

# Endline Evaluation

Of the Gender Responsive  
Education and  
Transformation Project  
(GREAT)

## Global Report

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This report was produced for Global Affairs Canada (GAC) as part of Right to Play's Multi-Country Endline Study.

This Endline Evaluation was carried out by Andres O. Navarrete, Joanna Seth-Smith, James Gathogo, and Sheryl Ewe from One South, LLC. The evaluation followed a cohort of girls and boys and their households in Ghana, Mozambique and Rwanda, tracking their progress across the ultimate outcomes of the project.

Data collection for this evaluation took place between October and December 2022.

The Evaluation was managed and facilitated by Jessica Best, Katherine Pizzacalla, Zoe Dibbs, Tracey Evans, Rachell Pell, and Eric Opoku from Right to Play International.

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# List of Acronyms

|                |                                                                                  |                |                                                                  |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>C</b>       | Control                                                                          | <b>MINEDUC</b> | Ministry of Education (Rwanda)                                   |
| <b>CBO</b>     | Community Based Organization                                                     | <b>MoE</b>     | Ministry of Education (Ghana, Mozambique)                        |
| <b>CEAA</b>    | Canadian Environmental Assessment Act                                            | <b>NTC</b>     | National Teaching Council (Ghana)                                |
| <b>CoP</b>     | Community of Practice                                                            | <b>NTS</b>     | National Teacher's Standards (Ghana)                             |
| <b>CoTT</b>    | Continuum of Teacher Training                                                    | <b>NBER</b>    | National Bureau for Economic Research                            |
| <b>CL</b>      | Curriculum Leaders (Ghana)                                                       | <b>NGO</b>     | Non-Governmental Organization                                    |
| <b>CS</b>      | Child Survey                                                                     | <b>OOS</b>     | Out-of-school                                                    |
| <b>CSO</b>     | Civil Society Organization                                                       | <b>PAQE</b>    | Play for the Advancement of Quality Education                    |
| <b>DCC</b>     | District Continuous Professional Development Committees (Rwanda)                 | <b>PPE</b>     | Personal Protective Equipment                                    |
| <b>DEO</b>     | District Education Officials                                                     | <b>PBL</b>     | Play-Based Learning                                              |
| <b>SDJET</b>   | District Services for Education, Youth and Technology (Mozambique)               | <b>SBM</b>     | School-based Mentors                                             |
| <b>DNFPTE</b>  | Direcção Nacional de Formação de Professores e Técnicos de Educação (Mozambique) | <b>SD</b>      | Standard Deviation                                               |
| <b>DPC</b>     | Desenvolvimento Profissional Contínuo (Mozambique)                               | <b>SDG</b>     | Sustainable Development Goals                                    |
| <b>EFA</b>     | Education For All                                                                | <b>SEDL</b>    | Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (Rwanda)            |
| <b>EGRA</b>    | Early Grade Reading Assessment                                                   | <b>SEO</b>     | Sector Education Officer                                         |
| <b>EGMA</b>    | Early Grade Mathematics Assessment                                               | <b>SGA</b>     | School General Assembly                                          |
| <b>EIP</b>     | Environmental Integration Process (Rwanda)                                       | <b>SMC</b>     | School Management Committee                                      |
| <b>ESP</b>     | Education Sector Plans (Rwanda)                                                  | <b>SOP</b>     | Standard Operating Procedures (Rwanda)                           |
| <b>ESSP</b>    | Education Sector Strategic Plan (Rwanda)                                         | <b>SSL</b>     | School Subject Leaders                                           |
| <b>F</b>       | Female                                                                           | <b>SSMT</b>    | Safety and Security Management Team (Rwanda)                     |
| <b>GAC</b>     | Global Affairs Canada                                                            | <b>T</b>       | Treatment                                                        |
| <b>GBV</b>     | Gender-Based Violence                                                            | <b>T-TEL</b>   | Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (Ghana)              |
| <b>GR</b>      | Gender-Responsive                                                                | <b>TOT</b>     | Trainers of Teachers                                             |
| <b>GREAT</b>   | Gender Responsive Education and Transformation                                   | <b>TTC</b>     | Teacher Training College                                         |
| <b>GR-CoTT</b> | Gender-Responsive Continuum of Teacher Training                                  | <b>UNESCO</b>  | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| <b>GRPBL</b>   | Gender-Responsive Play-based Learning                                            | <b>UNICEF</b>  | United Nations Children's Fund                                   |
| <b>HQ</b>      | Right To Play Headquarters                                                       | <b>UNFPA</b>   | United Nations Population Fund                                   |
| <b>HHS</b>     | Household Survey                                                                 | <b>USAID</b>   | United States Agency for International Development               |
| <b>IFP</b>     | Instituições de Formação de Professores - Teacher Training College (Mozambique)  | <b>VTI</b>     | Vocational Training Institute                                    |
| <b>M</b>       | Male                                                                             | <b>WASH</b>    | Water, Sanitation and Hygiene                                    |
| <b>MEL</b>     | Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning                                              | <b>ZIP</b>     | Zonas de Influência Pedagógica (Mozambique)                      |

# Executive Summary

## Project Summary

The Gender-Responsive Education and Transformation (GREAT) project was a five-year project (2018-2023) implemented in Ghana, Mozambique and Rwanda. It was funded by Global Affairs Canada.

The GREAT project aimed to improve quality education outcomes for girls and boys through the several school and community-based interventions, centred on promoting the adoption of gender-responsive play-based learning methodologies. The project aimed to support the three target countries in ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all (Sustainable Development Goal 4).

Figure 1. Countries of the GREAT Project



The project was structured through three core pillars:

1. Increased integration of gender-responsive play-based learning by teachers into teaching practice.
2. Increased engagement of parents and caregivers in addressing gender-specific learning needs of girls and boys, including at-risk children.
3. Increased adoption of gender-responsive play-based learning in in-service and pre-service teacher training.

In Mozambique, GREAT was implemented in 140 schools in 3 provinces: Maputo, Maputo City, and Gaza in Grades 1 to 3. The project reached 105,000 children (F 52,500), 1,136 teachers (F 636), and 368,500 community members including parents and caregivers.

In Ghana, the project was implemented in 139 schools, in 6 districts, across 3 regions: Volta (Keta and Anloga), Greater Accra (Ga South), and Northern Region (Kumbungu, Savelugu and Tolon), from Kindergarten to Grade 6 of primary school. The project reached 46,906 children (23,024 F); 1,157 teachers (2,238 F); and 105,667 community members including parents and caregivers.

In Rwanda, the project ran in 88 schools across 3 districts of Rwanda: Bugesera, Kayanza, and Ruhango from Grades 1 to 6. The project reached 64,791 children (32,697 F); 1,694 teachers (1,081 F); and 40,825 community members including parents and caregivers.

GREAT operated under extended school closures and reduced classroom instruction throughout much of 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project implemented a series of innovative and successful project measures across all three project countries as forms of adaptation<sup>1</sup>.

## Evaluation Background

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the impact, relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of the GREAT project.

To do so, the Endline Evaluation measured changes in the project's ultimate and intermediate outcomes among participants and stakeholders during three evaluation periods: a baseline conducted in 2018, a midline in 2021 and an endline in 2022. The evaluation used a longitudinal, individual-level, quasi-experimental design based on a Difference-in-Difference methodology (DID). This means the evaluation team tracked a representative sample of project participants through the time periods of baseline, midline, and endline at the individual-level, rather than tracking at a group or cluster level such as schools or youth groups. It also means data was collected and comparisons were made between individuals who participated in GREAT activities: the treatment group, and those who did not: the control group. The DID technique<sup>2</sup> was used to understand the change in outcomes between the treatment group and the control group over time, allowing the evaluation to assess and isolate the project's additionality<sup>3</sup>. Qualitative data also provided evidence of the causal pathways behind the observed achievements.

Most the students were tracked from baseline to endline. Children not found in the school or community after three attempts were replaced by other children in the same class (school) or of the same age (community). The endline reached a sample of 4,038 children (M 1,995 / F2,043). All countries achieved the minimum sample size to generalize at a 0.8 power. There was a total of 120 qualitative sessions conducted, with 40 conducted per country with project stakeholders.

## Findings

**GREAT delivered on its intended ultimate outcomes and had an impact on children's literacy, life skills, attendance, enrolment, and positive learning environments.**

In Ghana and Mozambique, the difference-in-difference (DID) model demonstrated that GREAT had an impact on literacy gains in the language of instruction (English and Portuguese, respectively)

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<sup>1</sup> RTP (2022) Annual Project Results Report: April 2021 – March 2022 p.6

<sup>2</sup> C.f. Parallel-trend assumption of the DiD model: This assumes that the average change in the control group represents the counterfactual change in the treatment group if there was no treatment.

<sup>3</sup> In Mozambique, we will compare results at the aggregate-level and a cross section approach will be used instead of a DID approach. This is because the project only operated from Grade 1 to 3 of primary school, and children from Grade 2 and 3 from previous periods would fall outside the project's exposure if they were tracked.

and, in Ghana, also on literacy gains in local languages. In Mozambique, literacy was not measured in the local languages.

GREAT also had an impact on enrolment across all three countries and on attendance in Ghana. Children were more likely to remain enrolled in project schools than in non-project schools through the course of implementation.

In terms of life skills<sup>4</sup>, the project improved pro-social skills across all three countries. GREAT also improved children's resilience and leadership skills in Ghana and Rwanda and school belonging in Mozambique (especially for girls). These life skills support gains in learning and the wider psycho-social wellbeing of children. According to self-determination theory, for example, school belonging is an essential ingredient in promoting goal-oriented behaviour. In Rwanda, the project improved self-esteem. Across all countries, girls in the GREAT programme caught up with boys across most life skill domains.

After GREAT, teachers were increasingly able to create positive learning environments for children. Children from GREAT schools were, on average, 1.5 times more likely to perceive their learning climate to be positive and supportive than children from control schools. This impact was experienced by children from all three countries.

## **Attending supplemental learning activities and having parents and caregivers engaged in education drove the project's impact on literacy in Ghana and Mozambique.**

Impact on literacy was driven by children's participation in supplemental learning activities as well as by having parents or caregivers who engage with the education of their children, for example, by discussing their child's progress at school with teachers or when the child is supported to read at home. According to regression models, these were the most significant predictors of literacy gains in Ghana and Mozambique (other indicators of the logic model<sup>5</sup> of the project were also considered). In Rwanda, only 37% of parents sent their children to supplemental learning activities, which may partially explain why impact in oral reading fluency was not visible.

Teachers discussed that supplemental learning activities were especially suited to cover specific skills gaps in literacy and allowed children to devote more time into strengthening these skills. This was the case for example, in oral pronunciation, reading, fluency and comprehension skills, which were addressed by the project through a combination of gender-responsive play-based learning (GRPBL) techniques.<sup>6</sup>

Caregivers who know about Right to Play (RTP) and attended its events, were members of parent councils, or who had positive parental attitudes to addressing child-gender specific needs, were also more likely to be engaged with the education of their children, reinforcing numerous project

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<sup>4</sup> All life skill measures are adapted internationally validated scales used to measure life skills. All scales, including life skill scales, were adapted and tested for inter-item reliability, yielding always a Cronbach alpha > 0.7.

<sup>5</sup> Also known as Performance Measurement Framework (PMF)

<sup>6</sup> FGD with Girls learning, KwekuPamfo\_1&2

assumptions. Furthermore, when parents encourage children to read at home and when they organize home learning activities, children demonstrated higher literacy gains<sup>7</sup>. Supplemental learning activities and activities that promoted positive learning environments through parental engagement at home (such as RTP-organized out-reach activities), were the most conducive to changes in oral reading fluency in Mozambique and Ghana.

## **Training teachers who integrate GRPBL and empower children to participate in class drove impact on life skills in Rwanda.**

Activities that had an impact on life skills included school-level interventions that prepared teachers to empower children participation in the classroom. Children who had a positive perception of their teacher's teaching quality experienced the greatest gains in self-esteem<sup>8</sup>, leadership skills<sup>9</sup>, and pro-social skills<sup>10</sup>. Children with positive learning environments also had higher self-esteem gains<sup>11</sup>. In Rwanda, teacher training and activities promoting positive learning environments at home were the most conducive to changes in life skills.

**The theory of change has been largely validated. Ultimate outcome results were driven by an increased integration of GRPBL by teachers into teaching practice, by an an increased engagement of parents and caregivers in addressing gender-specific learning needs of girls and boys, including at-risk children, and by the integration of gender-responsive play-based learning in in-service and pre-service teacher training.**

## **Considerably more teachers incorporated gender-responsive play-based learning into their lessons since the baseline.**

Children gave examples of how, through play and the supplemental reading clubs, they had more opportunities to develop soft skills such as being more confident to answer the teacher's questions, solve problems, read, and stand in the front of the class and answer questions on the blackboard<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> C.f. Leadership Model.

<sup>8</sup> *Self-Esteem Model*:  $R^2 = .296$ ,  $F(13, 548) = 3.396$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Classroom PLE:  $b = 0.317$ ,  $t(548) = 1.990$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Teaching Quality:  $b = .399$ ,  $t(548) = 2.414$ ,  $p < .05$ . Sex and other variables were not significant.

<sup>9</sup> *Leadership Model*:  $R^2 = .378$ ,  $F(13, 548) = 6.842$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Teaching Quality:  $b = 0.630$ ,  $t(548) = 3.700$ ,  $p < .001$ ; read books:  $b = 0.286$ ,  $t(548) = 2.823$ ,  $p < .04$ ; Home Learning Activities:  $b = 0.145$ ,  $t(548) = 2.246$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Sex and other variables were not significant.

<sup>10</sup> *Prosocial Skills Model*:  $R^2 = .326$ ,  $F(13, 648) = 4.891$ ,  $p < .001$  Teaching Quality:  $b = 0.798$ ,  $t(548) = 3.838$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Sex and other variables were not significant.

<sup>11</sup> C.f. Self-esteem model.

<sup>12</sup> Focus group discussion with girls about Complementary learning

## The proportion of students who felt empowered to participate in classroom activities increased in all countries.

At endline, a large majority of students in Rwanda felt more empowered to participate in classroom activities. In Mozambique and Ghana, around one third of children felt empowered to do so. Teachers observed that, by using play-based learning activities, children learned how to emulate active and engaged behaviours, giving them greater confidence to participate in class.<sup>13</sup>

## This is largely the result of improvements in the preparedness of teachers to use the skills taught in COTT in their classrooms.

Feeling very prepared to use these skills significantly predicted the extent to which teachers reported using GRPBL methods in their lessons. Most trained teachers scored satisfactorily on post-COTT training tests and most teachers feel prepared to integrate COTT approaches in the classroom after GREAT training.

## Teachers were also increasingly supported by Communities of Practice and Teacher Champions. Head teachers also developed action plans to support teachers in implementing GRPBL.

RTP has ensured that teachers form part of a school-level network of coaching and mentoring, working with- and helping establish Communities of Practice (CoPs) across schools. Communities of Practices are groups of teachers organized by subject area that share experiences and provide coaching and support on teaching approaches reflected in the COTT. The support provided by CoPs to teachers grew significantly between baseline and endline periods in all countries, which demonstrates a strong project contribution in this regard. Teachers described how the CoPs regularly checked on teachers' learner plans and supporting teachers by discussing ways to improve these plans<sup>14</sup> and gave many accounts of their usefulness.

