GEC thematic discussion papers
September 2016

Photo credit: PEAS, Uganda
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Overview

The Girls’ Education Challenge (GEC) was established by the UK’s Department for International Development to address the gender-specific obstacles that girls face in enrolling and remaining in education and to find solutions to address widespread low levels of learning. A total of 37 projects were selected that would find new and more effective ways to educate up to 1 million marginalised girls in countries where UK aid is focused. Implementing organisations include international and national NGOs, education providers and private sector organisations. Whilst all the projects have their own distinct theories of change designed to improve both attendance and learning outcomes, there are common approaches spanning projects. These provide a unique opportunity for learning on a number of critical issues. This set of discussion papers sets out some of the emerging lessons from the portfolio of projects and paves the way for further reflection and learning at the end of the GEC programme.

Beginning with an analysis of how projects have interpreted and approached marginalisation in their projects, we then move to look at learning across eight major themes, encompassing the conditions for learning, the environment for learning, teaching and learning methods, and leadership of learning, as follows:

1. Understanding and addressing educational marginalisation

- 8. School governance and provision
- 3. Community-based awareness, attitudes and behaviour

2. Economic empowerment

- 6. Teaching and learning
- 4. Self-esteem

3. Use of education technology

- 5. Violence against children
Under each theme, we have explained our current understanding about how and why different approaches are proving effective in improving girls' education, using examples from the field. The data presented in the papers originates from project baseline and midline evaluations, other reporting and observations. As such, it has been rigorously reviewed and moderated. However, it should be noted that the qualitative nature of the data and the composite make-up of most GEC projects means that hard and fast conclusions cannot always be drawn about cause and effect of particular interventions. Longer versions of each paper which include a more in-depth analysis and contextualisation of each theme area are available on request.

The discussion papers are intended to inform and enhance the continuing implementation of GEC projects as well as to serve as a resource for future planning by practitioners, funders and researchers. They will be further updated in 2017 with endline research and analysis and be complemented by further short insight papers on topics including attendance and its link to learning, language of instruction and gender integration in project design.

Whilst these discussion papers highlight lessons across the 6-19 year old age group, midline and endline results will be examined as they emerge with a specific focus on adolescent girls and their educational needs.

For further information, please contact: girlseducationchallenge@uk.pwc.com.
GEC discussion paper:
Understanding and addressing educational marginalisation

September 2016

Photo credit: Save the Children, Ethiopia
Introduction

Education is a universal right, bound by the principles of non-discrimination and equality. This right is being denied to around 124 million children and adolescents who have never started school or have dropped out.\(^1\) Data on learning suggests that despite gains in primary school enrolment, many children are not developing the basic literacy and numeracy skills they need.\(^2\) In their 2010 ‘Education for All, Global Monitoring Report’, UNESCO described educational marginalisation as ‘a form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities’.\(^3\) The fact that women and girls form two thirds\(^4\) of the world’s illiterate and a significant proportion of those who are out of school, highlights gender as a major dimension of this marginalisation. Hence, GEC I sought to focus on learning and scaling up effective interventions to reach and engage marginalised girls in education.

Literature on the concept of marginalisation in the education sector is fragmented with a number of bodies of work around related topics, including gender, inequality and particularly marginalised groups. The 2015 EFA Global Monitoring Report called for more and better monitoring of learning progress, disaggregated by marginalisation factors.\(^5\) Similarly the Sustainable Development Goals propose to disaggregate indicators and related data to identify who continues to get left behind. Consequently, the GEC has helped to clarify some of the factors and processes that marginalise girls, and crucially, what interventions might ensure they can access school and learn.

Conceptualising educational marginalisation

Educational marginalisation can be understood as social, economic, contextual and time factors that interact, layer upon and compound each other to exclude people from opportunities to learn. See Figure 1.

- **Contextual factors:** where an individual lives and the physical environment and infrastructure that might determine their physical access to school and learning e.g. living in a slum or conflict-affected area. These factors are difficult to address through an education programme given their externality to the school environment, but are easy to target as they usually have a common geographic dimension.

- **Economic factors:** an individual's access to economic and material resources and livelihoods that enable them to pay for and make time for school and learning e.g. parental unemployment. Whilst easier to address immediately through interventions like bursaries or cash transfers, targeting can be challenging as it has to be done on an individualised basis.

- **Social factors:** how society perceives and responds to an individual's socio-economic status, e.g. negative attitudes towards girls’ education and practices such as early marriages and female genital mutilation / cutting. Interventions to address social norms require attitude and behaviour change that take a longer time to realise, and are harder to define across individuals, households and community levels.

- **Life-cycle and intergenerational factors:** the length of or life stage in time an individual experiences the above factors. e.g. girls face a unique set of barriers related to reproductive health and social norms around early and forced marriage.

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\(^1\) Global Partnership for Education website, Out-of-School Children, accessed 15/04/2016: http://www.globalpartnership.org/focus-areas/out-of-school-children


Figure 1. Conceptual framework on educational marginalisation

**EDUCATIONAL MARGINALISATION:** A combination of social, economic, time and contextual factors that exclude, and deny the right to education.

Where you are: contextual factors and related barriers

- Environmental factors
  - Drought
- Conflict and generalised violence
  - Unsafe schools/journeys to school
  - Low teacher retention
- Displacement, protracted humanitarian crises
  - Crowded classrooms
  - Lack of viable life options (refugees)
- Rural/remote, nomadic areas
  - Lack of government investment in education
  - Seasonal accessibility
  - Lack of labour market opportunities
- Generalised poverty, inequality, under development
  - Lack of government investment in education
  - Low adult literacy rate
- Informal settlements/urban slums
  - Lack of government investment in education
  - Drug and alcohol problems
  - Safety

Who you are: factors relating to how society perceives and responds to your socio-economic status

- Gender and age
  - Disproportionate burden of HH chores
  - Lack of parental support/resistance to girls’ education
  - Community attitudes and social norms
  - Harmful traditional practices and gender-based violence in and on the way to school, and in the community
  - Lack of access to SRHR
- Disability
  - School journeys to school unsafe
  - Inaccessible teaching and learning materials
  - Lack of inclusive teaching methodologies
  - Lack of assistive devices
  - Discrimination by teachers, students and communities
- Ethnic and cultural minorities
  - Discrimination by teachers, students and communities
  - Lack of relevant curricula and flexible schooling for tribal, pastoralist and nomadic groups
  - Language of instruction
- Extreme household poverty
  - Inability to afford school fees and supplies
  - Opportunity costs associated with attending school
  - Nutritional status/hunger at school

The most marginalised girls experience a complex combination and intersectionality of social, economic and contextual factors.

*The example barriers we have included here are intended to be illustrative rather than an exhaustive list due to the contextual specificity of the barriers that girls face.*
It is the unique combination and configuration of these factors and barriers that each educationally marginalised individual experiences that creates a challenge for programming. Extremely marginalised girls face the most complex combinations and layers of barriers, often necessitating more tailored interventions than girls who might face just one or two factors and are therefore easier to reach with a broader-focused intervention. The process of marginalisation from education is complex: it is not necessarily a linear process and some barriers are self-reinforcing. With 37 projects across 18 countries, the GEC provides a valuable opportunity to begin to learn about the types of interventions that might respond to these myriad of combinations and configurations.

**What we are doing**

The 2012 DFID Business Case offered a broad definition of marginalised girls to enable prospective grantees to develop their own specific definitions of marginalisation: those girls (aged between 6 and 19) who have not been enrolled or have dropped out from school. The approaches taken by projects to defining marginalisation and targeting girls accordingly, varied. Most projects considered marginalised girls in their target areas as a homogeneous group with the most common definition of marginalisation being girls that were out of school or at risk of dropping out due to the interaction between gender, poverty and rural/remote location. Within projects’ overarching definitions, most also designed specific components to reach girls who had dropped out or girls who were not learning, for example, through household visits by community workers or targeted remedial classes for girls who were struggling to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. However, relatively few projects provided a holistic, flexible approach to conceptualising marginalisation, recognising the lived experiences of particular sub-groups within their target groups.

Figure 2 outlines the type of marginalised girls GEC projects have targeted. Around a third of projects have focused their interventions on the easier to reach marginalised girls (category 1), some on the harder to reach marginalised girls (category 2) and a small number of projects focused on extremely marginalised girls (category 3). Many projects have worked with girls from across different categories. This has meant that a significant number of marginalised girls have been reached, but perhaps only smaller numbers of the hardest to reach girls. Whilst extremely marginalised girls are likely to be found in the geographic target areas of projects focusing on category 1, projects lacked data on these girls in order to be able to adopt interventions that might be more inclusive of them. This is particularly the case for disabled and married girls who often remain hidden in household surveys and school focused data collection instruments due to parents and community members’ perceptions of their eligibility to access education. Promisingly, through the monitoring and evaluation process, projects have started to identify some of the more complex barriers extremely marginalised girls might face.
What we are learning

GEC has supported 1.6 million marginalised girls to enrol, attend and learn in school in poor rural, urban, remote and conflict-affected environments. The programme has generated a wealth of learning about how to effectively identify and work with marginalised girls to achieve these aims. Nevertheless, despite significant gains in enrolment, attendance and learning for many target girls, there is still more to be done to create adaptive programming which considers the complexity of educational marginalisation and is best able to meet the needs of extremely marginalised girls.

Some projects have responded to emerging learning around marginalisation by adjusting their targeting to ensure particular attention is paid to the most marginalised.

For example, WUSC found there was a need to revise their targeting for remedial classes in Kenyan refugee camps to ensure the inclusion of girls who appeared to be struggling the most, including unaccompanied girls and girls from child-headed households. Similarly Red een Kind/Across in South Sudan found they are struggling to reach girls and boys who travel to cattle camps for long periods, so are exploring ways to extend their intervention to conduct life skills sessions in these locations.

Many projects, however, have highlighted that they feel their interventions require more nuanced design to reach girls with more complex needs and desires. For example, Health Poverty Action found in Rwanda that enrolling out-of-school girls into their Mother Daughter Clubs was successful in increasing capacity to generate income and fostering positive mother daughter relationships. However, the intervention was less successful in facilitating these girls to enrol in school. Three quarters of these girls chose not to enrol as they were over-age and would prefer to attend accelerated learning programmes, or had children and needed to generate income for their households. The original design of the project had not envisaged these specific barriers for adolescent girls. Similarly, the majority of projects have struggled to incorporate adaptations that might be able to cater for the needs of children with disabilities without significant design and budget changes.
Projects have found that thorough training is needed before schools and teachers are supported to work to promote more girl-friendly learning environments. Other examples have emerged that suggest a thorough gender and social norms analysis would improve interventions, for example, girls clubs reinforcing gender norms and stereotypes through including activities focused on cleaning the school grounds.

