

Girls'
Education
Challenge



Thematic Review

Community Based Awareness, Attitudes and Behaviour

March 2018

GEC Thematic Reviews

This paper is one of a series of thematic reviews produced by the Fund Manager of the Girls' Education Challenge, an alliance led by PwC, working with organisations including FHI 360, Nathan Associates and Social Development Direct.

The full series of papers is listed below:

- Understanding and Addressing Educational Marginalisation
Part 1: A new conceptual framework for educational marginalisation
- Understanding and Addressing Educational Marginalisation
Part 2: Educational marginalisation in the GEC
- Economic Empowerment Interventions
- Community based Awareness, Attitudes and Behaviour
- Addressing School Violence
- Girls' Self-Esteem
- Extra and Co-Curricular Interventions
- Educational Technology
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- School Governance

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Executive summary

The Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) was set up to support improved attendance and learning for up to one million marginalised girls and has provided the opportunity to develop evidence on what works in girls' education. Overall across a number of GEC projects, evidence was found of communities' motivation, investment and commitment to educate their children, for example donating land, raising funds for bursaries and increasing their workload to pay for school fees. In general, GEC projects have not found communities are opposed to the principle of girls' education, but that their support interacts with other norms that can make it harder for girls to attend school and learn. In particular, there is a perceived (or actual) low return for the family as the investment is sometimes considered to be lost when girls get married.

Many GEC projects have built on a global evidence base focussed on enabling girls to access education by addressing community attitudes and behaviour. The evidence suggests that interventions are most effective when they are systematic, contextually and culturally appropriate, and when they have wide community engagement, dialogue, transparency and accountability. There is also some evidence to suggest that mothers are particularly important in girls' education, especially in sustaining progress made.

In the first phase of the GEC programme, 31 projects components relating to community based awareness, attitudes and behaviour. These included interventions through media; community meetings; working with men and boys; working with faith based groups and traditional leaders; providing adult literacy classes; conducting household level visits; and providing support through volunteers. Most projects implemented two or more of these components.

The main findings across the portfolio from projects who have explored this component in their endlines include:

1. There are a number of links between attitude and behavioural change interventions and improved attendance and learning
2. A multi-component strategy is effective in engaging communities to support girls' attendance, but more needs to be done to instil attitudes and behaviours that support learning
3. Measuring change in attitude and behaviours is complex and can be challenging, especially because it often relies on self-reported change. More specific measures of behaviours and attitudes are needed to establish clear links between learning and/or attendance and changes in community attitudes and behaviours.

An emphasis is placed on important learning points, such as a need for more detailed insight into how targeting community attitudes and behaviours on their own can affect learning, attendance and retention of girls; and for greater understanding of how to acknowledge and address significant pushback in some communities related to the primary focus on girls.

There are several key considerations for practitioners and policy makers in light of the literature and GEC findings; projects implementing community interventions should target the most prevalent and relevant attitudes and behaviours rather than generic ones, and projects should be prepared to adapt activities where required, recognising that norms are affected by changes in context and power dynamics.

1. Introduction

Many Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) projects' Theory of Change included some assumptions about prevailing norms and attitudes held by parents/guardians, family members and other community members which can influence girls' ability to access education. This paper gives an overview of the evidence around the influence of community attitudes, including the GEC baseline findings which challenged some of these assumptions, and maps the approaches used by GEC projects to influence attitudes and behaviours in support of girls' education. These approaches span media activities, working with faith-based groups and traditional leaders, involving men and boys, holding community meetings, adult literacy interventions, providing household-level visits and support, and implementing activities involving women's and parents' groups.

Due to the multi-faceted nature of projects in the first phase of the GEC, and the predominant evaluation focus on literacy, numeracy and attendance outcomes, there are limitations to the causal links and attribution which can be established between specific interventions (e.g. on influencing community attitudes and behaviours) and each project's outcomes. A detailed analysis is also limited by the fact that most projects focused on assessing broad support or recognition of the importance of girls' education, rather than specific attitudes or behaviours linked to different types of interventions. As such, this paper focuses on identifying potential contributions of these types of interventions to GEC outcomes, and draws out key lessons and best practice emerging in relation to the design and delivery of them.

The GEC was set up to support improved attendance and learning outcomes for girls, and the fund provided an opportunity for gendered programming to address educational and social norms that prevent girls' inclusion and access to a quality education. Evidence suggests that addressing and changing these social norms is a key enabler of girls' equal access and progression in education. In turn, a greater number of educated girls in the community can be a necessary lever for greater gender equality that leads to greater numbers of girls entering and progressing through school.

Across a number of GEC projects, communities' motivation, investment and commitment to educate their children was clear. Donating land, raising funds for bursaries and increasing their own workload to pay for school fees and free up girls' time from household chores were clear examples of this. In the vast majority of GEC projects, it was found that the primary barrier to children being in school was poverty, and that attitudes affecting girls' education are mostly related to a perceived or actual low return for the family rather than a general lack of support for girls' education in principle. Where gender-specific barriers to girls' access to education remain, however, they are likely to start in the home and the community as norms and attitudes held by parents/guardians, family members and other community members¹. Given their significant influence on girls' ability to access education, these norms, attitudes and behaviours are a significant factor making up the 'enabling environment'² for girls'

¹ Norms and attitudes of teachers, school management and peers; and norms and attitudes related to policy and systems level change are also a critical part of the enabling environment, and these are explored further in the 'GEC Thematic Paper: Teaching and Learning' and 'GEC Thematic Paper: School Governance' respectively. Although not a social norm, girls attitudes related to their own enrolment, attendance and learning achievement is also a crucial area for exploration, and is discussed in the 'GEC Thematic Paper: Girls' Self Esteem'.

² 'Enabling environment' is a term used in a range of contexts, however for the purposes of this paper it is based on DFID's conceptualisation of a 'positive enabling environment' as part of its *Strategic Vision for Girls and Women*. It refers to conditions

education. Consequently, working with communities to address attitudes and behaviours affecting girls' education was a core component in a large number of GEC project designs. These components also play a role in supporting project delivery, for example, through working with community volunteers and ensuring activities had their support thus avoiding resistance or backlash. Crucially, work with communities underpins sustainability strategies, which ensure that progress made to encourage more positive community attitudes and behaviour barriers is maintained, in order to benefit others in the future.

