



Lessons learned from the outcomes and delivery of girls' clubs in educational programmes

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Question

What are the lessons learned from the outcomes and delivery of girls' clubs in educational programmes? Where possible please focus on the extent to which different girls' clubs activities improve learning, develop and improve life-skills, support girls to stay in school, improve well-being, and delay pregnancy.

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The K4D helpdesk service provides brief summaries of current research, evidence, and lessons learned. Helpdesk reports are not rigorous or systematic reviews; they are intended to provide an introduction to the most important evidence related to a research question. They draw on a rapid desk-based review of published literature and consultation with subject specialists.

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1. Summary

This paper provides a rapid review of the evidence on the outcomes and delivery of girls' clubs in educational programmes. The review found some evidence of girls' clubs specific programmes in school settings having positive impacts on educational and life skills outcomes. However, there is limited evidence that is able to separate or attribute the impact of girls' clubs within larger education programmes. The review located very little evidence that looked at the links between participation in girls' clubs and outcomes like delaying pregnancy.

Girls clubs delivered as part of education programmes can have positive impacts on literacy, numeracy, enrolment and attendance. Although the evidence is limited. Evaluations of IGATE (Miske Witt, 2017) and New Equilibrium for Girls (Alcott et al, 2016) both in Tanzania deliver a life skills curriculum to girls and show positive impacts on learning with IGATE also able to show positive impacts of enrolment and attendance.

Clubs delivered in schools which combine the delivery of life skills training with sports also show promising impact on education. Evaluation of Standard Chartered Goal Programme showed that participation had increased their determination to complete their education and girls were more able to express ambition (Marcus and Stravropoulou, 2020)

Not all the evaluations of girls' club found for this review showed positive outcomes – for example Buehren et al (2017) found no impact on school enrolment or other empowerment outcomes. One evaluation was located that included considerations of disability in relation to girls' clubs.

Key lessons learned identified from the literature around outcomes and delivery of girls' clubs

- Combinations of approaches and activities are more likely to improve educational outcomes. The addition of bursary or cash transfer elements to life skills programmes can have positive impacts on pregnancy and child marriage (Ozler, 2020). A rigorous review of girls' club programmes found that programmes that had impacts on enrolment or retention included somekind of financial support for girls' to stay in school (Marcus et al, 2017)
- Lessons from the implementation of life skills based clubs show that careful consideration should be given to the material delivered and the mentor or facilitator who runs a Girls' Club. Some clubs delivered with education programmes train girls from the community, or learners at the school themselves to deliver club activities. Programmes must ensure that comprehensive training and support is available
- Little of the literature found for this review considers the long-term impact of clubs or how long sessions should run. Evidence from the Adolescent Girls Initiative in Kenya suggests that positive change in girls confidence, voice and sense of choice may be lost once attendance at the club ceases.
- Clubs may also mitigate future negative impacts on enrolment and attendance caused by school closures. One mechanisms identified for this in Sierra Leone was that by providing girls with a space where they may continue to learn and maintain their social networks girls may be more able to avoid or delay pregnancy (Bandiera et al 2018)
- Clubs need to also work with parents and the community in order to change norms and attitudes around girls' education in order to support girls' attendance and learning. The inclusion of boys in some club activities can also have strong positive impacts on boys attitudes and relationships, and build their support for girls' education.

2. Background

Girls' Clubs and Education

Girls' Clubs and youth development clubs have become increasingly common features of both school and community based programmes that aim to improve the well being, capacity and empowerment of girls. As Marcus et al (2017) describe, the majority of these programmes are community based or linked to non-formal education programmes and target girls not attending school, and so are out of scope for this review.

School based groups are becoming more frequent sometimes with an explicit educational goal in mind, sometimes focused on empowerment or life skills, and sometimes with a strong SRH focus. These clubs are often linked to large multi-sectoral education programmes and as they run on school premises can defacto target in school girls.

The design and activities of clubs' also varies widely (Marcus, 2020) most programmes focus the personal development of the individual girl participants, they provide somekind of life skills education, offer the opportunity to develop and practice communication skills and have some content on gender equality. Some clubs provide information around financial literacy or may be linked to vocational training or aim to encourage saving. Some act as safe spaces where girls can share their concerns and seek support and activities like study clubs can support academic learning.

