Project Evaluation Report

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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.

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Strategic Approaches to Girls' Education External Evaluation Report

Formal Track Midline

November 2021

iMC worldwide

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Cover sheet

- **Name of project:** Strategic Approaches to Girls' Education (STAGE)
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- **Name of external evaluation firm:** IMC Worldwide
- **Version number:** 8

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Executive summary

This report presents the findings from the formal track midline evaluation for the Strategic Approaches to Girls' Education (STAGE). The evaluation was conducted by IMC Worldwide, an external evaluator (EE), hired by the project implementing agency World Education, Inc. (WEI). This report follows the evaluation guidelines provided by the Fund Manager (FM) and reflects the evaluation scope of work detailed in the STAGE MEL framework.

Project Background. The project targets locations in Ghana where there are high levels of extreme poverty and deep-seated traditional and social norms towards gender roles (early marriage, pregnancies, and high chore burden on girls). The result is a negative impact on girls' ability to complete their education and gain decent employment. The project consists of two programme tracks for highly marginalised girls – a single cohort Formal school track for girls aged 10-14, and non-Formal track of three cohorts for girls aged 15-19 focused on vocation skills and employment. The project is being implemented from August 2018 until January 2023 and will seek to reach 16,794 girls (8,025 Formal and 8,769 Non-Formal) across eight regions of Ghana, with North Eastern Region being included following creation of six new regions. The Formal track sets out to provide girls with nine months of accelerated learning (ALPs) on literacy and numeracy together with Life skills training before transition to formal school via support to caregivers, training to teachers, and awareness raising on the importance of girls' education. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted programme delivery; schools in Ghana closed for 10 months from March 2020 due to the pandemic, and its impacts have disrupted the delivery of programmes and girls' learning more broadly. Programme interventions including the ALPs, animation sessions, home visits to check on the girls, training for safeguarding, peer education, the Behavioural Change Campaign, and vocational training were suspended. The programme had to adapt, pivoting to enable delivery of the ALPs and gender inclusive education in the new context with teaching and learning done through radio and community information systems.

Evaluation Approach. The purpose of the midline evaluation is to assess progress of the STAGE project's key log frame indicators for the Formal track (at Outcome and Intermediate Outcome level), together with assessing the relevance and plausibility of the STAGE Theory of Change (ToC). To measure project impact on outcomes, midline learning scores were compared with estimated counterfactuals calculated using a regression analysis that accounted for the language, region, and age of each participant. The literacy and numeracy levels of girls were measured using Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessments (EGMA). Other indicators were measured using a quantitative household survey with heads of households, primary caregivers and girls. Qualitative data (focus groups with target girls, interviews with target girls, boys, caregivers, teachers, headteachers, local leaders and local authority members) was also collected to provide input into some log frame indicators and complement the quantitative data. Data collection took place between 15 February – 4 March 2021 in three regions and four language groups. The qualitative sample covered three communities in each region. The evaluation applied a Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) lens to ensure girls and marginalised sub-groups were thoughtfully considered and reported on throughout in accordance with minimum standards for GESI reporting agreed with the Fund Manager (e.g. data disaggregation for marginalised subgroups, and differentiating sub-group and characteristics in reporting findings and analysis). The sample size for the midline was of 694 Formal track girls (705 at baseline). In total, 606 girls from baseline were successfully interviewed (or 86% of the baseline sample), equalling a 14% attrition rate.

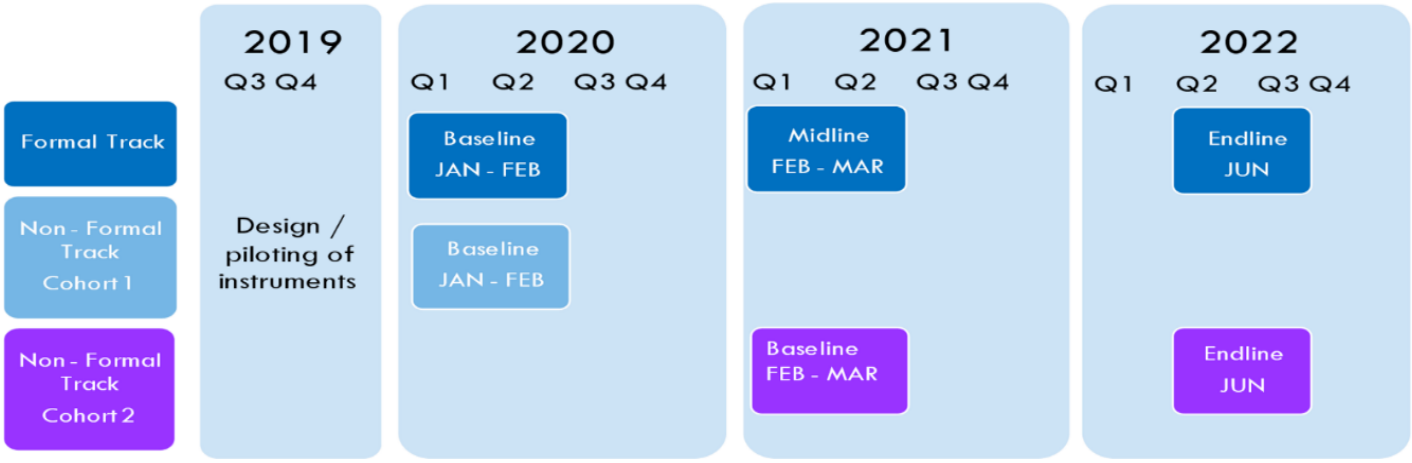

Figure 1: Evaluation timeline

STAGE project's profile. Formal track girls come from households with a high level of poverty. At midline, 82.7% of the sample (N=694) were between 11 and 15 years of age (average of 12.7 years). Overall, 3.8% of girls reported having a disability and 2.5% reported having a disability other than mental health, including physical and socio-cognitive.

Subgroup marginalisation. Since baseline, the prevalence of some marginalised subgroups among Formal Track girls has changed (Table 1).

Table 1: Characteristic Subgroups: Formal Track, Baseline and Midline

Characteristic	Proportion of sample with this characteristic – Baseline	Proportion of sample with this characteristic – Midline
Is a Mother	1.6%	1.0%
Married under 15	0.9%	1.0%
Married	0.9%	1.0%
Lives with neither parent	3.4%	3.3%
1+ hours to primary school	13.6%	14.5%
HH unable to meet basic needs[1]	35.6%	24.2%
Currently employed	8%	4.3%
Employed and under 15	7.7%	3.6%
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)	40.8%	5.5%
Has a disability	13.0%	3.8%
Source: Analytical Dataset Caregiver survey N =	705	689

The most significant changes include reduction of girls affected by a high chore burden (from 40.8% to 5.5%), lower prevalence of girls from impoverished households (from 35.6% to 24.2%) and lower prevalence of employed girls (from 8% to 4.3%). One possible reason for the decrease in high chore burden might be that project beneficiaries have given up time spent on household chores, to the benefit of studying. This could be seen as a positive result and a sign of commitment to investing in education from the beneficiaries and their caregivers. In addition, it is noted that STAGE has many continuous sensitisation activities in place directed to removing barriers to education. The largest reductions in prevalence of high chore burden were reported in the regions with highest prevalence reported

[1] Defined as answering Household Survey question 'PCG_5econ Please tell me which of the following phrases best suits your household situation' with '[_] 1 unable to meet basic needs without charity'

at baseline. Particularly the Northern region (Likpakpaaln language), Upper West (Dagaare), and Upper East (Kasem). Reporting of impoverishment has decreased from 76% to 12.5% of Formal track households in Upper East (Kusaal); and from 37% to 12.5% in Northern region (Likpakpaaln). Of employed girls (4.3% of the sample), the majority are engaged in informal employment (43.3%) or employment in household's income generating activities (30.0%). All jobs are temporary, the majority part-time, and are considered not paid fairly or not paid at all.

Overall, the Northern region (Likpakpaaln) – the most marginalised region at baseline – is now largely aligned to the other regions in terms of marginalisation prevalence, albeit with variations between subgroups. It has also seen major improvements in learning and transition outcomes.

Barriers. The barriers focus on what obstacles are preventing girls from attending school/ education programs that STAGE should consider in the design and implementation of its activities. The prevalence of barriers can only be examined in relation to the overall sample, or girls that are unenrolled. At baseline, 73% (636) of beneficiaries were not enrolled in formal school. At midline, 37% (209) were not enrolled. As the majority of girls have transitioned to school as of midline, a reduction in the prevalence of barriers among Formal-track girls is also noted (Figure **2**), especially for those affected by economic and travel barriers.

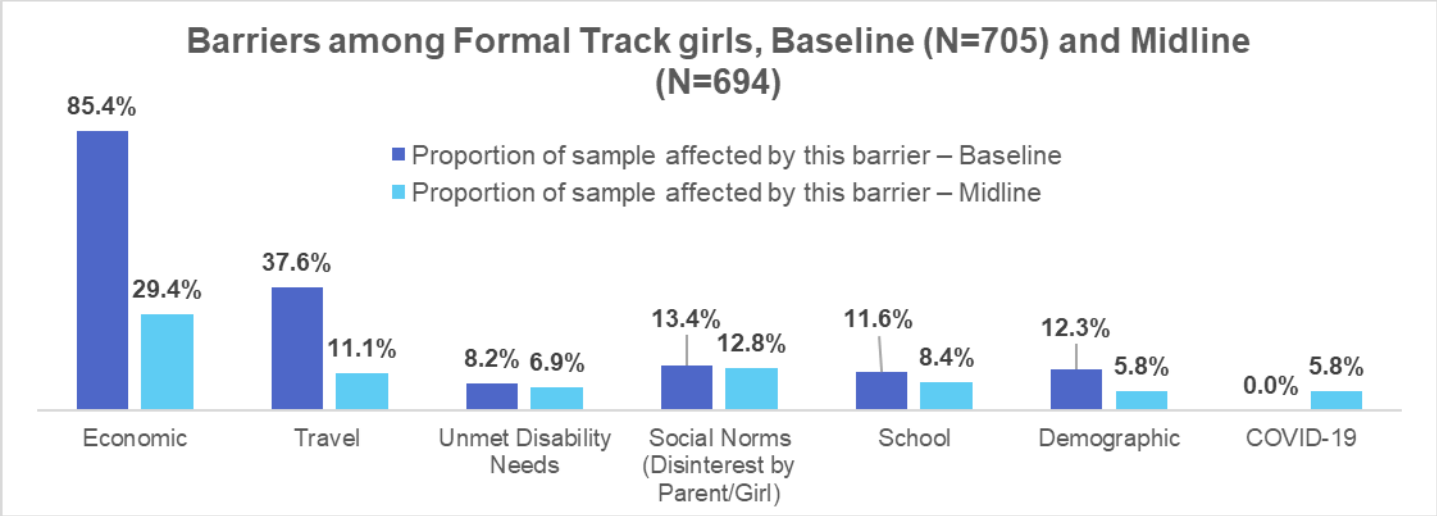

Figure 2: Barriers among Formal Track girls: Baseline and Midline

Figure 2 shows that whilst economic and travel barriers have decreased considerably (from 85.4% to 29.4% and from 37.6% to 11.1% respectively), social norms (disinterest in education by caregiver or girlchild/perception that school does not help in finding a good job)[2] and school related barriers have only slightly decreased (from 13.4% to 12.8% and from 11.6% to 8.4%). An alternative way to look at this finding is that among beneficiaries who are not enrolled in formal school[3] (37%), the social norms and school-related barriers play a larger role in preventing girls enrolment, than those factors contributed at baseline. The economic barriers at midline were, and are still, faced by almost all unenrolled girls. Travel-related barriers are the only ones whose prevalence has decreased among unenrolled girls.

[2] In the regions where STAGE is implemented, traditional beliefs, social norms, and gender stereotypes persist, limiting girls to the role of caregivers, homemakers, and income generators (STAGE MEL Framework, 2019). Extreme poverty in STAGE regions, with many families struggle to meet basic needs, make investing into children's education not a priority, especially when coupled with the perception that education does not help in finding a good job. As UNICEF reports "Social norms are rules or expectations of behaviour in a cultural or social group. They are widely observed patterns of behaviour to which individuals conform… Social norms persist because of social approval when they are followed or disapproval when they are violated". When considered in relation to gender, gender norms can be defined as "socially learnt roles and responsibilities assigned to both sexes in a given culture along with the societal structures that support these roles". UNICEF, (n.d). Programme Brief. Addressing social norms and gender in support of equity in education.

[3] Any mention of "school" refers to formal education/school where the Formal track girls transitioned to. Learning centres where STAGE Accelerated Learning Programmes were delivered are referenced as STAGE or ALP Learning Centre, never as "school".

As a general trend, the subgroups most affected by barriers are, unlike at baseline, married, mothers, employed and in some cases, Girls with Disabilities (GWDs), for school and unmet disability need barriers. As the size of these subgroups are mostly unchanged since baseline, this suggests that whilst better transition outcomes are possible for girls in these subgroups, it might not be feasible for some of them to give up work/household responsibilities to allow for schooling. COVID-19 is a barrier to attending school/ALP according to 5.8% of caregivers of Formal track girls (19% of caregivers of unenrolled girls only). Whilst 72.9% have experienced a decrease in income, based on limited qualitative evidence COVID-19 might have brought some economic relief to parents, as with schools closed there are no school related costs. Many girls are also reported as feeling anxious due to COVID-19 impacts.

It should be noted that all results reported in this report refer to Midline, unless otherwise specified. This is important especially when looking at results disaggregated by disability, marginalisation characteristics and barriers, since the girls composing each subgroup have changed across evaluation points due to attrition.

Appropriateness of project activities to the characteristic subgroups and barriers identified. Whilst the majority of the ToC project assumptions on characteristic subgroups and barriers are still valid at midline, some key ones have changed. The intersection between marginalised subgroups and barriers shows that the subgroups most at risk of not achieving positive transition outcomes are married girls, mothers, and currently employed, rather than high chore burden girls and those living in remote locations. Economic barriers are still the most prevalent, though the percentage of impoverished girls has decreased and those that are in this subgroup at midline have achieved higher than average outcomes. Social norms remain a persistent concern as a barrier to enrolment for a small group of beneficiaries, particularly among married girls and mothers. Whilst STAGE has successfully made progress at reducing barriers for some marginalised subgroups, including on social norms, it appears that at time of the evaluation the project has been less effective in helping married girls and mothers overcome social norms barriers to enrolment. This can be expected given that social norms are particularly entrenched in communities, and long-term interventions and concerted efforts are needed to alter social structures. Furthermore, it is noted that the transition process into enrolment was still ongoing at the time of the midline data collection. This is important both to the relevance of the interventions, but also its sustainability. It has also been noted that substantial changes in prevalence for some of the subgroups (impoverished, high chore burden and living in remote locations) have taken place notwithstanding some STAGE activities in support of these having not been delivered to their full extent (transition kits, bicycles) at the time of the evaluation. Key assumptions remain in relation to the importance of gender sensitivity / social norm awareness, quality of teaching and community/family's support for girls' education, and support to families with economic burdens.

Figure 3: Foundational numeracy scores comparison: Baseline and Midline

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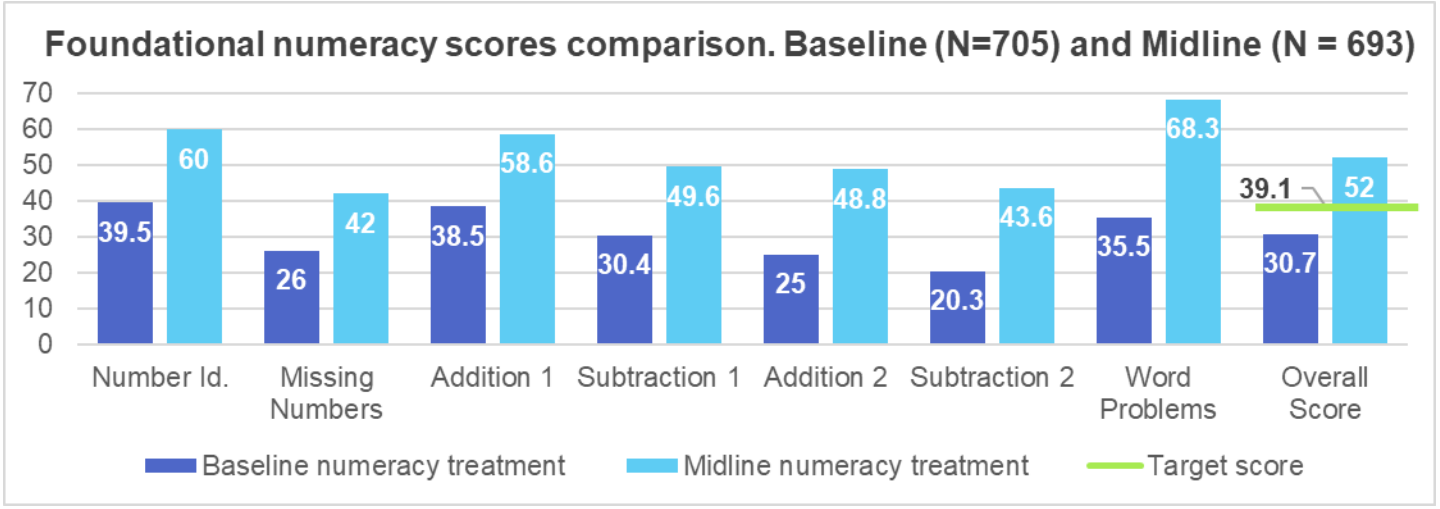
from baseline. Improvements are consistent and observed across all EGMA subtasks as well as bands of achievement. At midline, most girls scored in either the Established or Proficient learner bands, except for the missing numbers subtask (39.8%) which is still the most challenging one. By region, Upper West (Dagaare) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) present the lowest EGMA scores. By comparing the midline treatment scores to the estimated counterfactual, data indicates a large and significant effect of STAGE on numeracy outcomes (22.8). The estimated effect is slightly higher than the difference between midline and baseline scores likely because this last year has been challenging and has affected midline scores to an extent. Among the 605 beneficiaries for whom we have both baseline and midline scores, 456 (75.4%) have improved EGRA scores and 487 (80.5%) have improved



EGMA scores.

The overall **literacy** score at midline is 29.3 (Figure 4), an improvement of 18.1% points with respect to baseline. The Midline results demonstrate great improvement compared to the Baseline, but beneficiaries are not proficient in basic pre-literacy skills. While beneficiaries on average have doubled the number of letters, they can read in one minute (from 14.8 to 30.3), only 28.4 % of beneficiaries can read at 40 letters per minute, which is considered necessary for proficiency. While the proportion of girls in the non-Learner proficiency level (meaning they could not answer any question correctly on a subtask) has fallen, most girls are still in the Non-learner or Emergent learner bands of even the easiest activities, both of which are defined as below proficiency. Gaps are observed particularly in familiar words, oral reading fluency (the largest gap) and writing in Upper East (Kusaal) and Upper West (Dagaare). By comparing the midline treatment scores to the estimated counterfactual, data indicates a large and significant effect of STAGE on literacy outcomes, at 17.3 overall; the largest for writing (28.0) and reading comprehension (19.3). While continued improvement will be necessary for beneficiaries to have functional literacy skills, the project has exceeded its literacy target.

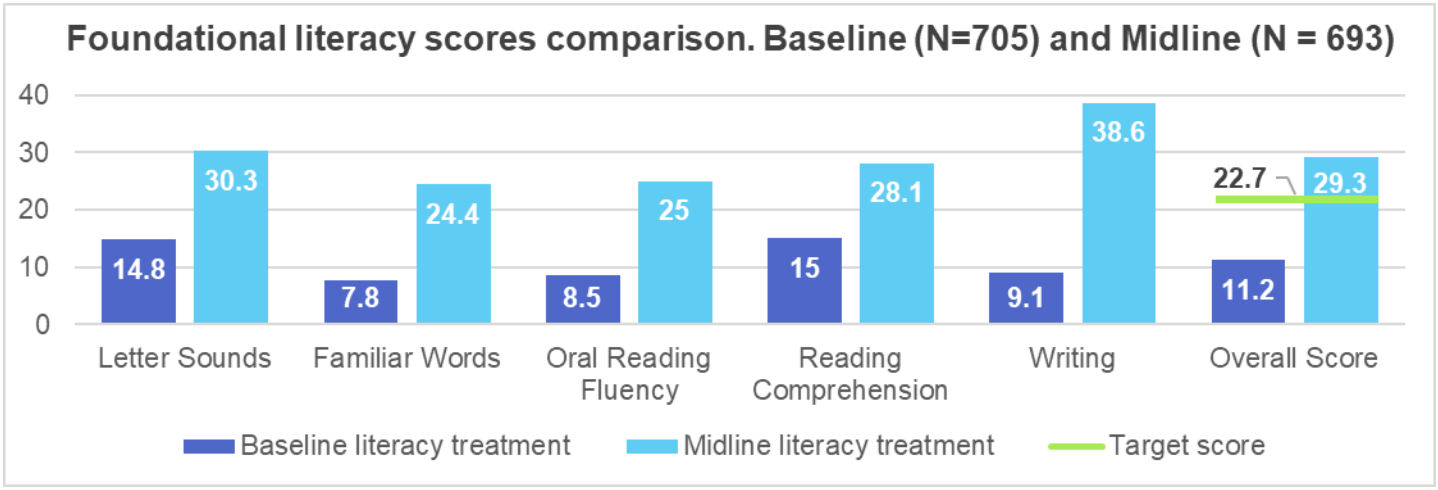


Figure 4: Foundational literacy scores comparison: Baseline and Midline

The STAGE intermediate outcome (IO) 2 relates to Quality of Teaching, directly contributing to Outcome 1 on Learning. STAGE overachieved targets under two out of three indicators under IO2 and only slightly underachieved the target for the indicator "% of girls that agree their facilitator was effective at the learning centre" (see below under IOs). Thus, positive results achieved in learning (for both numeracy and literacy) seem to be well supported by the positive results observed in quality of teaching. Further, T-tests of IO indicators note significant positive differences for EGRA and EGMA overall scores when the criterion of girls agreeing to the effectiveness of facilitators at the learning centre was met (7.53* and 7.91* differences for EGRA and EGMA respectively).

Transition outcome. Overall, 69.5% of girls have transitioned to school as of the time of the data collection[4], from

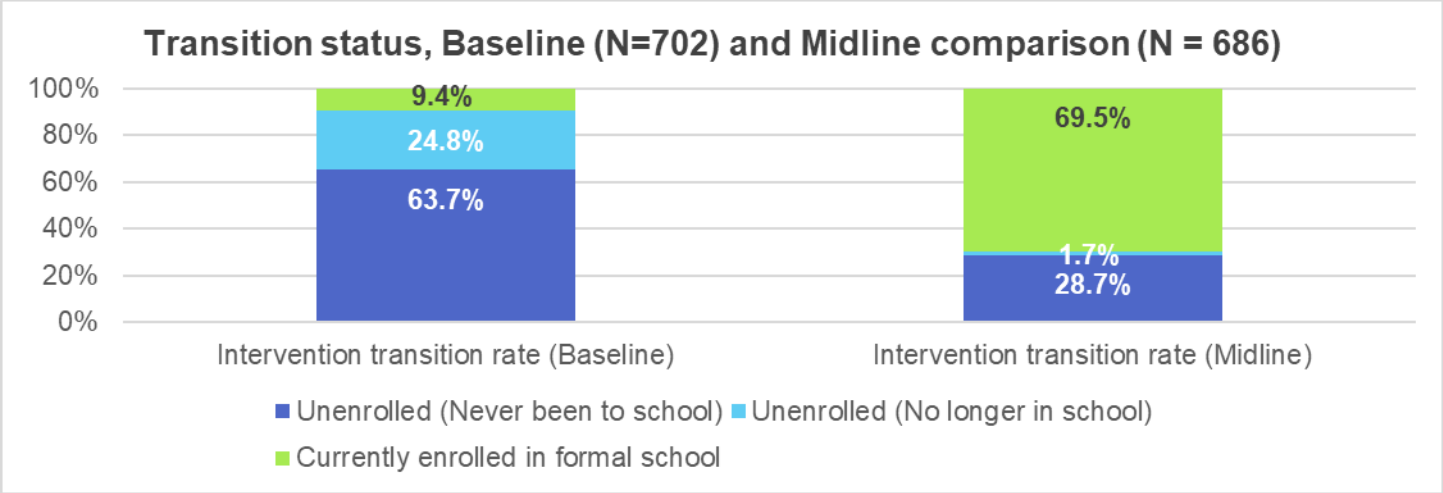


Figure 5: Transition status, Baseline and Midline comparison

9.4% at baseline (Figure 5). Thus, the 85% transition target has not been achieved at the time of the evaluation.

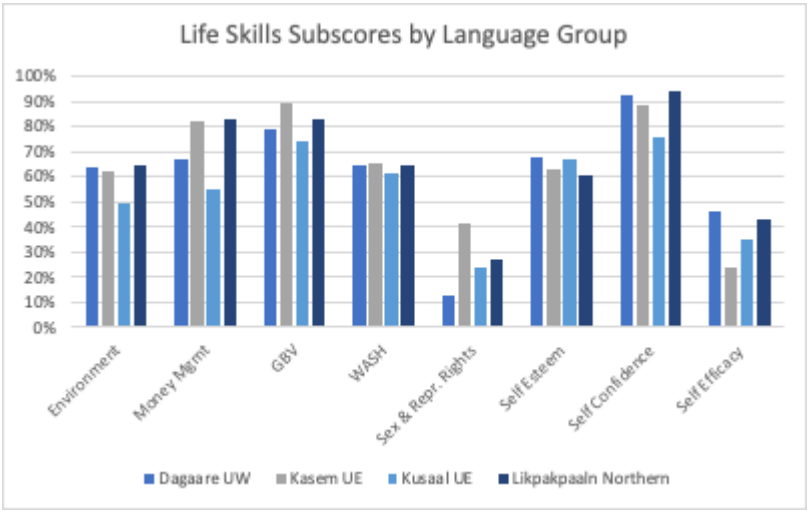


Figure 6: Life skills Sub scores by region and topic: Midline

However, when considering the absolute log frame target (5,625), this has been achieved. Further, the project indicated that COVID-19 delayed transition by the Ghana Education Service; and as of April 2021, the transition rate achieved was of 95%. According to the Midline evaluation data, at 28.7%, have still 'never been to school'. This is substantially lower than the 63.7% at baseline, but still higher than the national rates reported in the Ghana Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2017/18 (19%)[5]. It should be noted that comparison between midline and baseline is skewed (negatively) by the fact that 9.4% (66 girls) at baseline had been identified as being in school and were later replaced by out of school girls. The subgroups with the most remarkable positive results are girls that are from impoverished households and those that live one hour away from school. Slightly over half of girls with high chore burden are still not enrolled in school. Only 49% of girls in the Upper East (Kasem) are enrolled in school.

Sustainability outcome. The sustainability scores have increased since baseline at system and community levels but remained the same at school level (though signs of improvement have been observed, and some school level sustainability interventions have just begun). At **system level**, there were improvements in the use of the Inclusive Education Monitoring Tool (IEMT). As such, a score of 1.5 was given (0.5-point increase). At **community level,**

[4] Formal girls transitioned to school between January and April 2021.
[5] https://www.unicef.org/ghana/media/576/file/Ghana%20Multiple%20Cluster%20Indicator%20Survey.pdf

caregivers support of girls' education was not more prevalent, as whilst a basic level of support remains high (89.6%), active support remains low (15.5%). Local leader support increased and 60% of caregivers of girls with physical or some cognitive disabilities reported being able to access services for their children with disabilities. As such, a score of 1.33 was given (0.66-point increase). At **school level,** teachers and headteachers are showing knowledge and verbal support for inclusive, gender sensitive teaching, yet there is not enough evidence of *improved* practice or resource mobilisation. As such, a score of 1 was given (no increase).

Intermediate Outcomes (IO)

Table 2: Intermediate Outcome Targets and Progress: Formal Track

Intermediate Outcome	Baseline Actual	Midline Target	Midline Actual	End line Target
IO1.1 **Attendance**	86%	90%	86.1%	95%
IO1.2 **Support in reducing attendance barriers**	Not measured	N/A	20.5% (new reporting proposed by EE)	
IO2.1 **Effectiveness of facilitators**		75%	73.9%	85%
IO2.2 **GESI sensitive teaching**	Not measured	60%	75.9%	85% (EE proposed)
IO2.3 **Effective literacy/numeracy instruction**		60%	98.5%	N/A
IO3.1 **Girls Life Skills score**	56.0	65	60.5	75
IO3.2 **Life Skills Caregivers' assessment**	61.3%	Improvement on midline / maintenance of positive perceptions	66.2%	Improvement on midline / maintenance of positive perceptions
IO4.1 **Percentage of caregivers who feel it is equally viable to invest in a girl's education as a boy's**	88%	90% + 20% on baseline	92.2%	95% (EE recommends) +20% on midline (Log frame)
IO4.2 **Extent that religious and traditional leaders actively mobilize households to support excluded girls into education**	1	Level 2 or higher	2	3 (EE recommends)
IO4.3 **Extent that relevant district agencies participate in monitoring, supervision and coaching visits of schools**	0	1	1	2

IO1.1 Attendance. Overall, school attendance over four weeks is 86.1%, signifying that the log frame target of 90% has not been achieved. Upper West and Upper East (Kasem) have reached the target, and Northern and Upper East (Kusaal) have underachieved it. GWDs and those far from school show a 90% and 89.3% attendance rate. Girls with high chore burden and from impoverished households exhibit lower attendance rates than at baseline.

IO1.2 Support in reducing attendance barriers. Of the 23% of caregivers that received financial support, the majority said it made it more likely for the girl to be enrolled in school and to attend more regularly (90.5% and 89.2% respectively). However, in Upper East (Kasem) where 100% received some form, of financial support, the girls had the lowest increases in school attendance (compared to baseline ALP attendance) and lowest enrolment rate among regions. Only small percentages of girls received material support across all regions: 1.6% receive transport funds, a bicycle or both; 30.9% received water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) kits and/or sanitary wear;

and 60% reported having their own books, 20% share and 20% have none (Likpakpaaln). It is noted by the project that the transition was not yet completed at the time of the midline.

During COVID-19, 72.7% of caregivers reported that the girls were not able to attend ALP classes in person – which is expected given the suspension of in person classes for a few weeks. Slightly less, but still a high percentage, were affected in terms of not being able to listen to ALP classes remotely.

IO2.1 Effectiveness of facilitators. 73.9% of girls agree that their ALP facilitator was effective, just below the log frame target. Positive responses were highest in Upper East (Kasem) and Northern (Likpakpaaln). Girls in remote areas and GWDs drive up the average. Girls interviewed reported enjoying the teaching style and local language teaching.

IO2.2 GESI sensitive teaching. 75.9% of marginalised girls strongly agreed or agreed to all questions assessing the effectiveness of ALPs facilitators (higher than the overall average of 73.9%). All teachers and headteachers interviewed across all three regions said they were aware of what inclusive, gender-sensitive education is, often mentioning giving girls and boys equal levels of attention in the classroom. Ultimately, it was not consistently referenced across communities, nor the four listed log frame characteristics. As such, it was given a score of 2 ("some demonstration").

IO2.3. Effective literacy/numeracy instruction. Reporting from WEI states that close to 98.5% of facilitators demonstrated effective literacy and numeracy instruction through the use of participatory approaches in line with the STAGE protocols for the ALP classes, overachieving the log frame target. EE qualitative findings show that most girls enjoyed literacy and numeracy classes.

IO3.1 Girls Life Skills score. Despite improvement in the average Life Skills index since baseline (from 56.0 to 60.5), it did not meet the target of 65 (Table 3). Over 95% of girls score as established or proficient learners under environment, WASH and Gender Based Violence (GBV). As at baseline, girls continue to demonstrate a lack of knowledge on sexual and reproductive health (SRH), with 76% of girls unable to answer more than 40 percent of the questions correctly. GWDs and girls with a high chore burden showed a much higher increase in Life Skills compared to baseline than the overall. All unenrolled girls had lower than average increases, and in some cases a decrease of the Life Skills score. Regionally, Upper East (Kasem) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) average scores showed the largest increases (9.6 and 4.9 respectively).

Table 3: Life Skills Midline Results and Baseline Comparison – Index

Categories	Mean midline	SD	Mean baseline	Change in average score since baseline
Environment	62.3	13.8	54.0	8.3
Money Management	73.4	21	65.0	8.4
Gender Based Violence	81.2	16.9	76.5	4.7
WASH	64.4	13.9	61.9	2.5
Sexual & Reproductive Rights	23.3	24.3	18.8	4.5
Self-awareness (Agency)	58.1	13.9	57	1.1
- Self Confidence	90.7	14.5	86.0	4.7
- Self Efficacy	40.6	28.4	43.6	-3
- Self Esteem	64.4	9.1	59.9	4.5
Overall score	60.5	10.3	56.0	6.6
Source: Analytical Dataset Girls' Combined Survey (N=694)				

As part of its COVID-19 pivoting, STAGE incorporated COVID-19 preventive information in the WASH life skills component, as well as working with stakeholders to disseminate COVID-19 messaging. The great majority of girls (89%) received messages on COVID-19. For almost all girls who received messages (98.7%), these were reported as useful.

IO3.2 Life Skills Caregivers' assessment. Caregivers' perceptions of positive changes in girls' life skills since baseline are overall more prevalent (about five % points, 66.2% at midline). Caregivers' confidence in their girl child's knowledge on personal hygiene and SRH continues to be low.

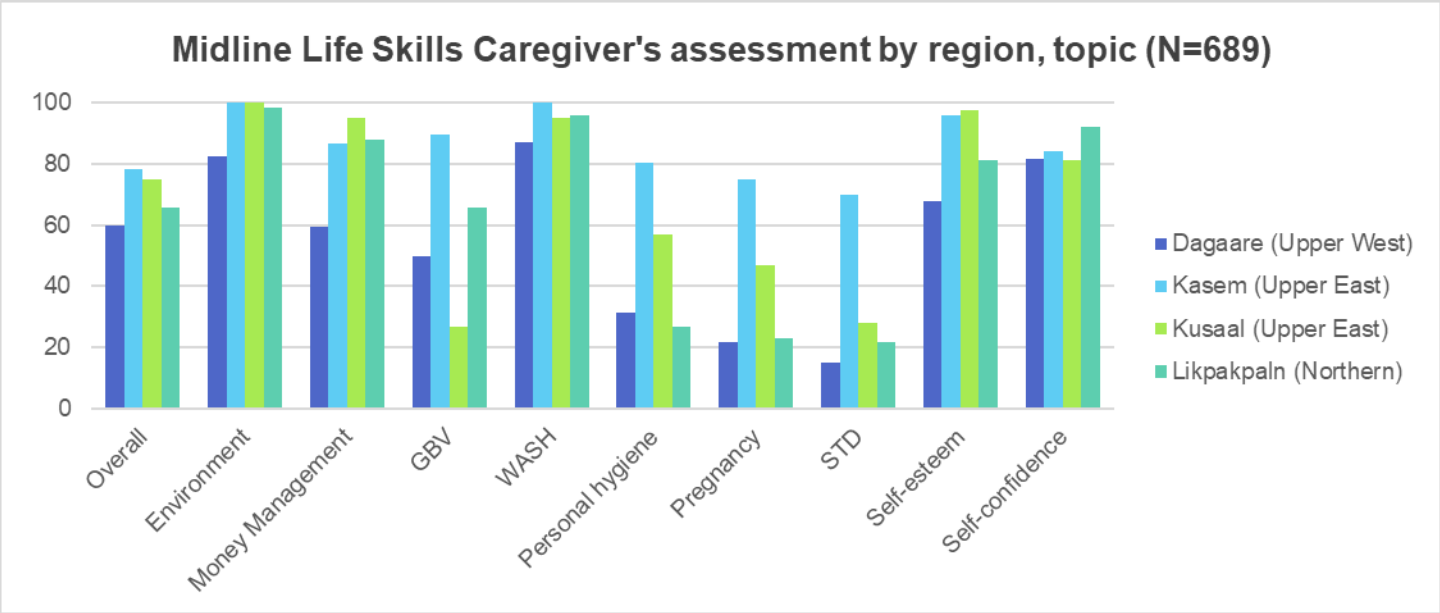


Figure 7: Percentage of Caregiver's perceiving positive changes in girls' life skills by region and topic: Midline

IO4.1 Percentage of caregivers who feel it is equally viable to invest in a girl's education as a boy's. At 92.2% the overall target for midline has been overachieved. A reduction in support for girls' education among some sub-groups and regions is observed, namely for high chore burden and impoverished girls, whereas support has increased substantially among caregivers of GWDs. Caregivers that support girls' education have increased in the Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kasem). Some caregivers interviewed attributed changes in their attitudes and behaviours to the STAGE programme. A commonly occurring opinion is that now other expectations of girls (such as marriage, children, and chores) can wait until after they have their education. Though a handful of respondents reported that within some families, there is still a preference for sending boys to school over girls.

IO4.2 Extent that religious and traditional leaders actively mobilise households to support excluded girls into education. A score of 2 is given. The majority of caregivers (55.6%) reported leaders spoke out in favour of girls' education, with 27.4% of caregivers noting this happens at least quarterly. In addition, 26.3% of caregivers reported that action was taken in support of girls enrolling or remaining in school. The qualitative data found instances of local leaders mobilising community projects or initiatives in support of girls' education (some since STAGE).

IO4.3 Extent that relevant district agencies participate in monitoring, supervision and coaching visits of schools. A score of 1 (from 0) is given. There seems to be more monitoring being reported, however the extent to which varied, with two out of three qualitative communities reporting that they have received monitoring visits.

Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI). At midline, there has been a large reduction in girls affected by the **high chore burden** (from 40.8% to 5.5% of girls). Whilst these girls still have lower absolute numeracy scores and positive transition outcomes, they have increased at a higher rate than the rest of the sample. Importantly, the proportion of the sample with a high chore burden has reduced significantly since baseline. This could be because STAGE activities targeting social norms have meant that chores are no longer interfering as much with the school day. STAGE should continue these activities to ensure this change is sustainable. However, girls who **are married and mothers** are most affected by all barriers. Notably, the social norms barrier is still prevalent among this subgroup at midline, indicating that for these subgroups, social norm barriers are more persistent than others at preventing enrolment. It could be that despite all the STAGE activities, it is just not feasible for some girls that are married or mothers to give up work or household responsibilities to the extent that would allow for schooling. Challenges therefore remain for STAGE addressing their needs, and they are at risk of not achieving positive transition outcomes, and more broadly progressing in school and onto decent employment.

Girls from **impoverished** households also exhibit lower attendance rates than baseline. Encouragingly, the prevalence of impoverished girls has reduced since baseline, and those that are still impoverished have also shown higher than average improvements on learning outcomes. It would seem the STAGE activities have been able to address the needs of this subgroup. The unmet **disability** needs barriers have increased among GWDs, which is also the group with the lowest increase in transition. However, GWDs have shown a 90% school attendance rate. GWDs also presented the highest improvements in learning outcomes (though still lower than the overall literacy and numeracy scores), and a higher improvement in life skills than the overall average. Whilst GWDs may face barriers around social norms by those who do not believe education is realistic or worthwhile for those with a disability, it would appear that the STAGE activities have contributed to the progress made by GWDs, despite the fact that, for some, their disability needs remain unmet.

Safeguarding Risks. The quantitative data identified 19 unenrolled girls that dropped out of their previous school because of mistreatment by a teacher, which increased from ten identified at baseline. This evidence of community protection issues was reported to WEI, in line with programme policies. Lastly, whilst the midline data collection did not identify any girls in modern slavery, it was noted at baseline that the STAGE project community mapping data did identify some girls in modern slavery. In addition, the qualitative data did find some girls engage in hazardous child labour (Galamsey, or illegal mining). The project will need to provide specific support to these specific groups of girls initially identified in their community mapping and enrolment exercise.

Recommendations & Lessons Learned. Within the main report, the EE has provided a section on lessons learned based on the evaluation findings on implementation, and the validity of the project ToC. Some recommendations that the STAGE team could consider to further improve the project's relevance are presented below (Table 4).

Table 4 - EE Recommendations by topic area

Area	Recommendation
Learning	● Learning outcome results achieved should be capitalised on. Work with schools to ensure gaps across regions, subtasks and subgroups are addressed. ● Share lessons with schools on effective teaching overall, and remote teaching in COVID-19 context. ● Learning outcomes remain highly variable between region/language groups. Adjustments should be customised to the groups with lower overall learning or lower levels of improvement.
Transition	● Consider the intersection of barriers, regions and subgroups identified which has meant an underachievement in the transition target, and potentially help unenrolled girls into schools. ● Continue to advocate for facilities and equipment to ensure all transitioned schools are adequately equipped with basic classroom furniture and school infrastructure (such as desks, chairs and teachers). Action might be limited to advocating for facilities and equipment to be provided, where this is the responsibility of the Government of Ghana. ● Regularly monitor whether the interventions still sufficiently address the economic barriers. ● Ensure prompt delivery of transition packs and implementation of bicycle banks. ● Consider providing girls with books and reading materials, for those with no or partial access. ● Assess whether schools are requiring girls to use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and look at how those might be provided, and if not, what barrier this might present. ● Ensure leveraging of existing school feeding programmes to provide support to extremely impoverished households, both after transition and as an incentive to unenrolled girls. ● Reconsider the implementation and targeting of financial assistance support given the regional disparities and very low distribution in regions most affected by impoverishment.
Sustainability	● Monitor whether the transition packs given to girls are sufficient enough to ensure the sustainability of the intervention; consider sustainable alternatives, such as tying to existing national support. ● Ensure linking of girls in need to National Health Insurance. ● Focus on how to increase active support levels among caregivers, which are still quite low. ● Consider how the limited involvement of relevant district agencies in monitoring responsibilities could affect the Formal track intervention and its sustainability, and how to get better

	engagement.
Gender	● Continue sensitisation at community, school and household levels towards relieving girls of their high chore burden (including boys and husbands), given positive results achieved so far. ● Consider targeting married girls, mothers and their caregivers and/or dependents in the work around changing social norms, and what could be done to help the enrolment of these girls. ● Consider that a specific challenge in transitioning to school for girls with high chore burden or work relates to the timing of school, providing less flexibility than the ALPs. ● Strengthen the SRH module in Life Skills and continue sensitising boys, and caregivers and communities to address the issue 'pregnancy inevitability'. ● Ensure that the environment module in Life Skills does not risk being used to reproduce existing housework norms, that could serve to maintain or add to girls' chore burden.
Disability	● Ensure provision of assistive devices and referral for specialised care including health insurance enrolment for GWDs. ● Consider how to address the travel burden for GWDs when they go to schools that are more distant. ● Sensitise teachers how to make teaching inclusive for GWDs (if visited again), given their knowledge of inclusive, gender sensitive education focuses on gender. ● Continue to include effective support to girls who have anxiety and depression. ● Continue to monitor closely progress of GWDs to ensure they are receiving appropriate support to assist with their continued transition, and learning outcomes in schools.
Safeguarding	● Strengthen safeguarding messages, as almost a third of girls are not sure how to report harassment and abuse. ● Monitor any safeguarding issues that may arise due to girls going back to school given their experiences of mistreatment by teachers. ● Consider how girls who report being in hazardous child labour or modern slavery will be safeguarded throughout the project intervention.
General Delivery	● Consider more monitoring of Downstream Partners (DSPs) and the standardisation of delivery, given substantial regional disparities in implementation (detailed under Lessons Learned).

