

# Final reflections

Achievements and lessons learned

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## Kenya Equity in Education Project (KEEP)

KENYA

APRIL 2017 – DECEMBER 2022



Girls'  
Education  
Challenge



**“Lots of projects in Kenya consider refugees in a vacuum. KEEP linked its work to the national system. Its innovations happened in the refugee camps but then were scaled to host schools. Sharing its lessons learned with government in 2019 was a huge advocacy gain for refugee education in Kenya. Even sceptics appreciate what KEEP is doing.”**

**UNHCR Representative Kenya**



● Kenya

# What did the Kenya Equity on Education Project project do?

The Kenya Equity in Education Project Phase II (KEEP-II) was implemented by World University Service of Canada (WUSC) in Kakuma and Dadaab Refugee Camps and their surrounding host communities in Turkana, Garissa and Wajir counties in Kenya. Launched in April 2017, the five-year initiative (which ran until December 2022) aimed to address the multiple barriers girls face when accessing education, staying in school, and successfully completing their academic studies.

Each of the target communities and schools face unique political, economic, and social issues. The most significant barriers to girls' education include:

- a critically under-resourced education system
- lack of appropriate school infrastructure for girls' safety and well-being
- inadequately trained teachers with limited opportunities for professional development and pedagogical support
- a lack of female teachers

A combination of economic barriers and socio-cultural norms prevent families from sending girls to and keeping girls in school. Gender stereotypes limit the perceived value of girls' education, while gender social norms and a heavy domestic chore burden limit girls' ability to study at home or attend school regularly. Gaps in schooling and inconsistent education trajectories, particularly in refugee communities, lead to overage learning, high repetition rates and reduced motivation among girls and their families for school retention and completion. Low self-esteem, socio-cultural attitudes and harmful, traditional practices also limit girls' ambition and their sense of agency to influence decisions about their future.

The project worked in 84 schools (14 secondary and 70 primary) and their surrounding communities across the targeted regions, supporting a cohort of over 20,000 marginalised girls, enrolled in upper primary (Standard 6 to Standard 8) and secondary school (Form 1 to Form 4), as they progressed in their formal education. The vision of KEEP-II was to create more positive conditions for learning that allowed this cohort of girls to access education, stay in school for as long as possible and attain at least functional literacy and numeracy. Centred on the premise that the ideal conditions for learning are created by mutually supportive relationships between the learner, the school and the community, the project was designed to address holistically the barriers that exist at these various levels and, through a multi-pronged approach, aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Increased and regular attendance of targeted girls (access).
- Improved learning experiences for girls in safe, supportive, and inclusive environments (quality).
- Improved ability of supported girls to make informed education, careers, and life choices (agency).
- Improved engagement of parents, guardians, and school communities in support of girls' education (enabling and empowering environment).
- Strengthened school governance and management mechanisms in support of girls' education (enabling and empowering environment).

**“Enrolment and attendance of girls is up since KEEP. With all the incentives – remedial classes, uniforms, sanitary wear – girls who could not afford to go to school before are now attending.”**

School Principal, Kakuma



With these outcomes as the goal, KEEP-II supported the delivery of the following activities and interventions:

- Provision of conditional cash transfers and merit-based scholarships.
- Targeted school infrastructure upgrades.
- Design and delivery of competency-based teacher training in basic pedagogy skills and gender-sensitive approaches.
- Strengthening the provision of continuous professional development opportunities for teachers through Instructional Leadership and Peer Coaching, including strengthening capacity of existing teacher support structures and personnel.
- Provision of life skills education through camp and club-based approaches.
- Providing access to guidance and counselling and psychosocial support, including strengthening referral pathways to specialised support services.
- Delivering targeted community engagement to promote girls' empowerment and education, using mixed-media approaches (film and radio) and via a network of Community Mobilisers, with a specific focus on engaging men and boys as agents of change.
- Strengthening school Boards of Management and Parent Associations to provide gender-sensitive support and supervision to service delivery.

## // AMOL'S STORY

Amol is a Form three student at a Girls High School. Amol's father passed away in 2017 and her mom relocated to a refugee camp in Uganda 9 years ago. She lives with her step sister, two brothers and three younger sisters. She lives in a highly patriarchal society, with gender stereotypical roles assigned to girls especially at home. In addition, parents do not value education for girls as much as they prioritise their marriage over their education. She has many friends who are pregnant and cannot continue learning. They struggle financially and depend on the food rations given by UNHCR.

