

Final reflections

Achievements and lessons learned

Improving Gender Attitudes, Transition and Education Outcomes (IGATE)

ZIMBABWE

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Girls'
Education
Challenge



World Vision

“Before IGATE came with the teacher professional development activities, we used to deliver monotonous lessons and our classroom observation were more of inspection and fault finding. But now its clinical supervision starting from the planning stage to lesson delivery, identifying strengths and gaps from each teacher and helping one another to improve.”

Headteacher



● Zimbabwe

What did IGATE do?

The Improving Gender Attitudes, Transition and Education Outcomes (IGATE) project implemented by World Vision UK aimed to address and mitigate the barriers that limit girls' educational access, retention and learning outcomes in some of the poorest areas of Zimbabwe. The programme operated across nine districts in four of the 10 provinces of Zimbabwe (Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, Midlands, and Masvingo) between 2017 and 2022.

IGATE was funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development (FCDO) through the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC). The project focused on: (i) improving the literacy and numeracy performance of in-school girls, (ii) ensuring in-school girls transitioned one grade to the next, and out-of-school girls transitioned into school, non-formal education, or a vocational pathway, and (iii) maintaining education outcomes beyond the lifetime of the project through shifts in social norms, practices, behaviours or attitudes in the project communities. The following activities were conducted in schools and communities across Zimbabwe:

- 1. Empowered in-school students across 318 primary and secondary schools, by building strong foundations in literacy and numeracy through a whole school development approach.** The whole school development approach encouraged teachers to carry out new activities in their classrooms, which was guided by professional development modules. Over 1,723 headteachers and teachers benefited from the participatory teaching methods-based courses, resulting in significant improvements in learning across literacy and numeracy skills of students.
- 2. Supported 8,650 out-of-school young people through alternative, low-cost community-based education that facilitated girls' livelihoods and transition.** IGATE set up a community-based education model that was premised on a community set up; learners were assisted by a trained community volunteer to support their literacy, numeracy, and financial literacy, and vocational training on business skills.
- 3. Established a community champions network, including 199 child protection committees** to enhance child protection efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic. IGATE worked closely with community champions/volunteers and girl peer leaders to identify community issues and the barriers girls faced in accessing education. This work was essential during the COVID-19 pandemic due to the heightened risk of safeguarding and child protection issues of girls.
- 4. Connected 15,166 learners through community learning circles,** to provide informal instruction to students during the COVID-19 pandemic and onset of school closures. Community learning circles promoted resilience and helped students to continue with their learning during school closures, which was very important for those learners who were struggling with education or identified as 'at-risk' of dropping out and could have lost motivation to complete their education. IGATE were able to provide training to 950 facilitators, mentors and peer leaders to support this initiative.
- 5. Trained 969 mentors and peer leaders in school to improve girls' resilience against negative peer pressure and connected girls to support structures.** In-school mentors and peer leaders helped IGATE to promote back to school campaigns and lead small group activities for life skills development and resilience. Peer leaders in certain communities also discussed issues such as peer pressure, bullying, early marriage, assertiveness, and promoted resilience with groups of girls at school and within communities.



How did IGATE adapt during COVID-19?

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the sudden closure of schools in Zimbabwe from March 2020, which meant one of the major channels for delivery of the project (in-person learning) was cut off. Most rural communities had limited access to radio and alternative forms of online/remote learning. This made it difficult to reach students outside of formal learning environments.

