Project Evaluation Report

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Notes:

Some annexes listed in the contents page of this document have not been included because of challenges with capturing them as an A4 PDF document or because they are documents intended for programme purposes only. If you would like access to any of these annexes, please enquire about their availability by emailing uk_girls_education_challenge@pwc.com.

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Strategic Approaches to Girls' Education External Evaluation Report

Formal Track End line

November 2022

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- **Name of project:** Strategic Approaches to Girls' Education (STAGE)
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- **Name of external evaluation firm:** DT Global International Development UK Ltd.
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Executive summary

This report presents the findings from the Formal Track Endline Evaluation for the Strategic Approaches to Girls' Education (STAGE). The evaluation was conducted by DT Global (formerly IMC Worldwide), an external evaluator (EE), hired by the project implementing agency World Education, Inc. (WEI). This report follows the evaluation guidelines provided by the Fund Manager (FM) and reflects the evaluation scope of work detailed in the STAGE MEL framework.

Project Background. The project targets regions in Ghana where there are high levels of extreme poverty and deep-seated traditional and social norms towards gender roles (i.e., early marriage, unwanted and early pregnancy, and responsibility for house chore resting on girls). These norms negatively impact girls' ability to complete their education and gain decent employment. The project consists of two programme tracks for highly marginalised girls – a single cohort Formal school track for girls aged 10-14, and three cohorts of girls aged 15-19 focused on vocation skills and employment. The project is being implemented between January 2020 and February 2023, seeking to reach 16,794 girls (8,025 Formal and 8,769 non-Formal) across eight regions of Ghana. The Formal track set out to provide girls with a nine month Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) focusing on literacy, numeracy, and life skills training. The purpose of the ALPs with the support of caregivers, teachers, and awareness raising efforts is to prepare the girls for their transition into formal education, vocational training and/or employment and self-employment. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted programme delivery since schools in Ghana closed for 10 months starting in March 2020, and its impacts have disrupted the delivery of programmes and girls' learning more broadly. Programme interventions including the ALPs, animation sessions, home visits to check on the girls, training for safeguarding, peer education, the Behavioural Community Change campaign, and vocational training were suspended. The programme had to adapt, pivoting to enable delivery of the ALPs and gender inclusive education in the new context with teaching and learning done through radio and community information systems.

Evaluation Approach. The purpose of the endline evaluation is to assess to what extent the STAGE project has achieved its intended objectives for the Formal track, what factors have contributed to, or hindered progress, and how sustainable STAGE effects are likely to be. In doing so, the evaluation also referred to key logframe indicators at Outcome and Intermediate Outcome level, together with assessing the relevance and plausibility of the STAGE Theory of Change (ToC). Five overarching evaluation questions (including sub-questions) have been answered (Section 4).

The evaluation design is a mixed methods evaluation as per methodology agreed in the MEL Framework (Annex 2). All indicators are measured at each evaluation point as defined by in the revised GEC Outcome-level Indicators and Targets[1] (see Section 3.2 and Annex 4 for details on the methodology). The EE has measured Learning outcomes, which are defined as improvement in literacy and/or numeracy, as the proportion of girls whose scores improved between baseline and endline and midline and endline.[2] The literacy and numeracy levels of girls were measured using Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessments (EGMA). Other indicators were measured using a quantitative household survey with heads of households, primary caregivers and girls. In addition to quantitative data, qualitative data sources were used to assess the experiences of project beneficiaries and stakeholders and build a deeper understanding of 'how and why' and 'under what circumstances' change has or has not occurred.

Data collection took place between August and September 2022, in three regions and four language groups. The qualitative sample covered three communities in each region. The evaluation applied a Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) lens to ensure girls and marginalised sub-groups were thoughtfully considered and reported on throughout the

[1] UK Aid. Girls' Education Challenge. GEC Outcome-level Indicators and Targets. Aligning project reporting and FCDO Annual Reporting requirements.

[2] Improvements between baseline and midline can be found in the previous evaluation report. Mean scores are also reported and used to investigate variation between subgroups.

study in accordance with minimum standards for GESI reporting agreed with the FM (e.g., data disaggregation for marginalised subgroups, and differentiating sub-group and characteristics in reporting findings and analysis).

For quantitative surveys, the sample was lowered from 640 to 400 due to budget considerations. However the EE is confident the sample size is sufficiently large to detect statistically significant changes and meet minimum power requirements, and given this is the last evaluation point and attrition at future data collection points not a consideration. Whilst the qualitative sample has been reduced overall, new stakeholders have been interviewed as key informants.

Socio-demographic characteristics of Formal Track girls

STAGE project's profile. Formal track girls come from households with high levels of poverty. Three years after the project start, the majority of the sample (71.7%) are under 14 years of age, and the average age is 13.5.

The evaluation assessed child functioning by asking girls' caregivers the Washington Group questions on child functioning focused on physical, socio-cognitive and mental health domains, though it is noted that in no way this is intended to be a medical diagnostic of disability prevalence among girls. At baseline, of the 701 observations for which data on child functioning was available, only 15 (2.1%) caregivers reported girls as having a disability other than anxiety or depression; this value has slightly decreased at the endline (1.6% increase, or 7 respondents). Between baseline and midline, it appeared that the decline in disability rates was largely due to a reduction in the severity of symptoms (of anxiety and depression especially), and not attrition from the project. However, there appears to be higher attrition between midline and endline. At endline, none of the beneficiaries who were counted as having a disability at midline counted as having a disability at endline (and vice versa). The EE notes that these results merit a review of disability criteria or reconsidering of assumptions about disability.

Marginalisation characteristics of Formal Track girls

A list of subgroup characteristic to report on by the EE was determined at baseline in 2020, building on the Project MEL framework and community mapping which identified key subgroups at risk of marginalisation among girls. The EE has tracked the prevalence of these subgroups across evaluation points, as per table below (ES Table 1).

ES Table 1 - Characteristic Subgroups: Formal Track, Baseline, Midline and Tracer (% of total sample)

Characteristic	Baseline	Midline	Endline
Is a mother	1.6%	1.0%	0.5%
Married	0.9%	1.0%	0.5%
Lives with neither parent	3.4%	3.3%	1.8%
1+ hours to primary/secondary school	13.6% (87.9% to secondary)	14.5%	75.6% (to secondary)
Household unable to meet basic needs[3]	35.6%	24.2%	25.2%
Works[4]	8.0%	4.3%	41.5%

[3] Defined as answering Household Survey question 'PCG_5econ Please tell me which of the following phrases best suits your household situation' with '[_] 1 unable to meet basic needs without charity'

[4] Work is defined as doing work for pay and is separate from doing chores in concept and in the questions asked in the survey. Work may be paid labour for others (including in family business/farm), selling items purchased or produced for a profit, or other transactions where the girl receives money or in-kind compensation for her efforts. In agreement with the project, how work has been recorded in the questionnaire has been modified since baseline, to ensure that chores and work are understood by the respondent as different.

Characteristic	Baseline	Midline	Endline
Works (under 15 years old)	7.7%	3.6%	25.9%
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)[5]	40.8%	5.5%	28.7%
Has a disability	13.0%	3.8%	6.3%
Source: Analytical Dataset Caregiver Survey N =	705	689	402

The table shows that the prevalence of marginalisation characteristics at endline has changed compared to previous evaluation points. First, 75% of girls reported to be over one hour away from secondary schools (23.6% of those enrolled at the time of the survey were enrolled at secondary level), which is expected as there might be fewer secondary schools than primary schools. Second, at midline, the prevalence of high chore burden had substantially decreased, from 40.8% of the total sample at baseline to 5.5%. At endline, girls affected by high chore burden represent 28.7% of the sample, which is higher than at midline, although encouragingly lower than at the start of the programme. Combined with the increased proportion of girls that work (41.5% of the sample), the end of the project may mean girls have more time to return to economically productive activities for their families (for better or worse).

The fourth most prevalent characteristic is living in poverty (25.2%). The percentage of girls from poor households has decreased by around 10 percentage points (pp) since baseline (35.6% of the sample) and has not changed since midline. Only a small percentage of girls are mothers or are married (0.5%). The slight decrease in prevalence of girls who are mothers and/or married might be due to these girls dropping out of the programme, with only two mothers and married girls present in the endline sample.

Considering the intersectionality of characteristics, it is notable that 55% of girls from households unable to meet basic needs and 55.9% of those with high chore burden are also working.

Barriers to education among Formal Track girls

The caregiver-reported reasons for girls not enrolling in school were added after the original baseline design, as the project required reporting on both characteristics and barriers. The twenty-eight reasons were then combined into six categories of barriers: Economic (Work or Costs), Travel (Safety or Distance from primary school), Disability (School cannot meet disability-related needs), Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl), School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry), and Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married). At baseline, as STAGE started work to address these barriers, almost all beneficiaries were not enrolled. At the end of the programme, almost all girls were found to be in formal school. Hence, at endline, barriers should not be interpreted as obstacles to enrolment in formal education, but – with a view to sustainability – as potential challenges to sustaining enrolment in the future. Further, it should be noted barriers are not directly comparable across evaluation points (see Section 3.1), though previous results are presented for reference.

[5] Defined by the caregiver as at least half a day spent on house chores such as fetching water or caring for family members.

ES Table 2 - Barriers to education among Formal Track girls: Baseline, Midline and Endline

Barrier	Baseline	Midline	Endline
Economic (Work or Costs)	85.4%	29.4%	88.7%
Travel (Safety or Distance)	37.6%	11.1%	34.8%
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	8.2%	6.9%	34.5%
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	13.4%	12.8%	25.9%
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	11.6%	8.4%	23.9%
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	12.3%	5.8%	27.5%
COVID-19	-	5.8%	-
Source: Analytical Dataset, Caregiver survey N=	705	694	397

At endline, the most felt barriers to transition and formal education are still **economic** related, for 88.7% of the overall sample (for example, there is not enough money to pay costs of schooling and/or the girl needs to work, earn money or help out at home). The substantial increase since midline might be linked to multiple factors, such as an increase in prevalence of girls with high chore burden, as well as a challenging and deteriorating economic environment worldwide as well as in Ghana.

Travel barriers (related to being distant from school or feeling unsafe traveling from and to school) are the second most prevalent barriers (34.8%), though at the endline these have been calculated based on distance to secondary school, rather than primary school.

Over half of girls that reported to be working (60.1%, significant), working and under 15 (58.1%, significant), GWD (56%) and with high chore burden (51.5%, significant) were reported to be in **schools that cannot meet their needs**, for example, the school is not physically accessible, or the teachers in the school are lacking the required skills to effectively teach, or teaching materials are not adequate ('unmet disability needs' barriers). The other barrier category related to the school environment is **issues with school** (for example, it's not safe, teacher mistreats child, child refused entry[41]), which are prevalent among 23.9% of the sample. However, this result should be noted with caution as other evidence (qualitative and quantitative) suggest girls feel safe at school. Whilst barrier prevalence over time is not directly comparable, it is not surprising that issues related to schools are more frequently reported at endline, as almost all girls are in formal school, unlike at the start of the project.

Demographic and social norms barriers are similarly prevalent among the sample (27.5% and 25.9% overall), mostly in Upper West, Northern and, to a lesser extent, Upper East (Kusaal). Girls from poor households, married girls, married under 15, mothers, and employed sub-groups felt these barriers the most.

Girls who are **marginalised** (in any of the marginalisation subgroups described in the previous section, that is 80% of the sample) are more likely to experience barriers than the overall sample, particularly some subgroups. In fact, there seems to be a link between barriers related to school not meeting needs ('disability'), social norms and demographic, and girls with high chore burden, girls that are working, girls living over an hour away from secondary school, and the GWD subgroups. However, girls from impoverished households did not report facing non-economic barriers related to gender or social norms more than girls that did not qualify as impoverished. This confirms the findings from baseline

and midline that living in poverty alone may not always be a direct cause for not attending school, but other factors with a greater impact would come into play, such as being in a household with unsupportive social norms or having caring responsibilities.

Overview of Logframe Indicator Results

The table below provides a snapshot of indicator progress across the programme, full details can be found in Section 3 of the report.

ES Table 3 - Overview of Indicator Results

Indicator #	Measure	Baseline level	Midline target	Midline level	Endline target	Endline level	EQ
Outcomes							
1. Learning							
O1.1 % of Marginalised Girls with improved EGRA score	EGRA score N = 401	N/A	80%		85% At least 50% with improved EGRA score (new logframe)	90.7%	1
O1.2 % of Marginalised Girls with improved EGMA score	EGMA score N = 398	N/A	75%		85% At least 50% with improved EGMA score (new logframe)	89.7%	1
O2.1 % of girls completing an "appropriate" transition: formal school and progressing to next grade	Caregiver survey Endline: N = 400	9.4%	85%	69.5%[42] 93.3% (WEI reporting)	40% (new logframe target) 75% (logframe)	99.8%	1
3. Sustainability							
School							

O3.1.a % of teachers applying gender sensitive and inclusive teaching pedagogies	Girls' survey (IO2.1) KIIs	N/A	N/A	1	N/A	2	3
O3.2.a Evidence of schools with practices that promotes girls' education[43]	Girls' survey (IO2.2) KIIs	1	N/A	1	N/A	2	3
Community							
O3.1.b % of parents/caregivers of marginalised girls who actively[44] support girls' education	Caregiver survey	1	1	1 (15.1%)	N/A	1 (32.6%)	3
O3.2.b Extent that key community leaders and decision makers actively support girls' education[45]	Modified indicator KII with DEOs, head teachers, leaders, teacher	1	2	2 (27.4% report quarterly) (see IO indicator 4.2)	N/A	3 (53.9%)	3
O3.3.b Evidence of communities with functional structures to support inclusive girls' education[46]		0	N/A	1	N/A	2	3
System							
Evidence of districts with functional structures to support inclusive girls' education[47]	Modified indicator KII with DEOs, head teachers, leaders, teachers	1	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	3
Evidence of District Education Offices (DEOs) with functional structures to promote inclusive girls' education[48]		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3

- Extent that MOE adopts parts of the STAGE model[49] to support CBE programming in Ghana. - Extent to which MOE/CEA adopt parts of STAGE post-ALP transition interventions[50]	KII CEA/MOE / DEOs New indicator Interview with CEA/MOE.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3
Intermediate Outcomes							
1. Attendance							
IO1.1 Attendance rates of girls	39.8% of sample, 20 observations per girl Measured by EE attendance form	N/A	90%	86.1%	85%	80.7%	2
1.2 Extent that girls, caregivers, teachers and school leaders feel the support received helped reduce the barriers to regular attendance	Qualitative data from girls, caregivers, teachers, leaders.	N/A	N/A	90.5% of those that received financial assistance mentioned it made it more likely for the girl to be enrolled in school.	N/A		2
2. Quality of teaching							
2.1 % of Girls that agree that their facilitator was effective at the learning centre	Girls Survey[51]	N/A	75%	73.9%	85%	75.2%	4
2.2 Extent that teachers/ facilitators apply inclusive gender-sensitive education	Girls Survey[52] KIIs girls/ teachers/ facilitators WEI classroom	N/A	60%	75.9%	70%	73.2%	4

	observation summary						
2.3 % of facilitators who demonstrate effective literacy/numeracy instruction	WEI classroom observation summary KIIs girls/ teachers/ facilitators	N/A	60%	98.5% (WEI data)	N/A	N/A (not measured at endline)	4
2. Life skills							
3.1 Life skills index score	Same sampling as Learning Test and HH Survey	56	65	60.5	75	Only measured through KIIs for Formal Track	1
3.2 Extent that caregivers perceive positive changes in girls' Life Skills	Same sampling as Learning Test and HH Survey	61.3%	Positive trend	66.2%	Positive trend	Only measured through KIIs for Formal Track	1
4. Support to girls' education							
4.1 % of caregivers who feel it is equally viable to invest in a girl's education as a boy's education even when funds are limited	Same sampling as Household Survey Question PCG_32g (Strongly agree or agree)	88%	90% (EE proposed)	92.2%	95%	98%	2
4.2 Extent that religious and traditional leaders actively mobilise households to support excluded girls into education.	Same sampling as Household Survey Question PCG_34g2[53]	1	2 or higher	2 (27.4% leaders spoke at least quarterly in support of girls' education)	3 (EE proposed: 32% leaders speak at least quarterly)	3 (53.9%)	2
4.3 Extent that relevant district agencies' (GES, Social Welfare, Complementary	KIIs with national actors, District Education	0	1	1	2	2	2

Education Agency) participate in monitoring, supervision and coaching visits of schools	Offices (DEOs), community leaders						

Evaluation question summary findings

EQ 1. What impact did the STAGE project have on the transition of highly marginalised girls into education/learning/training or work opportunities?

STAGE has delivered impressive results and overachieved targets in both key outcomes of learning (numeracy and literacy) and transition (to formal and/or non-formal education).

Almost all Formal track girls has successfully transitioned. 99.8% of respondents are enrolled in formal school (97.5%) and/or non-formal education (9.3%). All GWDs and girls affected by high chore burden have successfully transitioned and are still in school. All girls from poor households have transitioned, but a small percentage (2%) of girls are not in school any longer. Subgroups with lower transition rates to formal education include girls that are working, working under 15, and those experiencing social norms-related and school-related barriers. These subgroups conversely had higher transition rates to non-formal.

Improvements in learning in both numeracy and literacy were sustained across all evaluation points, including one year on from the end of the ALPs and girls' transition into formal school. For both numeracy and literacy, well over half of girls for which data is available for baseline and endline have improved scores compared to baseline, namely 89.7% of girls for numeracy, and 90.7% for literacy. The overall literacy score at endline is 43.2, up by 12.9 pp from midline, and up by 32 pp since baseline (literacy started at lower mean scores at baseline than numeracy, 14.8 and 39.5 respectively). The overall numeracy score at midline is 65.1, up by 34.4 pp from baseline, and 13.1 pp from midline.

The evidence from the evaluation is unequivocal that almost the totality of girls (including those that are working) have transitioned, have relatively high attendance rates, and are learning. Whilst there are some indications of potential barriers to education, these concern only a small number of girls from some of the subgroups or experiencing certain types of barriers (e.g., a small percentage of the girls that are working, or a small percentage of girls in households with unsupportive social norms). Whilst some learning and transition outcomes might be lower for some subgroups, overall results are remarkable and not far below from the overall average. These points should always be kept in mind when considering analysis of outliers summarised below and detailed in the report.

Subgroup analysis revealed that all girls affected by some kind of barrier except for economic-related, have scored lower than average on both tests, particularly girls whose schools cannot meet their learning needs and/or are unsafe environments, and girls that live in households with unsupportive social norms. GWDs (which mostly include girls with reported frequent feelings of anxiety and depression) scored lower in both literacy and numeracy tests. However, results are still remarkable for these subgroups as well, and improvements are noted across evaluation points.

In relation to the percentage of girls working (41.5%), it would seem that the work characteristics identified at endline are compatible with enrolment in school (as the large majority of the working subgroup is indeed currently enrolled), as they configure work done predominantly in a family context, informally, seasonally/temporarily, often in subsistence agriculture. Further, working does not seem to have affected attendance to a large extent, compared to other groups, with most working girls attending all or most of school classes (although quantitative and qualitative evidence on working and school attendance is mixed). On the other hand, looking at transition and learning results jointly, girls that reported to be working (mostly in seasonal/temporary work) also exhibited lower literacy scores and a higher likelihood of being enrolled in non-formal education than the overall sample.

EQ 2. How successfully did STAGE reduce barriers to full participation in formal education or vocational education for highly marginalised girls?

The activities that STAGE implemented to reduce economic, travel, school related and social norms barriers to attendance and transition were effective, as evidenced by the impressive outcome level results for the almost totality of girls, overall and across subgroups.

The evaluation found high rates of attendance to and completion of ALPs, with the evidence pointing to the effectiveness of the flexible approach to delivery and provision of different time slots (particularly in the afternoon) so girls could attend classes as well as house chores, work, or other family and life commitments. Girls' attendance rates to school as measured by checks on school registries are fairly high right after transition (80.7% of girls attend at least 80% of the classes), though lower than at midline (86.1%). Although, those girls that do not reach the target are not that far below it. Some subgroups seem to fare particularly well in terms of attendance, such as GWDs, girls from poor households, girls experiencing travel and demographic barriers. Overall, the quality of teaching, child-centred and inclusive pedagogy, safeguarding practices (discussed in EQ4), the flexibility of ALP delivery and interventions to increase support for education by families particularly all contributed to high attendance and completion rates of ALPs, and are contributing to sustained enrolment in and attendance to school.

STAGE supported girls in their transition process to school and provided material support in a range of forms. The quantitative and qualitative findings substantiate that this support – particularly the transition kit, and to a lesser extent, bicycle banks – greatly helped reduce economic related burdens, as well as travel barriers, and has helped sustain attendance to school. Widespread, almost total levels of family and community vocal support for girls' education were also found. Demonstrable, active support is less prevalent (for example, that a caregiver disagrees that girls should prioritise house chores over going to school or mobilising funds for schooling), though a positive trajectory was observed across evaluation points. There were though mixed findings on the distribution of house chores in the household, with a part of girls perceiving house chores had increased over the previous year.

While there are regional differences all respondents noted a reduction in various barriers to accessing education, and these were largely attributed to the material interventions, however community sensitisation, home visits and increased support from families and communities were also linked to the reduction of the social barriers. Evidence suggests that where present, unsupportive social norms seem to intersect with economic barriers, whereby families cannot pay for school costs, nor can they forego the work girls can contribute to the family.

Following the end of ALPs (intense in terms of time requirements) and transition to school, the 'new normal' for a part of the girls appears to be, being enrolled in education, whilst also helping with house chores and/or working for some times of the year. Whilst the almost totality of girls working and with house chores are in education and are learning, evidence suggests that having to work to support the household or oneself, or support family chores (identified as one of the key obstacles to education at baseline) represents a potential risk to sustaining education in the future for some of the girls. In fact, even though the almost totality of girls are currently enrolled, girls that are working are more likely to be enrolled in non-formal education than the overall sample. There were mixed findings on self-reported attendance to school, with relatively high attendance rates but also higher percentages of girls that reported attending school only sometimes, compared to the overall average. And, the qualitative data indicated that some seasons/times of the year where girls have to work and support the family (e.g., harvest) tend to affect attendance negatively.

EQ 3. How sustainable were the STAGE activities funded by the GEC and was the programme successful in leveraging additional interest, investment, and policy change? Have the project implementation approaches, or interventions built the capacities of existing structures and created the platform for continuity of activity interventions beyond the project's life?

STAGE has supported work to sustain the effects of the project after its end by working with actors at school, community and education system level on key interventions/areas identified through research and monitoring data as key to support learning and prevent harm at school. Evidence from interviews with a range of actors in three regions

(Upper East, Northern and Upper West) point to a higher likelihood of sustainability of interventions than previously, especially at school and community levels. There is less clarity on change taking place at the system level based on evaluation evidence, particularly at the national level; as well as structural issues in school resourcing which might be problematic. Project reporting indicates that the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Complementary Education Agency (CEA) have adopted elements of STAGE (such as the community advocacy strategy for girls' education projects) in their most recent strategies, though implementation has not started yet. The evaluation data also indicated that at national level there is intention to adopt some STAGE principles into their practices, however these are yet to be institutionalised, and as such there is no available material data on these interventions being incorporated in the national system.

Supporting MoE in the promotion of GESI in Formal Education was one key focus area of STAGE. The evaluation corroborated this wherein a majority of girls commended their teachers for being effective, inclusive and making the school a safe environment, which in turn had an effect on their learning, attendance and motivation to go to school. Evidence was found of increased awareness of inclusive and gender sensitive education (IGSE), and teachers improving their classroom/centre practice towards IGSE. However, ongoing refresher training will be needed and challenges in working with some marginalised subgroups in class, such as girls with mental health issues and girls from poor households was identified.

IGSE is now being integrated into the education system at district level with the support of national officials, though factors other than STAGE might have also contributed to this. There were more mixed findings on system-level changes such as the introduction of girls' education officer and social welfare officer roles, and mentorship sessions for teachers and district actors on IGSE. A key problem is that in the absence of funding going forward, the continuation of these sessions will be determined by the personal commitment by teacher mentors.

A key issue for the sustainability of transition into school is the inadequate status of school facilities, namely toilets not functioning and furniture lacking in schools (chairs and desks) and while there is community support for improved school infrastructure, resourcing decisions happen at a higher administrative level.

EQ 4. What works to facilitate transition of highly marginalised girls into education/training/employment and to increase learning?

Enhancing the quality of teaching at ALPs and later, at school, was one key area that STAGE leveraged effectively to reduce barriers to education across subgroups. Evaluation findings strongly suggest that implementation of IGSE practices, safeguarding, and ALP/CBE curriculum all contributed to girls' learning, attendance and transition to school. Over 95% of girls agreed to any one statement on the effectiveness of facilitators and teachers in school, and 75% agreed facilitators/teachers were applying all examples of IGSE practices they were asked about, as well as making them feel safe in class. However, some difficulties in teaching to some subgroups, as well as areas for improvement were noted, and the need for further training on IGSE and safeguarding.

Almost all girls agreed that the ALPs prepared them for literacy and numeracy classes in school, as well as helping them in everyday life (life skills). Beyond the content of the ALP classes, activities that stood out as particularly effective in raising learning were the teaching style (child-centred, inclusive approach); using the local language of instruction, also in combination with English; availability of afternoon classes and flexible ALP delivery with the possibility to reschedule. Community sensitisation, particularly home visits and monitoring/supervision stood out as effective in sustaining attendance and transition.

Several findings point to a risk of results not being sustained for girls with functional difficulties. Now that GWD have transitioned the evidence points at a risk of GWDs losing these gains as the formal education system might not be catering for their needs sufficiently well (lower learning outcomes, less likely to agree on effectiveness of teachers).

EQ 5. What are the most cost effective and impactful activities implemented through STAGE interventions which have helped girls to transition to schools and employment opportunities? What life skills are most valued and useful for girls in the STAGE project?

Beyond findings on effectiveness and sustainability already presented, the light touch Value for Money analysis pointed at the relevance of STAGE interventions. Namely targeted strategies put in place to encourage attendance, transition and learning of marginalised subgroups, the project building upon existing community structures to deliver interventions, and adaptiveness of interventions during COVID-19.

On efficiency, in all three regions it was said that the project has a higher financial demand than other CBE projects attributed to provision of training materials, the bikes, transition packs, but this was deemed as justified given the results obtained. Post-transition monitoring and support is regarded as particularly cost-effective as it helps prevent dropouts, thus preserving key project results.

Recommendations

1. For future programmes and STAGE close out phase, link girls from severely poor households with existing government, institutionalised material support interventions to reduce risks of dropping out of school due to financial constraints.

2. As STAGE did, future programmes should focus on reducing barriers related to social norms and demographic factors which are persistent and pose a risk to sustained transition and learning. The sensitisation of caregivers on the importance of continued education for girls with high chore burden contributed to positive outcomes for girls in this subgroup and – if implemented over a sufficient period of time - has the potential to bring long-lasting change for more persistent social norms and demographic barriers, which need long term interventions to change. Future programme design should consider a longer timespan/vision, to increase likelihood of sustained change.

3. In the close out phase, STAGE should explore all possible incentives/ avenues to ensure that community leaders will continue sensitisation, monitoring and supervision of girls' education and potentially come to embed it as one of their responsibilities as community leaders. Some leaders indicated a motivation to do so.

4. Incorporate community animation sessions in future programming.

5. For future programmes which aim to reach marginalised girls, consider long-term targeted interventions for married girls and mothers that tackle the social norms which disproportionately affect them.

6. In designing future programming, consider the challenges observed in changing girls' awareness, knowledge and practices of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights life skills over the lifespan of STAGE.

7. For similar future programmes, link girls and families to existing health services for GWDs given the positive impacts they have had on GWDs supported by STAGE and given the lack of awareness of these services among GWD families.

8. Future programme design should consider STAGE best practices and what worked to achieve observed results. These activities include:

    - Community mapping at baseline.
    - Promoting inclusive and gender sensitive education practices and child-centred pedagogy in schools and across local government.
    - Promoting the establishment of regulations and application of safe school policies.

- Conducting IGSE and safeguarding trainings to project implementers as well as government stakeholders.
- Monitoring and supervision resting on existing community and district structures.
- Family and community sensitisation resting on existing community structures, including home visits.
- Flexible delivery of ALPs, afternoon classes and possibility to reschedule classes.
- Local language teaching in combination with English.
- Reading reinforcement approach.
- Material support/transition kits to reduce economic barriers.
- If catch up classes were introduced to the CBE curriculum, the government could use a flexible approach, similar to STAGE, to deliver them.

9. Structural level issues around funding and resourcing of school facilities might be improved with a branch of programmatic activities focused on advocacy and influencing MoE and decision-makers in Ghana's education system with a clear strategy, aiming for example at increasing funding allocations to education departments of local government, schools, promoting accessibility guidelines, among others.
10. Revisit assumptions around disability or consider adopting different measurement technique/ criteria. Consider incorporating the Washington Group's severity scales into understanding disability or identify alternative methods to track disability among beneficiaries.
11. When anxiety and depression are prevalent issues among beneficiaries, consider how their accommodation and provision of supportive resources can be incorporated into overcoming barriers.
12. Future research:
    - To understand the different experience of Upper East (Kusaal) girls, especially lower support to education at family and community level, and lower literacy outcomes for girls.
    - To understand how high chore burden girls manage this compared with other groups, without it impacting on enrolment in education.
    - Unpack the reasons/factors behind Northern region success in a number of outcomes and intermediate outcomes to see what could be applied to similar programmes.
    - Unpacking the reasons and political economy on why certain approaches of STAGE have been adopted or not, by MoE and GES could inform future design to maximise sustainability potential.

1. Background to project

1.1 Project context

Ghana made notable efforts towards achieving Education for All (EFA) in the post-Jomtien period of the 1990s and by 2000. However, despite initial increases in rates of enrolment, significant expansion in terms of access nationally did not necessarily translate into equality or equity of opportunity (Akyeampong et al, 2012). In the early 2000s, Ghana passed clear policy guidelines through the 2002 – 2015 National Action Plan on EFA that sought to decrease girls' dropout rates in primary and junior high school (JHS), and while this led to increases in primary enrolment, challenges

in transition and retention of JHS girls persist and from 2014-2016 national transition rates from primary to JHS declined. In 2017 the Government pledged to make secondary education free thus removing a significant barrier to students staying in school.

In addition to financial challenges, extensive literature (UNICEF 1993; Mfum-Mensah, 2003; Farrell & Hartwell, 2009; Mfum-Mensah & Ridenour, 2014) highlights that rigid formalised school systems based on fixed timetables and a loaded curriculum that greatly depends on trained teachers, often do not perform as well in rural environments with respect to providing basic literacy, numeracy and other skills that are relevant to the local environment. Traditional schools operate on insufficient budgets and little funding is allocated to vocational training and apprenticeship programmes.

There is a correlation between the regions with the highest incidence of poverty and lowest levels of education and the regions with the least Government of Ghana per pupil expenditure in education (World Bank, 2010). Out-of-school children, especially girls, have few options to re-enter school or find viable options to generate income.

UNESCO studies found the gender gap in educational attainment increases at Junior High School (JHS). Ghana's Education Sector Performance Report (2018[6]) indicated that gender parity (GPI) was achieved at the primary and JHS levels nationally (1.00 in 2017/18) but in deprived districts, the GPI is 0.89 JHS and 0.93 Primary (2017/18) and ranging between 0.93 - 1.14 (2017/18) in Northern, Ashanti, Greater Accra, and Upper West regions. Girls in these targeted areas are not finding their way and have barriers to entering school. As a measure of ensuring equitable access to basic education for both males and females, the sector has achieved almost parity at the basic level as at 2017/18 academic year. However, the deprived district recorded a declined GPI from 0.93 in 2016/17 to 0.89 in 2017/18.

Evidence strongly suggests that the factors contributing to educational exclusion are multifaceted and intersectional and children suffering multiple disadvantages are considered most at risk.

For example, early marriage, pregnancies, disabilities, and high chore burden all affect engagement in education. Disability figures vary, however, in Ghana. 2021 Census data, suggests that in those aged 5 years and older "*About 8 percent (2,098,138) of the population have varying degrees of difficulty in performing activities and is higher among females (8.8%) than males (6.7%)*" (pp.27) however, when considering severe disability, prevalence is much lower, at 1.8% for the overall population, and 2% for female. There is also a rural- urban differentiation with "*difficulty in performing activities in rural areas (9.5%) …. higher than in urban areas (6.5%)*" (pp.27). On the other hand, another survey found that "*Overall, 21 per cent of Ghanaian children aged 5 to 17 years have at least one functional difficulty, a figure that is consistent across sex, age groups and areas. However, there are wide regional disparities, with the Volta and Eastern regions having the highest prevalence of children with at least one functional difficulty*" (2020)[7].

The barriers affecting education are interrelated throughout community, school, and system levels impacting all children, disproportionately girls. Addressing these multiple barriers will engender an enabling environment for girls' education and change the perception at the individual, community, and institutional levels. Ultimately it will equip the girls to be agents of change.

Programme Design

The Strategic Approaches to Girls' Education (STAGE) project, implemented by World Education, Inc. (WEI), addressed barriers to education through two tracks (a Formal school track and a non-Formal track focused on vocation skills and employment). It was designed to provide a holistic approach to tackle barriers at individual, community, school, and system levels, and support girls in accessing education and fair employment.

[6] https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2020-16-Ghana%20-%20ESP-IR.pdf
[7] https://pdf4pro.com/amp/view/ghana-education-fact-sheets-i-2020-unicef-73ce6d.html, pp.44

STAGE specifically targeted communities in eight regions of Ghana[8] with high levels of extreme poverty, in combination with existence of deep-seated traditional and social norms that act as a barrier to girls' education. STAGE targeted girls in these areas that are highly vulnerable and systematically marginalised due to factors such as early marriage, pregnancies, disabilities, and high chore burden. Additionally, with poverty being such a key factor issue, STAGE worked to reduce financial barriers, to ensure that girls become better educated and are put on pathways that break the cycle of poverty.

The project builds on learning from the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and USAID funded Complementary Basic Education (CBE) Programme that was set up to provide children between eight and 14 years old with basic literacy and numeracy skills, targeting children in remote and deprived areas that would normally be unable to attend school. The programme aimed to equip children with knowledge and skills comparable to those learnt in the first three years of formal school, and on completion of the accelerated learning children were able to transition into local primary schools.

The Formal track of STAGE provided girls with nine months of accelerated learning (ALP) on literacy and numeracy together with Life skills training. The girls were then supported to transition to Formal school via support to caregivers, training to teachers and community wide gender and awareness raising on the importance of girls' education.

COVID-19

The context in which STAGE was implemented changed significantly since the baseline as Ghana was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting measures imposed to control its spread. As of 27th April 2021, there were 92,253 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Ghana, resulting in 777 deaths as reported to WHO.[9] As of 31st August 2022, 168,580 confirmed cases were registered, with 1,459 related deaths reported.

Measures put in place by the government to curb the virus spread included enhanced hygiene protocols, restricted movement within country, a ban on all public gatherings, including conferences, funerals, festivals, and religious activities and authorisation for schools to shut down.[10]

The COVID-19 vaccination campaign began on 1st March 2021, starting with 600,000 doses of the CoviShield vaccine received through the COVAX facility (WHO, CEPI, GAVI, UNICEF). As of 30th August 2022, 18,396,070 vaccine doses had been administered.[11]

Impact on Education

According to academic research, "COVID-19 has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and all continents" and "exacerbating pre-existing education disparities by reducing the opportunities for many of the most vulnerable children".[12]

Schools in Ghana first closed in March 2020 and remained closed for 10 months. UNHCR estimates that 9.2 million schools' students and 0.5 million tertiary education students were impacted at the peak of the pandemic by the closure of learning institutions and the interruption of literacy and lifelong learning programmes in Ghana.[13]

The Ghana Education Services (GES) sought to mitigate the disruption to education provision through digital learning with lessons available online and transmitted via radio and television, developing a COVID-19 Coordinated Education

[8] Originally targeting seven regions but updated following the creation of six new regions after the 2018 referendum.
[9] World Health Organisation (2022). COVID Data. Ghana. Avallabile at: https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/gh
[10] Sibiri, H. et al. (2020). Containing the impact of COVID-19: Review of Ghana's response approach. Health Policy Technol. 2021 Mar; 10(1): 13–15. Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7641588/
[11] World Health Organisation (2022). COVID Data. Ghana Available at: https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/gh
[12] The United Nations. "Education during COVID-19 and beyond"
[13] https://www.unhcr.org/gh/2021/01/25/un-ghana-joint-statement-in-commemoration-of-2021-international-day-of-education/

Response Plan for Ghana in April 2020. GES opened a website[14] and in partnership with the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation expanded their digital learning offer, developing a further 700 lessons in English, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Integrated Science.

The Government implemented a staggered re-opening of education institutions; students in classes with exams returned in October 2020, most new and continuing pre-tertiary students returned in January 2021, and first-year Senior High School (SHS) students returned in March 2021[15]. The Government launched a Back-to-School Campaign in January 2021 to encourage learners and especially girls to return to school safely,[16] and the GES issued guidelines that mandated measures including the wearing of masks, temperature checks[17] and regular hand washing with soap to enable schools to open safely.

Changes to STAGE external context

Since the Project's start, three key contextual changes took place which affected it: COVID-19 (peaked in 2020-2021), reductions in UK Aid funding (2021), and the global economic crisis (2022).

During the ten-month period from March 2020 the STAGE Formal track programme activities were unable to continue as originally planned and the work plan was adapted in response to COVID-19 and resulting measures. WEI identified the risks to programme and programme participants, along with mitigations in the STAGE Response Plan[18]. Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) activities were suspended in all the 426 communities in 18 districts in eight regions until June 2020. Key interventions and drivers of the program like the ALPs, animation sessions, home visits to check on the girls, training for safeguarding, peer education, the Behavioural Change Campaign (BCC) and vocational training were suspended. WEI and the Downstream Partners (DSPs) had to adapt delivery of the ALPs and gender inclusive education to the new context. Teaching and learning were conducted through radio and community information systems. Parents were informed about this strategy and encouraged to support the learning process. WEI also aimed at procuring radios for DSPs to distribute in households with learners not currently possessing radios. In addition to distance learning, community facilitators also provided learning in reduced classes (convening girls in smaller classes; 5 girls out of 25, then increased to 15) whilst observing social distancing, starting in June 2020. This allowed the resumption of almost all ALPs as of July 2020. The program also organised catch up classes between August and September to ensure that most of the content areas were covered. For Formal girls who were supposed to transition in school starting in September 2020, STAGE collaborated with the school-based teachers to organize extra hours of catch-up classes for girls during the first three months. The content of the new curriculum in formal school was introduced between September and November to ensure that the girls are gradually brought to the level of their peers in class and facilitated to remain in school[19]. Support for girls' education at community level / and sensitisation, provision of essential school items, bicycles, extra teaching and learning materials and transition kits continued as initially envisaged by the programme. Also, as originally planned, GES assisted in the transition and placement of girls to the appropriate classes in formal school. This included special support for GWDs, who, based on the severity of the disability, were placed either in regular schools in their communities or in special schools that are equipped to provide the necessary psychosocial support needed[20]. Formal track girls transitioned to school between January and April 2021.

[14] https://www.peacefmonline.com/pages/local/education/202004/405898.php
[15] https://reliefweb.int/report/ghana/unicef-ghana-covid-19-situation-report-no16-1-31-march-2021
[16] https://www.unhcr.org/gh/2021/01/25/un-ghana-joint-statement-in-commemoration-of-2021-international-day-of-education/
[17] Temperature checks and mandatory wearing of masks. - (https://www.africanews.com/2021/01/19/schools-in-ghana-reopen-as-covid-19-cases-surge//
[18] This plan and the revised work plan are found in Annex 19 and 20 of the Formal Midline Report (Annex 12).
[19] Class teachers would later be engaged to support learners for at least thirty to forty-five minutes twice a week each to make learners catch-up with their peers in formal school while Field Supervisors of DSPs and community facilitators would support learners once a week in their respective communities (from STAGE MTR Plan, July 2020).
[20] Conditional to parents' approval, expected to be only a few.

The Project (and the evaluation) were also impacted by reductions in UK Official Development Assistance funding occurred in 2021[21].

Finally, the deteriorating economic situation with high inflation rates observed worldwide impacted Ghana as well. STAGE Annual Report Year 4 notes that "High inflation rates also threaten retention rates of girls in the Formal Track. As families have increased difficulties to buy products, girls may be called upon to contribute to additional income, do domestic work or seasonal farming".

1.2 Target beneficiary groups

STAGE direct beneficiaries for the **Formal track** are 10-14-year-old Out of School Girls (OOSG) living in the Northern, North East, Upper East and Upper West regions of Ghana. The identified districts have high levels of poverty and large numbers of girls never enrolled in school before. Many of the girls have dropped out of school; some may have benefited from accelerated literacy programmes but unsuccessfully transitioned. There are about 9,400 girls with disability living in these regions.[22] Girls in these regions also lack physical access to schools. On average, 10% of girls aged 15-19 in the four northern regions have started childbearing and 39% of girls are married before the age of 18. There is only one Formal cohort which will undergo the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) delivered by STAGE. To date, 8,245 girls in the Formal cohort have been reached through the programme (see under Sampling).

Girls start at grades 0-1 in literacy and numeracy, and the programme aims to help them reach Grade 4 in their learning outcomes by the end of the three-year programme. The second key outcome is that girls transition back into school through enrolment and progress through the grades (see Table 1).

Table 1 - Proposed Intervention Pathway - Formal track

Which girls follow this pathway?	How many girls follow this pathway for cohort 1?	How long will the intervention last?	How many cohorts are there?	What literacy and numeracy levels are the girls starting at?	What does success look like for learning?[23]	What does success look like for transition?
Girls aged 10-14	8,245	3 years	1 cohort	Grade 0-1 for literacy and numeracy	Girls achieve Grade 4 for literacy and numeracy	Girls enrol back into school; and progress grades

[21] UK Parliament (2021). Reducing the UK's aid spending in 2021. Available at: https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9224/

[22] WEI reported that the 2010 Population Census indicates that there are 737,437 (6%) PWD in Ghana. The female PWD population is 387,647 (52.6%). Girls between the ages of 10-14 and 15-19 years constitute 5.8% and 6.5% respectively of the total female PWD in Ghana. This figure translates into about 46,517 girls with disabilities who are within the ages of 14-19 years. This age bracket is the main benchmark for both Non-Formal and Formal track STAGE beneficiary selection in all project communities. The 9,200 girls with disabilities for the 7 STAGE regions out of the total 16 regions was extrapolated from the national female PWD population and used at the time of the proposal in 2014. Source: the 2010 Housing and Population Census, Ghana Statistical Service (2012).

[23] The evaluation was designed around the 0.2SD measure for improved learning outcomes. This has the advantage of focusing primarily on overall improvement, rather than meeting a minimum benchmark. Particularly in the case of the Non-Formal Track, literacy and numeracy requirements of operating one's own business will vary highly based on the sector that the beneficiary is working in and should be part of girls' individualized plans, rather than set project wide. This is compounded by the fact that comparisons across languages cannot be made because of how literacy acquisition varies by language, and therefore common minimum thresholds cannot be set across all languages. Only measures of improvement where girls are being compared to their past improvement are appropriate. See EGRA Toolkit, p.10 "How EGRA Should Not Be Used."

Indirect beneficiaries include boys, ALP Facilitators, community members. Please see Annex 6 for a detailed breakdown of beneficiaries.

1.3 Theory of change

This section summarises the original project Theory of Change (ToC) as taken from the STAGE project MEL Framework and highlights key changes in the ToC assumptions and activities compared to baseline, most of which are in response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic[24]. The project has confirmed there have been no changes to the logframe, notwithstanding the change in the operating context; and no changes to the original ToC diagram (see Annex 1 for ToC diagram). At the end of the project, the evaluation has conducted a thorough review of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning evidence to judge the validity of the impact pathways outlined in the ToC. Evidencing of the ToC is presented in Annex 1.

IF highly marginalised adolescent girls who have dropped out or have never been to school are provided with tailored and inclusive learning, and life skills, **AND IF** this is combined with family and individual level financial education and resource support, community wide behavioural change interventions, and institutional support mechanisms, **THEN** the girls will be able to successfully pursue educational and vocational pathways or use their acquired skills and set themselves on a path to self or paid employment.

The overall goal of STAGE is to improve life chances of marginalised girls by lowering the barriers they face in achieving a decent education. The girls in STAGE all have lives full of potential and promise but need significant support and guidance to enable them to overcome the barriers that hold them back. To achieve this overall impact, STAGE will work towards three key outcomes – *Learning, Transition, and Sustainability*. While these are three separate outcomes, they are also causally linked to each other. Girls with improved ***learning*** outcomes will be able to ***transition*** into formal and non-formal education or careers and will work with communities to create ***sustainable*** changes by empowering women to be change agents and creating an encouraging environment by working with community institutions and power structures.

1. Learning will be measured by the number of marginalised girls with improved learning outcomes. To achieve these outcomes, girls will need to; a) regularly attend learning sessions, b) have access to well-equipped facilitators and educators who provide inclusive learning opportunities, and c) be able to acquire the critical life and non-cognitive skills needed for success. These intermediate outcomes will collectively increase participation, self-esteem, and support for gender equity as girls will learn to speak their voice, engage more with their peers, and achieve better learning outcomes.
2. Transition will be measured by the number of Formal track marginalised girls who have been able to move into formal education. The key intermediate outcome enabling this transition is the increased community and district support for inclusive girls' education. Due to of the specific characteristics and needs of these girls, local ecosystems (made up of stakeholders such as schools, local businesses, vocational training centres, etc.) that are well sensitised and prepared to accommodate the target population must be advocated for and developed. To support girls' chosen paths, livelihood activities that increase family resilience, bicycle banks to ensure girls can access schools, transition support kits to meet learning material needs, and networks of guidance and support will be implemented. Beneficiary girls will improve learning outcomes through the community-based ALP platform where literacy and numeracy, as well as life skills are taught.
3. Sustainability will be measured by demonstrating that the changes brought about by the programme go beyond the initial targets. Strong and active partnerships and engagement with government, communities, schools, and other key stakeholders involved in girls' and inclusive education will continue reaching the most highly marginalised

[24] The Evaluator has reviewed STAGE COVID-19 Plan and Mid Term Review Plan dating July 2020.

girls. STAGE will leverage existing programmes, organisational and community structures and policies to educate, enhance, advocate, and demand accountability from all actors. A holistic approach will be taken to achieve project sustainability. This will be pursued through training, teaching and learning material (TLM) in inclusive education and disability interventions at school level (linking existing testing to inclusive education and training), Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) transformational interventions like life skills at community level, and safeguarding awareness and interventions. STAGE is working with GES at the regional and district levels to identify teachers and school managers to be trained on inclusive and gender sensitive pedagogy, GES Basic Education curriculum content in both local language and oral English, effective classroom management, development of local specific TLMs as well as school-based coaching. Existing GES tools, such as the Inclusive Education and Monitoring Tool are adapted to focus on marginalised girls. GES staff is involved in community mapping and animation as well. By building the capacity of GES in developing and using these tools, STAGE ensures that interventions can continue after project support ceases.

2. Evaluation approach and methodology

2.1 Evaluation purpose(s) and evaluation questions

The purpose of the endline evaluation is to assess to what extent the STAGE project has achieved its intended objectives for the Formal track, what factors have contributed to, or hindered progress, and how sustainable STAGE effects are likely to be. In doing so, the evaluation will also refer to key logframe indicators at Outcome and Intermediate Outcome level, together with assessing the relevance and plausibility of the STAGE ToC. Table 2 details the evaluation questions of the STAGE programme. These have been partially reviewed since baseline, and some sub-questions added.

Table 2 - Evaluation questions and data sources/ analysis required to answer question

Evaluation question	Qual data/analysis required to answer question	Quant data/analysis required to answer question
EQ1. What impact did the STAGE project have on the transition of highly marginalised girls into education/learning/training or work opportunities? - To what extent does the STAGE ALP/VST prepare beneficiaries for transition to school? What factors facilitate transition and retention of girls in school? - To what extent have STAGE beneficiaries improved learning outcomes? Who, if any, are the outliers (individuals and communities) in terms of learning outcomes identified in different regions, lessons from whom may be adopted for scale across Ghana to improve the intervention?	Qualitative data will identify any unintended impacts on girls and girls' experiences in transition.	Quantitative analysis from a representative sample of girls on their transition status and learning proficiency for the Formal track. Project beneficiaries transition status and learning proficiency assessed at baseline and endline (one year and a half after transition to school). This will allow identification of change in learning and transition status (in school, increased grade) and sustainment of transition. Findings to be disaggregated by respondent characteristics (household and region), including marginalisation category where possible.

Evaluation question	Qual data/analysis required to answer question	Quant data/analysis required to answer question
EQ2. How successfully did STAGE reduce barriers to full participation in formal education or vocational education for highly marginalised girls? - To what extent have STAGE interventions at various levels (district, community and school) been able to positively influence the socio-cultural norms, perceptions and attitudes that perpetuate gender inequality and social exclusion? - To what extent have the initiatives implemented by the STAGE program contributed to increased knowledge of the challenges marginalised girls face in Ghanaian communities?	Qualitative data from girls, caregivers and other relevant stakeholders will seek to understand how the project reduced the barriers identified during project development. The barriers include cultural beliefs on marginalised girls' roles, household poverty, beliefs on disability, inaccessible teaching methods, district level awareness and actions.	Quantitative analysis of the different outcomes achieved by girls with different marginalisation status.
EQ3. How sustainable were the STAGE activities funded by the GEC and was the programme successful in leveraging additional interest, investment, and policy change? Have the project implementation approaches, or interventions built the capacities of existing structures and created the platform for continuity of activity interventions beyond the project's life?	Qualitative data collected at community, school and system level to understand more about the changes in key stakeholders' attitudes and behaviours and changes in relevant agencies, budget, and actions.	Limited quantitative data collected at community, school and system level to understand quantitative changes in key stakeholders' attitudes and behaviours and changes in relevant agencies, budget, and actions.
EQ4. What works to facilitate transition of highly marginalised girls into education/training/employment and to increase learning? - Which elements of the training model contribute most to the effectiveness of the facilitators (and in turn the learning outcomes and transition of the girls)? Which pedagogical approaches have been identified as most effective in contributing to the quality teaching	Qualitative data will explore girls, caregivers, master craft persons, facilitators, and other relevant stakeholders' understanding of what works for transitions.	Quantitative data produced to answer EQ1 will be analysed to look at associations between transition/learning outcomes and project activities/intermediate outcomes (attendance, quality of teaching, Life Skills, support to family)

Evaluation question	Qual data/analysis required to answer question	Quant data/analysis required to answer question
and learning in the ALPs and VSTs? - Which activities have been most effective in raising literacy, numeracy, and life skills levels among STAGE beneficiaries? - Which factors and interventions are most correlated to sustained transition rates and increased learning?		
EQ5. What are the most cost effective and impactful activities implemented through the STAGE intervention which have helped girls to transition to schools and employment opportunities? What life skills are most valued and useful for girls in the STAGE program?	N/A	Light-touch analysis of results to determine examples of efficiency, effectiveness and equity and where possible, economy. Views of girls and other respondents on usefulness of various STAGE activities.

2.2 Overall evaluation design

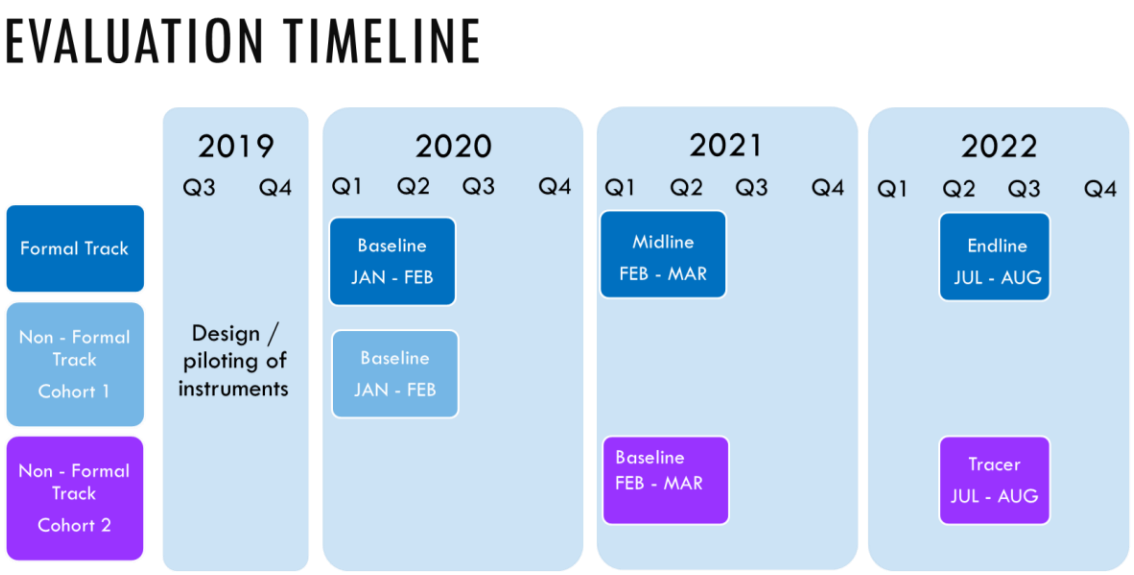
The evaluation design is a mixed method evaluation as per methodology agreed in the MEL Framework. Since STAGE targets marginalised girls with special attention to those with disabilities, it is not feasible to design a randomised control trial (RCT) where some girls will be randomly assigned to the intervention and other girls will be left out of this. The quasi-experimental design, however, allows various comparative analyses. Progress at endline is considered in two ways: (1) comparing the cohorts' average scores at baseline and endline; and (2) comparing endline scores with a comparison group composed of benchmark and baseline scores, weighted to ensure comparability (discussed below and in Annex 2). Quantitative data will be used to identify relationships between variables and assess the effect of some explanatory variables on the outcomes of interest, for example, marginalisation characteristics of the target group as well as characteristics of the environment (learning space, perceived level of community support for girls' education). In addition to quantitative data, qualitative data sources were used to assess the experiences of project beneficiaries and stakeholders and build a deeper understanding of 'how and why' and 'under what circumstances' change has or has not occurred. To understand the proposed design, a visual model below shows tracking of both beneficiary cohorts (Formal and non-Formal) over the course of the programme.

In principle, the data collection and timelines are aligned with the programme work plan and the Ghana school term dates. In the second year, for instance, the ALPs for the Formal track were planned from December 2019 to July 2020 to enable girls to transition to school in time for the new academic year that begins in September 2020. Accordingly, the baseline was collected January/February 2020. However, the evaluation timeline has changed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting changes to programme implementation. As girls have transitioned to school in

January 2021, the midline has taken place between February and March 2021. The endline is shortly after the end of the school term in June 2022.[25]

Given the split implementation model of the STAGE project, the design will be using a different evaluation approach for each track to best measure the impact of the interventions in the eight regions where STAGE is working. With a single cohort of beneficiaries going through an ALP and transition into formal schooling, a longitudinal design will be used over the course of the project to evaluate the Formal track. This design will track the levels of girls' key outcome variables (Learning, Transition, attendance) together with those of their caregivers and other stakeholders (teachers, community leaders) and compare the midline and endline levels with the baseline scores[26] *(*see Figure 1, top row, blue boxes). **Baseline** – January 2020; **Midline** – February/March 2021; **Endline** – July/August 2022.

