School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University

Graduate Capstone Project Report

Case Studies in Innovative Approaches to Girls' Life Skills Education: BRAC (Bangladesh), Grassroot Soccer (South Africa) and Room to Read (Cambodia)

Ariel Flaggs
Jessica Madris
Robert Marshall
Abisola Pinheiro
Chulan Qing
Daniele Selby
Nilay Tuncok

Adviser: Allison Anderson

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About the Team

Ariel Flaggs is graduating with a Master of Public Administration as a Public Policy and International Affairs Fellow. She previously served the City of Detroit working as a community health worker to reduce racial disparities in infant mortality. Prior to public health, Ariel worked as an analyst consult. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a Bachelors of Arts in International Studies from Spelman College.
Email: *af2857@columbia.edu*

Robert Marshall is graduating with a Master of Public Administration concentrating in Social Policy (Health Policy). He is studying in the U.S. on a Fulbright Scholarship and as a member of the International Fellows Program. Robert will be returning to Australia to continue his medical training and to take on a new position as a public sector consultant with the Boston Consultant Group. Prior to his graduate studies at Columbia University, Robert worked as a medical doctor and trainee with the Royal Australasian College of Physicians. He holds a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Medicine & Bachelor of Surgery from the University of Western Australia.
Email: *rmarshall.health@gmail.com* or *rdm2152@columbia.edu*

Abisola Noah-Pinheiro is graduating with a Master of Public Administration, concentrating in Human Rights and Humanitarian Policy and specializing in Gender Policy. She is a Global Leaders Fellow and an Ottaway International Fellow. Previously, Abi served disadvantaged populations as a resident physician at federally qualified health centers and a major hospital in New York. Her international work has included a Council of Women World Leaders fellowship assignment in Namibia, and a Population Council postdoctoral research fellowship posting to Ghana. Abi will continue her work as a consultant using a multidisciplinary approach to women's empowerment and women's health issues in underserved communities. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and Chemistry from New York University, as well as Doctoral degrees in Medicine and Public Health and a Master's Degree in International Health, from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Bloomberg School of Public Health.
Email: *abisolapinheiro@gmail.com* or *yan2102@columbia.edu*

Chulan Qing is graduating with a Master of Public Administration, concentrating in Urban and Social Policy. She is an Education Pioneer Fellow and will work in the education field in New York City after graduation. Education has changed her life trajectory, driving her dedication to improve equal education opportunities for the next generation. Fulfilling the long-living dream of giving back to her hometown in Northwest China, in 2014 she co-founded an alternative school to help rural students improve both their academic performance and soft skills. This step change came after two years as a management consultant at Deloitte Consulting focusing on strategic planning and two years as an administrative manager at Peking University. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Management and a Master's degree in Accounting, both from Peking University in China.
Email: *chulan.qing@columbia.edu*

Daniele Selby is graduating with a Masters of International Affairs, concentrating in Human Rights and Humanitarian Policy, while also specializing in Technology, Media, and Communications. She hopes to leverage these skills to advocate for children's rights and equal access to quality education. Daniele earned her Bachelor of Arts at Vassar College where she studied music and psychology.
Email: *daniele.selby@columbia.edu*

Nilay Tuncok is graduating with a Master of International Affairs, concentrating in Human Rights and specializing in Gender Policy. She has had the opportunity to work for various organizations, particularly focusing on women's access to health and education services. Nilay hopes to be an advocate for gender equality and wishes to work in the public health field upon graduation. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from Boston University.
Email: *nt2436@columbia.edu*

Jessica Madris is receiving her Masters in Public Administration in Urban Social Policy and Gender and Public Policy. Prior to attending Columbia University, Jessica worked for the New York City Human Resources Administration's Office of Public Private Partnerships. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from Barnard College.
Email: *jsm2169@columbia.edu*

Allison Anderson has worked in international development for over 15 years. She holds a Master's Degree in International Relations from the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland and a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from Yale University. Allison began her professional career at the Women's Refugee Commission in 1998, working with adolescents affected by conflict in Kosovo, Sierra Leone and northern Uganda. From 2003-2010, she worked with the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), serving as the Director as well as coordinating the global development of and training on minimum standards for education in emergencies. Allison is currently a Nonresident Fellow with the Brookings Institution's Center for Universal Education and an Adjunct Professor on education in emergencies at Columbia University's SIPA.
Email: *aa2861@columbia.edu*

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INTRODUCTION

Global development cannot progress if half the world's population is left behind. Policy makers, researchers, and advocates from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) agree that equal access to quality education is key, and have emphasized girls' education in both the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the importance of girls' education was highlighted, noting that "formal and non-formal education and training for girls and women, with its exceptionally high social and economic return, has proved to be one of the best means of achieving sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable."[1] Educating girls is, perhaps, the most critical means of increasing female empowerment, reducing gender discrimination, and ultimately achieving gender equality.[2]

The benefit of formal education to girls is evidenced by increased income and productivity, reduced incidences of child marriage and teenage pregnancy, longer life expectancies, and healthier personal and family lifestyles.[3] Educated girls are better able to stand up for their rights, more likely to send their children to school, and less likely to contract communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS (see e.g., Wolfe and Zuvekas 1997; Groot and Maassen van den Brink 2006a).[4] For example, in Sri Lanka, a one year increase in average life expectancy is associated with a 2 percent higher literacy rate and 0.11 more years of education.[5] Each additional year of education correlates with an increase of 0.036 in quality-adjusted life years.[6]

Despite broad-based global agreement on the importance of universal education and notable gains, about one third of developing countries have not yet achieved gender parity in primary and secondary education.[7] As a result of the numerous barriers to education that girls face, many girls' formal

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[1] United Nations, "The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women," accessed March 5, 2017, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/educa.htm.

[2] Herz, Barbara Knapp, and Gene B. Sperling. *What Works in Girls' Education: Evidence and Policies from the Developing World.* Council on Foreign Relations, 2004.

[3] Wolfe, Barbara L., and Samuel Zuvekas. *Nonmarket Outcomes of Schooling.* Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin--Madison, 1995.

[4] Groot, Wim, and Henriëtte Maassen van den Brink, "What Does Education Do to Our Health," *Measuring The Effects of Education on Health and Civic/Social Engagement*, Paris: OECD (2006): 355-363. http://www.oecd.org/edu/innovation-education/37437718.pdf

[5] Jayachandran, Seema, and Adriana Lleras-Muney, "Life Expectancy and Human Capital Investments: Evidence from Maternal Mortality Declines," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 124, no. 1 (2009): 349-397.

[6] Groot, W., and H. Maassen van den Brink. The Health Effects of Education: A Meta-analysis. Mimeo, 2006.

[7] United Nations, "Quality Education: Why It Matters", accessed on April 1, 2017, http://www.un.org/

educational attainment is capped at the sixth- to ninth-grade level.[8] Girls continue to struggle with cultural norms that value boys' education over girls' and social pressures like early marriage, childbearing, household duties, and early entry into the workforce. They may face resource constraints such as unaffordable school fees as well as inadequate sanitation facilities and means of managing menstrual health at school. For many girls, education is also hindered by formal policies and practices that obstruct their access to quality education. Against this backdrop, offering skills-based education in addition to traditional academic subjects can equip disadvantaged or marginalized girls with the tools necessary to navigate challenges and lead socially, economically, developmentally, and politically successful lives.

Skills can be envisioned in two ways, either in terms of particular sets of skills, or, more comprehensively, as a part of competencies. The latter conceptualization, advanced by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, views competencies as a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In this sense, skills "can be gained from experiences during and after childhood"[9] in formal, non-formal, informal, employer-based, or other, settings.[10] The 2012 Education for All Global Monitoring Report notes three types of necessary skills: foundational skills, technical and vocational skills, and transferrable skills.[11] Foundational skills are cognitive skills, such as numeracy and literacy, which are obtained through formal primary and secondary education. Technical and vocational skills are skills needed for livelihoods and are typically acquired through specialized training. Transferrable skills are those that "matter for social progress," as well as health and values-related changes.[12]

Transferrable skills like communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and self-confidence, while sometimes referred to as "soft skills", are better termed "life skills" and can be understood in myriad ways.[13,14] However, the idea that life skills education "provides knowledge, skills, values and attitudes through the four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and

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sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/ENGLISH_Why_it_Matters_Goal_4_QualityEducation.pdf

[8] "Free, Safe, Quality Education Is The Right Of Every Girl," Malala Fund, accessed on April 1, 2017, https://www.malala.org/girls-education

[9] UNESCO. 2015. *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015: Education for All 2000–2015: Achievements and Challenges*. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002322/232205e.pdf

[10] "Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning," OECD, accessed March 5, 2017, http://www.oecd.org/edu/skills-beyond-school/recognitionofnon-formalandinformallearning-home.htm

[11] King, Kenneth, "Youth, skills development, and work in the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2012: Learning from Asia or for Asia?," Prospects 44, no. 2 (2014): 141-158.

[12] UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015: Education for All 2000–2015: Achievements and Challenges*, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002322/232205e.pdf

[13] King, 'Learning from Asia"

[14] UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015*

with others, and learning to be" appears to be common across all the various understandings of life skills.[15] Life skills education thereby imparts "personal management and social skills which are necessary for adequate functioning on an independent basis" and contributes directly to building the human capital necessary in a skills-based economy.[16]

The importance of pursuing life skills education in a world that increasingly requires skills is noted in the Education for All (EFA) Dakar Framework of Action's Goal 3—to "[ensure] that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes"—and Goal 6—to "[improve] all aspects of the quality of education and [ensure] excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills."[17]

Just as there are various approaches to teaching foundational, technical, and vocational skills, there are different approaches to teaching and learning life skills, which vary by setting. Life skills are prioritized differently depending on cultural contexts and resource constraints; in particular, life skills education may be especially beneficial for girls living in poorer, more patriarchal societies where universal access to primary and secondary school is yet to be achieved. Through the diffusion of its impact on individual attitudes and behaviors, life skills education has the potential to not only empower girls to set their own course, but also to catalyze wider structural or transformational change, steering such societies towards more gender equitable dynamics.

This report, developed for the Brookings Institution's Center for Universal Education (CUE), examines three girls' life skills education programs operated by three different NGOs—BRAC in Bangladesh, Grassroot Soccer in South Africa, and Room to Read in Cambodia—and explores the mechanics, processes, and outcomes of these innovative programs. In order to gain a better understanding of girls' life skills education programs across different contexts, the programs considered in this paper were selected to represent diversity in geographical location, learning environments, and approaches to life skills. Both BRAC's and Grassroot Soccer's programs operate in non-formal learning environments, whereas Room to Read's program operates within government schools within the formal education system. While acknowledging that ideally, life skills education should begin as early as possible in girls' and boys' lives, and is beneficial across the life course, this study explores life skills learning primarily during adolescence, reflecting the current (and traditional) focus of most organizations providing girls with this training, including the three organizations examined for this research.

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[15] Delors Jacques, Learning: The Treasure Within," Accessed on April 5, 2017, 1996, 37 http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0010/001095/109590eo.pdf

[16] UNESCO, International Bureau of Education (IBE), Thesaurus 6th Edition, 2nd Revision, Geneva, UNESCO IBE, 2007

[17] UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015*

Using qualitative research methods such as desk reviews and key informant interviews, this report investigates how these programs define and teach life skills, and their overall impact based on available information. Additionally, it examines the programs' pedagogical approaches, the contexts within which they operate, and which gaps in girls' education the programs seek to address. The investigations produced three case studies and a comparative analysis of these programs, guided by a conceptual framework that analyzes girls' empowerment through life skills. Using this framework, the report also considers the extent to which these programs meet core conditions and competencies for empowering girls' life skills programs. Based on the results of the comparative analysis, the report concludes with implications and recommendations for developing and implementing girls' life skills programs.

The findings shared in this report increase the understanding of the elements and structures of core life skills programs that can be piloted, rolled out, and scaled up with long-term, discernable outcomes for girls, women, families, and communities in various contexts across the globe. Furthermore, the findings deepen the understanding of the capacity of girls' life skills education to contribute to the achievement of those SDGs that relate to girls' educational and life outcomes and to gender equality. This, in turn, will inform wider research on girls' life skills, including CUE's efforts to transform educational ecosystems.

METHODS

The three organizations examined in this report were chosen with guidance from CUE. All three organizations operate programs in multiple locations; however, the present case studies focus on only one program site (country) per organization. The particular program sites were selected by CUE, with the exception of Room to Read, where the site was selected by the organization, from a shortlist of three countries nominated by CUE. The final combination of organizations and sites enabled an analysis of programs with diverse geographic locations and approaches to life skills. The three case studies relied on mixed qualitative methods. Quantitative methods were not pursued due to the nature of the guiding questions as well as the lack of available precise, streamlined quantitative data and analyses around linkages between non-formal education, girls' life skills, and gender equality and empowerment.

The questions which guided the case studies, as set by CUE, are as follows:

1. What are the sociocultural, political, and economic contexts and conditions from which the program emerged and that it attempts to address?
2. What life skills does the program teach? How did the program come to identify these particular skills?
3. How does the program teach these skills? What are the mechanisms of delivery and the pedagogical approaches?
4 In what way does the program address the structural barriers to girls' education achievement and empowerment?
5. What has been the impact of the intervention on girls and on the community?
6. How does the program measure and assess these skills and their impact on girls' lives?
7. What lessons can be lifted up to inform girls' life skills programming in other national contexts, both developed and developing?

Data collection

Six (of the seven) Capstone team student members formed three sub-teams to complete the primary data collection (Appendix A) over a ten-week period from February to April 2017.

Desk review

Peer-reviewed and grey literature on gender, education, female empowerment, and life skills informed the development of a conceptual framework for this study (described later). Country-specific data on the state of girls' education and the status of girls and women, including gender equality indicators, existing education and gender policies and their implementation, as well as the current

landscape of opportunities for women and girls, were examined. Additionally, secondary materials like websites and program reports focused on the case study programs themselves were reviewed to better understand each program's history, background, purpose, and objectives. This material provided an understanding of the contexts from which these programs emerged, the specific barriers and challenges they attempt to address, and their theories of change. These resources also clarified the target population of each program, the skills that the programs aim to cultivate, and the outcomes they hope to achieve. In some cases, these materials contained information about program impact on the lives of the participants and their communities.

Interviews

Key interviews with program staff and former or current participants from each program complemented the desk review (see Table 1 for the number and distribution of interviews). Interviews were limited to virtual communication methods (i.e. audio and video calls, email, and instant messaging), based on the modalities available to individual respondents. Direct participant observation was not possible, as field research was not feasible.

Separate interview guides were developed for participants and staff (Appendix 2). Initial versions of the guide were based on the project's terms of reference; the interview guide was refined based on CUE input and desk review findings.

All Grassroot Soccer and BRAC interviews were conducted in English; however, the guides were translated into Khmer for Room to Read participant interviews. Verbal responses were back-translated into English with program staff acting as translators, due to financial and logistical limitations.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by program

	BRAC Bangladesh	**Grassroot Soccer** South Africa	**Room to Read** Cambodia	*Total*
Participants age 12-17 years	—	3	9	12
Participants age 18-24 years	—	1	—	1
Program staff: implementers[18]	—	9	2	11
Program staff: monitoring and evaluation	—	1	—	1
Program staff: management	2	2	2	6
Total	2	16	13	**31**

[18] Implementers refers to master crafts persons and peer leaders (BRAC), coaches (Grassroot Soccer) and social mobilizers (Room to Read), in addition to direct field staff.

Program staff from each organization selected participants for interview based on availability and, in some cases, English-language proficiency. All participants were girls between the ages of 12 and 24 years.

Data collection protocols were approved by the Columbia University Institutional Review Board and the respective girls' life skills programs. All respondents provided informed consent verbally; for those below the age of eighteen, parental consent was also obtained.

Because all key informants were assured of confidentiality, all names/initials are withheld in the case study reports. Furthermore, in line with this concern, since program staff scheduled all interviews, when only one or two interviews were conducted on a particular day, dates of interviews are also withheld.

Data Analysis

The developed conceptual framework informed the analysis of desk review and interview data. The analysis aimed to shed light on the nature of each program's pedagogical approach and its theory of change according to critical feminist theories of empowerment. Also examined were each program's relevance, strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in ability to achieve structural and/or transformational change through the development of girls' skills and capacities. A comparison of findings specific to each program was made.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The global commitment to address gender inequality and ensure equitable, quality education for all learners has most recently been documented in the SDGs. The SDGs were adopted by the international community in 2015 and built upon the successes of and lessons learned from the MDGs. Each of the 17 goals in the SDGs has specific targets to be met over the next 15 years. These goals are interconnected, such that achieving one goal necessitates simultaneously tackling issues associated with others. In particular, SDG 4 on education and SDG 5 on gender are inextricable as efforts made to reach the targets set for one will certainly impact the outcomes of the other (see Table 2). These two specific SDGs provide a lens through which the case studies presented in this report can be viewed.

Table 2: Sustainable Development Goals 4 & 5 and Relevant Targets

SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations 4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development 4.A Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls	5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences 5.A Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws

This report assesses the ways in which gender-responsive life skills education can effectively provide pathways of empowerment for girls within their communities. To the extent possible, this report also investigates the larger transformative potential these pathways have for society at large. Life skills education that addresses girls' specific needs and barriers to their rights can help challenge the gender norms and structures of a given context. This type of education can therefore serve as a tool for governments, NGOs, civil society, and other actors to help achieve the SDGs, specifically the targets of SDG 4 and 5.

Life Skills Education as a Pathway for Empowerment

In order to meet the challenges of the 21st century, today's learners require a breadth of skills that not only includes, but also moves beyond the traditional, foundational cognitive skills like literacy and numeracy.[19] In this "information age" and "knowledge economy," it is more crucial than ever that children develop the competencies needed to succeed in societies that may face ongoing violence, gender or ethnic discrimination, poverty, environmental disaster, or other epidemics. Life skills education—education that fosters boys' and girls' abilities to "manage challenges and risks, maximize opportunities, and solve problems in cooperative, non-violent ways"—is increasingly accepted as a core means of addressing the mounting challenges children around the world face,[20] and should be taught through the development of foundational skills, rather than as something separate. Following the OECD Education 2030 Framework and a recent Center for Universal Education policy brief, life skills education should also be conceptualized as the accumulation of certain competencies that can be used to address the various social, economic, personal, or cultural obstacles that disempowered groups face over time. They are explicitly designed to be highly transferrable. The specific life skills—or competencies—that have the greatest transformative potential are discussed in further detail in the following section.

There is no singular definition of the concept of life skills within the existing literature that can be applied universally. Life skills definitions and the competencies comprising life skills education curricula vary across contexts and encompass a broad range of skills. The most widely cited definition[21] comes from the World Health Organization (WHO), which defines life skills as "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour, that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life."[22] This definition highlights the importance of life skills education to

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[19] Care, Esther, and Kate Anderson, "How Education Systems Approach Breadth of Skills," Washington, DC: Center for Universal Education at BROOKINGS, 2016. https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-education-systems-approach-breadth-of-skills/

[20] "Life Skills: The Big Picture," UNICEF, April 21, 2003, https://www.unicef.org/lifeskills/index_statistics.html

[21] This definition is cited in articles such as Prajapati et al. 2017; Svanemyr et al. 2014; Yankey and Biswas, 2012)

[22] World Health Organization, "Life skills education for children and adolescents in schools," in *Life Skills*

the positive transformation of individual student behaviors and attitudes. The WHO definition will frame this study due to its broad scope and the fact that it is applicable to the contexts and aims of each of the life skills programs examined within this report. However, this study will also expand on the WHO definition by also specifying empowerment as an intended outcome of life skills education in order to highlight life skills as a socially transformative tool toward greater gender equality.

Toward a Transformative Gender Agenda through Life Skills Education for Girls' Empowerment

In light of SDGs 4 and 5, this report presents a conceptual framework of life skills that links education for girls' empowerment to greater gender equality. As Nelly P. Stromquist argues, "Empowerment is thus inseparable from subsequent action—at both the individual and collective levels. I see women's empowerment… as an attribute, a leverage that guarantees that gender equality will be initiated, respected, and maintained."[23] Given the focus of this research on life skills education for girls' empowerment, it is imperative to examine the specific competencies and pedagogical approaches that will foster girls' self-empowerment as well as the conditions necessary for this transformation to occur.

Many contemporary development programs conceptualize empowerment as providing a woman with the skills and resources she needs to climb the ranks within systems and structures that might still discriminate against her.[24] As a result, many of these same programs fail to address the ways in which class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, age, and religion all intersect with gender. How can life skills education programs aimed at fostering girls' empowerment take into account the larger structural changes necessary for gender equality? In her analysis of gender in the MDGs, Naila Kabeer defines empowerment as "the expansion of people's ability to make strategic choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them."[25] Implicit in this definition is the idea that empowerment is not simply about the acquisition of individual resources to improve the individual woman's situation. It requires an understanding of the "relations of power in which people are located, within which they may experience disempowerment…and is contingent on a prior or future state."[26] It is imperative that life skills programs effectively foster this expanded notion of empowerment, which

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Education for Children and Adolescents in Schools, 1994, pp. 2pts-in.

[23] Stromquist, Nelly P, "Women's Empowerment and Education: Linking Knowledge to Transformative Action," *European Journal of Education* 50, no. 3 (2015): 307-324, doi:10.1111/ejed.12137.

[24] Cornwall, Andrea, and Althea-Maria Rivas, "From 'Gender Equality' and 'Women's Empowerment' to Global Justice: Reclaiming a Transformative Agenda for Gender and Development," Third World Quarterly 36, no. 2 (2015): 396-415, doi:10.1080/01436597.2015.1013341.

[25] Naila Kabeer, "Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment," in: *Sida (Ed), Discussing Women's Empowerment—Theory and Practice*. Sida Studies no. 3 (Stockholm, Sida):19

[26] Cornwall, Andrea, and Althea-Maria Rivas, "Linking Knowledge"

includes context at its core. As such, this report examines the types of social and political environments, resources, and pedagogical approaches necessary to foster a gender-responsive environment that enables empowerment through life skills education in order to better understand how life skills are learned and taught in addition to what skills are taught.

The following table provides a framework for the competencies needed within life skills education programs to establish pathways for this expanded notion of girls' empowerment. This table is adapted from the Murphy-Graham and Lloyd framework for education as a means of promoting girls' empowerment.[27]

Table 3: Competencies

The following are four key competencies—or skills, knowledge and attitudes combined—for empowerment	
Critical Thinking and Learning Competencies	• Literacy and communication (including multilingualism) • Social studies • Numeracy and mathematics • Science and technology • Power relations and gender dynamics
Personal Competencies	• Self-awareness (understanding one's self-worth; identification of strengths and weaknesses, sexuality) • Self-care (physical health and nutrition, sexual health) • Personal development (includes traits such as emotional awareness, resilience, self-protection, perseverance) • Ability to read one's contexts and identify opportunities in order to apply life skills / Ability to see and make choices based on a vision of what is possible and in support of one's desired life-outcomes
Social Competencies	• Development of pro-social and moral values and respect for human rights • Development of friendships and feelings of social connectedness • Ability to communicate, negotiate, self-assert and work productively with others, including those different from oneself • Understanding of social systems and local and global issues that impact the well-being of self and others • Development of gender consciousness that can be applied to real-life challenges

Productive Competencies	• Ability to generate, to create, to produce (in both the economic and social spheres)
	  • Economic sphere could include: financial literacy, entrepreneurship and agricultural/farming/ technical skills, and environmental stewardship
	  • Social sphere could include: leading public awareness campaigns, community-building efforts, organizing and outreach skills, and interpersonal skills

[27] Murphy-Graham, Erin, and Cynthia Lloyd, "Empowering adolescent girls in developing countries: The potential role of education," *Policy Futures in Education* 14, no. 5 (2016): 556-577, doi:10.1177/1478210315610257.

How can life skills education programs best teach girls to gain these competencies not only within the safe space of the program but also to apply them to change real-life experiences? By emphasizing critical thinking and problem-solving both within and outside of the safe space of the program, life skills education has the potential to promote self-empowerment and respond to gender dynamics. Life skills education also allows for more inclusive and participatory learning environments that are effective in empowering disadvantaged groups, particularly girls.[28]

To accomplish this, this report has adapted and expanded on Murphy-Graham and Lloyd's conceptual framework of the requisite features (or the "necessary conditions") of education for empowerment; these conditions are grouped into three dimensions (see Table 4).[29] The first two dimensions lay out the larger political, social, and cultural conditions at both the national and community-levels that enable girls to more readily harness the empowering outcomes of their life skills education programs and help them achieve their full potentials. The third dimension focuses specifically on the learning environment of the life skills program. Based on findings from the three case studies and the theory of change included in this report, this study has proposed the conditions enumerated in the first two dimensions. However, the third dimension is adapted more directly from Murphy-Graham and Lloyd.

The conditions enumerated in the first two dimensions are grounded in the findings from the three case studies, where higher levels of gender inequality awareness and receptiveness to change among community members were associated with greater program impact. These first two dimensions are particularly important because, as previously mentioned, many of the barriers to girls' educational attainment and fulfillment of their potential are structural. Thus, in order for girls to be empowered within these contexts there needs to be support for such empowerment from the larger surrounding environment, including existing policies and prevailing norms and social systems.

The third dimension of conditions, adapted from Murphy-Graham and Lloyd's framework, hones in on the specific components of life skills education programs that are necessary for achieving empowerment outcomes. Murphy-Graham and Lloyd assert that empowering learning environments "must be physically, materially, and socio-culturally conducive to learning," which also relates back to dimensions one and two.[30] Furthermore, in order to empower girls, life skills education must foster girls' sense of self-worth in relation to others.[31] Therefore, life skills programs should use experiential learning models in order to "facilitate reflection, and develop students' capacity to critically ana-

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[28] Caroline Haddad. (Ed.). (2008). Gender-Responsive Life Skills-Based Education - Advocacy Brief. Retrieved March 1, 2017, http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001781/178125e.pdf

[29] Murphy-Graham, Erin, and Cynthia Lloyd, "Empowering adolescent girls"

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

lyze and contribute to community well-being."[32] This is also key, as life skills are transferrable skills and should be taught in a way that facilitates girls' understanding of these skills as components of competencies that are an asset in many facets of life, not just the isolated contexts and safe spaces in which they may be taught.

These conditions are crucial for life skills education programs to maximize their impact on girls' lives and foster self-empowerment. In instances where only some conditions are met, particularly those within the first two dimensions, life skills education programs can help lay the groundwork for a more supportive, inclusive environment for girls in places where such environments may not exist.

