

# Final reflections

Achievements and lessons learned

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## Strategic Approaches to Girls' Education (STAGE) implemented by World Education

GHANA

AUGUST 2018 - FEBRUARY 2023



Girls'  
Education  
Challenge



  
WORLD EDUCATION  
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**“I heard about the STAGE project. I embraced it wholly and I liked the ALP. The project has empowered me. I started making soap in my community before graduation. I make the soap and supply some stores in the city. Because of that, I no longer depend on my husband for money. I also personally sell some in the community.”**

A young mother



● Ghana

# What did the STAGE project do?

Ghana made notable efforts towards achieving Education for All (EFA) in the post-Jomtien period of the 1990s and 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.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to financial challenges, extensive literature<sup>2</sup> highlights that rigid, formalised school systems and a loaded curriculum that greatly depends on trained teachers often does not work in rural environments with respect to providing the 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 programmes. Out-of-school children, especially girls, have few options to re-enter school or find viable options to generate income. 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. Ultimately, it will equip the girls to be agents of change.

The Strategic Approaches to Girls' Education (STAGE) project, implemented by World Education, Inc. (WEI), 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. Additionally, with poverty being such a key factor issue, STAGE works to reduce financial barriers, to ensure that girls become better educated and are put on pathways that break the cycle of poverty.

STAGES builds on learning from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and USAID funded Community-Based Education (CBE). The project was implemented from August 2018 until January 2023 and reached 16,794 girls across eight regions of Ghana, with North-eastern Region being included following creation of six new regions. The project consists of two programme tracks for highly marginalised girls.

- A single cohort Formal school track for girls aged 10-14 that reached 8,025 girls
- Non-Formal track of three cohorts for girls aged 15-19 focused on vocation skills and employment that reached 8,769 girls

The Formal track set 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. It is designed to provide a holistic approach that tackles barriers at individual, community, school and system levels, and support girls in accessing education and fair employment.

The non-formal track provided 15 to 19-year-old girls with nine months of accelerated learning on literacy and numeracy. There was also life skills training and vocational training from community-based Master Crafts Persons. The purpose of these trainings was to support future employment for the girls via interventions such as support to caregivers, and awareness raising on the importance of girls' education.

**“Our community has become the centre of attraction by other surrounding communities due to the soap my daughter has learned to make.”**

**A mother of a girl supported by STAGE**



<sup>1</sup> Akyeampong et al, 20122

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF 1993; Mfum-Mensah, 2003; Farrell & Hartwell, 2009; Mfum-Mensah & Ridenour, 2014

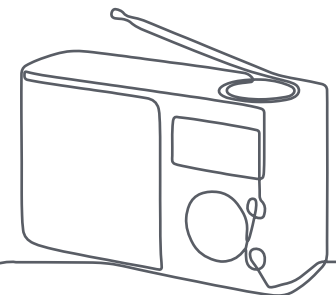
# How did STAGE adapt during COVID-19?

The context in which STAGE was implemented changed significantly as Ghana was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting measures imposed to control its spread. Schools in Ghana first closed in March 2020 and remained closed for 10 months. UNHCR estimates that 9.2 million school 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.

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. The Government implemented a staggered re-opening of education institutions. The Government launched a Back-to-School Campaign in January 2021, to encourage learners and especially girls to return to school safely and the GES issued guidelines that mandated measures including the wearing of masks, temperature checks and regular hand washing with soap to enable schools to open safely.

WEI identified the risks to programme and programme participants as a result of COVID-19, along with mitigations in the STAGE Response Plan. National school closures related to COVID-19 impacted the 8,245 STAGE learners. Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) activities were suspended in all the eight regions until June 2020. Key interventions and drivers of the programme 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, 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.
- In addition to distance learning, community facilitators also provided learning in reduced classes (convening girls in smaller classes; five 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 programme also organised catch-up classes between August and September to ensure that most of the content areas were covered. For the formal track girls who were supposed to transition in school starting in September 2020, STAGE collaborated with the school-based teachers to organise extra hours of catch-up classes during the first three months 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 and 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 were gradually brought to the level of their peers in class and facilitated to remain in school.
- 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.



- As originally planned, GES assisted in the transition and placement of girls to the appropriate classes in formal school. This included special support for girls with disabilities 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.
- 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<sup>3</sup>, and promote hand washing in all communities. It was 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; increased gender-based violence at home; increased levels of anxiety and depression.
- STAGE also planned to intensify community sensitisation interventions directed to ensuring support for continuous education, both direct (field staff to engage and sensitise parents and caregivers) and indirect (building the capacity of girls to sensitise their immediate family members).

