Girls on Track: Year 1 Project Report

Project Summary

The Girls on Track project is designed to improve the quality of education for 20,000 children (including 12,000 girls) in the Mara and Morogoro regions of Tanzania, by improving learning outcomes and life skills acquisition, contributing significantly to their ability to make informed decisions and exercise agency in increasing life chances. This report provides an overview of progress made during the first year of delivery (September 2018-2019), which has included the following key activities:

- 335 teachers from 80 schools have received training and support to use play-based learning inside and outside the classroom
- 225 student clubs were established with 400 Junior Leaders trained to support their peers and lead student club activities at school and within their local communities
- 70 Government District Education Officers received training to support, coach and mentor teachers in their use of play-based learning approaches in schools
- Various community focussed events were delivered to promote the value of education for girls and highlight the effect of harmful traditional practices as barriers to girls participation in education
- Over 7,300 out-of-school girls have participated in project activities designed to facilitate the process of entering or re-enrolling in education

Initial monitoring assessments have identified improvements in girls demonstrating greater confidence and communications skills, greater gender awareness by teachers, increasing attendance rates and the increased commitment of local leaders and local government authorities to address education barriers.

Key activities undertaken

A series of activities commenced in September 2018, in both the Mara and Morogoro regions, working towards the goal of increasing the life skills and educational engagement, particularly for girls. Key activities included:

Building life skills amongst girls to support their development and learning

One of the projects main priorities has been training 400 Junior Leaders (including 206 girls) on gender equality, child protection, and helping teachers deliver play-based games that support life skills. These trained Junior Leaders are now playing a key role in designing and delivering messages that promote life skill development for children and young people, and addressing barriers to education during various community initiatives. Seventy-seven Junior Leaders (including 51 girls) also received communication and advocacy training focused on issues surrounding sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), child protection and gender equality. This is the first step in helping children in the project to advocate for these issues amongst their peers, teachers, school committees, parents and local community members.

To complement the work with Junior Leaders, 225 student clubs have been set up in 40 primary and 5 secondary schools in the Mara region, with membership totalling 1,600 children (of which 800 are girls). These clubs provide peer-to-peer learning for children on SRHR, child rights and protection, and gender equality. Junior Leaders play a key role in the leadership of clubs and facilitating the discussions that take place when clubs meet.

A child club meeting in a primary school in Mara

Schoolteachers have also been provided with guidance on how to support the clubs and ensure meaningful activities take place. The project has also provided stationary and learning materials to allow creative learning and play to take place within the clubs. Through creative and imaginary play children can grow emotionally, socially and intellectually, as creative experiences help children develop these skills and enable them to share their thoughts, feelings and ideas.

Strengthening the learning environment within schools

Teacher training is a core component of Girls on Track, demonstrating our commitment to building a network of capable and enthusiastic teachers who are able to effectively integrate play-based learning into their daily lessons. Throughout Year 1, teachers have received capacity building and follow-up support to learn and apply child-friendly, participatory learning approaches that strengthen the learning environment within schools. An example of a play-based game teachers are trained to deliver, the connection to learning outcomes and application in the classroom can be seen in the following video: https://youtu.be/3l6mw6AhOlk

During Year 1, 335 teachers (199 F) from 80 schools across Mara and Morogoro regions were supported. These teachers have each received training in topics such as:

- Use of play-based approaches to support life skill development (including social, emotional and cognitive skill development)
- Preparing play-based learning lesson plans, modifying games and leading meaningful reflective discussion sessions aligned with curriculum objectives.
- Creating positive learning environments that foster participation, inclusion, teamwork and support healthy attitudes towards learning in a space that allows children to feel comfortable, safe and engaged.
- Applying positive behaviour management strategies with children to manage large groups and without resorting to negative and violent approaches such as corporal punishment.
- Understanding the principles of gender equality, child rights, advocating against harmful traditional practices, and promoting the engagement of community actors in addressing education barriers at school and community levels.
- Strategies for running, managing and conducting Communities of Learning (CoL) as stipulated in the national in-service teacher-training framework to ensure that the acquired knowledge and skills are shared with other teachers in schools.