From a review of project quarterly monitoring reports, the FM found that a third of GEC projects had reported that project stakeholders felt uncomfortable with the focus on girls and suggested that boys felt excluded by GEC projects. This is particularly the case where money, bursaries or other material goods have been provided. This is also, in some cases, a result of boys being upset that projects are challenging the status quo. For example, a boy highlighted that he now had to do household chores. There has been some reported bullying of GEC targeted girls. The ethical implications of providing support for a girl with disabilities when her brother is also disabled was highlighted, for example, by Cheshire Services Uganda. Boys are now receiving limited support through the project. Some GEC projects are also learning that boys are also marginalised from education, including in Somalia, Zimbabwe and northern Kenya where boys often migrate for work or tend their household’s livestock.

There has been significant learning on marginalisation through project implementation and monitoring, however, midline reports have, on the whole, not disaggregated quantitative data by sub-group, for example, in comparison to boys or for different groups of girls. Such disaggregation would have helped us to quantitatively articulate who is benefitting and who is excluded from the positive gains in enrolment, attendance and learning made by projects. Baseline reports also did not, on the whole, compare their data to national level statistics to demonstrate the extent to which their target groups were educationally marginalised and to adjust their targeting accordingly. There is an opportunity to do this within the second phase of GEC. More rigorous approaches to qualitative data collection and analysis across the portfolio would also aid projects’ understanding of marginalisation and ability to appropriately respond. A deeper and more nuanced understanding of marginalisation in project contexts is therefore not always available. Reports haven not thoroughly explored the differences between girls’ and boys’ experiences of school, which may have meant projects were not able to understand gender norms to intervene in an appropriate manner, or identify potential risks such as boys feeling left out.

A number of projects have reported that payment by results (PbR) may promote incentives to focus on easier-to-reach marginalised girls within their target groups given the time and cost implications of meaningfully targeting the most marginalised girls and the likelihood of these girls dropping out of education again. The FM has been sensitive to these issues and modified the PbR methodology to take issues such as these into account.

**Next steps**

The GEC extension announced by the Secretary of State in June 2016 should seek to develop a portfolio that addresses the three different categories of marginalisation to more closely reflect the complexity that is becoming evident. This should focus on continued learning and understanding of what works to not only reach large volumes of marginalised girls but also to reach those girls facing the most complex set of barriers, i.e. the hardest to reach girls in categories 2 and 3 above. Whilst one portfolio approach might focus on easier to reach, larger group of girls in category 1, taking a more focused approach to the portfolio’s targeting will enable deeper learning on how to reach extremely marginalised girls. This learning will help shape more inclusive programming across the whole portfolio so that more severely marginalised girls can start to benefit in larger numbers.

Combined with a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of marginalisation through disaggregated and comparative data and analysis, the next phase of GEC can benefit from more targeted and better designed interventions. This will ultimately lead to inclusion of a wider group of the most marginalised girls within broader target groups to ensure no girl is left behind.
To enable this, it is recommended that the next phase of GEC:

- **Broadens the focus from ‘girls’ to ‘gender’ in theories of change**, in order to address some of the more complex gender dimensions that marginalise girls from learning. This should include examining issues facing boys which might indirectly and negatively impact on girls. A thorough gender and social norms analysis should be commissioned for each project to better understand the potential for promoting and realising gender equality in education.

- **Considers the potential incentives to focusing on the easier to reach** marginalised girls which PBR may unintentionally promote and ensures that any subsequent measures includes consideration of an equity agenda.

- **Uses data disaggregated by marginalisation factor and age group** to better understand which combinations of barriers affect different groups of girls at different life stages. Given high rates of ‘over age for grade’ girls, focusing interventions on life stage, rather than grade level, will enable a focus on specific barriers that affect girls, particularly during adolescence.

- **Collecting and analysing high quality, qualitative data** will also deepen our understanding of the complexity of marginalisation and the extent to which interventions are addressing marginalised girls’ needs.

- **Utilise data-driven targeting approaches, including comparison with national learning, enrolment and attendance levels**, or comparison between groups of girls and their wider community. This will enable a balanced portfolio of projects across categories 1 to 3 to be selected.

- **Takes an adaptive and reflective approach to project design and evaluation** to enable projects to learn and adjust interventions to better respond to emerging and complex marginalisation issues. This should involve an element of flexible funding to support adaptive programming, but also a process of formative research that builds on the M&E process of the first phase to better integrate learning, monitoring and evaluation processes. This should also include a focus on ethics and monitoring for unintended consequences, including explicit opportunities to adapt programming where ethical concerns arise.

*For more discussion on the topic, see the GEC Thematic Synthesis Paper: ‘Understanding and addressing educational marginalisation’ from June 2016.*
GEC discussion paper:
Economic interventions and school outcomes
September 2016

Photo credit: Save the Children, Ethiopia
Introduction

The Girls’ Education Challenge (GEC) was established to increase educational outcomes for marginalised girls, defined as those who are out of school or at risk of dropping out. Almost all projects’ initial theories of change identified financial barriers to girls’ education as critical. These girls’ households, whether in rural areas or urban slums, are often forced to choose between basic necessities such as food and shelter, and education. Girls in these communities face the additional burdens of social norms that limit their choices and opportunities. Addressing family poverty and financial barriers to education are therefore key elements in the theories of change of almost every GEC project.

This summary paper provides an overview of the activities and insights from the GEC’s approaches to economic empowerment. Specifically it:

- Assesses what projects are doing to address these barriers, and the evidence to support the effectiveness of economic interventions.
- Discusses the impact of both handouts and income generating activities on attendance, retention rates, and learning outcomes.
- Analyses how economic interventions have changed parents’ attitudes positively towards sending children to school, by mitigating major costs such as school fees, textbooks, sanitary products.
- Presents the challenges around indirect effects, sustainability in the long-term and outlines next steps for economic interventions in the GEC.

What we are doing

The economic interventions implemented in the GEC portfolio are summarised in the figure below. Across the GEC portfolio, almost all GEC projects found some form of financial or poverty related barrier to girls’ education.

How GEC projects approach economic empowerment within schools and communities:

**Interventions include:**

- Meeting direct costs of education such as cash transfers, stipends, bursaries, scholarships, corporate donors to increase funds to school.
- Providing learning and other resources, such as scholastic materials and sanitary wear, to girls as part of their bursaries, or providing ‘school kits’ directly to schools.

**Handouts**

- Providing family income and support: These are typically savings and loan schemes, which may be conditional on the girl receiving an education, or initiatives to develop girls’ vocational skills so they can contribute to the family income.
- Increasing school budget: Introducing school businesses to increase funds in school.
What we are learning

Economic interventions take place within the broader context of government policy. In many instances multiple educational levies or charges exist and challenging these may be an important way to reduce the costs of education for poor families over the longer term. There is also an opportunity to make a stronger link between the economic interventions discussed above and broader support to school governance; supporting the work of school management committees and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) to make the best use of the funds they have, and to ensure marginalised children are not excluded. The approaches that are presently being employed appear to be effective in the immediate term, and need careful planning to have lasting long-term impacts.

We have learnt that handout programmes have:

- **Proved to have a positive influence on girls’ attendance rates and retention** (as compared to girls enrolled in the same grade level and even in the same class): Stipend programmes as well as provision of school materials such as textbooks, uniforms, and fees have offset the cost of education by reducing the cost of school. Providing free and accessible transport is a particular form of handout that has shown great increase in attendance and appreciation. For instance, for Cheshire Services Uganda, providing transportation allowed disabled children to go to school.

- **Increased numeracy and literacy achievement**: Tailored packages of financial support, such as those offered by Camfed, have been positively associated with increased numeracy and literacy outcomes, as shown in their qualitative surveys. Confidence and attendance increased due to the positive effect of easing household burden leading to higher learning outcomes.

- **Stabilised schools’ cash flow**: This has occurred due to guaranteeing timely payment of fees by students. This was seen in the case of the VAS-Y Fille! In the Democratic Republic of Congo. Further, because of continuity in cash flow, broader school activities were subsidised and have consequently contributed to improving learning outcomes.

- **Led to an increase in the demand for education by mitigating cost of schooling**: Households, particularly those very close to subsistence, had cited the cost of school material as a major burden that often prevented them from sending their children to school. Qualitative evidence from several projects has shown a positive shift as a result of handouts. In some cases, it has been a broader mix of bursaries, mentoring, mothers’ groups and targeted support programs that is driving the positive impact.

- **Created concerns around their sustainability**: This is because the administration and management of providing conditional scholarships and other scholastic materials – with their attendant requirements for strong targeting and tracking – could be made sustainable with public funding, however strong public engagement will be needed to achieve this.

- **Led to the need for reflection around design**: Design and targeting can lead to some negative consequences for instance; targeted cash transfers can demotivate some girls and boys who are excluded from them, worsening their learning outcomes as an unintended consequence.

**We have learnt that hand-up programmes have:**

- **Enabled mothers participating in income generation interventions to invest more in their daughters’ education**: Income generation interventions at the household level (e.g. Eco-Fuel Africa, IGATE) have enabled mothers who received the economic empowerment intervention to invest more in their daughters’ education through improved financial conditions. Beneficiary households have used this money to provide their daughters with
sufficient scholastic materials and meals. Midline reports suggest that this may be leading to girls performing better in class as they benefit from improved concentration and attendance.

- **Funded the procurement of sanitary products, school uniforms, and other items through income generation activities at the school level:** In qualitative surveys, respondents (particularly mothers) said this intervention has helped them increase money available to cover school fees and other requirements. However, it was not clear whether this was due to poverty reduction in their household or because of parents’ investing more in girls’ education to reflect the greater school investment in education through school income generation activities.

- **Ensured higher disposable income and become a platform for community engagement through VS&L schemes:** Qualitative reporting at midline suggests that families in VS&L schemes are better able to pay school fees and invest in girls’ health than other families. This is largely due to the strong community engagement nature of these programmes. This has led to positive shifts in attitudes towards sending girls to school. However, it becomes hard to maintain these positive effects where the economic and environmental situations are changing constantly. For example, in World Vision Zimbabwe the onset of a drought means it is becoming harder for the families to save continuously.

- **Created a need for a strong strategy to ensure that the income generated from the VS&L schemes and School Fee Loans programmes are used for girls’ education:** The concerns about these schemes centre on the length of time it takes to set them up and the support and training needed at the outset. More importantly, a strong strategy is also needed to ensure that the higher income generated leads directly to investment in girls’ education.

- **Led to a recognition of the broader impacts of economic interventions:** Broader impacts, such as increasing household welfare through more food, or better mother-child relationships can be as important as the direct effects of economic interventions. For instance, mothers who gain income-generating skills report an impact on their household decision making and likelihood to prioritise their daughter’s education.

**Next steps**

The GEC projects are generating significant new evidence to how economic interventions can be associated with positive changes in enrolment, retention and attendance, as well as on learning in some cases. It is unlikely that in isolation these economic interventions can achieve all of these outcomes, thus making it important to monitor what combination of interventions and what ‘dosage’ is most effective in different contexts.

