



Scaling what works in girls' education: Three promising practices from Kenya

This paper identifies three evidence-based models for the improvement of girls' education. Each model has proved effective in the context of a Girls' Education Challenge project in Kenya. The question now is whether these practices could be scaled nationally within Kenya or adapted and used at scale in other countries.

Education Development Trust (EDT) has been working on girls' education in Kenya since 2013 in close partnership with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Teacher Service Commission (TSC). Funding has been provided by the UK FCDO within the context of the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC). The current project is called Wasichana Wetu Wafaulu (WWW) or 'Let our girls succeed'. WWW supports 70,000 disadvantaged girls as they transition to secondary education or vocational education and alternative training pathways across eight counties – six in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) and two in high poverty urban areas. The programme delivers interventions across these five pillars:



The programme has achieved impressive learning, retention and transition outcomes, including:

- » Increased transition from primary to secondary, up to 97%
- » Increased school attendance to over 90%; this remained high after school re-openings following Covid-19
- » Re-enrolment of 9,596 out-of-school girls (target was 6,000)
- » Significant gains in learning outcomes on literacy and numeracy, with substantial learning continuity during the Covid-19 school closure.

Here we highlight three practices from the WWW programme with maximum scaling potential, based on:

01 Strong evidence of impact of the intervention on girls' success: both project level and globally – to ensure scaling will have an impact.

02 Clear alignment with existing policies, plans and priorities of Government with a clear need – to ensure scaling will be aligned.

03 Existing structures through which the intervention can be delivered – making institutionalising easier.



01 Intervention

Teacher coaching for gender-responsive pedagogy

OVERVIEW

In WWW teacher capacity to help girls to learn and thrive is enhanced through classroom-level coaching. We combine two evidence-based methods: classroom level coaching and gender-responsive pedagogy. The coaching, provided by experienced and serving senior teachers, is used to promote a girl-friendly classroom environment in the context of subject teaching.

The model

The approach used in WWW involves the recruitment of experienced teachers to serve as pedagogical coaches. The coaches work across five to seven primary schools. They are trained with particular reference to gender-responsive pedagogy. Coaches dedicate 60% of time to coaching and 40% to teaching duties. Continuing to work as a classroom teacher adds to the credibility and respect of the coaches in the eyes of other teachers. Oversight and quality assurance is provided through senior coaches and TSC field officers. Coaches seek to strengthen both the capacity of individual teachers and the school subject panel to build sustainable peer-to-peer support.

The global evidence base

Coaching by expert, serving teachers is a key component of the WWW model. Global evidence shows that teacher coaching can have a significant effect on improving the quality of instruction and improvement in learning outcomes. School-based training such as this is more effective than off-site training as it allows highly contextualised conversations about the best ways to apply theory in practice. In addition to the literature relating to coaching there is a growing body of international evidence which shows that gender-responsive pedagogy

approaches can lead to improved learning outcomes for girls, both cognitive and attitudinal. Studies in Rwanda, Malawi and Tanzania show that gender-responsive approaches can reduce dropout and repetition rates for girls and improve academic performance. When schools implement gender-responsive pedagogy, teachers are much less likely to use discriminatory, abusive and threatening language, instead making learners feel more encouraged to participate and support each other, and improving girls' self-esteem.

Evidence of efficacy in Kenya

Our work in Kenya reinforces findings from the wider literature relating to the power of both school-based coaching and gender responsive pedagogy. In the WWW project, the majority of teachers who received coaching support had the quality of their instruction subsequently rated highly as 'good' or 'excellent' by independent evaluators. Following the coaching intervention, the overwhelming majority of girls felt that teachers made them 'feel welcome in the classrooms, explain lessons well, and respond to questions well'. Project evidence also shows improvement teaching, leading to improved girls' learning in literacy and numeracy, with particularly impressive improvements in numeracy (from a baseline mean of 19.09 to 30.42).

