



LINK
EDUCATION

Transforming lives by
transforming education

At Link Education, we work across East Africa removing barriers to education, especially for girls. We partner with local and national governments, communities and schools to design tailored activities to overcome specific local challenges. We have a 30-year track record in strengthening education systems. We have strong evidence of impact delivering foundational literacy and numeracy approaches, targeted Teacher and Leadership Professional Development, gender and inclusive pedagogy, engaging communities and building resilience to climate change. Our effective and scalable programmes are delivered by national teams through local structures. Our model leverages government and community resources ensuring long-term sustainability and effective resource allocation.

Strategic Goals (2020 - 2030)



Impact in 2023 - 2024



Ethiopia



Malawi



Uganda



131,713

learners
reached



6,666

teachers and
school leaders
trained



16,422

community
members
engaged



259

schools and
learning centres
improved

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

Highlights

1

Over its lifetime, our Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) programme in Ethiopia, supporting 61,345 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." Woreda (District) Officer

2

Our UKAid funded programme in Malawi (TEAM Girl Malawi) has improved learning for 5,250 highly marginalised, out-of-school girls: 77% showed improvement in reading; 77% showed improvement in maths; 74% showed improvement in lifeskills.

3

In Uganda, after participating in Link's school transformation and community accountability programme, community members successfully advocated for improved school leadership, improved male/ female teacher gender balance and improved school environment. In addition, 6,300 community members (incl. 619 children and 164 people with disabilities) became leaders of change after regular participation in school-community meetings.

4

As evidence of the sustainability of our project in Ethiopia, the local government has scaled-up our Gender and Inclusion Responsive Pedagogy and Community Engagement interventions to an additional 456 schools, 12,182 teachers, and 460,070 learners.

5

Link's Value for Money model leverages capacity, forges partnerships, and avoids costly duplication of efforts by working through and strengthening existing systems. "TEAM Girl Malawi had built foundations for systems-level sustainability, including positive ministry signals about the community-based education model and the safeguarding processes embedded in communities." (GEC Reflections Document, page 9)





Key Projects

Supporting Transition of Adolescent Girls through Enhanced Systems

2017–2024; £14.8M

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

Technical Assistance to Reinforce GEQIP-E

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 numeracy teaching and learning 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.

Areas of operation

- South Ethiopia Region (former SNNPR)
- Afar
- Somali
- Benishangul-Gumuz
- Gambella



Supporting girls' education



We have 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:

- Girls' literacy scores have improved
- Improvement in numeracy scores – grade 6 improved by 18% and grade 8 by 20%
- Girls' self-esteem increased by 23%
- Nearly all teachers identified each project intervention as crucial for reducing barriers to girls' education



“We are registering clear results in every intervention. Overall, schools have become more friendly to girls and to children with disabilities. Girls who are vulnerable are supported financially and they are achieving better. The school construction has helped many to attend secondary school being [able to live at home] with their families.”

Woreda Official



Improving school leadership

In collaboration with the Regional Education Bureau and woreda (district) education offices, Link has supported the capacity development of school directors 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 girls' needs.
- Link led on the development, piloting and scale-up of a school leadership toolkit for 9,000 schools in the four emerging regions. This has now been scaled across Ethiopia.
- 93% of school leaders have moved from being 'beginner leaders' to 'developing leaders' on a competency scale.



“Previously, we were preoccupied with administrative tasks and were unable to give educational leadership and supervision the attention it deserved. Following this training, we are putting an emphasis on efficient teaching and learning techniques. We now realise that coaching and classroom observation [should be] given more weight.”

School Director





Community engagement and accountability

Strengthening existing school–community structures has created safe and welcoming schools for all children. School community meetings led by headteachers, and using school data, enable communities to help solve the issues identified. Community Mother and Father Groups are instrumental in family liaison to bring married girls back to school.



“One student’s father wanted to send his daughter away. But PTA members informed her school. 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 Officer



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.

Teacher training and support

Link trained teachers in local language, numeracy and English and embedded this with gender, inclusion, social and emotional pedagogies. Link also provided support in coaching and mentoring techniques for supervisors enabling more effective feedback that increases motivation. Teachers experienced changes in attitudes toward students with disabilities and said they now feel empowered to help these students.