Further exploration in other key areas is required:

- Analysis of the wider, spill-over and unintended positive and negative impacts of interventions on families, communities and on women and girls’ empowerment.

- Analysis of the sustainability of interventions as projects move towards endline:
  - The handout type of interventions are at risk of being terminated without ongoing project support and their impacts not being sustained, particularly given a profound shortage of government and other support in many contexts. For example, IRC faced enormous challenges with targeting of its scholarships in the violent conflict ridden and economically unstable environment of the Democratic Republic of Congo. However, emerging qualitative evidence suggests that these scholarships have been “very effective” and a “relief” for parents. Across the portfolio, projects suggest that a
mechanism by which former recipients will fund other girls once they are in employment could be employed.

- The **hand-up type** of interventions on the other hand, look more likely to be sustainable in the long term - but given the intensity of training and support at start up, careful consideration needs to be given to the proportionality of potential returns within the available time. For example, HPA is still working to ensure that the school businesses are profitable and that systems can be put in place to ensure this income is used for children and reported adequately.

It is crucial that we should not lose sight of the hidden and remaining costs of ‘free’ basic education that these projects are offsetting. To that end, DFID and the GEC project partners will continue to generate, collate and analyse the data from the projects so that they can effectively advocate for truly eliminating the educational costs poor families face. Only by ensuring adequate financing of all schools and eradicating economic barriers, can GEC fulfil its vision of delivering quality basic education to the most marginalised girls.

*For more discussion on the topic, see the GEC Thematic Synthesis Paper: ‘Economic interventions and school outcomes’ from June 2016.*
GEC discussion paper:
Community-based awareness, attitudes and behaviour

September 2016

Photo credit: iGate, Zimbabwe
Introduction

Education starts at home. But so do the barriers against girls’ education: the values, customs and traditions that influence what communities think as acceptable and favourable options for girls either empower or limit girls’ opportunities and life chances. The broader existing literature focuses on how norm and behaviour change interventions can encourage support for girls’ education. This becomes even more important as a girl reaches adolescence – the point where physical, social and educational transition usually happens. The Girls’ Education Challenge (GEC) has the potential to deepen our understanding of how education can move beyond the individual and support broader social change. While this is a long-term process, promising progress and learning is already emerging.

This summary paper provides an overview of some of these insights:

- GEC projects are implementing different instruments, ranging from media programmes to women’s groups, to build trust, encourage community champions and sustain voluntary participation in promoting education. But projects have also had to test their own expectations and attitudes in relation to the communities they are working in and adapt the above interventions to respond to new insights.

- Parents’ attitudes towards their daughters’ education appear to be more influenced by their perception of its future value than a lack of support for girls’ education in principle. The trade-off tends to become more pronounced as the girl approaches the age when she would traditionally be expected to marry.

- Projects working with parents on their attitudes and behaviour generally report that this increases support for girls’ education and, in turn, can positively affect girls’ learning outcomes, and well-being more broadly.

- Attitude and behaviour change take a long time to take root. We expect this to move beyond individual empowerment to broader social change that will benefit girls outside the GEC projects’ direct reach.

What we are doing

Most GEC projects implement attitude and behaviour change activities and most cover more than one such intervention. The most comprehensive community-focused GEC projects are in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS). Of course, there is no one simple way of changing community attitudes and behaviour, and projects need to tailor their programmes for their operating contexts.

How the GEC projects are working with communities to influence attitudes and behaviour:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Community Meetings</th>
<th>Engaging men and boys</th>
<th>Faith-based groups and traditional leaders</th>
<th>Adult Literacy</th>
<th>Household visits and support</th>
<th>Women’s / parents’ groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engage with communities such as radio campaigns, TV chat shows, Community Listening Clubs</td>
<td>Awareness-raising activities such as community conversations and “social audits” on acceptability of activities</td>
<td>Awareness-raising and influencing attitudes and behavior through e.g. designated spaces for young men to discuss and target fathers.</td>
<td>Engagement of leaders to deliver training on gender issues and explaining “gender encourages girls’ education”, following up on truancy, drop-out and child abuse.</td>
<td>Programmes for parents and community members to increase understanding of and support for education</td>
<td>Support and mentoring through volunteers, with a remit to encourage attitudinal and behaviour change</td>
<td>Working with existing and new groups to provide support and engage communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
STAGES in Afghanistan promote the benefits of delaying marriage until after a girl has completed year 6 at school. In intervention communities, attitudes towards underage marriage have changed somewhat, though many families continue to see more economic benefit in marriage than in education. However, people increasingly view education as an asset, as in some places a literate and numerate wife is becoming more valued.

BRAC Afghanistan has found their community engagement is changing attitudes. In almost all provinces surveyed, respondents reported a significant positive impact on mothers’ perceptions of girls’ education. The only exceptions were those where interaction with the community has not been regular.

In Zimbabwe, IGATE found that while parents wanted their daughters to be able to read and write, they saw little benefit in any further academic ambitions. The project started a Mothers’ Groups to champion the importance of providing girls with the opportunity to complete their education. The project reports an increase in enrolment.

ChildHope in Ethiopia found that awareness of the importance of girls’ education increased attendance. In some areas girls believed their parents were just trying to escape legal sanctions while others felt the support for study time at home demonstrated a real change in attitudes.

Education projects become behaviour change programmes
What we are learning

Projects have found that families do not tend to object to girls’ education per se but find themselves in a tough balancing act where the family’s intermediate economic survival (that may depend on a marriage agreement) often outweighs the more distant and uncertain benefits of having an educated daughter. In addition, there are some attitudes which frown upon girls or women leaving the home or working, which may also be linked to parents’ concern for the safety of their girls in and on their way to school.

In addition to addressing the physical barriers to education, which increase as girls finish primary education and move into adolescence, projects need to change the perception of girls’ continued education as low-value. The GEC projects are trying to make the benefits of education more attractive, often tangibly demonstrating how young women’s increasing levels of education can improve their economic opportunities and generate wealth for themselves and their families. For instance, Opportunity International’s financial literacy and girls’ savings accounts have increased girls’ confidence in participating in decision-making at home, particularly as parents are witnessing the benefits of their daughters’ involvement in the programme. The girls’ savings initiative, school fee loans and sensitisation of parents are improving parents’ confidence that girls will stay in school longer and girls themselves are giving education more priority. More girls are also planning to start up their own businesses in the next 5 years with their acquired knowledge and skills. Most projects working in secondary schools include work with community stakeholders – though not all focus on attitudes and behaviour. Monitoring and measuring these changes in attitudes can be challenging, but a number of different approaches are being tested.

Building trust

A programme must resonate with the people it is trying to target. WUSC and CIBT in Kenya, and World Vision in Zimbabwe, emphasise the significance of community consensus as a pre-condition for meaningful, lasting change. For example, the conversations that CIBT facilitated with support from community leaders led to an increase in the number of local leaders thinking that vulnerable girls in their local community should attend school.

While projects can facilitate discussions, genuine change relies on interventions being rooted in the community. Link’s holistic approach aligns with government policy in Ethiopia and extends ownership to all levels of the community by working closely with government staff and local institutions. This supports sustainability and improves social accountability. Link, which is one of the most successful projects in terms of improving learning outcomes for girls, simultaneously decreased gender disparity, developed an increased interest in science amongst girls and improved attendance.

Sometimes the ‘peer effect’ can give a programme credibility in the community. Reluctant communities may turn into enthusiastic supporters of girls’ education, once they witness the benefits in neighbouring communities. For example, one community that the STAGES projects is working with in Afghanistan, initially rejected the community-based education (CBE) model but requested implementation after seeing positive changes in places that had adopted the model.

Understanding and valuing community volunteers
Projects need to have an understanding of the time investment requirement and the constraints and motivations that prevail in the communities, and ensure the expectations do not feel exploitative. While many projects depend on voluntary participation, some have experienced that individuals cannot find time to attend activities or requested compensation. For example, participants to the STAGES project requested monetary compensation for working in the school management councils as other development organisations had set this precedent. Without this compensation, they lost interest and the project had to recruit new volunteers.

**Adaptive programming**

Unconscious attitudes and behaviours do not just manifest in the communities, project staff themselves have also had to review their assumptions and adapt their approaches. Sometimes original assumptions about the interventions or the communities have not held. Discovery, for example, changed the language of their TV show from English to Hausa half way through the programme to better reach its target audience in Nigeria. The project hopes to demonstrate the impact of the change at its endline evaluation. Link learned that while fathers decide whether their daughters can go to school in the first place, their future attendance is influenced more by the mother. In recognition of this, Link started Mothers’ Groups and have experienced some of the most improved attendance rates in the GEC as a result.

**Next steps**

Much of the emerging evidence from the GEC projects at present relates to how girls’ enrolment to school and attendance can be supported through attitudinal and behaviour change. Future evaluations of the GEC should be able to show the effects of girls’ education on broader transformational social change and how investments which the GEC is making in girls’ education today can contribute to behaviour changes that will benefit girls in transition.

The diagram highlights the main areas of focus going forwards:
▪ **Building trust**: Trust is key in driving changes in attitudes within the community. Projects should be encouraged to work in closer collaboration with community leaders and use them as a platform to build and strengthen trust within the community.

▪ **Champions**: The roles that parents and communities can and do play in girls’ transition to secondary education is not yet fully understood. In many cases economic constraints, lacking infrastructure and other contextual factors are to blame for the peak in school dropout, but in the future stages of the programme, we will seek to better understand the role communities and parents could play in helping to make positive changes for marginalised girls.

▪ **Participation**: Community members who understand the returns from girls’ education seem better at supporting girls to attend and stay in school, learn and succeed. Projects are helping to promote positive attitudes, even if this will take some time to truly change behaviour and take root.

▪ **Adaptive programming**: Qualitative data covering a range of approaches reveals some specific interventions that are working, and the areas that still need more attention. Reflecting on their midline, projects will be making improvements in measuring and evaluating to present a more complete picture of the impact of their attitude and behaviour change components at the final evaluation of their impact.

*For more discussion on the topic, see the GEC Thematic Synthesis Paper: ‘Community based awareness, attitudes and behaviour’ from June 2016.*
GEC discussion paper:
Self-esteem and learning

September 2016

Photo credit: ENGINE, Nigeria
Introduction

Educational outcomes are measured in the GEC through improvement of cognitive skills such as literacy and numeracy, but there is growing support for the theory that non-cognitive skills, such as self-esteem and self-confidence, are linked to improved learning and eventual life outcomes, and should be considered as an additional and complementary measure of educational outcomes. Whilst there is an expanding body of evidence in western education literature linking self-esteem to life outcomes, there is a deficit in the context of international development.

The Girls’ Education Challenge (GEC) funds 37 education projects in 18 countries in Africa and Asia. At programme inception, Coffey, the Evaluation Manager conducted a baseline evaluation that identified factors including lack of self-confidence, esteem and aspiration as the one of greatest barriers to girls’ education after poverty and school related factors. Over 90% of GEC projects have included elements aimed at building girls’ self-esteem and self-confidence.

