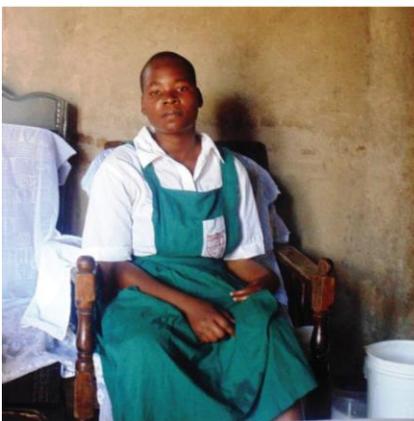
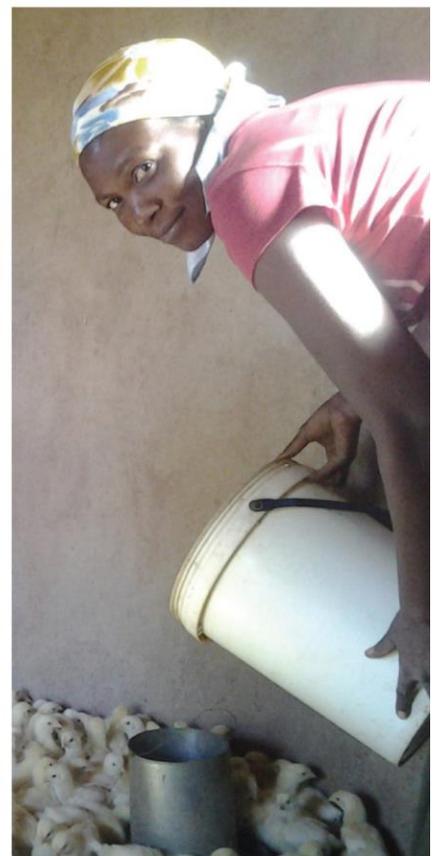
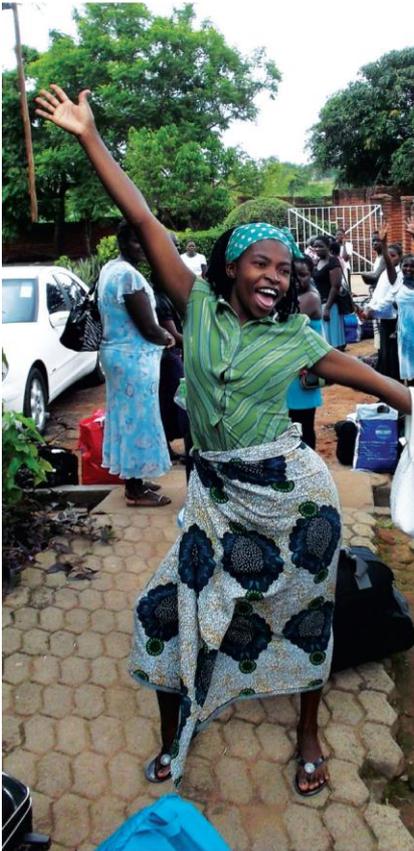


# Girls' Education Challenge

## Case Studies

March 2015



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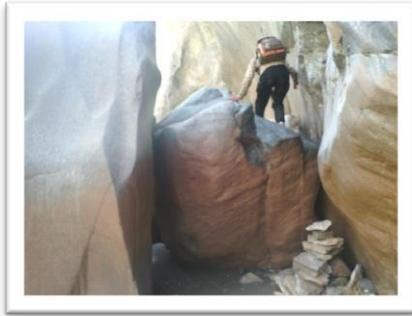
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# Aga Khan Foundation (AKF), Afghanistan

## Darwaz-Badakshan – The road less travelled (project staff)

Many of AKF's focus communities in the northern province of Badakhshan are very remote. AKF has established a base in Khorog, Tajikistan, which is on the border with Afghanistan, and normally staff can more easily reach communities in Maimai, Nusai, Shikai and Ishkashim districts from Khorog than from the provincial capital of Faizabad.



But In the summer of 2014, there was an outbreak of anthrax in northern Afghanistan and Tajikistan closed all the border crossings. This meant that STAGES project staff, who normally work from Khorog, were not able to get visas or cross the border, and this made it very difficult to reach these remote communities. To reach STAGES focus communities, project staff must travel first by four wheel drive vehicle and then by foot on rocky and unpaved paths.

Zohoruddin, the Regional Education Coordinator, and Faiz Muhammad, the District Teacher Education, traveled from Ishkashim to Shughnan and then to Maimai, Nusai and Shikai. They began their monitoring visits to these areas on 19 August and returned to the office on 6 September.

The two-week journey included all-day journeys up steep mountain paths, with the river flowing in the valley. Zohoruddin and Faiz found themselves completely cut off from the rest of the world when their mobile phones lost service as they trekked ever further from Faizabad to the communities.

Carrying only the supplies that they could take in their backpacks, they arrived in the communities. Though they were exhausted, they knew that they were providing the communities with educational opportunities they would not have otherwise had. This made it worth the risk and discomfort of the journey.

In Badakhshan, AKF works in very remote and mountainous villages, where community members have never had access to education and where children live days – not minutes or hours – from the nearest government school. Residents were born and raised in the same community and know little of the world outside their mountain homes.

The communities are difficult to reach during the warm summer months, and even more challenging to reach during the winter, when heavy snowfall and avalanches are a regular occurrence. However, these challenges did not stop AKF from reaching out to the community, and the UK Aid funded STAGES project has now provided the communities with community-based classes, including training teachers and school management committee members, provision of textbooks and student materials and other materials that transform the space provided the community into a classroom.

Communities have reciprocated, demonstrating their appreciation by providing housing and meals for teachers who have come from nearby districts (because no community member was able to work as a teacher) and for AKF staff on monitoring and training visits.

## Shakila's story (student)

Baghlan is a province where most residents are subsistence farmers and villages are located far from the city – and government schools. Shakila is one of the thousands of girls attending STAGES project schools in the province of Baghlan.

Shakila told her story to Aga Khan Foundation staff: “My name is Shakila. There are seven people in my family: my parents, three sisters and one brother. My father is a farmer and all the members of my family are illiterate. It was my dream that I would not be illiterate like them, and that I would get a chance to go to school. But the girls’ school is too far from my village and my father would not let me go so far. He would say to me, “The school is too far for you to walk, and even if you walked that far the dangers and threats on the way to school are too great for me to risk your life.” So I forgot about going to school.



“It was a great disappointment to me and I thought that it would be the end of the thoughts and hopes that I would be able to study and become literate. While I was thinking about how to do that, a miracle happened for me and the other children in the community. News was spreading all over the community that the Aga Khan Foundation was going to establish a school in our community. Twenty-four girls my age registered for class, and from that day forward we have learned new things from our teacher every day. Everyone thinks that this will change my future, and now when I go home and tell my parents what I learned, they are excited. My father says that once I complete my studies at our community school, he will send me to the government school to continue my education.”

“One day I will finish my studies and become a teacher, and this way I will be able to serve my family and my community to be able to create bright future for them. I am so thankful to everyone who brought this to reality for me.”

