Outcome Harvesting Study of Global Fund for Children's Echidna Giving Portfolio

Prepared for Global Fund for Children

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Boxes

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Acronyms

CDI	Centre for Development Initiatives
CP	Cultural Practice, LLC
DFID	UK Department for International Development
FGC	Female Genital Cutting
GFC	Global Fund for Children
iGLOW	Girls Leading Our World Initiative
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
NIGEE	Nyanza Initiative for Girls' Education and Empowerment
OCI	Organizational Capacity Index
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SGF	Samburu Girls Foundation
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Introduction

Background of Echidna Giving engagement with GFC

Global Fund for Children (GFC) invests in community-based organizations to help children and youth reach their full potential and advance their rights. Since 2013, GFC has received funding from Echidna Giving to support girl-focused community-based organizations globally. In December 2017, Echidna Giving awarded a final grant of $875,000 to GFC to support 15 local partners striving to improve the quality of girls' education (Table 1). The current tranche of Echidna Giving funding covers programs from December 2017 through June 30, 2020.[1]

This funding from Echidna Giving has helped GFC support community-based organizations to achieve **three primary project objectives**:

1. "Removing obstacles that make it difficult for girls to stay in school and receive a quality education";
2. "Increasing the quality of education available to girls in school"; and
3. "Strengthening grassroots organizations' programmatic, organizational, and networking capacity to promote replication of best practices at the local, regional, and global level through networking and advocacy." (GFC 2019)

With the funding from Echidna Giving, GFC provides primary grants for selected local partners to support their programmatic and operating costs. GFC staff and consultants also deliver tailored, value-added services to strengthen the local partners' capacity; their monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) skills; and their networking and fundraising skills. Echidna Giving funding also supports supplemental grants for organizational development and for convening local partners. These convening events include regional GFC Knowledge Exchanges and country-specific events to network, learn, and reflect on their work and specific aspects of organizational development. To maximize Echidna Giving's investment, GFC leverages its broader network of partners and peer organizations to provide local partners with additional capacity building, activity funding, and opportunities for learning and sharing best practices.

Table 1 Echidna Giving Portfolio Local Partners

Local Partner	Country	First Year of GFC Funding***	Years to Date	2019 Grant	Anticipated 2020 Grant
Nyanza Initiative for Girls' Education and Empowerment (NIGEE)*	Kenya	2017	3	$12,000	$20,000
Samburu Girls Foundation (SGF)*	Kenya	2017	3	$12,000	$17,000
Girls Leading Our World Initiative (iGLOW)**	Kenya	2015	5	$13,000	$20,000
Initiative pour la Promotion de la Santé Rurale et le Développement Intégré au Burundi (IPSDI)	Burundi	2016	4	$12,000	$18,000

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[1] At the inception of this study, it was understood that the Echidna Giving grant would end on December 31, 2019. While GFC was revising internal processes, it was discovered that funding went through June 30, 2020. This did not affect the analysis.

Local Partner	Country	First Year of GFC Funding***	Years to Date	2019 Grant	Anticipated 2020 Grant
Georges Malaika Foundation	Democratic Republic of the Congo	2016	4	$16,000	$25,000
Action for Children (AfC)	Tanzania	2014	6	$23,000 (including Bainum Family Foundation funding)	$18,000
Association Jeunesse Espoir (AJE)	Senegal	2016	4	$21,000 (including Three Graces Foundation funding)	$16,000
Achievers Ghana Education	Ghana	2016	4	$18,000 (including Three Graces Foundation) funding	$18,720
Center for Development Initiatives (CDI)*	Ghana	2016	4	$27,000 (including Three Graces Foundation funding)	$20,679
Child and Youth Protection Foundation (CYPF)	Nigeria	2016	4	$13,000	$19,000
Centre for Children's Health Education, Orientation and Protection (CEE-HOPE)	Nigeria	2015	5	$14,000	$14,000
Insan Association	Lebanon	2015	5	$22,000	$0
GRACE Association	Pakistan	2017	3	$19,000	$18,000
Sahyog Care for You	India	2015	5	$23,000	$23,000
Association Zanmi Timoun	Haiti	2014	6	$18,000 $5,630 (opportunity grant)	$3,000 from a $11,500 Echidna Giving discretionary fund****

*Indicates local partner that participated in entire Outcome Harvesting workshop.
**Indicates local partner that partially participated in Outcome Harvesting workshop.
***This report describes funding distributed to local partners under the current grant cycle. In FY18, GFC distributed $210,000 in Echidna Giving funding for local partner primary grants. An aggregate figure is given for FY18 due to staff transitions across GFC teams, which complicates reporting of accurate information for each local partner.
****The remaining $8,500 will be allocated based on the specific needs of partners.

Description of GFC approach to partnership and grantmaking

GFC provides unrestricted[2] funding to local partners, typically over four to six years. During its engagement with GFC, each Echidna Giving Portfolio local partner selected one primary outcome indicator to track and report. Local partners started their programs with varying degrees of MEL expertise, so GFC provided support to enhance their organizational capacity and MEL skills. Because of limitations on local partner MEL capacity, a lack of common indicators, and varying interventions, evaluation methodologies that require mapping of pre-determined outcomes across all local partners are not appropriate for this study.

All of the selected organizations were already GFC local partners prior to the 2018 and 2019 scope of this study, with many receiving funding from previous Echidna Giving grants.[3] GFC focused on identifying local partners that would benefit from organizational capacity development rather than sectoral technical assistance. According to GFC program staff, the local partners were selected in part because of their openness to refining their approaches.

Purpose of this study

With Echidna Giving funds granted in December 2017, GFC is supporting 15 local partners across Africa and the Middle East, South Asia, and the Americas working on a range of issues related to adolescent girls' education. GFC offers local partners both financial and non-financial support, including organizational capacity development. A consultant conducted an initial study in 2017 to analyze lessons learned about successful models and best practices among GFC's girls' education local partners and projects. In the Echidna Giving Portfolio's final year, GFC was interested in conducting an additional study to capture lessons learned associated with this portfolio of grants for future programming.

The Cultural Practice, LLC (CP) research team led a participatory workshop with GFC program and development staff to design and plan the Echidna Giving Portfolio study. Participants were guided through a series of activities in a one-day workshop to arrive at a common understanding of the history of the Echidna Giving Portfolio and the scope and parameters of the proposed study. The workshop helped to clarify the need for the findings of the study to both explore results relevant to Echidna Giving and GFC, and to deliver benefits to local partners. While the primary audience for the findings of this study are Echidna Giving and GFC, the report will also be shared with the local partners.

During the workshop, the participants expressed the desire to understand how Echidna Giving funding impacted local partners and their activities. However, given the lack of data and the unrestricted nature of the grants, it is not possible to capture attribution of the grant to specific local partner outcomes. Instead, the importance of understanding GFC's support more broadly to an organization's development and ability to do its work, including improve the lives of children and adolescent girls, emerged as an important learning question during discussions with staff. At the end of the workshop, the group agreed on the following research question for the study: *How did GFC support enable partners to advance their work in girls' education and beyond?*

Background on Participating Local Partners

All of the local partners work on multiple interventions. For the purpose of this study, the authors focus on interventions and activities that are funded wholly or in part through GFC grants. Interventions not supported through GFC are not described in this report.

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[2] Since the inception of the Echidna Giving partnerships, GFC has shifted its communications to use the term "flexible" grants instead of the term "unrestricted" grants. For the purpose of this report, the authors will use "unrestricted" to reflect the historical context of the local partner engagement.

[3] Echidna Giving was confirmed to be the first funder for nine of the local partners and is likely to have been the first funder for four additional local partners.

Centre for Development Initiatives (CDI) – Based in Accra, Ghana and rooted in a social work, social welfare, and child development background, CDI primarily works with upper primary school girls to improve access to education, and to provide leadership training, empowerment, and health services to out-of-school girls and girls at risk of dropping out. The intervention supported with GFC funds focuses on returning upper primary school–aged girls (junior high) to schools in urban slums in the Greater Accra Region. Most of the girls targeted by CDI have migrated from other parts of Ghana to pursue an education while staying with relatives or guardians, but dropped out or are at high risk of dropping out of school.

Nyanza Initiative for Girls' Education and Empowerment (NIGEE) – Based in Kisumu, Kenya, NIGEE works to respond to the needs of rural adolescent girls who are involved in child labor, forced into early marriage,[4] and victims of female genital cutting (FGC).[5] It operates a holistic girls' education program. NIGEE works with primary and high school girls who are willing to return to school after dropping out and helps them to succeed in formal education. NIGEE also undertakes community sensitization and community-based advocacy activities. The GFC-funded intervention during this cycle of the grant established school-holiday Academic Camps for girls in Kuria.

Samburu Girls Foundation (SGF) – Based in Maralal in Samburu county, Kenya, SGF was founded by Josephine Kulea and was formally registered in 2011 to "make the world a better and safer place for pastoralist girls in Kenya through the provision of life opportunities and psychosocial care." It works in three primary areas including addressing harmful practices like FGC, beading, and early marriage. SGF implements activities for 1) "rescue"[6] and reconciliation; 2) education (from primary to tertiary education levels); and 3) community outreach. Over 1,000 girls have been supported through their "rescue centers" to date. The grant from GFC is pooled with other funding to support SGF's overall programs.

Girls Leading Our World Initiative (iGLOW) – Based in Nairobi, Kenya, iGLOW addresses barriers to girls' education. It is one of the longer-term local partners in the Echidna Giving Portfolio and combines the GFC grant with other funding to support school feeding, school fees payments, learning material distribution, counseling services, and other interventions. iGLOW, however, is not part of the study because it was unable to fully participate during the in-depth and highly participatory Outcome Harvesting workshop. In consultation with GFC, the research team determined iGLOW could not be examined in the same way as the other three local partners.

Methodology

As described above, the study aims to answer the overall question: *How did GFC support enable partners to advance their work in girls' education and beyond?*

The research question is framed to be flexible enough to capture the wide range of local partner interventions within the Echidna Giving Portfolio. During the design workshop held in April 2019, CP and GFC staff defined and clarified key aspects of the research question. "GFC support" was understood to mean both **financial** and **non-financial support**:

- **Financial support** included annual primary grants for operational, programmatic, or capacity development, as well as need-based supplementary grants. Local partners applied for

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[4] The authors use the term early marriage throughout the report for consistency; however, local partners or GFC may use different terms such as "child marriage" or "early forced marriage" in their work. Early marriage is considered to be a marriage where at least one of the spouses is under the age of 18.

[5] The local partner uses the term Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in its work, but the authors of this study will use Female Genital Cutting (FGC) throughout this report, in line with established scholarship.

[6] The use of the term "rescue" is associated with the nomenclature SGF uses for its interventions. The use of "rescue" or "save" should not be understood to take away agency from the girls who themselves are making decisions (sometimes with support from family or community members) to leave their communities permanently or during the holiday. For this reason, quotations will always be used with the words "rescue" or "rescued" in this report.

supplementary grants with input from GFC on how to use the funding, particularly for visibility and networking.