Interventions that build self-esteem are multi-faceted and complex. At midline there are some positive results in building self-esteem, with specific successful approaches identified as peer mentoring, the provision of role models, as well as remedial classes. In fact, a review of projects across the portfolio revealed that there are up to nine distinct approaches which contribute to developing girls’ self-esteem. We have developed a new common framework for looking at changes in self-esteem and its link to behaviours and learning. Furthermore, changes in girls’ self-esteem, we believe, are sequential and thus can be modelled, measured and to some extent predicted. This paper:

- Sets out a diagram for identifying activities that build self-esteem and self-confidence and examines what might be effective.
- Draws upon quantitative and qualitative results from the GEC midline evaluation of projects to examine which interventions have achieved results and whether there are indeed links to learning.
- Identifies challenges, specifically in measurement, and suggests a model for mapping sequential change in ‘self’.

What we are doing

There are a number of activities that projects have adopted to build self-esteem (girls’ self-value) and related to this self-confidence (self-belief in fulfilling tasks related to skills). Approaches to self-esteem in the GEC focus around the following four areas.

- Nurturing positive attitudes to girls’ education and potential in those closest to the girls, such as teachers, parents, religious leaders and peers.
- Providing assets that support girls’ education and make them feel like valued learners, such as bursaries, uniforms, stationery sets and bank accounts.
- Building social capital amongst girls by providing extra-curricular classes and girls clubs that form ‘safe spaces’ whereby girls can catch-up in subject areas, learn life skills such as sexual and reproductive health (SRH), form friendships and share experiences.
- Foster aspiration through using in-school mentors, role models and peers that guide and inspire girls’ vision for a more ambitious future through learning.

GEC projects have placed importance on developing self-esteem because they are seeing that greater self-esteem leads to improved self-confidence in girls and that this has the potential to improve learning. Projects report that self-esteem can lead to changes in the girls’ behaviour and attitudes which results in increased participation in the classroom and in greater personal ambition.
that maximises their opportunities to learn. Behaviours that demonstrate self-confidence and support learning are summarised below.

- **Positive attitudes to learning and participation** in the classroom demonstrated, for example, by more girls putting their hands up to answer questions and participating in learning, and taking on new roles and responsibilities in the classroom and in schools.

- **Greater investment of their time in learning**, and so improved attendance. Girls are also tending to use skills and greater agency to initiate small livelihood activities or take a more active role in household decision making.

- **Improved knowledge of relationships and sexual and reproductive health** in order to understand the risks of sexual activity, speak out and protect themselves, and make informed choices.

- **Demonstration of skills such as greater literacy and numeracy** but also other skills including, public speaking, developing and investing in small livelihood ventures, and helping family members with savings and budgeting, amongst others.

We have analysed these approaches across the portfolio of projects and developed a conceptual framework in order to be able to capture how projects are building self-esteem and confidence, and understand why this is important to learning. These approaches are summarised in Figure 1 below. Project activities that build self-esteem are highlighted on the left side of Figure 1 and those that demonstrate self-confidence on the right.

**Figure 1: Self-esteem and self-confidence activities in the GEC**

A total of 35 of the 37 GEC projects have activities that fit into the above diagram. Figure 1 is circular as interventions implement different combinations of approaches. Improved self-esteem is demonstrated by greater girls’ self-confidence which in turn reinforces their self-esteem and so on. Findings from midlines that demonstrate some of the successful combinations of approaches are highlighted below.
What we are learning

Changing teacher attitudes towards teaching girls can build better classroom relationships and girls’ self-esteem: This was seen in the case of Red Een Kind in South Sudan where gender sensitive teacher training positively influenced girls to feel that they are capable of doing things they had not tried before. STAGES (Afghanistan) found that girls’ reported positive experiences at school and with teachers, and this formed an important predictor of positive learning outcomes. Motivation, confidence and aspiration were also tested in STAGES and found to be related to learning outcomes6. In Uganda, girls reported better relationships with teachers, and found their schools ‘to be safer and more just’ as a result of a teacher training programme that aims to reduce corporal violence and promote better school governance by involving pupils and parents in committees (Raising Voices). Other positive benefits for girls included their involvement in elected school office positions, more direct participation in classrooms and greater ambition, aspiration and expectations in their educational future.

Academic capacity building interventions such as tutoring and remedial lessons are enhancing self-confidence: Additional classes and tutoring are in great demand sometimes leading to oversubscription as in the case of Mercy Corps (Nepal) which ran girls’ clubs which reinforced classroom learning in maths, English and other subjects. Parents and children concurred on the effectiveness and benefits of these lessons as girls were able to revise the week’s lessons in the clubs and clear any doubts they had in the classrooms. Girls, parents and teachers who took part in focus group discussions at midline concurred that the girls’ clubs had played a significant role in improving the confidence levels of the girls who were now more confident to approach teachers, and even people outside school.

Promoting sexual and reproductive health and life skills training has improved self-esteem: Projects are providing life skills education and opening up discussion on issues such as puberty and menstruation, nurturing an environment where girls can discuss concerns around adolescence seeking to provide girls with safe spaces to discuss and question topics of importance and relevance to them. In Ghana, Varkey aimed to empower girls through life skills, covering child rights, personal hygiene, career choices and the importance of education. Combined with digital distance lessons and using female role models through ‘Wonder Women’ sessions there is a reported positive impact on aspiration, though not necessarily significant differences in confidence levels. One suggested reasons for this is that girls already demonstrated relatively high levels of self-confidence in both control and treatment schools. The project is seeking to understand this more through strengthening its investigation and piloting an amended survey tool on self-esteem. Theatre for a Change (TFAC) in Malawi adopts a methodology that focuses on changing girls’ behaviours and their empowerment in order to reduce sexual and reproductive health risks. The participatory approach they adopt to developing self-esteem in their project is a statistically significant predicator of higher learning outcomes and levels of attendance.

The provision of sanitary pads, kits and better sanitation in schools has boosted girls’ self-esteem and confidence: PEAS adapted its intervention to provide sanitary kits to improve girls’ attendance in school, after baseline research showed the significance of such provision. It is also engaging with boys to remove stigma around mensuration for the girls in the classroom. These activities have removed taboos and given girls confidence in their own bodies. HPA in Rwanda reported through qualitative interviews that ECOSAN toilets have increased privacy and girls reported that this ‘improved their motivation, confidence and feelings of safety and security’. It has also increased attendance as menstruation was identified as one of the key reasons why girls missed school.

6 A motivation score for each girl was computed by aggregating recoded variables for a series of statements related to enjoyment, nervousness, and the importance of certain subject areas. The aggregated motivation score was significantly correlated with Girls’ EGRA and EGMA scores such as learning scores increase as girls’ motivation, confidence and aspiration increases.
Mentors and role models can significantly raise self-esteem: A popular approach to building girls’ self-esteem has been through promoting mentors in schools and introducing role models which has had a positive impact on girls’ aspirations and potentially on their self-esteem and agency, particularly for adolescent girls. Sessions with in-school mentors directly support girls in their learning and pastoral care. Programmes have adopted different girl mentors including peers (BRAC, Afghanistan), school mothers (Red Een Kind, South Sudan) and teachers (Opportunity International). Additionally, girls are exposed to external female role models, who are often successful professionals who conduct lessons or talk about the benefits and opportunities that staying in education offers (Varkey’s ‘Wonder Women’, Ecofuels, Uganda, and Discovery’s video-based lessons).

Skills development is having a big impact on self-esteem and self-belief: The experience of learning a new skill and completion of a specific task can improve self-confidence and ambition for learning. One example is Opportunity International which offers financial literacy skills as part of its programme alongside opening Child Savings Accounts, offering micro entrepreneur mentors, and arranging bank exposure visits. There has been strong demand for such skills programmes, not just amongst girls, but also teachers and parents. Midline results report that girls attribute increased self-esteem to the project and demonstrate an increased take up of leadership roles in schools, greater public speaking and agency.

Challenges, measuring and modelling

It appears that girls’ self-esteem is developed in stages and starts with shifts in girls’ aspiration and ambition for their learning and life outcomes which is demonstrated through their different behaviours and attitudes. These changes are generally seen first in safe environments like girls’ clubs or girl focused classes and subsequently fans out to greater confidence in girls when dealing with their families and community. However, the monitoring and evaluation of self-esteem and related concepts remains a challenge not only in the GEC, but also amongst any discipline or project trying to establish improved self-esteem outcomes.

The above framework developed through the GEC shows that self-esteem and self-confidence are both complex, multi-faceted concepts that rely on distinct, individual and combinations of different approaches. Because of this, projects have had to develop a range of different indicators and methods to measure change. The wide variety of tools available, as well as the fact that the majority of tools rely on self-reporting which has in itself been challenged (Heatherton and Wyland, 2003), and makes the interpretation of results and aggregation of data hard. GEC projects have produced evidence of change using quantitative and qualitative methods, but results are mixed and can vary using different methods even in the same cohorts of girls.

Interlinked or suites of interventions together can contribute towards increasing self-esteem, but it is difficult to identify which activities are critical: Multi-stranded interventions can increase attendance and learning as in the case of VSO Mozambique which demonstrated that extra-curricular activities are effective in building confidence, but with mixed approaches, attribution to specific activities is difficult.

Interventions need to use comprehensive approaches to change attitudes of a number of stakeholders, not a single target group: Changing attitudes and behaviour of teachers and boys seems to be highly instrumental to building and supporting girls’ self-esteem and confidence and re-enforcing their identity as learners. By seeing girls take on different roles, such as taking on school positions and being role models, boys behave in a more positive manner to them. This reinforces the need to consider both boys and girls when making positive changes to treat boys and girls equally in the classroom.
The GEC framework above breaks down the different areas of activity. This allows projects to map their activities and be more targeted about measuring change consistently in specific areas. It seems that there may indeed be a sequence of change that girls’ experience when building their self-esteem and this requires new thinking and modelling. In order to measure and map how girls build self-esteem, we propose a behavioural model (see below) that projects could test. This suggests that, initially, changes are seen in the girls themselves, and seem to occur around increased or changed aspiration. This is followed by their changing behaviours in the girls’ clubs (or other safe spaces) where girls can demonstrate greater voice, confidence and build networks and friendship groups. At the next stage is a change in girls’ behaviours in the classroom. This needs to be encouraged through changing teacher attitudes and developing more gender responsive pedagogy. Further changes then occur with the girls’ behaviours with parents, wider family and lastly, in the community. Projects are independently reporting changes in many of these areas but not necessarily across all areas.

**Figure 2: Mapping change in self-esteem and self-confidence**

**Next steps**

It appears that as a result of interventions aimed at increasing self-esteem, girls are increasingly taking responsibility for their lives and we believe they are starting to acquire and build up agency to change their decision-making, mobility and investment choices. As so many GEC projects are adopting self-esteem promotion activities, we have a unique opportunity to examine this area of girls’ education in development more fully.

