



MARCH 2021

# COUNTRY BRIEFING: UGANDA



GEC-T

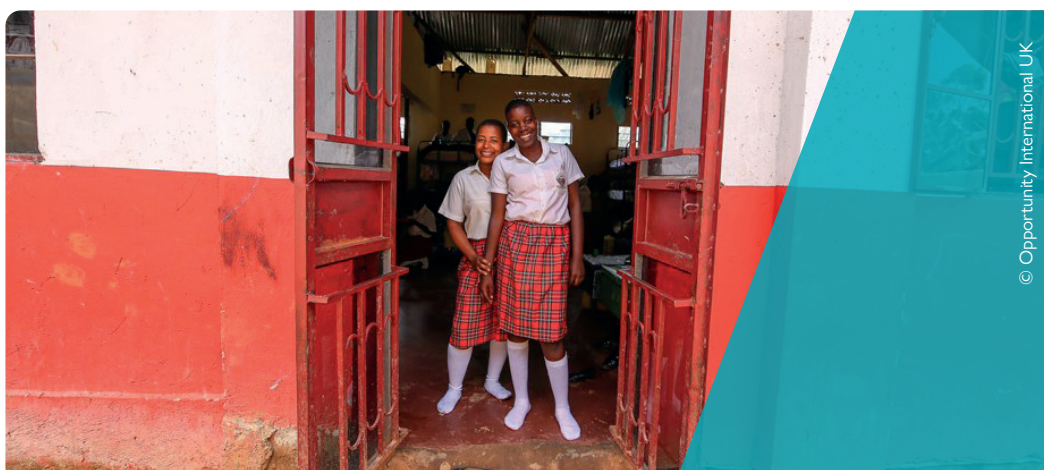
4 projects

48,750 target beneficiaries

**The GEC has had four projects operating throughout Uganda which focus on girls' transition from basic to secondary education.**

All projects have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 crisis with school closures since March 2020, and travel and meeting restrictions have forced projects to adapt their activities in order to try to meet the most urgent needs of the girls. Projects have also been affected by severe flooding in parts of Uganda which has exacerbated the need for support to girls and their families. In response, projects have focused their efforts on keeping in contact with as many girls as possible, keeping them learning remotely, broadcasting learning content on radio and TV, and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of girls during the crisis. Projects aim to have direct contact with and provide support to over 16,000 girls through their COVID-19 response activities.

PROJECT NAME	WINDOW	LEAD PARTNER	PROJECT START DATE	PROJECT CLOSE DATE
<u>Empowering Girls with Disabilities in Uganda through Education</u>	GEC-T	Cheshire Services Uganda (CSU)	1 April 2017	29 March 2024
<u>GEARR-ing Up for Success After School</u>	GEC-T	Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS)	1 April 2017	31 March 2021
<u>Building Girls to Live, Learn, Laugh and 'SCHIP' in Strong, Creative, Holistic, Inclusive, Protective, Quality Education</u>	GEC-T	Viva	1 March 2017	29 February 2024
<u>Girls Education Finance: Empowerment for Girls Education</u>	GEC-T	Opportunity International UK	1 May 2017	31 August 2020



Project data is based on reporting from May to October 2020

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Since the start of the second phase of the GEC<sup>1</sup> (2017-2025), projects in Uganda have reported the following achievements up to June 2020:



**16,594**  
teachers trained



**174,851**  
textbooks distributed



**109,645**  
student kits distributed



**421**  
assistive learning devices provided

## Challenges

The Government of Uganda took early measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, enacting strict rules which have required projects to alter their activities in order to keep in contact with girls, ensure their safety and support them to continue learning. The key challenges projects are facing during this time include:

