

# Project Evaluation Report

<b>Report title:</b>	Midterm Evaluation Report
<b>Evaluator:</b>	IMC Worldwide
<b>GEC Project:</b>	Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER)
<b>Country</b>	Sierra Leone
<b>GEC window</b>	Leave No Girl Behind
<b>Evaluation point:</b>	Midline
<b>Report date:</b>	November 2021

## Notes:

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## Midterm Evaluation Report

Midterm Evaluation of the Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER) project within the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) -Leave No Girl Behind project (LNGB)

**Prepared for:** IRC and the EAGER Consortium

**Prepared By:** IMC Worldwide

*Karla Giuliano Sarr*

*Andrew Trembley*

*Gwendolyn Heaner*

*Alexandra Cervini Mull*

November 2021



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# Acronyms and Terms

BBC MA	British Broadcasting Corporation Media Action
BLN	Basic Literacy and Numeracy
CCU	Consortium Coordination Unit
CO	Country Office
CRM	Complaint Response Mechanisms
CWW	Concern Worldwide
DFID	Department for International Development
EAGER	Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient project
EE	External Evaluators (used interchangeably with evaluation team)
EQ	Evaluation Question
ESP	Education Sector Plan
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FGM	Female genital mutilation
FM	Fund Manager
FL	Financial Literacy
GBV	Gender-based violence
GCS	Girls' Combined Survey
GESI	Gender equality and social inclusion
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
HoH	Head of Household
IMC	IMC Worldwide
IO	Intermediate Outcome
IP	Implementing Partner
IRB	Institutional Review Board
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LBS	Life and Business Skills
LNGB	Leave No Girl Behind
LPLI	low performance and low improvement
MBSSE	Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MGCA	Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children Affairs
MTRP	EAGER's Midterm Response Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee
OOS	Out of School
RD	Restless Development
SBCC	Social and behaviour change communication
SD	Standard Deviation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEL	Social and emotional learning
SERAIS	Social-Emotional Response and Information Scenarios
SO	Strategic Objective
SOW	Scope of Work
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TOR	Terms of Reference
TOT	Training-of-Trainers
VfM	Value for Money
WAU	Western Area Urban

# 1. 1. Executive Summary

## Introduction

The Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER) project is a Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) funded Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) Leave No Girl Behind (LNGB) project in Sierra Leone. EAGER is implemented by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Sierra Leone in partnership with Concern Worldwide (CWW), Restless Development (RD) and BBC Media Action (BBC MA) in 10 districts across Sierra Leone. The project duration is approximately 4 years (February 2019 - November 2023) and is implemented in 10 of the 16 districts of Sierra Leone.

EAGER engages out-of-school (OOS) adolescent girls ages 13-17 who upon enrolment in the programme lack basic Literacy and Numeracy skills. EAGER aims to significantly improve their functional Literacy, Numeracy, Financial Literacy, and Life Skills through an 8-month learning programme followed by a yearlong transition period. When girls complete the learning programme, they will have written their own Empowerment Plan in which they set 4 goals for their transition including a Learning Goal, Household Goal, Community Goal, and Financial Goal. Mentors will meet with each girl twice during this 1 year transition to check on her progress toward her goals and offer encouragement and support.

This report presents the midterm evaluation approach, findings and conclusions, and recommendations. The IRC hired IMC Worldwide (IMC) to conduct the baseline, midterm and final evaluations of the EAGER project. The midterm took place from April to November 2021 and covers all 10 EAGER programme districts. While the programme includes 2 cohorts of girl beneficiaries, the midterm, like the baseline evaluation, focuses solely on Cohort 1 (i.e., 7,500 girls) as well as indirect stakeholders.

## Approach

In line with the baseline evaluation, the midterm evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach and convergent design, in which, quantitative and qualitative data collections occurred simultaneously due to time constraints. Evaluation questions (EQ) that focused on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) criteria of relevancy, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability were the foundation of the evaluation. Like the baseline, the midterm reported on programme outcomes and intermediate outcomes (IOs).

Quantitative data collected included Financial Literacy (FL) and Life Skills surveys and learning assessments<sup>1</sup> with 2,173 beneficiary girls from 212 Safe Spaces, replicating the original baseline sampling framework. The midterm evaluation also included 150 session observations. The midterm sample successfully matched 1,352 beneficiaries surveyed at the baseline. It also included surveys with 2,111 Head of Households (HoH) and 2,126 Caregivers.

The qualitative component provided context and depth to the findings of the quantitative impact evaluation and increased validity through triangulation. Qualitative sampling took a purposeful approach across the same 10 communities as at baseline (1 per each of the 10 programme districts) and reached 190 individuals (115 females and 75 males, including 64 beneficiaries) via key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). Unlike the baseline, the midterm included interviews with National Government Officials as well as EAGER staff.

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<sup>1</sup> The Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA) for numeracy and the Out of School Learning Assessment (OLA) for Literacy.

## Key Results at Midterm Evaluation

### Outcome 1- Learning

- A) **Literacy:** Beneficiaries' average Literacy scores increased at midterm both overall and for every subtask. The average score increased 1.2 SD, or 6 times the suggested target<sup>2</sup>. Midterm Literacy results demonstrate remarkable progression. Beneficiaries who were 15 or 16 years old at midterm had an average Literacy score of 47.4 compared to 19.8 at baseline. Similarly, while at baseline, 16 percent of beneficiaries could read at least 1 word of the first oral reading passage, this proportion increased to just over half at midterm.
- B) **Numeracy:** Numeracy results also show midterm gains for the average overall score and every subtask. The overall Numeracy score increased nearly 5 times the suggested target, or 0.98 SD. The greatest increases were in the ability to add and subtract large numbers and compare the value of 2 groups of bank notes. Over four-fifths (81.6%) of the beneficiaries that took part in both evaluations scored higher at midterm than at baseline at Numeracy subtasks.
- C) **Life Skills:** Beneficiaries' average score increased on the overall Life Skills Index and in all 7 categories. Like with Numeracy, midterm Life Skills scores nearly exceeded the target 5 times, increasing 0.98 full standard deviations. Increased scores vary by subject with the highest gains in supportive relationships and health knowledge, and lowest in hostile attribution bias and conflict resolution.
- D) **Financial Literacy:** Unlike the other baseline data, the FL baseline was conducted in early 2021 by EAGER Project Officers. Analysis of midterm results show that the mean FL index score increased only slightly since baseline and some declines were noted. It is possible that inconsistencies at baseline may account for dampened changes. Despite scores in FL knowledge declining, the average score in this skill area remains high.

### Outcome 2 – Transition

Although beneficiaries were not expected to have completed creating their Empowerment Plans at the time of midterm data collection, the majority of those interviewed (96 percent) said that they had discussed Empowerment Plans with their Mentors. Eighty-seven percent of respondents said that they had already been helped to create their Empowerment Plan, and nearly all of those that had created a plan (99.5 percent) believed that they could achieve it.

### Outcome 3 - Sustainability

The midterm evaluation sought to report on 1 of 3 sustainability indicators: the proportion of community leaders, boys, and caregivers that report positive and empowering attitudes towards girls' education. Qualitative findings overall suggest enthusiasm for girls' education and that there may be fewer stakeholders participating in the midterm evaluation who espouse negative attitudes towards girls' education than at baseline. At the same time, quantitative findings surprisingly indicate no change in the attitudes of caregivers and household heads towards education. More precisely, the findings for the sustainability EQ below demonstrate important changes in the skills of beneficiaries and their outlook for the future. There is little evidence, however, that the changes will be sustained beyond the current beneficiaries as structural changes at the community and system-level are limited.

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<sup>2</sup> FM Guidelines suggested defining learning outcome targets at 0.2 SD. See *LNGB MEL Guidance Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (July 2018)*. UKAID.

## Intermediate Outcomes (IOs)

The table below presents the results relevant to the IOs and their related indicators.

IO/Indicator Description	Midterm Results
<b>IO1: Attendance</b>	Attendance rates are fairly high even during heightened levels of COVID-19, with over 80 percent of girls attending at least 65 percent of the time over the entire time period.
<b>IO2: Facilitators and Mentors deliver quality inclusive instruction in BLN, Life Skills, and Financial Literacy</b>	Scores across 19 teaching practices are high for nearly all practice topics and do not significantly differ by subject. The average number of observations with a score of 3 (Good Effort) or higher on a 4-point scale across all practices is 79 percent for Literacy sessions observations and 89 percent for Numeracy sessions.
<b>IO3: Empowerment Plans</b>	
A. Percent of girls who develop an individual Empowerment Plan that is Realistic and Achievable	This indicator is not relevant until the final evaluation as beneficiaries had not yet developed Empowerment Plans at the time of midterm data collection.
B. Percent of girls who report that since joining the programme, they have made at least one new friend in their group that they can trust	Nearly all beneficiaries (95.8%) report to have made at least 1 new friend through the EAGER programme that they could talk to if they were feeling sad or worried.
C. Percent of girls who report believing that they can achieve the goals they set for themselves	Results increased at midterm as 91.4 percent of beneficiaries indicated that they believe they will be able to achieve most of their goals, compared to 81.1 percent at baseline.
D. Percent of girls who report that they have used skills learned in their Life Skills sessions	Beneficiaries overwhelmingly agreed (92%) that they have used the Life Skills they've learned outside of the Safe Spaces.
<b>IO4: Community Engagement</b>	
A. Number of people reached (including frequency) through national programming	The evaluation team did not collect data on these indicators as they are covered by BBC Media Action.
B. Percent of radio listeners who report actively engaging with topics discussed in radio programming	
C. Percent of community members that foster more supportive attitudes towards girls' opportunities, education, and safety (disaggregated by sex, role)	Despite substantial evidence from qualitative interviews indicating support for girls' opportunities, quantitative data from beneficiary, Caregiver and Heads of Household surveys suggest lower support for girls' education than at baseline. The overall composite score fell from 69.5 percent to 60.3 percent.
D. Percent of girls that report fewer barriers to accessing learning and other opportunities, and increased perception that they have the right to safety in the community	At midterm, 86 percent of beneficiaries report 2 or fewer barriers compared to 75 percent at baseline, suggesting a reduction in referenced barriers to education. Similarly, at midterm, 99.4 percent of beneficiaries believed that girls had a right to the Safe Space compared to 84.8 percent at baseline. Even more substantial gains are evident for the proportion of beneficiaries that stated that girls with disabilities had a right to access the Safe Spaces (82.2 percent at midterm compared to 57.6 percent at baseline).
<b>IO5: Government Support</b>	
A. National level representatives of Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) and Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) participate in the Baseline, Midterm and Endline data validation	The evaluation team contacted 4 national-level representatives from MBSSE and MSWGCA for participation in the midterm evaluation. Just 1 MSWGCA official agreed to an interview while the other 3 officials did not respond. At baseline, no government officials participated as the government had undergone a reshuffling shortly before data collection.

B. Number of informative project coordination meetings held with the National level representatives of MBSSE and MSWGCA annually	No documentation of coordination meetings was available. EAGER's Consortium Coordination Unit (CCU) indicates that government efforts focused on the COVID-19 response during this period. Additional revisions are needed for this indicator.
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## Responses to Evaluation Questions by OECD-DAC Criteria

### **Relevance**

Midterm findings demonstrate that EAGER's project design is highly relevant and aligned to Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) priorities, particularly the National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools and the MBSSE COVID-19 Response Plan. The project has demonstrated care and attention in understanding beneficiaries' needs in order to address many of the barriers that would likely hamper their ability to take part in EAGER. Based on baseline findings, as well as other project research, EAGER has enacted critical project adaptations to better meet the needs of beneficiaries. In addition to implementing beneficiary-focused COVID-response measures, changes to the project design included redefining beneficiaries to include Mentors, adopting an innovative and holistic transition approach focused on empowerment, and providing small conditional cash transfers to all girls. Nonetheless, the project has encountered external challenges and has not been able to clearly delineate and leverage synergies between EAGER and GoSL policies in order to foster buy-in from government partners and improve opportunities for sustainability.

### **Effectiveness**

The majority of EAGER beneficiaries have improved their learning outcomes since baseline, exceeding targets. EAGER's Safe Space approach and instructional practices seem to be effective, particularly learner-centred strategies, the culturally grounded and contextualised curricula and the real-life applicability of learned skills and knowledge. Learning clusters reinforce Mentors' skills and provide a support network. Evidence shows, however, that improvements to Life Skills are less consistent than Numeracy and Literacy improvements and it is possible that this reflects the complexity of the topic as well as the range of educational levels and capacities of project Mentors. EAGER's design is also limited in its ability to provide inclusive strategies for girls with disabilities, due in part to scope and resourcing limitations.

While the beneficiary attendance rate is 85 percent, generally high, there have been fluctuations by quarter, notably reflecting the COVID-19 lockdown and post-lockdown periods. The rate also varies between project partners. Several factors seem to support programme attendance including self-motivation, support from caregivers and partners, and Mentor support. Nearly all beneficiaries surveyed indicate that they feel safe at the Learning/Safe Spaces, and the proportion of beneficiaries aware of what to do if they are feeling unsafe has increased by 27.2 percentage points from baseline at midterm. Factors that hinder participation include childcare responsibilities, farm or housework, pregnancy, language barriers, food and financial insecurity, and early/forced marriage.

The project is also making efforts to engage community members to support girls' participation and girls' education in general. Community stakeholders indicated that they have heard messaging about EAGER meetings and the importance of supporting girls' education through a variety of modes, including radio, posters, megaphones, and word of mouth. EAGER's Community Dialogues are also well received by community leaders, as indicated by FGD discussions with leaders.

### **Efficiency**

Midterm evidence suggests that the project has made good use of its financial, human and time resources to the extent possible given factors within its control. The most recent report (covering Quarter 10 of the project) indicates that EAGER has a 77 percent implementation rate against a 79 percent expenditure against budget, demonstrating equilibrium between implementation and spending. Although COVID-19 presented a formidable obstacle to EAGER and mitigation efforts continue, the pandemic was also a forced opportunity for the project to streamline its intervention

package. Compellingly, the project has still produced meaningful outcomes in a leaner form at midterm for a good portion of beneficiaries. Evidence also shows that the project efficiently mediated FCDO budgetary uncertainty and revision with very little perceptible impact on beneficiaries. The project's timeline has been pushed back due to a variety of factors, leading to the compression of cohorts, though this will likely have little impact on targets.

### **Impact**

An analysis of project outcomes by subgroup found that while there is some variation in improvement between subgroups, there are no subgroups whose improvement is statistically different from those not in that subgroup. Differences between subgroups and average scores have also narrowed between baseline and midterm and are no longer statistically significant. At the same time, some beneficiaries have not yet been able to master key skills, including writing their name and basic Numeracy tasks, and are falling further behind their peers. In both Literacy and Numeracy, one-sixth of beneficiaries both scored below average at midterm and achieved less than one-fifth of the average improvement in their score. Those in this group are often their own caregivers, girls who are pregnant, and girls with disabilities, and in certain districts, including Western Area Urban (WAU) and Koinadugu.

EAGER operates in a challenging environment. Almost a third of women (29.9%) and 6.5% of men aged 20-24 were first married before age 18. A fifth (21%) of all girls between the age of 15 and 19 had begun child rearing. In addition, nearly two-thirds of women (63%) and a third of men (34%) think beating your wife is justified<sup>3</sup>. The project's approach is a gender transformative approach while recognising the need to be attentive to the pressures and risks that many adolescents experience. Findings from the midterm evaluation show that beneficiaries generally demonstrate increased empowerment: the proportion of respondents who believe they can accomplish difficult tasks has increased to 91 percent from 74 percent at baseline. At the individual level, the majority of beneficiaries express improvements in self-care, capacity for menstrual hygiene, and familiarity with coping mechanisms. More than one-third of beneficiaries interviewed indicated feeling that, as a result of EAGER participation, they are aware of gender-based violence (GBV) and will no longer tolerate an offense and there are anecdotes of girls reporting their partners.

At the community level, survey data shows that beneficiaries are experiencing increased confidence in their abilities to have a voice (up 18.5 percentage points from baseline) and play a role within their communities (up 21.3 percentage points). Qualitative data also overwhelmingly support that many of the beneficiaries and Mentors are experiencing empowerment within the community. This sense manifests itself in multiple ways, including in beneficiaries feeling confident to share their opinions, serve as role models to others, and observing improvements in interactions within the community.

At the household level, beneficiaries indicate greater awareness of family planning methods and prevention of STIs, though some confusion remains. Beneficiaries seem to be using assertive communication strategies alongside a renewed sense of purpose and confidence in their roles within the home. They report improved relationships with caregivers and partners, less turbulence, and greater appreciation for household management. Some beneficiaries indicate that EAGER has helped them reach a place of mutual empowerment with their partners, and some communities are making strides to combat GBV and champion girls' education. However, for many beneficiaries, these outcomes primarily enable them to more effectively manage their lives within inequitable gender roles, without transforming culturally entrenched gender norms. There also remains concern among stakeholders that boys do not participate in EAGER's main programming and that this may put at risk some beneficiaries' achievements in the long-term. Pressures to meet targets, COVID-19 delays along with the realities of project constraints and a concern for quality have prevented EAGER from implementing activities with boys as originally planned.

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<sup>3</sup> Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2017). <https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/3210>

## **Sustainability**

Girls, Mentors, and other stakeholders perceive young women in EAGER communities to have undergone profound changes in terms of the skills and knowledge gained, and their confidence in the home and community. They widely agree that the knowledge and associated behavioural changes, will be maintained and have a positive and long-lasting impact on the lives of girls as well as many Mentors. Community Dialogues have shown some signs of contributing toward sustainability, particularly in terms of institutionalisation of girl-benefiting community by-laws. The project has encountered external challenges leveraging additional interest and investment from government to help sustain the project. At both the community and system-level there is little to no evidence that there are emerging structural changes as a result of the project activities. Quite the opposite, there are frequent and cross-district indications of reliance on the project's offerings to continue, versus indications of community or government ownership. Such community-level and/or systemic changes could amplify and extend EAGER's benefits.

## **Recommendations**

These recommendations are an abridged version of the 18 recommendations provided within the full report. The full version also includes a timing/priority determination and the project's response.

- Develop a plan specifically focused on subgroups demonstrating greatest needs in terms of learning outcomes: girls who are heads of household, girls with disabilities and girls who are pregnant. *(CCU, Project Partners)*
- Strategise and formalise the component of empowering girls as role models (multipliers) with the specific task of spreading knowledge to others beyond EAGER. *(CCU, Project Partners)*
- In addition to the Empowerment Package, the project should work with beneficiaries to develop an action plan for EAGER girls clubs. *(EAGER partners)*
- Support a qualitative study (or hold a series of listening sessions) to better understand how EAGER volunteers and District Staff understand "disability". *(CCU/MEAL & Research Coordinator)*
- Reinforce training and coaching of Mentors to identify those who have weaker capacity and provide additional support. *(CCU, Project Partners)*
- Clarify the message of financial support and Empowerment Package that will be provided to beneficiaries to support the transition phase. Ensure that the message is clear at the various levels of EAGER implementation as well as with community stakeholders. *(CCU, Project Partners)*
- Clarify project's gender stance among EAGER leadership and develop a communication or training plan to clarify it to Facilitators and Mentors. Consider incorporating African feminism more directly into the curriculum. *(CCU, Project Partners)*
- Articulate a sustainability plan specific to EAGER that investigates possible structural and systemic changes in addition to improvement in soft skills. Leverage Community Action plans as much as possible. *(CCU, Project Partners)*
- Think creatively about how to include boys in EAGER programming going beyond their inclusion in Community Dialogues to foster changes in gender norms and create allies for beneficiaries. For example, hold break-out groups during Community Dialogue sessions specific to boys, or provide limited workshops on interpersonal relationships and health. *(CCU, Project Partners)*
- Clarify how improvement is defined in learning targets and whether outcomes are to be measured as a percent of beneficiaries or average scores. *(CCU, MEAL & Research Coordinator)*

## 2. Background to project

### Project context, target beneficiary groups and theory of change (Prepared by the EAGER project)

#### 2.1.1. Overview of EAGER project

EAGER is a girls' education and empowerment project funded by FCDO through the GEC's LNGB funding window. This four-year project (February 2019 - January 2023) is implemented through a consortium of four partners working in 10 districts of Sierra Leone (Freetown Urban, Bo, Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, Koinadugu, Kono, Port Loko, Pujehun and Tonkolili). Through a consortium led by the IRC via a Consortium Coordination Unit (CCU), implementing partners (IRC, CWW, RD, and BBC MA) work together to design, plan, implement and monitor all aspects of EAGER programming. While the original value was £17,916,896.63, budget cuts and subsequent realignment in August 2021 reduced the project's total value to £17,487,181.

EAGER engages out-of-school (OOS) adolescent girls aged 13-17 who either never attended or dropped out of school and have not learned basic Literacy and Numeracy skills. The project proactively seeks to include girls facing other factors of educational marginalisation, including girls with disabilities, girls who are pregnant, girls who are already mothers, girls who have married early, and girls who were affected by the 2014 Ebola outbreak.

The project aims to significantly improve girls' learning outcomes for functional Literacy, Numeracy, and Financial Literacy, as well as Life Skills through a carefully tailored 8-month learning programme. This learning programme has gone through extensive restructuring and adaptations due to the upheaval of COVID-19 and project learning. While the original design was planned for a 11-month learning programme, the first cohort of girls experienced a longer timeframe due to a 5-month gap in programming followed by review sessions, reduced hours (from 2 hour sessions down to 45 minutes) and reduced days for sessions.

When girls complete the learning programme, they will have identified financial goals which will inform their Empowerment Plan. The Empowerment Plan developed by the girls sets four goals for their transition including a Learning Goal, Household Goal, Community Goal, and Financial Goal. Mentors will meet with each girl twice during this 6-month transition to check on her progress towards her goals and offer encouragement and support.

The project is being implemented in 300 communities (Cohort for year 1: 7,500 adolescent girls) since January 2020. In year 2 and 3, the project continued to work in these communities with the same cohort, due to delays and amendments in programme implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic. In year 4, the project will expand into approximately 400 new communities and work with a new group of approximately 12,500 adolescent girls. The project aims to reach a total of 20,000 adolescent girls and 800 Mentors within the four years and the two cohorts.

#### 2.1.2. Project Context

Sierra Leone has an estimated population of 7.5 million, is divided into four administrative divisions and 16 districts, ranks 181 out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index and is the 5th poorest country in the world. The gross national income per capita is \$1,381 and 52.2 percent of the

population live below US\$1.90 per day<sup>4</sup>. The country emerged from a decade-long civil war in 2002, during which 2 million people were displaced and 50,000 people were killed.

Progress made to rebuild collapsed public systems stalled as a result of the Ebola outbreak that took place between May 2014 and March 2016. This resulted in 8,704 Ebola cases and 3,589 deaths (and an increase in non-Ebola morbidity and mortality due to the effects of the crisis on public services and local/national economy)<sup>5</sup>.

National revenue lost due to the outbreak, exacerbated by a simultaneous decline in global iron ore prices (an important source of export revenue for Sierra Leone), was estimated to be more than US\$74 million; businesses failed and families descended further into poverty<sup>6</sup>. Low confidence in public institutions and marginalisation of subgroups (survivors, health care workers and burial teams) led to weakened community cohesion. Schools were closed between June 2014 and April 2015, with some used as Ebola holding or treatment centres, and 78 teachers died during the outbreak.<sup>7</sup>

According to the 2019 Demographic Survey, 61% of women age 15-49 have experienced physical violence by anyone since age 15 (up from 56% in 2013), and 7% have experienced sexual violence (down from 11% in 2013).<sup>8</sup> ; Sierra Leone ranks among the ten countries with the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in the world and the rate of teenage pregnancy spiked during the Ebola outbreak, likely due to school closings resulting in reduced protection of girls.<sup>9</sup>

Sierra Leone has a long-standing aspiration to attain middle-income country status by 2035.<sup>10</sup> The objectives of the 2015 National Ebola Recovery Strategy incorporated medium and long-term objectives from the 2013-2018 Agenda for Prosperity, which was the original guide for growth and development. This framework lays out ambitions for diversified and private sector generated growth with gender-equitable employment, improved access to health care and improved Literacy and equitable access to education. More recently, the Sierra Leone Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019-2023 reiterates the development goals, albeit acknowledging the challenges in meeting them presented by the Ebola crisis. Throughout its extant strategic plans, the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) has expressed commitments to meeting the Sustainable Development Goal of ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promote life-long learning, and has put forward ambitious strategic outcomes for improved Literacy of out-of-school (OOS) youth in the National Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2018-2020<sup>11</sup>. In 2018, the GoSL embarked on the mission to deliver Free Quality School Education (FQSE), an initiative that aims to provide greater access, quality, and equity in education for over 2 million children by removing financial barriers to school enrolment and improving teaching and learning outcomes. In March 2021, The GoSL also launched his National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools, which seeks to ensure that schools throughout Sierra Leone are accessible to, and inclusive of, all children – especially those that are typically marginalised or excluded. In particular, the policy focuses on four excluded and marginalised groups: children with

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<sup>4</sup> UNDP (2019) Human Development Report. Briefing note for countries on the 2019 Human Development Report, Sierra Leone.

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organisation (2016). Ebola Situation Report – 16 March 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Government of Sierra Leone (2015) National Ebola Recovery Strategy for Sierra Leone.

<sup>7</sup> World Health Organisation (2016). Ebola Situation Report – 16 March 2016

<sup>8</sup> <https://dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-FR365-DHS-Final-Reports.cfm>

<sup>9</sup> UNFPA (2015) 'Rapid Assessment of Pregnant Adolescent Girls in Sierra Leone,' Freetown: UNFPA.

<sup>10</sup> Government of Sierra Leone (2018), Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019-2023

<sup>11</sup> Government of Sierra Leone, 2017, Education Sector Plan 2018-2020

disabilities; children from low-income families; children in rural and underserved areas; and girls - especially girls who are currently pregnant and in school or are parent learners.<sup>12</sup>

### 2.1.3. Project Theory of Change

The EAGER project's latest Theory of Change (ToC) can be found in Annex X. Please note that it is not the final ToC but the most recent version. The ToC is currently being updated by the EAGER project in coordination with updates to the logframe.

**Learning:** Girl-only Safe Spaces for Life Skills sessions and mentoring and Learning Spaces for Literacy, Numeracy, and Financial Literacy sessions are identified to ensure that girls can learn in a safe and inclusive learning environment. Project Officers meet one-on-one with girls to provide guidance on navigating around their specific barriers and with both female and male caregivers to again discuss barriers and girls' participation. These activities link to **Output 1** for the provision of Safe Spaces addressing primary barriers faced by adolescent girls. EAGER has developed tailored curricula to meet the needs of adolescent girls. The Life Skills curriculum builds on the IRC's Girl Shine curriculum and includes social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies as well as sessions on sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, and goal-setting. Training for Facilitators (BLN) and Mentors (Life Skills) include cascade training on inclusive, gender transformative, age appropriate and learner-centred teaching practices. This is reinforced through quarterly individual coaching and peer-learning sessions.

These activities link to **Output 2** for the successful resourcing, training and coaching of Facilitators and Mentors. Attendance (**Intermediate Outcome 1**) and quality and inclusive instruction (**Intermediate Outcome 2**) are linked to outputs under Learning. To achieve improved learning outcomes, it is assumed that girls can be supported and motivated to attend, Facilitators and Mentors can be motivated to apply their training and communities can ensure the provision and maintenance of Safe Spaces.

The pedagogical approach and mode of delivery is inclusive, and sessions are delivered in the girls' mother tongue, while all materials are in English. Therefore, the language of instruction varies between groups and locations. Mentors and Facilitators are actively encouraged to use mother tongue while facilitating sessions, but to teach some key words that relate to the main themes, in English. For Literacy, the content is in English and mother tongue is used to bridge the gap as girls learn new English vocabulary and engaging with written text in English.

As few local languages have a formal written format, and it would be uncommon to encounter any written text in a language other than English, from a functional perspective, a focus on Literacy through the English medium is the only viable option.

Integral to an inclusive approach for the BLN programme is the use of illustrations, visuals and teaching aids to guide understanding, and to help overcome language barriers. Girls are provided with Learner Books (For Cohort 1, these are shared between two girls) that include vocabulary, short sentences illustrations, diagrams, pictures etc. to guide learning. The content is tailored to the girls' context and realities so they relate to and engage with the content. It features a diverse representation of girls, and concepts of gender equity and inclusion are reflected in the content and visuals. The Access to Learning Fund can also be used to ensure girls have access to the curriculum, for example, for girls that are visually impaired, larger text and visual aids can be provided.

Training and coaching for Facilitators and Mentors reinforces good facilitation skills and inclusive practices with emphasis on managing the space to ensure every girl can participate fully, as well as

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<sup>12</sup>Government of Sierra Leone, 2021, Radica Inclusion Policy

strategies on how to include learners with impairments. These trainings also cover gender, GBV, gender responsive pedagogy, and the code of conduct.

**Transition:** Shortly after the learning programme, every girl will have completed her own Empowerment Plan with support from her Mentors and Facilitator. This plan outlines her Learning Goals, Household Goal, Community Goal, and Financial Goal. Graduating girls who have signed off on their Empowerment Plan receive a small EAGER grant to use toward their financial goal. During this six-month transition, Mentors lead two one-on-one meetings with each girl to check in on her progress and encourage her to keep using her new skills to work towards her goals. This transition period is a focused opportunity for girls to continue practicing and strengthening the knowledge, skills, and confidence they have developed, and to leverage these skills to empower themselves **(Output 3, Intermediate Outcome 3)**.

**Sustainability:** EAGER works closely with communities to encourage shifts in the harmful attitudes and behaviours that disempower and marginalise adolescent girls. Engagement strategies include six Community Dialogues that use visual aids, storytelling, and girls' voices to foster collective reflection and action planning by community leaders. This series of monthly dialogues are led by LBS and BLN Project Officers with support from Mentors and Facilitators. Quarterly meetings are held at chiefdom level to reflect on and share action plans and mobilise action to protect and empower girls at the chiefdom level. Another key engagement strategy is the series of radio programmes created by BBC MA and designed to present issues through the eyes of girls and role model supportive attitudes and practices towards adolescent girls.

These activities aim to transform the harmful attitudes and gender norms that limit girls' education and income generating opportunities **(Output 4)**, and mobilise communities to take action to remove the barriers that limit girls' access to education, good health, safety, inclusion, and overall wellbeing. Both female and male caregivers and community leaders will actively engage in dialogue **(Intermediate Outcome 4)** and ultimately experience a shift in attitudes and practices that will contribute to the sustainability of learning and transition outcomes. In addition, staff and Programme Officers will be trained on how to engage the families and caregivers of girls with disabilities, and develop their individual strategies to circumvent the specific barriers that they encounter. At the system level, the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) is consulted on the design of the BLN curriculum and research approach **(Output 5)**. As per the original logframe, his involvement with the BLN curriculum (which will be made available to support the GoSL's own non-formal learning initiatives) and acceptance of the research findings will support the GoSL in achieving the ESP strategic outcome for improved Literacy for OOS youth **(Intermediate Outcome 5)**. The Literacy and Numeracy and Life Skills curricula developed by the project will also be made available to the ministry for continued use in educational programmes targeting OOS girls. However, the project is engaged in revisiting IO and Output 5 to reflect changes in the engagement with key GoSL stakeholders since project proposal. Although the elements above are still relevant, this outcomes and output are undergoing revisions.

# 3. Midterm evaluation approach and methodology

## Objectives, Timeline of Evaluation, Evaluation Questions and Evaluation Design

### 3.1.1. Objectives and Timeline

The midterm evaluation resulted in data aligned with the programme's logframe as did the baseline evaluation, enabling comparison of results on a longitudinal basis and assessing the extent of change over the course of programme implementation for Cohort 1. It should be noted that the logframe was revised during the midterm evaluation, and while this evaluation uses the same logframe as the baseline, the endline evaluation will use the revised logframe as decided in partnership with the CCU. This should be taken into account when reviewing this midterm findings and recommendations, as the logframe revision resulted from adaptations of the project model and approach.

The findings from the midterm will be used to refine the programme's approaches for Cohort 2 and also the remaining activities for Cohort 1, and the midterm measured the successes of Cohort 1. The midterm evaluation identified any barriers to achievement of the programme outcomes, and also assessed the efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, and relevance of the programme based on the performance to date. The midterm also assessed value for money of the EAGER programme, which was not done at the baseline evaluation.

In addition, the midterm evaluation offered the opportunity to focus on the programme's overall performance to date, its responsiveness to stakeholders, perceived value of EAGER to stakeholders, and the operating context. A series of evaluation questions guided this analysis. The Evaluation Questions are structured around the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC). They focus on 5 of the 6 criteria, including relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The questions can be found below.

At the baseline, IMC worked closely with the IRC to develop the programme logframe and more comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework for the EAGER programme, which guided the midterm evaluation as it did at the baseline. The evaluation covered all 10 districts where EAGER operates and was conducted in the same communities as the baseline evaluation. The midterm, like the baseline, focused solely on the participants in Cohort 1 (i.e., 7,500 girls) and addressed both direct and indirect stakeholders.

The timeframe for the evaluation of the EAGER programme was from April to October 2021, and was timed to be conducted at the end of the Financial Literacy (FL), the Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN) and Life Skills sessions. The trainings of the field team and data collection took place from the middle of June to mid-August 2021. Below are the dates when data collection took place for both qualitative and quantitative data collection:

- *Quantitative data collection: July 1 to August 6*
- *Qualitative data collection: July 2 to July 23 (in the field); July 21 to August 13 (Remote)*

### 3.1.2. Evaluation questions

In answering the evaluation questions below, the midterm evaluation sheds light on how the EAGER programme may further adapt and improve interventions for Cohort 2. Analysis in the following sections focused on subgroup differences including for girls who are heads of household, girls who became pregnant during the programme, mothers, girls with disabilities, residency in rural vs. urban areas, older vs. younger girls, etc. where feasible.

*Table 1: Evaluation Questions*

OECD-DAC Criteria	Evaluation Question
<b>Relevance:</b> The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To what extent do project objectives and the project design respond to the needs of beneficiaries and other stakeholders? And to the needs of the diverse subgroups served by the project?</li> <li>● To what extent do project objectives and project design align with government priorities and policies, notably the MBSSE Radical Inclusion policy and the MBSSE COVID-19 response?</li> </ul>
<b>Effectiveness:</b> The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is working (and is not working) to increase the learning and potential transition of marginalised girls as defined by the project as well as project Mentors?</li> <li>● Which factors support and hinder participation in project activities and achievements, at the individual, community and more macro levels?</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency:</b> The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Have project interventions made the best use of financial, human and time resources available? Has the project been implemented as planned? Why or why not?</li> <li>● Which internal and external obstacles has the project faced and how has EAGER addressed them? What has been the effect of COVID-19 on project efficiency?</li> </ul>
<b>Impact:</b> The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Are there signs of the emerging impact that the project has had on the learning of marginalised girls, and their plans for transition? How and why was this impact achieved? What individual (including psychometric measures), home and community level characteristics are associated with girls' learning and potential transition outcomes?</li> <li>● Are girls feeling increasingly empowered to meet their own goals? What obstacles or challenges do girls still perceive and what could be done to mediate them?</li> <li>● Has the project had any unintended consequences for direct and indirect stakeholders?</li> </ul>
<b>Sustainability:</b> The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What is the likelihood that the project benefits will remain after the intervention? What structural or behavioural potential changes are visible at this midterm point? How successful has the project been in leveraging additional interest and investment?</li> </ul>

### 3.1.3. Evaluation design

Like the baseline evaluation, the midterm evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach and convergent design, in which, due to time constraints, quantitative and qualitative data collections occur simultaneously. The breadth of the quantitative approach allowed for a statistically representative sample of programme locations and participants while the qualitative component provided context and depth to the findings of the quantitative impact evaluation, as well as enabling the triangulation of findings, thus increasing their validity.

#### Summary of Sampling Approach and Data Collection Tools

### 3.1.4. Data Collection Tools

The data collection methods used at the midterm evaluation reflect a use of multiple data sources and methods to triangulate information and draw conclusions regarding relationships and links between resources/inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, the long-term goal, within the context of the country in which the intervention is occurring (e.g. political, institutional, cultural), and the nature of the EAGER consortium's implementation of the project (e.g. operational and technical factors) that enable or inhibit success. In addition to aligning with the evaluation questions, like the baseline evaluation, the midterm data collection methods linked directly to programme outcomes and intermediate outcomes.

The evaluation framework (see **Annex 2** for the complete Evaluation Framework) guided the midterm evaluation's implementation and has two parts. The first focuses on the project's logframe. The midterm updated logframe reflects EAGER's post-baseline revisions to the logframe as well as updated data collection methods that allowed for midterm verification of indicators. The second part details the methods used to answer each evaluation question. Both parts for the evaluation framework can be found in Annex 2.

As indicated in the evaluation framework, the tools that were used during the midterm evaluation included:

*Figure 1: Data collection tools*

Quantitative Tools	Qualitative Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA)</li><li>• Out of school Learning Assessment (OLA)</li><li>• Girls' Combined Survey including Financial Literacy tool</li><li>• Session Observation Tool</li><li>• Survey with Heads of Household and primary Caregivers</li><li>• Programme Data Sheet</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key Informant Interview (KII) Guides</li><li>• Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guides</li><li>• Data Collection Checklist<sup>13</sup></li><li>• FGD and KII Cover Sheets</li></ul>

Evaluation tools were all prepared and designed in English as local languages remain largely oral in common practice. In order to promote participants' comfort and assure understanding between

<sup>13</sup> The Data collection checklist was used by the qualitative data collectors to guide their work in the field. It lists the different interviews and FGDs and notes when they took place, etc. It is an organisational and accountability tool.

data collectors and participants, all instructions and questions were delivered in local languages. A portion of the data collector trainings were dedicated to identifying the appropriate local language terms for both qualitative and quantitative activities. Quantitative data collectors practiced administering surveys and qualitative data collectors facilitating KIIs and FGDs in local languages. Quantitative data collectors recorded all data on tablets in English while qualitative data collectors wrote detailed field notes in English and transcriptions were also prepared in English. Although there was a potential risk to data quality associated with an oral translation process, knowledge of reading and writing in local languages is quite limited, including amongst in-country data collectors and quantitative data collectors, and verbatim note taking within the language uttered is not possible. These limitations are common in similar multilingual settings. Training addressed language issues for both the quantitative and qualitative team. For qualitative transcripts, the data collection firm employed a quality assurance strategy and assigned a staff member responsibility to oversee the integrity of the transcription process. IMC performed regular spot-checking and the data collection firm addressed issues found when they arose.

### 3.1.5. Sampling Approach

#### ***Quantitative Sampling***

The quantitative sample was designed to be conducted on a longitudinal basis, following a single sample of girls as they progress through Cohort 1. The sampled communities were stratified based on geography and randomly selected. Based on the assessment parameters at the baseline of the full programme, a sample of only 760 beneficiaries was necessary to be able to assess transition and learning outcomes of the programme. However, because there was an interest in ensuring a sufficiently large sample of girls in four marginalised groups used at baseline (girls with disabilities, girls with children, girls who are married, or working outside the home), the sample was substantially increased. The intended baseline sample included 2,160 respondents, but data from only 2,073 beneficiaries was collected due to a Lassa Fever outbreak in Tonkolili. This final sample included a buffer to assume for a 30 percent attrition rate, and includes plans for replacements. Given the interruptions to both the programme and beneficiaries' lives due to COVID-19, the replacement protocol was even more important to ensure sufficient sample power. The midterm sample included 2,173 beneficiaries from 212 Safe Spaces, and 150 sampling observations, replicating the original baseline intent. The midterm sample successfully matched 1,352 beneficiaries interviewed at the baseline. While overall analysis included the entire sample to be representative of the programme, barriers and subgroup analyses comparing baseline and midterm values only utilised the communities that were actually visited at baseline for data collection.

While the baseline for the full programme was conducted in 2019, the baseline for the Financial Literacy programme was completed in 2021 by surveying 1,402 beneficiaries that were part of the 2019 baseline sample, and 471 beneficiaries not included in the 2019 baseline. While the first priority was to include girls from the full programme baseline sample, girls who were included in the Financial Literacy baseline survey served as the priority alternates whenever possible at the midterm evaluation. In addition to the data collected at the 2019 full programme baseline and the 2021 Financial Literacy baseline, observations in 150 Safe Spaces were administered during Life Skills and Financial Literacy sessions at the midterm evaluation.

While the total number of beneficiaries in the sample reached the goal of 2,160, beneficiaries from Koinadugu are slightly underrepresented in the sample. . This is due to the fact that four Safe

Spaces were missed in Koinadugu during data collection, and therefore the sample size was 40 OLAs, EGMAs and Girls' Combined Surveys short (10 beneficiaries were surveyed per Safe Space). Surveys were also missing from Caregivers and/or Head of Households as well in those communities. As such, Dalan re-fielded a team to visit those four Safe Spaces, but unfortunately, data was only collected from a limited number of beneficiaries (20 total) across the four Safe Spaces, and no OLAs or EGMAs were conducted with beneficiaries. As such, the final sample number is missing 40 OLAs and EGMAs from Koinadugu, and 20 Girls' Combined Surveys as well. This results in 178 completed OLA-EGMAs in Koinadugu out of the intended 210 (and 203 surveys). However, due to increased collection in other districts, the midterm still reached the intended total sample size of 2,160, specifically 2,173 beneficiaries were surveyed (, as well as their Caregivers/ HoH when appropriate.

While the midterm met the sample goal, given the missing data from Koinadugu, it does leave that district slightly underrepresented in the sample. Specifically, it is only 8.1 percent of the sample instead of 9.7 percent like the other districts. To address this underrepresentation and reduce bias, the Quantitative Specialist used statistical weighting to ensure all districts were representative of their beneficiary populations. Statistical weighting was also applied at baseline to account for the data missing due to a Lassa Fever outbreak. Due to the weighting, results presented in the baseline and midterm are comparable.

### ***Qualitative Sampling***

Qualitative sampling for the midterm was purposeful and targeted each of the ten intervention districts of the EAGER project, specifically the same communities visited at baseline. The most significant change was cutting down on the number of KIIs and FGDs completed during the midterm to lessen the burden on respondents as well as the evaluation team, and therefore improving data quality. This decision was made in partnership with the Fund Manager and EAGER's Consortium Coordination Unit. This group comprises the EAGER leadership team from IRC and oversees implementation by the Consortium Technical Team (CCT) and the three partners (Concern Worldwide, IRC and Restless Development). In total, the midterm evaluation included FGDs and KIIs with 190 individuals (115 females and 75 males, including 64 beneficiaries) whereas the baseline engaged 441 respondents. The qualitative sampling was largely the same in terms of the respondent list at the community level at the midterm as conducted at baseline. However, there were changes to the qualitative sample from baseline to midterm which resulted in less interviews/FGDs than the baseline. These changes include:

- FGDs with boys and caregivers as well as community leaders were not conducted in all 10 communities like the baseline evaluation. IMC consulted with EAGER partners when selecting which communities those research activities should be held in.
- The midterm did not require speaking with the same individuals as at baseline, but selection criteria was in place to ensure the respondents have been part of the project for at least one year. In the case of Mentors and/or Facilitators, if they were newer, the team interviewed them so long as a colleague with more longevity with the project, and ideally someone who participated at baseline was present. Participant quotas were established similar to those established at baseline for each community.
- Girls that are part of the subgroups of focus (i.e., girls who are mothers, girls who are heads of household, girls with disabilities) had a higher quota. For example, 40 of 64

beneficiaries interviewed were mothers (19 have 2+ children) and 31 of 64 beneficiaries were married.

- At the country-level, EAGER the CCU and leadership as well as national ministry officials were added to the interview list. The team looked to the CCU to provide a list of key informants and make initial contact. The IMC's international team conducted these interviews using remote methods (Teams, Google, etc.).

## Evaluation ethics and COVID-19 Protocols

### 3.1.6. Evaluation Ethics

Related to the safeguarding elements of the midterm evaluation, the approach IMC used during the baseline evaluation served as the basis for our approach at midterm, as we had no incidence or problems with the established protocols. The evaluation team revised some of the safeguarding materials to ensure they reflect FCDO's data storage and future usage policy, as well as to reflect updated referral information.

A second wave in cases of COVID-19 in Sierra Leone in June 2021 created a new ethical dimension at the midterm and IMC ensured the COVID-19 safety protocols were explained in a clear manner to the field team, and that IMC's COVID-19 protocols follow the international best practices and guidance (i.e., WHO) related to safety. The field team was required to sign a COVID-19 protocols form that presented the policies they were expected to follow in the field for the protection of both the field team and respondents, as well as community members. The COVID-19 case rate was monitored closely and the training and data collection schedule ended up being adjusted due to an increase of COVID-19 cases in Freetown. This decision was made in partnership with the CCU.

COVID-19 has also caused increased violence against women and girls (VAWG), especially in the case of domestic violence. Given this consideration, IMC revisited the reporting and referral protocols to ensure they were adequate and updated as needed to reflect the increase in VAWG over the past year. IMC sought guidance from both Dalan and the CCU to be sure that procedures were appropriate and contextualised.

The field team was also re-trained in the safeguarding, reporting, and referral process during the training. The CCU presented on the safeguarding and child protection component and all field team members signed the Child Protection Policy provided by IRC. The same consent process was used during the midterm evaluation as was used at the baseline except for the addition of adding in consent related to the future storing, sharing and reuse of the data according to FCDO guidelines. All field team members were re-trained in the consent process prior to the field component.

The midterm tools and Inception Memo also went through an Institutional Review Board (IRB) process as was done with the baseline evaluation. IMC undertook the same steps as taken during the baseline, providing the CCU with the findings from IRB and small adjustments were made based on IRB feedback, as well as a letter confirming successful completion of the IRB. The safeguarding and IRB processes were detailed in the Baseline Evaluation Report.

### 3.1.7. COVID-19 Safety Protocols

IMC consulted with Dalan to inquire on the COVID-19 safety protocols they had in place for their field work activities. The protocols were deemed sufficient and strengthened given the increase in case rates in Freetown. The protocols used during the training and data collection included:

- Temperatures were taken at the start of each day of the training upon arrival
- All team members wore masks during each day of the training
- The quantitative team was separated into two rooms to follow the restrictions issued by the government (limit of 50 people per room)
- At the training, all field staff signed a COVID-19 Protocols document acknowledging they were aware of the safety protocols and would adhere to them. They were also provided a copy to carry with them in the field.
- All field team members wore masks during each day of data collection
- Masks were provided to all respondents during qualitative and quantitative data collection
- Hand sanitisers were given to all field staff to use during data collection
- The maximum number of respondents in FGDs was limited to 8 people
- Interviews/FGDs/surveys were undertaken in places with good respiratory hygiene (good air circulation)
- Shaking hands was prohibited
- Sanitiser wipes were used to wipe down field staffs' equipment (pencils/laminated items/data collection devices) between respondents
- After data collection was completed each day, the field team were asked to return directly to their hotel/accommodation and remain there. They were asked to not visit any crowded bars/restaurants or venues
- Phone numbers/contact information was collected where possible from respondents other than the beneficiary girls for contact tracing.
- Planning arranged that, in the event that a team member became ill with COVID-19 symptoms, they would be immediately quarantined at their home (they would be transported home and provided with proper PPE and quarantining instructions) and separated from other field team members and respondents. They would have been tested and remained quarantined until results are known. If they tested positive, IMC and Dalan would pull all field team members they worked with in the field, quarantining them at their homes, and have them tested. For respondents, Dalan would have notified communities visited by the team for data collection and work with the CCU and EAGER partners to inform all respondents that they need to be tested.

Upon completion of data collection, there was no known cases of COVID-19 on the field team, respondents or in the communities where data collection took place.

## Summary of Key Changes from Baseline Evaluation

### 3.1.8. Virtual Training and Training-of-Trainers

Training and data collection at the midterm evaluation took longer than at the baseline given the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that data collection took place during the start of rainy season which made for difficult travel. Additionally, since international travel was not permitted due to COVID-19, all training activities were done virtually, led by the international team members which took longer and required additional days and resources to ensure the team was properly prepared.

Prior to the training of the full field team, IMC held a training-of-trainers (TOT) for the field supervisors from each team. This was held over two days virtually on June 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 2021 led by the international team members. The purpose of the TOT was to ensure the field supervisors had an advanced understanding of the tools and field protocols, including sampling, so that they could assist the other team members during the full team training and also provide support in the field. The TOT covered the following:

- Overview of the EAGER project and its goals
- Presentation of all Quantitative Tools and practice
- Timed Learning Assessment
- Sampling plans and identifying who to interview
- Community Visits and Communication with Partners
- Ways to manage teams efficiently during collection period

The training for the full field team was expected to start on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021 and run until June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 with the teams deploying into the field over the weekend and starting data collection on July 28<sup>th</sup>. That said, there was a spike in COVID-19 cases in Freetown and based on the WHO data, the cases were expected to peak on July 22<sup>nd</sup>. The government also issued restrictions due to the high number of cases limiting the number of persons that could be in a room/gathering which impacted the quantitative team given the size of the team. Given this context, IMC and the CCU decided to delay the in-person training on the 21<sup>st</sup> June and instead have field staff pick up learning packets of materials from Dalan that they could use at their homes on June 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> with virtual training support from the IMC's international team members. The qualitative team also met in-person in small groups with the field supervisors over the weekend at Dalan to ensure they were reviewing the materials prior to the in-person training the following week.

In-person training then started on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021 with the quantitative team being separated into two rooms and then the qualitative team in another room to adhere to COVID-19 restrictions. The training started with an overview of the midterm led by Dalan and then the CCU presented on the Safeguarding elements as well as an overview of the EAGER programme. Dalan presented also on the COVID-19 protocols put into place for data collection. The training continued until June 30<sup>th</sup> for the quantitative team, and then until July 1<sup>st</sup> for the qualitative team. The training was led by the international team member virtually via Skype and WhatsApp, and then the field supervisors on each team provided in-person support to the other team members.

Below, you can find an overview of the trainings for both teams:

- Introduction to the research: Purpose of the midterm evaluation, Main research questions, Objectives of the midterm evaluation

- Overview of the EAGER project (led by the CCU)
- Child protection and safeguarding (led by the CCU)
- Research ethics and code of conduct in communities: informed consent/assent including changes from the baseline, with an emphasis on UK Data Archive protocol and future usage of data; confidentiality)
- COVID-19 safety protocols
- Details of fieldwork: Sampling strategy, in-depth review of tools, overview of process for entering communities
- Tool review: Discussion of stakeholder types, review, clarification and revision of tools
- Methods of training:
  - *For Qualitative:*
  - Review of qualitative tools that focused on participatory methods;
  - Note taking and recording;
  - Process for contacting respondents and entering the field;
  - Assent/consent processes;
  - Discussed how to ensure girls with disabilities can participate and interviewers can mitigate barriers to discussion; and,
  - Team planning meetings: Groups met together to identify appropriate terms in local languages, discuss roles, and plan logistics.
  - *For Quantitative:*
  - Use of mobile devices data entry and troubleshooting;
  - Review of all quantitative tools;
  - Consent/assent process;
  - Process for selecting respondents;
  - Developed translation guide for key terms in relevant local languages; and,
  - Discussed how to properly assess and survey girls with disabilities and how to minimise barriers.
- Key lessons learned from the baseline evaluation that were discussed with both teams:
  - New policy on entering communities- informing programme staff at least a day prior to arrival;
  - New procedures for providing daily updates on number of surveys completed via WhatsApp;
  - Reminder that field staff should undertake data collection with the least impact on girls' schedules;
  - Engaging HoH or Caregivers before girls so they can go to work (at baseline we had an issue with not being able to locate Caregivers/HOH);

- Reaffirmed that no male quantitative data collectors are allowed in Safe Spaces even for data collection; and,
- Reaffirmed that there are no time limits or language constraints when describing and explaining any aspect of the surveys and learning assessments.
- Debriefing protocols, data quality control and remote support (safety/security and communications)
- Piloting of tools for one day- Qualitative team only. Qualitative tools were piloted in three programme communities in WAU for one day during the training. Since the quantitative tools were relatively the same and were piloted at baseline, there was no piloting of the quantitative tools.

### 3.1.9. Team size for midterm data collection

Data collection needed to be completed in a shorter period than the baseline evaluation since the EAGER programme activities ended at the end of July/early August. As such, the original midterm workplan had data collection completed in 3 weeks versus the 4 weeks it took at baseline. Also, there were more data collection tools at midterm (specifically the Financial Literacy survey tool, and then additional KII guides for new stakeholder groups). Given this context, Dalan fielded a larger field team for the quantitative component. This included adding in an additional 14 quantitative data collectors. Otherwise, the field team size will remain the same, but there were 54 quantitative data collectors instead of 42 at midterm. The quantitative teams worked in groups of 3 with one field supervisor per team. They will be sorted into their sub-teams at the beginning of the training and work in their sub-teams during most of the small-group exercises.

The qualitative data collection field team had 13 qualitative data collectors (the baseline had 12) that were broken up into 3 teams of 4-5 qualitative data collectors. There were two field supervisors that participated in the TOT and helped the other team members during the training and in the field.

### 3.1.10. Removal of Community Case Studies and greater focus on Subgroup analysis

Baseline data analysis produced a set of community case studies. While valuable, the level of effort to develop the case studies exceeded their value and together with EAGER, the evaluation team decided to forgo community case studies at midterm. Instead, the evaluation team reinforced its efforts to produce data relevant to girls with disabilities, girls who are mothers, and girls who are heads of household, and girls who are married (and any other more vulnerable subgroups) for both the quantitative and qualitative components.

As the sampling strategies above lay out, qualitative recruitment prioritised girls that fit into the subgroups to the extent possible and with continuous attention to girls' already vulnerable positions. Training of the field team emphasised that data collection efforts should not place an unreasonable burden on girls especially those who are in the subgroups.

### 3.1.11. Desk Review Component at Midterm

At baseline the evaluation team paid attention to project design documents including EAGER's theory of change, the logframe, the MEL Framework and curriculum materials. At midterm, the desk review focused on additional programme materials which included:

- EAGER's COVID-19 medium term response plan
- project annual reports and the most recent quarterly report
- studies and reports from research, and mapping activities
- updates to curricula
- financial documents, including the LNGB cost analysis and financial burn rates
- attendance records
- other monitoring data, including the project's indicator matrix

EAGER provided a series of documents for the evaluation team's review as well as the attendance data. Document review occurred mostly during the analysis portion of the evaluation to assure relevant inclusion in this report. A list of documents reviewed can be found in the Annex 2.

### 3.1.12. New Community Entry Protocols

During the baseline evaluation there were issues regarding the entering programme communities and ensuring that the girls were available for the surveys and other data collection activities. In some cases, the Project Officers were caught off guard which impacted the ability to do data collection in a timely manner and also getting approval from community leaders if necessary. As such, the midterm tried to incorporate better community entry protocols. That said, while the protocols were developed, there were still issues especially since the data collection period was pushed back several days due to the increase in COVID-19 in Freetown. That meant changing the data collection schedules at the last minute and only sharing the data collection schedules with EAGER programme staff a handful of days before data collection began. Below is the process that was developed for community entry at midterm:

- Updated contact lists were requested from and provided by the CCU for all EAGER project staff in the communities that were to be visited for data collection.
- Once the data collection schedule was approved by EAGER leadership, Dalan began reaching out to the Project Officers in each district and then the facilitators, and/or Mentors in the community to alert them of their tentative arrival.
- At the training the field staff began calling the Project Officers to let them know the days they would be in their district.
- At least 24 hours prior to arrival field staff were told to alert the Facilitators and Mentors of their arrival.
- Field supervisors provided daily updates on their location to the international team members and status of the data collection so any delays could be tracked.
- For communities that were accidentally missed during the main data collection process, Dalan developed a schedule for visiting the communities and shared it with the local staff to get approval prior to re-fielding a team. The CCU was kept up to date on any re-fielding of teams and were alerted when approval was given by local EAGER staff.

Community entry procedures were part of the training and were adhered to as much as possible. There were some cases where the field team did not make contact with the Facilitators/Mentors

prior to arrival which then delayed the data collection process as respondents were not gathered for data collection.

### 3.1.13. Value for Money Assessment

Assessing value for money (VfM) was not a component of the baseline evaluation however a VfM analysis was a component of the midterm analysis and there is a dedicated section within the midterm evaluation report for VfM.

For the purposes of the midterm, the VfM analysis was focused on stakeholders' views on the importance and value of EAGER activities and the benefits that they view EAGER bringing both at the individual and community level. Qualitative data captured VfM perspectives, specifically through KIIs with beneficiary girls, male partners of beneficiary girls, Mentors, community leaders, and local government officials; and FGD's with caregivers, and beneficiary girls. Quantitative data collected from the various tools (Girls' Combined Survey and Caregiver/HOH survey) also supported the VfM analysis.

No specific evaluation questions were added related to VfM, but instead, analysis related to VfM used data from the different OECD-DAC criteria and related evaluation questions for the midterm evaluation. Specifically, this included the following OECD-DAC criteria and the areas relevant to each criteria where IMC collected data:

- **Relevancy:** How the project is designed to improve beneficiaries' lives (girls, Mentors) and stakeholders (caregivers, partners, community members) perceptions of that improvement (specifically, do they see the value in EAGER's outcomes?)
- **Effectiveness:** In what ways is EAGER positively affecting girls' lives; The girls' perceived value of the various EAGER activities
- **Efficiency:** Consider the perceived benefits of EAGER by stakeholders in relation to the inputs (account financial, human and in-kind)
- **Impact:** Perceived feelings of increased empowerment by beneficiary girls to meet their own goals; perceived impact on Mentors
- **Sustainability:** How girls' lives have improved and whether or not it will likely continue to remain that way (or improve further) after they end their participation in EAGER

Approaching VfM in this manner (using the ActionAid VfM framework<sup>14</sup> as guidance) allowed for the midterm to include feedback from stakeholders at the centre of the analysis of change, linking their feedback (specifically perceived value), to the resources EAGER uses to achieve the outcomes. The VfM analysis also identified areas of improvement to enable continuous adaptation of EAGER and increase impact for future cohorts. This approach also ensured that VfM was assessed from the "bottom up" specifically by the stakeholders themselves versus taking a more traditional top-down approach to assessing VfM.

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<sup>14</sup> VfM framework taken from: Value for Money in ActionAid: Creating an Alternate, ActionAid, May 2017

### Summary of Limitations and mitigation strategies

The midterm evaluation had several limitations that are discussed below. That said, the evaluation team believes that none of them impacted the quality of the data or the accurateness of the findings and recommendations. Additionally, the approach was still able to be implemented as intended, ensuring the evaluation was methodologically sound.

Below we note the limitations and challenges for both qualitative and quantitative data collection, as well as the mitigation strategies ensuring that the challenge/limitation does not impact the quality of the data or findings and recommendations.