Once teacher training commenced, a series of follow-up and support mechanisms were implemented to reinforce good practice, provide additional support for teachers where required, and to create peer networks that ensure learning and continued support will be provided after project completion. This included the implementation of regular teacher network meetings, which act as a platform to share learning, success and challenges related to the use of play-based learning approaches.

Engaging Government District Education Officers (DEO) and School Inspectors in the project acts as another mechanism to provide coaching and mentoring support for teachers. 70 (16 F) DEOs were trained on coaching and mentoring to support teachers on play-based learning implementation at schools. Through this support, DEOs have developed action plans to support teachers and head teachers during the next stage of project implementation. Additionally, 162 (33 F) head teachers were provided with the opportunity to share knowledge and experience on supporting teachers in the application of play-based learning for life skills development and curriculum objectives. This process is designed to further strengthen the support system provided to teachers as they continue to apply play-based approaches to the school environment.

A number of teachers also received core sports training, which, coupled with the distribution of sports equipment across schools has been successful in increasing participation in sports and play-based learning activities. Sports equipment including footballs, netballs, and jerseys were distributed to 80 primary and five secondary partner schools across Mara and Morogoro, whilst

sports training was provided to 200 teachers (103 F) from 25 primary schools in Morogoro. Trained teachers have been able to align core sports with specific topics such as child protection and gender equality, furthering the empowerment of their students.

Images above show children participating in play-based games outside and inside the classroom, with games adapted to different ages and supporting a range of learning in communication, teamwork and numeracy skills.

Other initiatives to improve the learning environment for children have included the distribution of uniforms and school materials for 416 (300 F) vulnerable children across Mara region, as well as materials distributed for 89 (37 F) children with disabilities across 10 schools in Morogoro. These materials will help children engage in learning activities and ensure they are better able to contribute while in school.

Additionally, a significant step in fostering safe and conducive learning environments is the construction and rehabilitation of sanitation facilities, understanding that the lack of adequate sanitation facilities is likely to impede participation and attendance at school, particularly female students. Construction of new drop hole latrines at two secondary schools commenced at the end of year 1 and will be completed in the early part of year 2. These facilities will provide safe and clean sanitation facilities for over 1,400 children, including more than 700 girls.

Improving community support for girls' education

100 (23 F) volunteer Community Coaches have engaged out-of-school children and young people in regular sport and play-based learning activities that promote life skills and topics such as child protection, gender equality, SRHR and the value of education. Collectively these sessions are reaching over 15,000 out-of-school children and youth, including 7,300 girls. In addition to providing valuable skills and knowledge, these sessions act as a platform to reach and engage out-of-school children in a manner that can facilitate their enrollment or return to education. The Coaches have received training support through the project and the distribution of sports equipment to 20 community centers in Mara has enabled the Community Coaches to deliver regular, structured and fun activities in their communities. Inclusive community environments where girls play sports alongside their male peers, are powerful in challenging longstanding discrimination and attitudes that persistently disadvantage girls.

A series of community engagement activities have taken place during Year 1. These events targeted parents, caregivers and key community influencers with messages designed to promote the value of girls' education, the barriers that affect participation in school, issues around child protection and promotion of gender equality. Activities have included sports tournaments and community plays days, both of which use sport as a hook to gain community interest to attend. These formats also serve to display the types of activities undertaken within the project to

reinforce the benefits children receive from engaging in participatory, play-based learning approaches. In many cases, community-facing activities were organized to coincide with key promotional days such as International Women's Day, Day of the African Child, Day of the Girl Child, and the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace. A total of 12 events were held reaching approximately 2,700 community members (1,250 F). Over 7,400 children and young people participated in the various community outreach events (3,002 F).

