



Baseline Report – Innovation Window

Final Version

Evaluation Manager Girls' Education Challenge Fund -
January 2015





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Partners

- The University of East Anglia
- RTI International
- Opinion Research Business

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Ben Ward, Project Director

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ben Ward", written over a horizontal line.



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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANER	Adjusted Net Enrolment Ratio
ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
CLC	Creative Learning Centres
DFID	Department for International Development
ECOSAN	Ecological Sanitation
EGMA	Early Grade Math Assessment
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EM	Evaluation Manager
FDS	Final Design Submission
FEN	Fundación Escuela Nueva
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FM	Fund Manager
GEC	Girls Education Challenge
HH	Household
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IW	Innovation Window
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
Nat.	National Assessment
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NUWODU	National Union Of Women With Disabilities Of Uganda
OOS	Out-Of-School
ORB	Opinion Research Business
PbR	Payment by Results
PPP	Public Private Partnerships
QED	Quasi-experimental Evaluation Designs
RCT	Randomised Controlled Trial
RTI	RTI International

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

SCW	Step Change Window
SPW	Strategic Partnerships Window
UEA	University of East Anglia
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UGX	Ugandan Shilling
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organistaion
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UW	UWESO Assessment
W.A	West Africa
WES	Water, Environment and Sanitation
WPM	Words per minute

Project Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for project organisations in tables in this report:

BRAC	BRAC
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
ChFnd	ChildFund
ECO	Eco-Fuel Africa Limited
GEMS	Girls Educational and Monitoring Services
HPA	Health Poverty Action
ICL	I Choose Life
LCDK	Leonard Cheshire Disability Kenya
LCSU	Leonard Cheshire Services Uganda
LINK	LINK Community Development Ethiopia
Mercy	Mercy Corps Scotland
Oppty	Opportunity International
PEAS	Promoting Equality in African Schools
RV	Raising Voices
RED	Red Een Kind Foundation

RV	Raising Voices
Tfac	Theatre for a Change
VIVA	Viva
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

Country Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for countries in tables in this report:

Afg	Afghanistan
Eth	Ethiopia
Gha	Ghana
Ken	Kenya
Mal	Malawi
Moz	Mozambique
Nep	Nepal
Rwa	Rwanda
Sou	South Sudan
Tan	Tanzania
Uga	Uganda
Zam	Zambia

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Executive Summary

Background to the GEC Innovation Window

In 2012, the Department for International Development (DFID) launched the £355 million Girls' Education Challenge Fund (GEC), which intends to support up to a million of the world's most marginalised girls to improve their lives through education.

Within the Innovation Window (IW), DFID awarded £30 million across 19 IW projects that test new ideas to support marginalised girls to learn. These innovations could include technological solutions, the development of new partnerships, applying successful approaches to new contexts, communities or age groups, and engaging women in decision-making. Together the IW projects aim to support 246,000 marginalised girls across 12 of the GEC target countries.

Purpose of the baseline report

DFID has appointed Coffey, in partnership with the University of East Anglia, RTI International and ORB as the Evaluation Manager of the GEC.

The baseline research aimed to capture the scale and nature of educational marginalisation before the start of activities. It measured current education outcomes of girls in the GEC project areas with respect to attendance, enrolment, retention and learning outcomes. It also explored the prevalence and importance of potential barriers to girls' education, ranging from poverty and household economics through early marriage and pregnancy, cultural attitudes, and violence.

Research approach

We designed an evaluation that primarily relies on IW projects' baseline research. The IW baseline report is informed by 19 Project Baseline Reports and Project Datasets. **Together the 19 IW projects achieved a baseline sample of 27,000 girls across treatment and control groups.**

During the Inception Phase, we provided technical support and guidance to ensure the projects' data collection activities were fit for purpose, representative and proportionate, and to enable a meta-analysis of findings at the IW level. To harmonise project baseline research, we ensured IW projects followed pre-defined M&E requirements. Projects' baseline research involved collecting primary data from intervention and control areas. It required the use of a representative longitudinal household survey of target and control communities and/or the longitudinal tracking of school-based cohorts, and structured qualitative research.

This allowed the synthesis of project-level research to capture baseline findings at the IW level. Based on a systematic review and triangulation of the data and analysis from IW project documents, and our reanalysis of IW Project Datasets, the synthesis approach ensured the findings presented are reliable and follow similar consistency and quality criteria. The process adopted aimed to present the levels of enrolment, retention, attendance and learning found by IW projects at baseline and to explore the most prevalent barriers to girls' education.

Key findings

Girls targeted by IW projects tend to enrol and attend school, but they are less likely to stay enrolled as they reach secondary school age compared to the primary school phase. Despite relatively high levels of enrolment and attendance found among projects which reported data on enrolment and attendance, learning is poor and only improves by a relatively small amount over the primary and secondary phases of schooling in terms of reading fluency.

A majority of girls are enrolled in school, but girls tend to be more marginalised in terms of enrolment and retention as they get older. On average across projects which reported data on enrolment, 89% of 9-11 year old girls and 74% of 14-15 year old girls are enrolled in school, with varying levels of enrolment in the individual IW project areas. Secondary school-aged girls have lower levels of enrolment and retention compared to primary school-aged girls, but tend to attend school just as much as primary school aged-ones, once they are enrolled.

Test results in reading fluency suggest that girls become more disadvantaged as they grow older. Primary school-aged girls are, on average, three years behind international norms while the literacy gap for secondary school-aged girls is the equivalent of five years of schooling. This suggests that once there is a significant gap in literacy levels then these differences tend to be maintained and increase in later years, and supports the GEC programme assumption that secondary school girls face particular barriers to being in school and learning at an appropriate pace.

By contrast, a majority of girls have higher numeracy scores for secondary school-aged girls compared to primary school-aged girls. This suggests that learning occurs across the two school phases with respect to numeracy skills. Similarly to findings on literacy, numeracy data show that girls achieving higher scores during their primary school age tend to maintain comparatively higher scores during secondary school.

Findings from the projects' research show that poverty appears to be the primary reason why girls do not enrol and attend school. School-related barriers were found to be the second most important barrier affecting girls' education. These types of barriers potentially explain the poor levels of learning evidenced across the IW.

Poverty appears to be the primary reason evidenced as to why girls do not enrol and attend school. Poor families have less spare resources to invest and experience high opportunity costs. Therefore the social and economic returns to school must be reasonably assured to justify this investment decision. However, projects also reported that parents in target communities sometimes perceived little value gained and expected limited returns from sending their girls to school.

The ways in which girls' education is affected by school-related barriers relate to the poor quality of education. During the baseline research, IW projects evidenced the prevalence of 'teacher-centred pedagogy', the lack of gender responsiveness of teaching and teaching techniques frequently involving corporal punishment. Additionally, long distances to school appear to result in greater girls' absenteeism due to safety issues and more than the distance itself between home and school, the hazards of girls having to walk to school on their own as a primary concern.

By contrast, negative attitudes towards education is a barrier for which projects' assumptions appear to be challenged by baseline research results. It is important to note that while barriers relating to poverty appear to have been fairly straightforward to evidence by projects, barriers such as attitudes may have been harder to capture, suggesting that attitudinal barriers to girls' education may be more prevalent than reported by projects.

Barriers affecting specific age groups were more salient for secondary school-aged girls. This age group was reported as being more likely to be affected by: the distance to school and insecurity on the way to and from secondary schools (that are located further away than primary schools); by the lack of adequate sanitation facilities in schools that prevent girls from attending school during menstruation; and by the prevalence of early marriage among teenaged girls.

During the baseline research, IW projects generally managed to identify and measure the groups they aimed to target as part of their design, although the achieved level of representation of target groups in their samples was markedly low for specific sub-groups.

The baseline research was successful to the extent that it confirmed and deepened projects' knowledge of their target populations. However, not all projects adapted their interventions to address the complex socio-economic factors disadvantaging their target group of marginalised girls.

Overall, IW projects M&E strategies appear to be appropriate for delivering effective project evaluation.

The collection of longitudinal data from intervention and control samples of sufficient samples sizes should support counterfactual analysis of the impact of individual projects and across the funding window as a whole. In most cases, IW projects overcame or mitigated the issues associated with the challenges that they encountered.

Some issues still prevail, particularly with regard to the ways in which projects' M&E frameworks define the complex relationships between key risk factors and barriers and educational outcomes. Furthermore, challenges relating to the limited ability of projects to achieve a full sample size and obtain reliable administrative data on attendance, enrolment or retention suggest that some projects may experience difficulties providing evidence of impact relative to their counterfactuals.

Conclusions and Recommendations

For projects whose target girls have relatively high levels of enrolment and/or attendance, it is possible that within the relatively short lifetime of the projects, significant change in these rates will not be achieved.

The consequences for overall project performance will depend on the extent to which the rationale for a particular project design was predominantly based on helping girls be in school more than they would otherwise have been to improve their literacy and numeracy. Even those projects where the evidence regarding the ways in which their target girls are educationally marginalised is inconclusive or uncertain run the risk of delivering interventions that may have little effect on their results within the time available. It is recommended that projects continue to monitor these outcomes over the course of the project period, so that the project can respond to any changes that may occur. Additionally, projects should try to identify and monitor sub-groups within their overall target group who have lower enrolment and attendance rates to track changes at this level that will have an effect on the performance of the cohort as a whole.

In spite of the wealth of evidence, IW projects did not always clearly assess the linkages between barriers and the ways in which these affect their target communities, and girls and parents' behaviours and decision-making processes.

Projects have not been able to clearly establish the linkages between the evidenced barriers to girls' education, the composition of target groups identified during the baseline research and their proposed interventions. This has constrained our capacity and that of projects to draw sufficiently definitive conclusions about the most prevalent pathways through which different barriers affect girls' education across the IW. Projects should reflect on the baseline evidence they have collected to identify potential improvements in their intervention mechanisms that are most likely to influence girls' educational outcomes, so that beyond the measurement of results, the pathways of change can be identified.

A common lesson learned for DFID and the Evaluation Manager concerns the added value of conducting rigorous baseline research.

The identification of barriers to girls' education and target groups at baseline deepened the projects' knowledge of the populations they work with. This suggests that the GEC Evaluation Strategy is likely to help build a solid evidence base in terms of what works and what does not for improving girls' access to education and learning.

A significant limitation of the data analysed in the report relates to the difficulties faced by the Evaluation Manager in assessing the levels of educational marginalisation of different sub-groups – for example, target groups identified by their levels of poverty, disability, geographical area in which they live, or their household characteristics. Some of this data exists but the data is not yet sufficiently accessible for analysis.

A potential recommendation for DFID for future programming relates to the extent to which a specific purpose should be established for the baseline research.

Projects generally sought to obtain data that was representative of their target community, but their sampling strategies were not always suitable for evidencing whether their target groups were marginalised compared to other groups in their target communities. However, for the purpose of identifying the specific needs of targeted girls, the baseline research was generally successful to the extent that it deepened projects' knowledge of their target populations. Both approaches to baseline research have different purposes and entail different types of actions for projects based on their baseline findings.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the GEC Innovation Window

In 2012, the Department for International Development (DFID) launched the £355 million Girls' Education Challenge Fund (GEC). The GEC intends to support up to a million of the world's most marginalised girls to improve their lives through education. The GEC will provide this support through three distinct funding windows:

- the Step Change Window (SCW);
- the Innovation Window (IW);
- and the Strategic Partnerships Window (SPW).

GEC projects across all three windows work towards the same high-level GEC outcomes around improved retention, attendance and learning for marginalised girls. However, each window has distinctive features and a specific focus.

The IW (the subject of this report) has a distinct focus to support innovative projects testing new approaches to address barriers to girls' education. These innovations can include: technological solutions; the development of new partnerships; applying successful approaches to new contexts, communities or age groups; and engaging women in decision-making processes.

DFID awarded £30 million across 19 IW projects that test new ideas for supporting marginalised girls to learn. Each IW grant is worth up to £2 million. Together the IW projects aim to support 246,000 marginalised girls across 12 DFID priority countries: Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

1.2 Governance of the GEC evaluation

DFID has appointed Coffey, in partnership with the University of East Anglia, RTI International and ORB as the Evaluation Manager (EM) of the GEC. We are responsible for designing and implementing a rigorous monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework to assess the effectiveness and impact of individual projects and the GEC as a whole. Table [Table 1.1](#) below provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of all EM consortium partners.

We closely collaborate with the GEC Fund Manager (PwC) to ensure that projects generate high quality data, and report results with a reasonable level of consistency across the portfolio. The Fund Manager (FM) is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the GEC, including managing relationships with projects and partners. With regards to M&E, the FM has played a key role in the following activities:

- Developing M&E processes and requirements at the project level (e.g. required sample sizes, target setting, methodological guidance on measuring key outcomes);
- Providing support and capacity building to strengthen projects' M&E designs;
- Formal sign-off of project M&E Frameworks and logframes;
- Developing reporting tools (including the Outcome Spreadsheet); and
- On-going work with projects to rectify data inconsistencies and methodological issues.

With regards to the ownership of the GEC data, data is collected by projects on the contractual understanding that it is the intellectual property of the funder i.e. DFID. This required that the data be anonymised and made available in a suitable form to DFID. Currently, baseline data is uploaded to a web-based location hosted by the Evaluation Manager on behalf of DFID. This data is primarily lodged as the evidence used to

measure changes against the baseline. However, a final version of all waves of data will be available to DFID after secondary processing and disclosure control review by the EM¹.

Table 1.1: Role and responsibilities of the EM consortium partners

Consortium Partner	Role and key responsibilities
Coffey (Consortium Lead)	<p>Coffey is the overall lead of the EM consortium and responsible for the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Designing and delivering the overarching GEC evaluation strategy; ✓ Providing M&E support to the Fund Manager and individual projects; ✓ Analysis and reporting of EM primary data for the Step Change Window; ✓ Meta-analysis and reporting of secondary data for the Innovation Window and Strategic Partnerships Window; and ✓ Sharing key findings and lessons learned.
ORB International	<p>ORB International manages the EM fieldwork and is responsible for the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Training interviewers and piloting research tools; ✓ Overseeing and managing local research partners to qualitative and quantitative data collection in Step Change Window countries; ✓ Quality assurance and data verification; and ✓ Data collation, processing and cleaning.
RTI	<p>RTI are leading on the design of the learning assessment tools (EGRA and EGMA). Their responsibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Design and adaptation of EGRA and EGMA learning assessment research instruments; ✓ Training interviewers in the use of EGRA/EGMA tests; ✓ Processing and cleaning of learning assessment data; and ✓ Peer reviewing and quality assuring the EM analysis of educational outcomes (lead by Coffey).
UEA	<p>UEA and its leading experts in the field of gender and international development support the evaluation through the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Technical lead on the design and implementation of the GEC thematic research; and ✓ Peer reviewing the design and implementation of EM research, analysis and reporting.

1.3 GEC evaluation strategy for the Innovation Window

The GEC evaluation seeks to:

- measure the results DFID delivers through the GEC;
- improve DFID’s understanding of what works and why, in supporting girls’ education; and
- produce evidence for audiences including governmental, private sector and donor organisations.

The overall objective of the evaluation research for IW projects is to demonstrate whether the concepts evaluated work and to assess the extent to which they are replicable and scalable in other contexts. The first stage of the evaluation process required projects to establish baselines. A key purpose of the baseline research was to enable projects to test the assumptions underpinning their theory of change and project designs (in particular, their definitions of target groups, their understanding of the barriers to girls’ education and levels of learning and attendance). Projects were expected to use the findings to refine their projects’ designs and their attendance and learning targets, which they will be assessed against at midline and endline. The projects will undertake another two rounds of research at midline and endline.

The EM provided technical support and guidance to ensure that the projects’ data collection activities were fit for purpose and proportionate to their needs. This support included working in-country with each project to review the quality of the projects’ M&E Frameworks and data collection strategies. Projects were required to use

¹ Responsibility for anonymisation rests with the projects, which were required to deliver anonymised data. Responsibility for disclosure control will be retained by DFID when it defines the mechanism for release. All EM data will meet all anonymisation and disclosure control requirements.

independent evaluators to produce their baseline reports. The baseline research involved collecting primary data from intervention (and control) areas and reporting on the findings before starting implementation. All projects conducted their baseline research from October 2013 to March 2014 and reported their findings following the end of their Inception Phase.

1.4 Purpose of this baseline report

The purpose of this baseline report is to present the findings at the funding window level from IW projects' baseline research to:

- provide the levels of enrolment, retention, attendance and learning found by IW projects at baseline;
- provide an assessment of the extent to which IW projects have been successful in identifying target girls who are educationally marginalised, in terms of their access to education and learning;
- assess the extent to which the projects' initial assumptions with regards to the barriers that girls face in accessing education are evidenced in their baseline findings;
- review how projects have defined marginalisation, identified their target groups; and whether the baseline evidence supports their targeting strategies; and
- provide an overview of the extent to which projects proceeded to adapt their project designs in light of baseline findings.

The IW baseline report aims to answer a range of research questions, which are listed in [Table 1.2](#) below.

Table 1.2: Key Baseline Research Questions

Key Baseline Research Questions	Report Sections addressing Questions
1. To what extent are target girls educationally marginalised?	
1.1 To what extent are girls attending school? 1.2 What are girls' current learning outcomes? 1.3 Does the evidence confirm target girls are educationally marginalised?	Section 3 – Educational outcomes at baseline
2. What are the barriers to girls attending school and learning?	
2.1 What are the barriers to girls attending school? 2.2 What are the barriers to girls learning? 2.3 What did the projects assume to be the barriers to girls' education in target areas? 2.4 Does the evidence confirm the expected barriers?	Section 4 – Barriers to girls' education at baseline
3. Does the evidence support project targeting and project design?	
3.1 How has the projects defined marginalisation (social and educational)? 3.2 How have the projects defined their target groups? 3.3 Has the baseline evidence influenced project intervention design?	Section 5 – Project targeting and changes to project design
4. Does the evidence support effective project evaluation?	
4.1 Which challenges did the projects face during baseline? 4.2 Will projects' evidence support counterfactual analysis of impact?	Section 6 – Projects' evidence and effective evaluation

The structure of the IW baseline report is organised around the IW research questions and aims to answer each aspect of the baseline research questions.

[Section 2](#) presents the approach and methodological challenges to synthesising and aggregating findings from the baseline research conducted by IW projects and further analysis undertaken by the EM using the project data sets. [Section 3](#) focuses on the extent to which girls targeted by IW projects are educationally marginalised and presents a synthesis of the levels of enrolment, retention, attendance and learning found by projects at baseline. [Section 4](#)

provides an in-depth analysis of barriers to girls' education, presents projects' pre-baseline assumptions about barriers to education, and discusses whether the evidence confirms the expected barriers. [Section 5](#) reports on the evidence found by IW projects with respect to project targeting and the changes projects have made to their designs in response to what they found from their baseline research. Finally, [Section 6](#) presents the challenges faced by projects during baseline and the extent to which projects' evidence supports counterfactual analysis of their impact.

A list of Annexes can be found at the end of this report, and comprises:

- **Annex A:** Individual project profiles (19 IW projects);
- **Annex B:** List of documents consulted and data sources;
- **Annex C:** IW projects outcome tables and sampling tables; and
- **Annex D:** Terms of References of the GEC Evaluation.

This report is a revised version of the IW baseline report first submitted in May 2014 and includes analysis of additional project data received in December 2014. Section 2 provides a detailed account of the data available for this version and the limitations faced while conducting further in-depth analysis. Comments received from DFID, University of East Anglia and SEQAS on a previous version of this report are addressed in this report.

1.5 Overview of GEC Innovation Window projects

DFID officially launched the GEC in May 2012. However, the launch of each funding window was staggered with the Step Change Window launching first in May 2012, followed by the Innovation Window that was launched in July 2012. All funding windows have taken longer than expected to contract grant recipients and it has taken grant recipients longer to complete their M&E Frameworks and baseline research than was originally anticipated.

At the baseline stage in particular, the progress of the EM research and analysis was dependent on the progress of grant recipients in designing their M&E Frameworks, conducting their baseline research and analysis and submitting their baseline data and reports. Following the Inception Phase, Innovation Window projects were allowed to move to the Implementation Phase once their Project Baseline Report had been approved by the Fund Manager.

The [GEC Introductory Report](#) provides an overview of the timelines for the Innovation Window projects and for each of the key evaluation tasks at baseline, midline and endline. DFID and the EM are currently in the process of reviewing these tasks and timelines to prepare for midline and accommodate projects' timeframes due to contract extensions until 2017.

Intervention types across the GEC and the Innovation Window

At the start of the GEC programme the EM categorised the different types of interventions identified among the applications for funding through the different funding windows. These categories provided a starting point for framing the design of the GEC Evaluation Strategy, in particular the approach to evaluating the impact of different types of interventions and analysing their effects on target groups and sub-groups. [Table 1.3](#) summarises the different types of interventions across the GEC. Detailed interventions for each project can be found in [Annex A](#).

Table 1.3: GEC Intervention Types

Broad types of interventions	Descriptions of different types of interventions summarised by the Evaluation Manager
1. Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support transition (primary to secondary) • Individual support for disabled access
2. Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build / fund schools or classes • Build / fund alternative schools
3. Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer / female mentors / Engage men /boys (mentor) • Champions / community facilitators • Community mobilisation • Integrate religious teaching into formal education • Engage groups / figures in promotion activities • Engage private sector

Broad types of interventions	Descriptions of different types of interventions summarised by the Evaluation Manager
4. Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train school governors / School Management Committees on girls' education best practices • Establish School Management Committees / school improvement / school development plans • International school partnerships • School inspectors • Capacity support system and policy development
5. Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life skills / leadership training • Formative assessment (literacy / numeracy) • Develop / extended curriculum • After-school / out-of-school tuition • Support Accelerated Learning Programme • School readiness classes • English language programmes (e.g. language of instruction)
6. Material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stipends funding • Other material support • Microfinance • Family training business • Solar lamps • Kits / materials • Deworming & vitamins
7. Safe space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical infrastructure • Facilities / WASH / hygiene education • Anti-gender-based violence • Engage public sector child protection • Girl / boy friendly school • Girls study group • Clubs (child / parent) • Girls spaces
8. Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train /fund (general) teachers • Support psychological / health training • Support government training • Train / fund local teachers • Training para-educators (extend curricula)
9. Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio programmes • Student represent / feedback • Child-led advocacy

The IW has a distinct focus to support innovative projects testing new approaches to address barriers to girls' education. Across the different GEC intervention types, these innovations can be grouped as follows:

- **Applying a proven approach, for the first time, in a country or area** – For example, Viva in Uganda will train Ugandan teachers to use Individual Learning Plans in order to help girls who have dropped out of school or who are at risk of dropping out through non-formal education. While tested and proven successful elsewhere, this approach is new to Uganda.
- **Offering new ways of applying, adapting or developing an existing initiative** – For instance, Link Community Development (Ethiopia) will adapt a 'School Performance Review' tool with a view of explicitly improving girls' education. This tool developed in Uganda and tested in South Africa, Ghana, Malawi and Ethiopia offers a new way of applying an existing initiative in support of girls' education.
- **Developing an innovatively sustainable solution to an existing problem** – Mercy Corps Scotland and its local partners in Nepal will resort to market-based strategies to distribute solar lighting products in order to increase study time for girls. A provider will identify entrepreneurs in the communities to establish solar light libraries, after which the role of the provider will be to connect local entrepreneurs directly with distributors.
- **Forming new partnerships in support of girls' education or using different partnership models to work across sectors and improve results** – The GEMS project in Ghana will be delivered through a partnership between a

leading Indian distance learning provider (*Everon*), a low-power computer manufacturer (*Aleutia*), a Ghanaian solar-power specialist (*Gem Technologies*) and a US-based non-profit impact evaluation specialist (*IPA*).

- **Developing ideas that come from girls and involving girls in project implementation** – For instance, Health Poverty Action (Rwanda) conducted a needs assessment prior to submitting their project design during which girls suggested establishing Mother-Daughter Clubs. Girls will also participate in the project through awareness raising activities and participatory research.
- **Finding sustainable solutions that lead to long-lasting change** – Activities proposed by I Choose Life (Kenya) will include capacity building of local communities to fundraise for the continuation of the project after the GEC funding ends, in addition to community sensitisation in order to secure long-lasting attitudinal changes.
- **Demonstrating the impact of new and existing innovative models so that the results can be shared** – For instance, Raising Voices will implement a toolkit in schools in Uganda and plan to roll out its approach through a cascading model. By focusing on the impact on children’s experience of school and their learning and cognitive outcomes, the Raising Voices project, in collaboration with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, will attempt to demonstrate the impact of an innovative model.

A short summary of each Innovation Window project is given below, grouped by IW project areas.

Innovation Window projects in Eastern Africa (11 projects)

- **Health Poverty Action Rwanda** (HPA) in partnership with Nyaruguru District Local Authority, Teach a Man to Fish and Urunana Development Communication is implementing its project in Nyaruguru District in the Southern province of Rwanda. The project will support schools to run profit-making businesses, organise Mother Daughter Clubs and separate girls’ toilets and sanitation facilities using ECOSAN waterless composting toilets.
- **Link Community Development Ethiopia** (Link) is operating its project “Life Skills and Literacy for Improved Girls Learning in Rural Wolaita Zone” in four rural Woredas of the Wolaita Zone in the southern region of Ethiopia. The project will implement a systems intervention, involving a wide range of stakeholders including parents, community members, school governors and managers, teachers and woreda officials in capacity-building training and awareness-raising activities.
- **Red Een Kind** (Red) operates its project “What’s Up Girls” in Rumbek East in South Sudan. The main activities will be training respected women in the community to act as advocates, training boys and girls in life skills, training teachers in formal methods and raising community awareness.
- **Leonard Cheshire Disability** (LCDK) operates its project “Pioneering Inclusive Education Strategies for Disabled Girls in Kenya” in five districts in the Lake region of Kenya. The project seeks to broaden the understanding of the context in which disabled girls live, and to pilot ways of transforming the ways in which disabled girls are seen by others and by themselves. It will enable disabled girls to access quality mainstream primary education, and to progress to secondary education.
- **I Choose Life** (ICL), in partnership with the Kenya Red Cross Society, SoS Children’s Village and Mothers & Daughters, operate its project “Jielimishe GEC Project” in three counties in Kenya: Laikipia, Meru and Mombasa. The project will address the school environment, the girls’ communities, as well as government policies and their implementation, to increase enrolment, attendance, and learning.
- **Viva** operates its project, “Creative Learning Centres (CLC) for Girls aged 10-18” in Uganda, within Greater Kampala. The project seeks to actively engage girls, with the most important strategy being the creation of individual learning action plans by each girl with the help of dedicated and trained female teachers.
- **Raising Voices** operates its project “Good School Toolkit: Creating a Violence-Free and Gender Equitable Learning Environment at School”, in Uganda. The project will roll out the Good School Toolkit that aims to influence the operational cultures of schools and will launch a communication campaign.
- **PEAS** operates its project “Girls Enrolment, Access, Retention and Results” in rural communities in northern Uganda. The project aims to provide low cost, quality secondary education in rural areas. The focus is on a relevant and partly vocational education and gender appropriate curriculum and facilities.
- **Eco-Fuel Africa Limited** (Eco-Fuel) operates its project “Keeping Marginalised Girls in School by Economically Empowering Parents” in Mukono, Buikwe and Wakiso in Uganda. The project seeks to

economically empower mothers through employment as micro-retailers of briquettes; provide school transportation services for girls with disabilities and girls who travel over four kilometres; improve teacher performance through teacher training and sensitisation activities; and provide counselling and guidance services to marginalised girls.

- **Leonard Cheshire Services Uganda** (LCSU) operates its project “Supporting 500 Slum and 100 Homeless Street Girls with Disabilities in Kampala City to Access Quality Education” in Kampala City. The project will address some of the main social, economic and practical barriers that prevent girls with disabilities from accessing primary education in the slums.
- **Opportunity International UK** (Opportunity) in partnership with Opportunity Bank Uganda Limited operates its project “Innovating in Uganda to Support Educational Continuation by Marginalised Girls in Relevant Primary and Secondary Education” in Uganda. The project will train school proprietors, as well as enable them to access loans, to develop the operational and infrastructural capacity of their schools to provide improved educational services. It will also provide tuition loans to parents, deliver financial literacy training to girls, encourage girls and parents to open Child Savings Accounts, and provide education-related insurance.

Innovation Window projects in Southern Africa (4 projects)

- **BRAC Maendeleo Tanzania** (BRAC) operates its project “A Community Based Approach Supporting Marginalised Adolescent Girls to Stay in School or Re-enrol and Improve their Learning” in Tanzania in the regions of Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, Shinyanga, Tabora and Singida. It will introduce free tutoring, provide basic scholastic necessities and link the families of the out of school girls to its existing microfinance/agriculture programme.
- **VSO Mozambique** operates its project “The Business of Girls’ Education” in seven districts of the Manica Province of Mozambique. The project will create gender responsive classrooms, communities, and home environments that support the empowerment of marginalised girls, resulting in broader livelihood outcomes and choices for marginalised girls.
- **Camfed** operates its project “Child Centred Schooling Innovation for the Improvement of Learning Outcomes for Marginalised Girls” in Muchinga Province in northern Zambia. The project aims to introduce the Fundación Escuela Nueva’s (FEN) democratic school governance model and flexible, child-centred pedagogy to Zambia.
- **Theatre for a Change** (TfAC) operates its project “Empowering Young Female Teachers to Create Inclusive Learning Environments for Marginalised Girls” in Central and Southern Malawi. The project aims to improve girls’ knowledge and awareness of Sexual and Reproductive Health, increase their confidence, raise their levels of participation in school activities, and encourage greater parental and community support and engagement. Using proven teacher training approaches, TfAC plans to leverage agents of change (outstanding female teachers) to increase the retention, achievement and learning of marginalised girls.

Innovation Window projects in Western Africa (1 project)

- **GEMS Education** (GEMS) operates “MGCubed: Making Ghana Girls Great!” in Volta and Greater Accra in Ghana. The project will: provide interactive distance learning to deliver both formal in-school teaching and informal after-school training to primary students; improve the quality and quantity of taught inputs and the girls’ instructional time-on-task; engage the girls and their wider community in an after-school programme; and facilitate discussions with female role models and career exploration activities.

Innovation Window projects in Asia (3 projects)

- **Mercy Corps Scotland** (MercyCorps) operates its project “STEM” in 14 Village Development Committees and 1 Municipality in Kailali district in Far West Nepal. The project seeks to facilitate the mobilisation of existing and new Public Private Partnerships (PPP) that engage with and support existing sustainable community structures, and where necessary create new ones that will make the education of marginalised in-school and out-of-school (OOS) Dalit and Janajati girls more efficient, equitable and effective.
- **VSO Nepal** operates its project “Sister for Sisters’ Education” in four districts (Dhading, Lamjung, Parsa, and Surkhet) of Nepal. It has been designed to enable out of school girls to access education and help those at risk of dropping out complete a full cycle of education to Grade 8. It addresses the barriers to girls’ education at individual, social, cultural and institutional levels.

- **ChildFund** operates its project “Equal Access to Education for Nomadic Populations in Northern Afghanistan” in Northern Afghanistan. The project will focus on several dimensions —providing a mentored and supported teaching cadre, providing community-based education to suit the Nomadic life style, support families, and develop a strong collaboration and alignment with the Department of Education.

2 Methodology

2.1 Synthesis methodology for IW baseline findings

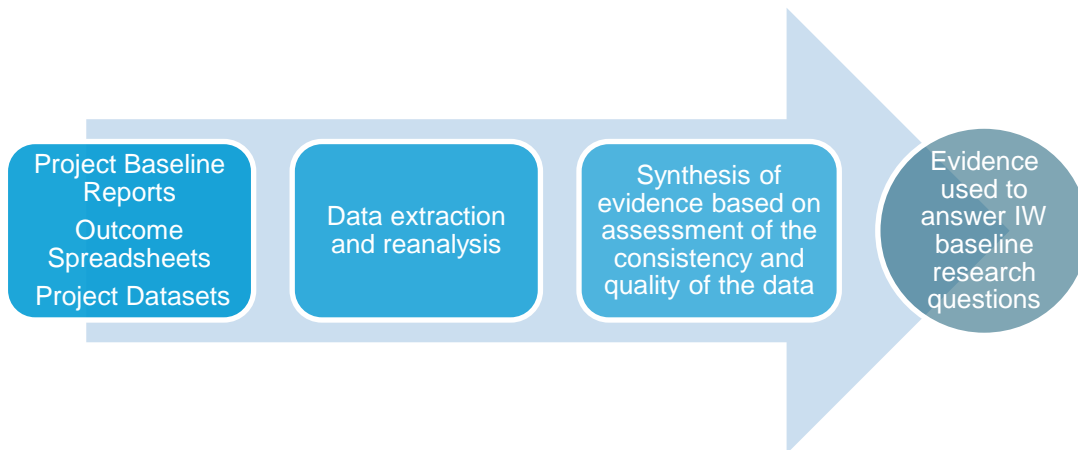
2.1.1 Purpose of the synthesis approach

The Evaluation Manager systematically reviewed and analysed project documents and data to produce the findings presented in this report. **The process adopted aims to synthesise the evidence provided by IW projects, in order to present the levels of enrolment, retention, attendance and learning found by IW projects at baseline and to explore the most prevalent barriers to girls’ education across the Innovation Window.**

The purpose of the synthesis approach is to ensure that the findings presented in this report are reliable. Our approach involved assessing project data and findings for their consistency against standard criteria used across the IW and assessing the quality of the data and findings against quality assurance criteria defined by individual projects, the FM and the EM (Figure 2.1). The step-by-step process adopted was as follows:

- mapping of project documents and data available (Project Baseline Reports, Outcome Spreadsheets, Project Datasets, Project Proposals and Project M&E Frameworks);
- systematically extracting the data and analysis from project documents, including Project Datasets;
- synthesizing the evidence base provided by projects at baseline to ensure the consistency and quality of reported findings; and
- answering IW baseline research questions using IW projects’ evidence base.

Figure 2.1: Purpose of the synthesis approach



2.1.2 Data sources and systematic extraction process

IW projects’ research

The GEC Evaluation Strategy required all IW projects to carry out qualitative and quantitative baseline research. All 19 projects conducted surveys using questionnaires and sampling frameworks that were reviewed by the EM and the FM during the development of M&E Frameworks. All 19 projects tested the literacy and numeracy skills of girls in their target communities. In addition, projects conducted qualitative research and were encouraged to draw on existing sources of secondary data.



As IW projects could develop their own qualitative research designs, they may have taken different approaches with regards to qualitative sampling or the development of interview guides. While quantitative data (Project Datasets) was shared with the EM along with Projects Baseline Reports, qualitative data was not submitted to the EM. As a result, the qualitative findings presented in this report are based solely on IW projects’ analysis.

The evidence gathered by projects through their baseline research is documented in three different formats (refer to Annex B for a list of documents consulted and references), as detailed below.

- **Project Baseline Reports** present evidence, key findings, and lessons learned based on the data analysis led by projects and by their affiliated researchers. The Project Baseline Reports focus on testing a project's theory of change and assumptions about target groups, educational outcomes and barriers to education;
- **Outcome Spreadsheets** are used by projects to report the baseline levels of attendance and learning, which are the key outcomes on which Payment-by-Results is based; and
- **Project Datasets** compiling the raw data from the household surveys and/ or in-school surveys. The EM has carried out an independent, renewed analysis of this data for a selected number of key outcomes where the relevant information was available, documented and comparable. This "reanalysis" aims to cross-check and verify the figures and findings presented by the projects in their baseline reports.

The three sources of information have different strengths and weaknesses.

Project Baseline Reports are based on the baseline research and analysis conducted by the projects or their independent evaluators, who had all committed in their M&E Frameworks to achieving high levels of representativeness, statistical power and analytical quality. However, reporting against indicators was not standard across projects and did not always reflect the range of indicators of interest for GEC baseline analysis at the programme level, and as such was not in a standard format or disaggregated by sub-groups of interest.

Outcome Spreadsheets are a way to consistently capture key outcome data and report on progress against targets for learning and attendance for all projects. The Outcome Spreadsheets have the advantage of providing a relatively standard format and allowing disaggregation by age group, subject to some variation in the learning assessment tools used.

Project Datasets were submitted by projects along with their baseline reports, which allowed the EM to conduct a reanalysis of the findings presented in project reports. The quality of the data was variable and led the EM to request further information from projects in order to identify the different variables in the datasets. For a majority of projects, the identification of key variables was not possible and entailed further limitations (refer to [Table 2.2](#)) for the EM to conduct the reanalysis of project data at the level of sub-groups (e.g. rural/urban populations, disabled groups, socio-economically disadvantaged groups) or for specific barriers (e.g. poverty, violence, early marriage).

Systematic extraction of data from Project Baseline Reports

Inclusion/ exclusion criteria used for extracting data were based on the baseline research questions, which required the following information to be extracted and collated from Project Baseline Reports:

- Overview of project and baseline activities;
- Definition of marginalisation and project target groups;
- Assumptions, expectations and findings related to baseline outcome measures (enrolment, attendance, retention, learning outcomes for literacy and numeracy);
- Assumed and actual barriers found at baseline for attendance and learning;
- Information related to intervention types and activities;
- Challenges faced during baseline research;
- Changes to project design and M&E as a result of baseline findings; and
- Any additional data collected related to poverty, disability, violence, early marriage and sub-groups.



It is important to note that only five out of 19 IW projects² presented analysis on gender differences in their baseline reports, which limited the EM's capacity to assess gender differences across the IW.

With respect to findings relating to baseline outcome measures (enrolment, attendance, retention, learning outcomes for literacy and numeracy), the EM chose to extract outcome data from Project Baseline Reports for intervention groups only. Where data were not disaggregated between control and intervention groups, the EM reported outcome data based on the total sample researched by IW projects.

² Link (Ethiopia), MercyCorps (Nepal), VSO (Nepal), GEMS (Ghana) and Camfed (Zambia) collected information on boys in their project areas.

Reanalysis of Project Datasets

The reanalysis aimed to cross-check and verify the figures and findings presented by the projects in their baseline reports. The approach the EM adopted was to use, compile and analyse the available data across sources and to attempt to investigate issues with findings, where they were reported by projects in a non-standard way (e.g. different indexes or non-comparable measures) or appeared to present contradictions or measurement issues. In addition to the specific limitations outlined in [Table 2.2](#) below, two general limitations of the Project Datasets presented serious challenges to the quality of the data presented in this report, that are explained below.



Absence of contextual information and clear labelling of variables: *In some projects the EM lacks contextual information to accurately reanalyse the Project Datasets. Necessary information relates especially to the nature of the assessed population (gender, age category, in-school or out-of-school), the structure of datasets and the labelling of outcome variables such as learning sub-task scores. As a result, the EM could have misinterpreted variables or associated them wrongly to sampled populations. This limits the validity and reliability of the reanalysis figures presented in this report.*

Absence of indication of EGRA/EGMA and Uwezo scales used by projects to report literacy and numeracy scores: *Both these scales are defined in this report based on the existing international literature on research instruments such as EGRA/EGMA and Uwezo (refer to [Section 3.2](#)). In places where the reanalysis process showed that IW projects have used a different scale, figures were reported in this report although not discussed as part of the overarching interpretation of the data.*

All 19 IW projects submitted their datasets. Project datasets which could be used for further investigative analysis are listed in [Table 2.2](#). The number of datasets received by the EM is included, although it may simply indicate that IW projects submitted their data in different files. Limitations to these datasets are also included.

Table 2.2: Reanalysis of Project Datasets and project-by-project limitations

			# Data sets	Being-in-school outcomes			Learning outcomes	
				Enrolment	Attendance	Retention	Literacy	Numeracy
HPA	6317	Rwa	1	✓		✓	✓	✓
				Attendance variable missing.			See notes below.	
Link	6473	Eth	2	In-school survey only – impossible to compute enrolment and retention. Attendance variable missing.			Learning assessment raw data missing (analytical data only).	
Red	6567	Sou	7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
							See notes below. Extrapolated from grade.	
Viva	6595	Uga	8	✓	✓	✓	✓	
							See notes below.	
Mercy	6616	Nep	10	Variable and value labels missing. EM was unable to disaggregate outcome variables in the HH survey.			See notes below. Extrapolated from grade.	
LCDK	6627	Ken	2	Variable labels missing.			See notes below.	
ICL	6803	Ken	5	✓		✓	✓	✓
				Attendance variable missing.				
BRAC	6957	Tan	5	✓	✓			
				Attendance assessed on last month only (proxy). Previous year enrolment variable missing.			See notes below.	
VSO	7038	Moz	9	✓		✓	✓	✓
				Attendance variable missing. Previous year enrolment needed for accurate retention calculations.			Age variable missing in Uwezo dataset. Results by age extrapolated from grade distribution.	
VSO	7042	Nep	2	Raw data missing.			Raw data missing. Gender and teacher assessments only, mostly analytical data.	
GEMS	7045	Gha	4	✓	✓		✓	✓
				Attendance: proxy. Previous year enrolment variable missing.				
RV	7133	Uga	6	✓			✓	✓
				Previous year enrolment and attendance variables missing. Age variable missing in HH survey.			See notes below.	
Camfd	7156	Zam	3	In-school survey only so impossible to compute enrolment and retention. Attendance variable missing.			National test. Reported data considers only Grade 5 students (age variable missing for Grades 6 and 7).	
PEAS	7374	Uga	5	✓		✓		
				Attendance variable inadequate.			See notes below.	
Eco	7549	Uga	5	✓		✓	✓	✓
				Attendance variable inadequate. Age categories instead of yearly age in all datasets.			See notes below. Extrapolated from grade.	
LCSU	7879	Uga	4	✓		✓	✓	✓
				Attendance variable inadequate.			See notes below.	
ChFnd	8100	Afg	6	✓			✓	✓
				Previous year enrolment and attendance variables missing.				
TfAC	8329	Mal	8	✓	✓	✓		
				Attendance: proxy. Previous year enrolment variable missing.			See notes below.	
Oppty	8980	Uga	8		✓		✓	
				Enrolment variables missing. Attendance: proxy.			See notes below.	

Notes: For most projects we lack contextual information on learning assessments. Subtask features are missing that are necessary to compute consistent literacy and numeracy scores: their type (e.g. writing, reading, addition, number identification); the time given to complete them, their score scale; their location in the overall test scoring and timing; and whether an aggregate score could be computed or not, etc. Due to missing or incomplete learning assessment variables and value labeling, we have sometimes been unable to relate subtasks to specific dataset variables.

2.1.3 Approach to synthesising IW baseline findings

Given the multiple sources of information available and the fact that evidence presented by projects is drawn from their own research, there is no definitive source of data about project target groups, educational outcomes or barriers. **The EM IW baseline report does not aim to provide a replacement baseline for IW projects but aims to present a synthesis of the evidence base provided by projects at baseline in order to ensure the consistency and quality of the findings that are reported.**

By systematically reviewing IW Project Baseline Reports and triangulating findings from different sources (Outcome Spreadsheets, Project Datasets) prior to the analysis stage, the EM mitigated the potential biases of having to only rely on project reporting and ensured that the reported evidence met a set of *consistency criteria*. The probing of data based on the EM analysis of projects' datasets therefore focused on the comparability of measurement tools used and consistency in reported measures across Project Baseline Reports, Outcome Spreadsheets and Project Datasets.

Despite the triangulation of findings across the different sources available and the EM reanalysis of projects' data, the quality of the data collected and the evidence reported is subjected to the *quality criteria* used by each individual projects' external evaluator, which implies limitations to the EM's interpretation of the synthesised data (outlined in [Section 2.4](#)). [Table 2.3](#) below provides the list of consistency and quality criteria used to synthesize the IW project data and analysis.