Figure 2: Limitations during evaluation and Mitigation Strategies

#	Limitation/Challenge	Mitigation Strategy
<b>Limitations for both Qualitative and Quantitative Data Collection</b>		
1	There were often delays during data collection which resulted in data collection teams arriving to communities on different days than planned and then having to take time to gather beneficiaries/respondents without support from programme staff.	The evaluation team had planned on the local programme staff gathering stakeholders and having Safe Spaces to hold the interviews and surveys with girls and other respondents. While a data collection calendar was prepared earlier in the Inception Phase, the schedule had to be changed due to COVID-19 which resulted in less time to alert programme staff. Once the team was more than one day behind schedule, the entire schedule had to change. The team also communicated directly with local EAGER programme staff as opposed to district level representative.
2	Travel during rainy season made it difficult to stick to the planned schedule and more difficult logistically speaking	While data collection had planned to be started a few weeks before rainy season, due to delaying because of the COVID-19 cases, the team had to be in the field during rainy season.
3	Training of field staff held virtually due to COVID-19 and travel restrictions which made it more difficult to ensure the team was trained properly prior to data collection. Additionally, due to COVID-19, there was one less day of in-person training.	<p>The international team members held a Training of Trainers prior to the full team being trained. This allowed the field supervisors to have a few extra days of training so they were well versed in the tools and sampling approach and could help answer questions during the full field training. This approach ensured there was one member on each data collection sub-team that had advanced training in the field.</p> <p>For the full team training, since the training schedule had to change, and we did not want to delay the data collection start date more than needed, the first two days of the training were home-based since we did not want the full team to meet in-person due to the COVID-19 transmission rates in Freetown. As such, the international team members prepared packages and videos for field team members to pick up from Dalan so they could participate in the training from their homes for the first two days. While this was the best option given the COVID-19 risks, it did result in less quality training and one less day of in-person training for the full team.</p>

4	Final data collection schedule was not finalised until right before data collection began due to the shift in the training and data collection period due to COVID-19. This left less time to alert the community level programme staff prior to arrival.	While Dalan had prepared a schedule several weeks before data collection started so it could be circulated to EAGER partners for approval prior to data collection, the schedule had to change at the last minute due to COVID-19. Dalan revised the schedule and it was circulated for approval only a few days before data collection began. Since there was this delay, programme staff in the communities had less time to prepare for the data collection in their communities. At the endline, hopefully COVID-19 won't impact the workplan and Dalan will be sure to prepare the data collection schedule several weeks before data collection as originally planned at the midterm.
5	COVID-19 and ensuring the protection of all team members and respondents during training and data collection.	IMC, the CCU and Dalan all assessed the risk of COVID-19 and came up with protocols to be used by the field staff both at the training and in the field during data collection to protect themselves and respondents. Protocols were presented at the training session and all field staff were provided a protocols sheet to carry in the field as a reminder. To IMC's knowledge, there were no cases of COVID-19 during data collection. Please see the section above discussing the COVID-19 protocols that were used.
<b>Limitations for Quantitative Data Collection</b>		
1	Some communities or Safe Spaces were skipped due to mis-scheduling. Still missing some data from four communities in Koinadugu.	In two districts, Port Loko and Koinadugu, during the main data collection, 2 Safe Spaces in Port Loko were skipped and 4 in Koinadugu. Dalan re-fielded some quantitative data collectors to collect the missing data. While all data was collected from Port Loko, data is still missing from Koinadugu and the district will be underrepresented in the sample. The sample size was 40 OLAs, EGMAs and Girls' Combined Surveys short (10 beneficiaries were surveyed per Safe Space). Surveys were also missing from Caregivers and/or Head of Households as well in those communities. Unfortunately, even after re-fielding quantitative data collectors, data was only collected from a limited number of beneficiaries (20 total) across the four Safe Spaces, and no OLAs or EGMAs were conducted with beneficiaries. As such, the final sample number is missing 40 OLAs and EGMAs from Koinadugu, and 20 Girls' Combined Surveys as well. This leaves us with only 178 completed OLA-EGMAs in Koinadugu out of the intended 210 (and 203 surveys). Weighting was used during analysis to account for Koinadugu being underrepresented.
2	Lack of connectivity in the field led to data not being uploaded daily or uploaded more than once. While several of the sub-teams were posting updates daily as requested on the WhatsApp platform, some of the sub-teams did not and it was difficult to track their progress if they were not uploading the data daily due to connectivity issues.	Teams were trained to upload data daily so that the Quantitative Specialist could review the data regularly. In some cases, data was not uploaded because of connectivity issues. That said, as a backup, the team was trained to provide daily updates via WhatsApp with the number of surveys completed by type (GCS, OLA, EGMA, Caregiver, HoH) so the Quantitative Specialist could ensure that all the necessary surveys were being completed for the intended sample. That said, not all sub-teams followed this guidance. Luckily, all necessary surveys were completed in most districts without issue (other than Port Loko and Koinadugu as discussed above).

<p><b>3</b> Problems with respondent lists. There was confusion if a beneficiary was listed both on the main sample list and also the replacement list, or there were two beneficiaries with the same name.</p>	<p>Additional time was needed to match the different quantitative data records and clean unique identification numbers and spend following up with quantitative data collectors, matching beneficiaries that were on both lists.</p>
<p><b>4</b> Quantitative data collectors did not enter in correct beneficiary ID numbers which resulted in data needing to be reconciled after data collection to match the data from the different tools as needed.</p>	<p>The survey forms on ODK and Tangarine were meant to be auto populated with beneficiary ID numbers to make it easier for quantitative data collectors. Auto population worked for most cases; Literacy and Numeracy forms could not support both alternates and sample numbers. While typos in ID numbers were significantly reduced since baseline, additional time was still needed to correct mistakes. The Quantitative Specialist worked with Dalan and their project manager to reconcile data, instructing the quantitative data collectors on how to clean and reconcile the data set so that each beneficiary had the required surveys linked to their ID number.</p>
<p><b>5</b> Initially there was confusion for when to administer the Caregiver and Head of Household survey but this was corrected within the first week.</p>	<p>The Quantitative Specialist noticed that some quantitative data collectors were skipping Caregiver and/or HoH surveys when the quantitative data collectors uploaded data. The team also expressed confusion as to when to administer those surveys via the WhatsApp group. This issue was caught during week 1 of data collection before quantitative data collectors had left their initial communities so they could conduct the missing HoH and Caregiver surveys before moving to the next community.</p>
<p><b>6</b> Shortage of female quantitative data collectors on the team due to changes in the data collection schedule which resulted in several quantitative data collectors becoming unavailable. This led to one quantitative sub-team having no females on the team.</p>	<p>When planning for data collection, IMC requested that there was at least one female on each sub-team which consisted of 3 quantitative data collectors. This is due to the fact that males, including quantitative data collectors, are not allowed in Safe Spaces, and also IMC wanted to have a gender-balanced team. Because data collection was pushed back nearly a week due to COVID-19, some of the original enumeration team members became unavailable, including several females. As such, one of the enumeration sub-teams were all males. Once IMC was informed of this change, IMC requested one of the female quantitative data collectors from another sub-team join the all-male team after her sub-team's data collection was completed so that she could undertake the observation sessions in the Safe Spaces.</p>
<p><b>7</b> In one district (Koinadugu), two sub-teams visited the same Safe Spaces resulted in double data collection.</p>	<p>Two sub-teams had the same two Safe Spaces on their schedules in Koinadugu. Data was collected from both. After data collection, data was reconciled and cleaned at the conclusion of data collection and the Quantitative Specialist was able to delete the repeated data. To make up for the fact that this data was deleted, Dalan re-fielded quantitative data collectors to two Safe Spaces in Koinadugu for data collection that were missed due to the scheduling mishap.</p>
<p><b>8</b> Session Observation Tool less appropriate for Life Skills than other session topics</p>	<p>The Session Observation tool was designed and approved at baseline based on a client-suggested tool, and were intended to be used on Literacy and Numeracy sessions. The tool was not updated for midterm, when the plurality of observations was of Life Skills tools. Some of the skills observed, such as opportunities to practice, may have not been relevant to Life Skills sessions. This concern was brought to EE's attention after collection was completed.</p>

Limitations for Qualitative Data Collection	
1	<p>Less interviews with National Level Government representatives than planned. Challenges getting in contact with representatives.</p> <p>While IMC reached out to the national government representatives provided by the CCU, only one representative actually participated in an interview with the Team Leader (held remotely). To make up for the lack of interviews with national government representatives, the evaluation team leaned more heavily on interviews with local government officials in analysis and triangulation with EAGER leadership.</p>
2	<p>EAGER finance director not available for interview.</p> <p>The Team Leader asked to interview the Finance and Compliance Manager from IRC for the EAGER programme. However, due to a busy time in the programme, the director was not available. As such, the EE Team Leader discussed finances with EAGER Team Lead, reviewed some financial documents and triangulated with donor perspective as well.</p>
3	<p>Team members struggled to keep their mobile devices charged during data collection and were frequently out of range of network coverage. Therefore, the qualitative team did not provide the daily updates as requested during the training which made providing quality assurance difficult.</p> <p>While the field supervisors were asked to provide daily updates on WhatsApp, several times these were not provided due to the team members' phones batteries not being charged. Some of the team members were provided with travel battery chargers, however, some were not. As such, it was difficult to communicate with the team daily to provide quality assurance.</p>
4	<p>Lack of interviews or FGDs with girls known to have disabilities.</p> <p>While the evaluation team aimed to engage more girls with disabilities via FGDs and KIIs, qualitative data collectors were not able to know whether girls engaged via interviews and FGDs had disabilities. That said, it is believed that data collectors were only recording physical disabilities that were obvious without asking girls if they had any disabilities, so there could have been respondents with emotional and learning disabilities in the KIIs/FGDs that the data collectors were not aware of. While girls with disabilities were not engaged to our knowledge, girls from the various subgroups made up much of the respondents for the KIIs and FGDs with beneficiary girls. For example, 40 of 64 beneficiaries interviewed were mothers (19 have 2+ children) and 31 of 64 girls were married.</p> <p>During KIIs/FGDs with different stakeholder groups, respondents were asked about girls with disabilities and their involvement with the EAGER programme. This data allowed the evaluation team to touch on girls with disabilities in their analysis. The quantitative data included the Washington Group questions for both the baseline and midterm assessments.</p>
5	<p>One of the individuals interviewed as a "male partner" was actually the male partner of a Mentor, rather than a beneficiary.</p> <p>The data from this interview were maintained and analysed alongside other male partner data. Where information from this interview was mentioned alone, it was clearly indicated that the quote, for instance, comes from the partner of a Mentor. Given the project's interest in Mentors' experiences, the Team Leader embraced this inadvertent perspective as one that provides value-added to the evaluation.</p>

## 4. Key Results

### Outcomes

#### 4.1.1. Learning

##### *Literacy*

Beneficiaries' average Literacy scores increased both overall and for every subtask. While the target was set at an improvement of the overall score by 0.2 Standard Deviations<sup>15</sup> (SD) to 22.4, the average score increased 1.2 SD, or six times the suggested target. Standard Deviation is a measure of the variation of scores between beneficiaries who took part in the baseline. The 0.2 SD target set the goal for the average beneficiary score at midterm to be equal to the score of a beneficiaries in the top 43<sup>rd</sup> percentile at baseline. In fact, the average score at midterm is equal to a beneficiaries in the top 11<sup>th</sup> percentile of the baseline scores. All subtask scores were significantly different at the 95 percent confidence level.<sup>16</sup> Nearly all learning outcomes easily obtain significant differences since baseline. This is due to both the very high increases in scores since baseline, and the fact that a very large sample size were chosen at baseline to ensure a large number of marginalised subgroups.

At baseline, the average test-taker was able to read 9.3 familiar words per minute, and could read on average only 4.1 words of the oral reading passage. Even when controlling for age, the progression is remarkable: for example, beneficiaries who were 15 or 16 at baseline had an average Literacy score of 19.8. Beneficiaries aged 15 or 16 at midterm had an average score of 47.4, or 1.2 standard deviations higher than baseline. The average score masks that, in fact, 48 percent of test-takers could not read any of the first oral reading passage at all at midterm. At midterm, just over half were able to read at least one word on the first oral reading passage (see below).

*Table 2: Literacy Outcomes at Baseline and Midterm*

Subtasks	Baseline Mean	Baseline SD	Midterm Mean	Change (in %)	Change (in SD)	P-value
<b>1. Listening Comprehension</b>	43.4	41.5	87.4	+44.0	+1.1	0.00
<b>2. Real Life Reading</b>	25.5	29.7	63.6	+38.1	+1.3	0.00
<b>3. Letter Sounds</b>	27.5	36.5	31	+3.5	+0.1	0.00
<b>4. Familiar Words</b>	9.3	19.2	17.4	+8.1	+0.4	0.00
<b>5. Oral Passage Reading and Comprehension</b>	8.3	19.9	31.1	+22.8	+1.1	0.00

<sup>15</sup> FM Guidelines suggested defining learning outcome targets at 0.2 SD. See *LNGB MEL Guidance Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning ( July 2018)*. UKAID.

<sup>16</sup> Learning Outcome tests were calculated as t-tests with unequal sample sizes and variances. Calculations were conducted in Stata.

<b>5a. Oral Reading Passage 1</b>	4.1	10.9	11.4	+7.3	+0.7	0.00
<b>5b. Reading Comprehension 1</b>	12.7	30.2	43.1	+30.4	+1.0	0.00
<b>5c. Oral Reading Passage 2</b>	6.2	19.6	36.1	+29.9	+1.5	0.00
<b>5d. Reading Comprehension 2</b>	8.9	24.3	33.9	+25.0	+1.0	0.00
<b>6. Dictation</b>	5.8	18.2	41.4	+35.6	+2.0	0.00
<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>19.2</b>	<b>21.4</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>+26.1</b>	<b>+1.2</b>	0.00

**Note:** Letter Sounds, Familiar Words, and Oral Passage Reading subtasks are calculated as the correct number of letters or words read per minute: all other subtasks are calculated as the percentage of questions answered correctly.

Scores are broken down into four achievement categories: Non-learner, Emerging learner, Established learner, and Proficient learner. Table 3 below includes the percent of test-takers in each of the four categories. Beginning with the oral reading passage subtasks, it becomes clear that test-takers generally fall into two separate skill levels: a group who are able to read letters and recognise some words but unable to read passages, and those who can read letters and a significant portion of the passages. Nearly half of test-takers fall into the non-learner category for the oral passage reading and comprehension subtasks (meaning they answer none of the comprehension questions and read at a rate less than 5 correct words per minute). In contrast, one-fourth to one-third of test-takers fall into the proficient learner category, meaning they can read at 80 cwpm or answered 80 percent or more of the questions correctly. Typically, 45 correct words per minute is considered an important proficiency benchmark for people to be able to read a passage and obtain information from it. Of the beneficiaries that took part in both the baseline and midterm evaluation, 84.1 percent scored higher at midterm than at baseline.

*Table 3: Literacy Achievement Levels by Subtask, Midterm*

<b>Categories<sup>17</sup></b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Non-learner</b>	<b>Emergent learner</b>	<b>Established learner</b>	<b>Proficient learner</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>1. Listening Comprehension</b>	87.4	6.1%	4.7%	10.2%	79.0%	100%
<b>2. Real Life Reading</b>	63.6	10.1%	21.5%	19.4%	49.0%	100%
<b>3. Letter Sounds</b>	30.9	15.0%	30.8%	54.2%	0.0%	100%
<b>4. Familiar Words</b>	17.4	31.7%	52.7%	15.5%	0.0%	100%
<b>5. Oral Passage Reading and Comprehension</b>	31.1	47.6%	11.4%	29.6%	11.5%	100%
<b>5a. Oral Reading Passage 1</b>	16.7	47.7%	40.4%	10.8%	1.1%	100%
<b>5b. Reading Comprehension 1</b>	43.1	51.2%	2.0%	11.6%	35.2%	100%
<b>5c. Oral Reading Passage 2</b>	35.1	48.8%	13.4%	11.0%	26.8%	100%

<sup>17</sup> Comparable baseline results can be found in Table 16 of the Baseline Report (Annex 13).

<b>5d. Reading Comprehension 2</b>	33.9	57.0%	4.2%	16.5%	22.4%	100%
<b>6. Dictation</b>	41.4	48.0%	3.1%	12.5%	36.5%	100%
<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>3.3%</b>	<b>44.3%</b>	<b>52.4%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **Numeracy**

EGMA subtask scores are reported as a percent correct of each subtask, and the overall score is the average of the 6 subtask scores. Results show that the average overall score and every subtask score increased since baseline. While the target was set at an increase of 0.2 SD, the overall score increased nearly fivefold that, or 0.98 SD. The greatest increases were in the ability to add and subtract large numbers and compare the value of two groups of bank notes. The most modest increase was in the ability to count items, due to the already very high scores at baseline. Of the beneficiaries that took part in both the baseline and midterm evaluation, 81.6 percent scored higher at midterm than at baseline at Numeracy subtasks. As was with Literacy, subtask and the overall scores were significantly different between baseline and midterm.

*Table 4: Numeracy Scores*

<b>Subtasks</b>	<b>Baseline Mean</b>	<b>Baseline SD</b>	<b>Midterm Mean</b>	<b>Change (in %)</b>	<b>Change (in SD)</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<b>1a. Counting</b>	79.0	32.0	92.5	+13.5	+0.42	0.000
<b>1b. Number Identification</b>	38.1	32.5	59.9	+21.8	+0.67	0.000
<b>2a. Money Discrimination</b>	53.6	34.8	85.4	+31.8	+0.91	0.000
<b>2b. Number Discrimination</b>	47.6	33.3	73.8	+26.2	+0.79	0.000
<b>3. Level 1 Addition</b>	45.2	38.0	73.9	+28.7	+0.76	0.000
<b>4. Level 1 Subtraction</b>	37.3	38.9	63.3	+26	+0.67	0.000
<b>5. Addition &amp; Subtraction of Large Numbers</b>	29.2	34.0	70.8	+41.6	+1.22	0.000
<b>6. Word Problems</b>	49.0	34.5	73.9	+24.9	+0.72	0.000
<b>EGMA Overall</b>	<b>47.3</b>	<b>27.4</b>	<b>74.2</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>0.98</b>	0.000

**Note:** All subtasks are calculated as the percentage of questions answered correctly.

Table 5: Numeracy Achievement Levels by Subtask, Midterm

Categories	Mean	Non-learner 0%	Emergen t learner 1%-40%	Establish ed learner 41%-80%	Proficien t learner 81%- 100%	Total
1a. Counting	92.5	2.6%	2.7%	12.3%	82.3%	100%
1b. Number Identification	59.9	11.5%	13.3%	41.1%	34.1%	100%
2a. Money Discrimination	85.4	3.3%	4.2%	16.8%	75.7%	100%
2b. Number Discrimination	73.8	5.0%	12.9%	34.9%	47.1%	100%
3. Level 1 Addition	73.9	8.4%	10.3%	25.0%	56.3%	100%
4. Level 1 Subtraction	63.3	20.2%	7.1%	29.5%	43.2%	100%
5. Addition & Subtraction of Large Numbers	70.8	13.2%	6.7%	27.5%	52.6%	100%
6. Word Problems	73.9	7.0%	7.1%	27.6%	58.4%	100%
<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>74.2</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>10.0%</b>	<b>36.7%</b>	<b>52.4%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 4.1.1.3 Life Skills

Table 6: Life Skills scores

Categories	Baseline Mean	Baseline SD	Midterm Mean	Change (in %)	Change (in SD)	P Value
1. Hostile Attribution Bias	41.1	34.2	49.2	+8.0	0.23	0.000
2. Emotional Regulation	77.9	23	88.5	+10.6	0.46	0.000
3. Conflict Resolution	80.3	19.6	85.3	+5.0	0.26	0.000
4. Self Efficacy	73.2	15.1	80.7	+7.5	0.50	0.000
5. Social Resources	75.7	25.9	87.2	+11.5	0.44	0.000
6. Supportive Relationships	50.2	12.9	66.1	+15.9	1.23	0.000
7. Health	61.2	25.5	74.2	+13.0	0.51	0.000
<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>65.9</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>75.9</b>	<b>+10.0</b>	<b>0.98</b>	<b>0.000</b>

**Note:** all subtasks are calculated as the percentage of questions answered correctly. Likert scale questions provide partial credit on a scale. See methodology annex for more information.

Each category of the Life Skills score is measured on a 0-100 index. Beneficiaries' average score increased on the overall Life Skills Index and in all seven categories. Increases in each score are shown both as percentage points and in terms of standard deviation, which show slightly different stories of progress. The overall Life Skills score increase, which was defined as 0.2 SD, was greatly exceeded, increasing 0.98 full standard deviations. The average beneficiary at midterm has a comparable level of knowledge as a beneficiary in the top quarter of the Cohort at baseline. Increased scores vary by subject: the highest gains were in supportive relationships and health knowledge, and lower gains in hostile attribution bias and conflict resolution.

*Table 7: Life Skills Achievement Levels by Subtask, Midterm*

Categories	Mean	Non-learner 0%	Emergent learner 1%-40%	Established learner 41%-80%	Proficient learner 80%-100%	Total
<b>1. Hostile Attribution Bias</b>	49.2	18.7%	18.3%	50.4%	12.7%	100%
<b>2. Emotional Regulation</b>	88.5	0.0%	1.4%	22.4%	76.2%	100%
<b>3. Conflict Resolution</b>	85.3	0.0%	1.7%	37.9%	60.5%	100%
<b>4. Self Efficacy</b>	80.7	0.9%	0.9%	48.4%	49.8%	100%
<b>5. Social Resources</b>	87.2	0.0%	1.1%	20.1%	78.8%	100%
<b>6. Supportive Relationships</b>	66.1	0.0%	4.0%	87.5%	8.5%	100%
<b>7. Health</b>	74.2	0.0%	5.5%	62.0%	32.4%	100%
<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>75.9</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>64.3%</b>	<b>35.7%</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### **4.1.1.4 Financial Literacy**

Unlike the other baseline data, the Financial Literacy (FL) baseline was conducted in early 2021 by EAGER Project Officers. It was conducted separately due to the curriculum's development and the courses' implementation beginning at a later time than the other interventions (and as such, was not included in the baseline evaluation of the full programme). Upon consultation with the CCU, the FL baseline Project Officers conducted data collection instead of independent quantitative data collectors due to the global pandemic as well as finite resources.

Analysis of midterm results show that the mean FL index score changed only slightly upwards since baseline. While confidence in abilities increased significantly, average scores on knowledge and ability to apply that knowledge declined since baseline. Noted at baseline, average scores varied widely between which Project Officers conducted the assessments, and concerns were raised at the time that scores may be biased upwards. Despite scores in the FL knowledge declining, the average score in this section remains high given that the assessment covers the wide range of topics covered in the FL curriculum.

Table 8: Financial Literacy Scores

Categories	Baseline Mean	Baseline SD	Midterm Mean	Change (in %)	Change (in SD)	P Value
Confidence in Abilities	67.8	20.2	77.7	9.9	+0.49	0.000
Knowledge	70.5	19.8	63.6	-6.9	-0.35	0.000
Applied Knowledge Scenarios	77.7	22.6	76.4	-1.3	-0.06	0.060
Financial Literacy Index	71.8	16.4	72.7	0.9	+0.05	0.116

**Note:** All subtasks are calculated as the percentage of questions answered with the desired response.

As was true at the FL baseline, most respondents scored highly on all aspects of FL assessment. The majority of respondents fell in the proficient learner level in terms of their confidence in abilities and their ability to apply knowledge to specific scenarios. The majority of beneficiaries also fell into the established category for knowledge and in their overall score.

Table 9: Financial Literacy Achievement Levels by Subtask, Midterm

Categories	Mean	Non-learner 0%	Emergent learner 1%-40%	Established learner 41%-80%	Proficient learner 80%-100%	Total
Confidence in Abilities	77.7	0.1%	2.9%	43.5%	53.5%	100%
Knowledge	63.6	0.4%	19.3%	65.8%	14.5%	100%
Applied Knowledge Scenarios	76.4	3.5%	7.0%	38.4%	51.0%	100%
Financial Literacy Index	72.7	0.0%	2.5%	62.0%	35.5%	100%

#### 4.1.2. Transition

Successful transition is defined differently for each beneficiary: their successful transition is based on their own creation of an individualised Empowerment Plan with four different goals<sup>18</sup> and their progression and completion of it. Although beneficiaries are not expected to have completed creating their Empowerment Plans at the time of midterm data collection, the majority of those interviewed (96 percent) said that they had discussed Empowerment Plans with their Mentor (Table 10). Eighty-seven percent of respondents said that they had already been helped to create their Empowerment Plan, and nearly all of those that had created a plan believed that they could achieve it (99.5 percent of 87.4 percent, or 87.0 percent). A more thorough discussion of beneficiaries' empowerment can be found under EQ Impact 2. Successful transition will be

<sup>18</sup> Originally called “transition plans,” the name “Empowerment Plan” was adopted when the approach to transition evolved to incorporate four dimensions of empowerment in girls’ lives. (See EAGER Transition Overview.)

measured by the evaluation team reviewing of a subset of beneficiary transition plans at endline and determining the percentage of beneficiaries who created appropriate plans and are making adequate progress towards their completion.

*Table 10: Progress of Empowerment Plans*

Question	Respondents who replied Yes
Has your Facilitator <sup>19</sup> discussed Empowerment Plans with you?	96.0%
Has your Facilitator helped you create your Plan?	87.4%
Do you believe that you can achieve this goal?	87.0%
Do you believe you can achieve the goals you will set for yourself in EAGER?	99.2%

#### 4.1.3. Sustainability

At the time of writing, the project was in the process of revising the sustainability indicators as part of the logframe review. EAGER leadership wishes the approach to be more accurate and reflect the nature of EAGER's activities so that indicators address learning as well as supporting girls in their lives. Of the three sustainability indicators, the midterm evaluation sought to report on one indicator relevant to the proportion of community leaders, boys, and caregivers that report positive and empowering attitudes towards girls' education. Qualitative findings show that only a limited number of stakeholders indicated continuing negative attitudes towards girls' education. Rather, findings related to changes in empowerment below (see Impact 2 EQ) point to improvements in relationships with caregivers and partners, though largely constrained by entrenched gender norms. The findings for the sustainability EQ below demonstrate important changes in the skills of beneficiaries and their outlook for the future. There is little evidence, however, that the changes will be sustained beyond the current beneficiaries as structural changes at the community and system-level are limited.

### Intermediate Outcomes

#### 4.1.4. IO1: Attendance

##### **Monthly Attendance rate for Girls in Life Skills, Financial Literacy, and BLN programme**

The attendance data used for this indicator is provided by the implementing partners of the EAGER programme. While the EE cannot completely independently verify the accuracy of the data, the data was complete, thoroughly detailed, and free of inconsistencies. The programme's internal reporting appears accurate and its current calculations to measure attendance are properly formulated. EAGER partners monitor their attendance data and measure the proportion of beneficiaries that attend at least 65 percent of the sessions quarterly. Attendance rates are fairly high even during heightened levels of COVID-19, exceeding 80 percent in all months overall and, and an overall average of all months of 85 percent. To ensure comparability between partners in terms of how enrolment data was collected, EAGER partners used the same methods

<sup>19</sup> Although Mentors normally the person to discuss Empowerment Plans, the survey incorrectly asked about Facilitators. Given the responses, it appears that respondents understood that the question should refer to Mentors.

of attendance for data collection. Analysis using the internal definition is discussed under the **Error! Reference source not found.** subsection of Effectiveness analysis below.

*Table 11: Attendance data*

	Restless	IRC	Concern	Overall
January 2020	93%	85%	70%	85%
February 2020	85%	83%	69%	80%
March 2020	81%	81%	80%	81%
September 2020	90%	87%	83%	87%
October 2020	90%	84%	83%	86%
November 2020	90%	84%	83%	86%
December 2020	90%	86%	87%	88%
January 2021	91%	84%	81%	86%
<b>Monthly Average</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>85%</b>

#### 4.1.5. IO2: Facilitators and Mentors deliver quality inclusive instruction in BLN, Life Skills, and Financial Literacy

When quantitative data collectors and qualitative data collectors from Dalan visited Safe Spaces, female members of the team conducted 30-minute observations of Facilitators or Mentors conducting sessions using a tool adapted from the IRC Retention Facilitator Observation Form (See Tools in Annex 8). The tool assesses Facilitators or Mentors in 19 different teaching practices using a four-point rubric, where ratings range from (1) No evidence / negative, (2) Tried, but poorly, (3) Good Effort, and (4) Exemplary. The majority of ratings were for level 3, Good Effort. The subject observed depended on what was being taught on the day the evaluation team visited. After the evaluation, the CCU suggested that this tool was better suited for the Literacy and Numeracy subjects (provided by Mentors), than the Life Skills and Financial Literacy subjects led by Mentors.

Overall scores are high for nearly all practice topics, and overall average scores do not significantly differ by subject. The practices with the fewest Facilitators or Mentors scoring a 3 or 4 are: 10. Learning Space Rules and 11. Discipline Consistency. Only 62 percent of Mentors overall scored a "Good Effort" or higher in these two practices (Table 12). To obtain a "Good Effort" or higher on the Learning Space Rules, the space rules must be hung up and referenced during the observation, making it difficult to obtain such a rating. While this was asked to be included in the original observation tool, it was explained by EAGER staff after data collection that posting rules was not actually a requirement in EAGER Learning and Safe Spaces. To obtain a rating of "Good Effort" or higher on discipline consistency, the Facilitator or Mentor must "make a good effort to consistently enforce the Learning Space rules, but fails at [no more than] one point or with a specific learner."

Differences can be seen by subject when calculating as the percentage of Facilitators and Mentors who score a 3 or 4 on each practice. The average number of Facilitators who scored a 3 or higher across all practices is 79 percent for observations of Literacy sessions, in contrast with an average of 89 percent for Numeracy sessions.

Table 12: Percent of Safe Space Observations rated Good Effort or Exemplary, by Subject

	Life Skills	Financial Literacy	Literacy	Numeracy	Overall
Number of Observations	11	62	46	31	150
1. Clear Lesson Objective	100%	93%	90%	95%	93%
2. Providing Feedback	82%	93%	89%	91%	91%
3. Checking for Understanding	73%	83%	83%	98%	85%
4. Adapting Lesson	82%	92%	81%	93%	89%
5. Supplementary Materials	82%	80%	84%	91%	83%
6. Opportunity to Practice	68%	88%	67%	78%	79%
7. Questioning Techniques	82%	84%	83%	89%	84%
8. Connecting to Learners' Lives	89%	88%	76%	83%	84%
9. Engaging Different Learners	81%	70%	67%	81%	72%
10. Learning Space Rules	68%	65%	50%	70%	62%
11. Discipline Consistency	68%	63%	50%	72%	62%
12. Use of Learning space	100%	96%	79%	95%	91%
13. Positive Words & Reinforcement	100%	96%	87%	100%	95%
14. Calm Tone of Voice	100%	96%	91%	100%	96%
15. Promoting Self-Compassion	89%	91%	86%	95%	90%
16. Recognising Perseverance	86%	89%	81%	91%	87%
17. Verbal Aggression [Not Used]	100%	87%	90%	92%	90%
18. Physical Aggression [Not Used]	86%	83%	87%	92%	86%
19. Negative Punishment [Not Used]	80%	88%	82%	92%	87%
Average number of Facilitators scoring a Good Effort or Exemplary on any given practice <sup>20</sup>	<b>85%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>85%</b>

#### 4.1.6. IO3: Empowerment Plans

##### **A. Percent of girls who develop an individual Empowerment Plan that is Realistic and Achievable**

While some discussion of Empowerment Plans has taken place, they have not yet been asked to develop individual Empowerment Plans yet: it is a later part of the project activities. This indicator is not relevant until the next evaluation point. For more information on Empowerment Plans progress, see section 4.1.2. Transition.

<sup>20</sup> These values were calculated by taking the 19 proportions of Facilitators or Mentors scoring a "Good Effort" or higher and averaging the 19 scores together.

**B. % of girls who report that since joining the programme, they have made at least one new friend in their group that they can trust**

Nearly all beneficiaries report that they have made at least one new friend through the EAGER programme, and that they could talk to them if they were feeling sad or worried (Table 13). Overall, 95.2 percent of respondents said “yes” that they both had made a new friend, and that they had made a new friend who they could trust to talk to if they were feeling sad or worried. These findings are unequivocally positive, as it helps beneficiaries create stronger social bonds and networks to empower themselves and find mutual support in their lives and their goals. While a complete analysis by all subgroups was not conducted, it is those who say that they in general have trouble making friends and those with anxiety and/or depression that had significantly lower likelihood of making friends. Those with difficulty making friends cited making a new friend they could trust to talk to if they were feeling sad or worried 92.7 percent of the time, and those with anxiety and/or depression made a new friend they could trust 95.8 percent of the time. While these differences are statistically significantly lower than average, they are also still very high.

*Table 13: Beneficiaries making new friends through EAGER Programme*

Question	Yes	No	Maybe
Have you made at least one new friend through the EAGER programme?	98.3%	1.7%	0.0%
Have you made at least one friend that you could trust to talk to if you were feeling sad or worried?	95.8%	4.0%	0.2%

**C. % of girls who report believing that they can achieve the goals they set for themselves**

Beneficiaries are asked numerous questions about their self-efficacy, including whether they believe they will be able to achieve most of the goals they set for themselves. Responses to this question have improved since baseline, with 81.1 percent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing at baseline compared with 91.4 percent agreeing at midterm (Table 14). As shown above as a Life Skills Index section, the average scores on all questions in the self-efficacy section suggest beneficiaries feel more confident in their ability to achieve their goals. The section of the Life Skills Index on self-efficacy includes 8 Likert-scale questions and is scaled from 0 to 100.<sup>21</sup> The average score of the question used for this indicator increased from 73.2 to 84.3; the average for the self-efficacy construct increased from 79.8 at baseline to 85.1. Self-efficacy is discussed further under Impact 2.

<sup>21</sup> The self-efficacy construct is the average of responses to 8 statements including the one used for IO3C. Statements are scored as: Strongly Disagree (0); Disagree (25); (Neither Agree or Disagree (50); Agree (75); Strongly Agree (100).

Table 14: IO3C Self Confidence

Response	I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I set for myself.		
	Baseline	Midterm	Change
Strongly Disagree	2.1%	4.1%	+2.0%
Disagree	7.8%	1.8%	-6.0%
Neither Agree or Disagree	6.9%	2.6%	-4.3%
Agree	54.4%	50.8%	-3.6%
Strongly Agree	26.7%	40.6%	+13.9%
Don't Know	2.1%	0.0%	-2.1%

**D. % of girls who report that they have used skills learned in their Life Skills sessions**

Beneficiaries overwhelmingly agreed that they have used the Life Skills they've learned outside of the Safe Space. Over 92 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (Table 15). This is in line with qualitative findings. For a more thorough discussion of Life Skills, see the Effectiveness section, Question 2. Calculating an average where *strongly agree* equals 100 and *strongly disagree* equals zero, the average score is 81.5.

Table 15: Life Skills Outside the Safe Space

Have you used the skills you've learned in Life Skills sessions in life outside of the learning/safe space?	
	Percent
Strongly Agree	42.8%
Agree	47.4%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	3.8%
Disagree	4.9%
Strongly Disagree	1.1%

4.1.7. IO4: Community Engagement

**IO4 Indicator A. Number of people reached (including frequency) through national programming**

The evaluation team did not collect data on this indicator as it is covered by BBC Media Action through their own monitoring.

**IO4 Indicator B. Percent of radio listeners who report actively engaging with topics discussed in radio programming**

Same as above.

**IO 4 Indicator C. % of community members that foster more supportive attitudes towards girls' opportunities, education, and safety (disaggregated by sex, role)**

Despite substantial evidence from qualitative interviews (see responses to Effectiveness 2 Evaluation Question below) and quantitative data from beneficiaries', caregivers' and HoHs' responses to the questions used in Indicator 4C suggest lower support for girls' education than at baseline. The overall composite score fell from 69.5 percent to 60.3 percent (Table 16).

Table 16: Composite scores of supportive attitudes of Household Heads and Caregivers

District	Composite Score		HoH Subscore		Caregiver Subscore	
	BL	ML	BL	ML	BL	ML
<b>Overall</b>	<b>69.5%</b>	<b>60.3%</b>	<b>59.9%</b>	<b>51.2%</b>	<b>78.3%</b>	<b>69.3%</b>
Bo	67.5%	66.7%	63.5%	54.9%	71.2%	78.6%
Kailahun	79.3%	57.3%	74.6%	47.9%	81.3%	66.7%
Kambia	74.8%	52.8%	57.7%	53.8%	91.9%	51.8%
Kenema	65.0%	53.7%	67.9%	50.4%	59.7%	56.9%
Koinadugu	73.3%	44.5%	53.1%	47.6%	93.2%	41.3%
Kono	60.9%	62.2%	45.0%	54.1%	76.2%	70.3%
Port Loko	71.5%	64.2%	53.4%	57.5%	89.4%	71.0%
Pujehun	71.0%	70.1%	67.1%	43.8%	75.1%	96.3%
Tonkolili	62.3%	67.7%	54.1%	52.2%	69.5%	83.1%
WA Urban	67.4%	62.0%	60.2%	49.0%	74.1%	75.1%

The caregivers' scores are calculated based on their responses to when they thought it was acceptable for a girl to not attend school. The more of the listed reasons a caregiver considered valid reasons, the lower their score is. A caregiver that considered none of the reasons included in the index acceptable reasons to not attend school would have a composite score of 100 percent, and a caregiver that thought all the reasons were acceptable would have a composite score of 0 percent. As can be seen, support for every reason to not attend increased since baseline (Table 17).

Table 17: Caregiver responses for the question: "Under which of the following conditions do you think it is acceptable for a girl to not attend school?"

When is it acceptable for a girl to not attend school? When...	Baseline	Midterm
The girl is a mother	30.3%	39.3%
The girl needs to work	18.1%	24.5%
The girl needs to help at home	21.1%	22.5%
The girl is married/is getting married	23.5%	32.8%
The girl is too old	13.2%	23.7%
The girl has physical or learning needs that the school cannot meet	10.5%	17.4%
The girl is unable to learn	17.9%	26.7%
Education is too costly	27.9%	45.0%

<b>Excluded from Index<sup>22</sup></b>		
The girl may be physically harmed or teased at school or on the way to/from school	14.6%	14.8%
The girl may physically harm or tease other children at school	13.0%	13.3%
Safety or health related to COVID-19	N/A	14.2%

The Head of Household component of Indicator 4C includes questions about community support and their personal attitudes towards girls and women in their community. As with the caregiver responses, the proportion of household heads giving the desired response fell for nearly every question. The most precipitous fall is among the two questions regarding the beneficiary's opportunities to learn outside of EAGER. This may be related to their perceptions now that the beneficiary is in the programme and not the actual supportive environment; also, COVID-19 may have reduced the actual opportunities available. However, even if the indicator excluded these questions, the average indicator scores would still decline since baseline.

Responses to two key questions related to the Head of Household's personal opinions declined: fewer household heads report that men's and women's roles in society can change over time, that men and women should share household chores. Meanwhile, the Head of Household opinion about child gender preference and women's responsibility to earn money increased. It is worth noting that the two questions with increasing outcomes are related to a women's worth – as earners and as a gender for a child – whereas the two values questions that declined are related to men losing power – sharing chores and changing societal values. It may be that while girls' productive value to households is increasing, interest in supporting them or granting them a greater voice is not increasing to the same degree. While this finding is interesting, it is also notable that the overall score for the Head of Household component of Indicator 4C do not vary significantly based on the household head's gender.

*Table 18: Percent of Heads of Household who gave supportive responses regarding girls and women's roles in their community*

<b>Question</b>	<b>Desired Response</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>Midterm</b>
Do you think [beneficiary] has a right to education even though she is not in school?	Agree	97.3%	95.5%
Apart from EAGER, are out-of-school girls given opportunities to learn in your community?	Say Yes	40.2%	23.1%
Other than EAGER, does beneficiary currently have opportunities for learning/education?	Say Yes	56.6%	10.7%
What quality of teaching do you think the girl is receiving at Safe Space?	Very good or Fairly good	90.5%	99.5%
Men and women should share household chores.	Agree	69.1%	67.4%
A man has more responsibility to earn money for the family than a woman.	Don't Agree	17.9%	22.0%

<sup>22</sup> While reported here, two questions were excluded from the index. While these hypothetical circumstances are barriers to school that should not exist, decisions about enrolment in such circumstances may not necessarily be undesirable.

Men's and women's roles in society can change over time.	Agree	77.8%	73.0%
A male child is preferable to a girl child.	Don't Agree	64.2%	78.4%

**IO 4 Indicator D. % of girls that report fewer barriers to accessing learning and other opportunities, and increased perception that they have the right to safety in the community**

**Fewer Barriers to Education**

At baseline, 75 percent of beneficiaries reported two or fewer barriers to formal education, and 9 percent reported four or more. At midterm, 86 percent of beneficiaries report two or fewer barriers (Table 19). This suggests that the perceived barriers to education are falling.

*Table 19: Number of barriers to formal education*

	Two or fewer	Three	Four or more
<b>Baseline</b>	75%	16%	9%
<b>Midterm</b>	86.1%	4.3%	9.6%

As at baseline, the barriers to formal education at midterm are primarily economic, though social norms also play a role. By far, the most common reported barrier to education is a lack of money to pay for education costs, and the second most common is that the caregiver reports that the beneficiary needs to work. However, several barriers related to their marginalised status remain prevalent: 29 percent of caregivers say that the beneficiary's status as a mother remains a barrier to formal education, and 19 percent say that they are not enrolled in part because they are married or about to get married (Table 20). In addition, the need for beneficiaries to work or help out at home increased since baseline, in part due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All three of these barriers may also be related to the fact that beneficiaries are 18 months older at midterm than baseline. These two barriers are cited more at midterm than at baseline, but may be linked to the fact that many beneficiaries have had children or gotten married since baseline. It is also possible that the rate of marriage and pregnancy increased since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. EAGER conducted a study that found that 20 percent of Mentors and 19 percent of beneficiaries reported an increase in GBV since the onset of COVID-19, including early marriage<sup>23</sup>. Overall, while caregivers at midterm claim that beneficiaries face fewer barriers to formal education than at baseline, the most common barriers remain largely the same.

*Table 20: Prevalence of Barriers to Formal Education*

Reason	Baseline	Midterm
There isn't enough money to pay the costs of beneficiary's schooling	72%	66%
Beneficiary needs to work, earn money or help out at home	23%	30%
Beneficiary has a child or is about to have a child	19%	29%
Beneficiary is married or about to get married	9%	19%
Transport services are inadequate	10%	13%
Beneficiary is too old to attend school	2%	13%

<sup>23</sup> EAGER. (June 2020). COVID-19 Surveys.

School is too far away	9%	11%
Beneficiary is not interested in going to school	10%	9%
It is unsafe for beneficiary to travel to/from school	6%	9%
No one available to travel with beneficiary to/from school	5%	8%
Beneficiary needs assistive devices/technology such as braille, wheelchair, etc.	1%	6%
It is not safe to attend due to COVID-19	N/A	6%
Other reasons related to COVID-19	N/A	5%
Schooling not important for beneficiary	3%	5%
It is unsafe for beneficiary to be in school	5%	5%
Teachers do not know how to teach a girl like beneficiary	1%	5%
To attend beneficiary needs special services/assistance (i.e. therapist, support)	3%	4%
Beneficiary is not mature enough to attend school	1%	4%
Beneficiary cannot use the toilet at school	1%	4%
School does not help beneficiary in finding a good job	2%	3%
Beneficiary has a health condition that prevents (her) from going to	3%	3%
The school does not have a programme that meets beneficiary 's learning	2%	3%
Girl says they are mistreated/bullied by other pupils	1%	3%
Beneficiary cannot move around the Learning Space	1%	2%
Beneficiary was refused entry into the school	2%	2%
Beneficiary has completed enough schooling	1%	2%
Girl says teachers mistreat her at school	2%	1%

### Right to Access the Safe Space

At baseline, 84.8 percent of beneficiaries reported that girls have a right to access the Safe Space. Also, 57.6 percent of beneficiaries reported that girls with disabilities had a right to access the Safe Space. At midterm, 99.4 percent of beneficiaries believed that girls had a right to the Safe Space, and 82.2 percent stated that girls with disabilities had a right to access the Safe Spaces.

#### 4.1.8. IO5: Government Support

##### ***IO 5 Indicator A. National level representatives of MBSSE and MSWGCA participates in the Baseline, Midterm and Endline data validation***

The evaluation team contacted four national-level representatives for participation in the midterm evaluation: two each from MBSSE and MSWGCA. Just one MSWGCA official agreed to an interview while the other three officials did not respond. Government participation at the regional level was much stronger as ten officials participated in midterm proceedings (three MBSSE representatives, six MSWGCA representatives and a local councillor). At baseline, no government officials participated as the government had undergone a reshuffling shortly before data collection.

***IO 5 Indicator B. Number of informative project coordination meetings held with the National level representatives of MBSSE and MSWGCA annually***

No documentation of coordination meetings was made available to the evaluation team. The MSWGCA official interviewed described participating in a project inception workshop in 2019. There is no indication of annual coordination meetings in the desk review materials. Further discussion with the CCU indicate that concerns for addressing the COVID-19 pandemic reoriented both government and development partners' efforts to developing coordination structures around COVID-19. This emphasis remained in place through the beginning of 2021. Additional work is needed to revise this indicator to be more responsive to the project's evolution.

# 5. Key findings

## Relevance

### 5.1.1. Relevance Question 1. To what extent do project objectives and the project design respond to the needs of beneficiaries and other stakeholders? And to the needs of the diverse subgroups served by the project?

This section reflects on interview data and the document review in order to understand how the project may align with the needs of beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Where applicable, the response also refers to baseline findings. Analysis suggests that EAGER has responded effectively to the needs of its girl beneficiaries and other stakeholders, including making critical project adaptations along the way to better meet those needs. This includes exploring the redefinition of beneficiaries to include Mentors and adjusting programming in order to meet their needs alongside those of the originally intended beneficiaries, i.e., EAGER's girl participants. This section also explores how the project has remained relevant in the face of contextual stressors beyond the control of the project including the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>24</sup>.

The section concludes with a review of areas where the project is, according to some beneficiaries and stakeholders, not meeting girls' needs completely – this is noted particularly often with respect to girls' need for capital to start or sustain a business, and, to a lesser extent to return to school or pursue further training. There are few instances where respondents reported girls leaving the project, or not attending regularly, because the project was not considered to be relevant or useful.

#### ***Identification of beneficiaries' needs***

The baseline analysis revealed key findings as it related to girls' needs, including not just what they needed, but who, in particular, was most in need. Like for the baseline report, analysis relied upon disaggregation of both quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide information about subgroups. Main findings, as reported in the Baseline Policy Brief<sup>25</sup> but elaborated upon in the full report<sup>26</sup> included:

- High prevalence of girls married and with children with high burdens of responsibility as caregivers (and limited time to attend sessions)
- Majority of out-of-school girls had never attended school or dropped out very early, making transition back to school difficult
- Literacy and Numeracy skills were very low. The majority of girls were interested in attaining Literacy and Numeracy skills that they would be able to use in everyday life and

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<sup>24</sup>Note that the inception report originally identified that the midterm would also explore adaptations relevant to Lassa Fever and Ebola. Interview data, however, revealed no distinct modifications for these illnesses, therefore, the emphasis here is solely on COVID-19 modifications.

<sup>25</sup> International Rescue Committee. (2020). EAGER Baseline Research Policy Brief: Contextual Background and Learning Needs of Out-of-school Adolescent Girls in Sierra Leone.

<sup>26</sup> Sarr, K. G., Trembley, A., Heaner, G. & Mull, A. C. (2020). Baseline Evaluation Report Baseline Evaluation of the Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER) project within the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) -Leave No Girl Behind project (LNGB). IMC Worldwide.

to pursue / enhance livelihood strategies; few were interested in transitioning back to formal education

- Girls had high levels of anxiety and depression, hostile attribution bias, and moderate levels of emotion dysregulation
- Community-based Mentors had limited skills in Literacy themselves, along with limited ability in teaching / facilitating
- Community-level support for girls' education and empowerment tended to be superficial as barriers persisted for many girls because some male partners indicated not wanting their wife or girlfriend to be educated beyond their level or to make her own decisions.

### **Adjusting Girls' Transition Planning**

Given baseline findings of girls' own ambitions and needs, EAGER made a significant practical adjustment to its original transition plans. This revised approach is articulated in the EAGER Transition Design Overview.<sup>27</sup> Importantly, the document states,

*"In EAGER, Transition has been re-conceptualised as Empowerment. Empowerment is envisioned as multi-dimensional, encompassing the most significant dimensions of the girls' lives. Empowerment is looked at holistically to ensure continuity with learning, and plant the seeds of sustainable positive impacts across the interconnecting aspects of girls' lives... a **more holistic model of 'Empowerment'** in which girls themselves envision what they want this to be across the four categories of learning, household, community, and financial empowerment." (bolding in original, p. 2)*

In terms of programming around transition, EAGER made significant adaptations to its intervention including:

- Providing Mentors enhanced training and continuous professional development in the form of learning clusters in order to better prepare them to lead Life Skills sessions and support Empowerment Plans;
- Working with girls on creating Empowerment Plans that challenge gender norms but also encourage them to think critically about "whether they can safely step beyond the restrictions and assumptions about the activities that girls can and should do in their homes and communities;"<sup>28</sup>
- Providing EAGER grants to all girls with which they can make their own financial decisions about how to spend the funds, based on what they had defined in their Empowerment Plan. The original design was based on a competition-focused approach in which a selected number of business plans would be identified for funding. Upon realisation of beneficiaries' baseline competencies and further reflection on the community-fostering

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<sup>27</sup> As reported in the Transition Overview document, "The original project design envisaged Transition as a range of self-identified pathways for each girl and narrowed these down to three main viable options: safe, fairly-paid employment; self-employment or further learning (vocational, professional, or return to school on a case-by-case basis)." (p. 2)

<sup>28</sup> EAGER. (n.d.). EAGER Transition Design – an Overview, p. 1.

approach, the EAGER leadership determined it best to provide EAGER grants to all beneficiaries;

- Empowerment Packages (in-kind items selected to further empower beneficiaries and minimise risk during Transition Period); and,
- Supporting Girls Clubs where beneficiaries will continue coming together after sessions have ended.

Midterm data from beneficiaries, stakeholders, and EAGER staff indicate that those adaptations were indeed relevant. At midterm, specific elaboration on the relevance of the Empowerment Plan process was uncommon among girls who remain in early stages of this process. However, a member of the CCU reflected on this adaptation

*“Especially for transition, we are being quite innovative and creative. I don’t think it’s pretty common and even the Fund Manager acknowledged that<sup>29</sup>...I don’t think what was there was originally realistic. It had been a focus on businesses and pushing girls into businesses. We know that we can’t ensure that happens. We would need to have a livelihoods component – it’s a separate intervention on its own. It’s not there. So, I think that as we learned about our girls and the capacity of our girls and their Mentors and we looked at the impact that COVID-19 has on the programme in terms of budgets and timelines, we realised it was unrealistic to commit to support the girls to enter employment and/or professional trainings... I think the way we reshaped the transition speaks to what the EAGER learning programme is about. It’s more realistic. It’s something we can more easily measure and track. It’s really more holistic and more cohesive.” (EAGER leadership #3<sup>30</sup>, KII)*

As will be explored in detail through the Impact and Effectiveness sections below, girls interviewed at midterm were overwhelmingly positive about the skills they had learnt through EAGER thus far, which they repeatedly pointed out was meeting one or more needs for them. Important to note in this Relevance section, however, is that the girls shared a wide variety of perspectives on which particular skills learnt thus far in EAGER were meeting needs and most relevant to them.

For example, while girls most often reflected on how they could use their new skills to start or expand a business, comments indicated that girls were able to immediately apply their learnings in varied and versatile ways and at different stages of business development. In the context of EAGER, “business” is a broad term that encompasses small-scale trading, services and production. The following quotes provide examples of how beneficiaries were engaging in business activity at midterm:

*“Before this time, I use to walk around without doing anything productive. But the coming of the project has made me to engage in business.” (Kenema Beneficiaries, FGD)*

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<sup>29</sup> An interview with a representative from the Fund Manager (solely identifying her personal views and not necessarily those of the Fund Manager entity) corroborated interest in EAGER’s approach to transition, which it considers to be unique and innovative among other GEC projects.

<sup>30</sup> Numbers refer to the specific staff person quoted for tracking purposes.

*“Before now, I thought nothing about my future, but now I have something in mind. I see my future as very bright. In one year’s time I will be doing my private business. In two years’ time, I will be a changed person from this present condition because at that time I would be making big profit out of my business and support my child’s education without the help of my husband.”*  
(Bo Beneficiary, KII)

*“Before now, if I went to sell my soap, I would not make any profit because I don’t know how to give change to someone but now with the help of EAGER sessions, I am realising a profit from my soap selling.”* (Bo Beneficiary, FGD)

Others did not necessarily express an interest in doing business, but rather highlighted how the most important need being met by EAGER was related to their domestic life and caregiving:

*“EAGER has helped us to know how to take care of ourselves, our children... before this time, we were just going to the farm in the morning not knowing that we should clean ourselves and our children before we go to the farm.”*  
(Kono Beneficiaries, FGD)

Still others pointed out that a main need for them was to be more active in the community, and EAGER helped them gain confidence in this regard:

*“I joined the programme because I wanted to be able to contribute to my community and one of the ways by which I can do that is through education or business. So, when I heard that the EAGER programme was offering these opportunities I just couldn’t wait so I joined.”* (Koinadugu Beneficiary, FGD)

And some indicated wanting to continue training or education:

*“I want to go to school, because I want to join my colleagues in school so that we can learn together. I don’t feel happy when I do not go to school. I will be very happy, and I will smile if I can go to school. They say, ‘education is the key. You will not have a better life tomorrow if you are not educated.’ If I am educated, then, I may become a doctor, a lawyer, a president or an honorable, but I don’t know. That is why I want to go back to school.”* (WAU Beneficiary, KII)

*“One year from now, I would like to learn a vocational skill like tailoring. Tailoring is very good for us. Three years from now, I will be able to know how to take measurements and I would be more focused on my dream of becoming a seamstress. I haven’t started the tailoring skill.”* (WAU Beneficiary, KII)

What the varied ambitions and goals shared by girls shows, though, is that the adapted (more flexible and holistic) approach to Empowerment Plans for girls is critical in ensuring that they are able to pursue futures on their own terms. The interests above align with the four dimensions that are the focus of the revised plan: learning, household, community and financial.

### **Adapting to COVID-19 Closures and Restrictions**

In response to COVID-19, EAGER made a number of adjustments to ensure continuity of programming while ensuring safety and protection of participants both during closures when girls

could not access their sessions, and upon re-opening, when prevention protocols were in place. When the Safe Spaces were closed, EAGER deployed Mentors to visit girls to identify support needs. When the Spaces were able to be re-opened, the scheduling of sessions was reformulated in order to promote prevention measures and social distancing. EAGER split up community cohorts into multiple groups to decrease the number of participants within Safe and Learning Spaces at the same time and held sessions less frequently and for shorter durations. The curriculum was adapted to include information around how girls and their families could avoid contracting COVID-19, hygiene materials were provided, and sensitisation messaging was produced. In addition, radio messaging from BBC Media, a key component of the EAGER programme featured prevention messages focused on COVID-19. EAGER also conducted a mapping of health facilities and psychosocial centres that could be provided to the Safe Spaces in the event that a beneficiary fell sick (EAGER leadership, KII).

A challenge at this phase, according to KIIs with EAGER staff, was attracting girls back to the Safe Spaces after the pause in instruction. To try to address this, and also, to accommodate the need for social distancing, sessions were shortened and made less frequent. A member of the EAGER leadership provided the following description of adaptations related to COVID-19:

*We had stopped sessions when COVID19 first came into the country just so that we could not bring everyone together and figure out what it meant. We divided the groups into 2 – 25 originally, then divided into 2 so there would be more spacing within the Safe Spaces so that they could hopefully be safer. There was handwashing buckets and cleaning supplies made. The curriculum was adapted to take away groupwork and pair work and coming to the board – less movement in the Safe Spaces as well. Also, because we know there was a higher workload and work burden on the girls during COVID we reduced the sessions – only once a week for Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills – so, all three were combined into a two-hour session (45 minutes for each topic). So, they were only coming only once a week for 2 hours so they could do whatever else they needed to do at home so there was hopefully less stress on them as well.” (EAGER leadership #2, KII)*

In terms of desired activities beyond those adjustments, according to one KII, “Once we were able to start programming again in the Safe Spaces, everything more or less continued as we had planned” (EAGER leadership #10, KII). As is detailed in the response to EQ Effectiveness<sup>1</sup> below, the protocols, information and materials provided to reduce COVID-19 transmission were important for the beneficiaries to have and were appreciated by beneficiaries and their families.

### ***Adaptations to specific implementation modalities***

In addition to the changes focused on transition and COVID-19, EAGER leadership made changes to specific implementation modalities, which are summarised in Table 21 below. Interviews with EAGER leadership and other stakeholders inform this table as well as the Transition Overview document.

Table 21: Adaptations to specific implementation modalities

Topic / Area	Problem / Need Identified	Adaptation Made
<b>SEL</b>	The baseline found that girls had high levels of anxiety and depression, hostile attribution bias, and moderate levels of emotion dysregulation.	The project developed adaptations in the Life Skills curriculum to increase focus on SEL. The project also developed Psychological First Aid, a training module for Mentors on how to support girls to manage anxiety and stress.
<b>Attendance: Girls' Schedules</b>	The baseline found that girls' schedules, in particular girls who were married and/or with children, made it difficult to attend EAGER regularly.	Session times were reduced; beneficiary groups determined alongside Facilitators and Mentors the most appropriate time for their sessions based on their actual needs.
<b>Beneficiaries as mothers</b>	Baseline data showed that 7 percent of beneficiaries were pregnant and 57.5 percent had children, a higher proportion than originally anticipated. Childcare often served as an obstacle to girls' education.	Mattresses were provided in the Safe Spaces to allow for children to sleep if they needed to be brought to the sessions with caregivers. Pillows were also provided for pregnant girls, and female caregivers were engaged to encourage them to support childcare during sessions.
<b>Safety: Safe Spaces Adequate</b>	Reports or observations that Safe Spaces were in some cases not suitable (lacked ventilation, accessible latrine, medical care, safe structure and roof, access to clean water, provision of COVID-19 prevention supplies).	A Safe Space checklist was developed and implemented by LBS Officers each quarter. First Aid items were procured for the Safe Spaces as well. Budget for repairs and maintenance was added, and the project procured more materials as part of the COVID-19 response plans for enhanced safety. Girls were and continue to be consulted for feedback on the spaces.
<b>Hygiene</b>	Noting menstruation as an obstacle to attendance.	Menstruation kits were provided to girls.
<b>Access to Learning Fund</b>	Original fund focused on supporting girls with disabilities. As project developed, it became clear that project was not able to support girls with severe disabilities.	The project expanded the use of the fund to include supporting access to psychosocial support, counseling, visual and hearing impairments, challenges related to pregnancy, etc. The expanded recommended use of the fund also included responses to acute injuries that were likely to keep girls from attending sessions for a significant period of time.