GEC projects have sought to achieve social change by working at four different levels:

- Individual level (to affect individuals' knowledge, attitudes and beliefs)
- Interpersonal level (targeting family/household, peers, small-scale social networks)
- Community level (influencing social networks more broadly)
- Institutional level (policies and informal structures which influence attitudes and behaviours), and, working to influence policies and systems at all levels of government.

In this paper, we consider a number of successful interventions implemented by GEC projects which target some aspects of the 'enabling environment' beyond the school setting to influence attitudes and behaviour change affecting girls' success in education. This includes working at the interpersonal and community levels to raise awareness of the importance of girls' education, and identifying and targeting attitudes and behaviours which hinder girls' enrolment, attendance and learning. Specific prevailing attitudes and behaviours that projects have sought to influence at these levels include:

- A tendency to prioritise boys' education due to the perceived low return on investing in girls' education (and the opportunity cost of sending girls to school as opposed to them marrying or working in the home)
- Low aspirations for girls
- Traditional, cultural or religious beliefs that deem girls ineligible for education
- Exclusion of particular groups of girls, e.g. girls with disabilities

Projects have sought to achieve change through a range of interventions including media activities; working with faith-based groups and traditional leaders; involving men and boys; holding community meetings; providing adult literacy interventions; conducting household-level visits and support; and implementing activities involving women's and parents' groups.

required for greater, more effective action to sustainably transform girls and women's lives. It is an environment where e.g. discrimination against women and girls is challenged, the value attributed to girls and women by society is increased, an effective legal framework which protects girls' and women's rights is built, the ability of girls and women to make informed choices and control decisions affecting them is increased, women's ability to participate in politics is strengthened, and political commitment to services and opportunities for girls and women is sustained (DFID, 2011)

2. Overview of the community attitudes and behaviour discourse

The current evidence base for what works to change community attitudes and behaviour is weighted towards how changes in norms or behaviour components of education programming can encourage girls to enrol in or attend school. The focus tends to be on the process of engaging stakeholders through media campaigns and community meetings, for example. There is less focus on the pathways through which gender equality in education can go beyond individual empowerment of girls to support broader social norm and behaviour change to reinforce and sustain women's empowerment. Research suggests that interventions are most effective when they are systemic, contextually and culturally appropriate, and when they have wide community engagement, dialogue, transparency and accountability (Fancy and McAslan Fraser, 2014). There is some evidence to suggest that mothers are particularly important in girls' education, especially to sustain progress made (Sperling and Winthrop, 2015). However, the impact of this is often hard to distil because engagement, outreach and advocacy strategies tend to be part of a larger package (ibid). A further limitation of the evidence base is that unless community engagement is specifically targeted at improving girls' education outcomes, studies tend not to discuss its impact on girls specifically.

Conceptualising attitude and behaviour change

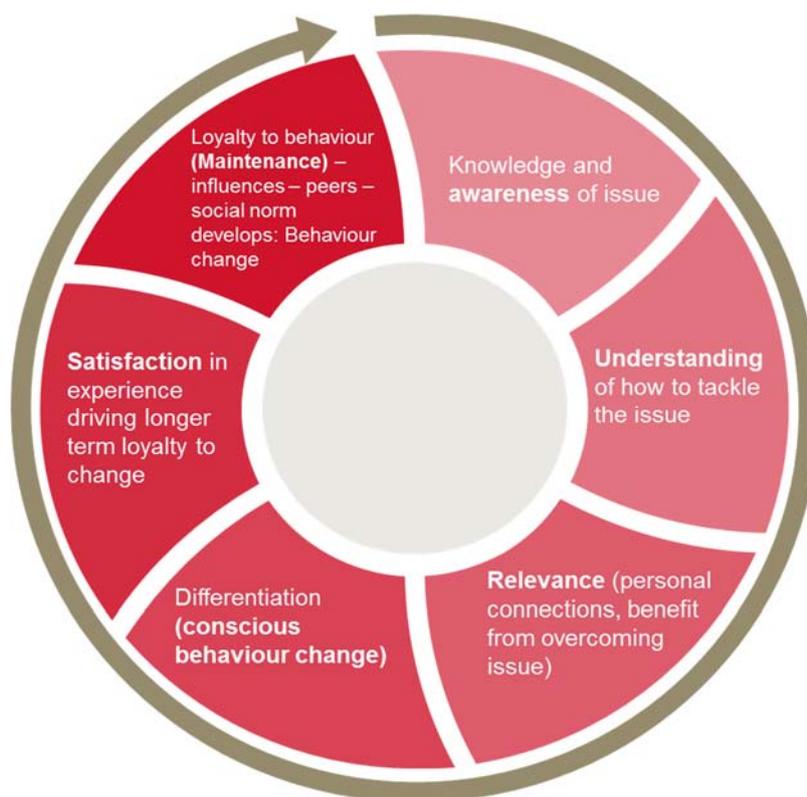
Individuals do not just act upon their own beliefs but are influenced by a range of norms which surround them, things which are collectively perceived to be 'normal' or 'expected', or that others in their social networks, such as family, friends, colleagues (commonly referred to as a reference group³) expect. Evidence suggests that when norms are at play, shifting knowledge or individual attitudes is often not enough to change behaviour, because norms are generally enforced through other people's expectations. People conform their attitudes or behaviours to gain social approval and belonging and if individuals divert from a norm, they often lose social approval and may be ostracised or sanctioned. As a result, interventions looking to change behaviours must create new beliefs within an individual's social group so that collective expectations allow for new behaviours to emerge and be sustained (Heise and Manji, 2016).

A key challenge in encouraging attitude and behaviour change is to diagnose the matrix of related factors keeping behaviours in place. Most practices are maintained through a combination of structural (e.g. laws, conflict dynamics), material (e.g. access to resources), social (e.g. norms and networks), and individual (e.g. attitudes, self-efficacy) factors, which can effectively act as a 'brake' on social change. Social change strategies must, therefore, critically assess which norms are to be addressed in a given context, and determine which factors are most pertinent in holding them in place. It is helpful at this point to distinguish between two types of social norms (Cialdini, 1998): descriptive norms - doing what others do; and injunctive norms - doing what others think one should do. These are distinct from personal norms which are about internal motivation related to one's own self-concept, (Mackie et al., 2015).

