

# Project Evaluation Report

<b>Report title:</b>	Post-Endline Research Report
<b>Evaluator:</b>	DT Global
<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>	Post-Endline
<b>Report date:</b>	January 2023

## Notes:

Some annexes listed in the contents page of this document have not been included because of challenges with capturing them as an A4 PDF document or because they are documents intended for programme purposes only. If you would like access to any of these annexes, please enquire about their availability by emailing [uk\\_girls\\_education\\_challenge@pwc.com](mailto:uk_girls_education_challenge@pwc.com).

**Girls'  
Education  
Challenge**



**Post-Endline Research Report  
Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER)  
project within the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) - Leave No  
Girl Behind (LNGB) project**

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January 2023

*EAGER Literacy and Numeracy Session*



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MEDIA ACTION

Report title:	Post-Endline Research of the Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER) project within the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) - Leave No Girl Behind project (LNGB)
Research Agency:	DT Global (formerly IMC Worldwide)
GEC Project:	Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER) project
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## Acronyms and Terms

BLN	Basic Literacy and Numeracy
EAGER	Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient
ESP	Education Sector Plan
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FQSE	Free Quality School Education
GEC	Girls Education Challenge
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KII	Key Informant Interview
LBS	Life and Business Skills
LNGB	Leave No Girl Behind
MBSSE	Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee
OOS	Out-of-school
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Associations
WAU	Western Area Urban

# 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. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) implements EAGER in Sierra Leone in partnership with Concern Worldwide, Restless Development, and BBC Media Action in 10 districts across Sierra Leone. The project duration is four years (February 2019 - January 2023) and is implemented in 10 out of 16 districts.

EAGER engages out-of-school (OOS) adolescent girls aged 13-17<sup>1</sup> (upon enrolment) who lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. The project aims to significantly improve their functional literacy, numeracy, financial literacy, and life skills through an 8-month learning programme led by trained Facilitators and Mentors recruited from the girls' communities. This is followed by an 8-month Transition period during which the girls are encouraged to integrate and practice the many skills they have learnt. This is guided by their personal Empowerment Plan, which each girl developed with support from her Facilitator and Mentor before graduating and receiving a conditional cash transfer. The Empowerment Plan template includes four domain areas—learning, household, community and financial—and encourages girls to set a meaningful and realistic goal for themselves within each of these areas. They are guided to focus on goals they can reach within one year or less, and to write down the steps they will take to reach their goals. During this Transition Period, EAGER Mentors formally met with each girl twice to check on her progress. However, as they live in the same communities, Mentors were encouraged to informally check in with the girls more often to discuss their goals and encourage them.

At the point of the Endline Evaluation (data collected in July - August 2021), findings showed beneficiaries actively and excitedly pursuing their Empowerment Plans with enhanced skills, confidence, and autonomy in their households and communities due to the EAGER programme. Building on the findings of the Endline Evaluation, IRC commissioned this **Post-Endline** research in mid 2022 as an in-depth focus on a small sample of graduates of EAGER Cohort 1. The aim was to capture insights on changes or challenges in girls' lives one year after the learning programme activities ended.

The research, conducted by DT Global (formerly IMC Worldwide), focused on self-reported changes in the lives of girls and how girls managed these changes and the ongoing commitments in their lives as a direct result of their participation in EAGER.

## Approach

The Post-Endline research explored a sample of individual girls' experiences with EAGER and how it impacted their everyday lives with relation to learning beyond the programme, their household, their community, and their financial empowerment. The research team used a one-on-one life-stories approach, in which a beneficiary and the qualitative data collector drew out a timeline and discussed major milestones in the girls' lives to-date, including through the different phases of the EAGER project. At each of the milestones, the qualitative data collector asked a set of prescribed follow-up questions about the milestones, including questions around what enabling factors and barriers may have impacted their futures thereafter. This narrative, including detailed stories from the girls' lives, allowed for a contextualised analysis of the role and contributions of EAGER for each girl. Such an approach provided insights into the social, economic, personal, and interpersonal dynamics that would be difficult to capture via a broader approach. The findings from this research design provide rich responses to the research questions that have guided this endeavour.

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<sup>1</sup> For Cohort 2, this age range was amended to 13-19 so that girls that were 17 at the planned point for the second cohort which was delayed due to COVID could benefit from the project. As a result, some girls were over 17 years old when starting Cohort 2.

## Key Post-Endline Findings

The Post-Endline provides important insights into the lives of a small sample of Cohort 1 EAGER girls and Mentors, demonstrating that the overwhelmingly positive effects as a consequence of EAGER programming observed at Midterm and Endline have endured at Post-Endline, one year later from Endline data collection. These include:

- Girls continue to see the importance of goal setting and making plans
- Girls perceive themselves to be, and analysis of the evidence suggests that they are, financially and emotionally more resilient than they were before EAGER
- Girls have enhanced confidence
- Girls have reliable and enduring support (sometimes financial) from friends, family, and the community; they remain motivated and optimistic about the future

Importantly, the Post-Endline has shown that girls demonstrate these positive effects in a context in which they must navigate many of the challenges observed at Midterm and Endline, including increasingly difficult economic circumstances and/or unexpected health crises.

### **To what extent has EAGER enhanced beneficiaries' resilience in the context of various shocks and stressors in their environment?**

The Post-Endline has shown that girls were overwhelmingly positive about their emotional, social, and economic empowerment—critical assets that contribute to resilience from shocks and stressors—as compared to before EAGER. This empowerment was also noted at the Endline Evaluation point. Furthermore, according to project monitoring data, 91.2 percent of EAGER girls had completed at least one step toward each of their goals at the first check-in. Progress was high across all areas, with the highest proportion of beneficiaries reporting completed steps for financial (95.4 percent) and learning (97.4 percent) goals. Reporting on progress ranked lower than reporting on community goals (91.7 percent); most likely attributed to the collaboration required with community members resulting in a lengthier process to reach each step.

The Post-Endline research findings show that this investment in girls' empowerment appears to have endured well beyond the period of intervention: all the girls interviewed indicated that they were economically, socially and emotionally better off today than they had been before EAGER. Financial empowerment, whether it be having savings or having the ability to earn money using the skills learned from EAGER, has helped girls withstand shocks and stressors by enabling them to cover costs associated with illness (their own or a family member's), loss of relatives, poor harvests, unstable market conditions and pregnancy. Psychosocial (emotional and social) empowerment has further engendered in many girls the confidence to succeed, or at least persist in their efforts to do so, even when circumstances are difficult.

The Endline Evaluation notes that whilst the EAGER Transition design emphasises four domains of empowerment (Learning, Household, Community, and Financial), extensive discussions with girls about their empowerment goals revealed that nearly all girls reported most on their financial goal. This is more tangible in nature than the other three domains, and may reflect girls' priorities as they navigate precarious financial situations. The attention to financial goals may also reflect their emphasis in Financial Literacy sessions, as girls planned activities and developed their budgets with support from Facilitators. Project staff interviewed during the Endline Evaluation reported anticipating that financial goals would likely be most pressing for girls, which is why the project asked girls to also identify goals in the other three domains.

At the Post-Endline stage, research findings show that indeed, all girls continued to face challenges in their lives, and some found themselves in situations where they had no more money for their business, and/or nobody to assist them. However, all shared examples of when they had endured a difficult time but, as is evident from their stories, all expressed that they were able to recover.



## **Were girls' Transition and Empowerment Plans appropriate, contextually specific and potentially sustainable?**

At Endline, most girls claimed to be actively and excitedly pursuing their Empowerment Plans, most of which they described with respect to financial goals, with generally positive reports from girls that the cash grant had been used to start a micro business or enrol in training or further education. At Post-Endline, the research indicates a similar situation, with girls generally emphasising the financial goals that they had set, and accordingly, that they had been pursuing micro business ventures.

Although the research demonstrates girls' awareness that they are both financially and emotionally stronger since EAGER and appreciated the new concept of goal setting and planning, the research team also captured feelings of disappointment amongst girls who were aspiring for more success. The girls reported that their disappointment stems from not having yet achieved what they hoped they would when drafting their Empowerment Plan. This may suggest that although Mentors and Facilitators were trained in and supported the endeavour to ensure girls goals were achievable and realistic, perhaps either expectations and aspirations may have been slightly unrealistic and/or there were other factors, as discussed above, about why goals were not met or changed over time. Moreover, there were multiple contextual challenges, described in the section above, which hindered expected achievement, as referenced by EAGER Mentors.

This is attributable not to girls' inability to succeed—they have succeeded to some degree and as described in the Endline Evaluation, all had acquired a new and welcome skill toward setting goals. Instead, this speaks to potentially unrealistic financial goals set in the Empowerment Plan as well as contextual factors that may have set them up for some degree of disappointment.

## **One year on, how do beneficiaries perceive the degree to which they are supported?**

At Post-Endline, girls consistently reported instances of support from caregivers, partners, and community members, including encouragement and financial or other kinds of direct assistance. At the same time, all caregivers/partners indicated that they continued to help the girls, and community leaders provided examples of how they and others actively assist the girls. The degrees of assistance did vary—in some cases, girls were provided with direct financial support (cash or regular resources), while in other cases, they were simply encouraged or not actively discouraged. Still, that one year on EAGER girls continue to receive help is commendable. The role of community dialogues/with community leaders and caregiver groups has evidently played a positive role in this regard. This reflects a continuation from what was found during the Endline Evaluation when girls also felt generally supported by caregivers, partners, community members and their peers, but with varying levels of assistance.

## **What has been the outcome of EAGER on beneficiaries' confidence over time?**

The Post-Endline research has found that the gains in confidence seen amongst the participants at (or shortly after) their graduation from EAGER have endured. In some cases, it is evident that the confidence of individual girls has continued to grow as she has continued to make progress toward her goals, further proving to herself that she is able to succeed. There was good congruence between the findings of the Endline Evaluation conducted in mid-2021 and the Post-Endline conducted in mid-2022, with girls and Mentors articulating a range of areas in which they reported that they were more confident, including: their communication skills; their skills in pursuing livelihoods; their confidence in expressing their rights as a girl/woman, and; confidence in being an active member of their community. This has also helped them to gain more respect from others.

## Recommendations

EAGER has made critical and significant adjustments to improve programming to be even more impactful for Cohort 2. As the aim of this Post-Endline was to continue tracking the impact of the programme amongst Cohort 1 girls, it could not measure the effectiveness of the adaptations made for Cohort 2. However, as the Post-Endline did further confirm the Endline’s suggested areas for improvement, this report further validates the rationale for many of those programmatic changes. It also may be helpful for similar programming with adolescent girls, particularly where a Transition period is designed to follow a learning component. The evaluation team offers 12 recommendations:

1. Investigate the extent to which revisions to the EAGER curriculum for Cohort 2 focusing on increasing girls’ flexibility and creativity in the face of financial challenges has succeeded.
2. Ensure that future iterations or adaptations of EAGER’s Financial Literacy curriculum (e.g., to government or future programming) and the Empowerment Plan and Transition Period trainings offer consideration and explorations of how macro-economic trends affect the world at the micro level.
3. Share promising practices and case studies learnt from Cohort 1 girls about how to take steps toward larger goals.
4. Consider offering information and referrals to community-based financial training or loan schemes (like *Osusu*) to assist start-ups once enough experience has been garnered.
5. Future iterations or adaptations of EAGER (e.g., in government or future programming) should further strengthen focus on generating Empowerment Plans such that goals are feasible for girls to achieve, given challenges they face.
6. Identify ways to invite further carefully facilitated discussion between girls and Mentors on girls’ Empowerment Plans to collectively articulate a clear and realistic definition of success and recognition of what progress looks like (and would not look like).
7. Conduct research to investigate the effectiveness and impact of changes made to Cohort 2-related curriculum and trainings emphasising guiding girls towards small, realistic, and time-bound financial goals.
8. Encourage girls to view goals that they have had trouble achieving as learning experiences with which to help plan next steps. This could be done through well facilitated reflection sessions with the girls and Mentors aimed at collecting and synthesising learning.
9. During all discussions and trainings, clarify with Mentors and girls that the Empowerment Plans are meant to have one financial goal with multiple feasible steps articulated, and not multiple varying financial goals or many income-generating activities within goals.
10. During training and discussions with girls, in addition to as part of developing Empowerment Plans, encourage awareness of, and work to change, discriminatory gender norms that place unequal work burdens on girls.
11. Work more closely with girls and local communities to supplement the simple market survey with additional ideas around types of income generation strategies that may not be readily apparent to girls.
12. During trainings and continuous professional development activities, ensure there is time allocated to discuss girls’ long term visions with the aim of clarifying EAGER’s role and the role of external support, and aim to manage expectations of EAGER’s support.

## 2. EAGER Overview

EAGER is a girls' education and empowerment project funded by FCDO through the GEC's LNGB funding window.<sup>2</sup> This four-year project (February 2019 - January 2023<sup>3</sup>) is implemented through a consortium of four partners (International Rescue Committee (IRC), Restless Development, Concern Worldwide, and BBC Media Action) working in 10 districts of Sierra Leone (Western Area Urban(WAU), Bo, Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, Koinadugu, Kono, Port Loko, Pujehun and Tonkolili).

EAGER engages OOS adolescent girls aged 13-17<sup>4</sup> who either never attended or dropped out of school, and therefore have not learned basic literacy and numeracy skills. The project proactively seeks to include girls with disabilities, girls who are pregnant, girls who are already mothers, girls who have married early, and girls who are head of their own households. Many of these existing barriers were exacerbated by the 2014 Ebola outbreak as well as more recently, and during the project timeline, COVID-19.

The EAGER consortium worked in 274 communities in Cohort 1 and 381 communities in Cohort 2 (some were a continuation of Cohort 1 communities), aiming to reach approximately 27,000 adolescent girls by the end of Cohort 2. Furthermore, the project trained 919 Mentors within the four years of implementation and the two programme cycles.<sup>5</sup> These female volunteer Mentors were recruited from the same communities as implementation to work with girls and are also considered programme beneficiaries in the sense that they have had opportunities to engage in ongoing learning and leadership opportunities not otherwise available to them. For many, this was their first formal work experience. Whilst volunteer Facilitators also had significant growth opportunities through EAGER trainings and coaching, they are not considered beneficiaries because they had previous education and experience, and the majority are men.

The project aims to empower adolescent girls by significantly improving their learning outcomes for functional literacy, numeracy, and financial literacy, as well as life skills through a carefully tailored 8-month learning programme led by trained Mentors and Facilitators.<sup>6</sup> The project uses a gender transformative approach to encourage girls to reach beyond the limitations they have experienced as girls. To guide them to think more concretely about positive changes they can make in their own lives, the project created an Empowerment Plan template where girls can write a Learning Goal, Household Goal, Community Goal, and Financial Goal of their own choosing. By the time girls complete the learning programme, they will have each completed their own Empowerment Plan with support from their Mentors and Facilitators. Graduating girls who have an approved Empowerment Plan receive a small conditional cash transfer (NSLE 300 or approximately 23 GBP) to use toward their financial goal in addition to an Empowerment Package, which includes a selection of items which aim to support girls during and beyond the Transition period. This package includes one *lappa* (traditional cloth), one solar light, one bucket (with a lid and tap), and one lockbox with a lock.

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<sup>2</sup> Through a consortium led by the IRC via a Consortium Coordination Unit, implementing partners (IRC, Concern Worldwide, Restless Development, and BBC Media Action) 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.

<sup>3</sup> At the time of the finalization of this report, the project had secured a no-cost extension up to March 2023.

<sup>4</sup> Please see footnote on page 6 for reference.

<sup>5</sup> Following the Inception Phase in year 1, the first Cohort of 7,500 adolescent girls started sessions in 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 expanded into 392 new communities and works with a second Cohort of approximately 19,800 adolescent girls.

<sup>6</sup> The learning programme underwent extensive restructuring/adaptation due to COVID-19 and adaptive management via project learning. While the original design planned an 11-month learning programme, Cohort 1 experienced a longer timeframe due to a 5-month gap in programming followed by review sessions, reduced hours (from 2 hours to 45 minutes) and reduced days for sessions. Another major design shift was to focus on two cohorts rather than three during the 4-year timeline.

During this 8-month Transition Period (which goals may stretch well beyond) during which girls implement their Empowerment Plans, 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. Furthermore, Mentors encouraged girls in each community to form their own Girls' Clubs at the end of the learning programme as a way to maintain the protective social networks built during the EAGER project, foster girls' leadership, encourage their continued engagement with Mentors, and continue to build and create safe spaces for themselves. While EAGER provides assets such as a football, a Bluetooth speaker, and an SD card with a selection of the EAGER radio shows to encourage participation, the Clubs function independently and are at-will for the girls (it was not mandatory that they set them up). 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 further empower themselves. Evidence in this report suggests that this was also an opportunity for Mentors to leverage their own new skills to continue their own empowerment journeys.

See Annex 1 for a more detailed overview of EAGER and the Sierra Leone context.

# 3. Post-Endline Research Approach and Methodology

## Objectives and Timeline

The Post-Endline research consisted of a “deep-dive” exercise that captured insights on changes and challenges in girls’ and Mentors’ lives one year after the learning programme activities ended and the Endline research was conducted. During that Endline research point (data collection from July - August 2021 with publishing of findings in April 2022), most EAGER Cohort 1 girls were actively and excitedly pursuing their Empowerment Plans with enhanced skills, confidence, and autonomy in their households and communities due to the EAGER programme. Also at that time, Mentors reported feeling empowered from their EAGER work. The Post-Endline research followed up with a small sample of girls and Mentors in August 2022 to see if and how those positive changes had endured one year on.