<sup>3</sup> The Veronica bucket is a mechanism for hand washing originating in Ghana which consists of a bucket of water with a tap fixed at the bottom, mounted at hand height, and a bowl at the bottom to collect wastewater. The Veronica bucket was developed by Veronica Bekoe. [Veronica bucket - Wikipedia](#)

## // REGINA'S STORY



A year ago, life was very different for Regina, a 19-year-old girl from Northern Ghana. She had dropped out of school. With no literacy or numeracy skills, no vocation, and her visual impairment, there would be limited opportunities available for her.

But now, things have changed.

“I think I have benefited more than my other colleagues,” she remarks with a broad smile on her face. “I could not see very well neither could I read when I started. This was affecting me at the vocational skills training and at Accelerated Learning Programme. Today, with the eyeglasses provided, I no longer have that difficulty with seeing, reading, walking without stumbling.”

She heard about the Strategic Approaches to Girls' Education program (STAGE) and with the help of her parents, she enrolled in a 9-month community-based learning program. There she learned to read and write, do math, and build important life skills. Supported by a facilitator and a Community Oversight committee, she went to the learning center every day.

A local artisan, trained Regina and five of her peers to make beads, sandals and other products. She also provided business counseling to them, teaching them skills like how to properly record cash flow. Madam Anafor also taught the girls to “look for people who will require you to supply the beads in quantity and sell products in the various markets within the districts.”

A significant portion of the girls enrolled in the program face barriers in the community and at school such as teenage pregnancy, extreme poverty, or living in remote areas with limited access to education. World Education has worked with communities to develop adequate support for girls to achieve their aspirations. Using our disability screening protocol, we have found that around 10% of the girls have a functional impairment and, as with Regina, STAGE works with government partners to provide assistive devices. Inclusive pedagogical approaches ensure that all girls are able to join and learn.

They all gathered on December 1, 2020, to celebrate the end of the training. At the graduation ceremony, Regina looks proud and confident in herself and the 809 other girls in her district.

**“We were happy when the STAGE project was brought to our village. We took advantage of it and enrolled her onto the program. Today, we are here for the graduation, the beginning of good things to come.”**

Mr. Abukan, Regina's father



**“I have an eye impairment. When the STAGE project came, I thought they would not select me because of my eyes. They enrolled me, and I took part in the ALP and the vocation skills training. The master craftsman supported me and gave me the needed support to benefit from the training fully. I am happy that today I am graduating in making pastries.”**

A girl supported by STAGE

# What did STAGE achieve?

**STAGE has overachieved end of project targets in both key outcomes of learning and transition.** Ten months after graduation from Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP)/ Vocational and Skills Trainings (VST), life skills learning and transition to decent employment/self-employment and/or additional vocational training greatly exceed target for girls graduating from VSTs (80% transition target in October 2021). Results vary substantially between regions and are lower for some marginalisation subgroups, although no subgroup is far below the overall average. Overall transition has been successful and sustained for 84.4% of non-formal track cohort 2 girls.

**A substantial portion of girls pursued additional vocational training.** Beyond STAGE, over a quarter of girls undertook additional vocational training (18.9% were undertaking further training at the time of data collection and 8.3% did so at some point after graduation). Of note, some subgroups are more likely to undertake additional training than the overall average: girls affected by social norms-related barriers (52% vs 18.9% for the overall sample, significant), girls with a disability (33.3%) and girls older than 19 (25%).

**Some regions with higher marginalisation also had higher rates of successful transition.** Despite having lower learning scores and high levels of marginalisation at baseline, Likpakpaaln speakers (in Oti and Northern regions) had the highest levels of successful transition. Upper West (Dagaare) and Upper East (Kasem) have the lowest transition rates (66.7% and 75% respectively): whilst they have higher than average rates of additional VST, they also have lower rates of girls working for fair pay and under safe conditions than average. These two regions also have a higher prevalence of poverty which is negatively correlated to lower transition rates.

**The Life Skills Index score improved by 8 percentage points since baseline,** exceeding recommended targets (significant at 90% confidence level, but not at 95%). Life skills subcategory scores all increased compared to baseline. Caregivers had high levels of confidence in their girls' life skills in all areas and in relation to all sub-groups at baseline but the Caregiver's Assessment has still increased statistically significantly since baseline (91.2). Concerningly however, the girls' Life Skills assessment SRHR section scores remained relatively low, highlighting the need for continued SRHR education in communities and schools.

**Completion and attendance rates of ALPs and VSTs were high** though some challenges were noted for nursing mothers and those with other household or family work responsibilities.

