

# Final reflections

Achievements and lessons learned

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## Discovery Project

GHANA, KENYA AND NIGERIA  
APRIL 2017 – DECEMBER 2020



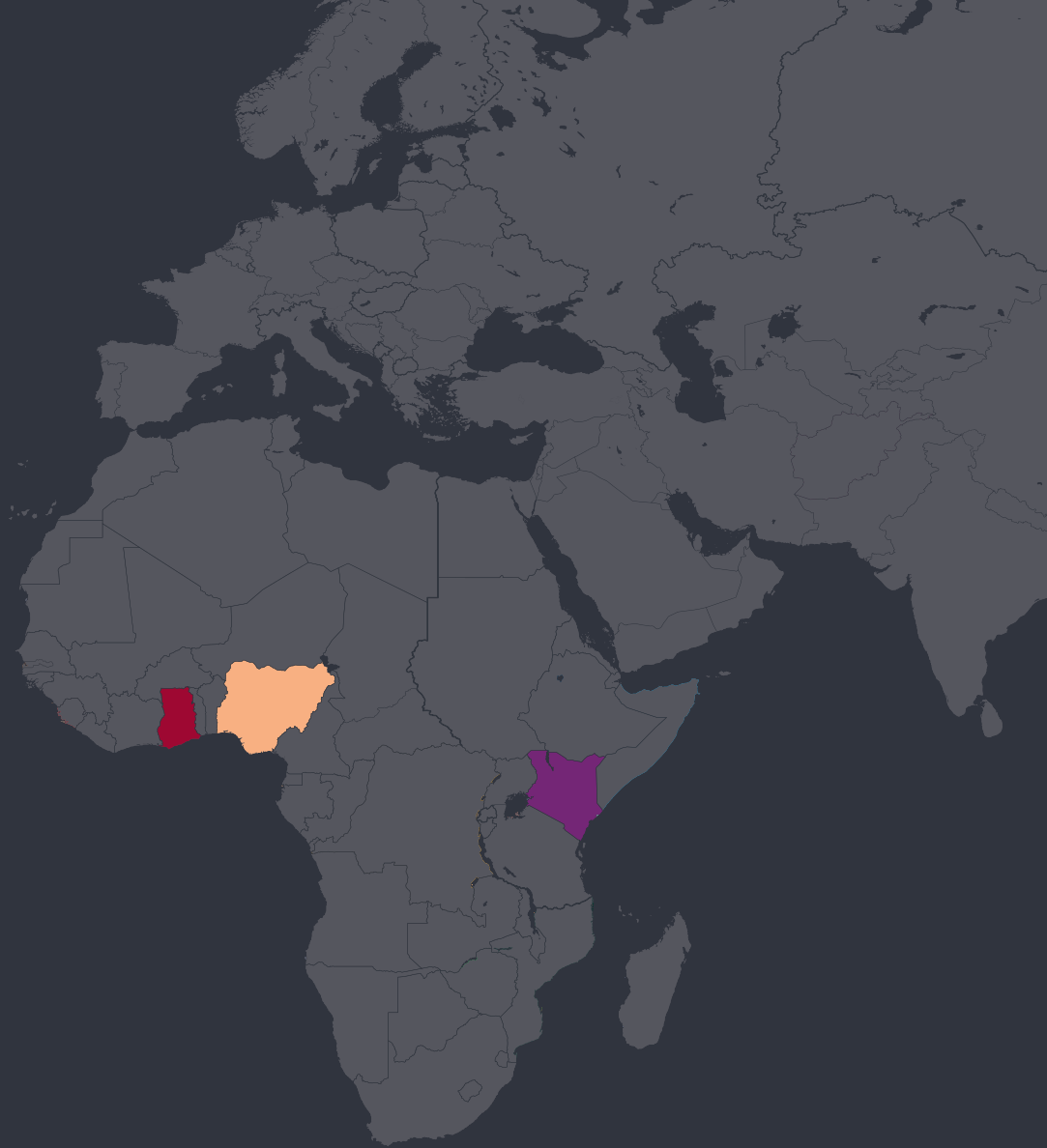
Girls'  
Education  
Challenge



impact(ed)  
INTERNATIONAL

**“Children can now speak fluently. They can converse with their friends in the English language. They can also do mathematics which they could not do before. It made them very confident. Previously, some of them were shy to participate in mathematics lessons but now it has given them the confidence to participate. It is now a friendly atmosphere in the classroom, and they are free to express themselves.”**