Table 2.3: Criteria used for the synthesis

Consistency criteria	Quality criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Comparable measurement tools (e.g. learning assessments) ✓ Comparable indexes compiled by projects for reporting on educational outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Defined by each individual projects' external evaluator ✓ Quality Assurance conducted by the EM and the FM prior to Project Baseline Report approval

2.2 Discussion of IW baseline findings

Following the synthesis of project evidence, the EM assessed whether project baseline findings were challenging GEC assumptions relating to educational outcomes and barriers to girls' education.

The discussion of IW baseline findings involved:

- exploring situations where projects found higher educational outcomes than expected at baseline;
- reviewing the barriers expected by projects pre-baseline in light of the barriers found during the baseline research; and
- assessing the extent to which project targeting and project design are supported by project evidence.

2.2.1 Triangulation process

The triangulation of baseline research findings was conducted by gathering: (1) international sources of secondary data relating to girls' enrolment, retention, attendance and learning ([Table 2.4](#)); and (2) existing literature about barriers to girls' education (refer to [Annex B](#) for a list of references).

Table 2.4: Data sources used for triangulation**Educational outcomes and teaching quality****Enrolment**

Enrolment ratios are based on the United Nations Population Division estimates, revision 2010 (United Nations, 2011), median variant. Data are for 2011 except for countries with a split calendar school year, in which case data are for 2010. Enrolment ratios are available for 1999 and 2011. Also available: % increase 1999 – 2011.

Data reflect the actual number of children not enrolled at all, derived from the age-specific or adjusted net enrolment ratio (ANER) of primary school age children, which measures the proportion of those who are enrolled either in primary or in secondary schools. National population data were used to calculate enrolment ratios. Children enter primary school at age 6 or 7. Since 7 is the most common entrance age, enrolment ratios were calculated using the 7–11 age group for the population.

Retention

School life expectancy is the number of years a newly enrolled child can be expected to stay in school, on average. School life expectancy is available for 1999 and 2011. Also available: % increase 1999 – 2011.

Survival rate to the last primary grade is the percentage of a cohort of pupils enrolled in Grade 1 of the primary level of education in a given school year who are expected to reach the last grade of primary school, regardless of repetition.

Primary cohort completion rate is the percentage of a cohort of pupils enrolled in the first grade of primary education in a given school year who are expected to complete this level of education.

Learning

Youth literacy rates (15-24) are available for 1984-94 (average), 2005-2011 (average) and 2015 (projection). Also available: % increase 1999 – 2011.

Teaching quality

Pupil/Teacher Ratio (Primary); Pupil/Teacher Ratio (Secondary); Number and % of trained teachers (Primary); Number and % of trained teachers (Secondary). Available for 1999 and 2011, and % increase 1999 – 2011.

Data sources: UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2013/14 & UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Database.

2.2.2 Evidence supporting or challenging assumptions about educational outcomes and barriers

Following the data extraction and document review process, project reported findings have been assessed against baseline assumptions and expectations (e.g. a project may have anticipated that disabled girls are educationally marginalised and found supporting or contradictory evidence during the baseline research).

The GEC Business Case³ lists the following key assumptions about educational marginalisation of girls in GEC focus countries:

- Despite existing bilateral and multilateral programmes, and the efforts of domestic governments, 39 million girls remain out of primary level education and a much larger number are dropping out without basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- Girls who have never been enrolled in primary school tend to come from the most disadvantaged communities and face multiple obstacles due to factors such as their geographic location (i.e. living in rural areas), ethnicity and low socio-economic status. The incidence of non-enrolment is particularly high in conflict and post conflict environments.
- Even though enrolment gaps between girls and boys of primary age have recently narrowed, girls are still less likely than boys to enrol in primary school.
- Enrolment gaps between boys and girls widen significantly when girls reach secondary school age.
- Girls are more likely than boys to lack basic literacy skills.

Assumptions include IW project-specific assumptions about barriers, i.e. individual project assumptions identified in their Project Proposals and design documents. GEC-relevant assumptions relate to overarching assumptions that

³ DFID (2012), Girls' Education Challenge, Business Case Version 4, June 2012, pp. 13-28

underpin the theory of change for the GEC programme as a whole. The key GEC-relevant assumptions have been interpreted as follows:

- **Educational outcomes:** the underlying assumption that is relevant to the GEC programme is that outcomes are poor because the target group is assumed to be marginalised. This implies that there is substantial space for improving educational outcomes of targeted girls and that this improvement would be measurable.
- **Barriers to girls' education:** with respect to barriers proposed by the project as being relevant to defining educational marginalisation in its target group, the GEC-relevant assumption is that these barriers will be present and that they will tend to be associated with poorer educational outcomes. IW projects may report on the levels or prevalence of these barriers in their target population but they may not consistently analyse the associations between these factors and the range of GEC-relevant outcomes. Again, the EM has tried to assess the extent to which the evidence presented supports or potentially challenges these assumptions.

The objective is not to provide a specific rating or 'critique' of individual project activity or assumptions, as this would to some extent duplicate the project baseline reporting cycle. The discussion of baseline findings does not necessarily relate to specific project assumptions about the levels of particular outcomes at baseline, nor about the desirability of actual circumstances. For instance, a project with high enrolment rates among girls in its target population may be discussed as presenting challenging evidence, not because it is undesirable to have high enrolment rates, but because the assumption at the design stage was that enrolment rates would be low.

To this end we have defined benchmarks for learning outcomes only. Benchmarks for learning outcomes are informed by published international norms for EGRA (Oral Reading Fluency). The norms are based on standard expectations for oral reading fluency as measured in words per minute for students (refer to [Section 3.2](#)).

2.3 GEC outcome variables

A number of key variables are used in this report to describe the baseline status relating to GEC outcomes.

2.3.1 Attending school

To assess the extent to which girls are attending school across the GEC's IW we look at a combination of three dimensions that are used together to ensure that girls 'are in school'. These are enrolment, attendance and retention.

Enrolment rates – We report enrolment rates as the proportion of girls in a target community who are enrolled in school.

Retention rates – We report retention rates as: (1) the proportion of enrolled girls who are eligible to re-enrol in the following school year that actually do so. These year-on-year rates are derived from answers to questions about enrolment one year ago and today provided by caregivers through the household survey administered by IW projects in their target areas.

Attendance rates – Attendance rates are compiled using projects' reported findings of the average of the proportion of schooling days attended. Projects collected attendance data during visits at the schools where the surveyed girls were reportedly enrolled. In some cases, this data served to verify some of the self-reported information on enrolment and attendance collected from the surveyed households ([Box 2.5](#)). Nevertheless, IW projects have pointed out their lack of confidence in the attendance data collected to date, as spot checks revealed that school registers were not a consistent and reliable source of information, which may prevent the EM from drawing a definite conclusion with regards to attendance rates of target girls. Where available, the EM reanalysis of project data made use of responses by caregivers about attendance levels for girls. This is subject to response bias and is an approximation of a proportion at the individual level, but which is also likely to remain consistent in its level of accuracy throughout the lifecycle of the GEC.

Box 2.5: GEC requirements for IW projects' measurement of attendance⁴

IW projects were provided guidance for the measurement of attendance before they undertook their baseline research. Although international measures of retention focus on enrolment, it is widely accepted that enrolment figures do not accurately measure the amount of education students receive – in part because of the frequency and accuracy of data collection. **As a result, attendance was chosen as a stronger indicator of the impact of educational interventions, in order to help verify the retention indicator.** Even if IW projects did not have systems in place for collecting individual girls' attendance data, they were required to develop a method to determine the **average attendance of marginalised girls.**

In order to establish a high degree of confidence in the reporting on attendance, the FM and the EM encouraged IW projects to:

- Use attendance data collected from schools registration systems (supplying registers, if necessary);
- Undertake a baseline for attendance using historical registration data in both intervention and control schools;
- Seek to verify that school-based attendance data is accurate through the use of unannounced spot checks (at least one per term);
- Collect data and undertake spot-checks for a sample of intervention schools and control schools;
- Ensure that attendance data collected is independently verified by IW projects' Independent Evaluator; and
- Set attainable targets for additional improvements to attendance over the project period.

2.3.2 Learning

Learning, in addition to attendance, is the second of the GEC's key outcomes. Throughout this report we use the term "learning" to describe girls' progress in school and the acquisition of new skills and knowledge in relatively broad terms. However when measuring learning as a GEC outcome we apply a more specific definition of learning as "a change in ability over time" in literacy (i.e. reading fluency and reading comprehension), and numeracy skills. All IW projects were required to include a learning assessment as part of their M&E design. They had the choice between different types of standardised assessments with the majority opting for a variant of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)⁵ and Early Grade Math Assessment (EGMA)⁶ tools.

Literacy – We use EGRA to measure the extent to which girls can demonstrate the *most basic* foundation skills for literacy acquisition in early grades. When taking this oral test, girls must perform a number of tasks such as recognising letters of the alphabet, reading simple words, understanding sentences and paragraphs, and reading with comprehension. International education experts consider oral reading fluency a strong predictor of later literacy. Children who do not acquire basic reading skills at an early age are more likely to repeat grades and eventually drop out of school, while the performance gap between early readers and non-readers increases over time. It is generally assumed that students should be able to read a minimum of 45-60 words per minute in order to understand a simple passage of text. Existing research suggests that this standard can possibly be applied worldwide⁷.

EGRA scores were reported in various ways by projects, as some projects presented overall EGRA scores whereas other projects reported on oral reading fluency measured by words per minute (wpm) as a key metric required for projects opting for Payment by Results (PbR).

Numeracy – We use EGMA to measure the extent to which girls can demonstrate foundational numeracy skills in early grades. Girls are asked to: identify numbers; distinguish different quantities; identify missing numbers; complete number patterns; and perform basic addition and subtraction exercises. Projects reported on the results that girls achieved on a range of numeracy subtask and typically present an overall percentage of correct answers.

⁴ See Fund Manager for the GEC (June 2013), *The Girls' Education Challenge – Attendance guidance*

⁵ EGRA is an orally administered student assessment designed to measure the most basic foundation skills for literacy acquisition in the early grades: recognising letters of the alphabet, reading simple words, understanding sentences and paragraphs and listening with comprehension.

⁶ EGMA is an oral assessment designed to measure a student's foundation skills in numeracy and mathematics in the early grades, including number identification, quantity discrimination, missing-number identification, word problem solving, addition and subtraction, shape recognition and pattern extension.

⁷ See Abadzi, H. (2011), *Reading Fluency Measurements in EFA FTI Partner Countries: Outcomes and Improvement Prospects*, GPE Working Paper Series on Learning, No. 1, Education for All Fast Track Initiative Secretariat, World Bank, Washington DC.

Other forms of learning assessment – A number of projects used the Uwezo test (“capability” in Kiswahili), which is adapted from the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) instrument, which displays distinct competency levels that allow scoring of the literacy and numeracy levels of a child.

Table 2.6: Data collection tools for learning

Data collection tools for learning	Number of projects	IW projects by country and region																		
		Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal		Afgh
East Africa											Southern Africa				W.A	Asia				
Learning assessment used																				
EGRA/ EGMA	14	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Uwezo	4						✓	✓	✓				✓							
Other	2									✓ ¹					✓ ²					
Lang. issues ³	13	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓		✓
Test in local lang. ⁶	3									✓	✓	✓								
Format chosen to report results in Outcome Spreadsheets																				
Words per min.	13	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓
Total/100	13	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Levels	3						✓	✓	✓											
Unspecified	4			✓ ⁵	✓ ⁵	✓ ⁵									✓ ⁴					
Notes:																				
1- In addition to EGRA and EGMA, the project also used National Assessments to assess achievement at the end of primary school.																				
2- This project used National Assessments.																				
3- Language of instruction/ spoken at home differ. This information is reported in the table as declared by projects in Project Baseline Reports.																				
4- This project reported the results from the Uwezo comprehension and multiplication sub-tasks.																				
5- These projects reported numeracy results against specific EGMA levels without specifying the unit of measurement.																				
6- Projects for which the learning assessment was carried out in the local language/ language spoken at home.																				

Comparability between EGRA/EGMA and Uwezo tests

Several IW projects adapted the standard versions of Uwezo or EGRA/EGMA to fit the specific age groups or grade levels that they target, and their language of instruction. This means that there are limits to the comparability of these tests and their results across the IW. Furthermore, some projects reported oral reading results as words per minute (in the case of reading), while others reported levels or scores on a 0 – 100 scale.

It is important to note that assessments such as ASER, Uwezo, and EGRA/EGMA are designed with a country’s curriculum and national context in mind. While they often test similar content, they are not strictly comparable and sometimes have different levels of competency with different levels of difficulty.

As shown in Table 2.6, a majority of projects (14 out of 19) used EGRA/EGMA to assess girls’ literacy and numeracy skills. Four projects chose to administer Uwezo tests. Finally, one project, Camfed (Zambia), provided non-comparable evidence (country-wise) for learning, as they used national assessments to assess achievement at the end of primary school.

Language spoken at school and potential effects on learning outcomes and learning assessments

A large number of IW projects (13 out of 19) work in areas where the language of instruction and the language spoken at home differ (Table 2.6). Challenges were reported by projects that students’ mother tongue may have affected their results from learning assessments carried out in a different language, especially in the case of literacy tests:

- **Viva (Uganda):** Of the 1463 girls that have been included in this analysis, 307 of them are described as able to speak English well and 433 girls can speak a little English. English is the language of instruction in schools in Uganda;

- **LCDK (Kenya):** Four different languages are spoken in the project’s target area. Learning tests were administered in Kiswahili or English;
- **VSO (Nepal):** The majority of out-of-school marginalised girls and extremely marginalised girls speak Nepali (71%), while 22% of them speak Bhojपुरi;
- **Camfed (Zambia):** The project reported that in half of the schools, pupils consistently responded to teachers’ questions during class, although, inspectors described pupils as appearing uncomfortable in the language of instruction (English) and only able to ask questions in the local language; and
- **PEAS (Uganda):** English levels of out-of-school girls was reported as being low, and girls often did not want to consent to a test that would make them speak a different language than the one spoken at home.

The literature around the impact of learning in a language which is different from the language spoken at home is relatively well-established. UNESCO guidance has encouraged school instruction in students’ mother tongues since 1953. The negative effects of learning in a language which is different from the language spoken at home on learning outcomes and retention are also fairly clear. Analysis conducted for UNESCO in 2008, which assessed data from 22 countries and 160 languages found that children who are taught in the same language spoken at home are significantly more likely to be enrolled in school and significantly less likely to drop out⁸. Studies have also found significant negative effects on learning outcomes. The 2011 PIRLS assessment found that students not taught in their mother language were significantly less likely to achieve minimum learning standards in reading than students who were taught in their home language⁹. Several key examples of these learning disparities stand out in the study: for instance in Benin, over 80% of Grade 5 students who are taught in their mother tongue achieve minimum scores in reading, compared with less than 60% of Grade 5 students who are not taught in the same language as they speak at home.

In order to avoid disadvantaging some groups due to language issues, some projects reported that they decided to administer learning tests in both languages.

HPA (Rwanda) reported that the tests were carried out in both English and Kinyarwanda. In the case of **Link (Ethiopia)**, the EGRA Grade 6 tool was developed in English, as the medium of instruction from Grade 5 to 8 in the Wolaita Zone is English. Since the medium of instruction from Grade 1 to 4 in the Wolaita Zone is Wolaitigna, the EGRA tool for lower grades was composed of six sections and developed in Wolaitigna. **Red (South Sudan)** adopted a similar strategy. The EGRA and EGMA tests for lower grades and out-of-school girls were translated in Dinka for easy interpretation by children, while the tests of girls in upper grades were administered in English because of the language of instruction in different grades. The project reported that Grade 2 girls performed fairly better than Grade 5 girls, probably due to the fact that the tests for Grade 2 were administered in the local language (Dinka). **GEMS (Ghana)** indicated that a key challenge encountered during baseline research related to language. Although survey teams were equipped to administer the survey instruments in the officially designated local languages of the schools, GEMS (Ghana) found many cases where students did not understand this language at all. This has implications for the quality of the GEMS (Ghana) learning outcomes, especially given the structure of the EGRA/EGMA test which puts substantial emphasis on local language understanding and for which results are closely related to the specific language used in the assessments. **For these four projects, we reported results of the English test only.**

2.3.3 Disaggregation by sub-groups

We report GEC outcomes for various sub-groups based on the available evidence. The purpose of this is to examine differences in baseline educational outcomes across:

- **Grades and school phases:** Using international sources of data ([Table 2.8](#)) we have gathered information by country relating to the official school starting age, the length of school phases and the age distribution by grade. This information allows the EM to address challenges relating to projects reporting information for grades only and not for different age groups¹⁰. Where data was provided by school phase (e.g. Lower

⁸ Smits et al. “Home language and education in the developing world” Commissioned study for Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2009. Nijmegen Centre for Economics, Radboud University, 2008.

⁹ UNESCO Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2013/2014 “Children need to be taught in a language they understand” (http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/GMR/pdf/language_factsheet.pdf)

¹⁰ In project reporting sources the breakdown may reflect country-specific grade structures. Age of school entry, transition ages and grade repetition levels also vary across countries.

Primary, Upper Secondary, etc.), the EM harmonised project data using country-level age distribution by grade in order to compile comparable measures across the IW.

- **Age groups:** Age groups are based on six age groups (below 6, 6-8, 9-11, 12-13, 14-15 and 16-19). As shown in [Table 2.8](#), the age group 9-11 is considered to be representative of the age at which most girls are theoretically enrolled in primary school. The age group 14-15 is considered to be representative of the age at which most girls are enrolled in secondary school¹¹.
- **Out-of-school girls:** We include in our definition out-of-school girls who have never been enrolled and out-of-school girls who have dropped out in the current year in order to explore the differences in baseline educational outcomes for girls not currently enrolled. Furthermore, we have considered and discussed additional criteria for defining out-of-school girls to the extent to which Project Baseline Reports provided us with the appropriate information on out-of-school girls and dropped out girls (for a discussion of IW projects' definition of out-of-school girls, refer to [Box 2.7](#)). Nevertheless, a number of projects have not clearly explained the characteristics of their sample of out-of-school girls (refer to [Table 2.9](#)), implying that our analysis is not as in-depth an analysis as in the [Step Change Window Baseline Report](#).

Box 2.7: IW projects' definitions of out-of-school girls

16 out of 19 IW projects are targeting out-of-school girls as part of their definition of marginalisation. Not all projects distinguish between out-of-school girls who have never been enrolled and out-of-school girls who have dropped out.

- **BRAC (Tanzania), ChildFund (Afghanistan):** Out-of-school girls are defined as girls who have dropped out of school.
- **VSO (Nepal), Raising Voices (Uganda), PEAS (Uganda), LCSU (Uganda), HPA (Rwanda):** Girls who have never been to school or have dropped out of school.
- **LCDK (Kenya), VSO (Mozambique), TfAC (Malawi):** Out-of-school girls are not considered as a homogenous group. These projects distinguished between out-of-school girls who have never been enrolled and out-of-school girls who have dropped out.
- **Red (South Soudan), Viva (Uganda), Eco-Fuel (Uganda):** Out-of-school girl category involves girls at risk of dropping out or girls with low attendance (almost out-of-school).
- **MercyCorps (Nepal):** Out-of-school girls were identified based on dropout girls recorded in school. The project found that the girls reported as out-of-school girls by schools were not available in the community. Some of them transferred to other schools, some of them got married, and some of them relocated themselves in search of suitable income opportunities.
- **GEMS (Ghana) and ICL (Kenya)** did not specify a definition for out-of-school girls.

Age-in-grade distribution for 9-11 and 14-15 year old girls

We found a limited amount of information on age-in-grade distribution using international and national secondary data sources¹². The age-in-grade distribution reveals that **the age at which students actually reach each grade is relatively higher than the official entry-age for each grade across IW countries**. The share of over-aged students compared to students studying at the right age starts rising in Grades 3 and 4, after which the age-in-grade until the end of primary school and in secondary school appears to remain steady. Both late entry into primary school and grade repetition can cause students to be over-aged in their grade, which has implications for the age groups that can be considered to be representative of the age at which most girls are theoretically enrolled in secondary school. Alternatively, shifting the analysis to the secondary school phase age band to 16-19 posed a risk of missing information for girls who complete secondary school at the right age.

¹¹ In summary, we present evidence on outcome levels for one age group that is representative of a primary school population, and one age group that broadly represents secondary-school girls. More detailed breakdowns of outcome levels by age and grade are provided in [Annex C](#).

¹² Primary school phase: Uganda (Lloyd (2011), The demography of the classroom in the primary grades; Patterns of enrollment by age and implications for early learning); Malawi, Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania (Lewin and Sabates (2011), Changing Patterns of Access to Education in Anglophone and Francophone Countries in Sub Saharan Africa: Is Education for All Pro-Poor?). Secondary school phase: Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Nepal (UNESCO (1996), Primary and secondary education: Age specific enrolment ratios 1960-1996).

For a more detailed discussion of the age-in-grade distribution across GEC projects, refer to the [Step Change Window Baseline Report](#).



Inconsistency between project reporting and the Reanalysis of Project Datasets: The EM reanalysed Project Datasets by age categories while most projects reported outcomes by grades in the Project Baseline Reports and Outcome Spreadsheets (refer to [Annex C](#) for disaggregated findings). In this report, we present findings across age categories as the averages of enrolment, retention, attendance and learning variables across 9-11 and 14-15 year old girls. We use a grade-age equivalent to report Project Baseline Report and Outcome Spreadsheet figures using official school starting age and length of school phases in each country (refer to [Table 2.8](#)).

This places a limit on the direct comparability between project-reported outcomes and reanalysis as we were forced to use official rather than actual age-grade distributions. In practice, girls are likely to fall behind their expected grades. This implies that project-reported results as presented in our aggregated outcomes tables may actually refer to older girls than the age category which is actually considered. For learning outcomes, Project Baseline Report and Outcome Spreadsheet figures may therefore be subject to an upward bias.

Table 2.8: Official school starting age and length of school phases (secondary data, by IW country)

	Primary school phase
	Secondary school phase

Official school ages	IW projects by country and region																		
	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
	7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
	Uganda					Kenya	Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh			
East Africa										Southern Africa					W.A.	Asia			
Grade 1	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	6	7	6	7	6	6	5	5	7
Grade 2	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	8	8	7	8	7	8	7	7	6	6	8
Grade 3	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	9	9	8	9	8	9	8	8	7	7	9
Grade 4	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	10	10	9	10	9	10	9	9	8	8	10
Grade 5	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	11	11	10	11	10	11	10	10	9	9	11
Grade 6	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	12	12	11	12	11	12	11	11	10	10	12
Grade 7	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	13	13	12	13	12	13	12	12	11	11	13
Grade 8	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	13	14	14	13	14	13	14	13	13	12	12	14
Grade 9	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	15	15	14	15	14	15	14	14	13	13	15
Grade 10	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	16	16	15	16	15	16	15	15	14	14	16
Grade 11	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	17	17	16	17	16	17	16	16	15	15	17
Grade 12	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	18	18	17	18	17	18	17	17	16	16	18
Grade 13	18	18	18	18	18	18						19				18			

Sources: For official starting ages: World Bank Development Indicators; UNESCO statistics. For school system information: UNESCO.

Note: Entrance age of primary is the age at which students would enter primary education, assuming they had started at the official entrance age for the lowest level of education, had studied full-time throughout and had progressed through the system without repeating or skipping a grade.

Out-of-school girl samples

Similar concerns arise with respect to the disaggregation of educational outcomes by in-school and out-of-school status. As shown in [Box 2.7](#), IW projects have used a range of definitions to distinguish between in-school and out-of-school girls. Most importantly, some projects (VSO (Nepal), Raising Voices (Uganda), PEAS (Uganda), LCSU (Uganda), HPA (Rwanda)) have defined out-of-school girls as girls who have dropped out in addition of girls who never enrolled, which suggests that a certain proportion of out-of-school girls may have received schooling in the

past. Three projects (Red (South Soudan), Viva (Uganda), Eco-Fuel (Uganda)) also defined out-of-school girls as girls at risk of dropping out or girls with low attendance (almost out-of-school), suggesting that these girls are still enrolled in school.

Table 2.9 shows the composition of out-of-school girl samples for IW projects which measured learning outcomes for out-of-school girls. The information presented below can be found in Project Baseline Reports (where available), and implications are discussed on a case-by-case basis in Section 3.



It follows that the measurement of learning outcomes (literacy and numeracy) at baseline for out-of-school girls should be interpreted with caution, as out-of-school girls may have relatively high literacy and numeracy scores in cases where they have dropped out after acquiring basic reading skills, or never enrolled in school but gained these skills at home. Moreover, out-of-school girls' outcomes are often reported as a single average with no information on their average age, which makes it difficult to compare with any specific age category of in-school girls.

As a result, the EM's ability to comment on out-of-school girls' literacy and numeracy performance compared to in-school girls' performance is limited, and the differences in learning outcomes between these two sub-groups cannot be solely attributed to learning occurring in-school, as the profile of out-of-school girls and their schooling history were not systematically recorded by IW projects.

Table 2.9: Composition of out-of-school girl sample, by project

Size, distribution by age group (%) and status	Number of projects	IW projects by country and region																		
		Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal		Afgh
East Africa											Southern Africa					W.A.		Asia		
Sample size and distribution by age group (%)																				
Sample size	-	1151	372		341	39 ⁴	392	235	126		99	217	332	103		374	194	373	166	107
<6 (%)	-				1						13							0		
6-8 (%)	-				1													100		
9-11 (%)	-	•	0		24		•	•	•			•	•	•		•	•		•	•
12-13 (%)	-				35						87							0		
14-15 (%)	-				32															
16-19 (%)	-		100		7															
Schooling status of out-of-school girls																				
Never enrolled	10	✓ ¹	✓ ¹		✓ ¹	✓ ¹	✓ ¹	✓			✓ ¹			✓		✓		✓ ¹		
Dropped out	13							✓					✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
At risk of drop. ²	3	✓			✓							✓								
Not specified	2								✓								✓			
Not targeted ³	3			✓						✓				✓						

Source: Project Baseline Reports.

Notes:

*• indicates that the information could not be found in the Project Baseline Report.

1- Out-of-school girls who dropped out or never enrolled are considered as a homogenous group.

2- Out-of-school girl category involves girls at risk of dropping out or girls with low attendance (almost out-of-school).

3- Three projects were not targeting out-of-school girls as part of their definition of marginalisation. However these projects may have collected data on this particular sub-group of girls.

4- Raising Voices (Uganda) did not find a sufficiently large group of out-of-school girls to disaggregate by age.

2.4 Identifying barriers to girls' education

In this report we present the projects' assumptions about barriers and assess the extent to which these assumptions are being supported by projects' baseline evidence.

To build their understanding of marginalisation, and develop their interventions, projects identified specific barriers that were assumed to drive educational marginalisation in the target areas. While some of these barriers are structural and beyond the projects' direct control (such as the occurrence of droughts or political violence), others may be tackled through targeted interventions and support (such as negative attitudes towards girls' education or a lack of adequate sanitation facilities in schools).

It is important to note that this report presents evidence collected by projects of the most reported barriers *perceived* to be preventing girls from attending school and learning. As such, barriers may not be *actual* barriers (e.g. fear that violence may occur on the way to school *versus* reports of violence occurring on the way to school) but the influence of these barriers, either actual or perceived, is assumed here to similarly prevent girls from attending school and learning. Where information is provided by projects, we distinguish between the two types of barriers and discuss the potential effects on girls' access to education.

2.4.1 Data sources

The evidence gathered by projects about barriers, both assumed at project design stage and found during baseline research, is documented in three different forms:

Barriers assumed prior to baseline:

- **Project Proposals:** In their Project Proposals, projects were required to specify the expected barriers to girls' attendance and learning in the target areas. Assumptions were mostly based on projects' understanding of the context in which they operate and/or have been operating in the past, and on a review of country-specific literature.
- **Project M&E Frameworks:** Projects refined their assumptions relating to barriers during the Inception Phase as they developed their Theories of Change and questioned the assumptions underpinning their intervention logic.

Barriers evidenced during baseline:

- **Project Baseline Reports:** Project Baseline Reports present evidence, key findings, and lessons learned relating to barriers based on the data analysis carried out by projects and their affiliated researchers.



*As pointed out earlier in this methodology section, IW projects could develop their own qualitative research designs and may have taken different approaches with regards to qualitative sampling or the development of interview guides. This is especially true with respect to the qualitative findings about barriers to girls' education. While quantitative data ([Project Datasets](#)) were shared with the EM along with [Projects Baseline Reports](#), qualitative data was not submitted to the EM. **As a result, the qualitative findings presented in this report are based solely on IW projects' analysis, which limited the EM ability to verify the objectivity or robustness of projects' findings relating to the prevalence of barriers in the researched areas.***

2.4.2 Methodology for assessing the most and least prevalent barriers

We follow a three-staged approach to assessing the most and least prevalent barriers. These three stages are described in [Table 2.10](#).

1. Following the data extraction, barriers were categorised across the key thematic areas that emerged from the baseline reporting of IW projects.
2. The metrics used to assess the prevalence of barriers are derived from the ways in which projects present their findings, e.g. whether the reported barriers are deemed as prevalent or not prevalent by the projects. Across the IW and for each of the identified barriers, we discuss the number of projects who have reported the existence of the specified barrier in their target areas. The ranking of reported barriers (from most reported to least reported) gives the relative prevalence of some barriers compared to other barriers across IW projects.

3. Finally, the third stage involves a project-by-project discussion of findings in order to assess whether the evidence was found, not found or not reported by projects for the assumed barriers identified by projects at the design stage.

For each IW project, we present a table listing the barriers that the project assumed at the design stage. The table shows whether the evidence presented in the Project Baseline Report supported or challenged these expectations.

In their baseline reports, projects had varied interpretations about the nature of educational barriers, and some projects did not distinguish between barriers to being in school, and barriers to learning. It is also important to note that the data collected by projects is focused on their target groups rather than the general population or communities in which their target groups live. This means that unless projects have undertaken a population study as part of their baseline research, those barriers that are most reported may not necessarily be the most prevalent in the communities in which they are working.

Further details of the research conducted by projects are given in the Project Profiles in [Annex A](#).

Table 2.10: Assessing the prevalence of barriers

1. Categorisation of barriers assumed and/or found at baseline	2. Metrics used to assess the prevalence of barriers (meta-level analysis across the IW)	3. Type of evidence in relation to assumed barriers (project-level analysis)
<p>Barriers are broadly categorised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty factors • School-related factors • Female aspirations, motivation and autonomy factors • Attitude towards girls' education factors • Personal and family factors • Violence-related factors • Social exclusion factors 	<p>Identification of barriers: Based on the barriers mentioned in Project Proposals and Project M&E Frameworks.</p> <p>Levels of barriers: Each of the categories cover specific barriers that may lie at the individual level (i.e. when related to the girls' aspirations, health or ability), within the family (i.e. in the case of household economics and decision-making), within the community (i.e. in the case of attitudes or social exclusion), or at the institutional level (e.g. the school).</p> <p>Source of evidence: Barriers may be reported by girls, parents, community leaders, school staff or other key informants.</p> <p>Prevalence of barriers: Based on the number of projects reporting the existence of a barrier in Project Baseline Reports. The ranking of reported barriers (from most reported to least reported) gives the relative prevalence of some barriers compared to other barriers across IW projects.</p>	<p>Barriers found and reported: Assumed barriers were mentioned by a relatively high number of respondents compared to respondents in other IW projects. Barriers found and reported are marked with '✓'.</p> <p>Barriers not found: Assumed barriers were mentioned by a relatively low number of respondents compared to respondents in other IW projects. Barriers not found are marked with '✗'.</p> <p>Barriers not reported: Barriers were assumed but not reported/ discussed/ measured by the project. Missing evidence is marked with '•'.</p> <p>Non applicable: Barriers neither assumed nor reported are marked in Grey.</p>

2.4.3 Discussion of key emerging themes

Key thematic areas emerged from the analysis of barriers to girls' education as reported by projects. As part of the EM's synthesis of findings relating to barriers, the following themes and the extent to which evidenced barriers and educational baseline figures present specific patterns for each theme (based on Project Baseline Reports) are discussed in [Section 4](#) using the definitions below:

- **Poverty:** We define poverty as being multidimensional, that is, not solely related to income or consumption levels. It is also assumed that the linkages between poverty and girls' education differ according to the different understandings of the term 'poverty'. Evidence suggests that it is the material dimension of poverty which, to a large extent, drives the household decision-making process with regards to sending an additional child to school. Consequently, where not otherwise specified, 'Poverty' refers to objective poverty understood as Material Deprivation.

- **Dimensions of Poverty:** Where information is available, the EM captures dimensions of poverty such as poor health or social exclusion and considers these dimensions of poverty as drivers of proximal barriers that sit next to material deprivation. We use and differentiate between the following terms:
 - **Lack of Human Capital:** Lack of knowledge, skills, competencies and other attributes embodied in individuals or groups acquired during their life and used to produce goods, services or ideas;
 - **Lack of Social Capital:** Lack of networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups;
 - **Subjective Poverty:** The perception by the individual as to whether she or he lives in poverty, or has what is necessary for a decent life;
 - **Chronic Poverty:** Chronic poverty is a phenomenon whereby an individual or group is in a state of poverty over extended period of time; and
 - **Cyclical Poverty:** Poverty can be persistent or cyclical (e.g. seasonal droughts).
- **Disability:** Our definition of disability is largely driven by projects' definition of disability. Several projects had a particular focus on disability, and collected data on this issue (refer to [Section 4.2](#)). LCSU (Uganda) defines disability as including mobility, hearing, visual, learning impairments. The project also includes some of the least recognised impairments that affect learning. These include girls with autistic spectrum disorders, attention hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, dyscalculia among others. LCDK (Kenya) defines disability as physical disability, intellectual disability, speech impairment, hearing impairment and visual impairment. The EM discusses disability in relation to its effects on girls' access to schools and learning (negative attitudes in community, inaccessible school environment, lack of assistance at school, inadequate teaching skills, etc.).
- **Early Marriage:** We investigate early marriage from the perspective of girls' household attitudes towards early marriage and perceptions about the frequency of early marriage within the community. We specifically focus on the relationship between attitudes to marriage and competing outcomes such as child employment and engagement with education. Several projects had a particular focus on early marriage, and collected data on this issue (refer to [Section 4.2](#)).
- **Violence:** Violence includes all reports of violence by respondents, within the household, school or community. It does not include wider insecurity (for instance, around elections) or verbal harassment. This thematic area however includes various types of violence that requires separate discussions: corporal punishment, sexual assault, domestic violence, fear of violence, etc. Where information is available in Project Baseline Reports, violence is reported and discussed under the most appropriate sub-category. Several projects collected data on this issue (refer to [Section 4.2](#)).

2.5 Evaluation Manager methodological challenges

Challenges identified by the EM while extracting, analysing and synthesising the data are listed below:

- **Significant gaps and quality issues with the evidence base:** significant gaps and weaknesses in the evidence available arose in relation to some of the key GEC outcomes. Missing and/or unreported figures, contradictory values reported in the Project Baseline Reports and other inconsistencies in Project Datasets (refer to [Section 2.1.2](#) for evidence missing in datasets) were addressed where possible by triangulating the available evidence (e.g. Outcome Spreadsheets).
- **Inability to disaggregate projects' datasets for variables relating to sub-groups:** the EM intended to conduct a comparison by sub-groups, especially between girls from rural and urban areas, from different social groups and by differences in types of poverty in order to assess the differences in educational marginalisation between different groups. The quality of the data provided in Project Datasets was variable and led the EM to request further information from projects in order to identify the different variables in the datasets. For a significant number of projects, the identification of variables was not possible (refer to [Tables 2.1](#) and [2.2](#)) and the resulting limitations led the EM to present information relating to sub-groups as provided by projects in their baseline reports, i.e. at project-level and not across the IW. It is also important to note that projects have targeted sub-groups and collected information at sub-group level for sub-groups which are relatively small in size, rendering the generalisation of findings difficult for sub-groups such as

young expecting mothers or street children for instance (refer to [Section 5.1.2](#) for a discussion on target sub-groups).

- **Contradictions arising from a diversity of data sources:** the diversity of data sources and different types of data reported by projects (quantitative versus qualitative data, population of reference, reporting style, etc.) led to difficulties in synthesising the findings that emerged into a coherent narrative. However the structured and systematic approach used for the analysis, triangulation and synthesis of the data helped resolve contradictions arising from the analysis by providing a transparent means of explaining why they occurred.
- **Synthesis challenges:** a carefully structured approach to the synthesis of project findings was adopted in order to mitigate against the effects of different types of bias. Challenges identified include:
 - potential **sources of heterogeneity**, including project research methodologies, the narrative versus quantitative nature of the synthesis, degrees of data validity, cultural sensitivities and contextual factors; and
 - the identification of **adverse synthesis effects** – effects that were identified as very likely to have been lost during the synthesis process; for example, if two equally valid sources of data (e.g. Project Baseline Report findings and Outcome Spreadsheets) entailed different findings, there was a tendency to conclude that this was an inconclusive-finding leading to the EM investigating a third source instead such as a project dataset.

It is not anticipated that the above limitations to the approach will significantly compromise the quality of the synthesis of the baseline findings, or its capacity to add significant value to DFID's understanding of how and to what extent the GEC IW projects successfully analysed available sources of data and reported their baseline research findings.

3 Educational Outcomes at Baseline

The GEC takes as its foundation the general assumption that every girl and every boy should have “access to a good quality education but [that] there is a specific need for an additional focus on girls”¹³. This is because girls are assumed to face gender specific obstacles to enrolling, remaining in school and learning. On this basis, girls who are targeted by the GEC would be expected to display relatively poor learning outcomes at baseline, both in terms of attendance and learning.

In the following section we provide an assessment of the extent to which IW projects’ target girls are marginalised from education in relation to enrolment, retention, attendance and learning.



*In order to give a comprehensive account of educational outcomes at baseline, the EM chose to report IW projects’ baseline findings on enrolment and retention, where found in the Project Baseline Reports or as part of the Reanalysis of Project Datasets. **The GEC requirements did not specify that IW projects should provide enrolment and retention data**, unless projects had a specific focus on interventions aiming at specifically improving enrolment and/or retention. As a consequence, the evidence base for these two outcomes found across the IW and presented in this section is more limited than for attendance and learning.*

Key findings

Projects’ findings suggest that the IW average for baseline enrolment and attendance rates are relatively high, with an average enrolment rate of 89% for 9-11 year old girls (across eight out of 19 projects reporting on enrolment) and an average attendance rate of 89% for both 9-11 and 14-15 age groups (across seven out of 19 IW projects reporting on attendance). The EM found lower levels of enrolment and retention among secondary school-aged girls compared to primary school-aged girls, although this finding does not apply to attendance rates. This suggests that secondary school-aged girls attend school just as much as primary school-aged girls, once they are enrolled. With regards to learning outcomes we see a more consistent picture of girls demonstrating relatively low levels of literacy and numeracy across almost all IW projects. The overall low levels of literacy and numeracy of secondary school-aged girls indicate that learning gains are relatively small over the course of their schooling and that learning gaps are likely to increase with time, especially in the case of literacy.

Presentation of the evidence base

The findings presented are based on a review of Project Baseline Reports and analysis of project data. Findings are also triangulated using secondary data (refer to [Section 2.2.1](#)). Age groups are based on six age groups (below 6, 6-8, 9-11, 12-13, 14-15 and 16-19). As shown in [Table 2.8](#) in [Section 2.3.3](#), the age group 9-11 is considered to be representative of the age at which most girls are theoretically enrolled in primary school. The age group 14-15 is considered to be representative of the age at which most girls are theoretically enrolled in secondary school.

We present and discuss project findings related to both 9-11 and 14-15 age groups. We comment on the consistency between the different sources of data (Project Baseline Reports, Reanalysis of Project Datasets and Outcome Spreadsheets) and differences in educational outcomes between different age groups. Outcome tables disaggregated by all age groups and by grades can be found in [Annex C](#).

Where projects reported outcome indicators for unspecified age groups, we chose to discard these data from the main reporting tables of this section in order to ensure consistency with projects for which age-disaggregated data was available. For a limited number of projects, the Reanalysis of Project Datasets enabled the EM to compile outcome figures by different age groups, in which case the figures reported in Project Baseline Reports could be matched against different age groups. For projects where the reanalysis of baseline outcomes could not be

¹³ DFID (2012): DFID 5685: Evaluation Manager for the Girls’ Education Challenge (GEC).

disaggregated by age due to the limited information available in project data sets, **we present project findings related to unspecified age groups** in a separate table.

Consistency across sources

We comment on the consistency between the different sources of data (Project Baseline Reports, Reanalysis of Project Datasets and Outcome Spreadsheets). We have encountered discrepancies between the different streams of evidence because IW projects may have used different statistical formula to compile educational outcomes figures. In particular, outcomes were usually reported by grades in project-reported sources (Project Baseline Reports and Outcome Spreadsheets). We therefore used official age-in-grade distributions to compile summary outcomes by age categories.

Regarding discrepancies between Project Baseline Reports and Outcome Spreadsheets, these may be explained by changes occurring between the time baseline reports were prepared by IW projects and the submission of the final target figures to the Fund Manager in the Outcome Spreadsheets. [Table 3.1](#) provides a key for the legend used to present educational outcomes at baseline in this section.



*It is important to note that in Project Baseline Reports and Outcome Spreadsheets, the breakdown of educational outcomes by age or grade reflects country-specific grade structures. As a result, **the EM harmonised project data using country-level age distribution by grade in order to compile comparable measures across the IW.** Using international sources of data ([Table 2.8](#)) we have gathered information by country relating to the official school starting age, the length of school phases and the age distribution by grade.*

*While this information allows the EM to address challenges relating to projects reporting information for grades only and not for different age groups, it also implies that **discrepancies between Project Baseline Reports and Outcome Spreadsheets may exist as a result of the EM analysis of the different sources of data – as we had to use official rather than actual age-grade distributions.** In practice, girls are likely to fall behind their expected grades, implying that project-reported outcomes may actually relate to older girls than the age category under which they appear.*

Table 3.1: Presentation of educational outcomes at baseline – Key

Type of evidence	Key
Evidence reported/ found for unspecified age groups: Evidence reported in Project Baseline Reports and/or reanalysed from Project Datasets that could not be attributed to a specific age group is marked with '⊙'. We present project findings related to unspecified age groups in a separate table.	⊙
Not reported/ found during reanalysis: Evidence not reported in Project Baseline Reports / not found in Project Datasets is marked in Grey .	
Consistency across sources	Key
Consistency: '✓' indicates a less than 10% difference between the different sources presented.	✓
Inconsistency: '✦' indicates a more than 10% difference between the different sources presented.	✦
Not applicable: '•' indicates that only one source is presented.	•

Description of available data

The availability of data varies considerably by project as well as by indicator. Of the 19 IW projects, the number of projects providing at least one source of information for the following indicators for the 9-11 year old age group is as follows:

- Numeracy test scores: **17 projects**
- Literacy test scores: **16 projects**
- Attendance: **12 projects**

- Enrolment¹⁴: 8 projects
- Retention¹⁵: 8 projects

In terms of the availability of data for 9-11 year olds by projects, we have at least one source of data on the above indicators from the following projects:

- All five indicators: 4 projects (Viva (Uganda), ICL (Uganda), HPA (Rwanda), TfAC (Malawi))
- Four indicators: 4 projects (LCSU (Uganda), Red (South Sudan), BRAC (Tanzania), GEMS (Ghana))
- Three indicators: 6 projects (Opportunity (Uganda), Raising Voices (Uganda), VSO (Mozambique), Camfed (Zambia), MercyCorps (Nepal), ChildFund (Afghanistan))
- Two indicators: 2 projects (Eco-Fuel (Uganda), LCDK (Kenya))
- One indicator: 2 projects (Link (Ethiopia), VSO (Nepal))
- None: 1 project (PEAS (Uganda), which focuses on secondary school girls only)

Overall, there is less data available from the projects for the 14-15 year old age group than the 9-11 year old age group¹⁶, which may be explained by the fact more IW projects target girls at primary school level (refer to Section 5). This implies that a comparison between primary and secondary school phases is not systematically possible across the IW, and where indicated, findings should be interpreted with caution.