The main challenge she faces while learning from home is the burden of house chores and to mitigate this, she wakes up earlier to do the chores. She mentors other girls from her community by sharing revision materials like books, and syllabus content in areas where her school is ahead. When she meets them, Amol encourages her peers who are pregnant to find ways of supporting their children and continue with their studies after giving birth. She cites peer pressure and idleness as some of the major contributors to increased cases of teenage pregnancy in her community at this time.

She uses Shupavu291 and the PDF app that has revision materials shared with friends from other schools for her studies. She also relies on offline resources to learn (subject notes, test papers from other schools and textbooks). She would like to use YouTube for learning although most of the time she cannot afford data bundles. Amol is, fluent, outspoken and confident leader. She is a dormitory prefect and a role model in her school.



# How did KEEP-II adapt during COVID-19?

Starting in 2020, education systems across the globe grappled with how to adapt to the unparalleled disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Abrupt and prolonged school closures meant that learning was halted for some 1.6 billion young people<sup>1</sup>, with estimates that students lost two thirds of an academic year on average worldwide.<sup>2</sup>

School closures meant that education systems had to adapt quickly to providing remote learning opportunities, a shift which heavily relied on using technology and online platforms. This shift unearthed a huge digital divide, which resulted in the exclusion of large proportions of young people for whom getting online was simply not possible. As a result, learning became increasingly inaccessible for learners in the world's most marginalised communities. Increases in sexual and gender-based violence and adolescent pregnancy rates have been consistently reported, along with a decline in general mental health and wellbeing, all of which carry the risk of young people, especially girls, permanently disengaging from education.

In Kenya, public primary and secondary schools and universities were closed from March to November 2020, at which point a phased reopening began - starting with Standards 4, 8 and Form 4 - with all grades only fully reopened in January 2021. During the closures, Kenya saw a shift to digital and online learning; TV, radio and online platforms were used to support remote and home learning. However, it is estimated that only 25% of learners - those living in urban settings - were able to access virtual classes due to lack of internet access and electricity and high related costs e.g., mobile phone data. In the KEEP operating contexts, access to these platforms was severely limited.

This, along with the increasing household pressures due to the loss of livelihoods caused by the pandemic, meant that many became cut off from learning all together during the lockdown period.

In response to the new challenges and changing context, KEEP developed a multi-pronged COVID-19 response plan that included a set of interventions designed to enable learners, especially girls', to continue to engage in education despite the ongoing crisis. This plan included the following project adaptations:

**Increased financial support to the most marginalised:** Cash transfer disbursements were increased from 2,000 Kenyan Shillings (approx. GBP 16 million) to 3,000 Kenyan Shillings (approx. 30 USD) to address economic hardship and cushion girls and their families from increased financial pressures. An additional 500 girls who were in boarding schools were also provided with cash transfers to support retention/transition of girls from primary (S8) to secondary (F1) during school closure and re-entry in 2021. After COVID-19 school closures, these boarding schools were eventually closed, and girls had to return home. For the proportion of the KEEP cohort that received cash transfers, the impact was significant and positive; when schools reopened, up to 87.4% (N=2,663) were present in school during an attendance spot check.

**Virtual and remote counselling and psychosocial support:** The psychosocial team adopted virtual group counselling sessions and, once social restrictions were eased, girls were organised in refugee camp blocks or in safe community spaces to speak to counsellors. Individual counselling sessions were also provided on WhatsApp and the project introduced safeguarding protocols around the use of WhatsApp.

**“Girls on KEEP program received the cash transfer, which really helped them and their families during this time. They also used this money to get online and communicate with us. Some were able to access online learning, but this, I would say, was very few of them.”**

**Guidance and counselling teacher, Greenlight Refugee Secondary**

<sup>1</sup> <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/184161638768635066/pdf/Executive-Summary.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-figures-show-two-thirds-academic-year-lost-average-worldwide-due-covid-19-school&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1674556794074060&usq=AOVWw3li24DU11-KMyiRTOJnAnU>



**Radio lessons:** The project partnered with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) to broadcast radio content to learners in Grades 7 and 8 and Form 3 and 4 in Kiswahili, English and Mathematics. Teachers were also engaged in the studio during the live sessions to respond to all the questions that learners raised.