³ A formal or informal group for which membership may be based on e.g. shared interests, goals or an identity such as ethnic group. Individuals' own norms, attitudes and behaviours are influenced by a comparison with other members of a reference group, and the perceptions of what they believe others do and what (they think) others expect them to do. This means that social norms are held in place by the reciprocal expectations and actions of members of a reference group (Mackie et al. 2015).

Supporting the development of agency at the individual level (the ability to make decisions about one’s own life and act on the outcomes), is another crucial factor for supporting social change. Programming focused on the empowerment of girls and women to help them build aspirations and self-efficacy and challenging the status quo is an example of this approach. See ‘GEC Thematic Paper: Girls’ Self Esteem’ for more information. Literature on behaviour and social norm change generally considers norm change to occur along a sequenced set of steps, as outlined in Figure 1. However, there is currently little agreement about the duration or the intensity needed for an intervention to bring about behaviour change. Indeed, this is likely to be highly context specific and therefore approaches need to be informed by a process of critical and, crucially, participatory, community diagnosis and assessment before interventions begin.

Figure 1: GEC conceptual framework of attitude and behaviour change



Use of media (radio, TV, advertising)

Using media can be an effective tool to quickly and widely disseminate messages, including those supporting girls’ education. The Overseas Development Institute (ODI), in a review of programmes involving communication components⁴, found that communication activities are an effective way to challenge gender-discriminatory attitudes and practices; programmes which employed more than one communication component achieved a greater proportion of positive outcomes, as did integrated programmes which employed other non-communication

⁴ Based on a review of 61 programmes which integrated some form of communication components and a multi-year, multi-country study on adolescent girls (*Transforming the Lives of Adolescent Girls* research, which explores complex ways in which adolescent girls’ capabilities are shaped and/or constrained by gender-discriminatory social norms, attitudes and practices, and under what conditions positive changes may be brought about, particularly around norms and practices related to child marriage and education); cf. Marcus and Page, 2014 and Marcus with Harper, 2014

activities. Best practice examples of activities working towards social change include radio and TV dramas featuring sympathetic characters who provide new factual information on the issue, as well as community dialogue-based events to create spaces for reflection about key issues. However, few studies provided analysis of project contexts or insight into how socio-economic inequalities affected programme success or the sustainability of changes achieved. This constitutes a notable gap in knowledge and a challenge for making programming more effective in the future. Evidence from well-designed interventions illustrates that the most successful interventions develop and deliver sophisticated television/radio programming and communications combined with community mobilisation strategies (Alexander-Scott et al., 2015).

Community meetings

Community meetings are often used for involving community members in an intervention, as they can help reach many people at once, mitigate potential resistance and ensure that progress is maintained beyond a project's lifetime (Fulu et al., 2014; Marcus and Page, 2014). Meetings are a good entry-point for creating space for reflection and mobilisation around messaging on the acceptability of certain norms including those related to education. Alexander-Scott et al. (2015) outline how using 'change agents' (community members who already display the desired attitudes and behaviours) can encourage change by creating opportunities for dialogue about how others have changed their attitudes, increase understanding about the negative impacts of existing norms, address fears around engaging in a new practice, and support communities in bringing about collective change. Schensul et al. (2015) argue that it is important that particular care is taken to reach both men and women, as they both play a role in upholding or perpetuating norms and are key decision makers in some realms. In addition, there is evidence that it can be more challenging to sustain participation and achieve changes for initiatives which target the community in contexts where the sense of 'community' is less defined, e.g. in urban areas where residents are more likely to be mobile and community memberships less cohesive (Alexander-Scott et al., 2015). Finally, monitoring and evaluation processes tend to only measure attitude and self-reported behaviour change rather than social norm change, which limits the evidence of the effectiveness of these types of interventions.

Working with men and boys

Although all members of society play a role in upholding or renegotiating norms through their attitudes and behaviours, it is often men (particularly household heads, community and political leaders) who are the status quo 'gatekeepers' and make decisions regarding resource allocation, including on schooling. As such, the importance of engaging men and boys when working to influence attitudes and behaviour cannot be over-emphasised. There is an increasing mandate for this within development policy and programming approaches, with a shared commitment⁵ providing a clear set of statements urging full inclusion of men and boys in efforts to achieve gender equality (Holden, 2015). Broadly speaking, evidence on interventions working with men and boys is at an early stage in both scope and scale, with rigorous evaluations often absent, limited methods used or showing mixed results (Ricardo et

⁵ In 2014, over 1200 activists/professionals from 94 countries attended the second MenEngage Global Symposium in New Delhi to discuss the complexity and diversity of gender justice issues. The outcome was the Delhi Declaration and Call to Action. (Men and Boys for Gender Justice, 2014).

al., 2011). Rigorous measurement of longer term impact on behavioural outcomes is weak. Some other gaps include: knowledge about which men to engage, why and how; a specific focus on change in behaviour rather than attitudes; and research on multi-pronged community interventions and the benefits of combining different approaches. On girls' education, Unterhalter et al. (2014) called for more research on what impact initiatives working with boys on gender equality can have on girls' participation in school and their learning.

Working with faith-based groups and traditional leaders

Obtaining buy-in from supportive religious, traditional and opinion leaders is an effective way to ensure project interventions are contextually and culturally appropriate. They can reach out to community members through existing forums, and their influence can help identify and dispel fears or myths around issues. While broadly speaking such involvement of leaders is an often-used approach to achieve community engagement, it is important that this is effectively contextualised to ensure relevance and appropriateness. Context-specific information, particularly understanding exactly who these leaders are, their level of influence, the nature of their interactions with each other and other stakeholders, and the structures they operate in, is often difficult to obtain and efforts should be made at an early stage to start gathering it. Many project evaluations do not detail 'how' they engaged with communities and so information on these processes is lacking. However, from the information that is available, insights would benefit from a deeper level of contextualisation, including on local power relations, gender norms and related religious and cultural aspects (including sensitivities, potential resistance, opportunities). Another major research gap is a lack of evidence about impact; on girls' education specifically, a rigorous review by Unterhalter et al. (2014) highlighted that more research is needed on what impact engagement with faith communities has on girls' participation in school.

Adult literacy

The links between positive parental attitudes and education levels, particularly mothers, towards their children's education are well documented (e.g. UNICEF, 2015; Schultz, 2002). A DFID funded family learning project in Uganda responded to requests from parents for literacy lessons, using existing infrastructure to prompt new community-wide initiatives in support of learning. This resulted in improved school attendance and retention (DFID, 2008). Adult literacy is also pertinent to the perceived or actual capacity for parents to engage in school parent committees (see section on activities involving women's groups and parents' groups).