## **Overcoming entrenched gender norms**

Another element of the EAGER Transition Design Overview<sup>31</sup> specifies that the project incorporates an enhanced emphasis on the Empowerment Plan Model in order to help overcome entrenched socio-cultural norms around gender at the community level. Accordingly, the new concept of transition also aims to “Enable the girls to **think critically** about their Empowerment goals, and to explore whether they can safely step beyond the restrictions and assumptions about the activities that girls can and should do in their homes and communities.”<sup>32</sup> Both baseline and midterm data show that there remain clearly entrenched gender norms, but also the midterm data suggests that some of those are being challenged and many more are being negotiated. These issues are dealt with in-depth in the Effectiveness and Impact sections below.

### **Needs not being met**

Analysis demonstrates that the reports of beneficiaries dropping out of the programme are rare and are reported by a minority of girls across all interviews<sup>33</sup>. Girls were said to be dropping out of the programme, or not attending regularly because of:

- Illness (self or in family)
- Childcare duties
- Chore burden (housework and/or farm work)
- Difficulty sitting for long periods of time when pregnant
- Socialising
- Individual sessions too long or too many sessions over too many weeks (also recognises strains on programming length due to COVID-19)

These reasons are further explored within the EQ Effectiveness 2 section.

#### **5.1.2. Relevance Question 2. To what extent do project objectives and project design align with government priorities and policies, notably the MBSSE Radical Inclusion policy and the MBSSE COVID-19 response?**

### **Alignment with Radical Inclusion Policy**

The response to this evaluation question relies upon close study of two key Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) policies: the MBSSE Radical Inclusion policy and the MBSSE COVID-19 response. Where applicable, data from interviews provides additional support.

The National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools, published in March 2021, recognises that providing “equitable access to education for all children in Sierra Leone” is a priority of the Medium-Term National Development Plan (2019-2023). The policy targets “four excluded and marginalised groups: *children with disabilities; children from low-income families; children in rural*

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<sup>31</sup> As reported in the document, “The original project design envisaged Transition as a range of self-identified pathways for each girl and narrowed these down to three main viable options: safe, fairly-paid employment; self-employment or further learning (vocational, professional, or return to school on a case-by-case basis).” (EAGER, n.d., p. 2).

<sup>32</sup> EAGER (n.d.), p. 2, bolding added.

<sup>33</sup> It is worth noting, however, that the design of the evaluation focuses on current EAGER participants. In order to more comprehensively understand reasons for drop-out, a study focused on girls who have left the programme would be more appropriate.

*and underserved areas; and girls – especially girls who are currently pregnant and in school or are parent learners.*<sup>34</sup> The MBSSE Minister recognises in the Foreword that Sierra Leone faces serious resource constraints which do not allow it to meet the needs of every child. Although the policy emphasises a transformation within formal schools, it includes a “specific provision for learners from low-income families and rural and underserved areas.” This provision affirms that MBSEE will “promote flexible learning pathways in both formal and non-formal settings including learning materials that supported accelerated or remedial learning for students.”<sup>35</sup>

The MBSSE COVID-19 response was published in May 2020. Leaning on the experience of the Ebola crisis, the document recognises that the COVID-19 pandemic will likely affect girls, disadvantaged and marginalised students most and that the likelihood increases for teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence. The response plan established four pillars: 1) Communications, 2) Continuous Distance Learning, 3) School Reopening Readiness Pillar, and 4) Operations, Planning and Policy Pillar. Alongside MBSSE technical leads, development partners serve as co-leads. FCDO serves as co-lead for the fourth pillar. Among activities listed within the four pillars are awareness raising (including via radio messaging), school safety protocols and gender focused activities. Within the latter, the plan notes the activities below:

- “1. Targeted community messaging on harmful norms, eg transactional sex, SGBV, Child Marriage, SRHR;*
- 2. Safe Spaces for children at risk operated by community Mentors/volunteers;*
- 3. Distribution of hygiene kits and other essentials.”*<sup>36</sup>

Document review and comparison with EAGER activities and objectives also identifies several areas of alignment with both policies. Firstly, the target group of adolescent girls from marginalised communities, with particular emphasis on subgroups that include girls with disabilities, pregnant girls, lactating mothers and girls who are heads of household clearly align with both policies. EAGER also seems to be operating in communities that may be difficult for the MBSSE Radical Inclusion policy to reach, given the limited resources indicated within.

A national MBSSE official and all 10 local government officials interviewed expressed general satisfaction with the project and its contribution to girls’ education. The national official emphasised how the project aligns with several policies including the National Development Plan, the Radical Social Inclusion Policy, the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage and the Child Rights Act of 2007. All 10 local government officials concurred and emphasised that EAGER objectives and design align with government priorities. Among local government officials, two of the three education officials underlined that they found the curriculum to be strong. One of them, from WAU, indicated having requested a copy of the curriculum and he still hopes he can obtain it. Similarly, district-level Social Welfare Officers interviews noted that EAGER supports the government in aligning with referral pathways and reporting in cases of sexual violence. An officer

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<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education – Sierra Leone. (March 2021). National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools, p. ii-iii. (Italics in original.)

<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education – Sierra Leone. (March 2021). National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools, p. 45.

<sup>36</sup> Government of Sierra Leone. (May 2020). COVID-19 Education Emergency Response Plan, p. 7.

also noted the policy aligns with the recently launched Equality and Women Empowerment Policy<sup>37</sup>.

### ***Alignment with Government COVID-19 Response***

In regard to COVID-19, EAGER's Midterm Response Plan (MTRP) is fully focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and project adaptations. The plan recognised that the contextual realities of the target communities do not permit reliance on a technology-based solution but rather, a multipronged approach was required<sup>38</sup>. The project's COVID-19 response also addresses several of the activities contained within the government's four-pillar approach. Most notably, EAGER has:

- Provided information on COVID-19 prevention;
- Reduced group size to support social distancing;
- Followed strict safety and hygiene protocols;
- Re-sequenced learning sessions to prioritise GBV and sexual and reproductive health topics (SRH);
- Elaborated psychological first aid (PFA) training for Mentors in order to better support beneficiaries;
- Adapted functional Literacy and Numeracy sessions and Life Skills sessions for COVID-19;
- Developed a messaging campaign through BBC Media Action addressing COVID-19 prevention;
- In response to increasing levels of GBV worldwide during the pandemic, created and disseminated a series of tailored GBV messages emphasising that violence is never a good solution and that all girls and women have the right to live free from violence – which were shared widely with government and NGO partners; and,
- Created and disseminated a series of image-based posters based on GBV messages.

Moreover, the MTRP also acknowledges how EAGER frames its response and recovery in line with other important government strategies and objectives relevant to the National Strategy for Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone.

Again, all ten local and regional government officials interviewed noted EAGER's alignment with education objectives as well as GBV and COVID-19 prevention measures. One Education Officer noted his support of the project's approach:

*"I think it is good for the project to also take into consideration the protocol involved in the prevention of the COVID-19. Looking at the area where the project is targeting the village setting so the project can also help in providing*

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<sup>37</sup> State House Media and Communications Unit. December 3, 2020. Sierra Leone's President Julius Maada Bio launches gender equality and women's empowerment policy, says happy women make a happy nation. <https://statehouse.gov.sl/sierra-leones-president-julius-maada-bio-launches-gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment-policy-says-happy-women-make-a-happy-nation/> )

<sup>38</sup> EAGER Medium-term Response Plan. (31 July 2020).

*material that will help or align with the COVID protocol that definitely will help the project and help the children. Well before this time we as MBSE we have been supplying material, hand washing material to mainstream schools.”*  
(Education Officer)

Data indicates that the relationship between EAGER and the government could be stronger but that there have been efforts on both sides to strengthen collaborations. For instance, MBSSE’s e-book “Transforming Education Service Delivery through Evidence Informed Policy and Practice” features EAGER as a case study. EAGER Leadership also underlined efforts made to discuss the EAGER curriculum with government officials as well as to develop a consortium focused on other projects working with out-of-school girls and Safe Spaces. Correspondence with the FM on the project’s annual RAAG and risk ratings<sup>39</sup> identify several challenges that collaborations with the GoSL including the MBSSE’s resistance to the development of a new non-formal curriculum from scratch and the possible desire to not call further attention to out-of-school girls and adolescents as this would detract from its universal education policy. The likelihood that the GoSL may also perceive EAGER as circumventing its strategy to bring out-of-school children back to school is also identified as a challenge given that EAGER does not seek to integrate all participants back into mainstream schools upon project completion, due to their age and other factors. EAGER leadership expresses awareness of these challenges and interest to continue to engage government. Involving the FCDO country office in such advocacy will be critical and this has not been possible prior to the midterm point.

Interviewed government officials provided suggestions as to how to further enhance collaboration between EAGER and government:

- Continue to support the attendance of EAGER partners at the weekly meetings of Social Welfare staff, when applicable<sup>40</sup>. District-level staff from one district noted the importance of Concern attending meetings and how it allows government officials to provide them with advice in order to work with government policies. Data seem to indicate that this practice of attending meeting may be a model for other districts to emulate if they do not do so already;
- Providing fuel so that government officials can participate more actively in EAGER activities;
- Similarly, traveling together to provide joint support;
- Sharing copies of the curriculum<sup>41</sup>;
- Improved coordination with other projects doing similar work; and,
- Even more focus on inclusion with girls with disabilities.

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<sup>39</sup> EAGER Internal communication from Fund Manager. (November 8, 2019). Annual RAAG/Risk.

<sup>40</sup> A member of the CCU underlined that EAGER partners attend these meeting when they are called by the local authorities. The degree of regularity in which these meetings are held in each district varies.

<sup>41</sup> Discussions with the CCU indicate that curriculum documents had been shared with government officials. Nonetheless, a government official interviewed insisted that he had not seen them. This may indicate that EAGER needs to closely monitor turnover and provide additional copies throughout the project life cycle.

## Effectiveness

### 5.1.3. Effectiveness Question 1. What is working (and is not working) to increase the learning and potential transition of marginalised girls as defined by the project as well as project Mentors?

Both quantitative and qualitative data underscore that, overall, beneficiaries have made impressive learning gains since baseline. Interview data show that girls generally express great satisfaction with the project in improving their reading, numeracy and “business” skills. Beyond the direct beneficiaries, all other stakeholder groups exhibit similar sentiments of satisfaction in how girls are learning and how their lives are positively influenced. In order to answer this question, the evaluation team draws upon both quantitative and qualitative data. We first explore the learning outcomes presented above in relation to instructional practices. We then describe ways in which beneficiaries are using their new knowledge and skills in their daily lives. Next, we explore elements that seem to contribute to the learning of participating girls and Mentors. The last section focuses on areas for improvement. Although less substantial than supporting elements, these findings related to improvements provide EAGER with potential ways to continue to strengthen programming.

#### ***Processes associated with improved learning outcomes***

A later section, under EQ Impact 1, provides a detailed analysis of how learning outcomes vary between marginalised subgroups. Rather, this section focuses on processes and aspects of the EAGER project that are associated with success.

Table 22 explores the correlation<sup>42</sup> between questions asked to beneficiaries about the Safe Spaces and improvement in Learning outcome scores. These correlations are not of average midterm scores and beneficiary responses, but of actual improvement since baseline. While values themselves should be interpreted with caution, the results that are statistically significant (marked with an asterisk) are noteworthy. Remark that the questions about Facilitators did not specify which subject they were learning nor did they distinguish between “Facilitator” or “Mentor.” Here, the term “Facilitator” is synonymous with “instructor.”

*Table 22: Improved Learning Outcomes and the Learning Environment*

Question	Improvement in scores in...		
	Literacy	Numeracy	Life Skills
Does the Facilitator explain how the things you are learning will be useful to you?	-1.4	-2.3	3.9*
Does the Facilitator give you ideas for how you can learn outside the space?	-1.2	1.2	3.4*
Do you find the lessons go at a good speed for you? Are they...	1.8	3	3.9*
If you don't understand, do your Facilitators/Mentors use a different language?	1.8	3	3.6*
Does your Facilitator encourage other learners to participate during lessons?	-2.1	-3.4*	2.3*

<sup>42</sup> Correlations were multiplied by 100 to make results more intuitive: for example, beneficiaries who responded yes to the question "Does the Facilitator explain how things are learning will be useful to you?" on average have a Life Skills score 13.3 points higher than a No response (valued at 0).

Does your Facilitator suggest ways you can continue to study outside/at home	4.2	4.7	4.7
Does your Facilitator discipline or punish other learners who get things wrong?	1.8	-3	-2.1
Physical Punishment	-2.2	-5.9	3
Shouting	-4.2	-9.1*	3.1
Detention	0	-8.1	0.5
In the last week you attended, did you see a Facilitator use physical punishment on other learner	5.8	4.7	1.9
In the last week you attended, did the Facilitator use physical punishment on you?	8.3	5	1.2

Several question items demonstrate statistically significant effects on Numeracy and Life Skills score improvements. Numeracy scores were significantly lower, for example, if they report that their Facilitator shouts during sessions. Curiously, Numeracy scores were also significantly lower if Facilitators encourage other learners to participate in sessions, according to beneficiaries.

Improvements in Life Skills scores were significantly higher based on beneficiaries' responses regarding several questions:

- If instructor explains how what they are learning is useful to them in real life;
- If instructors give them ideas for how to learn outside the Safe Space;
- If beneficiaries feel lessons are going at an appropriate pace;
- If instructors are using of different languages to ensure beneficiaries understand; and,
- If instructors are encouraging participation of beneficiaries during sessions.

The fact that most of the significant differences were linked to Life Skills improvements suggest that there may be more variation in the quality of learning in Life Skills than Literacy or Numeracy. If the identified differences have more of a relationship to Life Skills scores, it is likely because that is where the variation in teaching practices is taking place. Another possible explanation is simply that creating a safe, interactive environment to learn in is even more critical when discussing the sensitive and emotional subjects discussed during Life Skills sessions.

### ***Real-life application of knowledge and skills***

Interview data provides nuance into how beneficiaries are applying their learning and how it may continue to serve them as they move into the transition phase. Examples below indicate the source as relevant:

- Writing their name and signing where appropriate (in lieu of fingerprint) (multiple districts)
- Writing and recording the names of others – either those who contribute to savings mechanisms (Kailahun beneficiary, KII) or the names of creditors “so that I will not forget those who have to pay me” (Tonkolili beneficiary, KII)
- Reading a child’s name on a hospital card (Girls FGD, Pujehun)
- Reading a calendar so that they know when need to take child into the clinic for a visit (Girls FGD, Kailahun)
- Avoiding accounting errors for business (Girls FGD, Pujehun)

- Properly use measuring tape when sewing (Girls FGD, WAU<sup>43</sup>)
- Using WhatsApp (Girl's KII, WAU), SMS messages (Beneficiary, Kailahun, KII; Kailahun Girls' FGD)
- Taking down phone numbers for others (Koinadugu Female caregivers FGD)

As illustration, a beneficiary in Pujehun described how her Literacy skills are helping her not only to read books but also to be more effective in her small pepper trade.

*"The Literacy skill has helped me a lot, when I go and harvests my pepper garden, I will sold it without any mistake. Before now, I used to do so many mistakes when selling my pepper because, I don't know how to write the names of those who come and loan but now I can do that without any mistakes. P3: The Literacy skill has helped me a lot, now I can read my books all by myself and I can even read other books that I can't even imagine of reading them before now." (Girls FGD, Pujehun)*

This beneficiary's male partner also expressed his satisfaction with his wife's improved abilities during a separate interview, and citing that his relationship with her has also improved as a result of EAGER participation. We next turn to an investigation of project elements that may foster learning among marginalised girls and Mentors.

### **Session timing appropriate**

Although not all stakeholders are satisfied with the scheduling of the EAGER sessions, the majority of stakeholders interviewed expressed that the timing is appropriate, including girls and female caregivers. For instance, 6 of 10 male partners interviewed volunteered that they were pleased with when sessions take place. Some noted that the timing allowed their female partners to take care of other duties before going to class, such as farm work, taking care of children, and most commonly, preparing the daily meal. One partner in Kambia shared how he helps his partner organise herself so that she is able to begin cooking prior to the session, but that, nonetheless, it was very difficult. Nearly all Mentors interviewed (9 of 10) agreed and some explained how the group had collectively agreed upon the timing. As a Mentor in Kono described,

*"We called all the girls and their parents/caregivers to a meeting and we agreed that the sessions should not be in the morning because they have to go to their garden but in the evening, all of them must have returned from the garden. So we agreed for 4PM to 6PM." (Kono Mentor #1)*

Interestingly, local and regional government officials interviewed seemed most critical of the session timing but this finding is not substantiated by girls or other stakeholders.

### **Strong rapport with instructors**

Interview data overwhelmingly demonstrate that beneficiaries have strong relationships with their instructors, particularly with Mentors. Recall that the midterm evaluation interviewed 20 Mentors, discussing both their perspective on beneficiaries' experiences but also their own journeys as a Mentor. Of those interviewed, half had been with the project over a year and nearly a quarter had

<sup>43</sup> Instructional space provides access to sewing machines in this district as it is part of a training center.

been with the project for over two years, indicating they had fairly seasoned responses. When asked, Mentors described their roles as providing instruction in Life Skills, but moreover, as helping girls to build up their confidence, helping them negotiate attendance with their caregivers and partners, resolving issues at home, following up in the case of absence or illness, ensuring confidentiality and safeguarding and overall, helping girls to feel “relaxed and comfortable” during sessions, as indicated by a Mentor in Kambia.

A Mentor from Kailahun described her role as follows, indicating not only duty of care for EAGER beneficiaries, but also contextualising how she has also benefitted from EAGER:

*“I am a Mentor for [Community Name] and my responsibilities are to teach and take care of the youth in the community. I am a role model who tries to create an impact in the life of youth and on the community and to imitate me and even do more than I can do so that they can represent themselves well, the community, the country and the world at large.” (Mentor #1 Kailahun)<sup>44</sup>*

How Mentors may have developed enhanced self-esteem through participation in EAGER is a major theme that is further developed within the Impact Section below.

A discussion with female caregivers in Koinadugu provided particularly poignant insights into the powerful relationship that Mentors have forged with young women in the community. One of the two female caregivers FGD was particularly articulate and three participants explained how the beneficiaries trust and confide in the mentors, even more so than in their mothers:

*Caregiver 1: “I used to see my daughter and if she is upset or if I have hurt her, if she feels stressed, she will go to her Mentor and explain to her what is disturbing her. She likes going to her Mentor.”*

*Caregiver 2: “They are working fine with the Mentors. Because if my daughter does not go to the session, the Mentor will come and check to know why she did not go to the session.”*

*Caregiver 3: “Like my own daughter will hide her secret from me, but she will get up and go and tell her Mentor her secret. But she will hide from me, she will hide from her elder sister. But she does not hide from her Mentor. She will tell her everything. Maybe she feels if she tells me I will shout at her. Maybe that is why she prefers to go to her Mentor and explain herself to her. ”*  
*(Caregivers FGD, Koinadugu)*

Although there is less information in regard to beneficiaries’ relationships with their Facilitators, survey data indicate that beneficiaries nearly unanimously feel that “my Facilitators make me feel welcome in the Learning/Safe Space” with 93.6 percent of respondents indicating they agree “a lot” with the statement. Before sessions commenced, heads of household were asked what quality of instruction they expected: 90.5 percent expected very good or fairly good instruction. At midterm, 99.5 percent responded that they considered the instruction the beneficiary was

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<sup>44</sup> #1 refers to the Mentor who responded to questions more relevant to girls’ experiences. Mentor 2 is the Mentor who responded to questions more focused on the Mentor’s experience

receiving was good or fairly good – that is, while household head expectations for instruction were high, even those were exceeded.

### ***Instructor attendance inconsistencies***

Beneficiary survey data indicate that over one-fifth (21.0%) of respondents find their instructors<sup>45</sup> to be often absent from learning sessions. This finding requires additional investigation. Qualitative data generally did not indicate an issue with instructor attendance though there was mention that Mentors in the Kambia community who are also nurses do not have time for EAGER trainings (Project Officer KII; Kambia girls' focus group). These findings underline the challenge of volunteer positions requiring academic competencies. To help alleviate this issue, a District Project Officer as well as a partner representative proposed a structure whereby the project works with a national volunteer who would serve as the Facilitator, paired with a community volunteer who would serve as a Mentor.

### ***Safe Spaces***

Findings indicate that stakeholders find the Safe Spaces to be generally conducive to learning. Girls focus groups and KIIs in qualitative sample communities in Kailahun, Kambia, Kono and WAU discussed that the Safe Space is an area to express one's ideas and where girls are able to have a good time and forget their problems. Two of the three focus groups with female caregivers also explored these ideas, specifically in Koinadugu and Kono. The majority of male partners (6 of 10) interviewed also indicated that they felt the Learning Spaces are accommodating and appropriate for EAGER programming. The most recurring problem that stakeholders identify regarding Safe Spaces is that they are not fully dedicated to the EAGER project and can be repurposed, leaving participants without a meeting location.<sup>46</sup>

Survey results demonstrate that there are physical limitations to the Safe Spaces. When asked, 46.3 percent of beneficiaries state that they do not use a toilet when at the Safe Space. Drinking water facilities were not available in 19.8 percent of facilities. While some physical limitations, such as reliable drinking water, may be outside the control of the control of the Safe Spaces' locations, toilets, seats, and learning materials, are intended to be provide at all Safe Spaces. Several quantitative data collectors noted that the Safe Spaces were small or suffered from outside noise, lacked toilets, and some had leaking roofs. Accessibility of Learning and Safe Spaces varies significantly between districts (below). (Note that the next Effectiveness question will further explore how Safe Spaces may affect participants' attendance.)

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<sup>45</sup> As indicated earlier, question wording used the term "Facilitator" but did not differentiate between EAGER Facilitators and Mentors. We have opted for the term "instructor" here for greater clarity.

<sup>46</sup> This response arose from at least seven stakeholders and included Mentors, male partners and beneficiaries from communities in the districts of Bo, Puihuhun, Kambia and Kono.

Table 23: Safe Spaces with Facilities According to Beneficiaries<sup>47</sup>

	Toilets	Drinking Water	Seats	Learning Materials
<b>Overall</b>	53%	80%	99%	99%
<b>Bo</b>	52%	60%	100%	100%
<b>Kailahun</b>	33%	83%	100%	100%
<b>Kambia</b>	79%	98%	99%	100%
<b>Kenema</b>	54%	75%	100%	100%
<b>Koinadugu</b>	69%	98%	100%	100%
<b>Kono</b>	35%	72%	100%	100%
<b>Port Loko</b>	75%	91%	99%	99%
<b>Pujehun</b>	43%	100%	96%	100%
<b>Tonkolili</b>	55%	72%	99%	100%
<b>WAU</b>	40%	54%	99%	99%

### **Curriculum engaging and effective**

When asked about EAGER strengths, stakeholders, and in particular, beneficiaries, commonly cited the lesson content and teaching strategies. Interviews with EAGER leadership indicate that Literacy and Numeracy materials were initially developed by external consultants during project inception and then further contextualised as more permanent staff came on board. EAGER's Education Specialist developed the Financial Literacy curriculum and the Protection Specialist developed the Life Skills curriculum. As will be described further below, teaching and learning materials, especially for Life Skills, underwent significant modifications due to realisations after baseline results that Mentors' capacities were lower than initially anticipated and subsequently, due to the need for COVID adaptations.

### Curriculum topics elicit interest and fosters praxis

As described in EQ Relevance 1, respondents find the curriculum practical and relevant. Evaluation findings demonstrate the curriculum to be effective in both increasing interest in business, and also enhancing knowledge about how to start and sustain a business. Overwhelmingly, girls identified that they felt engaged and motivated by the content of the sessions. Fourteen of the 30 girls interviewed responded in this manner and across EAGER subjects. Beneficiaries' interest is particularly high for business-related topics<sup>48</sup>. A Kono beneficiary described how EAGER has been effective in helping her to strengthen her business skills and feel more confident about her future:

*"Right now I want to do business. I want this project to help me to do business since I am not able to go to school, let me support my brother to go to school."*

<sup>47</sup> These values are based on the percent of beneficiaries who stated Yes to the following questions: "Do you use the toilet at the Safe Space? Do you use drinking water facilities at the Learning/Safe Space? Are there seats for every girl in your session? When at the Safe Space can you use books or other learning material you need?"

<sup>48</sup> Interest in business-related topics may also have been high at the time of data collection because participants had just begun the Financial Literacy component and business was fresh on their minds.

*In the next one year, I will want to be doing petty trading. I want to be selling: pepper, magi, salt, onion, rice and palm oil. This was the business that I was doing. The business was finished because I was not able to control the money but now I have learnt so many things on how to control money. In the next three years, I will want to operate a shop where I will be selling so many things in the community. In my Empowerment Plan, I want to start a business. Empowerment Plan means if you have Le 100,000 for example, and you want to sell cookery in the community, you will first try to know how many people are selling cookery in this community and then you find a location where you will want to start the business. After starting the business, each profit that you make per day, you should separate it from the business and keep it so that you will be able to know how much you are making. " (Kono beneficiary, KII)*

This quote also speaks to this beneficiary's positive vision of the future, how she has mastered the concept of market study and how she views the utility of the transition plan. (See the impact questions below for more in-depth discussion of these topics.)

Male partners generally exhibited excitement when they were able to comment that their partner's business acumen had improved due to participation in EAGER. For some, seeing changes in behaviour and knowledge has strengthened their efforts to support their partner's participation in EAGER. (The next Effectiveness Question further explores these efforts and viewpoints.) The testimony below from a male partner illustrates how stakeholders find curricular content to be relevant and effective:

*"Before the coming of EAGER, I gave my wife money so that she will be doing small business, after one month, I asked her about the money, we ended up in quarrel. She misused the money. She was not able to give change correctly and she was not able to separate the profit from the main business. But now, she has improved. I am seeing her going to town to buy items that she is selling in community here and the business is growing." (Kono Male partner #1, KII)*

### [Bintu's story resonates and provides inspiration](#)

In particular, the continuous use of a character, Bintu, as a narrative throughout the various content areas resonated for some beneficiaries, as indicated within 4 FGDs with beneficiaries and 2 KIIs across 6 districts.

*Beneficiary 1: "Literacy is one of the things I like, more especially Bintu's story, which has taught me about how to do business and I found the interaction between Aminata and Bintu very interesting and I can recall what I learn.*

*Beneficiary 2: The Bintu's story has helped me to understand what I should do while at home with my parents". (Girls' FGD, Kailahun)*

EAGER leadership also report that beneficiaries often hope they will have a chance to meet Bintu, believing the story is based on a real person and indicating that the character has been particularly meaningful for them. Interviews with EAGER beneficiaries demonstrate how some beneficiaries have taken inspiration from Bintu's story to respond to issues in their lives. For example, a Tonkolili beneficiary explained how she applied the lesson from Bintu's story to resolve a family

situation at home (KII). Similarly, a Bo beneficiary explained how she used the experience of Bintu’s older sister, Aminata, to guide her in reporting an incident of gender-based violence (GBV) to the police (KII).

### Mentors’ perspectives on teaching Life Skills

The midterm evaluation’s interest in Mentors’ experiences permitted a deep investigation into the Life Skills curriculum and delivery, as this is the main responsibility of EAGER Mentors. When asked about the strengths and opportunities for improvement that EAGER’s approach to Life Skills presents, there was great variation across responses, as Table 24 displays. It is possible that the diversity in responses may also indicate the diverse needs and groups that EAGER serves.

*Table 24: Ease and difficulty of Life Skills topics according to interviewed Mentors*

Easier topics	More difficult topics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GBV (2)</li> <li>• Human trafficking (2)</li> <li>• Changing body (menstruation) (2)</li> <li>• Health and sanitation</li> <li>• Gender and sex</li> <li>• Goal setting</li> <li>• Power</li> <li>• Sex and consent/contraception/safe sex</li> <li>• Respecting ourselves</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assertive communication</li> <li>• Empowerment Plan</li> <li>• Emotional violence (2)</li> <li>• Friends with disabilities</li> <li>• Health and sanitation (because shares facilitation with colleague - makes it more challenging - Tonkolili Mentor #2)</li> </ul>

Analysis shows that the topics one Mentor may find easier to facilitate may be difficult for another Mentor for a multitude of reasons. As illustration, some Mentors report both Bintu’s story related to GBV and the topic overall as easy and interesting to teach while others avoid them, finding them difficult. Although a Bo Mentor shared how EAGER participants feel happy when discussing Bintu’s story because they see similar situations around them and because the Mentor uses local language to explain the topic, a Mentor from Kono explained that her Literacy level and that of beneficiaries prevented her from fully benefitting from the curriculum element:

*“The easiest topic for me to teach them is how to take care of themselves and the most difficult one is Bintu's story. Most of them are not able to read and even myself, I can read but when it comes to proper reading, I am not too comfortable.” (Kono Mentor #2)*

Sentiments on the GBV session are also mixed. Although 2 Mentors reported that they feel quite comfortable with the topic, two others expressed trepidation. A Mentor from Bo identified that GBV is very hard to teach as girls have experienced violence. Similarly, a Mentor from Pujehun described how Mentors face pressures from the community when discussing GBV:

*“If sexual abuse occurred, the community may try to isolate the information. As a Mentor if sexual abuse occurred, if we decide to report it the community people will not be happy for us, they will frown at us.” (Pujehun Mentor #2)*

A Kambia Mentor also indicated that she did not have the right to report safety incidents to the chief or the police. These findings underscore the sensitivity of GBV as a topic and the need for EAGER to be further attentive to Mentors' abilities to safeguard triggered beneficiaries as well as the potential harm that may be caused to Mentors as a result of elevating taboo issues. Project leadership also clarified that EAGER's survivor-centred approach encourages Mentors to support beneficiaries reporting incidents. The Mentor should seek to link the beneficiary with existing services and support her as appropriate and safe should the beneficiary decide to report an incident.

The rationale for why sexual and reproductive health is a difficult topic is more concrete. Three Mentors explained that the technical terms required to teach the session are overwhelming for some beneficiaries and that girls don't focus. A WAU Mentor indicated that girls' experiences with sex and reproduction are also varied which makes it a challenging topic to facilitate. Like with GBV, she also added that some beneficiaries have experienced violence, complicating discussion. Finally, the notion of "power over" may be too difficult for beneficiaries, as a Port Loko Mentor indicated. When she addresses the topic, beneficiaries have difficulty responding.

### Mentors apply EAGER lessons in their own lives

When asked, Mentors most frequently cited applying stress management (3 Mentors) and assertive communication (2 Mentors<sup>49</sup>), followed by respecting ourselves and managing disagreement to their daily lives<sup>50</sup>. When asked specifically about stress management strategies and Mentors' experience teaching the content, all 10 Mentors asked this question responded affirmatively. Nearly all shared how they have also applied the strategies in their own lives, including singing, playing with their children, speaking with a friend and breathing exercises. One Mentor from Bo explained how the strategies have helped her deal with a challenging situation with her husband while a Kono Mentor described how she employs the strategies to help her conquer her concerns about teaching.

### Supportive and interactive instructional strategies

The midterm evaluation also explored instructional strategies through interviews, surveys and direct session observation. Observations included rating 19 practices using a specific rubric. As described in the key results for Intermediate Outcome Indicator 2, observers gave very consistent and fairly high ratings for Facilitators/Mentors of all subjects.

Midterm data reveal that most stakeholders perceive the quality of EAGER's instruction as high. Nearly all caregivers (91.9%) surveyed responded that instruction is good, with 91.5 percent indicating "very good." Beneficiaries in three FGDs and three KIIs, representing 5 districts, also indicated that the quality of the instruction is good and encourages beneficiaries' participation. Nearly all of the Girls FGD also identify that Mentors and Facilitators are working hard to help them learn. In only one FGD was there mention of insufficiencies in Mentors' abilities. Interestingly, 4 of 20 male partners and two of three focus groups with male community leaders

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<sup>49</sup> Recall that these are open-ended questions asked of 10 mentors whose interviews focused on mentors' experiences of EAGER.

<sup>50</sup> The phrasing here reflects the translations made by the data collection team. These topics seem to align best with the core topics of stress management, respecting ourselves and negotiation skills within the Life Skills curriculum (Source: EAGER Revised Life Skills Curriculum: Session Sequencing).

also volunteered that EAGER instruction was strong, demonstrating strong positive perceptions of instruction particularly among male stakeholders.

When asked to describe EAGER's strengths, a number of stakeholders also focused on the strategies that EAGER Mentors and Facilitators use in their teaching. Many Mentors interviewed stressed how using local language and making sessions interactive help to engage and foster learning among EAGER beneficiaries. As confirmation, 97.2 percent of surveyed beneficiaries agree that Mentors and Facilitators will use a different language to foster learners' understanding. Singing is also a commonly used strategy and one that EAGER participants in Kailahun and WAU focus groups identified as engaging. Indeed, data collectors noted that focus group participants even broke out into song during the focus group. In addition, respondents identified song and dance, demonstration and the use of manipulatives, such as counters (sticks, fingers and stones) for calculations.

Moreover, evaluation participants accentuated that Mentors and Facilitators tend to use learner-centred supportive strategies. A Mentor explained her approach as follows:

*"As a Mentor, these girls are our friends and we are role models and it makes them safe, we play and make fun with them and that motivate them to come more." (WAU Mentor #2)*

Building on the positive rapport finding indicated above, many beneficiaries described during focus groups and KIIs how EAGER sessions use a positive approach free from corporal punishment and harassment. Two quotes provide illustration:

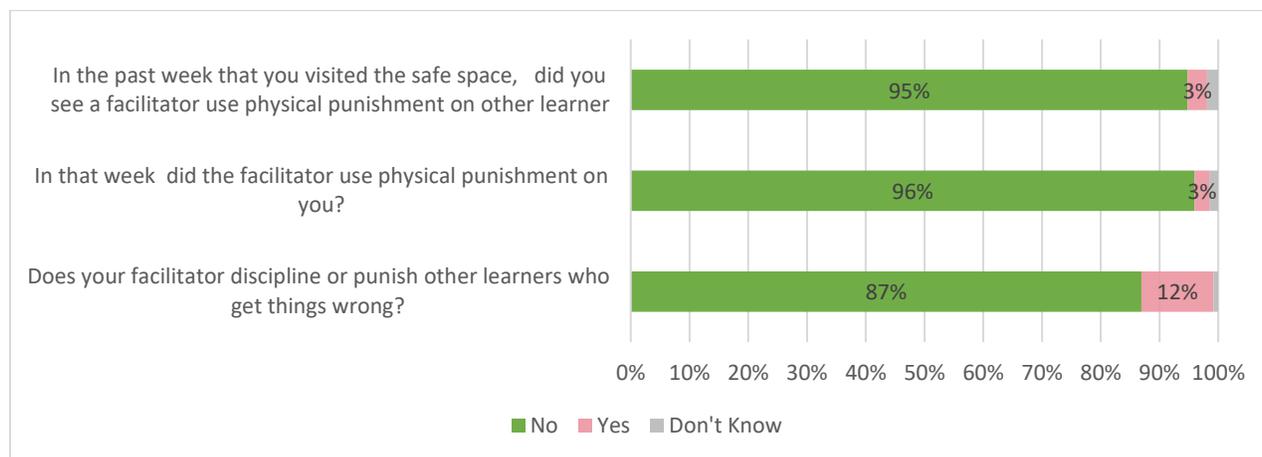
*"They [BLN Facilitators/Mentors] are very helpful, they do not shout on us. They warn us if we do something that is wrong, and they encourage us not to do that again. They take it easy with us. They do not use a cane on us, and they do not beat us. And they will never grumble at us. But they will only advise us not to do the wrong thing next time. They teach us so that we can understand. They have never driven us away. We do concentrate in class and we can only play after classes." (WAU beneficiary, KII)*

*"The first day I started when I hold the pen, I was nerving..... [respondent laughs] because I never held a pen before. I didn't know how do it. But the Facilitators and Mentors, the way they are teaching is very good. They tell us that we should not be ashamed to learn because I was ashamed to talk but right now I will not fear anymore. I will talk anywhere. What they ask me to do in the class, I will do it. What helped me to have confidence, is the way they talk to you. They talk to us nicely...They also told us that we should (not) be afraid because they are human being like us. They will say, 'what we are telling you - listen and learn.' They said we should not fear or be ashamed of anything." (Tonkolili beneficiary, KII)*

In addition, three other girls, one from Kenema and two girls from the same community in Kailahun, emphasised how instructors provide clarification to their questions when they do not understand or are seeking additional information. Similarly, when surveyed, 96.5 percent of respondents agreed that their Facilitator encouraged other learners to participate during sessions.

Quantitative data substantiate these findings while also calling attention to an important nuance. Figure 3 displays results from the Girls' Combined Survey on three questions pertaining to discipline within EAGER Learning Spaces. Although answers are almost always “no,” there is a small percentage of affirmative cases where beneficiaries responded that yes, there had been punishment. Over one-tenth of respondents (12.3%) indicated that discipline occurs for other learners in the Safe or Learning Space, but only 3 percent reported physical punishment for them, and 3 percent on others: 3.4 percent of the sample reported physical punishment was used on either them or another person.

*Figure 3: Cases of discipline within Safe Spaces, Girls' Combined Survey*



Although no additional detail is available, two girls' focus groups also indicated that there may be cases where learning environments could be more positive. These groups pointed to the need for a more “friendly and caring” environment (Tonkolili and Port Loko beneficiaries, FGD). For the Tonkolili group, however, these comments are inconsistent as other girls in the group repeated how they receive love and encouragement from the Mentors and Facilitators and how they learned a number of skills. Additional attention to these outliers in both qualitative and quantitative data are warranted. Comments may point to beneficiaries perhaps creating problematic situations among each other even if the instructors are supportive.

#### Limited inclusion of girls with disabilities within instructional approaches

Before conducting session observations, quantitative data collectors would meet with the Facilitator/Mentor, ask permission, and ask them to get permission from the beneficiaries in the session before the enumerator would enter and conduct the observation. Quantitative data collectors would ask Facilitators or Mentors beforehand if there were any beneficiaries attending with disabilities, and, if so, what types of disabilities<sup>51</sup>. By knowing this, they were able to mark observations about specific disabilities only in cases where beneficiaries with those disabilities were in the Safe/Learning Space. If there were no beneficiaries with a given disability, quantitative data collectors would skip the relevant question below. For example, if and only if the Facilitator stated there was a beneficiary with an auditory or visual disability, they would they mark a

<sup>51</sup> It is important to note that Facilitators or Mentors may not have acknowledged girls with mental or emotional disabilities as having a disability, and may have interpreted the term disability as only referring to physical disabilities, or were not aware of girls in their session who had emotional or mental disabilities.

response of yes or no to the question "there are no audio or visual barriers limiting learners from fully participating." Of the 28 observations conducted that included a beneficiary with an audio or visual disability, 65.6 percent of quantitative data collectors said that there were related barriers. Table 25 details the presence of several strong practices necessary for an inclusive approach. Should teaching and learning be fully inclusive, responses to these questions would all approach 100 percent. While there are some cases where those with disabilities are being included, overall EAGER instruction often lacks effective inclusion. EAGER leadership emphasised, however, that the project is limited in its scope in terms of the extent of disabilities that it can serve.

*Table 25: Presence of inclusive education strategies within observed Learning Spaces*

Inclusion Observation	% Yes
The Facilitator calls on girls with disabilities the same amount as those who do not have disabilities	66.2%
The Facilitator only assigns tasks that girls with disabilities can complete or makes accommodations for them	47.3%
There are no physical barriers limiting learners from moving around the Learning Space	41.1%
There are no audio or visual barriers limiting learners from fully participating	44.4%
There are no learning or behavioural barriers limiting learners from participating	57.1%
There are no communication barriers limiting learners from participating.	67.5%
There are no other barriers due to disability noted in the class	73.4%

### **Professional development for Mentors and Facilitators creative and supportive**

Mentors and Facilitators serve as the foundation for EAGER participants' learning experiences. Interviews with EAGER leadership described how given baseline evaluation findings that Mentor capacities, including basic Literacy and Numeracy in some cases, were low, the project reinforced its plans for initial and in-service professional development. Of Mentors and Facilitators interviewed, all who responded to specific questions on training and coaching were positive and recognised the benefit of the sessions for improving Mentors' and Facilitators' capacities (i.e., 8 of 10 Mentors and all 10 Facilitators).

#### **Mentors' training and continuous professional development**

EAGER has created a peer network for Mentors called learning clusters. Most interviewed Mentors indicated that a learning cluster occurred approximately one month prior to data collection. Mentors indicated having improved their understanding of the following topics during coaching sessions:

- Assertive communication
- Bintu's story
- Boldness
- Confidentiality
- Empowerment Plans
- Gender-based violence
- Goal setting (short-term and long-term goals)
- Malaria preventative measures
- Positive learner-centred approach
- Power
- Safeguarding
- Saving money
- Setting up a business (market study)
- Stress management

In general, the clusters offer both opportunities to learn content and to discuss this content with other EAGER volunteers but also the ability to network and meet others and share about their lives. In parallel to how Mentors intervene to resolve issues for beneficiaries (see next

Effectiveness EQ), evaluation participants also indicated that Facilitators may also play a similar role for Mentors. A Bo Mentor, for instance, described how the Facilitator had advised her when having difficulties with her husband. The two testimonies below speak to the paired benefit of the learning clusters for Mentors.

*“The last learning cluster was in June 2021. It brought an impact in our lives. We come together to learn from each other and that motivates us. It enables me to go out and impact others. It really good and we gain experiences from different side. It brought awareness for us to get the skills that are required to talk to children which will draw their attention and that motivated us. Our officers also motivate us.” (WAU Mentor #2)*

*“All of us are working as Mentors but there are some of them who has more knowledge than us, some of them completed their school and sat to their WASSCE, so when I meet with them I am happy because I am able to learn from them and I was very much happy meeting them. We discussed our girls’ habits since we are coming from different communities and we were able to share ideas and gain some knowledge on how to address any problem faced.” (Kailahun Mentor #2)*

### Facilitators’ training and continuous professional development

Like Mentors, EAGER Facilitators participate in a supportive professional network called peer-to-peer meetings. According to one regional education official, the quality of training is very good and Facilitators’ capacities follow suit (KII). Facilitators interviewed largely expressed a desire for peer-to-peer discussions to continue and Bo, Kambia and Pujehun Facilitators request increased meetings regularity. The last meeting reported took place in June 2021, just a few weeks prior to data collection. Facilitators also explained that they stay in touch with one another and reach out via telephone to each other when needing clarity. Like Mentors, some Facilitators also expressed having assimilated important messages from EAGER trainings:

*“What I learned from the sessions: one, I have understood how to take care of EAGER girls. Two, I have learned how to deal with people in my community, and also three, I have learned to teach these girls. I am a community teacher and previously I was using cane to discipline pupils but since this EAGER project training I had undertaken I no longer flogged pupils because that not the way to discipline pupils whenever they do wrong things.” (Kenema Facilitator, KII)*

*“Well, in the first place, as a Facilitator I attended school but through the EAGER programme and the trainings I attended, I increased my knowledge on how to live in the community and how to interact with people and even was exposed to learn new things from the trainings. I learnt new skills like how to talk in public, how to manage human beings and how to talk with people.” (Port Loko Facilitator, KII)*

When asked what might be done to further improve Facilitators' professional development, an interviewed Facilitator and a District Project Staff suggested training certificates that may be presented as a credential for future work. Another District Staff pointed to the need for additional field visits as well as First Aid Kits, essential for challenging travels between communities. Lastly, a District Project Staff also requested that teaching and learning materials be reinforced and multiplied.

#### District Staff<sup>52</sup> support

Analysis of qualitative data also indicates that on-going coaching from District Staff towards Mentors and Facilitators is also well appreciated. A Pujehun Facilitator, for instance, spoke effusively about the quality and responsiveness of his District Officer, explaining that the District Officer returns his calls immediately and helps him to decipher and clarify the teaching manual, as needed. Data collectors also interviewed a male partner of a Mentor within a WAU community. This partner shared enthusiastically how District Staff have been supportive of his wife:

*"There is a woman, who is the head of the project, but I don't know her name, but my wife told me about her. She has a good relationship with them and it brings a smile to the face of my wife and that tells me that the organisation is great. She talks to them nicely and that makes them able to have the energy, love and spirit needed to teach the children happily. I tried to find another place where she can teach but she refuses and she told me that she appreciates and loves where she is teaching." (WAU Male partner of Mentor, KII)*

Such testimonies emphasise the effectiveness of EAGER professional development activities.

#### **Additional training for Mentors and Facilitators**

Learning outcomes aside, a small number of interviews suggest that EAGER instructors are still in need of continued training. As indicated above, Life Skills topics that are challenging to some Mentors include GBV and sexual and reproductive health and would be useful topics for address. In addition, beneficiaries in Kono requested additional explanations of the Empowerment Plan.

#### 5.1.4. Effectiveness Question 2. Which factors support and hinder participation in project activities and achievements, at the individual, community and more macro levels?

The response to this question dives into factors that support and hinder attendance. Particular attention is paid to safety, the critical roles family and Mentors play in supporting attendance, as well as community engagement.

As discussed under IO1A, the average attendance rate is 85 percent, which is fairly high. EAGER measures attendance success internally as the proportion of beneficiaries who attend sessions at least 65 percent of the time. This rate fluctuates greatly by quarter however, and attendance registered the lowest proportion during the COVID shutdown and post-shutdown period (76.9% overall between January 2020 and January 2021). As Table 26 indicates, the proportion also

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<sup>52</sup> Here the term "District Staff" refers to a variety of positions interviewed: district supervisors, LBS Officers and BLN Officers. Given this variety, but more importantly, the traceability of these individuals if we were to provide their title and the district, we have masked their identity by referring to them all as "District Staff."

varies by partner. Green highlighting on the table shows that Restless Development consistently reports the highest attendance rates. Concern Worldwide generally demonstrates the lowest attendance rates. The difference between the highest and lowest rates varies between 10-11 percentage points for all three quarters with the exception of the last period, which demonstrates a 21.8 percentage point gap.

It is particularly remarkable that the proportion of those attending 65 percent or more over all months is lower than it is for any given quarter. This is most pronounced for Safe Spaces led by Concern Worldwide. For any given quarter, between 85 and 90 percent of beneficiaries are attending 65 percent of the time. However, only 76.9 percent of beneficiaries are attending 65 percent or more over the entire year. Many beneficiaries swing between attending more than 90 percent of the time to attending less than half of the time: they may have over 65 percent of attendance in two quarters, and a third quarter where they attended less than one-third of the time. As a result, their attendance rate over the entire period is under 65 percent. It is unclear what could be causing attendance to fluctuate so dramatically: it may be beneficiaries having children, or working during the programme. It does not appear to be community-wide, such as beneficiaries from whole districts being absent simultaneously, so it is unlikely to be due to factors such as harvest seasons or mining because causes are unique for each individual.

*Table 26: Percent of beneficiaries attending 65 percent or more of the time, by partner*

	January - March 2020	September - October 2020	November 2020 - January 2021	Jan 2020 - Jan 2021
<b>IRC</b>	85.60%	86.10%	85.20%	88.30%
<b>Concern</b>	79.80%	83.50%	86.50%	72.50%
<b>Restless</b>	90.80%	95.20%	95.40%	94.30%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>85.80%</b>	<b>88.80%</b>	<b>90.20%</b>	<b>76.90%</b>

Qualitative responses argue that girls generally attend EAGER sessions even more often, nearly always, but this result likely reflects selection bias, as beneficiaries who were available to participate in focus groups were likely those who most frequently attended programming.

### **Individual and Household Support**

#### **Self Motivation**

Some beneficiaries demonstrated a high level of self-motivation and interest in the content. As discussed in response to the first effectiveness question above, many interviewees declare finding the curriculum to be interesting and practical. For some, this is sufficient for them to proactively organise their days and priorities in order to be able to attend sessions. Participants in a girls' focus group in the sampled community in Koinadugu discussed as follows:

*Beneficiary 1: If I don't have anything to do at home, I make sure I attend my sessions. Even if I have things to do at home, I will still attend my sessions since the duration for classes is short. After I will then go home to do my work. Nobody advises me to come for my classes. I know these classes are very*

*important for me so I make it a point of duty not to absent myself from sessions.*

*Beneficiary 2: For me, I don't absent myself from the sessions because I am very serious about learning something. I did not have the opportunity to go to school, so now that I have been given the opportunity to learn something I need to take it very seriously. So, for that reason I make sure I attend all my sessions.*

*Beneficiary 3: For me, I will come every day for class except when it rains. Other than that, nothing stops me from attending my classes. Even though I am coming from a distant area I always make sure I come for class. The only thing that stops me is either sickness or when it rains." (Girls FGD, Koinadugu)*

In addition, it may be possible that girls' interest in content also leads to them staying beyond the designated session length. A Mentor from the community in Tonkolili shared that they will sometimes go beyond the session's end as girls want to be sure they understand the topics discussed.

### Household Support

Beneficiaries receiving support from family members to attend sessions was a highly frequent refrain within interview sessions when asked what elements may help them to attend sessions. Mothers or mothers-in-law were the most commonly identified family member, as participants raised them in 7 of 10 girls' focus groups and in both discussions with female caregivers. These individuals provide beneficiaries with childcare as well as encouragement. Stakeholders also identified mothers' clubs, specifically, as supportive in 5 of the 10 districts (Bo, Kambia, Koinadugu, Pujehun and WAU). In addition to mothers, half of the girls' focus groups discussed how other family members are also supportive, including male caregivers. Within the 2 boys' focus groups, respondents also expressed that they encouraged and supported their sisters to attend sessions. As communities chosen for the boys' focus groups were ones where boys already expressed interest in EAGER, this finding requires careful interpretation and cannot be generalised to boy family members in all EAGER communities.

In addition to family members, some girls also receive assistance and encouragement from their male partners. Recall from above, too, that findings show how some partners demonstrate enthusiasm for EAGER, particularly upon seeing changes in behaviour and capabilities in the beneficiaries. As a male partner in the sampled WAU community commented,

*"I will not accept for her to miss a day except if she is sick or if she has a major family issue that she must be present. But she does not miss a session." (WAU male partner 2, KII)*

Male partners interviewed in 7 of the 10 districts volunteered ways in which they help their female partners attend EAGER sessions. As will be explored in more depth in the Impact section many of these behaviours align with culturally expected gender roles. According to male partners interviewed, they help beneficiaries participate in EAGER in the following ways:

- Providing medicine for the beneficiary when sick (Bo male partner 1, Kenema male partner 2; KIIs)

- Giving money for daily provisions to female partner early in the day so she can complete food preparation in time to be able to attend sessions (Kono male partner 2, Pujehun male partner 2; KIIs)
- Allowing the beneficiary to skip work on a day she has a session (Pujehun male partner 2, KII)
- Watching children while the beneficiary attends the session (Pujehun male partner 2, Koinadugu male partner 2; KIIs). Male leaders in Kenema also indicated taking turns watching children (FGD)

*“These changes have helped us a lot, because before now she carries the burden of the child alone, but due to this programme, we both now take responsibility of the child.” (Koinadugu male partner 2, KII)*

### Early marriage

Early marriage also seems to be an issue that continues to serve as an obstacle to participation and completion of EAGER programming. As illustration, a Koinadugu Mentor explained how they lost a beneficiary to early marriage. It is possible this factor is underrepresented in the data as girls who have struggled to attend or who have dropped out are not as easily captured in the sampling. In addition, project research<sup>53</sup> demonstrated that COVID-19 pressures and the lockdown may have led to higher rates of early marriage.

### **Mentor support**

Beneficiaries interviewed identified the Mentors as critical to their participation<sup>54</sup>. Three ways in particular surfaced during analysis. First, Mentors provide assistance with childcare during sessions. As there are 2 Mentors, the Mentor who is not actively facilitating may often help a girl by picking up a restless child, for instance<sup>55</sup>.

Second, Mentors follow up with girls and their families when a girl has missed a session to understand the reason for the absence, and if relevant, help identify a solution. Nine out of 30 girls interviewed, and 8 of 10 focus group discussions underline the importance of Mentors encouraging them and following up with them in case of absence. Three girls also indicated that Facilitators check in on them as well, 2 girls from the same district in Kambia and a girl from Bo. Beneficiaries in Kono and WAU provided illustration:

*“The Mentors are teaching us and if for two or three days they did not see you at school, the Mentor will visit your house to understand the reason why you have not been in the class. If you are supposed to go for class and they meet*

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<sup>53</sup> EAGER. June 2020. COVID-19 Surveys: EAGER: Summary of results of surveys with Adolescent Girls and Mentors. Sierra Leone. COVID-19 Medium Term Response

<sup>54</sup> Girls also mention Facilitators as checking in on girls and helping them resolve issues but to a lesser extent than Mentors. Because of the project’s interest in Mentors as a secondary beneficiary group, we place particular emphasis on them during analysis.

<sup>55</sup> Mentors receive training to do so in order to support beneficiaries. One Bo community Facilitator also identified helping girls in this way as well during sessions.

*you doing some work, they will leave all that they are doing and help you so that you will be able to attend the classes.” (Kono beneficiary, KII)*

*“Our Mentors detect when we have stress. They will see our faces frown and then they will ask and advise us not to be stressed. They visit our homes if they do not see us. They tell us to call if we may be absent. There was a time when my Mentor visited me when I was sick and she took me to the safe place, especially when my family was not at home. She gave me a mat so that I could listen to the session.” (WAU beneficiary, KII)*

In addition, a Kailahun beneficiary explained how a Mentor took her sick child to the hospital so the participant could attend the lesson (Girls FGD; KII).

Third, in some cases, Mentors engage caregivers and male partners to resolve issues that may hinder participation. This may be proactively before an issue arises or intervening in response to a problem. They may respond to a beneficiary’s request or directly to a request from a caregiver or male partner. Eleven beneficiaries in 5 districts and female caregivers and male partners in the same additional district commented on how Mentors help resolve disputes. To a lesser extent, Facilitators do the same, as 2 beneficiaries in 2 districts and male partners in a third district noted. Most frequently, beneficiaries indicated that conflicts most often involve partners, but can include issues with sisters and mothers as well. At least 1 male partner expressed great satisfaction with the role that Mentors and Facilitators play in helping the couple to resolve their difficulties and indicated that they are truly trusted advisors:

*“One of the best things I have seen from the programme is changes. There are changes since the start of the programme between me and my wife. Before the commencement of the programme my wife usually disrespected me, but now she has changed. Even if I do something bad to her, she will report me to tutors instead of challenging me, and the tutors will settle us together.” (Koinadugu male partner, KII)*

Mentors also assist parents who indicate that the girls may not act appropriately at home or may exhibit a behaviour that could hinder their participation. As indicated during a Koinadugu female caregivers FGD:

*Caregiver 1: “She was not giving me respect. But since this project came in this community, she has been practicing what they have been telling them in the project. Now things are much better. Now how things are happening is that if the girls misbehave at home, we only need to complain to their Mentors. Their Mentors know what to do. The Mentor will also report them to their bosses if they do not stop. So presently, they are behaving well because they do not want to have a problem with the project.”*

*Caregiver 2: “It is the same thing with my daughter. My daughter and I have been living in the same community but sometimes it can be up to five months that she will not come to me and I will not see her. Each time people see her, they will tell me but she will not come to me to even say hello. But since she joined this project, she returned back to my house and even if she wants to*

*urinate, she will take excuse from me. Now I can say, 'Thanks be to God!'"*  
(Female caregivers FGD, Koinadugu)

Both quotes above (from the male partner and the Caregiver 1) touch upon the more challenging aspects of relationships and power between EAGER beneficiaries and their partners and caregivers, and EAGER's potential impact on those dynamics. (See Impact EQs for a more detailed exploration.) For this present section, we place emphasis on the important and new role that many Mentors are playing to support girls.

### **Marginalisation and Accessibility**

#### Parenting

By far, the most common reason for a beneficiary missing a session was if the beneficiary or her child were sick. This constraint was raised in 9 of 10 girls' focus groups as well as by male partners in 8 of 10 districts. As mentioned above, Mentors' provision of childcare was cited as a support critical for many beneficiaries' attendance. The provision of a mattress, where beneficiaries can lay down sleeping children or allow their children to play, as well as pillows to make hard wooden benches/chairs more comfortable for pregnant girls are two accommodations EAGER has helped beneficiaries attend sessions. Six of the focus groups with girl beneficiaries underscored the value mattresses, in particular, while another cited pillows as helping her to attend. In addition, 2 beneficiaries in 2 different districts also indicated that instructors provided them with needed medicine so they can participate in sessions. Finally, though not a material accommodation, a Mentor described how volunteers use a buddy system among beneficiaries in Kambia whereby participants identify an EAGER friend whom they will encourage to participate and follow up with in case of absence. CCU members clarified that the buddy system is a consortium-wide approach and it is integrated in trainings and continuous professional development activities.

#### Pregnancy

Two girls' focus groups noted that it may become difficult for a pregnant beneficiary to continue coming to sessions as it may become uncomfortable for her to sit for an extended period of time. In addition, a girl will likely take a break from the programme upon giving birth and also be absent from sessions in order to attend post-natal health appointments. As indicated above, EAGER has attempted to mediate this challenge by providing pillows to participants to help them cope during sessions. A CCU member also clarified that EAGER participants who have also given birth are exempt from the three-week dropout rule and they will be able to access learning sessions. Beneficiaries are encouraged to bring the new baby with them to sessions as needed and can rely upon a Mentor being available to help take care of the baby during the session as needed. As with early marriage, project data show that rates of pregnancy also increased due to COVID-19 related challenges<sup>56</sup>.

#### Disability

Recall from the IO4 section above that midterm findings show that at mid term beneficiaries surveyed feel more strongly that girls in general, and more specifically, girls with disabilities have a right to access the Safe Space. The proportion of girls in agreement of right to access increased

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<sup>56</sup> EAGER. June 2020. COVID-19 Surveys: EAGER: Summary of results of surveys with Adolescent Girls and Mentors. Sierra Leone. COVID-19 Medium Term Response

by 14.6 percentage points in general, and by an even greater 24.6 percentage points for those with disabilities. This change seems to demonstrate that prejudices against girls with disabilities accessing Safe Spaces have lessened greatly since baseline.

### Language barriers

While using local languages rather than English is a common instructional strategy (see above Effectiveness EQ) and girls learning Krio and English is a celebrated outcome of participation for some stakeholders (see Impact EQs), it is also clear that many beneficiaries face the challenge of learning in a language different from the one they speak.

