



COUNTRY BRIEFING: SOMALIA



GEC-T	2 projects	64,040 target beneficiaries
LNGB	1 project	42,000 target beneficiaries ¹

The GEC currently has two live projects in Somalia, one GEC-T project that focuses on transitioning girls between basic and secondary education, and one LNGB project targeting the most marginalised and vulnerable out-of-school girls. The GEC-T EGEP project closed at the end of August 2020.

All projects have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 crisis with nation-wide school closures from March to August. The economic and social impacts of the pandemic have been compounded by recent conflicts in Jubaland, an economic downturn, a desert locust crisis and seasonal flooding. Projects have focused their efforts on keeping in contact with as many girls as possible, keeping them learning remotely or in person in small groups, supporting radio broadcast of learning content, planning back-to-school campaigns, and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of girls. The projects have also supported national and regional educational response strategies. During their last quarter projects reached a total of 67,593 girls through their COVID-19 response activities.²

PROJECT NAME	WINDOW	PROJECT START DATE	PROJECT CLOSE DATE
Educate Girls, End Poverty (EGEP)	GEC-T	1 May 2017	31 August 2020
Somali Girls Education Promotion Programme (SOMGEP)	GEC-T	1 May 2017	30 October 2021
Adolescent Girls' Education in Somalia (AGES)	LNGB	12 September 2018	31 August 2022

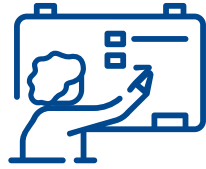


© Relief International

¹ Number subject to adjustment following identification of beneficiaries.
² This number includes the 'reach' numbers for EGEP (April to June 2020, the last quarter of implementation for the project), SOMGEP (July to October 2020) and AGES (August to October 2020).

Project data is based on reporting from May to October 2020

Since the start of the second phase of the GEC³ (2017-2025), projects in Somalia have reported the following achievements up to June 2020:



3,822

teachers trained



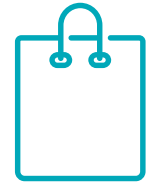
3,224

community awareness-raising events held



21,384

textbooks distributed



35,468

student kits distributed

Achievements

- **SOMGEP's** Girls Empowerment Forum (GEF) participants have significantly higher learning rates than their peers. Girls who participated at least once in a GEF activity have, on average, a learning score of 16.3% higher than project girls and comparison girls who did not participate in GEF. GEF participants are also more likely to remain enrolled in school for one to two years longer than their peers.
- An increasing number of project schools have improved their teaching practices.

EGEP's final reporting data⁴ included the following highlights:

- The project has addressed several barriers to girls' education through bursary support, improved teaching quality and learning environments and spaces focussed on girls (e.g. the leadership network).
- There has been considerable improvement in the teaching quality of teachers who participated in the continuing professional development programme.
- Girls reported greater confidence and self-awareness. They have engaged more confidently with teachers, their families, local communities and other students, and built a greater awareness of their individual rights and potential for the future. Contributing activities include the girls' leadership network and the use of 'leadership-focused activities' in classrooms.

Challenges

GEC projects have faced significant challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and they have adjusted their activities to address these. Prolonged absences from school, lack of PPE for in-person support and limited public support for adherence to prevention protocols has reduced the opportunities for girls to access and participate in learning. Despite the roll out of some state-wide distance-learning strategies, many girls were not able to access mobile phones, computers, television or radio in order to engage with learning opportunities.

The most acute and severe impact of the pandemic has been economic.⁵ Reduced remittances from overseas relatives and networks have combined with livelihood losses, leading to more parents using harmful mechanisms to increase income. There has been an increase in the number of early marriage arrangements in order to receive brideprice contributions, or parents leaving home to find additional work, leaving girls with increased unpaid caring responsibilities,⁶ impacting their ability to continue learning at home. Girls have been at increased risk of child labour, working in domestic roles within other homes to supplement household diminishing incomes.

The safety of girls has been a major concern. Travel and contact restrictions have reduced projects' access to girls and their capacity to provide safeguarding and psychosocial support. Projects have reported increased cases of early marriage, pregnancy and gender-based violence. A detrimental impact on the girls' mental health has been reported.⁷

³ The first phase of the GEC ran from 2012 - 2017 and provided quality education for over a million marginalised girls. The GEC is now in its second phase (2017-2025), with up to 41 projects in 17 countries. The second phase is enabling existing GEC beneficiary girls to complete primary school and transition to secondary education, technical vocational training or employment. Within the second phase, a second cohort of girls are also being supported through the Leave No Girl Behind funding window, which consists of interventions for highly marginalised, adolescent girls who are out of school.