Household level visits and support

Household level visits are a common methodological tool in initiatives seeking to influence community attitudes and behaviour. There are a number of studies which show their effectiveness on behaviour change, particularly in relation to health and sanitation initiatives (e.g. Behailu et al., 2010). In the sphere of education, this method appears to be most commonly used to create discussion with heads of households about the potential of otherwise excluded children, such as children with disabilities. Miles et al. (2011) showed how engaging the parents of deaf children in Uganda resulted in a substantial change in community attitudes towards educating this marginalised group. Once households are engaged in their children's education, home support visits from school or community staff or volunteers, for example, to

promote reading and homework corners, can also reinforce newly positive attitudes (Pritchard, 2005). There is scope for further research to explore the usefulness of household level visits in changing attitudes and behaviour towards the education of marginalised girls, specifically.

Activities involving women's and parents' groups

Community-based and school linked groups of women and parents can influence attitudes and behaviour in the community. A rigorous review undertaken by Unterhalter et al. (2014) highlights promising evidence that involving women in community mobilisation and leadership has an effect on girls' participation in schooling and can have a positive impact on girls' learning and girls' confidence. A 2014 systematic review of community accountability and empowerment interventions, and the link with educational outcomes, highlighted that interventions are more likely to engender higher levels of community participation when school leaders and teachers actively support, promote and resource this participation (Westhorp, 2014).

3. Community attitudes and behaviour interventions in the GEC

Conceptualising attitude and behaviour change in the GEC

For the purposes of the GEC, we suggest a practical conceptual framework which highlights the 'virtuous cycle' as it relates to girls' education (Figure 1, above). This framework acknowledges that the relationship between girls' education and behaviour change is a two-way change process. Firstly, changes in norms and behaviours which influence the perceived (or actual) value of educating girls are necessary to enable girls to go to school in the immediate term. Then, as girls and young women gain increasing levels of education and greater access to economic opportunities, this in turn plays a particular role in changing norms and social relations and can challenge what is considered 'normal' or 'expected' behaviour, contributing to wider change, including that which supports gender equality. From this perspective, investments which the GEC is making in girls' education now may contribute to important change in terms of wider societal norms and behaviours in the future.

Theory of Change

Working with communities to address negative attitudes and behaviours which hinder girls' education constitutes a core component of most GEC projects. Parental and community attitudes identified as key barriers to girls' enrolment and completion of school are often related to a low attributed value or few expected returns from girls' education, as well as negative attitudes relating to girls or women leaving the home environment or working. However, in some cases it was also linked to other factors, such as concerns for girls' safety.

One key assumption made by projects working on parental and community attitudes was that these attitudes or behaviours can be changed within the timeframe of the GEC. In particular, projects envisioned that when community members, including men and boys, parents and community leaders' better understand the returns possible from girls' education (including secondary education) and engage around this, they will support girls to attend and stay in

school. There is some indications that this assumption held out, but in some cases backlash arising from the exclusion of boys in certain areas where the GEC operated shows the need for continued focus.

Overview of the GEC portfolio

In the first phase of the GEC programme, 31 projects implemented programme components relating to community based awareness, attitudes and behaviour. These included interventions through media; community meetings; working with men and boys; working with faith based groups and traditional leaders; providing adult literacy classes; conducting household level visits; and providing support through volunteers. Most projects implemented two or more of these components. Those operating in fragile and conflict-affected states notably implemented a wider range of community-focused components, for example Steps Towards Afghan Girls' Education Success (STAGES) in Afghanistan and Somali Girls Education Promotion Programme (SOMGEP) in Somalia implemented all seven types to some extent.

Definitions of what 'the community' entails vary greatly from project to project, ranging from 'national TV show audiences' to 'small groups of specific parents'. Most often, projects proposed to target parents' or caregivers' attitudes, and to integrate a community focus more broadly. Boys' and girls' attitudes are targeted to a lesser extent at the community level, although student centred activities took place through extra-curricular activities and are discussed in the thematic paper on this topic, specifically.

Attitudinal barriers of some kind were mentioned by all projects in their original proposals and/or Theory of Change, in relation to low expectations of girls' achievement, limited awareness of the value of education, low levels of community support, and the prioritising of early marriage over girls' education. These attitudinal barriers were also researched to some degree in all baselines, though were not found to be as prevalent or as strong as expected in all cases.

Referring back to the two-way change process outlined in the GEC Conceptual Framework, a weighting towards interventions, encouraging attitude and behaviour change to get girls into school in the first place, rather than interventions aimed at maximising the norm-challenging impact of girls going to school (e.g. on greater gender equality) was observed. Some projects attempted to achieve behaviour change quickly through providing financial incentives to help parents send their daughters to school and encourage them to stay there (see 'GEC Thematic Paper: Economic Empowerment' for a deeper discussion on this). However, in order to support long-term attitude and behaviour change aimed at girls' school attendance being given the same priority as that of boys, in subsequent cohorts/generations, more wide-reaching attitude and behaviour change activities are needed. It is important to recognise that even where gendered attitudes might start to shift, poverty remains a major challenge to both boys' and girls' attendance and learning.

4. Key findings

This section explores insights from GEC projects in relation to community attitudes and behaviour change activities, which contributed to girls' enrolment, attendance and learning outcomes. Overall, a key finding across the portfolio is that despite highly positive shifts in attitudes toward girls' education and a clear desire to send girls to school, poverty, limited job markets, and cost-benefit perceptions remain significant barriers. These wider barriers make it difficult for families to see a clear return on investments of time or money, given more immediate challenges of providing sustenance. Sustainability of changes in community attitude and behaviour is likely to require the use of role models and access to evidence of the tangible benefits of girls progressing through education. Influencing attitudes and behaviours of parents and communities will be especially important in the next phase of the GEC as social norms and attitudinal barriers are more likely to increase as girls get older and attitudes about marriage and work come into play.

