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### **The Practice of Gender Responsive Class Room Instruction in Upper Primary Schools of South Gondar Administrative Towns (5-8 Grades)**

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#### **Abstract**

Gender equality teaching is as equal as quality education. Ensuring gender equality in education implies ensuring quality education. This study was carried out in upper primary schools in five administrative towns of South Gondar Zone (Wereta, Addis Zemen, Gayint, Debre Tabor and Estie). To collect quantitative data, questionnaires were employed for teachers. Besides, semi-structured observation checklist was used to observe and record class room instructions. There are 20 upper primary schools in the selected administrative towns. The total population of teachers in the selected schools is 623. Among this population, 305 participants were chosen using simple random sampling technique. The result showed that most teachers have awareness on gender equality class room instruction. Besides, most teachers confirmed that they practice gender responsive classroom interactions. They also practiced gender responsive language in their teaching-learning process in the class room. The result also showed that there was no statistically significant difference between male and female teachers in their awareness in most sub scales of measurement on gender equality class room instruction. Hence, the school should provide gender responsive- awareness trainings to those teachers who have poor and insufficient awareness to realize gender equality class room instruction. Furthermore, the school should help teachers to practice gender responsive language in their teaching-learning process by giving capacity building trainings on gender responsive language use.

**Keywords:** 1Gender 2 Gender Responsive Instruction 3 Instruction 4 Upper Primary School 5 Classroom

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## 1. Introduction

It is obvious that education plays a pivotal role for people to grow and transform themselves in several aspects of their lives. This would be realized when its quality is ensured. One fundamental element to ensure educational quality is to address gender dimension (Forum for African Women Educationalists, 2006). Gender equality teaching is as equal as quality education. The changes we make to education to better meet the specific needs of girls and boys is similar to the changes we need to make to ensure that everyone receives a better quality education. Thus, ensuring gender equality in education implies ensuring quality education.

Many efforts have been made to eliminate gender discrimination and to create gender friendly environments in the area of education. For about 25 years, the international community had been developing and pursuing goals and strategies related to the achievement of gender equality and responsiveness in education. For example, International commitments such as the Dakar framework for Action, Education for All, 2000, UN Millennium Development Goals, 2000, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action 1995, and World Declaration on Education for All, 1990 and Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979 are some of the efforts made. Similarly, the government of Ethiopia has made several national and regional efforts to eliminate gender-based disparity and to promote gender friendly atmospheres in the education system. Furthermore efforts are made to encourage women's participation in the informal education programs. Strategies to increase the school enrollment of girls in pastoral areas are also formulated (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2006).

Yet, practical change has not been still registered. What is designed in the policies of governments and what is practically observed on the ground is different. This is evident in many governmental institutions. One practical example is the one observed in the education sector. As several studies indicated, the education sector is not gender-responsive. The pedagogy that teachers use in most schools is not gender-responsive. It does not consider the particular needs of girls and boys (Daniel, M. (2013). Even the government of Ethiopia has been convinced that misconceptions and lack of awareness towards gender issues is still a challenge which requires continuous effort to be addressed.

Furthermore, as the researcher understood from various literatures and research outcomes, the instruction delivered in most schools of most countries is not gender-responsive. It is patriarchal in that it encourages the supremacy of males over females. Most females are seen to be passive listeners. In addition, most of the feedbacks teachers give to the students do not seem to be gender-responsive. Thus, to identify the problem and suggest possible solutions, the researcher is motivated to conduct a study on the area

under discussion. Therefore, to explore the practice of gender responsive instruction in upper primary schools of south Gondar zone and suggest possible solutions, the researcher has formulated four research questions: What is the awareness of upper primary school teachers on gender equality class room instruction?, Are teacher-student class room instructions gender responsive? Do teachers practice gender responsive language in the classroom? And is there a statistically significant difference between male and female teachers in their awareness of gender equality class room instruction?

