Project Evaluation Report

Report title:	End of Project Review of Empowering Girls with Disabilities in Uganda through Education
Evaluator:	Akim Okuni (PhD)
GEC Project:	Empowering Girls with Disabilities in Uganda through Education
Country:	Uganda
GEC window	GEC-Transition
Evaluation point:	End-of-Project
Report date:	April 2024

Notes:

Some annexes listed in the contents page of this document have not been included because of challenges with capturing them as an A4 PDF document or because they are documents intended for programme purposes only. If you would like access to any of these annexes, please enquire about their availability by emailing uk_girls_education_challenge@pwc.com.

Girls' Education Challenge

UKaid from the British people

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Table of Contents

List of Tables ii
Acronyms iii
Executive Summary iv
Introduction 1
1.1 Background to the study 1
1.2 GEC-T project context 3
1.3 Purpose of the study 5
Methodology 7
2.1 Design, Sampling and Data Collection 7
2.2 Accommodation of girls with disabilities 9
2.3 Data Analysis 9
2.4 Limitations of the study 9
Findings 11
3. Learning 11
3.1 How has the project supported girls to stay in education? 11
3.2 What factors have motivated/enabled girls to stay in education, and why? 13
3.3 What types of learning opportunities provided by the project have been most beneficial to girls and why? 16
3.4 What hindered learning for girls with disabilities, and why? 17
3.5 Lessons learned about supporting girls with disabilities' learning 20
4. Transition 22
4.1 What are the transition rates for girls with disabilities? 22
4.2 What (factors) enabled transition for girls with disabilities, and why? 24
4.3 What (factors) hindered transition for girls with disabilities, and why? 26
4.4 What types of transition have been meaningful to girls with disabilities involved in the project, and why? 30
4.5 Lessons learned about supporting girls with disabilities' transition 31
5. Sustainability 33
5.1 What are schools/teachers and communities/families doing differently after participation in CSU project and how is this contributing to safer and or more inclusive schools/communities (now/in the future)? 34

5.2 What project activities were most meaningful to parents (families), and how is this contributing to girls' feeling that they are more included in communities and schools as a result of project activities (now/in the future)? 41
5.3 What is government at the macro/meso/micro level doing differently after participation in the project to promote/improve education of the most marginalized children (e.g., girls with disabilities), and how is this contributing to making education more inclusive (now/in the future)? 45
6. Conclusions and recommendations 51
Annexes 60

List of Tables

Table 1: CSU interventions implemented by the GEC-T project with timelines 4
Table 2: The end of project review is guided by following research questions: 6
Table 3: Summary of Sampled Girls with Disabilities by Type and Severity of Disability 8
Table 4: Sample covered during Focus Group Discussions (FGD) 8
Table 5: Sample covered during Key Informant Interviews (KII) 8
Table 6: Schooling status of Girls with disabilities under GEC-T as of September 2023 23

Acronyms

COVID-19:	Coronavirus Disease
CSOs:	Civil Society Organizations
CSU:	Cheshire Services Uganda
FCDO:	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FGD:	Focus Group Discussions
GEC-T:	Girls Education Challenge Transition
IEO:	Inclusive Education Officer
IGA:	Income Generating Activities
KCCA:	Kampala Capital City Authority
KII:	Key Informant Interviews
ML:	Midline
MoES:	Ministry of Education and Sports
PLE:	Primary Leaving Examinations
SACCOs:	Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies
TVET:	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UBOS:	Uganda Bureau of Statistics

Executive Summary

Overview of education of Children with Disabilities in Uganda

Children with Disabilities in Uganda are estimated to be about 5.82% of the population. People with Disabilities, more so the children, are still among the most neglected groups both in the public domain and private spheres. They do not have adequate access to basic needs such as health and education, they experience multiple deprivations even within their family; and they tend to be invisible in the policy agendas. In Uganda, Children with Disabilities are less likely to attend school than their peers without disabilities. Enrollment and completion of Children with Disabilities in primary and secondary schools is significantly low. Many Children with Disabilities and learners with special needs fail to transition from one educational level to another. Meanwhile, attendance of school is not uniform across the diverse types of disabilities. There is hardly any data available on students with disabilities enrolled in universities and other tertiary institutions. There is an urgent need for such data to ensure equitable access to tertiary education. Government has been instrumental in promoting an inclusive education for all. Despite these efforts, challenges exist at all levels. Only 5% of Children with Disabilities can access education through Inclusive Schools and 10% through special schools (UNICEF, 2014). There is limited support in school for Children with Disabilities since most schools were not designed to accommodate their special needs. Most children with special needs tend to be older than their classroom peers. This requires imparting more life and vocational skills training so that they can acquire appropriate skills for their self-sustainability. It also requires provision of the necessary human resources and special equipment and materials to support these children. However, public financing for special needs education accounts for only 0.1% of the education sector budget (The World Bank (Factsheet February 7, 2020).

CSU Uganda GEC-T Project (2017-2024)

'Empowering girls with disabilities through education in Uganda' project implemented by Cheshire Services Uganda (CSU) for a seven-year period (2017-2024) is part of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)'s Girls Education Challenge Transition (GEC-T) programme. The GEC aims at helping the most marginalized girls in the world to access quality education and learning opportunities, and empower them to secure a better future, not only for themselves but also for their families and communities. The project aimed at supporting the same girls with disabilities from GEC-1 (2012-2017) to transition to/progress through the different education cycles, namely primary, lower and upper secondary, technical and vocational skills education and training (TVET), and eventually into employment. From 2017, the project has supported 2063 girls with disabilities out of which 86% were still at primary level, 12% were in secondary schools, and 2% were already in post primary vocational training institutions at the end of GEC-1. The project supported especially girls with disabilities (who are among the most marginalized girls) in four out of the five divisions in Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) of Nakawa, Kawempe, Rubaga, and Central and in the surrounding districts of Wakiso and Mukono. GEC-T project design was built around addressing an unsupportive environment that creates barriers (e.g. physical, behavioral/social, systemic and policy, economic, psychosocial, etc.) for girls with disabilities, and ensuring that the disadvantaged girls with disabilities are supported to sustainably demonstrate improved school attendance and learning outcomes, and to transition from primary to lower and upper secondary school, tertiary and university level, and into work. To

achieve this, several key elements (interventions) were implemented by the project. These include, providing girls with disabilities with direct support, supporting up to 10 target primary schools directly (and indirectly) and supporting target secondary schools indirectly (via advocacy) to acquire improved physical accessibility and sanitary facilities, equipping teachers with improved knowledge and capacity to deliver lessons using inclusive teaching practices to contribute to the girls' attendance and retention (learning) in school, providing life skills training, career guidance, child protection support and opportunities of participating in co-curricular activities to girls with disabilities, supporting families of girls with disabilities to gain increased incomes and willingness to support the education of their girls to contribute to their successful transition, and sensitizing schools, families/community and education system actors on gender and inclusive education to promote and sustain the education of girls with disabilities. It is noteworthy that following both the effect of the long school closure in Uganda due to COVID-19, as well as review of project activities to assess which interventions provided the best value for money and meaningfully supported learning and transition for the girls (conducted in the final year of the project), some project activities that were set to be implemented were either suspended, scaled down or terminated, and instead new activities were introduced that yielded high value for money focused on activities that would foster the learning, safety and wellbeing of girls with disabilities. While the budget was reduced significantly because of the further redesign of activities, the target number of girls with disabilities has remained the same.

The purpose of the end of project review study

The end of project review is concerned with exploring 'how' and 'why' the girls with disabilities were effectively supported (or not supported) during the second phase of the GEC-T project in Uganda, to learn and transition through the appropriate education system grades and or levels and into employment, and for the education system (actors) to promote and sustain their education (now/in the future). The purpose of the end of project review, therefore, is to understand better (in-depth) why the outputs and outcomes observed in the girls with disabilities' learning and transition have occurred and how or ways to improve delivery/enabling of long-lasting girls with disabilities' empowerment through education in Uganda (and in similar contexts), than to assess and determine whether (or not), and the extent to which (or not to which), the 'Empowering girls with disabilities through education in Uganda' project achieved its set targets.

A CSU baseline (2018) and two external midline evaluation surveys of the GEC-T project (i.e., ML1 - 2019/20 and ML2 - 2021/22) have been conducted. Nevertheless, the mid-line surveys by research design could not provide the necessary explanations for or did not focus on answering the 'how' and the 'why' questions behind the outcomes they observed to have occurred. Hence, this end of project review study explores 'how' and 'why' the project outcomes observed, for example, in ML1 and ML2 have occurred. In addition, the study draws inferences lessons for CSU and other actors implementing education programming focusing on girls with disabilities' empowerment in Uganda and similar settings/contexts to inform future empowerment of girls with disabilities through education (programming).

The end of project review sets out to explore the following research questions:

Learning:

- How has the project supported girls to stay in education?
- What factors have motivated/enabled girls to stay in education, and why?

- What types of learning opportunities provided by the project have been most beneficial to girls and why?
- What hindered learning for girls with disabilities, and why?
- What are the lessons learned about supporting girls with disabilities' learning?

Transition:

- What are the transition rates for girls with disabilities?[1]
- What (factors) enabled transition for girls with disabilities, and why?
- What (factors) hindered transition for girls with disabilities, and why?
- What types of transition have been meaningful to girls with disabilities involved in the project, and why?
- What are the lessons learned about supporting girls with disabilities' transition?

Sustainability:

- What are schools/teachers and communities/families doing differently after participation in CSU project and how is this contributing to safer and or more inclusive schools/communities (now/in the future)?
- What project activities were most meaningful to parents (families), and how is this contributing to girls' feeling that they are more included in communities and schools as a result of project activities (now/in the future)?
- What is government at the macro/meso/micro level doing differently after participation in the project to promote/improve education of the most marginalized children (e.g., girls with disabilities), and how is this contributing to making education more inclusive (now/in the future)?

The end of project review study methodology

The research methodology adopted for this end of project review, including research design, sample selection, data collection and accommodation of the girls with disabilities, and data analysis and report writing was as follows. A phenomenological approach was adopted for the end of project review study. This approach emphasizes understanding the subjective and experiential lived experiences and perspectives of the respondents. Thus, the review adopted an 'inclusive' and participatory qualitative research methodology in sampling, data collection and analysis that, among other things, acknowledged Children with Disabilities' agency and recognized their ability to competently report on their own experience.

This approach included alternative and diverse methods of participant recruitment (but mainly purposeful sampling). The girls with disabilities were purposively sampled based on both ensuring the representation of at least three broader categories of impairment, and ensuring proper accommodation, namely: physical (with "some" mobility issues/difficulty walking), and visual (with "some" difficulty seeing), as well as few children with '" some" difficulty self-care' (as categorized by CSU). Thus, in as much as possible, the purposive sample selection criteria ensured scope and depth, and that project implementers, beneficiaries and other participants (the girls with disabilities, parents/caretakers, teachers and school leaders/managers, project

[1] The end of project review focused on collecting and analyzing qualitative data from a relatively small, non-representative sample size, and not on the collection and evaluation of representative sample size quantitative data. Therefore, research questions in the ToR that are quantitative in nature were not quantitatively explored by this study but were analyzed qualitatively or where possible via monitoring (secondary) data shared by the project.

staff, and local and central government officials, non-GEC girls - i.e. without disabilities) across different program interventions were selected. The final sample size of the respondents was informed by considerations of the feasibility of field work.

This approach also included alternative and diverse methods of adaptations and supports in data collection techniques including focus group discussions, interviews, non-participant observation, and procedures (e.g., flash card writing, drawing and audio-tape recording) that enabled participants, more especially children with diverse disabilities, to self-report, or communicate directly, about their own views and experience. A key strategy was customizing (recruitment and) data collection processes to each individual girl with disability's communication and support needs (e.g. that they felt safe, comfortable, and relaxed in the setting in which data was collected), along with allowing additional time (including multiple episodes of data collection where necessary) in the data collection process to enable girls with disabilities to participate at their own pace and utilize their own mode of communication. This way the study ensured full accommodation for all sampled girls with disabilities. Thus, the field data collection teams were paired, each pair composed of both genders, focus group discussions and interviews were conducted at the girl with disabilities' school/institution (or home), which is a place of security, and to capture some of the complexity of the individual girl's world. A protocol for accommodating Children with Disabilities during data collection in the focus group discussions and interviews was developed and the field teams were inducted and oriented on its use prior to data collection. Girls with disabilities at primary school level, parents/caretakers, teachers and school leaders/managers, local and central government officials, and non-GEC girls - i.e., without disabilities, were individually interviewed, while girls with disabilities at post-primary level and project staff participated in focus group discussions. Secondary data (e.g., from reviewing of the relevant project documents) was also collected and analyzed.

Both primary qualitative data collected and secondary data from reviewing of the relevant project documents was analyzed via content analysis using line by line coding. The coding was linked to the study research questions and the project theory of change (see ToR). The coding entailed a manual process of card writing and sorting of emerging issues. The emerging issues identified were grouped into sub-themes and themes and reported accordingly under the respective research questions. As far as possible the final arguments and conclusions reported were backed up by direct quotes of the participants' views expressed.

Key findings/conclusions and recommendations of the end of project review

It was found/concluded that:

- **The project has supported girls to stay in education through direct (financial and material) support** such as, payment of school fees, provision of scholastic materials, provision of functional assessment and rehabilitation (therapy, and assistive devices such as metallic and durable clutches, wheelchairs, eyeglasses, etc.), provision of transportation to school in primary school and support to stay in the boarding section in secondary school, and supporting schools to acquire improved physical accessibility and sanitary facilities to contribute to the girls' retention in school[2].
- **Factors that have motivated/enabled girls to stay in education, and why majorly are, payment of school fees and provision of school supplies** (especially sanitary pads and school uniform), without which the girls would not have been able to regularly attend and stay in school and achieve learning, **given the abject poverty and**

[2] This was in a small number of schools (i.e. only 10 target primary schools) in comparison to where the girls are now.

relatively low socio-economic background of many of the girls targeted by project. The other major factor is provision of medical treatment and assistive devices to girls with disabilities that on the one hand improved their functionality, and on the other hand encouraged regular monitoring and follow-up (by CSU staff) of the girls with disabilities' schooling and well-being both at school and home.

- **Two types of learning opportunities provided by the project that have been most beneficial to girls** and why reported are, **academic and emotional/soft and life/social skills**[3]. **However**, interviews with girls with disabilities at all the various levels of schooling suggest that **the learning opportunity provided by CSU that was considered relatively more beneficial to them tended to be the emotional/soft and life/social skills. This is because the emotional/soft and life/social skills are a major springboard to achieving both the academic and technical/vocational training types of learning opportunities,** and thus improving one's life chances (i.e., a key foundational building block at individual girl level in enabling long-lasting girl empowerment).
- **Several factors hindered learning for girls with disabilities, due to their non-inclusiveness. These include insults and bullying by the other learners without disabilities especially reported at the lower educational levels (i.e., primary and to a lesser extent secondary)** due to their ignorance about disability issues and perhaps their relative immaturity. **And non-inclusive teaching practices by untrained or inadequately trained and unfriendly teachers** (and non-teaching staff)[4] due to ignorance of disability related issues and high (trained and untrained) teacher attrition coupled to limited capacity of schools/local government to effectively orient new teachers on inclusive teaching practices. **Other hindering factors include non-inclusive school physical infrastructure[5], the long distances to school, and eventually, the impending end of project support when it closes.**
- **Although the transition[6] rate for girls with disabilities as per the monitoring data shared by the project is approx. 80%, about 14% of these girls by the time of the study had not yet transitioned to secondary school.** It is worth noting that the disability types of the girls still in primary school were distributed across all types of disabilities, but **those girls whose level of severity of disability had been categorized as 'a lot' and 'cannot do at all' by the project constituted the bigger number of the learners still in primary level.**
- **There are several factors that enabled transition for girls with disabilities, and why. These include, among others, engagement with school leaders and managers and 'training' of teachers for positive attitude change and improved teaching methods**, geared towards accommodating girls with disabilities in inclusive education settings which contributed to creating a relatively favourable school environment. **And CSU support in linking some of the girls with disabilities to the government affirmative action opportunities available** for girls and students with disability at higher (university) education level which enabled qualified girls with disabilities to get admission at university via the available government affirmative action mechanisms. **However, the main factor that enabled transition for girls with**

[3] The three types of learning opportunities provided by the project explored are: academic, life skills/social and emotional subjects/soft skills, and technical/vocational training (see ToR).

[4] In many schools under GEC-T, direct training of teachers and school physical infrastructure development was limited, but the project could simply advocate for 'inclusive' changes via engagement with the school leadership and management. Besides, GECT-T did not target sensitizing/awareness creation of non-teaching staff on 'inclusive' education practice.

[5] Ibid

[6] through the GEC-T project transition pathways of transitioning into/progressing through school, transitioning into skills or vocational training; transitioning into work (see ToR).

disabilities reported was CSU life skills training, learning and mentoring camps, and counselling and guidance sessions by the GEC-T project targeting girls with disabilities. This is because it improved their confidence and self-esteem as well as agency.

- **Apart from the non-supportive and accommodating school environment as well as the nature and severity of disability of some girls with disabilities**, already seen above, which also hindered learning or transition for girls with disabilities, respectively; **other factors that hindered transition for girls with disabilities reported include, inability to get absorbed into the job market despite the girls with disabilities' technical/vocational skills training due to either their (relative) young age, or lack of work experience and or start-up capital for self-employment, or due to unsupportive parents.** Another potential factor hindering transition reported is parents' inability to financially support girls with disabilities' education when the project support ends due to abject poverty and the relatively low socio-economic status of many of the parents of the girls targeted by the project.
- **The types of transition that are most meaningful to the girls with disabilities interviewed in this study was transitioning into/progressing through school;** more specifically (i) transitioning into/progressing through school levels (e.g. from primary level to secondary or to tertiary level (especially technical/vocational training), and (ii) simply transitioning into/progressing through grades (especially for those girls still at primary level). **This was because of diverse reasons given, e.g., the girls viewed it as the avenue to advance and expand one's opportunities, e.g. for skilling, getting education sponsorship, or accessing the government affirmative action schemes targeting girls and persons with disability** (e.g. upon getting admitted into university at tertiary level)**. Girls with disabilities (especially those still at primary school level) and parents viewed simply transitioning into/progressing through grades as meaningful in terms of enabling the girls learn to associate and socialize with the other learners without disabilities, which in turn builds their confidence and self-esteem** both of which are essential social and life skills if their lives chances are to sustainably improve now/in the future.
- **There are several things that schools/teachers and communities/families are doing differently after participation in CSU project, which are contributing but not entirely to safer and or more inclusive schools/communities (now/in the future) in several diverse ways.** These include, among others, (i) **Some teachers and learners without disabilities were reported to be good, friendly, showed love and care towards, and did not discriminate against, girls with disabilities** which is contributing to safer and or more inclusive schools; **however, sometimes the love and care or friendship accorded to the girls with disabilities is probably because of a condescending/patronizing attitude perhaps than due to genuine respect and equality** (i.e. long-lasting empowerment[7] of the girls with disabilities). (ii) **Some schools were considering providing merit-based bursaries to, or were already rewarding, learners (girls) with disabilities who excelled (academically),** which will/might contribute to more inclusive schools by enabling some girls with disabilities to attend and stay in school after the project ends. **However, the proposed bursary scheme that some schools are considering introducing to support children (girls)**

[7] Empowerment means people (e.g. girls with disabilities) having power and control over their own lives. People get the support they need that is right for them. Empowerment means that people are equal citizens. They are respected and confident in their communities. You can't empower someone else or make someone empowered. It is about ways of working and supporting someone that means they can take control and responsibility for their own lives (see paper by the national Transforming Care empowerment steering group - at https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/What%20empowerment%20means%20to%20us.pdf)

with disabilities (more so) after the project ends, as is, is not inclusive/accommodating enough of girls with disabilities. Among other things, the bursary scheme will be (academic) merit-based and will therefore perhaps exclude both the most vulnerable girls[8], as well as all girls with diverse types of disabilities whose difficulties tend to be more severe. Therefore, the proposed bursary scheme is/might be potentially ineffectual in empowering many vulnerable girls with disabilities. (iii) **Some parents/caretakers (as integral members of their communities) are providing their girls with disabilities with opportunities to interact with their peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families (i.e. the community) in addition to them attending school and this in turn influenced positive change in the attitudes and behaviours of the community at large (e.g. of parents of the other Children with Disabilities not supported by CSU).** This is contributing to safer and or more inclusive communities. **However, the community still has a negative attitude towards persons with disabilities, and the views above were not expressed by any girls with disabilities interviewed.** These were views expressed by some parents/caretakers as well as primary and secondary school teachers/headteachers. **Hence as reported by girls with disabilities, they tended to feel relatively more excluded in communities than in schools.** This suggests that there are still opportunities for communities to show more empathy with girls with disabilities, and there is still some way to go to achieve unreserved empathy and respect for girls with disabilities (i.e. empowerment), especially from among peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families.

