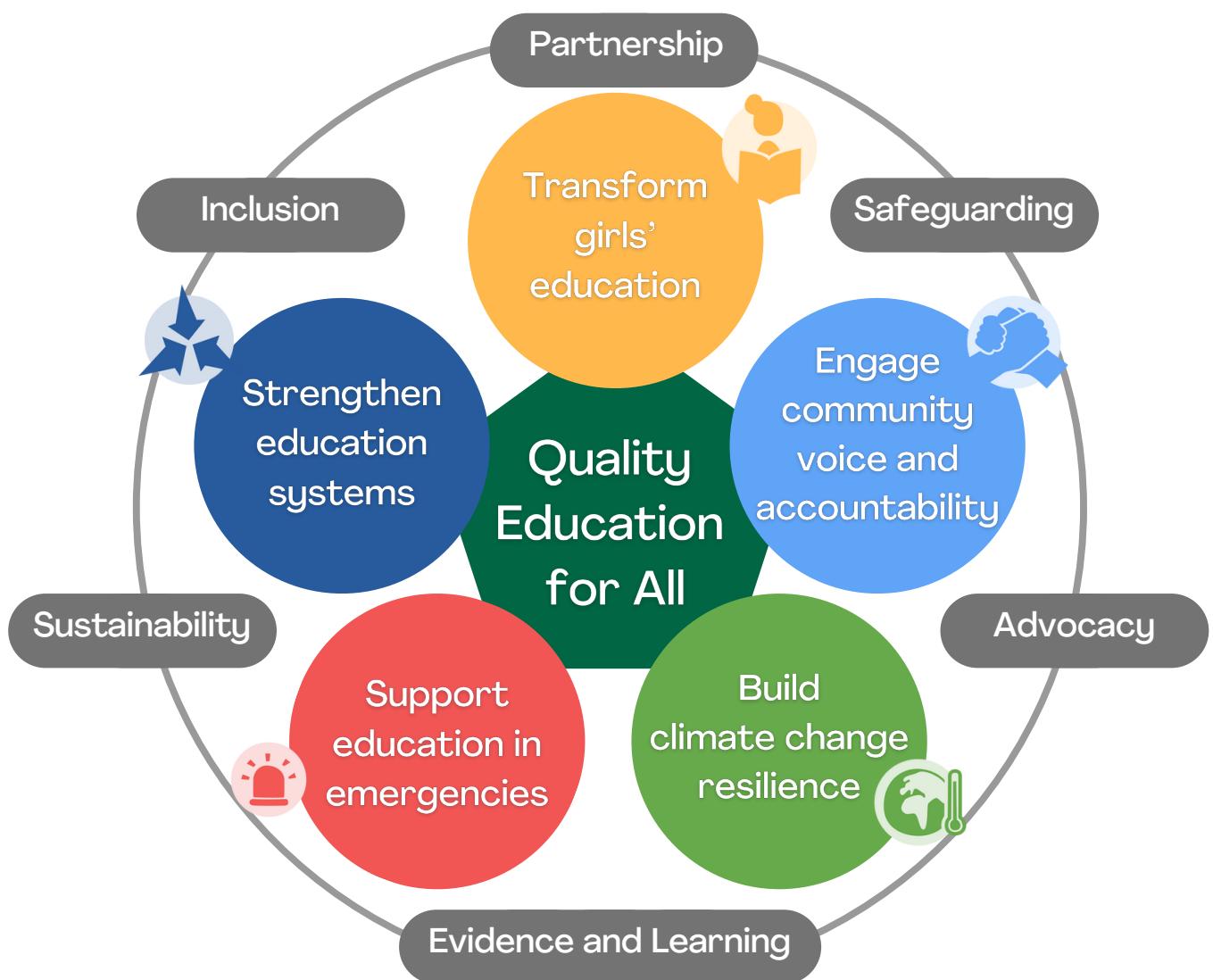


At Link Education, we work across East Africa, removing barriers to education, especially for girls. We partner with local and national governments to transform education systems, and work with communities and schools to design tailored activities to overcome specific local challenges. We have a 30-year track record and strong evidence of impact. Our effective and scalable programmes are delivered by national teams through local structures. Our model leverages government and community resources ensuring long-term sustainability.

Strategic Goals (2020 – 2030)

Link's five strategic goals align with the Sustainable Development Goals Decade of Action, national education plans and the African Union's Agenda 2063.