The above research questions are translated into four objectives

1. To know the level of awareness of upper primary school teachers on gender equality classroom instruction
2. To investigate whether teacher-student class room interaction is gender responsive or not
3. To check whether the language used in the class room is gender responsive or not
4. To examine if there is a statistically significant difference between male and female teachers in their awareness of gender equality class room instruction

## **2. Research methodology**

A descriptive research design with quantitative and qualitative methods was employed.

### **2.1 Population**

The main data sources of this study were upper primary school teachers of five administrative towns. There are 20 upper primary schools in the selected administrative towns. The total population of teachers in the selected schools is 623.

### **2.2 Sample**

By using Yamane's simplified formula of sample size determination, 305 participants were chosen. The sample size was selected by taking proportional number from each school's total population. Then, simple random sampling technique was used to select samples from each school population.

### **2.3 Instruments used**

Data was collected using quantitative data gathering tools. To collect quantitative data, questionnaires were employed for teachers. Besides, semi-structured observation checklist was employed to observe the class room instructions. Researchers first obtained consent from the school directors through letters. Then they oriented participants that the purpose of the research is to obtain scientific data for the study. Researchers informed participants on how to fill in the questionnaire.

## **2.4 Data collection procedure**

After proposal approval and permission to go to the field and collect data, the researchers obtained an introduction letter from Debre Tabor University via the head of the coordinator of the research committee to obtain a research permit. The researchers further sought consent from the local education office, the zone education office to carry out research within the zone. The researchers then visited the participating schools for familiarization and to obtain permission from each head teacher to conduct the proposed research in the school at an agreed time. The researchers then visited each sampled school to collect data from the sampled teachers. Then the researchers administered questionnaires to the teachers allowing them adequate time to respond appropriately. The researchers also assured the respondents of total confidentiality and guarantee of no victimization from the information given.

## **3. Results**

The purpose of this study was to explore the practice of gender equality instruction in upper primary schools of south Gondar zone. The data collected through questionnaire were analyzed quantitatively. Hence, the background information of respondents, the awareness of teachers, teacher-student classroom interactions, class room language usage and differences between male and female teachers in their awareness on gender equality classroom instruction were analyzed.

### **3.1Participants' response rate**

The study noted that out of 305 (100%) respondents targeted in the study, 305 (100%) response rate was attained meaning that every respondent targeted in this study responded to the questionnaires. Hence, 100% participation was achieved as was envisaged.

### **3.2Background information of teacher respondents**

Regarding the sex of teachers, the results indicated that 150 (49.2%) of the samples used were males while 155 (50.8%) were females. This enabled the researchers to examine the awareness of male and female respondents on the practice of gender equality class room instruction. In addition to this, teacher-student class room interactions would be investigated in detail by considering the responses of both sexes.

### **3.3Teachers awareness on gender equality class room instruction**

The responses of teachers on gender equality classroom instruction collected through questionnaire were presented and analyzed below:

**Table 1: Teachers’ Awareness on Gender Equality Classroom Instruction**

Statements	Rating scales									
	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
<b>Awareness on gender equal group discussion</b>	27	8.8	33	10.8	29	9.5	123	40.3	93	30.5
<b>Awareness on gender responsive reinforcement</b>	11	3.6	27	8.9	26	8.5	135	44.3	106	34.8
<b>Awareness on giving adequate time for reflection</b>	8	2.6	19	6.2	37	12.1	136	44.6	105	34.4
<b>Understanding on gender equal reflection</b>	10	3.3	32	10.5	38	12.5	139	45.6	86	28.2
<b>Knowledge that only males are idea producers</b>	50	16.4	83	27.2	51	16.7	91	29.8	30	9.8
<b>Understanding that females are supporters</b>	42	13.8	88	28.9	52	17	72	23.6	51	16.7
<b>Knowledge that both sexes participates equally during question and answer</b>	24	7.7	38	12.5	61	20	105	34.4	77	25.2
<b>Understanding that females prefer cooperative learning style</b>	30	9.8	77	25.2	54	17.7	82	27.2	62	20.3
<b>Awareness on sexual harassment</b>	23	7.5	25	8.2	10	3.3	112	36.7	135	44.3

**Note:** SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, N = not sure, a = agree, SA=strongly agree, , and f = frequency (Source: Own computation)

The findings of the study show the level of agreement and disagreement with statements regarding the practice of gender responsive class room instruction. Table 1 indicated that 70.5 % of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that gender equal group discussion is important to increase gender equality, while 19.6 % disagreed or strongly disagreed on this issue and 9.5% were neutral.