Table 4: Core Conditions of Life Skills Education for Empowerment

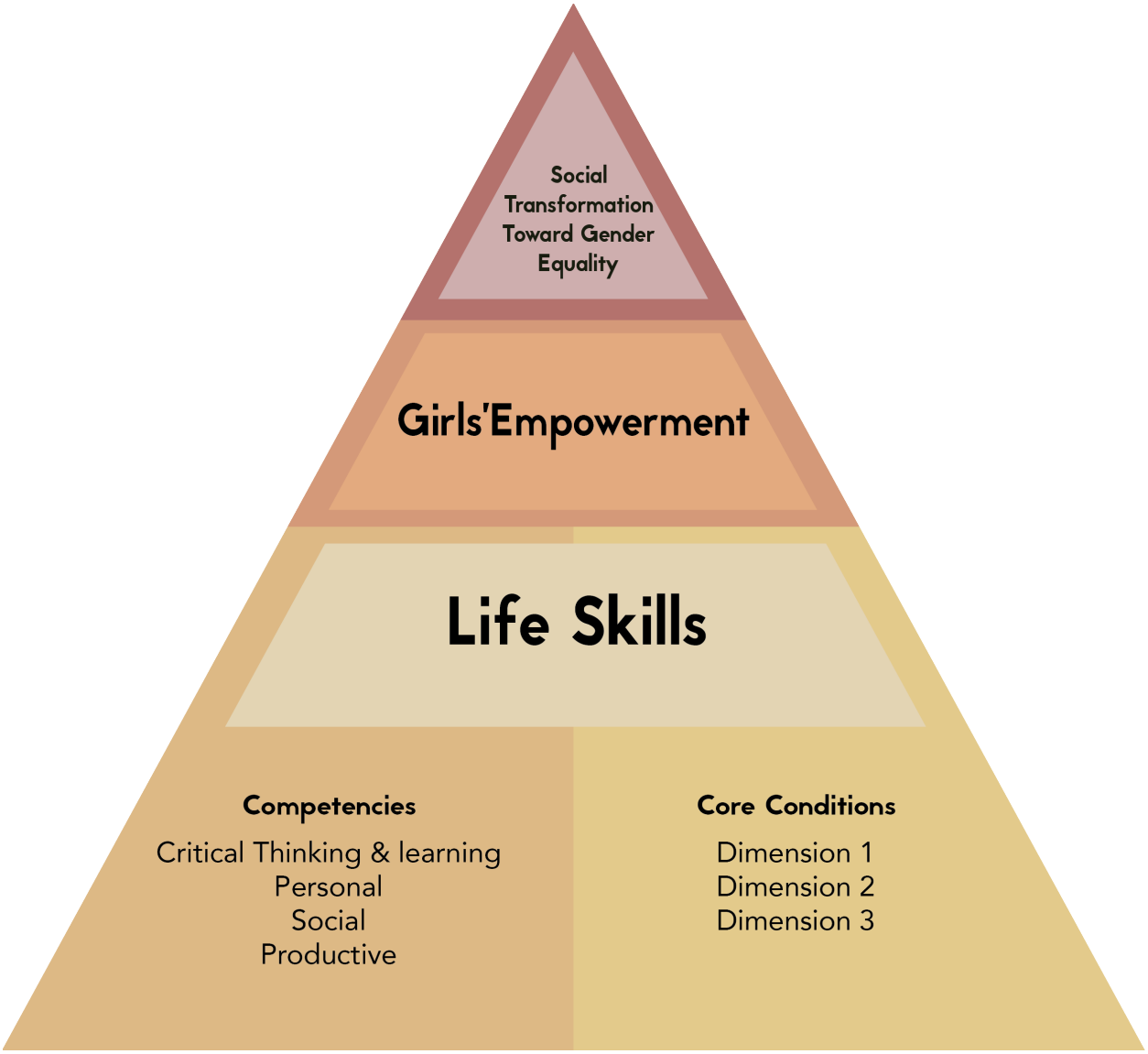
Dimension 1: *National Political and Social Structures*	• Access to Political Systems and Political Representation • Access to Formal Labor Markets • Respect for Reproductive Rights and Access to Quality Healthcare • Malleable Gender Norms
Dimension 2: *Larger Supporting Environment for Education*	• Government Support for Life Skills Education • Support to Teachers and Mentors • Community Support • Community Engagement
Dimension 3: *Life Skills Education Program Components*	• Conducive Learning Environment • Dignity & Equality with Others • Learning Through Action, to be Applied in Different Contexts

Adapted from Murphy-Graham and Lloyd (2016)

As illustrated in Figure 1, when the necessary conditions (enumerated in Table 4) are met and curricula are focused on facilitating the core competencies (in Table 3), life skills education will provide girls with pathways for empowerment and empowered action. And, when women and girls are empowered through life skills education, greater social transformation toward gender equality becomes possible.

[32] Ibid., 561-562

Figure 1


Social Transformation Toward Gender Equality
Girls'Empowerment
Life Skills
Competencies
Critical Thinking & learning
Personal
Social
Productive
Core Conditions
Dimension 1
Dimension 2
Dimension 3

Case Study:
BRAC's Skills Training for Advancing Resources Program, Bangladesh

Context analysis—Bangladesh's girls' education and labor landscape

Bangladesh has seen robust economic growth in the past decade, with an average annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of more than 6 percent.[33] A densely-populated developing country in South Asia with over 80 percent of nationals residing in rural areas, Bangladesh is currently experiencing a demographic dividend. In 2016, Bangladesh had a population of 156 million, with more than 30 percent of this population aged 10 to 24 years.[34] If these young people were equipped with skills and became productively employed, Bangladesh's economic development could be accelerated. However, the lack of quality education available to these young people hinders Bangladesh's economic development.

Although the country has achieved considerable progress towards quality primary education for children aged 6-10 years, it still has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world—between 41 and 48 percent among people age 11 or older.[35] In Bangladesh, the youth[36] literacy rate is higher than that of the general adult population, yet the former still lack the basic education and competencies required for productive employability. About half of youth do not attend secondary school; the gross enrolment ratio of secondary school in Bangladesh is 54 percent and the dropout rate is over 80 percent.[37] Studies by the World Bank and the International Labour Organization show that in 2013, about 41 percent of Bangladeshi youth were considered not to be in employment, education, or training.[38] Ninety-five percent of those who work do so in the informal sector.[39]

Instead of equipping young Bangladeshis with the skills necessary for productive employment, many industries prefer to import skilled workers from neighboring countries. A World Bank report found that over 75 percent of business leaders cited a scarcity of skilled young workers as a challenge to hiring domestic youth.[40] Young Bangladeshis face a precarious future due to their lack of skills.

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[33] World Bank, "Bangladesh Overview," http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bangladesh/overview

[34] Ibid.

[35] National Encyclopaedia of Bangladesh, Non-Formal Education, http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Non-Formal_Education

[36] "Youth" defined as between the ages of 15 and 24

[37] UNDP, *HDI BGD Report*, http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BGD#

[38] Sumon Corraya, "Bangladesh's youth unemployment, highest in South Asia" Asia News, October 2015, accessed March 16, 2017. http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Bangladesh%E2%80%99s-youth-unemployment,-highest-in-South-Asia-35596.html

[39] Asian Development Bank, *The Informal Sector and Informal Employment in Bangladesh*, (Manila: Asian Development Bank, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2012), 17

[40] Kayes Sohel "Youth unemployment a big problem for Bangladesh," Dhaka Tribune, October 2015, accessed April 2014.
http://archive.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2015/oct/14/youth-unemployment-big-problem-bangladesh

The challenges that female youth in Bangladesh face are even graver. In particular, a large gender gap in educational access and attainment persists because of gender inequality. In 2013, Bangladesh was ranked 115th out 149 countries surveyed on the Gender Inequality Index by UNDP.[41] Families often consider their daughters to be liabilities with limited economic potential; as such, parents generally value boys' education over girls' education. This is especially true of education beyond the five compulsory years of primary education for children aged 6-10 years. The average number of years of schooling is 4.5 years for females, compared to 5.5 for males; the girls' drop-out rate from secondary school (46 percent) is notably higher than that of boys (34 percent) as well.[42] Although girls' enrolment is high at the primary level, data shows lower achievement rates for girls, which then puts them at a disadvantage in secondary school.[43] These disparities are especially pronounced in rural areas and among the urban poor.

Female labor participation and skill development are also hindered by several persistent gender norms. Bangladesh has one of the world's highest rates of child marriage with 52 percent of girls married before the age of 18 and 18 percent before the age of 15.[44] After marriage, many women are discouraged from working by their families as patriarchal norms reinforce the idea that a woman's place is in the home. In a 2011 survey, 77.9 percent of urban men and 91.7 percent of rural men stated they believe a woman's most important role is taking care of her home and cooking for her family.[45] In Bangladesh, women account for only 27 percent of the total labor force and are responsible for most of the unpaid work.[46] Women who are employed in paid work tend to work in the informal sector, where they are overrepresented and work in hazardous environments and for low-wages.

Ultimately, despite the consistent economic growth that Bangladesh has been experiencing, its young workforce struggles with a huge skill gap. In particular, its young female population is facing challenges that call for special attention given the large gender gaps in both education and labor participation.

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[41] The index has three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and labor market participation.

[42] UNICEF, "Out of School Children Report," https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/Out-of-School_children_in_Bangladesh.pdf

[43] The Dailystar Editorial, "High dropout rate at secondary levels: Why aren't we intervening where it's most effective?," The Daily Star, February 2016, accessed March 16, 2017. http://www.thedailystar.net/editorial/high-dropout-rate-secondary-levels-783160

[44] *Bangladesh: Legalizing Child Marriage Threatens Girls' Safety*, Human Rights Watch, March 2, 2017, accessed April 6, 2017. https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/02/bangladesh-legalizing-child-marriage-threatens-girls-safety

[45] Naved Ruchira Tabassum et al. "Men's Attitudes and Practices"

[46] Ibid.

Life Skills Program—BRAC's Skills Training for Advancing Resources Program

BRAC is a non-governmental, development organization that operates in 11 countries and is dedicated to "empowering people living in poverty".[47] In Bangladesh, BRAC's Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR) program aims to address the critical skills gaps in the country's workforce by providing urban youth with skills development opportunities.[48] In 2012, STAR's pilot program focused on serving urban youth aged 14 to 18 years who had been out of formal education for at least one year.[49] STAR has since expanded to work in more urban centers throughout the country and is now a critical part of BRAC's overall work in Bangladesh.

Specific life skills curriculum components, identification, and interactions

In 2007 the government of Bangladesh formed the Bureau of Non-formal Education (BNFE) and in 2011 launched the National Skills Development Policy. These initiatives identified the need for skills development in Bangladesh, particularly for children who have not completed formal education.[50] Specifically, the BNFE identifies the need to equip children and adults with life-long knowledge, skills related to employment, and other "life-skills."[51] The BNFE highlighted two important areas of focus: (i) the Post-Literacy and Continuing Education Project, and (ii) the Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children project. The latter project was developed and funded by the Government of Bangladesh in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the international development agencies of the Swedish and United Kingdom governments.[52] The BNFE signed contracts with five non-governmental organizations, including BRAC's STAR program, to deliver skills development to 1,000 urban youth in Dhaka and Chittagong, the two largest cities in Bangladesh. STAR was launched as a pilot program to carry out the broad mission of the Basic Education for Hard to Reach Urban Working Children project to provide non-formal education to urban youth.

The STAR program developed its own apprenticeship-based teaching program, which comprises the majority of the skills training provided to participants. Following the apprenticeship model that has been a traditional means of teaching in the local informal employment sector for centuries, BRAC

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[47] "BRAC: Creating Opportunities for People to Realise Potential," BRAC, accessed April 8, 2017. http://www.brac.net/#who_we_are.

[48] Bhattacharjee and Kamruzzaman, "Towards Employability and Better Livelihood: An Evaluation of BRAC's Skills Development Initiative," Skills Development Working Paper, Series 01, Dhaka: BRAC, 2016.

[49] Ibid.

[50] "Vision & Mission lBureau of Non-Formal Education (BNFE)," accessed March 4, 2017. http://www.bnfe.gov.bd/site/page/3771fc83-29ba-4cb9-848b-6f0487e0570f/Vision-&-Mission.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Schapper, Andrea. *From the Global to the Local: How International Rights Reach Bangladesh's Children*. Routledge, 2013.

pairs each participant with a "Master Crafts Person" from whom they will learn a particular trade over a six-month period.[53] In addition to the time they spend with their assigned Master Crafts Person, participants spend two hours a week receiving classroom education. These education sessions are divided into one half-hour of basic English language skills, and one and a half hours of what BRAC refers to as "soft skills." These "soft skills" meet the broader definition of life skills. The life skills taught in these classroom sessions are outlined in Table 5.

Table 5: Classroom Education Component of the BRAC STAR Program

Topic	*Educational Aim*
Financial literacy	• Provide basic skills in managing accounts and transactions • Provide basic numeracy skills
Market assessment	• Provide a basic understanding of how to assess demand in the informal sector • Provide basic entrepreneurial skills: establishing a new business
Drugs and alcohol	• Provide awareness and knowledge about the harms of drug and alcohol misuse
Crime awareness	• Provide awareness and knowledge about the harms of criminal activity
Child marriage	• Provide awareness and knowledge about the harms of child marriage • Provide awareness of rights relating to child marriage
Women's reproductive health	• Provide skills and knowledge regarding feminine hygiene

Though many of the above points can be considered types of knowledge rather than skill sets, they nevertheless have been selected because they reflect important social issues in Bangladesh and are believed to complement the livelihood skills that participants develop through the apprenticeship component of the program. For example, a participant apprenticing with a tailor could benefit from becoming financially literate as this may help them manage their accounts and transactions in the marketplace. However, it is unclear precisely how the entire suite of "soft skills" was chosen. Beyond the basic acquisition of knowledge and familiarity with entrepreneurship and selected social issues, it is also unclear what the intended outcomes of teaching these "soft skills" are, including the level of transferability of the behaviors and attitudes gained from the training to other aspects of girls' (and boys') lives and livelihoods.

It is interesting to note that male participants are instructed to leave the room when the topic of women's reproductive health is taught. From interviews, it appears that this is done out of respect for girls' privacy and to give them freedom to discuss the topic, rather than a lack of interest in this topic per se. For all other skills, both male and female participants are taught in the same classroom setting.

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[53] "Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR)," BRAC, accessed March 8, 2017. https://www.brac.net/search/item/971-skills-training-for-advancing-resources-star.

In addition to the general "soft skills" taught in the classroom education component of the program, branches of STAR operating in two urban centers—Chittagong and Khulna—are also focusing on "psychosocial skills," such as goal-setting and managing healthy relationships. The particular focus of these programs may be because these are being co-administered by BRAC and UNICEF in an effort to target child marriage rates in this area, which are more than double the national average.

Pedagogical approaches

The STAR program is based primarily on the apprenticeship model, which is a traditional component of Bangladesh's informal employment sector.[54] However, the STAR model innovates on the traditional, male-only model by creating a an apprenticeship program open to both boys and girls that formalizes the training provided whilst reducing the duration of an apprenticeship from several years to six months.[55]

The pedagogical approach is twofold: (i) participants are matched to a Master Crafts Person in a particular trade, and (ii) they receive two hours of classroom teaching per week focused on the "soft skills" highlighted above in Table 5.

The apprenticeship training component relies on the training of participants by an appropriate Master Crafts Person. According to an evaluation of BRAC's Skills Development Initiative, Master Crafts Persons are identified based on the following criteria:[56]

- Experienced as a skilled crafts person in the particular trade;
- Sufficient space in his/her workplace to accommodate an apprentice;
- High demand for the particular trade in the market to increase the participants' chances of landing decent employment upon completing the training;
- Short distance between his/her shop and the participants' residence;
- Previous successful experience in managing apprentices

After appropriate Master Crafts Persons have been selected, they receive training in competency-based education relating to the specific competencies expected of the apprentice in each particular trade. This training focuses on establishing the expectations BRAC has of them as both teacher and employer, including business improvement, health, and working environment safety.

Participants are matched with their trade and, subsequently, a Master Crafts Person using a market evaluation tool designed to determine if the selected skill is in high demand. This information is col-

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Bhattacharjee and Kamruzzaman, "Towards Employability and Better Livelihood"

lected via surveys and discussions between the Master Crafts Persons and BRAC staff. As of 2015, the STAR program offers training for the following 13 vocations[57]:

- Tailor (women's clothing)
- Tailor (men's clothing)
- Beautician
- IT support technician
- Refrigeration and air conditioner mechanic
- Graphic designer
- Motorcycle repair person[58]
- Embroiderer
- Aluminum fabricator and glass fitter
- Basic electronic technician
- Carpenter
- Hardware technician
- Mobile phone-servicing technician

Both women and men are given an equal choice of the trade they will learn.[59] However, it is unclear if any counselling is provided to participants that can help inform their selection of a trade that best aligns with their career and personal aspirations or expectations.

Participants receive six months of apprenticeship training for five hours per day, five days per week. STAR refers to this as "competency-based training." Whether or not BRAC's use of competency-based training aligns with the traditional definition of a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes is unclear due to limitations on data collection during the present study. Both participants and Master Crafts Persons are paid during the six-month apprenticeship.[60] Master Crafts Persons receive BDT2,000 (USD24.67) per participant per month and participants receive BDT1,200 (USD14.80) per month as well as BDT11,000 (USD135.67) on completion of the program, to be used to help start a new business.[61] The monthly wage paid to participants is less than the current minimum wage, perhaps reflecting that these payments are intended to supplement participant's income while they are training and not to provide them with a full working wage.[62] Following the completion of the six-

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[57] BRAC, "BRAC Skills Development Program: Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR) project. 2016 Edition

[58] Where BRAC has partnered with UNICEF, motorcycle repair is only offered to participants 18 to 22 years old due to regulations regarding children working in this sector

[59] Ibid.

[60] Bhattacharjee and Kamruzzaman,"Towards Employability and Better Livelihood"

[61] Ibid.

[62] The Editorial Board. "A Living Wage in Bangladesh." The New York Times, November 12, 2013. http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/13/opinion/a-living-wage-in-bangladesh.html.

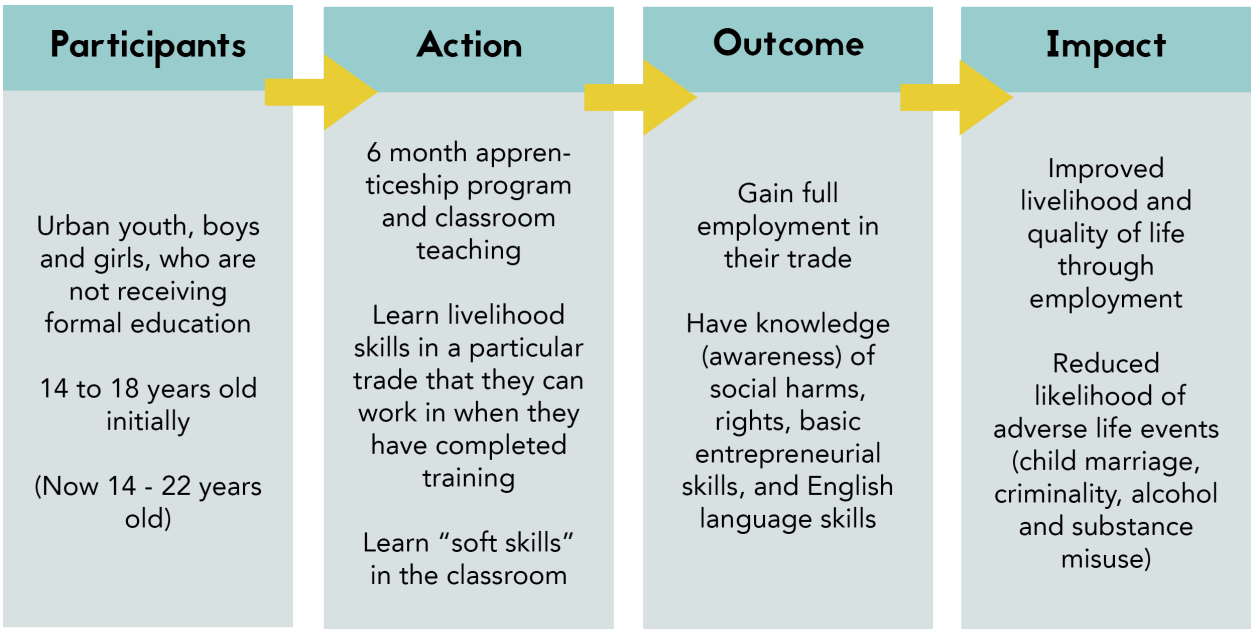
month training, participants are connected with potential employers or establish their own businesses in the informal sector.

Classroom teaching of "soft skills" (see Table 5) occurs for two hours each week and has been led by peer-leaders since 2013. Prior to 2013, in its earlier stages, this component of the STAR program relied on program staff or other educators. The peer leaders who teach these classes now are typically former participants who have received some initial training in teaching. As mentioned earlier, both boys and girls learn together in the classroom, except during sessions relating to women's reproductive health including menstrual hygiene, when boys are asked to leave the classroom.

Theory of change

BRAC's overarching theory of change is that teaching urban youth livelihood skills will lead to better economic outcomes and in turn, an improvement in their quality of life. The "soft skills" the program teaches are also designed to improve quality of life in non-economic ways, for example through the reduction of drug and alcohol abuse, criminal activity, and child marriage.

Figure 2: BRAC STAR's theory of change



Tackling structural barriers and empowerment

BRAC's STAR program faces significant structural barriers to girls' empowerment, given the cultural, historical and political context in which these skills are being taught. An initial barrier to girls' participation in BRAC STAR was the long tradition of male-only apprenticeship training in Bangladesh. BRAC worked to address this cultural norm by convincing the Master Crafts Persons to accept

female as well as male apprentices. This illustrates the significant achievement of BRAC in overcoming obstacles to create core conditions for life skills education for employment, as described in the conceptual framework presented earlier. Although initially reluctant, Master Crafts Persons were encouraged by the positive experiences they had training girls and are now more open to taking on female apprentices. Word of mouth appears to have amplified this effect too. Feedback now suggests that Master Crafts Persons prefer to train girls.[63] This might be explained by the positive work ethic, aptitude, or attitudes of female apprentices towards the trade and the Master Crafts Persons. It may also relate to how girls' attitudes or behaviors at work challenge Master Crafts expectations of gender norms and stereotypes.

Notably, over 50 percent of STAR's graduates are female, and the percentage of female participants has been increasing. In 2016, 4,314 (57.5 percent of the total) of the 7,500 young apprentices were girls.[64] Given that the trade apprentices in Bangladesh have traditionally been, almost exclusively, men for thousands of years, STAR has made ground-breaking achievements in equally involving women in the apprenticeship model. It has done so despite having a gender-neutral program, rather than one explicitly focusing on women's empowerment.

Girls who have dropped out of formal education are three times more likely to be married before the age of 18 than those who have completed secondary schooling.[65] BRAC uses STAR to address the issue of child marriage by providing a training program that equips young women with the skills to be financially independent and presents an alternative to child marriage. The program simultaneously teaches them the value of education and raises awareness of the issues connected with child marriage. The joint BRAC-UNICEF program in Khulna is currently assessing the impact of STAR on the incidence of child marriage among participants.

The impact of the STAR program on girls is not limited to improved employability and increased earnings. BRAC's data show that the proportion of female graduates employed in non-traditional jobs has been increasing. In 2015, over 15 percent of the girls were employed as IT support technicians, hardware technicians, graphic designers, tailors for male attire, and other typically male-oriented occupations in Bangladesh. Another positive effect of the program, based on the observations of the program staff, is that the girls' interpersonal and communication skills greatly improve after the six-month training.[66]

BRAC STAR also works with the local community through monthly meetings designed to discuss

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[63] Interview with program staff.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Girls Not Brides, "Education," *Girls Not Brides*, accessed April 1, 2017. http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/themes/education/

[66] Bhattacharjee and Kamruzzaman, "Towards Employability and Better Livelihood"

the program and participants. Parents, leaders of the community, and participants are invited to these monthly meetings. One participant noted that BRAC has "brand value" in the community because of its successful history of operating in Bangladesh since 1972. This is important, as this "brand value" presumably leads to support from and engagement by the community, which is part of the key core conditions for empowerment of girls through life skills programming, based on the conceptual framework presented earlier in this report. According to program staff, a major driver for community engagement is the perception that the STAR program has been important in preventing boys from urban migration, drug and alcohol addiction, and criminal activity.

Assessment

Methods and issues

This case study relied on data from an evaluation conducted by BRAC which focused on the STAR pilot program that ran from 2012 and 2013. The evaluation was conducted internally using both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.[67] Data on 747 children were collected, comprising 348 program participants and a control group of 399 non-participant children. The children in the control group were selected due to similar socio-economic backgrounds, school enrolment history, and age.[68] Additional data were collected using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders. Information from informal discussions and observations about the implementation of the project was also obtained from program staff.[69] A follow-up survey six months after participants' completion of the STAR program was used to measure the effect of the program's intervention on participants.[70] Master Crafts Persons and program staff were also interviewed to gain insight into the perspective of teachers and implementation staff, respectively.

An evaluation is currently in progress with UNICEF; however, these results have not yet been released.

Key Outputs and Outcomes

- Most relate to employment after completing the program
    - 95 percent job placement rate
    - 95 percent increase in income
- Female participation: > 50 percent

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

From 2012 to 2016, the program provided training to about 18,900 young people in 13 trades and trained about 8,640 Master Crafts Persons in business improvement, health, and working environment safety. According to BRAC's surveys, 95 percent of the participants were successfully employed after graduation, and participants saw 95 percent increase in their average incomes.

Impact

Impact at the individual level—girls' lives

STAR has been successful in providing competency-based training of livelihood skills to young people, especially girls. Both the percentage and the total number of female participants have been increasing since 2012. As of 2016, STAR has had more than 18,900 graduates, with more than half of them being female. Participants have included victims of child marriage, girls with disabilities, divorced young women, and other marginalized female groups.[71]

STAR also has had a positive impact on girls' empowerment. For instance, according to interviews with two program staff, they have observed girls outperforming boys in dedication, diligence, and skill acquisition, as well as taking on increased roles in personal decision-making. In addition, a BRAC Research and Evaluation Division report that documented the STAR pilot program's impact on 2012-2013 participants revealed several positive outcomes for the participants, and the following three are of particular importance for girls. First, the STAR program had significantly increased participants' involvement in income-generating activities and, consequently, their income levels, resulting in increased financial independence for young females. Second, participants had improved understanding and aspiration for decent and safe work environments, and this result is more valuable for female participants because girls are overrepresented in the informal sector and work in hazardous environments. Third, participants generally aspired to improve their quality of life and developed realistic plans for a better future after the STAR program, which helps female participants pursue alternative life choices other than being married off by their families when they are still adolescents. However, because this evaluation report did not provide gender-disaggregated data, the specific impact on girls cannot be determined.

Impact on the wider community

The STAR program also has been reported to have had a positive impact at the community level. Anecdotal evidence collected from interviews with program staff revealed two major impacts. First, as one of STAR's funding sources and supporters, UNICEF's staff that are involved with the STAR

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[71] BRAC, *BRAC Skills Development Programme's (SDP)-Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR) Project* (Bangladesh: BRAC, 2016), 5.

program have expressed their belief that STAR has contributed to reducing child marriage, especially in rural areas. As such, staff members from UNICEF and BRAC have initiated research data collection in Khulna and Chittagong, where the child marriage rate is markedly higher than the national average, to determine if the program is indeed contributing to a lowered child marriage rate.[72] BRAC expects to publish the research results in July 2017. Second, according to interviews with BRAC staff in field offices, some local community members have witnessed a decrease in criminal activities since the STAR program was launched and attribute this decrease to the fact that those youth who used to wander on streets are now either in employment or in training with the BRAC program. However, it is unclear whether the decrease in criminal activity is attributable solely to STAR, nor have detailed local crime statistics been obtained for this study.

Challenges

Based on staff interviews and secondary research, STAR program experienced the following two challenges in implementation:

- **Participant training:** First, parents hold stereotypes of some trades as against religious beliefs or social norms, causing difficulties in matching participants with those trades. For instance, many parents were reluctant to permit their children to work in beauty salons as they considered this trade immoral. Also, program staff faced challenges in participant selection. Interviews with both field staff and Master Craft Persons revealed that participants' lack of formal education had hindered their ability to learn trade-specific knowledge and limited their opportunities to interact with customers, impairing the value of the training. However, low-level of education is almost inevitable for most of the participants, given that the program only selects dropout students between 14-18 years old.

- **Program implementation:** Since Master Craft Persons are responsible for delivering most of the STAR training, BRAC developed detailed guidebooks for them, aiming for effective program implementation. However, feedback from the Master Craft Persons showed some gaps between the preset rules in the guidebooks and their daily practices. In addition, with the duration of the training pre-determined as six months, Master Craft Persons complained that the training plans in the guidebooks were challenging for them and were unable to deliver optimal training results for the participants.

[72] According to UNICEF (2016), the rate of child marriage (girls married before the age of 18) in Bangladesh is 52%. However, one BRAC staff member mentioned in an interview that the child marriage rate in Khulna and Chittagong is above 74%,

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Based on program curricula analysis, performance reports, and interviews with program staff some lessons can be drawn for future programming.