- **Project activities that are most meaningful to parents (families),** and are contributing to girls' feeling that they are more included in communities and schools as a result of project activities (now/in the future), **include CSU sensitization and awareness creation sessions on disability management/gender, which were reported to have greatly impacted parents' (as well as the girls') lives in terms of positively changing parents' attitudes and behaviours towards their children(girls)'s education**, hence making it one of the most meaningful project activities to the parents (see e.g. sub-section 5.1 below). **Many parents interviewed confessed that they now love and care for their girls with disabilities and fully understood and appreciated the benefits of educating their girls with disabilities, but that they were financially constrained** (see e.g., sub-section 4.3 below). **It is largely because of the latter reason, that concurrent "hands-on"** (or technical/vocational) **practical skills training directly targeting the girls with disabilities coupled with access to start-up finance/asset capital to start their own** (micro-) **business enterprises** (much as it was not provided by CSU because by design it was not meant to be among the GEC-T project activities), **was (also) reported as one of the most meaningful activities to parents (families), that the project would/should have delivered to (further) improve in sustainability of the supportive** (i.e. maintenance of the inclusive) **environment at family level to enable long lasting girls' empowerment** by girls with disabilities being in better position through education (e.g. project activities) to earn a living (faster/earlier than envisaged by GEC-T project design) and become self-reliant now/in the future.
- **CSU has influenced government at all levels** (i.e., national, local government and community/school level) **to make education more inclusive for girls with disabilities,** albeit to varying extents**. CSU has tended to influence government at the**

[8] The end of project review found that girls such as those with difficulty hearing, remembering and or communicating tended to be relatively more vulnerable in terms of transition through grades and levels.

community/school level relatively more perhaps than at the national and local government level. As seen below, **CSU has influenced the government to make education inclusive at community/school level** (see sub-section 5.1 below). This view was confirmed by CSU project staff who ranked positive attitude change of the school leaders and managers (e.g., that schools had enrolled girls with disabilities even without CSU support) as the highest ranked outcome and impact of the project achieved (see CSU PS FGD1). **CSU has influenced government to make education inclusive at national and local government level broadly in terms of engendering relatively greater responsiveness of government to, and hence growing interest in, education of Children with Disabilities.** For example, CSU has influenced government to make education inclusive at national and local government level in terms of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) benchmarking the CSU project implementation framework to inform the formulation and development of the draft national inclusive education policy, as well as in terms of Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) leveraging the Inclusive Education Officer (IEO) position established via and with the financial and technical support of CSU. This was achieved partly via CSU engagement with government at all levels, including: CSU taking lead in devising and delivery of activities and in providing their necessary funding to assist government deliver. CSU implementing the project's planned activities jointly with KCCA and Ministry (MoES) officials on disability issues, inclusive education practice, gender, child protection and safeguarding. **However, key informant interviews with central and local government officials pointed to two major challenges that both seemed to limit the extent to which CSU was able to influence government to make education more inclusive at all the levels as a result. One challenge was to do with the government's perennial funding limitations at both national and local government level. The other challenge was to do with the still lingering negative attitudes and or creeping ignorance of inclusive education practices among the local government leadership.** Meanwhile, CSU's relative failure to influence government to make education more inclusive at community/school level was reported to be partly manifested in the fact that (some) teachers, including those that have been trained (i.e. sensitized about disability issues, etc.) by CSU, still viewed accommodation of Children with Disabilities in schools as a (i.e. an additional) burden, which partly perhaps as suggested below was to do with CSU's mode of training (see KII KCCA1; sub-section 5.3).

In view of the foregoing, the end of project review made the following recommendations:

1. **To ensure the sustainability of the** (given) **high costs of attending and staying in school (i.e., learning) for girls with disabilities, incorporate into the** (new) **project design and implementation, right from the outset of the project support, cost-sharing with the parents of the girls with disabilities.** In fact, project staff argued that this could/would have been a big incentive for the parents/caregivers to engage in income generation to finance their girls' shared costs of education (see CSU PS FGD1). In addition, as also recommended by the midline 2 evaluation (ML2), there is need to rethink the Income Generating Activities (IGA) intervention by ensuring much better conceptualization/design and implementation of the IGA themselves. For example, basic entrepreneurship skills training targeting parents also aiming to effectively build basic book-keeping/financial literacy skills capacity of the parents.
2. **Given that interviews with girls with disabilities at all the different levels of schooling suggest that this was the learning opportunity provided by CSU considered relatively more beneficial to them,** because it served as a major

springboard to achieving both the academic and technical/vocational training types of learning opportunities, and thus improving one's life chances (i.e. a key foundational building block at individual girl level in enabling long-lasting girl empowerment), **strengthening provision of the emotional/soft and life/social skills type of learning** opportunity (facilitated both simply by girls being able to attend and stay in school as well as via project 'training' sessions) **is a key intervention option to consider in future programming design.**

3. **Considering that in many schools under GEC-T, direct training of teachers was by the design of the project limited**, plus given the need to strengthen the efforts of schools to cascade down among teachers the inclusive education/disability awareness training and for schools to establish girls with disabilities' safeguarding and child protection regulations, observed by this study; **more (and or continuous) sensitization sessions about inclusive teaching practice targeting *all* teachers directly is perhaps a intervention option to consider in future. Besides, due to the relative limited awareness of inclusive education practices and disability issues among both learners without disabilities and non-teaching staff,** hence their unaccommodating behaviors found to be contributing to hindering girls with disabilities' learning, observed by this study, **sensitization sessions about inclusive education practice targeting both learners without disabilities and non-teaching staff directly are other intervention areas for future programming to address.**
4. **Given that CSU has ably demonstrated that education (i.e., transition) of girls with disabilities in inclusive school settings (in Uganda) is possible,** albeit a still non-supportive and accommodating school environment remains a major hindering factor to transition (especially across levels) for girls with certain nature/severity of disabilities (e.g. those girls whose level of severity of disability has been categorized as 'a lot' and 'cannot do at all' by the project); **therefore, enhancing transition opportunities provided by the project that are meaningful to girls (who are still currently in primary school and whose level of severity of disability has been categorized as 'a lot' and 'cannot do at all' by the project) needs urgent attention in terms of intervention options to consider in future programming design.** The meaningfulness of the transition for such girls with disabilities should go beyond simply meaningfulness in terms of enabling the girls learn to associate and socialize with the other learners without disabilities which in turn builds their confidence and self-esteem (the importance of building the girls with disabilities' confidence and self-esteem notwithstanding).
5. **Considering that by design CSU project interventions did not directly target peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families** (i.e. the community), perhaps (more) **sensitization and awareness creation sessions on disability issues, gender, etc. including targeting peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families** (i.e. the community – e.g. via radio, partnership with cultural institutions such as Buganda Kingdom, etc.) **directly could be an intervention option to consider in future.**
6. **Given that many parents interviewed confessed that as a result of project activities they now fully understood and appreciated the benefits of educating their girls with disabilities**, as well as loved and cared for their girls, **but that they were nevertheless (still) financially constrained**; **access to start-up finance/asset capital to start their own** (micro-) **business enterprises coupled to concurrent "hands-on" or practical technical/vocational skills training directly targeting girls with disabilities, is an intervention option to consider in future programming design.** This is because

(although not provided by CSU because by design it was not meant to be) it is among the activities reported by parents/caretakers and girls with disabilities themselves, and by other participants (e.g. teachers), interviewed to be most meaningful to parents/caretakers (families) because of its potential to impact/influence improvement in sustainability of the supportive (i.e. maintenance of the inclusive) environment at family level, by girls with disabilities being in better position through education (e.g. project activities) to earn a living (perhaps faster/earlier than envisaged by GEC-T project design) and become self-reliant now/in the future.

7. **Considering that despite all CSU efforts to ensure sustainability, central and local government seems still requires intervention by other development partners and support to complement its efforts,** and cannot be entirely expected to take over and implement CSU project interventions targeting the Girls with Disabilities, due partly to government's funding limitations, as well as the still lingering negative attitudes and or ignorance of inclusive education practices among some of the local government leadership, among others; **devising more innovative strategies that have limited, or no, financial or monetary implications to sustain the CSU project outcomes** e.g. engaging (i.e. advocacy) with KCCA to waive the school fees/related costs (in the public primary schools) and for KCCA officials to engage/mobilize the parents to contribute as per UPE policy, etc.; **as well as implementing more "capacity building sessions" during the trainings and "not simply sensitization and awareness creation sessions" as was the case during the concluding project** (see KII KCCA1); **among other things, are some interventions options to consider in future programming design.**

Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

Overview of Children with Disabilities in Uganda

The lack of adequate, dependable, relevant and up-to-date information on the nature and prevalence of disability in Uganda remains a challenge[9]. Children with Disabilities in Uganda are estimated to be about 5.82% of the population[10]. The Uganda Population and Housing Census indicated that the total population of all children in Uganda was approx. 57.2% (19,874,000) of the total population. Considering that 5.82% of Ugandan children are estimated to be Children with Disabilities, this translates to 2,027,148 Children with Disabilities (1,052,000 boys and 974,488 girls). This is comparable to the estimated prevalence of about 13%, that is, 2.5 million children living with a disability[11]. The latest Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) 2017 study reported that 11% of children were reported with disabilities (4% aged 2–4 years, and 8% aged 5-17 years), with those with mental disabilities[12] constituting the majority[13].

People with Disabilities, more so the children, are still among the most neglected groups both in the public domain and private spheres. Many Children with Disabilities face enormous economic, social, physical, etc. barriers that have an adverse impact on their development and wellbeing. They do not have adequate access to basic needs such as health and education, they experience multiple deprivations even within their family; and they tend to be invisible in the policy agendas[14].

Education of children with disabilites in Uganda

Overall, Uganda is on track towards achieving education for all, with a net enrollment rate of 93% boys and 96% girls (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2016/17). However, enrollment and completion of Children with Disabilities in primary and secondary schools is significantly low. Most Children with Disabilities and learners with special needs fail to transition from one educational level to another. In Uganda, Children with Disabilities are less likely to attend school than their peers without disabilities, with only 74% of Children with Disabilities aged 5 -18 attending some level of school, compared with 83% of children without functional difficulties[15].

According to the MoES[16], a total of 172,846 Children with Disabilities are enrolled in primary schools, accounting for only 2.0% of total primary level enrollment and only 9% of the overall Children with Disabilities. Out of the total Children with Disabilities enrolled at primary school level, 53% are boys compared to 47% girls. At primary school entry level, out of the total 33,000 of Children with Disabilities enrolled in primary one (P.1), 56% are boys, while only 44% are girls. Further, while there is fair distribution of boys and girls with disabilities enrolled in secondary schools, only 8,945 students with disabilities are enrolled in secondary schools, accounting for merely 0.6% of total students enrolled in a secondary school in Uganda. It is also reported that

[9] Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) (2018). Uganda Functional Difficulties Survey 2017. Kampala, Uganda.
[10] National Action Plan for Children with Disabilities 2016/17- 2020/21, Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD).
[11] The State of the World's Children 2014 (UNICEF, January 2014)
[12] Includes those with psychosocial and/or intellectual difficulties, difficulty in communicating, difficulty in remembering or concentrating, and learning disabilities.
[13] Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2018), ibid.
[14] Beatrice Nabulime Kaggya (2019), Successes and Challenges in the reporting about the situation of Persons with Disabilities in line with the SDGs: The Uganda Case, p.1
[15] UBOS and UNICEF (2019). Situation Analysis of Children in Uganda. July 2019, Kampala.
[16] MoES (2019). Education Statistics Abstract, 2017. Ministry of Education and Sports (2019), Kampala.

30% of girls with disabilities aged 12-13 are not attending schools, because of menstruation, pregnancy and early marriage related issues. There is no data available on students with disabilities enrolled in universities and other tertiary institutions. There is an urgent need for such data to ensure equitable access to tertiary education[17].

Attendance of school is not uniform across the different types of disabilities. Available data indicate that children with visual impairments and those with psychosocial/intellectual were more likely to attend school, while those with self-care disabilities were least likely to attend school[18]. Children with difficulties in mobility and communication were also still below average attandance of school. For example, regarding the category of impairment of total primary level enrollment, hearing (27.2%), mental (22.7%), visual (25.8%), and physical impairments (17.9%) constitute the percentages. Meanwhile, the visually impaired students comprise the largest share of the students enrolled in secondary level, followed by those with physical disabilities. Pupils with autism and multiple handicaps were fewer among enrolled students[19].

Government has been instrumental in promoting an inclusive education for all. Despite these efforts, challenges exist at all levels. Only 5% of Children with Disabilities can access education through Inclusive Schools and 10% through special schools (UNICEF, 2014). There is limited support in school for Children with Disabilities, since most schools were not designed to accommodate their special needs. For example, insufficiently trained staff, inaccessible physical environments and unsupportive and non-accommodative teachers and fellow learners. These grealty contribute to poor school outcomes for Children with Disabilities, since most schools are not fully inclusive.

Legal and Policy frameworks for Children with Disabilities in Uganda

Uganda has many enabling policies and laws aimed at protecting the interests of children and creating equal opportunities for Children with Disabilities. Uganda had earlier demonstrated its commitment to protecting and promoting rights of persons with disabilities through the 1995 Constitution with pro-active provisions. Other examples include, The Persons with Disabilities Act 2020, The Children Act, 2016, National Child Policy Uganda, 2020, Uganda Education Act, etc. Despite these efforts, challenges exist at all levels. Public financing for special needs education accounts for only 0.1% of the education sector budget[20]. Most children with special needs are older than their classroom peers. This requires imparting more life and vocational training so that they can acquire appropriate skills for their self-sustainability. It also requires provision of the necessary human resources and special equipment and materials to support these children. A study conducted by UBOS and UNICEF revealed that perennial lack of assistive devices limit Children with Disabilities' functionality. For example, the unmet need for eyeglasses or contact lenses is 75% among children with sight difficulties, the unmet need for hearing aids 76% among children with hearing and the unmet need for equipment/assistance for walking is 38% among children with difficulty in walking[21]. Thus, Children with Disabilities are often less able to access services such as education and health care, partcipate in social activities and fulfil their potential[22].

[17] The World Bank (Factsheet February 7, 2020): Special Needs Education in Uganda: Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #4 Concerns Quality and Inclusive Education
[18] Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2018), ibid
[19] The World Bank (Factsheet February 7, 2020)
[20] Ibid.
[21] Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2018), ibid.
[22] UBOS and UNICEF (2019). Situation Analysis of Children In Uganda. July 2019, Kampala.

1.2 GEC-T project context

'Empowering girls with disabilities through education in Uganda' (GEC-T) project implemented by Cheshire Services Uganda (CSU) for a seven-year period (2017-2024) is part of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)'s Girls Education Challenge (GEC). The GEC aimed at helping the most marginalized girls in the world to access quality education and learning opportunities. Through access to quality education and learning opportunities, GEC aimed at empowering girls to secure a better future, not only for themselves but also for their families and communities. The GEC-T project aimed at supporting the same girls with disabilities from GEC-1 (2012-2017) to transition to/progress through the different education cycles, namely primary, lower and upper secondary, technical and vocational skills education and training (TVET), and eventually into employment.

FCDO supported the 1st phase of the Girls Education Challenge (GEC-1) that enabled 2,089 girls with disabilities from low-income communities in the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) to complete various levels of education. By the end of GEC-1 in February 2017, 2,063 girls had been retained, the lowest grade being P.2 and the highest-level being S.2. As a follow-on project to the GEC-1, the Girl Education Challenge Transition programme (GEC-T) implemented by Cheshire Services Uganda (CSU) – 'Empowering girls with disabilities through education in Uganda' – aims to support the same girls from GEC-1, and 586 boys with disabilities to complete the different education cycles - primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The project supports especially girls with disabilities in four out of the five divisions in Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) of Nakawa, Kawempe, Rubaga, and Central and in the surrounding districts of Wakiso and Mukono. Thus, these girls/young women with disabilities have had access to 12 years of quality education. This is in line with the UK government's stated objective of long-term investment and commitment to girls' education.

As seen in the background above there is low attendance, learning and transition of Children with Disabilities in Uganda, more so girls, due to negative attitudes and beliefs around disability at all levels of society in Uganda (system, school community) coupled with a lack of understanding of inclusive education and its value. This results into and or manifests itself in the form of an unsupportive environment that creates barriers (i.e., physical, behavioral/social, systemic and policy, economic, psychosocial, etc. barriers) for girls with disabilities. Therefore, girls with disabilities are more likely to drop out of school compared to boys with disabilities and other children without disabilities. The few who continue with education are less likely to register good grades or learning outcomes due to failure by the education system to respond to their education needs[23].

Thus GEC-T project design was built around addressing such barriers and ensuring that the disadvantaged girls with disabilities are supported to sustainably demonstrate improved school attendance and learning outcomes, and to transition from primary to lower and upper secondary, tertiary and university level, and into work. To achieve this, several key elements (interventions) were implemented by the project of which some of the activities are presented in **Table 1** below. These include, providing girls with disabilities with direct support, supporting up to 20 target primary schools directly (and indirectly) and supporting target secondary schools indirectly (via

[23] GEC-T Revised Project Proposal December 2017, CSU

advocacy) to acquire improved physical accessibility and sanitary facilities to contribute to the girls' retention in school, equipping teachers with improved knowledge and capacity to deliver lessons using inclusive teaching practices, providing life skills training, career guidance, child protection support and opportunities of participating in co-curricular activities to girls with disabilities to contribute to their successful transition, supporting families of girls with disabilities to gain increased incomes and willingness to support to the education of their girls, and sensitizing schools, families/community and education (system) actors on gender and inclusive education to promote and sustain the education of girls with disabilities.

It is noteworthy that Uganda had the longest COVID-19 related school shutdowns globally. The effect of the long school closure in Uganda due to COVID-19 cannot be overlooked. A few project activities that were set to be implemented were adapted, scaled down or terminated partly due to the COVID-19 restrictions, and instead new activities were introduced. Besides, for the final year of implementation, CSU and the Fund Manager (FM) decided to conduct a thorough review of project activities to assess which interventions provided the best value for money and meaningfully supported learning and transition for the girls. While the target number of girls remained the same, the budget was reduced significantly. This resulted in a further redesign of activities which focused on activities that would foster the learning, safety and wellbeing of girls with disabilities; activities that yielded high value for money (see CSU PS SAQ1[24]) (see the 'phasing' of project activities in Table 1 below). Overall the project holistically delivers interventions including financial and material (e.g. sanitary pads, scholastic materials, transportation, medical treatment/assistive devices) to contribute to access and retention in school of girls with disabilities (direct support); supporting schools to improve accessibility and sanitary facilities, and supporting teachers to improve knowledge and capacity to deliver lessons using inclusive teaching practices to contribute to attendance and retention (learning) in school; empowering girls with disabilities through life skills training, career guidance, child protection support and participating in extracurricular activities, and empowering parents of girls with disabilities to increase family income and willingness to support to the education of GWDs through income generating activities (IGA), disability and gender trainings to contribute to successful transition; and sensitization of schools, community, education (system) actors on gender and inclusive education to promote and sustain the education of girls with disabilities.

Table 1: CSU interventions implemented by the GEC-T project with timelines

Periods	Interventions/activities
Pre COVID-19 (2017-2019)	*Rationale:* Aiming at improving life chances for girls and women with disabilities in Uganda through education, and addressing education assess barriers faced by girls with disabilities at girl level, home/community, school and at policy levels. • **Learning:** The project supports girls with disabilities through payment of school fees (either full cost or cost-sharing depending on individual needs assessment), which is directly deposited with the respective schools attended by the beneficiary girls. The project also foots the bill for other school related costs such as provision of scholastic materials and sanitary pads, transportation and medical treatment although targeted directly to the individual girls with disabilities, which is largely delivered in-kind and not cash. The provision of support to learning by CSU is needs based and adaptive to circumstances to ensure that supported girls with disabilities accessed education and achieved learning. The project also sought to strengthen teacher quality through training of teachers on both the rights of Children with Disabilities and inclusive teaching methods. The project targeted teachers in some of the project participating schools including primary and secondary. • **ii) Transition**: Supporting the transition of girls with disabilities by GEC-T project is premised on the assumptions that improved self-esteem and agency increased the ability of girls with disabilities to make informed decisions related to their lives and wellbeing, and thus contributing to their overall in-school progression and education level transition. To achieve this assumption, the project undertakes interventions that are geared at improving confidence and self-esteem as well as aspirations of girls with disabilities for

[24] See Annex 4 attached

	higher education and future careers and geared at improved life chances. The project also holds disability management and gender sessions with parents/caretaker for receptive attitude. On the other hand, to some extent the project also supported families to enhance their incomes to ensure continuously support the education of girls with disabilities. • **iii) Sustainability** Activities under this component aims at improving the supportive environment for learning, retention and transition of girls with disabilities in a more sustainable way. These involves sensitization of schools, communities, policy and education actors for these systems to maintain the support of inclusive education and needs of girls with disabilities. CSUs also continues to lobby for education policies that support gender and inclusive to support and promote the education of girls with disabilities.
COVID-19 period (2020-2021)	*Rationale:* Keeping in contact with girls with disabilities and ensuring that they do not lose out on education totally as well as ensuring that they remain safe. New activities introduced adaptive to partial and full closure of schools and Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs). New activities such as, • Follow up (physical and remotely) on children's learning using phones, giving simple tasks to the children on phone, among others. • Provision of learning packs (adapted) for children in line with the GEC-T learning outcomes. • Cash transfers to project beneficiaries to support their needs at home such as meals. • Provision of reproductive health information and kits to project beneficiaries. • Intensify sensitization of beneficiaries and their families on COVID-19 messaging aligned with Government of Uganda and WHO guidelines • Intensified mobilization of to return to school when schools were okayed to re-open at the different stages. • Continuously participate in COVID-19 taskforce planning meetings for new and emerging plans at Ministry of Education and Kampala Capital City Authority. • Psycho-social counselling and support especially to children who had suffered GBV during COVID-19 stay home
Post COVID-19 (2022)	*Rationale:* Prioritise activities that directly address sustainable impacts on girls' opportunities for return to school, learning, and or safety/wellbeing. Introduced new activities such as, • Training of staff on duty of care and tools for spot check and risk assessment to enhance understanding of duty of care increases knowledge of beneficiary specific welfare and learning needs • The school beneficiary welfare spot check and institutional risk assessment and basic safety plans data collection to document and ensure the safety and welfare of project beneficiaries. • School break spot checks for girls in boarding, care homes and VTI hostels to Identify the risks likely to be faced by the girls during school break, develop plans and respond to the risk and to engage different stakeholders on supporting beneficiaries. • Training MEL team and individuals who collect data in GESI and SG Sensitive Approaches and as well Mainstream GESI & SG in MEAL tools and systems. • Implementation /follow up on the emerging issues from the basic safety plans. Risks identified during the documentation of the individual basic plans will be responded to in line with identified need. • Safeguarding trainings for focal persons in schools Improve SG reporting pathways in schools. • Conduct a stakeholder analysis of key actors who are promoting/ advocating for the rights of people with Disabilities and develop a CSU stakeholder engagement strategy to enhance contribution to policy change and implementation and improve CSU's collaboration and referral systems. • CSU GESI Strengthening to increase capacity among CSU teams in documentation, data collection, data analysis with a GESI lens
Final year (01 April 2023-31 March 2024)	*Rationale:* Ensure that girls with disabilities attend school and complete the school year 2023. Focus areas are Learning, Transition, Sustainability, SG, GESI and responsible closure. • The project continues with direct support to girls with disabilities including alternative care support for 82 resettled girls with disabilities, functional assessment and rehabilitation. Introduced new activities such as ttransition plan support and tracking to increase girls' aspirations, clear and aligned plans for moving to the next levels, and advocacy for the national inclusive education policy to contribute to national wide outlook to education inclusion of Children with Disabilities.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The end of project review is concerned with examining the dynamics of supporting the girls with disabilities during the second phase of the GEC-T project in Uganda to sustainably learn and transition through the appropriate education system grades and or levels and into employment. The purpose of the end of project review, therefore, is to explore 'how' and 'why' certain outputs and outcomes observed have occurred during the implementation of the project; and to better understand the perspectives on and of the girls with disabilities targeted by the project.

