

Final reflections

Achievements and lessons learned

CHANGE – Improving Access to Education to Most Marginalised Girls in Ethiopia, People In Need (PIN)

ETHIOPIA

NOVEMBER 2018 – OCTOBER 2023



Girls'
Education
Challenge



“The courses, housekeeping and hygiene management, the benefits of saving, home gardening, bee keeping and poultry production are among major skill we developed.”

Girl



● Ethiopia

What did the CHANGE project do?

Ethiopia has made significant progress in girls' education, with a rapid expansion in primary school enrolment. During 2021/22, female primary school students had an enrolment rate of 85% for girls and 92.3% for boys. Educational inequity, particularly in remote rural areas, remains a pressing concern due to cultural, social, and economic barriers, and high dropout rates even after enrolment.

Rural regions in Ethiopia, particularly Afar and Somali, have the highest proportion of out-of-school children, posing a significant challenge to the country's education system. Rural girls do not have the support from home to pursue education and are prioritised for household chores. There is lack of school facilities in reasonable walking distance, lack of latrines, and water are not available in most schools. In pastoral regions, a high proportion of girls need to walk for over an hour to nearby primary schools due to their pastoralist community. There are heightened safeguarding concerns on the way to and back from school, such as kidnappings and forced marriages due to long school commutes as well. Unsatisfactory hygiene conditions constitute a major barrier in regular school attendance. In addition, adolescent girls face several challenges relating to menstruation and its proper management. Families living in severe poverty are unable to afford both direct and indirect costs of schooling.

Between 2018 and 2023 the CHANGE project was implemented under the Girls' Education Challenge in four regions across Ethiopia (Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR and Afar) to improve the life chances of 24,968 out-of-school girls. The consortium led by People in Need (PIN) Ethiopia implemented the project with partners including Concern Worldwide, Welthungerhilfe, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation and Amref Health Africa. The project focused on

improving learning outcomes and life skills for highly marginalised girls, increasing transition rates at key points in their pathway, and improving community and government support, acceptance, and commitment to sustain girls' education. The project implemented the following activities:

- Delivered Alternative Basic Education (ABE) programmes for 10,646 younger girls (10-14) and Integrated Functional Adult Literacy (IFAL) for 14,322 for 15–19-year-old girls.
- Provided short-term technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to facilitate the transition to employment opportunities and income-generating activities for 1,800 girls.
- Trained 577 teachers and facilitators in gender-responsive pedagogy, multi-level/grade, child-centred and inclusive teaching methods.
- Established 565 self-help groups (SHGs) to provide 10,098 girls with life skills, psychosocial care, training on how to develop entrepreneurship and business plans and connecting with credit institutions and cooperatives.
- Provided safe and inclusive infrastructure facilities for accelerated learning programmes including construction of latrines for girls, water system for clean and drinking water, learning supplies and sanitary pads.
- Working with communities (parents/caregivers) through 223 structured community action groups (CAGs) to drive positive attitudinal change towards girls' education and their progression in life.
- Provided direct cash support to 4,776 girls and provided seed funding for SHGs.
- Provided sanitary kits and school feeding, particularly during emergencies, such as drought and floods.
- Provided targeted support to 430 girls with disabilities.



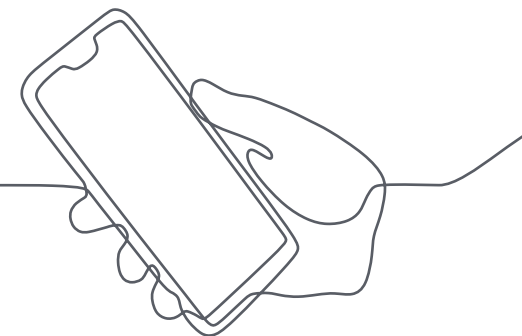
How did CHANGE adapt during COVID-19?

Despite the original project design, the implementation took place in environment of constant humanitarian crises (COVID-19, droughts, floods or conflicts) which occurred at different times and in different areas. This made it difficult for the consortium partners to coordinate, particularly in case of unplanned responses and adjustments to the crises.

For over a year schools in Ethiopia were closed as part of to the national response to COVID-19. The ethnic conflict in Tigray started in November 2020 and lasted for more than two years, affecting also the regions of Amhara and Afar. Protracted armed conflict in Southern Ethiopia (SNNPR and Oromia) caused periods with limited or no access to the project locations. In addition, natural disasters – such as severe droughts and consequent floods in Borena in 2022 and in 2023 – occurred in various parts of Ethiopia during the five years of project implementation.