## Constructing a dream: Working together to support education (community)

In one of CRS’ focus communities, in a remote village in Herat, there were many school-aged children but no school. Community members and parents were concerned by the lack of opportunities, but when they spoke to local government authorities they were told that there wasn’t enough money in the budget to support classes in the community. Community members considered building a classroom themselves, but because the village is poor they were unable raise the funds.

The community was eligible for a grant from the National Solidarity Program, a government program which provides development grants to communities. Elders held consultations meetings with women and men from the community and finally decided to apply for a grant to build a school in the hope that they could persuade government officials to provide a teacher. The community provided land to build a classroom and most community members participated in the construction. The new classroom is valued at £1,075.



While the construction of the classroom was a step in the right direction, the village still lacked a first grade teacher. Appeals to the local education authorities were rejected because the village is remote and the district education budget limited, and the community was unable to attract a qualified teacher without being able to offer a salary.

Community leaders contacted CRS during the planning phase of the STAGES project, and CRS was able to establish a community-based first grade class in the village in March, 2014. Now there are two first grade classes in the community, serving 35 girls and 25 boys; one class meets in the morning and one in the afternoon.

CRS trained a very active school management committee composed of men and women from the community to monitor teacher quality, the classroom environment and care for classroom materials. School management committee member Shirin Gul, age 55, says: "We are really interested in education, and now we are happy that our girls and boys have a school. We are grateful to CRS because they provided all the materials and a lot of training for the teachers, the school management committee members, members of the district education department and staff from the government school where students will continue studying in the future. We feel fortunate because our children can go to school and we want to support them for their future."

Through the STAGES project, UK Aid's Girls' Education Challenge is supporting 1,479 community-based preschool, primary school and accelerated learning classes for children in remote communities where there is no government school. Communities donate space for classrooms and volunteer their time and mean to support education for girls and boys in their community.

## The role of religious leaders in supporting girls' education: Baseera's story (student)

Although many girls in her village were going to school, Baseera and her sisters weren't allowed. She stayed at home with her mother to do housework and weave carpets that were sold to provide her family with some income.



Photo: Autumn Brown

"I have three brothers and two sisters. My brothers were studying, but my sisters and I weren't able to go to school. We stayed home to do housework and help our mother.

There's a school in our village and many of the girls from the village were going to school, but we weren't.

We wondered why our father wouldn't let us go to school even though he let my brothers go. My parents thought that for girls going to school was a sin."

"One day my father returned from the mosque and told my mother that the school management committee head, who is also a mullah, told him that Save the Children was going to establish accelerated learning programme classes in our village and girls our age could enrol."

When I heard this, I was so happy and excited, but scared to ask my father if I could attend. I thought that if only our father would allow me to be enrolled in these classes, I would be happy because the classes would be in our village."

"We went to talk with my father and asked if would let us go to the classes. But our father said: 'You are fourteen years old. You already missed school and besides, we don't have any money for you to study. The only income we have is from the rugs that you weave, so who will do the weaving if you go? How will we survive?' When we heard our father's answer we were very disappointed and asked God if it were a sin to be a girl."

“When we saw that the neighbour girls were attending classes, we were encouraged. I went to my mother and asked her to talk with my father, but she refused, so I then went to my uncle and told him: ‘My two sisters are not eligible to be enrolled in school but I still have the chance since I am 14 years. If they don’t send me now and I turn 15, I might never have the opportunity to get an education. Please talk with my father to allow me to enrol in the class,” and he agreed to talk to my father. He told him how important education is in Islam and what the mullah said about education in the mosque.” Finally my father agreed.”

“I went to talk with the teacher and found that there were already lot of girls at her house. Two women from Save the Children were there too and they were writing down the names of the girls who wanted to enrol. When the lessons started and they gave us everything we needed for class. I started to learn to read a few words and then sentences and now, after four months of attending the classes, I am able to write and read simple things.

“One day someone sent my father an invitation card. I read the the card and told my father ‘You are invited to Ezatullah’s house tomorrow at 10: 00 AM for a wedding ceremony.’ My father was surprised and said ‘So you can read now? It is a good opportunity for you and the girls like you because again you study 2 grades in a year and soon you will be enrolled in a formal school. When you will finish school I will let you join the university.’

“My teacher taught us about the importance of being healthy and clean. Everything I was learned in class I shared with my family at home. Every day I washed my little brother’s hands before he started eating. After six months I transitioned to second grade at the top of my class.”

“When my mother saw these changes she said ‘You have learned a lot and your little brother doesn’t get sick often anymore because you keep him neat and clean. This helps our family because when your brother does not get sick we don’t have to go to doctor and spend money on treatment.’ My mother usually visits me and my teacher in the class and she praises my teacher. These classes helped a lot of girls and now we can at least read and understand and we feel great. We are really thankful to Save the Children for establishing these classes.”

Baseera’s teacher says: “When I was preparing to become an accelerated learning programme teacher, the school shura members asked me to look for children who were eligible for the classes. One day Baseera came to me on her own to ask if she could enrol. That’s how committed she was! After making sure that she met the requirements, I enrolled her and now she’s doing very well and I’m proud of her. I am sure she will be an educated person in the future, because she understands and works hard. I am only worried about her family’s poor economic situation which might limit her future education.”

Baseera’s story shows how important it is to involve religious leaders in a girls’ education project. They are listened to and respected by communities, especially if they talk about the value of education in Islam. The project’s community mobilisation often includes religious leaders, because in many communities, the village leader is a mullah or a malik. That’s been very successful in many provinces, but in some cases religious leaders have actually opposed girls’ participation in classes. Save the Children continues to work with these religious leaders to help them understand and change their attitudes about education for women.

Through the STAGES project, the Girls’ Education Challenge supports 265 community-based accelerated learning program classes in which 86% of the students are female. Accelerated learning classes let students who are too old for regular primary classes study two grade levels in a calendar year and complete primary school in just three years in their home community.

## VAS-Y Fille!, Democratic Republic of Congo

### Pride of being a “scholarship girl”: Esperance’s story (student)

Esperance\*, who is 15 years old and in Year 6, has benefitted from a scholarship this year. Esperance tells us her story, and how the scholarship has helped her to stay in school.



In our family, there were 11 children, but three died, so now there are eight of us. I’ve got one brother and six sisters. My brother, one of my sisters and I are at school. The other five sisters are already married. I live with my grandma who is 90 years old, because both my parents died.”

“I started school when I was 8 years old and before that I stayed at home. There wasn’t anyone to enrol me in school. My sister finally enrolled me, and my grandma tried to pay the school fees.”

“Before VAS-Y Fille! helped with the scholarship, I was often asked to leave school because my grandma couldn’t always pay. Now I feel good because I can stay and follow all the classes. I have exercise books which I can bring in my school bag and not in a plastic bag like before and I have a pair of shoes. I am proud of being a scholarship girl.”

“I have been in this school since last year (2013) and I’m in year 6 now. I like school because I want to become a nurse after my studies. My favourite lesson is French because I like reading together in class.”

When asked what would help her in the future to continue to study, she says:

“I would like to have a bicycle that would help me with the journey to school. I have to get up early to go to school – at 5 o’clock in the morning. It takes one hour and 30 minutes to get to school on foot. I walk the route to school with children from the village who study at the secondary school because the road is too dangerous to walk alone. There are bandits in the bush.”