2021-2022 in a snapshot



155,786

learners
supported



28,629

teachers
strengthened



57,740

community
members
engaged



309

schools/
learning centres
improved

All our work is underpinned by these core principles:

- Locally-led – our work is co-designed with communities and aligns with government priorities
- Sustainable – we build models that can be scaled through leveraging government resources
- Inclusion and Safeguarding – we support and protect the most vulnerable
- Evidence and Learning – we measure impact and adapt to maximise effectiveness
- Advocacy – we share learning from community level to national governments



Our Supporters

- UKAid (incl. Girls' Education Challenge)
- USAID
- European Union
- Scottish Government
- UNICEF
- Comic Relief
- William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- Open Society Foundation
- Trust Africa
- Waterloo Foundation

Recent highlights

1

Our UKAid funded programme in Malawi has improved learning for 5,500 highly marginalised, out-of-school girls: 88% showed improvement in reading; 86% showed improvement in maths; 83% showed improvement in lifeskills. Girls with disabilities posted higher average literacy scores than girls without disabilities.

2

Following our school transformation and community accountability programme in Uganda, community members successfully advocated for: improved school leadership; improved male/female gender balance; improved school environment. 6,300 community members (incl. 619 children and 164 people with disabilities) became leaders of change after regular participation in school-community meetings.

3

Our Girls' Education Challenge programme in Ethiopia, supporting over 61,000 girls, has transformed school planning and leadership "The training ... helped bring a paradigm shift in our ways of leading—now we have shifted our approach to leading by example ... we continuously monitor the teachers' capacity and support them to improve."

4

In Ethiopia local government has scaled up our Gender and Inclusion Responsive Pedagogy to an additional 456 schools, 12,182 teachers, and 460,070 learners. Ours programmes are scalable and sustainable.

5

Link's Value for Money model leverages capacity, forges partnerships, and avoids costly duplication of efforts by working through and strengthening existing system. "These interventions are not being seen as 'add on' but better and a more productive way of doing" Ethiopian Education Official when noting how we've supported more efficient practice.





Supporting girls' education

Link's girls' education project has strengthened school leadership, school improvement planning, teaching quality, community engagement, and social, emotional and life skills education; supported girls' basic needs with sanitary packs and uniforms; and constructed four secondary schools to support girls' transition. Impact includes:

- Improvement in numeracy scores – grade 6 improved by 18.48% and grade 8 by 19.86%
- Girls' self-esteem increased by 23.4%
- Almost 100% of teachers selected every project intervention as key to reducing barriers to girls' education
- Girls' literacy scores have improved, whilst reading comprehension remains challenging

"My biggest concern was who will help me when I entered secondary school, but the organization has started assisting me. Because of this, not only me but also my parents are happy and confident to continue my education."

– Girl student

Areas of operation

- Wolaita, SNNPR
- Afar
- Benishangul-Gumuz
- Gambella
- Somali



Improving School Leadership

In collaboration with SNNPR Regional Education Bureau (REB) and their respective counterparts at woreda (district) level education offices, Link has supported the capacity development of school leaders to lead schools which are gender, inclusion and safeguarding-responsive while aiming for better learning outcomes for children.

- 94% of teachers report that school leaders are responsive to girl's needs.
- Link has supported the development, piloting and scale-up of a school leadership toolkit for 9000 schools in the four emerging regions. This will be scaled-up across Ethiopia in 2023.
- 93% of school leaders have moved from being 'beginner leaders' to 'developing leaders' on a competency scale.

"Before we received training, our way of supervision was simply criticism. But since we got trained, we have been involved in follow-up, evaluation and coaching and monitoring activities."

– School Cluster Supervisor

Key Projects

Supporting Transition of Adolescent Girls through Enhanced Systems 2017 – 2024; £13,868,133

Improving learning, non-cognitive skills and transition of 61,345 girls in 127 primary and 17 secondary schools in four woredas of Wolaita Zone, SNNPR.

Technical Assistance to Reinforce GEQIP-E Ethiopia 2019 – 2023; £1,519,441

Technical assistance to the Ministry of Education supporting gender equity and inclusion through strengthening continuing professional development for school leaders.

Girls into STEM 2020 – 2023; \$150,000

Supporting girls' transition to upper secondary school and promotion of STEM subjects via improved teacher training numeracy materials.

Language and Literacy 2016 – 2019; \$566,665

Improving girls' literacy outcomes via spaces for reading, training of teachers on local and English language competency, and extra-curricular tutorial provision.

