

Independent Evaluation of the Girls' Education Challenge Phase II - Teachers and Teaching for Marginalised Girls

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Simon Griffiths, Programme Director

Signature:



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This research was conducted in 2020/21, prior to the August 2021 Taliban takeover of the country, and references within to government stakeholders refer to those from the former government. This is an independent evaluation report and does not in any way represent any legal position or opinion of the UK government.

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Background

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's (FCDO) Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) was launched in 2012 with a commitment to ensure up to one million of the world's most marginalised girls completed a full cycle of either primary or secondary education. Phase I (2012-17) was funded with £355m and targeted 1.4 million marginalised girls and provided funding through 37 different projects.

Phase II of the programme is operating between 2017 and 2025. 41 projects are receiving £500 million to support their activities across two windows: (1) the GEC Transitions (GEC-T) window, which is supporting 27 successful GEC Phase I projects across 14 countries to transition to the next stage of their education; and (2) the Leave No Girl Behind (LNGB) window, which supports 14 projects in 10 countries to support up to 200,000 highly marginalised, adolescent girls who have never attended or have already dropped out of school with literacy, numeracy and life skills.⁵ The programme is managed by the Fund Manager (FM) and projects are designed and delivered by Implementing Partners (IPs). The two expected **outcomes** of Phase II of the GEC are: (1) improved learning outcomes for marginalised girls; and (2) increased transition through key stages of education, training, or employment.⁶

The independent evaluation (IE) of Phase II of the GEC was commissioned in February 2020. This evaluation is being conducted by a consortium of partners: Tetra Tech International Development (formerly Coffey International Development); the Research and Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre at the University of Cambridge; Fab Inc.; RTI International; and a number of academic and data collection partners. The IE will take the form of a series of evaluation studies on different aspects of GEC II implementation and outcomes to provide the FCDO and IPs with formative evidence and learning to inform ongoing improvements in the design and delivery of the overall GEC II portfolio, as well as improvements at the project-level for GEC II projects continuing beyond 2021.

This report is the second in this series. It has been published alongside the first report on *Effects of Covid-19 on Access and Learning in the GEC II*.

⁵ Altogether, GEC Phase II operates in the following 17 countries: Afghanistan; Democratic Republic of Congo; Ethiopia; Ghana; Kenya; Malawi; Mozambique; Nepal; Nigeria; Sierra Leone; Somalia; Pakistan; Rwanda; Tanzania; Uganda; Zambia; and Zimbabwe.

⁶ All projects have been designed by IPs to address the specific barriers and levers to marginalised girls participating in education and improving their literacy and numeracy skills in the contexts in which they are operating. As such, they all aim to address equity and inclusion in the contexts in which they are operating.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

APHRC	Africa Population and Health Research Centre
BLN	Basic Literacy and Numeracy
CAPI	Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing
CBE	Community-Based Education
CBE MG	Community-Based Education for Marginalised Girls
Covid-19	Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)
DP	Discovery Project
EAGER	Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient
EGDUE	Educating Girls with Disabilities in Uganda through Education
EGEP	Educate Girls, End Poverty
EiE	Education in Emergencies
ENGINE-II	Educating Nigerian Girls in New Enterprises Phase II
ESWG	Evaluation Studies Working Group
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FM	Fund Manager
GATE	Girls' Access to Education
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GEC	Girls' Education Challenge
GEC II	Girls' Education Challenge Fund Phase II
GEC-T	GEC Transitions
GES	Ghana Education Service
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GLTV	Ghana Learning Television
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IAG	Independent Advisory Group
IDI	In-Depth Interview

IE	Independent Evaluation
IP	Implementing Partner
IRB	Institutional Review Board
I-SAPS	Institute of Social and Policy Sciences
IT	Information Technology
IVR	Interactive Voice Recording
JHS	Junior High School
LBS	Life and Business Skills
LNGB	Leave No Girl Behind
MBSSE	Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education
MG	Marginalised Girls
MGCubed!	Making Ghanaian Girls Great!
MoE	Ministry of Education
MTRP	Medium Term Response Plan
NA	Not Applicable
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PFA	Psychological First Aid
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
QAERP	Quick Action Economic Response Program
REAL	Research for Equitable Access and Learning
RQ	Research Question
SMS	Short Message Service
SOMGEP	Somali Girls' Education Promotion Project
SGBV	School-Related Gender-Based Violence
STAGES-II	Steps Towards Afghan Girls Educational Success II
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
TSC	Teaching Service Commission
TV	Television

TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WaSH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Executive Summary

Teachers: The Key to Improving Education Outcomes

Teachers play a critical role in developing and enhancing children's education outcomes. Improving the *quality* of teaching through actions that enhance pedagogy and support teachers in delivering learning is seen as an important mechanism for improving education outcomes. In recognition of this, improving teaching quality is one of the eight intermediate outcomes set out in the Girls' Education Challenge Phase II (GEC II) Theory of Change.

Focus of this study

This study focuses on how GEC II projects have engaged teachers and emphasised teaching quality to improve girls' education. This means understanding not only teacher demographics (*who teachers are*), but also their pedagogical practices, most notably how they approach teaching marginalised girls in their classrooms (*what they do*).

In this context, the study focuses on two key research questions: How have GEC II projects (1) implemented and adapted interventions with teachers and teaching *prior* to Covid-19; and (2) adapted their interventions *during* the pandemic?

This study focused on areas identified in the literature as being important - some of which are a gap in the global evidence base – including those related to gender-responsive pedagogy; the role of female teachers; and teacher professional development. It considered these in the context of adaptations to learning and teaching interventions by GEC II projects in response to the Coronavirus 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic.

Methodology

Ten GEC II projects which included a strong focus on teachers and teaching were selected for inclusion in this study. The study team used a review of **project documentation** and **analysis of project-level external quantitative evaluation data** to answer the first research question (RQ1) on how GEC II project interventions were seeking to improve the quality of teaching.

In addition, **primary qualitative data** were collected for four of the ten projects through a **series of 187 in-country interviews, 31 focus group discussions and 60 narrative classroom observations** in Afghanistan,⁷ Ghana, and Sierra Leone between March and May 2021. These data (along with a review of project adaptation plans) were used to answer the second research question (RQ2) on the teaching and learning experience during Covid-19. Further insights into the context in which these projects were operating was also evidenced through analysis of these data together with key informant interviews with critical stakeholders from the education sector (such as members of national and local government, Implementing Partners (IPs), and community members).

Research Question 1: How have GEC II projects implemented and adapted interventions with teachers and teaching prior to Covid-19?

The first research question looked at the ways in which the ten GEC II projects selected for this study planned and implemented interventions related to teachers and teaching prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. We identified that projects included a wide range of interventions including a variety of roles for educators who are either directly recruited by IPs for their programmes or are supported by IPs in existing schools. As such, when we refer to GEC II teachers, we are referring to both those who are directly contracted by IPs and those who are supported by IPs, unless otherwise specified. We use the term 'teacher' throughout the report to refer to the range of educators engaged with IPs activities, unless we use an IP's specific terminology where relevant. However, not all education staff implementing the interventions are qualified teachers, and not all IPs refer to their educators as teachers.

Key findings

- **IPs engaged with different types of educators to deliver their programmes**, including government schoolteachers, teachers recruited to deliver community-based education, programme volunteers, and para-educators (including mentors/Learning Assistants). This enabled projects to cater to some of the most vulnerable girls in rural, remote, or conflict-affected settings by developing flexible teaching and learning models where schools and learning programmes might otherwise face challenges in recruiting professional teachers.

⁷ This report was completed in 2020/21, prior to the August 2021 Taliban takeover of the country, and references within to government stakeholders refer to those from the former government.

- **All ten IPs offer multiple interventions to improve teaching quality that are designed to address specific barriers related to teachers and teaching.** The top two teaching-related barriers identified in the projects' mid-term evaluation reports were a shortage of female teachers and safeguarding and child protection concerns.
- **The main intervention reported by all ten projects to improve the quality of teaching was teacher professional development.** Other interventions included providing additional or remedial classes, school leadership and management training, and providing learning resources for use in classrooms. Two projects provided additional teaching support (e.g., Learning Assistants).
- **Two projects were undertaking interventions designed explicitly to increase the female teacher pipeline.** One IP implemented a teaching apprenticeship programme or provided grants for women to attend Teacher Training Colleges, while another supported women to take part in distance learning programmes with Teacher Training Colleges, including a period of time spent as community-based Learning Assistants. However, systemic barriers to the recruitment and/or retention of female teachers may have hindered the extent to which IPs were able to support female teachers. Other projects were hiring both male and female teachers as part of their interventions.
- **Some IPs were undertaking activities to transition community-based educators into the mainstream teaching system** once projects closed to improve the sustainability of interventions. This included IPs holding discussions with external stakeholders to transition their teachers to formal teaching systems, and teachers pursuing opportunities outside those provided by the IPs.
- **Teacher professional development was primarily disseminated through 'traditional' classroom-based teacher training, followed by other formats, including teacher peer learning.** Whilst information on the content of this training was limited in project documentation, a majority of projects indicated they included some form of gender-responsive, learner-centred and inclusive pedagogic approaches in their training.
- **Teacher training seems to have improved pedagogies, self-confidence in teaching and awareness on child protection and safeguarding.** However, project documentation (external evaluation reports and monitoring reports) indicated that some IPs did not appear to be routinely assessing teachers' knowledge, skills, or competencies (including in literacy/numeracy) or linking this evidence to students' learning needs. This potentially hinders an assessment of the extent to which learning gaps are the result of teachers' skills or knowledge gaps and poses a risk of teacher professional development not reflecting teachers' own needs.

Research Question 2: How and to what extent have GEC II projects adapted and supported interventions during Covid-19 to enable girls to continue to learn?

The second research question focuses on how four of the ten GEC II projects (which operate in Afghanistan, Ghana and Sierra Leone) adapted or introduced new interventions to support girls during Covid-19 – including while schools were closed and once they reopened. The analysis is prefaced with a summary of the education systems and barriers to girls' education, as well as national-level responses to the pandemic in the three countries.

Key findings

- **The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated key supply-side and demand-side constraints to girls' education.** IPs conducted a situational analysis in the early months of the pandemic (June 2020), which highlighted that the time available to girls to learn was reduced due to an increase in domestic and/or income-generating duties and that Covid-19 adversely affected girls' psychological wellbeing. IPs used the disaggregated data they collected on the educational and wellbeing needs of different groups of marginalised girls to inform differentiated and gender-responsive interventions. All IPs adapted interventions related to teachers and teaching to provide not only remote education but monitoring of girls' wellbeing and health information and resources.
- **The provision of remote or adapted learning included various formats of teacher-guided distance learning and/or home-based self-directed learning.** As all three countries' governments initiated national distance learning initiatives (through television programme content or radio broadcasts), IPs endeavoured to increase girls' access to these initiatives – with one IP providing decoders or televisions to girls. Other IPs followed up with girls who had televisions or radios by creating timetables for them or informing them which lessons to watch/listen. In addition to supporting the national distance-learning initiatives, teachers provided paper-based learning materials (such as textbooks/assignments) or called girls (or their caregivers) to answer their questions or provide basic instruction. While government-mandated restrictions limited travel or in-person gatherings, community-based teachers from two IPs were able to visit girls during Covid-19 – with

teachers from one IP arranging in-person classes of small groups, and mentors from another IP visiting girls at their homes to informally revise with them.

- **Across the four IPs, girls were positive about their continued engagement with learning and contact with teachers, particularly when it enabled 'two-way' learning** (i.e., girls were able to communicate with their teachers to ask questions, rather than solely receive content). However, both girls and teachers faced challenges during school closures, and as such, preferred in-person learning. Girls' challenges included poor access to technology, increased domestic and income-generating responsibilities, inadequate access to textbooks/assignments, and limited support or avenues for feedback from teachers or caregivers. Teachers' challenges – that were disproportionately worse for female teachers – included expanded teaching responsibilities compounded with domestic responsibilities, inadequate supplies of textbooks/assignments to distribute equally amongst girls, and low access to technology.
- **IPs' activities attempted to circumvent these barriers – such as alleviating the costs of phone calls to girls or girls' parents by providing phone credit to teachers. However, the disruptions due to Covid-19, compounding systemic barriers, suggest that the extent to which IPs were able to address these barriers was limited – particularly given their own constraints.** For instance, a small number of girls suggested that they preferred learning at home instead of at school. This indicated that barriers such as long distances to school, inadequate classroom infrastructure and limited resources – which may be beyond the scope of IPs' activities – negatively affected the classroom learning experience for these girls.
- **During school closures, the role of teachers expanded from a primarily educational one to encompassing a broader range of support functions. Community-based female educators in particular were instrumental in monitoring girls' wellbeing and mitigating their risk of dropping out of schools/educational spaces.** Community-based female educators were often recruited locally and so able to move around during 'lockdown' periods while travel was restricted and are trusted sources of information for girls. Moreover, safeguarding concerns and social norms about interactions between girls and male teachers outside of a formal school setting prevented male teachers from supporting girls during school closures. Teacher engagement during school closures was identified as being particularly valuable to communities and parents with low literacy levels, especially as teachers delivered Covid-19 information and resources within communities.
- **Given the sudden expansion of teachers' roles during the pandemic, and changes in learning needs, IPs attempted to support teachers to cope with these additional responsibilities by adapting training content and modes of delivery.** Teachers found the training satisfying, particularly in developing their overall teaching methods and subject knowledge, their ability to support marginalised girls to come to school, and their access to teaching materials and learning resources. While teachers from all four projects reported wanting greater remuneration /stipends, material support and longer or more sustained school-based training, IPs' constraints (particularly during Covid-19) limited their capacity to respond to these needs. IPs' training most likely filled gaps in teacher training provided by governments – which while often discussed by government stakeholders – did not appear to be fully realised or received by teachers. Teachers' own wellbeing appeared to be comparatively overlooked – with only one IP reporting dedicated support for teachers' wellbeing needs.
- **In two countries – one of which has not prohibited corporal punishment – instances of witnessing and experiencing school-related gender-based violence (which appeared to have affected girls, boys and teachers) were noted in a small number of focus group discussions and classroom observations. It is important to note that these were not attributed to IPs, IP activities or GEC II teachers.** School-related gender-based violence remains a concern for quality education, and risks perpetuating cycles of violence. It has detrimental impacts on learners' wellbeing and morale to continue education, suggesting that a focus on preventing and addressing teacher violence is critical for learners' retention in school. IP activities on safeguarding and child protection may have decreased the extent to which teacher-perpetrated violence occurs. In addition, **teacher training on safeguarding and child protection were reported to be some of the most useful topics covered by IPs during teacher training** – contributing to teachers' increased awareness on positive approaches to disciplining learners and teachers relying on reporting mechanisms.
- **IPs and teachers aimed to bring their learners back to safe learning environments and mitigate the adverse impacts of Covid-19, particularly given the challenges reopened schools faced globally – and continue to face – in containing the spread of the virus.** Covid-19 protocols and provisions for safe learning environments were the main types of new interventions that were introduced. Classroom observations indicated these Covid-19 protocols (handwashing, sanitisation, mask-wearing, social distance) were not always observed in classrooms – most likely due to context-specific constraints (such as

overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, limited resources) and IPs' limited ability to monitor adherence to these protocols in the government schools they supported.

- **Once schools reopened, IPs adapted teaching interventions and provided training to teachers to implement remedial/catch-up strategies, as a means of mitigating learning loss.** Across all four projects, teachers used formal or informal assessments as well as other questioning strategies to gauge learners' learning levels, though this was not seen in all classrooms. Girls also reported that their teachers had applied one or more remedial strategies since their return to the classroom, such as asking if girls remembered what they had learned before the school closures, using formal assessments such as tests during class to assess learning levels, or repeating material introduced prior to school closures before moving on to new content. Girls reported that repeating content taught prior to the pandemic and checking for learners' understanding were useful practices, while bypassing old content and moving directly onto new content was less helpful for their learning.
- **Overall, teachers in all three countries were seen to use positive gestures, tone of voice and behaviours** (for example, friendly expressions, thumbs-up, clapping) in learning environments that contributed to a positive rapport between learners and teachers. **Teachers were also observed to apply learner-centred pedagogies for engaging marginalised girls**, such as translating content into multiple local languages, checking for individual understanding and encouraging shy learners to participate in class. One IP, that caters to out-of-school girls, and has the highest proportion of learners with children, indicated positive examples of **female mentors actively supporting learners with children**. While teachers incorporated gender equal practices, and gender-related content in their classes, a small number of classroom observations recorded instances of teachers making gender-biased or gender-harmful statements. In addition, teachers' understanding and inclusive practice for learners with physical disabilities and special learning needs appeared to be limited.

Conclusions

These conclusions are based on learning from the ten GEC II projects selected for this study (with four included in more depth). These projects were ones identified as projects that included a stronger focus on teachers and teaching in their interventions. Therefore, some of the conclusions relate to positive lessons from these projects, for consideration for other projects in the future.

- **Overall, GEC II projects included in the study delivered a range of activities to support diverse types of teachers and educators teaching in school and community-based education settings.** The assumption that providing training and resources for teachers will improve girls' learning underpins the Theory of Change for GEC II project designs and interventions targeting improving the quality of teaching. Teacher professional development (TPD) was a key approach that all projects used to improve teaching quality. In addition to this intervention, projects also implemented varied activities to address other parts of the teaching ecosystem, such as support for school leaders and government authorities, the provision of learning resources (both paper- and video-based), and additional lessons and extracurricular activities. However, 'quality teaching' is a complex composite of interdependent factors including who teachers are (their individual skills, qualifications, education levels), and what they do (pedagogical practices, gender and inclusion attitudes) - as well as wider institutional factors such as quantity of teachers, remuneration and the political and economic context within which teachers operate - all of which may influence teaching quality in different ways.
- **Of the 10 projects reviewed in this study, many included a specific focus on improving aspects of pedagogy, such as encouraging gender-responsive, learner-centred, and inclusive pedagogies**, although limited detailed information about teaching practices in the project documentation. Projects mainly provided forms of 'traditional', classroom-based TPD, followed by mentoring and coaching. Many GEC II projects aimed to make training and resources gender-responsive and accessible for their teachers and educators. However, some IPs did not appear to be routinely assessing teachers' knowledge, skills, or competencies, or linking this evidence to girls' learning needs, as a basis for designing and delivering targeted professional development activities to improve teaching quality, and subsequently girls' learning outcomes.
- **From the GEC II quantitative data (collected by IPs and external evaluators) that were available, we were unable to identify how effective the support provided to improve teaching quality has been in improving girls' learning outcomes.** Furthermore, because there are insufficient data linking changes in girls' learning outcomes to teaching practices, we are unable to tell whether the projects' support provided to teachers is the right support from the perspective of the learning needs of the girls themselves. As different types of interventions focus on different parts of the teaching ecosystem, it is critical to measure their ultimate

effects on girls' learning to be able to compare, contrast and identify which interventions or package of interventions work for which type of teachers, teaching which types of girls and in what contexts. It is also important to collect data that accurately identify the types of educators projects are working with (whether facilitators or learning support staff) and the interventions they received, which can then be linked to class-level learning data, to allow for a deeper analysis of 'what works' in relation to teacher professional development initiatives.

- The four projects included in the more detailed study mobilised rapid responses and adaptations that directly engaged girls in continued learning and provided Covid-19 information and safety processes. **These IPs adapted interventions based on rapid gender and needs assessment data** – some IPs provided targeted, low-tech solutions, while others provided resources to bridge the gap for girls who could not access national-level distance learning strategies. However, even when IPs provided paper-based resources and low-technology options, learners – especially younger learners - struggled with self-directed learning. Learners faced difficulties in engaging with their learning without a means of contacting teachers to ask questions and get direct feedback and support. IPs aimed to circumvent these challenges by enabling continued contact with teachers. **IPs included in the study also addressed gender-related and accessibility-related problems inherent in remote learning and teaching options by providing paper-based home-learning resources coupled with two-way teacher support.**
- **Overall, girls felt positive about their continued engagement with learning and contact with their teachers, however most reported they preferred in-person learning to home-based learning.** A small number of girls stated the contrary – mentioning that they felt more comfortable at home than at school. This preference could be due to inadequate classroom resources, low-quality school infrastructure, long distances to school and security concerns, which negatively impact the classroom experience.
- **During the pandemic, teachers were at the frontline of providing not only continued or adapted learning opportunities, but also critical health and safety or wellbeing information and pastoral support.** This indicates the importance of teachers' roles within the community and their ability to provide a pivotal 'bridging' role between schools and communities – although it raises a question as to whether teachers have been adequately equipped to play this more pastoral role, as well as the additional time and resources expected from them. Projects responded with training for teachers in psychological first aid and other wellbeing advocacy skills (although many teachers reported not receiving this in practice). However, teachers expressed concern about the need for more support for their own wellbeing.
- **Female community-based teachers were instrumental in supporting girls' ongoing engagement with learning, sustaining their motivation, and reducing their risk of dropping out of school.** In government education systems, where government regulations prevented schoolteachers from contacting learners outside of the formal school setting, community-based models facilitated home-based and phone-based support for girls. Female community-based teachers were better able to provide adapted learning and well-being support outside a formal school or learning setting. The role of female teachers was particularly important as safeguarding concerns in all three countries affected the extent to which male teachers involved with GEC II projects could provide remote teaching to girls outside the classroom environment. These community-based teachers typically lived locally, were often embedded in local community groups, and may have been personally acquainted with girls' families and their personal circumstances, which helped them provide differentiated attention and care. Female teachers' ability to remain in touch with girls during school closures was supported by IPs' provision of phones and phone credit, as teachers faced their own challenges in providing remote or adapted teaching, due to a lack of access to technology.
- **School-related gender-based violence – including corporal punishment – remains a concern for girls' wellbeing.** While corporal punishment is legal in certain contexts where GEC II IPs operate, IPs have prioritised child protection and safeguarding as a component of teacher professional development. Teachers have reported that this training has been very useful in developing their own self-awareness and practices. However, IPs that operate in government schools, and do not directly recruit these teachers, have limited oversight or influence over these teachers. These constraints may point towards a need for improved reporting mechanisms and collaboration with the broader ecosystem of parent associations and school management leadership systems to alleviate this burden on IPs.
- **Once schools reopened in all three countries, the four IPs prioritised the 'safe return' to school with Covid-19 protocols as the main cluster of interventions introduced, and strategies for remedial /catch-up learning to address learning loss during school closures.** The actual adherence to and implementation of Covid-19 safety mechanisms – such as mask-wearing, handwashing or hand sanitisation and physical distancing – varied across the classrooms observed in the three countries. There was some variation in approaches used for remedial and catch-up learning strategies, which included revising content that was studied prior to the onset of the pandemic, additional classes, and formative assessment strategies.

It is important to note IPs may have limited ability to monitor the adherence to Covid-19 protocols and implementation of remedial/catch-up strategies in government schools that they are supporting.

- **Learner-centred, inclusive and gender-responsive pedagogies, whilst a tenet of teacher professional development, continue to require support for implementation, particularly given the resource-constrained environments in which many teachers work.** Most teachers displayed learner-centred and inclusive pedagogies, for instance, by translating lesson content into various local languages to cater to learners, physically moving around the classroom to check on learners' progress or incorporating activities such as group work or roleplay. There were a small number of instances where it was observed that teachers made gender-biased or gender-harmful statements. In addition, inclusive pedagogies were observed to have been limited in practice, where some teachers were unable to identify disabled learners (i.e., those with visual or hearing impairments), or excluded learners who struggled with their learning and may have had learning disabilities. Our findings on gender-responsive and inclusive pedagogies may indicate a greater need for support to address teachers' internalised biases/beliefs, as well as support for them in identifying learners who have disabilities or struggle with their learning in their classes and providing them with practical advice on how to support these learners.
- In all three countries, community leaders and community groups played a critical role – through supporting families, monitoring girls' education and providing amenities such as food or money. **Community members and parents recognised the contribution of GEC II projects throughout the pandemic, particularly the work that GEC II teachers did in providing targeted wellbeing and learning support for beneficiaries who may not have benefited from national or system-wide strategies, due to their remote location, lack of resources, or other intersectional barriers.** As such, the impact of the pandemic may have been different, had IPs, their interventions and teachers not been present in these communities.

Recommendations

These recommendations are based on learning from the 10 GEC II projects selected for this study, in particular from the four projects for which more in-depth analysis has been undertaken during the pandemic. These projects were identified as including a stronger focus on teachers and teaching in their interventions. Therefore, some of the recommendations relate to positive lessons from these projects, for consideration for other projects in the future. Given many GEC II projects were coming to an end by the time this report is being finalised, the intention is not to provide specific recommendations for the GEC II portfolio. As such, the proposed recommendations are for the FM, IPs and the FCDO to consider for the design of future girls' education programmes and interventions in particular.

Overall, all projects working on improving learning for marginalised girls need to explicitly consider interventions related to supporting teachers and teaching, given that teachers are vital points of interaction between education systems and key stakeholders in their communities. Recognising that teachers' work goes beyond teaching in the classroom, interventions need to include activities that provide appropriate support and resources to fulfil teachers' responsibilities and allow them to manage their own wellbeing.

In addition, projects should recognise wider societal factors that are likely to affect the effectiveness of interventions, such as working conditions and government education policy. This includes the need to consider the wider contextual factors (including the key drivers and barriers to change) that are likely to influence project implementation and effectiveness at all stages of the project cycle; and the need to identify and engage with critical key stakeholders from the design stage of project development.

The recommendations below are organised by **aspects of projects' interventions** related to teachers and teaching that the FM, IPs and the FCDO (and wider audiences) may want to consider for future programming and policy decisions.

Recruitment of teachers and other professionals

- **Community-based teacher recruitment models are an appropriate method of addressing teacher shortages and skill gaps, particularly in rural and remote areas.** In designing community-based approaches, it is important from a sustainability perspective to consider from the outset whether these models can be transitioned or adopted by government education systems.
- **Interventions need to address systemic barriers to recruiting and retaining female teachers, either through their own recruitment or by actively engaging with governments and community leaders to promote female teacher recruitment. Female teachers are instrumental in catering to some of the most marginalised girls,** through additional forms of support to out-of-school girls, girls who are prevented from being taught by male teachers due to both safeguarding concerns and social and gender norms, and in security-prone areas. However, the recruitment of female teachers may be a systemic problem requiring long-term strategy. Projects need to consider interventions that have that long-term focus on policy and systemic

change even though the results may not be fully realised during the lifetime. Otherwise, projects risk continually treating the symptoms of underlying constraints that are not being sufficiently addressed. For those supporting teachers in existing schools, projects could work with government to identify strategies to increase female staff. For example, for projects which recruit their own teachers, this might involve building training and skills development into the project intervention or considering community-based recruitment processes.

- **Recruitment models that engage a wide range of educators – e.g., itinerant teachers for supporting children with disabilities and community-based educators or learning assistants – ensures specialist skills are drawn upon.** Recruiting, and subsequently training these teachers, enables the provision of quality teaching to support the learning and other needs of marginalised girls.
- **Engaging a wider range of educators also needs to include health professionals, social workers and other specialists.** Central to 'psychological first aid' is the principle that teachers can be a first point of contact who, when adequately trained and supported, can provide girls with immediate care and advice on referrals to appropriate social and health services.