Teacher champions trained by RTP maximize the integration of GRPBL in schools by providing individualized support to teachers. By the end of the project, most female teacher champions were comfortable providing coaching and mentoring support across all three countries. Teachers shared that the teacher champions helped them to understand the games and how to implement them in class.<sup>15</sup> The teacher champions also helped them with problems that arose during class-time and how to create a positive learning environment.<sup>16</sup>

Head teachers also play a pivotal role. Most head teachers across the three countries developed action plans to support teachers in using GRPBL by endline.

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13 FGD primary teachers with GRBPL training, odumprala MA\_#1

14 FGD with primary school teachers (Males) (Ghana); FGD with primary school teachers (Females) (Rwanda));

15 FGD with primary school teachers (Males) at Atsiame Heluvi

16 FGD with primary school teachers (Males) at Atsiame Heluvi

There is an increased engagement of parents and caregivers in addressing gender-specific learning needs of girls and boys, including at-risk children.

In all three countries, there are more male and female caregivers engaging in home-learning activities at endline compared to baseline. This included reading, telling stories, playing, singing, or dancing, asking about homework, or helping their child with homework. Male and female caregivers also increasingly shared home learning-activities amongst themselves. Parents said the project helped them change their view on girls' education and on the importance of play.<sup>17</sup>

As a result, children are increasingly experiencing a positive and stimulating home learning environment.

These changes in home learning environments are largely the result of increased parental awareness of the gender-specific learning needs of girls and boys. By endline, a large majority of parents had improved awareness in all three countries. Furthermore, when parents have increased awareness, they also have positive attitudes towards acting on that awareness and addressing the learning needs of both girls and boys<sup>18</sup>. By the end of the project, a large majority of parents had positive attitudes towards addressing these needs. In qualitative sessions, parents discussed awareness of several gender-specific needs for boys and girls.

Positive parental attitudes increase the likelihood that they send their children to supplemental learning activities. At the end of the project, a large proportion of parents in Ghana reported sending their children for supplementary learning activities. In Rwanda and Mozambique, it was about a third. Notwithstanding, most children are very satisfied with the quality of these supplemental learning activities.

Schools provide for specific learning needs of girls and boys and are becoming more child friendly.

Parent council members actively participated in carrying out school plans that support the specific learning needs of boys and girls, including the planning and budgeting of construction and rehabilitation work. Most Parent council members actively participated in carrying out school plans that supported the specific learning needs of boys and girls. At the end of the project, almost all school plans in the three countries exhibited 7 out of 10 requirements for gender responsiveness and the majority demonstrated environmental sustainability. Girls often cited the construction of girls' rooms where they can manage their menstruation whilst in school, as a key motivating factor to come to school during menstruation.

However, corporal punishment is still a prevalent practice in schools.

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<sup>17</sup> Focus group discussion with parents and caregivers (1) (Rwanda)

<sup>18</sup> Pearson correlation  $p < .05$

The project was only somewhat effective in promoting positive disciplining strategies in schools because the practice is still prevalent. While most head teachers reject corporal punishment and there was a significant reduction of children who report to have witnessed the use of corporal punishment in schools, the practice is still somewhat prevalent in Ghana (14% of children reporting the use), prevalent in Mozambique (37%), and very prevalent in Rwanda (60%). This is an area that still requires programmatic attention. In qualitative sessions, teachers gave many examples of positive discipline learned by the project so the practice may be restricted to teachers not supported by GREAT.

## **There is an increased integration of gender-responsive play-based learning in in-service and pre-service teacher training.**

Most teachers reported receiving gender-responsive coaching and mentoring support from district or national officials. This includes monitoring visits, feedback sessions, and continuous professional development opportunities offered by District Education Officials (DEO) to in-service teachers. This support system was also appreciated by most teachers agreed that the GR coaching and mentoring support has improved their practice.

There is an improved ability of district administration to support teachers in their implementation of GR-PBL in schools as the majority of teachers feel supported. Most teachers reported receiving coaching and mentoring support from district or national officials, but this number decreased since the baseline in all countries.

There was also a high level of integration of GRPBL into pre-service teacher education across the three countries. The three most positive dimensions were: 1) how GRPBL influenced the change in behaviour of key actors; 2) how debates and issues were framed differently integrating teachers who were untrained and 3) how curriculum and policy were legitimised and institutionally and organically integrated through the teaching training institutions, academia, and the Ministries of Education of each of the countries.

## **GREAT promoted gender transformation through improvements in quality teaching, normative change, and through construction or rehabilitation work that responded to the gender-specific needs of girls.**

GREAT's gender-responsive training supported the creation of a more equal learning environment in schools and homes and prepared teachers to deliver to the gender-specific needs of boys and girls in the classroom. Teachers and parents alike reported that after receiving GRPBL training, teachers were more capable of understanding the multiple dimensions of inclusion and awareness with regards to disability and gender<sup>19</sup>. After the outreach of the GREAT project and RTP training,

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<sup>19</sup> FGD with (male) teachers who received gender responsive Training on PBA at G.S Nyagihunika; Focus group discussion with parents and caregivers (1), Mozambique; EP Nyabaguma\_Transcription\_Parents\_Caregivers, Reanda

parents and communities have shifted harmful behaviors by recognizing children's rights to quality education<sup>20</sup>.

The gender-responsive element of GRPBL led to more gender equality within the teaching body, increasing female teachers' participation and leadership. Female teachers reported that through RTP's training, teachers' perceptions regarding traditional gender roles changed and they began allocating leadership roles to girls.<sup>21</sup> Through training, teachers have also learnt to become more gender equal.

GREAT has improved the confidence of girls and helped reduce negative gender stereotypes. Supplemental learning activities created spaces that fostered friendly inter-gender relations through games and experiences that promoted gender-transformation. Girls and boys said that the lessons allowed them to forge stronger friendships with one another<sup>22</sup>.

The programme helped to create consciousness about the need for comprehensive sexuality education in schools as a key mechanism to prevent child pregnancy and school drop-out. According to parents, girls are better able to cater for themselves to avoid dropping out from school due to pregnancy. Promoting menstrual hygiene education in schools has made female students more comfortable to attend school when they are on their period and have avoided missing school as a result.

Construction and rehabilitation of facilities helped create child-friendly spaces that catered to the gender-specific needs of girls. Girls also that, thanks to the girls' rooms that were constructed and teachings on menstrual hygiene management whilst at school, they are also attending school even during menstruation<sup>23</sup>.

**GREAT was a relevant intervention that considered the needs of at-risk children, was well-aligned with national education priorities, policies and systems and remained adaptable to a changing context.**

**The project considered the needs of children in its design, including the needs of children who were at-risk. GREAT continued to meet the needs of children, including during COVID-related school closures.**

The programme's GRPBL was suitable for children from all backgrounds because it motivated all children to learn and participate. When children lack motivation, they become 'disheartened' and miss school. Therefore, RTP's methodologies dedicated to building confidence and other life skills. Special strategies to include at-risk children were put in place and past evaluations were used to estimate the prevalence of at-risk children and the barriers they faced. These included forming

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<sup>20</sup> Focus group discussion with parents and caregivers (1)

<sup>21</sup> FGD with primary school teachers (Males) at Atsiame Heluvi, Ghana

<sup>22</sup> FDG\_Attendees of Supplemental Learning Activities\_KAYONZA district \_NYAMIRAMA sector \_G.S GIKAYA

<sup>23</sup> FGD with Girls Aged 8-12 (Mozambique).

teachers on inclusive education to deliver quality teaching and learning to children with disabilities and providing special support to children with low attendance, mothers, pregnant girls, and children from low-income households.

## **The project was well aligned with national education priorities, policies, and systems.**

All countries have included public priorities in their programmatic objectives and consulted with major stakeholders in the education sector to achieve a robust and replicable model.

RTP Ghana has been working closely with national government stakeholders from the GREAT project design stage, throughout the project, and into the current exit and sustainability stages. In Mozambique, the national curriculum for both the continuous professional development for in-service teachers and pre-service teacher training incorporated GRPBL components thanks to the knowledge shared by RTP through technical assistance and support. In Rwanda, RTP has been working closely with key actors of the education sectors, such as the Rwandan Education Board (REB) and the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC). These and other members from the education sector (such as UNICEF) required technical expertise in the GR-PBL methodology to enhance the national competence curriculum on GRPBL.

## **GREAT demonstrated a strong ability to adapt; especially during the COVID19 pandemic.**

The project team demonstrated a keen ability to adapt the project and remain relevant throughout the implementation period, especially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The project responded to COVID-19-related barriers affecting quality education in proactive and positive ways.

District-level officials emphasised that RTP, via the GREAT project, was often the only organisation to stay in communities to support student learning throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. At the validation workshops, participants explained that RTP was often the only NGO that stayed in the districts when the COVID-19 pandemic hit intervention sites and supported students to continue learning.<sup>24</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, RTP also provided soap, tissues, hand sanitizers, writing materials, library books and exercise books with students to facilitate their learning.<sup>25</sup>

Adaptations were also informed by MEL systems. The country project teams created an Evaluation Management Response Plan (EMR) to inform activity implementation for the last year of the project, in response to the midline evaluation report. For example, RTP developed special strategies to address the needs of at-risk children identified at baseline and midline.

<sup>24</sup> District-level officials at the validation workshop 30<sup>th</sup> Jan 2023

<sup>25</sup> FGD with primary school teachers (Males) at Atsiamé Heluvi, KII with Headteacher, Keta RC

## **GREAT has strong prospects for sustainability.**

**There is a growing level of ownership of the GREAT approach at the family, local, and institutional levels.**

Teachers reported that they will keep using GRPBL in their schools and the majority feel that their school leadership supports them to do so. Most teachers in all countries are committed to applying what they learned from RTP in their classes and most also feel supported by their head teachers to integrate GRPBL in their lessons. Most head teachers from RTP schools will support teachers to integrate GRPBL in their classroom lessons and believe they have good support from district stakeholders to do so.

Parents also believe it is now more common than before to send girls to school, that communities have become more encouraging for girls to succeed in school, and that home learning activities can contribute to a child's success in school. Social norms are therefore changing in favor of girls' education and on parental attitudes towards home-learning, demonstrating great prospects for sustainability.

**However, there are limited resources and funding plans in all three countries for the continuous application of GR-PBL pedagogies in schools after the project ends. Most of these will come from school budgets, as the majority of DEO offices have not allocated funds towards GRPBL integration due to limited availability.**

While the majority of District Education Officials are committed to ensure that GRPBL is integrated in teacher teaching and coaching should these activities be funded or scaled up, only about a third of DEOs offices in Ghana and 6% of those in Mozambique have allocated funding to GRPBL integration. Rwanda had the greatest commitment with 59% of DEOs saying they have allocated funds towards GRPBL.

However, at the school level, most head teachers in the three countries planned to allocate more funds in the future towards key project objectives such as teacher training, girl-friendly facilities, and girl-focused initiatives. This suggests future investments will come mostly from the school.

## **These results point to a few key lessons learned:**

1. Supplemental learning activities, parental engagement, and supporting children's participation in class were the most effective mechanisms to support children's learning and literacy. Linkages between GR-PBL and these mechanisms should be enhanced.
2. Teacher training modules that help children feel empowered to participate in classroom activities and activities promoting positive learning environments at home were the most conducive to changes in life skills.

3. Delivering training through cascade teacher training approaches was effective at reaching a large proportion of teachers quickly during the life cycle of the project. For sustained changes, projects in other geographies should continue to utilize a cascade teacher training model based on reports from stakeholders who participated in multiple validation exercises across the three countries. In Rwanda, this was also effective at reaching new groups of teachers including ECD teachers and even caregivers of children in ECD. In Mozambique, some concerns were raised about the content of GR-PBL training being diluted and the need for better quality management in how master teacher trainers deliver associated training.
4. School-based mentors effectively reinforced learning from teacher training and should continue to be supported as effective on the ground supports for teachers implementing GR-PBL. This was particularly emphasized by stakeholders in Rwanda.
5. Institutionalizing GR-PBL in pre-service teacher training is an effective approach to ensure the long-term sustainability of GR-PBL.
6. Working with district officials supported GR-PBL to reach schools beyond the project's immediate catchment area, likely broadening project impact and inculcating support mechanisms at the district level. This was reported as a successful strategy in Ghana.
7. Engaging effectively with the Ministry of Education, steering committees, and technical working groups supports sustainability of GR-PBL. In Ghana, participants reported the benefits of incorporating GR-PBL in resource materials utilized by these wider stakeholder groups.
8. Communities of Practice provided on-going support to teachers in implementing the methodology and created spaces where they could raise concerns and challenges.
9. Some stakeholders reported there needs to be a mechanism to track teacher implementation of GR-PBL more systematically, observing changes over time in a central database. Building this out with district officials may support wider adoption and establish useful accountability mechanisms.
10. In Mozambique, validation workshop participants requested that future projects share the resources for GR-PBL sooner in the implementation life cycle of the project to ensure teachers have sufficient time and resources to fully digest and implement the methodologies.
11. In Mozambique, participants also reported that future projects should consider supporting teachers across all primary school grade levels, as supporting children only in the early years through GR-PBL may not promote lasting change if it is not continued in later years.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background of the GREAT project

The Gender-Responsive Education and Transformation (GREAT) project was a five-year project (2018-2023) implemented in Ghana, Mozambique and Rwanda. Using a play-based pedagogical approach, the GREAT project worked towards the ultimate outcome of improved equal learning outcomes for girls and boys at the kindergarten and primary school level. There were three main activity pillars:

- Pillar 1: increasing the integration of gender-responsive play-based learning (GRPBL) by teachers into teaching practice.
- Pillar 2: increasing engagement of parents and caregivers in addressing gender-specific learning needs of girls and boys, including at-risk children.
- Pillar 3: increasing the integration of GRPBL in in-service and preservice teacher training.

The Government of Canada contributed CAD \$20,056,160 through Global Affairs Canada (GAC). Right To Play (RTP) provided a cash contribution of CAD \$4,653,003.

In Ghana, the project was implemented in 139 schools, in 6 districts, across 3 regions: Volta (Keta and Anloga), Greater Accra (Ga South), and Northern Region (Kumbungu, Savelugu and Tolon). RTP works from Kindergarten to Grade 6 of primary school.

In Mozambique, GREAT was implemented in 140 schools in 3 provinces: Maputo, Maputo City, and Gaza. Right To Play supported children and teachers in Grades 1 to 3 in target schools, unlike other GREAT project countries which targeted all primary school. In Mozambique, teachers stay with the same group of students from Grade 1 up to Grade 5. Therefore, while students in Grades 4, 5 or 6 at the end of the project were not directly involved in GREAT activities, they had continued to receive tuition by a GRPBL-trained teacher since they transitioned out of Grade 3.

In Rwanda, the project ran in 88 schools across 3 districts of Rwanda: Bugesera, Kayanza, and Ruhango. The project aimed to improve quality education for girls and boys from Grades 1 to 6.

