



COMMONWEALTH *of* LEARNING

Gender Guidelines for the Sri Lanka Open School System



NATIONAL
INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
SRI LANKA

Gender Guidelines for the Sri Lanka Open School System



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Acknowledgements

The final version of the guidelines was prepared by Sarawanamuthu Dunaisingh, Senior Lecturer/ Head, Open School Unit, National Institute of Education following a three-day workshop which was facilitated by a team from the National Institute of Open Schooling, India, which visited Sri Lanka for this purpose.

Published by:

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Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Commonwealth of Learning for their support and encouragement, especially to Dr. Tony Mays, Education Specialist: Open Schooling for his assistance to develop Gender Guidelines and conduct three day face-to-face workshop.

I would also extend my thanks to officers of the National Institute of Open Schooling, India (NIOS), Dr. Mamta Shrivastava, Deputy Director Academic, Dr. Madhur Bhatia, Academic Officer and, Ms. Anshul Kharbanda, Academic Officer for their facilitation in conducting the 3-day face-to-face workshop on developing Gender Guidelines for Open School.

Special thanks are extended to the research team, retired Prof. Sunethra Karunaratne, Dr. Nanda Wanniarachchi and Dr. Godwin Kodituwwaku for their expertise involvement in developing Gender Guidelines for Open School system in Sri Lanka.

I thank Visharad Sudath Samarasinghe, Deputy Director General (Faculty of Teacher Education and Alternative Education), Mr. S. Dunaisingh, Head, Open School and the staff members of the Open School Unit and all the resource persons who take the timely responsibility to carry out this process.

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Glossary of terms (including terms for understanding concepts)

Challenges in Promoting Gender Equality – Changing social - cultural values, beliefs and attitudes become a challenge in promoting gender equality. Existing power structure must change, and all genders must be full partners in development processes. There is a need to move from a gender neutral perspective to a gender - responsive approach.

Empowerment – This is about people taking control over their lives, setting their own agendas, gaining skills, building self-confidence, solving problems and developing self - reliance, irrespective of their gender. Society as well as institutions can support processes that can nurture self - empowerment of individuals or groups.

Femininity is a set of attributes, behaviours, and roles generally associated with girls and women. Femininity is socially constructed, but made up of both socially defined and biologically created factors.

Gender also refers to the roles and responsibilities of women / girls and men / boys in construction of roles and relationships that are created in our families, our societies and our cultures between women and men. The concept of gender includes the expectations held about the characteristics, aptitudes, and likely behaviours of both women and men (related to femininity and masculinity). These roles and expectations are learned. These are not biologically predetermined nor are these fixed forever.

Gender Analysis is the systematic examination of the roles, relations and processes, focusing on imbalances of power between women, men and transgender persons in all societies. It is the basis for planning an initiative that has realistic objectives and activities related to the promotion of gender equality.

Gender Audit is a process for organizational assessment and is an audit tool for action planning. The audit process helps to identify organizational strengths and challenges for monitoring gender integrity in the organization's systems and operations, and programmes and projects. It works in a two stage process that allows for the collection of information to assess the status of gender equity in a given environment of the organization.

Gender Bias refers to the unequal treatment in employment opportunity and attitudes based on the sex of an employee or group of employees. Gender bias can be a legitimate basis for a lawsuit under anti discriminatory statutes.

Gender Blind implies the inability to recognize the differences amongst all genders leading to failure in understanding the needs and provide for differences.

Gender Budgeting is critical for ensuring that resource allocation takes place in a gender - responsive manner. Gender budgeting involves the examination of all expenditures and revenues from a gender perspective. This implies that all expenditure is examined for its relevance, accessibility, impacts and consequences for women and men and transgender people. For example, when an institution devotes a percentage of its budget to provision of accommodation or scholarships, the question of how much of it will benefit women, will emerge. When an institution budgets for a crèche for staff children, the question of what is the impact on the female and male workforce will emerge.

Gender Disaggregated Data are the data that are collected and presented separately on all gender women, men and transgender persons.