With regard to providing gender responsive reinforcement to students,79.1% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that gender responsive reinforcement helps to realize gender responsive class room instruction while17.9% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and8.5 % neither agreed nor disagreed.

In the same token,79% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed that giving enough time for reflection supports the realization of gender responsive instruction whereas 8.8% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and the remaining 12.1% became neutral.

With respect to gender equal reflection, 73.8% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that they have the understanding about gender equal reflection while 13.8% either disagreed or strongly disagreed and12.5% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Concerning question and answer in the class, 59.6% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they know both sexes participate equally during question and answer in the classroom whereas20.2% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with statement and the remaining 20 % were neutral.

On the topic of sexual harassment, 81% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they are aware about sexual harassment while 15.7% either disagreed or strongly disagreed and 3.3 % neither agreed nor disagreed.

In light of females' preference to cooperative learning, 7.5% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that they know females' preference to cooperative learning while 35% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the issue and 17.7% neither agreed nor disagreed.

With regard to the belief that females are subordinates, 40.3% of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the topic whereas 42.7% either disagreed or strongly disagreed and 17% were neutral. Generally, it can be said that most teachers have awareness on the majority of the statements. This shows that the majority are aware of gender equality class room instruction.

**Table 2: Teachers’ responses to gender responsive teacher- student classroom interaction**

Interaction variables		Level of Agreement									
		SD		D		N		A		SA	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
<b>Class room setting</b>		16	5.2	20	6.6	31	10.2	116	38	122	40
<b>Classroom participation</b>		12	3.9	20	6.6	27	8.9	114	37.4	132	43.3
<b>Class room presentation</b>		17	5.6	18	5.9	30	9.8	106	34.8	134	43.9
<b>Support for females/girls</b>		13	4.3	31	102.2	28	9.2	109	35.7	124	40.7
<b>Leadership opportunities</b>		20	6.6	28	9.2	19	6.3	102	33.4	136	44.6
<b>Group discussion</b>		15	4.9	30	9.6	29	9.5	97	31.8	134	43.9
<b>Calling males only</b>		71	23.3	106	34.8	48	15.7	45	14.8	35	11.5
<b>Difficult questions to males</b>		100	23.8	102	33.4	42	13.8	33	10.8	28	9.2
<b>Calling personal names</b>		26	8.5	40	13.1	49	16.1	92	30.2	98	32.1

**Note:** SD stands for strongly disagree, D stands disagree, N stands neutral, A stands agree, SA strongly agree, and f stands frequency. (Source: Own computation)

Respondents rated 9 different statements with a scale from 1 to 5. These statements were targeted to identify respondents’ level of agreement on gender responsive teacher-student class room interaction. Regarding class room seating arrangement, data presented in table 4.2 revealed that 78% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that classroom seating arrangement is gender responsive while 11.8% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and 10.2% became neutral.

In case of participating in question and answer 80.7% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that students’ participation is gender friendly while 10.5% either

disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and 8.9%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Regarding students’ presentation and reflection,78.7% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that it is gender friendly while11.5% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the issue and 9.8% neither agreed nor disagreed.

With respect to support services 76.2% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that female are provided with special support services while 14.5% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and 9.2% neither agreed nor disagreed.

In case of responsive leadership opportunities, 78% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that females participate in leadership opportunities while 15.8% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the topic and 6.3% neither agreed nor disagreed.