Figure 1 - Evaluation timeline



In our quantitative endline analysis (to answer Evaluation Question EQ 1), as per the LNGB guidance, the Formal girls' 'natural' cognitive progression is assessed by comparing Formal track girls' endline results with the baseline results of girls who are older but otherwise similar to the Formal track girls.[27] This is completed through a benchmark sample composed of girls not in the programme, supplemented by baseline surveys of girls in the Formal and non-Formal track programme. Probability weights are then assigned to the comparison sample to match the linguistic, regional, and age composition of the endline sample.

Due to the number of beneficiary communities (total of 678), multiple intervention tracks, and separate cohorts, the evaluation design includes a representative sample of communities. STAGE monitoring has regularly collected data from all project communities and assessed all project beneficiaries, but for the sake of the EE, the sampling has selected a stratified representative sample of communities. The monitoring system provides data for the EE as they

[25] These timelines are based on current knowledge of project and school timelines. These might shift due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
[26] A comparison group for the Formal track was not seen as possible due to costs in collecting this additional data, and the practical and ethical difficulty in identifying a suitable comparison group who would not receive any intervention over the 3 years of the programme.
[27] For example, for midline comparison, a girl who is aged 8 at the November 2019 Formal baseline will be 8 years 11 months at the Sep/October midline, and 10 ½ years old at endline. Therefore, her 'natural' progression can be estimated by comparing her outcome scores at midline with the baseline scores of a similar out of school girl aged 8 years 11 months (from either formal or non-formal tracks), and endline natural progression through comparison with a similar out of school girl aged 10 ½ at baseline.

attempt to disaggregate the different elements of the intervention and how they are impacting variance within the results. Monitoring data is also needed to report against some of the intermediate outcome indicators in the STAGE logframe.

Evaluating the link between Intermediate Outcomes (IO) and Outcomes

At the endline for both cohorts, and midline for the Formal cohort, the status of intermediate outcomes is measured. Associations between the samples' quantitative transition/learning outcomes and project activities/intermediate outcomes (attendance, quality of teaching, Life Skills, support given to family) are calculated. This quantitative assessment is complemented by qualitative analysis which uses key informant interviews and focus groups to better understand the link between IO and Outcomes.

Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI)

To understand GESI the evaluation will disaggregate both Learning and Transition Outcomes, together with **Life Skills Outcomes by girl's age, disability and key project identified characteristics**. The endline/tracer survey questionnaires for both tracks have some questions on the girls' experience of inclusive and gender sensitive teaching practices. Complementing this will be specific questions within the qualitative data collection to explore the experiences and potential barriers for girls with different marginalisation characteristics.

Revised FM Evaluation principles

The GEC Revised Evaluation Principles (September 2021) shared by the Project with the EE prior to starting this evaluation point state that "As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and reductions in ODA funding, the original evaluation approaches laid out in the GEC MEL handbook and project MEL frameworks may no longer be feasible or appropriate". The Principles also refer to changes in the way GEC Outcome-level Indicators and Targets are to be reported across projects, noting in particular how the removal of the Payment by Results mechanism eliminates the need for a standardised approach across projects to measure impact (0.25 SD Difference-in-differences design). Other key changes relate to a shifted focus of GEC MEL from accountability to learning on 'what works'; and approval from FCDO to use project monitoring data alongside evaluation data. In line with these changes and budget cuts, the evaluation methodology has further changed compared to the midline evaluation point (see Section below).

2.3 Evaluation methodology

Summary of Key Changes since last evaluation point

As agreed with the Project in the inception report (see Annex 7), the endline and tracer evaluation point assessment scope and methods have changed. The revised methodology is in line with the revised evaluation principles and measurement approaches shared and recommended by the FM. The evaluation has made use of secondary data sources and monitoring data where possible. For some indicators, the EE has relied on information provided by the Project.

The following points summarise key changes for the Formal track:

Sampling. Across the Formal and non-Formal tracks the sample size has been reduced for both quantitative and qualitative data. For quantitative surveys, the sample was lowered from 640 to 400, due to budget reasons. However, given this is the last evaluation point and attrition would not be an issue to consider for future data collection, the EE is confident the sample size is sufficiently large to detect statistically significant changes and meet minimum power requirements. Whilst the qualitative sample has been slightly reduced overall, several new stakeholders have been interviewed as key informants (see below under Sampling).

Barriers and marginalisation characteristics. The EE understands the Project is required to demonstrate how it has worked over the years with marginalised girls to reduce the barriers to education and transition identified. In

agreement with the Project, the EE partially revised how barriers, marginalisation and demographic (age) characteristics are detected and reported on, in the spirit of streamlining analysis and reporting on those characteristics which add the highest value to the analysis. Further, the EE has advised that due to the reduced sample size, some of the sub-groups with low prevalence might not be detected by the survey. The "Note accompanying the STAGE endline tools review" details these changes (see Annex 8).

Measuring outcomes. Learning. Literacy and numeracy learning is a key outcome for Formal track girls. Except for the reduced sample size, there are no changes to the EGRA and EGMA assessments used to measure learning proficiency. However, there are methodological changes in how results are analysed and reported on, in alignment with the revised GEC Outcome-level Indicators and Targets[28] (see Section 3.2 and Annex 4 for details on the methodology). The EE has measured Learning outcomes by comparing the proportion of girls at endline that have moved upwards in terms of level of functional literacy and numeracy, against the midline as well as baseline level (overall progression since the programme's start). As a result of the reduced scope of the evaluation, Formal track girls were not assessed for Life Skills at endline; nor the caregivers' assessment of girls' Life Skills was performed. Usefulness of life skills is analysed through the qualitative interviews.

Measuring outcomes. Transition. Appropriate transition for Formal cohort girls is from out of school to formal education . Except for the reduced sample size, there are no changes to measurement of transition compared to the original approach, with the EE administering a Caregiver survey and girls' survey measuring 1) transition to formal education 2) survival rates based on enrolment data. The survey also contains questions to assess whether unintended transition outcomes have happened for the Formal track girls, such as transition to employment/self-employment or further vocational training. The qualitative interviews also include a small sample of teachers/head teachers, facilitators, and DSPs to provide insights on what worked and what did not work in supporting their transition. Results are disaggregated by marginalisation categories.

Measuring outcomes. Sustainability. This outcome is measured with qualitative and quantitative data at school, community, and system levels for the Formal track and community and system-level for the non-Formal track. Originally, this would be done against a Sustainability Scorecard with 0-4 ranks to be developed representing the extent of desired change. Of the eight original indicators, some were to be reported based on EE's data (qualitative primarily, but also through the survey in some cases), and some based on information provided by the Project. As part of the revised evaluation principles, the FM recommended projects should plan for relevant data to be collected against their updated sustainability plan. The EE has reviewed the May 2022 draft of the Sustainability Plan to inform the evaluation methodology. The following caveats have been made:

- The EE has flagged to the Project the scope and depth of some of the revised indicators would require a broader and in-depth sustainability assessment than what is in the scope of the evaluation, in order to be reported robustly. Further, the EE noted that primary data for some of the indicators would be limited to very few qualitative interviews, only relying on what is reported by selected Key Informants (especially at district level, where stakeholders from a reduced number of districts were interviewed). As such, triangulation of findings was limited. The Project reassured the EE that the same level of depth and robustness of midline reporting is expected for the endline, and that the purpose of the revised indicators was to add more detail to the desired change in terms of sustainability.

- Key sustainability interventions detailed in the May 2022 Sustainability Plan (Strengthening Apprenticeship Vocational Skills Training Model, Support to MOE in the promotion of Gender Equality and Social inclusion in Formal Education and Strengthening CBE policy and practice) span across the sustainability indicators and different intermediate outcomes. The evaluation has enquired about these keynote initiatives through the Key Informants.

[28] UK Aid. Girls' Education Challenge. GEC Outcome-level Indicators and Targets. Aligning project reporting and FCDO Annual Reporting requirements.

Measuring IOs. IO1. Attendance. No change. For Formal track, EE collected data from a sample of schools. In principle, the schools are the same as at midline, though as the sample size for the survey is reduced, so some of the schools would be excluded. STAGE contribution to reducing barriers to attendance was gauged mainly through qualitative data.

Measuring IOs. IO2. Quality of teaching. The EE interviewed a broader range of actors than at midline Formal and baseline non-Formal cohort 2, including ALPs facilitators, master craftsmen, national and district authorities and DSPs. The sections on quality of teaching introduced at midline in the girls' survey were retained, asking how much they felt their teachers followed known good practice in relation to inclusive education (for example, clarity of explanation, engaging, responsive). As detailed in the evaluation framework, the EE assumed that at endline the indicator should refer to school environment and teaching (not to facilitators in the learning centre).

Measuring IOs. IO4. Practical pathways and partnerships established. The IO on Practical Pathways and Partnerships was not assessed in previous evaluation points. Indicators under this IO were assessed through qualitative data only, and information provided by STAGE in summary form.

Measuring IOs. IO5. Community support for marginalised girls' education. The EE noted one of the indicators was differently worded and included a wider range of actors. The evaluation framework specifies how the EE would report on this indicator, through quantitative and qualitative data.

Value for Money assessment. In line with the recent workshop "incorporating the 'Light' and 'Medium' VfM Analyses into GEC evaluations", the EE has incorporated a light touch VfM analysis into the final evaluation reports – addressing EQ 5. This focuses primarily on making use of data planned to collect and high-level expenditure data from the Project, if provided. Further, direct beneficiaries (girls) as well as indirect were asked to rate different aspects of the programme in terms of perceived usefulness.

Data Collection Tools

Outcomes and intermediate outcomes have been assessed using quantitative and qualitative tools developed by the EE and reviewed/approved by the STAGE MEL team and the Fund Manager prior to starting data collection.

The quantitative tools included: two learning assessments (Early Grade Reading Assessment and the Early Grade Mathematics Assessment) (at endline these are only for the Formal track); Household questionnaire comprising sections for (1) the primary caregiver; and (2) the beneficiary girl, including the Life Skills tool; (3) a school attendance form to register attendance in formal school. Importantly, the Head of household part of the questionnaire – which was present in previous evaluation points - has been eliminated due to the limited usefulness for the analysis. Most relevant questions have been incorporated in the primary caregiver survey. During baseline, three versions of the EGRA and three versions of the EGMA were designed, piloted, and assessed to ensure comparability. The EGRA and EGMA tools, as with the other tools, were in the language of the respondent. They include Dagaare, Kasem, Kusaal, and Likpakpaaln. The qualitative tools included Key Informant Interview (KII) tools for all stakeholders.[29] Focus groups for girls were eliminated.

A summary of changes can be found in the "Note accompanying the STAGE endline tools review" (see Annex 8). See Annex 8 for a detailed description of the EGRA, EGMA and Life Skills questionnaire, approved methodology, and administration.

In addition to primary data collection, the evaluation has in a few cases referred to monitoring data/reporting from STAGE programme: STAGE Annual Report Year 4, STAGE COVID-19 Plan, STAGE master logframe July 2022. Where this is the case, it has been specified in the report. Additionally, in revising the primary data collection tools for midline and endline, the evaluation had reviewed STAGE Community Monitoring (COME) tool.

[29] Girls, Boys, Caregivers, Teachers, Headteachers, Local Leaders (Traditional and Religious), and Local Authority Members.

Data collection and analysis

Enumerators and training. The EE's data collection partner, JEAVCO/PAB recruited over 115 data collectors to run the CBE and STAGE projects between 2015 to 2022. For this last evaluation point, JEAVCO/PAB engaged 25 enumerators. All except two had previously worked with JEAVCO/PAB on STAGE. In selecting enumerators, extra consideration was given to those with qualitative data collection experience. Prior to engaging enumerators for the STAGE assignment, the data collection partner undertook pre-appointment checks including interviews, identification and qualification checks, reference checks and police checks.

Of the 25 enumerators, eight were female and 17 were male. Pairs of enumerators were selected to complete the qualitative data collection. All of the enumerators that undertook the qualitative data collection participated in the STAGE baseline or midline qualitative data collection which gave them prior experience on qualitative data collection, and they were led by those amongst them that also have experience from earlier CBE projects.

Building on the training provided for the pilot, baseline and midline, all data collectors participated in a three-day training programme. The training programme was revised and strengthened in response to data collection challenges experienced at baseline and midline and included an introduction to the STAGE project and Evaluation Design, Data Collection tools and protocols, Quality Assurance processes, and Safeguarding and Ethics. Additionally, simulation exercises were included for data collectors to practise administering each of the tools.

Safeguarding training covered subjects including safeguarding definitions, ethical guidelines, respondents with disabilities, accommodations for respondents with disabilities, do no harm principles, anti-slavery and human trafficking, bribery and corruption and reporting concerns. Enumerators provided programme and whistleblowing details to caregivers in the data collection stage.

The training was delivered by the JEAVCO/PAB leads, with remote support from the DT Global Evaluation team. In lieu of attending in person, the DT Global team recorded video presentations for training sessions and joined remotely to answer questions. WEI also contributed to training through input into training content and a member of a DSP attended the pilot training to offer input on key areas.

The training on quantitative data collection tools involved the following:

Learning Assessments:

- Introduction to Learning Tests (EGMA and EGRA)
- Explanation of the types of questions and how to administer them using the survey software.
- Enumerator practice session
- Feedback from training team on accuracy of enumerators' recording of practice questions.
- Piloting new questions on quantitative instruments

Quantitative Household Survey:

- Introduction to Household Survey and modules
- Explanation of the types of questions and how to administer them using the survey software.

The training on qualitative data collection tools involved the following:

- Purpose of qualitative data collection;

- Good practice in qualitative data collection;
- Introduction to each tool;
- Enumerator practice session.
- Use of cohort lists for identifying girls in sample, and procedures for selecting alternates

Data Quality Assurance. Processes were reviewed and strengthened following baseline data collection and were maintained for this endline data collection.

While in the field, data collectors reported any inconsistencies with the sample and tools via their assigned coordinator to the JEAVCO/PAB headquarters team. The team, including DT Global, also used a mobile platform, WhatsApp, to communicate daily and raise concerns. By raising minor concerns and responses via a shared platform, the team was able to respond to immediate concerns while also sharing knowledge with all data collectors, who may be in a comparable situation or may face it later.

Quantitative data collected was submitted to the JEAVCO/PAB I.T Department on a daily basis. On receipt, the data was checked for completion, relevance (response recorded as expected), and clarifications were sought from any data collectors, as needed. Supervisors checked progress daily, specifically, the required number of persons interviewed, and a sample of the data entered. Where the database administrator had queries on specific data points they communicated with supervisors, who then worked with enumerators to identify if there was an error and, where appropriate, submit corrections.

Additionally, the uploaded data was downloaded by the lead quantitative specialist periodically to identify any systemic issues with the data. It also helped to identify which teams were and were not promptly submitting data onto the secure servers.

Qualitative data collected was transcribed by enumerators and audited by groups of enumerators with the requisite language skills before submission to JEAVCO/PAB headquarters. Data collectors were requested to share their first transcription with Field Coordinators and DT Global within a few days of it being collected. This was so quality could be monitored and so DT Global could provide timely feedback and guidance to data collectors, as needed. Subsequent transcripts were audited by enumerators and quality assured by the JEAVCO/PAB headquarters team before being submitted to DT Global for analysis. Clarifications were sought directly from enumerators, as needed.

Data collection. The data was collected through three sources: (1) the EGRA and EGMA learning assessments using Tangerine software, (2) the household survey through a Survey Solutions tool; and (3) school attendance through the Survey Solutions tool in a sub-sample of selected schools.

Quantitative data collection for both Learning Tests and Household Survey took place between 02nd and 10th August 2022. Qualitative data was planned to be collected during the same time, however there were some delays due to the process involved in transcribing the interviews (first by hand, then electronically). The enumerators were assigned to areas based on their language skills. There were further delays in submitting all transcripts to DT Global and all qualitative data collection transcriptions were completed by 2nd September 2022.

Data cleaning and storage. Once enumerators entered data into their tablets, data was uploaded to secure servers when the tablet could access a mobile cellular network. Learning data was collected using the software Tangerine and then stored separately from household surveys. Household surveys were collected using Survey Solutions. The enumerator teams and the Lead Quantitative specialist undertook an iterative process of cross-checking and cleaning data. Once data collection was complete, final datasets were securely downloaded and stored as encrypted files on a password-protected hard drive. Both the household survey and the learning assessments were standardised and encoded. For each beneficiary in the sample, the household survey and the learning data were matched together using their unique identification numbers. Analytical files were de-identified and names and confidential information

were stored separately. In addition, the survey data was matched to the original beneficiary lists used to populate the sample to ensure fidelity. When identification numbers did not match, enumerators and the data collection team were contacted for corrections.

Qualitative data was recorded using the audio record function of data collectors' phones. The data collectors worked in pairs, one recording the interview and the other administering the questions. Notes were taken where appropriate by the data collector administering the questionnaire. The data collectors then transcribed and translated the data within word documents. Enumerators audited transcriptions which were then quality assured by JEAVCO/PAB headquarters team before submission to the EE.

Data analysis. All statistical analysis was completed using the software package Stata/IC 16. Several sets of variables have specific calculation criteria described in the LNGB documentation, including how the Washington Group questions are used to create a binary definition of disability for each disability domain[30], and how learning assessments are to be calculated (especially treatment of correct words per minute). All requirements were followed per the LNGB Guidelines. Key results, including EGRA overall and subtask scores, EGMA overall and subtask scores, and Life Skills overall and subtask scores are reported as the average percentage correct. The only exception to this are the EGRA Oral Reading Fluency scores, which are reported as the average correct words per minute, with over 100 correct words per minute rounded down to 100. Data was exported to Excel to allow for further analysis and reporting.

Qualitative transcripts were coded by the EE using Dedoose qualitative analysis software. A coding framework was developed based on EQs and Logframe Indicators, this allowed data to be sorted and findings identified in a way to complement the quantitative data. As with midline, there were only a small number of incidences of responses with very short answers. The only interview and transcript which was not to the expected standard of the WW was the KII with the representative from Ghana's Ministry of Education (MoE).

Adaptations for GWDs. To reduce barriers related to disabilities, only large-print materials were used for the assessments. In addition, enumerators were given instruction to repeat (and reword on repetition) instructions as necessary and as often as needed to ensure clarity. Breaks were offered to respondents at multiple points during the interviews. To minimize burden on test-takers, skip logic was used such that students who could not complete the simpler version of a subtask were not asked to complete a more complex version.

Sampling

Quantitative Sample selection[31]

The same sampling strategy was developed for the evaluation of both the Non-Formal and Formal tracks of the project. As agreed with the Project and the Fund Manager, both the Formal and Non-Formal track quantitative samples were reduced from 640 to 400 beneficiaries per track. To ensure the data collected is both representative of the project and comparable to previous evaluation points, the sample remained proportional by region to the previous evaluation points.

Community Sampling: The evaluation uses a clustered sampling approach, where a representative group of communities and eight girls within each sampled community were selected randomly at baseline. Communities were selected based on their language-region pairing (see Table 3 detailing quantitative sample sizes). The languages were purposefully chosen to cover the maximum proportion of the project population and cover as many of the project's regions as feasible across the Formal and Non-Formal tracks. Note, there is an overlap in languages between the Formal and Non-Formal tracks, with six languages used across both samples. Choosing the languages with a

[30] It should be noted for this evaluation point a shortened version of the Washington Group disability questions was used, eliminating the binary definition of disability.
[31] See Annex 11 for further details on sampling.

larger proportion of the project population ensured a larger sample from each subgroup, which increases statistical power of each subgroup, and simplifies the design and analysis of the reading scores to fewer languages.

Beneficiaries who speak languages not in the sampling design and records with no region and language information were excluded from baseline sample selection (see Table 4). To ensure it would be possible to collect data from eight or more beneficiaries in each community, communities with 15 or fewer beneficiaries were excluded. Randomised community selection was stratified by region-language pairing according to the table further below.

Alternate communities were selected randomly within each language-region pairing if for any reason one of the selected communities cannot be part of the sample. They are ordered on the list to ensure that they are not chosen out of convenience. When required, alternate communities were used as substitutes after discussing with partners at baseline.

The proportions of the sample communities differ only slightly from the beneficiary makeup due to rounding.

The sample is composed of beneficiaries interviewed at previous evaluation points to ensure comparability. Beneficiaries not from previous cohorts were only interviewed when previous respondents were unavailable or did not consent to being interviewed: in such cases, they were replaced by other beneficiaries. Quantitative analysis makes use of difference-in-difference comparisons between the baseline and final data to identify significant levels of improvement since the start of the project to measure outcomes for key outcomes such as learning. Other outcomes whose goal was over the entire project arc (such as transition) or do not track individual beneficiaries (such as teacher practice) compare changes between evaluation points. While the analysis included data from all evaluation points, the focus of the analysis is the improvement between the first and last evaluation points.

Student Selection: At baseline, within each sample community, eight beneficiaries were randomly selected. While eight beneficiaries from each community were identified as the intended sample, an additional eight girls were randomly selected and added to an alternates list. If a beneficiary was unavailable or refused to take part in the baseline evaluation, an alternate beneficiary will be selected, in the order that they are listed on the alternate list. At midline, the sample was constructed from the lists of girls who participated at the baseline. In cases where girls could not be found or refused to participate, alternates were selected from pre-populated, randomized lists of alternates in the same community.

Quantitative Sample sizes

Table 3 - Quantitative sample sizes: Formal Track

Tool name	Sample size agreed in MEL framework	Actual sample size (baseline)	Actual sample size (midline)	Sample size agreed for endline	Actual sample size (endline)	Remarks on why anticipated and actual sample sizes are different
Formal Track EGRA/EGMA test and Household Survey	640	705	606 (14% attrition)	400	402	Oversampling of Formal sample communities. Data collection team collected additional data from some Formal sample communities as replacement communities at baseline.

						At endline, reduced sample agreed to reduce costs.

At midline, the baseline actual sample of 705 Formal girls was revised to consider the non-responses and the girls from the alternate sample that had replaced girls in the main sample. Overall, 606 girls from baseline were successfully interviewed (or 86% of the baseline sample), equalling a 14% attrition rate. At endline, a reduced sample of 400 was agreed with STAGE. A total of 402 girls was successfully interviewed (100% of the agreed sample). The endline sample sizes by region and language are as follows (Table 4):

Table 4 - Quantitative sample sizes by region and language: Endline

Language	Region	Beneficiaries		Designed Sample Endline		Actual Sample		Difference	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	% point
Sample									
Dagaare	Upper West	2041	43%	176	43.1%	168	41.8%	-8	-1.3%
Kasem	Upper East	580	12%	49	12.0%	48	11.9%	-1	-0.1%
Kusal	Upper East	738	15%	64	15.7%	64	15.9%	0	0.2%
Likpakpaaln	Northern	1409	30%	119	29.2%	122	30.3%	3	1.2%
Out of Sample									
Dagbani	Northern	1357							
Gurune	Upper East	907							
Mampruli	Northern	1213							
All		**8,245**	**100%**	**408**	**100%**	**402**	**100%**		

Representativeness of the sample by language-region and age

The sample makeup matches closely the overall beneficiary language-region makeup. In the original sampling plan agreed upon at the evaluation inception phase, a sample of 640 observations would come from each STAGE Track. at previous evaluation points, this included a generous buffer to account for future sample attrition: given the endline is the final evaluation point, the sample was reduced from 640 to 400. The sample was designed as a subset of all the language-region pairings included in the project. The sample was designed to be proportionally representative of those four language-region groups. The endline sample closely tracks with the original design. The only concern to sample representativeness and comparability took place at baseline, where the data collection team over-collected

from Likpakpaaln speakers in Northern region: this matter is discussed in the baseline and midline reports.[32] Based on analysis undertaken at midline, this did not affect the representativeness or comparability between evaluation points.

At endline, albeit with a reduced sample, the same language-region composition was sought as at baseline, to continue to follow the same cohort and ensure comparability of findings. Marginalisation characteristics, disability, and barriers are comparable between evaluation points in how they are calculated, but they are not time invariant: beneficiaries facing a barrier, at one evaluation point are not necessarily facing it at others. It should be noted that all results reported in this report refer to Endline, unless otherwise specified.

A breakdown of the sample by age and region is shown in Table 5.

Table 5 - Sample breakdown by age and region: Endline

Age	Overall	Dagaare (Upper West)	Kasem (Upper East)	Kusaal (Upper East)	Likpakpaaln (Northern)
Under Age 13	25.8%	33.3%	16.7%	29.7%	15.8%
Age 13 to 14	45.9%	47.0%	45.8%	48.4%	45.8%
Age 15 and over	28.0%	19.6%	37.5%	21.9%	38.3%

"_" indicates results differ significantly from the sample average

As the breakdown of the beneficiary lists only included names, communities, and language, and not age makeup, it means that the age makeup of the sample cannot be compared to the age makeup of the overall beneficiaries However, there is no evidence to believe the ages are not representative of the group. At baseline, the average girls' age in the Formal sample is 11.6 years; at midline, as it would be expected, the average age is about one year older at 12.7 years old. Overall, majority of the sample at endline (71.7%) are under 14 years of age (Table 5 above), and the average age is 13.5. Regionally, Upper West (Daagare language) has the highest percentage of girls under age 13 (33.3%, significant), whilst Upper East (Kasem) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) have higher shares of older girls (age 15+, 37.5 and 38.3%, significant). The age range is in line with what is expected for the Formal track population at over 2.5 years since baseline.

Child functioning

According to the 2010 Census, which did not include anxiety or depression as categories of disability, 3% of Ghanaians have a disability (in physical or socio-cognitive domains)[33]. The 2021 Census[34] reported 8% of Ghanaians over 5 years have varying degrees of difficulty in performing an activity (higher for females at 8.8%). However, when considering severe disability, prevalence is much lower, at 1.8% for the overall population, and 2% for female.

At endline, caregivers were asked a shortened version of the Washington Group questions about their child's ability to complete common everyday tasks and activities, such as walking 100 metres, communicate their needs or making

[32] During baseline collection, it was noted that there was a deficit of observations among Non-Formal Likpakpaaln speakers in Oti region. Collectors returned to obtain more observations, but mistakenly collected additional Formal observations in Northern region, leading to a discrepancy in the proportion between the two groups.
[33] Available at: https://www.disabilitydataportal.com/explore-by-country/country/Ghana [accessed 6th April 2021].
[34] Statistical Service Ghana (2021). Ghana 2021 Population and Housing Census. General Report Volume 3F. Difficulty in Performing Activities. Available at: https://statsghana.gov.gh/gssmain/fileUpload/pressrelease/2021%20PHC%20General%20Report%20Vol%203F_Difficulty%20in%20Performing%20Activities_final_161221.pdf

friends, in order to determine their level of disability in a given domain.[35] While the questions seek to record standardized data on disability, they are not diagnostic, and should not be considered a definitive qualification of who has or does not have a disability, though for brevity, the report refers to GWDs. Beneficiaries could qualify as having a disability in one or more domains. The questionnaire enquired disability severity (some difficulty in performing a task, a lot of difficulty or not being able to do a task at all). If a beneficiary had a great deal of difficulty or could not do something at all, they met the qualification of having a disability for the purposes of this evaluation and hence have been counted as having a disability in that domain in Table 6.[36] [37] Annex 13 (Table 36) reports the breakdown of disability by level of severity.

Table 6 - Sample breakdown by disability: Baseline and Midline

Domain of difficulty	Sample proportion of Formal intervention group (%) – Baseline	Sample proportion of Formal intervention group (%) - Midline	Sample proportion of Formal intervention group (%) - Endline
Seeing	0.1%	0.4%	0.0%
Hearing	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%
Walking	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
Self-care	0.3%	0.15%	0.3%
Communication	0.4%	0.3%	0.3%
Learning	0.4%	0.15%	0.0%
Remembering	0.4%	0.15%	N/A
Concentrating	0.3%	0.0%	N/A
Remembering & Concentrating	0.4%	0.15%	0.3%
Accepting Change	1.0%	0.6%	0.3%
Controlling Behaviour	1.1%	0.7%	0.0%
Making Friends	0.3%	1.2%	0.3%

[35] At baseline and midline, the Washington Group Extended Set of Functioning questions provided by the FM were asked. At endline, a reduced 17-item set was asked instead. It was not the Short Set of six questions but covered the same range of functions in fewer items. For example, instead of asking" Do you wear glasses? Do you have difficulty seeing?" the question" Even if you wear glasses, do you have difficulty seeing?" Both items resulted in only students who struggle with seeing as having a visual impairment. The list of Washington Group questions used are available in Annex 15.

[36] Depression and anxiety were defined as "feeling very sad or depressed" or "feeling very anxious, nervous, or worried" daily.

[37] Prevalence of disability is calculated by the percent of the sample that has one or more disability: those with multiple disabilities are not double counted.

Domain of difficulty	Sample proportion of Formal intervention group (%) – Baseline	Sample proportion of Formal intervention group (%) - Midline	Sample proportion of Formal intervention group (%) - Endline
Anxiety	9.4%	1.3%	3.5%
Depression	3.7%	0.6%	2.5%
One disability domain (A)	**9.4%**	**2.3%**	**4.8%**
Multiple disability domains (B)	**3.6%**	**1.5%**	**1.5%**
Girls with disabilities overall (A+B)	**13.0%**	**3.8%**	**6.3%**
Source: Analytical Dataset, Caregiver survey N =	701	689	402

The rate of girls with a severe disability at endline is 6.3%, comprising girls with one and multiple disability domains, and girls with daily feelings of anxiety and depression.[38] At baseline, of the 701 observations for which disability data was available, only 15 (2.1%)[39] had reported having a disability other than anxiety or depression;[40] this value has slightly decreased at endline (1.6%, or 7 respondents) and is close to the rate of severe disability reported by official statistics (as above).

At endline, there is little change in the prevalence of physical disability compared to baseline (a slight increase from 0.1% to 0.3% in hearing), and no prevalence of seeing disability. Difficulties in walking have maintained the same prevalence across the three evaluation points (0.3%).

Table 7 - Sample Breakdown by frequency of Anxiety and Depression, Midline and Baseline

n			Daily	Weekly	Monthly	A few times a Year	Never	N
23	How often does the beneficiary seem very anxious, nervous or worried?	**BL**	9.4%	10.3%	3.1%	40.7%	36.5%	701
		ML	1.3%	2.6%	10.0%	58.9%	27.1%	689
		EL	3.5%	3.8%	11.6%	46.2%	34.8%	396

[38] When looking at the breakdown of disability by severity at endline, higher percentages of girls fell in the milder disability category (having 'some' difficulty in performing a task) though less than at midline. This was noted particularly in the Socio-Cognitive difficulty domains: Controlling Behaviour (5.5%); Accepting Change (5.3%); Remembering or concentrating (4.5%); Learning (3.5%). Further, 3.3% reported having some difficulty seeing and 3.3% some difficulty hearing.

[39] Of which two reported having difficulties walking, one hearing and another seeing.

[40] Depression and anxiety were defined as "feeling very sad or depressed" or "feeling very anxious, nervous, or worried" daily.

n			Daily	Weekly	Monthly	A few times a Year	Never	N
24	How often does the beneficiary seem very sad or depressed?	**BL**	3.7%	11.1%	4.9%	46.8%	33.5%	701
		ML	0.6%	1.6%	9.3%	59.9%	28.6%	689
		EL	2.5%	4.0%	8.6%	54.5%	30.3%	396

Whilst between baseline and midline, reports of daily anxiety and/or depression feelings had substantially reduced (Table 7), at endline anxiety and depression rates have slightly increased. Positively, they are still at lower levels than at the start of the project (from 9.4% to 1.3% to 3.5% and from 3.7% to 0.6% to 2.5% respectively over the evaluation period – 14 and 10 girls at endline). Table 7 also shows that there has been an increase of girls who are reported as to never experience these feelings compared to midline. Variations in anxiety and depression levels are expected as these – while no less valid than other disabilities – can be treated or changed by a person's financial and lived situation more easily than other forms of disability.[41]

Table 8 - Sample Breakdown of Disability by region: Baseline (BL), Midline (ML) and Endline (EL)

Characteristic	N			Dagaare (Upper West)			Kasem (Upper East)			Kusaal (Upper East)			Likpakpaaln (Northern)		
	BL	ML	EL	BL	ML	EL	BL	ML	EL	BL	ML	EL	BL	ML	EL
Has a disability (any)	701	689	402	13.3 %	3.4 %	6.0 %	9.9 %	7.3 %	6.3 %	3.8 %	6.3 %	5.4 %	16.5 %	2.0 %	5.9 %

Regionally, after sharp declines between baseline and midline, disability prevalence substantially increased in Upper West (Dagaare) and Northern (Likpakpaaln), as shown in Table 8.

Whether a girl was counted as having a disability was highly unstable between evaluation points: girls who met the criteria at one evaluation point often did not meet it at a different evaluation point. This appears in part due to how disability was deemed to be calculated using the Washington Group questions and possibly the questions themselves. Among girls who took part in the survey at both baseline and midline, 12.8% qualified as having a disability at baseline. Only 0.8% of girls qualified as having a disability at both baseline and midline: 12% qualified as having a disability at baseline but not midline. Similarly, 2.7% of the matched sample qualified as having a disability at midline, but not at baseline. At endline, none of the beneficiaries who were counted as having a disability at midline counted as having a disability at endline (and vice versa).[42] While a person's disability status may change over time, it is unusual that

[41] As noted at baseline, while mental health treatment, protective factors, and coping strategies may be helpful in removing the barriers to helping those with mental health challenges, improvement in their economic and material situation may also be critical factors in the reduction of its actual prevalence.

[42] Between baseline and midline, it appeared that the decline in disability rates at midline was largely due to a reduction in severity of symptoms, and not attrition from the project. However, there appears to be higher attrition of those who had a disability at midline and endline. Of the 26 beneficiaries identified as having a disability at midline, only 7 were successfully interviewed at endline. While recontact is always a challenge, recontact among those with disabilities was statistically significantly lower than among those without disabilities.

more respondents' disability status has changed since baseline than stayed the same. Even if most respondents with disabilities meet the criteria through anxiety and depression, which certainly change over time more than many other disabilities, these results merit considering using a different set of disability criteria at future evaluation points, or to reconsider our assumptions about disability.

Qualitative sample selection and sample sizes

The endline qualitative data collection followed a similar strategy to midline, and three communities, one in each of the sampled regions, were selected for the data collection. At endline, the EE selected the same three communities at midline, which coved a range of regions, DSPs and languages. The reasoning behind selecting these communities at midline remains the same: (1) enough girls in the community to ensure no overlaps with the girls being surveyed through the quantitative data (20-25 girls per community was deemed an appropriate number); and (2) enough girls from marginalised backgrounds were selected (by looking at those communities less able to meet basic needs at baseline). From this, the EE was able to select three proposed communities, with two alternate communities in each region. The communities sampled at in Table 9 below.

Table 9 - Communities sampled for qualitative data for Formal Track Endline

Region	District	Community	Partner	Language
Northern	Yunyoo	Piabunu	Afrikids	Likpakpaaln
Upper West	Nadowli	Naribuo	Pronet	Dagaare
Upper East	Bawku West	Agaago	LCD	Kusaal

As with midline, the respondents in these communities were not randomly chosen, due to not wanting to overburden girls who were also participating in the quantitative data collection. As such, the EE chose girls and alternate girls from the end of the quantitative alternate lists, whilst still capturing a good proportion of girls from within the marginalised sub-groups. As with midline, the caregivers of the girls sampled were also interviewed. Unlike midline, the endline data collection did not include boys nor local authorities as respondents and did not conduct focus group discussions with girls, as a result of the reduced scope of the evaluation. Rather, a broader range of stakeholders than previously was interviewed: teachers and head teachers from project schools, local leaders (religious and traditional), Downstream Partners (DSPs) implementing the programme (new), ALP facilitators (new), District Education Directors (DEOs) from each of the sampled locations (new) as well as one national actor from the Ghana's Ministry of Education (MOE, new). The reasoning for including the new stakeholders at the programme's end was to delve deeply into the mechanisms and factors behind observed programme results, as well as to explore sustainability issues and gather lessons learned. The sampling approach was effective in the field, and the range of beneficiaries were interviewed as planned, as detailed in Table 10.

Table 10 - Qualitative data sample sizes for Formal Track Endline

Beneficiary Group	Endline Sample Size	Midline Sample Size	Reduction of respondents since Midline	Reasoning Given	Sample Achieved
KII Girls	12 girls (4 girls per 3 communities)	12 girls (4 girls per 3 communities)	0	No reduction needed	100%

Beneficiary Group	Endline Sample Size	Midline Sample Size	Reduction of respondents since Midline	Reasoning Given	Sample Achieved
FGD Girls	0	3 FGDs (1 in each of 3 communities). Each FGD should aim for 5 girls	3 FGDs	Removed FGDs from endline samples	N/A
KII Caregivers	9 caregivers (3 per 3 communities)	9 caregivers (3 per 3 communities)	0	No reduction needed	100%
KII Head teachers	3 head teachers (1 in each of 3 communities)	3 head teachers (1 in each of 3 communities)	0	No reduction needed	100%
KII Teachers	3 teachers (1 in each of 3 communities)	3-6 teachers, (1-2 in each of 3 communities)	3 Teachers	Reduction due to only sampling one teacher in each location as opposed to two	100%
KII ALP facilitators	3 (1 in each of the 3 communities)	0	0	New	100%
KII Local Leaders	6 (1 religious leader and 1 traditional leader from each of the 3 communities)	6 (1 religious leader and 1 traditional leader from each of the 3 communities)	0	No reduction needed	100%
KII District Education Office (DEO)	3 DEO (1 in each of the 3 communities)	0	0	New	100%
KII MoE	1	0	0	New	100%

2.4 Evaluation ethics

The evaluation ethical approach is grounded in principles based on FCDO's ethics guidance and principles, WEI's policies and procedures and local laws for the states we operate in. A core principle is prioritising the best interest of the child and doing no harm.

Recruitment and Selection

The EE's partner data collection firm in Ghana, JEAVCO/PAB, have experience of working with children, including those with experience of high risk, vulnerable and/or marginalised girls. JEAVCO/PAB have conducted pre-appointment checks, including interviews, identification and qualification checks, reference checks and police checks for each of the enumerators engaged for the STAGE Formal endline data collection.

Training and Data collection

In the training for the pilot, baseline, midline and endline data collection enumerators received training on ethics and child protection. This training was informed by FCDO's ethics guidance and principles and WEI's policies and procedures. Specific content of training included the priority of Safeguarding and a child's wellbeing being paramount, the importance of gaining consent (of girls and adults), how to ask for consent, how to ensure the consent is informed in relation to questions asked and use of information, respecting respondents' right to decline/stop interviews, respectful behaviour during data collection (non-judgemental tone and body language), not taking photos, keeping data confidential, password protecting data collection devices, avoidance of raising expectations, what a Safeguarding issue is and how to report a Safeguarding issue. In addition, at midline and endline, training included how data collection processes should be adapted in line with social distancing and other COVID-19 control measures.

All the tools were developed to ensure that questions are framed sensitively and are appropriate to the age, gender, and ability of respondents to minimise distress to children or other vulnerable adults.

No **ethical issues** were reported in relation to the enumerators during the endline data collection.

2.5 Challenges in endline data collection and limitations of the evaluation design

As a general protocol, the field coordinator would report any local issue to the DSP. In case the issue was not resolved locally, the general field coordinator and the JEAVCO/PAB national office would intervene.

During data collection there were four key challenges: i) field work in the Central Region (Fante Twi area) started a week later than scheduled as the DSP were only able to mobilise the girls for data collection later. When the exercise did get under way, in Dago community several girls had migrated. However, they were reached via telephone provided by their caregivers to respond to the interviews; ii) in the Nawdoli and Yunyoo District areas the girls interviewed for the qualitative data collection were from the replacement lists due to a confusion with the sample sheet; iii) there were a couple of instances of identification challenges due to the girls having different names in the sample sheet and transcript. The data collection team verified the identity of the two girls; iv) as at midline, the timing of the caregiver interviews was a considerable challenge, due to clashes between the caregivers' working schedules and the safeguarding protocols established. The data collection team followed the previously established protocol (approved by DSPs and WEI) that interviews could be held beyond the stipulated time provided it was at the convenience of the caregiver.

There were no particular challenges relating to reluctance to answer questions, the girls have developed familiarity with the survey. The challenge of the length of the caregiver questionnaire was resolved by arranging interviews at the respondents' convenience; it is to be noted that the caregivers' questionnaire was shortened for this final round of data collection, which reduced respondent burden.

There was one safeguarding issue reported during the data collection; One girl in Bawku West also mentioned that their teacher still does use the cane sometimes.

In terms of COVID-19 protocols, all COVID-19 restrictions have been removed at the national level. However the enumerators wore nose masks and were provided with masks to give to respondents who would request them.

The qualitative endline sample only collected data from three communities: one in each sampled region, which is a limitation on how representative these findings are. The national actor interview (MoE) was initially supposed to be conducted by the evaluation Qualitative Lead. However, due to issues of connectivity and availability of the respondent, the interview had to be done in the country by JEAVCO. Unfortunately, this was not to the expected standard of the EE. The EE does not feel as though the affected the quality of the data overall, as the KIIs at district level did provide sufficient information on system level change, and the KII with MoE provided enough to fill any potential gaps in information.

Attendance data from school registries was not collected in Northern (Likpakpaaln), due to an error in developing the sub-sample of schools. However, for all region/language groups data on self-reported attendance by girls is available.

Barrier prevalence is not directly comparable across evaluation points since the sample barrier questions asked are different between endline and baseline. This was intentional, as almost all girls have transitioned to school, and the barriers acquire a different meaning at endline.

As part of the reduced scope of the evaluation, the survey was streamlined where possible (though still several new areas/questions were added). For example, caregivers were only asked about distance to secondary school, and not primary (most girls are secondary school age, though it was discovered they are enrolling in primary school). This is reflected in the way the subgroup of girls leaving in remote areas is presented. For comparability, baseline results have also been updated to define this subgroup based on distance to secondary school.

3. Key Results

The following sections summarise key results from the evaluation. Section 3.1 examines the prevalence of key marginalisation characteristics and barriers to education among the STAGE girls surveyed at endline, as well as the intersection between such characteristics and the barriers experienced. Section 3.2 presents a snapshot of results by STAGE logframe indicators at outcome and intermediate outcome level. In section 4, these results are examined in more detail and reference evidence from the evaluation and logframe indicators as appropriate.

Unless otherwise specified, findings refer to data collected at endline. All results are disaggregated by disability, marginalisation characteristics and barriers as appropriate[43], and where possible.[44] It should be noted that some of the girls composing each subgroup have changed across evaluation points due to attrition (14%). When information provided comes from monitoring data or STAGE programme/WEI, this is specified. Any mention of "school" refers to formal education/school that Formal track girls transition to. Learning centres where STAGE Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALPs) were delivered are referenced as STAGE or ALP Learning Centre.

3.1 Key characteristic subgroups and barriers of endline sample

Educational marginalisation

A list of subgroup characteristics to report on by the EE was determined at baseline in 2020 for both the Formal and non-Formal tracks, with little variation between them.[45] To help streamline the analysis and focus reporting on insightful results, the endline evaluation reduced the number of subgroups to study, in agreement with the Project and FM (see Methodology Section and Annex 7 for further detail). For the Formal track, non-enrolled girls were asked if

[43] As agreed with STAGE, the EE has revisited STAGE subgroups for recording, analysing and reporting in an effort to streamline the analysis and allow the flexibility to focus reporting on interesting and insightful results. Subgroups have been reduced from 38 to 32.
[44] To ensure individual respondents cannot be identified through the report, no reporting is done on subgroups comprised of fewer than 10 respondents; we are unable to provide more detailed subgroup reporting while respecting confidentiality.
[45] Per request, those who were married and under 15 were treated as a separate reporting group from those married overall; similarly, those employed and under 15 were analysed at previous points separately. However, even at the 2021 evaluation point, there were only three Formal Track girls who were married and under 15, and only one Non-Formal Track girl who was married and under 15.

they are not enrolled because of work, and few basic questions were retained to detect employment. Marital status (<15) was collected but not analysed. Results related to girls living over one hour from primary/secondary school are only referenced if significantly different from the overall sample. Girls living with neither parent were recorded but not analysed, as at midline there was little variability within this subgroup.

It should be kept in mind that girls referred to as 'with a disability' are based on their caregivers' responses to Washington Group questions on child functioning focused on physical, socio-cognitive and mental health domains . The Washington Group questions are not intended to be a medical diagnostic of disability prevalence among girls, though for brevity, the report refers to GWDs.

Table 11 - Characteristic Subgroups - Formal Track: Baseline, Midline and Tracer

Characteristic	Proportion of sample with this characteristic – Baseline	Proportion of sample with this characteristic – Midline	Proportion of sample with this characteristic – Endline
Is a mother	1.6%	1.0%	0.5%
Married	0.9%	1.0%	0.5%
Lives with neither parent	3.4%	3.3%	1.8%
1+ hours to primary/secondary school	13.6% (87.9% to secondary)	14.5% (88.1% to secondary)	75.6% (to secondary)
HH unable to meet basic needs[46]	35.6%	24.2%	25.2%
Works[47]	8.0%	4.3%	41.5%
Works under 15	7.7%	3.6%	25.9%
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)[48]	40.8%	5.5%	28.7%
Has a disability	13.0%	3.8%	6.3%
Source: Analytical Dataset Caregiver Survey N =	705	689	402

[46] Defined as answering Household Survey question 'PCG_5econ Please tell me which of the following phrases best suits your household situation' with '[_] 1 unable to meet basic needs without charity'

[47] Work is defined as doing work for pay and is separate from doing chores in concept and in the questions asked in the survey. Work may be paid labour for others (including in family business/farm), selling items purchased or produced for a profit, or other transactions where the girl receives money or in-kind compensation for her efforts. In agreement with the project, how work has been recorded in the questionnaire has been modified since baseline, to ensure that chores and work are understood by the respondent as different.

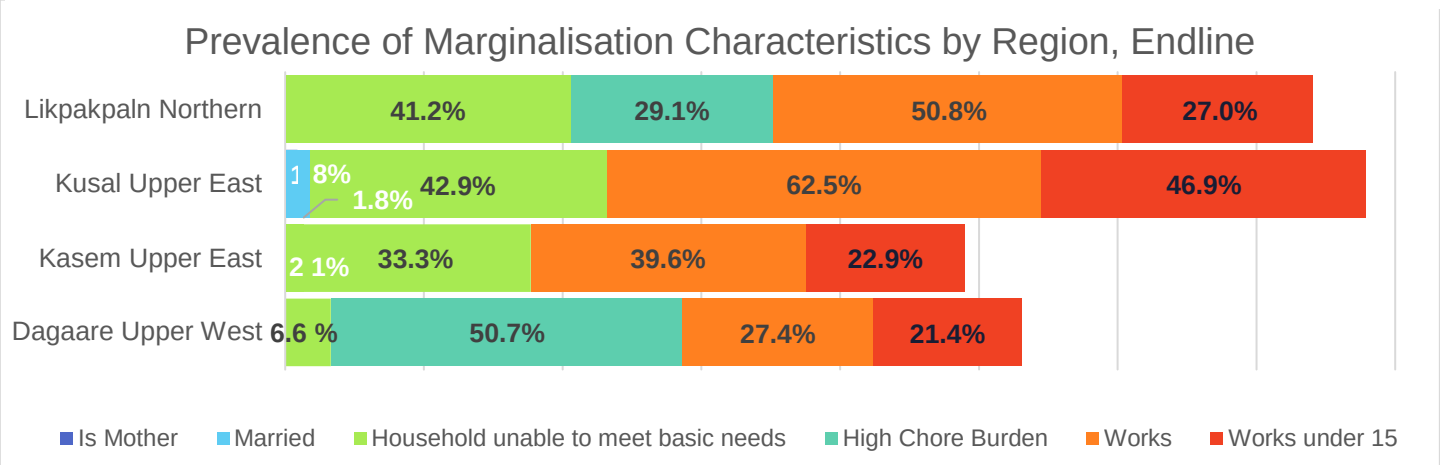
[48] Defined by the caregiver as at least half a day spent on house chores such as fetching water or caring for family members.

The prevalence of marginalisation characteristics changed compared to previous evaluation points. The most notable change is the substantial increase in girls that work (41.5% of the sample, 25.7% if working and under 15 years of age), compared to both baseline and midline. Work is defined as doing work for pay and is separate from doing chores in concept and in the questions asked in the survey. Most work is seasonal/temporary in nature, and in agriculture. Factors that might contribute to this result include girls growing older and being expected to contribute to the family; and, as stated in STAGE Annual Report (Section 1.1), the challenging economic context in Ghana affecting the need for girls to work and support family's earnings. Work is explored in further detail in EQ1, Transition. The other notable change relates to the percentage of girls with high chore burden, which is higher than at midline (28.7% of the sample, vs 5.5% at midline), though - positively – still lower than at the start of the programme (40.5%). These results need to be considered together with findings on enrolment/ attendance to formal school (see EQ1 and 2); and on community engagement and mobilisation continued by STAGE after transition (see EQ2). It might be that following the end of ALP (intense in terms of time requirements) and transition to school, the 'new normal' for a part of the girls is to be enrolled in education, whilst also helping with house chores and/or working.

Overall, 75% of girls reported to be over one hour away from secondary schools,[49] which is expected as there might be fewer secondary schools than primary. This value is lower than the proportion of girls distant from secondary school found at baseline (87.9%).

The fourth most prevalent characteristic after distance to secondary school, working and high chore burden is being impoverished (25.2%), about 10 pp lower than at baseline, and virtually unchanged since midline. Only a small percentage of girls are mothers or are married (0.5%). The slight decrease in prevalence for mothers and the married observed since baseline might be due to these girls dropping out of the programme, with only two mothers and married girls present in the endline sample.

Figure 2 - Prevalence of Marginalisation Characteristics by Region, Endline (% per Total Girls per Region)



Considering the intersectionality of characteristics, it is notable that 55% of girls from households unable to meet basic needs and 55.9% of those with high chore burden are also working. There are not enough observations to analyse the intersectionality of mothers and married subgroups with other subgroups. As mentioned in Section 1.1, factors

[49] As noted under Section 2.5, at endline caregivers were only asked about distance to secondary school, and not primary (most girls are secondary school age, though it was discovered they are enrolling in primary school). Overall, 23.6% of girls in formal education stated being in secondary school.

contributing to educational exclusion are multifaceted and intersectional and children suffering multiple disadvantages are considered most at risk.

Table 12 - Characteristic Subgroups by Region - Formal Track: Baseline and Midline

Characteristic	Dagaare (Upper West)			Kasem (Upper East)			Kusaal (Upper East)			Likpakpaaln (Northern)		
	BN	ML	EL	BN	ML	EL	BN	ML	EL	BN	ML	EL
Mother	1.1%	1.5%	0%	3.3%	2.1%	2.1%	1.3%	0%	1.8%	1.5%	0.4%	0%
Married	0.7%	0.8%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2.5%	1.8%	1.5%	1.2%	0%
Lives with neither parent	7.7%	5.7%	2.4%	2.2%	6.3%	4.2%	1.3%	6.3%	1.8%	0%	6.3%	0%
1+ hours to secondary school	84.9%	77.3%	55.7%	92.3%	94.8%	81.3%	86.3%	89.9%	78.6%	94.7%	96.4%	99.2%
HH unable to meet basic needs	28.0%	24.0%	6.6%	17%	12.5%	33.3%	76%	12.5%	42.9%	37%	12.5%	41.2%
Works	17.4%	0.4%	27.4%	7.7%	10.4%	36.9%	1.3%	10.4%	62.5%	0.4%	10.4%	50.8%
Works under 15	17%	0.4%	21.4%	6.6%	8.3%	22.9%	1.3%	8.3%	46.9%	0.4%	8.3%	27.0%
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)	29.7%	4.3%	50.7%	43.7%	10.6%	0%	11.4%	10.6%	0%	60.5%	10.6%	29.1%
Has a disability	13.3%	3.4%	6.0%	9.9%	7.3%	6.3%	3.8%	6.3%	5.4%	16.5%	2.0%	5.9%
Source: Analytical Dataset Caregiver Survey N =	271	263	168	91	96	48	80	79	64	263	250	122

"_" indicates results differ significantly from the sample average

Prevalence of girls that are working has substantially gone up across regions, especially in Upper East (Kusaal) where 62.5% of girls are working (significant), and in Northern (Likpakpaaln), where about half of girls are working (50.8%). Girls who are working and are under 15 years of age are particularly prevalent in Upper East (Kusaal), at 46.9% of the sample; below 30% in other regions.

Changes in high chore burden prevalence mask large regional variation: in Upper East region (both Kusaal and Kasem language groups), no caregiver reported the girl as being affected by high chore burden. In Upper West (Dagaare) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) regions, the reported high chore burden experienced a steep increase since midline (50.7% and 29.1% respectively), after sharp decreases from baseline levels were observed. Upper West is the only region where high chore burden is higher than at the start of the project (from 29.7% to 50.7%, results are significant), through the reason for this is not known. Positively though, this is the only region where reported prevalence of impoverishment (household inability to meet basic needs) has consistently decreased across evaluation points (from 28% to 24% to 6.6%). This is unlike in the other region/language groups where impoverishment prevalence is higher than at midline. The most striking worsening of impoverishment prevalence is observed in Upper East (Kasem, from 17% to 33.3% from baseline to endline); in Northern, this is slightly higher than at baseline (41.2% versus 37%), whilst in Upper East (Kusaal), impoverishment rate has improved since baseline (from 76% to 42.9%).

In all regions but Upper West (Dagaare), above 78% of girls live over one hour away from secondary school, almost all girls in Northern (99.2%). Finally, only a small percentage of girls live with neither parent across regions (from 0% in Northern to 4.2% in Upper East – Kasem), with little variations between baseline and endline.

Barriers to education by key characteristic subgroups

The caregiver-reported reasons for girls not enrolling in school were added after the original baseline design, as the project required reporting on both characteristics and barriers. The twenty-eight reasons were then combined into six categories of barriers: Economic (Work or Costs), Travel (Safety or Distance from primary school) Disability (School cannot meet disability-related needs), Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/ Girl), School (Unsafe/ Teacher Mistreats/ Refused Entry), and Demographic (Age/ Pregnant/ Parent/ Married). At baseline, as STAGE started work to address these barriers, almost all beneficiaries were not enrolled. At the end of the programme, the situation is reversed as almost all girls are enrolled in school (see Section 4, EQ1). Hence, at endline, barriers should not be interpreted as obstacles to enrolment in formal education, but – with a view to sustainability – as potential challenges to sustaining enrolment in the future. An increased prevalence in barriers should be seen in terms of girls experiencing these obstacles in a different way, now that they are enrolled in school. Further, at endline all caregivers in the sample were asked the questions about barriers, whilst at baseline and endline, only caregivers of not enrolled girls were asked. Because of the different interpretation and to an extent, the different sample, barriers are not directly comparable across evaluation points, though previous results are presented for reference.