There are a number of links between attitude and behaviour change interventions and improved attendance and learning

Five GEC projects implementing attitude and behaviour change activities achieved all of their learning and attendance targets, a further 13 achieved literacy targets, 12 numeracy targets and 12 attendance targets. Whilst we cannot make a direct causal link between attitude and behaviour change activities and the achievement of these outcomes, it is reasonable to assume that these interventions contributed. The following gives an overview of the relative success of each of the intervention types:

- **Community meetings:** 18 projects implemented community meetings as an activity. Education Development Trust (EDT) Kenya implemented Community Conversations and STAGES Afghanistan undertook 'social audits' at community meetings to discuss the acceptance of project activities, effectively providing a 'license to operate' in sensitive contexts. Qualitatively, it was found that these kinds of meetings were critical to understanding community attitudes towards the projects as well as highlighting any backlash or do no harm concerns and understanding subtle shifts in attitudes and behaviours. I Choose Life (ICL) Kenya found that daughters of parents who attended community dialogue meetings performed better in school. The proportion of parents reporting that they paid school fees for girls as a result of training or awareness raising increased on average by 30% from baseline to endline. Discovery's evaluation of Nairobi-based beneficiaries found that teachers frequently mentioned the key role of community meetings in reducing absenteeism, for example discussions held on tackling chore burdens and child labour. The evaluation proposed a link between this and significant increases in attendance in the area. Kenya Equity in Education Project (KEEP) saw similar increases in attendance results, and found specifically that this type of meeting was more effective than their media activities.
- **Media:** 13 projects implemented activities that included media targeting either to parents or students using, for example, radio and TV chat shows integrating messages on girls' education. Two of these projects achieved their learning and attendance targets, three achieved literacy targets, and five achieved numeracy and/ or attendance targets. Most projects implementing media activities saw increases in awareness of the importance of

girls' education, support for girls' education and/or other positive attitudes towards girls going to school. For example, STAGES Afghanistan found that the transition of girls to upper-secondary school in one community appeared to have been partly facilitated by changes in expectations of parents related to marriage. These changes were attributed by most community members to greater awareness of the value of girls' education through radio and other kinds of media⁶. Although projects developed sophisticated and well researched media content, many only measured specific behaviours or attitude changes in relation to these so struggled to attribute how their media activities contributed to and translated into improved attendance and learning outcomes.

- **Working with men and boys:** Nine projects worked with men and boys through activities conducted outside the school to raise awareness, and influence attitudes and behaviour on girls' education and gender equality. For example, EDT provided designated spaces for young men to meet away from community meetings, Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO) Nepal established Big Brother Clubs and Varkey Ghana established 'Boys clubs'. This broad portfolio finding is given weight at project level by Health Poverty Action (HPA) Rwanda who found that boys' favourable attitudes towards girls' education were significantly associated with higher numeracy scores for GEC girls⁷. Endlines explored the efficacy of their work with men and boys, and the results from Improving Girls' Access through Transforming Education (IGATE) in Zimbabwe provide a useful example of the role of this type of attitude and behaviour change intervention. IGATE trained and deployed male 'Champions' to engage other men and boys to better support girls' education. IGATE found notable shifts in gendered attitudes and parental engagement behaviours. These included fathers feeling comfortable talking to girls about their periods and changed perceptions of young children and especially girls having to do household chores. This was triangulated with mothers' perceptions of the changes, "fathers are now very helpful in the lives of girls. Before this, it was our duty as mothers to look after our girls but now fathers also help in even noticing behaviour change better than some mothers."
- **Working with faith based groups and traditional leaders:** Eight projects worked with faith-based groups and traditional community leaders to leverage their community influence. For example, World Vision in Zimbabwe trained traditional and church leaders on gender issues and involved them in following up on truancy, drop-out and gender-based violence. Lessons from monitoring and midlines found that where they identified such leaders early on, ensured their support for the projects, and used holistic approaches, projects have seen positive changes. SOMGEP Somalia found that their engagement of religious leaders, who shared messages during Friday prayers, along with increased support of religious teachers, who publicly participated in school activities, was a critical strategy in igniting enrolment drives and shifting attitudes towards girls prioritising school and marrying later. While engaging traditional and religious leaders is essential in some contexts, the method of engagement needs to be carefully considered, and should remain flexible throughout implementation as insights about the best ways to work with these

⁶ The evaluator notes that community members however did not mention GEC implementing organisations CARE or STAGES as key drivers of these media sources.

⁷ HPA endline: "Of the REAP outputs, only the boy's attitudes towards girls' education significantly affected numeracy scores. The better the attitude of a boy in the household has towards girls' education, the more likely it is that a girl will perform better in numeracy. In this model, a girls' oral reading fluency is still the best predictor of numeracy. In the control model, none of the individual level variables predicted numeracy except oral reading fluency. Model 3 is the best of all predictive models, explaining 41% of the total variance in numeracy scores ($r^2=.41$) and suggest the importance of enlisting boy's support for girls' education and confirms the project's theory of change in this regard."

groups emerge. For a number of design, operational and context-related reasons, both projects now mainly involve faith leaders in awareness raising and advocacy.

- **Adult literacy:** Six projects, most working in fragile and conflict affected states, provided adult literacy initiatives for parents and community members to increase support for girls' education, including in Afghanistan and Somalia. In theories of change, the purpose of adult literacy classes was to engage parents in supporting their girls' learning at home; better understand the curriculum the girls were studying; practically demonstrating the value of education to parents; and building their capacities to participate in school management. STAGES Afghanistan reported parents describing the benefits of their participation, including newly acquired skills and also greater impetus to drive the education of their daughters. Projects noted that in contexts where parents have low levels of literacy, there are power imbalances with, for example, school leaders which can affect parents' ability to engage in school settings or demand accountability from education providers (this is explored further in the 'GEC Thematic Paper: School Governance'). Adult literacy classes, consequently, had a critical role in supporting wider engagement of marginalised groups and individuals.
- **Household level visits and support:** 11 projects included household level visits and support through volunteers or others within their remit for community support. For example, Theatre for a Change (TFAC) Malawi supported teachers to conduct home visits to girls at risk of dropping out. Two projects implementing this intervention have achieved both their learning and attendance targets. Viva had particular success with the use of community mentors to conduct home visits. Mentor reporting and tracking showed that in February 2016, 44% of girls regularly attended and remained in school as a result of parental attitude change, rising to 98% in 2017. Similarly, School Mother mentors who conducted home visits for girls who infrequently attended or had dropped out of school, reported a high success rate in changing parents' and girls' attitudes towards regular attendance and re-engagement in school.
- **Activities involving women's and parents' groups:** 17 projects included women's or parents' groups, working with both previously existing groups, and groups created by the project. This was separate to activities with parent teacher associations. For example, Cheshire Services Uganda (CSU), and Leonard Cheshire Development in Kenya, provided support groups for families of girls with disabilities. Whilst evidence was not extensive across endline reports, there are indications that working with parents is likely to be one of the most beneficial activities for increasing learning and attendance outcomes. CSU found that 72% of parents it had engaged through parents' groups reported wanting their girls who had disabilities to attend university or college education compared to 67% in the control group; and 92% wanted their daughters to continue with education at age 18, rather than being married, compared to 87% in the control group. Qualitative data shows this attitude reflected in how parents increasingly saved money and took on extra work in order to support their children's education.