## CFBT: Wasichana Wote Wasome, Kenya (WWW- Let All Girls Read)

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### Re-enrolment - persuading parents: Faith's story (student)

When she heard of the message that girls are being encouraged to enrol back to school, Faith Kilumo, a 15 year old girl from Kiwandani primary, decided to give education a second chance.

"I got the information from my mother who had attended a parents meeting at the school in the month of January 2014."

"I also asked my friend, whom we had dropped out of school at the same time in the month of July 2012 while in class six, whether she would agree to go back to school but she gave a negative reply", continues Faith.

Her initial efforts to enrol back to school in 2013 had been rejected by her mother who regarded her as joke – given the fact Faith had previously left school voluntarily. Due to the marital status of her mother, who is a single parent, she wouldn't want the small resources she had being wasted by Faith who had refused to attend school without a specific reason.

However, Faith was serious about her decision. She took the step of going to school even without the proper uniform. "I was aware that WWW project was planning to provide uniform for us to go back to school but I didn't want to wait for long", explains Faith. After attending school for one term without missing even a single day, her mother realized she was serious with education and she bought her school uniform and began paying the levies that she was hesitating as she thought it was a waste.



*"I am grateful to WWW project for bringing the idea of encouraging girls to go back to school. I had been misled by fellow girls into engaging into small businesses of buying fish in the ocean and selling at the market. I was told it had a lot of money but when I ventured into that business, I realized it was wasting my time and couldn't rely on it for my living. I will continue with my education and work very hard to get at least a provincial secondary school and thereafter transit to a good college".*

# I Choose Life, Kenya

## School and community support: Letter from the head teacher (head teacher)\*\*

*KALIATI DAY SECONDARY SCHOOL  
P.O BOX 1195-60200,  
MERU*

*THE DIRECTORS*

*JIELIMISHE GEC GROUP*

*REF: A REPORT ON PROGRESS MADE TO MAKE A  
SUCCESS THE LAPTOP PROJECT BIOMETRIC KIT*



I hereby write to thank the Jielimische group for this good project you have brought to our school. Equally, I would like to register the BOM, PTA and teachers and students support to this project. We had a PTA meeting last month and the parents decided to give K shs. 500 per parent to make this project a success. The BOM went out of their way and did wiring to the lab and put a ceiling to improve on the security of the laptops.

The area MP Hon. Karithi has pledged to give us Kshs. 500,000 to do wiring on other classrooms and put in place other necessary inputs like printers, photocopiers to make ICT learning a reality

On Dec 13/12/2014 some friends of the school have decided to give us money to make this project a successful.

In a nut shell, the laptop project has done a lot of changes in our school. The student's fraternities are busy learning it very well. The learning has become very interesting to learners.

The Biometric kit has really improved our enrolment and daily attendance. The parents can bear this testimony to date. Hail Jielimische keep the spirit of giving us there support. The sanitary towels have done wonders to our girls because no more absenteeism during these menses day.

Thank you in advance,

Samuel Kaberia, The principal

Long live the GEC! (sanitary pad provision): Letter from the head teacher  
(head teacher)

MAIRO PRIMARY SCHOOL

GEC - Project

Since the provision of sanitary towels in our school, the girls have had a positive attitude and equal competition among the classes.

They even compete to go to the blackboard to carry out computations as in Maths which was rare before.

They have even improvised a slogan that "Mairo has a rich office" meaning that they can get what they never used to get from Mairo before.

The girls used to be dull but now they've cheered up.

They used to cheat they are sick while it was this natural God given femininity that was discouraging them.

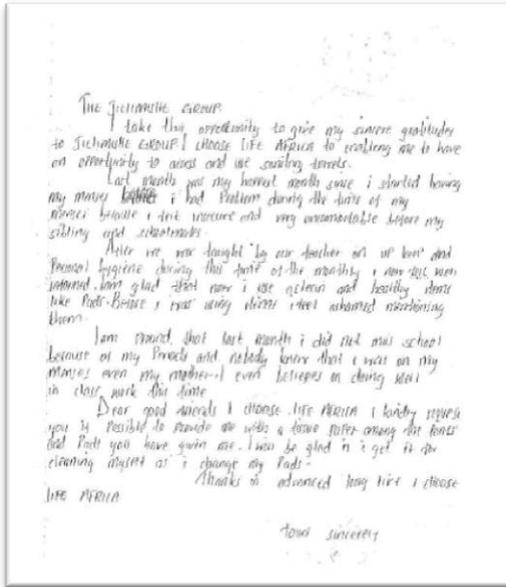
Now we expect an exodus into our school other than out of our school.

Long live GEC!

Lucy W. Mutare (H/T)



## Long live the GEC! (sanitary pad provision): Letter from a girl (student)\*\*



The Jeilimishe Group

I take this opportunity to give my sincere gratitude to Jeilimishe Group I Choose Life Africa to enabling me to have an opportunity to access and use sanitary towels.

Last month was my happiest month since I started having my menses before I had problem during the time of my menses because I felt insecure and very uncomfortable before my sibling and schoolmates.

After we were taught by our teacher on upkeep and personal hygiene during this time of the monthly, I am glad that I now use clean and healthy items like pads. Before I was using items I feel ashamed mentioning them.

I am proud that last month I did not miss school because of my periods and nobody knew that I was on my menses even my mother. I even believes in doing well in class work this time.

Dear good friends I Choose Life Africa I kindly request you if possible to provide me with a tissue paper among the pants and pads you have given me. I will be glad if I get it for cleaning myself as I change my pads.

Thanks in advance long live I Choose Life Africa

Yours sincerely

XXX

## Leonard Cheshire Disability, Kenya

### Supporting disabled girls: Millicent and Eunice's story (student and aunt)

Eunice Atieno Okaka, 31 years, is a single parent to two children and a carer for her niece Millicent Adhiambo, whose parents passed away in 2003 when she was three years old.



They live in a temporary shelter with four other relatives. Eunice struggles to meet the needs of the three children as she earns a low income from cleaning and doing laundry.

Millicent is epileptic and has seizures several times a month, some of which have resulted in facial injuries from her falling and hitting her head. As a result, some children in her community are scared of her appearance and avoid mixing with her. Adults are also wary of Millicent, believing her disability is the cause of a curse on the family.

Eunice could not afford to purchase the medication Millicent needed to help control her seizures, and she was therefore forced to drop out of Pand Pieri Primary School in 2007. These made Eunice feel hopeless when thinking about Millicent's future and how she would progress without an education.

With the help of community members who knew of Millicent, a Community Resource Worker (CRW) identified her in Nyalenda slum and approached her family to discuss the potential for support. Eunice was sensitized on the possible interventions available to help her niece and was told about LCD's project that is helping disabled girls access education.

Eunice agreed to take Millicent for an initial assessment at the Educational Assessment and Resource Centre (EARC) in Kisumu, from where she was referred onto Kisumu General Hospital. The doctor here confirmed the diagnosis of epilepsy and prescribed medication to help with her seizures. Additionally, Millicent was invited for frequent check-ups to enable the health officers to monitor the efficacy of the medication.