Teacher of remedial classes



- Ghana
- Kenya
- Nigeria

# What did the Discovery Project do?

The second phase of Discovery Project was implemented by Impact(Ed) in northern Ghana (Northern Region), northern Nigeria (Kano State), and Kenya (Kajiado, Kiambu, Machakos, Nairobi, and Wajir counties) between 2017 and 2020. The project aimed to increase girls' learning outcomes in numeracy and English literacy, their self-esteem and self-efficacy, and their successful completion of the primary cycle and transition into junior secondary school.

Discovery Project was funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) through the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC), with match funding from Impact(Ed). Discovery Project focused on the following core activities:

1. Provided **educational content and technology solutions and teacher professional development** (TPD) to primary schools and junior secondary schools. Discovery Project TDP programme focused on literacy and numeracy, while reinforcing child-centred, gender equality and social inclusion (GESI)-responsive approaches that would contribute to safe, inclusive classrooms and develop children's critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communications skills. Teachers who received the TDP training, called resource teachers (RTs), were tasked with stepping down the training to other teachers in their schools and received periodic refresher training and support. Teacher training was complemented by regular classroom observation and follow-up coaching.
2. Delivered an **accelerated learning programme** (ALP) through supporting small-size remedial classes for mid-to-upper primary school children who were performing well below grade level in English and mathematics.
3. Invested in vibrant **girls' and boys' clubs** with a print and visual life skills curriculum and training and support for club mentors. As part of Discovery Project, Impact(Ed), in collaboration with Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), created a new multi-media life skills series, called *My Better World*, to develop a range of practical knowledge and real-world skills for club members and beyond. Between 2019 and 2020, Discovery Project launched broadcasts of the *My Better World* animated series through collaborating with regional and national TV and radio stations with a combined broadcast audience reach of nearly 190 million across the three countries of implementation.
4. Involved school leadership and community representatives in **community action planning** (CAP) to identify and address persistent barriers to girls' attendance, learning, and transition, including through working closely with school governance bodies in their leadership roles, and focusing communities on the most relevant barriers in the context. Discovery Project training included facilitating the development of a CAP with specific objectives to address barriers to girls' learning and transition. Discovery Project also worked with stakeholders at school and government levels to track progress against CAPs, identifying gaps where stronger leadership was needed to achieve results, and discussing the role of leaders in evidence-based planning and accountability for results.



# How did the Discovery Project adapt during COVID-19?

**The COVID-19 outbreak substantially disrupted education for girls with schools closing in mid-March 2020 in Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya. Across the three countries, the implementation of project activities were significantly disrupted as a result.**

Activities happening in schools and communities (such as remedial classes, girls' clubs, community action planning and TDP activities) were affected as well as a range of sustainability-focused activities aimed at handing over project activities to schools and government counterparts planned between April and September 2020. Project activities were adapted to support government counterparts in implementing distance learning plans and raising awareness around child protection, COVID-19 prevention and mitigation through various channels.

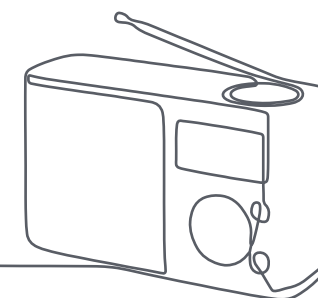
Access to educational resources provided by the government was relatively low in Nigeria, Ghana, and in the semi-arid/arid regions in Kenya. In Nairobi and surrounding counties, most girls (around 80 percent) had access to educational programmes on television, but some parents struggled to afford the subscription. Through fee-free license agreements with government partners in Nigeria and Kenya, Discovery Project provided a library of educational content for educational TV programming, which included training and production support in Kano. These TV broadcasts reached millions and were well received according to government partners. Also, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya and Nigeria, Discovery Project provided students with access to English and mathematics courses through its

mobile phone platform (developed and managed in partnership with Cell-Ed), which students could access through their parents' phones, and over 100 households did this. Although the engagement with these courses was limited in Nigeria and Kenya, the platform also served the purpose of sharing public health and child protection messages along with information on distance learning opportunities to over 50,000 households. In Ghana, Discovery Project worked with District Education Offices to provide learner packs to learners enrolled in remedial classes.