3. Key Programmes

Girls' Clubs Programmes in education programmes: evidence

There is strong evidence that girl focused clubs in a variety of settings can have positive impacts of girls' life skills (Marcus et al., 2017; Dupay et al., 2018). Despite their popularity there is more limited evidence on the impact of clubs that are delivered in education settings. In a rigorous review Marcus et al (2017) found evaluations of two school based life-skills programmes and two extra-curricula school based programmes that had positive impacts on enrolment and retention. Evidence of impact on educational outcomes is also limited. The Marcus et al (2017) review also found very mixed evidence of impact on educational attainment – nine programmes led to positive changes in educational achievement while six led to mixed changes – reflecting changes for some girls or in some subjects. The review found some indicators that these programmes contribute to 'soft skills' and a greater commitment to study.

Very little evidence was located that considered the impact of this kind of girls' club on pregnancy outcomes. This outcome has been considered recently in Rafaeli (2020) which focused on life skills programmes with adolescent girls in emergency settings, this is complimented by Rafaeli (2020b) which reviews the evidence for engaging girls in life skill programming at a distance despite the sparse evidence this review located evidence of remote approaches shifting gender norms and impacts on Sexual and Reproductive Health.

Related outcomes such as aspirations and attitudes towards education and decision making are commonly measured in programmes that are more explicitly designed to achieve change in gender norms. Recent evaluations located for this type of programme were mainly Asia and so outside the scope of this review. One example is Taaron Ki Tolu (Cluster of Stars) youth club

programme in Haryana. Jayachandran et al (2018) describe a two and a half year pilot included mixed sex youth clubs which received 28 facilitated classroom sessions, these covered gender roles, and skills such as leadership, self-efficacy and assertiveness. Based on a very small sample during a pilot project evaluation found that although participants report more equal gender attitudes and behaviour, there was no effect on the percentage of comments given by girls in class or the percentage of girls among class discussions. The programme also included a media based behaviour change communication campaign and the research was able to distinguish the impact of the different activities.

This review has identified several girls' clubs' interventions within education programming. The most relevant for this query are included below - these take place in an education setting, a report education or education and life skills outcomes, and are able to for girls and are able to make. The programmes included are all located in Sub-Saharan Africa. For each programme this review provides information available about the activities, evaluation design, outcomes and whether evaluation is able to attribute impacts to girls' club activities.

A full list of programmes is in Annex 1.

The majority of the included here are from the grey literature. In line with Marcus et al (2017) this review located very limited evidence or discussion around causal mechanisms for change.

A number of these studies are from programmes run as part of DFID's Girls Education Challenge (GEC) where full evaluations are available. Synthesis conducted by the GEC Evaluation Manager at the end of the first phase of GEC projects highlighted how girls' clubs within schools have improved girls' aspirations, sense of belonging and self-confidence, although they are were able to make a direct association with learning outcomes. For example, girls' clubs supported by Save the Children in Mozambique focused on peer education and help with homework led to an increase in 'academic self efficacy' and girls reported sense of belonging in the school (Coffey, 2018).

Improving Girls' Access through Transforming Education (IGATE), Zimbabwe.

A multiactivity girls' education programme funded by the GEC. 'Power Within' (PW) Clubs are School based girls' club run by a teacher matron. Aims to create an enabling environment to support completion of primary school, build leadership skills and knowledge of girls' rights and their own value within family, school and community. Clubs are designed for primary school girls aged 9-13 attending grades 4-7. Clubs met twice a month. Each PW club had a maximum of 50 student members, who were expected to share their lessons with all other students in the school. At endline 81% of schools supported by the wider programme had an PW club.

The overall programme was evaluated with a Randomised Control Trial which included mixed methods longitudinal evaluation. It is **not able to directly attribute impact to girls' clubs**. However the design is able to make some comments about impacts for girls in schools with and without clubs and comparison between those who did and did not join clubs. The RCT design was challenged by contextual difficulties including implementation of other NGO programming and roll of a national literacy programme – programme activities were also phased with some activities rolled out 12 months before endline

Miske Witt & Associates (2017) endline evaluation shows that girls who attended a school with a PW club significantly more likely to be enrolled at endline. **Girls who were members of a PW club were more likely to score highly in literacy and numeracy at both midline and**

endline, significantly more likely to have greater attendance at endline and significantly more likely to be enrolled at endline. Interviews with the girls showed they felt more able to ask questions and now felt that their community thought they were important. Girls were also more likely to apply their confidence when faced with non-academic challenges, like unwanted advances from others or reaching out for menstrual hygiene management support from parents, teachers, and/or classmates.

New Equilibrium for Girls. Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

The New Equilibrium for Girls project was implemented in Tanzania and Zimbabwe by Camfed as part of the DFID Girls Education Challenge. This is a multisectoral education programme which includes bursaries, community mobilisation, and teacher training to support adolescent girls remain in secondary school.