Six months is an insufficient period of training for participants to develop and master employable skillsets. Feedback from Master Craft Persons indicated that in six months, only the basics of a particular skill, and not the intricacies of the job, could be meaningfully taught. Also, some valuable transferable skills that are implicitly taught by the Master Craft Person during the training, such as leadership, communication, time management, etc., could not be fully developed in such a short time frame. The employment data from STAR showed that the majority of the program graduates were recruited by their former Master Crafts Persons; only a few started to work independently.[73] However, this may be due to insufficient skill acquisition of the graduates after just six months of training, precluding the pursuit of better employment elsewhere or the establishment of their own businesses. Based on this study, it is recommended that BRAC consider expanding the time span of trainings to 12 months, which may also require increased funding for the program.

Additionally, this study found that participants' lack of formal education negatively affected their skill attainment. As most STAR participants have dropped out of secondary schools, with limited formal education, many participants face challenges in maximizing the value of the training, including difficulties in learning both hard and soft skills. According to interviews with several Master Craft Persons, participants receiving beautician training—the majority of whom were girls—had difficulty communicating appropriately and "smartly" with customers because of lower level of education,[74] leading to customers' reluctance to receive their services. Thus, these girls had limited opportunities to practice their skills through hands-on experiences, as well as communication skills. Moreover, several Master Crafts Persons also expressed the concern that lack of education accounted for the participants' difficulty with reading and memorizing trade-specific terms, the names of tools, and machinery parts.[75] BRAC could consider expanding the curriculum of STAR program to include cognitive learning modules, e.g. literacy, numeracy, customer service skills, etc., to supplement participants' insufficient formal education.

Lastly, this study exposes the need for greater gender sensitivity in program management. On the one hand, during in-classroom sessions boys and girls are taught together, but when gender-sensitive

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[73] Bhattacharjee and Kamruzzaman, "Towards Employability and Better Livelihood"

[74] The lack of "smartness" can also be explained by the different family backgrounds between the participants and customers. The customers of beauty parlors are from families with higher income and social standing, while the STAR participants are from disadvantaged families, potentially leading to communication barriers.

[75] Ibid.

issues are discussed, such as female reproductive health, boys are asked to leave the classroom. This may result in girls feeling uncomfortable, awkward, pressured and even discriminated against. On the other hand, frequent visits by male program staff to female-owned and almost exclusively female-patronized beauty parlors, can result in both personal and professional backlash for the owners.[76] This was indicated by some female Master Craft Persons in interviews who stated that frequent male staff monitoring visits resulted in some neighbors exhibiting hostility towards and inciting rumors against the shop owners, as most beauty parlors in Bangladesh are exclusively for female customers. This study recommends BRAC impose better program management to protect gender sensitivity for both participants and Master Craft Persons with the following two recommendations. First, BRAC could conduct participant surveys during the training to collect feedback on where and how to improve its program management, especially gender sensitive issues. Second, field staff should be provided with training on gender consciousness.

Limitations

As with any program-centered research conducted remotely without on-the-ground presence, this case study was limited by a number of issues. The primary limitation is a logistical one. Accessing and coordinating interviews, overcoming a language barrier without the benefit of appropriate interpreters, and technology constraints in Bangladesh were all challenges faced while conducting this study. Consequently, this case study relied most heavily on primary and grey literature sources, with only two full interviews conducted with program staff.

Whilst all efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of the case study's findings, the small, non-representative sample size, coupled with limited access to quantitative and qualitative evaluations, means that the analysis herein may not necessarily reflect all aspects of the STAR program.

[76] Ibid.

Case Study:
Grassroot Soccer's SKILLZ Street Program, South Africa

Context analysis—South Africa's girls' education landscape

South Africa's apartheid system ended in 1994, yet it has left a legacy of racial discrimination and inequality still visible in the country today. Inequality persists in many facets of South African society, including in access to education. Under apartheid, the nation's white minority enforced policies that discriminated against the non-white majority, including segregation. As a result of this unequal, prejudiced system, non-white South Africans had limited access to quality education and experienced a lower quality of life than the white minority enjoyed. Nelson Mandela's presidential victory in 1994 paved the way for "a new constitution that enfranchised blacks and other racial groups" and marked the end of apartheid policies that had, by then, disprivileged the nation's majority for 46 years.[77]

The South African government quickly set about rebuilding the country. In 1995, its Department of Education released the White Paper on Education and Training[78] that identified the need for a national education system; it also highlighted new priorities, values, and principles to guide the construction of this new system.[79] The white paper recognized education and training as basic human rights, which the state has an "obligation to protect and advance...so that all citizens irrespective of race, class, [and] gender...have the opportunity to develop their capacities and potential."[80] Furthermore, the policy document acknowledged that "countless South African families [had been] fragmented by such factors as past unjust laws" and other discriminatory practices, and that these factors negatively impacted parents' abilities to support their children's education.[81] In light of this, the report stressed the state's "obligation to provide advice and counselling on education services... for parents, especially mothers, and young children."[82]

In subsequent years, the South African government enacted additional policies to support the implementation of the framework and recommendations presented in the white paper. In 1996, the National Education Policy Act No. 27 was passed, and established that the Minister of Education is responsible for determining a national education policy.[83] The act stipulates that the Minister's policy should protect all persons from discrimination—especially racial discrimination—"within or by an

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[77] The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. "Apartheid." Encyclopædia Britannica. December 12, 2016. Accessed April 07, 2017. https://www.britannica.com/topic/apartheid.

[78] "Training" in this context refers to vocational skills training.

[79] White Paper on Education and Training, Technical Paper. Department of Education . Cape Town , (1995):1-87. http://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Legislation/White%20paper/White%20paper%20on%20Education%20and%20Training%201995.pdf?ver=2008-03-05-111656-000.

[80] Ibid

[81] Ibid

[82] Ibid

[83] National Education Policy Act No.27

education department or education institution."[84] Additionally, the policy notes that the promotion of "gender equality and the advancement of the status of women" is necessary to achieve equitable education opportunities and redress the inequalities produced by apartheid policies.[85]

Despite these policies and efforts to transform South Africa's education system into a more equitable one, there remain disparities in access to quality education, particularly with regards to gender. Though girls' primary school educational attainment surpassed that of boys in 2013 (97.5 percent and 94.5 percent, respectively), South Africa has not been able to come close to that level of gender parity in secondary and tertiary educational attainment.[86]

South Africa's high teen pregnancy rate, even in comparison with other countries in similar phases of development like Brazil, correlates with secondary school dropout rates, and helps to explain the low rate of female enrolment in tertiary education.[87] The Annual School Survey found that 2.5% of learners attending school became pregnant in South Africa in 2013.[88] Data also showed that across different races in South Africa, black girls completed grade seven at the lowest rate—79.3 percent compared to white females who had the highest completion rate at 99.0 percent.[89]

Additionally, the 2012 South African National HIV, Behaviour and Communication survey found that 7.1 percent of 15-25 year olds in South Africa had HIV.[90] Early sexual debut and the misconceptions about HIV transmission that still abound contribute to the high prevalence of HIV within this age group. One-tenth of respondents aged 15–24 in this survey reported having had sex for the first time before their 15th birthday.[91] In 2014, only 24.2 percent of young men and women aged 15-24 years could correctly identify how to prevent sexual transmission of HIV.[92]

Gender-based violence is a serious problem in South Africa. According to the 2013/2014 Victims of Crime Survey, 54,000 individuals sixteen and older reported having experienced at least one individ-

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[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Millennium Development Goals 3: Promote gender equality and empower women 2015. Report. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2015. 32. http://www.statssa.gov.za/MDG/MDG_Goal3_report_2015_.pdf.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Millennium Development Goals: Country report 2015. Report. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, (2015): 87. http://www.statssa.gov.za/MDG/MDG_Country_Report_Final_Feb2016.pdf.

[91] Millennium Development Goals 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases 2015. Report. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2015. 15. http://www.statssa.gov.za/MDG/MDG_Goal6_report_2015_.pdf.

[92] Ibid.

ual sexual offence including rape.[93] Research reveals that boys as young as 12 have sexually harassed girls.[94] The behavior of boys is "part the product of a peer culture which stresses male competition and sexual prowess as part of the process of learning to 'be a man".[95] Boys are also more likely to participate in gang activity which commonly includes sexual violence and harassment.[96] Rape, coerced sex, and the inability to negotiate the use of contraceptives debilitates girl's safety and reproductive health increasing the likelihood of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Significantly, a large body of research confirms the interlinkage of sexual violence and HIV.[97] "When the construction of gender identities and gender relations are built on socially sanctioned inequalities"[98] and violence is normalized girls are less likely to report incidents of gender based violence. 2010 Social Surveys indicate that inequality around race, class and gender result in black girls and young women from socially and economically marginalized contexts bearing the brunt of sexual violence.[99]

Against this background of high incidence of adolescent pregnancy and low levels of HIV prevention awareness among youth, it is necessary to educate young people, especially those from minority or other marginalized groups, about sexual and reproductive health to improve their educational attainment as well as quality of life. Post-apartheid, South Africa has focused on reducing the prevalence of HIV and AIDS by mandating that public schools include sexual education in their curricula. The National Policy on HIV and AIDS education, established in 1995, aims to disseminate information on reducing HIV/AIDS transmission and to develop life skills to facilitate healthy behaviors in youth, such as communication and decision-making skills.[100] In 2004, this curriculum was

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[93] Millennium Development Goals 3: Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women 2015. Report. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2015. 64. http://www.statssa.gov.za/MDG/MDG_Goal3_report_2015_.pdf.

[94] Shisana, Olive. South African National HIV Prevalence, Incidence and Behaviour Survey, 2012. Cape Town, South Africa: HSRC Press, 2014.

[95] Leach, Fiona. "Learning to be Violent: The Role of the School in Developing Adolescent Gendered Behaviour." *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 33, no. 3 (July 1, 2010): 385-400. doi:10.1080/03057920302587.

[96] Burton, Patrick, and Lezanne Leoschut. "School Violence in South Africa: Results of the 2012 National School Violence Study." March 2013. http://www.cjcp.org.za/uploads/2/7/8/4/27845461/monograph12-school-violence-in-south_africa.pdf.

[97] Dunkle, Kristin L., Rachel Jewkes, Mzikazi Nduna, Nwabisa Jama, Jonathan Levin, Yandisa Sikweyiya, and Mary P. Koss. "Transactional Sex With Casual and Main Partners Among Young South African Men in the Rural Eastern Cape: Prevalence, Predictors, and Associations with Gender-Based Violence." *Social Science & Medicine* 65, no. 6 (September 2007): 1235-248. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2007.04.029.

[98] Leach, Fiona, Máiréad Dunne, and Francesca Salvi. "A Global Review of Current Issues and Approaches in Policy, Programming and Implementation Responses to School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV) for the Education Sector." January 21, 2014. http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/HIV-AIDS/pdf/SRGBV_UNESCO_Global_ReviewJan2014.pdf.

[99] Social Surveys. (2010). School drop-out in South Africa: Facts, Figures and Possible Interventions. Johannesburg, South Africa: Social Surveys.

[100] Lerissa Thaver and Astrid Leao, "Sexual and HIV/AIDS Education in South African Secondary

revised and renamed "Life Orientation." Life Orientation takes a broader, more holistic approach to teaching HIV/AIDS prevention and healthy behaviors. According to the curriculum statement, Life Orientation guides and prepares learners for life, and for its responsibilities and possibilities.[101] Additionally, it equips "learners to solve problems, to make informed decisions and choices, and to take appropriate actions to enable them to live meaningfully and successfully in a rapidly-changing society."[102] One of Life Orientation's four focus areas is "personal well-being," though HIV and AIDS remain an integral part of the lessons.

A literature review conducted on the Life Orientation sexual education curriculum found that there is a lack of training and resources for the teachers responsible for implementing this curriculum, leaving them underprepared and under-supported.[103] Studies show that some educators feel uncomfortable teaching about safe sexual behavior because it conflicts with their personal beliefs or those of their community.[104] Therefore, they tend to promote abstinence, emphasizing messages of "danger, disease and damage." The programs are also criticized for promoting rigid conceptions of gender, relying on prescribed patriarchal norms on the ways in which men and women should behave in sexual matters.[105] Lastly, learners reportedly feel a disconnect with the curriculum, which primarily focuses on knowledge and awareness of HIV/AIDS rather than learning healthy behaviors.[106] As a result, many learners disengage from Life Orientation lessons. Given these deficiencies, there is a need for better implementation of youth education programs on HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence. Many researchers and community activists have recommended greater emphasis on the development of life skills, such as decision-making, that are necessary to establish healthy behaviors.[107]

Life Skills Program—Grassroot Soccer's Programs

Grassroot Soccer is a non-profit organization that uses soccer to educate, inspire, and mobilize communities to stop the spread of HIV and AIDS. Founded in 2002, the sports-based program provides safe spaces for at-risk adolescents to play soccer, engage in vital conversations to make

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Schools." *BUWA! A Journal on African Women's Experiences*, 2, no.1 (October 2012).

[101] "Life Orientation: National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 (General)." Department of Education Republic of South Africa. (2003).

[102] Ibid.

[103] Jonathan Glover and Catriona Macleod, "Rolling Out Comprehensive Sexuality Education in South Africa: An Overview of Research Conducted on Life Orientation Sexuality Education," Unpublished policy brief document, Critical Studies in Sexualities and Reproduction, Rhodes University (2016).

[104] Lerissa Thaver and Astrid Leao, "Sexual and HIV/AIDS Education in South African Secondary Schools." BUWA! A Journal on African Women's Experiences, 1 (2012):2

[105] Glover and Macleod, "Comprehensive Sexuality Education in South Africa."

[106] Ibid.

[107] Thaver and Leao, "Sexual and HIV/AIDS Education."

healthy decisions, challenge gender norms, and take action in their communities. The organization characterizes at-risk adolescents as those from historically disadvantaged and economically marginalized communities who tend to face deeper consequences for their actions; these adolescents are also more vulnerable to HIV.[108]

Curriculum components, identification, and interactions

Grassroot Soccer actively runs two programs in South Africa: SKILLZ Street and a two-part program comprising of Generation Skillz and Skillz Utshintsho. The core component of the organization's work is geared towards sexual and reproductive health and rights; Grassroot Soccer's program activities focus on HIV-related knowledge and address the key behaviors implicated in the spread of HIV, including multiple sexual partners, older sexual partners and gender-based violence. Additionally, the programs seek to "help young people have relevant and important discussions about life, take small steps to achieve their goals, stay strong when faced with challenges, and protect themselves and others from HIV and AIDS."[109]

Though both of Grassroot Soccer's programs have similar focus areas they target different demographics. Generation Skillz-Skillz Utshintsho is a co-ed program that targets both boys and girls between ages 15 and 19 years, whereas SKILLZ Street is a girls-only program for 10-14 year-olds. SKILLZ Street was established in 2010 to focus more narrowly on girls as the HIV prevalence among girls between the ages of 15 and 19 years is eight times higher than among boys of the same age.[110]

The specific life skills taught in the programs are self-efficacy, self-confidence, communication, decision-making, goal-setting, and leadership.[111] According to one staff member, Grassroot Soccer focuses on these particular skills because of their relevance in shaping adolescents' behaviors toward HIV prevention, treatment and care,[112] especially when paired with adequate sexual health education.

Grassroot Soccer's sexual health curriculum is based on Doug Kirby's widely accepted characteristics of effective Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and includes 13 of his 17 identified

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[108] Interview with program staff.

[109] "Khayeltisha Skillz Girl Coach's Guide," 2

[110] Hershow, Rebecca Beth, Katherine Gannett, Jamison Merrill, Elise Braunschweig Kaufman, Chris Barkley, Jeff DeCelles, and Abigail Harrison. "Using soccer to build confidence and increase HCT uptake among adolescent girls: a mixed-methods study of an HIV prevention programme in South Africa." Sport in society 8(2015): 1009-1022.

[111] Interview with program staff.

[112] Interview with program staff.

characteristics.[113,114] These characteristics serve as a guideline on topics and pedagogical approaches that are most effective. The Kirby Characteristics also indicate what messages should be highlighted, including those about reducing the risk of sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy, building self-efficacy, and addressing individual attitudes and peer norms on condom use and contraception.[115] Previous research on sexuality and HIV education has found that programs addressing gender and/or power are five times more effective than those that do not; this supports Grassroot Soccer's curricular emphasis on gender issues and expectations.[116,117]

In addition to HIV-related knowledge, the curriculum covers the skills necessary to model healthy behaviors. The program also provides links to on-site and local health services. For instance, life skills activities aim to build communication and decision-making skills necessary to successfully negotiate relationships, as well as to foster self-efficacy and self-confidence to empower participants to resist gender-based violence and peer pressure.[118] Participants are provided information by the coaches on available counseling services, such as care centers they can call. The programs also have sessions during which external partners provide participants the opportunity to be tested for HIV on-site.[119] Coaches additionally report that they have referred participants who were suffering from abuse to social workers, with the permission of the affected participants.[120]

Pedagogical approaches

Grassroot Soccer's pedagogical approach is guided by studies showing the effectiveness of sports

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[113] Doug Kirby was a research scientist who has been credited as transforming the field of sex education. He has identified characteristics of effective programs to change adolescent sexual behavior.
Leslie M. Kantor, Lori Rolleri and Katherine Kolios. "Doug Kirby's contribution to the field of sex education," *Sex Education* 14, no.5 (2014): 473-480.

[114] Ford Foundation, Grassroot Soccer. "More Than Just a Game: Support as a Communication Platform in Sexuality Education for Adolescent Girls." (2015): 10

[115] Ford Foundation, Grassroot Soccer. "More Than Just a Game."

[116] Haberland, Nicole A. "The Case for Addressing Gender and Power in Sexuality and HIV Education: a Comprehensive Review of Evaluation Studies." *Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 41, no. 01 (2015): 31-42.

[117] In the study, the criteria for which programs address gender and power was that the curriculum had to include at least one explicit lesson, topic or activity of gender or power in sexual relationships. Some examples were, how harmful notions of masculinity and femininity affect behaviors, are perpetuated and can be transformed; gender inequality in society; and unequal power in intimate relationships. (Haberland, pg33)

[118] Grassroot Soccer, "Khayelitsha: SKILLZ Girl Coach's Guide."

[119] Hershow et al., "Using Soccer to Build Confidence"

[120] Interviews with coaches.

in changing behaviors and improving health outcomes, and by Social Learning Theory (SLT).[121,122] Sports have been shown to help adolescents increase their communication and self-efficacy skills, in addition to increasing HIV counselling and testing uptake.[123] Social Learning Theory posits that students understand how to form new behaviors through observational learning, and endorses the use of peer educators since the "observer is most likely to model behaviors after people that are most like themselves."[124] Grassroot Soccer's sports-based, participant-centered, peer-education model therefore leverages the coaches' age since they are slightly older than participants (ages 18-24) and their actions, since they serve as mentors.[125] One staff member explained that the coaches are "young enough to really relate to these girls, but old enough to command respect."[126]

Coaches are high school graduates recruited from program alumni, or through the formal education system and NGO networks. Based on feedback from participants indicating their reluctance to discuss menstrual health-related issues with male coaches, currently, only female coaches are recruited. Prospective coaches undergo an interview process and a background check before being hired.[127] Coaches then go through a one-week training workshop that covers the program's aims and curriculum content, as well as a diversity component that addresses ways to work effectively with participants of different ages, genders, and intellectual disabilities.[128] Coaches are advised to adapt their teaching approaches based on the different needs of the participants. The training also allots time for "teach back" sessions, where the new coaches rehearse the activities they will be facilitating and obtain constructive feedback from both peers and Master Coaches.[129]

The incoming coaches are asked to keep the program's "Big 5" goals in mind throughout each practice session as they interact with program participants. These goals are as follows:[130]

1. Sharing accurate information about HIV/AIDS, sexual reproductive health and rights, and gender-based violence and services

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[121] Hershow et al., "Using Soccer to Build Confidence," 3

[122] Bandura, Albert, and Richard H. Walters, "Social learning theory," (1977).

[123] Hershow et al., "Using Soccer to Build Confidence," 11

[124] Ford Foundation, Grassroot Soccer. "More Than Just a Game,"12

[125] Created by psychologist Albert Bandua, Social Learning Theory states that people learn from one another by observing, imitating and modeling.

[126] Interview with program staff.

[127] Interview with program staff.

[128] Intellectual disability can be defined as "a disability characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills." http://aaidd.org/intellectual-disability/definition#.WOw2VFPyvdQ

[129] Master Coaches are themselves trained by the program staff on curriculum delivery and coach monitoring in training of trainers (ToT) sessions.

[130] Generation Skillz, 4.

2. Creating a safe space
3. Building personal connections
4. Giving powerful praise
5. Sparking vital conversations

Through the peer-education model, coaches are able to serve as mentors who participants are comfortable approaching for guidance on life challenges including violence in relationships and ambivalence around HIV testing. This approach differs from the top-down approach taken by public schools that implement the government's Life Orientation curriculum in which teachers are often unable to relate to the girls, are reticent to address sexual health-related questions when asked by girls, and, are generally uncomfortable covering content on sexual reproductive health. In some cases, both at school and at home, girls who ask sex-related questions are actually punished.[131,132] As a coach from Khayelitsha, a township in South Africa's southwestern coast, said, "The girls cannot talk with their parents about things related to HIV, but when they are with us, it is easy for them to talk. We're on the same level."[133]

Grassroot Soccer coaches therefore bridge this gap in adolescent support surrounding sexual health arising from the inability or unwillingness of parents and teachers to provide such guidance. In an interview, one staff member explained, "a lot of times the content will get covered more thoroughly because they [the coaches] know [sexual and reproductive health] is what they are signing up for, it's not just a piece of what they're doing."[134] A participant said that the girls felt comfortable confiding in the coaches if one of them was ever in trouble, because of the coaches' "friendliness".[135] Another participant described feeling comfortable approaching her coach whenever she felt lonely.[136] Similarly, several coaches explained how the participants refer to them as sisters instead of teachers because they are able to provide the support the girls may not find at home. One coach described how a participant confided in her about abuse she was facing at home: "It is easy for them to disclose their problems because I don't judge them like their teachers."[137] Another coach explained how relatable the girls are because of their similar experiences: "I had a baby when I was 15, so they are able to relate to what I am saying, because I was in that situation, so I am able to give them better advice because I went through that."[138]

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[131] Interview with program staff.

[132] Interview with program staff.

[133] Ford Foundation, Grassroot Soccer. "More Than Just a Game," 38.

[134] Interview with program staff.

[135] Interview with participant.

[136] Interview with participant.

[137] Interview with coach.

[138] Interview with coach.

In terms of the pedagogical approach, the SKILLZ Street program consists of 14 one-and-a- half-hour practice sessions, which are taught after-school at school facilities. The breakdown of a typical practice session is as follows:[139]

1. Opening Team Time—During this time, the coach checks in with her team, reviews the previous session, and discusses the theme of the day. This is an opportunity to build personal relationships and establish a safe space.
2. Opening Circle— The players gather and go over the schedule.
3. Soccer or Life Skills Activity that alternates throughout the 14 sessions

Soccer Activity—During this period, each team plays the typical sport or engages in a non-competitive soccer activity where the objects in the field serve as metaphors to address causes of HIV, including multiple sexual partners, and gender-based violence.	***or***	*Life Skills Activity*—During this period, participants engage in group conversations with their peers and coach to discuss how to prepare for and react to any challenges they face. Participants are given hypothetical scenarios and asked how they would respond in those situations.

4. Closing Team Time—Players talk about applying what they've learned to their lives
5. Closing Circle—Players sing and dance to end the practice.

Generation Skillz and Skillz Utshintsho have seven 45-60 minute practice sessions each, with a very similar schedule to SKILLZ Street. Unlike SKILLZ Street, however, Generation Skillz and Skillz Utshintsho do not include competitive soccer play, but involve metaphorical applications of soccer field objects to life skills scenarios and activities. Across these two programs, each session consists of a life skills activity, a 'team time' discussion facilitated by coaches, as well as a 'cool down' session. Through these discussions, coaches impart HIV-related knowledge, as well as teach how to overcome society's gender expectations. The activities, which allow for learning through action, lead the participants to gain communication, decision-making and self-efficacy skills.[140] Since the two programs target different age groups, the same girls may eventually participate in both the girls only and co-ed programs, though not simultaneously.

Importantly, in Generation Skillz, girls and boys are separated during some activities to discuss topics such as gender-based violence and how to "say no" in a relationship. Both groups are brought

[139] Grassroot Soccer, "Khayelitsha: SKILLZ Girl Coach's Guide," 7.

[140] Grassroot Soccer, "Khayelitsha: SKILLZ Girl Coach's Guide".

together to discuss afterwards. The table below demonstrates how the same topic is tailored to the participants based on their gender.

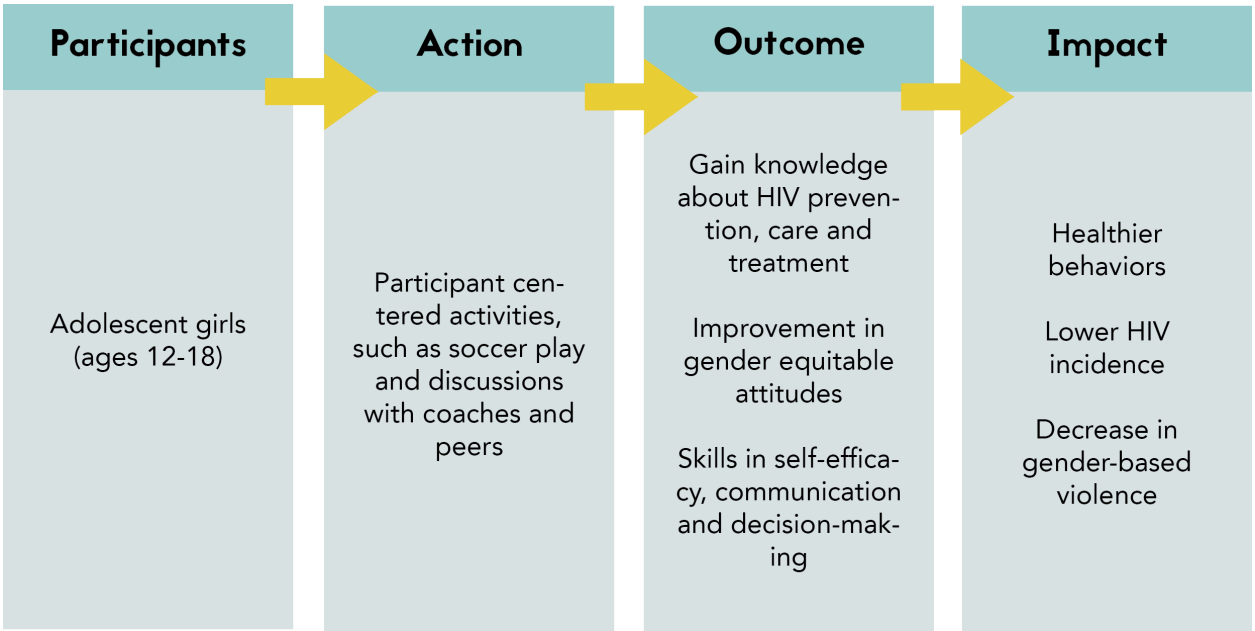
Table 6: Parallel Sessions for Boys and Girls, Generation Skillz

Session	Boys	Girls
Addressing Gender-based Violence ("The 3 T's")	Identify non-violent ways to deal with relationship problems and differences • Take a breath • Think of the consequences • Talk to your partner	Identify different types of abuse and ways to end an abusive relationship • Tell your partner • Time out • Trust your decision
Saying "no" in a Relationship	Identify ways to respect a woman's refusal to have sex • Don't pressure her • Respect her decision	Identify ways to say "no" to sex • Clear language • Strong body language • Changing the topic

Theory of change

SKILLZ Street and Generation Skillz-Skillz Utshintsho share the same projected outcomes and impact, but differ slightly in terms of the ages and sexes of targeted participants and program activities. However, the programs are similar enough to be illustrated in one theory of change diagram (see Figure 3). For female participants, the overarching theory of change is that participant centered activities (such as playing soccer or breakout sessions to discuss application of skills to everyday life) facilitated by coaches will allow adolescent girls (either aged 10 to 14, or 15 to 19 years) to gain HIV related knowledge and improve their gender-related attitudes. The activities will also lead girls to develop life skills (self-efficacy, communication and decision-making).