**Economic barriers were reduced** by free VST for a six-month period followed by provision of an IGA start-up fund and equipment/material, together with sensitisation on the importance of girls attending vocational education and achieving economic empowerment. Encouragingly, almost all girls stated that their working conditions are better now as a result of participating in STAGE.

**Activities implemented to reduce economic barriers to attendance and transition were mostly effective.** Results were mixed for girls affected by demographic barriers which proved a challenge to attendance.

**Family support improved, but gendered norms persist.** Ultimately, the evaluation evidence does suggest that caregivers and families are supportive of girls' vocational training and employment, and that there have been changes as a result of STAGE.

**“I believe this project will achieve higher fluency in reading for most of the girls, and a few will be able to read word by word in a sentence or paragraph form.”**

A teacher



Community support has increased from very low levels at baseline, but it is primarily concentrated in certain regions. While community leaders were widely seen as supporters of women working and learning outside the home in Kasem and Likpakpaaln-speaking communities, their perceived support was minimal elsewhere.

Findings pointed at supportive attitudes towards education and inclusion of girls with a disability in the class and a better awareness of the challenges of girls with high chore burden and care responsibilities amongst project implementers and trainers.

Evaluation findings suggest that implementation of IGSE practices, safeguarding/child protection, the VST and ALP/CBE curriculum all contributed to girls' learning and transition. Further, monitoring and supervision have enabled gains in learning and transition by ensuring the effective implementation of the CBE curriculum and IGSE/safeguarding and accompanying the girls through sustained transition. Girls' experience at the ALP and VST offered by STAGE was overall very positive. Qualitative evidence points to the fact that while the classes were designed or modified for the girls to learn at the level and rate that was appropriate for them, it is the behaviour, attitudes, and demeanour of the facilitators which helped the girls to engage and continue with the programme.

The life skills were seen as a very useful part of the ALPs, especially with regard to an increase in confidence, an increase in knowledge of personal hygiene and the environment, and money management. Opinions on usefulness of STAGE activities are very positive amongst girls without much variation among activities, nor by region.

**Safeguarding and Child Protection.** In all three locations girls spoke about knowing their rights and knowing how to report abuses as a result of the STAGE programme. This was likely the result of STAGE training, but girls also participated in other initiatives (e.g., by UNICEF) on child protection and safe school policies.

**Working with government and partners, and sustainability of interventions.** STAGE has worked with national, district and local actors on strengthening the Apprenticeship Vocational Skills Training Model, by promotive introduction of Inclusive and Gender Sensitive Education (IGSE) and safeguarding in VST delivery and seeking partnerships with existing vocational training institutions and structures). In addition, STAGE attempted to effect sustainable change in social norms and gendered views around girls' education and economic empowerment within households and communities. At national level, there were indications that STAGE has been working closely with CEA and T-VET Ghana in the establishment of strategies, policies and activities that have been influenced by the STAGE model, and a three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is in place with CEA.

## // FORMAL TRACK - BICYCLES, BOOKS AND BEST PRACTICES



The STAGE project works in areas of Ghana where there are high levels of extreme poverty, in combination with deep-seated traditional and social norms, resulting in negative impacts on women and girls. Since its inception, the project has supported more than 8,000 out of school girls between 10 and 14 years old to transition into formal education. The project sets up community support mechanisms to keep girls safe and in school to learn.

One of these mechanisms was the installation of a bicycle bank for girls who live further than 5 kilometers from their schools. The bicycle bank is maintained by the community and allows girls to arrive in school on time and return safely and well before the evening sets in.

In Nankana district (Upper East Region), girls from three STAGE communities were provided with bicycles, in addition to school uniforms, books, pens/pencils and other learning materials. In each school, one Mentor Teacher is trained to provide additional support to transitioned girls. He or she organises catch-up classes to provide literacy and numeracy remedial learning activities and is the safeguarding focal point in the school. The Mentor Teacher also liaises between parents, caregivers, girls and communities to ensure that they remain in school and are allowed to study..”

Speaking about the effects of the bicycles, Madam Silvia said, “The most important thing about the bicycles for the girls is that it has made them regular and punctual in school.”