The end of project review seeks to understand better and in-depth why certain outputs and outcomes observed have occurred and or how or ways to improve the life chances of girls with disabilities through education in Uganda, than to assess and determine whether, and the extent to which, the 'Empowering girls with disabilities through education in Uganda' project achieved its set targets.

The mid-line surveys[25] support the project theory of change assumptions to the effect that, there would be improvements in the learning outcomes, transition rates, and sustainability of the supportive environment for the target girls with disabilities in the project, thus improving their life chances. While the ML2 report addressed each of the above outcomes, significant differences in the methodologies and focuses of the study were necessary due to the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, where school were closed for almost two years. This inevitably led to a lack of comparability between baseline, ML1 and ML2 in some areas of the research. Learning outcomes have improved from ML1 in the areas that were assessed at ML2, with most learners performing at established or proficient status on key assessments. However, evidence shows most learners are still performing below expectations for their age and grade. The foundational and functional skills of girls with disabilities are aligned, and ML2 showed that they can transfer classroom knowledge into real world applications that required basic reading and mathematics skills.

However, the mid-line surveys by research design could not provide the necessary explanations for or did not focus on answering the 'how' and the 'why' questions behind the outcomes observed to have occurred.

Hence, this study explores 'how' and 'why' the project outcomes observed, for example in ML1 and ML2 have occurred. In addition, the study draws inferences lessons for CSU and other actors implementing education programming focusing on girls with disabilities' empowerment in Uganda and similar settings/contexts to inform future empowerment of girls with disabilities through education (programming).

Table 2: The end of project review is guided by following research questions[26]*:*

Project Area	Research Questions
Learning	• Project perspective- What has CSU learned about supporting girls learn? What enabled or hindered learning for girls, and why? What recommendations about girls learning would CSU give for other actors implementing education programmes focusing on Children with Disabilities? • Girls' perspective- What factors have motivated/enabled girls to stay in education, and why? How has the project supported girls to stay in education? What types of learning opportunities provided by the project (explore all of the following - academic, life skills/social and emotional subjects/soft skills, technical/vocational) have been most beneficial to girls? Why?
Transition[27]	• What are the transition rates for project participants disaggregated by gender and disability? • Project perspective - What has CSU learned about supporting girls' transition? What enabled or hindered transition for girls, and why? What recommendations does CSU have on transition for other actors implementing education programmes focusing on Children with Disabilities? • Girls' perspective - What types of transition have been meaningful to girls involved in the project, and why?
Sustainability[28]	• Project perspective - What has CSU learned about working with government to promote/ improve education of the most marginalized children? To what extent5 has the project been successful in influencing at the macro/meso/micro level6 to make education more inclusive? What works when working with local government?

[25] See CSU ML1 - 2019/20 and ML2 - 2021/22

[26] See ToR, pp. 3-4

[27] The GEC defines transition as 1) transitioning into/ progressing through school; 2) transitioning into skills or vocational training; 3) transitioning into work

[28] Sustainability in the GEC is about delivering and enabling long lasting girls' empowerment through education, for current and future generations, by working with girls, families, communities, schools and systems. Sustainability can be built at the individual girl level, and also within the enabling environment for change, including at community, family, school and system levels.

	• Girls' perspective - To what extent do girls feel that they are more included in communities and schools as a result of project activities, and why? • Parents' perspective - How have parents' attitudes and behaviors changed related to their children's education? What project activities were most meaningful to parents, and why? • Schools' perspective - What project activities have resulted in safer and more inclusive schools, and why? What are schools doing differently after participation in the project? • Teachers' perspective - What are teachers doing now as a result of project activities to make their teaching and classrooms more inclusive?

Methodology

This section summarizes the research methodology adopted for this end of project review, including sample selection, data collection and accommodation of the girls with disabilities, and data analysis and report writing.

2.1 Design, Sampling and Data Collection

A phenomenological approach was adopted for the end of project review study. The phenomenological approach was preferred in this study as it seeks to deeply understand fundamental dimensions based on the inner essence of lived experiences of project participants, especially the girls with disabilities, the implementers and other actors. Thus, a variety of data collection methods were used, including focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and non-participant observation, as summarized in **Annex 1, Table A** attached. The key project participants and other stakeholders from whom data was collected include the girls with disabilities, parents/caretakers, teachers and school leaders/managers, project staff, and local and central government officials. Secondary data (e.g., from reviewing of the relevant project documents) was also collected and analyzed.

The review adopted an 'inclusive' and participatory qualitative research methodology in sampling, data collection and analysis that, among other things, acknowledged Children with Disabilities' agency and recognized their ability to competently report on their own experience (see **Annex 1** attached). This approach provided qualitative insights of the process of project implementation, the perceptions of the project participants and implementers, and it also provided critical lessons that the project presents for actors implementing education programming focusing on girls with disabilities' empowerment in Uganda and similar settings/contexts.

This approach included alternative and diverse methods of participant recruitment (but mainly purposeful sampling). The girls with disabilities were purposively sampled based on both ensuring the representation of at least three broader categories of impairment, and ensuring proper accommodation, namely: physical (with "some" mobility issues/difficulty walking), and visual (with "some" difficulty seeing), as well as few children with "some" difficulty self-care' (as categorized by CSU). Thus, in as much as possible, the purposive sample selection criteria ensured scope and depth, and that project implementers, beneficiaries and other participants (the girls with disabilities, parents/caretakers, teachers and school leaders/managers, project staff, and local and central government officials, non-GEC girls - i.e. without disabilities) across different program interventions are selected.

This approach also included alternative and diverse methods of adaptations and supports in data collection procedures (e.g., flash card writing, drawing and audio-tape recording) to complement techniques including focus group discussions and interviews. Such procedures

enabled participants, more especially children with diverse disabilities, to self-report, or communicate directly, about their own views and experience.

Table 3: Summary of Sampled Girls with Disabilities by Type and Severity of Disability

School level	Type of Disability					Severity[29]			Total
	Hearing	Remembering /concentrating	Walking	Seeing	Self-care	Some	A lot	cannot do at all	
Primary	1		3	1	2	6	1		7
Post-Primary	1	3	10	14	4	21	11		32
Transited in employment	1			1		1		1	2

Further learners at primary school level were individually interviewed, while those at post-primary level participated in focus group discussions. There were fewer total number of girls with disabilities found in the sampled target primary schools to organize them into focus group discussions, and considerations of the feasibility of field work made in difficult to assemble girls from several primary schools together for the purpose of focus group discussion. A few non-GEC girls in the project target institutions were also purposefully selected (and individually interviewed) across the different institutions for comparison and to inform our understanding of their change in knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and experiences with the girls with disabilities integrated into their school/classes. The final sample size of the participants was informed by considerations of the feasibility of field work.

A key strategy was customizing recruitment and data collection processes to each individual child with disability's communication and support needs, along with allowing additional time (including multiple episodes of data collection where necessary) in the data collection process to enable girls with disabilities to participate at their own pace and utilize their own mode of communication. This way we ensured full accommodation for all sampled girls with disabilities. Girls with disabilities at primary school level, parents/caretakers, teachers and school leaders/managers, local and central government officials, and non-GEC girls - i.e., without disabilities, were individually interviewed, while girls with disabilities at post-primary level and project staff participated in focus group discussions.

Table 4: Sample covered during Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

Cluster	Number of FGD conducted	Number of participants covered
Secondary	3	24
Vocational	1	8
University	1	2
Project Staff	2	12
TOTAL	**7**	**46**

Table 5: Sample covered during Key Informant Interviews (KII)

Category of participants	Number of participants covered
Girls with disabilities (in primary school)	7 Girls with disabilities (1 a lot of difficulty self-care, 3 some difficulties walking, 1 some difficulties seeing, 1 some difficulties self-care and 1 some difficulties hearing)

[29] As defined by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics

Girls with disabilities (transited in employment)	2 Girls with disabilities (1 cannot do at all difficulty hearing, 1 some difficulty seeing)
Non-GEC girls (i.e., girls without disabilities)	5 Girls (e.g., student leaders, personal friends to girls with disabilities)
Parents/Guardians	5 Parents/ Guardians
Teachers (in primary school)	4 Teachers[30]
Teachers (in secondary school)	2 Teachers
Head teachers (primary and secondary school)	4 Headteachers
Government Officials (Local and Central Government)	3 Officials
Project Staff	3 (Self-administered questionnaire)
TOTAL	**32**

2.2 Accommodation of girls with disabilities

Creating an environment which is conducive for meaningful conversation in qualitative research was essential for interacting with girls with disabilities. The setting in which data were collected was critical for the quality of information gained as girls with disabilities were more likely to open-up and communicate if they felt safe, comfortable, and relaxed. Thus, the field data collection teams were paired, each pair composed of all genders. For dynamic understanding of girls' experiences, focus group discussions and interviews were conducted at the girl with disabilities' school/institution (or home), which is a place of security, and to capture some of the complexity of the individual girl's world. A protocol for accommodating Children with Disabilities during data collection in the focus group discussions and interviews was developed **(**see **Annex 1, Table B** attached**)**, and the researchers were inducted and oriented on its use prior to data collection.

2.3 Data Analysis

Both primary qualitative data collected and secondary data from reviewing of the relevant project documents was analyzed via (thematic) content analysis using line by line coding. The coding was linked to the study research questions and the project theory of change. The coding entailed a manual process of card writing and sorting. The card writing and sorting conformed to the identified emerging issues guided by the research questions to facilitate understanding the data while maintaining objectivity in the thematic analysis process. The emerging issues identified were grouped into sub-themes and themes. A parking lot/yard of cards that were written and sorted but were not conforming was created where appropriate. Research bracketing methods such as writing analytical memos (personal notes) to record their train of thought and to keep a record of their reflections as they worked towards their final arguments and conclusions was applied to mitigate against potential effects of researchers' background/preconceptions that might have influenced or tainted the content analysis and maintain objectivity in the thematic analysis process. Such analytical memos (personal notes) recorded would later form the basis of debate and discussions among the research team where necessary to reduce bias in the thematic analysis process. As far as possible the final arguments and conclusions would have to be backed up by direct quotes of the participants' perceptions.

2.4 Limitations of the study

The end of project review focused on collecting and analyzing qualitative data from a small, non-representative sample size, and not on the collection and evaluation of representative sample

[30] Two additional teachers' lessons were observed, and post-lesson observation conferencing done

size quantitative data. Therefore, research questions in the ToR that are quantitative in nature were not quantitatively explored by this study but were analyzed qualitatively or via monitoring (secondary) data shared by the project where appropriate. Such questions include, for example, what are the transition rates for the project participants disaggregated by gender and disability? To what extent has the project been successful in influencing at the macro/meso/micro level to make education more inclusive? To what extent do girls feel that they are more included in communities and schools as a result of project activities, and why?

Girls with disabilities were interviewed with the option of allowing the parent or caretaker (or teacher/tutor) to participate or not, especially for older girls, but subject to their nature of disabilities. This was in recognition of the contribution of a parent's or caretaker's (or teacher's) presence at a child with disability's interview in terms of facilitating, adding confidence and richness to the child's narrative. Albeit it may also hinder and or interfere with the freedom of expression of the child with disabilities. Careful judgement by the researchers was always exercised to minimize any such interferences.

Findings

This section presents the end of project review study findings on the girls with disabilities' perspectives, and the perspectives of the other key project stakeholders, on 'how' and 'why' certain outputs and outcomes occurred, and on what was learned about supporting the learning and transition of girls with disabilities and delivering/enabling long-lasting girls' empowerment (i.e. sustainability). The findings are presented as per the proposed end of project review research questions under the three major sections in the ToR, namely: 'Learning,' 'Transition' and 'Sustainability.'

3. Learning

The end of project review set out to understand from the girls' perspective:

- How has the project supported girls to stay in education?
- What factors have motivated or enabled girls to stay in education, and why?
- What types of learning opportunities provided by the project that have been most beneficial to girls and why?

The end of project review also sought to understand:

- What enabled or hindered learning for girls and why?
- What has CSU learned about supporting girls learn and what recommendations about girls learning would CSU give other actors implementing education programmes focusing on Children with Disabilities?

3.1 How has the project supported girls to stay in education?

The following are the keyways that the project supported girls with disabilities to stay in education that were reported:

i. payment of school fees
ii. provision of scholastic materials
iii. provision of medical treatment, functional assessment, rehabilitation, therapy, and assistive devices such as metallic and durable clutches, wheelchairs, eyeglasses, etc.
iv. provision of transportation to school in primary school and support to stay in the boarding section in secondary school
v. supporting schools to acquire improved physical accessibility and sanitary facilities to contribute to the girls' retention in school[31]

[31] It should be noted that this was in a small number of schools in comparison to where the girls are now. Only 10 target primary schools were supported directly to acquire improved physical accessibility and sanitary facilities under GEC-T. However, target secondary schools were supported indirectly to acquire improved physical accessibility and sanitary facilities through advocacy and engagement with the school leadership and management.

The direct support to girls with disabilities through payment of school fees and provision of scholastic materials supported them to stay in school. As one secondary school girl with disabilities interviewed explained, **"Before joining the CSU project, they used to send me back home frequently for nonpayment of school fees. When I joined the project in P.4 [Primary School Grade 4], my performance improved, I became the best in the class and now in S.2 [Secondary School Grade 2]. I started concentrating in class without any worries of school fees unlike before when I could not settle in school. I remember, there was a time when I stayed out of school for almost the entire term for lack of school fees"** (see GWD FGD1 KHS). Similar sentiments were expressed by the teachers and parents interviewed.

In addition to school fees and scholastic materials, girls with disabilities interviewed, reported that the support by the project through provision of medical treatment, functional assessment, rehabilitation, therapy, and assistive devices such as metallic and durable clutches, wheelchairs, eyeglasses etc.; and through the project supporting them to stay in the boarding section for the in-school resident students, especially in secondary school level; as well as through the project providing the girls with transportation to school, for those in primary school, Also helped those that acquired such support to stay in education at all times through improved attendance.

Girls with disabilities further reported that the project enhanced their school attendance with most of them being in the boarding section. All the girls interviewed at secondary level were in boarding section. Girls with disabilities observed that there was significant improvement in their learning when they joined the boarding section because it was noted that some girls with disabilities came from distant places and would not afford the daily costs of travel to school. This was confirmed by the teachers and school administrators interviewed. By the project either supporting the girls with disabilities in the boarding section for those girls at secondary level or providing transport via the accessibility buses or via footing the transport bills for the ones in primary level, it's one of the factors mentioned by the girls with disabilities interviewed why there was improvement in their school attendance and thus in their learning. Besides, girls with disabilities who were in boarding section further observed that if they were not in boarding section, probably they would have also faced other negative diversions that would have taken them away from learning for example, bullying or insults from the community, both of which would have demoralized them and discouraged from being in school.

Physical infrastructure improvement contributed to the project intermediate outcome of having inclusive schools' environments that supported and accommodated girls with disabilities. However, it is noteworthy that most physical infrastructure developments had been implemented under GEC-1[32] and only very few schools targeted in the GEC-T project (only 10 target primary schools were supported directly to acquire improved physical accessibility and sanitary facilities under GEC-T). Besides, physical infrastructure developments were implemented by CSU in primary schools only. In other schools, especially secondary level, during the GEC-T implementation, the project lobbied the school administration for disability friendly accessibility infrastructure improvements. According to the project staff interviewed, most of the schools largely

[32] In GEC-1, there were flagship/model schools where CSU had a lot more involvement but as the girls got older and because of Covid 19 CSU activities were phased out in preference for interventions provided the best value for money and meaningfully supported learning and transition for the girls. Most girls now are no longer in those original model schools.

were supportive and were able to improve their physical infrastructure. Overall, the improved physical infrastructure continues to benefit Children with Disabilities with an accommodative environment and thus supporting them to stay in education. This was further affirmed by the teachers and school administrators interviewed.

3.2 What factors have motivated/enabled girls to stay in education, and why?

The factors that motivated/enabled girls with disabilities to stay in education reported were:

i. payment of school fees and provision of school supplies (especially sanitary pads and school uniform), without which they would not have been able to stay in education (i.e. regularly attend and stay in school and achieve learning), due to the abject poverty and low socio-economic background of many of the girls targeted by project.
ii. provision of medical treatment and assistive devices that improved functionality, and encouraged regular monitoring, of girls with disabilities at school and home.

Other factors that motivated/enabled girls with disabilities to stay in education mentioned include:

iii. school supportive physical environment (i.e., accessibility physical infrastructure)
iv. improved inclusive teaching practices due to increased consciousness that some classes include Children with Disabilities
v. CSU regular monitoring of the schooling and well-being of girls with disabilities

These factors were variously cited by the participants interviewed, most especially those in secondary schools and tertiary institutions,

Payment of school fees and provision of school supplies

As also observed in ML1 and ML2 evaluation reports, provision of school fees continued to have a positive effect on girls with disabilities' attendance and learning. Teachers interviewed reported that before the project support, many girls with disabilities missed school due to lack of school fees, since most of the parents/caregivers were financially struggling and hence could not afford the cost of education. Headteachers interviewed also reported that the provision of school fees and requirements greatly improved girls with disabilities' attendance, retention in school and facilitated their learning. Payment of school fees and provision of school requirements thus were particularly mentioned as major factors that not only helped girls with disabilities access to education, but also raised their interest in attending and staying in school, hence leading to improved learning for some of the girls with disabilities.

According to girls with disabilities interviewed, especially those at secondary and tertiary levels, payment of school fees enhanced their academic performance, because they were always in school, which gave them more chance to read and excel. For example, a Senior Two (S.2) secondary schoolgirl with difficulties seeing said that **"The project has greatly helped many of us girls with disabilities to get an opportunity to go to school as most of us come from very poor families. My mother could not afford to pay for my fees, and I could not stay in school before I joined the project. I remember how they used to chase me out of school for fees when I was in P.2 [Primary School Grade 2]. I would spend almost the entire term**

out of school. But thanks to Cheshire Project! Today, I can stay in school and concentrate on my studies without any worries of being sent home for fees," (see GWD FGD1 KHS). Similarly, a Senior Three (S.3) secondary schoolgirl with difficulties walking testified that **"Before CSU started supporting me, I would go back home more than once because of school fees, but since CSU took over, I do not have to go back home for fees balances. This has helped me to focus and study"** (see GWD FGD2 KHS).

The provision of enough sanitary pads was one of the outstanding needs of the girls with disabilities met by the project that improved their attendance and learning experience. Teachers and girls with disabilities interviewed said that the project supplied *enough* sanitary pads to girls with disabilities, and were trained on how to use them, as well as on matters related to reproductive health, all of which built the confidence and increased the comfort and self-esteem of the girls with disabilities and hence kept them in school. For example, a second-year tertiary level girl with difficulties in walking undertaking a course in hair dressing stated that **"Since we started receiving sanitary towels it is impossible for us to miss classes. We have also learned to be clean. We [can] pack extra packages for use later in the day while attending lectures"** (see GWD FGD4 BRI). Similar sentiments were expressed by all girls with disabilities interviewed, especially those at secondary and tertiary level. A Senior One (S.1) secondary school girl with difficulties seeing reported that **"If you are in your monthly menstruation period and you are not comfortable with what you used, you can't even raise up your hand to answer any question in class. You fear the embarrassment that might come when you stand up. Using ordinary clothes during menstrual period can make someone less active not only in class but even outside**" (see GWD FGD3 AHS). This statement suggests that CSU providing girls with disabilities with sanitary pads not only motivated them to attend classes regularly but also increased their capacity to participate in learning. This was confirmed by a primary school teacher interviewed who noted that, **"Most of the parents tend to ignore personal school requirements, such as sanitary pads. Consequently, many girls especially those with disabilities used to miss school during their menstrual days [because of] discomfort. Thus, for CSU to provide [for the] extra needs of girls with disabilities [have] helped them gain confidence and comfort of attending school regularly"** (see T2 KII AHS). However, it suffices to mention that none of the parents interviewed mentioned the provision of sanitary pads by the project as a factor in facilitating school attendance or learning of girls with disabilities.

Provision of medical treatment and assistive devices

CSU supported girls with disabilities in terms of continuous medical checkups, medical treatment, rehabilitation, therapy and assistive devices, etc. One Senior Six (S.6) secondary schoolgirl with difficulties hearing and a former head girl interviewed reported that **"Once CSU is informed that one of us is sick, they will immediately respond and provide required medical treatment and pay for it as well"** (see GWD FGD2 KHS). Such support was said to improve the girls' functionality and to boost their school attendance and learning. Most of the girls with disabilities interviewed who received assistive devices reported that this improved their functionality, to the level that some did not require any support or assistance from anyone as they could manage on their own. According to the teachers interviewed, CSU facilitating girls with disabilities with assistive devices such as reading eyeglasses, hearing gears, wheelchairs or clutches, not only

improved their functionality but also supported their school retention, learning achievement and hence transition.