Figure 3: Grassroot Soccer SKILLZ Street's Theory of Change



The long-term expectation is that these knowledge, skills and attitudes will provide competencies for life skills. The girls will be empowered to better challenge gender norms, end abusive relationships, and manage peer pressure. Additionally, behavioral changes affecting HIV prevention, treatment and care, such as increased adoption of consistent HIV testing, reductions in number of sexual partners, age-disparate sex, and substance abuse, and increases in the rates of condom use and delayed sexual debut are also projected. Beyond these effects at the individual level, the girls will be able to mobilize their communities to lead healthier lives. The expected impact is to lower the prevalence of HIV, reduce the number of AIDS-related deaths, eliminate the stigma associated with the disease, and reduce the incidence of gender-based violence, thereby leading to lasting change more widely.[141]

Apart from the participants and trained coaches, stakeholders involved in this change are:

- Participants' parents/guardians, as they provide consent for program enrollment and before HIV testing
- Government schools, as Grassroot Soccer has aligned its programs to the learning outcomes of the Life Orientation curriculum, and the organization has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Education. (Coaches from Grassroot Soccer deliver the interventions during the Life Orientation program only when asked by the schools. Otherwise, the majority of Grassroot Soccer's programs are conducted after-school using the school's facilities.)[142]
- Local health facilities, such as sexual health service providers and violence support centers.[143]

Assessment

Methods and issues

Grassroot Soccer has a robust monitoring and evaluation system in place with routine tracking of progress towards meeting the organization's objectives and fulfilling donor requirements.[144] SKILLZ Scoreboard is Grassroot Soccer's customized monitoring and evaluation database. Some types of information collected include attendance, pre-/post-test responses on HIV-related knowledge, attitudes and communication, and documented observations of Master Coaches during coach support visits assessing the quality of coaches' performances.[145]

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[141] Grassroot Soccer, "Research Report 2016"

[142] Interview with program staff.

[143] Interview with program staff.

[144] Grassroot Soccer, "M&E Is Not Your Enemy."

[145] Interview with program staff.

Of note, Grassroot Soccer also uses qualitative methods for monitoring and evaluating programs, mostly relying on focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

Questions asked in a 2012 SKILLZ Street study measured communication about HIV with peers and self-efficacy in avoiding risky behavior, as well as self-confidence and self-efficacy to voice and achieve educational goals.[146]

Although Grassroot Soccer has abundant monitoring and evaluation data on individual change, further investigation into the wider impact the program is having on the community would be useful. There is anecdotal evidence of more people in the community being accepting of girls playing soccer, but no studies have been conducted thus far to measure the effects. A staff member explains, "We haven't really tracked enough of how much participants or coaches in our programs have passed on this information and changed their broader communities. The main focus of our programs has been generally individuals and we're starting to make a more concerted attempt to link with schools, health facilities, government structures and communities."[147] Some progress has been made, however, to address the high rates of gender-based violence. As part of the Sexual Violence in Schools in South Africa (SeViSSA) initiative, a baseline survey has been conducted in Khayelitsha in an ongoing study to examine the prevalence of school-related gender-based violence in the country.[148] Grassroot Soccer is partnering with the Soul City Institute to examine the extent to which Grassroot Soccer's programs have been able to empower girls to take action against violence at school, and how these programs improve related attitudes and practices of boys in relation to violence against girls, as well as engage community members.[149]

Key outputs and outcomes

For the girls-only SKILLZ Street program, Grassroot Soccer seeks "to increase self-efficacy to avoid risky sexual behavior, increase belief in gender-equitable norms and facilitate access to and uptake of [HIV Counseling and Testing; HCT] services."[150] Keeping in mind the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in South Africa and its disproportionate effect on girls, Grassroot Soccer appears to be successfully operationalizing its mission to educate, inspire and mobilize communities to stop the spread of HIV and AIDS.

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[146] Hershow et al., "Using Soccer to Build Confidence," 8

[147] Interview with program staff.

[148] Lynch, I., Morison, T., Gomfa, N., Timol, F., & Macleod, C. (2016). *"Kwanele! Communities ensuring safe learning environments for girls" in Khayelitsha: Part of the Sexual Violence in Schools in South Africa (SeViSSA) initiative in South Africa: Baseline report*. Cape Town: Human Science Research Council/Rhodes University.

[149] Ibid.

[150] Hershow et al., "Using soccer to build confidence," 3

Impact

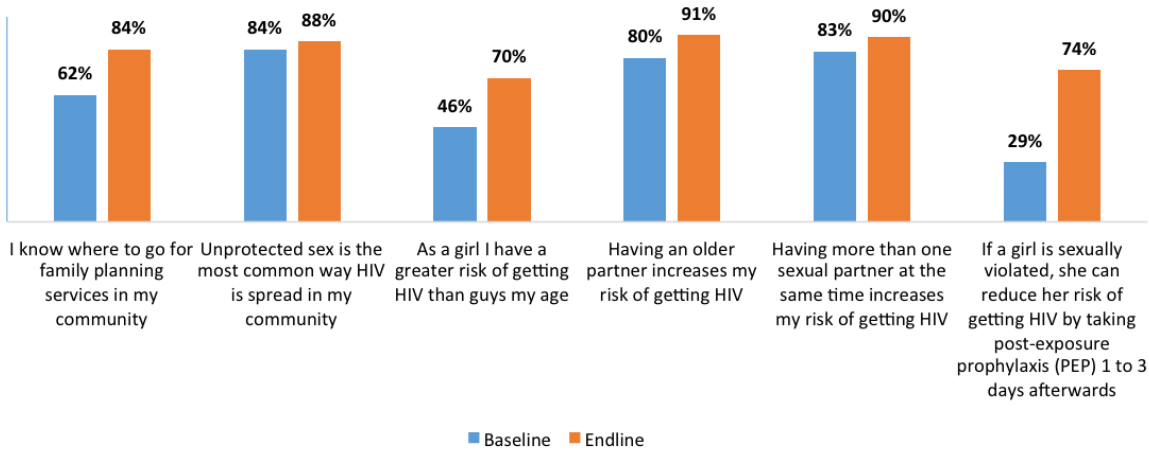
Impact at the individual level—girls' lives

Quantitative studies conducted by Grassroot Soccer, along with interviews conducted with program staff, coaches and participants reveal the program's positive impact in knowledge, attitudes and skills.

Knowledge:

As illustrated in Chart 1, an examination of quantitative data from a 2012 questionnaire given to SKILLZ Street participants reveals the program's effect on girls being able to gain knowledge on the prevention, treatment and care of HIV.[151] Only one item of the survey, "Unprotected sex is the common way HIV is spread in my community" did not yield a statistically significant result, with a p-value of 0.309.

Chart 1: SKILLZ Street Participant Baseline and Endline Survey, 2012: HIV-Related Knowledge



During the interviews, three coaches revealed how this experience has allowed them to gain knowledge about HIV as well. Before joining Grassroot Soccer, one coach explained how she was not aware of girls' greater vulnerability to HIV.[152] A participant explained that the different group discussions allowed them to learn about the prevalence of gender-based violence and HIV in their community, thus expanding their knowledge about the risks they face.[153] A coach explained that some girls have multiple (three or four) or significantly older boyfriends and that following program sessions, these girls are able to acknowledge the high risk of HIV infection associated with these partner-relat-

[151] 514 participants completed a 16-item self-administered questionnaire on their HIV-related knowledge, attitudes and communication immediately before and after their participation in the program in 2012. The mean age was 14.2 years. Hershow et al., "Using soccer to build confidence," 5.

[152] Interview with coach.

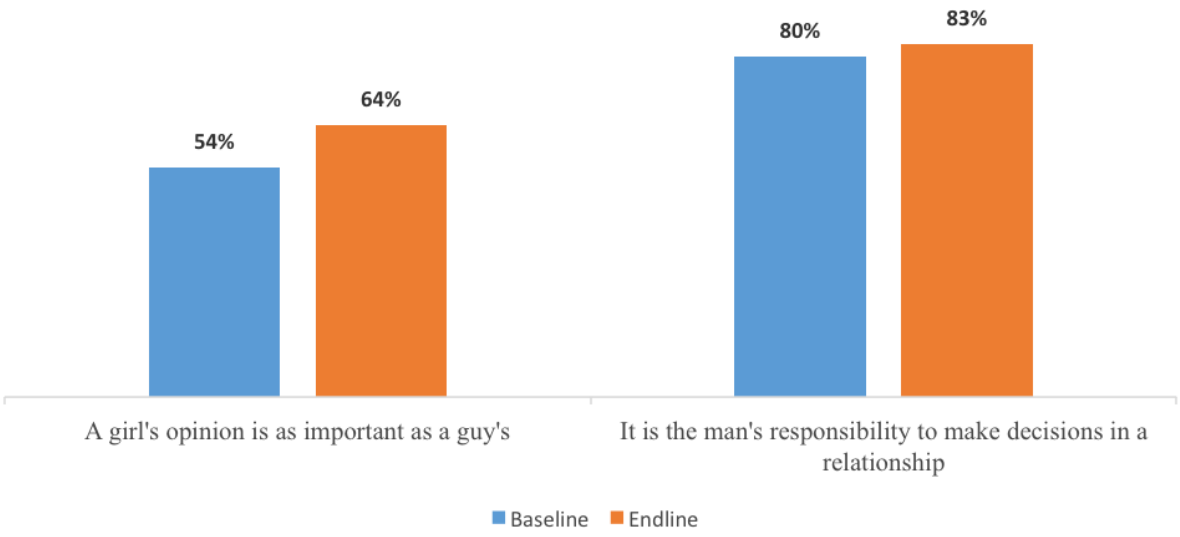
[153] Interview with participant.

ed choices.[154]

Gender-equitable attitudes:

An examination of quantitative data from a 2016 SKILLZ Street study conducted in the township of Soweto and the aforementioned 2012 study show the impact the program has had on adolescent girls' gender equitable norms.[155, 156] As illustrated in Chart 2, although there was an improvement in girls valuing their opinion as much as they value a boy's, the statement, "It is the man's responsibility to make decisions in a relationship" has a p-value of 0.081 and is thus not statistically significant.[157]

Chart 2: SKILLZ Street Participant Baseline and Endline Survey, Soweto, 2016: Gender-Equitable Norms



Attitudes around justifying violence also changed, with Chart 3 illustrating fewer girls justifying violence in both age groups.[158]

[154] Interview with coach.

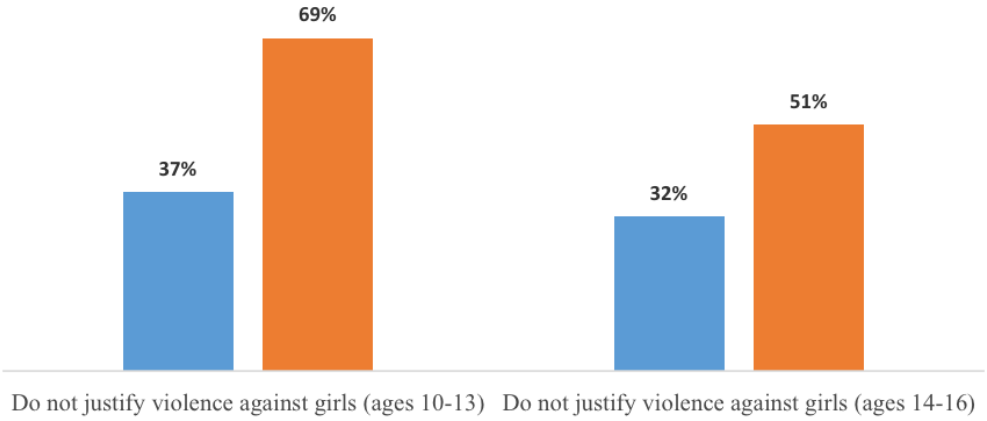
[155] The 2016 preliminary study involved 141 participants and the average age was 13.58 years. Ford Foundation, Grassroot Soccer, "More Than Just a Game," 35

[156] Hershow et al., "Using Soccer to Build Confidence."

[157] Hershow et al., "Using Soccer to Build Confidence," 8

[158] Ford Foundation, Grassroot Soccer. "More Than Just a Game," 35

Chart 3: SKILLZ Street Participant Baseline and Endline Survey, Soweto, 2016: Attitudes towards Violence



Grassroot Soccer has also shifted girls' attitudes around soccer being a male-dominated sport. One of the coaches explains, "…some girls see soccer as something that is only played by boys, but seeing us coaches as ladies playing soccer, they get more interested and they want to do more of our practices."[159] Another coach explained, "Girls like to complain that they can't play soccer, but once you show them, they say, 'oh, if coach can do it, I can do it also.'"[160]

Skills:

Anecdotal evidence and previous quantitative studies reveal Grassroot Soccer's effectiveness in improving girls' communication, decision-making and self-efficacy skills. The examples reveal the ability of girls to utilize the HIV-related knowledge, gender-equitable attitudes, as well as skills in communication, decision-making and self-efficacy and apply these in contexts outside of the program, such as in school and at home. Overall, the studies and interviews prove that girls have gained personal and social competencies through the program, which Murphy-Graham and Lloyd believe are important components of empowerment.[161]

Communication

The 2012 SKILLZ Street questionnaire results reveal an increase in girls talking to someone about HIV outside of the program, as demonstrated in Chart 4.[162]

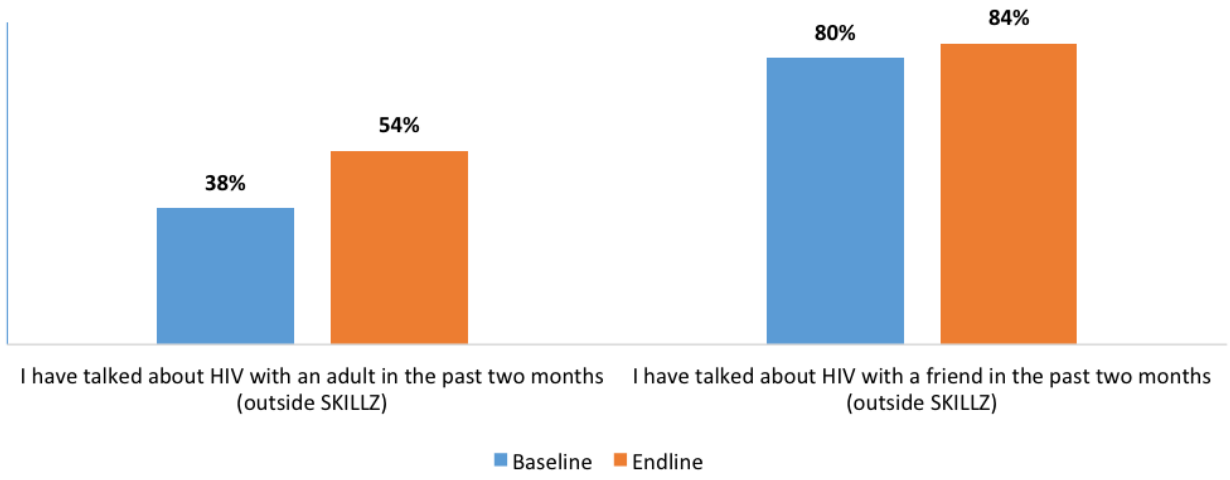
[159] Interview with coach.

[160] Interview with coach.

[161] Murphy-Graham and Lloyd, "Empowering Adolescent Girls"

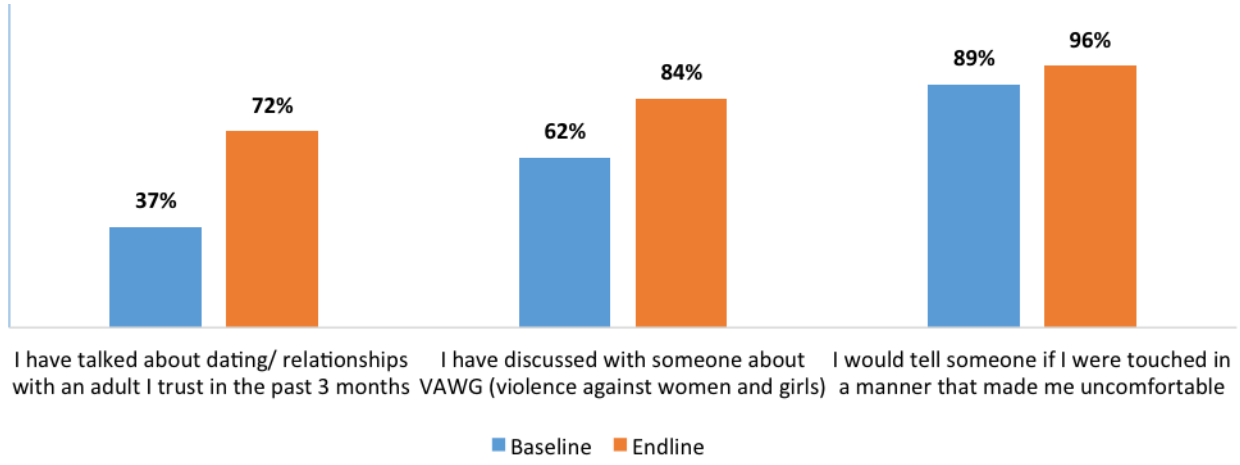
[162] Hershow et al., "Using Soccer to Build Confidence," 8

Chart 4: SKILLZ Street Participant Baseline and Endline Survey, 2012: Communication about HIV



In addition, a 2016 study conducted in Soweto found improvements in girls' ability to disclose and have discussions around relationships and violence,[163] as shown in Chart 5.

CHART 5: SKILLZ Street Participant Baseline and Endline Survey, Soweto, 2016: Communication about Relationships and Violence



These skills measured through quantitative methods focus only on girls' communication related to their health behaviors. Interviews reveal that girls have used their improved communication skills in other contexts as well; the anecdotes of girls being able to communicate and work productively with others demonstrate girls' social competencies.[164]

One 16-year-old participant said she enjoys discussion time, during which participants are asked

[163] Ford Foundation, Grassroot Soccer, "More than Just a Game," 35

[164] Murphy-Graham and Lloyd. "Empowering Adolescent Girls"

questions in a group and encouraged to speak.[165] Three participants explained how the group discussions have helped them overcome their shyness and speaking in front of a large group without being nervous. A 16-year-old participant explained, "I can now speak to people, first I was scared of the crowd."[166] Similarly, an 18-year-old participant claimed the program "has helped me talk around a large group, especially at school, so that I don't get that nervous."[167] Another 16-year-old participant said although she was a shy person before joining Grassroot Soccer, the program has taught her "how to talk, to be free around other people."[168] She said, "I felt so shy so they taught me how to feel comfortable and say what I have to say, even if it's wrong."[169]

Decision-making

Improving girls' decision-making skills is another focus of the program; anecdotal evidence highlights how girls have been able to lead healthy behaviors, but have also applied this skill in other contexts. High levels of peer-pressure often hinder participants' abilities to make the right decisions surrounding their sexual health and behavior. A coach details that some only listen to their friends and that they are pressured into following in the friends' footsteps. "So we try to challenge that to make sure they make their own decisions, they can't be decided by someone else, they need to believe in themselves."[170]

One coach explained her focus is "for them to know that when they make decisions, there might be consequences...they must know the risk. We help them know how decisions may affect them, their supporters, their families and friends."[171] This demonstrates that Grassroot Soccer envisions participants to use their knowledge about HIV prevention and their decision-making skills to change their health behaviors. One participant has learned that going with a friend, or "buddying up", can help her avoid danger when walking in her community. She can therefore use this knowledge and this skill to make a conscious decision not to go alone.[172] Another participant explained how she has learned to stand up for herself against peer-pressure and think of how her actions will affect those around her.[173]

Besides shifts in health behavior, interviews revealed shifts in behaviors at home and in school. One participant said her parents have noticed changes in her: "they say I'm much more responsible than

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[165] Interview with participant

[166] Interview with participant

[167] Interview with participant

[168] Interview with participant

[169] Ibid.

[170] Interview with coach.

[171] Interview with coach.

[172] Interview with participant.

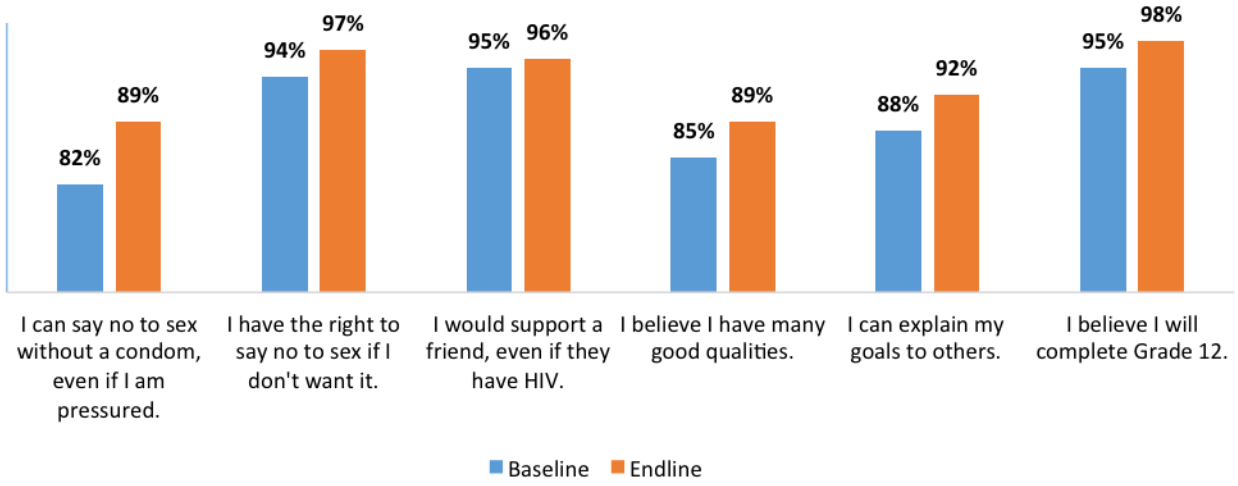
[173] Interview with participant.

before."[174] Similarly, a coach explained how participants have been improving academically as well, "since they've attended the programs, they are not going out at night, they are focused on their studies."[175] These noticeable qualities suggest improvement in girls' critical thinking and social competencies. According to the Murphy-Graham and Lloyd conceptual framework, girls are aware of their contexts, can make choices based on a vision of desired life-outcomes, and understand how their actions can impact themselves and the well-being of others.[176]

Self-efficacy

According to Grassroot Soccer, self-efficacy is defined as people's expectation of whether or not they can execute the required behaviors leading to certain outcomes.[177] The responses from the 2012 questionnaire, illustrated in Chart 6, reveal the extent to which girls' self-efficacy improved.[178] Only the statement "I would support a friend, even if they have HIV" showed weak evidence of improvement, with a p-value of 0.309, while the rest were all statistically significant. Although most of the measurements around self-efficacy are related to healthy behaviors, those related to being able to voice and achieve educational goals demonstrate the transferability of these skills.

CHART 6: SKILLZ Street Participant Baseline and Endline Survey, 2012: Self-Efficacy



Interviews with participants support improvements in self-efficacy to avoid risky behavior. A 16-year-old participant explained that she has learned the steps to "saying no" and can now avoid being

[174] Interview with participant.

[175] Interview with coach .

[176] Murphy-Graham and Lloyd. "Empowering Adolescent Girls."

[177] Ford Foundation, Grassroot Soccer. "More Than Just a Game," 31

[178] Hershow et al., "Using Soccer to Build confidence," 8

pressured in a relationship.[179] A coach explained her participants have become more independent and now have the self-confidence to stand up for themselves.[180]

The coach-participant relationship, focused on mentorship, can play a factor in this increase in self-efficacy. One coach explains, "It's difficult to believe in yourself if people can't believe in you, so we first believe in those kids. We show them that they are important and whatever they want to achieve, they can do it, there is no limit. Low self-esteem is dangerous."[181] Similar to the communication and decision-making skills, an increase in self-efficacy demonstrates personal competencies related to personal development and self-awareness.[182]

Interconnected skills

The examples given in interviews of how girls have changed their behaviors illustrate the interconnectedness of multiple skills. For instance, in order to "say no" in a relationship, girls must not only have the communication and negotiation skills to interact with their partner, but also decision-making and self-efficacy skills to prepare for their actions. In other words, before verbalizing and saying "no", they need to first decide that they would like to avoid risky behavior (decision-making), and then believe they have the ability to change their circumstance (self-efficacy). For instance, a 16-year-old participant claimed that she has learned refusal skills in a relationship and how to stand up for herself against peer pressure.[183] This demonstrates the participants' ability to utilize both her self-efficacy and decision-making skills. These contribute to the development of personal and social competencies such as understanding one's self-worth, resilience, and ability to negotiate.

Impact on the wider community

There is anecdotal evidence to support positive changes in community perceptions of gender norms following Grassroot Soccer's efforts. In an interview, a staff member highlighted that past participants have opened three soccer clubs in South Africa and have been able to gain the respect of their community.[184] According to the program staff, this development reflects directly the competency of these graduates in goal-setting, leadership, and decision-making, all skills gained from participating in Grassroot Soccer's programs.

As mentioned previously, regarding individual-level impact, qualitative evidence also suggests chang-

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[179] Interview with participant.

[180] Interview with coach.

[181] Interview with coach.

[182] Murphy-Graham and Lloyd, "Empowering Adolescent Girls."

[183] Interview with program staff.

[184] The staff member explains, "We have the acceptability of girls playing soccer in public spaces with support from men in their lives." Interview with program staff.

es in what is perceived as acceptable behavior for girls—specifically, a change in attitudes towards girls playing soccer—at the community level. In an interview, a participant said she has managed to change the perception in her community that girls can't play soccer.[185] One staff member acknowledged that this change may only have taken place in certain communities,[186] but the very act of parents consenting to their daughters' participation in Grassroot Soccer programs in the first place may signal the possibility of further change.

Similarly, parents may gain knowledge of sexual and reproductive health and rights through their children who are enrolled in the program. Coaches conduct home visits or send letters to participants' homes to explain the program's purpose to the family members. The organization seeks the consent of the parents before enrolling in the program and also before the HIV counselling and testing events. A staff member explained the emphasis of engaging the parents through the mentors who "talk about the importance of accessing sexual and reproductive health services and help the family talk about these issues."[187] One coach explained that the parents "thank us for being there for their children, for guiding them and for showing them the way."[188] Participants can relay the information learned in school to their family members as well, as a 16-year-old participant explains, "At home, I could tell people what I've learned."[189] In another instance, a girl who was 6-months pregnant was able to convince her parents that an abortion would be dangerous. A coach explained of the child, "…she went home and talked to her parents and they actually understood and they contacted us at Grassroot Soccer to find out solutions, what they can do since they can't do an abortion."[190] These examples demonstrate how family engagement can potentially change the community's perception of sexuality education.

Challenges

Over the years, Grassroot Soccer has faced some challenges in data collection and program implementation, which it has worked to address and resolve. Obstacles to conducting a randomized control trial for HIV incidence demonstrated the difficulty in measuring behavioral change. Further, the fact that the Department of Education pulled out of the project meant that Grassroot Soccer was unable to use antenatal clinics to measure HIV incidence with blood spots.[191]

Another challenge the organization faced stemmed from an apparent oversight regarding gender

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[185] Interview with program staff.

[186] Interview with program staff.

[187] Interview with program staff.

[188] Interview with coach.

[189] Interview with coach.

[190] Interview with coach.