- Schools reopened on 15 October 2020, but only for certain year groups (P7, S4 and S6) meaning that projects are effectively delivering learning to two groups of girls, those now in school and those still out of school. On average, projects had one third of girls returning to school and two thirds remaining at home until the start of 2021.
- Communication and keeping in contact with girls has been very difficult where families do not have access to a phone. Some districts in Uganda have no radio coverage and few families have TVs or computers, meaning remote learning opportunities are limited, so other solutions have had to be found.
- While schools have been closed, girls at home are exposed to greater risk of sexual harassment, defilement and emotional abuse. It is also more difficult for them to access psychosocial support from a reliable community referral structure.
- Lack of basic necessities for girls is a problem, as they sometimes cannot afford or access items like sanitary towels and other hygiene essentials.
- Girls with disabilities have faced additional challenges during this time and projects are particularly concerned that they will be left behind in their education during the pandemic. Projects are altering their activities and take a targeted approach to reach girls with disabilities.
- Recent flooding is estimated to have affected over half a million people in Uganda already and has displaced many thousands of families, disrupting girls learning and exacerbating security, safeguarding and wellbeing risks to girls.

**Girls with disabilities have faced additional challenges during this time and projects are altering their activities and taking a targeted approach to reach them.**

<sup>1</sup> The first phase of the GEC ran from 2012-2017 and provided quality education for over a million marginalised girls. The GEC is now in its second phase (2017-2025), with up to 41 projects in 17 countries. The second phase is enabling existing GEC beneficiary girls to complete primary school and transition to secondary education, technical vocational training or employment. Within the second phase, a second cohort of girls are also being supported through the Leave No Girl Behind funding window, which consists of interventions for highly marginalised, adolescent girls who are out of school.



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## Recent highlights

In response to the challenges that have arisen from the COVID-19 pandemic, GEC projects have developed response plans with activities designed to best support girls to continue learning, remain safe and support national and local government to reopen schools where possible. Since April 2020, projects in Uganda have reported reaching a total of 9,552 girls directly.<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 outlines the types of activities projects have implemented and indicates the proportion of these that are existing, adapted from existing activities or completely new to projects. Some highlights from these activities include:

- **Keeping girls learning: PEAS** has designed radio lesson programming, telephone tree and SMS services to maximise the opportunity for girls to engage with their teachers and learning content. The telephone tree system enables class teachers to reach out to the students through their parents' mobile telephones to provide pastoral care, guidance and counselling, and support on remote learning. **PEAS** have also distributed 3,949 learning packs to schools to pass on to students.
- **Keeping in contact:**
  - **PEAS** have sent SMS messages to over 9,500 students. These provide information on ways to prevent Covid-19 prevention transmission, safeguarding messages, remote learning activities, positive discipline approaches and notifications of radio lessons.
  - **Viva** asked its teaching team to find creative ways to reach families that only have phones, using mixed media learning to provide remote support. They also provided hardcopy learning resources and self-study packs, made learning calls, podcasts, and used WhatsApp and SMS messages that require less data usage.
  - **Viva** mentors made 3,408 contacts through phone calls, SMS and visits to provide psychosocial support to girls and their families.
  - **CSU** conducted phone interviews with almost 2,000 students to discuss how they were approaching their learning at home, enabling the project to understand their needs and encouraging the use of the available learning resources e.g. radio and TV content.
- **Broadcast learning content to a wider audience:**
  - **PEAS** scripted 42 radio learning programmes which were broadcast across five FM radio stations, offering learning content as well as informational and healthcare messages.
  - **Viva** collaborated with the National Curriculum Development Centre to film lessons with Uganda sign language interpretation (an example can be viewed [here](#))
  - **Viva** also broadcast messages through 19 community radio stations which reach isolated and poorer communities. This enabled them to reach 106 rural villages to increase awareness of COVID-19, child protection and gender-based violence.