The table below summarizes the project reach<sup>26</sup>:

**Table 1. Estimated Size of Project Participants**

| Project Participant                                        | Ghana                | Mozambique            | Rwanda               | Global                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Girls and Boys</i>                                      | 46,906<br>(23,024 F) | 110,385<br>(55,798 F) | 79,870<br>(39,057 F) | 235,324<br>(117,708 F) |
| <i>Teachers</i>                                            | 1,286 (923 F)        | 1,286 (923 F)         | 1,694<br>(1081 F)    | 4,077 (2,525 F)        |
| <i>Community Members (radio program reach or indirect)</i> | 105,667              | 220,000               | 38,814               | 330,652<br>(170,290 F) |

The project also worked with groups surrounding these target groups, including community leaders and community-based organizations; head teachers/principals, parent councils, and school administration; and district, sector and national-level governmental education officials.

## Implementation during the COVID19 pandemic

GREAT operated under extended school closures and reduced classroom instruction throughout much of 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project implemented a series of innovative and successful project measures across all three project countries as forms of adaptation<sup>27</sup>. The midline evaluation, which was delayed from Year 3 due to COVID-19 restrictions, was completed in Year 4<sup>28</sup>. In Year 5, schools remained open. Programmatic adaptations are discussed in the Relevance Sections of the reports.

## 1.2 Theory of Change

GREAT focuses on improving the quality of teaching and creating positive learning environments in both school and at home through the gender-responsive play-based learning (GRPBL) methodology. GREAT also focuses on transforming gender norms in schools and communities by working with teacher communities and through community-led gender analyses and campaigns. At the system-level, GREAT provides technical support to governments on GRPBL integration into national curriculums and sharing knowledge with the wider civic network. GREAT promotes gender-equitable participation and leadership in all project activities.

Play-based learning seeks to support the delivery of educational content through child-initiated and teacher-supported or caregiver-supported learning.

Gender-responsiveness within the GRPBL methodology refers to sharing knowledge on teaching methods and learning materials that consider the specific learning needs of female and male students. It also considers what is taught, how teaching takes place, and how what is taught is

<sup>26</sup> RTP (2023) Annual Workplan Y5

<sup>27</sup> RTP (2022) Annual Project Results Report: April 2021 – March 2022 p.6

<sup>28</sup> RTP (2022) Annual Workplan Year 5 p.4

learned, in the context of female and male students. It is also known as gender-responsive pedagogy<sup>29</sup>.

As a primary objective, GREAT aims to improve equal learning outcomes for girls and boys at the primary school level. Right to Play (RTP) contributes to this ultimate outcome through focused interventions at the school, community and policy level that will result in:

- Increased integration of gender-responsive play-based learning by teachers into teaching practice.
- Increased engagement of parents and caregivers in addressing gender-specific learning needs of girls and boys, including at-risk children.
- Increased adoption of gender-responsive play-based learning in in-service and pre-service teacher training.

## **Pillar 1100: Increased integration of gender-responsive play-based learning (GRPBL) by teachers into teaching practice**

Research demonstrates that when play is applied effectively in the classroom, it can contribute to learning, especially in the areas of literacy, life skills, and attendance and enrolment<sup>30</sup>. With regards to literacy instruction, play-based learning is suitable for an integrated instructional approach that blends elements of both explicit instruction and whole language instruction.

Play for the Advancement of Quality Education (PAQE) was an RTP-run project that preceded GREAT. Its monitoring reports demonstrated positive changes in classrooms and schools because of teachers integrating PBL into teaching practice. Results from PAQE indicate that PBL adoption leads to improved relationships between teachers and students, improved life skills, enrollment rates, attendance rates, retention of lessons, and fewer dropouts.

Activities implemented to achieve this intermediate outcome aimed to:

- ✓ improve teachers' skills via **training** to implement GRPBL into their teaching practice.
- ✓ improve the capacity of **communities of practice** (CoPs) to provide peer support to trained teachers, and
- ✓ improve the abilities of principals/head teachers to **support GRPBL in schools**.

Most activities associated with Pillar 1100 were based on the Continuum of Teacher Training (CoTT). The CoTT included teacher training and professional development focused on knowledge, attitudes, and skills to create child-centered, play-based, and positive learning environments for

<sup>29</sup> USAID (2018) Introduction to Gender-Responsive Teaching Methods. Maternal and Child Survival Programme. Available at: [https://www.mcsprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm\\_uploads/2018/11/PowerPoint-Introduction-to-Gender-Responsive-Teaching-Methods.pdf](https://www.mcsprogram.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2018/11/PowerPoint-Introduction-to-Gender-Responsive-Teaching-Methods.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> See Right To Play Research Brief on Literacy and Numeracy (2017). Sources referenced include Active Living Research (2015), McCracken and Colucci (2014), Whitebread (2011), Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (2010), Stead and Neville (2010), Bailey et al. (2009), Hirsh-Pasek et al. (2009), Trudeau and Shephard (2008), Christie and Roskos (2006), Zigler, Singer, & Bishop-Josef (2004). Literature on the value of play dates back much further to historians and sociologists such as Huizinga (1938) and Caillois (1961).

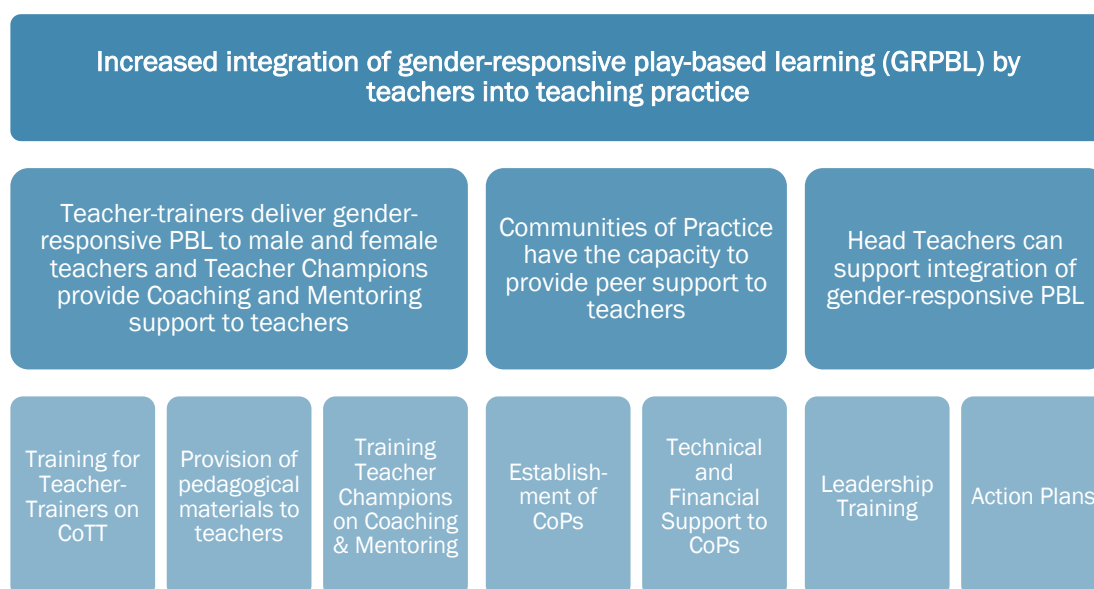
children to grow and develop to their fullest potential and to achieve expected national curriculum outcomes.

The CoTT approach relied on three components (1) Teacher Training (2) Coaching and Mentoring (3) Communities of Practice (CoPs). Teacher training was expected to lead to improved adoption of GRPBL, while both CoPs and district education offices provide on-going coaching, were expected to support and sustain this adoption.

The assumption was that improved skills in the practice of GRPBL, and improved CoP and principal/head teacher capacity would result in a meaningful culture shift in schools where teachers embraced and adopted GRPBL in their classrooms; fully supported by their school environment.

This results chain anticipated at the start of the project is outlined in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Results Chain for Pillar 1100**



## **Pillar 1200: Increased engagement of parents and caregivers in addressing gender-specific learning needs of girls and boys, including at-risk children**

Decades of research has shown that parents' involvement in their children's education has a positive and significant effect on children's attendance, academic performance, and behavior<sup>31</sup>. Mothers, fathers, and caregivers' perceptions of girls' learning needs also influences whether girls attend school, do their homework, and participate actively in school, making addressing gender-specific needs a key priority<sup>32</sup>.

This intermediate outcome is expected to have been achieved by:

<sup>31</sup> Ferguson, 2008; People for Education, 2011

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

- ✓ increasing the ability of teachers, community-based organizations (CBOs) and Junior Leaders to support the learning needs of girls and boys.
- ✓ improving awareness of gender-specific learning needs of girls and boys, including at-risk children, among mothers, fathers, and caregivers
- ✓ improving the ability of Parent Council members to participate in, and advocate for, the development and implementation of gender-responsive, environmentally sustainable school plans.

In GREAT, teachers, CBOs, and Junior Leaders work in close coordination with Parent Councils, school administration and child rights clubs to identify and maintain regular access for, and inclusive participation of, girls, children with disabilities and at-risk children in supplemental learning activities organized by CBOs and Junior leaders.

Parent Councils<sup>33</sup> played a critical role in identifying key activities, raising funds for co-financing, and developing and implementing maintenance plans for infrastructure projects. The assumption is that, because of training and awareness raising, parents will be more likely to participate in and contribute to school plans that are gender-responsive and environmentally sustainable. This would be accomplished by providing leadership training to Parent Councils, developing, and implementing school plans with them, and rehabilitating or constructing school facilities.

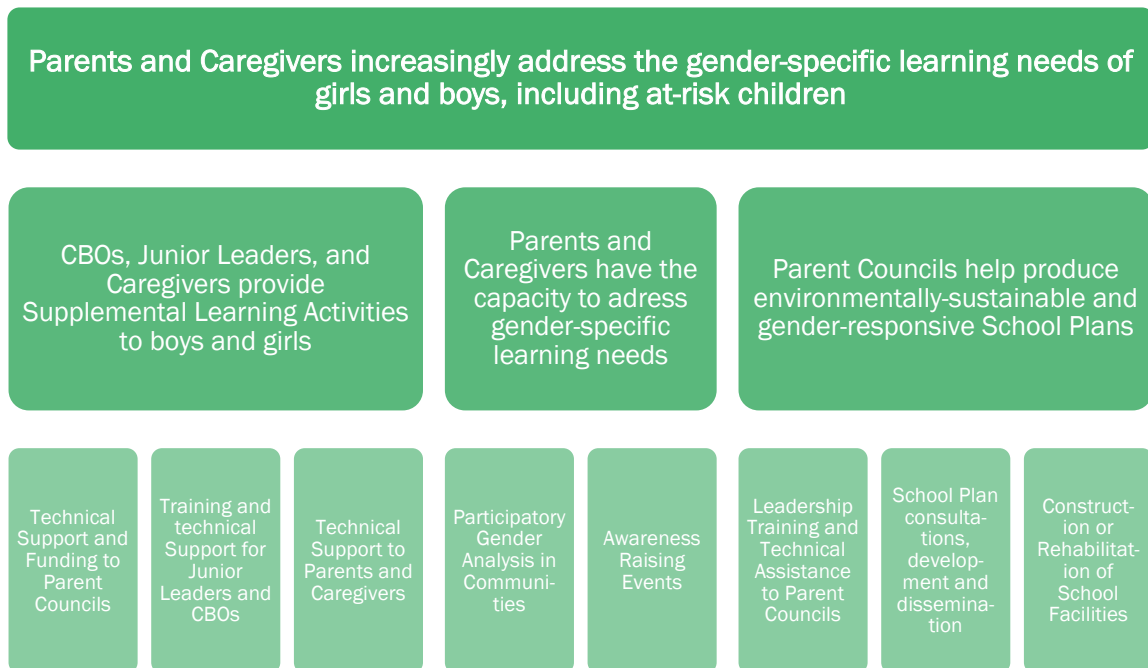
Leadership training for Parent Councils involved technical skill building in Parent Council management and fundraising, and training in gender equality, child protection and the environment. Where school plans were not in place at baseline, Parent Councils were tasked with supporting the development of these plans, and their implementation. Where plans did exist, they were to be strengthened. The project stated an expectation that Parent Councils would ensure the equitable participation of female members.

GREAT partnered with school authorities to develop school plans that are based on consultations with Parent Councils, the parent community as well as with boys and girls. School plans considered environmental sustainability, including creating litter-free schools (e.g., no standing water, clean toilets), incorporating green spaces, and carrying out construction/rehabilitation work that is protective of the environment. These plans were shared with the community to obtain their buy-in and support.

School facilities were rehabilitated or constructed based on the identified needs of girls and boys. These included single-sex sanitation facilities, hand washing facilities, rainwater harvesting, play spaces, girls change rooms or rehabilitation of classrooms. GREAT conducted participatory needs assessments with some school communities to identify infrastructure needs for the school, environmental analyses for infrastructure activities identified in the school plan, and tendered these activities based on environmental analysis recommendations. The project also supported school authorities to develop a maintenance plan for rehabilitated or newly constructed infrastructure to enhance its sustainability. To gain community buy-in into the process, the project held handover closing events with the schools and communities.

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<sup>33</sup> The term “Parent Council” is used as a general term to refer to Parent Teacher Association in Ghana, School General Assembly in Rwanda, and School Council in Mozambique.

**Figure 3. Logic Model for Pillar 1200**

## **Pillar 1300: Increased adoption of gender-responsive, play-based learning by key education stakeholders in in-service and pre-service teacher training**

The GREAT project aimed to secure sustainable, wide-spread change by promoting the integration of gender-responsive play-based learning (GRPBL) into the professional development of in-service teachers and into the training of pre-service teachers.

Right To Play worked towards improving the ability of education officials and institutional partners, including teacher training colleges (TTCs), to integrate GRPBL into teacher training, and the ability of the district administration to support teachers in integrating GRPBL into their teaching practice.

**Figure 4. Logic Model for Pillar 1300**

## 2. Scope and Methodology

### 2.1 Scope

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the relevance, effectiveness, and sustainability of the GREAT project. A key objective was to assess the attribution and contribution of the GREAT project in improving equal learning outcomes for girls and boys by using a quasi-experimental difference in difference methodology. This will consider the initial Baseline Assessment undertaken in 2018 and Midterm Evaluation undertaken in 2021. This endline study evaluates the GREAT project from the initiation of the program until the start of data collection (October 2022) to ensure that the evaluation captures the most up-to-date data and achievements.

The study will be shared with relevant stakeholders, and we expect this will be used to inform decision-making, evidence generation, lesson learning and greater accountability. The findings of this evaluation will be primarily used by the following stakeholders:

Right To Play International, including its country offices

- Global Affairs Canada (GAC)
- Co-funders and match donors
- Implementing partners
- Government stakeholders
- Project participants including teachers, head-teachers, and intermediaries.

The specific objectives of the endline evaluation were:

- ✓ To determine the extent to which the projects main outcomes of interest were achieved and whether these achievements can be attributed to the project.
- ✓ To assess the sustainability of RTP's approach in building local education systems/actors' capacities to support the adoption of gender responsive play-based learning (GRPBL) pedagogies in schools.
- ✓ To assess the extent to which key recommendations from the GREAT midterm review and were implemented to respond effectively to the needs of project beneficiaries and evolving contexts.
- ✓ To generate information on best practices and actionable lessons to inform future similar programming and development of RTP's work in education with children.

