



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.) *

Using children's clubs to protect and empower girls and boys in education in emergencies

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

DRC, Ethiopia, Somalia, Niger, Tanzania, Uganda, South Sudan

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) *

European Commission - Directorate General for International Partnerships

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and partners worked in DRC and Tanzania

Oxfam and partners in Northern Uganda and South Sudan

Plan International and partners in Ethiopia and Somalia

Save the Children and partners in DRC and Niger

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

child protection; School Related Gender Based Violence (SRGBV); Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRH&R)

6. What makes it a best practice? *

Contribution to what works for delivering safe, quality education and strengthening resilience in basic education systems for displaced and host community children

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? *

Building Resilience in Crisis through Education (BRiCE) supported delivering safe, quality education and strengthening resilience in basic education systems for over 200,000 displaced and host community children in seven countries where protracted conflict has put girls' and vulnerable boys' education at risk. Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and partners worked in DRC and Tanzania, Oxfam and partners in Northern Uganda and South Sudan, Plan International and partners in Ethiopia and Somalia, and Save the Children and partners in DRC and Niger. Interventions included teacher professional development, Accelerated Learning Programmes (ALPs), sustainability through (sub)national authorities, and the active involvement of parents, teachers, communities and children in school management and child protection.

Endemic gender inequality is exacerbated by emergency and conflict in the seven countries. Where men largely outnumber women teachers and school leaders, girls are left without female role models or support. Harmful gender norms about boy preference, menstruation and child marriage prevent girls from attending school. In crisis situations where women and children become displaced, gender intersectional inequalities, especially language and ethnicity, exacerbate exclusion in host government education systems. Lack of income within the displaced community increases girls' vulnerability to child marriage or sexual exploitation. Security issues intensify the risks unaccompanied boys and girls face: recruitment by armed groups and gender based violence. Bombed or occupied schools create barriers for menstrual hygiene management (MHM). COVID school closures severely reduced recent gains in female enrolment in basic education.

This best practice looks at how BRiCE used children's clubs to protect and empower vulnerable girls and boys in these emergency education settings. It examines how clubs and networks for girls and boys were established in all seven countries and the impact the clubs had on promoting gender equality and child rights in emergency settings, including

- adolescent girls' re-admission to, and completion of, basic education after child marriage;
- child protection, positive discipline, and referral systems that reduce school related gender based violence (SRGBV);
- menstrual health management (MHM) and awareness of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRH&R);
- vulnerable and often traumatised girls' and boys' empowerment through the participatory methodology and structured life-skills content of club activities.

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? *

Between 2018 and 2022, the EU contributed €19.2 million to BRiCE. Gender targeted interventions across the four consortia included school based gender action plans, MHM, gender responsive pedagogy, female teacher recruitment, SRGBV reporting and referral systems, and children's clubs.

Although the 350 children's clubs in the project comprised only a 4 to 6% share of the total number of children supported by BRiCE in basic education, club activities were cascaded to whole schools and integrated into school and community child protection services.

Gender clubs and girls' and boys' leadership networks in Ethiopia and Somalia taught girls self-assertiveness, body confidence, and how to prevent gender based violence, child pregnancy and early marriage. Boys were taught responsible sexuality, nonviolent relationships, resisting peer pressure and how to become gender equality champions of change.

Boys' and Girls' Clubs in DRC focused on displaced and returnee adolescents repeating primary grades 4 to 6. As well as basic child rights and life skills, they promoted gender equality for girls, preventing early pregnancy and how to report sexual abuse. In Tanzania, Child Rights' Clubs implemented a programme of healing and education through arts: trust-building activities and performance empowered and safeguarded children suffering psychosocial distress, helping them address abuse, child-headed household pressures, and bullying in schools of young mothers.

Children's Clubs in Uganda taught how to stop violence against children in schools and communities, positive discipline, adolescent sexual health and rights, and the management and prevention of teenage pregnancy. Club methodology focused on empowering marginalised girls and boys through participatory teamwork and networks, building and promoting self-esteem and amplifying children's voices. In South Sudan clubs promoted girls' access to education, menstrual hygiene, and inclusion in multicultural classrooms.