In Kenya, in the weeks following school closures, the *My Better World* series was broadcasted during the week as well, as a resource for children who were at home during school hours. TV broadcasts of *My Better World* were also aired in Hausa starting in July 2020 and in English starting in September 2020 in Kano, as well as in Ghana starting in September 2020. As part of the project's COVID-19 response for all three countries, with an eye toward reaching more of the most vulnerable girls (especially in Kano and arid and semi-arid regions of Kenya), the *My Better World* series was adapted for radio. In Kenya, the radio version of the show aired in Somali in Wajir through two local radio stations, beginning in June 2020, and radio broadcasts in Hausa started in September 2020 in Kano.

**“My plan was just to encourage her to be serious with her education, so that she can become a responsible person in future. I envisage her becoming a nurse or a teacher, even a minister for Ghana, so that the country can move forward.”**

Parent



# What did the Discovery Project achieve?

**Improved learning outcomes.** At midline, Discovery Project had made a large, positive impact on literacy and numeracy outcomes in Nigeria, as well as on numeracy in Wajir, Kenya. Limited evidence was found that Discovery Project had made an impact on learning outcomes in Ghana and Kenya more generally at midline. Given that the endline evaluation was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was not possible to directly measure learning outcomes through learning assessments and report on whether the impact on learning outcomes in Nigeria observed at midline had been sustained, and whether additional impact on learning outcomes in Ghana and Kenya had emerged by endline. The evaluation at midline found that positive changes in learning outcomes were linked to Discovery Project's TPD and remedial lessons.

**Changed perceptions toward learning.** At [endline](#), findings from the qualitative research show that Discovery Project changed perceptions towards learning positively in all countries. Girls felt that they were learning better, interacting more with their teachers and with each other, and feeling more confident to participate in class. Head teachers and teachers reported observing improvements in students' learning when teachers used strategies from the training in their lessons.

**Addressed foundational literacy and numeracy skills gaps through remedial classes.** A central component of Discovery Project's accelerated learning program (ALP) was the use of remedial classes aimed to ensuring that all students needing support were helped to strengthen their basic literacy and numeracy skills. At baseline many students in middle and upper primary were found to lack basic foundational building blocks in literacy and numeracy. Findings from midline and endline suggest that remedial classes were perceived positively and that they were addressing foundational literacy and numeracy skills gaps. The qualitative research at [endline](#) finds that girls

and remedial teachers across all three countries felt that the remedial classes were beneficial and were contributing to improved learning. The smaller class sizes during remedial lessons allowed teachers to engage more intensively with each individual student and their specific needs and enabled students to participate more actively in lessons than was possible in regular lessons with larger class sizes. In Nigeria, findings from qualitative research provided strong links between remedial classes and improved learning which likely supported lower repetition rates.

**Increased girls' self-efficacy and assertiveness.** Also, qualitative findings reported a steady increase in girls' self-efficacy from baseline to endline. These improvements are shown in girls being more active in the classroom, being more aware of their environment, being more assertive with their parents, and building stronger relationships with their siblings and friends. Qualitative findings also indicated a strong link between participating in the girls' club and watching *My Better World* videos and an increase in self-efficacy. In addition, girls across all three countries were able to articulate how they find the *My Better World* content relatable to their own experience and how this relatability supported them to understand new ideas or encouraged them to explore their own biases about gender further.

**Improved teaching practice.** Teachers across the three countries also reported using strategies that they learned in the Discovery Project TDP trainings and reported that they perceived this to improve student learning outcomes as a result. At [endline](#), teachers reported using literacy strategies, teaching aids, a range of assessment strategies, and a range of child-centred approaches that they had learned from the Discovery Project training. Teachers reported that adapting their teaching strategies to different types of students, engaging both boys and girls in different subjects, encouraging students to ask more questions in class, and being

**“Through the equipment in the learner centre, the students visualise what they are being taught and hence ideas are no longer seen in abstract form.”**

Head teacher

mindful of not belittling them if they get answers wrong has helped to build girls' confidence and enabled more active participation in the class. Teachers believed that the academic performance of children in their classes improved by virtue of increased participation and the practice of children working with each other. The findings from head teachers and teachers were also confirmed by girls sampled for the qualitative study at endline. Girls across countries provided examples of how teachers had created an environment where they felt comfortable to ask questions, to make mistakes, or to admit that they have not yet understood something.