### **Sense of Safety**

Nearly all beneficiaries surveyed (99.2%) indicate that they feel safe at the Learning/Safe Space. In addition, survey responses show that beneficiaries are much more aware of what to do if they are feeling unsafe at midterm compared to baseline, a change of 27.2 percentage points (from 64.9 to 92.1%).

Interview data provide further insights into how beneficiaries perceive their safety in EAGER Safe Spaces and Learning Spaces as well as within their communities and the resources that may or may not be available to them. To begin, nearly all beneficiaries interviewed (18 of 20) described themselves comfortable in EAGER sessions<sup>57</sup>, though 12 of 20 girls interviewed express having initial trepidation. Reasons for feeling unsafe/uncomfortable included:

- Uncertainty of how sessions would be
- Never having been to school before
- Never having been in a group setting before
- Feeling too old to learn
- Feeling ashamed of current situation
- Being afraid that would be beaten when had difficulties or when came late
- Snakes; no toilet

Many beneficiaries however, also expressed that this trepidation abated, particularly after they experienced EAGER's approach which was positive and learner-centred and did not feature corporal punishment: as mentioned in IO2, 97 percent of beneficiaries stated that they had not seen physical punishment be used in a Learning or Safe Space. Moreover, analysis of beneficiaries' responses when asked if they perceived a change in their safety show that many beneficiaries feel more confident within the community at large. Two quotes, among others, provide illustration:

*“The EAGER project has given me the awareness of my presence in the community; the things that I need to do and those that I should not do. I believe with all these I feel safer now in the community. I now know my roles and responsibilities in the community. I can interact well with other people. So, I have so many reasons to feel safe in my community. If I have a problem, I know the first person to meet for help which is my Mentor.” (Kambia beneficiary, KII)*

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<sup>57</sup> One beneficiary did not respond. Another indicated that she did not feel safer but unfortunately did not provide additional information.

*“Before I joined the EAGER programme I never felt safe at all because I had so many limitations. I was thinking that because I never went to school the best I could ever become was a farmer; I never really knew how important I was as a human being until I joined the EAGER programme. My interaction with friends who had the opportunity to go to school was very limited because whenever they come for holidays I didn’t usually talk with them for fear of being humiliated. Now that the EAGER programme has opened my eyes, I am more confident talking to anybody now regardless of education, or age. At least now I can contribute to every discussion in the community if given the opportunity.” (Koinadugu beneficiary, KII)*

Very few beneficiaries evoked concerns for physical safety within the Safe Spaces. The Pujehun girls’ focus group provided one exception. Beneficiaries indicated that their concerns focused on a high level of brush around the Safe Space that could harbour snakes as well as a lack of toilet facilities (see Effectiveness Question 1 above for more discussion). The beneficiary continued, however, to describe how the group learned to mediate the issue:

*“Yes, at first where we were having the EAGER session, that place was very bushy so I was afraid of snakes and sometimes I became uncomfortable in the area. But now, it is much better because, the place is very clean and it is well protected as compared to before... We learnt at EAGER that, you must clean your environment so that snakes or anything bad might not come around by so doing, the place will be safe to stay.” (Pujehun girls’ focus group)*

Similarly, a Mentor in the Kono community sampled noted that the group had to change Safe Spaces as the initial location was in the centre of town and very busy. The Project Officer was responsive to the request for a different venue and was able to resolve the issue.

Finally, the midterm evaluation explored how effective EAGER programming was in helping beneficiaries identify and access resources available to them in case a girl in the community tells them she is feeling “unsafe.” Most commonly, respondents noted that they would bring the issue to the attention of community elders, followed by seeking the advice of EAGER Mentors, and then reporting the incident to the police. In addition, EAGER Mentors also have increased their knowledge of how to handle incidents. When asked what they would do if someone came to them with a safety concern, all responding Mentors (9<sup>58</sup>) indicated they would be happy to sit and advise the individual as well as to speak with the concerned caregiver or husband. Serving as mitigator to solve disputes is also a common cultural practice. Other resources identified by Mentors included the safeguarding hotline (see below), reporting the issue to community elders or the police.

EAGER leadership clarified its development of safeguarding hotlines, or complaint response mechanisms (CRM), developed and operated by each of the three partner organisations. These lines originated in order for beneficiaries to be able to report general dissatisfaction but also incidents of abuse from project staff to the District or National Staff. Findings show that many beneficiaries are aware of the hotline and view it as a resource. A partner representative offered an example of how community leaders are effectively using the mechanism to support beneficiaries’ safety:

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<sup>58</sup> One of the 10 mentors asked this question responded with a non-sequitur.

*“Community stakeholders are also reporting issues of safeguarding. For me, it’s one good impact. Recently we had a chief who reported one of our Facilitators because one of our Facilitators beat the girl. It was reported! Before now, they did not report – they compromised issues. They did not want these issues to go out. Now, they are starting to report these issues to our tollfree line and also the police.” (Restless Development Representative, KII)*

Beneficiaries’ awareness of these hotlines and their confidence using them will be explored within the Impact Section below.

## **Economic Factors**

### Farming and household burdens

Being sick or caring for a sick child was the most common reason for missing an EAGER session while needing to tend crops, manage the household and care for children was the second most frequently reason cited. Quantitative data suggest that 13.3 percent of beneficiaries have high chore burdens.<sup>59</sup> Four girls’ FGDs and 1 of the male partners interviewed in 9 of 10 districts identified this as a constraint. In addition, although beneficiaries most often cited their mothers as helping them with childcare and encouraging attendance, similarly, many beneficiaries noted their mothers would keep them from attending sessions as they assigned them chores or work that prevented them from attending. One male partner from Koinadugu also was direct in sharing that he will not let his wife attend if she disrespects him. It’s possible that other partners felt the same way but refrained from sharing this information with data collectors. Two quotes from male partners provide additional understanding of the challenge beneficiaries face balancing household responsibilities:

*“There are challenges because when this project started my wife was a young mother and so she was not able to attend all the time the sessions because she has to prepare the child. It was not really easy although she was making an effort.” (Kono male partner #1)*

*“The biggest challenge is when we are doing work at home when wives go for session. When I have gone for work and she needs to prepare food for the children, that is what will prevent her from attending sessions. That is only thing can prevent her. The other thing that stops her is the farm work during this raining season - that is what will stop her. We will work hard to have food to eat.” (Tonkolili male partner #1)*

This last quote demonstrates intersectionality between various challenges, notably between housework, food insecurity and rains.

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<sup>59</sup> Beneficiaries are asked a series of questions about household chores they are expected to complete (such as farming, fetching water, or caring for family members), and then asked if those chores prevent them from enrolling in traditional school. Those who say yes are counted as having a high chore burden.

## Hunger

A variety of stakeholders in seven of 10 districts noted that hunger or a lack of food at home makes it challenging for a beneficiary to attend sessions, a problem exacerbated by COVID-19. According to caregiver responses, 24.7 percent of households are food insecure. This constraint may affect a beneficiary because of the opportunity cost of attending a session compared to being able to seek money or foodstuffs to support her and/or her family. In addition, as beneficiaries in a girls' FGD in Kenema pointed out, if a beneficiary is hungry, she may not be able to fully concentrate and succeed in sessions. One male partner in Pujehun also made the same observation:

*The biggest challenge she faces in participating in is the issue of hunger. If your wife is hungry how do you expect her to participate in something, she just can't afford to participate." (Pujehun male partner #2)*

## Financial Insecurity

Closely related to food insecurity, not having sufficient money at home may hamper a young woman's participation in EAGER programming, according to some stakeholders, in particular, male partners in 3 districts (Kailahun, Port Loko and Tonkolili). One male partner made the following statement, identifying the conditionality of his support for his partner:

*"She faced challenges like, lack of food at home, quarrel or misunderstanding at home and lack of finance. If food and money are available with me and yet she refused to attend, I have to talk to her and encourage her not to miss the sessions." (Kailahun male partner #1)*

Again, food insecurity and challenging accessing finances also have gotten worse within the pandemic context.

## **Logistical Factors**

### Distance from Safe/Learning Space

Although this factor may not apply to all communities, stakeholders in Kono, Kailahun and Kambia all expressed concerns that some girls live too far away from the Safe Spaces to attend consistently. In Kono, for instance, male caregivers shared that the Safe Space serves 5 communities, and that distance can be challenging (FGD).

### Extended length of programme

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the extension of the overall programme duration. A variety of stakeholders in 5 districts noted that it has been very difficult for beneficiaries to continue to participate over the revised period of time. In both Kailahun and WAU, girls reported that others had dropped out or no longer attend because the session and programme length are too long. In the case of Kailahun, girls reported that those who have dropped out have since expressed regret upon seeing the materials the girls in the programme have received. In addition, these girls also seem to actively discourage the attendance of the girls who have remained in the programme. At

the same time, project data shows EAGER's retention rate to be 88 percent, an arguably high result given contextual challenges<sup>60</sup>.

### Rain and a lack of appropriate rain gear

Stakeholders in seven districts noted that the rainy season presents major challenges to EAGER participants.

### **Community engagement**

According to programme documents, and in particular, the theory of change, EAGER strives to engage communities in order to promote girls' education and increase the awareness of the importance of education. Three local government officials identified community engagement as very positive and effective and as one of the strengths of EAGER programming.

Community stakeholders indicated that they have heard messaging about EAGER meetings and the importance of supporting girls' education through a variety of modes, including radio, posters, megaphones, and word of mouth. Radio may refer to BBC Media Action's programming, *Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap (When the Girl Child Stands)*, a national radio show that began airing in July 2020. The show is part of a social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) strategy "to challenge negative attitudes and practices that prevent adolescent girls from accessing and continuing education, learning and other empowering opportunities." Project data shows that parents and caregivers who reported listening regularly to programming listen around 8-10 episodes on average; most adolescent girls listen less at around four episodes, on average, likely due to having less access to a radio.

Beneficiaries in Kambia, Kailahun and Pujehun sampled communities also identified the use of a megaphone to remind EAGER participants that a session is about to take place and they should attend. In the sampled Kambia community, beneficiaries also mentioned that the village chief sometimes sends someone around to get the girls so they can attend the sessions. In Kenema, a Facilitator shared how the community spoke with people who often play DVDs on their verandas and show movies at times that may deter participants from attending EAGER sessions or studying. He notes that they listened and have not been playing DVDs outside as a result.

Hearing messages via the chief or other elders within the community was noted as effective by some female and male caregivers (specifically in Kono and Kambia) as well as Kambia female community leaders. Radio is a particularly attractive mode for some stakeholders. Both boys FGDs, Kambia female community leaders, Kenema and Pujehun male community leaders, Koinadugu female caregivers and male partners in 4 districts identified radio use to promote EAGER. Hearing about girls' education on the radio gives credence to the programme in the eyes of a Pujehun male partner. He emphasised,

*"I first heard it on radio and in most cases, whatever was said on radio is not a joke or fake. It is something serious and true. After we heard the announcement on the radio, now we are seeing it with our naked eyes. The effects of the EAGER sessions within the community are positive because,*

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<sup>60</sup> Internal FM correspondence with EAGER. (April 16, 2021). Re: Q!0 RAAG/Risk ratings for EAGER.

*even the behaviour of my wife is very different when compared to before now and the business skills is what makes me happier.” (Pujehun male partner #2)*

Like this stakeholder, the general reaction from many evaluation participants is that they are seeing changes in the beneficiaries at the community level, and this motivates them to support the programme. (These changes are the focus of the Impact section below.)

Evaluation respondents also identified structural ways in which communities are incentivising EAGER attendance. In Kono, a Facilitator shared how there has been an attempt to fine beneficiaries 1,000 Leone if they are absent 2 or 3 days. A Kono male partner also commented that there are laws in Kono that influence him supporting his wife’s attendance, even in cases where she has not finished cooking. In Koinadugu, the community encourages attendance through the establishment of by-laws:

*“Now, the community people have passed a by-law saying that if any girl who fails to attend the sessions they will remove the bag supplied to them by EAGER. Also, her parent will pay the sum of Le, 50,000. They don’t like to pay that, so they encourage their children to attend the programme.” (Koinadugu District Officer, KII)*

### *Community Leadership*

Community leaders provide support in some communities. A Mammy Queen leads the mothers’ club in the Kono community sampled and the Mammy Queen in the Kailahun community regularly stops in on sessions to be sure girls are attending (Kailahun beneficiary, KII). Female community leaders in the WAU sampled community shared how they had developed a community drama and song to promote girls’ education (FGD). According to many stakeholders, the provision of a venue for the Safe Space manifests obvious support for the EAGER project. Male partners from a variety of districts seemed particularly attune to this gesture, as it was noted by 4 of 10 male partners, as well as some Mentors and Facilitators. As one Mentor shared,

*“The first time we had the Safe Space, the chief looked at it and observed that the place was small and tight. So, they found another place that is free. It is where we are presently. We know that they are happy for the programme in their community.” (Kambia Mentor 1, KII)*

Recall from above that a common complaint of stakeholders is that the Safe Spaces are not fully dedicated to EAGER. Male leaders of the sampled Kenema community expressed during the focus group that they wish to provide land to EAGER so that a programme-specific structure can be built.

### *Community Dialogues*

Community Dialogues are a specific feature of EAGER’s approach. EAGER rolled out the Community Dialogue series with an initial training in November 2020. Dialogues took place in most districts between December 2020 and January 2021. Community Dialogues have the goal to “increase understanding and inspire action at the community level to foster a safer and more

supportive environment for girls to move in and be able to make decisions and take action for themselves.”<sup>61</sup>

In general, the data shows that stakeholders find the community meetings to be beneficial. Five of the 6 community leader FGDs commented on community dialogues. All FGD discussions were very positive about the dialogues. Participants in 4 of the community leaders’ FGDs indicated having participated in the dialogues. In one case, a FGD participant indicated not attending the dialogue as he was too old (age 65). Similarly, nearly three-quarters (14) of the 20 male partners interviewed also reported attending the sessions. These partners represent 9 of the 10 sampled communities, demonstrating general support across the sample. One male partner, from Kono, noted having attended an initial community meeting about the EAGER programme, but not subsequent gatherings as he is not permanently located in the community. A male partner in Tonkolili described the benefit of the Community Dialogues as follows:

*When they call the community, they will explain to us why they call the meeting. They explain to us how we should live with our wives and how to make peace with our wives. How to take care of your children and wife. How the wife should also take care of her husband. After the meeting, they will provide food for us to eat and after eating, we return home. They inform us of the meeting house by house...For me, the meetings are good because what they are telling us will stay in my mind.” (Tonkolili male partner #1)*

Another male partner in Tonkolili indicated feeling that the Community Dialogues are important as they help to unify the community.

Stakeholders indicated that community dialogues have addressed the following topics:

- Importance of women to development, to household, to community
- Promoting girls’ education
- Supporting women’s participation in EAGER
- How husbands and wives should interact (avoid public quarrels, shouting)
- How to end early marriage and curb teenage pregnancy
- Girls’ rights
- Existing laws to protect girls/women
- Gender-based violence
- Development of community-level bylaws to support girls

Stakeholders also shared suggestions to improve Community Dialogues. These included to continue meetings and to hold them regularly and to involve more people, including children and youth. The programme’s quarter 10 report indicates that the programme is looking to expand participation in Community Dialogue meetings to other community stakeholders for Cohort 2, notably young men and boys.

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<sup>61</sup> EAGER Q10 Quarterly Report. (February 2021), p. 8.

## Efficiency

### 5.1.5. Efficiency Question 1. Have project interventions made the best use of financial, human and time resources available? Has the project been implemented as planned? Why or why not?

Interviews with project staff as well as document review informs the response to this EQ focusing on efficiency and EAGER's use of resources. In general, findings demonstrate that the project has made good use of its financial, human and time resources to the extent possible given factors within its control. As would be expected, COVID-19 proved to be a major disruption to the project. The issue of whether the project has been implemented as planned aligns well with the discussion of internal/external factors and mitigation strategies that is the subject of the next EQ and will be discussed in that section below.

#### **Financial resources**

Although the EAGER financial officer was not available to participate in the midterm evaluation, EAGER's Senior Team Lead provided necessary information. The evaluation team has triangulated findings through an interview with the Fund Manager (FM) representative as well as a review of Fund Manager responses to progress report submissions. The FM uses a red, amber-red, amber-green and green (RAAG) rating to determine a project's performance and efficiency. The EAGER project has consistently received a rating of A and amber-green, which the FM representative interviewed described as a very good score. She also pointed out that very few green ratings (the highest) are provided to LNGB projects. The most recent response identifies for quarter 10 indicates that EAGER has a 77 percent implementation rate against a 79 percent expenditure against budget. Alignment between these two measures is important and demonstrates equilibrium between implementation and spending.

Interviews with project staff beyond the CCU raise some concerns about the different organisational structures and geographical coverage of consortium partners:

- A District Project Staff interviewed who is associated with Restless Development notes discrepancies in remuneration between Restless Development and Concern staff. The staff member underlines his passion for working with EAGER's target population and that he is fulfilled in giving back to his community.
- Observations from partner programme managers that staff travel is underbudgeted. A member of the EAGER Leadership (#2) noted that some partners will spend more than others given remote locations of target communities.

Such concerns require acknowledgement and attention so that management teams may better understand these needs. They were not indicated as challenges faced at the national level.

#### **Human resources**

EAGER operates through a consortium of four partner organisations: IRC, Restless Development, Concern and BBC Media Action. EAGER management is led by the IRC through the Consortium Coordination Unit (CCU) and partners provide representation to the Consortium Technical Team (CTT). Discussions with national-level staff and the FM confirm that partners are complementary. Each organisation contributes various strengths. When interviewed, EAGER leadership indicated that there exists "a spirit of partnership" among the four organisations based on trust and respect. The FM representative interviewed noted that, while IRC is the lead, they routinely consult with

Restless, Concern and BBC. Discussions between the FM and the partners indicate to the FM that the partners feel listened to and confirm a very positive approach. A representative from BBC Media Action articulated the strengths of the consortium approach as follows,

*“I think the collaboration and co-ordination is really strong. We have bi-weekly status calls in which all partners are present. We have regular review meetings and come together to plan activities. Whilst BBCMA’s activities are slightly separate from those of the other partners we have involvement from partners at key moments in the creative development process – this ranges from support from IRC safeguarding specialists to Restless and Concern field officers (depending on the need). I think the strength in this way of working is that we draw on the range of expertise from within the consortium and are able to look at any issues / design activities based on this breadth and depth of experiences. Also it enables us to understand how the whole project is delivering, not just our own piece. The challenge with this approach is the time commitment required, but I think it is worth the investment.”<sup>62</sup> (Partner Representative)*

The midterm evaluation also explored how staff turnover may affect project efficiency. While some turnover is noted, there is little indication that it has been an unsurmountable challenge for the EAGER project. EAGER leadership identified that the initial CCU positions had been pre-filled by IRC senior management prior to finalisation of the project award. Once onboard, the EAGER Team Lead made significant changes to that team. The CCU also experienced a transition in its MEAL and Research Coordinator position. Overlap between the 2 coordinators and the continued engagement of the former MEAL and Research Coordinator have helped to ensure a smooth transition.

Three critical gaps remain of note, however:

- EAGER experienced a gap in technical staff during the curriculum development phase. Both the Education Specialist and Protection Specialist had not yet been fully recruited when consultants leading curriculum development completed their contracts. According to a member of the EAGER Leadership (#4), the CCU did provide a temporary replacement but the individual did not have full contextual understanding of the Sierra Leonian context and the abilities of EAGER’s target population. Both positions worked under intense pressures to significantly rework curricula under tight deadlines.
- At the time of the midterm evaluation, IRC’s programme management that oversees field implementation suffered from long-term absence due to COVID-19 illness as well as a persistent recruitment gap. The COVID-19 impact has made recruitment and deployment of new personnel more challenging (EAGER Leadership #3, KII).
- Most notably, the FCDO-Sierra Leone country office also has experienced turnover, according to the FM and EAGER Leadership. This had led to difficulties establishing a relationship. At the time of the midterm evaluation, it seemed that a team was in place and EAGER was making efforts to develop a strong relationship.

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<sup>62</sup> Email correspondence (August 2020).

## **Timeline**

EAGER experienced a significant shift in its timeline due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the country-wide shutdown which began in March 2020. During this time, the GoSL imposed restrictions on gatherings as well as internal travel. Even after restrictions were lifted, they were reinstated at different levels subsequently. Stakeholders interviewed from the GoSL, as well as EAGER staff, underlined the significant disruptions that the project experienced. Project implementation suffered a 5-month delay, in consequence. (Additional ramifications are explored in the next EQ).

The project also experienced other shocks to its timeline but none as significant as COVID-19:

- Prolonged inception period: The grant was signed in February 2019 and Cohort 1 started in late January 2020, demonstrating an inception period of nearly a year. Ensuring appropriate safeguarding measures were in place largely accounted for the delays. When interviewed, the FM representative that LNGB projects often require an involved safeguarding process and that the EAGER timeline was not abnormal. According to EAGER leadership, the extended period did have several knock-on effects including shifting the timeline so that the most intensive field activities always occurred during the rainy season.
- Complicated Safe Spaces renovations: Also during the inception period the project secured Safe Spaces within each community, some of which required substantial renovations. The process was slow, according to EAGER leadership. The procurement of materials took time. According to one member of the CCU, different partners had different requirements for signing off procurement which took time (EAGER leadership #4, KII).
- Slow printing of curriculum materials: Printing was contracted internationally and delivery took longer than expected (EAGER leadership #4, KII),
- Pause in BBC Media Action’s production: The radio production timeline shifted by 4 months in February 2020 due to an incident that necessitated a review of protocols for posting on social media. According to a representative,

*“There was concern that [a published post] didn’t show girls having enough agency and control of their lives. It was a video of an adult talking about girls’ issues. Was not the tone we were looking for the EAGER programme. Was not harmful – was just “this is not what we are expecting” – want to be more girl-focused. Was just a pause while strategy was thought through.” (EAGER Leadership, KII)*

### **5.1.6. Efficiency Question 2: Which internal and external obstacles has the project faced and how has EAGER addressed them? What has been the effect of COVID-19 on project efficiency?**

EAGER staff and stakeholders have faced numerous internal and external obstacles, some of which are major and others are more contextual. This response to the second efficiency question explores these in greater detail including documenting how EAGER has responded when applicable. In general, most of these obstacles relate to external forces. The last part of the section highlights interesting findings of how the project’s resilience has resulted in compelling adaptations that may be long-term.

Perhaps most notably regarding the design, the project revised its cohort approach mid-way through Cohort 1 to shift from a three-cohort to a two-cohort model. EAGER leadership explained that while COVID-19 greatly impacted the project in causing a 5-month delay in session implementation, the CCU made a request to the Fund Manager prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to reduce targets and eliminate Cohort 3 altogether. The request and associated program adaptations proposal was largely a result of a thorough analysis of resources, contextual factors and project learning that informed revisions aimed at maintaining quality and appropriateness of programming. As a result, Cohort 2 will begin in November 2021 when Cohort 1 is moving into the transition phase. A member of EAGER leadership clarified,

*“The grant ends in January 2023 – we basically have a year and a half. So, the cohorts are merged – one big cohort – the original target in total was around 25,000 girls for Cohort 2 and 3 and we cut it down to 20,800 and in terms of communities.” (EAGER Leadership #3, KII)*

EAGER leadership further explained that it was not feasible to run 3 cohorts of beneficiaries during the project’s 5-year cycle given available capacity, tight timeframe and the need to create opportunities for the project to respond to learnings and adapt. The project felt that it had gained learning from the Cohort 1 experience to effectively implement a larger second cohort without a subsequent group.

### **COVID-19 lockdown and project pause**

As indicated in the above section, soon after Cohort 1 began sessions in January 2020, the project paused in order to ensure participants’ and staff’s safety and in accordance with government requirements. Stakeholders overwhelmingly concur that this interruption was the most significant obstacle that the EAGER project has faced. In addition to the resulting project pause and initiation of COVID-19 prevention measures, EAGER leadership also pointed to operational impacts of the pandemic, including reduced working hours, reduced supply chain capacity and interruption, reduced face-to-face capacity in an environment where this communication strategy is the most effective and efficient, etc. At the implementation level the following effects occurred:

- **Delay led to a demand-side reduction in project enrolment.** In spite of attrition due to the project pause, according to the Q10 FM response to the RAAG and risk review, EAGER had a retention rate of 88 percent, due largely to the extended timeline<sup>63</sup>.
- **Training modalities shifted.** BBC Media Action trainings moved online (Partner Representative, KII). Other EAGER partners conducted smaller training sessions organised within districts to avoid restricted inter-district travel. Later refresher sessions were also conducted in order to make-up for sessions that were missed (Partner Representative, KII).
- **Curriculum had to be condensed.** EAGER staff compressed 9 months of learning into 30 sessions (7.5 months) of delivery. According to a member of EAGER leadership,

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<sup>63</sup> Internal FM correspondence with EAGER. (April 16, 2021). Re: Q10 RAAG/Risk ratings for EAGER.

*“Right now, Cohort 1 is wrapping up and it was three Literacy/Numeracy sessions a week and one Life Skills session. For Cohort 2, starting in November, there will be two Literacy and Numeracy sessions a week and 1 Life Skills session.” (EAGER Leadership #2).*

- **Joint field visits among the partner leadership were limited due to travel restrictions.** A first visit took place in June 2021, but the July 2021 visit was cancelled due to increased concerns for mounting COVID infection rates. (EAGER Leadership #2)

Among possible factors that supported EAGER’s resilience during this time, the FM representative interviewed pointed to IRC’s experience with both development and humanitarian response. Some staff interviewed also cited their previous experience with the Ebola outbreak and how both staff and some of the population were already sensitive to the need for similar disease-preventing precautions.

### ***DFID/FCDO transition and ensuing budget reformulation***

In addition to COVID-19, the donor’s internal shift from DFID to FCDO led to substantial reorganisation and restructuring. For EAGER, this manifested in periods of uncertainty and delay concerning the fiscal year (FY) 21-22 budget and culminated in a relatively small budget reduction. The FM acknowledges the immense challenge of the situation. In navigating this uncertainty, findings show that EAGER’s management was stable and that the impact to field-level implementation was imperceptible. When interviewed, national-level CCU staff explained that EAGER’s response to the crisis was forward thinking.

At the time that budget cut discussions began, the project had already realised it needed to revise the design, including changing its transition approach and revising its targets to accommodate for required project adaptations, and had begun these processes. At the same time, partner representatives interviewed described the impending and uncertain budget cuts as causing anxiety and stress. Moreover, FCDO budget cuts had a significant impact on Restless Development, one of the four partner organisations making up the EAGER consortium. With another of its FCDO-supported projects being phased out, there was concern at the beginning of the process that Restless Development would be unable to continue supporting the EAGER project<sup>64</sup>. Correspondence with the EAGER leadership has clarified that Restless Development was able to resolve the issue through securing additional funds and no longer is in a precarious situation.

In reflecting upon EAGER’s management of the challenges it has faced, the FM representative said the following,

*“Now having gone through this adaptation process again – EAGER went through three major adaptations: 1) at the end of the inception period, 2) the Midterm Response Plan with COVID, and 3) with the FCDO budget cuts – they really thought about those and strategically worked within the points of time and they made those changes quite well.” (FM Representative, KII)*

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<sup>64</sup> Internal FM correspondence with EAGER. (April 16, 2021). Re: QI0 RAAG/Risk ratings for EAGER.

In addition to these major external disruptions, the midterm evaluation notes additional factors that have challenged the EAGER project:

### ***Project unable to formally engage boys***

Largely due to the frenzy of programmatic changes necessitated by learning from Cohort 1 and COVID-19, as well as budget cuts and pressures to meet targets, the project was unable to roll out sessions with boys as had been originally intended. The FM's response to project reports identifies the deferment of engagement of boys to be a serious challenge to GEC's gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) approach<sup>65</sup>. Though the ramifications of not involving boys in programming from the beginning of EAGER are not fully documented and understood, some project staff indicated that there is ongoing concern that boys could sabotage progress made for some girls. A District Staff member commented,

*“The boys were grumbling that, ‘Why are we only supporting the girls, and leaving them out?’ They were saying if we are continuing to support the girls and left them out, they will continue to go after the girls to make sure they don’t continue what they are doing.” (Kono District Officer)*

The midterm evaluation did not identify any such cases of retribution. At the same time, the evaluation design was limited, and this issue requires vigilant investigation.

### ***Insecurity also posed concern in some communities***

Secret society initiations (in which boys and girls are taken into their respective 'bush' for a period of time to undergo initiation rituals, in some cases against their will) were of particular concern according to all stakeholders in some communities. During these periods of initiation, participating girls undergo a recovery period during which they would also miss EAGER programming. In addition, a District Staff member in one district described how they had to work closely with Paramount Chiefs in order to address reports of ritual cannibalism occurring in the communities<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup> Internal FM correspondence with EAGER. (April 16, 2021). Re: Q!0 RAAG/Risk ratings for EAGER.

<sup>66</sup> Secret societies are found across Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. Where the societies exist, everyone knows of them, but their details are generally concealed. However, much work has been done on these societies and recent literature has indicated that the structure and function of “Poro” and “Bondo” (in Liberia, Bondo is known as “Sande”) has changed greatly over the years; much of this can be attributed to Western education, monotheistic religion and other aspects of modernisation. Ellis (1999) argues that leaders of the societies who had exclusive access to spiritual power through rituals (including sacrifice and, reportedly, cannibalism) have been losing control over time, particularly during the Civil War when these institutions became disrupted by violence, destruction and displacement. As a result, low-ranking initiates fighting in the war attempted to tap into the spiritual power themselves through, it is rumoured, cannibalism. Still today, reports of cannibalism are often used where there is some suspicion of someone acquiring too-much power for unclear reasons; the idea is that in order to have obtained such power, cannibalism may have been utilised.

For more information see Ellis, S. (2006). The mask of anarchy updated edition: The destruction of Liberia and the religious dimension of an African civil war. NYU Press. And Ellis, S., & Ter Haar, G. (2004). Worlds of power: Religious thought and political practice in Africa (Vol. 1). Oxford University Press on Demand.

### ***Community leaders originally not supportive in some communities***

District Project Staff (KII) noted that some communities were not supportive of the project at first as they were expecting too much from the project. This issue was mediated through continued discussion, in particular, the Community Dialogues. A local government official also pointed to resistance due to entrenched socio-cultural beliefs like early marriage and that this pushback was to be expected.

### ***Delays in procurement***

In addition to curriculum materials arriving later than expected, procurement of menstruation pads were also delayed, due in part to the large scale of the order and because EAGER leadership strongly encouraged working with a particular provider known for its quality product. Other members of EAGER leadership argued that EAGER has strong systems in place and the experience to know that a margin needs to be accommodated for when planning for training and other materials distributions. Therefore, this staff member argues, procurement issues were accounted for and only minorly affected the project (EAGER Leadership #2, KII).

### ***Farming activities***

In many communities dependent upon agricultural activities, it can be challenging to find community members available for participation (District Project Staff, KII). Implementing partners' experience of working within these communities and knowledge of how to adapt scheduling helped mediate this issue.

### ***Rains***

Multiple stakeholders at all levels indicated that heavy rains challenge project implementation, including delaying meetings like Community Dialogues, cancelling or rendering difficult site visits to communities and hindering beneficiary attendance of sessions (see EQ Effectiveness 2 for more detail). Road conditions also become poor and the project is limited in its ability to travel to certain remote areas. Some District Staff and volunteers indicated that they would appreciate the provision of rain gear in order to increase comfort and efficiency. EAGER leadership indicate that these materials have been included in the recent budget revision.

### ***Other organisations run similar projects and offer better incentives***

Project staff in Kono as well as at the EAGER coordination level noted that some community-level stakeholders are disgruntled to see other organisations operating similar projects providing lunches and money to beneficiaries whereas EAGER does not provide refreshments. EAGER leadership has clarified that these projects operate at a much smaller scale allowing them to provide such level of detail at the community level. Nonetheless, there is concern that beneficiaries will leave EAGER for the other opportunity and EAGER may need to address accordingly or prepare for some degree of related attrition.

### ***Unexpected efficiencies***

Stakeholder contributions also indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has produced unexpected efficiencies in project operations. For instance, during the ban on inter-district travel, BBC Media no longer sent radio recordings by car, but transitioned to sending audio files via WhatsApp. This process has been maintained even after travel bans were lifted. In addition, also for BBC Media,

a ban on international travel has created a budget savings that the partner is able to use for more rigorous monitoring efforts, for instance, to ensure that radio stations were able to function on broadcast days.

Moreover, the FM representative indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated project adaptations and streamlining that would likely not have taken place otherwise (KII). In some ways, the response to COVID has been a forced experiment that, according to learning outcomes above, has still proven to be effective.

## **Impact**

### **5.1.7. Impact Question 1: Are there signs of the emerging impact that the project has had on the learning of marginalised girls, and their plans for transition? How and why was this impact achieved? What individual (including psychometric measures), home and community level characteristics are associated with girls' learning and potential transition outcomes?**

Building on the earlier Outcomes section and the EQ Effectiveness 1 section on learning outcomes relevant to instructional strategies, this section explores how various learner characteristics may also influence outcomes based on subgroup analysis. Additionally, attention is paid to beneficiaries' understanding of transition and their futures, using both quantitative and qualitative data.

#### ***Subgroup analysis of midterm learning outcomes***

This section further explores quantitative results to understand the nuance within results and describes learning outcomes using three different insightful measures. It discusses the current learning levels, as measured by midterm scores; improvements in learning since baseline, as measured by increases between baseline and midterm scores; and the prevalence of beneficiaries that both had low performance on the midterm assessments at midterm and have shown low improvement since baseline (defined in greater detail below).

Analysis shows that Literacy and Numeracy outcomes are very high for all subgroups compared to baseline. Literacy and Numeracy results exceed the target for every subgroup of interest. While there is some variation in improvement between subgroups, there are no subgroups whose improvement is statistically different from those not in that subgroup.

The gap between average scores and the score of many subgroups has declined since baseline. For example, at baseline, married beneficiaries had significantly lower Literacy and Numeracy scores than average: the same was true for Numeracy scores of those who were food insecure, impoverished, or had a disability. At midterm, while all of these groups still have lower than average scores, the differences are no longer statistically significant, suggesting that they have scores more similar to their peers now.

It is worth noting that Literacy and Numeracy scores of those with high chore burdens (defined as over 35 hours per week of unpaid work for the household) were significantly higher than those without at baseline. At midterm they have lower than average scores. However, this appears to reflect changes in who has a high chore burden. At baseline, 41 percent of beneficiaries reported having a high chore burden. At midterm, only 13 percent fall into this category. Among those for whom there is baseline and midterm data, 83 percent of those who reported a high chore burden at baseline no longer report having a high chore burden. There are two likely reasons why chore

burdens changed significantly since baseline. First, the baseline was completed before EAGER sessions had begun: any person attending and participating in EAGER necessarily have fewer hours to dedicate to chores each day. A beneficiary cannot dedicate as much of their time to household production and participate in the programme: any beneficiary with an extremely high chore burden would simply have to drop out of the programme or dedicate less time to chores. Second, beneficiaries were asked the question differently at baseline. They were asked if they complete each of a list of chores, and estimate (to the closest quarter of a day) how much time each chore took them on average of their day. Those amounts were summed up, and those that spent 80 percent or more of their day on chores were defined as high chore burden. While constrained by the LNGB tool template to this version, it did not construct an externally valid metric: 24 percent of girls gave answers that added up to more than a day of work completed each day. At midterm, beneficiaries were asked the list of chores they complete, and then asked how much time all of their chores combined took to complete on average for a day, and those who spend 80 percent or more of their day on chores were categorised as having a high chore burden.

Beneficiaries who are their own caregivers have lower than average scores in Literacy, numeracy, and Life Skills. Being one's own caregiver is positively correlated with being a parent, married, older, and working, so it may be due to a nexus of challenges that they face. (Note that we will explore later the impact the project seems to have had on beneficiary household management.)

*Table 27: Learning Outcomes by Characteristics and Barriers*

	Average Literacy	Average Numeracy	Average Life skills	Average Financial Literacy
<b>All girls</b>	45.5	74.2	75.9	72.7
<b>Disability subgroups:</b>				
Any Disability	44.0	72.9	75.0	73.4
Seeing	N/A <sup>67</sup>	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hearing	47.7	74.2	75.7	74.5
Walking	50.6	66.9	71.5	74.7
Self-care	47.6	70.9	73.8	71.2
Communication	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Learning, Remembering and Concentrating <sup>68</sup>	36.6	57.6	69.6	64.3
Accepting Change, Controlling Behaviour and Making Friends	40.3	62.9	71.85	72.9
Mental Health (Anxiety and Depression)	46.9	76.7	76.1	75.0
<b>Age</b>				
Under 16	42.2	69.2*	75.4	68.6
16 to 17	47.2*	76.7*	76.3	73.5

<sup>67</sup> Results are not provided when there are fewer than 10 respondents for privacy purposes.

<sup>68</sup> Combined disability scores calculate the average score for each specific subgroup and average them together, per LNGB template guidelines.

18 or more	44.5	72.9	75.6	74.0
Female Head of Household	46.2	75.3	75.3	71.8
Orphan	45.3	73.3	76.2	73.4
Married	43.7*	72.6	76.1	73.5
Has Children	45.8	75.6	76.1	74.1
Pregnant	41.2	70.6	75.0	74.8
<b>Works</b>				
Works	44.7	73.4	76.1	73.8
Owns Business	44.8	73.5	76.4	74.2
Work: Farming	42.9*	71.6*	76.5	74.9
Work: Petty Trading	45.6	74.9	76.8*	74.1
Chore Burden	43.1	71.5	77.3	73.0
Impoverished	45.3	73.5	73.4	71
Food Insecure	43.8	70.8	75.3	67.7
Beneficiary is Head of Household	41.2	66.1	73.7*	69.1
Beneficiary is own Caregiver	39.9*	66.6*	74.3*	70.7
Low Caregiver Support	45.7	68.6	74.8	72.7
Source: OLA, EGMA, Life Skills Assessments				

The differences in improvement by districts are large and statistically significant. The difference between the highest and lowest increase in Literacy scores stretches from 11.4 percentage points (in WAU) to 42.7 percentage points (in Tonkolili). Numeracy score improvements span from 14.7 (in Koinadugu) to 47.1 (in Tonkolili). Life Skills improvement levels vary from as low as 5.0 percentage points in WAU to 16.1 percentage points in Kambia. While these results exceed the original target, it does suggest differences in how effective EAGER has been in different districts.

*Table 28: Average Learning Outcomes by District, Midterm*

District Partner	District	Literacy	Numeracy	Life Skills	Financial Literacy
<b>IRC</b>	Bo	38.1*	75.2	76.9	81.2
<b>Restless</b>	Kailahun	51*	83.4*	76.6	74.7
<b>Restless</b>	Kambia	40.9*	70.2*	77.3	70.9
<b>IRC</b>	Kenema	52.3*	80.3*	77.4*	76
<b>Restless</b>	Koinadugu	27*	42.6*	74.4*	69
<b>IRC</b>	Kono	49.8	79.1*	72.7*	75.3
<b>Concern</b>	Port Loko	48	82.4*	75.4	77.7
<b>Restless</b>	Pujehun	44.3	70.1	74.3	78.7
<b>Concern</b>	Tonkolili	54.8*	81.3*	77.8*	70.5

<b>Concern</b>	WAU	47.9	73.8	76.4	69.3
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### **Subgroup Analysis of Low-Performing Low-Improving Beneficiaries**

Performance can be measured in terms of improvement or in terms of absolute ability. Figure 4 below conceptualises beneficiaries falling into four groups, based on their current skills and their improvement since baseline. For example, some beneficiaries may still have relatively low Literacy or Numeracy skills but have significantly increased their ability since baseline (upper left quadrant of Figure 4); others may have already had strong skills, which have not improved over the course of the project; and, others may have begun with high abilities and have continued to improve. The beneficiaries of greatest concern are those who began with low learning outcomes and are not improving at pace with their peers: beneficiaries with low performance and low improvement (LPLI) are defined as those whose midterm scores are below average, and whose improvement since baseline is below the target improvement of 0.2 SD. Given that the average beneficiary nearly quintupled that improvement level in Literacy and Numeracy, those in this category would have had starkly different experiences while in the project than most.

*Figure 4: Conceptual Matrix of Performance and Improvement Levels*

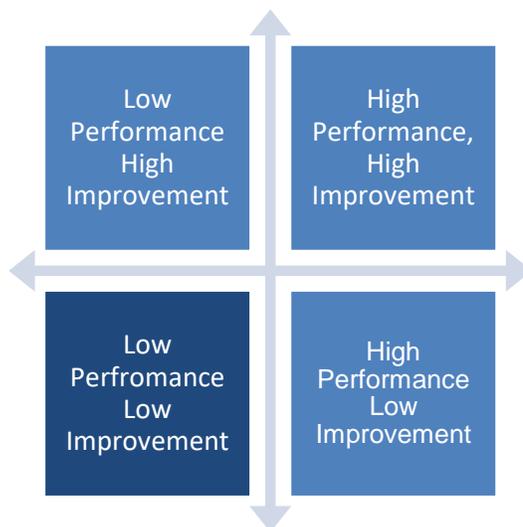


Table 29 below lists the subgroups most likely to fall into the category of LPLI, and how much more likely a member of that subgroup is to fall into this category than the average beneficiary. For example, those with a disability related to remembering are 19.5 percentage points more likely to fall into the LPLI category than the average test-taker. Seven of the 10 subgroups with the highest proportion of LPLI beneficiaries are related to disability.

Three of the lowest performance subgroups are in the following districts: Port Loko, Western Area Urban (WAU), and Koinadugu. At baseline, beneficiaries in Port Loko and WAU had higher average Literacy scores than any other districts, and Koinadugu beneficiaries had the lowest average Literacy scores. At midterm, Koinadugu beneficiaries continue to have the lowest average scores, and Port Loko and WAU have fallen to the sixth and fifth highest average Literacy scores. Those beneficiaries who began with lower scores in Port Loko and WAU appear to be progressing significantly more slowly than both the average beneficiary and other beneficiaries

who started with low scores. Among beneficiaries for whom there is baseline and midterm data, 11.2 percent of WAU and 23.2 percent of Port Loko beneficiaries had lower OLA scores at midterm than they had at baseline. For reasons that require additional investigation, many beneficiaries are improving at lower levels in these 2 districts.

In contrast, beneficiaries in Koinadugu had the lowest Literacy levels at baseline, and most beneficiaries had larger improvements in Literacy scores than the average beneficiary in the programme: while the average beneficiary increased their OLA score by 26 percent, the average beneficiary in Koinadugu increased their score by 30 percent. While there are more LPLI beneficiaries in Koinadugu, it's because most beneficiaries there began the programme with low performance, so any low-improvers fall into the LPLI category. Beneficiaries in Koinadugu may require extra support overall because they usually have more to learn to be as proficient as those in other districts, but unlike Port Loko and WAU, the issue is not about differences between beneficiaries in the same Safe Spaces.

*Table 29: Low-Performance Low-Improvement in Literacy, Proportions by Subgroup*

Subgroup	Percentage
Overall	16.6%
Remembering	36.1%
WAU	34.3%
Making friends	32.9%
Multiple Disabilities	31.9%
Anxiety	30.9%
Port Loko	30.5%
Koinadugu	28.6%
Accepting Change	27.9%
Depression	26.1%
<b>Disabilities Overall</b>	<b>23.7%</b>

The majority of subgroups with high proportions of LPLI test-takers in Numeracy are those with disabilities (Table 30). Subgroups related to difficulty remembering, concentrating, making friends, accepting change, and conducting self-care activities all had higher proportions of their populations that were low performance and low improvement. In addition, those who were pregnant and those who were their own caregiver had high proportions of LPLI test-takers. The high proportion of those with disabilities may be linked to the fact that there are many unmet needs in Safe Spaces for those with disabilities (see below).

Table 30: Low-Performance Low-Improvement in Mathematics, Proportions by Subgroup

Subgroup	Proportion of Subgroup that are LPLI
Overall	16.2%
Disability: Making Friends	32.9%
Disability: Remembering	25.6%
Disability: Concentrating	17.8%
Pregnant	17.4%
Disability: Accepting Change	17.0%
Disability: Multiple	15.9%
Own Head of Household	15.7%
Disability: Self Care	15.3%
Own Caregiver	14.8%

Interview data allow insights into the perspectives of beneficiaries who may be low-performing. Beneficiary participants during the Koinadugu community FGD expressed their frustration in still not being able to perform basic tasks, such as writing their names and calculating change during financial transactions. It is worth noting that evaluation participants across stakeholder types consistently identified the ability to perform these tasks as major transformations for many beneficiaries.

*Beneficiary #1: "Well, for me, one thing that is not working is that most times they don't teach us the things we want them to teach us. For example, I want them to teach me how to write and spell my name because as I sit here now, I cannot write or spell my name."*

*Beneficiary #2: "I am one person that never had the opportunity to go to school so I really want to make a very good use of this opportunity that has been given to us. Even though I am part of the classes, I still have much more to learn. So, I am still facing the same problem as my sister, I still haven't been able to write my name properly at all."*

*Beneficiary #3: "For me, I still don't know how to count money and so I really want to be taught how to count and give change." (Koinadugu, Girls FGD)*

In addition, a Koinadugu Mentor interview affirmed these experiences and noted that of 18 girls, only 2 can read and write well. The Mentor interviewed added that more instructional time is necessary to support struggling learners. These findings are notable because interview data from the other communities participating in the evaluation overwhelmingly stress the success of beneficiaries in learning to at least write their names and use currency. Experiences from Koinadugu provide balance and align with the quantitative data. These experiences may explain why a large portion of beneficiaries fall into the lowest band ("Non-Learner") for subtasks and another large portion in falls into the highest band, ("Proficient") but few beneficiaries fall between. It may be that, as Literacy learners, beneficiaries fall into these two very different groups. Based

on the baseline learning results and the LPLI analysis above, Koinadugu began with some of the lowest levels of Literacy skills at baseline, and many of the beneficiaries there are not catching up to beneficiaries in other districts. Findings suggest that despite exceeding targets a good proportion of beneficiaries remain far from mastering Literacy: 47.7% could not read 5 words per minute in the easier reading passage (see Literacy).

### **Psychometric Measures**

In order to better understand changes in Life Skills results, we turn to the Life Skills Hostile Attribution Bias subtask. This subtask is part of a series of questions where a beneficiary is told a brief story where there is a potential misunderstanding or conflict. In each story, there is a situation where it is not clear if a person intentionally or unintentionally inconveniences another person. Stories were slightly different than those given at baseline. Respondents are asked why they think that person did what they did. Scores in the table below include what percent did not attribute hostility to the character in the story, but presumed it was an accident or misunderstanding. As shown in the table below, the percentage of respondents who did not assume hostile intent increased in all stories, indicating that at midterm, more beneficiaries were apt to give the character in the scenario the benefit of the doubt than to assume malicious intent. While the hostile attribution bias is increasing, it is curiously lower for older respondents. The average hostile attribution bias score is 53.1% for those under 16, 48.9% for those 15 or 16, and 47.2% among those 17 or older.

*Table 31: Life Skills Hostile Attribution Bias Responses*

Category	Chronbach's Alpha	Story 1	Story 2	Story 3	Story 4	Average hostile attributions
<b>Baseline</b>	0.54	40.5%	42.4%	40.9%	N/A	41.1%
<b>Midterm</b>	0.62 <sup>69</sup>	62.6%	56.6%	53.5%	23.7%	49.6%
<p><b>Note:</b> Only four stories were included in the baseline evaluation for Life Skills. Although 5 stories were part of the midterm Life Skills story, the hostile attribution bias questions were only appropriate for four of the five stories. All five stories did include questions on emotional regulation and conflict resolution.</p>						

Table 32 shows the changes in beneficiaries' conflict resolution strategies. For each scenario, respondents are asked how they would respond to the conflict if they were involved. They are asked to suggest their response, which is then coded into options that map to the following four categories (below in table). The percentage of respondents who chose to use physical or verbal aggression did not change, nor did the percentage that suggested problem-solving approaches, such as asking why a person did what they did. The percentage that suggested disengagement -

<sup>69</sup> Chronbach's Alpha scores by calculation are low when there are few items, and are generally considered inappropriate to be applied to 10 or fewer items (Sijtsma K. On the Use, the Misuse, and the Very Limited Usefulness of Cronbach's Alpha. *Psychometrika*. 2009;74(1):107–120; Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory*. New York: McGraw-Hill). The hostile attribution bias subtask is further limited by the fact that those three items are binary variables, which allow for less variation than a five-point Likert scale or other form of item.

- that is, to ignore or avoid conflict -- fell from 14.7 percent at baseline to 8.4 percent at midterm, which was primarily compensated in an increase of those who would appeal to authority -- such as police or a teacher.

*Table 32: Conflict Resolution Responses*

	Story 1	Story 2	Story 3	Story 4	Story 5	Baseline Average	Midterm Average	Change since Baseline
<b>Aggression</b>	3.4%	2.1%	1.4%	1.8%	12.0%	4.3%	4.2%	-0.1%
<b>Disengagement</b>	11.0%	20.2%	2.4%	1.0%	7.4%	14.7%	8.4%	-6.3%
<b>Seek Authority</b>	10.8%	14.5%	24.9%	38.6%	5.8%	13.3%	18.9%	5.6%
<b>Problem Solving</b>	74.4%	63.1%	71.1%	56.1%	74.5%	67.7%	67.8%	0.1%

While there is a great deal of evidence suggesting improvement in interpersonal skills in the qualitative data and in girls' confidence in their ability to manage their relationships (see EQ Impact 2 below), these psychometric results are not in agreement with those findings. One possible reason is that this Life Skills tool was designed for younger girls: its evidence base is among girls aged 5-16<sup>70</sup>, whereas the majority of beneficiaries are aged 16 years or older. It is likely that the skills EAGER participants are developing are more nuanced than simply recognising that the best response is nonviolent discussion (which is what the assessment primarily measures). Instead, participants are learning exactly how to engage in challenging conversations and conflicts and resolve them. As described in the Outcomes section, the Life Skills results demonstrate marked improvements in other sections.

### ***Plans for the Future***

At the time of data collection, Cohort 1 beneficiaries were completing the learning programme portion of the EAGER project and beginning to move into the Transition Phase (see EQ Impact 2 for more information.) As described in the Outcomes section above, beneficiaries are making progress on Empowerment Plans by conceptualising goals for their future and understanding how to develop steps to realise them. Despite the project being in its early stages of discussing the concept of Empowerment Plans with beneficiaries and working with beneficiaries to develop their individualised plans, beneficiaries confirm that they have already begun the work. Nearly all (96 percent) stated that they had discussed Empowerment Plans with their Facilitators or Mentors. A slightly lower proportion, 87 percent, said that they had already been helped to create theirs. A fifth of the beneficiaries participating in qualitative interviews brought up their Empowerment Plans when asked about their ideas for the future.

<sup>70</sup> Kim, Ha Yeon and Carly Tubbs Dolan, (2019) SERAIS: Social Emotional Response and Information Scenarios Evidence on Construct Validity, Measurement Invariance, and Reliability in use with Syrian Refugee Children in Lebanon" Education in Emergencies: Evidence for Action (3EA). doi:10.13140/RG.2.2.23945.60007

In order to better understand how beneficiaries are viewing their lives after EAGER, the girls involved in the qualitative sample provided indications about their expanding perspectives about the future. Of the 30 girls interviewed, all but one (29) clearly identified that their notion of the future is more positive after having taken part in the EAGER project. Among these girls, a third spoke of more drastic changes in their ideas of the future and that they had a pessimistic view of the future prior to the project. Three of the girls indicated that previously they had only seen farming in their future, and 2 of these same beneficiaries also cited previously feeling limited to home management. These findings also complement findings from BBC Media Action audience research that report how the *Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap* radio programme has helped listeners realise that adolescent girls can have a positive future, even if they become mothers at a young age. This finding applies to both parents and beneficiaries<sup>71</sup>.

Over two-thirds of the beneficiaries participating in the qualitative sample identified business as their next pathway<sup>72</sup>. Similarly, 3 of the 4 caregivers' focus groups identified business as a goal their daughter's desire. For some of these respondents, they plan to pursue business alongside other opportunities. A beneficiary from Koinadugu explains how her vision of the future has changed due to her participation in EAGER:

*“Well I virtually had no future thoughts before I joined the EAGER programme. All I was thinking of was how to get married; give birth to as many children as I can, and how to work every day in the farm with my husband and children. Ever since I joined the EAGER programme my thoughts have been completely different from what I used to think. Now, I think of my future in a more positive way, how I want to see my children educated, how I would love my family to be and what I need to do so that I can educate my children and live a very happy life. In one year's time, I see myself doing a very big business... I had wanted to do tailoring but I don't have the chance because there is nobody to support me and there is also nobody to teach me. If EAGER is to help us get access to machines and people who can teach us here, I will be very much grateful because tailoring is something I also have so much interest in. But, because of these challenges I have opted to doing business instead. In the next three years if I have the opportunity to do tailoring, I want to see myself sewing on my own and using the money to take care of my children and my family as well. I never thought of all of these until I joined the EAGER programme. Because through the EAGER programme I saw myself as someone who can achieve a lot of thing despite not having the opportunity to go to school.” (Koinadugu beneficiary, KII)*

The other sorts of income generating activities mentioned were foremost tailoring (7), followed distantly by hairdressing, gardening, and soapmaking. One beneficiary from WAU also expressed that she intends to return to school, while a Koinadugu beneficiary expressed wishing to become a nurse. This last beneficiary also expressed her desire to have a business, likely a more viable

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<sup>71</sup> BBC Media Action. (March 2021). Leave No Girl Behind: Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER): Audience Research Report.

<sup>72</sup> In almost all cases, the beneficiaries used the phrase “do business,” which is vague and does not provide much information about the nature of the envisaged activity. Project leadership suggested that many beneficiaries may have been enthusiastic for activities related to Financial Literacy at the time of data collection as Financial Literacy sessions were underway at the time of data collection.

option for her given her age and other constraints. Similarly, a female caregiver's focus group from Koinadugu reported that they hope their daughters will learn how to sew, and with EAGER supplied sewing machines. Another group (male caregivers FGD from Kailahun) discussed going back to school as the only possible future plan.

#### 5.1.8. Impact Question 2: Are girls feeling increases in their empowerment to meet their own goals? What obstacles or challenges do girls still perceive and what could be done to mediate them?

As addressed above, the EAGER project revised its original transition design after baseline to adapt a model focused on four types of empowerment: learning, household, community and financial<sup>73</sup>. This was a change from the original proposal and one that the Fund Manager staff<sup>74</sup> interviewed is interested to investigate further as a possible model for other GEC projects (KII). The Fund Manager staff interviewed noted that the concept of transition the project employs is holistic and distinct from other projects that are more narrowly focused on livelihoods and skills development. In order to answer the EQ, we begin with an overview of how beneficiaries sampled have expressed feeling greater individual empowerment. Given the previous impact question's focus on learning, we touch upon learning briefly in this section. We begin with an exploration of overall empowerment that cannot be easily categorised within one of the dimensions but is rather cross-cutting. We then explore in greater depth the other three types of empowerment: household, community, and financial. Admittedly, these dimensions all intersect in the lives of beneficiaries. The response attempts to disentangle them in order to explore the various facets of EAGER's emerging impact. Additional context is also important to appropriately interpret the findings below. Before addressing examples of empowerment, we present details of some of the challenging dynamics that beneficiaries may face regarding violence. We also present a brief overview of the Life Skills curriculum in order to ground analyses.

#### ***Additional Context: Background on challenging environment for EAGER beneficiaries***

EAGER operates in an environment. Many adolescent girls and women experience violence and face many barriers to protection from unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). According to the 2017 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 29.9%% of women (and 6.5% of men) aged 20-24 were first married before the age of 18 years. A fifth (21%) of all girls between the age of 15 and 19 had begun child rearing. In addition, nearly two-thirds of women (63%) and a third of men (34%) think beating your wife is justified<sup>75</sup>. Similarly, the 2019 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data<sup>76</sup> for Sierra Leone, 61 percent of women age 15-49 have experienced physical violence by anyone since age 15 and 7 percent have experienced sexual violence. The same proportion (61%) of ever-married women have experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence by their current or most recent partner. This number has increased from 51 percent in 2013. Just under a third of ever-married women have sustained injuries. Experience of violence is also higher for women with less education. It is possible that these

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<sup>73</sup> EAGER. (n.d). EAGER Transition Design – An Overview.

<sup>74</sup> The Fund Manager staff spoke with the evaluation team but made clear that their views were individual and did not necessarily reflect those of the Fund Manager or FCDO, the donor.

<sup>75</sup> Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (2017). <https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/3210>

<sup>76</sup> Statistics Sierra Leone Stats SL and ICF. (2020). Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2019. Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Stats SL and ICF. <https://dhsprogram.com/publications/publication-FR365-DHS-Final-Reports.cfm>

proportions may be even higher in reality as some survey respondents may be reluctant to identify abuse on a survey.

In addition, in a recent study of 2011-2018 DHS data for 14 sub-Saharan countries Sierra Leonian adolescents demonstrated the highest rate of engagement in condomless sex of all countries (93.2% for female adolescents and 84.5% for male adolescents<sup>77</sup>). The article identifies the need for out-of-school programmes to provide relevant information on condom use. Taken together these statistics indicate that EAGER’s target population is very vulnerable to abuse and risky behaviour. EAGER’s design attempts to navigate this challenging context. As mentioned above under EQ Relevance 1, EAGER’s transition overview acknowledges EAGER’s intention to confront gender norms while recognising that beneficiaries may not be able to safely interrupt restrictions on their behaviour or opportunities. CCU members regularly cited the project’s adherence and responsibility to do no harm ethical principles and expressed concern that there are not be adequate resources or services available to beneficiaries who resist abuse or simply breach gender norms.

**Additional Context: Topics addressed by EAGER’s Life Skills Curriculum**

The EAGER Life Skills curriculum experienced many adjustments due to project learning, COVID-19 related lockdowns and related prevention measures (see EQ Efficiency). Table 33 outlines the topics that most beneficiaries would have experienced by the end of the learning phase. “Revised” refers to curriculum that had been changed to take into account baseline findings including Mentors’ capacities. “Adapted” refers to sessions that had been further revised due to COVID-19 restrictions; these sessions were condensed from 2 hour to 40-minute sessions during lockdown and did not include interactive activities out of concerns for social-distancing and beneficiaries’ time. “Final” refers to sessions developed as post-lockdown sessions that would conclude the learning period. Note that the adapted sessions not only reflect the imperative to condense curriculum but also EAGER’s awareness of beneficiaries even more heightened vulnerabilities during the lockdown period<sup>78</sup>.