Millicent was then supported to re-enrol at Pand Pieri Primary School in August 2014. Eunice has now joined the Parents Support Group at the school, where she is able to talk to other parents about the challenges she faces and what she can do to address these. She has expressed a sense of relief that she no longer feels alone. Discussions with the CRW have given Eunice a better understanding of Millicent's condition and how to support her, and she now feels able to challenge people in her community that have a negative perception of her niece and her disability.

"I'm so happy that Millicent is now in school and her condition is not as bad as before. She is now learning together with other children and looks happy each day she leaves home for school. Moreover, her condition is being managed, which has reduced some burden on me. I sincerely thank LCD for the support, including educating children and teachers to support children like Millicent."

## Supporting disabled girls: Molenta's story (student)



Molenta Amollo lives with her parents and five siblings in Nyalenda slum. When she was one and a half, her mother realised Molenta had a very weak left arm and took her to a traditional healer, but they were unable to help. After visiting a hospital instead, Molenta's arm was put in plaster to help strengthen it, but this did little to improve her disability.

Molenta began attending lessons at the special unit in Pand Pieri Primary School in 2006 and was soon moved to a mainstream class after teachers noted improvements in her educational attainment, but she stopped going to school due to a lack of support from her family.

When Molenta turned 15, she briefly went to live with her mother's friend, as she could no longer cope with the discrimination she received at home. They referred to her as useless and made it clear they felt she could be of no benefit to them.

Molenta reported the issue to a teacher from a nearby school, who arranged a meeting with her mother and a Community Resource Worker (CRW) from LCD's GEC project. They discussed a number of things including disability, Molenta's rights and how her family can support her, and after this Molenta felt able to return home. She was then supported to enrol in Pand Pieri Primary School in Kisumu East Sub County.

Following the meeting with her mother, Molenta was supported by LCD's GEC project team to enrol in school in 2014. The majority of teachers in Molenta's school have been trained on inclusive education and inclusive teaching strategies that ensure children with disabilities are able to learn in a mainstream classroom alongside their non-disabled peers. Furthermore, joining the school's parents group has had a significant impact on Molenta's mother, who demonstrates a drastically changed attitude towards her daughter as a result of quarterly capacity building workshops she has participated in.



Molenta's teacher says she is a very jovial and hard-working girl and is a pleasure to teach. Molenta expressed that she is no longer bullied as the other students now have a better understanding of her disability, and she is also free from torment by community members who would previously insult her as they too have a greater awareness of disability and her right to go to school.

She finally feels accepted by society, which motivates her to attend school regularly.

## A visually impaired girl's determination to continue her education: Christine's story (student)



Christine was born in Asembo Konyango in Rarieda District and is the third oldest child in a family of six children. Her mother, Jane, runs a small, local business from their rural home and her father, Jactone, passed away in 2005.

Christine's eyesight began to deteriorate when she was in grade 2. She was taken to Kitale Hospital where she was provided with spectacles, but she found that she was still struggling to see even when wearing them.

She returned to the hospital in 2005 and was given new, stronger glasses, but unfortunately they broke and the lenses were lost, and the family could not afford to replace them.

As time passed, it became apparent that Christine had a cataract that required removal through an eye operation and she was advised to visit Kikuyu Eye Hospital for surgery. However, the cost of the operation was 50,000/- Kenya Shillings, an amount that was impossible for her mother to raise at the time. While Christine was able to read books with large print, these were not available for her to use in class and as a result she fell behind in lessons and struggled to complete her homework. Jane said "It saddened me greatly to watch my daughter's sight worsen until she could no longer attend school. She dropped out of school and stayed home for a year."

Jane was eventually able to afford the operation in 2011 and Christine underwent surgery at Tenwek Hospital. However, far from correcting her eyesight, three months later Christine's vision became 'smoky' and she said "It became even harder for me to read. I could not, and still cannot, read anything that is in small print." She remained out of school for a further year.

As there are no schools near Christine's home that can support her educational needs, she enrolled in Joel Omino Primary School in Kisumu East District, one of the GEC project schools, in 2013 and stays with her aunt and cousins who live in nearby urban Kisumu during term time.

This is not easy for Christine as her aunt does not see the value in educating a disabled child and her cousins sometimes tease her and hide her belongings, knowing she will struggle to find them because of her poor eyesight. She has many chores to do around the home and her aunt is uncooperative when the school wants to discuss Christine's educational needs. She misses her mother and siblings a great deal.

To address this, the project will encourage Christine's aunt to join the school's parents' group to learn more about disability, the rights of children with disabilities and the need for them to receive a quality education on an equal basis as non-disabled children. This will also give her the space to share her experiences of living with a child with a disability, and will hopefully change her attitude towards the way she supports Christine at home.

### Going to school

Because of her disability, Christine has lost more than two years of her primary school education and her learning has been interrupted several times. Ordinarily, a girl her age should have completed primary education and be attending her second or third year of secondary school. Despite this, enrolling into Joel Omino Primary School has made a great difference to Christine's education as the school has a resource centre for children with visual impairments. Here, there is a computer with software that enables Christine to magnify and print her notes in large text so she is able to read them.



Through the GEC project, Christine will be provided with spectacles that will help to improve her vision and large print textbooks so she is better able to follow her lessons and learn alongside her classmates.

When she grows up, Christine would like to be a teacher as she truly values education and would like to help other children to learn.

“All children with disabilities need to be encouraged and supported to live with other people. The community should stop discriminating against disabled people.”

## Tackling stigma faced by the physically disabled: Joyce’s story (student)

Joyce lives in Olwan, East Alego in Siaya District with her parents, Beatrice Auma and James Oduor, and her four siblings, of which she is the fourth oldest. The family work as labourers for neighbours in order to earn enough money to meet their daily needs, and also rely heavily on subsistence farming. Despite their efforts, they earn less than £1 per day and it is incredibly difficult for them to access essential services including healthcare.

Beatrice was unable to afford regular ante- and post-natal clinics so her pregnancy was not monitored and she could not pay for the supplements needed to ensure the optimal development of her babies. Joyce caught measles when she was two years old, and the family believes that this is what resulted in her physical disability, which affects her spine, though this has not been confirmed by doctors. Her younger sister, who caught measles at the same time, sadly passed away.

Following her measles outbreak, Joyce developed a condition known locally as ‘hunch back’. Her spinal column is curved and her chest protrudes more than it should, making Joyce short of breath and susceptible to frequent chest infections. Joyce’s mother has been caring for her since the onset of her disability, using local herbs and oils to massage Joyce when she feels pain or discomfort. However, when the pain persists the family must buy medication to relieve this.

Joyce has never undergone an assessment at the hospital to determine the exact nature and cause of her disability, and therefore to decide what support she needs. The GEC project team will ensure she receives a full assessment at the local district hospital and is referred to specialists as necessary. Through the project she will also be provided with the interventions and the support necessary for her to complete her primary education.

### Going to school

Joyce attends Agoro Oyombe Primary School in Siaya District, which will be supported through the GEC project.

When unwell, she is unable to attend school, which has a negative impact on her education and learning, but on better days she actively participates in lessons and is very sociable. Joyce is popular with her teachers and readily approaches them when she is in need of assistance.

Her head teacher is keen to make sure she attends school as often as possible and contacts the family whenever Joyce is absent from school. She is also given leeway to reach school late if necessary as she is often forced to walk at a slow pace due to her disability.