## 2.1.1 Evaluation Questions

RTP developed the following research questions for the endline study: see Table 2. These are based on the evaluation specific objectives and design<sup>34</sup>. One South added two questions specifically focused on gender transformation.

**Table 2. Project-Level Questions and Sub-Questions**

| DAC Criteria                                 | Project-level questions                                                                            | Evaluation Sub-questions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Effectiveness (Ultimate Outcome)</i>      | To what extent did the project contribute to improving equal learning outcomes for girls and boys? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent and how has the project contributed to the achievement of its ultimate outcome? Specifically, did it contribute to improving academic performance, life skills, enrolment rates, attendance rates, learning environment and reducing drop-out rates, in each country?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What specific skills gaps in literacy and life skills was the project able to address and how?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Does the intervention affect some groups more than others (e.g., girls and boys)? And why?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <i>Effectiveness (Intermediary Outcome)</i>  | What works to facilitate the learning and life skills of children?                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent and how has the project contributed to the achievement of its outcomes at the intermediate and immediate level?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what extent did CoPs, coaching and mentoring support the application of GR-PBL in teaching practices in schools?</li> <li>• What is the contribution of GR-CoTT in improving relationships between teachers and children and among children? And did the GR-CoTT promote changes in teaching methods?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Which activities/strategies have been the most effective in affecting children's socio-emotional and academic skills?</li> <li>▪ How effectively did the project engage parents and other community level stakeholders in addressing gender-specific learning needs of children?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which engagement mechanisms were effective and why?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Was the project effective in promoting positive disciplining strategies (reducing corporal punishment) in schools?</li> <li>▪ What unintended changes (both positive and negative) have project participants experienced as a result of the GREAT project?</li> </ul> |
| <i>Effectiveness (Gender Transformation)</i> | How gender-transformative was the project?                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Has the project transformed the experiences of girls and boys, providing them with more gender-equal learning opportunities in a more equal learning environment?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

<sup>34</sup> RightToPlay (2022) Request for Proposals for the Gender Responsive Education and Transformation (GREAT): Final Evaluation

| DAC Criteria   | Project-level questions                                                  | Evaluation Sub-questions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                |                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the project transformed the experiences of teachers, creating a more gender-equal working environment?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Relevance      | Was the GREAT program designed to respond to the needs of target groups? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was the project aligned with national education priorities/policies and systems?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|                |                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the program continue to meet the needs of children during the implementation period? And how?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the program reach and respond to the needs of all children, including marginalized groups?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                         |
|                |                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent has the program demonstrated an ability to adapt design to remain relevant?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How did the project respond to barriers affecting quality education due to COVID-19?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                                          |
| Sustainability | How sustainable are the activities of the project?                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the level of ownership of the GREAT approach at the family, local, and institutional level and how likely is this to continue after the program has ended?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent has GR-PBL been integrated at the family, local, and institutional level (i.e. primary education policies/strategies)?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
|                |                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What resource and funding plans have local and national education officials put in place to support the continuous application of GR-PBL pedagogies in schools after the GREAT project?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What plans are in place to continue supporting CoPs and ensure regular trainings of teachers in GR-PBL?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>          |
| Learning       | What are the lessons learnt?                                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What key learnings from the project should be considered when scaling up the GR-PBL approach?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|                |                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there differences across the three GREAT countries that have persisted throughout the project? And why?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|                |                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What lessons can be learned in terms of the project's ability to be agile and responsive to the changing context?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How has COVID affected the project's ability to achieve its intended outcomes?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>                                                                                                         |
|                |                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To what extent were lessons learned from past evaluations integrated into the GREAT program?</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

## 2.2 Methodological Approaches

### 2.2.1 Effectiveness

The Endline Evaluation measured changes to the projects ultimate and intermediate outcomes among participants and stakeholders during three evaluation periods: a baseline conducted in 2018, a midline in 2021 and an endline in 2022. To appraise the effectiveness of the project, we used a mixed-methods design i.e., using both quantitative and qualitative data. The design also was hypothesis-driven; these hypotheses being the various causal pathways of the project's Theory of Change (see Figures 1, 2 and 3 above).

The evaluation used a longitudinal, individual-level, quasi-experimental design based on a Difference-in-Difference methodology (DID). This means the evaluation team tracked project participants through the time periods of baseline, midline, and endline at the individual-level, rather than tracking at a group or cluster level such as schools or youth groups. It also means data was collected and comparisons were made between individuals who participated in GREAT activities: the treatment group, and those who did not: the control group. A Difference-in-differences (DiD) technique<sup>35</sup> was used to define the difference in outcomes between the treatment group and the control group over time<sup>36</sup>.

The qualitative approach was key in gaining insights into the observed achievements collected through quantitative tools, as well as the potential barriers to GREAT achieving project outcomes. Qualitative data also provided evidence of the causal pathways behind the observed achievements. The extent to which these pathways were related to GREAT inputs, including whether they were within the predicted ToC, supported analysis of the plausibility of GREAT contributing to the observed achievements.

The validity of the evaluation findings was enhanced by quantitative and qualitative data being triangulated; or compared. If evidence of the same findings is found across data collected in different ways, or from different stakeholder groups; findings have higher levels of validity. This means that the data collection tools are more likely to have collected what they said they would collect.

Using this approach, the evaluation assessed the projects' achievements at the ultimate in the following domains:

- **Academic performance (literacy):** Oral Reading Fluency measured in correct words per minute; a widely accepted measure of early literacy acquisition.
- **Attendance rate,** also known as the net attendance rate, measured as the average % of time a child attends school in a specific month of each year.

<sup>35</sup> C.f. Parallel-trend assumption of the DiD model: This assumes that the average change in the control group represents the counterfactual change in the treatment group if there was no treatment.

<sup>36</sup> In Mozambique, we will compare results at the aggregate-level and a cross section approach will be used instead of a DID approach. This is because the programme only operated from Grade 1 to 3 of primary school, and children from Grade 2 and 3 from previous periods would fall outside the project's exposure if they were tracked.

- **Life Skills:** leadership, self-esteem, resilience, pro-social behaviour, and school belonging.
- **Positive learning environment:** supportive and child-centred.

At the intermediate and immediate outcome-level, the evaluation also identified which activities or impact pathways explained this impact. The evaluations tracked the progress of treatment groups overtime through a set of indicators enshrined in the project's Performance Measurement Framework (PMF)<sup>37</sup> across all three evaluation periods<sup>38</sup>. Through this component, studied the extent to which these indicators were empirically linked to the final outcomes as described by a testable theory known as the project's theory of change (TOC). To do so, we employed a variety of statistical tests such a multiple linear regressions and binary logistic regressions.

## 2.2.2 Relevance

To understand whether the GREAT programme was relevant to the contexts in which it operated, the evaluation team aimed to explore how various barriers affected different groups of project participants and included. At baseline and at midline, single and multiple regression models were used to analyse whether barriers, including participant characteristics, or intersections thereof, affected project outcomes. Chi-square tests, t-tests and ANOVA tests were also used to estimate the significance of mean differences whenever appropriate. At endline, we explored what changes these groups experienced through key-informant interviews and focus group discussions. Qualitative sessions were transcribed into text in their original language and translated into English for analysis. All transcripts were then either coded using QDA Miner software, or using analysis matrices, with codes extracted into Excel for further interpretation of findings.

## 2.2.3 Sustainability

To appraise the sustainability of the project, we gauged the level of ownership of project components that different stakeholders had through sustainability markers. These markers signal the continuation of activities, funding, skills, or knowledge acquisition, as well as wider normative change. Findings around sustainability also drew strongly on key-informant interviews (KIIs) with RTP project staff, teacher training college (TTC) college staff, district officials, headteachers, participants and other stakeholders to discuss whether specific elements of the project are likely to be continued once the project is no longer funded.

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<sup>37</sup> RTP (2018) GREAT Performance Measurement Framework

<sup>38</sup> Indicators were chosen in consultation with GAC, HQ, Regional and country office staff, and One South and reviewed them at baseline based on the GAC's Guidance on How to Guide on Result's Based Management for International Assistance Programming and the SMART criteria<sup>38</sup>.

## 2.3 Streams of Evidence

The endline used a variety of primary research instruments, including quantitative and qualitative tools to gather evaluation data.

### 2.3.1 Quantitative Tools

The following quantitative research tools will be used:

- **Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA):** EGRA will be administered in the language of instruction in all countries and in the local language in Ghana (Ewe, Ga, or Dagbani) and Rwanda (Kinyarwanda). EGRA Assessments (Assessor and Stimuli sheets) for the midline and endline were piloted in English and local languages at midline and an endline versions were prepared and adapted in difficulty based on these pilot results. Literacy assessments were designed after a review of the national curriculum in each country to identify subtasks relevant to children's early literacy acquisition.

For the purposes of establishing the project's impact on literacy at later evaluation points, the study will rely on oral reading fluency scores. Oral Reading Fluency, measured in words per minute (wpm), also known as correct words per minute (cwpm). This is a widely-used measure of 'overall reading competence' and is understood as 'the ability to translate letters into sounds, unify sounds into words, process connections, relate text to meaning, and make inferences to fill in missing information'<sup>39</sup>. Oral reading fluency is understood through a passage reading exercise and is measured in correct words per minute as shown in the formula below.

$$WPM = \frac{\text{Number of Words Read Correctly}}{\text{Seconds required to read (time taken)}} \times 60 \text{ seconds}$$

Paper surveys were used for this literacy assessment. This is because it increased the accuracy of the data and their safety.

- **Child Survey:** measuring children's life skills, attitudes towards school, their perception and feeling about teaching quality, reading habits, psycho-social domains, school safety and facility use, experiences of a stimulating home learning environment. We used internationally-validated life skills scales validated in the literature in cross cultural settings. This included measures of self-esteem, self-efficacy, resilience, and leadership.
- **Household Survey (HHS):** A comprehensive HHS that measured the families' socio-economic status, educational status, living conditions, vulnerability, attitudes towards education and other project dimensions and the child's exposure to learning opportunities by the project and official education providers. Questions about the head of the household were also provided. The HHS measured core assumptions of the project's theory of change, including components related to parental and community attitudes conducive to access to

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<sup>39</sup> Hasbrouck & Tindal. Oral Reading Fluency: 90 Years of Measurement. 2006

school and learning. The household survey also includes the short set of Washington group questions<sup>40</sup> to help the study identify children with disability in the data.

- **Enrolment:** Individual-level data on (re-) enrolment will be obtained from two items in the Household Survey (HHS), namely (1) “What was (girl’s name) doing last year?”; and (2) “what is (girl’s name) doing this year?” triangulated with NARs and midline data to confirm whether the child has re-enrolled in school, and if so, still attends school.
- **Attendance data from school registries:** A measure of a child’s attendance to school was taken to study the quality of their transition back to school. Attendance was defined as the difference in net attendance rates (NAR). Historical attendance data was obtained from school registries and attendance records made available by school authorities during school visits.
- **School-wide Assessment** is a semi-structured questionnaire made to evaluate the extent to which sustainable and gender-responsive facilities are being developed in schools and measure the extent which school environments are child-friendly and gender-responsive. The survey contains questions on the state of facilities, the extent to which environment-related risk-mitigating measures of current or planned construction or rehabilitation work has been considered, and school-level data on various child-friendly and gender-responsive facilities. The survey was asked to head-teachers, deputy head-teachers or school-leadership personnel referred to us by school authorities.
- **Teacher Survey:** a self-administered survey to measure several dimensions associated with the adoption of GRPBL and the extent to which teachers feel support by both school and district officials.
- **Parent Council Survey:** to understand the school planning process and how different people in the council participate in the development and/or implementation of school plans.
- **Head Teacher Survey:** asks about their values and experience leading their schools towards GRPBL, leadership training, and interacting with other school bodies such as the parent councils and school management committees.
- **District Education Official Survey:** this survey was designed to obtain the feedback from District Education Officials on their experience receiving technical assistance from the project and their provision of coaching and mentoring support.
- **Lesson Observation Tool:** measuring GRPBL integration in the classroom as well as the quality of the home learning environment. They are conducted by education specialists with pedagogical training and years of experience.

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<sup>40</sup> Washington Group on Disability Statistics (2019) WG Short Set on Functioning (WG-SS) in <https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/question-sets/wg-short-set-on-functioning-wg-ss/>

## 2.3.2 Qualitative Tools

The analysis of the qualitative data consisted of identifying all categorical themes and discussions from the interviews and presenting them through quotes in the study. The analytical objective was to draw the main themes from these discussions, as well as triangulate and complement findings, and explore new topics and dimensions.

The qualitative tool package contained focus group discussion (FGD) and in-depth interviews guides for key informants (key informant interviews – KIIs-):

- **Key-informant interviews (KIIs)** that followed a purposive sampling approach with key beneficiaries and informants helped us contextualize the intervention, investigate individual experiences and perspectives, and assess the theory of change. Key-informant interviews that followed a snowball sampling approach helped us identify vulnerable populations and other special groups.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** to study a range of opinions and dynamics between young girls and boys, teachers, families, and members of the community.

## 2.4 Sampling Framework

### 2.4.1 Sampling Approach

At baseline, sampling was done following an individual-level cohort tracking design. To achieve this, we used a multi-stage sampling technique to take a sample of intervention and non-intervention areas. The first stage refers to cluster sampling, which aims to create a balanced composition of school clusters across regions or districts of the intervention and a reliable counterfactual for the DiD impact model<sup>41</sup>. The second stage was a stratified random sampling method, which randomly selected at baseline a random sample made of a balanced composition of grade levels, as well as of boys and girls. Boys and girls were selected at the school-level from school registries in a 1:1 allocation ratio using a lottery method<sup>42</sup>. At midline and endline, these students were tracked at the individual level and the same surveys were applied each period.

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<sup>41</sup> We used school-level data and cluster analysis to select control schools and pair them to similar treatment schools across various characteristics such as gender parity in enrolment ratios, as well as student-to-teacher and student-to-classroom ratios. To keep design effect biases as low as possible, we also sampled as many schools as it was feasible, used the smallest feasible cluster size, used a constant cluster size rather than a variable one, and sought to increase geographic dispersion as much as possible. C.f. Turner (2003) Sampling Strategies in *Handbook on Designing of Household Sample Surveys*. United Nations Secretariat.

<sup>42</sup> The child's caregiver was contacted prior to the assessment to gather informed parental consent and interviewed at the household's location or at any location at their convenience<sup>42</sup>. This ensured that all child data was linked to their respective household data at the individual-level.

## 2.4.2 Sample Sizes

Sample sizes were set at Baseline to ensure that a representative sample of boys and girls was taken in each country to assess project-related changes on literacy outcomes for boys and girls as independent groups. Children were randomly selected to participate in the study at Baseline from children enrolled in Grade 1 - Grade 3 in project and non-project schools. Comparable non-project schools were identified at Baseline from district lists using a propensity score to select school control schools most comparable to project schools.