**Community campaigns with shift in messaging:** Radio was used as the main means of community engagement throughout the period of COVID-19-related lockdowns and restrictions. The project adapted community radio sessions to focus more on gender-based violence prevention and safeguarding, and these platforms were used to highlight community referral systems and awareness to communities on girls' safety. Radio was also used to promote back-to-school messaging once schools reopened. The project also stayed connected with parents and guardians through text messages to ensure support for girls learning during school closure and encourage parents to support learners to resume learning when schools reopened. Compressed file versions of community films were created and disseminated via WhatsApp and, once restrictions eased, film-based workshops resumed with smaller numbers of people, as well as listening groups for radio programming.

**Hybrid approach to teacher professional development:** Teacher training activities were adapted to a blended approach, comprising virtual and physical training. Travel to Dadaab and Kakuma was limited, hence training consultants based in Nairobi would work with their counterparts in Dadaab and Kakuma to deliver sessions. WhatsApp was also utilised as a way of sharing resources, tips, and to promote peer support and networking.

**Shift to virtual operations:** During the lockdowns, travel to the project sites was severely restricted, making monitoring and support visits impossible. The KEEP team adapted their ways of working to engage with partners and key stakeholders online to conduct virtual monitoring activities.

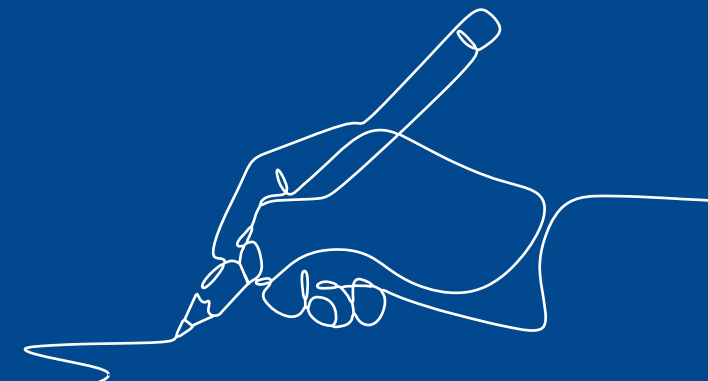
## // APEI'S STORY

Seventeen-year-old Apei\* was one of the lucky students from the camp who were able to secure a KEEP scholarship. In March 2020, after schools closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she was devastated to find out she had gotten pregnant. Her parents, decided to forcefully marry her off to the man that got her pregnant and Apei was married and moved into a small, thatched hut.

She had hoped to pursue medical studies to become a doctor, and the pregnancy put an end to that ambition. She did not know how to handle her new role of a wife and wanted to continue with her education. Her relationship with her parents had been ruined. At the verge of committing suicide, she sought the help of a counsellor. The counselling team took her through several counselling sessions to help her realise there was life after pregnancy. She was guided on how to take responsibility, make informed choices, and balance her studies and her personal life. She eventually decided to join the rest of the learners as they resume school in January 2021.

Due to her determination, the team sought a transfer for Apei to go to school within the camp, Kakuma Refugee Secondary School, where she could continue with her education. The team encouraged her to keep her focus and equipped her with study materials to help in her preparation to return to school once they reopen.

*"I was elated when I was told that I had gotten an opportunity at a school in the camp where I could return and finish my studies. I promise to keep pushing and make the most of this second chance that I have been granted. I still want to be a doctor and a role model to others in my situation" ...says Apei*



**“Before the counselling many of them felt they could not take their own decisions in the home. They felt worthless. But now they understand that their needs are important, and that the money is theirs.”**