Regarding group discussion, 75.7% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that group discussions taking place in the class are gender responsive while 14.5% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and 9.5% neither agreed nor disagreed.

In case of name-calling, 26.6% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they prefer to call only the names of boys than girls while 51.8% either agreed or strongly agreed with the issue of discussion and 15.7% neither agreed nor disagreed.

With respect to asking questions, 20% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that they equally treat boys and girls in asking questions whereas57.2% either disagreed or strongly disagreed and 13.8% neither agreed nor disagreed.

With respect to calling students’ personal names,62.2% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that they call on students’ personal names while 21.6 either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the topic and 16.1 %became neutral.

**Table 3: Teachers’ responses to class room language use**

Statement	Agreement level of participants										Mean	SD
	SD		D		N		A		SA			
	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%		
Sometimes calling students in male or female gender	111	36.4	97	31.3	33	10.3	33	10.3	30	9.3	2.25	1.33
Sometimes calling	110	36.1	102	33.4	45	14.8	20	6.6	28	9.2	2.19	1.2

students in feminine language	Calling students	89	29.2	103	33.8	54	17.7	27	8.9	32	10.5	2.38	1.27
in gender neutral language	Calling students'	83	27.1	86	28.2	47	15.4	50	16.4	39	12.8	2.59	1.37
in third person plural nouns	Calling students'	60	19.7	74	24.3	63	20.7	64	21	44	14.4	2.36	1.34
in second person plural nouns	Calling s females	102	33.4	86	28.2	43	14.1	41	13.4	33	10.8	2.4	1.35
in masculine character	Calling some males	109	36.7	84	27.5	44	14.4	35	11.5	32	10.5	2.33	1.34
in feminine character													

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**Note:** SD stands for strongly disagree, D stands disagree, N stands neutral, A stands agree, SA strongly agree, and f stands frequency (Source: Own computation)

It can be shown in table 4.3 that 19.6% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they do call students in the name of male or female sex while 67.7% either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they do not call students in the name of male or female sex" and 10.3% of participants became neutral.

Concerning feminine language use", 15.8% of respondents either agreed or disagreed that they practice feminine language use in the class while 69.5% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and 14.8% neither agreed nor disagreed.

In case of use of "gender neutral language" 19.4% either agreed or strongly agreed while 63% either disagreed or strongly disagreed and 17.7% of teachers were not sure about calling the names of students in gender neutral language.

With respect to calling students in "third person plural noun (they)" 29.2% either agreed or strongly agreed that they call students in third person plural noun while 53.3% of teachers either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they do not call students' names in third person plural noun (they) and 15.4% neither disagreed nor agreed on calling students in third person plural noun.

In case of calling students in second person plural noun (you), 35.4% of teacher respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that call students in second person plural or singular noun while44%either disagreed or strongly disagreed that they do not call students in second person plural or singular noun and 20.7% were not sure of calling students in second person plural noun (you).

With regard to calling females in "masculine character", 24.2% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that they call females in the name of masculine character while 61.6% either disagreed or strongly disagreed showing that they do not call females in masculine character like boyish, mannish and the likes and 14.1% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

In case of calling males in "feminine character",22% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they do not call male students in feminine character while64.2% either disagreed or strongly disagreed showing that majority do not call male students in feminine character and14.4%) became neutral on calling males in feminine character.

**Table 4: T-test Results between Male and Female teachers' awareness on gender responsive instruction**

Statements	Male			Female			t	Df	P
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD			
Gender equal group discussion	150	3.64	1.25468	155	3.812	1.24205	1.209	303	.227
Gender responsive reinforcement	150	4.0267	.94085	155	3.980	1.157	810	303	.419
Giving adequate time for reflection	150	3.9800	.91571	155	3.9800	1.03346	-.699	303	.486
Giving equal time for reflection	150	3.7533	.9964	155	3.9800	.1994	-1.575	303	.117
Males are idea	150	2.9267	1.21565	155	2.8645	1.32448	.427	303	.670

producers									
Females are supporters	150	3.0467	1.29706	155	2.9677	1.35042	.521	303	.603
Both sexes participates equally during question and answer	150	3.5000	1.12775	155	3.6323	1.29444	-.952	303	.343
Females prefer to cooperative learning style	150	3.4400	1.13208	155	3.0194	1.41178	2.875	303	.004*
Sexual harassment	150	4.0400	1.11656	155	3.7806	1.35451	1.827	303	.069

