

Transitioning into adulthood in Zimbabwe



PROJECT: Improving Gender Attitudes, Transition and Education (IGATE-T)



TIMEFRAME: May 2017 – October 2021



LOCATION: 9 districts in south and western Zimbabwe



DONOR: UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (Girls' Education Challenge)



GOAL: Improve literacy and numeracy. Promote the positive transition into rich and productive adult lives.

Introduction

Girls in Zimbabwe face many potential barriers to education. Family and community attitudes prioritise male education and girls often face harmful traditional and religious practises. Lack of ambition and confidence, as well as parental pressure and social norms, prevent girls from prioritising their own education. For example, until recently there was a law that banned pregnant girls from attending school. While this law was overturned in 2020, pregnant girls still face stigma from their peers and teachers. Girls are given more household chores and the long commute to school brings safety concerns.

The programme worked in rural areas with an average poverty rate of 80%, supporting the most vulnerable girls living in extreme poverty. Thus, IGATE-T worked with rural schools that were poorly resourced with poor sanitary conditions, inadequate classrooms, and low payment levels of school fees. Teacher absenteeism, due to teacher strikes over low pay, and regressive teaching methods limited learning taking place in schools. The programme also specifically targeted out-of-school girls, 'hidden' from society and seen as misfits, outcasts, or girls

with nothing to offer. These barriers were exacerbated by COVID-19, with an increase in early marriages and pregnancies and a deterioration of the economic situation.

Improving Gender Attitudes, Transition and Education (IGATE-T) supported over 123,000 of the most marginalised children¹ in nine districts in Zimbabwe between 2017 and 2021. IGATE-T had three main objectives:

Learning: Improvement in literacy and numeracy of primary and secondary school girls.

Transition: Improvement in progression of in-school girls from primary to secondary and supporting out-of-school girls to transition back into education or onto vocational pathways.

Sustainability: Maintaining outcomes beyond the lifetime of the programme through shifts in social norms, practices, behaviours or attitudes; and through increased capacity of the Zimbabwe Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE).



Areas of impact

There were four areas of impact, all of which were adapted to respond to COVID-19, supporting girls and communities during the pandemic.

Whole school development

Teacher Professional Development (TPD) instructed teachers on participatory training methods. **1,717 teachers and 319 head teachers** in 318 schools learnt new techniques and activities, guided by bespoke teaching materials, to improve learner engagement. Additionally, **more than 14,000 English and maths study guides** were developed and distributed. During COVID-19, WhatsApp was used with teachers to continue their TPD and support schools in designing safe school re-opening plans. Catch-up strategies were published, and teaching material was redesigned to become digestible for virtual learning.

Community learning initiative

This included a Community Based Education (CBE) programme, which provided literacy, numeracy, financial literacy, and vocational training to **3,387 out-of-school learners** in **326 CBE centres**. During COVID-19, all students became out-of-school learners due to school closures. The programme established **758 Community Learning Circles (CLCs)** to keep learners engaged and learning. **702 community facilitators** – volunteers motivated by feelings of compassion – were sent Daily Learning Activities by text or WhatsApp. The programme developed digestible educational resources for children to learn at home without teacher support.

Girls' leadership

The programme trained **753 adult mentors** and **1,160 girl peer leaders** to support community learning, support girls at risk of dropping out, and lead life skills activities. **314 school-based leadership clubs** and camps were created, which saw **79% of girls participating**. During COVID-19,

school Leadership Clubs were disbanded so the programme created **299 community-based clubs**. The focus was adapted to encourage peer leaders to put their skills into practice, for example by facilitating life skills sessions in the CLCs and voicing the issues that affected girls' wellbeing.

Angel is from a rural community bordering Botswana which is characterised by illegal gold mining activity as a means of income to overcome high unemployment rates in Zimbabwe. Angel is the eldest and cares for her siblings while their parents work in neighbouring countries. Angel was attending a school that was far from the community she lives in, but she found herself pregnant and by age 16 had given birth to a baby boy. Angel moved to an IGATE-T-supported school where young mothers can continue their education without stigma. There she became a peer leader.

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"There are currently three pregnant girls at our school, who have returned to school because of the support we give them as a leadership club. The leadership club has provided a safe space for me to share my vulnerabilities both socially and academically, giving me and other girls an opportunity to be assisted by the mentors and find my confidence to continue learning. We do interesting activities such as mapping life aspirations and presenting our life plans which also helps us to practice English."