- **Non-financial support** included advisory support from GFC and other organizations that was not funded through a grant to the local partner. This encompassed check-ins, proposal development support, and review for supplementary grant applications. Network facilitation – through local partner convenings and Knowledge Exchanges, and through third-party institution trainings on advocacy and program management – was also a key component of non-financial support received by local partners. GFC also leveraged its network of funders to help local partner secure additional funding. The final aspect of non-financial support was mentorship.

In addition to financial and non-financial support, local partners benefited through mentoring from GFC, leveraging of opportunities within GFC's broader portfolio, through participation in the "alumni network," and by making connections with other GFC local partners.

During the design workshop, the team defined "girls' education and beyond" as a focus of the study. Local partners were selected for the Echidna Giving Portfolio because some aspect of their work focused on girls' education. However, many local partners are working outside of school settings and providing wrap-around support services to address a broad range of issues, not just girls' education. The unrestricted nature of GFC's financial support enabled each organization to choose how to utilize the primary grants and other support to advance its specific approach and interventions addressing "girls' education and beyond." For this reason, GFC wanted a research question that could capture the breadth of activities being implemented to address girls' education and other target areas of intervention.

The Echidna Giving Portfolio was not designed with an overarching or common set of desired changes or outcomes for the local partners.[7] Therefore, there were no common indicators that could be investigated to understand the extent to which partners had or had not achieved a common set of goals. It was consequently necessary to use an evaluation method to explore intended and unintended outcomes of local partners' activities. In collaboration with GFC, a complexity-aware evaluation method called Outcome Harvesting was selected to answer the overall research question. This approach was appropriate for the study because it allows local partners in different countries, receiving different packages of GFC support, and without a common set of indicators, to identify observable changes in behavior[8] (outcomes) that their activities contributed to over a defined period. These changes could have been intended or unintended, positive or negative.

Using this approach, the CP team worked with three local partners using a variety of qualitative data collection methods to identify and analyze outcomes. After a change in behavior was identified, CP guided the partner to "work backwards" and identify the actors, contributing factors, and key moments in time that led to each outcome and how GFC support contributed to those outcomes.

The method provides insights into how local partner interventions influenced changes in actors' behavior. For this study, CP used several data collection methods including a document review, group and individual interviews with local partner staff and GFC staff, and participatory workshop activities to generate stories from local partners to understand the changes around girls' education and beyond in each intervention context. This study investigated change that occurred during the most recent round of GFC support, 2018-2019.

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[7] At the time that the Echidna Giving Portfolio was designed, GFC did not utilize a cohort-based approach. Local partners received funding from a common source but were not expected to establish common metrics or peer-to-peer communications.
[8] In the context of Outcome Harvesting, "changes in behavior" is a generalized term that refers observable changes in actors' behavior, actions, activities, policies, and practices.

Outcome Harvest Process

Outcome Harvesting starts with the identification of key stakeholders related to the intervention under review. It allows evaluators to examine outcomes perceived by different stakeholders retrospectively to understand how the changes came about, with a specific focus on changes in actors' behavior, actions, activities, policies, and practices. In Outcome Harvesting, "information is collected, or harvested, from the individual or organization whose actions influenced the outcome(s) to answer specific, useful questions. The harvested information may go through a winnowing process during which it is validated or substantiated by comparing it to information collected from knowledgeable, independent sources," (Wilson-Grau and Britt 2012). Afterwards, the validated information is analyzed by outcomes to answer the harvesting questions, and the overall research question.

Box 1: Outcome Harvest Steps

1. Design the Outcome Harvest
2. Gather data and draft outcome descriptions
3. Engage change agents in formulating outcome descriptions
4. Substantiate
5. Analyze and interpret
6. Support use of findings

Source: Wilson-Grau and Britt 2012.

The basic process for Outcome Harvesting follows six iterative steps (Box 1). CP adapted these steps to most effectively answer the research question within the specific context and constraints of this study. These steps are iterative, and many recurred or happened concurrently.

1. Design the Outcome Harvest: While completing the desk review (below), CP developed harvesting questions to guide the study in response to the primary research question. The specific harvesting questions help to answer the central research question and invited stakeholders to provide evidence-based answers about what happened, who was involved, how we know and corroborate the change, why it is important, and what we do with this information. These harvesting questions invite participants in the study to think about their outcomes at different levels (e.g., individual actor, organization, community, etc.). For this study, the specific harvesting questions were:

1. How have the outcomes of your interventions contributed, directly or indirectly, to a process of change that will, or has already, affected the relative empowerment of girls in ways that would not have happened without the intervention?
2. What aspect(s) of GFC support, financial or non-financial, was most important for supporting your organization's contribution to outcomes?
3. How do the outcomes you achieve correspond to the goals of your organization and GFC's Echidna Giving Portfolio?
4. What are the signs that the processes of change represented by your outcomes will endure following the conclusion of GFC support?

The team also designed the one-week Outcome Harvesting workshop, including draft outcome descriptions and data collection materials for engaging with stakeholders and validating information. The workshop was designed to be highly participatory and collaborative, utilizing numerous adult learning techniques and liberating structures.[9] CP made a high-level presentation to GFC programs staff about the intended methodology and the design of the workshop on July 10, 2019.

2. Gather data and draft outcome descriptions: The CP team conducted a thorough desk study to capture information about changes that occurred. This covered information submitted to Echidna Giving by GFC, including all proposal, reports, and relevant updates. It also included financial and technical reports submitted by local partners to GFC. CP additionally conducted virtual interviews with each local partner to improve the document review and support the workshop design. Some of these interviews revealed new

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[9] Liberating structures are a set of facilitation strategies designed to foster creativity and build trust to encourage innovative participation. http://www.liberatingstructures.com/

documentation that was provided to CP for review. The information gathered in this process influenced how CP designed and facilitated the Outcome Harvesting workshop.

3. Engage change agents in formulating outcome descriptions: CP led a workshop with GFC and local partner staff to review the draft outcome descriptions, identify and formulate additional ones, and begin analyzing them all. GFC staff coordinated the participation of local partner staff and organized workshop meeting logistics (e.g., lodging, workshop space, partner travel). The workshop was held in Nairobi, Kenya July 15-19, with three GFC local partners: two from Kenya and one from Ghana.[10] Two staff members from each organization participated, as well as a GFC capacity building specialist based in Guatemala, for a total of nine participants, including facilitators. Representatives from the local partners were closely involved in different aspects of grant administration and programming. Local partners were encouraged to select participants who had programmatic knowledge and expertise associated with the grant's financial and non-financial components. GFC also made recommendations, and some participants were changed as a result. The benefit of including participants with different roles and responsibilities is that they were able to identify different and complementary changes during the Outcome Harvesting process. The inclusion of the GFC capacity building specialist as an additional facilitator was not initially planned, but greatly supported the ability of the CP team to work closely with each of the three local partners throughout the workshop. It also provided an opportunity for knowledge exchange about this MEL methodology with GFC programs in another region.

4. Validate: During the study, the CP team conducted key informant interviews and group interviews to identify the views of stakeholders knowledgeable about each outcome and how it was achieved. This validates and enhances the reliability of the findings. External sources also helped verify some outcomes for which the partner organization staff were not the most authoritative source of information.

5. Analyze and interpret: After validating outcomes, CP analyzed and interpreted the data to provide evidence-based answers to the harvesting questions. This process included limited remote follow-up with GFC staff and local partners to clarify initial findings, not to serve as a second round of data collection. The analysis and interpretation for this study is documented in this report and executive summary.

6. Support use of findings: This report includes conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of the Outcome Harvest. The conclusions and recommendations section of this report is intended to be actionable and support decision-making about future grantmaking for GFC.

Limitations of the Study

- This study was designed for the purpose of learning; it is not a formal evaluation. The Echidna Giving Portfolio was not set up in a way that lent itself to a formal endline evaluation with the time and resources available at the inception of this activity. The study was not designed to uncover the impact of local partners' work, but instead to inform GFC about the importance of its support to the self-identified successes of local partners.
- To maximize time and budget resources, only a small sample of local partners was convened in Kenya. While the study anticipated the participation of up to five local partners, only three could actively participate in the process. In the absence of a common monitoring and evaluation framework, the findings and conclusions cannot be extrapolated to local partners that did not participate in the Outcome Harvest. Therefore, the findings and conclusions are not representative of all 15 local partners in the Echidna Giving Portfolio.

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[10] Five GFC partner organizations were invited to participate. An additional partner from Kenya had one staff member participate for 1.5 days of the workshop, and one additional organization from the Democratic Republic of the Congo was invited but unable to attend.

- Time and budget did not allow the team to plan for an extensive validation process, particularly since the Outcome Harvesting workshop was held outside the area of intervention for all participating local partners.
- Many of the relevant initiatives discussed by local partners began prior to the scope of this study. Therefore, the identified outcomes cannot be entirely attributed to this cycle of grant funding.
- The nature of GFC's unrestricted grantmaking means that it is hard to attribute certain changes to GFC support when local partners pool donor funding. However, the study still identifies the importance of GFC support, as reported by the local partners themselves.

Findings from Outcome Harvest Study

The local partners identified 24 outcomes as the most important and relevant for answering the harvesting questions and the overall research question. These outcomes do not represent all of the changes that occurred in the context of each local partner's interventions. However, the outcome descriptions describe the key behavior changes[11] that occurred, from the perspective of the change agents, the local partners.

Box 2: Characteristics of Analysis Categories

Distinct – conceptually differentiated
Defined – clearly spelled out
Meaningful – makes sense to users
Useful – applicable to harvesting questions

Source: Wilson-Grau. 2019.

Among the 24 outcomes, four broad thematic domains for analysis were identified, including: 1) Livelihood Outcomes, 2) Educational Outcomes, 3) Community Engagement and Advocacy Outcomes, and 4) Organizational Development/Sustainability. These analysis categories reflect the four recommended characteristics identified in Box 2.[12]

In the findings, each of the 24 outcomes is discussed within the broader literature. This has two purposes. First, the literature provides relevant context and background about the local partners and targeted communities' challenges and opportunities. Second, it is used to further elaborate on and discuss the significance of each outcome, as perceived by the local partners.

1. Livelihood Outcomes: Supporting pathways to expand girls' livelihood options

Well-being outcomes for girls and boys are better when they have access to and control of a diverse set of assets upon which to build their livelihoods (Meinzen-Dick et al. 2011). Many of the girls the local partners aim to benefit have minimal access to and control of resources that facilitate different livelihood options, e.g., land, livestock, educational services, healthcare services, safe spaces, or life skills.[13] Their limited access to and control of key livelihood assets is shaped by social norms about their roles and responsibilities as girls and the roles they are expected to fulfill later in life as women.

CDI in Ghana and SGF and NIGEE programs in Kenya contributed to outcomes that enable girls to accumulate livelihood assets to expand their livelihood options. Many of the changes in behaviors and practices identified by the local partners increased girls' access to assets like new academic and life skills or health and counseling services in a safe environment, or contributed to some degree to prolonging girls' school attendance. Other outcomes identified by the local partners went a step further, contributing to expanding girls' aspirations.