- 97% of teachers reported improvements in lesson planning, using teaching aids and assessing students’ learning



Key Projects

Scaling-up innovative Gender, Inclusion and Safeguarding Approaches in Education: Evidence from Malawi, Uganda and Ethiopia 2024-2026; £745,000

Research to understand how to scale up gender interventions

Climate Just Communities 2023-2025; £650,000

Build resilience in schools and communities to adapt to and manage climate change

Transformational Empowerment of Adolescent Marginalised Girls in Malawi 2018 - 2023; £7,700,000

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

Reaching Our Goals 2021 - 2023; £200,000

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

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

Areas of operation

- Dedza
- Lilongwe
- Mchinji
- Neno



“TEAM Girl Malawi taught me that educating a girl child is key to changing our communities.”

Community leader



Supporting girls' education



Supporting girls' education

Foundational learning supported by strengthening social and emotional skills are key drivers of Link's girls' education work. Our UKAid-funded project addressed multiple intersecting barriers faced by extremely disadvantaged girls in gaining a quality education. Our inclusive accelerated learning and lifeskills programme offered a route into mainstream education, vocational training, or employment. Highlights from the endline evaluation showed:

- 77% can now read and write
- 77% have functional numeracy skills
- 74% of learners have stronger lifeskills ¹
- 88% of girls reported that their participation had improved their future



“I have been inspired that I can do anything, this school gave me the opportunity to know about child rights and where to report and also I have learned how to read and write.”

Girl learner



Building climate resilience

Link is working with schools, communities, youth groups and climate networks to build the resilience of schools, enabling them better to prepare for disasters and adapt to climate events. We will prioritise the needs of the most marginalised community members and support them to advocate for climate justice and local equity.

Lifeskills

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 showed:

- 13% increase in attendance, with over 50% 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
- 20% increase in parents reporting positive attitudes to gender equality

Strengthening and scaling systems



Working with the Ministry of Education, Link supported development of Malawi's first National Education Standards and a scalable school improvement model that leads to evidence-based School Improvement Plans. 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 our girls' education project has informed development of an inclusive Complementary Basic Education (CBE) model which has been shared with government to guide scale-up. In addition, research funded by GPE will unpack how and why governments scale-up some gender and social inclusion interventions.

Inclusive education support

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

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



“The TEAM Girl Malawi Project changed my parents' view of inclusive education completely. They now believe in me that despite my physical disability, I can become an influential person one-day.”

Girl learner



Participatory community engagement

Exploring 'who's missing' from school-community decision-making enabled Link to develop a participatory and inclusive systems 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. 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



Key Projects

Digital support for school leaders and district inspectors

2024; £20,000

Training in digitally utilising school improvement data

Social Emotional Learning, Buliisa

2023–2024; £45,000

Developing and delivering teacher training materials with the Ministry of Education and Sport

School Transformation Through Enriching Accountability and Resilience

2018 – 2022; \$1,350,000

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, 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

Districts worked in

- Buliisa
- Hoima
- Masindi
- Katakwi
- Kikuube
- Wakiso
- Kampala



Building resilience and wellbeing in learners



With the government, Link is piloting a social emotional learning project to increase the lifeskills of vulnerable youth in western Uganda. Senior female and male teachers are trained to manage Teen Clubs which will:

- Build confidence, develop relationship skills, and support emotional management in adolescent girls and boys
- The eight-week course also offers basic financial literacy knowledge

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 evidence-based, 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.

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, education was improved for 54,290 children. Messaging via 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, the addition of a female teacher to an all-male teaching body, and improvements to the school environment

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. We adapted the Early Grade Reading Assessment for two local languages and raised awareness of the value of reading. A key highlight:

- 20 hours of individual support for early years' teachers in rural schools significantly improved 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 woodlots and school gardens.

Link Education's structure and governance

Link Education is made up of four 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's national teams build strong relationships with governments, communities and schools and co-design and deliver quality and scalable education programmes. Link Education International (LEI) provides technical support and capacity strengthening in governance and finance, monitoring, evaluation and learning, programme design, safeguarding and communications.

Link has developed a strong, lean organisation with a robust governance and risk management framework and capacity strengthening approach. 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.



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