A high number of out-of-school girls who were at most risk during this period lost motivation to continue vocational training, moved away (due to falling pregnant, work opportunities etc.), or lost contact with the project. For young people that had recently graduated, the poor (and worsening) economic outlook and closure of businesses meant there were less opportunities to gain employment or start their own business, which affected transition. In response to these challenges, IGATE made several adaptations to their programme:

The project established 758 community learning circles to reach learners who could not attend school or access alternative learning options during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over 700 community members, including parents and educators, volunteered as champions to remotely disseminate learning materials to students who could not attend school due to lockdowns and school closures. IGATE set up WhatsApp groups and networks by creating a mobile phone contact list for the key stakeholders at school and in the community, who were then able to disseminate learning materials to students. IGATE were able to reach 41% of girls through community learning circles and

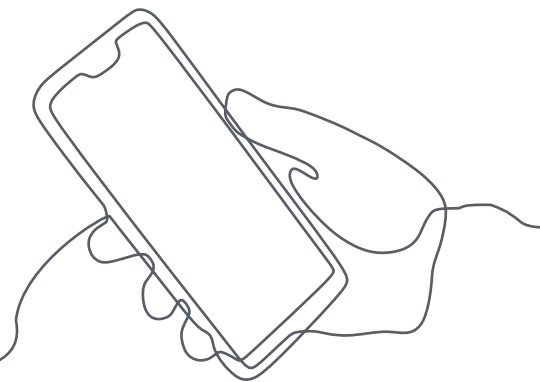
distributed printed resources, along with guides for champions once lockdown restrictions eased. This intervention offered continuity of learning for students in a time of school closures and safe space where students could strengthen their foundational skills.

Using the existing WhatsApp groups and networks established, the project was able to maintain and expand the community champion networks to enhance child protection efforts during the lockdowns. The project implemented a 'community score card' initiative, which was a platform organised for girls to interface with local stakeholders/duty bearers to raise issues affecting them and to hold stakeholders accountable for addressing the issues. This platform empowered girls to raise their issues openly and to surface unreported safeguarding cases. Community case care workers were used by the programme to keep reporting channels open for girls, and to spread awareness on how to keep girls safe. 266 school communities were also engaged in undertaking 'back to school' campaigns, for example by identifying and tracing at-risk girls.

The project shifted teacher development activities from face-to-face learning to WhatsApp groups. This allowed head teachers and teachers to continue with their professional learning through bite-sized content available on their mobiles. IGATE delivered a modified set of courses on foundational literacy and numeracy to teachers to address the challenge of weak foundational literacy and numeracy skills across primary and secondary learners and redesigned existing teaching materials to become digestible for virtual learning.

“Community-based education restored my daughter’s hope in life after her pregnancy and set her on the right path again – and as a mother who always wanted the best for her, I am grateful.”

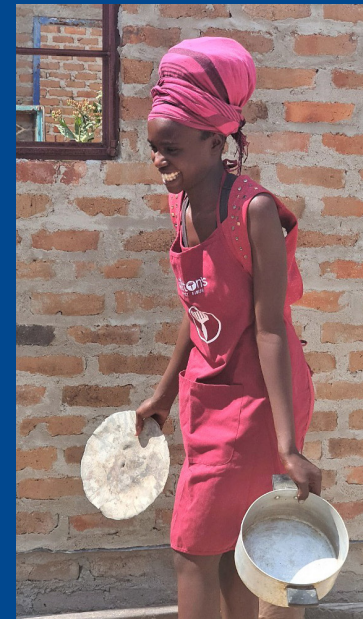
Parent



IGATE adapted its delivery of vocational training to smaller, decentralised training to keep out-of-school girls and young women motivated and traceable during a time of high-risk for dropping out. This beneficiary group were particularly difficult to engage with remotely, as they were highly mobile and deeply affected by the shrinking of economic activities due to the lockdowns. IGATE maintained regular contact with out-of-school girls and young women through community-based education facilitators, who shared additional learning materials and self-guides on preparing business plans. Girls and young women who were trained previously were supported with start-up kits, and extra training was provided to young mothers. Many of those who were successful with their endeavours took on roles as peer trainers to support other girls/ young women in their community.



// NELLY'S STORY



Nelly is a teenage mother who is defying the odds to pursue her education and self-development. *“I always had big dreams and they did not include me getting pregnant before finishing school. When it happened, I was so deflated I almost gave up and would have, if it was not for my mother’s support and Community Based Education.”*

Nelly was able to enroll into IGATE’s CBE initiative, which equips out-of-school girls with functional literacy, numeracy, business skills and vocational training in a non-formal community setting to enable them to transition to the next level of life.