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[11] In Outcome Harvesting, "behavior change" includes changes in relationships, actions, activities, policies, and practices.
[12] The researchers manually organized the outcome descriptions for analysis rather than using a database.
[13] This report draws on the definition of "life skills" that is most widely used: "abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO 1997).

1.1. Prolonging girls' attendance in schools to develop academic and life skills

In Kenya, many of the girls that NIGEE and SGF work with live in semi-nomadic pastoral Maasai and Samburu communities where harmful practices,[14] like FGC, beading[15], and early marriage are commonly accepted and practiced. Girls have little to no say about their participation in these harmful practices, nor full knowledge of their effects. Each practice, described below, has negative consequences for girls' development and future opportunities.

In the communities targeted by NIGEE and SGF, FGC is part of a rite of passage ceremony typically held during school holidays. It marks girls' transition into womanhood. After the ceremony, girls are recognized as women and therefore become eligible for marriage. Men and women within communities justify girls' participation in these ceremonies for economic reasons, further rationalized by existential fears that harm may fall upon girls or others in the community if girls do not undergo circumcision (Graamans et al. 2018). It is estimated that nationally 21% of women aged 15-49 years old have undergone FGC; however, the proportion of Maasai (78%) and Samburu (86%) women who have undergone FGC is much higher, as is the average for rural (26%) compared to urban women (14%) (KNBS 2015).

Similar patterns of control over girls' bodies are practiced through beading, a harmful practice whereby uncircumcised girls are forced into sexual relationships by their families with young men warriors (*morans*). The girls have no control over the sexual relationship. The *morans* who initiate sex do not always use contraception, leading to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies. Girls' pregnancy before circumcision is forbidden. Therefore, the girls' pregnancy can lead to negative social and psychological consequence. Girls tend to have abortions, practice infanticide after delivery, or give up the baby for adoption to reduce the social stigma of having a baby before their circumcision (Macharia 2016).

Girls have very little agency to make decisions over their bodies and may not be fully aware of the shorter- and longer-term negative consequences of these harmful practices on their health (physical and psychological), social relationships, and educational opportunities. In the short term, FGC damages tissue and can lead to blood loss, shock, fever, and infections. In the longer term, it tends to have negative effects on gynecological, sexual, and obstetric health outcomes (Madell and Hayward 2019). FGC also has implications for girls' education and social relationships. Parents in these poorer drought-prone contexts are incentivized to marry young girls, socially recognized as women, in exchange for assets like livestock and cash given by the husband's family. When girls marry early, they are less likely to attend school where they would gain knowledge, skills, and aspirations and form relationships with peers and mentors. Uneducated married adolescent girls must build their lives around the few assets they can access or control. Furthermore, many of these young girls are in danger of high-risk pregnancy; girls 15 or younger are five times more likely to die in childbirth than other women of reproductive age (Walker 2012).

Over the past 20 years, policies and the Kenya Children's Act passed in 2002 (Cap 586, Laws of Kenya) and the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act (Kenya Law Reports: Act No. 32 of 2011, 2012) have heightened awareness of the negative outcomes of harmful practices like FGC, beading, and early marriage. These policies also give international and community-based organizations legitimacy and legal authority to implement programming to reduce the prevalence of these harmful practices, with the aim of improving girls' wellbeing outcomes. However, the harmful practices persist in communities. In fact, in Kenya, the passing of laws criminalizing FGC has led to instances of FGC being carried out more discreetly on girls at younger ages (Graamans et al. 2018 citing Kiage et al. 2014).

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[14] Harmful practices are defined by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights as "a violation of human rights that put women's and adolescents' sexual and reproductive health and rights at great risk." (OHCHR 2019).

[15] In Samburu this practice is called *Nkishooroto e saen eelmuran*.

During the Outcome Harvest, NIGEE and SGF identified how changes in their organizations' practices have contributed to increasing girls' access to livelihood assets.[16] These outcomes were achieved through their understanding of existing laws and policies against FGC and other harmful practices, a familiarity with the socio-cultural context, identification of the most at-risk girls, and an understanding of girls' needs. NIGEE targeted girls and young women at risk for FGC, and SGF targeted girls who had already been subjected to beading or FGC. The approaches NIGEE and SGF used were slightly different, but the changes that occurred supported the diversification of girls' livelihood assets.

In 2018, <u>NIGEE staff and its board established the first holiday Academic Camps</u> in existing private secondary schools in Kuria, Kenya during periods when girls are most at risk of FGC. These Academic Camps, approved by the Ministry of Education, facilitated 10- to 18-year-old girls' and 19- to 24-year-old young women's access to different livelihood assets. By establishing and running the Academic Camps during holidays, NIGEE allowed girls to attend the camp and avoid the FGC ceremonies usually performed during that time period. By avoiding the ceremonies, girls were able to sustain their status and roles as girls. This meant they would not become eligible to marry and would be less likely to drop out of school. Furthermore, the camp focused on developing girls' ability to improve their academic skills through tutoring and mentorship. Although not reported by NIGEE, this safe space may have also given the girls a sense of social solidarity with other girls to resist rite of passage ceremonies and prolong their time in school.

Over the past two years, <u>SGF continued enrolling girls in school</u>, including those ages 5-12 who had already gone through the rite of passage (including FGC), were married early, or were in a forced sexual relationship with a *moran* through beading. Many of the girls targeted by SGF did not go to school because of their responsibilities at home as daughters, as young wives, or as sexual partners of a *moran*. The girls were selected for enrollment either through referral from a community member or when the girls themselves had fled to the pre-established SGF "rescue center" to escape. SGF, through partnership with Kenyan government entities, was granted the right to be the girls' caretaker, even without the approval of girls' families, in some cases. Through their enrollment, the girls had a first or second chance to go to school to develop academic and life skills. In this space, girls were also given a safe place to learn and live, while accessing resources to cope with challenges or trauma. Once enrolled, through an accelerator program, girls learned basic language (English, Swahili) and numeracy skills, attended counseling sessions, and learned about practicing good personal hygiene. Overall, the enrollment of girls in the schools provided them access to a diverse range of resources in support of their personal growth and future livelihoods.

While in both cases, these changes increased holistic educational opportunities girls can use to develop their livelihoods, there are tradeoffs. By attending the Academic Camps, girls could be stigmatized by members of their community who do not support their avoidance of rite of passage ceremonies. Those girls enrolled in schools by SGF, some who fled from their communities, have resisted or rejected their previous way of life. Those girls, stigmatized for fleeing their communities or entering the SGF program, could face challenges reentering their communities and utilizing household or community resources (e.g., shelter), and maintaining and relying on social relationships.

1.2. Changing girls' and young women's "capacities to aspire" in Kenya
Before the girls and young women enter Academic Camps or enroll in schools, there is a course set for their futures shaped by social norms and reinforced by institutional structures. This pathway often results in FGC, early marriage, and dropping out of secondary school. Social norms reinforced in institutional structures can limit someone's "capacity to aspire." They can deepen inequalities between poorer and wealthier groups' access to assets, limit one's voice or participation in civil society and policymaking, and constrain individuals from participating in new livelihood opportunities, e.g., opening businesses

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[16] Some of the girls had already participated in rite of passage to womanhood; however, they are referred to as girls based on their age, not social status in the community. Girls include those ages 5-18.

(Appadurai 2004). The girls and young women, before getting support through NIGEE and SGF programming, were limited or restricted from accessing assets (e.g., safe spaces, academic/life skills, health services), actively participating in community decisions, and making decisions about their futures because of their gender roles or responsibilities within their communities.

Both organizations identified outcomes, including changes in organizational practices and behaviors of girls themselves, that demonstrate girls' and young women's ability to take on new roles or aspire to livelihoods that diverge from their expected livelihood pathways. The NIGEE model, "nothing for us without us" is reflected in the approach both NIGEE and SGF have taken to support girls' aspirations. In other words, the girls and young women they work with, guided by staff and mentors, take an active part in beginning to define new roles and aspirations for themselves within and outside their communities.

In the Academic Camps, NIGEE reported that the <u>girls spoke up more frequently in NIGEE girls' steering committees and public events,</u> including community events and stakeholder meetings. NIGEE facilitated and encouraged girls' participation in community meetings to provide meaningful input into community decisions. Girls were also given opportunities to practice their public speaking skills in the girls' steering committee, which provides oversight to NIGEE's activities. The girls in the committees were elected by their peers. Through the election process girls were given opportunities to speak publicly. NIGEE reported that these public speaking opportunities nurtured girls' leadership skills, which the staff believe can have a range of benefits for girls to shape their futures (See Box 3).

SGF encourages girls who have left their communities to aspire to ways of life that were previously out of reach. The SGF approach was influenced by guidance received from GFC program staff in 2018 to develop a holistic curriculum to support quality education opportunities for girls. As a result, in 2018, with support from SGF, **high-school-level or recently graduated girls were exposed to alternative livelihood opportunities and ways of life through "eye opener" sessions, including exchange visits and internships.** SGF facilitated an exchange between the SGF girls and groups of girls living outside Samburu county to raise Samburu girls' awareness of other ways of life and expose them to girls supported by their communities to stay in school. SGF also arranged knowledge exchange visits to companies in Nairobi like Safaricom and Huawei to learn about job opportunities in those sectors. Some girls also participated in internships at companies, gaining professional experience.

Box 3: NIGEE on Significance of Girls Leadership

> *"We think that when girls gain leadership skills, pick up leadership positions, the benefits are seen in the girl herself, and beyond into their home lives, as many are young mothers. NIGEE staff shared that they are where they are now, but probably never received these opportunities at the same age – now it is important to them to help these young girls have opportunities to move beyond what the staff have been able to achieve. It is important to give them what we never managed to get for them to become better people in the society and then take up positions to help others."*
>
> NIGEE Staff, July 2019, Outcome Harvest Description

1.3. Girls' access to Menstrual Hygiene Management and school attendance in Ghana

CDI in Ghana works with both girls who are at risk of dropping out or who have already dropped out of school. There are many risk factors for students' absenteeism and school dropout. A recent metanalysis identified 781 risk factors for school absenteeism and 635 risk factors for dropout (Gubbles et al. 2019). Absenteeism is a high-risk factor for dropout (Kearney 2008). The reasons or motivations for absenteeism and dropping out vary between girls and boys (Gubbles et al. 2019 citing De Baat and Foolen 2012).

One often cited risk factor for girls' absenteeism and dropout is menstruation and girls' limited access to Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) resources and services.[17] Despite the lack of conclusive evidence

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[17] Could include discreet or sets of activities like designing and building WASH infrastructure that meets the needs of girls and boys of different ages, supplying sanitary products to girls, or providing hygiene education.

of girls' menstruation putting girls at high risk of being absent from school often or dropping out of school (Birdthistle et al. 2011, Glynn et al. 2010, Sumpter and Torondel 2013), the media continues to overemphasize the significance of menstrual periods as a significant risk factor for girls' absenteeism and dropouts. This has influenced NGOs to include MHM activities in their programs to decrease girls' school absenteeism and dropout (Dolan 2014).