The EE believes the evaluation questions remain relevant but recommends some changes for project's M&E system around: collecting beneficiary feedback; monitoring DSPs; and implementing an M&E system that allows regular tracking of attendance and the school learning environment. The EE also proposes changes to some indicators to be more relevant for the End line, which will be expanded on later in this report. The recommendations finish by providing some specific recommendations to the EE for the next round of data collection.

1. Background to project

1.1 Project context

Ghana made notable efforts towards achieving Education for All (EFA,) in the post-Jomtien period of the 1990s and by 2000. However, despite initial increases in rates of enrolment, significant expansion in terms of access nationally did not necessarily translate into equality or equity of opportunity (Akyeampong et al, 2012). In the early 2000s, Ghana passed clear policy guidelines through the 2002 – 2015 National Action Plan on Education for All that sought to decrease girls' dropout rates in primary and junior high school (JHS) and while this led to increases in primary enrolment, challenges in transition and retention of JHS girls persist and from 2014-2016 national transition rates from primary to JHS declined. In 2017 the Government pledged to make secondary education free thus removing a significant barrier to students staying in school.

In addition to financial challenges, extensive literature (UNICEF 1993; Mfum-Mensah, 2003; Farrell & Hartwell, 2009; Mfum-Mensah & Ridenour, 2014) highlights that rigid formalised school systems based on fixed timetables and a loaded curriculum that greatly depends on trained teachers often do not perform as well in rural environments with respect to providing basic literacy, numeracy and other skills that are relevant to the local environment. Traditional schools operate on insufficient budgets and little funding is allocated to vocational training and apprenticeship programs.

There is a correlation between the regions with the highest incidence of poverty and lowest levels of education and the regions with the least Government of Ghana per pupil expenditure in education (World Bank, 2010). Out-of-school children, especially girls, have few options to re-enter school or find viable options to generate income.

UNESCO studies found the gender gap in educational attainment increases at Junior High School (JHS). Ghana's Education Sector Performance Report (2016) indicated that gender parity (GPI) was achieved at the primary and JHS levels nationally (0.97 in 2015/16), but in deprived districts, the GPI is 0.93 (2015/16) and 0.79-0.9 or below in Northern, Ashanti, Greater Accra, and Upper West regions. Girls in these targeted areas are not finding their way and have barriers to entering school.

Evidence strongly suggests that the factors contributing to educational exclusion are multifaceted and intersectional and children suffering multiple disadvantages are considered most at risk. The barriers affecting education are interrelated throughout community, school, and system levels impacting all children, disproportionately girls. Addressing these multiple barriers will engender an enabling environment for girls' education and change the perception at the individual, community, and institutional levels.

Programme Design

The Strategic Approaches to Girls' Education (STAGE) project, implemented by World Education, Inc. (WEI), addresses barriers to education through two tracks (a Formal school track and a non-Formal track focused on vocation skills and employment). It is designed to provide a holistic approach that tackles barriers at individual, community, school, and system levels, and supports girls in accessing education and fair employment.

STAGE specifically targets communities in eight regions of Ghana[6] with high levels of extreme poverty, in combination with existence of deep-seated traditional and social norms that act as a barrier to girls' education. STAGE targets girls in these areas that are highly vulnerable and systematically marginalised due to factors such as early marriage, pregnancies, disabilities, and high chore burden. Additionally, with poverty being such a key issue, STAGE will work to reduce financial barriers, to ensure that girls become better educated and are put on pathways that break the cycle of poverty.

The project builds on learning from the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and USAID funded Complementary Basic Education (CBE) Programme that was set up to provide children between eight and 14 years old with basic literacy and numeracy skills, targeting children in remote and deprived areas that would normally be unable to attend school. The programme aimed to equip children with knowledge and skills comparable to those learnt in the first three years of formal school, and on completion of the accelerated learning children were able to transition into local primary schools.

[6] Originally targeting seven regions but updated following the creation of six new regions after the 2018 referendum.

The Formal track of STAGE will provide girls with nine months of accelerated learning (ALP) on literacy and numeracy together with Life skills training. The girls will then be supported to transition to Formal school via support to caregivers, training to teachers and community wide gender and awareness raising on the importance of girl's education.

COVID-19

The context in which STAGE is being implemented has changed significantly since the baseline as Ghana has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting measures imposed to control its spread. As of 27th April 2021, 92,253 confirmed cases of COVID-19 resulting in 777 deaths had been reported to WHO[7].

Ghana recorded its first COVID-19 cases on 12th March 2020 but prior to this the government had already put control measures in place[8]. Measures have included enhanced hygiene protocols, restricted movement within country, a ban on all public gatherings, including conferences, funerals, festivals, and religious activities and authorisation for schools to shut down[9].

The COVID-19 vaccination campaign began on 1st March 2021, starting with 600,000 doses of the CoviShield vaccine received through the COVAX facility (WHO, CEPI, GAVI, UNICEF). The vaccine rollout initially focused on the three most affected regions: Greater Accra, Ashanti and Central and prioritised health care workers and frontline workers, adults over 60 years of age and persons with known underlying comorbidities[10]. On 21st March the rollout was extended to target health care workers in all regions. As of 27th April 2021, a total of 842,521 vaccine does had been administered[11].

Impact on Education

"COVID-19 has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents" and "exacerbating pre-existing education disparities by reducing the opportunities for many of the most vulnerable children"[12].

Schools in Ghana first closed in March 2020 and remained closed for 10 months. UNHCR estimates that 9.2 million schools' students and 0.5 million tertiary education students were impacted at the peak of the pandemic by the closure of learning institutions and the interruption of literacy and lifelong learning programmes in Ghana[13].

The Ghana Education Services (GES) sought to mitigate the disruption to education provision through digital learning with lessons available online and transmitted via radio and television, developing a COVID-19 Coordinated Education Response Plan for Ghana in April 2020. GES opened a website[14] and in partnership with the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation expanded their digital learning offer, developing a further 700 lessons in English, Mathematics, Social Studies and Integrated Science.

The Government implemented a staggered re-opening of education institutions; students in classes with exams returned in October 2020, most new and continuing pre-tertiary students in January 2021 and in March 2021, first-year Senior High School (SHS) students[15]. The Government launched a Back-to-School Campaign in January 2021, to encourage learners and especially girls to return to school safely[16] and the GES issued guidelines that mandated measures including the wearing of masks, temperature checks[17] and regular hand washing with soap to enable schools to open safely.

[7] https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/gh
[8] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7641588/
[9] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7641588/
[10] https://reliefweb.int/report/ghana/unicef-ghana-covid-19-situation-report-no16-1-31-march-2021
[11] https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/gh
[12] The United Nations. "Education during COVID-19 and beyond"
[13] https://www.unhcr.org/gh/2021/01/25/un-ghana-joint-statement-in-commemoration-of-2021-international-day-of-education/
[14] https://www.peacefmonline.com/pages/local/education/202004/405898.php
[15] https://reliefweb.int/report/ghana/unicef-ghana-covid-19-situation-report-no16-1-31-march-2021
[16] https://www.unhcr.org/gh/2021/01/25/un-ghana-joint-statement-in-commemoration-of-2021-international-day-of-education/
[17] Temperature checks and mandatory wearing of masks. - (https://www.africanews.com/2021/01/19/schools-in-ghana-reopen-as-covid-19-cases-surge//

COVID-19 Impact On STAGE

During the ten-month period from March 2020 the STAGE Formal track programme activities were unable to continue as originally planned and the work plan has been adapted in response to COVID-19 and resulting measures. WEI identified the risks to programme and programme participants, along with mitigations in the STAGE Response Plan. This plan and the revised work plan are found in Annex 19 and 20 respectively.

1.2 Target beneficiary groups

STAGE direct beneficiaries for the **Formal Track are** ten-14-year-old Out of School Girls (OOSG) living in the Northern, North-East Region, Upper East and Upper West regions of Ghana. The identified districts have high levels of poverty and large numbers of girls who have not been in school before. Many of the girls have dropped out of school; some may have benefited from accelerated literacy programmes but unsuccessfully transitioned. There are about 9,400 girls with disabilities (GWD) living in these regions[18]. Girls in these regions also lack physical access to schools. On average, 10% of girls aged 15-19 in the four northern regions have started childbearing and 39% of girls are married before the age of 18. There is only one Formal cohort which will undergo the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) delivered by STAGE. To date, 8,245 Formal girls have been reached through the programme (see under Sampling).

On average, girls are starting at Grade 0-1 learning levels for literacy and numeracy., The main programme learning outcome is for girls to achieve Grade 4 learning levels by the end of the three-year programme. Success in the second key outcome (transition) is that girls enrol back into school and progress through the grades (see Table 6).

Table 5 - Proposed Intervention Pathway - Formal Track

Which girls follow this pathway?	How many girls follow this pathway for cohort 1?	How long will the intervention last?	How many cohorts are there?	What literacy and numeracy levels are the girls starting at?	What does success look like for learning?[19]	What does success look like for transition?
Girls aged 10-14	8,245	3 years	1 cohort	Grade 0-1 for literacy and numeracy	Girls achieve Grade 4 for literacy and numeracy	Girls enrol back into school; and progress grades

Indirect beneficiaries include: Boys; ALP Facilitators; Community members. Please see Annex 8 for a detailed breakdown of beneficiaries.

1.3 Theory of change

This section presents the original project Theory of Change (TOC) as taken from the STAGE project MEL Framework and highlights key changes in the TOC assumptions and activities compared to baseline – most of which are in response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic[20]. The project has confirmed there have been no

[18] WEI reported that the 2010 Population Census indicates that there are 737,437 (6%) PWD in Ghana. The female PWD population is 387,647 (52.6%). Girls between the ages of 10-14 and 15-19 years constitute 5.8% and 6.5% respectively of the total female PWD in Ghana. This figure translates into about 46,517 girls with disabilities who are within the ages of 14-19 years. This age bracket is the main benchmark for both Non-Formal and Formal track STAGE beneficiary selection in all project communities. The 9,200 girls with disabilities for the 7 STAGE regions out of the total 16 regions was extrapolated from the national female PWD population and used at the time of the proposal in 2014. Source: the 2010 Housing and Population Census, Ghana Statistical Service (2012).

[19] The evaluation was designed around the 0.2SD measure for improved learning outcomes. This has the advantage of focusing primarily on overall improvement, rather than meeting a minimum benchmark. Particularly in the case of the Non-Formal Track, literacy and numeracy requirements of operating one's own business will vary highly based on the sector that the beneficiary is working in and should be part of girls' individualized plans, rather than set project-wide. This is compounded by the fact that comparisons across languages cannot be made because of how literacy acquisition varies by language, and therefore common minimum thresholds cannot be set across all languages. Only measures of improvement where girls are being compared to their past improvement are appropriate. See EGRA Toolkit, p.10 "How EGRA Should Not Be Used."

[20] The Evaluator has reviewed STAGE COVID-19 Plan and Mid Term Review Plan dating July 2020.

changes to the log frame, notwithstanding the change in the operating context; and no changes to the original TOC diagram (see Annex 2 for TOC diagram).

IF highly marginalised adolescent girls who have dropped out or have never been to school are provided with tailored and inclusive learning, and life skills, **AND IF** this is combined with family and individual level financial education and resource support, community wide behavioural change interventions, and institutional support mechanisms, **THEN** the girls will be able to successfully pursue educational and vocational pathways or use their acquired skills and set themselves on a path to self or paid employment.

The overall goal of STAGE is to improve life chances of marginalised girls by lowering the barriers they face in achieving a decent education. The girls in STAGE all have lives full of potential and promise but need significant support and guidance to enable them to overcome the barriers that hold them back. To achieve this overall impact, STAGE will work towards three key outcomes – *Learning, Transition and Sustainability* (see Boxes 1-3 below for more detail on the outcomes). While these are three separate outcomes, they are also causally linked to each other. Girls with improved ***learning*** outcomes will be able to *transition* into formal and non-formal education or careers and will work with communities to create *sustainable* change by empowering women be change agents and creating an encouraging environment by working with community institutions and power structures.

Box 1: Key outcome - Learning

1. Learning will be measured by the number of marginalised girls with improved learning outcomes. To achieve these outcomes, girls will need to a) regularly attend learning sessions, b) have access to well-equipped facilitators and educators who provide inclusive learning opportunities and c) be able to acquire the critical life and non-cognitive skills needed for success. These intermediate outcomes will collectively increase participation, self-esteem, and support for gender equity as girls will learn to speak their voice, engage more with their peers, and achieve better learning outcomes.

***Key changes*.** National school closures related to COVID-19 impacted also the 8,245 STAGE learners. Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) activities were suspended in all the 426 communities in 18 districts in eight regions until June 2020. Key interventions and drivers of the program like the ALPs, animation sessions, home visits to check on the girls, training for safeguarding, peer education, the Behavioural Change Campaign (BCC) and vocational training were suspended. WEI and the Downstream Partners (DSPs) had to adapt delivery of the ALPs and gender inclusive education to the new context. Teaching and learning were conducted through radio and community information systems. Facilitators and Community-based Oversight Committees (CoCs) with support of the town criers alerted learners on the broadcast day and time and encouraged them to tune in as well as follow the lessons with their reading and exercise books. Parents were informed about this strategy and encouraged to support the learning process. WEI also aimed at procuring radios for DSPs to distribute in households with learners not currently possessing radios (established through a baseline assessment). In addition to distance learning, community facilitators also provided learning in reduced classes (convening girls in smaller classes; 5 girls out of 25, then increased to 15) whilst observing social distancing, starting in June 2020. This allowed the resumption of almost all ALPs as of July 2020. The program also organised catch up classes between August and September to ensure that most of the content areas were covered. For Formal girls who were supposed to transition in school starting in September 2020, STAGE collaborated with the school-based teachers to organize extra hours of catch-up classes for girls during the first three months.

Revised assumptions. The temporary closure of ALPs and the repivoting to distance learning risk impacting on achievement of learning outcomes and intermediate outcomes in terms of:

- Access, if face to face sessions in ALP centres are not restored in respect of social distancing measures when restrictions are lifted.
- Access to distance learning, if there is a lack of communication/promotion about it, and necessary facilities /infrastructure (e.g., radios) and coordination are not in place to enable and encourage engagement
- Quality of teaching, if STAGE facilitators are not properly trained[21] to promote and deliver remote learning; and if the programme does not make up for the delays in delivering the teaching and learning plans accumulated during the peak of the emergency.

[21] All facilitators were to benefit from a 2-day refresher either virtually or in person, to upgrade their knowledge, skills and attitudes to ensure continuous and effective learning at the ALPs in Gender sensitive and inclusive pedagogies, classroom management practices,

- Particularly adverse impacts on vulnerable groups, such as needs of girls with a disability (GWDs), due to the effects of COVID-19 restrictions on the delivery of teaching and learning plans; as well as impacts related to increased risks of violence, sexual violence, and teen pregnancy for young girls.

Box 2: Key outcome - Transition

2. Transition will be measured by the number of Formal track marginalised girls who have been able to move into formal education. The key intermediate outcome enabling this transition is the increased community and district support for inclusive girls' education. Due to the specific characteristics and needs of these girls, local ecosystems (made up of stakeholders such as schools, local businesses, vocational training centres, etc.) that are well sensitised and prepared to accommodate the target population must be advocated for and developed. To support girls' chosen paths, livelihood activities that increase family resilience, bicycle banks to ensure girls can access schools, transition support kits to meet learning material needs and networks of guidance and support will be implemented. Beneficiary girls will improve learning outcomes through the community-based ALP platform where literacy and numeracy as well as life skills are taught.

Key changes. As mentioned above, STAGE organised catch up classes for Formal girls to help them transition to school and cover the whole content of the ALPs. The WASH component of the Life skills curriculum was strengthened to include COVID-19 preventive information, as well as the Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights (SRHR) and Nutrition components. The content of the new curriculum in formal school was introduced between September and November to ensure that the girls are gradually brought to the level of their peers in class and facilitated to remain in school[22]. Support for girls' education at community level / and sensitisation, provision of essential school items, bicycles, extra teaching and learning materials and transition kits continued as initially envisaged by the programme. Also, as originally planned, GES assisted in the transition and placement of girls to the appropriate classes in formal school. This included special support for GWDs, who, based on the severity of the disability, were placed either in regular schools in their communities or in special schools that are equipped to provide the necessary psychosocial support needed[23]. Formal track girls transitioned to school between January and April 2021.

Revised assumptions. Transition might be negatively impacted if:

- Support for girls' education at community level and sensitisation are not able to help overcome the range of identified barriers to enrolment in formal school, especially for marginalised subgroups.
- Transition support material, including bicycles and transition kits are not delivered as planned.
- Collaboration with GES is not effective.
- The evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic represents a too large barrier for girls' transition (through a range of adverse economic, social and health impacts on girls and their families).

Box 3: Key outcome - Sustainability

3. Sustainability will be measured by demonstrating that the changes brought about by the programme go beyond the initial targets. Strong and active partnerships and engagement with government, communities, schools, and other key stakeholders involved in girls' and inclusive education will continue reaching the most highly marginalised girls. STAGE will leverage existing programs, organisational and community structures and policies to educate, enhance, advocate and demand accountability from all actors. A holistic approach will be taken to achieve project sustainability. This will be pursued through training, teaching and learning material (TLM) in inclusive education and disability interventions at school level (linking existing testing to inclusive education and training), Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) transformational interventions like life skills at community level, and safeguarding awareness and interventions. STAGE is working with GES at the regional and district levels to identify teachers and school managers to be trained on gender sensitive and inclusive pedagogy, GES Basic

continuous administration of ASER and organisation of remedial lessons etc. They would also receive continuous coaching from the DSPs Supervisors (from STAGE MTR Plan, July 2020).

[22] Class teachers would later be engaged to support learners for at least thirty to forty-five minutes twice a week each to make learners catch-up with their peers in formal school while Field Supervisors of DSPs and community facilitators would support learners once a week in their respective communities (from STAGE MTR Plan, July 2020).

[23] Conditional to parents' approval, expected to be only a few.

Education curriculum content in both local language and oral English, effective classroom management, development of local specific TLMs as well as school-based coaching. Existing GES tools, such as the Inclusive Education and Monitoring Tool are adapted to focus on marginalised girls. GES staff is involved in community mapping and animation as well. By building the capacity of GES in developing and using these tools, STAGE ensures that interventions can continue after project support ceases.

Key changes. WEI's strategy involves establishing strong relationships with a range of stakeholders to support dissemination of COVID-19 messaging from official and reputable sources to the STAGE communities and beneficiaries, whilst tackling the spreading of misinformation which could have increased stigma and fear among community members. WEI and DSPs partnered with Ghana Health Service, GES, the District Assemblies, National Commission of Civic Education, Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, the Non-Formal Education Unit, the Local Radio Stations and Traditional Authorities in the implementation of COVID-19 activities. Positive messaging was encouraged through the interactive radio instruction, targeted support by the Community Oversight Committee (CoC), peer educators through home visits and active monitoring by the DSP Safeguarding focal points and WEI staff. In addition to the dissemination of messages discussed above, STAGE worked with the DSPs to procure supplies and train community members, set up areas for tippy taps and Veronica buckets, and promote hand washing in all communities.

It is hoped that this action would help reduce some of the GESI-differentiated impacts of social distancing, and other restrictions to key economic, livelihoods and social activities. GESI-related risks for women, girls and marginalised communities and families such as those targeted by STAGE include: limited access to medical services for beneficiaries with specific medical conditions; loss of livelihoods for many families and women / girls engaged in livelihood activities particularly affected by suspension of gatherings (e.g. market vending and service provision during gatherings such as funerals, weddings, church services); increased gender based violence at home; increased levels of anxiety and depression.

STAGE also planned to intensify community sensitisation interventions[24] directed to ensuring support for continuous education, both direct (field staff to engage and sensitize parents and caregivers) and indirect (building the capacity of girls to sensitise their immediate family members).

Revised assumptions Sustainability might be negatively impacted if:

- Support for girls' education at community level and sensitisation are not able to reduce dropout rate and safeguarding/GESI/COVID-related issues, especially for marginalised sub-groups.
- Coordination with MOE, GES, GHS at all levels is not effective; capacity of government/community actors to ensure STAGE girls' continued education past the programme end is not built; there are insufficient incentives/resources to ensure continued government/community action in support of girls' continued education past the programme end.

2. Evaluation approach and methodology

2.1 Evaluation purpose(s) and evaluation questions

The purpose of the midline evaluation is to assess progress of the STAGE project's key log frame indicators for the Formal track only (at Outcome and Intermediate Outcome level), together with assessing the relevance and plausibility of the STAGE TOC. Table 6 details the evaluation questions of the STAGE programme. There have been no changes since baseline in this aspect.

[24] Community sensitisation is meant to i) address dropout rates through a range of avenues (community and home visits by Field Supervisors, CoC and Facilitators as well as senior officers of STAGE both at WEI and DSPs level on information regarding progress of STAGE project in their communities, complemented by radio programmes highlighting importance of education, and materials distributed to communities as part of the BCC); ii) engage and sensitize parents and caregivers on gender, disability, WASH child protection and safeguarding issues to help contribute to safer communities for children and respect for the rights of girls, and to enable parents/ caregivers to appreciate issues concerning gender as they take up the responsibilities of facilitating a change in gender roles).

Table 6 - Evaluation questions and data sources/ analysis required to answer question

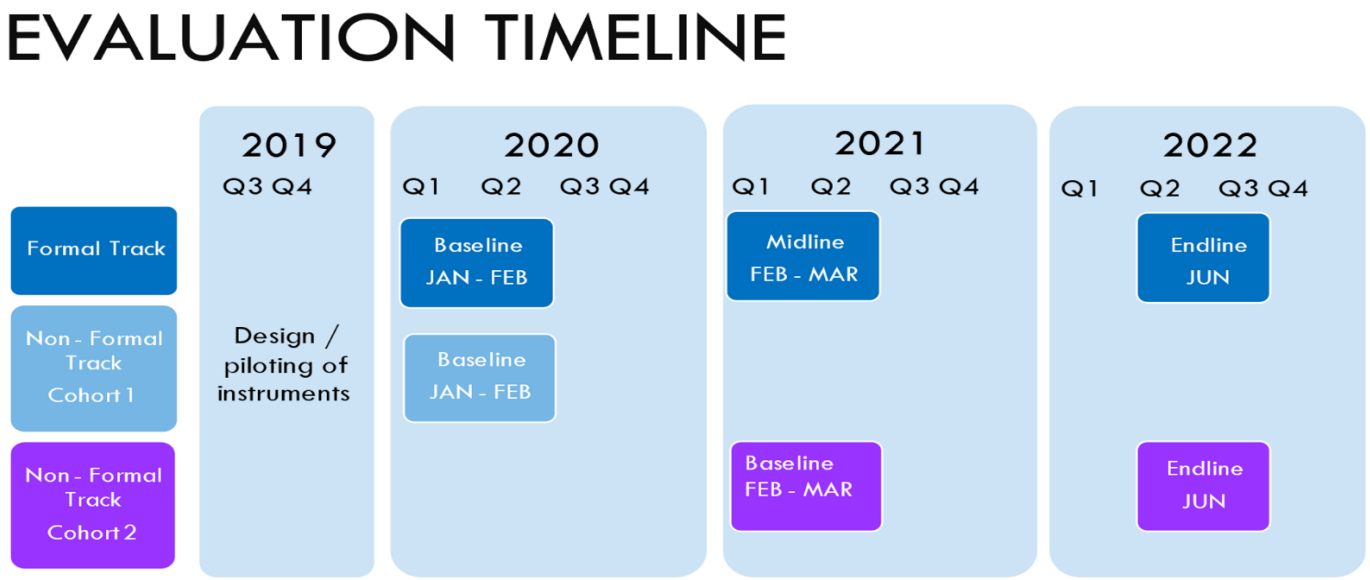
Evaluation question	Qual data/analysis required to answer question	Quant data/analysis required to answer question
1. What impact did the STAGE project have on the transition of highly marginalised girls into education/learning/training or work opportunities?	Qualitative data will identify any unintended impacts on girls.	Quantitative analysis of data from surveys of a representative sample of girls on their transition status and learning proficiency. Project beneficiaries transition status and learning proficiency assessed at baseline and end line (and midline for Formal Track). This will allow identification of change in learning and transition status (in school, increased grade, in decent employment) Findings to be disaggregated by respondent characteristics (including household and region), including a marginalisation category where possible.
2. What works to facilitate transition of highly marginalised girls into education/training/employment and to increase learning?	Qualitative data will explore girls, caregivers, teachers, and other relevant stakeholders' understanding of what works for transitions.	Quantitative data produced to answer EQ1 will be analysed to look at associations between transition/learning outcomes and project activities/intermediate outcomes (attendance, quality of teaching, Life Skills, support given to family)
3 How sustainable were the STAGE activities funded by the GEC and was the programme successful in leveraging additional interest, investment, and policy change?	Qualitative Data collected at community, school, and system level to understand more about the changes in key stakeholders' attitudes and behaviours and changes in relevant agencies, budget, and actions.	Quantitative Data collected at community, school, and system level to understand quantitative changes in key stakeholders' attitudes and behaviours and changes in relevant agencies, budget, and actions.
4. How successfully STAGE reduce barriers to full participation in education or vocational education for highly marginalised girls?	Qualitative data from girls, caregivers and other relevant stakeholders will seek to understand how the project reduced the barriers identified during project development. The barriers include cultural beliefs on marginalised girls' roles, household poverty, beliefs on disability, inaccessible schools and teaching methods, teacher attitudes, and district level awareness and actions.	Quantitative analysis of the different outcomes achieved by girls with different marginalisation status.
5. What are the most cost effective and impactful activities implemented through the STAGE intervention which have helped girls to transition to schools and employment opportunities?	N/A	Analysis of results of EQ1 Impact, EQ2 What works, and EQ3 Sustainability against the costs of different activities. Possible calculations: ● Cost per girl enrolled in

		ALP/vocational training • Cost per girl completing STAGE ALP/vocational training • Cost per girl improving in Learning (SD 0.2) • Cost per girl achieving appropriate of transition (see definitions below)

2.2 Overall evaluation design

The evaluation design is a mixed methods quasi-experimental evaluation as per methodology agreed in the MEL Framework. Since STAGE targets marginalised girls with special attention to those with disabilities, it is not feasible to design a randomised control trial (RCT) where some girls will be randomly assigned to the intervention and other girls will be left out of this. The quasi-experimental design, however, allows various comparative analyses. Progress at midline is considered in two ways: (1) comparing the cohorts' average scores at baseline and midline; and (2) comparing midline scores with a comparison group composed of benchmark and baseline scores, weighted to ensure comparability (discussed below and in Annex 10). Quantitative data will be used to identify relationships between variables and assess the effect of some explanatory variables on the outcomes of interest. For example, marginalisation characteristics of the target group as well as characteristics of the environment (learning space, perceived level of community support for girls' education). Qualitative data will be used to assess harder to quantify issues and build a deeper understanding of 'how and why' and 'under what circumstances' change has or has not occurred. To understand the proposed design, a visual model below shows tracking of both beneficiary cohorts (Formal and Non-Formal) over the course of the programme.

In principle, the data collection and timelines are aligned with the programme work plan and the Ghana school term dates. In the second year, for instance, the ALPs for the Formal track were planned from December 2019 to July 2020 to enable girls to transition to school in time for the new academic year that begins in September 2020. Accordingly, the baseline was collected January/February 2020. However, the evaluation timeline has changed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting changes to programme implementation. As girls have transitioned to school in January 2021, the midline has taken place between February and March 2021. The end line coincides with the end of the school term in June 2022[25].



[2] **Figure 8: Evaluation timeline for STAGE (Formal and Non-Formal Tracks)**

Given the split implementation model of the STAGE project the design will be using a different evaluation approach for each track to best measure the impact of the interventions in the eight regions where STAGE is working. With a single cohort of beneficiaries going through an ALP and transition into formal schooling, a longitudinal design will be used over the course of the project. This will track the levels of girls' key outcome variables (Learning, Transition, Life skills, attendance) together with those of their caregivers and other stakeholders (teachers, community leaders) and compare the midline and end line levels with the baseline scores[26] *(*see Figure 8, top row, blue boxes). **Baseline** – January 2020; **Midline** – February/March 2021; **End line** – June 2022.

In our quantitative analysis (to answer Evaluation Question EQ 1, and EQ 2), as per the LNGB guidance, the Formal girls' 'natural' cognitive progression is assessed by comparing Formal track girls' midline and end line results with the baseline results of girls who are older but otherwise similar to the Formal track girls[27]. This is completed through a benchmark sample composed of girls not in the program, supplemented by baseline surveys of girls in the Formal and Non-Formal track program. Probability weights were then assigned to the comparison sample to match the linguistic, regional, and age composition of the midline sample.

Due to the number of beneficiary communities (total of 678), multiple intervention tracks, and separate cohorts, the evaluation design will include a representative sample of communities. STAGE monitoring will be regularly collecting data from all project communities and assessing all project beneficiaries, but for the sake of the EE the sampling will select a stratified representative sample of communities. The monitoring system provides data for the EE as they attempt to disaggregate the different elements of the intervention and how they are impacting variance within the results. Monitoring data is also needed to report against some of the intermediate outcome indicators in the STAGE log frame.

Evaluating the link between Intermediate Outcomes (IO) and Outcomes

At end line for both cohorts, and midline for the Formal cohort, the status of intermediate outcomes will be measured. Associations between the samples' quantitative transition/learning outcomes and project activities/intermediate outcomes (attendance, quality of teaching, Life Skills, support given to family) will be calculated. This quantitative assessment will be complemented by qualitative analysis which will use key informant interviews and focus groups to better understand the link between IO and Outcomes.

Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI)

To understand GESI the evaluation will disaggregate both Learning and Transition Outcomes, together with **Life Skills Outcomes by girl's age, disability and key project identified characteristics**. The revised midline survey questionnaire has also introduced some questions on the girls' experience of gender sensitive teaching practices. Complementing this will be specific questions within the qualitative data collection to explore the experiences and potential barriers for girls with different marginalisation characteristics.

2.3 Evaluation methodology

Data Collection Tools

The evaluation quantitative tools included: two learning assessments (Early Grade Reading Assessment and the Early Grade Mathematics Assessment); Household questionnaire comprising sections for (1) the head of household; (2) the primary caregiver; (3) the beneficiary girl, including the Life Skills tool; (3) a school attendance form to register attendance in formal school. The qualitative tools included: Key Informant Interview (KII) tools for all stakeholders[28], and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) tool for beneficiaries. During baseline, three versions of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and three versions of the Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) were designed, piloted, and assessed to ensure comparability. The tools underwent a review at midline, agreed with WEI and the Fund Manager. The EGRA & EGMA tools, as with the other tools, were in the language of the

[26] A comparison group for the Formal track was not seen as possible due to costs in collecting this additional data, and the practical and ethical difficulty in identifying a suitable comparison group who would not receive any intervention over the 3 years of the programme.
[27] For example, for midline comparison, a girl who is aged 8 at the November 2019 Formal baseline will be 8 years 11 months at the Sep/October midline, and 10 ½ years old at end line. Therefore, her 'natural' progression can be estimated by comparing her outcome scores at midline with the baseline scores of a similar out of school girl aged 8 years 11 months (from either formal or non-formal tracks), and end line natural progression through comparison with a similar out of school girl aged 10 ½ at baseline.
[28] Girls, Boys, Caregivers, Teachers, Headteachers, Local Leaders (Traditional and Religious), and Local Authority Members.

respondent. They include Dagaare, Kasem, Kusaal, and Likpakpaaln. See Annex 13 for further details on tools and changes. See Annex 15 for a detailed description of the EGRA, EGMA and Life Skills questionnaire approved methodology and administration.

In addition to primary data collection, the evaluation has in a few cases referred to monitoring data/reporting from STAGE programme: STAGE Annual Report, STAGE COVID-19 plan and Mid Term review all dated June - July 2020. Where this is the case, it has been specified in the report. Additionally, in revising the primary data collection tools for midline the evaluation has reviewed STAGE Community Monitoring (COME) tool and STAGE COVID-19 Rapid Assessment Evaluation Questionnaire for Beneficiary Girls & Households.

Data collection and analysis

Enumerators and training. The EE's data collection partner, JEAVCO/PAB engaged 20 enumerators for the STAGE Formal and Non-Formal Cohort 1 baseline data collection. All 20 had previously worked with JEAVCO/PAB on assignments similar to STAGE. In selecting enumerators, extra consideration was given to those with qualitative data collection experience. For the Formal Midline, 24 enumerators were engaged, of which 21 worked on the STAGE baseline data collection in 2020. Prior to engaging enumerators for the STAGE assignment, the data collection partner undertook pre- appointment checks including interviews, identification and qualification checks, reference checks and police checks

Of the 24 enumerators, seven were female and 17 were male. Of the 24 enumerators undertaken quantitative data collection, ten were also chosen to collect qualitative data. Of those eight of those chosen to also collect qualitative data participated in the STAGE baseline qualitative data collection which gave them prior experience on qualitative data collection. The other data collectors selected were paired up with those with more experience to undertake the qualitative data for the STAGE Formal Midline.

Building on the training provided for the pilot and baseline, all data collectors participated in a three-day training programme. The training programme was revised and strengthened in response to data collection challenges experienced at baseline and included an introduction to the STAGE project and Evaluation Design, Data Collection tools and protocols, Quality Assurance processes, COVID-19 protocols and Safeguarding and Ethics. Additionally, simulation exercises were included for data collectors to practice administering each of the tools.

Safeguarding training covered subjects including safeguarding definitions, ethical guidelines, respondents with disabilities, accommodations for respondents with disabilities, do no harm principles, anti-slavery and human trafficking, bribery and corruption and reporting concerns. Enumerators provided programme and whistleblowing details to caregivers in the data collection stage.

The training was delivered by the JEAVCO/PAB leads, with remote support from the IMC Worldwide Evaluation team, as in-person support was limited by COVID-19 travel restrictions). In lieu of attending in person, IMC Worldwide team recorded video presentations for training sessions and joined remotely to answer questions. WEI also contributed to training through input into training content and a member of a DSP attended the pilot training to offer input on key areas.

The training on quantitative data collection tools involved the following:

- Learning Assessments:
    - Introduction to Learning Tests (EGMA and EGRA)
    - Explanation of the types of questions and how to administer them using the survey software.
    - Enumerator practice session
    - Feedback from training team on accuracy of enumerators' recording of practice questions.
    - Piloting new questions on quantitative instruments
- Quantitative Household Survey:
    - Introduction to Household Survey and modules
    - Explanation of the types of questions and how to administer them using the survey software.

The training on qualitative data collection tools involved the following:

- Purpose of qualitative data collection;
- Good practice in qualitative data collection;

- Introduction to each tool;
- Enumerator practice session.
- Use of cohort lists for identifying girls in sample, and procedures for selecting alternates

Data Quality Assurance. Processes were reviewed and strengthened following baseline data collection.

While in the field, data collectors reported any inconsistencies with the sample and tools via their assigned coordinator to the JEAVCO/PAB headquarters team. The team, including IMC Worldwide, also used a mobile platform, WhatsApp, to communicate daily and raise concerns. By raising minor concerns and responses via a shared platform, the team was able to respond to immediate concerns while also sharing knowledge with all data collectors, who may be in a similar situation or may face it later.

Quantitative data collected was submitted to the JEAVCO/PAB I.T Department on a daily basis. On receipt, the data was checked for completion, relevance (response recorded as expected) and clarifications were sought from any data collectors, as needed. Supervisors checked progress daily, specifically, the required number of persons interviewed, and a sample of the data entered. Where the database administrator had queries on specific data points they communicated with supervisors, who then worked with enumerators to identify if there was an error and, where appropriate, submit corrections.

Additionally, the uploaded data was downloaded by the lead Quantitative specialist several times per week to identify any systemic issues with the data. This role proved important in identifying enumerator teams who were not completing all Life Skills sections and had to return to recollect the data from several communities. It also helped to identify which teams were and were not promptly submitting data onto the secure servers.

Qualitative data collected was transcribed by enumerators and audited by groups of enumerators with the requisite language skills before submission to JEAVCO/PAB headquarters. Data Collectors were requested to share their first transcription with Field Coordinators and EE within a few days of it being collected. This ensured that quality could be monitored and allowed the EE could provide timely feedback and guidance to data collectors, as needed. Subsequent transcripts were audited by enumerators and quality assured by the JEAVCO/PAB headquarters team before being submitted to IMC Worldwide for analysis. Clarifications were sought directly from enumerators, as needed.

Data collection. The data was collected through three sources: (1) the learning assessments using Tangerine software, (2) the survey and life skills data through a Survey Solutions tool; (3) registering school attendance through the Survey Solutions tool in a sub-sample of selected schools.

Quantitative data collection for both Learning Tests and Household Survey took place between 15th February – 4th March 2021. Qualitative data was collected during the same time, due to the need to reduce data collection time/costs in communities, but using different data collection teams. The enumerators were assigned areas based on their language skills. All qualitative data collection transcriptions were completed by 12 March 2021.

Data cleaning and storage. Once enumerators entered data into their tablets, data was uploaded to secure servers when the tablet could access a mobile cellular network. Learning data, which was collected using the software Tangerine, were stored separately from household surveys, which were collected using Survey Solutions. The enumerator teams and the Lead Quantitative specialist undertook an iterative process of cross-checking and cleaning. Once data collection was completed, final datasets were securely downloaded and stored as encrypted files on a password-protected hard drive. Both the household survey and the learning assessments were standardised and encoded. For each beneficiary in the sample, the household survey and the learning data were matched together using their unique identification numbers. Analytical files were de-identified and names and confidential information were stored separately. In addition, the survey data were matched to the original beneficiary lists used to populate the sample to ensure fidelity. When identification numbers did not match, enumerators and the data collection team were contacted for corrections.

Qualitative data was recorded using the audio record function of data collectors' phones. The data collectors worked in pairs, one recording the interview and the other administering the questions. Notes were taken where appropriate by the data collector administering the questionnaire. The data collectors then transcribed and translated the data within word documents. Enumerators audited transcriptions which were then quality assured by JEAVCO/PAB headquarters team before submission to the EE.

Data analysis. All statistical analysis was completed using the software package Stata/IC 16. Several sets of variables have specific calculation criteria described in the LNGB documentation, including how the Washington Group questions are used to create a binary definition of disability for each disability domain, and how learning assessments are to be calculated (especially treatment of correct words per minute). All requirements were followed per the LNGB Guidelines. Key results, including EGRA overall and subtask scores, EGMA overall and subtask scores, and Life Skills overall and subtask scores are reported as the average percentage correct. The only exception to this are the EGRA Oral Reading Fluency scores, which are reported as the average correct words per minute, with over 100 correct words per minute rounded down to 100.

Qualitative transcripts were coded by the EE using Excel. Codes were based on EQs and logframe Indicators, this allowed data to be sorted and findings identified in a way to complement the quantitative data. The EE found most of the transcripts to be of good quality, with sufficiently detailed responses. The incidence of transcripts with short responses of insufficient detail was significantly reduced compared to baseline data collection.

Adaptations for GWDs. To reduce barriers related to disabilities, only large-print materials were used for the assessments. In addition, enumerators were given instruction to repeat (and reword on repetition) instructions as necessary and as often as needed to ensure clarity. Breaks were offered to respondents at multiple points during the interviews. To minimize burden on test-takers, skip logic was used such that students who could not complete the simpler version of a subtask were not asked to complete a more complex version.

Sampling

Quantitative Sample selection

The same sampling strategy was developed for the evaluation of both the Non-Formal and Formal tracks of the project. As agreed with the Fund Manager, sample sizes of 640 were chosen for both the Formal and Non-Formal tracks. See Annex 16 for further details on sampling.

Community Sampling: The evaluation uses a clustered sampling approach, where a representative group of communities were selected randomly at baseline. Communities were selected based on their language-region pairing. For the Formal track there are eight languages spoken in the target communities. It was agreed to focus the evaluation on four of these languages. The languages were purposefully chosen to cover the maximum proportion of the project population and cover as many of the project's regions as feasible. Note, there is an overlap in languages between the Formal and Non-Formal tracks. This meant that in total six languages were used across both samples. Choosing the languages with a larger proportion of the project population ensured a larger sample from each subgroup, which increases statistical power of each subgroup, and simplifies the design and analysis of the reading scores to fewer languages.

Beneficiaries who speak languages not in the sampling design and records with no region and language information) were excluded from baseline sample selection. In addition, communities with 15 or fewer beneficiaries were excluded to ensure it would be possible to collect data from eight or more beneficiaries. Randomised community selection was stratified by region-language pairing according to the Table 8 below.

Alternate communities were selected randomly within each language-region pairing if for any reason one of the selected communities cannot be part of the sample. They were ordered on the list to ensure that they are not chosen out of convenience. When required, alternate communities were used as substitutes after discussing with partners at baseline. The same communities were visited at baseline and midline.

The proportions of the sample communities differ only slightly from the beneficiary makeup due to rounding.

Student Selection: At baseline, within each sample community, eight beneficiaries were randomly selected. While eight beneficiaries from each community were identified as the intended sample, an additional eight girls were randomly selected and added to an alternate list. If a beneficiary was unavailable or refused to take part in the baseline evaluation, an alternate beneficiary will be selected, in the order that they are listed on the alternate list. At midline, the sample was constructed from the lists of girls who participated at the baseline. The midline formal track sample comprises 90.7 % girls interviewed at baseline. In cases where girls could not be found or refused to participate, alternates were selected from pre-populated, randomized lists of alternates in the same community.

Quantitative Sample sizes

Table 7 - Quantitative sample sizes: Formal Track

Tool name	Sample size agreed in MEL framework	Actual sample size	Remarks on why anticipated and actual sample sizes are different
Formal Track EGRA/EGMA test and Household Survey	640	705	Oversampling of Formal sample communities. Data collection team collected additional data from some Formal sample communities as replacement communities.