The main thing at school that Joyce finds difficult is the attitude of her fellow students, who sometimes pick on her and call her names, and stigma from those in her community. She said “Adults talk about me whenever I pass near them while some of my peers say that I’m pregnant [as my stomach protrudes] or just call me bad things. It hurts my feelings when my school mates jeer or laugh at me and yet it is not my wish to be the way I am.”

The GEC project will make great efforts to raise awareness about disability, inclusive education and the rights of disabled children to a quality education, and to change the negative attitudes that affect Joyce and other children with disabilities. The establishment of a child to child club in her school will further help her peers to better understand disability and support Joyce at school both in lessons and during extra-curricular activities.

### Ambition

Joyce would like to be a teacher when she grows. She feels that her teachers are her role models; they are kind to her and treat her well when she asks for their help, and they always encourage her to do her best in class.

### Joyce's Message to the Community



Joyce would like those around her to remember that anyone can become disabled and that society, therefore, should not discriminate against people with disabilities.

Going to school has given her the courage to speak out and she no longer feels so alone. Her question to society is:

“Can a disabled person not get a good job like a non-disabled person?”

### Suffering at the hands of other children due to a physical disability: Susan's story (student)

Susan lives with her mother and eight siblings, of which she is the seventh oldest. She has a physical disability and her older brother has epilepsy, which carries with it a great deal of stigma due to cultural beliefs. Her father passed away in 2009 so her mother, Jane, cares for the children alone, earning an income by doing menial tasks for neighbours such as clearing fields, tilling land, sowing, weeding and harvesting. She also keeps a few cows but the milk they produce brings in very little money. On her low income, Jane struggles to meet her family's needs and most of the time they survive on just one meal a day.

When she was three years old, Susan's hand was severely burnt. Her mother had cooked lunch for the family on an open fire but put it out before she left to do some work at a neighbour's farm. She thinks that Susan must have crawled into the cooling embers, resulting in her burns. Though she was taken to hospital straight away, it took two months for Susan's hand to heal and she is now permanently disabled. Because of the scarring she struggles with daily tasks such as washing, dressing and helping with household chores.



Susan finds her disability even harder to cope with because she is treated poorly by some people in community, who say unkind things. Sometimes when she tries to defend herself against jeers and abuse from her peers, they gang up against her and immobilize her by holding her better hand, rendering her helpless. Even some family members that are aware of how her disability occurred make negative comments, for example saying Susan's mother burnt her hand as a punishment for stealing.

## Going to school

Susan attends Ngiya Mixed Primary School in Siaya District, which will be supported through the GEC project. Based on her age, she should be in class 7 but is currently in class 5 as she started school late and had to repeat class 4 due to poor attendance.

Her teacher says that Susan is a strong girl who manages to go to school against the odds. Despite this, Susan is constantly affected by the negative attitude of her peers, who call her names and pick on her. This behaviour, she says, is not stopped or prevented by her teachers.



Through the GEC project, Susan will be assessed to ensure she receives any necessary treatment and medical support. The establishment of a child to child club in her school will promote peer support by increasing the understanding of disability and teaching children how they can learn and play together in a harmonious and uplifting way without prejudice to ensure there is a friendly learning environment for all students.

Community attitudes will also be addressed through awareness-raising efforts.

Susan would like to be a doctor when she grows up so that she can relieve the suffering of children in situations like her own.

Susan would like to remind everyone in the community that it was not her wish to be disabled and they should therefore stop discriminating against her.

# Theatre for a Change, Malawi

## Girls' Club: Mercy's story (student)

Primary School, Dedza District

Mercy (13) joined the girls' club at her Primary School in April 2014. She is one of four children and her parents are subsistence farmers. The family are currently unable to meet their basic needs without help. She is in Standard 6 and struggles keeping up with peers in both literacy and numeracy.

"Girls' Club is a group of girls only which shares discuss and learn the developing stages of a girl and also reading and writing skills. I joined the club because I had problems with reading and writing. So I wanted to learn the skills. My favourite thing about being in Girls' Club is the new topics we learn, activities and the role plays."

"I see a difference in myself from before Girls' Club to now since I didn't know what exactly menstruation is and I had so many worries and questions. Now I have an idea of what it is and all worries are gone and I have answers."

"My personal goals are to never drop out from school, get educated and become a doctor in mathematics."



*"At first I had no confidence in myself, I didn't participate in any activities even speaking, asking or answering questions in class but since I joined the Club my confidence has developed and I now participate in anything."*

## Girls' Club: Everista's story (student)

Everista (14) joined the Girls' Club at her Primary School in April 2014. Her father is a pastor and she has three sisters. She is in Standard 6 and was identified by her teacher as being at risk of dropping from school with poor attendance and performance.

"A Girls' Club is where we learn many skills such as teenage pregnancy prevention as well as HIV."

"I joined the Girls' Club because I wanted to know what my fellow girls are doing and my favorite things about being in the club are the topics we learn and the activities we do."

"I would feel very bad if I was not coming to Girls' Clubs as I am getting so many benefits."



*"I see a difference in myself from before Girls' Club to now since at first people were telling me that I will end up getting pregnant and I will never finish school so that made me not to have a passion with school. But now my attitude has changed towards school and that's why I feel differently."*

## Learning the importance of speaking out: Thandi's story (Agent of Change teacher)



My name is Thandi. I am a single young lady aged 25. I started teaching in March 2012.

I have gained a lot from Theatre for a Change especially the Tiphunzire project where I am one of the Agents of Change teachers.

Before the intervention of the project there were a number of things I was not comfortable doing. I could not speak in public even though I had a brilliant idea to raise specifically on that topic. Adding on to that as much as I acknowledge that I am a girl, I was not much conversant with various issues especially with girls growing up. And as a teacher living in a rural area, there are many problems and challenges I meet in everyday life, and it has been very difficult for me to solve all these.

When I took part in Tiphunzire training workshops in December 2013, I have learnt very important topics which have helped me solve out some of the challenges I was encountering. I have learnt about assertiveness which has helped me gather courage to speak in public and also how to approach girls and parents from the community. With the various knowledge acquired in HIV and AIDS, puberty, gender and child protection, I am already a hero in my community and school. I have started gathering girls who dropped out of school from around the villages to go back to school.

Today I was on Zodiac radio talking about a story on a girl who was being defiled by her father as a result of the project. I was on the forefront of making sure that justice will take its stand and that the father is brought to book.

I anticipate that the project goes on well because it is a life changer to many girls especially in the rural areas.'



# Mercy Corps, Nepal

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## Financial literacy training for a young mother: Tara's story (student)

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*“There was a point in life when I thought about killing myself because I couldn’t cope with the challenges I was being confronted with. I was poor and living in constant financial insecurity. I had so many difficulties in life. I considered killing myself but then I would think about my small daughter whom I breastfeed. When I looked down at her I became determined to survive, live and accomplish something in my life.”*

*Tara, 20, from Fulbari VDC, Kailali District, Far West Nepal”.*

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Talking about the past brings back many painful memories for Tara: “Four years ago I was studying in Grade 9 in Janjagriti School in Kailali, but in my society it was considered the right time for me to marry. I was under constant pressure from my family to marry and was forced to quit school. I had no option but marriage so I decided to marry someone I knew rather than a stranger. After marriage I realised that life is not always a bed of roses. I was not working and nor was my husband. We had no income and it was very difficult for us to survive. Then my husband fell ill. I sold all of the gold jewelry that was given to me by my parents to pay for my husband’s treatment.”