Figure 1: Post-Endline timeline



Four key themes and associated research questions (Table 1) guided the Post-Endline research.

Table 1: Post-Endline Research Questions<sup>7</sup>

Key Themes	Post-Endline Research Question
Beneficiary resilience to shocks and stressors—specifically, assets nurtured by EAGER to help increase girls’ resilience.	1. The extent to which EAGER has enhanced beneficiaries’ resilience in the context of various shocks and stressors in their environment.
Beneficiary perspectives on and experiences with her Empowerment Plan from inception to Post-Endline.	2. Were girls’ Transition and Empowerment Plans appropriate, contextually specific, and potentially sustainable in the first place?
Beneficiary perceptions of support from others, including within the household and community.	3. One year on, how do beneficiaries perceive the degree to which they are supported, or not, by members of their household and community?
Beneficiary confidence levels, positive and negative drivers.	4. What has been the outcome of EAGER on beneficiaries’ confidence over time?

<sup>7</sup> Questions 1 and 2 have been swapped from what appeared in the Summary Approach Document as it improved clarity in the presentation of the findings to discuss them in this revised order.

## Methodological Overview

This section provides an overview of the methods used for the Post-Endline. The full methodology and tools are provided in Annex 3. The Post-Endline used a qualitative in-depth case study approach (Life-Course Interviews) among a small sample of EAGER girls and Mentors (nine and three, respectively). This illustrated a spectrum of their potential Life-Course scenarios and allowed researchers to gain a holistic understanding of those girls' lives a year on from the end of the EAGER learning programme.

The Post-Endline research included data collection from three EAGER Cohort 1 programme communities from separate districts. The three communities for the Post-Endline research were purposively selected among the 10 qualitative data collection communities visited during each of the EAGER evaluation points, aiming to represent the broad variety of communities that EAGER served. Table 2 provides an overview of community characteristics that informed sample selection.

*Table 2: District and community features*

District Features			Community Features		
Name	% Food insecure (2020) <sup>8</sup>	EAGER Partner	Urban/Rural	Relative services accessibility <sup>9</sup>	Other notable features
WAU	50% (Medium)	Concern Worldwide	Urban	High	Urban environment near capital (Freetown)
Kailahun	67% (High)	Restless Development	Rural	Medium	Conservative Muslim
Kono	60% (Medium/High)	International Rescue Committee	Rural	Low	Endline report finds secret society <sup>10</sup> barriers to girls' mobility

A small purposive sample of respondents in each community allowed the Post-Endline team to explore girls' and Mentors' experiences since the learning programme ended via the Life-Course Interviews method; this enables a considerably more in-depth and open-ended approach than concise semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) or focus group discussions that reach a broader sample. Furthermore, in each community, non-beneficiary respondents participated in the more structured KIIs to further build out the case studies and triangulate data points. Accordingly, the following groups were sampled via the relevant research tools:

- In-depth case study interviews (Life-Course Interviews) with EAGER girls
- In-depth case study interviews (Life-Course Interviews) with EAGER Mentors (interviewed as benefiting from the program)
- In-depth contextual interviews (KIIs) with EAGER girls' caregivers or partners/husbands
- In-depth contextual interviews with Mentors (as part of the EAGER girls' support system)
- In-depth contextual interviews with female community leaders/Mammy Queens

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Country Team in Sierra Leone (2020), June 2020, p. 29.

<sup>9</sup> The determination of relative access was based on the community profiles conducted as part of the EAGER Baseline Evaluation.

<sup>10</sup> Secret societies in Sierra Leone are gendered and cultural spaces that influence decisions about community wellbeing such as the promulgation of laws and community practices—including early marriage and female genital mutilation.

Table 3: Summary of KIIs conducted by location

District of Community Location	Beneficiary Case Studies	KIIs for Context	Total # Respondents
WAU	3 girls, 1 Mentor (Total 4 individuals)	1 caregiver/partner per EAGER girl (1x3) 1 Community Leader 1 Mentor (interviewed about her role providing EAGER services) (Total 5 individuals)	9 people
Kailahun	3 girls, 1 Mentor (Total 4 individuals)	1 caregiver/partner per EAGER girl (1x3) 1 Community Leader 1 Mentor (interviewed about her role providing EAGER services) (Total 5 individuals)	9 people
Kono	3 girls, 1 Mentor (Total 4 individuals)	1 caregiver/partner per EAGER girl (1x3) 1 Community Leader 1 Mentor (interviewed about her role providing EAGER services) (Total 5 individuals)	9 people
Total	12 beneficiary case studies (9 girls and 3 Mentors)	15 context KIIs (9 caregivers/partner, 3 Community Leaders, 3 Mentors)	27 people

The research team contracted Dalan Development Consultants (Sierra Leone) to conduct the Post-Endline research, given their good performance in conducting research for the Baseline, Midterm, and Endline Evaluations. DT Global lead researchers conducted a three-day training that involved a morning session where Dalan qualitative researchers viewed training videos (PowerPoint with audio), reviewed the associated data collection tools, discussed with their team, and came up with any clarification questions. In the afternoon, DT Global lead researchers joined virtually for a live session with the Dalan researchers to answer questions and conduct simulations. All the qualitative data collectors had worked on previous EAGER evaluations. They were well-versed in the EAGER project and had established relationships with staff. This familiarity allowed for a streamlined training approach and moreover, fostered the ability to engage deeply with participants as they already had established a rapport with them. Topics covered in the training videos and session included:

- Overview of EAGER and Post-Endline questions, method, sampling
- Research ethics and safeguarding
- Contextual KII method and tools
- Life-Course Interview method and tools
- Data transcription and entry processes

Data collection took place over two days per community. DT Global Lead Researchers conducted data analysis of the qualitative data, prepared individual case studies for each girl, and summarised key findings in this report.

## Limitations of the Research

Limitations and mitigation strategies included:

- **Analytical challenge in examining Cohort 1 only.** This examination of the longer-term impacts on some Cohort 1 girls does not reflect the evaluation-influenced programmatic changes to Cohort 2 that may have already been made in response to findings from the external Midterm and Endline Evaluations. Therefore, findings may not be reflective of what would be found in a Cohort 2 study; accordingly, recommendations made from these findings may have already been put into place and are not relevant for Cohort 2 nor reflective of EAGER's overall progress. The study places great value on project responses to recommendations to demonstrate programme learning. Relatedly, the recommendations emerging from this examination of Cohort 1 also may be no longer relevant, applicable, or feasible for EAGER to implement due to the upcoming close-out of the project. The recommendations may be viewed as applicable for projects of a similar type in Sierra Leone that include a Transition period, or elsewhere given appropriate contextualisation. That said, the girls' reflections on their experiences one year after starting their Transition, alongside perspectives from Mentors and caregivers, provides useful insights for sustainability and potential future scaling.
- **Delays/interruptions in field team training and data collection.** The first day of virtual training in which the full field team was supposed to gather at Dalan offices was temporarily disrupted due to unrest (and resulting curfews) in Freetown in mid-August, making it unsafe for team members to move. All team members were sent links to the training videos for the day and asked to review and then to join for a live session to discuss and practice the methods. However, poor internet connectivity prevented many from viewing the videos in full and prevented others from joining live. To ensure that everyone could access the materials, a new training day was added that weekend, when the full team was able to gather at Dalan to view the downloaded videos and then have the live sessions with DT Global. Departure to the field was, as a result, delayed by one day which did not present any challenges to the field team nor the communities.
- **Sampled participants not available in communities.** EAGER local staff assisted in mobilising the sampled research participants (e.g., the EAGER girls selected using the criteria outlined above, and their partners or caregivers), but, the girls selected were in some cases not available, nor were the reserves (mostly due to work or family commitments, but detailed reasons were not explored). Still, other EAGER beneficiaries fitting the selection criteria were able to participate (e.g., following demographic selection such as girls who were pregnant or already had children during EAGER). It was therefore not possible for the research to represent all subgroups as intended (in particular, girls with disabilities), and there has likely been bias introduced in that the individuals available at the time may be systematically different than those who were not (e.g., those who were not available may have been traveling for business at the time perhaps indicating more vibrant businesses or alternatively that girls were not available because their partners or caregivers did not allow them to participate in an interview because they had domestic tasks to do). There are many types of bias that could have been introduced in this purposive method with a small sample, but it was not possible to know with certainty what the systematic bias could have been, and rather just to note again that the sample is not representative of all EAGER girls, their caregivers/partners, and Mentors.
- **Despite the research team's efforts, no girls with disabilities participated in this research.** Identifying girls with disabilities for the research was a challenge documented throughout the evaluations (see for example Endline Evaluation pp.30-31). For the Post-Endline, the team



selected respondents from lists of girls in each community with the intention of purposefully selecting girls with disabilities. However, across the three communities visited for Post-Endline, only one girl was identified as having a disability. This girl was selected; however, she was not available to be interviewed at the arranged time and therefore is not represented in this study.

- **Data is substantially richer around financial goals as compared to household, learning, community goals.** Though the girls' Empowerment Plans consisted of at least one of each type of goal, and interviews with girls aimed to learn about each type of goal, most girls emphasised and elaborated only on their financial goals. This is understandable given the economic situation of girls, and the reality that many of the most tangible barriers they faced were financial. Still, the lack of data and analysis around the non-financial goals should not be seen as a reflection of girls not having and achieving these goals, but rather that the data was not sufficiently rich to elaborate much on them.
- **Limited details in some interviews.** As expected in qualitative research, there were some instances in which it was difficult for enumerators to solicit detailed responses from interviewees. This occurred in interviews involving both girls and their female caregivers. This could indicate both a challenge in constructing and expressing content (even in a local language), or underlying power dynamics (particularly for adolescent girls) that may make it challenging to talk about their personal lives with interviewers that were not from their local area, and whom they were less familiar with. Furthermore, it was not always apparent whether the interviewee did not want to answer the question, or whether the interviewee simply needed the researcher to clarify the question. Researchers anticipated this challenge, and the team covered it as part of the enumerator training (e.g., to identify discomfort and therefore stop asking the question, or to rephrase the question). In the transcripts, it is evident that researchers were successful in navigating this challenge. Still, when they made multiple attempts to rephrase questions to respondents to try to solicit the desired information, this was not always successful. Furthermore, the data collection team were trained to never start an interview for which they had not received informed consent from the participant (which did not occur with any of the Post-Endline participants), and to end interviews for which the participant was evidently uninterested or reluctant to speak (in which case interviews were condensed or cut short). Because of limited participant engagement (because of limited participant engagement (attributed to aforementioned contextual factors)), some interviews lacked detail and, when this occurred during interviews with EAGER girls, the associated case study was therefore limited in depth. Where available and deemed reliable (because a girl had referenced it herself), researchers used additional information from caregivers, partners, Mentors, and community leaders as part of their reports to enrich the details of the Life Story for a particular EAGER girl.
- **Difficulty triangulating some information provided by girls and their caregivers/partners.** In some cases, information reported by girls was contradicted by testimony provided by their caregivers/partners. In these cases, the team relied on the girl's report of her situation in line with the programme's emphasis of putting the girls' voice at the centre. In some cases, a girl referenced a situation but did not elaborate on it. In these cases, if a caregiver/partner had elaborated on the same situation, the researchers relied upon and reported that information. There are multiple possible reasons for the discrepancies in stories. Possibly, the caregivers or partners were simply unaware of the present goals and motivations of the girl, given their own activities and lives or a lack of communication on these matters. For those taking a more active interest in the girls, the evaluation team notes these are subjective opinions on what girls should do, and there may be vested interests in framing opinions to share with the interviewer, whether that is to show the value of the program or ask for additional support.

## 4. Key Findings

This section presents responses to research questions, beginning with a high-level summary and ending with precise recommendations that serve the IRC, other implementing partners, or National Government with a specific focus on OOS adolescent girls' education and in particular the process of transition from learning programmes.

### EAGER Context

According to the 2022 Sustainable Development Report, Sierra Leone ranks 146<sup>th</sup> out of 163 countries, with a score of 53 (out of 100) on the statistical performance index for Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>11</sup> The most recent data compiled in the report indicates that 36.1% of Sierra Leone's population is living under the poverty threshold of US\$1.90 a day, and 70% under US\$3.20 per day (2022 data); 26.2% of the population's food intake is insufficient to meet dietary energy requirements (2019 data). The maternal mortality rate of 1,120 per 100,000 live births (2017 data) remains extremely high, as does the under-5 mortality rate of 107.8 per 1,000 live births (2020 data).

Sierra Leone's adolescent fertility rate of 102 births per 1,000 girls ages 15 to 19 (2018 data) is also much higher than the long-term objective of 2.5.<sup>12</sup> According to the country's 2013 Demographic and Health Survey, 13% of girls are married by their 15th birthday and 39% of girls before their 18th birthday. Teenage pregnancy is a key contributor of Sierra Leone's high maternal mortality rate, one of the highest in the world globally,<sup>13</sup> as well as a primary factor in more girls dropping out of school at primary stage than boys. A lack of education alongside early marriage and teenage pregnancy impact other development outcomes.<sup>14</sup> Gender-based violence is prevalent in Sierra Leone: 61% of females aged 15-49 have been subject to physical violence since age 15.

There are also critical shortages in the skilled health workforce, with staffing gaps for higher-skilled cadres such as doctors, specialist nurses, and midwives. Sierra Leone experienced 11 years of civil war (1991-2002), several humanitarian crises including Ebola virus disease outbreak, polio outbreaks, COVID-19, flash floods, and landslides which have resulted in displacement of people and deaths that place additional burdens on an already overstretched and weakened health system.<sup>15</sup>

In the recent past, women have welcomed and initiated significant advances in the economy as they continue to serve a key part in ensuring their households' survival. Women tend to perform more than 60% of the agricultural work necessary for food production in the nation in rural areas. However, restriction measures put in place in March 2020 because of Covid-19, including lockdowns, movement restrictions and market closures led to income losses among farmers, especially women farmers because of the lack of access to markets and agricultural inputs.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, changes in context during 2022 as a result of the economic crisis leading to rampant inflation has had significant negative impact on economic hardship and local economic development.<sup>17</sup>

EAGER thus operates in a context in which communities are facing severe economic challenges resulting in food insecurity (73% percent of Sierra Leone's population is food insecure), among which, 11% of households are severely food insecure, and 62% are moderately food insecure), with inflation at 17.59%, up by 0.94 percent point from 16.65% in January 2022. To put it into more context,

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<sup>11</sup> [Sustainable Development Report](#), 2022.

<sup>12</sup> [Sustainable Development Report](#), 2022.

<sup>13</sup> H. Mason, [Ending Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy in Sierra Leone](#), UNICEF, September 2017.

<sup>14</sup> Y. Kiendrebeogo, Q.W. Tuesday, [The Power of Investing in Girls in Sierra Leone](#), Brookings Institute, September 2020.

<sup>15</sup> UNFP, [Sierra Leone](#), 2022.

<sup>16</sup> I.S. Bangura, [Sierra Leone: Covid-19 Impacted Activities of Women Farmers in Kambia District](#), Premier Media, September 2021.

<sup>17</sup> WFP, Market Prices Bulletin, Q3 2022

according to the 2020 Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis, over 4.7 million people were food insecure of which some 963,000 were severely food insecure. Over half a million people were added to the count of food insecure people since 2015.<sup>18</sup> Through this section, the evaluation team highlights the complex factors in which EAGER is operating. These factors bear varying degrees of influence on girls' empowerment projects in Sierra Leone.

## Research Question 1

### To what extent has EAGER enhanced beneficiaries' resilience in the context of various shocks and stressors in their environment?

**Summary:** The Post-Endline showed that girls were overwhelmingly positive about their emotional, social, and economic empowerment—critical assets that contribute to resilience from shocks and stressors—as compared to before EAGER. This empowerment was noted at the Endline Evaluation point and appears to have endured in the intervening period: all the girls interviewed indicated that they were economically, socially, and emotionally better off today than they had been before EAGER. Financial empowerment, whether it be having savings or having the ability to earn money using the skills learnt from EAGER, has helped girls withstand shocks and stressors by enabling them to cover costs associated with illness (their own or a family member's), loss of relatives, poor harvests, unstable market conditions, and pregnancy. Psychosocial (emotional and social) empowerment has further engendered in many girls the confidence to succeed, or at least persist in their efforts to do so, even when circumstances are difficult.

Indeed, all girls continued to face challenges in their lives, and some found themselves in situations where they had no more money for their business, and/or nobody to aid them. However, all shared examples of when they had endured a difficult time but, as is evident from their stories, all expressed that they were able to recover. Notably, all reported that they were better off at the time of Post-Endline interviewing as compared to before EAGER, a strong indicator of EAGER girls' enhanced resilience in a volatile environment.

**All girls and Mentors interviewed were very clear about the positive impact that the EAGER Learning and Transition phases had on their lives.** As they had reported at Endline, six months or more after graduation, EAGER girls reported that they were continuing to work toward their empowerment goals and, despite some hardship, were financially stronger than when they had just enrolled in EAGER. Many of the girls had started micro businesses and despite ups and downs, were proud of their achievements. Most girls noted the increased sense of self-respect and confidence they gained because of EAGER.

*“With the business, I can easily multiply my capital by turning 500 Le into 1000 Le... Before EAGER, I was just sitting at home doing nothing, but now I am doing something that can give me income, and I am also socially better. Now I can talk in public unlike before.” (EAGER girl, Kailahun)*

Moreover, Mentors (as will be seen below) also noted the positive impact that EAGER had on their lives. As with the girls, many benefitted from starting up micro businesses.