*Table 33: Life Skills topics for Cohort 1*

Revised 1: Welcome!	Adapted 3: Emotional Violence	Revised 10: Managing Disagreements
Revised 2: Our Safe Space	Adapted 4: Exploitation and Abuse	Revised 11: Negotiation Skills
Revised 3: People We Trust	Adapted 5: Safety Planning	Revised 12: Respecting Ourselves
Revised 4: Seeing Our Strengths	Adapted 6: Our Changing Bodies	Revised 13: Making Smart Decisions
Revised 5: Listening Skills	Adapted 7: Sex and Pregnancy	Final 1: Gender

<sup>77</sup> Using 2013 data. Source: Ali, M.M., Merdad, L. & Bellizzi, S. Socioeconomic variations in risky sexual behavior among adolescents in 14 sub-Saharan Africa countries who report ever having had sex. *Int J Equity Health* 20, 11 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-020-01352-8>. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33407497/>, p.

<sup>78</sup> According to project-conducted research 20 percent of mentors and 19 percent of girls reported an increase in GBV since COVID-19. (EAGER. June 2020. COVID-19 Surveys: EAGER: Summary of results of surveys with Adolescent Girls and Mentors. Sierra Leone. COVID-19 Medium Term Response.)

Revised 6: Being a Good Friend	Adapted 8: Sex and Consent	Final 2: Different Abilities
Revised 7: Expressing Emotions	Adapted 9: Contraception and Safe Sex	Final 3: Trafficking
Revised 8: Managing Stress <sup>79</sup>	Adapted 10: Sexual Violence	Final 4: Power With Others
Adapted 1: Protecting Each Other (from Covid-19)	Adapted 11: Early/Forced Marriage	Final 5: Goals
Adapted 2: Managing Stress	Adapted 12: Assertive Communication <sup>80</sup>	

Review of the curriculum shows that the revised 15 sessions Mentors training document includes a section on empowering girls that runs for over half a page. This section notes that the curriculum is designed to:

*“Encourage girls to recognise their own strengths and build their own sense of self-respect, confidence, power, and resilience. To do this, the ideas and stories in the curriculum stretch beyond narrow social and gender norms that limit what girls can do.”<sup>81</sup>*

The guide reminds Mentors that, among other things girls may wish to work outside of the house, be a good friend, be funny, have good ideas, be a good negotiator, and/or wait to get married. It also reminds Mentors that “being a wife or mother does not mean that girls cannot do other things as well”<sup>82</sup>.

We next turn to discussions of how EAGER may have impacted girls’ empowerment – first overall and then, concerning household, community, and financial domains.

### **Overall empowerment**

Interviews with stakeholders nearly unanimously reflect that the EAGER project has positively influenced the lives of its girl participants, as well as Mentors. Many of the beneficiaries themselves indicated that EAGER sessions provide them with a sense of purpose and an activity in which to belong. Analysis also shows that many beneficiaries view their future prospects more optimistically they did prior to EAGER participation. Nearly all thirty beneficiaries interviewed report that they feel confident they will accomplish their goals. Since baseline, the percentage of respondents who say they believe they can accomplish difficult tasks has increased since baseline from 74 percent to 91 percent. Over half of beneficiaries noted that they perceive no obstacles in their way other than illness or death. Approximately a third of beneficiaries named a lack of capital as their principal obstacle, followed by having too many children/pregnancies, an unsupportive partner and/or an unsupportive caretaker, the COVID-19 pandemic, and finally, a lack of space or location for the beneficiary’s business. It appears that Life Skills sessions helped girls recognise that she may have power over the number of children she has and that the number of children may affect her future pursuits. When prompted, only a few girls identified supportive

<sup>79</sup> There were 15 original sessions within the Phase 1 curriculum that had been revised to take into account baseline findings. According to the CCU most partners reached session 7 or 8 before pandemic lockdowns.

<sup>80</sup> EAGER COVID-19 Response: Handbook for Mentors.

<sup>81</sup> EAGER. (n.d.) Life Skills Curriculum. Mentor Guide: Sessions 1-15 p. 3.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

factors. These included supportive caretakers and partners, knowledge gained from the programme, and supportive Mentors and Facilitators.

The proportion of girls who agree or strongly agree increased across all self-efficacy questions since baseline (Table 34). In every case, the percentage that agree increased from around 80 percent to over 90 percent.

*Table 34: Self Efficacy Responses, Percent who Agree or Strongly Agree*

	Baseline	Midterm
I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I set for myself.	81.2%	91.6%
When facing difficult tasks I am certain that I will accomplish them.	74.0%	91.0%
I think that I can achieve things that are important to me.	78.5%	93.6%
I believe I can succeed at almost anything if I work hard at it.	80.2%	94.0%
I can successfully overcome challenges.	77.0%	91.5%
I am confident that I can be successful at many different tasks.	78.6%	90.9%
Compared to other people I can do most tasks very well.	80.8%	92.4%
Even when things are difficult I can still manage well.	76.9%	91.8%

### **Individual empowerment**

In addition to features of empowerment linked to the four dimensions (learning, household, community and financial), data reveal that beneficiaries have developed an enhanced understanding of several key concepts central to individual empowerment particular to girls living in the districts served by the EAGER project:

**Improved self-care:** Another common refrain when asked about project strengths or resulting change was that beneficiaries improved their understanding of how to “take care of myself.” Half of the girls’ FGDs discussed this topic as well as a third of the KIIs with beneficiaries. Often times, respondents associated self-care with proper hygiene, referring to bathing practices for the beneficiary and her children, and appropriate dress. A beneficiary in Kono provided an illustration:

*“EAGER has helped us to know how to take care of ourselves, our children and the current outbreak. Before this time, we were just going to the farm in the morning not knowing that we should clean ourselves and our children before we go to the farm.” (Girls FGD, Kono)*

Male partners seemed particularly pleased with beneficiaries’ perceived improved self-care as hygiene-positive comments were noted by just under half of the partners interviewed. EAGER management staff interviewed also stressed the importance of beneficiaries improving their dressing habits as a signal of self-respect. As one male partner commented,

*“The community now looks at them differently with respect because they are no more idle in the community as they used to be before. You know sometimes when someone is uneducated you can tell by their dress code but now around four o’clock in the evening you will see these young girls neatly dressed going for their classes. That also has been a very big achievement by*

*the EAGER project. Our girls now dress neatly in the community. The EAGER project has been the brain behind these changes in the sense through the things they been learning, they have been able to transform their ways of doing things more especially in the area of their dress code which has improved so much and the manner in which they carry themselves in the community has also improved greatly." (Bo male partner #2)*

Interestingly, the Life Skills curriculum treatment of hygiene focuses on COVID-19 and menstruation but does not explicitly address bathing habits or dress. Like the quote above intimates, it is likely that these changes may be linked to improved self-confidence, self-care, initiative, and sense of purpose that many beneficiaries may have embraced during EAGER programming.

**Increased capacity for menstrual hygiene:**

Beneficiaries and other stakeholders also indicate that many EAGER participants now have more confidence in appropriately handling their menstrual cycle. The Life Skills curriculum covers menstruation as part of the Adapted Session 6: Our Changing Bodies. Survey data show that the majority (51.0%) of beneficiaries disagree with a statement suggesting that menstruation is dirty and a source of shame (Figure 5). While this question was not asked at baseline allowing no clarity in change over time, qualitative data suggest that girls’ attitudes about menstruation have changed significantly. This finding emerged in nearly half of the girls’ FGDs and among a portion of the beneficiaries interviewed. Some girls mentioned that they used to use the same cloth the entire day and that they were ashamed of the accompanying odour. One of the girls in the Kambia FGD declared that learning to change her pad three times a day during her period was “the biggest thing I have learnt form the project.” In addition, both female caregivers’ focus groups expressed strong satisfaction that the girls received menstruation kits with reusable sanitation pads and that the girls are now able to confidently care for themselves when they have their periods. One group said they are able to do so far better than the mothers themselves:

*“Before this time if they are observing their menses, they will come to us the mothers to ask for an old cloth so that they can use it but since these girls joined this project, they are not asking us again. They are given pads so they now know how to take care of themselves more than we do.” (Female caregivers FGD, Kono)*

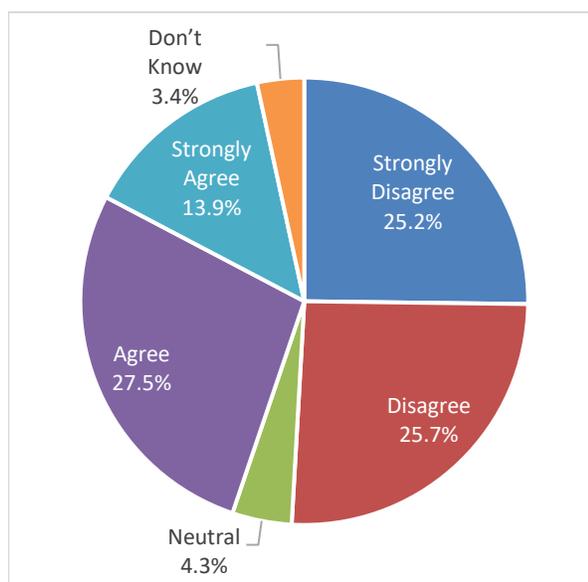


Figure 5: Agreement with statement: "Menstruation is something dirty that girls should feel ashamed of." (Girls' Combined Survey)

Finally, the quote below from a Kono beneficiary demonstrates that this new knowledge extends beyond the EAGER participants and may transfer to other family members, notably younger sisters:

*“The first time my younger sister started observing her messes, she was not able to take care of herself because she never knew what to do. That very day I taught her what I learnt in the programme and I took care of her properly. I have done so also for other people in the community.” (Kono Girls FGD)*

**Familiarity with coping mechanisms:** Recall from the EQ Effectiveness 1 section that EAGER addresses stress management (Adapted Session 2: Managing Stress) and that both beneficiaries and Mentors have found this subject to be compelling and applicable to their lives. Quantitative data further shows impressive change since baseline in beneficiaries’ knowledge of coping mechanisms. At baseline, 54 percent of beneficiaries could name at least one way to cope with stress (such as play sports, talk to a friend, or do breathing exercises). At midterm, all respondents could name at least one, and 83 percent could name two or more. Eighty-four percent suggested talking to a friend or Mentor, and 25 percent suggested listening to music. One beneficiary provided a particularly poignant account of how EAGER-learned stress management helped her to deal with the loss of her mother. She shared her strategy as follows:

*“Our Mentors told us that if you are stressed, you either listen to music or you do some exercise or you do something that will engage you so that the stress will reduce. Before this time, I never knew how to take care of myself but through EAGER, I now know how to take care of myself.” (Kono beneficiary, KII)*

**Better equipped to combat gender-based violence:** Discussions with beneficiaries reveal that some EAGER participants identify the project’s coverage of gender-based violence (GBV), child marriage and child protection as very important and useful. EAGER places special emphasis on helping girls to understand and recognise GBV and possible responses<sup>83</sup>. More than one-third of beneficiaries interviewed indicated feeling that, as a result of EAGER participation, they are aware of GBV and will no longer tolerate an offense. In some cases, they are thinking of more critically about problems with their male partners. For example, one girl in a discussion identified that she now knows the number of the complaint response mechanism in case she is having difficulties with her husband. While the mechanism is designed for reporting safeguarding concerns, this beneficiary’s use of the number indicates her awareness of her right to live free from violence as well as the existence of the complaint response mechanism number. A District Officer shared an example of a beneficiary who reported her husband to the local officials, gaining support from the authorities for the case. The following quotes underline beneficiaries’ awareness of their rights and reporting mechanisms:

*“They also taught us about the issue of violence against girls, where no man should force you to sex if you are not interested. We were even asked to report such matter if it occurs to anyone of us.” (Kailahun beneficiary, KII)*

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<sup>83</sup> The Life Skills curriculum covers GBV through Adapted Session 3: Emotional Violence, Adapted Session 4: Exploitation and Abuse, Adapted Session 5: Safety Planning, Adapted Session 8: Sex and Consent, and Adapted Session 10: Sexual Violence, Adapted Session 11: Early/Forced Marriage and Adapted Session 12: Assertive Communication.

Findings suggest that Mentors are also learning about their rights and how to protect themselves from GBV. According to one Mentor,

*“The most useful [EAGER] topic in my own life is sex and consent and it gives me the power to take my own decision. I cannot have sex with a man without my consent and it gave me the awareness to say yes or no.” (WAU Mentor #2)*

At the same time, there is also indication from outliers within the qualitative sample that teaching beneficiaries to identify and react to GBV in accordance with existing laws but against cultural norms is found by some to be abrasive and inappropriate. As one male partner from Kono shared,

*“I am happy about the topics they are learning there especially the sanitation aspect because I have seen the impact at home, then the reproductive health issues, too, is a good one but the issue of gender-based violence is what I am not happy about. From my understanding, they are teaching them about the actions they should take against any man that harms them at home and this is a rural community, and conflict in the home is inevitable. How can you teach my wife to take action against me when I flog her instead of telling her to obey the authority of her husband? That is really not a good thing they are teaching the girls and they have held on to that concept so firmly in [Community name], the moment a husband threatens to use power on them, the next moment they are ready to take a case against you. So I don’t approve of such learning at all.” (Kono male partner, KII)*

Such voices require continued attention. These voices echo the challenging context discussed above which renders beneficiaries vulnerable. EAGER recognises such resistance poses risk to beneficiaries and possibly weakens its ambitions to substantially shift gender norms. Baseline findings and EAGER’s transition document, however, identify as a challenge the entrenched social and gender norms that exist within many of the communities in which EAGER intervenes. As such, EAGER recognises the need to “enable the girls to think critically about their Empowerment goals, and to explore whether they can safely step beyond the restrictions and assumptions about the activities that girls can and should do in their homes and communities.”<sup>84</sup> Voices like the one above represents a significant challenge to the gender transformative approach EAGER seeks.

### ***Learning Empowerment***

The earlier EQs Effectiveness 1 and Impact 1 have addressed EAGER’s learning outcomes and possible intervention effects in depth. Recall simply that many beneficiaries express feeling more confident as a result of being able to perform basic Numeracy and Literacy tasks, including making change, writing their names, signing documents rather than using a fingerprint, and being able to participate more actively in their children’s education. (This last finding is explored in greater depth in the Household Empowerment section below.) Some beneficiaries shared that people can no longer make fun of them.

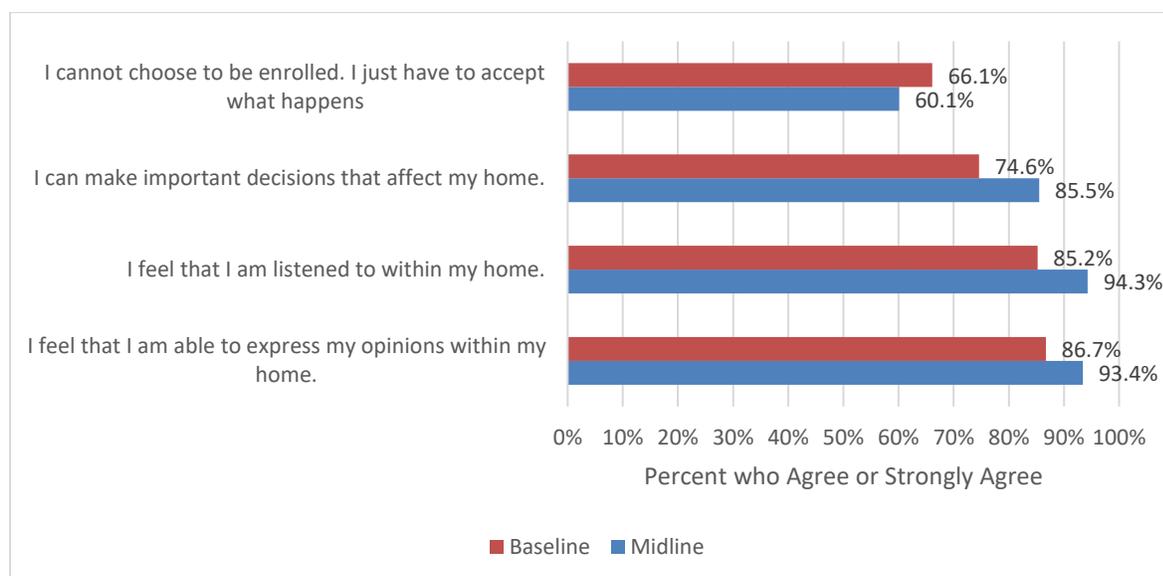
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<sup>84</sup> EAGER. (n.d.) EAGER Transition Design – An Overview, p. 1.

## Household Empowerment

Quantitative and qualitative data combine to form a complex picture of how many beneficiaries feel improved confidence and peace within their home environments but still largely within the backdrop of existent cultural norms regarding women's roles within the household. Overall, midterm survey data indicate that beneficiaries feel more confident in their abilities to make decisions and be listened to within their households compared to baseline. Figure 6 demonstrates that improvements range from 6.0 to 10.0 percentage points.

Figure 6: Changes in beneficiaries' confidence in role within the home (Girls' Combined Survey)



Household empowerment for EAGER participants manifests in multiple ways, according to beneficiaries and other stakeholders. We begin with a concrete example concerning beneficiaries' improved awareness and practice of family planning methods. Subsequent sections explore the complexities of how beneficiaries, male partners, caregivers, and other stakeholders also discern changes in the girls visible within the home. Evidence of change centres on improved communication and conflict management skills. We also present emerging examples of changes visible in male partners' behaviour before closing with a critical reflection on progress addressing gender norms within the GESI spectrum.

### Family Planning and Household Empowerment

Both qualitative and quantitative data demonstrate that EAGER beneficiaries have improved their awareness and application of family planning methods, also an indicator that beneficiaries may be experiencing greater empowerment within the household dimension. In general, all but one of the thirty beneficiaries interviewed individually expressed her satisfaction with topics explored during Life Skills sessions, such as sex and pregnancy, contraception, and violence against girls. More specifically, three girls' focus groups and over two-thirds of beneficiaries interviewed expressed how they now have a better understanding of family planning methods as well as how to protect themselves from sexually transmitted infections. One beneficiary from Koinadugu, for

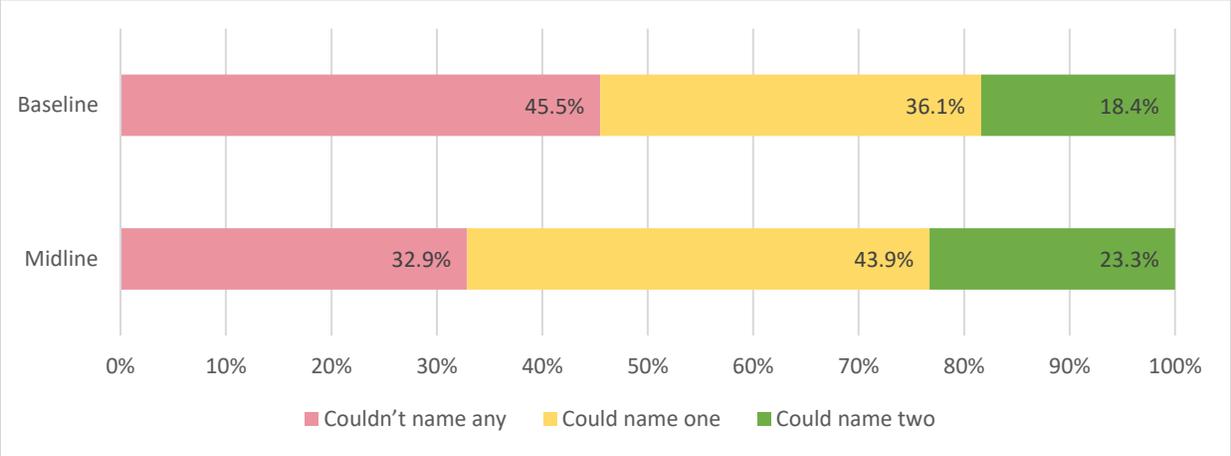
example, articulated how she was at first hesitant but has come to understand the importance of being able to manage the number of children that she has:

*“At first when our Mentor started teaching us about sex and pregnancy I didn’t like the discussion because I saw it as an embarrassment to us the women, but as the discussion went further I began to realise that it was something very important. Before this time, we had no idea of prevention and pregnancy control. We thought that once a young girl gets married, she will give birth to as many children as she can but our discussion with the Mentor on the idea of birth control and how we can control the amount of children we can have, for me, has been a very good idea. I never had the opportunity to go to school, probably because my mother had too many of us and because of that she could not send any of us to school. But now that I have got the privilege to learn so much about birth control, I may want to give birth to fewer children that I can be able to send them to school so that they can get the education I never had. With this knowledge we can even educate those who are not part of the programme on how they can control the amount of children they can give birth to. We will tell them what to do if they no longer want to get pregnant.” (Koinadugu beneficiary, FGD)*

Another beneficiary, from Kenema, expressed a similar sentiment, that in fact, family planning was sinful. Like her colleague, she too, asserted that she has come to see the benefit that family planning can have for herself and her family. In addition, at least one Mentor also shared how she is using family planning skills learned through EAGER in her life as well.

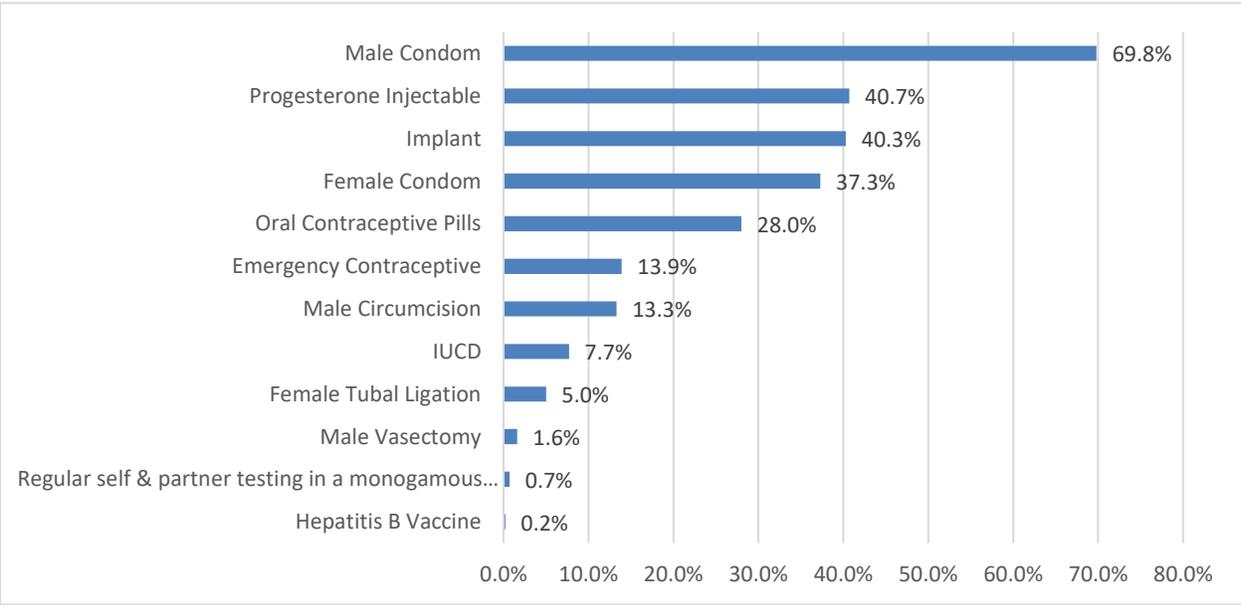
Quantitative data from the girls’ combined survey also demonstrate that, overall, beneficiaries were more able to think of effective methods to prevent STI infection at midterm than at baseline. As indicated in Figure 7, a higher percentage could name two, and the percentage who could name at least one increased from 54.5 percent to 67.2 percent. However, there appears to be substantial misunderstanding on the subject. When asked if they could name two or more effective methods of contraception, 62 percent of respondents also named at least one method that may prevent pregnancy but not STIs, such as an implant (40.0 percent) or oral contraceptive (28.1 percent). Quantitative data collectors were trained to accept vernacular terminology (e.g. foot-sock, chook, or ground nut).

Figure 7: Number of methods with which beneficiaries are aware for preventing STIs (Girls' Combined Survey)



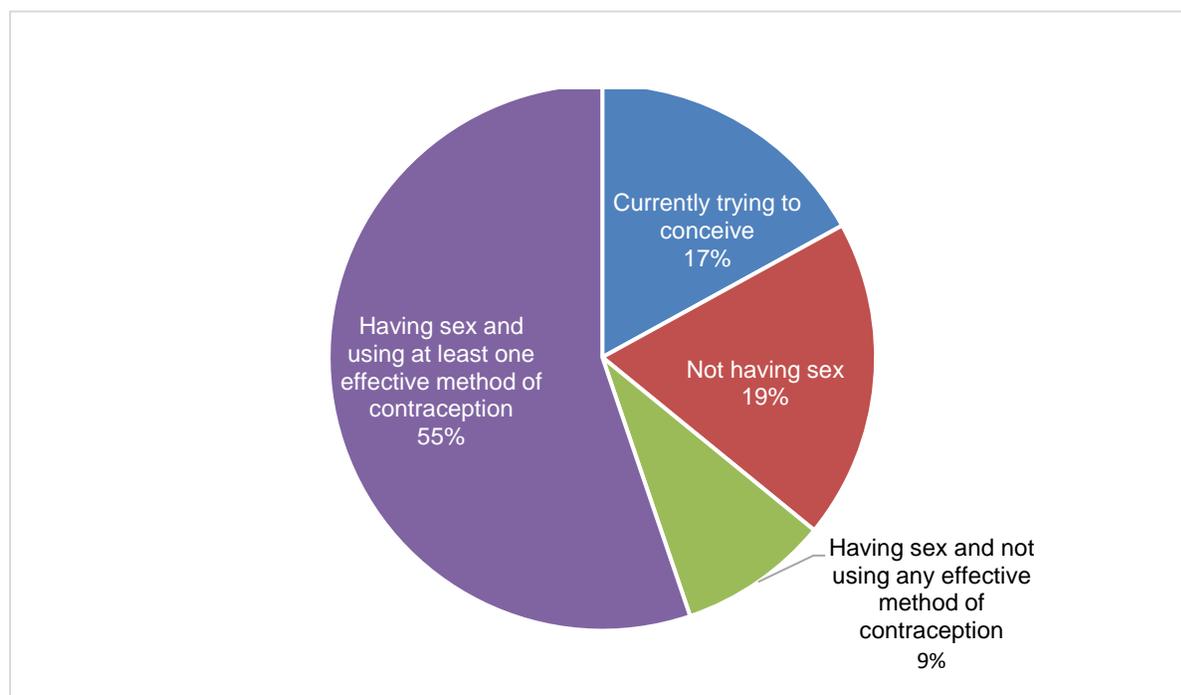
In reflection, the EAGER CCU indicated that these results may also reflect Mentors' beginning awareness of this topic as they likely encountered learning about contraceptive methods for the first time during EAGER. It was possible that they would not be able to answer these questions effectively. Instead, the CCU strongly recommended to partners that they invite a local health workers to meet with the beneficiaries in the Safe Space. In practice, however, this proved challenging due to the distance between many locations and health facilities as well as expectations from some health workers for payment.

Figure 8: Methods Suggested to Prevent STIs



Midterm survey data also demonstrates that over 80 percent of beneficiaries reported that they are currently sexually active. In addition, 17 percent of them are currently trying to conceive a child, as displayed in Figure 9. Most concerning, 8.9 percent of respondents said that they are sexually active but are not using an effective form of contraception or family planning. Of the 8.9 percent (196 respondents) who are not using an effective contraceptive, a small percentage are using a less effective method: four percent (9 respondents) are relying on lactational amenorrhea (reduced fertility when breastfeeding), 12 percent (24 respondents) are using the withdrawal method, and another 12 percent (24 respondents) report in one part of the survey that they use abstinence as a family planning method, but report that they are currently sexually active later in the survey. Of those who report that they use abstinence to reduce pregnancy (3.7 percent of all respondents), 52 percent report later in the survey that they are currently sexually active. According to the 2019 Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 14.3 percent of girls and women ages 15-19 who are unmarried and sexually active or are married use a modern form of contraception.<sup>85</sup> In contrast, 78 percent of beneficiaries who meet those criteria are using a modern form of contraception. This demonstrates that while there is a marked concern for the 8.9 percent at risk of unwanted pregnancy, there is a very substantial difference in contraception use between EAGER beneficiaries and the public at large. Compared too, with the DHS (2013) data indicated above showing high rates of condomless sex among both male and especially, female adolescents, these results seem promising.

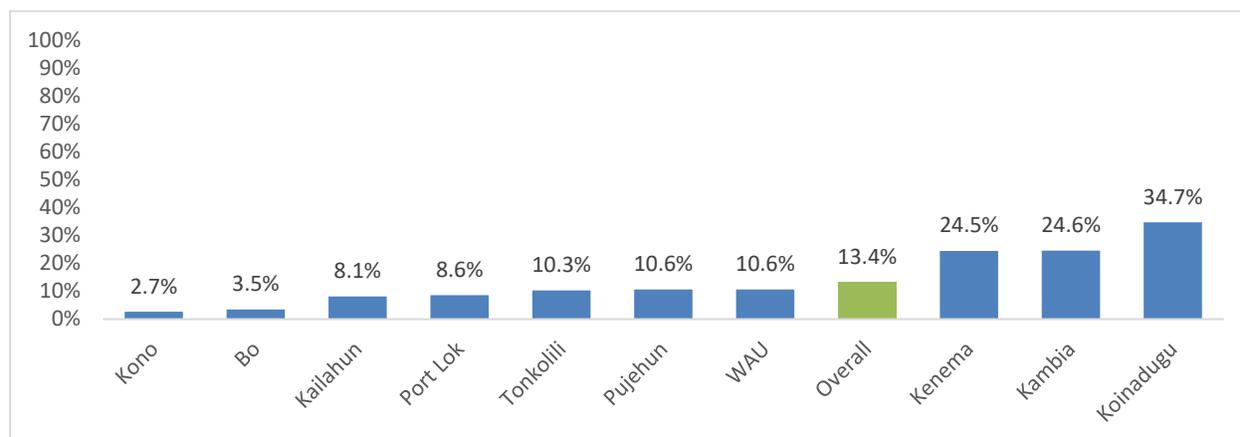
*Figure 9: Family Planning and Sexual Activity*



<sup>85</sup> Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey Key Indicators, 2019. <https://www.dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/PR122/PR122.pdf> . Accessed 6 Oct 2021.

As Figure 10 indicates, of those that are sexually active and not currently trying to conceive a child, a beneficiary's use of effective contraception varies significantly by district. In Bo, only 3.5 percent of those sexually active and not trying to conceive are not using effective conception: that is, 96.5 percent of them are using effective methods. In contrast, nearly 1 in 4 in Kambia and Kenema and over one in three in Koinadugu are not using effective methods of contraception.

*Figure 10: Prevalence of No or Ineffective Contraception use among those who are sexually active and not trying to conceive*



These findings signal that although many beneficiaries may indicate support and greater understanding of family planning methods, their application in their lives does not necessarily follow. Recognising that family planning resources are difficult to access in Sierra Leone and particularly for women and girls in rural areas<sup>86</sup>, EAGER should be encouraged to consider ways to help beneficiaries to continue to access information about family planning as beneficiaries move into the transition phase.

EAGER leadership has also indicated how known barriers for girls to access and use contraceptives include: disruptions in the supply chain leading to local stock-outs, cost barriers (as many health facilities charge for methods that are meant to be free), distance to facilities and associated transport costs, social norms that value a greater number of children and give husbands/partners the decision-making power over contraceptive use, judgemental attitudes of health workers, and concerns about confidentiality. The latter concerns arise particularly in community-based health facilities where a health worker is likely to know a beneficiary's caregiver or husband/partner.

### Exploring complex changes in the home environment

Both beneficiaries and those that they live with often emphasised changes in girls' home lives as a significant impact of EAGER programming. We include multiple quotes in this section to illustrate the depth of these findings as well as their complexity. Analysis shows that 19 of 30 beneficiaries interviewed individually and 3 of the 10 girls' focus groups surfaced comments on

<sup>86</sup> Source: Ali, M.M., Merdad, L. & Bellizzi, S. Socioeconomic variations in risky sexual behaviour among adolescents in 14 sub-Saharan Africa countries who report ever having had sex. *Int J Equity Health* **20**, 11 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-020-01352-8>. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33407497/>

improvements in relationships with partners or caregivers. These comments are spread across 8 of the 10 districts represented by sampled communities with only Kambia and Tonkolili not represented<sup>87</sup>. Nearly half (14) of the 30 beneficiaries interviewed focused on their relationships with male partners. Of these, 10 beneficiaries indicated that their communication strategies have improved. Similarly, 6 of 20 male partners interviewed also indicated improved communication skills. The EAGER Life Skills curriculum includes a session on assertive communication (Adapted session 12) and defines assertive communication as follows:

*“This is a kind of communication where we say what we want or need in a way that is clear and firm.*

*When we use assertive communication, we speak clearly but are not rude or demanding or disrespectful. This is different from passive communication – which means we do not say what we want. We keep quiet. It is different from aggressive communication – which means we say something with anger or aggression.”<sup>88</sup>*

Both Mentors and beneficiaries described how girls have learned to speak and “be respectful” and this skill seems to have translated for many into more control and predictability with both caregivers and partners. Among multiple examples, the quote below stands out as it identifies a beneficiary’s recognition of how she is able to communicate better, how she has learned to be more respectful, and how she has learned to assert her needs in order to improve her situation:

*“Well, EAGER has helped me learn to be more respectful to people especially elderly people. Before now, I used to talk to people anyhow but now, I have been trained to be respectful to people.*

*Yes, now I can confidently talk about things that affect me or other girls even to my partner. If something is not Ok with me, I can say it so that it will not keep happening.” (Kenema, Girls KII #3)*

Five beneficiaries (from Bo, Pujehun and Kenema) and 8 male partners (across 7 districts) further indicated there are fewer quarrels within the home as a result of participation in EAGER. Two of the beneficiaries (from Pujehun and Kenema) also indicated that their communication skills allow them to deter physical abuse from partners. For example,

*“The most that is helping me is the mutual understanding between me and my husband, before, my husband used to beat me but with the help of EAGER he has stop beating me. We understand ourselves much better now, and there is much respect now between us.” (Girls’ FGD Pujehun)*

At the same time a male partner from Pujehun described how incidents which would have caused him to beat his partner are no longer happening as a result of his partner’s participation in EAGER. It is not possible, however, to know if the partner is connected to the beneficiary quoted above. While this reference is highly problematic as it normalises abuse, it also demonstrates that beneficiaries are more aware of the situation and able to control it to their benefit in order to

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<sup>87</sup> These gaps may be more reflective of limitations of qualitative research as male partners in both locations did identify changes.

<sup>88</sup> EAGER. (2020). C-19 Mentor Handbook: Session 12: Assertive Communication p. 22.

minimise abuse. Ideally, more beneficiaries will experience a situation where beating has subsided making way for mutual understanding as the Pujehun beneficiary explained above.

In addition to EAGER participants improving their capacities in assertive communication, some are also improving their conflict management skills and putting them to use within the household. Quantitative data further support this assertion. As can be seen in the Life Skills scores presented in section 4.1.1.3, psychometric measures of beneficiaries' understanding of supportive relationships and conflict resolution have increased since baseline. Some of the beneficiaries interviewed spoke of being able to better control their tempers as well as having gained skills to help solve problems and resolve conflicts within their households and communities. Two beneficiaries in Port Loko, for instance, identified how they have solved conflicts with their partners as well as with other family members. A Kailahun beneficiary similarly shared how she had helped resolve a dispute between her father and mother. A male partner from Koinadugu also shared how his wife had stepped in to help their neighbours when they were having difficulties. The excerpt below provides insights into how one beneficiary has become more aware of what she needs to do to support herself, but also other members of her family in managing her temper and applying conflict management strategies,

*“One key thing I learnt from EAGER session is how to control your temper and also how to control your home. Before now, I didn’t really know how to do things but, now I can say, ‘Thanks to EAGER!’ because, I can now control my home and even my relationship. For example, at a point in time, my father was angry at my mother, I called him and sat him down and talked to him to calm down. He seemed to understand me and the problem between him and my mother was resolved. Also, at one point in time, when I went out to sell my items, I did not have many sales. I was being laughed at by my colleagues, I became angry but then I thought of what we were been taught at EAGER session how we should control our temper when get angry.” (Girl’s KII, Pujehun)*

Close analysis of words used to describe household changes identify repetition of the word “respect” as well as less frequent use of the word “obey.” Discussions with cultural informants indicate that “obey” and “respect” may translate similar attitudes from local languages concerning upholding cultural norms. While in some cases, these quotes about respecting male partners and caregivers may seem to emphasise girls’ roles as subservient, analysis also shows that “respect” often refers to being polite and cordial. Close review of EAGER sessions shows an emphasis on “respectful eye contact” and body language, accessible language, and care, having opinions and desires heard, and showing care for one another<sup>89</sup>. Some beneficiaries also indicate a desire for their partners and others in the community to show respect for them, indicating that respect is a mutually appreciated characteristic of positive relationships.

Findings also illustrate that many of the cited improvements relate to girls fulfilling expected societal roles. Three male partners (out of 20) indicated to data collectors that EAGER beneficiary partners take better care of them while 9 male partners said the girls are more respectful, for

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

instance<sup>90</sup>. Similarly, 5 beneficiaries and 6 male partners, for example, accentuate how beneficiaries have improved their abilities and awareness of how to care for young children. Similarly, 3 girls and 14 male partners emphasised improved abilities to conduct chores at home. Six of 20 Mentors also emphasised that girls have improved in this regard. All 4 caregivers FGDs (male and female) as well as all three FGDs with male community leaders and one FGD with female leaders also emphasised such improvements within the household. The quotes below present this view from the perspective of caregivers, a male partner, and a beneficiary:

*Caregiver 3: “We say thanks to you. Before this time, when they were at home they didn’t listen to the words of their parents. Now, we say thanks to you because our children are now listening to us. Anywhere we send them they will go. Some children would wake up in the morning they cannot sweep. But now, they can take broom and sweep. They can greet as well.” (Female caregivers FGD, Koinadugu)*

*“My wife’s participation in EAGER programme has changed a lot in our home we were previously quarrelling for her to clean and make the bed since she joined the EAGER programme she knows her responsibilities as a wife. She cleans, makes the bed in the morning before going anywhere. She even assists in fetching water for me to take bath which she was not doing previously. She is more tolerant and understanding now than before.” (Kenema, Male partner #2)*

*“What I have learned at EAGER sessions has benefited my father because now, I am well-disciplined when compare to before. Before now, I wouldn’t do any work at home. I would be on the street for the rest of the day going up and down, but now, thanks to EAGER, because I am well disciplined, so I am doing everything at home.” (Girl’s KII, Kailahun)*

Again, while these quotes do suggest that beneficiaries may have become more subservient to their caregivers and partners, the quotes above can also be interpreted as the beneficiaries gaining more understanding of how they can successfully participate and negotiate within their household unit; they also may feel a greater purpose and a desire to more efficiently manage their time, for instance, so that they can participate in EAGER sessions.

Although few in number, there are also emerging signs that some male partners are changing their habits in ways that challenge expectations of male behaviour as well. The changes may also be more notable given EAGER’s restricted programmatic engagement with male partners. They may benefit from radio programming as well as participation in voluntary Community Dialogues. Two beneficiaries (from Bo and Pujehun respectively) speak of changes in their partners as well as one male partner from Tonkolili. Similarly, findings from BBC Media’s audience research on its Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap radio programming identified that parents may be developing more positive attitudes towards sharing domestic chores equally between girls and boys<sup>91</sup>. Two quotes provide

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<sup>90</sup> Comments indicate spread across districts – partners from Bo, Kailahun and Kenema all expressed feeling better cared for while partners from the following districts indicated partners showing them more respect: Bo, Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, Koinadugu and Pujehun.

<sup>91</sup> BBC Media Action. (March 2021). Leave No Girl Behind: Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER): Audience Research Report.

illustration of improved relationships within the home, again, from both the beneficiary and partner perspective:

*“Before now, I was not having peace with my husband at home, we just can’t understand ourselves before, sometimes, he doesn’t give or gave late our feeding money for cooking because things are not working well between us. Now, with the knowledge I have gained from EAGER, all that have changed for good because, I kept talking to him and I also involved some family members and my Mentor to talk to him then, he seems to understand much better now and things are working out well for us at home.” (Girl’s KII, Pujehun)*

*“She is also taking good care of the children. She is taking care of me and I am also taking care of her. Before when I am sick, she doesn’t want to know but now when I am sick, she worries and going ups and down for me. Before when she is sick I don’t care but now we care for each other. She has change and I also have change... These changes have help her and it has help me also. Because we have peace at home. The way I use to think about her before that has changed.” (Tonkolili male partner #1)*

The second quote, in particular, speaks to improved mutual respect and care between partner and beneficiary and underlines some of the ways that partners may be adapting to help beneficiaries attend sessions (similar to findings from EQ Effectiveness 2 above). It is also possible that such changes may be underreported if male partners felt reluctant to share their bending of gender norms with data collectors, who were male and unknown to them prior to the interview.

### Limitations of EAGER’s transformative approach

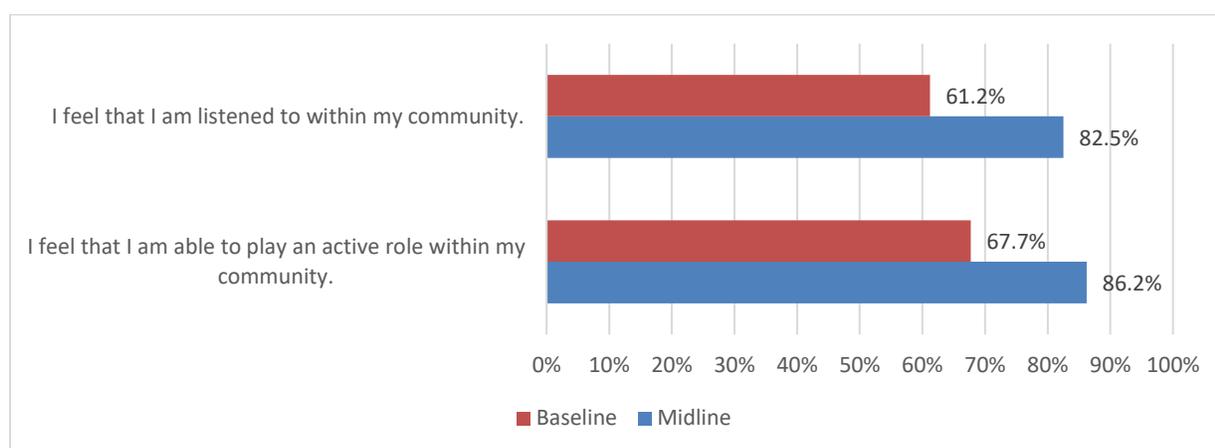
As indicated above, EAGER’s design both attempts to transform gender norms and acknowledges the challenging and vulnerable environment in which the project and beneficiaries exist. In addition to programming focused on girls, EAGER’s Community Dialogues challenge gender norms through discussions of gender roles, imbalance of household burdens and barriers to and lack of opportunities for girls and women. The findings above demonstrate largely positive changes in which girls have more control of their voices and situations within the home, but ones that also continue to conform with traditional expectations of female’s roles as home managers and caregivers. Accordingly, EAGER interventions more likely result in accommodating rather than challenging gender norms. Analysis also shows that, more often than not, project field staff (District Supervisors, Mentors and Facilitators) also describe positive changes in light of conformity with existing gender norms. Beneficiaries’ improved household dynamic surfaced in 7 interviews across various levels of project staff. While one of them (a District Supervisor) addressed power sharing, the others emphasised how changes in the beneficiary’s behaviour had elicited improvements in the home. In this way, the imperative remains with the girl beneficiary to moderate her behaviour. Given that EAGER’s interventions with men are limited to the Community Dialogues and there are no interventions with boys, it is unreasonable to expect that changes in men’s behaviour can regularly occur. The above quote of a partner saying that he does not beat his partner anymore because her behaviour has changed is an example of how men may not yet come to critically examine their own actions. As the EQ Efficiency explains above, COVID-19 disruptions and resource constraints largely account for this gap in EAGER

programming but this missed opportunity still bears mention as a limiting factor to achieving a gender transformative outcome. Other factors also limit changes to gender roles and expectations, notably, the entrenched nature of gender norms within many EAGER communities and, importantly, the slow and incremental process through which gender norm transformation occurs.

### Community Empowerment

Like with household empowerment, survey data shows that beneficiaries are experiencing increased confidence in their abilities to have a voice and play a role within their communities. Changes from baseline are 18.5 and 21.3 percentage points, respectively, as indicated in the figure below.

Figure 11: Changes in beneficiaries' confidence in role within the community (Girls' Combined Survey)



Qualitative data also overwhelmingly support that many of the beneficiaries and Mentors are experiencing empowerment within the community. This sense manifests itself in multiple ways, including in beneficiaries feeling confident to share their opinions, serve as role models to others, and observing improvements in interactions within the community. One quote from a male partner stands out, in particular, as not only demonstrating that his wife has improved her status within the community but also how the various elements of EAGER come together to foster empowerment across all four of the domains articulated in the revised transition approach (learning, household, community and financial):

*“The life of my wife has changed greatly, and it has improved...She has greatly improved in her oral or public speaking and she can write well now. In fact, we don’t need a home teacher to teach our son anymore since she can teach well. My wife has gained more respect in our community and people do admire her in the community. Her financial situation is better, and now she has a bank account and it has personally helped her. In the past they were calling her by her name but now, they call her aunty in the community. My wife has gained more respect in the community.” (WAU male partner)*

Multiple stakeholders agree that the status of the marginalised girls participating in EAGER have improved within the community. For instance, all 4 caregiver FGDs raised this notion. Some

community leaders also share this belief. One of the male community leaders shared how a current EAGER participant was previously labelled as a troublemaker and had been driven out of the community. Through EAGER, he argues, “her life has completely changed.” Similarly, a female community leader in the WAU sampled community commented that many of the EAGER participants had previously been mocked by the community but they have since improved and are now happy.

Moreover, many beneficiaries also indicate that they feel improvements in their status within the community, particularly in comparison with other girls who have been to school. This finding emerged during three girls’ FGDs and interviews with seven of the beneficiaries across six districts. According to 2 beneficiaries from the sampled community in Kambia,

*Beneficiary 1: "We are able to read and write now. Our colleagues who are going to school have not been coming close to us because they always think that we are not of the same class but now we are also telling that we have learnt something. So, this is one of the most important things we have received from EAGER."*

*Beneficiary 2: "The reason why I am so happy about Restless Development is that, since I was born the only thing that I know is how to go to the bush in the morning and return in the evening. Restless is the organisation that has brought light into my face. Now, I can compute with my colleagues that are going to school. If they hold their books in the evening to study, I will take my book as well. They are not able to make me feel bad anymore because I am able to do the things that they are doing." (Girls FGD, Kambia)*

Many Mentors also similarly indicate feeling an improvement in their social status. Four of the 10 Mentors interviewed about their own experiences expressed how they felt their status within the community has improved and they consider themselves to be role models within their communities. Other Mentors shared how their self-esteem and confidence has improved, both in general and more specifically, for instance, in managing her relationship with a male partner or being able to settle disputes. Three quotes are included here as illustration:

*"EAGER has made me role model in the community because people are pointing at finger that she is a Concern Mentor and she is one helping the girls to learn. Now I have respect in my community because of EAGER. Now they even call me to counselling girls who are not part EAGER just because they know I am trained to counselling them." (Port Loko Mentor #2, KII)*

*"Even if I go to the river to fetch water the moment they saw me they will come and take the bucket away from me and fetch the water for me. They will be saying to others this is our Mentor she is the one advising and encourage us that makes me proud of myself." (Bo Mentor #2, KII)*

*“Before EAGER, I was very shy to speak in public but now I am bold and I have the awareness and I implement it to not only the Eager children but the children in the community and parents. EAGER has done a great thing in my life. I was a victim when I was small especially in terms of consent and the right to say no and now EAGER has given me that knowledge. I have self-confidence.”(Mentor<sup>92</sup>, KII)*

### Improved confidence speaking in the community

An area of that stakeholders emphasised during qualitative interviews is beneficiaries' improved ability to speak within the community. In some cases, comments seemed to indicate that EAGER participants have improved their use of Krio, which has allowed them greater entry and acceptance in larger venues. In other cases, the issue seemed to be more about having confidence to speak with people who were unfamiliar. For example,

*“I didn't know how to talk the Krio well, but presently I can try. To talk in public, I didn't even have the mind to talk to people, I was having such a fear, but presently they have helped me and I can now talk to my fellow women.”  
(Kambia beneficiary, KII)*

A male partner in a Koinadugu sampled community specified that his partner now feels more comfortable speaking to people at the weekly market (luma).

When asked directly, more than two-thirds of beneficiaries interviewed report that they feel they have more knowledge of how to speak within their communities in order to make their voices heard. Many of them specified that they feel confident to speak out for girls' rights and that a space has opened for them for these discussions. One participant in a Pujehun community shared how she had helped to advocate for land to be provided by the community for the construction of a school building.

Many of the beneficiaries also evoke that they have become better at interacting with people in the community and have become more respectful, more polite, as indicated by this beneficiary from Kailahun:

*“Yes, because now I can talk to people with respect and in a very polite manner, but before now, I was so rude and aggressive to everyone in the community. And moreover, the issue of cleanliness is part of my daily activities now, although before now, I am not concerned about personal hygiene. Yes, I feel more confidence now to speak up about girl's needs because, I am not afraid to say truth when I get to the chief.” (Girl's KII, Kailahun beneficiary, KII)*

This quote underlines findings above concerning assertive communication as well as two behaviours stand out from qualitative data as being especially appreciated by community members: EAGER participants using greetings appropriately and having more respect for elders. A third of girls interviewed underlined that they now have renewed respect for elders. The use of greetings may refer both to the proper use of Krio as well as local customs. In both cases, EAGER

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<sup>92</sup> Due to the sensitive nature of the quote, no district name is listed to ensure confidentiality.

seems to have filled a need for transfer of these important cultural practices that otherwise was not being met for these EAGER participants.

### Role models and multipliers for others

It is clear from multiple sources of information that EAGER participants share their newfound knowledge and understanding with others around them. Here, we call additional emphasis to this effect as beneficiaries sharing their learnings with others both demonstrates mastery as well as extends the reach of the EAGER project. Beneficiaries described teaching non-EAGER peers how to read, write and perform mathematics in addition to knowledge about hygiene, menstrual care, and stress management. For example, 2 beneficiaries in Port Loko (KIIs) as well as the WAU girls' focus group, spoke separately of teaching other community members to identify the alphabet and read (KIIs). Another beneficiary in the WAU community indicated she does similarly,

*“I do study with [name – non-EAGER peer], and she normally comes here, and we study together, but she is very shy, and she always run when she sees a community member. But, she will return back after that community member has gone and then we will continue to study at home. She is ashamed to learn in the presence of a community member, but I don't know why she is shy. She is older than me, but I am not shy. People in the community do see me studying, and I can read. The community members do ask me questions, and I do answer them. The community members do see us as better persons, because we now know what we did not know in the past.”*  
(Girl's KII, WAU)

### Improved relationships with friends and peers

Findings also point to beneficiaries being able to interact with their friends and families in healthier and more effective ways than before they began participating in EAGER activities. This point emerged in 5 girls' FGDs and in more than one-third of the interviews with beneficiaries. In some cases, beneficiaries indicated that they have resolved a problem with another community member that existed prior to the project and have since mended their friendships. A Kono beneficiary emphasised that through EAGER sessions she has learned strategies for fostering and maintaining friendships, a concept that had eluded her previously (KII). As mentioned above, over 95 percent of beneficiaries in the quantitative surveys stated that they had made a new friend that they could talk to if they were feeling sad. Among those who qualified as having depression or anxiety, over 92 percent assented to the same question. While that quantity was significantly lower, it is still a very high proportion of the sample. Beneficiaries in a focus group in Kenema also agreed as they noted that they have learned to care for their friends and to be respectful towards one another. A number of male partners also agreed, as indicated across interviewees from 4 districts. A male partner from Koinadugu expressed that,

*“Before now, our women and girls seldom came together, but now they always meet, discuss, play and laugh.”* (Koinadugu male partner #2, KII)

Similarly, a male partner from the sampled Tonkolili community applauded how beneficiaries in his community have organised themselves into farming groups to support one another (KII).

## **Financial empowerment**

Evaluation findings above underline that many beneficiaries participating in the qualitative sample demonstrate an interest in Financial Literacy topics, and generally, in applying their knowledge to improve either a small business they already operate or for a new business pursuit. For example, the Facilitator interviewed in the sampled Kambia community noted that most of the EAGER participants have begun a small business in addition to their more typical farm work (KII). The quantitative data bear out this finding: 70 percent of beneficiaries who work on farms in Kambia and 56 percent of beneficiaries who work on farms overall report that they also do non-farm work, such as petty trading. The Facilitator in the WAU community observed that one of the beneficiaries is learning to be a tailor and has inspired the other beneficiaries. Lastly, the Facilitator in the Pujehun community sampled also spoke of a specific beneficiary developing cooking skills:

*"There was a girl who has never been to school. That girl can read now and can write. There was another one who has never done business, but now she can make cake, because she learned the trade. She now has the skill about how to make cake<sup>93</sup>. EAGER has helped those who are in the programme. Then they are implementing their skills in their community." (Pujehun Facilitator, KII)*

In addition to other Financial Literacy concepts, the EAGER curriculum covers savings strategies. When surveyed, nearly all respondents (95.7%) indicated that they feel confident they have the skills to save money so they can accomplish their goals with three-quarters (75.5%) responding that they agree "a lot." In addition, over half of respondents (59.0%) correctly disagreed with the prompt, "I am too young to save money for my needs and wants." During an interview, one beneficiary was particularly articulate how she has changed her behaviour and the relationship with saving:

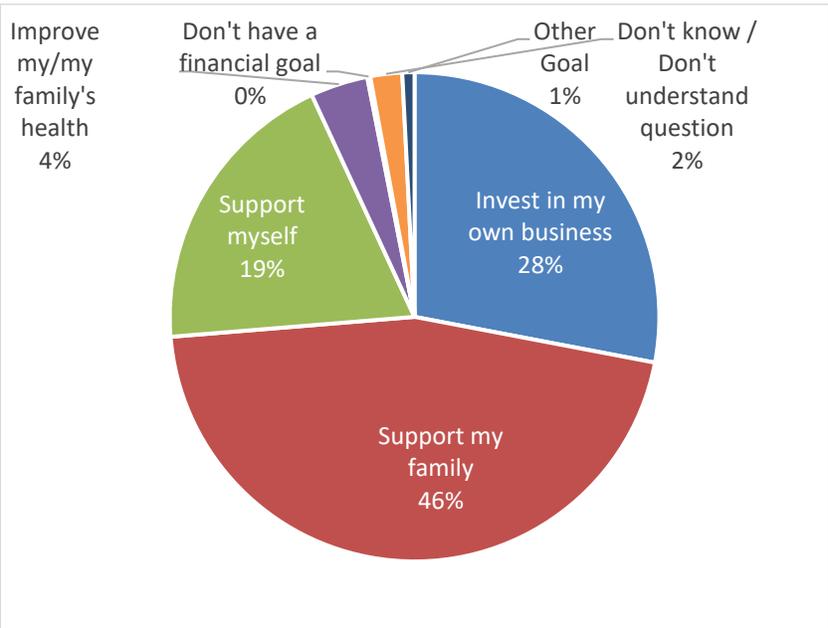
*"The biggest thing that I have learned in this project is how to save. Before this time, I was not able to save. I do not have the skills. Even when my mother asked me to cook at home, I was just using everything she gave me to prepare the food but now, if she gives me four cups of rice to prepare food, I will keep the one cup and if she gives me Le 15,000 to prepare the sauce, I will make sure to keep the Le 2000. The time when things will be bad, when we will not have enough food at home, that is the time that I will bring out all the things that I have been reserving." (Bo beneficiary, KII)*

Data from the Girls' Combined Survey indicate how these efforts fit into beneficiaries' financial goals. As indicated in Figure 12, nearly half of respondents (45.7%) hope to use their money to support their families, followed by investing in their own business (28.0%) and then supporting themselves (19.4%).

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<sup>93</sup> It is important to note that EAGER does not include vocational training components like culinary arts. However, it is possible that EAGER may have triggered the beneficiary's desire to learn a new skill and to use it to generate income. EAGER leadership emphasises the project's impact on improving self-confidence and self-esteem.

Figure 12: Beneficiaries Financial Goals (Girls' Combined Survey)



Moreover, as noted in the Learning Outcomes Results section above, in general, the results on Financial Literacy confidence of girls were quite high. For example, nearly all respondents surveyed noted that they “know how to make a plan so that I can reach my financial goals (an increase from 76.4% at the Financial Literacy baseline).” A similar proportion was also observed for EAGER participants’ confidence to create a budget (92.9%) and make good decisions about spending her own money (95.5%).

5.1.9. Impact Question 3: Has the project had any unintended consequences for direct and indirect stakeholders?

The midterm evaluation explored the extent to which stakeholders have observed or experienced positive or negative effects that had not been part of the original project design. Interview data inform the response to this question. This section first explores the recognised positive and negative unintended consequences. The last sub-section presents an implicit consequence that, while not yet fully formed, requires attention so as not to derail progress made.

**Explicitly stated positive and negative unintended consequences**

In general, when asked directly about any unintended consequences of the programme respondents said there were no negative consequences at all. Quite the opposite, many said they were pleasantly surprised by how good the project was for the girls in their community and how much was provided:

*“We were not expecting EAGER to provide all the learning materials. We were expecting that are going provide it for ourselves. When EAGER came, they did not tell we the volunteers about stipends. They said we are volunteers. We were not expecting stipends, we were thinking is free volunteering so we were not expecting stipends. They were not expecting the mothers club among*

*themselves. They were not expecting dialogues meeting. They think when EAGER enrolled their children that is the end.” (Port Loko Facilitator, KII)*

*“Some communities are apprehensive about how viable this project will be but with intervention of personnel from EAGER and the Ministry, I think that has been overcome through sensitisation over the time. They have the notion that other projects have come and failed and this project may not succeed, but this has been overcome by constantly interfacing with them.” (Port Loko Local Government Official, KII)*

According to one respondent, initial enrolment was relatively low because, according to her, girls were not expecting much of the project:

*“Some children did not join because they doubted that they will not be provided what they promised like furthering their career. Some are tired of fake promises by some projects.” (WAU Female Community Leader, FGD).*

But, according to this respondent, having seen positive impacts on girls in the community, enrolment was increasing. Also, as reviewed in detail in the Impact section, above, there have been many positive outcomes observed. Some explicitly stated positive unintended consequences of the programme included:

- An EAGER Facilitator noting that he had applied what he learned about instruction to his Learning Space
- Caregivers noting better relationships with girls; girls becoming more likely to cooperate doing chores
- Similarly, male partners noting improved relationships with their girlfriends/wives participating in EAGER

In addition, interviewed members of the EAGER leadership also pointed to the positive effects that the project has had on Mentors as an unintended consequence. These effects are detailed throughout the various EQs above and include Mentors’ enhanced confidence and improved status in the community as well as Literacy, Numeracy and Financial Literacy capabilities. Findings also point to similar outcomes for some Facilitators, though likely to a lesser extent. As one member of the EAGER CCU pointed out, EAGER partners have indicated that some Mentors have left EAGER to pursue their studies, having gained confidence and renewed optimism about their future possibilities. It was not possible to capture these cases in this midterm evaluation.