Teacher professional development

- **All projects delivering teacher professional development activities should align girls' learning needs and teachers' competencies to ensure they are effective and meaningfully impact girls' learning.** Teacher training should be provided based on an assessment of teachers' needs, both in relation to the teachers' subject-based competencies and pedagogies, as well as evidence of girls' learning requirements. This requires systematic reporting of both the content as well as the modes of teacher professional development. Recognising that it will take time for teacher professional development to have an impact on changes in teaching practices and consequently girls' learning outcomes, there is a need to adopt appropriate assessment approaches to identify the effects of these activities.
- **Teacher professional development should include training in gender-responsive pedagogies.** The training should go beyond making sure girls and boys are included equally in classroom activities, to tackling biases, building self-confidence etc. This should include feedback mechanisms in place to ensure they are being implemented as intended. In ensuring the effectiveness of the training, teachers, project implementors, and the broader school management /leadership system should work together to put in place mechanisms to mitigate the risks of imparting gender-biased or gender-harmful practices in learning environments.
- **Information on gender-responsive pedagogy that reflects the *quality* rather than solely the *quantity* of interactions between teachers and girl learners – and that are applicable in female-only learning environments – are fundamental to assessing the effectiveness of different training models.** This includes, for example, capturing information such as *how* teachers call on learners, rather than the frequency with which they do so.
- **The provision of remote or community-based modules, funding, and travel or other access allowances to female teachers is important to address barriers female teachers otherwise face in receiving teacher professional development.** This also needs consideration of the timing of training to fit around other responsibilities.

Hybrid teaching models during crises

- **Resources or facilities available to both teachers (to provide instruction) and girls (to continue learning) need to be carefully assessed in preparation for potential future crises situations, resulting in school closures.** Assessing the extent of technology access and ensuring needs are catered for, is needed as a preventative measure for the future, with attention paid in particular to contexts where both teachers and girls are likely to face barriers in accessing and utilising different forms of technology.
- **Teaching models based on home-learning need to be 'two-way'** (as also identified in the IE's Study on Access and Learning), **to ensure girls have an avenue for continued support and feedback to sustain their motivation and engagement with learning.** Appropriate resourcing and outreach to engage caregivers with low literacy levels, and community mentors or peer mentors to prevent girls becoming isolated, may strengthen these models.
- **Future projects working on education crisis response could consider conducting needs and wellbeing assessments of teachers,** to understand the extent to which teachers are able to perform additional pastoral roles (and feel adequately supported in doing so).

Gender-responsiveness in 'building back better'

- **Close working relationships between school management and leadership systems and teachers are needed to address school-related gender-based violence that affects girls' learning and wellbeing.** This requires a critical focus on corporal punishment and other forms of school violence, anti-violence curricula changes, ongoing monitoring of classrooms and referral procedures as a first response.
- **Projects with a focus on improving the quality of teaching should check whether teachers have adequate support to translate 'learner-centred' and 'gender-responsive' training into effective classroom practices, in the context of resource constraints and challenges in the classroom environment.** This could include continuous professional development, clear feedback mechanisms and ongoing monitoring of classroom practices, along with supplemental resources for teachers.

Areas for further research and data considerations

- The FCDO should consider **two areas for further research** that emerged during this study:
 - **Research into the most effective forms of teacher professional development to improve gender-responsive pedagogies.** This would help to inform the adoption of different pedagogical approaches that are feasible and appropriate in low-income settings and across different contexts. Such research would need to take account of a time lag between the TPD and potential effects on learning outcomes. In addition, little is currently known about the effectiveness of *remote* models of teacher professional development and tools. In light of the disruption caused by Covid-19, further research into this area would help to build resilience for future emergencies, as well as supporting the existing need for TPD in remote and rural settings.
 - **Research into the sustainability of the improvements in teaching quality including through community-based approaches, as a result of projects' interventions** – this could be an integral focus of the planned study by the IE on sustainability.

The **FCDO** should ensure that future girls' education projects or programmes that are designed to improve the quality of teaching **collect and directly link data on changes in girls' learning outcomes to changes in teaching quality as a result of the interventions.** This requires tracking teachers over time to adequately assess change.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Objectives of this Study

The **purpose** of this study is to understand how Girls' Education Challenge Phase II (GEC II) projects have engaged teachers and emphasised teaching quality within interventions designed to achieve a core GEC II outcome for girls' learning.

Teachers have an important impact on students' learning and, as such, improving teaching quality is one of eight intermediate outcomes set out in the GEC II Theory of Change (provided in [Annex A](#)). It is therefore important to understand the extent to which GEC II activities include ones that aim to provide high quality, gender-responsive learning environments for marginalised girls. This means understanding not only their demographics (who teachers are), but also their professional practices and how they approach teaching the marginalised girls in their classrooms (what they do).

This study contributes to this evidence base by analysing the work of the GEC II programme in engaging teachers and improving the quality of teaching. This focuses on **two key research questions**:

- How have GEC II projects implemented and adapted interventions with teachers and teaching prior to Covid-19?
- How and to what extent have GEC II projects adapted and supported interventions related to teachers and teaching during Covid-19: (1) to enable girls to continue to learn at home during school closures, and/or to return to school following school closures; and (2) to support them in other learning spaces (e.g., community-based learning, training on remedial learning etc.)?

In this regard, this is an **evaluation for learning** (used in this report interchangeably with study) rather than an evaluation for accountability purposes. The primary aim is to provide the FCDO and IPs with evidence and learning to inform improvements of current and future interventions relating to teachers and teaching, in addition to contributing to the wider global evidence base on teaching quality in this context.

1.2 Report Structure

The following analysis is organised around the overarching research questions that guided this study. These research questions are framed around two time periods: before and since the Covid-19 pandemic.

This report comprises the following sections:

- **Section 2** draws on background literature to provide an overview of key concepts and evidence in relation to teachers and teaching that have informed this study.
- **Section 3** provides an overview of the research approach and methodology. Further detail on the methodology is provided in the accompanying document ([Annex B](#)).
- **Section 4** (RQ1) and **Section 5** (RQ2) address the two core research questions above.
- **Section 6** (conclusions) and **Section 7** (recommendations) build on these findings to provide conclusions and recommendations for the FCDO, FM and IPs, and the wider academic and practitioner community.

In addition, this report is accompanied by a separate set of annexes, which provides further detail on the methodology and ethics and safeguarding procedures; the research tools used for this study; and expanded quantitative findings. These comprise the following annexes:

- Annex A: GEC II Theory of Change
- Annex B: Research Design and Methodology
- Annex C: Research Tools
- Annex D: Expanded Quantitative Findings
- Annex E: Ethical Research and Safeguarding Framework
- Annex F: FCDO Response on Safeguarding

2 Review of Existing Evidence on Teachers and Teaching to Support Girls' Education

This section provides a brief overview of key evidence that has informed the study. This is not intended to be an exhaustive review but rather provides an overview of key issues which feature in our analysis of the GEC II projects. This review was conducted using a purposive search strategy to identify recent research evidence on the theme of teachers and teaching.

Following the review of evidence, an overview of key documents is provided in relation to teaching in GEC II, including the GEC II framework for teaching quality.

2.1 What do we Know About Teachers and Teaching?

Teachers play a critical role in improving girls' education outcomes. As teacher salaries account for a large proportion of education budget expenditures (more than 70 percent of total expenditures in primary and secondary education), they are an important aspect of the education process (Sabarwal et al., 2021). In addition, quality of teaching is found to be important for improving students' learning outcomes. However, evidence from a large body of literature finds that teaching quality globally is variable. A recent review across a range of contexts has found, for example, that the difference between high- and low-performing teachers is potentially equivalent to multiple years of schooling (Beteille & Evans, 2019).

As the key facilitator of the child's learning experience, teachers also play a key role in mitigating – or exacerbating – harmful gendered practices in the school environment. Interventions to improve teaching quality, therefore, are a key mechanism for potentially enhancing education outcomes and addressing gender-specific barriers to education. However, challenges to effective teaching in low-income settings may include low educational attainment of teachers; limited resources and learning materials; differences between the language of instruction and that spoken fluently by pupils; low pedagogical knowledge related to limited training opportunities; inadequate physical school and classroom infrastructure; teacher shortages and absenteeism (World Bank, 2021a); and, in the specific case of female teachers, potential professional, educational and financial barriers arising from wider gender inequalities in society. Teachers also do not operate in a vacuum and their actions and activities are heavily influenced by the larger macro governance environment and the motivations and actions of important players both within and outside the educational sphere (Aslam & Rawal, 2019).

Various interventions have sought to improve teacher and teaching capacity by addressing different aspects of the teaching and learning experience. For example, interventions have sought to increase the teacher recruitment pipeline (including the education and training levels of incoming teachers) and address absenteeism, to increase the amount of learning time experienced by children (Masino & Nino-Zarazua, 2015; Aslam et al, 2016). The teaching experience must be understood holistically, and so improving the teaching environment may also include interventions such as addressing a lack of teaching materials, classroom overcrowding and poor infrastructure (Masino & Nino-Zarazua, 2015), as well as understanding how teaching and working conditions may affect teacher commitment and absenteeism (Evans & Yuan, 2018) and the ways in which the wider educational system and contextual factors and teacher's own intrinsic motivations may hinder or enhance their ability to perform their duties (Aslam & Rawal 2019, 2019b). In the case of girls' education, interventions may also seek to address gender-specific barriers, such as developing gender-sensitive teaching materials and pedagogical approaches and, where relevant, recruiting female teachers to provide girls with female role models and enable teaching in gender-segregated schools. Interventions may also seek to develop teaching models that recognise and address various intersecting forms of disadvantage that can affect a child's learning experience, including those associated with their gender, ethnic background, disability status, and economic situation. This can include, for example, developing inclusive education models and multi-lingual resources, and providing economic support alongside learning interventions.

It is also important to think about the *quality* of teaching, not just the *quantity*. Evidence suggests that simply providing additional resources and inputs (such as additional teachers) may not have an impact on learning unless used as part of a strategy to also improve how teachers teach and engage with the resources (World Bank, 2020), and interventions to increase teaching time may not be sufficient to increase learning on their own (Guerrero et al, 2012). Evidence suggests that teacher content and pedagogical knowledge may have a positive effect on student achievement (Bold, et al. 2017, 2017b; Glewwe & Muralidharan, 2015). However, as noted by several researchers and policy makers, attention has more often been paid to recruiting 'good teachers' and analysing teacher characteristics, rather than encouraging and collecting data on successful teaching *practices* (USAID, 2015).

As a result, recent literature has highlighted interventions to improve pedagogical practices as a potentially effective way of supporting learning outcomes in low-income settings, although the evidence is rarely synthesised by gender

(Conn, 2014; Evans & Popova, 2015; USAID, 2015). For example, a review found that two interventions are consistent at improving test scores – ‘pedagogical interventions that tailor teaching to student learning levels—either teacher-led or facilitated by adaptive learning software... [and] individualised, repeated teacher training interventions often associated with a specific task or tool’ (Evans & Popova, 2015). A systematic review of interventions for improving learning outcomes and access similarly found that structured pedagogy interventions had the largest and most consistent positive effects on learning outcomes (although had limited effect on participation outcomes) (Snilstveit, et al, 2015). A review focused on girls’ education specifically found that training teachers in pedagogy and gender equality and using group/collaborative learning styles were promising methods of improving girls’ learning outcomes (Unterhalter et al, 2014). In addition, teacher-related and pedagogical interventions have also been found to be cost-effective (Angrist et al, 2020).

On the basis of this promising evidence, more recent efforts (such as the World Bank Teach classroom observation tool) have sought to provide frameworks for improving teaching quality (World Bank, 2019). However, literature has also highlighted the need to understand and reflect local perspectives on what constitutes teaching quality (Carter et al, 2021). It is also important to understand what constitutes effective pedagogy in low-income settings (Westbrook et al, 2013), and in doing so, whether pedagogic models favoured in high-income countries (such as learner-centred education) are suitable in different cultural contexts (for example, given local child-adult authoritarian norms) and consider the feasibility of different pedagogical models in light of the experience of the teacher and class size and resources (Schweisfurth, 2013).

A key method of improving teaching quality is through teacher professional development (TPD) to support pedagogy within classrooms, although the availability of evidence on effective TPD is limited. TPD is frequently used as an (often externally-funded) intervention to compensate for under-funded pre-service training programmes (INEE, 2015). As detailed in [Section 4.2](#), all ten GEC II projects selected for this study included some form of TPD. TPD takes diverse forms and occurs at different stages of the teaching pipeline: from centrally organised, large-scale training to ongoing school-level coaching and mentoring or embedded professional learning; and from pre-service teacher training to continuous professional development for established teachers. It is recognised that the *nature* and *quality* of TPD is important (Angrist et al, 2020; Ganimian & Murname, 2014; World Bank, 2020; Snilstveit, et al, 2015) and that training programmes need to be well aligned with teaching and learning needs, rather than simply generalised, ‘overly theoretical’ training (World Bank, 2020), adapted to the local culture and context (INEE, 2015), considered in the context of the bundle of other available education ‘ingredients’ (such as the availability of teaching resources) (Piper et al, 2018), and delivered by teacher-educators with the appropriate skill level and contextual knowledge (INEE, 2015). Distance training methods may be cheaper than conventional ones, although may not necessarily be the most effective (Orr et al, 2013; Popova et al, 2021; Cilliers et al, 2021). In this regard, programmes may need to think not just about the content of the training, but also *who* to train, who is the *one training* (quality of trainer), *how* to train, *how long* to train, *what* to teach, and *where* to teach it (Popova, Evans & Arancibia, 2016).

While a growing body of evidence has sought to elaborate on the components of a successful TPD programme or strategy, the majority of evidence at present is drawn from high-income contexts (Darling-Hammond et al, 2017). As a result, there is an evidence gap on ‘how to effectively improve teacher knowledge and skills and the impact thereof’, even if we know what positive classroom practices they *should* be using (Bold et al, 2017). Elements of effective training programmes suggested by existing research may include those which provide complementary materials, focus on subject-specific pedagogy, incorporate lesson enactment, link participation to incentives such as promotion or salary implications, include follow-up visits, and use professional trainers (Popova, Evans & Arancibia, 2016; Popova et al, 2021). Where educational technology (EdTech) is used, evidence suggests that it should be used to ‘extend rather than replace’ what are existing promising TPD practices, and ‘should not be equated with Internet use’ (Haßler, Hennessy & Hofmann, 2018; Haßler and Moss, 2020; Allier-Gagneur et al, 2020). In practice, interventions may combine several strategies (including different objectives and delivery modes), making the evaluation of specific elements of TPD tricky (Orr et al, 2013). More generally, systematic reviews have highlighted that assessments of the effectiveness of TPD programmes and how they affect pedagogical practices require methods beyond conventional impact evaluations, which are not able to capture the complexity (Glewwe & Muralidharan, 2015, Aslam et al 2016). As Popova, Evans & Arancibia (2016) note, rigorous evaluations of TPD are few and where they exist, ‘many evaluations fail to provide sufficient details on the actual content or delivery mechanisms of the trainings,’ despite often large variation across interventions. The evidence base relating to TPD in fragile contexts is even more limited (INEE, 2015). Furthermore, Westbrook et al (2013) also find that theoretical approaches (e.g., child-centred education) are often referenced in passing in the literature without clarity on how these are implemented, possibly resulting in discrepancies in the interpretation and use of these terms across different countries and settings (see also, in the specific case of learner-centred education, Schweisfurth [2011]).

It is also important for teachers to account for the specific educational needs of girls in the classroom in their teaching practice. Teachers' own beliefs about children and their learning may potentially result in harmful practices in the classroom (Rakshit & Sahoo, 2020). However, these beliefs are rarely analysed as a critical factor in intervention designs or evaluations (Sabarwal, et al, 2021). In the specific case of girls' education, teachers' beliefs about gender differences may result in disparity of treatment between boys and girls, such as denying girls and boys equal opportunities to participate and promotion of harmful gender stereotypes (Sabarwal, et al, 2021). As a result, recent efforts have been made to develop models of **gender-responsive pedagogy**. Gender-responsive pedagogy is a pedagogical approach with the dual aim of addressing existing harmful gender norms, such as reducing exposure to gender stereotypes in children's educational resources, but also boosting girls' learning by helping teachers to recognise and reduce their own (conscious or unconscious) potentially harmful classroom practices. This is in contrast to gender-blind approaches which may fail to address, or even exacerbate, existing disadvantages embedded within 'standard' teaching practice (FAWE, 2018).

To date, the field has primarily focused on teacher and school management training approaches to embed gender-responsive pedagogy. For example, the toolkit developed by the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) aims to train teachers in gender-aware practices (such as language use, classroom management, student interaction and use of teaching and learning materials) as well as train school management on nurturing wider gender-sensitive school environments (e.g. gender-sensitive budgeting and child protection measures) and has been used to mainstream gender-responsive pedagogy within pre-service teacher training in Ethiopia and Malawi (FAWE, 2018). However, the evidence base on the impact of gender-responsive pedagogy remains small and primarily qualitative: there are some emerging studies which indicate that training education staff in gender-responsiveness may improve educational outcomes for girls and boys and improve gender relations in schools, although studies also emphasise the importance of improving the quality of teaching alongside gender-responsiveness (Marcus & Page, 2016; Sperling, Winthrop & Kwauk, 2016). In addition, it is important to be aware of the way in which gender intersects with other forms of disadvantage, such as economic situation and disability status, and how this similarly affects a child's learning experience.

Increasing the number of female teachers is also a prominent method of improving girls' learning and providing female students with role models, although the evidence base is limited. Some studies have shown promising evidence on the impact of female teachers on girls' learning, although it is difficult to extricate this from other variables such as the quality of the teaching itself and contextual variables, meaning the impact of female teachers is not yet well understood (Rawal & Kingdon, 2010; Unterhalter et al, 2014; Marcus & Page, 2016; Sperling, Winthrop & Kwauk, 2016; Evans & Le Nestour, 2019). Nonetheless, recruiting female teachers is particularly important in conservative societies where social norms may prevent female students from being taught by male teachers (Sperling, Winthrop & Kwauk, 2016), and the potential for female teachers to act as role models for girls may have wider effects than just improving direct learning outcomes (such as inspiring girls to follow Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics [STEM] pathways) (Evans & Le Nestour, 2019; Rawal & Kingdon, 2010).

2.2 Teaching During Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on teachers and teaching globally. Teachers played a critical role in the pandemic response: both in the short term by implementing remote learning models and Covid-19 classroom safety processes, but also over the longer term by implementing remedial education to mitigate learning losses after school reopening. The closest comparator may be that of the 2014-16 Ebola outbreaks in West and Central Sub-Saharan Africa, which also resulted in extended school closures. During the school closures (and as we have found in this study), the role of teachers was diverted towards disease control and other social mobilisation activities (Hallgarten, 2020). This implies a need to support teachers to deliver these new roles, while also providing training to effectively implement remote or adapted curriculums (including both the technology itself and remote pedagogical methods) and remedial education (UNICEF, 2020).

However, while there is an emerging evidence base on education in emergencies (EiE), there is much less known about disease contexts, and the effectiveness of distance learning approaches. The existing EiE evidence base has not always been applied to disease outbreak situations (Hallgarten, 2020), in which social distancing measures present specific distance learning challenges (rather than many conflict settings in which face-to-face gatherings remain possible, if challenging for other reasons). Similarly, a review of the impact of the Ebola outbreaks on education found very limited evidence on either the educational impact of disease or the impact of mitigation measures, with the body of literature primarily comprising 'lesson learned' documents and recommendations (Hallgarten, 2020). Neither did the review find evidence from this period on the impact of approaches to support teacher training or TPD during school closures (other than disease-related training). At the time of writing, a current World Bank project is seeking to build this evidence base in light of the Covid-19 pandemic by crowd-sourcing examples of remote technology-based TPD interventions to find good-practice examples for low-income settings and develop technical guidance (World Bank, 2021b). Similarly, despite the reliance of many countries on digital technologies, a 2018 review of EdTech in emergency settings by Save the Children found a lack

of evaluations and experimental evidence relating to the use of digital technologies in emergency settings, and also a lack of appropriate application of evidence from non-emergency settings to the emergency context (Tauson & Stannard, 2018).

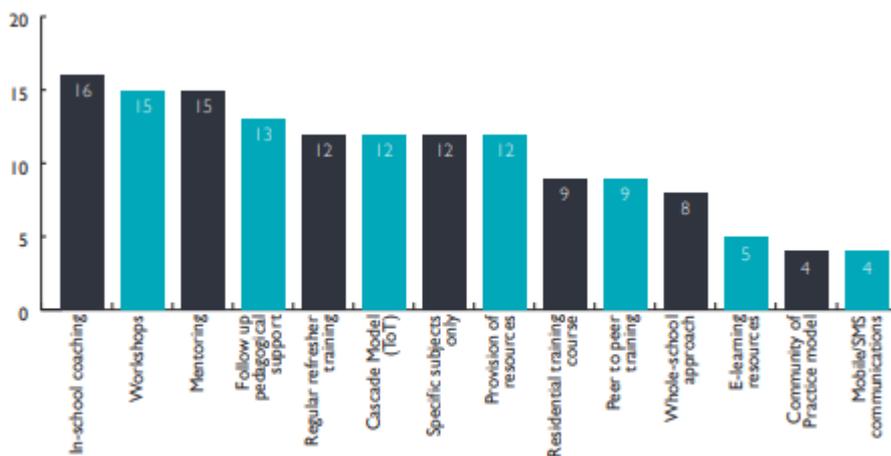
There is also a critical need to consider the impact of the pandemic on teachers themselves. The need to support teachers by providing adequate training, working conditions and psychosocial support has been recognised (UNESCO & ILO, 2020) although there is a dearth of evidence on the wellbeing of teachers themselves in crisis settings, in particular disease contexts (Falk et al, 2019). This also includes the impact of school closures and remote learning models on teachers; as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) suggests, teacher involvement in distance learning programmes may help support them by providing a sense of 'routine and purpose' and allow them to 'maintain their professional identities', enabling them to monitor children's education activities to better adapt learning after reopening (UNICEF, 2020). Some institutions have also called for teachers to be prioritised for vaccines (UNESCO, 2021). According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) data, as of October 2021, teachers have been included in one of the priority groups for national vaccine rollout plans in 72% of countries globally, with 9% of countries including teachers in their first priority group alongside frontline workers (UNESCO, 2021).

2.3 Teachers and Teaching in the GEC

The GEC developed a thematic review of teaching and learning practice during its first phase (GEC I), which studied GEC project approaches to teaching and learning and the relationship with intervention outcomes. The review found 'an association between projects which delivered the greatest gains in girls' learning and those which included a strong and direct focus on the quality of [teaching and learning] and assessment' (GEC, 2018). Almost all GEC projects were working with teachers in some way in order to address challenges relating to teachers' pedagogical, lesson planning and assessment skill gaps, including 30 out of 37 projects delivering some form of teacher training. The review recommended a stronger focus on designing teacher training to reflect the actual diagnosis of teacher needs; emphasis on the mode of training, including fostering follow-up support, practical sessions, and peer support; monitoring approaches which include observation of changes in teacher behaviour and indicators of quality education; and consideration of the language of instruction in designing teaching and learning resources.

A 2019 survey of GEC-T projects reported that a majority of GEC II projects were taking an 'individualised' approach to TPD, including school-level approaches, rather than a standard programme for large teacher cohorts (and in contrast to 'cascade' approaches) (GEC, 2019). This involves a range of training focus areas reported by projects, as depicted in *Figure 1*.

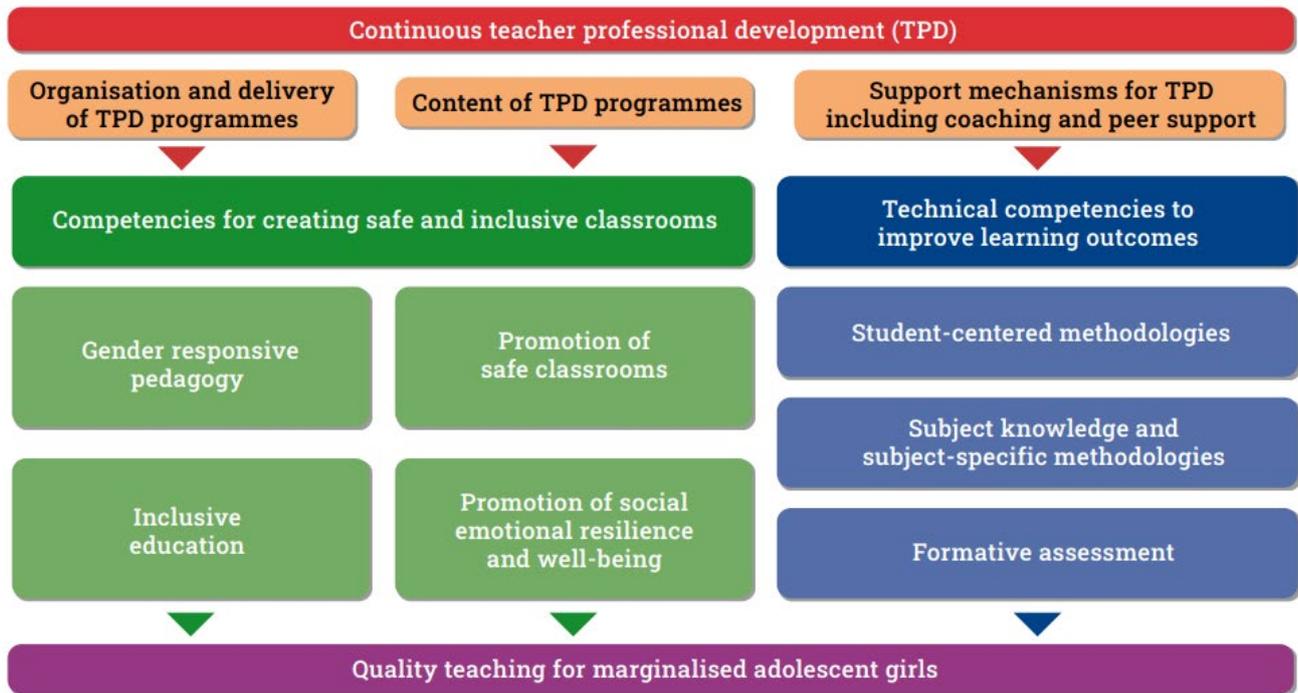
Figure 1: Approaches to TPD used by GEC projects



Number of GEC projects using the listed approaches to teacher development. Total responses = 21

During GEC II, a Quality Teaching Framework was developed setting out the *organisation* (delivery model) and *content* of TPD programmes, as well as the support mechanisms to reinforce learning (such as peer support) (*Figure 2*) (GEC, 2020). The Framework makes a distinction between teacher competencies for managing safe and inclusive classrooms (including gender-responsive pedagogy), and technical and pedagogical competencies required to support positive learning outcomes.

Figure 2: GEC II Quality Teaching Framework



Source: GEC II Fund Manager (GEC 2020)

In addition, the Framework set out a number of lessons for quality TPD (although, as noted above, a large part of this evidence was based on research on TPD in high-income settings). This included an emphasis on ‘continuous, school-based approaches’ rather than centralised trainings or cascade models; the need to target programmes to the needs and experience of individual teachers, and the specific needs of the student cohort; the inclusion of opportunities for discussion and practice with peers and reflections on professional practice; a focus on subject-specific methodologies; a gendered approach; and the provision of complementary learning materials for teachers and for use in their own classrooms.