A multi-component strategy is effective in engaging communities to support girls' attendance, and working at different levels can help to instil attitudes and behaviours that support learning

Projects which employed multiple attitude and behaviour change components met their learning and attendance targets in many cases. Qualitative data supported this, with multiple endline reports highlighting how different components with parents, school management, and community leaders reinforced and sustained attitude and behaviour change, particularly around attendance. In the second phase of GEC, projects that lacked detailed strategies for how different components could work together to drive attendance, will be encouraged to conduct further research and analysis to tailor and combine the optimum set of interventions.

EDT Kenya found that the combination of its Community Conversations and household visits by community health workers complemented each other to bolster enrolment. Similarly, IGATE Zimbabwe made use of a number of strategies to influence girls' attendance and learning, implementing a comprehensive community engagement strategy. This included a specific focus on engaging mothers through Mothers' Groups and Village Savings and Loans schemes; men through a Male Champions approach; religious leaders through a 'Channels of Hope' approach; and parents and government officials. However, one of their key findings was that whilst these approaches may promote girls' enrolment, attendance and retention in school, "working around the edges to influence learning – from 'without' rather than from 'within' the classroom – has limited impact on numeracy and literacy outcomes".

STAGES Afghanistan, a project which exceeded its learning and attendance targets⁸, demonstrated the value of taking a holistic approach to attitude and behaviour change, addressing what happens in the classroom, within the community and within the home, as well as at the system level (district, provincial and national). Qualitative research found strong evidence of the effectiveness of 'champions' (community members) in mobilising families to encourage girls to attend school and to challenge entrenched beliefs of community members who were opposed to girls' education. Shuras, male and female, made up of key influential, well-respected individuals and elders, were effective in reaching out to other parents, on their own initiative, when they noticed students repeatedly missing class. Religious leaders who had respect and following within their communities were important allies in challenging negative attitudes towards girls' education. STAGES reported that in one very traditional, Taliban dominated region, they successfully involved religious scholars in mobilising communities to recognise the importance of girls' education which led to an increase in girls' and boys' attendance and a decreased drop-out rate. STAGES further argued that the more communities feel that they can positively impact on education outcomes for their children, the more invested they are in engaging in the project's work such as by supporting libraries and donating books; engaging in educational activities like 'reading for children' in libraries; and attending shura meetings and social audits.

⁸ Control groups were not used in this evaluation

Specific measures of behaviours and attitudes are key to link activities to outcomes

Few projects measured specific changes in behaviours and attitudes, rather they assessed broad support or recognition of the importance of girls' education. Attribution of these changes is a challenge given many projects implemented a multitude of interventions, and this type of measurement is notoriously difficult to undertake without specialist evaluation. Most projects did not articulate clear processes for attitude, behaviour or wider social norm change through their activities to enable them to refine and improve components. Discovery's evaluation in Kenya, however, does provide a useful example of good practice in this area, through a more in-depth examination of specific behaviours and attitudes. They found insightful shifts in fathers' behaviours towards their daughters, and subtle positive shifts in gender norms. Fathers spoke of changes in their behaviours, such as talking more to their daughters about their futures and spending more time with them. One participant spoke of men treating their wives better so their daughters could see how they should be treated. This may have contributed to the Kenya project's significant increases in attendance outcomes, though learning targets were not achieved.

5. Key lessons

Lesson one: A shift in community perceptions is needed to promote gender equality in education as well as increasing support for better quality of education overall

Across the GEC portfolio, projects created shifts in support for girls' education and in some cases were able to evidence changes in behaviour as a result. There was a recognition of the need to engage men and boys in examining masculinities and patriarchies that render girls out of school and less likely to learn in the first place. In particularly conservative and religious societies, approaches need to be carefully considered so as to avoid concerns related to 'do no harm'. Incorporating these approaches is critical, not only for establishing girls' equal access to education in the short term but, crucially, for shifting gender norms in the long term to pave the way for girls and women's empowerment, and to enable subsequent generations of girls to attend school without this barrier.

IGATE Zimbabwe provides a positive example of this type of attitude shift. The project has trained Christian religious leaders at national and district level in the 'Channels of Hope' model, which focuses on support for girls' education using faith-based language to help change mindsets amongst leadership and followers, including about gender roles and gender-based violence. The training was cascaded down to community level by church leaders and female role models encouraging parents to send (and keep) their daughters in school. Changing traditional and faith-based views and practices is a long-term process, but it seems messages are getting through, as the project found more girls remaining in school.

EDT Kenya found its Community Conversations activity was having positive unintended impacts on traditional patriarchal communities' readiness to advocate for gender equality. This highlighted that change is possible, and with further focus on this kind of content, even more

could be achieved to sustain gains in gender equality in education. STAGES Afghanistan took a different approach to shifting gender norms, encouraging the inclusion and set up of women-only school management committees or 'shuras'. They found, however, that membership and attendance did not necessarily equate to meaningful participation, and although women were able to speak freely about girls' attendance at school, their roles in decision making and advocacy were limited. Both these examples highlighted a need for specific focus on masculinities and power structures and their role in preventing girls' from participating and achieving in education.

Lesson two: Working with key stakeholders as champions early on can increase buy-in for interventions, with promising results

Projects who chose to work through identified 'champions' – often key decision-makers, and community or religious leaders – highlighted a range of approaches that worked and lessons learnt from these. Where they identified such leaders early on, ensured their support for the projects, and used holistic approaches, projects saw positive changes. In particular, using champions ensured projects' credibility and relevance to the community. Link worked within the Ethiopian education system and with a small project team of trained district ('woreda') officials to implement interventions in a large number of schools. Communities were deeply involved in the project, drawing up school improvement plans and monitoring implementation, and therefore had ownership of the outcomes. This helped keep costs down and enabled Link to reach a large number of beneficiaries, knowing that in the context the most efficient way to achieve change is to secure stakeholder buy-in and political will.