Other factors that motivated/enabled girls with disabilities to stay in education

These included school supportive environment (i.e., accessibility infrastructure), improved inclusive teaching practices, CSU's regular monitoring of the schooling and well-being of girls with disabilities, Inaccessible buildings and sanitary facilities were identified right from project inception as leading causes of high school dropout of Children with Disabilities in primary and secondary schools. Therefore, the project giving a chance to the girls with disabilities to choose the school of their liking and interest and where they felt they would be comfortable to learn, coupled with CSU support (albeit limited and or indirect) to improve the school facilities/infrastructure for easy accessibility for girls with disabilities, created a relatively more comfortable and enjoyable supportive environment that hence facilitated the girls to stay in education. As one Year 1 University girl with difficulties walking reminisced, **"The officials from the project told me to choose the best school from where I would be comfortable. I chose St. Kizito Secondary School, and I was fully supported in the boarding section"** (see GWD FGD5 MUBS).

All the teachers and headteachers (and some girls with disabilities) interviewed concurred and reported that training of teachers on inclusive teaching practices improved the care, attention and learning of girls with disabilities in an inclusive school environment. It was reported that teachers gained knowledge on the learning needs of Children with Disabilities and on how to accommodate them, which therefore improved their capacity to support them accordingly via inclusive teaching practices, among other things. As one secondary school teacher interviewed observed; **"We never knew that such students could be in inclusive schools. We had no knowledge of teaching them at all. During exams, we normally encourage teachers to give such learners extra time to finish their papers"** (see T2 KII AHS). Teachers interviewed in this study reported that they were oriented on child protection and safeguarding and on how best to support and accommodate children with different forms of disabilities with empathy in an inclusive school environment.

Although much of the teacher orientation was done in GEC-1, during project monitoring, CSU staff continued to sensitize teachers in the participating schools on addressing on issues of inclusive learning and teaching and accommodation of Children with Disabilities. On the other hand, teachers who were trained in GEC-1 continued to orient their fellow teachers in a cascading approach during the GEC-T implementation period. Teachers observed that the project emphasis during teacher training, was on enhancing inclusive learning teaching methods, teaching and learning material development especially for children at primary level, and how to design different inclusive learning activities. For example, a primary school teacher interviewed explained that the training improved her knowledge of handling content delivery in an inclusive school setting using techniques such as role play in the lesson. She stated that, **"when a lesson is like a role play, children enjoy it and learn a lot. Encouraging learner centered methodologies like discussions and presentations help the learners to understand better other than the teacher doing all activities in class" (**see KII T1 MCoUPS). This both created an accommodative environment and boosted girls with disabilities' interest in staying in education.

The headteachers and teachers interviewed also linked girls with disabilities' staying in education to the project staff's routine tracking and monitoring of girls with disabilities through regular school visits. The headteachers and teachers interviewed reported that if the girls with disabilities under the project were not found in school, CSU would follow them up to their homes to find out why they were not attending school. Teachers also reported that project staff made occasional visits to schools to check on the girls with disabilities and interacted with them individually on matters related to their schooling and wellbeing, to ensure they were comfortable. It was reported that such monitoring and tracking helped the girls with disabilities under the project to maintain interest in attending and staying in school and which consequently improved the class performance of many of them. For their part, the girls with disabilities reported that they felt valued whenever the project staff checked on them at school, which motivated them to stay in school and read hard to improve their class performance. Girls with disabilities also said they felt obliged that the project would be expecting a good report card at the end of every school term.

3.3 What types of learning opportunities provided by the project have been most beneficial to girls and why?

Two types of learning opportunities provided by the project were reported to be most beneficial to the girls with disabilities, namely: academic and emotional/soft and life/social skills. However, interviews with girls with disabilities at all the various levels of schooling suggest that the learning opportunity provided by CSU that was considered relatively more beneficial to them tended to be the emotional/soft and life/social skills. This is because the emotional/soft and life/social skills were a major springboard (i.e., a key foundational building block at individual girl level in enabling long-lasting girl empowerment) to achieving both the academic and technical/vocational training types of learning opportunities, and thus improving one's life chances.

Girls with disabilities reported that being in school had given them a chance to interact with other learners without disabilities which had boosted their confidence and self-esteem. Some girls with disabilities, at secondary level, reported that they had been able to acquire skills in hairdressing, baking (e.g., cookies, doughnuts) and making crafts like table and door mats from school because of the new secondary school curriculum. They stated that this would not have been possible had they been out of school. One senior woman teacher interviewed also reported that she often interacted with most girls with disabilities in her school and observed that they had improved in social aspects and gained confidence, knowing that they are loved (see HT2 KII MCoUPS).

All the girls with disabilities interviewed acknowledged that without access to the academic type of learning opportunity provided by the project through both attending and remaining in school, they would not have accessed the other types of learning opportunities, most especially the emotional/soft and life/social skills. A Primary Seven (P.7) schoolgirl with difficulties walking interviewed explained that access to schooling provided different academic, social and life skills learning opportunities. She stated that, **"I have learnt how to read and write. Now I can read very well. I have also learnt how to socialize such as sharing eats with others and acquired some crafts[-making] skills in making bags, table clothes, all at school"** (see GWD1 KII MCoUPS). Similarly, a Senior Two (S.2) schoolgirl with difficulties seeing emphasized the inter-

connectedness of the learning opportunities. She noted in the focus group discussion that **"My goal is to become a medical doctor with which I cannot attain without school fees or being in school. Therefore, I concur with my friends that payment of school fees by CSU has been the most helpful support to me as well"** (see GWD FGD1 KHS).

However, it should also be noted that the girls with disabilities interviewed also acknowledged that without access to the emotional/soft and life/social skills type of learning opportunity provided by the project through the mentoring and counselling sessions, etc. their confidence and self-esteem would not have been boosted so much so that they can now fit in school and effectively attend and stay in school, thus learning, as well as transition. Hence, with boosted confidence and self-esteem acquired either indirectly via schooling as seen above or directly through CSU training (e.g., sensitization/awareness creation, guidance/counselling and mentoring, child protection and safeguarding and life skills) sessions, this enabled the girls with disabilities' long-lasting empowerment at individual girls' level. Therefore, the girls with disabilities continuing with academic learning and transitioning through grades, levels and into employment (i.e., improved life chances) would be relatively more guaranteed with or without project support.

Girls with disabilities during both key informant interviews and focus group discussions mentioned that the project activities boosted their self-esteem. For example, a primary school girl with difficulty communicating explained during the interview that they (girls with disabilities) were counselled to stay at home during holidays for protection purposes and to concentrate on their studies to get satisfactory results. She said that they were advised to avoid bad company both at home and in school. The benefits of the counselling camps, according to her, were the encouragement to read books and to remember where she came from and where she was headed. She added, **"The counselling lifted my self-esteem by making me realize that I have rights to education"** (GWD3 KII NKPS). Similarly, secondary school girls with disabilities participating in a focus group discussion conducted expressed pride in having participated in counselling sessions delivered during holidays at Kawempe Muslim School by CSU targeting girls with disabilities. This is because the counselling sessions helped them to know how to conduct themselves, such as avoiding associating with bad peer groups, and how to build self-confidence and self-esteem. For example, a Senior Two girl with difficulty walking said, **"During COVID-19, many young girls got pregnant but whenever I reflected on the counselling that we had received from Cheshire, I couldn't participate in acts that could lead to early pregnancies"** (GWD FGD3 AHS).

The project staff in their focus group discussion ranked the emotional/soft and life/social skills learning opportunity relatively high owing to its significant contribution to improving the life chances of the girls with disabilities via their increased confidence and self-esteem and its contribution to learning and retention (transition) (see CSU PS FGD1).

3.4 What hindered learning for girls with disabilities, and why?

Five major factors that hindered learning of girls with disabilities due to their non-inclusiveness were reported. These were:

i. non-supportive school environment due to insults and bullying by the other learners without disabilities especially at lower educational levels (i.e., primary and to a lesser extent secondary) perhaps partly due to ignorance about disability issues and relative immaturity of the learners.

ii. non-inclusive teaching practices by untrained or inadequately trained and unfriendly teachers (and non-teaching staff)[33] due to ignorance of disability related issues and high (trained and untrained) teacher attrition and limited capacity of schools/local government to effectively orient new teachers on inclusive teaching practices
iii. non-inclusive school physical infrastructure[34]
iv. the long distances to school; and
v. in the long run, the impending end of project support due to its closure.

While the non-supportive school environments due to insults and bullying by the other learners without disabilities were reported at both primary and secondary levels, paradoxically such incidences tended to be more prevalent at primary school level where participation in GEC initiatives has perhaps been relatively longer. Learners without disabilities insulting girls with disabilities with derogative terms was reported to be more prevalent in primary schools. This was reported in all interviews with girls with disabilities in the primary schools visited. Girls with disabilities at primary school level observed that their fellow learners without disabilities were fond of insulting them, giving them nick names related to their disabilities. This tended to give the girls with disabilities tough time enjoying schooling, and often resulted into their further loss of confidence and self-esteem. A Primary Seven (P.7) schoolgirl with difficulties walking interviewed explained that **"Other children without disabilities used to tease and abuse those with disabilities. It is very common even up to now. They call you abusive names because of your disability and they do not want to be friends with you. This behaviour of teasing demoralizes me. Sometimes I feel I shouldn't come to school."** She further added that **"I have only one friend in class, who also has a disability. Others are not friendly**" (see GWD1 KII MCoUPS). This experience while still at primary school level was also reported during their respective focus group discussions by the secondary and tertiary level girls with disabilities. They all reported that when they were still in primary school, some learners without disabilities were insensitive, bullies and used to identify them by their disabilities. It suffices to note that all references to disability in most local Ugandan local languages tend to be derogatory and to negatively profile persons with disabilities.

Cases of insulting, teasing and abusing girls with disabilities were also reported at secondary level, but to a relatively lesser extent. Some girls with disabilities at secondary level reported during their focus group discussion that their peers without disabilities labelled them as **"Cheshire students."** which detached or isolated them from the rest of the school community (see GWD FGD1 KHS). However, the girls with disabilities at tertiary level observed that the students generally tend to be relatively more mature and to mind about their own studies than to indulge in insulting others simply because of them having a disability. One First-Year fashion and design tertiary level girl without disabilities interviewed stated that **"Very few students care to know or talk about others. We are mature people and understanding. We are [supposed] to treat each other equally and conduct ourselves decently"** (see Non-GEC4 KII BRI).

Non-inclusive teaching practices by untrained or inadequately trained and unfriendly teachers and non-teaching staff were cited especially at primary school, coupled with congestion due to large class sizes. At secondary school level it was mostly the unfriendliness of non-teaching staff due

[33] In many schools under GEC-T, direct training of teachers and physical infrastructure development was limited, but the project could simply advocate for 'inclusive' changes via engagement with the school leadership and management.
[34] Ibid

to limited awareness of disability-related issues that was reported. But poor teaching quality attributed to high teacher attrition and limited capacity to effectively orient new teachers on inclusive teaching practices was also cited. Girls with disabilities, especially at primary level, reported that some teachers were harsh and used very disheartening and degrading language when referring to girls with disabilities, which discouraged their learning. For example, a Primary Seven (P.7) schoolgirl with difficulties walking interviewed reported an incident where one teacher had rebuked her that **"Your stay in this school is dependent on other people… charity. Your parents are poor, where would you get the money to be in school with your condition? This teacher hates me!"** (see GWD1 KII MCoUPS). It was not immediately clear whether the teacher referred to had received CSU sensitization and awareness creation on disability issues and inclusive teaching practice, or not. But informal debrief interviews conducted with some primary school teachers, e.g., after lesson observation, revealed that some teachers are unaware of most of the invisible disabilities that their learners had. Thus, both at primary and secondary school levels, they either offered the girls with disabilities limited or no support at all.

Informal interaction with some teachers and non-teaching staff who were not specifically targeted as key informants in this study also revealed that many of them had limited knowledge on the needs of Children with Disabilities and how best to support them. They would always tend to refer the field research team to specific teachers who they identified as the ones who understood issues of Children with Disabilities. This is not surprising since the GEC-T project did not set out to directly train all (secondary school) teachers in the traditional sense of teacher training that was provided, for example, in GEC-1. This implies that the CSU approach of training some teachers so that in turn they train others failed in some schools. It was also observed that government aided primary schools tend to be congested which when coupled with poor teaching quality resulted into limited support to the learners, and worse still for those with learners with disabilities. One primary school teacher interviewed reported that **"The classrooms are too congested, and we have an average of 70 pupils squeezing in one class which affects effective teaching learning process. The teacher cannot monitor the learners' work effectively in such an environment"** (see T1 KII MCoUPS).

At secondary level, especially in private secondary schools, poor teaching quality on inclusive teaching and learning was also attributed to high teacher attrition through self-transfer to other schools in search of greener pastures. But at primary level it was the government teacher transfers policy that was to blame. This trend had been observed in ML1 evaluation report, i.e., that the teacher transfer policy still hindered the learning of girls with disabilities as schools continued to lose teachers who have the expertise on inclusive teaching. Interactions with school headteachers revealed that though schools were trying hard to cascade down the CSU training they still had limited capacity to effectively orient new teachers on inclusive teaching practices.

By profession (training) teachers are supposed to be adaptive and accommodative and inducted into inclusive teaching practice. However, in practice this is not always the case. Besides, when it comes to girls with disabilities, teachers still needed additional help on how to effectively support and accommodate them in an inclusive school environment.

Other factors that hindered the girls with disabilities learning included the non-inclusive school physical infrastructure, the long distances to school, and the impending end of project support

due to its closure. In some schools visited during data collection, it was observed that there were areas that were still physically inaccessible or unfriendly to some girls with disabilities. Some schools, especially private secondary and tertiary institutions, visited were housed in multi-storied buildings with narrow and or steep staircases and without ramps or rails. Meanwhile, the dormitories were on the upper most floor in some cases. One tertiary level girl with difficulties walking interviewed reported that her classes are held on level 5, while the meals and better washrooms were on level 1. When asked how she coped she said that **"I hustle every day. I move slowly while resting along the way [up] to level 5 or down"** (see GWD FGD4 BRI). Credit to this girl with disabilities for her endurance. But overall, such hardship cannot be endured by everyone and could potentially hinder learning for girls with disabilities.

Some of the girls with disabilities at primary level, reported long distances to school were partly to blame for the poor school attendance. It was reported that some girls with disabilities either already lived far from the school or at some point their parents/caregivers relocated to far away from the school, which became expensive for those who were not in boarding section to travel to school regularly. Coupled to this was the impending end of project support due to its closure. Most of the girls with disabilities interacted with during this study reported that they had no hope of moving on without the project support. Consequently, schools, especially at primary level had already started to some extent to register poor school attendance among girls with disabilities. For example, a Primary Seven (P.7) schoolgirl with difficulties walking interviewed reported that **"I use a lot of money for transport to attend school. I need UGX 4,000 (approximately 1 GBP) to and from school using a boda-boda daily. Although my mother struggles to get this money, sometimes I miss school when money for transport is not available"** (see GWD CS2 MCoUPS). Similarly, a Senior Two (S.2) secondary schoolgirl with difficulties seeing explained that **"We come from very poor families. For my case, my mother is the sole bread winner. At home she is the mother and father at the same time. She has a whole load of taking care of us together with my siblings. So, if the project ends now, me am 'dead' because no one else can support me with school fees to complete my studies"** (see GWD FGD1 KHS). Such sentiments about the total lack of hope of continuing with their education whatsoever after the project finally closed were widely expressed by most girls with disabilities and by all the other key stakeholders interviewed in this study due to the abject poverty and low socio-economic backgrounds of many girls with disabilities targeted by the project. This suggests that the impending end of project support due to its closure, eventually perhaps could become a major hindrance to learning for girls with disabilities.

3.5 Lessons learned about supporting girls with disabilities' learning

- Direct (financial and material) support to girls with disabilities by the project, especially payment of school fees and provision of school supplies, was cited by respondents as the most useful support to learning for girls with disabilities due to the abject poverty and relatively low socio-economic backgrounds of many girls with disabilities targeted by the project.
- Learning for children (girls) with disabilities is relatively expensive as they face additional and multiple barriers of functionality including continuous medical checkups, medical treatment, rehabilitation, therapy and assistive devices, etc.; and relatively higher costs of attending school, staying in school and hence learning (e.g. requiring either residence at school in the boarding section or provision of transportation such travel fare or CSU accessibility buses).

- Such extremely high dependency on the project direct financial and material support for the girls with disabilities' learning however raises a major question about its sustainability given the typical nature of projects.
- Payment of school fees and provision of sanitary pads were the most challenging for most if not all the girls with disabilities who participated in this study. But no parent interviewed mentioned the provision of sanitary pads by the project as a factor in facilitating school attendance/retention or learning of girls with disabilities.
- Teachers and other school support staff (e.g., dormitory matrons/non-teaching staff) still need additional help on how to effectively support and accommodate the learners (girls) with disabilities in an inclusive school environment. While qualified trained teachers are expected to be adaptive and accommodative and inducted into inclusive teaching practice, in practice this is not always the case. GEC-T project made efforts via advocacy and engagement with school leadership and management to ensure teachers in the target schools are inducted. However, there were still several untrained and or inadequately trained teachers due to high teacher attrition and limited capacity to effectively orient new teachers on inclusive teaching practices, much as some schools had attempted to cascade down the skills. Besides, non-teaching staff appear not to have been directly targeted by the CSU training.
- Non-supportive and inclusive school environments for girls with disabilities' learning due to insults and bullying by the other learners without disabilities were still widespread at both primary and secondary level, albeit to a relatively lesser extent at secondary level. There were efforts by schools at cascading down inclusive education/disability awareness training and putting in place girls with disabilities' safeguarding and child protection school regulations, observed by this study. This was reported more among the secondary schools that participated in this study compared to the primary schools. However, suffice it to mention that the other learners without disabilities were not directly targeted by the CSU training. This may partly explain their relative ignorance of disability issues.
- GEC-T project has highlighted the importance of paying attention to invisible disabilities often overlooked in disability related discourses. Informal debrief interviews conducted with some primary school teachers (e.g., after lesson observation) revealed that some teachers were unaware of most of the invisible disabilities that their learners had. Thus, they either offered the girls with disabilities limited or no support at all. Considering as seen above that indeed in many schools under GEC-T, direct training of teachers was limited, and the project could simply advocate for 'inclusive' changes via engagement with the school leadership and management, this is perhaps not surprising and a strategic oversight that future programming could seek to address.
- Both academic and emotional/soft and life/social skills learning opportunities provided by the project were reported by the participants interviewed to be beneficial. However, interviews with girls with disabilities at all the various levels of schooling suggest that the learning opportunity provided by CSU that was considered relatively more beneficial to them tended to be the emotional/soft and life/social skills. This is because being in school had given girls with disabilities a chance both to access academic learning as well as interact with other learners without disabilities which had boosted their confidence and self-esteem. And this was beneficial regardless of how academically gifted and successful

one was. At the same time, with boosted confidence and self-esteem acquired either indirectly via schooling or directly through CSU training (e.g. mentoring and counselling, life skills, etc.) sessions and thus enabling the girls with disabilities' long-lasting empowerment at individual girls' level, the girls with disabilities' continued academic learning and transition through grades, levels and into employment (i.e. improved life chances) potentially were relatively more guaranteed with or without project support. The project staff in their focus group discussion ranked the emotional/soft and life/social skills learning opportunity relatively high owing to its significant contribution to improving the life chances of the girls with disabilities via their increased confidence and self-esteem in all aspects of life and its contribution to learning (academic) and retention (transition through grades) (see CSU PS FGD1).

4. Transition

The project defines transition in the context of the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC). The GEC defines transition as 1) transitioning into/ progressing through school; 2) transitioning into skills or vocational training; 3) transitioning into work. All project activities were designed to sustainably improve school attendance and learning outcomes, and ultimately to contribute to improved transition (rates) of girls with disabilities. GEC-T supported the same girls from GEC-1. Under the transition component of the GEC-T project, the end of project review seeks to understand, on the one hand; What types of transition have been meaningful to girls with disabilities involved in the project, and why? And, on the other hand; What enabled or hindered transition for girls, and why? What has CSU learned about supporting girls' transition? What recommendations does CSU have on transition for other actors implementing education programmes focusing on Children with Disabilities?

4.1 What are the transition rates for girls with disabilities?[35]

i. Most girls with disabilities supported by the project (approx. 80%) successfully transitioned through the GEC-T project transition pathways (see ToR) of transitioning into/progressing through school, transitioning into skills or vocational training, transitioning into work.
ii. About 14% of these girls had not yet transitioned to secondary school.
iii. Approx. 66% of the girls with disabilities supported by the project were at (i.e., suggesting they had transited through to) secondary and tertiary/university level. This appears to compare relatively well to the average national student transition rate to secondary school in Uganda of about 59%[36].

[35] The end of project review focused on collecting and analyzing qualitative data from a relatively small, non-representative sample size, and not on the collection and evaluation of representative sample size quantitative data. Therefore, research questions in the ToR that are quantitative in nature were not quantitatively explored by this study but were analyzed qualitatively or where possible via monitoring (secondary) data shared by the project.

[36] Uganda - Education Policy Data Center (FHI360 2018)

iv. Suffice it to note that the disability types of the girls still in primary school were distributed across all types of disabilities, but those girls whose level of severity of disability had been categorized as 'a lot' and 'cannot do at all' by the project constituted the bigger number of the learners still in primary level.

Although the design and scope of this end of project review was learning-focused (i.e. qualitative research), rather than accountability-focused (i.e. quantitative research), an attempt was made nevertheless, where possible, to answer some of the quantitative questions in the ToR, using the monitoring data shared by the project. The quantitative question in the ToR answered using the project monitoring data is, what are the transition rates for the project participants disaggregated by disability?

Table 5 below indicates that most (approx. 80%) of the girls with disabilities supported by the project transitioned through the project transition pathways of transitioning into/progressing through school, transitioning into skills or vocational training/university. However, about 14% of these had not yet transitioned to secondary school (see **Table 5** below). Data shared by the project indicates that the majority (75%) of girls with disabilities who are still in primary, joined the project while in primary one. This implies that these girls have been supported by the project for at least seven years (i.e., since project inception in 2017). Yet girls with disabilities totaling up to 139 girls out of all the girls with disabilities in upper primary were found in this study still in Primary Five (P.5) and Primary Six (P.6). With the school closures in Uganda for almost two years due to COVID-19, one would have expected these girls to have been in Primary Seven (P.7) or higher level by this time, at the very least. Data shared by the project appears to indicate that approx. 66% of the girls with disabilities supported by the project were at (i.e., suggesting they had transited through to) secondary and tertiary/university level. This appears to compare relatively well to the average national student transition rate to secondary school in Uganda of about 59%[37]. However, suffice it to note that while (according to the data shared by the project) the disability types of the girls still in primary school were distributed across all types of disabilities, those girls whose level of severity of disability had been categorized as 'a lot' and 'cannot do at all', constituted the bigger number of the learners still in primary level. Those girls whose level of severity of disability was categorized as having 'some' were very few.

