RESULTS FROM OUR GIRLS' EDUCATION CHALLENGE PROJECT IN ETHIOPIA

IMPROVED GIRLS' LEARNING IN RURAL WOLAITA
Our holistic, low-cost, low-tech project targeted girls, teachers, headteachers, parents, community leaders and government education officials. They identified barriers preventing girls from attending and succeeding in school. A combination of interventions addressed these challenges and supported systemic change to construct an environment that transformed girls’ education.

The project created an enabling climate for girls to attend school more regularly, stay in school for longer and increase their learning opportunities. A scalable model was developed that is replicable across Ethiopia and in other contexts, as the key obstacles addressed by the project are common to many other regions and countries.

This is a DFID-funded Girls’ Education Challenge project. The interventions undertaken are aligned to Ethiopian Ministry of Education policy and are being implemented in partnership with Ethiopian government offices. This embeds ownership, strengthens existing systems and supports sustainability.

**GOAL:** To improve girls’ enrolment, retention and performance in four rural districts of Wolaita Zone, south-western Ethiopia.

![Map of Ethiopia with Wolaita highlighted]
Woreda Education Offices empowered to support girls and share learning with Ministry of Education

Increased capacity of schools to support girls’ education

Mechanisms for data monitoring and gender action planning in place

Mobilised communities and parental support for girls’ education

Better academic opportunities for girls

Support during transition to adolescence

“I have realised that our girls can be big leaders of the country and for this they need to be well educated.”
(JUNIOR GIRL’S PARENT)
**MOST EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS**

- Girls’ Clubs
- Mothers’ Groups
- Gender responsive pedagogy
- Social accountability via integrated Gender Action Planning
- Awards
- Tutorial classes
- Upgraded latrines
- Embedding delivery to drive government ownership and capacity
- Encouraging community attitudinal and behavioural change
- Guidance and counselling for improved self-esteem
- Reusable sanitary pads, underwear and soap

“Link’s holistic approach supports sustainability and improves social accountability. Link, which is one of the most successful projects in terms of improving learning outcomes for girls, simultaneously decreased gender disparity, developed an increased interest in science amongst girls and improved attendance.”  
(Girls’ Education Challenge Thematic Papers, September 2016, p.18)
**RESULTS**

“‘They say if you give a man a fish, you feed him for one day. If you teach a man to fish you give him food for life, just like the project changed our lives forever. It brings change for a lifetime. They have given what cannot be lost, no one can take it away from us.’” (Female teacher)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>LITERACY</strong></th>
<th><strong>NUMERACY</strong></th>
<th><strong>ATTENDANCE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+197%</td>
<td>+301%</td>
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Increased literacy and numeracy for Project girls compared to Control girls.

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<tr>
<th><strong>RETENTION</strong></th>
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<td>+30%</td>
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Throughput from Grade 1 to Grade 8 increased for Project girls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>GENDER DISPARITY</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>-3.3% Grade 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>-1.4% Grade 4</td>
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Gender disparity reduced for Project girls, with Grade 7 performing 3.3% better and Grade 4 performing 1.4% worse compared to Control.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>PARENTS MORE SUPPORTIVE OF GIRLS’ EDUCATION</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Reduced chores, provided school materials including lamp oil to aid evening study</td>
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**TEACHERS USING MORE GIRL-FRIENDLY METHODS**

- 86% Project girls
- 10% Control girls

Teachers using more girl-friendly methods, with Project girls reporting changes contributing to increased attendance and performance.

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT IMPROVED**

- 60% Senior girls’ parents
- 37% Control group

Senior girls’ parents report increased support for girls to complete primary school (grade 8).

- 59% Junior girls’ parents
- 19% Control group

Junior girls’ parents report that sending girls to secondary school is now the norm in their village.

*(Female teacher)*

“They say if you give a man a fish, you feed him for one day. If you teach a man to fish you give him food for life, just like the project changed our lives forever. It brings change for a lifetime. They have given what cannot be lost, no one can take it away from us.” (Female teacher)
Girls’ Clubs helped girls find solutions to their problems and encouraged peer support to succeed in school. Now more girls think ‘marriage can wait’ until studies are complete.

Girls received counselling from female teachers trained to support girls, build their self-esteem and to give advice on HIV/AIDS, early marriage, menstruation, study methods, violence and harmful traditional practices. The teachers relate to girls, understand their problems and can deliver the most effective support.

Girls’ self-esteem improved

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Project girls</th>
<th>Control girls</th>
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<tr>
<td>felt that their education improved because of programmes to improve their self-esteem</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answered yes to ‘I feel happy with who I am’</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>felt they can do things as well as other girls in their school</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>felt proud of their achievements</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>felt they are just as good as the boys in their class</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>felt they have some good qualities</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>39%</td>
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“Our lives have changed. We are participating and competing with boys in class and elsewhere.” (Senior girl)
“I used to crave to see her married and have children. Now I desire her to continue her studies.”
(SENIOR GIRL’S PARENT)

“They send me to school regularly like male students.”
(JUNIOR GIRL)

“My mother blames her family for depriving her of the chance to study. She kept telling me the wonderful chance I am now getting. I see her struggling in life as a housewife and I understand that education will relieve me.”
(SENIOR GIRL)

“I am inspired by seeing people who attained high status through education.”
(SENIOR GIRL)

“The project is now in our blood. We scale it up, take it forward - no going back.”
(ZONE EDUCATION MANAGER)

“Attitude change is visible. A girl never sat at the same table with boys in the past. Now she feels equal and does not feel ashamed about her sex.”
(BOYS GROUP DISCUSSION)

“Girls’ grades improved because of tutorial classes. We used to beg male students to help us. Now we learn freely in tutorial classes and our teachers assist us.”
(SENIOR GIRL)

“Now the community believes that the female students’ problem is not lack of capacity, but opportunity.”
(TEACHER)
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