The project's readiness to adjust, re-design and continue providing classes to girls despite emergencies managed to prevent girls from dropping out of school. The project worked on ensuring that each region would develop a tailored approach to address contextual challenges. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the project worked on reaching girls through home-based learning, keeping in contact with facilitators and community action groups during the period of movement restrictions and school closure. The distribution of prevention tools/kits and posters on safeguarding were part of measures introduced by the consortium partners to ensure the continuity of implementation during the pandemic.

The project also had to adjust to occasional displacements of communities due to conflicts or natural disasters. Remote learning through mobiles was introduced in response to these challenges. As the movement of communities was frequent, facilitators and project staff moved with the community and continued the lessons which helped reduce the rate of dropouts. In Oromia the school feeding programme was launched to prevent girls from dropping out during the drought season. The economy of girls and their families deteriorated due to the conflicts and natural disasters. Humanitarian cash support assistance and the provision of scholastic materials were also provided.





“In the past girls did not have access to education, girls worked only in the kitchen but now girls can learn and get employed and have their own salary. Therefore, now we are learning and able to know a lot of things. Girls used to get married early in previous times but now we are allowed to get an education and gain knowledge. When we were staying at home, we were not able to write our names, or list the day of the week, or months of the year. But after entering the school we know everything, and I am also trying to learn to sign my own signature.”

Girl

What did CHANGE achieve?

Improved learning outcomes and attendance. The project's Endline Evaluation of the Cohort 3 girls suggests that the average Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) score for literacy of girls attending the ABE programme increased from 12.9% at baseline to 29.4% at endline. The girls registered in the IFAL programme increased their literacy score from 25.2% to 29.4%. The ASER literacy tests applied to the four cohorts show that 86% of enrolled girls (79% ABE girls, 83% IFAL girls, 99% joint programme girls) improved by at least one level in each academic year in the ABE/IFAL programmes. The project's Endline Evaluation of the Cohort 3 girls demonstrates that the average Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) numeracy score also registered an increase, yet less significant. Girls attending the ABE programme improved their average score from 42.3% at baseline to 49.5% at endline, while girls attending the IFAL programme slightly decreased their average score from 68.2% to 64%. The ASER numeracy tests applied to all four cohorts show that 87% of all enrolled girls (86% ABE girls, 82% IFAL girls, 100% joint programme girls) improved by at least one level in each academic year in the ABE/IFAL programmes. The number of enrolled out-of-school girls who attended the alternative basic education and integrated functional adult literacy programmes throughout the course duration at least 70% of the class time reached 87% while the target was 60%.

Improved transition. Transition of girls was to further education in formal school and to Self-Help Groups (SHGs), technical and vocational education and training, and possibly starting income generating activities (IGAs). The project indicator target set at baseline for marginalised girls and girls with disabilities in the age of 10-14 years who transitioned into formal education was 53% and, based on the on-going monitoring data, the project reached 78.4%

(8,343 girls out of which 138 girls with disabilities) transition at endline. Regarding the girls of 15 years of age and older, 7% (1,800) transitioned to TVETs, while 71% (10,098) joined self-help groups. Moreover, 55% (7,916) of girls who joined TVETs and SHGs started their own IGAs. Around 4% of ABE and IFAL girls dropped out from the program but re-joined formal education.

Improved parents' attitudes towards girls' education. At endline 83.6% of the parents expressed a positive perception of community action groups' work on girls' education and the target was 75%. On the work of community action groups, 54% of the parents attended community conversations and 54% received a home visit to discuss on girls' education. Also, 84.1% of the girls' parents who participated in the project demonstrated a positive attitude towards girls' education and target was 75%. Parents agreeing to education for girls with disabilities increased from 70.1% to 89.7%.

Developed and deployed the Unique Tool. The Unique Tool was created using Microsoft Power BI in response to the project's need for a centralised user-friendly tool for data collection to keep track of indicators with unified methodology across the consortium. During the project's lifetime, 4,404 monitoring visits were conducted with the support of the Unique Tool. The tool offers analyses of major project data and helps easily identify gaps and strength. The up-to-date insight from field visits as well as the ability to see both the bigger picture and the smallest details contributed to the decision-making capacity and project management.



Improved self-confidence. Girls, who through education and by securing their own income managed to gain status in their homes and communities, gained self-confidence and became more active agents of society. They also became role models for other girls in communities. Based on project data gathered through the Unique Tool, 84% of girls attending SHGs demonstrated self-confidence in their economic decision-making, which was a significant increase from 30% at baseline.