While menstruation and poor MHM infrastructure, supplies, and practices may not be the most significant driver of girls' absenteeism and school dropout rates, they do interfere with some girls' ability to regularly attend school. There are context-specific factors that keep girls out of school during their menstrual periods, over which girls have very little control. Pull factors include pain from menstruation, or social norms and beliefs that restrict girls from attending school during periods. For example, in 2018 in Ghana's Upper Denkyria East District, menstruating girls believed they were prevented from crossing a river to attend school because they believed it would anger a river god (Saraogi 2018). Push factors, including poor facilities to privately manage menstruation, also influence girls to stay home instead of going to school (Birdthistle et al. 2011).

Addressing these context-specific factors requires interventions tailored to the context. For example, two studies in India found a positive relationship between providing single-sex latrines for pubescent girls and their school attendance (Bodat et al. 2013, Adukia 2016). A study in Ghana found a broader set of complementary MHM and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) resources increased girls' school attendance and subjective wellbeing. This support included menstrual sanitary care, privacy for changing, access to water, and MHM material like pads, all complemented by puberty education (Dolan 2014).

In Ghana, CDI, in its recent programming supported by GFC, has also included MHM resources and services as one of several activities in a "basket of support" to reduce girls' absenteeism. The support packages are tailored to the contextual challenges that each individual girl faces with the help of a social worker and are recorded in a case file. **With support from CDI, girls ages 10-18 in 15 communities of the Greater Accra Region have <u>increased access to information and resources about safe menstrual hygiene practices.</u>** Girls accessed this information through lectures, seminars, and forums with health professionals who answered questions on related topics. This information was complemented with the monthly distribution of sanitary pads by program officers to targeted girls at home and through schools. However, none of the interventions reported included improving girls' access to latrines, other hygiene products like soap, or clean water for washing, which have been shown to reducing girls' absenteeism in Ghana and other places.

While CDI reported that this outcome was significant because it could contribute to reducing absenteeism, there is no available evidence to confirm that larger result. However, investing in resources that enable girls to have greater control over managing their menstrual periods could increase their sense of dignity and confidence. This is especially true in places like Ghana, where girls' menstrual periods are often perceived as "unclean" or "dirty." Education about menstruation, and sexual and reproductive health more broadly, can increase a girl's sense of self efficacy and potentially enable her to be more capable of managing her menstrual period in school, at home, and later in life in different kinds of work environments.

2. Educational Outcomes: Supporting girls' participation and performance in schools

The Echidna Giving Portfolio local partners identified the largest subset of outcome descriptions (11 of 24) related to Educational Outcomes. Within this category, the outcomes largely describe changes in girls' school attendance and academic performance, and school infrastructure and systems. The outcomes describe changes in behavior of the girls, local partner staff, educators, and the wider communities and girls' families. Each local partner used holistic learning approaches, including supplementary learning opportunities, to create enabling environments for girls' quality education. Many of the changes that local

partners identified are linked and made possible through the flexible grants from GFC that allowed them to identify and meet local-level needs.

There is an extensive and growing body of literature about best practices for supporting girls' education. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) commissioned a team of leading education and gender experts to conduct an extensive literature review of more than 20 years of evidence about interventions to support girls' education and gender equality (Unterhalter et al. 2014). The conclusions indicated that poorer families receiving additional resources to cover direct and indirect cost of school attendance are more likely to educate their children, especially daughters. The resource interventions that increase girls' school attendance and reduce drop-out rates are context-specific, requiring an assessment to determine the key risk factors for individuals and communities. The review also found that interventions with "girlfriendly [infrastructure] features" can improve both enrollment and learning outcomes for girls. Finally, the review concluded that the combination of resource support and "intensive after-school learning enhancements focusing on the development of personal and social competencies also have the potential to empower girls."[18]

As indicated below, all three local partners are implementing interventions that are at least partially rooted in these findings on best practices for girls' education. Each organization facilitates girls' after-school or school-holiday learning opportunities, with components and support services focused on building psychosocial and personal competencies. SGF and CDI also provide resource support to girls to bolster their academic participation and performance throughout the school year.

2.1. Girls' School Attendance

Consistent school attendance is linked to improved performance and learning outcomes. Adolescent girls face many obstacles attending school regularly or staying enrolled in schools, reducing their school performance and learning outcomes. Consistent access to education significantly improves girls' chances of making informed decisions and living fulfilled adult lives.[19] Girls targeted by CDI in Ghana and by SGF and NIGEE in Kenya face some common obstacles to regular school attendance, while others are unique based on their country and community contexts.

In the communities where SGF and NIGEE work, the most significant barriers to girls' regular school attendance are harmful practices including FGC, beading, early marriage, and other associated practices and beliefs that place low societal value on girls' education. As described in findings section 1, these practices put girls at much higher risk of STIs, early and unwanted pregnancies, psychosocial trauma, and other health-related risks that discourage their regular attendance. FGC and early marriage force girls into new roles, leaving little time to attend school.

Evidence shows that absenteeism is significantly related to a high likelihood of dropping out, limiting the future opportunities of girls (Kearney 2008, UNICEF 2018, US Department of Education 2019). In Ghana, CDI targets girls in upper primary schools referred by teachers, government agencies, and the community who have been identified as high risk for dropping out, or who have already dropped out of school for a period of time. Many of the at-risk girls were sent to the Greater Accra Region for schooling but faced pressure from relatives or guardians to leave school to earn income. CDI works with parents and guardians,

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[18] The term "empowerment" is used in the Unterhalter et al. literature review to "signal processes of social transformation, which include personal, social, political and economic changes in relation to access to resources, agency and outcomes that tend in the direction of substantive gender equality" (citing DeJaeghere et al. 2013; Monkman 2011; Murphy-Graham 2012).

[19] However, education does not necessarily address women's barriers to entry in labor markets, though it is a contributing factor. Education must be coupled with other assets that support women's empowerment in social, political, and employment spheres (Unterhalter et al. 2014).

key decision-makers in girls' access to education, to emphasize girls' rights to and need for continued education in secondary school and beyond.

Each of the local partners delivered interventions intended to address obstacles to girls' access to quality education. The three local partners implemented interventions to address what they viewed as the most crucial barriers to girls' attendance. This included harmful practices, low valuation of girls' education by families or communities, insufficient materials, and other factors. In some cases, local partner interventions are supported by the broader literature around girls' education. All three local partners described behavior changes related to improvements in adolescent girls' school attendance linked to their GFC support.

NIGEE reported that, beginning in 2018, <u>girls ages 10-24 participating in holiday Academic Camps in Kuria, Kenya have improved their school attendance.</u> The interventions focused on removing barriers to school attendance and improving academic performance. Morning academic sessions built girls' confidence and performance in key subject areas. Afternoon mentorship sessions showcased the reasons why staying in school is crucial for girls' future opportunities. The sessions also provided girls with information to make better-informed decisions about factors that may cause absenteeism or dropping out from school, such as sexual and reproductive health – especially teen pregnancy, early marriage, and FGC. Staff also made regular school and home visits to check in with and support girls. Because the Academic Camps were held during school holidays, a common time for FGC, they helped girls avoid rituals and family pressures that discourage their continued schooling and opportunities. This intervention aligns with best practices that creating safe havens with a focus on holistic approaches, including tutoring and mentorship, can help girls to fulfill their academic ambitions and to make better decisions that support school attendance.

In Samburu, Rendille, Turkana, and Pokot communities in Kenya, SGF reported that during the last two years, girls ages 5-12, fleeing harmful practices, <u>are now enrolled in boarding schools following an accelerator program in the SGF "rescue center".</u> The "rescue center" creates a safe and protected environment for girls, allowing them to focus on their studies. SGF's accelerator program now offers the girls a curriculum covering basic language (English and Swahili), numeracy, counseling, and personal hygiene. The girls who participate in the accelerator program graduate into boarding schools for grade 5. Protecting girls from harmful practices that would encourage absenteeism or dropping out is a key step in improving girls' attendance. The boarding schools continue to separate and protect girls from the environments where these harmful practices occur, contributing to girls staying in the classroom until they complete their schooling. This outcome sets a foundation for SGF to invest in girls' quality education and give girls the chance to improve their future opportunities and make informed decisions.

CDI staff reported that the <u>girls ages 10-18 who enrolled in the ten CDI program schools in four districts in the Greater Accra Region are now attending school more regularly.</u> This shows real progress since many of the girls targeted by CDI had previously dropped out of school or exhibited high rates of absenteeism. CDI's program encouraged this shift in behavior by re-enrolling girls into school, and by the timely delivery of tailored academic and MHM materials. While the availability of MHM materials is frequently associated with improvements in girls' school attendance, the literature does not provide compelling evidence for the approach (Birdthistle et al. 2011, Glynn et al. 2010, Sumpter and Torondel 2013, Unterhalter et al. 2014). However, when MHM materials and services are one component of a broader package of support to resource-constrained families, they may contribute to increased attendance.

In addition to material support provided with GFC funding, CDI's home visits with parents and guardians allowed staff to support girls' attendance by taking preventative, restorative, or curative measures, including psychosocial counseling and referrals to government agencies. CDI also paid for girls' participation in

compulsory and extra remedial classes to support girls' attendance. It reported that girls no longer felt ashamed for unpaid fees and were able to improve their familiarity with school subjects.

2.2. Girls' Academic Performance

Each organization also identified several behavior changes, across a broad variety of actors, related to the improved academic performance of adolescent girls. A range of interventions focused on the classroom, the enabling environment outside of schools, and additional tutoring and classroom time outside of the regular school year drove these behavior changes. Local partners argued that improved academic performance and associated changes in girls' confidence were important contributing factors to reducing absenteeism and dropouts. According to local partners, girls' improved performance was associated with matriculation to the next grade and with improved self-confidence and ambition for future opportunities.

In 2018, NIGEE staff and board <u>established the first holiday Academic Camps in existing private secondary schools</u> in Kuria, with approval of the Ministry of Education, targeting in-school girls ages 10-24 with academic and mentorship activities. NIGEE mobilized funding from GFC to pay for Academic Camps, creating a holistic learning environment complete with dedicated staff, tutors, and mentors. NIGEE screened and enrolled girls from previous programs in the Academic Camps. The Academic Camps are the only program in Kuria that provides opportunities for girls to both improve upon their academic performance and to avoid "social vices"[20] during three school holidays. During the December holiday, the camps additionally serve as a safe haven to protect the girls from harmful FGC practices, supporting their return to school and continued academic performance. Additional learning opportunities outside of the classroom are a key component of holistic learning approaches and have been shown to positively contribute to girls' empowerment (Unterhalter et al. 2014).