3.1 To what extent are girls attending school?

This sub-section presents baseline evidence related to enrolment, attendance and retention. These indicators (described in Section 2.3) are used to provide an assessment of the extent to which girls are marginalised in terms of access to education. Detailed outcome tables by age and grade can be found in Annex C.

The situation regarding educational marginalisation indicates that enrolment and attendance are relatively high for both 9-11 and 14-15 year olds.

While the assumptions with regards to low levels of enrolment and retention for secondary school-aged girls compared to primary school-aged girls are broadly supported by the evidence, the picture is more nuanced for attendance, as secondary school-aged girls attend school just as much as primary school aged-ones, once they are enrolled.

Across the IW, baseline evidence shows that while enrolment is higher in some project areas it is not universal and for others there are still many more girls who are not enrolled. Not all of those girls enrolled are attending school and even fewer girls are staying in schools.

3.1.1 Enrolment

The enrolment rate captures the percentage of girls in the target communities who are enrolled in school. To assess enrolment, we draw on the review of Project Baseline Reports and the Reanalysis of Project Datasets.

Projects were not systematically required to report on enrolment at baseline but some of them reported aggregated data for intervention and control areas in their Outcome Spreadsheets. We report this data in Annex C, along with data from Project Baseline Reports and Project Datasets disaggregated by age groups and grades.

Enrolment – 9-11 year olds

As shown in Figure 3.2 and Table 3.3, the following are our key findings on the enrolment of 9-11 year olds across the IW:

¹⁴ The GEC requirements did not specify that IW projects should provide such data (enrolment and retention), unless projects had a specific focus on interventions aiming at improving enrolment and/or retention. It follows that for these two outcomes, the evidence base found across the IW and presented in this section is more limited than for attendance and learning.

¹⁵ Same comment as above.

¹⁶ PEAS (Uganda) is the exception, as the project focuses on secondary school girls only.

- **Project Baseline Reports:** Eight projects presented aggregate data on enrolment, while only one project (ChildFund (Afghanistan)) reported disaggregated rates for girls aged between 9 and 11. ChildFund (Afghanistan) reported a rate of 66%, which is below the average rate found by the Reanalysis across the IW.
- **Reanalysis:** We were able to reanalyse 12 Project Datasets with regards to the enrolment rate of 9-11 year olds. Out of these 12 projects, data could be disaggregated by age group for eight projects. We found an average enrolment rate of 89% across these eight projects. At the project-level, enrolment ranged from 68% in the LCSU (Uganda) project area, to 99% in the HPA (Rwanda) project area.
- **Missing data:** Four out of 19 projects did not report comparable data and did not provide data sets that the EM could investigate for the reanalysis of 9-11 year old girls.
- **Consistency:** For the only project (ChildFund (Afghanistan)), for which we have enrolment rate data from both the Project Baseline Report and our reanalysis of the project’s dataset, there is a low level of consistency between the data for 9-11 year olds. The reanalysed enrolment rate is 13% higher than the rate reported.

For seven of the eight projects for which data is available the enrolment rate for 9-11 year olds is over 75%, and in four of these projects the enrolment rate is over 95%. This suggests that enrolment is relatively high for 9-11 year olds for half of the IW projects that reported baseline enrolment rates.

The four projects with enrolment rates of over 95% include HPA (Rwanda) 99%, ICL (Kenya) 98%, BRAC (Tanzania) 98% and GEMS (Ghana) 97%. Enrolment rates fall below 75% for only one project (LCSU (Uganda) 68%).

Figure 3.2: Enrolment rates across IW (9 to 11 year old)

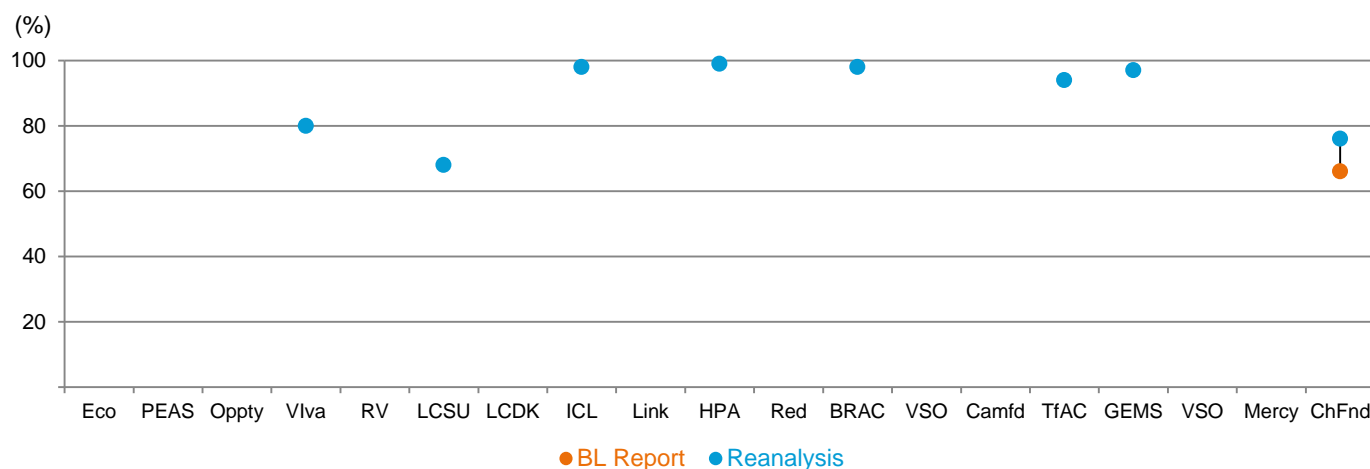


Table 3.3: Enrolment rates for 9-11 and consistency by source

Enrolment rates (%)	Average across IW projects	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda						Kenya		Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal		Afgh
		East Africa										Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia			
● BL Report	66	⊙				⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙			⊙	⊙	⊙						66
● Reanalysis	89	⊙			80	⊙	68		98		99	⊙	98			94	97		⊙	76
Consistency	-				•		•		•		•		•			•	•			✦

Notes: Data is presented across age categories but most of time was collected by grades. Equivalence was compiled using Table 2.8 in Section 2.3.3. Evidence reported in Project Baseline Reports and/or reanalysed from Project Datasets that could not be attributed to a specific age group is marked with '⊙'. We present project findings related to unspecified age groups in a separate table.

Enrolment – 14-15 year olds

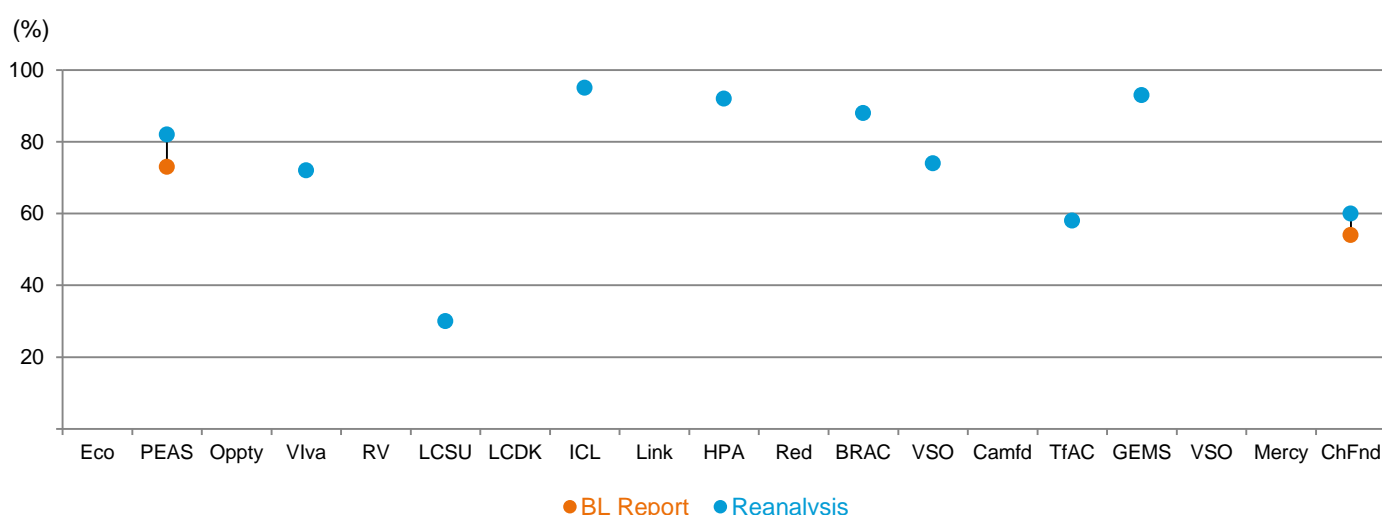
As shown in Figure 3.4 and Table 3.5, the following are our key findings on the enrolment of 14-15 year olds across the IW:

- **Project Baseline Reports:** 10 projects presented data on enrolment, while two projects (ChildFund (Afghanistan) and PEAS (Uganda)) reported disaggregated rates for girls aged between 9 and 11. The average enrolment rate presented in the two reports is 63%. The lowest enrolment rate was reported by ChildFund (Afghanistan) at 54%.
- **Reanalysis:** Based on the reanalysis of 14 Project Datasets, we could calculate enrolment rates disaggregated by age groups for 10 of the 14 projects. We found an average enrolment rate of 74% among girls aged 14-15. At the project-level, enrolment ranged from 30% in the LCSU (Uganda) project area, to 95% in ICL (Kenya) project area.
- **Missing data:** Four out of 19 projects did not report comparable data and did not provide datasets that the EM could investigate for the reanalysis of 14-15 year old girls.
- **Consistency:** The overall pattern of consistency between the 14-15 year old Project Baseline Report enrolment rates and our reanalysed rates is broadly the same as the 9-11 year olds data set. As with the 9-11 year old data, the disparity between the Project Baseline Report and our reanalysed enrolment rate for ChildFund (Afghanistan) is greater than 10%. Additionally, there is also a difference of 11% between the Project Baseline Report and our reanalysed enrolment rate for PEAS (Uganda).

The findings show a decline in enrolment rates between 9-11 and 14-15 year old girls. It is important to note that there is a wide disparity in the change in enrolment rates between the two age groups. While the enrolment rates decline between 9-11 and 14-15, the magnitude of the decrease varies from 10% or less for five IW projects (HPA (Rwanda), Viva (Uganda), ICL (Kenya), BRAC (Tanzania) and GEMS (Ghana)) to much larger declines for: ChildFund (Afghanistan) with a decline in enrolment rate of 22%; TfAC (Malawi) with a decline of 38%; and LCSU (Uganda) a decline of 56%.

The UNESCO 2011 data suggests that the declines reported by these three projects are consistent with the declines in enrolment rates at the national levels. For Afghanistan (ChildFund), the enrolment rate for girls in primary school in 2011 was 98% which falls to just 34% for secondary school. Similarly, for Malawi (TfAC), the rate declines from 97% of all children enrolled in primary school to 33% of girls at secondary school¹⁷. For Uganda, nationally, the enrolment rate for girls falls from 95% of primary school aged girls to just 26% of secondary aged girls.

Figure 3.4: Enrolment rates across IW (14 to 15 year old)



¹⁷ While we do not have the primary enrolment rate for Malawi disaggregated by gender, Malawi has a Gender Parity Index of 0.92 which suggests that the results for boys and girls are not too dissimilar.

Table 3.5: Enrolment rates for 14-15 and consistency by source

Enrolment rates (%)	Average across IW projects	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda						Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh
		East Africa												Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia	
● BL Report	63	⊖	73			⊖	⊖	⊖	⊖			⊖	⊖	⊖						54
● Reanalysis	74	⊖	82		72	⊖	30		95		92	⊖	88	74		58	93		⊖	60
Consistency	-		+		•		•		•		•		•	•		•	•			+

Notes: Data is presented across age categories but most of the time was collected by grades. Equivalence was compiled using Table 2.8 in Section 2.3.3. Evidence reported in Project Baseline Reports and/or reanalysed from Project Data Sets that could not be attributed to a specific age group is marked with '⊖'. We present project findings related to unspecified age groups in a separate table.

Enrolment – unspecified age groups

For projects which did not report enrolment rates disaggregated by age in their baseline reports, and where the reanalysis of baseline outcomes could not be disaggregated by age due to the limited information available in project data sets, **we present project findings related to unspecified age groups** in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6: Enrolment rates for unspecified age groups and consistency by source

Enrolment rates (%)	Average across IW projects	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda						Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh
		East Africa												Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia	
● BL Report	69	34				97	49	55	93			60	90	76						
● Reanalysis	72	35				97						61							93	
Consistency	-	✓				✓	•	•	•			✓	•	•					•	

Summary: Are 9-11 and 14-15 year old girls marginalised in terms of enrolment?

We found that enrolment rates for 9-11 year olds is over 75% for seven out of eight projects for which data is available and over 95% for four out of these eight projects. This suggests that enrolment is, on average, relatively high for primary-school age girls across the projects reporting data on enrolment. By contrast, the findings for secondary-school age girls, triangulated with UNESCO enrolment data, support the GEC-relevant assumption that girls of secondary-school age have a higher risk of not being enrolled than girls of primary school age.

3.1.2 Retention

Projects were not required to systematically report on retention at baseline and few projects (five projects) included retention rates in their baseline reports. Where possible, we draw on information from the projects' datasets to calculate retention rates. Since longitudinal data about the girls' educational trajectories is not yet available, we calculated year-on-year retention rates for girls of different ages. This simple year-on-year retention rate can also be understood as the inverse of the annual drop-out rate.

Retention – 9-11 year olds

Figure 3.7: Retention rates across IW (9 to 11 year old)

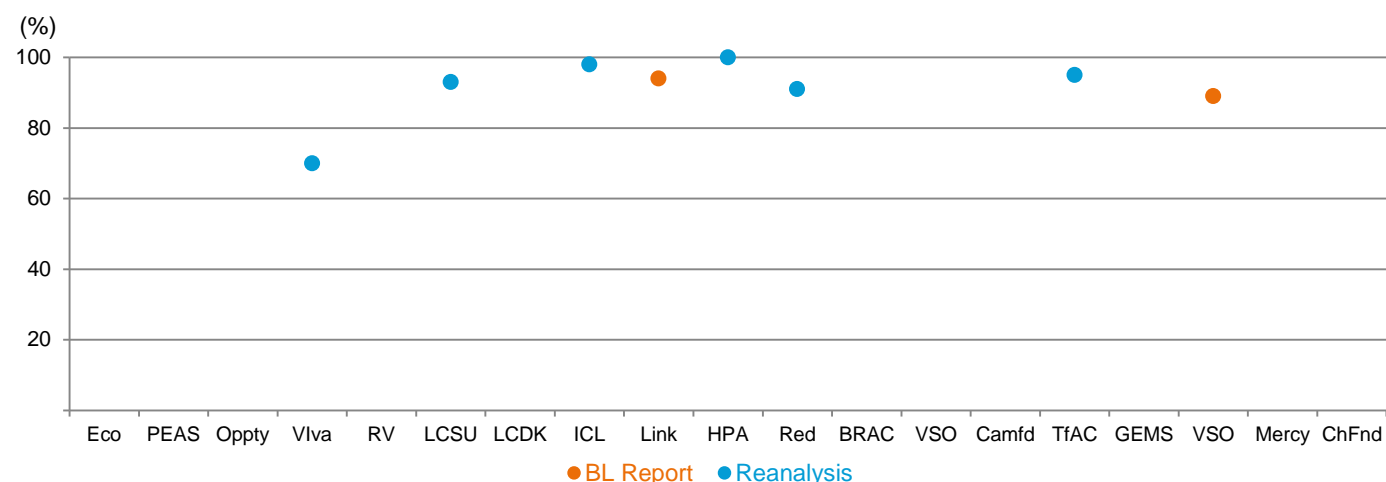


Table 3.8: Retention rates for 9-11 and consistency by source

Retention rates (%)	Average across IW projects	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda						Kenya		Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal		Afgh
		East Africa										Southern Africa			W.A	Asia				
● BL Report	93			⊙			⊙			94								91	⊙	
● Reanalysis	91	⊙			70		93		98		100	91				95				
Consistency	-				•		•		•	•	•	•				•		•		

Notes: Data is presented across age categories but most of time was collected by grades. Equivalence was compiled using Table 2.8 in Section 2.3.3. Evidence reported in Project Baseline Reports and/or reanalysed from Project Datasets that could not be attributed to a specific age group is marked with '⊙'. We present project findings related to unspecified age groups in a separate table.

As shown in Figure 3.7 and Table 3.8, the following are our key findings on the year-on-year retention of 9-11 year olds across the IW:

- **Project Baseline Reports:** Two Project Baseline Reports presented an age-specific year-on-year retention rate for 9-11 year olds i.e. Link (Ethiopia) with 94% and VSO (Nepal) with 89%, while three Project Baseline Reports stated an aggregate year-on-year retention rate for girls of all ages.
- **Reanalysis:** We were able to reanalyse year-on-year retention rates for 9-11 year olds using Project Datasets from nine projects. We found an average year-on-year retention rate of 91% across the six projects for which the data could be disaggregated by age groups.
- **Missing data:** Six out of 19 projects did not report comparable data and did not provide datasets that the EM could investigate for the reanalysis of 9-11 year old girls.
- **Consistency:** There is no project for which we have both the project baseline data and our reanalysed retention rates.

Retention rates for seven of the eight projects for which data are available are over 90%, suggesting a markedly high retention for primary school-aged girls. This includes three projects reporting retention rates of 95% and above: HPA (Rwanda) at 100%, ICL (Kenya) at 98% and TfAC (Malawi) at 95%. Viva (Uganda) reported a retention rate of 70%.

Retention rates nationally in Uganda are low. According to UNESCO in 2010 (Table 3.11), only 26% of girls who enrol in primary school complete primary school education.

Retention – 14-15 year olds

Figure 3.9: Retention rates across IW (14 to 15 year old)

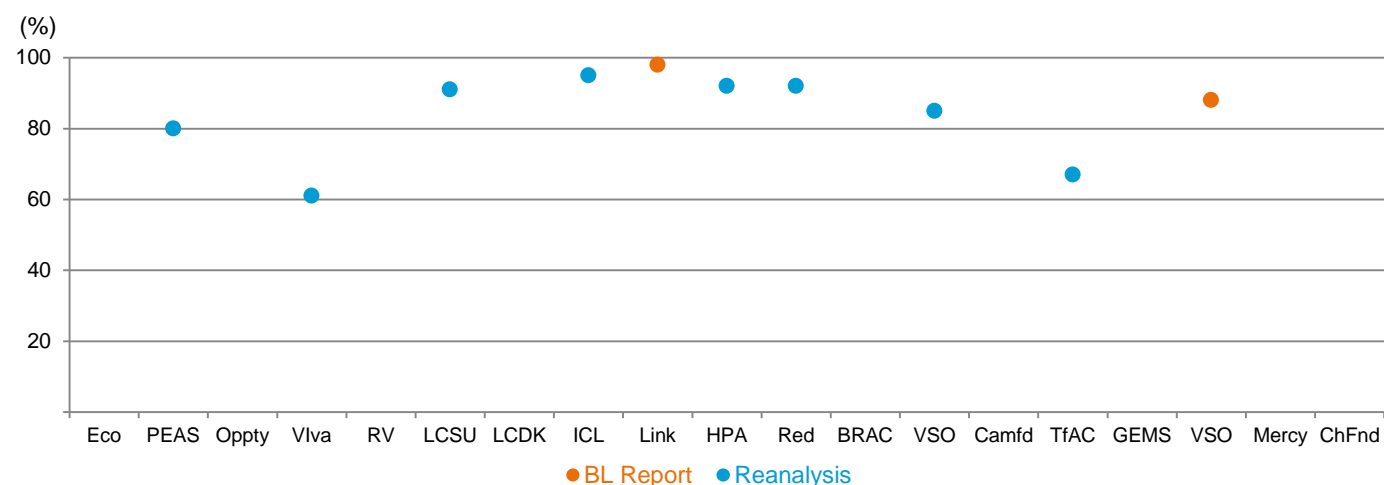


Table 3.10: Retention rates for 14-15 and consistency by source

Retention rates (%)	Average across IW projects	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh	
		East Africa										Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia			
● BL Report	93			⊙			⊙			98								88	⊙	
● Reanalysis	83	⊙	80		61		91		95		92	92		85		67				
Consistency	-		•		•		•		•	•	•	•		•		•		•		

Notes: Data is presented across age categories but most of time was collected by grades. Equivalence was compiled using Table 2.8 in Section 2.3.3. Evidence reported in Project Baseline Reports and/or reanalysed from Project Datasets that could not be attributed to a specific age group is marked with '⊙'. We present project findings related to unspecified age groups in a separate table.

As shown in Figure 3.9 and Table 3.10, the following are our key findings on the year-on-year retention of 14-15 year olds across the IW:

- **Project Baseline Reports:** The average year-on-year retention among the 14-15 year olds in Project Baseline Reports is 93%, which is the same as the average found for 9-11 year olds.
- **Reanalysis:** We were able to reanalyse year-on-year retention rates for 14-15 year olds using Project Datasets from the same nine projects we used for 9-11 year olds. For the eight projects for which the data could be disaggregated by age, we found an average year-on-year retention rate of 83%, which is relatively low compared to the average year-on-year retention rate of 91% for 9-11 year olds.
- **Missing data:** Six out of 19 projects did not report comparable data and did not provide data sets that the EM could investigate for the reanalysis of 14-15 year old girls.
- **Consistency:** There is no project for which we have both the project baseline data and our reanalysed retention rates.

The data indicates that the rate of retention falls as the age of the girls enrolled in school increases, with overall retention rates among girls aged 14-15 being lower than that of the 9-11 year old group.

There is a wide variation in the differences between the two retention rates across the projects. For four of the projects there is a decrease in the retention rates of 10% or less and in two of the projects the decreases in the enrolment rates are higher than 10%. These projects are Viva (Uganda) which reports a 13% decrease in retention rates between the two age groups and TfAC (Malawi) which reports a 29% decrease in retention rates. For two projects, the retention rate increases by 5% for Link (Ethiopia) and by 1% for Red (South Sudan) between the ages of 9-11 and 14-15. For the remaining five projects, Project Baseline Reports and Project Datasets did not allow the EM to use retention rates disaggregated by age groups (9-11 and/ or 14-15).

The large decrease in the retention rate for TfAC (Malawi) appears to be inconsistent with comparative national data (Table 3.11). Compared to the other countries for which we have data on retention rates, Malawi has a relatively high level of retention. Of the 10 countries for which we have retention rates disaggregated by age, Malawi has the third highest school life expectancy for girls¹⁸.

Table 3.11: School life expectancy for girls in 2011, by country¹⁹

School life expectancy in 2011 (years)	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LC DK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
	7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
	Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal		Afgh
	East Africa											Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia		
UNESCO data	10.8					10.7			8.4	11.2		9.1	9.1		10.9	11.0	12.5		6.1

Retention – unspecified age groups

For projects which did not report retention rates disaggregated by age in their baseline reports, and where the reanalysis of baseline outcomes could not be disaggregated by age due to the limited information available in Project Datasets, **we present project findings related to unspecified age groups** in Table 3.12.

Table 3.12: Retention rates for unspecified age groups and consistency by source

Retention rates (%)	Average across IW projects	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LC DK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal		Afgh
		East Africa											Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia		
● BL Report	91			89			91												94	
● Reanalysis	69	37																		
Consistency	-	•		•			•												•	

Summary: Are 9-11 and 14-15 year old girls marginalised in terms of retention?

The reanalysis of year-on-year retention using project data indicates that on average, for nine out of 19 IW projects reporting retention data, a relatively small proportion of girls aged 9-11 drop out of primary school from one year to another. On average for these nine projects, 91% of girls remain enrolled. Findings indicate that the rate of retention falls as the age of the girls enrolled in school increases. The average year-on-year retention is 83% among the 14-15 year olds, suggesting that secondary school-aged girls are less likely to continue in the following year compared to primary school-aged girls. This supports the GEC assumption that retaining girls in school becomes more challenging as the girls get older.

3.1.3 Attendance

Attendance rates establish the time that girls spend in school when they are already enrolled. For the assessment of this outcome we draw on three different streams of evidence, namely the Project Baseline Reports, the Outcome Spreadsheets and the Reanalysis of Project Datasets.

Attendance – 9-11 year olds

As shown in Figure 3.13 and Table 3.14, the following are our key findings on the attendance of 9-11 year olds across the IW:

- **Project Baseline Reports:** Seven Project Baseline Reports presented age-specific attendance rates for 9-11 year olds. For these seven projects, the average attendance rate presented for 9-11 year olds is 74%.

¹⁸ Average number of years a girl enrolled in school can be expected to remain in school.

¹⁹ UNESCO, *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2013/14*

The lowest attendance rate was reported by HPA (Rwanda) at 50%, while the highest attendance rate was reported by ICL (Kenya) at 89%.

- **Outcome Spreadsheets:** Nine projects submitted figures on the attendance of 9-11 year olds in their Outcome Spreadsheets. The average attendance rate reported was 81%.
- **Reanalysis:** Based on the reanalysis of available Project Datasets (for six projects) we found an average attendance rate of 89% among the 9-11 year olds. At the project level, attendance ranged from 83% in TfAC’s (Malawi) project areas to 97% in BRAC’s (Tanzania) project areas.
- **Missing data:** Five out of 19 projects did not report comparable data and did not provide datasets that the EM could investigate for the reanalysis of 9-11 year old girls.
- **Consistency:** For the 9-11 year old age groups we have more than one source of attendance data for eight projects. For six of these eight projects, all available sources are consistent with one another. For TfAC (Malawi), we have all three potential sources of attendance rates. There is a high level of consistency between the attendance rates presented in the Project Baseline Report and the Outcome Spreadsheets, while our reanalysed rates are significantly different. In the case of TfAC (Malawi), the reanalysis used a proxy variable (“How often does [GIRL] attend school when it is open?”), which is based on the research instrument administered by the project during the baseline research - this may limit the comparability with other sources of evidence and comparability across IW projects.

There is a wide range in levels of attendance between the projects, from almost full attendance to just 50% of attendance.

Of the 12 projects for which we have attendance rates, nine projects reported an attendance rate of 80% or higher. This includes two projects with reported attendance rates close to, or over 95% (94% for Opportunity (Uganda) and 97% for BRAC (Tanzania)), suggesting that **attendance rates are relatively high for more than two-thirds of the 12 projects which reported on attendance for 9-11 year old girls.**

Another two projects reported attendance rates between 60% and 80% (Raising Voices (Uganda) 60% and TfAC (Malawi) 66%) while HPA (Rwanda) reported a considerably lower attendance rate of 50%. This may be explained by the measurement used for attendance in HPA (Rwanda) project areas (based on the percentage of girls that were never absent in the term that preceded the survey).

Figure 3.13: Attendance rates across IW (9 to 11 year old girls)

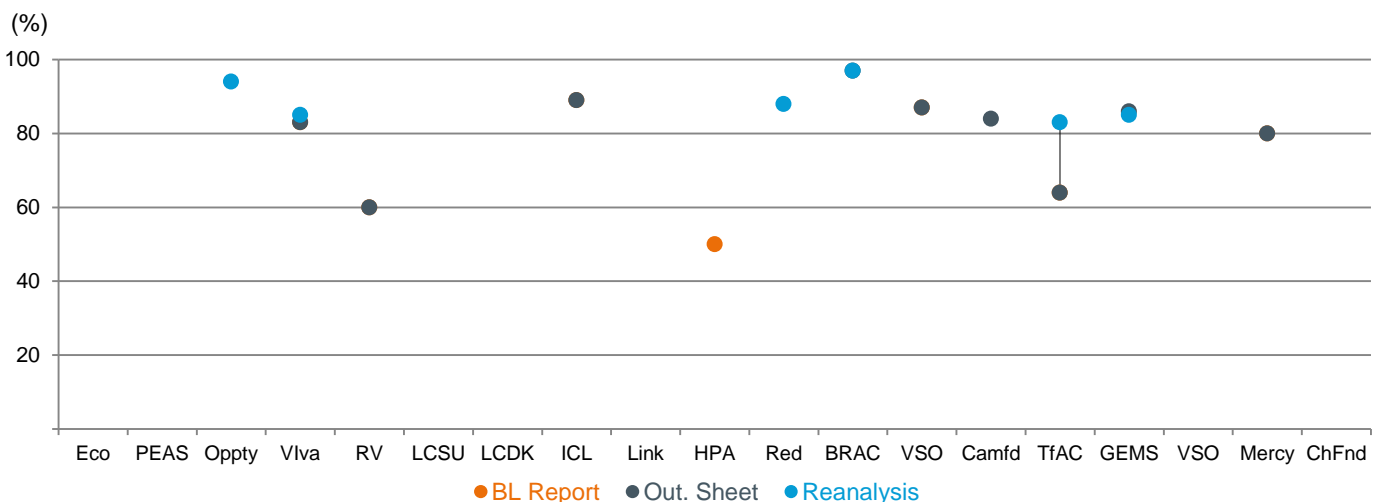


Table 3.14: Attendance rates for 9-11 and consistency by source

Attendance rates (%)	Average across IW projects	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd	
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100	
		Uganda						Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal		Afgh
		East Africa												Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia		
● BL Report	74				83	60			89		50			87		66			80		
● Out. Sheet	81				83	60			89				97	87	84	66	85		80		
● Reanalysis	89			94	85							88	97			83	85				
Consistency	-			•	✓	✓			✓		•	•	✓	✓	•	✦	✓		✓		

Notes: Data is presented across age categories but most of time was collected by grades. Equivalence was compiled using Table 2.8 in Section 2.3.3. Evidence reported in Project Baseline Reports and/or reanalysed from Project Datasets that could not be attributed to a specific age group is marked with '⊙'. We present project findings related to unspecified age groups in a separate table.

Attendance – 14-15 year olds

As shown Figure 3.15 and Table 3.16, the following are our key findings on the attendance of 14-15 year olds across the IW:

- **Project Baseline Reports:** Two projects presented age-specific attendance rates for 14-15 year olds in their baseline reports. The average attendance rate presented is 70%.
- **Outcome Spreadsheets:** Two projects, Viva (Uganda) with an attendance rate of 87% and PEAS (Uganda) with an attendance rate of 82%, submitted figures on the attendance of 14-15 year olds in their Outcome Spreadsheet.
- **Reanalysis:** Based on the reanalysis of available project data we found an average attendance rate of 89% among 14-15 year olds. At the project level, attendance ranged from 84% in Viva’s (Uganda) and TfAC’s (Malawi) project areas to 97% in BRAC’s (Tanzania) project area.
- **Missing data:** Nine out of 19 projects did not report comparable data and did not provide datasets that the EM could investigate for the reanalysis of 14-15 year old girls.
- **Consistency:** In both project areas for which we have difference sources of evidence (Viva (Uganda) and PEAS (Uganda)), the available streams of evidence are consistent.

Figure 3.15: Attendance rates across IW (14 to 15 year old)

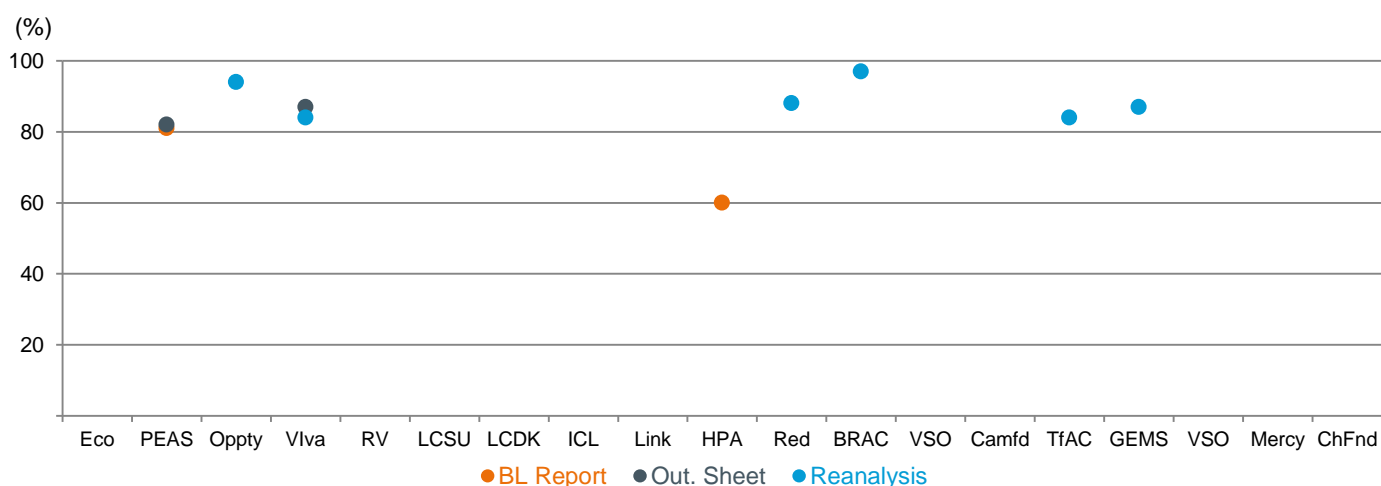


Table 3.16: Attendance rates for 14-15 and consistency by source

Attendance rates (%)	Average across IW projects	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda						Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh
		East Africa												Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia	
● BL Report	70		81								60									
● Out. Sheet	84		82		87															
● Reanalysis	89			94	84							88	97			84	87			
Consistency	-		✓	•	✓						•	•	•			•	•			

Notes: Data is presented across age categories but most of time was collected by grades. Equivalence was compiled using Table 2.8 in Section 2.3.3. Evidence reported in Project Baseline Reports and/or reanalysed from Project Datasets that could not be attributed to a specific age group is marked with '⊙'. We present project findings related to unspecified age groups in a separate table.

For seven of the projects reporting on attendance, we are able to use the same source of data to compare the attendance rates of 14-15 year old girls with 9-11 year old girls. The results indicate that **the levels of attendance within seven out of 19 IW projects are broadly similar between the two age groups**. For six of the seven projects, levels of attendance remain relatively unchanged between the 9-11 and 14-15 year old age groups. The exception is HPA (Rwanda) for which the level of attendance is notably higher for the older girls, increasing by 20% from 50% for 9-11 year olds to 60% for 14-15 year olds. It is worth noting that the trend is inverted in HPA (Rwanda) control areas, with 57% of primary school aged-girls and 52% of secondary school aged-girls never being absent in the term that preceded the survey. This suggests that the measurement of attendance used by HPA (Rwanda) is relatively sensitive to the areas surveyed and may not represent the actual level of attendance over the whole school year.

Summary: Are 9-11 and 14-15 year old girls marginalised in terms of attendance?

It is important to note that limited evidence was reported by IW projects for attendance rates, either in their Project Baseline Reports, Outcome Spreadsheets or in Project Datasets, which may affect the reliability of our findings. We found that attendance rates are, on average and for seven out of 19 IW projects, relatively high for both age groups, which suggests that secondary school-aged girls attend school just as much as primary school aged girls, once they are enrolled. Earlier we presented the analysis of enrolment suggesting that enrolment was lower among 14-15 year olds than among 9-11 year olds. It is interesting to note that this finding does not apply to girls' attendance rates. This contests the assumption that regular attendance of girls in school becomes more challenging as the girls get older. On the contrary, once girls are enrolled in secondary schools, their attendance is similar to the previous school phase.

3.2 What are current learning outcomes?

Learning is the second of the GEC's key outcomes. In this section we discuss baseline levels of learning across the IW and assess the extent to which the GEC's target girls can be considered marginalised with respect to their learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes across the IW present a relatively consistent picture of girls demonstrating markedly low levels of literacy and numeracy. The low levels of literacy and numeracy of secondary school-aged girls indicate that learning levels increase by only a little over the course of their schooling.

As discussed in Section 2.3, IW projects used different test tools to assess girls' literacy and numeracy levels. Projects translated these tests into different languages, adapted them to specific contexts and target groups, and chose different formats to present the test results. As a consequence, the literacy levels measured at the project level are not easily comparable across the IW project target groups.

Benchmarks for literacy (i.e. reading fluency)

In this report, we compare literacy scores measured (in words per minute (wpm)) in the project areas to US benchmarks for oral reading fluency to better understand what these scores tell us about children’s actual literacy ability. International education experts consider oral reading fluency a strong predictor of later literacy. Children who do not acquire basic reading skills at an early age are more likely to repeat grades and eventually drop out of school, while the performance gap between early readers and non-readers increases over time. It is generally assumed that students must be able to read a minimum of 45-60 words per minute in order to understand a simple passage of text. Existing research suggests that this standard can possibly be applied worldwide.

We use specific reading fluency benchmarks published by Abdazi²⁰ for use by the World Bank. Abdazi presents a distribution of oral reading fluency scores achieved by US students and suggests using the score achieved by students at the 50th percentile of the distribution within each school grade as a benchmark. Abdazi further presents the scores achieved by students at the lower end of the distribution, notably at the 18th percentile. Students of Grade 2 at this stage of the distribution scored 45 wpm. This corresponds to the benchmark recommended by USAID for use with students from poor countries. On this basis, we use the EGRA scores achieved by US students at the 18th percentile of the distribution within each grade as benchmarks for students in developing countries.

To date, no comparable benchmarks have been developed for the assessment of EGMA results. There is no established, aggregate EGMA score that readily represents mathematical ability as accurately as oral reading fluency (in wpm) represents literacy across subtasks. In discussion with RTI International we have therefore decided not to present any benchmarks for EGMA scores in this baseline report.

Table 3.17: International benchmarks of oral reading fluency by age

Grade	Age	Expected words per minute
1	6 years	21
2	7 years	45
3	8 years	63
4	9 years	85
5	10 years	90
6	11 years	108
7	12 years	110
8	13 years	110

Fourteen projects used EGRA and EGMA tests and reported results either as words per minute or as the total score divided by 100. Where results were reported as words per minute it is possible to compare them with international benchmarks of oral reading fluency for students (Table 3.17).

Four projects used Uwezo test tools and reported results in the form of levels rather than scores. The standard Uwezo test measures children’s ability to perform literacy and numeracy tasks at a level of difficulty that is typical for Primary Grade 2 assignments. Ability is then reported as the level of tasks that the child can perform comfortably (Table 3.18).

Table 3.18: Uwezo assessment levels for literacy and numeracy

Uwezo levels	Literacy		Numeracy
	English language literacy	Local language	
Level 1	<i>Non-readers/nothing</i> – Inability to recognise letters of the alphabet	<i>Non-readers/nothing</i> – Inability to recognise letters of the local language alphabet	<i>Nothing</i> – Inability to count at least 4 out of 5 numerical numbers from 1 – 9
Level 2	<i>Letter</i> – Ability to recognise letters of the alphabet	<i>Letter</i> – Ability to recognise letters of the local language	1-9 – Ability to count numerical numbers from 1 to 9

²⁰ Abadzi, H. (2011), Reading Fluency Measurements in EFA FTI Partner Countries: Outcomes and Improvement Prospects, GPE Working Paper Series on Learning, No. 1, Education for All Fast Track Initiative Secretariat, World Bank, Washington DC.

Level 3	<i>Word</i> – Ability to read words of Primary 2 level difficulty	<i>Syllable</i> – Ability to recognise syllables of the local language	<i>10-99</i> – Ability to recognise numerical numbers from 10 to 99
Level 4	<i>Sentence</i> – Ability to read a paragraph of Primary 2 level difficulty	<i>Word</i> – Ability to read simple words of the local language	<i>Addition</i> – the ability to solve at least two numerical written addition sums of Primary 2 difficulty
Level 5	<i>Story</i> – Ability to correctly read a story of Primary 2 level difficulty	<i>Sentence</i> – Ability to read a simple paragraph of the local language	<i>Subtraction</i> – Ability to solve at least two numerical written subtraction sums of Primary 2 difficulty
Level 6	<i>Comprehension</i> – Ability to correctly read and understand a story of Primary 2 level difficulty and answer related question	<i>Story</i> – Ability to correctly read a simple ‘story’ text of the local language	<i>Multiplication</i> – Ability to solve at least two numerical written multiplication sums of Primary 2 difficulty
Level 7		<i>Comprehension</i> – Ability to correctly read and understand a simple ‘story’ text of the local language	<i>Division</i> – Ability to solve at least two numerical written division sums of Primary 2 difficulty

3.2.1 Literacy

Literacy – 9-11 year olds

As shown in [Figure 3.19](#), [Figure 3.20](#) and [Table 3.21](#), the following are our key findings on the literacy levels of 9-11 year olds across the IW:

- Project Baseline Reports:** 13 projects presented findings on the literacy scores of 9-11 year olds in their baseline report. Projects using EGRA tests reported an average score of 29 wpm. Scores ranged from 4 wpm in the HPA (Rwanda) project area to 65 wpm in the MercyCorps (Nepal) project area.

Three projects using the Uwezo test tool reported results as literacy levels. These projects reported an average of 2.6. The lowest level reported was 1.1 (LSCU (Uganda)) while the highest level was reported by ICL (Kenya) of 3.9.
- Outcome Spreadsheets:** Data on the literacy levels of 9-11 year olds was available from 16 projects’ Outcome Spreadsheets. Across the projects using EGRA, we found an average literacy level of 27 wpm. At the project level scores ranged from 5 wpm in HPA’s (Rwanda) project area to 67 wpm in the MercyCorps (Nepal) project area.

Three projects using Uwezo reported literacy scores on the 1 – 7 Uwezo scale in their Outcome Spreadsheets for the 9-11 year olds, with an average of 3.3.
- Reanalysis:** We were able to reanalyse the data provided by 12 projects to assess the literacy levels of 9-11 year olds. Wpm scores ranged from 1 wpm in the HPA (Rwanda) project area to 66 wpm in the MercyCorps (Nepal) project area.

Based on the reanalysis of project data, we found Uwezo scores of 4 in the ICL (Kenya) project area and of 3.8 in VSO (Mozambique) project area.
- Missing data:** Three projects did not report comparable data and did not provide datasets that the EM could investigate for the reanalysis of 9-11 year old girls. For one of them (PEAS (Uganda)), this is explained by the fact the project mainly focuses on secondary school-aged girls.
- Consistency:** While there is a reasonable level of consistency between the data sources for six of the projects (with scores within a 10% range of variance), there is a high degree of inconsistency between the scores for the remaining projects. Overall, more of the projects report a higher score in their Baseline Reports than in the Outcome Spreadsheets. Of the 13 projects for which we have both data for 9-11 year olds, the Project Baseline Report scores are higher than the Outcome Spreadsheet scores in eight of the projects, lower than the Outcome Spreadsheet scores for four of the projects and the same in one project. There is also a wide range in the scale of the differences between project-reported data and our reanalysis of Project Datasets. This may be explained by the fact that we developed an equivalence scale between age and grade to report Outcome Spreadsheet data and Project Baseline Report data (refer to [Section 2.5](#)).

