

# CHANGE LEARNINGS

## Development - Humanitarian Nexus

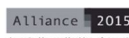


CHANGE - Improving Access to Education in Ethiopia for Most Marginalized Girls  
Consortium led by People in Need

Girls'  
Education  
Challenge



CONCERN  
worldwide



Despite the original design of project as educational development project, the implementation took place in environment of constant humanitarian crises (Covid-19, droughts, floods or conflicts) which occurred in different times and different areas, de-synchronising the implementation among four consortium partners throughout the whole project duration.

The readiness to adjust, re-design and continue providing classes to girls despite emergencies, like Home-based learning or Mobile schools, were a major factor which minimized drop out of girls which would had been otherwise significant.

## Introduction

There have been many external events which disrupted and hindered the fulfilment of project activities (especially girls' school attendance) throughout the five years project. Those events required to adapt overall approach from development project to the humanitarian conditions. These unplanned responses and adjustments to the crisis created the biggest challenge over the project implementation.

## Challenges

- Pandemic Covid-19 – for over a year schools in Ethiopia were closed as part of to the Covid-19 measures. Government also did not allow NGOs to work in education for certain period of time.
- Conflicts and Security situation - ethnic conflict in Tigray which started in November 2020 and lasted for more than two years gradually affected Amhara and Afar region too. Protracted armed conflict in Southern Ethiopia (SNNPR, Oromia) mainly in various parts of Gedeo and surrounding zones caused periods with limited or no access to the project locations
- Climate change – natural disasters occurred frequently in various parts of Ethiopia during the five years project. To name at least the most serious emergencies:
  - severe drought in Borena in 2022,
  - severe drought and consequent floods in Borena in spring 2023
  - floods in Afar in Zone 1 (Aysaita, Afambo) in Oct 2022 (the project had to repair several learning centers, damaged by the floods, relocate girls temporarily to alternative learning spaces and provide education supplies to those girls whose supplies had been damaged).
- Economic factors – over five years of the project duration the prices of almost all commodities increased significantly with impact on food insecurity of the target communities. Since 2017, the government has been undergoing a major devaluation. In the past four years the value of Ethiopian Birr has dwindled by 126% against the dollar. The severe shortage of foreign currency has led to a shortage of commodities in the market. Food, housing, fuel, industrial inputs, rent, and virtually every other product have skyrocketed in price. For example, the price of 1l of Diesel fuel increased by 133% since January 2022 till January 2023 (from 28.9 to 67.40 Birr per liter). These macroeconomic changes affect the whole society, but the most already poverty-stricken communities. As stated in the baseline survey in SNNPR and Oromia, 65.8% of households cannot meet their basic needs without charity or external help.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Baseline, C3, 2022, Jarco Consulting

The rate of inflation has also had a major impact on the prices of constructions, equipment and school supplies for girls. The entire procurement process for larger contracts has been complicated by volatile prices and has also affected the completion of planned activities.

## Adaptations

- ⇒ **Home-based learning** - during **Covid-19 pandemic**, all partners had to adjust to the new humanitarian situation to ensure continuation of the schooling. SOPs were prepared and protective equipment delivered to girls, facilitators and CAG members. Although the regular schools were closed, the CHANGE project continued its education program during the peak time of the pandemic by arranging home based learning. Facilitators were teaching in homes with small groups of girls. In one day, facilitator visited approximately three houses.
- ⇒ **Project facilitators** - It proved the great advantage to have own program facilitators. Government teachers could not teach during Covid-19, but our teaching team after agreement with Zonal Education office (in a new regime) could deliver the home based classes and thus continue in teaching. .
- ⇒ **Mobile schools** - partners had to also adjust to occasional displacements of communities due to the conflicts or natural disasters. Therefore, mobile schools had been introduced. As the movement of communities was frequent (Afar), the facilitators (who were also from those communities) and project staff moved with the community and continued the lessons which helped to reduce the rate of girls' withdrawal from education. This kind of mobile schooling, by following the route of beneficiary girls when they moved in search of pasture and water, helped many girls to stay in education. The concept was then repeated in upcoming challenges.
- ⇒ **School feeding program** - in Oromia (Borena) the school feeding program was launched to prevent girls from drop-out during the drought season. IFAL girls did not want meal in the school, but preferred to take food items home so they could cook and share it with their kids and family.
- ⇒ Above mentioned changes caused delays in planned activities and required modifications not only in consortium approach in the work with girls and communities but also in administrative aspect of the project. Therefore, **repetitive revisions of activities and budget modifications** (including introduction of new reporting formats) had to be executed.
- ⇒ Consortium submitted **five major project revisions** (5 RAM) with major changes in logframe, activities and budget.
- ⇒ **Human resources** – changed conditions and consequent needs of the beneficiaries led to enormous amount of adjustment throughout the project lifespan demanding more capacities and attention of the project management, administration, financial follow up and data management than was envisaged.
- ⇒ **Data management during emergencies** – already challenging data collection on girls' attendance and regular monitoring in remote areas were affected by events which made communities inaccessible (e.g. floods) or communities were forced to flee and became displaced in random new locations (e.g. during conflicts).
- ⇒ The overall **target of enrolled OOS girls was decreased** from 31 000 to 24 042 (incl decrease of girls with disabilities from 1300 to 934) for the Consortium due to the above-described challenges in the implementing regions. Till Q20 there were 24 968 girls enrolled to the ABE or IFAL.
- ⇒ From the consortium of four partners point of view, **external events occurred in different times and different areas** throughout the whole project. Therefore, the implementation process could not be synchronized, as these extraordinary events created delays in different moments for one or more different partners. Partners' response differentiated according to specific locations and situations with

inevitable delays of the time-plan. All disruptions that have occurred due to the emergency events required even stronger coordination among the consortium partners with subsequent modifications.

## Learnings

- The crucial learning from the emergency situations in CHANGE project is that timely and continuous follow-up was essential in the educational intervention, especially in the rural areas. The readiness to adjust and continue providing classes to girls despite Covid-19, droughts or conflicts was a major factor which minimized drop out of girls which would have been otherwise significant. The great credit goes to the consortium of partners who did not give up at the most difficult time and continued to enable education to marginalized girls.
- That also meant to adapt overall approach from development project to the humanitarian conditions. The unplanned responses and adjustments to the crisis created the biggest challenges throughout the project duration. During five years of the project the project underwent major revisions, targets had to be decreased and several indicators as well as activities re-designed due to the external events happening in different parts of Ethiopia over the years.
- In countries facing long-term instability, it is crucial to prepare flexible contingency plan and budget anticipating external events which might affect the project implementation and girl's school attendance.
- Since the crises occurred in different times and different places for different partners it is very demanding on the side of the consortium to keep track of progress of similar activities but in different stages of implementation.