N= number of participants, M=mean, SD= standard deviation, t= t-test, Df= degree of freedom, p= p-value

(Source: Own computation)

A t-test comparing awareness differences between male and female teachers on nine specific statements showed that except the 8<sup>th</sup> statement, there was no statistically significant difference between male and female teachers in their awareness on gender responsive instruction. But there was a statistically significant difference between male and female teachers in their understanding about female students' preference to cooperative learning style in the classroom interaction (t- value 2.875, P=.004, an alpha value =0.05, p<.05). This showed that male teachers have better awareness than females in the preference of cooperative learning style in classroom instruction.

#### 4.2 Discussions

In the results of the study, it was found out that most teachers have awareness on gender equality class room instruction. Supporting this finding, Genalyn P. Lualhati (2019) ascertained that teachers' teaching plans and processes take the particular learning needs of all students regardless of sex. Similarly, Onyeme, Alexander Chukwudi, Obi, Collins C., Onyido, Jane-Frances, Okoli, Stella Obiageli and Uche Martin Anibueze (2018), revealed that teachers have encouraging awareness about gender sensitive instructional materials. In this study, teachers asserted that gender sensitive teaching materials need to incorporate issues which show both sexes' activities in an equal manner. However, the same study is against the above finding interms of its practicality. That is to say, teachers have better awareness and understanding of gender responsive classroom instruction and

instructional materials but their skill of using them on the ground is to a low extent. Moreover, this result contradicts with Bridgt A. et al.(2010)'s finding which contends that lack of awareness within the community about the importance of girls' education, poor physical facilities and problems in the proximity of schools and inadequate pedagogical teacher training enhance gender inequality in the education system. A study undertaken by Dorji, T. (2020) also confirmed that school teacher's knowledge of gender and gender responsive pedagogy is poor and inadequate. Less number of teachers (8.8%) agreed to have poor awareness on students' group discussion. Majority (79.1%) of respondents confirmed to have better knowledge on gender responsive reinforcement. Contrary to this result MOE. (2010) suggested that female teachers are socialized to believe in the inferiority of women that would reinforce inequality attitudes in the classroom as much as their male colleagues.

Majority of the respondents (88.7%) reported that teachers are gender responsive in their participation in students' presentation and reflection. This is against the result discovered by a study. According to a study, male students are given more time and attention than females during presentation and reflection (Zittleman, K. and Sadker, D., 2003). Regarding support services, majority of teachers (76.4%) agreed that female students are provided with special support such as tutorial, adequate time, study program, assertiveness training etc. This finding is contrary to Anne Geer. (1997) in that in this study it was found out schools don't provide support services like separate toilet, water, sanitation and other school facilities for female students. In light of gender responsive leadership opportunities assigned in the classroom, majority of the respondents (80%) have asserted that students of both genders are given gender responsive leadership roles. However, Alwis, R.S. (2014) disclosed that boys are more likely than girls to take on leadership roles in the classroom. In the same token, Soederberg, S, & Adrienne, R. (2012) pointed out that girls are poorly represented in leadership positions due to male dominated cultural factors and beliefs.

In case of calling students' name, (58.1%) of teachers disclosed that they do not favor to one gender in calling names of students while small number of teachers (30.5 %) agreed that they prefer to call only the names of male students. With respect to asking difficult questions, male students are given the first priority and followed by females. That is to mean 59.2% of teachers reported that they give difficult questions to male students and simple questions to female students. With regard to calling students' personal names, less number of respondents,(19.4%) agreed that they call students in their personal names. But it is possible to understand that majority of the participants (67.7%) confirmed that they do not call students in the name of either sex and less than half of the participants (29.6%) agreed that they sometimes call students in the name of either sex. This implies that majority of teachers do not call students in the name of males and females. Other research

findings showed that teachers became more gender-aware and adopted practices that encourage more equal participation of boys and girls within the school environment (The World Bank, (2014).