Girls' Clubs are lead in school by Camfed Learner Guides. Learner guides are local young women who have completed secondary school. They deliver the My Better World Curriculum which aims to build confidence, resilience and life skills. Learner Guides also support girls with study skills and provide mentoring.

Reanalysis of evaluation data by Alcott et al. (2016) from Tanzania showed a reduction in school dropout was driven by the bursary programme. Girls were 18% less likely to dropout compared to marginalised girls in other school districts. Some results are **attributed to the activities and expected impact areas of girls' clubs**, the analysis links self-esteem and aspiration with the clubs led by learner guides. At baseline there was a difference in learning between girls with high self esteem and those with low self-esteem of two points in mathematics test scores, this gap was not seen at endline, where learning had increased at a similar rate for all girls regardless of their self-esteem. The reanalysis also showed learning improvements did not much depend on whether girls had a disability or not – this was attributed to the programme taking place in secondary school so all girls will have had around 8 years of education previously.

Standard Chartered Goal Programme, Uganda Nigeria, India, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Africa, Zambia.

Marcus and Stavropoulou (2020) conduct an evaluation of Standard Chartered's Goal Programme. Using surveys completed by 18,698 girls before and after completing the programme and interviews and FGDs with girls in Uganda and Nigeria.

The Goal programme consists of after school clubs which combine sports and the delivery of a life skills curriculum. They are normally but not always held in schools, for girls aged 12-18 with sessions held weekly over 10 months. The clubs use participatory, play based methodologies to deliver five life skills modules 1) be yourself 2) be healthy 3) be empowered 4) be money savvy 5) be independent. In Nigeria the sessions are delivered by peer leaders and in Uganda they are delivered through participation in BRACs Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents clubs

Across all countries the evaluation found a 14% reported increase in confidence in Goal participants. Qualitative research revealed that increased self confidence was the foundation for other changes. In both Uganda and Nigeria girls talked about how Goal had 'increased their determination to complete education' and express ambition. In Nigeria Girls teachers and parents all mentioned positive impacts on education including gains in study and time management skills, confidence to participate in class. In Uganda the majority were out-of-schools but for those in school or aspiring to return they programme built commitment and confidence.

A key finding of this was that parental resistance can be an issue – parents often think it's a waste of girls' time and don't want them to participate, there was also some resistance to them playing 'masculine' sports – but also a lot of appreciation for what they'd learnt and how they'd changed through taking part. It seemed to be the combined life skills and sports that were having the impact, not specifically one or the other.

Safe School for Girls (SSFG), Rwanda.

Part of a multi-activity education programme, which provides academic resources, financial literacy training and sexual and reproductive health education to address obstacles to girls' education. This includes training for teachers to be mentors and support students to participate in club activities after school. Activities included financial education and life skills training, mentorship sessions and activities to reinforce academic skills, map career paths, build peer support networks and develop leadership skills. The clubs include both boys and girls. At midline the age of students varied from 15-24.

A mixed methods midline study which takes a longitudinal panel approach (Laterite, 2019) is **not able to directly attribute outcome to clubs** positive impacts were found on completion and transition to upper secondary school are stronger for girls – at midline 68.5% of girls are in S4 compared to the national average of 56%. Young people were asked questions from the Care Youth Leadership Index (YLI). The largest improvements between baseline and midline centred on improved self confidence – interacting with others, speaking up in class, considering implications and making decisions. Unfortunately data from the YLI is not gender disaggregated

Galz and Goals. Namibia.

Implemented by the Namibian Football Association and UNICEF the Galz for Goals programme integrates life skills with basic football coaching and includes the establishment of under 15 football leagues for girls. The programme largely operates from schools and most volunteer coaches are teachers.

An end of project evaluation (UNICEF, 2015) based on document review, interviews and a small Knowledge, Attitude, Practice and Behaviour Survey found that Girls reported increases in self-confidence, self-esteem, self-worth, self-efficacy and leadership – in some cases in areas where the life skills curriculum had not actually been delivered. Girls said the programme helped them develop positive attitudes towards school work. They also described how involvement in the club helps them prevent pregnancy. The evaluation noted that without regular follow ups, the life skills component of the programme was not being given sufficient attention

Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA), Tanzania.

An adaption of the standard ELA model with the additional of microcredit services. The standard ELA model includes safe space clubs for girls aged 11-21 which take place in a specially hired community space. Each club is provided with books and games equipment. One girl from the community is trained as a mentor and leads a curriculum which covers health, nutrition, sexual and reproductive health, life skills and financial literacy. Girls are also provided with livelihood and vocational training. In this adaption, school buildings were used for club spaces – but the aim had been for them to take place in a specially rented space giving the programme team more control of timing and safety.