Lesson three: Attitudes and behaviours related to girls' education were more complex than anticipated

The baseline undertaken by the GEC Evaluation Manager (Coffey, 2017) found that it was not frequently the case that communities were against the principle of girls' education, but rather that a more complex set of beliefs and trade-offs were influencing household decision making. Most GEC projects found that communities were generally supportive of girls' education. For example, the STAGES Afghanistan baseline revealed that almost all male heads of households and female carers agreed that it is women's and girls' right to be educated. When negative attitudes about girls' education were encountered, they related mostly to perceptions that there is little value in girls obtaining an education and that it yields low rates of return. As a result, despite generally supportive views by parents and community members, girls' education often still loses out in family decision making. Competing views also impacted the ultimate level of support for girls' education. Attitudes relating to girls working or leaving the home, fear of girls being in mixed settings with boys, or their treatment in school, and notions that girls should play domestic roles, all affected their participation and success in education. These kinds of beliefs are obviously context-specific, but, in the first phase of the GEC, tended to include the following:

- That girls should perform domestic chores and should meet their domestic responsibilities
- That girls should get married at a young age
- That there is little point in educating girls as they are unlikely to achieve highly and if they do, they will not be able to do anything with the education they receive

- That girls are at greater risk of pregnancy if they go to school, and therefore that school is a risky environment for them.

Insights such as these caused some shifts in messaging among GEC projects from a predominant emphasis on the importance of girls' education as a principle, to focusing engagement with communities on specific beliefs or concrete behaviours which would support girls' education. For example, after establishing that parents were supportive of girls' education, PEAS Uganda adapted their community engagement plan to focus messages on specific things that parents could do to facilitate and support their daughters' education. This learning shows that it is important to go beyond a simple focus on girls' education as 'a good idea' and to acknowledge and address very specific challenges, pressures and trade-offs which inform household decision-making relating to girls' education.

Lesson four: Adaptive programming is important in order to respond to emerging challenges

A number of GEC projects adapted their approaches based on challenges encountered, and learning that emerged about complex attitudes and behaviours. Projects' ability to be flexible in their design has been key in this. For example, in early implementation, Link Community Development in Ethiopia learned that while fathers make decisions about their daughters' enrolment, mothers tend to do so regarding their continuing attendance, so Link targeted mothers through Mothers' Groups as part of a 'Maximising Results' process. EDT Kenya found that community meetings about girls' education were not attended by a key target group, young men. To address this, 'Moran (warrior) Circles' were instigated to provide alternative spaces for them.

KEEP Kenya's media activity provides a good practice example of adaptation and tailoring of activities. Their field research helped them to develop ethnicity-tailored multi-media presentations (radio broadcasts and video screenings) intended to raise awareness and stimulate community reflection on issues around girls' education in refugee camps and host communities. These were followed up through organised community-mobiliser sessions aimed at men and boys as key influencers of girls' participation in education. Pre- and post-surveys enabled them to improve the design and content of the sessions.

Red Een Kind's (REK) project in South Sudan featured community engagement prominently in their Theory of Change, describing various attitudes which act as barriers in the community or household, such as a strong opinion of the low value of girls' education which affected girls' enrolment and retention. REK significantly adapted their approach between the baseline and midline, as the project shifted from solely targeting fathers with its 'What's up Men?!' initiative (sensitisation meetings) to include all parents, renaming it 'What's Up Parents?!' in 2015. This responded to the finding that although men are often power holders, mothers play a crucial role in household decision-making by influencing their husbands and sons.

STAGES Afghanistan conducted weekly meetings with community elders and parents to impart the importance of education for children's long-term development and community benefits, as well as providing training to foster positive attitudes towards girls' education. During these meetings it was found that girls often missed class because of chores

(agricultural and household duties), and for weddings and religious holidays. STAGES, together with the community, worked to develop solutions such as rescheduling class times so students could return home earlier to help with preparations. Some projects found that their assumptions about the reach and accessibility of their communication activities did not hold and experienced particular challenges with low literacy levels, finding suitable times to reach target groups and identifying an effective format. The Discovery project, for example, had difficulties reaching very rural areas with its shows as TV coverage is limited. Relief International's EGEP project in Somalia found that both caregivers and girls attributed important attitude changes to radio programmes. There was an overall observation and concern, however, that while mobile phone ownership continues to rise, radio access appears to be decreasing.

6. Considerations for practitioners and policymakers

In summary, it can be seen that a range of programming approaches targeting the community level have shown promise. There is encouraging qualitative data demonstrating how specific interventions improved the conditions for learning and positively influenced the 'enabling environment'. Evaluation of the GEC interventions also provides some pointers for 'what works' and what has the potential to work, given a stronger focus:

- Projects, in most cases, helped drive positive attitudes towards girls' education; however, these need to be reinforced and sustained through more evolved messaging and follow up.
- Community meetings were a commonly used format and have increased awareness, but require continuous, community-rooted implementation in order to maintain participation.
- Interventions which involved key stakeholders as champions early on saw considerable community buy-in for their initiatives
- Projects that worked with parents in some form (particularly where parents witness the benefits of education first hand, for example, through literacy initiatives), found that this increased parents' support for girls' education and positively influenced girls' learning outcomes and wellbeing.
- Some projects experienced pushback from communities due to their exclusive focus on girls, emphasising the importance of including boys. More generally, a number of projects found that their community engagement strategies would benefit from further critical review and greater flexibility in the engagement methods used.
- Media activities, despite having a potentially large reach, encountered some challenges with reaching their target populations adequately, and assessing impact of their activities at community level.

Overall, we can conclude that the GEC's Theory of Change still holds: community members who better understand the returns possible from girls' education and engage around this do

seem to better support girls to attend and stay in school, learn and succeed. With regards to the assumption about girls' transition to secondary education, while some projects have seen improvements in understanding about the benefits of secondary education, in many contexts it is still not accessible for girls due to economic constraints (high school costs and the expectation that girls will contribute income to households), poor infrastructure, or because of other prevailing contextual factors or norms, e.g. safety concerns, early pregnancy (and associated exclusionary education policies) or early marriage. In these situations, while attitudes may change, behaviours do not.

