Welcome to the third Learning Digest

Since August 2021, we have participated in a number of high-level events on girls’ education and the conversation has been interesting, informative and is shaping our work as we move into 2022. If you would like to sign up to receive information on our events, webinars and learning outputs, please sign up here.

The GEC’s celebration of International Day of the Girl 2021

"Here’s what I think…”
An audience with the girls of the Girls’ Education Challenge

11 October 2021 | 13:30-14:30 (BST)

Girls’ learning losses

The GEC independent evaluation team measured girls’ learning losses in Kenya and Nepal in March 2021. This was compared to projects’ midline data from 2019 to estimate changes in girls’ learning during the prolonged school closures. This blog highlights the learning loss before and after school closure amongst the girls supported through two projects implemented by EDT and Mercy Corps in Kenya and Nepal.

Nepal Country Briefing – October 2021

Read about the latest activities, learning and progress in Nepal. This Country Briefing summarises a number of highlights including the formation of the Girls Inclusive Education Network and a glimpse of what it is like to be a ‘Big Sister’.
Our Future, Our Voice: Girls’ education and tackling the climate crisis

During November 2021, world leaders, activists and researchers attended COP26, calling for action on climate change.

Sharon Tao (GEC Team Leader/Education Director) joined a panel highlighting the importance of girls’ education in tackling climate change. The UK’s Minister Morton opened the panel discussion and the Minister of Education from Malawi, Hon. Agnes Nyalonje, set the scene. The panel included Kirsty Newman (RISE), Cath Porter Young Lives) and Jamille Bigio (USAID). It was expertly moderated by Forget Shareka (CAMFED association member). The discussion was powerful and lively, eloquently depicting how girls disproportionately suffer from climate change. It also demonstrated the ways in which they are leading change in their communities and beyond.

Harnessing the best type of energy: Girl power

Investing in girls makes countries more resilient to climate change. Studies show that when girls and women are better educated and included in decision making at all levels, their families and communities are more resilient and adaptable to the climate crises. The ENGAGE project, led VSO Nepal, is engaging 2,340 girls within 82 schools in climate risk assessments and action planning. Another project Marginalised No More, led by Street Child of Nepal, also raises awareness of the climate crisis by working with local partners and community stakeholders. The work of these two projects demonstrates that when girls’ voices are heard and used to generate evidence, they can instigate transformational changes in mitigating the impact of climate change.

Spotlight on Value for Money

Webinar on Value for Money (VfM)

Led by the GEC VfM Manager, Valsa Shah, this webinar focused on how projects can integrate VfM assessments in their project evaluations. The session recording provides a brief overview of the National Audit Office 4E Framework, the OECD DAC Criteria, and guidance on how to apply the ‘light-touch’ and ‘moderate-touch’ analysis to VfM evaluations.

VfM brief on PIN Nepal

Recently, we published a Spotlight Brief on Value for Money which focuses on the Aarambha project, led by People in Need in Nepal.

The VfM of Community based structures

An updated version of our Thematic Review ‘Using community-based structures in education programming’ is now available on the GEC website. This version contains an initial VfM review of community-based structures used in two GEC projects being implemented in Ethiopia and Malawi.
Protection is possible

We are proud to share our new publication ‘Protection is possible: How an innovative operating model strengthened safeguarding for the Girls’ Education Challenge’.

Although the GEC has worked on meeting its commitments to safeguarding since it began, the past two years have seen extensive, intensive and meaningful improvements in safeguarding work, including within the GEC Fund Manager and implementing partners. ‘Protection is possible’ explores this journey. It provides insights into the GEC’s Safeguarding Operating Model and how this model contributed to meeting meaningful compliance to the GEC’s Safeguarding Minimum Standards. We celebrated the launch of the paper on 25 November through a webinar organised by the Safeguarding Resource and Support Hub (RSH). The webinar recording and slides are available on the RSH website.