Both the EAGER girls and Mentors attributed the positive impact specifically to the literacy and numeracy skills obtained during the learning phase, which they explained continued to be helpful in their lives. Also, a discrete contributor to girls' enhanced resilience beyond confidence-building and skills acquisition was the emphasis that the EAGER Financial literacy sessions place on the value and

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<sup>18</sup> [Sierra Leone Food Security Monitoring System Report](#), Government of Sierra Leone and World Food Programme, February 2022.

practice of savings. At Endline, EAGER project staff underlined that setting aside a small amount of cash for emergencies is a component of the curriculum that reinforces the value of thinking and planning ahead. Similarly, many girls found success in putting money aside through a village savings and loan practice (locally referred to as VLSA or *Osusu*).

The Endline Evaluation also specifically identified the positive impact EAGER had on girls' communication skills, namely, skills around communicating assertively, respectfully, and clearly. This contributed to their ability and propensity to try to resolve disputes within the household and the community, whether this involved themselves or they were supporting others. At Post-Endline, girls continued utilising these enhanced communication skills for positive ends, according to both girls and their caregivers/partners:

*"[EAGER] played a great role in my life when I learned about assertive communication. I can also settle disputes because I know how to communicate with people." (EAGER girl, Kono)*

*"Before she was wild, quick to anger with her colleagues. She is now calmed down, never quarrelling with her friends. If anyone offends her, she will come and complain to me to warn the individual." (Caregiver, WAU<sup>19</sup>)*

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When asked about the Transition Period and the preparation of their Empowerment Plans, the girls were most confident speaking about their financial goals. As mentioned previously, Empowerment Plans also contained learning, community, and household goals written by the girls and signed off by their Mentors and Life Skills Officers before they graduated. The emphasis on financial goals in this section reflects what the girls spoke about when being interviewed about all the goals in their Empowerment Plans, and not an indication that they did not have those goals in the first place.

Similar findings were also reported in the Endline, in which the analysis suggested that girls' limited access to capital and opportunities to earn money for themselves before the programme—as well as the in-depth coaching girls received during their Financial Literacy sessions on the development of financial goals—resulted in more motivation from the girls to put emphasis on this goal. Findings from this research suggest a similar trend. In describing the financial goals, all girls emphasised the role EAGER had in helping them to pursue income generating activities, noting the acquisition of financial management and business skills, working with Mentors to prepare and follow through with Empowerment Plans, and the Le 300,000 cash grant:

*"[Doing business] is somehow easy, even if it is Le 500 you can make it Le 10,000. That is why I placed all my focus on business, and I can see that business is good for me... EAGER has come and changed me for good. I didn't know how to do business before, but through the help of EAGER, I know how to do business now." (EAGER girl, Kailahun)*

*"I was taught how to manage finances, how to start up a business... Before this time I couldn't do business, but I can do business now...[Today] business is very good...whenever I realise a profit, I will keep the profit and do a different thing [for my business]." (EAGER girl, Kono)*

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At the time of Post-Endline research, all the girls interviewed described themselves as substantially more active in terms of pursuing an income generating activity as compared to what they report they

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<sup>19</sup> Note that we have redacted the names of individuals interviewed for this research for confidentiality. In individual case study reports, we used replacement names.

were doing before EAGER. That the girls have businesses and continue to be motivated to operate them is notable given that the current economic context and high inflation make it extremely difficult to operate a business, let alone a successful business. These income generating activities and their status are summarised in Table 4.

*Table 4: EAGER girls' livelihood activities before and since EAGER*

	Livelihood activities before EAGER	Current active income generation activity	Status of income generation activity
<b>EAGER girl, Kono</b>	Subsistence farming and gathering wood to sell from forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural and selling produce</li> <li>• Goat-rearing</li> <li>• Security guard</li> </ul>	Agricultural activities have been lucrative such that she has purchased a goat; she is also saving to buy more goats. She has also gained a job working as a security guard with a women's empowerment organisation.
<b>EAGER girl, Kailahun</b>	Subsistence farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selling cassava and groundnuts that she grows on her farm</li> <li>• Farming with her partner</li> </ul>	Her former business set up after EAGER (tailoring) is not active now because she reported she spent the profits and capital on paying for health needs and food, so she is relying on farming again. She still hopes to re-start her business and pursue tailoring..
<b>EAGER girl, Kailahun</b>	Sometimes farming 'in swamp' but mostly 'idle'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selling assorted items (onions, pepper, Maggi-brand bouillon cubes)</li> <li>• Making and selling baked goods</li> <li>• Hairdressing</li> </ul>	Her business is up and down but continues such that she has been able to move into her own accommodation. Hairdressing is not profitable/She often does it for free.
<b>EAGER girl, Kailahun</b>	Farming and selling produce with mother	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making and selling doughnuts</li> <li>• Agriculture and selling produce, with mother as back-up</li> </ul>	Her doughnut business has ups and downs, but generally goes well; in slow business times she relies on agricultural activities.
<b>EAGER girl, Kono</b>	Helping mother with domestic work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making and selling flour cakes</li> <li>• Taking tailoring classes</li> </ul>	Business is "very good"; her profit was used to enrol in tailoring classes.
<b>EAGER girl, Kono</b>	Working on family farm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selling soap and homemade fried cake</li> </ul>	She has been successful such that she has used money to buy a sewing machine and enrol in tailoring classes; she also goes to school.
<b>EAGER girl, WAU</b>	Domestic work at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hairdressing (earns money plaiting)</li> <li>• Selling sweets/biscuits</li> <li>• Also in school (basic ed)</li> </ul>	Both businesses are going well, but hairdressing is more lucrative.
<b>EAGER girl, WAU</b>	Domestic work at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selling bananas and groundnuts</li> <li>• Awaiting tailoring course to start</li> </ul>	She started a successful small business recently after her prior business stopped earning money. Ahe saved money to start a new one and enrol in tailoring classes to earn money from tailoring.
<b>EAGER girl, WAU</b>	Living on street or with extended family; prostitution or "boyfriends"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making and selling cucumber soup</li> <li>• Taking tailoring classes</li> </ul>	She has been successful such that she often supports her family members; can purchase things she needs; she is practicing tailoring when she can so she can eventually earn money to do it.

**By enabling girls to pursue income generating activities, EAGER has helped build girls' self-sufficiency.** Many girls demonstrated greater financial independence to provide for themselves, for their children if they have them, and in some cases, to provide assistance to their parents/caregivers:

*"The business is very much important to me because it is through this small business that I am able to take care of myself and my child in terms of feeding and clothing." (EAGER beneficiary, WAU)*

*"Before and after classes I take care of my family [parents]...It is a good thing, because they are my family and I have to take great care of them for me to have my parental blessings before they will die and it is a good thing... It is important to take care of them because anywhere they go they will talk that good name of me, and some people will tell me that, 'Your mother is talking good things about you' and I am always happy about that and she will bless me always. And I am not married presently, except when I do my little business then I support my mother and myself... That has shown that I am caring and responsible and I will have the good name and blessings and I believe that my children too will do the same thing to me when I am old." (EAGER girl, Kono)*

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The ability of girls to contribute to their families was noted as a positive achievement by parents/caregivers, most likely one of critical importance given the absence of social safety nets. While family structure is historically patrilineal in nature, in theory making women dependent on their husbands or male members of their families for sustenance, the intense poverty faced by men and women in Sierra Leone may be a key factor in shifting this norm. In reality, many women work to support their families, though men may control household resources.

This ongoing commitment was frequently acknowledged by parents/caregivers during discussions.

*"I am happy now...Before this time, I was tight [stressed], but now I am free...because [girl's name] can do a little business now...she is finding money for herself now, she is helping me with some little things." (Caregiver, Kono)*

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Another said:

*"Well, out of the business she is doing, she has been able to also support the family whenever things are rough with me financially and [I] cannot afford to provide for the family at a particular point in time. She will provide food for the family; she has been the one taking care of most of her needs without bothering me...My wife is developmentally oriented. She is someone who can get things done no matter how many challenges she may face. She will always get things done in a positive way." (Partner, Kailahun)*

*"She is no longer bothering me by asking me to give her money to add to the one she already has, in order for her to buy what she wants to buy at that moment...Sometimes she assists me with money when things are not going well with me. This is the reason I am saying that she has improved on her business. As a child, she is now coming to my aid when I am in need, instead of me as father giving money to her." (Caregiver, WAU)*

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Desk review research shows that these findings may be explained by Sierra Leone's collectivistic society (with a score of 20), which manifests in close commitments among a family, extended family,

or extended relationships which hold loyalty as paramount to societal rules or regulations and upholding of shared responsibility for members of the group.<sup>20</sup>

**Difficult context and extent of girls' marginalization results in limited ability to withstand shocks and stresses, though they do indicate improved resilience because of EAGER.** Notwithstanding many positive examples of success, the girls operate in a volatile economy with high risk of shocks and stressors. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, global economic crisis, and the inflation rate in Sierra Leone in the last six months (estimated 28.2% in August and 29.5% in July of 2022)<sup>21</sup>, the situation for many girls has deteriorated since EAGER began in February 2019. Therefore, many girls face frequent challenges, with varying degrees of success in overcoming them. This ongoing struggle is documented in Table 4 above showing the current livelihood status of some girls, but all girls noted similar challenges. For those operating micro businesses, they frequently mention difficult market situations, for example:

*"I have gone far on [my business] and I can say thanks to God because I am improving on it little by little... Prices are going up every day, so it is very difficult for us the business people. When you go to the market, everything has become expensive, therefore we make little or no profit in our business...it is not enough, so I need more support."* (EAGER girl, Kailahun)

*"When I am sick, I have to take from the little I have saved to find medication...the money given to me was very small due to the cost of items in our country...even transportation is a concern in which way what we use to pay to go to town and buy goods is now more than twice before."* (EAGER girl, Kono)

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The impact of this volatility may be exacerbated by girls' still-evolving financial literacy. . While girls do report improvements, the evidence suggests that there are possible opportunities for that success to be even more pronounced or sustainable.

For example, most girls operating small income-generating activities are unable to retain significant business profits for future business investments, but rather must use that cash on family emergencies or other needs. Alongside market instability, this Post-Endline study finds that some of the girls' businesses have become unsustainable and, as can be seen in Table 4 above, they are seeking alternative income-generating activities or returning to their previous engagements including farming. This reflects resilience, which is critical for operating in amidst challenges and recovering emotionally and financially from setbacks. However, there may be opportunities for further enhancing their resilience such that they can recover more quickly or strongly than before.

For example, a case study of one EAGER beneficiary from WAU shows how she initially started a business from EAGER funds that was very successful. However, as a result of inflation, that business faced challenges and she was forced to close it:

*"Yes, she was doing well, she was getting a lot of profit at that time. We started buying certain things for the home when she was doing business that we were not buying before. We were able to buy rice and other things that we need in the home. She was really doing well in the business, and she was really serious with it...but due to the hardship in the country she has abandoned it, she has no money left."* (Partner, WAU)

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<sup>20</sup> [Sierra Leone Culture](#), Hofstede Insights.

<sup>21</sup> O. Camara, [Sierra Leone Raises Benchmark Rate to 17% to Curb Inflation](#), Bloomberg, October 4, 2022.

However, since that business closed, the girl has demonstrated persistence by starting a new business selling bananas and boiled groundnuts and has enrolled in a tailoring course. In another example, a girl in Kailahun described how her petty trading business selling agricultural produce had not been doing well, and she was presently only engaged in subsistence farming with her partner. Still, she saw potential for being successful again:

*“I am still finding ways as to how I could have a tailoring machine and, as for the business, I am working hard to find a place like a market stall where I will sit down and sell palm oil. Although, there is no money, but I am still working towards achieving my goals....I [continue to] want to sell palm oil, but I don’t have anything to start with, therefore, I need money to start my business.” (EAGER girl, Kailahun)*

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With respect to health emergencies, over half of the girls noted that health concerns caused them additional expenses (saving, assets or money that was needed to procure additional items for sale). This finding is not surprising given the economic vulnerability of EAGER’s target population, as well as the significant disease burden of malaria and other illnesses in Sierra Leone—including the particular vulnerability of adolescents to<sup>22</sup> meningitis, lower respiratory infections, sickle cell disorders, and others. Such urgent needs will often take precedence and may impede the realisation of other goals. It also reflects consideration among girls that taking care of their own and their families’ health is a necessary immediate and long-term investment.

*“Sickness is a challenge to the growth of your business... I use part of the profit to take care of myself and for medication when I am sick.” (EAGER girl, Kailahun)*

*“I have stopped selling because there is no capital anymore... I used to take care of myself and my children when we got sick, and we fed ourselves out of the money.” (EAGER girl, Kailahun)*

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Notwithstanding these critical concerns, it is important to note that before EAGER, the girls would not have had the financing resources to cover their health or other crucial needs. With those income-generating activities still ongoing at the time of the Post-Endline, EAGER had clearly improved the ability of girls to contribute to the health and well-being of themselves and their households, and their resilience to keep up their motivation and start recovering financially from setbacks.

As EAGER’s project response in the Endline Evaluation acknowledged, “Emergencies do happen... Although the Transition funds may go towards an emergency; it is empowering that a girl has the funds from cash transfers she receives to support herself during this time. She is deciding on how she is using her money, using the skills she has learned in the programme” (p. 149).

Moreover, as discussed further below, girls perceived that they experienced many existing challenges with the goals they had been actively pursuing, including lack of time to pursue multiple goals alongside existing domestic responsibilities and lack of assets which they noted impeded their progress. There is evidence to suggest that some girls do not fully distinguish their headline goals (of which they select four as part of their empowerment plans) and the intermediate steps that they set out to achieve each of these goals (which can involve multiple different activities). This may lead to challenges in prioritising steps and an unwillingness to consider alternate pathways to goals that involve different intermediate steps. This is discussed in more depth below, as are the limitations

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<sup>2222</sup> World Health Organization, Adolescent Health in Sierra Leone, 2018. [www.afro.who.int](http://www.afro.who.int)



posed by their literacy skills and ability to develop more detail to outline the individual steps on their written plans. Yet many girls indicated that they are not ready to drop their goals altogether or replace them with new goals.

*“I don’t even think that [a new goal] is feasible...because my original goals are yet to be met and my interest is more on the business than any other one.”*  
(EAGER girl, Kono)

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While many girls provide examples in which they have overcome obstacles themselves, nearly all of them have also relied to a varying extent on help from others or say that they will be unable to succeed without additional support. This topic is further covered under Research Question 3.

For girls like a 20-year-old mother of two from WAU, who dropped out of school at an early age, EAGER has made a tremendous difference in her life. This girl shared that initially her business was profitable, and that she had gained basic literacy and numeracy skills through the EAGER learning program.

*“The business is very much important to me because it is through this small business that I am able to take care of myself and my child in terms of feeding and clothing”. “I think my life now is far better, because before I joined the EAGER project I knew nothing, I was faced with a lot of challenge, and my friends were always laughing at me. But ever since I joined the EAGER project to now, I feel very comfortable and almost very okay. At least now I can read and write.”*

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These changes may have multiplier effects in terms of direct socio-economic benefits and increased acceptance and aid from family members or caregivers. Thus, there is evidence to indicate that EAGER has had positive knock-on effects for the girls’ children and/or other family members.

## Research Question 2

### **Were girls' Transition and Empowerment Plans appropriate, contextually specific, and potentially sustainable in the first place?**

#### **Summary**

At Endline, most girls claimed to be actively and excitedly pursuing their Empowerment Plans, most of which they described with respect to financial goals, with generally positive reports from girls that the cash grant had been used to start a micro business or enrol in training or further education. At Post-Endline, the research indicates a similar situation, with girls generally emphasising the financial goals that they had set, and accordingly, that they had been pursuing micro businesses.

Although the research demonstrates girls' awareness that they are both financially and emotionally stronger since EAGER and that they appreciate the new concept of goal setting and planning, feelings of disappointment were captured in the research amongst girls who were aspiring for more success. The girls reported that their disappointment stems from not having yet achieved what they hoped they would when drafting their Empowerment Plan. This may suggest that expectations and aspirations may have been slightly unrealistic given the many contextual challenges that girls face, as described in the section above.

This is attributable not to girls' inability to succeed—they have succeeded to some degree and as described in the Endline Evaluation, all had acquired a new and welcome skill toward setting goals—but instead to difficulties setting realistic financial goals in the face of rapidly changing and exacerbated contextual factors set in the Empowerment Plan that may have set them up for some degree of disappointment.

For example, girls' Empowerment Plans often made a vague reference to doing 'business', but generally did not specify what type or size of business they may have within six months or one year. This is likely due to the limitations posed by their literacy skills and ability to develop more detail to outline the individual steps on their written plans (this was also identified in the Endline Evaluation, where it was inferred that girls' conversations with Mentors and Facilitators was not fully reflected in the written plan).<sup>23</sup> Other non-business plans were overly ambitious or only feasible in the longer-term, or lacking feasible steps toward that larger ambitious goal. Nonetheless, it was more important for EAGER that the girls wrote their own plans as the focus remained on girls' own definition and experience of empowerment rather than Mentors and/or Project Officers writing a detailed plan that could not be later read by the girl or that she had not committed to.

#### **Girls gained a strong sense of planning and pursuing a plan, and coupled with increased confidence, they now have a strong basis for success**

It is important to highlight that despite feeling at times disappointed or noting that they did not yet achieve one or more of their goals, a key outcome is that girls display a strong sense of planning and pursuing a plan, and coupled with increased confidence, they now have a strong basis for success. Girls and their caregivers/partners perceived girls to be financially stronger than they were prior to EAGER, referred to viable livelihood strategies, and explicitly noted progress toward one or more of their goals. Yet some simultaneously reported that girls were unsuccessful in achieving their financial goals, as noted above, for several reasons including a difficult economic context in which to start up small business, and overall lack of (but developing) business management skills in the face of health

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<sup>23</sup> Note that the empowerment goals described here are those that the girls articulated verbally during the Post-Endline interviews. The Endline Evaluation report indicated a disconnect between goals that girls had written within their Empowerment Plans and those that girls shared verbally with data collectors during interviews, due likely in part to weak literacy skills.

concerns. In general, this refrain was accompanied by a request for more financial assistance from EAGER or others, namely for more money (or other resources or equipment such as sewing machines).