– Angel, 18, Zimbabwe



ABOVE: Community Based Education catering class. ©2020 World Vision

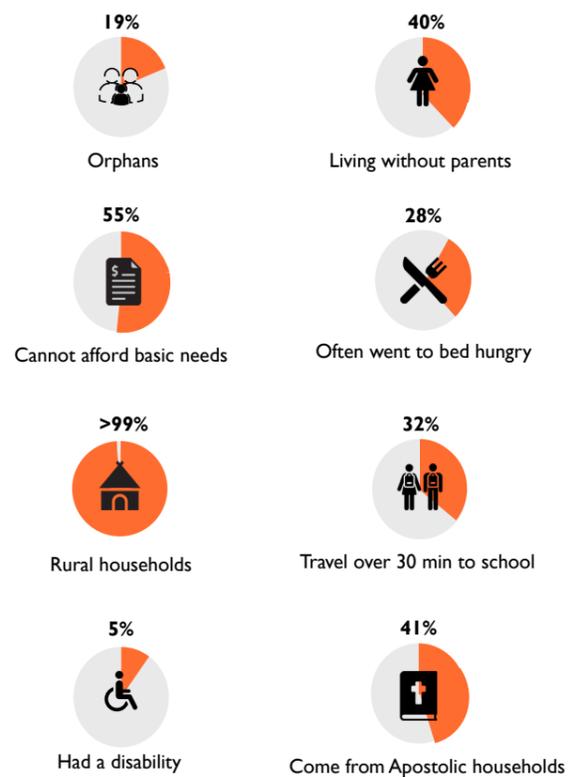


FIGURE 1: Characteristics of the children who were reached by the IGATE-T programme.²

¹Due to the focus of the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC), IGATE-T prioritised girl beneficiaries. The programme followed a cohort of 40,928 girls throughout the project and impact assessments were made on this cohort, so the results in this report only mention girls. However, in total, the programme supported 63,029 girls and 60,304 boys.

²Apostolic church communities have had strongly entrenched viewpoints causing barriers to education for girls, such as approval of early marriage. Through research we identified this sub-group of girls as facing particularly steep barriers. As a Christian organization, we have worked with religious leaders as influencers and the Union for the Development of the Apostolic Church in Zimbabwe Africa (UDACIZA) has been a World Vision partner church in the IGATE-T project.

TOP LEFT: Students do a group numeracy exercise. ©2021 World Vision TOP RIGHT: Community Based Education participants learning new hairdressing skills. ©2021 World Vision BOTTOM: Angel, 18, Zimbabwe. ©2021 World Vision