Supporting teachers and students throughout COVID-19

Strengthening teacher quality
This blog highlights how four GEC projects operating in Afghanistan, Ghana and Sierra Leone have adapted their interventions or introduced new ones during the COVID-19 pandemic to help girls continue learning. The four projects demonstrate that after the pandemic, more than ever, teachers play a vital role in supporting students and that their work goes beyond teaching in the classroom. The emerging findings from the study highlight the need to provide teachers with appropriate support to manage their own wellbeing whilst enabling them to fulfil their professional responsibilities.

Reimagining learning spaces
This blog looks at the ways in which COVID-19 has shifted the perspectives of what, where and how learning happens in rural Zimbabwe. It considers which of these changes will remain as we reimagine learning spaces. To imagine another way of learning in rural areas, the ‘insider’ perspective of local community members is needed. The IGATE project, led by World Vision, acted as a supporter and facilitator, building up networks of these community champions. What emerged was a mosaic of approaches, learning spaces and learning leaders, with diverse configurations based on the people and resources available in each school and community.

World Teachers Day
In celebration of World Teachers Day 2021, this blog showcases the work and determination of an exemplary teacher: Felicia Abena Kantu. Felicia is a teacher and community facilitator supported by the MGCubed project in Ghana. She talks about her love for teaching, how she supported the children from her school during COVID-19 and what was most effective in ensuring their return.

Getting girls back into schools
Plan International talk through the strategies they employed in Ghana and Sierra Leone to ensure that girls successfully re-enrolled in school.
Final Reflections and project learning

The **GEARRing Up for Success After School project**, led by PEAS, completed in 2021. This Final Reflections piece and blog reflect on the successes of the project, the achievements of the students in 28 secondary schools in Uganda and the lessons learned.

The **STAR-G project** in Mozambique recently closed and this Practice Brief summarises a rapid, non-traditional approach that can be taken to alleviate the bottleneck between primary school graduation and limited secondary school places. It focuses on how a lack of secondary school infrastructure can be addressed through the provision of Distance Learning Centres which can expand access to secondary education, making it more widely available to marginalised groups and meeting demand.

Newly published evaluation reports

**Uganda** – **GEARRing Up for Success GEC-T Endline Report** (PEAS)

**Pakistan** – **Closing the Gap Endline Report** (ACTED)

**Democratic Republic of Congo** – **REALISE Midline report** (Save the Children)

The Global Disability Summit 2022: A forward look

The Global Disability Summit is due to take place from 16-17 February 2022. In 2018, the commitment was made to a new ‘leave no girl behind’ funding window to the GEC. Much work has already been done to transform girls’ life chances and support 10,000 girls with disabilities. For the summit in 2022, we will be updating how far we come to meet this commitment. See below for recent learning.

Challenging assumptions: why girls with disabilities return to school

During the COVID-19 pandemic, marginalised girls were particularly at risk of disengaging from learning due to financial hardship, food insecurity, caregiving responsibilities, sexual and gender-based violence and early marriage or pregnancy. We anticipated that girls with disabilities would struggle to go back to school, given these challenges. However, at least 11 GEC projects had return rates of girls with disabilities into school at the same rate or higher than overall attendance patterns. This blog explores the reasons as to why these rates are so much higher than one may expect.

Leonard Cheshire’s paper on the impact of inclusive education on learning outcomes for girls with disabilities

In alliance with Leonard Cheshire UK, research on the impact of an inclusive education intervention on learning outcomes for girls with disabilities (within a resource-poor setting) was published in the African Journal of Disability here. The article aims to assess the impact of an inclusive intervention, led by Leonard Cheshire, on the educational attainment of girls with disabilities in the Lakes region of Kenya, where intervention activities were being conducted. The paper concludes that girls with disabilities in the intervention group reported greater literacy and numeracy attainment.

Forward look

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Day of Education</td>
<td>24 January</td>
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<td>Global Disability Summit</td>
<td>16-17 February</td>
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<td>International Mother Language Day</td>
<td>21 February</td>
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<td>International Women’s Day</td>
<td>8 March</td>
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