Caregivers and partners recognised the girls' success in relation to the amount of income generated from their micro businesses and did often note improvements since EAGER in this regard. At the same time, caregivers still highlighted what was lacking. For example, the parent of an EAGER girl in Kailahun said, "The only achievement she has made so far is the fact she is no longer staying with her parents as she is now living on her own." While self-sufficiency (living on her own) is a tremendous measure of success, this was not highly valued by the caregiver as compared to family expectations that monetary contributions be made to support to family expenses.

### **Girls' and community/caregivers' perspectives of what constitutes success**

The above finding points to the need for EAGER to further understand from girls' perspectives what constitutes success and how they may more effectively identify their successes along the way toward a larger and more long-term goal. That way, girls may be more encouraged to build on top of those small but feasible milestone successes toward their larger goals and place failures in their correct perspective as learning milestones. For girls still living with caregivers or living with partners, it is important to discuss with girls how they may realistically and safely inform and include caregivers or partners in their plans in a way that is empowering to the girl, while preserving her safety. By doing so, girls can receive as much assistance as possible and set reasonable expectations for success. Further, expectations of success without some degree of failure are in themselves not realistic. Indeed, expectations of, and preparations for, failure and a willingness to learn from this are a key element of any entrepreneurial endeavour.

For several girls, it was evident that their goals were not always feasible or lacked clear and necessary steps that could be successfully achieved on the path toward the larger goal. This may have contributed to partners' and caregivers' perception that some of the girls were not highly successful. Nonetheless, it is very important to appreciate that key steps or milestones have indeed been achieved even if not articulated in the Empowerment Plans. Since working with Cohort 1, EAGER has been aware of the need to work with girls to set their own goals (e.g., not rely on Mentor's ideas), but also to ensure that these are realistic goals. This is how one EAGER Mentor described her role in helping girls develop their Empowerment Plans:

*"...the goals that they should take they should be the short-term goals. They should do it within or less than one year...it is up to the girl to come up with her own goal that she can feasibly do given her existing constraints... I should not tell them what they want, they should choose what they want, because she is the one that has to achieve them and she is the one that will have to take constraints towards achieving the goals that she wants." (Mentor, Kailahun)*

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### **Multiple long-term and short-term financial goals with high expectations for investment**

In the Empowerment Plan template, the financial goal includes details such as a plan and budget outlining how a girl will spend the cash she will be receiving from EAGER. However, it appears that many girls then set additional goals that also required financial investments, for instance, a sewing machine, without a clear plan or steps for how they would finance them. EAGER project staff noted that that girls were made aware that such longer-term goals would need to be funded through savings or financial assistance from family. Where these inputs were not available, it was understandably difficult for girls to reach these goals within a one-year time period. This may explain why some girls were not attempting to meet their longer-term goals at the point of the Post-Endline.

However, these same girls did not say that they had fully given up hope on their goals. Rather, they specified that they needed additional financial resources to meet these goals, though they were aware that no more EAGER funds were available. A common example of mismatch between the goal and the steps required to achieve it was with respect to tailoring. EAGER girls from WAU, Kono, and Kailahun all learned to sew and had set tailoring as a goal, but reported that they did not possess a sewing machine and therefore dropped tailoring as a livelihood strategy and pursued some form of business instead:

*“I have not achieved anything yet because I don’t have money to buy a tailoring machine and other materials.” (EAGER girl, Kailahun)*

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However, there is one example of a girl who was able to save enough money from her business to buy her own sewing machine. This demonstrates that such a goal was not entirely unrealistic within a one-year period. It is possible that the girls who were unable to pursue tailoring had planned to buy their own sewing machines with profits from their businesses, but then struggled to turn a profit due to various financial difficulties and life circumstances. Again, it is important to note that they had not given up on this goal and may in future buy their own machines as planned. The EAGER project team notes that some of the Girls’ Clubs have started up their own VSLA (*Osusu*), which may be another strategy for reaching these goals.

### **Positive actions taken towards building upon their longer-term financial goals**

The choice of tailoring was a common longer-term goal across the Post-Endline sampled girls. Eight of the nine girls said that tailoring was part of their Empowerment Plan, yet none were earning money from tailoring at the time of Post-Endline, approximately one year on from the sign-off of their Empowerment Plans. Some were taking steps toward earning money from tailoring, for example taking classes or practicing on machines. These responses indicate that tailoring is evidently an in-demand service. Several charity organisations have taught Sierra Leoneans tailoring skills so that beneficiaries can sew school uniforms and perform mending, for which there is great demand.<sup>24</sup> Many participants in these tailoring trainings (male and female) have limited education, and literacy and numeracy skills are considered fundamental for reading, writing down measurements and other details, and keeping accurate business records.<sup>25</sup> Many of the skills that EAGER graduates have learned would empower them to do this work.

The profession offers a decent income to support financial independence, but getting there does take multiple steps, time, and resources to achieve. However, there appeared to be limited practical planning among six of those girls on what steps they could take to keep moving toward their goal. These girls noted that the NSLE 300 (former Le 300,000) grant was insufficient or that EAGER ought to provide them with a machine, which they saw as the only way they could pursue tailoring. It should be noted that when representatives from an organisation perceived to have resources visit a community, it is rare to pass up the opportunity to ask for more support.

This said, three of the girls’ case studies offer important examples of how girls have worked out how to pursue tailoring on their own, using small feasible steps toward that larger goal. For example, one girl in Kono had education, tailoring, and business on her Empowerment Plan, and she reported during her interview that she first pursued business—soap and fried cake selling—and was then able to save enough money to purchase her own sewing machine. Another girl in Kono also had business, tailoring,

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<sup>24</sup> [Women Learn Sewing, Find Hope and Position in Sierra Leone](#), Just Hope International, August 2016.

<sup>25</sup> [Empowered Young People Look to the Future in Sierra Leone](#), Tools for Self-Reliance.

and education on her Empowerment Plan and initially focused on business and had since used that money to enrol in tailoring school. This was a good strategy, as she explains:

*“Recently, it is out of the profit I have been able to pay my tuition for the tailoring... Whenever I make my flour cake to sell, I know I will make some profit. So what I always do is to give the profit I made for the day to my mother for safe keeping. I did this for several months and was able to raise a reasonable amount that encouraged me to enrol in the tailoring training school.” (EAGER girl, Kono)*

Another girl (from Kailahun) noted that whilst she did not have a sewing machine, she continued to try to learn tailoring through borrowing machines belonging to friends. It is unclear whether these intermediate steps toward the tailoring goal were part of each girl’s original Empowerment Plan, or something that evolved afterwards. In either case, these are good examples of creative solutions and proactive steps toward goals, and would be inspiring examples to share with other girls developing plans for tailoring or other activities requiring substantial financial resources to start-up.

During discussions of Endline findings, the EAGER team emphasised to the research team that cash investments were never intended for large purchases as sewing machines. Project staff were aware that the absence of vocational training centres in the majority of rural communities was a barrier to learning specific trades, but recognised the potential of apprenticeships within communities. It is beyond the scope of the Post-Endline research to investigate whether Cohort 2 participants demonstrated an increased understanding of setting goals based on the assets available to them and skills for mapping out the incremental steps towards their goals.

As noted above, multiple girls at Post-Endline set a micro business strategy as part of their goals but provided few details on concrete steps required toward achieving that goal. Table 5 below provides a summary of the goals that girls said they had on their Empowerment Plans. Notable is the number of girls who mentioned only their financial goals.

*Table 5: Empowerment Plan goals, as stated by girls*

	Kailahun (n=3)	Kono (n=3)	WAU (n=3)	Total (n=9)
<b>Financial Goals</b>				
<b>Business (general)</b>	3	3	2	8
<b>Tailoring</b>	3	3	2	8
<b>Hairdressing</b>	1	1	1	3
<b>Soapmaking</b>	0	2	0	2
<b>Non-financial Goals</b>				
<b>Further education</b>	0	2	0	2
<b>Take care of myself</b>	3	0	0	3
<b>Communicate with others</b>	3	0	0	3

### **Economic shocks and stressors impacting building upon financial empowerment goals**

A major factor that has contributed to the challenges faced by the girls in starting up petty trade and other income-generating activities were shocks and stresses experienced by the economy at large and disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable or marginalised. The girls could not have adequately studied the local economy and market context to prepare for external factors including conflict and

inflation. EAGER girls who wanted to pursue a micro business were encouraged to conduct simple market surveys, but this was not always successful at least partly due to information about changing market conditions not being immediately apparent to girls or Mentors during the development phase.

There were some girls who said they had not begun work on some of their goals. Girls perceived that they already had enough challenges with the goals they had been actively pursuing and lacked time to pursue multiple goals (or, more likely, steps towards these goals that they are conflating with the headline goals themselves and therefore being unwilling to take alternate steps to work towards goals) alongside their existing domestic responsibilities. They noted that a lack of financial resources impeded their progress, and kept them from pursuing new goals.

*“I don’t even think that [new goals] is feasible...because my original goals are yet to be met and my interest is more on the business than any other one” (EAGER girl, Kono).*

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As Mentors were already attending the girls’ Financial Literacy sessions to help the facilitators, they were encouraged to learn from the sessions as well. Every Mentor (and Facilitator) received a printed copy of the Empowerment Plan template that they could use to think about and document their own goals. While these were not intended for assessment by EAGER staff, and the volunteers were not provided with start-up cash, the templates encouraged them to internalise these ideas for themselves as well. As seen with the girls, Mentors also noted difficulties they had in pursuing their business goals. A Mentor commenting on her own efforts to pursue a business after EAGER explained how she faced:

*“...a lack of enough financial resources that were supposed to have made things easy. Like for example, if I am sick, I have to take from this little amount from the business to seek for medication and for me to take money again to buy a sewing machine is not easy at all because the money is not enough... it will be difficult for these other plan goals to work well for me due to the available resources and the rise in the cost of every other thing we buy in our country.” (Mentor, Kono)*

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### **Strong hope and resolve among girls to see through long-term financial empowerment goals, though financial and personal challenges remain key impediments**

While all girls noted that one or more of the income-generating ideas they proposed as part of their financial goal in their Empowerment Plan had not seen as much success as they hoped, or they had opted for pursuing opportunities that better suited their circumstances, many still hoped to achieve them rather than dropping them entirely or adopting new ideas instead. For example, a beneficiary from Kailahun included tailoring and business on her Empowerment Plan but had only been able to pursue business because she did not have a sewing machine nor had yet been able to raise funds to purchase one. She says: *“The old plans still remain... I want the machine for the tailoring skill and the tailoring still stands.”* This may well be tied to the commitments that they made to these plans as part of the EAGER training and possibly an indication that they are highly motivated. In some cases, the lack of ability to raise additional funding appears to be an impediment to success as girls are not exploring more viable steps or taking on new goals that the girls’ increasing experience and empowerment may make possible.

### **More success in prioritising financial goals in line with current obligations experienced by girls**

Some girls indicated that they had too many competing responsibilities to successfully take on multiple or especially time-demanding livelihood strategies. Girls showed success in prioritising one goal that was in line with daily obligations and other contextual realities of their local context (described in previous parts of this report). One girl (from Kailahun) successfully dealt with the intensive demands on her farm by focusing mainly on expanding that farm and selling agricultural produce, rather than continuing to try to pursue her other income-generation ideas under her business goal. However, two others (from Kono and Kailahun) suggest that the time required for farming was interfering with time needed to pursue the financial goal set out in their Empowerment Plan.

The findings above are well aligned with those of the Endline Evaluation, and thus EAGER's active efforts in response to the evaluation findings to address these challenges in their work with Cohort 2 is well warranted. For example, the project team noted implementing strategies within March 2022 trainings as well as a new joint Learning Cluster for Cohort 2 volunteers to strengthen training on goal-setting—including, but not limited to, financial goals—to make them even more relevant and flexible to girls' realities. These changes included stronger emphasis on guiding girls towards specific goals within the scope of available resources and improving Mentors' and Facilitators' capacity to aid girls. The project spent more time exploring the concept of goal-setting and special attention was given to the process of identifying clear steps towards goals. Future research (either ongoing monitoring or period assessments or evaluations) could analyse the effectiveness and impact of these improved strategies amongst Cohort 2 girls and compare these with the Post-Endline findings from Cohort 1.

### Research Question 3

## One year on, how do beneficiaries perceive the degree to which they are supported?

### Summary

Girls consistently reported instances of help from caregivers, partners, and community members, including encouragement and financial or other kinds of direct assistance. At the same time, all caregivers/partners indicated they continued to help the girls, and community leaders provided examples of how they and others actively aid them. Degrees of assistance did vary - in some cases, girls were provided with direct financial support (cash or regular resource), while in other cases, they were simply encouraged or not actively discouraged. Still, it is commendable that one year after their involvement, EAGER girls remain supported. The role of community dialogues with community leaders and/caregiver groups has evidently played a positive role in this regard. This reflects a continuation from what was found during the Endline Evaluation when girls also felt generally supported by caregivers, partners, community members and their peers but with varying levels of assistance.

### **External support (in kind or financial) has been helpful in supporting the impact of shocks and stresses on the girls' own lives**

In many instances, both at the time of the Endline and Post-Endline research, the assistance provided to girls (or perception of encouragement) by those around them has been critical to the girls' success in pursuing their Empowerment Plans. Most caregivers and Mentors also recognise that more (both financial and continued mentorship) aid would be helpful for the girls, and the girls (as seen above) have noted the same. Some respondents reflected on examples of how community members, family, or micro business strategies can provide this backing, as in the case of girls who have been successful despite setbacks. Most of the girls also highlighted their peers and friends as key sources of support, which was a key aim of the EAGER Girls' Clubs, as discussed further below.

Whilst beneficiaries provided examples in which they have overcome obstacles to generating income for themselves, as shown in the section responding to Research Question 1, many of them also received direct help from others. This help is critical for managing both shocks (e.g., sudden illness, volatile markets) and ongoing stressors (e.g., time-consuming domestic tasks, poverty, unpredictable weather patterns due to climate change). Sometimes this support appears to be more regular, such as having help from a family member with farming or making products for the business. Other times, the aid is more sporadic, such as getting a loan or cash gift from a community member or family member, or periodically receiving help with household food items.

One young woman from WAU who reported that she has faced traumatic history, was shunned by her family for what she described as her (negative) "past behaviour". She had also faced traumatic loss but joined EAGER and, over time, her self-dependence has grown, and she has been welcomed back by her immediate family. She also provides the family with some financial assistance. Her father explained how he has also helped her, including offering financial assistance. It is interesting to note that this EAGER girl did not expect her father to support her without repayment and thus repaid her father. This indicates a strong sense of responsibility and independence on the part of the girl who has since not borrowed from her father.

*"At one time I came in and lent her some money when she was in need, because most times she will not tell me to give her, instead she will tell me to lend her. I gave her Le 100,000 at that time. Since then, she has not asked me for any money again." (Caregiver, WAU)*

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Girls themselves also often mentioned how caregivers and partners would provide them with material assistance (either regular, once, or sporadic), though others noted they received nothing material. All indicated that they received emotional and moral support from caregivers or others close to them.

*“My parents were assisting me at times not to go to the farm and do my business. They allowed me to move from one community to the other doing my business.”*  
(EAGER girl, Kono)

*“The balance money [additional money used to grow business and enrol in tailoring course] is [from] my boyfriend that helps me in order to achieve my empowerment plans.”* (EAGER girl, WAU)

The community leader in Kono emphasised that typically, girls needed support from caregivers, though some were able to succeed without it:

*“All of these girls succeeded due to the help of their parents with the exception of [girl’s name] who succeeded as a result of hard work and confidence. She was able to add [to] the small resources given to her, by doing cash crop farming for a few months then later harvested and sold to add [to] her business.”* (Community leader, Kono)

Table 6 below summarises the type of support girls received, according to girls and caregivers/partners.

Table 6: Direct and indirect support received by girls, as reported by girls and caregivers/partners

	Kailahun (n=3)	Kono (n=3)	WAU (n=3)
<b>Family or partner provides regular labour/help with business</b>	2	1	0
<b>Financial support (one-time or rarely) from family or partner</b>	2	2	3
<b>Regular financial or material support from family or partner</b>	1	1	2 <sup>26</sup>
<b>Access to community-based loans</b>	2	0	0
<b>Moral support from family</b>	3	3	3
<b>Moral support from community</b>	3	3	3

Mentors also indicated that they felt supported by the community. For example, according to one Mentor in Kailahun, community elders sometimes pay her school fees if she is struggling, although she also relied heavily on her EAGER volunteer stipend as her main form of assistance.

*“When going to school if I do not have school fees, they [elders] are the ones that pay school fees for me. At least they are helping me. Then through the EAGER program they [EAGER} were helping me [with a monthly stipend].”* (Mentor, Kailahun)

<sup>26</sup> According to one girl, she does not get regular material aid from her family; her family, however, attests to providing regular material aid.

Interviews with Mentors and community leaders indicated that there were situations where the activities of other EAGER girls they know (not included in the Post-Endline case studies) were indeed actively restricted by family members, which were outliers also identified in the Endline Evaluation. Further analysis of these instances is provided later in this section.

