Guidance on Gender-Responsive School Observation

**Target audience:** Project/programme officers, teachers/school heads, teacher trainers, researchers

*This tool gives guidance on how to use the school observation sheets that are given in Tool 16: “Gender-Responsive School Observation Tools.”*

Before using the observation sheets, please read the following guidelines:

**Guidelines for Classroom Visits**

1. **Limit the number of observers.** The presence of visitors changes students’ and teachers’ classroom behaviour; change it as little as possible by limiting the number of observers to two, if possible. Divide up tasks with your partner so that one person can fill in all the charts within one class period.

2. **Determine how long you will observe.** Spending one day or at least half a day gives a better view.

3. **Decide whether observers should intervene** or not. For instance, during a class observation, observers can sit at the back of the classroom to avoid disturbance or they can also participate and interact with the teacher and the students. Both approaches have different implications that you should ponder.

4. **Be clear about your objective** for the class observation and discuss it with the teachers and the school head.

5. **Tell the teacher you are here to learn** from her/him and her/his students, so you will be writing down many things while you are there. Have your pencil/pen and worksheet ready so you can begin as soon as you sit down.
   - Take off your “teacher’s or supervisor’s hat” and put on your “researcher’s hat.” Your role is to watch carefully, and not judge what the teacher is doing.
   - Use what you know as an educator to help you think about what you are seeing. You may also participate in the class by giving suggestions to the teacher or participate in the class, depending on your approach to class observation.
   - Watch. Record. Take notes. When observing, do not focus only on those speaking up and responding to the teacher. Observe and pay attention to those who are not actively participating, and why.
   - After the class, ask to interview five students (volunteers) and the teacher. (Make sure that both girls and boys are included possibly in equal numbers)
   - After you interview the teacher, you may show her/him what you have done (e.g., drawing the classroom map as shown in the example in Tool 16: “Gender-Responsive School Observation Tool”).
Guidelines for Collecting School-level Data

6. All observers should look around the school as they are walking to and from their classrooms to take note of:
   a) images of males and females on the school walls (posters).
   b) how spaces are used by girls and boys (e.g., seating arrangements with sufficient number of desks for both boys and girls, medical facilities, counseling facilities, football/basketball/lawn tennis field, location and use of separate toilets, drinking water).
   c) other setting characteristics: Opportunities for athletics, extracurricular opportunities for both sexes (e.g., art, cooking classes for boys and sports for girls).

7. Prior to the school visit, administrative school data should be collected from relevant services. You may verify them with the school teachers/head.

8. Observers can collect the enrolment information and data on teachers from the school head, if it has not been collected before.

9. In addition to what is asked for on your observation sheets, ask "child-seeking" questions:
   a) See if the school has a record of how many girls and boys have dropped out of school in the last three years.
   b) See if the school have a record of children in the community who are in the school-going age.
   c) See if the school know how many children in the community are not in school and may never have enrolled (e.g., physically/mentally challenged, slow learners, dyslexic children whose parents are keeping them at home, children who are working, baby sitting, helping in family occupation, taking care of a sick family member, doing household chores and not enrolled in school).
   d) See if the school has ever tried to reach those out-of-school children, girls and boys, and/or their parents, so that they can come to school.

Synthesize

In case you conduct multiple visits and observations, you may need to draw a summary sheet to compare your findings.

Adapt the Observation Tools

You are encouraged to adapt the observation sheets according to the context of the school or classroom you are visiting. The sheets you are given in Tool 16 can not be applied to all school/classroom contexts.

When you create your own observation tools, you can also make use of other materials given in the Toolkit, in particular, materials included in Part 2: Tools for a Gender-Responsive Educational Environment.