The key areas for deeper analysis and collaboration in the period between midline and endline include:

- Further examination of the link between self-esteem and learning using a focussed range of quantitative and qualitative methods.
- Delving into which methods and approaches and combinations of approaches are the most effective and why in raising self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Evaluating the value for money of providing girls’ self-esteem activities and assessing the social, educational and economic return.
- Leading an examination of the common indicators and tools used to measure self-esteem and self-confidence with girls and those around them with a view to propose a more nuanced set of indicators based on changed attitudes and behaviours.

*For more discussion on the topic, see the GEC Thematic Synthesis Paper: ‘The importance of girls’ self-esteem to learning’ from June 2016.*
GEC discussion paper:
Preventing and responding to violence against children

September 2016

Photo credit: PEAS, Uganda
Introduction

The Convention on the Rights of the Child explicitly states that all children have a right to be safe from all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse. It is important to note that, while violence against children in schools and communities has been linked to lower levels of attendance by students and to poorer performance on tests, first and foremost, it is a child’s human right to be able to receive his/her education in a violence free environment. Throughout the paper, violence against children is broadly defined as ‘all forms of, or threat of, physical, psychological and sexual violence against a person below the age of 18’.

While both girls and boys can be victims and perpetrators of violence, girls are more likely to experience sexual violence, harassment and exploitation, while boys are more likely to experience physical violence. Children from marginalised groups, children with disabilities and children who do not conform to mainstream gender norms are more likely to experience violence than other children.

Although the education sector is not solely responsible for addressing such violence, it has a clear mandate within the wider child protection system. All education programmes should be designed based on a comprehensive understanding of the child protection system where they work, including the capacity of its stakeholders, as well as the education sector’s place and responsibility within that system. In particular, it is important that there is the ambition for schools to become areas free from violence and where children are taught about healthy and respectful relationships. Teachers and other staff should be able to identify vulnerable children, including those who experience abuse, and refer them to appropriate services in a timely and appropriate manner. This means that schools need to take a holistic look at child well-being, ensuring that the environment is child-friendly, that teaching methods encourage equality between all children, that children treat each other well and that their different abilities are supported and encouraged. If this is lacking, education programmes can inadvertently create new risks to children they aim to help. This is important whether education programmes are specifically trying to reduce violence against children in schools or not.

This summary paper provides an overview the main approaches used by Girls’ Education Challenge (GEC) projects to prevent and respond to violence against children, highlighting the significant areas of learning emerging from GEC related to violence against children.
What we are doing

Within the GEC portfolio, violence against children did not feature highly at the proposal stage. However, following the baseline data collection, many projects found that violence was cited more frequently as a barrier to girls’ education than had been previously assumed. The following diagram shows how projects proposed to prevent and respond to violence against children:

How the GEC projects are improving the safety of children at community and school level:

- **Holistic approach to respond to and prevent violence**
  - Projects are working with schools and local communities to address the drivers of power and inequality in numerous spheres. These interventions are occurring within schools and beyond the school level, including focusing on households and the Government.

- **Establishing community based education schools**
  - To reduce the distances that girls need to travel and so they are safer and easier for girls to access, leading to improvements in enrolment and attendance.

- **Adding an anti-violence component to awareness raising campaigns**
  - To positively influence attitudes and behaviours of community members to reduce violence against girls making it easier for them to attend school.

- **Teaching girls about their rights and building their self-esteem**
  - To enable girls to protect themselves and have the courage to report violence when it happens.

- **Building safer school infrastructure**
  - Projects are tackling violence at the sites where it may frequently occur, for example in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities. This may mitigate violence occurring in the future, particularly if girls are involved in decisions about where to site the facilities.

- **Establishing and strengthening response mechanisms to reports of violence**
  - To enable stakeholders, either formal or informal, to act on reports of violence received in schools or through other reporting mechanisms to ensure girls are safe and adequately supported.

**Engaging in capacity building of teachers and school management:** Projects are focusing on training to introduce the use of non-violent disciplining methods and child protection policies in a preventative approach, before violence has occurred.

**Establishing reporting mechanisms in schools:** Some projects are facilitating reporting of violence by establishing anonymous complaints boxes, or using female teachers for safe reporting following sessions on child rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

**Working with service providers:** Some projects are using ‘One stop’ service centres, safe houses or district level stakeholders such as Ministry of Social Welfare, law enforcement agencies etc. to provide a more integrated approach to child protection. Where service delivery is less available, projects often work with community groups and traditional authorities. They are also building capacity of stakeholders to respond and document cases of violence.

**Ensuring safety in boarding schools:** Projects are addressing the safety of girls in boarding houses who have been given bursaries, when they live far away. Approaches to address this include:

- Conducting thorough child protection assessments of the schools.
- Building capacity of matrons and improving infrastructure, particularly sanitary facilities, to create a safer environment for girls.
- Improving student awareness of violence and gender equality.
- Introducing reporting mechanisms.
Close monitoring and follow up with girls while they are at school.

**What we are learning**

A number of GEC projects reported successes in improving the safety of children in their project schools at midline. The main observations emerged from their midline evaluations are listed below.

**Holistic approach to respond to and prevent violence**

*Working to create a safer environment for girls can lead to an improvement in learning outcomes:* For example, Raising Voices in Uganda - which has violence against children prevention and response at its core - has recorded some of the best literacy improvements. The midline evaluation conducted for Relief International in Somalia, also found a correlation between girls’ perceptions of safety and maths and reading scores. ChildHope in Ethiopia also found that their anonymous reporting mechanism in schools is significantly and positively associated with attendance and literacy scores.

*A long-term approach to make schools child friendly and free from violence (including corporal punishment) is more effective:* While only a small number of GEC projects looked specifically at measuring corporal punishment and perceptions of safety among girls, there is evidence emerging that longer engagements are more effective. For example, Relief International in Somalia found that teachers who were part of a two-year in-service training (rather than attending a one off training) were more likely to implement more girl-centred teaching methods. Not only did this reduce violence in the classroom, but girls in these classes also scored higher on a psychosocial well-being index.

*It is not sufficient to develop child protection policies in schools in order to improve safety for children.* The development of policies needs to be complemented by monitoring to ensure policies are implemented and translated into commitment at the school level. For example, while most of the schools supported by Theatre for a Change (TfaC) in Malawi have child protection policies in place, interviews conducted with their Agents of Change (AoC) teachers indicate that even in circumstances where child safeguarding procedures are designed together with the school community, it can still be problematic to ensure head teachers act appropriately when children report violence.

**Establishing safe journeys to school**

*Reducing the distance children need to travel to get to school can help increase attendance:* A Community Based Education (CBE) approach in Afghanistan has shown success in increasing attendance for girls. While unsafe journeys to school was still identified as one barrier at midline, this was less prominent in communities where a community-based school had been established (STAGES, BRAC Afghanistan).

*Facilitating children’s mobility through the provision of bikes or facilitating school buses to drive children to and from school increases attendance:* Quantitative data from Eco-Fuel’s midline in Uganda indicates that their transportation scheme has led to increased attendance for girls and qualitative feedback from parents indicate that they are happier to let their girls attend school when transport is provided, especially parents of disabled girls.

*Working directly with communities to identify areas unsafe for children during their journey to school and advocating for appropriate measures does not automatically translate into an improved perception of safety among children.* While this is a more cost-effective solution than an on-going transportation scheme, PEAS midline concludes that raising awareness among communities of the dangers potentially facing their children does not automatically translate into better perceptions and actions. The percentage of girls reporting feeling unsafe on the journey to school decreased only marginally, indicating that a more targeted effort is required.
Important consideration when working on preventing and responding to violence against children

Implementation of some activities aimed at empowering girls in school such as mixed seating and provision of scholastic material, can in fact lead to more violence perpetrated against girls. In Mozambique, for example, some girls complained that as a result of the new mixed sex seating, they experienced more violence as there were more opportunities for boys to touch them inappropriately. The same evaluation also found that there are instances where girls reporting violence perpetrated by boys in schools, would be beaten by the boys for reporting them.

Project implementers should link schools to accessible child-protection referral systems to ensure that concerns and cases reported by children are acted upon and services provided. This has been an ongoing struggle for many of the GEC projects. For projects working on strengthening a community focused response to violence have faced challenges including difficulty of translating knowledge of community groups into practice. Other limiting factors including the cost of transport to conduct referrals and the fear of victimisation from community members who want to settle cases through community mechanisms rather than involve formal service providers.

It is also important to note that different forms of violence against children overlap and reinforce each other and that types of violence can also vary enormously between and within countries. An assumption underpinning many of the projects' theory of change, although not always explicitly stated, was that girls are victims of violence and boys and men are perpetrators. However, the situation is not always so clear cut. A thorough gender analysis linked to tailored types of activities addressing gender based violence has been successful in encouraging project staff to consider potential unintended and negative consequences of interventions.

Limitations of learning within the GEC

In general, there has not been sufficient expertise and knowledge of this challenging field across the GEC portfolio and this will limit the amount of in-depth and useful learning that can be done before endline. This is because of the issues listed below.

**Measuring violence requires special expertise:** Conducting research on violence against children has ethical implications and a number of safeguards need to be built into the research in order to minimise harm to children. Violence is often underreported and so special care and expertise is needed to design appropriate data collection tools and ensure that reporting violence does not put victims at further risk.

**Measuring the impact of interventions, which aim to reduce violence against children, is challenging:** Prevalence estimates are problematic as increased reporting can be misinterpreted as an increase in experiences of violence, whereas increased reporting can actually be a positive indicator of improved awareness and a belief that it should be responded to and prevented.

**It can be hard to ensure unbiased reporting (including social desirability bias) when researching violence against children:** For instance, an intervention which has effectively challenged the acceptability of violence within a community may result in research participants feeling less inclined to admit that they have themselves perpetrated violence.

Next steps

This paper is intended to illustrate the importance of child protection in education programming. It has used the experience of the GEC portfolio to highlight the range of abilities, approaches and results employed by projects. It also highlights some factors that project staff and donors need to be aware of in order to mitigate against doing greater harm.
In the future, education interventions should place child protection at their core in order to both fulfil children’s rights to be free from violence and to ensure students have a good experience in school. It is therefore recommended that programmes have a clear understanding of the education system’s role within a wider protection system to support the well-being of children. While this can be challenging, especially where coordination between child protection stakeholders is weak, development partners need to be aware of the limitations of referral services and should programme appropriately in order to not give rise to ‘do no harm’ concerns.

While not all education programmes need to include violence prevention and response activities, it is crucial that all education projects have adequate child protection capacity in place and that this is built in from the conception of the programme. This includes not only child safeguarding, but also the capacity to conduct child protection and ‘do no harm’ assessments to ensure safety of children in project activities and to mitigate any potential emerging child protection issues.