At midline, the baseline actual sample of 705 Formal girls was revised to consider the non-responses and the girls from the alternate sample that had replaced girls in the main sample. Overall, 606 girls from baseline were successfully interviewed (or 86% of the baseline sample), equalling a 14% attrition rate. The midline sample sizes by region and language are as follows (Table 8):

Table 8 - Quantitative sample sizes by region and language: Midline

Language	Region	Beneficiaries		Designed Sample Midline		Actual Sample		Difference	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	% point
Sample									
Dagaare	Upper West	2041	43%	271	38.4%	263	37.9%	-8	-0.5
Kasem	Upper East	580	12%	88	12.5%	95	13.7%	+7	+1.2
Kusal	Upper East	738	15%	79	11.2%	78	11.2%	-1	0
Likpakpaaln	Northern	1409	30%	263	37.3%	254	36.6%	-9	-0.7
Other	Upper East			4	0.6%	4	0.6%	0	0
Out of Sample									
Dagbani	Northern	1357							
Gurune	Upper East	907							
Mampruli	Northern	1213							
All		**8,245**	**100%**	**705**	**100%**				

Representativeness of the sample

In the original sampling plan agreed upon at the evaluation inception phase, a sample of 640 observations would come from each STAGE Track. During baseline collection, it was noted that there was a deficit of observations among Non-Formal Likpakpaaln speakers in Oti region. Collectors returned to obtain more observations, but mistakenly collected additional Formal observations in Northern region, leading to a discrepancy in the proportion between the two groups. At Midline, the same language-region pairing makeup was sought as at baseline, to continue to follow the same cohort and ensure comparability of findings.

As discussed above, the **Formal** sample was designed as a subset of all the language-region pairings included in the project. The Formal sample was designed to be proportionally representative of those four language-region groups. For three of those language groups, the initial design was closely followed numerically. However, an additional set of 71 observations was collected for the Likpakpaaln group in Northern region. While these observations slightly skew the sample to overrepresent this group, inclusion of these observations adds greater detail and statistical power. This causes the sample proportions to vary from the original baseline design however

they do ensure comparability between evaluation points and the actual number of observations exceeding the original plan. A breakdown of the sample by age and region is shown in Table 9.

It should be noted that all results reported in this report refer to Midline, unless otherwise specified. This is important especially when looking at results disaggregated by disability, marginalisation characteristics and barriers, since the girls composing each subgroup have changed across evaluation points due to attrition.

Table 9 - Sample breakdown by age and region: Midline

Age	Overall	Dagaare (Upper West)	Kasem (Upper East)	Kusaal (Upper East)	Likpakpaaln (Northern)
Age 8 to 11	25.9%	33.8%	14.6%	30.4%	20.8%
Age 12 to 15	67.9%	62.7%	83.3%	69.6%	66.7%
Age 16 to 19	6.2%	3.4%	2.1%	0.0%	12.2%

As the breakdown of the beneficiary lists only included names, communities, and language, and not age makeup, it means that the age makeup of the sample cannot be compared to the age makeup of the overall beneficiaries. This is a limitation in knowing the representativeness of the sample in terms of age. At baseline, the average girls' age in the Formal sample is 11.6 years; at midline, as it would be expected, the average age is about one year older at 12.7 years old. Overall, 6.2% of beneficiaries are above age 15; 67.9% are between age 12 and 15; and 25.9% are age 11 or younger (Table 9 above). Regionally, the Upper East (Kasem language) has the highest percentage of girls in the 12 to 15 age range, and a lower percentage of younger girls (eight to 11) than the other regions. The age range is in line with what is expected for the Formal track population.

Table 10 - Sample breakdown by disability: Baseline and Midline

Domain of difficulty	Sample proportion of Formal intervention group (%) – Baseline	Sample proportion of Formal intervention group (%) - Midline
Seeing	0.1%	0.4%
Hearing	0.1%	0.0%
Walking	0.3%	0.3%
Self-care	0.3%	0.15%
Communication	0.4%	0.3%
Learning	0.4%	0.15%
Remembering	0.4%	0.15%
Concentrating	0.3%	0.0%
Accepting Change	1.0%	0.6%
Controlling Behaviour	1.1%	0.7%
Making Friends	0.3%	1.2%
Anxiety	9.4%	1.3%
Depression	3.7%	0.6%
One disability domain (A)	**9.4%**	**2.3%**
Multiple disability domains (B)	**3.6%**	**1.5%**
Girls with disabilities overall (A+B)	**13.0%**	**3.8%**
Source: Analytical Dataset, Caregiver survey N =	701	689

Table 11 - Sample Breakdown of Disability by region: Baseline (BL) and Midline (ML)

Characteristic	N		Dagaare (Upper West)		Kasem (Upper East)		Kusaal (Upper East)		Likpakpaaln (Northern)	
	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML
Has a disability (any)	701	689	13.3%	3.4%	9.9%	7.3%	3.8%	6.3%	16.5%	2.0%

Caregivers were asked the Washington Group questions about their child's ability to complete common everyday tasks and activities, such as walking 100 metres, communicate their needs or making friends, in order to determine their level of disability in a given domain. Beneficiaries could qualify as having a disability in one or more domains. The questionnaire enquired disability severity (some difficulty in performing a task, a lot of difficulty or not being able to do a task at all). If a beneficiary had a great deal of difficulty or could not do something at all, they met the qualification of having a disability for the purposes of this evaluation and hence have been counted as having a disability in that domain in Table 10 above. For questions about anxiety or depression, reports of daily feelings of strong anxiousness or sadness qualified a girl as having a mental health disability[29]. Prevalence of disability is calculated the percent of the sample that has one or more disability: those with multiple disabilities are not double counted. Annex 16 reports the breakdown of disability by level of severity.

At baseline, of the 701 observations with disability data, only 15 (2.1%)[30] had reported having a disability other than anxiety or depression. At midline, there is little change in the prevalence of physical disability (a slight increase from 0.1% to 0.4% in seeing), and no prevalence of hearing disability. However, a substantial decrease is observed in mental health disability reported: anxiety and depression went from 9.4% to 1.3% and from 3.7% to 0.6% respectively over the period, equal to nine and four girls. All girls reporting depression are also reported by Caregivers to have anxiety. Regionally, disability prevalence substantially decreased in Upper West (Dagaare) and Northern (Likpakpaaln), whilst it increased in Upper East (Kusaal) from baseline, as shown in Table 11.

According to the 2010 Census, which did not include anxiety or depression as categories of disability, 3%of Ghanaians have a disability[31]. This disparity may be due to (1) exclusion during beneficiary selection, (2) failure to remove barriers for those with disability to participate in the programme, (3) households opting to not include children in the programme for reasons of bias or belief that barriers could be removed; or (4) sample bias, in which those with disabilities could not be found for the sample.

It appears that the decline in disability rates at midline is largely due to a reduction in severity of symptoms, and not attrition from the project. To assess whether girls with disabilities at baseline had left the project, girls who participated in both the baseline and midline were matched. Among beneficiaries who participated in both the baseline and midline, 12.8% reported having a disability at baseline, suggesting those who identified as having a disability at baseline did not drop out at higher rates. Interestingly, only 0.8% of girls identified as having a disability at both baseline and midline; 12.0% of the matched sample identified as having a disability at baseline but not midline; and 2.7% of the matched sample did not qualify as having a disability at baseline but do at midline. Some of this is likely driven by the fact that such a high proportion of the baseline disability sample was comprised of girls with anxiety or depression, which, while no less valid than other disabilities, can be treated or changed by a person's financial and lived situation more easily than other forms of disability.

When looking at the breakdown of disability by severity at midline, higher percentages of girls fell in the milder disability category (having 'some' difficulty in performing a task). This was noted particularly in the Socio-Cognitive difficulty domains, with small variations compared to baseline: Remembering (10.48%); Learning (10.3%); Communication – being understood by people outside the household (8.7%); Controlling Behaviour (8.6%); Accepting Change (7.0%). further, 2.9% reported having some difficulty seeing and 3.6% some difficulty hearing.

[29] Depression and anxiety were defined as "feeling very sad or depressed" or "feeling very anxious, nervous, or worried" daily.
[30] Of which two reported having difficulties walking, one hearing and another seeing.
[31] Available at : https://www.disabilitydataportal.com/explore-by-country/country/Ghana [accessed 6th April 2021].

Table 12 - Sample Breakdown by frequency of Anxiety and Depression, Midline (ML) and Baseline (BL)

			Daily	Weekly	Monthly	A few times a Year	Never	N
23	How often does the beneficiary seem very anxious, nervous or worried?	**ML**	1.3%	2.6%	10.0%	58.9%	27.1%	689
		BL	9.4%	10.3%	3.1%	40.7%	36.5%	701
24	How often does the beneficiary seem very sad or depressed?	**ML**	0.6%	1.6%	9.3%	59.9%	28.6%	689
		BL	3.7%	11.1%	4.9%	46.8%	33.5%	701

As mentioned, daily anxiety and depression[32][33] are not as prevalent among beneficiaries than it was at baseline (Table 12), though the breakdown by frequency of anxiety and depression shows that there has been an increase of girls who are reported as experiencing anxiety and depression a few times a year or monthly and a decrease in those who are said to never experience these feelings.

It is important to note the differences in who qualifies as having a disability at baseline and midline. Only four respondents that met the criteria of having a disability at baseline meet the (unchanged) criteria at midline. Seventeen respondents who did meet the Washington Group criteria of having a disability at baseline do not meet those at midline. While a person's disability status may change over time, it is unusual that more respondents' disability status has changed since baseline than stayed the same. Even if most of respondents with disabilities meet the criteria through anxiety and depression, which certainly change over time more than many other disabilities, these results merit considering using a different set of disability criteria at future evaluation points, or to reconsider our assumptions about disability.

Qualitative sample selection and sample sizes

At baseline, the qualitative sample included five formal communities to gather a range of communities and DSPs (four in the Northern region covering Afrikids and LCD, and one in Upper West, covering Pronet). However, at baseline, the qualitative data collectors struggled to get around the full beneficiary sample. To prevent this from happening again, the EE, WEI and the FM agreed to: reduce the size of the qualitative tools; reduce the number of communities; and reduce the beneficiary sample size per group.

It was jointly agreed that three communities – a total of one in each of the sampled regions – would be sufficient coverage for the purposes of the qualitative data collection. To select these communities the EE firstly tried to ensure these covered a range of regions, DSPs and languages. The communities were then purposively sampled to ensure that there were: (1) enough girls in the community to ensure no overlaps with the girls being surveyed through the quantitative data (20-25 girls per community was deemed an appropriate number); and (2) enough girls from marginalised backgrounds were selected (by looking at those communities less able to meet basic needs at baseline). From this, the EE was able to select three proposed communities, with two alternate communities in each region. The proposed communities were visited with no problems and are outlined in Table 13.

Table 13 - Communities sampled for qualitative data for Formal Track Midline

Region	District	Community	Partner	Language
Northern	Yunyoo	Piabunu	Afrikids	Likpakpaaln
Upper West	Nadowli	Naribuo	Pronet	Dagaare
Upper East	Bawku West	Agaago	LCD	Kusal

Unlike at baseline, the respondents in these communities were not randomly chosen. This was because in each of these communities, quantitative data was also being collected and the EE was cautious not to overburden the same girls with both sets of data collection tools. To avoid this, the EE chose its proposed girls and alternates from the

[32] Depression and anxiety were defined as "feeling very sad or depressed" or "feeling very anxious, nervous, or worried" daily.
[33] As noted at baseline, while mental health treatment, protective factors, and coping strategies may be helpful in removing the barriers to helping those with mental health challenges, improvement in their economic and material situation may also be critical factors in the reduction of its actual prevalence.

end of the quantitative alternates list, whilst attempting to capture a good proportion of girls from within marginalised sub-groups (i.e., married, mothers, and disabled), where possible. The caregivers of the girls sampled, were also interviewed. Other respondents included: boys of a similar age randomly selected based on guidance from DSPs, teachers and headteachers from project schools, local leaders chosen based on which communities visited and, similarly, the relevant local authority member that works on girls' education / vocational training was chosen.

The EE are pleased to report that the change in sampling approach worked successfully in the field and meant the full range of beneficiaries were interviewed as planned, as detailed in Table 14.

Table 14 - Qualitative data sample sizes for Formal Track Midline

Beneficiary Group	Midline Sample Size	Reduction of respondents since Baseline	Reasoning Given	Sample Achieved
KII Girls	12 girls (4 girls per 3 communities)	8 girls	Reduction to allow more attention paid to each girl, but still allow some breadth.	100%
FGD Girls	3 FGDs (1 in each of 3 communities). Each FGD should aim for 5 girls	2 FGDs	Reduction mirrors the reduction in communities.	100% (15 girls total)
KII Caregivers	9 caregivers (3 per 3 communities)	6 Caregivers	Reduction necessary as only 50% of sample reached at baseline.	100%
KII Boys	9 boys (3 in each of 3 communities)	6 Boys	Reduction to allow more time with each boy. At end line, look at making this an FGD.	100%
KII Headteachers	3 head teachers (1 in each of 3 communities)	2 Heads	Reduction mirrors the new community sample.	100%
KII Teachers	3-6 teachers, (1-2 in each of 3 communities)	9-12 Teachers	Reduction due to learning there are only 1 or 2 teachers per community usually.	100% (5 teachers total)
KII Local Leaders	6 (1 religious leader and 1 traditional leader from each of the 3 communities)	4-9 Local Leaders	Reduction mirrors the new community sample.	100%
KII Local Authority	3 (1 in each of the 3 communities)	2 Local Authority	Reduction mirrors the new community sample.	100%

2.4 Evaluation ethics

The evaluation ethical approach is grounded in principles based on FCDO's ethics guidance and principles, WEI's policies and procedures and local laws for the states we operate in. A core principle is prioritising the best interest of the child and doing no harm.

Recruitment and Selection

The EE's partner data collection firm in Ghana (JEAVCO/PAB) have experience of working with children, including those with experience of high risk, vulnerable and/or marginalised girls. JEAVCO/PAB have conducted pre-appointment checks, including interviews, identification and qualification checks, reference checks and police checks for each of the 24 enumerators engaged for the STAGE Formal Midline data collection.

Training and Data collection

In the training for the pilot, baseline and midline data collection enumerators received training on ethics and child protection. This training was informed by FCDO's ethics guidance and principles, WEI's policies and procedures and local laws for the states we operate in. Specific content of training included the priority of Safeguarding and a child's

wellbeing being paramount, the importance of gaining consent (of girls and adults), how to ask for consent, how to ensure the consent is informed in relation to questions asked and use of information, respecting respondents' right to decline/stop interviews, respectful behaviour during data collection (non-judgemental tone and body language), not taking photos, keeping data confidential, password protecting data collection devices, avoidance of raising expectations, what a Safeguarding issue is and how to report a Safeguarding issue. In addition, training included how data collection processes should be adapted in line with social distancing and other COVID-19 control measures.

All the tools were developed to ensure that questions are framed sensitively and are appropriate to the age, gender, and ability of respondents to minimise distress to children or other vulnerable adults.

No **ethical issues** were reported in relation to the enumerators during the Midline data collection.

The quantitative data identified an increase in the number of caregivers in the Formal track reporting that girls are unenrolled because of mistreatment by a teacher (one of the barriers related to school). Specifically, reporting of being mistreated by teachers at school went from ten girls at baseline, to 19 girls at midline. This could refer to events that took place previous to STAGE, but also at school or at the ALPs[34]. Whilst we do not condone this behaviour, we understand that corporal punishment is still a common practice in Ghana as explained in the background Section 3, despite being banned in recent years. The STAGE project seeks to return girls to schools, therefore, there is a risk that by returning girls to schools they will be mistreated by teachers or come into contact with the same teachers that mistreated them.

To mitigate this safeguarding concern, this finding was shared with the STAGE project so that they are aware of the increased risk and they will monitor closely any safeguarding issues not only for this sample of girls but for the overall intervention. See Section 2.5 for an assessment of the project's activities in relation to child protection and teacher's discipline methods.

Additionally, whilst the baseline data collection did not collect information on modern slavery, it was noted that the STAGE project community mapping data did identify some girls in modern slavery. In the Formal track, 9.5% of girls identified as being in modern slavery. In addition, the qualitative data at midline found reports of girls working in "Galamsey" (illegal mining) which is classified as hazardous child labour. It would also be helpful to understand how STAGE is safeguarding the girls that responded to these questions.

2.5 Challenges in midline data collection and limitations of the evaluation design

There were fewer challenges in this round of data collection than at baseline. It was established that the field coordinator would report any local issue to the DSP. In case the issue was not resolved locally, the general field coordinator and the JEAVCO national office would intervene.

The timing of the interviews of the caregivers was a considerable challenge. The caregivers usually returned from their places of work late in the evenings which posed a challenge to data enumeration as a result of the safeguarding protocols established. In consultation with the DSP, WEI Ghana and IMC Worldwide the decision was granted that interviews could continue beyond the stipulated time to complete an interview provided it was at the convenience of the caregiver.

Some of the girls had moved and could not be traced easily. The alternatives were used to replace those girls that changed their locations.

There were no particular challenges relating to reluctance to answer questions, though some of the girls had to overcome an initial shyness for some questions. The challenge of the length of the questionnaire was resolved by arranging interviews at the respondents' convenience, though it is noted that the length of the caregivers' questionnaire should be reviewed at end line to minimise burden on respondents coming back from a day of farming work.

There were no ethical or safeguarding issues (apart from the timing of caregivers' interviews) reported during the data collection. As at baseline, this was made possible by the fact that all the girls were assembled either at a

[34] As evidence of this latter risk, 3.5% (24 girls) either disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement "I feel safe with my facilitators/teachers."

community centre or in a school classroom and they were interviewed in turn while others waited for their turn. This is the standard process WEI has established at the community level to ensure that no issues arise between visitors or staff and the girls. However, security protection issues were recorded and aforementioned incidences of corporal punishment were reported. It is not clear whether these events took place previous to STAGE, or at school, or at the ALPs and we suggest amending questions at end line so this can be reported and analysed on more clearly.

In terms of evaluation design, there were challenges in using the benchmark scores to estimate the impact of the programme on learning outcomes. Hence, a Difference in Difference (DiD) methodology based on comparing a baseline and midline sample for treatment and benchmark girls has not been applied, as it would have not assured comparability across the two groups. Rather, a regression analysis has been run to generate predictions of what a group of girls (of the same age, regional, and linguistic makeup in the same year and track as the midline sample) would have achieved without a programme, based on a large database of scores capturing benchmark girls, and Formal and Non-formal scores for both 2020 and 2021. This represents an improvement on the original methodology envisaged. A detailed description of the methodology is available at Annex 12.

The qualitative midline sample only collected data from three communities: one in each sampled region, which is a limitation on how representative these findings are.

2.6 Cohort tracking and next evaluation point

The next and final evaluation point in the Formal track evaluation is the end line (June 2022). The same girls in the midline sample will be tracked with the assistance of the DSP who will track all girls participating in the project.

3. Findings

The following sections report key findings from the evaluation. Section 3.1 examines the prevalence of key marginalisation characteristics and barriers to education among the STAGE girls surveyed at midline, as well as the intersection between such characteristics and the barriers experienced. This section ends with a review of the appropriateness of the STAGE activities to the identified characteristics and barriers of beneficiaries. Section 3.2 analyses each of the STAGE three outcomes (learning, transition and sustainability), comparing midline results with baseline data, both quantitative and qualitative. Section 3.3 presents key findings at the STAGE intermediate outcome levels. Section 3.4 outlines the results of the test of key intermediate outcome indicators against learning and transition outcomes. This is a helpful way to quantitatively test the validity of the TOC impact pathways between intermediate outcome and outcome levels.

Unless otherwise specified, findings refer to data collected at midline. All results are disaggregated by disability, marginalisation characteristics and barriers as appropriate, and where possible[35]. It should be noted that some of the girls composing each subgroup have changed across evaluation points due to attrition (14%). When information provided comes from monitoring data or STAGE programme/WEI, this is specified. Any mention of “school” refers to formal education/school where the Formal track girls aim to transition to. Learning centres where STAGE Accelerated Learning Programmes were delivered are referenced as STAGE or ALP Learning Centre.

3.1 Key characteristic subgroups and barriers of midline sample

Educational marginalisation

Table 15 - Characteristic Subgroups - Formal Track: Baseline and Midline

Characteristic	Proportion of sample with this characteristic – Baseline	Proportion of sample with this characteristic – Midline
Is a mother	1.6%	1.0%
Married under 15	0.9%	1.0%

[35] To ensure individual respondents cannot be identified through the report, no reporting is done on subgroups comprised of fewer than 10 respondents; we are unable to provide more detailed subgroup reporting while respecting confidentiality.

Married	0.9%	1.0%
Lives with neither parent	3.4%	3.3%
1+ hours to primary school	13.6%	14.5%
HH unable to meet basic needs[36]	35.6%	24.2%
Currently employed	8%	4.3%
Employed and under 15	7.7%	3.6%
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)	40.8%	5.5%
Has a disability	13.0%	3.8%
Source: Analytical Dataset Caregiver Survey N =	705	689

At midline, the most reported form of educational marginalisation for girls under the Formal Track (Table 15) is still being impoverished (households unable to meet basic needs) at 24.2% of the overall sample, decreased by almost 5% compared to baseline, but remains the highest factor. The most notable change between midline and baseline results is the substantial decrease in the prevalence of girls reporting being affected by a high chore burden, from 40.8% of the total sample at baseline to 5.5% at midline. One possible reason for this shift might be that beneficiaries who participate in the programme have to give up time doing work for their household. Only a small percentage of girls are mothers or are married under 15. This is expected given the younger average age of these girls.

Table 16 - Characteristic Subgroups by Region - Formal Track: Baseline and Midline

Characteristic	Dagaare (Upper West)		Kasem (Upper East)		Kusaal (Upper East)		Likpakpaaln (Northern)	
	BN	ML	BN	ML	BN	ML	BN	ML
Mother	1.1%	1.5%	3.3%	2.1%	1.3%	0%	1.5%	0.4%
Married under 15	0.7%	0.8%	0%	0%	0%	2.5%	1.5%	1.2%
Married	0.7%	0.8%	0%	0%	0%	2.5%	1.5%	1.2%
Lives with neither parent	7.7%	5.7%	2.2%	6.3%	1.3%	6.3%	0%	6.3%
1+ hours to primary school	10.0%	17.5%	26.4%	28.1%	12.7%	28.1%	13.1%	28.1%
Impoverished	28%	24.0%	17%	12.5%	76%	12.5%	37%	12.5%
Currently employed	17.4%	0.4%	7.7%	10.4%	1.3%	10.4%	0.4%	10.4%
Employed and under 15	17%	0.4%	6.6%	8.3%	1.3%	8.3%	0.4%	8.3%
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)	29.7%	4.3%	43.7%	10.6%	11.4%	10.6%	60.5%	10.6%
Has a disability	13.3%	3.4%	9.9%	7.3%	3.8%	6.3%	16.5%	2.0%
Source: Analytical Dataset Caregiver Survey N =	271	263	91	96	80	79	263	250

In terms of regional trends (Table 16), the overall reduction in the incidence of impoverishment is driven by shifts in the regions/language combinations which were most affected at baseline: reporting of impoverishment has decreased from 76% to 12.5% of Formal track households in Upper East (Kusaal); and from 37% to 12.5% in Northern region (Likpakpaaln). A similar trend is noted for a high chore burden prevalence, in Northern region (Likpakpaaln, from 60.5% to 10.6% over the period), Upper West (Dagaare, from 29.7% to 4.3%), and Upper East

[36] Defined as answering Household Survey question 'PCG_5econ Please tell me which of the following phrases best suits your household situation' with '[_] 1 unable to meet basic needs without charity'

(Kasem, from 43.7% to 10.6%). Data also shows that the prevalence of girls that live with neither parent, live over one hour away from primary school and are employed went up in Upper East (Kusaal) and Northern (Likpakpaaln). This increase might either be linked to a change in the composition of the sample; or to changes in the life situation of girls, for example moving and/or marriage (in Upper East, Kusaal the prevalence of married girls went from 0% to 2.5% of the sample). Findings on the 'employed' subgroup are detailed in Annex 9 – Educational Marginalisation – Employment section.

Barriers to education by key characteristic subgroups

Table 17 - Barriers to education among Formal Track girls: Baseline and Midline

Barrier	Proportion of sample affected by this barrier – Baseline	Proportion of sample affected by this barrier – Midline
Economic (Work or Costs)	85.4%	29.4%
Travel (Safety or Distance)	37.6%	11.1%
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	8.2%	6.9%
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	13.4%	12.8%
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	11.6%	8.4%
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	12.3%	5.8%
COVID-19	-	5.8%
Source: Analytical Dataset, Caregiver survey N=	705	694

Table 18 - Barriers to education by characteristic subgroups and region/ language: Midline

Characteristic, region/language	Barriers					
	Economic	Travel	Unmet Disability Needs	Social Norms	School	Demographic
Overall	**29.4%**	**11.1%**	**6.9%**	**12.8%**	**8.4%**	**5.8%**
Mother	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Married under 15	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	40%*
Married	42.9%	28.6%	42.9%*	28.6%	42.9%*	28.6%
Lives with neither parent	30.4%	8.7%	0.0%	13.0%	4.3%	0.0%
1+ hours to primary school	18.0%	5.0%	2.0%	2.0%	0.0%	1.0%
Impoverished	17.9%	10.7%	3.6%	7.7%	6.0%	6.0%
Currently employed	36.7%	26.7%	23.3%*	16.7%	6.7%	23.3%*
Employed and under 15	40.0%	28.0%	24%*	16.0%	8.0%	24%*
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)	51.7%	17.2%	3.4%	17.2%	3.4%	13.8%
Has a disability	53.8%	15.4%	23.1%*	7.7%	15.4%	3.8%
Dagaare (Upper West)	14.8%	4.9%	1.5%	4.6%	2.7%	0.8%
Kasem (Upper East)	49.0%	5.2%	16.7%	6.3%	1.0%	1.0%

Kusaal (Upper East)	31.6%	26.6%	19.0%	16.5%	11.4%	10.1%
Likpakpaln (Northern)	36.5%	14.9%	5.1%	22.7%	16.1%	11.4%
Source: Analytical Dataset Caregiver Survey N = 694						
* results are significant						

The barriers questions focus on what obstacles are preventing girls from attending school/ education programs that STAGE should consider in the design and implementation of its activities. They are only asked to the caregivers of those girls that are not enrolled. Prevalence of barriers can be examined in relation to the overall sample, or only girls that are unenrolled. At baseline, 73% (636) of beneficiaries were not enrolled in formal school. At midline, 37% (209) were not enrolled. As the majority of girls have transitioned to school as of midline, a reduction in the prevalence of barriers among Formal track girls is also noted (Table 17), especially for those affected by economic and travel barriers. On the other hand, examining the dynamics within those still facing barriers (unenrolled) at midline is useful in assessing which types of barriers are particularly persistent, and for which subgroups[37]. Such analysis (see Annex 9, Barriers: Tables 68 - 75 for details) suggests that many of the girls that had lower barriers to enrolment have now entered formal school; but those that remain unenrolled, remain so because their barriers have not been eliminated. More specifically, the changes in relative prevalence of barriers and subgroups that have transitioned are useful to indicate that: i) some barriers are more persistent than others at preventing enrolment; ii) some subgroups are more heavily affected by barriers than other subgroups, and in a more severe way (as they have been able to transition less so than other subgroups); and/or iii) that the project has been more successful at removing some barriers than others; or for some subgroups than others.

The following paragraphs delve deeper into these trends, analysing the intersection between each barrier type and the subgroup and regions/language groups identified[38]. As a general trend, the subgroups most affected by barriers are, unlike at baseline, married, employed and in some cases, GWDs (for school and unmet disability need barriers). Prevalence is generally calculated out of the total Formal track sample; where it is in relation to unenrolled girls only, this is specified.

By far the most common barriers to enrolment continue to be economic (for example, there is not enough money to pay costs of schooling and/or the girl child needs to work, earn money or help out at home[39]), though prevalence has decreased substantially since baseline (from 85.4% to 29.4% of the overall sample, Table 17). This is expected given the high prevalence of economic barriers at baseline, and that most of the girls have transitioned to school at midline. Economic barriers are felt relatively more by married girls, girls living with neither parent and currently employed girls (Table 18). Looking at prevalence among unenrolled, virtually all unenrolled girls experience these barriers (Annex 9, Table 68. In terms of regional trends, the economic barriers are felt the most in Upper East (Kasem) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) which are the regions with relatively lower prevalence of girls that transitioned to school (Table 18).

The qualitative data echoes these findings, as all girls and caregivers reported they struggle to cover education related costs[40]. As a girl from Naribuo (Upper West) explained: *"Sometimes teachers asked us to buy school sandals, socks, books, pencils etc. which my parent could not afford so I was forced to stay home".* Girls during an FGD in Agaago (Upper East), agreed that teachers can often play a role in this barrier, due to enforcing strict uniform guidelines, as one girl summarised: *"some teachers would always insist that we get the required school*

[37] A useful approach to considering barriers among unenrolled is that those that decrease or increase small amounts (e.g. economic) are likely those faced by many students at baseline. The students that are enrolled at midline, would not be asked the barrier questions anymore and the N= over which the prevalence is calculated, changes. However, since these are relatively large subgroups of students at baseline as at midline, barriers' prevalence does not change much for them. On the other hand, for barriers whose prevalence among the unenrolled has doubled or tripled since baseline, these likely refer to relatively small subgroups of students who reported the barrier at baseline; and - for those still unenrolled - that report the barrier at midline as well. These students now comprise a larger portion of the group over which the barriers' prevalence are calculated. Hence, the prevalence value will also appear higher, as the basis has changed. In the latter case, such findings should be taken with caution, as the number of students involved are small, and hence less significant than where the subgroup is large (e.g. there are only seven married girls in the overall sample).

[38] Sample sizes are too small to allow for the simultaneous disaggregation of sub-group characteristics by barrier and further, by region. Disaggregation would not generate any robust finding whilst potentially causing confusion.

[39] The questionnaire questions and codes for the Economic barriers are PCG_notenr3 [There isn't enough money to pay the costs of (name)'s schooling], and PCG_notenr4 [(Name) needs to work, earn money or help out at home]

[40] Worth noting that for this barrier, qualitative respondents noted that, girls with one, or no, caregivers will suffer more from this barrier.

uniform [and if you don't have it] you are either punished or asked to go back home" which means they *"always end up stopping".* Another factor also seen in baseline is hunger, specifically noted by the girls in Agaago (Upper East), who said during an FGD that as they leave home without eating: *"we become hungry in the middle of the day as we are not given money to feed in school… which sometimes don't make me concentrate in class."* This sub-barrier of hunger was also noted by some boys, caregivers, religious and traditional leaders in this community.

Caregivers must sometimes make the difficult decision of choosing which children to fund through education. Where this is the case, some girls felt that *"most poor families prefer to send their males to school at the expense of girls"* (Girls FGD – Naribuo, Upper West). As in baseline, age was also found to be a factor, as a girl from Piabunu (Northern) said*: "my father said I should stop because he cannot take care of the two of us in school. My brother, who is older than me, continued."* In Piabunu (Northern) and Agaago (Upper East), two respondents (one traditional leader and one girl respectively) gave some context as to why this might be, as boys can sometimes help fund their own education through *"farm"* or *"galamsey"* (mining) work, but girls *"can't do that".* Presumably due to societal social norms on what girls can do, which will be discussed next.

Related to the issue of economic costs is the chore burden that many girls face at home. This barrier was mentioned across all three communities, most prominently in Agaago (Upper East), followed by Piabuna (Northern). This commonly consists of housework, such as *"fetching water", "sweeping the house",* and looking after the younger children, which can mean girls are either late for school, or miss it entirely. The timing of school makes this particularly difficult, as a girl from Agaago (Upper East) explained: *"During the afternoon classes, I am able to do my chores before classes begin, but with the formal school I have to wake up very early to do the chores before I go to school. Sometimes, when I am not able to wake up on time, I end up leaving the chores until I return from school…. however, sometimes, I am always compelled by chores not to go to school".*

Economic barriers and social norms intersect in how girls and boys can overcome economic barriers. In comparison to the girls' chore burdens, the qualitative data found that boys in all three communities were more likely to be constrained by manual labour either by helping on family farms (especially in rainy seasons), or migrating to the South to work on illegal mining sites (Galamsey). Specifically, with Galamsey, it is noted by some boys in Agaago (Upper East) that once you experience the wages Galamsey can provide, it is very difficult *"to stay in school again".* Though this is commonly reported amongst boys, girls too have been known to engage in these activities too. For example, one caregiver from Naribuo (Upper West) said that her girl's *"engagement in illegal mining is the only thing of great worry to me… in her quest to succeed in the future".*

Girls facing **barriers related to social norms** (for example, the perception that school does not help in finding a good job and disinterest in education by caregiver or girl child[41]) have only slightly reduced since baseline and are the second most felt type of barriers at midline. Expressed differently, at midline girls experiencing these barriers comprise a much larger proportion of the unenrolled than at baseline (increasing from 14.5% to 42.6%, Annex 9, Table 68. This suggests that many girls who did not face barriers related to social norms are now enrolled in school, leaving most of those facing barriers to social norms remaining unenrolled. The increases are driven by (beyond impoverished) married girls, married under 15, mothers, and employed sub-groups (Annex 9, Tables 69 and 70 Unenrolled girls and all Formal Track girls). One explanation might be that whilst better transition outcomes are possible for girls in these sub-groups, it might not be feasible nor affordable for a small part of them to give up work or housework responsibilities to the extent that would allow for schooling. The higher prevalence of social norms is also driven by Upper East (Kusaal) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) regions.

Unlike the quantitative data, all girls and caregivers interviewed said to have an interest in education, and no respondents argued that school does not help in finding a good job[42]. In fact, girls, boys and caregivers alike recognised that they would need to get an education to succeed in their career and life goals. As a girl from Naribuo (Upper West) summed up: *"Most of the girls in this community aspire to be leaders and great people in future. This will enable them to support their husbands in marriage. Education is very useful to achieve these goals as without it*

[41] The questionnaire questions and codes for the Social Norms barriers are PCG_notenr24 [(Name is not interested in going to school] and CG_notenr26 [Perception that school does not help in finding a good job].

[42] The discrepancy between qualitative data suggesting a change in norms and quantitative results suggesting that they may persist could have several explanations. People in qualitative interviews may be more prone to speak up more in agreement with the values supported by the project: either because they feel more supported to do so by the community or because they consider the interviewers receptive, whereas those who have persistent values that disadvantage girls may be more reticent. This can point at the challenges in intrinsically changing social norms in some households, but may signal that the predominant opinion in a community has shifted, as what is perceived as the most prevailing opinion has changed.

they cannot be the teachers, doctors and lawyers they want to be". Only one girl in Agaago (Upper East) in an FGD bucked this trend, as she wishes to become a tailor, and does not feel like school will be useful for that: *"I think I am grown and the school will delay my success in life, as the trade only takes three years to learn".*

However, when talking about getting married and starting a family, the qualitative data revealed how the existence of social norms is still likely to impact differently boys and girls in relation to education, in fact substantiating the quantitative findings in relation to specific subgroups. All girls and caregivers interviewed made clear they now prioritise getting education and a career before getting married and starting a family. However, the following quotes highlight how girls' education might suffer in case of getting married or starting a family, unlike boys'. According to a girl from Piabunu (Northern): *"when I finish school, I want to go to nursing school so I can become a nurse. After that I will marry and give birth to my own children. If I don't finish nursing school, I will not give birth, because if I give birth, I cannot go to school again.";* whilst a caregiver from Piabunu (Northern) stated: *"[Boys] can marry and still go to school".* It is also worth noting that interviews revealed different career aspirations between boys and girls, suggesting there might still be a perception that there are certain jobs for boys versus the girls[43].

The third most common barrier identified by the quantitative data is travel (for example, school is too far away and/or it is unsafe to travel to/from school[44]). The barrier has reduced substantially since baseline (Table 17), and is also the only barrier that has seen a decrease in prevalence among unenrolled girls compared to baseline (36.8% against 41.7%, Annex 9, Table 68. Interestingly, there have been changes in the prevalence of this barrier by marginalisation sub-groups compared to baseline. Whilst the subgroups noticeably affected at baseline were those that live more than an hour from primary school (this overlap in barrier and sub-group characteristic is expected), impoverished and high chore burden, at midline the incidence among these subgroups is relatively lower than for others[45], particularly for those living in remote areas (5.0% of the Formal track girls overall sample, Table 18). The barrier is more prevalent among those currently employed and married (Table 18). In terms of specific reasons for citing this barrier, the unavailability of transport to go to school is the most cited factor at midline (25.4% of unenrolled girls, Annex 9, Table 73.

Geographically, the prevalence of travel barriers has decreased substantially in Northern (Likpakpaaln, from 52.3% to 14.9% of the total sample) and Upper West (Dagaare, from 16.9% to 4.9% of the total sample) as detailed in Annex 9, Table 72. In these regions, high chore burden prevalence has also substantially reduced (Table 16). It might be that the reduced high chore burden has freed up time to travel to the ALPs/school and have made the long distance less challenging. It is unlikely that this change is linked to better travel options (bicycles) or funds for transport because only a small percentage of STAGE girls received bike/funds to pay for travel or both - even though only those communities/girls most in need are to be delivered bikes by the project.

The qualitative data found that the distance to school was the biggest barrier after economic constraints. However, this is because all three communities reported having no primary school in the community, and so children must travel long distances to the next village to attend school. During an FGD with girls in Agaago (Upper East), the girls reported having to wake at 4:00am to get to school on time by foot and are often late for this reason. One caregiver even reported fearing for her girl's health due to this. This can be further complicated for flood prone areas in rainy seasons. For example, in Piabunu (Northern) a Traditional Leader said that *"the water cuts part of the road so they are not able to go"* and one girl agreed saying that *"we cannot be crossing the stream to go to another place to school".* Whilst in relation to GWDs, one local leader from Naribuo (Upper West) reported: *"girls with disability are cut off in attending school due to issues of proximity".*

According to qualitative evidence, travel barriers might lead to drop-outs and absenteeism. As a Traditional Leader from Naribuo (Upper West) reported: *"Girls whose parents cannot afford bicycles for them have to forgo school by default… [because the distance] most often contribute to school drop-outs, lack of interest in going to school, absenteeism, migration to illegal mining communities and early marriages".*

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[43] Whilst many girls questioned wanted to be nurses (3 mentions), followed by seamstresses and teachers (2 mentions each), the majority of boys wanted to be an influential figure like the President (3 mentions) or a teacher (3 mentions). As one girl from Piabunu (Northern) puts it: "boys are stronger than the girls so they will become soldiers and police. But the girls will become teachers and nurses".

[44] The questionnaire questions and codes for the Travel barriers are PCG_notenr5 [It is unsafe for (name) to travel to/from school], PCG_notenr7 [Distance to school is too large], PCG_notenr8 [No one available to travel with (name) to/from school], PCG_notenr9 [No transport available to go to school].

[45] This might be due to changes in the sample, but also to some girls having changed location, or caregivers referring specifically to the inconvenience of the formal school location (for example compared to ALP which were more conveniently located).

Table 19 - Key Disaggregation of 'School Barriers, Unenrolled girls: Baseline compared to Midline

Barrier: School	Proportion of Unenrolled girls affected by this barrier. Baseline	Proportion of Unenrolled girls affected by this barrier. Midline
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	**12.9%**	**27.8%**
It is unsafe for (name) to be in school	5.2%	9.6%
Child says teachers mistreat her at school	1.7%	9.1%
(Name) was refused entry into the school	3.8%	17.2%
Toilets at school / learning centre are not usable	10.3%	1.4%
Child says they are mistreated/bullied by other pupils	2.9%	3.3%
Source: Analytical Dataset: Caregiver survey: Unenrolled girls N =	636	209

Issues with the school (for example, it's not safe, teacher mistreats child, child refused entry[46]) are prevalent among 8.4% of the total sample (Table 17) and have relatively increased since baseline among those unenrolled, from 12.9% to 27.8.% (Annex 9, Table 68). Given the sensitivity of these issues, it is important to look at the specific reasons for this barrier (Table 19). The prevalence of this issue is driven by the indicators that girls that were refused entry into the school (17.2%) and feeling of being unsafe at school (9.6%). School barriers seem to particularly affect married girls (42.9%*, results are significant, and GWDs (15.4%, Table 18). In terms of regional trends, these barriers are by far felt the most in Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kusaal language) regions (16.1% and 11.4% of the total sample respectively). The trend is similar to that observed at baseline. The reason for these findings is not clear.

Reporting of being mistreated by teachers at school (9.1% of unenrolled, 19 girls versus 10 at baseline) has increased since baseline, which is concerning as it might refer to either facts that took place at school or at the ALPs. As noted in the section below on facilitators, 3.5% (24 girls) either disagreed or neither agree nor disagree with the statement *"I feel safe with my facilitators/teachers.***"** We understand that corporal punishment is still fairly common in Ghana, despite being banned in recent years. No qualitative data was found to suggest any mistreatment by teachers, and as one Headteacher from Piabunu (Northern) remarked: *"In the school here too we don't cane them. We were trained not to cane them."*

Qualitative data found that sometimes children can be turned away from school due to improper uniform. Refused entry may be seen as a school or economic issue: as noted above in qualitative interviews, not possessing uniforms or other supplies can lead to teachers refusing entry. Other school-related problems in qualitative communities concerned the lack of teachers in the school and the learning environment. In Piabunu (Northern) and Agaago (Upper East), sometimes a volunteer would teach, but the respondents said despite this even still the school is inappropriate. In Agaago (Upper East) a girl reported that *"the school building was not conducive for effective learning"*, whilst a caregiver in Agaago (Upper East) even reported that the students have***" no*** *choice but to carry chairs from the house to school or they are compelled to sit on the floor to study… just imagine the distance they have to carry the chairs to school to sit****".*** This is not an isolated case, as in Piabunu (Northern), girls and boys interviewed reported there being no tables, chairs or water in the school.

Girls experience **unmet disability needs barriers** (for example, school lacking required physical access or teaching skills/materials needed[47]) are those that are married (including under the age of 15 years) and currently employed,

[46] The questionnaire questions and codes for the Issues with School barriers are PCG_notenr6 [It is unsafe for (name) to be in school] PCG_notenr13 [Child says teachers mistreat her at school], PCG_notenr14 [(Name) was refused entry into the school], PCG_notenr15 [Toilets at school / learning centre are not usable], PCG_notenr27 [Instances where child says they are mistreated/bullied by other pupils].

[47] The questionnaire questions and codes for the Unmet disability needs barriers are PCG_notenr10 Lack of special services or assistance (such as speech therapist, support worker, sign language interpretation) for [GIRL], PCG_notenr11 Lack of special services or assistance (such devices/technology such as braille textbook, hearing aid, wheelchair) for [GIRL], PCG_notenr12 Lack of teachers that know how to teach a childlike [GIRL], PCG_notenr15 Inability of [GIRL] to move around the school / learning centre, PCG_notenr17 Learning programme not good for [GIRL]'s needs, PCG_notenr18 Health condition prevents [GIRL] from going to school

and GWDs the most, with results being significant (42.9%*, 23.3%* and 23.1* respectively, Table 18). Regionally, results are driven by the Upper East region (both languages). In our quantitative data collection, only three girls reported a severe sight disability, and only two girls reported a severe walking disability. In addition, no qualitative respondents reported having a disability or knowing someone with a disability at their school.