Figure 3.19: EGRA scores across IW (9 to 11 year old) in-school girls only
Words per minute

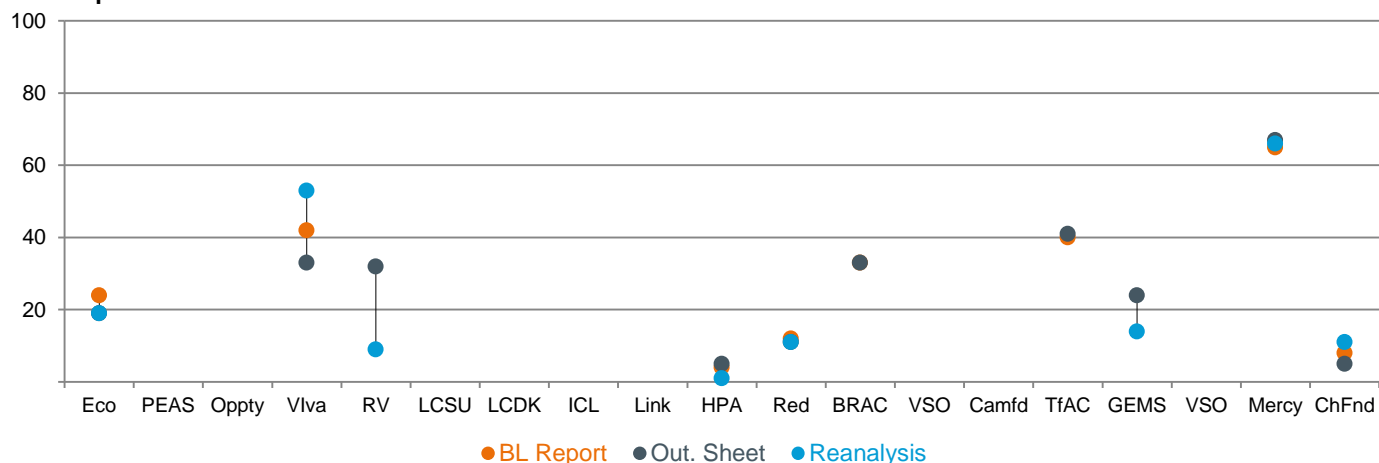
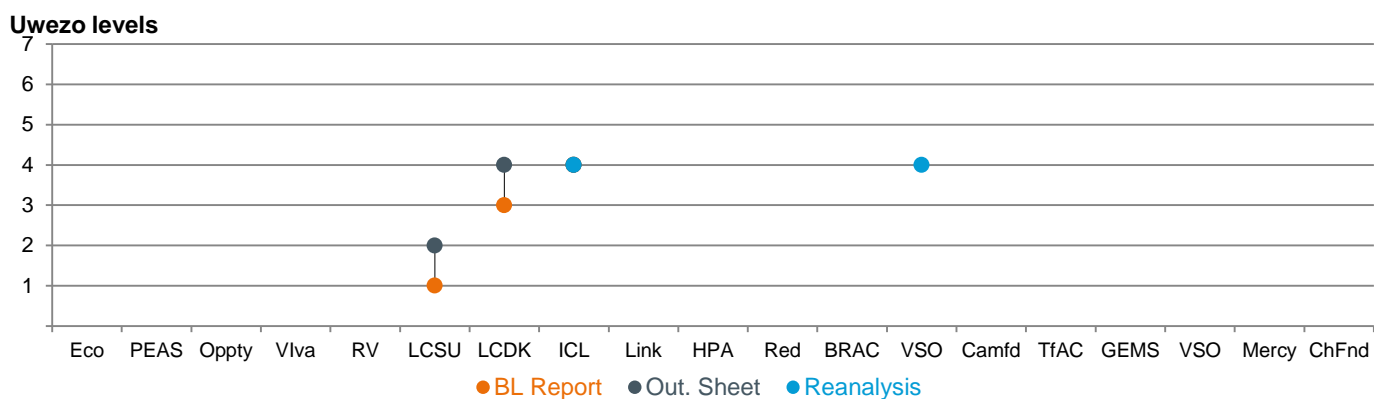


Figure 3.20: Uwezo scores across IW (9 to 11 year old), in-school girls only



The average EGRA score of 27 words per minute achieved by girls aged 9-11 (from the Outcome Spreadsheets) is below the 45-wpm threshold, which is considered a benchmark for 7-year old students (refer to Table 3.17). The international reading fluency benchmark considers that children reading less than 45 words in Grade 2 can be considered at risk of poor learning. At age 9-11, the norm is 85-108 wpm for students. An EGRA score of 27 wpm indicates a gap in performance that is equivalent to three years of schooling with regards to fluency, in comparison with international benchmarks.

Table 3.21: Literacy scores for 9-11 and consistency by source, in-school girls only

Literacy scores	Average across IW projects (EGRA wpm scores only)	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd			
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100			
		EGRA					UW					EGRA					UW	Nat.	EGRA				
		wpm	wpm	unsp.	wpm	wpm	level	level	level	wpm	wpm	wpm	wpm	unsp.	/100	/100	wpm	wpm	wpm	wpm	wpm		
		Uganda							Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh		
● BL Report	29	24		100 ²¹	42		1	3	4		4	12	33	⊖		40 ²²			65	8			
● Out. Sheet	27	19		57	33	32	2	4	4		5	11	33	33 ²³	24	41	24		67	5			
● Reanalysis	23	19*		24	53	9			4		1	11*		4	25		14		66*	11			
Consistency	-	+		+	+	+	+	+	✓		+	✓	✓	+	✓	✓	+		✓	+			

Notes: Data is presented across age categories but was collected by grades for Project Baseline Reports and Outcome Spreadsheets. Equivalence was compiled using Table 2.8 in Section 2.3.3. Reanalysis was done by age category directly, except when marked with an

²¹ Unit of measurement not specified in Project Baseline Report. This figure is not included in the EGRA scores graph (word per minute only).
²² EGRA scores reported as Total/100 and not word per minute. This figure is not included in the EGRA scores graph (word per minute only).
²³ Uwezo scale used not specified in Project Baseline Report. This figure is not included in the Uwezo scores graph.

asterisk. Evidence reported in Project Baseline Reports and/or reanalysed from Project Datasets that could not be attributed to a specific age group is marked with ‘⊗’. We present project findings related to unspecified age groups in a separate table.

At the project level, based on Outcome Spreadsheet scores for literacy, none of the projects fall within the 85-108 wpm norm for girls aged 9-11. The gap in performance compared with international norms ranges from four years in three project areas (HPA (Rwanda), Red (South Sudan), Eco-Fuel (Uganda), ChildFund (Afghanistan)) to only one year in the MercyCorps (Nepal) project areas, suggesting disparities in levels of literacy across the IW countries (Table 3.22).

Table 3.22: EGRA scores and years behind the international norm for 9-11 year olds (Outcome Spreadsheet only)

Words per minute and years behind (EGRA only)	Average across IW projects	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd				
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100				
		EGRA					UW					EGRA					UW							
		Uganda					Kenya					Eth					Rwa					Sou		
East Africa										Southern Africa					W.A.					Asia				
Out. Sheet	27	19		57	33	32					5	11	33			41	24		67	5				
Years behind	3	4		2	3	3					4	4	3			3	3		1	4				

Literacy – 14-15 year olds

Figure 3.23: EGRA scores across IW (14 to 15 year old), in-school girls only

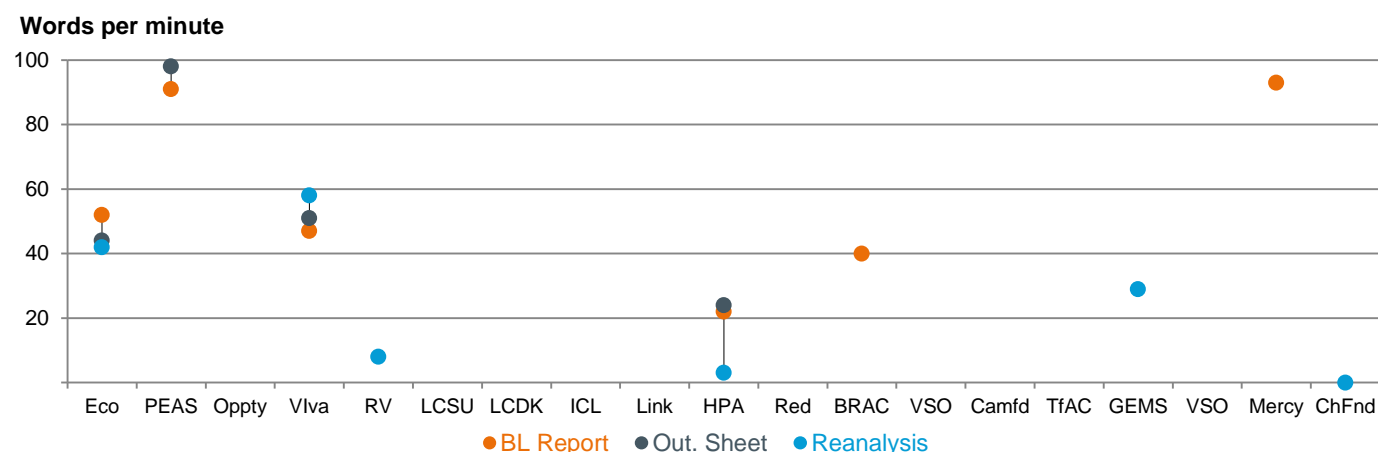
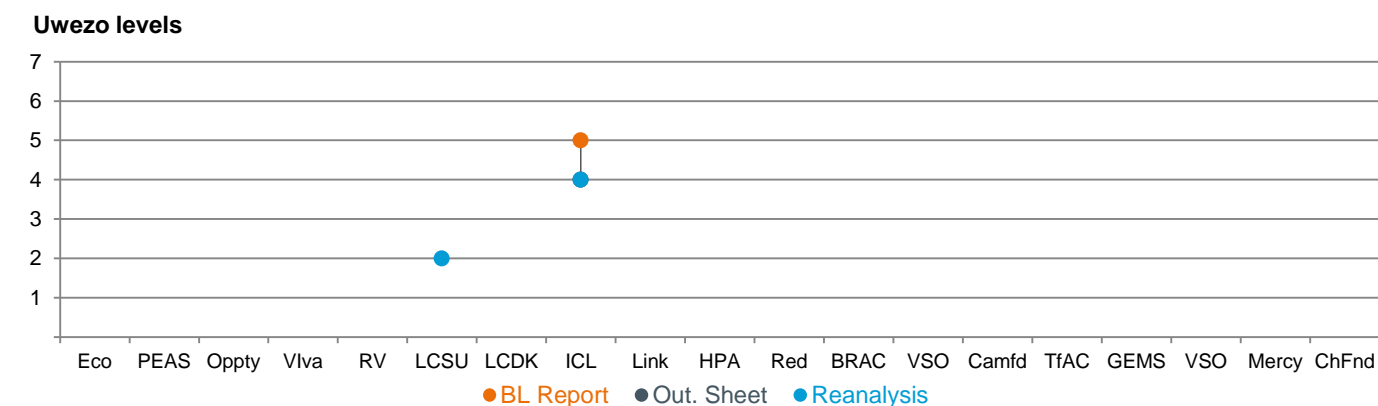


Figure 3.24: Uwezo scores across IW (14 to 15 year old), in-school girls only



As shown in Figure 3.23, Figure 3.24 and Table 3.25, the following are our key findings on the literacy levels of 14-15 year olds across the IW:

- **Project Baseline Reports:** Out of 19 IW projects, eight projects presented findings on the literacy levels of 14-15 year old girls in their baseline report. Across projects that reported EGRA scores in wpm for 14-15 year old girls (six projects), the average speed for reading fluency was 58 wpm. The lowest score was

reported by HPA (Rwanda) at 22 wpm, while the highest score was reported by MercyCorps (Nepal) at 93 wpm.

One project (ICL (Kenya)) reported Uwezo levels for the 14-15 age group of 4.5.

- **Outcome Spreadsheets:** Figures on literacy levels among 14-15 year olds were available from six projects through their Outcome Spreadsheets. Across the four projects reporting EGRA scores in wpm, we found an average reading fluency level of 54 wpm. The lowest EGRA score was reported by HPA (Rwanda) at 24 wpm, while the highest score was reported by PEAS (Nepal) at 98 wpm.
- **Reanalysis:** We were able to reanalyse the data provided by 12 projects to assess the literacy levels of 14-15 year olds. Out of these 12 projects, 10 projects had data disaggregated by age that could be specifically related to the 14-15 age group. For the six projects that used EGRA tests, we found reading fluency levels between 58 wpm for Viva (Uganda) and 0 wpm for ChildFund (Afghanistan).

Based on the reanalysis of project data which could be disaggregated by age, we could analyse Uwezo results for one project area – we found a level of 4.3 in the ICL (Kenya) project area.

- **Missing data:** Five projects – VSO (Nepal), MercyCorps (Nepal), LCDK (Kenya), Link (Ethiopia) and Raising Voices (Uganda) – did not report comparable data and did not provide datasets that the EM could investigate for the reanalysis of 14-15 year old girls.
- **Consistency:** For six projects areas we were able to compare Project Baseline Reports literacy scores with Outcome Spreadsheets or the Reanalysis of Project Datasets. With the exception of two project areas, we generally found similar literacy scores across the six projects.

Using results from the Outcome Spreadsheets, IW projects’ EGRA scores suggest that 14-15 year old girls are able to achieve a reading fluency level of about 54 words per minute on average. Based on international norms, this roughly corresponds to the literacy level of 7 year olds (refer to [Table 3.17](#)). This indicates that girls in this age group are, on average, six years behind these international norms. [Table 3.26](#) indicates that the gap in performance compared with international norms ranges from seven years in two project areas (HPA (Rwanda) and Eco-Fuel (Uganda)) to three years in two other project areas (PEAS (Uganda) and Opportunity (Uganda)). This suggests that the disparities in levels of literacy across the IW projects tend to increase as girls enter secondary school-age.

Table 3.25: Literacy scores for 14-15 and consistency by source, in-school girls only

Literacy scores	Average across IW projects (EGRA wpm scores only)	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		EGRA				UW				EGRA				UW	Nat.	EGRA				
		wpm	wpm	unsp.	wpm	wpm	level	level	level	wpm	wpm	wpm	wpm	unsp.	/100	/100	wpm	wpm	wpm	wpm
		Uganda				Kenya				Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal		Afgh
● BL Report	58	52	91	165 ²⁴	47				5		22		40	☉					93	
● Out. Sheet	54	44	98	92	51				4		24									
● Reanalysis	23	42		46	58	8	2		4		3				24		29			0
Consistency	-	+	✓	+	✓	•	•		✓		+		•		•		•		•	•

Notes: Data is presented across age categories but most of time was collected by grades. Equivalence was compiled using [Table 2.8](#) in [Section 2.3.3](#). Evidence reported in Project Baseline Reports and/or reanalysed from Project Datasets that could not be attributed to a specific age group is marked with '☉'. We present project findings related to unspecified age groups in a separate table.

We also found that the average difference in literacy scores between 14-15 and 9-11 year olds was only 27 wpm which roughly corresponds to an increase in reading fluency to the equivalent of less than 1.5 years of schooling, even though 14-15 year old girls have spent between four and five additional years in school. This suggests that **the literacy gap is increasing as girls get older**. [Figure 3.28](#) shows that the gaps in literacy scores between high and low scoring projects do not close in absolute terms between the two age groups and that the ranking order for

²⁴ Unit of measurement not specified in Project Baseline Report. This figure is not included in the EGRA scores graph (word per minute only).

test scores between the two age groups remains unchanged. Once there is a significant gap in literacy levels then these differences tend to maintain over the schooling years.

Table 3.26: EGRA scores and years behind the international norm for 14-15 year olds (Outcome Spreadsheet only)

Words per minute and years behind (EGRA only)	Average across IW projects	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd			
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100			
		EGRA					UW					EGRA					UW	Nat.	EGRA				
		Uganda					Kenya					Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh		
		East Africa										Southern Africa					W.A.		Asia				
Out. Sheet	54	44	98	92	51						24												
Years behind	5.2	7	3	3	6						7												

Literacy – unspecified age groups

For projects which did not report literacy scores disaggregated by age in their baseline reports, and where the reanalysis of baseline outcomes could not be disaggregated by age due to the limited information available in project data sets, **we present project findings related to unspecified age groups** in Table 3.27.

Table 3.27: Literacy scores for unspecified age groups and consistency by source

Literacy scores	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd			
	7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100			
	EGRA					UW					EGRA					UW	Nat.	EGRA				
	wpm	wpm	unsp.	wpm	wpm	level	level	level	wpm	wpm	wpm	wpm	unsp.	unsp.	/100	wpm	wpm	wpm	wpm			
	Uganda					Kenya					Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh		
East Africa										Southern Africa					W.A.		Asia					
BL Report													3									
Out. Sheet																						
Reanalysis													3									
Consistency													✓									

Literacy – out-of-school girls

The differences between in-school girls and out-of-school girls²⁵ are shown on Figure 3.28. For most projects (five out of seven projects reporting EGRA scores for both in-school and out-of-school girls) **out-of-school girls have similar or lower EGRA scores than in-school girls**.

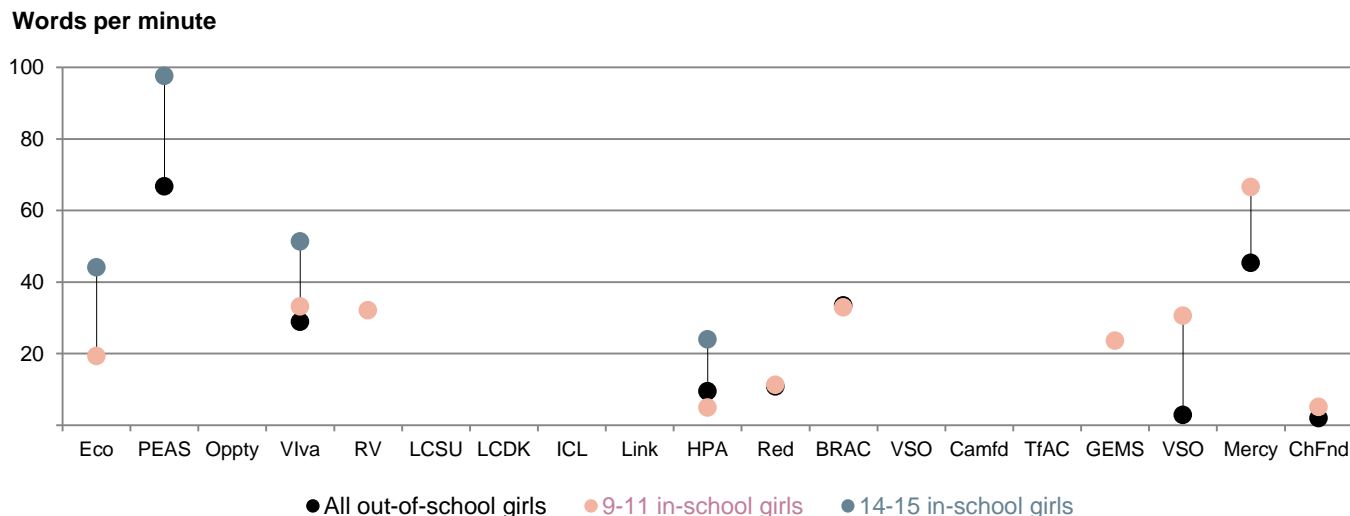
Two projects (HPA (Rwanda) and BRAC (Tanzania)) found that out-of-school girls are performing slightly better than 9-11 year old in-school girls in terms of reading fluency.

The low reading fluency score of HPA (Rwanda) in-school girls (10 wpm) suggests that out-of-school girls may have learned similar basic literacy skills at home or before dropping out of school compared to in-school girls (e.g. in the case of girls having dropped out after the first years of primary school). Furthermore, HPA's (Rwanda) sample of out-of-school girls is relatively small (99 girls) and may reflect different levels of schooling in the past for out-of-school girls (e.g. never enrolled or dropped out after a different number of schooling years²⁶). Finally, BRAC (Tanzania) focuses solely on girls who have dropped out from school (refer to Table 2.9), which suggests that out-of-school girls may have mastered a set of basic literacy skills before leaving school and therefore perform relatively well on literacy tests.

²⁵ It is important to note that out-of-school girls' data were not reported by specific age groups, and therefore may reflect outcomes for a range of ages. Please refer to the detailed methodology in Section 2.

²⁶ 87% of out-of-school girls in HPA (Rwanda)'s sample are 9 year old or above, which suggests that reading skills may have been acquired either in school before dropping out or at home among these girls.

Figure 3.28: EGRA scores for in-school girls and out-of-school girls (Outcome Spreadsheet, EGRA scores in wpm)



Summary: Are 9-11 and 14-15 year old girls marginalised from learning (literacy)?

IW projects’ EGRA scores suggest that both 9-11 and 14-15 year old girls have low literacy (reading fluency) levels. Primary school-aged girls are, on average, three years behind international norms while the literacy gap for secondary school-aged girls is the equivalent of five years of schooling. This suggests that once there is a significant gap in literacy levels then these differences tend to be maintained and increase in later years, highlighting the importance of improving reading fluency and literacy before the age of 9-11, so that girls are not disadvantaged from an early age.

3.2.2 Numeracy

As in the case of the reading fluency assessments, projects used different tools to assess the numeracy abilities of girls in their target areas (refer to Section 2.3.2). It is important to note that the benchmarking against international data that was carried out for EGRA (Oral Reading Fluency) could not be repeated for EGMA. EGMA measures numeracy skills through a range of sub-tasks, and the literature suggests that neither the overall EGMA score nor single sub-task scores can be used for benchmarking purposes²⁷. The EM therefore reported on the relative range of overall EGMA scores reported by projects across the IW. We have indicated where the EGMA scores could not be compared across IW projects due to differences in reporting unit or compilation of sub-task scores. EGMA scores plotted on the graphs are a total out of 100.

²⁷ For the timed sub-tests, because the scales on which each sub-test is based are different, aggregating the sub-test scores to report a total score should be performed with care. For the untimed subtests, the scores can be aggregated by determining the average of the proportion of items answered correctly. For example, the proportion of items correct for each of the untimed subtests (Number Discrimination, Missing Number, Word Problems, Addition Level 2, Subtraction Level 2) could be averaged to derive the average proportion correct. Again, the utility of this average proportion correct should be examined for providing descriptive information.

Numeracy – 9-11 year olds

Figure 3.29: EGMA scores across IW (9 to 11 year old), in-school girls only

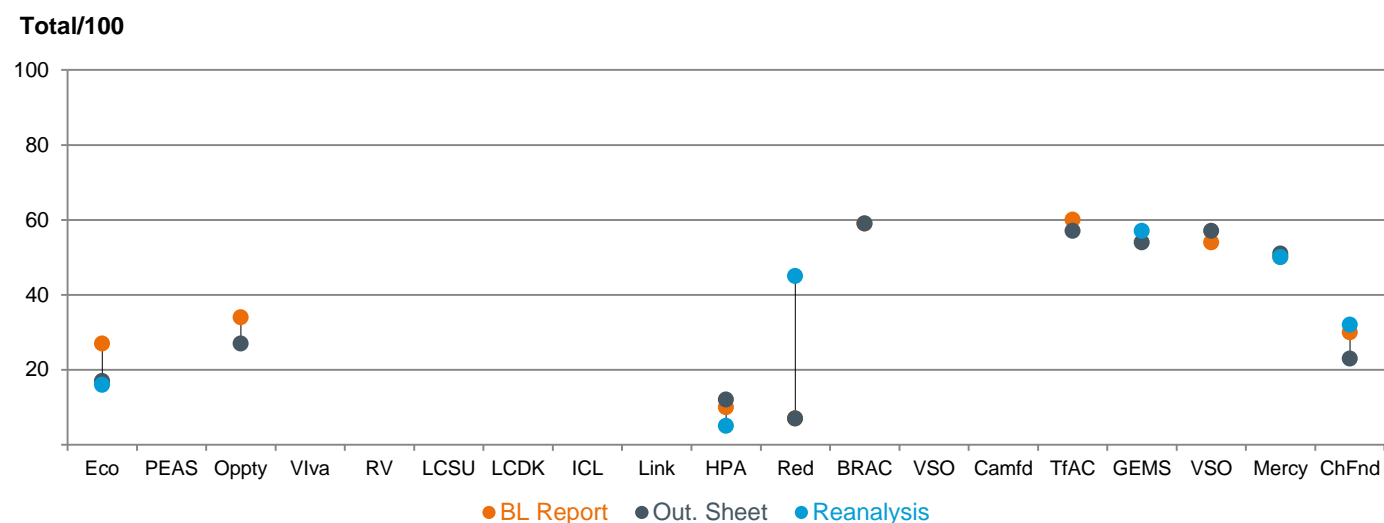
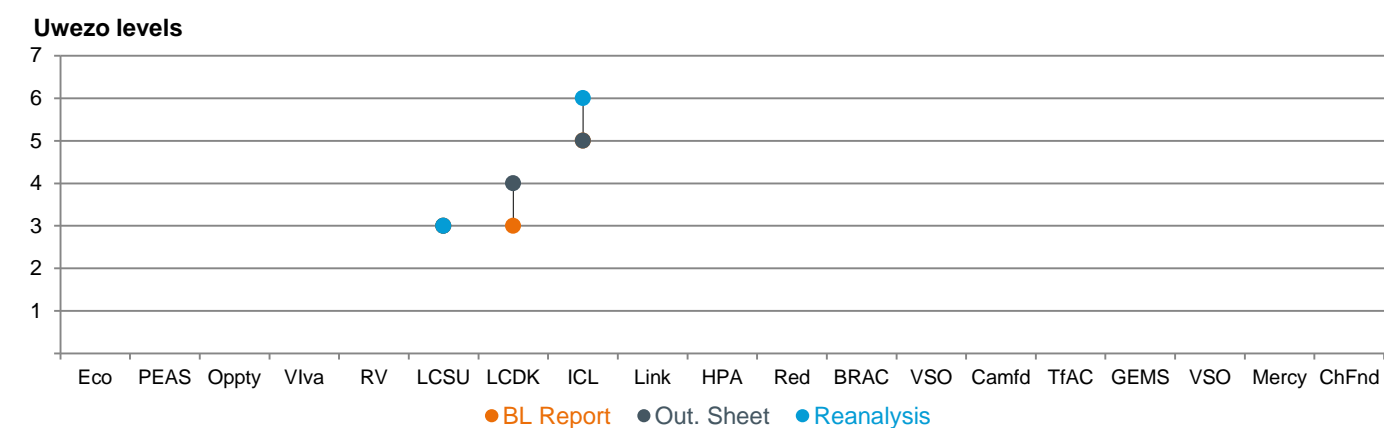


Figure 3.30: Uwezo scores across IW (9 to 11 year old), in-school girls only



As shown in [Figure 3.29](#), [Figure 3.30](#) and [Table 3.31](#), the following are our key findings on the numeracy scores of 9-11 year olds across the IW:

- Project Baseline Reports:** Out of 19 IW projects, 13 presented findings on the numeracy levels of 9-11 year old girls in their baseline report. Across projects that reported EGMA scores (as a total out of 100) disaggregated by age (six projects), the average score was 37 out of 100. The lowest score was reported by HPA (Rwanda) i.e. 10 out of 100, while the highest score was reported by TfAC (Mali) i.e. 60 out of 100. Three projects reported Uwezo scores (in levels) disaggregated by age. LCDK (Kenya) reported a level of 2.7, LSCU (Uganda) a level of 2.9, while ICL (Kenya) reported a level of 5.5.
- Outcome Spreadsheets:** Figures on numeracy levels among 9-11 year olds were available from 17 projects' Outcome Spreadsheets. Across the nine projects reporting EGMA scores (as a total out of 100), we found an average score of 36. The lowest EGMA score was reported by Red (South Sudan) i.e. 7 out of 100; while the highest average score was reported by BRAC (Tanzania) i.e. 59 out of 100. Three projects reported Uwezo scores in level. The lowest average level was reported by LSCU (Uganda) at 3, while the highest was reported by ICL (Kenya) at 5.
- Reanalysis:** We were able to reanalyse the data provided by 11 projects to assess the numeracy levels of 9-11 year olds. For the six projects that used EGMA tests, we found an average numeracy level of 35 out of 100.

Based on the reanalysis of project data, we could reanalyse Uwezo results for two project areas. We found a level of 5.9 in the ICL (Kenya) project area, 3.7 in the VSO (Mozambique) project area and 2.9 in the LCSU (Uganda) project area.

- **Missing data:** Two projects did not report comparable data and did not provide datasets that the EM could investigate for the reanalysis of 9-11 year old girls. For PEAS (Uganda), this is explained by the fact that the project mainly focuses on secondary school-aged girls.

Table 3.31: Numeracy scores for 9-11 and consistency by source, in-school girls only

Numeracy scores	Average across IW projects (EGMA scores /100 only)	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd	
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100	
		EGMA				UW				EGMA				UW	Nat.	EGMA					
		/100	/100	/100	unsp.	unsp.	level	level	level	/100	/100	/100	/100	unsp.	/100	/100	/100	/100	/100	/100	/100
		Uganda						Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal		Afgh
East Africa												Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia				
● BL Report	37	27		34	70		3	3	5		10	7	59	⊙		60		54	50	30	
● Out. Sheet	36	17		27	70	8	3	4	5		12	7	59	17 ²⁸	27	57	54	57	51	23	
● Reanalysis	34	16				11	3		6		5	45		4	28		57		50	32	
Consistency	-	+		+	✓	✓	+	+	✓		+	+	✓	+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	+	

Notes: Data is presented across age categories but most of time was collected by grades. Equivalence was compiled using Table 2.8 in Section 2.3.3. Evidence reported in Project Baseline Reports and/or reanalysed from Project Datasets that could not be attributed to a specific age group is marked with '⊙'. We present project findings related to unspecified age groups in a separate table.

- **Consistency:** There is a degree of inconsistency of numeracy test scores between the different sources of data provided by the projects. Of the 16 projects for which we have more than one data source there is a variation of over 10% in the scores for eight of the projects. Among the 11 projects for which we have a specified scale (total out of 100 or standard Uwezo scale); only five projects present discrepancies between the different streams of data.

In almost all cases, the discrepancies can be found between the Project Baseline Report data and the Outcome Spreadsheet results. For four projects where the differences are over 10% between the project-reported data and the reanalysis conducted by the EM, these differences can be explained by the fact the EM developed an equivalence scale between age and grade to report Outcome Spreadsheet and Project Baseline Reports data (refer to Section 2.5).

Numeracy – 14-15 year olds

As shown in Figure 3.32, Figure 3.33 and Table 3.34, the following are our key findings on the numeracy levels of 14-15 year olds across the IW:

- **Project Baseline Reports:** Out of 19 IW projects, nine projects presented findings on numeracy levels of 14-15 year old girls in their baseline report. Across projects reporting EGMA scores as a total out of 100 disaggregated by age (six projects) the average score is 58 out of 100. The lowest score was reported by HPA (Rwanda) i.e. 24 out of 100, while the highest score was reported by Opportunity (Uganda) i.e. 71 out of 100.

One project reported Uwezo levels, ICL (Kenya) with a level of 6.6.

- **Outcome Spreadsheets:** Figures on numeracy levels among 14-15 year olds were available from six projects' Outcome Spreadsheets. Across the four projects reporting EGMA scores as a total out of 100, we found average scores of 41 out of 100.

One project, ICL (Kenya), submitted an Uwezo level for 14-15 year olds in their Outcome Spreadsheets of 6.6.

²⁸ Uwezo scale used not specified in Project Baseline Report. This figure is not included in the Uwezo scores graph.

- Reanalysis:** We were able to reanalyse the data provided by nine projects to assess the numeracy levels of 14-15 year olds. Across the two projects that used EGMA tests (total out of 100), we found an average numeracy score of 37 out of 100.

Based on the reanalysis of project data, we could analyse Uwezo results for one project area. We found a numeracy level of 6.6 for ICL (Kenya).

- Missing data:** Four projects did not report comparable data and did not provide data sets that the EM could investigate for the reanalysis of 14-15 year old girls.
- Consistency:** Of the six projects for which we have more than one data source there is a variation of over 10% in the scores for three of the projects (Eco Fuel (Uganda), ICL (Kenya) and HPA (Rwanda)). ICL (Kenya) reported consistent numeracy and literacy scores in the Project Baseline Report and Outcome Spreadsheet, for both age groups. Differences between these two sources and Reanalysis data can be partly explained by the fact the EM developed an equivalence scale between age and grade to report Outcome Spreadsheet data and Project Baseline Report data (refer to [Section 2.5](#)).

Figure 3.32: EGMA scores across IW (14 to 15 year old), in-school girls only

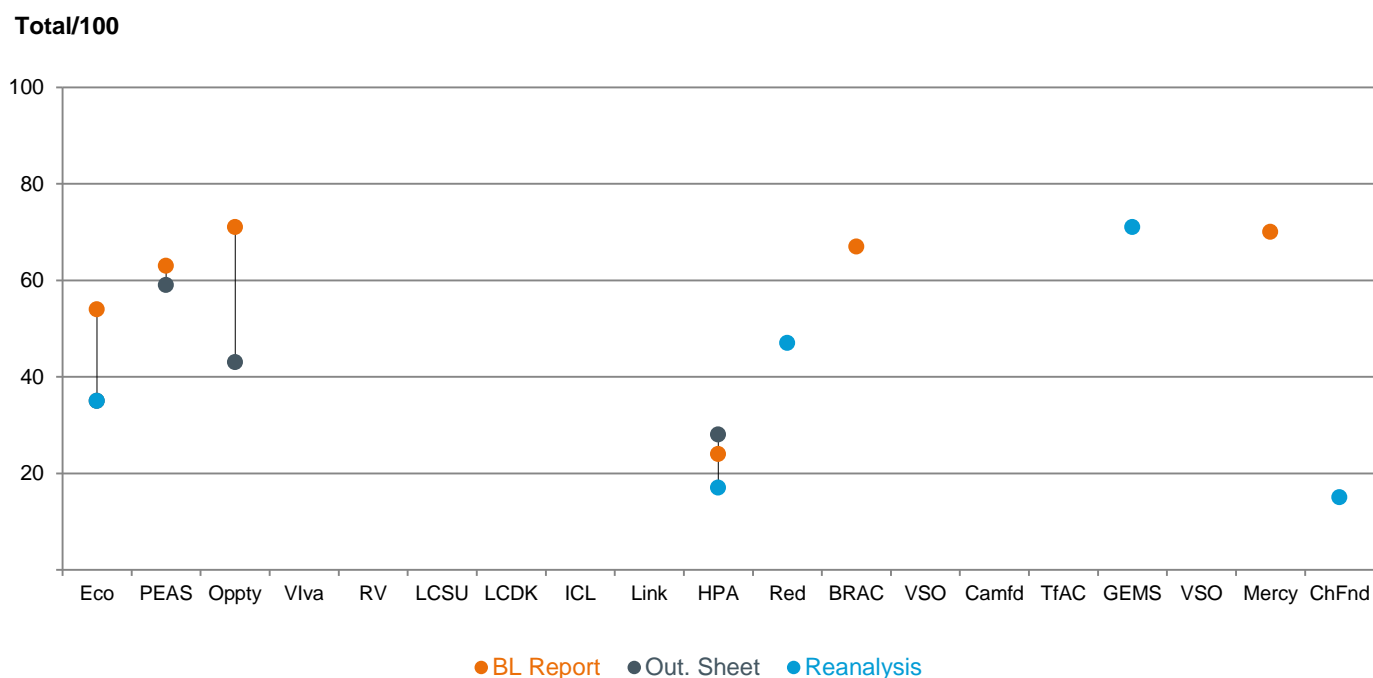


Figure 3.33: Uwezo scores across IW (14 to 15 year old), in-school girls only

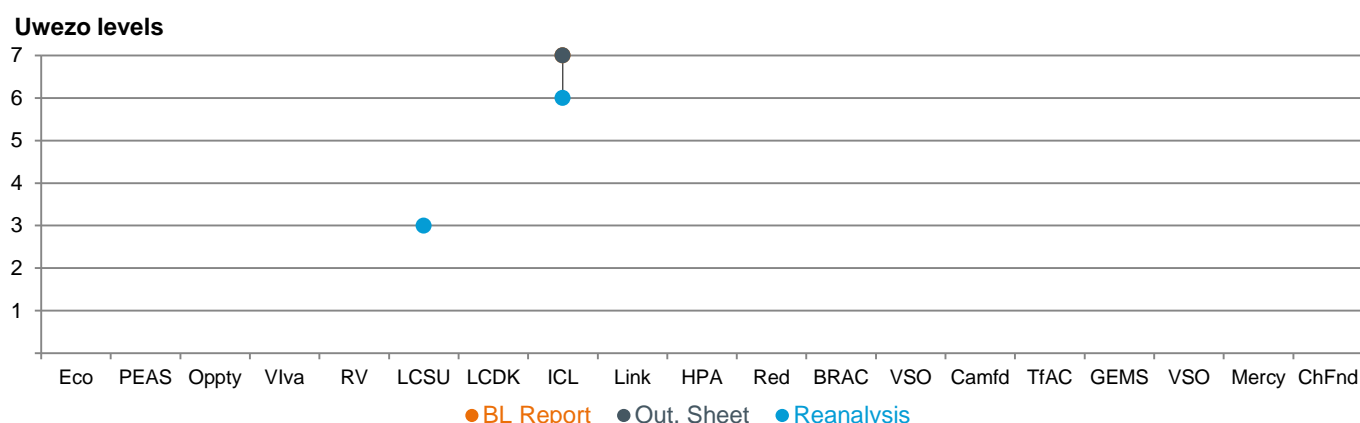


Table 3.34: Numeracy scores for 14-15 and consistency by source, in-school girls only

Numeracy scores	Average across IW projects (EGMA scores /100 only)	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd	
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100	
		EGMA			UW			EGMA			UW	Nat.	EGMA								
		/100	/100	/100	unsp.	unsp.	level	level	level	/100	/100	/100	/100	unsp.	/100	/100	/100	/100	/100	/100	/100
		Uganda						Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh	
● BL Report	58	54	63	71	72				7		24		67	⊙						70	
● Out. Sheet	41	35	59	43	72				7		28										
● Reanalysis	37	35				12	3		6		17	47			27		71			15	
Consistency	-	+	✓	+	✓	•	•		+		+	•	•		•		•		•	•	

Notes: Data is presented across age categories but most of time was collected by grades. Equivalence was compiled using Table 2.8 in Section 2.3.3. Evidence reported in Project Baseline Reports and/or reanalysed from Project Datasets that could not be attributed to a specific age group is marked with '⊙'. We present project findings related to unspecified age groups in a separate table.

Similar to the literacy scores, the most notable feature of the numeracy scores is the wide range of scores achieved by girls. Of the three projects for which we are able to compare Outcome Spreadsheet scores between the two age groups and reported results on a specified scale, **all of the projects reported higher numeracy scores among the 14-15 year olds than the 9-11 year olds, suggesting that girls acquire numeracy skills during these schooling years (Figure 3.36).**

Comparing literacy scores with numeracy scores, the overall trend reflects the results seen in the literacy data that **the projects achieving higher scores among 9-11 year olds maintain comparatively higher scores for the 14-15 year olds.**

Numeracy – unspecified age groups

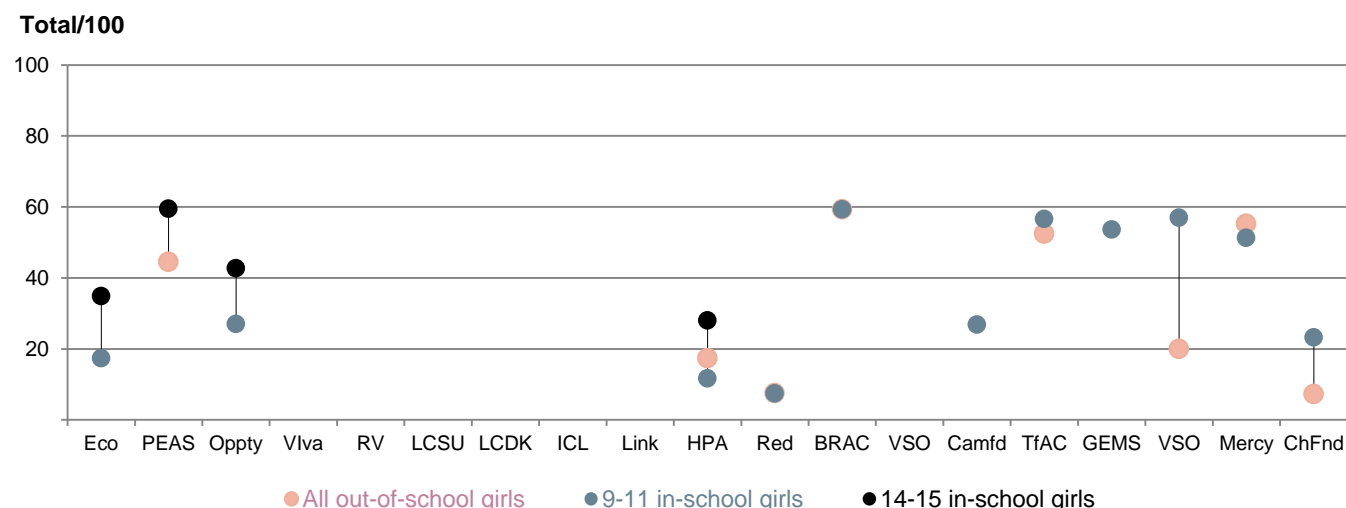
For projects which did not report literacy scores disaggregated by age in their baseline reports, and where the reanalysis of baseline outcomes could not be disaggregated by age due to the limited information available in Project Datasets, **we present project findings related to unspecified age groups in Table 3.35.**

Table 3.35: Numeracy scores for unspecified age groups and consistency by source

Numeracy scores	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
	7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
	EGMA				UW				EGMA				UW	Nat.	EGMA				
	/100	/100	/100	unsp.	unsp.	level	level	level	/100	/100	/100	/100	unsp.	%	/100	/100	/100	/100	/100
	Uganda				Kenya				Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh	
East Africa												Southern Africa			W.A.	Asia			
BL Report													5						
Out. Sheet																			
Reanalysis													4						
Consistency													+						

Numeracy – out-of-school girls

Figure 3.36: EGMA scores for in-school girls and out-of-school girls (Outcome Spreadsheet)



Differences in EGMA scores between in-school girls and out-of-school girls²⁹ are shown on Figure 3.36. For six projects (out of seven projects reporting EGMA scores as a total out of 100 for out-of-school girls) **out-of-school girls have lower EGMA scores than in-school girls**. Only one project (MercyCorps (Nepal)) found that out-of-school girls are performing slightly better than in-school girls in terms of numeracy. For this project, the absence of a marked difference between both groups suggests that out-of-school girls may have gained numeracy skills before dropping out (after the first years of primary school). In cases where out-of-school girls are girls who never enrolled (Table 2.9), it may be that these girls learn those skills through their daily domestic activities (managing household expenses for instance) or by engaging in income-generating activities. Interestingly the gap between in-school and out-of-school girls seems to be less significant in terms of numeracy skills compared to literacy skills.

Summary: Are 9-11 and 14-15 year old girls marginalised from learning (numeracy)?

We found that numeracy scores are relatively low for both age groups, with a wide range of scores across IW projects. A majority of projects reported higher numeracy scores for secondary school-aged girls compared to primary school-aged girls, suggesting that learning occurs across the two school phases. Similarly to findings on literacy, numeracy data show that girls achieving higher scores during their primary school age tend to maintain comparatively higher scores during secondary school.

²⁹ It is important to note that out-of-school girls' data were not reported by specific age groups, and therefore may reflect outcomes for a range of ages. Please refer to the detailed methodology in Section 2.

Does the evidence confirm target girls are educationally marginalised?

Following the data extraction and document review process, the EM has assessed project findings against baseline assumptions and expectations. The underlying assumption that is relevant to the GEC programme is that outcomes are (a) poor because the target group is marginalised and (b) poor because this leaves substantial space for improvement, which is measurable.