# The STAGE project in numbers



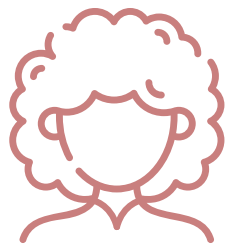
Number of girls  
between the ages 15  
and 19 years trained  
in 20 trades

**9,548**



Percentage of girls that are  
still in school after two  
years, and the learning  
gains are very high

**90%**



Number of girls reached  
in 652 communities in  
seven regions

**17,793**



Number of girls  
between 10  
and 14 years  
completed  
the CBE  
programme

**8,245**

Percentage of girls that started income generating activities in their communities: **94%**

**615** master craftsperson and **411** mentor teachers trained in inclusive gender sensitive pedagogy

Percentage of parents and caregivers supports girls' education: **98%**

Indicator	Target	Reached
Attendance rates of girls (% of girls that reported attending all or most of the classes)	N/A	85.3%
% of Girls that agree that their master craft person was effective at the learning centre	75%	93.4%
Extent that master craft persons apply inclusive gender-sensitive education	75%	92.5%
% of facilitators who demonstrate effective literacy/numeracy instruction	66%	88.9%
Life skills index score	75	74.6
Extent that caregivers perceive positive changes in girls' life skills (% of caregivers who agree or strongly agree with positive changes in life skills)	Positive trend	91.2%
% 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	85%	95.7%
Extent that religious and traditional leaders actively mobilise households to support excluded girls into education (% of leaders that speak at least quarterly in support of girls' education)	N/A	33%

# What did STAGE learn?

## **What works in improving enrolment and retention for marginalised girls**

The bicycle bank concept introduced by the STAGE project was beneficial to the girls and their families because it has helped to improve enrolment, retention and safety outcomes. If scaled up by districts, this could provide a sustainable solution to communities that may not have access to schools due to distance.

The catch-up classes concept also helped bring direct benefits to the girls in formal school. Even before they moved into formal education, the facilitators who had basic knowledge in English gave them basic tuition in the English language before transition. This positioned most girls well to start their formal education. The teacher mentors were able to support the girls to fully transition into formal education by providing them with needed tutelage. The teacher mentor idea has been promoted in many schools and currently, they are seeking support from their districts assemblies to make it part of the Junior high School (JHS) system to enable teacher mentors in JHSs identify and support low learners in their schools.

Another encouraging outcome was the training of teacher mentors, the girls and some district social welfare staff on how to make reusable sanitary pads. These trainers organised training sessions for students who were provided with a pack of the reusable pads. These had a spill over effect in communities and junior high schools, with some parents availing the training and Head Teachers of some JHSs agreeing to use their capitation grants to support training female students in their school. If these efforts are sustained there can be a significant drop in absenteeism or drop out due to lack of hygiene pads.

## **What works in transition and life skills**

An important legacy of the project will be out of the 17,000 girls on the non-formal track, the 8,000 girls who have transitioned and 9,000 girls who have been trained on a non-formal track, with over 80% moving into their chosen employment and vocational pathways. They have the skills and knowledge to sustain themselves and make their own life decisions. Crucially, these girls have children, and they are already transferring these skills to the next generation and will drive change in their communities.

A recent monitoring report by the WEI monitoring team revealed that 9,548 out of 10,221 girls who enrolled on the project have transitioned to IGAs. Graduation ceremonies have been events in which whole communities came out in support of the girls.

The report of a local consultant on the profitability of the vocational skills training programme said, *“82.9% of the respondents always apply the training knowledge and skills gained from the training received. This implies that respondents are constantly applying the skills learned and hence there is the hope of sustainability of the project.”*

The girls have hit the ground running and are benefitting practically from their chosen pathways. What is most interesting is also the finding that a significant number of girls are making profit and also training their peers in their respective communities.

**“We like it because of the life skills learning, literacy, and numeracy which have assisted most of us to be able to read and write in our local language and with the life skills learning, we are now able to work with the acquired knowledge to earn some level of income for our living.”**

Participant



### ***What works and what are the challenges in changing attitudes around Girls Education***

Gendered roles in households are deeply rooted and difficult to change, especially in situations of widespread poverty. While family members agree that the gender stereotypical roles that girls are assigned may prove detrimental to their education and overall development, the social cost of removing this domestic burden is high. These traditional roles are embedded practices in families and communities, challenging or changing these behaviours and socio-cultural norms will take sustained work. A lesson for projects that target marginalised girls, is from the outset, they should engage mothers, caregivers and community leaders to find innovative ways of shifting the domestic from girls to other in the household. This would require a changing of deeply entrenched norms and practices around gender stereotyping of roles in the household and community.

As the Endline Evaluation highlighted, there was a gradual shift in the mindset of many community members and caregivers when it came to gender equality in education. A critical reason for this shift is family and community members' first-hand experience of the positive effects and overall impact of girls education on their families and communities.