02 Intervention

Community-school integration through the work of Community Health Volunteers

OVERVIEW

In WWW Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) promote the education of girls at community and household level. The engagement of vulnerable girls in education is greatly enhanced through contact with CHVs who provide a powerful link between the school and home. Schools notify CHVs of girls who are absent or at risk of dropping out, and CHVs work at the household level to ensure girls return to or remain at school. CHVs played a key role in ensuring learning continuity during Covid-19.

The model

There is a national system of volunteer health visitors in Kenya. These CHVs visit disadvantaged households as part of their work to provide health care. As part of WWW they also engage with households and communities when girls are absent from school and promote the importance of girls' education. The CHV structure enables extensive reach countrywide, respect and trust at community level and household-level knowledge of individual children. CHVs are trained on educational outreach and linked to local schools. In addition to their focus on tackling absenteeism at household level, CHVs also engage with community leaders on barriers to school attendance at community level. During the period of school closures, the CHVs went further and tracked and encouraged the engagement of specific vulnerable girls in distance learning through home visits.

The global evidence base

This intervention builds upon several intersecting bodies of knowledge. It has long been known that community and household level engagement in education can greatly support the achievement of better outcomes for disadvantaged students.

The model also draws upon another body of knowledge concerning the power of multi-agency working, including effective collaboration between education and health, to provide 'joined up' support for vulnerable individuals. A third relevant literature concerns the use of disaggregated data to identify and protect at-risk learners. This intervention draws upon all these insights using CHVs to reach out to the hard-to-reach, connect health services with education and track girls with high levels of need, thereby providing schools with highly useful granular data.

Evidence of efficacy in Kenya

The WWW CHV model is linked to impressive improvements in enrolment of vulnerable girls. The CHV model came into its own during the period of school closures. The CHVs not only monitored engagement in home learning; they also provided study materials to girls in their homes and collected their homework. As a result, the majority of vulnerable girls maintained some level of learning during this time – 91% of the parents of girls from ASAL regions reported that they were spending more than two hours per day studying while schools were closed.



03

Intervention

Catch-up programmes for out-of-school girls

OVERVIEW

WWW provides school and community-based catch-up courses intended to re-engage out-of-school school girls. Participating girls are systematically assessed at baseline and the catch-up provision is carefully tailored to the level of the girls' learning. This is a multi-faceted approach that recognises the need to address academic catch up and deeper reintegration barriers facing girls. CHVs play a key role at the community level to deliver this initiative.

The model

WWW has established a network of catch-up centres for the reintegration of girls who had previously dropped out. CHVs and community leaders are used to identify individual girls who are out of school. After careful baseline assessment of needs and learning levels, girls undertake an intensive accelerated education programme that gives them a route back to formal education. The centres are hosted in schools out-of-hours with wrap-around support to meet the needs of the girls, such as childcare. The Teaching at the Right Level (TARL) method is used, with girls placed in classes with others operating at a similar academic level at baseline, supported by specially designed catch-up materials and a trained 'catch-up' teacher. The catch-up accelerated programme typically takes between 6-12 months. The centres provide different pathways for out-of-school girls to progress through education and build skills for life and livelihoods. On graduating from the catch-up centres most girls join mainstream school while some begin different forms of vocational training.

The global evidence base

The model designed by WWW drew upon both a well-established body of research relating to successful accelerated remedial programmes for out-of-school students and the robust evaluation of the TARL pedagogy. The global literature suggests that effective catch-up programmes require features used by WWW such as systematic initial assessment and an accelerated learning programme which is carefully aligned with the mainstream curriculum. TARL methods have been successfully used in many countries in south Asia and Africa and there is a strong body of evidence that demonstrates the efficacy of relatively homogenous learning level groups as being conducive to rapid learning.

Evidence of efficacy in Kenya

The catch-up approach used by WWW, with a TARL-based pedagogy and careful sensitisation, has been highly successful at reintegrating girls who had dropped out of education. Of a cohort of 994 participants, 979 girls successfully completed the programme and re-entered education or training.