Then Tara’s daughter provided the inspiration for Tara to set in motion a chain of events that would change the direction of her life, “In my society, parents and in-laws don’t encourage their daughters or daughters-in-law to leave their house, but I decided to go against my in-laws will and enrolled in a tailoring training which was provided in our village. After the training I bought a sewing machine and began stitching clothes on a small scale. This was the first opportunity I received in my life; the second opportunity changed my life, forever.”

“I heard that staff, from a project called STEM, were in our village to collect information about out-of-school girls to help them with their education. I put my name down and was selected to join the Step Programme. I participated in a financial literacy training of trainers’ course and learnt about household budget management and the importance of saving in life which had a very profound impact on me. I had never realised what saving could do, but after receiving the training I expanded my tailoring business and in the last three months alone I have saved around 40,000 Rs. After the financial literacy training, I delivered two trainings on financial literacy to more than 50 girls at clubs in two different schools; it really increased my confidence. I never thought I could face people like that or speak in public, but the training prepared me well and I was able to deliver both successfully. I received some money for delivering the training and I used it for our household expenses. Everyone sees the changes in me, from a depressed person to a motivated individual who now ‘glows’ and believes in doing something in life. I have realised that if you have the determination and the will, then nothing and no one can stop you.”

“These days even my mother and father-in-law have changed their perception and attitude towards me. They tell me I should focus myself on using my skills and knowledge rather than staying at home and doing household chores. They even take care of my small daughter.”

Tara’s mother-in-law said, “My son is suffering from a long term illness so all we have now is Tara and we are all dependent on her. I used to think that there is no point sending a daughter to a school or providing them training. What is the use in sending your daughters to school when even if they are educated they are limited to the inside of a house? Looking at Tara and the way she has supported the family after my son fell sick, I have realised how important it is to educate our daughters and daughters-in-law.”

## A teacher's story: providing “the armour of education”: Oma's story (teacher)

Oma is a teacher in one of the STEM project schools, a government school, supported by the Girls' Education Challenge in Kailali, Far West Nepal. Oma completed her Masters degree in English and is one of only two English teachers in her school. She teaches children in Grades 3 to 9.

Oma comes from the community in which she teaches, a Tharu village called Bhada. Tharu people are one of the indigenous groups of Nepal. They live in the fertile plains in the Terai region. Most of the Tharu people were previously bonded labourers in a system called Kamaiya which was abolished in 2000. They depend on agriculture for their livelihood and are identified as generally poor, less-educated and are discriminated against at the socio-political level.

Oma had not considered becoming a teacher, but her family conditions were such that as soon as she finished her secondary school she had to work to support her family. Whilst studying for her higher secondary she started teaching in a private school in Dhangadhi, the main city of Kailali district. That was when she realised that teaching was her passion.

### Supporting the education of marginalised girls in Kailali (STEM)

Oma is engaged in the GEC supported project which aims to increase the enrolment and retention of girls in schools in this region. As well as implementing a large scale education campaign, entitled 'Educate Girls. Alleviate Poverty' (EGAP), and rolling out training to school management committees, parents and teachers, the project, run by Mercy Corps, is establishing after school Girls Clubs for in and out-of-school girls, encouraging private investment, and making solar lamps accessible to households through girls who are trained as Sales Agents and will work for female-run clean energy enterprises that are being established under the project. It also provides access to vocational training, apprenticeships and business start-up support through a bespoke programme and transitioning fund.

### Teaching in a government school

#### *The challenges*

Oma's transition from private to government school, city to village was not an easy one.

“There is a difference between teaching in government and private school. In private schools there are fewer students in a class. The students are extrovert and are inquisitive and creative but the students in the villages are very introvert, shy and they don't ask many questions”.

“When I used to teach in a private school, I shared the common belief that teachers in the government schools are not serious, but now that I teach in a government school, I haven't seen that. In one class there are 60 to 80 students. It is difficult for one teacher to manage such large number of students. It's not possible to check their homework every day. The temperature in summer reaches 45 degrees and we don't have a cooling system. The students use their books or copies to fan themselves which diverts their attention. In monsoon season it rains and because the classroom roofs are made of tin the students are unable to listen to our lectures. Despite all this I have seen that my colleagues are serious and very committed in their profession.”

#### *The solutions*

On ways to improve the quality of education in schools, Oma thinks that there should be a limit on the number of students in a class, improved infrastructure inside the school and teaching learning materials should be provided. She also thinks that awareness needs to be raised at the parent's level. Most of the parents are daily wage labourers and are happy if their children are contributing something to earn money or to do household chores. They are not really interested in their children's education.

**On being female...**

As a girl she feels that it doesn't matter how successful a girl is but she is discriminated in some way or other by culture and society.

She said, "I haven't faced any discrimination being a girl, but at times I feel I am discriminating myself. Being a girl, I cannot go wherever I want to and especially if I want to attend any big function I think I might be the only girl and feel uncomfortable. But within my profession and also at the family level I think I am blessed. My family has been very supportive which has given me the strength to continue and improve myself every day".

My friends went from village to the city and some abroad whereas in my case I went from the city to the village. Sometimes I doubt myself but when I see them and successful people like doctors and engineers, I believe that they have gained that success only because of committed teachers like us, and that gives me the motivation to continue, believing that I am contributing something to my village, society and to my country as a whole".

She is happiest when her students understand what she has taught them. "What I want to tell all the students is that it doesn't matter what the challenges are, you have to overcome these and move ahead in life and success will eventually follow. For girls, I think education is very important, in a society like ours if we have the armour of education, then I have seen, felt and believe that nobody can discriminate, humiliate or dominate. This I believe is real power and freedom".

# Viva/Crane, Uganda

## Re-enrolling young mothers: Maurine's story (student)

Maurine\* became a young mother and was taken out of school as a result. Her parents were displeased with her actions and she was destined to a life at home looking after her baby and carrying out the day-to-day tasks to survive in this world. When talking with Maurine, it was clear that her English was good and that she was a bright girl but life had given her many challenges.

The mentors at the local Creative Learning Centre (CLC) heard about Maurine and her delicate situation and decided to go to her home and meet with her parents. Through discussions with the mentors, Maurine's parents agreed that she could attend the CLC.

Maurine enjoyed the CLC and the counsel she received there from the teachers. They did not beat her or make her feel guilty about her present situation. She learnt new skills like making afro pads (reusable sanitary pads) and also developed further in the core curricular subjects like Maths, English and Science. Gradually she regained confidence and knew that after the CLC she wanted to return to her studies. She wondered if her parents would agree.

The mentors continued building a relationship with Maurine's parents and gradually their mind sets changed. The parents decided to take care of Maurine's child while she attended school. In an interview, her father said, "The situation she is in now makes me happy..." Her father also encouraged other parents to forgive their daughters and give them a second chance to complete their studies. Not only has Maurine's relationship with her parents been restored but she is now in school with new focus, working towards her dreams of becoming a nurse. Maurine had lost hope but with the support of the mentors and teachers at the CLC, she found the strength to continue her studies and endure through hardship.

