



Report on the project activities Of the
Girls Education Challenge (GEC-T)
Excelling against the Odds
(January 2020- Dec 2020)

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Introduction

This report deals with the activities carried out by CHADET under the Girls Education Challenge in Transition (GEC-T) project. GEC is part of the FCDO (previously DFID- UK) Girls Education Challenge (GEC) program which is aimed at helping up to a million of the world's most marginalized girls improve their lives through quality education by enrolling them in to schools and helping them to thrive. This project is a continuation of GEC-I, a project that was implemented during 2014 and 2017, with slightly different focus. GEC-I largely focused on increasing enrollment of girls, their attendance of school, and their learning outcomes. The current project, GEC-T, specifically focuses on increasing girls' learning outcomes, transition, and girls' education's sustainability. GEC-T is being implemented between April 1, 2017 and March 31, 2021 and has been supporting over 16,000 girls. The implementation areas and the target girls remain the same for the two phases of the GEC project. Hence, GECT is being carried out in two regional states in which GEC-I was carried out. CHADET, in partnership with ChildHope, UK, has been implementing the project in 77 rural and semi urban schools in tow regional states of Amhara and Oromia. This report deals with the period from January, 2020 to December 2020, which is the third year of the GEC-T project's life. The report has three parts. The first part shortly presents the project over view; the next part deals with the key achievements at both outcome and output levels; and the last part highlights the key challenges faced and the mitigation strategies taken by the project.

“Securing Retention and Smooth Transition in the Different Cycles of Education and Adulthood for Girls (GEC-T)” /“Excelling against the Odds”

1. Project Overview

This project entitled “Securing Retention and Smooth Transition in the Different Cycles of Education and Adulthood for Girls (GEC-T)” also named “Excelling against the odds” was designed by CHADET in collaboration with ChildHope-UK. The project period is from April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2021 with a total budget of 4.7 Million UKP. The project targets 16,481 girls in around 30 kebeles of 10 woredas Amhara and Oromia regions. The intervention areas are largely rural and some semi-urban settings.

Project Site: Amhara (South Gondar and South Wollo) and Oromia (Arsi Zone)

Project Aim: trying to get 16,481 girls of the previous GEC project transition in the different cycles of education and adulthood. The cycles are:

Lower primary- upper primary

Upper primary-lower secondary

Lower secondary-upper secondary /TVET

In to employment through skills training

Project Outcomes insuring the girls thrive in learning, smooth transition, and sustainability.

Expected Project Outputs:

Safer and stimulating learning spaces for girls

Met transition costs (financial, material, and psychological)

Well-trained and supported teachers of numeracy and literacy

A school-based girls' support group to promote girls education and equipping girls with key life values, skills and challenge norms

An entrepreneurship and employability skills development service supporting girls

2. Key Achievements

During the specified period the following points can be highlighted as key achievements aligning with the above mentioned project outputs. These achievements are hoped to continue sustaining the outcome level success achieved during the mid-term evaluation which was carried out and by external evaluators. The mid-term evaluation results have already been signed off by the fund manager. Following this and in due consideration of the onset of the global pandemic of COVID-19, CHADET had to carry out a project mid-term review plan through an adaptive project management system. Accordingly, the following key achievements are highlighted in due consideration of the reviewed plan. There were also non output activities carried out by the project and achievements of the same are briefly presented below.

Non-Output activities: the following non-output activities were carried out in the reporting period.

School leadership training was given to 40 school leaders and community workers who support girls' education. The training included management and leadership aspects of instructional leaders; mentoring and coaching, as well as using student data effectively.

Report writing workshop for was delivered to 6 GEC-T project staff via Zoom meeting. This has inspired staff and increased their skill in writing reports for various groups of stakeholders.

Girls' school enrollment update: Following the school closure due to the CORONA pandemic, follow up of enrollment was crucial as many children were not showing up to schools. Hence, with the relentless effort and collaboration our field staff and especially the community workers did with government stakeholders and families, 13519 girls were registered for school during the reporting period. This number excludes all grade 9 and grade 12 girls whose status was not reported due to the delay of the national examinations.