UNHCR Representative Kenya



# What did KEEP-II achieve over its five years of implementation?

Indicator	Total
% of trained teachers demonstrating increased knowledge of gender-responsive and basic teaching methodologies	Y1 – N/A Y2 – 71.1% (n=101) Y3 – 75.3% (n=101) Y4 – 29.0% (n=114)
% of girls attending remedial with improved learning outcomes	Y1 – 51% (1133) Y2 – 75.6% (1204) Y3 – 61% (805) Y4 – 75.1% (586) – comparison between results for girls in F3 2019 and KCPE results of 2020 (exam done in March 2021) In Y3 and Y4, several factors including relocation of some refugees from Dadaab to Kakuma, insecurity, drought and COVID-19 significantly affected the implementation of remedial classes hence targets were missed.
% of additional placements created in targeted secondary schools taken up by girls as direct beneficiaries and boys and indirect beneficiaries (host/refugee, Kakuma/Dadaab)	Y1 – 0% Y2 – 41.6% between 2018 and 2019 Y3 – 17% between 2019 and 2020 Y4 – N/A Upgrades were done in Y1 & Y2. In Y4, schools were closed because of COVID-19 restrictions.
% of girls receiving cash transfers with improved attendance in school	Y1 – N/A Y2 – 36.6% (n=186) Y3 – 44.7% (n=1036) Y4 – 51.5% In Y4, cash transfers were provided to girls as they remained home due to school closure during COVID-19. 85% of girls who received cash transfers returned to school when schools reopened.
% of girls receiving scholarships with improved attendance in school	Y1 – 94% (N=188) Y2 – 94% (N=188) Y3 – 84.6% (N=188) Y4 – 92.5% (n=149) At the end of Y4, 127 scholarship girls took the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) exams. From the project monitoring, 64 (32.4%) girls dropped out of the scholarship programme due to resettlement, transfer from KEEP scholarship schools to private schools (especially in Dadaab), marriage and death.
% of girls receiving life skills training with improved knowledge of career options and life skills	Y1 – N/A Y2 – 53% Y3 – 58.5% (n=328) Y4 – N/A No life skills camps were held in Y1. In Y4, life skills camps were not run because of COVID-19 disruption. The project adapted the life skills approach to in-school peer clubs. Training to support delivery of life skills by guidance and counselling teachers at the school level was conducted.

**“We used to benefit from those teachers who went for the training. Personally, when I was finding it difficult to handle some large classrooms I was helped by one of the teachers who went for the training, and I am now able to handle my class with no difficulty.”**

**Teacher from Kakuma Refugee Secondary school**



Interviewed girls, parents and teachers reporting positive interaction and increased agency of girls in school and community because of guidance and counselling and life skills	Teachers and parents reported that they have observed positive change in behaviour, attitude and academic performance from the girls who attended the life skills camps. Qualitative data at midline show that teachers, counsellors, and girls interviewed report that supported girls are beginning to assimilate life skills, particularly regarding “Learning to Learn” skills.
% of trained school community members demonstrating improved knowledge and attitudes on methods to support girls’ education	Y1 – N/A Y2 – 46% of Boards of Management had an overall understanding of the themes on gender, child protection, laws, and policies. Y3 – 71.9% (n=57) Y4 – N/A
# and type of activities initiated by school communities in support of girls’ education	In the follow-ups of trained Parent Association members in Q10 and Q12, it was observed that school communities had initiated various activities to support girl-child education. Based on the follow-up data collected by the project, an overwhelming majority of the Parent Associations and Boards of Management in the visited schools (73.7%) indicated that they had put in place some awareness and other outreach programs to promote girls’ attendance, retention, and transition of girls in their respective schools.
Level of awareness of barriers to girls’ education and how to address them among boys, parents/guardians and other community members reached by multimedia messaging	There has been notable change of parents’ attitudes towards education which is manifested through improved attendance to these meetings convened to discuss education matters. There are also declining cases of girls dropping out because of early forced marriages, as reported by parents. A qualitative assessment by the MEL team on community perception and behaviour on equitable distribution of household chore burden show that most of the community members are aware of the effect of household chore burden on girls’ education. 85% (83% in Dadaab & 88% in Kakuma) of film-based workshop participants improved their knowledge on barriers to girls’ education and how to address them.
% of trained school management and governance members (Boards of Management and PTA) showing increased knowledge of gender issues, child protection and inclusion	Y1 – N/A Y2 – 46% of Boards of Management had an overall understanding of the themes on gender, child protection, laws, and policies. Y3 – 71.9% (n=57) Y4 – N/A
% of trained Board of Management members showing increased knowledge of fiscal management	Y1 – N/A Y2 – 37% Based on our monitoring data indicated that in some schools, the Boards of Management struggled to understand and implement best practices on fiscal management. Y3 – 64.9% (n=57) Y4 – N/A
% of teachers satisfied with level of remote support for trainings	Y4 – 95.6% (n=114) To support effective teaching, the project made various adaptations including adapting teacher training manuals and using a blended teacher training approach to address teachers’ needs. One of the greatest achievements has been the usage of a remote teacher training support system to enhance in-person training.
% of girls actively attending the out-of-school sessions (class; host/refugee, Kakuma/Dadaab)	Y4 – 98% (n=493) The out-of-school component was introduced in the last year of the project to support girls who had dropped out from KEEP-supported schools. The out-of-school girls were supported to rejoin form school or undertake vocational courses.
% of girls who feel that their counselling session(s) was helpful and supportive	There was an increase (48% to 54%) in the percentage of girls who strongly agreed that they were confident. There was a 17% increase (from 46% to 54%) in the percentage of girls who strongly agreed that they felt responsible for their choices. There was a 5% increase in the number of girls who would now ask for help if they needed it (from 85% to 90%). There was a 11% increase (from 34% to 45%) in the percentage of women that strongly agree that they now know the changes their bodies go through in adolescence.