### **Demonstration of positive change in girls had positive impacts not just for the girls but also for their household**

A notable positive impact of EAGER was that some partners or families that had been initially resistant to the idea of girls' empowerment ended up seeing material and emotional benefits as the girls learned in their sessions and then began pursuing their empowerment goals. For example, all the girls interviewed noted moral and emotional support from family members. This is a reported continuation of girls' perception of multifaceted encouragement reported at Endline. For many partners and caregivers, they demonstrated an observation and therefore understanding that positive change in girls had positive results for girls, but also good for households and community life.

At Endline, for instance, nearly all male partners interviewed expressed satisfaction that the EAGER girl could contribute more practically to the well-being of the household. As a result, many who may have felt uncertain about or opposed to EAGER's activities ended up shifting toward strong agreement with her pursuit of empowerment goals. At Post-Endline, all the sampled girls continue to feel supported to some extent, though certainly some more than others. Similar examples of partners noting material (i.e., financial) contributions to the household and sharing household responsibilities was common. In a previously referenced case study (from WAU), the girl had either left or been ejected from the household to "live on the street" but after EAGER, she had reconciled with her family and was, at the time of research, playing an active and responsible role in family life.

### **Encouragement and support from the community and peers had significant positive impact on success and the continued empowerment of the girls**

Girls reflected on how community members were helpful to their businesses both through investment and purchase of items, in particular:

*"The community do normally check on me by asking me so many questions about the money they gave me to do business, how is it going and that it is helping."  
(EAGER girl, Kailahun)*

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*"The community people were buying from me whatever I sell in the community."  
(EAGER girl, Kono)*

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Respondents reported ways in which girls are supported so that they can conduct their business more safely and effectively. For example, in Kailahun, the community leader explained how:

*"An EAGER beneficiary lost her mother; [she] was so much interested in farming that I volunteered to help her with the brushing [clearing the farm of weeds, etc.] since I know she is a woman and that she may need help when it comes to brushing. I told her I was going to help her with that." (Community leader, Kailahun)*

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The same community leader in Kailahun also explained that in their community there was assistance for EAGER during its implementation, and it persisted:

*“One way the chief has been able to support [EAGER girls] is by making sure that she feels safe within the community while doing her business...I try to make sure that no one disadvantaged them while they go about their normal business.”*  
(Community leader, Kailahun)

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Critically, one Kono community leader notes that receipt of financial aid will only benefit a girl if she, at the same time, takes her future seriously:

*“The reason [business and income has increased with family support] is because they are focused on it. One may support [girls] and they may end up eating all the money so the business does not grow. But they [girls who have succeeded] know where they come from and their businesses have been growing...they supported themselves...EAGER taught them well. If they had not listened, then they would not have learned... If they had not listened well, then they would not have done such a business. They now know how achievement in the future will look.”*  
(Community leader, Kono)

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According to case study participants, peer interactions have also been crucial for building confidence and/self-esteem. Some girls detailed how they have maintained relationships with other EAGER girls up to the time of the Post-Endline data collection. These relationships were enhanced by the EAGER Girls’ Clubs, a voluntary initiative inspired by EAGER but managed entirely by EAGER girls upon graduation. The aim of these clubs is to bring the girls together on a regular basis to keep up their friendships and social networks, encourage and advise each other, and continue learning together after the programme ends. Mentors play an advisory role. Girls described the value of these friendships:

*“But since the coming of EAGER, I can now talk with people and have time for friends. We sometimes sit down as friends and give advice to ourselves so that we can achieve our goals.”* (EAGER girl, Kailahun)

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*“During the EAGER programme, my colleagues exchange ideas together and share things together and I am not ashamed of them during learning.”* (EAGER girl, Kailahun)

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*“During the classes we [EAGER girls] were taught to help each other in case of any challenge among us and to always keep the secret of each and every one of us. This help me a lot and today we are our sister’s keeper to ensure all succeed.”*  
(EAGER girl, Kono)

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Thus, it is evident from the Post-Endline research that while degrees of success (and girls’ own perception of her success) varied, there is a strong sense of recognition within the communities in which each girl lives, that they have gained skills, personal growth, and improved relationships from EAGER.

The ability to communicate more effectively with one another and to have improved peer relationships were also findings of the Midterm and Endline evaluations.

Conversely, a caregiver in one instance noted that his daughter faced challenges in collecting the money owed to her by her customers. He singled out those of her friends for whom she did work as being particularly problematic in paying her for work. Despite this comment, research suggests that for most EAGER girls, their peers who participated in the learning sessions with them have been a source of help and advice. Thus, promoting constructive relationships between EAGER girls and encouraging them to bolster each other beyond programme completion, as was evidently done successfully as part of the Girls' Clubs, has protective and potentially long-term benefits.

### **There is evidence of some obstruction or increased set of domestic responsibilities that family members and partners give to girls**

Although evidence from the girls' interviewed in this Post-Endline research overwhelmingly points to evidence of support towards their endeavours, one Mentor interviewed reported an instance where a girl had been obstructed by her partner:

*"[Girl] also had challenges with her husband concerning her business so the man bought a sewing machine and asked to be sewing instead of selling. The man was jealous to see the woman going around to sell. That is why he bought a sewing machine and put it in the house. So [girl] is now at home and does not go anywhere again." (Mentor, Kono)*

Implicit obstruction can be seen in two additional cases where girls continue to be given a high burden of domestic duties that directly impeded their ability to pursue their empowerment goals. In the case of an EAGER beneficiary in Kono, family farming obligations take time away from her business. However, over time, because of her participation in EAGER, her family has allowed her to leave the farm to sell more often. Discussions with this girl indicate that EAGER has enhanced her resilience as she has earned sufficient profit such that she has also begun moving onto larger empowerment goals while maintaining her business, and despite challenges she has identified, she continues to improve.

In another case, the partner of an EAGER girl from WAU described how he had given her more domestic responsibilities including as washing, caring for the children, and overseeing the needs of their household which he attributed to her improved sense of responsibility acquired from EAGER. Her partner did not seem to understand (or at least articulate) how he could have supported his partner in her Empowerment Plan. Instead, his apparent interpretation of 'support' involved her taking on increasing responsibilities within the family (which he reported he had otherwise undertaken) and was clear that her domestic responsibilities in child rearing and household maintenance (food preparation, cleaning) were hers to manage in addition to her chosen livelihood strategy. He did not appear to be dismissive of his partner, and indeed, was quite positive in his estimation of her abilities. However, entrenched gender norms—also evident in the Endline Evaluation where partners continued to emphasise domestic duties they expected of women—combined with a lack of practical help may have contributed to her abandoned first attempt at business.

### **Girls and others have made many requests for additional assistance, particularly from EAGER, which provides support to kickstart girls' empowerment goals rather than catering for all the costs involved in achieving their goal**

Despite the widespread general assistance that girls reported and that their caregivers, partners, and others affirmed, including instances of material aid, almost all respondents noted that they need additional support (namely from EAGER) to be successful. Hopes for continued help are a natural

consequence of the girls having received both financial and mentorship assistance from an external stakeholder, and understandably identifying additional opportunities for resources that could help them to take their goals even further.

Also, it is important to note that the volatile financial context in Sierra Leone has led to higher prices, in some cases doubling the cost of items in comparison to costs at the time girls were developing their Empowerment Plans. In the face of these challenges, girls continue to demonstrate persistence along with boldness to speak up and ask for the additional resources they need to pursue their goals.

*“I still want EAGER to add to the money given to us for business and also help me with a tailoring machine to do tailoring.” (EAGER girl, Kailahun)*

*“I would want the people who brought the EAGER project to these girls to give them more support...a skill centre...financial support...tailoring machines...hoes and cutlasses...” (Community leader, Kailahun)*

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Such requests made to project representatives or data collectors are not uncommon within similar projects. This is especially the case where communities have been historically marginalised and where the researcher is viewed as an interlocutor with project management.

Similar responses were noted at the Endline as well, when girls and other stakeholders simultaneously said that girls were doing well with the cash provided, but that it was insufficient. Still, it may be helpful to note the specific types of assistance requested to help manage expectations in future, and to further explore ways to leverage existing community-level support. See Recommendation #12 below, which discusses emphasising to girls that there will not be any further material aid forthcoming from EAGER after the graduation and cash distribution.

Conversely, although many respondents at Endline and Post-Endline claimed the NSLE 300 (former Le 300,000) received was not sufficient, one girl’s aunt (from WAU, where inflation was particularly challenging) shared a perspective very much in line with EAGER’s intention to catalyse girls’ self-empowerment:

*“It [300,000 Leones] has helped her greatly, because without that money she would not have been able to go to where she is working. After receiving that money, she told her parents that she is going to learn a trade.” (Caregiver, WAU)*

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This case could be a lesson for all participants and caregivers that the money received after graduating is to support them in kickstarting their empowerment goals rather than catering for all the costs involved in achieving their goals. Many stakeholders interviewed at Endline also shared how the EAGER cash transfer served as a stepping stone towards a different activity, such as training, a different business or saving (in an *Osusu*, for example), but in most cases would need to be augmented with additional resources. Hence, families could be encouraged to take up a share of responsibility in supporting their girls to the extent that they can, to bolster the realisation of their goals. Articulating this need and obtaining commitments at training and graduation stages was part of work done via EAGER’s community dialogues and community action plans, and likely did help substantially in framing expectations of both the girls and their families.

## Research Question 4

### What has been the outcome of EAGER on beneficiaries' confidence over time?

#### Summary

The Post-Endline research has found that the gains in confidence seen amongst the participants at (or shortly after) their graduation from EAGER have endured and, in some cases, it is evident that their confidence has continued to grow as a girl has continued to make gains on her Empowerment Plan, further proving to herself that she is able to succeed. There was strong congruence between the findings of the Endline Evaluation of EAGER conducted during mid-2021 and the Post-Endline conducted in mid-2022, with girls and Mentors articulating a range of areas in which they said they were more confident: their communication skills, their skills in pursuing livelihoods, their confidence in expressing their rights as a girl/woman, and confidence in being an active member of their community. This has also helped them to gain more respect from others.

#### **Gains in confidence amongst EAGER girls during or shortly after their graduation from EAGER have endured and, in some cases, their confidence has continued to grow**

This overwhelmingly positive outcome on confidence and self-esteem shows that the confidence built through EAGER participation and training endures, despite the evident challenges that these girls continue to face. As at Endline, some girls noted that their confidence continues to improve in terms of their ability to speak confidently and thoughtfully in public, including in community meetings or amongst elders or other community leaders. This has helped them to gain more respect from others. For example, EAGER girls shared that:

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*“They now accept that I have acquired more knowledge. They now move with me, but they didn’t move with me before. They used to discriminate [against] me, saying I was illiterate.” (EAGER girl, WAU) <sup>27</sup>*

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*“Now, I understand that a woman has the right to stand in the public and talk.”  
(EAGER girl, Kailahun)*

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*“Before EAGER, I was very quiet in doing things, but now I am brave and bold. EAGER has really changed me for good as before EAGER I was afraid or shy to hold a microphone or talk in public.” (EAGER girl, Kailahun)*

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*“Firstly, I am not shamed of speaking up in a gathering. I get applauded after speaking confidently and boldly. My reading has also improved, and I am able to read and understand the messages I receive on my phone. Lastly, I can confidently communicate with my peers and encourage them to participate in the EAGER programme while setting my life before and after EAGER as an example.” (EAGER girl, WAU)*

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<sup>27</sup> Respondent is WAU and where literacy rates are much higher leading to her perceived discrimination.

Other girls noted continued their confidence and increased sense of self-reliance in supporting themselves and their families particularly through their livelihood activities:

*“When I want to buy lappa [fabric used for wrap skirt] or needle, thread, scissors or any other thing, I will remove money from the selling of the cucumber ground soup and buy and also solve some of my problems, and I am doing this for me not to be hopping to men for money...Also, the tailoring [that I plan to do in future] will not allow men to fool me again. They will not call and ask me to come and sleep with them and later give me Le 10,000 or Le 15,000, but my tailoring will give me more than that money and men will not fool me again on that.” (EAGER girl, WAU)*

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This last excerpt from WAU is particularly notable because it also demonstrates a girl moving away from situations that put her at risk—and indeed having reconciled with her family from which she had moved away prior to EAGER. These examples are powerful and demonstrate the multifaceted ways in which girls feel that they have improved confidence and control over their lives.

Caregivers, partners, community leaders and Mentors all agree that EAGER girls have enhanced confidence. For example, a beneficiary from Kono reports explicitly that since starting her business activity she has become “*very important in the community.*” Several caregivers attested to the girls’ increased confidence since they joined EAGER:

*“Whatever activities they introduce here she will be in the lead.” (Caregiver, Kono)*

*“Her level of self-confidence has increased greatly ever since the end of the EAGER project. Right now, I can tell you [girl’s name] is full of self-confidence. She can speak anywhere without fear.” (Caregiver, Kailahun)*

*“[Girl’s name] could hardly talk before the EAGER programme. In fact, she used to cry when she was asked a question. She was so shy that she never used to talk, but after the training of EAGER, she can now freely talk and communicate to anyone at any time.” (Caregiver, Kono)*

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In WAU, a community leader reported that,

*“The [EAGER] girls that I am regularly seeing in this community have confidence in themselves.” (Community leader, WAU)*

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Similarly, a community leader in Kailahun shared that:

*“I think their level of self-confidence has increased so much ever since they graduated from the EAGER project. I believe they can now stand and speak in public...when [we] normally do have community meetings in the Barray [town meeting space], I have seen them stand in the Barray and speak freely without any fear.” (Community leader, Kailahun)*

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## **Mentors' confidence also increased because of their work with EAGER**

Like the EAGER girls, the Mentors interviewed also reported increased self-confidence. Their confidence emanates partially from their tasks as EAGER Mentors—being role models to girls, learning and then teaching life skills (including about girls' and women's rights), and receiving a regular stipend for their work. It also emanates from their improved status in the community given the positive impact they evidently have had on girls there and community members' appreciation for that.

*“EAGER has helped me because I have to concentrate. I read every night [to prepare for facilitating sessions]. My brain has developed.” (Mentor, Kailahun)*

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For example, as with the girls, Mentors describe how their confidence has increased in terms of communicating with others, thanks to the experiences they gained in speaking to EAGER girls' caregivers or other EAGER stakeholders. For example, a Mentor in WAU noted that before joining EAGER, she was shy and unable to speak with fellow Mentors, stakeholders, and children. Now, she feels free to communicate with all kinds of people in her community, including leaders. Having the Mentors' voices represented in circles of influence will surely be a positive asset not just for EAGER girls, but for people of all ages and genders standing to benefit from their positive influence:

*“Before I was too shy to talk, to meet my colleague Mentors. I visited the caregivers' homes but I found that very difficult. But right now, I am able to talk to the caregivers without any fear. And even children who were not part of EAGER, I have the confidence to talk to them...the chief that we have in our community is an elder and old person/woman. Before, I was scared to meet her, but now I am the only one that is sent to go and call her, [for example,] that today we have a stakeholders meeting.” (Mentor, WAU)*

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A Mentor in Kono highlights how because of her increased confidence, she can now engage in previously male-dominated spaces, a valuable asset for not only the Mentor herself but also girls in the community who benefit from seeing that older women can have authority and voice in the community:

*“Now, I am able to express myself well in public and can even contribute in community dialogues. Before this time, I didn't have the thought that I should even speak among men, but today I can share my ideas among men and at times they can even consult me to say something in certain matters within the community. This alone has given me the confidence that I am useful and have something to contribute in my community...I am more confident now than ever in the history of my life.” (Mentor, Kono)*

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A Mentor in Kailahun notes that her work with EAGER has helped her to be more economically empowered and marketable in the employment sector:

*“I believe that since EAGER has recruited me, and [taught me], I [will be] able to get my certificate [in school], and anywhere I apply they will take me.” (Mentor, Kailahun)*

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These excerpts from the Mentors and their expressions of improved confidence confirm EAGER's assertion that Mentors also would stand to gain from participation in EAGER and could be considered as secondary beneficiaries.



## 5. Conclusions & Recommendations

### Post-Endline Conclusions

The Post-Endline provides important insights into the lives of a small sample of Cohort 1 EAGER girls and Mentors, demonstrating that the overwhelmingly positive effects observed at Midterm and Endline have endured at Post-Endline, one year later from Endline data collection. These include:

- They continue to see the importance of goal setting and making plans
- They perceive themselves to be, and analysis of the evidence suggests that they are, financially and emotionally more resilient than they were before EAGER
- They have enhanced confidence
- They have reliable and enduring support (even financial) from friends, family, and community
- They remain motivated and optimistic about the future.

Importantly, the Post-Endline has shown that girls demonstrate these positive effects in a context in which they must navigate many of the challenges observed at Midterm and Endline, including new difficult economic circumstances and/or unexpected health crises.

That said, partially in response to the findings in the Cohort 1 Midterm and Endline Evaluations, EAGER has made critical and significant adjustments to improve programming to be even more impactful for Cohort 2. This Post-Endline was not designed to measure the effectiveness of the adaptations made to the Cohort 2 approach, but it does further confirm the Endline's recommendations and therefore validates the rationale for many of those programmatic changes.

The Post-Endline also provides evidence that EAGER's overall design, which endures into Cohort 2, leads to positive impacts six months after all EAGER-related interventions (Mentor check-ins) have occurred, and one year after EAGER provided the more intensive support (learning sessions). The positive impacts are observed not only for girls who all attest to improved lives at the time of Post-Endline as compared to before EAGER, but also for Mentors. In most cases, girls' caregivers, partners, and communities continue to endorse girls' empowerment one year after the end of project activities.

