



Knowledge hub - Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Our Right to Learn – Reaching the unreached

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Kenya

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

Girl Child Network (GCN) is an independent membership organization that is non-political, non-religious and non-profit, registered in Kenya. Established in 1995 after the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing by participating Kenyan civil society organizations, GCN's aim is to

facilitate the implementation of the Beijing Plan of Action, (specifically Article 12, The Girl Child) through actively leading and coordinating Gender and Child Rights programming in Kenya. GCN advocacy areas cover child protection, gender, democracy and governance, policy, education, health and HIV/AIDS.

Expanding its legal mandate and regional coverage, GCN registered as a Charitable Trust Deed in 2006 and as an NGO in 2012. Today, It includes over 300 organizations, key government ministries, departments and individuals working to improve the status of children in Kenya with special emphasis on the girl child. GCN has grown in scale, from a one project initiative to now undertaking large, complex multi-sectorial programs in Education, Health and Nutrition, Human Rights and Legislation, Gender and Governance, Disaster Risk Reduction, Research and Documentation and Institutional Strengthening.

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

Girls, parents, community leaders, child marriage, gender equality, WASH

6. What makes it a best practice? *

The project provides a holistic and transformative approach to ensure girls' transition from primary to secondary education and their completion of a full cycle of basic education. It achieves this by addressing cultural (e.g. female genital mutilation, child marriage, low parental support), institutional (school and government capacity), intersectional (in particular disability-related stigma) and economic (including child prostitution) barriers which prevent children, particularly girls, from accessing and completing their education. It is innovative as it takes a multi-pronged approach to transformation which: 1) Catalyzes social mobilization and hosting community dialogue to challenge entrenched social norms and cultural practices that prevent girls' education, working through Community Gatekeepers to challenge negative social norms holding girls back. 2) Works with families to delay marriage and supports duty bearers' to understand their responsibilities to support their children's education. 3) Supports the creation of gender-sensitive, safe, secure and friendly learning environments where children can thrive. 4) Empowers girls and boys with life skills and an understanding of their rights. 5) Supports advocacy to influence legal policy and frameworks for the education of out-of-school children (OOSC).

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

Kenya has put education at the center of its development strategy, seeing remarkable progress in access to education for both girls and boys since introducing free primary education in 2003 and free secondary education in 2008. However, while significant progress has been made, large regional disparities still exist in girls' education, particularly in terms of the enrollment, retention and completion of basic education in remote, semi-arid and arid counties.

The Our Right Learn - Reaching the Unreached project was established in 2012 as a partnership between the Education Above All's Education a Child programme and the Girl Child Network. It focuses on marginalized, arid and semi-arid regions of the country.

This initiative's theory of change is rooted in the understanding that out of school children (OOSC) have rights and their participation in education can be realized if barriers are addressed at the community, family, governmental and policy levels.

The project aligns with the country's constitution (article 53), as well as the Ministry of Education's sector plan and supports the National Council for Nomadic Education in Kenya's (NACONEK) efforts to increase access to education for marginalized and nomadic communities in the country. The approach aims to confront the barriers of gender discrimination, early/forced marriage, child labor and the perceived low-value of education, as well as build the capacity of duty bearers to implement/enforce education-related policy while building awareness among rights holders of their right to education and protection.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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Established in 2012 and now in its second phase, the Our Right to Learn project works with a total of 120 public primary schools; 45 in Kajiado (25 in Kajiado North and 20 in Mashru sub-counties), 45 in Kwale (20 in Matuga and 25 in Msambweni sub-counties) and 30 in Garissa (Balambala sub-county) counties.

It employs five key implementation strategies:

1. Awareness creation among communities. The project supports community conversations/dialogues and works with community gatekeepers to challenge entrenched social norms and cultural practices that prevent children's right to education.
2. Enhancing the capacity of duty bearers. This is done through training on their duties and responsibilities to meet their legal obligations related to child protection and education. Strategies include parental outreach programmes and training of Ministry of Education officials.
3. Engendering a gender-sensitive, safe, secure and friendly learning environment. This includes the rehabilitation of sanitation facilities, teacher capacity development in gender-responsive pedagogy, training of School Board Management staff and provision of resources and school materials that are free from gender stereotypes.
4. Empowering boys and girls with information on rights and life skills that gives them the confidence and desire to learn. These strategies have focused on the enrolment of out-of-school children, the establishment of child rights clubs, and learning programmes that integrate information on basic and gender rights.
5. Advocacy to influence policy change and actions on legal policy and frameworks that support education for out of school children. This has included the development of briefs which aim to directly influence government reforms and actions. The project also registers poverty-stricken households with government social protection schemes, ensuring support to education continues beyond the life of the project.