Further community outreach was undertaken through monthly meetings with 155 key community leaders in Mara and Morogoro. These sessions provided opportunities to promote the value of education and concretely address the varied barriers to education for children, such as the impact of early child marriage, preferences towards male attendance at school and wider gender inequality and protection issues facing girls. Through this process, community members were supported to produce their own strategies to advocate for the actualisation of girls rights, wellbeing and protection. Proposed strategies include working through churches, mosques and religious groups; dissemination at village executive meetings (for village leaders) and promotion of messages at local health centers. Community members have also been linked with existing Government Child Protection teams to further support the implementation of action plans designed to address barriers facing girls' education. This work will be expanded upon in Year 2.

Progress towards Outcomes

The anticipated impact of the Girls on Track project includes progress against key indicators, including: 60% of girls reached by the project demonstrating an increase in leadership, confidence, communication, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities and 60% of girls reporting improved knowledge of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). In terms of wider community engagement, by the end of the project we expect to see 60% of parents/caregivers regularly participating in community awareness events on the value of education for girls, and 50% of local leaders promoting awareness around key issues affecting access to education. Quantitative measurement against these indicators will take place in Year 2, but at this stage of project delivery initial qualitative measurements and observations from project staff, teachers and government education officers have identified:

- Girls demonstrating greater confidence and communication skills through increased and vocal participation in school club activities and within the classroom. This has been particularly prominent in discussions on barriers to education and harmful traditional practices. Some girls have spoken openly about these issues at sports tournaments and community events organised through the project.
- Teachers are reporting an increase in gender awareness amongst children. With greater male participation in activities that are traditionally viewed as work for girls, such as fetching and carrying water.
- Teachers' capacity to deliver quality gender-sensitive, play-based learning approaches has progressed significantly. Some examples have been demonstrated in the way classrooms were re-arranged to encourage girls and boys to work together and to facilitate better teamwork and communication amongst pupils. It has also been shown through reflective discussions after play-based games and through a reduction in the use of corporal punishment as teachers learn new way ways to manage student behavior.
- Pupil attendance rates are increasing across a number of schools. This is likely to be associated with child friendly learning approaches now being used in the classroom, reductions in corporal punishment and greater awareness of the value of education at community level. The project will examine these changes in greater depth during Year 2.
- Increased commitment of local leaders and local government authorities to address education barriers. For example, the village government has offered one primary school in Mara, a plot of land to cultivate staple foods such as maize and cassava to ensure that children who live far from school, and those whose parents cannot afford lunch, can have at least one meal at school.
- Increased awareness of parents and community members on child protection, gender equality and the value of education. For example, one community leader attending a sports event

commented, *"Really the match was interesting when I saw girls running with a ball and scored a goal like boys, before I would not agree if girls can play football, I used to see only boys. This is eye opening to our communities that we need to provide equal opportunities to our girls in every opportunity including education issues".*

- Community Coaches work with out-of-school children helped two girls join a Complementary Basic Education programs, which is a basic education initiative for out-of-school children that provides a route back into the formal education sector.
- Dissemination of knowledge on play-based learning through community meetings and as teachers trained through the project share their learning with teachers in other schools. This suggests a longer-term sustainability of the project as knowledge and skills continue to spread.

Communications Activities

Throughout the first year of implementation, the Girls on Track project has been promoted within the Isle of Man, the UK and the project locations within Tanzania. In each case, communication has included acknowledgement of support from the Isle of Man Government.

Through our partnership with the Isle of Man based company Stars Group we have disseminated information about the project and the support provided by the Isle of Man Government. This has included blog posts and a 6-month project report for their internal company intranet, reaching 240 staff based in Onchan.

Our engagement in the Isle of Man continued through ongoing involvement with Douglas Athletic Football club, where Right To Play remains a charity partner. We have used this connection to promote the work in Tanzania and the funding provided by the Isle of Man Government. Douglas Athletic have promoted the project at matches and through a series of social media posts as shown in the example below.

Kudos to the Isle of Man Government @iomgovernment for supporting @RightToPlay_UK by funding a two-year project to transform the lives of thousands of children, particularly girls. The Girls on Track project in Tanzania has made solid progress and has already displayed some impressive results. Click on the link below to learn more 👂
https://www.righttoplay.org.uk/en-uk/national-offices/national-office-uk/whats-new/isle-of-man-government-supports-pioneering-right-to-play-project-in-tanzania/

Our Ambassador Mark Cavendish has also used social media to promote the project in April and July 2019. Through Facebook, this has reached 600,000 followers, generating 350 likes, and multiple comments and shares. We anticipate further social media promotion through these outlets in 2020.