Recommendations that surface from Post-Endline findings continue to emphasise challenges that the previous evaluation points also described. The Post-Endline research team is aware that some of the recommendations made in this report may be both or either: a) outside of the scope of what EAGER can feasibly do at this stage in its programming, and thus may be considered more appropriate for new programs of a similar nature, particularly those intending to adopt the Transition Period approach and; b) that EAGER may have implemented some of these previously recommended changes for Cohort 2, but assessing the impacts from those changes is outside of the scope of this study. The recommendations may rather be considered as further validation of those already-made adjustments or are potential areas for Cohort 2-specific research.

### Recommendations for Action

**Recommendation 1: Investigate the extent to which revisions to the EAGER curriculum for Cohort 2 focusing on increasing girls' flexibility and creativity in the face of financial challenges has succeeded.** This includes ensuring that EAGER's revised curriculum, which already emphasises the difference between business money and personal money, and saving for emergencies, also contains a component of recovering from financial shocks. For example, ensure that girls understand that by needing to expend their capital (vs. savings or profit) on inevitable life expenses or emergencies, they should: a) not give up when such things occur, and; b) take necessary but realistic steps to adjust their business to ensure it continues to survive; c) seek to positively frame the experience as having the capacity to help themselves to deal with that shock in the first place.

**Recommendation 2: Ensure that future iterations or adaptations of EAGER’s Financial Literacy curriculum (e.g., to government or future programming) and the Empowerment Plan and Transition Period trainings offer consideration and explorations of how macro-economic trends affect the world at the micro level.** For instance, increased oil prices leading to knock-on effects on goods, transportation, and utilities worldwide may affect girls’ lives and empowerment options. Financial literacy training (specifically market research and income-generating activity planning) should include consideration of the likelihood of price increases over time when setting out budgets.

**Recommendation 3: Share promising practices and case studies learnt from Cohort 1 girls about how to take steps toward larger goals.** In particular, share the three approaches articulated in the case studies. toward achieving a tailoring goal (two from Kono, one from Kailahun) .

**Recommendation 4: To the extent that resources exist within communities, EAGER should consider offering information and referrals to community-based financial training or loan schemes (like Osusu) to support start-ups** once enough experience has been garnered.

**Recommendation 5: Future iterations or adaptations of EAGER (e.g., in government or future programming) should put additional focus on generating Empowerment Plans such that goals are feasible for girls to achieve, given challenges they face.** More “aspirational” (i.e., less feasible) goals can be considered, but should be framed clearly in the context of likely success and appropriate emphasis placed on the importance of balancing these with more modest and hence easily accomplished, goals. Providing additional aid or encouragement around the achievement of individual steps toward these feasible goals can provide important confidence boosts and validation for girls which can, in turn, motivate them to continue with their plans and achieve even more success.

**Recommendation 6: Identify ways to invite further carefully facilitated discussion between girls and Mentors on girls’ Empowerment Plans to collectively articulate a clear and realistic definition of success and recognition of what progress looks like (and would not look like).** In this, the use of **peer groups** is very useful—they are already a source of informal advice and motivation for girls, and this should be emphasised and maintained in future iterations of Transition Period phases of EAGER or similar programming. It would be important that such a process is carefully managed to ensure an optimal balance between what makes sense and can be internalised by each girl and the risk of peer group dynamics driving the process. Skilled facilitation and careful recording of the process and outputs is important to maximise the chances of success in this.

**Recommendation 7: Conduct research to investigate the effectiveness and impact of changes made to Cohort 2-related curriculum and trainings emphasising guiding girls towards small, realistic, and time-bound financial goals.** Particular attention should be paid to the following, which were seen as limitations in this Cohort 1 Post-Endline:

- Identification of individual steps in achieving the financial goal and identifying key milestones along the way towards supporting a larger goal.
- Greater consideration at the planning stages with respect to the amount of assets (e.g. equipment, stock) needed for engaging in income-generating activities of different types (as part of financial goals), and if/how they will be generated as part of the process toward a longer-term goal. If not realistic, alternative strategies or alternative goals should be considered.
- Reframing the individual income-generating activities that may comprise elements of financial goals as a “menu” that can be selected from as circumstances dictate rather than a checklist more rigid plan (that is perceived in the binary context of success/failure) so girls understand that even if they decide to focus on one income-generating activity that may be as good or better than trying to succeed at multiple income-generation activities partially.

**Recommendation 8: Girls should be encouraged to view goals that they have had trouble achieving as learning experiences in planning next steps.** In particular, they can better a) understand that they will not necessarily be in a position to achieve all of the goals set out in their plans, and struggling to achieve a goal as planned can be beneficial in offering learning opportunities on what could work instead, and; b) constantly review and reprioritise their goals in light of their ongoing lived experience and not be afraid to adjust or develop new, more appropriate goals and refocus on the more feasible goals.

**Recommendation 9: Clarify with mentors and girls that the Empowerment Plans are meant to have one financial goal with multiple feasible steps articulated, and not multiple varying financial goals or many income-generating activities within goals.** Most girls interviewed for the Post-Endline indicated that they had more than one income-generating activity within their financial goal (for example, tailoring and business, or selling *ouk* and catering). Understandably, then, some girls indicated that they had too many responsibilities to successfully take on multiple or especially time-intensive livelihood strategies. Indeed, there was success seen in prioritising one goal that was in line with daily obligations and for which steps could be realistically achieved in a girls' day.

For instance, one girl dealt with her intensive demands on her farm by focusing mainly on expanding that farm and selling agricultural produce, rather than continuing to try to pursue her stated non-agriculture goals. Girls' can be encouraged to keep notice of other possible goals, or expansions to existing goals, that may be feasible given the realities of their lives—building on their existing assets but noting their existing limitations. This learning could be further emphasised with mentors as they work with girls to develop their Empowerment Plans.

**Recommendation 10: Encourage awareness of, and work to change, discriminatory gender norms that place unequal work burdens on girls.** To minimise the over-burdening of girls that seek to meet their empowerment goals and also acquit domestic/family responsibilities, EAGER should undertake sensitisation of partners or caregivers as to the nature and quantity of assistance they can offer, i.e., reducing or sharing domestic work. This could be done in the community dialogue/caregiver group mechanism. This can both mitigate excessive workload placed on girls (however well-meaning) and go some way to changing entrenched discriminatory gender norms.

**Recommendation 11: EAGER should work more closely with girls and local communities to supplement the simple market survey with additional ideas around types of income generation strategies that may not be readily apparent to girls.** As part of their Empowerment Plans, girls who want to start a small business are encouraged to conduct a simple market survey to better understand the demand for their chosen product or service. However, the frequent choice of economic activities that appear to have limited capacity for income generation suggests that such analyses are limited, likely because the types of livelihood strategies that are active in a given area can be limited.

The market assessments could thus combine both an inquiry into which livelihood strategies are available in the community with introduction of different types of strategies, such as bringing speakers into communities to introduce new ideas, providing workshops to teach different skills that are not common, or sharing stories of girls in other communities who have succeeded in pursuing livelihoods using an innovative approaches. Also, because it is difficult or impossible to foresee the impact that economic shocks can have on communities in the future (in this case, inflation became extremely difficult for everyone, not just EAGER girls), having ideas about a broad range of livelihood strategies could help girls remain flexible in case their chosen approach was not successful in that present market.

**Recommendation 12: Manage expectations of EAGER's support.** Emphasising with the graduates that there will not be any further material aid forthcoming from EAGER post-graduation is essential to

forestall any expectations from the girls or the community that EAGER will provide a “safety net,” particularly with respect to additional capital to sustain businesses. Should EAGER or other future implementers feel that some form additional support is warranted, then consider managing expectations through a mechanism such as small grants/prizes available on a competitive basis for graduates (involving community members and mentors in nomination and/or selection). This can both be an additional source of motivation for girls to engage with their Empowerment Plan goals and help minimise any expectation that blanket assistance or a focus on those that have expended their capital might generate.

Public-private partnerships with leading industries in Sierra Leone may be a viable source for these funds. Crowd-sourcing may also be possible through a request for donations from *Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap* [BBC Media Action EAGER programming] listenership.

## Addendum: EAGER Management Response to Recommendations

Recommendation	EAGER Consortium Coordination Unit (CCU) Response
Curriculum	
<p><b>Recommendation 1: Investigate the extent to which revisions to the EAGER curriculum for Cohort 2 focusing on increasing girls’ flexibility and creativity in the face of financial challenges has succeeded.</b> This includes ensuring that EAGER’s revised curriculum, which already emphasises the difference between business money and personal money, and saving for emergencies, also contains a component of recovering from financial shocks. For example, ensure that girls understand that by needing to expend their capital (vs. savings or profit) on inevitable life expenses or emergencies, they should: a) not give up when such things occur, and; b) take necessary but realistic steps to adjust their business to ensure it continues to survive; c) seek to positively frame the experience as having the capacity to help themselves to deal with that shock the first place.</p>	<p>EAGER welcomes the recommendation put forward related to flexibility and creativity being an important aspect of financial literacy, however would like to provide clarity on what is taught in the curriculum, as well as the implementation context.</p> <p>The program encourages girls to set aside savings for emergencies to help them recover from any unexpected events, including financial shocks or other unexpected costs. Ultimately, savings for emergencies also entails saving for financial shocks. Girls using profit for life expenses is taught in the learning program as what profit should be used for, and it is known that many girls chose to start a business so they can reach other goals they have set for themselves. The program is clear on advocating to girls that using profit does not mean their business is failing; they can re-invest their income (minus profit) back into their business to keep the business going.</p> <p>Furthermore, part of the Financial Literacy curriculum teaches girls to make smart decisions on what to do with the profit they make from their business. Do they want to re-invest it back into the business? Save? Or put it to personal/household expenses? Once they know their income and calculate their profit, they can put the profit aside to do as they have chosen and re-invest the rest of the income back into their business to keep it operating. In addition, girls are taught when starting and running a business to be flexible and adaptable. This can be found especially in the session ‘What Makes a Good Business’, where girls learn that changing small aspects of a business can improve profit and it is important to always be open to changes especially when it comes to diversification, location and customer service.</p> <p>Therefore, perhaps due to the severity of shocks, it has to be acknowledged that the girls in the program are experiencing financial shocks that many well established regional and national businesses are also facing. In light of point c, it is welcomed that future projects should also consider fostering the coaching beyond the program that EAGER provided via the Mentors, to encourage a supportive environment where girls can feel proud of themselves.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 2: Ensure that future iterations or adaptations of EAGER’s Financial Literacy curriculum (e.g., to government or future programming) and the Empowerment</b></p>	<p>The EAGER program acknowledges the impact that macroeconomics has on girls not only in their everyday lives, but Especially during recent times of stark inflation and depreciation in Sierra Leone.</p>

<p><b>Plan and Transition Period trainings offer consideration and explorations of how macro-economic trends affect the world at the micro level.</b> For instance, increased oil prices leading to knock-on effects on goods, transportation, and utilities worldwide may affect girls’ lives and empowerment options. Financial literacy training (specifically market research and income-generating activity planning) should include consideration of the likelihood of price increases over time when setting out budgets.</p>	<p>EAGER also recognizes the scope of programming and therefor the feasibility of the Financial Literacy curriculum with a focus on foundational skills. Although it would be ideal to include more in-depth objectives in Financial Literacy, this is beyond the scope of this project. Global businesses and individuals alike with perceived sufficient capital have also been unable to navigate such shocks, meaning that the feasibility of the project to support OOSC adolescent girls to mediate these circumstances is unfeasible within the duration of the learning program. Increasing the number of Financial Literacy sessions would need to be carefully coordinated to make space for Literacy and Numeracy, and Life Skills sessions, while making sure that dosage is appropriate for girls who hold adult responsibilities and have less time for learning. This was not possible within the timeline of EAGER but can be considered for future program designs.</p> <p>That being said, findings of this report have proven that EAGER’s target of building girls’ capacity to focus on creating budgets before spending and setting aside savings for emergencies has allowed girls to make smart decisions even within complex contextual factors.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> To the extent that resources exist within communities, <b>EAGER should consider offering information and referrals to community-based financial training or loan schemes</b> (like Osusu) to support start-ups once enough experience has been garnered.</p>	<p>EAGER acknowledges the importance of community-based financial training or loan schemes, particularly as <i>Osusus</i> and VSL are informal loans and exist in almost all communities in Sierra Leone and some Girls Club groups (anecdotally) have started these groups. EAGER monitoring – as well as this evaluation piece – demonstrates the value of these financial schemes to support EAGER girls’ particularly in the face of financial unpredictability.</p> <p>However, EAGER recognizes that supporting start up is beyond the scope of EAGER and would fall under a different project all together.</p>
<p>Goal Setting</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 3: Share promising practices and case studies learnt from Cohort 1 girls about how to take steps toward larger goals.</b> In particular, share the three approaches articulated in the case studies toward achieving a tailoring goal (two from Kono, one from Kailahun).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The project also sees great value in identifying girls from Cohort 1 to be ‘coaches’ for girls in Cohort 2. Limitations in bringing this idea into the second cohort were recognized and assessed by the team, with the main dissuading factor being the mindfulness that giving examples can sometimes lead to girls choosing the same goal as it is presented to them. This would dissuade girls from identifying and choosing goals most applicable to them and their context, and therefore impacting opportunities for empowerment. The Financial Literacy Curriculum does present various</li> </ul>

	<p>examples of different financial goals and specifically businesses or jobs women in Sierra Leone have started to encourage girls to think broadly of the various goals they can achieve while challenging gender norms.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 5: Future iterations or adaptations of EAGER (e.g., in government or future programming) should refocus on generating Empowerment Plans such that goals are feasible for girls to achieve, given challenges they face.</b> More “aspirational” (i.e., less feasible) goals can be considered, but should be framed clearly in the context of likely success and appropriate emphasis placed on the importance of balancing these with more modest and hence easily accomplished, goals. Providing additional aid or encouragement around the achievement of individual steps toward these feasible goals can provide important confidence boosts and validation for girls which can, in turn, motivate them to continue with their plans and achieve even more success.</p>	<p>The program also agrees with the importance of ensuring the feasibility of goals. Goals for both Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 were to be achievable within one year or less, and both the curriculum and Mentors and Facilitators training were oriented around this. This was to ensure goals were feasible for girls to achieve and boost confidence as the goals can be accomplished before setting other goals.</p> <p>The curriculum and training with the Mentors and Facilitators emphasised that all goals are important while some goals that may be more “aspirational” could be broken down into smaller steps that are achievable. These smaller steps are the goals that girls can set for themselves in the Empowerment Plans.</p> <p>As noted in the Endline Evaluation, the concept and practice of goal-setting was new for most of the girls as well as for their Mentors. Therefore, whilst improvements can be made to support girls in this endeavour, it is likely that issues with realistic goals were symptomatic of both aforementioned contextual factors and the novelty of goal setting amongst adolescent girls in the cohort.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 6: Identify ways to invite further carefully facilitated discussion between girls and mentors on girls’ Empowerment Plans to collectively articulate a clear and realistic definition of success and recognition of what progress looks like (and would not look like).</b> In this, the use of <b>peer groups</b> is very useful—they are already a source of informal advice and motivation for girls, and this should be emphasised and maintained in future iterations of Transition Period phases of EAGER or similar programming.</p>	<p>The project welcomes this recommendation and offers a suggestion to those proposing Transition periods in future projects to ideally set Transition as a longer period in the project timeline so girls have more support from mentors and their peers. This was not feasible in EAGER before the roll out of Cohort 2 due to delays brought about by COVID-19; the project had to ensure the Cohort could be completed before the end of the project timeline.</p> <p>That being said, one step the project took to strengthen peer support and encouragement during the Transition period and beyond was providing a framework for starting Girls’ Clubs. Whilst these groups are to be led by the girls themselves, Mentors guided the girls to set them up and continue to this present day to support as advisors. The aim was for girls to keep coming together on a regular basis to keep their protective social networks strong, and to continue building a sense of solidarity as they worked on their goals. The project agrees that such groups are a valuable forum for girls to exchange information, share their challenges and solutions, and motivate each other to keep taking steps toward their goals. These Girl Groups were intentionally designed to be girl-led so that they do not rely on the</p>

	inputs and leadership of project staff, increasing the likelihood that they will endure long after the close of the project.
<p><b>Recommendation 7:</b> Conduct research to investigate the effectiveness and impact of changes made to Cohort 2-related curriculum and trainings emphasising guiding girls towards small, realistic, and time-bound <b>financial</b> goals. Particular attention should be paid to the following, which were seen as limitations in this Cohort 1 Post-Endline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of <b>individual steps</b> in achieving the financial goal and identifying key milestones along the way towards supporting a larger goal.</li> <li>• Greater consideration at the planning stages with respect to assets (e.g. equipment, stock) needed for engaging in income-generating activities of different types (as part of financial goals), and if/how they will be generated as part of the process toward a longer-term goal. If not realistic, alternative strategies or alternative goals should be considered.</li> <li>• <b>Reframing the individual income-generating activities that may comprise elements of financial goals</b> as a “menu” that can be selected from as circumstances dictate rather than a more rigid plan (that is perceived in the binary context of success/failure) so girls understand that even if they decide to focus on one income-related goal that may be as good, or better, than trying to succeed at multiple income-generation activities partially.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project welcomes recommendation and continues to monitor and assess impacts of tailored programming on outcomes measuring girls’ education and empowerment through the EAGER project. Based on learnings from Cohort 1, the project further shaped and refined its trainings for staff and volunteers to ensure that girls were guided to focus on more realistic goals that they could achieve within the timeframe and with the assets they had. One of the key learnings was that girls struggled to identify clear steps that they would take to reach their goals. Increased emphasis and practice with steps was built into trainings so that staff and volunteers had greater confidence to guide and support girls in identifying steps. Whilst the project timeline will not allow for additional research post-Cohort 2 to investigate the impact of this emphasis before the close of the project, monitoring data throughout the second cohort, in addition to anecdotal evidence from project teams highlights that girls in Cohort 2 have indeed set more realistic and achievable goals, which will be reflected in the presentation of monitoring data in project documents and dissemination outputs following the project closure.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation 8:</b> Girls should be encouraged to <b>view goals that they have had trouble achieving as learning experiences in planning next steps</b>. In particular, they can better a) understand that they will not necessarily be in a position to achieve all of the goals set out in their plans, and struggling to achieve a goal as planned can be beneficial in offering learning opportunities on what could work instead, and; b) constantly review and reprioritise their goals in light of their ongoing lived experience and not be afraid identify new, more appropriate a goals and refocus on the more feasible goals.</p>	<p>The project has shown to exercise this predominately as the Empowerment Plan and goal-setting approach was designed to encourage girls to focus on a few key areas of their life in which they wanted to take concrete action. Having a written plan enabled them to document their intentions at a specific point in time, and gave them something to refer back to as a reminder. This was intended to motivate the girls to keep taking steps forward in areas of their lives where they wanted to see change, rather than being a fixed contract that they were bound to.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Furthermore, the Financial Literacy curriculum discussed flexibility and adaptability in goals,</li> </ul>



