

Final reflections

Achievements and lessons learned

Jielimishe (Educate Yourself)

KENYA

APRIL 2017 – MARCH 2022



Girls'
Education
Challenge



Healthy Africa, Empowered People!

“Before, I used to think learning was not that important for my daughter and it didn’t matter if she finished school when she was 12. But Jielimishe came to talk to us, and my daughter spoke to me and told me about how school can help her in the future, and that she can help us as a family too. I started to realise that she was right and that helping her to finish school would help our family in the future too.”

Mother



● Kenya

What did Jielimishe do?

The Jielimishe project was funded through the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) and implemented by I Choose Life – Africa (ICL) in partnership with SOS Children's Villages Kenya from 2017 to 2022. The project worked on improving the life chances of 10,123 marginalised girls (2,390 in primary school; aged 12 to 16 years and 7,730 in secondary school; aged 14 to 22 years) using a holistic approach to complete a cycle of education, transition to the next level including alternative pathways and demonstrate learning.

The project sought to empower girls, schools and teachers, as well as families across 20 primary schools and 39 secondary schools. The project was implemented across three counties of Kenya: Meru (agricultural communities), Laikipia (pastoralist communities) and Mombasa (urban poor). The project also worked with highly marginalised girls and young women, including 47 young mothers, 74 rescued girls and 1,791 pastoralist girls. These girls received more targeted interventions to support them to remain in school, learn and transition to the next stage of education. Besides supporting girls as direct beneficiaries, the project supported 3,190 boys in primary school between Grades 7 and 8 and 3,790 in secondary schools. The project worked to address the most common barriers to girls' education, such as gender inequalities in marginalised communities, poverty, limited value placed on education girls, girls facing insecurity when travelling to school, inadequate support for teachers in life skills and mentorship, long distances to and from schools and household responsibilities affecting girls' abilities to fully engage with learning activities.

The project achieved its objectives through the following interventions:

1. Provision of teacher professional development (TPD). 37 teacher champions trained and empowered 162 teachers on learner-centred approaches in pedagogy and promoted collaboration and best practice through group meetings and digital forums.
2. Provision of resources and learning materials. The project provided learners with solar lamps to help them study at home and partnered with Kenya National Library Services to develop libraries in the marginalised Laikipia county.
3. Provision of information and communication technology (ICT) connectivity and training of teachers to use it effectively. The project trained 300 teachers from the 30 schools to use ICT in lesson preparation, delivery and assessment. As a result, 71% of learners cited improved academic performance.
4. Establishment of remedial support for weaker students to facilitate their transition to the next grade.
5. Development of Girls' Clubs to promote empowerment and self-confidence. This included training on social and emotional learning and sexual and reproductive health. Girls were given sanitary pads to help them manage their menstrual hygiene.
6. Development of a strong safeguarding mechanism at the school level. The project developed and distributed child protection material, conducted sessions with 'ambassadors of change' to address and prevent harmful practices, and supported the Ministry of Education in the development of effective child protection policies and practices.

“Before, I wasn't ready to do any maths, I feared it actually. But now, I think because of group discussions and group working and being able to consult with teachers, I have improved and now I love maths.”

Girl



7. Provision of academic and career mentorship to girls. The project set up a school-based mentorship model in 40 schools. Government guidance and counselling teachers were trained on life-skills education, entrepreneurship, market skills and academic opportunities. Further support was also provided to the Ministry of Education and Teachers' Service Commission for the adoption of the mentorship model across all schools in Kenya.
8. Provision of scholarship and bursary support to marginalised girls to ensure their continued learning in schools. During COVID-19, cash transfers were also provided to keep girls in school.
9. Empowerment of communities through economic opportunities such as poultry farming. 500 caregivers/parents have been supported through farming support and findings highlight that 86% have used the income from their business on their girls' education (buying learning materials and paying school fees).
10. Provision of technical, vocational education and training (TVET) opportunities to girls. The project connected with TVET institutions to raise awareness of the career and financing opportunities. The project advised learners on technical institutions, professional certifications and strengthened the capacity of Guidance and Counselling teachers for continued support to learners within schools. Communities and caregivers engaged in the economic activities/poultry value chain were also provided with extension services to ensure post-closure support.