Beyond the community context, EAGER’s radio communication component also reports beneficial unintended consequences. BBC Media Action works with 18 radio stations to develop and broadcast programming. A requirement of this collaboration is that 1 of the 2 journalist liaisons be female. As a representative of this partner organisation indicated,

*What this meant for some stations is that they needed to employ a woman to get them to be part of the EAGER project. It has really helped women – for them to be the presenter, be the voice. I think it will have this unintended consequence. There are 18 female journalists...Hearing people like you and hearing their voices could be really interesting.” (Partner Representative)*

Rarely, negative unintended consequences were explicitly described. Two respondents mentioned concerns about certain groups being excluded from the direct benefits of the intervention:

*“The boys were always asking why only the girls and left them out, and that we need to get a programme for them that will help to empower them... The other communities where there is no Safe Space are also yearning to benefit from the Safe Space and opportunities because you had girls coming from other communities to join the safe space.” (Kono DEO, KII)*

*“The negative aspect of the project, at the beginning when EAGER held a meeting with the community they thought it was a project for the community people, but later EAGER targeted the girls. The community thought that EAGER would provide toilet, school and market for them. That’s all.” (Pujehun Facilitator, KII)*

EAGER leadership were very open during interviews in discussing that the programme has not been able to address the needs of boys within the communities as originally planned. Although the 2 focus groups with boys did not uncover resentment from boys, this may also be due to selection bias as EAGER was very cautious about not causing harm through focus groups and therefore, identified communities where boys were known to be supportive. The project could benefit from additional research into this topic and the external evaluation team and the CCU should strategise to see if inclusion of other boys’ voices may be possible for the endline evaluation without causing harm.

In addition, one respondent shared his perspective that the programme was negatively affecting relationships, though one, of course, can interpret this as a positive outcome reflecting a girl feeling empowered to divorce a husband:

*“According to the report I had, some of the adolescent girls who were married that were on the programme, because of the awareness they have gained, some even divorced with their husbands. This was one of the unintended things that happened. The project went to raise awareness but not to make them divorce their relationships.” (Local government, Pujehun)*

This issue is further complicated because marriage of adolescent girls is not legal in Sierra Leone, though early marriage is frequent cultural practice. The data did not indicate that many stakeholders indicated divorce during interviews. Nonetheless, continued attention to this issue is warranted.

### ***Implicit unintended consequences***

Despite few unintended consequences being articulated by respondents asked directly about the topic, one important implicit unintended consequence should be considered: widespread expectations of financial support and/or longer-term support from the EAGER project itself. This expectation is strong across communities and groups. At the same time, project beneficiaries expecting financial compensation may also be symptomatic of the dependency that often comes to be felt in many development settings where NGOs operate in Sierra Leone as well as in other countries. Nonetheless, the issue warrants project attention. Specific to EAGER, as illustration, both boys’ FGDs, both male caregivers’ FGDs, and 5 of 20 male partners interviewed indicated

this expectation. Similarly, at least 8 of the 30 beneficiaries interviewed also spoke enthusiastically about the financial support they would be receiving from EAGER. In some cases, as illustrated by the second and third quote here, expectations do not align with project promises:

*“We want them [Facilitators] to continue, but am also eager to know when they will stop the sessions. I will want them to support us on the business aspect because they had promised us that they will give us some amount of money to start a business.” (Bo Girl Beneficiary, KII)*

*“We [community leaders] were expecting that they should provide us with money after every meeting but they did not... Some of the community members do not believe in this EAGER programme and some of them do discourage the girls. This is because they expected food/ lunch and money for their children....” (WAU Female Community leader, FGD)*

*“Let them provide us with the money they promised us. They promised to give us some amount of money in order for us to start do business. Yes, we want them to provide us with raingear and uniforms because, we are now in a raining season and it rains heavily. I will go to them to support me with a capital to do business after the session ends, and also, they promised to build us a school so we would want them to fulfill that promise.” (Pujehun Girl Beneficiary, KII)*

Analysis of interview data also reveals evident expectations that EAGER would continue in some form:

*“Yes, I am sure the changes [observed thus far] will last. I used to tell them [girl beneficiaries] whatever EAGER does for them, after one or two weeks they will come back and follow up. I used to tell them don’t get relaxed after EAGER has helped you, they will come back and follow up with you.” (Pujehun mentor, KII)*

*“We are telling EAGER if the project will be ending for this community, let them not abandon us entirely as a community and we also want EAGER to be checking up on us and let them continue providing empowerment to the girls.” (Kailahun mentor, KII)*

If unrealistic (unintended) expectations are not well-managed, this could be potentially damaging not just for EAGER but also for future programming to benefit girls, particularly given reflections shared above regarding being ‘tired of fake promises’ from other interventions. EAGER should consider further engaging staff on managing expectations and communicating accurately with the project’s direct and indirect beneficiaries.

## Sustainability

### 5.1.10. Sustainability Question 1: What is the likelihood that the project benefits will remain after the intervention? What structural or behavioural potential changes are visible at this midterm point? How successful has the project been in leveraging additional interest and investment?

At midterm, the evaluation investigates the project's efforts to render its interventions and possible effects sustainable. Interviews with a variety of stakeholders at the beneficiary, government and project level inform the response to this question.

#### ***Sustaining Immediate Beneficiaries' Gains***

All stakeholders interviewed at the community level were certain that the skills gains made around Literacy, Numeracy, Life Skills, and Financial Literacy would remain after the project closed. Most often, and particularly among beneficiaries themselves, stakeholders highlighted Life Skills including assertive communication, having confidence, enhancing manners, and maintaining hygiene.

*"I will be patient with issues around me. Sometimes, I may get angry when things are hard with me, but I will patient and apply the skills learnt from EAGER." (Pujehun Girl Beneficiary, FGD)*

*"Yes, now I can confidently talk about things that affect me or other girls even to my partner. If something is not Ok with me, I can say it so that it will not keep happening." (Kenema Girl Beneficiary, KII)*

Also, beneficiaries frequently made reference to basic Numeracy and Literacy as skills that would endure:

*"All the things that I have learnt in the project, I will never forget them in my life. I have learnt how to write my name. I will never forget that, I have learnt how to read and write basic things. I will never forget them." (Kambia Girl Beneficiary, FGD)*

Often, beneficiaries said that their newly-acquired Financial Literacy skills would not be forgotten, and they would be able to apply them after the programme had ended, but did not provide much more specificity beyond saying "business skills." A few pointed out that more was needed:

*"I still need much to learn from them especially the business skills even after the end of EAGER session." (Pujehun Girl Beneficiary, KII)*

Despite the skills learnt, nearly a third of beneficiaries across communities also often mentioned that without capital provided by the project, they would be unable to utilise the skills they gained in the project. Very often, they indicated their future success relied on obtaining start-up capital.

*"I hope as promised that EAGER will give us some package or money after the end of this project and maybe I will be able to buy a tailoring machine and make clothing for sale. And that will help me to increase on my income." (WAU Beneficiary, KII)*

*"EAGER may have given me the motivation and the basic skills to help me pursue these dreams but I do not have people to help me financially. So that will be one thing that will stop me from achieving everything I have said so far. If I have somebody to help me I am very sure I will succeed." (Koinadugu Beneficiary, KII)*

*“The barriers that may stop me from reaching my goals are if I was not giving a capital to start a business and also if I am dead. What will help me succeed is, when EAGER session ends, they must assist me with a capital so that I can do business.” (Girl, Kailahun)*

A District Officer interviewed spoke strongly about how beneficiaries in his district learned that Le 3,000,000 (about £209) would be provided and that with the revised transition approach, this amount has been reduced to Le 300,000 (about £21). The officer argues that the future viability of the project for Cohort 2 and beyond might be in jeopardy if the current cohort feels tricked and might subsequently discourage the participation of the next group of girls within the community. The EAGER programme staff is aware of the importance of clear communication with beneficiaries and this has been addressed by the development of clear communication guidelines to follow at the mapping stage for Cohort 2.

Given these challenges related to funding expectations, attention to emerging creative ideas is warranted. There was one case, in Koinadugu, in which beneficiaries reflected their thinking about how to fund their businesses after EAGER. There, girls noted that groups had been mobilised to help fund themselves for starting their business as it was encouraged in the Financial Literacy curriculum and reinforced by topics in the Life Skills curriculum as well. As the FGD participants explained:

*“We have a girls’ club group here; the purpose of the group is to see how best we can come together to help one another. We do contribute some sums of money to the group as a form of savings so that whoever wants do business that person can come to the group and borrow money which she will in turn pay. Whenever a member of the group falls sick, the other members will pay a visit and help in whatever ways they can.”*  
(Koinadugu Girl Beneficiaries, FGD)

Articulating plans about how to support girls’ businesses beyond the Financial Literacy training was also rare among EAGER volunteers, staff, and other stakeholders. This absence may be due to the timing of data collection with the learning session phase. Opinions may be different at the time of endline data collection when beneficiaries are fully in the transition phase. In total, 2 stakeholders across all KIIs made specific reference to Empowerment Plans that would be a key factor in sustaining beneficiaries’ gains:

*“Through the Empowerment Plan that they make for themselves, the type of business, and the capital that they will start the business with. If you have someone who will clearly start her business independently without spending it on food, medication or household use; her business will stand the test of time.”* (Kono Facilitator, KII)

*“Some changes may last and some may not last, but if they go through with what we learnt them, then these changes will last and they may also learn positive things from their colleagues. If they follow the Empowerment Plan, it will help them last.”* (WAU Mentor, KII)

### ***Sustaining Immediate Beneficiaries’ Gains – Maintaining relationships with Mentors and other girls in the cohort***

Additional behavioural changes that appear to be sustainable can be seen in terms of beneficiaries’ relationships with other girls in their cohort. Beneficiaries interviewed had the opportunity to comment on whether or not they imagined they would continue meeting with the other members of EAGER Cohort 1 upon the end of project activities. While not all girls

commented, 22 of the 24 who did were generally emphatic that they would be meeting up in the future. Reasons beneficiaries provided for wishing to meet up include:

1. Discussing development
2. Sharing their problems and helping find solutions
3. Serve as examples within the community
4. Discuss and remind each other of what learnt during the EAGER project
5. Share their knowledge with other girls within the community: "Will share experiences of transition, in particular, their business pursuits

*"Yes, I will meet the girls in my group even if our Mentors are not around. We will meet because, we have to discuss issues that have to do with development and also, some friends may have problems and when we meet we will discuss these problems and find solutions to them."* (Bo beneficiary, KII)

*"Because those of us who have gone through the programme we will be meeting as a group to chat the way forward of our lives and we should serve as a good example in the community."* (Kambia beneficiary, KII)

Two beneficiaries were not as convinced, and they cited how they will become busy again with their own lives and their paths may cross less frequently. Even among those who strongly expressed a desire to meet again, some also clarified that they would do so among their friends, or how the community was small so certainly they would be seeing each other. They did not indicate a very clear action plan for the meetups.

*"Yes, for now we see each time we come for classes but after the programme, everyone will be in their houses but sometimes we will meet because we are all in the community."* (Kenema beneficiary)

*"Well that I cannot tell because when once the programme ends everyone will busy doing their own business. The possibility for us to be meeting in future after the programme ends is very small. You know we are all coming from different backgrounds and because of that it will be very difficult for us to be meeting."* (Koinadugu beneficiary)

Although EAGER is encouraging beneficiaries to form informal "girls' clubs" that will reinforce connections as well as learning made during programming, these clubs require girls' initiative to sustain them. EAGER is providing guidelines as well as some incentives to support their development but Mentors will not be able to manage these clubs or follow up closely as Mentors' efforts shift to Cohort 2. This is a limitation of the project timeline and scope that is important to recognise.

### **Explicit concerns about structural changes resulting from EAGER**

Local government stakeholders were articulate about the necessity of government and communities to help sustain both the direct and indirect benefits of the project through structural changes. At the same time, they had not yet seen or taken part in such engagement to a degree they considered to be sufficient for structural changes:

*"At government level, we should take from where the partners stopped and take few of the things they have done, like the Numeracy and Literacy they taught them and see*

*how we can implement them in some of the chiefdom headquarters for the girls to continue with some of the activities. And the girls to be doing the saving scheme they have been trained. We should make sure that we push those activities for the project to be sustainable.” (Pujehun Local Government Official, KII)*

*“A good [sustainable] change is our expectation indeed. We want to see that community engagement and dialogue to continue, and that will sustain improvement or otherwise that will be the end and we do not want to see that... To maintain these particular expectations of change however, there must be a sustainable and continuous programme towards Girl child education. And also the role of government to sustain this programme is that let the partners link with government and government to make it a must, I believe that will help greatly.” (Kailahun Local Government Official, KII)*

*“Government should take up these projects to help the communities and also help these girls that stay at hard-to-reach and poor places to build their future and the country as a whole.” (Tonkolili DEO, KII)*

*“For the programme to be sustainable the government should also come in to assist IRC in building the center for the girls so they will continue their training and learning.” (Kenema Caregiver, KII)*

*“These changes will last if they are supported but if they are not monitored, they will collapse... This is the point now that we are expecting programmes like EAGER to come in and support the adult Literacy activities in the country.” (Kono Local Government Official, KII)*

Others mentioned, more often education officials, that government should have a role in providing more educational opportunities for out-of-school girls who may be interested in continuing education after completing EAGER, but who live in communities without such options. For them, doing business might be interesting to them for some time, but the question remained as to what they could do if they wanted to do more:

*“One thing government needs to do to improve on that, for now EAGER is working with the Out of School Girls and their number is high, at the end of the day some may want to go back to school, they can be in that community for four or five years my brother, for as long as those communities don’t have schools, there is nothing like formal education, they cannot be able to continue. Some people can do business, three or four months, she will say let me stop doing business let me sit down, she can still continue with the same life. One thing government need to do to improve on the Literacy aspect, they need like maybe four five communities to have one school or center where all the children can access.” (Koinadugu official, KII)*

*“We know that the government is responsible for everything but the government will not do everything as they rely on development partners to help them do something. What they need to do is develop a policy that every girl child should at least finish complete basic education before dropping out of schools. So, the factor that is making the girls drop out of school at early stage is what government needs to handle by developing a strong policy that will clamp down on anyone that goes against it.” (Kono official, KII)*

*“Just like I told you, the Mentors will continue to monitor them and we will continue to talk to their caregivers so that they will be able to support these girls. We have a period of three months that the Mentors will be in the community to continue to provide mentoring*

*for these girls. If the government is able to establish adult education systems in the country. assure the girls that they will be able to learn and provide the necessary support by establishing centers across the country.” (Kambia official, KII)*

### **Communities actively working toward structural changes**

Less frequently than mention of government’s role in contributing to structural change, respondents described the role the community should play in owning the project. In most cases, respondents indicated that the community had not yet made such moves. However, there were sporadic reports of community ownership appearing in three communities in Koinadugu, Port Loko, and Kenema. In the case of Koinadugu, this was surprising to a local government official:

*“The unexpected change that happened was like when they took a quick leadership role on the activities, we didn’t expect it to have happened so. When you look at how we started we were not expecting it to be so easily. But presently before we go to the community as soon as we say chief we have come oh he will go right round the community and inform the people if we are going to have a meeting. So he claims ownership over the project. Even when we say chief we may work in your community in the second cohort oh he will say please don’t take such a decision our girls need your supports. So we have observed that the community is willing to take up ownership of the project, and we were not expecting such kind of thing to happened so easily.” (Local official, Koinadugu)*

Also, as described in the first sub-section in this Sustainability section, girls clubs were formed in Koinadugu specifically to help fund businesses to support girls with newly acquired business skills as a result of EAGER.

In the communities in Port Loko and Kenema, beneficiaries mentioned the communities’ own mobilisation to form girls’ clubs to contributing toward maintaining certain structures to support girls beyond EAGER:

*“Yes, it will last because, the chiefs and youth leaders are ready to take steps so that the EAGER project will last. Yes we have girls’ clubs that works in the interest of girls.”*  
(Mentor, Port Loko)

*“Me and the community people will continue to work on the Girls’ Club for lasting changes.” (Girls FGD, Kenema)*

### **Institutionalisation of sociocultural shifts in attitude and practices around girls’ rights**

The degree to which the important sociocultural shifts observed as a result of EAGER (articulated in the Impact section, above) will endure is, at midterm, understandably difficult to assess. EAGER leadership points out, too, that communities had not yet begun engaging in the drafting of Community Action Plans at the time of data collection. At the same time, there is positive evidence around institutionalisation of certain positive shifts, particularly in the institutionalisation of by-laws in the community that benefit girls’ education and broader rights.

There were 2 communities in which it was said that new by-laws to support girls had been adopted as a result of EAGER. One district education official in Koinadugu highlighted the role of the Community Dialogues in this when he said:

*“Looking at the structures that we have created in the community so far, like the Community Dialogue which is a key activity... 25 people come together and decided to do something [about setting by-laws for girls], you know that even if we leave those communities those laws will still be effective for the girls. So, change can happen in positive way.” (Koinadugu DEO, KII)*

And a Mentor in Kono pointed toward the mother’s club in particular:

*“I am sure the changes will last. They will last because, the communities have seen the need for some of these changes, they will last because, they have developed laws that will strengthen these changes. For example, they have a law against early marriage, they have the mothers club that is discouraging teenage pregnancy and early marriage. So even if the project ends, they will be able to manage these changes through these laws and the female groups they have formed in the community.” (Kono Mentor, KII)*

### **Beneficiary Girls Sharing Knowledge**

Additional indirect impacts – benefitting more than the girl beneficiaries themselves – were identified that may be leveraged to contribute to enhance structural changes. In some cases, beneficiaries indicated that they had shared skills or knowledge with others in their community outside of the immediate purview of the project.

*“We will also be using that opportunity to teach our friend who have not been part of the EAGER programme some of the things we have learnt.” (Koinadugu Beneficiary, KII)*

*“Even if EAGER ends and my Mentors are not around, I will still be able to meet with other girls in the community. From time to time I will be able to share with them the things that I have learnt from the project even there is no mentor. I will also try to be talking to my friends who are doing bad life to stop.” (Kono Beneficiary, KII)*

*“What I will be doing for them is to advise them so that they will be able to see the benefits that I have gained in the project and I will advise them to copy my steps so that they will not go in the street. Yes from time to time, I will be able to talk to them even if there is no mentor again. I will advise them so that they will be able to be better people in society.” (Kono Beneficiary, KII)*

This was also mentioned by Mentors, Facilitators, local leaders and education officials to be an important asset to leverage for the project’s sustainability

*“In fact, even those ones [girls in EAGER] are serving as ambassadors for other vulnerable children. Some of the communities we visit to see a child being bold to talk about issues affecting them is difficult to see.” (Koinadugu Local government Official, KII)*

*“We are telling them to be role model to girls who were not fortunate to be part of the EAGER project and those who are part of the programme we are really seeing changes in them.” (Port Loko Facilitator, KII)*

Maximising on these potentials may be critical in helping to sustain gains not just with girls themselves (who will have the opportunity to keep their skills fresh by teaching them), but also to others who stand to benefit from those gains beyond the life of EAGER.

### ***Leveraging additional interest and investment***

At the community level, as explained above, movement toward leveraging additional interest and investment in order to try to sustain project gains has been limited. At the system-level, EAGER leadership indicated there have been challenges leveraging additional interest and investment from government to help sustain the project. The lack of participation in the evaluation from central level officials also brings into question the government's buy-in to the EAGER project. As indicated above, the project has encountered challenges in this regard, though the government has shown some interest. EAGER leadership accentuated that it continues to work on government engagement with FCDO.

## Value for Money Analysis

This Value for Money (VfM) analysis prioritises beneficiaries' voices in contrast to a more traditional top-down approach. This analysis takes inspiration from ActionAid's VfM framework and places stakeholders at the centre of the analysis of change. The chart below synthesises the value that stakeholders perceive for EAGER interventions as well as identified challenges to actualised benefit. This analysis complements the conclusions and recommendations for the larger report.

Criteria and Area of analysis	Identified Value	Identified Challenges
<p><b>Relevancy:</b> How the project is designed to improve beneficiaries' lives (girls, Mentors) and stakeholders (Caregivers, partners, community members) perceptions of that improvement (specifically, do they see the value in EAGER's outcomes?)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project design takes into account baseline values and needs of beneficiaries, Mentors and other stakeholders</li> <li>• Project has redefined beneficiaries to include Mentors</li> <li>• Project uses innovative methods to support holistic approach: Community Dialogues, mothers' groups, recruitment of Mentors and Facilitators from communities in order to ensure proximity to beneficiaries, etc.</li> <li>• Initiated learning clusters to support Mentors; hired separate Financial Literacy Facilitators</li> <li>• Creative solutions identified to support beneficiaries from various subgroups (example: use of mattresses and pillows, establishment of Access to Learning Fund)</li> <li>• Includes strategies to support beneficiaries with disabilities (training Mentors on psychological first aid, access to learning fund, etc.)</li> <li>• Session schedules adapted to meet needs of learners</li> <li>• Transition approach has been redefined to be more adaptive to the needs of all beneficiaries, not just those few able to craft winning business plans through a competitive process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boys are not currently involved in EAGER programming</li> <li>• Barriers to attendance persist: illness, childcare duties, chore burden, length of programme too long, etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Effectiveness:</b> In what ways is EAGER positively affecting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructional strategies foster positive, learner-centered approach</li> <li>• Beneficiaries apply skills in their lives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistencies in instructor attendance</li> <li>• Additional training needed for a limited number of Mentors and Facilitators</li> </ul>

<p>girls' lives?; The girls' perceived value of the various EAGER activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships with Mentors and Facilitators are generally very positive</li> <li>• Many beneficiaries look up to EAGER Mentors</li> <li>• Increased ability to help their children with their education</li> <li>• Increased abilities to conduct business due to improved Literacy and Numeracy</li> <li>• Improved relationships with their partners and/or caregivers</li> <li>• More knowledge on sanitation issues (menstrual hygiene specifically)</li> <li>• Increased understanding of GBV, and how to report incidents if needed (improved safety of girls in some cases)</li> <li>• Girls have developed friendships/networks with other girls in the programme and Mentors</li> <li>• Mentors apply EAGER lessons in their own lives</li> <li>• Many girls are experiencing support to attend EAGER from their caregivers and/or male partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some Safe Spaces have limitations</li> <li>• Instructional approaches are limited in their inclusion of girls with disabilities, due in part to the project's design that can only accommodate minor disabilities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sustainability:</b> How girls' lives have improved and whether or not it will likely continue to remain that way (or improve further) after they end their participation in EAGER</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girls are adamant that the skills they've gained are essential and life-changing; they'll apply them whenever they can</li> <li>• Creation of by-laws in some communities to institutionalise protecting girls' rights</li> <li>• Many beneficiaries and Mentors have improved in various facets of their learning and confidence</li> <li>• The status of many beneficiaries has improved for many within their communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern among beneficiaries that cash grants will not be provided, will not be adequate, and will only be provided once and therefore seeing fully through the Empowerment Plan beyond EAGER grants is being questioned</li> <li>• Expressions of community ownership of support for girls' learning and empowerment are weak at midterm, with some notable exception; concern that may not continue after project end</li> <li>• Structural changes are limited such that elements of the project (e.g. continued mentorship, provision of instruction) will not extend beyond the beneficiaries themselves and will likely cease with end of EAGER</li> <li>• Unclear of the impact of the programme on changing gender norms to the degree where girls are able to make choices for themselves within their households-- still traditional gender</li> </ul>

		norms expectations (i.e. girls in charge of children and chores, etc.)
<b>Efficiency:</b> Consider the perceived benefits of EAGER by stakeholders in relation to the inputs (account financial, human and in-kind)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beneficiaries experience smooth project implementation in spite of budget uncertainties and modifications</li> <li>• Stable staffing provides consistency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID-19 presents a continuous challenge</li> <li>• Turnover at FCDO-country office has limited their support of the project, likely heightened government engagement (not necessarily palpable at beneficiary-level)</li> </ul>
<b>Impact:</b> Perceived feelings of increased empowerment by beneficiary girls to meet their own goals; perceived impact on Mentors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving/developing Numeracy and Literacy basic skills</li> <li>• Better able to care for their children and younger siblings, as well as themselves</li> <li>• Empower girls in terms of learning, in their households, community and financially - express greater confidence in those domains</li> <li>• Community supporting girls' participation in the project (development of by-laws, serving as reporting mechanisms, some indications of reduced early marriage and GBV)</li> <li>• Adapted sessions to fit better with girls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community stakeholders share different views of gender norms; many remain entrenched in more traditional norms that constrain women and girls and contradict the EAGER curriculum</li> <li>• Reports of improved behavior and values taught sometimes reflect gender exploitative tendencies</li> </ul>

## 6. Conclusions

1. EAGER's project design is highly relevant and aligned to GoSL priorities, particularly the National Policy on Radical Inclusion in Schools and the MBSSE COVID-19 Response Plan, as well as others. Nonetheless, there seems to be a missed opportunity to clearly delineate and leverage these synergies in order to foster buy-in from the GoSL (MBSSE & MSWGCA) and improve opportunities for sustainability. The FCDO country office will need to be invested and actively contributing to developing a stronger relationship with the GoSL.
2. EAGER has demonstrated great care and attention in trying to understand beneficiaries' needs in order to address many of the barriers that would likely hamper their ability to take part in EAGER. Based on baseline findings as well as other project research, EAGER has enacted critical project adaptations to better meet the needs of beneficiaries.
3. COVID-19 and the FCDO restructuring presented formidable obstacles to EAGER. Evidence shows that the project efficiently mediated budgetary uncertainty and revision with very little perceptible impact to beneficiaries. Mitigation efforts for COVID-19 continue.
4. COVID-19 presented a forced opportunity for the project to streamline its intervention package and the project still has produced meaningful outcomes in a leaner form at midterm for a good portion of beneficiaries.
5. The majority of EAGER beneficiaries have improved their learning outcomes since baseline, and average scores exceed the targets proposed at the baseline evaluation. However, some beneficiaries have not yet been able to master key skills, including writing their name and basic Numeracy tasks, and are falling further behind their peers. In both Literacy and Numeracy, one-sixth of beneficiaries both scored below average at midterm and achieved less than one-fifth of the average improvement in their score. Those in this group are often their own caregivers, girls who are pregnant and girls with disabilities, and in certain districts, including WAU and Koinadugu. Additional attention is needed to EAGER's approach in order to meet the needs of these more challenging cases if EAGER should succeed in meeting the needs of the most marginalised girls.
6. Evidence shows that improvements to Life Skills are less consistent than Numeracy and Literacy improvements and it is possible that this reflects both the range of capacities possessed by project Mentors and the content of the Life Skills curriculum that challenges gender norms and traditions. Learning clusters are well-received by Mentors and provide a support network. EAGER should reinforce formative assessment and coaching efforts for Mentors to identify and reinforce the skills of Mentors who are the weakest.
7. Project stakeholders speak of the transition period with excitement and reflect on the multiple pathways that girls may take, on their own terms, as a result of their participation in EAGER. However, this period will be important to track closely in order to further understand the impact of EAGER's innovative conceptualisation of transition as empowerment. The results will also be partly reflective of a rapidly changing context and often challenging contextual factors.
8. The provision of EAGER grants for girls is an essential component of their transition. However, there is already evidence that some stakeholders hold incorrect expectations of financial or in-kind EAGER offerings that do not align with EAGER's plans. Management of

expectations will be critical so as not to derail Cohort 1's progress and plans, and also so that Cohort 2 begins the programme with accurate information.

9. EAGER acknowledges the complexity of the environment in which it operates, while also recognising the importance of a gender transformative approach. Findings demonstrate that some beneficiaries have reached a place of mutual empowerment with their partners and that some communities are making strides to recognise and combat GBV as well as to champion girls' education. More often however, beneficiaries seem to be applying assertive communication strategies alongside a renewed sense of purpose and confidence to their roles within the home. They report improved relationships with caregivers and partners, less turbulence and greater appreciation for household management. However, for many beneficiaries, these outcomes primarily enable them to more effectively manage their lives within inequitable gender roles, without transforming culturally entrenched gender norms. Recognising the challenging environment and the long-term process required to achieve changes in normative behaviours, EAGER should consider intensifying discussions about gender norms amongst its staff and incentivised workers (District Officers, Facilitators and Mentors, in particular) and strengthen community engagement efforts in order to increase momentum towards a transformative stance from gender accommodation.
10. There remains concern among stakeholders that boys are being unfairly left out of any EAGER benefits. To be truly transformative and conform to do no harm principles, EAGER would ideally be engaging boys more formally in programming. Various factors, including pressures to meet targets, resource constraints versus project learnings and required adaptations, and COVID-19 delays prevented EAGER from implementing activities with boys as originally planned. EAGER should strongly consider creative ways to involve boys more formally for Cohort 2 as findings suggest that not addressing boys through activities may put at risk beneficiaries' achievements in some communities.
11. The project has resulted in girls', Mentors' and other stakeholders' perception that young women within the community participating in EAGER programming have undergone profound changes in terms of the skills and knowledge gained, as well as their confidence in the home and the larger community. This knowledge, and associated behavioural changes, it is widely agreed, will be maintained and have a positive and long-lasting impact on their lives.
12. Community Dialogues have shown some signs of contributing toward sustainability, particularly in terms of institutionalisation of girl-benefiting community by-laws. At the project level, there have been challenges leveraging additional interest and investment from government to help sustain the project. However, there is little to no evidence that there have been structural changes as a result of the project activities. Quite the opposite, there are frequent and cross-district indications of reliance on the project's offerings to continue, versus indications of community or government ownership.

## 7. Recommendations

The following recommendations flow from the findings and conclusions above. Recommendations may be applicable to Cohort 1 and/or 2. The chart below indicates the suggested actor or actors to be responsible for the recommendation as well as the appropriate timeframe for its implementation. The final column at right leaves space for the project response.

#	Recommendation	Actor to Address	Timing/Priority	Project Response
1	<p>Develop a government engagement plan with support from the FCDO country office. Opportunities for engagement might include review of EAGER curriculum documents and discussions of synergy with other non-formal education modules, as well as the establishment of a consortium of development partners working with out-of-school girls.</p> <p>At the local level, encourage the attendance of project staff at regular meeting, if invitation is open.</p>	CCU Government, Fund Manager	Immediate	<p>The CCU engaged the FCDO country office to implement all these measures since earlier this year. The project will continue to work closely with FCDO to strategise about the most effective approach to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Foster greater and more efficient coordination of actors operating not only in the non-formal education sector, but also targeting girls.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Explore how this could be mainstreamed in the existing Education Development Partners (EDP) group to enable greater buy in and support from the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education.</li> <li>b. Explore how greater coordination with the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs can also be achieved, while recognising structural challenges that are internal to the Government of Sierra Leone.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Leverage momentum about the Midterm report through the development and implementation of a Learning, Dissemination and Advocacy strategy which will, among others, target key line ministries. This will be an important platform to advocate for 1) the need to more integrated research and approaches to tackle social marginalisation in Sierra Leone, and 2) provide evidence of what interventions may be effective to help make progress towards this goal.</li> </ol>

2	Strengthen formative assessment tools and process for Literacy and Numeracy so that it is easier to track individual progress. As needed, provide support to Facilitators to bolster instruction.	CCU	Prior to roll out of Cohort 2	<p>The project has had regular communication with FCDO to explore ways to strengthen formative assessment tools and processes, whilst being mindful of the partner capacity to collect detailed data for each adolescent girl in the program. Going forward into Cohort 2, the project has explored several ways to do this with an increased cohort, going from approximately 7,500 girls, to 20,000. The project can improve monitoring at the community level through both informal and formal monitoring mechanisms dependent on the session content. For BLN and FL sessions, quantifying the number of girls who responded to a question correctly by a show of hands (as done in Cohort 1) is an easy mechanism to capture and track girls performance at the group level. However, for Life Skills, due to the more conceptual content (i.e. questions with more than one answer, and more nuances than a “yes” or “no” answer), the project will have to find more informal monitoring mechanisms to monitor 20,000 girls’ individual progress.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Formal Mechanisms: ensure checks at the Safe Space Group level per a 6 or 7 sessions. Checks for BLN will be done by counting the number of correct and incorrect answers within a group. This does not track progress per girls, but per group. For Life Skills, due to the aforementioned means to track progress, learning checks will look at group responses to questions to measure progress. Formal monitoring mechanisms will be feeding back into targeted improvements for the mentor or Facilitator, to improve how they understand the content and conduct the session.</li> <li>2. Informal Mechanisms: ensure that gaps identified during formal monitoring are followed up on. For example, during the learning checks, the volunteer (Facilitator, Mentor) or the Officer may notice that a certain girl/ group of girls may be struggling more than others, or consistently reporting incorrect answers without this</li> </ol>
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				bringing down the group average response (captured in formal monitoring mechanisms). This will encourage the Officer to follow up with the volunteer on how they can support the girl both inside and outside the safe space to better-participate and access learning. This will also be triangulated with formal monitoring of volunteer teaching through session observations done twice per quarter.
3	Develop a plan specifically focused on subgroups demonstrating greatest need in terms of learning outcomes: girls who are heads of household, girls with disabilities and girls who are pregnant. Consider developing a “ <i>pad</i> ” system with graduates from Cohort 1 to help motivate and support Cohort 2 learners.	CCU, project partners	Immediate	<p>The project has been working in several areas to strengthen inclusion and inclusive practices across the different project areas, with a particular focus on girls with disabilities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. During the mapping and enrollment process for Cohort 2, there has been a stronger emphasis on finding and registering girls with disabilities. Partners anticipate that they will be able to more successfully locate these girls in communities where Cohort 1 has already taken place because the community now knows and trusts the project implementing partners and caregivers of girls with disabilities may be more likely to come forward. Furthermore, Mentors and Facilitators in these communities will be supporting the mapping and enrollment this time (they were not recruited by the time Cohort 1 mapping took place) and are more likely to know girls with disabilities in their community.</li> <li>2. New trainings developed for Cohort 2 incorporate modules on Disabilities and Inclusive Practices to ensure that all Officers, Mentors, and Facilitators understand the importance of inclusive facilitation alongside practical strategies to support girls with different types of disabilities. This must be understood within the project constraints which do not have provisions for specialty trainings for staff and volunteers or material support for adapted learning materials. EAGER is in the process of</li> </ol>

				<p>developing a more comprehensive Disability Strategy that will outline key concepts, approaches, and areas where staff and volunteers can support girls with disabilities.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Teams will also revisit the Access to Learning fund before the start of Cohort 2 to identify any areas where this may need to be strengthened to support practical and realistic solutions that can be taken by project teams to support those girls with disabilities who have been enrolled in Cohort 2. Whilst some girls with disabilities will likely not be able to reach the desired targets for learning outcomes based on the project's lack of resources to specifically meet all of their needs, the overall consensus is that they should be included and supported as much as possible and that by being part of the group, these girls will greatly benefit from simply belonging to a group, developing friendship networks, having a specific EAGER padi(s) within the group, having a Safe Space to go to, connecting with Mentors and Facilitators, and experiencing respect from their peers and other adults.</li> <li>4. The project is encouraging Cohort 1 girls to start their own girls clubs, and can explore with the consortium whether the recommendation to create a system of padis between cohorts is feasible.</li> </ol>
4	Reinforce the goal of developing structural and systemic changes as part of community action plans that may help to a) maintain the gains made by EAGER thus far (e.g. working toward funding their businesses; creating venues for continued dialogue with their peers and former Mentors); b) continue	EAGER Partners, project officers in communities, mentors	Immediate	EAGER partners are already working with each Cohort 1 community to review their action plans and progress made to date. A template for a Community Action Plan has been developed to streamline the process for project teams to work with community leaders and girls to identify one action point that is important to everyone and requires some funding to act on. A small amount of money has been set aside to support each community's initiative, and partners will follow up to ensure that this funded action is implemented. The project has not specified

	elements of EAGER such that more girls may stand to benefit in future (working toward funding resources for Mentors to continue work in Safe Spaces; empowering former beneficiaries to work Mentors, etc.)			which type of action this must be, as it is up to each individual community to determine what is most needed by listening to the voices and wishes of girls. The consortium is currently exploring strategies for exiting communities where there are not enough adolescent girls to run a second cohort, and will learn through this pilot process what the most effective strategies will be for the full closeout of the project in January 2023.
5	Strategise and formalise component of empowering girls as role models (multipliers) with specific task of spreading knowledge to others beyond EAGER.	CCU, project partners	Immediate (Cohort 1) - Revised plan at end of phase 1 sessions (Cohort 2)	<p>The EAGER CCU has shared simple guidelines to communicate with Cohort 1 girls about starting a Girls Club. This must be the girls' own initiative, as Mentors will not have time to support them directly and it is the perfect opportunity for girls to practice their organising and leadership skills. In the guidelines, several ideas are provided for what kinds of activities girls might want to do in a Girls Club, including: play together, continue learning together, support each other with their Empowerment Plans, work on a collective project or business idea, and/or engage with the community. The last point of engagement includes several ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Participate in community projects or activities</li> <li>▪ Encourage community leaders to celebrate important global days, especially International Day of the Girl (Oct 11) and International Women's Day (Mar 8)</li> <li>▪ Create dramas, songs, dances for community events</li> <li>▪ Turn the Bintu stories into dramas to teach other girls</li> <li>▪ Girls Club leaders can attend community meetings to raise girls' needs and concerns</li> <li>▪ Support community leaders to implement their Action Plans</li> <li>▪ Participate in activities that will increase girls' safety and wellbeing</li> </ul> <p>The project will use learnings from piloting this component with Cohort 1 communities to confirm, revise or adapt the approach for Cohort 2. This will be done by March 2022.</p>
6	In addition to the empowerment package provided during the transition phase, the project should	EAGER Partners	Immediate (Cohort 1) - Revised plan at	Please see response to #5 above. A Girls Club Guidelines document has already been circulated and Mentors will use this to discuss the ideas of a Girls Club with the girls from Cohort 1.

	work with beneficiaries to develop an action plan for EAGER girls clubs. Specifically, emphasis should be placed on how beneficiaries can organise themselves in order to stay in touch and keep their supportive network as they move into the transition phase. Mentors and Facilitators should come together to help review and strengthen the action plan. This would include clear indications of how they will or will not be involved with the girls in the future so that expectations can be clear for the beneficiaries.		end of phase 1 sessions (Cohort 2)	<p>It clearly explains to girls that Mentors will not run the clubs, but that the girls themselves would be in charge. There are ideas included for how they might want to choose leaders and organise themselves, and what they might want to do. As the idea is to empower the girls to decide what they want to do, we feel a standardised Action Plan template would push girls to fit their ideas into our mold.</p> <p>The project will use learnings from piloting this component with Cohort 1 communities to confirm, revise or adapt the approach for Cohort 2. This will be done by March 2022.</p>
7	Support a qualitative study (or hold a series of listening sessions) to better understand how EAGER volunteers and district-level staff understand “disability.” Use the findings to help foster discussion amongst colleagues and reinforce training.	CCU/MEAL & Research Coordinator	Before or early in Cohort 2 implementation	A conversation along these lines took place during the Training of Trainers (ToT) with Life Skills Officers for the roll out of EAGER Cohort 2 in October 2021, and will be used to foster and guide further discussion. Learnings will be used to inform the development of the Disability Strategy and to inform all aspects of EAGER programming. Future trainings and learning clusters will reinforce these discussions and continue to build staff and volunteer awareness of inclusive practices, respect rather than pity, and strengthening respect, acceptance, and kindness amongst the girls themselves.
8	Reinforce training and coaching of Mentors to identify those who have weaker capacity and provide additional support.	CCU, project partners	Before launch of Cohort 2	Following the 1-week training on Life Skills, Mentors will continue to be brought together for monthly Learning Clusters. These will be more structured and strategic for Cohort 2 to purposefully target areas that were identified as requiring further support during Cohort 1. These will be used to continue building the capacity of all Mentors, but especially the weaker ones. Regular session observation and coaching will also continue throughout implementation of the learning programme. Monitoring tools, as

				specified above, will be focusing on mentor capacity and improvement through both the sessions observations, and feedback from the girls' learning check ins.
9	Closely follow and provide support to beneficiaries as they navigate the transition phase. Regular check-ins should take place both with beneficiaries as well as with Mentors to be sure that support is appropriate. Initiate monitoring mechanism to document evolution, successes and challenges encountered.	CCU/MEAL & Research Coordinator	End of regular sessions Cohort 1	Two check-in points are planned during the transition period, and Mentors will be coached and supported by Life Skills Officers to follow up with every girl from Cohort 1 during these check-ins to see what progress she is making towards her four goals. Dedicated tools and guidance for these monitoring mechanisms were developed in July 2021. Mentors will be trained and supported to use the Check-in Tool, which clearly outlines how to document whether the girls is making progress towards her goals or not. Data from these tools will be collated and analysed at CCU level to determine any red flags that may require programmatic changes. Additional guidance on implementing these monitoring checks for Cohort 1 girls will also be provided.
10	EAGER should be encouraged to consider ways to help beneficiaries to continue to access information about family planning as beneficiaries move into the transition phase.	EAGER partners, project staff at community level	End of regular sessions Cohort 1	The EAGER CCU is aware of the multiple barriers that girls face in terms of accessing and using contraception. Based on recommendations from LBS Officers and District Supervisors, the team is currently exploring multiple strategies for strengthening girls' access to contraception. This includes fostering stronger linkages with Marie Stopes Sierra Leone as the primary mobile service that visits communities on a rotating schedule to increase access to contraceptive services. By sharing EAGER operational areas and understanding their distribution schedule, the project may be able to advocate for visits to EAGER communities and to communicate this schedule with Mentors and girls via LBS Officers. As confidentiality within health facilities is also a key barrier to girls accessing contraceptive services, EAGER will also explore possibilities for creating an intentional conversation with health staff in the local facilities and developing an MOU around confidentiality. Advocacy efforts through the FCDO-funded Saving Lives consortium, which is also led by IRC in Sierra Leone, have ensured that recommendations for policy changes related to the confidentiality in the provision of family planning were put

				<p>forward to the Ministry of Health. Recommendations included clear policies on confidentiality and specific training for service providers on confidentiality and ethics. The project will continue to explore channels for direct action and advocacy to support girls' access to family planning as a vital aspect of their empowerment.</p> <p>BBC Media Action will be running a series of Radio Dramas that touch on family planning and contraception. The Radio Drama series are accessible to those who have access to the radio, and whilst this may not directly be EAGER beneficiaries, information in the radio programme will encourage community understanding of conception, and improving girls' access to it.</p> <p>To support efforts in the direction of continuous access to services, EAGER will proceed to update the service mapping that was carried out prior to the roll-out of Cohort 1 and disseminate this to Mentors in existing and new communities were Cohort 2 will be implemented.</p>
11	<p>Clarify message of financial support and empowerment package that will be provided to beneficiaries to support the transition phase. Ensure that message is clear at the various levels of EAGER implementation as well as with community stakeholders (notably male partners and community leaders). Ensure that messaging for Cohort 2 is clear from the start.</p>	CCU, Project partners	<p>Immediate - Cohort 1; Launch of Cohort 2 - Cohort 2</p>	<p>Key messages were put together to communicate to girls the exact cash amount they would be receiving – and was shared across all communities well before the start of the Financial Literacy sessions. Some girls may have missed this, others may simply have been continuing to express their disappointment about the amount being less than what they hoped. Up until that point, EAGER never formally mentioned any figure for the cash amount that was to be distributed. Perhaps there were rumours, but as the project did not have a clear budget until recently, it was not possible to promise any specific amount to girls earlier than we did. Challenges with getting approvals of programme adaptations and related budget for several months in the current year – due to the uncertainty of the FCDO funding situation – have documented the additional constraints that the project had to manage.</p>

				<p>This will be much easier to communicate to Cohort 2 girls from the beginning, and is already included in some of the communication documents. The project had slightly increased the amount for the cash grant in the budget revision conducted in 2021 for Cohort 2. This is to ensure funds are secured should the project need to adapt based on learnings on Transition from Cohort 1 as well as any other potential budget shock in the future.</p>
12	<p>Clarify project's gender stance among EAGER leadership, and develop a communication or training plan to clarify it to Facilitators and Mentors. Consider incorporating African feminism more directly into the curriculum. Next, be sure that the gender stance is also clearly articulated and communicated as part of community dialogues and other project messaging.</p>	<p>CCU, Project Partners, Project Staff at Community Level</p>	<p>Launch of Cohort 2 - Cohort 2</p>	<p>EAGER's gender and empowerment stance and programme materials are built from the IRC's Girl Shine programme model and resources and the work and approaches of Raising Voices, a leading feminist NGO from Uganda. Girl Shine was developed through extensive piloting, research, and responsive adaptations in Liberia, Ethiopia, and DRC, alongside Pakistan and Lebanon. The approaches have led to positive impacts for girls and communities across sub-Saharan Africa and are currently open source and being used by diverse organisations including the Batonga Foundation in Benin. The adaptations in EAGER are primarily related to the low Literacy levels of girls and M(for example, using singing as a memory tool), limited material resources for activities within the Safe Spaces, and some added topics based on contextual risks. The project has drawn on the extensive work that Raising Voices has done in rural communities to engage people in conversations about power. Their materials approach gender inequality and GBV conversations within the power analysis framework of power within, power to act, and power with others, versus power over others, and they have effectively used posters to invite community members into these conversations. EAGER built on this approach to design the Community Dialogues and invite community members into constructive guided conversation rather than criticising or telling them what they should do differently. EAGER field teams have regularly commented that taking a positive approach in these dialogues has invited community leaders into the conversation and created fruitful discussions rather than immediately raising their defenses.</p>

				<p>The project is rights-based and built on the foundation of 10 core principles that outline the rights of adolescent girls in relation to the project and staff and volunteer attitudes, beliefs, and practices. These have been and will continue to be reinforced through trainings and learning clusters to bring staff and volunteers into greater alignment with the principles and foster more supportive attitudes and beliefs. All project staff and volunteers have been trained on GBV Basic concepts including gender and sex, gender norms, root causes of GBV, and GBV causes and consequences. Project Officers have received additional training on these topics in the Community Dialogues training, and this will be further reinforced through the refresher training in November 2021. The project will continue to reflect on how best we can work to strengthen the programme team's understanding around gender, gender norms, and gender equity as a key aspect of our accountability and commitment to girls' empowerment.</p> <p>In alignment with the African Feminist Charter, the project will continue working to: strengthen solidarity and mutual respect between girls and women across perceived difference (eg. age, education level, and different abilities); highlight the value of non-violence and the possibility of non-violent societies; and work with girls not as the objects of our work but as the agents in their own lives and communities. The project will remain open to listening, learning, adapting, and incorporating creative and responsive strategies to strengthen these areas so that girls can pursue their goals free from patriarchal oppression, discrimination, and violence.</p>
13	Articulate a sustainability plan specific to EAGER that investigates possible structural and systemic changes in addition to improvement in soft skills.	CCU, Project Partners,	Prior to launch of Cohort 2	The project had already initiated discussions about developing a Sustainability Plan back in February 2021. However, the uncertainty about the project future capacity, largely due to the lengthy revision and approval of project budget following the FY21 budget cuts, made it challenging to envision this plan. The project

				agreed with the Fund Manager that this would be resumed as soon as possible, after a clear picture of project funds and adjustments was gained. The EAGER consortium will be reinitiating conversations now that an up-to-date budget and programme timeline are available. This won't be possible before the launch of Cohort 2, as it will rely on how some of the project components for Cohort 1 will perform. These are occurring at the same time as the kick start of Cohort 2.
14	Reflect creatively and act to more prominently include boys within EAGER initiatives, such as Community Dialogues in order to foster changes in gender norms and allies for beneficiaries. The project might consider break-out groups for boys specifically during or after Community Dialogues with incentives (very light refreshments, etc.) for them to participate.	CCU, Project Partners,	Prior to or soon after launch of Cohort 2	<p>The project is mindful this is important and requires action, but it is equally cognizant of how much more the project team can uptake, and the risks of doing more harm. Learnings about project volunteers' capabilities, as well as staff and organisational capacity to deliver an already rich package of interventions to a much larger cohort after Cohort 1, were gathered prior to the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic. These learnings had already informed the request for programme adaptations in September 2019. Such adaptations included the need to put on hold a dedicated learning programme for boys as it was set out in the original proposal, due to the lack of capacity of volunteers and staff to deliver this alongside many new approaches at the same time. Unfortunately, Covid-19 started shortly afterwards, and caused major disruptions to the project timeline and capacity, including further limiting time and bandwidth to implement a dedicated interventions for boys. In the effort to integrate boys into programming within the existing challenges, EAGER is currently working out its strategy to incorporate older boys/young men, including partners, in the next round of Community Dialogues</p> <p>BBC Media Action's work to develop a radio drama series to explore some of the most sensitive topics relating to sexual and reproductive health and GBV will consider boys and partners amongst the primary audience and will use storytelling and role modeling positive behaviours as a strategy for challenging harmful gender norms and encouraging boys to step up as allies</p>

				to girls. The EAGER project team will continue to explore other possible strategies for engaging with adolescent boys and husbands/partners to foster the supportive attitudes and behaviours that will benefit and empower the adolescent girls in their lives.
15	Investigate ways to include boys' voices from less supportive communities for the endline evaluation that still maintains adherence to do no harm principles. For example, IMC suggests holding 1-2 KIIs with boys from each of the 10 districts (1 community per district) to capture more diverse opinions while still adhering to the do no harm principles.	CCU/MEAL & Research Coordinator	Endline evaluation	In lieu to the project response to greater inclusion of boys in the project, by incorporating older boys/ men, including partners, into the next round of Community Dialogues will be a good mechanism to assess the means to include boys' voices in adherence with do no harm mechanisms. This will be an ongoing dialogue between the CCU and IMC (EE) in the coming months as preparation for the endline begins.
16	Revise Intermediate Outcome indicator 5B to better reflect the project's current plans and realistic expectations for government collaboration.	CCU/MEAL & Research Coordinator	Immediate	
17	Clarify how improvement is defined in learning targets and whether outcomes are to be measured as a percent of beneficiaries or average scores.	CCU, MEAL & Research Coordinator	Next EAGER Leadership meeting	The project, led by CCU, is currently reviewing the logframe, as a transition from the MTRP. This process is clarifying how improvement is defined, with particular focus on learning targets and the measurement of outcomes.
18	Provide certificates to Facilitators and Mentors that attest to training received (include both formal sessions and continuous professional development)	EAGER partners	Prior to launch of Cohort 2	The project had already integrated certificates for EAGER Facilitators and Mentors in the budget revisions that was conducted in July-August 2021.

## 8. Project Response

The project welcomes the recommendations provided by the external evaluator (EE) for project improvements across many multi-faceted areas of the EAGER project.

EAGER recognises the importance of improved engagement with the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) at all levels (national, district, and council level) to reach project goals and enhances sustainability of results. However, the project also acknowledges that the challenges encountered so far in the project lifetime are to some extent structural to the national GoSL coordination mechanisms (internally, and with development partners). These also speak to internal difficulties in creating windows for strategic collaboration among key Ministries, which could maximise opportunities to elevate and leverage inputs from development partners. Support from key donor institutions, primarily the FCDO in Sierra Leone, are also instrumental to amplify the influence that EAGER can exercise in the public arena, namely to inform policy dialogue and practices about addressing social marginalisation of women and girls. EAGER proactively initiated consultations with the FCDO in Sierra Leone during the challenging times for the office in 2020, and is committed to pursue a fruitful collaboration in this respect. EAGER is also working towards elevating the profile of the programme with influential stakeholders within GoSL line Ministries through a variety of strategies, first and foremost through the purposeful dissemination and use of evidence-based learnings that can inform the implementation of the Radical Inclusion Policy in Sierra Leone. The project is designing plans and strategies to achieve this at the time of this report and hopes to see evidence of these steps in the upcoming endline and post-endline assessment. Further, EAGER initiated conversations with the Fund Manager about a Sustainability Plan in early 2021, but uncertainly about the project capacity in light of the UK Government ODA budget cut for the fiscal year 2020/2021 and the lengthy programme revision that followed hampered a smooth completion of the Plan. The project aims at re-igniting this exercise soon after the finalising of this report.

The project welcomes recommendations for improvements to monitoring and assessment processes. Identifying the best approach to measure girls' learning and progress within the project capacity is an ongoing conversation and EAGER is committing to explore this can be most effectively achieved whilst also managing the increase in monitoring requirements for the second cohort of girls that is due to kick start in January 2022. This cohort sees an increase in beneficiaries from 7,500 to 20,000, and recognises the challenges of additional monitoring requirements on top of an already substantial monitoring system to maintain quality. The project will continue to explore what may be possible with the Fund Manager in this respect. Alongside these discussions, the EAGER consortium also reviewed the logframe following the end of the MTRP, and considered ways to best capture how improvement is defined, through learning targets, as well as how the outcome is measured.

Inclusion is a key element of the EAGER project, and the project is pleased to see the EE's engagement with this component. The project is committed to ensuring that subgroups demonstrating the greatest need in terms of Learning and Transition are catered for through different dimensions of the programme. This includes recommended focus group discussions to better understand views on disability in the project communities, as well as strengthening Facilitators and Mentors' capacity to support to these groups in the learning sessions. This will be done by building on existing mechanisms, such as training, session observations, coaching and

continuous professional development opportunities (Peer-to-Peer meetings and Learning Clusters). As part of the mapping and set up of the Cohort 2, the project is also working to identify girls with disabilities in enrolment activities and assessing project capacity to support through the proactive promotion and identification of need for the use of the EAGER Access to Learning Fund.

EAGER also recognise the role of the whole community in supporting girls' retention with the project, but also the sustainability of the project aims beyond its timeline. Targeted community engagement is therefore a core aspect of EAGER. To strengthen this, Community Action Plans are being rolled out for communities in Cohort 1 at the time of this report, with consortium partners reviewing the action plans that each community identified as part of the EAGER Community Dialogues, and the assessing progress made to date. The project aims to support each individual community in this plan, particularly in the ones where there will not be a second cohort. The project is mindful of further recommendations that aim to be more inclusive of boys' participation and voices in EAGER programming, with the caveat that all actions must be in line with Do No Harm principle. The project critically assessed the need to target men and boys against the imperative of preserving programme quality, Do No Harm and girls' safety and safeguarding within a timeline and budget allocation that have been severely affected by the changing context, in Sierra Leone and globally. EAGER will be mindful of identifying ways to be more inclusive of men and boys, including partners of girls who are enrolled in the programme, through adaptations of the Community Dialogues model and engagement of caregivers. These adaptations are already ongoing.

Through trainings and ongoing continuous professional development opportunities, the project aims to reinforce existing programming based on the foundation of the 10 core principles for working with adolescent girls. These principles outline the rights of adolescent girls in relation to the project and staff and volunteer attitudes, beliefs and practices. Due to the project timeline however, it must be acknowledged that it won't be possible to monitor changes in deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms and stances beyond a year, as this is not sufficient time to assess changing norms.

Finally, the project welcomes feedback related to strengthening programming which directly affects the girls, the key beneficiaries of EAGER. The project is confident in evaluation, monitoring and research evidence showing girls becoming role models within their community. In this framework, EAGER supported the girl-led initiative to create girls clubs, which will contribute to consolidate the concept of girls as role models, for their peers and other people in their communities. Girl-led initiatives and girls' (proactive and reactive) feedback have been core to the project roll-out, and EAGER will continue to support girls in Cohort 2 through improving transition processes through lessons learned from Cohort 1, most poignantly ensuring that messages related to financial support are clear and manage beneficiary expectation. This has already been implemented through the initial messaging to girls currently being enrolled in Cohort 2 at the point of this report publishing.

The project initiated approaches that arguably respond already to some of the key midterm findings, and will leverage these to further refine and adapt interventions for the second cohort of girls enrolled in the project.

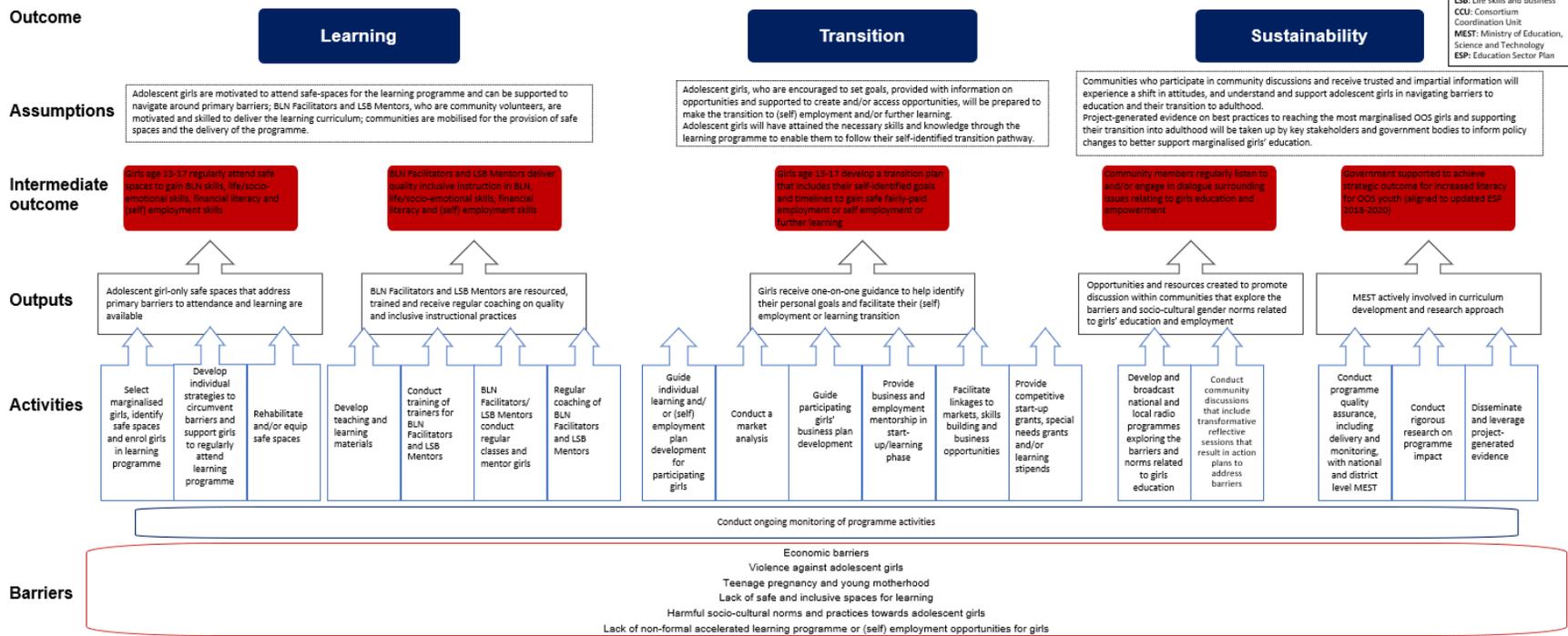
# 9. Annexes

## Annex 1: Project Design and Interventions

Figure 13: Theory of Change

**Marginalised girls have significantly improved learning outcomes and have transitioned to education, training, or employment.**

**Acronym guide:**  
 OOS: Out-of-school  
 BLN: Basic literacy and numeracy  
 LSB: Life skills and business  
 CCU: Consortium Coordination Unit  
 MEST: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology  
 ESP: Education Sector Plan



## Topline analysis of EAGER's TOC

Review of EAGER's Theory of Change (TOC) concludes that the TOC shared with the external evaluating team is out of date and does not reflect significant changes to the project approach nor the operating environment. The lack of a clear rubric for assumptions also seems to complicate the articulation of pathways. Although the TOC elements relative to the learning outcome remain largely correct, the transition and sustainability elements need substantial revisiting. In some cases, like for transition, the TOC needs to be updated to reflect current project activities. For sustainability, the review needs to be fundamentally deeper to take into account unforeseen barriers to collaboration with government.