In terms of **teaching and learning quality**, KEEP experienced positive success. More girls qualify to sit the national exams every year, and there are now girls among the top KCPE/KCSE performers, which was not the case before KEEP. Classroom observation data between midline and endline reveals some improvement in teaching practices related to lesson planning, pedagogy, and classroom management. Based on school register data, attendance rates for the KEEP-II cohort of girls increased from baseline; between midline and endline the average attendance rate increased slightly by approximately 2 percentage points. For girls receiving a cash transfer, **attendance rates** remained stable from baseline to midline with a slight increase at endline (+1.8%). There was a positive trend from baseline to endline for most indicators related to **life skills and self-efficacy among girls in the KEEP-II cohort**.

### **Reducing financial barriers for girls**

The project provided beneficiary girls with access to a limited sum of unconditional funds for their basic needs such as food, menstrual hygiene management products and school materials through the cash transfer programme. Assessments over the last year showed that these funds were helpful in reducing the dependency of girls on their parents and enabled them to access items that they needed to be comfortable both at home and in schools. Perception surveys, along with monitoring data, suggest that cash transfers had a positive impact on girls' attendance at school; average attendance rates for cash transfer recipients remained stable over time – at 90% between midline and endline with a slight increase of 1.8% at endline. This was also reflected in the perceptions of beneficiary households, who perceived that cash has a positive impact on school attendance (82% agreed or strongly agreed), academic performance (76% agreed or strongly agreed) and school continuation (68% agreed or strongly agreed). Beyond attendance, there is evidence to suggest that cash may be a crucial factor in helping to sustain girls' engagement in education when families are affected by unexpected crises. Families receiving cash during the pandemic reported that it helped in keeping girls and their households safe and contributed to sustaining livelihoods during this time (60% agreed or strongly agreed). The Endline Evaluation reports that 85% of cash transfers recipients successfully re-enrolled in school following the COVID-19 school closures.

### **Improving girls' self-esteem, confidence, and decision-making**

The project has been successful in raising the confidence levels of girls. A study conducted in the final year of the project showed a 48-54% percentage increase in self confidence amongst girls, and this went together with improved levels of agency. The project provides compelling evidence that life skills education can be a powerful tool in increasing academic engagement and motivation, precursors to academic performance and success. After attending a Life Skills Camp, 90% of girls agreed or strongly agreed that they should go to school during their menses, compared to 79% at baseline. These results are indicative of a shift in attitude around school attendance during the time of menstruation. There were also positive changes in girls' attitudes towards problem solving and seeking help when needed, both of which, if translated and applied within the school context, could support increased academic attainment. The Life Skills programme in KEEP was also found to provide the additional benefit of expanding girls' social support network, with 81% of girls reporting that they felt lonely before attending life skills camps and all girls stating that they made new friends and found new sources of social support after the camp. More girls felt responsible for their choices and more empowered to make their own decisions after participating in the Life Skills Camps. For example, at endline, 82% of girls reported that they will decide when/at what age they will get married, compared to 55% at baseline. As one girl wrote, the most meaningful change for her since taking part was her ability to make her own decisions.

These findings highlight the importance of providing girls with holistic support at school; that is, not only addressing education access and performance, but ensuring that girls are supported in ways that indirectly impact their education success.