Table 13 - Barriers to education among Formal Track girls: Baseline, Midline and Endline

Barrier	Baseline	Midline	Endline
Economic (Work or Costs)	85.4%	29.4%	88.7%
Travel (Safety or Distance)	37.6%	11.1%	34.8%
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	8.2%	6.9%	34.5%
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	13.4%	12.8%	25.9%
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	11.6%	8.4%	23.9%
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	12.3%	5.8%	27.5%

Barrier	Baseline	Midline	Endline
COVID-19	-	5.8%	-
Source: Analytical Dataset, Caregiver survey N=	705	694	397

Table 14 - Barriers to education by characteristic subgroups and region/ language: Endline

Characteristic, region/language	Barriers					
	Economic	Travel	School cannot meet needs	Social Norms	School (Safety)	Demographic
Overall	**88.7%**	**34.8%**	**34.5%**	**25.9%**	**23.9%**	**27.5%**
Mother/Married/Married under 15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lives with neither parent	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1+ hours to secondary school	87.0%	35.0%	43.0%	32.0%	30.3%	34.3%
HH unable to meet basic needs	88.0%	36.0%	39.0%	15.0%	21.0%	31.0%
Currently employed	88.6%	47.5%	60.1%	34.8%	27.8%	40.5%
Employed and under 15	85.7%	49.5%	58.1%	32.4%	27.6%	39.0%
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)	99.0%	45.6%	51.5%	35.0%	19.4%	54.4%
Has a disability	88.0%	48.0%	56.0%	32.0%	32.0%	40.0%
Dagaare (Upper West)	92.8%	41.3%	27.5%	35.3%	35.9%	31.7%
Kasem (Upper East)	77.1%	2.1%	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Kusaal (Upper East)	73.2%	55.4%	25.0%	28.6%	23.2%	8.9%

Characteristic, region/language	Barriers					
	Economic	Travel	School cannot meet needs	Social Norms	School (Safety)	Demographic
Likpakpaln (Northern)	95.8%	28.6%	61.3%	21.0%	17.6%	41.2%
Source: Analytical Dataset Caregiver Survey N = 396						

"_" indicates results differ significantly from the sample average

As a general trend on the intersection between barriers and marginalisation characteristics, is that girls in all subgroups are more likely to experience barriers than the overall sample.[50] In particular, there seems to be a link between feeling barriers related to school not meeting needs ('disability'), social norms and demographic, and the high chore burden, girls working, girls living over an hour away from secondary school, and GWD subgroups. Of note, girls from poor households are unlikely to suffer from barriers (other than economic related) more than the overall sample. This seems to corroborate the finding from baseline and midline that impoverishment alone was not always a cause for not attending school, and other factors would come into play. Regionally, barriers prevalence is much lower in Upper East (Kasem) than elsewhere, so much so that apart from economic related, almost none of the girls here (or none at all) feel other types of barriers.

Last, midline findings revealed that barriers were particularly persistent among those married girls, living with neither parent and with high household chores, however analysis by the former two subgroups is not possible at endline due to the limited numbers.

At endline, the most felt barriers to transition and formal education are still **economic related**, for 88.7% of the overall sample (for example, there is not enough money to pay costs of schooling and/or the girl child needs to work, earn money or help out at home).[51] Whilst endline, midline and baseline values here are not directly comparable, economic barriers have been reported consistently across evaluation points as the most prevalent barriers, overall and by subgroups. It is nevertheless noted that at midline the economic barriers had substantially decreased, from 85.4% at baseline to 29.4%. The qualitative responses corroborate the finding that the biggest barrier to education were financial constraints in the community and in families. This was the sentiment from almost all respondents in all communities. Even where there may have been support for girls' education in the family, some girls have been unable to attend school due to the costs. For example, in Nadowli (Upper West), all three caregivers said the reason their girls were not attending school prior to STAGE was due to the cost. Looking at the prevalence among subgroups, girls with high chore burden and working are most likely to feel these barriers than the overall sample (the overlap between economic barriers and high chore burden is expected because of the way the barrier prevalence is calculated). This data suggests that having to work to support the household or oneself, or support family chores (identified as one of the key obstacles to education at baseline) continues to represent a potential risk to sustaining education in the future, even though the almost totality of girls are currently enrolled. Regionally, the overall average is driven by Northern and Upper West regions, where over 90% of girls are said to experience financial related barriers.

Travel barriers are the second most prevalent barriers (34.8%) and are reported highest in Upper West and Upper East (Kusaal) regions. Travel barriers relate to both difficulty and safety in travelling to and from the school. While midline specified barriers to travel to ALP sessions, baseline and endline refer specifically to formal schooling. Based

[50] For economic barriers this is due to the way barrier prevalence is calculated.

[51] The questionnaire questions and codes for the Economic barriers are PCG_notenr3 [There isn't enough money to pay the costs of (name)'s schooling], and PCG_notenr4 [(Name) needs to work, earn money or help out at home]

on these responses, barriers related to travel to formal schools do not appear to have changed substantively (or statistically significantly) since baseline. These findings are distinct from the percentage reporting it takes over an hour to get to a secondary school, which have not changed appreciably since baseline. STAGE had put initiatives in place to reduce these barriers, such as bicycle banks and flexible timings of the ALP classes. According to qualitative evidence from midline, travel barriers might lead to drop-out and absenteeism. The qualitative findings corroborate survey data, and travel related barriers are the second most common cited in qualitative responses among girls and other community members. Distance to school was a bigger barrier in Bawku West (Upper East, Kusaal) and Nadowli that in Yunyoo (Northern) qualitative interviews. In Bawku West, one girl highlighted she dropped out because ***"the distance was a challenge, aside that my parents were not very supportive",*** which suggests that the activities implemented by STAGE need to address multiple barriers, and that support is needed alongside reductions in distance. The challenge of travelling to school – especially where this is distant - was mentioned by all four girls and one local leader in Upper East. While there were bicycles distributed in this region, the DEO, the teacher and the head teacher all said that the bicycle scheme was not well implemented as many girls do not have access to one, and there is no consideration of how to pay for the upkeep and maintenance of them. One girl suggested an intervention that would help is the provision of money for transport as opposed to the bikes. In Nadowli, the biggest barrier for transition is the distance from the Junior High School. As explained by the teacher "***There is no junior high school at the community, compelling students to travel to the second nearest community for junior high education. This community called Sampina is about seven (7) kilometres away from Naribuo, thereby compelling most students without transport (bicycles) or relatives to stay with, to often dropout after primary***". There is a potential that distance to school in this community will remain a barrier, despite the support from STAGE.

Over half of girls that reported to be working (60.1%, significant), working under 15 (58.1%, significant), GWD (56%) and with high chore burden (51.5%, significant) reported that **school cannot meet needs** ('unmet disability needs') barriers (for example, school lacking required physical access or teaching skills/materials needed) (Table 15). A relatively large prevalence of these barriers makes sense since by endline, almost all girls have transitioned to school. The prevalence of these barriers largely exists in the Northern region (61.3% of the sample).

Demographic and social norms barriers are similarly prevalent among the sample (27.5% and 25.9% overall), mostly in Upper West, Northern and, to a lesser extent, Upper East (Kusaal). Between baseline and midline, social norms barriers for unenrolled girls were shown to be more persistent than other barriers. For example, there was a perception that school does not help in finding a good job and subsequent disinterest in education by the caregiver or girl child[52] . Girls from poor households, married girls, married under 15, mothers, and employed sub-groups felt these barriers the most. Demographic barriers were also prevalent among these subgroups, driven by trends in Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kusaal). Some examples include "**child too old**", "**not mature enough**", "**pregnant**", "**a mother**", or "**married**".[53] These two region/language groups had also seen the highest increases in employed girls. At endline, these subgroups are still more likely to feel these barriers, particularly girls that are working (including under 15), with high chore burden, and (re. the demographic ones, 41.2%) girls in Northern region. Data is not available for mothers and married (N=<10).

Issues with school such as "**it's not safe**", "**teacher mistreats child**", or "**child refused entry**"[54] are prevalent among 23.9% of the sample. Given the sensitivity of these issues, it is important to look at the specific reasons for this barrier. The qualitative data did not suggest that girls felt particularly unsafe at school, with almost all girls stating there is no caning by their new teacher, and all teachers claiming there is a zero-caning policy at the school. In fact, the school environment was something that girls mentioned as a positive aspect of their experience of school (i.e.,

[52] The questionnaire questions and codes for the Social Norms barriers are PCG_notenr24 [(Name is not interested in going to school] and CG_notenr26 [Perception that school does not help in finding a good job].

[53] The questionnaire questions and codes for the Demographic barriers are PCG_notenr19 [(Name) is too old to attend school], PCG_notenr20 [(Name) is not mature enough to attend school], PCG_notenr23 [(Name) has a child or is about to have a child], PCG_notenr22 [(Name) is married or about to get married].

[54] The questionnaire questions and codes for the Issues with School barriers are PCG_notenr6 [It is unsafe for (name) to be in school] PCG_notenr13 [Child says teachers mistreat her at school], PCG_notenr14 [(Name) was refused entry into the school], PCG_notenr15 [Toilets at school / learning centre are not usable], PCG_notenr27 [Instances where child says they are mistreated/bullied by other pupils].

feeling safe, the safeguarding policy and the lack of corporal punishment and caning. Particularly in Northern (Yunyoo) not being caned is mentioned as significant to the girls' experience and enjoyment of school. One girl from Yunyoo stated that she thought the teachers at school would cane them but "I feel good now because they don't cane us". One girl from Upper West stated, "**I feel very safe in my new school**". Of the 23.9% of those surveyed that stated there were safety barriers at schools, two-thirds of those observations were reported by a single team of enumerators in Upper West: the other team working in that region did not identify any girls who faced such barriers. This suggests the high prevalence may be related to enumerator teams, and not actual cases. Of the remaining 29 cases, 13 were reported by a single enumerator in Northern region. Among all other enumerators, only 3.3% (16 girls) reported issues related to school safety. While every concern related to child safety should be taken seriously, evidence suggests these may be cases of enumerator bias, and that the qualitative findings better represent girls' experiences.

3.2 Summary of results by indicator

Table 15 - Summary of results by indicator

Indicator #	Measure	Baseline level	Midline target	Midline level	Endline target	Endline level	Summary of results / comment	EQ
Outcomes								
1. Learning								
O1.1 % of Marginalised Girls with improved EGRA score	EGRA score N = 401	N/A	80%	75.2%	85% At least 50% with improved EGRA score (new logframe)	90.7%	Improvements in literacy were sustained across all evaluation points, and across all sub-tasks of the learning assessment (EGRA). The overall literacy score at endline is 43.2, up by 12.9 pp from midline, 32 pp since baseline. Largest gains were observed for reading comprehension. Writing, a challenging task, saw a remarkable increase between baseline and midline. Girls currently working, including those working under age 15, GWDs, girls with social norms barriers and girls whose schools cannot meet their learning needs or are unsafe environments scored lower than average and improved less than average since baseline. Girls speaking Kusaal scored lower on literacy on average, but it may be a product of the assessment. Girls from poor households and with high chore burden performed better than average and improved more than average since baseline.	1

Indicator #	Measure	Baseline level	Midline target	Midline level	Endline target	Endline level	Summary of results / comment	EQ
O1.2 % of Marginalised Girls with improved EGMA score	EGMA score N = 398	N/A	75%	80.5%	85% At least 50% with improved EGMA score (new logframe)	89.7%	Improvements in numeracy were sustained across all evaluation points, and across all sub-tasks of the learning assessment (EGMA). The overall numeracy score at midline is 65.1, up by 34.4 pp from baseline, and 13.1 pp from midline. GWDs, girls whose schools cannot meet their learning needs or are unsafe environments scored lower than average (disability and school-related barriers). Girls from poor households and older girls performed better than average.	1
2. Transition								
O2.1 % of girls completing an "appropriate" transition: formal school and progressing to next grade	Caregiver survey Endline: N = 400	9.4%	85%	69.5%[55] 93.3% (WEI reporting)	40% (new logframe target) 75% (logframe)	99.8%	Almost all Formal track girls has successfully transitioned. 99.8% of respondents are currently enrolled in formal school (97.5%) and/or non-formal education (9.3%). All GWDs and girls affected by high chore burden have successfully transitioned and are still in school. All girls from poor households have transitioned, but a small percentage (2%) of girls are not in school any longer. Subgroups with lower transition rates to formal education include girls working, working under 15, and those experiencing the social norms and school-related barriers. These subgroups conversely had higher transition rates to non-formal education. In three out of four regions, all girls had successful transition rates and sustained enrolment in formal school . The exception was Kusaal Upper East: lower formal, higher non-formal rates.	1

[55] Following the first draft of the midline evaluation report, the EE was informed that transition lasted until April 2021, hence past the data collection period. Hence the transition rates reported by the project for midline are higher.

Indicator #	Measure	Baseline level	Midline target	Midline level	Endline target	Endline level	Summary of results / comment	EQ
3. Sustainability								
School								
O3.1.a % of teachers applying gender sensitive and inclusive teaching pedagogies	Girls' survey (IO2.1) KIIs	N/A	N/A	1	N/A	2	The qualitative findings provided evidence that awareness of IGSE has increased, and teachers are improving their classroom/centre practice towards IGSE, and local resource mobilization is growing	3
O3.2.a Evidence of schools with practices that promotes girls' education[56]	Girls' survey (IO2.2) KIIs	1	N/A	1	N/A	2	At baseline, analysis of qualitative data found that Head teachers across three communities were all aware of and able to describe the basics and supported inclusive and gender sensitive education (IGSE). At midline, all Head Teachers interviewed across all three communities said they were aware of what inclusive, gender-sensitive education is. However, it was not described consistently across communities. Indications of application of safe school policies.	3
Community								
O3.1.b % of parents/caregivers of marginalized girls who actively[57] support girls' education	Caregiver survey	1	1 (27.3%)	1 (15.1%)	N/A	1 (32.6%)	Whilst basic support levels were found to be high both at baseline and midline, active support was much less prevalent among caregivers. At endline there are indications active support has increased, though it is still much less prevalent than basic support. Some indication of persistence of unsupportive social norms and indications of consistent shares of girls with high chore burden	3

[56] For example, provide training for teachers on GESI, establish reporting channels for abuses, have functional CP and Safeguarding policies, organize PTA/SMC meetings among others.

[57] Active support is defined as meeting all of the following conditions: i) key knowledge, understanding, and a basic level of supportive attitude towards girl's education (measured through positive responses to the following survey questions: 1. Do you think [GIRL] has a right to education even though she is not in school?; 2. To what extent do you agree that

Indicator #	Measure	Baseline level	Midline target	Midline level	Endline target	Endline level	Summary of results / comment	EQ
O3.2.b Extent that key community leaders and decision makers actively support girls' education[58]	Modified indicator KII with DEOs, head teachers, leaders, teacher	1	2	2 (27.4% report quarterly) (see IO indicator 4.2)	N/A	3 (53.9%)	Support for girls' education among community leaders has increased steadily since the project start, and there are indications of community leaders starting to mobilise resources to support girls' education, as well as showing consistent supportive practices/behaviour towards it	3
O3.3.b Evidence of communities with functional structures to support inclusive girls' education[59]		0	N/A	1	N/A	2	There is limited evidence from the evaluation on the extent that parents can access services within their district for their children with disabilities, though some positive examples of increased awareness of services (such as special education needs schools) available for girls with functional difficulties. There were also references of GWD being linked to medical centres for assessments or ability to attend a school for special needs. It may be due to the small qualitative sample, with no caregivers of GWD that there was limited information on this.	3
System								
Evidence of districts with functional structures to support inclusive girls' education[60]	Modified indicator KII with DEOs, head teachers,	1	N/A	1	N/A	N/A	It would seem that there is strong engagement from districts at endline, with all three sampled communities reporting evidence in this sense Signs in all three regions suggest that the main area that the MOE/GES at district level are	3

"even when funds are limited it is worth investing in a girl's education?; 3.To what extent do you agree "a girl is just as l ikely to use her education as a boy?); ii) Active support: 1. Caregivers did not say any of the following were acceptable reasons for a child not to attend school: child needs to work, child needs to help at home, child is married, child is too old, child unable to learn, education is too costly, child is a mother; 2. When asked, girls stated that chores, work supporting home economic activities, or working in a family business were not a reason keeping her from enrolling in school or a vocational education programme

[58] For example, advocating to others the importance of girl child's education, collaborating with others to create functional structures to promote girls' education.

[59] For example, establishment of a community-based support scheme for girls' education, platforms for knowledge sharing and brainstorming, establishment of catch-up classes, mentoring and coaching support, availability and unrestricted access to services for PWDs.

[60] For example, establishment of scholarship scheme, platforms for knowledge sharing and brainstorming, establishment of catch-up classes, mentoring and coaching support, availability, and unrestricted access to services for PWDs, functional child protection and safeguarding policies, availability of functional Girls Education officers and Social Welfare Officers.

Indicator #	Measure	Baseline level	Midline target	Midline level	Endline target	Endline level	Summary of results / comment	EQ
Evidence of District Education Offices (DEOs) with functional structures to promote inclusive girls' education[61]	leaders, teachers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	engaging is by promoting IGSE and the establishment of safeguarding regulations. Mention of mentorship sessions and presence of dedicated IGSE officers. Concerns on sustainability of various interventions by one DEO.	3
- Extent that MOE adopts parts of the STAGE model[62] to support CBE programming in Ghana. - Extent to which MOE/CEA adopt parts of STAGE post-ALP transition interventions[63]	KII CEA/MOE / DEOs New indicator Interview with CEA/MOE.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	There is clear district level change and use of the STAGE curriculum especially in the area of safeguarding and safeguarding polices. At a national level, there also seems to be some indication that the MOE/ GES will be or have been including elements of Gender Inclusive Education in the national curriculum. Based on Project reporting, MOE have adapted significant strategies from STAGE, though these are yet to be implemented. This is in line with evaluation evidence, which suggests that the implementation of elements of the STAGE curriculum into CBE is still limited.	3
Intermediate outcomes								
IO1 Attendance								
IO1.1 Attendance rates of girls	39.8% of sample, 20 observations per girl Measured by EE attendance form	N/A	90%	86.1%	85%	80.7%	At midline, attendance was 86.1%, almost the same as the attendance level to ALP classes recorded by WEI at baseline. At endline, recorded mean attendance is 80.7%, meaning there is a worsening of this indicator since midline. However, it should be noted that those that do not reach the target are not that far below it.	2

[61] For example, platforms for knowledge sharing and brainstorming, dedicated officer of Unit for Inclusive education, Functional and trained SEAH structures/officers, functional child protection and safeguarding policies.
[62] Including the formative assessment structure, inclusive pedagogy and reading reinforcement approach.
[63] For example, catch up classes, SISO support, mentoring, household visits, bicycle banks and negotiations) to promote retention of CBE graduates in formal schools.

Indicator #	Measure	Baseline level	Midline target	Midline level	Endline target	Endline level	Summary of results / comment	EQ
							In terms of self-reported attendance, 52.8% reported attending all classes, 45.1% most of the time, and 2.1% sometimes. GWDs, girls from poor households, working (under 15), with travel, school and demographic barriers are more likely to report attending all classes. Girls with chore burden are in line with the overall average.	
1.2 Extent that girls, caregivers, teachers and school leaders feel the support received helped reduce the barriers to regular attendance	Qualitative data from girls, caregivers, teachers, leaders.	N/A	N/A	90.5% of those that received financial assistance mentioned it made it more likely for the girl to be enrolled in school.	N/A		There are good indications that STAGE contributed to reducing economic- and travel-related barriers, -which still are the most prevalent ones-, through the transition kit, flexible delivery of ALPs, and bicycle banks to a lesser extent. Though, while the transition kits have helped to support girls to enter education, it may not be a sustainable solution if poverty remains the biggest barrier in the community. Home visits and community animation sessions also contributed to improve unsupportive social norms towards girls' education, thus indirectly favouring attendance.	2
IO2 Quality of teaching								
2.1 % of Girls that agree that their facilitator was effective at the learning centre	Girls Survey[64]	N/A	75%	73.9%	85%	75.2%	After transition, the evaluation examined girls' views of school teachers' teaching style A similar proportion of girls than at midline (re. facilitators) agreed their teacher is effective (75.2%), appreciating particularly feeling safe in class, the teacher motivating them if they have difficulties, and complementing them for making contributions during classes. Notably, above 95% of girls agreed to any one statement on IGSE	4

[64] Eight questions (HHG_13b-g) were inserted in the survey to assess effectiveness of facilitator /teacher at learning centre/school. The questions referred to practices including providing individual support to pupils; organising paired/group work; valuing contribution of pupils in the lessons and other attributes of effective teaching as per STAGE logframe and STAGE classroom observation tool. The overall result for this indicator is calculated as the prevalence of girls that strongly agreed or agreed to all eightquestions.

Indicator #	Measure	Baseline level	Midline target	Midline level	Endline target	Endline level	Summary of results / comment	EQ
							practices (though less girls agreed to all eight statements). A similar regional trend than at midline is noted at endline for teachers, with 63.7% of girls in Upper West (Dagaare) agreeing their teachers are effective vs. 75.2% overall.	
2.2 Extent that teachers/ facilitators apply inclusive gender-sensitive education	Girls Survey[65] KIIs girls/ teachers/ facilitators WEI classroom observation summary	N/A	60%	75.9%	70%	73.2%	Slightly less girls from any of the marginalised subgroup (73.2%) also agreed on the effectiveness of teachers by agreeing to all eight questions on IGSE practices. Of concern, only 52% of GWDs agreed their teachers are effective. Qualitative findings confirm the positive findings from the survey and project monitoring and found that the IGSE training was effective for teaching inclusive and gender sensitive pedagogy to facilitators and teachers.	4
2.3 % of facilitators who demonstrate effective literacy/numeracy instruction	WEI classroom observation summary KIIs girls/ teachers/ facilitators	N/A	60%	98.5% (WEI data)	N/A	N/A (not measured at endline)	The almost totality of surveyed girls strongly agreed or agreed that the ALPs prepared them for literacy and numeracy classes in school. Evidence from the qualitative data also mentioned that facilitators were going to a pace that allows for learning and were following the session plans.	4
IO3 Life skills								
3.1 Life skills index score	Same sampling as Learning Test and HH Survey	56	65	60.5	75	Only measured through KIIs for	Life skills index score not calculated at endline. Between baseline and midline there had been an 8% improvement (from 56 to 60.5), albeit the 65 score target had not been achieved. At midline, over 95% of girls score as established or	1

[65] The value reported from the EE quantitative data (75.9%) calculates the prevalence of marginalised girls (under any of the marginalised sub-groups) that strongly agreed or agreed to all eight questions (HHG_13b-g) to assess effectiveness of facilitator/teacher at learning centre/school. As per STAGE logframe, gender sensitive education is defined as: Marginalised girls, girls and boys get equal level of attention, interaction, praise/criticism, roles, classroom resources; are encouraged to engage with each other in class / seating; are encouraged / facilitated; gender and inclusive discriminative language is challenged and explained. The EE considers that HH survey questions HHG_13b-g cover all these gender sensitive teaching practices, except for that relating to challenging and explaining discriminative language and obviously not capturing boys' perspectives.

Indicator #	Measure	Baseline level	Midline target	Midline level	Endline target	Endline level	Summary of results / comment	EQ
						Formal Track	proficient learners under environment, WASH and GBV. The greatest gap was in SRHR, where 76% of girls at midline were not able to answer more than 40% of the assessment correctly. Observed as an issue since a notable barrier to girls' continued attendance in school is becoming pregnant. At endline, Life skills are regularly highlighted by girls as one of the most useful things they learnt from STAGE. The most commonly cited life skills related to hygiene and cleanliness; confidence and money management.	
3.2 Extent that caregivers perceive positive changes in girls' Life Skills	Same sampling as Learning Test and HH Survey	61.3%	Positive trend	66.2%	Positive trend	Only measured through KIIs for Formal Track	Indicator not measured quantitatively at endline. Improvement by 5 pp between baseline and midline. Caregivers showed high confidence levels in WASH and environment (4.1 and 4.2 out of 5), though low in their children's knowledge of personal hygiene and SRH (3.0 and 2.8 out of 5). Money management is mentioned as the most useful skill for caregivers.	1
IO4 Increased community and district support for inclusive girls' education								
4.1 % of caregivers who feel it is equally viable to invest in a girl's education as a boy's education even when funds are limited	Same sampling as Household Survey Question PCG_32g (Strongly agree or agree)	88%	90% (EE proposed)	92.2%	95%	98%	there has been a sustained improvement in the prevalence of caregivers agreeing with this statement, from 88% to 98%, a 10-pp difference. The almost totality of caregivers also responded that they think a girl is just as likely to use her education as a boy. Almost all the girls agreed that their families tend to support the girls and boys equally in attending school. Evidence of some unintended effects emerged from the interviews: caregivers are expressing that as a result of STAGE now some families are supporting girls over boys.	2

Indicator #	Measure	Baseline level	Midline target	Midline level	Endline target	Endline level	Summary of results / comment	EQ
4.2 Extent that religious and traditional leaders actively mobilise households to support excluded girls into education.	Same sampling as Household Survey Question PCG_34g2 [66]	1	2 or higher	2 (27.4% leaders spoke at least quarterly in support of girls' education)	3 (EE proposed: 32% leaders speak at least quarterly)	3 (53.9%)	A substantial shift is observed in the frequency of reports of community leaders speaking out for girls' education: at endline, over half of caregivers (53.9%) stated this happens at least quarterly, from 27.4% at midline. This is less likely to happen in Upper East (Kusaal) and Upper West (Dagaare). More caregivers than at midline reported community and religious leaders have taken action to support girls to remain in school: 31.7% responded affirmatively at endline against 26.3% at midline.	2
4.3 Extent that relevant district agencies' (GES, Social Welfare, CEA) participate in monitoring, supervision and coaching visits of schools	KIIs with national actors, DEOs, community leaders	0	1	1	2	2	Good monitoring was being reported in all three communities by facilitators, teachers, head teachers and the DEO. This improvement is in-line with the STAGE monitoring report, which stated "***Evidence from the field suggest that support from district entities and stakeholders have been massive. Aside regular joint monitoring, data from monthly and quarterly DSP reports revealed that these entities are putting in place several measures to support girls' education at the community and district levels.***" There are also indications of collaboration between districts, other government agencies and schools.	2

[66] Responses to question: PCG_34g2: How often (have leaders in your community spoken out in support of girls' education? Quarterly or more frequently (monthly, weekly).

4. Key findings

This section presents key findings by evaluation question. In doing so, it also refers to key results against outcome and intermediate outcome indicators from STAGE logframe. Reporting attempts to avoid repetition across Eqs to the extent possible, by cross-referencing findings across Eqs. Conceptually, EQ1 talks about STAGE outcome results (Outcome 2, Transition, Outcome 1, Learning and Intermediate Outcome 3, Life Skills); EQ2 delves into STAGE contribution to reducing barriers to attendance and transition (Intermediate Outcome 1, Attendance, and 4, Support to education); EQ3 focuses on sustainability aspects of the intervention (Outcome 3); EQ4 analyses STAGE training model and what worked to support learning (Intermediate Outcome 2, Quality of teaching) and encourage transition; and EQ5 looks at some VfM aspects of the intervention.

4.1 EQ1. What impact did the STAGE project have on the transition of highly marginalised girls into education/learning/training or work opportunities?

Following the end of the ALPs, between January and April 2021, STAGE Formal track girls were supported transitioning to formal school. Successful transition is assessed in terms of girls that to date are still enrolled in Formal school; further, the percentage of girls that temporarily transitioned is also considered, together with transition to non-formal education, even though this was not an intended outcome for the Formal track. Beyond enrolment, attendance rates have been measured, though they are presented in EQ2.

The evaluation also assessed learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy (EGRA and EGMA results), as well as looking at life skills through qualitative interviews. Transition and learning are also examined by subgroup and geographic location/language group, so to determine the presence of outliers.

In terms of STAGE ToC and logframe, this EQ focuses on STAGE key results at the Outcome levels 1, Learning, and 2, Transition.

Transition

EQ1.a To what extent does the STAGE ALP prepare beneficiaries for transition to school? What factors facilitate transition and retention of girls in school?

Table 16 - Transition status – Baseline, Midline and Endline

Group name (e.g., In school girls etc – refer to OSS)	Intervention transition rate (Baseline)	Intervention transition rate (Midline)	Intervention transition rate (Endline)
Successful transition	-	-	99.8%
Currently enrolled in formal school	9.6%	69.5%	97.5%
Temporarily enrolled in formal school	-	-	2.0%
Currently Enrolled in non-formal education	-	-	9.3%
Temporarily Enrolled in non-formal education	-	-	0.5%

Group name (e.g., In school girls etc – refer to OSS)	Intervention transition rate (Baseline)	Intervention transition rate (Midline)	Intervention transition rate (Endline)
Unenrolled (Never been to school)	65.1%	28.7%	-
Unenrolled (No longer in school)	25.4%	1.7%	-
Works[67]	8%	4.3%	41.5%
Source: Analytical dataset Caregiver survey (baseline, midline); Girl survey (endline) N =	702	686	400

Endline findings show that almost the totality of Formal track girls has successfully transitioned[68] i.e., 99.8% of respondents are currently enrolled either in formal school (97.5%) and/ or non-formal education (9.3%, there is some overlap between the two groups). Of those who returned to school, 14.9% were enrolled at in lower primary (P1-P3); 61.5% were enrolled in upper primary, and 23.6% were enrolled in junior secondary. Additionally, 2% of girls temporarily transitioned to school after the end of ALPs and 0.5% were temporarily enrolled in non-formal education. These results are higher than DSP monthly monitoring data, which reported 7866 out of 8245 transitioned to school (including Special Education Needs – SEN- schools) at some point (96%), and 90.8% are still enrolled as of May – July 2022. Most girls expressed that they enjoyed school and were happy there. At endline several girls across all regions expressed feeling excited about going to school. One girl in Yunyoo (Northern) stated "***I was excited that I was going to the new school. I did not have any fear in me.***" And one girl from the Upper West stated: "***I felt very excited because I was going to be in a totally different environment***". Two of the three girls from Upper East who reported dropping out still stated that they had enjoyed schooling with one girl expressing "***I like everything about it, I did like my class teacher and my colleagues"*** and the other girl saying, "***I would have loved it if only I had not dropped out because school always made me happy***." Thus, even girls who dropped out had enjoyed being in school. As explored further in EQ4, most girls enjoyed their ALPs experience and are enjoying school. This is where qualitative and quantitative findings on safety in school are not aligned, as the qualitative data showed a general perception of girls being happy and safe in school.

These findings are notable when considering that 63.7% of girls had never been to school at baseline, and 24.8% were dropouts. Midline evaluation findings indicated a successful transition for 69.5% of the sample, and 28.7% as never been to school,[69] however, the transition process was not complete by the time of the evaluation data collection in February/ March 2021.[70] At midline, project data reported a transition rate of 93.3% (March 2021).

[67] Work is defined as doing work for pay and is separate from doing chores in concept and in the questions asked in the survey. Work may be paid labour for others (including in family business/farm), selling items purchased or produced for a profit, or other transactions where the girl receives money or in-kind compensation for her efforts. In agreement with the project, how work has been recorded in the questionnaire has been modified since baseline, to ensure that chores and work are understood by the respondent as different.

[68] No endline target has been set in the latest version of the STAGE logframe.

[69] Whilst this represents a substantial improvement compared to baseline, the percentage of 'never been to school' is still higher than the national rates reported in the Ghana Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2017/18 which found that only 19% of primary school age children in Ghana were out of school. The MICS survey findings also showed that the Northern, Upper East and West have lower attendance rates than the national average. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/ghana/media/576/file/Ghana%20Multiple%20Cluster%20Indicator%20Survey.pdf

[70] In addition, the comparison between midline and baseline is skewed (negatively) by the fact that 9.4% (66 girls) at baseline had been identified as being in school and were not (the majority of which being from the Upper West region, Dagaare language with 76.8% of all

Table 17 - Transition By Subgroup and Type, Endline

	Successful Transition	Currently Enrolled in Formal School	Currently Enrolled in Non-formal
Overall	99.8%	97.5%	9.3%
Disability Overall	100.0%	100.0%	17.4%
Mother / Married under 15 / Married	N/A	N/A	N/A
High Chore Burden	100.0%	100.0%	9.8%
Works	99.4%	94.0%	15.7%
Lives with neither parent	N/A	N/A	N/A
Works under 15	99.1%	96.4%	16.4%
Unable to meet basic needs	100.0%	98.0%	13.0%
1+ hours to primary/secondary school	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Economic (Work or Costs)	100.0%	98.6%	9.2%
Travel (Safety or Distance)	99.3%	97.8%	16.3%
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	100.0%	100.0%	16.9%
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	99.0%	92.0%	19.0%
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	98.9%	96.8%	17.0%
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	100.0%	100.0%	13.1%
Dagaare Upper West	100.0%	100.0%	7.7%
Kasem Upper East	100.0%	100.0%	4.2%
Kusal Upper East	98.4%	84.4%	25.0%
Likpakpaln Northern	100.0%	100.0%	5.0%

girls currently in school). This had been discussed with the STAGE team, which confirmed that these girls were removed from the project. Due to this reason, the actual increase in transition would be higher than what is observed by comparing the midline and baseline data.

	Successful Transition	Currently Enrolled in Formal School	Currently Enrolled in Non-formal
Source: Evaluation Surveys (N = 400)			
Note: Cells represent the proportion of column groups that have row characteristics. Currently Enrolled do not add up to Overall Transition, as overall transition includes temporarily enrolled in non-formal and formal, and a small percentage of respondents enrolled in both formal and non-formal after ALP.			

"_" indicates results differ significantly from the sample average.

As mentioned under Section 3.1 – Barriers, endline transition results need to be seen with a view to the sustainability of the transition after the interventions end, and the persistence, in some cases, of barriers to sustaining education for some subgroups.

Data shows that all GWDs and girls affected by high chore burden have successfully transitioned and are still in school, a positive result considering these subgroups had lower than average enrolment rates at midline. On the other hand, as noted, transition had concluded when midline data was collected; hence these subgroups might have been underrepresented in terms of enrolment at midline. Still, this is a positive finding considering girls with high chore burden were less likely to have transitioned at midline, than the overall sample. In relation to GWDs, qualitative data supports findings on successful transition of this subgroup into formal schooling, as well as STAGE contribution to this (see EQ2). Further, all girls living in remote areas have transitioned and are still in school, as well as those affected by the 'disability' barrier (school cannot meet basic needs). All girls from poor households have transitioned, but a small percentage is not in school any longer (2%).

Some characteristics and barriers seem to be associated with specific transition outcomes, i.e., formal school versus non-formal education. All or almost all of girls working, working under 15, experiencing the social norms and school barriers have successfully transitioned, but the proportions of these girls currently enrolled in formal school are lower than the overall average.[71] In particular, 92% (significant) of girls with social norms barriers are in formal school, 94% of those who work (significant) and 96.4% of those who work under 15 years old, against 97.5% overall. Conversely, these groups exhibit higher than average enrolment and attendance rates to non-formal education (19.0% for girls affected by social norms barriers – significant, 15.7% those working and 16.4% those working under 15 years old). As a general trend, those affected by barriers to formal education (i.e., travel, school cannot meet needs, social norms-related) have significantly higher than average enrolment rates in non-formal education.

Overall, these results seem to confirm the finding from baseline and midline that impoverishment alone is not always a cause for not attending school, and other factors such as distance to school, high chore burden, working, marriage and motherhood might come into play.

Successful transition rates and sustained enrolment in formal school are total for three regions out of four. The only outlier is Upper East (Kusaal), where a significantly lower percentage of girls is currently enrolled in school (84.4% against 100% of the other regions/language groups), and a much higher percentage than elsewhere are enrolled in non-formal education (25.0%, significant). This is corroborated by the qualitative data. Whilst most girls interviewed across the communities stated that they attended school most of the time, three of the four girls interviewed from Bawku West (Upper East, Kusaal) stated that they had dropped out. One girl "***dropped out after being sick for a very long time***." One girl dropped out due to lack of parental support and the distance barrier (despite there being bicycle banks in this community), she stated ***"I lost the interest of going to school because my parents were not supportive enough, besides that, the distance to school is very far***". There were reports from girls and caregivers that COVID-19 had an impact on girls dropping out of the ALPs or not transitioning. One girl dropped out due to COVID and financial difficulties, stating COVID also led to other girls dropping out "***I think the COVID-19 pandemic***

[71] Work is defined as doing work for pay and is separate from doing chores in concept and in the questions asked in the survey.

contributed to it. Besides that, many of my colleagues dropped out including me as well as financial difficulties that I was facing." In Upper East, one caregiver confirmed their girl dropped out during COVID and is now in employment "*I had only one girl attending the ALP, but she dropped out during the Covid-19 period and is now an apprentice in a tailoring shop*". Another caregiver in Upper West also mentioned "*during COVID some migrated down south to engage in illegal mining (Galamsey) and some also got married*". This is also supported by observations from the teacher interviewed from Bawku West who states "*about eight of them have dropped out. Some dropped out this year while others dropped out last year".*

It is not possible to report on transition findings for girls who are mothers/ married/ married under 15, and living with neither parent, as respondents are less than 10.

Work

As noted, a much larger proportion of girls reported they are working than previously: 41.5% of the sample (166 girls in total), and 27.5% working and under 15 years of age. Delving further into the characteristics of work, 22.8% mentioned working for money during the year (selling items or working for a wage). Over a third of the overall sample reported being engaged in seasonal – like harvest time (36.0%) or temporary (34.3%) work, the latter referring to when the girl has extra time, or the household needs some extra money. By type of main activity, 79.5% works into agriculture/livestock/forestry/fishing, of which 69% is for subsistence only. The remainder said to be engaged in sales and services (vendor at street/shop/market, cook…, 14.5%) and a minority in craft making (1.8%). Further, a majority (54.2%) stated that they are not the ones making work decisions, but rather their parents, spouses or other household members, whilst 21.7% make decisions together with a business partner or family (Figure 4). Most of the girls do not consider being paid fairly or only somewhat (40.4% and 39.8% respectively) (Figure 3). Slightly concerning, almost 10% of girls considered their working conditions as somewhat (6.6%) or very (3.3%) unsafe.

Figure 3 - Type of work (employment, self-employment, family work), % Formal track girls working for a pay

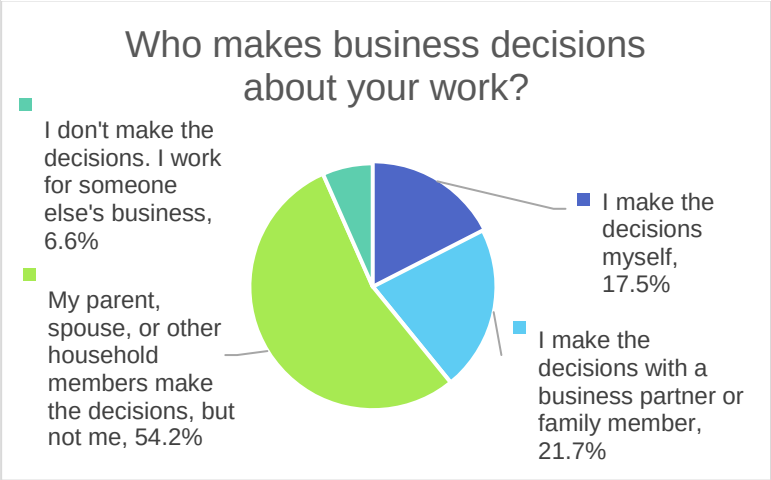
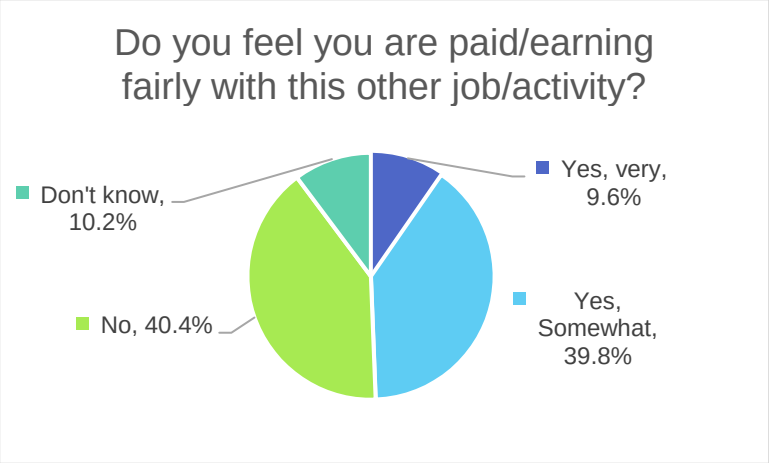


Figure 4 - Views on fairness work pay, % Formal track girls working for a pay



All of the mentions of work from the qualitative data were in line with working on the family farm or household chores. In these cases, the girls and their caregivers mention that the girls are working whilst also attending school, however it might lead to absenteeism on those days. For example, in Northern, one girl mentioned "*currently I am in the formal school. I go to school every day unless I am sick or sometimes, I go to help my mother in the farm to sow*". The teacher in Northern also felt as though girls in the community were engaged in farm work and household chores, however suggested the farm work is seasonal "*for now the children don't have any problem coming to school. The only problem is that sometimes their parents take them to the farm to help them especially when it's planting time or when they are*

harvesting". The qualitative data suggests that in all three regions, girls going to the farm whilst also attending class was more common while girls were at the ALPs. This could be because the ALPS were structured with more flexibility and girls were attending farms in the morning, and ALPs class in the afternoon. There are fewer mentions of girls going to the farm as well as attending formal school. Whilst this contradicts a relatively high percentage of girls that reported working (for money) at endline, it should be noted that qualitative findings are not representative of the all sample. There are no mentions of girls attending school as well as being engaged in formal work, and the few mentions of girls who are now working in formal work, are no longer enrolled in school.

Findings from previous evaluation points suggested that simultaneous work and enrolment in formal school were not feasible for most. In fact, of those for whom there was both baseline and midline data, only 6% of those who were employed at baseline still were at midline, and only 3% of those who were not employed at baseline were employed at midline. Endline data seems to confirm previous findings to an extent. On one hand, it would seem that the work characteristics identified at endline are compatible with enrolment in school (as the large majority of the working subgroup is indeed currently enrolled), as they configure work done predominantly in a family context, informally, seasonally/temporarily, often in subsistence agriculture (qualitative findings on lifeskills also suggest so, see further below). Further, working does not seem to have affected attendance to a large extent, compared to other groups, with most working girls attending all or most of school classes.

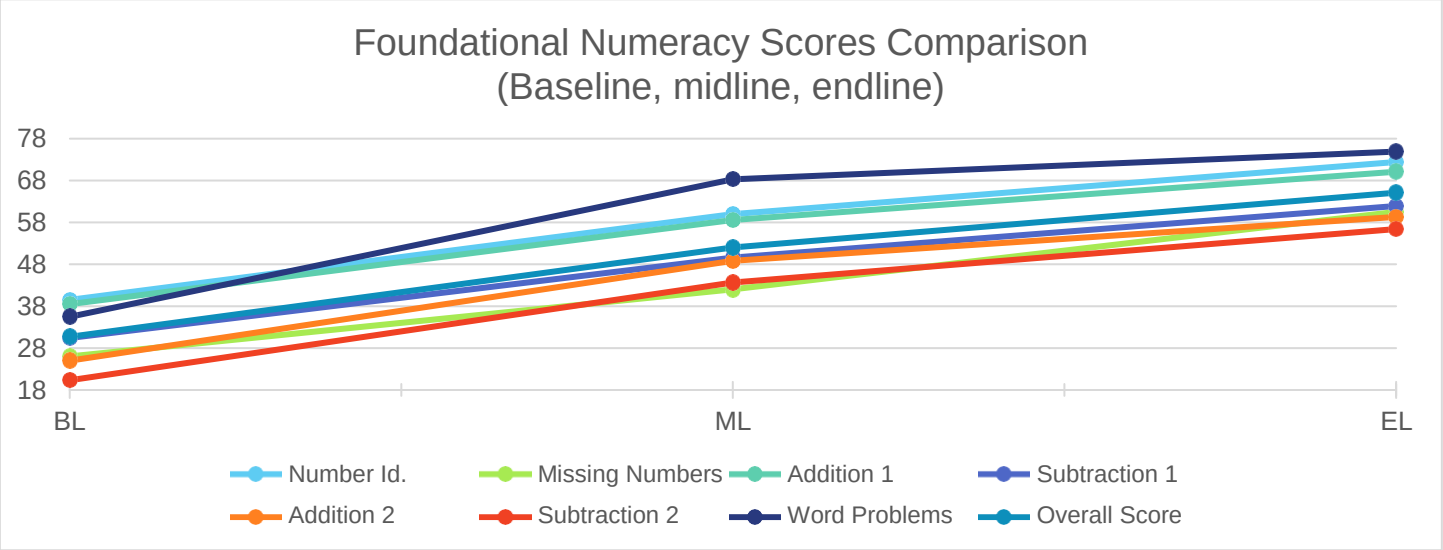
On the other hand, whilst almost all working girls successfully transitioned after the ALP, they are more likely to be enrolled in non-formal education than the overall average, as well as to experience social norms and demographic related barriers. Girls that reported working also scored less than average in the literacy assessment (see below). There are mixed findings on the impact of working on attendance, as quantitative findings point to relatively high attendance rates, whilst qualitative evidence suggests that working negatively affects attendance (see IO1.1 Attendance rate, under EQ2).

Learning

EQ1.b To what extent have STAGE beneficiaries improved learning outcomes? Who, if any, are the outliers (individuals and communities) in terms of learning outcomes identified in different regions, lessons from who may be adopted for scale across Ghana to improve the intervention?

This section explores the learning outcomes of STAGE beneficiaries at endline, as measured by statistically significant improvements in the mean literacy and numeracy scores over baseline and endline; and as the percentage of

Figure 5 - Foundational Numeracy Scores Comparison, Overall and by subtask



marginalised girls with improved EGRA / EGMA scores.[72] Further, changes in the percentage of beneficiaries that fall into four key learning categories are considered. Results are presented overall for the Formal track as well as disaggregated by key subgroups (marginalisation characteristics, regions) to identify any outliers. Exploration of the mechanisms and factors that might have contributed to these results, as well as STAGE's effectiveness in reducing barriers to education, are explored under EQ2 and EQ4.

N***umeracy***

Table 18 - Foundational numeracy scores comparison: Baseline, Midline and Endline

Categories	Baseline numeracy treatment	Midline numeracy treatment	Endline numeracy treatment	Difference numeracy midline to endline	Difference numeracy baseline to endline
Number Id.	39.5	60.0	72.4	12.4	32.9
Missing Numbers	26.0	42.0	60.5	18.5	34.5
Addition 1	38.5	58.6	70.1	11.5	31.6
Subtraction 1	30.4	49.6	61.9	12.3	31.5
Addition 2	25.0	48.8	59.3	10.5	34.3
Subtraction 2	20.3	43.6	56.4	12.8	36.1
Word Problems	35.5	68.3	74.9	6.6	39.4
Overall Score	**30.7**	**52.0**	**65.1**	**13.1**	**34.4**
Source: Analytical dataset: EGMA Midline N = 693; Baseline N=705					

Beneficiaries' average numeracy scores at endline sustained the substantial advancements observed at midline, overall and across all sub-tasks. The overall numeracy score at endline is 65.1, an improvement of 34.4 pp from baseline, and 13.1 pp from midline (Table 18). Positive changes are observed across all bands of achievement. Figure 5 above shows the upward trajectory of mean scores for numeracy tasks across the three evaluation points. At midline, among the 605 beneficiaries for whom both baseline and midline scores were available, 487 (80.5%) have improved EGMA scores. At endline, among the 273 beneficiaries for which endline and baseline scores are available, 89.7% improved EGMA scores.

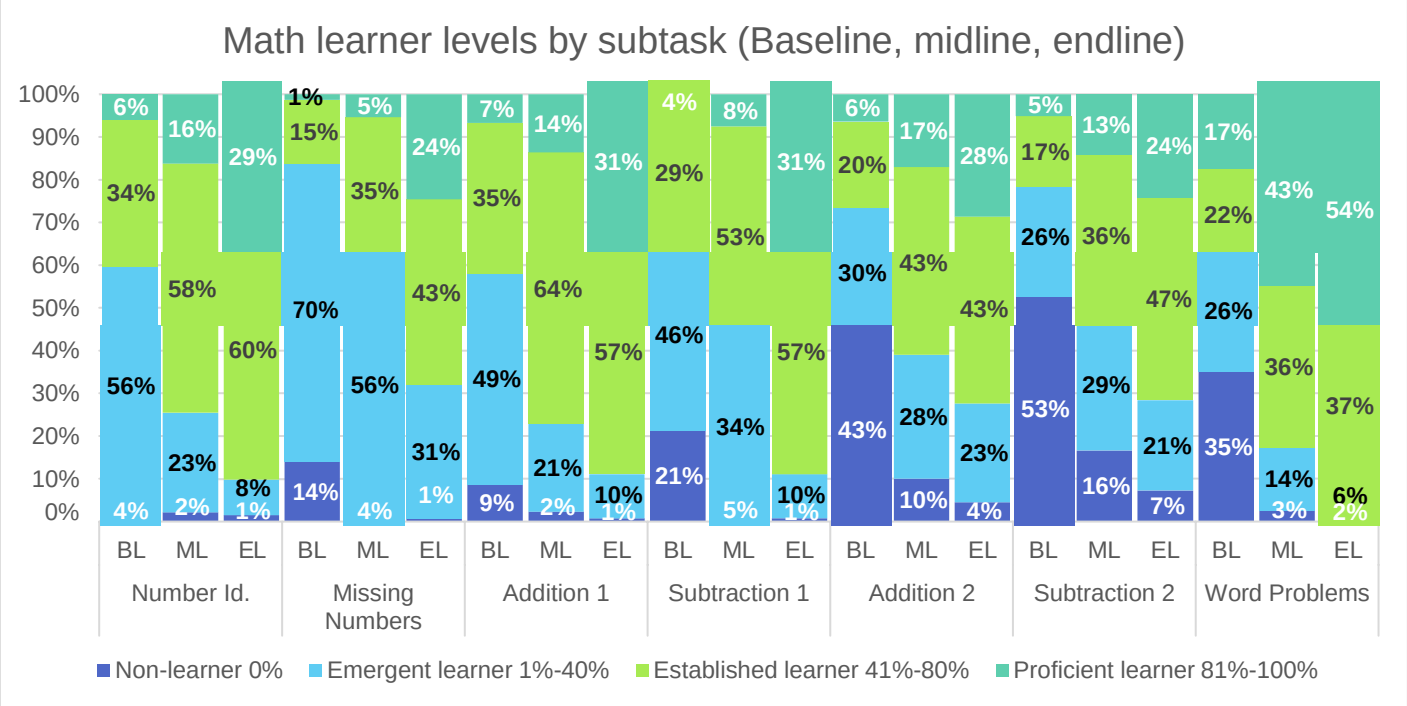
Mean score increases are particularly large in those subtasks where girls were low performing – on average – at baseline: Subtraction 2 saw a 36.1 increase since baseline, and 12.8 increase since midline; Addition 2 and Missing numbers average scores went from 25 and 26 at baseline, to 59.3 and 60.5 at endline, respectively. The largest improvement since baseline was in Word problems (39.4), whilst the largest improvement since midline was in Missing numbers (18.5).

[72] UK Aid. Girls' Education Challenge. GEC Outcome-level Indicators and Targets. Aligning project reporting and FCDO Annual Reporting requirements.

Table 19 - Foundational numeracy skills: Endline

Categories	Mean	SD	Non-learner 0%	Emergent learner 1%-40%	Established learner 41%-80%	Proficient learner 81%-100%
Number Id.	72.4	21.0	1.5%	8.2%	60.3%	29.2%
Missing Numbers	60.5	27.1	0.7%	30.9%	43.1%	24.4%
Addition 1	70.1	21.9	0.7%	10.2%	56.9%	31.4%
Subtraction 1	61.9	24.7	0.7%	10.2%	56.9%	31.4%
Addition 2	59.3	27.4	4.5%	22.9%	43.4%	28.4%
Subtraction 2	56.4	28.1	7.2%	20.9%	47.1%	23.9%
Word Problems	74.9	23.9	1.7%	6.5%	37.4%	53.6%
Overall Score	**65.1**	**20.6**	0.0%	11.0%	62.6%	25.7%
Source: Analytical dataset: EGMA Endline N = 398						

Figure 6 - Math learner levels by subtask (Baseline, midline, endline)



The prevalence of girls in lower bands (non-learner and emergent learner) has diminished in favour of increases in the higher bands (established learner and proficient learner, Table 19 and Figure 6). At baseline, most Formal track girls scored in either the Non-learner or Emergent learner classifications cross subtasks, which was unsurprising given their age and that 63.7% had never been to school.[73] Challenging tasks included Subtraction 2, with the highest percentage of Non-learners (53%, and 26% Emergent learner); Missing numbers, with the largest percentage of Emergent learners (70%, and 14% Non-learner); Addition 2 (43% Non-learners and 30% Emergent learners). At midline, most girls scored in either the Established or Proficient learner bands, except for the Missing numbers subtask. Gains were observed across subtasks considered less challenging (Word problems. Addition 1), as well as challenging (Addition 2, and Subtraction 1 and 2).

At endline (Table 19), the situation is reversed compared to baseline: there is no subtask where most girls are in the two lowest bands. Importantly, for Word problems, Number Ids, Addition 1 and Subtraction 1, around 90% of girls score in the two higher bands; and the same is true for around 70% of girls for scores in challenging tasks such as Missing numbers, Addition and Subtraction 2. When aggregated results across tasks are considered, no girl results in the Non-learner category, only 11% in the Emergent Learner, and the rest in the two highest bands.

The largest increases in the share of girls become Proficient learners are in the subtasks starting from the lowest points at baseline: Missing numbers (4.17 times increase on baseline); Subtraction 2 (3.29 increase) and Addition 2 (2.68 increase). Overall, 53.6% of girls are Proficient learners in Word problems, 31.4% in Addition 1 and Subtraction 1, and 29.2% in Number Id. These figures represent remarkable improvements on all accounts, as shown by Figure 6.

Literacy[74]

Literacy Outcomes are reported in two different ways: as means, and in terms of the percentage of beneficiaries that fall into four learning categories. The means of each subtask calculated as the percentage of items correct, with the exception of Oral Reading Fluency. Oral Reading Fluency is calculated as the correct words per minute read. The four learner level categories reported, as defined by the LNGB MEL Guidelines, include those obtaining zero scores (Non-Learner), Emerging (1-40%), Established (41-80%), and Proficient (81% or more). The only exception to those guidelines is oral reading fluency.