As a caregiver from Piabunu (Northern Region) remarked*: "Even those who are 'normal' are struggling with school, so how much more for the disabled?"* The reasons for those with disabilities struggling are multifaceted. The data found that the most common reasons for citing this barrier relate to a lack of special services or assistance (devices/technology such as braille) and health conditions preventing girls from going to school (Annex 9, Table 74 or transport related issues (found from the qualitative data). Additionally, social pressures and societal norms may also have an impact, for example, a religious leader from Agaago (Upper East) told of how many caregivers are afraid to *"allow their disabled children attend a public place, for the simple reason that others will laugh at them".* This is despite the fact that when questioned, all respondents across beneficiary groups and communities felt that children with disabilities should be able to go to school. A Girl from Agaago (Upper East) sums up the common viewpoint on this**:** *"education is important to everyone whether one is abled or disabled".*

The incidence of **demographic barriers** (for example, child too old, not mature enough, pregnant, a mother, married[48]) is driven by those married under 15 (40%*), married (28.6%), employed under 15 (24%*) and employed (23.3%*, Table 18). Responses are more or less split between unenrolled girls that caregivers claim are not mature enough to attend school, and considered "too old to attend school" (14.4% and 12.9% of unenrolled, see Annex 9, Table 75). The latter might be linked to employed and married girls, which from qualitative data are considered by caregivers to be too old to attend school. Regionally, demographic barriers are almost entirely attributable to Northern (Likpakpaaln, 11.4%) and Upper East (Kusaal, 10.1%). This is consistent with the fact that the two regions have registered a substantial increase in currently employed girls compared to baseline (Table 16).

The intersectional nature of demographic differences means that all aforementioned barriers have the potential to be heightened for some children over others. As a religious leader from Agaago (Upper East) reported, *"everyone has the same challenges, but to different gravities".* As demonstrated, boys and girls both face economic and travel barriers to schooling, but these are often felt more by girls given their gendered household chores. This is likely to be heightened again for those who are mothers or married girls, who will have further responsibilities, than girls without further dependents. In all qualitative communities, early marriage and underage pregnancy was reported to be a problem, with girls commonly getting married and/or having children between 14 and 18 years old according to one Religious Leader in Agaago (Upper East)[49]. This happens for a multitude of reasons, with *"some parents forcing their daughters into early marriage which prevents them from going to school*" (Girl from Naribuo, Upper West); some girls *"going to our boys to request money for school, they demand sex with us, and before we know it we are pregnant and have to stop school"* (Girl from Agaago, Upper East); or *"returning home with children... [after] travelling to the southern part of the country for Galamsey mining"* (Boy from Agaago, Upper East).

Some respondents across all communities referred to the fact that due to these risks, caregivers will often *"play safe"* and invest in their boy child's schooling instead (Religious Leader from Agaago, Upper East). As a Local Authority Member from Naribuo (Upper West) explains: *"Most parents still think that it's prudent to invest in boys' education rather than girls due to marriage and pregnancy issues that are likely to terminate the girl child education. The assumption is that, once you are pregnant, your education is ended".*

There was little reported on the specific reasons why marriage and pregnancy should stop a girl from schooling. However, the assumption is that this is related to social norms around the roles and responsibilities of wives and mothers, and the barriers to schooling that that brings. Lastly, one respondent from Piabunu (Northern) reported that COVID-19 might have increased these barriers, as *"within this period, children were sat at home for a year and some of them became pregnant".* According to the quantitative data, the prevalence and average age of mothers has not substantially changed since baseline.

Finally, at midline 5.8% of caregivers of Formal track girls (19% of caregivers of unenrolled girls) also reported that **COVID-19** was a **barrier** to attending school/ALP or vocational training (this was inserted as a new barrier).

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[48] The questionnaire questions and codes for the Demographic barriers are PCG_notenr19 [(Name) is too old to attend school], PCG_notenr20 [(Name) is not mature enough to attend school], PCG_notenr23 [(Name) has a child or is about to have a child], PCG_notenr22 [(Name) is married or about to get married].

[49] For reference, in Ghana, the legal age for marriage is 18 years old, and the age of consent is 16 years old.

Appropriateness of project activities to the characteristic subgroups and barriers identified

The STAGE project considers all the main characteristics of sub-groups identified in the midline data. As was noted at baseline, it is evident that STAGE has considered the recommendations of previous education evaluations in Ghana. This section examines key findings by barrier and subgroup, linking these to the STAGE activities intended to address the needs of the most marginalised girls.

The main barriers to educational attendance are still economic, as they were at baseline. Further, the subgroup 'unable to meet basic needs' is the most prevalent, of all marginalised subgroups, even though such prevalence has reduced at midline. Both trends were driven by decreases in the region/language groups which were most affected at baseline.

The STAGE Formal track has interventions to address economic related barriers, such as free ALP classes, transition packs ahead of moving to their formal school[50] and dissemination of useful information such as on farming subsidies available.

At midline, findings show often better than average outcomes and intermediate outcomes for impoverished girls, which may suggest STAGE interventions have reduced the impact poverty has on girls' transition or learning. However, it is noted that almost all the girls that are still unenrolled at midline and have never been to school are affected by economic barriers. This suggests that where impoverishment is particularly severe, learning and transition outcomes are affected; and more targeted interventions are needed. This is particularly true in Upper West (Dagaare), where the percentage of impoverished girls is the highest. In relation to transition, and in light of the new COVID-19 school requirements, the STAGE project should also assess whether schools are requiring girls to provide their own PPE (i.e., masks and sanitiser), and if so, look at how those might be provided to see the girls through the year. Lastly, as stated in the STAGE Midterm Response Plan (MTR) to COVID-19, leveraging of existing national school feeding programmes to provide feeding support to beneficiaries living in extreme poverty might be a particularly useful activity, both after transition and as an incentive to girls that are still to transition.

Fewer girls have a high chore burden at midline than baseline. While it is possible this links to changes in norms or values, it is also likely due to girls attending education programs having less time to complete chores, whereas when they were not in education programs, it was how they were using their productive time (from the perspective of their household). This could be seen as a positive demonstration of a household's dedication to getting the beneficiaries education and their investment in STAGE by giving up the productive work the girls/women have been doing in the home. Sensitisation of caregivers (with monthly visits from either facilitator, supervisors, teachers, and/or a member of the CoC) on the importance of continued education for this subgroup continues to be an appropriate activity. A more challenging issue to address, which was highlighted in the qualitative data, is the timing of school starting early in the morning (as opposed to ALP which offered afternoon classes) which might be too large an impediment to overcome for some of the girls with high chore burden to transition.

The second most common barrier is in relation to social norms. STAGE has numerous interventions to change social norms towards girls' education at household, community and school levels. The EE assessed that both the home visits and continuous sensitisation were appropriate for tackling this.

The social norms barrier is more prevalent among the girls that are unenrolled at midline, compared to baseline. As found from qualitative data, these barriers are linked with the economic barriers, whereby an impoverished family having to prioritise which children send to school and more likely to send the boys. Whilst data shows some of the indicators on support of caregivers for girls' continued education have risen and/or support is high, other indicators such as parents' active support have worsened since baseline and are at an overall low level (less than 20%, see Section 3.3).

Analysis by subgroups shows that married girls (under 15 years) and mothers are the most affected by social norms barriers. The small number of girls in these subgroups limits the significance of the findings; but the high incidence and persistence of barriers among these groups is revealing of how, as family duties, housework and the need to be engaged in productive work might be too big of a challenge to education. CoC home visits to encourage families/husbands to be supportive of these girls' education should continue; though it is not clear if STAGE interventions are sufficient for the needs of these subgroups and those affected by the social norms barriers.

[50] These include uniforms, bags, stationery and books – the lack of which proved to be a barrier in the past.

The third most common cited barrier to education attendance was travel. At baseline, the EE found the locations of ALPs training and the bicycle banks in 40% of communities to be appropriate for reducing the time and costs needed to travel long distances to formal schools. The intersection between barrier and subgroup characteristics provide some interesting findings. In terms of subgroups, girls living over one hour away from school have increased across regions[51]. Despite this, transition findings show better than average results for this subgroup than the overall average. Also, at midline the prevalence of the travel barrier has notably diminished, meaning that this barrier is less of an impediment to transition than other barriers that have persisted among the unenrolled girls. It is currently employed girls, mothers and married women which drive the prevalence of this barrier, rather than girls living over one hour away and with high chore burden as at baseline. It might be that the reduced high chore burden has freed up time to travel to the ALPs/school and have made the long distance less challenging. Notwithstanding these positive findings, based on our quantitative and qualitative data, almost no bicycles have been delivered yet, which might be a result of. COVID-19. When these are distributed, STAGE needs to ensure that the bicycles are appropriately targeted to the sub-groups suffering the most with the issue of travel: those that live far away from their school; mothers, married and currently employed girls.

At midline, the prevalence of **school-related barriers** has decreased less than other barriers (from 11.6% to 8.4%), with the main reasons being given of refused entry to school, unsafe to be in school, and mistreatment by teachers. Whilst qualitative respondents did not report on teacher mistreatment, there were reports of lack of teachers in schools and basic classroom furniture and infrastructure in the school, reported by girls from Piabunu (Northern) and Agaago (Upper East) in neighbouring communities. It is unclear how prevalent this problem is, and it may be confined to a few schools. More research is needed to understand whether an unconducive learning environment might affect the sustainability of transition rates achieved. Future projects like STAGE should ensure all the schools transitioned to are adequately equipped and could consider creating a feedback mechanism where schools and local decision makers can request small funds for things like chairs.

Barriers related to disability needs have increased among the subgroups married (under 15 years), currently employed (under 15 years) and GWDs. Specific reasons for citing this barrier have changed, primarily due to a lack of special services or assistance (such devices/technology such as braille) and health conditions preventing girls from going to school. The reason for prevalence of this barrier among the employed and married is not entirely clear, but it is worth noting that these are small subsets of the overall sample. STAGE support to GWDs includes provision of assistive devices and referral for specialized care including health insurance enrolment. It is not known to what extent this has been implemented, though there is still a need among the cited subgroups.

Demographic barriers are more prevalent among employed (under 15 years, significant results) and married girls compared to baseline. This is linked to the emergence of *"too old to attend school"* as a specific reason for citing this barrier. Data suggests that addressing issues relating to social norms (i.e., the role of married girls) for example by encouraging families/husbands to be supportive of girls' education as appropriate. However, impediments for these subgroups are equally related to practical reasons, i.e., time needed to conduct household and family chores when married, or to work when employed is a real barrier to continued education. It is not known if there are specific activities directed to addressing this.

Demographic barriers are more frequently faced by mothers and pregnant girls as shown by qualitative data. The difficulty of providing effective support towards continued education for these subgroups that is sufficient and sustainable has been noted by the STAGE implementing team. The MTR mentions one such support for teenage mothers is negotiating for caretakers during lessons. It is not known to what extent this has been implemented and it would be worth exploring more about the implementation/results of such an activity.

In terms of prevention of teenage pregnancy and child marriage, the baseline evaluation noted the appropriateness and urgency of the SRHR module in the Life Skills training. Given this is still the weakest area at midline -as shown by Life Skills scores under Section 3.3 -, the need for addressing these issues remains. As at baseline, this is unlikely to be sufficient if the role of boys and caregivers in preventing this is not addressed, as evidenced by midline qualitative findings in Section 3.3. As for boys, the STAGE peer educator training given to boy peer educators should continue[52]. Similarly, awareness raising activities with caregivers and communities need to

[51] This might be due to changes in the sample, but also to some girls having changed location, or caregivers referring specifically to the inconvenience of the formal school location (for example compared to ALP which were more conveniently located).
[52] Including on respect for girls, taking responsibility for contraception and SRH related to contraception.

address the issue 'pregnancy inevitability', referring to the partial resignation by caregivers/community leaders that girls will get pregnant which was reported as influencing the willingness of caregivers to invest in their girl child.

As per recommendation from CBE impact evaluation, STAGE delivers lessons in the National Accelerated Literacy Project (NALAP) languages, which do not cover the languages of all STAGE communities. Though noted as an exception, WEI reported that some teachers end up code mixing the communities' local languages and English when teaching. At midline, girls did report liking learning in the local language (see Section 3.3); it would be interesting to know from STAGE whether this issue was raised again since baseline.

One of the programme's core assumptions is that **there is support for girls' education.** Analysis of correlations between active support and quality teaching indicators and outcomes indicates these two factors can explain nearly 10% of the variations in outcome results (see Section 3.2 and 3.3). The fact that the active support indicator has decreased since baseline and it is at an overall low level suggests that STAGE should continue and/or strengthen activities towards promoting support for continued education.

Prevalence of the COVID-19 barrier for unenrolled girls is low (5.8%) compared to other barriers. STAGE conducted a series of activities to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the programme (described under Section 1.3). In terms of safeguarding and WASH, findings suggest an overall positive impact. In terms of teaching during COVID-19, data reveal that especially in some regions (Upper West) implementation of activities has not been as planned e.g., delivery of remote learning sessions/attendance. This might have impacted learning and transition outcomes of some girls. See detailed findings under Section 3.3.

Box 4: Contribution of the project

Project's contribution

In recognition of the barriers marginalised girls face in their quest to receive education, STAGE's interventions have focused on changing existing norms at three levels: Individual, school and community level. At the individual level, STAGE's efforts have been focused on building the competencies of girls in literacy, numeracy and life skills. Drawing from several studies on the empowering effect of literacy, numeracy and life skills sessions on girls, STAGE's interventions are in line with recommendation by education scholars. These have emphasized and focused on broadening the scope of the ALPs from being simply about reading, writing and counting to a much more expansive notion of education that looks at helping girls to recognize and address the socio-cultural issues that stand in the way of their advancement. Through the various topics treated in the life skills sessions, girls are empowered to participate fully in processes that affect their lives to live the kind of lives they value. At the school level the project's activities have focused on promoting inclusive and gender sensitive approaches to quality education. This is critical in promoting participatory learning and addressing some of the barriers which prevented the girls from staying in school and completing. The capacities of teachers have been built to identify and appreciate the various categories of learners including GWDs to enable them design out appropriate pedagogies to meet their learning needs.

The ecosystem to a large extent affects the ability of these marginalised girls to use their agencies to construct their functioning. Indeed, an analysis of the marginalisation these girls experience are expressed in the social norms and structures in place at the community level. These structures and social norms combine to create consistent and pervasive barriers towards girls' education and empowerment. STAGE's interventions in these communities through the various community animation and sensitization sessions have focused on addressing these challenges and working with community stakeholders to craft new social norms to support girls' education and economic empowerment.

While significant progress has been made at each of the three levels since the project inception, challenges persist which requires the project to increase its efforts. The project is of the firm belief that the activities it has implemented over the years have the capacity to engineer the desired change in the communities. This will however take time even beyond the project's life span as with most behaviour change interventions. Indeed, as has been observed the processes of social change have been slower due to the outbreak of COVID 19 and other local factors including poverty and limited access to basic infrastructure which continues to affect the attendance, participation and empowerment of some sub-groups of girls.

In order to address these challenges, the project believes the assumptions underlying its TOC are still valid. If marginalised girls have access to learning opportunities and are informed of their importance, facilitators and teachers are properly trained in how to approach and teach these girls, then marginalised girls will improve their

literacy, numeracy, life skills, and non-cognitive skills. By enhancing the community animation component, increasing engagements with district educational actors, providing support for the establishment of income generation activities (IGAs) and enhancing monitoring of project interventions, STAGE is confident it will transform existing gendered relationships in the communities, strengthen household resilience, garner community consistent support for girls' education and empower girls for the future.

3.2 Outcome findings

This section presents key findings on the STAGE progress towards outcome targets at midline: learning (numeracy and literacy), transition to formal school and sustainability. For learning outcomes, the evaluation estimates the effects of STAGE by predicting counterfactual scores and conducting a regression analysis (see Annex 12 for the detailed methodology). Outcome changes since baseline for all outcomes are also presented. Where available, analysis of findings by barriers and characteristic subgroups is conducted.

An important caveat regarding the transition outcome concerns the timing of the midline data collection. Following the first draft of the evaluation report, the EE was informed that transition lasted until April 2021, beyond the data collection period. The transition rates reported by the project following the end of the transition period are higher.

Learning outcomes

Numeracy

Table 20 - Foundational numeracy skills: Midline[53]

Categories	Mean	SD	Non-learner 0%	Emergent learner 1%-40%	Established learner 41%-80%	Proficient learner 81%-100%
Number Id.	60.0	24.7	2.2%	23.2%	58.2%	16.2%
Missing Numbers	42.0	23.7	3.9%	56.0%	34.5%	5.30%
Addition 1	58.6	23.1	2.3%	20.5%	63.5%	13.6%
Subtraction 1	49.6	24.0	5.3%	33.8%	53.1%	7.50%
Addition 2	48.8	27.9	9.8%	28.3%	42.9%	16.6%
Subtraction 2	43.6	29.8	15.7%	28.9%	36.4%	13.4%
Word Problems	68.3	27.4	2.5%	13.9%	36.4%	42.7%
Overall Score	**52.0**	**21.3**				

Source: Analytical dataset: EGMA Midline N = 693; Baseline N=705

[53] Literacy and Numeracy Skills reporting follows the GECT Midline Report Template Final document. Means are reported as the mean percentage of items answered correctly. The four benchmark categories report the percentage of students that fell into each category, by subtask.

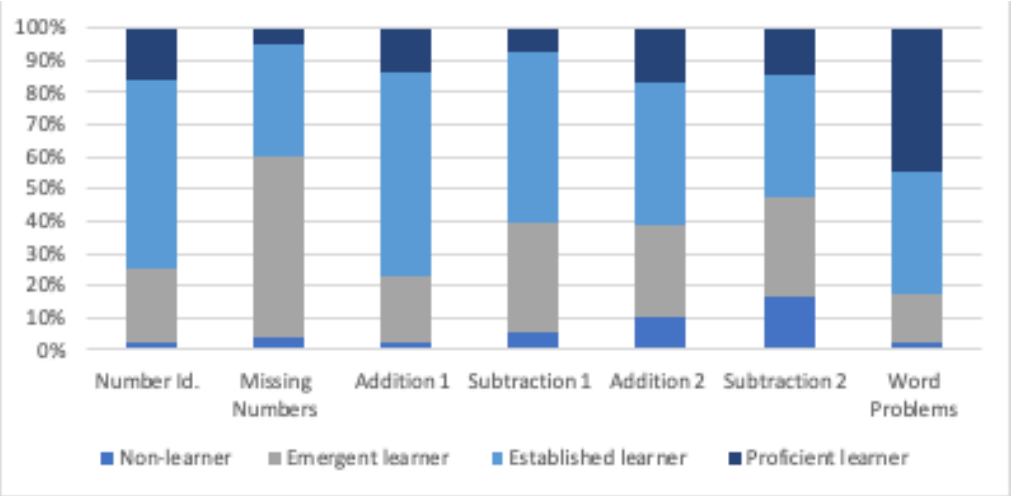

Figure 9 - Maths Learner Levels by Subtask

Table 21 - Foundational numeracy scores comparison: Baseline and Midline

Categories	Baseline numeracy treatment	Midline numeracy treatment	Difference numeracy to midline
Number Id.	39.5	60.0	20.5
Missing Numbers	26.0	42.0	16.0
Addition 1	38.5	58.6	20.1
Subtraction 1	30.4	49.6	19.2
Addition 2	25.0	48.8	23.8
Subtraction 2	20.3	43.6	23.3
Word Problems	35.5	68.3	32.8
Overall Score	**30.7**	**52.0**	**21.3**
Target score	**39.1**		
Source: Analytical dataset: EGMA Midline N = 693; Baseline N=705			

The overall numeracy score at midline is 52, an improvement of 21.3 %points (0.9 SD[54]) from baseline (Tables 20 and 21). The overall scores at midline greatly surpass the baseline scores, the comparison group, and the targets set at baseline. Improvements are consistent and observed across all EGMA subtasks and bands of achievement. The prevalence of girls in lower bands has diminished in favour of increases in the higher bands, throughout all bands of achievement. Among the 605 beneficiaries for whom we have both baseline and midline scores, 487 (80.5%) have improved EGMA scores.

At baseline, most Formal track girls scored in either the Non-learner or Emergent learner classifications, which is unsurprising given their age and that 63.7% had never been to school[55]. Relatedly, more girls were classified as Emergent or Established learners for the addition 1 and subtraction 1, than for the harder addition 2 and subtraction 2. A slightly higher percentage of girls scored in the proficient learner classification (81%+) on the word problems questions. This was felt to be a result of their use of verbal numeracy skills in their daily lives.

At midline, most girls scored in either the Established or Proficient learner bands, except for the missing numbers subtask, which is still the most challenging at midline. Whilst addition 1, number ID and word problems are still the

[54] Standard deviations (SD) in this section are measured in terms of the baseline SD, to maintain consistency with the targets set at baseline, which were also measured in baseline score standard deviations. See baseline report for more information.
[55] However, a ceiling effect in the Formal EGMA numeracy tests was not felt, as there are few girls scoring 81%+ (proficient learning).

subtasks where relatively more girls score in the two higher bands (41% or more), substantial improvements from baseline are noted also for the more difficult sub-tasks of addition 2 and subtraction 2. Notably, 42.7% of the sample scores in the Proficient learner category (81%+) for word problems (which is expected given baseline results); over 16% are in this band for addition 2 and number ID; over 13% are in this category for addition 1 and subtraction 2. This suggests that high scores are not necessarily observed only in the subtasks considered less challenging. Missing numbers and subtraction 2 remain the lowest scoring subtasks. The largest increases in the share of girls becoming proficient learners are in the subtasks starting from the lowest points at baseline: missing numbers (4.07 times increase); subtraction 2 (2.63 increase) and addition 2 (2.59 increase). See Annex 9, Table 76 for details on changes in learner band from baseline for numeracy.

By region, Upper West (Dagaare) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) present the lowest EGMA scores (see further below on disaggregation by region and subgroups). While overall scores vary significantly by region, the trend of which subtasks students find the most difficult and easiest remain fairly consistent, with the exception of subtraction 1 in Upper East and addition 2 for Upper West (Dagaare) and Northern (Likpakpaaln).

Table 22 - Foundational numeracy scores Midline compared to Control - Regression analysis results

Categories	Estimated counterfactual	Estimated effect of STAGE[56]
Number Id.	46.9	13.1*
Missing Numbers	20.4[57]	21.6*
Addition 1	42.1	16.5*
Subtraction 1	29.5	20.1*
Addition 2	20.9	27.9*
Subtraction 2	22.1	21.6*
Word Problems	54.4	14.0*
Overall Score	**29.1**	**22.8***
Source: Analytical dataset: EGMA Midline N = 693		
* results are significant		

To estimate the impact of the programme on learning scores, a regression analysis has been run to generate predictions of what a group of girls (of the same age, regional, and linguistic makeup in the same year and track as the midline sample) would have achieved without a programme (Table 22)[58]. This is different from the Difference in Difference (DiD) approach based on comparing a baseline and midline sample for treatment and benchmark girls, which would have not assured comparability across the two groups. This was completed by constructing a panel dataset that includes formal and nonformal midline assessments, formal and non-formal baseline assessments, and the benchmarking sample. The regression analysis controlled for the beneficiaries' age, track, year of assessment, language and region. A complete explanation of the method can be found in Annex 12. The analysis was used to estimate what the effect of participating in the programme was. B Overall, the regression analysis suggests that the

[56] The magnitude of estimated effects is calculated as the actual treatment midline scores minus the predicted counterfactual scores. However, for greater accuracy in testing, the hypothesis tests were calculated by whether the indicator variable for treatment were significantly different from zero. This method is more rigorous.

[57] In some instances, estimated counterfactuals are lower than baseline scores. This is because on average, older test-takers often score lower than younger test-takers, and the regression analysis controls for age. This is presumably because as years pass without schooling, some numeracy and literacy skills fall out of practice.

[58] For the treatment, improvement can still be measured in terms of midline minus baseline score. However, for the control the analysis estimates the average scores of the beneficiaries by using a large dataset including all the baseline data, Formal and Non-Formal, for 2020 and 2021. Changes between the two years, the language-region makeup, the differences between the Formal and Non-Formal group, and their ages have been controlled for to ensure proper comparison to the midline population. So, the impact of the programme is estimated by comparing the treatment midline scores to predictions made by a regression analysis of what a group of girls (of the same age, regional, and linguistic makeup in the same year and track as the midline sample) would have achieved without the programme. If STAGE had no effect on girls, the estimated effect would be 0.

effect of participating in the programme was. Overall, the regression analysis suggests that participation in the program resulted in a 17.3% increase in overall literacy scores. That is, based on all of the assessments conducted of women and girls and controlling for demographic, geographic, and external factors, girls who had participated in the program scored 17.3% higher than those who had not. By comparing the midline treatment scores to the estimated counterfactual, data indicates a 22.8-point difference effect of STAGE on numeracy outcomes. The estimated effect is slightly higher than the difference between midline and baseline scores for STAGE girls likely because this last year has been particularly challenging due to school closures and has affected scores to an extent. This suggests, if midline tests had been taken at a similar time as baseline, midline results would be even higher[59]. Among the 605 beneficiaries for whom we have both baseline and midline scores, 456 (75.4%) have improved EGRA scores.

The STAGE intermediate outcome (IO) 2 relates to Quality of Teaching, directly contributing to Outcome 1 on Learning. STAGE overachieved targets under two out of three indicators under IO2 (application of gender sensitive education by ALP facilitators/teachers and % of ALP facilitators who demonstrate effective literacy/numeracy instructions). It only slightly underachieved the target for the indicator "% of girls that agree their facilitator was effective at the learning centre" (see Section 3.3 for further details). Thus, the positive results achieved in learning (both numeracy and literacy, see below) seem to be well supported by the positive results observed in quality of teaching. Further, T-tests of IO indicators (Section 3.4) note significant positive differences for EGRA and EGMA overall scores when the criterion of girls agreeing to the effectiveness of facilitators at the learning centre was met (7.53* and 7.91* differences for EGRA and EGMA respectively).

Literacy

Throughout the analysis of the EGRA results, it is critical to consider the variation of literacy skills between languages. In general, it is not recommended to aggregate scores as done in this report, because literacy skill acquisition varies between languages. For example, Fante has 10 vowel phonemes, whereas Likpakpaaln only has six. Students of languages with more explicit phonemes may take longer to perfect letter recognition, but may acquire the ability to read words sooner. As each language is different in what aspects are simple or complex, how they may score on assessments may likely be a reflection of the language, not of their ability. For simpler results and more expedient analysis, it was requested that the analysis of all language groups be combined at the outset of the project. Because the outcome of interest is improvement over time (instead of raw scores or proficiency), and the proportion of each language group does not change between evaluation points, overall scores can still be used effectively as indicative of learning outcomes.

Table 23 - Foundational literacy skills: Midline[60]

Categories	Mean	SD	Non-learner 0%	Emergent learner 1%-40%	Established learner 41%-80%	Proficient learner 81%-100%
Letter Sounds	30.3	24.5	7.2%	64.4%	25.3%	3.2%
Familiar Words	24.4	27.3	34.2%	38.4%	24.1%	3.3%
Oral Reading Fluency	25	27.5	40.1%	34.6%	20.8%	4.5%
Reading Comprehension	28.1	31.8	47.2%	25.0%	22.8%	5.1%
Writing	38.6	30.9	25.0%	26.4%	39.7%	8.9%
Overall Score	**29.3**	**25.8**				

[59] To predict this counterfactual both Formal and Non-Formal scores have been included in the regression analysis, for both years. Non-Formal scores for Cohort 2 are lower than Cohort 1. All things equal, scores seem to be lower in 2021 than in 2020 and the analysis takes this into account.

[60] Literacy and Numeracy Skills reporting follows the GECT Midline Report Template Final document. Means are reported as the mean percentage of items answered correctly. The four benchmark categories report the percentage of students that fell into each category, by subtask. The only exception is Oral Reading Fluency, which is reported as the average correct words per minute read (CWPM). Oral Reading Fluency are broken down into non-learner: 0-5CWPM; Emergent: 6-44CWPM; Established: 45-80CWPM; Proficient: 80 or more CWPM.

Source: Analytical dataset: EGRA Midline N = 693; Baseline N=705

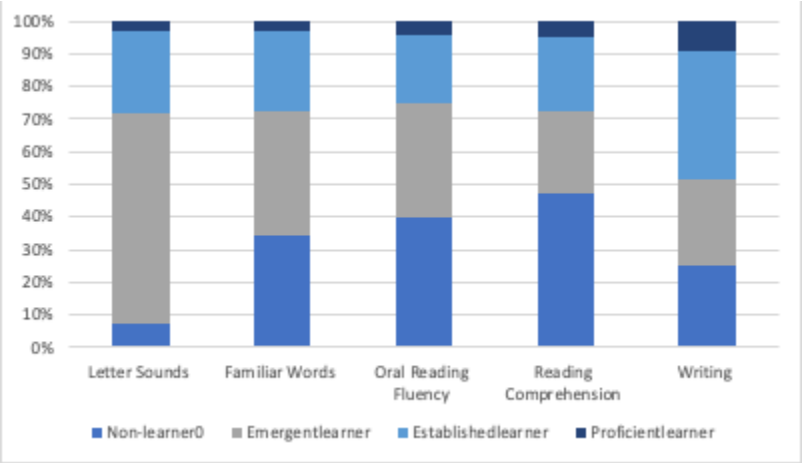

Figure 10 - Literacy Levels by Subtask

Literacy Outcomes are reported in two different ways: as means, and in terms of the percentage of beneficiaries that fall into four learning categories. The means of each subtask are calculated as the percentage of items correct, with the exception of Oral Reading Fluency. Oral Reading Fluency is calculated as the correct words per minute read. The four learner level categories reported, as defined by the LNGB MEL Guidelines, include those obtaining zero scores (Non-Learner), Emerging (1-40%), Established (41-80%), and Proficient (81% or more). The only exception to those guidelines is oral reading fluency.

Table 24 - Foundational literacy scores comparison: Baseline and Midline

Categories	Baseline literacy treatment	Midline literacy treatment	Difference baseline to midline
Letter Sounds	14.8	30.3	15.5
Familiar Words	7.8	24.4	16.6
Oral Reading Fluency	8.5	25.0	16.5
Reading Comprehension	15.0	28.1	13.1
Writing	9.1	38.6	29.5
Overall Score	**11.2**	**29.3**	**18.1**
Target score	**22.7**		

Source: Analytical dataset: EGRA Midline N = 693; Baseline N=705

The overall literacy score at midline is 29.3, an improvement of 18.1 points with respect to baseline (0.96 SD) (Tables 19 and 20).

At baseline, most Formal track girls were classified as non-learners (meaning they obtained zero scores, or in the case or Oral Reading Fluency, read less than 5 correct words per minute) in in all subtasks except for the letter sounds category (23.1%). On all subtasks besides writing, at least 70% of beneficiaries scored 40% or less[61]. In Oral Reading Fluency, 40.1% of beneficiaries could not read 5 correct letters per minute.

The proportion of beneficiaries with zero scores (non-learners) has decreased substantially across subtasks, though a larger share of girls in the familiar words and oral reading fluency are still in this band of achievement (34.2% and 40.1% respectively). Most girls are still in the Non-learner or Emergent learner bands (over 70% for all subtasks except writing), suggesting very low starting points in literacy at baseline. Looking at the improvements by band and

[61] However, there did not appear to be a ceiling or floor effect for the Formal EGRA literacy tests.

across subtasks, overall, no decrease in the share of girls performing in the highest categories is observed. The largest gap remains in oral reading fluency, whilst writing is where the highest share of Proficient learners and Established + Proficient learners score.

Of girls who have become proficient in subtasks compared to baseline, the largest increases are in writing (4.2 times increase) and letter sounds (3.6 times increase) which had the lowest percentage of proficient learners at baseline. The smallest increase -even though still 2.5 times higher- is recorded in oral reading fluency, which again suggests this is where the largest gaps are. See Annex 9, Table 78 for details on changes in learner band from baseline for literacy.

Regionally, Upper West and Upper East (Kusaal) presents the lowest EGRA scores (18.3 and 9.3 respectively, results are significant). Across these two regions, gaps are observed particularly in Familiar words, oral reading fluency and writing. Upper East (Kasem) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) present above average results across subtasks. However, these results may not reflect different levels of learning by students, but differences in the particularities of the languages they are learning. Both mean scores and standard deviations may be affected by differences in language. However, because the composition of the sample (in terms of proportions using each language) and because of the use of statistical weights, the scores may be aggregated effectively to measure improvement between evaluation points.

Table 25 - Foundational literacy scores Midline compared to Control - Regression analysis results

Categories	Estimated counterfactual	Estimated effect, Regression analysis
Letter Sounds	17.8	+12.5
Familiar Words	12.2	+12.2
Oral Reading Fluency	12.4	+12.6
Reading Comprehension	10.6	+19.3
Writing	8.8[62]	+28.0
Overall Score	**12**	**+17.3**

A regression analysis has been used to estimate the impact of the programme on literacy scores (Table 25). By comparing the midline treatment scores to the estimated counterfactual, data indicates an estimated effect size of a 17.3 %point increase in overall scores. The largest estimated effect was in writing, which increased by 28.0 % points over the counterfactual (1.27 SD). As for numeracy scores, considering the last year has been particularly challenging, it is likely that midline results would be even higher if the tests had been taken at a similar time as baseline[63].

Characteristic subgroup analysis of the learning outcome

Table 26 - Learning scores by key characteristic subgroups, regions and barriers: Midline

	Average literacy score (aggregate, midline)	Change in average literacy score since baseline	Average numeracy score (aggregate, midline)	Change in average numeracy score since baseline
All girls	**29.3**	**18.1**	**52**	**21.3**

[62] In some instances, estimated counterfactuals are lower than baseline scores. This is because on average, older test-takers often score lower than younger test-takers, and the regression analysis controls for age. This is presumably because as years pass without schooling, some numeracy and literacy skills fall out of practice.

[63] Further, for the EGRA, it was calculated that the scores peak around age 15, with the highest scores are on 14-15 years old, for those who have not been exposed to programme. As girls get older, they gradually lose their knowledge. For that reason, the analysis predicts that if girls were not in the programme, literacy scores would go down over time. Otherwise said, as girls in project get older, the girls in the counterfactual get progressively lower scores which increases the programme effect for older ages.

Disability subgroups:				
Any Disability	26.5	19.5	47.7	24.1
Marginalisation characteristics				
Mother / Married under 15 / Married	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lives with neither parent	22.8	5.9	48.2	13.2
1+ hours to primary school	27.3	12.1	57.1	19.5
Impoverished: Unable to meet basic needs without charity	23.5*	15.7	55.1	24.6
Currently employed	21	9.5	56.3	22.7
Employed and under 15	19.3	7.9	52.3	19.4
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)	39	27.7	50.8	21.5
Barriers				
Economic (Work or Costs)	27.5	16.5	47.1	16.6
Travel (Safety or Distance)	16.7*	11.5	43.6	16.7
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	24.4	19.5	51.5	29.9
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	19.4*	2.8	44.2	10.3
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	18.4*	14.2	41.8	18.8
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	18.8	16.0	44.6	29.2
Age				
Age 8 to 11	20*	12.4	41.2*	17.8
Age 12 to 15	31.8*	17.2	55.6*	18.2
Age 16-19	41.4*	N/A	57.9	N/A
Languages (Regions)				
Dagaare (Upper West)	18.3*	4.7	40.4*	8.9
Kasem (Upper East)	49*	13.6	70.5*	9.6
Kusaal (Upper East)	9.3*	5.8	61.8*	15.0
Likpakpaaln (Northern)	39.4*	36.8	53.9	39.3
Source Analytical dataset: EGRA Midline (N=693); Baseline (N=705) EGMA Midline (N=693); Baseline (N=705) Barriers: Caregiver Survey: Unenrolled Students Midline (N=209); Baseline (N=636)				
* = results are significantly higher for this group than baseline scores using the difference in difference methodology described in Annex 12				

Table 27 - Test-takers with a higher score at Midline than Baseline (%)

	EGRA	EGMA
Dagaare (Upper West)	58%	63%
Kasem (Upper East)	77%	72%
Kusaal (Upper East)	51%	83%

Likpakpaaln (Northern)	95%	98%

Sources: Individually-matched Baseline and Midline EGRA and EGMA Assessments (N=606)

Results by region (Table 26) have been examined by looking at overall midline scores as well as magnitude of improvements. In terms of absolute scores, Upper East (Kasem) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) drive the overall improvement in literacy scores, at 49.0* and 39.4* against an overall average of 29. For numeracy, Upper East (Kasem and Kusaal) drive the overall improvement, at 70.5* and 61.8* against overall an average of 52.

One of the most noticeable findings is the substantial diversion between regional improvement in comparison with baseline data. Whilst it is less appropriate to compare EGRA results to the same extent as EGMA due to the language differences, both EGMA and EGRA show the same trend: namely, girls in the Northern (Likpakpaaln) exhibit large improvements in both tests. As can be seen in Figure 11 Northern (Likpaklaaln) beneficiaries had an average score of 2.6 at baseline, and increased to 39.4 at midline. Among test-takers for whom we have baseline and midline data, the number of Likpakpaalm speakers who scored less than 1 percent on the EGRA fell from 130 (out of 255) at baseline to six at midline. The number of Dagaare speakers who scored less than 1 percent fell from 43 (out of 22) to 42[64]. Whilst Northern (Likpakpaaln) beneficiaries started from a much lower average score than other regions, it is also notable that Upper East (Kusaal) also had a much higher improvement in the EGMA than other linguistic-region groups, even though they started at a off fairly high level. Upper East (Kusaal) showed improvement mainly in the EGRA.

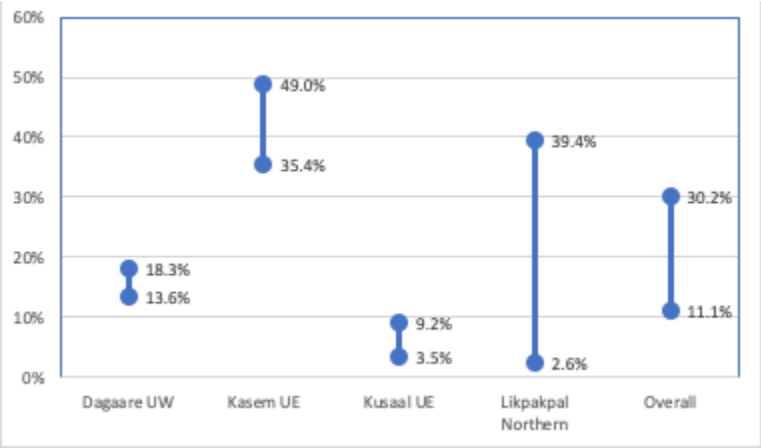

Figure 11 - Changes in EGRA scores since Baseline by Language / Regional Group

As can be seen below, the subtask scores by region and linguistic group show the same patterns as the overall numeracy scores. The only surprising result is that among Kasem speakers in Upper East, test-takers on average scored higher in subtraction 2 than subtraction 1, and higher in addition 2 than addition 1. This may suggest that most students who are proficient in basic addition are also proficient in more complex addition.

Table 28 - Numeracy subtask scores, by region and linguistic group

	Overall	Dagaare Upper West	Kasem Upper East	Kusaal Upper East	Likpakpaaln Northern
Number Id.	60.0	48.3	80.3	61.6	63.8
Missing Numbers	42.0	25.9	60.9	60.6	45.5

[64] Only 4 Kasem and 11 Kusaal speakers with scores at both time points scored less than 1 percent at baseline, so their changes are not comparable.

Addition 1	58.6	49.4	72.0	62.2	61.9
Subtraction 1	49.6	41.9	54.3	53.0	54.5
Addition 2	48.8	31.9	73.6	61.6	49.7
Subtraction 2	43.6	22.7	64.1	56.1	47.1
Word Problems	68.3	63.2	88.4	77.6	54.9
Overall Score	**52.0**	40.4	70.5	61.8	53.9

It is important to note that literacy scores should not be directly compared across different language. Some languages have more simple or complex phonetic and orthographic rules, making it take a different length of time to develop each skill. Literacy subtask results by region and language follow the similar patterns of the overall results. Even without making assumptions about the languages, the differences between linguistic groups are stark. Interestingly, Upper East includes both the highest scores (in Kasem) and lowest scores (in Kusaal). The average Kusaal speaker could only read 5.2 correct words per minute (Oral Reading). EGRA guidance suggests that readers need to be able to read at least 30 correct words per minute to be able to proficiently comprehend the information. Kasem readers, in contrast, on average exceeded 40 correct words per minute.

Table 29 - Literacy subtask scores, by region and linguistic group

	Overall	Dagaare Upper West	Kasem Upper East	Kusaal Upper East	Likpakpaaln Northern
Letter Sounds	30.3	20.0	48.9	12.6	39.6
Familiar Words	24.4	12.3	39.2	5.2	37.3
Oral Reading	25.0	14.5	45.8	5.2	34.2
Reading Comprehension	28.1	29.3	60.7	17.8	46.4
Writing	38.6	15.4	50.2	5.8	39.8
Overall	**29.3**	**18.3**	**49.0**	**9.3**	**39.4**

An alternative way to consider this is to examine the percentage of test-takers that had a higher score at midline than baseline (Table 28). It is expected that if students learned nothing and forgot nothing, about half of them would do slightly better at midline and half of them would do slightly worse. The data shows that only 58% and 51% of Dagaare and Kusaal reading outcomes are better than at baseline, respectively.

The analysis of learning outcome by subgroups (Table 26) shows that girls experiencing disability and demographic barriers present the highest improvements. The average change in improvement for these two sub-groups is higher in absolute numbers in the case of numeracy skills (29.9 and 29.2 % points respectively). However, when considering the starting point, those experiencing the demographic barrier have improved their literacy scores by 1.5 SD compared to baseline; whilst those experiencing disability barriers almost four-fold (398.0%) over the same period. It should be noted that scores of girls who reported a disability are still lower than the overall literacy and numeracy scores (2.8 and 4.3 difference for EGRA and EGMA respectively).