**“I now can make my own decisions. I can say YES or NO”**

**Survey participant during Life Skills Assessment**



### **Increasing teacher effectiveness**

KEEP significantly developed its approach to teacher training over the course of the project, from having a stand-alone module on gender-responsive pedagogy in its early phases, to a competency-based multi-faceted teacher training programme. The project expanded the contents of its teacher training to include basic pedagogy skills, gender-responsive teaching and learning, and inclusive education, as well as expanding its delivery approach to include ongoing professional development support through instructional leadership and peer coaching. A corresponding classroom observation tool was also developed, aligned to the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) Teacher Performance Appraisal Development (TPAD) assessment, to support classroom observations and mentorship as part of sustainability strategy.

Investments were made in technology and strengthened coordination to ensure efficient delivery of the blended teacher training. In the final year, the project conducted a survey with teachers to get their feedback on the training approach and their experiences of classroom observation.<sup>3</sup> A respondent said,

*“Through another person’s eye, I was able to see my strengths and weaknesses in the classroom.”*

The survey findings indicate that the KEEP’s in-service teacher training and follow-up mechanism (classroom observation) were relevant and crucial to the provision of high-quality education and gender-responsive learning opportunities. Over the course of KEEP-II, over half of teachers who received some form of training demonstrated an increase in knowledge of gender-responsive pedagogy and basic teaching methodologies, indicating progress but also highlighting that there is great need for further and continued support for teachers.

### **Enhancing support for girls’ empowerment, safety, and wellbeing**

KEEP-II made great progress in transforming the attitudes and perceptions towards girls and their education. This has been highlighted by the increased self-worth and resilience among girls themselves. An internal research study conducted in the final year of the project to understand the psychosocial wellbeing of young women in Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps showed that young women who benefitted from psychosocial support were able to negotiate access to material resources in the home. Due to their increased self-worth and resilience, they were able to defend their resources. This dynamic was seen in the cash transfer component targeting young women in Kakuma and Dadaab.

Various project components such as the out-of-school programme, Engaging Men and Boys (EMB), radio, and guidance and counselling outreaches supported engagements with different stakeholders at community level, worked well in influencing the attitudes of these stakeholders, who had enormous influence on community attitudes towards girls’ education.

### **Effective school leadership and management in formal and non-formal learning spaces**

Over time, the project built the capacity of Boards of Management and Parent Association members in various areas to support the management of KEEP-supported schools. This includes project management, resources mobilisation, conducting rapid gender analyses, gender-sensitive emergency response and gender-responsive school improvement planning. Continuous training and follow up activities for the Boards of Management and Parent Associations has been ongoing, to assess their knowledge practice and functionality.<sup>4</sup> Over the course of the project, 59% of trained school management and governance members (Boards of Management and PA (Parent Association)) demonstrated increased knowledge of gender issues, child protection and inclusion and 51% showed an increase in knowledge of fiscal management. Based on the follow up data collected by the project, an overwhelming majority of the Parent Associations and Boards of Management in the visited schools (73.7%) indicated that they had put in place some awareness and other outreach programmes to promote girls’ attendance, retention, and transition of girls in their respective schools.

**“Before the counselling many of them felt they could not take their own decisions in the home. They felt worthless. But now they understand that their needs are important, and that the money is theirs.”**

**Psychosocial Counsellor in Life Skills Assessment FGD**

<sup>3</sup> KEEP III Year 5 Annual Report

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

# What did KEEP-II learn from implementing the project over five years?

Over the course of implementing KEEP-II (2017-2022), we have learned a great deal about best practices in relation to improving girls' education, particularly within refugee and refugee-hosting contexts.

Throughout KEEP's work, we have been forced to critically reflect on some of the underlying assumptions that informed the programme design, as well as the overarching approaches and implementation of project activities; all of which have strengthened our understanding of what constitutes effective girls' education programming and will, we hope, provide valuable contributions to the growing evidence base and global dialogue on what works (and what does not) when striving to improve education for the world's most marginalised girls and young women.