For more discussion on the topic, see the GEC Thematic Synthesis Paper: ‘Preventing violence against children’ from June 2016.
GEC Discussion Paper:
Teaching and learning

September 2016

Photo credit: ACTED, Afghanistan
Introduction

Teaching and learning interventions are central to the Girls’ Education Challenge (GEC). Once marginalised girls have overcome the barriers they face in getting to and staying in school, learning depends largely on their teachers and on the classroom environment. GEC interventions range from a focus on improving academic teaching to developing gender responsive pedagogy and child-centred learning. The quality of girls’ learning will also affect their likelihood to continue attending school as parents and girls compare the gains of education with the costs, financial and otherwise. Midline evaluations have provided an opportunity to explore how effective teaching and learning interventions have been in improving girls’ learning and attendance, and how sustainable they are.

The development of teachers’ skills and subject knowledge feature strongly in projects showing positive midline learning outcomes. The GEC portfolio illustrates a recognition that there are a number of variables which influence change, including teacher and learner behaviour and attitudes, teaching methodologies, and learning resources. Many projects have distinguished between the gender and previous training of project teachers, and whether teachers are working in regular classes or in remedial/catch-up situations. There is evidence of an important role played by extra-curricular learning opportunities in facilitating girls’ educational progress, particularly for those who have missed out on formal schooling.

In response to their midline evaluations, projects are further adapting their approaches and interventions to accentuate those teaching and learning processes which appear to be leading to better learning outcomes, and adding in new activities to trigger further change. As implementation continues towards end line, GEC projects and the Fund Manager will monitor the changes taking place and generate further data and findings.

What we are doing

Of the 37 GEC projects, 30 work with teachers directly reaching over 90% of the GEC target beneficiary girls. Twenty-eight projects include some form of extra-curricular activity. Some projects are also contributing to long term solutions for teacher capacity such as selecting senior secondary girls and supporting them on pathways to becoming teachers as is the case in Save the Children’s Girls Learning How to Teach Program. There are five main types of teaching and learning interventions outlined (see overleaf). They target both in school and out of school girls, and include boys, either deliberately or as wider beneficiaries.
**Teacher training**
Projects include teacher training and support, including child-centred learning approaches as one element of a composite approach.

Implementation approaches vary, with some projects using a full or partial cascade approach (where a small number of teachers receive training and then take the role of other teachers, and so on), a whole school approach, or supporting government-run training.

**Gender responsive pedagogy**
These include interventions which seek to influence expectations, attitudes and practices of teachers and schools when teaching girls and boys. These include issues such as reflection of gender in textbooks, language, attention and time given to boys versus girls, acknowledgement of risks and vulnerabilities girls face; classroom seating arrangements.

**Extra-curricular teaching and learning**
Interventions which include a direct route to learning or focus on a broader range of non-cognitive skills are critically important prior to and during adolescence as girls’ needs, and the pressures on them, change. Typical activities include: homework clubs, reading corners, mentoring sessions, vocational training, economic empowerment, income generation for girls, non-formal education provision example accelerated learning programmes.

**Academic catch-up**
These include extra classes (for example, literacy classes) to provide remedial coaching and tutoring, demand for extra tuition appears to be high as this addresses the fact that many girls do not gain foundational skills during their first years in school and so have many gaps in their knowledge.

**Inclusive education**
These interventions support disabled girls, and two are exclusively focused on supporting disabled children to access education. A first necessary step is often the need to address a lack of awareness and projects therefore focus on improving teacher skills and knowledge about inclusive education and disability and learning materials. Whilst many governments have introduced inclusive education policies, relatively few have had the capacity to allocate appropriate resources to enact them.

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**What we are learning**

Broad approaches have enabled some projects to provide a comprehensive teacher training package that looks at teachers’ subject knowledge, classroom management, successful pedagogy, child’s rights and girls’ inclusion.

The GEC’s emphasis on measuring learning outcomes has shown that at midline almost 800,000 girls have achieved better learning outcomes than their peers outside the programme, with greater success in literacy than numeracy. Learning opportunities outside of traditional lessons has been a significant factor in the projects showing the most positive results.

**Teacher training**

Interventions to develop better pedagogy, whether by enhancing teachers’ skills and knowledge or by creating a gender-sensitive classroom, seem to be having a positive effect on girls’ learning and on school culture. Frequent and ongoing support, and coaching teachers, works well to embed the changes required. Most projects report a strong impact of teaching and learning processes on progress for GEC-supported girls. This was particularly seen in Camfed International where teachers were observed to be now spending more hours teaching than before and are putting into practice teaching techniques from gender sensitive training sessions. In these projects, teachers now have higher expectations of girls, thereby improving their motivation to learn.

Direct teacher training when complemented with improvements in classroom and school resources can lead to outstanding improvements in literacy and numeracy. Wasichana Wote Wasome (CIBT) in Kenya, attributes improvements to a combination of direct teacher training,
including individualised structured support, better classroom resources provided following training and in-class coaching of teachers.

**Interventions intending to change pedagogy and classroom dynamics need to be based on a well-informed understanding of teachers' own educational experience:** Some types of behaviour and attitudes which may be detrimental to girls’ learning are culturally embedded, and require creating awareness to bring in positive change. In Northern Kenya, WUSC have included in their teacher training the possibility that teachers can be both creators and removers of barriers to effective learning. As the midline results are analysed further, we will look for correlation between changes in girls’ perception of their school experience and their attendance patterns. It was also seen that peer to peer teacher support allows teachers to contextualise the training and build on what works in their own situation. This is evidenced by teacher observations, and girls' and teachers' own reporting.

**Training, particularly when it is hands-on, can generate enthusiasm and motivation among teachers, but needs effective follow up, and changes in teaching styles are sometimes met with reluctance and resistance:** The mode of delivery of teacher training affects its impact. We are collecting evidence from those using different approaches (such as cascade training, resource or catalyst teachers, whole school training) and documenting the differences. So far it is clear that:

- It is crucial to involve the head teacher, regardless of the way training is delivered.
- Both male and female teachers should be included in training about gender sensitivity.
- Practical follow up is vital, involving practice sessions for new methodologies.
- Teacher networking is an effective way of sustaining and embedding training. A number of projects are using technology to support this (e.g. video, WhatsApp, YouTube).
- There is potential value in “taking lessons from the classroom to the village” to challenge local value systems and approaches to men and women.

**Language of instruction and testing affects girls’ learning outcomes:** A challenge within the GEC is that some projects may be required to test girls in the country’s official language, even if this is not the language being spoken on a daily basis in the classroom or home. This has been discussed with individual projects and learning tests have been designed to accommodate multiple languages where possible and not considered inappropriate by government authorities. Some projects, such as Camfed International, are stepping up English language support and adding refresher classes; others are increasing reading practice time. However, in a number of projects, language has understandably been cited in the midline report as a challenge which may have affected results. The FM is working with projects to try to mitigate this at endline and projects and evaluators are encouraged to be clear about these issues in their analysis of results so that we have a full understanding when we are comparing results from different contexts.

**Engagement with local and national education authorities is vital in order to discuss how learning from their project can be translated to broader large-scale provision.** This is important when interventions with teachers are sometimes constrained by broader systemic challenges such as large, multi-grade classes, teacher workload, and sudden redeployment of teachers. Inclusion of ministries of education in classroom observations enables conversations about areas for enhanced teacher support which governments can then follow up on through in-service teacher training programmes.

The GEC is enabling adaptive programming, with well integrated projects being better equipped to make changes to their interventions. For instance, the projects described overleaf are expanding the interventions they perceive to be most influential on learning:
Additional learning opportunities

Extra and co-curricular interventions contribute to improved learning outcomes leading to a significant increase in test scores. These types of intervention are successful if they are focused, needs-based and practical tutorials as opposed to generic classes. Link provided extra tutorial classes in literacy and numeracy after training tutors. This led to an increase in girls’ subject knowledge. There has been some exploration of spill-over effects from such activities into mainstream classrooms. However, this effect appears to be minimal in terms of teaching quality, noted in MGcubed’s midline research. Projects are being encouraged to use what has worked in extracurricular interventions to inform in-school activities.

Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALP) can provide a turning point for girls who have missed out on education: When girls have missed out on large parts of their primary level education, ALPs are often employed to support them to catch up to re-enter their appropriate grade or continue in non-formal training. Teachers are specially trained to deliver this programme, in line with government curricula. So far projects, including BRAC and STAGES in Afghanistan, are reporting successes in midline learning outcomes.

The skills needed by teachers in extra-curricular settings are different to those needed in formal school classrooms. Especially when providing catch-up type classes for older girls, it is important to adopt age-appropriate methods, including the introduction of self-study techniques, so that girls can make the most of the opportunities.

It is important to ensure the support of the local community and parents around running these type of classes: Only after fully briefing parents and community members before the start of the programme can projects ensure that there is clarity about activities. Projects have highlighted the need for sustainable models for teacher incentives, and the importance for teachers to use age-appropriate classroom activities.

Next Steps

This paper has collected together some of the experience of developing teaching and learning within the GEC to date. It is clear that there is a rich vein of learning to be tapped from the extensive and innovative range of interventions. GEC projects are responding to their midline results and evaluations, with a view to improving results at end line. In the area of teaching and learning, projects have indicated that they are making adaptations in the following areas:
Teacher absenteeism and engagement with local and national education authorities:
Given the high level of turnover and 'churn' in the teacher cohorts trained by projects, there is a risk of diluting the benefits of the teacher training conducted by the project. Projects are overcoming this by planning for a level of attrition and training more teachers than are needed, training a group instead of only one teacher in each school, and working closely with Ministries on retention of trained teachers.

To further address working with teacher authorities, a number of projects are working together with ministries of education to carry out joint classroom observations. This enables conversations about areas for enhanced teacher support which governments can then follow up on through in-service teacher training programmes.

Gaining buy-in and cooperation from parents: Projects are using this strategy to reinforce changes. However, some changes within the classroom which appear to be working well are hard to sustain beyond the project setting and further engagement will be needed with projects to make these sustainable in the long-term.

For more discussion on the topic, see the GEC Thematic Synthesis Paper: ‘Teaching and Learning’ from June 2016.
GEC discussion paper: Education technology in the GEC

September 2016

Photo credit: iMlango, Kenya
Introduction

A number of Girls’ Education Challenge (GEC) projects use technology to improve education outcomes, with varied levels of ambition and scope. Private sector partnerships play a prominent role in this work (it is worth noting that our strategic partnerships have not done midlines so conclusions for these projects are in a slightly different evidence base). Three technology projects are co-financed by companies.

This summary paper looks at:

- The ways GEC projects are working with education technology (ed-tech).
- Emerging findings.
- Lessons regarding sustainability of interventions and their value for money.
- Opportunities for further work.