1. Projects' findings (on average, and across the projects which reported data) suggest that **baseline enrolment and attendance rates are relatively higher than expected** at the project design stage.
2. In terms of differences between primary school-aged girls and secondary school-aged girls, the EM found lower levels of enrolment and retention among secondary school-aged girls compared to primary school-aged girls, suggesting that **girls across the IW target project areas tend to be more marginalised (enrolment and retention) as they get older**.
3. **This finding does not apply to attendance rates**, suggesting that secondary school-aged girls attend school just as much as primary school aged-ones, once they are enrolled.
4. With regards to learning outcomes the EM found a more consistent picture of girls demonstrating relatively **low levels of literacy (reading fluency) and numeracy across almost all IW projects** – in line with what would have been expected based on GEC-relevant assumptions.
5. The low levels of literacy (reading fluency) and numeracy of secondary school-aged girls indicate that **learning increases by only a little over the course of schooling especially in the case of reading fluency**.

4 Barriers to Girls' Education at Baseline

In this section we discuss the barriers to girls' education which were assumed by the projects to exist within their intervention areas and which they aim to overcome through their interventions in order to allow girls within their target groups to attend school and learn. This is followed by a discussion regarding the evidence presented by the projects in relation to their assumed barriers.

As indicated in [Section 2.4](#), the findings presented in this section are based solely on IW projects' analysis, which limited the EM ability to verify the objectivity or robustness of projects' findings relating to the prevalence of barriers in the researched areas. We indicate the origin of the findings by referring to individual Project Baseline Reports and we chose to express reservations on these findings wherever projects themselves have expressed these reservations (refer to [Box 4.5](#) for a detailed discussion). Where possible, we triangulated projects' findings using the existing literature relating to barriers to girls' education.

Following the mapping of barriers reported by projects across the IW, barriers were categorised into two groups, proximal and indirect barriers (refer to [Figure 4.1](#)). This categorisation allows us to reflect the differences between [barriers that have a direct influence](#) on girls' enrolment, retention, attendance and learning (proximal barriers) and [barriers which influence the pathways](#) that cause girls to remain out-of-school, to leave school, attend irregularly or learn poorly (indirect barriers).

Proximal barriers

School-related factors

[Inadequate school facilities](#): lack of classrooms, lack of sanitation facilities

[Long distance to school](#): school distance, limited number of schools in area

[Inadequate provision of teachers and teaching materials](#): teacher absenteeism, high pupil teacher ratio, shortage of female teachers, lack of school materials, gender biased teaching materials

[Poor quality of teaching](#): teachers not responsive to student needs, teachers' inadequate pedagogy, lack of teachers' knowledge about their topic, use of corporal punishment, teaching not related to concrete employment opportunities, language issues/ school not taught in mother tongue

Poverty factors

[Cost of schooling](#): high school fees, uniforms, equipment and textbooks

[Household duties](#): significant housework commitments of girls

[Material deprivation](#): lack of educational resources at home, limited electricity/ light for studying at home

Female aspirations, motivation and autonomy factors

[Lack of female motivation/ aspirations](#): lack of self-confidence, no local women of influence/ role models

[Lack of female autonomy in decision-making](#): do not have the ability to make decisions about marriage, early marriage; do not have the ability to make decisions about pregnancy

Violence-related factors

[Violence](#): reports of violence

[Safety](#): reports of fears of violence, reports of harassment and insecurity

Indirect barriers

School-related factors

[Poor school governance](#): poor school management, low representation of female teachers in high positions

[Unfriendly school environment](#): unfriendly environment, no guidance /counselling at school

Poverty factors

Poverty: hunger, health related factors

Chronic poverty: limited opportunities and circular effects at community level

Subjective poverty: negative perception of poverty affecting girls' enrolment, attendance and learning

Lack of human capital: employment issues in household, low household educational background

Poverty-related strategies: girls engaging in income-generating activities, girls marrying early and dowries

Negative attitude towards girls' education factors

Negative attitudes towards girls' education: negative attitudes towards (girls) education, families value boys over girls, low expectations of girls' ability to achieve in schools, low awareness of value of education

Lack of engagement in girls' education: lack of family support for education, low community support for girls education, perceived irrelevance of education to employability

Personal and family factors

Personal factors: issues in terms of disability

Family factors: orphan status/ family bereavement, recent migration/ mobility, presence of drugs/ alcohol

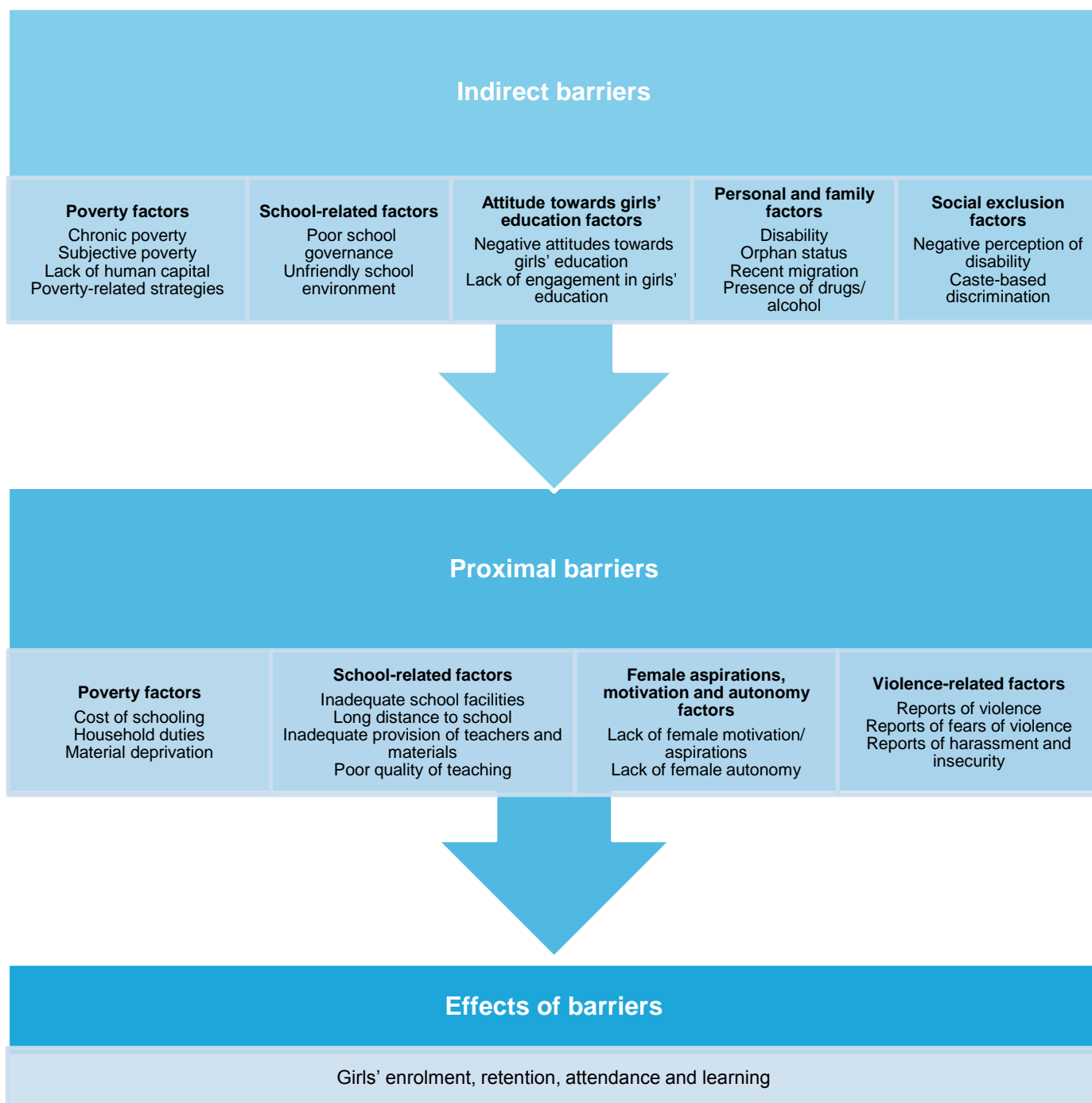
Social exclusion factors

Exclusion: negative perception of disability, caste-based discrimination

As part of the EM's synthesis, we discuss in this section findings relating to barriers, thematic areas and the extent to which evidenced barriers and educational baseline figures present specific patterns for each theme based on the Project Baseline Reports. **The key thematic areas are: Poverty, Disability, Early Marriage and Violence³⁰.** Thematic definitions can be found in [Section 2.4.3](#).

³⁰ These thematic areas were identified as part of our analysis and are based on comments received by DFID and UEA on a draft version of this report. Refer to [Section 1](#) and [Section 2](#).

Figure 4.1: Proximal and indirect barriers



4.1 What did the projects assume to be the barriers to girls' education in their target areas?

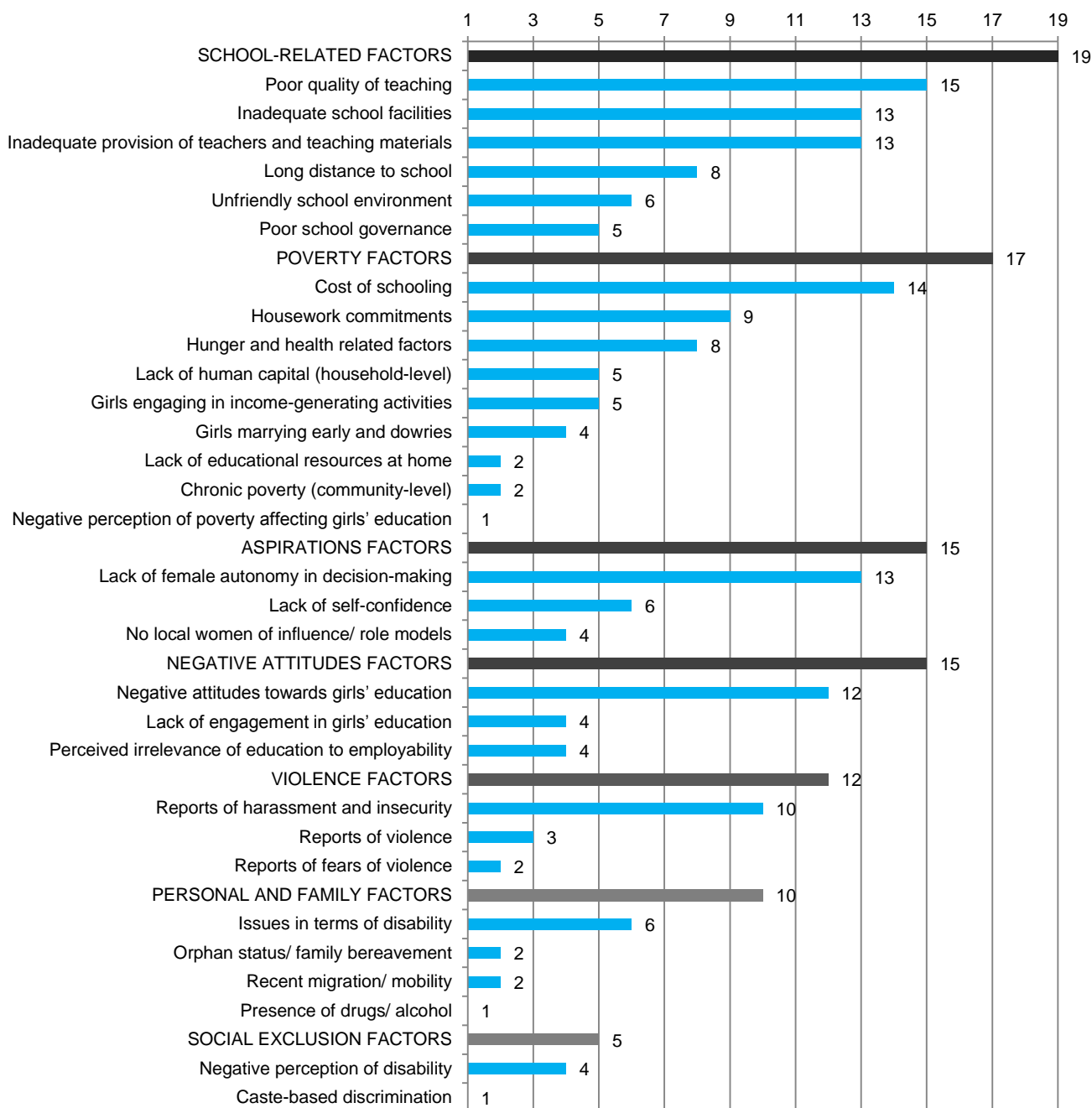
Projects described barriers which they assumed existed within their target areas in their Project Proposals and Project M&E Frameworks. These barriers have been grouped into categories following the methodology described in [Section 2.4.2](#).

All 19 IW projects assumed that school-related factors were likely to affect girls' education in their target areas. The second category of assumed barriers expected by 17 projects across the IW related to poverty factors, ranging from the inability to afford the cost of schooling to girls being involved in income-generating activities in order to support their families. Barriers relating to female aspirations and decision-making and negative attitudes towards girls' education were also assumed by a majority of IW projects (15). Finally, violence, personal

and family factors and social exclusion were reported as potential barriers by half or less than half of the 19 IW projects.

Figure 4.2 gives an overview of barriers assumed by projects by sub-categories of assumed barriers.

Figure 4.2: Number of projects assuming barriers before baseline, by categories of barriers



During the project design stage, there were a large number of different sub-categories of barriers believed to affect girls' education, cited by projects within the key categories of barriers.

- The specific barriers related to schools assumed by most projects included **poor quality of teaching** (15 projects), **inadequate school facilities** (13 projects) and **inadequate provision of teachers and teaching materials** (13 projects).
- Barriers related to poverty were most frequently assumed by projects to affect girls' education through parents' inability to afford the **cost of schooling** (14 projects), girls' significant **housework commitments** (nine projects) and issues in terms of **affording meals and healthcare** products such as soap and sanitary pads (eight projects).

- The barriers relating to female aspirations and decision-making assumed by projects included the **lack of female autonomy in decision-making (early marriage and pregnancy)** for 13 projects, followed by **girls' lack of self-confidence** (six projects).
- Barriers related to negative attitudes towards girls' education mainly focused on **low awareness of the value of education** (five projects) and **families valuing boys over girls** (four projects).
- Finally, violence-related barriers mainly related to: **harassment and insecurity** (10 projects); personal and family circumstances relating to **disability** (six projects); and social exclusion barriers as a result of **negative perceptions of disability** (four projects).

In summary, projects across the IW proposed a diverse range of barriers believed to be affecting girls' education, suggesting a multiplicity of obstacles faced by girls in terms of their education. Half of these sub-barriers are poverty and school-related. Fewer projects anticipated that violence, social exclusion and family circumstances would act as barriers to girls' education.

4.2 What are the barriers to girls attending school and learning?

This section focuses on the findings provided by the projects based on the data they collected through household surveys and other data collection methods (quantitative and qualitative), in relation to their assumed barriers. We first present an overview of the [prevalence of barriers across the IW](#) in relation to the different categories of barriers (number of projects reporting the existence of a specific barrier) and then report on the [projects' evidence found for specific barriers](#) within each of these categories (projects' findings relating to their assumed barriers). The methodology for assessing the prevalence of barriers is detailed in [Section 2.4.2](#).

- **Meta-level analysis across the IW:** The metrics used to assess the prevalence of barriers are derived from the ways in which projects present their findings, e.g. whether the reported barriers are deemed as prevalent or not prevalent by the projects. Across the IW and for each of the identified barriers, we discuss the number of projects that have reported the existence of a specified barrier in their target areas.
- **Project-level analysis:** We discuss projects' findings in order to assess whether the evidence was found, not found or not reported by projects for the assumed barriers identified by projects at the design stage.

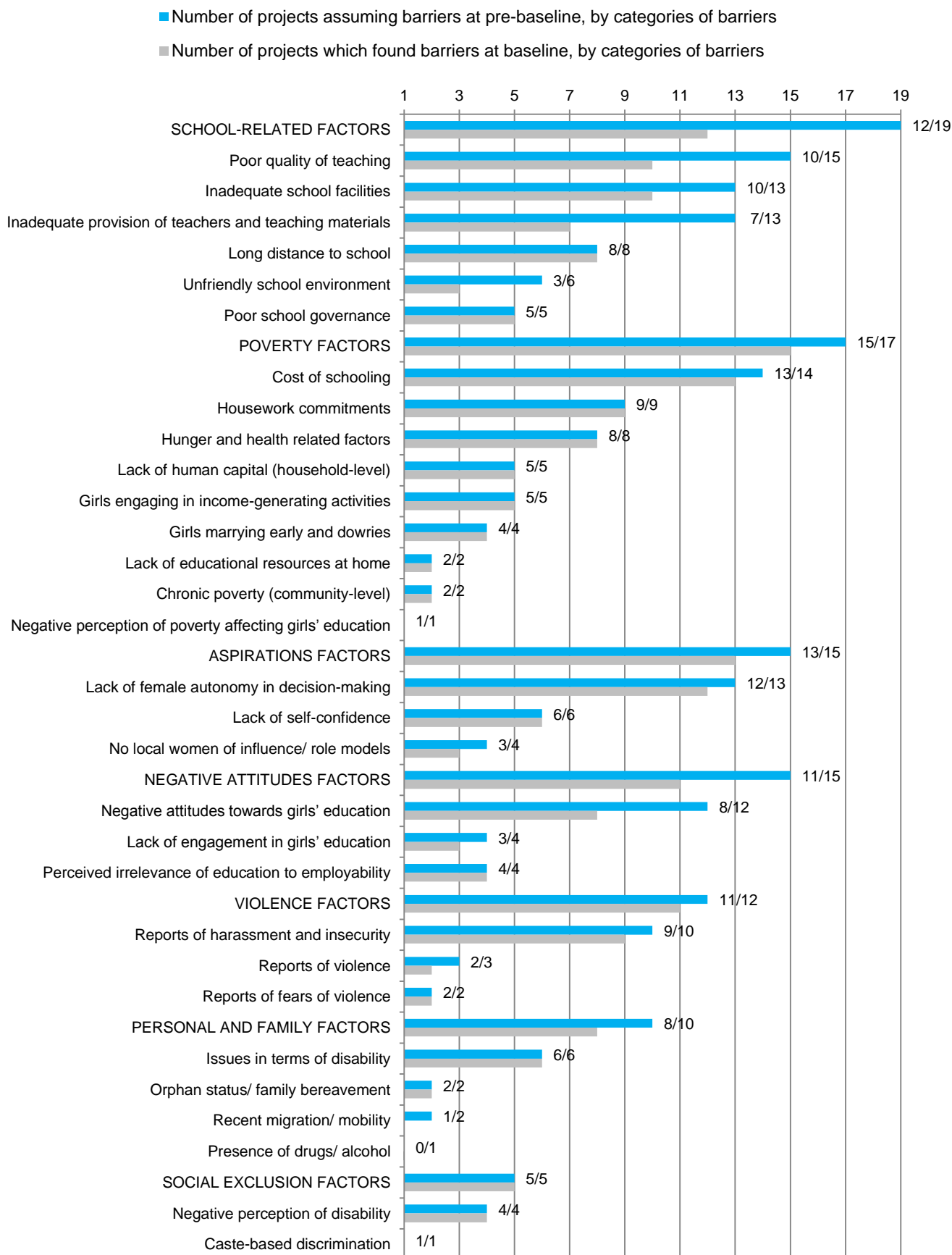
Table 4.3: Projects' evidence of assumed barriers – Key

Type of evidence in relation to assumed barriers	Key
Barriers found and reported: Assumed barriers were mentioned by a relatively high number of respondents compared to respondents in other IW projects. Barriers found and reported are marked with '✓'.	✓
Barriers not found: Assumed barriers were mentioned by a relatively low number of respondents compared to respondents in other IW projects. Barriers not found are marked with '✦'.	✦
Barriers not reported: Barriers were assumed but not reported/ discussed/ measured by the project. Missing evidence is marked with '•'.	•
Non Applicable: Barriers neither assumed nor reported are marked in Grey .	

Meta-level analysis across the IW by category of barriers

Across the IW and for each of the identified barriers, we discuss the number of projects who have reported the existence of the specified barrier in their target areas. The ranking of reported barriers (from most reported to least reported) gives the relative prevalence of some barriers compared to other barriers across IW projects ([Tables 4.3 and 4.6](#)). [Figure 4.4](#) gives a summary of barriers found by projects by sub-categories of assumed barriers.

Figure 4.4: Number of projects which found expected barriers at baseline, by categories of barriers



Box 4.5: Assessing the prevalence and intensity of barriers

Factors responsible for barriers to girls' education can be understood in several ways. Barriers take different forms – among others, barriers to access, barriers to quality services and barriers to relevant curricula and/or pedagogy. Barriers may also be related to historically embedded stigma and only observable as part of subtle social norms.

Assessing the existence of barriers is therefore a difficult task, as barriers existing in the form of perceived stigma against girls' education may be difficult to detect in a population. For instance, 90% of a population may consider that education is a valuable asset for girls; although the remaining 10% state that there is little value in educating girls. For the purpose of this report, we chose to consider that these 10% demonstrated the existence of negative attitudes towards girls' education.

Determining the prevalence and intensity of barriers is subjected to an evaluative judgement by the EM. In the previous example, one may argue that girls' access to education is not markedly affected by only 10% of the population reporting negative attitudes towards girls' education. In practice, this may however imply that 10% of the girls are prevented from being in school and learning. Our approach therefore lies in **ranking the intensity of reported barriers** across IW projects, in order to assess the relative intensity of barriers from one project to another. More importantly, we attempt to discuss the **contextual factors** affecting the areas in which projects operate. For instance, a project working with disabled girls may only report a high prevalence of negative attitudes towards disabled girls' education because they focus their baseline research in communities and households facing issues in terms of disability. A project working with a population of girls in which only 5% of the girls are disabled could report a marginal number of respondents expressing their negative attitudes towards disabled girls' education due to the fact that disability is less common among the population. In the case of the latter, we chose to report the intensity of the barrier related to disability as proportionate to the issue of disability as identified in the project sample³¹.

Overall IW projects found evidence of the existence of the barriers they anticipated. **The most evidenced barriers were sub-barriers relating to poverty factors affecting girls' education.** Most projects (15 out of 17) found evidence of barriers such as the cost of schooling, housework commitments of girls and hunger and health-related factors in their target areas.

As shown in [Table 4.6](#), **barriers for which evidence was not systematically found by projects relate to school factors** (i.e. evidenced as not being barriers to girls' education (↔)). Two-thirds of the projects (12 out of 19) expecting school factors to represent a barrier to girls' education provided evidence of the existence of such barriers. Barriers which were most difficult to evidence or for which evidence was found to contradict projects' assumptions related to the poor quality of teaching, inadequate school facilities and provision of teachers and unfriendly school environments. This suggests that despite the overarching importance of school factors, these barriers were harder to evidence and sub-categories of school barriers were not systematically found to be as prevalent as expected in project areas.

Projects' assumptions about schools before baseline were that schools were the most crucial obstacle for girls to enroll, attend and learn due to the poor quality of teaching (15 projects), inadequate school facilities (13 projects) and inadequate provision of teachers and teaching materials (13 projects). While the overarching assumption about the relevance of school-related factors in preventing girls from accessing quality education holds true in view of the baseline evidence, five projects (Red (South Sudan), BRAC (Tanzania), Camfed (Zambia), PEAS (Uganda), Eco-Fuel (Uganda) and Opportunity (Uganda)) found evidence challenging assumptions about inadequate pedagogy of teachers, inadequate school facilities/ sanitation and teacher absenteeism. **This suggests that schools' capacity and performance in terms of providing quality education to girls is more nuanced than expected by projects before the baseline research.**

Negative attitudes towards education are the second category of barriers for which projects' assumptions appear to be challenged by baseline research results. Four projects reported that low expectations of girls to achieve, low awareness of the value of education and low community support for girls did not exist in their target

³¹ It is important to note that IW projects could develop their own qualitative research designs and may have taken different approaches with regards to qualitative sampling or the development of interview guides. This is especially true with respect to the qualitative findings about barriers to girls' education. While quantitative data (Project Datasets) was shared with the EM along with Projects Baseline Reports, qualitative data was not submitted to the EM. As a result, the qualitative findings presented in this report are based solely on IW projects' analysis, which limited the EM ability to verify the objectivity or robustness of projects' findings relating to the prevalence of barriers in the researched areas. For more information on IW projects' research design, refer to [Annex A](#).

areas, in spite of their pre-baseline assumptions. This finding is discussed further in this section, and highlights the difficulty in identifying specific barriers to education. More specifically, we attempt to differentiate between the *perceived* awareness and support to girls’ education of parents, caregivers and community members in contrast with the *actual* support provided by these different stakeholders.

It is important to note that the capacity of projects to report on barriers may have differed according to the barriers projects were looking to evidence. **Barriers relating to poverty appear to have been fairly straightforward to evidence by projects, while barriers relating to attitudes may have been harder to measure due to social desirability bias³² during in-depth interviews or focus group discussions.** Projects may have also faced difficulties in using the appropriate research instruments to collect evidence relating to the pathways³³ through which barriers affect girls’ education. For instance, Raising Voices (Uganda) assumed the existence of issues of violence in schools that would have required evidence from a perception survey to capture whether in-school violence perceived by girls, care givers or community leaders was preventing girls from attending school regularly, rather than an absolute figure reporting the occurrence of violence in schools.

As a mitigation strategy, the EM has interpreted projects’ findings in light of the context in which projects operate (refer to [Box 4.5](#)). Furthermore, when evidence was reported on the share of respondents declaring a positive attitude towards the value of education for instance, the EM also considered the importance of the share of respondents not declaring positive attitudes as a proxy for negative behaviours towards girls’ education. This partially mitigates the issue of social desirability bias which may have resulted in respondents not fully revealing their actual attitudes (refer to [Section 4.2.4](#)). For instance, when a project reported that 75% of the respondents had positive attitudes towards girls’ education, the EM commented on the fact that 25% of the interviewees may have negative views on girls’ education.

As such, it can be observed that **most of the projects found some level of evidence to support their assumptions about barriers to girls’ education, although the intensity of the evidenced barriers tends to differ across projects.** This is discussed at the project level by sub-category of barriers.

Table 4.6: Projects’ baseline evidence by category of barriers

Baseline evidence by categories of barriers	Evidence found	IW projects by country and region																			
		Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd	
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100	
		Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh		
East Africa											Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia					
School factors	12	+	+	+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	+	+	✓	+	•	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Poverty	15	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Aspirations	13	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	+	✓	✓	✓	+	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Negative attitudes	11	✓	+		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	+	✓	+	+	✓		✓	✓		
Violence	11	✓	✓		✓	+	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	
Personal/ family	8		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	+	✓		•				✓				✓	
Social exclusion	5		✓				✓	✓								✓			✓		

³² Social desirability bias is the tendency of respondents to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favourably by others. It can take the form of over-reporting "good behaviour" or under-reporting "bad" or undesirable behaviour.

³³ Mainly pathways from indirect to proximal barriers. See [Figure 4.1](#).

Findings from UNESCO indicate that over the decade since the 1990 Jomtien conference, where girls' education was identified as a critical priority, much effort has been put into understanding the obstacles to girls' education. Two types of barriers stand out in UNESCO's research³⁴:

- **School-related factors are important for ensuring girls access, stay and learn in schools.** In a number of countries investments in girls' education benefited girls, but they benefited boys more. What seems to have happened is that there were significant investments in girls' education, and girls' enrolments increased, but at the same time, boy enrolments increased more, resulting in a larger gender gap. What this may show is that the investments made essentially improved the quality of schooling and that parents tended to put more children in school when the offering was better.
- It appears that parents still had no additional incentive to enroll their daughters to the same extent as their sons. The quality of education is essential for ensuring that girls get into school and learn, but in itself it is not sufficient. The growing gender gap in some countries where there are significant investments in girls' education indicates that quality improvements are both recognised and appreciated by parents, but they do not inevitably lead to their daughters' participation in education. **Growing evidence suggests that the nature of the learning environment and societal attitudes are important factors in improving girls' education.** With regard to the learning environment, there should be a broader definition of "quality" that embodies the concepts of "girl-friendly" or "gender-sensitive" learning environments.

While these findings indicate the prevalence of school-related factors and parental/ community attitudes as key barriers to girls' education, IW projects found poverty factors to be the most important obstacle to girls' education, more than the existence of negative attitudes among parents and community members. Due to the design of the GEC, IW projects focused on marginalised girls, namely girls affected by poverty. **By design, it can be assumed that the influence of poverty on girls' access to education is therefore significant across the IW**³⁵.

Key findings across the IW

Overall most of the projects found some level of evidence to support their assumptions about barriers to girls' education, although the intensity of the evidenced barriers tends to differ across projects. The most evidenced barriers were sub-barriers relating to poverty factors affecting girls' education. Projects found evidence of barriers such as the cost of schooling, housework commitments of girls and hunger and health-related factors in their target areas.

The second most evidenced barriers were sub-barriers relating to school factors. However, evidence was not systematically found by projects. This suggests that schools' capacity and performance in terms of providing quality education to girls is more nuanced than expected by projects before the baseline research.

A lack of female aspirations and inability to make decisions ranked third in the list of barriers evidenced by projects during the baseline research.

In contrast with UNESCO's research, negative attitudes towards education are another category of barriers for which projects' assumptions appear to be challenged by baseline research results. It is important to note that while barriers relating to poverty appear to have been fairly straightforward to evidence by projects, barriers such as attitudes may have been harder to capture. Attitudinal barriers to girls' education may be more prevalent than reported by projects.

³⁴ http://www.unesco.org/education/wef/en-conf/coverage_session1_2.shtml

³⁵ From a socio-economic perspective, a majority of projects (13 out of 19) define marginalisation and their target groups at least in part through levels of poverty, compiled using different criteria and factors affecting the level of resources available to households. Refer to Section 5 for a discussion of targeting and definition of marginalisation.

Project-level analysis by sub-categories of barriers

In this sub-section, we discuss the projects' findings to assess whether the evidence was found, not found or not reported for the assumed barriers identified by projects at the design stage.

Our focus is on discussing the variable intensity of each barrier and sub-barrier found by projects. This is done by contextualising the different barriers found, in light of projects' target areas, target groups, and also national or regional-level factors that may affect the prevalence of certain types of barriers for some projects (refer to [Box 4.5](#)). For instance, the pathways through which poverty affects girls' access to education may vary across projects and contexts, while the intensity of poverty may be more or less conducive to limiting educational opportunities in some areas.

Finally, we comment on barriers that projects assumed during the design stage and did not find during the baseline research. The overarching categories of barriers are presented in this section following the number of projects assuming they would find evidence for each of the barriers, i.e. from most assumed barriers to less assumed barriers.

School-related factors are therefore presented before poverty-related factors, although the baseline research showed that school-related factors were reported as the second most important barriers to girls' education. While **school-related barriers were assumed by IW projects at pre-baseline as the most important barriers to girls' education**, only two-thirds of the projects provided evidence confirming the existence of these barriers, demonstrating that **poverty factors, contrary to pre-baseline expectations, are the primary barrier to girls' education according to IW project baseline findings**. Subsequent assumed categories of barriers (aspirations and decision-making, negative attitudes towards girls' education, violence and safety issues, personal and family factors and social exclusion) are presented in the order of importance as assumed by IW projects before baseline. The evidence reported by projects during the baseline research process supported their initial assumptions for these categories of barriers.

It is not expected that the relative importance of these categories of barriers reflects or supports the broader body of evidence described in the literature relating to barriers affecting girls' education. It should be noted that IW projects work in specific target areas and that the barriers they evidenced are specifically related to their initial assumptions and individual project design. As a result, some projects may have disregarded certain types of barriers as part of the scope of their evaluation required by the GEC programme. This issue is further discussed in [Section 6](#).

4.2.1 School-related factors

All 19 projects reported school-related factors as affecting attendance and in some cases learning. While a variety of school-related barriers were assumed by IW projects at pre-baseline, 12 out of 19 projects provided evidence confirming the existence of these barriers.

Many of these barriers are specific to each project. However, the three sub-barriers which were most often reported across the IW were **inadequate school facilities/ sanitation** (10 projects), **long distance to school** (eight projects) and **teachers' inadequate pedagogy** (seven projects). Barriers which proved difficult to evidence/ report relate to various sub-categories ([Table 4.7](#)).

Table 4.7: Evidence reported by projects for barriers relating to school factors

Baseline evidence for school factors	Evidence found	IW projects by country and region																		
		Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda				Kenya				Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh	
East Africa											Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia				
School facilities and access																				
Inadequate school facilities/ sanitation	10		+	+	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	+		✓	✓			✓		
Long distance to school	8	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓							✓	
Provision of teachers and teaching materials																				
Teacher absenteeism	5		✓					✓				✓		+		✓		✓		
High pupil teacher ratio	2				✓						✓									
Shortage of female teachers	2				•								•		•		•	✓	✓	
Lack of school materials	2					✓		✓			+									
Gender biased teaching materials	1												✓							
Quality of teaching																				
Teachers not responsive to needs	4		✓			✓	✓		✓											
Teachers' inadequate pedagogy	7	✓			✓			✓			+	+		✓	•	✓	✓	✓		
Lack of teachers' knowledge about topic	2	+									✓					✓			•	
Use of corporal punishment	3	✓			✓											✓				
Teaching not related to employment	1																	✓		
School not taught in mother tongue	3										✓			✓			✓			
School governance																				
Poor school management	4	✓				✓		✓	✓											
No female teachers in high positions	1																	✓		
School environment																				
Unfriendly environment	2		✓							✓	+			•	•					
No guidance/ counselling at school	1	✓																		

Projects' baseline evidence for school-related barriers

Barriers found and reported: It was found that long distances to school entails girls' absenteeism (evidenced by eight projects). Poor quality of teaching is affecting girls' education due to teachers' inadequate pedagogy (evidenced by seven projects). In terms of school facilities, it is primarily sanitation facilities which prevent girls from

attending school (evidenced by seven projects). More than the lack of female teachers and high pupil teacher ratios, it is teacher absenteeism that seems to affect girls' ability to learn (evidenced by five projects).

Examples of evidence indicating that the assumed barriers exist include:

- Red (South Sudan) indicated that 38% of the teachers teaching in the target schools have no training at all;
- ICL (Kenya) reported that 40% of girls do not find the lessons interesting;
- Link (Ethiopia) reported that 48% of household survey respondents and 62% of interviewed girls are dissatisfied with the toilets facilities; and
- One in four girls in the BRAC (Tanzania) target areas and 29% in the GEMS (Ghana) target areas reported issues relating to teacher absenteeism.

Barriers not found: Inadequate school facilities were not reported as being an issue by BRAC (Tanzania), PEAS (Uganda) and Opportunity (Uganda). Teachers' pedagogy and knowledge about the topics they teach were found to be adequate by Red (South Sudan), BRAC (Tanzania) and Eco-Fuel (Uganda).

Examples of project evidence challenging the existence of the assumed barriers include:

- 78% of household respondents in PEAS's (Uganda) target areas and 79% in Opportunity's (Uganda) target area reported being satisfied with school latrines;
- 85% of girls in BRAC's (Tanzania) target areas reported that teachers' attitudes and teaching are satisfactory;
- 77% of teachers in Red's (South Sudan) target areas indicated that they have access to all of the required teaching materials coupled with constant supervision from head teachers;
- 97% of girls in Red's (South Sudan) target area reported that teachers treat them well in school indicating that the school environment is friendly; and
- A 91% teacher attendance was reported by Camfed (Zambia).

Barriers not reported: Six projects had at least one proposed barrier for which evidence was not reported in their Project Baseline Reports. Specifically, the shortage of female teachers (reported by four projects) and unfriendliness of the school environment (reported by 2 projects) were identified at the design stage as key barriers but not discussed in the Project Baseline Reports.

School-related barrier #1 – Quality of teaching (10 projects)

Teachers' inadequate pedagogy is the main factor affecting the quality of education received by girls, followed by the lack of responsiveness to girls' specific needs.

#1.1 Teachers' inadequate pedagogy (seven projects)

Among different aspects of teaching quality, teachers' inadequate pedagogy was reported as the main barrier to girls' education by seven projects. According to Camfed's (Zambia) teacher survey, most of the teaching materials are improvised materials (38%) and 'talking walls'³⁶ (52%), which are produced by teachers with limited participation of the students, suggesting that teaching is not especially participatory. In addition, 31% of the teachers do not develop lesson plans with specific objectives on a regular basis. GEMS (Ghana) found similar **evidence of 'teacher-centred pedagogy'**³⁷, with lessons involving long explanations from teachers, followed by written tests for the students to complete based on the content delivered during the lectures. According to the project, Ghanaian teachers have the **tendency to "teach to the top of the class"**:

³⁶ Educational talking walls are posters including pictures, texts and charts used by teachers in the classroom.

³⁷ In order to be learner-centred, instructional practice needs to consider the following areas: the balance of power, the function of content, the role of the teacher, the responsibility for learning, and the purpose and processes of evaluation.

Since teachers in Ghana rarely employ differentiation within their pedagogy to allow students of different abilities to master materials matched to their learning levels, the less able students rarely get a chance to catch up the ground they have lost in the early grades.

GEMS (Ghana)³⁸

At baseline, GEMS (Ghana) found that the sequencing of topics is not always coherent or consistent and that the content of lessons is not specifically tailored to the age range or ability levels in the classroom. Also, **teacher feedback on student work was found to be very general and not conducive to learning:**

Teacher markings of student work tend to simply be ticks or crosses showing where a student has answered correctly or incorrectly, with little further guidance on why answers were handled incorrectly or subsequent reflection on future pedagogy.

GEMS (Ghana)

#1.2 Teachers not responsive to student needs (four projects)

Classroom observations were also carried out by IW projects in order to assess the responsiveness of teachers to student needs, and more particularly to girls' needs. VSO (Nepal) reported that the results of their baseline classroom observations revealed a poor understanding of teachers and head teachers on teaching methods in general, and on gender-friendly learning environments in particular. Observations included teacher-student relations, teachers' planning, students' learning, learning environment and inclusion of all students (boys and girls), which all received low marks (1 out of a maximum score of 6). Link (Ethiopia) reported similar findings on the **lack of gender responsiveness of teaching**, as 39% of Grade 2 girls felt that boys get more attention in class and 32% that boys are more important in school.

In the case of projects working with disabled girls, it was found by LCSU (Uganda) that the teachers' training curriculum does not address the needs of children with disabilities, therefore compromising the quality of education received by disabled girls – 49% of the teachers reported to be lacking knowledge and skills to effectively identify the learning needs of learners with disabilities, which is considered a barrier to the specific group of disabled girls targeted by the project³⁹.

#1.3 Use of corporal punishment (three projects)

Three projects reported that teaching techniques frequently involved corporal punishment. In at least three schools visited by GEMS (Ghana), enumerators declared having witnessed a teacher or a head teacher "caning the students":

When questioned about the purpose of the caning, teachers gave vague answers and blamed the child for misconduct, or defended the use of the cane as the only effective measure of last resort, after other disciplinary techniques had already been tried and failed.

GEMS (Ghana)

Viva (Uganda) found that a majority of the respondents said that girls generally dropped out due to abuse. When asking girls about what they perceived as being good and bad about school, girls reported that beatings, unfair punishments, abuse by the teachers and ear-pulling were negative aspects of schools. Furthermore, 2.1% of the girls interviewed reported that teachers would "beat them with a cane" if they failed a test.

Eco-Fuel (Uganda) noted during their baseline research that while the majority of teachers disagree with corporal punishment, this could simply reflect teachers' willingness to demonstrate compliance with the law. By contrast, most of the girls interviewed reported that they had been subjected to corporal punishments in school. In some cases, being late to school entailed systematic corporal punishment (e.g. caning). According to the project,

³⁸ GEMS (Ghana) is frequently quoted in this section as they reported extensively on the importance of school-related factors. Other IW projects had similar findings relating to teachers' inadequate pedagogy i.e. Viva (Uganda), MercyCorps (Nepal), Eco-Fuel (Uganda), ICL (Kenya), VSO (Nepal) and Camfed (Zambia).

³⁹ One may argue that teachers' knowledge about disabled girls' needs is generally low in both developing and developed countries schooling contexts and that 51% of teachers feeling able to address disabled girls' needs is relatively high. However, in the case of a project identifying disabled girls as their target group, there is a rationale for considering teachers' capacity to address disabled girls' needs as a barrier to address through interventions.

Girls would rather skip school for the entire day than risk this form of punishment which is painful and embarrassing.

Eco-Fuel (Uganda)

Although **corporal punishment is experienced by both girls and boys** and therefore is not a form of discrimination against girls in the most obvious sense, it is directly linked to other forms of gender-based violence according to the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2012)⁴⁰:

It is particularly closely related to domestic violence against women and is used to control and regulate girls' behaviour much as intimate partner violence aims to control women's behaviour that may perpetuate violence against girls in other parts and at other times of girls' lives.

Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (2012)

#1.4 Language issues and lessons not taught in mother tongue (three projects)

Red (South Sudan), VSO (Nepal) and Camfed (Zambia) reported similar issues related to language barriers experienced by girls in schools. Red (South Sudan) found that teachers struggled with the **lack of teaching materials available in the local language** (i.e. Dinka). VSO (Nepal) highlighted the issue of girls' lack of fluency in the language of instruction. EGRA results revealed differences between districts, especially in Parsa where results were well below the average of other targeted districts. According to the project, this is largely influenced by the fact the language spoken at school differs from girls' mother tongue. In Parsa, 89% of the girls speak their mother tongue at home. In comparison with other districts, the evidence shows that the **languages used at home and school have a significant impact on girls' EGRA performance** (approximately 7 words per minute for Parsa/English speakers compared to approximately 24 words per minute for English/Nepali speakers).

Camfed (Zambia) had similarly interesting observations from their baseline research. Respondents repeatedly noted that **students engage more actively when the local language is used in the classroom.**

The extent to which the issue of language is a gender-related issue was not discussed by projects. According to UNICEF⁴¹ (International Conference on Language, Education and MDGs (2010)), **research shows that there are clear linkages between language, girls/ women empowerment and gender equality in education.** Girls/ women are much less likely than boys/ men to be exposed to the 'prestige' language, because they are restricted to the home and family where the local language is spoken. Differences in language competence often go unnoticed at school, especially where girls are given fewer opportunities to speak and are expected to perform less well than boys. Girls speaking less may be interpreted as evidence of limited academic ability, rather than lack of exposure to the language of instruction, which may have had effects on IW projects' assessment of educational outcomes for girls. However, **the evidence-base is still weak due to the lack of relevant data and indicators that allows systematic cross-tabulation of data on gender, language and educational attainment**⁴².

#1.5 Teachers' lack of knowledge about their topic (two projects)

According to Red (South Sudan), teachers demonstrate through their teaching styles that they are "enthusiastic and supportive". They have access to materials and feel supported by their headmasters, which may explain girls' positive attitude towards teachers' quality of teaching. Interestingly though, Red (South Sudan) indicates that 38% of the **teachers in target schools have not received any teacher training at all.** A number of teachers are also not trained to teach classes in English although the language of instruction for upper classes is English.

Eco-Fuel (Uganda) reported slightly different evidence of teachers' lack of knowledge. Results show that most teachers (73%) have diplomas, 23% of teachers have a Grade 3 teaching certificate while 3% of teachers have university degrees. This suggests that most teachers have the necessary qualifications required to teach their respective grades. Nevertheless, **teachers' knowledge does not always appear to translate into good quality teaching**, as evidenced by a school inspector interviewed by Eco-Fuel (Uganda):

⁴⁰ <http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/pdfs/briefings/Corporal%20punishment%20of%20girls.pdf>

⁴¹ <http://www.seameo.org/language/mdgconference2010/doc/presentations/day2/makihayashikawa-ppt.pdf>

⁴² This is an important gap in the IW baseline research which could be addressed during midline research and as part of the EM thematic research.