### Learning

Activities related to learning still hold true – EAGER offers a holistic and extensive approach to its beneficiaries. The reliance upon Mentors, in particular, to help develop a tailored approach to meet beneficiaries' needs is a critical element in the approach. Although baseline findings found Mentors' skills to be lacking, EAGER's adjustments to the curriculum and learning cluster approach seems to support Mentors and help them to deliver services as prescribed in the TOC.

Midterm findings demonstrate that instructional practices are largely effective and rely upon a learner-centered approach, a culturally grounded curriculum and high relevancy to beneficiaries' lives. Midterm learning assessment results indicate remarkable improvement, surpassing targets by around five times for Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills with more modest gains for Financial Literacy. LBS Mentors and BLN Facilitators sampled at midterm also spoke highly of EAGER's coaching strategies, suggesting that they are supportive and effective for them to be able to provide adequate instruction. Findings do suggest that project Mentors may need additional support for Life Skills delivery, however, and that both sets of instructors demonstrate inconsistencies in delivery of inclusive methods.

We do see that the age of girls is broader than mentioned in the TOC. According to the TOC, girls and young women enter the project from ages 13 to 17. At baseline, beneficiaries in the sample ranged from 11 to 19. At midterm, it is reasonable for beneficiaries to be ages 13-19: 2.5 percent of the sample is outside of that range. One beneficiary reported being 9 years old, 6 beneficiaries interviewed claimed to be 11, and 19 reported being 22 or older. At baseline, project leadership explained that the sampling frame for girls within each community often needed to be broadened in order to reach the requisite number of girls for programming (20 girls). In addition, many people do not know their exact age in Sierra Leone. Apart from the one beneficiary who estimated that they were 9 years old, the beneficiaries' age ranges seem reasonably well targeted.

### Transition

The transition portion of the TOC does not reflect the project's significant shift to an empowerment approach. The language within the TOC needs to be updated to from goals relevant to "self-employment or learning transition" to goals relevant to the project's four domains of empowerment: individual, learning, household and community. Similarly, activities listed are generally focused on business, start-up grants, etc. and do not align with programmatic changes and revised pathways.

## Sustainability

The timing of the midterm evaluation, which focuses on Cohort 1, allows a slightly premature view of the project's emerging sustainability achievements. As midterm findings show, many beneficiaries and Mentors demonstrate profound changes in terms of their skills and knowledge, and their confidence within the home and the community. There are also some signs of community uptake, largely in support for beneficiaries to attend EAGER sessions, and more structurally, in the institutionalisation of by-laws. Findings indicate that the community-level pathways for sustainability remains on track.

At the government-level (now two ministries), however, the project has encountered more challenges and the pathways to sustainability require revision. Although EAGER is conducting rigorous research and monitoring and evaluation, government involvement is nearly absent at the central level. This may be due in part to COVID-19 response refocusing but seems to indicate that barriers to government collaboration are significantly more substantial than originally conceptualised.

## Barriers

The design of the TOC does not specifically indicate assumptions but rather articulates barriers. This design is limiting as key assumptions are missing about the operating environment. The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light the importance of recognising functioning health systems and operating service structures as imperative to service delivery. Projects and implementation worldwide are confronting this realisation and it is not unique to EAGER. It is nonetheless surprising that the potential for health outbreaks is not listed as one of the barriers given the history of Ebola in Sierra Leone. Another notable barrier concerns adolescent girls with disabilities and the stigma they face as well as recognition of the specific resources and skills necessary to succeed with inclusive programming. At the same time, midterm findings show that the project has addressed all of the barriers currently listed within the TOC, either within the original design or through project modifications.

## Annex 2: Midterm Evaluation Approach and Methodology

### Evaluation questions

In answering the evaluation questions below, the midterm evaluation sought to shed light on how the programme may further adapt and improve interventions for Cohorts 2 and 3. Analysis throughout also paid close attention to subgroup differences including for girls who are heads of household, girls who became pregnant during the programme, mothers, girls with disabilities, residency in rural vs. urban areas, older vs. younger girls, etc. Recommendations provided include precise direction as to possible programmatic changes. Questions with \*\* indicate more relevant areas of interest from FCDO, questions with \*\*\* are areas FCDO will be interested in.

OECD-DAC Criteria	Evaluation Question
<p><b>Relevance:</b> The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent do project objectives and the project design respond to the needs of beneficiaries and other stakeholders? And to the needs of the diverse subgroups served by the project?</li> <li>To what extent do project objectives and project design align with government priorities and policies, notably the MBSSE Radical Inclusion policy and the MBSSE COVID-19 response? **</li> </ul>
<p><b>Effectiveness:</b> The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is working (and is not working) to increase the learning and potential transition of marginalised girls as defined by the project as well as project Mentors?</li> <li>Which factors support and hinder participation in project activities and achievements, at the individual, community and more macro levels?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Efficiency:</b> The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have project interventions made the best use of financial, human and time resources available? Has the project been implemented as planned? Why or why not? **</li> <li>Which internal and external obstacles has the project faced and how has EAGER addressed them? What has been the effect of COVID-19 on project efficiency?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Impact:</b> The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there signs of the emerging impact that the project has had on the learning of marginalised girls, and their plans for transition? How and why was this impact achieved? What individual (including psychometric measures), home and community level characteristics are associated with girls' learning and potential transition outcomes?</li> <li>Are girls feeling increasingly empowered to meet their own goals? What obstacles or challenges do girls still perceive and what could be done to mediate them?</li> <li>Has the project had any unintended consequences for direct and indirect stakeholders?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sustainability:</b> The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue, or are likely to continue.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the likelihood that the project benefits will remain after the intervention? What structural or behavioural potential changes are visible at this midterm point? How successful has the project been in leveraging additional interest and investment? **</li> </ul>

## Evaluation methodology

**Briefly outline the evaluation methodology. Include any changes from the baseline approach.**

- **What is the overall evaluation design? Quasi-experimental, pre-post, mixed-method, qualitative only? Why have these been chosen?**

Like the baseline evaluation, the midterm evaluation adopted a mixed methods approach and convergent design, in which, due to time constraints, quantitative and qualitative data collections occur simultaneously. The breadth of the quantitative approach allowed for a statistically representative sample of programme locations and participants while the qualitative component provided context and depth to the findings of the quantitative impact evaluation, as well as enabled triangulation of findings, thus increasing their validity. There were no changes in terms of design from the baseline to the midterm.

- **How were GESI minimum standards incorporated into the evaluation to allow measurement of changes in gender dynamics and efforts to ensure social inclusion of girls across the range of characteristics, including disability?**

Like the baseline, several evaluation components address gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) standards. Specifically, the sampling approach specifically stratified to include the following vulnerable groups:

- girls with disabilities
- girls who are married
- girls who have children and/or are pregnant
- girls who work outside of the home
- girls who are Head of Household

The evaluation team also utilised the GESI Assessment Tool completed by IRC for EAGER to inform the development of both quantitative and qualitative research tools at the baseline across key stakeholder groups. GESI standards, and the categorisation of GESI accommodating and GESI transformative, in particular, guided data analysis especially related to the sustainability of the project's objectives, per EAGER's logframe to key stakeholder groups. Further, at the midterm the evaluation team focused on incorporating girls that fall into the groups above into the data collection process in order to ensure that the midterm can make recommendation on how to further address gender and inclusion in EAGER programming for future cohorts.

## Data collection process

**In this section, outline the process taken to collect data (both quantitative and qualitative).**

**Provide details on the following areas. Highlight changes since baseline and why they occurred.**

One overarching change from the baseline was the inclusion of a desk review during the midterm evaluation. The desk review informed the analysis for both qualitative and quantitative. The following documents were consulted during the desk review:

Table 35: Documents and materials for desk review

#	File name
1	ActionAid Value_for_money_-_creating_an_alternative.pdf
2	BBC Media Action_EAGER ME Plan_Revised_June2021_final
3	BBC Media Action_EAGER Final Audience Research_PowerPoint Report
4	5-22-2020 EAGER -Project Adaptations Matrix
5	6. MTR_Output Targets and Monitoring Framework_July 2020
6	Logframe_updated April 2020
7	Annex I. EAGER MTR Adapted Timelines_July 2020.xlsx
8	Annex II. EAGER Work Plan_C19 Revised_July 2020.xlsx
9	Annex III. EAGER Risk Matrix_C19 Updated_July 2020.xlsx
10	Annex IV. EAGER C-19 Survey with Girls and Mentors Summary of findings.pdf
11	Annex V. EAGER One-to-one meetings Summary Data.pdf
12	Annex VI. EAGER Baseline Research Policy Brief.pdf
13	IRC Sierra Leone EAGER Factsheet_DRAFT.docx
14	EAGER C19 MTR Plan_Final_July 2020.docx
15	1.2.3 Guidelines for Working Safely with Adolescent Girls_JA.docx
16	Core Principles for Working with Adolescent Girls and Actions.docx
17	December Meeting with Mentors and Facilitators.docx
18	EAGER Access to Learning Fund Guidelines.docx
19	EAGER Actions to Support Marginalised Girls.docx
20	EAGER Communication with Girls_December 2020.docx
21	EAGER Guidance Note on Non-Attendance.docx
22	Discussion Notes_Working with Boys.docx
23	EAGER Life Skills Approach.docx
24	Prioritised Competencies.docx
25	SEL for Eager.docx
26	EAGER LS SS 180319 - DRAFT.docx
27	EAGER LS SS Final Draft.docx
28	DRAFT_EAGER Life Skills Sessions.docx
29	EAGER Life Skills Curriculum - Sessions 1-15.docx
30	EAGER Life Skills Curriculum_1-5 Concern feedback.doc
31	EAGER Life Skills Curriculum_1-5_Restless comments.docx
32	EAGER Life Skills Curriculum_1-15 AEF_JA.docx
33	EAGER Life Skills Curriculum_06.03.20.docx
34	EAGER Life Skills Curriculum.docx

35	EAGER Life Skills Manual 6-10 commentCWW.doc
36	LS revision - Timeline Dec '19 - filled.xls
37	Orientation on Revised Life Skills Curriculum.docx
38	Revised EAGER Life Skills Curriculum Sequencing.docx
39	Trainer Guide_LS Sessions 10-13.docx
40	FINAL Life Skills_1-5.docx
41	FINAL Life Skills_1-5.pdf
42	Trainer Guide_FINAL Life Skills Sessions.docx
43	EAGER Life and Business Skills Mentor Code of Conduct.pdf
44	EAGER Mentor and Facilitator Code of Conduct.docx
45	EAGER MoU_LBS Mentors_revised.docx
46	Sierra Leone Child Rights Act_2007.pdf
47	C-19 EAGER Life Skills Session Feedback Tool - LM_IO2-2.docx
48	C-19 EAGER LBS Officer Feedback_Learning Clusters
49	LM_IO2-2 EAGER Life Skills Session Feedback Tool - Final.docx
50	Mentor Learning Cluster Guidelines.docx
51	Trainings Sub-folder
52	DRAFT EAGER Adolescent Boys Curriculum_06.03.20.docx
53	EAGER Life Skills for Boys - Framing note.docx
54	EAGER Literacy and Numeracy Approach.docx
55	Functional Math Literacy for Youth.docx
56	Guidance notes for Youth Literacy Program_Dec 2018_AR.pdf
57	LNGB Literacy and Numeracy Approach Presentation_revised_03052019.pptx
58	LNGB Partners Presentation_draft revised 03052019.pptx
59	BLN timeline of sessions.xlsx
60	EAGER BLN Lesson Plan Template - Final.docx
61	EAGER Illustration Request Form.docx
62	Writing and Style Guide - EAGER.docx
63	IRC EAGER Literacy Facilitator's Guide - word version.pdf
64	IRC EAGER Numeracy Facilitator's Guide.pdf
65	IRC-SierraLeone-Literacy-190708.pdf
66	IRC-SierraLeone-Numeracy-190711.pdf
67	BLN Theme and session numbers.xlsx
68	LB - Literacy -To Print_compressed.pdf
69	LB - Numeracy -To Print_compressed.pdf
70	Learner Book
71	Literacy FG-Phase II- FINAL.pdf

72	Numeracy FG-Phase II- FINAL.pdf
73	Phase 2 Literacy Audio Sessions
74	Adapted _Learn to Earn Curriculum (1)--2020.docx
75	Business Skills Curriculum Outline V2.docx
76	Improving income through business skills _OVP.pdf
77	Numeracy FG-Phase II- FINAL.docx
78	EAGER Sustainability workshop - key points.docx
79	EAGERGirlsandMentorsSurvey_findingssummary_v3.docx
80	Business Skills- Session Objectives- Updated.xlsx
81	EAGER Empowerment Plan-Bintu's Plan_FINAL.docx
82	EAGER Empowerment Plan-FINAL.docx
83	EAGER Financial Literacy and Transition Training Guide_FINAL.docx
84	EAGER Financial Literacy Facilitators Guide_FINAL.docx
85	EAGER Financial Literacy Workbook and Empowerment Plan_FINAL.docx
86	List Income Generating Activities.xlsx
87	AEWG_Accelerated Education Evidence Review.pdf
88	AWEG M&E Toolkit - ENGLISH.zip
89	IRC SERAIS.pdf
90	Logframe .xlsx
91	EAGER Indicator Matrix_MTRP.xlsx
92	EAGER MTRP C-19 Monitoring Tools Guidance Document_Final_v2_January 20 2021.docx
93	LNGB Cost Analysis Results - Copy.pptx
94	FINAL_EAGER_PFA_1 Page Handout for Mentors.docx
95	FINAL_EAGER_PFA Briefing for Mentors_COVID-19.docx
96	PFA Briefing for Mentors_COVID-19.pptx
97	20-06-03 EAGER Sierra Leone Q7 Quarterly Project Report_final.docx
98	21-03-02 EAGER Q10 Quarterly Report.pdf
99	EAGER Q6 Quarterly Project Report.docx
100	EAGER Q8_Quarterly Project Report_Final.docx
101	EAGER Q9 Quarterly Report_Consolidated_V.Donor.DOCX
102	EAGER Y2 Annual Workplan Progress Review.xlsx
103	EAGER Y2_ Annual Project Report_Final.docx
104	20-09 Strategies to support girls to succeed in their wider world_Webinar CIES.pptx
105	EACDS 261 Output 7 Phase 2 report _Education Development Trust Case Study.docx
106	EAGER Sierra Leone - C19 response.pptx
107	GEC evaluation Final research questions - Teachers and Teaching Research Study v.01.docx

108	GEC Sierra Leone C-19 Response and Learning July 2020 (EAGER+GEC GATES).pptx
109	MBSSE_Policy-E-book-V.1.pdf
110	EAGER C-19 Survey with Girls and Mentors Summary of findings.pdf
111	EAGER One-to-one meetings Summary Data.pdf
112	EAGER Transition Mapping Summary Mar 2021 - Copy.docx
113	EAGER Transition Flowchart.docx
114	EAGER Transition Overview.docx
115	EAGER Transition Timeline.xlsx
116	TransitionM&EFlowchart.docx
117	01. Empowerment Plan Assessment and Sign Off.docx
118	02. Progress Check 1.docx
119	03. Progress Check 2_End of Transition.docx
120	04. EAGER Cash Distribution Exit Interview.docx
121	CashGuidance_ID_ExitInterview.docx
122	EAGER Transition Distribution_Guidance for LBS Officers.docx
123	Mentor Guide_Girls Empowerment Plan_FINAL.docx
124	EAGER Organogram.pdf
125	Organogram CWW - LNGB V5.ppt
126	BBCMA EAGER staff organogram_updated 18 Aug 21
127	RD_LNGB ORG CHART Nov 2019.pptx
128	EAGER Cohort 2 scenarios mini-RAM.pptx
129	EAGER Sierra Leone_Savings Template for RAM Process_FINAL.PPTX
130	EAGER Transition Design mini-RAM_Post MTRP RAM template.pptx
131	EAGER Transition Design mini-RAM.pptx
132	Radical-Inclusion-Policy.pdf
133	Sierra-Leone-COVID19-Education-Response-Plan-PDF.pdf
134	Final EAGER Wave 1 Report_Updated_2021

### Pre data collection (quantitative)

- **How were quantitative sampling frameworks adapted for this evaluation (Please note the sampling framework(s) must be submitted in [Annex 11](#). What was the rationale for the sizes and composition of the quantitative sample?**

The quantitative sample was designed to be conducted on a longitudinal basis (at baseline, midterm and final evaluations), following a single sample of girls as they progress through Cohort 1. The sampled communities were stratified based on geography and randomly selected at baseline. Based on the assessment parameters at the baseline of the full programme, a sample of only 760 beneficiaries was necessary to be able to assess transition and learning outcomes of the programme. However, because there was an interest in ensuring a sufficiently large sample of girls in four marginalised groups used at baseline (girls with disabilities, girls with children, girls

who are married, or working outside the home), the sample was substantially increased. The intended baseline sample included 2,160 respondents, but data from only 2,073 beneficiaries was collected at baseline due to a Lassa Fever outbreak in Tonkolili. This final sample included a generous buffer to assume for a 30 percent attrition rate, and includes plans for replacements.

At midterm, the sample was the same as the original sample at baseline (specifically, 2,160 respondents) and included data collection from the original sampled communities at baseline. Given the interruptions to both the programme and beneficiaries' lives due to COVID-19, the replacement protocol was even more important to ensure sufficient sample power. As such, the midterm sample included 2,173 beneficiaries surveyed, 2,111 household head surveys, and 2,126 Caregiver surveys from 212 Safe Spaces, replicating the original baseline intent. While overall analysis included the entire sample to be representative of the programme, barriers and subgroup analyses comparing baseline and midterm values only utilised the communities that were actually visited at baseline for data collection.

While the baseline for the full programme was conducted in 2019, the baseline for the Financial Literacy programme was completed in 2021 by surveying 1,402 beneficiaries that were part of the 2019 baseline sample, and 471 beneficiaries not included in the 2019 baseline. While the first priority was to include girls from the full programme baseline sample, girls who were included in the Financial Literacy baseline survey served as the priority alternates whenever possible at the midterm evaluation. The midterm sample included 1,463 beneficiaries from the baseline sample and 799 alternates.

In addition to the data collected at the 2019 full programme baseline and the 2021 Financial Literacy baseline, observations in 150 Safe Spaces were administered during Life Skills and Financial Literacy sessions at the midterm evaluation.

- **Were any quantitative data collection tools revised or adapted from baseline? If so, please explain how and why they were revised.**

Quantitative data was collected electronically using the same devices used at the baseline evaluation. The Numeracy (EGMA) and Literacy (OLA) assessments were completed by girls interacting with paper instruments. The use of paper tools is intended to let test-takers feel comfortable during the assessments and the scores accurately represent how they have learned from the programme, and what they struggle with so they can continue to practice. The exercises and passages were on printed paper, and girls were provided with scrap paper and counters for the Numeracy assessment. Quantitative data collectors graded the assessment results on mobile devices as the girl completed each exercise. Three versions each of the EGMA and OLA were designed at baseline to ensure item variation at each evaluation point. Versions were also piloted before baseline to ensure comparability between versions. For the baseline Version A was used, versus for the midterm evaluation, Version B of both OLA and EGMA were used.

The Girls' Combined Survey, caregiver, Life Skills, Financial Literacy, Head of Household (HOH), and programme data surveys were delivered verbally by the enumerator and answers recorded on mobile devices, reducing barriers and maximising efficiency. Session observations, which were not held during the baseline evaluation, were conducted by a non-participant observer via an electronic form on the device during and after the observation period.

Different from the baseline evaluation, the midterm evaluation used Tangerine as the application for the OLA and EGMA testing on the devices, and then ODK with ValiData was used on the

remaining quantitative tools like the baseline. The switch to Tangerine was due to the fact that Tangerine has a better timing mechanism that was useful for the Literacy and Numeracy testing.

The midterm evaluation quantitative tools closely resembled the baseline tools and responded to the evaluation framework. The table below presents the key changes made to the tools at the midterm. One of the main components of the tool revision was cutting the tools so as to lessen the time burden they placed on respondents. Additionally, the Financial Literacy survey tool was added at the midterm evaluation, and as such, the team needed to remove questions from other tools in order to make up for the additional time that that tool added to each girl.

*Figure 14: Modifications made to baseline quantitative tools for midterm*

Stakeholder	Changes
Girls' Combined Survey	<p><b>Washington Group questions:</b> Removed questions on disabilities that are unlikely to have changed from baseline, but kept questions on those more likely to change, especially regarding mental health, given the high prevalence identified during baseline. The full Washington Group questions were asked to alternates in the sample that were not in the original full programme baseline.</p> <p><b>Literacy:</b> OLA, used version B which was designed and piloted at baseline; Correct Skip Logic to reduce burden on girls who are unable to read any letters or words by not requiring them to attempt more advanced subtasks when skip logic is supported by evidence from baseline.</p> <p><b>Numeracy:</b> EGMA, used predesigned and piloted Version B that was designed and piloted at baseline.</p> <p><b>Life Skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Socio-emotional learning:</b> Added in hostile attribution bias scenarios, Needed a minimum 5 scenarios to increase reliability.</li> <li>● <b>GBV Blame and Rights:</b> Added in questions based on curriculum</li> <li>● <b>Empowerment Plan:</b> Added in question related to having an Empowerment Plan (IO 3A)</li> <li>● <b>Friendship:</b> Added question on whether since joining the programme, the girls have made at least one new friend they can trust within their EAGER group (IO 3B)</li> <li>● <b>Use of Life Skills lessons:</b> Added question asking if girls have used skills learned in their Life Skills sessions (IO 3D)</li> <li>● <b>Streamlining:</b> Assessed whether any questions can be removed without affecting index to compensate for increased socio-emotional learning scenarios</li> </ul> <p><b>Girls' Household Survey:</b> Remove some questions that are not relevant. Revised questions about work to match logframe and clarify concepts of work and chores.</p> <p><b>Financial Literacy (FL) Survey:</b> Needed to be digitalised in ODK; Provided definition of what "work" and "employment" is to quantitative data collectors; Other tools were harmonised to ensure they don't duplicate questions addressed in FL survey, such as income generating activities and industries worked.</p>
Intermediate Outcomes	<p><b>Session Observation:</b> Tool was generated and approved by the FM from the baseline.</p> <p><b>Attendance:</b> the CCU to provide data, no tool needed.</p> <p><b>Programme Data Sheet:</b> The Programme Data Sheet is an adapted version of the GEC Head Teacher Survey that recorded Safe Spaces-provided information related to enrolment as well as other site-specific details (facilities, etc.).</p>
Household Survey	<b>Head of Household:</b> Removed any questions not used in baseline analysis.

- **Which new quantitative data collection tools were designed for this evaluation point? Comment on any newly developed and calibrated tools and describe the calibration process.**

There were no new quantitative tools designed for the midterm evaluation. There was a new tool administered during the midterm that was not during the full programme baseline, and that was the Financial Literacy (FL) tool. As discussed above, the baseline of the FL programme was held in early 2021 and was not part of the original baseline of the full programme back in 2019. The FL tool was included during the midterm evaluation to collect data that can be compared with the results from the baseline of the FL programme earlier in 2021. Given that there were no new tools, there was no calibration process, and the quantitative tools were not piloted prior to data collection.

- **How were quantitative data collectors recruited, what skills and experience did they have and what training did they receive ahead of quantitative data collection?**

Same as was done at the baseline evaluation, IMC hired their local partner, Dalan Development Consultants, to provide the field team for this midterm evaluation for data collection. As such, Dalan provided the quantitative data collectors and field supervisors for quantitative data collection. As a research firm with extensive experience in data collection across Sierra Leone and having worked with IMC on the baseline evaluation, Dalan maintains a wide pool of candidates for conducting different types of research in different locations. Dalan selected a team of 54 quantitative data collectors (for the quantitative research) on the basis of the following criteria:

- Bachelor's degree or higher,
- Experience undertaking surveys in the project communities,
- Experience working on similar evaluations,
- Computer and mobile device literacy,
- Facility with the local languages in the communities which they were assigned,
- Experience with the baseline evaluation,
- Experience undertaking education surveys, and,
- Gender balanced as much as possible.

In this case, several of the quantitative data collectors had previous experience working on GEC-funded project/project evaluations including the baseline evaluation, and so were familiar with some of the research tools and could share this experience with their colleagues.

IMC also ensured that those quantitative data collectors who had poor performance during the baseline evaluation were not included on the midterm evaluation team.

- **Were quantitative tools piloted and if so, what were the main findings? Were any adaptations made to the quantitative tools as a result?**

Quantitative tools were not piloted at the midterm evaluation point.

### **During data collection (quantitative)**

- **When did quantitative data collection take place? Were dates different for different tools or by areas?**

Quantitative data collection took place from July 1 until August 6, 2021. Each sub-team consisting of 1 field supervisor and 2 quantitative data collectors travelled to a community for 1-2 days and administered all quantitative tools at the same time. Data collection took place in all 10 districts and the sampled communities all at the same time. The session observation tool was only used in 150 communities though, as opposed to all communities. The sample for the session observation aimed to collect around 15 session observations per district.

Data collection was expected to end for all sub-teams by or before July 24<sup>th</sup> however there were some delays and so some of the teams remained in the field a bit longer. Upon returning to Freetown and uploading the data, IMC identified gaps in data from some of the districts, specifically Koinadugu and Port Loko, and as such, Dalan re-fielded a team to each district during the week of August 2<sup>nd</sup> with data collection being completed on August 6<sup>th</sup>. In Koinadugu the re-fielded team visited 4 communities and in Port Loko, they visited 2 communities to collect the missing data.

- **What protocols were followed when collecting the data, particularly to ensure ethical and child protection standards? What was done to ensure the safety of the quantitative data collectors during quantitative data collection?**

As with the baseline, all field supervisors and quantitative data collectors were briefed on safeguarding and child protection policies during the training. IRC presented their Child Protection Policies and Safeguarding policy at the training and then the field staff signed the Acknowledgment of Receipt of Child Safeguarding Policy and were provided a copy as well. Child protection and safeguarding, as well as the consent process was discussed throughout the training as well by the international evaluation team and was part of the training process. This included a comprehensive discussion of the consent and assent process required for each respondent group ensuring that respondents were informed that participation was voluntary, information confidential, and that they can skip questions or terminate the interview/survey at any time. Different from the midterm, the consent process was modified to include a statement that data could be held for future usage. This was highlighted during the training to ensure the quantitative data collectors covered this new consent consideration with respondents. The training also reviewed potential risks to participants (these are assumed to be minimal) and how to identify and mitigate any potential physical, psychological or disclosure dangers that can be anticipated (for example, conducting survey in a private space), as well as COVID-19 protocols for the protection of both the respondents but also the field team.

As with the baseline, IMC established a reporting system should there have been any issues that came up during data collection. This included providing quantitative data collectors with a Child Protection Issue Reporting Protocol form to be completed. IMC also prepared referral information sheets that included contacts for each district and EAGER partner in case there was a child protection or safeguarding issue.

The quantitative field team also provided nearly daily updates, which included any challenges they were facing including health issues or safety. There were none that arose during the data collection except for one enumerator did have a moped accident and required medical attention.

Finally, as with the baseline, IMC and their partner ensured that data was collected and stored securely from respondents. This included requesting the quantitative data collectors to upload their data daily and also using data collection devices provided by Dalan. All data was uploaded up onto a secure platform and beneficiaries were tracked using their Beneficiary ID number.

- **What re-contact protocols were followed to track cohort girls from baseline (if any)? Was this approach successful? Did you have to replace girls due to attrition, and if so, how did you sample these replacement girls?**

The quantitative data collectors went to the same communities and Safe Spaces as the baseline. As such, the intention was to survey the same beneficiaries as was the baseline. The quantitative data collectors were provided respondent lists with the beneficiaries from the baseline to use first. If the beneficiaries were not available/not able to be found, and they could not survey at least 10 girls from the original sample list, the quantitative data collectors then used the backup sample list. The backup sample list were beneficiaries from the Financial Literacy baseline that was completed in early 2021 who were not on the original sample list.

- **What data quality assurance processes were used during quantitative data collection?**

During data collection, there was a WhatsApp group for the quantitative team with all the field supervisors and the international Quantitative Specialist, as well as Dalan programme managers. The field supervisors were trained to provide daily updates that had the following information:

- Team number
- Supervisor
- Enumerator names
- Date of visit
- District
- Safe Space name
- Number of Beneficiaries surveyed
- Number of beneficiaries from main sample
- Number of beneficiaries from replacement sample
- Number of EGMA-OLA completed
- Number of Life Skills surveys completed
- Number of Financial Literacy surveys completed
- Number of Girls' Combined Surveys completed
- Number of Caregiver Surveys completed
- Number of Head of Household surveys completed
- Number of programme data sheets completed
- Number of Safe Space observations
- Challenges:
- Data synced: yes/no
- Survey comments:

This quality assurance measure ensured that each enumerator team was completed the correct number of surveys and survey type at each Safe Space visited and allowed the Quantitative Specialist to identify issues while the quantitative data collectors were still in or near the communities. While some field supervisors followed the protocol, there were some sub-teams whose updates were not provided regularly. Additionally, the WhatsApp group was used by the quantitative team to submit questions or challenges they were having (and that other sub-teams

were likely having) and the Quantitative Specialist could answer their questions and make sure all the other sub-teams saw the response.

Once data were uploaded, data from the separate tools were linked based on the unique IDs analysis commenced using the STATA analysis software per the guidance provided by GEC and the project MEL Framework and logframe. There were two common concerns by quantitative data collectors in the field:

Issue with when to administer the Head of Household survey and the Caregiver survey. Confusion about when to administer the HoH survey resulted in some teams not administering it on occasions when they should. This was solved within the first few days of data collection so it was not an issue moving forward.

Issues with connectivity for uploading data daily: some teams were unable to upload on a daily basis due to a lack of internet connection. The teams uploaded data as promptly as possible quantitative specialist checked for errors as soon as the data was uploaded.

A further challenge noted during initial data analysis was that of matching the different tools together to form a complete observation for each girl. Although unique identification numbers were used and pre-populated into the ODK tool, data entry errors by quantitative data collectors resulted in a 5 percent unmatched rate within the raw (uncleaned) dataset. Manually correcting unique identification numbers reduced the percent of unmatched observations to 2 percent within acceptable margins. Corrections to beneficiary IDs were made beginning as soon as the data were submitted to resolve them before any of the details had been forgotten or records lost by quantitative data collectors, and to emphasise to enumerator teams the importance of accurate submission.

### **ValiData**

An online survey data solution, ValiData, was used to securely and rapidly collate and cross-check data in real-time and immediately alert field supervisors to issues or problems that needed to be addressed. ValiData uses statistical criteria and validation rules to ensure that all survey responses are within expected parameters. It also conducts cross-checks on data entry, flagging inconsistencies or outliers. Parameters assessed for quality control included:

- Survey duration (including survey start and end times);
- Total number of surveys conducted by enumerator and by team;
- Key filter questions and demographic ratios;
- Unique enumerator ID numbers to match surveys to individual quantitative data collectors;
- Unusual response patterns by enumerator;
- Unusual missing data patterns; and,
- Response outliers.

The quantitative specialist monitored real-time data entry remotely via the ValiData platform and the WhatsApp group. Data for the learning assessments were entered into the mobile devices and scored during the assessments. Data entered was spot checked by supervisors and the

quantitative specialist for errors. Field supervisors ensured that all data was uploaded at the completion of every day, assuming internet connectivity<sup>94</sup>.

The use of an online mobile-based data solution also added levels of safety and security to the data collection process. Absence of paper-based data forms and real-time uploading of completed surveys minimised the risk of loss of data and/or access to data by unauthorised individuals. The need for access to mobile data (or other internet access) did present a challenge, particularly in remoter locations, but all quantitative data collectors were briefed regarding the need to regularly return to locations with internet access. Some quantitative data collectors experienced delays of several days before uploading, but these instances were flagged as they happened by supervisors and communications issued to quantitative data collectors to prioritise uploading.

- **What were the final sample sizes for each of the quantitative tools and did these differ to intended sample sizes?**

The final sample size met the intended sample for the midterm. That said, data is missing from Koinadugu and therefore that district will be underrepresented in the sample. This is due to the fact that 4 Safe Spaces were missed in Koinadugu, and therefore the sample size was 40 OLAs, EGMAs and Girls' Combined Surveys short (10 beneficiaries were surveyed per Safe Space). Surveys were also missing from caregivers and/or Head of Households as well in those communities. As such, Dalan re-fielded a team to visit those 4 Safe Spaces, but unfortunately, data was only collected from a limited number of beneficiaries (20 total) across the 4 Safe Spaces, and no OLAs or EGMAs were conducted with beneficiaries. As such, the final sample number is missing 40 OLAs and EGMAs from Koinadugu, and 20 Girls' Combined Surveys as well. This leaves us with only 178 completed OLA-EGMAs in Koinadugu out of the intended 210 (and 203 surveys). However, due to increased collection in other districts, the midterm still reached the intended total sample size of 2,160: specifically, 2,173 completed OLA-EGMA assessments, and 2,211 completed Girls' Combined Surveys. In total, there are 2,262 observations. Differences between the number of observations per tool are the result respondents choosing to stop the interview before completion. Given the importance of the OLA-EGMA to results, its count of observations is used throughout the report.

*Table 36: Total numbers of surveys completed per tool type*

Tool	Observations
OLA-EGMA	2,173
Life Skills	2,213
Financial Literacy	2,217
Girls' Combined Survey	2,211
Caregiver	2,218
Household Head	2,202

However, while the midterm met the sample goal, given the missing data from Koinadugu, it does leave that district slightly underrepresented in the sample. Specifically, it is only 8.1 percent of the sample instead of 9.7 percent like the other districts. To address this underrepresentation and

<sup>94</sup> Due to connectivity issues- some data was not uploaded for over a week which made it difficult to track the number of surveys undertaken with each respondent.

reduce bias, the Quantitative Specialist used statistical weighting to make the data in Koinadugu affect the estimates slightly more during analysis. Statistical weighting was also applied at baseline to account for the data missing due to a Lasse fever outbreak.

*Table 37: Quantitative Sampling by Location*

Districts	Original Design <sup>95</sup>		Results	
	Sample	Safe Spaces	Sample	Safe Spaces
Bo	240	24	249	24
Kailahun	210	21	232	21
Kambia	210	21	221	22
Kenema	220	22	269	22
Koinadugu	210	21	200	21
Kono	230	21	214	20
Port Loko	230	23	233	23
Pujehun	210	21	213	20
Tonkolili	210	21	214	22
WAU	210	21	206	21
<b>Total</b>		<b>216</b>		<b>216<sup>96</sup></b>

- **What accommodations or adaptations were made to data collection protocols and tools to ensure inclusion of girls with disabilities? For learning assessments and surveys?**

During the original sample design at baseline, the minimum sample size was increased from 760 to 2,160 in order to ensure the sample of four subgroups were large enough to be large enough for reporting. Those subgroups included including those with disabilities, married, parents, or working outside the home). As was completed at baseline, all stimuli were produced in large print in an easy-to-read font to make it more visually accessible for all girls. All aspects of the survey apart from Literacy and Numeracy testing did not require any visual aids or reading to complete; however, a large pictographic visual aid is used to help conceptualise responses to Likert-scale questions. During the training it was emphasised that there are no time limits or language constraints when describing and explaining any aspect of the surveys and learning assessments.

<sup>95</sup> Original design here refers to agreed-upon proportionality before commencement of data collection.

<sup>96</sup> Eleven observations (0.5 percent of the sample) were not correctly linked to a district during data collection and could not be resolved in cleaning, but it was decided to include their data in the results when regional information was not necessary.

## **Post data collection (quantitative)**

- **How was the quantitative data cleaned and checked for consistency?**

On completion of data collection, the enumerator teams and Dalan management and the quantitative specialist undertook an iterative process of cross-checking and cleaning. The different instruments (which yielded over 2.9 million separate data points) were matched using beneficiary identification numbers, names, and demographic information. All beneficiary-identifiable data were aggregated into a single dataset.

All survey and learning assessment data was collected in real-time on handheld mobile devices using ODK and Tangerine versions of the quantitative survey tools. Raw data were uploaded to secure ValiData servers daily. Data consistency was monitored in three ways during the data collection process:

- (1) By direct supervision of quantitative data collectors by team leaders;
- (2) By automated machine learning algorithms completed by ValiData, which automatically flag observations that have abnormal response patterns, skip patterns, or time durations; and,
- (3) By the quantitative specialist, who would download the data multiple times per week to ensure consistency and identify any unusual responses or patterns.

On conclusion of the data collection, the Dalan project manager cross-checked the full combined dataset for inconsistencies, missing values or missing data blocks. This process was supervised and further cross-checked by the quantitative specialist.

In some cases, this process identified additional data on devices that had not yet been uploaded – this was subsequently completed and a full, cleaned and checked dataset was prepared for subsequent analysis by mid-August. At the end of the main data collection period in July, it was noted that 4 communities had been missed in Koinadugu, and 2 in Port Loko. As such, Dalan re-fielded 2 teams to go to the 2 districts in order to complete data collection by August 6, 2021. While data was collected from the missing communities in Port Loko, in Koinadugu only partial data collection took place from the 4 missing communities.

Because the data were carefully coded and used common variable and value definitions during their ODK coding, the multiple tools generally merged together for straightforward analysis. The clean and secured raw dataset will be provided to the CCU as part of the assignment deliverables.

## **Tests for Internal Consistency**

To determine whether the assessments do effectively measure a concept, reliability tests are used. Chronbach's Alpha tests for internal consistency were used for the four assessments (Literacy, Numeracy, Life Skills, and Financial Literacy). This test measures inter-item consistency – that is, that a beneficiary that answers one item correctly is more likely to answer each other item correctly. Each assessment overall and their subtasks were tested. Chronbach's Alpha statistic varies from 0 to one and a value of 0.65 or higher is desirable to indicate a reliable test. To properly interpret Chronbach's Alpha statistics, however, it is important to understand the limitations of the statistic. Chronbach's Alpha statistics operate best when there are a large number of items for the test. When there are fewer than 20 items, Chronbach's Alpha statistics

are often low not because the test is unreliable, but because of the structure of the statistic: it is not designed for low-item subtasks. This makes it a thoroughly imperfect for subtasks such as the Interpersonal Strategies, which only had five items. This biases Chronbach's Alpha statistics downward for low-item subtasks. Secondly, Chronbach's alpha assumes that respondents have a chance to answer all items, and that the sequence of questions is randomised. To minimise testing burdens, much of the OLA and EGMA automatically end early: for example, a test-taker who could not read any letters is not asked to read words or stories; furthermore, if a test-taker could not read the first five items of an exercise, they also are not asked to complete that exercise. This results in inflated Chronbach's Alpha statistics. Finally, binary items result in lower statistics than Likert, ordinal, or continuous items. This further pressures downward subtasks such as Emotional Regulation, Hostile Attribution Bias.

In the table below, it can be seen that all subtasks in the OLA and EGMA assessments easily exceed the minimum desired value of 0.65. This is unsurprising given the generally high numbers of items for most subtasks and the skip logic mentioned above. However, 4 out of 7 Life Skills subtasks and 1 out of 3 of the Financial Literacy subtasks (values in bold) fell below the minimum desired level and merit some further analysis. In each of these cases, there are ten or fewer items in the subtask, which likely has affected the results.

Other results suggest that these subtasks are valid. For example, while Hostile Attribution Bias only had an alpha of 0.612, all four items in the subtask are positively and significantly correlated with each other at the 95 percent confidence level. Similarly, all five conflict resolution items are positively and significantly correlated with all four other items in that section, suggesting internal consistency. For the Health subtask, 19 out of the 21 pairwise correlations between items are positive and significant. Finally, all pairwise correlations among the business knowledge skills are positive and significant as well. This demonstrates that even in cases where the Chronbach's Alpha scores are low, the overall reliability of the subtasks remain high.

	Chronbach's Alpha	# Items
<b>OLA Overall</b>	0.997	251
1. Listening Comprehension	0.782	3
2. Real Life Reading	0.832	6
3. Letter Sounds	0.993	50
4. Familiar Words	0.986	45
5. Oral Passage Reading and Comprehension	0.997	141
5a. Oral Reading Passage 1	0.993	25
5b. Reading Comprehension 1	0.958	4
5c. Oral Reading Passage 2	0.997	108
5d. Reading Comprehension 2	0.926	4
6. Dictation	0.930	6
<b>EGMA Overall</b>	0.973	69
1a. Counting	0.829	5
1b. Number Identification	0.957	24
2a. Money Discrimination	0.814	6
2b. Number Discrimination	0.881	10
3. Level 1 Addition	0.899	8
4. Level 1 Subtraction	0.927	8
5. Addition & Subtraction of Large Numbers	0.913	8

6. Word Problems	0.819	6
<b>Life Skills Overall</b>	0.755	54
1. Hostile Attribution Bias	<b>0.612</b>	4
2. Emotional Regulation	0.700	10
3. Conflict Resolution	<b>0.434</b>	5
4. Self Efficacy	0.906	8
5. Social Resources	<b>0.511</b>	10
6. Supportive Relationships	0.698	10
7. Health	<b>0.579</b>	7
<b>Financial Literacy</b>	0.806	23
Confidence in Abilities	0.865	10
Knowledge	<b>0.369</b>	4
Applied Knowledge Scenarios	0.82	9

- **How was the quantitative data stored and analysed, including relevant reflections of quantitative data collectors and researchers while in the field? What analytical process were used for the data?**

Quantitative data were stored initially on the secure ValiData (for ODK) and Tangerine (for OLA and EGMA) servers. Upon completion of the collection period, they were deleted from these servers. They were downloaded onto the quantitative specialists' computer and stored as encrypted files, and backups maintained on an encrypted server. Data were cleaned and combined using STATA, and all edits to the original files can be seen in the provided coding files. Personally identifiable information, such as beneficiaries' names and phone numbers, are kept in a separate file from the analytical dataset.

For reporting, learning outcome scores are broken down into four achievement categories: Non-learner, Emerging learner, Established learner, and Proficient learner. For all Life Skills and EGMA scores, and for the OLA scores in listening comprehension, real life reading, reading comprehension and writing, the four achievement categories are divided as such:

- Non-learner: answers 0% of items correctly
- Emerging Learner: answers 0.1%-40% of items correctly
- Proficient Learner: answers 40.1-80% of items correctly
- Advanced Learner: answers 80.1-100% of items correctly

Per the original LNGB report template guidelines, the scores and four achievement categories are calculated differently for the timed subtasks Word Grid, Oral Reading Passage 1, and Oral Reading Passage 2. These are calculated in terms of the correct words per minute read (cwpm). These achievement levels are calculated as:

- Non-learner: 0-4.9 correct items per minute
- Emerging Learner: 5-44.9 correct items per minute
- Proficient Learner: 45-80 correct items per minute

- Advanced Learner: 80.1 correct items per minute or more

The Life Skills and Financial Literacy Assessments included questions where one or more responses are objectively correct, and others are incorrect, as well as Likert Scale questions where agreement or disagreement is the most desirable response. On questions with objectively correct and incorrect answers, points are awarded for correct answers. For Likert Scale questions, responses are graded on a graduated scale from 0 to 1, depending on the level of agreement. For example, in the Life Skills assessment, respondents are asked "I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I set for myself." For this scale, respondents can respond Strongly Agree for 1 point, Agree (0.75 points), Neither Agree nor Disagree (0.5 points), Disagree (0.25 points), or Strongly Disagree (0 points).

#### **Pre data collection (qualitative)**

- **Were any qualitative data collection tools revised or adapted from baseline? If so, please explain how and why they were revised.**

All qualitative tools were revised from the baseline given the objective and scope of the midterm evaluation was different from the baseline evaluation.

- **Which new qualitative data collection tools were designed for this evaluation point?**

Two new KII tools were created for two stakeholder groups: 1) EAGER leadership; 2) National Government Representatives. These KII guides were not needed for the baseline evaluation but were developed for the midterm given the scope of the midterm and the data needs based on the evaluation questions.

- **What qualitative methods were selected and what tools were developed for data collection?**

While KIIs and FGDs were held at the baseline evaluation as well with nearly the same stakeholder groups, all new tools were developed for the midterm evaluation, and two new stakeholder groups were included in the data collection (as noted below). As such, the following qualitative tools were developed for data collection at the midterm evaluation:

#### **Key Informant Interviews**

- Beneficiary girls
- Male partners
- Project staff, BLN Facilitators and LBS Mentors
- Local-level MBSSE or Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs
- National Government (not included at baseline)
- EAGER Leadership (not included at baseline)

#### **Focus Group Discussions**

- Beneficiary girls
- Boys in the communities
- Mothers or female caregivers of beneficiaries
- Fathers or male caregiver of beneficiaries

- Community Leaders

Participatory techniques were used during the interviews with some stakeholders. In example, for the KII with beneficiary girls, the data collectors drew a triangle on a piece of paper and said "Imagine that this triangle represents the EAGER Safe Space." They then asked the girl interviewed to list "Who is part of your group that meets in the Safe Space? Is it everyone?" The data collector also named the various subgroups (Girls who are heads of household, girls who became pregnant during the programme, mothers, girls with disabilities, etc) and asked if they were part of the Safe Space and why or why not they were not included in the Safe Space. This is in line with the midterm approach of focusing subgroups analysis and especially girls with disabilities.

- What sample sizes and sampling approaches were identified for each qualitative data collection tool? What was the rationale for the sizes and composition of the qualitative sample?**

Data was collected from the same 10 communities (1 per district) as the baseline evaluation. Below is a table that shows how many interviews or FGDs were done with each stakeholder group.

*Table 38: Sampling plan for midterm data collection*

Respondent Type	# and FGD or KII per community	Additional information
Girls 13 – 17 (beneficiaries)	1 FGDs – all communities	One group with diverse ages; include as possible some girls with disabilities, married girls, girls with children/pregnant, girls working outside the home
Boys 13 – 17 (community members)	1 FGD – only 2 communities	Mixture of in school and out of school boys typical of community; should be cousins/siblings living in the households of beneficiary girls. (Not partners)
Mothers or female caregivers of beneficiaries	1 FGD – only 2 communities (prioritising communities where there are active Mothers/ Female caregivers groups)	To represent both mothers and community members; mixture of higher and lower education levels and SES as possible
Fathers or male caregiver of beneficiaries	1 FGD – only 2 communities	To represent both fathers and community members; mixture of higher and lower education levels and SES as possible
Community Leaders	1 FGD – 3 male groups, 3 female groups (6 different communities)	Rotating between male and female groups of community leaders
BLN Facilitator	1 KII – all communities	The number of BLN Facilitators varies between 1-2 per community. Where possible, conduct KIIs with both.
LBS Mentors	2 KIIs – all communities	Mentors sit for different questions- one will have a KII on: Questions focusing on girls' experience  The second Mentor will have a KII on:

		Questions focusing on mentor's experience
Girls (beneficiaries)	3 KIIs – all communities	Three girls from each community; attention will be paid to representation from various subgroups; variety between girls in subgroups and not across the sample
Male partners of participating girls	2 KIIs – all communities	Two males from within the community who have their partners participating as beneficiaries within the programme; attention will be paid to representation from various subgroups
Programme Staff	1 KII – all communities	In certain areas, it will likely be necessary to conduct this interview at the regional office for programme staff, but the person selected should be responsible / have experience working in the community selected.
Local-level MBSSE or Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs <sup>97</sup>	1 KII (alternating between ministries)	To be informed based on suggestion of the CCU and partners. In rural areas, it will likely be necessary to visit regional capital to meet the MBSSE official responsible for this area.

Since FGDs with boys, community leaders, female caregivers and male caregivers were only done in select communities, some communities had more data collection activities than others. Care was taken to spread the activities as evenly as possible across the communities. The figure below shows which activities were undertaken in each community:

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Figure 15: Activities per community

EAGER Midterm Evaluation		List of Activities per community									
	District of Community										Total
	Bo	Kambia	Koinadugu	Kono	Pujehun	WAU	Port Loko	Kailahun	Kenema	Tonkolili	
FGD Girls	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
FGD Male Leaders					1			1	1		3
FGD Female Leaders		1				1	1				3
FGD Boys				1						1	2
FGD Male caregiver		1						1			2
FGD Female caregiver			1	1							2
KII Girls	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	30
KII Male partners	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
KII LBS Mentors	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	20
KII BLN Facilitators	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
KII District project staff	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
KII Local gov	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
Total # activities	11	13	12	13	12	12	12	13	12	12	122
Green denotes selective FGDs that do not occur in every community											

In total, the qualitative field team reached 190 Individuals (115 females and 75 males, including 64 girl beneficiaries) via key informant interview and focus group discussions.

- How were qualitative researchers recruited, what skills and experience did they have and what training did they receive ahead of qualitative data collection?

### Recruitment of team

As with the quantitative data collection team and at baseline, national partner Dalan Consultants was responsible for recruitment of qualitative data collectors. A total of 15 field researchers (in 3 groups of 4 with one group having 5) were hired for data collection, and participated in the training. Recruitment and selection of the individuals was on the basis of:

- Previous experience conducting qualitative interviews and focus groups;
- Ideally experience with baseline evaluation;
- Education level of bachelor's degree or higher;
- Local language skills - critical to conducting focus groups and interviews with the target stakeholders; and,
- A gender balance within teams in accordance with good practice of research of this nature (and FM requirements).

### Training

Since the international team was not able to travel to Sierra Leone, the training of the field team was done remotely by the international team members in the USA. To account for this, the team held a Training of Trainers prior to training the full team. This allows the field supervisors to have extra training ahead of the full team training so they could help with the training of the remaining

team members, and also ensured they had a solid understanding of the sampling plans, data collection tools, ethical protocols and quality assurance. Details on the training of trainers can be found in the report in section 3. After the training of trainers, the full team started training but virtually for the first 2 days, and then in-person for 3 days. Details on this can be found in section 3 of the report.

- **Were qualitative tools piloted and if so, what were the main findings? Were any adaptations made to the qualitative tools as a result?**

Qualitative tools were piloted for 1 day in 3 programme communities in the WAU district: Moyeba, Culvert and Red Pump. Piloting took place on June 29<sup>th</sup> during the training week with the full qualitative team participating. The team was divided into 3 groups of 4 data collectors (2 females and 2 males) per community and all the tools were piloted except for the EAGER leadership KII guide and the National Government officials KII guide.

In terms of results of the piloting, teams provided feedback on questions that were more difficult than others or ones that needed rephrasing. We also discussed at length strategies necessary for successful recruitment once in the field.

Based on the piloting, the following changes were made to the tools:

- Precision made regarding participatory questions. Provided additional instructions to teams.
- Minor changes to question phrasing.

Revisions to cover sheet

#### **During data collection (qualitative)**

- **When did qualitative data collection take place? Was sequencing used so that qualitative data was collected after initial analysis of the quantitative data? Were dates different for different tools or by areas?**

Qualitative and Quantitative data collection took place at the same time. Qualitative data collection took place from: July 2 to July 23 (in the field); July 21 to August 13 (Remote). All tools were used during the data collection period and the same tools were used in each district, except for in the cases of the FGDs with caregivers, community leaders and boys, which were only used in select districts as noted above.

- **What protocols were followed when collecting the qualitative data, particularly to ensure ethical and child protection standards? What was done to ensure the safety of the researchers during quantitative data collection?**

In terms of child protection and ethical standards, as with the baseline, all data collectors were briefed on safeguarding and child protection policies during the training. The CCU presented their Child Protection Policies and Safeguarding policy at the training and then the field staff signed the Acknowledgment of Receipt of Child Safeguarding Policy and were provided a copy as well. Child protection and safeguarding, as well as the consent process was discussed throughout the training as well by the international evaluation team and was part of the training process. This included a comprehensive discussion of the consent and assent process required for each respondent group ensuring that respondents were informed that participation was voluntary, information confidential, and that they can skip questions or terminate the interview/survey at any

time. Different from the midterm, the consent process was modified to include a statement that data could be held for future usage. This was highlighted during the training to ensure the data collectors covered this new consent consideration with respondents. The training also reviewed potential risks to participants (these are assumed to be minimal) and how to identify and mitigate any potential physical, psychological or disclosure dangers that can be anticipated (for example, conducting survey in a private space), as well as COVID-19 protocols for the protection of both the respondents but also the field team. The qualitative team was trained to hold interviews and FGDs and a quiet space but within view of other people (so data collectors were not alone with respondents).

As with the baseline, IMC established a reporting system should there have been any issues that came up during data collection. This included providing quantitative data collectors with a Child Protection Issue Reporting Protocol form to be completed. IMC also prepared referral information sheets that included contacts for each district and EAGER partner in case there was a child protection or safeguarding issue.

All data collected will be anonymised and names as well as any identifying information will be removed from transcripts before being shared with the CCU and the Fund Manager.

- **What accommodations or adaptations were made to data collection protocols to ensure inclusion of girls with disabilities?**

At the midterm, as with the baseline, girls with disabilities, as well as other subgroups of focus (i.e. girls who are mothers, girls who are Head of Household) were meant to have a higher quota. As such 40 of the 64 beneficiaries interviewed were another (19 have 2+ children), and 31 of 64 beneficiaries were married. Unfortunately, there were 0 beneficiaries interviewed that were reported as having a disability, but this could be due to the fact that the data collectors only focused on physical disabilities and not learning or emotional disabilities.

- **What data quality assurance processes were used during qualitative data collection?**

For Quality Assurance in the field, data collectors were asked to produce handwritten interview notes that were used to: a) enable the evaluation team to provide same-day spot checks on the quality of data being recorded in the FGDs and KIIs; b) enable the team to observe in real-time some emerging themes that will then guide the qualitative field team to hone in on key areas that would benefit from additional probing during future qualitative activities. A WhatsApp group was established for the qualitative team to communicate with the Team Leader daily and also with each other. If there were any issues in the field, the Team Leader would reply immediately via the WhatsApp group and all the other teams could see the feedback in case they were having the same issues. While the team was trained to share their handwritten field notes daily, some of the teams did not do this regularly.

Qualitative data collectors worked one-on-one with respondents as they did at baseline. Similarly, each FGD had no more than 8 participants of the group type (girls, boys, caregivers, etc.), and the discussions were held in an area that is private and quiet. In order to mitigate data quality issues, a FGD Facilitator led the conversation while a notetaker wrote key takeaways from the conversation in English. For KIIs, one data collector conducted the interview and took notes (in English) at the same time. For KIIs and FGDs with girls and Mentors, all interviewers and notetakers were female. The conversations were also recorded and subsequently translated and transcribed by Dalan. Data was entered into an MS Excel database by transcribers in a secure file.

- **What were the final sample sizes for each of the qualitative tools and did these differ to intended sample sizes?**

Below is the sample table for the qualitative data collection by tool. The table displays the intended sample and the actual sample per tool.

*Table 39: Sampling for midterm by stakeholder group*

Tool	Beneficiary group	Intendent sample size	Actual sample size	Remarks on why there are major differences between anticipated and actual sample sizes (if applicable)
FGD	Girls 13 – 17 (beneficiaries)	1 FGDs – all communities with 5-8 participants (50-80)	64	Met anticipated size
FGD	Boys 13 – 17 (community members)	1 FGD – only 2 communities with 5-8 participants (10-16)	9	Met anticipated size
FGD	Mothers or female caregivers of beneficiaries	1 FGD – only 2 communities with 5-8 participants (10-16)	13	Met anticipated size
FGD	Fathers or male caregiver of beneficiaries	1 FGD – only 2 communities with 5-8 participants (10-16)	8	Actual sample size slightly less than target; data collectors encountered recruitment challenges, largely due to their occupations and the need for a focus group which could not accommodate individual schedule needs
FGD	Community Leaders	1 FGD – 3 male groups, 3 female groups – 6 different communities) with 5-8 participants (30-48)	26 (11 female, 15 male)	Actual sample size slightly less than target; data collectors encountered recruitment challenges, largely due to being highly solicited and the need for a focus group which could not accommodate individual schedule needs
KII	BLN Facilitator	1 KII – all communities (1)	10 (1 female, 9 male)	Met anticipated size
KII	LBS Mentors	2 KIIs – all communities (20)	20	Met anticipated size
KII			30	Met anticipated size
	Girls (beneficiaries)	3 KIIs – all communities (30)		
KII	Male partners of participating girls	2 KIIs – all communities (20)	20	Met anticipated size
KII	Programme Staff	1 KII – all communities (10)	10 (5 female, 5 male)	Met anticipated size

KII	Local-level MBSSE or Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs <sup>98</sup>	1 KII (alternating between ministries) (10)	10 (6 Social Welfare Officers, 3 Education Officers, 1 Local Councillor)	Met anticipated size; 1 representative was a local council member per EAGER's recommendation
KII	National-level MBSEE and Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs	At least one person per key ministry (2)	1	Only one individual responded to emails; 4 people were contacted for potential interview
KII	EAGER Leadership	1 KII for key members of CCU plus 1 representative per partner (approximately 8)	8	Met anticipated size

### Post data collection (qualitative)

- **Was qualitative data recorded on audio, using written notes, or through a combination of the two?**

Data was recorded via audio and also written notes. Specifically, during FGDs, A FGD Facilitator led the conversation while a notetaker wrote key takeaways from the conversation in English. For KIIs, one data collector conducted the interview and took notes (in English) at the same time. For KIIs and FGDs with girls and Mentors, all interviewers and notetakers were female. The conversations were also recorded and subsequently translated and transcribed by Dalan. Data was then entered into an MS Excel database by transcribers in a secure file.