Sample sizes were calculated based on power analysis and a required power of 0.8, and a 0.25 effect size in learning gains over and above a control group, which is the target improvement over this group. Through this method, it was determined that the minimum sample size should be a total combined of 506 cases. Given that RTP wished to generalize for boys and girls separately in the impact DID model, the sample size was doubled following the advice of Turner's (2003)<sup>43</sup>. This yielded a minimum sample size of 1,012 to make generalizations.

Some of the tracked cohort needed to be replaced at midline and then at endline for various reasons included having moved school or having graduated out of primary school. Attrition is discussed in further detail in the relevant country report annexes (see Field Reports). Attribution was within tolerable levels in each country due to the attrition buffer included in the sample at Baseline.

Most the students were tracked from baseline to endline. Children not found in the school or community after three attempts were replaced by other children in the same class (school) or of the same age (community).

All countries achieved the minimum sample size to make generalizations at a 0.8 power.

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<sup>43</sup> Op cit., 16 Turner (2003).

**Table 3. Sample Sizes of the Main Cohort**

| Tracking status   | Sex   | Treatment    | Control      |  | Total        |
|-------------------|-------|--------------|--------------|--|--------------|
| <b>Ghana</b>      |       |              |              |  |              |
| <i>Tracked</i>    | Boys  | 208          | 290          |  | 498          |
|                   | Girls | 197          | 268          |  | 465          |
|                   | Total | 405          | 558          |  | 963          |
| <i>Replaced</i>   | Boys  | 113          | 92           |  | 205          |
|                   | Girls | 118          | 121          |  | 239          |
|                   | Total | 231          | 213          |  | 444          |
| <b>Total</b>      |       | <b>636</b>   | <b>771</b>   |  | <b>1,407</b> |
| <b>Mozambique</b> |       |              |              |  |              |
| <i>Tracked</i>    | Boys  | 333          | 359          |  | 692          |
|                   | Girls | 355          | 354          |  | 709          |
|                   | Total | 688          | 713          |  | 1,401        |
| <i>Replaced</i>   | Boys  | 0            | 0            |  | 0            |
|                   | Girls | 0            | 0            |  | 0            |
|                   | Total | 0            | 0            |  | 0            |
| <b>Total</b>      |       | <b>688</b>   | <b>713</b>   |  | <b>1,401</b> |
| <b>Rwanda</b>     |       |              |              |  |              |
| <i>Tracked</i>    | Boys  | 254          | 251          |  | 505          |
|                   | Girls | 267          | 270          |  | 537          |
|                   | Total | 521          | 521          |  | 1,042        |
| <i>Replaced</i>   | Boys  | 42           | 53           |  | 95           |
|                   | Girls | 47           | 46           |  | 93           |
|                   | Total | 89           | 99           |  | 188          |
| <b>Total</b>      |       | <b>610</b>   | <b>620</b>   |  | <b>1,230</b> |
| <b>Global</b>     |       |              |              |  |              |
| <i>Tracked</i>    | Boys  | 795          | 900          |  | 1,695        |
|                   | Girls | 819          | 892          |  | 1,711        |
|                   | Total | 1,614        | 1,792        |  | 3,406        |
| <i>Replaced</i>   | Boys  | 155          | 145          |  | 300          |
|                   | Girls | 165          | 167          |  | 332          |
|                   | Total | 320          | 312          |  | 632          |
| <b>Total</b>      |       | <b>1,934</b> | <b>2,104</b> |  | <b>4,038</b> |

**Table 2. Sample Sizes for Other Assessments**

|                                                | <b>Ghana</b> | <b>Mozambique</b> | <b>Rwanda</b> | <b>Global</b> |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <i>School-wide Attendance</i>                  | 139          | 150               | 160           | 772           |
| <i>Teachers Survey</i>                         | 211          | 159               | 218           | 588           |
| <i>Lesson Observation</i>                      | 62           | 50                | 86            | 198           |
| <i>Education Officials Survey (DEO Survey)</i> | 20           | 17                | 29            | 66            |
| <i>Parent Council Members Survey</i>           | 67           | 74                | 46            | 187           |
| <i>Headteacher/Principal Survey</i>            | 69           | 74                | 34            | 177           |
| <i>School-wide Assessment</i>                  | 69           | 74                | 36            | 179           |
| <i>School Plan Assessment</i>                  | 70           | 78                | 37            | 185           |

The qualitative sample included focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth key-informant interviews (KIIs) with numerous stakeholders:

**Table 4. Qualitative Sample**

| #            | Session Type | Stakeholder                                   | # per Country | Total      |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------|------------|
| 1            | FGD          | Primary School Girls Topic 1: Learning        | 4             | 12         |
| 2            | FGD          | Primary School Girls Topic 2: Life Skills     | 4             | 12         |
| 3            | FGD          | Primary School Boys Topic 1: Learning         | 4             | 12         |
| 4            | FGD          | Primary School Boys Topic 2: Life Skills      | 4             | 12         |
| 5            | FGD          | Attendees of supplemental learning activities | 2             | 6          |
| 6            | FGD          | Teachers                                      | 4             | 12         |
| 7            | FGD          | Parent-Council Members                        | 1             | 3          |
| 8            | FGD          | Parents/Caregivers                            | 4             | 12         |
| 9            | FGD          | CoP members                                   | 1             | 3          |
| 10           | KII          | Community Leader                              | 1             | 3          |
| 11           | KII          | Headteacher/Principal                         | 1             | 3          |
| 12           | KII          | Teacher Champion (at school)                  | 1             | 3          |
| 13           | KII          | Primary School Teacher                        | 2             | 6          |
| 14           | KII          | Trainer, Mentor, Coach (at TTC)               | 1             | 3          |
| 15           | KII          | Teacher Training College representative       | 1             | 3          |
| 16           | KII          | District Education Officials                  | 1             | 3          |
| 17           | KII          | National level government representatives     | 2             | 6          |
| 18           | KII/FGD      | Project Manager and Project Staff together    | 1             | 3          |
| 19           | KII          | Project Managers                              | 1             | 3          |
| <b>Total</b> |              |                                               | <b>40</b>     | <b>120</b> |

## 2.5 Data Collection

Data collection took place in November and December 2022. Training of enumerators occurred over a four-day period during the first two weeks of November 2022. The endline study performed verification and validation of 20% of each enumerator's paper forms, as well as data entry checks to ensure that all data was submitted correctly. After data entry, data sets were cleaned and verified to ensure the target samples were achieved and that entered data matched cohort tracking dataset information. This verification was then confirmed by the One South data analysis team and any queries managed with support from in-country consultants.

### 2.5.1 Limitations of the Research and Mitigating Actions

Limitations encountered include:

1. While findings are presented by male and female project participants or “boys” and “girls”, the study did not intend to exclude other genders which may be represented in the sample. The decision to report data by male and female participants was taken in line with previous reporting practices at the client organization.
2. Findings are representative for girls and boys targeted by the project in each of the project countries overall but not at the regional level. While regional findings are discussed in the reports, sample sizes were set to understand the project progress to desired outcomes at

the country level but not to make claims about regional differences. Regional findings therefore provide an indication of how the project may have performed in each region within the project countries.

# 3. Findings

## 3.1 Effectiveness

**GREAT delivered on its intended ultimate outcomes and made an impact to the literacy, life skills, attendance, enrolment, and positive learning environments of children.**

In Ghana and Mozambique, the DID model showed GREAT made an impact on the literacy gains for the language of instruction (English and Portuguese, respectively) and, in Ghana, also in the local languages (in Mozambique, literacy was not measured in the local languages).

GREAT also had an impact on enrolment across all three countries and on attendance in Ghana. In Mozambique, boys were more likely to be enrolled in school at midline than girls, but this likelihood disappeared at endline, meaning an enrolment gap was bridged. Attendance gains caused by the project were visible in Ghana from baseline to endline, where it remained at high levels.

In terms of life skills, the project improved pro-social skills across all three countries. GREAT also improved children's resilience and leadership skills in Ghana and Rwanda and school belonging in Mozambique (especially for girls). In Rwanda, the project improved self-esteem. Girls in the GREAT programme caught up with boys across most life skill domains.

After GREAT, teachers were also increasingly able to create positive learning environments for children. Teachers from RTP created a supportive climate in the lesson by seeking to understand the opinions of students, telling students that they are doing well, encouraging them (even when they give the wrong answer), listening to students' opinions on which activities students would like to do in the lesson, and by letting children to work in small groups during class time. Children from RTP schools were, on average, 1.5 times more likely to perceive their learning climate to be positive and supportive than children from control schools. This impact was experienced by children from all three countries.

The next table maps impact results by country, ultimate outcome, and comparison period (by midline to endline or by baseline-to-endline). The rows of the table show the ultimate outcomes of the program used as dependent variables in the DID model. These variables represent the individual gains or changes in those scores from one period to the next ( $T_2 \text{ Score} - T_1 \text{ Score}$ ). The columns show the two variables used in the DID model. T/C is the treatment status variable (treatment or control), and sex is the gender of the child (male or female). When a cell is green it means that model was significant for that indicator; either that treatment performed better than control or that girls performed better than boys. Red cells mean the opposite (control or boys

performed better). Grey cells mean that there are no differences between groups and white that no model was done. The ideal combination is green in the T/C column (treatment did better) and grey in the gender column (as there are no differences between boys and girls).

**Table 5. Great Impact Map: DID Model Results**

| Ultimate Outcome Gains or Changes                                                     |         | Ghana |        | Mozambique |        | Rwanda |        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|-------|--------|------------|--------|--------|--------|
|                                                                                       |         | T/C   | Gender | T/C        | Gender | T/C    | Gender |
| Literacy (Language of Instruction: English (Ghana, Rwanda) / Portuguese (Mozambique)) | ML → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
|                                                                                       | BL → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
| Literacy (Local Language)                                                             | ML → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
|                                                                                       | BL → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
| Attendance                                                                            | ML → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
|                                                                                       | BL → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
| Enrolment                                                                             | ML → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
|                                                                                       | BL → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
| Life Skills: Resilience                                                               | ML → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
|                                                                                       | BL → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
| Life Skills: School Belonging                                                         | ML → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
|                                                                                       | BL → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
| Life Skills: Self-esteem                                                              | ML → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
|                                                                                       | BL → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
| Life Skills: Leadership                                                               | ML → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
|                                                                                       | BL → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
| Life Skills: Pro-social behaviours                                                    | ML → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
|                                                                                       | BL → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
| Life Skills: School Belonging                                                         | ML → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
|                                                                                       | BL → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
| Positive Learning Environments                                                        | ML → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |
|                                                                                       | BL → EL |       |        |            |        |        |        |

Significant / Girls more / treatment more

Significant / Boys more / control more

Not sig

No test

Treatment and Control

|  |
|--|
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

t/c

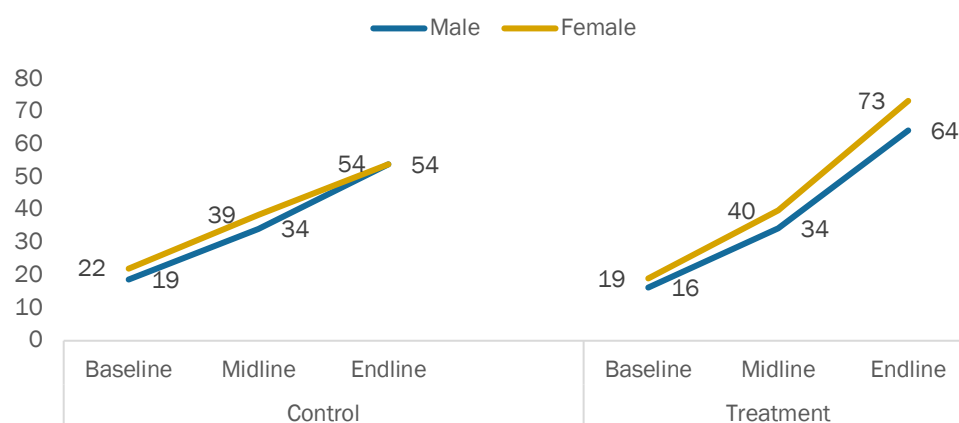
Children from RTP schools could read, on average, 9 WPM more than children in non-project schools. Girls have higher literacy levels than boys in RTP schools, while in non-RTP schools, they are similar.

According to the DID model, treatment significantly predicted differences in oral reading fluency scores between midline and endline<sup>44</sup> for Mozambique and Ghana, and a child's gender was not significant. This means that the project had a statistically significant impact on English oral reading fluency for both girls and boys in both countries.

The figures below show the evolution of the average words per minute score for boys and girls in treatment and control schools. The figure shows steeper lines for treatment children compared to control, signifying a larger increase in words per minute over time, demonstrating the impact of GREAT on the literacy of children.

In Ghana, learners from treatment schools could read in English, on average, 69 words per minute (WPM) at endline (M 64 WPM/ F 73 WPM) and 18 WPM at baseline (M 16 WPM / 19 WPM). In control, learners read at a rate of 54 WPM (M 54 WPM/F 54 WPM) at endline compared to 20 WPM at baseline (M 19 WPM/F 22 WPM)<sup>45</sup>. This shows an approximate 51 WPM increase in treatment schools (M 48 WPM/F 54 WPM) compared to a 34 WPM increase in control schools (M 35 WPM/F 32 WPM); that is, 17 WPM over and above control. Learners dropped in oral reading fluency (ORF) scores at midline but recovered fluency levels at endline.

Figure 5. Aggregate ORF Changes (Ghana)



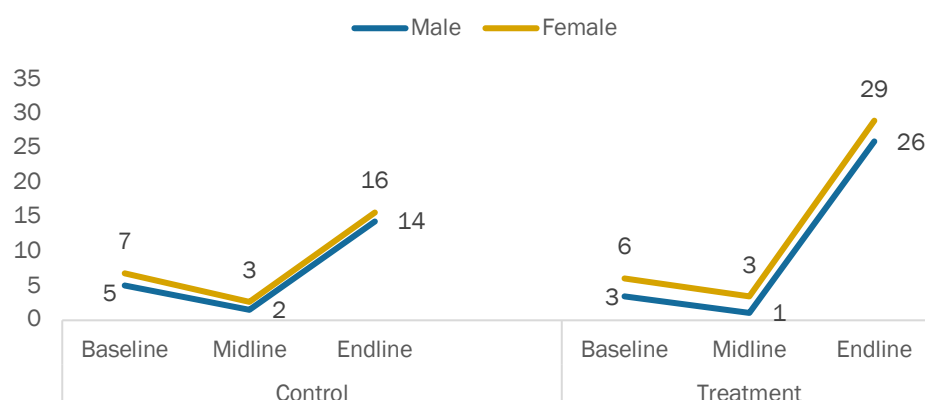
Children from GREAT schools in Mozambique could read in Portuguese, on average, 28 words per minute (WPM) at endline (M 26 WPM/F 29 WPM) and 5 WPM at baseline (M 3 WPM/F 6 WPM). In control, it was 15 WPM (M 14 WPM/F 16 WPM) compared to 6 WPM at baseline (M 5 WPM/F 6 WPM). This shows an approximate 23 WPM increase in treatment schools (M 23 WPM/F 23 WPM) compared to a 9 WPM increase in control schools (M 14 WPM/F 16 WPM). This is 14 WPM over

<sup>44</sup> According to the regression model, treatment significantly predicted differences in oral reading fluency scores between midline and endline,  $b = 14.3$ ,  $t(1323) = 7.23$ ,  $p < .001$  and a child's gender was not significant. Treatment also explained a significant proportion of variance in ORF differences between periods,  $R^2 = .20$ ,  $F(2, 1321) = 26.2$ ,  $p < .001$ .