These teachers spend two or three years in college and when they graduate, they never receive any more on-the-job training to enable them acquire practical teaching skills. The two or three years spent in college are not enough to enable them to learn everything they need to know about delivering high quality education. This is why students cannot learn well in school.

Eco-Fuel (Uganda)

#1.6 Teaching not related to concrete employment opportunities (one project)

MercyCorps (Nepal) was the only project to investigate and report on the **lack of support for girls' transition into vocational training and employment**. In the project target areas, girls reported “not knowing what to do after secondary school” and therefore neither they nor their families seemed likely to invest in their secondary education. This barrier is also discussed in [Section 4.2.4](#), as four projects found evidence of a perception that education is irrelevant to employment among girls, parents and community members.

School-related barrier #2 – Distance to school (eight projects)

Safety issues on the way to and from schools are the main factor affecting girls' absenteeism.

As evidenced by eight projects, the **long distance to school appears to result in greater girls' absenteeism due to safety issues**. Girls often reported having to walk long distances to get to school and many consider the journey as ‘unsafe’ and as such represents a key barrier to attending school. Safety issues related to the journey to school were repeatedly mentioned across the IW, indicating that **more than the distance itself between home and school, the hazards of having girls walking on their own are of concern**. Due to poor infrastructure and long distances to school, LCDK (Kenya) reported that girls with disabilities are more vulnerable to “instances of bullying by strangers”, which prevents them from going to school. Link (Ethiopia) indicated that safety to get to school was an issue for 41% of Grade 6 girls and 19% of Grade 2 girls. The qualitative data collected by Link (Ethiopia) shed light on the risks associated with walking to school:

The physical topography of the zone includes long distances to be travelled and also mountainous and forest areas offering physical hazards to girls. Travelling is limited to trips that can include a male counterpart and mobility is restricted for girls, due to the risk of harassment. Harassment and abuse still seem to occur in places, which further hamper movement. Girls also reported being verbally harassed on the way to or nearby schools.

Link (Ethiopia)

The distance to school becomes a crucial issue when girls enter the secondary school phase. The lack of secondary schools in some project areas increases the distance to travel to get to school. Also, distant boarding schools are perceived by parents as posing additional risks of safety and harassment, as girls need to commute long distances and end up spending long periods away from home in environments that care givers do not consider as appropriate for secondary school-aged girls.

Finally, as most IW projects work in poor areas, the distance to school and the time to get to school are perceived as a **trade-off for girls who are often engaged in a significant amount of housework tasks**.

School-related barrier #3 – School facilities (seven projects)

With regards to school facilities and infrastructure, the inappropriateness of sanitation facilities is the main factor affecting girls' education.

The key factor relating to school facilities predominantly related to the provision of toilets. These were considered to be ‘inadequate’, ‘unsatisfactory’, ‘not safe for girls’ and in some areas, projects reported that girls did not have separate toilets. As explained by girls participating in a survey conducted by Opportunity (Uganda), school facilities are the ‘main attraction’ of a secondary school, indicating **the importance of appropriate sanitation facilities when choosing to attend school**. It is especially important for secondary schools to have adequate sanitation facilities particularly in view of the fact that **girls are reported to be absent from school during menstruation**.

While older girls are more likely to be affected by a lack of adequate sanitation facilities in schools due to menstruation, younger girls also reported that school facilities were not satisfactory (BRAC (Tanzania)). According to HPA (Rwanda), most of the sanitation facilities are shared with boys and located in remote parts of schools (i.e. “near bushes”). Additionally, toilets often do not lock from the inside. They also do not include hand washing facilities and changing room facilities were reported as being “inadequate” to girls' needs.

According to UNICEF⁴³, water, environment and sanitation (WES) are all children's issues that are inexorably linked to girls' education. Safe water and adequate sanitation are as important to quality education as pencils, books and teachers:

While affecting all school-aged children, inadequate sanitation facilities hit girls hardest, pushing many out of the classroom for lack of privacy and dignity. In some cases girls put up with these deplorable conditions only to leave when they begin to menstruate.

(UNICEF, Water and Sanitation)

School-related barrier #4 – Provision of teachers and teaching materials (seven projects)

More than the lack of female teachers and high pupil teacher ratios, it is teacher absenteeism that seems to affect girls' ability to learn.

#4.1 Teacher absenteeism (five projects)

Teacher absenteeism was reported as the main barrier to girls' education in terms of the different aspects of teaching provision (teachers and materials). **Five projects reported issues with teacher attendance.** Additionally, MercyCorps (Nepal) reported that teacher absenteeism was rather considered as a lack of teachers' involvement in the tasks given to students:

Whilst children are frequently told to study, the teachers sleep in class.

MercyCorps (Nepal)

In support of the GEMS (Ghana) project findings, a 2009 study by Al-Hassan⁴⁴ assessed the causes and the impact of teacher absenteeism in selected schools in northern Ghana. Results of the study reveal that 30% of teachers in the sampled schools are considered to be absent, late to school or leaving from school early. Teacher absenteeism in the sampled schools is higher in deprived schools compared to endowed schools. Lateness and early departure from school by teachers are more common among teachers who live outside the school community (70%), and are responsible for 65% of the lateness/ early departure. On average, 70% of the sampled teachers agree that absenteeism has a significantly negative effect on teaching and learning.

These findings were corroborated across the IW, with teacher absenteeism reported as the main barrier to girls' education when it comes to teaching provision. **The lack of female teachers (and high pupil teacher ratios) were reported as less prevalent barriers** by IW projects, suggesting that issues in teacher provision are likely to be affecting girls as well as boys and should not be considered a specifically gendered barrier to girls' education.

#4.2 Gender-biased teaching materials (one project)

VSO (Mozambique) interestingly noted that feedback from girls suggested that they perceive little bias in the treatment they receive in classrooms, although classroom observation suggests that the learning environment could be greatly improved. According to the project, the delivery of the national curriculum in a gender-responsive manner remains a critical challenge and **gender stereotypes perpetuated through textbooks and curricula choices have an impact on girls' engagement in learning.**

School-related barrier #5 – School governance (five projects)

In terms of school governance, poor school management was reported as affecting teachers' capacity to respond to girls' needs.

As reported by five projects, **poor school management was found as an obstacle to girls' education in target schools.** Despite a number of projects collecting evidence on school management systems, the evidence gathered across the IW is relatively heterogeneous and difficult to assess in terms of the actual prevalence of poor school management as a barrier to girls' education. **Pathways through which girls are affected by non-functional school governance were not clearly articulated by IW projects.** For instance, Link (Ethiopia) reported that 13% of teachers rated the school management system as not being responsive to girls' needs. ICL (Kenya) found that a majority of the schools have committees that are not "equipped to handle oversight duties over the management of schools":

⁴³ http://www.unicef.org/education/index_focus_water.html

⁴⁴ Al-hassan (2009), An Assessment of the Effects Teacher Absenteeism on Quality Teaching and Learning in Public Primary Schools in Northern Ghana, NNED & IBIS

The head teachers and principals in some of the schools seem not to be in control of the schools with poor facilities, poor teaching and teacher absenteeism being of major concern to girls in the country.

ICL (Kenya)

According to Raising Voices (Uganda), one of the project barriers relating to teacher's unresponsiveness to student needs has been assessed during baseline research in relation to the **absence of teacher committees and student committees**. Finally, Eco-Fuel (Uganda) noted that 98% of their target schools do not have a policy on school attendance and re-admission of girls who get pregnant. Most girls who get pregnant are dismissed from school and do not attend school after giving birth, which, as suggested by the project, could be addressed through improved **governance mechanisms and policies at the school level**.

School-related barrier #6 – Value of girls' education in schools (three projects)

Valuing boys' education over girls' is a barrier existing in schools as well, not only in communities or among parents.

As reported by Link (Ethiopia), about a third of the girls in their target schools felt that teachers regarded education for boys as more important than for girls (31%) and that boys were getting more attention than girls in classes (38%). More than half of the girls (58%) felt that teachers foresee limited career options for girls. A large proportion of girls (77%) think that they learn less than boys in school, suggesting that the **absence of gender-sensitive education methods in schools has a negative influence on girls' self-esteem and confidence**.

Summary: Is girls' education affected by school-related factors?

We found evidence across the IW that **school-related factors were reported as the second most important barriers to girls' education**. While school-related barriers were assumed by IW projects at pre-baseline as the most important barriers to girls' education, only two-thirds of the projects provided evidence confirming the existence of these barriers, demonstrating that poverty factors, contrary to pre-baseline projects' assumptions, are the primary barrier to girls' education according to IW project baseline findings.

Pathways through which girls' education is affected primarily relate to the **poor quality of education**, as evidenced by the prevalence of 'teacher-centred pedagogy', the lack of gender responsiveness of teaching and teaching techniques that frequently involve corporal punishment.

The second school-related factor identified by IW projects in their target areas relates to the **distance to school**. Long distance to school appears to result in greater girls' absenteeism due to safety issues and more than the distance itself between home and school, the **hazards of having girls walking on their own** are of concern⁴⁵. With regards to school facilities and infrastructure (third school-related factor), the **inappropriateness of sanitation facilities** is the main barrier affecting girls' education. Girls are particularly reported to be absent from school during menstruation due to the absence of appropriate sanitation facilities. Fourthly, in terms of teaching provisions, more than the lack of female teachers and high pupil teacher ratios, it is **teacher absenteeism** that seems to affect girls' ability to learn. **Poor school management** was found as a fifth obstacle to girls' education, although pathways through which girls are affected by non-functional school governance were not clearly articulated by IW projects.

⁴⁵ Distance to school also becomes a more crucial issue when girls enter the secondary school phase due to the absence of nearby secondary schools and the additional safety issues faced by secondary school-aged girls.

4.2.2 Poverty factors

Almost all projects (15 out of 17 assuming barriers at project design stage) reported poverty factors as affecting girls’ education. The three sub-barriers which were most often reported across the IW were the **cost of schooling** (13 projects), **housework commitments** (nine projects) and **hunger and health-related factors** (eight projects). The evidence confirms the assumption of many projects that poverty is a major barrier to girls’ education (Table 4.8).

Table 4.8: Evidence reported by projects for barriers relating to poverty

Baseline evidence for poverty	Evidence found	IW projects by country and region																			
		Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd	
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100	
		Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh		
East Africa											Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia					
Proximal barriers																					
Cost of schooling	13	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		+	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		
Significant housework commitments of girl	9				✓					✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓		
Lack of educational resources at home	2									✓									✓		
Indirect barriers																					
Hunger and health related factors	8	✓			✓				✓	✓	✓				✓	✓			✓		
Chronic poverty (community-level)	2									✓					✓						
Negative perception of poverty	1																		✓		
Lack of human capital (household-level)	5													✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Poverty-related strategies																					
Girls and income-generating activities	5								✓				✓		✓	✓			✓		
Girls marrying early and dowries	4	✓			✓							✓		✓							

Projects’ baseline evidence for poverty barriers

Barriers found and reported: It was found that the costs of schooling involved a variety of expenses that must be met by parents and act as an important obstacle to girls’ education although primary education is technically free (evidenced by 13 projects). Significant housework commitments of girls are the second most important poverty barrier preventing girls from attending school (evidenced by nine projects). Inability to afford meals, hunger and health related factors put girls in a situation where they either cannot attend schools and/ or learn properly (evidenced by eight projects).

Examples of evidence indicating that the assumed barriers exist include:

- Eco-Fuel (Uganda) reported that 100% of the households who participated in the survey were below the poverty line and 60% could only afford one meal a day;
- TfAC (Malawi) reported that 73% of households were unable to meet basic needs;
- 66% (HPA (Rwanda)), 63% (Viva (Uganda)), 82% (Opportunity (Uganda)), 54% (TfAC (Malawi)) of parents interviewed and 38% of girls interviewed (Opportunity (Uganda)) reported that school fees are too high;
- 76% of households and 67% of girls surveyed by HPA (Rwanda) reported a lack of school materials (uniforms, books);

- A high percentage of girls reported to have significant household commitments. For example, 67% of Link’s (Ethiopia) and 92% of TfAC’s (Malawi) interviewed households reported this issue. While 98% of MercyCorps’ (Nepal) and 86% of BRAC’s (Tanzania) interviewed girls also reported helping with housework, without specifying the extent to which housework prevented them from attending schools;
- HPA (Rwanda) reported that the lack of sanitary pads is also a barrier to girls’ education because at least 20% of girls reported that they stay at home during menstruation; and
- Almost two-thirds of the girls (62%) interviewed during Camfed’s (Zambia) survey, and 76% of households from ChildFund’s (Afghanistan) survey reported that parents had low levels of education, which may affect girls’ learning and performance in school.

Barriers not found: Contrary to pre-baseline assumptions, ICL (Kenya) found that poverty was not a prevalent barrier to girls’ education, as 95% of households in the ICL (Kenya) sample stated they were able to provide for their girls’ basic needs.

Barriers not reported: All projects reported on their assumed barriers in their Project Baseline Reports.

Poverty barrier #1 – Cost of schooling (13 projects)

Costs of schooling involve a variety of expenses that must be met by parents act as an important obstacle to girls’ education although typically primary education is technically free.

Although primary school education in most countries is considered to be free and universal, there are a variety of expenses that must be met by parents, for example school uniforms, textbooks, contribution to the school’s development fund (e.g. for classroom construction) and payment of costs associated with school projects, extracurricular activities and education trips. Parents often consider these costs as informal schooling fees.

Thirteen projects reported that the costs of schooling affected girls’ education in their project areas. As illustrated by BRAC’s (Tanzania) findings, over half of the out-of-school girls participating in the survey reported affordability as a reason for dropping out of school. Viva (Uganda) reported that 14% of girls drop out due to an inability to afford school fees and school material.

While a large majority of IW projects reported on the existence of schooling costs, few of them evidenced specified which aspects of the costs of schooling were obstacles to girls’ education. This may suggest that parents perceive the costs of schooling as a black box, with a limited understanding of the costs that schooling may imply. A potential explanation may be that they are likely to perceive the overall costs of schooling as higher than they may be in proportion to their daily living costs, therefore **preventing girls from attending schools for fear of not being able to afford unknown costs at the time of enrolment**.

Poverty barrier #2 – Girls’ housework commitments (nine projects)

Significant housework commitments of girls are the second most important poverty barrier preventing girls from attending school.

#2.1 Housework and time for school/ studying (nine projects)

As evidenced by nine projects, **girls’ household responsibilities associated with household survival strategies suggest that girls have less time to attend school and learn**. Examples of household work include taking care of siblings, cooking, cleaning, fetching water and taking care of ill family members. Additional responsibilities do not only affect girls’ ability to attend school but imposes restrictions on the time for study at home, which was reported by one third of the girls surveyed by MercyCorps (Nepal) as a reason for failing their exams.

According to Link (Ethiopia), barriers to girls’ education result from a culture where women as well as girls are seen as part of the domestic work force:

Limited resources are rather spent on boys’ education. Girls are part of the maintenance and income generation function in the household which interferes with their going to school.

Link (Ethiopia)

The burden of household chores in the mornings before school severely influences girls arriving late for school, missing classes, attention and ability to concentrate in class. Additionally, household chores in the afternoon limits the time and energy girls have to study and do homework.

#2.2 Gender norms in poverty contexts and girls' domestic responsibilities (three projects)

Three projects found that gender norms in **poverty contexts tend to favour girls' responsibilities in terms of household chores and care of family members**. Gender norms require girls to help with household chores or care for siblings. BRAC (Tanzania) found that 86% of the girls reported that women/ girls alone are responsible for taking care of household chores such as washing, cleaning and cooking in the family. When asked who should go to fetch the water if the house does not have water access, 79% of the girls reported that this task is also a female responsibility in the household.

Poverty barrier #3 – Hunger and health (eight projects)

An inability to afford meals, hunger and health-related factors put girls in a situation where they either cannot attend schools and/ or learn properly.

Illustrating the findings relating to poverty factors of eight IW projects, a comment from one of the parents from BRAC (Tanzania) describes the struggle that parents may face when they have limited resources affecting girls' education:

I wake up early every morning to go and look for any job that I can find to feed my children. Since I did not go to school, I have no specialised skills. So, I do whatever job is available provided they can pay me some money. Sometimes I wash clothes for my neighbours, sometimes I slash their compounds, or dig for them. However, sometime I cannot find work for days or even weeks and during that period, we are lucky to even have one meal a day. So if I cannot even feed my family consistently, how do you expect me to afford sending my children to school?

BRAC (Tanzania)

Similarly, Eco-Fuel (Uganda) found that 60% of the households interviewed eat only one meal a day. As a result, girls from these households attend school without having breakfast and most of them do not get any meal at school or do not carry packed food to school. Most of these girls are hungry at school, leading to low participation especially during afternoon lessons. This suggests that **poverty, and the proximal barrier related to hunger, ultimately affects girls' learning**.

Interestingly, menstruation was also reported as an issue affecting girls' attendance, in particular an **inability to afford sanitary pads**. For example, almost 40% of a sample of girls interviewed by Link (Ethiopia) and Viva (Uganda) reported menstruation as an issue and one third of girls (ICL (Kenya)) reported missing school due to a lack of sanitary towels. Some girls participating in a focus group discussion in Ethiopia identified menstruation as a significant issue:

We often leave school when our clothes get soiled during menstrual cycles. This problem is not tackled well and an adequate education has not been given on this issue. We lack a place to clean ourselves during menstruation.

Link (Ethiopia)

According to UNICEF⁴⁶, it is a widespread but unacknowledged problem that girls miss school and stay at home because of menstruation. There are many aspects that link girls' attendance rates to their menstrual cycles. Firstly, the lack of affordable sanitary products and facilities for girls and women keeps them at a disadvantage in terms of education when they are young and prevents their mobility and productivity as women. Secondly, the lack of clean and healthy sanitation such as toilets and running water means that girls often do not have anywhere to change or dispose of pads safely and in privacy at school. Thirdly, the taboo nature of menstruation prevents girls and their communities from talking about and addressing the problem; raising awareness and education to eliminate the stigma of menstruation is a large part of the battle. Additionally, the cultural implications of **menstruation as an important stage in a woman's development may be used as an opportunity to remove girls from school –**

⁴⁶ UNICEF (2001). Teacher's guide for the integrated water, sanitation and hygiene education, and HIV/AIDS for grades 1 to 7. Lusaka, Zambia, United Nations Children's Fund (http://www.schoolsanitation.org/Resources/Readings/Zambia_teachersguide%5B1%5D.pdf)

confirming the idea that ‘if a girl is ready for motherhood, then she is ready for marriage’ (refer to [Section 4.2.3](#) for a discussion of early marriage baseline findings).

Poverty barrier #4 – Low parental education (five projects)

More than employment issues, a lack of human capital at the household level relates to parents’ inability to provide support for girls’ education.

Along with four other projects, VSO (Nepal) found that **low parental literacy means that parents are less able to support girls in relation to what they learn at school**. VSO (Nepal) findings also suggest that an educated mother in particular has a positive impact on a daughter’s literacy, as girls with one or more parents who are literate were found to perform better in the EGRA test.

Poverty barrier #5 – Poverty-related strategies affecting girls’ education (five projects)

Poverty-related strategies mean that girls tend to engage in income-generating activities (five projects), or are forced to marry early for financial reasons (four projects).

Short term strategies in poverty-constrained environments suggest that girls either start working or get married at a young age.

Link (Ethiopia) mentioned that **girls’ efforts to overcome poverty translate into their engagement in micro-enterprises, or trade in local markets**. The community focus is therefore on survival rather than on long-term goals such as education. This leads girls to drop out of school, and in cases where girls remain in school it affects their performance due to missed days of school and their attention being allocated between school and work. MercyCorps (Nepal) also noted that **in addition to domestic work, some girls have to carry out daily wage work in agricultural fields**. During the agricultural season, some girls are absent from school as they engaged in agricultural paid work.

Another type of poverty-related strategy related to early marriage. By contrast with Asian countries, in most African countries a daughter’s marriage increases a family’s wealth through combined cattle and cash dowries. Furthermore, since a girl has to live with her husband’s family after her marriage, her family is relieved of the economic burden of supporting her. Viva (Uganda) found that 9.8% of their respondents declared that girls “choose marriage when the challenges are too high for them” or when they are **married off for bride compensation by their parents** or guardians. According to Red (South Sudan), “as people are poor, dowry is an important source of income and a ‘good reason’ to keep girls home from school”. The challenges mentioned by Viva (Uganda) were found by Eco-Fuel (Uganda) as well. Eco-Fuel (Uganda) found that 21% of households surveyed had teenage mothers who had dropped out of school:

Many girls from poor households turn to older men with money for financial support because their parents are unable to provide them with things like sanitary pads, books, uniforms and money to eat at school.

Eco-Fuel (Uganda)

Poverty barrier #6 – Material deprivation and educational resources at home (two projects)

Material deprivation suggests an inability to meet basic needs such as electricity/ light for studying at home.

Poverty and the lack of resources were prominent barriers mentioned in the qualitative interviews conducted by Link (Ethiopia). Poverty is often interrelated with other factors such as the inability of girls to afford basic and educational resources. The lack of electricity or kerosene supplies also prevents girls from being able to study after dark. In addition, MercyCorps (Nepal) found that 80% of surveyed girls have light at home only one month a year, suggesting that **educational resources at home are being affected by poverty and lead to inadequate studying conditions for girls**.

Poverty barrier #7 – Chronic poverty (two projects)

Chronic poverty at the community level is another factor influencing the ability of girls to enrol, attend and learn in schools.

Link (Ethiopia) reported that in the rural districts of the Wolaita zone, in the southern region of Ethiopia, all girls are defined as marginalised as they live in subsistence farming communities where 77% of households live under the

absolute poverty line. Due to chronic poverty and cultural factors girls have limited opportunities. Poverty in the community has a direct effect on school facilities as well. According to Link (Ethiopia), poverty and a lack of resources can also lead to early and unwanted marriages which are seen as “an escape route out of poverty”. This indicates that **chronic poverty in the community may entail a shift in the educational aspirations of girls.**

Poverty barrier #8 – Negative perceptions of poverty (one project)

The negative perception of poverty affects girls’ likelihood of going to school due to the fear of being seen as poor.

For most IW projects, poverty is seen as an issue in terms of the ability to afford school costs. One project commented on the negative perceptions associated with poverty, as poverty is also sometimes a perceived barrier (e.g. going to school with no uniforms or inadequate shoes). As reported by MercyCorps (Nepal), girls are willing to attend school and learn, although their family cannot afford their stationery due to financial constraints. These girls have a higher tendency to drop out than other girls, suggesting that **being seen in schools with an old uniform for instance may prevent girls from attending school:**

Such a tendency is seen in larger families where there are many children. Schools provide books, but they have to buy uniforms themselves. Furthermore, a family that cannot manage resources for additional requirements (such as sanitary pads, new uniform) of pre and post puberty girls is likely to see their girls dropping out-of-school.

MercyCorps (Nepal)

Summary: Is girls’ education affected by poverty factors?

While school-related barriers were assumed by IW projects at pre-baseline as the most important barriers to girls’ education, baseline findings revealed that **poverty factors are the primary barrier to girls’ education.**

Pathways through which girls’ education is affected primarily relate to the **cost of schooling**, which was found to prevent girls from attending schools due to parents’ inability (or fear of not being able) to afford the costs of schooling at the time of enrolment and during subsequent years of schooling.

The second poverty factor identified by IW projects in their target areas relates to **girls’ household responsibilities that are associated with household survival strategies.** Poverty contexts tend to favour girls’ responsibilities in terms of household chores and care of family members, suggesting that girls have less time to attend school and learn. The third poverty factor affects girls’ learning relates to the **inability of girls’ households to afford basic needs such as meals or sanitary pads.** **Low parental literacy** means that parents are also less able to support girls in relation to what they learn at school (as the fourth poverty barrier).

Less frequently reported barriers relating to poverty that reveal the different pathways through which poverty affects girls’ education include: girls having to carry out daily wage work in addition to domestic work; girls married off for bride compensation by their parents; limited educational resources at home creating inadequate studying conditions for girls; and chronic poverty in the community provoking a shift in the educational aspirations of girls.

4.2.3 Female aspirations and decision-making

A large majority of projects (13 out of 15 assuming barriers at project design stage) reported that their assumptions about girls’ low aspirations and female lack of decision-making affected girls’ education. The two sub-barriers which were most often reported across these 13 projects were **early marriage** (12 projects) and the **inability to make decisions relating to pregnancy** (10 projects).

Projects’ evidence confirms the assumption of IW projects that the lack of female autonomy in decision-making is a major barrier to girls’ education (Table 4.9). Fewer projects reported on the existence of girls’ lack of self-confidence or the influence of female role models (eight projects).

Table 4.9: Evidence reported by projects for barriers relating to female aspirations and decision-making

Baseline evidence for aspirations	Evidence found	IW projects by country and region																		
		Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LC DK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh	
East Africa											Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia				
Lack of female motivation/ aspirations																				
Lack of self-confidence	6						✓		✓					✓	✓	✓		✓		
No local women of influence/ role models	3	✓						+	✓		✓									
Lack of female autonomy in decision-making																				
Early marriage	12	✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	+	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
No ability to make decisions (pregnancy)	10	✓	✓		✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓				

Projects' baseline evidence for aspirations and decision-making barriers

Barriers found and reported: It was found by IW projects that early marriage is seen as an alternative to education, either for parents to receive financial benefits or for girls to be provided for by their husbands (evidenced by 12 projects). Fear of early pregnancy also encourages parents to marry their daughters at a young age (evidenced by 10 projects). Finally, the lack of self-confidence and absence of local women of influence/ role models influences girls' interest in education (evidenced by eight projects).

Examples of evidence indicating that the assumed barriers exist include:

- Almost all teachers (94%) interviewed by Red (South Sudan) reported marriage as a reason for girls to drop out of school, and 40% of girls from the same area reported being aware of arranged marriages;
- MercyCorps (Nepal) reported a high prevalence of early marriages leading to early school dropout, with half of the girls (48%) getting married by the age of 18 and a significant proportion by the age of 15;
- VSO (Mozambique) found that many families living in poverty 'sell' their daughters to marriage. It emerged from focus group discussions with girls that female new-borns are sold after their birth to 'cover their costs to their families' until they are of marriageable age, usually at puberty when they leave for their husband's family;
- 58% of girls in PEAS (Uganda) target area reported pregnancy as a reason for dropping out of school;
- Red (South Sudan) reported that 48% of out-of-school girls cited pregnancy as a reason for dropping out;
- 46% of the girls participating in the survey conducted by Viva (Uganda) reported not returning to school after giving birth (44% responded 'Sometimes' and 10% 'Often'); 98% of schools were reported by Eco-Fuel (Uganda) not to have a re-admission policy for girls after giving birth;
- Camfed (Zambia) reported that 13% of pupils demonstrated very low self-esteem. TfAC (Malawi) reported that 52% of the household respondents reported a lack of self-confidence among girls as a barrier; and
- Link (Ethiopia) reported that very few schools report inviting female role models into their schools.

Barriers not found: Evidence reported by ICL (Kenya) did not confirm that there was a lack of local women of influence. BRAC (Tanzania) also did not find evidence of early marriage issues. Marriage or co-habitation rates were found to be low (about 1%) in the BRAC (Tanzania) sample. However, BRAC (Tanzania) demonstrated that while marriage rates are the same for in-school and out-of-school girls, fertility rates are much higher (6%) among out-of-school girls relative to school-going girls (0.4%), suggesting that pregnancies may be a cause of girls' dropping out of school.

Barriers not reported: All projects reported on their assumed barriers in their Project Baseline Reports.

Aspirations and decision-making barrier #1 – Early marriage (12 projects)

Early marriage is seen as an alternative to education, either for parents to receive financial benefits or for girls to be provided for by their husbands.

Along with 12 projects, PEAS (Uganda) reported that **there are deeply entrenched beliefs relating to marriage** in project target areas. A father reported that,

During the adolescent stage for girls (15-17 years), their attitude changes; they refuse to go to school and get married; they start getting out of home and parents loose interest in providing fees for their girls.

PEAS (Uganda)

PEAS (Uganda) also found that **girls can be forced into early marriages to older and wealthier men**, so that the family gets a financial compensation and the girl leaves her home before starting her menstrual cycles. This finding was confirmed by Viva (Uganda), with 9% of the **girls being married off for bride compensation** by their families. [Box 4.10](#) discusses the context of early marriage in Uganda more specifically, using evidence from the educational body of literature on the reasons identified for early marriage.

The cultural values around marriage are reported to affect girls' education by VSO (Mozambique) as well, due to:

(...) cultural beliefs, norms of bride price reflecting the high value placed on a girl's virginity and related early marriage at puberty.

VSO (Mozambique)

Most of the key informants cited premature marriages/ forced marriages as the major cause of dropping out of school among girls. A head teacher stated that 80% of the drop-out cases in his school were due to early marriages. According to a girl respondent,

My father thinks I should get married soon. He decided who my husband should be even before I was born and said now that I have reached puberty he wants to protect me from the dangers of being on the street and in school with older boys. Once I marry I will be living with my husband's family, I learned how to work in the home and fields with my mother when I was not at school.

VSO (Mozambique)

Early marriage also affects specific sub-groups of girls, as shown by LCSU (Uganda). Disabled girls lack information on reproductive health to enable them to cope with body changes, early marriages and prevent unwanted pregnancies. A baseline study undertaken by The National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda (NUWODU) covering all four regions of Uganda revealed that women and girls with disabilities experience gender-based violence in the form of sexual abuse such as rape, defilement and forced marriage. In relation to this, LCSU (Uganda) found that 9.9% of households reported having child mothers, suggesting the **importance of early marriage and pregnancy as a disruptive event affecting girls' education**. As mentioned in [Box 4.10](#), the **fear of early pregnancy also encourages parents to marry their daughters at a young age**. HPA (Rwanda) found evidence of forced marriage due to early pregnancy – 14.3% of the girls interviewed declared that they knew girls that had been forced into early marriages. Findings from focus group discussions with out-of-school girls indicated that **girls who were forced into early marriages were those who were pregnant**. They also declared that these pregnancies were linked to inadequate counselling and guidance on the part of schools and parents, and the inability of parents to provide girls with school materials (refer to [Section 4.2.2](#) for a discussion of early marriage as a poverty-related strategy).

Box 4.10: Early marriage in Uganda

In Uganda, the rate of child marriage (40%) is higher than the African average of 39%. A number of factors contribute to this high rate, including poverty, gender norms and expectations, culture and tradition. In rural areas, parents also tend to believe that child marriage offers protection against premarital pregnancy and HIV infection.

Child marriage occurs when one or both spouses are below the age of 18. While boys can be affected, the practice predominantly concerns girls. It is often referred to as "early and forced" marriage because girls, given their young age, can rarely make a free and informed decision about their partner, the timing or the implications of the commitment. An element of coercion may be involved because their families may pressure or force the girls into marriage. Strong social and cultural norms also drive the practice despite the legislation in place.

While child marriage is common in Uganda, prevalence is highest in Northern Province (59%). Child marriage occurs more frequently among girls who are the least educated, the poorest and those living in rural areas. In 2006, women aged 20-24 and living in rural areas were about twice as likely to be married before the age of 18 as their urban counterparts. This urban-rural divide has remained roughly at the same level since 2000.

Where poverty is severe, a young woman may be considered either an economic burden or an asset from which families can gain property and livestock from bride wealth exchanges. Bride wealth transactions are different from dowry payments. Bride wealth exchanges are offered by the groom's parents to the bride's parents. A dowry is a pre-death inheritance by a bride from her father and is more common in Asia than in Africa (except among Asian communities in Africa).

Related to poverty is the phenomenon of 'sugar daddies and sugar mommies', older men and sometimes women who seek sex from children and adolescents in exchange for money or other goods. To earn money, some parents may encourage their daughters to take jobs that place them in circumstances where they meet with men (e.g., working in bars). Such associations could lead to early marriage, especially in the case of premarital pregnancy.

Aspirations and decision-making barrier #2 – Self-confidence and female role models (eight projects)

To a lesser extent than early marriage and pregnancy, the lack of self-confidence and absence of local women of influence/ role models influences girls' interest in education.

Link (Ethiopia), for example, reported that 10 out of the 15 schools involved in their baseline research do not invite female role models to school. This suggests that the barrier exists but does not confirm that the lack of female role models hinders girls' attendance and learning. Red's (South Sudan) baseline research suggests that female role models can have a positive influence where they encourage girls to return to school and help convince parents of the value of educating girls. However, even though the presence and engagement of female role models may be beneficial, it remains unclear whether their absence is a key factor contributing to educational marginalisation in the target areas.

Summary: Is girls' education affected by aspirations and decision-making factors?

IW projects found that the lack of female aspirations and girls' inability to make decisions was the third most important barrier to girls' education after poverty and school-related factors.

Pathways through which girls' education is affected primarily relate to deeply entrenched **beliefs relating to marriage and the role of women**. Early marriage is seen as an alternative to education, either for parents to receive **financial compensation** or for girls to be provided for by their husbands. The **fear of early pregnancy** also encourages parents to marry their daughters at a young age, suggesting that early marriage and early pregnancy are important and **disruptive events** affecting girls' education.

4.2.4 Negative attitudes towards girls' education

Two-thirds of the projects (11 out of 15 assuming barriers at the project design stage) found that their assumptions about negative attitudes towards girls' education existed in their target areas. The two sub-barriers which were most often reported across these 11 projects were a **low awareness of the value of education** (four projects) and the **perception that education was irrelevant for employment** (four projects).

A third of the projects reported not having found their assumed barriers during baseline research (Table 4.11). A large majority of projects (15 out of 19) assumed that girls', parents' or communities' attitudes were a relatively important obstacle to girls' education. However, it appears that negative attitudes towards girls' education derived from a perception that there was little value gained from getting an education (evidenced by seven projects), as opposed to a general lack of positive support for girls' education (evidenced by three projects)⁴⁷.

Table 4.11: Evidence reported by projects for barriers relating to negative attitudes towards girls' education

Baseline evidence for negative attitudes	Evidence found	IW projects by country and region																		
		Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LC DK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh	
East Africa											Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia				
Attitudes towards education																				
Negative attitudes towards education	2	✓							✓		+									
Families value boys over girls	3				✓					✓			+						✓	
Low expectations of girls to achieve	0													+						
Relevance of education																				
Low awareness of value of education	4		+		✓							✓						✓	✓	
Irrelevance of education to empl.	4						✓			✓					✓				✓	
Support to education																				
Lack of family support for education	1								✓ ⁴⁸											
Low community support for girls	3		+		✓	✓			✓											

Projects' baseline evidence for attitudinal barriers

Barriers found and reported: It was found by IW projects that education is seen as being of little value (evidenced by seven projects). Negative attitudes towards girls' education were relatively less reported (evidenced by five projects) compared to the perceived relevance of education – although social desirability bias⁴⁹ may have played a role in limiting the reliability of the evidence. Finally, a lack of community or family support was perceived as an obstacle to girls' education by fewer projects (evidenced by four projects).

⁴⁷ The available evidence shows that negative attitudes towards education, in particular the low expectations of girls to achieve a good education, are relatively less mentioned by respondents as a barrier to girls' education compared to perceiving education as being of little value.

⁴⁸ 4% of parents in Link (Ethiopia) survey reported that they do not support their daughters to attend school. Although the evidence is weak, the EM found the finding worth reporting.

⁴⁹ Social desirability bias is the tendency of respondents to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favourably by others. It can take the form of over-reporting "good behaviour" or under-reporting "bad" or undesirable behaviour.

Examples of evidence indicating that the proposed barriers exist include:

- Viva (Uganda) reported that 23% of parents believe that educating women is not worth the investment;
- 49% of BRAC’s (Tanzania) out-of-school girls reported that there is a lack of awareness of the value of education;
- Eco-Fuel (Uganda) reported that 59% of girls agreed that teachers perceive boys to be academically more competent than girls;
- Raising Voice (Uganda) reported that 10% of household respondents stated that girls are given equal opportunities as boys. This finding was confirmed during the focus group discussions during which community members reported that parents often treat boys more favourably than girls; and
- Low community support for girls’ education was reported by 69% of respondents in the LCSU (Uganda) household survey.

Barriers not found: Evidence reported by Red (South Sudan) did not clearly confirm the prevalence of negative attitudes towards girls’ education. The opinion of community leaders varied, as the majority of them appear to encourage parents to send girls to school, while some of them (13%) discouraged household heads from taking their daughters to school. VSO (Mozambique) also did not find clear evidence of families valuing boys over girls. PEAS (Uganda) reported that 99% of surveyed households value girls’ education. There is clear engagement from the community for girls’ education, and about 79% of caregivers declared that girls’ learn at least as much as boys, if not more. Interestingly, it appears from baseline research that a more important issue for the project is the treatment of girls in school rather than negative values attached to girls’ education.

Barriers not reported: All projects reported on their assumed barriers in their Project Baseline Reports.

Attitudes #1 – Perceived value of education and relevance to employment (seven projects)

Education is seen as being of little value and perceived as mostly irrelevant to girls’ employability.

Different aspects of the perceived value of education emerged from the baseline research. The value given to education from parents’ perspective and girls’ perspective was found to vary across projects.

Firstly, the value of education is reported as being low in terms of its relevance and returns expected from engaging girls’ in education (e.g. a lack of interest among girls themselves, a low level of awareness among parents of the value of sending girls to school and a lack of relevance of education to female adult life). LCDK (Kenya) reported that the main barrier to education (mentioned by 46% of caregivers) is disabled girls’ perception of the relevance and usefulness of education. Link (Ethiopia) indicated that a strong belief among families is that girls’ education is a “useless investment because girls will eventually get married”, suggesting that the **economic returns of getting a girl into school** will benefit the husband’s family. In the words of a parent, during a focus group discussion:

They [parents] lack interest to educate their female children to avoid the disappointment they would feel when the girl leaves home upon completing her education or get married. (...) They don’t give consideration to girls’ education due to their wrong belief that pertain the invalidity of female education.

Link (Ethiopia)

This finding was confirmed during school staff interviews:

Parents think that educating a girl is pointless since she is bound to marry sooner or later.

Link (Ethiopia)

And by a member of the school management:

Parents prefer that their children get married rather than learn.

Link (Ethiopia)

Secondly, the value of education is assessed by parents and community members against the opportunity costs of sending girls to school, as girls are often engaged in household chores and sometimes in income-generating activities contributing to the household income (refer to [Section 4.2.2](#)). For instance, MercyCorps (Nepal) reported that parents perceived the value of girls' labour (agricultural labour) as being higher than the value of girls' education.

Thirdly, in cases where girls' education is perceived as a potential asset for girls, which therefore leads to a positive attitude towards girls' education, the issue of the relevance of education to employability is still raised as a concern by parents and communities, as evidenced by four projects across the IW. HPA (Rwanda) notes that parents often do not think that the skills learned by girls in school are relevant for the career prospects of their daughters in the rural context of Nyaruguru. HPA's (Rwanda) baseline research confirmed that 50% of parents or caregivers did not feel that school was relevant for girls. It is interesting to note that girls themselves value the skills that they learn in school (more than their parents), and that they have career aspirations and plans for their futures.

MercyCorps (Nepal) also found that the lack of relevance of education to employability is closely linked to the caste system, since girls do not need to acquire skills in schools as their caste group determines the type of livelihoods they will carry out in the future. Furthermore, high skill levels are required for a girl to find employment outside of her caste, suggesting that parents may favour the idea of keeping girls at home or engaging them in relevant income-generating activities (in view of their caste group) rather than sending them to school with a limited probability of success outside of caste-determined livelihoods.

A recent study⁵⁰ found that expected returns and risk perceptions are important determinants of schooling decisions. With regards to the role of young people in the decision-making process, results showed that while both boys and girls expect high returns to schooling, only boys' expectations mattered and not those of girls. This suggests that **girls are more likely to be considered for alternative occupations than going to school compared to boys**, as evidenced by projects' findings relating to the value attached to girls' education.

Attitudes #2 – Negative attitudes towards girls' education (five projects)

Negative attitudes towards girls' education were relatively less reported compared to the perceived relevance of education – although social desirability bias may have played a role in limiting the reliability of the evidence.

As found by HPA (Rwanda), another barrier to girls' education is that parents favour boys' education over girls' as they do not see much income generation potential for girls. Interestingly, the project reports that parents were more likely to report that they valued girls' education to a lesser extent than boys' during focus group discussions rather than during household interviews⁵¹.

Social desirability bias, the tendency to answer self-reported questions in a manner that may heighten social approval instead of reflecting one's true feelings⁵², is a major type of response bias. In the case of attitudes, beliefs and opinions research, this bias may influence respondents' answers depending on the ways in which questions are formulated and whether respondents anticipate that their beliefs may not be in line with the beliefs of others. We therefore question the reliability of the evidence presented by IW projects when questions about attitudes were directional (e.g. 'Do you agree with the statement "girls' education is important"?'), which suggests that **more evidence relating to the existence of negative attitudes towards girls' education may exist than was actually reported by projects**. Alternatively, findings from focus group discussions may reveal the existence of attitudes that were not revealed during face-to-face interviews (see HPA (Rwanda) above).

Nevertheless, five IW projects found the **existence of different attitudes towards boys' and girls' education** during their baseline research. When girls were asked if they felt that their teachers considered boys to be academically more capable than girls, 59% of girls agreed that teachers perceive boys to be academically more competent than girls⁵³ (Eco-Fuel (Uganda)). Link (Ethiopia) also reported that negative cultural beliefs and practices which undermine the value of girls and girls' education were often mentioned as barriers to girls' education in focus group discussions,

⁵⁰ Attanasio and Kaufmann (2008)

⁵¹ 95% of HPA (Rwanda)'s household survey respondents reported that they wanted their daughters to continue education.

⁵² Crowne and Marlowe (1960); Paulhus (1991)

⁵³ One may argue that the question asked was directional here as well.

The perception that girls are less important and priority should be given to boys result from traditional cultural beliefs. Gender perceptions and stereotypes describe girls as being lazy and low achievers. (...) Parents do not have confidence in their female children's ability to attain respectable position in society.

Link (Ethiopia)

Attitudes #3 – Lack of community or family support (four projects)

Lack of community or family support was perceived as an obstacle to girls' education by relatively fewer projects.

Low community support for girls' education was reported by 69% of respondents in the LCSU (Uganda) household survey. Additionally, 4% of parents in Link's (Ethiopia) survey reported that they do not support their daughters to attend school.

According to UNESCO⁵⁴, parents and community attitudes are mainly influenced by traditional beliefs regarding the ideal roles of women and girls in society, suggesting that **negative attitudes are being conveyed at the household and community levels**, with a direct influence on girls' access to education,

These traditional beliefs have been found to foster negative attitudes which limit family and community support for girls' education. (...) It is an indisputable fact that without parents and community support, any efforts to improve girls' participation in education will be greatly hampered.

UNESCO (1998)

Summary: Is girls' education affected by negative attitudes towards education?

IW projects reported that negative attitudes towards education were the fourth most important barrier to girls' education after poverty, school-related factors and female aspirations. Negative attitudes affecting girls' education are mostly related to the [perception that there is little value of getting an education](#) rather than a general lack of family/ community support to girls' education.

Firstly, the perceived value of education affects girls' education because [parents assume that it has little relevance and that little or no returns are expected](#) from engaging girls in education. Another attitudinal pathway through which girls' education is affected relates to the fact that the value of education is assessed by parents and community members [against the opportunity costs of sending girls to school](#). In cases where girls' education is perceived as a potential asset for girls, the issue of the [relevance of education to employability](#) is raised as a concern by parents and communities.