Our study aims to contribute to the existing literature. As detailed in [Section 3](#), in this study we explore the contribution of a sub-set of GEC II projects to understand the ways in which they have worked to improve teaching quality, with a particular focus on girls. Reflecting the current evidence gaps in the literature, and the focus on TPD in the GEC II Teaching Quality Framework, we have specifically focused on aspects such as gender-responsive pedagogy; recruitment and training of female teachers; and TPD interventions. We further explore these issues in the light of adaptations to learning and teaching interventions in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

3 Research Design and Methods

3.1 Overview of Research Design and Project Sampling

This section presents a short description of the research design and methods for this Study. For the full research design and methods see *Annex B* (Research Design and Methodology) in the accompanying annexes.

The study focuses on two key research questions. These questions, and related sub-questions (as outlined in *Annex B*), were selected following an iterative consultation process with the FCDO and FM to maximise relevance to FM and FCDO activities:

- RQ1: How have GEC II projects implemented and adapted interventions with teachers and teaching **prior to Covid-19**?
- RQ2: How and to what extent have GEC II projects adapted and supported interventions related to teachers and teaching **during Covid-19**: (1) to enable girls to continue to learn at home during school closures, and/or to return to school following school closures; and (2) to support them in other learning spaces (e.g., community-based learning, training on remedial learning etc.)?
- **Contextual analysis** was also conducted to inform findings on the way in which project interventions with teachers and teaching differed across settings.

For RQ1, the study primarily used secondary quantitative data collected as part of project evaluations together with an analysis of project monitoring reports and other existing documentation. For RQ2, qualitative data were collected (as explained further in *Annex B*).

Ten projects were sampled for inclusion in this study. These included nine projects from the GEC-T window and one from the LNGB window (the **longlist**). Of these ten projects, four were selected for more in-depth study (the **shortlist**), including the collection of primary qualitative data (*Table 1*). These included two projects in Afghanistan,⁸ one in Ghana and one in Sierra Leone. Projects were screened based on: (1) including a focus on teachers and teaching; (2) the availability of data for secondary quantitative analysis; (3) country of operation; and (4) feasibility of collecting primary data. As such, the selected projects should not be considered representative of the wider GEC II portfolio, but rather those that included specific interventions related to teachers and teaching. Further details of this selection process are provided in *Annex C*.

Table 1: Longlisted and shortlisted GEC-T projects for the Study

Project name	Window	Country	Shortlist (primary data collection)
Steps Towards Afghan Girls Educational Success II (STAGES-II)	GEC-T	Afghanistan	x
Community-Based Education for Marginalised Girls in Afghanistan (CBE MG)	GEC-T	Afghanistan	x
Making Ghanaian Girls Great! (MGCubed!)	GEC-T	Ghana	x
Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER)	LNGB	Sierra Leone	x
Discovery Project (DP)	GEC-T	Ghana	--
Educating Nigerian Girls in New Enterprises Phase II (ENGINE-II)	GEC-T	Nigeria	--

⁸ This report was completed in 2020/21, prior to the August 2021 Taliban takeover of the country, and references within to government stakeholders refer to those from the former government.

Project name	Window	Country	Shortlist (primary data collection)
Girls' Access to Education (GATE)	GEC-T	Sierra Leone	--
Somali Girls' Education Promotion Project (SOMGEP)	GEC-T	Somalia	--
Educate Girls, End Poverty (EGEP-T)	GEC-T	Somalia	--
Empowering Girls with Disabilities in Uganda through Education (EGDUE)	GEC-T	Uganda	--

Note: Throughout this report, the above acronyms are used for brevity.

3.2 Overview of Research Methods

The main sources of data for the study, for each of the RQs, were as follows:

RQ1: How have GEC II projects implemented and adapted interventions with teachers and teaching prior to Covid-19?

Secondary data:

- A review of project documentation, including external evaluation and technical monitoring reports, GEC II FM documentation, and GEC II project websites.
- Analysis of secondary quantitative project-level data collected by external evaluators at baseline and midline between 2017 and 2019 (for all longlisted projects, except EAGER which commenced in 2020 and for which we only had baseline data).

RQ2: How and to what extent have GEC II projects adapted and supported interventions related to teachers and teaching during Covid-19: i) to enable girls to continue to learn at home during school closures, and/or to return to school following school closures, and ii) to support them in other learning spaces (e.g., community-based learning, training on remedial learning etc.)?

Primary data (collected in relation to the four shortlisted projects only):

- 153 in-depth interviews (IDIs) with a sample of project headteachers and teachers.
- 24 focus group discussions (FGDs) with a sample of female beneficiaries who returned to education following the pandemic, and for MGCubed! and EAGER, 7 additional FGDs/IDIs with those who did not return.
- 31 FGDs with School Management Committees/*Shuras* (councils) /Community Stakeholders.
- 60 qualitative narrative classroom observations in 24 project schools for shortlisted projects, to observe gender-responsive and other pedagogical practices. This included an observation of the teacher during the lesson (by one observer), an observation of four pre-selected learners (by a second observer), and reflections of both observers after the session.
- In addition, 34 key informant interviews (KIIs) with national government and district education authority officials; IP and consortium partner staff; and project external partners were undertaken to inform RQ2 as well as the broader contextual analysis.

A number of limitations should also be considered in interpreting the findings of this study, including:

- 1 The purposive selection strategy used to select projects for inclusion in this study means that selected projects are not intended to be representative of the wider GEC II portfolio, but rather the selection focuses on projects that included specific interventions related to teachers and teaching. For this reason, the recommendations highlight learning from these projects – for example, what projects have delivered successfully and as such could be replicated elsewhere.
- 2 Given the timeline of this study, the analysis of quantitative secondary data only covers baseline and midline data collected before Covid-19 collected by projects' external evaluators. It is worth noting that the observed effects and changes may have been limited at this stage due to the short time interval between both rounds – a

year on average. In addition, the tools and indicators used to collect data varied across projects, meaning the data was not comparable. As a result, our analysis only reflects changes observed in a subset of comparable indicators between projects, rather than the whole range of indicators collected by projects' external evaluators.

- 3 The baseline and midline data were collected in samples of project-supported schools. We were not always able to link data across from different instruments, for example teacher data and students' learning data, or disaggregate by specific variables, such as gender. This limited the analysis we conducted to address the research questions. In addition, the samples included both teachers who were trained and those not trained by the projects. Furthermore, external evaluations did not uniquely identify the teachers, and projects did not necessarily survey the same teachers between baseline and midline. As such, we cannot attribute any changes in teaching practices observed in these schools to direct project activities.
- 4 The study made use of project documentation (for example, technical monitoring reports) that were made available to the team. The documentation was not always produced in a standardised format across projects. This meant that more information was available for some projects or on some topics than others. Therefore, caution has been taken in making comparisons from this information across projects.

A detailed discussion of limitations and mitigation strategies is available in [Annex B](#) (Research Design and Methodology).

4 Teachers and Teaching Before the Covid-19 Pandemic

This section addresses the first overarching research question:

- How have GEC II projects implemented and adapted interventions with teachers and teaching prior to Covid-19?

This includes the following sub-questions:

- Who are the GEC II teachers and what do they do (including discussion of what interventions projects are providing)?
- What specific teacher training and resources have implementing partners provided (including a review of quantitative monitoring data relating to teacher training)?

The analysis is based on quantitative data from the ten longlisted projects collected by their external evaluators, together with a review of project documentation. The documentation includes external evaluation reports and technical monitoring reports provided by the FM. Please see [Annex B](#) in the accompanying annexes for a list of evaluation data and monitoring reports used to inform this analysis.

4.1 Who the GEC II Teachers are and What They Do

'I enjoy being a mentor because it has always been my dream to work with female learners for them to know the value of their life and [for] them to develop themselves.'

Female, Life and Business Skills (LBS) mentor, IDI, Sierra Leone

'I am woman and it [teaching] is the only way to help the girls who have dropped out of school and who have little courage to tell their family to allow them to go to school, because some people think that knowledge is only for men, but it is opposite, the women need more to knowledge.'

Female, Government Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan

'...my family does not allow other tasks...being a teacher is a safe job, and school is close to home. And I found it appropriate to be a teacher.'

Female, Community Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan

'...during this [MGCubed!] training and learning you could see that it should be interaction between learners and teachers and not teacher centred. You give, you take from the children. I have much interest in it, it opens so many doors for us too...'

Male, Facilitator, IDI, Ghana

In this section, we provide an overview of how GEC II projects were working with teachers and delivering teaching activities prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. We include an overview of the types of teachers that projects worked with, and the nature of project activities across the ten longlisted implementing partners included in this study.

The term 'teacher' encompasses a wide range of teaching and educator roles engaged within the GEC II programme. This includes educators who are either directly recruited by IPs for their programmes or are supported by IPs in existing schools. As such, when we refer to GEC II teachers, we are referring to both those who are directly contracted by IPs and those who are supported by IPs, unless otherwise specified. We use the term 'teacher' throughout the report to refer to the range of educators engaged with IPs activities, unless we use an IP's specific terminology where relevant. However, not all education staff implementing the interventions are qualified teachers, and not all IPs refer to their educators as teachers.

Between 2017 and 2020, around 60,467 teachers were beneficiaries of teacher training and related interventions provided by the ten longlisted implementing partners included in this study. Of these, 24,557 (41%) were female.⁹

Not surprisingly, given the large number who have received direct training from the ten GEC-II projects included in this study, there is no typical GEC II teacher. The project documents reviewed for this analysis indicate there are two main approaches to teacher recruitment or engagement:

⁹ Please note, while EAGER mentors and facilitators are included in this figure, the project began in 2020 and as such, does not capture teachers between 2017-2019.

- **Project provides training or resources for qualified teachers and headteachers working in existing schools.** Nine projects (all but EAGER) were engaging with the existing teaching workforce to deliver some form of professional development or involve teachers in delivering the project intervention.
- **Project delivers their own school/learning programmes:** In this model, the project recruits local volunteers or teachers to deliver a learning programme directly. This included both projects which were hiring education staff directly to deliver a learning programme to students (STAGES-II, CBE MG, EAGER), and projects which were recruiting education staff to support existing classroom teachers, by delivering teacher training or specialist learning support. Not all teachers who are directly recruited by the project however are formally contracted by the IP; for example, EAGER mentors and facilitators are paid a stipend, but not a formal salary, while GATE learning assistants are supported through bursaries.

As shown in *Table 2*, teachers assume diverse roles within the scope of the project design and delivery, and in the different learning environments.

Table 2: What types of teacher and schools do GEC II IPs work with?

Project	Types of teachers					Types of schools	
	Beginner Teachers	Experienced Teachers	Specialised Teachers (for example to support children with disabilities)	Learning support staff	Teacher trainers (e.g., professional teacher trainers or project staff involved in teacher training)	Existing schools	Schools / learning programmes run by projects
STAGES-II	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
CBE MG		✓			✓	✓	✓
EGDUE		✓	✓		✓	✓	
DP		✓		✓	✓	✓	
EAGER				✓	✓		✓
EGEP-T		✓		✓	✓	✓	
ENGINE-II		✓			✓	✓	✓
MGCubed!		✓		✓	✓	✓	
GATE	✓	✓			✓	✓	
SOMGEP		✓			✓	✓	

Source: Synthesised from project external evaluation reports, and technical monitoring reports. Note: The terminology for types of teachers is standardised in accordance with the Education Commission's 'Transforming the Education Workforce' report (The Education Commission, 2019), with the addition of 'teacher trainers'.

Projects engaged with the following types of teachers (see *Table 2*) :

- Two projects were supporting **beginner teachers** – STAGES-II and GATE – and delivering an intervention to recruit and train girls to increase the teaching pipeline. STAGES-II was providing funding for young women to attend teacher training college or undertake apprenticeships in order to increase the workforce itself; while GATE was supporting young women through a teacher training distance-learning programme college, including a period spent as learning assistants in their community. These women may not have finished their own formal schooling or may not be much older than the older adolescent beneficiaries they support. These projects provide these women with a training pathway (in the case of GATE, this results in a professional

certification) to overcome shortages in the number of qualified female teachers in remote areas. This is discussed further in [Section 4.1.2](#).

- **Experienced Teachers** featured in all but one project (EAGER, which was training community volunteers to deliver the intervention). As discussed in [Section 4.1.1](#), eight projects engaged the existing teaching workforce (for example, teachers in government schools), while one project (STAGES-II) hired classroom teachers to deliver community-based education. One project (CBE MG) was delivering training to the existing workforce in existing schools and was also hiring their own teachers to deliver their community-based education programme.
- One project – GATE – was employing **specialised teachers**. These were five 'itinerant' teachers whose role was to visit existing schools and provide support for children with learning difficulties or disabilities, as well as provide inclusive education training for teachers. These itinerant teachers also provide a link between the school and the families of children with disabilities and work with communities to identify children not receiving an education, work with families to develop an education plan, and support families and schools to meet the child's health, social, emotional and education needs.
- Five projects were making use of **learning support staff**. These included four projects (STAGES-II, MGCubed!, EGEP-T and DP) which were using extra-curricular coordinators to deliver extracurricular activities. Few details are available in the documentation about these coordinators, and so it is unclear whether these were the classroom teachers or different individuals recruited specifically for this role. One project – EAGER – was using volunteers recruited from the local community to be trained to deliver the learning programme. In some cases, these volunteers were also experienced classroom teachers.
- As all projects were delivering some form of teacher professional development, it is likely that all projects were employing or contracting some kind of **teacher trainer** to deliver the training and/or provide coaching. As noted in the literature review, the skill level of the teacher trainer is a critical (but often overlooked) aspect of providing effective TPD (INEE, 2015). Few details were available about the nature of these trainers, although diverse models were apparent: using project staff (DP); using 'cascade' models to train head teachers and specialised tutors to subsequently train teachers (EGDUE); procuring specialised support through teacher training agencies or colleges (EGDUE and EGEP-T); and using remote trainers to deliver video-based training (MGCubed!). This is discussed further in [Section 4.1.1 4.2](#).

Not all GEC II teachers have received formal qualifications. During our primary data collection with the four shortlisted projects, we obtained information about the formal qualifications held by 119 of the 137 teachers interviewed.¹⁰ Of these, 29 reported not having a formal teaching qualification, with the remaining 90 teachers reporting having either a Bachelor or Diploma in Education degree; general Teacher Training or a Teacher Seminar /Short Course. The main variation in teaching qualification obtained was by IP – all of the MGCubed! teachers and facilitators held either a Bachelor or Diploma in Education degree, while all teachers from Afghanistan (both CBE MG and STAGES-II) underwent Teacher Training or a Teacher Seminar/Short Course (with no variation between government and Community-Based Education (CBE) teachers).

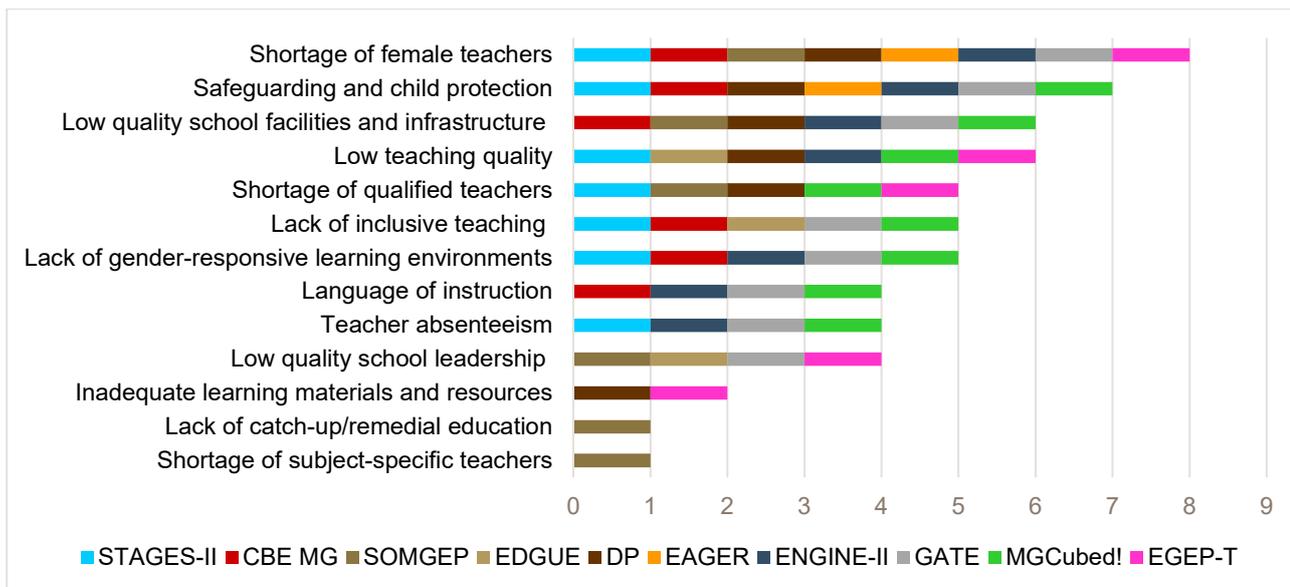
4.1.1 How do implementing partners support these diverse teachers?

Each project takes a differentiated and targeted strategy to achieve the overall GEC II aims, depending on nuanced contextual barriers and enabling factors, and supporting their diverse teachers accordingly. We provide an overview of activity across the ten IPs below to give an indication of the different types of interventions used by different GEC II projects.

All ten external evaluations reported **specific supply-side barriers related to teachers and teaching** that informed how and why they developed and implemented specific interventions for improving the quality of teaching: the top three teaching-related barriers across the ten external evaluations in this study were a shortage of female teachers, safeguarding and protection concerns, and low-quality teaching ([Figure 3](#)).

¹⁰ The sub-sample of 119 teachers consisted of teachers from the following projects: STAGES-II, CBE MG and MGCubed!. We did not receive data about formal qualifications from the 18 interviewed EAGER mentors or facilitators.

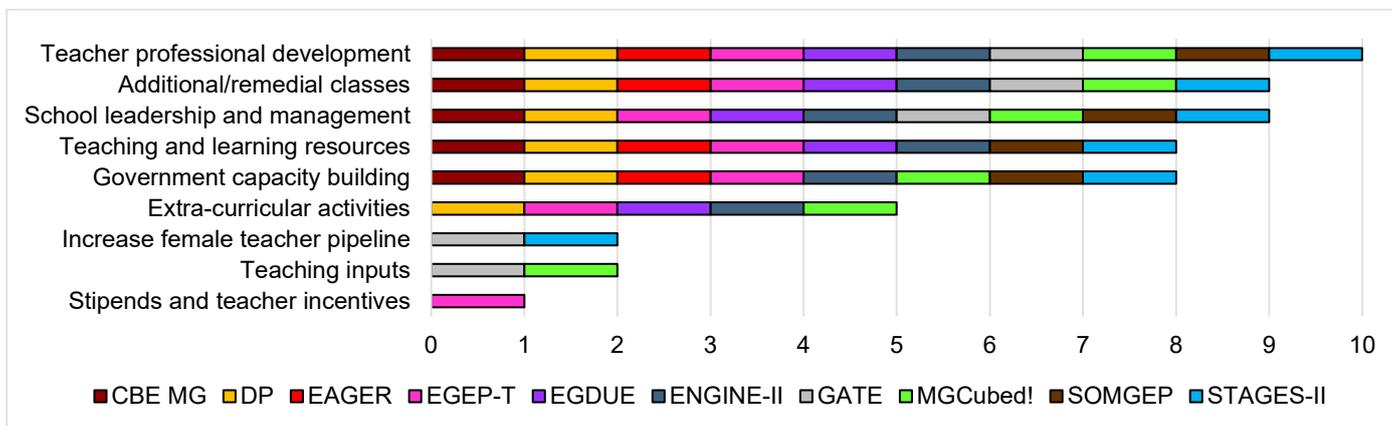
Figure 3: Barriers to girls' education related to teachers and teaching



Source: GEC II project external evaluation reports (midline; and baseline where no midline available)

As the quality of teaching is key to improving learning, it is unsurprising that all implementing partners offer multiple interventions designed to improve the quality of teaching across the GEC II teaching cadre. Teacher professional development (TPD)—including training and resources—is the main intervention implemented to improve the quality of teaching (reported by all ten projects), followed by the provision of additional or remedial classes, school leadership and management training, teaching and learning resources for use in class and government capacity building (Figure 4). The majority were delivering some kind of TPD programme for the existing teaching workforce or for education staff hired to deliver the intervention, while one project (EAGER) was training community volunteers (who were not all necessarily qualified teachers) in subject and pedagogical techniques to deliver the project’s learning programme.

Figure 4: What are the main interventions related to teachers and teaching that projects are implementing?



Sources: GEC II project external evaluation reports (midline; and baseline where no midline available); FM technical monitoring reports

All but one project (SOMGEP) hosted some form of **additional or remedial classes** for students. This included four projects – EAGER, ENGINE-II, STAGES-II and CBE MG – launching dedicated education programmes external to the government school system. STAGES-II and CBE MG established community-based education programmes (and, in the case of CBE MG, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centres), while EAGER and ENGINE-II produced learning programmes for specific demographics: EAGER established an 11-month learning programme specifically for 13-17-year-old marginalised girls to support their transition to vocational /professional training, further education or employment; while ENGINE-II established ‘learning spaces’ for both in-school and out-of-school girls to offer additional coaching to attain functional literacy and numeracy skills, in addition to extra-curricular activities such as life skills and vocational training.

The other projects (MGCubed!, GATE, EGDUE, DP, and EGEP-T) were hosting extra or remedial classes for students in addition to their regular education programme. As presented in [Figure 6](#) at least four projects also included the delivery of remedial classes in their TPD activities. Most projects were delivering these lessons through standard classroom-based delivery, although one – MGCubed! in Ghana – was delivering additional lessons to multiple schools at once via a live satellite video link to 'master teachers' based in Accra.

Box 1: Spotlight: providing additional lessons via satellite video link

The Making Ghanaian Girls Great! Project (shortened to MGCubed!) in Ghana involves the delivery of satellite-enabled live broadcast lessons to girls in 139 government run schools. Lessons are delivered by a 'Master Teacher Trainer' in Accra and facilitated in the classroom by teachers selected and trained to facilitate the lessons. Students receive one hour of maths and one hour of English a day in after-school hours, in addition to additional 'by-grade' lessons during the day. The project also runs video-based after-school clubs (girls, boys and mixed) focusing on life skills. In addition, schools receive technical equipment (such as projectors and solar panels) to support the implementation of the video lessons.

Five projects (MGCubed!, ENGINE-II EGDUE, DP and EGEP-T) were also hosting **extra-curricular activities** in addition to the additional /remedial classes. These all focused on different elements of life skills, such as leadership, confidence-building, and reproductive rights. EGEP-T and MGCubed! were also running these clubs for boys.

Nine projects (all except EAGER) also indicated that they were undertaking forms of interventions aimed at **school leadership /management** structures to improve teaching or involving teachers in implementation of the interventions. Most projects (STAGES-II, CBE MG, GATE, SOMGEP and EGEP-T) explicitly linked training or other interventions to improving or extending the role of school leaders (and in the case of STAGES-II and CBE MG, *shuras* (councils)), providing oversight, support or performance monitoring to teachers. Three projects – MGCubed!, EGDUE and ENGINE-II – have a dedicated role for school leaders in terms of implementing the intervention, by monitoring and supporting teachers throughout (MGCubed! and ENGINE-II) or by receiving training to deliver teacher training themselves (EGDUE).

Box 2: Spotlight: engaging headteachers to provide ongoing professional development to teachers

The EGDUE project in Uganda aims to provide training for existing teachers in literacy, numeracy, and inclusive teaching practices support. The project engaged a specialised inclusive teacher training agency to train headteachers and external tutors to deliver training to teachers in school-based workshops. Headteachers were then involved in generating plans for follow-up, supportive supervision and in-school capacity strengthening activities among the teachers participating in training, in order to reinforce learning through continuing professional development activities.

Two projects also undertook a broader intervention aimed at behavioural change involving teachers: ENGINE-II 'encouraged' the adoption of a code of conduct to guide teacher and student behaviour; while EGEP-T intended to 'contextualise positive discipline approaches' in school, linked explicitly to improved teaching practices – although few details are available on what this meant in practice. Three projects – CBE MG, GATE and DP – have also involved teachers alongside other school and community leaders in wider activities (such as community workshops) to identify and tackle barriers to education.

Similarly, eight projects indicated that they were undertaking an intervention related to **government and education authority capacity-building** which was relevant to teachers or teaching. As with school leaders, most of these projects (STAGES-II, CBE MG, MGCubed!, SOMGEP, DP and ENGINE-II) focused on improving or extending the role of education authorities in monitoring and supporting quality teaching, typically by training education officials, for example in monitoring teacher performance and pedagogical techniques.

Box 3: Spotlight: aligning project activities with national monitoring structures

The MGCubed! project in Ghana was working with education authorities in the country to develop monitoring tools and train education officials in their use to align monitoring of the project with existing education structures. The monitoring system was introduced in a regional workshop, and local education authorities had started using some of the tools to monitor teaching quality in intervention schools. This was intended as an ongoing process in which education authorities would provide feedback and further training to increase alignment between project tools and the existing education monitoring system. In addition, video-based leadership training was also offered to education officials in the project districts for an average of one hour per week, covering topics such as protection, monitoring, gender-sensitive school environments, and continuous professional development practice. This was explicitly linked to improving teaching quality in schools through improved school management.

Four projects were also working with education authorities to develop teaching or learning resources: SOMGEP was working with the Ministry of Education to develop an accelerated secondary learning programme and teacher competency framework; EAGER was working with education authorities to develop 'the first approved basic literacy and numeracy curriculum for out-of-school adolescent girls'; EGEP-T was developing monitoring tools to enable education authorities to monitor school, teacher and student performance; and ENGINE-II was collaborating with education authorities to develop teacher handbooks and update the Family Life and HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) Education curriculum.

Eight projects indicated explicitly that they were providing **teaching and learning resources**. The nature of resources varied across projects: in addition to general curriculum and learning materials, this included laboratory and library kits (STAGES-II), establishing school libraries (CBE MG), a teacher handbook (ENGINE-II), a television and radio series (DP), and working with BBC Media Action to create a radio programme (EAGER). Four projects were also providing some form of digital content: providing digital devices for students and teachers to access learning materials (SOMGEP and DP), devices and storybook contents suitable for girls with disabilities (EGDUE), and the CELL-ED digital learning platform¹¹ (EGEP-T). One project (DP) was also intending to use the Cell-Ed platform to deliver good practice reminders, tips, and training materials directly to teachers, to complement the professional development activities.

Box 4: Spotlight: using technology to provide learning resources

The EGDUE project in Uganda partnered with Worldreader, an international NGO focused on provision of reading support, to provide project beneficiaries with 1,000 tablets containing different types of curriculum and extracurricular books and content. These were also adapted to ensure accessibility for children with disabilities, for example by enabling different text and image sizes and text-to-speech functionality.

Two projects were also providing **direct teaching inputs**: MGCubed!, in which the Accra-based 'Master Teachers' were delivering video lessons, and GATE, which was providing five specialist 'itinerant' teachers to visit schools and provide support for children with learning difficulties or disabilities. For GATE schools, female students currently undergoing teacher training (see [Section 4.1.2](#)) were also working in classrooms as learning assistants.