Life Skills and Literacy for Improved Girls' Learning in Rural Wolaita 2013 – 2017; £2,934,968

Improving girls' attendance, retention, and foundational learning.

Community Engagement and Accountability

Strengthening existing school-community structures has created gender, inclusion and safeguarding responsive schools. School-community meetings using school data and led by headteachers, enable issues to be identified that communities can help solve.



“One student’s father wanted to send his daughter away. But PTA members informed her school as a result of community awareness. The school and education office stopped the student from dropping out with the help of the community and police. Additionally, the student’s father was charged and the student is back in class.”

– Woreda official



Partnerships for Sustainability

Link has strengthened capacity across stakeholders, aligning our support with government needs and building relationships. A government official stated there is ‘political acceptance’ of Link’s work which is a key factor for sustainability. This has resulted in elements of our work being incorporated into long-term planning and project materials used in training, evidencing Link’s programming being integrated into wider government systems.

- 18 non-target districts have trained teachers using Link’s Gender and Inclusive Responsive Pedagogy training targeting learner-centred, gender-responsive and disability-inclusive teaching techniques, and subject-specific techniques for essential areas of literacy and numeracy teaching.
- 18 non-target districts also rolled out Mother and Father Group activities focusing on challenging social norms and supporting girls’ wellbeing.
- Link’s work is now being included in the three-year district strategic plans, “making the initiatives part of the actual plan will be our mechanism to ensure the sustainable implementation of these activities” a district official said.



Supporting girls' education

Foundational learning supported by strengthening social and emotional skills are key drivers of Link's girls' education work. One project addresses the multiple intersecting barriers that extremely disadvantaged girls face in gaining a quality education, and via an inclusive accelerated learning and life skills programme, offers a route into mainstream education, vocational training, or employment. Highlights from the 2022 external midline:

- Girls improved in reading (88%) and maths (86%)
- 80% of teaching facilitators use at least one of Link's child-centred teaching methods
- 83% of girls showed improved life skills
- Project activities embedded in community and district-level processes and structures

Areas of operation

- Dedza
- Lilongwe
- Mchinji
- Mulanje (past work)



Life skills

Link's Sport for Change methodology uses netball to build social and emotional skills for marginalised out-of-school girls and boys. Those at risk of dropping out of community-based education are supported to catch up on their learning, and transition successfully into mainstream education, self-employment or vocational skills training. Results from 2022 show:

- Improved attendance from 54% to 67%, with over half of centres reporting 100% learner retention
- Girls report a 14% increase in self-esteem
- Girls report a 20% increase in confidence to challenge gender norms
- A 20% increase in parents reporting positive attitudes to gender equality

Key Projects

Reaching Our Goals

2021 – 2023, £200,000

Sport for Change netball curriculum to strengthen girls' self-confidence and SRH knowledge.

Transformational Empowerment of Adolescent Marginalised Girls in Malawi (TEAM Girl)

2018 – 2023, £7,000,000

Support marginalised, out-of-school girls to learn and transition into mainstream education, employment, or vocational training.

Inclusive Community Engagement

2018 – 2019, \$230,000

Increasing school accountability by empowering local communities and promoting inclusive education.

Integrated School Performance Review and Engagement

2015 – 2018, £600,000

Developing and embedding the National Education Standards for evidence-based school improvement planning.

Keeping Girls in School

2013 – 2016, £500,000

Technical Assistance to improve girls' retention and progress gender parity in basic education.

Strengthening and Scaling Systems

With the Ministry of Education, Link supported development of Malawi's first National Education Standards and a scalable school improvement model (school performance review) that leads to evidence-based School Improvement Plans. Across two districts results showed:

- 99% of headteachers found the standards useful for improving their school
- 25% of headteachers found increased community awareness and participation
- 18% increase in the number of schools that met or exceeded national standards for learning

Learning from the TEAM project has informed development of an inclusive Complementary Basic Education model. Ten recommendations have been shared with government for use in scale up considerations.

Inclusive Education Support

Link works with local organisations that support people with disabilities and government to ensure all children receive the support they need to access and participate in a quality and safe education. Adaptations have included specialist teacher training, community awareness raising, Individualised Education Plans and devise provision. Project highlights are:

- 86% of learners with disabilities showed improved learning outcomes
- 95% of learners on Individual Education Plans perform fairly well or very well



“I didn't even know how to write my own name, but now, I know how to write it”

– Learner



Participatory Community Engagement

Exploring 'who's missing' from school-community decision-making enabled Link to develop a participatory and inclusive system for school planning. By providing local language translations of national policies, accessible report cards and interactive radio shows we enabled more than 200,000 community members to participate and school leaders observed more inclusive meetings and improvement plans.