In the case of t-test comparing awareness differences between male and female teachers, there was no statistically significant difference between male and female teachers in their awareness on gender responsive instruction. That is, there is no awareness difference between male and female teachers on gender response instruction. On the contrary, other reach findings showed that there is a significant difference in awareness between male and female students. Female teachers take care of children in the same way they take care of their own children. When a woman enters a classroom, children are less afraid. Female teachers are more democratic whereas male teachers are more autocratic (FAWECAM and VSO Cameroon (2012). On the other hand, there was a statistically significant difference between male and female teachers on a sub-scale (females prefer cooperative learning style) in the classroom. This shows that male teachers had better awareness than females in the preference of cooperative learning style in classroom instruction. Other research findings found that male teachers tend to run their classes in ways that match the learning and behavior styles of boys, while female teachers employ a style that is more likely to suit the needs of girls. Research indicates that female teachers are more likely to utilize motivational tools, be less critical, invest more time in planning and assessment, encourage more often, lecture less and promote higher order thinking. While male teachers are said to be more hands-on, more likely to use humor and be more disciplinarian.

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendation**

##### **4.1 Conclusion**

Most teachers were found to awareness on gender equality class room instruction. They had better awareness on gender equality classroom, group discussion, better knowledge on gender equality reinforcement, on giving adequate time for reflection; better knowledge on the equal participation of boys and girls in the classroom and about sexual harassment. However, some teachers were found to be not aware of gender equality classroom instruction.

Most teachers asserted that they practice gender responsive classroom interactions in presentation, reflection, class room seating arrangement, question and answer, student's leadership opportunities and group discussions. But some teachers did not practice gender responsive classroom interaction.

Most teachers practiced gender responsive language in their teaching-learning process in the class room. For instance, most teachers did not call students in the name of either sex, the name of students in feminine language, in third person plural noun, in second person plural noun, females in masculine character, male students in feminine character and favor

the names of students. However, some teachers were found to use gender irresponsible or biased language in the classroom.

There was no statistically significant difference between male and female teachers in their awareness in most of the sub scales of the measurement on gender equality class room instruction. That is, there was no awareness difference between male and female teachers on gender responsive instruction. However, there was a statistically significant difference between male and female teachers on one sub-scale (females' preference to cooperative learning style) in classroom interaction. This entails that male teachers have better awareness than females in their preference to cooperative learning style in classroom instruction.

#### **4.2 Recommendation**

- Teachers' awareness on most sub scales of gender responsive class room instruction was found to be better and encouraging. However, the awareness of some teachers is poor and insufficient. So, schools should provide continuous trainings for those teachers who have low and inadequate awareness on gender responsive class room instruction.
- This in turn helps teachers to treat all students equally and address the diverse needs of male and female students in their teaching –learning process.
- As much as possible, all activities practiced by teachers in the classroom should be gender responsive. That is to mean, curriculums, assessment strategies, questions, feedbacks, group discussions, guidance and counseling services and many others should be practiced in gender responsive ways.
- Schools, gender specialists and other concerned bodies should help teachers to practice gender responsive language in their teaching-learning process by providing capacity building training in the area of gender responsive language use. This helps teachers to call students in their personal names and to avoid derogatory terms.
- Besides, this sort of practice helps students to be motivated to learn and create positive classroom interactions between students and teachers. The awareness-difference between male and female teachers was found to be insignificant.
- However, there is statically significant difference between male and female teachers in their awareness on females' preference to cooperative learning style. Therefore, to narrow down the difference, schools as well as other concerned bodies should help teachers to build their capacity by providing training and supervision services.

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