Other sub-groups that have shown higher than average improvements are girls from impoverished households and with a high chore burden and; to a lesser extent, girls currently employed. High chore burden girls have improved by a factor of almost 2.5 in their literacy scores (39.0, 27.7 increase since baseline). Results for EGRA for impoverished girls are significant (23.5*, a 15.7-point increase since baseline). The unenrolled girls experiencing the economic barriers are also a barrier subgroup whose score is close to the overall average (albeit still lower, together with those experiencing the disability barrier) which is also consistent with these findings. Looking at the intersection between sub-groups and regions, the results seem to suggest that regions with the greatest reduction in prevalence of impoverished households and a high chore burden are the ones that also showed the greatest improvement at midline for either both tests (Northern, Likpakpaaln) or one of the tests (EGRA for Upper East, Kasem and EGMA for Upper East, Kusaal). Finally, girls aged between 12 and 15 years old have improved literacy scores significantly more than other age groups; whilst if the (lower) starting point is considered, the youngest sub-group (8 – 11) shows the biggest percentage improvement (163.2% vs 117.8% for girls 12 - 15) compared to baseline.

However, it is striking that unenrolled girls affected by social norms, school barriers as well as travel perform substantially lower than the overall average. For literacy scores, lower results for these three sub-groups are significant. Whilst the extent varies between literacy and numeracy tests, those affected by social norms also present the smallest increases since baseline (19.4* in EGRA, up by 2.8 points; 44.2 in EGMA up by 10.3 points). As highlighted in Section 3.1 the prevalence of social norms barriers among unenrolled girls at midline is driven by (beyond impoverished) married, married under 15, mothers and employed sub-groups, whereby these barriers were not being experienced by any of the girls in these sub-groups at baseline.

Transition outcome

Successful transition outcome for the Formal Track – described in Table 28 – is unchanged since baseline.

Table 30 - Transition pathways - Formal Track Girls

Intervention pathway tracked for transition	Please describe the possible transition pathways for this group	Aim for girls transition for next evaluation point	Aim for girls transition level by the time project stops working with cohort
Formal Track	Girl enrols in Formal School. In Formal School the girl progresses to the next grade	Girls enrol into school	Girls enrol into school or continues to be in school and progressing through the relevant grades

Table 31 - Transition status - Baseline compared with Midline

Group name (e.g., In school girls etc – refer to OSS)	Intervention transition rate (Baseline)	Intervention transition rate (Midline)	Target	% of target achieved
Unenrolled (Never been to school)	63.7%	28.7%		N/A
Unenrolled (No longer in school)	24.8%	1.7%		N/A
Currently enrolled in formal school	9.4%	69.5%	85% (5,625)	81.8%
Currently employed	8%	4.3%		N/A
Source: Analytical dataset Caregiver survey N =	702	686		

Overall, 69.5% of girls have transitioned to school as of February/March 2021 when the data collection was conducted[65], from 9.4% that were in school at baseline (Table 29). Qualitative data found that most of girls interviewed across all three communities were *"nervous but excited"* to join a new school. In addition, in all three communities, teachers and Headteachers agreed their STAGE girls had been placed into the right grade, and noted

[65] As mentioned, following the first draft of the evaluation report, the EE was informed that transition last until April 2021, hence past the data collection period. Hence the transition rates reported by the project are higher.

that from their cohort, there had been no drop-outs so far. As a Headteacher from Piabunu (Northern) said: "*None has dropped because I think they have developed the likeness for school because of the ALPs".*

Baseline findings showed that 63.7% of girls had never been to school and 24.8% were no longer in school; at midline, these values have changed with 28.4% of girls that have never been to school; and 1.7% that were in school at some point but dropped out. Whilst this represents a substantial improvement compared to baseline, the percentage of 'never been to school' is still higher than the national rates reported in the Ghana Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2017/18 which found that only 19% of primary school age children in Ghana were out of school[66]. The comparison between midline and baseline is skewed (negatively) by the fact that 9.4% (66 girls) at baseline had been identified as being in school and were not (the majority of which being from the Upper West region, Dagaare language with 76.8% of all girls currently in school). This had been discussed with the STAGE team, which confirmed that these girls were removed from the project. Due to this reason, the actual increase in transition would be higher than what is observed by comparing the midline and baseline data.

Qualitative data found that the majority of girls interviewed across the three communities were happy with their transition to formal school, and several girls referred to the fact that ALPs helped them with this. For example, a girl from Naribuo (Upper West) said: *"I was excited to move into the new school because the afternoon classes have helped me a lot more than the old school, as my parents could not afford most of the things my old school requested. [Whereas with ALPS] I got a transition pack that helped me join the new school"*. In addition, three girls in Agaago (Upper East) agreed that they were *"very excited and prepared about going to the new school …the reading materials from ALP as well as the assistance of the teachers in the school [helped me with transition]".* However, due to existing barriers, transition was difficult for some respondents. One traditional leader from Naribuo (Upper West) reported that whilst *"ALPs classes are working well in this community, where to transition remains a problem"*. As a girl from Naribuo illustrates, she was *"not happy with the transition [as] there are no teachers in the new school"*. Finding issues with the new school is not a completely isolated case, as one girl from Piabunu (Northern) also reports that whilst she was *"very happy that I was going to a new school… we don't have chairs in the class, so we sit on the floor"*.

The STAGE logframe target of girls transitioned to school has not been achieved at the time of the data collection in February – March 2021, when considering the percentage target of 85% at midline. Based on project reporting, as of April 2021, at the completion of the transition period, a 95% enrolment rate had been achieved. In addition, when considering the absolute target (5,625), this has been achieved, if the rate of transition determined by the evaluation is compared to the target number of girls to have transitioned out of the total number of STAGE beneficiary girls:

5,625 number of girls to have transitioned (target) / 8,198 total Formal Track girls = 68.6%

Information is needed on how the target has been set by the project, particularly whether 5,625 was indeed a target in absolute numbers or whether it referred to the total number of STAGE girls (as in: 85% transitioned out of 5,625) and the project ended up ultimately supporting substantially more girls in the Formal Track (8,198).

Eight %of girls in the Formal track (56 girls) reported being currently employed at baseline against 4.3% at midline (see Section on employment). However, this is not a transition target for the Formal Track. Additionally, whilst the categories of never been to school/no longer in school/currently enrolled are mutually exclusive, currently employed overlaps with these categories.

Sub-group analysis of the transition outcome

Table 32 - Transition status by subgroups - region: Midline compared with Baseline

	Never been to school		No longer in school		Currently enrolled in formal school		Currently employed	
	Midline	Change	Midline	Change	Midline	Change	Midline	Change
All girls	**28.7%**	**-35.0%**	**1.7%**	**-23.1%**	**69.5%**	**60.1**	**4.3%**	**-3.7**
Disability subgroups								

[66] The MICS survey findings also showed that the Northern, Upper East and West have lower attendance rates than the national average. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/ghana/media/576/file/Ghana%20Multiple%20Cluster%20Indicator%20Survey.pdf

Any Disability	50%	-19.2%	7.7%	2.2	42.3%	20.3	3.8%	N/A
Project specific subgroups								
Mother / Married under 15 / Married	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lives with neither parent	26.1%	-15.6	4.3%	-24.9	69.6%	48.8	0.0%	N/A
1+ hours to primary school	17.2%	-49.1	1.0%	-26.4	81.8%	74.7	3.0%	N/A
Impoverished: Cannot meet basic needs without charity	17.5%*	-46.7	0.6%	-28.9	81.9%*	81.6	7.7%	N/A
Currently employed	30%	-20.0	6.7%	-12.9	63.3%	34.7	100.0%	N/A
Employed and under 15	32%	-18.0	8.0%	-10.5	60.0%	30.4	100%*	N/A
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)	48.3%	-27.3	3.4%	-14.6	48.3%	44.7	6.9%	N/A
Barriers								
Economic (Work or Costs)	94.6%	22.6	5.4%	-22.6	-	-	5.4%	N/A
Travel (Safety or Distance)	92.2%	22.4	7.8%	-22.4	-	-	10.4%	N/A
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	91.7%	6.2	8.3%	-6.2	-	-	14.6%*	N/A
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	93.3%	17.7	6.7%	-17.7	-	-	5.6%	N/A
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	87.9%	8.4	12.1%	-8.4	-	-	3.4%	N/A
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	92.5%	-2.6	7.5%	2.6	-	-	17.5%*	N/A
Age								
Age 8 to 11	31.5%	-37.5	1.1%	-18.6	67.4%	57.0	1.1%	N/A
Age 12 to 15	28.1%	-31.4	1.9%	-27.9	70%	61.5	5.7%	N/A
Age 16 to 19	24.4%	N/A	2.4%	N/A	73.2%	N/A	2.4%	N/A
Language (Region)								
Dagaare (Upper West)	12.3%*	-50.1	3.5%	-14.7	83.3%*	65.4	0.4%*	N/A
Kasem (Upper East)	51.0%*	11.4	0.0%	-51.6	49.0%*	40.2	10.4%	N/A
Kusaal (Upper East)	27.8%	11.5	3.8%	-76.2	68.4%	65.9	22.8%	N/A
Likpakpaaln (Northern)	37.6%*	-50.2	0.0%	-5.7	62.4%*	60.5	0.4%*	N/A

Source: Analytical Dataset
Caregiver Survey: Baseline: N=702; Midline: N= 686
Barriers: Caregiver Survey: Unenrolled Students: Baseline: N=636; Midline: N=209

*results are significantly higher for this group than baseline scores using the different in different methodology described in Annex 12.

At baseline, the sub-group with the highest proportion who had never attended school was those married under 15 years old, followed by those with a high chore burden and those that were mothers (Table 30). Findings are not reported for midline given observations for these groups, as they comprise fewer than 10 respondents (only a slight decline from baseline). The sub-group showing the least increase in transition is girls affected by a disability, whereby the percentage of never been to school is higher than the enrolled (50% versus 42.3%). This subgroup and

employed under 15 also show a higher prevalence of girls that are not currently in school than most other subgroups.

Baseline data suggested that for the Formal track girls, the impoverishment sub-group on its own was not always a cause for not attending school, and other factors such as distance to school, high chore burden, marriage and motherhood might come into play. This finding is further explored at midline, given that the subgroups with the largest increases of enrolment are girls that are from impoverished households and those that live one hour away from school. These sub-groups not only present the highest enrolment rates (at 81.8% and 81.9%*), but also the largest increases (74.7 and 81.6 % points). Slightly over half of girls with high chore burden are still not enrolled in school (with 48.3% that are enrolled), notwithstanding substantial increases in transition compared to the currently employed. Interestingly, girls with a high chore burden are the ones exhibiting the largest improvements in learning outcomes, compared to baseline. This suggests the following : i) the major decrease in the prevalence of girls with high chore burden can be seen as a sign of the families and girls' commitment to investing in education, which has most likely had an impact on the increased enrolment rates; ii) ALPs have been effective in improving the learning outcomes of girls with a high chore burden; however, for those girls who do continue having a high chore burden at midline, this constitutes a major impediment to transition into school. Qualitative data can help to surmise that families and girls may have been able to commit to the ALPs for their duration, due to the timing of classes which fit around chores, though at the moment of deciding whether to transition into school, this may not have represented an investment that is feasible with the length of the school day. As one girl in Agaago (Upper East) explains following her transition she is *"still trying to adjust with the timing of the schooling. Usually, during the afternoon classes, I can do my chores before classes begin, but with the formal school, I have to wake up very early to do some of the chores before I go to school… Sometimes, I am always compelled by house chores at home not to go school".*

Linked to the above, the currently employed and employed under 15 (which were among the sub-groups most affected by persistent social norms and school barriers) are also showing lower than average enrolment rates, and relatively smaller increases compared to baseline. This likely suggests that simultaneous enrolment and employment are not feasible for most, not that those that worked at baseline were less likely to enrol. In fact, of those for whom there is both baseline and midline data, only 6 percent who were employed at baseline still are, and only 3% of those who were not employed at baseline now are.

There are marked differences between regional subgroups in terms of enrolment. Upper West (Dagaare) transition rates are substantially higher than other regions, driving the overall transition rate for the Formal Track. Only 49% of girls in Upper East (Kasem) are enrolled in school.

The composition of the girls that are no longer in school by age and grade is available at Annex 9, Table 80.

Sustainability outcome

Table 33 - Sustainability indicators: Midline

	System	Community	Learning space / School
Indicator 1:	Extent that the district assembly support inclusive gender sensitive education Baseline status = 1 Midline status = 1	% of parents of marginalised girls who support girls education Baseline status = 1 Midline status = 1 (15.1%)	Extent that teachers/ ALP facilitators provide inclusive gender sensitive quality teaching Baseline status = N/A Midline status = 1
Indicator 2:	Extent that MOE, GES promote inclusive gender sensitive education in their district/region through monitoring and coaching using the Inclusive Education Monitoring Tool (IEMT) Baseline status = N/A Midline status = 2	Extent that key community leaders and power holders support girls' education Baseline status = 1 Midline status = 2 (27.4% report quarterly) (see IO indicator 4.2)	Extent that School Leadership support good quality and inclusive gender sensitive education Baseline status = 1 Midline status = 1

Indicator 3:	Extent that CBE steering committee adopts the STAGE curriculum for ALPs to support CBE programming in Ghana Baseline status = N/A Midline status = N/A	Extent that parents can access services within their district for their children with disabilities Baseline status = 0 Midline status = 1 or 2 (60)	N/A (only 2 indicators for school)
Baseline Sustainability Score (0-4)	**1**	**0.67**	**1**
Midline Sustainability Score (0-4)	**1.5**	**1.33**	**1**
Overall Sustainability Score (0-4, average of the three level scores)	**1.27**		

System level

Indicator 1: Extent that the district assembly support inclusive gender sensitive education

This indicator assesses the extent that the District Assembly (DA) supports the project. At baseline WEI reported that the DAs have been engaged in the community mapping and related project preparation. However, qualitative interviews with DAs and teachers found that the DA were yet to regularly attend and support schools. As such, at baseline, a score of 1 was given[67].

As demonstrated in detail below under Intermediate Outcome Indicator 4.3, the qualitative data at midline found that whilst some of the three sampled communities are starting to receive monitoring and supervision visits as planned, some communities are being left behind, and the ones that are included, could be improved on the coaching elements. WEI field data from ongoing engagement with local assemblies has seen some progress made in two communities in terms of improving access to and availability of adequate seating and desks[68]. As such, through the qualitative data and WEI field data, there is no evidence to suggest that DA support has improved since baseline. A score of 1 is therefore given as the DA is involved in project delivery/monitoring with frequent project engagement. WEI expect that engagement with other DAs in the future will yield results after the DAs have received the common fund. To move to a score of 2, the DA must demonstrate support to the project schools with little to no prompting by WEI.

Indicator 2: Extent that MOE, GES promote inclusive gender sensitive education in their district/region through monitoring and coaching using the Inclusive Education Monitoring Tool (IEMT)

At baseline, WEI reported that the MOE/GES are not yet using the Inclusive Education Monitoring Tool (IEMT). As this was to be expected at baseline, a score of N/A was given.

As reported under Intermediate Outcome Indicator 4.3 below, the qualitative data at midline found that 1 out of 3 local assembly members interviewed across the three communities were aware of the IEMT (from Piabunu, Northern Region). Whilst the qualitative data is far from representative, this does indicate that the IEMT is not consistently used across communities. This is to be expected as WEI report that the IEMT will be administered in June 2021 in the all the schools that the girls have transitioned to. As such, at midline, a score of 2 is given, which means that there is evidence of the IEMT being used, but it is irregular and/or not well documented.

[67] A score of 1 = District assembly are involved in delivery/monitoring; have improved knowledge and are demonstrating a more positive attitude towards girls education/employment. Project is aligned with specific policies, systems and departments.

[68] For example, WEI found that one District Assembly had provided furniture to a school which was lacking in January 2021, and a Municipal Assembly was also found to supply furniture to schools where STAGE transitioned.

Indicator 3: Extent that CBE steering committee adopts the STAGE curriculum for ALPs to support CBE programming in Ghana

At baseline, WEI report that the CBE steering committee has not taken any steps to adopt the STAGE curriculum for ALPs to support CBE programming in Ghana. Again, this was expected at baseline and a score of N/A was given.

At midline, the curriculum has been shared by WEI to the CBE steering committee for their inputs and further discussions, though feedback has not been received. As such, a score of N/A was given, as we cannot yet determine the attitude of the committee towards the curriculum. WEI note that the committee has not met since late 2019, partly due to a change in Director's and perhaps due to the Government of Ghana's inability to fund the programme consistently. If this remains to be the case, and considering COVID-19 disruptions, it seems unlikely that the CBE steering committee will adopt the STAGE curriculum before the end line data collection.

Community level

Indicator 1: % of parents of marginalised girls who support girls' education

The baseline quantitative data found that 85.6% of the sampled caregivers showed key knowledge, understanding, and a basic level of supportive attitude towards girl's education. However, it was found that only 27.3% are *actively* supporting girl's education[69]. Therefore, a score of 1 was given.

At midline, the basic level of supportive attitude towards girls' education has increased to 89.6%. Qualitative data has found the overwhelming majority are vocally supportive of girls' education, but there is still a small minority who hold the view that boys' education is more valuable. Examples of more active support for girls' education included financially supporting girls through school (even making sacrifices to do so), giving girls' time to do schoolwork at home, and showing interest in their days at school. A few respondents (from Naribuo, Upper West) reported that this has improved since ALPs. However, the quantitative data found that only 15.1% are *actively* supporting girls' education. As such, a score of 1 is maintained at midline.

Indicator 2: Extent that key community leaders and power holders support girls' education

At baseline, this indicator was not quantitatively measured. Analysis of the small sample of qualitative data found that whilst local leaders verbally demonstrate high levels of support for girls' education, there were few examples of the leaders *actively* supporting girls' education. Therefore, a score of 1 was given.

At midline, this indicator began to be measured quantitatively. The EE found that 27.4% of caregivers reported that community leaders spoke quarterly or more frequently in support of girls' education, and that 26.3% of caregivers said that action was taken in support of girls remaining in school, or out of school girls being enrolled. The qualitative data supports this finding. Anecdotal improvements include community leaders at baseline being more vocally supportive, whilst at midline, two of the three communities interviewed had good examples of local leaders actively mobilising community support for girls' education.

Therefore, whilst the qualitative data indicates a score of 3, as community leaders are starting to mobilise resources in support of girls' education, the findings are not representative enough to make that conclusion, and therefore a score of 2 is given, to reflect the fact that community leaders are at a very minimum showing improved practices/behaviours towards girls' education.

Indicator 3: Extent that parents can access services within their district for their children with disabilities

The baseline data from the quantitative survey found that of the parents that reported their child had a disability none (0) had received any services for children with disability. Therefore, a score of 0 was given.

[69] Active support is defined as meeting all of the following conditions: i) key knowledge, understanding, and a basic level of supportive attitude towards girl's education (measured through positive responses to the following survey questions: 1. Do you think [GIRL] has a right to education even though she is not in school?; 2. To what extent do you agree that "even when funds are limited it is worth investing in a girl's education?; 3.To what extent do you agree "a girl is just as likely to use her education as a boy?); ii) Active support: 1. Caregivers did not say any of the following were acceptable reasons for a child not to attend school: child needs to work, child needs to help at home, child is married, child is too old, child unable to learn, education is too costly, child is a mother; 2. When asked, girls stated that chores, work supporting home economic activities, or working in a family business were not a reason keeping her from enrolling in school or a vocational education programme

At midline, the survey asked whether girls with disabilities (which includes lots of difficulty in performing a task or cannot do at all) receive support from the government in relation to this. Out of 10 responses received by the caregivers of 12 girls with disability that were asked about support received[70], 60% said they can access support (mostly from Health Service, Other or District). See Annex 9, Table 64 for a detailed breakdown. There was no qualitative data to support or deny this finding.

It is not clear how this indicator should be reported against in the sustainability scorecard. It is noted 3 and 4 in the logframe both relate to 'are able to access services for their children most of the time'. Based on the quantitative data, the EE would rate this indicator as 2 (access to service some of the time) or 3.

Learning Space

Indicator 1: Extent that teachers/ ALP facilitators provide inclusive gender sensitive quality teaching

At baseline, data on this indicator was not collected, therefore scored as N/A.

As described under Intermediate Outcome Indicator 2.2, according to the quantitative survey at midline, 75.9% of marginalised girls strongly agreed or agreed to all survey questions assessing the effectiveness of facilitators at learning centres. This aligns with classroom observation reports by supervisors in the various DSPs submitted to WEI. Supervisors reported that close to all the facilitators use inclusive and gender sensitive teaching approaches. To consolidate this, supervisors provide on a regular basis coaching which has enhanced the quality of teaching. However, given this indicator is looking at sustainability, the EE recommends this is measured using teachers only. Ultimately, whilst there is evidence of some knowledge of what inclusive, gender-sensitive education is, it was not referenced consistently across the three communities, nor the four logframe characteristics. As such, it was given a score of 1 at midline as teachers show key knowledge, understanding and basic level of supportive attitude with regards to inclusive gender sensitive education and specific teaching approaches or management techniques. At the end line, it would be good to see the inclusive, gender-sensitive education being understood more consistently across communities and evidence of it being applied in practice. Additionally, all responses on this indicator were focused towards the "gender" aspect of this approach, rather than the "inclusive". At the end line, it would be good to see teachers referring to children with disabilities, and within marginalised sub-groups more within their responses.

Indicator 2: Extent that School Leadership support good quality and inclusive gender sensitive education

At baseline, analysis of qualitative data found that Headteachers across three communities were all aware of and able to describe the basics and supported gender sensitive education. A score of 1 was given.

As detailed under Intermediate Outcome Indicator 2.2 Findings, at midline of all Head Teachers interviewed across all three communities said they were aware of what inclusive, gender-sensitive education is. However, as with the teachers described above, it was not described consistently across communities, nor the four logframe characteristics. As such, a score of 1 is given again, as School Leadership show knowledge and supportive attitude on inclusive, gender sensitive education but the qualitative data did not find evidence for *improved* practice or resource mobilisation since baseline.

See Annex 9, Table 72 for STAGE approach to ensuring Sustainability.

3.3 Key Intermediate outcome findings

This section presents reporting and key findings against each of the intermediate outcome (IO) indicators in the STAGE logframe. It is important to note that the IO scoring criteria is different to sustainability outcome scoring, and hence they may sometimes score slightly differently despite being on the same topic (this is detailed under 'Target' sections where applicable). The data sources are primary data collected by the EE (quantitative and/or qualitative) and in a very few cases reporting from the STAGE programme. Comments on the adequacy of indicators and targets are provided for each IO indicator, consisting in some cases of proposals for reporting against indicators through the EE survey rather than qualitative data or WEI reporting. If accepted, these proposals would allow to increase representativeness and independence of reporting.

Intermediate Outcome 1 – Attendance

[70] Not all disability domains were asked this question, specifically for some cognitive disability domains (accepting changes, controlling behaviour, making friends) and mental health (anxiety and depression).

Table 34 - IO Indicator 1.1 – Attendance - Baseline (ALP classes) and Midline (Formal School)

IO indicator	Sampling and measuring technique used	Who collected the data?	Baseline level	Target for Midline	Midline level	Target for end line	Indicator used for next evaluation point.
1.1 Attendance rates of girls	39.8% of sample, 20 observations per girl[71] Measured by EE attendance form	EE	86%	90% (from the Logframe)	86.1%	85%	Yes

Main findings

The evaluation recorded formal school attendance for the Formal Track in the first weeks since school started on 15th January 2021. For each girl, the last four weeks from when data was collected are captured (20 observations per girl). Overall, attendance is 86.1%, which is almost the same as the attendance level to ALP classes recorded by WEI at baseline. The logframe target has not been achieved, which is illustrated by the view of a teacher interviewed in Naribuo (Upper West): *"I can say [attendance] has not really changed, since we still have that kind of low turnout or low percentage of the females in the school, and the rate at which they drop out hasn't changed".*

There is substantial regional variation, with Upper West and Upper East (Kasem) having reached the target (91.7%); and Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kusaal) having underachieved it, in the case of Upper East substantially (85.7% and 65%*). By sub-group it is encouraging that girls with a disability (N=10) and those far away from school show 90% and 89.3% attendance rates, respectively. However, slightly contrary to this, from the qualitative data, a Headteacher from Agaago (Upper East) did report that*: "As for regular attendance, it cannot be guaranteed considering the distance they have to walk to school every day".* Less positive, girls with high chore burden and from impoverished households exhibit lower attendance rates than at baseline, especially the former (82.9% and 85% respectively). This goes to show that the burden from housework continues being a key barrier to girls' education. See Annex 9, Table 82 for a detailed breakdown.

Target

The logframe target of 85% for end line might be ambitious given the midline attendance level achieved. STAGE should focus on addressing barriers to attendance particularly for those in Upper East (Kusaal) and Northern regions, and continue working on ways to reduce barriers, including on girls' chore burdens.

Table 35 - IO indicator 1.2 – Barriers to Attendance: Midline

IO indicator	Sampling and measuring technique used	Who collected the data?	Baseline level	Target for Midline	Midline level	Indicator used for next evaluation point?
1.2 Extent that girls, caregivers, teachers and school leaders feel the support received helped reduce the barriers to regular attendance	- Qualitative - 3 questions in Caregiver's survey. Calculated as the % of all respondents interviewed who say that they both (a) receive the stipend and	EE	Not measured at baseline	N/A	20.5% (New reporting proposed by EE)	Yes

[71] Data for 276 respondents from the Formal track was collected, with 20 observations per girl (totalling 5,520 observations). Twenty-five of the respondents could not be matched to the full dataset, though are at least from regions that have formal track interventions and therefore they have been included in the sample. This means that there are 276 observations which the evaluation has geographical data for, but only 251 for which there is data on age, characteristics and barriers.

	(b) it has increased attendance[72].					

Main findings

Table 36 - Support of STAGE in reducing barriers to attendance: Midline

Question	N	Responses			
Received scholarship, cash transfer or financial assistance in last 12 months		**Yes**	**No**	**Don't Know**	
Overall	687	23.0%	76.4%	0.6%	
Has this support had an impact on the likelihood of [girl] being enrolled at school		**More likely**	**Just as likely as before**	**Less likely**	**Don't know**
Overall	158	90.5%	4.4%	2.5%	2.5%
Has this support had an impact on how often the [girl] attends school/intervention		**More regularly**	**No Change**	**Less Frequently**	**Don't know**
Overall	158	89.2%	7.6%	1.3%	1.9%
Source: Analytical dataset Caregiver survey					

Caregivers were asked whether they have received financial assistance (e.g., a scholarship) from STAGE in support of girls' education, and whether this support had an impact on a) the likelihood of the girl being enrolled at school, and b) the frequency of attendance (Table 34). Out of 687 records, 23.0% responded affirmatively (N=158), 76.4% negatively and 0.6% did not know. Regional variation is substantial, with only 4.4%, 5.1% and 18% of caregivers in Northern (Likpakpaaln), Upper East (Kusaal) and Upper West (Dagaare) regions reporting having received support, against 100% of caregivers in Upper East (Kasem). However, it should be noted that scholarship provided by STAGE is the transition kit for enrolment. It is not clear from the data whether all respondents had this clear when answering the question, hence these findings should be taken with caution, especially given the large regional variation and the possibility that the coverage in Upper East (Kasem) might be linked to support from another intervention[73]. (Likpakpaaln) (Kusaal) Detailed disaggregation can be found at Annex 9, Table 83

Of the 158 positive responses, for the majority (90.5%) support received made it more likely for the girl to be enrolled in school. Furthermore, almost 90% of respondents also affirmed that such support had a positive impact on attending school/the ALPs more regularly. In both questions, all caregivers of girls currently employed, affected by a high chore burden and almost all (99%) of those in Upper East (Kasem) responded 'more likely' and 'more regularly' respectively. Detailed disaggregation can be found at Annex 9, Table 84 and 85

Table 37 - STAGE: Other project support received: Midline

Question	N	Responses				
Have own textbooks / learning materials		**Always have my own**	**Have to share sometimes**	**Don't have student / learning materials**	**Don't know**	
Overall	689	60.3%	18.7%	19.5%	1.3%	

[72] At end line it is recommended to establish an alternative way of measuring whether support of STAGE has helped in reducing barriers to attendance. Massive regional differences relating to who has received financial assistance over the past 12 months, and the fact that STAGE support goes beyond provision of financial assistance, make this way of reporting on such indicator of limited value. It is noted in STAGE logframe there is no indication of a way to measure this indicator (only specifying the data source would be qualitative EE interviews) and no target.

[73] STAGE programme also detailed that few projects/DSPs occasionally receive financial and non-financial assistance to support the beneficiaries. This support can come from the local government agencies (e.g., wheelchair donations by the Jirapa Municipal in the Upper West) and/or from international donors. According to the programme, this is not a very pronounced phenomenon.

Have received WASH kits and/or sanitary wear		WASH kits	Sanitary wear	Both	No	Don't know
Overall	689	2.5%	26.1%	2.2%	67.6%	1.4%
Have received funds for transportation or a bicycle to travel safely to the Learning Centre		**Funds to pay for travel**	**Bike**	**Both**	**No**	**Don't know**
Overall	689	0.4%	0.2%	1.0%	98.0%	0.3%
Received information from your facilitator or CoC member on how to access child protection services		**Yes**	**No**	**Don't Know**		
Overall	689	58.4%	36.0%	5.5%		
Source: Analytical dataset Girl survey						

Regarding other support received that could impact positively on transition to school and attendance (Table 35), only small percentages of Formal Track girls received some kind of material support. For example, only 1.6% received funds for transportation, or a bicycle to travel safely to the Learning Centre or both (even though only those communities/girls most in need are to be delivered bikes or funds for transportation); whilst 30.9% received WASH kits and/or sanitary wear. Furthermore, 60% of girls reported having their own textbooks, 219% share and 20% have none.

The qualitative data supports this finding. On **bicycles**, girls and their caregivers in each of the three communities were frustrated that they did not receive the bicycles they felt they were promised, and so travel has remained a large barrier for them. A girl from Agaago (Upper East) sums up the general sentiment when she pleads with our data collection team that she wants *"to find out when the bicycles that were promised would be brought, because the distance to school is far, and may encourage some of us to drop out of school"*. On **books and transition packs**, whilst a good proportion of those interviewed across communities seems to have been delivered to them, the transition packs received varied. For example, the girls in Naribuo (Upper West) report to receiving books, but not bags, stationary, uniform and shoes as promised. The girls in Piabunu (Northern) received uniform, books, bags and pencils, and finally the girls in Agaago (Upper East) report to receiving everything but the shoes, however one girl reports that the STAGE IPs *"recently came and took our footwear sizes and told us they were going to bring shoes"*. It is noted though that not all communities/girls were to receive bikes or funds for transportation).

All the qualitative respondents that did receive some materials reported that it helped to reduce their barriers to attendance. As a girl from Agaago (Upper East) summed up: *"it has been of great help, as if not for that [the transition pack], my parents would struggle to get me these items"*. The caregivers in this community echoed this, as one said, *"the burden of getting those items for her has been taken off our shoulders"*.

This finding was to be somewhat expected as the STAGE project activities have been impacted by COVID-19. The STAGE annual report (July 2020) flagged that formal education transition support kits procurement and distribution had not started yet, nor the establishment of bicycle banks for girls reintegrating into formal education (1,200 bicycles to be distributed). More information is needed on progress once activities have resumed.

Table 38 - Learning space at STAGE Learning Centre: Midline

Question	Responses					
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
The learning centre entrance is easily accessible	34.1%	59.7%	3.5%	1.6%	0.7%	0.3%
There is enough space in the classroom for everyone in my class to sit	26.4%	56.8%	8.6%	5.6%	1.6%	0.6%
There are separate toilets for boys and girls at my school	27.6%	48.2%	6.7%	14.1%	3.2%	0.2%
The toilets are accessible (all students,	17.4%	44.0%	8.6%	23.5%	5.8%	0.3%

even those with disabilities, can use the restrooms)						
The toilets are always in working conditions	18.0%	44.4%	8.6%	22.6%	5.5%	0.9%
There is water and facilities for personal hygiene available in the toilet	11.3%	35.4%	8.3%	35.4%	9.0%	0.4%
I have learned how and where to report harassment or abuse	13.6%	58.5%	8.4%	15.4%	1.9%	2.0%
When in class, I feel safe with my facilitators/teachers	45.2%	51.1%	2.3%	0.6%	0.4%	0.3%
Source = Analytical dataset, Girl Survey N = 689						

Girls were asked about their opinion on the accessibility and comfort of the STAGE Learning Centre. As shown in Table 36, the majority considered the entrance to the centre easily accessible (94.2%) and that there is enough space in the classroom for everyone to sit (83.8%). On the other hand, only 62% agree or strongly agree that their toilets are always in working conditions and that toilets are accessible to all students including those with disabilities. In particularly, 5.8% strongly disagrees with this latter statement. Over one quarter either disagree or neither agree nor disagree with the statement "I have learned how and where to report harassment or abuse", and over 3% (23/689) either disagree or neither disagree nor agree with the statement "I feel safe in the classroom with my facilitator/teacher". Disaggregated data by region shows that girls in Upper West (Dagaare) tend to agree or strongly agree less than the overall average to all of the above statements, whilst responses from Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kusaal) tend to drive the overall averages up. Results for Upper West (Dagaare) and Northern are significant across all statements. By marginalisation characteristic, a notable finding is that only 56.0% of girls with a disability or experiencing the disability barrier, against 73.7% of girls' overall mention that they have learned how and where to report harassment or abuse. In particular, 32% of girls with a disability disagree with this statement. See Annex 9, Table 86 for the complete disaggregation.

STAGE Girls' education during COVID-19

Both caregivers and girls were asked a range of questions about the impacts of COVID-19 on various aspects of their lives, with a focus on girls' education, as well as about STAGE support during the pandemic (see Section 1.3 on changes to STAGE TOC).

Overall, 0.6% of caregivers reported someone in their household contracted the virus (2.1% in Upper East, Kasem; 1.3% in Upper East, Kusaal; none in Upper West). The effects most felt among caregivers are not being able to attend meetings (church, market, social gatherings, funerals, with 73.1% overall) and not being able to work (16.7% overall). In total, 72.9% have experienced a decrease in income as a result of the pandemic. Households that have been most impacted by COVID-19 are in Upper East (Kusaal) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) where 100% and 91.6% of respondents experienced a decrease in income respectively (results are significant). See Annex 9, Table 87 for detailed results.

The majority of caregivers reported on girls feeling anxious about contracting COVID-19, their caregiver getting infected, and changes in their daily activities (93.8%, 83.9% and 81.3% respectively strongly agree or agree to the statements). Across three questions, higher levels of anxiety are reported in Upper East (Kusaal) and Northern (Likpakpaaln), whilst lower levels in Upper West (Dagaare) (results are significant). As a girl from Agaago (Upper East) worried: *"I was afraid of getting the virus hearing how dangerous they describe it. I also didn't know where the sickness was coming from and so I just stayed away from the class for fear of getting it".* Overall, 19% of caregivers also reported that COVID was a barrier to attending school/ALP or vocational training. See Annex 9, Table 88 for detailed results.

Table 39 - Caregivers' responses: education during COVID-19: Midline

Region	In the last 6 months, [GIRL] has been affected by COVID-19 as a result of… (strongly agree or agree)		
	Not being able to attend ALP classes in person	Not being able to listen to ALP classes remotely	Challenges in doing homework

All	72.7%	69.0%	66.9%
Dagaare (Upper West) *	65.7%	65.0%	69.6%
Kasem (Upper East)	70.8%	67.8%	34.4%
Kusaal (Upper East) *	89.9%	69.6%	75.9%
Likpakpaaln (Northern)*	75.2%	73.6%	73.6%
Source: Analytical dataset Caregiver survey N=689			
*results are significantly higher for this group than baseline scores using the difference in difference methodology described in Annex 2.			

A majority of caregivers reported COVID-19 impacted on the girls' education during the period (Table 37). Almost three quarters (72.7%) of caregivers reported that the girls were affected in terms of not being able to attend ALP classes in person, particularly in Upper East (Kusaal) and Northern (89.9% and 75.2% respectively). All girls interviewed for qualitative data reported that they had missed classes due to schools being shut. As a girl from Piabunu (Northern) recalled: *"I was not going every day. Sometimes I am doing work in the house. But we all stopped going when COVID-19 came…. The time we were supposed to go to the new school we didn't go because of the COVID-19".* Slightly fewer were affected in terms of not being able to listen to ALP classes remotely, particularly in Northern (73.6%). For 66.9% of caregivers another effect was also experiencing challenges in doing homework, particularly in Upper East (Kusaal) and Northern (Likpakpaaln). This effect was felt by a minority in Upper East (Kasem) with only 34.4% agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statement.

Importantly, without being prompted, some girls interviewed from Agaago (Upper East) referred to the fact that the COVID-19 disruptions caused, and could lead to more, drop-outs. A girl during her interview observed that *"before the lockdown we were 49 in class made up of 27 girls but we now only have 21 girls whilst the boys' number is still the same, the rest have either gotten pregnant or just refuse coming again".* In addition, one of the boys from Agaago (Upper East) said, lockdown had added benefits to caregivers: *"the virus has brought some relief to my parents as we stayed home for a long time and were not going to school and so did not have to buy any school materials fees".* It could be that with so long out of school, caregivers and children may have got used to missing school. Lastly, a girl in the FGD recalled that when they came back to school, COVID-19 precautions made school more boring which makes her skip classes: *"We used to be in one class but when we came back, we were put into two classes and seated far away from one another which made learning boring and so I only attended a few of the classes"*. As such, it appears likely that there be future impacts of COVID-19 on to girls' education and drop-out rates.

Table 40 - Girls' responses: education during COVID-19: Midline

Question	N	Responses					
There were in person ALP sessions during the pandemic		**Yes**	**No**	**Don't Know**			
Overall	689	38.8%	58.3%	2.9%			
How many were you able to attend?		**All**	**Most**	**Half**	**Some**	**None**	**Don't know**
Overall	267	24.3%	29.2%	1.5%	44.9%	-	-
There were distance ALP sessions during the pandemic (via radio or broadcasted in the community)		**Yes**	**No**	**Don't Know**			
Overall	689	51.2%	40.8%	8.0%			
How many were you able to attend?		**All**	**Most**	**Half**	**Some**	**None**	**Don't know**
Overall	352	19.6%	30.1%	1.1%	44.9%	2.6%	1.7%
Did you have challenges doing your homework during the pandemic?		**Yes**	**No**	**Don't Know**			
Overall	689	54.4%	43.8%	1.9%			
Source: Analytical dataset Girl survey							

*results are significantly higher for this group than baseline scores using the difference in difference methodology described in Annex 2.

At midline, almost 40% of girls reported that there were **in person ALP sessions** during the pandemic, the majority of which were in Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kasem) (49.2% and 47.9% respectively), with only 13.2% mentioning access to in person ALPs in Upper West (Table 38; see Annex 9, Table 89 for regional disaggregation). These responses are expected given that ALPs were suspended during a period of time and STAGE opted for continuing teaching and learning through radio and community information systems. ALPs were resumed to a certain extent, with reduced numbers allowed per class, though the exact frequency and amount of ALP classes is not known by the EE. Of those girls who responded there were in-person classes, better attendance patterns were also noted in Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kasem) where 65.6% and 75.5% were able to attend all or most of the classes; whilst attendance was worse in Upper West (Dagaare), with 73.3% attending only some of the classes.

Only 51.2% of girls reported there were **distance learning sessions via radio or broadcasted in the community**, with Upper West (Dagaare) and Upper East (Kusaal) exhibiting the lowest prevalence of remote classes (39.2% and 38.2% respectively). Results are significant for Upper West and Upper East (Kasem). In the latter, 87.2% of girls reported there were remote classes. And the reasons for these regional disparities are not known. It is worth noting that Upper West also had lower literacy and numeracy scores than other regions and Upper West (Kusaal) the lowest literacy scores. Furthermore, only 12.6% of girls in Upper West that reported the availability of distance learning were able to attend all or most of the classes, against over 70% in Upper East (Kasem) and 67.2% in Northern.

Girls were asked the reason for not being able to attend remote classes (Annex 9, Table 90. According to quantitative data, key reasons include lack of electricity at home and at the learning centre (55.7% and 44.3% respectively). Other prevalent reasons relate to access to radios. It should be noted that as part of making distance teaching and learning possible, STAGE was to provide girls without radios (established through a baseline assessment) with radios and batteries in order that they could listen to their ALP classes. Overall, 16.5% reported their household/themselves do not have a radio, the majority being in Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kusaal) with 28.9% and 27.3% respectively; 43.7% that the radio was not powered/the radio battery went dead, the great majority being in Upper West (Dagaare) with 79.5%, and Upper East (Kusaal) with 27.3%; 43.7% that they do not have money to buy batteries, again with the great majority being in Upper West (Dagaare, 73.1%) and Upper East (Kusaal, 45.5%). These findings are corroborated by the qualitative data. Whilst it was clear from the qualitative data that **radios were distributed in all three communities**, and was found to be useful, most girls questioned complained about not receiving individual radios, meaning that they had to share or congregate, which meant some girls missed some classes. As a girl from Piabunu (Northern) described: *"The radios were not enough so we didn't all get. We were coming together in one place to listen. Because of this some of us could not always attend. They should have given everyone their own radio".* In addition, one caregiver in Piabunu (Northern) reported that her girl could not always listen to the radio as *"the batteries were down and we could not buy more".* A caregiver in Naribuo (Upper West) admitted to using the *radio "as a source of entertainment and pleasure… but we are unable to use it when the battery is dead and we have no money to buy".* These findings indicate that whilst the radios were an appropriate tool for delivering lessons, the type of radio (battery rather than solar or wind-up) and the quantity of radios, meant that girls could not always listen to lessons, and also risked not being COVID-19 friendly with girls all gathering together to listen.

Finally, 60.9% of girls in Upper East (Kasem), 27.3% of girls in Upper East (Kusaal) and 20% of girls in Northern reported one reason for not attending was being busy with household chores. This finding confirms that even if for many girls, a high chore burden did not prevent them from enrolling to school, it continues to be a challenge to education.

As reported by caregivers, a substantial number of girls had challenges doing their homework during the pandemic. Regional trends are similar across caregivers and girls' responses, with the highest challenges reported in Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kusaal): 59.7% and 68.4% of girls respectively responded affirmatively to the statement (results are significant). Among those that reported challenges (N=374), key reasons were difficulties in understanding homework (for 84.8% of the overall sample, particularly in Northern, 95.5%*); and not being able to ask for support to the teacher/facilitator (for 77% of the sample overall, particularly in Upper East region, both languages). Not being able to study with peers/classmates was a less prevalent reason (22.7% of the sample). See Annex 9, Table 91 for detailed results.

