when all girls are present, instead of after school, when many have gone home.
- The National Curriculum Development Centre should ensure that the SWTs have enough time in the school day for all their activities.

As stated by MOESTS, NSGE, 2015-2019, the role of the SWT is an extra responsibility beyond the normal teaching load.

4. **Data recording and reporting**
   - The Gender Unit should accord the SWT the role of recording data related to girls in school, as SWTs are well placed to collect such data since they meet with the girls daily. At present, policies on reporting, tracking, referral, and response (RTRR) (MOESTS, 2014), along with guidelines on reporting violence against children in schools, point to the

SWT as the figure responsible for collecting data on girls' attendance, retention and completion patterns, child labor, early marriage, and pregnancy. Currently, SWTs monitor attendance, but they do not have the tools and training they need to record consistently along with the other data needed. With some training and tools, SWTs can better collect this data, which will provide MOESTS with important information on girls' programming and can be used by development agencies to advocate for gender-responsive policies.

5. **Professionalization of the SWT role**
   - If SWTs were designated by MOESTS as professionals, this would help raise their profile, give them the respect they deserve, and create a career path for young female teachers. In the Education Commission's 2016 report, *The Learning Generation*, the commission notes the need for a diversified teacher workforce to help meet the increasing demand for education and to provide new educational services while managing costs (UNESCO, 2016). Professionalizing the SWT's teaching and non-teaching roles would help to ensure a more gender diverse teacher workforce in Uganda, as well as the provision of a wide range of educational support and services to girls. However, this would require a change in the way teachers are trained, supported, managed, recruited, rewarded, and placed in the system.
   - One way to prepare and support female teachers' leadership roles is to make the SWT a department head in the school who then supervises other teachers on issues of gender and manages the matron and school nurse.

Conclusion

The SWTs' role to support quality education has not yet been effectively evaluated in Uganda since they operate without clear responsibilities. However, global studies stress the importance of female teachers in schools; and, in Uganda, where the teachers' gender is critical, female teachers must be recruited to provide counseling, advocacy, and role modeling to help girls achieve quality secondary education. Organizations in Uganda such as PEAS, GEMS, AGE Africa, Discovery Learning Alliance, and BRAC have used mentors, facilitators, and teachers to perform these roles and the results have been positive. Thus, the government could apply these groups' best practices in its polices and guidelines—which would serve as one approach to improving the SWTs' effectiveness regarding girls' educational outcomes in secondary schools. Finally, the professionalization of the position of SWT in schools in Uganda could help to address the global teacher shortage crisis by not only encouraging more women to join and stay in the teaching profession, but also by providing them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and pathways to support girls get out of a cycle of intergenerational poverty and into one of improved educational and life outcomes.

Appendix I: Proposed training topics for SWTs

Advocate	Skills Teacher	Health Teacher	Counsellor	Role Model
The SWT's responsibility as an advocate and change agent for girls	Breadth of skills, including cognitive, non-cognitive, and 21st century skills (e.g. use of technology)	Basic general primary health care	Effective counselling and guidance practices	The concept of role modelling
Development of school gender strategy	Integration of skills in all school activities	Puberty and adolescents	Emotional stress and how to manage it	Effective role modelling practices
Training and support to staff on gender responsiveness and awareness	Setting up of girls clubs in schools	Personal hygiene and menstruation hygiene and management	Decisionmaking and problem solving	Designing programs for role modeling activities in schools
Involvement of girls in advocacy activities	Preparing for the world of work after school	Health implications of early marriage and pregnancy	Career guidance	Identification and invitation of role models within the community and school
Reporting and recording gender issues in the school environment		Communicable diseases and their dangers (e.g., HIV/ AIDS, Hepatitis E)	Positive discipline	Support to youth as role models
Volunteerism and community relations		Addictions and their management	Dealing with exclusion and discrimination	Recognizing and challenging gender stereotyped behaviors, attitudes, and aspirations
Understanding girls' rights and responsibilities		Food and nutrition		

Appendix II: Proposed job description for SWTs

Job title:	Senior Woman Teacher	
Reports to:	**Head Teacher**	
	Job Purpose To maintain and foster key strategies that promote **gender and inclusion for girls** in the quality of the **education provided in schools**	
	Key responsibilities	**Outcome measure**
Teacher	Teach at least two subjects on the school time table and act as a model for gender responsive practices.	Improved academic results for girls.
Advocate	Supports the Head Teacher in coordinating and developing the gender standards of the whole school in partnership with girls, staff, governors, and parents.	Increased parental, school administration, and community involvement in girls' education.
Role Model	Inspire girls with higher aspirations and gender-equitable attitudes.	Increased number of alumnae with career aspirations.
Counsellor	Provide guidance and counselling services tailored for girls; Coordinate, organize, and record guidance and counselling activities in the school.	Increased number of girls accessing guidance and counselling services.
Health Teacher	Provide basic health care and information to girls.	Improved general health of girls; Reduced number of girls affected by early pregnancy and marriage.
Skills Teacher	Ensure the school academic and non-academic timetables includes activities that promote skills development among girls.	Increased number of girls involved in clubs and activities.

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Notes

1. A shift in focus is needed from parity to gender equality to enable all, and especially girls and young women, to reap the full benefits from education.
2. NSGE 2014-19 4.5 Capacity Utilization and Enhancement: Utilization and strengthening of capacities for all stakeholders in girls' education is central in increasing stakeholders' knowledge, attitudes, and skills to appreciate the underlying barriers to girls' education. Interventions in this area of focus include awareness raising on the need for girls' education, providing clarity on the roles of different stakeholders (e.g., teachers, education managers, senior women, and school counselors), tapping into key spaces of societal conscience such as cultural and political leaders, and attention to boys' and men's involvement in supporting girls' education.
3. The International Day of the Girl Child is commemorated every 11 October, since the United Nations adopted it in 2011, and has been a key global moment to celebrate the power of girls and to highlight the barriers they face.
4. Promoting Equality in African schools (PEAS). http:www.peas.org.uk.
5. BRAC runs a secondary school program in Uganda to ensure high quality education and practical experience to meet current job market demands. http://www.bracusa.org.
6. AGE Africa is an organization that enables disadvantaged but academically talented young women to attend and *finish* secondary school and to pursue opportunities beyond high school by equipping them with all the resources, knowledge, and awareness they need to succeed. http://www.ageafrica.org/.
7. The Gender Desk in MOEST has been set up in the MOESTS to provide technical assistance to the Ministry on gender mainstreaming efforts, lobbying and mobilization of resources for gender mainstreaming activities, and setting up structures for linking and networking with partners on gender equality.
8. MOESTS Circular No 05/2016, Sexuality education materials in schools. With great concern, the Ministry has noted that a number of organizations and individuals have volunteered to develop materials and to even provide sexuality education to some educational institutions without first getting permission from the Ministry. Such materials have often been found to be highly inaccurate.
9. MOESTS Circular No 01/2015, Menstrual Hygiene management in schools. The MOESTS recognized the importance of menstrual hygiene management as a key issue that affects the retention, performance, and completion of girls in school. It issued menstrual hygiene management regulations for educational institutions, both primary and secondary level.

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