Projects discussed the existence of [different attitudes towards boys' and girls' education](#), although the nature of these attitudes remained vague. Also, due to social desirability bias, more evidence relating to the existence of negative attitudes towards girls' education may exist than was actually reported by projects. [A lack of community or family support](#) was perceived as an obstacle to girls' education by relatively fewer projects, suggesting that although negative attitudes towards girls' education may be conveyed at the household and community levels, these were not found as a prevalent pathway affecting girls' education compared to other attitudinal barriers.

⁵⁴ UNESCO (1998), Parents' and Community Attitudes Towards Girls' Participation in and Access to Education and Science, Mathematics and Technology (SMT) Subjects

4.2.5 Violence and safety

A large number of projects (i.e. 10 out of 11 projects assuming these types of barriers at the design stage) found that their assumptions about violence and safety issues affected girls’ education. The sub-barrier which was most often reported across these 10 projects was **harassment and insecurity** (nine projects).

The evidence confirms the assumption of IW projects that harassment and insecurity is a barrier to girls’ education (Table 4.12). Fewer projects reported on the existence of girls’ fear of violence (two projects) or actual reports of violence (two projects).

Table 4.12: Evidence reported by projects for barriers relating to violence and safety

Baseline evidence for violence	Evidence found	IW projects by country and region																		
		Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh	
East Africa											Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia				
Safety																				
Reports of fears of violence	2				✓							✓								
Reports of harassment and insecurity	9	✓	✓		✓	+				✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	
Violence																				
Reports of violence	2	✓				+								✓						

Projects’ baseline evidence for violence-related barriers

Barriers found and reported: It was found by IW projects that harassment and insecurity is mainly felt on the way to and from schools⁵⁵ (evidenced by nine projects). Sexual violence also happens in schools (evidenced by two projects). Corporal punishment is discussed as part of school-related factors in Section 4.2.1.

Examples of evidence indicating that the proposed barriers exist include:

- Link (Ethiopia) reported that 41% of Grade 6 girls felt threatened for their safety when getting to school;
- Over half (52%) of Viva’s (Uganda) respondents reported their journeys to school as being dangerous. 30% of girls said they were never as safe as boys on their way to and from school;
- HPA (Rwanda) reported that only 19% of girls reported feeling safe, supported and secure in their school environment. By contrast, 9% of parents felt that their girls were safe, supported and secure;
- PEAS (Uganda) reported that the second barrier to girls enrolment and attendance in schools (after the inability to pay schools fees (39%)) was the fear of abuse by male students (18%); and
- Eco-Fuel (Uganda) reported that schools had no guidelines on handling cases of abuse; therefore most cases of child abuse in schools were never reported.

Barriers not found: Raising Voices (Uganda) is the only project which reported not having found barriers related to violence⁵⁶.

Barriers not reported: All projects reported on their assumed barriers in their Project Baseline Reports.

⁵⁵ Also discussed as part of Section 4.2.1 in relation to the distance to school.

⁵⁶ Raising Voices (Uganda) assumed the existence of issues of violence in schools that would have required evidence from a perception survey of whether the in-school violence perceived by girls, care givers or community leaders was preventing girls from attending school regularly, rather than an absolute figure reporting the occurrence of violence in schools.

Violence and safety #1 – Harassment and insecurity (nine projects)

Girls' reported that harassment and insecurity is mainly felt on the way to and from schools.

While the main obstacles to female education are frequently assumed to stem from cultural or religious social attitudes, there are also concerns about safety when traveling to and from school which were identified at community level as the reason behind female dropout. For instance, Link (Ethiopia) reported that safety on the way to school was an issue for 41% of Grade 6 girls. Qualitative findings showed that travelling is limited to trips that can include a male counterpart and **mobility is restricted for girls due to the risk of harassment**. Interestingly, parents (83%) reported that the fear of bullying, violence or physical threats did not influence the girls' school attendance.

Insecurity and harassment appear to influence girls' attendance more specifically at secondary school level. BRAC (Tanzania) found that 20% of out-of-school girls reported that the journey to the nearest secondary or high school is not safe (only 13% of in-school girls reported on this issue) suggesting that another potential barrier for girls to continue their education may be the safety concerns on their way to school. According to ChildFund (Afghanistan), given the security concerns, economic constraints and lack of resources, there are no special arrangements to encourage or support nomadic students' attendance in class. Security was identified as an additional factor contributing to long absences or reasons for nomadic girls dropping out.

Violence and safety #2 – Sexual violence (two projects)

Sexual violence was reported as happening in schools.

Two projects reported that they found cases of sexual violence in schools.

Eco-Fuel (Uganda) states that **sexual violence, particularly the defilement of girls by teachers, older men in the community and boys, takes place in schools**. Results from focus group discussions with girls, teachers and parents showed that marginalised girls from poor households are more vulnerable to sexual abuse than other girls. Marginalised girls from poor households are generally "easier to entice with small material possessions" such as shoes that their parents cannot provide. The project also reported that **school administrators are likely to protect teachers who sexually abuse girls in their schools in order to protect the reputation of their schools** and therefore they dismiss the girls abused from school. Key informant interviews with district school inspectors also revealed that school inspectors in the project target areas are not currently investigating cases of sexual violence against girls in schools. The project also reported that **schools have no guidelines on handling cases of abuse**; therefore most cases of child abuse in schools were never reported.

Similarly, VSO (Mozambique) reported that a high level of sexual abuse was taking place in schools. The survey revealed that nearly a third of marginalised girls (30%) had never heard of mechanisms for reporting abuse cases although there is evidence that sexual violence against girls exist (9%).

Findings from the Institute of Education (2011)⁵⁷ suggest that girls in Kenya, Ghana and Mozambique are subjected to violence in schools. Physical punishments are very common at home and at school, and are frequently taken for granted by girls and boys, despite recent legislative changes. The legal status of corporal punishment may discourage teachers from openly advocating the practice, but it appears to have a minimal impact on classroom practice, raising questions about how to implement laws prohibiting corporal punishment. Girls in the project area researched in Kenya appeared to be more vulnerable to many forms of sexual violence, but are also more outspoken about violence than girls in Mozambique and Ghana, which would support VSO's (Mozambique) findings. Protecting family honour, shame and embarrassment, and fear of repercussions hinder girls from talking about violence. As found by Eco-Fuel (Uganda)⁵⁸, **sex in exchange for goods is seen as a direct consequence of poverty**, and by some respondents from the Institute of Education study as "symbolising the disruptive effects of modernity on girls' behaviour". Girls are seen both as victims and to blame for the violence they experience.

⁵⁷ Parkes and Heslop (2011), A cross-country analysis of baseline research from Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique, Stop Violence Against Girls in School, Institute of Education, University of London, for ActionAid International.

⁵⁸ This finding is also discussed as part of the poverty barriers. Refer to [Section 4.2.2](#).

Summary: Is girls' education affected by violence and safety-related factors?

The fifth most important barrier to girls' education evidenced by IW projects relates to violence and safety. **Harassment and insecurity** was reported as the most prevalent sub-barrier, in contrast with girls' fear of violence or actual reports of violence.

Girls' reported that harassment and insecurity is mainly felt on the way to and from schools. **Mobility is restricted for girls due to the risk of harassment**, providing evidence of the pathway through which insecurity affects girls' ability to attend school. **Sexual violence**, particularly the defilement of girls by teachers, older men in the community and boys, takes place in schools and was reported as the second barrier affecting girls' education with respect to violence. Furthermore, sexual violence is seen as being closely related to girls seeking to trade sex in exchange for goods as a consequence of poverty.

4.2.6 Personal and family factors

Most projects (eight out of 10 assuming these types of barriers at the design stage) found that their assumptions about personal and family factors affected girls' education. The sub-barrier which was most often reported across these eight projects was **disability** (six projects).

For the three IW projects mainly targeting disabled girls, it appears that disability was found as a prevalent barrier to girls' education in these project areas (Table 4.13). Fewer projects reported issues relating to orphan status (two projects) or migration/ mobility (one project).

Table 4.13: Evidence reported by projects for barriers relating to personal and family factors

Baseline evidence for personal/ family factors	Evidence found	IW projects by country and region																		
		Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh	
East Africa											Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia				
Issues in terms of disability	6		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓										
Orphan status/ family bereavement	2						✓									✓				
Recent migration/ mobility	1											•								✓
Presence of drugs/ alcohol	0								+											

Projects' baseline evidence for personal and family barriers

Barriers found and reported: IW projects found that issues relating to disability prevent girls from attending and learning in schools (as evidenced by six projects). Fewer projects found evidence related to orphan status and family bereavement (evidenced by two projects). Recent migration or mobility was found to affect girls' attendance and learning for projects working with mobile populations (evidenced by one project).

Examples of evidence indicating that the proposed barriers exist include:

- The majority of the girls (73%) in LCDK's (Kenya) survey reported being unable to attend school due to illness/ disability;
- PEAS (Uganda) reported that about 27% of girls stated that issues associated with their health or disability as a barrier to their education;

- 5% in Link’s (Ethiopia) household survey reported that disability affects attendance. It is important to note that the project’s main target group was not disabled girls, which may explain why such a small percentage of girls reported a linkage between disability and attendance⁵⁹;
- 68% of household respondents in ChildFund’s (Afghanistan) survey reported migration as a reason for missing school; and
- 28% of marginalised girls reported being orphans in TfAC’s (Malawi) project areas and 6% reported coming from child-headed households.

Barriers not found: The presence of drugs/ alcohol was assumed by ICL (Kenya), but no evidence was found during their baseline research.

Barriers not reported: Red (South Soudan) is the only project which did not comment on an assumed barrier relating to personal and family factors.

Personal and family factors #1 – Disability (six projects)

Issues in terms of disability were reported to prevent girls from attending and learning in schools.

The majority of girls (73%) in LCDK’s (Kenya) survey reported **being unable to attend school due to illness or disability**. LCDK (Kenya) also found that 70% of girls with a hearing impairment rated school a nice place to be most of the time, compared to only 20% of those with a visual impairment. Girls identified “hostility from peers” as an aspect they did not like about school. Concerning treatment from teachers, 59% of the girls felt that teachers treated them fairly and 56% believed that teachers respected their opinions.

Evidence also suggests that **limited assistance and appropriate school facilities are available to girls with disabilities**. For example, 90% of a sample of girls surveyed in Uganda (LCSU (Uganda)) reported that the support required by them is not available, while 83% reported a lack of appropriate teaching aids. 50% of parents reported that schools were not suitable for their disabled girls. LCDK (Kenya) reported that girls with disabilities were also perceived to have ‘less confidence than other girls’.

Overall six projects found evidence of disability in their target areas and reported on its effects on girls’ access to and ability to learn in school. Social exclusion associated with disability is discussed as part of [Section 4.2.7](#).

Personal and family factors #2 – Orphan status and family bereavement (two projects)

Fewer projects found evidence related to being orphaned and family bereavement.

LSCU (Uganda) indicated that they found single mothers taking care of girls with disabilities. According to the project, this could have resulted from family separation due to having a disabled child. TfAC (Malawi) reported that 35% of out-of-school girls (and 26% of in-school girls) were reported as orphans and 17% of out-of-school girls (and 2% of in-school girls) were reported as coming from child-headed households, suggesting that reasons for never enrolling or dropping out may be related to family factors.

Although not reported as a barrier to girls’ education, PEAS (Uganda) found that there were issues over the **differential treatment of orphans within households**. Girls’ attendance and learning is often affected by domestic violence, especially where step mothers influence husbands “not to pay fees for girls and instead have them prepare for marriage”.

Summary: Is girls’ education affected by personal and family factors?

The sixth category of barriers reported to affect girls’ education by IW projects relates to personal and family factors. [Issues in terms of disability](#) were reported to prevent girls from attending and learning in schools, particularly due to the limited assistance and appropriate school facilities available to girls with disabilities. Fewer projects found evidence related to [being orphaned and family bereavement](#). This suggests that the pathways through which personal and family factors other than money and resources-related affect girls’ education are mostly linked to disability across the IW.

⁵⁹ As such, the project found that disability was a barrier to girls’ education for the majority of the girls surveyed who reported being disabled (5%).

4.2.7 Social exclusion

One in four of the 19 IW projects (five out of five projects assuming these types of barriers at the design stage) found that social exclusion affected girls' education. The sub-barrier which was most often reported across these five projects was the **negative perception of disability** (four projects).

For the three IW projects mainly targeting disabled girls, it appears that the negative perceptions of disability were found as a prevalent barrier to girls' education (Table 4.14). One project reported on issues related to caste discrimination.

Table 4.14: Evidence reported by projects for barriers relating to social exclusion

Baseline evidence for social exclusion	Evidence found	IW projects by country and region																		
		Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal		Afgh
East Africa											Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia				
Negative perception of disability	4		✓				✓	✓								✓				
Caste-based discrimination	1																	✓		

Projects' baseline evidence for social exclusion barriers

Barriers found and reported: IW projects found that negative perceptions of disability prevented girls from attending and learning in schools (as evidenced by four projects). Caste-based discrimination was found to affect girls' attendance and learning (by one project). For a discussion of caste-related factors, refer to Section 4.2.4.

Examples of evidence indicating that the proposed barriers exist include:

- 66% of participants in LCDK's (Kenya) household survey reported that girls with disability have less confidence than others;
- MercyCorps (Nepal) reported that on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high), girls reported the scale of effect of caste-based discrimination as 3.5 to 4; and
- PEAS (Uganda) reported that according to caregivers, disabled girls were considered to be less able to perform in schools than non-disabled girls.

Barriers not found: All projects found the barriers they had assumed before baseline research.

Barriers not reported: All projects reported on their assumed barriers in their Project Baseline Reports.

Social exclusion #1 – Negative perceptions of disability (four projects)

Negative perceptions of disability appear to affect disabled girls' self-confidence.

While disability has been reported as an issue by six IW projects (refer to Section 4.2.6), it is important to note that disability is not only an issue in terms of school facilities and infrastructure. Negative perceptions of disability among the community and parents are also likely to affect girls' education, as **there is a shared belief that disability is "a curse" and cannot be overcome by providing education to disabled girls.**

For example, 69% of households and 63% of girls participating in a survey in Kenya (LCDK (Kenya)) reported that girls learn less because of their disability. Responses reflecting community perceptions relating to girls with disability included the following comment from a Kenyan Education Officer:

There are various challenges when it comes to provision of education for disabled children, particularly girls. The first obvious disadvantage they face is the community beliefs and perceptions. There are some communities that believe if you have some disability like a physical disability then that is a curse, you have to live with that tag in the community. There are others who also perceive them as good for nothing people because they are not physically able, they are not able to do work on the farm and such.

LCDK (Kenya)

Summary: Is girls' education affected by social exclusion factors?

The last category of barriers reported to affect girls' education by IW projects relates to social exclusion. [Negative perceptions of disability](#) were found as a prevalent barrier to girls' education, as some communities and parents appear to share the belief that disability is a curse and that disabled girls should not be offered education.

Does the evidence support project assumptions about barriers?

Following the data extraction and document review process, the EM has assessed project findings for barriers against baseline assumptions and expectations relating to barriers. The underlying assumption that is relevant to the GEC programme is that the assumed barriers are present and that they tend to be associated with poorer educational outcomes (enrolment, retention, attendance and learning). The EM has tried to assess the extent to which the evidence presented supports or potentially challenges these assumptions.

1. Projects' findings suggest that contrary to pre-baseline assumptions from IW projects, **the most evidenced barrier related to poverty factors**.
 - Pathways through which girls' education is affected primarily relate to the **cost of schooling**, found to prevent girls from attending schools due to parents' inability (or fear of not being able) to afford the costs at the time of enrolment and during the subsequent years of schooling.
 - The second poverty factor identified by IW projects in their target areas relates to **girls' household responsibilities occasioned by household survival strategies**. Poverty contexts tend to mean that girls' responsibilities include household chores and caring for family members, suggesting that girls have less time to attend school and learn.
2. **School-related barriers**, assumed by IW projects at pre-baseline as the most important barriers to girls' education, **ranked second in the list of barriers to girls' education found at baseline**. Evidence was not systematically found by projects, which suggests that schools' capacity and performance in terms of providing quality education to girls is more nuanced than expected by projects before the baseline research.
 - Pathways through which girls' education is affected primarily relate to the **poor quality of education**, as evidenced by the prevalence of 'teacher-centred pedagogy', the lack of gender responsiveness of teaching and teaching techniques frequently involving corporal punishment.
 - The second school-related factor identified by IW projects in their target areas relates to the **distance to school**. The long distance to school appears to result in greater girls' absenteeism due to safety issues and more than the distance itself between home and school, the hazards of having girls walking on their own are a concern.
3. IW projects found that **the lack of female aspirations and girls' inability to make decisions was the third most important barrier to girls' education**. Pathways through which girls' education is affected primarily relate to **deeply entrenched beliefs relating to marriage and the role of women**. Early marriage is seen as an alternative to education, either for parents to receive financial compensation or for girls to be provided for by their husbands.
4. In contrast with UNESCO research, **negative attitudes towards girls' education** are a category of barriers for which projects' assumptions appear to be challenged by baseline research results. It is important to note that barriers such as attitudes may have been harder to measure, suggesting that attitudinal barriers to girls' education may be more prevalent than reported by IW projects.
 - Negative attitudes affecting girls' education are mostly related to the **perception that there is little value in girls getting an education** rather than a more basic lack of family or community support for girls' education.
 - The perceived value of education affects girls' education because parents assume that **little should be expected in return for engaging girls' in education**. Another attitudinal pathway

through which girls' education is affected relates to the fact that the value of education is assessed by parents and community members against the **opportunity costs of sending girls to school**.

5. The fifth most important barrier to girls' education evidenced by IW projects relates to violence and safety. **Harassment and insecurity** was reported as the most prevalent sub-barrier, in contrast with girls' fear of violence or actual reports of violence.
6. The sixth category of barriers reported to affect girls' education by IW projects relates to personal and family factors. **Issues relating to disability** were reported to prevent girls from attending and learning in schools, particularly due to the limited assistance and appropriate school facilities available to girls with disabilities.
7. The last category of barriers reported to affect girls' education by IW projects relates to social exclusion. **Negative perceptions of disability** were found as a prevalent barrier to girls' education, because some communities and parents appear to share the belief that disability is a curse and that disabled girls should not be offered education.
8. **Barriers affecting specific age groups** such as secondary school-aged girls related more to: the distance to school and insecurity on the way to and from secondary schools because they are located further away from their homes than their primary schools were; the lack of adequate sanitation facilities in schools that prevent girls from attending school during menstruation; and the prevalence of early marriage among teenaged girls.

In summary, the evidence reported by IW projects suggests that most of the barriers assumed at the project design stage exist within projects' contexts. While it is difficult to reach definitive conclusions about the extent to which aspects of girls', parents' and communities' lives constitutes an obstacle for girls to attend and learn in schools, **the evidence provided by IW projects suggests that two categories of barriers, namely poverty-related barriers and school-related barriers prevail across a variety of contexts.**

For further insights on coping strategies put in place by parents and girls to overcome barriers to girls' education, refer to the [Step Change Window Baseline Report](#) where additional data sources (EM data) were used to discuss the prevalence of barriers.

Finally, identifying the barriers influencing girls' education is crucial for projects to achieve sustainable change through their planned activities. **The sustainability aspects of projects' interventions should be addressed more extensively at midline and endline stages**, in order to address the limited evidence presented in Project Baseline Reports in relation to the implications of baseline findings on expected sustainable changes.

5 Project Targeting and Changes to Project Design

This section focuses on the projects' definition of marginalised girls and projects' criteria for inclusion in their target groups. It seeks to explain the extent to which IW projects' target girls are marginalised, socially and educationally, and whether projects managed to reach their target groups. Also discussed are the intervention activities planned by the projects at the design phase and changes to these resulting from the project baseline research. Key findings are reported based on baseline research findings reported by IW projects.

5.1 Does the evidence support project targeting?

During baseline data collection, most projects asked girls in their sample to respond to questions that would allow the project to identify them as members of target groups and to assess their level of marginalisation compared to non-target girls. As a result, it is possible in light of baseline findings to:

- clarify and confirm how projects have defined marginalisation, specifically how they have measured the relevant characteristics that support the identification of target groups;
- assess the extent to which projects have been able to ensure that the designated target groups are directly represented in their research, specifically in survey samples; and
- examine the accuracy of assumptions made about the nature and level of girls' educational marginalisation in target groups against the definition of social and educational marginalisation that projects had formulated at the onset of the Inception Phase.

5.1.1 How have projects defined marginalisation (social and educational)?

The GEC Business Case⁶⁰ defined marginalised girls as those (aged 6 to 19) who have not been enrolled or have dropped out from school or are in danger of doing so (whether living in slums, remote areas, ethnic/religious minorities, girls with disabilities, girls who become pregnant, girls affected by conflict). However, the design of the GEC Fund deliberately left the definition of marginalisation open to the projects' individual interpretations of what marginalisation entailed in each of their intervention contexts. Projects have therefore taken various approaches to defining marginalisation with respect to their target groups.

Three broad categories of marginalisation criteria have been identified across the 19 IW projects, as listed below:

- **Educationally marginalised girls:** Projects which opted to define marginalised girls through the spectrum of educational marginalisation, e.g. out-of-school girls, girls at risk of dropping out, girls at risk of poor learning or poor attendance.
- **Geographically or socio-economically marginalised girls:** Projects which provided a range of socio-economic criteria to define marginalised girls, e.g. girls living in a slum or in a rural area, girls from displaced or migrant population groups, girls whose families are unable to meet basic needs or facing hunger, orphan girls, girls with disabilities, girls facing early marriage or a young pregnancy, girls living on the street or being forced into labour and – more broadly – any other definitions that fit the context where projects operate.
- **Combination of educational, geographic and socio-economic factors to identify marginalised girls:** Projects which identified marginalisation for their target group using multiple criteria or indexes (refer to [Table 5.1](#)). Five of the 19 IW projects provided detailed explanations of the multiple criteria or indexes used to arrive at their definition of marginalisation.

⁶⁰ DFID (2012), Girls' Education Challenge, Business Case Version 4, June 2012, pp. 13-28

Table 5.1: IW projects’ marginalisation criteria

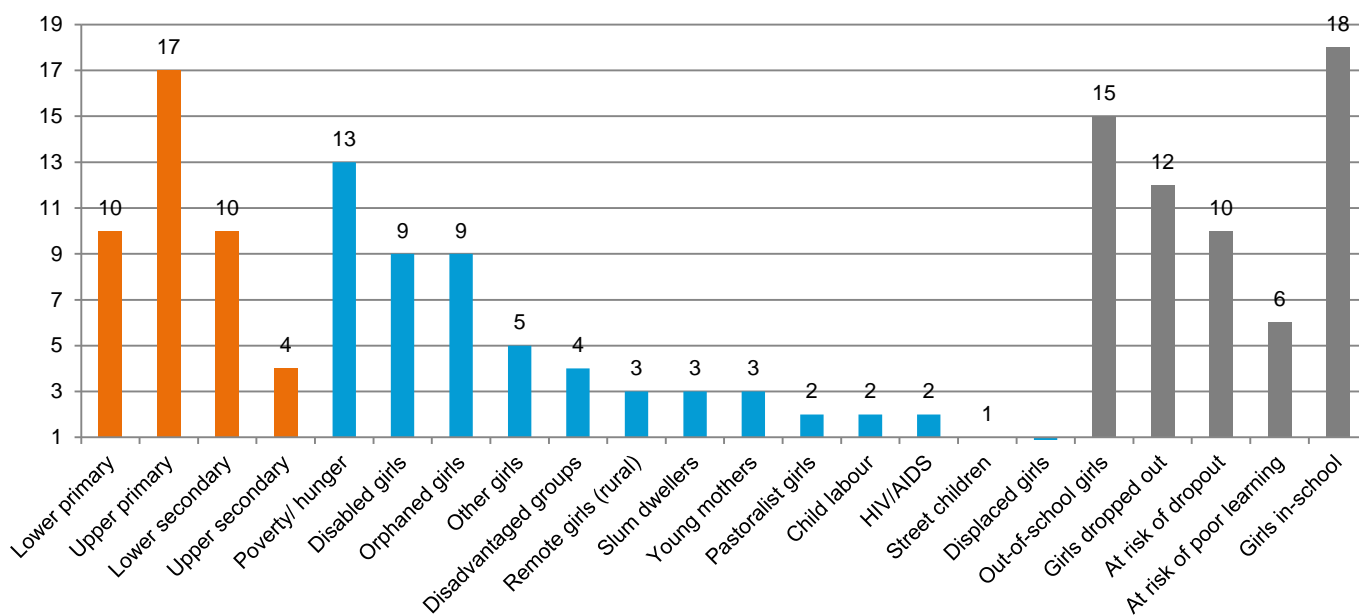
Marginalisation criteria	Number of projects	IW projects by country and region																			
		Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd	
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100	
		Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh		
East Africa											Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia					
Single criteria	14	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓ ²	✓	✓	
Multiple criteria ¹	4					✓							✓			✓	✓				
Index (weighted)	1														✓						

1- Some projects have listed multiple criteria (for example, poor AND disabled AND/OR orphan) that define a marginalised girl, but they have not specified that it is an index. Similarly, some projects have specified marginalised in comparison to extremely marginalised girls.
 2- This project distinguishes between marginalised and extremely marginalised girls. However, it is not an index but two separate definitions.

5.1.2 How have the projects defined their target groups?

During the Inception Phase, projects refined their theories of change to reflect the different types of barriers that they anticipated would drive educational marginalisation in their target areas. Based on these considerations, projects identified the specific educational or social groups that they would want to target through their interventions. Figure 5.2 below provides an overview of how projects have defined their target groups. A discussion of baseline findings and implications for the criteria used to target project beneficiaries is presented as part of this section.

Figure 5.2: Number of projects targeting school phase groups / social groups / educational groups



In the IW, the category “other girls” refers to various definitions provided by the projects that did not fit the main categories. For example, VIVA (Uganda) included girls who are victims of sexual violence, girls at risk of murder or child sacrifice, girls from child-headed households and girls in conflict-affected areas. GEMS (Ghana) included girls who are over-age in their grade, girls who travel more than 30 minutes to school, girls who have absented themselves from school more than 10 times in a term and girls who have more than four siblings. Raising Voices (Uganda) has included structural vulnerability (circumstances: nutritional deficit, living in child headed households, having to work outside the home while still attending school or having some form of disability) and environmental vulnerability (experiences: severe physical or sexual violence at school or home or scoring highly on emotional or behavioural problem measurements). Finally, TfAC (Malawi) has included vulnerability to domestic violence or

harmful practices against girls. This underlines the wide range of factors identified by IW projects as marginalisation factors.

School phase groups

Projects are targeting girls aged in the range of 5 to 19 years with a dominant focus on **primary school girls**. In terms of school age groups, girls of upper primary school age (regardless of whether they are in school or out-of-school) are the age group targeted by 17 projects, while four projects target girls of upper secondary age. Only one project in the IW (LCSU (Uganda)) is not targeting primary school-aged girls as part of its project design.

Social marginalisation

From a socio-economic perspective, a majority of projects (13 out of 19) define marginalisation and their target groups at least in part through levels of poverty, compiled using different criteria and factors affecting the level of resources available to households. This suggests that **poverty** is expected by projects to be a common theme underlying educational marginalisation for girls. However poverty is also recognised to be a multidimensional phenomenon and is likely to take various forms and to different degrees across different project contexts, and having different types of relationships to educational experiences and outcomes.

As shown in [Figure 5.2](#), various other social criteria have been used by projects to narrow their definition of social marginalisation. Almost half of the projects (nine out of 19) include **disability or orphan status** as criteria in their definition of marginalised girls.

Two of the IW projects have defined marginalisation of their target group as girls who are HIV positive. Two projects include children who are forced into labour in their definition of their target group. From a geographic perspective, two projects target girls in pastoralist communities, three projects target girls in remote or rural areas, and three projects target girls living in slums.

Educational marginalisation

As noted above, some IW projects also defined their target groups in educational terms, proposing to work with girls who have never been enrolled in school, girls who have dropped out, or girls who are in school but at risk of dropping out or learning poorly.

Almost all projects (18 out of 19) are targeting **in-school girls**, except for one project, LCSU (Uganda), which is targeting only out-of-school girls. Fourteen projects are targeting both in-school and out-of-school girls. A further four are targeting only in-school girls. Girls who have dropped out are also an important focus for projects, with 12 out of 19 projects proposing to work with girls who have dropped out.

Girls at risk of dropping out and girls at risk of poor learning are target groups which have been targeted by less than half of the projects, as the projects had difficulties in finding the appropriate indicators for predicting whether girls were at risk of educational marginalisation.

Primary and secondary target groups

It is important to note that projects have often used several criteria to target their beneficiaries, but that this did not always imply that each of the sub target groups was equally represented in projects' samples. As shown in [Table 5.3](#), projects tended to have a primary target group and several secondary target groups. Primary target groups are most likely the target groups for which projects will attempt to demonstrate improved access to school and learning for girls during the life of the GEC programme.

Table 5.3: Projects' primary and secondary target groups

Projects	Primary target group(s)	Secondary target group(s)
HPA (Rwanda)	Poor; rural girls	Orphan girls; HIV positive girls; historically marginalised groups (e.g. Batwa); girls with a history of being absent/ late in school; pregnant girls; very poor girls; not enrolled /willing to re-enroll; disabled girls; girls involved in work
Link (Ethiopia)		Disabled girls
VSO (Mozambique)		
PEAS (Uganda)	Poor; rural girls; physical disabilities; orphaned girls	
BRAC (Tanzania)	Poor girls	Orphan girls; disabled girls; minority ethnic group
VSO (Nepal)	Disadvantaged caste/ minority; poverty	Extremely vulnerable girls
Eco Fuel (Uganda)	Poor girls; slum dwellers	
TfAC (Malawi)	Orphan girls; girls at risk of pregnancy; vulnerable to domestic violence or harmful practices	
Opp Int (Uganda)	Poor girls; orphan girls; in female-headed household; rural or peri-urban	
LCSU (Uganda)	Disabled girls; slum dwellers; poor girls	
LCDK (Kenya)	Disabled girls	
ICL (Kenya)	Disabled girls; young mothers and orphans	
Viva (Uganda)	Out-of-school girls/ at high risk of dropping out	Orphan girls (lost mother, lost both mother and father); girls infected and affected by HIV/AIDS; girls with disabilities; girls in worst form of child labour; girls from child headed households; girls in war affected areas; young mother or expectant young mother
MercyCorps (Nepal)	In-school girls/ girls who have dropped out	Sub-castes; bonded labour
GEMS (Ghana)	Girls with more than 4 siblings; living more than 30 minutes from school; girls over-age for their class	
Child Fund (Afghanistan)	Nomadic girls	
Red (South Sudan)	In-school girls/ girls at risk of dropping out/ girls who have dropped out	
Raising Voices (Uganda)	Any of the following: nutritional deficit, living in child headed households, having to work outside the home while still attending school or had some form of disability, severe physical or sexual violence at school or home or scoring highly on emotional or behavioural problem measurements	
Camfed (Zambia)	Index: orphan status, hunger, education of household members, household assets and repetition to define marginality	

Summary: How have the projects defined marginalisation and their target groups?

Poverty is expected by projects to be a common theme underlying educational marginalisation for girls. Other **social criteria** have been used by projects to narrow their definition of social marginalisation: almost half of the projects include disability or orphan status as criteria in their definition of marginalised girls. To a lesser extent, some IW projects also defined their target groups in **educational terms** (girls who have never been enrolled in school, girls who have dropped out, or girls who are in school but at risk of dropping out or learning poorly). This may be explained by the fact that IW projects had difficulties in finding the appropriate indicators for predicting whether girls were at risk of educational marginalisation.

5.1.3 Have the projects found baseline evidence that their target groups exist?

During their baseline research, projects were encouraged to collect data that is representative of their target group(s), as well as of a control group of marginalised girls, who will not receive the intervention but are similar in other relevant respects. [Tables 5.4](#) and [5.5](#) below show the extent to which proposed target groups are represented in the project baseline survey samples.

Table 5.4: Projects' evidence of target group identification – Key

Type of evidence in relation to target group	Key
Target group found and reported: Targeted group was reported by the project as being present in population sampled. Target groups found and reported are marked with '✓'.	✓
Target group not found: Targeted group was not reported by the project as being present in population sampled. Target groups not found are marked with '✦'.	✦
Target group not reported: Targeted group was assumed but not reported/ discussed/ measured by the project. Missing evidence is marked with '•'.	•
Non Applicable: Target groups neither assumed nor reported are marked in Grey .	

Baseline findings show that projects are targeting diverse groups of girls and have evidenced, to a certain extent⁶¹, that these groups are present in their target areas.

- **Target groups not found:** Projects targeting disabled girls did not all manage to reach a large proportion of disabled girls. Two projects (LCDK (Kenya) and LCSU (Uganda)) out of nine found all girls to be disabled in their baseline samples as their primary focus is on addressing disability and related barriers to girls' education. However, another four projects found less than 10% of their baseline sample to be disabled girls.
- **Target groups not reported:** Projects in general had difficulties presenting evidence on disadvantaged caste/ ethnic minority groups (four out of four projects), girls at risk of dropping out (nine out of 10 projects) and girls at risk of poor learning (five out of six projects).

Findings indicate that projects have achieved the representation of target girls in their baseline data to varying degrees (refer to [Tables 5.5](#) and [5.6](#)). While project samples include the major categories of target groups, data related to social sub-groups within these categories is missing in various cases, such as for girls from disadvantaged castes or ethnic minorities⁶². With respect to educational sub-groups, data for girls at risk of dropping out and girls at risk of poor learning is not available. Data related to age groups however is reported by most projects, although not available for all. The EM does not comment on target groups for which evidence was

⁶¹ Depending on the share of targeted girls found in their samples.

⁶² This may be related to the difficulties for projects to report disaggregated data by ethnic group or caste, and/ or to the sensitivity of such data.

not reported by projects in their baseline reports (missing evidence marked with ‘•’), as these groups may have been found in the baseline sample but not reported by the projects.

Table 5.5: Identification of target groups in project samples

Target groups found at baseline	IW projects by country and region																			
	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd	
	7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100	
	Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal		Afgh	
	East Africa										Southern Africa					W.A.	Asia			
Baseline sample size	1768	1462	800	1480	1257	746	1142	2108	1500	714	1108	2582	414	3075	942	2722	1740	1129	381	
Treatment	893	1114	300	779	848	374	610	1054	750	•	601	1711	199	2610	471	•	1064	621	194	
Control	875	348	500	701	409	372	532	1054	750	•	507	870	215	465	471	•	676	508	187	
School phase																				
Lower primary	✓				✓		✓	•	•	✓	✓		✦			•	•		✓	
Upper primary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	•	•	✓	✓	✓		✓	•	•	•	•		
Lower secondary	✓	✓	✓	✓		•		•		✓		•					•	•		
Upper secondary					•		•			✓								•		
Older				✓						✓	✓		✓	✓					✦	
Social groups																				
Disabled girls		✦		✦	•	✓	✓	•	✦	✓		✦								
Orphaned girls		✓	•	✓	•			✓		•		✓		✓	✓					
Pastoralist girls								✓											✓	
Displaced girls																				
Remote girls (rural)		✓							✓				✓							
Slum-dwellers	•					✓		✓												
Other girls				✓	•			•							•	•				
Child labour				✦														•		
Poor/Hunger	✓	✓	•	✓		✓			✓	•		✓	✓	✓	✓	•	•			
Disadvantaged groups										•		•			•		•			
Affected by HIV/AIDS				✓						•										
Young mothers				✓				•		✦										
Street Children				✓																
Educational groups																				
Out-of-school girls	✓	✓		✓	✦	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Girls dropped out	✓			✓	✓		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	•	•	
At risk of dropout	•			•			✓		•	•	•	•			•		•	•		
At risk of poor learning		•		•					•			✓		•		•				
Girls in-school	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	•	✓	✓	✓	✓	•	•		

Where data was reported and analysed by the EM based on project data, the evidence shows that:

- With respect to **school age groups**, five projects reported to have found older girls (up to 22 years old) within their sample. HPA (Rwanda) found a large number of girls in their sample to be older (197 girls out of 714 sampled girls (28%)), which suggests that the GEC activities will also target marginalised girls who are beyond the primary and secondary school age.
- Thirteen projects define marginalisation and their target group through **poverty**. Nine of these projects reported having found their target group, and a high number of girls reporting to be living in poverty. Link (Ethiopia) reported that 1485 girls out of 1500 sampled girls (99%) were in a situation of poverty (all girls were sampled in rural areas); PEAS (Uganda) found 1039 girls out of 1452 sampled (72%) were reported

to be poor or from impoverished households; Eco-Fuel (Uganda) found that 1096 out of 1768 sampled (62%) and TfAC (Malawi) found that 688 out of 942 girls sampled (73%) were living in poverty.

- Nine projects defining marginalisation using **disability** criteria reported finding disabled girls within their sample. LCSU (Uganda) and LCDK (Kenya), two projects predominantly targeting disabled girls, have the largest proportion of disabled girls in their sample.
- **Orphaned girls** (girls who have lost one or both of their parents) were targeted by nine projects, although only six projects reported evidence for orphaned girls as a primary target group. PEAS (Uganda) baseline figures show that 381 out of 1462 girls sampled (26%) are orphaned girls.
- **Out-of-school girls** were targeted by 16 projects. The number of out-of-school girls found in projects' samples varies considerably across these 16 projects, suggesting that the number of out-of-school girls expected pre-baseline may have been higher than found during baseline. While most of the 16 projects found between 5% and 20% of their sampled girls to be out-of-school girls, Raising Voices (Uganda) found a markedly lower number of out-of-school girls in their sample (39 out-of-school girls out of 1257 sampled girls (3%)).

For detailed figures on baseline samples achieved by projects, refer to [Annex C](#).

Based on projects' baseline samples and assumptions prior to the baseline research, it is difficult to assess to what extent they found the target groups they expected to reach. Projects may have found a smaller than expected sample of a specific sub-group in their sampled populations. However there are no definite thresholds for assessing whether projects reached the expected number of disabled or orphaned girls in their sample for instance. Projects did not specify the size they expected at the design stage.

As a result, where projects defined a target group as a primary target group, it is assumed that a majority of girls should belong to this target group in the project sample. [Table 5.6](#) presents projects' comments on target groups for which the achieved representation in projects' baseline data was relatively low.

Table 5.6: Target groups not found during baseline research

Projects	Target group expected	Achieved representation in sample	Projects' comments
PEAS (Uganda)	Disabled girls	3% (42 girls out of 1462 sampled girls)	The fourth group of girls identified by PEAS as marginalised included the girls with disabilities. The baseline study found very few girls with disabilities who are eligible for PEAS interventions in the sampled population. PEAS will not change any of the activities from the planned focus on girls with disabilities.
Link (Ethiopia)		5% (75 girls out of 1500 sampled girls)	Parents reported that about 5% of sampled girls had some disability that could influence their school work. These girls may be the most marginalised girls and may benefit from additional tutoring classes.
Viva (Uganda)		4% (60 girls out of 1480 sampled girls)	Not reported as a primary target group by the project.
Raising Voices (Uganda)	Out-of-school girls	3% (39 girls out of 1257 sampled girls)	Not reported as a primary target group by the project.
HPA (Rwanda)	Young mother/expecting	1% (8 girls out of 714 sampled girls)	The baseline survey observes that the question around pregnancy attracted a high non-response as girls, from the enumerators' observation, felt uncomfortable to discuss this sensitive issue. The sample size was too low to draw definitive conclusions, but suggests that the number of girls dropping out of school due to teenage pregnancy may be significant.
Viva (Uganda)	Child labour	1% (22 girls out of 1480 sampled girls)	Not reported as a primary target group by the project.

There are several implications related to the fact that the achieved representation of target groups in projects' samples was markedly low. Firstly, projects may have difficulties in demonstrating a significant change in educational outcomes on such small sample sizes. Secondly, the scalability of findings is likely to be questioned

at the endline stage due to the limited size of these sub-groups. Finally projects may want to revise their project design to adapt the size of their interventions to reflect the proportionality of results expected for these sub-groups.

Changes to projects' marginalisation criteria and target group definitions

In response to findings from the baseline research some projects changed their definition of marginalisation while other projects developed a better understanding of their contexts and target groups. This shows the use and value of undertaking the research for refining project design including target groups.

Three projects modified their definition of marginalisation to include socio-economic criteria. LCSU (Uganda) identified the existence and marginalisation of street girls and refined their definition of relevant marginalisation to include these girls. These are now included in the project's current target group alongside disabled girls. Similarly, HPA (Rwanda) has included girls who are forced into child labour into their target group, considering these to be marginalised in ways that are relevant to GEC. BRAC (Tanzania) has also changed its target group as a result of its baseline evidence which now only includes girls in upper primary schools.

Other projects did not change their target groups but their learning about the target groups was enhanced. For example, ChildFund (Afghanistan) did not change its target group, but learned that the target communities of girls migrate for shorter times than expected. Theatre for a Change (Malawi) and VSO (Nepal), in one of their interventions, had planned to work with boys and girls in a mixed setting. Given the level of vulnerability of target girls, found at baseline, they decided that the intervention had higher chances of success if boys were not included as direct project beneficiaries or if special care was provided to ensure girls did not feel further marginalised with the inclusion of boys.

Summary: Have the projects found baseline evidence that their target groups exist?

We found that IW projects are targeting diverse groups of girls. Most projects have evidenced, to a certain extent (depending on the share of targeted girls found in their samples), that these groups are present in their target areas. Projects found a high number of girls reporting to be living in [poverty](#), and half of the projects reported finding [disabled girls](#) within their sample. In contrast, [orphaned girls](#) were not found by all projects expecting a significant share of orphaned girls in their target areas. Similarly, the number of [out-of-school girls](#) expected pre-baseline may have been higher than found during baseline. In general, the baseline research allowed projects to develop a better understanding of their contexts and target groups.

5.2 Has the baseline evidence influenced project targeting and project intervention design?

In this section we summarise the baseline findings and review whether projects changed their target groups, outcome targets and project designs (e.g. intervention activities), based on their baseline research findings.



It is important to note that the EM had limited information on the project design changes that took place after the baseline research was completed. Project design changes were discussed between the FM and the IW projects, and the EM used the available information shared by the FM at the time of writing, which may not reflect the full range of changes projects made subsequently.

Intervention opportunities

All projects were required to report on the baseline levels of educational marginalisation, and encouraged to analyse barriers to education. In addition, some projects also reported on existing opportunities for their planned interventions to take place in the target communities. For example, some projects verified that textbooks are actually in short supply or that communities are not yet exposed to community radio messages on girls' education. [Tables 5.7](#) and [5.8](#) provide an overview of the broad intervention types that projects set out to implement according to their full proposal application and the evidence supporting interventions as per projects' baseline findings.

Table 5.7: Projects’ evidence for intervention activities – Key

Type of evidence in relation to intervention activities	Key
Evidenced intervention activities: Evidence was reported by the project which is supporting proposed project intervention activities. Evidenced intervention activities are marked with ‘✓’.	✓
Challenged intervention activities: Evidence was reported by the project which is challenging proposed project intervention activities. Challenged intervention activities are marked with ‘✦’.	✦
Missing evidence: Opportunities for intervention activities was not discussed by the project. Missing evidence is marked with ‘•’.	•
Non Applicable: Intervention activities not planned by the project are marked in Grey .	