Intermediate Outcome 2 - Quality of teaching

Table 41 - IO Indicator 2 - Quality of teaching: Midline

IO indicator	Sampling and measuring technique used	Who collected the data?	Baseline level	Target for midline	Midline level	Target for end line	Indicator used for next evaluation point.
2.1 % of Girls that agree that their facilitator was effective at the learning centre	Survey[74]	EE	Not measured at baseline	75%	73.9% (N=689)	85%	Yes
2.2 Extent that teachers/ facilitators apply inclusive gender-sensitive education	Survey[75] EE Qualitative (Section 2.3) WEI classroom observation summary	WEI EE		60%	75.9% (N=322)	80% (proposed EE)	Yes
2.3 % of facilitators who demonstrate effective literacy/numeracy instruction	WEI classroom observation summary EE Qualitative (Section 2.3)	WEI EE		60%	98.5% (WEI reporting)	N/A	Yes

IO Indicator 2.1

Main findings

Overall, 73.9% of girls at midline agree that their facilitator is effective at the learning centre, just below the target as per logframe (Table 39). Regionally, responses in Upper East (Kasem) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) drove the result, at 92.6%* and 72.4% respectively, with Upper West (Dagaare) at 69.2% lowering the overall average. Girls in remote areas are significantly more likely than other groups to agree with the statement (93.0%*); girls with disability also drive the overall average (76.9%) whilst all other sub-groups are below average, particularly those living with neither parent and currently employed girls. In terms of unenrolled girls, less girls experiencing the demographic and the disability barrier agree with the statement than the overall average (62.5% and 65.2% respectively). The reason for this finding against the positive one on girls with a disability is not clear. It indicates that girls experiencing the disability barrier (school cannot meet needs) do not necessarily overlap with girls reporting a disability. Detailed results by sub-group and region can be found at Annex 9, Table 92

The qualitative data complements the overall indicator finding, with all girls across all three communities reporting that they "loved" or "liked" ALPS afternoon classes. The overwhelming reasoning for this was due to the teaching style and local language instruction which both made it easy to understand. In Naribuo (Upper West), a girl said*: "I*

[74] Eight questions (HHG_13b-g) were inserted in the survey to assess effectiveness of facilitator at learning centre. The questions referred to practices including: providing individual support to pupils; organising paired/group work; valuing contribution of pupils in the lessons and other attributes of effective teaching as per STAGE logframe and STAGE classroom observation tool. The overall result for this indicator is calculated as the prevalence of girls that strongly agreed or agreed to all eight questions.

[75] The value reported from the EE quantitative data (75.9%) calculates the prevalence of marginalised girls (under any of the marginalised sub-groups) that strongly agreed or agreed to all eight questions (HHG_13b-g) to assess effectiveness of facilitator at learning centre. As per STAGE logframe, gender sensitive education is defined as: Marginalised girls, girls and boys get equal level of attention, interaction, praise/criticism, roles, classroom resources; are encouraged to engage with each other in class / seating; are encouraged / facilitated; gender and inclusive discriminative language is challenged and explained. The EE considers that HH survey questions HHG_13b-g cover all these gender sensitive teaching practices, except for that relating to challenging and explaining discriminative language and obviously not capturing boys' perspectives.

loved the way they handled me, and the language that they used". Similarly, a girl from Piabunu (Northern) said she liked that*: "they were using the local language and the teacher was very friendly to us".* Lastly, one girl in Agaago said: *"the facilitator made me enjoy every bit of it. His teaching was always well explained and well understood".*

In terms of content, all girls confirmed that they were taught literacy, numeracy and life skills (such as COVID-19, cleanliness and self-confidence) in their local language, with some English instruction too. However, when asked what could have been improved about ALPs teaching, one girl from Naribuo (Upper West) and two girls from Agaago (Upper East) would have liked to see more subjects being covered. In addition, girls in Agaago (Upper East) reported not learning enough of the English language to help them in school. As one girl says: *"English language should be a priority so that when we are transitioned it would not be difficult for us to understand and communicate with it".* Lastly, one girl from Agaago reported not being taught to write their name properly in ALPs, *"but now we have been taught [in school]".* Although not representative, the above qualitative findings may go some way to help illustrate just some of the reasonings that could be given by the 26.1% of girls that disagreed that their facilitator was effective.

Targets

The target seems realistic based on the results at midline. However, WEI should specify what the target in the logframe (85%) for end line refers to and whether STAGE will be conducting classroom observations. The ALPs have terminated, and with girls transitioned in school, it is not clear in relation to whom the measurement should be at the next evaluation point. It would not make sense for it to be ALP facilitators; however, if girls are asked about school teachers, the results would not be comparable; nor it is clear whether there would be any attribution to STAGE in the first place. STAGE should consider whether deleting this target if not applicable.

IO Indicator 2.2

Main Findings

This indicator is to be reported through WEI's classroom observations triangulated with EE's qualitative data from facilitators[76]. The EE reported on this indicator through the survey data, considering the percentage of marginalised girls (i.e. under any of the marginalisation categories, N=322 or 46.7% of the overall sample) that agreed their facilitator to be effective at the learning centre (Indicator 2.1). According to the midline survey, 75.9% of marginalised girls strongly agreed or agreed to all survey questions assessing the effectiveness of facilitators at learning centres (Table 39). This aligns with WEI classroom observations which revealed that largely facilitators have fully integrated inclusive and gender sensitive approaches to teaching, in line with the GES policies and manual for teaching. This is positive as the value for marginalised girls only is higher than the overall average (73.9%).

All Teachers and Headteachers interviewed across all three regions said they were aware of what inclusive, gender-sensitive education is[77]. However, when asked to explain this and give concrete examples, some elements of gender-sensitive pedagogy were cited more than others. Most responses revolved around the characteristic of giving girls and boys equal levels of attention in the classroom. As the Teacher from Naribuo (Upper West) said: *"I normally employ the whole class method in teaching my class such that questions are distributed fairly to both boys and girls".* Similarly, in Agaago (Upper East), the teacher said: *"Usually, when I ask a question in class, I give equal opportunities to both boys and girls without discriminating among them".* Of respondents interviewed, none mentioned giving equal levels of praise and criticism to girls and boys.

All other inclusive gender-sensitive characteristics listed in the STAGE logframe were also referred to, but to lesser extents, and not consistent across the three communities. Only one community referenced the need to encourage and facilitate marginalised girls. In Agaago (Upper East) the teachers report that they: call parents of absent girls to see why they did not come to school; prompt shy girls to *"contribute during lessons"*; take into consideration that *"boys may pick things up faster than girls"* who are exhausted from doing household chores before school; and seat the ALPs girls with *"good students in class, especially those they were already comfortable with"* so they can ask for peer support. With regards to the characteristic of girls and boys being encouraged to engage/sit together in class, again just one community referenced this. The Naribuo (Upper West) teacher claimed that: *"If you separate boys*

[76] No summary reporting/data was received from the project.
[77] For clarity, at midline, the qualitative data asked respondents specifically on whether teachers apply gender-sensitive education, as they have received training from STAGE on this, and the findings can be compared to end line.

from girls, there would be no competition in class. Whereas I believe in having competition [between boys and girls]".

With regards to challenging and explaining discriminatory language, a teacher in Agaago (Upper East), says that they *"do not allow teasing against boys or girls"*. This is supported by a boy in the same community who admitted that*: "If a girl is doing well in a class, sometimes we discourage them and tell them that they will soon get pregnant. We sometimes refer to them as witches… This behaviour has stopped because our teachers advise us against it".* However, this was only referenced in one community.

Whilst the teachers in Naribuo (Upper West) and Agaago (Upper East) seemed to have an adequate grasp on what inclusive, gender-sensitive education entails, the teacher in Piabunu (Northern) seemed less confident, and their responses were more confused: *"So gender sensitive teaching means observation, you observe the girls and boys in class and advise them to do the right thing".*

Target

Should STAGE accept the proposal for measuring the prevalence of applied gender-sensitive education from the girls' survey as an alternative or complementary measurement to that specified in the logframe, a suggested target would be 80%.

It is important to note that the scoring criteria for this IO indicator (i.e., "*2 = some demonstration*") is different to the scoring criteria for the same question under the Sustainability Indicator 1 under school-level (i.e., "*2 = teachers/facilitators are improving their classroom/centre practice towards inclusive gender sensitive education and local resource mobilisation is growing*"). Hence the differences in scoring.

IO Indicator 2.3

Main Findings

This indicator is to be reported through WEI's classroom observations triangulated with EE's qualitative data from facilitators. Reporting from WEI[78] states that "analysis of DSP coaching data revealed that the midline target has been overachieved. Close to 98.5% of facilitators (Table 39) demonstrated effective literacy and numeracy instruction through the use of participatory approaches in line with the STAGE protocols for the ALP classes. Similarly, 91% of facilitators avoided repetition, encouraged peer mentoring and completed both literacy and numeracy lessons on time".

The small sample of qualitative data found that in the three communities interviewed, most girls reported that they enjoyed ALPs classes in literacy and numeracy (as mentioned under IO 2.1 above). To add to this, a girl from Naribuo (Upper West), mentions that thanks to ALPs she is now able to *"speak English, write the alphabet, and count numbers".* In Piabunu (Northern), one girl reports being about to *"add numbers" now*, and another girl can now *"read".* In Agaago (Upper East), one girl remarks that: *"I have learnt a lot, but the most useful thing was the fact that my numeracy level of understanding increased"* and has learnt *"division"* of numbers. Moreover, the teacher in Agaago (Upper East) has been impressed with some of the girls that came from ALPs. They said that *"some of them are good in both maths and reading, as they said they were taught that during their ALPs classes. There is one of them who is very impressive in the class… even more than some of the formal learners".*

Similar trends were observed in WEI classroom observation. According to WEI's reporting, 90% of the girls revealed that the ALP classes were very participatory which provided them with opportunities for peer mentoring and learning. A beneficiary in Nkunsieh (Upper East) noted to WEI that: "*Before ALP I couldn't write my name. Thanks to the ALP class I am able to write my name and calculate numbers."*

Though as mentioned already under IO Indicator 2.1 above, a minority of girls did offer recommendations for improvement which could be considered.

Target

Considering the fact that the ALP intervention had yet to be rolled out, no baseline figure was set. However, STAGE set a target of 60% for the midline. STAGE should consider whether to keep this indicator for end line, given the termination of ALPs for the Formal track.

[78] DSP coaching Data was not shared with the EE.

Intermediate Outcome 3 - Life Skills

There has been no change to the methodology for life skills (see Annex 15). This section presents summary and detailed results for the two Intermediate Outcome Indicators: 3.1 Life Skills index score and 3.2 Extent that caregivers perceive positive changes in girls' Life Skills.

Girls Foundational Life Skills

Table 42 - IO Indicator 3.1 - Life Skills Index score: Baseline and Midline

IO	IO indicator	Sampling and measuring technique used	Who collected the data?	Baseline level	Target for Midline	Midline level	Target for end line	Indicator used for next evaluation point.
3 Number of marginalised girls supported by GEC with improved Life Skills (Formal Track)	3.1 Life skills index score	Same sampling as Learning Test and HH Survey – see section 4.4	EE	56.0	65.0 (target from Logframe)	60.5	75.0 (target from Logframe)	Yes

Table 43 - Life Skills Midline Results – Index

Categories	Mean midline	SD	Non-learner 0%	Emergent learner 1%-40%	Established learner 41%-80%	Proficient learner 81%-100%	Mean baseline	Change in average score since baseline
Environment	62.3	13.8	0.1%	4.5%	85%	10.4%	54.0	8.3
Money Management	73.4	21	0.4%	9.7%	45.7%	44.2%	65.0	8.4
Gender Based Violence	81.2	16.9	0.3%	3%	36.6%	60.1%	76.5	4.7
WASH	64.4	13.9	0%	4.6%	82%	13.4%	61.9	2.5
Sexual & Reproductive Rights	23.3	24.3	26.9%	50%	19.6%	3.5%	18.8	4.5
Self-awareness (Agency)	58.1	13.9	0%	13.3%	80.1%	6.6%	57	1.1
- Self Confidence	90.7	14.5	0.1%	1.0%	22.0%	76.9%	86.0	4.7
- Self Efficacy	40.6	28.4	12.6%	38.4%	36.1%	12.9%	43.6	-3
- Self Esteem	64.4	9.1	0%	0.1%	90.6%	9.2%	59.9	4.5
Overall score	60.5	10.3					56.0	6.6
Source: Analytical Dataset Girls' Combined Survey (N=694)								

Despite improvement in the average Life Skills index score since baseline (from 56.0 to 60.5), this did not meet the target of 65 (Table 40). Over 95% of girls score as established or proficient learners under environment, WASH and GBV (Table 41). Similar to baseline, girls continue to demonstrate a lack of knowledge on SRHR. Whilst some emergent learners at baseline have become established learners (5.5%), 6.6% of girls that could answer at least one SRR question correctly at midline could not at baseline. If the questions in the Life Skills assessment represent

the life skills that the project hopes to impart on its beneficiaries, its greatest gap is in SRHR. In total, 76% of girls are unable to answer more than 40 % of the questions correctly. This is an issue considering that a notable barrier to girls' continued attendance in school is becoming pregnant. Whilst the prevalence of mothers has not increased since baseline, but rather decreased, it might be due girls that were mothers dropping out of the programme. It is appropriate that the STAGE Life Skills course has a module on SRH and it is recommended that this module receives extra focus between midline and end line, and greater focus on this topic is given in future cohorts.

The self-awareness score has also only slightly improved, due to worsening of the self-efficacy score.

See Annex 9, Table 93 for midline results aggregated by the three categories Knowledge, Attitudes and Self-Awareness.

Table 44 - IO indicator 3.1 - Girls' Life Skills - by key characteristic subgroups, barriers and region: Midline

	Average Life Skills score – Midline	Change in average Life Skills score since baseline
All girls	**60.5**	**4.5**
Disability subgroups		
Any Disability	59.2	8.1
Mental Health (Anxiety and Depression)	N/A	N/A
Marginalisation characteristic		
Mother / married under 15 / married	N/A	N/A
Lives with neither parent	58.5	2.7
1+ hours to primary school	63.2	4.9
Impoverished: Unable to meet basic needs without charity	59	5
Currently employed	58.1	7.3
Employed and under 15	56	6
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)	63.8	9.6
Barriers		
Economic (Work or Costs)	59.6	3.4
Travel (Safety or Distance)	57.5	2.3
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	57.2	-0.6
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	57.2	3.8
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	57.1	-0.6
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	58.3	-4.5
Age		
Age 8 to 11	56.4*	-1.8
Age 12 to 15	61.3	N/A
Age 16 to 19	69.2*	N/A
Language (Region)		
Dagaare (Upper West)	58.2*	2.8
Kasem (Upper East)	65.2*	8.4
Kusaal (Upper East)	53.5*	3.6

Likpakpaaln (Northern)	63.2*	4.9
Source: Analytical Dataset, Girls Life Skills questionnaire Barriers: Caregiver survey: Unenrolled girls:	N=694 N=209	N=705 N=636

*results are significantly higher for this group than baseline scores using the difference in difference methodology described in Annex 2.

Some sub-groups score below the total average on Life Skills (Table 42). GWDs showed a much higher increase in Life Skills compared to baseline than the overall average (8.1 versus 4.5 % points), as well as those with a high chore burden (+9.6 % points). It is positive that the sub-groups impoverished, high chore burden, and currently employed girls have caught up with the overall average at midline. The increase was the lowest for those that live with neither parent (+2.7).

All girls experiencing barriers (i.e. currently unenrolled) had lower than average improvements, and in some cases a lower Life Skills score compared to baseline, as in the case of those facing demographic barriers (-4.5, whereby the prevalence of this barrier was primarily linked to perception of the girl being too old for school or not mature enough). As noted with other outcomes, this can be interpreted as a change in who comprises barrier groups: those who face demographic barriers at midline are those who likely faced them at baseline and still have not been able overcome them. Regionally, Upper East (Kasem) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) average scores showed the largest increases (9.6 and 4.9 respectively) and are the highest in absolute terms, as it happened for literacy scores (and numeracy as well in the case of Upper East). These two areas also experienced large reductions in the prevalence of a high chore burden between baseline and midline and have achieved or almost achieved the STAGE Life Skills target for midline (score of 65).

At baseline, factors that had been seen as impacting negatively on the Life Skills of girls (as well as on learning) were the inability of households and girls to meet their basic needs, a high chore burden, employment and social norms. It is therefore positive to see that these sub-groups experienced relatively important increases in Life Skills, and in the case of impoverished and a high chore burden also on literacy and numeracy. Though, as showed by learning scores and the prevalence of barriers of unenrolled girls at midline, social norms – the disinterest in education or perception that education does not lead to valuable opportunities for girls – continues to be a major factor in hindering both girls' learning and transition outcomes. At midline, results suggest that awareness raising and behavioural change work with caregivers, heads of households and community leaders directed to changing social norms are more important to positively affect the girls' education outcomes.

Caregiver assessment

Table 45 - IO indicator 3.2 - Caregiver assessment of girls Life skills: Baseline and Midline

IO	IO indicator	Sampling and measuring technique used	Who collected the data?	Baseline level	Target for midline / end line	Midline level	Indicator used for next evaluation point.
3 Number of marginalised girls supported by GEC with improved Life Skills (Formal Track)	3.2 Extent that caregivers perceive positive changes in girls' Life Skills	Same sampling as Learning Test and Household Survey – see section 4.4	EE	61.3%	Improvement on midline / maintenance of positive perspectives	66.2%	Yes

Main findings

Table 46 - Relative Frequency of Caregiver Response to questions on their girl's Life skills: Baseline (BL) and Midline (ML)

Introduction to each question – "To what extent do you agree that [girl's name] ….	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean at ML	Mean at BL
Knows how to look after the environment and keep it clean?	38.2%	54.6%	4.1%	2.9%	0.1%	4.3	4.2
Knows how to spend money sensibly?	23.2%	54.4%	12.2%	7.3%	2.9%	3.9	3.5
Knows about the dangers of violence that women face?	13.8%	44.7%	22.2%	13.5%	5.2%	3.5	3.1
Knows good water and sanitation hygiene - how to wash her hands before eating and after the toilet, to only drink clean water?	33.5%	59.5%	4.4%	1.9%	0.7%	4.2	4.1
Knows about women's menstruation, use and cleaning of sanitary pads?	13.4%	26.3%	23.1%	24.2%	7.8%	3.0	2.7
Knows about how women get pregnant and how to avoid getting pregnant?	8.7%	23.7%	23.7%	29.6%	9.3%	2.8	2.6
Knows about sexually transmitted diseases and how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases?	6.7%	19.7%	24.5%	31.1%	11.5%	2.6	2.5
Feels she has good personal qualities and is a person of value?	18.7%	61.2%	11.3%	5.4%	1.0%	3.8	3.8
Is confident expressing her feelings and opinions and talking in front of others?	17.9%	67.9%	7.8%	5.1%	0.6%	4.0	3.8
Source: Analytical Dataset Caregiver survey N=689							

Prevalence of caregivers' perceptions of positive changes in girls' life skills since baseline has increased overall (about five% points, 66.2% at midline, Table 43)[79]. Compared to baseline, caregivers continue having high levels of confidence in their girlchild's knowledge on keeping the environment clean and knowledge of WASH, and somewhat high confidence in their girlchild's knowledge on money, their self-esteem and confidence (Table 44). Whilst a small improvement is noted, caregivers' confidence in their girlchild's knowledge on personal hygiene and SRH continues to be low (3.0, 2.8 and 2.6 out of 5). This corroborates the fact that the girls' Life Skills score on SRH is low and has only improved slightly since baseline (23.3, +4.5% points). Despite increases in caregivers' perceptions of girls' knowledge about menstruation, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases. Itis not reflected in girls' life skill scores on the subjects, which have increased only minimally since baseline. The results in Figure 12 and table 45 are an index score of all caregiver questions, where 0 would represent "strongly disagree" on all questions about girls' abilities and 100 would represent "strongly agree" to all caregiver questions about confidence in the beneficiary. See the Caregiver tool for more information.

[79] Caregiver means are calculated on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being Strongly Agree and 1 being Strongly Disagree.

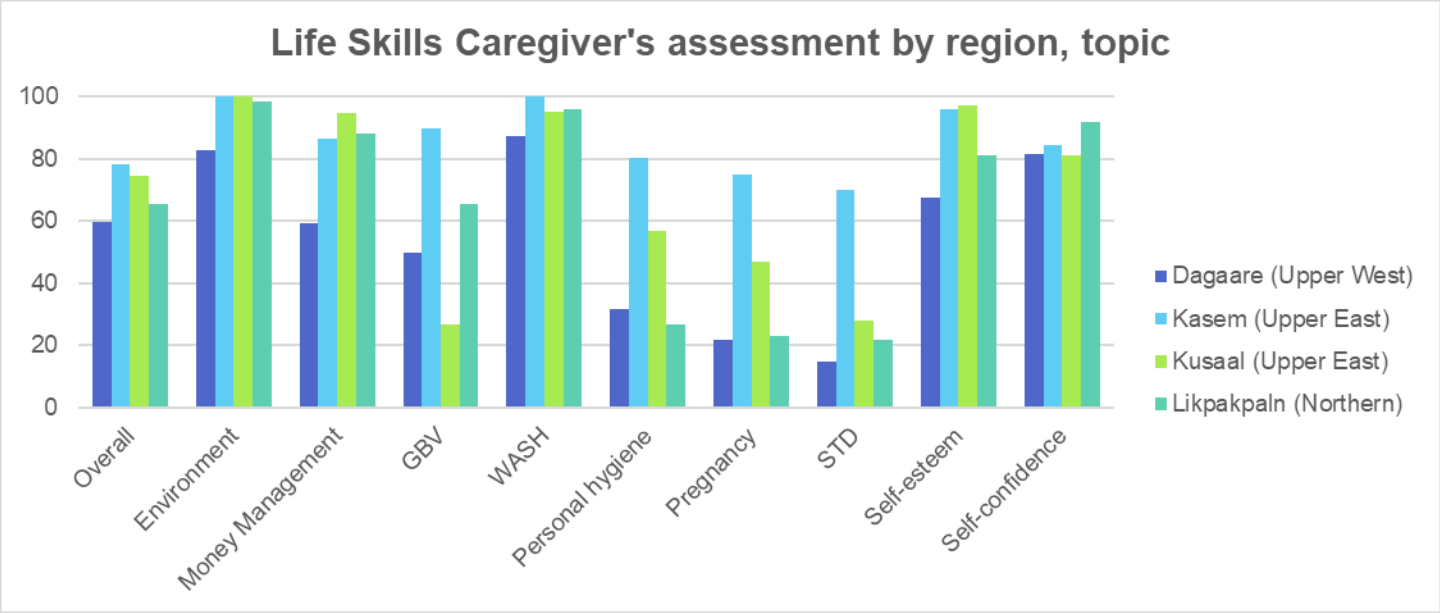

Figure 12 - Percentage of Caregiver's perceiving positive changes in girls' life skills by region and topic: Midline

Table 47 - IO indicator 3.2 - Index of Caregiver assessments of girls' life skills by key characteristic subgroups, barriers and region: Midline

	Average Caregiver's assessment – Midline	Change in average Caregiver's assessment since baseline
All girls	66.2	4.9
Disability subgroups:		
Any Disability	62.3	12.2
Mental Health (Anxiety and Depression)	N/A	N/A
Marginalisation characteristic		
Mother / Married under 15 / Married	N/A	N/A
Lives with neither parent	70.2	4.2
1+ hours to primary school	67.5	2.4
Impoverished: Unable to meet basic needs without charity	64.2	5
Currently employed	75.6*	24.7
Employed and under 15	74	24.5
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)	65.6	2.9
Barriers		
Economic (Work or Costs)	67.8	6.2
Travel (Safety or Distance)	66	7.1
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	70	8
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	64.4	-6.8
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	66.1	6.2

Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	67.2	4.2
Language (Region)		
Dagaare (Upper West)	59.8*	-3.4
Kasem (Upper East)	78.2*	14.1
Kusaal (Upper East)	74.7*	12
Likpakpaaln (Northern)	65.6	7.9
Source: Analytical Dataset	N=689	N=705

*results are significantly higher for this group than baseline scores using the difference in difference methodology described in Annex 2.

Results for Northern (Likpakpaaln) for knowledge of SRH (pregnancy and STDs) were higher than the overall average at baseline, however they were lower than the total sample average in every other domain including on personal hygiene. At midline, assessment in all these topics has worsened. Caregivers' assessment scores in Upper East (Kasem) are still higher than the average in all domains (Figure 12) and increases overall are observed compared to baseline, including on personal hygiene (+34.7), pregnancy (+33.5) and sexually transmitted diseases (+26.9) (similar to results in literacy and numeracy tests where girls from this region scored substantially higher than the average, as at baseline). Other notable findings include overall decreases in scores compared to baseline in Upper West (the only region where this occurred, Table 45); and the lower measured assessed knowledge of GBV in Upper East (Kusaal), unlike other domains where large increases are noted. See Annex 9, Table 94 for a detailed regional breakdown by question.

In terms of sub-group characteristics (Table 45), the biggest improvements are noted for those sub-groups which were starting from a lower point than average. First, the score of girls in the disability subgroup rose by 12 % points, even though it is still below the overall average. Second, those currently employed and employed under 15 years old scored by about 24.6 % points higher.

At midline, the qualitative tools around life skills were changed to ask caregivers broader questions around what good qualities are needed to excel and asking if their girl had these. Whilst this elicited interesting responses, it was too broad to be useful for answering this indicator[80]. Hence, the qualitative data are used to give a more general idea of the life skills classes, and levels of confidence among girls. At end line, the EE will make the questions more specific to see what examples the caregivers can give to evidence their girls' life skills knowledge and practices.

On life skills classes

In response to questions about what they learnt in their ALP classes, all girls reported liking the life skills classes. This is aside from their response on the content of ALP classes. Across the three qualitative communities, the majority of girls referenced the environment and WASH classes (six out of 12 girls total for each class). As a girl from Piabunu (Northern) summarised: *"I feel good about the classes, they taught us so many things, like how to keep our body and surroundings clean".* A girl from the FGD in Agaago (Upper East) mentioned that she: *"learned so much about the use of the pad during menstruation and how to handle myself during my period".* Following this, Self-Confidence and SRHR classes were mentioned (four out of 12 girls for each class, largely from Agaago, Upper East). None of the 12 girls across the three communities mentioned money management or GBV classes, but that is not to say they did not receive them.

Regarding the high levels of mentions to the "environment" life skills in both qualitative and quantitative, the EE would like to report a potential unintended consequence based on some things being said across all the three communities in the qualitative data. A girl from Naribuo (Upper West) was pleased to report that *"We are able to keep our environment clean and that attracts praises from our parents… In the morning when I wake up, I sweep the compound and wash bowls".* Then a girl from Agaago (Upper East) reported that since the classes she has been *"washing my school uniform twice in a week because I have only one so that I can look neat".* Additionally, a caregiver from Piabunu (Northern) said that *"Some people came to educate us on girls' education and*

[80] For example, the most commonly occurring good qualities listed (unprompted) were hardworking, humility and honesty (4 mentions each); Obedience, respectfulness, and discipline, came next (3 mentions each); then patience, confidence and empathy followed (2 mentions each); and lastly just one mention was given for punctuality, bravery, and passion.

environmental hygiene… and it is helping us keep our homes clean". The Naribuo caregivers also report that their girls' skills have improved as *"anytime I am not around, she does what is expected without my instructions"* (Quote from Caregiver in Naribuo, Upper West that is representative of others remarks). The concern from the EEis that the environmental life skills being taught to only girls (due to the aims of the STAGE programme) contribute to reproducing existing housework norms, that could serve to maintain or add to girls' chore burdens. The STAGE programme should consider ways in which to amend the "environment" life skills content to reduce this possible unintended consequence.

Lastly, one girl from an FGD in Naribuo (Upper West), said: *"we are able to teach our parents and siblings some of these life skills"*, which bodes well for sustainability of the programme. In terms of future recommendations, two caregivers from Agaago mentioned that career counselling would be useful, as many children do not know what they want to be.

On levels of girls' confidence

Generally, girls and their caregivers reported the girls had good confidence and self-esteem. The girls from Naribuo (Upper West) report high self-confidence as they can *"speak in front of adults".* Girls in Piabunu (Northern) and Agaago (Upper East) spoke of now being comfortable enough to raise their hands, speak their minds in class, and ask questions. Lastly, one girl in Agaago (Upper East) gave a very positive response to this question when she said that: *"I was usually the very timid type of person who believed I was not worth anything, but after the afternoon class, I believe strongly that I am a person of worth and would do great things in the near future".*

The caregivers broadly agreed with their girls' statements. For example, the caregivers in Piabunu (Northern) reported that their girls are confident as they speak out. One of them even said: *"I can see that she has improved since she started going to ALPs classes. She is now very free and open".* The caregivers in Naribuo (Upper West) and Agaago (Upper East) felt their girls' have some confidence, but this could be improved as they are still a little shy. For example, a caregiver from Agaago (Upper East) said that whilst her girl will always take the initiative to let someone know they offended her, *"she is the reserved type and so sometimes I wonder if she asks questions in the classroom".*

STAGE support to Girls' Life Skills in response to COVID-19

As part of its COVID-19 repivoting, STAGE strengthened the WASH component of the Life skills to include COVID-19 preventive information; as well as working with a range of stakeholders to support dissemination of COVID-19 messaging from official and reputable sources to STAGE communities and beneficiaries (see Section 1.3). Girls were asked about sensitisation and education messages on COVID-19 that they received over the last six months.

Table 48 - Sensitisation messages on COVID-19 received (by region and type of message): Midline

Question	N	Responses					
Did you receive any education or-sensitisation messages on COVID-19 in the last 6 months?		Audio messages on the phone from DSP/WEI	Sensitisation through local radios	Sensitisation through community information centre	Messages through ALP facilitators	None of the above	Don't know
Overall	689	25%	67%	51.9%	63.7%	7.8%	3.1%
Dagaare (Upper West)*		39.5%*	53.2*%	43%*	48.3%*	17.5%*	6.8%*
Kasem (Upper East)		14.9%	64.9%	28.7%*	71.3%	0%	3.2%
Kusaal (Upper East)*		5.3%*	96.1%*	75%*	44.7%*	0%	0%
Likpakpaaln (Northern)*		19.3%	73.2%	63%*	82.3%*	3.1%*	0%*
Source: Analytical Dataset Girl survey							
*results are significantly different for that subgroup, than those not in that subgroup							

The great majority of girls (89%) received messages on COVID-19 through various channels, mostly through local radios (67%), ALP facilitators (63.7%) and the community information centre/broadcasting (51.9%, Table 46).

Regionally, over 23% of girls in Upper West did not receive messages or did not know, with most messages received through DSP/WEI in this region compared to others (39.5% against 25% overall average). Between 97% and 100% of girls in the other three regions heard messages on COVID-19, with some variation in the preferred avenues (results are significant in Upper East, Kusaal, Northern and Upper West). For example, Northern region relied on ALP facilitators more than other regions, whilst Upper East (Kusaal) relied more on sensitisation through local radios or community information centres, as shown in Table 46. It is worth noting that the COVID-19 lessons were mentioned without prompting by a few of girls in all three of the qualitative communities.

Overall, 516 (74.9%) girls did not receive messages through phones, and 227 (32.9%) did not receive messages through radios (Annex 9, Table 95. The key reason for the former (Annex 9, Table 95, is that the phone owner do not deliver the message to the girls (76%), followed by having poor network in the area (24.8%). This suggests that using community avenues or radios for sensitization might be more effective in a context where the majority of beneficiaries do not have a mobile phone, or do not have reliable access to one. For those who could not listen to messages on local radios Annex 9, Table 96, the most cited reason (as under Intermediate Outcome 1) is lack of electricity at home (28.6%), and the learning centre (14.1%) and not having a radio in the household (23.3%).

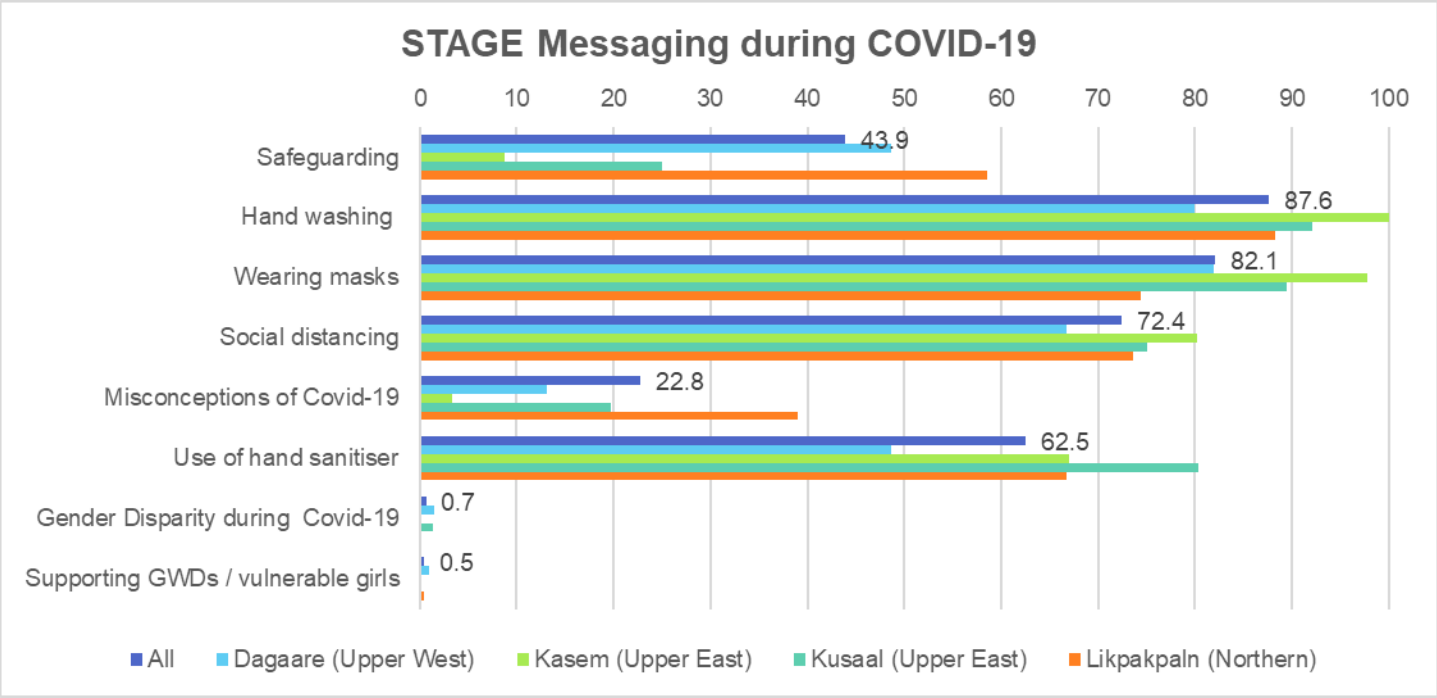

Figure 13 - STAGE Messaging about COVID-19 during COVID-19: Midline

Of those who received messages of some sort (N=613), the majority reported listening to instructions for COVID-19 prevention (hand washing with running water, wearing nose masks, social distancing and use of hand sanitiser, as shown in Figure 13). Some variations are noted among regions on the type of content heard most. A small percentage of girls reported listening to messages on gender disparity and supporting GWDs and vulnerable girls during COVID-19 (0.7% and 0.5% overall).

For almost all girls who received messages (98.7%), these were useful in one or more ways (Annex 9, Table 98. For 83.4% of girls, it was useful for learning about COVID-19 prevention (especially in Upper West and Upper East regions). As a girl from Naribuo (Upper West) said: *"I now know about COVID-19 information and how to prevent it".* A girl in the Piabunu (Northern) FGD describes the safety protocols as follows: *"We should wear nose masks, wash our hands with soap regularly under running water, and practice social distancing".* For 69.2% and 61.3% of girls, it was about learning what to do if themselves or some family members present COVID-19 symptoms (especially in Northern region).

Intermediate Outcome 4 - Increased community and district support for inclusive girls' education

Table 49 - IO indicator 4.1 Family support for girls' education: Baseline and Midline

IO indicator	Sampling and measuring technique used	Who collected the data?	Baseline level	Target for midline	Midline level	Target for end line	Indicator used for next evaluation point.
4.1 % of caregivers who feel it is equally viable to invest in a girl's education as a boy's education even when funds are limited	Same sampling as Household Survey Question PCG_32g (Strongly agree or agree)	EE	88%	EE: 90% Logframe: +20% on BL	92.2%	EE recommends 95% Logframe : +20% on ML	Yes

Table 50 - Indicator 4.1 Percentage (%) of Caregivers reporting that it is equally viable to invest in girl's education as boy's education

	Midline	Change in average score since baseline
All girls	**92.2%**	**4.2**
Disability subgroups		
Any Disability	92.3%	5.5
Marginalisation characteristics		
Mother / Married under 15 / Married	N/A	N/A
Lives with neither parent	91.3%	3.8
1+ hours to primary school	94%	9.8
Impoverished: Cannot meet basic needs without charity	87.5%	-6.9
Currently employed	96.7%	25.3
Employed and under 15	96%	25.6
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)	82.8%	-4
Barriers		
Economic (Work or Costs)	93.6%	5.7
Travel (Safety or Distance)	96.1%	9.6
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	93.8%	4.7
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	95.5%	7.7
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	100%	10.3
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	97.6%	1.2
Language (Region)		
Dagaare (Upper West)	83.7%*	-6.3

Kasem (Upper East)	93.8%	8.1
Kusaal (Upper East)	96.2%	0
Likpakpaaln (Northern)	99.2%*	15
Source: Analytical Dataset Caregiver Survey N=689, Barriers: Caregiver Survey: Unenrolled girls N=209		

*results are significantly higher for this group than baseline scores using the difference in difference methodology described in Annex 2.

Main findings

Baseline data showed that a high percentage of caregivers reported that it is equally viable to invest in girl's education as boy's education, even when funds are limited. Hence it is not surprising that a relatively small increase overall is observed at midline (+4.2% points), and the overall target for midline has been exceeded (Table 47). What is noticeable is a reduction in support for girls' education among some sub-groups[81] and regions (Table 48). For example, support is lower than at baseline among caregivers of girls with a high chore burden and that are impoverished (-4 and -6.9 % points respectively); whilst support has increased substantially among caregivers of girls that are employed (starting from a lower point at baseline: 71.4%). This is concerning to the EE due to the high percentage of project beneficiaries that qualify as being impoverished. Results for caregivers' support of GWDs have increased more than the overall average. Another interesting result is the higher-than-average support for girls' educations among caregivers of unenrolled girls (shown under barriers), in some cases substantially higher (for those affected by the school and demographic barriers as shown in the table). The reason for this finding is not clear from the qualitative or quantitative data.

Geographically, opposing trends are noted: caregivers that support girls' education have substantially increased in Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kasem), whilst they have decreased in the other two regions, especially in Upper West (Dagaare), by 6 %points less. The reason for this finding is not clear, other than both these regions were starting from a higher support level at baseline. Upper West (Dagaare) is also the region with the smallest improvements in learning outcomes, though positively with the lowest prevalence of out of school girls.

Similar to baseline, all caregivers interviewed felt that both boys and girls need education to be successful in life. In addition, when prompted about whether GWDs and mothers should be able to get an education, the vast majority of caregivers agreed with this. Unprompted, some caregivers in each of the three communities in the qualitative sample attributed changes in their attitudes and behaviours to the STAGE programme. For example, a caregiver from Piabunu (Northern) announced that: *"the programme has educated us on the need for girls' education… some of us didn't have this education [before]"*. As a religious leader from Agaago (Upper East) surmised: *"Before the introduction of the programme, the community was not educated on the relevance of the girl child's education and its associated importance in the long run".*

The majority of caregivers and boys interviewed across all communities felt that girls' education was important as they can help their family and the community at large later in life. As a caregiver from Piabunu (Northern) summed up: *"We now know how girls' education can benefit the family and the community... So, we are doing our best to see them through school".* Interestingly, this reasoning has led some caregivers, particularly in Naribuo (Upper West), to feel that their girl's education is more valuable to them than the boys. For example, a caregiver said: *"Emphasis is, and should be placed more upon girls' education than boys… as so many girls have become successful through education and their parents are benefitting from that…[whereas] the boys can easily survive through illegal mining even if they don't succeed at school".* A local assembly man in Piabunu (Northern) shed some more light on this viewpoint, as he said some caregivers*: "think girls' education is better than boys as if the boys get money, they don't even think of their parents".* A teacher in Agaago agreed with this, as they said: *"community members are now interested in girls being in school because they feel if their girls succeed, they are more likely to be helpful than the boys, especially in their old age".*

Another commonly occurring opinion among caregivers across all three communities is that now the other existing expectations of girls (such as marriage, children and chores) can wait until after they have completed their education (and employment too, in some cases). As a caregiver from Naribuo (Upper West) summed up: *"no-one has ever*

[81] As noted in previous sections, results for mothers and married are not available as observations were less than 10.

succeeded in life through marriage or farming but rather, through education… it is only education that can bring relief to the child and the entire family. The other expectations of girls such as marriage and household chores can always wait". This brings expectations of girls more in line with their male peers.

As with baseline, all caregivers report trying their best to help their children get a better education, supporting girls the same as their boys. More material examples of support were reported in Naribuo (Upper West). Support cited included providing money when asked by their girls for educational purchases, giving their girls more opportunity to do schoolwork at home rather than chores, and verbal support such as showing interest in their school day. In some cases, caregivers were reported to making sacrifices to support their girls' education. As one girl from Naribuo (Upper West) reported: *"Their views have changed since I started [ALPS], because they bought sandals for me with the little that they have*" and ensured her brothers and sisters get the same. One traditional leader from Naribuo (Upper West) also reported that *"men even sell their farm products to support girls' education since the Inception of ALPS, as they now believe that girls' education is as important and as profitable as boys".*

However, as at baseline, some respondents within the communities (such as some teachers, girls, and local leaders), reported that there is still a preference for sending boys to school over girls, within some families. One girl in Naribuo (Upper West) felt that her caregivers would *"rather support my brothers than my sisters and I… they had these views long before I started ALPS classes and are different to the wider community… [because] some elderly people are wicked".* In Agaago (Upper East), one girl said that some caregivers *"think we are just wasting our time [at school] because we are grown and should get married".*

Thus, whilst the majority of caregivers feel it is equally viable to invest in a girls' education as a boys, even when funds are limited, there is still a minority of caregivers who hold the view that boys' education is more worthwhile than girls. As support for girls' education is a core assumption of the project, this needs to be tracked to see if the high level of support remains. This is particularly since support is less prevalent among some sub-groups. As observed in other sections (e.g., transition), there has been a major reduction in the prevalence of girls with a high chore burden; however, for those that continue to be affected by this at midline, barriers to education seem to be very challenging to overcome.

Targets

The +20% compared to baseline and midline level targets is impossible due to the starting point for this indicator. The 90% recommended by EE turned out to be a suitable target level. EE recommends 95% for end line.