Table 20 - Foundational literacy scores: Baseline, Midline and Endline

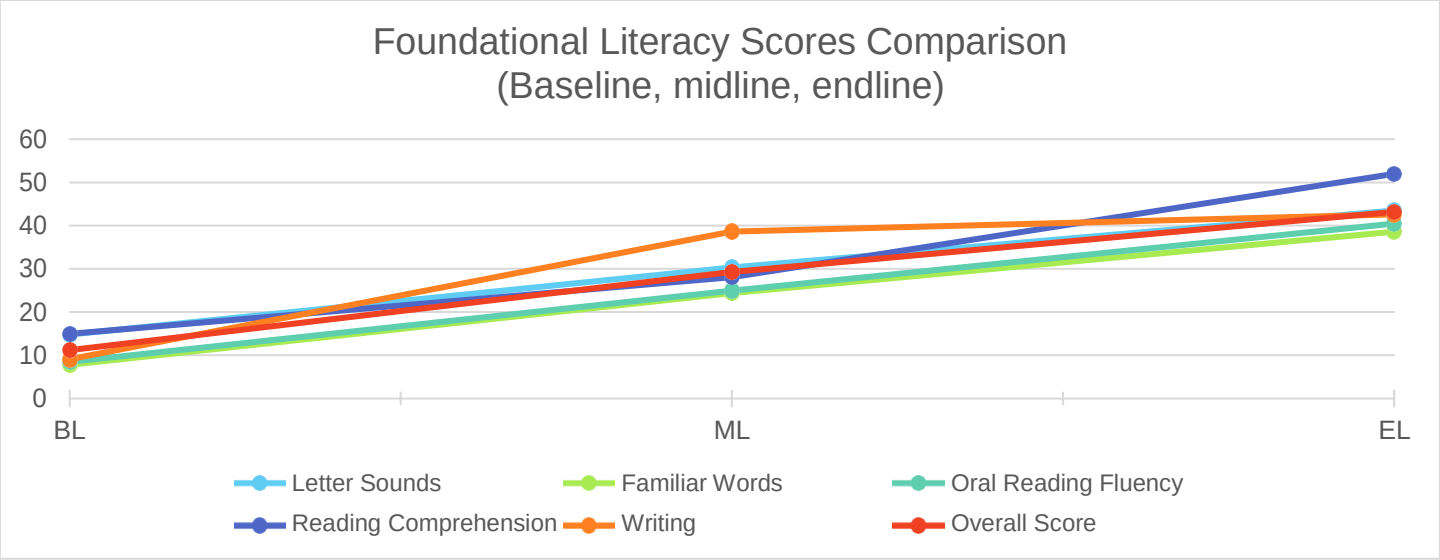
Categories	Baseline literacy treatment	Midline literacy treatment	Endline literacy treatment	Difference literacy midline to endline	Difference literacy baseline to endline
Letter Sounds	14.8	30.3	43.5	13.2	28.7
Familiar Words	7.8	24.4	38.6	14.2	30.8
Oral Reading Fluency	8.5	25.0	40.5	15.5	32.0

[73] However, a ceiling effect in the Formal EGMA numeracy tests was not felt, as there are few girls scoring 81%+ (proficient learning).

[74] Throughout the analysis of the EGRA results, it is critical to consider the variation of literacy skills between languages. In general, it is not recommended to aggregate scores as done in this report, because literacy skill acquisition varies between languages. For example, Fante has 10 vowel phonemes, whereas Likpakpaaln only has six. Students of languages with more explicit phonemes may take longer to perfect letter recognition but may acquire the ability to read words sooner. As each language is different in what aspects are simple or complex, how they may score on assessments may likely be a reflection of the language, not of their ability. For simpler results and more expedient analysis, it was requested that the analysis of all language groups be combined at the outset of the project. Because the outcome of interest is improvement over time (instead of raw scores or proficiency), and the proportion of each language group does not change between evaluation points, overall scores can still be used effectively as indicative of learning outcomes.

Categories	Baseline literacy treatment	Midline literacy treatment	Endline literacy treatment	Difference literacy midline to endline	Difference literacy baseline to endline
Reading Comprehension	15.0	28.1	52.0	23.9	37.0
Writing	9.1	38.6	42.6	4.0	33.5
Overall Score	**11.2**	**29.3**	**43.2**	**12.9**	**32.0**
Source: Analytical dataset: EGRA Endline = 401; Midline N = 693; Baseline N=705					

Figure 7 - Foundational Literacy Scores Comparison, Overall and by subtask



At the start of STAGE, girls' literacy scores did not surpass 15 out of 100 across subtasks Letter Sounds, Familiar Words, Reading Comprehension and Writing; whilst girls were able to read (Oral Reading fluency) correctly only 8.5 words per minute. Across the board, girls were starting from lower levels than in numeracy. At endline, beneficiaries' average literacy scores sustained the substantial advancements observed at midline, overall and across all sub-tasks (Table 20 and Figure 7). The overall literacy score at endline is 43.2, up by 12.9 pp with respect to midline, and up by 32 pp since the start of the programme (Tables 20 and 21).

The largest gains, both between baseline and midline, and midline and endline, can be observed for Reading comprehension, which was the task scoring the highest (15) at baseline, and still is at endline (52). The most challenging task remains Familiar words (7.8 at baseline and 38.6 at endline, the lowest score across subtasks measured out of 100), though improvements were steady across evaluation points (16.6 and 14.2 improvement between baseline and midline, and midline and endline respectively). Writing, another challenging task, saw a remarkable advancement between baseline and midline (from 9.1 to 38.6), though this trend almost halted between midline and endline (still, an improvement of 4 points is observed). Figure 7 shows the upward trajectory of mean scores for literacy tasks across the three evaluation points. Further, out of 273 girls for which endline and baseline results are available, 90.9% improved EGRA results from baseline.

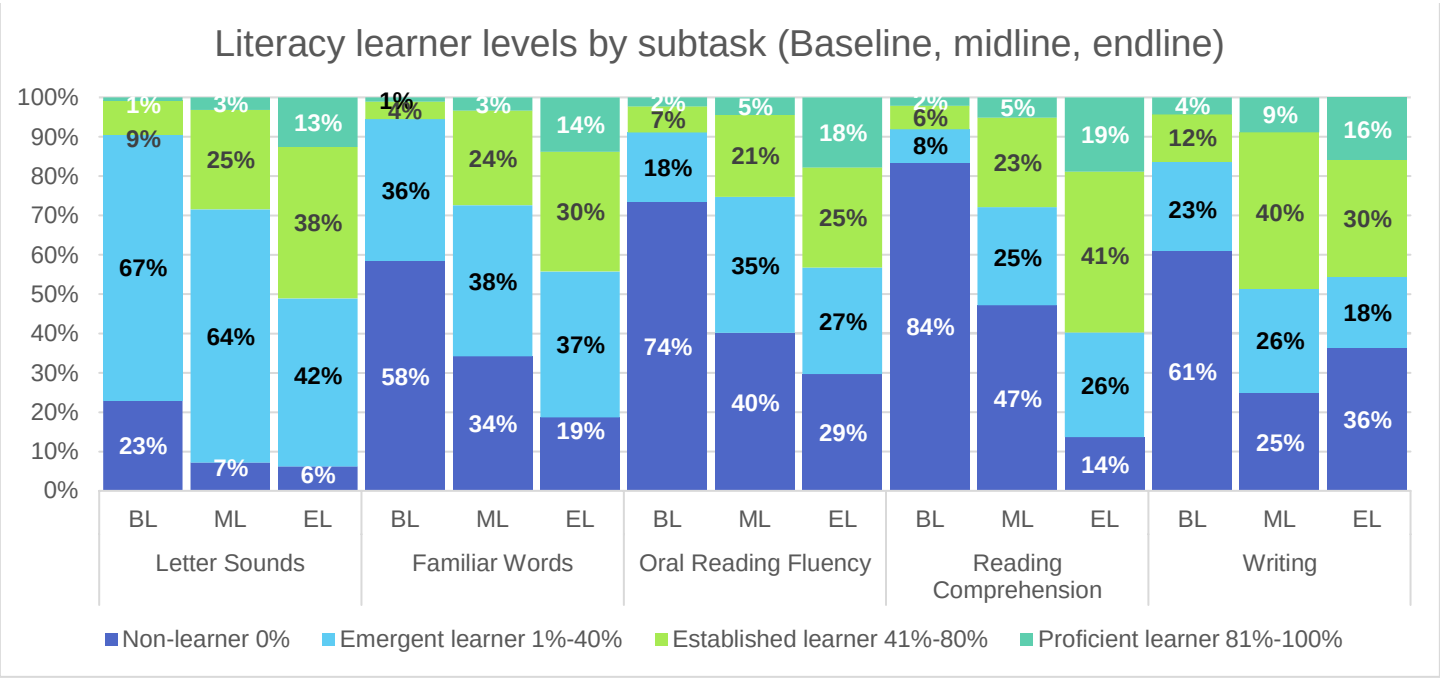
Table 21 - Foundational literacy skills: Endline

Categories	Mean	SD	Non-learner 0%	Emergent learner 1%-40%	Established learner 41%-80%	Proficient learner 81%-100%
Letter Sounds	43.5	29.0	6.2%	42.4%	38.2%	12.5%
Familiar Words	38.6	31.5	18.5%	36.9%	30.2%	13.7%
Oral Reading Fluency	40.5	35.2	29.4%	26.9%	25.2%	17.7%
Reading Comprehension	52.0	31.9	13.5%	26.4%	40.6%	18.7%
Writing	42.6	38.5	36.4%	18.0%	29.7%	16.0%
Overall Score	43.2	30.1	2.7%	42.4%	41.9%	13.0%

Source: Analytical dataset: EGRA Endline = 401

Note: All scores are out of 100. Oral Reading Fluency is calculated as correct words per minute, and the others are percentage of questions correct.

Figure 8 - Literacy learner levels by subtask (Baseline, midline, endline)



Looking at results by band of proficiency in a task, important gains in literacy have been realised since the start of the project; however, these are less marked than for numeracy, and in one case (Writing) there was a regression in learning between midline and endline.

At baseline, it is notable how most girls were either Non-learners[75] (particularly in Reading comprehension, 84%; and Oral Reading Fluency, 74%) or Emergent learners (especially in Letter Sounds, 67% and Familiar words, 58%). On all subtasks besides writing, at least 70% of beneficiaries scored 40% or less. In Oral Reading Fluency, 40.1% of beneficiaries could not read 5 correct letters per minute. Proficient and Established learners considered together amounted to less than 10% of girls. At midline, the proportion of beneficiaries with zero scores (Non-learners) had decreased substantially across subtasks, though a larger share of girls in the Familiar words and Oral Reading Fluency were still in this band of achievement (34.2% and 40.1% respectively). Most girls were still in the Non-learner or Emergent learner bands (over 70% for all subtasks except writing), suggesting very low starting points in literacy at baseline.

At endline, most girls are in the highest learning bands in two subtasks (Reading comprehension, 59% in total; and Letter sound, 51% in total). For all other tasks, between 43% and 46% of girls are either Established or Proficient learners. The largest gaps remain in Familiar words, though the percentage of Non-Learners is down to 19%; and Oral Reading Fluency, where Non-Learners represent 29% of the sample, down from 40% at midline. Of note, Writing had seen the largest improvement between baseline and midline, and the highest share of Proficient learners and Established + Proficient learners score (49%). However, since midline there has been an increase in the share of Non-learners (from 25% to 36%) and – whilst Proficient learners have continued to increase (from 9% to 16%), Established learners have decreased by 10 pp. The result is a slight regression in Writing skills for a share of the girls.

Of girls who have become proficient in subtasks compared to baseline, the largest gains are in Reading comprehension (7.3 times increase) and Familiar words (7.9 times increase). The smallest gain is in writing (2.7 times).

Subgroup analysis of the learning outcome

Table 22 - Learning scores by key characteristic subgroups, regions and barriers: Endline vs Baseline

	Average literacy score (aggregate, endline)	Change in average literacy score since baseline	Average numeracy score (aggregate, endline)	Change in average numeracy score since baseline
All girls	**43.2**	**32.0**	**65.1**	**34.4**
Disability subgroups:				
Any Disability	28.1	21.1	54.4	30.8
Mother / Married under 15 / Married	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lives with neither parent	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1+ hours to primary/secondary school	41.8	26.6	64.9	27.3

[75] Meaning they obtained zero scores, or in the case or Oral Reading Fluency, read less than 5 correct words per minute.

	Average literacy score (aggregate, endline)	Change in average literacy score since baseline	Average numeracy score (aggregate, endline)	Change in average numeracy score since baseline
HH unable to meet basic needs	47.1	39.3	69.9	39.4
Works	32.0	20.5	65.5	31.9
Employed and under 15	26.7	15.3	62.3	29.4
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)	46.7	35.4	64.2	34.9
Barriers				
Economic (Work or Costs)	46.7	35.7	65.4	34.9
Travel (Safety or Distance)	34.3	29.1	58.0	31.1
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	33.9	29.0	58.6	37.0
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	32.0	15.4	59.5	25.6
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	29.4	25.2	52.4	29.4
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	37.8	35.0	58.7	43.3
Age				
Under Age 13	32.6	-	54.6	-
Age 13 to 14	45.2	-	66.1	-
Age 15 and over	51.6	-	73.1	-
Languages (Regions)				
Dagaare (Upper West)	43.4	29.8	58.7	27.2
Kasem (Upper East)	53.8	18.4	75.4	14.5
Kusaal (Upper East)	10.7	7.2	72.2	25.4
Likpakpaaln (Northern)	56.3	53.7	67.1	52.5
Source Analytical dataset:				

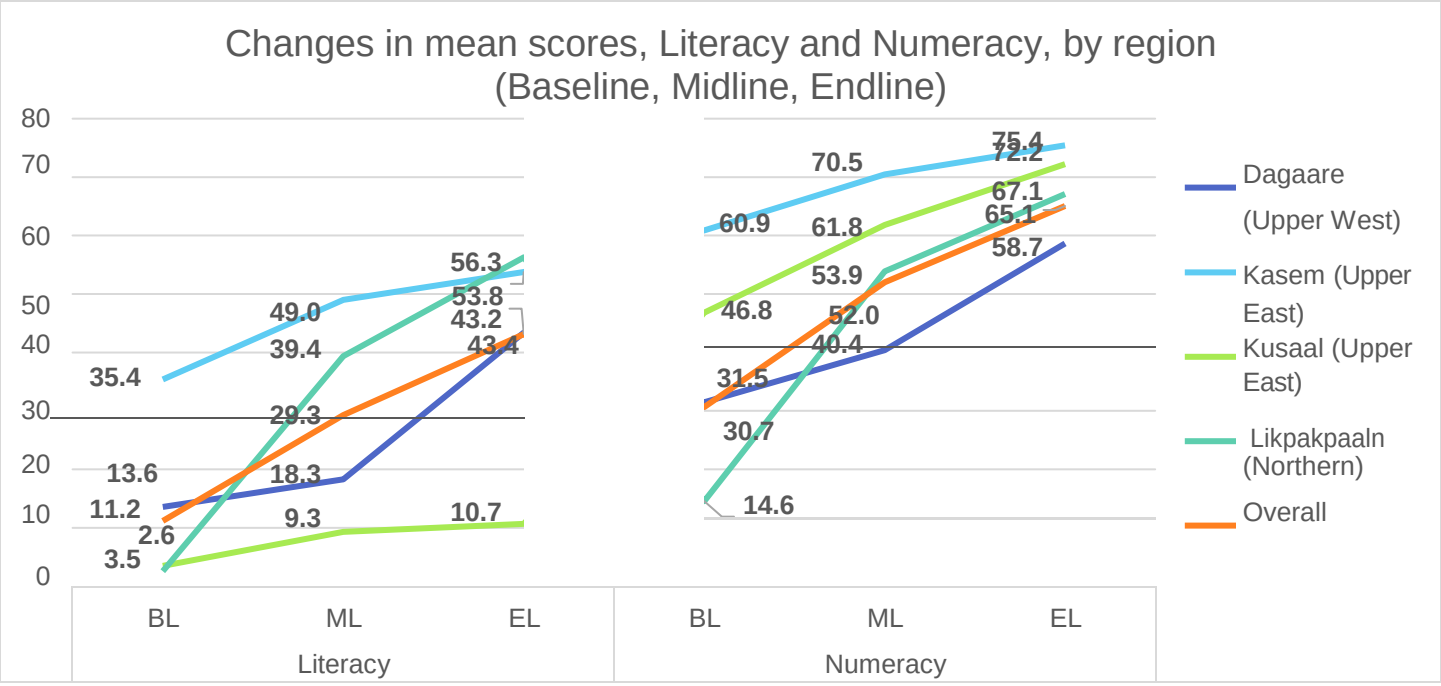
	Average literacy score (aggregate, endline)	Change in average literacy score since baseline	Average numeracy score (aggregate, endline)	Change in average numeracy score since baseline
EGRA Endline (N=401); Baseline (N=705)				
EGMA Midline (N=398); Baseline (N=705)				
Barriers: Caregiver Survey: Endline: all girls (N=402); Baseline: unenrolled girls (N=636)				

"_" indicates results differ significantly from the sample average

Learning outcomes by subgroups have been analysed in terms of change since the start of the project; however, where valuable, midline results are also referred to. For example, GWD scores were lower than average at midline in both tests, however, this subgroup had seen remarkable improvements compared to others since the start of the project. In fact, GWDs and girls with demographic barriers were the two subgroups experiencing the highest absolute improvements in numeracy between midline and baseline and GWDs improved literacy scores by almost 400% at midline. However, at endline GWDs scored lower than average in both literacy (28.1 vs 43.2) and numeracy (54.4 vs 65.1) and improved less than average since baseline. The reasons for this change in trajectory for GWDs are not known. Girls working (including under 15) scored lower in literacy and improved less since baseline than average (results are significant).

In general, all girls affected by some kind of barrier except for economic-related, have scored lower than average on both tests, particularly girls whose schools cannot meet their learning needs ("Unmet disability needs" barriers) or are unsafe environments (both types of "school"-related barriers) (29.4 and 33.9 for literacy; 52.4 and 58.6 for numeracy). Given the nature of these barriers, now that girls have transitioned to school, these results are concerning for the sustainability of learning and transition outcomes for those girls that are affected (see School level sustainability

Figure 9 - Changes in mean scores, Literacy and Numeracy, by Language/Region Group



findings under EQ3). Girls in households with unsupportive social norms also scored lower than average, especially in literacy (32). Again, it should be noted that girls that are working and GWDs tend to be affected by these barriers more than other subgroups (though at endline disaggregation is not available for mothers and married). The qualitative data suggests similar findings, particularly for those girls in unsupportive households; though it would seem GWDs are faring better in schools, wherever they "were sent to special schools meant to cater for their needs" (DEO, Bawku West) (see under EQ3, Sustainability, Community level).

Sub-groups that have shown higher than average improvements in both tests are girls from impoverished households, experiencing economic-barriers and older girls. Girls with a high chore burden scored higher than average for literacy, and slightly lower for numeracy. Results are significant for girls unable to meet basic needs.

Results by region (Table 22) have been examined by looking at overall midline scores as well as magnitude of improvements. In terms of absolute scores, as at midline, Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kasem) drive the overall improvement in literacy scores, at 56.3 and 53.8 respectively, against an average of 43.2. For numeracy, as at midline, Upper East (Kasem and Kusaal) drive the overall improvement, at 75.4 and 72.2 respectively against an average of 65.1.

One of the most noticeable findings is the substantial diversion between regional improvement in comparison with baseline data especially for literacy. Literacy scores should not be directly compared across different languages. Some languages have more simple or complex phonetic and orthographic rules, making it take a different length of time to develop each skill. Still, whilst it is less appropriate to compare EGRA results to the same extent as EGMA, both EGMA and EGRA show the same trend: namely, girls in the Northern (Likpakpaaln) exhibit the largest improvements since baseline in both tests. As can be seen in Figure 9 Northern (Likpaklaaln) beneficiaries had the lowest literacy score (2.6) at baseline, and increased to 56.3 at midline, the highest score. Similarly, for numeracy, Northern girls started at the lowest level (14.6) across region/language groups, and at endline their score is higher than the overall average (67.1). Among test-takers for whom we have baseline and endline data, the number of Likpakpaaln speakers who scored less than 1 percent on the EGRA fell from 130 at baseline to zero at endline. The number of Dagaare speakers who scored less than 1 percent fell from 43 to 3 4.[76] Whilst Upper East (Kasem and Kusaal) started off at a fairly high level at baseline for numeracy, they exhibit sustained improvement across evaluation points. Although, less positively, literacy scores in Upper East (Kusaal) improved the least since baseline and are by far at the lowest level at 10.7 (still this might be a product of the assessment).

Table 23 - Test-takers with a higher score at Endline than Baseline (%)

	EGRA	EGMA
Dagaare (Upper West)	85.8%	82.3%
Kasem (Upper East)	90.9%	81.8%
Kusaal (Upper East)	80.8%	88.0%
Likpakpaaln (Northern)	99.1%	100.0%
Sources: Individually matched Baseline and Endline EGRA and EGMA Assessments (N=605 and 273)		

[76] Only 4 Kasem and 11 Kusaal speakers with scores at both time points scored less than 1 percent at baseline, so their changes are not comparable.

An alternative way to consider results is to examine the percentage of test-takers that had a higher score at midline than baseline (Table 22). It is expected that if students learned nothing and forgot nothing, about half of them would do slightly better at endline and half of them would do slightly worse. The data shows that all regions showed improvements since baseline in both literacy and numeracy: at least 80% of test-takers for which baseline and endline data are available have improved since baseline (virtually all girls in Northern). Further, those scores which had increased the least between baseline and midline, by endline have caught up (primarily Upper West, Dagaare).

Life Skills

Life skills are regularly highlighted by girls as one of the most useful things they learnt from STAGE. Girls' knowledge of several different life skills is mentioned by different respondents, particularly girls and caregivers. The most commonly cited life skills related to hygiene and cleanliness, confidence and money management. WEI monitoring data for Q2 – Q3 2022 found that caregivers report considerable shifts in girls' awareness and understanding on topical issues delivered at the ALPs on life skills including personal hygiene, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender based violence (GBV) and environment (STAGE logframe, July 2022). However, in SHRH limited changes in practice and sometimes, limited knowledge, were found as shown further below.

A majority of caregivers consider that there have been improvements in personal hygiene among the girls as well as their appreciation of the environment. This is supported by the evaluation qualitative findings with caregivers across all regions highlighting girls increased awareness of personal hygiene, cleanliness and awareness of the environment around them. One caregiver from Nadowli (Upper West) stated that girls "***are [more] mindful of what happens in their environment than before, such as personal hygiene***." Most girls across all regions also mention an increase in hygiene and cleanliness with one girl from Upper West saying that now she knows "***how to keep my environment clean, keep my sanitation clean, handle my personal hygiene***". Some girls also elaborate more on the specifics of what personal hygiene practices they learnt with one girl from Upper West stating "***I have learned why we should stop open defecation and practice personal hygiene in school and at home***."

On SRHR, a few girls mention increased knowledge related to rights and safety, however there is a limited amount of evidence on changed practices in this area from the qualitative data. A finding that confirms the gap identified at baseline as well as midline. One girl from Upper East (Kusaal) mentioned that it was useful learning "***those topics on knowing my rights and responsibilities. The one on reproductive rights were also very useful as I used it in my daily life***." But, as mentioned in STAGE monitoring report, "***a small sample of girls shared perceptions regarding SRHR that demonstrate they have improved perceptions and knowledge, but that their practices are unchanged***." Some caregivers also felt that these skills were still lacking, for example one caregiver in Upper East commented "***I think if more of personal hygiene and adolescent reproductive health is taught her, she would be in a better position to be better at being clean and neat all the time. Again, issues of pregnancy would not occur since this is an issue that a lot of our young children encounter in their growth***". However, this is the same caregiver who had said they did not know what their girl had learnt in ALPs, so it is possible they did learn this, and the caregiver was unaware. This is only one example from the qualitative data, and is not representative of all caregivers, however it is important to highlight some caregivers may not have been as engaged with the STAGE programme as others resulting in a lack of awareness in what girls were taught in ALPS.

Almost all girls report an increase in self-confidence, a view shared by several caregivers and local leaders. One girl from Upper West stated that through ALPs and school she gained a lot of confidence:

> "***I had gained a lot confidence by both schools because at first I used to be very timid but now I can talk in front of my colleagues***".

This is also supported by the girl's caregiver who says, "***I think she has become a little more confident after ALP because she was a very timid child but she is opening up little by little***". Another girl in Upper West commented: "***I can now confidently speak in front of my teachers, peers and adults***". Most of the respondents who report

increased confidence amongst girls link this directly to ALPs. One respondent from the Upper West noted "***My girls' confidence level has been boosted by the Accelerated Learning Programme. This is seen in the way they dress and even talk to adults or people who are older than them***". The other changed referenced most by caregivers was the girls becoming more respectful or responsible. This was also mentioned by one girl in Upper East who said, "***I was taught to treat everyone equally at all times without discriminating against people***".

Money management is also mentioned by many respondents as a life skill gained by girls, and as the most useful for caregivers (mentioned by three caregivers in Upper West, one in Upper East, and one in Northern). This is often further linked to improved numeracy skills as well as the girls' ability to work and provide money for the family by girls and caregivers. One caregiver from Upper West stated that "***My girl money management level has improved due to her involvement in ALP. She's now able to sell farm produce for us on her own***." One girl from Upper West expressed "***I loved the numeracy aspect because it helped me to know how to calculate and know more about money***." Though two caregivers in Upper East mentioned that the girls did learn some money management, but this could also be improved more, to help them with their careers.

Several caregivers, across the regions, however, do not entirely attribute the girls changes in life skills to ALPs and STAGE interventions. Two caregivers, one from Upper East (Kusaal) and one from Upper West feel that the girls' cleanliness has improved but that this was not really thanks to STAGE. When asked about what key skills the girl uses the caregiver from Upper East responds "***when she wakes up in the morning, she doesn't need to be told that she has to sweep the compound, wash bowls and perform other household chores. She takes the initiative to perform all these chores without being reminded to do so***", however when asked if this has changed since ALPs/STAGE the caregiver responds "*no, not really*". A few caregivers also considered the girls improved life skills because they taught the girls so, rather than ALPs. However, several caregivers – especially those in Upper East – state that they did not know what was studied in ALPs, so perhaps this has influenced their perspective on what life skills were learned and their perspective that STAGE did not significantly contribute to the girls' expanded life skills. While this qualitative data does suggest to some extent that the caregivers of the girls may not have been entirely aware of the content of the ALPs including what was learnt in life skills, the fact that this caregiver views girls' better household management as a key skill links to notions of gendered norms in the community.

Both girls and caregivers felt that the life skills component of STAGE added greatly to the girls, both in terms of enhancing their education, and enhancing aspects of their lives beyond school. However, while girls tended to speak about how they had become more respectful to one another, the caregivers spoke more about girls contributing more to the house. This could be seen as a risk as it could imply higher chore burden in the home, if girls are becoming more willing to do so, especially as it is noted that girls are keeping the house cleaner. These findings point to the persistence of social norms where girls are responsible for house chores, or need to help in the family business, beyond going to school (see EQ2.b).

4.2 EQ2. How successfully did STAGE reduce barriers to full participation in formal education or vocational education for highly marginalised girls?

The evidence from the evaluation is unequivocal that almost the totality of girls (including those that are working) have transitioned, have relatively high attendance rates (as it will be explored in this section) and are learning in both literacy and numeracy. Thus, the central idea of the project of working to remove obstacles preventing full participation into education for marginalised girls has been realised to a very large extent.

The evaluation has been tracking since the project start the potential factors behind different learning and transition outcomes (such as having certain socio-demographic characteristics, or experiencing certain types of barriers), with a view to inform the Project's implementation as well as draw some useful lessons for other projects for vulnerable communities. At midline, evidence suggested that subgroups most at risk of not achieving positive transition outcomes were married, mothers, and currently employed, rather than high chore burden girls and those living in remote locations. Economic barriers were still the most prevalent, though impoverished girls had decreased in number and those that were in this subgroup at midline achieved higher than average transition and learning outcomes. On the

other hand, social norms remained a persistent concern as a barrier to enrolment for a small group of beneficiaries, particularly among married girls and mothers. This was expected given that social norms are particularly entrenched in communities, and long-term interventions and concerted efforts are needed to alter social structures. It was noted that challenges in addressing social norms barriers were important both to the relevance of the interventions, but also its sustainability: in fact, whilst STAGE helps remove economic barriers for its duration, those types of intervention will not continue beyond the project; instead, changes in social norms can lead to sustainable changes long after its end.

At the project's end, STAGE's remarkable results in transition and learning are well noted. At the same time, analysis of barriers prevalence (Section 3.1) and of outliers by outcomes (in EQ1) reveals economic, social, demographic and school-related risks to sustained transition and learning for a small number of girls, and for some subgroups more than others. This section thus delves into the possible factors and explanations behind STAGE observed results, and the mechanisms which may have contributed to such results, including through interventions to reduce the identified barriers to education. In doing so, it presents findings overall, as well as in relation to different subgroups of marginalised girls so to identify outliers, if any.

Analysis of outliers aims at drawing useful lessons on what works and where risks persist for reducing barriers to education. It should always be remembered though, that: i) indications of potential barriers to education concern only a small number of girls from some of the subgroups or that were experiencing certain types of barriers (e.g. a small percentage of the girls that are working, or a small percentage of girls in households with unsupportive social norms); ii) learning and transition outcomes might be lower for some subgroups, but results for these subgroups are still remarkable and not far below from the overall average.

STAGE worked to reduce barriers to education across subgroups acting on multiple fronts. First, by making the learning environment more inclusive and conducive to learning in ALPs, both physically, in terms of adequacy of STAGE learning centres; and from a pedagogical/psychological point of view, by encouraging the use of inclusive pedagogy by facilitators and flexible approaches to delivery to cater to the girls' needs (Intermediate Outcome 1 – Attendance, and 2 – Quality of Teaching). Second, by supporting the process of transitioning to school (Outcome 2), through provision of material support to girls. Third, STAGE acted at the district, community and family levels, in an attempt to influence the socio-cultural norms, perceptions and attitudes that perpetuate gender inequality and social exclusion and negatively impact on girls' education (Intermediate Outcome 4 – Increased community and district support for inclusive girls' education). Additionally, STAGE put in place a range of measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on girls' attendance to ALPs and learning (this had been analysed at midline).

Conceptually, this section examines STAGE's contribution to reducing barriers to attendance and education from a double perspective: i) efforts to foster attendance during the ALPs and support transition to school; and ii) efforts to encourage continued attendance to formal school. The former is clearly more under STAGE direct control than the latter; if anything as STAGE does not have control on the extent to which structural deficiencies of the formal school system are addressed or not (findings from the midline evaluation on inadequate class and school structures and materials come to mind) (see also under Section 4.3 EQ3, Sustainability). In terms of STAGE ToC and logframe, this question focuses on Intermediate Outcomes 1 and 4, which contribute especially to Outcome 2, Transition. Use of inclusive pedagogy is examined under EQ4, as part of an analysis of STAGE learning model. Whilst findings on school learning environment are reported under Sustainability.

STAGE contribution to reducing barriers to Girls' Education

Table 24 – IO Indicator 1.1 – Attendance - Baseline (ALP classes), Midline and Endline (Formal School)

IO indicator	Sampling and measuring technique used	Who collected the data?	Baseline level	Target for Midline	Midline level	Target for end line	Endline level
1.1 Attendance rates of girls	39.8% of sample, 20 observations per girl[77] Measured by EE attendance form	EE	86%	90% (from the Logframe)	86.1%	85%	80.7%

Attendance to Accelerated Learning Programme

STAGE annual report, Year 4 considers that the project "has addressed systemic barriers that exclude girls by adapting approaches that fit and address the needs of marginalised girls". Effectively, endline survey data found high rates of attendance to and completion of ALPs, albeit with some variation between subgroups and region/language groups as shown below.

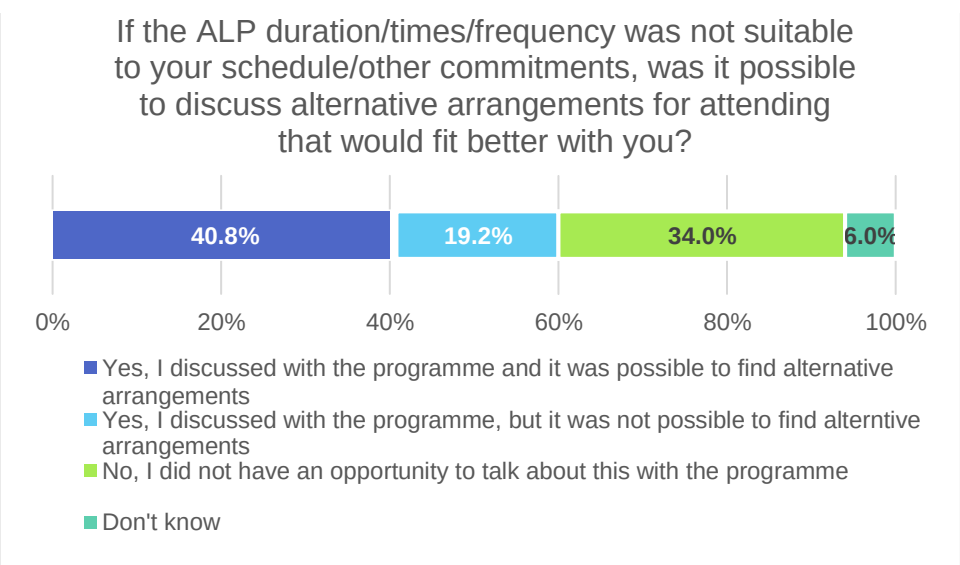
In particular, almost all girls (98.9%, N = 370) reported having completed the ALP (only four did not). One of the facilitators interviewed mentioned that some girls dropped out because their parents were not supportive for them to continue ALPS. On attendance rates, 97.8% of girls stated having attended the ALP either always (40.5%) or most of the times (57.3%). However, GWDs, girls from Upper East (Kasem) and girls under 13 years of age lower the overall average (88.9%, 92.5% and 93.6% respectively). Positively, girls with high chore burden and from poor households were more likely than the average to respond they had attended all or most of the classes (100% and 98.9% respectively). Other key findings on attendance include that 93.5% of girls reported joining the ALP right from the start (with girls from Upper West/Daagare and girls under 13 years of age lowering the overall average) and attending it on average for a year. Though, the average number of months of ALP attendance is higher for girls working under 15, girls under 13 years of age and from Upper West/Daagare (13.2, 13.4 and 13.8 respectively); and lower for girls from poor households, and from Upper East (Kusaal and Kasem languages) (10.7, 10.8 and 10.3 respectively). From the qualitative data in all locations, reasons for not attending included sickness, needing to attend to the farm, helping in the house, or looking after siblings.

Adaptation of the intervention to girls' needs started with STAGE community mapping –conducted at the inception of project activities for each Track and Cohort. At the project start, community mapping identified different marginalisation subgroups, and based on their specific constraints and barriers to education, developed a tailored approach to address their needs so to foster attendance. One key element of adapting to girls' needs has been the flexible approach to delivery of ALPs to allow for girls to attend house chores, work, or other family and life commitments that they might have, through offering of different time slots to attend ALP classes or offering catch up classes. Qualitative findings from midline confirmed the effectiveness of this approach. Endline findings (quantitative and qualitative) corroborate this view, to an extent. In fact, the girls were asked whether STAGE offered the possibility to discuss alternative arrangements for attending that would fit better girls' needs, if the ALP duration/times/frequency were not suitable to girls' schedule/other commitments (Figure 10). Overall, 60% of girls were offered the opportunity to discuss alternative arrangements, and two thirds of these girls were able to find suitable options for attending. It is not possible to know

[77] Data for 276 respondents from the Formal track was collected, with 20 observations per girl (totalling 5,520 observations). Twenty-five of the respondents could not be matched to the full dataset, though are at least from regions that have formal track interventions and therefore they have been included in the sample. This means that there are 276 observations which the evaluation has geographical data for, but only 251 for which there is data on age, characteristics and barriers.

how many of the girls that did not discuss alternative arrangements, did not do so in absence of a need for it. Whilst it emerged from qualitative findings that afternoon classes were particularly appreciated (see EQ4).

Figure 10 - Girls' views on flexible approach to ALP delivery (% of Formal girls, N = 370)



STAGE also aimed at increasing attendance to ALPs through the establishment of appropriate Learning Centres. Midline findings included very positive views on the accessibility of the centre (94.2% of girls strongly agreed or agreed), and space in classrooms for everyone to sit (83.8%). Slightly fewer positive findings related to toilets being always in working conditions and toilets being accessible to all students including those with disabilities. Again, results from Upper West (Daagare) were less positive than in other regions, whilst Northern (Likpakpaaln) and Upper East (Kusaal) tended to be the most positive.

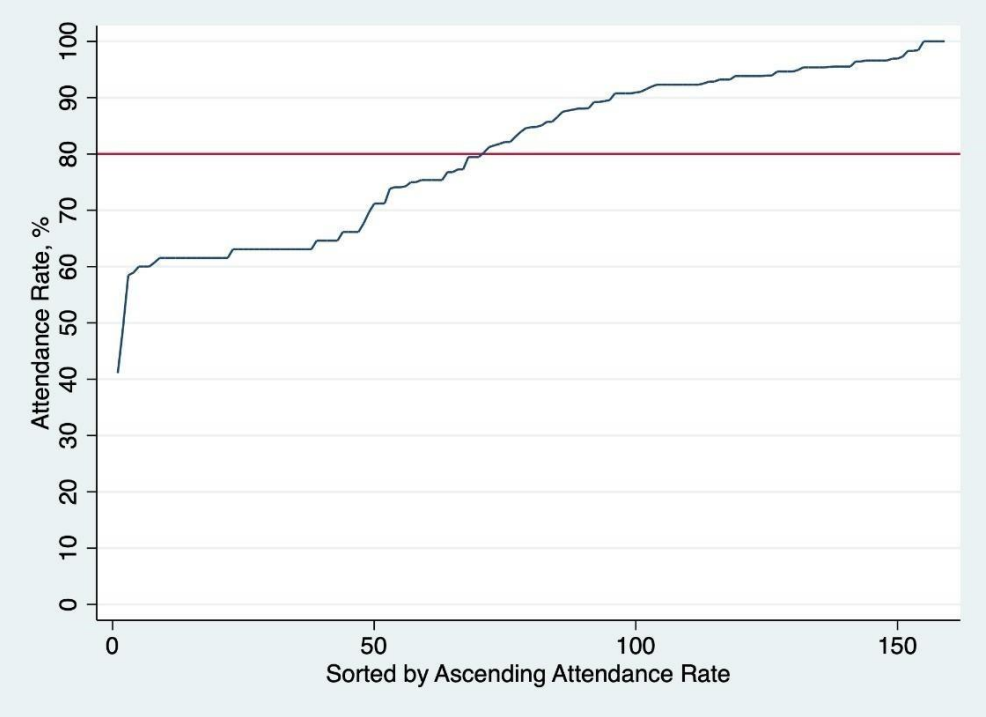
STAGE re-pivoted activities and ALP delivery approach during the COVID-19 pandemic, by developing and implementing a COVID response plan. A key component was the delivery of ALP classes (together with COVID-related health and safeguarding messages) through radios distributed to girls and loudspeakers placed in key community locations; as well as the offer of intensive, catch up (smaller) classes once the peak of the emergency was over to support the transition to school. Indeed, the evaluation had found that attendance of girls to ALPs and VSTs was impacted by COVID. Specifically, a majority of caregivers reported the pandemic affected the girls' ability to attend ALP classes in person (72.7%), not being able to listen to ALP classes remotely (69%) and causing challenges in doing homework (66.9%). Regional disparities had been observed in the reported availability of distance classes, with Upper West (Dagaare) and Upper East (Kusaal) exhibiting the lowest prevalence of remote classes (39.2% and 38.2% respectively), whilst over 85% reported these were available in Upper East (Kasem). Around half of girls interviewed at midline also reported that they were able to attend all or most of the distance ALP sessions and had challenges in doing homework. The evaluation found varying rates of access to functioning radios (with batteries), as well as lack of electricity at home and at the Learning Centre as reasons for not being able to attend classes. COVID also impacted the establishment of bicycle banks for helping girls travel to school, and the delivery of transition packs (STAGE annual report, July 2020).

In conclusion, STAGE was able to put in place strategies for encouraging girls' attendance to ALPs, which have likely contributed to high completion and attendance rates reported by girls (STAGE work on increasing community support to education is addressed in sub question 2.a). There were challenges in the delivery of ALPs and implementation of the COVID response plan. Also, there were varying levels of agreement on the accessibility and appropriateness of STAGE Learning Centres on a range of aspects, though results were overall positive. Notwithstanding the challenges, the midline had also found remarkable learning outcomes, and project monitoring detected an almost total transition rate to school at the end of the transition period. However, an important consideration is that – once girls transition to formal school – scope to implement strategies to encourage attendance would be more limited (monitoring and continued community sensitisation), with potential implications for the sustainability of the project at different levels (see Attendance to School below and EQ3).

Transition and Attendance to School

The evaluation measured attendance to school in two ways. First, by recording formal school attendance in the last four weeks from when data was collected (20 observations per girl in a subsample of schools, school registry check) and calculating the percentage of girls which attended at least 80% of the classes. At midline, attendance was 86.1%, almost the same as the attendance level to ALP classes recorded by WEI at baseline. At endline, recorded mean attendance is 80.7%, meaning the logframe target (85%) has not been achieved and in fact there is a worsening of this indicator since midline. However, it should be noted that those that do not reach the target are not that far below it, as shown by the distribution of attendance rates (Figure 11). Roughly one-third of students attend 60-75% of the time; roughly one third attend 90% of the time or more, and the remaining third are equally dispersed between 75% and 90%.

Figure 11 - Distribution of Girls' Attendance Rates (% of classes attended)



Source: EE Spot checks of School Registries

Table 25 - Distribution of Girls' Attendance Rates (% of classes attended)

	Percent Under 80	Percent Over 80	Average Percent
Kasem Upper East	28.1%	71.9%	87.4%
Dagaare Upper West	51.9%	48.1%	77.4%
Kusaal Upper East	30.4%	69.6%	85.8%
Overall	44.0%	56.0%	80.7%

Note: Data not collected among Likpakpaaln Northern communities.

Source: EE Spot checks of School Registries

Table 26 – Self-reported Attendance (% of Girls Who Attend Formal School by Subgroup)

	Yes, always	Most of time	Sometimes
Overall	52.8%	45.1%	2.1%
Disability Overall	82.6%	13.0%	4.3%
Mother / Married under 15 / Married	N/A	N/A	N/A
High Chore Burden	52.9%	46.1%	1.0%
Works	64.1%	32.1%	3.8%
Lives with neither parent	N/A	N/A	N/A
Works under 15	61.3%	34.0%	4.7%
1+ hours to secondary school	56.3%	41.6%	2.1%
HH unable to meet basic needs	69.4%	27.6%	3.1%
Economic (Work or Costs)	50.6%	47.4%	2.0%
Travel (Safety or Distance)	62.1%	35.6%	2.3%
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	62.5%	36.0%	1.5%
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	47.8%	50.0%	2.2%
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	51.6%	46.2%	2.2%
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	58.9%	39.3%	1.9%
Dagaare Upper West	41.1%	57.7%	1.2%
Kasem Upper East	81.3%	8.3%	10.4%
Kusal Upper East	72.2%	25.9%	1.9%
Likpakpaln Northern	49.2%	50.8%	0.0%

Source: Evaluation Surveys (N = 390)

	Yes, always	Most of time	Sometimes
Note: % exclude 9 girls who reported they never attend classes.			

"_" indicates results differ significantly from the sample average

Attendance was also assessed by enquiring the frequency of attending classes among girls that are enrolled at endline (Table 26, above). Rates of attendance to formal school as reported by girls are relatively high. Excluding nine girls who reported never attending school – even whilst enrolled -, over half of the sample reported attending all classes; 45.1% most of the time; and 2.1% sometimes. This is in line with attendance recorded by the project, as DSP reports revealed that around 86% of the girls who transitioned to formal schools are 'very regular at school'.

Some subgroups seem to fare particularly well in terms of attendance, notably 82.6% of GWDs (and 62.5% of girls affected by the disability/school cannot meet needs barrier) reported attending all classes; as well as girls working (64.1%, result is significant) and working under 15 (61.3%); and girls experiencing the travel and demographic barriers (62.1% and 58.9%). In the interview with the DEO in Bawku West, they highlighted that "***we have also realised that for girls with disabilities there is a high tendency that majority of them will attend ALP classes***". No reason was given for this specifically, however in Bawku West there was reference to the STAGE programme supporting disabled girls to attend a special needs school, which may have an impact on their attendance. On the other hand, girls that are working (under 15 particularly) recorded attending school only 'sometimes' more than the overall average (4.7% respectively vs 3.8%). At midline, girls with high chore burden and from impoverished households exhibited lower attendance rates than at baseline, especially the former (82.9% and 85% respectively). At endline, results of girls with high chore burden are in line with the overall average; whilst results for girls from poor households are substantially better than other subgroups (69.4% reported attending al classes).

As at midline, there is regional variation. Data from checking of the school attendance registers reveal that, the average attendance rate in Upper West is significantly lower than the two groups in Upper East (Table 25 above). Self-reported attendance (girls survey) is continuous (all classes) or very frequent (most of the times) in all regions but Upper East (Kasem), where 10.4% (significant) of girls reported only 'sometimes' attending school (compared to no more than 2% in other region/language groups. Though, Upper East (Kasem) has the largest percentage of girls reporting continuous attendance (81.3%, significant). Upper West and Northern regions have lower than average continuous reported attendance (41.1% - significant, and 49.2% respectively).

There was variation in the reports on school attendance in the qualitative data across the regions, however there is overall corroboration with the survey results. The qualitative data suggests respondents in all locations agree that girls try their hardest to attend school, though there are still some challenges. From the girls interviewed, in Bawku West (Upper East, Kusaal), three of the four attended all class and one only missed class when sick. Overall, in Bawku West, only five girls dropped out of the ALPs. In Nadowli (Upper West, Dagaare), all four girls reported attended every class except when sick. In Yunyoo (Northern, Likpakpaaln), three of the four girls attended every class except when sick or when they had to with their families. In total, in Yunyoo, 23 girls transitioned and none dropped out of the ALPs.

While there was generally good attendance reported by the girls themselves, in Bawku West, the Teacher and DSP both highlighted that attendance is usually poor during the rainy season, as girls are expected to accompany their parents to the farm. This was illustrated by the Teacher, who said ***"We also have seasons where we record very poor attendance to school and that is usually the raining season. This is because parents sometimes want their children to follow them to their farms"***. To note, in Bawku West girls tended to report that their parents are still not supportive of education. These findings are in line with the high share of Formal track girls that were found to be working at endline, mostly in temporary and seasonal work (see EQ1, Transition).

A qualitative finding from Nadowli illustrates the intersectionality of barriers, namely travel and economic-related. In Nadowli, the nearest junior high school is more than five kilometres away. The Teacher explained "***Girls have to travel to the second nearby community to access junior high education: some challenges the girls still face***

includes performing of house chores before going to school in the morning which weighs too much, expensive cost of girls transitioning from basic six to junior high school which is quite far from Naribuo." The distance, cost, and the household responsibilities combined cause girls to have low attendance at school after transition. On the other hand, distance to school did not seem to pose as much of a challenge in Bawku West and Yunyoo.

Contribution to reducing economic and travel barriers

STAGE accompanied girls in their transition process to school and provided material support in a range of forms. The quantitative and qualitative findings concur that this support greatly helped reduce economic related burdens, as well as travel barriers, and has helped sustain attendance to school. However, there are some concerns around its sustainability. This is examined in the following paragraphs. STAGE contribution in reducing other hindrances to transition and attendance, around social norms, demographic, school barriers, and high chore burden through community mobilisation and pedagogy and teaching are addressed under EQ2.a, EQ2.b and EQ4.

Table 27 - STAGE support to transition and attendance to school

		Always have my own	Have to share sometimes	Don't have student / learning materials	Don't know	
Have own textbooks / learning materials	EL	36.5%	44.0%	19.5%	0.0%	
	ML	60.3%	18.7%	19.5%	1.3%	
		WASH kits	**Sanitary wear**	**Both**	**No**	**Don't know**
Have received WASH kits and/or sanitary wear	EL	33.3%	56.8%	1.3%	8.3%	0.5%
	ML	2.5%	26.1%	2.2%	67.6%	1.4%
		Yes	**No**	**Don't know**		
Have received school Transition pack (e.g., uniform, stationery, bag, pencil	EL	96.8%	2.2%	0.5%		
Have received support on how to use reusable sanitary pads	EL	79.8%	18.5%	1.7%		
Have received support/information on scholarships for attending school	EL	75.0%	20.5%	4.5%		
Received information from your facilitator or CoC member on how to access child protection services	EL	75.5%	20.3%	4.2%		
	ML	58.4%	36.0%	5.5%		

Source: Analytical Surveys: Midline N = 390; Endline N = 400

The most common barriers respondents claimed were reduced are economic-related; this was largely attributed to the provision of the transition kits, which was a similar finding to the midterm evaluation. Transition kits include uniform, stationary, a bag, books, and were received by 96.8% of girls surveyed. In addition, as the transition happened when the pandemic emergency was still ongoing, STAGE provided girls with WASH kits. Sanitary wear (reusable pads) was also to be provided. In total, 33.3% of girls reported receiving WASH kits, a majority (56.8%) sanitary wear, and 1.3% both (Table 27).

The contribution of the transition kits in reducing financial barriers was mentioned by caregivers in all three locations, as well as by the girls, facilitators, teachers and head teachers. For example, in Bawku West, a caregiver commented "***It has been extremely useful and made things easier. This is because of the transition pack that was given to them. I did not have to buy uniforms, books, bags, pens and pencils. It has relieved me of the struggle of getting her all these items***". Similarly, in Nadowli, a caregiver said "***The girls received assistance in the form of books, bags, pencils, and pens, most importantly sanitary pads. This has gone a long way to reduce my burden in sending my girls to school***". And in Yunyoo, a caregiver also spoke about the reduction in financial burdens due to the transition kits, when they said "***Things are better now than before. This time the child has been provided with school uniform and other things. I will not have had money to buy them. Even books and pencils were given***". Of the items received in the transition kits, school uniforms and sanitary pads were often commented on, including by the girls, such as this in Bawku West "***the transition pack helped me a lot. It saved my parents from buying those items especially the school uniform***". On (reusable) sanitary pads, it is important to note that almost 80% of girls also reported receiving information on how to use them (Table 27).

As economic-related barriers were generally seen as the biggest challenge in both girls and boys attending school, the contribution of STAGE is notable. However, despite this reduction for the girls who participated in STAGE, respondents in each community still feel as though economic challenges are the biggest barrier to education in the communities, also confirmed by the quantitative data (Section 3.1). This was illustrated by one caregiver in Nadowli, who stated that three of their four children were in formal school, and when asked why the fourth was not, they responded with "***I don't have money to adequately cater for all of them in school***". Similarly, while the transition kits have been quoted as the most useful, concerns were raised by the Religious Local Leader in Yunyoo, who said "***most families are not able to support the children because of their economic status. So now that the STAGE people are going, I am wondering if the parents will be able to continue with the supports***". A related survey finding is that a much higher percentage of girls at endline than at midline has sometimes to share textbooks/learning materials (44% vs 18.7%), whilst around 20% still does not have access to these. All of this suggests that while the transition kits have helped to support girls to enter education, it may not be a sustainable solution if poverty remains the biggest barrier in the community. The Project informed that transition kits have been provided for the year 2023 as well. Further, they informed that GES should provide some transition kits through support from central government, Non-Governmental Organisations and individuals, though this has not been probed through the evaluation.

As seen in Section 3.1, travel barriers are still felt by a consistent share of girls, One of the STAGE activities that was intended to relieve the pressure of travel costs and distance was the provision of bicycle banks. The bicycles were often cited as useful but sometimes it is mentioned that there were not enough bikes or that they frequently broke down. For example, in Bawku West, the DEO explained "***what did not work well was the distribution of the bicycles, which some children did not received nearly made the success of the programme, but we thank God that we had to explain and parents understood us leading to paring of some children and this did not actual help such children due to frequent breakdowns***". Additionally, girls in Bawku West, Nadowli and Yunyoo expressed that there were not enough bikes, as did some caregivers in Yunyoo. While the bikes did go some way in supporting the girls who needed to travel long distances, the perception seemed to be that it was not benefitting all the girls who needed them. Additionally, with the high rates of poverty in the community, there is no information on how the bikes will be maintained in the future.

STAGE contribution to positively effect social change

EQ2.a To what extent have STAGE interventions at various levels (district, community and school) been able to positively influence the socio-cultural norms, perceptions and attitudes that perpetuate gender inequality and social exclusion?

STAGE work with girls' families, communities and stakeholders such as teachers, leaders, Community Oversight Committees (CoCs), former facilitators and district actors aimed at changing socio-cultural norms, perceptions and attitudes which hinder girls' participation to education. These include, for example, that education is not worth for girls as it is for boys, that some groups (e.g., GWDs) should be excluded by education, or gendered roles of girls/women mainly as housewives, helping with family work and household chores. Whilst there are important economic and practical factors as to why many girls are excluded from education – poverty and the need to contribute to family livelihoods, or mothers' duty to care for their children -, it is often because of socio-cultural norms that girls are disproportionately affected by such factors, compared to boys/men. Indeed, midline findings had suggested that STAGE should continue working on ways to reduce barriers particularly on girls' chore burdens.

STAGE work included community mobilisation, primarily through regular community animation sessions, monitoring and home visits to families to sensitise on the importance of girls' education and encourage enrolment into and attendance to school, including for marginalised girls. In STAGE ToC and logframe, Intermediate Outcome 4 tracks community and district support for inclusive girls' education. This evaluation question presents findings on support from key stakeholders for girls' education, first and foremost their families/caregivers; secondly, communities; and third, district-level authorities in charge of education policy implementation and administration. Lastly, under this question changes in girls' attitudes to education are also examined.

Support among Caregivers/families

Caregivers and families support for girls' education was measured quantitatively and qualitatively, as well as characterising the support as either 'basic' or 'active', both presented in the following paragraphs.

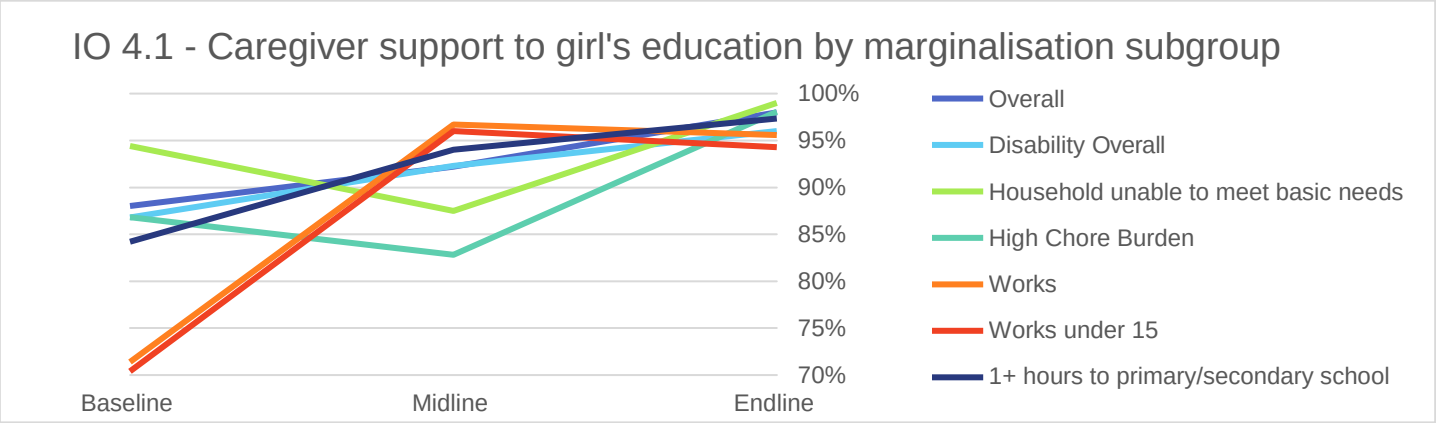
Table 28 – IO indicator 4.1 Family support for girls' education: Baseline, Midline and Endline

IO indicator	Sampling and measuring technique	Who collected the data?	Baseline level	Target for midline	Midline level	Target for end line	Endline level
4.1 % of caregivers who feel it is equally viable to invest in a girl's education as a boy's education even when funds are limited	Same sampling as Household Survey Question PCG_32g (Strongly agree or agree)	EE	88%	EE: 90%	92.2%	EE: 95%	98%

In terms of basic support, STAGE logframe IO indicator 4.1 measures the prevalence of caregivers who feel it is equally viable to invest in a girl's education as a boy's education even when funds are limited (Table 28 above). Findings from baseline to endline denote that there has been a sustained improvement in the prevalence of caregivers agreeing with this statement, from 88% to 98%, a 10 pp difference. The almost totality of caregivers also responded that they think a girl is just as likely to use her education as a boy (70.3% strongly agreed with the statement, and 28% agreed). The qualitative findings support this result. In all three locations, caregivers expressed their support for

boys' and girls' education equally. Almost all the girls agreed that their families tend to support the girls and boys equally in attending school. This is a finding that has changed from midline, where there was still some preference to sending boys to school over girls. However, evidence of some unintended effects emerged from the interviews: caregivers are expressing that as a result of STAGE now some families are supporting girls over boys. This is exemplified by one local leader in Nadowli (Upper West), who said "ladies are now the majority of the population in the school due to STAGE intervention unlike those days. Those who dropped out are easily spoken too to go back. Parental support in supporting girls' education has improved unlike those days". Additionally, one parent in Nadowli said that all their children are in formal school except the boys, as they did not get the support from STAGE: "I don't have money to adequately cater for their expenses in school". This suggests that the support for girls' education in this particular instance is closely linked to the material support provided by STAGE, as poverty is still one of the biggest challenges. Overall, the evaluation findings corroborate project reporting: "within the communities, the focus of engagements and direction of discussions at the various community animation sessions point to a significant shift in the narrative with regards to investing in both girls' and boys' education" (STAGE logframe, Feb – Apr 2022).