⁴ This evaluation was conducted during COVID which limited the external evaluator to remote research. Girls were less able to recall changes in their learning and education prior to COVID or to reflect on their circumstances.

⁵ According to the recent survey conducted by SOMGEP, 33% of the girls had experienced hunger for more than 10 days/most days since the COVID-19 crisis started; 47% had limited access to drinking water for the same period; 43% lacked access to medicines for at least 10 days, or during most days; and 63% had gone without a cash income for at least 10 days, or during most days. The lack of drinking water experienced by nearly half of families reflects the limited access to water in general and contributes to extreme risk of COVID-19 contamination. The prevalence of severe anxiety and depression is significantly higher among those deprived of basic needs.

⁶ A survey conducted with a sample of 440 AGES girls (randomly selected proportionally to the population enrolled in each pathway/region) indicated that 71% of girls were experiencing increased workload at home during this pandemic. The findings are aligned with baseline results which revealed that 40% of the caregivers/parents believed household chores are an acceptable reason to keep their children out of school.

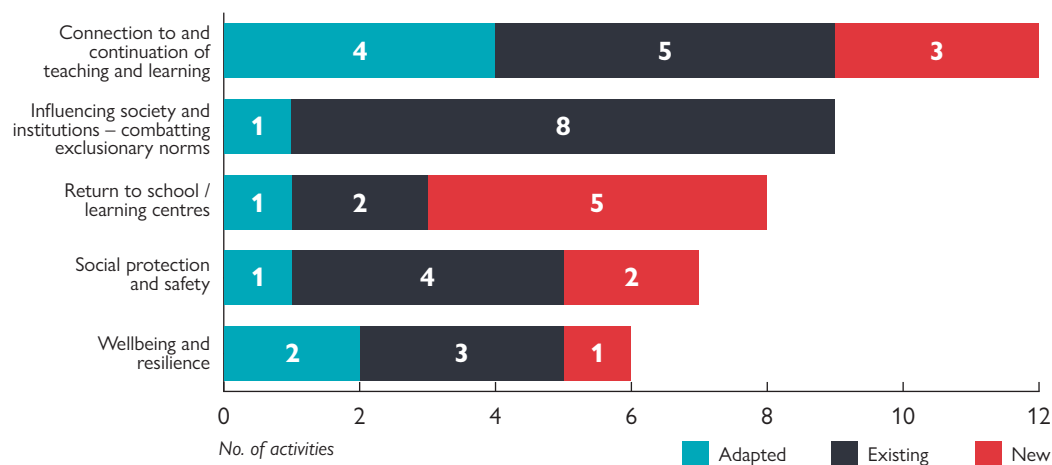
⁷ AGES survey: girls reporting that they feel depressed on a daily basis (67%) among those who reported an increased workload, compared to 50% among those whose workload has reportedly remained the same. The survey revealed that among the girls who are experiencing anxiety and depression, 89% of the girls were more anxious and nervous since the onset of the crisis, while 93% were feeling sadder and more depressed during this period.

Recent highlights

In response to the many challenges of COVID-19, GEC projects pivoted their activities to best support the needs of the beneficiary girls. *Figure 1* outlines the types of activities projects have implemented and indicates the proportion of these that are existing, adapted from existing activities or completely new to projects. Some highlights from these activities include:

- **EGEP** used radio and TV stations' public service announcements and live shows to create mass awareness on COVID-19, child protection and psychosocial support. This activity has informed the development of Federal Government of Somalia MoE guidelines on remote psychological support services and child protection during COVID-19.
- **AGES** developed remote learning content and trained facilitators to deliver it, reaching 468 beneficiaries.
- **EGEP** provided pre-recorded radio remedial Mathematics and English lessons for both primary and secondary schools.
- **SOMGEP** organised outreach activities, coaching sessions and guidelines that detailed the timings for school openings. It also reinstated its contribution towards monthly boarding school costs for 150 girls whose families could no longer afford them due to the economic impact of COVID-19.⁸
- **SOMGEP** reinstated Girls' Empowerment Forums (GEFs) within communities and encouraged the girls to keep in touch with each other. Gender Focal Points (GFPs) worked closely with the mentors and GEFs, and continued to work directly with girls at school and community level. The project formed a WhatsApp group with GFPs and other gender officers to improve contact and communication. This enabled the dissemination of prevention and response-related information at community level.
- **AGES** continued their Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA). New procedures were developed, along with a translated coaching guide, to support VSLA agents and staff. This helped the groups remain active amidst economic shocks.
- **Safeguarding:** All projects have put in place safeguarding protocols and procedures specifically to ensure that their COVID-19 responses are safe for girls, other beneficiaries and staff members. Safety, as well as learning, continues to be a top priority for all GEC projects.*

Figure 1: COVID-19 Response activities in Somalia⁹



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

⁸ Pre-COVID, the project had stopped this activity as families had taken on the cost themselves due to their increased income as a result of their membership in project-led Village Savings and Loan Associations

⁹ Projects began implementing the COVID-19 response activities in March 2020 and will continue or be adapted in accordance with the evolving COVID-19 situation in each context and in agreement with the FM.