NIGEE staff also reported that, beginning in 2018, <u>girls ages 10-24 attending Academic Camps changed their attitudes and relationships towards perceived difficult subjects</u>, particularly math and science. The Academic Camps created opportunities for girls to spend more time practicing these subjects in small settings, with individualized attention. Staff linked girls' comfort with these subjects to tutors' participation as peers alongside girls in some mentorship sessions, which allowed girls to see their instructors differently and to understand that everyone has strengths and weaknesses. This shift in the relationship contributed to changes in the way tutors and students engaged with each other and the subject material inside the classroom. The Academic Camps also linked some girls with tutors from different schools, who in some cases displayed more positive attitudes about girls' academic potential. Teachers' attitudes may be particularly important for girls' sustained school attendance and performance. A study in Kenya found that schools where teachers showcased less supportive attitudes in classrooms towards girls experienced higher dropout rates for girls, while boys' dropout rates were not impacted when faced with less supportive attitudes in classrooms (Unterhalter et al. 2014 citing Lloyd et al. 2011)

Overall, the Academic Camps encourage girls to view these subjects as more approachable. The holistic approaches during the holiday Academic Camps contributed to improving girls' overall academic performance and linked to improved attendance during the school year. This change in girls' attitudes about perceived difficult subjects, like math and science, could help to persuade more girls to pursue science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects and careers in the future, although additional long-term research would be necessary to validate this hypothesis.

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[20] While the partners use the language "social vices," this was understood to encompass voluntary risky behaviors including, but not limited to, unsafe sexual practices that could lead to STIs or early pregnancy and other complicating factors making it difficult for girls to stay in school.

The SGF accelerator program described above also helps newly "rescued" girls who have fallen behind in school to improve their academic performance. By focusing on several key subject areas, as well as counseling and other individualized support, the girls are positioned to strengthen their academic performance and confidence in themselves. They are then enrolled in boarding schools where they can finish their education, insulated against some of the factors that threatened both academic performance and attendance.

CDI found that <u>teachers in its ten program schools across four districts in the Greater Accra Region are now spending extra paid time working with girls in remedial classes.</u> Teachers participated in an orientation on girls' need for additional academic support, including identifying and reporting early warning signs of abuse, neglect, insufficient rest time, and other issues. They teach girls in small group and individualized settings, to better respond to the needs of individual girls and improve their academic performance.

Linked to additional tutoring opportunities, **CDI reported that girls ages 10-18 enrolled in the ten program schools in four districts in the Greater Accra Region <u>are now more regularly completing and submitting both school and remedial class homework assignments</u>.** This outcome reflects the additional support from teachers, who are paid using GFC funding based on the number of remedial assignments that students complete. The change in school assignments was also connected to other GFC-funded interventions, such as providing teaching and learning materials. The material support provided girls with the resources to avoid punitive actions from teachers for not completing assignments. The CDI program also encouraged this behavior change outside of the school by engaging with guardians during home visits to understand how home conditions can facilitate or detract from performance at school and completion of assignments. Completing and submitting homework assignments are key to a girl's learning and academic success, a key building block in access to future educational and livelihood opportunities.

Key changes in the behavior of parents and guardians also supported the improvement in girls' completion of homework assignments. **CDI staff and volunteers reported that the <u>parents and guardians of girls enrolled in the CDI program in 15 communities in the Greater Accra Region showed more interest in their girls' academic performance</u>.** CDI staff regularly visit girls' homes, convincing parents and guardians to show interest, be responsible for girls' academic performance, and reduce girls' time on household chores. As a result, CDI staff have monitored changes in parents' and guardians' behavior supporting girls' education through discussions with parents, girls, and neighbors. CDI reported that parents and guardians are encouraging girls to do their school and remedial homework, reviewing the homework (depending on level of education of parent), and, **<u>in some cases, reducing the burden of house chores</u>** to give girls more time to complete their homework. Some parents may be motivated to change their behavior because of the regular home visits. Others are going above and beyond by participating in Parent-Teacher Association meetings, a core strategy of the government's Ghana Education Service.[21]

2.3. School Infrastructure and Systems

Two local partners identified outcomes related to behavior changes within the infrastructure of local school systems. GFC local partners contributed to sustainable change in their communities by working to change the behavior and organization of school systems to be more responsive to the differential needs of girls.

CDI staff observed a change in behavior by the heads of schools and subject teachers in CDI partner schools. **The <u>heads of school in ten CDI partner school are now known to inspect subject teachers' agendas for remedial classes, as well as reviewing the attendance and performance records</u> for CDI program**

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[21] https://ges.gov.gh/

girls. This new interest in the CDI approach is in part thanks to the orientation given to heads of school about the CDI program to help them better understand the girls' backgrounds and the need to ensure that their schools are meeting the teaching and learning objectives of these girls. With the involvement of the heads of schools in the review process, subject teachers now see a focus on supporting CDI girls as their duty and assomething for which they will be held accountable.

SGF reported two changes in the structure of the newly established "rescue center" approaches funded through GFC. **SGF's "rescue center" manager and program manager <u>increased the number of impromptu visits to partner boarding schools</u>.** These visits created opportunities to regularly share information with schools about the specific needs of SGF program girls and to better understand how the schools tracked academic progress and disciplinary issues. The visits between SGF staff and boarding school staff strengthened their working relationship and were believed to support the transition of more girls to the next grade level by identifying and addressing girls' risk factors for dropping out at an early stage.

The second change was **establishing a new holistic learning approach for the "rescue centers" following the suggestion of GFC staff.** The expanded curriculum includes psychological and life skills support (e.g., emotional wellbeing sessions using a toolkit co-developed by staff, counselors, and girls, as well as trauma counseling) alongside the academic courses. The primary grant supported this change by allowing SGF to hire a counselor to work at the "rescue center" during holidays. SGF noted that this shift towards a holistic approach means that the girls are better able to handle the strain of several factors that previously led to dropping out. It also contributed to girls' confidence, supporting changing attitudes about their role and voice in the community.

3. Community Engagement and Advocacy: Building a base of support for girls' education

During the harvesting workshop, each organization developed outcome descriptions that described behavior changes related to Community Engagement and Advocacy. Within this broad category, the outcome descriptions outlined changes related to community sensitization and government advocacy.

3.1 Community Sensitization

SGF and NIGEE identified outcomes about sensitizing local community actors and stakeholders to the importance of educating girls. This helped ensure local acceptance of and support for interventions aiming to reduce the prevalence of harmful practices affecting girls' educational opportunities, like FGC, beading, and early marriage. Both organizations recognized that entering into dialogue with the community, including men in positions of power, helped them to achieve their goals. This approach is supported by literature from a study of Maasai girls in Kenya that found that the support of parents and other family members, teachers, community leaders, NGO staff, and others helped girls to manage the tremendous barriers they faced in accomplishing their educational ambitions (Unterhalter et al. 2014 citing Warrington and Kiragu 2011).

CDI and NIGEE identified changes in parents' and guardians' attitudes and behaviors that was exemplified by their participation in project interventions. By getting parents to contribute to the delivery and success of activities, CDI and NIGEE are strengthening the sustainability of behavior change activities supporting adolescent girls' education after the end of GFC-funded interventions.

SGF reported that some community members in villages, some far from the "rescue center," including targeted men, women, *morans*, girls, boys, and teachers, have <u>changed their attitudes to be more supportive of the enrollment and retention of girls in school</u> and the importance of child protection. SGF implemented several activities to change community members' attitudes about girls' right

to education. These activities reached influential community members (e.g., local leaders, chiefs, village ward admins, and religious leaders) who moderate or enforce social norms through different mechanisms. SGF trained community leaders who influence social norms to oversee a community outreach program focused on changing attitudes. SGF also runs local radio programs on Saturdays during the November to December holidays – a peak time for FGC and early marriage – and invites local leaders and SGF program girls to share their stories on air with the wider community. Boarding and day school students, especially from high schools, also participate in an "end-FGM program" focused on girls' rights and reproductive health. Overall, SGF reported that this set of activities contributes to an enabling environment for girls' safe return to their communities.

While changes in community attitudes toward girls' rights to education and ending harmful practices have been modest, SGF emphasized the importance of investing more in this kind of work. SGF views this as an integral component of its new holistic approach to supporting girls' education and rights and as a pathway towards sustainability (see Organizational Development/Sustainability). This aligns with the approach other community-based organizations, including civil society groups, use to reduce the prevalence of harmful practices in communities (Shawki 2015). Sustainability and scale, however, can only be reached when a broader set of government and private actors from diverse sectors are engaged in platforms or partnerships to end harmful practices like early marriage (Malhotra et al. 2011).

Starting in 2017, NIGEE project staff began to build a positive relationship with the Kuria community by engaging mothers and fathers and other influential members of the community about the importance of girls' education and child protection. This process has expanded over the last two years to reach more community members to ultimately benefit girls. NIGEE staff began by speaking about the project and its intended purpose with key informants (e.g., religious leaders, chiefs, and other community leaders), who then disseminated the information to the broader community. NIGEE also organized and participated in community meetings to discuss the project, its benefits, and the expected contribution from the community. Regular feedback meetings provided updates to the community.

The newly established relationship created ownership of the project within the community. NIGEE staff perceive that this contributed to the sustainability of their behavior change interventions. As a result of the engagement, some stakeholders, particularly the key informants, have changed their attitudes around FGC practices. NIGEE reported that the shift in stakeholders' beliefs and behaviors has contributed to an increase in girls' perceptions of their own safety, encouraging more girls to remain in the community. This change in attitude among girls would require further validation through focus groups with girls living in the targeted community.

NIGEE reported that, starting in 2018, <u>many mothers began volunteering to prepare meals for the Academic Camps</u> in Kuria. This was the idea of the mothers themselves and shows that they value NIGEE's efforts to protect and educate their daughters. The participation by mothers has also created cost savings for NIGEE, which previously paid for meal preparation, allowing it to expand Academic Camp enrollment to more girls.

CDI reported that <u>parents and guardians are now encouraging program girls to finish their homework and, in some case, reducing their burden of household responsibilities</u> to create more time and space for homework. Guardians with relevant subject knowledge have also been reported to review the homework assignments before submission. This is an important change that signals a newfound recognition about the importance of adolescent girls' education. These changes were observed during home visits and conversations with guardians, girls, and neighbors. More information would be necessary to

understand the degree to which expectations around household responsibilities are actually changing and contributing to girls' completion of homework assignments.

3.2 Government Advocacy

It is often necessary to work with government stakeholders to improve the status of adolescent girls' education on a wider scale and ensure sustainability. Across its work CDI has taken a targeted approach of engaging government officials with capacity building efforts and demand-driven advocacy campaigns at the local, regional, and national level. **As a result, CDI reported that during the GFC-funded project, several government duty bearers (officials) began collaborating with CDI to support girls' education in the Greater Accra Region.** In these partnerships, CDI aimed to enable government stakeholders to develop laws that favor girls' enrollment, retention, and completion of education. CDI was invited to participate in the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection Technical Working Group and Committee, which reviewed relevant legislation, national standards and protocols, and the amendment to the Children's Act of Ghana to favor girls' education. The partnerships with government duty bearers are in part due to CDI's GFC-supported work in the Great Accra Region. CDI and other NGOs are working to hold duty bearers more accountable for the use of public resources to better meet the needs of girls who are at risk of dropping out of school, or who have dropped out of school. This is helping elevate the issue of girls' education to feature more prominently in district, regional, and national policy frameworks. CDI reported that one member of parliament made a statement about girls' education following a visit to a CDI partner school. Other politicians have helped provide financial support to girls' education by directing support from District Assembly funds. Some staff in District Assemblies make referrals for CDI programs.