Improved teaching. According to project data gathered through the Unique Tool, 99,5% of trained facilitators in alternative basic education programme and integrated functional adult literacy programme were found using gender-sensitive, child-centred and inclusive teaching methods, surpassing the 90% target. Moreover, 259 facilitators trained under the project transitioned to the formal education before the end of the project.

// ROMANESH'S STORY



Romanesh is a 18-year-old leader of a self-help group based in the SNNP region. 'Two years ago, members of the community action group from my village told me about an opportunity for girls like me to access basic education and business skills training. I grabbed the opportunity immediately and started my education. Apart from the material assistance I received moral support from my teachers and members from the community action groups that energized me to stand firmly and finish the two years of education.' She can now read and write. Romanesh joined the self-help group in her village and thanks to her drive, she was elected chief of the group. Group members learned how to start a business after two weeks of business skills training. 'I started my business with local bread. Thanks to group savings, I purchased flour and baking powder. I am now baking local bread and selling it on the market during the week and after church on Sunday. I've already paid back my loan several times and I earn several hundred birr a week. I want to continue the group meetings after the project is over. We support each other and it's great to see the success of many of us. And I definitely want my daughters to go to school one day'.

The CHANGE project in numbers



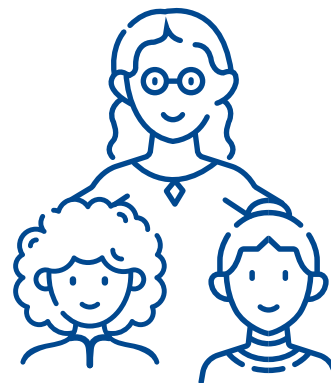
Number of learning centres constructed

129



Number of facilitators employed and trained

577



Number of girls' clubs established

246



Number of families supported with cash transfers

4,776

Number of out-of-school and highly marginalised girls enrolled in alternative basic education (10,646) and integrated functional adult literacy (14,322) programmes: **24,968**

Number of girls transitioned from the alternative basic education programme into formal education: **8,343**

1,800 girls transitioned from the integrated functional adult literacy programme into TVET and **10,098** into self-help groups. From these two groups, **7,916** girls started income-generating activities

Number of girls that dropped out from the alternative basic education and integrated functional adult literacy programmes but re-enrolled into formal education: **993**

Number of facilitators transferred into the formal education system: **259**

Number of self-help groups established: **565**

Number of functional community action groups established: **223**

Number of girls with disabilities supported through provision of education, medical support and assistive devices: **430**

To what extent did the project deliver value for money?

According to the assessment done by the GEC Fund Manager, the CHANGE project offered good value for money.

Project interventions were relevant and provided learning centres in difficult areas addressing access barriers. The project operated in a challenging context affected by conflict and prolonged drought, with low severely marginalised communities in the midst of a humanitarian crisis. Learning outcomes improved at endline compared to baseline. Transition also improved. There were positive community changes through community action groups and girls' financial empowerment through self-help groups. The project's monitoring and evaluation system was good. Some behaviour changes are expected to be sustained due to the work of the community action groups.

“I personally believe what we have learned is very nice. We learned how to subtract and add numbers. We were not aware of this when we were staying at home. So, we learned a lot after enrolling in ABE.”

Girl



What did CHANGE learn?

Adapting to regional contexts. In such a geographically vast and ethnically diverse country like Ethiopia the differences among regions and even within regions (zones) are inevitable. Although the activities are supposed to be the same for all four regions/ partners, a standardised approach to girls' education in all areas could not be applied. On the contrary, it was important to ensure that each region would develop their own tailored approach. In response to these differences each partner had to develop regionally specific curricula reflecting cultural context and respecting local language.

Responding to emergencies. Furthermore, implementation of project activities was affected by external factors (COVID-19, conflicts with displacements, natural disasters, political unrests) which occurred in different times and different areas throughout the whole project. The crucial learning from the emergency situations was that timely and continuous follow-up was essential especially in rural areas. The readiness to adjust and continue providing classes to girls despite COVID-19, droughts or conflicts was a major factor which minimised dropouts. It also meant that the overall approach of the development project had to adapt to respond to the humanitarian challenges. Unplanned responses and adjustments during projects were the most difficult challenges the project faced. However, a key learning was that in countries facing long-term instability, it is crucial to prepare flexible contingency plan and budget anticipating external events which might affect the project implementation and impact project outcomes.

Working closely with local communities. Working with communities as drivers of change rather than recipients of change improves results and enhances success and sustainability. Community action groups played a vital role in identifying highly marginalised girls, in reducing girls' absenteeism from school and in ensuring the learning environments were inclusive and safe. They also played an invaluable role in mobilising the local community and advocating for the importance of girls' education through community campaigns. Members were from a range of community structured, including religious leaders, and headteachers. Facilitators were also selected from the local communities as they were more committed and could better contribute to protecting and supporting marginalised girls in their communities.