Child Clubs in South Kivu, DRC, and Children's Clubs in Niamey, Niger created a space for girls to participate with boys as equals in 'school governments'. Children used gender-equal citizenship, planning, and presentation skills, and inclusive teamwork, to develop action plans for child rights, combating harmful gender norms, and preventing teen pregnancy, HIV, other sexually transmitted diseases, and boys' recruitment into armed groups. Girls began to take leadership positions for the first time.

Key to all these child club initiatives was the selection and training of both female and male teachers as club facilitators so that sensitive issues could be discussed in same-sex groups with a responsible adult. In some of the consortia, teachers were paid stipends for this work, through project funds in the camps, and school management committees and parents in host government schools.

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 clubs helped change attitudes about adolescent girl access to basic education and created a more enabling environment for girls' readmission, retention and completion. The message from the clubs about free education without recrimination for older girls resonated with a lot of young mothers who had dropped out. In Tanzania refugee teen mothers did specific ALPs and in Uganda and South Sudan 22% went on to basic education in host government schools. In DRC, by the end of the project, 224 of 232 (97%) of girls in clubs had enrolled in the final year of primary school.

The participatory, inclusive methodology of the clubs improved girls' presentation and interpersonal skills, self-esteem and voice in class. In DRC, 15 of the 55 Child Clubs elected girl leaders; in Niger girls took 39% of leadership roles in 82 schools. Vulnerable boys' attendance improved. Boys developed self-awareness and began to support girls' rights. In Ethiopia, club facilitators reported increased awareness amongst boys and parents of girls' domestic inequality. In Uganda, South Sudan, DRC and Tanzania, club messages about gender equality cascaded to parents and communities through children's petitions, and drama and dance performances for larger refugee audiences on commemorative days such as International Day of the Girl Child.

In Ethiopia by 2022, 236 (118 girls') cases of child abuse – 22% of all cases - were referred through gender clubs. In Uganda 356 (223 girls') cases and in Ndutu and Mtendeli Camps in Tanzania 58% of cases were reported through clubs. In DRC Child Clubs linked to Réseau Communautaire Protection de l'Enfants (RECOPE) took action against armed group school occupation and recruitment. Other clubs worked with local authorities to reduce SRGBV from soldiers on girls' journeys to school. In South Kivu, girls' leadership in clubs led to more girls as class monitors where teachers observed fewer conflicts. In Niger school fights reduced as a result of club-led conflict resolution systems.

Clubs impacted not only in the way girls and boys interacted with greater confidence and knowledge in class, but also in the pedagogy of the club facilitators. In Uganda refugee settlement and host schools, Matrons and Patrons transferred their professional development in life skills, recognising trauma and intersectional vulnerability, especially in girls, to their regular classes.

The clubs were used as a bridge for peaceful coexistence between government and camp schools. In Tanzania clubs joined forces for '16 days of activism'. In Somalia, 29 Girls' and Boys' Leadership Networks across settlement and host schools brought children and teachers together through storytelling. In Uganda, the club network provided a platform for refugee ALP young mothers to share their experience of re-admittance with dignity and encourage young mothers in host communities to return to government schools.

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? *

Gender clubs became sustainable in low-capacity contexts by

1. Garnering support from a range of community stakeholders; clubs were linked to other child protection mechanisms: in Ethiopia to mothers in the camps, in Niger to the Association of Mother Educators, in Tanzania to Child Protection Committees, in DRC to Parents' Committees, School Management Committees and RECOPE, and in Uganda to District Education and Community Development Offices;
2. Providing a model of how to implement government mandated policies and guidelines on establishing school clubs by training facilitators, ensuring equal participation of girls, and using methodology and modules from War Child UK's 'DEAL' programme, MoES Uganda's 'Journeys', Save the Children's 'HEART', 'Module organisation, fonctionnement et gestion du club d'enfants' and Plan International's 'Champions of Change'.

In terms of funding, the sustainability of children's clubs within the camps seems both plausible, given the continuing availability of external financing, and necessary given the extreme levels of vulnerability of children there. However, sustainability in host government schools remains a concern. Money will be used for more pressing school maintenance or teacher payments, especially in South Sudan where parents fund schools. At the same time BRiCE implementers will no longer influence the strategic transfer of club facilitators to spread club know-how to other host government schools, and child club leaders will move on.