## ***A nuanced understanding of the operating context is key***

A one-size-fits-all approach is not sufficient in dynamic and diverse operating contexts. Not only are refugee-hosting contexts incredibly diverse and dynamic places, but in the context of KEEP, Kakuma (primarily hosting South Sudanese nationals) and Dadaab (primarily hosting Somali nationals) have stark differences in terms of culture, prevailing norms and attitudes, and operational restrictions. So, what worked in one location did not necessarily work in the other. Several factors also make these locations incredibly dynamic and fluid; emerging crises in neighbouring countries can result in large influxes of new arrivals, shifting the dynamics within schools and communities. Dadaab experienced partial closure (two of the five camps were shut down) within the course of KEEP which resulted in large population movement within the remaining three camps. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was a stark reminder that dramatic changes can be unplanned and

unexpected. This has major implications for both programme design and implementation, ensuring programme design is adequately differentiated to reflect the multiple needs and realities within the overall operating context, as well as being flexible and adaptive to be able to adjust to changing dynamics.

Throughout the course of KEEP, there were multiple examples of how we shifted our approach to be more differentiated:

1. In close consultation with project counsellors, we adapted life skills curriculum content to be tailored to the differing sociocultural contexts within Kakuma/Turkana and Dadaab/Garissa. For example, taking a more liberal approach for content used in Kakuma and Turkana by including examples that presented issues such as homosexuality, and retaining a more conservative approach for content used in Dadaab.
2. We shifted from one stand-alone teacher training module (focused on gender-responsive pedagogy) to a comprehensive, competency-based teacher training programme that incorporated basic pedagogy skills (to meet the needs of previously untrained teachers), advanced pedagogy skills and inclusive education, as well as building greater opportunity for continuous professional development through more individualised peer coaching and instructional leadership.
3. In recognition that the financial barriers that exist at household level affect girls and their families in different ways, along with the fact that girls have different and individual needs, we shifted from in-kind, blanket distributions of uniforms, sanitary pads, and other basic school supplies, to cash transfers which enabled girls and their families to attend to their specific needs and situation.

**“KEEP sold the dream of university education and jobs for all girls. In the end, the real effect is more self-confidence, the benefits of basic literacy for running a business. Girls see now not everyone will get a scholarship to Canada...”**

**Community leader, Dadaab**





### ***Collaboration and alignment with local systems is critical to success and sustainability***

The relevance and sustainability of education interventions are improved when their design is aligned with national education system delivery and when they are developed in collaboration with national and local education stakeholders. Having a strong understanding of existing systems, structures and actors also operating in the same space enables programming to identify critical entry points and focus on complementarity, value-add and sustainability, rather than duplicating efforts and operating in programming siloes.

As highlighted in the KEEP-II Endline Evaluation, alignment with national systems was significantly improved compared to the first phase of the project. The way in which KEEP evolved its approach to teacher training provides one example of how we applied this within the project. First, we did a mapping of the structures which support teacher professional development within the KEEP context and identified Curriculum Support Officers and senior teachers as critical stakeholders. Curriculum Support Officers are positions with the Ministry of Education's Teacher Service Commission who are tasked with assessing teaching quality and senior teachers are often tasked with supporting other teachers' development in their school. Second, we established a Teacher Training Working Group, composed of Curriculum Support Officers, senior teachers, project staff, head teachers and a teacher training consultant, to collectively design the teacher training content and approach. Third, we worked in partnership with Curriculum Support Officers, head teachers and senior teachers to: 1) co-deliver teacher training workshops, and 2) co-conduct in-school coaching sessions using the instructional leadership model. This approach resulted in closer working relationships with the Ministry of Education, more relevant training inputs, more effective policy dialogue and the integration of KEEP models into national education priorities.

### ***Effective guidance and counselling intervention can improve participation and performance in school***

In fragile environments, a focus on safety becomes even more critical as challenges are magnified and girls become even more vulnerable. Programming needs to recognise and be responsive to changes within the context that can heighten risks for girls and build in protective measures to ensure these risks are addressed. In this regard, an important success of KEEP was the work on guidance and counselling. KEEP was successful in establishing and strengthening functional guidance and counselling departments in every project-supported school through the

specialised support provided by a project-staffed network of Education Counsellors (trained psychotherapists) and School Counsellors (trained in lay counselling). Through training on Lay Counselling and ongoing coaching, in-school Guidance Teachers have been supported to enhance guidance and counselling services within the school, as well as mapping referral pathways to help learners seek specialised support services where needed. According to an internal guidance and counselling case study, this, along with the availability of psychosocial support from project counsellors, enabled girls (and boys) to have access to a greater range of support that has contributed to improvements in retention, participation, and performance in school.