// EFFIE'S STORY



Walking into one of the TVET colleges supported by the Jielimishe project, one can see how students are each busy holding combs and pins, trying their best to outdo themselves in this styling class practical. In the very corner of the room, Effie is working passionately on her dummy to achieve the style she had been taught. Effie is one of the girls who receives scholarship support by the Jielimishe project.

Just after her parents separated, Effie, who is the eldest in a family of five, had lost hope in ever finishing school since her father was the family's sole bread winner. However, when Effie took part in the mentorship activities delivered by the Jielimishe project, she was encouraged to continue her education until she was done with secondary school. *"Most of my close friends lost hope while others got pregnant and dropped out of school but through mentorship I felt encouraged to hold on in spite of the situation at home,"* she said.

When finishing her secondary school studies, Effie was concerned that her mother would expect her to start working rather than continuing with her education. Effie had a deep desire to work into the cosmetic industry but did not know how to create opportunities for herself. Meanwhile, she got a job in a cosmetic shop. With this job, Effie was able to contribute financially to the family. Her passion for the cosmetic industry deepened even more.

After two years working in the shop, Effie was supported by the Jielimishe project to access tertiary education and study at a college of beauty and hairdressing. *"She is a good performer, self-driven and always eager to perfect the skills she is taught. We have a lot of hope in her,"* said her teacher. Currently, Effie works at a renowned manufacture of cosmetic products, dish washing products, fabric softening products and plastic products, such as school rulers. Effie is saving to further studies and become a hair and beauty teacher.

How did Jielimishe adapt during COVID-19?

COVID-19 hit Kenya in March 2020 and schools were closed between March and September 2020. During that time, students could not access face-to-face learning, and (in many cases) formal learning was suspended. The Jielimishe project adapted the main project activities to ensure learning would still take place. The project introduced remote learning through internet platforms and/or informal community-based learning. Classes were taught via Zoom by teachers for students who had access to internet data and either a laptop, tablet or mobile phone.

Teachers set up Google Classrooms, where they uploaded lessons and material which students could access. Google Classrooms was used in conjunction with Zoom, providing students with a multi-platform approach to remote learning. Students and teachers also established and communicated through WhatsApp groups. WhatsApp was a particularly beneficial platform as it allowed students to engage with learning and materials more flexibly. They could engage in conversation with teachers and classmates through text messages, share their concerns and also manage their household responsibilities. Students were also provided with supplementary hard copies (printouts) of material for learning when they could not access technical devices.

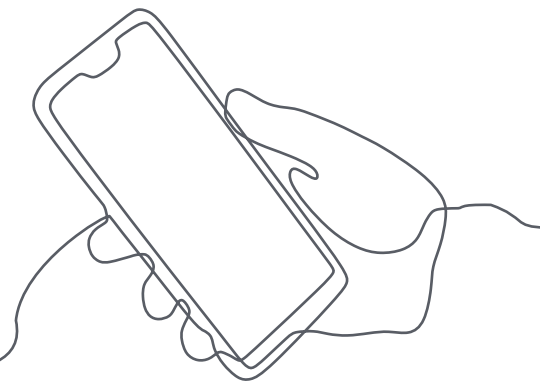
In Laikipia, where access to technology was limited, the Jielimishe project set up 'village-based learning cells', which worked well for communities that were geographically remote. Learners congregated in one space, and teachers travelled to these communities to teach students. Teachers were provided with materials and refreshments for themselves and the students by the project. The project also supported the provision of hard-copy materials to students who had no access to online learning material or village cells. Mentorship and sanitary towels were also delivered in the community cells. The project also distributed materials to prevent the spread of COVID-19, including handwashing points, soap and face masks.

At endline, teachers highlighted that most girls returned to school once their schools reopened. In some schools, students said that they were happier with the schooling situation following the school closures because class sizes were halved to enable social distancing. In instances where a class previously had 60 or more students, this was reduced to 30-40 students upon reopening the school. Students highlighted that this was beneficial to their learning, as they could engage more regularly with teachers and appreciated having more space.

COVID-19 appeared to harm girls' learning, as many girls suggested that they did not engage in learning during the break, despite being provided with materials. Girls also suggested that they felt they had slipped in their learning outcomes after returning to school and needed to re-motivate themselves to get back into learning and make up for any learning loss.

