

### [Gender equality starts in the early years](#) [1]



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VVOB and the [Forum for African Women Educationalists \(FAWE\)](#) [2] have committed themselves to making early childhood education gender-responsive in Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia. The gender partners are in the process of developing a toolkit to be used by both student teachers and in-service teachers in these countries.

## GRP4ECE

With the signing of the Post 2015 Development Agenda, the governments of Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia pledged to work towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030. And they are putting their money where their mouth is.

The fourth SDG on education includes a target on quality early childhood education (target 4.2), as well as a target on inclusive education which also includes gender equality (target 4.7). With support from VVOB and FAWE, the ministries of Education of Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia are developing a gender-responsive toolkit for early childhood education (ECE) – or a GRP4ECE toolkit for short. This toolkit will be used by VVOB and its partners for the teacher education of ECE student teachers and for the professional development of in-service teachers in the three countries.

### Gender-sensitive kids

The goal of the GRP4ECE toolkit, which is planned to be finalised mid-2018, is to encourage ECE teachers to provide a gender-balanced environment in which their young learners can develop to their full potential. By more consciously developing gender equality in classrooms, gender stereotypes can be challenged before they become a set and unconscious way of thinking in children.

But are kids really that sensitive to gender? Christin Ho from [RoSa vzw, a Flemish gender expertise centre](#) [3] and partner organisation of VVOB, lent her insights at a two-day workshop in Lusaka. She says children are definitely susceptible to stereotyping: "We assume girls and boys enjoy equal opportunities, but in practice we see that our society is dominated by gender stereotypes that determine how kids 'should' behave at school. Frequently heard statements such as 'girls like pink', 'boys don't cry', 'girls play with dolls, boys with cars' push young children in a certain direction in life that may not be in line with their real talents, personality and potential."

The early years of education, therefore, is a crucial time to develop a gender-sensitive view of the self and others in children, positively impacting the choices both girls and boys make in later life.

### Strong record of collaboration

The GRP4ECE working group is made up of 21 people from different backgrounds. Ministry officials, academics, and representatives from FAWE and VVOB Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia will be working together on the toolkit the coming year.

VVOB and FAWE have a strong record of collaborating on gender issues in African education contexts. The organisations have joined forces on topics such as gender-responsive pedagogy and school leadership, and gender-sensitive teaching and learning materials. The partnership also includes joint engagement for gender-sensitive education policies and practices at national, regional and international levels.

VVOB was also honoured to partake in FAWE's conference on Girls' Education in Africa end August. Our colleagues from VVOB RD Congo presented [a case study on gender-responsive agricultural education in Congo](#) [4], and our colleagues from VVOB Zambia gave more insight into [gender-responsive early childhood education in Zambia](#) [5], which also touched on the topic of the GRP4ECE toolkit.

[Partnering up for girls with FAWE and RoSa](#) [6] (news)

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[2] <http://www.fawe.org/>

[3] <http://www.rosavzw.be/site/>

[4] <http://www.vvob.be/vvob/en/downloads/paper-gender-responsive-pedagogy-tvet-case-study-rdc-french>

- [5] <http://www.vvob.be/vvob/en/downloads/gender-responsive-pedagogy-early-childhood-education-grp4ece>
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