## A mother's story of returning to education: Sarah's story (student)



Sarah\* is a 17 year old girl who lives in the Greater Kampala region of Uganda. She comes from a family of seven children. Her father has two other women and no longer has anything to do with her family, so her mother has cared for the children alone.

Of the seven children only three of them are in school. None of the children have ever been able to advance beyond primary school.

Sarah got pregnant and now has an 18 month old daughter. The father of the child, like Sarah's father, has two other women, both of whom have children. He has not shown any interest in his daughter, so she cannot rely on him to help with raising the child. With only a limited education and no vocational skills, Sarah faced a difficult future making a life for her and her daughter on her own.

### The challenge

Sarah's story is not an unusual one in Uganda. School drop-out rates, particularly for girls, is extremely high. There are a number of reasons for this: costly school fees, abuse or belittling at school, pressure from home to marry and/or take on household chores, pregnancy or disability.

However, these girls do not want to struggle through their lives, or repeat the pattern of their mothers. They understand that a low skilled job does not offer a decent standard of living and are desperate to learn the skills that will help them earn a decent wage. They often realise that school can help them achieve this – but they do not have the tools, knowledge or motivation to get themselves back into the system.

### **A new opportunity...**

A few months ago Sarah got involved in the new Creative Learning Centre (CLC) scheme, run by Viva in partnership with CRANE, and funded by the UK Department for International Development through the Girl's Education Challenge. The CLC offers non-formal education to girls who have dropped out of school or are in danger of doing so. It aims to reintegrate them into the formal school system, so that they can complete either upper primary or lower secondary education.

Sarah is determined that she wants to be a teacher and the opportunity of the CLC has helped to reignite her passion and desire to do this.

Twenty Creative Learning Centres have been created at small venues in and around Kampala. The teaching is focused on numeracy, literacy, sport, craft and technology – but employs creative teaching methods and has a low ratio of students to teachers (20-25 girls to two teachers) to really reignite the passion to learn and achieve. The most marginalised girls will be identified and each girl will create an individual learning action plan with the help of dedicated and trained female teachers.

The programme also focuses activity in three other areas: the training and mentoring of teachers so that they teach more effectively; family mentoring to help the families get more established economically and to help them to think positively about education, and an inter-school 'league' and library which will allow girls to engage in competition, whether for arts, sports, or any number of other options.

### **Ambition**

Sarah has set her mind to go back to secondary school in 2014 as she had only completed primary school and then dropped out. The challenge is raising money for school fees, so she has decided that she will use the skills she has learned in the CLC to generate her own income. She has learned weaving, and so will do this, but needs to find a market for her products. She can also cook food and will create a small business to cook and sell food for other people so that she can raise money for her school fees.

Sarah says: "After leaving the CLC I plan to use what I have learned here as a stepping stone to what I want to become. I hope to go back to school when I have the money for tuition. My dream is to be a teacher."

Sarah also wants her own daughter to start in pre-school when the girl is 3 years old, and will work when she is not in secondary school to raise money for her fees and for the fees of her daughter. Clearly her CLC teachers and mentors will have to help her to learn to do good business so that she becomes self-sustaining. In Uganda it is possible to finish lower secondary and then go to teacher training college. Sarah has said that she will at least do this, start as a teacher, and then upgrade her qualifications as she continues on with her chosen career.

Mim Friday, part of the Viva team who run the programme in Uganda, said: "Recently, Sarah was part of the winning team on an inter-schools/inter-CLC league quiz and a debate. The girls from the CLC beat the girls from the mainstream school and were much more confident and much more able to come out and speak, which is so encouraging."

"Clearly there is a long way to go in Sarah's life, but it is demonstrating that with a bit of help to get back on track, these marginalised girls can start again, which is really exciting."

## Community support enabling young mothers to go to school: Helen's story (student)

Helen\* is one of the girls at the Pikk Bakka Creative Learning Centre (CLC) supported by the Girls' Education Challenge in Uganda. She is 17 years old and a child mother of one and half year old daughter. She dropped out of school seven years ago while in primary four. Together with her sister, she rents a house that is 1.5km away from the CLC. She loves the programme and is committed to it.



In the first two weeks of the CLC, she struggled as she had to ring her baby to the CLC. She could not concentrate in class and sometimes she would not make it all as carrying the baby to class was too great a strain.

The teachers noticed Helen's irregular attendance and talked to her mentors about it. The mentors and Helen then approached a neighbour and talked to her about the possibility of taking care of the child while Helen was at the CLC. The neighbour agreed to the request.

Currently, Helen leaves the child with the neighbour and she now attends regularly and concentrates in class. In November 2013, her targets were to learn how to write alphabetical letters and count numbers.

She successfully achieved these targets. Helen does farming after attending CLC class to support her family. This is a typical story of young mothers who have dropped out of school because of child care issues. In some cases, the girls have brought their children to school – but this can be a distraction. In others, children are left alone – but this is unsafe.

In this programme, teachers and mentors are working together to find solutions from within the community itself. This example shows the strength of the African community where one neighbour will help another to find a way to make progress in life. It shows that it is possible for solutions to be found without any financial intervention.

\*Helen's name has been changed to protect her identity.

## A mother's journey to educate herself: Sharida's story (student)

Sharida\* aged 17 years goes to the Adonai Creative Learning Centre (CLC), which is supported by the Girls' Education Challenge.



Before Sharida dropped out of school, she lived with her mother. She last saw her father when she was five years old. Her mother had five other children to care for and used to sell bananas to raise school fees. In 2010, her mother could no longer raise the money to pay Sharida's fees. Sharida was then in P7. Sharida then dropped out of school, got a boyfriend (20 years old) and decided to leave her mother's home to live with her boyfriend.

Sharida now has a two month old baby who she brings to the CLC. In November 2013, Sharida's reading target was constructing and forming sentences which she is now able to do. In numeracy, her target was to add, subtract and multiply – she can now add and subtract some numbers. She also learnt how to make necklaces and earrings.

Importantly she also learnt how to keep her body clean and value herself as a girl. She enjoys socialising with the other young women and is making new friends. Sharida dreams of having her own salon and also doing tailoring.

Sharida's story is very typical of young women who abandon education and start a family. It is fortunate that Sharida is willing to come to the CLC, but her story also demonstrates that many girls remain unconvinced that going back to academic studies is a good plan, and would rather just own a business.

Some CLCs have begun to tackle this challenge by helping the girls to meet people who run small businesses. These individuals describe how hard it is to make a living this way. This has helped other girls to realise that the only way to make a better life is to continue with education. The CLCs helpfully combine formal learning with creative skills so that girls can become self-sufficient but also understand the value of continued education.

# World Vision (iGATE), Zimbabwe

## Village Savings and Loans (VS&L): Rambai's story (mother)

"I am a mother of six children, five of them at school, which includes two girls, one at secondary, and the other at primary. I got to know about the VS&L initiative at a community meeting in October 2014.

"Before I joined the IGATE VS&L project, I could not send all my children to school - only two of them, one girl in Form 1 and the other boy in Grade 6. Their father could not afford to send the rest of the children to school. When we started VS&L, I met other colleagues who taught me to set traps for rodents (kuteya mbeva) and sell them (\$1 for 10). In that way, I managed to have money to start saving in VS&L.