[191] Interview with program staff.

sensitivity, in that male coaches were initially hired for SKILLZ Street, an all-girls program. As mentioned earlier in this report, the program stopped using male coaches following feedback from participants which highlighted the latter's discomfort when discussing menstruation and puberty with males.[192]

Although parents have largely approved of the program, interviews with program staff reveal backlash from some community members about the work of Grassroot Soccer. One coach explained, "Some of the parents are understanding and tell us we are doing a good job, but some of the parents they don't want to hear us, so I can say it's a 50/50 situation." One program staff recalled negative reaction towards the content of the curriculum. "We had a SKILLZ Girl diary that showed the external genitalia and people got really upset and said it was pornographic," the staff member explained.[193] However, the same staff member also explained, "there have been some minor setbacks but overall we've had really really overwhelmingly positive feedback from coaches and community members."[194]

Lastly, although coaches praised the program and explained how the mentorship has allowed them to gain knowledge, leadership and communication skills, they admitted being a role model is sometimes challenging. The participants and coaches live within the same community and therefore they see each other outside of the program. One coach explained, "The challenging thing is that if you are a role model, you can't do any mistakes, you always have to be in the right direction."[195] Another remarked that they are seen as role models within the community so people look to them as if they have answers for all problems.[196]

Tackling structural barriers and empowerment

Today's structural barriers to girls' education in South Africa are bolstered by patriarchal norms and decades-long structural inequalities. These have reinforced a cycle of violence and discrimination, which has left black girls especially marginalized. These, in turn, contribute to the high levels of gender-based violence, HIV and pregnancy among girls, which leads to social exclusion and school dropout.

Grassroot Soccer has worked to shift the patriarchal norm that soccer is a male only sport. This view constrains what behaviors are acceptable for girls. Though it is taboo for girls to play soccer in South Africa, Grassroot Soccer programs give girls the opportunity to play. As more girls play soccer, gen-

[192] Interview with program staff.

[193] Interview with program staff.

[194] Interview with program staff.

[195] Interview with coach.

[196] Interview with coach.

der norms, biases and stereotypes surrounding the sport can begin to change, as evidenced through interviews with program staff and participants.[197]

In addition, Grassroot Soccer aims to equip participants with the skills to challenge gender norms. Both SKILLZ Street and Generation Skillz conduct specific sessions for participants on how to challenge these norms, asking girls to learn through applying the knowledge, skills and attitudes they have gained in different contexts. In these sessions, group discussions with the coaches focus on increasing girls' self-efficacy by instilling in girls the belief that they have the power to challenge stereotypes.[198] However, it is possible that the pedagogical approach, focused on individual girls being responsible for change, might only enable girls to better navigate the existing patriarchal system, rather than change it.

An impediment to overcoming previously-described structural barriers is that girls in the programs are often asked to take individual action when exercising their rights; these may result in unintended consequences. For example, the key message in one session is that, in order "to access health services, it is important you stand up strongly for yourself."[199] This piece of advice does not seem to teach girls that in an ideal society, access to health care services should be readily obtainable, but merely recognizes the fact that program participants live within a system that holds biased beliefs against adolescents, particularly against girls.

Similarly, sessions devoted to teaching girls to "say no" to abusive relationships do not move towards improving power dynamics within relationships; rather, they encourage girls to use clear language and strong body language, and to "walk away" if feeling unsafe.[200] With high levels of gender-based violence in the country and the persistence of patriarchal norms, participants may not always have a choice on whether or not to confront partners when threatened with physical violence, and if the onus is placed on girls, this means that attitudes favoring violence are preserved.

Recognition of the potential for negative unintended consequences like these—lack of gender-responsive change beyond the individual level, and survival rather than confrontation of violence—is necessary. As programs push for girls to be agents of change, they must avoid placing a heavier burden on those who are already marginalized. Hayhurst explains that sport, gender and development programs should make sure to address structural inequalities.[201] Otherwise, the self-esteem and

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[197] Ibid.

[198] "Generation Skillz: Coach's Guide," 49.

[199] Khayelitsha Skillz Girl Coach's Guide," 106.

[200] Ibid, page 71.

[201] Hayhurst, Lyndsay M.C. "Girls as the 'New' Agents of Social Change? Exploring the 'Girl Effect' Through Sport, Gender and Development Programs in Uganda." *Sociological Research Online* 18, no. 2 (2013).

confidence building exercises will only be placing the onus on its targets to be responsible for change and to cope with potential resistance.[202]

A staff member explained that although hard to quantify, there is, in fact, increased agency among girls who have participated in their program. However, this same source also acknowledged, "It's not sufficient to leave all the structures alone, there does need to be a larger advocacy around changing gender norms and changing policies particularly."[203] Another staff member echoed the same sentiment and explained Grassroot Soccer's efforts working with partners in providing soft training to community health workers in order to change how they treat adolescents.[204] Although Grassroot Soccer collects consistent data from participants on knowledge, attitudes, and ability to communicate with peers and partners about problems around HIV, it is much more difficult to gather information on the program's behavioral impact on participants and its contributions to social transformation. One staff member explained, "We would love to see changes structurally, but in the meantime, it's still invaluable to enable young people to make the best out of the situation they are in."[205] Grassroot Soccer acknowledges that "knowledge-based self-efficacy does not change the circumstances of vulnerability for adolescent girls, nor does it reduce risk in many instances—e.g. sexual coercion and violence, or sexual relationships motivated by severe poverty."[206] Although girls are gaining knowledge, changing their attitudes, and developing the skills to make healthier decisions, the extent to which they are able to apply these to their own lives is dependent on how well these newly acquired skills are recognized and respected by society.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Based on program curricula analysis, performance reports, and interviews with program staff and participants, some lessons can be drawn for future programming.

1. Although Grassroot Soccer teaches participants about patriarchal gender norms and promotes the modification of harmful gender expectations, an examination of the curriculum suggests there is room for improvement in gender sensitivity. For instance, many gender binaries were found when girls were taught how to behave with their partners, and only male pronouns were used to describe partners.[207] In another instance, gendered categories were used in a session dedicated to decision-making. Girls were asked to "start making decisions

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[202] Ibid.

[203] Interview with program staff.

[204] Interview with program staff.

[205] Interview with program staff.

[206] Ford Foundation, Grassroot Soccer. "More Than Just a Game," 31.

[207] Grassroot Soccer, "Khayelitsha: SKILLZ Girl Coach's Guide."

about the kind of woman, friend, daughter or sister you want to be".[208] Having instead more gender neutral terms, such as "student", "person" or "child" would help lessen the patriarchal gender norms that dictate the expected behaviors of girls and boys. A program staff explained that Grassroot Soccer is in the process of reviewing the curriculum, saying, "Some of our curricula does need updating; some of the language is not always as inclusive as it should be, also with regards to the LGBTQI communities for example."[209]

2. As mentioned earlier, in Grassroot Soccer's co-ed life skills program, girls and boys are given separate but parallel sessions devoted to discussions surrounding topics like gender-based violence. As seen in Table 6, these parallel sessions may portray girls as inherently the victims and boys as the perpetrators. Although girls are certainly more vulnerable to gender-based violence and their subordination should not be ignored, these broad classifications may further gender stereotypes. Instead, a group discussion where the same information is shared may be beneficial, since changing gender dynamics requires the engagement of boys and girls.

3. As discussed in the Structural Barriers to Empowerment section of this report, although the program seeks to increase girls' agency to navigate within a patriarchal society, the curriculum can be altered to better address power dynamics. Although there is an emphasis on teaching participants about the persistence of gender norms and on providing them with the self-confidence and self-efficacy to overcome these challenges, the specific advice given can be altered. For instance, the lessons on "how to say no" in a relationship and on confronting an abusive partner put the onus on girls to change their situations, without changing their environments or tackling the root cause(s) of these challenges. As an example, participants are advised to use a "strong, confident voice without shouting or yelling" when saying "no", but the actual problem lies in gender hierarchies and not in girls' language or tone of voice.[210] This may give the girls the false notion that gender-based violence is due to their behavior instead of their partners', and may not prepare them for potential physical, verbal or emotional backlash they may receive. Although girls may gain the skills necessary to resist, their actions will only be beneficial when structural change also occurs. Therefore, the efforts to change gender expectations and address larger structural barriers to gender equality should be expanded to the larger community.

4. Many participants participate in both Generation Skillz and SKILLZ Street. In order to avoid repetition in the lessons and to maintain participant interest, Grassroot Soccer can expand networks to reach more girls, and can develop more variations in the curricula. A coach

[208] Grassroot Soccer, "Khayelitsha: SKILLZ Girl Coach's Guide."

[209] Interview with program staff.

[210] Grassroot Soccer, "Khayelitsha: SKILLZ Girl Coach's Guide," 71.

explained that girls repeating similar sessions in two consecutive years say "oh, I know this", and recommends reaching out to more schools to "make it more interesting".[211] Another coach explained that Grassroot Soccer has been delivering the programs in the same schools for three years in a row, so "the kids get bored because we are teaching them over and over again."[212]

5. Increased efforts to measure program impact on past participants and on the wider community are needed. Although program staff explained the expensive nature of longitudinal studies and donors' reluctance to fund, Grassroot Soccer could benefit from tracking past participants' achievements.[213] If the organization collects data on how the participants have been able to transfer the skills they have learned in the program to other contexts, this can help with tailoring the curricula accordingly to maximize impact. One program staff noted that besides anecdotal evidence, no efforts have been made to track how the participants change the broader community. This informant also, however, stated that more effort is currently being made to analyze the program's impact in schools.[214] The Sexual Violence in Schools in South Africa (SeViSSA) initiative, which will have a combined intervention with Grassroot Soccer and Soul City Intervention, demonstrates the progress that has been made to address sexual and gender-based violence in schools, a prevalent issue in South Africa. Data collected after the pilot program concludes will demonstrate whether the efforts of the two organizations have been able to change the school climate and education.[215]

6. In the future, Grassroot Soccer can expand on measuring and evaluating beyond healthy behavior outcomes, to other contexts as well. A staff member admits the program's studies have focused on particular health outcomes and explains the program's recent efforts to look more on how these skills are applied in specific contexts, such as in education outcomes.[216] "It's just a missed opportunity," the staff member adds, "because the skills you need to make those decisions in an HIV sphere are really similar to the types of skills you're going to need in relationships and in school."[217] The anecdotal examples given in the Impact section reveal how the knowledge, attitudes and skills are transferred into girls' lives outside of the program, but more quantitative efforts can further support this observation.

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[211] Interview with coach.

[212] Interview with coach.

[213] Interview with program staff.

[214] Interview with program staff.

[215] Ben Sanders, Barkley CK, "Where Do Children Play? Alarming Levels of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Township Schools in Cape Town, South Africa: Baseline Data for a Joint Grassroot Soccer & Soul City Intervention." Presented at International AIDS Conference, Durban, South Africa, 2016.

[216] Interview with program staff.

[217] Interview with program staff.

7. The girls-only SKILLZ Street program was created due to the greater vulnerability of girls in contracting HIV. Interviews with program staff and coaches reveal the possibility of having a boys-only program in the future; however, there should be an analysis of the impact single sex vs. co-ed programs have in sexuality education programs. One coach said there must be a boys program led by male coaches "because boys also face challenges like girls, even the boys have the same issues. For example, most of the boys bully, there's drug abuse, most of them drop out."[218] A staff member similarly explained that a boys-only program would help "with engaging young men and boys, not just as perpetrators, but also victims of violence, which they often are, and would also engage them as allies in the movement for gender equality."[219]

Limitations

When reviewing this case study, a number of limitations should be considered. Due to the remote nature of the work, the screening and selection of the participants was left to country level program staff. Consequently, older participants with stronger English speaking skills were selected and younger participants were not interviewed. Thus, the individual-level impacts were determined from exclusively older participants and findings may have been different if younger participants had been included.

Since the participants were not randomly chosen, those who consented to be interviewed may have stronger feelings towards the program and may not be representative of the cohort. In addition, non-verbal signals were not visible during the remote interviews. Therefore, there may have been some sample selection bias and subtle information may have been missed. However, the likelihood of this is small due to the consistency in responses from participants.

The time constraints also presented limitations for the study. Interviews with participants and program level staff were limited to one of three sites and it is uncertain if interviews with the other sites would have presented different information.

Lastly, some of the monitoring and evaluation reports provided included information from baseline reports of ongoing studies, leaving trend data to be determined in the future.

[218] Interview with coach.

[219] Interview with program staff.

Case Study:
Room to Read's Girls' Education Program, Cambodia

Context analysis—Cambodia's girls' education landscape

Over 40 years have passed since the Khmer Rouge regime seized control of Cambodia and enacted its "Year Zero" plan. This plan saw the systematic extermination of Cambodia's educated classes—including teachers, doctors, lawyers, and other educated professionals—and the end of "normal schooling," as the regime shuttered public schools and universities, converting them into re-education camps, prisons, and stables.[220]

Today, despite decades of peace, Cambodia continues to grapple with the residual effects of the regime. The Khmer Rouge exterminated an entire generation of educated professionals and role models.[221] It also took a generation of children as soldiers, robbing them of an education.[222]

The fall of the regime and establishment of peace in the country resulted in baby booms that have produced a "youth bulge."[223] Cambodia's population is over 15.5 million and approximately 37.5 percent of that population is under the age of 18.[224] Unfortunately, the country's education system is unable to adequately support this population, leading to an expansion in the workforce, but a shortage of skilled workers.[225]

Cambodia's history and current level of poverty shapes priorities for many citizens and their families. Over 13 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, while millions more are considered "near-poor."[226][227] Moreover, 36 percent of the youth population lives below the poverty line.[228] Thus poverty remains a major barrier to education, and many families cannot afford to send their children to school.

Though the country has a primary school enrolment ratio of 95 percent—with just a two percent

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[220] Al Jazeera staff, "Key Facts on the Khmer Rouge." Al Jazeera, February 3, 2012, accessed March 19, 2017. http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/02/20122314155454169.html

[221] Room to Read, *Through Their Eyes, In Their Voices*, 2011.

[222] Tim Hume, Anna Coren, and Chieu Luu, "Scars of the Khmer Rouge: How Cambodia is healing from a genocide." *CNN*, April 16, 2015, accessed March 19, 2017. http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/16/asia/cambodia-khmer-rouge-anniversary/

[223] OECD, *Structural Policy Country Notes: Cambodia*, 2013.

[224] UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2016: A fair chance for every child*, 2016.

[225] OECD, *Structural Policy Country Notes: Cambodia*, 2013.

[226] "Near-poor" refers to those who live on less than $2.30 a day. World Bank. "Poverty Has Fallen." https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2014/02/20/poverty-has-fallen-yet-many-cambodians-are-still-at-risk-of-slipping-back-into-poverty

[227] Asian Development Bank, "Poverty in Cambodia," 2016, accessed March 20, 2017. https://www.adb.org/countries/cambodia/poverty

[228] OECD, "Key Issues Affecting Youth in Cambodia," 2014, accessed 21 March, 2017. http://www.oecd.org/dev/inclusivesocietiesanddevelopment/youth-issues-in-cambodia.htm

disparity between girls and boys—there is a steep drop in secondary school enrolment ratios, where the rate drops to 40 percent for boys and 37 percent for girls.[229] Similarly, Cambodia's primary completion rates stand at about 96 percent, as of 2014, while its lower secondary completion rate is less than half that at 45.1 percent.[230],[231] The rates for tertiary enrolment are even lower. This may be explained by the fact that primary and lower secondary school are compulsory, while pre-school and upper secondary school are not.[232] The low completion rate of lower secondary school might also be attributed to the fact that though lower secondary is compulsory "in principle," it is perhaps not treated as such in practice.[233]

This may be explained by the low return on education in Cambodia. More years of schooling are not leading to better job opportunities or substantially higher wages for most Cambodians.[234] Therefore, in addition to poverty acting as a barrier to education, many families are discouraged from sending their children for further education because they see little value in it due to the relatively low return on schooling beyond basic education.[235] As a result, in Cambodia, 19 percent of children ages 5-14 work[236]. This is comparable to neighboring Vietnam's child labor rate of 16 percent, but substantially higher than either Laos' or Thailand's rates (10 and 8 percent respectively).[237] Additionally, 32.4 percent of the country's labor force is comprised of youth[238].[239]

Girls face additional challenges in this regard. Not only will more schooling be unlikely to help girls find better employment, but it is also unlikely to help girls marry. Khmer girls are traditionally expected to be married by their early twenties, not uncommonly by the age of 15 or 16.[240] Therefore, girls who stay in school beyond those ages may be seen as having "too much" education, and may be

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[229] UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2016: A fair chance for every child*, 2016.

[230] World Bank. http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.CMPT.ZS?locations=KH

[231] World Bank. http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.CMPT.LO.ZS

[232] UNESCO International Board on Education, "World Data on Education," 2010/11, http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Cambodia.pdf

[233] Ibid.

[234] OECD, *Structural Policy Country Notes: Cambodia*, 2013.

[235] Ibid.

[236] UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2016: A fair chance for every child*, 2016

[237] Ibid,pg. 151-153

[238] Youth here is defined as between the ages of 15 and 24. http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session6/KH/UNCT_KHM_UPRS06_2009_document3.pdf

[239] OECD, "Key Issues Affecting Youth in Cambodia," 2014, accessed 21 March, 2017. http://www.oecd.org/dev/inclusivesocietiesanddevelopment/youth-issues-in-cambodia.htm

[240] Graham Fordham, A*dolescent Reproductive Health in Cambodia: Status, Policies, Programs*, and Issues, Policy Project, January 2003.

considered less desirable for marriage.[241]

The traditional place for a girl in Cambodia is in the home. "Marriage and domestic labor are viewed as the primary goals for girls."[242] As a result, girls and their education tend to be valued less than boys and their education, so it is often girls who are taken out of school to help care for family members and/or household duties.[243] In fact, despite a minimum legal age of 18, 16 percent of girls between the ages of 10 and 19 are married or in a union, and seven percent give birth by the time they turn 18.[244],[245] This is comparable to the child marriage rate of nearby Thailand, but nearly double that of Vietnam.[246]

Though, in recent years, the government of Cambodia has made significant improvements to its education system, there remains much work to be done overall, particularly to support girls' education.[247] For instance, in the last ten years, the government has built close to 1,000 new schools and put more resources toward making education more easily and equally accessible.[248] Yet, in 2016 Cambodia was ranked 112th out of 144 for gender equality across sectors, and 128th for gender equality in educational attainment, where girls achieve only 89.7 percent of what boys do.[249] The average number of years of schooling for girls is 9.2 years, compared with 10.4 for boys.[250] The gender disparity in school attendance and enrolment is more significant at secondary and tertiary levels, which the Cambodian government attributes to poverty, late entry into school, and pregnancy.[251] Moreover, as many rural areas do not have public secondary schools, students may need to move to urban areas to continue attending school, and many families are unwilling to send their daughters away to school.[252] Particularly for girls, there are safety concerns related to living and traveling to school in urban areas, as young Cambodians are believed to experience the most violence and abuse of all age groups in the country, especially gender-based and domestic violence[253].

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[241] Ibid.

[242] Ibid.

[243] Ibid.

[244] Civil Code, article 948.

[245] UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2016: A fair chance for every child*, 2016.

[246] Ibid, pg.152-153.

[247] USAID, "Cambodia: Education." February 2, 2017, accessed March 20, 2017. https://www.usaid.gov/cambodia/education

[248] Ibid.

[249] World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2016*, 2016.

[250] UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 2016: A fair chance for every child*, 2016.

[251] OECD, *Structural Policy Country Notes: Cambodia*, 2013.

[252] Ibid.

[253] OECD, "Key Issues Affecting Youth in Cambodia," 2014.

Life Skills Program—Room to Read's Girls' Education Program (GEP)

Room to Read, an international non-governmental organization based in the United States, seeks to transform the lives of millions of children in developing countries by focusing on literacy and gender equality in education. In particular, Room to Read's Girls' Education Program (GEP) specifically focuses on girls' transitions into and throughout secondary school, as well as into post-secondary school life because Room to Read believes that this is where the biggest and most permanent gaps in gender equality in education take place. The GEP operates in nine different countries, with the aim of supporting girls to complete secondary school with the skills necessary to negotiate key life decisions, and has supported more than 33,000 girls across 219 schools.[254]

Curriculum components, identification, and interactions

By targeting girls who are transitioning to or already in secondary school, the GEP also catches girls during a particularly crucial and vulnerable period in their lives: adolescence. Given that adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to the social pressures mentioned in the previous section and in light of Cambodia's low secondary school enrolment rate for girls, the GEP's focus on this transition period as a means of keeping girls in school through secondary school seems apt. It is possible that girls are made more vulnerable during adolescence for lack of having developed these key competencies earlier in life, and that building these skills and competencies prior to adolescence might help mitigate some of the risks and vulnerabilities girls experience during adolescence.

Room to Read has been present in Cambodia since 2002, and its activities and programs have focused on the organization's larger mission of promoting literacy by providing material support, such as establishing libraries in schools, helping to renovate schools, and training teachers in phonics-based approaches to teaching literacy.[255] The organization operates in government schools in the provinces of Banteay Meanchey, Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom, Prey Veng, Tbong Khmum and Siem Reap, though it does not offer the GEP in all of those areas.[256]

When Room to Read first began working specifically to support girls in Cambodia, the program did not take as integrated or holistic an approach as they do today. Initially, the organization primarily provided girls with material support to enable them to attend school more easily.[257] For example, the organization provided bicycles to girls who lived far from their schools, uniforms to those who could

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[254] Ibid.

[255] Room to Read, "When a Child Reads, She Can Write Her Future", https://www.roomtoread.org/literacy-girls-education/literacy/?tab=teacher%20training

[256] Ibid

[257] Interview with program staff.

not afford them, and scholarships.[258] The program initially took a "girl-based" approach, in which girls were individually identified as needing the program's support. However, by 2009 Room to Read had moved to a school-based approach and began supporting entire cohorts, rather than individually identified girls. A year later, the organization began piloting its Enhance Program, which provided material support, taught life skills, provided mentorship, encouraged schools and teachers to be gender responsive, and engaged with family and community members.[259] The program ran for four years and received positive feedback from community members, but strained the capacity of the program facilitators, also called social mobilizers, on whom the program relied.[260] In 2015, the program's focus was narrowed down to four elements: providing material support, teaching life skills, providing mentorship, and engaging family and community members.[261] Though initially the program was known as a simplified Enhance Program, this is now known as the GEP.

As mentioned, the Enhance Program was streamlined down to the four components of the GEP—*life skills*, *mentoring*, *family and community engagement*, and *material support*—that act as complements to one another to provide a holistic approach to girls' success and empowerment. The following is an overview of the GEP and its four components; an in-depth examination of the role and qualifications of social mobilizers—who take on dual roles as both teachers of the life skills sessions and mentors—is provided in the following section on *Pedagogical Approaches.*

> *Life Skills*, in Room to Read's consideration, are "competencies—such as empathy, critical thinking and self-efficacy—that [girls] need to meet day-to-day challenges and make informed decisions."[262] The competencies taught within the GEP are broken into 10 skills in three different categories (*see Table 7)*. These skills were identified based on the World Health Organization's (WHO) definition of life skills.[263] The skills were also selected bearing in mind the skills that girls would need to successfully navigate the physical, social, and emotional changes they face during adolescence.[264]
>
> These skills are taught by social mobilizers to secondary school girls in their formal school settings. In order to foster girls' development of these competencies, the GEP

[258] Interview with program staff.

[259] Interview with program staff.

[260] Ibid.

[261] Interview with program staff.

[262] How These Two Cambodian Schoolgirls Became Inspiring Role Models for Other Girls—and Kept Them From Dropping Out," Room to Read, https://medium.com/@RoomtoRead/how-these-two-cambodian-schoolgirls-became-inspiring-role-models-for-other-girls-and-kept-them-7cceb4dbaa71

[263] Interview with program staff.

[264] Interview with program staff.

teaches these 10 skills together with certain areas of knowledge the program aims to impart, such as good hygiene practice and the negative impact of child marriage.[265] The skills the girls learn in each session are applied to the knowledge areas; for example, girls may learn communication skills by holding debates on the effects of domestic violence on children and families.[266]

Table 7: Room to Read's Girls Education Program-10 Life Skills

Self-Awareness	Self-Efficacy	Social-Awareness
• Self-confidence • Expressing and managing emotion • Empathy	• Self-control • Critical thinking • Decision-making • Perseverance	• Communication • Creative problem-solving • Relationship building

Mentoring is a key component of the GEP's holistic approach to teaching girls' life skills and empowering them to become advocates for their own continued education. Social mobilizers, who are employed by Room to Read to run the GEP in schools, teach life skills sessions but also act as mentors and in this way are able to reinforce the life skills they teach on a more personal level with the girls and encourage the transference of these skills across contexts.[267] Because the social mobilizers are embedded in schools and can regularly interact with the girls they are able to build relationships with the girls and relate to them, despite being adults and not having gone through the GEP as girls themselves. In their role as mentors, social mobilizers hold small group meetings, but also make themselves available to girls to discuss personal issues or challenges. They may also conduct home visits or intervene in other ways when girls miss school, fail an exam, or miss a life skills session. Approximately 23 percent of girls received individual mentoring, in addition to group mentoring, across Room to Read's global GEPs.[268]

Family and community engagement is another crucial part of the GEP approach. As previously mentioned, social mobilizers conduct home visits; however, they do not only do so when girls are deemed "at risk."[269] Social mobilizers conduct home visits before girls begin the GEP during which they speak to parents. In addition to this, social mobilizers hold two workshops a year for the parents of girls in the

[265] Interview with program staff.

[266] Interview with program staff.

[267] Room to Read, "Implementation of the Girls' Education Program," Unpublished program report.

[268] Ibid.

[269] Room to Read defines "at risk" in this context as missing three or more consecutive days of school, missing a life skills session, or failing an exam.

GEP. These workshops touch on the value of girls' education, the importance of life skills for girls, and how to support girls in their studies. In 2015, 82 percent of girls who participated in Room to Read's GEP globally had parents who attended workshops.[270] Of the Cambodian nine participants interviewed for this study, all reported that their parents attended workshops, and most expressed a desire for more opportunities for their parents to be involved in or learn from the GEP.[271] During interviews, some girls said they felt their parents would better understand the importance of girls' education and the value of the GEP if there were more workshops for them to attend. They added that if their parents had a better understanding of the value of girls' education, they would encourage community members to keep sending their girls to school as well.[272] Girls in the GEP are also encouraged to engage with the wider community by bringing their learnings into their communities through awareness raising campaigns and knowledge sharing.[273] For example, one participant described partaking in the "white ribbon campaign" to raise awareness in her community about the impact of domestic violence on girls and children, and how to stop this violence.[274]

Material support is provided on an individual basis to meet girls' specific needs and enable them to attend school. Room to Read is in the process of standardizing how material support is offered across the nine countries in which it operates.[275] However, in general the decision to provide material support is at the discretion of the country office based on their assessments of a particular family's needs.[276] In Cambodia, depending on each girl's family situation and financial need they may receive different support, or no support at all if they do not need it. For example, some girls may receive books, others may receive uniforms, while others still may receive both.[277] At times, material support may be provided to a girl's family or community to enable them to send the girl to school.[278]

The GEP curriculum was designed by Room to Read's global office, based in San Francisco, California. The curriculum was developed based on global studies and after consulting with Room to

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[270] Room to Read, Implementation of the Girls' Education Program," Unpublished program report.

[271] Based on participant interviews.

[272] Interviews with program participants.

[273] Interviews with program staff.

[274] Interview with program participant.

[275] Room to Read. Implementation of the Girls' Education Program

[276] Ibid.

[277] Interview with program staff.

[278] Ibid.

Read offices in different countries.[279] The result was a training manual with scripted exercises and a set curriculum.[280] While this is ultimately the curriculum now used to implement the GEP in all the countries in which Room to Read runs the program, each country office is responsible for contextualizing the curriculum to suit its country, culture, and the needs of its girls.[281] This curriculum is also updated yearly, though the GEP's overall goals and objectives remain the same year to year.[282]

In Cambodia, when the global GEP curriculum is received by the country office, it is transferred to the Regional Manager who trains the Program Officers in the curriculum. Managers and program officers are not responsible for implementing the GEP in schools. Instead, the Program Officers train the social mobilizers who are responsible for implementing the curriculum in schools and teaching it to girls.[283] Program managers then hold meetings in the field with social mobilizers to determine how best to implement the curriculum in each school's context.[284] Based on this feedback, the country office amends the curriculum to better suit the needs of Cambodian girls. For example, in the global GEP curriculum, knowledge relating to good hygiene practice is taught in Grade 10; however, similar topics are taught in Cambodian state schools in Cambodia at an early age, so the scripted topics had to be made more challenging to ensure that students continued to learn.[285] In general, country offices may decide to change the order of topics presented in the curriculum, but do not substantially alter the topics.