“Group work helps a lot because I can ask for help from a friend. If we don't know the answer, someone else will. We can learn from one another in a group.”

Girl



What did Jielimishe achieve?

Improved learning outcomes, confidence and self-esteem. Feedback from girls in the Endline Evaluation suggested that they felt the Jielimishe project had helped them improve their learning and, subsequently, some academic outcomes. As midline data demonstrated, girls had mainly improved in their literacy and numeracy scores, and feedback from girls at the endline suggest that many felt they had continued to improve. At the endline, learning outcomes were not measured due to prolonged COVID-19 school closures and, therefore, could not be compared with midline and baseline results. Girls suggested that the most significant contribution to improved learning was classroom attitudes, in that girls had been able to increase their confidence and self-esteem throughout the project and were, therefore, more committed to learning. Girls attributed their improved learning to key activities such as using ICT in the classroom, group work and classroom-based discussions where students participated in a question-and-answer format. Opportunities to engage in discussion and the use of student-centred approaches appeared to be the most appreciated and beneficial. Caregivers, too, considered that the Jielimishe interventions had contributed to promoting positive attitudes and improving learning outcomes.

Improved transition. Internal project monitoring data indicated that transition outcomes among students improved across the project's life. Both students and caregivers associated these improvements in transition outcomes with students' improved motivation and commitment to school. Students suggested that being engaged in mentorship activities and adopting a better understanding of potential future career pathways helped build their confidence and commitment to learning and successfully transitioning from grade to grade and school level to school level. Girls who received bursary support had the greatest transition rates according to project monitoring data.

Improved girls' learning and life skills through mentorship. At endline, girls and teachers in all counties commented that girls were empowered by mentorship sessions, and the sessions made them feel more prepared and committed to learning. Girls also reported that mentorship contributed significantly to improved leadership and life skills, particularly increased confidence in and out of the classroom. Girls attributed this to being provided with opportunities to lead discussions and being engaged in understanding how women can contribute to society. Mentorship programming was reported to contribute to improved learning outcomes by building the motivation and maturity of girls, whereby girls became more focused on their studies and the academic scores they needed to achieve to pursue employment pathways. Mentorship appeared to positively influence transition outcomes among girls. Girls and caregivers suggested that an awareness of future pathways and the value of education made girls more motivated to continue their studies instead of dropping out. Girls reported considerable value in the sexual and reproductive health sessions, noting that the information was not previously known to them and made it easier for them to manage menstruation, as well enabling greater understanding of how girls become pregnant.

“When I do activities with the class, I select a group leader to do some teaching. In each group, the leader is responsible for helping everyone. I select a new leader in every activity, so it helps to build the confidence of students and makes them more engaged.”

Teacher



Supported young mothers. The mentorship programme included components focused on sexual and reproductive health. These sessions aimed to increase girls' knowledge on sexual reproductive health, how to prevent pregnancy, and the negative effects of relationships, early marriage and pregnancy. At endline, teachers and students reported that they felt the sessions on sexual and reproductive health contributed to reducing the number of pregnant girls and/or girls who were in relationships. Furthermore, in Meru, project staff highlighted how they attempted to negotiate with school heads and advocate for more flexibility for girls who were mothers. The project team highlighted that they worked with schools to allow girls who were mothers to come to school a little later (when necessary), go home during their lunch hour to feed and check on their children, and complete classwork at home. The MoE decided that this flexibility should be detailed in the National School Entry Guidelines. The project team also highlighted that tailored mentorship sessions were held with mothers in Meru to discuss unique issues they faced. However, this was not a direct project activity and, instead, a decision made by schools. As the project team cited, these included short discussions on how to balance school and taking care of babies.

Supported families through income-generating resources and activities. Through the economic empowerment component of the project, families were offered livelihood/poultry farming support through the provision of chickens, goats, and other income-generating resources and activities. The economic empowerment support enabled families to cover education costs and contribute to meeting basic household needs, such as food and clothes. Families were upskilled throughout the project and had the necessary knowledge to manage their activities after the project ended. The project also provided them with extension service through linkages to value chain providers, enabling them to continue their learning and become more productive. While much smaller in scale, the economic empowerment component appeared to offer considerable value to the families who were supported. These households were offered a sustainable and independent solution to limited income.