Within the UK, promotion occurred through newsletters, website, annual reports and special mention of the project and partnership at a fundraising gala in London in May 2019, focused on promoting funds for girls' education.

One of our other Ambassadors Jazmin Sawyers visited the project in 2018 and recorded a message on the link below, which has also been used to promote the project to UK audiences through our various digital and social media platforms: https://youtu.be/Ba5RVch-EKU

Within Tanzania, the project has adhered to original communications plans by promoting activities through engagement with community leaders, parents and education stakeholders through the various initiatives described earlier in this report. Community sports tournaments and play days have been another platform to promote the aims of the project and key messages on girls' education. Collectively, these activities have promoted the project to almost 3,000 people. In some cases where appropriate, acknowledgement of support from the Isle of Man Government is disseminated, particularly during engagement with education stakeholders.

Case Study: Using play to strengthen teacher-pupil relationships

Corporal punishment, poor learning environments and poor relationships between pupils and teachers have contributed to truancy rates at primary schools. Beatrice Saima Tibiasa (pictured below) a primary six pupil stated that, "*corporal punishment and negative relationship with teachers have been a stumbling block affecting our school attendance and the way children perform for tests.....it has always been common for a teacher to come to class carrying a bunch of sticks and therefore pupils are learning with fear and so sometimes they abscond classes.*"

Girls on Track teacher training, is helping to create non-threatening learning environments and social connections between pupils and teachers leading to the positive engagement of all children in school activities.

"We have become active and attentive to the lessons because teachers keep us constantly engaged through songs, games and clapping of hands unlike previous days when we used to sleep in class while teachers were teaching" remarked Beatrice. "Now, when a teacher walks into the classroom, we are all happy and we greet them warmly and when they teach, we become all happy and focused" she concluded.

The primary school Head teacher remarked that play-based *"trainings have been received in a positive way as teachers are using games in and out of the classes, relationships amongst teachers themselves and teachers with pupils have increased a lot and teachers do not use sticks any more. Life skills such as confidence and cooperation have improved among pupils and there is a great cooperation between teachers and pupils during learning activities and positive changes in their altitudes."*

Financial Report

Some aspects of project delivery are tracking behind the original work plan, which has led to reduced expenditure across certain budget lines. Delays were incurred in part, as extra time was required to recruit a suitably qualified project officer whose role is central to project delivery from the Right To Play office in Mara. The role had to be re-advertised to find the right candidate, which meant they started later than initially planned and some activities could not be undertaken until they were in post.

Additional delays were caused through an early alternation to the proposed local partner in Mara region. Originally, project delivery was designed to take place in partnership with the Tanzanian organisation Child Dignity Forum (CDF). Through previous experience of working with CDF it was decided to end the working partnership on the basis of concerns over their capacity to deliver against all requirements within Girls on Track. In particular, recent experience had raised concerns over the calibre of their reporting and financial management. Using a detailed partnership assessment approach a new local partner called IMARA Foundation were selected to help deliver the required activities in Mara. IMARA Foundation is an organisation that Right To Play has previously collaborated with, and on this basis we have full confidence that they will work effectively on the project. During project deliver in Year 1, IMARA has demonstrated high standards of activity delivery, financial management, reporting and community level engagement.

The effect of these delays on budget lines is outlined in the corresponding financial report submitted alongside this narrative report. At this stage, there is now a revised work plan to ensure activity delivery and expenditure catches up to align with proposed budget forecasts. To date these delays have not detrimentally affected overall project delivery and reach. Therefore, we remain confident that all aspects of project implementation will be completed as scheduled in line with the proposed aims and objectives.

Girls engaging in play-based learning activities outside the classroom

Female Junior Leader delivering a play-based learning activity to fellow classmates