Table 6: Schooling status of Girls with disabilities under GEC-T as of September 2023

Key stage of formal education	Classes	Current Number of Girls with Disabilities at each education stage	Percent
Lower primary	P.1 - P.4	26	1.3
Upper primary	P.5 - P.7	264	12.8
Lower Secondary	S.1 - S.4	787	38.1
Upper secondary	S.5 - S.6	243	11.8
TVET/Tertiary	Technical and university	329	15.9

[37] Ibid

Completed	Completed	202	9.8
Dropped out	Dropped out	212	10.3
Total		**2063**	100.0

Source: GEC-T project supported girls with disability database

Table 5 above also indicates that about 10% of the girls with disabilities dropped out of the project, while another approx. 10% completed vocational skills training and qualifying for work/ self-employment. Further analysis indicates family relocation where the project lost contact was the main contributing factor to drop out of the project.

4.2 What (factors) enabled transition for girls with disabilities, and why?

The main factor that enabled transition for girls with disabilities reported was:

i. life skills training, learning and mentoring camps, and counselling and guidance sessions by the GEC-T project targeting girls with disabilities, which improved their confidence and self-esteem as well as agency

Other factors that enabled transition for girls with disabilities mentioned included:

ii. engagement with school administrators and training of teachers for positive attitude change and improved teaching methods, geared towards accommodating girls with disabilities in inclusive education settings which contributed to creating a favourable school environment
iii. provision of school fees and other related requirements by the GEC-T project enabled the girls with disabilities to remain focused and concentrate on their studies and therefore transition, since they were not worried because their school fees or requirements were assured through the project
iv. CSU's routine monitoring and tracking of the girls with disabilities through regular school and home visits, which made the girls feel loved and valued, and hence raised their hopes and motivated them to stay in school.
v. CSU support in linking some of the girls with disabilities to the government affirmative action opportunities available for girls and students with disability at higher (university) education level which enabled qualified girls with disabilities to get admission at university via the available government affirmative action mechanisms.

Life skills training, learning and mentoring camps, and counselling and guidance sessions

According to girls with disabilities at all levels, interviewed, as well as the project staff, the project organized life skills trainings, learning and mentoring camps, and counselling and guidance sessions. These sessions were mainly organized in holidays or during weekends without interrupting school activities. Girls with disabilities especially at secondary and tertiary level noted that counselling and guidance sessions were more regular and focused on career guidance, how to conduct themselves well, avoiding associating with bad peer groups, believing in themselves

and taking their studies seriously, and making decisions that affect them positively. Girls with disabilities observed that counselling sessions contributed to their resilience, improved confidence, self-esteem, academic performance, and focus on their goals. For example, a second-year tertiary level catering student with difficulties walking observed that **"It's through career guidance that I [decided] to pursue a technical course after S.4. It's a decision I took seriously"** (see GWD4 FGD BRI).

All girls with disabilities interviewed reported that they attended several counselling and sensitization sessions. They also added that these sessions not only instilled confidence, but changed their attitudes, and taught them to accept their disabilities as simply different but normal conditions. Girls with disabilities further reported that when they started attending counselling, they started accepting their condition and could not be put down by insults or bullies. As one Senior Two (S.2) secondary schoolgirl with difficulties walking noted in the focus group discussion, **"Actually, this [i.e. having a disability] stopped bothering me because I knew who I am. To me I was not disabled as they thought. I learnt how to move on without being bothered, after all, I was better than most of them in all aspects"** (see GWD FGD5 MUBS). Similarly, a Senior Three (S.3) secondary schoolgirl with selfcare difficulties interviewed affirmed that **"In these camps and workshops, we used to interact with different people whose forms of disabilities at times are of high severity than ours. They always told us that despite our forms of disabilities, we can do any work and achieve much by reading hard and being creative"** (see GWD FGD5 MUBS). Thus, especially for those with certain types of disabilities and or whose levels of severity were relatively less severe, this factor was found to have contributed greatly to their improved school attendance, academic performance and transition.
Through counselling sessions, girls with disabilities reported that they developed tolerance, a sense of unity, ability to easily relate with others, which has supported their transition through school grades and from one education level to another. The emotional and moral support through counselling encouraged girls with disabilities to be assertive, hardworking, and stay focused on their life goal aspirations. For example, a university girl with difficulties seeing interviewed stated that **"These talks consequently inspired me to read hard and achieve a career in life. When I compared myself to many other girls with disabilities, I realized that I was lucky. For me I didn't even know I had a disability, so I had to read hard"** (see GWD5 KII KYU).

Other factors that enabled transition for girls with disabilities

According to interviews conducted with girls with disabilities and teachers, improved confidence and self-esteem of the girls with disabilities, coupled with a supportive and accommodative school environment, enabled the girls' transition, especially through in-school progression. Through the GEC-T project, CSU engaged with school administrators and trained teachers for positive attitude change, and improved teaching methods, geared towards accommodating girls with disabilities in inclusive education settings. This contributed to creating a favourable school environment.

Girls with disabilities further observed that keeping them in school through provision of school fees and other related requirements enabled their transition. Girls with disabilities reported that they have been able to transition through in-school progression and to the next school level, since they were not worried because their school fees or requirement were assured through the project.

According to the headteachers and teachers interviewed, CSU's routine monitoring and tracking of the girls with disabilities through regular school and home visits made the girls feel loved and

valued, which raised their hopes in education and motivated them to stay in school. They further observed that the project had reduced on the school dropout number of girls with disabilities, and many had transited to the next levels of education, enrolling into secondary and TVET or other tertiary level institutions for further education. As one primary school teacher interviewed asserted **"Actually, many girls with disabilities have successfully completed and been able to go to higher levels of education from primary to secondary"** (see T1 KII MCoUPS).

It was reported by the project staff and confirmed by a tertiary level girl with disabilities' focus group discussion that the GEC-T project also linked some of the girls with disabilities to the available higher (tertiary) education level government affirmative action programs for girls and students with disability. For example, one of the tertiary level girls with disabilities interviewed was supported by the GEC-T project to get admission at university via the government affirmative action mechanisms thus enabling her transition accordingly (see GWD FGD5 MUBS).

4.3 What (factors) hindered transition for girls with disabilities, and why?

Factors that hindered transition for girls with disabilities reported included:

i. Non-supportive and accommodating school environment due to insults and bullying by the other learners without disabilities especially, as well as due to unfriendly and or untrained or inadequately trained teachers; coupled with
ii. The nature and severity of disability of some girls with disabilities
iii. Inability to get absorbed into the job market despite their technical/vocational skills training due to their (relative) youthful age, lack of work experience and or start-up capital for self-employment, unsupportive parents and the general high unemployment rates of youth in Uganda
iv. Parents' potential inability to financially support girls with disabilities' education when the project support ends

Non-supportive and accommodating school environment coupled with nature (e.g., invisible disabilities, girls with difficulty remembering) and severity of disability

Further analysis of the end of project review data revealed that non-supportive and accommodating school environment, which leads to poor attendance and learning was reported as a major hindering factor to transition for girls with disabilities, especially transition in terms of progressing through school grades and levels (see also discussion in section 3.4 above on the factors that hindered learning of girls with disabilities, and why?). The non-supportive and accommodating school environment led both to the girls with disabilities' poor school attendance and learning, as well as to inadequate support given by the teachers to the learners (girls) with disabilities, especially those with multiple disabilities and or to certain learners depending on their nature of (e.g. invisible) disabilities, and or to the learners with relatively more severe levels of disabilities in the context of inclusive school settings.

For example, the learners with difficulties communicating and with self-care difficulties tended to find it more difficult to transition in terms of progressing through school grades and levels. Those learners (girls) with multiple disabilities tended not to be supported enough in the inclusive schools' settings which hindered their transition. Some parents interviewed, especially those who

had girls with disabilities in Primary Seven (P.7) and those whose girls with disabilities had dropped out of school at primary level, also admitted that their children had been struggling academically. Teachers interviewed confirmed that many of the girls with disabilities who were found to be still in primary during this study had been slow transitioning through school. A parent of a 17-year-old Primary Seven schoolgirl with difficulties communicating and self-care when interviewed, expressed deep worries concerning her daughter's impending completion of the primary level (i.e., transition to secondary school). She was at a loss as to where her daughter would be able to go to or what she would be able to do next. This was because, according to her, the girl would have difficulty being accommodated in any new school environment given the nature of her disabilities. The girl was comfortable and used to the environment and the teachers at her current (primary) school who understood her condition (see P5 KII MCoUPS).

Secondary school girls with disabilities also highlighted a tendency of teachers to not give the learners (girls) with certain types of disabilities (e.g., girls with difficulty remembering) enough time in class. Besides, evidence of support reported to be provided by teachers now to make their teaching and classrooms more inclusive because of the project activities was not seen during the (two) lessons in primary school observed by the lead researcher as part of this end of project review ((see LO1 MCoUPS and LO2 NKPS). The attempts to demonstrate special or additional attention and support to the children (girls) with disabilities by the two primary school teachers observed teaching Primary Five English and Primary Six Social Science Studies (SST) lessons, in the final analysis turned out as if the Children with Disabilities were perhaps simply being targeted or profiled by the teachers due to their disabilities. It was not possible to establish whether such performance by the two teachers was probably because the researcher was present. This was because the lead researcher was able to observe each of these two teachers only once. Nevertheless, when the teachers' knowledge of disability issues is limited, then it is reasonable to conclude that it is highly probable that sometimes such special or additional attention in class showed to the children (girls) with disabilities could very easily prove counterproductive. For example, both teachers acknowledged separately during their post-lesson observation conferencing with the lead researcher that they did not know that not all types of disabilities are visible. Hence, progression through school grades of such children (girls) with disabilities (e.g. with invisible disabilities or severe disabilities) tended to be based simply on the automatic promotion policy of government, as well as the desire by the schools to help maintain the girls' interest in education, not to mention the potential financial benefits reaped by the schools from the girls with disabilities' continued stay in school under the GEC-T project support.

Considering that in many schools under GEC-T, direct training of teachers was by the design of the project limited, perhaps more sensitization sessions about inclusive teaching practice (disability issues) targeting all teachers directly could be an intervention option to consider in future.

Inability to get absorbed into the job market

Girls with disabilities interviewed who had transitioned to employment mid-way the full education system cycle (e.g. due to early pregnancy) but were still supported by the project and graduated from short vocational skills courses, reported that they were considered relatively younger and inexperienced to effectively satisfy the clientele's needs compared to their peers without disabilities in the job market with similar skills gained through apprenticeship and with better experience and exposure to the clients or customers (see KII GWD6) . The peers without disabilities also tended to be in abundance in the job market. Besides, self-employment for such girls with disabilities was not an option either yet, since the girls with disabilities reported that they

also lacked start-up capital to launch themselves into self-employment. Another girl with difficulties seeing and hearing who transitioned to employment interviewed insinuated that her parent (mother) was not supportive both at home and school which contributed to her failure in one way or another (see KII GWD7). Thus, most girls with disabilities supported by the project were still in the education system despite their technical/vocational skills training. According to the monitoring data shared by the project, up to one hundred girls with disabilities were in their final year of vocational training. Meanwhile, girls with disabilities who had dropped out of school during or after the primary or O' level education cycles had undertaken short vocational technical courses such as hair dressing, tailoring, etc. with the support of the project. However, they were yet to get into gainful employment. About 30% of the youths who are qualified in Uganda are unable to find jobs, and the situation is even worse for semiskilled and unskilled youths[38]. Therefore, it is not surprising that girls with disabilities tended to find it even harder to access gainful employment due to factors reported in this study.

Parents' potential inability to financially support girls with disabilities' transition

The project has been working with the parents, schools, children, etc. around transitional planning since almost project inception but despite this, parents cited their potential inability to financially support their girls with disabilities transition as a major hinderance. Some of the girls with disabilities interviewed reported that after their parents formed groups (i.e., SACCOs), a few were able to access loans to start business that generated some income to support the entire household. One participant reported that her mother started a business, selling items like charcoal with money borrowed from the parents' 'SACCOs'. One teacher also observed that the project supported some parents of girls with disabilities with startup capital to help them improve their girls with disabilities' wellbeing. Some parents interviewed also reported that they had started small businesses on their own that supplemented their household income, and were able to save some money, as well as provide money for a school break snack and transport for their daughters with disabilities.

However, while some of the parents interviewed reported having attended business and financial literacy trainings, but very few parents acknowledged indeed receiving funds to finance their income generating activities. Most parents interviewed said that they did not receive funding from or through the project for income generating activities. Many of them reported that the CSU economic empowerment initiative merely stopped at forming groups. Such groups that were formed were never supported to access the intended loans. This brings into question the financial capability of most families of girls with disabilities to support the education and transition of the girls, despite the project's efforts. Therefore, it was not surprising that almost all the parents interviewed expressed financial inability to support their girls with disabilities' education and transition when the project support ends. And it is no wonder the project direct financial and material support to the girls with disabilities' transition through school and into skills or vocational training continued at the same level of commitment by the project throughout the lifespan of the project, the risks associated with encouraging a high dependency syndrome notwithstanding. As one parent of a tertiary level girl with difficulties seeing undertaking a plumbing course reported,

[38] Uganda Bureau of Statistic, Labour Force Survey, 2019/2020, Kampala.

"My daughter wants to study and become a specialist in plumbing, unfortunately none of us the parents are in position to fulfill her dream. We don't have money to support her, and we have other children to look after. If this project can continue supporting her the way it has been doing, we shall be the happiest because she doesn't want to stop at certificate level," (see P1 KII BRI).

Many parents interviewed confessed that they now fully understood and appreciated the benefits of educating their girls with disabilities, however that they were financially constrained. When asked about the transition prospects of her daughter, one parent with a girl with difficulties walking interviewed observed that, **"I don't have any plan, unless God makes a miracle for me. All my hope is with CSU"** (see P4 KII BRI). Another parent of a girl with difficulties walking interviewed equally noted that **"I feel so bad knowing that the project is in its late stages. My daughter will be going to senior four next year but imagine the support is ending this year. I am not even sure if she will sit for her final Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) exams. I cannot afford her school fees"** (see P6 KII AHS).

Meanwhile, most micro-income generating initiatives that had been started with or without the project support still needed financial and technical business/financial literacy boost if parents were to adequately support the transition of their girls with disabilities as envisaged by the project theory of change. Much as the participants reported and project staff confirmed that the project conducted basic entrepreneurship skills training targeting parents, evidence of the capacity of the parents having been effectively built was not immediately apparent. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that even the relatively few parents who reported that the project had successfully supported them to start income generating activities, said that their micro-enterprises that had initially thrived eventually collapsed perhaps partly due to lack of basic financial/book-keeping literacy skills. As one girl with difficulty seeing (aged 22years) who had transitioned into employment after becoming pregnant upon completing her PLE exams and was now employed as hairdresser at a salon explained during a key informant interview, (in 2015[39]) the project staff told the parents of the girls with disabilities to make individual business proposals. This was intended to boost their household income to support their girls' transition. Her mother was given UGX 500,000 to start a tap water selling business at their home. The mother would sell a jerrycan of tap water at UGX 100 and on average would get approx. UGX 10,000 in a day. The project support had helped to boost the income of the home and benefited all the rest of the family members as well. The business income was used to support the girl acquire requirements while at the vocational training institute, as well as basic needs. However, she said that the business is no longer operational unfortunately simply because of the accumulated (water consumption) bills (see GWD6 KII Employed). Interviews with the project staff revealed that they were also aware that this project component had not been well executed (see CSU PS FGD1).

The findings are largely consistent with and partly explain the CSU Midline 2 Report findings that found that "only 57% of caregivers declared participating in a training organized by CSU on income generating activities. Out of the participants, only 11.5% declared that the training was useful to learn something to improve their income. The majority (71.1%) of caregivers interviewed have been members of a saving or loan group set up by CSU for a long time (41.5% for more than 3 years), however only 29% declare saving with this group...". The findings also partly confirm

[39] Although GEC-T project commenced in 2017, it is noteworthy that GEC-T supported the same girls from GEC-1.

and add to the CSU Midline 2 Report recommendation that "…[To] ensure the sustainability of the activities, CSU should rethink their [income generating activities] IGA activities".

Thus, the future transition prospects for the girls with disabilities after the GEC-T project support ends were grim. One primary school teacher interviewed observed that **"Expect rise in child marriages and early pregnancies in girls with disabilities when the project ends. These girls will obviously drop out of school because their parents cannot support them."** (see T3 KII NKPS). Another primary school teacher also agreed. She noted that "**With the end of the project support today, most of them will definitely drop out [of school]."** Similar, sentiments were also expressed by secondary school teachers and headteachers interviewed. But suffice it to note that the transition prospects for the girls with disabilities at secondary level were perhaps relatively less bleak than those of the girls still at primary level.

It is also worth noting that in the final year of the project, CSU is implementing a series of project exit activities, including a clear plan of supporting and tracking girls with disabilities to increase their aspirations of moving to the next levels of transition as well as keeping them safe.

4.4 What types of transition have been meaningful to girls with disabilities involved in the project, and why?

The type of transition that was most meaningful to the girls with disabilities interviewed in this study was transitioning into/progressing through school; more specifically (i) transitioning into/progressing through school *levels* (e.g. from primary level to secondary or to tertiary level (especially technical/vocational training), and (ii) simply transitioning into/progressing through *grades* (especially for those girls still at primary level) .This was because the girls viewed it as the avenue to advance and expand one's opportunities, e.g. for skilling, getting education sponsorship, or accessing the government affirmative action schemes targeting girls and persons with disability (e.g. upon getting admitted into university at tertiary level). Girls with disabilities (especially those girls still at primary school level) and parents also reported another benefit of such transition to the effect that the girls had had learned to associate and socialize with the other learners without disabilities, which in turn had built their confidence and self-esteem both of which are essential social and life skills if their lives chances are to sustainably improve.

The transition in terms of progressing through school (levels) and transitioning into skills or technical/vocational training stood out as being the most meaningful transition for girls with disabilities. Transition in terms of progressing through school was most meaningful in terms of moving on to the next education level, e.g., from primary to secondary level and or to tertiary level (i.e., skills/vocational training or university). This was most meaningful to the girls with disabilities because the girls viewed it as the avenue to advance and expand one's opportunities, e.g., for skilling, getting education sponsorship, or accessing the government girls' and disability affirmative action schemes upon getting admitted into university at tertiary level. The two university girls with disabilities interviewed during their focus group discussion admitted that CSU project support facilitated their effective transition through primary and secondary level and earned one of them a university admission under the government disability scheme, while the other girl was able also to secure a sponsorship from an NGO to support her university education requirements. But suffice it to note that such perceptions tended to be expressed more by the

girls with disabilities at the secondary and tertiary levels than by the girls still at primary level. It also worth noting that perhaps such a view of the most meaningful type of transition for the girls with disabilities tended to conform to the traditional view of what is considered academic success in Uganda (i.e. transitioning into and progressing through school grades and levels from nursery/primary school through secondary school to tertiary level (preferably university) before eventually transitioning into employment).

Nevertheless, simply transitioning into/progressing through school (grades) tended to be the most meaningful type of transition to girls with disabilities still at primary school level and or depending on their nature and severity of disability. Through transitioning into/progressing through school (grades and levels) girls with disabilities had learned to associate and socialize with the other learners without disabilities. Hence, they were able to build their confidence and self-esteem that were essential social and life skills. For example, a Senior Three (S.3) secondary schoolgirl with difficulties seeing stated that **"I joined the project in P.2 and in P.3 I become the sports leader. Now am in S.3 and am the Assistant Chief Justice. I am optimistic that next term am going to aspire for the post of Speaker for [the] Student Council"** (see GWD FGD1 KHS). Some parents interviewed also noted the benefit of nurturing good character and behaviour of their daughters with disabilities that simply transitioning into/progressing through school in an inclusive school setting had had. For example, this had provided the girls with disabilities the opportunity to receive mentoring, counseling and guidance, as well as the chance to interact with other learners and adults (beyond their immediate families) without disabilities. One parent of a girl with self-care difficulties observed that **"My daughter used to be very aggressive and violent, before she was supported to start schooling. But with project support, she eventually changed character and is now a very peaceful woman, unless provoked. She also started speaking a few words and now can sustain a conversation with you if you give her time and show her that you are friendly"** (see P5 KII MCoUPS).

4.5 Lessons learned about supporting girls with disabilities' transition

From the discussions above the following are perhaps some lessons that can be learned about supporting girls with disabilities' transition:

- Overall, most of the girls with disabilities under the project managed to transition both in terms of transitioning into and progressing through school grades and levels (e.g., from primary to secondary level, etc.). However, about 14% of girls with disabilities had not yet transitioned to secondary school. This could be partly due to several reasons including the inevitable COVID-19 disruptions that led to changes in the implementation of project activities[40], as well as to the nature and level of severity of disabilities of these girls, coupled to the still largely non-supportive and accommodating school environments given the predominantly non-inclusive education school settings of the project target schools.
- The two main enabling factors to transition for girls with disabilities implemented were life skills training, learning and mentoring camps, and counselling and guidance sessions by the project targeting girls with disabilities; plus, engagement with school leaders and

[40] The effect of the long school closure in Uganda due to Covid 19 cannot be overlooked. Uganda had perhaps the longest (primary) school closure due to Covid 19 in the world whereby up to a full school academic year was lost.

managers and training of teachers for positive attitude change and improved teaching methods, geared towards accommodating girls with disabilities in inclusive education settings. The former is because emotional/soft and social/life skills improved the girls' confidence and self-esteem as well as agency, and thus improving their life chances overall. And the latter i.e., engagement with school administrators and training of teachers for positive attitude change, and improved teaching methods, contributed to creating a relatively more favourable school environment in inclusive education settings of the project target schools.