Provided bursaries to support girls' attendance and transition. At endline, girls, caregivers and teachers noted that having school fees covered ensured that girls could continue their studies. Girls highlighted that their stress and anxiety levels in school were drastically reduced due to bursary support, and their commitment to continue learning had improved. The provision of bursary support throughout the project period appears to have contributed significantly to improving transition rates among the most marginalised girls in targeted schools. Looking closely at the monitoring data, transition outcomes among bursary students were particularly high across all years of the project. As noted, over 98% of girls in all counties transitioned from grade to grade, and then 100% of girls transitioned from primary to secondary. On average, a total of 96% of bursary-supported girls transitioned from secondary to tertiary education or TVET studies.

Provided menstrual health management resources. Girls and caregivers widely praised the project's provision of menstrual hygiene management resources. Girls in all counties highlighted that sanitary pads ensured they could continue coming to school during their period. This also helped them maintain their hygiene better because they had soap and underwear. The provision of menstrual hygiene management resources supported the retention of girls and improved attendance rates in classes. Overall, stakeholders also noted that transition outcomes improved by the endline as a result of the provision of menstrual health management resources.

“The mentorship programme has boosted our girls' confidence and self-esteem and they are now able to open up about their challenges. They are happy to express themselves and tell us if there are any issues.”

Headteacher



Jielimishe in numbers



Number of marginalised girls supported

10,123



7,730

in secondary school supported

Number of marginalised boys supported

6,980



2,390

in primary school supported

To what extent Jielimishe deliver value for money?

The Endline Evaluation suggests that overall, the Jielimishe project delivered reasonable value for money. As highlighted, the project demonstrated relevance to the primary needs of target stakeholders and effectively improved overall learning outcomes, transition rates, community attitudes, and life and leadership skills.

Overall, investments were effectively targeted to engage with and support girls' education in Laikipia, Meru and Mombasa counties. In most cases, optimal resource allocation was evident, with activities focused on mitigating existing barriers and engaging with the most relevant and influential stakeholders. The key barriers identified at the baseline and then re-reviewed at the midline and endline were addressed either through short-term or long-term mitigation, such as tackling financial issues, transportation and earlier marriage. The most vulnerable girls were identified and supported in most circumstances, including through engagement with their caregivers. Gaps were noted in the extent to which more marginalised sub-groups – such as girls with disabilities, married girls and those who were mothers or orphaned – were directly engaged in interventions. There was also an awareness of the community's key role in strengthening educational commitment and retention in schools and the influential role boda boda drivers can have in supporting safe school access. Moreover, engaging with the Ministry of Education and the Teacher Service Commission, throughout the project process ensured that efforts and interventions were closely aligned to the government's aims and that relevant officials were actively involved in reviewing and providing feedback to the project team. The project also allocated funding when the project adjusted its approach during the COVID-19 pandemic and identified remote learning opportunities for students.

Overall, the project allocated appropriate resources where necessary, introducing optimal interventions in terms of spending. This includes the allocation of resources for girls in schools, economic empowerment efforts and TVET spending. However, significant resources were allocated to training a smaller number of teachers with unclear results. Resource allocation could also have been reviewed in relation to fewer effective interventions, such as community dialogues compared with the set outcome of improving attitudes towards education. Resources could have been more efficiently allocated to schools to enable them to build networks and communication platforms with caregivers. Furthermore, the provision of bursary support for students was also effective spending, as it appeared to contribute to very high transition rates directly. This, however, was a short-term approach, and there were limitations in terms of value for money about sustainability.

“Once I did the training and learned how to use technology in the classroom, objectives became easier to achieve. ICT acts like an assistant in the classroom. Teaching something visual is easier to stick in students' minds than listening. With ICT, it is easier to illustrate calculations. I really recommend that all teachers be trained on ICT and provided with the adequate resources to use it.”

Teacher

What did Jielimishe learn?

Improving learning outcomes. As pointed out by girls at endline, key contributions to improved learning were increased confidence, self-esteem and motivation in their studies. This supported girls to become more focused on their studies, more engaged in classroom learning and more willing to complete additional studies to support their classroom work. To that end, efforts that continue to support confidence-building and self-esteem should be prioritised and incorporated into mentorship sessions and classroom-based activities.

