

CHANGE LEARNINGS

Girls Empowerment

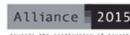


CHANGE - Improving Access to Education in Ethiopia for Most Marginalized Girls
Consortium led by People in Need

Girls' Education Challenge



CONCERN worldwide



Achievements such as learning outcomes, improvement of teaching methods, school attendance despite disability, gained business skills, improved economic situation, safe space in gender clubs and meaningful participation in community affairs contributed to building and strengthening self-awareness and self-value and foster ability to pursue development in life.

Girls, who through education and by securing their own income, have stepped out of the subordinate role, gained self-confidence and become the role models for other girls in community.

Introduction

CHANGE project contributed to the empowerment of girls and women by promoting equal access to education, increased economic opportunities, emphasizing dignity and safety and creating opportunities for more equitable participation in society for females. Various platforms were introduced to support social and economic empowerment of girls – CAGs, GC, SHG, Facilitators. Promote girls' empowerment help them realize their rights and potential, advance gender equality within society, and disrupt the intergenerational transmission of poverty, discrimination and deprivation.

Challenges & Adaptations

⇒ At the beginning of the project **CAG members** were not sufficiently confident in using their full potential to influence and make decisions in the interest of the education and protection of girls in the community. As they were gaining experiences supported by the project team, CAGs became the key **active agents of positive and sustainable change**, providing community-level support and were confident in voicing girls agenda. CAGs learned to and became key agents for the mobilisation of the community in the interest of girls' education, improvement of school attendance and reduction of girls' school absenteeism and drop-outs by meeting with families, organisation of community campaigns, negotiation of construction of accessible and safe learning centers or school toilets from community resources etc. Finally, the sharing of experiences among the CAGs created stronger network for mobilizing resources.

"I came from a very poor family. My parents depended on a very small farm. I was the sixth child to my parents. They couldn't afford to send all of us to school. I was among my sibling who stayed in the house to help my family. Two years ago, Community Action Group (CAG) members from my village told me about the opportunity being available for girls like me to access basic education and business skill trainings. I grab the opportunity immediately and started my education. Throughout the two years, I have been supported education and sanitation materials. Apart from the material assistance, I have got moral support by my teachers and local CAG members that energize me to stand firmly and finish the two years IFAL program. Now I can read and write. Besides, I got basic knowledge on how to make business after attending the two weeks business skill training. I now joined saving in self-help group and planning to start my own business",
Aregash Bekele, 18 years.

⇒ **Gender clubs** were peer-to peer support community-based groups for girls and boys. They created safe space to raise various topics on education, safeguarding, protection, gender equality, social

inclusion, GBV, MHM etc. They were usually established in school premises where girls (and boys) had regular meetings. As part of the support, girls received not only trainings but also girls' hygiene kits including sanitary pads. Within the Girls club girls can maintain their menstrual hygiene in a private, safe and dignified manner.

- ⇒ The girls from community who have leadership potentials had the opportunity to remain active in their communities as well as their informal education. Engagement and inclusion of boys too was important to achieve sustainable positive change in gender and societal norms and roles.
- ⇒ In Y5 the proportion of project girls' enrolment against non-project pupils' enrollment was on average 59%. The proportion of boys enrolled was 18% vs. 82% of girls. Moreover, the average number of project girls enrolled in a GC was 42.8 and the average number of pupils enrolled in a GC was 73.1 (average no was 59.8 girls/ 13.3 boys). The GC membership was bigger in Amhara and Gedeo and smaller in Afar and Borena.

Tesfanshe has been working at the girls' club associated with Dumerso Primary School for several months. She said that by using various opportunities and organising an awareness-raising campaign, they could change society's attitude toward gender-based violence. They are also able to help girls maintain hygiene during their menstruation cycle. "My team and I use to meet twice a week to keep each other up to date on what went on in their classes and outside of school." Tesfanshe added that: "We received pads and supplies from CHANGE Project, so the girls didn't worry about missing class. In addition to the sanitary pads, we have set up a bed for them to rest if needed during period in our center."

- ⇒ **Self-confidence of SHG members** - The girls who have started IGA are earning income and thus improving their economic situation with growing self-confidence. These positive examples have significant impact not only on girls but also on the attitude of community towards the girls' education. Based on data from Unique Tool, 84% of monitored SHG members (90% for members doing IGA) demonstrate self-confidence in their economic decision-making, which is a significant increase from 30% in baseline. SHGs have thus proved to be an important opportunity for both personal and economic growth of the marginalised girls.

"Concern Worldwide came in 2019 in our kebele to register 'out of school' girls and we became among the first group of girls who started the IFAL program. Starting school helped us to free our minds and exchange ideas with our friends. While we were studying, it helped us to increase our self-confidence, financial skill, numeracy and literacy skills." As the group members continue talking: "The courses, housekeeping and hygiene management, the benefits of saving, home gardening, bee keeping and poultry production are among major skill we developed." Fana self-help group (SHG) 12 members lives in Wolete Kebele in Legambo Woreda.

- ⇒ **Girls with disabilities** - Actual attendance of GwD in schools, paired with the conducted sensitisation on diversity and inclusion which was part of discussions in Gender Clubs and community meetings contributed to elimination of social stigma and stereotypes associated with disability and positively changed perception and understanding of disabilities.
- ⇒ In most of the cases project team arranged medical examination for GwD (in Y5 it was 198 out of 218 enrolled GwD), provision of medication or assistive devices or/and medical treatment

(physiotherapist, surgery)¹. The provided medical support and treatments helped the girls to participate in and benefit from project activities, continuing their learning as well as increasing their chances in better quality of life.

- ⇒ The successful stories of GwD who, thanks to the project intervention have started to attend ABE or IFAL program and have either alleviated or completely recovered from their disability (depending on the type and degree of disability), became well known within community and thus the whole CHANGE project. It had the effect that people started to be more interested in activities of the CHANGE project in their community.

Toyiba Demisse from Lagombo woreda left school when her father passed away and she had to support her chronically ill mother and younger brother. Due to her missing hand, she did not have many opportunities. Later she joined CHANGE project and after completing IFAL program she took sewing course. *“I am so happy for this opportunity; going to school gives me relief. I am getting busy with the trainings and now I am less stressed. The training builds my confidence and now I believe I can do more. I would like to thank Concern for the opportunity.”* Toyiba Demisse, 19 years.

Learnings

- Girls, who through education and by securing their own income, have stepped out of the subordinate role, gained self-confidence and become more active agents of society, are the role models for other girls in communities. Although community-based structures (GAC, SHG, GC) require capacity building and long-term support they represent sustainable way to women empowerment.
- To be able to challenge and change harmful, deeply rooted social and gender norms and discriminations requires time and a long-term efforts and commitment. However, achievement such as learning outcomes, improvement of teaching approach, gained business skills, improved economic situation and meaningful participation in community affairs contributed to building and strengthening self-awareness and self-value and foster ability to pursue development in life.
- Arrangement of medical examination and consequent support with provision of medication or assistive devices or/and medical treatment for GwD often contributed to a significant improvement in the quality of life of those girls whose parents would otherwise not have had the opportunity to afford adequate care.

¹ Among disabilities were Mobility and Physical Impairments, Visual or/and Hearing Impairment, Cognitive or Learning Disabilities. Many impairments were result of untreated injuries.