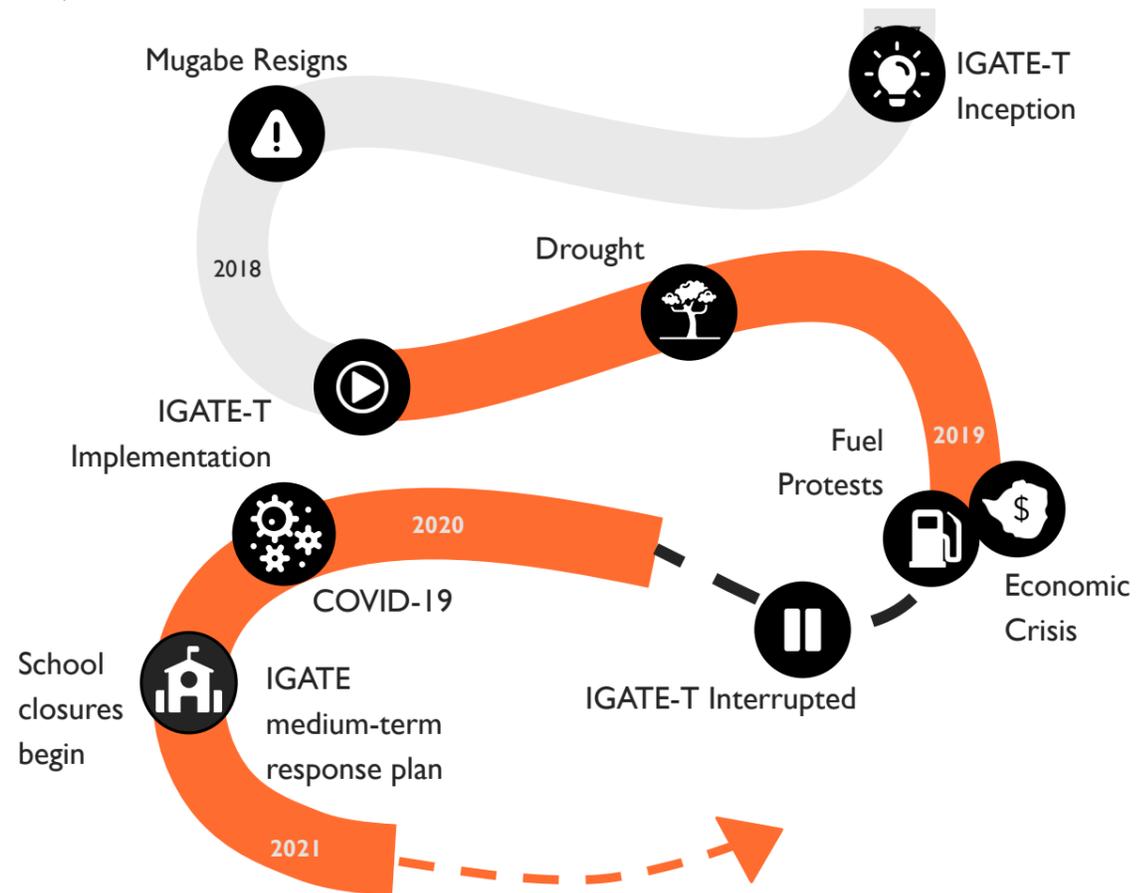
Community engagement

This addressed community attitudes that act as a barrier to girls' education. A mechanism was created to report cases of abuse faced by girls and **298 Child Protection Committees (CPCs)** were formed, made up of community members, local leaders, and social services. The programme developed Community Champion Networks, and enhanced child protection efforts during lockdowns. **21 case conferencing** and **60 score carding sessions** acted as reporting mechanisms, as well as enabling survivor support. **266 school communities were also engaged in 'back to school' campaigns**, for example by tracing at-risk girls.

RIGHT: Participants at a leadership club in an IGATE-T supported school. ©2021 World Vision **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Netball club at an IGATE-T supported school. ©2021 YEAR World Vision



FIGURE 2: A description of the high-risk and fragile context, in which the programme operated.



Some programme snapshots

- **9,247 students in IGATE-T areas received bicycles** to improve access to school. This also addressed the issue of girls' safety on their way to and from school.
- **Caregivers reduced chore burdens by an average of 17 minutes per day** for girls in IGATE-T communities.
- **1,202 CBE facilitators** oriented and trained
- **95% of learners report that their teachers use participatory practices** in school now.
- **80% of learners report being at least slightly better at maths and English** because they participated in Community Learning Centres.
- **1,346 solar radios with pre-recorded lessons** were distributed to Community Learning Circles to support ongoing learning in the community.

Results

A final evaluation³ examined the impact of IGATE-T in October 2021. Data was collected from over 1,500 individuals through surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Key findings in learning

Learners experienced **significant improvements in literacy and numeracy**,⁴ with the largest gains for those children with the least ability at the start of the programme. This was corroborated by teachers, community members, and learners, who attributed it to improved learning experiences.

95% of students reported that teachers and community volunteers demonstrated improved use of participatory and inclusive methods of teaching. IGATE-T schools saw an 8% decrease in teacher absenteeism as teachers became more motivated.

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"...Before, they would just let us all write our work, whether everyone understood or not... Now we do group work and help each other."

Community Learning Circles during COVID-19 provided equitable access to education for those unable to access alternative education, with CLC participants experiencing an **extra 72 days of learning**. They promoted coping mechanisms, allowing children to maintain hope of graduating from school. CLC participants performed better when schools reopened, with **80% of participants reported being at least slightly better at maths and English because they participated in CLCs.**

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"...you will find that...readers are increasing, and the non-readers are decreasing." – Headteacher, Mberengwa



³The evaluation measured success in the project outcome areas of terms of learning, transition, and sustainability outcomes. A mixed methods impact evaluation (using qualitative and quantitative methods) was combined with Outcome Harvesting, a qualitative methodology to understand project contribution, to assess impact of the programme.

