



An unprecedented uplift in learning outcomes:

Results from a major evaluation of Camfed's program in Tanzania and Zimbabwe

Summary

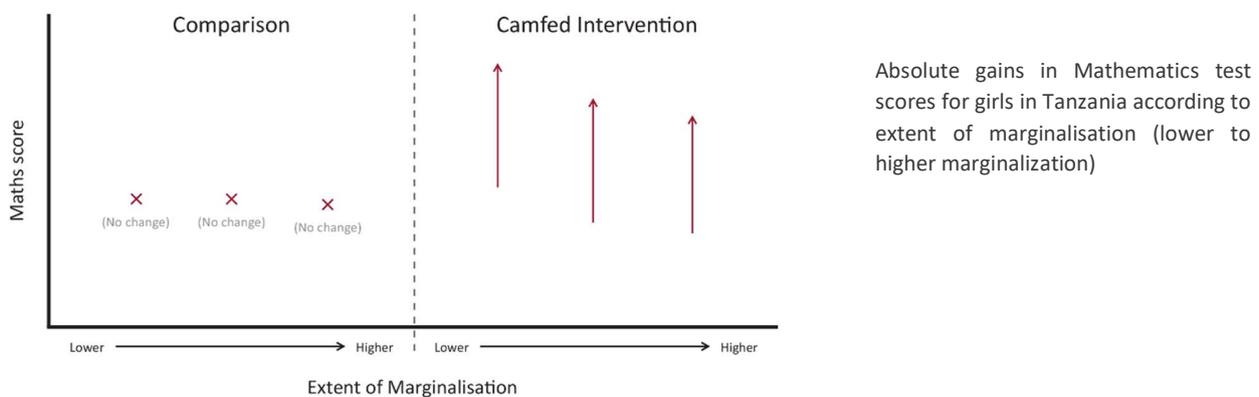
Results from an extensive education intervention delivered by Camfed in Africa demonstrate an **unprecedented uplift in learning outcomes** among marginalized girls and show that, with the right kind of support, even the poorest and most disadvantaged students can make good progress through the early years of secondary school. They show that helping students to explore life skills and self-development in tandem with a focus on core curricular subjects, raises their achievements, builds academic confidence and cuts dropout rates. Importantly, the findings show that these changes can be achieved across different countries and within the framework of existing government education systems, offering hope that this kind of intervention could be scaled to achieve the ambitions of the Sustainable Development Goals and offer millions of marginalized children the prospect of a better future.

The Results

Camfed's intervention, funded under DFID's Girls' Education Challenge, has incorporated a comprehensive approach to tackle the multiple dimensions of disadvantage faced by adolescent girls in Tanzania and Zimbabwe, to enable them to enroll in and succeed at secondary school. This has included measures to support girls to go to school, promote their welfare and improve their learning – both academic and broader life skills. It began in 2013 and to date, has benefited **247,061** marginalized girls in Zimbabwe and Tanzania, in a network of 991 government secondary schools across 35 rural districts¹.

To assess the impact of the intervention, a rigorous, independent evaluation tracked a representative sample of 11,075 students (girls and boys) over a period of two years in 151 intervention schools and 111 comparison schools. This incorporated an assessment of learning using tools designed by the National Examination Councils in each country to be age and curriculum appropriate.

The results show strong, statistically significant evidence for the intervention's effectiveness in improving learning outcomes. This effect was evident in all groups (marginalized, less marginalized; boys, girls; disability, no disability). In Tanzania, the improvements in literacy and numeracy among marginalized girls equate to **effect sizes of 0.5 and 1.0**. This translates to **more than double the rate of learning** than among girls in comparison schools (in Math, nearly **five times** the rate). In Zimbabwe, where drought has had a severe impact in the intervention districts in the recent period, the results were lower – effect sizes of 0.3 and 0.1 – but still significant. In addition, while Camfed's intervention also boosted learning among marginalized boys, benefits were greatest among marginalized girls, thus helping to close the gender gap in learning.