- 36% more respondents from marginalised groups felt they participated regularly in school
- 41% more respondents said they had good knowledge of school management
- 29% more respondents agreed they could influence school management decisions



Effective School Improvement Planning

Link strengthened the capacity of district inspectors, school managers and community leaders to understand, develop and monitor school improvement plans. Now plans are based on evidence, respond to local needs, and are inclusive and realistic. Highlights include:

- Better leadership resulted in improved teaching via monitoring of student learning, supportive teacher observations and effective lesson plans.
- More coordinated evidence-based district education planning and strengthened capacity of district inspectors and local administrators to support schools.

Districts worked in

- Buliisa
- Hoima
- Masindi
- Katakwi
- Kikuube



Strengthened Social Accountability

Through advocacy training, Link enabled communities to know their rights and responsibilities, provided tools to monitor progress, and used evidence to guide demands for stronger education delivery. Across 100 schools in three districts education was improved for 54,290 children. Local radio and murals deepened support. Results included:

- 6,300 community members attended school-community meetings, including 619 children and 164 people with disabilities.
- Community demands resulted in a change of headteacher in one school, addition of a female teacher to an all-male teaching body, and improvements to the school environment.

Key Projects

School Transformation Through Enriching Accountability and Resilience II

2019 – 2022, \$950,000

Follow on and scaling up of phase one of the project.

School Transformation Through Enriching Accountability and Resilience I

2018 – 2019, \$400,000

Community empowerment to better advocate for rural schools, improve community-based management of schools, and strengthen local government school support.

Empowerment for Girls' Education

2018 – 2020, £108,865

Increasing accountability by empowering local communities and promoting inclusive education practices..

The Literacy and School Support Project in Buliisa

2015 – 2017, £90,000

Raising teaching quality and learner literacy in local language-speaking schools, pioneering the use of Early Grade Reading Assessments.

Early Learning Enhancement Project

2014 – 2015, \$60,000

Improving early learning outcomes with a focus on local language teaching and whole school support.

Schools for IDP Resettlement Katakwi

2010 – 2014, £471,792

Encouraging school improvement and promoting community engagement as a means to assist displaced people to return to their ancestral lands.

Teacher Training

Link strengthened teacher performance, instructive knowledge, and practice in 166 primary schools by training 330 primary school teachers in curriculum interpretation, integration, and implementation.



Early Learning and Literacy

Focusing on local language education, Link used child-centred methods and locally available resources to improve the literacy level of 4,795 learners in marginalised communities across two districts. We adapted the Early Grade Reading Assessment for two local languages and raised awareness of the value of reading. A key highlight was that just 20 hours of individual support for early years' teachers in rural schools was adequate to improve significantly learners' literacy skills.

Schools as Community Hubs

Link strengthened school management and leadership in 75 schools benefitting 53,000 learners who had left Internally Displaced People's camps. Alongside training on gender inclusive teaching practices, Link also worked with communities to nurture a resilient school compound that included wood lots and school gardens.

“We have all left the camps now. We are all fully cultivating and out of school children are back in school and we have enough food to support them and we can provide clothing, books and pens – in the camps we couldn't do that.”

– Community member



Link Education's structure and governance

Link Education includes three local partners, Link Community Development Uganda (est. 2000) and Malawi (est. 2006), both independent and governed by national Boards, and Link Education Ethiopia (est. 2009). Link Education International (LEI) provides technical support and capacity strengthening in governance and finance, monitoring, evaluation and learning, programme design, safeguarding and communications.

This team has developed a strong, lean organisation with a robust governance and risk management framework and capacity strengthening approach. Income has grown from £1.654m (2017) to £3.949m (2022) and we are actively working on diversifying our funding mix to increase our sustainability. We are members of international and national education networks and ministerial technical working groups, and proactively seek partnerships that complement our expertise to deliver effective projects that are financially realistic for governments to scale.



“...through that training and orientation we were empowered. Through the innovation, our learners have made a tremendous improvement in terms of punctuality, class attendance, class performance and even in terms of dressing [school uniform].”
Headteacher, Mchinji

“ 54% increase in girls' self-reported feelings of confidence and agency since the start of the project ”

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