- GEC-T project demonstrated that education of girls with disabilities in inclusive school settings is possible. In fact, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) representative interviewed stated categorically that CSU project had demonstrated that inclusive education is possible (see KII Asst. Comm, MoES). Nevertheless, a non-supportive and accommodating school environment remains a major hindering factor to transition for girls with disabilities, especially transition in terms of progressing through school grades and levels. Thus, much more is still needed to be done, especially to cater relatively much better for girls with certain types and severities of disabilities that make progressing academically and transitioning through the inclusive education settings in Uganda relatively much more challenging. For example, CSU and other actors implementing education programmes focusing on Children with Disabilities could consider providing directly alongside or concurrently with the formal school education of such children (girls) with certain types and severities of disabilities (at primary and or secondary school level), "hands-on" or technical/vocational skills training (i.e. non-formal education) coupled to access to start-up finance/asset capital to start their own (micro-) business enterprises. Nevertheless, inability to get absorbed into the job market despite their technical/vocational skills training due to their (relative) young age, lack of work experience and or start-up capital for self-employment, as well as unsupportive parents and the general high unemployment rates of youth in Uganda could still be a potential hinderance to transition for girls with disabilities into employment.
- There was no one type of transition that was most meaningful to *all* girls with disabilities, but the meaningfulness of the type of transition depended on several factors, including the girls' current levels of education, the nature and severity of their disabilities, the extent to which the individual girls with disabilities were academically gifted, among other things.
- Transitioning into/progressing through school (grades) could potentially be perhaps the most meaningful type of transition to *all* girls with disabilities, not least because of its being fundamental to opening doors for all girls with disabilities regardless of the factors mentioned above since it enabled every girl with disabilities to learn to associate and socialize with the other learners and adults without disabilities and hence build their confidence and self-esteem that were essential social and lifelong skills if their lives chances are to sustainably improve.
- Parents' unresolved inability to financially support girls with disabilities' transition in general (i.e., transitioning into/ progressing through school; transitioning into skills or vocational training; transitioning into work) remained the main potential hinderance to transition for girls with disabilities after the project closes. This is a project component that project staff, admittedly, also said had not been well executed. CSU and other actors

implementing education programmes focusing on Children with Disabilities could consider incorporating into the project design, as well as mainstreaming into the project implementation, cost-sharing with the parents of children (girls) with disabilities right from the outset of the project support. The project staff argued that this could/would have been a big incentive for the parents/caregivers to engage more effectively in income generation to finance their girls' shared costs of transition (see CSU PS FGD1). It is, however, worth noting that in the final year of the project, CSU is implementing a series of project exit activities, including a clear plan of supporting and tracking girls with disabilities to increase their aspirations of moving to the next levels of transition.

5. Sustainability

The project defines sustainability in the context of the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC). Sustainability in the GEC is about *delivering and enabling long lasting girls' empowerment*[41] *through education, for current and future generations, by working with girls, families, communities, schools and systems* (see ToR). It is about furthering impact or sustaining an effect by longevity via either contribution, continuation, adoption, replication, scaling[42]. *Sustainability can be built at the individual girl level, and within the enabling environment for change, including at community, family, school and system levels*[43]. GEC-T supported the same girls from GEC-1. Thus, GEC-T project activities at the individual girl level, and within the enabling environment for change (i.e. at community, family, school and system levels), were designed to equip current and future generations of girls with disabilities, through education, with *long lasting power and control over their own lives (i.e. equality as citizens, respect and confidence in their communities, the ability to take control and responsibility for their own lives*, etc.). Because you can't make someone empowered, but it is *about ways of working and supporting someone* (e.g. girls with disabilities) so that they can take control and responsibility for their own lives[44], key questions regarding sustainability in GEC-T include, *how* did activities delivered by GEC-T enable long lasting girls' empowerment through education for current and future generations? Put differently (or in addition), what are the *ways* in which girls with disabilities demonstrate having power and control over their own lives currently and (potentially) in the future because of the GEC-T project? Therefore, under the sustainability component of the GEC-T project, the end of project review seeks to understand, how do we know if the CSU outcomes (desired or intended/unintended) e.g. safer and or more inclusive schools and communities, economically empowered parents supporting the education of their girls with disabilities, improvement in sustainability of the supportive (i.e. maintenance of the inclusive) environment (to support the needs of girls with

[41] Empowerment means people (e.g. girls with disabilities) having power and control over their own lives. People get the support they need that is right for them. Empowerment means that people are equal citizens. They are respected and confident in their communities. You can't empower someone else or make someone empowered. It is about ways of working and supporting someone that means they can take control and responsibility for their own lives (see paper by the national Transforming Care empowerment steering group - at https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/What%20empowerment%20means%20to%20us.pdf)

[42] See ToR, p.9

[43] ibid p.4

[44] See https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/What%20empowerment%20means%20to%20us.pdf)

disabilities) by girls with disabilities being in better position through education (i.e. project activities) to earn a living and become self-reliant, government promoting and improving education for the most marginalized children (e.g. girls with disabilities) and making education more inclusive, etc., were achieved and may/will continue (more so) after the end of the project? In other words, what groundwork was put in place by CSU to ensure that such outcomes mentioned above are achieved, sustained and continue after the end of the project? To answer these overarching questions, the end of project review explored the following broad (paraphrased based on the evidence gathered/data collected/analyzed) research questions in the ToR:

- What are schools/teachers and communities/families doing differently after participation in the project and how is this contributing to safer and or more inclusive schools/communities (now/in the future)?
- What project activities were most meaningful to parents (families), and how is this contributing to girls' feeling that they are more included in communities and schools as a result of project activities (now/in the future)?
- What is government at the macro/meso/micro level doing differently after participation in the project to promote/improve education of the most marginalized children (e.g., girls with disabilities), and how this is contributing to making education more inclusive (now/in the future)?

5.1 What are schools/teachers and communities/families doing differently after participation in CSU project and how is this contributing to safer and or more inclusive schools/communities (now/in the future)?

It was reported by both a secondary school girl with disabilities and a primary school headteacher during key informant interviews that before CSU project teachers, schools, parents and the community at large tended to segregate children (girls) with disabilities and perceived them as learners who cannot learn anything in class, therefore tended to isolate, ignore and exclude them. A 20-year-old secondary school girl with difficulty seeing reported that before she joined the project, the teachers used to segregate her because of her disability. **"I was always discriminated [against] and given an isolated seat in class. Teachers never wanted me to associate with [the] other children due to my condition. I had a mentality that I had [been] cursed or there was a bad omen in my family. Everyone used to isolate me [by] nature"** (see GWD CS1 AHS). Such teacher behaviour was confirmed partly by one of the primary schools' deputies (headteacher) that we interviewed because of her relative longevity working with the CSU project. The substantive headteacher was transferred to the school only last year (2022). According to her, before the CSU intervention many girls with disabilities faced a lot of segregation from the teachers. She explained that teachers used to perceive Children with Disabilities as those who cannot learn anything in class (see HT2 KII MCoUPS). Similarly, a primary school teacher and headteacher and two parents of a primary and secondary school girl with disabilities, respectively, confirmed that before CSU intervention the experiences of girls with disabilities in the communities were no different.

However, it was found that what schools and (to a much lesser extent) communities are doing differently after participation in CSU project include the following, listed below in descending order of frequency with which they were cited by the participants. Schools/teachers and communities were reported by the participants in the study to be doing several things differently after

participation in the project contributing to safer and or more inclusive schools/communities now and potentially in the future, some of which things were also already noted above under factors enabling/hindering learning/transition (see e.g. sub-sections 3.4, 4.2, 4.3 above). This was reported during both focus group discussions and key informant interviews conducted, as well as observed during two lessons by the lead researcher, as part of this end of project review. Both primary and secondary school, as well as tertiary, level girls with disabilities on the one hand, and primary school teachers, primary and secondary school headteachers, as well as the non-GEC secondary school girls without disabilities and parents/caretakers interviewed on the other hand, acknowledged that school administrators and teachers as well as some learners, and some parents/caretakers as integral members of their communities, were doing several things differently regarding girls with disabilities accommodation in school and communities some of which things may/will continue (more so) after the end of the project. However, for the several reasons also given below more could/can still be done in the future. Among other things, participants reported the following which are (potentially) contributing to safer and or more inclusive schools/teachers and communities:

i. Some teachers and learners without disabilities were good, friendly, showed love and care towards, and did not discriminate against, girls with disabilities
ii. Some school leaders and managers had plans to engage with the parents and caregivers of the children (girls) with disabilities in their respective schools to explore jointly affordable cost-sharing arrangements to enable them to continue to access education after CSU intervention ends
iii. Some schools were already negotiating with other organizations and (high net worth) individuals to come onboard to support learners (girls) with disabilities in their respective schools, leveraging on CSU project support
iv. Some schools were considering providing merit-based bursaries to, or were already rewarding, learners (girls) with disabilities who excelled; and
v. Some parents/caretakers (as integral members of their communities) were providing their girls with disabilities with opportunities to interact with their peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families (i.e. the community) in addition to them attending school and this in turn influenced positive change in the attitudes and behaviours of the community at large (e.g. of parents of the other Children with Disabilities not supported by CSU)

However, the end of project review also found and or concluded that:

- sometimes the love and care or friendship accorded to the girls with disabilities by some teachers and learners without disabilities could be probably because of a condescending/patronizing attitude perhaps than due to genuine respect and equality (i.e., long-lasting empowerment[45]).
- GEC-T target schools tended more to serve mostly learners who are from poor or relatively low socio-economic backgrounds including many girls with disabilities. Hence, the assured cash flow via CSU direct (financial) support to girls with disabilities (e.g., via

[45] Empowerment means people (e.g. girls with disabilities) having power and control over their own lives. People get the support they need that is right for them. Empowerment means that people are equal citizens. They are respected and confident in their communities. You can't empower someone else or make someone empowered. It is about ways of working and supporting someone that means they can take control and responsibility for their own lives (see paper by the national Transforming Care empowerment steering group - at https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/What%20empowerment%20means%20to%20us.pdf)

paying school fees) by and large sustained the operations of the GEC-T partner schools, more so the private (secondary) schools. Without either CSU direct (financial) support or other such support to the schools (via paying the girls' school fees) if/when the cost-sharing arrangements or negotiations failed, one wonders whether going forward how many vulnerable girls with disabilities are sufficiently empowered at an individual girl level to continue with education (now/in the future)?

- the proposed bursary scheme that some schools are considering introducing to support children (girls) with disabilities (more so) after the project ends, as is, probably is not/will not be inclusive/accommodating enough of girls with disabilities. Among other things, the bursary scheme will be (academic) merit-based and will therefore perhaps exclude the most vulnerable girls such as those with difficulty hearing, remembering and or communicating, as well as all girls with diverse types of disabilities whose difficulties tend to be relatively more severe. Therefore, the proposed bursary scheme is/will be potentially ineffectual in empowering many vulnerable girls with disabilities.
- the community still had a negative attitude towards persons with disabilities, hence girls with disabilities tended to feel relatively more excluded in communities than in schools. This suggests that there were opportunities for communities to show relatively more empathy with girls with disabilities. Considering that by design, CSU project interventions did not directly target peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families, perhaps more sensitization sessions about disability issues including targeting peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families directly could be an intervention option to consider in future.

Such reservations outlined above found and or concluded by the end of project review, despite what positive things the schools/teachers and communities were reported to be doing (planning to do) differently after participation in CSU project, bring into question if the project outcomes (i.e. of safer and more inclusive schools/classrooms and communities that were the result of GEC-T) will be sustained and the schools/classrooms and communities will continue to be safer and or inclusive after the end of the project. Nevertheless, such reservations appear to suggest intervention options that could be considered in future programming.

Teachers and learners without disabilities were good, friendly, showed love and care towards, and did not discriminate against, learners (girls) with disabilities

Some teachers and learners without disabilities were reported to be good, friendly, showed love and care, and did not discriminate against girls with disabilities. They were said to be accommodative and understanding, and they counselled and educated girls with disabilities about their rights. According to some primary and secondary girls with disabilities interviewed, individual teacher attitude toward girls with disabilities not only kept them in school but also made them love school as well. For example, a Primary Seven (P.7) schoolgirl with difficulties seeing observed that, "**in P.7 teachers are good. We can consult them at any time and are always willing to give support whenever approached"** (see GWD1 KII MCoUPS). She reported that she was also given a chance to identify where to sit in class so that she can see well what is on the chalkboard. Participants also said Teachers encouraged and had empowered both the girls with disabilities and the student leaders (with or without disabilities), to report cases of abuse, and to

enforce the inclusive school environment where all the learners must be treated equally and with empathy, respectively. For example, it was variously mentioned by participants interviewed and in focus group discussions, including girls with disabilities, that learners without disabilities tended to help them, such as fetching water for them from the water source to the dormitory, washing their school uniforms, informing the nurse when girls with disabilities were feeling unwell; and girls with disabilities were exempted from queuing for school meals, etc. A Senior Two (secondary school) girl without disabilities (i.e., non-GEC) and student leader in charge of student general welfare interviewed, explained that the reason learners (girls) with disabilities are treated well is because this is an inclusive school where all students must be treated equally. She added, **"Here there are no better students. All of us are equal regardless of our physical appearances"** (see Non-GEC3 KII).

It was also found out however, that sometimes the reason for the love and care or friendship accorded to the girls with disabilities could be probably because of a condescending/patronizing attitude perhaps than, due to genuine respect and equality. A Senior Three (secondary school) girl without disabilities in the same school who we interviewed on the account that she was a friend to most of the girls with disabilities in that school also agreed that girls with disabilities were treated well and there was always equal treatment to all students irrespective of the nature of their abilities. But also explained that **"I started relating with them [i.e. girls with disabilities] out of sympathy because of their disabilities, through sharing personal stories and getting to learn more about them, understanding that some of these girls come from poor and humble background[s]; then we ended up becoming friends"** (see Non-GEC2 KII).

School administrators planned to engage parents and caregivers of the children (girls) with disabilities to explore jointly affordable cost-sharing arrangements

Both primary and secondary school headteachers interviewed reported plans to engage with parents of the girls with disabilities in their respective schools to explore jointly, affordable cost-sharing arrangements to facilitate them to continue to access education after CSU intervention ends. A secondary school headteacher interviewed said that the school management was planning to have a meeting with the parents of these girls (with disabilities) to see how they can have an affordable cost sharing arrangement to continue supporting these children (see HT1 KII AHS). Similarly, the headteacher of a primary school interviewed also talked of her school plans to meet the parents of these beneficiaries (i.e., the girls with disabilities) to find out the best approach on how they can support them as the project ends its support programs (see HT2 KII MCoUPS). Such plans were strongly endorsed by a primary school teacher in the same school that we interviewed, albeit she lacked decision-making powers since she was not part of school management. She opined, **"I would think, as a school, we would keep these girls [with disabilities] in school. The school management should talk to their parents in a meeting and see the possibility of the parents contributing to the girl's stay in school, either by providing the school requirements, or paying part of the tuition to enable the beneficiaries complete this primary level"** (see T1 KII MCoUPS). However, it is worth noting that Uganda has been implementing the universal primary education (UPE) policy since 1997, and under the policy there are some restrictions on charging certain costs to parents of children in public primary schools. The primary school in question here is a public primary school.

Schools were already negotiating with other organizations and individuals to come onboard to support learners (girls) with disabilities

Both primary and secondary school headteachers interviewed confirmed that they were already negotiating with other organizations and (high net worth) individuals to come on board to support children (girls) with disabilities in their respective schools, leveraging on the CSU support. For example, a secondary school headteacher interviewed explained that as a way of sustaining the project achievements for the beneficiaries (i.e., the girls with disabilities), the school was already negotiating with different organizations supporting some of their other students to also accept the CSU-supported girls with disabilities. This was because as a school they saw a great benefit in them being further sponsored both for the school and the learners, given the substantial number of girls with disabilities supported by CSU in the school. The organizations the headteacher mentioned included Kabaka Education Fund, Childcare, and Asika project. He stated that, **"We are negotiating with some of these organizations to see how they can contribute to the support and sustainability of the CSU project beneficiaries"** He also added that the school had approached some political leaders as well (see HT1 KII AHS). Similarly, a primary school headteacher interviewed reported that the school was also trying to negotiate with other organizations that can come on board to support these girls with disabilities. She said that the school is in negotiations with, e.g., Rotary Club Kampala East with a proposal to support the needy boys and girls in the school (see HT2 KII MCoUPS).

It is worth emphasizing that CSU direct (financial) support to girls with disabilities (e.g. paying school fees) was as great a benefit to the girls with disabilities as it was to the CSU partner schools, and more especially to the partner private (secondary) schools, that tended to serve mostly learners who are from relatively poor or low socio-economic backgrounds. CSU school tuition funding extended to the girls with disability, for example meant that such schools had an assured termly cash flow, not least in the face of having many learners in the school whose parents would perennially default on school fees payments. Among other things, the assured cash flow by and large sustained the operations of such schools, the reported occasional delays in CSU school fees remittances notwithstanding. That being the case, going forward one wonders whether without both CSU direct (financial) support to girls with disabilities or other organizations and (high net worth) individuals coming on board to support, one can confidently say that girls with disabilities many of whom are from relatively poor or low socio-economic backgrounds were sufficiently empowered at an individual girl level.

The focus in primary (and secondary) schools in Uganda is on the acquisition of academic knowledge mostly, and therefore the lack of opportunities for the girls with disabilities to develop practical "hands-on" or technical/vocational skills (and or to start-up a business) while still in school. At individual girl level, this tendency feels like exclusion of girls with disabilities in schools perhaps because such focus on only developing academic knowledge wrongfully assumes either that all the girls with disabilities would be able to perform well academically to transition through school and tertiary levels, or that all girls with disabilities that transition out of the education system to employment would readily get work. The latter generally is not easy nor assured (and more so for people with disabilities) as noted above (see sub-section 4.3 above). As a university girl with difficulty seeing interviewed explained, depending on the nature of their disabilities girls with disabilities may not be able to perform well academically yet they can learn other social skills including practical "hands-on" skills. She went on to say that "**Acquiring these skills will enable them to startup their own business[es]. The girls can learn skills like tailoring, carpentry, shoe making etc. This will raise their standards of living and… inspire[re] other girls who have difficulties in one way or the other. Therefore, even when the project closes at some point, these girls will have acquired a skill useful for their future sustainability"** (see GWD5 KII KYU).

Schools were considering providing merit-based bursaries to, or were already rewarding, learners (girls) with disabilities who excelled

In addition to the plans to engage parents and organizations and political leaders by some schools noted above, a secondary school headteacher interviewed revealed that his school was now also thinking of giving full merit-based bursaries to some of the girls with disabilities who were excelling (academically) in their respective classes (see HT1 KII AHS). On the other hand, participants in a secondary school girl with disabilities focus group discussion reported that girls with disabilities are being accepted and included in various activities like other girls which was not the case in the past. For example, it was reported that they are encouraged to participate in debates. They added that once a student with disabilities competed in such activities and won, s/he was given an award and was highly celebrated (GWD FGD2 KHS).

However, it is noteworthy that the proposed bursary scheme as is, probably is not inclusive and accommodating enough of girls with disabilities and therefore potentially ineffectual in empowering many girls with disabilities given that it will be merit-based and will therefore perhaps exclude the most vulnerable girls such as those with difficulty hearing, remembering and or communicating, as well as all girls with different types of disabilities whose difficulties tend to be relatively more severe. Besides, the proposed bursary scheme being merit-based, perhaps may not guarantee sufficient security of tenure even for the girls with disabilities that can compete to transition through school or levels in case their academic performance declined for one reason or the other.

Parents/caretakers were providing their girls with disabilities with opportunities to interact with their peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families (i.e., communities) in addition to them attending school and this in turn influenced positive change in the attitudes and behaviours of the community at large (e.g. parents of the other Children with Disabilities not supported by CSU)

Traditionally, Children with Disabilities in Uganda are (ignorantly) regarded as a taboo and therefore tend to be locked-up behind doors, away from the public. However, a primary school teacher and headteacher and two parents/caretakers of a primary and secondary school girl with disabilities, respectively, interviewed reported that, as integral members of their communities, some parents/caretakers after participation in the project had started encouraging their girls with disabilities, plus giving them moral support and providing them with infinite opportunities (together with them attending school), to interact with their peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families (i.e. communities). This had had a profound influence on the girls with disabilities, including them improving their social aspects plus them gaining confidence and self-esteem knowing that they are loved and appreciated.

For example, two parents/caretakers of both primary and secondary school girls with disabilities claimed that the CSU counselling and awareness creation sessions, had greatly impacted parents' (as well as the girls') lives, hence making it one of the most meaningful project activities to the parents. They said this because, getting to know more about disability issues and child protection and safeguarding, raised and or restored the hope and aspirations of the parents (and of their daughters with disabilities). Therefore, due to the restored hope and aspirations, for example, one parent of a primary schoolgirl with difficulty selfcare interviewed, revealed that previously she had lost faith in her ability to give birth to a child without disabilities. But that after the CSU counselling she had not only gained courage and started loving her daughter more, but she had also conceived and given birth to her next child after the first daughter with disabilities. She proudly asserted that "**I can now move with her freely in public, anywhere without being**

bothered at all." And that she has since given birth to another child (see P5 KII MCoUPS). This parent of a 17-year-old Primary Seven (P.7) schoolgirl with multiple difficulties communicating and selfcare explained that the condition of her daughter with difficulty self-care had greatly improved due to attending school which in turn had made her become and therefore feel more included in community. **"Her attending school has helped her a lot. My daughter can now speak, do house chores under supportive supervision, move by herself in the community. She can even bathe herself and go to the toilet without support."** She went further to say that being and staying in school had improved her daughter's performance in social/life skills, given her a chance to interact with other children without disabilities, and it had also increased her self-esteem and confidence in society. **"My daughter used to be very aggressive and violent, before she was supported, as I mentioned to you earlier. But with project support, she eventually changed character and is now a very peaceful woman, unless provoked. She also started speaking a few words and now can sustain a conversation with you if you give her time and show her that you are friendly''** (see P5 KII MCoUPS).