Just one project – EGEP-T – mentioned providing **stipends** to teachers (outside of standard salaries paid through the project), by providing dry food rations to teachers as part of drought response activities. However, a SOMGEP monitoring report indicates that a pilot Village Savings and Loan Association set up as part of the project chose to use the money for teacher incentives to subsidise the otherwise low salaries. Two projects were delivering interventions aimed to increase the pipeline of female teachers. This is discussed further in [Section 4.1.2](#) below.

As discussed above ([Figure 3](#)), external evaluations reported various barriers to girls' learning against the number of projects. Barriers were not analysed systematically by project evaluations, and so this should be considered indicative of key areas of need in the country in which IPs operate, rather than a systematic needs analysis relating to the specific project context.

All but two external evaluations identified shortages of female teachers as a barrier. This is discussed further in [Section 4.1.2](#) below.

Issues relating to **teaching quality and pedagogy** were cited as a barrier by half the evaluations, although as discussed above, are the most common intervention provided by projects.

Four projects – SOMGEP, EGDUE, GATE and EGEP-T – identified **low quality school leadership** as a barrier. All but one project included activities to improve aspects of school leadership relating to teaching. For those external evaluations identifying it as a barrier, this included explicitly aiming to strengthen the role of leadership in providing oversight, support, or performance monitoring to teachers (SOMGEP, GATE and EGEP-T), while EGDUE provided training to school leaders to monitor implementation of the intervention and provided ongoing continuous professional development (CPD) to teachers.

While only two projects – DP and EGEP-T – identified **inadequate teaching and learning materials** as a barrier, eight projects (including these two) were providing some kind of teaching or learning materials to teachers or students as part of their intervention.

Only one project – SOMGEP – identified a **lack of remedial or catch-up education** as a barrier. Interestingly, this was the only project which was *not* providing some form of accelerated or remedial learning programme as part of

¹¹ See: <https://www.cell-ed.com/>

their initial intervention plan, although the project stated an intention to work with national education authorities to develop and implement an 'accelerated secondary learning programme' focusing on numeracy, literacy, and life skills.

4.1.2 Recruitment of female teachers

Box 5: Female teachers in formal education systems

The **proportion of female teachers in formal education systems where the ten selected IPs work is negatively correlated to the level of education.**¹² For instance, in Ghana, while over 42% of teachers in primary education were female, only 23% of teachers in upper secondary education were female. In Sierra Leone, this proportion was even lower, with nearly 30% of female teachers in primary education, and 8% in upper secondary education. The specific reasons for a lower proportion of female teachers may vary across contexts, but as identified in external evaluation reports as well as wider evidence (UNESCO Bangkok, 2006), include the following:

- The **systemic exclusion of women from government recruitment and deployment** (including gender-exclusionary networks or nepotism);
- **Cycles of educational disadvantage perpetuating a shortage of sufficiently literate and numerate female candidates** for training, including lower numbers of girls completing secondary education; and
- **Traditional gender norms limiting women's access to work outside the home**, particularly for those who are married or have children. This may also be particularly the case in rural areas, with data from Sub-Saharan Africa showing a much larger share of female teachers in urban primary schools compared to rural ones.

As outlined in *Figure 3*, eight projects – all except MGCubed! and EGDUE – identified a **shortage of female teachers** as a barrier, while five projects (including MGCubed!) also identified a **shortage of qualified teachers** more generally.

Only two projects were undertaking interventions designed explicitly to increase the female teaching pipeline: STAGES-II (Afghanistan), which aimed to support 1,995 young women through a teaching apprenticeship programme or grants to attend Teacher Training Colleges; and GATE (Sierra Leone), which aimed to support 250 young women to undertake distance learning programmes with Teacher Training College, including a period spent as Learning Assistants in their own communities. However, some other projects were recruiting both male and female teachers to deliver their project interventions. This included one project, EAGER (Sierra Leone), which was explicitly hiring female mentors to deliver its life skills programme, in addition to either male or female literacy and numeracy facilitators.

In addition, some of these projects indicated that they were considering ways to transition teachers (including both male and female teachers) they recruited to deliver project activities into the mainstream system. CBE MG (Afghanistan), which employed teachers to deliver its Community-Based Education (CBE) indicated that some trained teachers may have been absorbed into the government school system following project completion. EGEP-T (Somalia), which employed coaches through teacher training colleges to train project teachers, noted that discussions were underway at the time of writing (November 2019) in relation to whether the coaches could stay in the system after the project closes. STAGES-II noted that teachers recruited to deliver its CBE programme would have a greater chance of being absorbed into the formal system given the alignment of TPD with the national teacher competency framework.¹³ Project representatives from EAGER – which recruited community volunteers to be trained as mentors and facilitators – also noted some staff were pursuing distance education and other opportunities - noting that the project had helped them '*realise their potential*' (Female, IP Representative, KII, Sierra Leone), and that they may have additional employment opportunities as a result (Male, IP Representative, KII, Sierra Leone). Given the stage that projects had reached at the time of this study, it is not possible to know whether the initiatives to support the transition of teachers into the mainstream system were successful.

Projects were not able to address some of the wider challenges faced by female teachers. Findings from the primary data indicated that female teachers were providing wider forms of learning support. CBE MG (Afghanistan) provided 'aunts' to accompany female students on their walk to and from the school and community-based female teachers provided home-based support during school closures where male teachers could not (Male, Headteacher, IDI, Afghanistan). Female EAGER mentors ensured 'Safe Spaces' for girls to learn life skills. However, some projects faced difficulties in recruiting female teachers, such as recruiting literate female volunteer teachers (Male, IP Representative, KII, Sierra Leone) or recruiting female teachers for the rural community-based schools (Female,

¹² Data sourced from UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). Retrieved from: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/>

¹³ At the time of writing, it is unclear the extent to which the plans for transition of teachers by STAGES-II and CBE MG will be affected by the takeover of the government by the Taliban in August 2021.

External Stakeholder, KII, Afghanistan), including as a result of specific security issues faced by females travelling between villages (Female, Headteacher, IDI, Afghanistan). One MGCubed! interviewee, meanwhile, reported specific difficulties with regard to the perceived commitment levels of female teachers as a result of domestic responsibilities, resulting in the project specifically aiming to increase the number of male facilitators. This indicates that projects may continue to face challenges and dilemmas relating to **wider structural barriers** to females working as teachers and specifically the risk of reinforcing particular gender norms:

'We also realise at a point that the challenges that female facilitators were facing because you know, women after school close they are willing to go somewhere else ... some have to go and do the cooking. So, the commitment level from the women were not all that there. So, we had to bring in the male facilitators for them to show more commitment.'

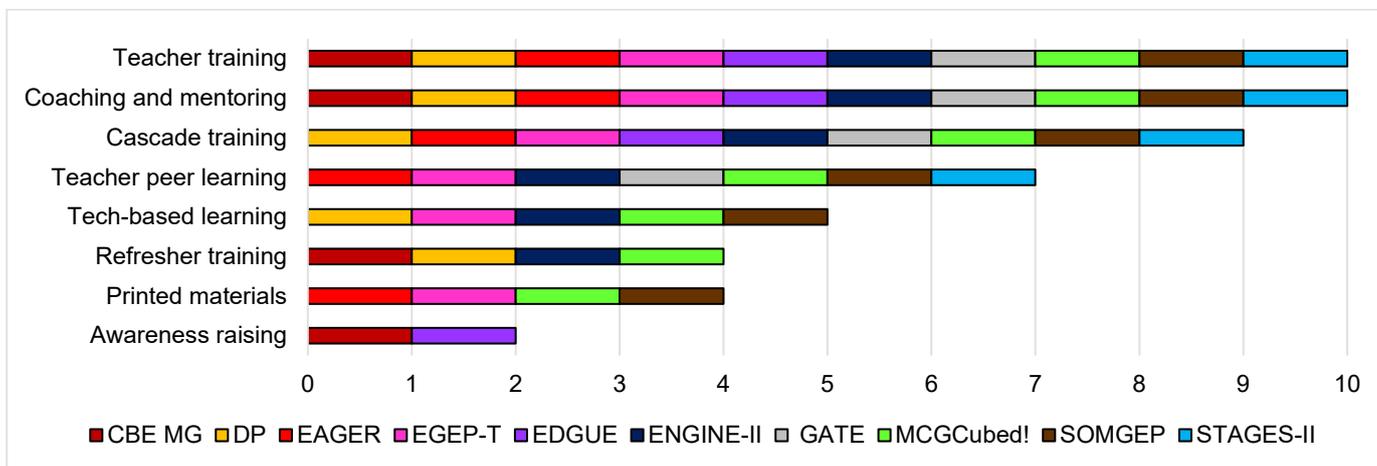
Male, IP Representative, KII, Ghana

These female para-educators, trainees, and teachers worked in some of the most challenging teaching and learning settings, including remote and rural settings under-served by government resources, with out-of-school populations, and in countries affected by current and historical conflict and civil war. Project monitoring reports highlighted the importance of wider community, family, and government support for young women training to become qualified teachers, with projects undertaking various outreach activities such as community engagement in recruiting local candidates and sharing child-caring responsibilities among family members while undertaking training or teaching roles.

4.2 What Specific Training and Resources do Implementing Partners Provide?

All of the ten GEC II projects sampled for this study provide teacher professional development (TPD) to improve the knowledge, skills, and competencies of this diverse teaching cadre. Direct training followed by mentoring and coaching are the most common forms of teacher professional development (Figure 5). Training and coaching are often implemented holistically within the project professional development design: one-off training sessions may be delivered first, to improve teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical subject knowledge; then complemented by follow-up classroom-based coaching and mentoring (or learning-space based in the case of EAGER and GATE) to provide opportunities for classroom-based practice and feedback on their professional practices.

Figure 5: What types of training and resources do Implementing Partners provide teachers?



Source: GEC II projects' external evaluation reports (midline; and baseline where no midline available); FM technical monitoring reports. Teacher training refers to training provided as a discrete training initiative, e.g., a regular in-person or remote training session. Cascade training refers to training models in which an individual is trained with the expectation that they will in turn train other individuals (e.g., colleagues).

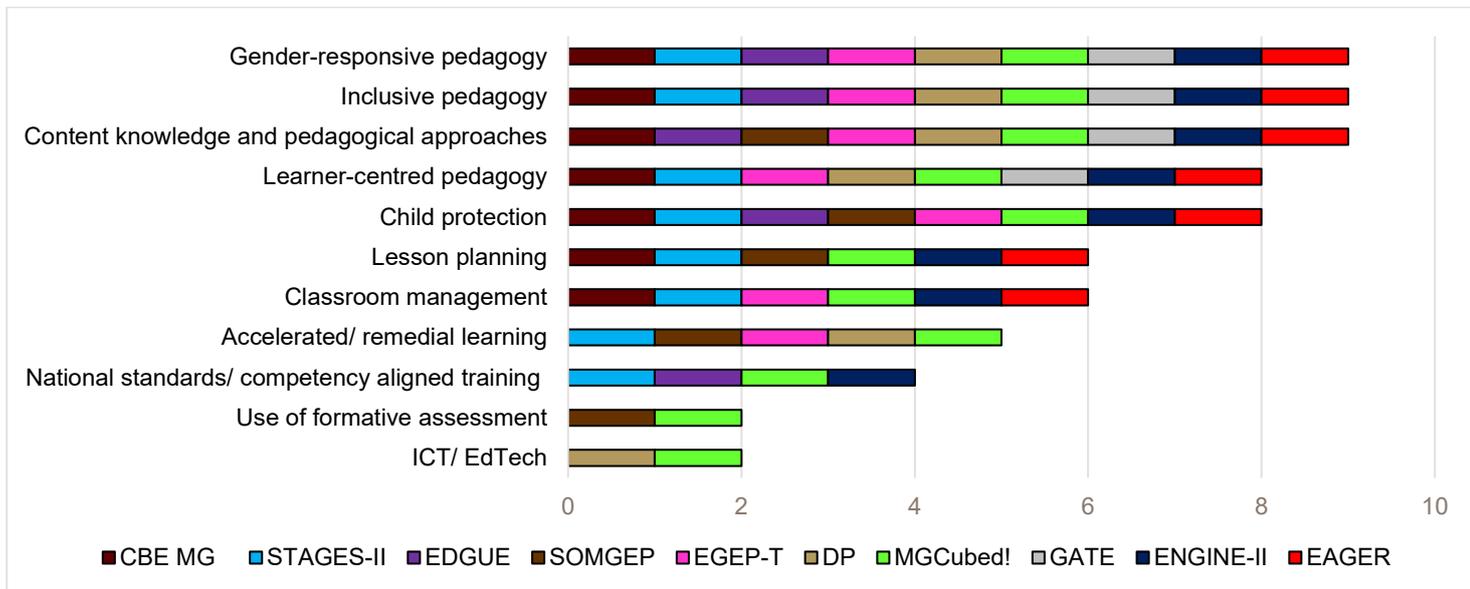
Note: The approaches here differ slightly from the approaches to TPD used by GEC I projects, as detailed in Section 2 (Figure 1). This may reflect the slightly different definitions of these approaches used by this study and the FM (for example, we combine all one-off teacher training approaches into a single category), and the selection of projects in this study which had a strong focus on teachers and teaching and available quantitative data.

The types of training and related interventions implementing partners offer are tailored to various contextual factors. These include the specific roles that the GEC II teachers are expected to perform within the scope of the project design; the learning setting or context in which they work, (e.g. Safe Spaces or alternative learning settings, or government and CBE classrooms); the target beneficiaries (e.g., out-of-school learners) they work with; and the wider

enabling environment in which the project operates. Factors such as political will, national policies or strategies, and relevant regulatory environments also shape intervention feasibility and delivery.

While information on the content of teacher professional development in monitoring and evaluation reports is limited, key areas across projects include a focus on teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, particularly around gender-responsive, learner-centred, and inclusive pedagogies, and content knowledge in specific subjects (Figure 6). As noted in Section 4.1.1 (see Figure 3), six IPs identified low teaching quality as a barrier to learning; five identified a **lack of gender-responsive teaching** environment; five identified a lack of inclusive teaching environment; and one a shortage of subject-specific teachers.

Figure 6: What content does teacher professional development cover?



Source: GEC II project external evaluation reports (midline; and baseline where no midline available); FM technical monitoring reports

Four GEC II projects reported measures to actively endeavour to make training and resources gender-responsive and accessible for their female teachers. Gender-responsive and accessible professional development implemented by projects that recruited and trained female teachers included:

- training and development offered within local communities, including distance learning materials and in-community training supported by a teacher training organisation for increased accessibility;¹⁴
- headteachers and training providers allowing trainees or teachers to bring their children to school if necessary, and to continue to study if they became pregnant;¹⁵
- engaging mentors or other support staff—such as experienced teachers, project staff, or other community leaders—to work with female trainees, female teachers, and female *shura* (council) or school committee members to build their confidence and to learn from their concerns or experiences;¹⁶
- supporting female trainees' access to teacher professional development and distance professional learning models (such as phone-based professional development or remote, community-based training through teacher training colleges);¹⁷
- male champions to lend 'status and support' for recruiting and training female teachers;¹⁸ and
- ensuring training days and timings did not clash with market days and other economic activities that could have impaired female attendance.¹⁹

As discussed in Section 2, evidence indicates that teacher professional development may be a promising method of improving teaching quality. We return to this in the conclusions and recommendations (Section 6).

¹⁴ GATE project in Sierra Leone

¹⁵ GATE-GEC_SL_WA.002_3 Scorecarding TL ToC Q9 monitoring report MLS May 2019

¹⁶ CBE_Midline EE Report_Lee_5 October 2020>; GATE_Sierra Leone LA Research Report 170517 FINAL

¹⁷ STAGES-II_Midline EE Report_Oct 2019; GATE_Sierra Leone_Midline EE Report>

¹⁸ GATE_Sierra Leone LA Research Report 170517 FINAL

¹⁹ MGCubed! Midline EE report

4.2.1 How adequate have these trainings and resources been?

The assumption that training and resources for teachers will improve teaching quality and therefore improve learner learning underpins the Theory of Change for GEC II project designs and interventions for improving the quality of teaching. As identified in the monitoring reports and external evaluation reports, strengths of teacher professional development included:

- **Improved pedagogies**, such as being more organised and designing a structured lesson plan, greater use of interactive teaching methods (i.e., group work, role play), engaging learners during class and paying attention to girls and boys equally;
- **Increased self-confidence in teaching**, particularly for para-educators (i.e., Learning Assistants/mentors), or community-based teachers, who may not necessarily have formal teaching qualifications or experience; and
- **Improved awareness on child protection and safeguarding**, including sensitisation to protect learners from corporal punishment.

Challenges with GEC II training and resources reported in project monitoring and evaluation reports—which drew on limited teacher perception data, and primarily evaluator assessments—included:

- **inadequate duration and frequency of training** to develop teacher subject and pedagogical knowledge, particularly noted in mathematics and numeracy training;
- **a lack of classroom-based support** for teachers to practice new skills, knowledge, or competencies, and to receive real-time expert feedback on their teaching practices;
- **problems with access**, particularly for remote teachers and female teachers who were required to attend centralised training but where distance, security concerns, or gender norms prevented full participation;
- **inappropriate modalities** for those who lacked reliable access to electricity, phones, or other resources for technology-based training; and
- an **over-reliance on 'cascade' models** for training at scale, that presumed teachers would pass on the benefits of direct training to their peers.

External evaluation and technical monitoring reports indicated that some Implementing Partners did not appear to be routinely assessing teachers' knowledge, skills, or competencies (including in literacy and numeracy) or linking these to evidence of girls' learning needs. This may hinder an evaluation of to what extent gaps in learning are the result of teachers' skill or knowledge gaps, rather than other factors. It also raises a risk of TPD content not reflecting teachers' actual learning needs.

External evaluation reports also suggested a need for greater Implementing Partner support and guidance on how to measure the impact of teacher professional development activities specifically on teaching quality and learner learning outcomes within the scope of the core GEC II outcomes. FM technical monitoring and external evaluation reports frequently recommended projects improve how they measured the quality of the training and resources they provided, and specifically the impact of training on teachers' subject and pedagogical content knowledge, teachers' practices, and learners' learning outcomes within the scope of the project.²⁰ Some IPs reported a desire to do so in their responses to FM monitoring and evaluation visits; however, limited practical advice seems to have been offered to IPs on how to achieve this.

4.2.2 To what extent were teachers provided with training to support them in delivering the GEC II project interventions between the baseline and midline external evaluations?

This section includes information on the six GEC-T projects for which baseline and midline data were available before Covid-19, to understand the extent to which teachers in project schools received training directly, or indirectly, as part of the GEC II.²¹ For consistency in reporting, the analysis is based on teacher surveys and classroom observations collected by the six projects' external evaluators.²²

²⁰ STAGES_Q9_School modalities_EFM_May'19_QAed, SOMGEP-T_Somalia_Midline EE Report_July 2019, EGEP-II_GEC technical monitoring report - EGEP cover sheet_SA HoA2.020a , DP2_Ghana WA.020_21 TL Girls club monitoring report MLS Nov 2019, DP2_Ghana WA.020_21 TL Girls club monitoring report MLS Nov 2019

²¹ Data available for STAGES-II, CBE MG, ENGINE-II, DP, EGEP-T and MGCubed! This analysis does not include the LNGB project (EAGER) as only baseline data was available at time of writing for this project.

²² We prioritised using classroom observations as the data source to answer this sub-question. However, wherever the classroom observation dataset did not include relevant information for this sub-question, the teacher survey data were used instead. Teachers who were observed and teachers who participated in the teacher survey are not always the same people across rounds. To ensure that results are comparable, we constructed a panel of schools to carry out the secondary data analysis for this question. EGDUE and SOMGEP were not included in the analysis because the data was not comparable between rounds or consistent (i.e. data on training was collected about headteachers).

Projects were all providing some form of training for teachers. For the five projects²³ which collected information about teacher training in classroom observations or teacher surveys, the proportion of teachers who received *any training or project training on any topic* increased across the projects from baseline to midline.²⁴ ENGINE-II increased the proportion of teachers trained by 56 percentage points, with an increase of 10 to 15 percentage points for the other four projects. Except for ENGINE-II, the majority of the projects began with a high proportion of trained teachers, with more than half of the teachers surveyed at baseline reporting having received already some form of training or project training. All of these five projects reported data on training in gender-responsive pedagogy specifically. Three reported data on literacy and numeracy, with two of these showing increases in proportion of teachers trained between baseline and midline.²⁵ While the majority of teachers in GEC II-supported schools were male, the data indicates that female and male teachers were equally prioritised in receiving this training.

External evaluations tended to collect data on training on gender-responsive pedagogy more than on training on literacy and numeracy. Whereas six projects reported data on the proportion of teachers trained on gender-responsive pedagogy, only half reported data on the proportion trained on literacy and numeracy. Due to the GEC II's emphasis on gender-responsive pedagogy, it is plausible that projects prioritised gender-responsive pedagogy trainings over literacy and numeracy training.

Indicators used to evaluate teachers' gender-responsive practices in the classroom did not generally capture the quality of teacher-learner interactions. The most frequent indicators of gender-responsive pedagogy found in external evaluation data were summative counts of teacher interactions with male and female learners.²⁶ Summative measures do not provide insights into teachers' behaviours —such as tone of voice, body language, or kinds of questions asked of male or female learners (e.g., open or closed questions, which indicate presumptions about learners' capabilities)—which are important indicators of transformative gender-responsiveness. Comparative counts of male and female interactions are also not applicable in all-female classrooms, which some GEC II settings are, particularly in community-based and alternative learning settings that accommodate the most marginalised learners such as out-of-school girls and girls from remote and rural communities, or extracurricular girls' clubs. Findings from the primary data collection, as further discussed in [Section 5](#), highlighted the importance of understanding teacher-learner interactions and the implementation of teacher training in the classroom environment.

4.2.3 What changes can we see in teaching practices from baseline to midline?

Teacher observations were an important component of the nine GEC-T longlisted projects' external evaluations, with teacher observation tools providing an insight into how the teaching practices of project-supported schools changed between baseline and midline evaluation points. To ensure that all projects were being compared on the same categories of teaching practices, all classroom observation tools (which were not standardised across the nine projects) were mapped to the World Bank Teach Tool categories. [Annex B](#) explains how the mapping was carried out and which categories were chosen for analysis. Expanded quantitative tables for all indicators below are provided in [Annex D](#).

As demonstrated below, there were positive changes on some indicators between baseline and midline, and mixed results or no change on other indicators.²⁷ It is important to note that these results below cannot be attributed to the projects given data limitations and therefore should not be understood as providing evidence of project impact (or lack of project impact). We have referenced project names in our analysis below for context purposes only.

- **There was a reduction in the proportion of teachers using corporal punishment at midline compared to baseline.** The decline was statistically significant in four of the five projects which reported data on this indicator. However, where no change was found, levels of corporal punishment were already extremely low – only 3% of teachers sampled at baseline.
- **There were decreased instances of teachers showing anger or hostility towards learners at midline compared to baseline,** from the four projects reported data on this indicator. In two projects, the decrease in proportion of teachers showing instances of anger and hostility was statistically significant (for EGEP-T, one of the two projects, this included two separate indicators). While there was no significant change observed in the data for the other two projects, one (ENGINE-II), reported very rare incidences of teachers scolding or

²³ We exclude DP from this comparison since this project asks different questions at baseline and midline.

²⁴ Some of the projects asked teachers if they have been trained during the project without specifying the source of the training, whereas some projects specifically asked the teachers if they have been trained by the GEC II project in their school during the project.

²⁵ Of the two projects that reported on both pedagogical domains, MGCubed! were found to have a lower proportion of teachers trained in literacy and numeracy at midline than on gender-responsive pedagogies, and EGEP-T, a higher proportion of teachers trained in literacy and numeracy than gender-responsive pedagogies. It was not possible to establish clear reasons for this difference in numbers based on the external evaluation data used for this analysis.

²⁶ Please note that this does not include EAGER, as aforementioned, the only data available at the time of writing was baseline data.

²⁷ We used an alpha level of .10 or lower for all statistical tests.

punishing students for incorrect answers at baseline and zero occurrences at midline. In the other project (SOMGEP) where no change was observed, approximately one of ten teachers used angry tone of voice or harsh language with students. This suggests that while no significant change was observed, these practices were likely not the norm.

- **There was a higher proportion of teachers using positive language with learners at midline compared to baseline.** There was a statistically significant increase in use of positive language in two of the four projects which reported data on this indicator. In these two projects, nine out of ten teachers were using positive language by midline. In the two projects where no significant change was detected (SOMGEP and EGEP-T), the proportion of teachers who use positive language was noted in around six and seven out of ten teachers, respectively.²⁸
- **Some projects saw improvements in practices related to responding to learners' needs in the classroom at midline and others showed no significant change or a decrease.** Five projects reported data across eight different sub-indicators. In two projects where there was no significant change in all or some indicators, the proportion of teachers responding to learners' needs were high by midline. SOMGEP, which saw improvements, achieved comparably high levels of teachers responding to learners' needs. There was no significant change for EGDUE, and a low proportion of teachers (four out of ten) used tactics such as pairing learners with different learning needs. EGEP-T, on the other hand, showed a statistically significant decrease in the proportion of teachers responding to learners' needs in two of the three indicators reported.
- **On the indicator of frequency of practices used by teachers in classrooms to determine learners' level of understanding, some projects reported improvements at midline and others showed no change or a decrease in frequency of practices to determine learners' level of understanding.** All nine GEC-T projects reported data on this indicator. While four projects showed a statistically significant increase, two projects showed a statistically significant decrease, and the other three showed no significant change. One of the projects that showed no change (CBE MG) could have been because almost all teachers (97%) were already using positive practices at baseline.
- **There was no evidence of improvement on indicators of reducing gender bias** (for example, teachers giving girls and boys equal time to respond to questions and asking questions of the same difficulty). Only one of the six projects for which data were available demonstrated a statistically significant positive change on an indicator of reducing gender bias over the year between baseline and midline (although they also showed a statistically significant negative change on another indicator). The other five projects showed no significant change. However, in two of the five projects, a high proportion of teachers were not exhibiting gender-biased practices at baseline (CBE MG and MGCubed!).

²⁸ In CBE MG, where no change was observed, the majority of teachers (nine out of ten) already address learners' needs by actively trying to involve students who are not participating in class. In GATE, which saw improvements in one indicator but no change in two others, the majority of the teachers (eight out of ten) demonstrated practices related to meeting the needs of their students in all three indicators by midline.

5 Teachers and Teaching in the GEC II in the Context of Covid-19

This section addresses the second overarching research question, namely:

How and to what extent have GEC II projects adapted and supported interventions related to teachers and teaching during Covid-19: (1) to enable girls to continue to learn at home during school closures, and/or to return to school following school closures; and (2) to support them in other learning spaces (e.g., community-based learning, training on remedial learning etc.)?

The following analysis focuses on the four short-listed GEC II projects (three GEC-T and one LNGB project) included in the primary data collection component of this study: Ghana's MGCubed!; EAGER in Sierra Leone; STAGES-II and CBE for Marginalised Girls (CBE MG), both in Afghanistan. The section provides a summary of the education systems and barriers to girls' education, as well as national-level responses to the pandemic in the three countries. These enable a contextualised understanding of the main components relating to teachers and teaching in the context of Covid-19 that we look at:

- Key Covid-19 challenges and barriers faced by Implementing Partners (IPs).
- Key new and adapted interventions implemented by IPs related to teachers and teaching, including teacher training, learner monitoring activities and adapted teaching/learning modalities.
- Key insights from classroom observations once schools/Safe Spaces reopened.

