



## Background

Governments have an international legal obligation to provide good quality education and ensure all children can access it. Education has been recorded as a basic human right in international law since 1948 and is enshrined in many international documents and treaties.<sup>1</sup>

In 2019 the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development noted that *“Education is a public good and public responsibility, a fundamental human right and an important basis for ensuring personal fulfilment and for the realization of other rights essential for peace and sustainable development. Governments have the primary responsibility to deliver on the right to education and a central role as custodians of efficient equitable and effective management and financing of public education accessible to all.”*<sup>2</sup>

Link recognises that sustainable improvements to education for the greatest number of people will be achieved by the governments of the countries where we work. We don't believe in creating parallel systems which end when we leave. Instead, we work within government systems so that change is created and capacity is strengthened internally in a way that means improvements will continue beyond the lifetime of our partnership. Our holistic model of working supports education structures on multiple levels to ensure that effective solutions are integrated throughout the system, while the system itself is held accountable.

UK Aid's Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) identifies collaboration with government institutions and policies as one of the key principles of sustainability.

*“If governments and local authorities are to be expected to sustain project approaches and, therefore, the gains achieved, they need to be able to replicate these approaches using their own systems and resources.”*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948); Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1960); International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979); African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1986); Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989); World Declaration on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs (1990); The Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All (2000); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006); UN General Assembly Resolution on the Right to Education in Emergency Situations (2010)

<sup>2</sup> [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23669BN\\_SDG4.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23669BN_SDG4.pdf) accessed 03.06.2021

<sup>3</sup> [https://girlseducationchallenge.org/media/xuacqlo3/gec\\_s2s\\_report\\_final.pdf](https://girlseducationchallenge.org/media/xuacqlo3/gec_s2s_report_final.pdf)

## About Link

Link Education is Scotland's leading international education charity, working to improve education for children and communities in some of the poorest rural areas of Ethiopia, Malawi and Uganda, and helping thousands of people escape the cycle of poverty. We focus on enhancing teaching and learning in schools, as well as building life-skills and promoting inclusion for the most marginalised. Our vision is one where all children have access to good quality education, giving them hope and a strong foundation for a brighter future. We take both a top-down and bottom-up approach to transform education, supporting broad system and school-wide improvements while recognising the need for more tailored, localised support to overcome specific challenges.

## Our Approach

Link works in partnership with governments to support national education sector plans, the achievement of African Union Agenda 2063 targets<sup>4</sup> and the Sustainable Development Goals. We aim to influence government policy and reinforce governments' efforts to deliver on their education commitments and priorities. As a non-governmental organisation we support government systems, while strengthening pathways to hold governments accountable for what they promise to deliver.

Our approach is to work with governments to model more effective ways of delivering quality education within available resources. We work through existing structures and in partnership with government staff, in particular the middle tier, to demonstrate effective solutions which can be scaled up. Involving government staff at every stage of a project from implementation to evaluation enables us to share learning and create trusting relationships where solutions are developed together. We sit on Technical Working Groups to disseminate learning across government departments and to other NGOs.

The foundation of a strong partnership is the trust which allows partners to challenge one another. Link has been instrumental in promoting the inclusion of children with disabilities and making the link between child protection and academic performance. As government priorities evolve, our strong partnership and adaptive management methods enable us to tailor projects to fit. As climate change and education in emergencies have become more urgent in recent years, Link has developed expertise to support governments to respond to these challenges. Our approach papers on Climate Resilience, social and emotional learning, and Education in Emergencies outline how we do this.

The high level of participation and ownership by government partners creates the opportunity to scale up successful models and leverage government resources to make these successes sustainable. In all the countries where we work, governments have committed staff and funding to deliver Link's [school review approach](#). In Malawi the processes we developed jointly with the government are now part of national guidelines for school inspectors and advisors.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/goals>

<sup>5</sup> Directorate of Inspection and Advisory Services Handbook

## Our Experience

### ETHIOPIA:

The GEC-Transition project, STAGES<sup>6</sup> seeks to strengthen the education system to ensure that girls in project areas are benefitting from an education that considers the specific barriers that girls face, and better meets their needs. Project activities focus on 61,345 girls, with the same number of boys benefitting more indirectly from improvements made. To adhere to key principles of partnership with education structures at all levels (community/kebele, cluster, woreda, zone and region, i.e. the middle tier), and for ownership, adaptive management and sustainability, project staff conduct joint monitoring visits to schools with key government stakeholders on a quarterly basis. These monitoring visits are followed by a programme review meeting where achievements are recognised, and where plans are agreed as to how to resolve challenges. Evidence generated from these visits, as well as from supervision visits conducted by woreda Cluster Supervisors, in addition to internal project monitoring data, and external evaluation findings provide learning on which government, community and project partners can act to improve education for girls.



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<sup>6</sup> Supporting the Transition of Adolescent Girls through Enhancing Systems

## UGANDA:



Link uses school performance review to support districts in collecting, analysing, sharing and using information to improve the education schools deliver. Working directly with Uganda's Ministry of Education and Sport, we used this model to bring to light the critical gaps and issues affecting efficacy of teaching and learning in schools in Bunyoro region in 2020. This includes the leadership and management gaps, and the critical governance issues in 100 public primary schools in Hoima, Kikuube and Buliisa Districts.

Embedding school performance review in government systems was achieved by having it included in the District Development Plan III as well as using District Education Officers themselves in every step of the process. Due to our engagement with districts, Kikuube District Local Government used the school performance review report to channel funds to support training of all their headteachers on financial administration, school leadership and management, accountability for results, and school improvement planning. Meanwhile, Hoima District prioritised recruitment of Special Educational Needs focal persons to address their low performance on access and equity during school performance review.

## MALAWI:



Link worked with the Ministry of Education to adapt the government's complementary basic education (CBE) programme to be more inclusive of the most marginalised learners, such as young mothers and children with disabilities. Life-skills became a focus area with topics such as responsible water use, coping with stress, and financial literacy. Training for CBE centre teachers focused on using child-centred inclusive education approaches. We demonstrated how this works to include 6,000 of the hardest to reach young people who have dropped out of school.

The Ministry of Education was involved in monitoring teaching and assessing learning at Link's CBE centres, as well as participating in project steering committees and adaptive management meetings. In its National Education Sector Investment Plan 2020-2030 the Ministry of Education included plans and budget to expand CBE across the country. As the government extends its provision of CBE, the shared experience of developing a programme that is inclusive of the most marginalised has influenced the curriculum and teaching approaches which will be used in the government's CBE centres in future.