Coordination and collaboration

Strengthening relationships with local and national organisations and government agencies has been a key element of many projects' COVID-19 response activities, allowing them to reach more girls and align activities to national strategies.

- **EGEP** worked with the MoE and Teacher Training Institutes (TTI) to develop and implement a comprehensive teacher development programme; a combination of face-to-face and in-classroom support through trained coaches. The project has seen an increased demand by head teachers for coaches to give other teachers similar support.
- **SOMGEP** delivered community-based campaigns with the MoE on COVID-19 prevention.
- **AGES** and **SOMGEP** worked together on procedures for safe and inclusive communication and IEC messages. **AGES** coordinated with the CARE emergency team to establish reporting hotlines.
- **AGES** coordinated with Mercy Corps in Mogadishu, Save the Children in Kismayu, Baidoa and NRC in Baidoa on awareness raising via radio, TV, IEC materials, and community health workers.
- **AGES** collaborated with the Ministry of Health and the Federal Ministry of Education to provide 300 thermometers for secondary schools in South Central Somalia. 100 thermometers were distributed by CARE and 200 by Relief International.

Lessons learned

- The projects' work to build and strengthen community-based structures – from girls' empowerment forums to community education committees – has been critical in mobilising in-community support for girls within their own homes at short notice and with minimal transmission risk.
- The projects used their experience of responding rapidly in fragile and conflict-affected contexts to develop strong response plans. Their monitoring systems were effective as they were used to conducting remote monitoring in challenging contexts. For example, **AGES** were able to use the remote monitoring tools they had developed pre-COVID-19 for the 18% of schools they could not physically reach.
- Attention to mental health of both girls and of other stakeholders, including staff themselves, has emerged as a core issue for all Somalia projects. Teachers are highly motivated to learn more about psychological first aid practices and be able to employ them in schools, and staff have strengthened their own systems for looking out for one another amidst continued difficult working environments including repeated quarantines.
- In their closure report **EGEP** highlighted that household chores remain a major barrier to girls' schooling. While stereotypes about girls' education have changed in communities as a result of campaigns, girls still face significant pressure to fulfil traditional gender roles, particularly around household chores.
- They also found that community dialogue forums are key to achieving sustainable community behavioural change. Through these dialogue forums, communities can articulate and identify the socio-economic and cultural barriers that affect girls' education. They also help communities to come up with localised strategies to address these barriers through sharing of responsibilities among various segments of the community. This promotes community ownership and ultimately long-lasting impact.

Priorities from January 2021

Projects will be focusing on supporting school-based activities while still preparing for individual or nationwide school closures. Out-of-school girls will be a core priority group for both **AGES** and **SOMGEP**, with particular focus on girls with disabilities and girls from pastoralist communities. Alternative pathways for out-of-school girls will be important as the number of eligible girls is likely to increase and the need to support the transition of those who have completed the course made more urgent. The projects will focus on identifying transition pathways and support girls to get onto them, such as vocational and entrepreneurship opportunities. Supporting the girls to help them deal with their new reality will be critical. **SOMGEP** have adapted their plans for working side-by-side with MOE school supervisors so that teachers are supported to deal with changed learning levels, greater anxiety and depression amongst girls, and any school-specific protocols. Projects will intensify their existing support to schools to strengthen their attendance tracking systems to monitor the ongoing situation.

.....
Contact: uk_girls_education_challenge@pwc.com | www.girlseducationchallenge.org
.....

**Girls'
Education
Challenge**



The Girls' Education Challenge is a project funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office ("FCDO"), formerly the Department for International Development ("DFID"), and is led and administered by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP and Mott MacDonald (trading as Cambridge Education), working with organisations including Nathan Associates London Ltd. and Social Development Direct Ltd. This publication has been prepared for general guidance on matters of interest only and does not constitute professional advice. You should not act upon the information contained in this publication without obtaining specific professional advice. No representation or warranty (express or implied) is given as to the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in this publication, and, to the extent permitted by law, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP and the other entities managing the Girls' Education Challenge (as listed above) do not accept or assume any liability, responsibility or duty of care for any consequences of you or anyone else acting, or refraining to act, in reliance on the information contained in this publication or for any decision based on it.