2.1. Outcome Level Achievement

As per the midterm evaluation results, the project achievements can be seen especially in the improvements made on the academic performance of target girls, their transition rate and project's sustainability. The contributing factors for these achievements can be derived from the results obtained at output level in the previous years; similarly, the accomplishments obtained against what was planned under each output in the reporting period would be a strong predictor of the project's continued success. Hence, a brief description of activities accomplished under each of the outputs is also presented next to the outcome level achievements below.

Academic Performance: midline evaluation results show that girls have improved in both basic literacy and basic numeracy. The report has stated that, "The project had a statistically significant impact on numeracy outcomes between baseline and midline, according to the cross-sectional difference-indifference model." Likewise for literacy, the same report witnessed that, "A logistic regression finds that treatment is a statistically significant predictor of a girls' proficiency level in local language oral reading fluency...Across all subtasks girls in the treatment group perform better in English language literacy than in the control group." (Midline, 2020:15-16).

Transition rates: According to project's internal monitoring data, there was an increase in transition rates across milestone grades 8, 10 and 12, which can be attributed to the

improved quality of teaching and learning and the additional supported learning GEC-T girls receive in homework clubs. The overall transition rate of 85.63% has increased from 76.25% in the previous year. Midline results also showed that most girls from the sample were able to transition successfully between periods, in both treatment and control schools. CHADET believes that there are combinations of interventions that lead to better transition. Project activities contributing to this increase include:

- gender-sensitive literacy & numeracy pedagogy training for teachers;
- lesson observation and feedback;
- mentoring on peer-led communities of practice;
- leadership and management training for principals and vice-principals;
- homework clubs;
- reading corners and provision of books; and
- Summer transition support.

2.2. Output Level Achievements

2.2.1. Safer and Stimulating Learning Spaces for Girls

Safeguarding and case management: 15 cases were reported through letter link boxes.

Early marriage or harassment cases: 73 cases required child protection services and they were referred to the GEC committees.

Letter link boxes: these are boxes placed in every school so that girls and boys report cases confidentially to the school. In the reporting period a close follow up was carried out on the functionality of the letter link boxes in all schools and on all cases reported through letter link boxes.



Figure 1: A letter-Link Box and a team of school committee to handle cases reported

Girls' and good brothers' clubs: 226 existing girls' and good brother's clubs have been strengthened through material and technical support and follow up.

Psychosocial Support Training: Training of Trainers (TOT) on Psychosocial Support was given for 218 educator including Cluster supervisors, Education Bureau Gender Experts, and project staff.

Designing, producing and duplicating safeguarding fliers: around 23,178 fliers dealing with child safeguarding were produced and distributed to schools and community. This included information on COVID-19 prevention.

Provision of Books: Reference books were made available in 11 primary and 6 secondary schools.



Figure 2: Shelves in a reading Corner stoked with reference books

Tracking out-of-catchment girls: 166 Community Volunteers (CVs) have been working hard under difficult circumstances in tracking girls as a result of which 11, 059 truant girls resumed school.

Identifying active girls in school - project staff in coordination with the community and government stakeholders did a follow up and data verification; hence 15,048 girls were found to be active. This means, most girls are active in the school and are attending the services made available.

Girls with Disability: in-school support has been provided to 305 girls with disability. The support included provision of equipment such as braille kits and glasses. Tape recorded handouts and worksheets were also given to girls with visual impairment.

Sexual and reproductive health: 7,074 girls were provided with SRH support which included counselling and awareness raising.

Sanitary welfare: 1,176 pieces of underwear, 12,871 pads of sanitary towels, and 11, 639 bars of soap have been distributed to girls

2.2.2. Meet Transition Costs

Transition support for girls, which has financial, material & psychological aspects, has been given for girls who leave their villages and families to join high schools in towns.

Supporting girls' school integration cost: 1,251 girls who have joined high schools have received financial support (300-400 ETB/month for 9 months) to cover their transportation, rent and subsistence which we know has been a contributory factor to their transition and retention in school.