5.1 Educational Contexts in Afghanistan, Ghana and Sierra Leone

In all three countries, a sizeable proportion of children do not complete primary school. Girls are less likely to complete primary school than boys in Afghanistan, while the opposite is the case in Ghana and Sierra Leone. *In secondary school, the gender gap is very wide in Afghanistan, and completion is similar for boys and girls in Ghana and Sierra Leone (as seen in Table 3).* In addition, there is a wide gender gap in literacy rates in Afghanistan, which also has the lowest literacy rates across the three countries. Sierra Leone also has slightly lower literacy rates for girls than boys. In Ghana, the reported literacy rate is very high for both boys and girls.

Interviews with stakeholders (government representatives, community members) indicated that across all three countries, social and cultural factors – such as **high rates of early marriage, low value for girls' education and a high burden of domestic work** - are barriers to girls' education. Interviews also indicated that **critical challenges in terms of equity, teaching quality and a lack of resources** affect the quality of girls' education.

In Afghanistan, interview respondents identified **long distances to school** as another factor posing a challenge to girls' continued schooling – travel time could be between 4-8 hours which is seen as a deterrent especially due to safety and security concerns. Respondents suggested that community-based schools (such as CBE MG schools), often located close to girls, can reduce travel times and, therefore, can overcome a specific challenge to girls' education in the context.

Interviews highlighted that inadequate school infrastructure – particularly a **lack of sanitation and hygiene facilities** – also hinder girls' attendance in school. Respondents suggested that community-based schools may be better equipped than government schools in terms of classroom resources and infrastructure, as these are often provided by the IPs.

Education systems in Afghanistan and Sierra Leone have also been affected by **severe conflict**. The effects of the conflict in Sierra Leone were further exacerbated by the outbreak of the Ebola virus between 2014-2015. At the time of our data collection and analysis, the security situation in Afghanistan remained fluid given the increased political instability.

Table 3: School completion and literacy data (for primary and secondary)

	Afghanistan	Ghana	Sierra Leone
Completion rate - primary (total, %)	65.4 (2020)	74.9 (2020)	66.9 (2020)
Completion rate - primary (girls, %)	54.9 (2020)	78.1 (2020)	68.5 (2020)

	Afghanistan	Ghana	Sierra Leone
Completion rate - primary (boys, %)	77.0 (2020)	70.9 (2020)	64.3 (2020)
Completion rate - lower secondary (total, %)	50.4 (2020)	52.9 (2020)	44.6 (2020)
Completion rate - lower secondary (girls, %)	34.7 (2020)	55.2 (2020)	45.8 (2020)
Completion rate - lower secondary (boys, %)	61.3 (2020)	52.3 (2020)	45.7 (2020)
Completion rate - upper secondary (total, %)	28.6 (2020)	-*	15.7 (2020)
Completion rate - upper secondary (girls, %)	16.8 (2020)	-*	15.6 (2020)
Completion rate - upper secondary (boys, %)	37.3 (2020)	-*	19.7 (2020)
Literacy rate (15-24 years old) (%)	55.9 (2021)	92.5 (2018)	66.7 (2018)
Literacy rate (15-24 years old) (girls)	41.6 (2021)	92.2 (2018)	62.7 (2018)
Literacy rate (15-24 years old) (boys)	71.2 (2021)	92.8 (2018)	70.6 (2018)

* Data not available for indicators

Note: The IE team acknowledges that gender-related completion and literacy patterns intersect with multi-dimensional poverty and should be interpreted carefully.

Sources: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, World Bank database

5.2 Government and System-level Responses to the Pandemic

'The impact of Covid-19 is negative...It has a ripple effect, multiplicity. Because of the attention government gave to Covid-19 interventions and it's been cash-[s]trapped now, the educational sector is somehow suffering...The schools are suffering from attrition as teachers are leaving the classrooms, and most of the teachers that are managing in the classrooms are untrained and unqualified...Teachers are dying with stress, but with provision of Guidance Counsellors serving not only students but teachers, it can be of immense help for teachers to be able to give up their best performance in their teachings. And by not giving their best, the students will suffer the consequences.'

Female, Government Representative, KII, Sierra Leone

The first Covid-19 cases were reported between February 2020 (Afghanistan) and March 2020 (Ghana and Sierra Leone). In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, governments in all three countries closed schools in March 2020 for a period of time, ranging from four to ten months, as detailed in [Figure 7](#).

In addition to school closures, governments also introduced wider restrictions, such as **limits on the number of people in gatherings and on international or inter-district travel**.

During school closures, the education ministries in all three countries introduced **alternative education programming, making use of distance learning modalities via internet, radio, and television content**. In Ghana, the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service (GES), the government agency responsible for coordinating pre-tertiary education, broadcast television lessons through a dedicated Ghana Learning TV channel established for that purpose. The MGCubed! project was involved in producing television lessons in English, Maths, Science and Social Studies. During this time, some schools also provided remote learning opportunities of their own, with public schools primarily providing hard-copy materials and encouraging children to participate in government-led TV and radio programming, and private schools offering more individually tailored support for children through online classes or instant messaging (Innovations for Poverty Action, 2021).

The Ministry in Sierra Leone leveraged experiences from the Ebola crisis in response to the Covid-19 crisis, reactivating school safety guidelines initially developed during Ebola to keep schools safe, along with mobilising

teacher training, psychosocial support, hand washing and regular temperature checks. An Education Emergency Task Force was established by the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) and its Teaching Service Commission (TSC) to implement emergency education programming, including 44 hours of educational radio programming a week (including gender-sensitive messaging), online on-demand lessons, and a toll-free helpline to connect with a teacher (World Bank, 2021c). Education radio was previously used during the Ebola outbreak, during which time schools were closed for eight months, followed by the introduction of an accelerated curriculum and shortened academic years (Gutierrez Bernal & Wurie, 2021).

Governments' constraints to enable or provide greater access to technology (such as data, TV, or radio), raised equity and gender concerns about 'EdTech' solutions. A rapid survey conducted in Ghana in May 2020 found that 60% of respondents reported children were using their own schoolbooks, compared to fewer than 20% who were accessing Ghana Learning TV (although it is important to note that GLTV only launched in the same month) (UNICEF Ghana, 2021). In addition, some stakeholders (government representatives, community members) noted that TV and radio lessons did not reach all learners with a lack of access to TVs and radios - and signal problems - cited as major challenges. Similarly, in Sierra Leone the radio programmes were aimed specifically at girls to forestall high rates of pregnancy and encourage their return to school; however, **a lack of resources both at the government level and among large shares of the population limited the impact of these distance learning interventions.** Interviewees in Afghanistan also indicated concerns about national-level distance learning strategies that relied on 'EdTech', particularly for remote and underprivileged communities. Interviewees noted that although the Ministry had been providing television and online learning since the pandemic hit, **most of the population lacked access to television and/or the internet, or even electricity for extended periods, meaning that large numbers of learners were not being reached by these endeavours.**

In Afghanistan, other challenges were noted. Interviews also suggested that the national government adopted a **top-down approach in education service delivery** when the pandemic hit, with stakeholders at lower levels of the system suggesting that guidelines were announced and that these then had to be implemented by stakeholders without adequate consultation. **Home learning materials were reportedly not provided in Afghanistan due to the logistical difficulty of printing and delivering materials to schoolchildren** (Rabi, 2021). Where distance learning was not possible (for example, rural areas with low access to distance technologies), small-group learning was permitted until June 2020.

Figure 7: Dates of school closures and re-opening in Afghanistan, Ghana, and Sierra Leone



Source: Authors' correspondence with implementing partners and key stakeholders.

All countries closed schools in March 2020 due to Covid-19. As seen in *Figure 7*, schools reopened in a phased manner, with exam grades being prioritised. In Afghanistan, schools partially opened in August 2020, and all learners returned by October 2020. However, schools were closed for a second period of time in May 2021, due to a rise in Covid-19 cases. In Ghana, schools partially opened for exam grade learners in May 2020, and for all learners in January 2021. In Sierra Leone, schools partially opened in June 2020, and all learners returned in September 2020.

These school closures further reinforced the already limited progress in girls' education in three countries with historically low enrolment and low learning outcomes, particularly for adolescent girls and girls from the poorest households, **as girls were unable to access schools for most of 2020 and early 2021.**

Governments in all three countries began a phased reopening of schools from June-July 2020, with priority given to exam grades. In Afghanistan, government schools resumed in-person learning with Grades 11 and 12 and private schools reopened in-person learning for Grades 1-12. By October 2020, all government school grades had returned to in-person learning. In May 2021, a new period of school and university closures was enforced in Afghanistan in light of rising numbers of Covid-19 cases which is still in force at the time of writing (August 2021). Although vaccination rates are currently low, teachers in Afghanistan were prioritised for vaccines in March 2021 ahead of the new school year (ReliefWeb, 2021).

In Ghana, government policy encouraged normal grade promotion on reopening with remedial measures if needed, although **grade repetition increased markedly in practice** (Abreh et al, 2021).

Governments in Ghana and Sierra Leone introduced additional Covid-19 safety measures when schools reopened (ReliefWeb, 2021b). In Ghana, there were restrictions on class size, a reduced school day (by one hour), restrictions on sporting and religious activities at schools, and hygiene and safety protocols.

As discussed above, the national governments of Afghanistan, Ghana, and Sierra Leone all developed dedicated Covid-19 response plans for the education sector (*Table 4*).

Teachers were central to education sector recovery interventions in all three countries, with governments across the three countries prioritising teacher training, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) supplies and Covid-19 awareness, and the distribution of teaching and learning materials.

However, levels of government support, as well as other areas of prioritisation and resourcing, varied between countries, based on local and national needs and contexts. While the Afghanistan government prioritised teacher recruitment (particularly female volunteer teachers), Ghana prioritised curriculum development and Sierra Leone community outreach and psycho-social support.

Table 4: Government national Covid-19 Response Plans for the public education sector

Intervention	Afghanistan	Ghana	Sierra Leone
Teacher training	✓	✓	✓
WASH supplies/awareness-raising	✓	✓	✓
Distribution of teaching/learning materials	✓	✓	✓
Accelerated/remedial learning	✓	✓	
Guidelines/strategies for continued learning	✓	✓	
Teacher recruitment/deployment	✓		
Strategies to reopen schools 'safely'	✓	✓	
Community outreach programming		✓	✓
Psychosocial support			✓
Curriculum development		✓	

Source: Global Partnership for Education (2021)

The pandemic has exacerbated critical supply-side and demand-side barriers to girls' education in all three countries, as noted by key stakeholders (government representatives, community members) such as: a shortage of qualified teachers and/or female teachers; inadequate school infrastructure and resources; financial and budgetary constraints; security issues; deep-seated social, cultural and religious norms; long distances to school; domestic chores; early pregnancy and/or marriage; and family migration.

*'...some pregnant girls have not returned to school; some are in school but are discriminated against and so prefer to stay at home to sell for their parents. The parents encourage them to sell.'*²⁹

Female, Government Representative, KII, Sierra Leone

'Lack of proper awareness for families and the tradition of society and poverty, and early marriages and security problems are major factors [hindering girls' education].'

Male, Government Representative, KII, Afghanistan

²⁹ Please note that the government amended the policy on pregnant girls returning to school, with the long-standing ban overturned in March 2020. We do not discuss this policy change in depth in this report as the project selected for our study caters specifically to out-of-school girls.

More widely, the pandemic has increased existing challenges in all three countries, particularly related to household income and food insecurity. Rapid food assessments performed by CBE MG (Afghanistan) reported a negative impact of the pandemic on income, food consumption and availability of food (specifically among daily labourers). In Ghana, the pandemic has also increased risk of exploitation, and reduced families' abilities to access basic services. The closure of schools is also likely to have increased food insecurity among children, including reducing access to free school meals (UNICEF Ghana, 2021; Abreh et al 2021).

'Like we said, parents want their children to go to school but because of poverty, it is difficult for them to go but they allow the girl child to go to school.'

Male, Community Member, FGD, Ghana

Sierra Leone, in addition to these challenges, was still recovering from the outbreak of Ebola (which ended in 2016) and a period of high inflation and currency depreciation. In addition, the lockdowns in Sierra Leone coincided with the seasonal planting season, thereby impacting agricultural supply chains, and contributing to increased food prices. In Sierra Leone, a Quick Action Economic Response Program (QAERP) aimed to stabilise food and commodity prices and provide support to businesses and vulnerable families through cash transfers (NFP-Sierra Leone, 2021).

In Afghanistan, the pandemic increased security concerns. STAGES-II (Afghanistan) reported that the pandemic had increased insecurity in some areas, including attacks by Armed Opposition Groups (AOGs) on healthcare facilities and seizures of aid and medical supplies, increasing their influence in several areas.³⁰ At the time of writing, the security situation remains fluid as a result of the withdrawal of the international military presence and the takeover by the Taliban that will undoubtedly influence the sustainability of projects' progress in supporting girls' education in the country.

Box 6: How were efforts to continue girls' education implemented during Covid-19?

In all three countries, interviews with government stakeholders suggested there was a **strong political will by their governments to support girls' education**. The Ghana Education Service showed its commitment through the appointment of gender officers at the national level, sensitisation programmes and monitoring of education programmes at the community level, as well as other promotion activities of girls' education. In Sierra Leone, while government representatives had strong political will, a lack of resources still limited their ability to engage with a wider range of stakeholders (community leaders, teachers, school community groups, parents).

In Ghana, **district education authorities were identified as key players** in education delivery during Covid-19, and 'back to school' campaigns. District office staff were trained and deployed to communities to engage with parents, teachers, and communities about the need for children to return to school and to highlight the efforts the Government had made to ensure safe school environments to protect children from Covid-19.

In all three countries, **community leaders and community groups played a critical role**. In Ghana, Chiefs were noted to be highly respected and played an instrumental role in helping families during the crisis. Parent Teacher Associations enabled communities to engage in children's schooling and to resolve minor issues. In Sierra Leone, community 'Chiefs' and 'women leaders' ensured the continuation of girls' education through encouragement to girls and at times, provision of food and money. Respondents noted communities held their leaders in high regard. In one community, the Chiefs monitored attendance, schooling, and concentration on learning. Religious leaders and fathers were also noted to be important stakeholders for girls' education in Afghanistan during the Covid-19 period.

Specifically, in Sierra Leone, **donor support from NGOs and the World Bank** remained critical in supporting Government mitigation strategies for girls' education. Even so, one Government stakeholder suggested that engagement between larger NGOs and local implementing programmes could be enhanced to improve the efficacy of their interventions.

5.3 Key Covid-19 Challenges and Barriers Faced by Projects

This section outlines the challenges and barriers IPs faced at the onset of Covid-19, as reported in their medium-term response plans (MTRPs).

All GEC II IPs conducted a situational analysis in June 2020.³¹ In these plans, **IPs highlighted the economic risks of the pandemic, such as a loss of income-generating activities, increase in costs of basic goods, and costs associated with items such as sanitation goods**. As reported by MGCubed! (Ghana), around 30% of caregivers surveyed reported a loss of income. Two projects also cited food insecurity: EAGER (Sierra Leone) report that lack of

³⁰ STAGES-II Medium Term Response Plan (MTRP)

³¹ The evaluation team did not have access to the full datasets for these needs assessments and thus this section provides an overview of the results as reported by projects in their MTRPs. The precision of results and the availability of data for different response options (e.g., respondents who answered 'don't know') differs between projects. For this reason, where precise data are not available, we have used the same wording as reported in the project MTRPs (e.g., 'around 40%').

food was a key challenge for 70% of girls during the pandemic³² (and lack of money for 67% of girls)³³, while MGCubed! report that 20% of caregivers surveyed cited 'difficulty having food.' 23% of girls surveyed by EAGER reported increased time spent on income-generating activities during the pandemic.

Similarly, and possibly because of these economic changes, IPs noted a large proportion of girls reporting an increase in domestic duties, with consequences for time available for learning. STAGES-II (Afghanistan) reports that 26% of project girls surveyed reported an increase in chores or caring for sick family members (rising to a high of 58% in the province of Herat), although 68% still reported they had 'a lot' of time to study at home. EAGER report that 41% of project girls reported increased household chores and 23% increased childcare demands and/or income generating activities (compared to 40% who reported no change to their responsibilities). MGCubed! report that most girls surveyed reported spending on average 2-3 days a week studying.³⁴ While the country contexts discussed in the two evaluation studies are different, similar factors influencing girls' available time towards learning are reported in our Study on Access and Learning.

IPs also highlighted barriers arising from psychological wellbeing. STAGES-II report that their survey found a high prevalence of severe anxiety or depression (with 30% reporting this on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis), and 70% of girls with severe depression reported an increase since the pandemic began. EAGER report that 82% of girls surveyed reported an increase in stress or anxiety. MGCubed! report that, of the 64% of caregivers surveyed who had noticed a change in their child's mood, 81% reported that their child was 'less happy' since schools closed (with boys marginally more likely to be reported as 'less happy' than girls). MGCubed! also reported greater caregiver stress, with around 40% of caregivers reporting a 'greater level of stress' and almost the full sample reporting 'greater caring responsibilities' – 98% of caregivers reported that they would like further guidance on how to support their child's wellbeing.³⁵

All IPs identified increased gender-based violence as a key risk, though just one IP reported data. EAGER reported that their survey found that 19% of girls and 20% of female mentors reported increased violence against women and girls during the pandemic, rising to 38% of girls in one district (compared to 76% of both mentors and girls who reported no increase). Intimate partner violence was the most frequently reported type of gender-based violence reported by girls (8%) followed by child marriage (7%), sexual violence and harassment outside the home (5% respectively), and sexual abuse and exploitation by a person with authority (3%). EAGER also reported that the reduced organisational capacity to monitor activity in communities could have increased the risk of abuse by male facilitators.³⁶

IPs highlighted that a reduction in local social welfare and protection and health services resulting from the demands of the pandemic response could further threaten girls' wellbeing. EAGER report that 48% of girls surveyed reported challenges in accessing health services during the pandemic, mainly as a result of money or transport challenges (with 12% reporting closures of local health services, rising to 38% in one district). EAGER mentors reported some reluctance among community members to seek healthcare for fear of being diagnosed with Covid-19. MGCubed! noted in their response plan that difficulties faced by girls could be exacerbated by the loss of access to teachers as a trusted adult confidante, as almost a third of girls surveyed identified their class teacher as the person they preferred to approach with any concerns.³⁷

Box 6: GEC II teachers at the frontline of the Covid-19 response

During school closures, teachers provided direct logistical support for home-based learning, such as delivering and picking up assessments, and adapted teaching modalities. Teachers provided psychosocial and wellbeing support to girls, through referral information on community or social services, and monitoring checks to ensure learners were learning during closures and to mitigate the risk of drop-out. In addition, teachers disseminated Covid-19 safety information and supplies to families and communities. When schools re-opened, teachers also became responsible for implementing 'catch-up' and 'back-to-school' strategies and ongoing activities to monitor learner wellbeing.

GEC II teachers served as vital points of contact between education systems and learners. In Ghana, teachers were direct links between district government offices, learners, and caregivers, and helped support national-level distance learning strategies. For example, MGCubed! facilitators made regular phone calls and conducted home visits

³² The survey notes that the period overlaps with the rainy season, which is typically the period associated with food shortages in a non-pandemic year.

³³ At baseline, 43.1% of EAGER girls were categorised as impoverished, and 45.5% as food insecure.

³⁴ 'Children have also had to combine learning with other tasks at the household. Studying and domestic work were the most common ways children reported spending their time since schools closed, with most girls indicating that they spend an average of 2-3 days a week learning. This common trend does not apply to girls with disabilities who spend 4-5 days studying as reported to the Project.'

³⁵ 'MGCubed! remote monitoring findings – Caregiver survey'. May – August 2020. [Shared with study team.]

³⁶ "Reduced monitoring due to travel constraints will impact the project's capacity to oversee the situation in the community, also leading to an increased risk that male facilitators based in the community may abuse their power to exploit girls' vulnerability."

³⁷ "Almost one third of girls mentioned their class teacher as their preferred person to talk to when they have any concern, meaning that girls now have less access to teachers who had provided pastoral support and were their trusted confidants for reporting concerns."

during school closures, and project staff distributed TV sets and decoders. In Afghanistan, teachers both encouraged families to send their children to school (by going to learners' homes and by engaging with local community councils and religious leaders), and after they returned to school, in dealing with issues that may have caused them to drop out. **Teacher support and monitoring was particularly valuable among families and communities who lacked literacy skills.**

Teachers assumed these new and expanded responsibilities both formally, within the context of their roles as GEC II teachers, but also in many instances voluntarily, providing additional support on their own time and initiative, particularly within community-based programmes where teachers had strong local relationships with beneficiaries and their communities.

These roles and expectations put teachers under extreme pressure, on top of the existing challenges of serving some of the world's most marginalised girls. GEC II teachers work in difficult circumstances, often serving extremely remote or rural communities with a lack of government services and essential infrastructure such as basic education resources, public health, and electricity and phone network coverage.

The Covid-19 related challenges – mental health concerns, work-related burnout, increased home or economic pressures, concerns related to teachers' and their families' own health – **were compounded with the pressure to deliver Covid-19 information and resources on top of remedial learning.** Interviewees noted that the pandemic impacted teachers in Afghanistan who were themselves in 'quarantine'³⁸ whilst facing higher workloads at home and in terms of reaching their learners. During the pandemic, guidance counsellors in Sierra Leone who provided support to pupils were also required by the Ministry to support teachers.

Stakeholders noted that **the pandemic had serious negative consequences on the teaching cadre with challenges arising from teacher deployment, recruitment, and retention in all three countries.** Government stakeholders in Ghana noted more requests for transfers and redeployment due to Covid-19. Teacher recruitment was a critical challenge, as district staff noted that disruptions to regular teacher transfer processes led to shortages in most schools. Stakeholders at the national and district level noted that existing budgetary constraints prior to Covid-19 were exacerbated during the pandemic, impacting teachers and their teaching. **One stakeholder in Afghanistan noted that these issues were more pertinent in government schools than in GEC II projects,** and that CBE MG and STAGES-II community-based education (CBE) schools continued to be open for longer and provided remote phone-based learning and teacher support for learners. In addition, IPs generally continued teacher stipends during lockdowns, enabling continued teaching activities during Covid-19.

Moreover, the impacts of Covid-19 on teachers have been gendered – interviews with teachers, headteachers and IPs indicated that female teachers were more likely to have faced challenges related to their health, morale, domestic responsibilities, and families' constraints on mobility, while male teachers were more likely to have been financially affected. In Ghana, female teacher retention was observed to have been affected due to pregnancy and maternity leave contributing to female teacher shortages in classrooms.

As governments and Implementing Partners around the world move into a 'building back better' stage, the wider question is what these expanded expectations and pressures mean for the systems of education teachers serve, in terms of burnout, retention, recruitment, and professional needs.

5.4 IPs' Key New and Adapted Interventions Related to Teachers and Teaching During the Pandemic

'...although the schools were closed...we were continuing our lessons, [so that] the students do not [become] discourage[d] and dropout, and they do not forget what they learned, and they do not take distances with lessons and class[es]'

Male, IP Representative, KII, Afghanistan

Since the Covid-19 pandemic forced school closures and disrupted programming around the world, GEC II projects undertook what some IP staff likened to a wholesale transformation: no longer just educational development organisations, they assumed a humanitarian role, providing not only continued teaching and learning support, but also mental and physical health support and Covid-19 information at a time of unprecedented global crisis.

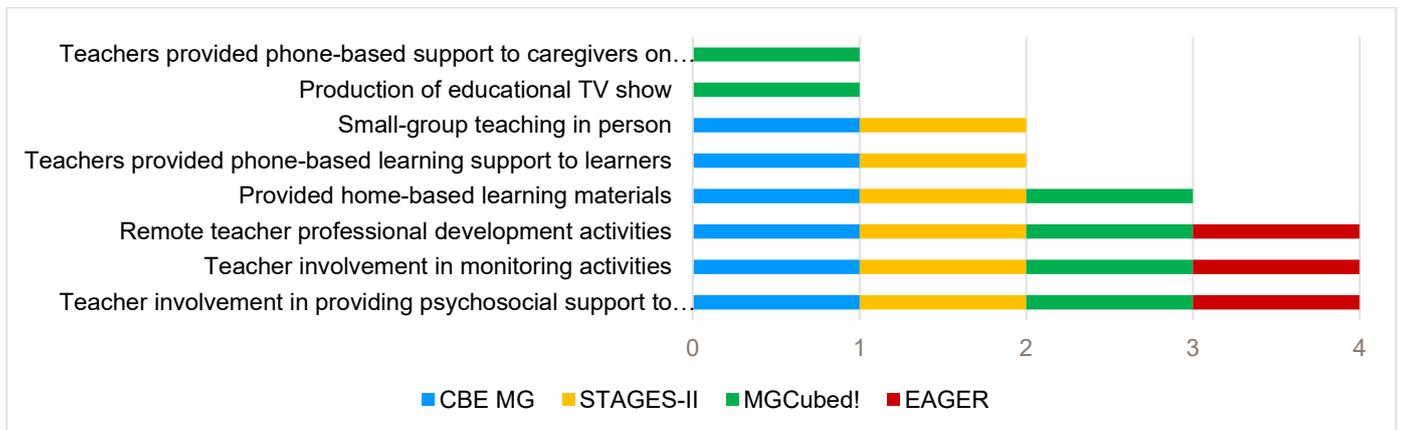
³⁸ The term 'quarantine' was used during interviews, however, does not necessarily refer to isolation due to being unwell with Covid-19. Rather, the term 'quarantine' seems to be used interchangeably with what some other countries termed 'lockdown'.

Implementing Partners have proven highly adaptive in response to the pandemic, capitalising on existing infrastructure, resources, and stakeholder relationships to provide rapid adaptations for continued learning opportunities and other forms of support for beneficiaries during school closures and since schools opened. The key barriers to, and drivers of, these new and adapted interventions can be found in [Table 6](#).

As discussed in [Section 5.35.3](#), projects reported a key barrier to girls' learning arising from the economic and social impact of Covid-19 lockdown measures, for example, increased domestic and income-generating duties resulting in lost learning time and a higher risk of drop-out. While we did not cover direct income-support measures (such as cash transfers³⁹) in this Study, teachers in all projects were also involved in mitigating these challenges to learning by supporting **monitoring activities** and (with the exception of EAGER, which had only been operational since January 2020) providing support for home learning. A second key barrier identified by projects related to girls' individual wellbeing, including psychosocial stress, reduced access to social services and risk of increased gender-based violence. As discussed below, all IPs sought to address these barriers by providing different forms of **psychosocial support to girls**, including training teachers on delivering Psychosocial First Aid (PFA) and safeguarding risks.