Extra time is needed to affect attitudinal and behavioural change because it cuts so deep into the fabric of paternalistic, poverty-driven norms, exaggerated by displacement. Even though many of the gender club initiatives implemented by the BRiCE consortia built on previous DFiD, NORAD and UNICEF funding for clubs, more than four years is needed for club facilitators to be trained and sustained and for more than one generation of children to pass through the system.

Producing comprehensive trainer's notes and participants' tasks in local languages may sustain quality in the short term. But in the long term, the life skills content and participatory methodology promoted by children's clubs needs to be mainstreamed in the school curriculum.

Future programmes should also ensure engagement with out-of-school children. Government guidelines and school funding of club facilitators stipulated that club members had to be formally registered at the school. Yet many of the children most in need of education in emergencies were non-accompanied street children, not registered in any school. They did not benefit, and the dilemma remains that school club sustainability excludes the most vulnerable of all.

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)? *

Evans and Yaun, 2019, What We Learn about Girls’ Education from Interventions that Do Not Focus on Girls argues that non-targeted school interventions can disproportionately advantage girls. BRiCE demonstrates how non targeted interventions can be integrated with gender targeted ones.

The clubs represent 'best practice' in the way they tackled vulnerability and dropout, increased awareness of gender-based rights and sexual health, and strengthened girls’ roles within school. Further, they did so in ways that appear to support ownership by governments and local stakeholders, using cost-effective approaches well within existing capacity. This appeared to result in changed attitudes both for students and their teachers in the seven BRiCE countries. However, there was insufficient information about actual changes in important outcomes such as reductions in SRGBV or the retention of vulnerable boys and girls in school. Future programmes should develop clear gender-targeted objectives with much more emphasis on measuring outcomes. It will also be important to find ways to encourage or even give priority to the participation of out-of-school children.

School clubs provide an important entry point for conveying important messages about gender equality in education that are not sufficiently addressed within current host government education systems. As education systems mature, every effort should be made to incorporate this messaging into the school curriculum, and to increase the capacity of district- and school-level leadership to incorporate related training into teacher professional development and community outreach.

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. *

Club teaching and learning materials

Plan International (2017). Girls Champions of Change: Curriculum for Gender Equality and Girls' Rights. Woking, UK: Plan International

RTI International. 2017. Journeys. Activity Handbook for teachers and school staff. Building a Positive School Community: My Role, My Responsibility. USAID/Uganda Literacy Achievement and Retention Activity

Save the Children. 2018. HEART: Healing and education through the Arts. Implementation manual for HEART facilitators

Save the Children Norway. 2018. Module organisation, fonctionnement et gestion du club d'enfants

Save the Children. 2016. Module de formation des enseignants sur le processus de mise en place du gouvernement scolaire

War Child Holland. 2013. 'The DEALS' for Leadership and Life Skills

Ministry guidelines

Ministry of Education and Sports, Republic of Uganda. 2007. An Introductory Handbook for promoting positive discipline in schools for quality education: Alternatives to Corporal Punishment. UNICEF Uganda

Ministry of Education and Sports, Republic of Uganda. 2018. Training Manual for Teachers and Other Stakeholders on Menstrual Health Management. Plan International Uganda

Ministry of Education and Sports, Republic of Uganda. 2020. Revised guidelines for the prevention and management of teenage pregnancy in school settings in Uganda. Irish Aid; UNICEF Uganda

Ministry of Education and Sports, Republic of Uganda. 2020. Guidelines on the Formation, Management and Strengthening of School Clubs. Irish Aid; UNICEF Uganda

Ministry of Education and Sports, Republic of Uganda. 2020. Guidelines for the Implementation of the Roles and Responsibilities of the Senior Women and Senior Men Teachers in Uganda. Irish Aid; UNICEF Uganda

RDC Ministère de l'Enseignement Primaire, Secondaire et Professionnel. 2019. Programme de Club Scolaire. Guide de mise en place et de fonctionnement.