NIGEE indicated that, thanks to its participation in a GFC local partner training in Tanzania, it is updating its advocacy strategy and is better positioned to demand services from government entities. SGF has extensive relationships with several government entities, many of which refer girls for SGF interventions, but remains overstretched and under-resourced to be the sole provider of these services. Part of the organizational strategy that SGF reported it is developing may require a new type of government advocacy for additional resources in support of child protection and girls' education.

4. Organizational Development Outcomes: Enhancing capacity for organizational expansion and sustainability

Organizational capacity development is "any kind of activity that builds the capacity of an organization to achieve its mission" (Fine et al. 2001). Often organizational capacity development is described as a progression of three steps: 1) enhancing capacity of program delivery, 2) strengthening capacity for program expansion, and 3) enhancing organizational adaptive capacity (Letts et al. 1999). The *program delivery capacity* focuses on developing strategies or approaches to support organizational goals. At its core the *capacity for program expansion* enhances program performance. It is facilitated by changes in structures, policies, and systems to improve the reach and benefits of an organization's work. Lastly, *organizational adaptive capacities* build an organization's ability to foster an environment for learning and reflection, which is used to make corrections and changes to achieve the overall mission (Fine et al. 2001). An organization's capacity to adapt also strengthens its sustainability.

Through financial and non-financial assistance, GFC has supported its local partners to develop their organizational capacities. Prior to the two-year focus of this study, CDI, NIGEE and SGF had already established programmatic approaches to deliver their services, developing their mission and vision statements, and planned activities. GFC's support to the organizations focused on the second level of organizational capacity: *capacities for program expansion*. Its support helped to improve the reach and benefits of local partners' services to girls and targeted communities, contributing to improving programmatic performance. This was mainly achieved through strengthening organizational structures,

policies, and systems. GFC also supported strengthening NIGEE's and SGF's adaptive capacities, helping them to carve pathways toward organizational sustainability.

This financial and non-financial support from GFC was delivered through two complementary methods: 1) developing individual staff and volunteers' capacity through workshops, knowledge exchanges, and coaching; and 2) technical assistance to develop or improve institutional strategies and systems. This two-pronged approach reflects the principles of Human and Institutional Capacity Development, which emphasize the importance of going beyond standalone training activities by identifying the root causes of performance challenges and identifying options for addressing those challenges through both individual and institutional level activities. Typically, this process monitors continuous improvements through a performance monitoring system (USAID 2010).

While GFC has provided both individual and institutional capacity development support, the monitoring and evaluation of organizations' performance improvements has been more ad hoc and less formal or systematic. Instruments similar to GFC's organizational capacity index (OCI) self-assessment can provide a baseline of information about local partners' capacity, but continued systematic monitoring is needed. Additionally, reports from GFC program officers and local partners indicate that GFC's approach has exhibited many other core capacity building principles (see Box 4), including team and peer learning, building relationships of trust, and taking place over a period of time.

4.1 Enhancing capacity for program expansion to increase reach and strengthen benefits

Two different outcomes, achieved with non-financial assistance from GFC, have supported NIGEE's organizational growth. Through workshops and direct technical assistance, NIGEE staff developed both technical and program management skills. NIGEE harnessed new knowledge and skills to increase the reach and potential benefits of its work to girls and targeted communities.

In 2018, a NIGEE compliance officer attended the local partner training on advocacy in Arusha, Tanzania. **The information gained from this workshop inspired <u>NIGEE to incorporate new advocacy approaches into its draft comprehensive advocacy strategy.</u>** This strategy enabled NIGEE to develop advocacy as a new practice area, working in partnership with organizations promoting girls' rights and education. Advocacy allows NIGEE to expand the reach and potential benefits to targeted communities. Furthermore, by having an advocacy strategy, NIGEE became an attractive partner to Plan International, with which it was able to form a partnership with the government to advocate for an SGBV policy that aimed to reach and benefit women and girls. NIGEE also viewed the enhancement of its advocacy strategy as important, because staff believe it will increase NIGEE's visibility with other partners in the future.

In the same year, NIGEE also strengthened its financial management systems to improve its organizational capacity assessment scores with potential donors. During a visit to NIGEE's headquarters, the former GFC regional director for Africa, Emmanuel Otoo, recommended that NIGEE begin **requiring all project staff to submit narrative activity reports for both GFC and non-GFC funded activities, improving the quality of information supporting financial accountability**. **<u>This change was implemented</u>** across all NIGEE projects, thus improving its financial credibility, from the perspective of partners and donors. This change in internal procedures contributes to new partnership opportunities with NGOs and donors enabling NIGEE to scale up its services to reach and potentially benefit more girls and communities.

4.2. Enhancing capacity for program expansion to increase the benefits received by targeted communities of girls

In the last year, SGF <u>established a new holistic learning approach</u> for girls at the "rescue centers." This new program delivery included various forms of psychological and life skill support (e.g., emotional wellbeing sessions and trauma counseling, using an emotional wellbeing toolkit which was co-developed by staff, counselors, and girls). A combination of GFC's non-financial and financial support contributed to this outcome. In 2018, GFC recommended that SGF develop a more holistic curriculum to enhance the performance of its program. Prior to that, SGF primarily focused on trying to get girls in school, placing less emphasis on the quality of their education. Using funding from GFC, SGF implemented programming to enhance the benefits girls receive. For example, a counselor was hired to be present at the "rescue center" during the holidays, supporting girls' psychological wellbeing. SGF also developed a curriculum supporting girls' holistic education, including a wellbeing toolkit. SGF perceived this outcome as significant, because it increased girls' benefits and retention in school by enabling them to better manage stress, boost their confidence, and give them more voice in their communities.

Similarly, with support from GFC, CDI was able to enhance the quality of its services to benefit girls. **During the last program year, CDI staff and volunteers reported spending more time with girls during home visits in 15 communities in the Greater Accra Region.** Staff and volunteers attended two capacity-building workshops on girls' education case management. The workshops covered subjects such as recording and documenting information on the girls through daily, weekly and monthly progress tracking sheets, use of individualized care plans, and basic monitoring and evidence gathering. CDI said this was significant, because it provided staff and volunteers the opportunity to develop a new and more responsive approach to handle the emerging challenges with girls' education programming. CDI staff also appreciated that the workshop strengthened their MEL systems and real-time data collection.

4.3 Enhancing local partners' adaptive capacities for sustainability

NIGEE staff have improved their ability to draw on their work with the Academic Camps, to tell their stories of positive change in their targeted communities enabling them <u>to secure additional partnerships and funding.</u> For example, NIGEE reported that in consultative meetings with Plan International, NIGEE was also able to demonstrate its vision and ability to scale up its work to solidify a partnership with the international NGO. In November 2016, NIGEE won a With and For Girls Award that provided two years of supplemental funding.[22] While the initial award was outside the scope of this study, it remains an example of crucial non-financial support from GFC, which initially nominated NIGEE, for diversifying local partners' visibility, networks, and funding opportunities. However, it should be noted at the time of the Outcome Harvest, NIGEE had not yet secured funding to maintain Academic Camp activities after the end of the GFC grant.

SGF reported it has been developing a strategic plan for improving the sustainability of its work. SGF staff acknowledged facing challenges linked to receiving an influx of girls at the "rescue center," which they did not turn away, but have limited funds to support in the long term. They attributed this influx of girls, seeking shelter and support away from their communities, in part to larger organizations' interventions in surrounding communities. SGF staff reported that larger NGOs are supporting alternative rite of passage ceremonies in the communities that aim to prevent girls' subjection to FGC by engaging girls and their families in non-harmful rite of passage ceremonies. These activities also raise girls' awareness of the harmful effects of FGC. While communities are participating in the alternative rites of passage ceremonies, they also still continue to perform FGC on girls. Girls, now knowledgeable about the risks of FGC, are choosing to flee their communities to avoid being harmed. SGF reported many girls from these communities are going to their "rescue centers."

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[22] The award was administered by Stars Foundation, which was the secretariat of the With and For Girls Collective at the time.

Therefore, a sustainability plan is necessary for SGF to be better able to support these girls in the long term. **After attending GFC-supported project planning, management, and advocacy courses in April and August 2018, the SGF Programs Lead was able to <u>apply her new knowledge and skills to influence leadership in SGF to develop a new strategic planning process.</u>** The development of a new strategic planning process, SGF staff reported, enabled SGF to begin restructuring its programs to make them more capable of addressing the needs of girls and changing attitudes and behaviors of community members about harmful practices. By implementing this new sustainable approach, it could reduce the stress and stretch of resources enabling SGF to support more girls and communities without them being as dependent on SGF.

Conclusions

The findings above emerged from the 24 outcomes developed by CDI, NIGEE, and SGF during the participatory Outcome Harvesting workshop. The conclusions below build on the findings section and broader literature. They are organized by the four harvesting questions used during the workshop to help answer the overall research question. Following the conclusions, a series of recommendations are provided to guide future GFC grantmaking and partnership opportunities.

How did GFC support enable partners to advance their work in girls' education and beyond?

Harvesting Question 1 Conclusions: How have the outcomes of your interventions contributed, directly or indirectly, to a process of change that will, or has already, affected the relative empowerment of girls in ways that would not have happened without the intervention?

The local partners, with support from GFC, have contributed to a process of empowering girls. Empowerment is a process of change that "refers to the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them," (Kabeer 1999). In the contexts where GFC is supporting girls' education programming, inequalities between girls and boys are profound. These inequalities are shaped by social norms and institutions that limit or restrict girls' and women's relative access to and control of resources and ability to define goals and act upon them. This has implications for girls' achievements in the short and long term, such as educational attainment, improved or diversified livelihood options, and overall wellbeing.

The programs identified outcomes through the harvest that have contributed to the process of changing girls' access to and control of resources and ability to develop a "power within" – or sense of agency to define new goals for themselves and act upon them. Lack of comparable data across the programs limits an understanding of the extent to which organizations' activities have closed girls' achievement gaps. However, the Outcome Harvest reveals that the selected interventions pulled on the right levers to begin a process of change to close gaps between girls' and boys' educational outcomes, access to a diversity of livelihood options, and health outcomes. These levers include increasing girls' access to and control of resources and increasing girls' ability to make their own choices about their lives; both require transforming gender roles and relations (see Box 5).

Box 5: Gender Roles and Relations

> **Gender roles:** The socially defined tasks, responsibilities, and behaviors that are considered appropriate for men and women. These are context-specific and can change over time, through individual choices or as a result of social and/or political changes emerging from changed opportunities (more education, different economic environment) or times of social upheaval (during disasters, in war, and in post-conflict situations).
>
> **Gender relations:** The types of social relations between men and women that are defined and reinforced by social institutions. They include the routine ways in which men and women interact with each other: in sexual relationships, friendships, workplaces, and different sectors of the economy. Gender relations are socially determined, culturally based, and historically specific. They are mediated by other identities, including ethnicity, religion, class, and age. Gender relations are shaped and reinforced by cultural, political, and economic institutions, including the household, legal and governance structures, markets, and religion. Gender relations are dynamic and change over time.
>
> *Adapted from Rubin and Manfre 2015*

The local partners that participated in the harvest are committed to not only "reaching" girls to achieve educational parity, but also to implementing more sophisticated programming to increase girls' access to and control of resources like academic skills, life skills, safe spaces, and social networks. Interventions like

CDI's and NIGEE's demonstrate an understanding of some of the factors that limit girls' school attendance or put girls at risk of dropping out. For example, NIGEE's Academic Camps are specifically designed to reduce the risk of girls dropping out of school by holding them during the holidays, a peak time for FGC. However, NIGEE, like other organizations, goes a step further by introducing a curriculum, in non-school settings, that facilitates girls' access to academic and life skills, safe spaces, and a network of girls and mentors. SGF has taken a similar approach through its "rescue centers."