All four Implementing Partners introduced major adaptations to the format of their interventions related to teachers and teaching during school closures, primarily by moving towards remote or adapted learning models or pausing key activities (as seen in [Figure 8](#)).⁴⁰ [Table 5](#) provides a summary overview of the new and adapted interventions related to teachers and teaching across the four shortlisted projects. Drawing on existing project infrastructure to provide home-based education, STAGES-II and CBE MG invested in teacher training and resources to provide phone-based support and small-group sessions. MGCubed! supported the national distance learning initiative by collaborating with the Ministry of Education to produce Ghana Learning TV (GLTV) (including designing, scripting, recording, and editing lessons and making use of the MGCubed! studio). In addition, MGCubed! provided TVs and decoders to enable access, and encouraged learners to engage with GLTV. The EAGER project paused official learning activities in response to logistical difficulties in providing home-based learning for the out-of-school girls the project catered to, and the girls' low literacy levels and lack of access to digital platforms which hindered the use of individual learning modes. Providing home learning support faced further difficulties as learning spaces had only begun to open in January 2020, meaning girls had only been attending learning spaces for two months at the start of the pandemic. However, the primary data indicated that female EAGER mentors nonetheless provided informal learning support to beneficiaries while Safe Spaces were closed.⁴¹

Figure 8: New and adapted interventions during school closures



Sources: Project Medium Term Response Plans (MTRPs) and correspondence with IPs.

Since schools reopened, Implementing Partners have introduced key changes to the format and scheduling of learning activities to ensure a safe return to schools and Safe Spaces, though few changes have been made to the core teaching and learning interventions. Most changes were implemented to provide remedial or 'catch-up' lessons; accommodate reductions in group size to enable social distancing measures; and introduce other Covid-19 safety measures such as hand sanitisation and washing facilities. All projects also provided some psychosocial wellbeing activities for girls – an example being EAGER's newly introduced stress management practices.

³⁹ For example, MGCubed! provided cash transfers for children considered most at risk of not returning to school.

⁴⁰ Similar adaptations to remote learning were made by other IPs involved in the GEC II, as seen in our study on Access and Learning.

⁴¹ EAGER activities ceased when the school closures began, as a result of government restrictions and the closure of schools limiting access to school classrooms for literacy and numeracy sessions (and teachers who were sometimes acting as facilitators). EAGER noted that remote learning channels were not feasible given the low access of project girls to distance learning technologies. Government restrictions on inter-district travel hindered the movement of project staff to conduct checks, and the geographic dispersal of project girls and norms against allowing male facilitators to visit girls' homes meant that at-home education visits were considered unfeasible.

Continuing teacher training during the pandemic was a priority, with IPs providing adapted training modalities and content to reflect the changing education and well-being needs of learners in the wake of the pandemic. The main adaptation was to switch teacher professional development (TPD) modalities to distance or small-group settings, with STAGES-II, CBE MG, and MGCubed! all delivering either phone- or satellite-based training for teachers during school closures. IPs also prioritised adapting training content to reflect the expanded roles and responsibilities of GEC II teachers, including issues such as remote or adapted pedagogies, psychological first aid (PFA), and Covid-19 safety.

Table 5: Covid-19 adaptations to core teacher and teaching-related interventions

Project	Original intervention	New and adapted interventions during closures	New and adapted interventions after reopening
STAGES-II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of CBE in rural communities • Training and coaching for government and CBE teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher involvement in monitoring activities • Teacher involvement in providing psychosocial wellbeing support to girls • Shift to remote learning, inc. teacher phone support, small-group teaching, and paper-based home learning materials • Remote TPD activities, including small-group TPD activities and remote mentoring • Adapted TPD content, including remote learning support and socio-emotional learning • Provided teachers with phones and credit to engage in remote TPD and contact learners during closures • Provision of hygiene materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class programme resumed with adaptations to schedule, class length and group size • Extended project timeline to accommodate additional lessons
CBE MG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of CBE in rural communities • Training and coaching for government and CBE teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher involvement in monitoring activities • Teachers involved in providing psychosocial wellbeing support to girls • Move to remote learning, including teacher phone support, small-group teaching, and paper-based home learning materials • Remote TPD activities, including online/phone TPD • Adapted TPD content, including homes learning support • Provided teachers with phones and credit to engage in remote TPD and contact learners during closures • Provision of hygiene materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class programme resumed with adaptations to schedule, class length and group size
MGCubed!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of satellite-enabled live broadcast lessons to 72 schools, delivered by Master Teacher Trainers from central studio • Video-based extracurricular girls' and boys' clubs • Training and coaching for school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher involvement in monitoring activities • Teacher provision of phone-based support and guidance to caregivers on home learning • Project remote training for caregivers on supporting their children's home learning • Teacher involvement in providing psychosocial wellbeing support to children • Teachers involved in disseminating Covid-19 information in communities • Project led the national government distance learning initiative, Ghana Learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class programme resumed with adaptations to schedule, class length, group size and content (to enable remedial classes) • Repeated broadcasts of TV lessons produced during closures⁴² • Distributed home learning packs aligned to the national curriculum to support learning and as a back-up resource in case of further

⁴² The project reports that in spring 2021, the project has again been asked to provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service to produce a new distance learning programme for senior high school students preparing to take the West African Senior School Certificate (WASSCE) in the areas of social studies, mathematics, science and English language.

Project	Original intervention	New and adapted interventions during closures	New and adapted interventions after reopening
	teachers and lesson facilitators	TV (GLTV), in collaboration with Ministry of Education (420 episodes created) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of numeracy and literacy workbooks for home learning • MGCubed! girls encouraged to watch GLTV programming and use self-study materials • Provided TVs and decoders to support girls to engage with GLTV • Remote TPD activities, including remote mentoring • Adapted TPD content, including home learning support and PFA • Training for headteachers and education authorities to support staff and data sharing to monitor teacher and learner attendance • Provision of hygiene materials 	school closures (from early 2021)
EAGER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tailored learning programme for out-of-school girls hosted in Safe Spaces and school buildings • Training for mentors and facilitators to deliver the intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentors' involvement in monitoring activities • Mentors involved in disseminating Covid-19 information in communities • Education programme paused • Training for mentors on psychological first aid, Covid-19 safety and delivering the adapted curriculum • Provision of hygiene materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapted curriculum content to reflect the Covid-19 situation • Adapted learning programme timeline to allow catch-up and completion of course; smaller group teaching in Safe Spaces

Sources: Project Medium Term Response Plans (MTRPs), correspondence with IPs and primary interview data with key IP staff. Note: this table contains only those interventions related to teachers and teaching and does not include adaptations to other interventions (such as cash transfers or school management capacity building).

Box 7: How have IPs endeavoured to make their new and adapted interventions gender-responsive?

'...we asked them [girls] about learning what are we learned today? What medium did you use to learn and we realised that some of them were not? So, because of that, there was an intervention where we help them to have access to the lessons...we took data and those of them that we knew that they were not having television and then some were having televisions which were analogue but then the signals were digital. So, we had to quickly either add decoders to their TVs or give them TVs and decoders in total.'

Male, IP Representative, KII, Ghana

IPs conducted Rapid Gender and Needs Assessments early in the pandemic and gathered disaggregated data on educational and wellbeing needs of different groups of marginalised girls. These disaggregated datasets addressed not only beneficiaries' educational needs, but also intersectional wellbeing, health, and resource needs at home, to inform project interventions and adaptations during the pandemic. Data from the needs assessments performed by projects also indicated the importance of teachers in the Covid-19 response as a source of information and trusted adult for girls.

Projects used these monitoring data to inform differentiated and gender-responsive interventions to meet girls' learning needs during school closures.⁴³ Based on monitoring data that indicated low learner engagement with TV-based learning, MGCubed! provided TVs and decoders (for converting digital to analogue signals) to encourage girls to watch Ghana Learning TV lessons at home (Male, IP Representative, KII, Ghana).

When monitoring data gathered by the STAGES-II consortium indicated that younger learners were not effectively engaging with paper-based home learning because of low literacy levels and a lack of literacy support at home, the consortium shifted to provide small group teaching for this learner group.

⁴³ This analysis cannot answer if projects did more disaggregated research since Covid than before, owing to a lack of pre-Covid data.

The provision of paper-based learning materials for girls to use at home, particularly by STAGES-II and CBE MG, was another key gender-responsive adaptation, reflecting the reality that most GEC II learners did not have access to low-tech resources such as radios or TVs in the home (UNICEF, 2020). As discussed in our study on Access and Learning, low access to technology influenced learning loss following school closures.

Projects implemented holistic strategies that engaged learners' broader 'ecosystems', to support home learning and back-to-school activities, by engaging learners, families, communities, and *shuras* (councils) / school management committees through awareness campaigns, and community or family outreach activities that were often led by teachers.

IPs also pursued gender-responsive approaches to teacher training and support. For instance, CBE MG and STAGES-II provided phones and credit to teachers, particularly female teachers, to overcome the digital gender gap amongst female teachers.

Providing female teachers with mobile phones supported their engagement in professional learning, and ensured female learners continued to receive teacher support in settings where traditional gender and social norms, and safeguarding concerns, limited the support male teachers could offer to female learners outside the school setting. Female teachers played a unique role in providing phone- and home-based support to learners during lockdowns, as families' restrictions prevented girls from asking questions to or receiving direct support from male teachers, either over the phone or in person. As a CBE MG teacher said: *'for those [learners] whose families didn't let them to speak with male trainers, they [CBE MG] teachers themselves called to them and ask about their problem on each Thursday once in a week...In addition, we ourselves also called them and told them that find your problem in one week and ask them in the next week. The lessons continued like this during the quarantine.'* (Female, Community Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan)

Table 6: Barriers and drivers for new and adapted interventions throughout the pandemic

	Key drivers	Key barriers
Overall project implementation and adaptation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project flexibility and existing infrastructure which allowed IPs to pivot quickly to provide responsive interventions for girls and teachers 2. Caregivers who could protect children's time and supported them to learn from home 3. Strong relationships with community or local stakeholders and key gatekeepers and partners in local communities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Constraints imposed by remote and rural locations on key activities and adaptations such as remote teacher professional learning and home-based learning 2. Cultural and social norms that influenced attitudes towards girls' education 3. Lack of resources and essential infrastructure, such as electricity, internet, TVs, radios and basic learning materials; security threats (particularly in Afghanistan) 4. Covid-19 related restrictions limiting movement (affecting various in-person activities such as teaching, TPD and coaching, and programme quality monitoring) and learners' access to services 5. Gender norms limiting the freedom of movement for female teachers and learners 6. Poverty and access to appropriate school or learning facilities (such as Safe Spaces)
Recruitment and retention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continued provision of salaries and/or stipends to teaching staff 2. Meaningful community outreach to key stakeholder and 'gatekeepers' regarding 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers pursuing higher salaries or new opportunities elsewhere, often as a result of being upskilled through project training 2. Inflexible or inconducive working conditions or locations for female teachers

	Key drivers	Key barriers
	recruitment of female volunteers or teachers	
Teachers' contact with learners during school closures	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An adequate supply of suitably-trained teachers to provided informal and formal support to learners to continue with their learning; in particular, an adequate supply of female teachers who could provide home-based and adapted learning for girls 2. The provision of key technological resources such as televisions, decoders, phones, and credit to facilitate phone-based learning support 3. The provision of paper-based teaching and learning resources for no-tech self-directed learning 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learners lacking sufficient literacy to engage in self-directed home-based learning materials; learners lacking support from caregivers and/or siblings who also had low literacy and numeracy 2. Limited access to technology and essential services in rural or remote settings, including lack of access to televisions, radios, electricity, and poor network coverage 3. Restrictions on movement and long distances impeding in-person contact 4. Gender-based domestic responsibilities limiting the time available for female learners and female teachers to engage in teaching and learning activities 5. Gender norms preventing male teachers from engaging fully in providing home-based support for female learners, including either home- or phone-based support 6. Poverty and financial constraints limiting learners' access to basic learning materials at home and teachers' abilities to supply these where needed

5.5 Provision of Adapted Teaching and Learning Activities During School Closures

'Yes, the teachers worked a lot. We worked hard to study our lessons too. If we had any problem, they solved our problems. When the schools re-opened, we didn't have any problem.'

Female, Learner, FGD, Afghanistan

When schools closed during Covid-19, teachers from all four projects engaged in various forms of remote or adapted learning opportunities for girls through teacher-guided distance learning and/or by supporting learners with home-based self-learning.⁴⁴

Teacher-guided distance learning included home visits and phone-based learning (either through messaging platforms such as WhatsApp or phone calls). Home visits, while less common due to Covid-19 restrictions, provided a means for teachers to maintain in-person contact with learners. While EAGER had officially ceased learning sessions, female mentors' visits to beneficiaries (primarily for monitoring purposes) included 'revising' with learners to ensure knowledge retention when learners returned to Safe Spaces/Learning Centres. This additionally enabled mentors to reassure learners that Safe Space/Learning Centre closures were temporary, thereby mitigating risks of not returning when Safe Spaces/Learning Centres reopened. In Afghanistan, CBE MG community-based teachers taught learners through small, in-person classes at 'clinics' or learners' homes, which catered to learners in low-tech settings. Teachers would spread out the number of learners they called to class on the same day, with sessions lasting between 2-2½ hours.

Interviews with girls and teachers also indicated a few instances of girls visiting teachers in their own homes during school closures to receive additional teaching and help with their learning. As one female learner indicated, this was not always with family members' knowledge, suggesting potential concerns for girls' safety, or limited encouragement for home-based learning:

'Whenever my father was not at home I was going to teacher's home and that was so helpful for us.'

Female, Learner, FGD, Afghanistan

Teachers providing phone-based learning used calls primarily to answer learners' questions on paper-based or other home-based resources, rather than providing content-based instruction. STAGES-II, CBE MG and MGCubed! learners were encouraged to call teachers using the 'missed call' strategy, where teachers would not answer but would subsequently call them back, thereby covering call fees through credit provided by the IP. Teachers

⁴⁴ This analysis makes use of UNICEF's home-learning modalities matrix, which classifies high through to no-tech learning modalities into self-learning led by learners, and teacher-guided learning facilitated by teachers. Please see UNICEF Guidance on Distance Learning, p.4.

also contacted learners' families, when unable to call learners directly, and used these phone calls to follow-up – for instance, MGCubed! teachers followed up about content delivered through Ghana Learning TV. Learners were encouraged to prepare questions about their Ghana Learning TV lessons—which were developed with the support of Master Teacher Trainers from MGCubed!—so that teachers could provide structured feedback and instruction. **This two-way model overcame a major challenge in home-based learning, which was the lack of teacher-led guidance and risk of learners losing motivation or momentum when they encountered challenges.** However, it is important to note that barriers related to accessing technology impacted teachers, as well as learners. Teachers in Afghanistan and Ghana reported that a key challenge in disseminating remote instruction was poor network coverage.

In all three countries, safeguarding concerns regarding interactions between female learners and male teachers outside of a formal classroom or Safe Space settings were a barrier to male teachers providing home-based and even phone-based support. Safeguarding protocols prevented EAGER male facilitators, for instance, from visiting beneficiaries at home, with female mentors assuming responsibility for providing Covid-19 information and learning or wellbeing support during home visits. Several MGCubed! facilitators indicated that community members and parents feared male teachers would sexually abuse female learners if they provided in-person support outside the classroom setting. As one MGCubed! teacher explained:

'But people have wrong impression in the society, because some of the girls sometimes you hear that unfortunately they get pregnant and that is not advisable. They fall victims to teachers or to town boys so when you go like that people will be like you want to take advantage.'

Male, Teacher, IDI, Ghana

Even when adapted learning required learner-led activities, teachers were nonetheless instrumental in supporting home-based self-learning. Teachers bridged the gap between national TV learning strategies and learners' engagement in Afghanistan and Ghana. Given the synergy between Ghana Learning TV and MGCubed!, MGCubed! staff distributed TVs to girls who did not have access to TVs at all, and decoders to girls who did not have access to the Ghana Learning TV channel. In Afghanistan, STAGES-II teachers informed learners or their families about the various classes being displayed on TV channels, for instance, by distributing a scheduling timetable and encouraging them to follow the lessons if they were able to.

In rural or remote areas where low network coverage and low access to technology impeded the dissemination and uptake of remote learning, IPs catered to these learners by providing paper-based materials. For instance, MGCubed! produced and distributed paper-based 'home learning' packs in early 2021, based on their June 2020 needs assessment. MGCubed! also provided answer booklets and guides for caregivers (*Box 8*), along with the 'home learning' packs, as a resource in case of future school closures. Surveyed children preferred textbooks as a learning resource compared with caregiver support, sibling support, TV lessons and teachers.⁴⁵ However, teachers in both Afghanistan and Ghana faced a challenge in ensuring the equitable distribution of materials due to a lack of resources such as textbooks/assignments. While EAGER did not provide 'learning' materials, mentors distributed Covid-19 related information within communities and provided information and support to girls through home visits.

Even with the provision of home-based materials, beneficiaries were unlikely to progress with their learning when they lacked avenues for feedback and scaffolding from teachers, caregivers, or siblings. As a female learner in Afghanistan replied, when asked what, if anything, prevented her from engaging in homework or learning activities at home:

'In the name of God, the lack of guidance prevented us from studying the lessons so that we could not read our lessons well, and when I called the teacher, our mobile card ran out and these were the obstacles.'

Female, Learner, FGD, Afghanistan

Box 8: How did IPs extend support beyond teachers to enable continued learning during the pandemic?

As identified above (and also noted in our report on Access and Learning), learners struggled to engage with their studies at home without an avenue for support or feedback. This barrier was compounded by low literacy levels of caregivers, as it meant that if learners could not contact their teachers, they also did not have scaffolding from members within their home.

A means to overcome this barrier was **IP support to government stakeholders and caregivers during the pandemic.** MGCubed! extended training to caregivers on how to support learning at home through online community

⁴⁵ Correspondence with IP

training during school closures.⁴⁶ The training was broadcast into classrooms using MGCubed!'s satellite-enabled live feed technology, with caregivers gathering in classrooms to watch.

Two training sessions were delivered, focusing on 'Promoting Learning at Home and Gender Equity' (including discussion of parents' role in supporting home learning and strategies for equal opportunity in home learning and gender equity at household level) and 'Positive Parenting'.

In addition to the training sessions, MGCubed! Master Teacher Trainers (MTTs) and project facilitators provided phone-based support to caregivers. This involved using a scripted conversation guide to provide guidance on supporting their children's' home learning. MTTs and facilitators were assigned a group of children and their caregivers to call on a regular (at least fortnightly) basis.

The IP reports from their internal survey that after attending training, 95% of **caregivers said they felt either a bit or much more confident to support their child to learn at home as a result of the training and were more likely to have helped their child with their learning in the last week**; 84% of caregivers who had received some form of guidance on home learning said they had helped their child in the last seven days, compared to 65% of those who had not received training

When learners were unable to receive support through teachers or literate members in their home, some learners engaged in informal learning sessions through community networks. As one learner from STAGES-II stated:

'I was not contacting teachers but I was in contact with literate girls of our village as I was going their home for studying.'

Female, Learner, FGD, Afghanistan

Among the learners and teachers who expressed an opinion on home-based versus school-based teaching and learning, most preferred in-person learning compared to remote or adapted learning (across all four projects). Learners noted that instruction over the phone impeded home-based learning, as factors such as poor network coverage hindered their understanding of content.

As one learner said: *'So the teachers gave activities, and we studied and read them at home. We continued learning. But it wasn't as good as now that the schools re-opened'* (Female, Learner, FGD, Afghanistan). One teacher, also from Afghanistan, shared her perspective of the challenges associated with home-learning:

'The distance learning course is like that if you ask them a question how do you know they learned something or they [are] answering from the book, because the students are not in front of you, it's not effective like that, in my opinion in person learning is better, you understand the students better, and know their problems, [my] experience say[s] that in person learning is very good.'

Female, Government Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan

Despite challenges associated with remote or adapted learning during school closures, beneficiaries from all four projects who were able to continue learning during school closures reported positive feedback, citing that continuation of learning activities was better than 'nothing at all'. One learner commented:

'It was very helpful for us in our lessons, because if the teachers did not help us, did not call us and did not remind us [of] the lessons, maybe we were indifferent to the lessons and forgot everything.'

Female, Learner, FGD, Afghanistan

Continued education during school closures helped in the retention of school lessons, as stated by one learner:

'It helps me to remember or keep whatever I have been taught at school in mind so that I don't want to be found wanting [lacking] when asked'

Female, Learner, FGD, Ghana

A small number of girls preferred home-based teaching to being in school, citing better provision of learning resources and comfort at home. These interview responses were corroborated by classroom observations conducted as part of this study, wherein supply-side constraints such as inadequate textbooks, good quality chairs and tables and even a lack of windows or heating exacerbated girls' barriers to quality learning. **This suggests that a lack of classroom-based resources can impede girls' full engagement with their learning.**

⁴⁶ Information provided via correspondence with IP.

Box 9: What do IP needs assessments tell us about remote or adapted teaching during school closures?

As highlighted above, all GEC II projects conducted a situational analysis in June 2020 to gauge learners' educational and well-being needs posed by the pandemic. Two key findings from these analyses shed light on the challenges of providing remote or adapted teaching and learning during school closures.

All four IPs highlighted challenges with learners' access to remote learning technologies such as internet, telephones, radio, and televisions:

While 80% of MGCubed! girls and 82% of surveyed boys were aware of the GLTV lessons, only 34% of these girls (and 27% of boys) had watched them. Three quarters of children who watched GLTV said they felt they were progressing with their learning compared with 33% who had not watched it, and all of the 81 children who had watched a lesson could name at least one thing they had learnt). There were also differences in access to resources depending on the gender of the caregiver respondent, with 69% of male caregivers owning a television compared to 58% of female caregivers, and 65% / 56% respectively owning a radio. The most common barriers cited were lack of access to a TV (34% of boys and 60% of girls) and lack of access to the channel (37% of boys and 28% of girls).

While 98% of girls surveyed by STAGES-II were using 'materials provided by the project', far fewer were using television (10%) or radio (7%).

Among EAGER learners, 20% had access to a phone (down to 3% in some districts) and 7% to social media, while radio access was found to be limited in research by BBC Media Action; as a result, the project was not focusing on technological solutions for continuing remote activities during Safe Space closures.

Similar access issues were also reported by CBE MG (data not reported).

MGCubed! also highlighted a lack of caregiver knowledge to support children with home learning as a barrier. Caregivers were an important source of learning support: 78% of (male and female) caregivers reported helping their child with learning over the week prior to the survey, a quarter of caregivers had watched a lesson with their child, and four-fifths took steps to support their child's learning, most commonly by 'encouraging them to read'. The MGCubed! survey found that teachers were the main source of home learning support for caregivers, with 56% of caregivers reporting that they had received guidance from teachers on home learning. The project reported that, based on later monitoring data, 65% of caregivers reported having received guidance on home learning between November 2020 and March 2021 and 69% of caregivers surveyed reported attending MGCubed! trainings between Nov 2020 and June 2021.⁴⁷ Of those who attended trainings, 95% said they felt a bit more confident or much more confident to help their child with their learning at home as a result of the training.

5.6 Well-being and Monitoring Activities During School Closures

The pandemic negatively affected learner morale and was a major factor affecting learners' education and aspirations.

The global response to the pandemic saw widespread debates about remedial and accelerated learning provision. Efforts to measure learning loss and debates about how to help learners 'catch up' with their learning dominated national agendas and crisis responses across all levels of the system.

A foundational but often under-emphasised component of any 'catch-up' strategy is the need to address learners' wellbeing first and foremost. Particularly for children for whom the disruptions and difficulties of the pandemic were compounded or even overshadowed by conflict, violence, and the threat of death, providing adequate and timely mental health and wellbeing support are an urgent precondition for any further development and learning.

All four GEC II Implementing Partners identified girls' social and emotional wellbeing as a priority during the pandemic, often using Rapid Needs Assessment or other Covid-19 related monitoring data to highlight challenges in this area.

Implementing Partners responded by **introducing adapted teacher training and resources on social and emotional wellbeing, such as training on psychological first aid and information or resources to refer beneficiaries to appropriate, local social services.** CBE MG provided 'advocacy' training for teachers to help them solve learners' educational and social problems. MGCubed! provided training on psychological first aid, stress management, and wellbeing for MGCubed! facilitators and classroom teachers, through face-to-face training (facilitators) and through district educational officials (classroom teachers), followed by reminders and refreshers on

⁴⁷ Reported by IP in correspondence with us.

'socio-emotional learning strategies and techniques'; while EAGER mentors/facilitators were trained in 'psychological first aid.'⁴⁸

GEC II teachers were often tasked with providing this adapted or additional social and emotional support for beneficiaries. For instance, the STAGES-II consortium highlighted the role of teachers in providing social and emotional support, based on monitoring data:

*'[STAGES-II consortium] partners will specifically reinforce with teachers the need to check on students' wellbeing and not only to provide academic support, as the [Rapid Gender Assessment] results show that this is not happening in the majority of the communities.'*⁴⁹

STAGES-II MTRP, 2020

Formal monitoring activities conducted by teachers were central to IPs' approaches to keeping in touch with learners during school closures and gathering feedback on their overall experiences and specific challenges throughout the pandemic. Formal monitoring of learners' experiences and mitigation of drop-out risks occurred primarily through phone-based contact between teachers and beneficiaries, though home-based visits were more common in Sierra Leone.

Box 10: Providing psychosocial support for out-of-school girls during Safe Space closures

The EAGER consortium, which began activities in January 2020, officially paused all in-person EAGER learning activities during the Safe Space closures due to logistical difficulties in providing remote or home-based learning.

However, female EAGER mentors often assumed an informal support role, providing home-based learning and social and emotional support for learners during Safe Space closures.

Interviews with key implementing and consortium partner staff, as well as mentors and facilitators, indicated that the EAGER community-based model—where mentors and facilitators were recruited locally and were often embedded in the same villages or communities as beneficiaries—encouraged this informal, relationships-based support. When asked if EAGER facilitators and mentors were involved in monitoring and mitigating the risks of girls dropping out during Safe Space closures, one IP key informant stated:

'No, not really, to be honest with you. But... they are all living in the same community and these girls are now attached to them and they have confidence in them. So those who had problems took their problems to them even when sessions were not in progress... Like we were able to take care of somebody who was pregnant, and she was suffering from epilepsy... because the mentor was in the community and she knew about her condition, we were told about her condition too... The mentors are very supportive.'

Female, IP Representative, KII, Sierra Leone

Mentors were also central in maintaining beneficiaries' motivation and morale during Safe Space closures, sometimes travelling long distances to inform girls about the plans for the EAGER programme to resume after the closures. A June 2020 survey of girls found that 94% of girls (and 97% of mentors) had received information on changes to the EAGER programme since the pandemic, and 94% of girls (and all but one of the 299 mentors) had received information from the project on Covid-19 and how to 'stay safe.'

EAGER also set out an intention to develop resources for mentors to provide psychological first aid to girls and act as a 'Safe Person'. A survey of mentors in June 2020 found that all but 2 of 299 mentors reported having been trained in how to support a girl who experienced violence and 97% indicated that they felt comfortable to support a girl using this approach – 66% reported that they had been provided with a directory of services. The project reported that 92% of girls had received information on where they could go if they experienced violence.

After reopening, **EAGER sessions also introduced stress management practices in each session,** led by mentors or via recordings provided by the project.