"As a VS&L group, we agreed on saving our money and buying our children school uniforms at the end of each cycle. I managed to lend some money from the VS&L group to also support my rodent business, and was able to enrol all my children in school.

"The rodents business has grown for me, since I now buy from other members and sell at a higher price of \$1 for 5. Through the VS&L initiative I have also learnt the importance of buying and selling business. We used to dislike being referred to as vendors, but I have realised that it is important to work hard in business. I recently bought school uniforms for my other two children. I see the education of my family getting better due to my participation in the VS&L initiative."

## Village Savings and Loans: Three mothers' stories (mothers)

The three ladies are Mary, (42), Teresa (38) and Yvonne\*, (48).



They are members of three different VS&L groups. They joined IGATE VS&L in January 2014. By May of the same year, they came together to start a poultry project in which they are feeding broilers for resale to local residents and food outlets in the border town.

Of the three only Teresa had previously been engaged in an income generating activity. She used to buy and sell second hand clothes. Mary and Yvonne didn't have any IGA experience despite being members of VS&L.

Borrowing, according to the three, is mandatory in their groups; Mary told us that before they started the poultry project she would borrow and keep the money at home. When it was time for repayment she would raise the accrued interest from personal savings or selling some of her assets or small livestock.

The three mothers, with a total of four girls who are currently in school, stay in the same village and often meet on their way to the savings meetings. It is during one of the trips to the meeting place where the idea of a poultry project was started. When she gave feedback to her peers about the training, it dawned on the trio that this was their opportunity to transform their lives including those of their families.

With a capital base of \$120 each borrowed from their VS&L groups, the trio realised that it was going to be economically expensive to pursue individual projects. By bringing their monies together they managed to start off with 100 chicks which were purchased at \$0.75 each. The remainder was used for chemicals and stock feeds for the whole cycle. 98 of the birds survived and went through the market. 40 birds were sold at \$6.5 each while the remaining 58 were sold at \$7, generating a total of \$660.

The proceeds were used to order another batch of 200 birds including stock feeds and chemicals as well as servicing the group loans and other household expenses.

The group contends that there is a huge market for broilers in BeitBridge town which has quite a number of food outlets; however their major challenge is that they do not have a proper fowl run. Currently they are using Mary's hut which doubles as both fowl run and kitchen for her family. The group plans to continue operating jointly until such a time when each member is able to stand on their own and Yvonne pointed out that "this might take a while given that we are basically surviving from this income generating activity".

### **What are some of the changes they have seen from their participation in VSL?**

Mary – During the 2013 rainy season BeitBridge was inundated by flash floods in which Mary's home was washed away. She had been struggling to raise enough money to reconstruct. However since joining VS&L in January 2014 she says she already managed to borrow a lump-sum from her group and bought cement which she used to mould bricks for her "new and more secure house" (pictured below).

Teresa – Before joining the IGATE VS&L, she used to sell second hand clothing to farming communities as far as Mwenezi district. It would usually take between two and three weeks away from home every month. Meanwhile her children would be alone at home and she says they didn't have anyone to assist them with their school work adding that their performance in class dropped. Now that they are involved in the poultry project she now has time with her family, attending to all their needs as well as assisting them with homework. She also indicated that for predictable expenses like school fees and uniforms it's now a lot easier to plan around these expenses.

Yvonne – Previously, according to her, she was a mere house wife depending entirely on her husband who is in South Africa doing piece work. She said the piece jobs are not a reliable source of income and in some cases money from her husband would take a long in coming or never at all. Now she is able to better plan and manage her expenses knowing she has a dependable source and steady stream of income from the poultry business.

The goal for these women is to ensure economic security for their households. They believe that building a strong entrepreneurial base will result in their ability to meet household basic needs including education of their children. Given that this is a nascent initiative that has potential it has been booked as a case study that will be followed throughout the life of the project.

### **Village Savings and Loans: Taki ngwenya's story (parent)**

"I am a widow and a mother of three children, two boys and one girl. I attended a meeting in the community where I learned about the IGATE project. This project has helped me so much. I used to face much difficulty paying school fees, but this project has helped me to pay the school fees well for my children.

"My life had been difficult since the father of these children passed away when they were very young. Now I can pay school fees for my children and also buy other necessities, especially for my daughter, which are important for her, such as menstrual pads. Before this intervention, she would be chased away from school, due to late payment, but now we no longer struggle to pay her fees.

"I used to stay without money, but now I always stay with some money from the proceeds of the village savings and loan group. I buy flour and make burns (amagwinya), sell them to farmers in the village and make a profit.

"The IGATE project has also taught me a lot about gender roles and how we have to share duties between our boy and girl children. It has also taught me the importance of being open to my children, especially girls. I used not to have time to talk to my children, since I spent most of the time looking for money, but because of the IGATE project, my situation is now better.

"I foresee a bright future for myself and my children, especially my daughter, because I am now involved in a project that values girls."

## Girls' rights: Basitsana's story (student)

"My name is Basitsana. I am 11 years old and am in Grade 6 in primary school. I got to know about the IGATE project when we were taught by our matron, Mrs Ndlovu in class. We formed a club, and we have been taught how to knit reusable menstrual pads.



"We once went for a trip to Masiye Camp, where we were taught a lot of team building games like zip-line. Before I joined the IGATE club, I used to be so shy (ngiyisithutha), but now I feel that I am more confident and I no longer fear to talk in front of others or recite stories.

"We have also been taught about our rights and have been given advice on our careers.

I think as I continue with this project, I will grow up to be a more clever and confident person, which I used not to be.

When I am grown up, I wish to be a nurse in the local community."

## Come back to school!: Mrs. Muringiswa's story (project staff)

"After completing the 'Power Within' training we tried to find out the main causes of drop outs in our communities. We realised that many people were concentrating on broad political activities and were not focusing on the needs of their families. We talked with the school authorities and the Mothers' Group members to look for a solution.

"As the Power Within club, we carried out a "Come Back to School Campaign". We addressed parents at public gatherings, including at political meetings, talking to them about the importance of education and the issues of abuse and domestic violence.

"The Mothers Group members helped to identify out-of-school girls in their communities. We also talked to the chief about re-enrolling children into school. With his help, 20 pupils were re-enrolled."

## The community perspective: Mrs Chirozva's\* story (community member)

"My name is Mrs Chirozva. I am a member of the Methodist Church in my community. Before the IGATE project, I used to be just a church member without much contribution to the kingdom of God."



\*From left, Mrs. Mudavanhu-matron, Mrs Chirozva, Alleta and Mrs. Gwayuya-matron

The IGATE project has shown me how to see things differently. We were taught about helping the needy in our society and the importance of educating children, especially girls. Issues of violence against girls and domestic violence touched my heart during Mothers' Group training."

"That's when I began to see the importance of every child in the society. I began to preach the gospel of giving in our church and everyone started to see the importance of giving. As a result, the church is now sponsoring a child with school fees, uniforms and school exercise books."

"Also, as an individual I also managed to donate a school uniform to Alletta who had no school uniform. I believe this will help her performance in school."

## More information on the Girls' Education Challenge can be found at [www.dfid.gov.uk/gec](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/gec)

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