Similarly, the 63-year-old grandmother/caretaker of a secondary school girl with disabilities equally said that when she received counseling on how to care for and support her granddaughter, it motivated her to show love and care, and to support her granddaughter, which in turn had inspired her granddaughter to gain confidence and self-esteem. As she explained, **"We were taught that we need [to] show love to Children with Disabilities and make them feel that they are not lesser humans in any way. To encourage them to remain in school and participate in activities that promote [their] self-image"** (see P2 KII AHS).

Meanwhile, parents' attitudes and behaviours can be said to have also changed in terms of the reported positive change, albeit transient, in the attitudes and behaviours of the community at large (e.g. parents of the other Children with Disabilities not supported by CSU) seen, for example, in the reported increase in enrollment of Children with Disabilities. A secondary school headteacher interviewed perhaps best illustrates this. The headteacher explained that the GEC-T project had created awareness to the parents that Children with Disabilities have rights like any other children. And that they needed to be supported, not neglected. In his view, this consequently had influenced change in the parents' attitude, which resulted in the school also experiencing an increased number of Children with Disabilities enrolled in the school. He reasoned that**, "When you have such learners [i.e. with disabilities] in a school, it's an indicator of change in attitude and community confidence to join the school"** (see HT1 KII AHS).

Nevertheless, such views were not expressed by any girls with disabilities interviewed. This perhaps implies that such reported cases are still few and isolated, and that generally girls with disabilities do not feel more included in communities after participation in the project.

It was reported that the community still had a negative attitude towards persons with disabilities, hence girls with disabilities tended to feel relatively more excluded in communities than in schools. A Senior Two (S.2) secondary schoolgirl with difficulty walking perhaps best summed up this view in a focus group discussion we conducted, when she went ahead to say that she felt safer and peaceful at school than at home. She said that most voices in the community were negative, they look at you as someone waiting to get spoilt. This was because girls with disabilities could easily be taken advantage of due to their disabilities and fact that most of them come from poor backgrounds. She added that because she was coming from a poor family, yet at the same time having disability, there is a way how the community viewed her as a failure, or society did not expect much from her. She concludes that it is only the school that could shield her from such negative community environments (see GWD FGD3 AHS). The other reasons advanced for the girls with disabilities feeling more excluded in communities included, the relative difficulty for

persons with disabilities finding employment and getting employed, and the lack of startup capital for most parents as well as the girls with disabilities, coupled with the failure of CSU to have provided effective financial and business skills training. For example, a university girl with difficulty seeing in the interview conducted with her emphasized the negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities rampart in the communities by adding that **"It's also not easy for a person with disability to get a job. Maybe society still looks at them as people without any potential and as if they cannot do anything productive" (see GWD5 KII KYU).**

Therefore, while there is some evidence seen above to suggest that there were opportunities for communities to show relatively more empathy with girls with disabilities, there are reasons also to feel that there is still some way to go to achieve unreserved empathy and respect for girls with disabilities, especially from among peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families. It is noteworthy that by design CSU project interventions did not directly target peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families. Hence, perhaps more sensitization sessions about disability issues including targeting peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families directly could be an intervention option to consider in future.

5.2 What project activities were most meaningful to parents (families), and how is this contributing to girls' feeling that they are more included in communities and schools as a result of project activities (now/in the future)?

The parents/caretakers' attitudes and behaviours towards their children's education were found to have changed positively because of project activities, in one major way. That is, that parents/caretakers now believe in the intrinsic and or relative capacity and resourcefulness of their girls with disabilities and their ability to succeed in school and possibly in future life (as a result). Consequently, some parents/caretakers who could afford to financially support fulfil their girls with disabilities' educational dreams were reported to be cost-sharing either by topping-up the school fees that CSU project was paying at secondary level, or by fully supporting their girls' tertiary level education costs - given CSU direct financial support did not extend to the tertiary level (see GWD5 KII KYU). Besides, many parents/caretakers' attitudes and behaviours have also positively changed in terms of the attention, love and care accorded now to their girls with disabilities. A Primary Five (P.5) teacher of a girl with difficulty communicating and remembering, narrated that at first, most of the girls with disabilities were not in school; and that many parents/caretakers had neglected these girls and that many of them were locked up in their parents/caretakers' homes and not in school. But that **"Today, the girls with disabilities have greatly improved in their cleanliness. They come to school from [their] homes when they have bathed, brushed their teeth and smartly dressed in their uniforms. This implies that back at home, the parents have had a change in attitude and adopted the idea of supporting and taking care of their Children with Disabilities which was never the case before the project"** (see T1 KII MCoUPS).

Furthermore, some parents' attitudes and behaviours can be said to have also changed in terms of the reported positive change, albeit transient, in the attitudes and behaviours of the community at large. For example, there was reported increase in school enrollment of Children with Disabilities by some parents of the other Children with Disabilities not supported by CSU seen (see sub-section 5.1 above). Such change in parental attitudes and behaviours was also noted by the Midline 2 Evaluation Report (see Midline 2 Report, p.14). This positive change was partly because of the CSU counselling and awareness creation sessions, which were reported to have

greatly impacted parents/caretakers' (as well as the girls') lives, hence making it one of the most meaningful project activities to the parents (see sub-section 5.1 above).

There were, however, other project activities reported by parents to be among the most meaningful to them. For example, concurrent "hands-on" (or technical/vocational) practical skills training directly targeting the girls with disabilities, which, however, was not provided by CSU because by design it was not meant to be among the GEC-T project activities. CSU provided technical/vocational training skills to girls with disabilities but only if/when the girl with disabilities either completed primary and secondary levels and could not proceed to university or opted to join a tertiary institution or dropped out of school before completing primary/secondary levels e.g. due to early pregnancy, etc. and opted/was interested to join a tertiary institution. With such established strong belief in the capacity and resourcefulness of their girls with disabilities, and in their ability to succeed in school and possibly in future seen above, it is logical to expect that the parents would be willing to invest in their girls' future. It is reasonable to expect that parents would be willing to invest in improvement in sustainability of the supportive (i.e. maintenance of the inclusive) environment (to support the needs of girls with disabilities) by girls with disabilities being in better position through education (i.e. project activities) to earn a living and become self-reliant. Thus, as seen above some parents who could afford to financially support fulfil their girls with disabilities' educational aspirations, in that vein, were reported in this study to be cost-sharing, e.g. by topping-up the school fees that CSU project was paying at secondary level, by fully supporting their girls' tertiary level education costs, etc.

A university going girl with difficulty seeing interviewed, noted that while at secondary level she was not supported with all the school fees when the project resumed supporting her, hence her parents topped-up on what the project was paying for her. She added that her parents were now supporting her at the university where she was pursuing a Business Administration degree course. She was categorical that **"My parents are willing to support me until when I accomplish it"** (see GWD5 KII KYU). During a focus group discussion conducted with secondary school girls with difficulties walking and seeing, it was revealed by one participant (whose future dream was to get into the fashion and design industry) that as soon as her mother got to know way back that the project would be closing, the mother started making preparations through her savings to be able to support her daughter when the project funding finally ended (see GWD FGD3 AHS). Her testimony perhaps vindicates the project theory of change in that it illustrates a successful case of a parent who via presumably using project support to boost her own economic empowerment (and savings) had prepared well in advance to continue to support her daughter's education.

However, when asked what will happen next after the project ends, many parents interviewed did not have a clear plan. Many parents interviewed confessed that they now fully understood and appreciated the benefits of educating their girls with disabilities, but that they were financially constrained (see sub-section 4.3 above). It is largely for this reason, that concurrent "hands-on" (or technical/vocational training) practical skills training *directly* targeting the girls with disabilities coupled with access to start-up finance/asset capital to start their own (micro-) business enterprises, (much as it was not provided by CSU because by design it was not meant to be among the GEC-T project activities) was reported as one of the most meaningful activities to parents (families), that the project could/would/should have delivered to (further) improve in sustainability of the supportive (i.e. maintenance of the inclusive) environment at family level to enable long lasting girls' empowerment by girls with disabilities being in better position through education (i.e. project activities) to earn a living (faster/earlier than envisaged by GEC-T design) and become self-reliant now/in the future.

Concurrent "hands-on" or practical technical/vocational skills training *directly* targeting girls with disabilities coupled with access to start-up finance/asset capital to start their own (micro-) business enterprises

Providing "hands-on" or practical technical/vocational skills training (i.e. non-formal education) directly to the girls with disabilities, alongside or concurrently with their formal primary and secondary school level education coupled with access to start-up finance/asset capital to start their own (micro-) business enterprises, was cited both by their parents and by the girls with disabilities themselves interviewed separately, and by teachers interviewed, as one of the project activities which if it had been implemented by CSU as proposed by them would have been potentially *the* most meaningful activity to parents (families). The reasons given for this view were majorly two. One, is that it would have given the girls with disabilities the opportunity to gain experience early to earn a living on their own and become more self-reliant much more quickly, hence perhaps improving their life chances relatively much better and faster than had been envisaged by CSU (ToC)[46]. Two, it would have catered relatively much better for girls with disabilities with certain types and severities of disabilities, especially those disabilities that tended to make progressing academically, and therefore continuing to attend primary and secondary school level through to university/tertiary institutions until one eventually transitions into employment (more so after the project support ends) relatively much more challenging (see sub-section 4.1 above). The latter may refer to or include e.g., girls with multiple difficulties communicating and self-care or girls with difficulties hearing, etc.

Parents of both primary and secondary school girls with disabilities, secondary school and tertiary level girls with disabilities, and primary school teachers, during both key informant interviews and focus group discussions conducted, all separately voiced this view. A 63-year-old grandmother/caretaker of a secondary school girl with disability during the interview suggested that, in addition to (i.e., concurrently with) formal education, the girls with disabilities school should also add on technical or practical hands-on skills education, so that they can learn to earn a living for themselves. She argued that it was so relevant today for these girls to acquire skills to (better) survive given their disabilities. She went on to argue that technical/practical skills training would also arouse the girls with disabilities' creativity and innovation so that they would come up with something (i.e., some form of self-employment job) to do (given the scarcity of employment opportunities in the job market in Uganda) (see P2 KII AHS).

Such sentiments were strongly echoed by the secondary school and tertiary level girls with disabilities during their respective focus group discussions that were conducted. While some tertiary level girls attending a vocational institute in the focus group discussion were interested in upgrading their level of education, others wished for access to start-up finance/asset capital to start their own (micro-) business enterprises. For example, one stated that **"If my parent can get me a sewing machine. I will start from there and progress."** Another noted in agreement that, **"Not everyone who has succeeded start[ed] big, I believe I can start small but grow with time."** Also, one of the girls who was completing a course in fashion and design believed that with the knowledge she had acquired if she got start-up capital, she would get started (on her own) (see GWD FGD4 BRI). In the focus group discussion with the secondary school girls with disabilities, one participant, who is a former head girl, disclosed that there was an initiative back in her home district of Luwero to train girls in hair dressing which she joined on her own initiative, and that she had already acquired these skills. Therefore, she hoped to put those skills to use to fund her education after the project funding closes. She also mentioned a goat project that she was running again out of her own initiative where she hoped to get money to add to what she

[46] The project has been working with the parents, schools, children, etc. around transitional planning since almost project inception.

expected to earn from training other girls in hair dressing. Another participant in the focus group discussion who had acquired skills in bakery on her own initiative with the support of her mother, said that she may have to stop in S.4 (i.e. Senior Four secondary school grade) and go on to pursue a course in catering, because that was her passion and she had already acquired the necessary skills on her own. She disclosed that she had already discussed it with her mother and they both thought this would be the best thing for her to go forward (see GWD FGD2 KHS).

These views were separately echoed by two primary school teachers who were interviewed. One teacher felt that to further support the girls with disabilities, they should be given opportunities in skilling them after P.7 (i.e. Primary Seven) to help them acquire skills like tailoring, bakery, etc. and become self-sustaining; especially those who would not excel academically and join secondary education (see T1 KII MCoUPS). This view was amplified by another primary school teacher who was interviewed. She noted that there were some girls with disabilities who were struggling academically in class. Therefore, she suggested that the project ought to help such girls with technical/vocational skills. **"Some girls are not performing well academically, but this doesn't mean they should leave school, no. The school hides them from boys who are out there waiting for them. If the project can help such girls with vocational skills, this can help them because excelling [in life] is not only in terms of academics."** She argued that such skills were so vital as they could help anyone to even start up an income generating activity on their own. She gave an example of how anyone (i.e., including the girls with disabilities) equipped with tailoring skills could independently survive if given a startup capital of only UGX 500,000/= and a sewing machine. In addition, she observed that if it were possible before the project closure, efforts would be made to start up small businesses for the parents/guardians of the girls with disabilities because most of them could not sustain their households. However, now that the project was ending, she was afraid that such children would drop out of school because their parents/guardians cannot continue supporting them (see T3 KII NKPS).

Therefore, we can conclude that among the activities found and or concluded by this end of project review to be most meaningful to parents (families) because of the way they impacted/influenced improvement in sustainability of the supportive (i.e. maintenance of the inclusive) environment at family level to enable long lasting girls' empowerment, by girls with disabilities being in better position through education (i.e. project activities) to earn a living (faster/earlier than envisaged by GEC-T design) and become self-reliant now/in the future, included two activities among others. One, the CSU counselling and awareness creation sessions, which were reported to have greatly impacted parents' (as well as the girls') lives. In that, many parents interviewed confessed that they now fully understood and appreciated the benefits of educating their girls with disabilities, but that they were (still) financially constrained despite the CSU economic empowerment initiatives. Two, hence the proposal by parents, as well as girls with disabilities (i.e. families), and by teachers interviewed that the project could have delivered *concurrently* "hands-on" (or technical/vocational training) practical skills training *directly* targeting the girls with disabilities coupled with access to start-up finance/asset capital to start their own (micro-) business enterprises, which, however, was not provided by CSU because by design it was not meant to be among the GEC-T project activities. Altogether, this appears to bring into question how effectively CSU delivered and enabled long lasting girls' empowerment[47] through education, thus

[47] Empowerment means people (e.g. girls with disabilities) having power and control over their own lives. People get the support they need that is right for them. Empowerment means that people are equal citizens. They are respected and confident in their communities. You can't empower someone else or make someone empowered. It is about ways of working and supporting someone that means they can take control and responsibility for their own lives (see paper by the national Transforming Care empowerment steering group - at https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/What%20empowerment%20means%20to%20us.pdf)

contributing to girls with disabilities' feeling that they are more included in communities and schools as a result of project activities (now/in the future). Nevertheless, this also suggests an intervention option that could be considered in future programming design.

5.3 What is government at the macro/meso/micro level doing differently after participation in the project to promote/improve education of the most marginalized children (e.g., girls with disabilities), and how is this contributing to making education more inclusive (now/in the future)?

What is the government at all levels doing differently after participation in the project to promote/improve education of the most marginalized children (e.g., girls with disabilities)?

The findings suggest that CSU has generally influenced government at all levels (i.e., national, local government and community/school level) to make education more inclusive of girls with disabilities, albeit to varying extents. CSU has tended to influence government at the community/school level relatively more perhaps than at the national and local government level. As seen above, CSU has influenced the government to make education inclusive at community/school level (see sub-section 5.1 above).

When asked to what extent had the intended outcomes and impact of the project been achieved, the CSU project staff during the focus group discussion conducted, ranked positive attitude change of the school leaders and managers (e.g. that schools had enrolled girls with disabilities even without CSU support) as the highest ranked outcome and impact of the project achieved (see CSU PS FGD1). This view was supported both by a private secondary school teacher and by a local government official of Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) that were interviewed separately. The secondary school teacher reported that the school had registered a remarkable increase in the inclusive education enrollment of students with disabilities. He observed that **"We have some students with disabilities who are entirely supported by their parents,"** he asserted (see KII T2 AHS).

Similarly, the local government official interviewed confirmed that indeed the level of inclusive education practice of girls with disabilities in KCCA today is much better than before and compared to all other local governments across the country. He proudly noted that no other local government across the entire country was implementing inclusive education to the level of KCCA. He reported that teachers in KCCA schools were more positive about inclusive education than before and gave the example that now admissions of Children with Disabilities into both public and private schools were (relatively more) possible. He added that during the 2023 national Primary Leaving Exams (PLE), a lot of learners with disabilities (i.e**., "over 3000"**), now sat the examinations, which he attributed to the CSU training creating **"a lot of sensitizations"** about disability issues among school leaders and managers (see KII KCCA 1).

Generally, this confirms the earlier findings of the project monitoring report to the effect that at school/community level, families of girls with disabilities were becoming more interested and involved in education of their daughters for example accompanying them to school or bus stages, rehabilitation centres (see AR Yr 1, p.12).

CSU has influenced government to make education inclusive at national and local government level broadly in terms of engendering relatively greater responsiveness of government to, and hence growing interest in, education of Children with Disabilities. Specifically, CSU has influenced government to make education inclusive at national and local government level in terms of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) benchmarking the CSU project implementation framework to inform the formulation and development of the draft national inclusive education policy, as well as in terms of KCCA leveraging the inclusive education officer (IEO) position established via and with the financial and technical support of CSU. CSU's nomination to and active representation in the National Task Force for the development of the draft inclusive education policy and in other Ministries' working groups and national organising committees of different national events showed the growing interest in disability issues including education for Children with Disabilities (see CSU AR Yr 1). This view was confirmed during key informant interviews with central and local government officials.

For example, during a key informant interview conducted with a senior representative of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) in charge of special needs education (SNE) it was revealed that CSU had challenged MoES (and KCCA) to think innovatively about different accommodation strategies and activities in education for Children with Disabilities, including providing transportation, sensitization of and awareness creation among the school leadership and management (i.e. school management committees and Boards of Governors), as well as sensitization of MoES senior management. The same government official acknowledged that CSU had both set the standard of how schools should be constructed, as well as demonstrated the need for capacity building of teachers in inclusive education practices. She also noted that if approved by cabinet the inclusive education policy (that she owed to CSU support) would put MoES in a better position than before to advocate/lobby for additional resources for children (girls) with disabilities and inclusive education (see KII Asst. Comm, MoES).

Both KCCA officials interviewed explained that by leveraging the inclusive education officer (IEO) position kickstarted with CSU support, KCCA had established in its staffing structure an IEO position fully budgeted and funded by KCCA effective February 2023 (see KII KCCA1; KII KCCA2). One of the officials interviewed (who also doubles as the KCCA education directorate's budget liaison officer) even went further to confirm that KCCA had also put in place a modest but symbolic portion of its budget for inclusive education activities beyond simply catering for the salary of the IEO position (see KII KCCA2).

What groundwork was put in place by CSU to ensure that national and local government promotes and improves education for the most marginalized (e.g., girls with disabilities) and makes education more inclusive?

Conventionally, government is expected to control and shape Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) activities and ensure their most appropriate delivery of development support to the most vulnerable and marginalized. However, it appears that instead the reverse was generally true of CSU work with the government to promote and improve education of the most marginalized children in Uganda. The findings suggest that CSU engagement with government at all levels entailed several things, including CSU taking lead in devising and delivery of activities and in providing their necessary funding to assist government deliver development support most appropriately to the most marginalized children (girls) with disabilities in Uganda. CSU implementing the project's planned activities jointly e.g., the teacher sensitization and inclusive education practice training and the school monitoring and support supervision visits with KCCA.

CSU training (i.e., sensitizing and creating awareness) of KCCA and Ministry of Education and Sports officials on disability issues, inclusive education practice, gender, child protection and safeguarding.

And for its part, government consequently received relevant 'training' (i.e. sensitization and awareness creation) directly from CSU, benchmarked CSU work, supported CSU's shared workplans and or jointly participated in implementing the project's planned activities, received funding from CSU to implement agreed project activities, and took over implementation of the planned activities (even as CSU continued to provide the necessary funding). For example, it was reported that KCCA was developing and submitting activities concept notes and proposals based on the approved CSU workplans to CSU for funding and subsequent implementation. A key informant interview with one local government (KCCA) official pointed out, for continuity, that KCCA later took over implementation of the teacher training in inclusive education practices, meanwhile CSU continued to provide funding. His colleague who was also interviewed confirmed that KCCA fitted into the CSU workplans, e.g., by developing activity concepts/proposals based on the workplan, and CSU released funding to implement the activities (see KII KCCA2).

During a key informant interview conducted with a senior representative of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) in charge of special needs education it was revealed that CSU facilitated and supported (technically and financially) some of the meetings to develop and review the draft inclusive education policy. The Ministry representative stated that CSU project had demonstrated that inclusive education is possible. Hence the Ministry had benchmarked the project implementation framework in informing the framing of the inclusive education policy and in informing the MoES' school infrastructure planning and design. She added that the need for capacity building for teachers in inclusive education practices had been demonstrated by CSU. She noted that the status quo of one teacher in charge of special needs education per school was insufficient - all teachers needed to be trained. Therefore, MoES needed to roll out capacity building in inclusive education practice for all teachers (see KII Asst. Comm, MoES).

The key informant interviews conducted separately with both officials from Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) disclosed that CSU engagement with KCCA happened within the framework of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between CSU and KCCA which spelled out the roles and contributions of each party. For example, CSU's role included providing funding for project related activities like sensitization and awareness creation training for education system stakeholders (i.e., teachers and central and local government education officials) on disability, inclusive education, gender and child protection. CSU was specifically acknowledged for funding inclusive education infrastructure developments in some schools within KCCA, the establishment of an Inclusive Education Officer (IEO) position at KCCA for the first 4 years after which KCCA would takeover, as well as facilitating through funding the (joint) project monitoring and school/teacher support supervision visits, among other things (see KII KCCA1; KII KCCA2).

The findings from the interviews corroborated the data gleaned from the project documents, e.g., the project proposal (see pp. 4,7), the project workplan, and the Midline 1 Evaluation Report (see p.13).

How successful is CSU in influencing government at all levels to make education more inclusive (i.e., in furthering impact/sustaining effect of inclusive education by longevity)?

As seen above, CSU was generally successful in influencing government at all levels (i.e., national, local government and community/school level) to make education more inclusive, albeit to varying extents.