<sup>45</sup> Model  $R^2 = .20$ ,  $F(2, 1321) = 26.2$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Treatment:  $b = 14.3$ ,  $t(1323) = 7.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Sex not significant

and above control. Student participants claimed that, after joining the supplementary book club, they were able to read, write or answer their teacher's questions more easily than before.<sup>46</sup>

Figure 6. Aggregate ORF Changes (Mozambique)



Through play-based learning (PBL): singing songs, clapping, or playing simple games together, students were able to learn in a more interactive manner.<sup>47</sup> Within a focus group discussion, students reported that through play-based learning (PBL), they played various games that involved writing, reading, memorizing and singing, which overall helped their literacy skills.<sup>48</sup>

In Rwanda, the DID could not predict impact because children from treatment and control schools experienced similar literacy gains. This may be the result of similar literacy campaigns occurring in control areas and the fact that only 37% of parents sent their children to supplemental learning activities (an activity proven to be impactful in other countries). Children from GREAT schools could read in English, on average, 54 words per minute (WPM) at Endline (M 53 WPM/ F 56 WPM) and 13 WPM at Baseline (M 14 WPM / 13 WPM). In control, it was 51 WPM (M 48 WPM/F 54 WPM) compared to 9 WPM at Baseline (M 8 WPM/F 10 WPM). This shows an approximate 41 WPM increase in treatment schools (M 39 WPM/F 43 WPM) compared to a 42 WPM increase in control schools (M 39 WPM/F 45 WPM); that is, 1 WPM more for control children.

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*"I was not good at reading at all. I was struggling with different subjects like Kinyarwanda and English. After joining the reading club my performance has improved and I now occupy around 4th or 5th place in my class."*

*- attendee of supplemental learning activities*

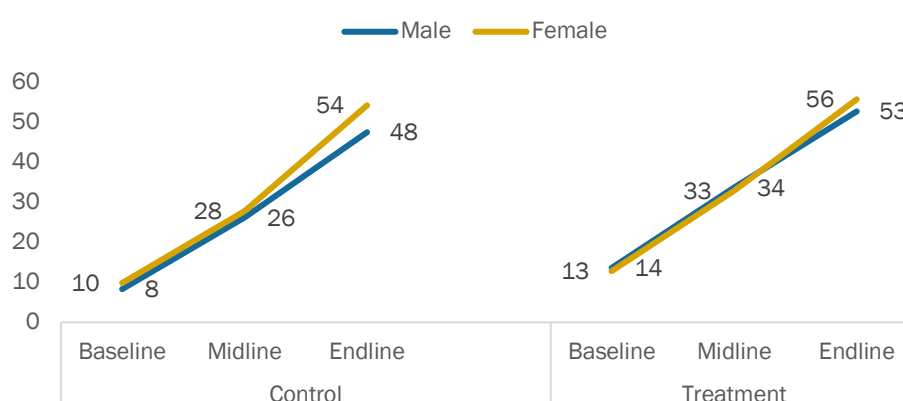
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<sup>46</sup> Focus group discussion with children with complementary learning

<sup>47</sup> FGD with primary school boys on the topic life skills at Tegbi Agbedrafor#1

<sup>48</sup> Focus group discussion with children 8-12 years old about learning- Goine

Figure 7. Aggregate ORF Changes (Rwanda)



## GREAT ensured children remained in school across all three countries.

According to logistic regressions, the odds of being enrolled<sup>49</sup> in school at endline increased by 10 times when children were in a Ghanaian RTP school compared to when they were in a control school, 18 times when they were in RTP school in Mozambique and 1.2 times in a Rwandan RTP school; regardless of whether they are a boy or a girl<sup>50</sup>. By endline, 100% of treatment girls and boys were enrolled in school<sup>51</sup> in Ghana, 99% in Mozambique (M 99% / F 100%) and 98% in Rwanda (M 99% / F 98%). In control school schools, it was 99% in Ghana (F 99% / M 98%), 97% in Mozambique (M 97% / F 97%), and 96% in Rwanda (M 93% / F 96%).

In Ghana, the drop-out rate fell to 0% for both genders at endline, from 0.9% at midline. In control schools, it was 1.4% (M 0.7% / 2.2%) at endline. In Rwanda, it increased slightly to 1.8% (M 2.4% / F 1.3%) compared to 1.2% at midline (M 0.8% / F 1.6%) though was still much lower than in control schools; where it was 9.5% (M 10.8% / F 8.4%). Differences were not significant between boys' and girls', but they were between periods. In Mozambique, the drop-out rate fell to 0% for both genders at endline, from 0.2% at midline. In control schools it was 2.8% (M 2.5% / F 3.2%).

Parents noted in qualitative sessions that COVID-19 had led to numerous dropouts<sup>52</sup>. Students and teachers also discussed how the improvements in teacher-student relationships, provision of personal protective equipment materials, and the use of PBL as a more enjoyable teaching methodology for students, were factors supporting students to stay in school<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> This is the proportion of girls in the cohort at endline that were enrolled in school. The drop-out rate is the percentage of girls who are not in school but were enrolled in the previous year.

<sup>50</sup> Logistic Regression Model: chi-square = 16.9, df= 1, N=1814, p.<001; Indicator: B=10.4, S.E = .334, Wald = 224.7, p<0.001).

<sup>51</sup> This is the proportion of girls in the cohort at endline that were enrolled in school. The drop-out rate is the percentage of girls who are not in school but were enrolled in the previous year.

<sup>52</sup> FGD with parents or caregivers at Tsiamé M A Basic School

<sup>53</sup> FGD with primary school teachers who received GRPBL Training at Woribogu Ahamadiyya Primary School.

## GREAT improved the attendance of children in Ghana and helped children in Mozambique and Rwanda to sustain high attendance levels.

In Ghana, children from RTP schools are likely to attend 3% more days in a school calendar month when compared to children from other schools.<sup>54</sup> Changes in attendance were higher for children in treatment schools when compared to those in control schools. Both girls and boys increased their attendance over time in treatment and control schools. The average attendance rate for children was 93% at endline (M94%; F93%), compared to 87% at baseline (M87%; F87%). These differences are significant between periods<sup>55</sup> but not significant between genders.

In Mozambique and Rwanda, girls and boys kept similar attendance rates during the lifetime of the project. The average attendance rate in Mozambique at baseline was 87% (M 88%; F 86%) and increased to 89% (M 88%; F 90%). There were no significant differences between girls and boys or between periods. In Rwanda, the average attendance rate for children was 94% at endline (M93%; F95%), compared to 96% at baseline (M96%; F96%). These results were no different to control cases, as shown by the regression analyses in Table 5. Great Impact Map: DID Model Results.

Within focus group discussions, teachers and students reported in all countries that the incorporation of PBL into the classroom encouraged the students to come to school regularly to learn and play.<sup>56</sup> Students reported that these changes “rejuvenated” student’s interest in going to school because of the happy and playful environment it created<sup>57</sup>. From the caregiver viewpoint, some caregivers stated attendance had improved due to project activities, for example, they talked about female teachers assisting students with personal hygiene and menstruation matters, supporting girls to continue to come to school every day and participate in classroom activities throughout their menstruation.<sup>58</sup>

## GREAT had an impact on the life skills of children. The project improved pro-social skills across all three countries. GREAT also improved children’s resilience and leadership skills in Ghana and in Rwanda and school belonging in Mozambique (especially for girls). In Rwanda, the project improved self-esteem.

Being in an RTP school predicted changes in **resilience** in Ghana and Rwanda from midline to endline. Children from RTP schools in Ghana increased their resilience 4% more<sup>59</sup> than children

<sup>54</sup> According to the regression model, treatment significantly predicted changes net attendance rates between baseline and endline,  $b = 3.4$ ,  $t(849) = 2.7$ ,  $p < .05$ . Treatment also explained a significant proportion of variance in attendance differences between periods,  $R^2 = 0.080$ ,  $F(1, 848) = 5.5$ ,  $p < .05$ .

<sup>55</sup> Paired t-test  $p < .001$  and  $p < .001$  respectively.

<sup>56</sup> FGD with teacher who received RTP training, Tolon EA Primary School; KII with primary school teacher who has received training in GRPBL@Anyako MA; In-depth interview with community leader (Mozambique)

<sup>57</sup> FGD Primary School Students Life Skills, Pong Tamale MA primary school#1

<sup>58</sup> FGD ParentsCaregivers, odumprala MA#1

<sup>59</sup> This percentage is derived from the beta result of the regression. The beta result used a range of 0-5 as per the points in the Likert scale in question. To make this more interpretable, we presented the results in terms of a percentage where 5 points = 100%.

from control schools<sup>60</sup> and in Rwanda by 1% more<sup>61</sup>. This applied to both girls and boys and demonstrates small improvements over and above control.

When children are in RTP schools from Ghana or Rwanda they have a better aptitude for **leadership**<sup>62</sup>. The DID model showed that children from RTP schools in Ghana increased their leadership skills 5% more than children from control schools<sup>63</sup> and 1.5% more if they were in Rwandan RTP schools<sup>64</sup>.

The project had an impact on children's **pro-social skills**<sup>65</sup> in all three countries. The DID model showed that children from RTP schools in Ghana increased their pro-social skills 2% more than children from control schools between baseline and endline periods<sup>66</sup>, in Rwanda 2% more<sup>67</sup>, and in Mozambique 3% more<sup>68</sup>. Girls and boys increased their pro-social skills in a similar way, meaning this impact occurred regardless of a child's gender.

In Mozambique, girls from RTP schools increasingly felt they **belonged in school**. This stands in contrast with children from control schools and boys from treatment schools, whose school belonging did not increase as much. According to the DID model, children from RTP schools increased their school belonging<sup>69</sup> 2% more than children from control schools between midline and endline periods<sup>70</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> Model:  $R^2 = .110$ ,  $F(2, 1361) = 8.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Treatment:  $b = 0.214$ ,  $t(1363) = 3.815$ ,  $p < .001$ . Sex variable was not significant.

<sup>61</sup> Model:  $R^2 = .088$ ,  $F(2, 1153) = 4.479$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Treatment:  $b = 0.181$ ,  $t(1155) = 2.916$ ,  $p < .05$ . Sex variable was not significant.

<sup>62</sup> **Leadership** skills allow children to have control of their lives and the ability to make things happen. Leadership instills confidence, and helps children solve problems creatively, work in a team, and work collaboratively with others. Leadership gives children opportunities to develop responsibility. As such, it is an important project outcome in the domain of life skills in and of itself. Leadership was measured through a shortened version of the Roets Rating Scale for Leadership. C.f. Roets, L. F. (1997). *Leadership: Skills training programs for ages 8–18 (8th ed.)*. Des Moines, IA: Leadership.

<sup>63</sup> **Resilience** refers to the extent to which children can persist in challenging tasks or recover from difficult life events. Through play-based learning approaches we expected children to simulate struggle and, over time, develop improvements in their resilience. Resilience was measured through an adapted version of CD-RISC Resilience Scale for children; C.f. Smith, B. W., et al. (2008). The brief resilience scale: assessing the ability to bounce back. *International journal of behavioral medicine*, 15(3), p. 196.

<sup>64</sup> Model:  $R^2 = .075$ ,  $F(2, 1153) = 3.225$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Treatment:  $b = 0.106$ ,  $t(1155) = 2.506$ ,  $p < .05$ . Sex was not significant.

<sup>65</sup> **Prosocial behavior or pro-social skills** can take the form of sharing, cooperating and helping others. Prosocial behavior in the form of sharing, helping, and cooperating is a hallmark of social competence throughout childhood. Of direct relevance for schooling is that prosocial behavior has been related positively to intellectual outcomes and to other socially competent outcomes, including social acceptance, approval among classmates and being liked by teachers. Prosocial skills are measured through an adapted version of the Prosocial Set of Items from the International Social and Emotional Learning Assessment (ISELA) developed by Save the Children. C.f. Save the Children (2017) International Social and Emotional Learning Assessment (ISELA). *Administration Guidance*, p. 22. Adapted version included fewer items and response options were adapted to the Likert-scale used throughout Child Survey.

<sup>66</sup> Model:  $R^2 = .115$ ,  $F(2, 1361) = 9.152$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Treatment:  $b = 0.143$ ,  $t(1362) = 3.451$ ,  $p < .001$ . Sex was not significant.

<sup>67</sup> Model:  $R^2 = .075$ ,  $F(2, 1153) = 3.225$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Treatment:  $b = 0.106$ ,  $t(1155) = 2.506$ ,  $p < .05$ . Sex was not significant.

<sup>68</sup> Model:  $R^2 = 0.141$ ,  $F(2, 1380) = 14.004$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Sex:  $b = 0.190$ ,  $t(1382) = 3.838$ ,  $p < .001$ . Treatment:  $b = -0.178$ ,  $t(1382) = -3.590$ ,  $p < .001$ .

<sup>69</sup> **School Belonging** refers to the extent children feel close to people, are happy to be there, and feel generally to be part of the school. GRPBL creates positive school environments that should create increased feelings of belonging. Based on the Simple School Belonging Scale (SSBS) C.f. Erin Feinauer Whiting, Kimberlee C. Everson & Erika Feinauer (2018) The Simple School Belonging Scale: Working Toward a Unidimensional Measure of Student Belonging, *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, 51:3, 163-178

<sup>70</sup> Model:  $R^2 = .16$ ,  $F(2, 1380) = 18.3$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Treatment:  $b = 0.085$ ,  $t(1380) = 1.97$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Sex:  $b = 0.249$ ,  $t(1380) = 5.72$ ,  $p < .001$ .

In Rwanda, RTP had an impact on children's **self-esteem**. According to the DID model, children from RTP schools increased their self-esteem 2% more than children from control schools<sup>71</sup>. This applies to both girls and boys.

Child participants gave examples of how, through play and the supplemental reading club, they had more opportunities to develop soft skills such as being more confident to answer the teacher's questions, solving problems, reading, and going to the front of the class and solving the question on the blackboard.<sup>72</sup>

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*"The teachers have started to understand that even girls are able work by themselves and to give them the opportunity to be free, speak and show what they are capable to do. All of this made the girls to be brave."*

*- Teacher champion*

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Children also learned to support each other through GRPBL. As GRPBL was more child-centered, teachers observed children volunteering to help their classmates who faced any difficulties in the classroom.<sup>73</sup> A teacher participant mentioned that the inclusion of marginalised groups, such as children with disabilities, was promoted through games and activities that encourage participation from all students.<sup>24</sup>

**GREAT also had an impact on creating positive learning environments for children at school across all three countries.**

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*I like that the teachers who teach us have compassion and empathy for us [now]... so we relax. The teacher relaxes too. This makes the lessons happen without any problems."*

*- male learner*

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Children from RTP schools were nearly twice as likely to feel their learning climate was supportive across all three countries. According to a logistic regression, the odds of children feeling that their learning climate was supportive increased in both Ghana and Mozambique by 1.2 times when children were in an RTP school compared to when they were in a control school and, in Rwanda, by 2 times. In Ghana, this effect was stronger for girls. There was

an increase in the number of teachers that were observed to engage learners in child-centered learning during lesson observations between baseline and endline.