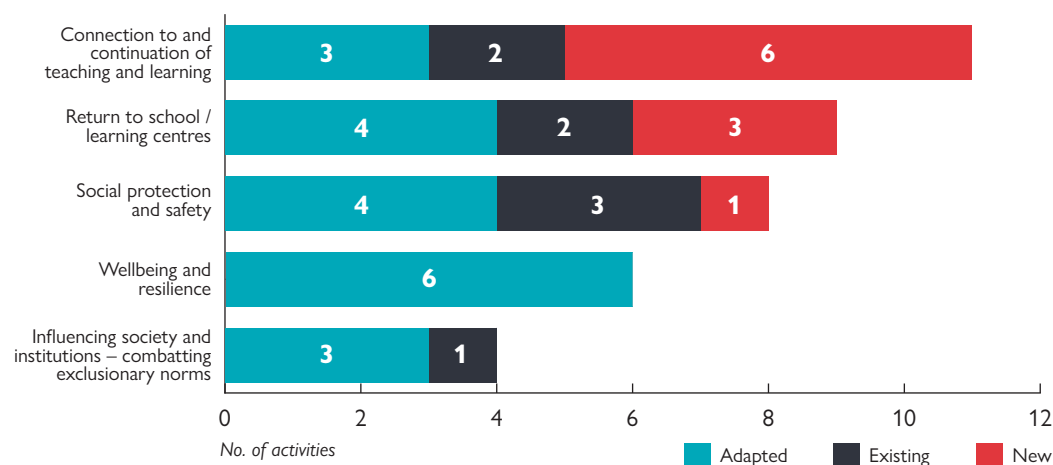
All projects have put in place safeguarding protocols and procedures specifically to ensure that their COVID-19 responses are safe for girls, other beneficiaries and staff members. Safety, as well as learning, continues to be a top priority for all GEC projects.\*

<sup>2</sup> This includes 3,969 girls reached by PEAS, 4,076 by Viva and 1,507 by CSU. Opportunity International is not included in the numbers as this project closed in August 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Projects began implementing the COVID-19 response activities in Q2 2020 and will continue or be adapted in accordance with the evolving COVID-19 situation in each context and in agreement with the FM.

\* Please see the safeguarding section on the COVID-19 page of the GEC website for materials and guidance provided to projects: <https://girlseducationchallenge.org/#/article/covid-19-response>. The GEC expects our projects to be compliant with our 14 minimum standards on safeguarding.

**Figure 1: COVID-19 Response activities in Uganda<sup>3</sup>**



## Coordination and collaboration

The projects in Uganda have strong links to government, NGO and civil society groups. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, coordination and collaboration efforts have particularly increased with all projects, but the **PEAS** project in particular has been consulted on government-led Covid-19 working groups, has become a member of the Uganda Education national task force and sits on the home learning and radio/TV content task teams. The GEC projects in Uganda have also collaborated and worked with the Ministry of Education and Sports and the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) to produce national learning materials. For example, **Viva** are liaising with the Ministry of Education through the Basic Education Working Group and the Special Needs Department. **Viva**, **PEAS** and **CSU** are collaborating with the NCDC to produce self-study resources, radio and television lessons that are accessible for children with disabilities.

## Lessons learned

One of the most crucial and challenging aspects of the recent period has been keeping in touch with girls. Projects in Uganda have learned that it is best to deploy various different methods to reach girls with different levels of access and needs across different areas of the country. Methods have included radio and television broadcasts of learning content and healthcare messages, enabling them to reach wider audiences indirectly. They have combined this with direct methods of communication with girls including phone calls and SMS messaging, and limited in-person contact within safeguarding and health guidelines. Furthermore, as girls had varying needs, all projects quickly recognised the importance of getting feedback from them in planning the next steps of implementation. They undertook rapid needs assessments to gather data on the situations the girls are facing to determine how they could alter their activities to meet the girls' most urgent needs.

## Priorities from January 2021

Schools opened to three year groups only on 15 October 2020. Projects are focused on supporting the return to school, monitoring dropout rates and maintaining contact as regularly as possible with girls that are not yet back in school. Across all projects, over 16,000 girls will receive learning materials and learning support from the project teachers/staff to maintain learning in the coming months.

- All 28 **PEAS** schools successfully passed government inspection for reopening and they supported the government in designing criteria for reopening.
- **CSU** is supporting students to return to school by providing bursaries for the most vulnerable.
- **Viva** is focused on building psychosocial support for girls through teacher and mentor training and encouraging regular check-ins with girls as they return to school.

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**Contact:** [uk\\_girls\\_education\\_challenge@pwc.com](mailto:uk_girls_education_challenge@pwc.com) | [www.girlseducationchallenge.org](http://www.girlseducationchallenge.org)  
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**Girls'  
Education  
Challenge**



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