Under the programme, Nelly was able to enroll onto a Hotel and Catering course, where she was provided with a start-up baking kit to support her new home-based baking business. To promote her baked

goods, which included muffins, scones and doughnuts, she put up posters at borehole points and shops and advertised her confectioneries in different community WhatsApp groups. With the profits Nelly made, she raised enough money to re-enroll into school as profits have allowed her to pay for school fees, uniforms and stationery. *“I learnt from this experience that if you really want something, nothing can stop you. I went back to school because I want a better life for myself and my daughter. I am proud that I was able to do it with my own money without having to bother people or rely on anyone”.*

Nelly is now sharing her knowledge with other girls in the community where she is teaching the elements from the Hotel and Catering course. *“These girls have done well in the theory that we have covered, and I am looking forward to starting practical sessions with them as soon as I find breathing space in my studies.”*

She is also registered to write her advanced level (A-Levels) this year and plans to resume and improve her business, which will allow her to continue funding her own education. *“My story is evidence that with support anyone can achieve anything. I want to be a journalist too one day, with my business on the side!”*

What did IGATE achieve?

Community learning circles and improved teaching methods resulted in positive learning outcomes for students. At [endline](#), IGATE had made positive learning gains for girls in school due to improved teaching methods and learning opportunities provided in the community. Learners experienced significant, positive improvements in literacy (0.26 standard deviation) and numeracy (0.29 standard deviation) skills since [midline](#). By focusing on foundational skills in literacy and numeracy, IGATE were also able to improve the test scores for those who had been the weakest learners at the beginning of the project. The [endline](#) also observed that students who were part of community learning circles were also more likely to have experienced greater improvements in both literacy and numeracy than the rest of the intervention group. 80% of students reported being at least slightly better at math and literacy because they participated in community learning circles. Community learning circles promoted participatory learning methods, including peer-to-peer support, and addressed the issue of access to learning during COVID-19 lockdowns, as this was the only option for alternative learning during school closures due to the lack of rural access to radio and TV programmes. Participants of the community learning circles also experienced an extra 72 days of learning, which helped students to improve their literacy and numeracy skills compared to learners that did not attend.

Girls demonstrated increased leadership abilities (compared to midline) and were more confidence in their leadership skills. IGATE's peer leadership approach was an important intervention to provide actionable leadership opportunities for girls, especially since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, where school-based leadership clubs were no longer able to meet. Girls who were provided with opportunities as peer leaders demonstrated increased leadership abilities compared to [midline](#); peer leaders interviewed at [endline](#) felt they had experienced

improvements in their leadership abilities after participating in leadership roles. IGATE offered girls tangible roles and responsibilities in developing their leadership abilities (recruiting and organising participants for community learning circles, coordinating the distribution of learning materials during the lockdown, and support peer-to-peer learning) and were able to develop their self-confidence, assertiveness, visioning and organisation skills. A leadership assessment conducted by IGATE in October 2021 found that 60% of girls in leadership clubs exhibited leadership competencies in and out of class compared to 49% of girls who were not in leadership clubs. Girls and boys in leadership clubs were also statistically more likely to present in front of the class, ask questions and help their peers than non-club participants.

Participatory teaching methods training improved teaching practices and increased student participation in class. IGATE ensured participatory teaching methods training was regularly delivered to teachers (before the pandemic), and continued training via WhatsApp during the pandemic. At [endline](#), more than 95% of students interviewed reported that teachers encouraged questions, group work, and used teaching resources in their lessons, which shows that teachers of IGATE project did incorporate lessons from training on particularly teaching practices. Teachers interviewed at [endline](#) also reported that practical work kept learners engaged as it helped them understand concepts better. For example, educational games increased student participation and comprehension in class, which is consistent with teacher experiences at [midline](#).