	<p>and the practice of goal setting was introduced so that girls could continue to adapt their goals and set new goals for themselves throughout their lives. The language of “failure” was never used in any of the EAGER materials or trainings. This evaluation has confirmed that many girls set longer-term goals for themselves that will require additional resources and creative solutions to reach. However, the fact that these same girls are not sitting idle, but continuing to engage in a range of activities to generate income shows that they are adapting and reprioritising based on their circumstances. At the same time, the fact that many girls continued to mention their long-term goals demonstrates that these are still meaningful to them and that they continue to have a vision that they want to work towards.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 9: Clarify with Mentors and girls that the Empowerment Plans are meant to have one financial goal with multiple feasible steps articulated, and not multiple varying financial goals or many income-generating activities within goals.</b> Most girls interviewed for the Post-Endline indicated that they had more than one income-generating activity within their financial goal (for example, tailoring and business, or selling <i>ouk</i> and catering). Understandably, then, some girls indicated that they had too many responsibilities to successfully take on multiple or especially time-intensive livelihood strategies. Indeed, there was success seen in prioritising one activity that was in line with daily obligations and for which steps could be realistically achieved in a girls’ day.</p> <p>For instance, one girl dealt with her intensive demands on her farm by focusing mainly on expanding that farm and selling agricultural produce, rather than continuing to try to pursue her stated non-agriculture goals. Girls’ can be encouraged to keep notice of other possible goals, or expansions to existing goals, that may be feasible given the realities of their lives—building on their existing assets but noting their existing limitations. This learning could be further emphasised with mentors as they work with girls to develop their Empowerment Plans.</p>	<p>The project sees much of this recommendation in the way that the Empowerment Plans were designed; to encourage girls to reflect on different areas in of their lives in which they could take action to create positive change. Anticipating that a greater emphasis would be placed on income-generating activities, the project intentionally invited girls to think about concrete ways they wanted to use the skills they had learned in their Life Skills and Literacy &amp; Numeracy sessions, how they could continue learning, and what actions they would like to take in their household and community that would feel empowering to them. The Financial Goal was specific to the cash transfer, and included a budget and plan which girls developed in their Financial Literacy sessions with support from their Facilitators. This model aligned with the project’s more holistic approach to empowerment, rather than only emphasising financial empowerment.</p> <p>The fact that some girls had identified multiple goals requiring financial inputs beyond the scope of the cash transfer amount is likely a combination of the girls’ excitement about goal-setting and ambition, the fact that most girls had never gone through the process of setting goals and thinking through concrete steps and inputs required to reach them, and the fact that this was a pilot led by volunteers and staff who were building their own skills in goal-setting. Building on learnings from Cohort 1, the project reinforced these core skills in trainings with staff and volunteers so that they could more effectively guide girls in Cohort 2 to prioritise their goals and identify clear steps for reaching them.</p>
<p>Community sensitization and Gender Norms</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 10: Encourage awareness of, and work to change, discriminatory gender</b></p>	<p>The project agrees that it is essential to engage with girls’ households and the wider community to challenge the</p>

<p><b>norms that place unequal work burdens on girls.</b> To minimise the over-burdening of girls that seek to meet their empowerment goals and also acquit domestic/family responsibilities, EAGER should undertake sensitisation of partners or caregivers as to the nature and quantity of assistance they can offer, i.e., reducing or sharing domestic work. This could be done through community dialogues or engagement of caregivers groups. This can both mitigate excessive workload placed on girls (however well-meaning) and go some way to changing entrenched discriminatory gender norms.</p>	<p>gender norms that place unequal burdens on girls and keep them from pursuing opportunities. Recognising this, a series of Community Dialogues was created and rolled out with community leaders and influential persons during Cohort 1. These dialogues aimed to shine a light on these discriminatory gender norms and spark conversation about what needs to change in households and at the community level so that girls can have full and equal opportunities to boys – including reducing the chore burden on girls.</p> <p>During Cohort 2, two sets of Community Dialogues were run in each community – the first with leaders, influential persons, and partners, and the second with caregivers. At the close of each dialogue, communities were engaged in an action planning process to encourage concrete actions and follow-through in response to the points that were discussed. To extend these conversations about gender norms to the national level, the project also created and broadcasted 108 factual radio programmes centred on girls with the aim of fostering a more supportive and enabling environment around them.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 11: EAGER should work more closely with girls and local communities to supplement the simple market survey with additional ideas around types of income generation strategies that may not be readily apparent to girls.</b> As part of their Empowerment Plans, girls who want to start a small business are encouraged to conduct a simple market survey to better understand the demand for their chosen product or service. However, the frequent choice of economic activities that appear to have limited capacity for income generation suggests that such analyses are limited, likely because the types of livelihood strategies that are active in a given area can be limited.</p> <p>The market assessments could thus combine both an inquiry into which livelihood strategies are available in the community with introduction of different types of strategies, such as bringing speakers into communities to introduce new ideas, providing workshops to teach different skills that are not common, or sharing stories of girls in other communities who have succeeded in pursuing livelihoods using an innovative approaches. Also, because it is difficult or impossible to foresee the impact that economic shocks can have on communities in the future (in this case, inflation became extremely difficult for everyone, not just EAGER girls), having ideas about a broad range of livelihood strategies could</p>	<p>EAGER programming demonstrates an agreement with the importance of market surveys and income generation suggestions as a key part of supporting girls receiving a conditional cash transfer. The Financial Literacy curriculum presented multiple examples businesses within Sierra Leone that may not have been readily apparent to girls. However, context of the demand in communities is a part of the market survey and needed to be taken into account.</p> <p>It is worth noting that the market survey was a very basic tool for the purposes of EAGER so that girls could make smart decisions on what business to start. Above all, the focus of Financial Literacy curriculum was not to start a business but rather to make smart financial decisions.</p>

<p>help girls remain flexible in case their chosen approach was not successful in that present market.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendation 12: Manage expectations of EAGER’s support.</b> Emphasising with the graduates that there will not be any further material aid forthcoming from EAGER post-graduation is essential to forestall any expectations from the girls or the community that EAGER will provide a “safety net,” particularly with respect to additional assets to sustain businesses. Should EAGER or other future implementers feel that some form additional support is warranted, then consider managing expectations through a mechanism such as small grants/prizes available on a competitive basis for graduates (involving community members and mentors in nomination and/or selection). This can both be an additional source of motivation for girls to engage with their Empowerment Plan goals and help minimise any expectation that blanket assistance or a focus on those that have expended their capital might generate.</p> <p>Public-private partnerships with leading industries in Sierra Leone may be a viable source for these funds. Crowd-sourcing may also be possible through a request for donations from <i>Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap</i> [BBC Media Action EAGER programming] listenership.</p>	<p>The project is aware that at the start of Cohort 1, there were high expectations of what material resources would be provided to the girls. Project staff attempted to manage these expectations, but whilst the Transition design was being finalised and the exact amount of the cash transfer being worked out, the team became aware that some misinformation had circulated about the girls receiving a large amount of cash. Before the girls started their Financial Literacy sessions, the final amount of the cash transfer was clearly communicated to all girls and their caregivers/partners, and the girls were guided to set their Financial Goal and build their budget based on this amount. Whilst no other cash was promised at any point in the programme, requests for additional assistance are commonly raised in any programme where NGOs continue to have a presence and are perceived to have resources.</p> <p>As the Transition model was in place before the start of Cohort 2, the project communicated the amount of the cash transfer at the beginning of the programme to manage expectations. This amount was ultimately increased before the start of the Financial Literacy sessions to account for inflation and increases in items girls would be likely to require, and communicated to the girls before they started their planning and budgeting.</p> <p>The project sees the value added in the recommendation for a secondary round of competitive grants following the initial cash transfer. Due to the scale of the project, and the significant design, planning, financial tracking, and oversight such an additional activity would entail, it is unfortunately beyond the scope and timeline of this project, as it approaches its closure.</p>

## 6. Annexes

### Annex 1: Overview of EAGER

#### Activities

- Delivering an 8-month integrated learning programme which included literacy, numeracy, financial literacy, and life skills sessions.
- Establishing safe spaces where girls can learn, with sessions facilitated by Mentors and Facilitators recruited from the same community.
- Guiding girls through one-on-one mentoring to develop their own Empowerment Plan with a learning, household, community and financial goal. This guides girls through an 8-month Transition period during which they are encouraged to practice the skills they learnt. Supporting the Government of Sierra Leone to achieve its strategic outcomes for increased literacy for OOS youth and engage the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education in developing the first approved basic literacy and numeracy curriculum for OOS adolescent girls.
- Holding monthly and quarterly community discussions respectively at the community and chiefdom-level, and broadcasting factual and drama-discussion radio shows to raise and address common barriers through discussion and dialogue.

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, implementing partners (IRC, Concern Worldwide, Restless Development, and BBC Media Action) 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 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 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 Period including a Learning Goal, Household Goal, Community Goal, and Financial Goal. Mentors will meet with each girl twice during this six-month Transition Period to check on her progress towards her goals and offer encouragement.

The project is being implemented in 300 communities (Cohort for year 1: 7,500 adolescent girls) since January 2020. In years 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 has expanded into 392 new communities and is working with a new group of approximately 19,800 adolescent girls. The project has reached a total of 27,313 adolescent girls and 909 Mentors within the four years and the two Cohorts.

### Project Context

Sierra Leone has a gross national income per capita of \$1,381 and 52.2 percent of the population live below US\$1.90 per day.<sup>28</sup> The country emerged from 11 years of 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>29</sup>

#### Sierra Leone Key Information

- **Total Population:** 7.9 million (2020)
- **People displaced by crisis:** 5,500 (2020)
- **Rank in Human Development Index:** 181 of 195 (2022)

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>30</sup> Low confidence in public institutions and marginalisation of sub-groups (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>31</sup>

According to the 2019 Demographic Survey, 61% of women aged 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>32</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>33</sup>

Sierra Leone has a long-standing aspiration to attain middle-income country status by 2035.<sup>34</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

<sup>28</sup> [Human Development Report](#), Briefing Note for Countries on the 2019 Human Development Report, Sierra Leone, UNDP, 2019.

<sup>29</sup> [Ebola Situation Report](#), World Health Organisation, March 2016.

<sup>30</sup> [National Ebola Recovery Strategy for Sierra Leone](#), Government of Sierra Leone, July 2015.

<sup>31</sup> [Ebola Situation Report](#), World Health Organisation, March 2016.

<sup>32</sup> [Demographic and Health Survey](#), Ministry of Health and Sanitation, Government of Sierra Leone, 2019.

<sup>33</sup> [Recovering from the Ebola Virus Disease: Rapid Assessment of Pregnant Adolescent Girls in Sierra Leone](#), UNFPA, 2017

<sup>34</sup> [Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2019-2023](#), Government of Sierra Leone, 2018.

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 OOS youth in the National Education Sector Plan 2018-2020.<sup>35</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 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>36</sup>

**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 competencies as well as sessions on sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, and goal setting. Training on the Basic Literacy and Numeracy (BLN) and Financial Literacy curricula for Facilitators and on the Life Skills curriculum for Mentors 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. The project provides mentors with a monthly stipend for their work. Initially the project envisioned to be project staff. However, after the 2019 Baseline Evaluation of EAGER, the project determined that Mentors should be considered a type of beneficiary of EAGER, given the training and support they received, and potential empowerment they could gain as a result of their work with EAGER girls.

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, we 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

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<sup>35</sup> [Education Sector Plan 2018-2020](#), Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, Government of Sierra Leone, 2017.

<sup>36</sup> Government of Sierra Leone, 2021, Radical Inclusion Policy

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

**Transition Period:** 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 an opportunity for girls to continue practicing, strengthening, and leveraging the knowledge, skills, and confidence they have developed to empower themselves (Output 3, Intermediate Outcome

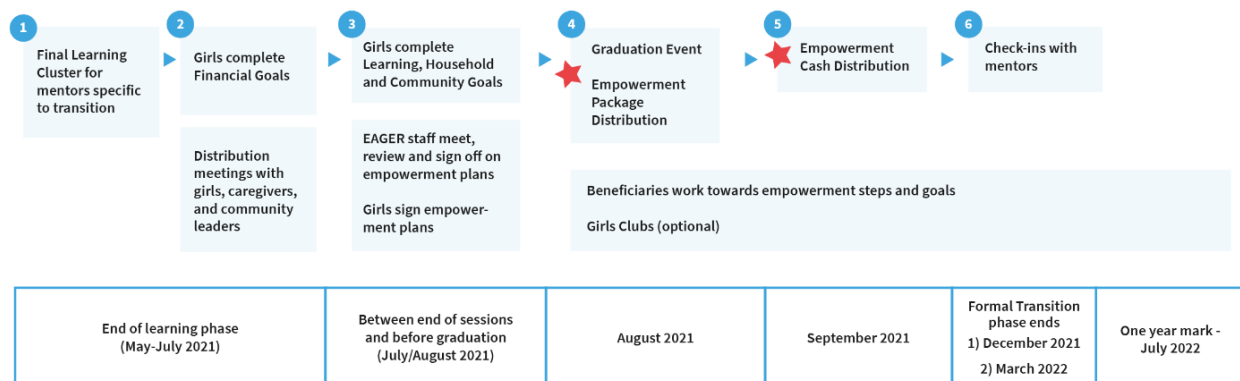


Figure 2: Transition Phase design

3).

**Sustainability:** At the end of the learning program, Girls’ Clubs are set up in each community to provide a means for girls to maintain relationships built during the EAGER programme and continue formal engagement with the Mentors and safe space (where feasible). The Girls’ Clubs receive assets such as a football, a speaker, and a selection of the BBC Media Action radio shows to foster greater community and provide activities for the girls to structure their Clubs around. 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 Life Skills (LS) and BLN Officers with help from Mentors and Facilitators. The project holds quarterly meetings at chiefdom level to reflect on and share action plans and mobilise action to protect and empower girls. After the Cohort 1 learning programme cycle finished in July 2021, EAGER project staff worked with community leadership to create a "Community Action Plan", which acts as a roadmap for the community to continue building girls' empowerment in their community beyond the project timeline. Another key engagement strategy is the series of radio programmes created by BBC Media Action and designed to present issues through the eyes of girls and role model supportive attitudes and practices towards adolescent girls.

These activities 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 actively engage in dialogues (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 including Project Officers are 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, this involvement with the BLN curriculum (which will be made available to help 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, Numeracy, Financial Literacy 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 has engaged in revisiting Intermediate Outcome and Output 5 to reflect changes in the engagement with key GoSL stakeholders since project proposal.



## Annex 2: Post-Endline Approach and Methodology

### Research Design

It is important to note that the research questions and samples used for the research are not focused on evaluating EAGER or representing the population of beneficiaries, but rather using a more in-depth case study approach among a small sample of beneficiaries to illustrate a spectrum of potential life course scenarios among EAGER beneficiaries. Specifically, this is not an evaluation and does not use Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) criteria. The Post-Endline research will not measure programme indicators, nor will it produce findings that speak to what worked/did not work in the programme design (such analysis was presented as part of the Endline Evaluation report). Rather, by using a more in-depth case-study approach amongst a small sample of beneficiaries, our goal is to gain a holistic understanding of the girls' lives a year on from EAGER and the main barriers they have encountered in realising the goals they established in their Empowerment Plans. Our goal is also to assess the sustainability of the EAGER program beyond the implementation timeline.

The field research also involved speaking to significant individuals in the beneficiaries' lives, namely, their male partner or male/female caregiver, in addition to a community leader and an EAGER mentor, allowing for enhanced contextual information related to the girls, rather than explicit inclusion of their voices in the case studies. By collecting data from these stakeholders via a more structured interview, the research team was able to utilise this data to build out the girl's story in each case study.

Dalan Development Consultants, a Sierra Leonean data collection firm, was contracted to conduct the field research given their experience conducting the field research for all three EAGER evaluations.