Gender Discrimination refers to the prejudice or discrimination based on person's sex or gender and has been linked to gender stereotypes and gender roles. Gender discriminations continues to get perpetuated with the belief that one sex or gender is intrinsically superior to the other. Another commonly used term for such discrimination is **sexism**. Extreme sexism may foster sexual harassment, rape and other forms of gender violence.

Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is an index designed to measure the gender equality. GEM is the United Nations Development Programme's attempt to measure the extent of gender inequality across the globe's countries, based on estimates of – women's relative economic income, participation in high - paying positions with economic power, and access to professional and parliamentary positions.

GEM is determined using three basic indicators;

1. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments
2. percentage of women in economic decision making position (including administrative, managerial, professional and technical occupations) and
3. Women's share of income.

The GEM is thought to be a valuable Guidelines instrument because it allows certain dimensions that were previously difficult to compare between countries to come into international comparison.

Gender Equality means that all genders have equal conditions for realizing their full potential and for contributing to and benefitting from economic, social, cultural and political development. It is based on the principle of all genders being full partners in their home, community and society. The advancement of the goals of gender equality and empowerment are central to the agenda of learning for development.

Gender Equity refers to fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities amongst women and men and transgender people. The concept recognizes that women and transgender people have different needs and power and that these differences should be identified and addresses in a manner that rectifies the imbalance between the sexes and amongst all genders.

Gender Expression refers to all of the external characteristics and behavior that are socially defined as either masculine or feminine, such as dress, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions.

Gender Gaps in learning environments stem from socio - cultural values, beliefs and attitudes. Such gender gap in learning environments refers to differences in access, participation and benefit from learning opportunities for women / girls, men/boys and transgender people.

Gender Identity refers to a person's internal, deeply felt sense of being either man or women, or something other or in between.

Gender Inclusive term denotes that all genders should be part and parcel of the processes of education aiming at mainstreaming for equity, equality, justice and empowerment.

Gender Mainstreaming is a strategy for making women's, men's, well as transgender concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres, such that inequality between men, women and transgender persons is not perpetuated.

Gender Parity is attained when the same proportion of women and men, relative to their respective age groups, enter the learning environment or education system and complete and advance through different cycles of learning and education.

Gender Guidelines is developed out of recognition that there are deficiencies in the operation of institutions and organizations in their fair and equitable treatment of all genders i.e. women/girls, men/boys and transgender community. A Gender Guidelines is an instrument for tackling those deficiencies in an organized manner with stated goals, timeframes for achieving them, methodologies for achievement of goals and strategies, and programmes through which the Guidelines will be applied.

Gender Roles are learned through socialization processes; they are not fixed but are changeable. Perspectives on gender are institutionalized through educational, political and economic systems; through legislation; and through culture, religion and traditions.

Gender Roles and Relations usually result in women and girls having different and less access and control to resources and decision - making processes than men and boys, which may lead to unequal power relations. These unequal power relations hinder equitable development and make it difficult for women and girls to fully participate in development processes that affect them.

Gender Sensitivity is the translation of awareness into practices, which result in changes in the perceptions, plans and activities of people, society, institutions and organizations.

Gender Stereotype is a rigid and over-simplified definition of a group of people in which all members of that group are labelled with similar characteristics. Stereotypes produce behavior patterns that conform to expectations. Gender stereotypes inhibit women and girls and the transgender people from realizing their full potential because of societal barriers.

Gender is used to describe those characteristic of individuals, which are socially constructed, while sex refers to those which are biologically determined. People are born female or male but learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men. This learned behavior makes up gender identity and determines gender roles.

Masculinity is a set of attributes, behaviours, and roles generally associated with boys and men. Masculinity is made up of both socially defined and biologically created factors.

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is a socio economics index usually designed to measure the relative access to education of males and females. In its simplest form, it is calculated as the quotient of the number of females by the number of males enrolled in a given stage of education (primary, secondary etc.) The calculation to include transgender people in GPI is yet to be evolved.

Transgender people are individuals of any age or sex whose appearance, personal characteristics, or behaviours differ from stereotypes of being men and women and fall outside stereotypical gender norms.