Community-based education activities resulted in positive transition outcomes for out-of-school girls who remained in the project throughout the COVID-19 period. The [endline](#) evaluation found that 75% of out-of-school girls reached through community-based education had successful transition outcomes by endline; they went on to become employed, re-enrolled in formal education, or enrolled for a full-time vocational course. Young mothers who participated in community-based income generating activities were also particularly successful in gaining financial independence. 89% of young mothers who finished vocational training started an income generating activity with many reporting that they used their profits they earned to invest in their homes and pay their children's or their siblings' school fees.

Improved community attitudes and engagement towards girls' education and safety. IGATE helped communities to develop supportive attitudes towards girls' education through the ongoing engagement and participation of community stakeholders. World Vision found at endline, despite the context of COVID-19, that girls in the project felt safer both in school and walking to school than the comparison group, and that churches, schools and communities had institutionalised measures that promoted the safety and wellbeing of girls. In the communities where IGATE operated, there were significantly more abuse cases reported and followed up than other communities. This could reflect higher levels of abuse in intervention areas, however, based on the qualitative evidence at [endline](#), this is due to the greater awareness of child protection issues in IGATE intervention areas. The [endline](#) evaluation also found that 97% of intervention schools have active community protection committees in place, compared to 88% of comparison schools.

Developed a National Blended and Catch-up Learning Strategy. At the national level, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) worked with IGATE to develop an implementation framework and costed action plan for the National Blended and Catch-up Learning Strategy. Guidance documents developed by IGATE were signed off by MoPSE for scale-out with additional funding provided by FCDO Zimbabwe. IGATE influenced policy priority on foundational literacy and numeracy skills and teacher professional development. IGATE's learning materials, guidance documents and good practice developed for school and community educators¹ were incorporated into the national implementation framework. This includes IGATE's integrated approach

at school, in the community and at home which saw the percentage of parents engaging in school activities which target improving learning increase to 70%. The Government of Zimbabwe formally approved the Implementation Framework and FCDO is funding a nationwide rollout – providing learning materials and guidance to 90,000 teachers, 9,000 head teachers and 54,000 community champions – reaching 3.7 million school-aged children in Zimbabwe.

Developed curricula, certification and learning materials. IGATE's set of modules on basic literacy, numeracy, financial, entrepreneur skills and life skills have been approved by MoPSE for scale up. Curricula for 4 vocational skills short courses have been refined and approved by Ministry of Youth (MoY) along with a certification framework. This meets a specific gap and opportunity for out of school youth who face barriers to entering a one- or two-year residential course and provides a practical solution for outreach to remote areas.

Facilitated dialogue and progress towards a more joined up approach to reach out-of-school youth. Applying the evidence and experience of community-based education towards ongoing engagements with key stakeholders in MoPSE regarding non-formal education and MOY regarding vocational skills, IGATE has facilitated key dialogue and progress towards a more joined up approach to reaching out-of-school youth and contributed to a draft framework anchored on foundational literacy and numeracy, financial literacy, and links to vocational skills.

“Learning is our collective responsibility as a community. I go to the headteacher if I notice that there are parents not encouraging their children to come for community learning. He helps in addressing parents directly and making them realise the importance of reinforcing learning at all levels. When I face challenges in helping struggling learners, I get help from the teachers at the school. So, it is going well in our community and our children will not lag behind.”

Community champion

¹ IGATE materials incorporated include Learner materials (Reading, Numeracy and Financial literacy cards, Grade 7 Study Guides), Guides for primary teachers, secondary English and Mathematics teachers, School Heads and Community Learning Champions.



“Being in the learning circle has helped me greatly. I only started to understand multiplication and division when we did it together during our meetings five times a week. In class they all just seemed like numbers to me, and I would be too shy to tell the teacher I don’t understand. The leadership trainings have given me confidence in many ways. I am pushing myself to be better since I am now a peer leader and need to set the example for others – and also, I want to be a nurse!”