Table 51 - IO indicator 4.2 Community support to girls' education: Baseline and Midline

IO indicator	Sampling and measuring technique used	Who collected the data?	Baseline level	Target for midline	Midline level*	Target for end line	Indicator used for next evaluation point.
4.2 Extent that religious and traditional leaders actively mobilise households to support excluded girls into education.	Same sampling as Household Survey Question PCG_34g2[82]	EE	1	Logframe: +20% (level 2 or higher)	2 (27.4% leaders spoke at least quarterly in support of girls' education)	Level 3 (EE proposed: 32% leaders speak at least quarterly)	Yes

[82] Responses to question: PCG_34g2: How often (have leaders in your community spoken out in support of girls education? Quarterly or more frequently (monthly, weekly).

*Support as reported by caregivers via the Household survey

Table 52 - Community support for girls' education: Midline

Question	N	Responses					
Have leaders in your community spoken out in support of girls' education?		Yes	No	Don't Know			
Overall	689	55.6%	30.8%	13.6%			
How often?		Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Once a year	Never	Don't know
Overall	689	0.6%	9.1%	17.7%	29.6%	18.9%	24.1%
On which occasions have they spoken out in support of girls' education?		During religious/ community meetings	At home visits	Both	Don't know		
Overall	689	39.5%	3.2%	21.3%	36.0%		
Have they taken action to support girls to remain in school?		Yes	No	Don't Know			
Overall	689	26.3%	42.2%	31.5%			
Have they worked to ensure more out of school girls are enrolled?		Yes	No	Don't Know			
Overall	689	25.7%	42.5%	31.8%			
Do you feel supported by your community in your education?		Yes, very much	Yes, a little	No	Don't Know		
Overall	694	24.0%	45.0%	18.2%	12.9%		

Source: Analytical Dataset Caregiver survey
Girl Survey

Main findings

The majority of caregivers (55.6%) reported leaders spoke out in favour of girls' education, mostly at religious/ community meetings (39.5% of responses, Table 49). Overall, 27.4% of caregivers reported that community leaders spoke quarterly or more frequently in support of girls' education (Table 49). The qualitative data supports this finding, with some form of community sensitisation being reported in each of the three communities, to varying extents. In Naribuo (Upper West), the female traditional leader reports going *"house-to-house to educate my fellow women on the importance of girls education".* In Agaago (Upper East), some boys interviewed mentioned that the religious leaders "*sometimes talk about it [girls' education] in church and tells our parents to buy the required learning materials for us".* Lastly, and most remarkably, in Piabunu (Northern), all respondents speak fondly of their local Chief who is an educated man that wishes that all girls in his community go to school. According to an Assembly Woman in Piabunu (Northern), the Chief "*calls for meetings to encourage the parents to send their girls to school… just last week he called a meeting [for girls' education] and he asked that they all contribute money for the volunteer teachers to help their girls get some concrete educational foundation".* All three caregivers report to attending these periodic meetings the chief holds. However, it is worth noting that this Chief has been working positively in this way for girl's education since before STAGE programming.

In addition, the quantitative data shows 26.3% of caregivers reported that action was taken in support of girls remaining in school, or out of school girls being enrolled. Again, the qualitative data found instances of local leaders

mobilising community projects or initiatives in support of girls' education in all three qualitative communities, including prior to STAGE. In Piabunu (Northern), several respondents (caregivers and local leaders) confirm that the Chief set up an annual harvest initiative six years ago, to get members of the community to contribute food and money (which is used to buy books and uniforms) for girls and boys of poor families. In Agaago (Upper East), the local judge recalled organising meetings and providing land which has been used "to build three classrooms", and the religious leader's church provides some packages with school materials to needy students on an annual basis. In Naribuo, one traditional leader reports that he has recently mobilised the community to address the lack of school in the community by gathering financial contributions and coordinating the gathering of materials for construction of a school block. Three caregivers confirmed this, as one summarised: *"the introduction of the STAGE programme has brought about significant positive change… several meetings were organised by community leaders to tackle the non-availability of school in the community… This compelled the poor people to contribute in undertaking a self-help project in the construction of school block".* They are currently awaiting more funds to complete the project and have appealed to central government. In the meantime, they have erected shades made from grass for children between six and 16 years old to be taught under them by community volunteers.

It is not possible to compare the results for midline and baseline as this indicator was not quantitatively measured at baseline (see Target below). However, the qualitative data has seen some anecdotal improvements. At baseline qualitative data found local leaders to verbally show support girls' education, whereas at midline, two of the three communities interviewed had good examples of actively mobilising community support for girls' education.

Of the 181 open responses from the survey, about half (93 respondents) consider that encouraging/advising/talking to girls about the importance of education is key to maintaining girls enrolled in school; 26 mentions were also made of the ALPs as a means to help girls transition to formal school; some caregivers also mentioned about the importance of talking to parents and doing community sensitisation on the importance of girls education (21; 20 mentions); a few (16) also mention providing girls with material help (books, free educational resources, pens, pencils, uniforms) to help them stay enrolled in school; finally a few (eight mentions) also refer to community representatives (from the unit committee, assembly) visiting schools and homes to make sure girls are in school.

Girls were also asked one question about whether they feel supported in their education. Overall, 69.0% of girls responded positively ('yes, very much' or 'yes, a little'). Asked for an open response about the reason why they feel or do not feel supported, a few girls mentioned they do not feel supported by the community, or that the community does not care. A few references are also made to what might be intended like lack of material support to go to school, which in a few cases relates to a general lack of resources for education in the community.

Target

The logframe target for this indicator at midline was 2 out of 4, increased from 1 at baseline based on the survey data conducted by the EE. This indicator is to be reported by WEI as per the logframe, however it is not clear how it would be measured as the data source is not clear; the sample and minimum prevalence of leaders speaking monthly (level 3 in logframe) in support of girls' education required for being able to report positively is not defined i.e., in how many communities out of the total should leaders speak monthly to be able to report a level of 3? Further, level 3 target (speaking monthly) might be too ambitious considering less than 10% of caregivers reported speaking monthly or more frequently takes place.

For end line, the EE proposes to report against this indicator as done at midline, through the survey. Two sub-indicators are suggested: 1) prevalence of caregivers that report community leaders speaking quarterly or more frequently in support of girls' education, to measure changes compared to midline; and 2) prevalence of caregivers that report community leaders have acted in support of girls' education. There are limitations in using this technique (a relatively large percentage of caregivers do not know how to answer the question) however it is considered more straightforward and consistently measurable than the previous method. The target sub-indicator 1) proposed is +20% than the midline level (32%).

It is important to note that the scoring criteria for this IO indicator (i.e., "*2 = discuss inclusive girls' education quarterly during religious meetings/participation*") is different to the scoring criteria for a similar question under the Sustainability Indicator 2 under community-level (i.e., "*2 = community leaders are showing improved practices / behaviours towards girls education*"). Hence, there might be differences in scoring.

Table 53 - IO indicator 4.3 District support for girls' education: Baseline and Midline

IO	IO indicator	Sampling and measuring technique used	Who collected the data?	Baseline level	Target for midline	Midline level	Target for end line	Indicator used for next evaluation point.
4 Increased community and district support for inclusive girls' education	4.3 Extent that relevant district agencies'(GES, Social Welfare, NFED) participate in monitoring, supervision and coaching visits of schools	See section 2.3 on qualitative data collection	EE	0	1	1	2	Yes

Main findings

This indicator is measured solely based on qualitative data and there is a limitation on how representative these findings are.

At baseline, there were mixed findings around district agencies and local authority members, with the majority undertaking community sensitisation activities rather than regular monitoring of schools. At midline there seems to be more monitoring being reported, however the extent to which varied, with two out of three communities reporting that they have received monitoring visits. In Naribuo (Upper West), the Headteacher reported that they are monitored three times per term, mainly around *"checking teacher attendance, vetting lesson notes, and encouraging us to give our best"*. They added that whilst this is *"very helpful… I need coaching on how to handle these young girls [better]". A viewpoint also mentioned by the* Naribuo teacher. In Agaago (Upper East), both teachers reported that they come every two weeks to encourage the teachers and *"inspect our outputs in class, as well as attendance in school"* but again, these teachers also wished that they *"provide us with enough teaching and learning materials to make lessons as practical as possible".* However, in Piabunu (Northern) both the Headteacher and teacher agreed that "*no-one has come from the district for any monitoring or supervision".* The Piabunu Headteacher further complained that: *"We have no furniture; the children sit on the floor... There is no support from the district".*

Whilst at baseline no one was using the Inclusive Education Monitoring Tool (IEMT), at midline one out of three local assembly members interviewed across the three communities were aware of the IEMT. This was the Piabunu (Northern) local authority member who said: *"we were taught [about IEMT] at the STAGE workshop. It is working in our community here. They don't discriminate whether you are poor or rich, you are free be in school. The SMC chairman, school committee members, and the chief can also help to do monitoring".* This is contradictory of the earlier finding that the Headteacher and teacher in Piabunu (Northern) does not remember anyone monitoring them from the local authority or district agency.

While some communities are starting to receive monitoring and supervision visits as planned, some communities are being left behind, and the ones that are included, suggest that there could be improvements in the coaching areas of the visits.

Target

The logframe target for this indicator at midline was 1, which was met, and increased from 0 at baseline. This meant that local authorities are more involved in monitoring and supporting schools. For end line, the EE recommends a target of Level 2, with the local authorities moving from verbal support to more specific actions.

The scoring criteria for this IO indicator (i.e. "*2 = 2 = District relevant actors are consistently and effectively involvement in delivery/monitoring responsibilities, have supportive attitudes towards gender-sensitive and inclusive education approaches and can talk knowledgeably about the practices they use*") is different to the scoring criteria for a similar question under the Sustainability Outcome Indicator 2 under system-level (i.e. "*2 = MOE/GES uses the*

IEMT. Monitoring and/or coaching is irregular or not well documented."). Hence, there can be differences in scoring, though it is acknowledged this might be due to one indicator relating to Outcomes, another to Intermediate Outcomes.

3.4 Test of key Intermediate Outcome indicators against Outcomes

The test of key intermediate outcome indicators against learning and transition outcomes has been conducted in terms of correlations and conducting a t-test between EGRA and EGMA scores and comparing those who meet the criteria of an indicator and those that do not.

The correlation analysis has revealed the following:

- Indicators "caregivers' key knowledge, understanding and basic level of supportive attitudes towards girls' education" and "2.1 Girls that agree that their facilitator was effective at the learning centre" can around 10% of the variation of EGRA/EGMA improvements between midline and baseline (results are significant).
- Indicator "4.1 % of caregivers who feel it is equally viable to invest in a girl's education" explains 8.8% and 9.1% of variations of EGRA and EGMA improvements, respectively.

Table 54 - T-test on outcomes and key intermediate outcome indicators: Midline

Indicator	Difference in outcome between meeting and not meeting indicator criteria		
	EGRA score (learning)	EGMA score (learning)	Currently enrolled (transition)
Outcome 3. Indicator 1. Community level. Criterion 1. caregivers' key knowledge, understanding and basic level of supportive attitudes towards girls' education	13.74*	11.66*	0.1
Outcome 3. Indicator 1. Community level. Criterion 2. Active supportive attitude of caregivers	7.21	6.67*	9.55
Outcome 3. Indicator 1. Community level. Criterion 3. Beneficiary stated not kept from enrolling due to chores/home/family duties	-6.56	8.27	36.73
IO 1.2 Caregivers feel the support reduced the barriers to regular attendance	13.41*	12.48*	-12.67
IO 2.1 Girls that agree that their facilitator was effective at the learning centre	7.53*	7.91*	-1.43
IO 4.1 Percentage of caregivers who feel it is equally viable to invest in a girl's education	14.17*	11.23*	-6.94

*results are significantly higher for this group than baseline scores using the difference in difference methodology described in Annex 2.

One useful way to test the TOC and the appropriateness of IO indicators is to test whether the main outcome indicators are significantly different in their presence or absence. For example, beneficiaries with supportive caregivers (as measured by Outcome 3 Indicator 1) on average score 13.74 % points higher on the EGRA. While there are several strong and significant positive links between learning outcomes and the above intermediate outcome indicators, none of them have a significant effect on enrolment. This may be in part because the overwhelming majority of the sample is currently enrolled: the reasons for the few that are not, might not show up in a simple t-test. These results suggest that the IO indicators are well-founded and linked to improved learning.

T-tests (Table 52 above) note significant positive differences for EGRA and EGMA overall scores when the following indicator criteria are met (compared to not meeting the criteria): percentage of caregivers who feel it is equally viable to invest in a girl's education, basic level of supportive attitudes towards girls' education, caregivers feel the support reduced the barriers to regular attendance, and girls that agree that their facilitator was effective at the learning centre. Looking at transition outcomes, despite some differences being negative, it is worth noting that none of the

negative differences are statistically significant. A large difference in the likelihood of being enrolled or not is observed depending on whether the girls stated they are not kept from enrolling due to household chores or family duties[83]. These results confirm the TOC assumptions on the importance of quality of teaching and community/family's support for girls' education. See Annex 9, Tables 99 – 102 for detailed results.

4. Conclusions

Key characteristic subgroups and barriers faced

STAGE project's profile of Formal track. Formal girls are mostly aged 10-14 (11–15 at midline) and come from households with a high level of poverty. Many girls had not been to school, those with school experience had dropped out, many lacked physical access to school, 10% were mothers and a 3% have a disability. At midline, 82.7% of the sample (N=694) is between 11 and 15 years of age and have an average age of 12.7 years.

Only 3.8% of caregivers reported girls as having a disability at midline, down from 13.0% at baseline (classified as having a great deal of difficulty or could not do something at all). To note the decrease is mainly attributable to the decrease in prevalence of girls with anxiety and depression from baseline (from 9.4% to 1.3% and from 3.7% to 0.6% respectively). Overall, 2.5% reported having a disability other than mental health, including physical and socio-cognitive (slightly up from 2.1% at baseline).

Subgroup marginalisation. Since baseline, the prevalence of some marginalised subgroups among Formal Track girls has changed. Of note, the **substantial reduction of girls affected by a high chore burden** (from 40.8% to 5.5%), **lower prevalence of girls from impoverished households** (from 35.6% to 24.2%) and lower prevalence of employed girls (from 8% to 4.3%, 30 girls in total). One possible reason for the shift in high chore burden girls might be that beneficiaries who participate in the programme have to give up time doing work for their household. This may be intrinsic to participation in the programme (if it changed social norms), or incidental (if families would have always preferred to invest girls 'time, but not the resources, into education).

The largest reductions in prevalence of a high chore burden **were reported in the worst affected regions/language at baseline.** Particularly Northern (Likpakpaaln, from 60.5% to 10.6% over the period), Upper West (Dagaare, from 29.7% to 4.3%), and Upper East (Kasem, from 43.7% to 10.6%).

Similarly, reporting of impoverishment has decreased from 76% to 12.5% of Formal track households in Upper East (Kusaal); and from 37% to 12.5% in Northern (Likpakpaaln). There has been a very small reduction in impoverishment prevalence in Upper West (Dagaare), making this the region currently most affected.

Of employed girls, the majority are engaged in informal employment (43.3%) or employment in household's income generating activities (30.0%). All jobs are temporary, the majority part-time and unfairly paid or not paid at all. For a smaller percentage of girls than at baseline, work is somewhat unsafe (26.7%), or very unsafe in one case; whilst for the rest is somewhat safe or very safe.

Overall, **Northern region** – which was the most marginalised region at baseline on many fronts – **is largely aligned to the other regions in terms of marginalisation prevalence**, albeit with some variations between subgroups. This region is also the one that has seen major improvements in learning and transition outcomes.

Barriers to education. Prevalence of barriers can be examined in relation to the overall sample, or only girls that are unenrolled. At baseline, 73% (636) of beneficiaries were not enrolled in formal school while at midline, 37% (209) were not enrolled. As most girls have transitioned to school as of midline, **a reduction in the prevalence of barriers among Formal track girls is also noted**, especially for those affected by economic and travel barriers. Whilst economic and travel barriers have decreased considerably (from 85.4% to 29.4% and from 37.6% to 11.1% respectively), social norms (disinterest in education by caregiver or girlchild/perception that school does not help in finding a good job) and school related barriers have only slightly decreased (from 13.4% to 12.8% and from 11.6% to 8.4%). These findings highlight that among beneficiaries who are not enrolled in formal school (37%), the social norms and school-related barriers play a larger role in preventing those girls remain unenrolled than they did at

[83] Inconsistent results are noted for indicator 1.2. As mentioned under Section 3.3, at end line it is recommended an alternative way of measuring whether support of STAGE has helped in reducing barriers to attendance.

baseline. The economic barriers were and still are faced by almost all unenrolled girls, at midline. Travel-related barriers are the only ones whose prevalence has decreased among unenrolled.

The **subgroups that are most affected by barriers** have also changed, these being **married, married under 15 years** (which overlap)**, mothers and currently employed (beyond impoverished).** Girls facing barriers related to social norms comprise a much larger proportion at midline of the unenrolled (increasing from 14.5% to 42.6%). These increases are particularly noticeable among girls who are married, mothers, and working. Beneficiaries who remain unenrolled at midline appear to still be facing significant barriers to social norms and economic barriers.

Those still unrolled and **married (under 15 years) or currently employed face significant travel barriers,** mostly as a result of the unavailability of transport to go to school. The same trends are noted for barriers that are created or removed by schools **in relation to unmet disability needs and demographic barriers**, and it is again those married girls and currently employed who experience this barrier at significantly higher rates than the rest of the sample. For GWDs the disability barrier has also increased.

At midline 5.8% of caregivers of Formal track girls reported that **COVID-19** was a **barrier** to attending school/ALP or vocational training. In total, 72.9% have experienced a decrease in income as a result of the pandemic. At the same time, based on limited qualitative evidence, COVID-19 might have brought some economic relief to parents, as girls were not going to school and so there were no school related fees. The majority of caregivers reported on girls feeling anxious about contracting COVID-19, their caregiver getting infected, and changes in their daily activities.

Appropriateness of project activities to barriers and characteristic subgroups identified. Whilst the majority of the project assumptions on characteristic subgroups and barriers are still valid at midline, some seem to have changed. The intersection between subgroups and barriers shows that the subgroups most at risk of not achieving positive transition outcomes are married, mothers, and currently employed, rather than high chore burden girls and those living in remote locations as was seen at baseline. Economic barriers are still the most prevalent, though impoverished girls have decreased in number and those that are in this subgroup at midline have achieved higher than average outcomes. It would seem that STAGE has been able to address the needs of the latter subgroups, but challenges remain for the former ones. At the time of the evaluation, social norms remain a persistent concern as a barrier to enrolment for a small group of beneficiaries, particularly among married girls and mothers. This is expected given that social norms are particularly entrenched in communities, and long-term interventions and concerted efforts are needed to alter social structures. Furthermore, it is noted that the transition process into enrolment was still ongoing at the time of the midline data collection. Challenges in addressing these barriers are important both to the relevance of the interventions, but also its sustainability: while the project removes economic barriers in its duration, those types of intervention will not continue beyond the project; but changes in social norms can lead to sustainable changes long after the end of the project. At the same time, it has been noted that changes in the prevalence of some subgroups (impoverished, high chore burden and living in remote locations) have taken place notwithstanding some of the STAGE activities in support of these having not been delivered to their full extent (transition kits, bicycles) at the time of the evaluation. Key assumptions remain in relation to the importance of gender sensitivity / social norm awareness, quality of teaching and community/family's support for girls' education, and support to families with economic burdens.

Outcome findings

Learning outcome, Numeracy. The overall numeracy score at midline is 52, is an improvement of 21.3 % points from baseline. Improvements are consistent and observed across all EGMA subtasks as well as bands of achievement. At midline, most girls scored in either the Established or Proficient learner bands, except for the missing numbers subtask (39.8%) which is still the most challenging one as it was at baseline. By region, Upper West and Northern (Likpakpaaln) present the lowest EGMA scores.

By comparing the midline treatment scores to the estimated counterfactual, **data indicates a large and significant effect of STAGE on numeracy outcomes, at 22.8 % points overall.** The estimated effect is slightly higher than the difference between midline and baseline scores for STAGE girls likely because this last year has been particularly challenging due to school closures and disruption and has affected midline scores to an extent.

Learning outcome, Literacy. The overall literacy score at midline is 29.3, an improvement of 18.1 points from baseline. Non-learners have decreased substantially across categories, though a consistent share of girls in the familiar words and oral reading fluency are still in this band of achievement (34.2% and 40.1% respectively). Most girls are still in the Non-learner or Emergent learner bands (over 70% in letter sounds, familiar words and oral reading fluency), denoting very low starting points in literacy at baseline. The largest gaps remain in oral reading

fluency. Gaps are observed particularly in Familiar words, oral reading fluency and writing in Upper East (Kusaal) and Upper West (Dagaare). Upper East (Kasem) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) present above average results across subtasks.

By comparing the midline treatment scores to the estimated counterfactual, **data indicates a large and significant effect of STAGE on literacy outcomes, at 17.3 overall**; the largest for writing (28.0) and reading comprehension (19.3).

It is noted that the STAGE intermediate outcome (IO) 2 relates to Quality of Teaching, directly contributing to Outcome 1 on Learning. STAGE overachieved targets under two out of three indicators under IO2 and only slightly underachieved the target for the indicator "% of girls that agree their facilitator was effective at the learning centre" (see below under IOs). Thus, positive results achieved in learning (both numeracy and literacy, see below) seem to be well supported by the positive results observed in quality of teaching. Further, T-tests of IO indicators note significant positive differences for EGRA and EGMA overall scores when the criterion of girls agreeing to the effectiveness of facilitators at the learning centre was met (7.53* and 7.91* differences for EGRA and EGMA respectively).

Learning Outcomes, Regional, Barrier and Marginalisation analysis. **Upper East (Kasem) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) drive up the overall improvement in literacy scores**. **For numeracy, Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kusaal) drive the overall increase**. A noticeable finding is the **substantial diversion between regional improvement between baseline and midline**. Northern (Likpakpaaln) went from having the lowest average literacy and numeracy scores at baseline to having scores above the sample average. Upper East (Kusaal) had a much higher increase in the EGMA than other linguistic-region groups, even though they started off high. Upper East (Kasem) showed improvement mainly in the EGRA. **Upper West shows the least increases in both test scores, as in other intermediate outcome indicators.**

Girls experiencing the disability and demographic barriers present the highest increase in learning outcomes, although of GWDs are still lower than the overall literacy and numeracy scores. This is likely related to changes in the composition of who reported having a disability mentioned above. Other sub-groups that have shown **higher than average improvements** are girls from **impoverished households** (+15.7, significant) and **with high chore burden** (+27.7 for literacy).

Looking at the intersection between sub-groups and regions, **regions with the greatest reduction in prevalence of impoverished households and a high chore burden are the ones that also exhibiting the largest increases** at midline for either both test scores (Northern, Likpakpaaln) or in one of the tests (EGRA for Upper East, Kasem and EGMA for Upper East, Kusaal).

noteless positive results show that **unenrolled girls affected by social norms, school barriers as well as travel perform substantially lower than the overall average**. For literacy scores, lower results for these three sub-groups are significant. It is worth remembering that prevalence of social norms barriers among unenrolled girls at midline is driven by (beyond impoverished) married, married under 15 years, mothers and employed sub-groups.

Transition Outcome. Overall, 69.5% of girls have transitioned to school as of February/March 2021, from 9.4% that were in school at baseline. **Thus, the 85% transition target has not been achieved at the time of the evaluation. However, the absolute target of 5,625 has been achieved**. Further, the project indicated that COVID-19 delayed transition by GES; and **as of April 2021, the transition rate achieved was of 95%**. At the time of the evaluation, the percentage of 'never been to school' (28.4%) is still higher than the national rates reported in the Ghana Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2017/18 (19%)[84]. It should be noted that comparison between midline and baseline is skewed (negatively) by the fact that 9.4% (66 girls) at baseline had been identified as being in school and should have been replaced by out of school girls.

Transition Outcome, Regional, Barrier and Marginalisation analysis. The subgroup showing the lowest improvement in transition is girls affected by a disability, whereby the percentage of those who have never been to school is higher than the enrolled (50% versus 42.3%). This subgroup and employed under 15 also show a higher prevalence of girls that were in school but dropped out than most other sub-groups.

The baseline found that impoverishment on its own was not always a cause for not attending school, and other factors come into play. This was further confirmed and refined at midline. The subgroups with the most

[84] https://www.unicef.org/ghana/media/576/file/Ghana%20Multiple%20Cluster%20Indicator%20Survey.pdf

remarkable positive results are girls that are from impoverished households and those that live one hour away from school. These sub-groups not only present the highest enrolment rates (at 81.8% and 81.9%*), but also the largest increase by and large (74.7 and 81.6 % points).

Slightly over half of girls with a high chore burden are still not enrolled in school (with 48.3% that are enrolled), notwithstanding substantial increases in transition compared to the currently employed. Interestingly, girls with high chore burden are the ones exhibiting the largest improvements in learning outcomes, compared to baseline. All of this suggests the following: i) the major decrease in the prevalence of girls with high chore burden can be seen as a sign of the families and girls' commitment to investing in education, which has most likely had an impact on the increased enrolment rates; and ii) ALPs have been effective in improving the learning outcomes of girls with high chore burden. However, for those girls who do continue having a high chore burden at midline, this constitutes a major impediment to transition into school.

Upper West (Dagaare) transition rates are substantially higher than other regions, driving the overall transition rate for the Formal Track. Only 49% of girls in Upper East (Kasem) are enrolled in school.

Sustainability Outcome. Overall, the **sustainability scores have improved** since baseline **at system and community level and remained the same at school level** though **signs of improvement have been observed** (which is to be expected when some school level interventions have only recently begun). At the system level, whilst there was no evidence to suggest the district agency support has improved since baseline due to inconsistent reports of monitoring visits, there were improvements in the use of the Inclusive Education Monitoring Tool (IEMT) by local assembly members. As such, a score of 1.5 was given overall (an 0.5-point increase since baseline).

At the community level, there were no increases in the percentage of parents of marginalised girls who support girls' education, as whilst the basic level of support remains high (89.6%), active support remains low (15.5%). However, there were improvements seen in local leader support to girls' education, with no examples of active support given at baseline, and a few good examples (linked to the intervention) given at midline. There were also improvements in the extent parents can access services for their children with disabilities (60% of caregivers of girls with a disability said they can access support). As such, a score of 1.33 was given overall (a 0.66-point increase since baseline).

At the school level, teachers and headteachers are showing knowledge and verbal support for inclusive, gender sensitive teaching, yet there is not enough evidence to demonstrate *improved* practice or mobilisation of local resources. As such, a score of 1.5 was given overall (there are promising signs that this will improve by end line already, even though school interventions have only recently begun).

At midline, the EE would not expect that the sustainability scores to be vastly improved from baseline, especially given the COVID-19 disruptions this past year. The small increases observed are a promising sign ahead of the end line, and the multi-level, and continuous nature of project activities with girls, caregivers, school, community and government, suggest that sustainability of outcomes is achievable, even though possibly not at the highest level of ambition set by the project.

Intermediate outcome findings

Intermediate Outcome (IO) 1.1 Attendance. Beneficiaries enrolled on average attended 86.1% of the time over the previous four-week period: the logframe target of 90% has not been achieved. Upper West and Upper East (Kasem) have reached the target, and Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kusaal) have not. GWDs and those far from school show a 90% and 89.3% attendance rate. Girls with a high chore burden and from impoverished households exhibit lower attendance rates than at baseline (82.9% and 85% respectively).

IO1.2 Support in reducing barriers to attendance. Of the 23% of caregivers that received a scholarship (transition kit), the majority said it made it more likely for the girl to be enrolled in school and attend more regularly (90.5% and 89.2% respectively). Only small percentages of girls received some kind of material support: only 1.6% received funds for transportation, a bicycle to travel safely to the Learning Centre or both; whilst 30.9% received WASH kits and/or sanitary wear. Further, 60% of girls reported having their own books, 20% share and 20% have none. Only communities/girls most in need were to receive transportation funds or bicycles.

STAGE support to education during COVID-19. During COVID-19, almost three quarters (72.7%) of caregivers reported that the girls were affected by not being able to attend ALP classes in person. All girls interviewed for qualitative data reported that they had missed classes due to schools being shut. Slightly less but still a high percentage, were affected by not being able to listen to ALP classes remotely, particularly in Northern (73.6%). Some girls interviewed from Agaago (Upper East) referred to the fact that the COVID-19 disruptions caused, and

could lead to more, drop-outs. Other girls interviewed mentioned that COVID-19 precautions have made school more boring which might lead to skipping classes.

IO2.1 Effectiveness of facilitators. Overall, 73.9% of girls agree that their facilitator is effective at the learning centre, just below the logframe target. Regionally, responses in Upper East (Kasem) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) drove the result, with Upper West lowering the overall average. Girls in remote areas (significant) and GWDs drive up the overall average. Girls interviewed reported loving the teaching style and teaching in local language, though one mentioned there should be more focus on English to help transition to school. However, there are some concerns, as 3% of girls did not agree with the statement "I feel safe with my facilitators/teachers."

IO2.2 GESI sensitive teaching. Among girls who met at least one of the criteria of marginalisation (nearly half of the sample), 75.9% strongly agreed or agreed to all survey questions assessing the effectiveness of facilitators at learning centres (higher than the overall average of 73.9%). All Teachers and Headteachers interviewed said they were aware of what inclusive, gender-sensitive education is, often mentioning giving girls and boys equal levels of attention in the classroom. Ultimately, whilst there is evidence of some knowledge of what inclusive, gender-sensitive education is, it is not consistently referenced across the three communities, nor with regard to the four listed logframe characteristics.

IO2.3. Effective literacy/numeracy instruction. Reporting from WEI states that close to 98.5% of facilitators demonstrated effective literacy and numeracy instruction using participatory approaches in line with the STAGE protocols for the ALP classes, overachieving the logframe target. EE qualitative findings show that most girls enjoyed literacy and numeracy classes. One teacher in Agaago (Upper East) was impressed with some of the girls that came from ALPs.

IO3.1 Girls Life Skills score. Despite improvement in the average Life Skills index since baseline (from 56.0 to 60.5), it did not meet the target of 65. Over 95% of girls score as Established or Proficient learners under environment, WASH and GBV. Similar to baseline, girls continue to demonstrate a lack of knowledge on SRH, with 76% of girls unable to answer more than 40 % of the questions correctly. This is an issue if considered that a notable and identified barrier to girls' continued attendance in school is becoming pregnant.

GWDs showed a much higher increase in Life Skills scores compared to baseline than the overall average (8.1 versus 4.5 % points), as well as those with a high chore burden (+9.6 %points). Those that are currently in the subgroups impoverished, high chore burden and currently employed have caught up with the overall average at midline. All unenrolled girls had lower than average improvements, and in some cases a worsening of the Life Skills score. Regionally, Upper East (Kasem) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) average scores showed the largest increases (9.6 and 4.9 respectively) and are the highest in absolute terms.

IO3.2 Life Skills Caregivers' assessment. Caregivers' perceptions of positive changes in girls' life skills since baseline are overall more prevalent (about 5 % points, 66.2% at midline), thus achieving the target of maintenance and improvement of positive perspectives. Caregivers' confidence in their girlchild's knowledge on personal hygiene and SRH continues to be low.

STAGE support to Girls' Life Skills in response to COVID-19. The majority of girls (89%) received messages on COVID-19 through various avenues, mostly through local radios (67%), ALP facilitators (63.7%) and the community information centre/broadcasting. For almost all girls who received messages (98.7%), these were useful in one or more ways: learning about COVID-19 prevention and/or learning what to do if themselves or some family members present COVID-19 symptoms.

IO4.1 'Percentage of caregivers who feel it is equally viable to invest in a girl's education as a boy's'. At 92.2% the overall target for midline has been exceeded. A reduction in support for girls' education among some sub-groups and regions is observed, namely for a high chore burden and impoverished, whereas support has increased substantially among caregivers of GWDs. Caregivers that support girls' education have increased in Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kasem), whilst they have deceased in the other two regions, especially in Upper West (Dagaare). Like at baseline, all caregivers interviewed felt that both boys and girls need education to be successful in life. Some caregivers interviewed attributed changes in their attitudes and behaviours to the STAGE programme. A commonly occurring opinion is that now, other pre-existing expectations of girls (such as marriage, children and chores) can wait until after they have their education. Though a handful of respondents reported that within some families, there is still a preference for sending boys to school over girls.

IO4.2 'Extent that religious and traditional leaders actively mobilise households to support excluded girls into education'. A score of 2 is given. The majority of caregivers (55.6%) reported leaders spoke out in favour of

girls' education, with 27.4% of caregivers noting this happens at least quarterly. In addition, 26.3% of caregivers reported that action was taken in support of girls enrolling or remaining in school. Instances of local leaders mobilising community projects or initiatives in support of girls' education were found, including through encouraging/advising/talking to girls about the importance of education, talking to parents and doing community sensitisation on the importance of girls' education, providing girls with material help, and visiting schools and homes to make sure girls are in school.

IO4.3 'extent that relevant district agencies' participate in monitoring, supervision and coaching visits of schools'. A score of 1 is given (up from 0 at baseline). There seems to be more monitoring being reported, however the extent to which varied, with two out of three qualitative communities reporting that they have received monitoring visits. One out of three local assembly members interviewed across the three communities were aware of the IEMT, though it is not clear whether this is used. The data for this IO was only collected through qualitative sources.

Gender, Equity and Social Inclusion

Gendered barriers to education include early marriage, pregnancy, higher chore burdens, and unequal access to paid work. At midline, there has been a large reduction in girls affected by the **high chore burden** (from 40.8% to 5.5% of girls), likely from girls forgoing chores to enrol and attend. Whilst these girls still have lower absolute numeracy scores and positive transition outcomes, they have increased at a higher rate than the rest of the sample. Importantly, the proportion of the sample with a high chore burden has reduced significantly since baseline. This could be because STAGE activities targeting these social norms have meant that chores are no longer interfering as much with the school day. It is recommended that STAGE should continue these activities to ensure this change is sustainable. However, girls who **are married and mothers** are relatively more affected by all barriers. Notably, the social norms barrier is more prevalent among this subgroup at midline than at baseline (from 14.5% to 42.6%). It could be that despite all the STAGE activities, it is just not feasible for some of them to give up work or household responsibilities to the extent that would allow for schooling. Challenges therefore remain for STAGE addressing their needs, and they are at risk of not achieving positive transition outcomes.

Girls from **impoverished** households also exhibit lower school attendance rates than baseline (compared to ALP attendance monitoring data). Encouragingly, the prevalence of impoverished girls has reduced since baseline, and those that are still impoverished have also shown higher than average improvements on learning outcomes. It would seem the STAGE activities have been able to address the needs of this subgroup.

The unmet **disability** needs barriers have increased among GWDs, which is also the group with the lowest rate of in transition. However, for those that have enrolled, GWDs have shown a 90% school attendance rate. GWDs also presented the highest improvements in learning outcomes (though still lower than the overall literacy and numeracy scores), and a higher increase in life skills scores than the overall average. Whilst GWDs may face barriers around social norms by those do not believe education is realistic or worthwhile for those with a disability, suggests that STAGE activities have contributed to the progress made by GWDs, even despite the fact for some, their disability needs remain unmet.

Risks

Safeguarding. The quantitative data identified 19 girls in the Formal track which are still unenrolled that dropped out of their previous school because of mistreatment by a teacher, increased from ten identified at baseline. This could refer to events that took place prior to STAGE, but also at school or at the ALPs. Lastly, whilst the midline data collection did not identify any girls in modern slavery, it was noted at baseline that the STAGE project community mapping data did identify some girls in modern slavery. In addition, the qualitative data did find some girls engage in hazardous child labour (Galamsey, or illegal mining). The project will need to provide specific support to these specific group of girls initially identified in their community mapping and enrolment exercise.

5. Lessons Learned

Table 55 - Key lessons learnt by thematic area

Area	Lessons learned
Marginalisation and transition	Whilst most of the project assumptions on characteristic subgroups and barriers are still valid at midline, some key ones have changed. The intersection between marginalised subgroups and barriers shows that the subgroups most at risk of not achieving positive transition outcomes are those married, mothers, and currently employed. A high percentage of girls who had high chore burdens at baseline no longer do, and many have enrolled in school; those that still have high chore burdens face other barriers to enrolment at higher rates. Separately, girls who had never enrolled in school at baseline comprise a higher percentage of those who have not enrolled since baseline than those who were returning to school.
Economic barriers / impoverishment	Economic Barriers are still by far the most prevalent, and as such the assumption on the importance of this barrier for transition outcomes still holds. Almost all the girls that are still unenrolled at midline and have never been to school are affected by economic barriers. This suggests that where impoverishment is particularly severe, learning and transition outcomes are more affected; and more targeted interventions might be needed for this sub-group. This is, particularly seen in Upper West (Dagaare), where the percentage of impoverished girls is the highest.
Economic barriers / impoverishment	Positively, the proportion of beneficiaries living in households unable to meet basic needs has fallen, and this subgroup is closing outcome gaps between them and those not impoverished. This may suggest that STAGE interventions have contributed to ensuring poverty does not impact on girls' transition or learning. Additionally, it seems that STAGE has been able to address the needs of high chore burden and living in remote location subgroups. At the same time, it is noted that substantial reductions in the prevalence of these three subgroups (impoverished, high chore burden and living in remote locations) have taken place notwithstanding some of the STAGE activities in support of these having not been delivered to their full extent (transition kits, bicycles).
Economic barriers / High chore burden	The reduction in high chore burden girls since baseline is remarkable. This could be seen as a positive demonstration of household's dedication to getting the beneficiaries education and their investment in STAGE by giving up the productive work the girls/women have been doing in the home. Further, the high chore burden subgroup shows better than average results in learning and transition outcomes, as well as other indicators. Sensitisation of caregivers (with visits from facilitators, supervisors, teachers, and/or a member of the CoC) on the importance of continued education for all girls but particularly this subgroup continues to be an appropriate activity. At the same time, 60.9% of girls in Upper East (Kasem), 27.3% of girls in Upper East (Kusaal) and 20% of girls in Northern (Likpakpaaln) reported one reason for not attending ALP remote lessons was being busy with household chores. This finding confirms that even if for most girls, high chore burden did not prevent them from enrolling to school, it continues to be a challenge to education for some. A more challenging issue to address is noted by qualitative data: the timing of school starting early in the morning (as opposed to ALP which offered afternoon classes) might be too large an impediment to overcome for some of the girls with high chore burden to transition.
Social norms	At baseline, factors that had been seen as impacting negatively on the Life Skills of girls (as on learning) were the inability of households and girls to meet their basic needs, a high

	chore burden, employment and social norms. It is therefore positive to see that these sub-groups experienced relatively important increases in Life Skills scores, and in the case of impoverished and high chore burden also on literacy and numeracy. Though, as showed by learning scores and the prevalence of barriers of unenrolled girls at midline, social norms – the disinterest in education or perception that education does not lead to valuable opportunities for girls – continues to be a major factor in hindering both girls' learning and transition outcomes. Results suggest that awareness raising and behavioural change work with caregivers, heads of households and community leaders directed to changing social norms are the more so important to positively affect the girls' education outcomes.
Barriers of mothers and married girls	Social norms and the demographic barriers are more prevalent among the girls that are still unenrolled at midline. STAGE has numerous interventions to change social norms towards girls' education at household, community and school levels. However, the high incidence and persistence of these barriers among married (under 15 years), mothers and employed is telling, as family duties, housework and the need to be engaged in productive work might be too big of a challenge to education. Moreover, this barrier is often linked with the economic barrier, whereby an impoverished family having to prioritise which children send to school, will likely opt to send the boys. An alternative way to look at it is that girls that suffered from less severe barriers to enrolment have now entered school; but those that remain unenrolled, remain so because their barriers are deep-seated and require long term action to be addressed, they have not been eliminated in the project timeline.
Social norms and high chore burden	Data suggest that addressing issues relating to social norms (i.e., the role of married girls) for example by encouraging families/husbands to be supportive of girls' education is appropriate. However, impediments for these subgroups are equally related to practical reasons, i.e., time needed to conduct household and family chores when married, or to work when employed is a real barrier to continued education. It is not known if there are specific activities directed to addressing this.
Teenage pregnancy and child marriage	In terms of prevention of teenage pregnancy and child marriage, the baseline evaluation noted the appropriateness and urgency of the SRHR module in the Life Skills training. Given this is still the weakest area at midline, the need for addressing these issues remains. Though as at baseline, this is unlikely to be sufficient if the role of boys and caregivers in preventing this is not addressed.
Travel barriers	Travel barriers are less prevalent among girls living over one hour away and with high chore burden (and more among employed girls, mothers and married) than at baseline. It might be that the reduced high chore burden has freed up time to travel to the ALPs/school and have made the long distance less challenging.
Importance of active support to education for outcome results	The active support to education indicator is revealing of the severity of these barriers when present. Whilst the basic level of supportive attitude towards girl's education has increased to 89.6%, the active support has worsened since baseline and is overall low (15.1%). In most cases, this was because the caregiver did not say that any of the of the following were acceptable reasons for a child not to attend school: child needs to work, child needs to help at home, child is married, child is too old, child unable to learn, education is too costly, child is a mother. Importantly, analysis of correlations between active support indicator(s) and outcomes indicates these can explain nearly 10% of the variations in outcome results (as well as quality teaching). Looking at transition outcomes, results are not significant, though not surprisingly a large difference in the likelihood of being enrolled or not is observed depending on whether the girls stated they are not kept from enrolling due to household chores or family duties.
Implementation disparities	The details of STAGE implementation model through different delivery partners, standardisation/flexibility in implementing such activities, and monitoring arrangements are not known by the EE. Based on the findings, there have been substantial regional disparities

	in some cases in the implementation of the STAGE activities. Notable differences are also evident in outcome and IO results (as evidenced by whilst Upper West (Dagaare) which has achieved better transition outcomes than other regions but has underachieved on learning outcomes and a number of other indicators). In terms of implementation, key lessons/findings include: ● Availability of remote learning sessions. Only 51.2% of girls reported there were distance learning sessions via radio or broadcasted in the community, with Upper West and Upper East (Kusaal) exhibiting the lowest prevalence of remote classes (39.2% and 38.2% respectively). This is along with Upper East (Kusaal) also exhibiting lower school attendance rates and the lowest literacy scores; whilst Upper West also had lower literacy and numeracy scores than other regions. ● Attendance to remote learning sessions. Girls were asked the reason for not being able to attend remote classes. According to quantitative data, key reasons include lack of electricity at home and at the learning centre (55.7% and 44.3% respectively). Other prevalent reasons relate to not having radios and not having replacement batteries. Apart from Upper East (Kasem) all regions have issues of some kind in relation to radios. ● Overall, not all girls have received the full transition pack (the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic may have played a part in this); almost no girl has received bicycles, with complaints in the interviews of not having received what some felt was promised. Though it is noted that only communities/girls most in need were to receive bikes or transportation funds. In terms of textbooks, 20% of girls have to share textbooks, and 20% do not have any textbooks. ● The STAGE learning centre. Girls in Upper West (Dagaare) tend to agree or strongly agree less than the overall average to statements on accessibility of the centre, toilets being accessible and in working conditions, having enough space in the class to sit, feeling safe in the classroom with the facilitator/teacher. Responses from Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kusaal) drive the overall averages up.
Implementation – messaging	Overall, the survey found that 74.9% girls did not receive messages through phones, and 32.9% did not receive messages through radios – though this differs from project internal monitoring data. The key reason for the former, is that the phone owner didn't deliver the message (76%). This suggests that using community avenues or radios for sensitization might be more effective in a context where most beneficiaries do not have a mobile phone, or do not have reliable access to one.
Support to GWDs	STAGE support to GWDs includes provision of assistive devices and referral for specialised care including health insurance enrolment. It is not known to what extent this has been implemented, though there is still a need among the cited subgroups.