Transgender has become an umbrella term that is used to describe a wide range of identities and experiences, including transsexual people; male and female cross-dressers; intersexes individuals; men and women whose identity or behaviours are gender atypical and fall outside the stereotypical gender norms. Transgender is a term which is used to refer to all persons whose own sense of gender does not match with the gender assigned to them at birth.

The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite statistic of -1) life expectancy, 2) education, 3) income indices used to rank countries into four tiers of human development, created by Prof. Amartya Sen and Prof. MahbubulHaq in 1990 published by the United Nations Development.

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Part I

Open School in Sri Lanka

Open School in Sri Lanka was established as a Department of the National Institute of Education (www.nie.lk) in 2005 as an alternative path to provide education for those who were unable to complete their formal education due to a variety of reasons such as poverty, social cultural factors, and disability related factors. A study conducted by the International Labour Organisation (2005) has found that number of school dropouts was about 60,000 in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, at the end of secondary education, 45% of students leave the school without following any courses, after sitting the examination of General Certificate of Education - Ordinary Level (GCE-O/L) (World Bank 2005).

Due to the rigidity of rules and regulations of school education system students who were dropped out cannot enter to the school system again. Furthermore there were no alternative pathways to provide education for differently abled children and, children in rehabilitation centres.

Taking into consideration the above facts, National Institute of Education introduced Open School as a low cost non formal channel to provide education for children, youth and adults who missed the opportunity to complete their formal education due to various reasons.

Aim of Open School

The overall objective of National Institute of Education with regard to the Open School is :

To provide opportunities for Open Learning for youth who are not attending mainstream schooling to prepare them for the world of work and develop life skills (Source : National Institute of Education, 2017, p. 43).

Objectives

- To provide multiple opportunities for those who have not been benefitted from formal education system to complete their secondary and senior secondary education.
- To provide opportunities for the people who were unable to gain literacy and numeracy through formal education.

- To expand opportunities through different paths to follow vocational education.
- To improve opportunities for the differently - abled, less academically-abled and for those who do not have “acceptable” qualifications.
- To build a bridge between general education and the world of work.
- To improve the productivity of labour and quality of life by meeting the needs of Open School learners.
- To promote facilities for conducting education programmes.
- To create an understanding of importance of education in modern world.

Functions of the Open School

- Carrying out need surveys, investigations and research
- Designing and implementation of projects
- Curriculum development and planning of learning material
- Development and production of learning materials
- Conducting awareness and training workshops
- Project management
- Project evaluation
- Evaluation and certification
- Staff development
- Providing vocational guidance
- Collaboration with other institutes

Clientele of Open School

- Drop outs of formal school without completing formal education
- The differently - abled people who have been unable to attend formal school
- Nomads and indigenous groups who do not usually enter formal school
- The employed/unemployed who seek opportunities in education
- Those who need vocational education and guidance
- Those especially the females who have grievances in education due to various socio - economic and cultural factors
- Children who were affected by disasters such as tsunami, floods, landslides, war and illnesses

Anticipated learner - facilitating courses

- Foundation course
- Basic Education course
- Junior Secondary Education courses
- Senior Secondary Education courses
- Bridging courses to facilitate continuing school education for school drop outs due to civil war and various other reasons
- Supplementary education courses
- Language courses
- Skill development courses
- Literacy and numeracy courses
- Life enrichment courses

Challenges

By establishing regional study centres throughout the country, Open School programmes could be implemented to provide education for a variety of disadvantaged children and youth. However, the urgent need is to address the challenges faced by the Open School to achieve its goals. It is difficult to provide flexible learning environment for learners due to lack of infrastructure facilities including technology. A majority of tutors who work in regional study centres are teachers in formal schools and they are unable to adapt to teach drop outs and learners with diverse backgrounds and needs. Another major problem is how to keep girls and women to continue Open School programmes due to their involvement in social and house hold activities.

Part II

Rationale for gender guidelines

According to the Constitution of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (1978) women are equal to men under the general law, including inheritance rights. It also guarantees fundamental rights and non-discrimination on grounds of sex (Art. 12[1] and 12[2]). There is also provision for special measures to ensure women's right to equality. There are no legal barriers to women working outside home, engaging in financial transactions or obtaining credit.