**Changed attitudes towards girls' education through community action planning.** Discovery Project's monitoring data showed that the vast majority of schools and communities that were monitored during the 2020 school year had taken steps to implement their community action plans (CAP) at endline. This was confirmed by the qualitative study conducted by the external evaluator at endline, which finds that there was a considerable increase in CAP members' participation in the school and community, and self-reported data that CAP participants were implementing activities as per their plans. In all three countries, CAP activities centred around raising awareness about the importance of schooling, and against early marriage and child labour. CAP participants also worked on decreasing barriers to attendance and learning by addressing concerns related to sanitary hygiene and encouraging student performance by hosting award ceremonies for both teachers and students. CAP participants also claimed to have made several improvements to the school infrastructure as part of their action plans. The endline evaluation found strong evidence on the causal link between CAP activities aimed to identify and address barriers to girls' education and changed attitudes and concrete plans in support of girls' education. The majority of CAPs took concrete steps to implement action plans, with qualitative evidence suggesting that there was a considerable increase in the diversity of membership in the CAP process as well as in efforts to implement action plans. These efforts included the sensitisation of parents on factors that might hinder favourable learning outcomes such as hawking, with respondents in all three countries reporting some forms of behaviour change. Efforts also included the mobilisation of community resources to address specific barriers such as improvements to school infrastructure in Ghana and Nigeria or providing access to sanitary pads and the donation of books in Kenya.

**“Basic operations such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division were always difficult to explain to my students in abstract until the introduction of the Discovery Project video library and content. It's making teaching and learning more real and practical.”**

Maths teacher

## // FUSEINA'S STORY

Fuseina is a 13-year-old student attending first year junior at a secondary school in northern Ghana. Fuseina was not enjoying going to school and was struggling to make friends with her peers. As a child Fuseina was badly burned in a fire and because of that incident part of her arm was amputated. According to her mentor, Fuseina often missed school as she was sad and tired of her peers making fun of her. Then, her school took part in the Discovery Project and began running girls' clubs to identify and address the challenges girls face at school and at home. Some of the characters featuring in the *My Better World* series were people with disabilities. The series showed scenes of social interactions between people with disabilities and those without disabilities. Fuseina describes how after watching the videos together, her peers changed their attitude towards her and invited her to play. Fuseina's teacher thought the series influenced positively both Fuseina and her peers. Fuseina was showing more confidence and participation in the classroom. Fuseina said: 'I feel confident in myself. I can read and answer questions in class now'. [Click here](#) to watch a video about Fuseina's story.





**“I want to finish school and become a businesswoman. I will have lots of goods in my shop, selling and making profit. I need to learn maths and English so that I can run my business successfully. That is why I want to complete school.”**

Girl supported by Discovery Project

# Discovery Project in numbers



Number of girls reached

**461,351**



Number of teachers trained

**19,694**



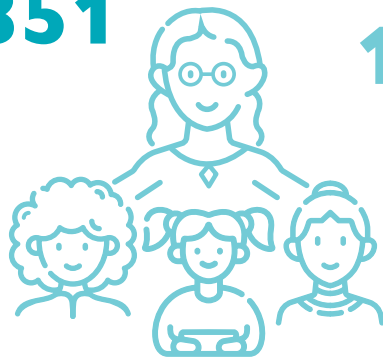
Number of students reached as part of remedial classes