### ***Work on safeguarding was effective as evidenced by reporting of cases and securing of funds***

STAGE also focused on building the girls' confidence, tackling issues of sexual and reproductive health, and strengthening safeguarding and reporting mechanisms. The girls became more articulate in defining their rights to reproductive health services, safety at the workplace, their right to humane treatment by family members, their peers, teachers, master craft persons and employers. They reported cases of harassment, child protection and early marriages through the helpline and other channels, indicating they had been sensitised and were acting on these issues. At the Institutional level, WEI and the Consortium partners ensured that safeguarding was one of the most important working policies. Safeguarding policies and strategies were mainstreamed into every aspect of the STAGE work. Indeed, as a result of safeguarding policies, four partners have secured funding from other development partners. In addition, the project was able to train and get all the 13 districts of the formal track to introduce and develop safeguarding standards for their districts and schools.

### ***Making inclusion and SEN a priority at all levels***

Working with SEN schools and persons with disabilities increased awareness and deepened knowledge of all stakeholders on inclusion. The girls supported their peers with disability at the learning centres, in formal schools, in training skill centres and in managing their income generating activities. Through the implementation of the social inclusion component of the project, the girls, caregivers, programme staff and stakeholders were better sensitised and were fostering inclusion in their homes, workplaces and communities. Programme implementers prioritised inclusion, which was much needed. Inclusive strategies need to be integrated into a programme at all levels, from recruitment through to evaluation.

The project engaged beneficiaries strategically at all levels and implemented a holistic approach towards inclusion. Effective collaboration with government institutions yielded positive results for inclusion. Some girls received support from Ghana Enterprise Agency, while others received cash support from churches and traditional authorities. The leadership of the project engaged District Assemblies which led to supporting girls with disabilities in their districts.

### ***The innovative use of the mapping tool for targeted interventions and policy making***

The project faced a challenge at the start, identifying the girls who would need support. This was particularly true for girls with disabilities who were often not 'visible' or included in social gatherings. To address this, the STAGE project developed a comprehensive mapping tool for identification of marginalised girls. They carried out detailed mapping and validation to look at different categories of vulnerability and marginalisation to ensure they were reaching the girls who most needed support. This comprehensive tool reflects an advancement in data collection for a targeted programme for marginalised girls in extremely poor settings. It is a tool that enables a project to coordinate policy and implementation very strongly among key actors. This tool is now an acceptable tool used by the Complementary Education Agency and the Education Outcomes Fund (EOF) team. With proper implementation and documentation of processes, other implementing partners can learn from an organisation that is producing excellent outcomes.

**“The activities have changed my perception on girls’ vocational education and economic empowerment because it has brought life to them.”**

**Participant in Community animation and sensitization sessions**

### ***A robust management information system can prove transformative***

From the management information systems put in place, it was learned that having multiple layers for data and quality assurance helps to improve data quality and enhance adaptive learning. The recruitment of Monitoring and Evaluation officers in all the partner organisations, the engagement of supervisors who constantly visited the communities and ALP ensured that the project received real time data on what was working and what was not. This provided enough impetus for the project to review and where necessary change the technical approaches to align with the realities on the ground. In addition, the quality data also improved the project's engagements with relevant education sector agencies as every advocacy or engagement meeting was grounded in robust evidence from the field. These processes increased overall implementation and participation of programme beneficiaries, staff, volunteers and stakeholders.

### ***Leveraging the existing to strengthen ownership and generate cost efficiencies***

The project learned that leveraging existing structures helps in strengthening community ownership and reduces the tendency of duplication. The project used existing community structures during community mapping exercises to identify girls who met the project's selection criteria. These community structures throughout the ALP and VST training provided a layer of supervision at little or no cost. Through this approach, the project succeeded in building the capacity of community leaders to provide a sustainable support system to beneficiaries.

### ***Before implementation prioritising establishing of relations and getting community buy-in***

A challenge was getting communities to 'buy into' the project's many interventions which often challenged the status quo. Engaging the community is key. If the community makes their own commitments and their own contributions, in whatever way possible, they feel ownership and those changes are sustained beyond the work of the project. To address the initial apprehensions and potential tensions at the community level, the team did not just enter the community but engaged social service providers and traditional authorities. They worked at the national and district level, and once these relationships established, it was easier to get buy in at the government, district and community level for ambitious plans, such as standardisation of the curriculum or building community-based education.

Working with the Ministry of Education (MoE) was important to deepen and sustain the efforts. There can be a disconnect between the school supported by the MoE and the community supported by the Department for Social Welfare. In the middle of the school and community sit the girls who are facing barriers to education and are at risk of dropping out, so this disconnect has to be addressed and it does come down to the CSOs and traditional authorities to make that connection and try to get them to work together.



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