Student peer leader

IGATE in numbers



15,166
learners
participating in
community
learning initiatives

1,717
teachers and
319
headteachers trained
in primary and
secondary schools



318
primary schools
supported in
nine districts of
Zimbabwe



5,026
girls enrolled in
community-based
education

123,333 direct and indirect beneficiaries; of which 8,650 out-of-school young people (5,026 girls and 3,624 boys) supported

1,202 community-based facilitators orientated and trained, with 326 community-based education centres established

758 community learning centres established during the COVID-19 pandemic

314 school-based leadership clubs created, with 79% of girls participating

95% of vulnerable / at risk girls identified and supported back to learning (in and out of school)

298 child protection committees established – 1,202 community-based facilitators orientated and trained, with 326 community-based education centres established – of this, 199 school child protection committees working with community child protection committees to address child protection at community level

What did IGATE learn?

Building partnerships for learning across schools and communities is critical for transformative change. In order to change community attitudes to learning, it is paramount to keep schools and communities engaged and focused on learning outcomes for girls throughout the delivery of a girls' education programme. IGATE worked closely with community stakeholders throughout the programme and focused conversations around improving girls' learning outcomes – shifting the narrative away from fees and costs of girls' education. IGATE invested in building a support network of community educators and champions, who all volunteered for the role, and provided them with clear guidance and basic working resources (e.g. data bundles for communication and learning material) to support learning within their community. This approach was successful, as over 700 community members led community learning circles when schools closed during lockdowns and these individuals continued to lead once schools had re-opened. Partnerships between schools and communities are not only critical for mitigating education disruptions (e.g., school closures), but also for building transformative change, including reaching marginalised girls and improving learning outcomes.

Creating opportunities for learners to apply leadership skills outside of clubs is key for their development. Leadership clubs are important for improving girls' leadership skills, however, providing girls with actionable roles and responsibilities is important for accelerating the acquisition of leadership competencies, such as self-confidence and assertiveness. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, leadership clubs were no longer able to take place and the project shifted its focus from clubs to introducing 'peer leaders' to the programme. Peer leaders were older girls who were able to demonstrate leadership abilities. They were given significant roles within the programme, such as recruiting and organising participants for community learning circles,

coordinating the distribution of learning materials during the lockdown, supporting peer-to-peer learning, and leading discussions on a variety of topics, such as peer pressure, early marriage and menstruation, in both formal and informal settings. Community learning circles also created community learning spaces where peer leaders could apply their leadership roles, which gave them more confidence and allowed other girls to emulate them. At [endline](#), peer leaders reported having greater roles and responsibilities within their peer groups and experienced improvements in leadership assessments. The shift in focus from clubs to actionable roles demonstrates the importance of ensuring that activities aimed at developing leadership skills go beyond training and classrooms, to opportunities for real-life application in the school or community level.

Building girls' agency and voice, and engaging marginalised sub-groups contributed to transformational change. IGATE's approach to programme implementation was holistic, but they maintained a focus on specific sub-groups of girls (young mothers, survivors of gender-based violence, learners with low foundational literacy and numeracy skills, etc.) who were most marginalised. The project identified, engaged with, and monitored these groups regularly. By focusing on these girls, IGATE continued to learn more about the depth, extent and intersectionality of the barriers and issues affecting them. Survivors of abuse, including girls who had an early marriage or unwanted pregnancies, and out-of-school girls were nearly invisible in communities. IGATE gained more direct interface with these girls over time through building community networks, mobilising girls as peers, and implementing interventions (such as community-based education and leadership clubs that were not initial interventions) that specifically targeted and benefitted them. By building a strong rapport with these girls, IGATE was better placed to amplify their

“I am so happy about leadership clubs. Finally, I am now able to participate fully like my peers without feeling drawn back by my disability. I may be disabled but I don't feel it when I go to the leadership club. In fact, I am now amongst the club leaders!”

