



**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR BASELINE STUDY ON SCALING -UP INNOVATIVE GENDER
INCLUSION AND SAFEGUARDING APPROACHES: EVIDENCE FROM MALAWI, UGANDA AND
ETHIOPIA - EXTERNAL CONSULTANT**

Introduction

The Scaling-up innovative Gender, Inclusion and Safeguarding Approaches: Evidence from Malawi, Uganda and Ethiopia is a 36-months (2024-2027) project to address issues related to the barriers faced by children, particularly girls, in accessing and completing school, as well as in achieving the expected learning and active participation when they are there. This work is supported by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) a joint endeavour with the International Development Research Centre, Canada. It is implemented by consortium of Five organizations consisting of Link Community Development Malawi (LCDM), Link Education International (LEI), Link Community Development Uganda and Link Education Ethiopia (LEE), the Centre for Educational Research and Training (CERT) of the University of Malawi, and the Robert Owen Centre (ROC) for Educational Change in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow, with financial support from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and International Development Research Centre (IDRC). Link Community Development Malawi will lead the consortium.

Since 2006, Link Community Development Malawi (LCDM) has been a nationally registered Civil Society Organization (CSO) with independent legal status and has co-designed, led and managed numerous education projects that focus on gender and inclusion with multi-million-dollar funding from bilateral and multilateral bodies, and with experience leading international consortia. Link Malawi works in partnership with government structures including national and district government offices, communities and schools, to strengthen quality and equitable sustainable systems. LCDM works in close collaboration with Link Education International (LEI), based in Edinburgh, Link Education Ethiopia and Link Community Development in Uganda. These Link partners are independently constituted and together make up the Link Education organization.

Established in 1991, CERT is the primary Malawian institution that determines, develops, undertakes and disseminates educational research to relevant stakeholders nationally and globally. CERT also specialises in collaborative research and develops needs-based training programmes for education stakeholders. A specialist focus area in CERT's research is 'equity', specifically gender and girls' education, inclusive education, and equitable access to education. CERT will lead the research, training, capacity strengthening and support the knowledge dissemination across the project.

RoC aims to promote more equitable education systems through research based on effective models of partnership working, distributed leadership and participant empowerment and has a strong commitment to working with professionals from multiple and diverse educational practice backgrounds to develop local and embedded approaches that make a tangible difference to learners from marginalised backgrounds. ROC brings expertise from within the Network for Social and Educational Equity which builds on approaches that have a track record for improving outcomes for disadvantaged learners. ROC will provide external support and international best practice.

LCDM will draw on the expertise and experience from the wider Link Education group (with offices in Ethiopia, Uganda and Edinburgh) where Link interventions in gender, inclusion and safe schools are at various stages of scale-up, from embedded into national policy to initial stages of zonal level engagement and planning. These strong relationships and varying input points will enable consortium partners to build a robust research framework to explore scale up mechanisms. In addition, the consortium has a history of partnership where they have explored the efficacy and sustainability of Link Malawi interventions and currently are evaluating work on gender and inclusion.

Background and Rationale

This project will address issues related to the barriers faced by children, particularly girls, in accessing and completing school, as well as in achieving the expected learning and active participation when they are there. The research proposal underscores that scaling successful innovations in Gender, Equality and Inclusion (GEI) remains a global challenge. Fragility around scale-up may largely be linked to a conundrum of factors including loss of capacity, lack of resourcing or inability by governments to make robust decisions to enable school leaders and teachers to adopt good practices. However, there is a limited knowledge to inform good practices on how to scale up such innovations.

The research project will mobilise evidence across Ethiopia, Malawi and Uganda on how gender equality and inclusion (GEI) scale-up happens including what incentivises or impedes it, contributing to existing international evidence and practice of scale-up of education projects globally. It builds on four interventions previously implemented in the three countries which aim to strengthen GEI and safeguarding in education programming, and each are at varying stages of scale-up by the relevant governments. These include continuing professional development of teachers, school leaders and supervisors; school performance review and improvement planning; national education standards; and community participation. These interventions seek to address the intersecting barriers that girls, children with disabilities and other marginalised children face to acquiring quality education.