Figure 12 - IO 4.1 - Caregiver support to girl's education by marginalisation subgroup

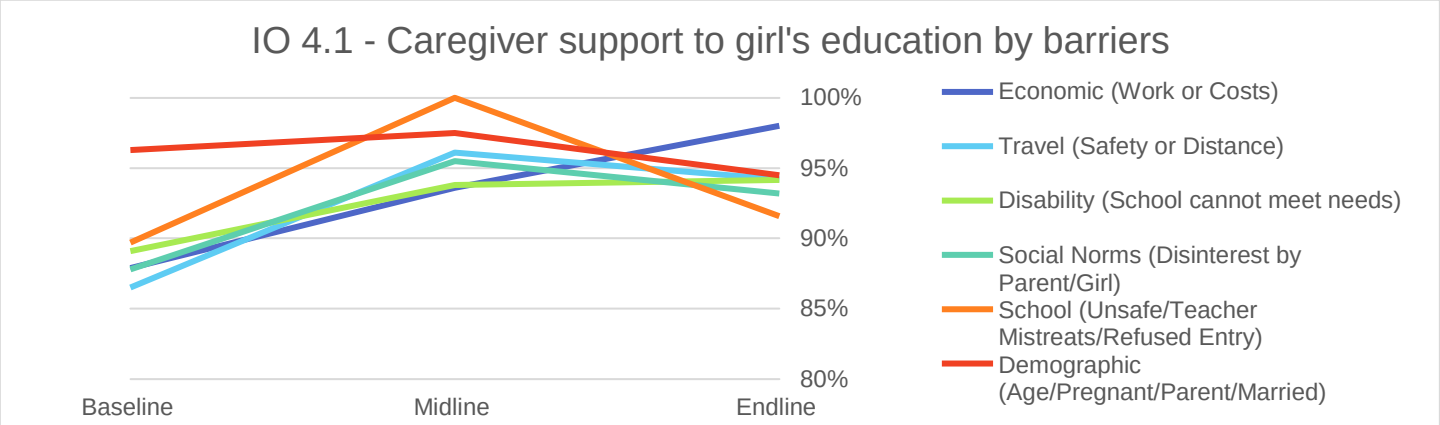


Positive progress concerned all marginalisation subgroups where data is available,[78] even though different trajectories are observed across evaluation points. For girls working and working under 15, the lowest levels of caregivers' support had been recorded at baseline (around 70%); these substantially increased at midline (over 96%), to decline slightly by endline (95.6% and 94.3% respectively). An opposite trend was seen for girls with high chore burden and from poor households, whereby caregivers' support decreased at midline, but at endline is at higher levels than at the project start (+11.3 and 10.1 pp). This finding supports what found by a recent STAGE internal rapid assessment, which found a convergence of views among girls, caregivers, teachers and school leaders with regards to support for girls' education. According to the assessment, this has helped to reduce high chore burdens and other barriers to regular attendance in schools (STAGE logframe).

Overall, the prevalence of caregiver's support across all subgroups, barriers and region/language groups has increased compared to the project start, except for girls affected by the demographic barriers (-1.8 pp). A notable trend is that vocal support by caregivers have slightly declined since midline for girls whose caregivers reported any kind of barrier to education, exception made for the economic barrier (+10.1 increase in prevalence of support). Whilst high levels of support for girls experiencing barriers were found at the project start, which would limit the scope for

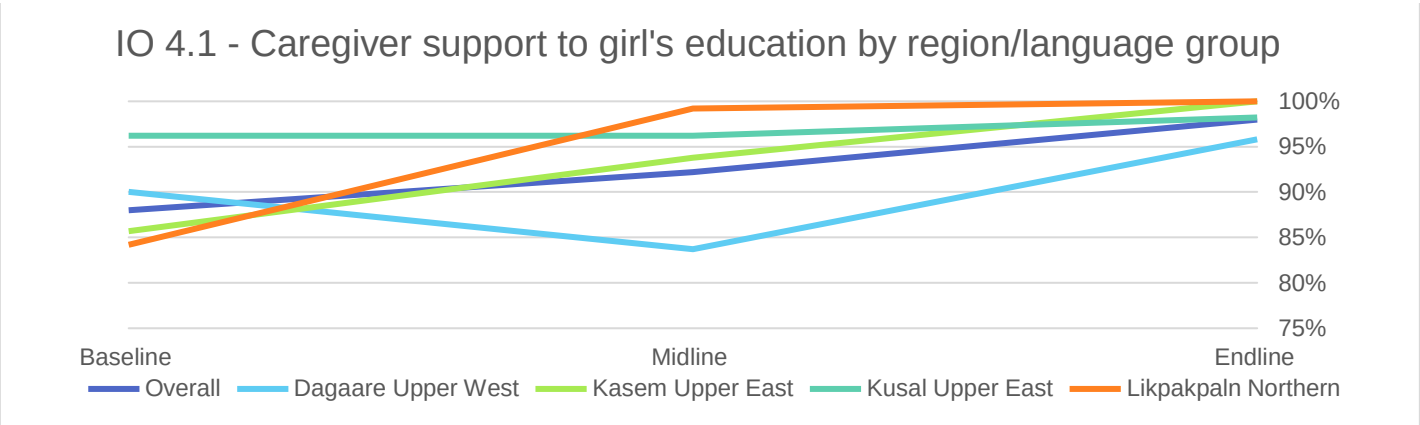
[78] As for all indicators, it was not possible to track progress for mothers/married/married under 15 or girls living with neither parent.

Figure 13 - IO 4.1 - Caregiver support to girl's education by barriers to education



improvement, this data confirms midline findings on the effectiveness of the project in addressing the economic barriers to education and point to the persistence of other barriers such as demographic, school and social norms related.

Figure 14 - IO 4.1 - Caregiver support to girl's education by region/language group

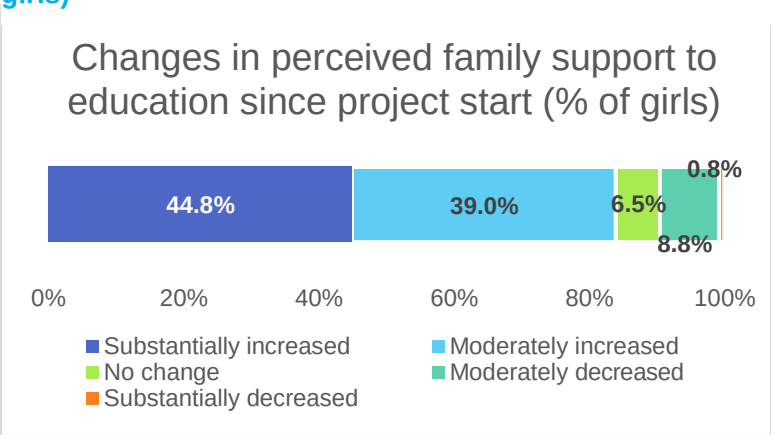


Support levels among caregivers are high across region/language groups, though slightly lower for Upper West (Dagaare, with 95.8%). Further, positive progress is sustained across evaluation points for all areas. For further details on disaggregation for this indicator, see Table 60 in Annex 13.

Insights from the quantitative and qualitative data speak to what extent STAGE has contributed to change support, and how so. Girls were asked whether they felt there has been a change in family's support since the start of the STAGE programme. The large majority (84%) considered that support either substantially increased (44.8%) or

moderately increased (39.0%). A small percentage of girls said that there was no change, and the rest said that it worsened moderately or substantially (Figure 15).

Figure 15 - Changes in family support to education (% of girls)



Analysis by subgroups reveals large variation in changes in perceived support. For example, it is notable that 98% of girls with high chore burden, 92.5% of girls with demographic barriers, 91.3% of GWDs, and 89.1% of girls working under 15 perceived increased levels of support. Girls with economic-related, travel and disability barriers also reported higher results than the overall average. On the other hand, larger shares of girls with school and social norms barriers felt that the support had moderately decreased since the start of the project (20.2% and 14% respectively for the two subgroups). It is also concerning that only 59.4% of girls from Upper East (Kusaal) reported improvements in support, whilst 25% felt there had been no change, and 15.6% a moderate decrease (see Table 61 in Annex 13 for the full disaggregation).

As with baseline and midline, qualitative evidence in all three communities revealed mostly positive attitudes to education by caregivers, including a desire for their girls to complete school; There was however indication of the persistence of unsupportive social norms in some cases. In Bawku West, two caregivers said that they want the girls to continue, one said she wanted the girl to be a teacher or nurse and be an example to others in the community, while the other said she wants the girl to help the family financially. In Nadowli, all three caregivers said they expect the girl to finish school, get employment and return to be useful to the community; two said expect to go to university. In Yunyoo, two caregivers said their views have changed, they now see the importance of education. One said they want them to get a job but then get married.

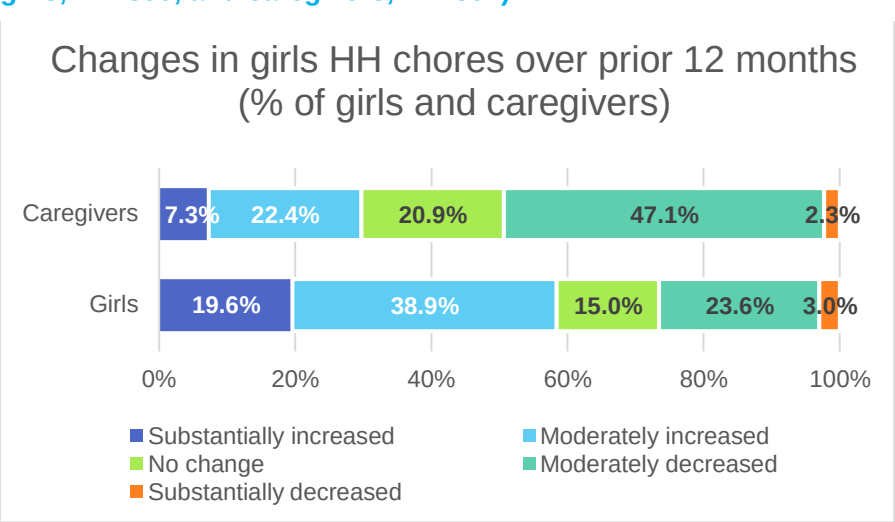
However, there were also instances of pessimistic views on families' attitudes to education and indication of persistence of unsupportive social norms. In this respect, the local leaders in Nadowli said "girls' education is not taken seriously by most parents. They consider it as a waste with the mind-set that they will be pregnant within the shortest possible time. They consider it as a waste". While the District Education Director (DEO) in Nadowli also said "sensitization of parents and difficulty in retaining all girls at school in some communities did not work well." Similarly, the DSP in Bawku West (Upper East, Kusaal) considered that "the attitude of some parents still has some negative effect on some girls' attendance as they would want them to accompany them to the markets, farms, the break-down of their bicycles, and in some cases staying back home to take care of their siblings". The Head Teacher in Bawku West also mentioned that "***some parents come to the school to report their children's refusal to attend school instead of encouraging them to come. Others too expect their children to go to their farms with them during school periods. When the parents are invited to attend Parents Teacher Association meeting, we record very few attendances***". There do not seem to be as many reports of these more negative attitudes towards girls' education in Yunyoo (Northern). In Yunyoo, the DSP said that "difficulty has been with convincing the guardians of fostered children to allow them transition to formal school, alas, we were able to navigate through with persistence engagements".

Some girls too expressed that their families were still not supportive of their education. For example, one girl in Bawku West, when asked if her family supports her education said *"no, I think they see education as a waste of time*". Another girl in Bawku West, who said her family does not place much value on education considered ***"I think it is because they themselves have not been educated so they don't encourage you to attend. I also believe it has to do with the finance that is involved in educating a child***". Some girls expressed that their parents do not see the importance of education, because they still believe that supporting at home or on the farm is a more valuable opportunity for them. Despite this, in Nadowli, all four girls interviewed said their parents have been supportive, three

said their parents or family are now supporting them financially to continue education. Three said the support has changed a result of STAGE, and one said that they were always supportive but now do more. For example, one girl said, "***my parents at times sell animals/farm products to support my education***". While in Yunyoo two of the four girls said that as a result of STAGE, they now want them to go to school instead of the farm and one said it was as a result of school meetings. The other two said their families have always been supportive but did not have the finances to go to school.

These examples of more active support for girls' education are positive. Indeed, the survey found that the percentage of caregivers who 'actively support' education[79] has increased since midline –where it had declined compared to the project's start – and it is now slightly higher than at baseline. In effect, 32.6% of caregivers met all criteria to be characterised as 'actively supporting', from 27.3% at baseline and 15.1% at midline (see also EQ3, Sustainability below). The basic level of supportive attitudes has also increased from 89.6% at midline to 92.7% at endline. However, these findings confirm that there is a substantial difference in the prevalence of basic/vocal support or agreeing to statements such as whether girls' education is as worth investing on as boys', and actionable, demonstrable support.[80]

Figure 16 - Changes in girls HH chores over prior 12 months (% of girls, N = 399, and caregivers, N = 397)



A further indication of the nuances and complexity involved in perceptions, views and attitudes towards girls' education is given by survey responses on house chores. Even if perceptions on family's support are overall positive, especially for high chore burden girls, most girls reported that the house chores increased over the last year, either substantially (19.5%) or moderately (38.9%). The data also shows a discrepancy between caregivers and girls' views on this aspect, with a majority of caregivers thinking that house chores either moderately decreased or there was no change (47.1% and 20.9% respectively) (Figure 16). For context, three quarters of caregivers reported that at household level there was either no change in chores (26.4%) or there are fewer chores (48.9%). These findings resonate with qualitative evidence reported above, including caregivers' perceptions of girls' life skills (EQ1), whereby some caregivers hinted at girls being better at house chores or doing family work as a result of increased life skills and better money management.

Overall, evaluation evidence supports STAGE reporting to an extent, according to which the "major shifts in the expressed support, among stakeholders, for girls' education" are reflected in a "reduction in chore burdens and the high attendance of girls at the VST centres and school". Whilst indeed attendance rates are relatively high, they do not seem to be accompanied by widespread changes in the distribution of house chores in the household.

[79] Active support is defined as meeting all of the following conditions: i) key knowledge, understanding, and a basic level of supportive attitude towards girl's education (measured through positive responses to the following survey questions: 1. Do you think [GIRL] has a right to education even though she is not in school?; 2. To what extent do you agree that "even when funds are limited it is worth investing in a girl's education?; 3.To what extent do you agree "a girl is just as likely to use her education as a boy?); ii) Active support: 1. Caregivers did not say any of the following were acceptable reasons for a child not to attend school: child needs to work, child needs to help at home, child is married, child is too old, child unable to learn, education is too costly, child is a mother; 2. When asked, girls stated that chores, work supporting home economic activities, or working in a family business were not a reason keeping her from enrolling in school or a vocational education programme

[80] At midline, an analysis of correlations between active support and quality of teaching indicators and outcomes had found that these two factors could explain nearly 10% of the variations in outcome results.

Additionally, d All of this goes to show how gendered roles in households are deeply rooted and complex to change as families can be overtly unsupportive or might not even fully realise their biases (as exemplified by the findings on house chores). Qualitative findings also point to regional differences, as it seems like in Upper East (Kusaal) there were the least changes in family support for girls' education, whilst in Upper West there were the most mentions of instances of active support, and in general of positive changes in views. Importantly, project monitoring (STAGE logframe) acknowledged that vocal support for education needs to turn into active, demonstrable, and actionable support, which is made difficult by prevailing economic challenges of families. As one caregiver in Yunyoo said "***The support has actually changed. As for the family or community what can we do. We can only encourage the children to go to school because we don't have money to buy them what they need***."

Community support

STAGE work with communities was two-folded. First, it aimed at changing social norms around girls' education at a general community level, so that girls would feel supported in getting back/continuing going to school, and stigma around continuous education for some groups especially would be reduced (GWDs, mothers, married girls among others). Activities included community animation sessions as an avenue to conduct sensitisation on the importance of inclusive girls' education (see subsection below).

Second, the project engaged with religious and traditional leaders to leverage the respect/trust they enjoy in their respective communities and encourage them to actively mobilise girls' families in support of their education. This included regular home visits, and *ad hoc* communications/interventions when a girl would be at risk of reduced attendance to or dropping out of ALPs and school.

As such, assessment of community leaders' involvement in supporting girls' education looked at both speaking up about it in communities, as well as actively mobilising households for this cause.

Table 29 – IO indicator 4.2 Community support to girls' education: Baseline, Midline and Endline

IO indicator	Sampling and measuring technique used	Who collected the data?	Baseline level	Target for midline	Midline level*	Target for end line	Endline
4.2 Extent that religious and traditional leaders actively mobilise households to support excluded girls into education.	Same sampling as Household Survey Question PCG_34g2 [81]	EE	1	Logframe: +20% (level 2 or higher)	2 (27.4% leaders spoke at least quarterly in support of girls' education)	Level 3 (EE proposed: 32% leaders speak at least quarterly)	53.9%
*Support as reported by caregivers via the Household survey							

[81] Responses to question: PCG_34g2: How often (have leaders in your community spoken out in support of girls' education? Quarterly or more frequently (monthly, weekly).

Table 30 – Community support for girls' education: Endline and Midline

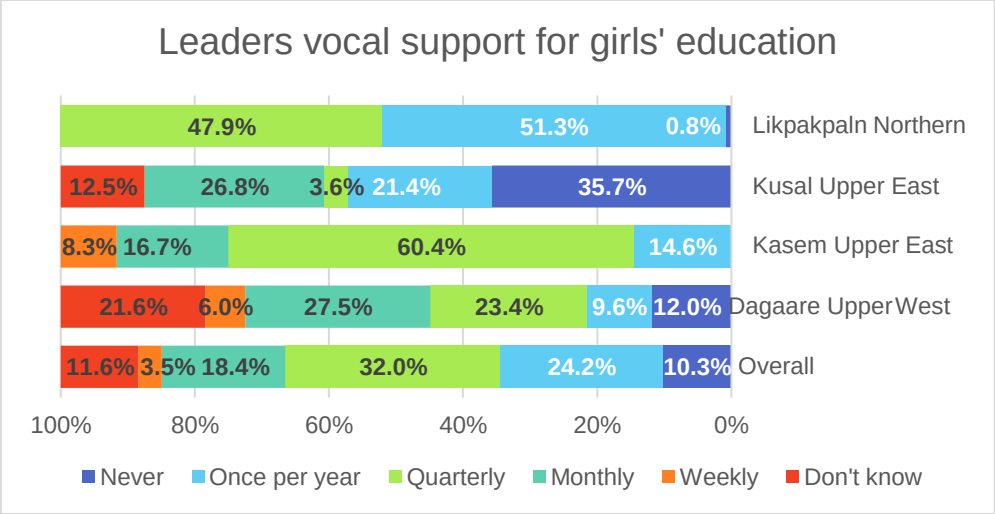
Question	N	Responses					
Have leaders in your community spoken out in support of girls' education?		**Yes**	**No**	**Don't Know**			
Endline	397	77.3%	11.3%	11.3%			
Midline	689	55.6%	30.8%	13.6%			
How often?		**Weekly**	**Monthly**	**Quarterly**	**Once a year**	**Never**	**Don't know**
Endline	397	3.5%	18.4%	32%	24.2%	10.3%	11.6%
Midline	689	0.6%	9.1%	17.7%	29.6%	18.9%	24.1%
On which occasions have they spoken out in support of girls' education?		**During religious/ community meetings**	**At home visits**	**Both**	**Don't know**		
Endline	397	57.2%	4%	18.1%	20.7%		
Midline	689	39.5%	3.2%	21.3%	36.0%		
Have they taken action to support girls to remain in school?		**Yes**	**No**	**Don't Know**			
Endline	397	31.7%	23.4%	44.8%			
Midline	689	26.3%	42.2%	31.5%			
Have they worked to ensure more out of school girls are enrolled?		**Yes**	**No**	**Don't Know**			
Endline	397	28%	27.2%	44.8%			
Midline	689	25.7%	42.5%	31.8%			
Do you feel supported by your community in your education?		**Yes, very much**	**Yes, a little**	**No**	**Don't Know**		

Endline	399	40.9%	35.8%	18%	5.3%		
Midline	694	24.0%	45.0%	18.2%	12.9%		
Source: Analytical Dataset Caregiver survey Girl Survey							

Caregivers were asked several questions on the type and frequency of support shown by community leaders (Table 30). Asked whether leaders have spoken out in favour of girls' education, a much higher share of caregivers responded affirmatively at endline than at midline: 77.3% vs 55.6%, a change of over 22 pp. These actions mostly take place at religious/ community meetings (57.2% of endline responses), and to a lesser extent both at community meetings and home visits. In total, 22.1% of caregivers reported this happened during home visits.

A substantial shift is also observed in the frequency of reports of community leaders speaking out for girls' education (IO indicator 4.2 in STAGE logframe): at endline, over half of caregivers (53.9%) stated this happens at least quarterly, from 27.4% at midline (Table 31). There is however substantial regional variation in the perceptions of caregivers (Figure 17): whilst 10.3% of caregivers overall stated leaders talking about girls' education 'never' takes place, this figure goes up to 35.7% in Upper East (Kusaal), and 12% in Upper West (Dagaare). Furthermore, in Northern (Likpakpaaln) a majority stated expression of support happens once a year. On the other hand, Upper East (Kusaal) and Upper West (Dagaare) is where there is a lot of variation in responses, with 26.8% and 27.5% of caregivers that stated leaders speak up monthly, respectively. A relatively large share of caregivers also does not know, though much less than at midline (11.6% vs 24.1%).

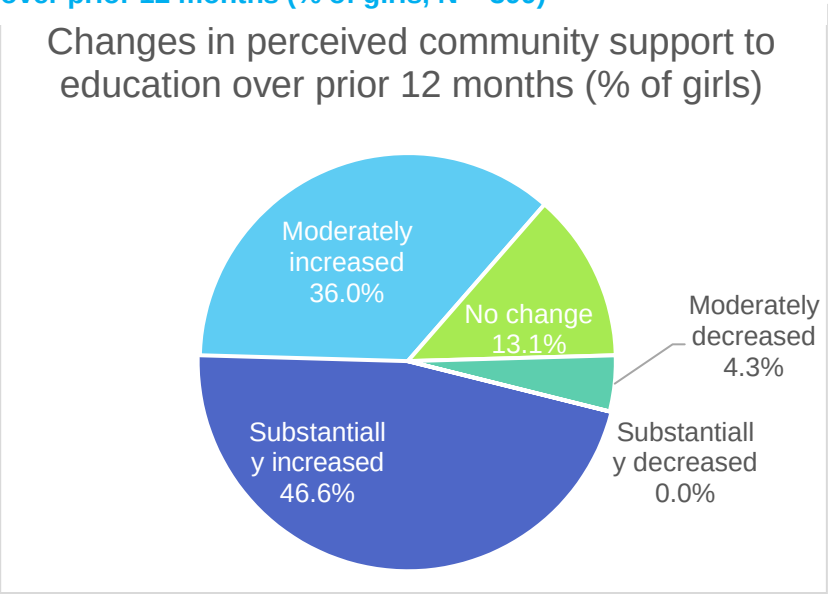
Figure 17 - Frequency of leaders speaking in favour of girls' education (% of caregivers, N = 370)



Endline data also reveal more caregivers than at midline reported community and religious leaders have taken action to support girls to remain in school: 31.7% responded affirmatively at endline against 26.3% at midline. Of the 126 survey open responses, over 110 stated that leaders support girls' education by talking/ advising/ counselling/ encouraging them to go to school; very few mentioned material support provided by leaders (learning materials, books, pencils and mobilising funds); and few specifically mentioned home visits. Although, there is large regional variation: only 14% and 2% of caregivers in Upper East (Kusaal) and Upper West (Dagaare) stated so, and 64% in Upper East denied any specific actions had taken place from leaders. To note, the percentage of caregivers who did not know is almost 45%. A similar trend is noted on caregivers' reports of leaders working to ensure more girls are enrolled in school (28% responded they did, at endline; a slight improvement over midline). Again, a majority of caregivers in Upper East (Kusaal) felt that leaders are not working to keep girls enrolled in school (57.1%), and no caregiver in Upper West (Dagaare) reported leaders have taken action in this sense (most did not know how to respond).

In terms of girls' perceptions on community support, there was no change in the share of girls that said they do not (18%). Positively though, substantially more girls at endline than at midline said they feel very supported (40.9% vs 24%). There are also clear indications that the perceived community support for girls increased over the 12 months prior to data collection for a large majority of girls (82.5%), and for almost half (46.6%), support substantially increased. Of the 383 open responses from the survey, several girls mentioned that they feel supported by their leaders as these keep encouraging/advising/talking to girls and families about the importance of education; a few mentioned they participate to Parent Teacher Association and/or community meetings on girls' educations; a few also mentioned they did not receive any support; there was a mention on leaders advising families to reduce girls' chore burden.

Figure 18 - Changes in perceived family support to education over prior 12 months (% of girls, N = 399)



There is some variation in perceptions of community support for education among subgroups. Notably, girls with high chores, disability and school barriers reported higher feelings of being supported (above 92%); whilst girls from poor households were less likely to report so (77%). Regionally, findings from Upper East (Kusaal) point to substantially lower feelings of community support having increased over the last year: only 31.3% of girls stated so, against 89% or more in other regions. A majority felt there had been no change (51.6%) (see Table 62 in Annex 13 for full disaggregation).

The qualitative data on local leaders and community support for girls' education is similar and linked to that of caregivers' support for girls' education. Overall, whilst community attitudes are changing, there still seem to be some barriers that remain. This seemed to be most prominent in Bawku West (Upper East, Kusaal), where one caregiver highlighted "***I think some of the community members as well as some family members do not see the importance of education, so they do not even encourage their children to go to school***". Bawku West is one of the communities in which most respondents noted not attending, or not being aware of community animation or sensitisation sessions (see below). It is unclear if there is a causal relationship between the two, however there could be a connection between them.

As at midline, the qualitative data shows that local leaders are all in support of girls' education. It was evident that some local leaders were more involved in the STAGE project, for example in Yunyoo, one local leader was vocal about their support and stated "***for me as the community leader, what I can do is to keep advising my people because I don't have any money to support them. So, I am doing that. I keep talking to the men of the community to take the education of their children seriously***". Others spoke about how they wish to continue to support the community after the STAGE project ends, for example on local leader in Bawku West commented "***I will encourage parents to try and adopt my style especially those that have not most importantly my elders.***" Qualitative findings also revealed of instances of leaders contributing to safeguarding girls and keeping them safe, which was also favoured by the training they received. For example, in Yunyoo, the Traditional Local Leader said "***if there is any abuse case in the community, I think it's my duty as the chief to solve the matter. But if it goes beyond me, I will involve the police. We have also been informed by the STAGE to report abuse cases to the district office***" (see below on Safeguarding).

Overall, these findings support project reporting, which found evidence of "considerable support for girls' education among traditional leaders and religious leaders" across communities (STAGE logframe, Feb – Apr 2022). According to the project, there is an ongoing collaboration between traditional leaders (part of CoCs) and caregivers to retain their children in school; as well as instances of collaboration between leaders and DSP staff to undertake monitoring at the ALPs. Further, according to STAGE, the regular monitoring visits by community leaders of girls' enrolment and attendance to school is a sign of high interest among them in the interventions being rolled out. The project reported that support from teacher mentors, CoCs, former facilitators and caregivers have contributed to positive attendance results and low dropout rates, in addition to other factors (such as catch-up classes, see EQ4 under STAGE training model). Notwithstanding this, the quantitative data also highlighted that: i) reports of leaders actually taking action for girls' education are less frequent than speaking out in favour of it; ii) multiple findings, both from caregivers and girls, point to lower perceived levels of support (spoken and actions taken) in Upper East (Kusaal), and to a lesser extent, in Upper West (Dagaare).

Community animation sessions

EQ2.a.1 What role did community animation sessions and engagements have in promoting GESI at the community and district levels?

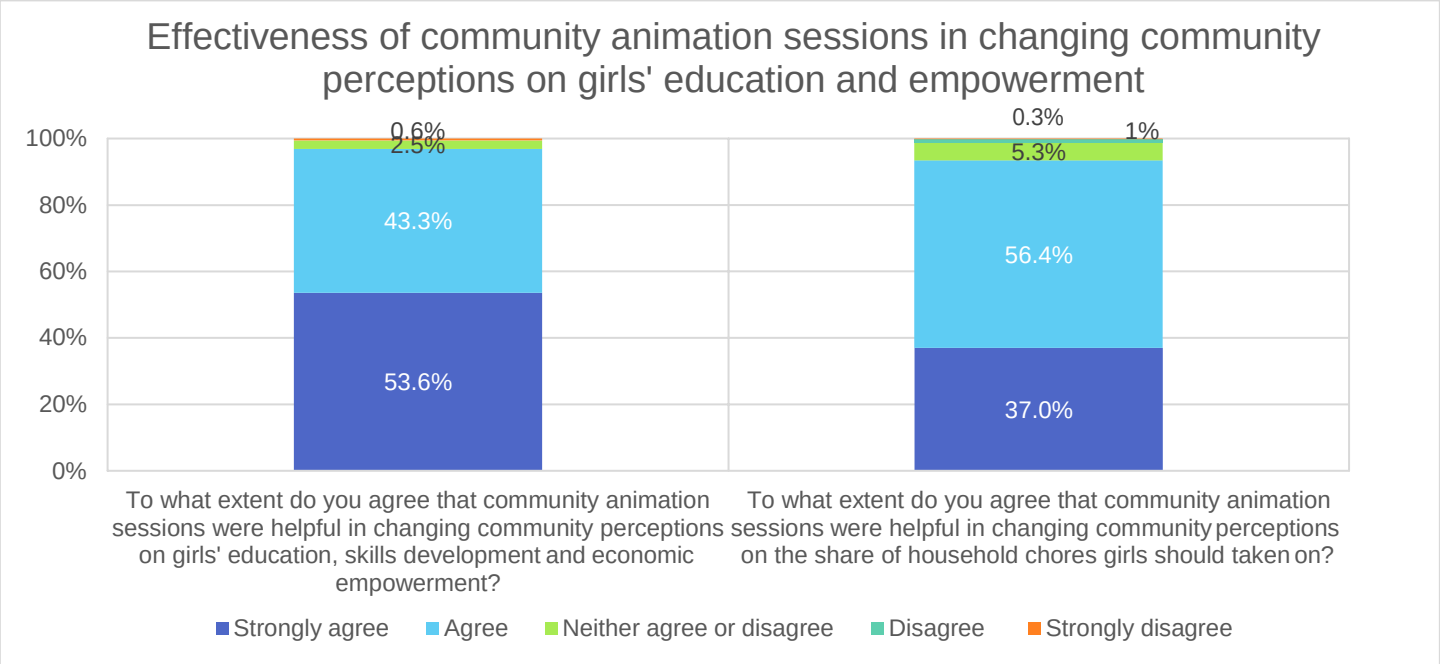
As mentioned, community animation and sensitisation sessions were one of key STAGE activities implemented intended to raise awareness on the importance of inclusive girls' education, issues of gender equality, safeguarding and GBV, and equality between girls and boys in class. Quantitative and qualitative findings point to the effectiveness of this activity in increasing support for girls' education from families and communities, and knowledge of the challenges marginalised girls face.

Table 31 - Awareness and participation to STAGE community animation sessions (% of caregivers)

	N	Yes	No	Don't know
Were you aware of community animation sessions that took place as part of the STAGE programme?	397	80.9%	15.1%	4.0%
Did you attend the community animation sessions that took place as part of the STAGE programme?	321	89.7%	10.3%	

STAGE community animation sessions were familiar to 80.9% of caregivers. Out of these, almost 90% participated to them (Table 31).

Figure 19 - Caregivers' views on effectiveness of community animation sessions (% of caregivers)



Caregivers were asked to what extent they thought that community animation sessions were helpful in changing community perceptions on girls' education, skills development and economic empowerment, as well as on the share of household chores girls should take on (Figure 19). The almost totality of caregivers strongly agreed or agreed with the former statement, and a majority (53.6%) strongly agreed with it. Whilst there is widespread agreement also on the helpfulness of this STAGE activity in changing views around girls' household chores (93%), there are less caregivers (37%) that strongly agreed with this statement than the former. This finding should be considered together with the contrasting views of caregivers and girls on changes in the share of household chores over the last 12 months, with caregivers thinking that overall, they had moderately decreased, as opposed to girls.

In addition, the qualitative data revealed that STAGE activities, including community animation sessions, have been impactful on raising awareness on challenges such as safeguarding, GBV, and disability, which also stood out as key barriers to education. In fact, at the community and district level, many were already aware of the financial and travel barriers, but less so of safeguarding, GBV and disability. Nevertheless, financial constraints do seem to permeate community discussions on girls' education. As evidenced by the Traditional Local Leader in Yunyoo, who said "***at every community meeting we discuss the issues of our children's education…. The growing interest of the community members in the in girls' education is encouraging except that we are economically unable to support like we wish to***". Further, from the qualitative data it would seem that community animation sessions, along with the Gender Inclusive Training had an impact on changing corporal punishment in schools (see under EQ2.b and EQ4 for further details); and that community sensitisation as well as school meetings have been effective in changing parents' attitudes, though in some communities more than others (notably, in Upper West and Northern, see section above).

Community and family engagement, either individually, at the school or in the community is seen as a mechanism to change parents' perceptions of girls' education. While in Yunyoo it was said to have helped marginalised girls' support for education, in Bawku West, one girl commented "***our parents have to be talked to about the importance of education and the need for them to support them if they can, so that they can then encourage their children to go to school. If this happens, they would not prioritize staying at home than being in school***". There is potential that one of the reasons fewer caregivers support girls' education in Bawku West could be lack of parents' engagement in community meetings.

District support

Table 32 - IO indicator 4.3 District support for girls' education: Baseline and Midline

IO	IO indicator	Sampling and measuring technique used	Who collected the data?	Baseline level	Target for midline	Midline level	Target for end line	Endline
4 Increased community and district support for inclusive girls' education	4.3 Extent that relevant district agencies' (GES, Social Welfare, CEA) participate in monitoring, supervision and coaching visits of schools	See section 2.3 on qualitative data collection	EE	0	1	1	2	2

Intermediate Outcome Indicator IO4.3 focusses on the extent to which districts are involved in the monitoring of activities as well as the extent to which there is coaching on IGSE (see further details under EQ4, on STAGE training model). The indicator is measured only through qualitative data.

At midline, the EE found that more monitoring had been reported since baseline, however this was seen more in two of the three communities. At endline, the EE found that good monitoring was being reported in all three communities by facilitators, teachers, head teachers and the DEO. This improvement is in-line with the STAGE monitoring report, which stated "***Evidence from the field suggest that support from district entities and stakeholders have been massive. Aside regular joint monitoring, data from monthly and quarterly DSP reports revealed that these entities are putting in place several measures to support girls' education at the community and district levels.***" Examples of this from the qualitative data include the DEO from Upper East saying their four roles are "***1) To facilitate the implementation of educational policies and programmers 'in the district, 2) Making sure that school improvement and support officers (SISO) are on the ground monitoring and assessing educational policies, 3) I ensure the effective distribution of received resources in the district, 4). I also move around schools within the district to monitor and supervise where necessary and I am responsible for the effective and efficient operation of human resources under education in the district and many others***". This was confirmed by the teacher in Upper East, who said the Circuit Supervisor visits every week and "***they support in terms of advice, encouragement, correction and sometimes provide us with valuable information, so they support us a lot***". Similarly, the DEO in Northern said they take part in monitoring saying "***Apart from the trainers, the supervisors, the GES circuit supervisors who are now SISOS (school improvement support officers) were going round to monitor attendance during the ALP class sessions. We also checked the punctuality of the facilitators***". This again was confirmed by the Head Teacher in Northern, who said "***GES officials do come to monitor what we do***

here. Each time they come the advice and encourage us to be punctual to school and classes. These visits are helpful. It reduces truancy among teachers". The DEO in Upper West said that they are also involved in monitoring on "*regular attendance, improvement in performance and resources for monitoring is quite impressive. Transition packs are not excluded. The safeguarding issues are also enforce as expected. I am yet to observe those not working well*". However, the teacher and head teacher provided less information on the monitoring visits, and only mention of monitoring was from the head teacher: "*Girl child education officers do visit school at least twice a year to provide girls with pads. She also educates them on personal cleanliness*". This suggests a slight shift from midline, where it was in Northern where there were fewer reports of monitoring visits, and now the qualitative data suggests fewer reports of this in Upper East.

In Upper West, there were also some reports that the school resources were not adequate, which is something that should be identified in the monitoring visits. For example, the Teacher in Upper West said "*the curriculum implementation has been one of the major setbacks as a result of inadequate teaching and learning materials. There is inadequate furniture and infrastructure at the school for the stay of the girls*". This suggests that the monitoring in Upper West is more focused on the attendance and polices, and less so on the school infrastructure.

This indicator also includes collaboration between stakeholders. At midline, EE suggested to reach a target of 2, the District Agencies should move more from verbal support to specific actions. In each community, there was some evidence of collaborations being formed, which is in line with the STAGE monitoring report, which stated "*The CEA has initiated engagements with the project communities to identify areas of collaboration. Similarly reports from the DSPs contains several examples of collaborations between the GEA and Community Development and the project communities"*. In Upper East, the DEO said "*We collaborate a lot where necessary for instance, we and Ghana Health Service have had several collaborations in the implementation of health programmers in the district. We have also built good partnership with Environmental Agency, the district Assembly and several developmental partners in the area of improving education in the district"*. While in Northern, the DSP said "*at the community and family, the collaboration with Ghana Health Service and Social welfare also contributed to the success so far. This was seen from the assessment, referral and treatment to what was possible within constraint resources*". In Upper West, the DSP said "*Social Welfare and Community Development engage schools on safeguarding and child protection and inclusive education issues. Especially in DBI and Nadowli-Kaleo districts. Nadowli-Kaleo Social Welfare provided a tricycle to PRONET North to support girls with disability GES in DBI, NKA and JiMA have extended safeguarding and child protection issues in schools and started extending training on bridge through English and multi-grade teaching method to all schools*". This suggests that at district level, there have been clear and tangible actions taken to form partnerships that will support girls' education, especially for marginalised girls, such as GWDs.

Based on the increased reports of monitoring in all three communities (however Upper West slightly less so), and the evidence of collaborations in each community, a score of 2 was assigned, meaning the logframe target was achieved.

STAGE contribution to increase knowledge of the challenges of marginalised girls

EQ2.b To what extent have the initiatives implemented by the STAGE program contributed to increased knowledge of the challenges marginalised girls face in Ghanaian communities?

A key assumption from STAGE logframe is that as the project increases advocacy and behaviour change communication, the prevalence of community stakeholders that demonstrate knowledge and awareness about marginalised girls and how to support their education and development will improve. As shown under EQ2.a, this assumption largely held true, even though active support has been more challenging to improve, in face of economic and social norms related barriers.

Beyond awareness of gender equality, STAGE helped increased knowledge of the challenges particularly marginalised girls face that prevent their full participation in education, for example for girls with functional difficulties

or issues related to safeguarding and GBV. The project did so through community sensitisation (animation sessions), direct work with caregivers/ families (home visits, school/ PTA meetings), as well as Gender Inclusive Training to a range of stakeholders, including community leaders, facilitators, teachers/head teachers, as well as district administration.

Awareness of gender equality

The Gender Inclusive Training has helped to increase the awareness of the challenges marginalised girls face is the treatment of boys and girls in the classroom. For example, in Yunyoo, the DEO spoke about how the model helped to change the seating arrangements in the classes, so that girls are better able to participate. They said "***In the formal schools the siting arrangement was that the boys will be in front and the girls will be at the back. But if you go the formal schools now both the boys and girls sit together because of what we learnt from the STAGE"***. Similarly, the DEO in Nadowli said that since the GST, "***they got some training on that and have been able to integrate sensitivity issues during classroom management in teaching***". Most of the girls across all four locations mentioned that they are treated the same as boys in their classes in formal school now. See EQ4 for further details on STAGE training model.

Girls with a disability

No girls interviewed stated they were disabled and no caregivers interviewed mentioned having disabled children or dependents; however, the attitude towards disabled girls receiving education in the evaluation data was positive. The qualitative data showed that in Bawku West (Upper East, Kusaal), two caregivers said that disabled girls have the same rights to access education, which was echoed by one caregiver in Nadowli, and one in Yunyoo. Survey responses also revealed that 94.5% of girls believe that children with disabilities have a right to go to school (positively, 95.7% of GWDs also do), even though: i) this is lower than girls reported belief that overall "girls have a right to go to school" (98 %); and ii) both indicators have slightly worsened since midline (where 95.8% of girls believed girls with a disability have a right to go to school, and 98.8% held this belief for girls in general).

Whilst STAGE aimed to place all girls, including with functional difficulties, in regular basic education, the Project supported 19 girls with severe disabilities to access Special Needs Schools (SEN schools). This was echoed in respondents' responses, which mentioned various activities that have contributed to both increasing the awareness of disability as a marginalisation factor and contributing to reducing it. In both Bawku West and Nadowli the STAGE programme is supporting disabled girls to attend special schools or facilitate their attendance in normal school. For example, the DEO in Bawku West said, "***the programme has spotted some disabled girls in their operational areas and has enrolled them in special schools" and that "for girls with disabilities they were given medical attention and some place based on their needs***". In Bawku West, the DEO believed that the IGSE training was beneficial in increasing the awareness of GWD as the "***majority of parents did not know that there was a place to educate person with disability"*** and that previously it was not seen as a worthy endeavour to have children with disabilities in school. In Nadowli, the DSP explained how the project supported GWDs by following up on a health assessment "***one could not walk to ALP/school and the other had sight problem. They were assessed by health professionals and recommendation made. A tricycle and clutches were procured for her. The one with eye problem was taken to BLISS Eye Clinic in Wa for further consultation and diagnosis. The project paid for transport consultation and prescribed drugs***". In Yunyoo (Northern), there was not as much mentioned on the support for disabled girls, but one caregiver did say "***there are now schools for people who are disabled. So, if the family can afford to send her there, they should be allowed***". The Northern region DSP also stated "***Girls with disabilities had a golden opportunity to transition to school for that matter a specialised institution that fit and respond to their special need. What made this work well was due to the sustained support the project received from WEI to see to welfare of these girls in terms of creating further opportunities for them post ALP***."

Therefore, qualitative findings corroborate results on the successful transition of disabled girls into formal schooling (see EQ1). However, in all three locations it was highlighted that since STAGE there are no specific services for severely disabled girls in the community.

Other marginalised girls

In Nadowli (Upper West), one local leader spoke about the changed perspectives on marginalised girls, when they said, "***the local community believe that girls from poor families and that of marginalised girls as well as girls who are pregnant/young mothers/married girls have equal right to education***." The local leaders generally expressed support for girls' education from themselves, and from their community.

Yunyoo was the only community that mentioned challenges for fostered girls, they said "***difficulty has been with convincing the guardians of fostered children to allow them transition to formal school, alas, we were able to navigate through with persistence engagements***".

Safeguarding, GBV and corporal punishment

Safeguarding, GBV, and corporal punishment were also barriers addressed by the STAGE initiatives. The community animation sessions had some impact in highlighting the barriers related to GBV in the community. These sessions, along with the IGSE and safeguarding training also contributed to changing corporal punishment in schools, which is seen as one key area whose effects will be sustained after the project end. The girls themselves also highlighted that the no-caning policy has been helpful in them enjoying their experience in school more (see EQ3 and EQ4 for further details).

However, there were sporadic indications of the reluctance from teachers and caregivers to apply safeguarding protocols in schools, and support for corporal punishment. Further, evaluation findings reported varied knowledge and awareness of safeguarding protocols by girls (see EQ3 and EQ4).

4.3 EQ3. How sustainable were the STAGE activities funded by the GEC and was the programme successful in leveraging additional interest, investment, and policy change?

This section assesses to what extent project implementation approaches and interventions have built the capacities of existing structures at school, community and system levels, and created the platform for continuity of activity interventions beyond the project's life. Through monitoring data and research, STAGE identified the following interventions/areas as key to supporting learning, preventing harm at school and sustaining transition: i) supporting MOE in the promotion of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Formal Education; related to this, supporting MOE, and in particular GES, to strengthen Child Safeguarding in creating Safe Learning environments and Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH) prevention and reporting mechanisms on school and community level; iii) lastly, the project aimed to strengthening the CBE policy and practice, aiming to formalize the Catch-Up classes support model for students who transitioned out of the CBE programme into formal education.

In addressing this EQ, the EE refers to the STAGE sustainability plan, revised sustainability indicators and sustainability scorecard as appropriate.

Table 33 - Sustainability indicators: Endline

	System	Community	Learning space / School
Indicator 1:	Extent that the district assembly support inclusive gender sensitive education	% of parents of marginalised girls who support girls' education	Extent that teachers/ ALP facilitators provide inclusive

	System	Community	Learning space / School
	Baseline status = 1 Midline status = 1 Endline = 2	Baseline status = 1 (27.8%) Midline status = 1 (15.1%) Endline status = 1 (32.6%)	gender sensitive quality teaching Baseline status = N/A Midline status = 1 Endline status = 2
Indicator 2:	Extent that MOE, GES promote inclusive gender sensitive education in their district/region through monitoring and coaching Baseline status = N/A Midline status = 1 Endline status = 2	Extent that key community leaders and power holders support girls' education (see IO indicator 4.2) Baseline status = 1 Midline status = 2 (27.4% report quarterly) Endline status = 3 (53.9% report quarterly)	Extent that School Leadership support good quality and inclusive gender sensitive education Baseline status = 1 Midline status = 1 Endline status = 2
Indicator 3:	Extent that CBE steering committee adopts the STAGE curriculum for ALPs to support CBE programming in Ghana Baseline status = N/A Midline status = N/A Endline status = N/A	Extent that parents can access services within their district for their children with disabilities Baseline status = 0 Midline status = 1 or 2 Endline status = 2	N/A (only 2 indicators for school)
Baseline Sustainability Score (0-4)	**1**	**0.67**	**1**
Midline Sustainability Score (0-4)	**1.5**	**1.33**	**1**
Endline Sustainability Score (0-4)	**2**	**2**	**2**
Overall Sustainability Score (0-4, average of the three level scores)	**2**		

School level

Indicator 1: Extent that teachers provide inclusive gender sensitive quality teaching

Extent that teachers/ ALP facilitators provide inclusive gender sensitive quality teaching

Baseline status = N/A

Midline status = 1

Endline status = 2

Indicator 2: Extent that School Leadership support good quality and inclusive gender sensitive education

Baseline status = N/A

Midline status = 1

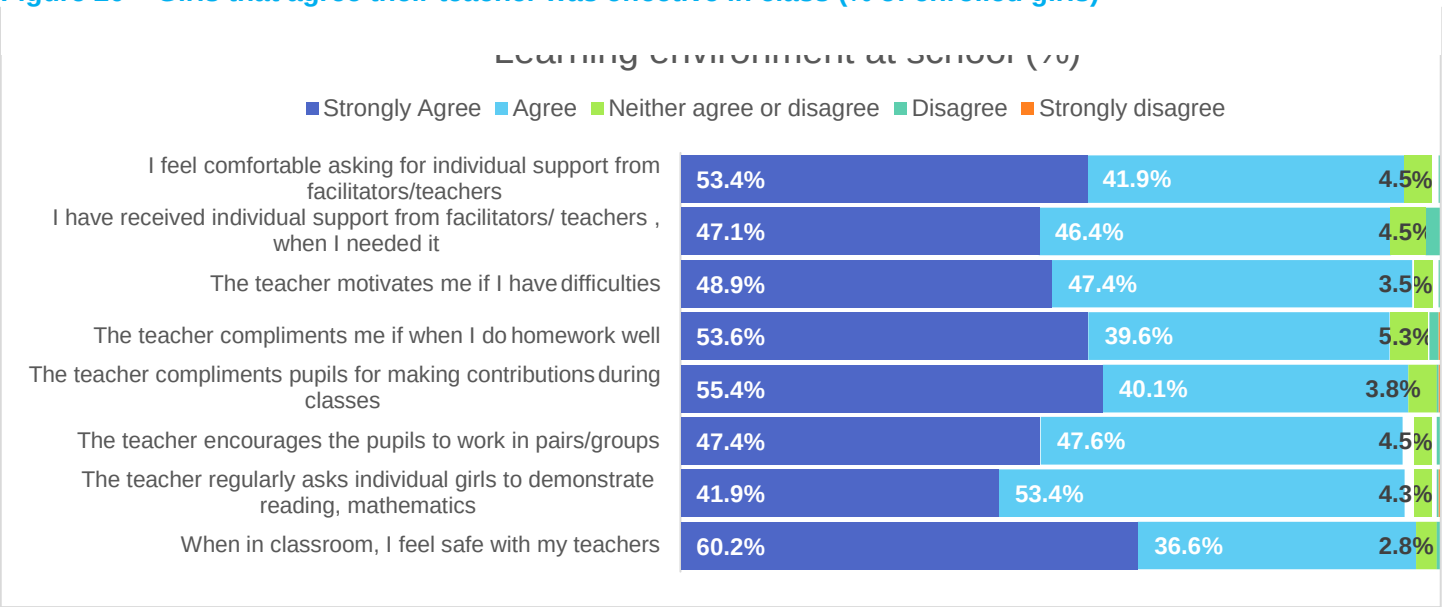
Endline status = 2

One of the areas of sustainability of STAGE interventions at school level is the extent to which schools are implementing practices that support girls' education, including in areas such as having IGSE training for teachers, establishing reporting channels for abuses, having functional child protection and safeguarding policies and organising PTA meetings. In the original version of the sustainability scorecard, two indicators covered this area, referring to the extent to which head teachers and teachers' mentors (school leadership, school-level indicator 2) and teachers (school-level indicator 1) support IGSE. This refers both to the establishment of conducive learning environments, as well as safe school policies. The project reported that they provided training and orientation for schools including on safeguarding and child protection as well as IGSE and supported schools to develop policies to promote conducive and safe learning environments.

Inclusive and gender sensitive education

The qualitative findings provided evidence that awareness of IGSE has increased, and teachers are improving their classroom/centre practice towards IGSE, and local resource mobilisation is growing (score = 2 as per STAGE logframe). Project monitoring confirmed that teachers are applying the inclusive and gender sensitive pedagogies in the delivery of lessons. This is corroborated by survey responses, whereby a majority of girls strongly agreed or agree that their teachers are effective in class, i.e., they apply a range of IGSE practices, such as motivating pupils, providing individual support when needed, organising team work and making girls feel safe as well as comfortable with asking for support to teachers (Figure 20 below). Overall, 75.2% of girls agreed their teachers are effective (Indicator 2.1, Quality of teaching, see also EQ4).

Figure 20 – Girls that agree their teacher was effective in class (% of enrolled girls)



Additionally, a slightly lower percentage of marginalised girls (73.2%) also agreed to the same (Indicator 2.2, Quality of teaching[82]). Though, it is concerning that only 52.2% of GWD agreed their teachers are applying IGSE, as well as lower percentages of girls affected by barriers related to school (school unsafe, 59.1% of girls agreed; school cannot meet needs, 66.2% of girls agreed), by travel barriers (61.2%) and by social norms barriers (63.6%). Regionally, Upper West (Dagaare) drives the overall average down (63.7%), whilst 95.8% of girls in Upper East (Kasem) agree their teachers are applying IGSE.

The inclusive gender-sensitive teaching was mentioned as an effective tool in all three regions by facilitators, teachers and head teachers. Overall, the qualitative findings confirmed the survey data and monitoring report that teachers in the formal schools and facilitators at the ALP centres have grasped the concept of inclusive and gender sensitive pedagogies and are applying same. As with the midline assessment, the respondents cited some elements of inclusive gender-sensitive more than others. For example, in all regions, the equal treatment of boys and girls in the classroom setting was mentioned. In Yunyoo, the DEO highlighted that the biggest change in schools was the inclusive gender-sensitive practices, and that now "***the boys and girls are getting together in everything, playing ball and eating together. They are now very comfortable doing things together***". This was also referenced by the Head teacher in Yunyoo who said: "***we try to use child centred approach to learning so that we can treat each child as a unique student. In this way, you are able to identify the weakness of the individual student so that you can help them out. In this case, the teaching is inclusive***." The same respondent also mentioned that "***sometimes girls are psychologically more sensitive than boys so they need to be given special or extra attention so that they will be able to match the boys***". This suggests that perceptions of girls and boys are not entirely equal, however shows willingness to give girls and boys equal opportunities in class.

As with midline, none of the respondents mentioned giving equal praise and criticism to boys and girls. The perception was generally to give girls and boys equal attention, however in Yunyoo, one additional change for boys and girls was highlighted, in that previously the boy prefect was in charge of the whole school, but the girl prefect was just in charge of the girls. Since STAGE, the girl and boy prefects have the same responsibility.

[82] As at midline, the % of girls from any marginalisation subgroup which agrees to their facilitators/teachers being effective was used by the evaluation as an indication of facilitators/teachers applying inclusive gender sensitive education.

In Nadowli (Upper West) and Bawku West (Upper East), there seemed to be a better grasp of what inclusive gender-sensitive teaching meant, and other marginalisation factors beyond gender were mentioned. For example, in Bawku West there was a greater focus on girls with disabilities in the schools, and the DSP mentioned how the school environment was gender and disability sensitive, while the DEO explained how the inclusive gender-sensitive training helped to highlight to parents of disabled girls that their children can go to school.