The project has evolved thank to a long-term strategic partnership between Girl Child Network (GCN) and the Education Above All programme, Educate A Child.

Further, the Our Right to Learn project has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education. It actively supports and strengthens the national government's strategic vision and plans, and builds the professional capacity of teachers, school administrators and Ministry of Education staff on gender rights issues, associated barriers and the solutions that enable girls' to access education.

The project's annual budget is: US\$1,011,883 with 19 staff (9 women/10 men) directly involved in the project.

Resources have been mobilized from:

- The Ministry of Education Kenya; and the Ministry of Labour and Social Services (National

Council for Persons with Disabilities);

- Education Above All – Educate A Child;
- Aidlink;
- PEPFAR/Trocair; and CBM International.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

The programme is transformative as it:

- recognizes that advancing girls' education requires social mobilization and community conversation to change negative cultural practices such as female genital mutilation, early marriage and the gendered expectations and gendered roles of girls and women. To do this, the programme maps out and directly engages with community gatekeepers to utilize the influence they have in their communities with consultations on gender and child rights issues. It also works with families and households to enter social contracts which delay their daughters' circumcisions and resulting early marriages, and encourages parental support of girls' education.
- works with schools, building the professional capacity of teachers, school administrators and Ministry of Education staff on gender rights issues, associated barriers and the solutions that enable girls' to access education.
- includes gender-specific advocacy to ensure that identified gender gaps in legal policy frameworks are addressed through Briefs that directly influence government reforms and actions.
- supports the registration of poverty-stricken households with government social protection schemes, ensuring girls' education continues beyond the life of the project.

Concrete results achieved: In total, combined Phase I and Phase II - 51,936 Children (25,937 girls and 25,999 boys). - 1,992 teachers and head teachers (743 women and 1249 men) - 580 Board of Management representatives, (285 women and 295 men) - 2627 Community Members (1,176 women and 1451

The first phase of the project saw a number of key outcomes achieved, resulting in the enrolment of 34,254 (17,497G/16,757B) marginalized out of school children into 120 schools with the creation of gender sensitized schools contributing greatly to girls' enrolments. This involved 240 Ministry of education officials alerted to gender policy and legal obligations; 1,440 teachers trained in gender responsive pedagogy teaching methodologies and 426 School Management Committees advised on the creation inclusive schools.

In addition, 120 child rights clubs were established, with 9,600 students learning their basic and gender rights. 18 schools received improved female WASH facilities and 2000 girls received school materials.

With the first phase surpassing its out of school children's enrolment target by 9%, the project was scaled up in 2018 with an additional 47,515 OOSC (25,896 G) targeted for education access over a 4-year period. By 2020, an additional 17,682 OOSC (8,440 girls) were enrolled. Further gains in community sensitization, teacher training, capacity, inclusiveness and resource supply have also been made.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

The key triggers of transformation are:

- The programme is holistic, rights-based and engages the multiple actors involved in a child's education from learners, to parents, to communities, to school staff, to decision-makers.
- Social mobilization and community conversation and direct engagement with Community Gatekeepers is helping to challenge negative social norms and drive a transformation agenda.
- Parental engagement and social contracts which delay circumcision and resulting early marriage and encourage girls' education effectively address barriers inside the household to girls' access to schooling.
- School based efforts are creating safe school environments, including support to menstrual hygiene management through improvements to sanitary facilities and other efforts to address gender-based violence in and around schools.
- Capacity development of teachers and School Management Committees is helping to build sustainable institutional capacity for gender-responsive pedagogy and support to enable girls' to access education.
- Gender-specific advocacy to ensure that identified gender gaps in legal policy frameworks are addressed through Briefs that directly influence government reforms and actions.
- The registration of poverty-stricken households with government social protection schemes will ensure girls' education continues beyond the life of the project.