Sri Lanka has achieved gender equality in primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and tertiary education (MDG country report, 2014, Sri Lanka) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Progress and status of indicators related to gender equality and empowerment under MDGs

Indicator	1995	2002	2006	2012	2015 target	Status of indicator
Ratio of girls to boys (number of girls per 100 boys) enrolled in.						
Primary	94.2	94.6	99.0	99.4	100	Achieved
Lower secondary	91.2	94.8	105.7	102.8	100	Achieved
Upper secondary	107.7	101.8				
Tertiary	75.4	113.8	NA	NA	100	Achieved
Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (%)	30.8 (1993)	32.8 (2001)	32.2 (2007)	32.0 (2011)	No target	Need to increase
Population of seats held by women in national parliament	5.8 (1989/94)	4.2 (2000/04)	5.8 (2004/07)	6.8 (2010/14)	No target	Need to increase

Source: MDG country report, 2014, Sri Lanka.

The concluding observations of the UN committee in 2011 (UN CEDAW) has indicated that Sri Lanka has eliminated gender disparities in enrollment in primary, secondary, and higher education but has not eliminated them in technical – vocational education or ensured gender equality in the labour market and in access to decision - making positions to achieve the third Millennium Development Goal, “Promote gender equality and the empowerment of women.” Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 5.0) also found that gender inequality is still visible in the country. Sri Lanka Voluntary National Review on the status of implementing SDGs (2018) also reports that although gender equality exists in primary, secondary enrollments, school completion rates, higher performance rates at public examinations, there is wider gender imbalances in enrollment in natural sciences and information technology and political participation.

At present the clientele of the Open School consists of a very diverse group of learners. Although many who have dropped out of schools are enrolled in the Open School, some of them were not able to continue the programme successfully, e.g., still in some families, the eldest girl in the family has to look after the younger siblings and also in cooking when parents are involved in agricultural activities such as harvesting in the paddy fields. Some of these learners have to take the responsibility of family matters as either mother or the father has gone abroad to earn more money. Hence, there should be some flexibility e.g., in considering attendance for them to continue the programmes. Even among the indigenous groups there is inequality in the numbers who follow the Open School due to the involvement in house hold activities. In spite of all these barriers some female students were able to enter to the university. Some parents do not want to send their disabled children especially girls to a school. They keep those children at home.

There are also Open School learners from the children in the rehabilitation centres (children who are under 18 years of age, involved in small scale offences.) Some of them are involved in many illegal activities. Women who are involved in temporary jobs want to raise their standards by following an education course to do a skilled job, but working conditions prevent them in following such courses. Open School offers literacy courses for illiterate people. There is also a group of women who have done

major offences are in the prison and in the mental hospitals are also following courses in the Open School. There are several factors to be considered in educating these groups such as providing a suitable learning environment for study such as offering a special chair to sit, safety, love and care, transport facilities, flexible hours and venues for learning. To reap the benefits of the Open School, it is necessary to consider the faith of these groups who deny the access to education in formulating the Gender Guidelines of the Open School.

Open School and gender related issues

Design and implementation of school does not focus on gender equality and equity due to stereotyped mindset with regard to education. The lack of gender focus in the program has influenced girls and women education. Therefore the following problems and issues related to gender equality and equity were identified by analysing the Open School programmes.

- Mission, purpose and objectives of the Open School were developed without considering gender equality and equity.
- Presently, participants of learners are dominated by male participants (2015/2016: Females, 40%; Males, 60%); (2016/2017: Female 51%; Male 49%) (2017/2018: Female 51%; Male 49%) (2018/2019: Females, 49.5%; Males, 50.5%) (Source : Evaluation reports, Open School, NIE, 2015 -2019)
- Lack of awareness of gender equality and equity for the staff, learners and other stakeholders of Open School.
- There is no gender balance in recruitment of tutors. In September 2019, there were 11 male senior tutors, but only one female tutor. There were 160 male tutors and 80 female tutors.
- The participation of women in the management of Open School is also low.
- Courses, self-learning materials and supplementary materials have been developed without considering gender equality and equity (Most of the examples given in modules are pictures of males and stories related to men.)
- Without considering girls and women's special needs learner support system have been developed, e.g., Some of our Open School learners are mothers who do breastfeeding. They need a place to feed the baby and also to change baby's clothes.