Teachers also reported conducting informal monitoring within their communities, particularly among community-based projects where GEC II teachers were recruited locally (rather than through government schools), such as CBE MG and STAGES-II in Afghanistan. This enabled the teachers to keep in touch with girls and encourage them to continue engaging with their learning and to return to schools or Safe Spaces once these reopened. Teachers from these communities often had strong personal relationships not only with beneficiaries but also their families, community stakeholders such as school management committees or *shuras* (councils), and other

⁴⁸ Project Medium Term Response Plans (MTRPs)

⁴⁹ STAGES-II Medium Term Response Workplan Adaptations Table, 2020

'gatekeepers'. When asked about what she did to monitor girls and encourage them to return to school, for instance, one female teacher highlighted the importance of these community bonds:

'There is rural life. We are living close together. We met closely and were speaking with their mother and sister and encouraged them to school and education and talk [to] them about the advantage of school. That was our encouragement to bring them to school through consultation.'

Female, Government Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan

Teachers reported discussing a mix of well-being and monitoring issues during their points of contact with beneficiaries, such as **sustaining learner motivation and sharing information about school reopening, Covid-19 information, and safeguarding awareness and support**. Only 21 teachers (of 137 interviewed) – all from MGCubed!, STAGES-II, or CBE MG – reported not conducting any monitoring or mitigation, primarily because they either were not instructed to by the school or IP, or because they lived or moved out of the district since the pandemic. In general, CBE teachers reported being more involved than government teachers with monitoring and mitigation activities and received more training and resources from IPs to do so (although our research sample is small).

As discussed during interviews with community members, IP representatives and government representatives, **the pandemic had a negative impact on learner morale** and their educational aspirations, causing many children, particularly **the most vulnerable and marginalised girls to drop out of school**.

Stakeholders in Afghanistan reported that **by reducing the economic and financial burdens that families faced during the pandemic** – such as providing learning materials and Covid-19 health equipment – **IPs supported both educational and health-related needs of learners, thereby improving learner morale**.

Interviews with beneficiaries suggest both formal and informal monitoring and well-being visits played an important role in maintaining learners' motivation and ongoing engagement with their learning. As one female learner said of her experience during Safe Space closures:

'I felt really happy and [my mentor] encouraged us that we should continue studying what they taught us when the Safe Space was open. Every night, I try to read and think about everything they have taught us at the Safe Space.'

Female, Learner, FGD, Sierra Leone

Teacher contact with learners, having been identified as an important means of support for learners during school closures, was an important factor in learner retention and mitigating drop out. One female learner each from MGCubed! and EAGER who did not return to school /their Safe Space said they would have liked their teachers and mentors to contact them during school closures to encourage them to return to school. As one learner who did not return to the EAGER project once Safe Spaces reopened said of her desire for more support from EAGER mentors and facilitators to return to the EAGER programme:

'Yes Sir, they should have given me more courage. But still I don't blame them as I told them that I am doing business.'

Female, Non-Returner, IDI, Sierra Leone

However, teacher encouragement does not overcome specific drivers of learner drop-out, such as distances from home, family or household responsibilities and safeguarding concerns. For instance, as one non-returner stated:

'Well, the facilitators visited me and pleaded that I should be attending, that there is a benefit coming. But it is not easy for me, the distance is far, and I also have a child. So, it is not easy for me to come, that is why I could not come, but he has been talking to me to come.'

Female, Non-Returner, FGD, Sierra Leone

Teacher wellbeing appeared to be comparatively overlooked in IP responses and resourcing, with only one IP reporting dedicated support for teachers' wellbeing needs through MGCubed!⁵⁰ MGCubed! also set out an intention to support teachers' own psychological wellbeing.⁵¹ The MGCubed! MTRP reported that the IP was *'also looking at a mixture of approaches to support teacher wellbeing and resilience, including through Psychological First Aid and socio-emotional support. The Project has started collecting information from the Facilitators directly, through*

⁵⁰ MGCubed! Medium Term Response Plan (MTRP)

⁵¹ Please see <https://inee.org/resources/teacher-wellbeing-resources-mapping-gap-analysis> for more information on teacher wellbeing.

remote monitoring via phone calls, and the information collected will be used to create suitable adaptations to support the Facilitators' project Medium Term Response Plans' (MGCubed! MTRP, 2020).

Teacher interviews suggested possible gaps in IP support and training, with many reporting they did not receive support in catering for learners' wellbeing. Those who did mention support often referred to Covid-19 health interventions, such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and hygiene supplies and training on Covid-19 protocols, rather than training specifically on addressing mental health needs among learners.

Classroom observations also highlighted rare instances where potentially serious youth mental health concerns did not appear have been appropriately addressed by GEC II teachers in the classroom. For instance, as the two observers noted during their observation of an EAGER Safe Space session: *'...who we learnt had just lost her baby tried to lie on the desk [when] the mentor asked her to sit properly and she did, the teacher wasn't being sensitive to her at all for someone that had just lost a baby few days back.'* (Classroom Observation, Safe Space, Sierra Leone).⁵² Teachers cannot be expected to provide expert psychological support to beneficiaries: such instances highlight the need for specialist psychological expertise and referral processes within projects, alongside teacher training on social and emotional wellbeing and safeguarding protocols.

5.7 Teacher Training Throughout the Pandemic

'Being a teacher is an art, [we] must teach students in every possible way. And these projects helped us become more artists, to teach students in a better way because when we graduate from university, we have no experience and [now] we gain little, little experience and skills.'

Male, Government Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan

With teachers' roles changing rapidly but conventional training delivery impacted by lockdowns in many countries, **Implementing Partners found innovative ways of providing adapted training and resources to prepare teachers for the new and additional expectations on them throughout the pandemic.**

The main adaptation to teacher professional development that IPs deployed was to shift training from in-person to remote modalities, including primarily phone- and internet-based options, though some small-group training with Covid-19 adaptations occurred in rare instances.⁵³ CBE MG provided online and phone-based training for teachers, and managed to provide small-group teacher training in one province, maintaining social distancing and Covid-19 related protocols. STAGES-II partnered with an 'EdTech' social enterprise called Viamo to deliver simple phone-based training (*Box 12*). MGCubed! utilised the existing distance satellite-based technology to continue providing distance professional learning and developed contingency plans for small-group teacher training to be moved to WhatsApp as needed. STAGES-II and MGCubed! also provided remote mentoring for teachers, using phone- and satellite-based delivery models to reach teacher beneficiaries. **Teachers' experiences of remote training during the pandemic indicated satisfaction, with a few teachers hoping it was a temporary measure until in-person training could resume.**

IPs also adapted the content of their teacher training and related interventions to reflect teaching and learning in the Covid-19 context. Adapted teacher training content from STAGES-II, CBE MG and MGCubed! included remote and distance learning pedagogies; psychosocial wellbeing support for girls; monitoring and drop-out mitigation, including safeguarding and child protection; remedial or 'accelerated' pedagogies; and Covid-19 information and safety, including general and specifically classroom-based teaching.

Box 11: Remote phone-based training for teachers in Afghanistan⁵⁴

During school closures in Afghanistan, the STAGES-II consortium ceased all in-person training for teachers and had limited in-person contact among technical staff.

To continue providing teaching and learning, STAGES-II adapted a home-based system of learning, including distributing paper-based learning materials to learners, and providing phone-based professional learning for teachers.

However, many teachers, particularly those in remote and rural communities, had limited (if any) access to the internet, and intermittent electricity supply.

The STAGES-II consortium therefore adapted the professional learning model to a remote approach to teacher professional development, providing phones and credit to teachers, and partnering with a social

⁵² Please note, we reported the findings from this classroom observation as a safeguarding/welfare concern.

⁵³ EAGER suspended mentor and facilitator training that had been planned for May and June in 2020.

⁵⁴ Girls' Education Challenge webinar (2021). 'Coordinated sensitive education response amid Covid-19 pandemic: Innovations from two GEC projects in Afghanistan'. Attended by study team.'

enterprise called Viamo to deliver phone-based teacher professional development through an Interactive Voice Recording (IVR) System.

The Interactive Voice Recording system used simple mobile phones to deliver short weekly training modules (12 modules in total), each comprising a 6-minute lesson. Modules covered 3-4 key points from previous learning, a 'narrative' on the topic of the day, and a multiple-choice test for teachers. The content of modules included key topics for teachers' Covid-19 era roles and responsibilities, including preventing drop-out among beneficiaries, child-friendly classrooms, positive disciplinary practices, at-home learning, inclusive education, and social and emotional wellbeing for learners.

The platform also used SMS messages for reinforcement and monitoring purposes. The IVR system, which delivered automated voice lessons and recorded responses, allowed training to be delivered without the need for teachers to own smartphones. Teachers who missed scheduled calls were able to access content later. If teachers missed the automatic call, they could call a number back to access the lesson. Some teachers were also found by the project to be recording the lessons for future use.

Technical issues recorded by the project included difficulty with network connectivity in rural areas and some teachers not understanding how to use the call-back number. The project also noted that in future uses, printed visual materials could be disseminated to guide participants during the trainings.

According to project monitoring data, female teachers' engagement with Viamo phone-based training through STAGES-II was higher than male colleagues. On average, female teachers engaged with 65% of Viamo calls over the 12-week period, compared to 56% for male teachers.

Forty four percent of the 125 teachers across the four projects **reported not receiving any training or resources on monitoring and mitigation activities since the pandemic**, of which, a higher proportion were from STAGES-II, CBE MG and MGCubed! than EAGER. The remaining 56% of teachers who received support and training indicated that these were helpful in promoting safety and awareness of the Covid-19 pandemic and following up with learners to see if they were engaging in home learning.

In particular, **the provision of phones and credit** by IPs such as STAGES-II and CBE MG **helped teachers remain in contact with learners for monitoring and remote teaching during school closures, as well as for their own remote professional learning.**

Fifty eight percent of teachers (who responded to the question) across the four projects confirmed having received **training about gender-based violence (GBV)**, either specifically during Covid-19 in response to the increased risks posed to girls during lockdowns, or from the IP in general.⁵⁵ Those who did report receiving gender-based violence training reported covering topics such as **gender theory (e.g. distinguishing between sex and gender) and building awareness of associated gender stereotypes in local communities; child protection and gender equality laws and safeguarding protocols**, such as how teachers and beneficiaries could report instances of abuse or GBV – typically, teachers reported up the system or to 'central coordinators' who were in charge of GBV response protocols. **Content also included physical and sexual violence and abuse that might be school-related** – for instance, EAGER male facilitators spoke of training that covered teachers' codes of conduct while interacting with female learners - or within the learners' home/community, and the emotional and mental health impact of these forms of violence. These teachers did not mention that the content of GBV training included alternatives to corporal punishment, such as training in positive discipline methods.⁵⁶

Box 12: What do teachers say about the training they received from IPs?

Teachers across all four projects reported a high degree of overall satisfaction with GEC II training and resources, particularly in developing their overall teaching methods and subject knowledge, their ability to support marginalised girls to come to school, and their access to material teaching and learning resources.

Teacher training enables teachers to have wider impacts on girls' education beyond the classroom – **for EAGER facilitators and mentors, a large majority reported that the most useful training they received from the IP related to safeguarding and gender-based violence.** As one facilitator stated, *'I implement [the training] like if someone is giving his/her child to a man for early marriage, I do come in and stop that from happening because I have learnt it from EAGER, how to come in and help prevent things like harassment, they even gave us mic and other*

⁵⁵ While there was no large variation between male and female teachers, there was a marginally higher proportion of female teachers – 6% compared with their male counterparts - who reported receiving training about GBV.

⁵⁶ While this was not specified by teachers who reported on training during Covid-19, six projects (ENGINE-II, EGEP-T, CBE MG, EGDUE, SOMGEP, EAGER) did report providing training about child protection in the project monitoring data, but only SOMGEP included a focus on positive discipline and reduction in corporal punishment.

things for us to do sensitisation rally to stop early marriage or [advise] people not to give their girl child for early marriage.' (Male, Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN) Facilitator, IDI, Sierra Leone)

Teacher training also contributed to teachers reflecting on their own teaching practices and gaining a better understanding of their learners, as mentioned by a MGCubed! facilitator: *'But after [IP] training, I realised that maybe my way of teaching is not the best and I had to look for a better way of it...I would not pay attention to those who were not willing to learn. My attention was only on those who are willing to learn. From the training, I realised I had to change my method of teaching. If a child or a learner is sleeping it means that something is wrong. I need to reach out to that child.'* (Female, Facilitator, IDI, Ghana). **Some MGCubed! facilitators further stated that they apply the training to their other lessons, not just their MGCubed! lessons, suggesting a possible 'spillover' effect on a wider range of learners.**

Teachers reported challenges in implementing teacher training in the classroom – particularly due to constraints such as inadequate books and overcrowded classes. Some teachers from CBE MG and STAGES-II discussed that given large classroom sizes, it is difficult to apply teaching strategies such as role play and group work, and therefore, the preference is to use direct instruction (lecturing) or 'question and answer' strategies. **Teachers from all four projects additionally reported wanting more training or resources, including remuneration, material supports, and longer or more sustained school-based training.** One MGCubed! facilitator summarised this perspective—dissatisfaction arising not from quality, but quantity—when he said simply: *'As the literature people say, "Oliver Twist ask[s] for more.'* (Male, Facilitator, IDI, Ghana).

It is important to note the constraints in which IPs operate, and as such the feasibility of providing higher stipends and increased resources, particularly in a crisis context that exacerbated resource constraints and restricted modes of delivery.

Box 13: Did teachers receive teacher training from governments during the pandemic?

Government stakeholders often discussed how their **governments intended to provide training to support teachers during school closures and re-opening, but sometimes they were not realised.** Interviews with teachers similarly suggested that government training during the pandemic often did not reach them. For instance, in Ghana, some district education authorities provided workshops to teachers on encouraging children to return to school, and how to re-open schools safely. However, while schools were mandated to conduct teacher training, the evidence from interviews suggests these trainings did not always take place or reach these teachers. In Afghanistan, external stakeholders questioned whether government teachers received training during the pandemic - most of the teachers interviewed in Afghanistan, including government teachers, did not mention any training from the government during the pandemic.

In Sierra Leone, the government provided support and training to teachers during the pandemic, with one government stakeholder noting that two teachers per school had been **trained during the pandemic on psychosocial support for the reopening of classes for examination candidates, and on school safety protocols.** In particular, the Teacher Service Commission in Sierra Leone was identified as a key stakeholder designed to ensure ongoing teacher training efforts during the pandemic.

In Afghanistan, **external NGOs were mentioned to provide training during the pandemic.** For example, teachers mentioned that an external NGO provided a one-week training on how to help students learn and observe good hygiene practices at home, and to go to their homes to encourage them so they do not lose interest in school. For school re-opening, an external NGO taught teachers how to help students return, and how to keep social distance and to provide materials like masks, soap, and disinfection. Teachers stated that they implemented these learnings.

5.8 Inside the Covid-19 GEC II Classroom: Safety and Learning

This section describes the findings from the **classroom observations** conducted as part of this study in Afghanistan, Ghana, and Sierra Leone.⁵⁷ These classroom observations sought to observe teaching practices (with a particular focus on gender-responsive and learner-centred pedagogies), interactions between learners and teachers, and the overall classroom management. In addition, observers noted availability of classroom resources (particularly for girls and disabled learners, if applicable) and observance of Covid-19 protocols.

'We always encourage girls not to insinuate to themselves that we are girls and [so] we cannot study. I always try to remove obstacles in their way: if they do not have support at home, at least here I am a supporter.'

Female, Government Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan

⁵⁷ Please note, the teachers observed were sampled on the basis that they received GEC II training. We cannot assess the extent to which the observed teaching practices were a continuation of what was done prior to school/Safe Space closures. In addition, we cannot rule out the possibility of social desirability bias influencing the findings of these observations.

With the reopening of schools around the world, Governments grappled with the demands of balancing a safe return to the classroom and providing remedial or accelerated learning and 'catch-up' curricula for vulnerable learners who missed out on up to a year of learning.

These dual priorities—getting learners back to into classrooms safely, as well as resuming their learning—are reflected in GEC II project responses to schools and Safe Spaces reopening.

5.8.1 Safe return to school

'They told us about hand washing, that how many times in a day should we wash our hands, and we have to keep distance and not get too close, that it was very helpful for us.'

Female, Learner, FGD, Afghanistan

Covid-19 protocols and provisions for safe learning environments were the main cluster of new interventions introduced since the pandemic, with all IPs prioritising the distribution of PPE supplies and training for teachers on Covid-19 protocols. This included giving information to teachers and learners about Covid-19; the provision of hygiene or WaSH materials; and disseminating information about Covid-19 to the wider community (through monitoring calls – MGCubed!, and door-to-door sensitisation or safeguarding – EAGER). One IP representative from MGCubed! discussed how the provision of PPE supplies alleviated financial burdens on families and supported girls' return to schools.

'...the parent might be thinking of how to get PPEs for their children, how to get books now that I don't work. Okay, so because of that you should stay at home and don't go to the school. But those that enjoy the cash transfer system removes that barrier of the likelihood of children to stay home due to their parent's loss of job.'

Male, IP Representative, KII, Ghana

While classroom observations suggested that these Covid-19 protocols were being widely observed—particularly hand washing and sanitisation practices, and face mask use in MGCubed! schools and EAGER Safe Spaces—there were concerns regarding the extent to which protocols were observed in Afghanistan.

The ability to maintain social distancing by restricting the number of learners in a classroom or Safe Space setting varied across the projects. For instance, EAGER split sessions of up to 25 beneficiaries into groups of 7 or 8 learners. This was corroborated by some classroom observations, however, other observers recorded Safe Space sessions of up to 20 beneficiaries. On the other hand, some STAGES-II classrooms were observed to have had up to 60 learners, which likely explains the inability to physically distance learners in STAGES-II classrooms.

One teacher interviewed also raised the prospect that teachers may have been sources of misinformation about Covid-19, further highlighting the need for targeted and ongoing training on Covid-19. One STAGES-II teacher reported: *'Yes, people were afraid of Covid-19 but we encouraged and told them that Muslims will not be infected by Corona.'* (Female, Government Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan)

While the variation in observance of Covid-19 protocols is likely due to context-specific constraints (such as overcrowding, inadequate infrastructure, limited resources), **IPs and teachers aimed to bring their learners back to safe learning environments and mitigate the adverse impacts of Covid-19, particularly given the challenges reopened schools globally faced – and continue to face – in containing the spread of the virus.**

5.8.2 Resuming learning

'It is the joy of every teacher seeing his or her learner achieve whatever she wants to achieve.'

Male, Teacher, IDI, Ghana

Since the return to the classroom, IPs have adapted curricular and pedagogical interventions to welcome learners back to the classroom and resume learning, with commensurate training for teachers to implement curricular adaptations (see [Table 5](#)). As one EAGER key informant explained, when describing how mentors and facilitators were trained to implement the project's Covid-adapted curriculum:

'We cannot expect them to just take these materials and use without training them on their use.'

Female, IP Representative, KII, Sierra Leone

Classroom observations recorded instances of GEC II teachers applying remedial and catch-up pedagogical strategies with beneficiaries. Across all four projects, teachers used formal or informal assessments as well as other questioning strategies to gauge learners' learning levels, though this was not seen in all classrooms. Beneficiaries from all four projects also reported that their teachers had applied one or more remedial strategies since their return to the classroom, such as asking if learners remembered what they had learned before the school

closures, using formal assessments such as tests during class to assess learner learning levels, or repeating material introduced prior to school closures before moving on to new content.

Remedial and catch-up practices—such as mentors and facilitators asking if learners remembered what topics they had covered prior to the Safe Space closures, repeating content as required, and frequently asking questions to check for learners' level of understanding—**seemed to be particularly consistent across observations of Safe Spaces from the EAGER project.** One learner's description of her experience since Safe Spaces typified responses from her cohort:

'Yes, they did recap, when we started classes, we did review on all the topics before they started new ones. Before they proceeded to the next, they will ask questions and we will answer, the ones we do not answer properly, they will explain again before proceed.'

Female, Learner, FGD, Sierra Leone

5.8.3 Learner-centred, gender-responsive and inclusive pedagogies

Overall, teachers in all three countries were seen to adopt positive behaviours, body language, and tone of voice towards all learners, such as using thumbs up or positive gestures, smiling, clapping, encouraging learners to clap for each other, and using a warm or friendly tone of voice. Observations captured a higher proportion of 'positive' teacher behaviour than 'negative' (such as harsh tone of voice, negative language, ignoring learners) with no notable variation between projects nor by teacher or learner gender.

Teachers from all three countries reported using learner-centred, individualised, and participatory approaches specifically to support girls who struggled with their learning, those who were shy or disengaged, and those who were at risk of dropping out. As one teacher replied: *'We try to teach marginalised girls or low courage students individually, so that they grow, step by step, and become active'* (Male, Government Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan). A higher proportion of teachers from MGCubed! than other projects reported using mixed-ability group work to encourage peer-learning for learners who struggled with their learning, with one MGCubed! facilitator explaining the importance of learner-centred pedagogies in mixed-ability classes: *'Almost in every class it will be difficult to find people who are homogeneous in terms of their learning level, so you would have to adopt child-centred approach to your teaching'* (Male, Facilitator, IDI, Ghana). Another teacher from CBE MG reiterated the need to build the self-confidence of marginalised and shy learners through adopting an individualised approach:

'The girls who are marginalised, when they see we use the individual method or explaining method; they themselves start explaining. For example; the one who is very silent and quiet. Most of the time is at home and her family don't let her to go to school. When they stand among the class and speak; they believe their abilities. Then we can encourage them to study their lessons. A student who is very weak, I mean who has a weak mind, if we stand her and ask question; she gets unhappy; but when she answers a question, she believes [in] herself.'

Female, Community Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan

Classroom observations also recorded GEC II teachers applying learner-centred strategies for engaging marginalised girls, corroborating the interview findings. Such strategies included explaining content in multiple local languages, physically moving around to check on learners' understanding, and encouraging shy or hesitant learners to participate in class. One exemplary CBE MG classroom observation of an all-girl class taught by a female government-school teacher from Afghanistan, highlighted **various learner-centred pedagogies** such as **relating content to learners' lived experiences, engaging respectfully with learners, creating a positive learning environment, and assessing learners individually and as a cohort to check learners' levels of understanding:**

'The lesson [was] related with the daily life of students. All students were involved and shared their ideas. They were posing questions and the teacher was respecting their ideas patiently. The teacher was adding her idea with student's idea and shared with students. Students didn't face any problem but again she gave chance to students who didn't raise their hands to say what they have gotten. And she explained again individually and cooperatively to realise better...Students were engaged in all activities of the class. The teacher explained all content of the lesson and asked the student's view. And all students were involved in all explanation of the lesson and in all activities of the lesson and the teacher used encouraging language against students.'

Classroom Observation, Government School, Afghanistan

One classroom observation in Ghana noted MGCubed! facilitators including **lesson content about gender biases in curricula** – a component of gender-responsive pedagogy that interrogates teaching and learning materials (FAWE, 2018) as previously discussed in [Section 2.1](#). This classroom observation showed the teacher discussing activities that perpetuate gender biased practices in the classroom, as a means of raising awareness and addressing gender-biased practices. This included questioning the **types of courses girls are encouraged to study, and the division of classroom management responsibilities between girls and boys:** *'[assigning] courses to girls like reading*

subjects whilst to boys like maths or calculation subjects. Also, [giving] girls...the opportunity to sweep whilst boys arrange desks in the classroom.' (Classroom Observation, Government School, Ghana)

A small number of classroom observations recorded instances of teachers' gender-biased or gender-harmful statements. For instance, one observer noted that while an EAGER mentor was discussing the topic of gender stereotypes and intra-household responsibilities, she *'also advised the learners that because they can do what their men are doing should not make them start disobeying their husbands'* (Classroom Observation, Safe Space, Sierra Leone). In Afghanistan, one learner stated that **there was a gendered difference in the quality of questions asked, which implies perceptions around gendered differences in academic ability:** *'The teachers more ask hard questions from boys, not from girls.'* (Male, Learner, FGD, Afghanistan). However, other observers noted that female learners were typically more 'active' and 'engaged' with their learning, and male learners tended to be more 'disruptive'.

Across the projects, there was no notable variation between teacher gender or other characteristics that influenced the demonstration of gender-responsive practices, suggesting that **while female teachers can be influential mentors for marginalised girls, it cannot be taken for granted that their pedagogies will be gender-responsive without adequate support.**

Interviews with teachers and classroom observations suggested teachers' limited understanding and inclusive practice for learners with physical disabilities and special learning needs. In some classes, when asked if there were any learners with disabilities in their classes, teachers replied no, while subsequently saying that they preferentially sat learners who struggled to see or hear at the front of their class. In other observations, teachers were seen to be overlooking or not engaging learners with visual disabilities in class activities and questions, and not prioritising them for seating arrangements at the front of the class (Classroom Observation, Community School, Afghanistan; Classroom Observation, Government School, Afghanistan). One observation in Ghana noted that *'the teacher compared learners who had finished their class task to those [who] had not finished theirs, and this made the learners affected looked unhappy'* (Classroom Observation, Government School, Ghana). However, one exceptional instance was a classroom observation from an EAGER Safe Space session, where the learners were role-playing the story of *Bintu*,⁵⁸ a girl with visual impairment. The mentor was observed to have *'continued by telling them that they as EAGER should never do such they should teach the other children out there not to ignore disable[d] people. They should encourage them, talk to them, play with them and sometimes take a walk with them by doing so will make the other children start doing it.'* (Classroom Observation, Safe Space, Sierra Leone)

Classroom observations also suggested variation in accommodating learners with children in class (Box 15). Interviews and classroom observations with EAGER—which of all projects had the highest proportion of learners with children owing to the adolescent out-of-school beneficiaries—indicated positive examples particularly of female mentors actively supporting learners with children in the Safe Space sessions, such as mentors who did team teaching intentionally splitting roles, with one looking after learners' children and the other leading the session.

Box 14: Supporting learners with children: lessons from Sierra Leone and Afghanistan⁵⁹

'I am teaching them all equally, I treat them all equally. I don't like one more than the others, I share knowledge equally. If you have a child and your child is crying, I will take the baby from you and make sure the baby keeps [quiet] while you will be concentrating on your learning.'

Female, Life and Business Skills (LBS) Mentor, IDI, Sierra Leone

Learners with children in class emerged from the qualitative data as a key sub-group of marginalised young women who need dedicated support and attention in GEC II classrooms and learning spaces. In Afghanistan and Sierra Leone, interviews with teachers and classroom observations indicated that the presence of learners with children presented them with a particular challenge, though attitudes, resources, and inclusive practices varied.

In Sierra Leone, female mentors in particular implemented strategies for supporting learners with children. Classroom observations confirmed interview responses, with female EAGER mentors picking up the children or physically comforting babies so their mothers could concentrate on their lesson. Several mentors who led sessions in pairs split duties, with one mentor leading the session while the other 'pampered' or tended to the children of learners so their mothers could concentrate on their learning.

Observers recorded the provision of mattresses in Safe Spaces, with mentors reporting that these helped support the inclusion of beneficiaries with children, by giving mothers somewhere to lay their children down for naps during sessions.

⁵⁸ The character of 'Bintu' is incorporated into EAGER mentors' handbook. While there is no official documentation available to us that explains the content, interviews suggest that EAGER mentors use the story of 'Bintu' to relay content about topics such as financial autonomy, increased self-confidence and prevention of trafficking.

⁵⁹ No learners with children were identified in primary data collection relating to MGCubed! in Ghana.