Buehren et al. (2017) report a Randomised Control Trial using a panel design – although the study experiences a 42% attrition rate. There was no impact of young women’s reproductive health outcomes, school enrolment or empowerment. However, there was a higher take up rate of ELA clubs activities in communities with microfinance (19%) compared to communities without.

The evaluation states that implementation of the programme was constricted by lack of replenishment of club materials which lead to less interest in regular participation and the inadequate training of new of replacement mentors with new mentors waiting months for training.

4. Lessons Learned

The review has identified a number of lessons learnt from the implementation and outcomes of girls’ clubs, this section of the review combines evidence from girls’ clubs delivered in education settings and those in community settings as reviews of the literature often discuss them together (VAWG Helpdesk, 2020; Marcus et al., 2017, ICRW, 2018, Bell, 2019). Key recommendations that emerge from the literature focus on elements of programme design that contribute more directly to life skills outcomes – all however contribute to the creation of a more gender equitable learning environment for girls.

Using multisectoral approaches or combinations of activities can be more effective to reach the most vulnerable. Several papers talk about the need to also address financial barriers and need to address the social and economic environment that girls are living in (Austrian et al, 2020) and there is some evidence adding cash transfers to life skills programmes can have positive impacts on child marriage, pregnancy and risky behaviour (Ozler et al. 2020), Marcus et al (2017) found that the majority of included programmes that had impacts on enrolment or retention included some provision of in-kind or financial support for girls’ to stay in school.

Marcus and Stavropoulou (2020) highlight a small but growing evaluation literature around combined sports and life skills programme which shows them to have positive impacts on areas of girls life skills and empowerment including self-confidence, communication and leadership skills as well as education outcomes such as improving the relationship with teachers, study skills and enabling girls to realise the value of education. STEM or ICT and coding based clubs may also show promise in building girls’ life skills (West et al., 2019)

Who facilitates clubs should be carefully considered. Many girls clubs programmes in education and other settings recruit female mentors from the local community who have navigated similar challenges – such as the Learner Guides in the New Equilibrium for Girls programme who are girls from the community who have successfully completed secondary school (Miske and Witt, 2017). Authors have also suggested that it is important to ensure that training for mentors is comprehensive and ongoing training and support is available. Alcott et al (2016) highlight that in ELA Tanzania the programme was not able to train replacement mentors when girls dropped out of leading the ELA clubs leading to concerns about implementation quality. Some school based clubs, such as the Child-to-Child Clubs delivered as part of Wasichana Wetu Wafaulu train a club matron who then supports children attending the club to run sessions themselves. (Education Development Trust, nd)

Where clubs have explicit learning outcomes or life skills goals **curriculum should be designed with the local context** and age of the girls in mind. Where relevant as close

alignment as possible with any national life skills curriculum can help reinforce messaging – this might involve challenging the content of national curricula. Evaluation of Galz and Goals notes that aligning the life skills curriculum with the school curriculum would increase buy in from the relevant Ministry and ensure that coaches and teachers are delivering messages that build on and compliment each other (UNICEF, 2015)

Few evaluations consider the long-term impact of girls' clubs or how long clubs should run. Austrian et al (2020) look at the impact of the Adolescent Girls Initiative in Kenya two years on. The interventions trialled included community-based girls clubs led a mentor. At the end of the two-year intervention, there were improvements in girls' confidence, voice, and sense of choice over their decisions. These measures of empowerment did not show sustained impact two years after the programme which suggests perhaps that maintaining social support for vulnerable girls and creating spaces in which they can learn about their rights and have opportunities to express themselves may need to be carried out over longer periods of time

Clubs can continue to have positive impacts in crisis or when schools are closed. Analysis of the impact of the presence of BRAC ELA clubs in communities Sierra Leone (not in educational settings) during the 2014 Ebola outbreak and South Sudan can provide some insight into how clubs can help girls in crisis contexts. In Sierra Leone ELA clubs took place in community venues and provided important access to social networks, life skills training and information about reproductive and sexual health while schools were closed. Bandiera et al (2018) examine the impacts on younger (12-17) and older (17+) girls. The evaluation found that for young girls the clubs allowed girls to continue to meet and learn informally and were associated with reducing the likelihood of pregnancy. girls in villages with an ELA were more likely to re-enrol in school post-crisis. In South Sudan Goldstein et al (2018) notes that clubs took place in a community space but were timed to ensure that both in school and out of school girls could attend – they found no negative impact on enrolment rates – while the ELA programme did seem to mitigate the likelihood of dropout for girls who were effected by conflict there was no impact on the desire of out-of-school girls to go back to school or literacy, there was however a significant positive effect on girls social networks. The importance of life skills programming is also discussed in new GEC guidance on life skills for adolescent girls in the COVID-19 Pandemic (Boost et al, 2020)