In Ghana, 95% of learners at endline perceived their learning climate to be supportive (M 93% / F 97%) compared to 68% of learners at baseline (M 69% / F 67%). In Mozambique, 58% of children at endline perceived their learning climate to be supportive (M 68% / F 48%) compared to 42% of children at midline (M 54% / F 31%). In Rwanda, 96% of learners at Endline perceived their learning climate to be supportive (M 94% / F 98%) compared to 84% of learners at Baseline (M 85% / F 83%).

Throughout qualitative sessions students and teachers stated how much students enjoyed it when teachers used games in class<sup>74</sup>. These reactions to play-based learning show the positivity it brings into the classrooms and the general impression that it improves the learning environment.

<sup>71</sup> Model:  $R^2 = .066$ ,  $F(1, 1154) = 5.11$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Treatment:  $b = 0.083$ ,  $t(1154) = 2.261$ ,  $p < .05$ .

<sup>72</sup> Focus group discussion with girls about Complementary learning (Mozambique)

<sup>73</sup> Focus group discussion with children 8-12 years old about learning- Goine (Ghana)

<sup>74</sup> FGD-CoP\_Kayonza\_Nyamirama\_EP Gikaye mixed\_Engl\_Epy (Rwanda)

Additionally, students reported now feeling comfortable asking the teacher when they did not understand something in the class<sup>75</sup>. This improves participation as well as making the learning environment more supportive. Other students noted that their classroom's seating arrangement was now mixed gender resulting in less discrimination around gender<sup>76</sup>. Through group-work, students would help each other to pronounce words and read<sup>77</sup>.

Within qualitative evidence, teachers reported that GRPBL improved interactions between teachers and students, making children feel more comfortable in the school setting.<sup>78</sup> Teachers encouraged students to clap for others, which created a friendlier and more supportive learning environment.<sup>79</sup> Teachers who checked for students' understanding also helped students vocalize their lack of understanding and gaps in knowledge, allowing them to ask questions.<sup>80</sup> When teachers took the time to explain class materials, students appreciated it.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> FGD with primary school students boys (life skills) GS Muyange P4P6 (Rwanda)

<sup>76</sup> EP Nyabaguma\_Transcription\_Parents\_Caregivers; FGD\_Boys Learning-P4-P6-Ruhango\_Ruhango-GS MUYANGE\_Engl-Epimaque (Rwanda)

<sup>77</sup> FGD with Girls learning, KwekuPamfo\_1&2

<sup>78</sup> FGD with primary school teachers who received GRPBL Training at Woribogu Ahamadiyya Primary School. (Ghana)

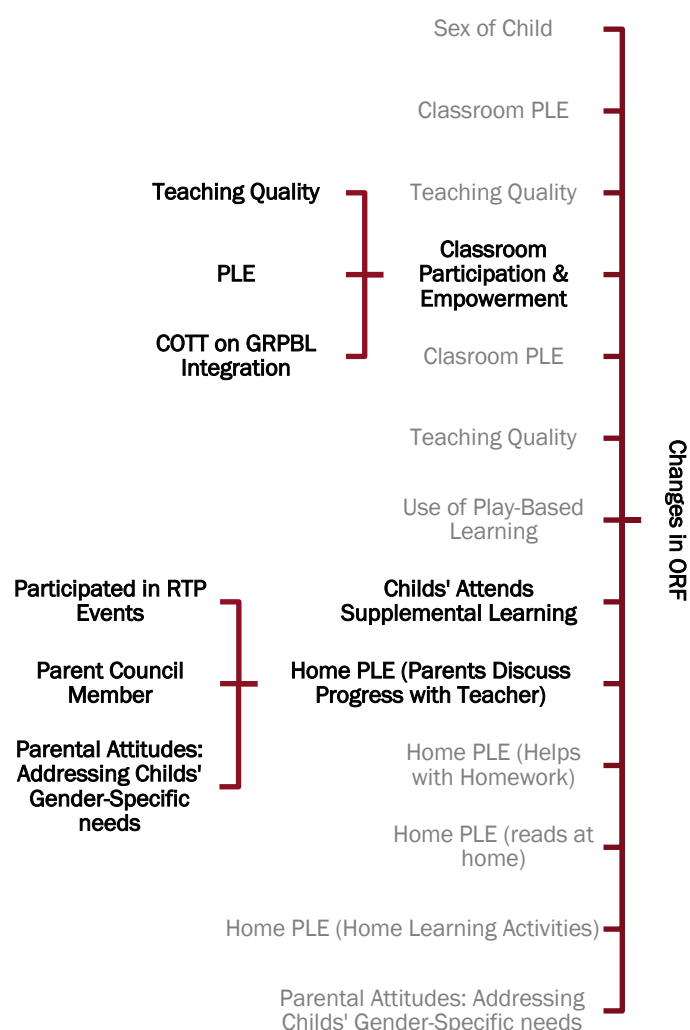
<sup>79</sup> FGDprimary girls learning, odumprala MA#1

<sup>80</sup> FGDprimary girls learning, odumprala MA#1

<sup>81</sup> FGDprimary girls learning, odumprala MA#1

Attending supplemental learning activities and having parents and caregivers engaged in education drove the project's impact on literacy in Ghana and Mozambique.

**Figure 8. Impact Pathways**



Impact on literacy was driven by children's participation in supplemental learning activities as well as by having parents or caregivers who engage with the education of their children, for example, by discussing their child's progress at school with teachers or when the child is supported to read at home. According to regression models, these were the most significant predictors of literacy gains in Ghana and Mozambique (other indicators of the logic model<sup>82</sup> of the project were also considered). In Rwanda, only 37% of parents sent their children to supplemental learning activities, which may partially explain why impact in oral reading fluency was not visible.

Teachers discussed that supplemental learning activities were especially suited to cover specific skills gaps in literacy and devote more time into them. For example, in oral pronunciation, reading, fluency and comprehension skills, which were addressed by the project through a combination of GRPBL techniques.<sup>83</sup>

Student participants in both Ghana and Mozambique claimed that, after joining the supplementary activities, they were able to read, write or answer their teacher's questions more easily than before.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>82</sup> Also known as Performance Measurement Framework (PMF)

<sup>83</sup> FGD with Girls learning, KwekuPamfo\_1&2

<sup>84</sup> Focus group discussion with children with complementary learning

Caregivers who know about RTP and have attended its events, were members of parent councils, or have positive parental attitudes addressing child-gender specific needs, were also more likely to be engaged with the education of their children. Furthermore, when parents encourage children to read at home and when they organize home learning activities, children also had higher literacy gains<sup>85</sup>. Therefore, supplemental learning activities and activities that promoted positive learning environments through parental engagement at home (such as RTP-organized out-reach activities), were the most conducive to changes in oral reading fluency in Mozambique and Ghana.

## **Training teachers who integrate GRPBL and empower children to participate in class drives impact on life skills in Rwanda.**

These activities had a significant effect on children's life skills and enrolment in Rwanda, where the project made its largest contributions.

Activities that had an impact on life skills included school-level interventions that prepared teachers to empower children participation in the classroom. Children who had a positive perception of their teacher's teaching quality experienced the greatest gains in self-esteem<sup>86</sup>, leadership skills<sup>87</sup>, and pro-social skills<sup>88</sup>. Children with positive learning environments also had higher self-esteem gains<sup>89</sup>. In Rwanda, teacher training and activities promoting positive learning environments at home were the most conducive to changes in life skills.

## **Ultimate outcome results were driven by an increased integration of gender responsive play-based learning (GRPBL) by teachers into teaching practice.**

Considerably more teachers incorporated gender-responsive play-based learning into their lessons than at baseline. In Ghana, 95% of teachers at endline demonstrated the use of gender-responsive play-based learning methodologies (M94% / F97%), in Mozambique 70% (M71% / F 69%), and in Rwanda 78% (M71% / F 81%). In all countries, this percentage increased with time.

Children gave examples of how, through play and the supplemental reading clubs, they had more opportunities to develop soft skills such as being more confident to answer the teacher's questions, solving problems, reading, and going to the front of the class and solving the question on the blackboard.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> C.f. Leadership Model.

<sup>86</sup> *Self-Esteem Model*:  $R^2 = .296$ ,  $F(13, 548) = 3.396$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Classroom PLE:  $b = 0.317$ ,  $t(548) = 1.990$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Teaching Quality:  $b = .399$ ,  $t(548) = 2.414$ ,  $p < .05$ . Sex and other variables were not significant.

<sup>87</sup> *Leadership Model*:  $R^2 = .378$ ,  $F(13, 548) = 6.842$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Teaching Quality:  $b = 0.630$ ,  $t(548) = 3.700$ ,  $p < .001$ ; read books:  $b = 0.286$ ,  $t(548) = 2.823$ ,  $p < .04$ ; Home Learning Activities:  $b = 0.145$ ,  $t(548) = 2.246$ ,  $p < .05$ ; Sex and other variables were not significant.

<sup>88</sup> *Prosocial Skills Model*:  $R^2 = .326$ ,  $F(13, 648) = 4.891$ ,  $p < .001$  Teaching Quality:  $b = 0.798$ ,  $t(548) = 3.838$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Sex and other variables were not significant.

<sup>89</sup> C.f. Self-esteem model.

<sup>90</sup> Focus group discussion with girls about Complementary learning

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*“When my teacher asks me a question and I am able to answer it correctly, it makes me happy and feel that I can now do this on my own with little difficulty.”*

*- Leaners, male*

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The proportion of students who felt empowered to participate in classroom activities increased in all countries. At endline, a large majority of students in Rwanda felt more empowered to participate in classroom activities. In Mozambique and Ghana, it was about a third. These are students who do not get nervous to participate in class and feel confident to do so. Students also have a positive perception of their teachers in all three countries<sup>91</sup>.

In Rwanda, the proportion of students who felt empowered to participate in classroom activities increased at endline to 74% (M73% / F72%) from about 68% at midline. In Ghana, children who felt empowered to participate in classroom activities increased to 57% (M61% / F52%) at endline from 32% (M31% / F32%) at midline. In Mozambique, the number remained relatively the same between periods; 39% at endline (M42% / F36%) and 39% at midline (M32% / F46%) but the number of girls increased, and the number of boys decreased.

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*“We have youth clubs where we lecture of these things and most of them are led by girls. When it is a girl’s time to speak, she tells boys to sit and listen and they receive the message from a girl. That is a positive development.”*

*- KII with community leader, Rutare Shyara sector, Rwanda*

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Teachers observed that by using play-based learning activities, children copied and emulated play-based behaviors by teaching and learning from each other during times when the teachers were not present and this gave them greater confidence to participate in class.<sup>92</sup> Teachers also described games, songs, and activities as exciting for students and enabling them to acquire literacy and subject-focused skills.<sup>93</sup>

This is largely the result of improvements in the preparedness of teachers to use the skills taught in COTT in their classrooms. Feeling very prepared to use these skills significantly predicted the extent to which teachers reported to use GRPBL methods in their lessons. This suggests that training is an effective mechanism for teachers to acquire the necessary skills to implement GRPBL in classrooms<sup>94</sup>. Most trained teachers scored satisfactorily on post-COTT training tests and most teachers feel prepared to integrate COTT approaches in the classroom after GREAT training. In Ghana, 88% felt prepared (M85% / F 95%). In Mozambique it was 95% of teachers (M95% / F95%) and, in Rwanda, 89% (M91% / F88%). In the category of those who feel ‘strongly’ prepared, we have about a third of teachers in Ghana and Mozambique and two-thirds in Rwanda. These were increases since the baseline in all countries and, while the increase is modest, they are

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<sup>91</sup> To know if children had positive perceptions of their teachers, we asked them question about teachers (1) classroom management, (2) cognitive activation, (3) supportive climate and created a composite measure measuring these three domains. Using this measure, we classified students who rated their teacher highly (>4) as having positive perceptions and those children that rated their teachers lower as not having positive perceptions.

<sup>92</sup> FGD primary teachers with GRBPL training, odumprala MA\_#1

<sup>93</sup> FGD primary teachers with GRBPL training, odumprala MA\_#1

<sup>94</sup> Model:  $R^2 = .115$ ,  $F(2, 1361) = 9.152$ ,  $p < .001$ ; Treatment:  $b = 0.143$ ,  $t(1362) = 3.451$ ,  $p < .001$ . Sex was not significant.

nonetheless significant because training is proven to be relevant to ensure teachers feel very confident to integrate GRPBL in their lessons.

A teacher champion shared that GREAT has trained them to better understand how a teacher can plan a lesson or design a lesson plan and organize it through games and plays.<sup>95</sup> A DEO trained by GREAT also shared that he felt that teachers valued the need to engage learners through play and would use the skills during class time. DEOs stated that teacher's perceptions were changing so that they sought the view of a student to understand their point of view or perspective, instead of shunning them aside<sup>96</sup>

RTP has also ensured that teachers form part of a school-level network of coaching and mentoring working with- and helping establish Communities of Practice (CoPs) across schools; that is, groups of teachers organized by subject area that share experiences and provide coaching and support on teaching approaches reflected in the COTT and GRPBL integration in the classroom.

The support provided by CoPs to teachers grew significantly between baseline and endline periods in all countries, which demonstrates a strong project contribution in this regard. 91% of teachers in Ghana, 94% in Mozambique, and 96% in Rwanda reported receiving support from CoPs to improve their teaching practices at endline. Teachers also felt increasingly able to lead CoP activities and make their own contributions to it. By the end of the project, most teachers were leading CoP activities in all countries. At endline, the majority of teachers interviewed were also members of a CoP.

Teachers were very positive when discussing the support they received from CoPs. Teachers described how the CoPs regularly checked on teachers' learner plans and supporting teachers by discussing ways to improve these plans.<sup>97</sup> Teachers described the usefulness of CoPs as a learning process where a teacher who has mastered a certain area shares with other teachers, including topics such as management of students and approaches to use in the classroom. One teacher described the CoPs as "always effective", saying that they visited 2-3 times per month to monitor teacher activity.<sup>98</sup> Another group of teachers talked about a CoP workshop they attended where they learned about gender equity and gender equality, saying that they then integrated their learning into their classrooms. Teachers stated that they also learned a lot about teaching and learning material (TLM) preparation.<sup>99</sup> They reported that this provided students with more equal opportunities as well as giving students resources that would help them create their own findings or research.<sup>100</sup>

Teacher champions trained by RTP maximize the integration of GRPBL in schools by providing individualized support to teachers. By the end of the project, most female teacher champions were comfortable providing coaching and mentoring support across all three countries. About 79% of female teacher champions in Ghana, 94% in Mozambique, and 99% in Rwanda felt comfortable providing coaching and mentoring support to both male and female teachers. When considering

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95 KII\_Teacher champion-Ruhango\_Ruhango-GS MUYANGE\_Epimaque-ENGL

96 FGD primary teachers with GRBPL training, odumprala MA\_#1 (Ghana)

97 FGD with primary school teachers (Males) (Ghana); FGD with primary school teachers (Females) (Rwanda));

98 FGD with teachers at primary school (Mozambique)

99 FGD with primary school teachers (Males)

100 FGD primary teachers with GRBPL training, odumprala MA\_#1

only those that felt very comfortable, about 39% of female teacher champions in Ghana, 48% in Mozambique, and 86% in Rwanda felt very comfortable providing coaching and mentoring support to both male and female teachers.