The overarching research questions focus on the factors which influence government decisions to scale-up specific interventions, on the quality of interventions carried out after the end of the initial support to pilot the innovations, and on how scale-up can be improved in the future. This knowledge will be mobilised and disseminated to key education policy makers in the three

countries to influence the practice of scale-up by governments and education development partners.

Purpose and Objectives of the Project

The general objective of the project is to contribute to the understanding and improvement of scale-up practices of GEI-focused education innovations at local, regional, and international levels. Specifically, the project aims to:

- To generate knowledge that contributes to a broader understanding of the factors of scale-up innovations on gender equality and inclusion to guide stakeholders, including policymakers and other researchers.
- To design specific tools (guidelines) and train education stakeholders, principally staff from the Ministries of Education, on best practices of GEI scale-up strengthening capacity.
- To mobilise knowledge on best practices of GEI innovation scale-up to improve education policy and practice.

The project baseline study data is structured to serve as a benchmark for monitoring and evaluating the project's progress towards achieving its outcomes. It also aims to offer pertinent recommendations for revising the project's decision making in achieving the three specific project objectives.

- To provide a better understanding of the implementation contexts by generating knowledge on the factors that affect scale-up of GEI- focused interventions to inform the design of the propose scale-up research study.
- To help establish baselines for project indicators in the project monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MEL) plan, suggesting necessary revisions as needed.
- To support the validation of the assumptions in the project's Theory of Change (ToC).
- To provide recommendations for the development, updating and implementation of the project's monitoring, evaluation, research and learning (MERL) plan.

This evaluation is part of a process of feedback and learning as it is intending to inform tool development and research design for the study of scale up GEI innovations implemented by Link in Malawi, Ethiopia and Uganda. The evaluation will also set standards that would be used to measure any changes in approach to scale up that has taken place across all 3 countries (through 30 interventions). More country-specific information on these interventions, including past evaluation reports are available on request from LCDM.

Scope of the Baseline Study

The external evaluator will be responsible for the design of the baseline, data collection of both quantitative and qualitative data in the three target countries of the Link projects namely Malawi, Uganda and Ethiopia, analysis and report writing.

The scope of the baseline study involves but is not limited to the following responsibilities:

- Inception report – design methodology and workplan, and contingency planning in case of emergencies.
- Lead and coordinate the team of enumerators and the study.
- Development of data collection teams
- Use of data collection tools and assure quality control
- Data analysis (meta-analysis) – incorporating findings from the baseline data collections in all three countries to initiate a final consolidated study report.
- Presentation to validate baseline data findings
- Develop a brief publishable report of the main findings and case studies, and clear recommendations.
- Prepare a comprehensive report for GESI scale-up with clear recommendations.

Approach and Methodology

The overarching methodological framework for this baseline is mixed-methods. However, the external evaluator is expected to define a more detailed methodological approach in the proposal that is consistent with the above prescribed parameters and also present it during the inception phase of this evaluation.

- The study should consciously apply qualitative and quantitative research methods that are gender and youth-sensitive, and engage as much as possible in participatory approaches;
- The geographic scope of the study will be aligned with the targeted areas, schools, households and individuals targeted by the project as laid out in the project description;
- The data collection approaches and specific tools used to establish indicator baselines should be adapted to the local contexts in the three countries, to assure the appropriateness and reliability of the data collected.

The external evaluator will be expected to review country-specific data from existing Link’s interventions in Malawi, Ethiopia and Uganda to determine current level of scale-up, to achieve the following:

- Assess the progress of scale-up of TEAM Girl Malawi interventions beyond initial government interest;
- Examine how the gender transformative indicators in the government’s Basic Requirement Minimum Standards for schools were incorporated into the school performance review tools and inclusion disaggregated data was generated for school improvement planning using data from the STEAR II program in Uganda; and
- Assess scalability of the STAGES project using data from four interventions that are being implemented in Ethiopia.