**60,376**



Estimated audience size for My Better World TV and radio broadcasts

**187million**



Number of girls' clubs established

**1,304**



Number of schools reached

**1,923**

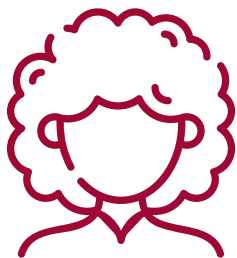
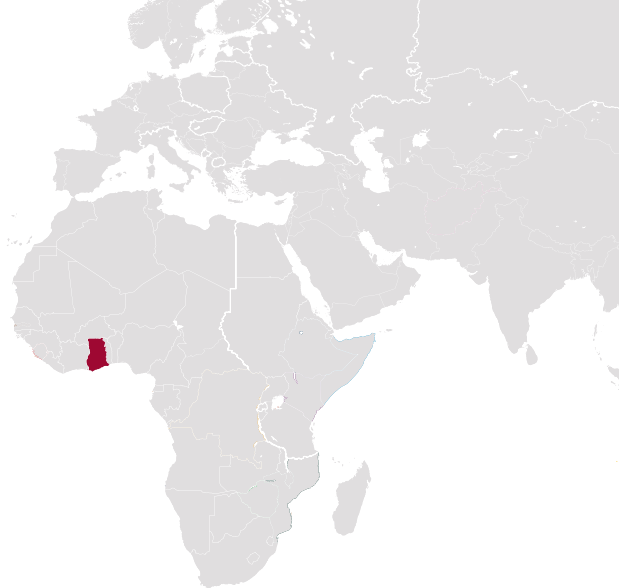


Number of community and school leaders trained

**8,244**



# Discovery Project in numbers // Ghana



Number of girls reached

**104,365**

Number of teachers trained on effective literacy and numeracy teaching strategies

**4,983**



Estimated audience size for *My Better World* TV and radio broadcasts

**4million**



Percentage of CAPs that have taken steps to address constraints around learning

**97%**



Number of schools reached: **800**

Number of students reached as part of remedial classes in each country.

**GIRLS: 7,450 BOYS: 7,587**

Number of community and school leaders trained: **4,010**

Percentage of CAPs that have taken steps to address constraints around retention/transition: **97%**

Percentage of CAPs that have reported some evidence of impact: **95%**

Number of girls' clubs established: **448**

Percentage of clubs in which mentors report girls/boys' attitudes towards learning and continuing education have improved.

**GIRLS: 87% BOYS: 86%**

# Discovery Project in numbers // Kenya



Number of girls  
reached

**152,955**

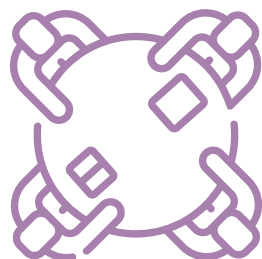
Number of teachers  
trained on effective  
literacy and numeracy  
teaching strategies

**10,062**



Estimated audience  
size for  
*My Better World*  
TV and radio  
broadcasts

**38million**



Percentage of CAPs  
that have taken  
steps to address  
constraints  
around learning

**89%**



Number of schools reached: **514**

Number of students reached as part of remedial  
classes in each country.

**GIRLS: 6,069 BOYS: 3,976**

Number of community and school leaders  
trained: **1,280**

Percentage of CAPs that have taken steps to address  
constraints around retention/transition: **91%**

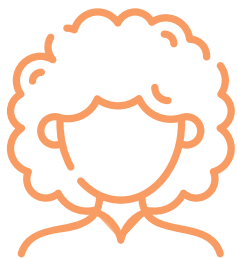
Percentage of CAPs that have reported some  
evidence of impact: **91%**

Number of girls' clubs established: **364**

Percentage of clubs in which mentors report girls/  
boys' attitudes towards learning and continuing  
education have improved.

**GIRLS: 88% BOYS: 84%**

# Discovery Project in numbers // Nigeria



Number of girls reached

**204,031**

Number of teachers trained on effective literacy and numeracy teaching strategies

**4,649**



Estimated audience size for My Better World TV and radio broadcasts

**145million**



Percentage of CAPs that have taken steps to address constraints around learning

**87%**



Number of schools reached: **609**

Number of students reached as part of remedial classes in each country.

**GIRLS: 20,446 BOYS: 14,848**

Number of community and school leaders trained: **2,954**

Percentage of CAPs that have taken steps to address constraints around retention/transition: **74%**

Percentage of CAPs that have reported some evidence of impact: **74%**

Number of girls' clubs established: **492**

Percentage of clubs in which mentors report girls/boys' attitudes towards learning and continuing education have improved.