Through their interventions, the local partners also intentionally aimed to change behaviors and attitudes, among girls and influential members of the community, about the roles and rights of girls and women. They also helped girls to establish their own goals, by changing their sense of their ability to act on their rights. For example, the local partners' outcomes that were indicative of positive changes in girls' academic performance and girls' capacities to aspire to new livelihoods were influenced by activities that aimed to change girls' and community members' attitudes about girls' right to education.

While local partners have facilitated changes in girls' access to and control of resources and ability to set goals and make decisions about their lives, few have addressed how factors in the environment, like economic opportunities or climatic change, affect this process toward girls' empowerment. Many of the local partners' interventions are challenging social norms about harmful practices, like early marriage, but are not directly addressing how these behaviors are reinforced. For example, in zones like those targeted by NIGEE and SGF, climate change is making it difficult for men and women to earn a living from the land and their cattle. Girls' parents must find other opportunities to make money. Early marriage is one way to smooth income during periods of stress or when shocks occur. Overall, these challenges were not directly featured in the activities that contributed to identified outcomes from the harvest. Programming that accounts for these economic, climatic, and policy challenges in the broader environment is critical for supporting sustainable interventions that can transform gender relations to achieve gender equality and empowerment outcomes.

Harvesting Question 2 Conclusions: What aspect(s) of GFC support, financial or non-financial, was most important for supporting your organization's contribution to outcomes?

Financial Support

Most of the financial support from GFC went directly to local partners' program activities. Local partners found that the unrestricted nature of GFC funding was extremely useful, even though it was for relatively small dollar amounts. This was because many of their other funding sources are significantly restricted, creating challenges for several of the local partners to find donors willing to invest in certain GFC-funded aspects of their interventions. The GFC grant complemented other restricted funding that local partners receive, to fully deliver on their intended interventions and best serve their communities. Local partners also faced fewer administrative and organizational burdens often associated with restricted funding.

Two of the local partners have been able to use the flexible funding to demonstrate results and secure additional external funds or make new partnerships. CDI indicated that its board of directors secured additional resources to expand the model from its GFC-funded intervention in the Greater Accra Region into the Upper West Region. Though this is not tied to GFC funding, it is an important example of how the relatively small grants provided under the Echidna Giving Portfolio created opportunities for partners to pilot and prove concepts in order to leverage additional external funding and resources. Similarly, NIGEE established a positive relationship with communities around the Academic Camps, and there is now demand for NIGEE to scale other non-GFC-funded interventions into the same communities using plots of land being donated for that purpose.

The flexibility of unrestricted funding allows local partners to quickly realign their programs when new obstacles or opportunities emerge. However, this does not always work in the favor of the local partners because of the relatively small size of the grants. SGF has been inundated with walk-ins and referrals from government agencies and communities, beyond the original size and scope of its intervention design. For ethical reasons, SGF does not turn girls away in need of assistance. Therefore, SGF has reprioritized funds to cover the additional costs of these admissions. It willingly pulls money away from staffing, organizational development, sustainability, and advocacy – all of which are imperative for its continued work. Meeting the emergent needs of the community was an important success of the unrestricted grant but has contributed to unresolved sustainability issues following the end of SGF's partnership with GFC.

There are also significant concerns around the sustainability of funding for each of the three local partners. Because they are frequently implementing interventions for which they see a great need, but for which they have seen limited donor interest, there is a risk that their work will go unfunded after the conclusion of the Echidna grant. Currently, NIGEE has not secured funding for the Academic Camps following the end of the Echidna Giving grant, despite increased demand for the activity from the community. If it is unable to provide these services, many more girls will be put at risk of FGC during future December holidays and there may be a regression of behavior change around child protection and girls' education in the wider community. Despite GFC efforts to link each organization with new funders and to support proposals, a lack of funding was reported as a problem by each organization.

Non-Financial Support

Each of the local partners identified outcomes related to critical non-financial support they received through GFC. Typically, this support was linked to their participation in a Knowledge Exchange or another event, or through connections with another organization that provided organizational development or funding opportunities. These linkages with peer organizations, with technical assistance providers, and with funders was important for the continued implementation of activities funded by the Echidna Giving grant (Box 6). They also enabled local partners to refine their overall organizational strategies and MEL systems to be more responsive to needs in their communities and more competitive in grant applications. For example, GFC linked CDI with Grant Thornton to refine its theory of change and develop other useful tools. For these reasons, the CP research team places relatively

Box 6: SGF Receives Non-Financial Support

In 2017, GFC nominated SGF for a With and For Girls Collective award for which they were one of 20 winners. GFC is a member organization of the With and For Girls Collective. Winners of the awards receive flexible funding of up to US$50,000 and capacity building support and join a wider network in the girls' and women's rights sector.

Through the award, three SGF staff were funded by EMpower to spend one month in the US for networking in New York and Washington, DC and to attend the Commission on the Status of Women in New York. SGF reported that the award and other support from GFC were particularly important for interest in its work from new donors and partners.

more importance on the non-financial aspects of GFC support than the local partners themselves did. Local partners expressed appreciation for non-financial support provided through GFC but indicated that they valued the financial support more. Without GFC's flexible funding they could not implement activities. If local partners had other more sustainable sources of funding, then they may have considered the non-financial support to be more important, especially considering the relatively small grant sizes.

Each local partner repeatedly emphasized how easy it was to work with GFC, particularly with GFC's Program Officer for Africa, and their point of contact, Bundie Kabanze. The congenial interactions helped create trust and honesty in the grantmaking relationship, improving the local partners' receptivity to organizational development efforts and to changing their approaches. This was crucial to the success of the grant portfolio, particularly considering the unrestricted and flexible nature of its funding.

Harvesting Question 3 Conclusions: How do the outcomes you achieve correspond to the goals of your organization and GFC's Echidna Giving Portfolio?

Organizational Goals

Each local partner was selected for the Echidna Giving Portfolio after already partnering with GFC prior to the scope of this study. All local partners were selected for the portfolio because of their work around girls' education and because they could benefit from GFC's organizational development support, rather than only from sectoral technical assistance.

The three local partners participating in the Outcome Harvesting study all held common goals, particularly the two organizations in Kenya providing child protection services to prevent FGC and early marriage. The unrestricted nature of funding meant that the local partner outcomes tended to align well with each of the organizations' goals. It should also be noted that the changes in behavior or practices reported by the local partners contribute to higher-level programmatic goals, but do not necessarily mean all goals are being met.

Local partners are meeting critical needs in their community, but some may need to reconsider how they stay relevant in a changing philanthropic landscape. As part of GFC's new trust-based relationship model, GFC can work to provide local partners with the information, resources, and tools so that each organization can make informed decisions about how it will continue to serve communities and stay relevant and marketable in the donor landscape. The recommendations in this report are divided into design, implementation, and MEL sections and highlight actions for GFC to take that support informed decision-making.

The Echidna Giving Portfolio Objectives:

Prior to this Outcome Harvesting study, most of the local partners were not aware that they were part of the Echidna Giving Portfolio. The portfolio was not designed to create a cohesive cohort of local partners, and the local partners did not know about the portfolio's three primary objectives. However, each organization still identified outcomes aligned with all three objectives, although the degree to which they supported each objective differed. Links between the outcomes achieved by local partners and the three objectives of the Echidna Giving Portfolio are discussed below.

1. Removing obstacles that make it difficult for girls to stay in school and receive a quality education

All three organizations focus extensively on the portfolio's first objective. Each intervention addresses factors believed to push or pull girls out of the classroom. As indicated in the Findings section, many of these activities are supported by the broader literature, but some would require additional external research to determine whether they are contributing to removing obstacles to girls' quality education in the local partners' specific context.

2. Increasing the quality of education available to girls in school

Local partners identified outcomes about behavior changes supporting better quality education for girls. The local partners are implementing holistic learning approaches that support improvements in academic performance outside of schools. Because the organizations are, for the most part, not working to improve the quality of education in schools, fewer outcomes are linked to the portfolio's second objective.

Additionally, the GFC administration of the Echidna Giving grant tended to provide technical assistance focused on organizational development rather than on quality education. The local partners work ardently to improve girls' education outcomes, but several require additional support to move beyond removing barriers to access towards a focus on improving education quality. Technical assistance around best practices, coupled with the existing organizational capacity efforts, should enable GFC's local partners to see more positive changes in behavior related to improved quality of education.

3. Strengthening community-based organizations' programmatic, organizational, and networking capacity to promote replication of best practices at the local, regional, and global level through networking and advocacy

GFC provided organizational development opportunities for the local partners, aligning with Objective 3. Each local partner participated in a networking or Knowledge Exchange opportunity, but not always with other organizations from the Echidna Giving Portfolio. While they were able to build solidarity with and learn from other local partners, it may have been more effective to create recurring touchpoints with a cohort of peer organizations focused on similar issues.

As indicated above in the non-financial support section of Harvesting Question 2, local partners did not place as much importance on GFC's organizational support when answering the harvesting questions. However, the research team believes that this focus on organizational development has positioned many of the local partners to better continue their work following the conclusion of the Echidna Giving grant.

Harvesting Question 4 Conclusions: What are the signs that the processes of change represented by your outcomes will endure following the conclusion of the GFC support?

As reflected in the conclusions above, organizations face challenges supporting sustainable programming following the completion of GFC funding. These issues are associated with limitations in organizational capacity as well as technical capacity to design and implement sustainable programming. While GFC has provided non-financial support to help organizations identify pathways toward securing more funding or developing sustainability plans, the findings show it may not go far enough. For example, GFC support to SGF to develop a sustainability plan is critical and can also be leveraged to pique the interest of donors only willing to invest in sustainable programming. However, at the time of the Outcome Harvest, the SGF staff were still struggling to gain additional donors for their activities.

As outlined in Harvesting Question 2, the local partners cited a lack of donor interest in their interventions as a challenge for drumming up funding. This challenge is partially linked to the local partners' limited capacity to monitor, evaluate, and tell their stories of change to gain interest of donors. In fact, for some local partners, the Outcome Harvesting workshop was the only time staff collectively spent reflecting on their organizational achievements and what contributed to those changes. The perception that there is limited donor interest in their work could also be attributed to limited knowledge and relations with existing donors. While GFC has facilitated introductions between the local partners and other donors, some have not been able to secure funding to sustain their activities beyond June 2020.