Support to girls from economically vulnerable families: a total of 2,518 selected girls from poorer families have also received a one off financial support during the C-19

Support girls' scholastic materials and mathematical sets: Scholastic materials have been procured and distributed to 11,059 target girls who have returned to school in the academic year. 2,251 girls in secondary schools have also received mathematical sets.

Award high performing girls: 500 girls who are high performers have also been awarded by the project

Provision of uniforms: school uniforms have not been provided yet and will be so in the next reporting year.

2.2.3. Improved Teaching and Learning (included adaptations made during the C-19 pandemic)

Teacher Training: 492 teachers and school principals have been trained in literacy and numeracy pedagogy, supportive supervision & gender-sensitive teaching/ Lesson revision training /

Numeracy and literacy tutorials: 4,863 girls were reached with the tutorials in numeracy and literacy

Developing distance learning Materials: 12,225 girls have received first round of worksheets prepared during the COVID -19 School Closure; again 12,455 girls received the second round of worksheets. 69 tutor teachers participated in developing worksheets



Figure 3: Health check on the Occasion of the distribution of worksheets / distance learning materials and soap

Schools support: 70 school were provided with teaching aids such as chalk and stationery materials to support government tutorial

Homework teachers' incentives: 436 teachers who supported girls in homework clubs were provided with modest incentive (ETB 400/month for 8 months each year); those tutorial were also with minimum duplication cost of 5 birr per month for each school.

Classroom observations: As a mentoring and coaching strategy, Project Education Experts carry out classroom observations and mentoring of teachers to assess effectiveness of literacy pedagogy; accordingly, 61 teacher were observed and supported.

Supporting school improvement initiatives: 659 members of school community were supported in school improvement schemes committed to pupil outcomes in partnership with principals, PTAs and Woreda cluster supervisors.

Strengthen community of practices (CoPs): strengthening the CoPs has been an ongoing activity and is part of school improvement initiatives; accordingly, the already established 101 CoPs have been supported technically.

2.2.4. A school-based Girls' Movement and Communication Campaign Empowering Girls with key Life Values, Skills and Challenge Norms

Communicating and sharing learning: 1,836 advocacy/communication materials have been produced by members of girls movements, which are girls forums organized by the

girls. Topics of the communication materials focused on challenging social norms and practices around gender and disability.

Life skills: 5,214 girls have been attending the life skills and a follow up and support was given to them.

Training peer leaders: 41 girls have been trained in life skills peer education. These girls use the life skills job aid and other materials to teach their peers.

2.2.5. An Entrepreneurship & Employability Skills Development Service Supporting Girls who Choose Vocational Education or Independent Adulthood to Develop Meaningful Livelihood Opportunities in Partnership with TVET Agencies & Private Sector.

Bursaries for girls' entrepreneurship: 98 girls have been supported with livelihood options.

Bursaries for mothers' entrepreneurship - 100 selected mothers from economically disadvantaged families were trained in business plan development to help them efficiently run their small businesses to be established using the project's livelihood support

Support enrolment of girls into vocation school: enrolment fees were covered for 268 girls in TVET

Support for girls in TVET: Accommodation, local transport and subsistence costs were cover for 71 TVET girls

Extra-Curricular training for Girls: by way of enhancing the vocational curriculum for employability, 198 girls have been trained in business development and 'softer' skills such as interviewing, work place conduct and ethical behaviour.

Link girls with employment: 98 girls have been linked to thriving Ethiopian private sector in their areas

Monitoring and Evaluation

TOT on GEC-T data base: a 3 days TOT on GEC-T database, data collection and reporting tools was given for 10 GECT M&E team. The training was also cascaded and a 2 days orientation on data collection tools, data quality and supportive supervision was given to 52 community volunteers

Monitoring visit: Due to the movement restrictions during the first months of COVID - 19, only 6 visits were carried out by head office to project offices which was planned to be carried out every two months for each site. Yet, rather many weekly online meetings have been carried out with project coordinators. Similarly, 20 field monitoring visits were conducted by each field office M&E unit on community and school based activities in each kebele.