KEEP-II was asked to contribute to the government's policy formulation on guidance and counselling, which informs national standards for in-school guidance and counselling provision. Following the Ministry's visit to Kakuma, the allocation of psychosocial and school counsellors for KEEP-supported schools was recognised as a best practice. The project, through this component, tracked reported cases and provided support directly and through the community referral systems. Thereafter, KEEP provided financial and technical support for a situational analysis of the guidance and counselling for basic institutions in Kenya to establish the extent of provision of guidance and counselling in Learning Institutions and guidance and counselling teachers in the learning institutions, identify challenges experienced by learning institutions in the provision of guidance and counselling services, and identify the guidance and counselling needs within the learning institutions.

### ***Behaviour change requires sustained investment and interventions beyond awareness raising***

KEEP's community engagement work relied on broad-based messaging focused on awareness raising. What we saw as a result were gains in knowledge and some shifts in attitudes and perceptions, but evidence of this being translating into action was limited. We have learned that interventions designed to drive behaviour change need to be approached differently, especially when it comes to community engagement. We have built upon this learning in another programme currently being implemented in Kakuma, where we have taken a much more comprehensive approach to community engagement; taking community members through a phased approach that moves beyond information sharing and focuses on a community-wide process of personal reflection and collective behaviour change.

**“I will attribute the changes to the rate of community empowerment done by Windle. It has helped community members know the importance of girl child education.”**

**Female parent, Kakuma refugee**

In addition to more targeted and intensive programming, the KEEP Endline Evaluation also highlights the need for sustained and sizeable investment in girls' education as a significant driver for shifting entrenched gender norms, noting that KEEP (an investment of approximately £40 million over eight years) has proved significant for targeted communities where overall education investments are historically low and at a time when investment in refugee education is dwindling. According to many stakeholders in KEEP, this level of investment in and the sustained attention it focused on girls' education, has been a catalyst for attitude change at the community and school levels. Shorter-term and more limited investment is not likely to have the same effect in terms of moving the needle on entrenched social gender norms.

### ***Evidence and data driven decision making is key***

Project performance is improved when investments are made in the generation and use of evidence to support informed and timely decision-making. With encouragement and financial support provided by GEC-T (Girls Education Challenge Transitions), KEEP II invested significantly in the development of monitoring and evaluation systems, capacity, and evidence generation. Significant adaptations were made to KEEP design and delivery strategies based on evidence generated by KEEP and by GEC. The support and space provided by GEC for flexible and iterative project management contributed to internal capacity and system development at WUSC and KEEP-II implementing partner organisations which benefits their ongoing and future programming. Learning emerging from the project's monitoring and evaluation efforts has been shared with national and international stakeholders.

### ***Empowerment needs to be central for programming to be transformative***

Putting girls' own individual choice and agency at the centre of programming is not only more empowering, but also more effective and sustainable. WUSC is already applying this lesson in other programming by supporting girls' opportunity of choice by giving them options and letting them choose whether they want to attend traditional school, technical training, and digital training - or to pursue traditional employment or become an entrepreneur.

By empowering girls with the tools to make decisions and act upon their own choices, we have removed a western-imposed ideal of success and made girls' priorities our priorities. This focus on empowerment is key to success when working with girls.

While enhancing girls' agency, promoting positive and supportive relationships, and engaging the broader community to support girls' education and safety were all parts of the KEEP programme, we have learned that to truly facilitate the process of empowerment, these efforts need to be more coordinated, holistic, given equal weight. To facilitate the process of girls' empowerment, programmes need to promote individual growth in areas related to education, while also contributing to gender-transformative change through family and community engagement activities that address power relations, roles, and norms. When girls are empowered, they can gain control over their lives and acquire a greater voice to overcome inequalities. WUSC has infused this learning into the design of other programs in the region (in Kenya, Uganda, and South Sudan), where empowerment of adolescent girls is the ultimate outcome. These programmes operate at multiple levels (personal, relational, and structural), taking into consideration the multidimensional and complex nature of empowerment.

**“There are now more girls in schools compared to five years ago because there are some organisations who have enlightened parents, villagers, village elders and religious leaders.”**

**Community leader, Dagahaley**



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