Evaluation Questions

The external evaluator will review baseline status of each of the selected interventions across Link interventions in Malawi, Ethiopia and Uganda. The evaluation questions are presented in matrix below:

Evaluation Questions

Scalability Assessment Factors	Questions
Resource availability-Financial resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were financial resources available? • Were there any challenges faced in scaling up the intervention?
Organizational capacity-Capacity strengthening: the ability of the implementing organization(s) to manage expanded operations, including human resources, infrastructure and logistical capabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the intervention include training and development programs for staff, local staff, and other personnel? • Was there availability of necessary infrastructure (physical and material resources that support educational activities) for the success of the intervention?
Stakeholder engagement (Focus on community engagement, partnerships with local governments, NGOs and other organizations)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did the project involve local communities (community leaders, students and their families) in its implementation? • Does the intervention have networks with local governments and other organizations (such as schools, educational institutions and NGOs supporting education)?
Policy and regulatory environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any national or local policies that support the scale up of the intervention? • Did the objectives of the intervention align with national priorities?
Monitoring and evaluation	Does the intervention have robust systems for tracking progress and outcomes?

Key Activities, Deliverables, Timelines

Deliverable	Timeline
Inception report with detailed methodological approach and data collection tools submitted electronically and presented to consortium	15 th August, 2024
Data collection in three countries	Aug to September, 2024
Draft baseline report submitted to LCDM	Mid-October 2024
Final baseline report submitted to LCDM	31 st October 2024

The baseline evaluation study is expected to involve three key phases namely:

1. Contracting.
2. Inception.

3. Data collection, data analysis, and final report.

The study is expected to take at least four months from July – October 2024. The matrix below shows the expected activities, timelines for deliverables:

Contracting Phase	Inception Phase	Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Report Writing
Key Activities, Main Data Collection Tools, and Milestones		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant shortlisting • Selection and contract consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study inception meeting to confirm understanding of the assignment. • Study literature and document review. • Stakeholder consultations with all project teams (Malawi, Ethiopia, Uganda) on the methodological details of the study as well as all the data collection tools. • Draft and submission of inception report. • Submission of the ethical protocols, as required by the project and relevant national authorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification, recruitment, and comprehensive training of enumerators, ensuring they are well-equipped for the tasks ahead. • Meticulous data collection in each country, which may include data entry as required (Consultant to oversee this phase to guarantee the integrity and quality of the data gathered). • Conduct thorough data analysis, culminating in the determination of baseline indicators for each outcome indicator within the MERL plan. • Prepare and submit a draft baseline report for review. • Include feedback received from the consortium, refine, and submit final report version for approval, marking the completion of this critical phase.
Phase-Specific Deliverables		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract signing. 	Develop and submit an inception report encompass: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a comprehensive methodology, outlining the approach for data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A final baseline report meticulously updated to include a comprehensive baseline indicators for each outcome indicator

	<p>gathering and analysis, along with its inherent limitations to ensure transparency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the data collection instruments employed, ensuring they are tailored to capture the necessary metrics effectively. • a meticulous workplan presented for each country, incorporating detailed scenarios and a contingency plan responsive to the potential country specific impacts of emergencies. • the development of a robust training protocol for enumerators, complete with educational materials, and culminate in the execution of the training sessions to equip the enumerators with the skills required for accurate data collection. 	<p>within the MERL plan, outlining the limitations encountered with the methodology employed in the study, ensuring transparency and accountability, provides insightful recommendations on enhancing the measurability of the indicators, which will facilitate more effective monitoring and evaluation, and it captures the valuable lessons learned throughout each phase of the data collection exercise, which will inform the project research and data gathering endeavors, thereby strengthening the overall impact of the project research study.</p>
Tentative Deadlines for Deliverables		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June/July 2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15th August 2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31st October 2024

Guiding Principles and Values

The consortium underscores the important thematic values of Intersectionality, Safeguarding and Ethical research conduct in the implementation of projects including this baseline study.

Ethical Standards

The evaluators is expected to among others ensure and uphold the following:

Participant Consent: Prior to the commencement of any data collection activities, it is imperative to obtain documented participant consent from all participants involved in the study. This includes providing clear and comprehensive information about the purpose of the study, the nature of participation required, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

Non-rewarding / voluntary participation: Participation in the baseline study should be voluntary, without any form of coercion or undue influence. Participants should be assured that their decision to participate or decline will not affect their access to any services or benefits.

Participant Confidentiality and non-disclosure: All collected data must be treated with utmost confidentiality, ensuring that personal information is anonymized and stored securely. Only authorized personnel should have access to identifiable data, and it should only be used for the purposes outlined in the study protocol.