6. Recommendations

Project Implementation

Table 56 - EE recommendations - project implementation

Area	Recommendation
Learning	● The significant results achieved by the STAGE programme on learning should be capitalised on. Work with schools to ensure specific gaps identified by the EE in literacy and numeracy across regions, subtasks and subgroups are to be addressed. ● Given these results were achieved despite the COVID-19 impact on programme delivery, STAGE could consider sharing their lessons learned/best practices on distance/remote

	learning and effective teaching in a pandemic context with schools. ● Evaluation evidence shows that the effectiveness of facilitators as perceived by girls is significantly linked to better learning outcomes. Whilst the EE does not know about the STAGE approach to working with school teachers after transition, STAGE should focus on sharing good practices and monitor these are being followed upon in schools. ● Learning outcomes remain highly variable between regions and language groups. Many adjustments should be customised to the groups with lower overall learning or lower levels of improvement.
Transition	● The transition target (%) has not been achieved at the time of the evaluation. Though COVID-19 delayed transition by GES, and STAGE continued working with girls towards their enrolment. As per project reporting 95% of transition had been achieved as of April 2021, thus overachieving the logframe target. With this said, STAGE should consider the intersection of barriers, regions and subgroups identified by the EE which has prevented transition for some groups. ● Continue to advocate for facilities and equipment to ensure all transitioned schools are adequately equipped with basic classroom furniture and school infrastructure (such as desks, chairs and teachers). Action might be limited to advocating for facilities and equipment to be provided, where this is the responsibility of the Government of Ghana. ● Future projects could consider creating a feedback mechanism where schools and local decision makers can request small funds for things like chairs and desks. ● Given the continued significance of the economic barrier for project beneficiaries, STAGE should regularly monitor whether these interventions remain sufficient in addressing it. ● Ensure prompt delivery of transition packs and implementation of bicycle banks. ● Whilst unclear whether STAGE has a responsibility to address this, a relatively large percentage of girls does not have access or only partial access to books and reading materials. This should be addressed by working with Government. ● Assess whether schools are requiring girls to provide their own PPE (i.e., masks and sanitiser) as part of the COVID-19 requirements, and if so, look at how those might be provided to see the girls through the year. ● Ensure leveraging of existing national school feeding programmes to provide feeding support to beneficiaries living in extreme poverty, both after transition and as an incentive to girls that are still to transition.
Sustainability	● Given the prevalence of the economic barrier and potential challenges noted in terms of transition to employment, the project should monitor whether the fund given to girls to assist with their transition is sufficient enough to ensure sustainability of the intervention. This requires thought into sustainable alternatives, such as tying to existing national or other kind of support (similar to feeding programmes) or working with schools to develop accommodations or school policies that do not disproportionately harm poor families (e.g. uniform requirements). ● Similarly, ensure tying of girls in need to National Health Insurance. ● Evaluation evidence shows that knowledge, understanding and basic support for girls' education, but especially active support of caregivers and girls are positively linked to better transition outcomes. STAGE should focus on how to increase active support levels, which are still quite low (27.3%). Related to this is the need to address social norms. ● Consider how the limited involvement of relevant district agencies in monitoring responsibilities could affect the Formal track intervention and its sustainability. This seems particularly important at midline, as some findings point at a non-conducive school environment which could lead to future dropouts.
Gender	● Continue sensitisation at community, school and household levels towards relieving girls of their high chore burden, given positive results achieved so far. The inclusion of boys and husbands in this intervention will be of paramount importance.

	● Consider specifically targeting married girls, mothers and their caregivers and/or dependents in the work around changing social norms, given the persistence of this barrier among unenrolled girls. ● Consider that a specific challenge in transitioning to school for girls with high chore burden or work relates to the timing of school which starts early in the morning, providing less flexibility than the ALPs which had afternoon options. ● The project should strengthen its module on SRHR, and allow for more time for this module in its programming. ● The project should continue sensitising boys on the respect for girls, taking responsibility for contraception and SRHR related to contraception; and caregivers and communities to address the issue 'pregnancy inevitability'. ● The project should ensure that the environment module in Life Skills does not risk being used to reproduce existing housework norms, that could serve to maintain or add to girls' chore burden.
Disability	● For girls with GWDs, ensure provision of assistive devices and referral for specialised care including health insurance enrolment. ● Teachers seem to have a good understanding of the 'gender' aspect of inclusive, gender sensitive teaching, but less knowledge on the 'inclusive' aspects. Should the project engage with teachers further, it is encouraged to stress how to make teaching inclusive for GWDs. ● Continue to include effective support to girls who have anxiety and depression, together with guidance for caregivers on how to support girls with this challenge. ● Continue to monitor closely progress of GWDs to ensure they are receiving appropriate support to assist with their continued transition.
Safeguarding	● Strengthen safeguarding messages, as 28% of girls said they either disagree or neither agree nor disagree with the statement "I have learned how and where to report harassment or abuse". ● Monitor closely any safeguarding issues that may arise due to girls going back to school given their experiences of mistreatment by teachers, not only for the increased sample of girls who reported this, but for the overall intervention. ● Consider how girls who report being in hazardous child labour or modern slavery will be safeguarded throughout the project intervention. ● Continue ensuring the issue of girls' high chore burden is included and sufficiently addressed in behavioural change for parents, boys and community members, as achieved so far.
General Delivery	● Consider consulting with those responsible for home visits and ensure they do not face any barriers fulfilling their obligations for this. ● Consider the most effective ways to deliver intended messages to beneficiaries, such as community-based avenues.

Project Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

Table 57 - EE recommendations - project monitoring, evaluation, and learning

Area	Recommendation
M&E	The midline findings suggest that there are notable economic and social barriers for girls to transition to formal education or decent employment. Some of these barriers have been addressed and these girls have transitioned. For some other subgroups, barriers are particularly persistent. This feedback will help the STAGE team to check that the design remains relevant throughout the implementation period. The project should consider: ● It is recommended that the STAGE team ensure it regularly collects feedback from girls, caregivers, teachers and other stakeholders on how effective the project activities are and the

	likelihood of transition especially for the subgroups and barriers identified by the EE. ● Given large disparities observed in programme implementation, STAGE should consider reviewing how it monitors DSPs, or think about ways to standardise delivery more. Implementation in Upper West (Dagaare) region is the most concerning, based on several findings. ● Implementing an M&E system that allows for regular tracking of attendance rates, as there is substantial regional variation on attendance. ● Implementing M&E system that allows for tracking of appropriateness of the school learning environment.
Logframe	● Indicator 2.1. Consider EE comments on Target under indicator 2.1. ● Indicator 2.2. Consider changing to teachers only for end line. ● Indicator 2.3. Consider changing to teachers (see comments on indicator 2.1). ● Indicator 4.2. Consider EE comments on Target under indicator 4.2. ● Targets are not set for some indicators.
Learning	The findings suggest some notable opportunities for the STAGE team to learn about effective transitions. The EE recommends learning opportunities could be especially valuable on: ● Effective numeracy, literacy, and GESI teaching in a pandemic context. ● How to change social norms on high chore burdens for girls especially those that are married and pregnant/mothers, to mitigate the 'double burden' risk. ● How to change social norms and behaviours on early pregnancy.

External Evaluation

Table 58 - EE recommendations - external evaluation

Area	Recommendation
Evaluation questions	All of evaluation questions are still judged to be relevant with no need for additional questions to be added.
Measurement tools	● Measurement for IO4.2 "Extent that religious and traditional leaders actively mobilise households to support excluded girls into education" includes a question(s) in both the girls and caregiver surveys (both tracks). This has enabled this indicator to be reported on using quantitative data from a larger sample. The survey question would seek to understand the views of girls and caregiver in relation to the support of local leaders for girls' education. It is recommended to leave this for end line as well, where percentage of actions will be looked at. ● Suggest changing the quantitative survey to allow disaggregation of 'mistreatment by teacher', to be able to report definitively on where the mistreatment took place, whether in previous schooling, ALPs, or their transitioned school. Consider also adding an open response box for enumerators to detail what is meant by 'mistreatment' in cases of ALPs or transitioned school reports. ● Suggest adding a prompt in the qualitative tool to ask girls what other forms of mistreatment make them feel unsafe at school. ● Suggest reviewing disability questions at end line. Review financial assistance section. ● Suggest revising the qualitative life skills questions at end line. ● Consider whether to omit boy KIIs in favour of a FGD instead. ● If caregiver says girl cannot go to school because of cost, suggest inserting question asking caregiver how many boys in the household go to school (measuring active support). ● Find alternative way to measure perception of STAGE support to reducing barriers to education, focusing beyond provision of financial assistance. ● Ensure tools allow ability to assess whether the learning environment might affect the sustainability of transition rates achieved.

7. Annexes

Annex 1 Project Design and interventions

Annex 2 Midline/End line evaluation approach and methodology

Annex 3 Characteristics and barriers

Annex 4 Logframe

Annex 5 Beneficiaries tables

Annex 6 External Evaluator's Inception Report

Annex 7 Quantitative and Qualitative data collection tools used for Midline/End line

Annex 8 Qualitative transcripts

Annex 9 Quantitative datasets, Codebooks and Programs

Annex 10 Quantitative Sampling Framework

Annex 11 External Evaluation Declaration

Annex 12 MEL Framework

Annex 13 Key Finding on Output Indicators

Annex 14 Project Management Response

Annex 15 Learning Test Pilot and Calibration Annex 17 Additional External Evaluator Tables

Annex 16 Project Revised Workplan COVID-19 Response Plan

7.1 Annex 1 Project Design and Interventions

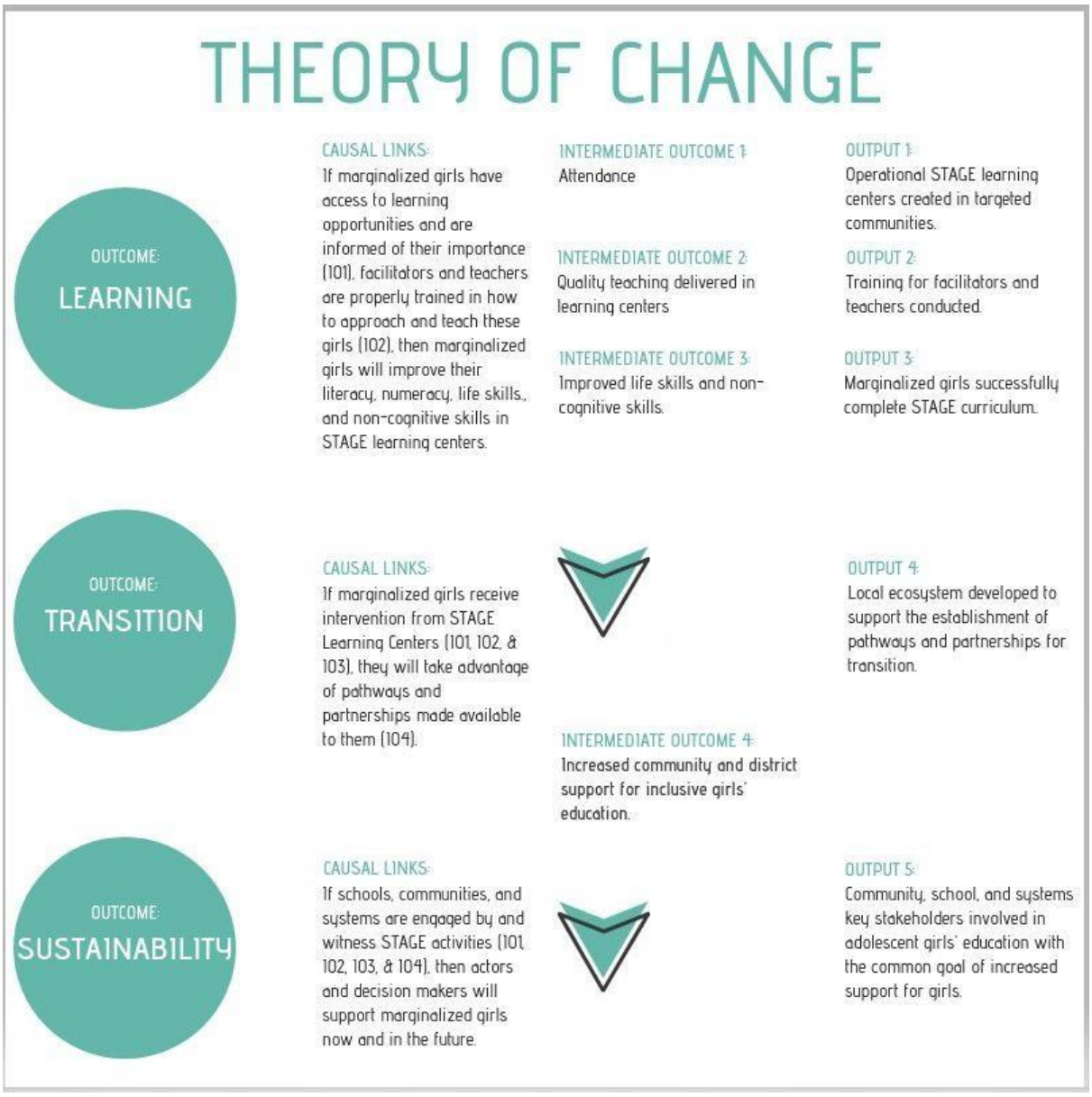

Figure 14 - STAGE Theory of Change

7.2 Annex 2 Midline / End line evaluation approach and methodology

The fundamental theory behind difference-in-difference scoring is that one must have two evaluation points for those that have received are project beneficiaries, and two evaluation points for a population that serves as a reasonable counterfactual. This allows us to identify what typical growth in outcomes would be through the counterfactual, and to separately identify growth that can be attributed to the project. The difference-in-difference amount being the amount that beneficiary outcomes improved minus the improvement in the counterfactual.

Improvement can effectively be measured through age groups. For the counterfactual group, for example, average literacy scores of seventeen-year-olds not in the program can be subtracted from the average literacy scores of sixteen-year-olds not in the program. This can be compared to improvement seen in those tested at the beginning of the program at sixteen and were tested a second time a year later.

In the original design, a small benchmark group was intended to serve as the counterfactual for the formal track. The benchmark group was collected at the first evaluation point. To be able to make comparisons for the entire formal track, the benchmark group needs to include respondents from the age of the youngest beneficiary at baseline to the age of the oldest beneficiary at the last evaluation point. Given that the STAGE Formal track is designed for girls aged 10-14, and cohorts are assessed upon entry and one year later, the benchmark sample was designed to include girls aged 10-15 in the same communities.

Ages. Given that the formal track was designed for girls age 10-14, the benchmark sample was intended to include girls age 10-15. However, the actual baseline sample shows beneficiaries between the ages of 8 and 16, meaning the counterfactual should include ages 8 through 17. In addition, because of the inclusion of alternates, the midline formal track sample includes girls age 8 through 18 and one 20-year-old. Separately, data collectors at baseline did not include girls over 14 in the benchmark sample. This was due to a difficulty in finding enough girls in communities not enrolled in the program, and possibly a misunderstanding of the importance of girls older than the project.

Language. As agreed, upon, the benchmark sample included a mixture of girls from the four language groups of the beneficiaries, without carefully controlling for representativeness or ensuring a large enough sample by each language group to make comparisons. If an alternate source of counterfactual data is being considered, it would ideally allow for variation in language-regional differences. Starting points, progress as measured by scores, and implementation, may vary by the linguistic-regional groups.

Fortunately, reasonable modifications that can be made that should provide at least as good of a counterfactual. Apart from the formal track, the project also includes the non-formal track. While there are substantial differences between the support received, the primary difference between the formal and non-formal track girls at baseline were that the (1) the non-formal track includes some matching languages and regions, but some that are not; (2) the nonformal track targets girls ages 15-19. While the inclusion of the previous benchmark data is not necessary for this approach, additional observations will only increase the validity of the results.

We recommend generating difference-in-difference estimates by creating a dataset that includes (1) baseline formal track observations (ages 8-17); (2) midline formal track observations; (3) baseline nonformal track observations of the relevant age (collected of Cohorts 1 in 2019 and Cohort 2 in 2020), and (4) the already collected benchmark sample. Estimates will be generated by regressing outcome scores on (1) indicator variables for age, (2) linguistic-regional pairing of student, (3) student track (formal, non-formal, or benchmark), (3) whether they have received project support, (4) interaction variable for age and project support, and (5) year of data collection. Further interaction variables are omitted as they would multiplicatively increase the number of regressors, which would increase multicollinearity and make it unlikely to be able to measure significant differences. This functions as a fixed-effects panel regression analysis, where age is used as the variable to measure change over time. The regression equation would be

$$Y=b_0+b_1*AGE+b_3*TRACK+b_3* b_4*LANREGION*POSTTREAT+b_4*YEAR+e$$

where b_1, b_2, b_3, and b_4 are vectors of estimators and Y is the students' outcome score or subtasks thereof. AGE refers to a vector of indicator variables for each year of age; LANREGION refers to the linguistic-regional pairing, TRACK to whether the observation formal, or non-formal; POSTTREAT a binary variable if observation of a girl after being in the formal track program, and YEAR a binary variable as to whether the data was collected during the 2019 or 2020 evaluation point. This provides a robust analysis that controls for variation by language, region, age, and

evaluation point to remove the most powerful confounding factors and allow a robust measurement of the effect of the program.

In addition to the regression analysis above, further consideration needed to be made to account for the fact that the composition of the sample is slightly different at baseline and midline. To ensure that the overall estimates of average scores were comparable, population weights by age and language/region were calculated. This ensured that predicted effects were comparable for the beneficiary population at baseline.

7.3 Annex 3 Characteristics and barriers

Not applicable

7.4 Annex 4 Logframe

ABBAligned Logframe.xls

7.5 Annex 5 Beneficiaries Tables

Direct Beneficiaries

Formal Track: 10-14-year-old OOSG living in the Northern, North-East Region, Upper East and Upper West regions.

Selection: In collaboration with the district authorities, STAGE visited communities to conduct initial entry and animation exercises to gather a broad base of support for project implementation. Consultations were held with traditional leadership and opinion leaders to outline key objectives and other implementation arrangements. Working with District Assembly girls' education and gender officers, initial community-wide sensitisation on girls' education was organised to lay the groundwork for the identification and selection of girls.

STAGE held planning meetings with key stakeholders to set up, review, and agree on the specific criteria for the selection of the girls using a targeted approach. Key criteria for selection included the following:

- age (10-19 years),
- educational level,
- parental income/livelihood measures,
- marital status,
- girls who are pregnant or teen mothers,
- girls with any form of disability, and
- Fostered girls.

Community-level meetings provided a forum for the initial identification of girls that meet these criteria and local systems of communication were used to ensure that the beneficial opportunity for participation in this programme was made widely known within the selected communities. Once identified, STAGE conducted home visits to verify cases, better understand the needs of beneficiaries, and begin training families and girls to gain momentum for programme entrance[85].

Table 59 - Direct beneficiaries - Formal and Non-Formal

	Learners		
	Girls	Boys	Total
Formal	8025	0	8025
Non Formal Cohort 1	2733	0	2733
Non Formal Cohort 2	3470	0	3470

Table 60 - Indirect beneficiaries - Formal and Non-Formal

	Learners			HT/Teachers/other "educators"			MoE/District/ Govn't staff			Parents/ caregivers			Community members		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Formal	34,110	5184	39,294	531	450	981	946	984	1930	41,943	27,963	69,906	11,160	4575	15735
Non Formal Cohort 1															
Non Formal															

[85] See Annex 5 for External Evaluator comment on selection process.

Cohort 2															

Table 61 - Direct beneficiaries by intervention/activity - Formal and Non Formal

	Intervention/activity						Total
	[A]	*[B]*	*[C]*	*[D]*	*[E]*	*[F]*	
Formal							8025
Non Formal Cohort 1							2733
Non Formal Cohort 2							3470

Table 62 - Summary of Direct Beneficiaries

Direct beneficiary numbers	**Total figures**
Total number of girls reached in cohort 1	2733 girls in cohort 1 (NF) i.e., 111 communities x 25 girls
Total number of girls expected to reach by end of project	8769 NF girls 8025 Formal girls (just one cohort) Total both tracks (16752)
Education level	**Proportion of total direct beneficiaries (%)**
Never been to school	735 Non-Formal 2803 Formal
Been to school but dropped out	1984 Non-Formal 5076 Formal
Could not answer directly	14 Non-Formal 146 Formal
Age banding (The age bandings used should be appropriate to the ToC)	**Proportion of total direct beneficiaries (%)**
10 to 14	8025 Formal Track 100%
15 to 19	2733 Non-Formal Cohort 1 100%

Table 63 - Indirect Beneficiary Groups

Group	**Interventions received**	**Total number reached for cohort 1**
Boys	● Peer education training ● Information on BCC ● Training in communication skills (gender, self-esteem, safeguarding)	1179 (3 boys per community x 393 (282 formal +111 NF communities)
ALP Facilitators	● Gender, Inclusive pedagogy, Safeguarding and Inclusion, life skills, ASER assessment training ● 6 – 9-month continuous professional support from supervisors and WEI teaching and learning team	415 ALP facilitators
Community members	● Public BCC campaigns on gender issues and safeguarding	78,600

7.6 Annex 6 External Evaluator's Inception Report

See MEL Framework submitted as part of Annex 6.

F Midline & NF Cohort 2 Baseline Inception Report

The following summarises the EE approach as presented in the MEL framework and notes any changes since the baselines, resulting from learning from the baseline of both the formal and non-formal tracks.

The EE's mixed methods quasi-experimental evaluation design is largely unchanged. The quasi-experimental alternative design allows us to conduct various comparative analyses for both tracks. Quantitative data is used to assess how much and identify relationships between variables. Qualitative data is used to assess harder to quantify issues and build a deeper understanding of 'how and why' and 'under what circumstances' change has or has not occurred.

Formal Track - With a single cohort of beneficiaries who will go through an ALP and transition into formal schooling, a longitudinal design will be used over the course of the project. This will track the levels of girls' key variables (Learning, Transition, Lifeskills, attendance) together with those of their caregivers and other stakeholders (teachers, community leaders, boys) and compare the levels with the baseline scores.

Qualitative data will complement the quantitative data to understand the how and why of the changes, together with understanding the contribution of the STAGE project to these changes (see MEL Framework Section 7 for more on qualitative data collection).

For this formal track group, there will be three evaluation points: *baseline, midline and end line.*

Non-Formal Track - With three distinct cohorts of non-formal track beneficiaries who will go through an ALP and transition into vocational training or employment, STAGE proposed to conduct baseline and end line for Cohort 1, and baseline and tracking assessment for the girls in Cohort 2 a few months after the end of the programme (without end line). The rationale for conducting a tracer for Cohort 2 was to give some time to the STAGE girls to transition into employment or vocational training, whilst an end line for Cohort 1 would have allowed to measure learning outcomes right at the end of the ALP and thus learn about the success of STAGE intervention on key Outcomes, using this learning to improve Cohort 2 and 3. Considering the impact of COVID 19 on the project interventions during 2020, the EE will not be conducting an end line for Cohort 1. Instead, monitoring data will be captured by the project.

The EE and project teams have discussed whether the approach for Cohort 2 should be changed as a result, considering that as the design currently stands, there would be no outcome assessment at the end of the ALP for Cohort 2 on learning (EGRA/EGMA) and Lifeskills. Therefore, IMC believe the ideal scenario for the non-Formal track would be to have an end line for cohort 2, to assess learning outcomes at the end of the programme; as well as a tracer to measure transition a few months after the end of the programme. There is no harm in additionally doing a tracer for cohort 1, if we want to capture some of the transition results achieved for this cohort, however our recommendation is to focus resources on cohort 2 as it will not, we hope, be impacted as much by the pandemic.

Note – In the final version of the MEL Framework, dated 27 September 2019, there is a repeated error (pgs. 39, 46 & 47) where reference is made to data collection across Cohorts 2 and 3, where it should read Cohorts 1 and 2. There will be no external evaluation of Non-Formal Cohort 3.

The Evaluation Matrix (MEL Framework Table 3) provides a summary of how the evaluation questions will be responded to. The MEL frameworks Sections 5.3 onwards provide more explanation of the methodology for each outcome, quantitative sampling framework and qualitative sampling framework and methods. This is unchanged.

Measuring outcomes

Outcomes and intermediate outcomes for the STAGE project will be measured by the EE, also drawing on some data collected by WEI / DSP through their monitoring process. This section outlines how those outcomes are defined and the approaches used to measure them.

Learning. As defined by the Girls' Education Challenge, the key learning outcome indicator is "Number of marginalised girls supported by GEC with improved outcomes". This includes literacy and numeracy outcomes measured by the EE through administration of Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and the Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) tools to test the quantitative changes in the literacy and numeracy outcomes. As per FM guidance in the Baseline Report Template, the EE will measure Learning outcomes by first identifying the bands in which a girl's performance places her at baseline. This will then be assessed at endline to know the proportion of girls who had moved from their original learning levels to other levels. For example, move from non-learner to emergent learner. In addition, as part of the quasi-experimental design, we aim to estimate the Formal girls' 'natural' cognitive progression by matching Formal Track girls' midline and end line results with the baseline results of girls who are older but otherwise similar to the Formal track girls[86].

There are no changes in measurement of numeracy and literacy outcomes compared to baseline formal, and non-formal Cohort 1.

Transition. Successful transition defined by the STAGE project depends on the track to which girls have been assigned. It will be measured in binary format - successful transition, no/unsuccessful transition.

Formal Track: Transition from Out of School to enrolment in Formal School (present in the first few weeks of the year), transition through a grade of Formal School Transitions for the formal track will be measured by a combination of WEI/DSP monitoring data (attendance registers) and household surveys administered by the external evaluator, comparing the midline and end line results with the baseline scores.

Nonformal Track: Transition from Out of School / work to safe and decent employment.

Transition for the non-formal track will measured by household surveys conducted by the external evaluator. The definition of safe and decent employment will be contextual and include fair pay and safety of employment. We encourage WEI to provide as specific as possible a definition of these two concepts in order to be able to measure transition in the most relevant way.

The quantitative changes in these outcomes will be disaggregated by key beneficiary characteristics (including those related to marginalisation) to understand how inclusive are the changes. Further, analysis will also be conducted in relation to intermediate outcome data (attendance levels, Life Skills level, transition support, support to parents). This, together with qualitative data, will help to answer the 'What works' evaluation question (EQ2).

Measuring Intermediate Outcomes

Attendance

Quantitative - ALP facilitators will record and report attendance levels (% of days attended) at ALPs using digital tablets. We understand as per MEL framework this data will be verified by spot checks by DSP staff.

In the MEL Framework it's proposed that data on attendance levels at schools be collected by the EE when they visit schools for the midline and end line (school registries) but suggest DSP staff share this data directly with IMC, if possible.

In addition to what is planned in the MEL framework, we propose to introduce a section in the survey to report against the Logframe indicator using three descriptive levels (Yes, very much, Yes, a little, No) to measure the extent it is felt the project's support has reduced barriers to attendance. This change is reflected in the Formal midline survey tools (Primary Caregiver) submitted for review to the FM. Inserting this section in the survey will allow to increase substantially the sample size to assess to what extent the programme has contributed to reduce barriers to attendance.

[86] Because differences in language are inherently tied to different social, geographical differences, it is not possible to untie them strictly with the baseline data. For example, it is not possible to untangle differences in learning assessments between Kusaal and Dagaare speakers based on where they live, what language they speak, what their language of instructions are or the social and economic differences between their communities live. It should be noted that there were only 8 cases in the Formal interviews and 10 cases in the Non-Formal interviews where languages of instruction and spoken at home were different which doesn't imply a significant gap in the quantitative data collected by the evaluation, but few outliers compared with the overall sample.

In both the formal midline and non-formal Cohort 2 baseline, covid-19 has also been introduced as a barrier to school attendance.

Qualitative - Focus groups and KIIs will be used to understand issues related to girls' attendance, specifically the value of attendance, changes in the barriers to attendance and how the project activities have contributed to

these changes.

Quality of Teaching

ALPS facilitators, master craftspeople, national authorities will not be interviewed by the EE.

Instead, the data captured by WEI / DSP through classroom observations and Ghana Education Service assessments of quality of teaching delivery will be complemented by midline and end line surveys with students to ask them how much they felt that their facilitators and teachers followed known good practice in relation to inclusive education (for example, clarity of explanation, engaging, responsive).

Questions have been included in the girls' survey based on the 18 Inclusive Education practices defined in the STAGE logframe, to be able to report on Intermediate Outcome indicator: Extent that girls agree that their facilitator was effective at the learning centre. In addition to what is stated in the MEL framework, in the formal girls' midline survey we have introduced some questions to gauge girls' perceptions on school access, conducive learning environment, safety and coverage of STAGE activities (administration of stipends, travel funds/transportation), building on WEI COME monitoring tool.

To report against this intermediate outcome indicator, the EE still feels that it would be beneficial to receive from WEI summary reports (if available) of the classroom's observations, as well as the classroom observations themselves. We would be able to check these against the data reported from WEI by drawing a random sample of classroom observations (this could be by community, or overall).

Life Skills

Girls' life skills will be assessed using a survey with questions to assess girls' knowledge, skills, attitude and practice in relation to the life skills with the STAGE curriculum. These life skills include environment, money management, gender-based violence, water and sanitation hygiene, disabilities, sexual and reproductive health rights, self-esteem and self-confidence. The responses to these questions will be analysed, weighed and expressed as a percentage to produce a score against a life skills index. The girls will be assessed by the external evaluator at baseline, midline and end line.

The Girls' life skills survey will be complemented and triangulated by household survey and interviews with caregivers on their perceptions of the girls' acquisition and utilisation of life skills.

Some additional questions not asked at baseline will be included at the midline and end line, however they will not be included in the Index score calculation because this would be different to the baseline process. further, small changes have been made on the girls' Life Skills questionnaire to address a few small issues from baseline.

Sustainability

The third Outcome, Sustainability, will be measured with quantitative data at three levels – school, community, and system – against a Sustainability Scorecard. For each level descriptions of 0-4 ranks will be developed. Zero will represent no signs of desired change, and four the highest rank of desired change. Scores of 0-4 will be reported for each level, plus, to add clarity, disaggregation by each stakeholder group within each level. The information collected against this indicator will answer the Evaluation Question on sustainability (EQ3).

Washington Group Questions and adaptations for disability

During the community mapping the Washington group questions will be used to identify if girls have a functional impairment. In addition to contributing towards choices of which girls to enrol in the project, this data will be used for in three ways. Firstly, it will contribute towards the sampling approach to ensure appropriate representation of girls with disabilities within the sample. Secondly, it will contribute towards any adaptation of data collection tools to remove possible barriers these girls may face in responding to surveys. Thirdly, it will act as a category of analysis to see if girls with disabilities experience, in comparison to girls without disabilities, changes in outcomes and how these changes occur.

No changes in the household survey have been made to the disability section.

GESI

To understand GESI the evaluation will disaggregate both Learning and Transition Outcomes, together with Life Skills Outcomes by girl's age, disability and key project identified characteristics (see MEL Framework Table 13). Complementing this will be specific questions within the qualitative data collection to explore the experiences and potential barriers for girls with different marginalisation characteristics.

Qualitative sample selection and sample sizes

The qualitative data sample design had data to be collected from purposefully chosen communities by the STAGE project team. The criteria that informed the choices were:

- Collect data from at least one community where a Downstream Partner (DSP) would implement – this was to provide some learning on how each DSP worked, and to be representative of all DSPs (there are three DSPs for the Formal Track and five DSPs for the Non-Formal Track)
- In recognition that 68% of beneficiaries are in the Northern region for the Formal Track, additional communities should be sampled in that region.
- In recognition that 29% of beneficiaries are in the Oti region for the Non-Formal Track, an additional community should be sampled in that region

Within these communities, respondents were chosen based on the STAGE ToC, Logframe and Evaluation Questions. Girls and parents/primary caregivers were randomly chosen from beneficiary lists, boys randomly selected based on guidance from DSPs, teachers purposefully selected from project schools, religious/traditional leaders chosen based on which communities visited and, similarly, the relevant local authority official that works on girls' education / vocational training will be chosen. To enable some triangulation, where possible, at least three of each respondent group will be interviewed per community.

At baseline, the data collection firm noted that in some locations it was not possible to identify multiple leaders and, as a minimum, one teacher (Formal), one religious' leader, one traditional leader and one Local Authority will be interviewed.

The data was collected at the same time as the quantitative data due to budget constraints influenced by the need to reduce data collection time/costs in communities.

The planned sample is described in the MEL Framework and is based on five communities in the Formal track and 6 communities in the Non-Formal track. This was partially adapted to ensure at least one community per Downstream Partner (DP) had data collected.

Sampling process for midline and end lines, suggested changes to remove risk of bias in selection.

1. Discuss within the team if the same communities as baseline should be used.
2. If not the same communities, then review the selected communities from the quantitative sample and randomly select 5 communities from the Formal track, 6 from the Non-Formal. Ensure that each Downstream partner has at least one community selected.
3. Check with WEI that there are at least 20 girls in that community who they feel can be accessed and there is not a high number that have left the location – it is ok to interview girls that might have dropped out (note, 8 will be needed for the quantitative data). If there are too few girls in that community, randomly select an alternative community.

Quantitative Tools Updates

The key updates are as follows. Detailed updates are listed in the Change log submitted to FM.

Table 64 - Key updates to quantitative tools

Questions to capture decent employment:	Add more variables to define decent employment. Make changes to current response options to improve quality of responses received on employment. [further clarity needed from WEI on what is defined as decent employment in the context of this programme. We understand it relates to safety and pay, but we would need more details, for example how do you consider seasonal/temporary job?
Length of questionnaire	Review whether there any questions that could be removed.
	Questions on Drop out recording the age / grade the girl dropped out
Measurement for IO4.2	"Extent that religious and traditional leaders actively mobilise households to support excluded girls into education" includes a question(s) in both the girls and caregiver surveys (both tracks). This will enable this indicator to be reported on using quantitative data from a larger sample. The survey question would seek to understand the views of girls and caregiver in relation to the support of local leaders for girls' education. The question will be piloted before use.
Definition of success for Non-Formal: Ability to start and manage their own business; Ability to work under another vocational master making use of skills learnt from STAGE.	Definition of success for Non-Formal: Ability to start and manage their own business; Ability to work under another vocational master making use of skills learnt from STAGE. Review and add to the tool.
Intermediate outcome indicator 1.2 Extent that girls, caregivers, teachers and school leaders feel the support received helped reduce the barriers to regular attendance	Questions added for midline & end line for both tracks (in addition to measuring changes in perceptions on level of barriers)
Intermediate outcome indicator 2. 2.1 % of Girls that agree that their facilitator was effective at the learning centre 2.2 Extent that teachers/ facilitators apply inclusive gender-sensitive education 2.3 % of facilitators who demonstrate effective literacy/numeracy instruction	Questions added for midline & End line for both tracks on indicator 2.1 to the survey. Review KIIs to complement WEI's monitoring data on 2.2 and 2.3
IO 4.C Extent that religious and traditional leaders actively mobilise households to support excluded girls into education.	Questions added to measure this, based on definition of indicator set out in STAGE logframe.

Various	Survey: Add questions to measure school drop outs (age and grade); to capture girls over 18; review and correct issues emerged during baseline data collection; review issues on Life Skills Index questions. [clarity sought: could you confirm how the STAGE programme should be referred to in the survey, to ensure respondents understand what we are referring to ?]
COVID	Questions added on Girls and Primary caregivers survey building on WEI's Covid Rapid Assessment Tool.

Qualitative Tools Updates

No major amendments needed from Baseline, aside from some shortening needed if possible due to the length of interviews. However, changes are to be made to each baseline tool to as appropriate for midline and end line data collection.

As confirmed during a call with WEI on 19th October 2020 no changes to the tools are being made to enhance the EE's assessment of GESI or to respond to the impact of COVID-19 on the project.

7.7 Annex 7 Quantitative and Qualitative data collection tools used for midline/end line

Summary of Changes to Data Collection Tools

The following table sets out quantitative data collection tools, the relevant indicators they contribute to and key changes since baseline. Full tools are submitted separately.

Table 65 - Quantitative and Qualitative evaluation tools

Tool name	Relevant indicator(s)	Tool review at midline	Was tool piloted?	How were piloting / training findings acted upon[87]	Was tool shared with the FM?	Was FM feedback provided?
EGMA	Outcome 1: Number of Marginalised Girls with Improved Learning Outcomes (Formal Track) – % of Marginalised Girls with improved EGMA score	N/A	Yes, at baseline (three versions)	Minor adjustments to difficulty level & coding.	Yes	Yes
EGRA	Outcome 1: Number of Marginalised Girls with Improved Learning Outcomes (Formal Track) – % of Marginalised Girls with improved EGRA score	N/A	Yes, at baseline (three versions)	Minor adjustments to difficulty level & coding.	Yes	Yes
Household Questionnaire	OUTCOME 2 – Transition Number of Marginalised Girls who have transitioned through key stages of Education or gained Employment Outcome 3:	Several changes and additions: - revised questions to capture decent employment. - IO1.2 Questions added for midline & end line for both tracks (in addition to measuring changes in perceptions on level of barriers). - IO2.2. Questions added for midline & end line for both tracks.	Yes, at baseline. Extensive exercises during training for midline.	Minor adjustments to skip / validation and instructions for data collectors	Yes	Yes

[87] For detailed information on the pilot of the Learning test please see Annex 14 Pilot report

	Sustainability (see Sustainability sections for relevant sub-indicators) Intermediate Outcome 4: Increased community and district support for inclusive girls' education (Formal and Vocational)	- IO4.2. Questions added in both the girls and caregiver surveys (both tracks), enabling this indicator to be reported on using quantitative data from a larger sample. - STAGE contribution to reducing barriers to education. Introduced questions to report on financial assistance/scholarship and reduction of barriers to education - COVID-19 section: Questions added on Girls and Primary caregivers survey building on WEI's COVID-19 Rapid Assessment Tool.				
Life Skills survey (within the Household Questionnaire)	Intermediate Outcome 3: Number of marginalised girls supported by GEC with improved Life Skills	Reviewed issues from baseline, ensuring correct response types are given (multiple choice, tick all that apply, etc.)	Yes, at baseline. Extensive exercises during training for midline.	Minor adjustments to terminology used and response options	Yes	Yes
School Attendance Form	OUTCOME 2 – Transition Number of Marginalised Girls who have transitioned through key stages of Education (Formal track)	New tool. Introduced to measure attendance on a sub-sample of communities surveyed, checking school register together with headmaster. Attendance of all eight STAGE girls surveyed in communities would be checked over a period of four weeks.	During training.	No	No	No
Key Informant Interview (KII) Tools[88] and (FGD) Tools	IO3 and IO4 plus complementing quantitative indicators where possible.	Revised all tools (with feedback log in excel documenting all changes), including: Shortening following baseline feedback; Simplifying language; Reframing boys' questions; Reframing life skills questions to ask around what are good qualities and skills to have.	During baseline and midline training exercises.	No changes required.	Yes	Yes

[88] For Girls, Boys, Caregivers, Teachers, Headteachers, Local Leaders (Traditional and Religious), Local Authority Members (usually Assembly Members).

7.8 Annex 9 Quantitative datasets, Codebooks and Programs

Submitted Separately

7.9 Annex 10 Quantitative Sampling Framework

Supplementary to sample data provided in the main report, see section 2.3 Evaluation Methodology

Table 66 - Formal Track, Disability breakdown by severity

Question	No Difficulty	A Little Difficulty	A Lot of Difficulty	Cannot Do At All	# Responses
Difficulty Seeing	96.7%	2.9%	0.4%	0.0%	688
Difficulty Hearing	96.4%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	688
Difficulty Walking 100 metres	93.6%	3.2%	0.0%	3.2%	31
Difficulty Walking 500 metres	96.7%	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%	30
Does she have difficulty with self-care such as feeding or dressing him/her	94.6%	5.2%	0.2%	0.0%	688
When she speaks does he/she have difficulty being understood by people ins	96.7%	3.1%	0.3%	0.0%	689
When she speaks does he/she have difficulty being understood by people out	91.2%	8.7%	0.2%	0.0%	689
Compared with children of the same age does she have difficulty learning t	89.6%	10.3%	0.2%	0.0%	689
Compared with children of the same age does she have difficulty remembering	89.4%	10.5%	0.2%	0.0%	687
Does she have difficulty concentrating on an activity that she enjoys doing	95.2%	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%	688
Does she have difficulty accepting changes in her routine?	92.4%	7.0%	0.2%	0.4%	688
Compared with children of the same age does she have difficulty controllin6	90.7%	8.6%	0.7%	0.0%	689
Does she have difficulty making friends?	92.1%	6.7%	0.9%	0.3%	687

Note: difficulty walking by distance questions only asked of those who require equipment to walk. This was likely a mistake when coding the questionnaire.

7.10 Annex 11 External Evaluation Declaration

Name of project: Strategic Approaches to Girls' Education External Evaluation

Formal Midline

Name of External evaluator and contact information:

IMC Worldwide Ltd

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Names of all members of the evaluation team:

Elena de Besi, IMC Worldwide

Lauren Atherton, IMC Worldwide

Andrew Trembley, Independent

___FF___ (Fazlun Fazlee) certify that the independent evaluation has been conducted in line with the Terms of Reference and other requirements received.

Specifically:

All of the quantitative data was collected independently ((Initials: _FF___).

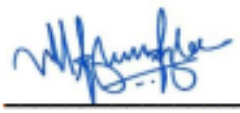
All data analysis was conducted independently and provides a fair and consistent representation of progress (Initials: __FF__).

Data quality assurance and verification mechanisms agreed in the terms of reference with the project have been soundly followed (Initials: _FF___).

The recipient has not fundamentally altered or misrepresented the nature of the analysis originally provided by JEAVCO / PAB (Company) (Initials: _FF___).

All child protection protocols and guidance have been followed (initials: _FF___).

Data has been anonymised, treated confidentially and stored safely, in line with the GEC data protection and ethics protocols (Initials: __FF__).



Fazlun Fazlee

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27 May 2021