However, key informant interviews with central and local government officials pointed to two major challenges that both seemed to limit the extent to which CSU was able to influence government to make education more inclusive at all the levels as a result. One challenge was to do with the government's perennial funding limitations at both national and local government level. The other challenge was to do with the still lingering negative attitudes and or creeping ignorance of inclusive education practices among the local government leadership. Meanwhile, CSU's relative failure to influence government to make education more inclusive at community/school level was reported to be partly manifested in the fact that (some) teachers, including those that were trained (i.e. sensitized about disability issues, etc.) by CSU, still viewed accommodation of Children with Disabilities in schools as a (i.e. an additional) burden, which partly perhaps as suggested below was to do with CSU's mode of training (see KII KCCA1).

Besides, as also noted above, the expected cascading of the relevant CSU training on inclusive education practices to new teachers by the teachers that were trained was not happening routinely nor systematically as would have been wished and or expected. Therefore, implying a potential breakdown in continuity of inclusive education practice in some KCCA schools after the project closes. More so, since it was also found that when CSU facilitation of the teacher training ended, KCCA had not stepped in to bridge the gap due to budget limitations (see KII KCCA1). It is worth noting that, for example, much as KCCA taking up the IEO's position effective February 2023 was touted as a success story by CSU in terms of sustainability on the account of the vast technical experience and knowledge of the officer recruited, it still does not give assurance that the CSU project interventions in KCCA will necessarily continue due to the limited funding.

The views above were variously expressed by both Ministry and KCCA officials, as well as by primary school teachers. The representative of the Ministry of Education and Sports observed that **"as a key player we [i.e., MoES] are still in a dilemma of what [to do] next since the project is closing. Of course, Cheshire [i.e., CSU] indicated it can't support forever…. The Ministry is aware that many more schools are not yet adaptive towards and accommodative of disability issues. Thus, we [i.e., MoES] need more support to extend to even other districts. Can new project funding be found? Government's hands are tied – financially"** (see KII Asst. Comm, MoES). She went on to make the following urgent request, **"our appeal is that the government budget is always inadequate. Therefore, CSU or a similar project is needed to rollout the support to other vulnerable parts of Uganda, with still negative attitudes towards the education of Children with Disabilities, for example in West Nile, Karamoja…"** (see KII Asst. Comm SNE, MoES).

Similarly, a KCCA official interviewed while acknowledging the fact that KCCA had made a small budget provision for inclusive education services beyond the salary of the IEO, also recommended that more budget allocation was needed. **"KCCA needs to improve on its budget component to inclusive education services to cater for some of the activities that CSU has been undertaking… [That is to say], KCCA develops a clear sustainability plan for the various services CSU has been undertaking in KCCA schools"** (see KII KCCA2). Another KCCA official interviewed while admitting that schools tended to register more Children with Disabilities for the national (PLE) examinations, also reported that there was still the challenge of school administrators not declaring Children with Disabilities to Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) during the registration of the exam candidates and went ahead to share specific examples of such a debacle he had experienced during the recent (2023) PLE examinations.

Meanwhile, he also reported that some of the current KCCA leadership, unlike in the past, no longer saw any sense/point in the IEO's getting physically involved in the active monitoring and support to the conducting of UNEB examinations for Children with Disabilities in KCCA schools. Therefore, KCCA did not provide the IEO facilitation (e.g., a vehicle and driver or an allowance for transport) during the just concluded PLE examinations.

The same reluctance shown by the KCCA leadership regarding facilitating the already established IEO position was reported to be manifesting itself regarding the proposal to establish five additional IEO positions for the five divisions of KCCA, i.e., one at each KCCA Division. The leadership were reported to hold the view that the already existing mainstream education officers at each division of KCCA would and should be able to handle inclusive education practice aspects, notwithstanding their potential likely lack of awareness/understanding of disability issues that was seen to be widespread as per the CSU ToC[48] (see KII KCCA1). Finally, a Primary Five (P.5) class teacher with one girl with difficulty communicating and remembering interviewed, expressed the view that as teachers handling Children with Disabilities, since the project was ending its programs, her request was for financial support to be extended to her (or for some kind of package) as a motivation to (continue to) support such girls in school. This seems to imply that such teachers saw Children with Disabilities as an additional burden. Therefore, this appears to suggest that there was still need for more sensitization and awareness creation of teachers to make them more aware that learners with disabilities ought to be viewed and treated the same way as all the other learners without disabilities (see KII T1 MCoUPS); albeit one KCCA official interviewed appeared to advocate in future for relatively more **"capacity building sessions"** during the trainings and **"not simply sensitization and awareness creation sessions"** as was the case during the concluding project. He also explained that CSU should in future involve the relevant KCCA officers more directly in implementing project activities and cited the case of mobilizing parents effectively to engage in income generating activities and/or their economic empowerment. (see KII KCCA1).

Overall, it seems that intervention by other development partners and support to complement the government efforts is still required its. For example, the KCCA-CSU project liaisons officer interviewed, stated that **"CSU has been talking about sustainability of several of its interventions – can CSU identify a partner to follow up that sustainability, e.g. follow up the girls with disabilities to find out the mechanisms in place for the continued learning of these children. For example, is KCCA waiving the school fees/related costs (in the public schools)? Are parents providing the necessary/required support? Is KCCA engaging the parents? [That is to say, in short] are the stakeholders living up to their commitments?"** (see KII KCCA2). Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that despite all CSU efforts to ensure sustainability, central and local government cannot be expected to entirely take over and implement CSU project interventions targeting the girls with disabilities. For example, it seems they cannot be entirely relied upon to act independently and or on their own initiative to devise strategies that have limited, or no, financial or monetary implications to sustain the CSU project outcomes. Nor can central and local government also be entirely relied upon to effectively mobilize and supervise parents to do the same.

Hence, perhaps devising more strategies that have limited, or no, financial or monetary implications to sustain the CSU project outcomes; implementing more "capacity building sessions" during the trainings and "not simply sensitization and awareness creation sessions" as was the case during the concluding project; and involving the relevant government officers more directly

[48] see CSU ToR, p.8

in implementing project activities in future, among others, could be some interventions options to consider in future programming design.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

The end of project review was guided by the proposed research questions in the end of project review TOR (see **Annex 3** attached). It is concluded and recommended, from the evidence, that:

Conclusions	Recommendations
Learning	
1. Because learning for girls with disabilities is relatively expensive as they face additional and multiple barriers of functionality and hence relatively higher costs of attending and staying in school (i.e., learning), the project has supported girls with disabilities to stay in education through direct (financial and material) support. This is why the girls are motivated/enabled to stay in education, also given the abject poverty and relatively low socio-economic background of many of the girls targeted by project. However, such extremely high dependency on the project direct (financial and material) support for the girls with disabilities' learning raises a major question about its sustainability given the typical nature of projects.	• To ensure the sustainability of the given high costs of attending and staying in school (i.e., learning) for girls with disabilities, incorporate into the (new) project design and implementation, right from the outset of the project support, cost-sharing with the parents of the girls with disabilities. In fact, project staff argued that this could/would have been a big incentive for the parents/caregivers to engage in income generation to finance their girls' shared costs of education (see CSU PS FGD1). Other relevant things to consider include e.g. improved vulnerability risk assessment as well as better targeting of direct financial support intended for girls with disabilities; or adopting right from project start-up a gradual phasing out of project direct (financial/material) support coupled with the corresponding increase in cost-sharing (e.g. by either other organizations and (high net worth) individuals, and or the parents/caretakers themselves).

	• In addition, as also recommended by the midline 2 evaluation (ML2), there is need to rethink the income generating activities (IGA) intervention by ensuring much better conceptualization/design and implementation of the IGA themselves. For example, basic entrepreneurship skills training targeting parents also aiming to effectively build basic book-keeping/financial literacy skills capacity of the parents.
2. Two types of learning opportunities provided by the project have been most beneficial to girls, i.e., academic and emotional/soft and life/social skills, and relatively less so the technical/vocational training. This is the case despite the opportunities/advantages the latter type of learning opportunity offers to transition mid-way directly from any level of education including primary school level to tertiary and or to employment. However, interviews with girls with disabilities at all the different levels of schooling suggest that the learning opportunity provided by CSU considered relatively more beneficial to them was the emotional/soft and life/social skills type of learning opportunity (facilitated both simply by girls being able to attend and stay in school as well as via project guidance/counselling and mentoring, etc. sessions). This is because it served as a major springboard (i.e. a key foundational building block at individual girl level in enabling long-lasting girl empowerment) to achieving both the academic and technical/vocational training types of learning opportunities, and thus improving one's life chances, not to mention the relative inability to get absorbed into the job market that was also reported by some girls with disabilities interviewed who had dropped out of school and transitioned to technical/vocational training and subsequent employment mid-way the full education system cycle (e.g. due to early pregnancy). Nevertheless, it is also worth noting that providing "hands-on" or	• Strengthening provision of the emotional/soft and life/social skills type of learning opportunity (facilitated both simply by girls being able to attend and stay in school as well as via project guidance/counselling and mentoring, etc. sessions) is a key intervention option to consider in future programming design.

practical technical/vocational skills training (i.e. non-formal education) directly to the girls with disabilities, alongside or concurrently with their formal primary and secondary school level education coupled with access to start-up finance/asset capital to start their own (micro-) business enterprises, was cited both by their parents and by the girls with disabilities themselves interviewed separately, and by teachers interviewed, as one of the project activities which if it had been implemented by CSU as proposed by them would have been potentially the most meaningful activity to parents (families) (see sub-section 5.2 above).	
3. Among the major hindering factors for girls with disabilities' learning is the lingering non-inclusiveness of education, for example, insults and bullying by the other learners without disabilities especially reported at the lower educational levels (i.e., primary school and to a lesser extent secondary). This is partly due to the learners' limited awareness about disability issues and perhaps their relative immaturity. It is also the effect of non-inclusive teaching practices by untrained or inadequately trained and unfriendly teachers (and non-teaching staff) partly due to their ignorance of disability related issues and high (trained and untrained) teacher attrition coupled to limited capacity of schools/local government to effectively orient new teachers on inclusive teaching practices. Suffice it to note that the other learners without disabilities and non-teaching staff were not directly targeted by the CSU sensitization/awareness creation, guidance/counselling and mentoring, etc. sessions. Meanwhile, there were efforts by schools at cascading down among teachers the inclusive education/disability awareness training and efforts by school to put in place girls with disabilities' safeguarding and child protection (school) regulations, observed by this study. Paradoxically, this was reported more among the secondary schools that participated in this study compared to the primary schools. But considering that indeed in many schools under GEC-T, direct training of teachers was limited, and the project could simply advocate for 'inclusive' changes via engagement with the school leadership and	• The relative ignorance of inclusive education practices and disability issues by both learners without disabilities and non-teaching staff, hence their unaccommodating behaviors found to be contributing to hindering girls with disabilities' learning; plus the need to strengthen the efforts of schools to cascade down among teachers the inclusive education/disability awareness training and to establish girls with disabilities' safeguarding and child protection school regulations, observed by this study, are some intervention areas for future programming to address. • Considering that in many schools under GEC-T, direct training of teachers was by the design of the project limited, perhaps more sensitization sessions about inclusive teaching practice targeting all teachers directly could be an intervention option to consider in future.

management, the findings above are perhaps not surprising. It is also noteworthy that the secondary schools that participated in this study tended to be privately run schools compared to the primary schools that tended to be public government-aided schools.	
Transition	
4. GEC-T project has demonstrated that education (e.g., transition) of girls with disabilities in inclusive school settings (in Uganda) is possible (see KII Asst. Comm, MoES). There was no one type of transition that was most meaningful to *all* girls with disabilities, but the meaningfulness of the type of transition depended on several factors, including the girls' current levels of education and the nature (e.g., invisible) and severity of their disabilities, among other things. Nevertheless, a non-supportive and accommodating school environment remains a major hindering factor to transition for girls with disabilities, especially transition in terms of progressing through school *levels*. Owing to the still largely non-supportive and accommodating school environments, it is worth noting that those girls whose level of severity of disability has been categorized as 'a lot' and 'cannot do at all' by the project, constitute the bigger number of the learners still in primary level and therefore have not yet transitioned school/educational levels (e.g. from primary level to secondary or to tertiary level). This is even though their confidence and self-esteem both of which are essential social and life skills if their lives chances are to sustainably improve now/in the future. Thus, much more is still needed to be done, especially to cater relatively much better for girls with certain types and severities of disabilities that make progressing academically and transitioning through school levels in the inclusive school settings in Uganda relatively much more challenging. It is also worth noting that both the midline evaluation and this study found that parents' unresolved inability to financially support girls with disabilities' transition in general remained the main potential hinderance to transition for girls with disabilities after the project closes (see sub-	• Enhancing transition opportunities provided by the project that are meaningful to girls (who are still currently in primary school and whose level of severity of disability has been categorized as 'a lot' and 'cannot do at all' by the project) needs urgent attention in terms of intervention options to consider in future programming design, i.e. so that meaningfulness of transition goes beyond simply meaningfulness in terms of enabling the girls learn to associate and socialize with the other learners without disabilities which in turn builds their confidence and self-esteem – despite the importance of the latter.

section 4.3 above). This is a project component that project staff, admittedly, also said had not been well executed (see CSU PS FGD1).	
Sustainability	
5. There are several things that schools/teachers and communities/families are doing differently after participation in CSU project. While there are several ways that they are contributing to safer and or more inclusive schools/communities (now/in the future), there are also some reservations found and or concluded by the end of project review that bring into question if the GEC-T project outcomes reported (i.e. of safer and more inclusive schools/classrooms and communities) will be sustained and the schools/classrooms and communities will continue to be safer and inclusive after the end of the project. For example, some teachers and learners without disabilities were reported to show love and care towards girls with disabilities which is contributing to safer and or more inclusive schools. However, it was found that sometimes the love and care or friendship accorded to the girls with disabilities could be probably because of a condescending/patronizing attitude perhaps than due to genuine respect and equality (i.e., long-lasting empowerment). Some school leaders and managers were indeed negotiating with other organizations and (high net worth) individuals to come onboard to support learners (girls) with disabilities in their respective schools, leveraging on CSU project support. Others had plans to negotiate cost-sharing arrangements with parents/caretakers of the girls with disabilities. This will/might contribute to more inclusive schools. However, GEC-T target schools tended more to serve mostly learners who are from poor or relatively low socio-economic backgrounds including many girls with disabilities. Hence, the assured cash flow via CSU direct (financial) support to girls with disabilities (e.g., via paying school fees) by and large sustained the operations of the GEC-T partner schools, more so the private (secondary) schools. Without either CSU direct (financial) support or other such support to the schools (via paying the girls' school fees) if/when the cost-sharing arrangements or negotiations failed, one	• Considering that by design CSU project interventions did not directly target peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families (i.e. the community), perhaps (more) sensitization and awareness creation sessions on disability issues, gender, etc. including targeting peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families (i.e. the community – e.g. via radio, partnership with cultural institutions such as Buganda Kingdom) directly could be an intervention option to consider in future. • Incorporate into the (new) project design and implementation, right from the outset of the project support, negotiations between project target schools with other organizations and (high net worth) individuals, and cost-sharing arrangements with all parents/caretakers of girls with disabilities, to come onboard immediately (and not wait till the end of project), leveraging on project support to sustainably support the learners (girls) with disabilities' education. This is likely to be an attractive proposition to schools, especially since there was evidence seen in this study of a potential (financial) benefit also for schools in terms of the girls

wonders whether going forward how many vulnerable girls with disabilities are sufficiently empowered at an individual girl level to continue with education (now/in the future)? Also, some schools were considering providing merit-based bursaries to, or were already rewarding, learners (girls) with disabilities who excelled, which will/might contribute to more inclusive schools. However, the proposed bursary scheme, as is, probably is not inclusive/accommodating enough of girls with disabilities. Among other things, the bursary scheme will be based on academic performance and will therefore perhaps exclude the most vulnerable girls[49], as well as all girls with diverse types of disabilities whose difficulties tend to be relatively more severe. Some parents/caretakers (as integral members of their communities) are providing their girls with disabilities with opportunities to interact with their peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families (i.e. the community) in addition to them attending school and this in turn influenced positive change in the attitudes and behaviours of the community at large (e.g. of parents of the other Children with Disabilities not supported by CSU). This is contributing to safer and or more inclusive communities. However, the community still has a negative attitude towards persons with disabilities, and such views above were not expressed by any girls with disabilities interviewed. Hence as reported by girls with disabilities, they tended to feel relatively more excluded in communities than in schools. It is noteworthy that by design CSU project interventions did not directly target peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families (i.e., the community). This suggests that there are still opportunities for communities to show relatively more empathy with girls with disabilities, and there is still some way to go to achieve unreserved empathy and respect for girls with disabilities, especially from among peers and adults beyond the girls' immediate families.	with disabilities being enrolled in their schools and having sponsorship.

[49] The end of project review found that girls such as those with difficulty hearing, remembering and or communicating tended to be relatively more vulnerable in terms of transition through grades and levels.

6. Among the activities that are most meaningful to parents (families) included two activities among others. One, the CSU counselling and awareness creation sessions, which were reported to have greatly impacted parents' (as well as the girls') lives. Two, the proposal by parents, as well as girls with disabilities (i.e. families), and by teachers interviewed that the project could/should have delivered *concurrently* "hands-on" (or technical/vocational training) practical skills training *directly* targeting the girls with disabilities coupled with access to start-up finance/asset capital to start their own (micro-) business enterprises, which, however, was not provided by CSU because by design it was not meant to be among the GEC-T project activities. These activities are the most meaningful to parents (families) because of the way they impacted/influenced improvement in sustainability of the supportive (i.e. maintenance of the inclusive) environment at family level to enable long lasting girls' empowerment, by girls with disabilities being in better position through education (e.g. project activities) to earn a living (faster/earlier than envisaged by GEC-T design) and become self-reliant now/in the future. Hence, many parents interviewed confessed that they now fully understood and appreciated the benefits of educating their girls with disabilities, but that they were (still) financially constrained despite the CSU economic empowerment initiatives. Altogether, this appears to bring into question how effectively CSU delivered and enabled long lasting girls' empowerment[50] through education, thus contributing to girls with disabilities' feeling that they are more included in communities and schools as a result of project activities (now/in the future).	• Access to start-up finance/asset capital to start their own (micro-) business enterprises coupled to concurrent "hands-on" or practical technical/vocational skills training directly targeting girls with disabilities, is an intervention option to consider in future programming design. This is because (although not provided by CSU because by design it was not meant to be) it is among the activities reported by parents/caretakers and girls with disabilities themselves, and by other participants, interviewed to be most meaningful to parents/caretakers (families) because of its potential to impact/influence improvement in sustainability of the supportive (i.e. maintenance of the inclusive) environment at family level, by girls with disabilities being in better position through education (e.g. project activities) to earn a living (perhaps faster/earlier than envisaged by GEC-T project design) and become self-reliant now/in the future.

[50] Empowerment means people (e.g. girls with disabilities) having power and control over their own lives. People get the support they need that is right for them. Empowerment means that people are equal citizens. They are respected and confident in their communities. You can't empower someone else or make someone empowered. It is about ways of working and supporting someone that means they can take control and responsibility for their own lives (see paper by the national Transforming Care empowerment steering group - at https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/What%20empowerment%20means%20to%20us.pdf)

7. CSU has influenced government at all levels (i.e., national, local government and community/school level) to make education more inclusive for girls with disabilities, albeit to varying extents. CSU has tended to influence government at the community/school level relatively more perhaps than at the national and local government level. There are some things that government at the macro/meso/micro level is doing differently after participation in the project to promote/improve education of the most marginalized children (e.g., girls with disabilities), that are contributing but not entirely to making education more inclusive for girls with disabilities (now/in the future). As seen above, CSU has influenced the government to make education inclusive at community/school level (see sub-section 5.1 above). This view was confirmed by CSU project staff (see CSU PS FGD1). CSU has influenced government to make education inclusive at national and local government level broadly in terms of engendering relatively greater responsiveness of government to, and hence growing interest in, education of Children with Disabilities. For example, CSU has influenced government to make education inclusive at national and local government level in terms of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) benchmarking the CSU project implementation framework to inform the formulation and development of the draft national inclusive education policy, as well as in terms of KCCA leveraging the inclusive education officer (IEO) position established via and with the financial and technical support of CSU. This was achieved partly via CSU engagement with government at all levels. However, key informant interviews with central and local government officials pointed to two major challenges that both seemed to limit the extent to which CSU was able to influence government to make education more inclusive at all the levels as a result. One challenge was to do with the government's perennial funding limitations at both national and local government level. The other challenge was to do with the still lingering negative attitudes and or creeping ignorance of inclusive education practices among the local government leadership. Meanwhile, CSU's relative failure to influence government to make education more inclusive at community/school level was reported to be	• Devising more innovative strategies that have limited, or no, financial or monetary implications to sustain the CSU project outcomes e.g. engaging (i.e. advocacy) with KCCA to waive the school fees/related costs (in the public primary schools) and for KCCA officials to engage/mobilize the parents to contribute as per UPE policy, etc.; and implementing more "capacity building sessions" during the trainings and "not simply sensitization and awareness creation sessions" as was the case during the concluding project; among other things, are some interventions options to consider in future programming design.

	partly manifested in the fact that (some) teachers, including those that have been trained (i.e. sensitized about disability issues, etc.) by CSU, still viewed accommodation of Children with Disabilities in schools as a (i.e. an additional) burden, which partly perhaps as suggested below was to do with CSU's mode of training. One KCCA official interviewed appeared to advocate in future for relatively more **"capacity building sessions"** during the trainings and **"not simply sensitization and awareness creation sessions"** as was the case during the concluding project. (see KII KCCA1). Overall, it seems that the government still requires intervention by other development partners and support to complement its efforts. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that despite all CSU efforts to ensure sustainability, central and local government cannot be entirely expected to take over and implement CSU project interventions targeting the girls with disabilities. For example, it seems they cannot be expected to act independently and or on their own initiative to devise strategies that have limited, or no, financial or monetary implications (given their perennial funding limitations) to sustain the CSU project outcomes. Nor can central and local government also be expected to effectively mobilize and supervise parents to do the same.	

Annexes

CSU Uganda End of Project Review TOR