- **What volume of qualitative data was produced in total (numbers of hours of recordings or pages of notes)? Was this data transcribed verbatim or summarised? (Please note that two qualitative transcripts must be provided, as outlined in Annex 10)**

There were 137.22 number of hours of recordings. The data was transcribed verbatim during the transcription process for all interviews and FGDs except for the interviews with EAGER leadership, where those transcripts were summarisations but very close to verbatim

- **How was the qualitative data stored, coded and analysed, including relevant reflections of quantitative data collectors and researchers while in the field? What analytical processes were used for the data?**

Qualitative data was recorded by data collectors and then submitted for transcription along with a cover page for each interview/FGD. The transcripts are stored on secured database and as transcription took place, data was entered into a MS Excel file and sorted by Question. The transcribers entered in each interviews or FGD cover sheet information which included the following information: District, Interview/FGD number, Respondent Type, Date of Interview, Start and End times of interview, Facilitator Name, Notetaker Name, Number of males or females, Language of KII/FGD, Consent provided by all respondents (Yes/No), and Notes from Interviewer. This last category, "notes from the interview" allowed space for data collectors' reflections on the process and emerging themes. In addition, teams were asked to post regular updates in which

they also commented on the process and data quality and relevance. Transcripts were then further reviewed for clarity, comprehensiveness, identifiable information removed and data was pre-coded under subheadings by research question. The Team Leader reviewed transcripts for quality before approving the transcripts.

The cleaned and categorised data was saved in an Excel database organised by location/community, group type (e.g. girl, boy, caregiver), discussion question asked, the general topic of the question (e.g. Learning, Transition, Sustainability), and subtopics (e.g. Barriers to Education, Desired Skills, Supportive Relationships). On occasion, direct quotes from transcripts required additional editing for legibility purposes in English. This was appropriate as most interviews were either in Krio or in another national language and were already a translation.

The qualitative analysis team (team leader and technical specialist) then coded all data associated with a particular subtopic. Initial codes were assigned to ensure the team captured key perspectives that would be useful to inform the evaluation questions (e.g. parent codes for “Effectiveness 2: Participation: Family support”. As the notes were reviewed iteratively in more detail, additional sub-codes were assigned. As appropriate, sub-sub codes were created (e.g. (not specified or other than mother/mother-in-law) supporting - urging them to attend”; “Effectiveness 2: Participation: Mother or Mother-in-law helping attend - through childcare or encouragement”). When a new code was created, all lines of data related to that theme were revisited to determine whether the interview contained that perspective or not. When it did, an identifier was placed in the appropriate cell. When the questions related to a sub-topic were fully coded, and the team was confident that saturation was reached in terms of capturing the types of responses within the transcripts, the team moved onto another sub-topic.

By conclusion of the coding process, the team had assigned over 250 unique codes across all transcripts. When the team had addressed all sub-topics, they undertook a final round of cleaning such that the database reflected the unit of the interview rather than the number of times a perspective may have arisen within a focus group (to avoid double-counting). The team then created pivot tables for each of the subtopics to plot/quantify the presence of perspectives for each interview and to allow disaggregation by (as appropriate) gender, group type, and community. This allowed the team to give a precise number of groups who reflected a certain perspective or not, and also enabled the team to identify trends and outliers by gender, group type, and community.

When available, the team relied upon quantitative analysis to inform responses to evaluation questions as well as Outcome and Intermediate Outcome indicators as such data maximises representativeness of the whole community, rather than a single respondent, as is the case for the qualitative data.

Qualitative data supplemented that analysis, both in terms of providing additional nuance to contextualise statistics, and also to provide additional anecdotal information related to outcomes or indicators that was not captured by the surveys. Quantitative analysis of the qualitative data was used to indicate scope and spread of indicated phenomena but only if it provided additional information not captured by the quantitative, with the clear caveat that such analysis has limited representativeness of the wider population but reflects distributions of perspectives among the beneficiary population. In addition, in instances where quantitative and qualitative data conflicted, both sets of findings were explored.

Qualitative analysis is relied upon where no complementary quantitative data was obtained, for example, among beneficiaries and stakeholders who were not administered the survey (e.g. Facilitators, Mentors, project staff, government officials, community leaders, etc.). The logframe also provided indication of whether indicators would rely upon quantitative or qualitative data and informed the process.

- **In what language was the analysis conducted? Was all or some of the qualitative data translated at any point?**

Analysis was conducted in English. Data was translated during the transcription process. All interviews were translated except for those held with EAGER leadership, and National Government representatives.

### **Challenges in data collection and limitations of the evaluation design**

**Please describe any identified limitations and challenges related to the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the evaluation. This section should:**

- **Outline any methodological challenges to the approach (including any biases, attrition etc.) and how these were mitigated.**

Please see the Challenges and Mitigation table in section 3 of the main report.

- **Provide a summary of any limitations and challenges that were faced during this evaluation point (for both quantitative and qualitative aspects) either pre-fieldwork, during fieldwork, or post-fieldwork.**

#### **Quantitative Challenges**

- Some communities or Safe Spaces were skipped. Missing some data from 4 communities in Koinadugu.
- Technology difficulties with uploading the correct survey forms on the data collection devices.
- Lack of connectivity in the field led to data not being uploaded daily or uploaded more than once.
- Problems with respondent lists. There was confusion if a beneficiary was listed both on the main sample list and also the replacement list.
- Quantitative data collectors did not enter in correct beneficiary ID numbers which resulted in data needing to be reconciled after data collection to match the data from the different tools as needed.
- While a data collection schedule was prepared before heading into the field, there were often delays which resulted in teams arriving to communities later than planned and then having to take time to gather beneficiaries/respondents.
- Travel during rainy season made it difficult to stick to the planned schedule.
- Initially there was confusion for when to administer the Caregiver and Head of Household survey but this was corrected within the first week.
- Shortage of female quantitative data collectors on the team due to change in the data collection schedule which resulted in several quantitative data collectors becoming unavailable. This led to one quantitative sub- team having no females on the team.

- In one district (Koinadugu), two sub-teams visited the same Safe Spaces resulted in double data collection.
- Final data collection schedule was not finalised until right before data collection began due to the shift in the training and data collection period due to COVID-19. This left less time to alert the community level programme staff prior to arrival.
- While several of the sub-teams were posting updates daily as requested on the WhatsApp platform, some of the sub-teams did not and it was difficult to track their progress if they were not uploading the data daily due to connectivity issues.

### **Qualitative Challenges**

- Training of data collection team held virtually due to COVID-19 pandemic.
- Change in training schedule, and then data collection, due to COVID-19 cases peaking in Freetown. This resulted in one day less of training at the training facility and instead home-based learning.
- Travel during rainy season made it difficult to stick to the planned schedule.
- Less interviews with National Level Government representatives than planned. Challenges getting in contact with representatives.
- COVID-19 and ensuring the protection of all team members and respondents.
- In some of the communities, EAGER partners could not support the data collection process which then required the teams to seek out respondents and delayed the data collection process.
- Team members struggled to keep their mobile devices charged during data collection and therefore did not provide the daily updates as requested during the training which made providing quality assurance difficult.
- Lack of interviews or FGDs with girls with physical disabilities.
- Final data collection schedule was not finalised until right before data collection began due to the shift in the training and data collection period due to COVID-19. This left less time to alert the community level programme staff prior to arrival.
- **Explain how these challenges affect/may affect the robustness, reliability and comparability of any findings, and the degree to which findings should therefore be caveated.**

As indicated within the main report, the sampling approach for the qualitative strand focuses on depth rather than breadth. Analysis takes this into account throughout the report and caveats data appropriately. In terms of the quantitative data, due to the missing data in Koinadugu, weighting during analysis will be used to account for the fact that that district has less data compared to the other 9 districts.

- **Describe how participant attrition potentially affected results. Include a description of the characteristics and baseline learning levels of the girls in the baseline sample that dropped out of the programme or were unable to be located in future evaluation points.**

Annex Table 2.1: Evaluation sample and attrition<sup>99</sup>

Cohort group	Baseline sample (n)	Midterm/endline sample (total) (n)	Midterm/endline sample (recontacted) (n)	Midterm/endline attrition (%)
<i>Cohort 1 (entire sample)</i>	<b>2,073</b>	<b>2,262</b>	<b>1,418</b>	<b>68.4%</b>
Bo	237	249	206	86.9%
Kailahun	210	232	160	76.2%
Kambia	209	221	166	79.4%
Kenema	211	269	135	64.0%
Koinadugu	209	200	106	50.7%
Kono	208	214	162	77.9%
Port Loko	226	233	170	75.2%
Pujehun	212	213	145	68.4%
Tonkolili	134	214	105	78.4%
WAU	206	206	63	30.6% <sup>100</sup>

Annex Table 2.2: Evaluation sample breakdown by region

	Baseline		Midterm/endline (total)	
	% of total	n	% of total	n
Bo	11.4%	237	11.0%	249
Kailahun	10.1%	210	10.3%	232
Kambia	10.1%	209	9.8%	221
Kenema	10.2%	211	11.9%	269
Koinadugu	10.1%	209	8.8%	200
Kono	10.0%	208	9.5%	214
Port Loko	10.9%	226	10.3%	233
Pujehun	10.2%	212	9.4%	213
Tonkolili	6.5%	134	9.5%	214
WAU	9.9%	206	9.1%	206
Unknown <sup>101</sup>	0.5%	11	0.5%	11
Total	100%	2,073	100%	2,262

While the table above reports the actual sample, it should be noted that weights were used at both baseline and midterm to ensure that the results were representative of the original sample design.

<sup>99</sup> Attrition calculated as [(number of girls in baseline sample – number of girls recontacted at evaluation point)/number of girls in baseline sample]\*100%.

<sup>100</sup> Between baseline and midterm, the names of several Safe Spaces in WAU were changed and had to be remapped during data collection. For this reason, an accurate count of recontacted beneficiaries wasn't possible. This is likely a gross underestimation of recontact in WAU.

<sup>101</sup> Eleven Literacy and Numeracy observations could not be mapped to any particular district or beneficiary due to improper input at both baseline and endline, but were kept in the final sample for completeness. It is simply chance that it was the same number at both evaluation points.

Annex Table 2.3: Evaluation sample breakdown by age

	Baseline		Midterm/endline (total)	
	% of total	n	% of total	n
% sample aged <10 (n)	0%	0	0%	1
% sample aged 10-11 (n)	3%	63	0%	6
% sample aged 12-13 (n)	7%	143	4%	92
% sample aged 14-15 (n)	21%	438	14%	322
% sample aged 16-17 (n)	66%	1378	53%	1192
% sample aged 18-19 (n)	2%	46	22%	503
% sample aged 20 or more (n)	0%	1	4%	93
% sample age unknown	0%	4	2%	53
Total		2,073		2,262

The average age increased from 15.8 to 16.7 between baseline and midterm, which is in line with the passage of time between the two points. However, a much higher percentage of beneficiaries report being aged 20 or more: only 2 percent of the sample at baseline was 18 or more, and now 4 percent of the sample is 20 or more. Both of these points underscore that a person's age is not necessarily known definitely: many respondents had to guess their age at both evaluation points or didn't know it (1.5 percent at baseline, 3.5 percent at midterm). A slightly higher percentage of respondents had unknown ages at midterm: this is likely due to the fact that at baseline, both beneficiaries and caregivers were asked the beneficiaries' age, but only beneficiaries were asked the question at midterm.<sup>102</sup>

Annex Table 2.4: Evaluation sample breakdown by disability status

		Baseline		Midterm/endline (total)	
		% of total	n	% of total	n
<b>Girls with at least one disability (% overall)</b>		14.6%	296	10.9%	241
<b>WG Child subdomain</b>	<b>Domain</b>	<i>Provide data per subdomain and domain</i>			
Difficulty seeing	Seeing	0.8%	16	0.1%	2
Difficulty hearing	Hearing	0.7%	14	0.80%	17
Difficulty walking or climbing steps	Walking	0.9%	19	0.70%	15
Overall Cognitive	Cognitive	4.8% <sup>103</sup>	102	4.2%	95
Difficulty with self-care		0.3%	7	1.5%	33
Difficulty with communication		0.5%	11	0.4%	8
Difficulty learning		1.7%	34	1.1%	24

<sup>102</sup> Because the Financial Literacy tool and numerous questions to other tools were added at midterm, questions such as asking two people the beneficiaries' age were cut to make the interviews a reasonable length of time.

<sup>103</sup> Because some beneficiaries have multiple disabilities under a single domain, the overall domain prevalence is less than the sum of the prevalence of all disabilities in that domain.

		Baseline		Midterm/endline (total)	
		% of total	n	% of total	n
Difficulty remembering		1.7%	34	0.9%	20
Difficulty concentrating		1.0%	19	0.5%	11
Difficulty accepting change		1.4%	28	1.4%	30
Difficulty in behaviour		1.1%	21	0.2%	5
Difficulty making friends		1.7%	33	0.5%	12
Overall Psycho-social		8.5%	180	6.3%	140
Anxiety (feeling anxious)	Psycho-social	7.3%	142	4.0%	89
Depression	Psycho-social	4.9%	96	4.2%	93
One Disability		9.2%	187	7.00%	159
Multiple disabilities		5.4%	109	3.60%	82

Table 40: Sources of Disability Calculation

WG Child subdomain	Indicator Variable	Calculated from Variable(s):
Difficulty seeing	ggdis2seeing	gcs_wg_cf2 gcs_wg_cf3
Difficulty hearing	ggdis3hearing	gcs_wg_cf5 gcs_wg_cf6
Difficulty walking or climbing steps	ggdis4walking	gcs_wg_cf8 gcs_wg_cf9 gcs_wg_cf10 gcs_wg_cf11 gcs_wg_cf12 gcs_wg_cf13
Difficulty with self-care	ggdis5selfcare	gcs_wg_cf14
Difficulty with communication	ggdis6communication	gcs_wg_cf15 gcs_wg_cf16
Difficulty learning	ggdis7learning	gcs_wg_cf17
Difficulty remembering	ggdis8remembering	gcs_wg_cf18
Difficulty concentrating	ggdis9concentrating	gcs_wg_cf19
Difficulty accepting change	ggdis10acceptingchange	gcs_wg_cf20
Difficulty in behaviour	ggdis11behavior	gcs_wg_cf21
Difficulty making friends	ggdis12makingfriends	gcs_wg_cf22
Anxiety (feeling anxious)	ggdis13anxiety	gcs_wg_cf23
Depression	ggdis14depression	gcs_wg_cf24
One Disability	ggonedisability	
Multiple Disabilities	ggmultidisability	

All disability questions were asked as part of the Washington Group questions in the Girls' Combined Survey.

## Evaluation Framework

The evaluation framework was based on the logframe used at the baseline. It was updated during the midterm evaluation. The revised logframe will be used in the endline evaluation but for the midterm evaluation the previous iteration of the logframe was used as agreed to with the CCU.

Figure 16: Part 1, Evaluation Matrix Based on logframe

Outcome/IO	Description	Indicator	Assumptions	Evaluation Method
<b>OUTCOME 1 - Learning</b>	Number of marginalised girls supported by GEC with improved learning outcomes	A. Literacy Improvement: Percentage of EAGER Research Participants with improved learning outcomes in Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-That girls who attend the learning programme will be motivated and engaged in the curricula to improve their Literacy, Numeracy, Life Skills and Financial Literacy learning outcomes.</li> <li>-That adolescent girls who receive continuous mentoring throughout the learning programme and Empowerment Plan development will be able to transition to (self-) employment or further learning.</li> <li>-That girls will be able to attain learning outcomes in order to transition to their self-identified pathway.</li> <li>-That financial goals created by girls receiving start-up/growth grants and transitioning to self-employment enter into viable and market-driven business.</li> <li>-That girls interested in transitioning into further learning can identify viable pathways back into formal/non-formal education, with guidance and support from BLN Facilitators and LSB Mentors.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OLA</li> <li>2. Desk review of secondary data</li> <li>3. FGDs/KIIs (girls, caregivers, male partners, Facilitators, Mentors, BLN Facilitators, district project staff, EAGER leadership)</li> </ol>

			-That the communication approach for behaviour change (community discussions and radio programming) can be tailored to the Sierra Leone context and generate changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices.	
	B. Numeracy Improvement: Percentage of EAGER Research Participants with improved learning outcomes in Numeracy		Same as assumptions for Literacy Improvement	1. EGMA 2. Desk review of secondary data 3. FGDs/KIIs (girls, caregivers, male partners, Facilitators, Mentors, BLN Facilitators, district project staff, EAGER leadership)
	C. Life Skills Improvement: Percentage of EAGER Research Participants with improved learning outcomes in Life Skills		Same as assumptions for Literacy Improvement	1. Girls' Combined Survey with Life Skills and SEL questions 2. Desk review of secondary data 3. FGDs/KIIs (girls, caregivers, male partners, BLN Facilitators, Mentors, district project staff, EAGER leadership)
	D. Financial Literacy Skills Improvement: Percentage of EAGER Research Participants with improved learning outcomes in Financial Literacy		Same as assumptions for Literacy Improvement	1. Girls' Combined Survey (includes Financial Literacy questions) 2. Desk review of secondary data 3. FGDs/KIIs (girls, caregivers, male partners, BLN Facilitators, Mentors, district project staff, EAGER leadership)
	<b>OUTCOME 2 - Transition (optional)</b>	Number of marginalised girls who have successfully implemented their Empowerment Plan	A. # and % of girls who have taken steps towards the completion of goals related to their Empowerment Plan B. For endline and post-endline evaluations only: # and % of girls who have completed their Empowerment Plans.	Same as assumptions for Literacy Improvement

<p><b>OUTCOME 3 - Sustainability</b></p>	<p>Project can demonstrate that the changes it has brought about which increase learning and transition through education cycles are sustainable: Performance against comprehensive sustainability scorecard (scores 1-4).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o National level: Listening and engaging with EAGER radio programme results in more positive attitudes towards girls education and empowerment amongst wider population</li> <li>o Safe Spaces: Girls strengthen their social networks through the Safe Space approach, and continue creating a safe environment for each other outside of the physical safe space</li> <li>o Communities: Community leaders and caregivers report positive and empowering attitudes towards girls' education</li> </ul>	<p>A. % of radio listeners that foster more supportive attitudes towards girls' learning / education / entrepreneurship / participation in society (disaggregated by sex)</p>	<p>Community members will have access to a radio and signal to pick up radio frequency</p>	<p>N/A (Reported through BBC Qualitative study)</p>
		<p>B. % of girl groups that decide to continue meeting and creating a conceptual Safe Space for each other after completing the learning programme</p>	<p>Girls learn through their Life Skills sessions that they can help each other stay safe through strong social networks, and help each other feel safe by being good friends to each other</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FGDs/KIIs (girls, Mentors, BLN Facilitators, community leaders, district project staff)</li> <li>2. Programme Data Sheet</li> <li>3. Document review</li> </ol>
		<p>C. % of community leaders, boys, and caregivers that report positive and empowering attitudes towards girls' education (disaggregated by sex)</p>	<p>Community outreach under EAGER is effective in encouraging support for girls education and empowerment</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FGDs/KIIs with girls, boys, community leaders, caregivers, local government officials, EAGER leadership (Analysis of girls FGD will include an indicator scale for judging positive attitudes)</li> <li>2. Document review</li> </ol>

<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 1</b>	Attendance	A. Monthly Attendance rate for Girls in Life Skills programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Girls can be supported to navigate around barriers to attend the learning programme and receive one-on-one mentorship for their transition.</li> <li>-Capable LSB Mentors can be identified and recruited to deliver quality instruction and mentorship.</li> <li>-Girls are motivated to develop viable Empowerment Plans outlining their own vision for their Learning, Household, Community, and Financial Empowerment.</li> <li>-Project research is accepted and validated by the Ministry of Education.</li> <li>-Boys do not feel excluded by the programme and do not react negatively in a manner that impacts target girls.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Desk Review of programme data related to attendance</li> <li>2. Session observation tool</li> <li>3. Programme data sheet</li> <li>4. FGDs/KIIs (girls, BLN Facilitators, Mentors, district project staff, EAGER leadership)</li> </ul>
		B. Monthly Attendance rate for Girls in Literacy & Numeracy programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Girls can be supported to navigate around barriers to attend the learning programme.</li> <li>-Capable BLN Facilitators can be identified and recruited to deliver quality instruction..</li> <li>-Project research is accepted and validated by the Ministry of Education.</li> <li>-The Ministry of Education approves the BLN curriculum targeting OOS adolescent girls.</li> <li>-Boys do not feel excluded by the programme and do not react negatively in a manner that impacts target girls.</li> </ul>	

		C. Monthly Attendance rate for Girls in Financial Literacy programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Girls can be supported to navigate around barriers to attend the learning programme and receive one-on-one mentorship for their transition.</li> <li>-Capable Financial Literacy Facilitators can be identified and recruited to deliver quality instruction.</li> <li>-Girls are motivated to develop viable Empowerment Plans outlining their own vision for their Learning, Household, Community, and Financial Empowerment.</li> <li>-Project research is accepted and validated by the Ministry of Education.</li> <li>-Boys do not feel excluded by the programme and do not react negatively in a manner that impacts target girls.</li> </ul>	
<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 2</b>	Facilitators and Mentors deliver quality inclusive instruction in BLN, Life Skills, and Financial Literacy	A. % of project-supported Facilitators who use inclusive instructional practices in the BLN and Financial Literacy programme	Facilitators will attend step-down training that will be aimed at an appropriate level to be able to incorporate inclusive practices into session facilitation; project officers will be able to identify areas where improvement is needed and provide effective coaching where a need for this is identified.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Session observational tool</li> <li>2. Girls' Combined Survey</li> <li>3. Desk Review: Programme data and review of programme documents/teaching materials and manuals</li> <li>4. KIIs/FGDs (BLN Facilitators, LBS Mentors, girls, district project staff, EAGER leadership)</li> </ul>
		B.. % of project-supported Mentors who use inclusive instructional practices in the Life Skills programme	Mentors will attend step-down training that will be aimed at an appropriate level to be able to incorporate inclusive practices into session facilitation; project officers will be able to identify areas where improvement is needed and provide	

			effective coaching where a need for this is identified.	
<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 3</b>	Girls age 13-17 develop their own Empowerment Plan that outlines their own goals and timelines for Learning, Household, Community, and Financial Empowerment t	A. % of girls who develop an individual Empowerment Plan that is realistic and achievable***	Mentors and Financial Literacy Facilitator will be trained to coach girls in developing an Empowerment Plan ; girls will be available and supported to attend individual mentoring sessions; appropriate opportunities that girls can transition to will be available in communities	1. Girls' Combined survey 2. FGDs/KIIs (girls, Mentors, caregivers, male partners, district project staff, EAGER leadership)
		B. % of girls who report that since joining the programme, they have made at least one new friend in their group that they can trust	Mentors will be trained to coach girls in Life Skills. Girls will be able to attend and participate in Life Skills sessions	1. Girls' Combined Survey 2. FGDs/KIIs (girls, Mentors, caregivers, male partners, district project staff, EAGER leadership)
		C. % of girls who report believing that they can achieve the goals they set for themselves	Mentors will be trained to coach girls in Life Skills. Girls will be able to attend and participate in Life Skills sessions	1. Girls' Combined Survey 2. FGDs/KIIs (girls, Mentors, caregivers, male partners, district project staff, EAGER leadership)
	Girls apply skills learned in Life Skills sessions in their daily lives	D. % of girls who report that they have used skills learned in their Life Skills sessions	Mentors will be trained to coach girls in Life Skills. Girls will be able to attend and participate in Life Skills sessions	1. Girls' Combined Survey 2. FGDs/KIIs (girls, Mentors, caregivers, male partners, district project staff, EAGER leadership)
<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 4</b>	Community members regularly listen to and/or engage in dialogue surrounding issues relating to girls' opportunities and education (disaggregated by girls, boys, men and women)	A. # of people reached (including frequency) through national programming	Community members will have access to a radio and signal to pick up radio frequency	1. Desk review 2. FGDs/KIIs (community leaders, caregivers, district project staff, local government officials, EAGER leadership, national government officials) 3. BBC Media Action evaluation* 4. HoH Survey 5. Combined Girls' Survey

		B. % of radio listeners who report actively engaging with topics discussed in radio programming	Community members will have access to a radio and signal to pick up radio frequency	N/A (covered by BBC Media Action evaluation)
	Community members, including caregivers of girls, foster more supportive attitudes and/or behaviours towards girls' opportunities, education, and safety	C. % of community members that foster more supportive attitudes towards girls' opportunities, education, and safety (disaggregated by sex, role)	Community members attend dialogues; Mentors properly and effectively facilitate community dialogues	1. Desk review 2. FGDs/KIIs (community leaders, caregivers, male partners, district project staff, local government officials, EAGER leadership) 3. BBC Media Action evaluation 4. Combined Girls' Survey
	Girls report greater support for girls' opportunities, education, and safety at community level	D. % of girls that report fewer barriers to accessing learning and other opportunities, and increased perception that they have the right to safety in the community	Programme is effective in encouraging community members to support girls opportunities, education, and safety	1. Desk review 2. FGDs/KIIs (girls, Mentors, caregivers, male partners, district project staff, EAGER leadership) 3. BBC Media Action evaluation 4. HoH Survey 5. Combined Girls' Survey
<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME 5</b>	Government supported to achieve strategic outcome for increased Literacy for out-of-school (OOS) youth (aligned to updated ESP 2018-2020)	A. National level representatives of MBSSE and MSWGCA participates in the Baseline, Midterm and Endline data validation	Same as for IO Indicator 1	1. Desk Review (including meeting minutes from relevant Government ministries and other written communications) 2. KIIs (national and local government officials, EAGER leadership)
		B. Number of informative project coordination meetings held with the National level representatives of MBSSE and MSWGCA annually	Same as for IO Indicator 1	

Figure 17: Part 2, Evaluation Questions with Sources

Evaluation question	Qual data/analysis required to answer question	Quant data/analysis required to answer question	Relevant indicators
<p>R1. To what extent do project objectives and the project design respond to the needs of beneficiaries and other stakeholders? And to the needs of the diverse subgroups served by the project?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FGDs/KIIs with girls, Mentors, caregivers, male partners, BLN Facilitators, community leaders, district project staff, EAGER leadership</li> <li>2. Document review: Quarterly and annual reports, research studies</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: thematic coding paying attention to differences between subgroups and stakeholder perspectives</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Girls' Combined Survey</li> <li>2. HH survey</li> <li>3. Caregivers survey</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: Trend analysis; regression analysis; paying attention to differences between subgroups</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>R2. To what extent do project objectives and project design align with government priorities and policies, notably the MBSSE Radical Inclusion policy and the MBSSE COVID-19 response?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. KIIs with local government officials, national government officials, district project staff, EAGER leadership</li> <li>2. Document review: Government policies and decrees (MBSSE Radical Inclusion policy, MBSSE COVID-19 response), Quarterly and annual reports</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: thematic coding paying attention to differences between subgroups and stakeholder perspectives</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Effect1. What is working (and is not working) to increase the learning and potential transition of marginalised girls as defined by the project as well as project Mentors?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FGDs/KIIs with girls, Mentors, caregivers, male partners, BLN Facilitators, community leaders, district project staff, EAGER leadership</li> <li>2. Document review: Quarterly and annual reports, research studies</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: thematic coding paying attention to differences between subgroups and stakeholder perspectives</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Girls' Combined Survey</li> <li>2. Caregivers survey</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: Trend analysis; regression analysis; paying attention to differences between subgroups</p>	<p>Outcome 1 A, B, C, D IO1 A, B, C (Attendance) IO2 A, B (Quality inclusive education) IO4 A, B, C, D (Support for girls education)</p>

<p>Effect2. Which factors support and hinder participation in project activities and achievements, at the individual, community and more macro levels?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FGDs/KIIs with girls, Mentors, caregivers, male partners, BLN Facilitators, community leaders, district project staff, EAGER leadership</li> <li>2. Document review: Quarterly and annual reports, research studies</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: thematic coding paying attention to differences between subgroups and stakeholder perspectives</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Girls' Combined Survey</li> <li>2. HH survey</li> <li>3. Caregivers survey</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: Trend analysis; regression analysis; paying attention to differences between subgroups</p>	<p>IO1 A, B, C (Attendance) IO2 A, B (Quality inclusive education) IO4 A, B, C, D (Support for girls education)</p>
<p>Effic1. Have project interventions made the best use of financial, human and time resources available? Has the project been implemented as planned? Why or why not?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FGDs/KIIs with girls, caretakers, male partners, community leaders, Mentors, BLN Facilitators, district project staff, EAGER leadership</li> <li>2. Document review: Quarterly and annual reports, financial reports, indicator tracking document</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: thematic coding, indicator analysis, financial analysis</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Effic2. Which internal and external obstacles has the project faced and how has EAGER addressed them? What has been the effect of COVID-19 on project efficiency?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. KIIs with Mentors, BLN Facilitators, district project staff, EAGER leadership</li> <li>2. Document review: Quarterly and annual reports, COVID-19 response plan, financial reports, indicator tracking document, research studies</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: thematic coding, indicator analysis, financial analysis</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p>Imp1. Are there signs of the emerging impact that the project has had on the learning of marginalised girls, and their plans for transition? How and why was this impact achieved? What individual (including psychometric measures), home and community level characteristics are associated with girls' learning and potential transition outcomes?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FGDs/KIIs with girls, Mentors, caregivers, male partners, BLN Facilitators, district project staff, EAGER leadership</li> <li>2. Document review</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: thematic coding paying attention to differences between subgroups and stakeholder perspectives</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. OLA</li> <li>2. EGMA</li> <li>3. Girls' Combined Survey (including Life Skills and Financial Literacy )</li> <li>4. HH surveys</li> <li>5. Caregivers surveys</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: Trend analysis; regression analysis; paying attention to differences between subgroups</p>	<p>Outcome 1 A, B, C, D (Learning)</p> <p>Outcome 2 A (Transition)</p> <p>IO1 A, B, C (Attendance)</p> <p>IO3 A, B, C, D (Transition)</p> <p>IO4 A, B, C, D (Quality inclusive education)</p>
<p>Imp2. Are girls feeling increases in their empowerment to meet their own goals? What obstacles or challenges do girls still perceive and what could be done to mediate them?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FGDs/KIIs with girls, Mentors, caregivers, male partners, district project staff, EAGER leadership</li> <li>2. Document review: Quarterly and annual reports, empowerment framework, transition overview, research studies</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: thematic coding paying attention to differences between subgroups and stakeholder perspectives</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Girls' Combined Survey</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: Trend analysis; regression analysis; paying attention to differences between subgroups</p>	<p>Outcome 2 A (Transition)</p> <p>IO3 A, B, C, D (Transition)</p>
<p>Imp3. Has the project had any unintended consequences for direct and indirect stakeholders?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FGDs/KIIs with girls, boys, community leaders, caregivers, local government officials, district project staff, national government officials, EAGER leadership</li> <li>2. Document review: Quarterly and annual reports, research studies</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: thematic coding paying attention to differences between subgroups and stakeholder perspectives</p>	<p>N/A</p>	

<p>S1. What is the likelihood that the project benefits will remain after the intervention? What structural or behavioural potential changes are visible at this midterm point? How successful has the project been in leveraging additional interest and investment?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. FGDs/KIIs with girls, boys, community leaders, caregivers, male partners, local government officials, district project staff, national government officials, EAGER leadership; (Analysis of girls FGD will include an indicator scale for judging positive attitudes)</li> <li>2. Document review: Quarterly and annual reports, government documents, research studies</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: thematic coding paying attention to differences between subgroups and stakeholder perspectives; as well as Vfm</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Programme Data Sheet – will provide information about how space is used and who uses it to allow understanding of if girls who are finishing up their cohort are making use of EAGER resources still available to them.</li> <li>2. HoH and Caregivers Surveys</li> </ol> <p>Analysis: Trend analysis; regression analysis; paying attention to differences between subgroups</p>	<p>Outcome 3 A, B, C (sustainability) IO5 A, B (support of GoSL strategic outcomes)</p>
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### Annex 3: Characteristics and barriers

Annex Table 3.1: Evaluation sample breakdown by characteristic subgroup

	Baseline		Midterm/endline (total)		Variable name and source
	% of total	n	% of total	n	
<b>Beneficiaries with Disabilities Overall</b>	14.6%	296	10.9%	241	ggdis0all
<b>Under 15 at baseline / 16 at midterm<sup>104105</sup></b>	15.9%	399	19.1%	421	ggagegrp1
<b>15 to 16 at baseline / 16 to 17 at midterm</b>	40.0%	1,140	54.0%	1192	ggagegrp2
<b>17 or more at baseline / 18 or more at midterm</b>	44.1%	581	27.0%	596	ggagegrp3
<b>Female Head of Household</b>	33.4%	657	31.3%	689	ggfemalehoh
<b>Orphan</b>	63.4%	870	63.5%	901	ggorphan
<b>Married</b>	44.1%	943	43.2%	977	ggmarried
<b>Has Children</b>	57.5% <sup>106</sup>	1,373	64.3%	1,426	ggmother
<b>Pregnant</b>			7.9%	176	ggpregnant

Annex Table 3.2: Evaluation sample breakdown by barrier

	Baseline		Midterm/endline (total)		Variable name and source
	% of total	n	% of total	n	
<b>Works</b>	38.8%	712	65.6%	1,454	ggwork
<b>Owens Business</b>	34.0%	625	51.6%	1,145	ggownbusiness
<b>Work: Farming</b>	47.4%	919	29.0%	642	ggwfarm
<b>Work: Petty Trading</b>	N/A	N/A	46.5%	1,032	ggwtrade
<b>Chore Burden</b>	41.0%	868	13.3%	293	ggchoreburden
<b>Impoverished</b>	43.1%	874	32.4%	716	ggpoor
<b>Food Insecure</b>	45.5%	914	24.4%	187	gghungry
<b>Beneficiary is Head of Household</b>	9.2%	181	4.4%	98	ggownhoh
<b>Beneficiary is own Caregiver</b>	6.3%	124	13.7%	302	ggowncaregiver
<b>Low Caregiver Support</b>	6.3%	134	9.8%	222	ggglowsupport

The table is best read as the percentage of the column group that is in the row group. For example, 10.6 percent of beneficiaries under 16 have one or more disability. Asterisks denote when there is a significant difference between the prevalence of the row characteristic for those within a given (column) characteristic, and the prevalence of that (row) characteristic and those who are not in that (column) characteristic. For example, only 15.3% of married beneficiaries are also in female-

<sup>104</sup> The baseline and midterm were collected 18 months apart. Per client request, the age groups were changed to one year older for the midterm.

<sup>105</sup> Because some beneficiaries did not know their age, the three age groups do not sum to the full sample.

<sup>106</sup> At baseline, women were asked "are you a mother?" and interviewers were instructed to include pregnant women. At baseline, the question of being a parent and being pregnant were split.

headed households, which is significantly different from the proportion of unmarried beneficiaries who are in female-headed households. It is lower than the average for the overall prevalence of 31.3%. Tests were proportion tests of equality at the 95 percent confidence interval with Bonferroni corrections applied.

*Annex Table 3.3: Evaluation sample intersectionality between subgroups and barriers*

	Overall	Has Disability	Under 16	16 to 17	18 or more	Female Head of Household	Orphan	Married
<b>Beneficiaries with Disabilities</b>	<b>10.9%</b>	X	10.6%	10.6%	12.1%	12.6%	9.3%	9.9%
<b>Under 16</b>	<b>19.1%</b>	18.3%	X	0%*	0%*	21.7%	17.3%	8.7%*
<b>16 to 17</b>	<b>54.0%</b>	50.9%	0%*	X	0%*	55.7%	48.9%	52.8%
<b>18 or more</b>	<b>27.0%</b>	30.8%	0%*	0%*	X	22.6%	33.8%	38.5%*
<b>Female Head of Household</b>	<b>31.3%</b>	35.6%	36.2%	33.0%	25.1%	X	28.2%*	15.3%*
<b>Orphan</b>	<b>63.5%</b>	52.5%	65.3%	61.2%	66.0%	47.3%*	X	74.3%*
<b>Married</b>	<b>43.2%</b>	39.5%	20.1%*	43.7%	60.4%*	21.5%*	62.1%*	X
<b>Has Children</b>	<b>64.3%</b>	64.5%	28.3%*	68.2%	81.9%*	57.9%	70.8%	87.1%*
<b>Pregnant</b>	<b>7.9%</b>	9.3%	4.7%	7.8%	10.7%	7.4%	10.0%	13.3%*
<b>Works</b>	<b>65.6%</b>	65.3%	54.0%	67.9%	71.4%	62.4%	69.6%	73.1%
<b>Owns Business</b>	<b>51.6%</b>	48.6%	36.7%*	52.8%	62.6%	48.3%	58.2%	63.2%*
<b>Work: Farming</b>	<b>29.0%</b>	27.5%	23.5%	28.4%	37.0%	26.2%	31.7%	38.3%*
<b>Work: Petty Trading</b>	<b>46.5%</b>	47.5%	40.5%	49.7%	45.4%	42.5%	48.7%	49.2%
<b>Chore Burden</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	15.0%	10.8%	13.9%	13.4%	10.7%	7.8%	14.4%
<b>Impoverished</b>	<b>32.4%</b>	35.6%	35.9%	34.2%	27.5%	46.1%*	28.4%	29.9%
<b>Food Insecure</b>	<b>24.4%</b>	34.8%	27.8%	20.9%	29.6%	32.6%	21.7%	24.4%
<b>Beneficiary is Head of Household</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	4.0%	4.1%	4.9%	3.5%	6.9%	4.0%	4.8%
<b>Beneficiary is own Caregiver</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	8.5%	8.1%	11.8%	23.4%*	9.6%	18.1%	21.3%*
<b>Low Caregiver Support</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	17.5%	10.5%	8.8%	12.3%	10.1%	12.6%	11.3%

Annex Table 3.3: Evaluation sample intersectionality between subgroups and barriers, continued

	Overall	Has Children	Pregnant	Works	Owns Business	Work: Farming	Work: Petty Trading
Beneficiaries with Disabilities Overall	<b>10.9%</b>	11.0%	12.8%	10.9%	10.2%	10.2%	11.2%
Under 16	<b>19.1%</b>	8.3%*	11.0%	15.4%	13.3%*	14.9%	16.4%
16 to 17	<b>54.0%</b>	56.1%	51.5%	54.4%	53.3%	50.4%	56.4%
18 or more	<b>27.0%</b>	35.7%*	37.5%	30.2%	33.4%	34.7%	27.2%
Female Head of Household	<b>31.3%</b>	28.1%	29.3%	29.6%	28.9%	27.5%	28.7%
Orphan	<b>63.5%</b>	66.4%	70.5%	65.5%	67.2%	63.6%	66.0%
Married	<b>43.2%</b>	59.6%*	74.3%*	48.4%	52.8%*	56.6%*	46.2%
Has Children	<b>64.3%</b>	X	59.9%	68.4%	71.9%*	73.4%	67.2%
Pregnant	<b>7.9%</b>	7.4%	X	8.7%	8.8%	9.2%	9.0%
Works	<b>65.6%</b>	70.4%	72.8%	X	100%*	100%*	100%*
Owns Business	<b>51.6%</b>	58.5%*	57.9%	79.3%*	X	83.2%*	83.1%*
Work: Farming	<b>29.0%</b>	34.1%	34.5%	44.8%*	47%*	X	33.1%
Work: Petty Trading	<b>46.5%</b>	48.6%	52.8%	70.6%*	74%*	52.2%	X
Chore Burden	<b>13.3%</b>	13.3%	16.4%	14.3%	12.3%	17.4%	13.3%
Impoverished	<b>32.4%</b>	31.9%	34.1%	32.7%	33.1%	37.1%	31.5%
Food Insecure	<b>24.4%</b>	23.5%	19.0%	27.7%	29.5%	43.8%*	24.3%
Beneficiary is Head of Household	<b>4.4%</b>	4.8%	5.1%	4.2%	4.3%	4.5%	3.9%
Beneficiary is own Caregiver	<b>13.7%</b>	19.1%*	17.9%	17.9%*	18.1%	20.6%	18.0%
Low Caregiver Support	<b>9.8%</b>	9.8%	11.9%	10.8%	10.1%	9.9%	11.9%

Annex Table 3.3: Evaluation sample intersectionality between subgroups and barriers, continued

	Overall	Chore Burden	Impoverished	Food Insecure	Beneficiary is Head of Household	Beneficiary is own Caregiver	Low Caregiver Support
<b>Beneficiaries with Disabilities Overall</b>	<b>10.9%</b>	12.5%	12.0%	18.1%	10.2%	6.6%	19.1%
<b>Under 16</b>	<b>19.1%</b>	15.6%	20.6%	25.7%	17.7%	10.7%	19.7%
<b>16 to 17</b>	<b>54.0%</b>	56.0%	55.7%	44.8%	59.8%	43.7%	46.1%
<b>18 or more</b>	<b>27.0%</b>	28.4%	23.7%	29.5%	22.5%	45.6%*	34.2%
<b>Female Head of Household</b>	<b>31.3%</b>	25.3%	44.1%*	48.8%	49.1%	21.0%	31.2%
<b>Orphan</b>	<b>63.5%</b>	49.4%	59.7%	50.6%	62.7%	69.9%	71.9%
<b>Married</b>	<b>43.2%</b>	47.8%	40.8%	39.2%	48.2%	65.4%*	48.8%
<b>Has Children</b>	<b>64.3%</b>	64.6%	63.5%	56.0%	70.4%	85.4%*	62.3%
<b>Pregnant</b>	<b>7.9%</b>	9.9%	8.3%	5.4%	9.2%	9.9%	9.2%
<b>Works</b>	<b>65.6%</b>	72.0%	66.7%	73.0%	63.0%	83.1%*	70.8%
<b>Owens Business</b>	<b>51.6%</b>	48.8%	53.4%	59.2%	51.0%	66.3%	52.4%
<b>Work: Farming</b>	<b>29.0%</b>	39.3%	34.2%	42.8%*	30.9%	43.0%	29.1%
<b>Work: Petty Trading</b>	<b>46.5%</b>	47.3%	45.2%	48.5%	41.3%	58.9%	55.1%
<b>Chore Burden</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	X	13.8%	11.7%	14.2%	13.8%	17.4%
<b>Impoverished</b>	<b>32.4%</b>	33.8%	X	55.8%*	46.8%	26.2%	35.4%
<b>Food Insecure</b>	<b>24.4%</b>	25.9%	40.3%*	X	31.3%	24.9%	27.0%
<b>Beneficiary is Head of Household</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	4.7%	6.3%	6.3%	X	18.4%*	3.3%
<b>Beneficiary is own Caregiver</b>	<b>13.7%</b>	15.0%	11.6%	12.6%	60.3%*	X	16.6%
<b>Low Caregiver Support</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	13.4%	11.1%	13.2%	7.6%	11.7%	X

#### Annex 4: Learning outcome data tables

Zero score tests for significant differences were conducted as one-sample tests for whether the midterm data was equal to the baseline proportion. As with other statistical tests of learning outcomes, the combination of very large sample sizes and very large improvements result in incredibly low P-values. Nearly all statistical tests find significant differences between the zero score prevalence at midterm and baseline. Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, and 4.5 are included in the main report.

*Annex Table 4.3: Literacy zero scores (by subtask) across baseline and midterm/endline*

	% zero scores		p-value <sup>107</sup>	Statistically significant difference (Y/N)
	Baseline (N= )	Midterm/endline (N= 2,262)		
<b>1. Listening Comprehension</b>	38%	5.5%	0.000	Yes
<b>2. Real Life Reading</b>	38%	9.4%	0.000	Yes
<b>3. Letter Sounds</b>	38%	14.2%	0.000	Yes
<b>4. Familiar Words</b>	59%	30.2%	0.000	Yes
<b>5. Oral Passage Reading and Comprehension</b>	76%	45.5%	0.000	Yes
<b>5a. Oral Reading Passage 1</b>	78%	45.6%	0.000	Yes
<b>5b. Reading Comprehension 1</b>	83%	49.2%	0.000	Yes
<b>5c. Oral Reading Passage 2</b>	81%	46.7%	0.000	Yes
<b>5d. Reading Comprehension 2</b>	80%	54.7%	0.000	Yes
<b>6. Dictation</b>	83%	45.8%	0.000	Yes
<b>Overall Score</b>	<b>22.2%</b>	<b>3.0%</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Yes</b>

<sup>107</sup> Recommended to use a chi-square test.

Annex Table 4.6: Numeracy zero scores (by subtask) across baseline and midterm/endline

	% zero scores		p-value <sup>108</sup>	Statistically significant difference (Y/N)
	Baseline (N= 2,145)	Midterm/endline (N= 2,262)		
<b>1a. Counting</b>	8.7%	2.3%	0.000	Yes
<b>1b. Number Identification</b>	25.5%	10.9%	0.000	Yes
<b>2a. Money Discrimination</b>	18.1%	3.0%	0.000	Yes
<b>2b. Number Discrimination</b>	20.0%	4.5%	0.000	Yes
<b>3. Level 1 Addition</b>	27.4%	7.8%	0.000	Yes
<b>4. Level 1 Subtraction</b>	41.5%	18.9%	0.000	Yes
<b>5. Addition &amp; Subtraction of Large Numbers</b>	45.5%	12.0%	0.000	Yes
<b>6. Word Problems</b>	20.3%	6.4%	0.000	Yes
<b>EGMA Overall</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>Yes</b>

Annex Table 4.4: Increase in Average Scores Since Original Baseline by Subgroup

Subgroup	OLA	EGMA	Life Skills
<b>All Sample</b>	+26.3	+26.9	+10.3
<b>Any Disability</b>	+27.6	+31.4	+13.9
<b>Hearing</b>	+37.3	+46.0	+22.1
<b>Walking</b>	+39.2	+35.7	+9.9
<b>Self-care</b>	+28.9	+31.4	+23.7
<b>Learning, Remembering and Concentrating[1]</b>	+25.2	+27.0	+12.8
<b>Accepting Change, Controlling Behaviour and Making Friends</b>	+25.6	+26.1	+17.7
<b>Mental Health (Anxiety and Depression)</b>	+31.2	+36.4	+14.3
<b>Female Head of Household</b>	+23.7	+26.4	+8.6
<b>Married</b>	+27.9	+27.9	+9.8
<b>Has Children</b>	+26.8	+27.9	+11.3
<b>Never went to school</b>	+36.3	+38.8	+12.2
<b>High Chore Burden</b>	+21.8	+20.1	+9.4
<b>Impoverished</b>	+26.0	+28.9	+8.2
<b>Hungry</b>	+24.7	+27.1	+10.5
<b>Beneficiary is Head of Household</b>	+24.6	+22.8	+10.9
<b>Low Caregiver Support</b>	+25.9	+26.2	+8.7

**Note:** The Financial Literacy Baseline is excluded from this table because did not include subgroup analysis.

<sup>108</sup> Recommended to use a chi-square test.

*Annex Table 4.5: Increase in Average Scores Since Original Baseline by District*

District Partner	District	Average Literacy score	Average Numeracy score)	Average Life Skills score	Financial Literacy Score
<b>IRC</b>	Bo	+21.9	+31.1	+13.2	+0.2
<b>Restless</b>	Kailahun	+31.6	+32.5	+11.6	+1.7
<b>Restless</b>	Kambia	+23.5	+23.8	+16.7	+13.0
<b>IRC</b>	Kenema	+38.4	+33.1	+9.3	+3.6
<b>Restless</b>	Koinadugu	+21.2	+8.4	+11.2	+10.8
<b>IRC</b>	Kono	+22.3	+18.5	+1.5	+2.2
<b>Concern</b>	Port Loko	+14.3	+22.6	+6.6	-7.8
<b>Restless</b>	Pujehun	+32.5	+30.7	+13.9	+9.3
<b>Concern</b>	Tonkolili	+40.3	+47.4	+12.4	+1.0
<b>Concern</b>	WAU	+18.9	+21.4	+6.5	-8.2

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

The logframe for the EAGER programme has been included as a separate document. Please note that the logframe used at the midterm evaluation was the same used at the baseline evaluation. The logframe was updated during the midterm evaluation and the revised logframe will be used moving forward for the endline evaluation. The EE is unaware of any external targets. The project is currently in process of updating the targets.

We have also included the Medium-Term Response Plan Output Monitoring Framework. The Medium-Term Response Plan was consulted by the EE during to inform the tools development, during the desk review, and during analysis.

## Annex 6: Beneficiaries tables

### Project guidance

Please provide cumulative numbers of direct and indirect beneficiaries by cohort that the project has reached. The data for these tables should come from the Total Reach tab on your project’s quarterly workplan tracker. Please report the **unique** total beneficiaries reached without double counting beneficiaries reached over multiple quarters. Do not simply add up reach totals across your quarterly workplan reporting.

Tables should include details for all cohorts and cohort types that the project has and is reaching—for example, formal track and nonformal track. Please add on row(s) as needed for disaggregating by cohort *type* and cohort *number*.

Annex Table 6.1: Direct beneficiaries

	Learners			HT/Teachers/other “educators”			MoE/District/ Govn’t staff			Parents/ caregivers			Community members		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
[Cohort 1]	72		72	451	56	1,0	-	-	-	2,75	-	2,7	3,93	3,1	7,0
	78		78		5	16				3		53	9	08	47

Annex Table 6.2: Indirect beneficiaries

	Learners			HT/Teachers/other “educators”			MoE/District/ Govn’t staff			Parents/ caregivers			Community members		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
[Cohort 1]	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

### Project guidance

Please provide the cumulative numbers of direct beneficiaries reached by intervention/activity type. Disaggregate direct beneficiaries by gender. You might report the same beneficiary in multiple interventions/activities if your project is targeting multiple interventions/activities to each girl. However, do not double count beneficiaries in the total and do not simply add up beneficiaries across interventions/activities. The total direct beneficiaries reported in this table should be the same as in Table 6.1.

Tables should include details for all cohorts and cohort types that the project has and is reaching—for example, formal track and nonformal track. Please add on row(s) as needed for disaggregating by cohort *type* and cohort *number*.

Please update the table with your project’s specific interventions/activities and add columns as needed.

Annex Table 6.3: Direct beneficiaries by intervention/activity

	Intervention/activity						Total
	<i>Enrolment</i>	<i>Life Skills Sessions</i>	<i>BLN Sessions</i>	<i>Menstrual Hygiene Distribution</i>	<i>C-19 Hygiene Promotion</i>	<i>Financial Literacy Sessions</i>	
<i>[Cohort 1 – girls]</i>	7,394	6146 girls with 65% or higher attendance (86% of girls enrolled)	5,865 girls with 65% or higher attendance (65% of girls enrolled)	7,125 girls received hygiene kits (100% of girls enrolled at point of distribution)	7,278 girls (100% of girls enrolled at the point of implementation)	6597 girls with 65% or higher attendance (61% of girls enrolled)	
<i>[Cohort 1 – boys]</i>							

## **Annex 7: External Evaluator's Inception Report**

The Inception Memo has been submitted as a separate document as requested.

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

Consent language is included in all of the tools at the beginning of each tool for quantitative tools, and for qualitative tools there is a packet of Consent Forms submitted as a separate attachment along with the tools. The tools and consent forms have been submitted separate files as requested.

Tool	Qualitative/Quantitative	Data use and Data Access requirements
Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA)	Quantitative	Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected with respondent's name. Data may be important for designing future studies and helping other girls in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Any information used in reporting on this study will be presented in a way that it cannot be associated with respondent's name.
Out of school learning assessment (OLA)	Quantitative	Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected with respondent's name. Data may be important for designing future studies and helping other girls in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Any information used in reporting on this study will be presented in a way that it cannot be associated with respondent's name
Girls Combined Survey tool, including Life Skills and Financial Literacy	Quantitative	Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected with respondent's name. Data may be important for designing future studies and helping other girls in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Any information used in reporting on this study will be presented in a way that it cannot be associated with respondent's name
Session Observation tool	Quantitative	No Consent Process used since it was an observation tool of programme sessions and all girls (and their caregivers when applicable) and Facilitators/Mentors have given consent as participation in the EAGER programme
Survey with Head of Households	Quantitative	Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected with respondent's name. Data may be important for designing future studies and helping other girls in Sierra Leone and elsewhere.
Survey with Caregivers	Quantitative	Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected with respondent's name. Data may be important for designing future studies and helping other girls in Sierra Leone and elsewhere.
Programme data sheet	Quantitative	Respondent told that their answers will be recorded to use in the midterm research but respondent would not be mentioned by name, or and their personal details will not be shared with anybody outside of the team.

Key Informant Interview Guide- Beneficiary Girls	Qualitative	Any information used in reporting on midterm study will be presented in a way that it cannot be associated with respondent's name. It also will not be possible to connect respondent's comments to their participation or impact their participation in the EAGER project. Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected to respondent. This information may be important for designing future studies and helping other girls in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Picture of the data collection activities may be taken, but picture will be professional and respectful and used only in reporting. They may be stored and used in the future. Respondent name will not be associated with the picture.
Key Informant Interview Guide- Local Government officials	Qualitative	Any information used in reporting on this study will be presented in a way that it cannot be associated respondent's name. Respondent comments will not affect any girl's participation in EAGER activities. Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected to respondent. This information may be important for designing future studies and helping other girls in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Pictures of the data collection activities may be taken, but picture will be professional and respectful and used only in reporting. They may be stored and used in the future. Respondent name will not be associated with the picture
Key Informant Interview Guide- Mentors	Qualitative	Any information used in reporting on this study will be presented in a way that it cannot be associated respondent's name. Respondent comments will not affect any girl's participation in EAGER activities. Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected to respondent. This information may be important for designing future studies and helping other girls in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Pictures of the data collection activities may be taken, but picture will be professional and respectful and used only in reporting. They may be stored and used in the future. Respondent name will not be associated with the picture
Key Informant Interview Guide- EAGER leadership	Qualitative	Any information used in reporting on this study will be presented in a way that it cannot be associated respondent's name. Respondent comments will not affect any girl's participation in EAGER activities. Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected to respondent. This information may be important for designing future studies and helping other girls in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Pictures of the data collection

		activities may be taken, but picture will be professional and respectful and used only in reporting. They may be stored and used in the future. Respondent name will not be associated with the picture
Key Informant Interview Guide- National Government	Qualitative	Any information used in reporting on this study will be presented in a way that it cannot be associated respondent's name. Respondent comments will not affect any girl's participation in EAGER activities. Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected to respondent. This information may be important for designing future studies and helping other girls in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Pictures of the data collection activities may be taken, but picture will be professional and respectful and used only in reporting. They may be stored and used in the future. Respondent name will not be associated with the picture
FGD guide- Beneficiary Girls	Qualitative	Any information used in reporting on midterm study will be presented in a way that it cannot be associated with respondent's name. It also will not be possible to connect respondent's comments to their participation or impact their participation in the EAGER project. Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected to respondent. This information may be important for designing future studies and helping other girls in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Pictures of the data collection activities may be taken, but picture will be professional and respectful and used only in reporting. They may be stored and used in the future. Respondent name will not be associated with the picture.
FGD guide- Caregivers	Qualitative	Any information used in reporting on this study will be presented in a way that it cannot be associated with respondent's name. Respondent's comments will not affect any girls' participation in EAGER activities. Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected to respondent. This information may be important for designing future studies and helping other girls in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Pictures of the data collection activities may be taken, but picture will be professional and respectful and used only in reporting. They may be stored and used in the future. Respondent name will not be associated with the picture.
FGD guide- Boys	Qualitative	Any information used in reporting on this study will be presented in a way that it cannot be associated respondent's name. Respondent comments will not affect any girl's participation in EAGER activities.

		Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected to respondent. This information may be important for designing future studies and helping other girls in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Pictures of the data collection activities may be taken, but picture will be professional and respectful and used only in reporting. They may be stored and used in the future. Respondent name will not be associated with the picture
FGD Guide- Partners of girls	Qualitative	Any information used in reporting on this study will be presented in a way that it cannot be associated with respondent's name. Respondent's comments will not affect any girls' participation in EAGER activities. Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected to respondent. This information may be important for designing future studies and helping other girls in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Pictures of the data collection activities may be taken, but picture will be professional and respectful and used only in reporting. They may be stored and used in the future. Respondent name will not be associated with the picture.
FGD guide- Community Leaders	Qualitative	Any information used in reporting on this study will be presented in a way that it cannot be associated respondent's name. Respondent comments will not affect any girl's participation in EAGER activities. Data collected will be stored and may be used for future studies but never connected to respondent. This information may be important for designing future studies and helping other girls in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. Pictures of the data collection activities may be taken, but picture will be professional and respectful and used only in reporting. They may be stored and used in the future. Respondent name will not be associated with the picture
Data collection checklist	Qualitative	Not applicable – no consent process
FGD and KII cover sheets	Qualitative	Not applicable – no consent process

### **Annex 9: Qualitative transcripts**

Three Qualitative transcripts have been included as separate attachments.

## **Annex 10: Quantitative datasets, codebooks and programmes**

The Quantitative data sets and codebooks are included as separate attachments.

## **Annex 11: Quantitative sampling framework**

The Quantitative sampling framework has been included as a separate attachment.

## **Annex 12: External Evaluator declaration**

**Name of Project:** Midterm Evaluation of the Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient programme

**Name of External Evaluator:** IMC Worldwide

**Contact Information for External Evaluator:**

Alexandra Cervini Mull, Managing Associate at IMC Worldwide,

[Alexandra.cervini@imcworldwide.com](mailto:Alexandra.cervini@imcworldwide.com); +1.517.610.1020

1201 Wilson Blvd.

Floor 27

Arlington, VA 22209 USA

**Names of all members of the evaluation team:**

Karla Giuliano Sarr

Andrew Trembley

Gwen Heaner

Alexandra Cervini Mull

Alexandra Cervini Mull certify that the independent evaluation has been conducted in line with the Terms of Reference and other requirements received.

The following conditions apply to the data collection and analysis presented in the midterm report:

- Quantitative and Qualitative data were collected independently by the EE and quantitative and qualitative data were provided by the project for analysis (Initials: ACM)
- The data analysis conducted independently by the EE and provides a fair and consistent representation of findings (Initials: ACM)
- Data quality assurance and verification mechanisms agreed in the terms of reference with the project have been soundly followed (Initials: ACM)
- The recipient has not fundamentally altered or misrepresented the nature of the analysis originally provided by IMC Worldwide (Company) (Initials: ACM)
- All child protection protocols and guidance have been followed (Initials: ACM)
- Data has been anonymised, treated confidentially and stored safely, in line with the GEC data protection and ethics protocols (Initials: ACM)

Alexandra Cervini Mull

(Name)

IMC Worldwide

(Company)

October 25, 2021

(Date)

### **Annex 13: Baseline Report**

The Baseline Report has been submitted as a separate document as requested.