It was only in Nadowli where the DEO suggested that the Inclusive Gender-Sensitive Training (IGST) could be improved, they said *"[it is] very useful but we don't know how sustainable it is. It should have been a recurring practice from time to times to enhance managerial capacity and awareness creation on inclusive and gender sensitivity*". This is notwithstanding project reporting mentioning a refresher training took place in Q2-Q32022.

Child protection and safeguarding

The qualitative data confirms that schools across the three districts have developed safeguarding and child protection policies and this has influenced district attitudes on safeguarding (see EQ3 system level and EQ4). However, there does not seem to be complete buy-in on safeguarding policies from all school staff and community members and there have been some reports of ongoing corporal punishment. In Nadowli (Upper West) the head teacher mentioned that the school does not have a safeguarding policy in place; whilst the teacher from Yunyoo interviewed commented on the banning of corporal punishment that *"Honestly, I think the approach is not good. Caning is good to correct the children but not too much. Sometimes the only way to put fear in the children to obey rules is to cane them small. But this time they say no caning and the children are becoming naughty."*

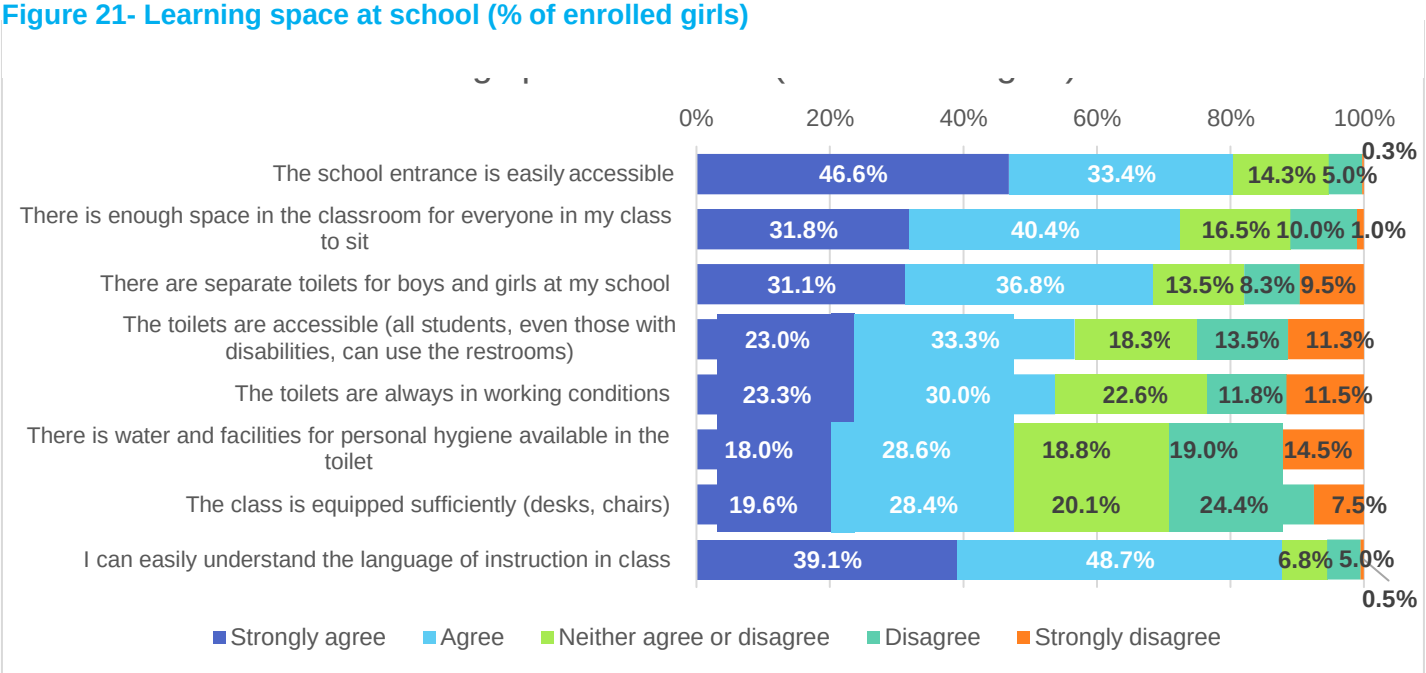
Moreover, there may be issues regarding communication on safeguarding reporting mechanisms as some girls do not know how to report abuse and even some of those who claim to understand how to report abuse did not know about the reporting hotline (see further in EQ4). There are also reports of ALP facilitators who did not know how to teach girls to report abuses.

School facilities and learning space

A key issue for the sustainability of transition into school that emerged from quantitative and qualitative data relates to the status of school facilities. Several girls across all three regions mentioned inadequate school facilities as something they do not like about their new schools. In particular girls mentioned that they do not like the toilets and inadequate furniture especially a lack of tables and chairs. One girl from Upper West region stated, "*I do not like the inadequate classroom block, the toilet facility and the limited tables and chairs we have in the school*." Similarly, a girl from Upper East (Kusaal) expressed that "*I feel very comfortable, and the atmosphere is very conducive for learning except that there is not enough furniture for us to sit*."

The survey data corroborate these findings, as shown in Figure 21 below. A large majority of girls agreed or strongly agreed on the accessibility of the school entrance, on classrooms being spacious enough, and on the language of instruction being easy to understand. However, girls were less likely to agree on toilets being in working conditions and with water and facilities for personal hygiene, and on classes being sufficiently equipped (desk, chairs).

Figure 21- Learning space at school (% of enrolled girls)



This problem was not just identified by the girls but also by the head teachers interviewed at Yunyoo (Northern) and Nadowli (Upper West), the teacher in Yunyoo and DSPs in Nadowli and Bawku West (Upper East). The head teacher at Yunyoo also clarified how this reflects an issue of cooperation with the district. "***Again, when I came to the school, there was no single chair in the school. As you can see in the office, there is no better sitting place for you. I had to speak to the district chief executive who promised to give us about 20 chairs but up till now we have not seen anything. These are some of the challenges, I keep complaining to the authorities and they keep promising to address the issues, but they never deliver.***" This issue had already been detected at midline by qualitative interviews. It might indicate a structural issue with funding, resourcing and administration of schools, which is out of the control of education stakeholders at lower levels (teachers, school leadership, as well as community leaders), and in the hands of the government administrations. Whilst there was some indication of community leaders advocating for improved school infrastructure and facilities, it is unclear how the matter will evolve in the future. As shown by lower formal education transition rates for girls affected by school-related barriers, this is an issue that has the potential to hamper successful transition sustainment after the project's end.

Community level

Indicator 1: % of parents of marginalised girls who support girls' education

Baseline status = 1(27.8%)

Midline status = 1 (15.1%)

Endline status = 1 (32.6%)

As stated under EQ2.a, 32.6% of caregivers at endline are actively support girls' education, since 27.3% at project's start. This points to a substantial improvement since midline, where the indicator had decreased to 15.1%. However, a score of 1 is maintained, since less than 40% of parents are demonstrating an active level of support (as per STAGE logframe definition). As seen, quantitative and qualitative data has found the almost totality of caregivers are vocally supportive of girls' education, though there are still some indications of persistence of unsupportive social norms and

indications of consistent shares of girls with high chore burden. As indicated by project monitoring, turning caregivers' vocal support into demonstrable, actionable is needed to consolidate project gains. It is not clear in the project close out phase how STAGE would go about this, though it is recognised that deeply embedded social norms need long term interventions to change.

Indicator 2: Extent that key community leaders and power holders support girls' education[83]

Baseline status = 1

Midline status = 2

Endline status = 3

Evaluation findings indicates that support for girls' education among community leaders has increased steadily since the project start, and there are indications of community leaders starting to mobilise resources to support girls' education, as well as showing consistent supportive practices/behaviour towards it (score 3 as per STAGE logframe criteria). As reported under EQ2.a, 53.9% of leaders speak at least quarterly of girls' education, as reported by caregivers surveyed. This is up from 27.4% at midline. Moreover, the share of caregivers stating leaders had taken action in support of girls to remain in school has slightly increased from 26.3% to 31.7%, and girls feel more supported by their communities in their education. The qualitative and quantitative evidence all points to widespread support for girls' education from leaders, as well as mobilisation in terms of community sensitisation, and provision of encouragement and advice to girls to continue their education, and, in a few cases, material support/mobilisation of funds.

At midline two of the three communities interviewed had good examples of local leaders actively mobilising community support for girls' education; now qualitative data provides evidence that local leaders in all three communities are committed to mobilising community support for girls' education. The Upper West traditional local leader confirmed that they have been actively involved in trying to change community attitudes to be more supportive of girls' education: "***We (local leaders) are however taking to them to defuse that mentality and I think it is going on well in changing their mentality***." The Upper West religious leader stated "***anytime I am called upon I will embrace it***" even if they do not have a specific role in STAGE. Open responses from the girls' and caregivers' survey (see EQ2.a) mentioned several times leaders encourage/provide advice and counselling to girls, as well as, to a lesser extent, participate to school meetings and conduct home visits to encourage keeping girls in school.

While the qualitative data did not suggest any support for material or infrastructure needs, there was strong evidence that local leaders in all regions are contributing to behaviour change in the community. Further, there was a mention in the open survey responses from girls of their leaders building a 'school block for us'; and a few mentions of leaders providing books and learning materials. Similar responses were given by caregivers surveyed, with a few mentioning learning materials, and one mention of the leader mobilising funds to maintain the school. To an extent, this aligns with STAGE monitoring, which stated "***support being is extended to schools with inadequate seating and writing spaces. There are instances where community leaders have collaborated with district education directorate to repair broken furniture for use in the available public schools***." As stated under "School level" above, structural issues with the state of schools are a key concern for sustainability, though they are outside of STAGE's control. It is not known to what extent the kind of pressure exerted by leaders towards increasing funding to education could be effective in this sense.

There are also indications on the sustainability of this support, notwithstanding leaders being involved to varying extents in STAGE and not having any specific role to sustain STAGE after its end. All local leaders express their support for girls' education. All local leader respondents from Upper West and Northern regions emphasise that their

[83] In assessing progress against this indicator, the following aspects were considered, as per STAGE Revised Sustainability indicators: *key community leaders or decision makers who actively support girls' education (e.g., advocating to others the importance of girl child's education, collaborating with others to create functional structures to promote girls' education).*

continued dedication to supporting and encouraging girls' education will be sustainable, also as a result of the leaders themselves being parents and therefore being sensitive to the instances of girls. As exemplified by the traditional leader in Northern region "***The activities are sustainable because we are self-motivated as members of the community to help ourselves***."

All local leaders from Northern (Yunyoo) and the religious leader from Upper East (Bawku West) believe that it is now part of their duties as a leader to advocate for girls' education. For example, the religious leader in Upper East stated, "***I have a strong belief that girls no matter their age and state of being need education and so I have been preaching and admonishing my congregation on it…Yes [this falls within the responsibilities mandated for their leadership role], I believe if the people don't know I have duty to teach them***." The two local leaders from Upper West (Nadowli) do not state that it is their responsibility to support girls' education, but they emphasise that they hope girls' education will continue and that they will try to support it. A traditional local leader from Upper East (Bawku West) stressed that whilst it is not part of his responsibilities as a leader to support and encourage support for girls' education, it is part of his responsibilities as a father and that he will advocate for girls' education as "***since I started doing things my children have become close to me and their studies according to their teacher has improved***." Community members are therefore motivated to continue to support girls' education to benefit their children and their community as a whole.

Indicator 3: **Extent of communities with functional structures to support inclusive girls' education[84]**

Baseline status = 0

Midline status = 1 or 2

Endline status = 2

Positive transition results for GWDs are noted; less so on learning outcomes (EQ1). There is limited evidence from the evaluation on the extent that parents can access services within their district for their children with disabilities. As reported under EQ2.b, the qualitative findings provided some positive examples of increased awareness of services (such as special education needs schools) available for girls with functional difficulties. There is no evaluation evidence on communities with functional structures to **support girls' education (including for girls with a disability) after the project's end. The project monitoring mentioned: "*Some communities have initiated some interventions aimed at improving access and encouraging caregivers and parents to send their children to school. These are recent initiatives which are at their early ages. Through collaboration with district education directorate and local assemblies, communities are hoping to establish more robust support system for girls' education in the communities***." Though it would seem that parents need funding to send girls to SEN schools. In fact, the project also reported that STAGE has "***been engaging district assemblies for the early release of the People with Disability component of the MPs/ District Assemblies Common Fund"*** in order to provide financial support to girls who have transitioned into SEN schools. Funding would be an issue for those families of GWD affected by financial constraints.

There were also some examples of STAGE helping GWDs accessing health services, though again it is not clear how this support would continue after the project's end. In fact, in all three locations it was highlighted that since STAGE there are no specific services for disabled girls in the community. However, as there were reported examples of girls accessing health services or special need education, a scoring of 2 (from 1/2) is assigned at endline, though this is based on limited evidence.

[84] In assessing progress against this indicator, the following aspects were considered, as per STAGE Revised Sustainability indicators: *communities with functional structures to support inclusive girls' education (e.g., establishment of a community-based support scheme for girls' education, platforms for knowledge sharing and brainstorming, establishment of catch-up classes, mentoring and coaching support, availability and unrestricted access to services for PWDs etc.).*

System level

Indicators 1 and 2. Extent that districts support inclusive gender sensitive education

Endline status = N/A

Two revised sustainability indicators cover the extent to which districts support (i) and promote (ii) inclusive gender sensitive education,[85] though no scoring criteria nor targets have been set against them. Indication of district support can include a range of aspects: the existence of platforms for knowledge sharing and brainstorming, the presence of dedicated district officers of units for Inclusive education, functional and trained Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) structures/officers, functional child protection and safeguarding policies. This section provides indications of the extent of this support, based on the qualitative evidence from the evaluation.

From qualitative findings, it would seem that there is strong engagement from districts at endline, with all three sampled communities reporting evidence in this sense (see also IO4.3 and EQ4 specifically on coaching and monitoring by districts).

The qualitative responses from DEOs in all three regions suggest that the main area that the MOE/GES are engaging is by promoting IGSE training, and that this has been influenced by STAGE. For example, the Northern (Yunyoo) DEO states that gender inclusiveness is the biggest change that they feel will be sustained after STAGE finishes. They expressed that STAGE has made an impact on improving IGSE. For example, GES and district officials were not familiar with the concept before STAGE, whilst this is now being integrated into the education system with the support of national officials. However, increased awareness amongst national education actors, which would then trickle down to lower administrative levels, is not entirely attributed to STAGE: "***we got the experience from the STAGE. It was when we were implementing in the STAGE that we started hearing it from the top. So, I don't know whether the national officials also learnt it from STAGE... But we are now gradually implementing it***." The Northern DEO also gave several examples of how gender sensitive education understandings are being applied including gender integrated seating arrangements, allowing female prefects and making toilets more gender inclusive, including building urinary pits.

There were also mentions of the mentorship sessions and presence of dedicated IGSE officers. In Upper East (Bawku West) DEO commented that they believe mentorships session will be sustainable due to the commitment of teacher mentors and DEOs. "***The mentorship session has been very useful for these girls and for its sustainability, yes it will be sustained as these mentors has promise to hold onto it even after the programme end as we will try to support them as well***." They also mentioned that they feel girl education officer and social welfare officer roles, as well as safeguarding policies will be sustained going forward. However, the DEO did not explain how this would happen. They stated: "***Girls' enrolment will be sustained as the STAGE programme has come to get girls and parents interest in schooling. I again believe that we will sustain functional girls' education officers and unrestricted access to person with disabilities to the social welfare officer as well as functional child protection and safeguarding policies***".

In all three regions, it was highlighted that there is District level involvement in establishing safeguarding regulations. For example, the DEO in Bawku West pointed out that in their district STAGE safeguarding policy guidelines are applied and that STAGE trained key stakeholders including teachers and head teachers on safeguarding issues. The DEO in Yunyoo highlighted "***zero-caning; They were not caning in the ALP classes at all in the formal schools they were using corporal punishment; caning and other things. We have adopted the zero caning because some students will not come to school because of the caning***". As well as the Head Teacher in Yunyoo, who said

[85] In assessing progress against this indicator, the following aspects were considered, as per STAGE Revised Sustainability indicators: *districts with functional structures to support (Indicator 1) and promote (Indicator 2) inclusive girls' education (e.g. establishment of scholarship scheme, platforms for knowledge sharing and brainstorming, establishment of catch-up classes, mentoring and coaching support, availability and unrestricted access to services for PWDs, functional child protection and safeguarding policies, availability of functional Girls Education officers and Social Welfare Officers).*

"***We have a zero-caning policy in the school so we don't cane the children when they even go wrong. We only advise and encourage them. This is the directive from GES. They said learning is not about force so when you cane a child in the school and the parent sees this, they can report you to the office and you can be punished***". This was especially seen in Yunyoo, where three of the four girls said that there is no caning in the school. The DEO in Bawku West also considered that changes in the safeguarding policy would be sustainable, and that in its district there have also been attempts to improve protections for girls that might help facilitate their continued education: "***On policy level, we have been able to come out with by-laws aim at addressing early marriage and teenage pregnancy in the district. We are now of the hope that this will help reduce the frequent drop-out often occupation by this as in the by-law it has hefty punishment for perpetrators***." Though it might be that these changes came about as a result of a range of factors, rather than STAGE directly, particularly as other organisations are also operation in the girls' education and safeguarding area in the region. In this regard, the Upper East DEO said "***Camfed an NGO in the district have also been supporting needy girls in the district and I am glad to report that the support system from Camfed is really helping girls to stay in schools***." This can also be seen as an example of STAGE working collaborative with others for increased outreach and effectiveness, as stated in the STAGE logframe for Q2 2022 "**the project has *embarked on a rigorous campaign at the district and community levels to leverage on existing interventions in the medium-term plans to provide support for girls' education … Emphasis for these engagements have been to collaboratively work with district stakeholders to identify opportunities and additional resources to roll out interventions to consolidate the project gains and guarantee support for girls' education in the districts post STAGE.***"

Additionally, on safeguarding, the facilitator in Yunyoo said that facilitators know they can report safeguarding concerns to the district. In Nadowli, the DSP said that "***Social Welfare and Community Development engage schools on safeguarding and child protection and inclusive education issues".*** This suggests that the safeguarding training has been effective in raising the awareness on safeguarding in schools, and the STAGE safeguarding training has had an impact on institutional systems Community animation sessions change.

However, the Upper West (Nadowli) DEO is sceptical of the sustainability of gender sensitive education in the district. They felt that although MoE/GES does promote IGSE and models from STAGE are used in lesson delivery, refresher training is needed and is important to enhance capabilities and awareness creation. The DEO raised further concerns about the sustainability of other STAGE activities after its end which may impact sustainment of girls' transition. For example, STAGE monitoring reported that "***project learning documents on a regular basis is shared with stakeholders to promote peer learning.***" However, the Upper West (Nadowli) DEO considered that knowledge sharing and brainstorming would collapse due to funding, after the project's end. They stated what is needed is the establishment of scholarship scheme, platforms for knowledge sharing and brainstorming (which they think will collapse due to funding ending), establishment of catch-up classes, mentoring and coaching support (which they think will be poorly supervised after STAGE), increased availability and access to services for PWDs, better implementation of child protection and safeguarding policies, and addressing the non-availability of functional Girls Education officers (which needs to be addressed).

Ultimately, the qualitative data showed that in each location there are concerted efforts from the districts to support IGSE. In two locations out of three there were particularly positive indications, as expressed by the DEOs. There seem to be some challenges on the sustainability of STAGE interventions in one location particularly, however, there also does seem to be some system changes already in place which could help with the transition away from STAGE to maintain these in the longer term.

Indicator 3. Extent that CBE steering committee adopts the STAGE curriculum for ALPs to support CBE programming in Ghana[86]

[86] In assessing progress against this indicator, the following aspects were considered, as per STAGE Revised Sustainability indicators: i) *Extent that MOE adopts parts of the STAGE model (including the formative assessment structure, inclusive pedagogy and reading reinforcement approach) to support CBE programming in Ghana; ii) Extent to which MOE/CEA adopt parts of STAGE post-ALP transition*

Baseline status = N/A

Midline status = N/A

Endline status = N/A

Indication of adoption of STAGE curriculum by CBE can include a range of aspects: the implementation of the formative assessment structure in schools, inclusive pedagogy and reading reinforcement approach; catch up classes, coaching and mentoring, household visits to facilitate sustained transition. The qualitative data showed that some STAGE policies have been adopted at a national level and there are plans to adopt other elements of it which will enable the sustainability of gains made by STAGE; however, the implementation of elements of the STAGE curriculum into CBE is still limited. This is in line with Project reporting, which stated that MOE and CEA have adapted significant strategies from STAGE in their strategic documents, though these are yet to be implemented.

All DEOs find that there are elements of the STAGE intervention that would be useful to integrate into CBE and the national and district education system approaches.

The Upper East (Bawku West) DEO particularly highlighted the continuation of home visits, COC and provision of radio sets as useful interventions to sustain and integrate into district education systems. They also found that it would be useful to adopt elements of STAGE curriculum for ALPs to support CBE programming, in particular the reading reinforcement approach as it helped girls to be able to read within a short period. According to the respondent, progress on implementing this is ongoing and it should be rolled out soon, but COVID-19 has created a funding gap that has slowed things down.

One element of the STAGE approach that has already influenced the broader education system is the prioritisation of safeguarding. The Upper East (Bawku West) DEO explains that STAGE has influenced the district systems for safeguarding and checking abuse as they trained district officials as well as schoolteachers, head teachers and other relevant stakeholders.

In Upper West (Nadowli) the DEO was also more critical of what elements of STAGE would be adopted at district level simply saying they do not know if CBE will adopt any elements of the STAGE curriculum; however, they were more positive about the impact of the safeguarding system saying that it works well, is accessible and that there is community awareness. "***The community awareness has been created to report such issues to the school district education office through the girl child officer and the social welfare department. Issues of abuse that use to occur and go unreported and unpunished are now of serious consideration and has reduced due to the sensitization***." Similarly, the Northern (Yunyoo) DEO also states that STAGE has influenced the district approach to safeguarding and its implementation in schools with parents and teachers being informed about these policies. Hopefully this increased community awareness and changes in community attitudes will help make changes in attitude towards safeguarding more sustainable, however the Northern (Yunyoo) and Upper West (Nadowli) DEOs did not definitively state that they feel community change in attitudes will enhance the sustainability of the safeguarding approach.

The Northern (Yunyoo) DEO also highlights mother tongue education and material support for those most in need as useful things to adopt at a national level and for CBE but there have been issues with implementing CBE: "***there is no CBE programme in the district. Plan Ghana started it and when they folded up the district assembly was supposed to continue but I don't know why they did not continue***." Building on midline findings[87] it seems that there has still been little progress on CBE adopting elements of the STAGE curriculum and that there has even been

interventions (catch up classes, SISO support, mentoring, household visits, bicycle banks and negotiations) to promote retention of CBE graduates in formal schools.

[87] At midline, the project reported the curriculum had been shared by WEI to the CBE Steering Committee for their inputs and further discussions, though feedback had not been received. WEI noted that the Committee had not met since late 2019, partly due to a change in Director's and perhaps due to the Government of Ghana's inability to fund the programme consistently.

delays to the implementation of CBE itself in Yunyoo (Northern Region). Despite this the STAGE curriculum and activities have influenced district and national level thinking and practices on education, particularly the importance of safeguarding and gender inclusive education.

Finally, the project mentioned they are engaging the MOE to adopt the project's safeguarding tools and policies for integration into the education sector strategic plan, as well as being part of a group developing a gender policy for the education sector which would lower barriers for girls' education. There is no evaluation evidence to corroborate this finding, and progress of this activity is not known. Project reporting also indicates that the MOE and CEA have adopted elements of STAGE (such as the community advocacy strategy for girls' education projects) in their most recent strategies, though implementation has not started yet.

Overall, on adopting interventions at the national level, the MOE representative interviewed referred to elements of STAGE that they would consider implementing, such as working with the districts for regular updates and not working in silos. There was also some mention of wanting to integrate areas of child protection and inclusiveness into the curriculum, and they are now using a "universal design" in this. Further, the Northern region DSP mentioned that the STAGE programme is appealing to the MOE, which is evidenced by "***most of the concepts and policies are being followed, studied and adopted for mainstreaming into the formal educational systems***". While these have only been mentioned in one of the three communities, it still suggests that there is national level engagement with the STAGE programme, polices, and concepts.

In conclusion, in each location, there is clear district level change and use of the STAGE curriculum especially in the area of safeguarding and safeguarding polices. At a national level, there also seems to be some indication that the MOE/ GES will be or have been including element of Gender Inclusive Education in the national curriculum, and based on Project reporting, that they have adopted significant STAGE strategies in their most recent strategic documents.

4.4 EQ4. What works to facilitate transition of highly marginalised girls into education/training/employment and to increase learning?

As stated under EQ2, one of the areas STAGE leveraged to reduce barriers to education across subgroups and facilitate transition and learning was encouraging an environment more inclusive and conducive to learning both at ALPs (under the project's direct control) and at school, once the girls transitioned, implementing a child-centred pedagogical model. Activities implemented in this sense included IGSE training to both facilitators (during ALPs) and teachers/head teachers; as well as training on the CBE curriculum on literacy, numeracy and life skills (including accelerated learning and catch-up classes). In addition, STAGE used monitoring and supervision by a range of actors (CoCs, including traditional leaders; district actors; as well as facilitators to support schools after girls' transition) to: i) train and provide support on the implementation of IGSE and CBE curriculum to facilitators and teachers; and ii) monitor implementation of these practices, and mitigate issues detected through monitoring, especially in case of risk of girls dropping out of education. Conceptually, these activities fall under Intermediate Outcome 2, Quality of Teaching in STAGE TOC which is the focus of this EQ. Further, other elements that were leveraged to encourage attendance were a flexible approach to delivery of ALPs and making the ALP centres conducive to learning. The latter has been examined under EQ2 and will be referenced here where appropriate. Similarly, aspects of teaching at school have been explored under School level sustainability and will be referred to here as appropriate.

Effectiveness of STAGE training model and pedagogical approach

EQ4.a. Which elements of the training model contribute most to the effectiveness of the facilitators (and in turn the learning outcomes and transition of the girls)? Which pedagogical approaches have been identified as most effective in contributing to the quality teaching and learning in the ALPs?

Evaluation findings (quantitative and qualitative) suggest that implementation of IGSE practices, safeguarding, and ALP/CBE curriculum all contributed to girls' learning, attendance and transition to school. Further, monitoring and supervision have enabled gains in learning and transition, through ensuring the effective implementation of the CBE

curriculum and IGSE/safeguarding. Monitoring and supervision also contributed to increase support for girls' education by caregivers/families especially (seen under EQ2). IGSE, safeguarding and monitoring/supervision are examined here, whilst ALP/CBE curriculum in EQ4.b.

Inclusive and Gender Sensitive Education at ALPs and school

Table 34 - IO Indicator 2 - Quality of teaching: Midline and Endline

IO indicator	Sampling and measuring technique used	Who collected the data?	Baseline level	Target for midline	Midline level	Target for end line	Endline
2.1 % of Girls that agree that their facilitator was effective at the learning centre	Girls' Survey	EE	Not measured at baseline	75%	73.9% (N=689)	85%	75.2%
2.2 Extent that teachers/ facilitators apply inclusive gender-sensitive education	Girls' Survey (% Marginalised girls) KIIs to girls, facilitators, teachers/head teachers, leaders WEI classroom observation summary	WEI EE		60%	75.9% (N=322)	70%	73.2%

At midline girls reported they "loved" or "liked" ALPs afternoon classes, the overwhelming reason being the teaching style and the local language of instruction which made class content easy to understand. Overall, 73.9% of girls at midline had agreed that their facilitator was effective at the learning centre (indicator 2.1, Table 34 above),[88] just below the logframe target. Regionally, responses in Upper East (Kasem) and Northern (Likpakpaaln) had driven the result, at 92.6% (significant) and 72.4% respectively, whilst responses from Upper West (Dagaare) were lowering the overall average (69.2%). Whilst an even larger proportion (75.9%) of girls from any of the marginalised subgroups had agreed that their facilitator was applying IGSE (indicator 2.2).[89]

[88] Eight questions (HHG_13b-g) were inserted in the survey to assess effectiveness of facilitator at learning centre. The questions referred to practices including: providing individual support to pupils; organising paired/group work; valuing contribution of pupils in the lessons and other attributes of effective teaching as per STAGE logframe and STAGE classroom observation tool. The overall result for this indicator is calculated as the prevalence of girls that strongly agreed or agreed to all eight questions.

[89] The value reported from the EE quantitative data (75.9%) calculated the prevalence of marginalised girls (under any of the marginalised sub-groups) that strongly agreed or agreed to all eight questions (HHG_13b-g) to assess effectiveness of facilitator at learning centre. As per STAGE logframe, gender sensitive education is defined as: Marginalised girls, girls and boys get equal level of attention, interaction,

At endline, after transition, the evaluation examined girls' views of school teachers' teaching style (75.2%, seen under EQ3, School level). A similar proportion of girls than at midline (re. facilitators) agreed their teacher is effective, appreciating particularly feeling safe in class, the teacher motivating them if they have difficulties, and complementing them for making contributions during classes. Notably, above 95% of girls agreed to any one statement on IGSE practices (though less girls agreed to all eight statements). Slightly less girls from any of the marginalised subgroup (73.2%) also agreed on the effectiveness of teachers. A similar regional trend than at midline is noted at endline for teachers, with 63.7% of girls in Upper West (Dagaare) agreeing their teachers are effective vs. 75.2% overall.

According to project monitoring at midline, facilitators were overwhelmingly applying IGSE pedagogy in their classes; and at endline "***teachers in the formal schools and facilitators at the ALP centres have grasped the concept of inclusive and gender sensitive pedagogies and are applying same***." STAGE also reported that: "***facilitators encourage peer learning which is helping students who need additional support to adapt***", and that feedback from ALP classroom observations point to use of "***appropriate teaching methods and examples to explain the concepts and topics in the ALPs***". In terms of monitoring and supervision (as it will be explained below) the project also noted that "***the supervisory role played by COCs and DSP supervisors have ensured that facilitators follow the session plans for life skills and establish a positive learning environment***". At midline, the project had also stated that supervisors provided coaching to facilitators on a regular basis, in addition to the main IGSE training, with a view to consolidate the use of inclusive and gender sensitive teaching approaches.

Qualitative findings confirm the positive findings from the survey and project monitoring and found that the IGSE training was effective for teaching gender sensitive and inclusive pedagogy to facilitators and teachers. According to STAGE logframe, at the point of transition STAGE put in place a teacher orientation workshop to equip teachers to deliver effectively in the classrooms. In this respect, the Upper East (Kusaal) DSP commented "***in the formal school system, we had to train the teacher mentors, the head teachers on gender sensitive inclusive child cantered methodologies. We sharpen their minds; we sharpen their understanding and skills on how to teach multi-grade children because these were children of different ages that were going to be integrated in the formal school system and the teachers were very happy that we were bringing in new teaching methodologies to the schools and we provided them with safeguarding practised***." As seen in EQ3, School, certain elements of the IGST are used more than others, for example the seating of girls and boys next to each other in class.

However, some difficulties in teaching to some subgroups, as well as areas for improvement were noted, and the need for perhaps further training on IGSE and safeguarding. In Nadowli, the ALP facilitator had a good grasp of what gender-inclusive training meant, saying "***inclusive teaching is a teaching approach that addresses the needs of students with a variety of background (be it poor, disability or an able people), learning modalities and abilities, whereas, gender sensitive teaching provides equal opportunity to both male and female students in the class***." However they highlighted that they found dealing with girls from poor homes and girls with disabilities more challenging, because "***you need to be tactful and meticulous before you adequately handled them, considering the fact that we don't have special knowledge in special education***". Additionally, while the facilitator said they had received training, they said they were not able to implement the methods in their teaching. On the other hand, the Yunyoo facilitator stated that they did apply what they learned from the gender sensitive training.

Safeguarding and child protection

Increased safeguarding awareness and establishment of safeguarding practices is one of the key intended GESI transformational interventions STAGE has worked towards as part of its model. The Girls' Education Challenge Safeguarding Operating Model[90] defines safeguarding as: "**the prevention of, mitigation of and response to violence, exploitation, abuse and harassment, which occurs due to structural and hierarchical power**

praise/criticism, roles, classroom resources; are encouraged to engage with each other in class / seating; are encouraged / facilitated; gender and inclusive discriminative language is challenged and explained. The EE considers that HH survey questions HHG_13b-g cover all these gender sensitive teaching practices, except for that relating to challenging and explaining discriminative language and obviously not capturing boys' perspectives.

[90] https://girlseducationchallenge.org/media/ftvjxa5u/protection_is_possible_report_final.pdf

inequality and the abuse of that inequality by individuals or entities through action or inaction". Any such form of mistreatment contributes to keeping girls from realising their potential, this being economic empowerment or attendance to school/education (for example, for fear of corporal punishment). Evidence from the STAGE evaluation across evaluation points confirmed these risks are real, as shown by caregivers reporting mistreatment by teachers or not feeling safe at school, or travelling to/from school, as reasons for their cared girls not being enrolled in school.

As stated in STAGE Annual Report, Y4, the Project acted at multiple levels to 'keep girls safe', spearheaded by a dedicated Safeguarding and Child Protection Team and Safeguarding and Disability and Inclusion advisors. Internally, all staff – including DSPs -– had to adhere to a Safeguarding Code of conduct. Capacity development on safeguarding was performed for STAGE and DSP staff – including supervisors, as well as ALP facilitators. Externally, awareness raising activities and capacity development included key stakeholders, from CoCs, community leaders, school staff, to district stakeholders. As part of community-based sensitisation on a variety of GESI topics (education, SRHR, GBV, STAGE ensured outreach of awareness raising and other activities on safeguarding among the girls as well as their caregivers, families and communities in general. For girls, awareness raising also happened in the context of the ALP classes.

In terms of response to safeguarding risks, the project leveraged existing reporting channels, i.e., national helplines like the Orange Support Center and the Helpline of Hope, which the girls were taught how, and when to resort to. An important component of safeguarding regarded the application of positive disciplinary protocols in schools, as well as teachers and school staff being alert to possible signs of abuse among schoolchildren and how to report on it. This was ensured through continued monitoring visits to schools by DSP Safeguarding and Child Protection Focal Points including Field Supervisors. Work with SEN schools on safeguarding was one key STAGE intervention to ensure sustainability and long-lasting impact (as seen under Sustainability, School and System level). The safeguarding approach was further operationalised through monitoring visits at home to check on caregivers and their girls, especially GWDs.

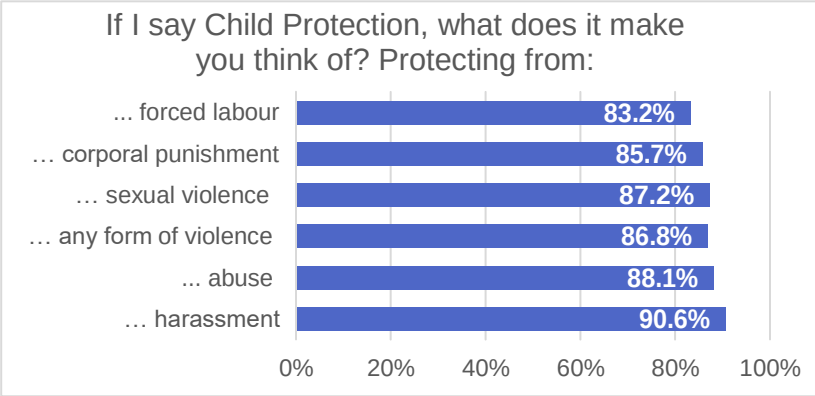
Findings from the endline evaluation support that STAGE safeguarding approach is one of the factors that have encouraged girls going back to school, as evidenced by high attendance and transition rates, though some risks still persist. For example, the qualitative data at endline showed similar results to midline, in that girls generally really enjoyed the ALPs classes, and many said they were "excited" to start formal school. One key area that girls, teachers, and facilitators mentioned which made girls more encouraged to go to school was changes in safeguarding and corporal punishment. When asked how girls feel about their new school, the fact that there is no caning was the most common answer, it was said by three girls in Yunyoo, and one girl in Bawku West. Improvements in safeguarding, including preventing the use of caning are important elements of the STAGE training model, as it helps to improve girls experience of schools.

However, while there have been changes in behaviours towards corporal punishment, there were still two mentions in Yunyoo that they feel caning or physical punishment is the most effective method to discipline children. In Yunyoo, both the Head Teacher and Teacher said there is now a zero-caning policy in the school, but neither think it is effective. The Teacher noted "***I have a problem with the zero-caning policy. It's a good policy at one side but bad at the other. Because some of the students are very stubborn and it takes only caning to correct them so now that they said zero caning, it's becoming difficult to correct those children. They have even made the parents aware that when their children are ca ned in the school they should report***." This suggests that while the policy and training are in place, the messaging on why teachers should avoid corporal punishment has been less effective. One girl in Bawku West also mentioned that their teacher still does use the cane sometimes.

Monitoring reports say that caregivers are of the opinion that the life skills topics treated at the ALP/VST centres have improved girls understanding of GBV and awareness of the various channels for reporting abuse. The monitoring reports also find that out of 100 girls engaged, 90% are aware of the STAGE helpline and are able to call out the numbers from memory.

The evaluation confirmed these results, to an extent.

Figure 22 - Awareness of CP concepts among girls (%)



The survey found awareness of different child protection (CP) concepts is high among girls (Figure 22). Further, survey responses also show an increase since midline in the percentage of girls that know how to report harassment or abuse, including corporal punishment (Table 35 below). In fact, many more girls than at midline (32.8% vs 13.6%) strongly agreed they know how to report, and 52.4% said they agreed. Though, a minority still does not know (6.5%) or does neither agree nor disagree with the statement (7.3%). This is corroborated by qualitative evidence, which found mixed responses from girls on how to report corporal punishment. In Yunyoo (Northern), all four girls said they knew how to report abuses, and two of the four knew about the hotline. In Bawku West (Upper East), only one of the four girls said they knew how to report abuses, including corporal punishment, and in Nadowli (Upper West) three of four girls said they did not know how to report abuses, and the ALP facilitator said they did not know how to teach girls about how to report abuses. This is indirectly linked to the elements of the training model that have been effective, as it suggests there is still more to be done in safeguarding training and how to communicate the messages to girls. In effect, a few teachers, facilitators (in Nadowli) and local leaders also demonstrated only a limited knowledge of safeguarding protocols, to a higher extent this happened in Upper East (Kusaal).

More girls than at midline also strongly agreed that they felt safe with their facilitators in class rather than agree and only two disagreed (Table 35).

Table 35 - Girls' views on reporting harassment and abuse and feeling safety with facilitators/teachers

		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
I have learned how and where to report harassment or abuse	**EL**	32.8%	52.4%	7.3%	5.8%	0.75%	1.0%
	ML	13.6%	58.5%	8.4%	15.4%	1.9%	2.0%
When in class, I feel safe with my facilitators/teachers	**EL**	60.2%	36.6%	2.8%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%
	ML	45.2%	51.1%	2.3%	0.6%	0.4%	0.3%
Source = Analytical dataset, Girl Survey Midline N = 705; Endline N = 399							

Coaching, monitoring and supervision

In all three communities, coaching of the facilitators, teachers and head teachers, as well as the DEO and DSP monitoring the schools was seen as an effective method to continue the support of the STAGE curriculum and teaching methods, as well as help to monitor and maintain good attendance. In line with IO2 2.3, the recruitment, training,

continuous professional development and monitoring of facilitators is a key factor in the success and sustainability of the programme.

In all three communities, the DEO or the DSP said they were involved in monitoring visits, and these were very helpful. The main use of the monitoring visits was to i) check on facilitators' quality of teaching and provide any support where further coaching was needed; and ii) to check on issues such as attendance. For example, the DSP in Bawku West said that while the ALPs were still ongoing "***we often observed how our facilitators were teaching and where possible we guide them and, in some cases, support them in varied ways including advice and coaching so as to optimise learning in the ALP classes***." The facilitator in Bawku West conformed that these visits took place and said that "***once in a while the Downstream Partner comes around when I am teaching. He sits and observes whatever is going on. After everything, he corrects me where necessary and tells me what I needed to do and say at what point***". Similarly, in Yunyoo, the Facilitator said that "***I had a supervisor from AfriKids who visited me at least once in the week. I had an exercise book so each time he came he will write his name and sign. And any time he come he will advise and encourage me***." The monitoring visits were seen as successful as it helped to provide continued support and guidance to the facilitators.

Monitoring was also highlighted as an important aspect of maintaining good attendance of both students and facilitators. For example, in Nadowli, the DEO said that monitoring data was submitted to PRONET, and so that "***attendance, regularity of teachers and pupils, as well as punctuality are checked, and corrective measures taken for the wellbeing of the pupil***". Similarly, in Bawku West, the DSP said that when they conduct visits, it is to "***monitor the girl's attendance and ask questions on the stay in their new schools and find out their challenges. In some cases, we would even place in calls where especially we cannot reach***". In Yunyoo, the DEO said that the STAGE monitoring was preferred to the SISOS monitoring, which was like they were "witch hunting" teachers. They commented that the STAGE monitoring was not just there for attendance, but also coaching.

It was only in Yunyoo that the DSP commented that although the monitoring and coaching was detailed, it was also "***demanding in some cases the data collection process and timings***". This does highlight that while the monitoring and coaching was seen as effective by the DSPs, DEOs, and facilitators, it was also perceived as more resource and time consuming than previous monitoring methods, however no details of these were provided in the interviews.

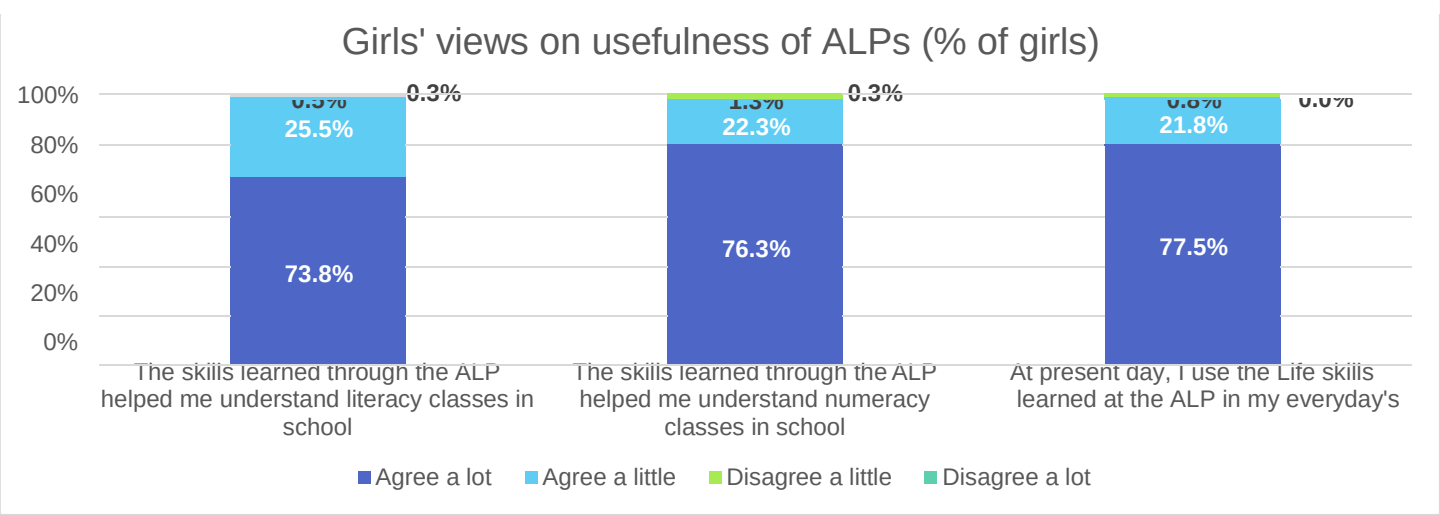
Most effective activities to increase learning

EQ4.b Which activities have been most effective in raising literacy, numeracy, and life skills levels among STAGE beneficiaries?

Table 36 - IO Indicator 2 - Quality of teaching

IO indicator	Sampling and measuring technique used	Who collected the data?	Baseline level	Target for midline	Midline level	Target for end line	Endline
2.3 % of facilitators who demonstrate effective literacy/numeracy instruction	WEI classroom observation summary KIIs girls/ teachers/ facilitators	WEI EE	N/A	60%	98.5% (WEI reporting)	N/A	N/A (not measured at endline)

Figure 23 - Girls' views on usefulness of ALPs (% of girls)



The almost totality of surveyed girls (Figure above) strongly agreed or agreed that the ALPs prepared them for literacy and numeracy classes in school, as well as helping them in every day's life (life skills). These findings were echoed by the qualitative evidence. Similar to midline, several girls across all regions referred to the fact that ALPs helped prepare them for the transition to school, one girl from Upper West stated: "***The ALP classes facilitate me to enter the formal education.***" Importantly, girls also expressed that ALPs were something that helped them feel more passionate about school and confident in their educational aspirations. Other girls from Upper West said: "***my passion for school increased after the afternoon classes***" and "***I consider in for myself now that I would be able to realize my educational dream.***" A girl form Yunyoo said "***This time I believe that I can finish school. When I stopped going to school, I didn't have any hope of going to school again. So now I believe I can go to school***."

Beyond the content of the ALP classes, the following activities stood out as particularly effective in raising learning.

Teaching style

Many girls commented on the quality of the teaching at ALPs and at school and how this helped them to learn (see also EQ4.a and EQ3, School on IGSE education), in particular praising their facilitators at ALPs and teachers at school. Girls commented on the teachers being inclusive and attentive and teaching at a pace that they could follow. One girl from Upper East stated, "***as he often repeats what he teaches many times, so I understand him very well when he teaches***." This helps with learning, as put by a girl in Upper: "***I like my new school teacher. He is very good and I like the way he teaches because I am able to grasp whatever he teaches***".

This attitude of teachers being attentive and accounting for and supporting each individual child was highlighted as an intentional teaching method by the Northern (Yunyoo) head teacher and the ALP facilitator interviewed. The latter also expressed how this child centred approach and awareness of individual children's needs could be applied to provide more support to marginalised children by saying "***I didn't have girls with disabilities except on girl who had mental issues. When you are teaching, she could just get up and come and stand in front or go out. But because I knew her condition it was easy to control her. I advised her colleagues in the class, so they didn't have any problem with her. Sometimes I teach her alone when the rest are gone for break***."

In addition, the Upper West head teacher interviewed specified that the teachers' skills especially their classroom management skills had improved thanks to STAGE "***it is so helping in the teaching and learning of girls at the classroom to a large extent. Classroom management skills has improved through that…. The skills of teacher has also improved with STAGE intervention***". Classroom management skills and the ability to apply child centred teaching may have been facilitated by small class sizes. The Upper East (Bawku West) DSP reflects that ***"the class size was not more than twenty- seven, and this made it easy to manage the class coupled with the training in gender and inclusive and child cantered methodologies that enabled them to teach across the individual needs of the girls and so the girls had a very conducive environment to learn."***

Local language of instruction

Learning at ALPs and in schools that employed the local language was commonly mentioned as effective by the majority of girls across all regions. Girls expressed that this local language tuition and particularly the combination of the local language and English was the preferable way to learn. One girl from Upper West expressed ***"I love my present school for the reason that the language of teaching is a combination of Dagaare and English and that makes it simple for to understand and learn new skills***." One girl from Northern said "***I was very happy in the ALP classes. It was good because they were teaching us in the local language***" Similarly, the Upper East (Bawku West) facilitator finds that at ALPs "***the use of the local language actually helps in their understanding in the content delivery***." The head teacher at Upper West (Nadowli) also found that learning in the local language helped girls to continue their schooling and the Northern (Yunyoo) DEO finds that mother tongue education was effective and should be applied in the wider school curriculum. The Upper East (Bawku West) DEO similarly stated that "***the programme usage of the local language actually enhanced the understanding of the girls as we believe that we learn from known to unknown and so, the use of the L1 cannot be underestimated***". A similar point was made by Northern DEO who called for mother tongue education as a thing to adopt at national level and for CBE. Even a few caregivers mentioned the importance of local language teaching ***"I know in the ALP they were teaching them how to read and write in the local language. It has prepared her for school that is why she is gone. Because if she could read in the local language, it means she will be able to read in the school."*** (Caregiver, Northern, Y*unyoo*).

Girls also emphasised the importance of learning English particularly as they needed to use it in formal schooling. One girl in Upper East (Bawku West) said "***I learnt a lot of things but the most useful thing I learnt was the English Language because, I was compelled to speak it while in class***". However two girls, one from Upper East (Bawku West) and one from Upper West (Nadowli), felt that English should have been used more to help with the transition, the girl from Upper West said ***"I also think English Language should be introduced as a medium of instruction in order to enable us to be conversant with it before we are transitioned to the formal school"*** and

the girl from Upper East said "***the use of English language should also be intensified***". Two girls, one from Upper East, one from Upper West, also felt that more subjects should have been introduced at ALPs, which was also mentioned at midline.

Afternoon classes and flexible ALP delivery

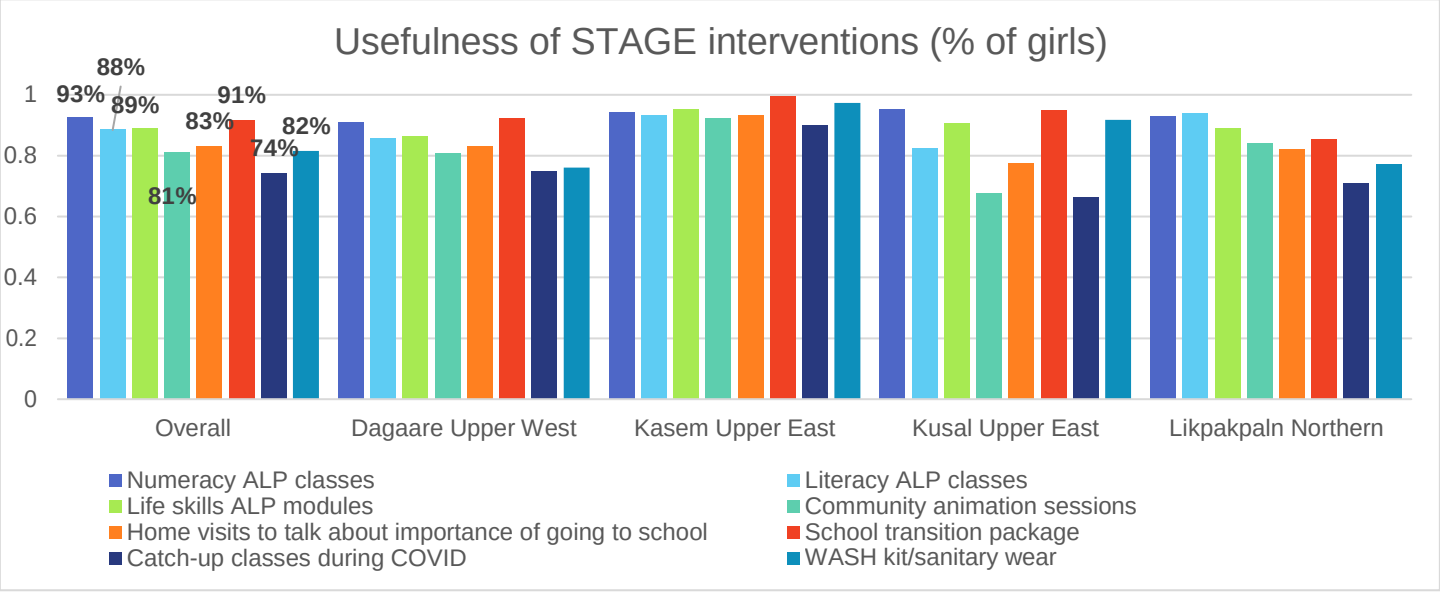
Many of the girls interviewed also mentioned that it was good that the classes were afternoon classes. Three of the four girls from Upper East (Bawku West) and two of the girls in Northern (Yunyoo) felt that it was good that the classes were in the afternoon, as one said "I ***was very happy in the ALP classes. It was good because they were teaching us in the local language, and we were going in the afternoon***." The Upper East (Bawku West) DSP also describes the importance of the flexibility of ALPs classes to facilitating girls' attendance "***The children actually liked the ALP classes due to its flexibility as they had the opportunity to reschedule their classes to anytime as they would all desire unlike their current schools***". The Upper East (Bawku West) DSP however rather highlighted that it was the ability to reschedule classes rather than the fact that they took place in the afternoon which was useful.

Factors and interventions correlated to positive learning and transition outcomes

EQ4.c Which factors and interventions are most correlated to sustained transition rates and increased learning?

Analysis of endline as well as midline results sheds a light on which interventions as well as subgroups are associated to sustained transition and increased learning.

Figure 24 - Girls' views on usefulness of key STAGE interventions (% of girls)



Girls were asked to rate how useful key STAGE interventions had been for their sustained transition and learning. Figure 24 shows the percentage of girls that rated each intervention as useful of very useful. Responses confirmed that numeracy ALP classes (92.7%) and transition kits (91.5%) were deemed as most useful across the sample, followed by life skills ALP modules and literacy ALP classes. As seen in the section above, girls considered that skills learned at the ALP help them understand numeracy and literacy classes at school, as well as help them in their everyday life. The activities that were considered slightly less useful were catch up classes during COVID (74.2%)

and community animation sessions (81.3%). At midline, it had been seen there were some challenges in the outreach of catch-up classes to all girls, which might explain this result. However, the positive learning outcomes at endline support the finding that the ALP model worked well in this sense, notwithstanding COVID disruptions. Community animation sessions were seen as least useful in Upper East Kusaal (67.7% of the sample). This is in line with quantitative and qualitative evidence from a range of sources which detected lower feelings of community and family support in this region/language group.

Learning

For increased learning, activities gauged to increase support for girls' education by their families and encourage attendance to ALPs and catch-up classes, such as community sensitisation and particularly ad hoc home visits and monitoring seem to be particularly effective. Second, the teaching style as well as STAGE/CBE curriculum at ALPs also seems associated with positive learning outcomes; together with the fact that classes were taught in local language, and sometimes using a combination of English and local language.

Notwithstanding positive findings on girls' views on the effectiveness of teachers in school, it is of concern that whilst GWDs were more likely to agree with facilitators being effective (76.9%) at midline, only 52.2% of GWDs agree their teacher in school is effective at endline. Similarly, girls affected by school, social norms and travel related barriers were less likely to agree. This finding should be considered together with lower learning outcomes than average for all these subgroups. It would seem that whilst results for GWDs were better than average on a range of indicators at midline (e.g., on learning and effectiveness of ALPs), now that they have transitioned the evidence points at a risk of GWDs losing these gains as the formal education system might not be catering for their needs sufficiently well. This is obviously the case for girls whose caregivers said they experience barriers related to the school not meeting their learning needs, or school not being a safe/accessible environment, as well as for girls in households with unsupportive social norms.

On the other hand, girls from poor households were more likely to agree on their teacher being effective (82%), as well as girls with chore burden (76.5%); these girls have also performed better on a range of indicators, including outcome-related (learning and transition). These findings corroborate midline results, which had tested correlations between key intermediate outcome indicators against outcomes and found that higher learning outcomes were associated with active support for education from caregivers, as well as facilitators being effective at the learning centre[91].