Through its rigorous monitoring and evaluation processes and the innovative nature of many GEC projects, the GEC has generated evidence about 'what works' to support girls' education, including data about changing social norms. The examples outlined in this paper illustrate what works to support girls' educational outcomes through community-focused engagement to some extent, but would benefit from deeper insight into the pathways of change and the specific contexts in which they have been implemented. It is important that qualitative work in the next phase of the GEC enables a better understanding of the complex ways in which attitudes and norms affect decisions and behaviours related to girls' progression in education, and how these are being changed by projects.

If GEC projects are supported to ask targeted questions at the baseline of the next GEC phase, particularly through qualitative inquiry, they could contribute to global evidence about what specifically brings about behaviour change and how it can be sustained. To this end, the Fund Manager has encouraged more standardised measurement methods of attitude and behaviour change. This will allow for investigation of the sustainability of successful changes, and provide further valuable learning. Finally, projects in the next phase should also make concerted efforts to maintain an ongoing understanding of how context-specific factors interact with and affect programme outcomes and fill the current gap on 'deep context' insights, exploring what is effective, why, for whom, and in what types of conditions.

Recommendations

The following recommendations can be summarised based on the lessons and insights from GEC projects on this theme:

1. Identifying relevant norms

- Rather than targeting generic attitudes and behaviours, it is crucial to identify the most relevant and prevalent ones, e.g. household level decision-making, in order to arrive at actual attitude and behaviour change.
- Projects should evolve their contextual analysis to support an understanding of how context-specific factors interact with and affect programme outcomes. This analysis should consider a more complex picture of how attitudes and behaviours shift in context, and could include, for example, looking at 'positive deviants'.

2. Tailoring approaches

- Project design should reflect opportunities to adapt activities, recognising norms are affected by changes in context and power dynamics.
- Improved monitoring of changes in attitude, behaviour, and social norms would be beneficial, drawing on projects' own monitoring activities and deeper analyses and

disaggregation of evaluation data to understand the range and persistence of attitudes and to which stakeholder(s) they belong.

- Project approaches which anticipate and recognise pushback from communities when their attitudes and behaviours are challenged will be better positioned to address it.

3. Measurement

- There is a need for better understanding of the complex ways in which attitudes and norms affect decisions about girls' education, and how these are changing.
- Greater focus is needed on developing methodologies that can make a clear link between specific attitudes and behaviours and how they impact learning, attendance and retention.

The second phase of GEC provides a significant opportunity to fill the evidence gap on 'deep context' insights about what brings about attitude and behaviour change and how it can be sustained, including through qualitative inquiry.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Community attitude and behaviour change activities and achievement of GEC outcomes

Intervention Type	# achieved literacy targets	# achieved numeracy targets	# achieved attendance targets	# achieved literacy + numeracy targets	# achieved both learning and attendance targets	No. projects implementing intervention
Media (radio, TV, advertising)	3	5	5	2	2	13
Community meetings (use of drama etc)	7	5	5	4	3	18
Working with men & boys	5	3	3	2	1	9
Working with faith based groups & traditional leaders	4	1	3	1	1	8
Adult literacy	5	3	3	3	3	6
Household level visits & support	4	3	4	2	2	11
Activities involving women's groups, parents' groups	9	7	8	7	4	17
All that achieved targets	13	12	12	9	5	

	5.2 Number of adults (sex disaggregated) participating in family workshops, reading activities and other community based activities supporting education				
World University Service of Canada (WUSC): Kenya Equity in Education Project (KEEP), Kenya			3.3 % of trained people showing increased level of engagement with men and boys on gender equality issues 3.4 Number of parents supporting their daughter(s)'s education		X X
World Vision: Improving Girls' Access through Transforming Education (IGATE), Zimbabwe		2.1 Participants of Mothers' Groups, SDCs and local leaders increased their knowledge, awareness and skills on gender specific issues 2.4 Percentage of decrease in the number of parents that indicate household chores and violence at home, in school and on the way to school as reasons for girls not to attend school	2.2 Mothers groups, traditional leaders and church leaders, following up on truancy, drop-out, GBV and leading initiatives for school improvement 5.1 Increased percentage of girls who believe that they are listened to and able to participate at home, school and peer groups (defined per average score in Youth Leadership Index scores)		X X
Care International UK (consortium leads), Kobcinta Waxbarashada Gabdhaha (SOMGEP), Somalia			1.1 # of religious leaders actively mobilizing households for girls' education 1.5 # of mothers attending evening classes for adult literacy/numeracy (20 women per village) 3.2 % of girls age 10 and above mentioning participation in sports activities		

Relief International (consortium leads) Educate Girls, End Poverty, Somalia (EGEP)		1.1 Percentage of people who think there is enough local support for girls to succeed in school			
Theatre for a Change, Malawi	3.2: Percentage of Listening Clubs attended by at least 30 community members every month 3.3: Percentage of Girls' Club parents / guardians with knowledge of girls' gender and sexual and reproductive health rights	3.1: Percentage of Girls' Club parents/ guardians who feel that it is equally valuable to invest in a daughter's education as a son's when funds are limited 3.4: Percentage of Girls' Club parents/guardians who feel that their daughter is as likely as their son to make use of her education after school 3.5 Percentage of Girls' Club parents/ guardians who report feeling comfortable discussing SRH issues with their daughters			
Coca Cola: ENGINE, Nigeria		3.1 Number of gatekeepers who agree that girls learning new skills or getting a secondary-level education is important 3.2 Number of community members who agree that girls learning new skills or getting a secondary-level education is important	3.3 Number of targeted FTLS, government officials and other gatekeepers making appropriate public statements to promote girls' education. 3.4 % of gatekeepers reporting more equitable division of household chores to enable girls to stay and perform in school.		X
Discovery Communications: Discovery Girls, Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya	3.1 Broadcast reach of Discovery+ shows		2.4 Improvement in parents' knowledge, attitudes or practices (KAP) related to girls' education (in project catchment areas) 3.2 Improvement in viewers' knowledge, attitude or practices (KAPs) related to girls' education		X X

The Girls' Education Challenge is a project funded by the UK's Department for International Development and is led and administered by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, working with organisations including FHI 360, Nathan Associates London Ltd. and Social Development Direct Ltd.

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