Key informant interviews: 125 project target girl were interviewed to gather information on the impacts of COVID-19 to inform intervention

Staff Meetings: Due to C-19 restrictions, only one meeting was held with GECT staff at head office level.

Monthly staff review meeting: Within project offices level, 36 monthly meeting were run in the three sites.

Midline evaluation: Mid-line evaluation was successfully carried out by the external evaluators. Government signatories also conducted midterm evaluations in their respective ones and woredas. Only 2 (i.e. in Arsi) out of the planned 5 government evaluation were done. This was due to the COVID-19 restrictions and the remaining four evaluations, which are in Amhara, will be done in the next reporting period.

School Award and experience sharing visits: 6 best performing school were awarded; 3 experience sharing visits among schools, Community Care Coalition (CCC) were organized to promote learning and implementation strategies within region.

Stakeholders quarterly review meeting: 9 review meeting were held with Regional, Zonal & Woreda government representatives.

3. Challenges and mitigation strategies

Early marriage

The major challenge has been increases in early marriage and the threat of early marriage during the Covid-19 pandemic.

CHADET used a multi-pronged approach to mitigate the issue, involving the individual girls, parents, local leaders, social services officers, Helath offices, Ministry of Education officials, and the media.

Uncertainty about the future, long school closures and economic hardship as a result of the pandemic means early marriage has remained a risk for many girls during the pandemic and during key informant interviews girls have reported knowledge of other girls that they know who have married. They have also used the reporting hotline or approached Community Volunteers or Community Workers to report instances of early marriage and increased domestic labour in and around the home. Project staff continue to intervene and negotiate with families if there is prior knowledge of a marriage being arranged, however girls and families are reporting that prolonged school closure and economic uncertainty are the main reasons for marriages going ahead. Newly married girls and those escaping an early marriage are referred to the local officials and service providers, e.g. Women's Officers and Health Extension Workers for psychosocial and SRH support. Wherever the newly married girls and their families agree project staff support them to register for school and avoid dropping out of education. Avoiding early marriage and its negative effects on girls' lives, including dropping out of education will be a key issue discussed during closure meetings with regional and local government officials and service providers.

Negative economic effects of Covid-19

Covid-19 continues to have a negative economic impact on families with fewer formal and informal employment opportunities available. Families with small businesses or those selling agricultural produce are earning less because their customers have less money to spend. This in turn affects a family's ability to support their children's education and increases the risk of drop out, early marriage and migration to other regions and countries. High foreign exchange rates mean food and non-food imports are increasingly expensive, further exacerbating family budgets.

To mitigate this problem, CHADET has remained in contact with families through Family Hubs and Community Worker and Community Volunteer home visits, identifying families that are most in economic difficulty and in need. 100 mothers from female headed households received cash grants to strengthen their small businesses and improve their livelihoods. Mothers are more likely to support their children's education if their income allows. Moreover, CHADET has distributed scholastic materials, including exercise books and pens to the girls, taking the economic burden of purchasing the items off families. Project staff and CCC members have responded to safeguarding issues reported through Letter Link Boxes. Safeguarding, risk of early marriage and drop out have been key topics

for discussion during project closure meetings with stakeholders to ensure they are aware of the different roles and responsibilities of Focal Teachers and CCC members in addressing the different types of safeguarding issues.

Political instability

Political instability and civil unrest have been present during each of the project years and in 2020, this instability and violence has escalated. There were several incidents of unrest during the year, affecting different project regions at different times, but each resulting in the temporary closure of schools and disruption in learning for the girls. To mitigate this problem, CHADET's staff have been doing their best. Project staff have past experience of monitoring and responding to political and civil unrest and in particular motivating and supporting girls back into school once they reopen. Worried parents have also been counselled about allowing their daughters to return to school following closure and unrest. These activities have generally been carried out in collaboration with the local education bureau. Girls and staff safety will always be paramount, however as soon as it is safe to return to school project staff always engage with girls and parents to bring as many girls back into school as soon as possible. And this has been fruitful.

Annexes (see separate Excel sheets for plan vs accomplishment for program activities and budget utilization)