The curriculum includes the 10 skills listed in Table 7, as well as topics such as hygiene and sexual health, which can be used to teach girls skills. It also includes activities, like debating and role-playing that give girls an opportunity to actively build through practicing skills such as self-confidence and communication while gaining knowledge about topics like domestic violence.

The kinds of activity and topics covered in the GEP curriculum vary with age group and grade, as do the program structure and lesson frequency.[286] For Lower Secondary School girls, two life skills sessions are held each month, for a total of approximately 16 sessions in a year covering 60 topics, but the same 10 life skills listed in Table 7. Lower Secondary School life skills sessions were described in an interview by one program officer as "more basic, more relaxed, more fun."[287] For

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[279] Interview with program staff.

[280] Interview with program staff.

[281] Interview with program staff.

[282] Interview with program staff.

[283] Interview with program staff.

[284] Ibid.

[285] Interview with program staff.

[286] Room to Read refers to Grades 6-9 as Lower Secondary School and Grades 10-12 as Upper Secondary School.

[287] Interview with program staff.

example, these sessions might focus on building an understanding of what peer pressure is and how to identify it through games.[288]

During Upper Secondary School girls participate in five sessions each year, but also participate in other activities intended to prepare them for life after graduation. Each Upper Secondary School life skills session is one hour and covers more than one life skill. Over the course of a year, the Upper Secondary life skills curriculum covers all 10 skills as well as 15 topics. Activities may include guest speakers and "exposure visits." For girls in grades 11 and 12, the GEP tries to provide more career-focused activities to expose girls to career options and encourage them to set career goals.[289] The difficulty and complexity of the content taught in the life skills sessions increases as the girls advance through the program, corresponding to the increasingly difficult life decisions and challenges the girls face. For instance, if girls learn about what peer pressure is and how to recognize it in Lower Secondary School, in an Upper Secondary School life skills session, they may learn how to refuse peer pressure and stand up for others.[290]

The GEP currently operates in four of the five provinces in which Room to Read is present in over 40 state schools.[291] Within these schools, the GEP becomes a part of the formal school curriculum within a school and its life skills sessions are treated as mandatory classes within these schools. However, when the program first began, life skills sessions were conducted during breaks in the school day, after school, or on weekends.[292] Unfortunately, holding life skills sessions during these times meant that not all girls were able to attend. However, after Room to Read successfully "[trained] teachers in Prey Veng and Kampong Cham secondary schools on life skills education, officials in Kampong Cham allowed those teachers to conduct life skills sessions for girls during the school day with minimal support from our social mobilizers."[293] In most of the project schools, GEP's life skills sessions are now taught to girls during the school day like other subjects in the schools in which it operates and Room to Read "now advocate[s] for additional integration of life skills education into the national secondary school curriculum."[294] At a few project schools, Room to Read's life skills training is offered to both girls and boys; however, the program is intended to be a girls-only program and operates as such in most schools. In the majority of schools that have the GEP, the boys attend a different subject or participate in a different activity, such as attending agriculture class, while the

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[288] Ibid.

[289] Interview with program staff.

[290] Interview with program staff.

[291] Interview with program staff.

[292] Interview with program staff.

[293] Room to Read website

[294] Ibid.

girls attend the GEP's life skills sessions.[295] Though GEP's life skills sessions are currently run by social mobilizers who are employed by Room to Read in most of the schools in which the program operates, the goal is for these sessions to be fully integrated into the national curriculum and for the sessions to be led by state school teachers—as is already the case in a subset of project schools.[296]

When introducing and running the GEP, Room to Read partners with state schools and supports entire classes, rather than individual girls, though girls in need of material support are still identified individually.[297] Room to Read remains in each school for an average of nine years in order to support at least three subsequent cohorts.[298] The schools in which they choose to operate the GEP are those where girls are enrolled at disproportionately lower rates than boys and in which girls dropout at higher rates.[299] Because a main goal of the GEP is to see girls through secondary school, Room to Read also selects schools in areas where there are nearby elementary schools from which students will be able to flow into secondary school.[300] In order for Room to Read to operate its GEP in a school, the school must apply and be reviewed.[301] In an interview, one program staff said that the organization chooses "schools where [they] can make a difference. Not schools that are the most difficult [to work with and create change within] and not the most easy."[302]

Pedagogical approaches

Girls are active participants in their life skills education. The competencies identified in the previous section are developed through the building of life skills, which are primarily taught through interactive means such as role-playing difficult conversations and holding debates, and in conjunction with particular areas of knowledge like sexual health. Life skills sessions are run by Room to Read social mobilizers, who act as both life skills teachers and mentors—though they perform slightly different roles in each of these functions, these roles will be distinguished and detailed in the following sections.

These social mobilizers play a critical role in the GEP in Cambodia; their primary role is facilitating girls' skills learning by leading activities and teaching the GEP curriculum, but there are many capacities in which a social mobilizer reinforces these learnings, including through mentorship. A

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[295] Interview with program staff.

[296] Interview with program staff.

[297] Interview with program staff.

[298] Interview with program staff.

[299] Interview with program staff.

[300] Interview with program staff.

[301] Ibid.

[302] Interview with program staff.

social mobilizer is assigned to a particular school, though a school may have more than one social mobilizer; each social mobilizer is typically responsible for supporting around 50 girls.[303] In order to keep the student-teacher ratio low, each life skills session only has 25-27 girls in the classroom; however, a social mobilizer may teach multiple sessions so that all the girls are able to attend.[304] The social mobilizers are individuals who are chosen based on experience and teaching qualifications, with a preference for training in pedagogy methods and experience in public and/or private schools.[305] Typically, social mobilizers have teaching experience, though not necessarily pedagogical training.[306]

Social mobilizers are employed by Room to Read and must meet the following criteria:[307]

- Must have, at least, completed secondary school
- Must have relevant skills and knowledge to work with children
- Must be a member of the local community
- Must be female

The above criteria were determined by the global office, but each country office can add conditions as they see fit.[308] Social mobilizer positions are sometimes advertised in state schools and as a result some social mobilizers are former state school teachers, or current teachers that are employed by the government to teach as a state school teacher during only one session a day[309].[310]

Once selected, social mobilizers receive two kinds of training—one focused on life skills and one focused on how to work with and mentor adolescents.[311] The life skills training is a six-day training, usually split into two sessions, each lasting three days.[312] The life skills training provided to social mobilizers focuses on the life skills in the curriculum and skills needed to deal with adolescent changes; therefore, as part of the training, social mobilizers learn about how to teach and talk to adolescents. It is interesting to note that these trainings address how to approach adolescents in general, and not adolescent girls specifically.[313] In the life skills curriculum covered during social mo-

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[303] Interview with program staff.

[304] Interview with program staff.

[305] Ibid.

[306] Ibid.

[307] Interview with program staff.

[308] Ibid.

[309] Due to lack of capacity, many state schools in Cambodia operate in two shifts. They hold a morning session from approximately 7-11am and an afternoon session from approximately 1-5pm. Students attend only one session or the other.

[310] Interview with social mobilizer.

[311] Interview with program staff.

[312] Interview with program staff.

[313] Ibid.

bilizer training, the only "girl-only" topic, as reported by staff members interviewed, is reproductive health.[314]

As with the life skills training, mentor training is split into two sessions: one five-day session on what mentorship is and a three-day training on how to provide mentorship in a group setting vs. one-on-one.[315] Trainings are also conducted each year to refresh social mobilizers' understanding and teaching approaches.

In addition to leading life skills sessions, social mobilizers hold small group mentoring meetings with the girls to whom they teach the skills sessions, where participants can practice skills they've learned, address specific challenges they have been facing, and dig deeper into the life skills they have been learning. As mentors, social mobilizers reinforce the skills the girls are learning by talking about and applying them to the girls' personal challenges and real-life contexts. They also make themselves available for girls to share their own problems and experiences and provide guidance. Social mobilizers may also help girls form "life skills clubs"—or "study clubs" as most interviewed participants referred to them. These after-school "study clubs" are led by the girls and give the girls the opportunity to practice life skills like creative problem-solving, communication, and relationship building while simultaneously honing their leadership skills and solidifying their knowledge as they help one another study both the material learned in the GEP as well as their other school subjects.[316]

Social mobilizers are available for individual mentoring. As mentors, social mobilizers build relationships with the girls and become trusted adults with whom the girls can share stories and ask questions freely.[317] Social mobilizers fulfil a very different role from teachers in state schools. In an interview, a social mobilizer who is also an active state school teacher said that as a social mobilizer she is "not a teacher, [she] needs to be a facilitator."[318] In state school classes, the expectation is that students listen while teachers explain or present. In these situations, students are mostly passive, and are not expected to ask questions or engage in discussion.[319] During this same interview, the social mobilizer explained that during life skills session, the reverse is true. Her role is to encourage girls to engage in activities and discussions.[320] She explained that while the role reversal took time for the girls to adjust to at the outset, the girls "feel happy to do the activities" that are part of Room to Read's life skills sessions.[321] She also noted that the principal of her school and its support commit-

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[314] Ibid.

[315] Ibid.

[316] Interviews with program participants.

[317] Interview with program staff.

[318] Interview with social mobilizer.

[319] Ibid.

[320] Ibid.

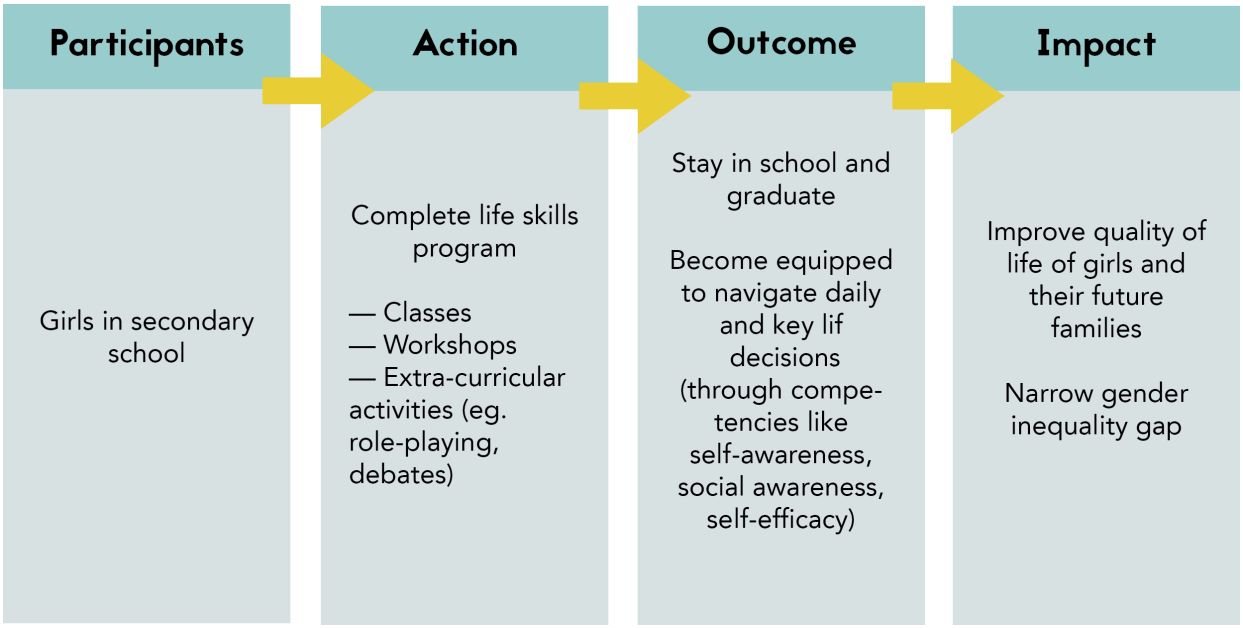
[321] Ibid.

tee[322] view the GEP's activities and pedagogical approach positively and that social mobilizers have been approached by administration and teachers wanting to adapt the GEP's teaching methods and activities for their classes.[323]

Theory of change

Based on a desk review of Room to Read publications, it is surmised that the theory of change of the GEP is as follows: If the organization can support girls in secondary school to complete the life skills program in which the girls complete the life skills classes, workshops and extracurricular activities offered, then the organization can help the girls avoid drop out while equipping the girls to navigate both daily and more substantial life decisions. This is achieved through acquisition of the 10 life skills determined by the organization to build girls' self-awareness, social awareness and self-efficacy. The hope is that development of these skills leads to long-term impact in two forms: improvements to the quality of life of the girls and that of their future families, as well as the narrowing of the gender inequality gap in education, in their communities, and in the country as a whole.

Figure 4: Room to Read Girls' Education Program's Theory of Change



[322] "Support committee" here refers to a committee of students' parents who are actively involved in the school.

[323] Interview with social mobilizer.

Tackling structural barriers and empowerment

The structural barriers Room to Read's GEP faces primarily relate to the social norms that the program aims to challenge. Because boys' education tends to be more highly valued than girls' education, the organization encountered some resistance from community members with regards to the GEP being a program that is only offered to girls.[324] In an interview, one program officer said that initially "the people in the community complained [that] we were only working with the girls when the boys also need support … it was difficult [because] their stereotype and their mindset is always 'boys first.' So when we work with girls, they always say it's unfair for the boys."[325] Room to Read staff members also said that this same "boys first" mentality is also pervasive in schools, particularly at the outset of the GEP's implementation in a new school and when schools are first approached with the GEP. During the selection process, multiple schools being considered as potential GEP sites told Room to Read that they would also have to run programs to include boys if the organization wanted to run the GEP program at their school.[326] It is unclear how many of these schools changed their position after hearing Room to Read staff members' justifications of a girl-only program. However, a program officer shared her observation that teachers and principals seem to have improved their knowledge and awareness of gender issues and the need for gender equity, and that the organization now faces less resistance from schools. The program officer further noted that most of the resistance felt now comes from families who maintain a "boys first" mentality.[327]

The resistance from the community that the organization faces when implementing the GEP poses a structural barrier to girls' empowerment, not only as family and community engagement is a key component of the GEP, but also because—as noted in the conceptual framework of this report—community support and engagement are core conditions for life skills education to lead to empowerment. Furthermore, the fact that communities in which the GEP operates are still somewhat resistant and/or disagreeable to the program and its aims is noteworthy because the skills and competencies taught in the GEP are transferrable skills that the girls are taught, in part, so that girls can leverage these skills within their families and communities to advocate for their continued education. If the community is not receptive to girls learning such skills and adapting their behaviors as a result of having developed skills and competencies like communication and self-efficacy, which may encourage them to debate or argue with their parents, the girls will continue to be hindered by gender norms and structural barriers. Community support or, as a bare minimum, acceptance of the GEP and its aims are necessary to enable girls not only to learn these skills, but also to practice, develop, and internalize them, which will lead to their empowerment. Until communities are receptive to girls developing these skills, girls may be empowered in the sense that they will have acquired such

[324] Interview with program staff.

[325] Ibid.

[326] Ibid.

[327] Ibid.

skills and competencies, but are still likely to face structural and societal barriers to their success and empowerment to reach their full potential.

Still, it is possible that given more time and a greater established presence, Room to Read will be able to operate the GEP in communities with less and less resistance. A program officer noted that Room to Read encounters less resistance to the GEP from communities over time, as people see positive changes in their girls' attitudes, behaviors, and educational attainment.[328] Despite reports of resistance to the program from staff members, all the participants interviewed said even if their parents were not initially in favor of the girls' participating in the program, they are now supportive after seeing positive changes in the girls' behaviors and school performances.[329] Additionally, girls are encouraged through the GEP to share what they have learned with their communities, which community members have tended to look upon favorably.[330] For example, some girls have begun to teach younger children in their villages and communities how to read; thus, when these children start school they are then ahead of their peers, and community members see this as a positive impact of the GEP on their community.[331] One program officer also noted that the GEP faces less resistance establishing itself in communities where the GEP is already present in other schools within the same community.[332]

There remain some aspects of the program that are challenged by social norms and community-held beliefs, such as lessons and skills relating to sexual health. In some life skills sessions, sexual health serves as the topic or knowledge area through which skills and competencies are taught. Social norms discourage girls from talking or learning about sex; as a result, some girls feel ashamed when the subject arises and some community members feel it is inappropriate.[333] It is important to note that this reflects resistance to a topic being used to teach skills and competencies, rather than resistance to the teaching of these skills and competencies themselves.

A lack of capacity and resources combine with logistical constraints to pose another structural barrier to Room to Read's program and mission. As previously noted, Room to Read selects schools, in part, based on practical implementation constraints, such as the proximity of elementary schools from which girls would flow into secondary school.[334] In light of this, it is unlikely that Room to Read is able to reach girls in the most marginalized communities with its GEP program. Therefore, while Room to Read is certainly supporting and empowering vulnerable girls through the GEP pro-

[328] Interview with program staff.

[329] Interviews with program staff and participants.

[330] Interviews with program staff.

[331] Interview with program staff.

[332] Interview with program staff.

[333] Interview with social mobilizer and with program staff.

[334] Interview with program staff.

gram, the overall goal of empowering all girls to work toward gender equality and closing the gender gap may be impeded by these practical constraints and structural barriers.

Assessment

Measurement methods and issues

It is important to note at the outset that the following discussion of Room to Read's GEP monitoring and evaluation was limited to information obtained either from the organization's website or from staff interviews. Requests for an interview with program monitoring and evaluation staff and for GEP-related monitoring and evaluation documents were unsuccessful, in part because some of the material was under revision at the time of this study.

Room to Read's website reports that research, monitoring, and evaluation are guided by four key principles. The first of these is data-driven decision making, in which real-time adjustments to funding for programming are made to reflect needs and priorities based on data received on an ongoing basis from the field. Capacity building, in terms of the recruitment and training of local staff for research, monitoring and evaluation activities, is an important organizational goal. The organization also carries out comparative assessments between project and control schools, using an experimental design that is more rigorous than a simple pre- and post-intervention measurement in determining program effect. Moreover, the organization reports that complete results are published to foster confidence in findings and establish credibility with donors, government and partner organizations.

According to Room to Read's website,[335] assessments are conducted by a multi-level team with global advisors, country managers, and local research officers and data support staff. This research, monitoring and evaluation team carries out a variety of activities under the categories of program monitoring, quality monitoring, and girls' outcomes and impact.[336]

On a regular basis, Room to Read (local) staff enter a set of key metrics ("Global Indicators") into a centralized web-based database for routine monitoring of the life skills education nested within the GEP. During the first quarter of a given year, data from the previous year across all 10 program countries are synthesized with the objective of identifying trends and opportunities for improvement. This process informs planning for the following program cycle, and the information is utilized at the country level. Further, to maximize the likelihood that the life skills program is being implemented as expected, a Room to Read program manager and/or officer conducts monitoring and support visits to project schools, observing social mobilizers as they carry out their duties. These visits are

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[335] "Tracking and Results," Room to Read, accessed March 30,2017, https://www.roomtoread.org/impact-reach/tracking-results/

[336] Interview with program staff.

meant to enhance quality, as program officers can better understand the complexities of the challenges faced in the field, assess the need for social mobilizer coaching, and determine best practices for propagation. The third set of activities, pertaining to outcomes for girls and impact, is tied to an evaluation of the effectiveness of the GEP. Chief among these is the ongoing rigorous evaluation of Room to Read's program in India, with baseline data collected in 2016 and endline scheduled for 2018. The evaluation uses a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design featuring 60 project schools with Room to Read GEP and 59 control schools which are nearby government schools with no life skills training. The total sample of about 2,500 girls will be assessed for the outcomes of interest, including academic performance, time invested in education and work, and development of life skills and competencies.

Apart from self-reported measures, at least two task-based assessments are being used in the RCT: the scavenger hunt, and the mirror task.

Scavenger Hunt. The scavenger hunt exercise requires GEP life skills participants to collect 10 out of the 30 items on a list pre-determined by monitoring and evaluation staff.[337] Some items are more difficult to obtain than others, but importantly the task developers note that these items cannot be "too easy nor too hard" to get.[338] The items range from common household items (such as an alarm clock), to certain types of food (e.g. a handful of rice), and other objects (like a peacock feather). It is unclear if the specific listed items vary by program location/country, but this is likely to be the case since different items may hold different value to their owners in different settings. For example, in Ajmer district in the western part of India, this list includes "toe ring" is one of the 30 items to be sourced by GEP participants under assessment.[339] However, in this geographical area, a toe ring is essentially a wedding ring and is rarely taken off by the owner.[340] This means that if a GEP participant executing the scavenger hunt is successful in borrowing a toe ring from a family member, friend, or other individual, this participant is regarded, from the program's perspective, as demonstrating not just trustworthiness and ability to negotiate, but also life skills such as self-confidence, perseverance, communication, and creative problem-solving. It is worth noting that the assessment team found it necessary to explain the scavenger hunt and its purpose to the families and communities of girls being evaluated, as some members of these latter groups expressed concern regarding the purpose of the exercise, which they perceived as collection of items for ritual or "black magic" purposes.[341] Others in these groups were simply uncomfortable with girls having to participate in such a novel

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[337] Ainsley Harris, "The Nonprofit Using Scavenger Hunts To Research Girls' Education," Fast Company, last modified November 21, 2016. https://www.fastcompany.com/3063141/how-one-nonprofit-is-using-scavenger-hunts-to-research-indian-girls-edu

[338] Ibid.

[339] Ibid.

[340] Ibid.

[341] Ibid.

activity.[342] Information about the girls' thoughts or feelings about the scavenger hunt, or their experiences completing the task, are not currently publicly available.

Mirror Task. The mirror task has been described as follows: "The girls are asked to draw a series of shapes by following their reflection in a mirror. The shapes become progressively harder to draw with the last shape being nearly impossible to reproduce accurately." [343,344] The examiners take note of how long it takes for the participant to stop attempting to draw the shapes, and in so doing are able to assess her level of perseverance,[345] one of the life skills taught in the GEP. Another segment of the mirror task requires girls to analyze distances on a map as they are asked to "travel" between two points. In identifying the shortest route possible, presumably the girls demonstrate critical thinking and problem solving. [346]

The RCT tool is also being adapted for use in Cambodia and other program countries as a monitoring tool, but this adaptation has been challenging for three main reasons. First, although the RCT participants are girls in upper secondary school, the monitoring tool must be appropriate for use with girls in both lower and upper secondary school which GEP spans. In addition, the RCT tool has to be suitable for use outside India in a variety of cultural contexts, including Cambodia. Lastly, certain items in the RCT tool are too time-consuming or too costly for use in routine monitoring, and have to be eliminated, with important implications for reliability. Further details about the monitoring tool, its piloting process, or resulting preliminary findings in Cambodia were not made available for this study.

Key Outputs and Outcomes

The expected outcomes of the girls' life skills program include:

1. Increased graduation rates
2. Improved ability to navigate daily and key life decisions, achieved through:
    - Increased self-awareness
    - Increased social awareness
    - Increased self-efficacy

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[342] Ibid.

[343] "Measuring the Effectiveness of a Life Skills Education," Room to Read, last modified November 03, 2016, https://www.roomtoread.org/the-latest/measuring-the-effectiveness-of-a-life-skills-education/

344 "Room to Read Creates an Innovative Tool to Measure Girls' Life Skills", Room to Read, last modified December 14, 2016, https://www.roomtoread.org/the-latest/room-to-read-creates-an-innovative-tool-to-measure-girls-life-skills/

[345] "Measuring the Effectiveness of a Life Skills Education."

[346] "Innovative Tool to Measure Girls' Life Skills."

Graduation-related outcomes are obtained at the school level and aggregated upward, using a set of indicators.[347] Plans are currently underway to measure short-term life skills-related outcomes using the monitoring tool. Room to Read also assesses longer-term benefits of the GEP, by follow up of program alumnae. Previously, this was done through "periodic surveys to understand particular kinds of life outcomes"[348] but starting in 2015, an annual post-graduation survey tracking life decisions was instituted. One key life decision for girls involves whether or not to pursue tertiary education, and Room to Read has found from post-graduate assessments that most GEP alumnae are indeed furthering their education. While Cambodia-specific data are not available as of the time this report is being written, across Room to Read's 10 country programs, two-thirds of graduates that were reachable by program staff were enrolled in a tertiary academic program (three out of every four in mainstream universities and the remainder in vocational colleges), as of the time of follow up.

Impact

Tracking of alumnae suggests that across all project countries, nine out of every 10 girls are either in school or working one year after graduation (some as teachers, nurses, social workers, or business women).[349] However, life skills program impact data are currently pending for Cambodia and other Room to Read program countries.

Anecdotal evidence reported by program staff in Cambodia and based on external feedback from Cambodian alumnae, their families and school principals, supports a general positive trend on several levels, including individual, family, school, and community levels, which are examined below.

Impact at the individual level—girls' lives

Room to Read reports that over 500 Cambodian participants in the GEP have graduated from secondary school. However, detailed information on graduation rates has not been made available, precluding comparisons with baseline or control rates, and constraining the ability to draw inferences about the effectiveness of the program. Further information relating to assessments of quality of life is not available, and it is unclear if this is being measured. Nevertheless, program staff have observed that girls have gained self-confidence, empowering them to apply the communication and leadership skills that they learned through life skills training outside of the safe space of the GEP program, for

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[347] New secondary school graduates, Cumulative secondary school graduates, Dropout rate, Advancement rate (among girls who remained enrolled), Advancement rate (among all girls), Pass rate for gatekeeping exams

[348] Room to Read, "Global Monitoring Report 2015", accessed on March 31, 2017, https://www.roomtoread.org/media/634255/gmr-2015-final_low-resolution.pdf

[349] Room to Read, "Through Their Eyes, in Their Voices", accessed March 31, 2017, https://www.roomtoread.org/media/150439/tertiary_education_10_13_2011_edited.pdf

instance to form school clubs, as noted below, carry out campaigns and skits on staying in school and avoiding marriage, as well as on healthier behaviors in their communities.

Impact on the wider community

i. **Communication**: At the family level, Cambodian parents reportedly comment that girls become "very active" in discussions, especially those that have to do with their education i.e. staying in school. Increased "voice" has also been observed by school principals, who note that girls, as a group, tend to speak up more after beginning life skills training.
ii. **Girls Perceived as Leaders**: In an interview, one staff member[350] reported that at the project school level, principals now perceive that with life skills training, girls can be effective leaders, for instance through girl-headed clubs. These clubs, known as "Friend Help Friend" are avenues for peer education, and membership is open to girls and boys, whether or not they participate in the life skills program.
iii. **Recognition of the Importance of Secondary Education for Girls**: Several interviewed participants also reported that during summer breaks, they introduce reading and writing to young area-children who are yet to begin school, and that within a span of a few months, these preschool children are reading and writing. Not surprisingly, community-level perceptions of the importance of girls completing secondary education seem to have improved, following the girls' awareness-raising campaigns and tutoring of children. The community engagement component of the GEP has also helped to improve community-level appreciation for girls' secondary education.

Communication and leadership skills are both demonstrable in the GEP girls' participation in Cambodia's Community Development Plan meetings, which are held annually by community authorities. Room to Read routinely sends one or more girl representatives to advocate for girls' needs at these meetings, an opportunity to draw on their communication, leadership and confidence skills. In an interview, a program staff member reported that the girls' ideas ultimately get incorporated into the plans, constituting a significant achievement.

The external feedback, however, is not always positive, with some parent complaints about disrespect in terms of daughters challenging parental preferences. Other parents, especially mothers, also complain about exposure of their daughters to health messages related to HIV, puberty, pregnancy, and similar topics. Potential reasons for parental disapproval of Room to Read's GEP include inadequate engagement of parents, for example, as evidenced by the reported lack of attendance at parent workshops, according to program staff, or intergenerational conflict, which is often stoked by programs focusing on gender inequality, adolescent empowerment, and leadership skills more generally. Parental disapproval could be an indication that Room to Read's life skills program challenges norms and

[350] Interview with program staff.

has the potential to contribute to social transformation around gender dialogue.