Do No Harm: Efforts should be made to minimize any potential harm of any form - physical, psychological, social, or economic to participants throughout the duration of the study. This includes implementing appropriate measures to mitigate risks, providing support services if necessary, and promptly addressing any adverse events that may arise.

Ethical conduct: all effort shall be made for researchers or anyone acting on behalf of this research undertaking to behavior that aligns with accepted moral principles and standards, acting in a manner that is fair, honest, respectful, and responsible towards others.

Respect: Cultural differences among participants should be acknowledged and respected. Researchers must be mindful of local customs, traditions, and beliefs, ensuring that study procedures are conducted in a culturally sensitive manner. Collaboration with community leaders and stakeholders can help ensure that the study is conducted in a culturally appropriate and respectful manner.

Conflict of Interest: Researchers should disclose any potential conflicts of interest that may arise from the study, including financial interests, affiliations, or personal relationships that could influence the conduct or outcome of the research. Transparency in reporting and decision-making processes is essential to maintaining the integrity and credibility of the study.

These may not be exhaustive ethical considerations for the research, but by adhering to these ethical considerations, the baseline study aims to uphold the principles of respect, ethical conduct, justice, and integrity, thereby ensuring the welfare and rights of all participants involved.

Logistics

The consultant will hire and manage all enumerators and organize all logistics for the data collection.

Minimum Requirements

The consultant must possess the following qualifications and experience:

- Must demonstrate a minimum of 10 years of experience in administering studies, collecting data and producing quality baseline/end line study reports, in education and for international non-profit organizations or multilateral agencies.

- Advanced experience in designing baseline and end line studies including proven experience in sound sampling, gender sensitive research methods, mixed methods approach (quantitative and qualitative), data collection tool development, enumerator training, etc.
- Proven facilitation skills and ability to recruit and manage enumerators for both the quantitative and qualitative components, in the three countries of the study (either in person or remotely).
- Demonstrated experience in quantitative and qualitative data analysis.
- Excellent knowledge and experience with education policies in Malawi, Ethiopia, Uganda will be considered an asset.
- Excellent knowledge and experience with multisectoral approach to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion programs.
- Knowledge and experience in gender equality issues in the education sector is mandatory; specific experience in data collection on gender norms is desirable.
- Fluency in English is mandatory and other relevant languages an asset.
- Demonstrated capacity to respect and safeguard vulnerable populations.
- Capacity to set priorities, organize, plan, and production and delivery of high-quality work under tight timeframes.

Structure of the Proposal and Submission Guidelines

The consortium is seeking the services of an external evaluator to conduct a baseline study of the project in Malawi, Ethiopia and Uganda. We invite applications from suitably qualified evaluators/researchers to submit proposals for the baseline evaluation.

Qualified and interested parties are asked to submit the following:

1. **Detailed technical proposal** (8 to 9 pages maximum) clearly demonstrating a thorough understanding of this ToR and including the following:
 - a. Description of the Capacity and qualifications of the consulting firm, including previous relevant experience (2 pages).
 - b. Description of the proposed approach and methodology, including sampling strategy, data analysis, integration of gender, inclusion and safeguarding considerations and ethical standards, quality assurance (4 pages).
 - c. A proposed schedule/work plan (i.e. a Gantt chart), including contingency planning for emergencies (1 page).
 - d. Team composition and level of effort of each proposed team member (1 page).
2. **Financial proposal** (in US\$) with a detailed breakdown of costs for the study:
 - a. Itemized consultancy fees/costs.
 - b. Itemized field data collection expenses.
 - c. Itemized administrative expenses.
 - d. Validity period of quotations.
 - e. Expected payment plan and method.

3. **Curriculum Vitae** of all proposed team members outlining relevant experience (max 1 page per CV).
4. Names and contact information of three references who can be contacted regarding relevant experience.
5. A sample copy of a previous report of similar work undertaken.

All proposals should be submitted electronically to the following email address: recruitment@linkedmalawi.org Please submit 2 separate emails: "Technical Proposal from...*(name)*" and "Financial Proposals from ...*(name)*" respectively and indicate in the email title line. For any further enquires please contact recruitment@linkedmalawi.org, and indicate "enquiry" as part of the email title. All enquiries should be received by 26th June 2024, responses will be published on our website by 28th June 2024. **The deadline for submitting proposals is 5th July 2024 by 8am CAT.**