### Data Collection Tools

The Post-Endline research used the following tools:

- Life story timeline template and interview guide for girl beneficiaries and mentor beneficiaries
- KII guide for caregivers
- KII guide for male partners
- KII guide for mentors (as non-beneficiaries)
- KII guide for female community leaders/Mammy Queens

The research team prepared data collection tools in English as local languages remained largely oral in common practice. This ensured uniformity of understanding among Dalan's qualitative data collectors at the training stages. For the field research, instructions and questions were orally translated into local languages (i.e., Krio, Limba, Mende, Temne). A portion of the field staff training was dedicated to identifying appropriate local language terms for the tool contents as well as preparing for facilitation of interviews in the appropriate local languages.

For the Life Story timeline activity with beneficiaries, the qualitative data collector used flip chart paper and markers on which they drew a timeline of the beneficiary's life beginning with her year of birth (or approximate year) to the date of research, marking noteworthy life events that the beneficiary identified herself on the timeline (approximating years as needed). The qualitative data collector asked the beneficiary to go through and describe each of the events in her own words, then asked selected follow-up questions for each of the events depending on a) the nature of the event (e.g., a positive milestone, a happy memory, a difficult time personally, a difficult time for the community or region); and, b) the time of the event (e.g., before, during, or after EAGER). The follow-up questions the qualitative data collector asked were prescribed by the tool and designed to elicit more information that will contribute to answering the research questions and topics above. After

building the timeline, researchers asked follow-up questions about the future as much as the beneficiary was willing, to learn about what sorts of plans the beneficiary had, what enabling and limiting internal and external factors exist, and how the assets gained from EAGER impacted on those plans. KII Guides for non-beneficiaries were aimed exclusively at understanding perspectives about beneficiaries and gaining a broader contextual understanding of the external factors in that community that were impacting on the beneficiaries' lives.

Each Life-Course session was planned to take no more than two hours (although in practice this varied depending on the responsiveness of each girl), and each interview did not take more than one hour due to the age of the girls and the anticipated chore or work burden they already had. As with the qualitative research conducted as part of the EAGER evaluations, training of the qualitative data collectors included a) being able to identify when a respondent was becoming uncomfortable answering questions such that they could take a break, move onto a new question, or stop the interview, b) frequently reminding the person being interviewed that they could stop at any time or say they did not want to answer a question and move on. The team had already been trained on these protocols as part of their work on the EAGER evaluations, and they also received further training as it related to that specific method.

Data collectors practiced administering the KIIs and Life-Course Interviews in local languages. Data collectors recorded the interviews (with the consent of the interviewees) and supplemented these with detailed field notes in English. The data collectors prepared transcriptions from the notes and recordings 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. DT Global performed regular spot-checking and the data collection firm addressed issues found when they arose.

### Sampling Approach

The Post-Endline research included data collection from three EAGER Cohort 1 programme communities from separate programme districts. Researchers selected the three communities for the Post-Endline research from the 10 qualitative data collection communities visited during each of the EAGER evaluation points. The research team used the following criteria to ensure that the communities selected were maximally representative of the EAGER programme communities:

- Urban and rural communities (one urban, two rural).
- Each EAGER partner represented in at least one community selected.
- Community's relative accessibility to services (high, medium, low).
- District's prevalence of food insecurity in 2020 (proxy for recent socio-economic status).
- No overlap in the communities where cash distributions or graduations are happening.

Figure 3: District and Community Features

District Features			Community Features		
Name	% Food insecure (2020) <sup>37</sup>	EAGER Partner	Urban/Rural	Relative accessibility to services <sup>38</sup>	Other notable features
WAU	50% (Medium)	Concern	Urban	High	Urban environment near capital (Freetown)
Kailahun	67% (High)	Restless	Rural	Medium	Conservative Muslim
Kono	60% (Medium/High)	IRC	Rural	Low	Endline data mentions of secret society barriers to girls' mobility

Researchers confirmed community selection after receiving feedback from the project team confirming that these three communities could be visited for Post-Endline data collection. While data collection was to take place during the rainy season, thus making access to Kono and Kailahun districts challenging, Dalan allocated extra days for travel to and from these districts to address this. Additionally, we were aware that programme activities would be ongoing so requests for EAGER field staff help would need to be made in advance to fieldwork.

### Selection of Respondents

The Post-Endline research included primary data collection with up to four beneficiaries from each of the three communities listed above (three beneficiary girls and one beneficiary mentor, if the latter was available). A purposive sampling approach would be employed to ensure participants in the research fit a particular profile. While not representative of the general population, purposively sampled individuals were qualitatively generalisable. In order to ensure the sample of girls selected represented the broad variety of types of EAGER beneficiaries, the research team aimed to sample the following sub-groups:

- Girls who became pregnant or had children during EAGER, or already had children
- Girls who were their own heads of household
- Girls who engaged in work outside of the household
- Girls with disabilities
- Girls who reached their household and/or community goals in addition to their financial goal (e.g., girls that started a business, returned to education, underwent skills training, if possible).

The research team used Endline survey data (e.g., Washington Group short-set disability questions) collected at the evaluation points and triangulated the survey data with qualitative data from beneficiaries in order to inform the selection of girls to interview from the various sub-groups within those three communities. The research team also relied on project officers and programme staff in

<sup>37</sup>United Nations, [UN Food Security Monitoring System](#), June 2020, p. 29.

<sup>38</sup> The determination of relative access was based on the community profiles conducted as part of the EAGER Baseline Evaluation

the three communities to help identify the girls that fit into the selected sub-groups above. EAGER partners and staff in the three communities helped to recruit the girl respondents and coordinated interviews with the female community leaders and mentors, and caregivers or partners of the girls. This was crucial in relation to the girls in order to ensure that the research team was able to interview girls from the various sub-groups listed above.

A smaller purposive sample allowed the Post-Endline team to explore girls’ and Mentors’ experiences since programme ending via the Life-Course Interviews, a considerably more in-depth and open-ended approach than concise semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions that reach a broader sample. Accordingly, the following groups were sampled via the relevant research tools:

- In-depth case study interviews with three girl beneficiaries in three different communities (nine girls total)
- In-depth case study interviews with one mentor beneficiary in the three communities (three total mentors identified about how they have benefited)
- In-depth contextual interviews with girls’ partners/husbands or caregivers (with priority given to female caregivers) (nine partners or caregivers total)
- In-depth contextual interview with one mentor per community (three total mentors interviewed about their role in supporting EAGER)
- In-depth contextual interview with on female community leader/Mammy Queen per community (three total)

Community	Beneficiary Studies	Case	KIIs for context	Total # respondents
<b>WAU</b>	3 girls, 1 Mentor as beneficiary – subject to availability in the community (Total 4 individuals)		1 partner/caregiver per EAGER girl (1x3) 1 community leader 1 Mentor as provider (Total 5 individuals)	9 people (possible that the Mentor will complete both beneficiary case study tool and KII tool)
<b>Kailahun</b>	3 girls, 1 Mentor as beneficiary – subject to availability in the community (Total 4 individuals)		1 partner/caregiver per EAGER girl (1x3) 1 community leader 1 Mentor as provider (Total 5 individuals)	9 people (possible that the Mentor will complete both beneficiary case study tool and KII tool)
<b>Kono</b>	3 girls, 1 Mentor as beneficiary – subject to availability in the community (Total 4 individuals)		1 partner/caregiver per EAGER girl (1x3) 1 community leader 1 Mentor as provider (Total 5 individuals)	9 people (possible that the Mentor will complete both beneficiary case study tool and KII tool)
<b>Total</b>	12 beneficiary case studies (9 girls and 3 Mentors)		15 context KIIs (9 partner/caregivers, 3 community leaders, 3 Mentors)	27 people (possible that the Mentor will complete both beneficiary case study tool and KII tool)

#### Evaluation Ethics and Safeguarding

As was done at the Midterm and Endline Evaluations, Dalan ensured that during the training of field staff and fieldwork that COVID-19 protocols and policies were followed. The Post-Endline research used the same protocols as established at Midterm, including wearing of masks by qualitative data collectors in indoor settings, as well as providing respondents with masks during data collection.

COVID-19 policies and protocols were covered during the field staff training and PPE equipment was provided prior to deployment to the field.

The field team was trained in the safeguarding and reporting or referral process during the training as well and highlighted any new processes or information related to these protocols. The same consent process used during the evaluation points was used for the Post-Endline research including the addition of consent related to the future storing, sharing, and reuse of the data (notably around use of audio recordings, excerpts from the life-stories and images of their life-story maps—with consent and in accordance with IRC's ethical policies). All field team members were re-trained in the consent process prior to the field component. All field team members had worked on the Midterm and Endline evaluations of EAGER, and had done qualitative research in the communities (and with some of the same people) that were visited for the Post-Endline.

### Virtual Training

The data collection partner firm, Dalan Development Consultants, selected qualitative data collectors with a background in this research (e.g., those with previous experience on the EAGER Baseline, Midterm and/or Endline and who were skilled in nuanced and sensitive facilitation). They were matched to locations with which they were familiar to minimise the chance of language barriers or significant interpretation issues during fieldwork. Once the tools had been finalised, the DT Global researchers developed training videos around a) overview of EAGER and the Post-Endline method; b) KII tools; c) Life Story Tool. These were sent to Dalan in advance of the planned training, so that Dalan could download the videos for the researchers to view in advance of live sessions with the lead researchers.

DT Global planned for the training to take place over three days. This consisted of qualitative researchers in the Dalan offices reviewing the data collection tools and associated training videos in the morning. In the afternoon, the DT Global lead researchers were online to answer any questions prepared by the Dalan researchers, and to do some mock interview sessions with the DT Global researcher as a mock participant and Dalan researchers acting as interviewer.

Training occurred on August 12 (EAGER and Post-Endline overview; KIIs), 13 (Life-Course Interviews overview), and 15 (Life-Course Interview simulations). Training was initially planned for August 11 – 12, but due to rioting in Freetown, it was unsafe for Dalan researchers to physically meet at Dalan offices on the 11th. Therefore, qualitative researchers were sent links to download the pre-recorded training videos prepared by the lead researchers. Some struggled with internet connectivity at home, so the training was shifted to include the 13<sup>th</sup> (a Saturday) and the 15<sup>th</sup> in order to adequately cover all topics. Dalan management staff and field managers participated in the training at their offices prior to embarking to the field for data collection as they were providing quality assurance.

### Data Collection in Field

Interviews were conducted one-on-one, with only female qualitative data collectors speaking to girls and mentors completing their life-stories interview. Male qualitative data collectors could conduct KIIs with community-level stakeholders that were helping to provide context around the beneficiaries' lives. Given the nature of the Life Story interview which was guided by questions but involve multiple unique conversations, interviews were audio-recorded (with the appropriate informed consent from the participants) and notes were not taken during the interview except on the flip-chart paper where the Life Story map was being drawn and annotated to help drive the conversation.

In cases where respondents required special consideration, i.e., they had children with them or needed to sit for a shorter time so they could go to market or the farm, the qualitative data collectors accommodated needs to the extent possible, e.g., allocated more time for the interview or ensured

that the environment was adequate. If beneficiaries were unavailable for interview at specific times (e.g., due to work responsibilities), the field team tried to accommodate their schedule, for example conducted the interview later in the evening or early in the morning.

### Transcription and Analysis

Dalan led the transcription process which began as the team was still in the field via virtual transfers of recordings. Although there were potential risks to data quality associated via an oral translation process, local language reading/writing skills were limited (as many local languages are not written), including amongst qualitative data collectors, precluding verbatim note taking. Qualitative data collectors collected audio recordings and Life Story maps during data collection, as appropriate and transcribed notes in English subsequent to the field work. Dalan team members transcribed all audio files. The Dalan field team and research team members checked all transcriptions to ensure completeness, clarified phrasing (by referring back to audio files as necessary), and provided contextual information for certain idioms or descriptions that would help the analysis team interpret the text.

### Quality Assurance during Data Collection

Since the international evaluation team did not travel to Freetown, all quality assurance during data collection was done remotely by the Team Leader and Qualitative Specialist, and in-person via Coordinators at Dalan. As such, the team used quality assurance measures including:

- **Group chats on WhatsApp.** All members of the field team, along with the Dalan field supervisor, joined the DT Global on a Group WhatsApp chat. This allowed the international team members to answer questions and trouble shoot in real time while teams were in the field, in addition to receiving reports on progress.
- **Ongoing communication with Dalan Coordinators.** Daily conversations took place with Dalan coordinators in Freetown. This included daily check-ins and location checks of the field teams in order to mitigate challenges as they arose.
- **Updates provided to IRC.** DT Global provided updates on the status of the data collection, flagging any challenges or issues that occurred, and highlighting what was accomplished. This ensured DT Global was engaged in the data collection process and problem solving if there were issues.

### Annex 3: Research Framework

Research Question (RQ)	Sub-Questions	Data Points	Notes
<p><b>Were girls' Transition and Empowerment Plans appropriate, contextually specific and potentially sustainable in the first place?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent have the girls followed through on their final/signed off Empowerment Plans?</li> <li>If yes, what were the factors that contributed to their sustainability in the planning and early-implementation phase?</li> <li>If not, why not? What were the factors that made them unsustainable?</li> <li>If not, have they replaced their Empowerment Plan goals with other goals?</li> <li>How have they progressed with these new goals?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Girls' self-assessment on level of completion of original Empowerment Plans.</li> <li>Self-assessment on likelihood of completion of plans.</li> <li>Number and type/extent of changes/replacements to plans.</li> <li>Girls' self-assessment on level of completion of NEW empowerment goals.</li> <li>Perceived key drivers of plan successes.</li> <li>#, type of perceived obstacles to plan attainment – (by internal (personal capacities) vs. external).</li> <li>Proposed solutions to address expressed challenges.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One of the project's main strengths, as identified in the Endline Evaluation, is that girls worked with mentors and others one-on-one to ensure their plans were tailored to (to their needs, abilities (noting abilities were enhanced by EAGER learning phase), and socio-economic contexts) and therefore were appropriately feasible and sustainable such that one year on, they would continue to do well.</li> <li>Sample note: As possible, explore this in a context/with a girl where there were relatively fewer shocks or stressors in her life and in the environment itself. We'd be better able to assess the plan itself in this situation. Within that, need to look at sub-groups as much as possible.</li> </ul>
<p><b>To what extent has EAGER enhanced beneficiaries' resilience in the context of various shocks and stressors in their environment?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>With respect to each of the goal areas, explore girls' perceived successes and limitations in the past one year. Where she identifies limitations, probe into her external context to determine if perceived limitations in success was a result of a sudden shock (e.g., death in family, illness) or a longer-term stressor in her environment (e.g., price fluctuations, poor growing season)?</li> <li>IF SHOCKS: Where and what were the shocks or events between EAGER project ending and the time of research?</li> <li>IF STRESSORS: Where and what were the longer-term stressors?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>#, type of perceived obstacles to goal attainment (or steps towards this) – (by internal (personal capacities) vs. external).</li> <li>Time after EAGER conclusion (specifically after August/September 2021 when the final distributions took place, but incorporating periodic check-ins up to March 2022)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sample note: As possible, identify if and how the community context has been volatile in past one year (e.g., price increases, natural hazard or health emergency). Within that, need to look at sub-groups as much as possible.</li> <li>Shocks and stressors of ALL types (social, economic, natural, systemic, community, personal/external etc.) will be explored, noted and categorised across all</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were some factors that contributed to the stressors?</li> <li>• What attempts were made to deal with the stressors</li> <li>• FOR ALL: Which resilience capacities were utilised (e.g., anticipating, absorbing, adapting, transforming) in her response and what about EAGER contributed to those capacities?</li> </ul>	<p>when key obstacles materialised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #, type of contributory factors to obstacles.</li> <li>• #, type of mitigating solutions to address obstacles (successful or unsuccessful).</li> </ul>	<p>respondents during the analysis portion of the research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research will include any support or check-ins undertaken by EAGER after the August/September 2021 final distributions and how these may have affected girls' perception and/or treatment of challenges/obstacles.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>For girls DOING WELL (e.g., plan working, better off than before), were there ever any threats of shocks?</i></li> <li>• If so, how did they overcome them?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #, type of perceived obstacles to plan attainment – (by internal (personal capacities) vs. external).</li> <li>• #, type of mitigating solutions to address obstacles (successful).</li> </ul>	
<p><b>One year on, how do beneficiaries' perceive the degree to which they are supported or not by members of their community and household?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has their perception of family/community support changed since the end of the programme?</li> <li>• What factors contributed to the changing feelings of support.</li> <li>• To what degree did support enhance or hinder her resilience to keep her plan going?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• #, type/source of family/hh/community supports</li> <li>• Perceptions of changes in support between the last Empowerment Plan check in (March 2022) and current time.</li> <li>• #, type of perceived factors influencing support.</li> <li>• Perception of influence of supports on plan attainment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sampling note: As possible, identify any cases where a girl has not been successful in her business over time, and/or is presently not engaging in any livelihood strategies. Explore whether she is still feeling the support she had when she was more successful and contributing to the household (did lack of success hinder the support she got, or did lack of support limit her success?) This can also help explore themes around gender empowerment and support.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What has been the outcome of EAGER on beneficiaries' confidence over time?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much does increased confidence (at home, in business, in community, etc.) depend on a positive Transition Period outcome?</li> <li>• How does a negative outcome in their Transition Period or overall lives impact their confidence?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perception of change in confidence levels between end of EAGER (1 March 2022) and time of interview.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration into how success impacts on confidence (in various spheres - personal life, community life, business life, etc) and vice versa.</li> <li>• Sample note: This aspect will be captured given sampling notes above.</li> </ul>



## **Annex 4: Data Collection Tools**

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 following tools and consent forms have been submitted as separate files as requested.

1. Key Informant Interview Guide for partner/caregiver
2. Key Informant Interview Guide for Mentor
3. Life-Course Interview Form (questions and data entry template)
4. Life-Course Interview Guide