What worked well:

- Multipronged approach that involves targeting and removing barriers to girls' educational access and survival through strategic community engagement; institutional development and capacity building; policy advocacy; infrastructure and student access to social welfare
- Strong partnerships with government that is helping to support and strengthen the national government's strategic vision and plans, and build the professional capacity of teachers, school administrators and MoE staff on gender rights issues, associated barriers and the solutions that enable girls to access education.
- Working with community and religious leaders to address harmful social norms holding girls back.
- Village Tracking Committees to identify out-of-school girls, facilitate their educational access, and track their progress once they were enrolled into their local schools.
- Focusing on girls but working with boys, acknowledging that both have the power to build the world they want to live in!

What we are learning:

The Girl Child Network has identified the importance of engaging with girls with special needs, and addressing the traditional cultural stigma that prevents these girls from participating in education as key. Accordingly, further support for this population including medical and cognitive assessments, and tailored support for their integration into local schools is planned.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”. What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

The Our Right to Education project is rooted in the understanding that out-of-school children’s have rights and their participation in education can be realized if the key access barriers are addressed at the community, family, governmental and policy levels.

Awarded the UNESCO Prize for Girls’ and Women’s Education in 2020 the project is providing a holistic and transformative approach to ensure girls’ transition from primary to secondary education and their completion of a full cycle of basic education. It addresses cultural (e.g. female genital mutilation, child marriage, low parental support), institutional (school and government capacity), intersectional (in particular disability-related stigma) and economic (including child prostitution) barriers which prevent children, particularly girls, from accessing and completing their education.

It is innovative as it implements a multi-pronged approach to transformation which:

- 1) catalyzes social mobilization through community dialogue to challenge entrenched social norms and cultural practices that prevent girls’ education, working through Community Gatekeepers to challenge negative social norms holding girls back.
- 2) works with families to delay marriage and support duty bearers’ to understand their responsibilities to support children’s education.
- 3) Supports the establishment of gender-sensitive, safe, secure and friendly learning environment where children can thrive.
- 4) Empowers girls and boys with life skills and an understanding of their rights.
- 5) Supporting advocacy to influence legal policy and frameworks for the education of out-of-school children.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

1. <https://www.facebook.com/girlchildnetwork/videos/2597755810487125/>

The local government administrator (Area Chief) encouraging children to pursue their careers as she demystifies gender related careers. She encouraged girls to pursue science related careers such as; doctors, engineers among others including the Area Chief which is predominantly male dominated.

2. <https://educateachild.org/our-partners-projects/projects/our-right-learn-reaching-unreached>

‘Our Right To Learn, Reaching The Unreached - Project is implemented in Partnership with Educate A Child. The project aims to enroll 47,515 OOSC in Garissa, Kwale and Kajiado Counties in Kenya.

3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLYp3fPy3bA>

Girl Child Network short documentary. The stories of girls supported through the project

4. <https://www.facebook.com/girlchildnetwork/videos/247645016286778/>

Girl Child Network Director of Programs – Mr. Dennis Mutiso gives a synopsis of the ‘Our Right to Learn - Reaching the Unreached’ project during International Education Day 2020.

5. <https://www.facebook.com/girlchildnetwork/videos/490159831902666/>

Girl Child Network has distributed over 3,700 back to school kits to OOSC in the three counties. The clip shows the distribution to enrolled OOSC in Kwale County.

6. <https://www.facebook.com/girlchildnetwork/videos/240209740310501/>

The clip shows Area Advisory Council during a meeting to discuss child protection issues in Kwale County hindering participation of out of school children in education and mitigation measures. The meeting was supported by ‘Our Right to Learn – Reaching The Unreached’ project

7. <https://en.unesco.org/news/how-unesco-laureate-helping-girls-go-back-school-kenya>

Article about Girl Child Network’s work to keep girls in school following COVID-19 related school closures.

8. <https://en.unesco.org/news/unesco-laureate-harnesses-communities-ensure-education-hard-reach-girls-kenya>

Article about the Our Right to Learn Project -Reaching the unreached which focuses on the effectiveness of their community engagement strategy