Delivering remote learning solutions. Remote learning proved challenging for girls, with many suggesting they were unmotivated and unengaged in learning during the lockdowns caused by COVID-19. While the Jielimishe project attempted to engage learners with remote learning options and support teachers to engage with learning through mobile phones, a more considered approach may be needed. Such an approach needs to keep all students accountable for their learning and performance. This may include a more formalised approach to managing learning and asking teachers to build on their ICT skills to promote more interactive learning remotely. Alternatives are also needed for girls who cannot access devices such as mobiles, tablets, and computers. This was particularly pertinent among the most marginalised girls who lacked the funds to access such learning platforms. In such instances, the focus could be on providing teachers who can be community-based or providing a space for girls within targeted communities to engage in learning in a local home, church, or mosque.

Improving transition through engaging caregivers. Transition appeared to be most successful when caregivers and the local community were committed to supporting school access and when girls felt more motivated to continue their learning. A key component to support transition in the future is the continuation of engaging caregivers (male and female) closely with school-related activities and ensuring that schools are providing regular updates to parents on the progress of their children.

Training, coaching and supporting teachers. Professional coaching was noted as the most valuable means of building teachers' capacity along with providing them hands-on IT support. The one-on-one model allowed teachers to focus on their individual techniques and receive real-time support to improve their teaching approaches. Only a small selection of teachers was exposed to professional coaching. Attempts at introducing such training, even at a school level, should be a focus for the future on a larger scale. This could involve bringing an external teacher into schools or having teachers within existing schools support one another through direct observations and feedback. ICT training was reported to be a valuable contribution to the classroom and student learning. ICT training should be continuous, whereby teachers can access ongoing support and training.

Engaging communities. It is important to engage closely with local communities to articulate the strategy behind any economic interventions. Community members may not be clear as to the reasons why they were not considered for economic support. It is recommended that future programmes consider engaging communities and explaining selection processes so that families who do not meet the necessary criteria understand why they have not been selected.



Addressing the stigma around menstruation. Gaps remain concerning the stigma around menstruation. While girls were taught reproductive health details on menstruation, the social stigma negatively impacted school attendance which could not be addressed through the Jielimishe project. Negative stigmas are more pronounced at school among students rather than through teachers or education staff. This should be a key point in future interventions. Directly addressing social stigmas against menstruation might go a long way towards building the confidence of girls to continue attending school during menstruation, especially when the provision of sanitary pads stops.

Engaging communities and caregivers. Caregivers who noted improved attitudes towards education suggested it was less to do with community dialogues in the community and more to do with direct engagement with schools. The opportunity to speak with school classroom teachers and access reports and evidence of learning outcomes was a greater indicator of improved engagement with education. It is also particularly important to ensure that male caregivers are engaged. This is especially pertinent as the male caregivers tend to play a decision-making role within the household. Ensuring their buy-in will be key to higher retention and transition rates.

// SOPHIE'S STORY



Sophie is 24 years old and the youngest in a family of five. She is one of the girls supported by the Jielimishe project and also a project volunteer. After graduating university, she pursued a bachelor's degree in business management. While undertaking her studies, Sophie volunteered for four years at the Jielimishe office in Mombasa. She said, *"The main contributor to my hindrance of transitioning was low economic status. Furthering one's studies after high school had become a cloud too high for anyone to reach in my family. Given that my secondary education fees had been paid with a lot of difficulties and I often had to stay at home due to lack of fees, going to the university proved to be a big challenge.*

Furthering my studies remained a forbidden fruit only to be admired but not to be eaten, all hope of becoming a finance guru flew away and so I settled for selling chapati and beans to earn a living."

"Luckily, I happened to be one of the few girls chosen by the Jielimishe project to be sponsored under TVET in Mombasa. I took short courses in various fields, including bookkeeping. This opportunity awakened my hopes, it motivated me to work harder at everything I did. After graduating from the short course, I joined university and I was able to successfully attend my classes with the support from my parent who had been informed by the Jielimishe project. Now I am also a mentor and volunteer for the Jielimishe project and am able to help supporting other girls too. Also, I am proud to say that I now have recently found a job as finance and administration assistant. To say the least, my dreams are coming true by the day, the sky is the limit."

Girls'
Education
Challenge



.....
Find out more: www.facebook.com/ichooselifeafrica/ | www.girlseducationchallenge.org
.....

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

Photos: © I Choose Life