**GIRLS: 87% BOYS: 93%**

# What did the Discovery Project learn?

## Implementing remedial classes for rapid learning improvements.

Remedial programmes, including diagnostic testing to place learners in need of remedial support at the right level, schemes of learning aligned with the curriculum that target specific learning gaps, and trained, supported and incentivised teachers of remedial classes – can lead to rapid learning improvements. Remedial classes were shown to be most effective when they were not common practice, as was the case in Nigerian primary schools. In Nigeria, there [was strong evidence](#) supporting the link between remedial classes and improved learning outcomes, with part of this link being generated by Discovery Project filling a missing gap in meeting the needs of more poorly performing students. In order for remedial classes to be most effective, they should be free of charge and target the most vulnerable students by identifying those that lack economic, social, and familial support (all of which are identified as important barriers to education). Key to the effective implementation of remedial programmes is also the robust support and involvement of local stakeholders from government, school and community. The [endline evaluation](#) showed that there was potential school-and system-level sustainability, with schools committed to sustaining the remedial classes and state and local governments interested in replicating these more widely in Nigeria and Ghana.

**Engaging community in education planning.** [As the endline evaluation reported](#), the CAP process can be effective in identifying and addressing barriers to education and bridging the gap between the school and the community. The CAP process works best when there is a clear identification of ‘champions of change’ and when both school leadership and influential community members are engaged in the process. The former ensures a continuity of activity in CAP processes, and the latter support engagement of the community,

as well as to mobilise resources in response to barriers identified. Further, it works best when its implementation is sensitive to the needs of marginalised parents, who, along with their daughters, may face particular barriers to engagement, as well as particular barriers to education. It is particularly important that participants in the CAP workshops are representative of the community, with emphasis on ensuring the perspectives of girls, women and the most vulnerable groups are accounted for. This may require strategising to compensate for existing school/community management bodies that are often male dominated and may not include key stakeholders, such as parents of children with disabilities. Discovery Project learned that the importance of representative participation needed to be explicitly and repeatedly stated through invitation letters and follow-up monitoring visits.

## Identifying and supporting female mentors for effective girls’ clubs.

[The endline evaluation](#) provided evidence that girls related well to content provided by the *My Better World* series and that this was contributing to positive changes in their self-esteem and self-efficacy. Key to this were qualified and dedicated female mentors for girls’ clubs. After trainings, follow-up observation and coaching strengthened mentor confidence and capacities and equipped them to effectively facilitate club viewing and discussion of the *My Better World* life skills series. However, finding potential female mentors can be very challenging. For example, some schools had only one female teacher, who was already overburdened, or had no female teachers at all. Discovery Project learned that it was important to plan from the outset to support school communities in recruiting community mentors, ensuring they were invited to mentor trainings and given additional



support in using the video equipment. Discovery Project also learned that, in some contexts, female mentors were more likely to leave their position for reasons such as maternity leave. It was therefore important to identify and train more than one female mentor. Promoting a participatory club model in schools with predominantly traditional teaching approaches also posed a challenge. Developing interactive facilitation guides and training mentors in learner-centred methodology helped. In addition, intensifying monitoring and coaching using a club observation tool that included a focus on correct interpretation of the facilitation guides, and activity demonstrations by project staff, further supported quality delivery by less literate mentors.

#### **Reaching the most marginalised through girls' and boys' clubs.**

Decisions on the timeslot and the duration of club sessions were important for supporting regular attendance and access, particularly for the most vulnerable children. Most schools and mentors ran 30 to 45-minute club sessions once or twice a week. After-school sessions sometimes posed attendance challenges, particularly for girls and boys from more vulnerable homes or distant communities. In such cases, some club mentors shifted to lunch-hour sessions. While moving time slots sometimes enabled better participation, inevitably some girls and boys in need of mentoring still did not participate in clubs. Schools came up with a range of solutions, such as mentors providing one-on-one mentoring or identifying peer mentors that met with members who missed sessions, or girls and boys who were not enrolled, to retell *My Better World* stories and summarise the main lessons and the learnings for the week. Education systems that have recently reformed their school timetables to include extra-curricular periods have experienced improved club attendance by slotting sessions within this timeslot.