Peer leader

voices during project implementation. For example, IGATE set up girl-led discussions about safeguarding at the school and community level, which led to increased awareness and collaboration among multiple stakeholders. This provided girls with the confidence to speak out, protect themselves and each other, by being open with their issues in the school and community. Breakthroughs in shifting a culture of silence around physical abuse took place when girls had a more direct voice into the structures mandated to protect them, and a trusted network/channel for them to report into. Girls shared issues affecting them, particularly on safety, that community and school stakeholders were not acknowledging in other engagements. As a result, this led to an increase in the number of girls and community members reporting abuse and protection issues.

Alternative pathways and support are required to address the barriers young mothers face in returning to school. Many marginalised adolescent girls and young women who have dropped out of school aspire to return to school, but they are unable to do so due to stigma (of early teenage pregnancy), attitudes of school stakeholders, and perceptions by caregivers and gatekeepers that girls who dropped out are better off generating some income than continuing with their education. Even though the project was able to reach and support young mothers through community-based education activities and vocational training, it remained difficult for this target group to transition back into formal schooling. Young mothers require alternative pathways and support specifically designed to address the barriers they face, including childcare arrangements, negotiation with gatekeepers as well as removal of barriers to accessing financing. Ill treatment by peers in schools also remains a large barrier to these girls' education, and often this is not directly addressed through activities that focus on transforming caregiver and community attitudes towards educating pregnant girls.

Adapting community-based education activities to provide vocational training fostered greater benefits for adolescent girls and young mothers. IGATE adapted its community-based education activities to include vocational training in response to girls and communities were less interested in modules focusing on foundational literacy and numeracy skills. The community-based education programme helped many learners establish business plans and start their own income-generating activities. The [endline](#) evaluation found that out-of-school girls who were older (20 to 25 years old) and had children were very motivated to complete the community-based education course, including the vocational training. Many out-of-school girls who were older with children started micro-enterprises using their new skills and invested their earnings to pay for their children's school fees. The provision of start-up kits was a very useful addition to the community-based education modules as start-up costs can often be a barrier to starting an enterprise. This programme restored the hope of young women who dropped out of schools, as they were able gain confidence and financial independence through an alternative means.

// NEO'S STORY



Neo is 16 and is a peer leader at her school. Her pregnancy at 13 was unexpected, leading her to drop out of school. Neo was supported by IGATE's leadership club initiative. The programme provides girls with the confidence and skills to return to school and overcome negative stigma. Neo eventually lost her baby but survived the traumatic experience through support from her peers, mentors and her mother.

Even though the landmark ruling in Zimbabwe allows pregnant girls to attend school, without encouragement and adequate support, many girls choose not to continue their studies in school. Most girls who have experienced teen pregnancy endure stigma largely based on ignorance and intolerance. *“My school is really great in supporting girls in situations like mine, they do not make us feel dirty or foolish. I cannot imagine where I would be if it was not for the overwhelming support that I get here.”* Since going back to school, Neo feels bold about her future now, *“Without education it is hard to prosper,”* she states.

“Currently there are two pregnant girls at the school and another on maternity leave, expected to return soon. As a school we have been capacitated to accommodate these girls. We even built a guidance and counseling center with community pooled resources, to be a safe space for girls to engage and be supported.” – School Head Teacher, Mangwe

“I took part in an interesting activity called community score carding and it was nice to share the issues that affect us knowing it was safe to do so and people will do something about it and help us going forward.” Score carding is an IGATE initiated platform that promotes engagements and action at community level in addressing social issues affecting young people, including their access and full participation in education. *“I am now on the right path to a better future. Who knows what I would have done as helpless as I used to feel.”* Neo now enjoys encouraging other girls with similar experiences to push for education. *“Education is important, being pregnant is not anything out of this world and is not an excuse to stop pursuing your dreams and better yourself!”*



Find out more: www.wvi.org | 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.

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