Transition

In terms of sustained transition, activities intended to reduce economic- and travel-related barriers, such as the transition pack and bicycles were seen as particularly effective by girls. However, at one year from transition, there are concerns on the sustainability of these initiatives once STAGE ends.

The transition pack was one of the elements of STAGE support that was most consistent mentioned across regions and respondent types as helping to support the transition to education (see EQ 2). ***"The transition pack was the most helpful thing that helped the girls transition without any issues.***"– Upper East (Kusaal) facilitator.

Another important area for sustaining transition is addressing unsupportive social norms, which as seen, also affect learning. Support from caregivers appears as key, not only vocal, but demonstrable support (e.g., caregivers do not consider that girls need to prioritise house chores over education, or family work; as well as mobilising funds). Findings

[91] Overall, T-tests had noted significant positive differences for EGRA and EGMA overall scores when the following indicator criteria were met (compared to not meeting the criteria): percentage of caregivers who feel it is equally viable to invest in a girl's education, basic level of supportive attitudes towards girls' education, caregivers feel the support reduced the barriers to regular attendance, and girls that agree that their facilitator was effective at the learning centre. In particular, beneficiaries with supportive caregivers (as measured by the active support indicator, O3, School, 1) on average scored 13.74% points higher on the EGRA.

point to a link between girls that are working, lower literacy scores, higher likelihood of being enrolled in non-formal education, school and social norms-related barriers, and Upper East region, Kusaal speaking beneficiaries.

4.5 EQ5. Value for Money

EQ5. What are the most cost effective and impactful activities implemented through the STAGE intervention which have helped girls to transition to schools and employment opportunities?

EQ5.a What life skills are most valued and useful for girls in the STAGE program?

In line with the workshop "incorporating the 'Light' and 'Medium' VfM Analyses into GEC evaluations", the EE incorporated a light touch VfM analysis into the endline evaluation reports. This focuses primarily on **making use of data collected and specific questions to the Project to gather insights on the cost-efficiency and cost-effectiveness** of some key interventions**.** The light touch approach is intended to use the data and findings (quantitative and qualitative) on effectiveness, sustainability, relevance, and efficiency, which is collected and compiled in all GEC evaluation reports. All respondents in the evaluation, including girls through the survey and all actors through KIIs were asked specific questions on VfM, specifically whether or not the training model and other activities were cost effective and efficient, and understanding whether the STAGE programme was more resource intensive than other CBE programmes. Those insights are reported here.

Table 37 - Value for Money assessment

Criteria	Finding
Relevance Project is designed to improve beneficiaries' lives; stakeholders see value in the project	● Project design based on extensive community mapping at baseline, identification/understanding of barriers and marginalised subgroups ● Targeted strategies put in place to encourage attendance, transition and learning of marginalised subgroups (mothers/pregnant, married, impoverished, high chore burden, GWDs) by meeting their needs and address their specific barriers ● Project builds upon existing community structures to deliver and sustain key interventions and maximise changes of ownership by communities i.e., to build support for girls' education among caregivers/families and community members in general, monitor and supervise attendance to school, deliver ALPs, deliver health and safeguarding messages during COVID. ● Community animation sessions and home visits seen as effective. ● Showed adaptiveness of interventions during COVID-19 (distribution of radios, remote classes, support of government messaging on the pandemic), though some problems in the implementation of the COVID plan ● Some respondents (DEO, DSPs, head teachers, facilitators) recognised that the project put a lot into the girls financially, but this helped to improve the transition and retention of the girls. "***I must say that STAGE has spent a lot of money on the girls and it's worth it because it has helped most of the girls to go to school***". (Head teacher, Yunyoo, Northern) ● Inclusive gender-sensitive teaching mentioned as an effective tool in all three regions by facilitators, teachers and head teachers

Criteria	Finding
	● Reading reinforcement approach helped girls to be able to read within a short period; continuation of home visits, COC and provision of radio sets (DEO Upper East) ● Perception project helped marginalised groups particularly: the DSP in Upper East, Kusaal commented "***all these girls would never have gone to school how much more of having to go to a special school and so no matter how much money the donor has spent I think it is worth it in putting a smile in these marginalised girls***". ● The life skill most valued by caregivers was money/ financial management skills. This may reflect the importance of earning money as a result of STAGE for the caregivers.
Effectiveness Ways in which project is affecting girls' lives Girls' perceived value of key STAGE activities	**Life skills** ● Life Skills seen as one of the most cost-effective tools in STAGE, as girls learnt practical lessons to enhance their lives, beyond school; caregivers also saw value in this. ● All of the caregivers and the majority of girls in each region spoke about girls' increased self-confidence as one of the biggest changes after being a part of ALPs. ● Indication of increased awareness and practices of hygiene and cleanliness, money management skills, and to a lesser extent, SRHR among girls. ● Increased understanding of how to report abuse/harassment **Learning** ● Positive views among girls of facilitators and teachers' teaching style, seen as inclusive and helping keep up with classes. ● Child centred approach fosters positive and conducive learning environment, however capacity gaps mentioned in few instances by facilitators/teachers especially in working with particularly marginalised girls (e.g., from poor households, with mental health issues). ● Skills learnt at ALP seen overwhelmingly as helping girls understand literacy and numeracy classes in school. Few comments on need to incorporate more subjects in ALPs. ● Use of local language of instruction facilitates learning, as well as in combination with English. Though some suggest English should be integrated more and earlier. **Transition and attendance** ● Flexibility of delivery (afternoon attendance or possibility to establish alternative arrangements/ repeat of classes) seen as helping attendance.

Criteria	Finding
	● Transition pack as most useful intervention to help and sustain transition, but concerns on sustainability when supplies run out. It helped reduce financial constraints/barriers which are prevalent among girls' families. ● Safeguarding (especially zero-caning policy), together with IGSE/child-centred pedagogy help keep girls in school and make them feel safe. ● Increased support for girls' education by caregivers and community, overwhelming basic support shown, to a lesser extent active support also increased. However, indications of increased chore burden and generally increased engagement in (family) work, whilst also going to school.
Sustainability Extent to which improvements in girls' lives are likely to remain that way after the project's end	**School** ● Positive signs of establishment of conducive learning environments in schools, and application of safe school policies (including zero-caning). Some resistance remains in some schools in terms of applications and functionality of such policies and changed views on corporal punishment. ● Awareness of IGSE has increased and teachers are improving their classroom/centre practice towards IGSE. Though room for improvement of the IGST and also need for refresher trainings in the future undermines sustainability. ● Key sustainability issue at school level is state of school facilities. Mentioned by several respondents at midline and endline, including girls, teachers, facilitators, community leaders. Structural problem which needs addressing at government level, starting from national to district. **Community** ● There remain instances of unsupportive social norms and signs of increased chore burden. Active caregivers' support increased but still much lower than basic support. ● Financial and travel barriers still prevalent, undermine sustainability of transition in the future for girls from poor households. ● Establishment of by-laws in some communities to institutionalise child protection. ● Increased support shown by community leaders, including taking action towards girls' education. Positive signs of sustainability, though some leaders recognised this is not part of their responsibilities as leaders. ● Qualitative indication of awareness of and increased access to services for GWDs, but doubts on sustainability, especially for cost of SEN schools. No evidence of functional/systematised structures to support GWD education. **System** ● Qualitative findings suggest strong engagement from districts at endline, with all three sampled communities

Criteria	Finding
	• Key area of engagement are IGSE; establishment of safeguarding regulations • Mentions of the mentorship sessions from teacher mentors and presence of dedicated gender sensitive education officers, but risk that sustainability rests only on personal willingness/commitment of teacher mentors going forward. • Upper West DEO sceptical of sustainability of STAGE, need for refresher trainings in IGSE; doubts on mentoring and coaching support continuing well after STAGE; issue of non-availability of functional Girls Education officers • Consideration that STAGE has influenced district systems for safeguarding and checking abuse, and this came 'from the top'.
Efficiency Perceived benefits of STAGE in relation to inputs	• In all three regions, it was said that the programme requires a higher financial demand than other CBE projects due to things like training materials, the bikes, transition packs, but all said this was justified (DEO in Upper East, Kusaal, Head teacher in Northern, DSP Upper East, Kusaal). • For Upper West (Nadowli) DSP and the Facilitator, they saw preventing girls or facilitators facing barriers to attendance before they arise as the most cost-effective methods. One facilitator suggested that "*to make programme cost efficient without affecting its quality is that there should timely delivery of incentives to both facilitators and the girls*". None of the respondents were able to think of activities that would not require a cost without impacting on the quality of the project. • The respondent from TVET Ghana commented that STAGE requires more materials than other programmes, and it is not possible to get materials without money, suggesting that STAGE interventions are at a higher cost than others. • Post-transition monitoring and support seen as particularly cost-effective as it helps prevent dropouts, thus preserving key project results (sustainability) (DSP, Upper West). However, one respondent mentioned it is more resource intensive. • Leveraging existing community structures to deliver interventions (see under Relevance) • Example of partnerships or building upon other initiatives to increase outreach of intervention (Camfed in Upper East).

5. Conclusions

This section presents key conclusions drawn from the evaluation and Project's monitoring evidence. As a general caveat, the evidence from the evaluation is unequivocal that almost the totality of girls (including those that are engaged in work) have transitioned to formal and/or non-formal education, have relatively high attendance rates, and are learning as evidenced by the learning assessments at over a year since transition. Whilst there are indications of barriers to education, these concern a small number of girls from some of the subgroups or experiencing certain types of barriers (e.g., a small percentage of the girls that are working, or a small percentage of girls in households with unsupportive social norms). Whilst some learning and transition outcomes might be lower for some subgroups, overall

results are still remarkable and not far below from the overall average for these subgroups as well. These points should be kept in mind when outliers and challenges related to certain subgroups are discussed in the report and in the conclusions below.

Key characteristic subgroups and barriers faced

1. **Subgroup marginalisation.** While marginalisation levels have varied through the project, most girls who received support through the Project remain highly marginalised and face potential barriers to sustained, full participation in education. Girls from poor households comprise one quarter of the sample (25.2%), virtually unchanged since midline but lower than at baseline. However, the most notable changes are related to girls with high chore burden and girls that are engaged in work (defined as doing work for pay and is separate from doing house chores). The proportion of girls who work increased substantially from baseline (8%) to endline (41.5%). Factors that might contribute to this result include girls growing older and being expected to contribute to the family; and the worsening economic context in Ghana affecting the need for girls to work and support family's earnings. Work is mostly either seasonal or temporary, for a large part in subsistence agriculture/family business. Girls that are working are prevalent in Upper East (Kusaal), at 46.9% of the sample; below 30% in other regions. While the percent of girls with a high chore burden fell precipitously from baseline (40.8%) to midline (5.5%), it increased at midline to 28.7%, resulting in a smaller net improvement. Prevalence of girls with high chore burden has sharply increased in Upper West (Dagaare) and still comprises almost 30% of the sample in Northern (Likpakpaaln). This data needs to be considered together with findings on enrolment/attendance to formal school and on community engagement and mobilisation continued by STAGE after transition, which – despite more prevalent engagement in work and house chores – still points at almost total transition rates and learning improvements.

2. **Disability reporting remains low and variable over evaluation points.** At all evaluation points, the prevalence of disability was lower than those described in the original description of the project: it may be due to the Washington Group questions not capturing disability in the same way described by the implementers. In addition, categorization as having a disability varied: none of the girls who met the criteria of having a disability at midline met the same criteria at endline (and vice versa). The way the Washington Group severity scale are translated into binary definitions of disability likely play a role in their instability between evaluation points. Daily feelings of anxiety or depression were by far the most prevalent criteria for disability status at each evaluation point.

3. **Barriers to education.** The evaluation has been tracking girls' experience of different types of barriers to education since baseline. At the project's end almost all girls are enrolled in school; as such, barriers should not be interpreted as obstacles to enrolment in formal education, but – with a view to sustainability – as potential challenges to sustaining enrolment in the future. The most prevalent barriers are still related to economic challenges (88.7% of the overall sample; for example, reporting that there is not enough money to pay costs of schooling and/or the girl child needs to work, earn money or help out at home) qualitative evidence pointed at girls not being in school previously due to costs. Travel barriers (lack of transport, safety in travelling to and from the school) are the second most prevalent barriers (34.8%), mostly felt in Upper West and Upper East (Kusaal) regions and among girls that are married, working, with high chore burden and girls that are far from school. Travel barriers might lead to drop-out and absenteeism. Over half of girls working, working under 15, GWDs and with high chore burden were reported to experience barriers related to the school not meeting girls' needs (for example, school lacking required physical access or teaching skills/materials needed) vs. 34.5% of the sample overall. Demographic and social norms barriers are similarly prevalent among the sample (27.5% and 25.9% overall), mostly in Upper West, Northern and, to a lesser extent, Upper East (Kusaal). Between baseline and midline, social norms barriers (for example, the perception that school does not help in finding a good job and disinterest in education by caregiver or girl child) were shown to be more persistent than others, with girls experiencing these barriers comprising a much larger proportion of the unenrolled at midline than at baseline. Girls from poor households, married girls, married under 15, mothers, and employed sub-groups felt these barriers the most. Girls that are working (including under 15) and with high chore burden were more likely to experience demographic barriers (for example, child too old, not mature enough, pregnant, a mother, married). Lastly, issues with school safety (for example, it's not safe, teacher mistreats child, child refused entry) are prevalent among 23.9% of the sample, though the qualitative evidence did not suggest that girls felt particularly unsafe at school.

4. Girls in marginalisation subgroups tracked by the evaluation are more likely to experience barriers than the overall sample.[92] In particular, there seems to be a link between facing barriers related to school not meeting girls' needs (lack of accessibility or of appropriate teaching skills and materials), social norms- and demographic-related barriers, and girls facing high chore burdens, girls that are working or are living over an hour away from secondary school, and girls with disabilities. Girls from poor households are less likely to suffer from non-economic-related barriers than the overall sample. This seems to corroborate the finding from baseline and midline that impoverishment alone was not always a cause for not attending school, and other factors such as lack of support from family and community, or caring responsibilities would come into play. Regionally, barriers prevalence is much lower in Upper East (Kasem) than elsewhere, so much so that apart from economic-related, almost none of the girls here (or none at all) report facing other types of barriers.

5. Midline findings revealed that barriers were particularly persistent among girls that are married, living with neither parent and with high household chore burden, however analysis by the former two subgroups is not possible at endline due to the limited numbers of girls with these characteristics.

Key findings

EQ1. STAGE Outcome results: Learning and Transition

6. STAGE has obtained impressive results and overachieved targets in both key outcomes of learning (numeracy and literacy) and transition (to formal and/or non-formal education) for Formal track girls. Whilst there are some differences across marginalisation subgroups, positive results and improvements on previous evaluation points have been recorded for the sample overall as well as across all subgroups of interest.

Transition

7. Almost the totality of Formal track girls (99.8%) has successfully transitioned to either formal school (97.5%) and/or non-formal education (9.3%). As a general trend, those affected by barriers related with travel to school, school not able to meet needs, and social norms have higher than average enrolment rates in non-formal education, compensating lower than average enrolment in formal education.

8. All GWDs and girls affected by high chore burden have successfully transitioned and are still in school. All girls from poor households have transitioned, but a small percentage (2%) began, then stopped going to school since the end of project support. Successful transition rates and sustained enrolment in formal school are total for three regions out of four, except for Upper East (Kusaal) which has lower formal and higher non-formal education transition rates.

9. In relation to the high prevalence of girls that are working concurrent to almost total transition rates, two considerations are made. Evidence suggests the work characteristics identified at endline are compatible with enrolment in school, as they configure work done predominantly in a family context, informally, seasonally/temporarily, often in subsistence agriculture. As noted, other factors possibly contributing to higher rates of girls working are the older age of girls, the worsening economic context of Ghana which may push some girls to support family earnings, as well as the end of time-intensive ALPs freeing up girls' time for work and house chores, in addition to participating in education. Of note, whilst 94% of girls that are working are enrolled in formal school, they are also more likely to be enrolled in non-formal education than the overall sample (15.7% vs 9.3%, significant), as well as to experience social norms- and demographic-related barriers. There are mixed findings on the impact of working on attendance, as quantitative findings point to relatively high attendance rates, whilst qualitative evidence suggests that working negatively affects attendance. However, effects might be limited to specific times of the year such as harvest.

[92] For economic barriers this is due to the way barrier prevalence is calculated.

Learning

10. Improvements in learning in both numeracy and literacy were sustained across all evaluation points, thus even after one year from the end of the ALPs and girls' transition into formal school.

11. For both numeracy and literacy, well over half of girls for whom data is available for baseline and endline have improved scores compared to baseline, namely 89.7% of girls for numeracy, and 90.9% for literacy. The overall literacy score at endline is 43.2, up by 12.9 pp from midline, and up by 32 pp since baseline (literacy started at lower mean scores at baseline than numeracy, 14.8 and 39.5 respectively). Largest gains were observed for reading comprehension. Writing, a challenging task, saw a remarkable advancement between baseline and midline. Most girls are in the highest learning bands in two subtasks (Reading comprehension and letter sounds). The overall numeracy score at midline is 65.1, up by 34.4 pp from baseline, and 13.1 pp from midline. Results are particularly impressive for numeracy: when aggregated results across subtasks are considered, no girl results in the Non-Learner category, and almost 90% of girls are in the two highest bands.

12. Marginalised sub-groups that have shown higher than average improvements in both tests are girls from poor households and older girls. Girls with a high chore burden scored higher than average for literacy, and slightly lower for numeracy. Northern region (Likpakpaaln speakers) – which started from higher marginalisation levels than elsewhere and lower learning scores – experienced the largest improvements in learning outcomes, as well as successful transition, and improvements on a number of intermediate outcome areas since the project start. Girls in Upper East regions/language groups also fared particularly well in numeracy.

13. All girls affected by one or more non-economic related barrier scored lower than average on both tests: lower scores were particularly pronounced for those reporting schools that did not meet their learning needs, provide safe environments, and girls who live in households with unsupportive social norms. However, results are still remarkable for these subgroups as well, and improvements are noted across evaluation points for these subgroups.

14. Girls with disabilities scored lower in both literacy and numeracy tests, after seeing large improvements between baseline and midline. Girls working (including under 15) scored lower in literacy and improved less since baseline than average (results are significant). Girls who are working and GWDs tend to be affected by barriers related to the school environment more than other subgroups. Given these barriers are linked to lower learning scores, now that girls have transitioned to school, there may be some concerns for sustained learning outcomes for those girls that are affected. However, both girls working and GWDs have improved learning outcomes since the project's start. The qualitative data suggests similar findings, particularly for those girls in unsupportive households; though it would seem from the qualitative findings that girls with severe disabilities sent to special needs schools are faring well. Regionally, girls from Upper East (Kusaal) scored significantly lower in literacy (this region/language has the highest prevalence of marginalisation characteristics, especially girls that are working and unable to meet basic needs); whilst girls in Upper West (Dagaare), scored lower in numeracy.

15. Findings point to a link between girls that are working, lower literacy scores, lower enrolment in formal school (entirely attributable to Upper East, Kusaal data), and higher likelihood of being enrolled in non-formal education.

EQ2. Stage contribution to reducing barriers to education

16. The activities that STAGE implemented to reduce economic, travel, school related and social norms barriers to attendance and transition were effective, as evidenced by the remarkable outcome level results for the almost totality of girls, overall and across subgroups.

17. The evaluation found high rates of attendance to and completion of ALPs, with the evidence pointing to the effectiveness of the flexible approach to delivery and provision of different time slots (particularly in the afternoon) so girls could attend classes as well as house chores, work, or other family and life commitments. There were some challenges in the delivery of ALPs and implementation of the COVID response plan during the pandemic. Also, there

were varying levels of agreement on the accessibility and appropriateness of STAGE Learning Centres on a few aspects, though results were overall positive.

18. Girls' attendance rates to school as measured by checks on school registries are fairly high (80.7% of girls attend at least 80% of the classes), though lower than at midline (86.1%) just after transition. It should be noted that those that do not reach the target are not that far below it. Self-reported attendance to school by girls was also fairly high: excluding nine girls who reported never attending school – even whilst enrolled -, over half of the sample reported attending all classes and 45% most of the classes. Some subgroups seem to fare particularly well in terms of attendance, such as GWDs, girls from poor households, girls experiencing travel and demographic barriers. Overall, the quality of teaching, child-centred and inclusive pedagogy, safeguarding practices (discussed in EQ4), the flexibility of ALP delivery and interventions to increase support for education by families particularly all contributed to high attendance and completion rates of ALPs, and are contributing to sustained enrolment in and attendance to school.

19. STAGE accompanied girls in their transition process to school and provided material support in a range of forms. The quantitative and qualitative findings concur that this support – particularly the transition kit, and to a lesser extent, bicycle banks – greatly helped reduce economic related burdens, as well as travel barriers, and has helped sustain attendance to school. However, findings from the qualitative sample indicated a lack of information on how the bikes will be maintained in the future; and there are concerns for school costs once the transition kit supplies run out.

20. Increased, overwhelming basic support for girls' education both at family/caregiver as well as community/community leaders level stood out from a range of sources. Demonstrable, active support is much less prevalent (for example, that a caregiver disagrees that girls should prioritise house chores over going to school or mobilising funds for schooling), though a positive trajectory was observed across evaluation points. There was evidence of persistence of social norms and demographic-related barriers, whereby reasons for families not supporting girls' education would include future likely pregnancy, or the need to prioritise house chores and family work. A further indication of the nuances and complexity involved in perceptions, views and attitudes towards girls' education is evidenced by the increased prevalence of girls with high chore burden, as reported by girls. Further, unsupportive social norms seem to intersect with economic barriers, whereby families cannot pay for school costs, nor can they give up the work girls can contribute to the family. Given that one of the most fundamental hurtles of transforming gender roles is not allowing girls to do more but allowing them the time to focus on new pursuits instead of all the duties they were expected to carry out to maintain a household, there are potential sustainability implications of some girls continuing to be expected to complete all the work they traditionally would plus the burden of schoolwork.,

21. Overall, the prevalence of caregiver's support across all subgroups, barriers and region/language groups is higher than at project start, except for girls affected by the demographic barriers. However, vocal support by caregivers has declined since midline for girls experiencing barriers related to school being unsafe, demographic and social norms. As with transition and learning outcome results, a positive trend of increased family and community support was observed for girls from poor households particularly, and girls with high chore burden. Regionally, there were mixed results in terms of positive social change towards girls' education in Upper East (Kusaal); here, girls were more likely to be working than elsewhere, as well as girls from poor households. Together with findings on transition rates and learning (literacy) in this region/language groups, this confirms that unsupportive social norms remain a persistent concern as a barrier to full participation in formal education.

22. Evidence of some unintended effects emerged from the interviews: instances of caregivers expressing that as a result of STAGE now some families are supporting girls over boys.

23. In terms of community leaders' support, there were signs of leaders advocating more frequently for girls' education, as well as taking action towards it, such as providing counsel/mentorship/advice to girls, visiting homes and participating to parent-teacher meetings to sensitise families on sending girls to school. By and large, support would not consist of mobilising funds – though there are few examples, noting how economic challenges in communities prevail. Community animation sessions were seen as effective to sensitise on the importance of girls' education by a range of respondents, though in some communities (e.g., in Upper East, Kusaal) less than elsewhere.

24. The evaluation also found that districts are more involved than previously in monitoring and there are indications of collaboration between districts, other government agencies and schools. This improvement is in line with the STAGE monitoring report, which stated "***Evidence from the field suggest that support from district entities and stakeholders have been massive. Aside regular joint monitoring, data from monthly and quarterly DSP reports revealed that these entities are putting in place several measures to support girls' education at the community and district levels***."

EQ3. Sustainability

25. STAGE has upped up its work to sustain the effects of the project after its end by working with actors at school, community and education system level on key interventions/areas identified through research and monitoring data as key to support learning and prevent harm at school. Evidence from interviews with a range of actors in three regions (Upper East, Northern and Upper West) points to a higher likelihood of sustainability of interventions than previously, especially at school and community levels. Project reporting also indicates that MOE and CEA have adopted significant STAGE approaches in their most recent strategic documents, though implementation has not started yet. This is in line with evaluation findings, which found limited evidence of implementation. Several findings also point to structural issues of school resourcing which might be problematic (see Conclusion 29 below).

26. Supporting MOE in the promotion of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in Formal Education and establishment of safe school policies were two key areas STAGE focussed its efforts on. The evaluation indeed found that support in this sense was well directed, as evidenced by a majority of girls commending their teachers for being effective, inclusive and making the school a safe environment, which in turn had an effect on their learning, attendance and motivation to go to school (EQ4).

27. The qualitative findings provided evidence of increased awareness of inclusive and gender sensitive education (IGSE), and teachers improving their classroom/centre practice towards IGSE. The inclusive gender-sensitive teaching was mentioned as an effective tool in all three regions by facilitators, teachers and head teachers, though there was some indication that refresher trainings are needed going forward if the gains in teaching quality are to be sustained. Further, a few respondents reported challenges in working with some marginalised subgroups in class, such as girls with mental health issues and girls from poor households.

28. At the system level, IGSE education was seen by district actors as the main area that the MOE/GES are engaging in, and one District Education Director stated that gender inclusiveness is the biggest change that they feel will be sustained after STAGE finishes. They mentioned IGSE is now being integrated into the education system at district level with the support of national officials, though factors other than STAGE might have also contributed. However, there were more mixed findings on system-level changes such as the introduction of girl education officer and social welfare officer roles, and mentorship sessions for teachers and district actors on IGSE. A key problem is that in absence of funding going forward, the continuation of these sessions is only down to personal commitment by teacher mentors.

29. A key issue for the sustainability of transition into school that emerged from quantitative and qualitative data relates to the inadequate status of school facilities, namely toilets not functioning and furniture lacking in schools (chairs and desks). This issue had already been detected at midline. It might indicate a structural issue with funding, resourcing and administration of schools, which is out of the control of education stakeholders at lower levels (teachers, school leadership, as well as community leaders), and in the hands of the government administrations. Whilst there was some indication of community leaders advocating for improved school infrastructure and facilities, it is unclear how the matter will evolve in the future. As shown by lower formal education transition rates for girls affected by school-related barriers, this is an issue that has the potential to hamper successful transition sustainment after the project's end.

EQ4. What works for increased learning and sustained transition

30. Enhancing the quality of teaching at ALPs and later, at school, was one key area that STAGE leveraged effectively to reduce barriers to education across subgroups. Evaluation findings strongly suggest that implementation of IGSE practices, safeguarding, and ALP/CBE curriculum all contributed to girls' learning, attendance and transition to school. Further, monitoring and supervision of facilitators at ALPs, and teachers after transition to school have enabled gains in learning and sustaining of transition, through ensuring the effective implementation of the CBE curriculum and IGSE/safeguarding. Monitoring and supervision also contributed to increase support for girls' education by caregivers/families especially.

31. Over 95% of girls agreed to any one statement on the effectiveness of facilitators and teachers in school, and 75% agreed facilitators/teachers were applying all examples of IGSE practices they were asked about, as well as making them feel safe in class. The evaluation confirmed that the IGSE training was effective for teaching gender sensitive and inclusive pedagogy to facilitators and teachers, and at the point of transition, the teacher orientation workshop to equip teachers to deliver effectively in the classrooms was effective. However, some difficulties in teaching to some subgroups, as well as areas for improvement were noted, and the need for perhaps further training on IGSE and safeguarding.

32. Findings support that STAGE safeguarding approach is one of the factors that have encouraged girls going back to school, as evidenced by high attendance and transition rates. Improvements in safeguarding, including preventing the use of caning are important elements of the STAGE training model, as it helps to better girls' experience of schools.

33. Almost all girls agreed that the ALPs prepared them for literacy and numeracy classes in school, as well as helping them in every day's life (life skills). Beyond the content of the ALP classes, activities that stood out as particularly effective in raising learning were the teaching style (child-centred, inclusive approach); using the local language of instruction, also in combination with English; availability of afternoon classes and flexible ALP delivery with possibility to reschedule. Community sensitisation, particularly home visits and monitoring/supervision stood out as effective in sustaining attendance and transition. Endline findings corroborate midline analysis that found significant correlations between higher learning outcomes and active support for education from caregivers, as well as facilitators being effective at the learning centre.

34. For transition, activities intended to reduce economic- and travel-related barriers, such as the transition pack (and to a lesser extent bicycles) stood out as effective, as well as those intended to reduce unsupportive social norms. However, at one year from transition, there are concerns on the sustainability of material support initiatives once STAGE ends, and still prevalence of school and social norms related barriers are prevalent among a part of the Formal track girls.

35. Several findings point to a risk of results not being sustained for girls with functional difficulties (though, the instability of disability measurement across evaluation points has been noted). It would seem that whilst results for GWDs were better than average on a range of indicators at midline (e.g., on learning and effectiveness of ALPs), now that they have transitioned the evidence points at a risk of GWDs losing these gains as the formal education system might not be catering for their needs sufficiently well (lower learning outcomes, less likely to agree on effectiveness of teachers). This is also –obviously- the case for girls whose caregivers said they experience barriers related to the school not meeting their learning needs or school not being a safe/accessible environment, as well as for girls in households with unsupportive social norms.

EQ5. Value for Money

36. Overall, the allocation of time and resources to each component of the project largely reflects their helpfulness according to beneficiaries.

37. Beyond findings on effectiveness and sustainability already presented, the light touch Value for Money analysis pointed at the relevance of STAGE interventions. Namely targeted strategies put in place to encourage attendance,

transition and learning of marginalised subgroups, the project building upon existing community structures to deliver interventions, adaptiveness of interventions during COVID-19.

38. On efficiency, in all three regions it was said that the programme requires a higher financial demand than other CBE projects due to things like training materials, the bikes, transition packs, but this was deemed as justified given the good results obtained. Post-transition monitoring and support seen as particularly cost-effective as it helps prevent dropouts, thus preserving key project results.

6. Lessons Learned

Area	Lessons learned
Economic barriers / impoverishment	Economic Barriers are still by far the most prevalent, and as such the assumption on the importance of this barrier for transition outcomes still holds. Findings suggest that STAGE interventions have contributed to ensuring poverty does not impact on girls' transition or learning and transition kits were considered overwhelmingly useful to reduce financial constraints of sending girls to school. At midline, the very positive results of girls from poor households especially in learning, and a number of other indicators, suggested that impoverishment alone was not always a cause for not attending school, and other factors would come into play (e.g., unsupportive social norms). However, at endline concerns were raised by caregivers about the inability to sustain education costs when material supplied provided by STAGE run out (e.g., books, pencils, uniform); but also a few indications of families actively mobilising funds for girls' education (to the extent of not sending boys). Also, families might not be able to afford giving up the work contribution of girls, if these were to be only focusing on studying. This may suggest that indeed where households are affected by severe poverty, economic barriers are insurmountable even on their own. Two considerations are made. First, the importance of the material resources provided by STAGE is without doubt, but concerns about the future from a number of caregivers highlight the potential risks associated with providing a one-time material support, which does not help the root cause of the issues of poverty. Two, there should be institutionalised, material support provided for children whose families cannot afford school. STAGE had one activity directed to link poor girls with material support from government (STAGE Mid Term Plan 2020), though there is no evidence from the evaluation of progress on this.
Economic barriers / High chore burden	The reduction in high chore burden girls since baseline was remarkable. This could have been seen as a positive demonstration of household's dedication to getting the beneficiaries education and their investment in STAGE by giving up the productive work the girls/women have been doing in the home. Further, the high chore burden subgroup had shown better than average results in learning and transition outcomes, as well as other indicators. At endline, the prevalence of high chore burden has increased, although encouragingly it is still lower than at the start of the project. In some cases, qualitative findings point at the persistence of views that girls need to prioritise house chores which might affect attendance. However, as at midline, girls with high chore burden obtained positive outcome results in

Area	Lessons learned
	learning and transition, in line with the overall average (for learning) or better (for sustained transition). This leads to three considerations. First, it might be that following the end of ALP (intense in terms of time requirements) and transition to school, the 'new normal' for a part of the girls is to be enrolled in education, whilst also being helping with house chores and/or working. The potential sustainability implications of some girls continuing to be expected to complete all the work they traditionally would plus the burden of schoolwork have been noted. Second, the sensitisation of caregivers on the importance of continued education for girls with high chore burden was an appropriate and effective activity by the project, especially through home visits from facilitators, supervisors, teachers, and/or a member of the CoC and participation of leaders to school meetings, given the positive results seen for these girls. Even more so when considering the persistence of social norms and demographic barriers for a share of the girls which pose a real risk to sustained transition and learning, as shown by worse outcome results for girls affected by these barriers at endline. Further research may be helpful with this subgroup to understand how they manage this high chore burden compared with other groups without it impacting on enrolment in education.
Social norms	Whilst there are important economic and practical factors as to why many girls are excluded from education – poverty and the need to contribute to family livelihoods, or mothers' duty to care for their children -, it is often because of socio-cultural norms that girls are disproportionately affected by such factors, compared to boys/men. Social norms – the disinterest in education or perception that education does not lead to valuable opportunities for girls – continues to be a major factor in hindering both girls' learning and transition outcomes at the end of the project. Evaluation findings suggest that STAGE rightly directed efforts to effect social change. Indeed, there is indication of the persistence of unsupportive social norms, but this is expected given that social norms are particularly entrenched in communities, and long-term interventions and concerted efforts are needed to alter social structures. Using existing community structures and leaders that enjoy the respect and trust of the community, as well as continuous monitoring and supervision was important to the observed improvements in community and family support for education and in turn, positive transition outcomes.
Social norms	. Findings on caregivers' basic vs. active, demonstrable support for girls' education show that further interventions are needed to have lasting impact, given the embeddedness of unsupportive social norms. Midline analysis found significant correlations between higher learning outcomes and active support for education from caregivers, as well as facilitators being effective at the learning centre. At midline, higher likelihood of being enrolled or not was observed depending on whether the girls stated they are not kept from enrolling due to household chores or family duties (though differences were not significant).
Community animation sessions	Quantitative and qualitative findings point to the effectiveness of this activity in increasing support for girls' education from families and communities, and knowledge of the challenges marginalised girls face.

Area	Lessons learned
	These should be incorporated into future programming.
Social norms: Married and mothers	At midline, social norms remained a persistent concern as a barrier to enrolment for a small group of beneficiaries, particularly among married girls and mothers. At endline it was not possible to observe results for these subgroups in the Formal track, due to low numbers involved. Still, targeting married girls and mothers specifically with long term programmes may be important for tackling the social norms which disproportionately affect them and can take an extended time period to change. This will potentially improve sustainability.
Teenage pregnancy, child marriage and sexual and reproductive health and rights	In terms of prevention of teenage pregnancy and child marriage, the baseline evaluation noted the appropriateness and urgency of the SRHR module in the Life Skills training. This was still the weakest area at midline, and qualitative findings at endline revealed that lower awareness/knowledge of and limited practices of SRHR remained an issue. At baseline, it had been found it is unlikely to be sufficient if the role of boys and caregivers in preventing this is not addressed. It is not known to what extent STAGE worked in this sense, or the reasons why life skills in this area still seemed to lag behind at endline, though the sensitivity of teaching about these issues is acknowledged.
Girls with functional difficulties	Several findings point to a risk of results not being sustained for girls with functional difficulties (however, see below on disability measurement instability). Whilst results for GWDs were better than average on a range of indicators at midline, now that they have transitioned the evidence points at a risk of GWDs losing these gains as the formal education system might not be catering for their needs sufficiently well. Future programmes might consider targeted material support to GWDs, though this –as all-time bound material support – has sustainability risks. For physical difficulties, material support/equipment is more likely to have long lasting impact. There were positive mentions of SEN schools and how these make a difference for girls; there were signs of no awareness of these services being there before STAGE. The (limited) evidence of STAGE linking girls/families to existing services on GWDs – where these services are present – and positive impacts for the girls indicated this is an important area to bring forward in future programming.
Work, pathways to formal and non-formal education	Work characteristics identified at endline are compatible with enrolment in school (as the large majority of the working subgroup is indeed currently enrolled), as they configure work done predominantly in a family context, informally, seasonally/temporarily, often in subsistence agriculture. On the other hand, evidence suggests that being engaged in work might well have effects on transition to formal/non-formal education (or sustainment thereof) as well as intersect with other characteristics and barriers. There are mixed findings on impact on attendance, with real risks of work affecting attendance during peak work periods (e.g., harvest). Work was also associated (significantly) to lower formal school transition rates, and higher non-formal education enrolment.
Travel barriers	A large majority of girls live over one hour away from secondary schools (of which there are less); this might be a risk for future sustainability, as more girls enter secondary school.
School environment	The physical infrastructure of the school is a problematic barrier e.g., even with access there is nowhere to sit. This hints at structural level issues around funding/resourcing which might

Area	Lessons learned
	be improved with a branch of programmatic activities focused on advocacy and influencing MoE with a clear strategy.
Upper East	Upper East (Kusaal speaking) has higher prevalence of marginalisation subgroups, particularly working, working under 15 and girls from poor households. This region/language group also has significantly lower literacy outcomes (though this might be a product of the assessment), significantly lower transition rates to formal education and lower rates of support from caregivers and communities. This would suggest a different programming approach is needed for this particular area which acknowledges these differences. Further investigation/research may be helpful to understand the different experience of Upper East (Kusaal) girls.
Disability measurement	The instability of meeting the Washington Group criteria for disability are notable. Even if most of the respondents with disabilities meet the criteria through anxiety and depression, which certainly change over time more than many other disabilities, evaluation results merit considering using a different set of disability criteria at future evaluation points, or to reconsider assumptions about disability.
What works	Among the interventions that work for increased learning and sustained transition: ● Community mapping evidencing marginalisation and barriers provided solid base to design and ToC. ● Evaluation findings strongly suggest that implementation of IGSE practices, child-centred approach, safeguarding, and ALP/CBE curriculum all contributed to girls' learning, attendance and transition to school. ● Qualitative findings found that the IGSE training was effective for teaching gender sensitive and inclusive pedagogy to facilitators and teachers. At the point of transition STAGE put in place a teacher orientation workshop to equip teachers to deliver effectively in the classrooms. ● Improvements in safeguarding, including preventing the use of caning are important elements of the STAGE training model, as it helps to better girls' experience of schools. However, while the policy and training are in place, messaging on why removing corporal punishment (other than being forced to) could be reviewed. ● Money management and personal hygiene life skills were considered as helping girls in everyday life. ● The continuation of home visits, supervision and monitoring by Community Oversight Committees, and provision of radio sets as useful interventions to sustain and integrate into district education systems (DEOs). ● STAGE monitoring is an effective and appreciated mechanism not just there for attendance, but also coaching and ensuring correct application of IGSE. Monitoring and supervision also contributed to increase support for girls' education by

Area	Lessons learned
	caregivers/families especially and minimising risk of dropouts thus maintaining project gains. Integration of this in education improvement interventions is helpful. ● Adopt elements of STAGE curriculum for ALPs to support CBE programming, in particular the reading reinforcement approach as it helped girls to be able to read within a short period. ● Material support for those most in need as useful things to adopt at a national level and for CBE (DEO). ● Increased communication between MOE and districts (MoE). ● Instruction in mother tongue (DEO, girls; see point below).
What works / Language of instruction	The importance of language stood out in two areas: 1. Mother tongue education was effective and should be applied in the wider school curriculum. 2. English should have been used more to help with the transition, the girl from Upper West said, "I also think English Language should be introduced as a medium of instruction in order to enable us to be conversant with it before we are transitioned to the formal school" and the girl from Upper East said, "the use of English language should also be intensified". The balance between mother tongue and English is an important consideration for learning.
What works / ALP flexibility and sustained attendance at formal school	The flexibility of the ALP approach was appreciated. Overall, 60% of girls were offered the opportunity to discuss alternative arrangements, and two thirds of these girls were able to find suitable options for attending. Afternoon classes and options to reschedule the class were considered the most useful. However, an important consideration is that – once girls transition to formal school - scope to implement strategies to encourage attendance would be more limited (monitoring and continued community sensitisation), with potential implications for the sustainability of the project at different levels. If catch up classes were introduced in the CBE curriculum, government could a flexible approach similar to STAGE to deliver them, especially catering to needs of marginalised girls.
Areas for improvement	Potential areas for improvement that were raised by some of the stakeholders interviewed include the following: ● Consider refresher trainings for IGSE and safeguarding. Focus on messaging around why corporal punishment shouldn't be implemented. ● Consider ALPs with more subjects (beyond numeracy and literacy) such as the introduction of English language skills in preparation for school.

Area	Lessons learned
	• Practical coaching/support to facilitators or refreshers as sometimes they feel they do not know how to implement IGSE with particularly marginalised girls (e.g., with mental health issues).
Future research / Policy Integration	• Unpacking the catalysts and barriers to integration into policy and practice at a structural level. Unpacking the reasons why certain approaches taken by STAGE have been adopted or not, by MoE and GES could inform future design to maximise sustainability potential. • Unpack the reasons/factors behind Northern region success in a number of outcomes and intermediate outcomes to see what could be applied to similar programmes.

7. Recommendations

1. For future programmes and the STAGE close out phase, link to the extent possible girls from severely poor households with existing government, institutionalised material support interventions to reduce risk of girls dropping out of school due to financial constraints.

2. As STAGE did, future programmes should focus on reducing barriers related to social norms and demographic factors which are persistent and pose a risk to sustained transition and learning. The sensitisation of caregivers on the importance of continued education for girls with high chore burden contributed to positive outcomes for girls in this subgroup and – if implemented over a sufficient period of time - has the potential to bring long-lasting change for more persistent social norms and demographic barriers, which need long term interventions to change. Future programme design should consider a longer timespan/vision, to increase likelihood of sustained change.

3. In the close out phase, STAGE should explore all possible incentives/avenues to ensure that community leaders will continue sensitisation, monitoring and supervision of girls' education and potentially come to embed it as one of their responsibilities as community leaders. Some leaders indicated a motivation to do so.

4. Incorporate community animation sessions in future programming.

5. For future programmes which aim to reach marginalised girls, consider long-term targeted interventions for married girls and mothers that tackle the social norms which disproportionately affect them.

6. In designing future programming, take into account the challenges observed in changing girls' awareness, knowledge and practices of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights life skills over the lifespan of STAGE.

7. For similar future programmes, link girls and families to existing health services for GWDs given the positive impacts they have had on GWDs supported by STAGE and given the lack of awareness of these services among GWD families.

8. Future programme design should take into account STAGE best practices and what worked to achieve observed results. These activities include:

    - Community mapping.

- Promoting inclusive and gender sensitive education practices and child-centred pedagogy in schools and across local government.
- Promoting the establishment of regulations and application of safe school policies.
- Conducting IGSE and safeguarding trainings to project implementers as well as government stakeholders.
- Monitoring and supervision resting on existing community and district structures.
- Family and community sensitisation resting on existing community structures, including home visits.
- Flexible delivery of ALPs, afternoon classes and possibility to reschedule classes.
- Local language teaching in combination with English.
- Reading reinforcement approach.
- Material support/transition kits to reduce economic barriers.
- If catch up classes were introduced in the CBE curriculum, the government could use a flexible approach, similar to STAGE, to deliver them.

9. Structural level issues around funding and resourcing of school facilities might be improved with a branch of programmatic activities focused on advocacy and influencing MOE and decision-makers in Ghana's education system with a clear strategy, aiming for example at increasing funding allocations to education departments of local government, schools, promoting accessibility guidelines, among others.
10. Revisit assumptions around disability or consider adopting different measurement technique/criteria. Consider incorporating the Washington Group's severity scales into understanding disability or identify alternative methods to track disability among beneficiaries.
11. When anxiety and depression are prevalent issues among beneficiaries, consider how their accommodation and provision of supportive resources can be incorporated into overcoming barriers.
12. Future research:
    - To understand the different experience of Upper East (Kusaal) girls, especially lower support to education at family and community level, and lower literacy outcomes for girls.
    - Conduct listening sessions to learn how high chore burden girls manage this compared with other groups, without it impacting on enrolment in education.
    - Unpack the reasons/factors behind Northern region success in a number of outcomes and intermediate outcomes to see what could be applied to similar programmes.
    - Unpacking the reasons and political economy on why certain approaches of STAGE have been adopted or not, by MoE and GES could inform future design to maximise sustainability potential.

8.Annexes

Annex 1: Project Design and Interventions

Annex 2: MEL Framework

Annex 3: Characteristics and barriers

Annex 4: Learning outcome data tables

Annex 5: Logframe and Medium-Term Response Plan Output Monitoring Framework

Annex 6: Beneficiaries tables

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Annex 8: Quantitative and qualitative data collection tools used for midterm/endline

Annex 9: Qualitative transcripts

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Annex 12: STAGE EE Formal Baseline and Formal Midline

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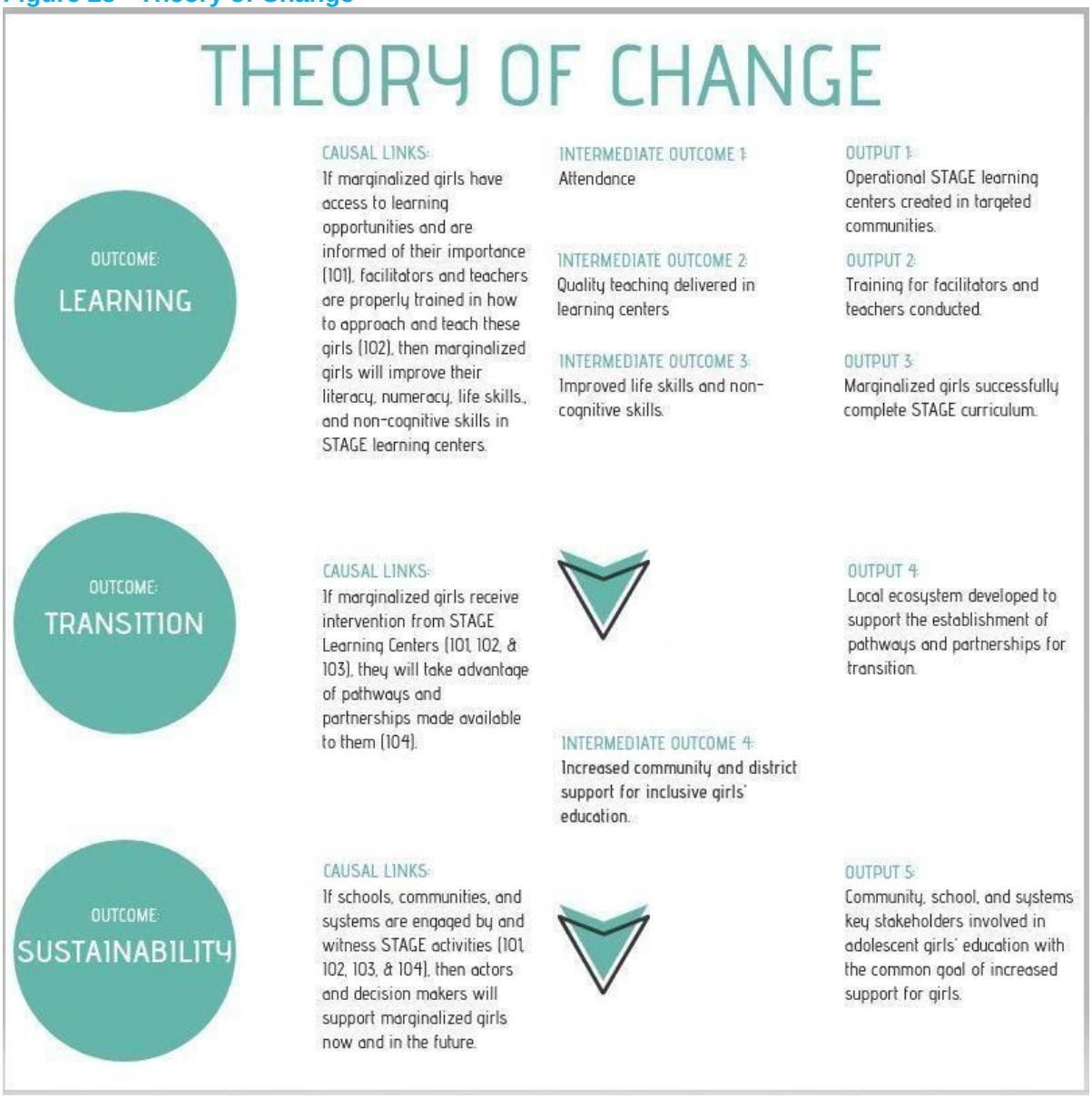
3.1 Annex 1: Project Design and Interventions

Figure 25 - Theory of Change



Evidencing the Theory of Change

In order to judge the validity of the impact pathways outlined in the ToC a thorough review of the MEL evidence has been conducted and mapped against the sections below. Learning, Transition, Sustainability and, barriers and assumptions surrounding this. The section below does not lay out all of the evidence mapped against the ToC but demonstrates the overall findings and delves into the barriers and assumptions alongside the implications for sustainability of the outcomes (and possible future design).

1. Learning will be measured by the number of marginalised girls with improved learning outcomes. To achieve these outcomes, girls will need to; a) regularly attend learning sessions (school and ALP); have access to well-equipped facilitators and educators who provide inclusive learning opportunities and be able to acquire the critical

life and non-cognitive skills needed for success. These intermediate outcomes will collectively increase participation, self-esteem, and support for gender equity as girls will learn to speak their voice, engage more with their peers, and achieve better learning outcomes.

Assumptions centred on barriers: assumptions relate to the effectiveness of activities in overcoming barriers including accessible learning opportunities, gender sensitivity / social norm awareness and supporting families with economic burdens and girls with life/family commitments which limit attendance and learning.

STAGE was able to put in place strategies for encouraging girls' attendance to ALPs, which have likely contributed to high completion and attendance rates reported by girls (STAGE work on increasing community support to education is addressed in sub question 2.a) and marked improvements in learning between baseline and midline. There were some challenges in the delivery of ALPs and implementation of the COVID response plan. Also, there were varying levels of agreement on the accessibility and appropriateness of STAGE Learning Centres on a range of aspects, though results were overall positive. Notwithstanding the challenges, even between midline and endline there has been a marked increase in learning outcomes, with remarkable results in numeracy as well as literacy. This was favoured by the child-centred approach, inclusive gender sensitive education practices, afternoon classes, local language teaching, beyond the ALP curriculum.

2. Transition will be measured by the number of Formal track marginalised girls who have been able to move into formal education. The key intermediate outcome enabling this transition is the increased community and district support for inclusive girls' education. Due to the specific characteristics and needs of these girls, local ecosystems (made up of stakeholders such as schools, local businesses, vocational training centres, etc.) that are well sensitised and prepared to accommodate the target population must be advocated for and developed. To support girls' chosen paths, livelihood activities that increase family resilience, bicycle banks to ensure girls can access schools, transition support kits to meet learning material needs, and networks of guidance and support will be implemented.

Beneficiary girls will improve learning outcomes through the community-based ALP platform where literacy and numeracy, as well as life skills are taught.

Assumptions centred on barriers*:* assumptions relate to the effectiveness of activities in overcoming barriers including economic, travel and social norms barriers as well as barriers related to school not meeting basic needs or being unsafe.

Assumptions underpinning the achievement of learning and transition outcomes are centred on a range of barriers that have been analysed and tracked since STAGE inception. These assumptions crosscut the TOC and the effects of these on Learning, Transition and Sustainability are analysed below. As of the endline study some prominent findings have emerged.

Study findings have confirmed that **economic barriers** on their own are not always impediment to learning and transition, however financial constraints certainly are the most prevalent and seemingly insurmountable to address in severe cases. This also means girls need to work and contribute to the family income, as evidenced by the high proportion of girls working at endline. The evaluation has demonstrated a marked contribution to reducing economic-related barriers throughout the course of the programme, relieving financial obstacles through a range of material support (transition kits, and bicycles *in primis*). Prevalence of girls' chore burden has been reduced since baseline, though for a consistent share of girls this has not been the case. Still, girls from poor households and affected by high chore burden showed above average (or as a minimum in line with the overall average) learning and transition outcomes.

At endline distance to school and cost of **travel** are still considered as problematic, being the second most common barriers girls and other community members cited in qualitative responses. Through bicycles, the project contributed to reducing travel-related barriers. However, as girls grow older and transition to secondary school, distance to secondary schools – of which there are fewer than primary school - might represent an obstacle to sustaining transition. Further, there are sustainability issues with maintenance of bicycles.

Demographic and social norms barriers are still prevalent among a relatively large share of the Formal track girls. Indeed, findings indicated widespread vocal support for and changed perceptions towards girls' education by caregivers and communities; however, there was evidence of persisting unsupportive social norms in some instances, and no widespread changes in the distribution of house chores in the household were observed. Lack of support could be overtly vocal, whereby caregivers explicitly state that girls need to prioritise house chores, or work in the family business/farm, rather than education; or that once girls get pregnant – which would happen soon – education would need to stop. But biases against girls' education could also be more nuanced and implicit, whereby a caregiver praises STAGE life skills teaching as it helps girls to be better with house chores, or better with managing the family business; or where most caregivers perceive a reduction in house chores for girls –or no change-, whilst girls consider there has been an increase. Indeed, findings point to a much lower percentage of caregivers demonstrating active support (32%, against 92.7% basic support), whilst this has improved from midline.

Importantly, unsupportive social norms need to be seen in the context of the prevailing economic challenges of several STAGE families and communities, which make it difficult for families to not only pay for girls' education, but to potentially renounce to the contribution girls can give to family's income through work. This needs to be linked with findings on girls working, which have increased from 8% at baseline to over 40% at endline. On one hand, it would seem that the **work** characteristics identified at endline are compatible with enrolment in school (as the large majority of the working subgroup is indeed currently enrolled), as they configure work done predominantly in a family context, informally, seasonally/temporarily, often in subsistence agriculture. Further, working does not seem to have affected *attendanc*e particularly, compared to other groups, with most working girls attending all or most of school classes. On the other hand, evidence suggests that being engaged in work might well have effects on *transition* to formal/non-formal education (or sustainment thereof) as well as intersects with other characteristics and barriers. In fact, whilst almost all working girls successfully transitioned after the ALP, indeed a lower percentage are still enrolled in formal school, compared to the overall average (94%, significant). In addition, girls that are working are more likely to be enrolled in non-formal education, and more likely to suffer from social norms and demographic related barriers. In conclusion, social norms take longer to change and so the persistence of related barriers is unsurprising even though community sensitisation activities had very positive results.

Now that girls have transitioned, **barriers related to issues with school not meeting learning needs or being an unsafe environment** were more prevalent. This is concerning for sustainability, as girls affected by these barriers fared lower in learning and transition. Further the evaluation found structural issues with the state of school facilities which might negatively impact sustained transition; this assumption did not seem to have been considering in the design of the intervention, and clearly is outside of the control of STAGE as well as education actors at the local level such as schools, and community structures.

The majority of girls with **functional difficulties (GWDs)** are affected by frequent feelings of anxiety and depression. GWD had some reversal in learning and other gains observed between baseline and midline, which might indicate schools are not meeting their needs. There were some examples of findings that STAGE has contributed to raising awareness of existence of tailored programmes for GWD, special needs schools, and also sensitised well on importance of GWD going to school; however, since the end of STAGE there are no more services/or knowledge of services for GWD.

