

# Value for Money of Educating the Most Marginalised GEC Girls

## Principal findings

- **Benefits greatly exceeded costs for all three case study projects.** In Ethiopia and Nepal, measurable benefits were valued at between 4.0 and 5.4 times costs, and in Malawi benefits were worth twice the costs. The value of the benefits derived mostly from achieved gains in literacy, numeracy as well as projections of the extra years of schooling that will be completed by those girls who transitioned into further education.
- **The projects raised literacy and numeracy levels substantially.** Girls in Malawi and Nepal showed increases of 20 to 22 percentage points in literacy and numeracy tests, equivalent to girls having achieved five additional years of formal schooling. Gains in Ethiopia were lower, particularly for numeracy, but still equivalent to completing an additional two to three years of formal schooling. Of all project benefits, literacy and numeracy were by far the most highly valued by girls themselves.
- **Most girls (76%) successfully transitioned into further education or work** following project completion. The greatest impact was on younger girls, who predominantly transitioned into formal schools. Having been out-of-school prior to their enrolment on the project, this has already achieved a transformational impact on their lives.
- **Many other health and social benefits were also found**, including improved health knowledge and outcomes; improved self-confidence, self-efficacy, social networks, and well-being; changes in social norms and reductions in gender-based violence; and positive spill-over effects in local communities.
- **Project costs ranged from £179 (in Ethiopia) to £731 (in Malawi) per girl per year.** Reasons for higher costs included the country context and differing approaches in terms of the extent of support provided. The costs are 2.5 to 10 times higher than those for educating girls in regular government schools. This reflects both the more marginalised nature of the beneficiaries (including many who had never been to school, had disabilities, were young mothers and came from illiterate households) and the greater breadth and intensity of support provided (including non-educational support such as life-skills, engaging with local communities and safeguarding).



## Recommendations

1. Supporting the education of particularly marginalised, out-of-school girls should be prioritised.
2. Achieving gains in literacy, numeracy and rates of transition (to further education or work) should be the core focus of future projects.
3. Design phase should assess opportunities for targeting other benefits relative to the marginal costs of doing so (e.g. specific health outcomes).
4. Benefits should be systematically defined, targeted, monitored and maximised throughout implementation.
5. Markers of marginalisation should be robustly defined and tracked throughout implementation.
6. Girls' direct and indirect costs from participating in the project (as well as from transitioning into continued education) should be mitigated as far as possible – cash transfers could be a particularly cost-effective intervention to achieve this.
7. Girls should be supported beyond their completion of learning centre activities to improve VfM through both increasing and sustaining their transitions to further education and/or work.
8. Project design should be responsive to external context, including flexibility in implementation and assuring labour market relevance of vocational training.

## Background

The Girls' Education Challenge Phase II is an eight-year (2017-2025) programme supported by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) that aims to improve the learning opportunities and outcomes of over 1.6 million girls around the world. The programme spans 17 countries and includes 41 projects through two funding windows: the Girls' Education Challenge – Transition (GEC-T) Window with 27 projects, and the Leave No Girl Behind (LNGB) Window with 14 projects targeting the most marginalised out-of-school girls. This evaluation examined three of the 14 LNGB projects, in Ethiopia, Malawi, and Nepal, as in-depth case studies.

### For more information:

The GEC Study 6 Final Report, dated June 2024, is available at: [gec-ii-ie\\_study-6-report\\_final.pdf](https://www.girlseducationchallenge.org/gec-ii-ie_study-6-report_final.pdf) (girlseducationchallenge).