As we take stock of what has been learned so far, particularly from midline research, some useful and important lessons are being learned around the use of ed-tech in the GEC. We know from existing evidence and programmes that, to be effective in improving educational outcomes, technology needs to be aligned with the broader approach to teaching and learning and integrated into the life of the school. This is certainly confirmed by the experience of GEC projects. For ed-tech to raise learning levels, it is crucial to give an early priority to sourcing content. From GEC projects, we are also seeing some potential in the innovative use of cloud-based resources to personalise learning and the assessment of this learning. GEC work confirms the importance of training and working with teachers to maximise the benefits of using technology in the classroom, and offers some good learning on best practice. Ed-tech can also provide innovative approaches for improved school management and reporting, monitoring and evaluation, and awareness raising.

By endline, it is anticipated that we will better understand, through measuring and analysing results, if and how ed-tech has contributed to improved learning and attendance for marginalised girls. This paper sets out what we have learned so far, lessons that could be used to inform ongoing and future design and delivery of education programmes, and provide a basis for more in-depth endline analysis.

What we are doing

The range of technologies being used across the GEC can be characterised in terms of three broad objectives:

- Supporting teaching and learning.
- Improving school management, data collection and reporting.
- Promoting awareness and advocacy around girls’ education.

Across the GEC portfolio, 23 projects are using ed-tech to support one or more of these objectives in a number of different ways.
**How we use ed-tech in GEC projects to enhance girls’ education experience:**

**Connectivity**
- Internet access to schools in rural / underserved areas (e.g. mobile, satellite, broadband provision).

**Hardware**
- Hardware to aid classroom teaching and learning, attendance tracking and reporting (e.g. tablets, desktops, mobiles, screens, projectors, solar lamps).

**Management systems**
- ICT-based systems enhancing capacity for effective school data management, attendance tracking and reporting (e.g. mobile-based reporting systems, electronic digital assessments).

**Content – teaching and learning resources**
- Content and other resources to use for teachers and students to use on and offline (e.g. learning programmes, e-books, lesson plans, videos).

**Advocacy and awareness-raising**
- Use of technology to disseminate messages on girls’ education (e.g. radio, bulk SMS, TV broadcasts).

**Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)**
- Hardware and software used to enhance capacity for reliable and robust M&E (e.g. mobile-based reporting systems, electronic digital assessments).

**Training and support**
- Workshops, training programmes, mentoring and other support to teachers and other stakeholders (e.g. initial and on-going training, in-school support, online support, workshops).

**Some examples of ed-tech interventions in GEC projects in Africa:**

**The Discovery Project** in Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria, uses video-based learning resources in SEN schools or classes, particularly for deaf children. It has also provided material to destigmatise disability.

**MG Cubed** in Ghana provides distance-based teaching to improve the quantity and quality of instruction in Maths and English to rural schools, with lessons broadcast live from a studio. This has shown an increase in numeracy but not literacy results.

**Jielimishe** project in Kenya introduced the BioSim attendance tracking system, using an Iris recognition system linked to a smart phone to record each student’s daily attendance and send messages to their parents to confirm their attendance and departure from school.

**iMlango** in Kenya provides broadband connectivity, high quality learning materials in maths, literacy, and life skills, and training for teachers. It uses Maths Whizz, to provide personalised tutoring, test students regularly and where students get sufficient time on devices, their maths age is increasing. The provision of sufficient computers remains a challenge.
What we are learning

It is too early to draw comprehensive or firm conclusions from the evaluation around results and what works, or does not work. However, the following observations set out emerging results and changes in learning outcomes, teaching practice, and school management, drawing on quantitative and qualitative reporting at midline.

The impact of ed-tech on learning outcomes

Education technology has been linked with improved learning outcomes particularly in numeracy: MGCubed midline is showing positive results in numeracy, though not literacy. Students’ responses indicate that the quality of materials has played a part in this, including engaging, animated content to aid understanding of maths concepts.

Individualised learning programmes provide rich, real-time data, which can be used to improve learning: Technology can enable more individualised, tailored learning for students. Maths Whizz (iMlango) is showing positive signs of improving the acquisition of foundational numeracy skills, including remediation for students at higher primary grades. The project has also introduced a regular digital test for literacy to provide data on students’ progress and inform teaching. Where students have individual log-ins, more personalised approaches to classroom based assessments can be employed.

Technology has the potential to provide learning support for children with disability. In some iMlango schools, Special Educational Needs (SEN) classes have seen a positive increase in student motivation through using the computer lab. In The Discovery Project in Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria, teachers have reported that educational video materials have helped children with special needs. The project has also developed materials which aim to de-stigmatisate disability. There is a growing interest across GEC projects in developing targeted support for children with disability, using ICT and other technology.

The impact of ed-tech on teaching

Technology has significant potential to build teacher capacity: GEC projects working in remote, rural schools, where teachers are often isolated, are finding that distance learning and broadband-based platforms can support teachers’ pedagogical content, knowledge and skills. MGCubed has recorded at midline a number of ways in which teachers at rural schools are benefitting from distance learning and subsequently applying the new approaches in their other classes, not directly supported by the project. For teachers in rural schools, especially remote schools, this kind of on-going and regular support is unusual and has great value.

Other projects are using technology to build networks among teachers for peer learning and support: This is done either through specially tailored platforms, or through use of existing social networks and messaging services such as WhatsApp. More work is needed at endline to evaluate the impact of such networks, but projects are reporting the important contribution this is making to learning outcomes.

The impact of ed-tech on school management and reporting

There has been improved student attendance and parental engagement as a result of technology-based systems: iMlango is reporting that attendance is increasing and 80% of head teachers find the attendance data generated through technology useful. ICL reports that the information being given to parents via a daily SMS has encouraged more parental engagement with school, and support for girls to attend regularly. Camfed uses data to make bursary payments and to track poor attendance, ensuring that follow up support can be provided.
Greater depth and reliability of data: Real time attendance data is adding to the GEC capacity for rigorous evaluation. It can be used to monitor and analyse attendance patterns and triangulate this with other data sources in order to understand barriers. For example, iMlango data clearly shows the impact of market days and seasonal variations. Projects are also reporting greater reliability of data.

Teacher attendance is being tracked more reliably: Projects are finding technology for tracking student attendance, along with other programmes, useful to help track teacher attendance too. This is either done directly, for example where head teachers report daily, or indirectly, such as when teachers log in to operate a student attendance system. Clearly, these interventions need to be approached carefully and in cooperation with teachers.

The impact of ed-tech on students’ motivation levels

Technology can have a motivational impact on teachers and students, which needs to be harnessed: Introducing technology to classroom teaching can be motivational and exciting for teachers and students. Nearly 63% of girls surveyed by iMlango report that using computers has made school more exciting. Through teacher training, early focus was given to reassuring teachers that technology could develop their skills and careers rather than be a threat to them. Viva, in Uganda, reports a high degree of interest and enthusiasm for learning generated by use of computers in classes for out-of-school girls.

Operational challenges

Establishing a technology-based intervention in under-served and marginalised schools needs good design which addresses a number of early challenges.

Political and bureaucratic constraints: Projects have had to navigate cumbersome barriers to get ICT established. For example, Ericsson struggled to secure approval from the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology which delayed the process substantially. Avanti’s deployment of hardware was delayed due to the additional clearance required from the Kenyan government.

Limited, pre-existing infrastructure: Unreliable and expensive electricity supplies can be restricting. For the most marginalised regions, platforms suitable for low bandwidth regions that can be easily used by people with no prior exposure to ICT may be required. Ericsson conducted a needs assessment study to develop appropriate solutions such as generators or solar power. At midline, The Discovery Project found that the electricity supply to schools had become more reliable during the first year of the programme; schools were possibly incentivised to resolve power supply problems to use the technology in class.

Teaching and learning

Interventions that use technology to improve teaching and learning provide a mix of the three Cs – connectivity (and hardware), learning content, and strengthen teacher capacity. A good understanding of the fourth C, context, is needed to ensure we get the right balance.

Early attention to developing/sourcing appropriate and high quality content for teaching and learning is needed and may require more time and resources than anticipated: Projects have had to work hard to identify or create appropriate content that is of sufficient quality, relevant to local and country contexts, appropriate for target grades and subjects, and in line with national curricula. There are possible trade-offs between paying for high quality content and accessing a range of other freely available content. Ericsson’s Connect to Learn project in Myanmar is investing significant time to develop materials and to ensure they are available in Burmese where possible.

Cloud-based content needs to be well organised for effective and safe use by teachers and students: Projects use different approaches to ensure a safe learning environment and to quality assure and organise cloud based materials such as apps, programmes and teacher-generated
content. In Myanmar, with the Ericsson/Finja Five edu-tablet, each student has their own log-in which presents an individualised set of cloud-based materials to each user. Online safety is ensured by only enabling access to quality assured sites and resources.

**Effective programming requires integrating the technology-based learning into the school day, and ensuring sufficient time on task:** This requires careful scheduling in order to optimise usage and learning benefits. This is an on-going challenge for GEC projects. Data indicates that students from more marginalised backgrounds made slower progress than expected from their initial exposure, then progressed more rapidly when given additional time on the programme. For individualised learning, such as Maths Whizz, sufficient contact time per week is crucial.

**Leverage and sustainability**

The GEC shows how ed-tech can have a broader influence on education systems at national and school levels (leverage), and the elements that are needed to ensure investments and results continue beyond the life of the project (sustainability).

**Demonstrating the value of technology for learning and effective school management:** It is necessary to engage with governments from the outset, at national and local levels, and to demonstrate measurable gains, particularly in under-served, remote schools. Projects are working with teacher trainers, district supervisors, as well as central authorities, to ensure integration with teaching practice and curriculum delivery. The GEC projects also have had good engagement with government regarding the use of attendance monitoring and other data management systems. Given government interest in having accurate and reliable data, there are emerging opportunities around this work.

**Local ownership of technology, and the potential for revenue generation may contribute to sustainability:** Projects are working with and training school management, leaders and district level supervisors to maintain the technology assets that have been provided. Where schools have been given internet connectivity, there is an emerging focus on using this to help schools to generate income (e.g. from renting out internet time) that will help cover some of the future local costs. This is because the introduction of technology may create benefits beyond the immediate programme parameters (e.g. provision of reliable internet to unconnected regions, or stimulating micro-enterprise at school/community levels).

**Private sector can play an enabling role:** A number of GEC projects are working in marginalised and rural communities which had no previous access to broadband. This may require a significant upfront investment in ICT infrastructure. Partnerships with Ericsson, Avanti and others are showing how the private sector can play an enabling role. The partnerships with the private sector appear to have significant potential benefits in fast tracking access to technology where schools and communities currently lack the necessary infrastructure and capacity.

**Value for Money**

Technology interventions vary greatly in terms of costs, but can represent a much higher investment than other non-tech based interventions. The following areas are emerging from GEC work as key issues when assessing Value for Money for this investment:

**Technology requires an upfront investment:** Technology often requires a large up-front investment (infrastructure, hardware, software, and training) and reasonably high upkeep costs. A key test is whether the benefits of this investment are likely to pay out beyond the project timeframe. It is also possible that outcomes will improve over time as students and teachers become more familiar with the technology and optimise its use. It is hard to assess this in advance. In addition, technology may catalyse benefits beyond the immediate educational objectives of the programme (e.g. local business and enterprise, connectivity to rural areas). It is important to plan for ways in which costs (e.g. of connectivity) can be brought down over time through partnerships
and as markets and technology improve. For example, ICL in Kenya are working with local telecoms companies to bring down the costs of connection which were higher than anticipated.