Data related to narrowing the gender inequality gap are yet to be collected in Cambodia. However, one informant suggests that program graduates who go on to tertiary education often return to their hometowns after completion of studies and begin to challenge the status quo in their communities. As she notes:

> These girls are poor, they do the life skills program and they go to university then they come back to their hometown and become role models for girls. So we are changing society through the representative of Room to Read in the society. We are impacting this generation and the next.

Challenges

Both the program activities and their assessment through monitoring and evaluation are not without challenges, including problems with participation and appropriate measures.

Key Program challenges:

Participation of girls: Room to Read targets every girl in project schools for enrolment and attendance. However, there are many absences, especially among poor, rural girls, which may have important implications for evaluation results.

Participation of parents: Similarly, the degree of parent engagement varies, as the extent to which they attend workshops specifically designed for them varies. This was pointed out by program staff, and is further supported by the stated desire of girls for more parental involvement.

Key Assessment challenges:

Room to Read has identified the following four challenges related to their measurement of outcomes:

- **Comprehension**: First is an issue of comprehension of the questions asked, as understanding is moderated by age and developmental stage. Younger girls (e.g. 11- and 12-year olds) in lower secondary school are likely to interpret a given question (e.g. on self-esteem) differently from older girls. Further, according to one informer, it seems that the nature and language of at least some of the items in the questionnaire may be too technical to be useful.
- **Relatability**: A related problem is how best to ask questions in concrete ways, so that girls "can relate [them] to their daily experiences",[351] given the prevailing context of few adult women role models in the formal workforce.
- **Response Options**: A third challenge lies in formulating questions that would elicit a range

[351] Room to Read, "Measuring the Effectiveness."

of responses as opposed to questions that would generally yield positive answers or suffer from desirability bias (telling interviewers what they presumably want to hear).

- **Acquisition of vs. exposure to skills**: Fourth, the measures need to assess acquisition of life skills (via demonstration i.e. tangible, practical action), beyond mere exposure to life skills education (which could be the case with rote memorization/regurgitation i.e. knowledge of life skills). The challenge of measuring acquisition of skills is being addressed by at least, the two innovative methods to measure competency-based outcomes mentioned previously, including the mirror task and the scavenger hunt, which test girls' perseverance and negotiation abilities, respectively.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

In its 15 years of operations in Cambodia, and despite strong cultural and economic biases against the education of girls and social norms regarding the role(s) of women and girls, Room to Read has helped more than 500 girls graduate from secondary school through its GEP. Most of these girls have continued their education at the tertiary level. Rigorous GEP monitoring and evaluation data are pending; however, anecdotal reports are encouraging and indicate that the GEP also seems to have imparted girls with important life skills including but not limited to communication, leadership, and self-confidence. Related competencies have been demonstrable in situations both within and outside the safe spaces afforded by the GEP schools, ranging from girls' homes to their communities. Based on program curricula analysis, performance reports, and interviews with program staff and participants, some lessons can be drawn for future programming.

Schools and Targets:

As highlighted in one interview, at inception, Room to Read purposefully determined to partner with schools and communities in need of intervention, but not those that would be "too easy" or "too hard" in terms of implementing the GEP and obtaining the desired impact. This presents an apparent departure from the mainstream goal of reaching the most marginalized, which may be true at the community level, where in the most marginalized communities, there are no schools or those schools in existence are barely functional. However, it is not currently Room to Read's mission to build schools or renovate them. Furthermore, Room to Read *has* made an effort to reach the most marginalized at the individual level, through its material support component, in which it provides girls from the poorest families with uniforms, books, tuition or all three. One potential existing mechanism Room to Read may be able to harness in reaching the most marginalized communities—should this become of interest—is the state community learning centers, which the government currently uses as venues for its literacy, numeracy and vocational instructional programs. These centers would capture out-of-school learners, introducing a different profile of program targets and

possibly necessitating some adjustment in Room to Read's approach and implementation of its GEP.

Buy-in:

The GEP benefitted from the buy-in of several stakeholders without which the program would be greatly hampered. Apart from donors, the project school administration and staff, girl participants, and their families, key stakeholders also included the local Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (in particular, district officers), village chiefs, and other commune leaders. Notably, district officers were essential in securing physical space for Room to Read activities within schools, and in obtaining approval for government school teachers to receive the same training as social mobilizers. The cultivated relationships also facilitated visits to project schools by national level ministry staff, and positioned Room to Read's life skills program strategically for potential scale up and integration within all state schools.

Curriculum:

In the majority of project schools where only girls are included in life skills training, community backlash has been observed, because boys' education is deemed more important than girls'. In the subset of project schools where the life skills component of the GEP was integrated into the normal school day (as opposed to after-school), Room to Read found it necessary to extend the life skills education to boys as well. However, boys were still excluded from the sexual health education sessions offered to girls, and appeared to be unoccupied during these sessions. This is potentially problematic since this means boys may not have the same level of sexual health-related knowledge as girls. The adequacy of the instruction boys receive in regular (school) classes such as biology, could not be ascertained, as detailed information on the regular state school sexual health education curriculum was not obtained in this study.

Room to Read recognized the importance of considering participants' ages and abilities to understand certain life skills content. Because of this, a given life skill could be taught at various participant ages or grades. And, in doing so, the particular life skill is reinforced to various degrees as the girls mature and transition to higher grades.

Design:

Life skills were not taught in isolation, and other components of the GEP were crucial—material support for the most economically disadvantaged girls, on-going mentorship of girls by a social mobilizer or facilitator, and family and community engagement. Family engagement is a potential area for growth, because although home visits conducted by social mobilizers are generally effective, the parent workshops that are convened away from parents' homes are often poorly attended, creating somewhat avoidable friction between parents and program

staff.

Operations:

Room to Read is cognizant of the importance of local context in shaping programs determining intervention outcomes, and maintains a flexible approach to certain aspects of the GEP. As an example, country and local offices are able to modify the eligibility criteria for social mobilizers that have been established at headquarters or at the regional level. Another instance is the possibility of contextualizing the curriculum to fit the country context.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Although many specifics regarding the GEP monitoring and evaluation are currently unclear, what *is* known is that Room to Read purposefully seeks to distinguish between knowledge of life skills and demonstrated competencies in life skills, and for this reason assesses program impact by using measures that are competency-based tasks as opposed to merely self-report. In addition, Room to Read has opted to measure program impact by adopting the gold standard of determining an intervention's effect, which is the RCT.

Sustainability:

Room to Read's exit strategy after approximately nine years of operation at each project school involves not only integrating with the host government school curriculum and engaging the ministry of education, but also training government teachers as social mobilizers. The presence of the latter greatly aids the continuation of life skills education after the organization has pulled out of a given school.

Limitations

The findings of this case study should be interpreted in light of some study limitations. First, while sample size is less of an issue in qualitative research, results in this study are based on a small number of girls from three out of a possible 40 Room to Read project schools in Cambodia. Time constraints simply did not allow for interviews with more participants, and it is unclear if more interviews would have been beneficial anyway, as an indication of saturation[352] was observed on a number of interview questions using the current sample.

Second, although the sample provided a mix of respondents with different ages, any possible biases due to sample selection were unavoidable. In particular, participants for interview were picked by program staff. It is possible that program staff selected girls that would give favorable interviews,

[352] A situation where respondents begin to provide similar answers to previous participants' answers and additional interviews do not provide new information.

but it is also possible that girls who were willing to be interviewed in the first place were more likely than not to have had good experiences within the GEP. The impact of selection bias in this study is unclear. However, only one of the six questions in the participant interview guide was designed to elicit aspects of the GEP the girls did not like or felt needed improvement.

Third, because of financial and logistical constraints, this study relied on remote interviews (by video call) and not on direct observations involving site visits. While valuable information was elicited from these interviews, that understanding of the details of, for example, pedagogical processes, was limited.

Fourth, limitations on time and language meant dependence on local translators designated by the program. In most cases, GEP officers served as translators.

Fifth, lack of access to monitoring and evaluation information, whether from staff or from reports (which were under revision at the time of this study), limited the scope of findings and of analysis regarding impact measurement.

Lastly, self-reported interview data cannot be independently verified, and recall bias due to inaccurate memories of past occurrences cannot be eliminated in any interview-reliant study.

Comparative Analysis

As mentioned in the conceptual framework of this report, although WHO provides a broad definition of life skills calling them "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour, that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life,"[353] there is no solely agreed upon definition of life skills. Each of the three organizations considered by this report—BRAC, Grassroot Soccer, and Room to Read—operates in a different country and within a different context, because some of the skills necessary to successfully navigate everyday life in each context may vary, particularly for girls. Though all three of the programs analyzed in this report aim to empower girls to lead successful lives, they have all done so in different ways, based on the skills and competencies each organization has determined to be crucial for girls in each context to "deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life."[354]

It is therefore evident that a single "formula" or "magic bullet" for effective girls' life skills programming and scaling is unlikely to be feasible. Rather, the conceptual framework shared in this report outlines a series of competencies and core conditions that serve as guiding principles for life skills for empowerment programming that must be applied and adapted based context.

The set of skills that each organization has determined to be crucial for girls' success within their context has shaped the aims of their programs and teaching methods, and has subsequently influenced the kind of impact they produce and the way in which they have sought to generate change. Additionally, the skills and competencies identified as necessary for girls' success by each of these programs reflects the varied conceptions of girls' empowerment; these also similarly align with the core competencies outlined in the conceptual framework of this report. Table 8 provides a comparative overview of the contexts from which BRAC, Grassroot Soccer, and Room to Read girls' life skills education programs emerged, touching on the presence or lack of some of the necessary core conditions for empowerment.

Country Context

Across all three countries and contexts, girls face greater challenges than boys in obtaining an education. However, due to the national political and social structures (Dimension 1 of the core conditions for empowerment found in Table 11), the primary barriers in each of these countries is slightly different, as is the impact of having a higher level of education.

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[353] World Health Organization, "Life Skills Education for Children and Adolescents in Schools," in Life Skills Education for Children and Adolescents in Schools, 1994, pp. 2pts-in.

[354] Ibid.

Table 8: Context Comparison

Organization	**BRAC** Bangladesh	**Grassroot Soccer** South Africa	**Room to Read** Cambodia
Country Context	Despite robust economic growth over the past decade, Bangladesh's substantial youth population (approximately 46.8 million between the ages of 10 and 24) faces challenges finding employment.[1,2] This is attributed to a paucity of marketable skills among young Bangladeshis, related to a lack of access to quality education.[3] Because young women face greater challenges accessing education, they also have a harder time finding employment.[4] Gender norms pose additional challenges to young Bangladeshi women seeking jobs.[5]	After apartheid ended in 1994, South Africa began reconstructing its education system to be more racially equitable.[6] However, racial disparities persist in educational attainment, particularly between girls of different races.[7] South Africa also has a high rate of teen pregnancy, which correlates with secondary school drop out rates.[8] Furthermore, a lack of awareness and understanding of HIV/AIDS prevention methods may negatively impact educational attainment, especially girls' educational attainment.[9]	Cambodia is still recovering from the Khmer Rouge regime, which wiped out its educated population and dismantled its education system.[10] Poverty levels remain high and poses a major barrier to children's access to education.[11] Traditional gender norms interact with poverty-related barriers to education, adversely impacting girls' access to education.[12]

[1] World Bank, Bangladesh Overview, http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bangladesh/overview

[2] Ibid.

[3] Asian Development Bank (ABD), 2012, The Informal Sector and Informal Employment in Bangladesh, Page 17, Manila: Asian Development Bank, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics

[4] UNICEF Out of School Children Report, https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/Out-of-School_children_in_Bangladesh.pdf

[5] Naved, Ruchira Tabassum, Hamidul Huque, Subrina Farah Muhammad Mizanur Rashid Shuvra (2011), 'Men's Attitudes and Practices regarding Gender and Violence against women in Bangladesh: Preliminary Findings', November 2011. (last accessed April 2014).

[6] White Paper on Education and Training . Technical paper. Department of Education . Cape Town , 1995. 1-87. http://www.education.gov.za/Portals/0/Documents/Legislation/White%20paper/White%20paper%20on%20Education%20and%20Training%201995.pdf?ver=2008-03-05-111656-000.

[7] Ibid

[8] Ibid

[9] Ibid

[10] Al Jazeera staff, "Key Facts on the Khmer Rouge." Al Jazeera, February 3, 2012. Accessed March 19, 2017. http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/02/20122314155454169.html

[11] The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Key Issues Affecting Youth in Cambodia," 2014. Accessed 21 March, 2017. http://www.oecd.org/dev/inclusivesocietiesanddevelopment/youth-issues-in-cambodia.htm

[12] Graham Fordham, Adolescent Reproductive Health in Cambodia: Status, Policies, Programs, and Issues, Policy Project, January 2003.

In both Bangladesh and Cambodia, gender norms often hinder girls from going to school beyond the primary level. In both countries, boys' education is valued over girls' education as a girl's place is considered to be the home. In Bangladesh, this means that little value is placed on girls getting an education, where they would learn critical thinking and competencies like literacy and numeracy that could be useful in the workforce. Instead, girls are often discouraged from working after marriage;

[355] notably, 52 percent of girls in Bangladesh are married before the age of 18.[356] In Cambodia, a low return on education means that many Cambodians do not see value in education beyond primary school in general.[357] However, this is especially true for Cambodian girls who are traditionally expected to marry by their early twenties, and may be seen as has having "too much" education if they continue their schooling through the upper secondary and tertiary levels and may therefore be considered less desirable for marriage.[358] Given the gender norms in both Bangladesh and Cambodia, girls are also often the first to be pulled out of school when help is needed in the home; many girls are also taken out of school to work in order to provide financial assistance to their families.

In South Africa, the main barriers to girls' education arise from the intersection of its legacy of racial discrimination with health and gender issues. Among the country's primary barriers to girls accessing education are its high rates of teen pregnancy[359] and high HIV prevalence.[360] Unlike gender norms in Bangladesh and Cambodia, which strongly disfavor girls' education and hold that a girl's role is caring for her family and home, education-related gender norms in South Africa may less directly cause girls to be deprived of an education. Instead, gender norms that lock women into a lower social status than men render women more vulnerable to HIV infection. Such norms may inhibit the development of key competencies, including self-awareness and self-care; many South African girls may not have the power to decide when, where, and how they engage in sexual activity, and for example, may not be able to insist on the use of condoms to prevent HIV infection.[361] Compounding the problem, girls are also more physiologically susceptible to contracting HIV.[362] It is the medium- and longer-term physical effects of teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS that account for South African girls' dropping out of school, and not gender norms related to education, per se, that may keep girls from continuing their education.

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[355] Naved Ruchira Tabassum., Hamidul Huque, Subrina Farah, and Muhammad Mizanur Rashid Shuvra, "Men's Attitudes and Practices Regarding Gender and Violence Against Women in Bangladesh." Preliminary findings, Dhaka: ICDDR, B (2011).

[356] "Bangladesh: Legalizing Child Marriage Threatens Girls' Safety", Human Rights Watch, March 2, 2017, accessed April 6, 2017. https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/03/02/bangladesh-legalizing-child-marriage-threatens-girls-safety

[357] OECD, Structural Policy Country Notes: Cambodia, 2013.

[358] Ibid.

[359] "Millennium Development Goals 3: Promote Gender Equality And Empower Women 2015". Report. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2015, 32. http://www.statssa.gov.za/MDG/MDG_Goal3_report_2015_.pdf.

[360] Millennium Development Goals: Country report 2015. Report. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2015. 87. http://www.statssa.gov.za/MDG/MDG_Country_Report_Final_Feb2016.pdf.

[361] Ackermann, Leáne, and Gerhardt W. de Klerk, "Social Factors that Make South African Women Vulnerable to HIV infection," Health Care for Women International 23, no. 2 (2002): 163-172., http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/073993302753429031

[362] Cullinan, Kerry. "In Africa, AIDS often has a woman's face." Africa Renewal Online. Special Edition on Women(2012). http://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/special-edition-women-2012/africa-aids-often-has-woman's-face

Mission and Life Skills

In light of the different contexts and concerns from which the programs discussed in this report have emerged, all three programs have missions that aim to empower girls but are distinctly different. As a result, each program teaches a different set of competencies that it believes are necessary for girls to lead successful lives. These competencies are developed through the acquisition of a combination of certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

Table 9: Mission and Life Skills Comparison

Organization	**BRAC** Bangladesh	**Grassroot Soccer** South Africa	**Room to Read** Cambodia
Organization mission	Empowering people and communities in situations of poverty, illiteracy, disease and social injustice. BRAC aims to achieve large scale, positive changes through economic and social programmes that enable men and women to realise their potential.[1]	Leveraging the power of soccer to educate, inspire, and mobilize youth to overcome their greatest health challenges, live more productive lives, and be agents for change in their communities.	Transforming the lives of millions of children in developing countries by focusing on literacy and gender equality in education.
Program mission	**STAR** aims to address the critical skills gaps in the country's workforce by providing youth with skills development opportunities.[2]	**SKILLZ Street** aims to reduce the spread of HIV, challenge gender norms, and improve knowledge of and practices around reproductive and sexual health for girls in South Africa.	The **Girls' Education Program (GEP)** aims to keep girls in school, through secondary school, so they can reach their full potential.
Life Skills	The **STAR** program teaches livelihood skills to participants through apprenticeships and complements this with in-classroom learning. The livelihood skills taught depend on the vocation to which a participant is matched. The in-classroom learning aims to support the development of these livelihood skills with other "soft skills" and skills necessary to lead successful lives, such as numeracy and financial literacy.	**SKILLZ Street** teaches self-efficacy, self-confidence, communication, decision-making, goal-setting, and leadership because these skills can shape adolescents' behaviors toward HIV prevention, treatment, and care, especially when paired with adequate sexual health education.[3,4]	The GEP teaches ten life skills which fall into three categories: *Self-Awareness* • Self-confidence • Expressing and managing emotion • Empathy *Self-Efficacy* • Self-control • Critical thinking • Decision-making • Perserverance *Social-Awareness* • Communication • Creative problem-solving • Relationship building

[1] Room to Read website.

[2] Bhattacharjee, A., Kamruzzaman, Md. (2016), BRAC: Skills Development Working Paper, Series 01.

[3] Chris Barkley (Director of Development and Strategy), interviewed by Ariel Flaggs and Nilay Tuncok, New York, NY. March 2017.

[4] Alison Clowes (Curriculum Development and Training Coordinator), interviewed by Nilay Tuncok, New York, NY. March 2017.

Empowerment and Theory of Change

The organizations considered in this report all seek to empower girls to overcome challenges, but each has its own conception of what that "empowerment" should look like within the context in which it operates. Based on what "empowerment" is considered to be for girls in these contexts, each of the organizations in this study has determined a particular set of skills to be crucial to reaching the "empowering outcome." These skillsets and conceptions of empowerment have then informed each organization's theory of change.

For example, BRAC's mission is "empowering people living in poverty."[363] Its STAR program primarily seeks to do this by providing marginalized youth in both rural and urban settings the opportunity to develop productive competencies such as livelihood skills that will enable them to find gainful employment.[364] BRAC believes that these livelihood skills empower Bangladeshi youth, especially girls, to find jobs and, as a result, enable them to improve the quality of their lives. In this way, the organization's conception of better economic standing and livelihoods as a means of empowerment has informed its mission, and has subsequently shaped what skills its program teaches. BRAC also combines its livelihood skills trainings with—although to a lesser extent—education focused on other knowledge it considers necessary to lead a successful life, including the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse and criminal activity, and the negative impact of child marriage.

Grassroot Soccer, on the other hand, considers better health outcomes to be a means of empowerment, because girls who lead healthier lives are empowered to also lead more productive lives—for example, they may be able to stay in school longer, find a better job, or more fully participate in society. Therefore, Grassroot Soccer focuses more on building social competencies, such as communication, in order to change individual behaviors to support a healthier lifestyle. Grassroot Soccer expects that with such skills, girls will be better able to advocate for themselves within relationships and insist on safe sex and the use of HIV/AIDS preventative methods.

Similarly, Room to Read aims to foster girls' development of critical thinking, personal, and social competencies, as the organization expects that teaching girls these competencies will enable them to advocate for their continued education. Further, Room to Read expects that the girls can and will use the skills they have learned to advocate for improvement in other facets of their lives, for example to advocate for better hygiene practices among community members.[365] In this way, Room to Read's view of empowerment is actually two-fold. The organization not only views the skills it teaches

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[363] "BRAC: Creating Opportunities for People to Realise Potential., Accessed April 8, 2017, http://www.brac.net/#who_we_are.

[364] Anindita Bhattacharjee and Md. Kamruzzaman, "Towards Employability and Better Livelihood: An Evaluation of BRAC's Skills Development Initiative," Skills Development Working Paper, Series 01, Dhaka: BRAC, 2016.

[365] Interview with program staff

as tools of empowerment, but it considers education itself to be a form of empowerment as it is through education that girls can acquire skills necessary to lead successful lives in the world, such as literacy and numeracy, as well as higher-level skills that develop simultaneously with the acquisition of knowledge and through the process of learning and interacting with others, such as critical thinking and decision-making.[366]

It is notable that though this report considers all of the skills taught by the programs detailed in Table 9 to fall within the purview of "life skills," this language is not consistently used across all three organizations. Only Room to Read both explicitly calls the skills it teaches "life skills" and defines them, as "competencies—such as empathy, critical thinking and self-efficacy— …[necessary] to meet day-to-day challenges and make informed decisions."[367] Grassroot Soccer uses the term "life skills" in its curriculum but what these skills are exactly, is not made clear. The skills taught by BRAC are not called "life skills", but certainly qualify as such according to the WHO's definition of life skills as "abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour, that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life."[368]

Furthermore, the skills taught by these programs, particularly those taught by Grassroot Soccer and Room to Read, are easily transferrable across different contexts and situations. Although Grassroot Soccer teaches skills like decision-making and goal-setting in the context of sexual health and activity, the expectation that girls will internalize these skills and change their behavior reflects the underlying expectation that these behaviors, such as standing up for oneself against pressure from a sexual partner, would also transfer to other scenarios, like standing up to a bully at school. Room to Read similarly expects and actively encourages girls to transfer their skills across different contexts. For instance, though the program teaches girls to communicate through activities such as debating the impact of domestic violence on families, it expects them to use the communication skills developed to communicate with other students, their communities, as well as at home with their parents, to convey the importance of secondary schooling for girls.[369] In this way, both of these programs are focused on the dynamic process of skill development and enhancing girls' ability to understand their contexts and apply knowledge, skills and attitudes gained in one context to other (new) contexts. In this way, these programs are ultimately supporting girls to transfer skills from safe spaces to the outside world for empowered action.

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[366] "Girls' Education," Room to Read

[367] Room to Read, Implementation.

[368] World Health Organization, "Life Skills Education"

[369] Interview with program staff

Challenging Gender Norms: Targets, Facilitators, and Pedagogical Approaches

The majority of the skills that the three programs teach are not inherently gendered; competencies like self-awareness and critical thinking can, and should, be developed by both boys and girls. The three organizations considered by this report generally conceive of empowerment as being able to successfully navigate life's challenges, which is not in and of itself a gendered notion of empowerment either. However, all three of the programs operate in contexts with clear gender inequality, which may make it necessary for programs to focus on serving just girls, rather than both boys and girls, in order to compensate for a deficit of such competencies in girls arising from the lack of equal opportunities afforded to girls. Room to Read's GEP and Grassroot Soccer's SKILLZ Street programs focus exclusively on girls for this reason, to equip them with the competencies they need to be empowered to overcome structural barriers and negative gender norms, thereby working towards closing the gender gap. It is important to note, however, that Room to Read runs other programs (primarily literacy programs) that serve both boys and girls, and that Grassroot Soccer also runs co-ed programs that teach skills and content similar to that of its SKILLZ Street program. Compared to the girls-only programs, these co-ed programs teach similar skills and content, but specifics of teaching may vary to account for the involvement of both male and female participants.

Given that these programs aim to empower girls to overcome gender norms and structural barriers, it is worth considering whether or not the skills and competencies these particular programs teach should be taught to both boys and girls, and whether or not this should be done in a co-educational setting as opposed to using separate, parallel sessions for boys and girls. In interviews, Room to Read staff shared that some schools already expose boys to the life skills program, while others have expressed interest in expanding the life skills program to include boys.[370] Some staff also expressed that they believe boys would benefit from learning these skills as well, but that since girls are typically in a more vulnerable, disprivileged position in society, teaching only girls is a means of empowering the latter to hopefully reach equity.[371] The interviewed staff members did not specify whether life skills programming involving boys should use a boys-only or co-educational structure; however, Grassroot Soccer staff said that interest has been expressed in having a boys-only program similar to the girls-only SKILLZ Street, as boys are considered "allies for change."[372] Given that neither the forms of empowerment nor the skills these programs focus on are necessarily gendered, it is interesting to consider who the programs target and why, as well as how they have structured their programs to serve these targets. Table 10 provides a comparative overview of these elements.

[370] Interview with program staff

[371] Interview with program staff

[372] Interview with program staff

Table 10: Program Structures and Targets

Organization	**BRAC** Bangladesh	**Grassroot Soccer** South Africa	**Room to Read** Cambodia
Targets/Participants	Both male and female youths aged 14 to 18 years who have been out of formal education for at least one year.	10-14 year-old girls who are "at-risk" and are from historically disadvantaged and economically marginalized communities. These girls are recruited through schools.	Girls in secondary school (grades 6-12) who are attending state schools.
Learning environment	Non-formal education setting	Non-formal education setting, however, Grassroot Soccer uses school facilities.[1]	Formal setting—taught in state schools during the school day.
Program Structure	Apprenticeship model—each participant is paired with a "Master Crafts Person" from whom they will learn a particular trade over a six-month period.[2] Participants also spend two hours a week receiving classroom education. These sessions are divided into one half-hour of basic English language skills, and one and a half hours of what BRAC refers to as "soft skills."[3]	The entire curriculum is covered in 14 1.5 hour practices.[4] One practice typically consists of a check-in period and a review of the session's schedule. This is followed by a soccer activity, in which objects on the field may serve as metaphors for obstacles to sexual health, or a life skills activity, in which engage in conversations with their coach and peers about challenges they may face and how to respond to them. Each session concludes with a discussion of what was learnt, followed by singing and dancing.	The **GEP** has a different program structure depending on participant's grade levels. Lower Secondary School—two hour-long life skills sessions are held each month, for a total of approximately 16 sessions in a year covering 60 topics, and the 10 skills listed in Table B. Upper Secondary School—five sessions each year, as well as other activities in preparation for life after graduation. Each Upper Secondary School life skills session is one hour and covers more than one life skill. Over the course of a year, the Upper Secondary life skills curriculum covers all 10 skills as well as 15 topics.

[1] Email correspondence with program staff.

[2] "Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR)." Accessed March 8, 2017. https://www.brac.net/search/item/971-skills-training-for-advancing-resources-star.

[3] Refer to Table 9

[4] Grassroot Soccer, "Khayelitsha: SKILLZ Girl Coach's Guide"

It is also important to examine whether or not the programs meet the core conditions for girls' empowerment identified in the study conceptual framework, focusing on gender norms and community support/engagement. As mentioned above, both Grassroot Soccer's SKILLZ Street and

Room to Read's GEP are girls-only programs, and given that they operate in contexts where girls are disprivileged in society, this is understandable. However, what might be lacking in this single-sex approach to girls' empowerment is a careful consideration of the fact that girls in both South Africa and Cambodia are disprivileged in society as a consequence of gender norms that persist throughout those cultures. Both Grassroot Soccer and Room to Read aim to challenge gender norms through their programs. Grassroot Soccer seeks to build girls' self-efficacy and communication skills in order to empower them to speak up for themselves, which directly challenges long-held gender norms in South Africa. Additionally, the very act of girls playing soccer is a challenge to the country's gender norms, as soccer is typically considered a male sport. Similarly, Room to Read aims to empower girls to advocate for their continued education and in doing so may also challenge gender-norms with regards to girls' education and place in society.