¹ This is set within Camfed's wider programme which to date has benefited nearly 4 million children in a network of 5,306 schools in 5 countries – Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Alongside an uplift in learning, Camfed's intervention is associated with a statistically significant **reduction in school dropout** among marginalized girls. Girls in the intervention schools were nearly **three times less likely** to drop out from school than girls in comparison schools in Zimbabwe, and more than one third less likely to drop out in Tanzania. Marginalized girls also showed greater resilience in school; in Zimbabwe 72 percent of girls who travelled over an hour to get to school were still in school at the end of lower secondary in intervention schools, compared to only 54 percent of girls in the comparison schools.

Students in the intervention schools also said they felt safer at school, felt their teachers were more engaged with them and felt more confident that cases of abuse would be tackled. They expressed greater enjoyment of school, and had a stronger belief that school was relevant for their future. And self-belief has rocketed, with more than 95 percent of marginalized girls in both Tanzania and Zimbabwe saying they now feel more positive about their future and more able to shape their life goals.

“Before I received my secondary education, I feared that life would bind me and make me a slave. My hope was rekindled by my education; it transformed me into viewing life from a different perspective. It taught me to be myself and to have power over my life.” Yvonne, Zimbabwe.

Next Steps

These results attest to the value of a targeted, multi-dimensional approach to improve school enrolment, retention and learning among marginalized girls. They demonstrate that the experience of marginalized girls provides an important barometer for education quality, and that interventions to improve their learning outcomes can translate to significant gains for all children. And they underscore the importance of focusing both on learning *content* – the relevance to their lives of what young people are learning, as well as on learning *context* – the support systems that shape their well-being. This is illuminated by global education thought leader and Forbes columnist, Jordan Shapiro, in his [recent article](#)² ***“How some of the poorest girls in the world get exactly the education they need: Camfed’s work in sub-Saharan Africa might change the way you think about education everywhere”***.

Going forward, Camfed will pursue three strategies to maximize the impact of these results:

1. Partner with the **Research on Equitable Access & Learning (REAL) Centre** at the University of Cambridge to analyze what it costs to support a marginalized girl through secondary school and improve her learning, in order to inform targeted, cost-effective financing mechanisms that ensure that no girl is left behind in the drive for quality education for all³.
2. Further scale-up the intervention in Zimbabwe and Tanzania and to other countries including Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia. This will build on the community-led approach operated in partnership with Ministries of Education which has been a hallmark of this intervention and for which Camfed won **OECD recognition for “best practice in taking development innovation to scale”**.
3. Explore how innovative components can be adapted and extended to deliver impact in new areas. This includes the **Learner Guide program**⁴, developed through a cross-sectoral approach involving government, private sector and social enterprise, through which young women school graduates return to their local schools to deliver a uniquely tailored life skills program integrated alongside the academic curriculum. As part of Camfed’s wider intervention, this is unleashing an **extraordinary multiplier effect** through which initial investment in girls’ education pays ever-increasing dividends in the activism of educated young women who are stepping forward to support the younger generation through school.

“This [Camfed] is an incredibly sustainable model and one that has huge growth potential built into it.”

Julia Gillard, Camfed Patron, Chair of the Global Partnership for Education, and former Australian Prime Minister.

² ‘How some of the poorest girls in the world get exactly the education they need’, *Forbes*, May 2016. See also brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2016/06/08/the-distance-to-school-is-not-only-about-the-distance-you-walk/

³ Announced by the Vice Chancellor at the DFID high level roundtable on 7/7/16. This builds on analysis undertaken by REAL, commissioned by The International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity: ‘Targeted, multidimensional approaches to overcome inequalities in secondary education: Case study of Camfed in Tanzania’ (2016).

⁴ Highlighted by Rebecca Winthrop in the Stanford Social Innovation Review (November 2016).