**GEC should enable the most marginalised to benefit, reducing inequality within the community and between regions, and ensuring gender equity:** Remote and rural regions are rarely the first to benefit in a rollout of broadband. Experience so far on GEC projects indicates that, when providing ICT based solutions to rural and other marginalised communities, costs increase with the degree of marginalisation.

**Innovations may offset other costs faced by government provision:** Interventions may provide new solutions to barriers to learning and retention in schools for marginalised children. For example, if ICT can provide a solution to generally low teacher capacity and motivation in rural schools, the cost of provision may off-set other costs in providing support and incentives to teachers in these schools.

**Next Steps**

Technology is being used across the GEC to test solutions to the barriers to girls’ education, in terms of quality of teaching and learning, to track and encourage attendance, and more broadly promote change in attitudes through advocacy.

This paper captures lessons drawn from implementation to recent midline evaluations. It is anticipated this evidence base will be further strengthened at endline with results showing where learning and retention gains have been made, and qualitative work showing in more depth how ed-tech is contributing in specific ways to the education of marginalised girls. In the meantime, ongoing GEC work will find ways to promote innovation and collaboration among and between GEC projects and with the broader community of interest in-country and internationally. The use of technology in education is of great interest to governments, donors and others in the sector. However, getting this right, and doing it in a sustainable and affordable way will be critical.

**Some key areas for deeper analysis and collaboration will include:**

- How can intervention design and delivery decisions around specific technologies maximise learning (e.g. changing teaching practice, time on task, usage in class, integration into teacher training)?
- What are the opportunities to use existing resources and learning content? How can new content be developed and accessed, particularly in foundational skills? What is the most effective use of technology-based content, including for individualised learning?
- What are the potential advantages of ICT in responding to the needs of marginalised children, teachers in remote, rural and under-served schools and children with disabilities, and the specific needs of girls?
- Tailoring the ed-tech interventions more closely to the needs of girl – How can the benefits of personalised log-ins and tailored portal access be used to give girls equal or preferred access to technology, or to specific life-skills content that can assist them to overcome their own specific barriers?
- What are the implications for ICT interventions that require investment in infrastructure? How can costs be managed and reduced over time? Do the results warrant such an investment? Are there are emerging alternatives?
- Can we use technology to generate school level data? Can this be used to improve attendance and other areas of student/school management and performance?

*For more discussion on the topic, see the GEC Thematic Synthesis Paper: ‘Education Technology on the GEC’ from June 2016.*
GEC discussion paper:
School governance and provision
September 2016

Photo Credit: IGATE
Introduction

How schools are managed, governed and designed can have a significant impact on whether student learning takes place. This summary paper examines learning from two types of interventions common within the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) projects. The first are school governance interventions which involve working with school councils. The second are interventions which involve direct community or private school provision.

Much of the recent research suggests that school governance interventions can lead to significant improvements in attendance and learning. Evidence from the GEC midlines to date is similarly positive. In many projects, interventions that involve working with school councils have not only increased attendance by directly targeting out-of-school girls and those at risk of dropping out, but have also positively affected learning by, for instance, implementing remedial classes and undertaking infrastructural improvements of poor school facilities. In addition, interventions involving provision of financial support have demonstrated positive results related to attendance and learning.

However, not all projects are witnessing positive impacts from their governance interventions yet. In some cases this is because disentangling the effects of governance from other related interventions has proven difficult. In others, this is the consequence of design and implementation challenges. With respect to the latter, this report points to the following four key design and implementation lessons that enhance the efficacy of governance reforms:

- Provision of structured forums for discussion results in real stakeholder engagement.
- Training helps to ensure that governance reforms will yield desired outcomes.
- Awareness of local power dynamics allows for more effective implementation.
- Integration into the broader education system enhances intervention sustainability.

What we are doing

School governance and provision interventions are common in the GEC. Of the 37 GEC projects, approximately 33 projects involve related reforms. This paper focuses on two types of interventions within this broad theme in particular:

- Working with school councils;
- Community or private provision.
What we are learning – student outcomes

School councils have positively affected attendance

In most cases, this has been achieved by directly targeting out-of-school girls, recent dropouts or girls at risk of doing so.

School councils in some projects have established relationships with parents and the school to do more follow-up on absenteeism. In general, this follow-up has included door to door visits for students reported by the school as being frequently absent (e.g. EGEP project from Somalia).

Other school councils have offered financial assistance to recent dropouts, or girls at risk of doing so (e.g. SOMGEP from Somalia).

School councils in several projects have also established community meetings that (a) stress the importance of education, (b) deliver early marriage awareness training, and (c) engage girls directly in motivational talks in order to boost enrolment and attendance rates (e.g. CFA from Afghanistan, EGEP from Somalia, LINK from Ethiopia).

Community or private provision has had a positive impact on enrolment and attendance for girls and in many cases, for boys as well

In Afghanistan, comparison shows that attendance and overall retention improved at a much higher rate in CBE classes, which Stages and BRAC projects had supported through teacher and shura (school council) training, than in government school classes.

In general, this increased enrolment and attendance is the direct result of placing CBE classes within communities. This reduces the distance girls are travelling to school, alleviating safety and security barriers.

Tackling negative norms related to girls’ education has led to high demand for spaces in CBE schools. A key aspect of these projects has been to recruit influential community leaders to
participate in the school management committee, which is then trained with the knowledge and skills they needed to champion education in their community.

In Uganda, the private provision project - PEAS - reports that through their councils, parents are increasingly monitoring not just student, but also teacher absenteeism. According to project staff, this increased accountability to the council has reduced absenteeism in both groups.

Another way shuras have invigorated support for girls’ education in the Afghanistan projects is by proactively tackling reasons for absenteeism. According to the STAGES project, for example, school management councils have been trained to work with parents on their expectations of children during harvest and planting seasons. This has helped children to access more instructional time than they would have typically accessed during harvest and planting times.

Given the fragile context, school management councils in difficult to access or insecure areas have also played a key role in getting school supplies to communities and in monitoring classes to ensure that teachers are present – ensuring these basic enablers are in place has encouraged higher student attendance.

Better student learning is related to governance and provision interventions in many projects

Proactive planning by school councils is associated with higher reading scores in the case of CARE Somalia. In particular, school councils’ decision to remove, or support, teachers and to intervene in cases of underperformance is related to better learning.

In an effort to address poor learning, school councils in the CAMFED Tanzania project have started remedial classes for students, in addition to investing in infrastructure in order to improve learning.

All community-based interventions have experienced better student results than in government schools in Afghanistan. Qualitative data from the midlines indicates that improved learning in CBE classes is likely driven by a multitude of factors, some of which relate to school management and governance. Firstly, higher attendance in these classes implies that students have exposure to greater instructional time than their peers in government school classes. Secondly, increased engagement with community members has resulted in more positive attitudes towards schooling. These positive attitudes – including greater aspirations for children, more stress on school work, and fewer household chores - may actually contribute to increased test scores. In addition, school councils have been anecdotally reported to have approached students in danger of dropping out, ensured teacher timeliness, and created a sense of commitment to education in the communities that they operate in; each of these factors is positively impacting student learning.

Research on PEAS, the private provider in GEC, shows that PEAS schools score significantly higher than all other public and private schools in Uganda on school management metrics as defined by the World Management Survey’s education instrument. According to this report (Ark 2016: p.1), PEAS schools “are characterised by on-going training for school leaders, consistent use of data to set school improvement plans, and strong accountability, through sanctions for underperforming school leaders.” Interestingly, this improved management is “correlated with better learning outcomes, both in terms of overall attainment and test score growth.”

What we are learning – design and implementation

Provision of structured fora for discussion results in real stakeholder engagement

These structured fora include both school councils and other formats, such as community meetings, that have been able to mobilise communities and benefit from stakeholder engagement in school planning and monitoring.

Training is important to enhance capacity to ensure that governance reforms will yield desired outcomes
Successful training in the GEC portfolio has had two characteristics: it has been customised to the local context (such as in STAGES where training is adapted to be delivered over the phone due to insecurity), and has focused on building planning skills (for example, in the CARE project in Somalia).

**Cognisance of local power dynamics allows for more effective implementation**

In cases where this is ignored, it is possible that elite individuals or groups may “capture” decision-making power and resources, thereby only improving outcomes for a select few. To address such challenges related to local dynamics, it becomes important to train facilitators using innovative techniques to identify and address unequal power relations on councils. Encouraging inclusive elections to SMC can be challenging. Mercy Corps in Nepal, for instance, has quotas for lower caste members in councils. However, in practice it has proven difficult to get such members to participate due to lack of awareness on one hand, and community attitudes on the other. The project’s key learning on this front is that the process requires careful engagement by project staff at school, community and district levels. In some cases, inclusion calls for segregation rather than assimilation. An example of this can be seen in the STAGES consortium project in Afghanistan, which has established separate male and female school management councils in some areas where a mixed gender council was not considered acceptable. In addition, in these more traditional areas, women are actually trained separately from men.

**Integration into the broader education system enhances intervention sustainability**

It is important to be aligned with national education policies and keep updating approaches by working with the government in order to ensure sustainability. Save the Children Mozambique, for example, is working with the Government to align its programming with new national education standards. Sustainability and integration may, however, be less clear for private schools (PEAS), and in instances where school councils are not fully be recognised by the Ministry of Education. The challenges being faced by CBE classes in Afghanistan further illustrate these points around integration and sustainability. Although the original plan for all projects had been to hand over community-based classes to the Ministry of Education, progress on this front has been slow due to the limited financial and human resource capacity of the Ministry.

**Next steps**

Evidence emerging from this theme will not only shed more light on the specific design and implementation features of governance interventions that are the most effective, but also on the impact governance interventions can have on girls’ aspirations and decision-making authority. As GEC partners approach the next phase, we should expect greater analysis in other areas relating to this theme:

- **Specific design and implementation elements.** Some evidence is already building within this area. Additional questions this analysis may answer include: Is involving groups such as students or mothers in school councils effective for girls’ education? Are single gender councils more effective than mixed gender councils? What training features are most effective in building the capacity of councils? Is there a difference in urban and rural school councils?

- **Impact of governance interventions on lack of female aspirations and low decision-making authority.** This paper already provides indicative evidence of the impact GEC governance interventions have had on negative attitudes towards girls’ schooling, and safety and security concerns. However, evidence examining impact on girls’ and women’s aspirations is as yet limited. Additional analysis may address the questions: Does including women on school councils and other forums improve their bargaining power in decision-making? How does this participation affect girls’ aspirations?
For more discussion on the topic, see the GEC Thematic Synthesis Paper: ‘School provision and governance’ from June 2016.