**Addressing gender norms in a safe way:** Discovery Project's *My Better World* girls and boys club intervention showed a great deal of promise and initial evidence of significant impact on girls' self-confidence, life skills/efficacy, and educational aspirations. Girls were given a chance to develop skills such as communication, negotiation and problem-solving. However, as girls considered actions to bring about change, such as advocating to renovate unsafe toilets, it became clear that their actions could be viewed as challenging adult authority and might even provoke negative backlash from both the school and community. To address this, it was important to mitigate possible harm. Mentors were reminded in trainings and school visits

**“In our remedial lesson, if the teacher gives work and there are boys in the class and we do not know how to do it, he does not make us scared or embarrassed, he encourages us to try our best... as everyone must say their mind. But now honestly there is no such fear even when I'm in my class, I ask questions and also respond as well.”**

**Girl participating in remedial classes**

#### **// MAYIANNAE'S STORY**

Mayiannae is a girl studying in a primary school in rural Kenya. At 11 years old Mariannae was still attending Grade 3 and had difficulties to progress to the next level of her education. She was discouraged by being older than the rest of her classmates. Aware of the difficulties Mayiannae was going through, her father thought he had to take a decision between continuing to encourage Mayiannae to pursue her education or arrange for Mayiannae to get married. Around that time Mayiannae's school took part in the Discovery Project. Mayiannae's father heard of the Accelerated Learning Programme, a programme aimed to support students with gaps in maths and literacy, and supported Mayiannae's enrolment to the programme. Mayiannae described how remedial classes were different from traditional classes and how the teacher dedicated more time to each pupil or groups. 'That helped me read, write and understand better', said Mayiannae. Within one year from when she first attended the Discovery Project remedial classes she moved ahead two grade levels. Her father said: 'I want her to go beyond my level of education to become a doctor or an engineer, a level of education I didn't reach. It is important for all girls to go to school. It is important to educate girls so they can lead us in the future.' [Click here](#) to watch a video about Mayiannae's story.



to help girls themselves anticipate possible negative outcomes, seek out adult allies, and determine the best approach so that they would be less likely to face backlash. In some cases, it was important for mentors or another adult to work alongside the girls. For example, when girls wanted to carry out home visits to meet friends who had dropped out and advocate for their return, an adult from the school took the lead on this and girls accompanied them when appropriate and safe. Community awareness raising was also done. Boys' clubs were also used to address gender norms and promote girls' education. Based on internal monitoring and assessment, the clubs shifted boys' attitudes toward girls and built their support for girls' education. The project also found that, while the *My Better World* media series did present positive male role models, boys may benefit from additional work targeted specifically to deeper exploration and challenging of social expectations around masculinity and the impact of this on themselves, girls and society.

**Ensuring quality teaching in the classroom and school-based mentoring.** In the hands of trained teachers and facilitators, high quality, relevant and appropriate media – for the classroom, school-based clubs and school communities more generally – can enhance children's learning and shift parent and community attitudes and behaviours. Teacher and mentor training followed by regular, structured and sustained observation and coaching can generate sizable improvements in teaching practice and mentor facilitation of clubs. The quality of teaching and club mentorship is best supported through a multi-pronged approach that includes providing intensive training and tools, follow-up coaching and relevant, engaging content that brings learning to life. The project saw growth in areas such as video and digital content selection and use within classroom lessons and club sessions, formative assessment in the classroom, subject content knowledge and positive reinforcement, and safe and inclusive classrooms and clubs to name a few. Getting classroom teachers to respond to formative assessment findings through differentiation, redirecting the lesson and providing appropriate and meaningful feedback is more challenging, though the endline did find that teachers felt these practices were highly important and beneficial in their classrooms.

**Working closely throughout with local government officials.** As [reported in the endline](#), sustainability at the system level appeared to be related to two key factors: systematic efforts to align with and engage government at different levels and the ability to demonstrate the tangible added value of project activities. While the project worked closely with government in all three countries, partnerships in Nigeria were especially strong. There, working closely with state and local government counterparts led to the incorporation of Discovery Project plans into the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) planning. The experience of Discovery Project in Nigeria demonstrates the value of creating a solid partnership with government counterparts from the beginning and continuing to work in a close collaboration across implementation. Key to this effective partnership was being able to provide evidence of the effectiveness of the project activities and present a clear vision of how these activities could be sustained and even expanded to more schools across Kano State. These partnerships also led to rapid roll out of the pandemic response including teaching and learning and COVID-19 awareness raising interventions through a range of low-cost, accessible technologies such as mobile phones and radio, in addition to TV during school closures.



Girls'  
Education  
Challenge



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Find out more: [www.impact\(ed\).org](http://www.impact(ed).org) | [www.girlseducationchallenge.org](http://www.girlseducationchallenge.org)

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