Initially planned interventions – 15 projects initially planned to undertake activities related to the development of ‘Capacity’ and ‘Community’, 12 projects planned to provide ‘Teaching’ inputs and ‘Safe spaces’, and 11 ‘Material’ support. Nine projects aimed to intervene by providing ‘Learning’ support, seven through ‘School Governance’ activities and seven by improving ‘Access’. Within each of these categories of intervention type, projects proposed specific activities planned to be undertaken during the project period. Some examples include adapting self-financing education model with business classes, setting up income generating activities, building accelerated-learning schools and supporting families to review their household budget and income generating strategies (for a full list of interventions for each project, refer to [Annex A](#)).

Evidence of intervention opportunities – Evidence was mostly supportive of projects’ initially planned interventions. Projects planning interventions relating to ‘Governance’ and ‘Voice’ reported clear opportunities for the proposed interventions. Twelve of the 15 projects that proposed interventions related to ‘Capacity’ provided evidence suggesting that these are relevant.

Table 5.8: Evidence reported for proposed project intervention activities

Intervention types and baseline evidence	IW projects by country and region																		
	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LC DK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
	7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
	Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal	Afgh	
	East Africa										Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia			
Access	✦		✓			✦					•	✓			✓	✦			
Capacity	✓	✓			✓	✦	✓	✓		✓	✓	✦	✓	✓	✓	✦	✓		✓
Community	✓	✦			✦	✓		✓	✓	•	✓	✓	✓	✓		•	•	✦	✓
Governance		✓			•			•	✓	✓							•		✓
Learning		✓				✓		✦	•			✓			•	✓	✦		✦
Material	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓		•	✓		•	✦	✓		✦	
Safe spaces	✦	✦					✓	•	✓	✦	•	•		✓		•		✓	✓
Teaching	✦	✦		✓		✓			✓		✓	✓	✦	✓		•	•	•	•
Voice	✓				•	•	✓		✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	•	•

Challenged planned interventions – Thirteen projects provided evidence for their designed activities which suggest that some of these may not be relevant for their intervention areas. PEAS (Uganda), Eco-Fuel (Uganda), GEMS (Ghana), MercyCorps (Nepal) and LCSU (Uganda) all reported two or more interventions being challenged by their baseline evidence. After finding out that parents were supportive of girls’ education, PEAS (Uganda) adapted their community engagement plan to use messages that emphasise what parents can do to facilitate and support their daughters’ education rather than why educating their daughters is important in the first instance. Furthermore, LCSU (Uganda) revised its project design in order to develop school-based inclusive education resource centres in schools rather than at the central office. These will be used for education, medical assessment, remedial teaching, therapeutic services, counselling, learning test centres and a library for accessible teaching and learning materials.

Missing evidence – For 12 of the 19 projects, evidence was missing relating to one or more of the proposed interventions. More specifically, evidence was missing for almost half of the projects planning to intervene at the ‘Governance’ level, suggesting intervention opportunities may be more challenging to evidence for this type of intervention.

Revisions to the project design, outcome targets and target groups

A primary purpose of the projects’ baseline research was to test assumptions about degrees and types of marginalisation, barriers to girls’ education, and the opportunities for planned interventions to take place, in order to be able to adjust outcome targets, target groups or the intervention design before the start of project implementation. [Table 5.9](#) summarises the challenges that projects have encountered with respect to their assumptions about outcome levels, barriers and interventions, as a result of the baseline analysis. The table further indicates whether a project has made any changes or adjustments to the definition of their target groups, their outcome targets, or their intervention design.

Projects may have wanted to adjust their target population on the basis of evidence about marginalisation for either of the following reasons:

- Because a sub-group was found to be more or less marginalised than expected; or
- Because evidence about expected barriers was different than expected (for example the assumed barrier that the intervention targets is not unique to a sub-group).

A small number of other projects decided to adjust their target population based on the evidence collected at baseline, as indicated in [Table 5.9](#).

Based on this evidence four projects adjusted their target groups. These projects are HPA (Rwanda), BRAC (Tanzania), Eco-Fuel (Uganda) and LCSU (Uganda). LCSU (Uganda) found street girls (considered to be a marginalised group), and refined their definition of marginalisation. These are now included in the project’s current target group alongside disabled girls. Similarly, HPA (Rwanda) have included girls who are forced into child labour into their target group, considering these to be marginalised. BRAC (Tanzania) has also changed its target group which now only includes girls in upper primary schools.

Based on a review of the baseline evidence, some projects decided to change their intervention type or mix of interventions due to one or several of the following baseline findings:

- The evidence about one or several educational barriers contradicts assumptions about the way in which the intervention should support marginalised girls (for example, the barrier is not present in the population or operates in a different way or is less important than another barrier);
- The evidence about outcomes levels in the target groups contradicts assumptions about the educational needs of the groups of girls that are targeted (for example, the project finds that they need to help a larger group or less disadvantaged girls rather than a small group of very disadvantaged girls or vice versa); and
- The evidence about intervention opportunities suggests that there is no specific need for the planned intervention type.

As shown in [Table 5.9](#) all projects made adjustments to their outcome targets and 18 projects proposed to make changes to their proposed intervention activities. Only GEMS (Ghana) did not propose to adjust their intervention activities although challenging evidence was found relating to their planned interventions. More projects aimed to change their activities related to ‘Capacity’ (seven projects), ‘Community’ (seven projects), ‘Material’ (six projects) and ‘Safe spaces’ (five projects). Only one project, Viva (Uganda), planned to change its intervention related to ‘Governance’, as their research revealed the critical need to advocate on behalf of children with disabilities and young mothers who are excluded from school when they have a right to be in school.

Table 5.9: Changes to project interventions, target groups and outcome targets

Changes to interventions, target groups and outcomes	IW projects by country and region																		
	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Viva	RV	LCSU	LC DK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
	7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
	Uganda				Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal		Afgh	
East Africa											Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia			
Evidence challenges assumption about:																			
Barriers	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓					
Interventions	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Project adjustments to:																			
Target groups	✓					✓				✓		✓							
Outcome targets	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Intervention design	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Specific adjustments to interventions:																			
Access	✓		✓	✓		✓													
Capacity					✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓				
Community		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓		✓								✓
Governance				✓															
Learning		✓							✓								✓		✓
Material	✓							✓	✓					✓	✓			✓	
Safe spaces	✓	✓							✓	✓								✓	
Teaching	✓	✓							✓									✓	
Voice							✓		✓						✓			✓	

Summary: Has the baseline evidence influenced project targeting and project intervention design?

Evidence was **mostly supportive** of projects’ initially planned interventions. Based on a review of the evidence from the baseline research all projects made adjustments to their **outcome targets** and 18 projects proposed to make changes to their proposed intervention activities. Broadly speaking most projects responded to challenges to their pre-baseline assumptions. However the extent to which projects were able to better articulate the **linkages between their evidenced barriers to girls’ education, the composition of their target groups identified during the baseline research and their proposed interventions** seems to have been limited.

6 Projects' Evidence and Effective Evaluation

6.1 Does the evidence support effective project evaluation?

6.1.1 What challenges did projects face during baseline?

At the proposal development stage IW projects were encouraged (but not required) to use a combination of: a representative longitudinal household survey of target and control communities; longitudinal tracking of school based cohorts; and structured qualitative research. Learning assessments would be implemented at the household level and where appropriate supplemented by in-school testing. The focus of the baseline research was to ascertain the degree of marginalisation and barriers affecting girls. At the midline it was planned that projects would assess the extent to which target groups were exposed to intervention activities and assess for any intermediary changes. At the endline projects would assess changes in outcomes and the processes contributing towards this change.

Some projects however adopted strategies which varied from the description above. This was due to their intervention population, for example, those working with girls with disabilities, or girls who were judged to be segregated from their communities, street children or girls boarding at secondary schools. Projects also relied upon the evaluation approaches they had previously used. Some also had their own understanding of the feasibility and desirability of establishing control groups in their project areas. On the one hand, some projects were positive about adopting an RCT design while others suggested that project implementation was dependent on limiting such activity to highly restricted and purposive sampling.

The intent of the Evaluation Manager was to encourage harmonisation. Where possible, the EM advocated design ideas that enabled projects to work from a common framework for undertaking their evaluations while respecting the variety of approaches available and the different contexts across the Innovation Window. Projects were encouraged to at least undertake some level of community assessment to allow evaluation of the effects on both target groups and the general population and also to help form a control group to establish a counterfactual. Some projects proposed a phased design where some intervention areas would start later than others forming controls initially. In many cases the research designs evolved during the baseline design phase and in some instances at the post-baseline phase where remedial or redesign activity was required.

The projects were also encouraged to prepare for the requirements of PbR. To some extent these evolved as DFID provided clarifications of their requirements, as the availability of measures could be repeated, and the practicalities of collecting data became clearer. A focus also emerged on learning assessments for specific sub-groups (in school by grade and out-of-school) and for collecting attendance data (from schools). This has led to some projects developing specific out-of-school samples and not developing a single probability sample for target communities.

IW projects faced a range of difficulties while conducting baseline data collection, which have been described in Project Baseline Reports. From these reports, the most frequently reported research challenges, experienced by over a third of the projects were: (1) the inability to achieve a full sample size; (2) difficulties in obtaining reliable administrative data on attendance, enrolment or retention; and (3) weak analysis of data in Project Baseline Reports (Table 6.1).

The review process for the Project Baseline Reports assessed the baseline research based on the results presented. The projects and the Fund Manager agreed on their research designs with input from the Evaluation Manager. There was an understanding that if implemented these designs would provide a reasonable probability of generating evidence that was fit for purpose for project-level evaluation. However, even if these designs were used as planned across the 19 projects some data imbalances or unrepresentativeness were likely to arise that might require remedial measures. Issues were also expected to arise due to constrained sampling opportunities and challenging fieldwork circumstances as well as limited knowledge of the project contexts. In most cases, projects overcame or mitigated the issues associated with these challenges. In some cases, however, issues appear to be outstanding, either because these concerns have not as yet been addressed by projects or because they were not fully discussed in the Project Baseline Reports.

Table 6.1: Research challenges reported or identified by IW projects at baseline

Research challenges at baseline	IW projects by country and region																			
	Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Vlva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd	
	7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100	
	Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal		Afgh	
East Africa											Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia				
Non-response/ refusal		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓										
Unrepresentativeness		✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓		✓	
Differences control/ int.				✓				✓	✓											
GEC admin. issues				✓				✓			✓									
Prob. with admin. data	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓						✓	✓		
Survey length		✓		✓					✓		✓									
Disruptive conflict				✓							✓									
Survey logistics		✓		✓			✓	✓			✓								✓	
Data entry/ analysis	✓			✓	✓						✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			
Survey cost/ incentive				✓																
Benefits for participation				✓			✓													
Did not gather key info.				✓		✓						✓	✓		✓	✓				
Problems with evaluator															✓				✓	

Was representativeness achieved?

Six IW projects reported high levels of non-responses to the survey, or refusal or non-cooperation of girls, community leaders, or head teachers. Four projects mentioned problems caused by the length of the survey instrument, and the relevance of certain questions, or noted that respondents complained about the length of the survey or that this caused logistical issues in administering the survey. These issues have the potential to affect the representativeness of the findings, suggesting that **representativeness was only achieved to a certain extent**.

One aspect of representativeness involves the ability to identify target groups. A number of projects were reported as having some difficulties in identifying and articulating their target beneficiaries within their context.

- **LCDK (Kenya):** The project acknowledged the limitations in using a snowballing technique to identify girls with disabilities and states that this will not be used for midline and endline evaluations. Some of the data which remains to be collected includes attendance data.

Almost half of the projects reported problems in collecting official data from school or other government sources. This data was either unavailable, or incomplete, due to poor school records. At times there were also discrepancies with the projects' own data, which highlighted the potential over-estimation of attendance or enrolment obtained from official data sources. Collecting reliable attendance data was particularly problematic, although enrolment and retention data were also mentioned. Some of the problems in collecting official data were related in the GEC approval process which resulted in schools being closed at the time of the baseline. An example of this issue was that faced by VSO:

- **VSO (Mozambique):** Due to time constraints, the external evaluation research team was not able to conduct spot checks or review school registers. As a result, the enrolment and attendance figures do not provide a comprehensive account of enrolment in the targeted schools.

Two projects, in different regions, reported that their external evaluator had not delivered their work as promised or lacked the capacity to deliver to the expected standard of quality.

Six projects were reported by the EM to have omitted to collect key information in their baseline. This included not conducting quantitative or qualitative elements of the survey, not conducting household surveys, or not gathering evidence of key barriers or other assumptions in the project's theory of change.

- **BRAC (Tanzania):** No qualitative data was collected at baseline due to the Christmas period. Additional data may be collected during early implementation phases, along with data on attendance.

Almost half of all IW projects, from three of the four regions, identified problems with data entry or presented weak data analysis on quantitative or qualitative aspects of their surveys. It should be noted that none of the projects which were identified as having weak data analysis reported problems with the capacity of their external evaluator.

Some projects experienced challenges in fully using their intended sampling approach. Some of these relate primarily to achieving the numbers required, affecting the precision of the data rather than its representativeness. About 50% of IW projects reported problems in completing the desired number of interviews. Some examples include:

- **Red (South Sudan):** Conflict disrupted the project's ability to achieve a full sample (70% achieved).
- **ChildFund (Afghanistan):** Several challenges arose during the initial round of enumeration that prevented the external evaluator from obtaining the required sample size of 380 girls. These challenges included incomplete household identification data (e.g. missing names or phone numbers), potential variations in data from what was provided from the pre-baseline and security concerns that prevented enumerators from visiting certain areas.
- **GEMS (Ghana):** The external evaluator experienced a few challenges in implementing the agreed sampling framework – it originally had planned to rely on the head teachers to identify marginalised girls and out-of-school girls. Even with a revised sampling strategy, GEMS was not able to achieve 1,500 out-of-school girls it expected to identify. The external evaluator will analyse the outcomes on out-of-school girls using a difference-in-difference analytical strategy, which should account for baseline imbalances.

For some of the projects, the direct consequence was that the sample achieved was not representative of the population of beneficiaries and its various sub-groups (such as, out-of-school girls and in-school girls, lower primary and upper primary, etc.) and/or that the sample was not large enough to achieve a high level of statistical confidence in the baseline results. Three projects were unable to achieve the full target sample using the methodology agreed:

- **HPA (Rwanda):** High levels of non-response during baseline – due to the small samples for EGRA/EGMA assessments of Grades S4 to S6, it may be difficult to draw conclusions about these grades.
- **LCSU (Uganda):** Some of the girls with disabilities, though eligible to participate in this survey could not talk, or communicate or express themselves in any way that would be used to respond to the survey questions. Also, the last census conducted in Uganda dates back from 2002. Therefore there was no comprehensive record of households with children with disabilities.

Projects have taken remedial measures to overcome some of the issues identified above. This process has been negotiated with the Fund Manager and the projects will develop datasets which have a reasonable potential for enable evidencing of PbR requirements for project impact. The Evaluation Manager has provided input in the form of advice and guidance, although a number of the issues involved are specific to PbR requirements rather than to the broader evaluation process.

Were control groups and intervention groups well matched?

A key area in terms of representativeness concerns the extent to which the control group is representative (or matched) to the intervention population. For the most part, **control groups and intervention groups were reasonably well matched**, and were successful in achieving an acceptable level of comparability between the groups. Some projects either raised concerns about the comparability or suitability of control groups or concerns were raised by the EM. Sixteen projects found a clearly comparable counterfactual (or control/ comparison) group, as represented in the Project Baseline Reports, while three projects, namely: Link (Ethiopia); Viva (Uganda); and ICL (Kenya) reported some differences between their treatment and control groups, as follows:

- **Link (Ethiopia):** Differences between control and treatment groups have been reported for attendance levels and Grade 8 examination results; attendance data in schools was not available; the project was unable to collect data on some of the indicators, including re-enrolment. Any data that the project has not been able to collect will be collected as part of future data collection, using qualitative methods.
- **Viva (Uganda):** The review by the EM recorded control and treatment groups being different and the sample not being representative.
- **ICL (Kenya):** Due to control and treatment groups being located in the same counties and districts, the project has expressed concerns over the possibility of interaction and contamination.

- **TfAC (Malawi):** The external evaluator reported that there was a lack of engagement of traditional authorities and community members in responding to questions about the programme concept and planned intervention. It was difficult to get the control schools to participate in the research.

Was project analysis of good quality and were findings triangulated?

Some issues were raised during the review of Project Baseline Reports regarding **a lack of detailed analysis of data and of a failure to make use of qualitative data to support analysis**. These issues, combined with the incomplete documentation of project data and the variety of sampling approaches make it more difficult to assess whether the evidence base for midline and endline is likely to be robust for every project.

Where results reported by projects do not provide information about the broader outcomes that are relevant to the GEC, the Evaluation Manager has sought to obtain both the minimal extent of available information and to establish a best estimate of the general baseline circumstances on a basis that is as comparable as possible across projects.

As a result, a number of indicators of interest to the evaluation have been identified and analysed by the Evaluation Manager from the project baseline data. For reasons of independence and in order to avoid the generation of 'alternative' baseline figures before all projects have carried out their baseline research and revised their logframes, our analysis has treated the baseline project data as a 'found' resource and analysis has been confined to unambiguously labelled and structured data. The results presented have been arranged to support a review of the state of play across the GEC without duplicating the figures required for PbR. In other words the approach has been to fill some gaps in the set of potential (not mandatory) indicators of interest for GEC where the data allows us to do so.

Future issues

We anticipate that the following issues may arise at the midline stage of the evaluation:

- A number of projects are working with mobile populations. Where sampled populations are displaced and or migratory, this may make it difficult to find the same households at midline;
- Learning assessments will need to be maintained, modified and in some instances augmented to capture the variation in outcomes for all sub-groups and age groups relevant for the purpose of measuring projects' impacts; and
- At midline the challenge will be to detect and identify the extent to which target groups have been exposed to diverse project activities and measure the intermediary outcomes that have been achieved as a result, while retaining as much consistency as possible across GEC.

External events

The baseline process was relatively extended with a stagger between IW projects.

- Three projects mentioned that delays in the approval process led to them being unable to collect all of the required data, as schools were inaccessible or no longer open or students were sitting exams.
- Six projects, from three regions, reported problems in survey logistics, including long distances between households, timing or season in which the survey was undertaken to be affecting access to respondents.
- One project, in South Sudan, was unable to complete the baseline research and achieve the full sample due to conflict breaking out. Conflict was not reported by the IW project in Afghanistan.

Additionally, one project, in Uganda, reported the cost of conducting baseline research as a problem, and also mentioned that respondents were demanding incentives to participate. The same project reported that respondents were expecting the GEC implementing partner to provide services or enrolment in another of their programmes in exchange for participation in the GEC baseline survey.

Summary: What challenges did projects face during baseline?

Overall the background and evolution of the GEC IW baseline research has led to a variety of approaches. All approaches were reviewed at the proposal stage and in more detail at the pre-baseline approval stage for their ability to represent target groups and to deliver representative data on key outcomes for target populations and control or comparison groups along with contextual data on barriers and context. The focus on achieving a specified level of precision on learning outcomes and attendance has led to some [unification in approach](#), but also to some [diversity in sampling and research designs](#) to address projects' research challenges.

6.1.2 Will projects' evidence support counterfactual analysis of impact?

Based on the different evaluation designs and samples achieved by IW projects during the baseline research, projects' evidence appears for the most part capable of supporting a counterfactual analysis of impact.

In most cases, IW projects overcame or mitigated the issues associated with the challenges encountered. In some cases, however, issues appear to be outstanding, either because these concerns have not been addressed by projects or because they were not fully discussed in Project Baseline Reports.

As described in [Table 6.3](#), 12 out of 19 IW projects either used experimental (RCT) or quasi-experimental evaluation designs (QED) while seven projects used alternative designs that do involve a contrast or comparison group. [Box 6.2](#) gives a summary of the guidance provided to IW projects with regards to their evaluation designs.

Box 6.2: Evaluation design requirements for IW projects⁶³

IW grant recipients were requested to develop and implement the most appropriate and rigorous evaluation approach possible within their specific context. The EM and FM provided feedback on projects' M&E Frameworks to help IW projects to determine how they could measure the additional impact directly attributable to their interventions.

Impact is defined as the additional effect that IW projects have on marginalised girls (i.e. at outcome and impact levels of the GEC logframe). The additional benefit that is realised is defined as 'an impact arising from an intervention that is additional if it would not have occurred in the absence of the intervention'.

The fundamental problem that all impact evaluation faces is that projects cannot observe what would have happened in the absence of the intervention. The way around this problem is to establish a control group. This is a sample group that is representative of the group that is benefitting from the intervention (the treatment group). The control group should not benefit from any of the IW projects' interventions. By measuring the starting position of both the control group and the treatment group at the baseline stage and then measuring the progress they both make throughout the project lifecycle, it is possible to estimate with rigour the additional impact directly attributable to the interventions.

IW projects were advised that the selection of the control group could be undertaken as a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) or through a Quasi-Experimental Design. Unless under exceptional circumstances agreed with the Fund Manager, all IW projects had to identify a control group for their project.

⁶³ GEC Documentation (June 2013), Grant Recipient Handbook, Innovation Window.

Table 6.3: IW projects evaluation design and data collected

Project evaluation design at baseline		IW projects by country and region																		
		Eco	PEAS	Oppty	Viva	RV	LCSU	LCDK	ICL	Link	HPA	Red	BRAC	VSO	Camfd	TfAC	GEMS	VSO	Mercy	ChFnd
		7549	7374	8980	6595	7133	7879	6627	6803	6473	6317	6567	6957	7038	7156	8329	7045	7042	6616	8100
		Uganda					Kenya			Eth	Rwa	Sou	Tan	Moz	Zam	Mal	Gha	Nepal		Afgh
		East Africa										Southern Africa				W.A.	Asia			
Design	RCT ⁶⁴											✓				✓				
	QED ⁶⁵				✓	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
	Other ⁶⁶	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓									
Data collected	Quant.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Qual.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Counterfactual group ⁶⁷	Area	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	
	School	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓			
Unit(s) of observation	Girl	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Boy								✓					✓		✓	✓	✓		
	Household	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
	School	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Projects’ definitions of counterfactual groups

Two projects chose to conduct Randomised Control Trials, while 10 projects opted for a Quasi-Experimental Design. We give examples of the definitions and selection processes of their counterfactual groups below. Other evaluation designs used by IW projects are presented in [Alternative project evaluation designs](#) at the end of this section.



It is important to note that the EM has limited information about the changes in evaluation design that took place after the Project Baseline Reports were submitted by IW projects. Evaluation design changes were discussed between the FM and the IW projects, and the EM used the available information shared by the FM at the time of writing, which may not reflect the full range of changes projects made subsequently.

Randomised Control Trials

BRAC (Tanzania): The project identified 108 communities that met the eligibility criteria for intervention. As part of their RCT design, BRAC (Tanzania) randomly split the 108 communities into three groups of 36 communities each. The project will track educational outcomes in a control group where the project does not intervene and two treatment groups where BRAC (Tanzania) establishes non-paying study groups (Treatment 1) and where BRAC (Tanzania) establishes study groups with a voluntary fee (Treatment 2).

GEMS (Ghana): The evaluation design comprises a RCT conducted with 77 control schools and 70 treatment schools. In collaboration with IPA, GEMS (Ghana) incorporated their RCT into their budget and timeline.

Quasi-Experimental Designs

Link (Ethiopia): The project uses a quasi-experimental design comprising intervention areas (*Woreda*) that were matched with control areas based on a range of criteria. Since Link (Ethiopia) is intervening in all schools in their intervention areas, randomisation using schools as randomized units could not be achieved. The project therefore opted for a matching of intervention *Woredas* with control *Woredas*.

⁶⁴ Randomised Control Trial

⁶⁵ Quasi-Experimental Design

⁶⁶ Refer to [Alternative project evaluation designs](#) in this section.

⁶⁷ Counterfactual groups were identified by projects following two different processes: (1) from the selection of treatment schools and control schools, and their catchment areas, or (2) from the selection of treatment areas and control areas, and the schools identified in these areas. Some projects also used more than one control group and may have used a combination of the two aforementioned approaches to select their counterfactual groups.

Viva (Uganda): The project opted for a quasi-experimental design using communities as their matching unit (20 treatment communities and 10 control communities). The treatment and control communities were selected based on: geographical location; demographic factors; social factors; education levels in primary and secondary schools; and financial background of households.

Raising Voices (Uganda): The project evaluation design used identical criteria to identify their cohort of respondents in four intervention districts and four control districts.

Alternative project evaluation designs

Seven projects used alternative designs that do involve a contrast or comparison group. We present below some examples of these.

LCDK (Kenya): The project faced the difficulty of having to identify a sample of households that have girls with a disability. After a pre-baseline household survey listing girls with disabilities in the project areas, LCDK (Kenya) selected a sample of 25 schools to draw their treatment cohort from, while 25 other schools were selected from the districts that did not contain treatment schools in order to prevent contamination effects. Although the treatment and control areas were matched according to a range of criteria prior to the baseline research, LCDK (Kenya) had to sample additional households during the baseline research in order to achieve their targeted sample of disabled girls.

Opportunity International (Uganda): Working with a credit institution, the project's sample for the household survey was drawn from Opportunity Bank Uganda Limited (OBUL)'s current clients who are either in their first loan cycle or at the beginning of their second cycle of business loans. The credit institution estimates that eventually 25% of these clients go on to obtain the tuition loan. As a result, Opportunity International (Uganda) used an evaluation design that builds on clients who are expected to eventually access the tuition loan to form a treatment and a contrast group.

PEAS (Uganda): PEAS (Uganda) evaluates the impact of their project by comparing a treatment group with two similar control groups. Due to the potential interference of other NGOs operating in the area, one of the control groups has been selected within the network of PEAS schools. Additionally, PEAS (Uganda) measures the impact of their interventions against a control group of non-PEAS schools. Secondary schools with characteristics similar to those of PEAS schools were found in the districts PEAS operates in.

Implications of the methodological challenges faced by projects during baseline

All projects specified sample sizes that should provide a reasonable chance of detecting the agreed level of impact for the key GEC outcomes (attendance and learning). The level of precision of the data collected is subject to the circumstances of data collection, sample distributions and district level variation. However, the rigor of the design process means that the collection of longitudinal data from intervention and control samples of sufficient samples sizes should support counterfactual analysis of impact. This needs to be supported with effective causal investigation using qualitative research at midline and endline.

Projects have already experienced issues with the planned design integrity, data quality and matching. These reduce the likelihood that all projects will be in a position to demonstrate impact where it occurs as definitively as intended. With probability sampling and multiple project participants in the IW, there is always the likelihood that some projects will not be able to evidence actual change or falsely evidence or overstate non-existent impact. Nonetheless, some aspects of the default approach provide some protection against both the probability of false results and the external challenges to project design.

This mitigation of this risk is provided by the following factors:

- The GEC Household Survey approach and cohort studies are designed to be longitudinal and this provides some scope to evaluate change even if intervention and control locations are not ideally matched; and
- The standard template for the household survey provides information on a number of risk factors for outcomes (in other words markers or barriers to adverse outcomes) which can be used to control for differences in intervention and control locations, or to support matching work for the same end.

Where re-contact rates are lower at midline, projects may need to use a mixed longitudinal and cross-sectional approach across their project locations.

Summary: Will projects' evidence support counterfactual analysis of impact?

We recognise and anticipate that some IW projects will experience challenges providing counterfactual evidence of their impact. Where possible these can be identified in advance through [further analysis of baseline data](#) in order to work with the projects. Despite the complex circumstances and challenges which have led to changes in evaluation designs, we are confident that through support from DFID, the FM and the EM, outstanding risks to the quality of project evaluation can be minimised to ensure that counterfactual analysis of their impact can be undertaken.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

The EM has reviewed and analysed the findings from IW projects' baseline research. This has enabled us to assess whether projects have been successful in identifying target girls who are educationally marginalised in terms of their access to education (enrolment, retention, attendance) and learning. Additionally, we have provided an assessment of the extent to which the evidence supports the projects' initial assumptions with regards to the barriers that girls face. Finally, we have assessed the implications for project designs and targeting in response to the baseline data, analysis and findings.

To what extent are target girls educationally marginalised?

Conclusion 1 – Girls targeted by IW projects tend to enrol and attend school, but they are less likely to stay enrolled as they reach secondary school age compared to the primary school phase. Despite these relatively high levels of enrolment and attendance, learning is poor⁶⁸ for in-school girls and only improves by a relatively small amount over the primary and secondary phases of schooling.

IW projects' findings and EM analysis of the project data show that in several project areas enrolment and attendance are higher than would have been expected at baseline. Baseline research revealed that secondary school-aged girls have lower levels of enrolment and year-on-year retention compared to primary school-aged girls, suggesting that girls across the IW target project areas tend to become more marginalised from education (in terms of enrolment and retention) as they get older. In contrast, secondary school-aged girls who are enrolled seem to attend school just as much as primary school-aged girls⁶⁹. This suggests that attendance is regular for the girls who decide to transition to secondary education.

Baseline learning results were typically found to be poor regardless of relatively high levels of enrolment and attendance in several project areas. Furthermore, the low levels of literacy (measured as reading fluency) and numeracy of in-school secondary school-aged girls indicate that learning increases less than would be expected over the course of schooling, especially in the case of reading fluency.

Overall, it is unclear whether the girls targeted by IW projects are as relatively disadvantaged in terms of getting into and attending school compared to non-target girls, as assumed at the outset of the GEC. It is clear though that when in school the average learning progression of girls by age is generally relatively very slow as they transition to secondary education.

Which barriers were found to affect girls' education?

Conclusion 2 – Most of the barriers proposed by projects were supported by evidence presented as part of their baseline findings. Contrary to expectations of some projects relating to the importance of school-related barriers, poverty appears to be the primary reason evidenced as to why girls do not enrol and attend school. In terms of making an investment decision in education, poor families have less spare resources to invest and experience significant opportunity costs, therefore the returns to school must be reasonably assured for this group. However, projects also reported that parents in target communities sometimes perceived little value and expected limited returns from sending their girls to school. School-related barriers that were found to be the second most important barrier affecting girls' education potentially explain the poor levels of learning evidenced across the IW.

At the design stage, IW projects assumed that a wide range of different barriers prevented their target girls from attending school and learning effectively. The assumptions about these 'risk factors' affecting girls' ability to enrol, attend and learn in school were mostly driven by grantees' historical understanding of the environments in which they operate and lessons learned from previous programmes they have implemented with similar communities. This may explain the extent and variety of the evidence presented by IW projects.

Projects' findings suggest that contrary to pre-baseline assumptions about the importance of school-related factors, **the most evidenced barrier to schooling outcomes was related to poverty.** Pathways through which girls'

⁶⁸ Compared to internationally-defined benchmarks.

⁶⁹ It should be noted though that projects have reported concerns with the quality and reliability of the attendance data they have collected, which is largely secondary data sourced directly from their target and control schools.

selection into education (enrolment and attendance) is affected primarily relate to the cost of schooling. These types of pathways prevent girls from attending schools due to parents' inability (or fear of not being able) to afford the costs at the time of enrolment and during the subsequent years of schooling. Contexts where poverty is an important issue tend to lead to girls having greater responsibility for household chores and caring for family members, suggesting that girls have less time to attend school and learn.

These barriers appear to be real and have an impact on families, but the relatively high levels of enrolment and attendance found at baseline by several projects suggest that these parents and caregivers send their girls to school, despite having to make difficult financial choices in poverty-constrained situations involving potentially high opportunity cost of these choices⁷⁰.

Interestingly, the perceived value of education is often low among girls and their parents, suggesting that they do not expect high returns from education despite the difficult choices they make about sending girls to school. As girls appear to experience limited learning progression as they get older, it is possible that this affects perceptions and decisions about transitioning to secondary school, especially given the range of factors and barriers that girls and their parents face. **As the opportunity cost of sending a girl to school past a certain age seems to increase, parents tend to explore alternative life paths for their daughters**, such as early marriage or getting girls to contribute to household earnings through income-generating activities.

The second pathway through which girls' education is affected relates to the poor quality of education, as evidenced by the prevalence of non-participatory approaches to teaching, the lack of gender responsiveness of teaching and teaching techniques that frequently involve corporal punishment. Teacher absenteeism was also found to affect the quality and regularity of education received by girls. Nevertheless, the evidence presented by projects was not always systematically able to prove these links. The level of schools' capacity and performance in terms of providing quality education to girls may be more nuanced than expected by projects before the baseline research. It is also important to note that projects may have faced difficulties in evidencing school-related barriers in part because only a limited number of projects included classroom observations in their research design.

Conclusion 3 – In spite of the wealth of evidence, IW projects presented the barriers they found in a descriptive way and did not always clearly assess the linkages between barriers and the ways in which these affect their target communities, and girls and parents' behaviours and decision-making processes. Furthermore, barriers identified during the baseline research may not represent the range of risk factors affecting girls' education.

Synthesising and unpacking the range of barriers evidenced by projects at baseline allowed the EM to start to identify the linkages between girls' educational marginalisation and the risk factors that affected their ability to enrol, attend and learn in school. **The analysis of these linkages could have been better framed through projects' research and analysis, in order to assess both the importance of the prevalence of barriers and the multiple pathways through which barriers influence educational outcomes.**

The identification of barriers at the design stage was influenced by grantees' thematic focus, since some grantees chose to target and support groups who experienced a specific set of barriers – for example, barriers faced by disabled groups or girls living in remote areas, based on their historical knowledge of these groups. Consequently, **IW projects sometimes had pre-conceptions about the barriers they expected to find during the baseline research**, which meant that despite good intentions and a desire to understand needs, the data collection process was sometimes implicitly directed by and towards projects' interests and may not capture the range of risk factors faced by marginalised girls. Project data collection strategies were typically more focused on collecting information about their target groups rather than on capturing the characteristics of the general population or communities in which their target groups live. This means that **barriers identified during the baseline research may not represent the range of risk factors affecting girls' education**. Finally, whether projects have control or not over the identified barriers to girls' education remains subject to debate and would require an in-depth assessment by each individual project to ensure the anticipated outcomes of their interventions are realistic or not.

⁷⁰ For further insights on coping strategies put in place by parents and girls to overcome barriers to girls' education, refer to the [Step Change Window Baseline Report](#) where additional data sources (EM data) were used to discuss the prevalence of barriers. These may explain why enrolment and attendance rates were actually found to be higher than expected across the IW.

Does the evidence support project targeting and project design?

Conclusion 4 – During baseline research, projects generally managed to identify and measure the groups they aimed to target as part of their design, although the achieved representation of target groups in projects' samples was markedly low for specific sub-groups. In other cases, where purposive samples were drawn, the data did not allow the EM to assess whether the target groups were marginalised compared to other groups in target communities.

The GEC programme design allowed IW projects to target diverse groups of girls. IW projects are primarily targeting primary school age girls, with important sub-groups targeting girls who are in poverty, living in rural areas, are disabled, out of school or at risk of dropping out. These target groups were generally successfully identified in projects' samples, although the prevalence of the various groups differed sometimes from expectations – for example fewer out-of-school girls were identified than was envisaged across the projects.

Projects generally sought to obtain data that was representative of their target community with appropriate boosts for sub-groups of interest or in some cases purposive surveys directly of sub-groups. Sometimes achieving this balance was inherently challenging and a representative sample of the target group within its wider population was not achieved. **This means that projects were not always able to show whether their target groups were marginalised compared to other groups in their target communities.** In the absence of data that is representative of the communities with which projects engage, there are no means of verifying whether projects' pre-conceptions of who are the most marginalised girls in their target groups hold true. This constrained our ability and those of projects to analyse the extent to which these target girls are marginalised relative to others. It also sometimes limited projects' capacity to understand and evidence the complex linkages between the social and economic factors that marginalise particular groups of girls compared to other groups and their capacity to attend school and learn.

Nevertheless, for the purpose of identifying the specific needs of targeted girls, the baseline research was successful to the extent that it confirmed and deepened projects' knowledge of their target populations.

For those projects whose target girls have relatively high levels of enrolment and retention rates and/or attendance, it is possible that within the relatively short lifetime of the project significant change in these rates will not be achieved. The effect of this on overall project performance will depend on the extent to which the rationale for a particular project design was predominantly based on helping girls be in school more than they would otherwise have done and improve their literacy and numeracy through this. Even those projects where the evidence regarding the ways in which their target girls are marginalised is inconclusive or uncertain run the **risk of delivering interventions that may have little effect on their results within the time available.**

Conclusion 5 – Evidence was mostly supportive of projects' initial assumptions about their design, but where it was not we found that project responses were mixed. Not all projects made changes to their proposed interventions when their pre-baseline assumptions were challenged by baseline findings.

Broadly speaking most projects responded to challenges to their assumptions by either changing their outcome targets or modifying their definition of marginalisation. However, **not all projects adapted their interventions to address the complex socio-economic factors disadvantaging their target group of marginalised girls.**

Projects that have not responded to their baseline findings by changing their design adequately may not bring about the change they aim for, nor be able to measure the change they actually manage to deliver. This issue is likely to be further exacerbated for those projects in which the links between key risk factors identified and their effects on education outcomes are not clear.

Does the evidence support effective project evaluation?

Conclusion 6 – Overall, IW projects M&E strategies appear to be appropriate for delivering effective project evaluation. The focus on achieving specified precision on learning outcomes and attendance has led to some unification in approach, but also to some diversity in sampling and research designs to address projects' research challenges.

The background and evolution of the GEC IW baseline research has led to a variety of approaches. In most cases, IW projects overcame or mitigated the issues associated with the challenges encountered. All projects also specified sample sizes that should provide a reasonable chance of detecting the agreed level of impact for the key

GEC outcomes (attendance and learning). **The collection of longitudinal data from intervention and control samples of sufficient samples sizes should support counterfactual analysis of impact.**

The breadth and depth of the evidence base is arguably a result of a more rigorous approach towards establishing a clear theory of change and articulating M&E strategies in line with an analytical research framework. However, **issues still prevail, particularly in terms of how projects’ research frameworks address the relationship between risk factors and barriers and educational outcomes.** Furthermore, challenges relating to the limited ability of projects to achieve a full sample size and obtain reliable administrative data on attendance, enrolment or retention suggest that some projects will experience difficulties providing evidence of impact relative to a counterfactual.

7.2 Recommendations

Recommendations for DFID and the EM

1. The most important limitation of the baseline research relates to **projects’ reporting of educational outcomes and barriers to girls’ education as two distinct categories of findings.** Projects’ inability to clearly establish the linkages between the evidenced barriers to girls’ education, the composition of target groups identified during the baseline research and their proposed interventions has prevented the EM from drawing definitive conclusions on the most prevalent pathways through which different barriers affect girls’ education across the IW.
2. A second limitation of the secondary data analysed in this report are the difficulties faced by the EM in **assessing the levels of educational marginalisation of different sub-groups** – for example, target groups identified by their levels of poverty, disability, geographical area in which they live, or their household characteristics. Some of this data exists but the data is not yet sufficiently accessible for analysis.
3. In order to address these two limitations, the EM proposes to **extend the reanalysis of project data to include full documentation and relevant clarification work with projects** to enhance the quality and utility of project baseline data. This would facilitate more detailed analysis of the relationship between barriers, sub-groups and contexts as part of GEC learning and also provide a means of refining the evaluation approach and tools for projects and the GEC as a whole for midline and endline evaluation.
4. DFID and the EM should consider these findings and conclusions when **finalising the approach to the thematic research.** This research could be used to unpack some of the links between social and educational marginalisation and the various target sub-groups identified by projects, particularly those that are implementing different types of innovative strategies to reach those girls who are the most marginalised from education.
5. A common lesson learned for DFID and the EM relates to the **added value of conducting rigorous baseline research.** The identification of barriers to girls’ education and target groups at baseline deepened the projects’ knowledge of the populations they work with, suggesting that the GEC Evaluation Strategy is likely to help build a solid evidence base in terms of what works and what does not for improving girls’ access to education and learning.
6. A potential recommendation for DFID for future programming relates to the extent to which **a specific purpose should be established for the baseline research.** Projects generally sought to obtain data that was representative of their target community, but their sampling strategies were not always suitable for evidencing whether their target groups were marginalised compared to other groups in their target communities. However, for the purpose of identifying the specific needs of targeted girls, the baseline research was generally successful to the extent that it deepened projects’ knowledge of their target populations. Both approaches to baseline research have different purposes and entail different types of actions for projects based on their baseline findings.

Recommendations relating to projects’ use of baseline findings

1. It is expected from projects that they will evidence additionality for their interventions through the use of a counterfactual research design. Nevertheless, without a sufficiently precise understanding of the complex mechanisms at play in their intervention areas – the main purpose of the baseline research – projects may fail in delivering significant results over the GEC cycle. **A post-baseline research reflection upon the**

evidence collected is needed to identify the mechanism through which projects will be likely to influence girls' educational outcomes, so that beyond the measurement of results, the pathways of change can be identified. Importantly, identifying the barriers influencing girls' education is crucial for projects to achieve sustainable change through their planned activities. **The sustainability aspects of projects' interventions should be addressed more extensively at midline and endline stages**, in order to address the limited evidence in relation to the implications of baseline findings on expected sustainable changes.

- In general, projects' capacity to effectively respond to their baseline findings in a formative way could be strengthened**, as project changes to interventions to address the barriers faced by marginalised girls appear to have been limited in scope. Additionally, whether projects have control or not over the identified barriers to girls' education, they should be assessed by each individual project to determine whether the anticipated outcomes of their interventions are realistic or not. This should be addressed during implementation and should be a focus of the on-going monitoring of projects' baseline evidence and the current assumptions that underpin their designs, especially since the GEC programme lifespan has recently been extended by one year for most projects.

Recommendations relating to projects' M&E Frameworks

- Projects' lack of analysis of the complex mechanisms at play in their intervention areas should be addressed before midline research takes place. Following the example of best practice from other projects and the EM's approach to barrier analysis, projects should define and establish these linkages based on their data and assess the relationship between the prevalence of barriers and educational outcomes. This can be achieved by **developing an appropriate analytical framework and comprehensively analysing internal and external factors interacting with girls' education (directly or indirectly) supported by more focused research questions.**
- Projects whose evidence base is inconclusive or where there is insufficient disaggregated data about their sub-groups should **conduct more in-depth research as an integral part of their monitoring strategies** to understand the type of effects they are having on the complex barriers faced by their target girls. This should enable projects to make short-term corrections to their activities that are most likely to improve the effectiveness of their interventions.
- We anticipate that some IW projects will experience challenges **providing counterfactual evidence of impact**, specifically in terms of the limited ability of projects to achieve a full sample size. Where possible these can be identified in advance through further analysis of baseline data. These will need to be supported with effective causal investigation using qualitative research at midline and endline.

Recommendations relating to projects' midline research

- For projects where baseline enrolment rates and attendance are relatively high, it is recommended that projects try to identify sub-groups within their overall target group who have lower enrolment rates and evidence changes at this level. It is also important for projects with high baseline enrolment rates and attendance to continue to monitor these to **assess whether these levels remain high over the course of the project period**, so that the project can respond to any changes that may occur.
- IW projects' baseline data showed that girls' average learning progression by age is generally relatively slow as they transition to secondary education. This should be explored further by projects through the research conducted for the midline evaluation. It is also important to note that projects may have faced difficulties in evidencing school-related barriers as only a few projects included classroom observations in their research design. It is recommended that projects focus on **unpacking school-related barriers as part of the midline research in order to understand the limited learning gains of in-school girls.**

Recommendations relating to projects' longitudinal research

- Some issues and questions require longitudinal data to fully understand and evaluate.** Continued evaluation throughout the course of GEC of the relationship between baseline circumstances, combinations of barriers and context and the levels of intervention exposure will lead to a better understanding of what barriers are really present and causally relevant to GEC-relevant objectives, and may lead to further recommendations for adjustment at the project level, as well as more effective understanding of what works, why and under what conditions – a key aim of the IW.