⁴Positive, significant improvements in literacy (0.26 SD) and numeracy (0.29 SD). Standard deviation (SD) is used to denote the difference in changes between the IGATE-T areas and 'control' areas.

Key findings in transition

87% of in-school girls successfully moved up a grade. 75% of out-of-school girls who attended CBE transitioned into (self-)employed, or back into education. **Teenage mothers were particularly successful, with 89% gaining financial independence.** Many mothers reported using their profits to pay their children's or their siblings' school fees.

Girls became more confident and optimistic about their future. They became more highly regarded within their communities – where before they were considered 'outcasts' or 'social misfits'. They became role models to their peers, even engaging in peer teaching of skills for other girls in the community.

Key findings in sustainability

A significant achievement was to have MoPSE commit to **nationally scaling up IGATE-T-developed teaching and learning materials.** IGATE-T influenced the national catch-up strategy in Zimbabwe, with **MoPSE endorsing the IGATE-T education model** nationally. IGATE-T addressed gender considerations throughout, contributing to transformative change in areas related to gender and social inclusion.

IGATE-T communities developed more supportive attitudes towards girls' education, illustrated in their commitment during COVID-19. Caregiver and community attitudes towards educating pregnant girls improved. This resulted in an **8% reduction in girls not feeling safe travelling to school** and a **5% increase in learners feeling safe in-school.** Additionally, caregivers **reduced girls' chore burdens by an average of 17 minutes per day.** Girls say they receive more support at all levels (from caregivers, schools, and communities) than before. There was an increase in reporting and follow-up of abuse cases across IGATE-T areas as a result of improved reporting channels, awareness campaigns and support to victims of abuse. 414 out of 480 abuse cases in schools and communities were successfully resolved since the start of the programme by CPCs and referral agencies. Work by CPCs will continue to resolve remaining cases.

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"Ministry officials across all districts agree they would like to expand the use of IGATE-T models to other schools in their district." – IGATE-T Evaluation



Conclusion

IGATE-T equipped over 123,000 children in nine Districts of Zimbabwe to increase fluency in literacy, numeracy, financial literacy and life skills. There were positive and significant improvements in literacy and numeracy, improved learning experiences both within the school and in communities, improved engagement and teaching methods of teachers and reduced teacher absenteeism. Out-of-school girls who attended Community Based Education, particularly teenage mothers, increased their confidence and life chances. Reports of abuse are dealt with in communities, girls feel safer and have a reduced domestic burden. Programme learning materials will continue to improve education into the future. IGATE-T represented good value for money, with a cost of \$125 per child.⁵

What have we learnt?

IGATE-T's responsive programming – adapting and reflecting – was key to obtaining results in a fragile and high-risk context. The programme took a “sustainability-

first” approach, working within the system and with local stakeholders so solutions could be sustained and scaled. Finally, IGATE-T learned that it was crucial to ensure the voices of the girls were central to the programme .

Next steps

IGATE-T generated a large amount of evidence demonstrating what works for girls' education, documented in learning products and events – attended by FCDO, GEC partners and wider education stakeholders. IGATE-T is informing the development of global World Vision project models to ensure all education projects around the world use this best practice. Finally, several of World Vision UK's generous private donors have committed to fund a follow-up education project in Zimbabwe, called Girls' Education, Mentoring and Support (GEMS) continuing to reach out-of-school girls, with opportunities to re-enter education, attend non-formal education or gain vocational skills to support them and their families.

ABOVE: IGATE-T catch-up learning in class. ©2021 World Vision

⁵Financial cost of the project is **£125 per beneficiary** (including direct and indirect), which is lower than the GEC average. **Cost-benefit ratio of 1.67** on IGATE-T, which means for every £1 spent on the project had a financial benefit of £1.67 when analysing the impact of improved literacy and numeracy on future income of the girls. For context, most UK public projects have a CBR of around 1.2.

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At World Vision, our focus is on helping the most vulnerable children, in the most dangerous places, overcome poverty and injustice. Inspired by our Christian faith, we've worked together with communities, partners, local leaders and governments, for over 70 years, so that children – of all faiths and none – are empowered to experience fullness of life.

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COVER: In late March 2020, schools closed abruptly due to the COVID-19 lockdown and Mercy aged 17 discovered she was pregnant. The IGATE-T team learned of Mercy's situation and made her aware of the recent policy change that would allow pregnant girls to re-enter schools upon reopening. ©2020 World Vision