However, while it makes sense to provide services to girls because they have been marginalized, overlooked, and disprivileged by society, by targeting only girls, these programs may not challenge gender norms as effectively as they could. The reason is that approaches taken by both Grassroot Soccer and Room to Read primarily focus on the girls taking action to challenge norms while working within existing systems, rather than also working to actively change those gender norms by, for instance, teaching boys to challenge structural barriers that reinforce gender inequality and encouraging them to be allies in the fight for gender equality. The current approach is more aligned with Naila Kabeer's theory of women's empowerment—as described in the conceptual framework of this report—as these programs, in a sense, are equipping girls with the skills and resources they need to navigate a system that has been built to discriminate against them. While this approach to empowering girls can positively impact girls and lead to empowerment, it is not without flaws. One Grassroot Soccer staff member acknowledged the limitations of such an approach, but emphasized its positive power to effect change. "We would love to see changes structurally, but in the meantime, it's still invaluable to enable young people to make the best out of the situation they are in."[373]

Interestingly, because BRAC STAR's mission is to address the skills gap in Bangladesh's youth work force, its program is co-ed and as a consequence, STAR's work has helped to shift gender dynamics with regards to employing girls' in jobs that had previously been gender-normed; for example, some female participants have trained as "hardware technicians", which has been typically considered a man's job.[374] However, it is unclear if STAR places girls in these vocations with the explicit goal of challenging gender norms.

Despite the fact that Grassroot Soccer and Room to Read's programs are female-only, they have had some impact on gender norms held by the wider communities. In the case of Grassroot Soccer,

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[373] Interview with program staff.

[374] BRAC, "BRAC Skills Development Program: Skills Training for Advancing Resources (STAR) project. 2016 Edition

SKILLZ Street offers girls the opportunity to play soccer, although it is considered taboo for girls to play the sport. However, by creating an opportunity for girls to play, gender norms, biases and stereotypes surrounding the sport have begun to change as the community sees more girls playing in spite of persistent gender norms.[375] For instance, in an interview, a 16-year-old participant said she has managed to change the perception in her community that girls can't play soccer.[376] One staff member acknowledged that this change may only have taken place in certain communities,[377] but it is worth reiterating that the very act of parents consenting to their daughters' participation in Grassroot Soccer programs in the first place may signal the possibility of further change to the gender norms that lock women into a lower social status than men.

Room to Read's impact on the wider community is similar, in that parents and members of some communities have reported seeing changes in their daughter's attitudes and behaviors, which have helped to challenge gender norms within those communities.[378] In interviews, current GEP participants shared that their parents and friends have told them they seem braver, more confident, and more capable of speaking up.[379] Program staff and participants said that as a result, parents and community members who previously did not see the value of girls' education are now not only seeing the value of sending their girls to school through secondary school but also feel that it is beneficial for their girls to partake in the GEP.[380] Additionally, girls have also directly engaged in generating impact in their communities. In interviews, participants spoke of undertaking awareness raising campaigns in their communities to promote good hygiene practices; they also mentioned that the GEP encouraged them to share their knowledge with others, and as a result many girls teach younger children in their communities how to read before formal schooling begins.[381] As a result, the communities look more favorably upon girls' education, and gender norms surrounding girls' education are challenged.

As mentioned previously, all three programs also teach girls to challenge gender norms, whether directly or indirectly. For example, although BRAC does not directly teach girls to challenge gender norms, their pedagogical approach, in and of itself, is a challenge to gender norms that exist in Bangladesh. It is interesting to note that BRAC's STAR is the only one out of the three programs considered by this report that only operates as a co-ed program. By using an apprenticeship model to run a co-ed program, BRAC is challenging gender norms in Bangladesh, as the apprenticeship model in Bangladesh has traditionally been one in which only males partake. While BRAC initially received push-back on using this model to teach girls and having girls apprentice with Master Crafts

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[375] Ibid.

[376] Interview with participant.

[377] Interview with program staff.

[378] Interview with program staff.

[379] Interviews with participants.

[380] Interviews with program staff and participants.

[381] Interviews with participants.

Persons in vocations usually considered male vocations, STAR has now received substantial positive feedback about the performance of its female participants. This may reflect the indirect shifting of gender norms as a result of this pedagogical approach.

Grassroot Soccer teaches girls to speak out against gender-based violence and stand up for themselves in relationships, while Room to Read teaches girls to speak up for themselves and insist on going to school. Room to Read and Grassroot Soccer also employ similar pedagogical approaches to teaching these skills in that they both have strong mentorship components to their programs.

Yet even within these mentorship models, the programs diverge in approaches. Grassroot Soccer aims to hire coaches to whom the girls can easily relate based on similar backgrounds and other traits. Many of Grassroot Soccer's coaches have been through the program themselves, and are not much older than the girls they are mentoring; additionally, all the coaches who teach SKILLZ Street are female.

In contrast, Room to Read hires social mobilizers to fill the mentor role in the GEP, and though these social mobilizers are also all women, Room to Read looks for a background in teaching, pedagogy, or experience working with children.[382] As a result, social mobilizers are notably older than the girls they serve. However, because social mobilizers are embedded within schools and establish a regular presence in schools, they are able to foster familiarity with the girls and make themselves relatable in other ways.

Transferability of Skills

The way in which the skills are taught in classes may encourage different degrees, or ease, of transferability of these skills. Because BRAC STAR primarily teaches productive competencies like livelihood skills using an apprenticeship model, these skills may not be as transferable. Though the "soft" skills taught in the weekly STAR classroom sessions might be more transferable than those taught through its apprenticeship model, it is unclear how this suite of skills is chosen, and how the lessons in the classroom are conducted— e.g. whether by passive learning through lectures.

Grassroot Soccer and Room to Read, on the other hand, rely on pedagogical approaches that encourage a much more active and experiential learning style. These approaches seem to inherently foster more transference of skills across different life contexts. By using a sports-based intervention model, Grassroot Soccer makes use of sports analogies to teach girls skills. Because these skills are taught through analogies, it is immediately obvious that the skills being learned transfer to other life situations. Similarly, Room to Read promotes girls' development of competencies by having girls

[382] Interview with program staff.

learn and practice skills through activities, in combination with certain topics and knowledge areas. Because the skills are applied to changing topics or knowledge areas from session to session, girls actively practice translating the knowledge, skills and attitudes into empowered action. The small group mentorship component of the program, like the mentorship element of Grassroot Soccer, gives girls a safe space in which to raise their own problems and challenges before the mentors. The mentors are then able to discuss the different challenges with the girls and help them understand how the skills they have learned can be applied or adapted to dealing with those challenges. In this regard, the mentorship components of these programs help girls directly map the skills they are learning on to their own lives and personal challenges.

Assessments — Comparison of Montioring & Evaluation

As mentioned previously, although bearing some overlap, the missions pursued, life skills taught, and competencies gained vary considerably among the three programs. The pedagogical approaches also display this same pattern, with different approaches globally, but some similarity, for example, in the classroom environment that BRAC has in common with Room to Read. Importantly, Room to Read and Grassroot Soccer also actively focus on girls being able to transfer skills learned in one setting (the safe space of the program) to others (other aspects of girls' lives) in order to develop empowered action, as opposed to rote learning. The fundamental differences (and minor similarities) between the three programs shape the priorities identified for and methods used in their monitoring and evaluation. A number of trends can be identified based on the monitoring and evaluation information the three programs made available for this report.

All three organizations solicit feedback from facilitators —Master Crafts Persons and peer leaders/ classroom program staff (BRAC), coaches (Grassroot Soccer) and social mobilizers (Room to Read) —regarding any observed changes in participant knowledge, attitude or behavior, all somewhat subjective outcomes. Similarly, all three organizations measure main outcomes of interest, namely employment status (BRAC), secondary school graduation status (Room to Read) and HIV serostatus (Grassroot Soccer), which are more objective in nature.

In terms of life skills, however, Grassroot Soccer and Room to Read measure competencies directly whereas BRAC does not explicitly measure competencies, but relies on Master Crafts Person reports related to participant progress in productive competencies. Importantly, although Grassroot Soccer's SKILLZ Street incorporates time for participants to reflect on how life skills can be applied in other areas of life off the football field, the organization only measures the acquisition of skills—such as communication and self-efficacy—as they relate to HIV, in line with its mission. It collects this information through self-report (questionnaires) of participants.

While Room to Read also obtains self-reported data, the organization additionally uses competency-based tasks such as the mirror test or the scavenger hunt described earlier to measure life skills acquisition among GEP participants. Room to Read's methods therefore stand out in terms of validity of measures that are not reliant solely on self-report or facilitator observation, but on actual demonstrable life skills. Room to Read's assessment methods are also more robust than the others because of the measures' abilities to capture transferable skills, since the competency-based tasks are neither restricted to the main mission (secondary education) nor are they confined to girls' school experiences. Additionally, based on the data made available for this report, Room to Read and Grassroot Soccer have followedl program alumnae, although it appears the follow up period maybe limited to, at most, one year post-graduation. In this sense, it seems that none of the programs has longitudinal monitoring and evaluation procedures in place to measure the longer-term impact of learning life skills and gaining competencies, on girls' lives beyond the first year as alumnae.

Core Conditions

Using the conceptual framework and theory of change established in this study, it is useful to analyze the types of core conditions for empowerment that are present or absent in the larger environments within which each program operates. As mentioned in the conceptual framework and theory of change, when all of these core conditions are in place, a life skills education program for empowerment has the greatest potential for social transformation toward gender equality, in line with SDG 5. These conditions are dynamic, however, in that life skills education programs for empowerment can have the effect of establishing some of these core conditions where they previously did not exist. While none of the three programs meet all the necessary conditions, each exists in an environment that, to varying degrees, lays the groundwork for some of the core conditions for empowerment across the three dimensions.

Table 11 provides an overview of the presence, or lack thereof, of relevant core conditions in the contexts in which each of these programs operates.

Table 11: Comparison of Core Conditions

Organization	**BRAC** Bangladesh	**Grassroot Soccer** South Africa	**Room to Read** Cambodia
Dimension 1: National Political & Social Structures	Bangladesh struggles on this dimension, particularly with regards to women's access to the formal labor market. However, the government has taken initiative to address this through programs, and working with BRAC.	Social structures in South Africa are barriers to good reproductive health practice and sexual education. Cultural gender norms contribute to this as well.	Overall, the education system in Cambodia is weak, but cultural norms in Cambodia tend to value girls education less than boys education as well.
Dimension 2: Larger Supporting Environment for Education	BRAC receives financial support from the government of Bangladesh. Master Crafts Persons are also part of this larger supporting environment.	The government of South Africa provides material support to Grassroot Soccer, and has also asked the organization to help with its national sexual health education curriculum, implying a high level of support for and acceptance of the program. Coaches are part of this larger supporting environment too.	The government of Cambodia also provides material support to Room to Read, by way of enabling the GEP to operate in state schools. Additionally, Room to Read's social mobilizers form part of the this larger supporting environment and by engaging directly with communities is also transforming communities to be part of this supporting environment.
Dimension 3: Life Skills Education Program Components	BRAC has some life skills elements, that are not strictly livelihood skills, in its classroom component. However, it is unclear how these skills were selected.	Grassroot Soccer takes an experiential learning approach to teaching life skills and has identified skills that complement the sexual health knowledge it teaches.	Room to Read takes an experiential learning approach to teaching life skills. This is accomplished by fostering the development of competencies through activity-based learning of skills and knowledge.

As previously mentioned in the discussion of country contexts, each program's curriculum and pedagogical approach is tailored to address the specific structural barriers girls face within that program's country. For BRAC in Bangladesh, access to the formal labor market for women and girls, a key condition along dimension one, is not present. While this might impede the girls who participate in the program from achieving their full potentials, the sheer presence of the BRAC STAR apprenticeship model has helped shift the gendered perceptions of labor in many Bangladesh communities. Similarly, Grassroots Soccer is working to change the way the South African society at large views reproductive health and sexual education; while there are still cultural gender norms that persist with regard to sexual health and reproductive rights, the Grassroot Soccer curriculum is helping to transform the way its participants and subsequently their families and communities think about these issues in a more gender equitable way.

Along the second dimension, which deals with the larger supporting environment for girls' life skills

education, all three settings appear to have these conditions in place but to varying degrees. BRAC, Grassroots Soccer, and Room to Read carry out their programs with some sort of support from their respective national governments, whether financial (BRAC) or material (Grassroot Soccer and Room to Read). This is significant not only because it allows these non-governmental organizations to sustain their work, but it also provides them with additional credibility among community members and civil society at large. Notwithstanding this added credibility, at the community level, all three programs have suboptimal family/community engagement results. Without adequate community support, detrimental gender norms can only be challenged, but not changed, and girls will continue to have to learn skills that help them adapt to and exist in highly gender-discriminatory environments, rather than using those skills to reach their full potential in a more gender-equitable context and maximizing their progress in the social, economic, political and wellbeing spheres of life.

The larger supporting environment also involves facilitator support. All three programs appoint and support facilitators to develop girls' skills: master crafts persons and peer leaders (BRAC); coaches (Grassroot Soccer); social mobilizers and sometimes, teachers (Room to Read). While this facilitating role is crucial to pedagogy across the three life skills programs, because of the different approaches to life skills, definitions of empowerment, pedagogical approaches, and target populations, the degree of training or support provided to these facilitators varies. Room to Read mandates training for social mobilizers in both life skills facilitation and working with adolescents. Grassroot Soccer trains coaches in life skills facilitation and working with participants of different ages, genders, and intellectual abilities. BRAC master crafts persons undergo training related to vocation-specific competencies, and in the expectations BRAC has of them as both teachers and employers. Because of the key role of facilitators, the importance of adequate training cannot be overlooked. The Room to Read case study indicated the organization's policy of ongoing or refresher training based on program officers' assessments of field staff carrying out their duties in life skills classes. The continuing education/training policies of Grassroot Soccer and BRAC were unclear from the data obtained for this report, although it is clear that facilitator observations or supervisory visits are conducted. Also unclear for Grassroot Soccer and Room to Read, was the adequacy of compensation organizations provide to their facilitators; neither interview nor desk review data included remuneration information, even though this is an important consideration in the education setting. BRAC's master crafts persons receive about USD25 per participant per month, raising the possibility of inadequate compensation if these facilitators take on only one apprentice.

Lastly, the structural and pedagogical components of each program are at least partially successful in establishing the necessary conditions for empowerment within each program. Both Grassroot Soccer and Room to Read are highly successful in fostering environments that rely on learning through action. This kind of experiential learning has been shown to be particularly useful in activating girls' personal and social competencies. All three programs succeed in providing participants with environments that are conducive to learning, but can do more to foster an environment built upon dignity and equality with others through linking to programs that actively turn boys and the wider

community into allies for girls' empowerment and/or directly working with these groups to structurally change the gender norms within the larger operating environment.

Lessons Learned

Though most of these programs' goals and activities were developed in a context-specific manner, much can be gleaned from their strengths and weaknesses that may or may not be applicable across and adaptable to different contexts and countries.

Firstly, many of the skills that these three organizations consider to be life skills, and which fall under the definition of life skills as provided in the conceptual framework, should actually be considered transferrable and foundational skills that are crucial to the development of the competencies key to leading a successful life. These competencies should be developed in tandem with other foundational skills. Two particular life skills were taught by all three programs of interest: goal setting and relationship building. Because these programs have all defined empowerment differently, they have taken a somewhat narrow view of these skills, particularly with regards to how they evaluate girls' acquisition of these skills.

Given the sometimes limited consideration of the role of life skills and their potential impact, this report finds that there is a need for better monitoring and evaluation of the girls' development of these skills and their subsequent impact. Of the three organizations considered by this report, only Room to Read was found to use any competency-based tests as a means of evaluating skills development. However, Room to Read does not yet thoroughly track graduates of its programs and their successes. Doing so could help shed light on whether or not the skills learned in the GEP are leading to the formation of lifelong competencies. Similarly, Grassroot Soccer could benefit from expanding its evaluative methods. It currently evaluates the development of skills, specifically in regards to how these skills have been acquired in relation to certain knowledge areas (i.e. health). For example, Grassroot Soccer evaluates girls' development of communication skills by evaluating their abilities, or rather confidence in their abilities, to communicate with others specifically about sexual health. In other words, the measurement tools seem to elicit an individual girl's rating or perception of her own ability to communicate about reproductive health, and not her actual ability to do so. Further, because Grassroot Soccer focuses on HIV/AIDS, the tools are not designed to measure girls' abilities to communicate about non-sexual health issues.

Secondly, skills and knowledge should be complementary and, as much as possible, should be taught through experiential learning. It is possible that the "entry point" into these skills and knowledge is less important than the type of pedagogical approach taken. To that end, it seems key that programs adopt a pedagogical approach that looks at life skills education as a means of building competencies

and uses certain pools of knowledge as a vessel for teaching skills. Both Grassroot Soccer and Room to Read build girls' skills while simultaneously teaching them certain topics, like ways to practice safe sex. This contrasts with BRAC's classroom lessons that primarily aim to impart knowledge; for example, the program teaches about the dangers of child marriage and substance abuse, though it does not necessarily teach the skills one might need to avoid these dangers (e.g. communication, critical thinking, and self-confidence to stand up to parental or peer pressure). The two life skills BRAC STAR does teach in the two sites jointly implemented with UNICEF are goal setting and managing relationships.

Third, *how* skills are taught is as important as what skills are taught. It was difficult for this report to find robust material on how Master Crafts Persons, peer leaders, coaches, and social mobilizers are trained. This was true particularly with regards to BRAC's peer leaders. It is possible that the lack of information about BRAC's training of the peer leaders in charge of the classroom sessions is due to a lack of standardized trainings for these peer leaders. This may imply that not as much consideration has been given to *how* these skills are taught as has been given to which skills and knowledge are taught.

Additionally, while there was information about Room to Read's and Grassroot Soccer's training of social mobilizers and coaches, respectively, the training time appears to be relatively short. This may imply that less emphasis is placed on how skills are taught than on what skills are taught, particularly in the case of Room to Read, as social mobilizers follow a set curriculum which dictates the topics, skills, and activities to be taught and used. However, what has emerged from this study's research is that there is a clear need for intentionality in choosing not only the suite of skills that should be taught, but also in determining how those skills should be taught, in order for those skills to be transferrable and actually result in the development of competencies, behavioral changes, and empowerment. This requires a larger focus on training the teachers, social mobilizers or coaches, as well as better and more focused support for these critical human resources. Facilitator training should extend beyond the initial training during the onboarding period, to include continuing or refresher training as deemed needed by the organization, or as requested by the facilitators on ground, as they also need to build their own teaching or facilitation skills. Another important issue concerns facilitator compensation, which needs to be competitive and fair based on prevailing costs of living.

Fourth, despite the above mentioned need for intentionality in regards to choosing programs' suite of skills and pedagogical approaches, it is possible that positive unintended consequences of life skills programming will occur regardless. For example, BRAC staff have observed that the girls' interpersonal and communication skills greatly improve after the six-month training, although the program did not directly teach girls communication skills or have them participate in activities whose main purpose was to build interpersonal skills, like Grassroot Soccer and Room to Read have their

participants do.[383] These specific positive outcomes from BRAC's program then seem to be more unintended, albeit positive, consequences rather than the result of intentional life skills programming.

This positive outcome may reflect the fact that life skills, including personal and social competencies, can be developed as a result of learning productive competencies and becoming empowered in a different aspect of life. For instance, BRAC considers empowerment to be economic empowerment and it aims to address the issue of child marriage through this kind of empowerment. By providing a training program that equips young women with the skills to be financially independent, it hopes to present them with an alternative to child marriage. Therefore, the program simultaneously teaches them the value of education and raises awareness of the issues connected with child marriage. If the girls complete the program and are able to find gainful employment, they may develop other social and personal competencies, like self-confidence and self-efficacy, because they feel positively about being able to support themselves. This differs from Room to Read's approach through which the organization teaches girls to advocate for themselves to not get married early and to stay in school. It also differs from the approach Grassroot Soccer takes, teaching girls to stand up for themselves against gender-based violence or abuse within relationships.

Fifth, this study finds that more consideration should be given to the timing of life skills education, with an eye toward extending such programming to younger ages. All three programs target participants around adolescence as it is a particularly vulnerable life stage, especially for girls. However, it is possible that if life skills were taught earlier in life, and girls began to develop these competencies earlier, that some of the vulnerabilities associated with adolescence could be mitigated. For example, younger SKILLZ Street participants (ages 10 to 14) were more receptive to sports than older participants (15-19), who reported struggling with games and feeling 'childish.'"[384] Additionally, change in gender beliefs were also reported, with an increase from 37% to 69% of girls aged 10-13 years old who do not justify violence against girls, whereas this indicator only increased from 32% to 51% in girls aged 14-16 years old.[385]

Sixth, with regards to both BRAC and Room to Read, this study finds that the duration and frequency of life skills program sessions might be inadequate. This is a question that requires further exploration and better data to determine. However, BRAC staff shared in interviews that Master Craft Persons have provided feedback critical of the short duration of the program stating that six months is only sufficient to teach participants basic skills, meaning they cannot leave the program fully equipped to work. Given that BRAC is teaching livelihood skills, which tend to be more concrete and tangible, it is possible that programs with short durations and infrequent sessions, like Room to

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[383] Anindita Bhattacharjee and Md. Kamruzzaman, "Towards Employability and Better Livelihood"

[384] Ford Foundation, Grassroot Soccer. "More Than Just a Game: Support as a Communication Platform in Sexuality Education for Adolescent Girls." 2015. page 23

[385] Ibid, page 35

Read's GEP in upper secondary school, might face similar challenges teaching girls more than just the basics of a skill, as the skills the GEP teaches are of a more abstract nature and require some degree of behavior and attitudinal change to become competencies. Related to the duration and frequency of life skills programs is the issue of participant support during the period of transition to tertiary education or the workforce. This is also requires follow-up strategies for girls graduating from programs, even beyond the year after.

Seventh, the case studies raise the issue of cross-sectoral collaboration in life skills programming. Working across sectors to address structural barriers to girls' education is necessary, because these barriers are not confined to the classroom and result from deep-seated gendered norms and other conditions which inevitably involve sectors outside education. For example, BRAC brings a livelihoods perspective to their life skills program and works with craftsmen and women, while Grassroot Soccer includes a health focus (HIV/AIDS) and works with health facilities and violence care centers. Room to Read, though working solely within the education sector as a key partner to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of Cambodia, also includes health content in its life skills programming. The importance of cross-sectoral collaboration in life skills programming should not be overlooked, as girls face multifaceted challenges and have multiple roles, which need to be taken into account in designing life skills programs. Such consideration will increase the likelihood of maximizing the acceptability, effectiveness, and sustainability of life skills programs.

Future Research

From report findings, there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to girls' life skills programming, as success depends on a careful design around context. The conceptual framework presented in this report is a starting point and should be tested, adapted, and expanded upon by future research on girls' life skills.

In addition, based on the preceding case study and comparative findings, a number of questions for future exploration are outlined below, with respect to life skills program processes and impact:

<u>Process:</u>

- What should training of trainers entail? What are the facilitators learning?
- Is there a minimum implementation duration for each program type to be truly effective in fostering development of life skills and competencies?
- Should life skills be taught in single sex or co-ed settings, or some hybrid of these?
- What is the role of safe spaces in learning environments?
- How can development of a competency be measured?
- If skills should be taught earlier in life, what skills should pre-adolescent children learn,

when should they start learning these, and how can they best learn the skills?

Impact:

- How can a better understanding of life skills programming community impact be obtained?
- How should impact on educational, transitional, and post-program lives be measured?

APPENDICES

Appendix A - Primary Data Collection

Capstone Team Members by Organization

BRAC	Grassroot Soccer	Room to Read	Conceptual Framework
Chulan Qing Robert Marshall	Ariel Flaggs Nilay Tuncok	Daniele Selby Abisola Pinheiro	Jessica Madris

Appendix B - Interview Guides

Guiding Questions for Interviews with Case Study Program Staff

Hello *name of interviewee* and thank you for taking the time to speak with us today about *name of organization's* life skills work. As you know we are working with Brookings Institution's Center for Universal Education and conducting case studies to examine different approaches to girls' life skills education. The objective of the project is to better understand what components of these programs are the most effective in improving girls' educational and life outcomes. Through our conversation with you, we hope to learn how the program has impacted girls' lives and understand what lessons can be drawn upon to influence girls' life skills programming in other regions. The case studies will inform the Center for Universal Education's wider research on girls' life skills and its efforts to spark transformation within the education ecosystem that contribute to positive outcomes for girls.

We would also like to remind you to please sign the consent form and email it back to us as soon as possible (*or get oral consent*).

1. How does the program define life skills? What life skills does the program teach? How did the program come to identify these particular skills?
    - What is the history of this program? How did it come to exist in its country and locality?
    - Who does your program aim to target and why does it target this group with these particular life skills??
    - Has the program expanded to other contexts? Has the program changed in different towns/villages/states/countries, etc.?

2. How does the program teach these skills? What are the mechanisms of delivery? The pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning?
    - How are the facilitators/educators chosen? What kinds of training do they receive?
    - Is the pedagogical approach gendered? i.e.- is there a specific approach to teaching and learning *girls*' life skills in particular?

- In what ways are your programs' pedagogical approaches different or similar to those of the public education systems' in your case countries and why?
- Is their pedagogical approach in line with societal beliefs/ attitudes, or does the program challenge these norms?

3. What feedback has the organization received from members of the community about the program? (Members of the community can include local leaders, parents, other students, etc.)

4. Has your organization made any programmatic changes (ex. skills taught, pedagogical approaches, timing/ sequencing of lessons), since the program began? If so, what led to the change and has there been any impact from the programmatic change?

5. What areas of the program are particularly successful? Any areas you would like to improve? Have there been any unintentional consequences?

6. How does the program measure and assess these skills and their impact on girls' lives?
    - What challenges has your organization faced in measuring these skills, and how did it work/ is it working to overcome the challenges?

7. What has been the impact of the intervention on girls? The community?

8. In what ways, if any, have donor priorities impacted your programming?

9. What lessons can be drawn from your program to inform girls' life skills programming in other contexts?

10. Is there anything else you would like to share that has not been covered?

Thank you for contributing your time and expertise to this exciting research. Your input will help us with our comparative analysis and we will be sure to email a copy to *name of organization* once the report is finalized in May.

Guiding Questions for Interviews with Case Study Program Participants

Hello *name of interviewee* and thank you for taking the time to speak with us today about your experience with *name of organization's* life skills program. As you know we are working with Brookings Institution's Center for Universal Education and conducting case studies to examine different approaches to girls' life skills education. The objective of the project is to better understand what components of these programs are the most effective in improving girls' educational and life outcomes. Through our conversation with you, we hope to learn how the program has impacted your life and your community and understand what lessons can be drawn upon to influence girls' life skills programming in other regions. The case studies will inform the Center for Universal Education's wider research on girls' life skills and its efforts to spark transformation within the education ecosystem that contribute to positive outcomes for girls.

We would also like to remind you to please sign the consent form and email it back to us as soon as possible (*or get oral consent*).

1. What skills did you learn in this program? This program calls itself a life skills program; what does "life skills" mean to you?
    - How did you find out about the program? How did you become involved?
    - Did you go to school as well? If so, for how long? Private/public? Single-sex school? Were the skills that you learned in this program different from those that you learned in school? If so, how?

2. Through what kinds of activities did you learn these life skills within the program?
    - If you attended school as well, how is this life skills program different from your regular school?

3. Were members of your community also involved with the program? If so, how? Were there other ways you think your community could / should be involved in the future?

4. What did you hope to learn from the program? Do you feel like the program met your expectations? If so, how? If not, why not and what would you recommend changing?

5. In what ways did the program impact you? Can you give some specific examples of when you put your skills into practice in various settings (i.e. to overcome the X barriers X program has intended to overcome, for instance within family or community settings, and how it helped you change the circumstance you were in)
    - In addition to this impact on yourself, have you seen any impacts on the wider community?

- Have your friends or family remarked that they've noticed any changes in you? If so, what did they mention?
- How has your role in your community changed since you completed the program (or began the program, if the interviewee has not yet finished)?

6. Is there anything else you would like to share that has not been covered?

Thank you for sharing your experiences with us. Your input will help us with our comparative analysis and we will be sure to email a copy to *name of organization* once the report is finalized in May.