- There are no proper sanitary facilities and a rest room for women and girls.
- Although Sri Lanka is a small island, there are provincial - wise differences. They were not considered in developing educational projects on Open Schooling. Hence, there is a necessity to reduce provincial level gender imbalances by focusing on Open school Guidelines.

Gender vision

Women and girls in Sri Lanka engage as equal partners in the educational development process via Open School system.

Gender mission

The mission of the Open School is to:

- build awareness on gender issues and concerns
- create gender sensitive learning environment
- enable multiple learning opportunities to make girls and women participate in further learning
- develop activities to be useful in their household activities.
- Implement Open School activities leading to gender equality, equity and sustainability

Sri Lankan Open School undertakes the following activities to achieve gender mission

- Conduct training programmes for building gender sensitivity amongst the stakeholders
- Establish Open School regional centres to provide wider access to gender sensitive learning environment
- Develop gender sensitive learning materials for the benefit of Open School learners
- Support education programmes for women and girls to promote their self-generated projects
- Provide variety of learning opportunities for marginalized groups
- Introduce different paths to access education for girls and women in using digital system

Scope of Gender Guidelines

- Clearly spell out the aim and objectives of the Open School to address gender concerns so as to achieve gender parity in enrollment, retention and achievement of learners
- Ensure gender parity in the academic faculty, administrative staff, support staff and other stake holders
- Identify the particular needs of girls and women in relation to employment, income, consumption and control over and access to education and health, political representation, physical security, legal and human rights
- Review the existing curricula and self-learning materials to bring about gender equality
- Design activities to promote and integrate gender equity, equality and empowerment
- Allocate resources in a gender responsive manner in preparing budget
- Monitor and evaluate all programmes from the perspective of gender justice
- Monitor on a regular and systematic basis to ensure compliance with desired standards and quality assurance based on the principles of gender equity, equality, justice and empowerment in the following areas:
 - Institutional management
 - Financial management
 - Learner support services
 - Course development
 - Learner assessment
 - Monitoring and evaluation
 - Integration with technology
 - Research
 - Community engagement physical infrastructure
 - Networking with National and Regional Organizations
 - Advocacy and information dissemination
 - Documentation

Values of Gender Guidelines

The Gender Guidelines in Sri Lanka is framed considering the following values:

- Developing Gender Guidelines based on the values specific to gender.
- Developing purposes of Open School specific to the Gender Guidelines.
- To address the different needs and values on Open Schooling, different values of stakeholder participation are encouraged.
- Gender Guidelines are implemented adhering to the different levels of values in the management systems of Open School system.
- Gender Guidelines are implemented in the teaching and learning processes adhering to the values of the Open School system.
- Monitoring and evaluation of gender related programmes needs to be in line with the accepted value standards prevailed provincially, nationally and internationally.
- Comprehensive and sustainable education will be developed based on value added research to provide and maintain excellence of learning in a gender bias free environment.
- Collaborative partnership with government and non-governmental institutions both locally and internationally will be used to develop and organize gender sensitive programmes, workshops and seminars.
- The environment of the regional and national study/learning centres is free of gender bias.
- Ensure values related to gender equality, equity and justice in the admission guidelines of students, tutors and administrators to study centres.
- Promoting gender equality, equity, justice and empowerment through learning resources such as print, electronic, open educational resources etc.
- Evaluation practices need to be gender bias free highlighting the cultural, social and economic values of the country.