While not drawn out in this section of the report, there are a variety of **regional variations** with regards to how these barriers are experienced by girls. This is also something to be aware of when tailoring future girls' education programmes. Although not across the board, the Upper East (Kusaal) regions seem to have a number of variations from the rest of the sample with regards to a number of barriers, so this could be an area for further investigation. This

hints at a necessity for a more nuanced approach for certain regions and subgroups such as GWD and girls that are working.

3. Sustainability will be measured by demonstrating that the changes brought about by the programme go beyond the initial targets. Strong and active partnerships and engagement with government, communities, schools, and other key stakeholders involved in girls' and inclusive education will continue reaching the most highly marginalised girls. STAGE will leverage existing programs, organisational and community structures and policies to educate, enhance, advocate, and demand accountability from all actors. A holistic approach will be taken to achieve project sustainability. This will be pursued through training, teaching and learning material (TLM) in inclusive education and disability interventions at school level (linking existing testing to inclusive education and training), Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) transformational interventions like life skills at community level, and safeguarding awareness and interventions.

STAGE is working with GES at the regional and district levels to identify teachers and school managers to be trained on gender sensitive and inclusive pedagogy, GES Basic Education curriculum content in both local language and oral English, effective classroom management, development of local specific TLMs as well as school-based coaching. Existing GES tools, such as the Inclusive Education and Monitoring Tool are adapted to focus on marginalised girls. GES staff is involved in community mapping and animation as well. By building the capacity of GES in developing and using these tools, STAGE ensures that interventions can continue after project support ceases.

Assumptions. Sustainability might be negatively impacted if: support for girls' education at community level and sensitisation are not able to reduce dropout rate and safeguarding/GESI/ issues, especially for marginalised sub-groups; coordination with MOE, GES, GHS at all levels is not effective; capacity of government/community actors to ensure STAGE girls' continued education past the programme end is not built; there are insufficient incentives/resources to ensure continued government/community action in support of girls' continued education past the programme end.

It would seem that assumptions on coordination with MOE, GES, GHS at all levels and political will/incentives to move forward the adoption of STAGE curriculum in CBE programming did not hold true – even though there was limited evaluation evidence in this area. On the other hand, there was progress on inclusive and gender sensitive education and adoption of safeguarding policies at national, district and school levels, which would support system-level sustainability to an extent. There are several STAGE approaches and interventions of interest for education actors at district level, which future similar programming to STAGE might focus on.

Considerations for impact and sustainability

Overall, the evidence suggests that the TOC holds for the most part. This is a testament to the strength of the programme and points to a solid understanding of the issues affecting girls' education during programme design. Within this there is some nuance that may affect the way outcomes are achieved for certain subgroups (GWDs, employed girls, married girls).

While Learning, Transition and Sustainability outcomes have been improved by the programme there are some results that may continue to present a future challenge to continued sustainability of learning and transition outcomes (also see, School level sustainability findings under EQ3).

1. The persistence of **social norms barriers** and specifically how these affect GWDs and girls that work still have a strong potential to pose a barrier to attendance and transition.
2. **School related barriers**: where girls have transitioned, there is still a need for training regarding flexibility to allow entry to girls who may not have the 'correct' uniform or arrive late to class due to other responsibilities. The physical

infrastructure of the school is still a problematic barrier e.g., even with access there is nowhere to sit. This hints at structural level issues around funding which might be improved with a branch of programmatic activities focused on advocacy and influencing MOE with a clear strategy.

3. **Transition kits:** these helped mitigate some of the financial costs of transition however concerns remain regarding how the girls will go to school once the supplies of the transition packs run out and in addition respondents in each community still feel economic challenges are the biggest barrier to education.

4. **Tailored programmatic interventions** by certain sub-group (employed, GWD, married girls, from poor households) or geographical location (Upper regions seem to have some differences to other locations) might be considered and some focus on research to unpack some of the nuance around girls' educational experiences in these cases.

5. Unpacking the catalysts and barriers to **integration into policy and practice at a structural level**. Unpacking the reasons why certain approaches of STAGE have been adopted or not, by MOE and GED could inform future design to maximise sustainability potential.

6. Evidence suggests that there is further progress to be made with regards to **support from caregivers** for girls' education. Specific emphasis on this in future will be essential to maintaining learning and transition outcomes in families and will contribute to continue shifting of social norms around this issue.

For the ToC to be even more robust and maintain sustainable outcomes it will be useful to begin to address some of the points above.

3.2 Annex 2: MEL Framework

STAGE MEL Framework.doc

3.3 Annex 3: Characteristics and barriers

Not applicable.

3.4 Annex 4: Learning outcome data tables

Learning outcome data.doc

3.5 Annex 5: Log frame and Medium-Term Response Plan Output Monitoring Framework

ABBAligned Logframe-FT.xls

3.6 Annex 6: Beneficiaries tables

Direct Beneficiaries

Formal Track: 10-14-year-old OOSG living in the Northern, North East Region, Upper East and Upper West regions.

Selection: In collaboration with the district authorities, STAGE visited communities to conduct initial entry and animation exercises to gather a broad base of support for project implementation. Consultations were held with traditional leadership and opinion leaders to outline key objectives and other implementation arrangements. Working with District Assembly girls' education and gender officers, initial community-wide sensitisation on girls' education was organised to lay the groundwork for the identification and selection of girls.

STAGE held planning meetings with key stakeholders to set up, review, and agree on the specific criteria for the selection of the girls using a targeted approach. Key criteria for selection included the following:

- age (10-19 years),
- educational level,
- parental income/livelihood measures,
- marital status,
- girls who are pregnant or teen mothers,
- girls with any form of disability, and
- fostered girls.

Community-level meetings provided a forum for the initial identification of girls that meet these criteria and local systems of communication were used to ensure that the beneficial opportunity for participation in this programme was made widely known within the selected communities. Once identified, STAGE conducted home visits to verify cases, better understand the needs of beneficiaries, and begin training families and girls to gain momentum for programme entrance.

Table 38 - Direct beneficiaries - Formal and Non-Formal

	Learners		
	Girls	Boys	Total
Formal	8245	0	8245

Table 39 - Indirect beneficiaries - Formal and Non-Formal

	Learners			HT/Teachers/other "educators"			MoE/District/ Govn't staff			Parents/ caregivers			Community members		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Formal	34,110	5184	39,294	531	450	981	946	984	1930	41,943	27,963	69,906	11,160	4575	15735

Table 40 - Direct beneficiaries by intervention/activity - Formal and nonFormal

	Intervention/activity						Total
	[A]	*[B]*	*[C]*	*[D]*	*[E]*	*[F]*	
Formal							8045

Table 41 - Summary of Direct Beneficiaries

Direct beneficiary numbers	**Total figures**
Total number of girls reached in cohort 1	8333
Education level	**Proportion of total direct beneficiaries (%)**
Never been to school	2903 Formal
Been to school but dropped out	5196 Formal
Could not answer directly	146 Formal
Age banding (The age bandings used should be appropriate to the ToC)	**Proportion of total direct beneficiaries (%)**
10 to 14	8245 Formal Track 100%

Table 42 - Indirect beneficiary groups

Group	Interventions received	Total number reached for Formal Track
Boys	• Peer education training • Information on BCC • Training in communication skills (gender, self-esteem, safeguarding)	846 (3 boys per community x 282 formal communities)
ALP Facilitators	• Gender, Inclusive pedagogy, Safeguarding and Inclusion, life skills, ASER assessment training • 6 – 9-month continuous professional support from supervisors and WEI teaching and learning team	282 ALP facilitators
Community members	• Public BCC campaigns on gender issues and safeguarding	78,600

3.7 Annex 7: External Evaluator's Inception Report


Annex 7.pdf

3.8 Annex 8: Quantitative and qualitative data collection tools used for Formal Endline

With a view to reducing evaluation costs and keeping information collected relevant, the data collection tools will undergo a review and will be approved by STAGE/FM prior to launching the data collection. The following table presents the tools administered to each track, and a summary of anticipated changes.

Table 43 - Quantitative and Qualitative data collection tools, Formal Endline

	Tool	Formal	Non-Formal	Anticipated changes/review
Quant Tools	Literacy Assessment (EGRA) (Girls)	✔		N/A
	Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) (Girls)	✔		N/A
	Life Skills Tool (Girls)		✔	N/A
	Girls' Survey	✔	✔	Streamlining/deleting some sections. Delete: - COVID-19 - Employment for Formal - Reduce/edit quality of teaching for non-Formal Add: - Transition questions for Non-Formal on IGAs - rating activities (for VfM)
	Primary Caregiver Survey	✔	✔	Streamline/deleting some sections Delete: - STAGE contribution to reducing barriers section - LifeSkill's assessment for Formal girls - COVID-19
	Household Head Survey	✔	✔	Streamline
Qual Tools	Overall			- Tailor tools more towards endline and 'what worked' - Add further sustainability questioning

	Tool	Formal	Non-Formal	Anticipated changes/review
	Girl KII	✔	✔	- Streamline and improve life skills questions - Add sensitive questions around school safety (incl. corporal punishment prevalence)
	Girl FGD			Deleted
	Boys KII			Deleted
	Caregiver KII	✔	✔	- Streamline and improve life skills questions
	Teacher KII	✔		- Add questions around school safety (incl. corporal punishment prevalence)
	Head Teacher KII	✔		- Add questions around school safety (incl. corporal punishment prevalence)
	Facilitators KII	✔	✔	New tool
	Master Crafts persons KII		✔	New tool
	Local Leaders	✔	✔	
	Local Authority Members			Deleted
	DEDs[1]/District Actors KII	✔	✔	New tool
	National Actors KII (NVTI, CEA/NFED, & MOE tbc)	✔	✔	New tool
	Downstream Partner KII	✔	✔	New tool

Learning tests

No changes have been made to the tests or administration modality compared to baseline. No modifications were made for girls with disabilities.

Enumerators administered all quantitative tools orally and recorded responses electronically. All instructions and items were given in the language of preference of the respondent (typically their mother tongue), with the exception of the listening comprehension and dictation sentences of the literacy assessment which were always given in the language of assessment (the language that will be used in ALPs training in that location). The learning assessments included paper supplements for test-takers to interact with (such as passages to read or lists of numbers). This section provides an overview of the quantitative tools for this midline.

Languages: Both learning assessments were translated into the language of instruction used by the STAGE programme in their community (which is presumably the same as language spoken in the home of the girl) [93]. The languages included in the midline were: Dagaare, Kasem, Kusal, and Likpakpaaln. All assessments were designed in English, and then translated to the six languages. As mentioned above, instructions and items were given in the language of preference of the respondent (typically their mother tongue). The items in the EGRA were all written in the language of assessment, and accommodations made for differences in alphabets, letter, and word frequency. This resulted in slight differences in length of the oral reading passages: however, because scoring is calculated as correct words per minute, the different number of items does not affect the calculation of scores.

Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA): The EGRA was based on the standardised international assessment and modified slightly to ensure appropriateness for the beneficiary population. It consists of five sections:

Table 44 - EGRA subtasks

Subtask		Timed
1.	Letter Sound Identification	60 sec.
2.	Familiar Word Reading	60 sec.
3.	Oral Reading Passage	60 sec.
4.	Reading Comprehension	Untimed
5.	Dictation	Untimed

The Letter Sound Identification and Familiar Word Reading subtasks consist of grids of letters and words, and test-takers were asked to read as many of them as they could in a minute. For the Oral Reading Passage, test-takers were given a short narrative passage to read and asked to read aloud to the end. After 60 seconds had elapsed, the enumerator marked how many words were correctly read in that period. Test-takers could finish reading the story. Reading Comprehension asked five questions about the Oral Reading Passage story. Finally, the enumerator read a sentence slowly aloud, and asked the test-taker to write it down. The timed subtasks are scored according to the number of items correct per minute[94]. The untimed subtasks are scored as a percentage of the total number of items. Translation resulted in slightly different word counts of the passages and dictation, depending on the language of assessment. Because scoring is completed as correct words per minute or percentages, this increases comparability of scores.

Skip Logic. Each subtask is progressively more difficult than the previous, so if a test-taker is unable to complete ability on one subtask they do not need to continue to the successive tasks. Each subtask had a minimum standard required to continue to the next subtask. This minimises the burden on test-takers struggling to complete the assessment. For example, test-takers who could not read any of the first 10 letters on Subtask 1 were not asked to

[93] Because differences in language are inherently tied to different social, geographical differences, it is not possible to untie them strictly with the baseline data. For example, it is not possible to untangle differences in learning assessments between Kusaal and Dagaare speakers based on where they live, what language they speak, what their language of instructions are or the social and economic differences between their communities live. It should be noted that there were only 8 cases in the Formal interviews and 10 cases in the non-Formal interviews where languages of instruction and spoken at home were different which doesn't imply a significant gap in the quantitative data collected by the evaluation, but few outliers compared with the overall sample.

[94] Per the FM template guidelines, all subtasks excluding oral reading fluency were calculated as percentages of the total items. Oral Reading Fluency was calculated as correct words per minute, which includes measuring the total number of correct answers divided by the amount of time tested, according to the Tangerine software. For example, if a student read 25 correct answers and completed the exercise in 20 seconds, their ORF score would be 75cwpm. In cases where students read more than 100 cwpm, their scores were rounded to 100, to ensure the entire range of scores spanned from 0 to 100.

continue with the assessment. Within each subtask, students were encouraged to continue to the next item if they could not read a letter or word within 3 seconds.

Table 45 - EGRA untimed subtasks

Subtask		Minimum Proficiency to Continue
1	Letter Sound Identification	Read 1 or more letter on the first line (10 items)
2	Familiar Word Reading	Read 1 or more words correctly on the first line (10 items)
3	Oral Reading Passage	Read 1 or more words correctly on the first line (5 items)
4	Reading Comprehension	Read 1 or more words correctly in first sentence (9-12 items, depending on language)
5	Dictation	Final subtask: no minimum needed.

Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA). The EGMA consisted of 7 subtasks.

Table 46 - EGMA subtasks

Subtask		Timed
1.	Number Identification	60 Sec.
2.	Missing Number	Untimed
3A.	Addition: Level 1	60 Sec.
3B.	Addition: Level 2	Untimed
4A.	Subtraction: Level 1	60 Sec.
4B.	Subtraction: Level 2	Untimed
5	Word Problems	Untimed

The Number Identification subtask followed a similar design as the first two subtasks in the EGRA. The Missing Number subtask showed a succession of numbers following a pattern, and asked students to fill in a missing number in the pattern. In the Level 1 Addition and Level 1 Subtraction subtasks, test-takers were given 60 seconds to correctly complete up to 20 questions of addition or subtraction of two one-digit or two-digit numbers. If students correctly completed at least one Level 1 question, they continued to the Level 2 questions, which included addition of up to four-digit numbers. Responses were not timed on Level 2 questions. On the Word Problem subtask, students were slowly read six-word problems of increasing difficulty, from simple addition to multiplication and division.

Skip Logic: Students were not asked the Level 2 questions if they could not complete any of the Level 1 questions, but there were no other cases where subtasks were skipped. Within each subtask, if a child stopped on an item for five or more seconds, they were asked to continue to the next item.

Modifications for girls with disabilities: No modifications were made for girls with disabilities.

Caregivers' Life Skills Assessment

Caregivers' perceptions of girls' acquisition and utilisation of life skills is an average score of caregivers' opinions on to what extent the beneficiary:

- knows how to look after the environment and keep it clean
- knows how to spend money sensibly
- knows about the dangers of violence that women face
- knows good water and sanitation hygiene - how to wash her hands before eating and after the toilet, to only drink clean water
- knows about women's menstruation, use and cleaning of sanitary pads
- knows about how women get pregnant and how to avoid getting pregnant
- knows about sexually transmitted diseases and how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases
- feels she has good personal qualities and is a person of value
- is confident expressing her feelings and opinions and talking in front of others

Each response was marked on a five-point Likert Scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. If a caregiver opted to not respond or said they did not know, those questions were omitted from calculating the average. It is reported as the mean of all items responded to by the caregiver, and is calculated on a 0 to 100 score, where 100 would mean caregivers responded Strongly Agree to all questions.

The relative frequency of each response is shown in the tables, along with the mean score for each question, where Strongly Agree (SA) is scored as 5, and Strongly Disagree (SD) is scored as 1 (with D=Disagree, N=Neither Agree/Disagree, A=Agree).

Note accompanying STAGE quantitative tool review – Formal endline and non-Formal tracer

As the external evaluation of STAGE has changed in scope, and as we are at the final evaluation point in the project, STAGE survey tools have been reviewed considerably. As a general principle, we have streamlined the questionnaires and only kept necessary information to report on evaluation questions, on agreed indicators and where necessary to make comparisons with previous evaluation points. Further, we have attempted to keep questions in the girls' survey tool, removing any duplicate information from the caregivers', unless needed/appropriate. We have added considerably on sections/areas important to explore at endline/tracer.

As mentioned during scoping discussions, another aspect of the review comprised revisiting STAGE subgroups for recording, analysing and reporting. This note presents a summary of changes and our proposal for STAGE subgroups for this evaluation point.

Table 47 - Summary of changes

Section	Formal	Non-Formal
Head of Household survey	Deleted – redundant. Very few questions moved into (and adapted) the caregiver's survey	Deleted – redundant. Very few questions moved into (and adapted) the caregiver's survey
Caregiver survey	Pre-survey added from HoH Deleted – as agreed – **STAGE contribution to reducing barriers** and questions on financial support from STAGE (see specific comment on tool). (Original barriers questions kept for Formal). Deleted girl's **employment section** from caregiver's **Caregiver's support to girls' education:** no change from midline **Community support to girl's education / empowerment**. No change. Added some questions on animation sessions. **Life Skills.** Deleted as agreed **HH Economic situation**. No change **Child functioning**: No change. See section below on disability questions' concerns and recommendation to use Washington Group short version **Covid-19: deleted.** Not relevant any longer- other sections are priority, considering FM eval principles	Pre-survey added from HoH Deleted specific questions on school enrolment/attendance Deleted **barriers** as all about school - Info on barriers to vocational education/economic empowerment obtained from other questions (see Section on Subgroups below). Deleted – as agreed – STAGE contribution to reducing barriers. Deleted **employment section**. Inserted comprehensive transition section in girls' survey. **Caregiver's support to girls' education**: a couple of questions were removed as not relevant to non-Formal **STAGE SUPPORT to girls' education / empowerment**: added section, to understand caregiver's view on STAGE support **Community support to girl's education / empowerment.** No change on questions on support to education; new questions added on support to girls' empowerment, and community animation sessions. **Life skills**: No change **HH Economic situation**. No change

Section	Formal	Non-Formal
	Recontact: deleted questions not relevant any longer	**Child functioning**: Only 3 questions added at the end relating to disability and work. However, see section below on disability questions' concerns and recommendation to use Washington Group short version **Covid-19: deleted.** Not relevant any longer- other sections are priority, considering FM eval principles **Recontact:** deleted questions not relevant any longer
Girls' survey	**Participation to programme**. Questions added on attendance to the ALP and VST, including the dates of ALP **Transition.** Questions added to capture 'transitioned but not sustained'. Request project to review carefully, also considering end of academic year and start of new one. Is enrolled transitioned, even if not attending? **View of education** questions. No change **Employment**. Deleted as agreed – not focus of evaluation and reasons for not being enrolled. Only kept three questions to detect subgroup. Also included employment in question asking for reasons for not being enrolled. **Girl's experience at SCHOOL.** Quality of teaching questions not changed. Two questions added. Reference to ALP deleted and only left school. **Programme support received.** Questions added on transition pack, usefulness of ALP/STAGE components (VfM – included if using life skills), other support received. **Community support to girl's education / empowerment**. No change, but two questions added on Household chores.	**Participation to programme**. Questions added on attendance to the ALP and VST, including the dates of both ALP and VST, the area, and 4 questions asked about motivation/goal for attending ALP/VST. Deleted questions on views on schooling, never used before/not priority here. **Transition**. Main section added to non-Formal tracer. The section includes current work /IGA and characteristics (based on applicable ILO decent employment); whether there are other concurrent IGAs/work (less detailed); if no current work/IGAs, whether they worked after end of ALP/VST; safety section; whether they are attending further VST; overall earning position/ economic empowerment. **Programme support received**. Questions added on IGAs support, usefulness of ALP/VST/STAGE components (VfM), other support received. **Community support to girl's education / empowerment**. two questions added on Household chores + 4 questions on money management. **Recontact:** deleted questions not relevant any longer

Section	Formal	Non-Formal
	Covid-19: deleted. Not relevant any longer- other sections are priority, considering FM eval principles **Recontact:** deleted questions not relevant any longer	
Lifeskills girls questionnaire	Deleted – as agreed.	As part of streamlining and given focus on transition for non-Formal, we have analysed findings from previous evaluation point, examining variation/interesting results, ceiling effects, redundancy, burden on respondent (over 50 questions for Money management). Only few sections retained, the most useful/with high variability among subgroups. SRR, GBV, self-efficacy It is not possible to cut questions from sections, as the index would not be comparable anymore.

STAGE Subgroups for endline and tracer Evaluation

Previous STAGE Evaluation Non-Formal Track evaluations, outcomes were required to be analysed for 38 different subgroups. To streamline the analysis and allow the flexibility to focus reporting on interesting and insightful results, the 2022 evaluations will reduce the number of subgroups of study. The plan below outlines 32 subgroups and characteristics for analysis. Previous subgroups will either be analysed and included as part of the mandatory subgroups for reporting, recorded in the survey but their results will only be reported if interesting results are found, or removed from data collection tools and no longer be included in the report.

Both Tracks: Language and Region

The language and regional makeup cannot be modified for the final evaluation, because doing so would render results incomparable to previous evaluation points. Analysis by region and language has proven important at previous STAGE evaluation points.

Table 48 - Region-Language Pairings

Language	Region	Baseline (%)	Non-Formal Endline/Tracer
Akuapim Twi	Eastern	11.3%	Analyse
Akuapim Twi	Oti	16.3%	Analyse
Dagaare	Upper West	11.3%	Analyse
Fante	Central	20.0%	Analyse
Kasem	Upper East	8.8%	Analyse
Likpakpaaln	Northern	20.8%	Analyse
Likpakpaaln	Oti	11.3%	Analyse

Both Tracks: Disability

There have been considerable challenges and concerns about the validity of STAGE evaluation disability data. The results of the Washington Group questions have not been internally consistent: among the Formal cohort, of the 78 beneficiaries who were identified as having a disability at baseline in 2019, 73 of them did not qualify as having a disability when asked same Washington Group questions at in 2021.[95] While this partially can be explained by the way Washington Group questions are translated from four levels of difficulty into a binary definition of disability, the results were also identified as out of step with STAGE's intentional recruitment of beneficiaries with disabilities from the beginning. Further, the 24-question Washington Group long form (comprised of 51 sub questions) is a burden on caregivers. However, due to reporting interests from the FM, these questions will remain in the final version of the tool. However, the **external evaluator recommends that the short version of the Washington Group questions is used to reduce response burdens** and to potentially get results that are more consistent with rates found by the Project (Please see in the annex in this document the short version of the questionnaire, anxiety and depression could be included separately).

Table 49 - Disability Subgroups

Domain of difficulty	NFT Cohort 2 Baseline 2021 (%)
Seeing	0.8%
Hearing	0.8%
Walking	0.6%
Self-care	0.3%

[95] Because the 2019 and 2021 evaluations studied different Non-Formal Track cohorts, no similar comparison can be made.

Domain of difficulty	NFT Cohort 2 Baseline 2021 (%)
Communication[96]	0.3%
Learning[2]	0.5%
Remembering[2]	0.3%
Concentrating [2]	0.3%
Accepting Change[2]	0.5%
Controlling Behaviour[2]	1.1%
Making Friends[2]	1.1%
Anxiety	2.8%
Depression	2.5%
One disability domain (A)	5.5%
Multiple disability domains (B)	2.5%
Girls with disabilities overall (A+B)	**8.0%**

Both Tracks: Characteristics and Barriers

The original characteristics list was determined at the original 2020 baseline for both the formal and non-formal tracks, with little variation between the two tracks. Per request, those who were married and under 15 were treated as a separate reporting group from those married overall; similarly, those employed and under 15 were analysed at previous points separately. However, even at the 2021 evaluation point, there were only three Formal Track girls who were married and under 15, and only one Non-Formal Track girl who was married and under 15.

For Non-Formal, while marital status, and work status (<15) will still be collected, they will not be analysed. For the Non-Formal, while employment was a subgroup for understanding context at baseline, it is an outcome and will be subject to a separate and more thorough subject analysis for endline.

For the Formal, non-enrolled girls will be asked though if they are not enrolled because of work, and few very basic questions retained to detect employment (the original agreement during scoping discussions was to delete the whole employment section altogether). Similarly, marital status, and work status (<15) will be collected but not analysed.

The tables below present a summary of how characteristics would be treated at this evaluation point.

[96] As set forth in the original FM templates, Learning, Remembering, and Concentrating disability domains will be aggregated for outcome reporting. Accepting Change, Controlling Behaviour and Making Friends will also be aggregated into a single group.

Table 50 - Non-Formal Characteristics

Characteristic	NFT Cohort 2 Baseline 2021 (%)	Non-Formal Endline/Tracer
Is a Mother	50.7%	Analyse
Married	21.1%	Analyse
HH unable to meet basic needs	7.8%	Analyse
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)	33.1%	Analyse
Currently employed	1.4%	Transition Outcome, not subgroup
Married under 15	0.16%	Record
Lives with neither parent	21.3%	Record
Employed and under 15	0.16%	Record
1+ hours to primary school	5.2%	Remove

Table 51 - Formal Characteristics

Characteristic	Formal baseline 2020 (%)	Formal midline 2021 (%)	Formal Endline
Is a Mother	1.6%	1%	Analyse
Married	0.9	1%	Analyse
HH unable to meet basic needs	35.6%	24.2%	Analyse
High Chore Burden (Half a day or more)	40.8%	4.5%	Analyse
Currently employed	8%	4.3%	Analyse
Married under 15	0.9%	1%	Record
Lives with neither parent	3.4%	3.3%	Record (at midline, little variability of this subgroup)
Employed and under 15	7.7%	3.6%	Record

Characteristic	Formal baseline 2020 (%)	Formal midline 2021 (%)	Formal Endline
1+ hours to primary (secondary at endline) school	13.6%	14.5%	Record / reported if interesting results. Already captured by travel barrier.

Non-Formal: Caregiver-Reported Reasons for not enrolling in Formal Education

The caregiver-reported reasons for not enrolling were added after the original baseline design, as the original template required reporting on both characteristics (discussed above) and barriers. During baselines, caregivers reported them as reasons beneficiaries were not enrolled in traditional education. These 28 reasons were combined into six categories of barriers: Economic (Work or Costs), Travel (Safety or Distance from primary school) Disability (School cannot meet disability-related needs), Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl), School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry), and Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married). A mixture of new questions and already used questions will be used to identify if these are serving as barriers to successful transition.

Table 52 - Barrier changes for non-Formal

Barrier	Measurement
Economic (Work or Costs)	• Poverty Status (household ability to meet basic needs) • High Chore Burden preventing work
Travel (Safety or Distance from primary school)	• Beneficiary does not feel safe at work or in community • Outcome Variables measuring workplace safety
Disability (School cannot meet disability-related needs)	• Disability status analysed as characteristic • Caregiver reports a disability prevents or limits ability to work
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	• Low Community Support (based on caregiver questions about community) • Low Caregiver Support (if not own caregiver)
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	• Safety and treatment by VST craftsperson

Barrier	Measurement
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	• Age, pregnancy status, parental status, and marital status

Formal: Caregiver-Reported Reasons for not enrolling in Formal Education

As the barriers relate to school enrolment/attendance, we will keep them as they are. Further we have introduced a question asking to non-enrolled girls what prevented them for being enrolled.

Non-Formal: Age

The 2021 baseline evaluation reported separately on beneficiaries aged 12 to 15 and those age 16 to 19. The mean age of those surveyed at baseline was 17.3. Given that data will be collected 18 months after baseline data and that the age of majority in Ghana is 18, we recommend reporting on those under 18 and those 18 or older. Based on 2021 data, approximately 40 percent of beneficiaries will be under 18 and 60 percent will be 18 or older.

Table 53 - Age Non-Formal

Age (in February 2021)	NFT Cohort 2 Baseline 2021 (%)
Age 10 (%)	0.2%
Aged 12 (%)	0.3%
Aged 13 (%)	0.6%
Aged 14 (%)	3.6%
Aged 15 (%)	11.9%
Aged 16 (%)	13.9%
Aged 17 (%)	13.3%
Aged 18 (%)	33.8%
Aged 19 (%)	19.4%
Aged 20 (%)	1.4%

Formal: Age

The 2021 midline evaluation reported separately on beneficiaries aged 8 to 11, 12 to 15 and those age 16 to 19. The mean age of those surveyed at baseline was 11.6. Given that data will be collected 30 months after baseline data, we recommend reporting on those 8 to 13, 14 to 17 and > 18 (smaller group). Based on 2020 and 2021 data, between 25 and 35% will be 13 or under, around 60-65% between 14 and 17, and the rest >18. Alternatively, the older group could be incorporated into the one 14 – 17.

Table 54 - Age non-Formal

Age	Formal February 2020	Formal February 2021 (%)
Age 8 (%)	2.6%	0.9%
Age 9 (%)	3.5%	2.3%
Age 10 (%)	29.1%	7.9%
Aged 12 (%)	12.3%	14.8%
Aged 13 (%)	19.1%	19.6%
Aged 14 (%)	17.9%	20.6%
Aged 15 (%)	12.8%	15%
Aged 16 (%)	1.7%	12.7%
Aged 17 (%)	0.4%	3.6%
Aged 18 (%)		1.9%
Aged 19 (%)		0.6%
Aged 20 (%)		0.1%

Census Questions on Disability Endorsed by the Washington Group

1. Do you have difficulty seeing, even if wearing glasses? a. No - no difficulty b. Yes – some difficulty c. Yes – a lot of difficulty d. Cannot do at all

2. Do you have difficulty hearing, even if using a hearing aid? a. No- no difficulty b. Yes – some difficulty c. Yes – a lot of difficulty d. Cannot do at all

3. Do you have difficulty walking or climbing steps? a. No- no difficulty b. Yes – some difficulty c. Yes – a lot of difficulty d. Cannot do at all

4. Do you have difficulty remembering or concentrating? a. No – no difficulty b. Yes – some difficulty c. Yes – a lot of difficulty d. Cannot do at all

5. Do you have difficulty (with self-care such as) washing all over or dressing? a. No – no difficulty b. Yes – some difficulty c. Yes – a lot of difficulty d. Cannot do at all

6. Using your usual (customary) language, do you have difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood? a. No – no difficulty b. Yes – some difficulty c. Yes – a lot of difficulty d. Cannot do at al

3.9 Annex 9: Qualitative transcripts

Submitted separately

3.10 Annex 10: Quantitative datasets, codebooks and programs

Submitted separately

3.11 Annex 11: External Evaluator declaration

External Evaluator Declaration

Name of project: Strategic Approaches to Girls' Education External Evaluation

Formal Endline

Name of External evaluator and contact information:

DT Global International Development UK LTD

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Names of all members of the evaluation team:

Sophie Collins, Independent

Elena de Besi, DT Global

Andrew Trembley, Independent

Katrina Will, DT Global

___FF___ (Fazlun Fazlee) certify that the independent evaluation has been conducted in line with the Terms of Reference and other requirements received.

Specifically:

All of the quantitative data was collected independently ((Initials: _FF___).
All data analysis was conducted independently and provides a fair and consistent representation of progress (Initials: __FF__).
Data quality assurance and verification mechanisms agreed in the terms of reference with the project have been soundly followed (Initials: _FF___).
The recipient has not fundamentally altered or misrepresented the nature of the analysis originally provided by JEAVCO / PAB (Company) (Initials: _FF___).
All child protection protocols and guidance have been followed (initials: _FF___).
Data has been anonymised, treated confidentially and stored safely, in line with the GEC data protection and ethics protocols (Initials: __FF__).

Fazlun Fazlee
Senior Technical Director, Africa and the Caribbean, IMC Worldwide Ltd

10 November 2022

3.12 Annex 12: Project Management Response

Project Management Response.docx

3.13 Annex 13: Formal Baseline and Midline Reports

Submitted separately.

3.14 Annex 13: Additional External Evaluation Tables

Table 55 - Formal Track, Disability breakdown by disability type, region

Subgroup	Overall	Dagaare Upper West	Kasem Upper East	Kusal Upper East	Likpakpaln Northern
Disability Overall	6.3%	6.0%	6.3%	5.4%	5.9%
Seeing	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Hearing	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
Walking	0.3%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Self-Care	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Communication	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
Learning	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Remembering and Concentrating	0.3%	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Accepting Change	0.3%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Self-Manage	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Making Friends	0.3%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Anxiety	3.5%	3.0%	2.1%	5.4%	3.4%
Depression	2.5%	2.4%	0.0%	5.4%	1.7%
Anxiety or Depression	4.5%	4.8%	2.1%	5.4%	4.2%
Disability Other Than Anxiety or Depression	1.6%	1.2%	4.2%	0.0%	1.6%
One Disability	4.8%	5.4%	6.3%	0.0%	5.0%
Multiple Disabilities	1.5%	0.6%	0.0%	5.4%	0.8%
Source: Evaluation Surveys (N = 397)					

Table 56 - Formal Track, Disability breakdown by severity

Question	No Difficulty	A Little Difficulty	A Lot of Difficulty	Cannot Do At All	# Responses
Difficulty Seeing, even if wearing glasses	96.7%	2.9%	0.4%	0.0%	688
Difficulty Hearing, even if using a hearing aid	96.4%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	688
Difficulty Walking or climbing steps	93.6%	3.2%	0.0%	3.2%	31
Does she have difficulty with self-care such as feeding or dressing him/her	94.6%	5.2%	0.2%	0.0%	688
Using her usual (customary) language, does she have difficulty communicating, for example understanding or being understood?	96.7%	3.1%	0.3%	0.0%	689
Compared with children of the same age does she have difficulty learning things?	89.6%	10.3%	0.2%	0.0%	689
Compared with children of the same age does she have difficulty remembering or concentrating?	89.4%	10.5%	0.2%	0.0%	687
Does she have difficulty accepting changes in her routine?	92.4%	7.0%	0.2%	0.4%	688
Compared with children of the same age does she have difficulty controlling her behaviour?	90.7%	8.6%	0.7%	0.0%	689
Does she have difficulty making friends?	92.1%	6.7%	0.9%	0.3%	687

Table 57 - School Goals by Characteristic, Barrier, and Region

	None	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	College or university	Vocational training / certificate	Don't know
Overall	4.0%	0.8%	4.8%	77.3%	12.5%	0.8%
Disability Overall	8.7%	0.0%	13.0%	73.9%	4.3%	0.0%
Is Mother	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Married	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Married under 15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
High Chore Burden	5.9%	0.0%	6.9%	82.4%	4.9%	0.0%
Works	3.0%	0.6%	3.6%	74.1%	16.9%	1.8%
Married under 15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lives with neither parent	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Works under 15	3.6%	0.9%	3.6%	72.7%	17.3%	1.8%
1+ hours to primary school	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%
Overall	4.0%	0.8%	4.8%	77.3%	12.5%	0.8%
Economic (Work or Costs)	4.3%	0.6%	4.0%	79.0%	12.1%	0.0%
Travel (Safety or Distance)	7.4%	1.5%	6.7%	74.1%	10.4%	0.0%
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	2.9%	0.7%	6.6%	77.9%	11.8%	0.0%
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	2.0%	1.0%	12.0%	81.0%	3.0%	1.0%
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	3.2%	1.1%	13.8%	72.3%	9.6%	0.0%
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	2.8%	0.0%	10.3%	84.1%	2.8%	0.0%
Overall	4.0%	0.8%	4.8%	77.3%	12.5%	0.8%
Dagaare Upper West	7.1%	0.0%	10.1%	78.6%	4.2%	0.0%
Kasem Upper East	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	91.7%	6.3%	0.0%
Kusal Upper East	4.7%	4.7%	1.6%	56.3%	28.1%	4.7%
Likpakpaln Northern	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	80.8%	18.3%	0.0%
Source: Evaluation Surveys (N = 400)						
Note: Cells represent proportion of row group that gave response in column						

Table 58 - Attendance to ALPs

	Yes, all	Yes, most	Yes, half	Yes, some
Overall	40.5%	57.3%	0.8%	1.4%
Overall	40.5%	57.3%	0.8%	1.4%
Disability Overall	33.3%	55.6%	0.0%	11.1%
Is Mother	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Married	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Married under 15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Household unable to meet basic needs	54.3%	44.6%	1.1%	0.0%
High Chore Burden	49.0%	51.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Works	61.2%	37.5%	0.0%	1.3%

	Yes, all	Yes, most	Yes, half	Yes, some
Married under 15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lives with neither parent	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Works under 15	57.6%	40.4%	0.0%	2.0%
1+ hours to primary school	47.4%	51.1%	0.4%	1.1%
Economic (Work or Costs)	41.6%	56.2%	0.9%	1.2%
Travel (Safety or Distance)	52.4%	45.2%	1.6%	0.8%
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	65.6%	34.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	49.5%	49.5%	1.1%	0.0%
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	51.7%	48.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	60.0%	40.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Dagaare Upper West	32.7%	64.8%	1.2%	1.2%
Kasem Upper East	75.0%	17.5%	0.0%	7.5%
Kusal Upper East	38.6%	59.6%	1.8%	0.0%
Likpakpaln Northern	40.7%	59.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Under Age 13	31.9%	61.7%	2.1%	4.3%
Age 13 to 14	40.6%	58.3%	0.6%	0.6%
Age 15 and over	48.5%	51.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Source: Evaluation Surveys (N = 370)				

Table 59 - Indicator 4.1 % of caregivers that agree it is worth investing in a girl's education as a boy

	Endline	Midline	Baseline	Change Endline to Baseline
Overall	98.0%	92.2%	88.0%	10.0
Disability Overall	96.0%	92.3%	86.8%	9.2
Is Mother / Married / Married under 15	N/A	N/A		N/A
Household unable to meet basic needs	99.0%	87.5%	94.4%	4.6
High Chore Burden	98.1%	82.8%	86.8%	11.3
Works	95.6%	96.7%	71.4%	24.2
Works under 15	94.3%	96.0%	70.4%	23.9
Lives with neither parent	N/A	91.3%	87.5%	N/A
1+ hours to primary school	97.3%	94.0%	84.2%	13.1
Economic (Work or Costs)	98.0%	93.6%	87.9%	10.1
Travel (Safety or Distance)	94.2%	96.1%	86.5%	7.7
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	94.2%	93.8%	89.1%	5.1
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	93.2%	95.5%	87.8%	5.4
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	91.6%	100.0%	89.7%	1.9
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	94.5%	97.5%	96.3%	-1.8
Dagaare Upper West	95.8%	83.7%	90.0%	5.8
Kasem Upper East	100.0%	93.8%	85.7%	14.3

	Endline	Midline	Baseline	Change Endline to Baseline
Kusal Upper East	98.2%	96.2%	96.2%	2.0
Likpakpaln Northern	100.0%	99.2%	84.2%	15.8
Under Age 13	96.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Age 13 to 14	98.4%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Age 15 and over	99.1%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Source: Evaluation Surveys Endline N = 397; Midline N = 689; Baseline N = 705				

Table 60 - Change in Family Support for Education since the start of STAGE (% of girls)

	Substantially increased	Moderately increased	No change	Moderately decreased	Substantially decreased
Overall	44.8%	39.0%	6.5%	8.8%	0.8%
Disability Overall	47.8%	43.5%	4.3%	4.3%	0.0%
Is Mother	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Married	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Married under 15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Household unable to meet basic needs	34.0%	48.0%	13.0%	5.0%	0.0%
High Chore Burden	52.9%	45.1%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Works	42.8%	44.0%	6.6%	6.6%	0.0%
Married under 15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lives with neither parent	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Works under 15	42.7%	46.4%	7.3%	3.6%	0.0%
1+ hours to primary school	44.2%	39.1%	5.1%	10.5%	0.7%
Economic (Work or Costs)	47.8%	40.1%	5.5%	6.1%	0.3%
Travel (Safety or Distance)	44.4%	43.0%	4.4%	8.1%	0.0%
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	48.5%	41.2%	3.7%	6.6%	0.0%
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	53.0%	27.0%	4.0%	14.0%	2.0%
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	39.4%	34.0%	4.3%	20.2%	2.1%
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	56.1%	36.4%	0.0%	6.5%	0.9%
Dagaare Upper West	45.2%	39.3%	0.6%	12.5%	1.8%
Kasem Upper East	77.1%	16.7%	2.1%	4.2%	0.0%
Kusal Upper East	26.6%	32.8%	25.0%	15.6%	0.0%
Likpakpaln Northern	40.8%	50.8%	6.7%	1.7%	0.0%
Under Age 13	39.2%	44.1%	5.9%	9.8%	1.0%
Age 13 to 14	43.9%	41.2%	7.0%	7.0%	0.5%
Age 15 and over	51.4%	30.6%	6.3%	10.8%	0.9%
Source: Evaluation Surveys (N = 400)					

Table 61 - Change in Community Education Support over prior 12 months (% of girls)

	Substantially increased	Moderately increased	No change	Moderately decreased
Overall	46.0%	36.5%	13.0%	4.3%
Disability Overall	56.5%	26.1%	13.0%	4.3%
Is Mother	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Married	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Married under 15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Household unable to meet basic needs	26.0%	51.0%	19.0%	4.0%
High Chore Burden	45.1%	48.0%	5.9%	0.0%
Works	50.0%	31.3%	13.3%	5.4%
Married under 15	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lives with neither parent	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Works under 15	52.7%	29.1%	15.5%	2.7%
1+ hours to primary school	46.6%	36.7%	11.9%	4.4%
Economic (Work or Costs)	47.8%	36.0%	12.4%	3.5%
Travel (Safety or Distance)	49.6%	30.4%	15.6%	4.4%
Disability (School cannot meet needs)	56.6%	36.8%	6.6%	0.0%
Social Norms (Disinterest by Parent/Girl)	58.0%	25.0%	9.0%	8.0%
School (Unsafe/Teacher Mistreats/Refused Entry)	50.0%	34.0%	7.4%	8.5%
Demographic (Age/Pregnant/Parent/Married)	52.3%	40.2%	5.6%	1.9%
Dagaare Upper West	51.2%	38.1%	7.1%	3.0%
Kasem Upper East	81.3%	12.5%	4.2%	2.1%
Kusal Upper East	15.6%	15.6%	51.6%	17.2%
Likpakpaln Northern	40.8%	55.0%	4.2%	0.0%
Under Age 13	46.1%	40.2%	11.8%	2.0%
Age 13 to 14	42.2%	38.5%	15.0%	3.7%
Age 15 and over	52.3%	29.7%	10.8%	7.2%
Source: Evaluation Surveys (N = 400)				

The current Theory of Change and what might need to be revised based on current activities and evaluation evidence;

The evidence from the evaluation broadly aligns with the project's monitoring data. The evaluation data showed that 90.7% and 89.7% of the girls recorded improved learning outcomes for literacy and numeracy, respectively. Indeed a further disaggregation of the data showed significant improvements in all the subtasks under both literacy and numeracy and improvement in the learning outcomes across all marginalisation categories. Further, parental support for girls' education has increased from 88% to 98% while the proportion of community and religious leaders who support girls' education increased from 27.4% to 53.9%. The project's figure of 7441(94.6%) girls who are still in school out of the 7866 girls who transitioned at the beginning of the 2021 academic year confirms that the project had exceeded the target of 85% for transition and there is evidence in the schools and communities that suggest there have been positive shifts attributable to the activities STAGE has implemented in the communities. Girls' attendance rates to school as measured by checks on school registries are high (80.7% of girls attend at least 80% of the classes), though lower than at midline (86.1%), right after transition. Some subgroups seem to fare particularly well in terms of attendance, such as girls with disabilities (GWD), girls from poor households, girls experiencing travel and demographic barriers. Overall, the transition kits, quality of teaching; child-centred and inclusive pedagogy, safeguarding practices (discussed in EQ4), the flexibility of ALP delivery and interventions to increase support for education by families particularly all contributed to high attendance and completion rates of ALPs, and are contributing to sustained enrolment in and attendance to school.

Notwithstanding significant learning gains, the report also noted that impact varies between regions and language groups. While this can be partially explained by analysing the linguistic complexity of the various languages used or other socio-cultural differences, further research is needed to reveal the full rationale to explain these differences Subgroup analysis revealed that all girls affected by some kind of barriers except the economic-related ones, have scored lower than average on both tests, particularly girls whose schools cannot meet their learning needs, feel unsafe in their environment and live in households with unsupportive social norms.

GWDs (which mostly include girls with reported frequent feelings of anxiety and depression) scored lower in both literacy and numeracy tests. Further, the intersectionality of the marginalisation faced by girls show that almost all barriers have seen some slight increases in their prevalence since midline. However when compared to the situation at baseline, the data showed positive progress made. Barriers such as economic and high chore burdens which increased between midline and evaluation may be attributed to a number of reasons including the current economic challenges which has seen inflation more than quadrupled in the last year from 9.7% to an estimated 50.4% and the timing of the endline evaluation which coincided with the harvesting period. In addition, the endline evaluation highlighted an inadequate number of GES teaching and learning materials, furniture as well as the gaps in the implementation of the inclusive education policy and the pervasive financial and economic challenges that parents and caregivers are facing. These issues, the report noted, have the potential of eroding the gains the project has made.

The project, based on the analysis of the endline data, notes that improving and creating a sustainable support system for marginalised girls will require changes at each of the levels identified by the project's theory of change which may likely go beyond the project's lifespan and its stakeholders. Evidence provided in the report confirms that broader national economic challenges have significant impact on local dynamics. Most of the barriers to girls' education are rooted in other social and economic factors and as a result any significant external factor which shakes their foundations may likely alter the underlying motivations. In this regard, by addressing the underlying motivations (including social and economic barriers), the project believes it will lead to more

sustainable changes that will create a more supportive environment for girls' enrolment and retention in schools in the project communities.

The project has been intentional in the last quarter to ramp up its engagement with stakeholders at the community, district and central level. The focus of these engagements revolved around working with community structures and caregivers of beneficiaries to move their support of girls' education beyond oral support, to taking keen interest and steps to make it a reality. This included addressing gender roles in the home and giving equal support to both boys and girls to receive education. In this regard, CoC members, peer educators and Girls' Education officers from the school level to the district levels have been empowered to work with teacher mentors to keep track of the girls and provide the necessary support to keep them in school and engage caregivers on ways to address the factors of early marriage and other marginalisation. In addition, the project continues the engagement with district Agric offices, the Ghana Enterprise Agency and other relevant departments and agencies to provide extension services and business support to the families of the project beneficiaries. This helps improve productivity and household incomes to support girls in school..

Considering how demotivating the inadequacy of school furniture and teaching and learning materials are to school attendance, the project's engagements on inclusive and gender sensitive approaches to quality education will aim at working with school management and local assemblies to provide adequate teaching and learning materials and furniture in schools. STAGE is confident working with communities, schools and local governments in the implementation of these interventions will help to transform existing gendered relationships in the communities, strengthen household resilience, garner community consistent support for girls' education and empower girls to be confident, take charge of their own life decisions and be able to stand up to any form of abuses in the future. The project is of the firm belief that the activities it has implemented in the course of the project lifecycle have set the tone and engineered some change in the communities. This will be complemented with these enhanced interventions as part of the close out activities. It must however be noted some of these system level changes including the implementation of safeguarding protocols in schools and overwhelming community support for girls education may take a while before they begin to manifest. Some changes are even expected to manifest beyond the project's life span as with most behaviour change interventions.

The current log frame and what might need to be revised based on current activities and evaluation evidence;

The evidence from the endline report largely reinforces and validates the assumptions, indicators and targets in the log frame. Even though the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic considerably changed the context of the project, the evidence from the evaluation reveals that the project managed to meet the targets for most of the indicators and only missed the remaining slightly. Retargeting recommended by the EE after the midline evaluation helped in this regard.

The project's observation over the past five years shows that behaviour change in the project communities happens at a slow pace due to their pervasiveness and interrelatedness with other barriers. Were there to be a phase 2 or a continuation of the project, the project would have been very informed and revised some of its sustainability targets to reflect the reality on the ground. Supported by evidence, the project has sown the seeds of sustainability at all the levels: community, school, system. Through the GESI interventions, most schools have teachers trained on gender sensitive and inclusive pedagogies and are applying them. The data further reveals that about 200 schools have developed safeguarding plans which will make schools safer and more conducive for girls and boys. Lastly, there is significant evidence that supports the fact that the training of teacher mentors and the rolling of the catch up classes have contributed to the observed improvements in learning. Considering the fact that all these improvements may be offset by persisting social norms, it would only be fair and reasonable to modify some of the sustainability targets to reflect the reality.

Whether girls are reaching the expected learning levels based on the project's design and intended outcomes, and why or why not;

The findings from the endline and the project monitoring reveal learning outcomes between baseline and endline have seen very commendable improvements albeit with some variations across languages and among the marginalisation categories. The endline evaluation reports a 15.5 percentage point increase in literacy and a 9.2 percentage point increase in numeracy learning outcomes, an improvement over the midline figures.

Some of the subtasks still remain a challenge for some beneficiaries. Anecdotal evidence from the field attributes these gaps to the complexities in the writing systems, concepts used and vocabulary of some of the languages. For instance until recently Kusaal had not been accepted as a language of instruction in Ghanaian schools.

Further as the report rightly highlighted, the pervasiveness of social norms and economic barriers also accounted for and affected varying learning outcomes observed for sub-groups of the beneficiaries. Specifically, the report noted that girls whose schools cannot meet their learning needs, are in unsafe environments and girls that live in households with unsupportive social norms substantially had scores lower than the overall average even though the score for girls experiencing social norms which was lowest recorded a 25.6 percentage point increase. For literacy scores, lower results for these three sub-groups were noted. While the project exposed these categories of girls to the same interventions as others, the barriers they faced to some extent affected their learning outcomes. On the other hand, learning gains of girls with disabilities and girls who are facing economic barriers were very high, standing at 37 and 34.9 percentage points respectively.

Notwithstanding these differences, learning outcomes across all marginalisation categories and languages are significant and the project strongly believes that the improved pedagogy implemented in the CBE/Formal track programme has led to these results.

Reasons for any differential results by disability status, subgroup and barrier, including whether exposure (compliance) to the project was similar or dissimilar across subgroups;

In recognition of the objectives of the project, each beneficiary received the full set of the basic interventions. Beneficiaries with special needs were provided with assistive devices after they had undergone disability screening and further assessment. Similarly, as part of the design, remedial interventions were integrated into the after transition support for girls with learning disabilities to catch up with their peers who had been in school since grade 1. These were rolled out to ensure that ,at bare minimum, the project interventions responded to peculiar needs.

As the report rightly stated, the continuous animation, home visits, and household-gender based time-resource planning between boys and girls led to a reduction in the high chore burden between baseline and midline. While there has been an increase since midline, compared to baseline it still represents a significant decline. The ramping up of community animation, home visits, stakeholder engagements and formal school enrolment support over the course of the project implementation will start bearing fruits.

In addressing the barriers around social norms, intensive behaviour change, communication interventions, community, stakeholder engagements and sensitization have been implemented. However, looking at the short duration of the project in each community, it will prove very difficult to say the project has entirely altered the social structures to remove all challenging social norms. Nonetheless, the project is of a firm conviction that the shifts observed in terms of community support for girls education will be consolidated through the structures established in the communities

to enable the girls complete their education. As such, behavioural change towards gender norms can be viewed as an intergenerational, and longer term, process in which the children of the current beneficiaries are more likely to enjoy an education and bear the fruits of the change that started under STAGE.

Programmatic changes that might be made based on the evaluation evidence.

STAGE, as part of the efforts towards sustainability, has been working with the MOE and GES to strengthen basic child protection/child safeguarding principles within their structures and down to the schools. The project has proposed the integration of safe vetting into the GES recruitment and HR policies. Initial training has been provided on safeguarding and focal persons have been identified to coordinate sensitization sessions, conduct assessments, monitor and communicate learnings and outcomes to MOE. This is meant to strengthen the implementation of the safe school policy in the country.

The community catch-up classes approach introduced as a stop-gap measure to help prepare the girls to understand the formal school system and curriculum is being pushed to be adopted by the GES as part of the efforts to achieve the learning outcomes targets in the Education Sector Strategic Plan. The push has provisions for training, development of a simple guide for teachers, joint monitoring with circuit supervisors to include classroom observation, assessments and capacity improvement through coaching. This is expected to be implemented in all the formal track schools as the project ends in the first quarter of 2023. The upcoming Education Outcomes Funds (EOF) programme will benefit from this intervention to improve outcomes for the next cohort of CBE implementing partners.

The project is working with the Ghana Education Service (GES) to make schools child friendly. One key component of this intervention is creating a 'safe protective school environment'. This essentially focuses on addressing violence related behaviours, that is, bullying, sexual harassment, abuse and corporal punishment. The creation and maintenance of safe and child friendly spaces is recognized as very critical to enrolment and retention within learning spaces. Stakeholders including school heads, teachers, caregivers and community members in the project communities through the CoCs and GES will be reminded about what constitutes the importance of safe/child friendly spaces to enhance the girls' overall well-being as well as being vocal and assertive. Continued advocacy and sensitization on the need to apply positive disciplinary tools in schools and homes instead of corporal punishment would be encouraged as much as possible. Corporal punishment will be strongly discouraged. Child Protection/Safeguarding focal points will conduct community/school-based sensitizations about the negative effects of corporal punishment, its non-compliance to GES policy and the need to report such practices to appropriate quarters via recognized reporting channels.

The report further recommended that the project should focus on reducing barriers related to social norms and demographic factors which are persistent and pose a risk to sustained transition and learning. It noted that the sensitisation of caregivers on the importance of continued education for girls with high chore burden contributed to positive outcomes for girls in this subgroup and – if implemented over a sufficient period of time - has the potential to bring long-lasting change for more persistent social norms and demographic barriers, which need long term interventions to change. To this end, the project has engaged extensively and worked with the Department of Social Welfare, COCs, Girl's Education Officers and SISOs within the District Education Directorates to continue with the community engagements to change the narrative. The project has also duly noted and will ensure that future programme design would consider a longer timespan/vision, to increase likelihood of sustained change.

The report recommended that the project should link girls to appropriate and relevant government agencies as part of the sustainability to retain them in school. In line with this recommendation, the

project has engaged district assemblies in all the areas where the 387 schools are located. Specifically, the project has engaged the DAs to ensure the timely release of funds to girls in the SEN schools. Similarly, the project has succeeded in getting some DAs to supply furniture to some of the schools the girls are enrolled in. There is also an on-going advocacy effort at the local and national level to increase targeted investments into the three formal track regions where support is needed. In addition, the project has linked communities to agric extension services and other available farming support to help increase their productivity and production and ultimately their incomes to provide financial support to the girls. These efforts are expected to improve the school environment for the girls and support them to stay in school.

The findings from the project's recent rapid assessment of the ALPs identified some challenges among facilitators and teachers in the delivery of the SRH materials due to ingrained cultural biases. This to a large extent may have accounted for the gap identified in the endline report.To improve beneficiaries' understanding and knowledge on sexual reproduction, the project will encourage the Ghana Health Service to make sexual and reproductive health a permanent feature of their community outreach programs. The integration of the Ghana Health Service is to large extent improve knowledge levels in the communities which will ultimately change the narrative.