Reducing dropouts and increasing transition. Transition of girls from informal to formal education depends on many external factors such as the availability of formal schools near their homes, the quality of the schools, employment opportunities in their locality. The project noted that after completion of the integrated functional adult learning programme girls were more interested in setting up and/or joining self-help groups than transitioning to TVET schools. Some reasons for this were the low wage-employment/self-employment opportunities, lack of sufficient start-up capital/tools, low salaries in employment sector and most TVET schools were in extremely remote areas. Self-Help Groups gave girls the opportunity to create their own income and get support from other women on developing a business plan. It was also noted that if these groups were established while girls were still engaged in the learning programme, they would have more time to set them up and drop-outs could be reduced. This is attributed to girls being able to see a practical prospect to building their businesses after completing the integrated functional adult learning programme.



Engaging the government to ensure sustainability. Close relations and partnership with government bodies was essential for endorsement of any adaptations and for sustainability of the interventions. Community actions groups was one such intervention that proved to be impactful, with the most potential to be sustained. The groups built on existing community structures – which was a critical success factor as a sustainable model with high community acceptance allowing accurate targeting and space for social change. To ensure sustainability and continuation of these community actions groups the project implemented community conversation trainings and conducted events with groups leaders to share experiences creating linkages with government institutions. The project started a dialogue with the government around sustainability, raising awareness of the importance of educating girls and the success in preventing girls' absenteeism from school. The government also understood the value of having community facilitators after persistent efforts by the project who worked with government institutions to find ways to integrate project facilitators into the larger education system. This involved discussions around how to best utilise facilitators in communities with no formal schools.

// MIMI'S STORY



15-year-old Mimi lives in Gedio Zone in Beloya Kebele. Mimi is the youngest child in her family. She was unable to attend school because of her disability. After she was born, she became paralysed and is unable to walk. She spent her first 15 years in her home while her friends were playing and attending school. Her family keep her at home because of cultural beliefs in their rural community. To protect Mimi from discrimination, they chose to keep her at home. In rural areas, people with disabilities tend to face more challenges than their counterparts in urban areas. They are less likely to attend school, be employed or get better health services.

Mimi's disability doesn't keep her from dreaming of her future: 'I was always curious about the outside world. The only friends I had were my family. My peers didn't want me to be their friend. Yet, all these things hadn't kept me from dreaming about school. I daydreamed about going to school and becoming a successful, educated businesswoman. However, the problem was I can't walk a single step and I need a crutch.' Mimi says. Her father, Mulugeta, says: 'I was not lucky to see and applaud my child's first step. I carried her for nine years, looking for a good treatment, but I could only afford the traditional healing treatments. After many attempts, we just gave up and were forced to keep her in the house.'

The CHANGE project arranged for a qualified teacher to teach and provide psychological support for girls with the same condition as Mimi. Community action groups also worked to alter the community's attitude toward girls' education, including towards those who live with a disability. In order to be able to bring those marginalised girls back to school, the project donated eyeglasses, crutches and orthopaedic shoes for girls with disabilities. Girls with hearing impairments, elephantiasis and epilepsy received medical treatment in local hospitals.

Mimi continued: 'Now, I have received a crutch and solar lamps from the CHANGE project. So, in the coming year, I'll join the level one alternative basic education programme. I'm so excited to make friends and attend my education in the classroom like any other girl.' Mulugeta is happy for his daughter, saying: 'Now my child can walk by herself. She doesn't need my support. Moreover, the community has started accepting her.'

Girls'
Education
Challenge



Find out more: www.peopleinneed.net | www.girlseducationchallenge.org

The Girls' Education Challenge is a project funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office ("FCDO"), formerly the Department for International Development ("DFID"), and is led and administered by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP and Mott MacDonald (trading as Cambridge Education), working with organisations including Nathan Associates London Ltd. and Social Development Direct Ltd. This publication has been prepared for general guidance on matters of interest only and does not constitute professional advice. You should not act upon the information contained in this publication without obtaining specific professional advice. No representation or warranty (express or implied) is given as to the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in this publication, and, to the extent permitted by law, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP and the other entities managing the Girls' Education Challenge (as listed above) do not accept or assume any liability, responsibility or duty of care for any consequences of you or anyone else acting, or refraining to act, in reliance on the information contained in this publication or for any decision based on it.

Photos: © People in Need