Considerations in developing Gender Guidelines

- Review the goals and objectives of Open School in terms of gender perspective
- Review existing curricula, self-learning materials and supplementary materials towards gender sensitivity

- Guidelines and strategy on women enrollment need to be implemented to take decisions on recruitment of women for staff and enrollment of girls for courses and further to encourage women and girls for Open School programmes
- Impact gender sensitive orientation training/capacity development projects to the staff, learners and other stakeholders
- Encourage women and girls for Open School programme by focusing their needs, interests and benefits
- Introduce on line facilities to minimize their barriers for learning
- Introduce friendly learner support system for women and girls (flexible time table, sanitary facilities, breast feeding facilities, safe environment)
- Determine that resource allocation takes place in a gender responsive manner in preparing budget

Suggested actions

- Review the existing, self-learning materials and activities towards gender sensitivity
- Analyze and review (self and peer) programmes on Open School from gender perspective
- Encourage recruitment of women and girls to Open School
- Encourage girls and women for Open School by focusing the courses for the benefits of girls and women
- Introduce on-line facilities to support women and girls to minimize barriers of participation
- Learner support system to be developed considering the needs of the girls and women
- Determine that resource allocation takes place in a gender responsive manner in preparing budgets
- Impact gender sensitive orientation training to the learners and other stakeholders
- Conduct participatory action research on Open School related activities and projects to identify gender related issues and promote gender sensitivity.

Action plan for implementing the Guidelines

Issues	Guidelines to improve	Specific actions needed	Time frame
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mission, purpose and objectives of the Open School have been developed without considering gender equality and equity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of existing materials based on gender perspective Develop a theoretical framework for guiding Guidelines based on existing theories on gender (e.g., Critical Feminist Pedagogy) (Source: Sahini, 2018) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of existing mission, purpose and objectives, based on the gender factor and develop a new framework with mission, purpose and objectives Review of existing theories on gender and indigenous knowledge on gender Define the Open School concept based on digital era definitions (Source: Commonwealth of Learning, 2018) Develop a road map for gender related and digital area related Open School Guidelines and specific activities. 	<p>March - May 2020</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No representation of women participation in management level of Open School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determined that resource allocation takes place in a gender responsive manner in preparing budgets for recruitment Encourage women and girls for Open School programmes Take decision on recruitment of women for staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze and review (self and peer) programmes on Open School based on gender perspective to identify cadre requirements based on the criteria gender Awareness building media project Develop a qualification and recruitment process to encourage women and recruit them to Open School 	<p>July 2020 - December 2021</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner population is dominated by male participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take decision on enrollment of girls for courses • Introduce on - line facilities to support women and girls to minimize barriers of participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage girls and women for Open School by focusing the courses for the benefits of girls and women • Develop on-line courses to support women and girls to minimize barriers of participation 	<p>August 2020 - December 2021</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness of gender equality and equity for the staff, learners and other stakeholders of Open School. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement gender sensitive orientation courses to the staff, learners and other stakeholders • Impact gender sensitive orientation training to the learners and other stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze the content of existing awareness programmes and specific activities to identify strengths and weaknesses • Develop a gender based orientation program 	<p>March - December 2020</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no gender balance in recruitment of tutors or learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage women and girls for Open School programmes by focusing their needs, interests and benefits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review study to identify world trends. • A need survey to identify the needs of women for courses • A Guidelines research to identify Guidelines frame - work on recruitment 	<p>July 2020 to December 2021</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses, self - learning materials and supplementary materials have been developed without considering gender equality and equity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the existing curricular, self - learning materials and activities towards gender sensitivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content analysis research on the existing curricular, self - learning materials and activities towards gender sensitivity 	<p>June 2020 – December 2021</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Without considering gender equality and equity learner support system was developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner support system to be developed by considering the needs of the girls and women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of the learner support system to identify gaps to be filled with regard to gender issue. 	<p>August - December 2020</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial wise differences were not considered in developing educational projects on Open Schooling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine that resource allocation takes place in a gender responsive manner in preparing budgets according to the provincial needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct participatory action research on Open School related activities and projects at provincial levels • Use the technique of 'photo voice' to identify provincial level needs • Develop provincial specific implementation plans for the next five years • Develop a road map for gender related Open School activities at provincial level. 	<p>July 2020 - March 2022</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assurance process is not emphasized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a quality assurance body and guidelines for actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study the exiting quality assurance frameworks in the global contexts in relation to gender on Open Schools. • Develop a quality assurance framework to suit the Sri Lankan context. 	<p>April - August 2020</p>

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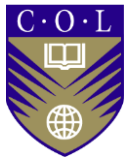
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