The local partners have done commendable work aiming to address gender inequalities in terms of girls' access to and control to resources (e.g., infrastructure, education, social), raising consciousness about girls' rights, and increasing opportunities for girls to participate in community decisions and set life goals. However, the approaches that are being employed, as discussed in Harvesting Question 1, do not take into account the extent to which the environment is or could exacerbate gender inequalities, particularly related to factors like harmful practices that limit girls' educational opportunities.

Local partners need additional technical guidance to develop theories of change that identify key gender equality goals, linked to overall objectives including sustainability. Doing this will force them to identify their assumptions about the risks that girls face to achieve gender equality outcomes, as well as opportunities for closing gender gaps. For example, limited lucrative economic opportunities in northern Kenya, exacerbated by climate change, incentivize parents to facilitate marriages of their young daughters to older men in exchange for cash, livestock, and other valuables. This helps to smooth income during periods of stress. Changing climatic conditions are a risk for the sustainability of interventions aiming to

end early marriage and girls' educational attainment. However, this risk could also be seen as an opportunity. A study found that men were supportive of girls' education, because it would give those girls livelihood options that do not rely on the pastoral livelihoods that are negatively impacted by climate change (Archambault 2011). Identification of other risks, assumptions, and opportunities in a theory of change can be useful for identifying sustainable pathways for supporting girls' education and empowerment.

Recommendations

The recommendations below focus on strengthening GFC's financial and non-financial support to local partners throughout the project cycle. There are recommendations tailored to the program management team, the business development team, and the MEL team. Some recommendations highlight how collaboration between the teams, particularly around MEL, can benefit all and strengthen the overall quality of the work and its relevance to GFC's goals.

1. Strengthen technical capacity of GFC and local partners for portfolio and program design

1.1 Leverage and strengthen in-house capacity for GFC portfolio design. During this study, program staff demonstrated a wealth of knowledge and experience managing grants that can be drawn upon to design future portfolios. This report offers evidence of the common themes and programmatic and monitoring challenges that these staff manage. GFC should encourage internal collaboration across teams in the design phase to maximize the existing expertise.

- **Action 1:** Map out existing in-house expertise and interest in technical sectors, project management, and MEL. It is anticipated that gaps will be identified in in-house expertise during this process. See Recommendation 1.3 for how to engage consultants and firms to support GFC's portfolio design.
- **Action 2:** Clearly define responsibilities, across teams, to support the design of new portfolios, including the draft MEL framework. For example, program staff who participated in the management of the Echidna Giving Portfolio will be well suited to contribute to the design of a new adolescent girls' education portfolio.
- **Action 3**: Establish common outcomes, outputs, and indicators[23] for all local partners within the portfolio. This could be done prior to making awards, as evaluation criteria, or developed collaboratively with selected local partners during portfolio kickoff. This gives local partners a foundation for peer-to-peer learning. See Recommendations 2 and 3.

1.2 Provide more technical assistance to support local partner program design. Community-based organizations face challenges staying up to date on best practices and approaches because of limitations on staff time and training, funding and travel constraints, and small networks. This limits the extent to which the local partners can influence positive change in communities through their activities. After awarding an initial grant, GFC could strengthen local partners' programmatic capacity by connecting local partners with in-house and external technical experts (local or international) for the final project design.

- **Action 1:** Develop a roster of technical experts to collaborate with local partners on their activity designs, including budgeting, based on best practices and the local contexts. The technical expertise may cover topics like education, child protection, gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, social and behavior change, and other areas in which local partners are working. These experts should be familiar with other organizations implementing similar projects in these

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[23] Establishing indicators also requires setting measurable and realistic targets.

contexts. This collaboration could be done remotely, through stakeholder workshops, or through short-term visits.

1.3 Engage external technical assistance to support GFC portfolio design, as needed. Based on the mapping of in-house technical capacities, GFC can draw on additional external support in technical areas to shape these portfolios and be more judicious about which organizations to fund. This should be based on an understanding of the specific landscape and relevant best practices for targeted technical areas and geographies.

- **Action 1:** Staff with interest in specific areas should be matched with external technical experts to respond to donor solicitation and/or develop unsolicited proposals that reflect these priorities. This increases in-house technical capacity and learning as well as the quality of the portfolio design. Technical experts should be familiar with the landscape of interventions in the sector and targeted geographic area to maximize investment by complementing existing activities. This process will help GFC proposals include sufficient rigor and builds technical capacity in new areas for staff.
- **Action 2:** Develop a roster of technical experts (local or international) to support local partner application review. Technical experts can guide GFC through local partner selection based on an understanding of the extent to which partners' interventions align with best practices and the on-the-ground landscape. Following the selection of local partners, technical experts can work with GFC staff to develop overall next steps for working with each local partner. Based upon previous portfolios, the targeted technical expertise may include education, child protection, gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, social and behavior change, and other areas in which local partners are working.

2. Strengthen capacity of local partners to implement and adapt programs

2.1 Provide more technical assistance to support implementation. Local partner organizations are mostly employing strategies to reach and benefit girls. If GFC wishes to support more community-based organizations to employ strategies that empower girls and follow best practices, it may be necessary to provide additional technical expertise during the funding relationship with GFC, in addition to organizational capacity development. There are two reasons to provide additional expertise after the final design of programs. The first is to support local partners' adaptive management. For example, local partners may need to adjust their approach based on new information or a change in context (e.g., political change). The second is to help local partners that are piloting new activities scale and improve their approach.

- **Action 1:** Develop a roster of technical experts and subcontractors to provide support throughout program implementation. The targeted expertise may cover education, child protection, social and behavior change, and other areas in which local partners are working. Technical experts can support local partners to adjust their programs during implementation kickoff and in developing new activities, learning, and adaptive management throughout the project cycle. This can be done remotely, through site visits at different points throughout the intervention, or a convening of multiple local partners for a workshop or training.
- **Action 2:** Facilitate more opportunities for local partners to participate in learning activities with a sectoral focus, in addition to organizational capacity focused opportunities. For example, local partners could attend convenings, attend conferences, or receive visits from experts focused on building their awareness of and ability to implement best practices around child protection and education. These opportunities can be external or internal to GFC.

2.2 Establish a cohort of local partners to support peer-to-peer learning. GFC may want to strengthen the linkages between local partners funded by the same portfolio. Establishing regular interactions between local partners could instill a common sense of purpose. It would also create more opportunities for networking and exchanging ideas about promising practices among peers who develop trust through repeated interaction. Local partners can apply these lessons to adjust their implementation approach throughout the project cycle.

- **Action 1:** Provide local partners with opportunities to interact and reflect on their individual and collective experiences. This would allow for sharing of ideas about effective solutions to common challenges and provide a platform for thinking about the value of their work. The authors recommend increasing the number of opportunities for peer-to-peer learning engagements. GFC can conduct an assessment of local partner preferences and communications infrastructure to determine the most effective and appropriate mechanisms for continuous peer-to-peer learning. An initial meeting of the local partners can take place at regional meetings. Other mechanisms like WhatsApp and webinars, can be used to facilitate continuous learning across regions, where language is not a barrier.

2.3 Increase the value of the grants to local partners based on changes in their organizational capacity and demonstrated results. Community-based organizations that demonstrate positive results or improvements in organizational development could be given additional funding to scale up their approaches and/or ensure sustainability when there is a demonstrated need. Providing additional money at key moments in time to expand local partner programs could help make their work more attractive to other donors.

- **Action 1:** Set aside a pool of money to make results-based increases to local partner grants. The determination for additional money should be based on performance against MEL plans and results achieved to date in pilot activities. This will help rationalize more rigorous MEL requirements.
- **Action 2:** Consider scheduling annual grants to increase over the lifecycle of the partnership. This should be tailored for the specific interventions (e.g., proof of concept activities vs. better established activities). Partnerships that begin with relatively smaller grants that increase over time can also help reduce risks to GFC of supporting untested or unknown local partners.

3. Support local partners to improve Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning systems

3.1 Ensure that future GFC programs have sufficiently planned and budgeted for Monitoring, Evaluating, and Learning. To learn from interventions and describe results across a cohort of local partners, GFC should conduct more extensive monitoring. Throughout the life cycle of the grants, this should include the selection and reporting of clearly defined common indicators, and validation or triangulation of results. Local partners that participated in the Outcome Harvesting workshop indicated that they already collect more monitoring data than the one indicator required by GFC.

- **Action 1:** Program officers conduct an assessment of local partners' MEL capabilities to shape the appropriate level of capacity building support. The OCI self-assessment tool can be used as a starting point for the initial assessment but should be validated by the GFC MEL and programs teams.
- **Action 2:** GFC staff should coach future local partners based on the results of the assessment to develop a MEL plan and to report on more extensive, quality monitoring data to better inform GFC decision-making about the work it supports.

- **Action 3:** GFC could plan for external performance evaluations to improve in-house learning and the organization's capacity to manage and design programs more effectively. GFC should budget for evaluations during the program design phase. The programs and MEL teams should begin planning the evaluation questions and scope of work well in advance, according to guidance from the MEL team. Because of the flexible nature of GFC's grants to local partners, additional complexity-aware and mixed methods may be most appropriate for future evaluations.

3.2 Establish reflection mechanisms for improved programming and business development. During the Outcome Harvesting workshop, the local partners valued using their time to learn from each other and reflect on their own work in a structured way. This is something that they normally do not have the time or opportunity to do within their organizations. The process achieves multiple goals. It supports local partners to make course corrections during implementation, to tell their story in new ways to pursue new funding, and to think strategically about their organizational needs and programmatic objectives.

- **Action 1:** Establish a framework for local partner reflection meetings/processes within GFC grantmaking activities. Reflection sessions could be done internally within each local partner organization, and/or collectively within a broader cohort on a regular basis (e.g., quarterly or semi-annual meetings). This would allow for local partners, and GFC, to think critically about what has been achieved to date, what unforeseen issues emerged, and how to solve them. This is captured in two outputs for each organization: 1) documentation of achievements, and 2) an adaptive management plan detailing changes to the anticipated approach. Reflection questions may include:
  - What is the progress to date (since the last check-in) in relation to indicators?
  - Are there any new and unforeseen challenges that explain why we are not meeting targets?
  - What can we do differently to achieve the results that we want to see?
  - What are some of the obstacles/risks to achieving our objectives that we need to plan for?
  - What is going well and why?
- **Action 2:** Use reflection meetings to further refine local partners' theories of change and identify opportunities to support transformative and sustainable changes in the communities where they work. Reflection meetings should result in clear next steps for program management. It is critical to communicate the multiple purposes of these reflection mechanisms to encourage local partners' participation.

3.3 Use outputs of reflection mechanisms to improve local partners' access to funding and GFC's business development. The success stories and lessons learned identified during reflections can be used by local partners and GFC to support future proposals or attract donor attention.

- **Action 1:** Reflection mechanism outputs can help local partners to tell their story in a more convincing way to donors. They can use the outputs to refine their proposed approaches. GFC can guide local partners through this process.
- **Action 2:** GFC business development and program teams can use the outputs of reflection and learning activities to develop proposals for funding new community-based organizations. Use the reflection outputs to strengthen links between GFC's business development, programs, and MEL teams to better capture the unique value added of their work for proposal writing and project design.

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