However, other mentors and facilitators reported that despite the EAGER focus on accommodating learners who were mothers, the presence of children and babies in sessions could be disruptive for other learners. In all 18 classroom observations of EAGER Safe Spaces/Learning Centres, observers noted instances of learners with children, or their peers, being distracted by the babies.

Several female teachers in Afghanistan indicated giving additional attention to mothers in their classes. One STAGES-II teacher explained that she used 'an especial method' for learners with children, including asking mothers 'to sit on a separate place, first to calm their children' before she 'explain the lesson separately for them,' as well as working individually 'with them at break time or at some other free times' or even inviting mothers to her home after school to provide additional tutoring and support (Female, Government Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan). Another government school female teacher reported:

'For this type of students, the one who is the mother or the one who has more problems, we pay more attention to them, because they are mothers and they have more problems at home, and with those students we guide and help them outside of school hours. And we answer their questions.'

Female, Government Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan

In both countries, interviews suggested a gender divide between teachers who reported being comfortable including learners with children in the classroom. For STAGES-II and EAGER, female teachers were more likely than their male colleagues to say they were willing to carry or care for learners' children during classes to allow learners to concentrate on their studies, and to provide individualised support for mothers in their classes. During observations for this study, one EAGER male facilitator became 'annoyed' and told mothers with children in the session to leave their babies at home if they could not control their children or prevent them from crying (Classroom Observation, EAGER, Sierra Leone). This facilitator was observed to have later apologised to the learners.

Attitudes towards learners with children were similarly mixed among teachers in Afghanistan, though neither CBE MG nor STAGES-II reported an explicit focus on supporting learners with children. One STAGES-II teacher summarised his view simply, saying: 'Those who have kids should not bring their children to the class' (Male, Government Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan). Others were more sympathetic, with one experienced male teacher from a government school saying teachers 'should have kindly behaviour' towards mothers with children in class and treat them humanely (Male, Government Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan), and a newly-appointed female teacher from a lower secondary government school reporting 'keeping children busy' so their mothers could concentrate on the lesson (Female, Government Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan). Classroom observers did not record provisions for learners with children, nor did any observations occur with learners with children present in class. However, one observer reported that a learner with child was supposed to attend the session that day but had to return home to take care of her child.

5.8.4 School-Related Gender-Based Violence

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) can affect both male and female learners, as well as teachers, in different forms and to varying extents (UNESCO and UN Women, 2016). The four forms of SRGBV presented in this section are psychological, physical, peer and sexual violence.⁶⁰

It should be noted that we do not attribute the occurrence of this violence to GEC II project activities, nor do we suggest that this violence has been caused or contributed to by IPs, as we are not able to identify from our data whether the teachers reported to perpetrate violence were supported or recruited by the projects. Rather, we are presenting these findings to shed light on a sensitive phenomenon that undermines quality, inclusive and equitable education, particularly for marginalised girls and other beneficiaries, and so has wider applicability. IPs have also variously adopted strategies to address SRGBV concerns (discussed below). It is also important to note that we followed up on all potential welfare and safeguarding issues raised in this section with the FCDO and IPs as relevant, in accordance with the Ethical Research and Safeguarding Framework ([Annex E](#)). The FCDO's response to SRGBV can be found in [Annex F](#).

'A few years ago, when a parent council meeting was held, our fathers said that students should be encouraged. Students should be encouraged instead of threatened, teachers should not use threatening tools for students. Students are not like soldiers who are calmed by force and threats.'

Male, Learner, FGD, Afghanistan

⁶⁰ This section draws on the interviews and focus group discussions conducted with teachers and learners, as well as classroom observations. Teachers were not asked direct questions about SRGBV. As part of the focus group discussions with learners, they were asked about the use of physical punishment or other actions by their teachers they disliked or made them feel unwelcome in the learning environment. The classroom observation forms included a prompt for the usage of physical punishment in the learning environment.

There were no reported instances of SRGBV perpetrated by teachers in classroom observations, however, two classroom observations recorded harassment by male learners towards female learners and female teachers.⁶¹

Some instances of psychological and physical violence perpetrated by teachers were reported by learners when asked about forms of punishment during FGDs in Ghana and Afghanistan. While the Government of Ghana has expressed its commitment to prohibit all corporal punishment – a form of physical violence – it is lawful and reported to be widely prevalent in schools (End Corporal Punishment, 2020). The Government in Afghanistan prohibited corporal punishment in schools in 2008, and there has been a reported decrease in the prevalence of physical and verbal (psychological) violence against learners (End Corporal Punishment, 2020b). During two FGDs, government school learners similarly reported that the incidence of physical violence had decreased compared with previous years.

Some learners noted that their teachers did not punish them. However, in both Afghanistan and Ghana, a small number of learners reported that teachers threatened to punish, or physically punished them, for reasons such as not *'learning'* the lessons, or for not bringing their homework to class or being unable to answer a question in class.

Some learners in Afghanistan reported that teachers disproportionately punished boys more than girls, claiming that boys misbehaved more or were less interested in their lessons. Other beneficiaries reported no differences between boys and girls. One learner spoke of a teacher repeatedly *'beating'* her and other learners in the classroom:

'Yes, he beat me, I learned the lesson, but he beat me...I just moved a little bit, he came take the stick and beat all of us, he does not see who is to blame and who is not to blame, [he] just beat[s] all of us.'

Female, Learner, FGD, Afghanistan

Reports of learners experiencing physical violence as a means of discipline were more frequently raised in government schools than community-based education (CBE) provision, with it being referred to in five FGDs with government school learners, compared with one FGD with CBE learners. The potential greater prevalence in government schools was noted by a CBE learner:

'We have heard from the students, who study in government schools, they tell us, that our teachers punish us physically every day, but we have not seen here yet.'

Female, Learner, FGD, Afghanistan

In Ghana, girls reported instances of teachers threatening to, and punishing learners, by *'caning'* or *'lashing'* them. With the implementation of Covid-19 protocols in reopened schools, one learner also mentioned that girls were caned for *'stealing'* hand sanitiser. One instance of psychological violence reported a female learner stating a male teacher would tell the class they were going to *'die'* at school.

Learners from another focus group discussion in Ghana indicated that their peers with disabilities, including visual impairments or physical disabilities, tended to be physically punished (caned) in class as well, albeit reportedly less than their non-disabled peers.

In Afghanistan beneficiaries described instances of teacher violence in terms that suggested such practices were normalised among these cohorts, and that learners had internalised the belief that punishment was a *'just'* response to learners not completing homework or *'learning the lesson'*. Some beneficiaries spoke of physical punishment as *'good'* teacher behaviour, as it *'motivates'* learners to study. For instance, as one female respondent expressed,

'Yes, our teacher punishes us to study and learn better. I think it is good that the teacher beats us, because they try that we learn something. The teacher beats us so that we learn our lessons.'

Female, Learner, FGD, Afghanistan

Teacher violence was reported to have included sexual violence, which, if leading to pregnancy, increases the risk of girls dropping out. For instance, one FGD in Ghana included beneficiaries who spoke of teachers who impregnated learners at the school, but then mistreated the girls and rejected the pregnancy. In the same FGD, learners reported experiencing or seeing teachers raise girls' skirts to cane their buttocks, questioning whether the act was done *'deliberately'*.

Teacher violence had a profoundly detrimental impact on girls' emotional wellbeing and engagement with their learning. Learners reported how some of their teachers' behaviours induced various negative emotions and sensations such as fear, helplessness, panic, and an inability to answer questions that they knew the answers to. As one girl explained of her experience:

⁶¹ Please note, as mentioned previously, we cannot eliminate the possibility of teachers adapting their behaviour during classroom observations.

'When they lash us like that, for example, if they ask a question and I answer but my friend couldn't answer and they start lashing my friend, most times we feel the pains of our friends, the way he or she cries makes us feel sad and helpless'.

Female, Learner, FGD, Ghana

Teacher violence also impacted learners' morale and willingness to attend school, suggesting that a focus on preventing and addressing teacher violence is critical for learners' retention. As one female learner from Afghanistan stated:

'I feel upset, teachers should encourage students, not punish them. If students are encouraged, they will get better day by day. If they are punished, they will be discouraged from school and will leave school'

Female, Learner, FGD, Afghanistan

The response of one participant suggested that teacher violence risked perpetuating cycles of violence across generations and within school cultures:

'The way they lash us is not good. If I also become a teacher, I will also lash someone like that'.

Female, Learner, FGD, Ghana

In Afghanistan and Ghana, violence instigated by male learners was reported during FGDs. Female learners discussed the occurrence of their male peers harassing them during FGDs in Ghana, and two observations of mixed-gender classrooms in Afghanistan recorded male learners acting aggressively towards other learners and towards teachers.

In Ghana, learners stated that boys 'beat' the girls, along with slapping their buttocks and touching their breasts. Learners stated that when they reported these incidents to their teachers, the teachers verbally disciplined the boys or physically punished them.

One observation in Afghanistan witnessed 'violence against female students and teacher by the male students. The male students were bullying the female students carelessly by...laughing' (Classroom Observation, Government School, Afghanistan). The learner observation for the same lesson reported: 'Boy students were not supporting the teacher, instead they were insulting and disrespecting the teacher, but the teacher always had a smile on her face and kind and good words on her mouth. The teacher was unable to control boys properly. During the observation of this class, we have noticed that boys were annoying, bothering teasing girls' (Classroom Observation, Government School, Afghanistan). When the observer asked about her experiences particularly with one male learner after the lesson, the female teacher replied:

'I have to walk a long distance to get to school, so if I take serious action toward him, it is more likely that she [sic] stabs me or kill [me] [by] a knife or tell someone else to on my way and kill me. Therefore, in order to save my honour I don't tell him anything... It is very disappointing for me to tolerate such a condition in the class, but I really need my salary, so I tolerate it.'

Classroom Observation, Government School, Afghanistan

While instances of SRGBV were reported in the focus groups, as already noted, we do not attribute these instances to the IPs, as the respondents do not identify the specific teachers they are referring to, and whether they are trained by, or affiliated with, the IPs.

The IPs have adopted strategies to address SRGBV. For example, their external evaluation reports highlight that IP activities include working with teachers, parent-teacher associations, school management committees and in certain instances, government authorities to sensitise them about the adverse effects of physical punishment. A few external evaluation reports suggested limitations with school management committees' oversight, as they were not necessarily girls' primary contact, and some committee members were uncomfortable raising certain issues (e.g., early marriage) with girls' families.

IPs also conducted training about reporting procedures and provided the contact details to community members, families, teachers and girls in the case of reporting an incident of SRGBV. Reporting mechanisms identified in the external evaluation reports were IP staff, school authorities (e.g., teachers, disciplinary committees and headteachers) and counsellors. However, the external evaluation reports found that girls were not always aware of reporting mechanisms. In addition, the reports recommended the establishment or promotion of a telephone hotline (e.g., through a school landline) for wider reach and increased anonymity.

The reports indicated that IPs also monitor classrooms to check the presence of canes, and that they facilitate training sessions with teachers on positive classroom management strategies. Interviews with teachers suggest that **IP activities on safeguarding and corporal punishment have decreased the extent to which teacher-perpetrated**

violence occurs. In addition, teacher training and seminars on **safeguarding and child protection** were reported to be **some of the most useful topics covered by IPs during teacher training.** Teachers reported that these seminars and discussions raised their awareness on how to treat their learners in a positive manner. For instance, as a government school teacher in Afghanistan stated:

'Teachers used to punish students in the class, and they thought that punishing of students are useful, but after the seminar they know that this is violence, so no one punishes students anymore. We try our best not to insult students. New teachers encourage the students to study their lesson and try hard. [The] seminar helped us learn all these things.'

Female, Government Teacher, IDI, Afghanistan

Teachers from all countries mentioned that they implement the training they received about safeguarding and child protection from IPs by reporting instances shared with them by learners to relevant supervisors or coordinators and during parent-teacher association meetings.

In addition, teachers also mentioned an element of *'culture'* (beyond the school) in these practices. Social and cultural norms around discipline in homes and communities that are reproduced in school settings are challenging to change, particularly in settings where IPs may be constrained in their efforts to prevent SRGBV. **Our findings suggest a need to continue to prioritise tackling SRGBV, including learning from the initiatives that IPs have put in place to teachers and school systems to be aware of, prevent and respond to all forms of violence.**

6 Conclusions

These conclusions are based on learning from the ten GEC II projects selected for this study, which were identified as projects that included a stronger focus on teachers and teaching in their interventions. Therefore, some of the conclusions relate to positive lessons from these projects, for consideration for other projects in the future.

RQ1: How have GEC II projects implemented and adapted interventions with teachers and teaching prior to Covid-19?

- **Overall, GEC II projects included in the study delivered a range of activities to support diverse types of teachers and educators teaching in school and community-based education settings.** The assumption that providing training and resources for teachers will improve girls' learning underpins the Theory of Change for GEC II project designs and interventions targeting improving the quality of teaching. Teacher professional development (TPD) was a key approach that all projects used to improve teaching quality. In addition to this intervention, projects also implemented varied activities to address other parts of the teaching ecosystem, such as support for school leaders and government authorities, the provision of learning resources (both paper- and video-based), and additional lessons and extracurricular activities. However, 'quality teaching' is a complex composite of interdependent factors including who teachers are (their individual skills, qualifications, education levels), and what they do (pedagogical practices, gender and inclusion attitudes) - as well as wider institutional factors such as quantity of teachers, remuneration and the political and economic context within which teachers operate - all of which may influence teaching quality in different ways.
- **Of the 10 projects reviewed in this study, many included a specific focus on improving aspects of pedagogy, such as encouraging gender-responsive, learner-centred, and inclusive pedagogies,** although limited detailed information about teaching practices in the project documentation. Projects mainly provided forms of 'traditional', classroom-based TPD, followed by mentoring and coaching. Many GEC II projects aimed to make training and resources gender-responsive and accessible for their teachers and educators. However, some IPs did not appear to be routinely assessing teachers' knowledge, skills, or competencies, or linking this evidence to girls' learning needs, as a basis for designing and delivering targeted professional development activities to improve teaching quality, and subsequently girls' learning outcomes.
- **From the GEC II quantitative data (collected by IPs and external evaluators) that were available, we were unable to identify how effective the support provided to improve teaching quality has been in improving girls' learning outcomes.** Furthermore, because there are insufficient data linking changes in girls' learning outcomes to teaching practices, we are unable to tell whether the projects' support provided to teachers is the right support from the perspective of the learning needs of the girls themselves. As different types of interventions focus on different parts of the teaching ecosystem, it is critical to measure their ultimate effects on girls' learning to be able to compare, contrast and identify which interventions or package of interventions work for which type of teachers, teaching which types of girls and in what contexts. It is also important to collect data that accurately identify the types of educators projects are working with (whether facilitators or learning support staff) and the interventions they received, which can then be linked to class-level learning data, to allow for a deeper analysis of 'what works' in relation to teacher professional development initiatives.

RQ2: How and to what extent have GEC II projects adapted and supported interventions during Covid-19 to enable girls to continue to learn?

- The four projects included in the more detailed study mobilised rapid responses and adaptations that directly engaged girls in continued learning and provided Covid-19 information and safety processes. **These IPs adapted interventions based on rapid gender and needs assessment data** – some IPs provided targeted, low-tech solutions, while others provided resources to bridge the gap for girls who could not access national-level distance learning strategies. However, even when IPs provided paper-based resources and low-technology options, learners – especially younger learners - struggled with self-directed learning. Learners faced difficulties in engaging with their learning without a means of contacting teachers to ask questions and get direct feedback and support. IPs aimed to circumvent these challenges by enabling continued contact with teachers. **IPs included in the study also addressed gender-related and accessibility-related problems inherent in remote learning and teaching options by providing paper-based home-learning resources coupled with two-way teacher support.**

- **Overall, girls felt positive about their continued engagement with learning and contact with their teachers, however most reported they preferred in-person learning to home-based learning.** A small number of girls stated the contrary – mentioning that they felt more comfortable at home than at school. This preference could be due to inadequate classroom resources, low-quality school infrastructure, long distances to school and security concerns, which negatively impact the classroom experience.
- **During the pandemic, teachers were at the frontline of providing not only continued or adapted learning opportunities, but also critical health and safety or wellbeing information and pastoral support.** This indicates the importance of teachers' roles within the community and their ability to provide a pivotal 'bridging' role between schools and communities – although it raises a question as to whether teachers have been adequately equipped to play this more pastoral role, as well as the additional time and resources expected from them. Projects responded with training for teachers in psychological first aid and other wellbeing advocacy skills (although many teachers reported not receiving this in practice). However, teachers expressed concern about the need for more support for their own wellbeing.
- **Female community-based teachers were instrumental in supporting girls' ongoing engagement with learning, sustaining their motivation, and reducing their risk of dropping out of school.** In government education systems, where government regulations prevented schoolteachers from contacting learners outside of the formal school setting, community-based models facilitated home-based and phone-based support for girls. Female community-based teachers were better able to provide adapted learning and well-being support outside a formal school or learning setting. The role of female teachers was particularly important as safeguarding concerns in all three countries affected the extent to which male teachers involved with GEC II projects could provide remote teaching to girls outside the classroom environment. These community-based teachers typically lived locally, were often embedded in local community groups, and may have been personally acquainted with girls' families and their personal circumstances, which helped them provide differentiated attention and care. Female teachers' ability to remain in touch with girls during school closures was supported by IPs' provision of phones and phone credit, as teachers faced their own challenges in providing remote or adapted teaching, due to a lack of access to technology.
- **School-related gender-based violence – including corporal punishment – remains a concern for girls' wellbeing.** While corporal punishment is legal in certain contexts where GEC II IPs operate, IPs have prioritised child protection and safeguarding as a component of teacher professional development. Teachers have reported that this training has been very useful in developing their own self-awareness and practices. However, IPs that operate in government schools, and do not directly recruit these teachers, have limited oversight or influence over these teachers. These constraints may point towards a need for improved reporting mechanisms and collaboration with the broader ecosystem of parent associations and school management leadership systems to alleviate this burden on IPs.
- **Once schools reopened in all three countries, the four IPs prioritised the 'safe return' to school with Covid-19 protocols as the main cluster of interventions introduced, and strategies for remedial /catch-up learning to address learning loss during school closures.** The actual adherence to and implementation of Covid-19 safety mechanisms – such as mask-wearing, handwashing or hand sanitisation and physical distancing – varied across the classrooms observed in the three countries. There was some variation in approaches used for remedial and catch-up learning strategies, which included revising content that was studied prior to the onset of the pandemic, additional classes, and formative assessment strategies. It is important to note IPs may have limited ability to monitor the adherence to Covid-19 protocols and implementation of remedial/catch-up strategies in government schools that they are supporting.
- **Learner-centred, inclusive and gender-responsive pedagogies, whilst a tenet of teacher professional development, continue to require support for implementation, particularly given the resource-constrained environments in which many teachers work.** Most teachers displayed learner-centred and inclusive pedagogies, for instance, by translating lesson content into various local languages to cater to learners, physically moving around the classroom to check on learners' progress or incorporating activities such as group work or roleplay. There were a small number of instances where it was observed that teachers made gender-biased or gender-harmful statements. In addition, inclusive pedagogies were observed to have been limited in practice, where some teachers were unable to identify disabled learners (i.e., those with visual or hearing impairments), or excluded learners who struggled with their learning and may have had learning disabilities. Our findings on gender-responsive and inclusive pedagogies may indicate a greater need for support to address teachers' internalised biases/beliefs, as well as support for them in identifying learners who have disabilities or struggle with their learning in their classes and providing them with practical advice on how to support these learners.
- In all three countries, community leaders and community groups played a critical role – through supporting families, monitoring girls' education and providing amenities such as food or money. **Community members**

and parents recognised the contribution of GEC II projects throughout the pandemic, particularly the work that GEC II teachers did in providing targeted wellbeing and learning support for beneficiaries who may not have benefited from national or system-wide strategies, due to their remote location, lack of resources, or other intersectional barriers. As such, the impact of the pandemic may have been different, had IPs, their interventions and teachers not been present in these communities.

7 Recommendations

As education systems around the world tackle the challenge of reopening schools and providing education in the wake of the pandemic, there is an opportunity for governments and development organisations to mainstream gender-responsive policies and strategies within new distance learning and 'building-back-better' initiatives.

These recommendations are based on learning from the 10 GEC II projects selected for this study, in particular from the four projects for which more in-depth analysis has been undertaken during the pandemic. These projects were identified as including a stronger focus on teachers and teaching in their interventions. Therefore, some of the recommendations relate to positive lessons from these projects, for consideration for other projects in the future. Given many GEC II projects were coming to an end by the time this report is being finalised, the intention is not to provide specific recommendations for the GEC II portfolio. As such, the proposed recommendations are for the FM, IPs and the FCDO to consider for the design of future girls' education programmes and interventions in particular.

Overall, all projects working on improving learning for marginalised girls need to explicitly consider interventions related to supporting teachers and teaching, given that teachers are vital points of interaction between education systems and key stakeholders in their communities. Recognising that teachers' work goes beyond teaching in the classroom, interventions need to include activities that provide appropriate support and resources to fulfil teachers' responsibilities and allow them to manage their own wellbeing.

In addition, projects should recognise wider societal factors that are likely to affect the effectiveness of interventions, such as working conditions and government education policy. This includes the need to consider the wider contextual factors (including the key drivers and barriers to change) that are likely to influence project implementation and effectiveness at all stages of the project cycle; and the need to identify and engage with critical key stakeholders from the design stage of project development.

The recommendations below are organised by **aspects of projects' interventions** related to teachers and teaching that the FM, IPs and the FCDO (and wider audiences) may want to consider for future programming and policy decisions.

Recruitment of teachers and other professionals

- **Community-based teacher recruitment models are an appropriate method of addressing teacher shortages and skill gaps, particularly in rural and remote areas.** In designing community-based approaches, it is important from a sustainability perspective to consider from the outset whether these models can be transitioned or adopted by government education systems.
- **Interventions need to address systemic barriers to recruiting and retaining female teachers, either through their own recruitment or by actively engaging with governments and community leaders to promote female teacher recruitment. Female teachers are instrumental in catering to some of the most marginalised girls,** through additional forms of support to out-of-school girls, girls who are prevented from being taught by male teachers due to both safeguarding concerns and social and gender norms, and in security-prone areas. However, the recruitment of female teachers may be a systemic problem requiring long-term strategy. Projects need to consider interventions that have that long-term focus on policy and systemic change even though the results may not be fully realised during the lifetime. Otherwise, projects risk continually treating the symptoms of underlying constraints that are not being sufficiently addressed. For those supporting teachers in existing schools, projects could work with government to identify strategies to increase female staff. For example, for projects which recruit their own teachers, this might involve building training and skills development into the project intervention or considering community-based recruitment processes.
- **Recruitment models that engage a wide range of educators – e.g., itinerant teachers for supporting children with disabilities and community-based educators or learning assistants – ensures specialist skills are drawn upon.** Recruiting, and subsequently training these teachers, enables the provision of quality teaching to support the learning and other needs of marginalised girls.
- **Engaging a wider range of educators also needs to include health professionals, social workers and other specialists.** Central to 'psychological first aid' is the principle that teachers can be a first point of contact who, when adequately trained and supported, can provide girls with immediate care and advice on referrals to appropriate social and health services.

Teacher professional development

- **All projects delivering teacher professional development activities should align girls' learning needs and teachers' competencies to ensure they are effective and meaningfully impact on girls' learning.**

Teacher training should be provided based on an assessment of teachers' needs, both in relation to the teachers' subject-based competencies and pedagogies, as well as evidence of girls' learning requirements. This requires systematic reporting of both the content as well as the modes of teacher professional development. Recognising that it will take time for teacher professional development to have an impact on changes in teaching practices and consequently girls' learning outcomes, there is a need to adopt appropriate assessment approaches to identify the effects of these activities.

- **Teacher professional development should include training in gender-responsive pedagogies.** The training should go beyond making sure girls and boys are included equally in classroom activities, to tackling biases, building self-confidence etc. This should include feedback mechanisms in place to ensure they are being implemented as intended. In ensuring the effectiveness of the training, teachers, project implementors, and the broader school management/leadership system should work together to put in place mechanisms to mitigate the risks of imparting gender-biased or gender-harmful practices in learning environments.
- **Information on gender-responsive pedagogy that reflects the *quality* rather than solely the *quantity* of interactions between teachers and girl learners – and that are applicable in female-only learning environments – are fundamental to assessing the effectiveness of different training models.** This includes, for example, capturing information such as *how* teachers call on learners, rather than the frequency with which they do so.
- **The provision of remote or community-based modules, funding, and travel or other access allowances to female teachers is important to address barriers female teachers otherwise face in receiving teacher professional development.** This also needs consideration of the timing of training to fit around other responsibilities.

Hybrid teaching models during crises

- **Resources or facilities available to both teachers (to provide instruction) and girls (to continue learning) need to be carefully assessed in preparation for potential future crises situations, resulting in school closures.** Assessing the extent of technology access and ensuring needs are catered for, is needed as a preventative measure for the future, with attention paid in particular to contexts where both teachers and girls are likely to face barriers in accessing and utilising different forms of technology.
- **Teaching models based on home-learning need to be 'two-way' (as also identified in the IE's Study on Access and Learning), to ensure girls have an avenue for continued support and feedback to sustain their motivation and engagement with learning.** Appropriate resourcing and outreach to engage caregivers with low literacy levels, and community mentors or peer mentors to prevent girls becoming isolated, may strengthen these models.
- **Future projects working on education crisis response could consider conducting needs and wellbeing assessments of teachers, to understand the extent to which teachers are able to perform additional pastoral roles (and feel adequately supported in doing so).**

Gender-responsiveness in 'Building back better'

- **Close working relationships between school management and leadership systems and teachers are needed to address school-related gender-based violence that affects girls' learning and wellbeing.** This requires a critical focus on corporal punishment and other forms of school violence, anti-violence curricula changes, ongoing monitoring of classrooms and referral procedures as a first response.
- **Projects with a focus on improving the quality of teaching should check whether teachers have adequate support to translate 'learner-centred' and 'gender-responsive' training into effective classroom practices, in the context of resource constraints and challenges in the classroom environment.** This could include continuous professional development, clear feedback mechanisms and ongoing monitoring of classroom practices, along with supplemental resources for teachers.

Areas for further research and data considerations

- The FCDO should consider **two areas for further research** that emerged during this study:
 - **Research into the most effective forms of teacher professional development to improve gender-responsive pedagogies.** This would help to inform the adoption of different pedagogical approaches that are feasible and appropriate in low-income settings and across different contexts. Such research would need to take account of a time lag between the TPD and potential effects on learning outcomes. In addition, little is currently known about the effectiveness of *remote* models of teacher professional development and tools. In light of the disruption caused by Covid-19, further

research into this area would help to build resilience for future emergencies, as well as supporting the existing need for TPD in remote and rural settings.

- **Research into the sustainability of the improvements in teaching quality including through community-based approaches, as a result of projects' interventions** – this could be an integral focus of the planned study by the IE on sustainability.
- The **FCDO** should ensure that future girls' education projects or programmes that are designed to improve the quality of teaching **collect and directly link data on changes in girls' learning outcomes to changes in teaching quality as a result of the interventions**. This requires tracking teachers over time to adequately assess change.

8 Bibliography

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