There is a growing recognition that programmes need to **work with parents and community 'gatekeepers' in order to change norms and attitudes around girls' education.** Some strategies highlighted in Marcus (2020) include holding community dialogues or running awareness raising campaigns – these kinds of activities can build support and also promote messages such a girls' right to education.

Evaluations of girls clubs, and broader girls education programming, often include concerns about the impact on boys who are seen as being excluded. In an evaluation of ASPIRE in Malawi, which includes after-school clubs for girls, responses emphasised concerns that 'boy's exclusion is discouraging them and could lead to disparities in the long (Falconer et al, 2018). Researchers suggest that clubs should include activities with boys and where possible holding mixed sessions can be valuable to support a more gender transformative perspective (Marcus et al, 2017. ICRW, 2018). There is evidence that **participation in girl club like activities can also have strong positive impacts on boys attitudes and relationships** (Marcus et al, 2018) The Ishraq programme in Egypt for example delivers it's New Horizons life skills curriculum with the brothers of participating girls, and Biruh Tesfa in Ethiopia includes classes for husbands of girl participants (Erulkar et al. 2012).

5. Annex: List of Additional Programme Evaluations

Reference	Programme description	Activities and relevant outcomes
Side et al. (2015)	Creating Healthy Approaches to Success (CHATS) delivered in Malawi. CHATS delivered skills based sessions in girls' clubs. Using a participatory approach they cover self-advocacy, leadership skills, sexual and reproductive health, study skills and business skills. CHATS participants were found to have higher school completion rates than the national average and girls who participated were more likely to see themselves as leaders and role models.	
Navarrete et al (2015)	The Tiphunzire Project in Malawi was a multifaceted education programme which included girls' clubs held in sessions after school. The clubs were targeted at marginalised girls at risk of dropout and aimed to improve literacy, numeracy, life skills, empowerment and confidence. A quasi-experimental evaluation gave results only from girls' who participated in the clubs and found positive effects on attendance, improvements in EGRA and small improvements in EGMA scores.	
Falconer et al (2017)	USAID's ASPIRE programme aimed to improve achievement of girls in upper primary and secondary school and reduce teenage pregnancy. As part of the programme Mothers Groups have created clubs that teach girls' about sexual health and the importance of staying in school. Reading clubs in school also took place. The evaluation does not directly attribute outcomes to club activities.	
Para-Mallam (2012)	Transforming Education for Girls in Nigeria and Tanzania (TEGINT) ran from 2008 – 2012. A multipronged programme it included girls clubs led by trained facilitator which aimed to empower girls. The evaluation found that more girls' club members than non-club members cited obstacle and solutions in their schooling and they were more vocal about solutions. Girls thought the clubs had helped them learn about gender, girls' rights, HIV and violence, confidence and reading and writing skills.	
Visser et al (2016)	'Improved Girls Learning in Rural Wolaita' aimed to improve girls enrolment, retention, learning and school performance in 123 rural primary schools in Wolaita, Ethiopia. The programme included girls club activities presented by teachers. This midline evaluation includes data on girls' reports on education outcomes. 83% of seniors and 71%	

	<p>of juniors reported that girls' clubs increase attendance and performance (13% a lot, 70% a bit) and 78% of senior girls and 69% of junior girls reported reading clubs to increase attendance and performance (13% a lot, 70% a bit) – overall they were not considered to be a main reason for change.</p>
<p>Austrian et al (2020)</p>	<p>The Adolescent Girls' Initiative (AGI) in Kenya delivered multi-sectoral interventions to girls aged 11-15 in 2 marginalised areas of Kenya. AGI tested four bundles of interventions one of which was a weekly girls group meeting facilitated by a young woman from the community and covered health and life skills topics. This was delivered in addition to a violence prevention intervention, and a conditional cash transfer for education. Evaluation found that the cash transfer appeared to be the key driver in positive impacts on education outcomes as well as delaying marriage and pregnancy.</p>

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- Sport and Dev <https://www.sportanddev.org>
- Align <https://www.alignplatform.org/resources/girls-clubs-and-gender-norm-change>

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About this report

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