Teachers shared that the teacher champions helped them to understand the games and how to implement them in class.<sup>101</sup> The teacher champions also helped them with problems that arose during class-time and how to create a positive learning environment.<sup>102</sup> A teacher champion shared that the Right To Play project has trained them to better understand how a teacher can plan a lesson or design a lesson plan and organize it through games and plays. In turn, this has helped them support other teachers at the school.<sup>103</sup> Teacher champions also observed teachers' lessons with a focus on GRPBL and support and provide advice on how to improve.<sup>104</sup> During an in-depth interview with a teacher champion, he shared that he guided the teachers and eased their difficulties regarding the integration of play-based learning into their lesson.<sup>105</sup>

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*"I am constantly reminding my teachers on the need to integrate RTPs play-based learning into teaching practice because it serves as a reference for good teaching."*

*- Head Teacher (Ghana)*

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Head teachers also play a pivotal role, as they are the connection between multiple school management structures, such as Parent Councils, teachers, students, and other members of school staff. They support multiple outcomes for GREAT such as ensuring that a coaching and mentoring support system is in place, providing continuous professional development opportunities for in-service teachers, and ensuring the school has made the appropriate investments to meet the gender-specific needs of

girls and boys. 94% of principals/head teachers in Ghana, 85% in Rwanda and 95% in Mozambique developed action plans to support teachers in using GRPBL by endline. Teachers have also felt increasingly supported by head teachers. About 40% of teachers in Ghana (lower than at midline), 35% in Mozambique and, in Rwanda 87% were satisfied with the support from headteachers/principals on the implementation of GRPBL in schools at endline.

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101 FGD with primary school teachers (Males) at Atsiame Heluvi

102 FGD with primary school teachers (Males) at Atsiame Heluvi

103 KII\_Teacher champion-Ruhango\_Ruhango-GS MUYANGE\_Epimaque-ENGL

104 FGD with primary school trained teachers E.P Mburabuturo 211

105 In-depth Interviews with Teacher Champions\_Transcription\_Teacher Champion\_GS Kibungo

## There is an increased engagement of parents and caregivers in addressing gender specific learning needs of girls and boys, including at risk children.

In all three countries, there are more male and female caregivers engaging in home-learning activities at endline compared to baseline. This included reading, telling stories, playing, singing, or dancing, asking about homework, or helping their child with homework. Male and female caregivers also increasingly shared home learning-activities amongst themselves.

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*“When children come back from school, if they have homework, we will help them to do it.”*

*- Parent (Mozambique)*

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Parents said the project helped them change their view on girls' education and on the importance of play.<sup>106</sup> A group of parents said they took a particular interest and initiative in both children's education and development.<sup>107</sup>

As a result, children are increasingly experiencing a positive and stimulating home learning environment. In

Ghana, there was a 10% increase in the number of parents who discussed their child's academic progress with their teachers. Additionally, more children reported receiving assistance with their homework and reading books or engaging in reading activities at home than at baseline in both Mozambique and Rwanda.

These changes in home learning environments are largely the result of increased parental awareness of the gender-specific learning needs of girls and boys. By endline, a large majority of parents had improved awareness in all three countries. In Ghana, 73% of parents and caregivers reported to have improved awareness of the gender-specific learning needs of girls and boys (M 74% /F 73%) at endline. In Mozambique, it was 57% (M 67% /F 54%), and in Rwanda 89% (M 90% /F 89%).

Furthermore, when parents have increased awareness, they also have positive attitudes towards acting on that awareness and addressing the learning needs of both girls and boys<sup>108</sup>. In Ghana, 69% of parents and caregivers at endline demonstrated positive attitudes towards addressing the learning needs of both girls and boys (M71% / F 67%), in Rwanda 85% (M84% / F 86%), and in Mozambique 57% (M 67% /F 54%).

In qualitative sessions, parents discussed awareness of several gender-specific needs for boys and girls. Parents also said that they are increasingly involved with the learning of their children such as providing playtime, support completing assignments, ensuring they are not late for school and providing educational materials<sup>109</sup>. If parents understood the school material, parents or other members of the family (such as older siblings) would help with the children's homework assignments.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Focus group discussion with parents and caregivers (1) (Rwanda)

<sup>107</sup> Focus group discussion with parents and caregivers (1) (Rwanda)

<sup>108</sup> Pearson correlation  $p < .05$

<sup>109</sup> FGD with parents or caregivers at Tsiamé M A Basic School

<sup>110</sup> FGD with parents or caregivers at Tsiamé M A Basic School

Positive parental attitudes increases the likelihood that they send their children to supplemental learning activities. At the end of the project, a higher proportion of parents in Ghana (68%) reported sending their children for supplementary learning activities. In Rwanda and Mozambique, it was lower (37% and 22% respectively). Furthermore, children are very satisfied with the quality of these supplemental learning activities: 99% of children in Ghana and Rwanda had positive attitudes

towards the support provided by CBOs and Junior Leaders (M99% /F99%). In Mozambique, it was 92% (M 73% / F94%) and significantly more girls were satisfied compared to boys.

Parent council members actively participated in carrying out school plans that support the specific learning needs of boys and girls, including the planning and budgeting of construction and rehabilitation work. 94% of parent council members in Ghana and 100% in Mozambique and Rwanda actively participated in carrying out school plans that supported the specific learning needs of boys and girls. At the end of the project, almost all school plans in the three countries exhibited 7 out of 10 requirements for gender responsiveness and the majority demonstrated environmental sustainability. Trough school plans, 58% of assessed RTP schools in Ghana conducted construction or rehabilitation work to foster inclusive environments that addressed the gender-specific needs of girls in the last year (a small decrease since the midline), 33% in Rwanda, and 10% in Mozambique .

The project was only somewhat effective in promoting positive disciplining strategies in schools because the practice is still prevalent. Most head teachers reject corporal punishment, and this number has increased between periods. 86% of head teachers in both Ghana and Rwanda and 76% in Mozambique did not support the use of corporal punishment in schools at endline. However, while there were reductions in the number of children who report to have witnessed teachers administer corporal punishment in recent weeks, there are still 14% of children in Ghana, 37% of children in Mozambique and 60% of children in Rwanda who have witnessed corporal punishment being used. This shows that this is a prevalent practice, despite project efforts to end the practice in schools.

Teachers said that, in order to discipline children when they displayed problematic behaviors, they would ask questions, listen and understand, instead of punishing them with force.<sup>111</sup> For children who did not complete their homework, they would be asked to remain after school and to complete it there under the teacher's guidance.<sup>112</sup> A teacher participant shared that in school, there was also a complaint box that students can write to and submit their complaints regarding teachers.<sup>113</sup>

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*“The teachers are doing their best...Even with the Right To Play programme, we see their effort and we are excited because they treat the learners like their own, play with them and do not discriminate. As parents, we see this, and we are excited. They really help our learners.”*

*Parent (Ghana)*

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<sup>111</sup> In-depth interview with a teacher trained by RTP-Inhaca

<sup>112</sup> In-depth interview with a teacher trained by RTP-Inhaca

<sup>113</sup> In-depth interview with a teacher trained by RTP-Inhaca

## **There is an increased integration of gender-responsive play-based learning in in-service and pre-service teacher training.**

In Ghana, 85% (M88% / F78%) of teachers at endline reported receiving gender-responsive coaching and mentoring support from district or national officials, 68% in Rwanda (M 66% / F69%), and 95% in Mozambique (M 92% / F 97%). This includes monitoring visits, feedback sessions, and continuous professional development opportunities offered by District Education Officials (DEO) to in-service teachers.

The coaching and mentoring support provided to in-service teachers by district education author service was appreciated by most teachers. In Ghana, 93% of teachers reported that the GR coaching and mentoring support has improved their practice (M91% / F98%). In Mozambique it was 90% (M90% / F90%) and in Rwanda 97% (M98% / 97%). This means that the GR coaching and mentoring support is highly appreciated by most teachers. When only the 'strongly' prepared category is considered, about a third of teachers in Ghana strongly agreed that GR coaching and mentoring support has improved their teaching practice. It was a similar proportion in Mozambique (22%), though in Rwanda, it was 86%, where the GR coaching and mentoring support seems to be the strongest.

There is an improved ability of district administration to support teachers in their implementation of GR-PBL in schools as the majority of teachers feel supported. Most teachers reported receiving coaching and mentoring support from district or national officials, but this number decreased since the baseline in all countries.

Furthermore, the large majority of DEOs in the three countries are committed to ensuring that GRPBL is integrated in teacher training and coaching.

There was also a high level of integration of GRPBL into pre-service teacher education across the three countries. The three most positive dimensions were: 1) how GRPBL influenced the change in behaviour of key actors; 2) how debates and issues were framed differently integrating teachers who were untrained and 3) how curriculum and policy were legitimised and institutionally and organically integrated through the teaching training institutions, academia, and the Ministries of Education of each of the countries.

GREAT promoted gender transformation through improvements in quality teaching, normative change, and through construction or rehabilitation work that responded to the gender-specific needs of girls.

GREAT's gender-responsive training supported the creation of a more equal learning environment in schools and homes. Students, teachers, headteachers, district officials, and caregivers discussed the success of GREAT's gender equality awareness raising at the individual, school, home, and community levels, and how this provided girls with more equal learning opportunities, including participation in classrooms and leadership positions.

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*"Now there are equal opportunities given to both boys and girls to compete against each other so there is a lot of competition in the class so in my class now both the girls and boys want to lead."*

*Teacher (Ghana)*

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GREAT prepared teachers to deliver to the gender-specific needs of boys and girls in the classroom. Teachers reported that after receiving GRPBL training, teachers were more capable of understanding the multiple dimensions of inclusion and awareness with regards to disability and gender<sup>114</sup>. Through GR training and education, teachers treated learners of both genders more equally.<sup>115</sup> The gender-responsive element of GRPBL led to more gender equality within the teaching body, increasing female teachers' participation and leadership.

Female teachers reported that through RTP's training, teachers' perceptions regarding traditional gender roles changed and they began allocating leadership roles to girls.<sup>116</sup> Through training, teachers have also learnt to become more gender equal. A CoP participant shared that, before the

programme, teachers had a bias to encourage the participation of boys in class, rather than girls, whereas now it is more equal.<sup>117</sup>

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*"Recently, the school prefect that was elected is a girl and this is due to the GREAT project and the club that we've formed... It made us concerned with aspects of gender responsiveness and equality"*

*- GREAT-trained teacher (Rwanda)*

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Girls involved in GREAT took on more leadership roles traditionally taken by boys (for example in sports or class activities like coming to the blackboard), and young mothers were supported and welcomed back to school more than before<sup>118</sup>. Teachers say girls have become increasingly self-aware of their own skills and are confident to participate in class thanks to the GRPBL methodology.

<sup>114</sup> FGD with (male) teachers who received gender responsive Training on PBA at G.S Nyagihunika

<sup>115</sup> FGD-CoP\_Kayonza\_Nyamirama\_EP Gikaye mixed\_Engl\_Epy

<sup>116</sup> FGD with primary school teachers (Males) at Atsiame Heluvi, Ghana

<sup>117</sup> Focus group discussion with Community of Practices (CoP) - Pedagogical Journeys

<sup>118</sup> KII with primary school teacher who has received training in GRPBL@Anyako MA

The programme also created consciousness amongst parents and community members about the gender-specific needs of boys and girls. After the outreach of the GREAT project and RTP training, parents and communities have shifted their traditional behavioral approach by recognizing children's rights to quality education<sup>119</sup>.

Parents shared that the counselling from the GREAT project changed their perspectives to provide equal opportunities between girls and boys and noticed more equality in school and at home *"compared to their own generation"*.<sup>120</sup>

It is visible through the parents and caregivers' opinions that there has been a major shift<sup>121</sup> in the opinions about the girl child and their education<sup>122</sup>. A community leader participant reported that overall, the attitude of the parents changed drastically towards female children, as they treated them equally with boys<sup>123</sup>. For example, parents now distribute house chores more equally between boys and girls, which allows girls more time to do schoolwork<sup>124</sup>.

GREAT has improved the confidence of girls and helped reduce negative gender stereotypes. Supplemental learning activities created spaces that fostered friendly inter-gender relations through games and experiences that promoted gender-transformation. Sharing learning spaces outside school helped children to mix socially with children from another gender from an early age, which fosters gender transformation.

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*"Club activities have helped us to support others while reading. We had free time to play and express ourselves."*

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*-RTP Girl*

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Teachers said that boys and girls from previous cohorts would not socialize or even sit on the same table, let alone do traditionally gendered activities such as boys helping with the cleaning of the classroom or girls doing sports. Through games, children formed friendships with classmates of the opposite sex and the classroom atmosphere became more productive for learning.<sup>125</sup> Girls and boys said that the lessons allowed them to forge stronger friendships with one another<sup>126</sup>.

The programme helped to create consciousness about the need for comprehensive sexuality education in schools as a key mechanism to prevent child pregnancy and school drop-out. RTP trained teachers on providing information relevant to the gender-specific needs of girls, such as Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) education. According to parents, girls are better able to cater for themselves to avoid dropping out from school due to pregnancy. Promoting menstrual hygiene education in schools has made female students more comfortable to attend school when they are on their period and have avoided missing school as a result. A local leader linked parents sending girls to schools to lower pregnancy rates and to GREAT activities<sup>127</sup>.

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<sup>119</sup> Focus group discussion with parents and caregivers (1)

<sup>120</sup> Focus group discussion with parents and caregivers (1), Mozambique; EP Nyabaguma\_Transcription\_Parents\_Caregivers, Reanda

<sup>121</sup> KII SEDO Munini Sector\_Ruhango District

<sup>122</sup> EP Nyabaguma\_Transcription\_Parents\_Caregivers

<sup>123</sup> In-depth interview with community leader

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> In-depth interview with a representative of the IFP (Institute for Teacher Training)

<sup>126</sup> FDG\_Attendees of Supplemental Learning Activities\_KAYONZA district\_NYAMIRAMA sector \_G.S GIKAYA

<sup>127</sup> KII local leader Cell Rutare Shyara sector GS Gihi

Construction and rehabilitation of facilities helped create child-friendly spaces that catered to the gender-specific needs of girls. Girls also that, thanks to the girls' rooms that were constructed and teachings on menstrual hygiene management whilst at school, they are also attending school even during menstruation<sup>128</sup>. A DEO who worked with the programme said that GREAT has made important contributions and consider the construction and renovation of play-ground facilities to be amongst the most significant ones.<sup>129</sup> Parent Council members said private girls' rooms where girls can change during their period has helped them attend and go to school.<sup>130</sup>

## 3.2 Relevance

**The project considered the needs of children in its design, including the needs of children who were at-risk. GREAT continued to meet the needs of children, including during COVID-related school closures.**

The programme's GRPBL was suitable for children from all backgrounds because it motivated all children to learn and participate. When children lack motivation, they become 'disheartened' and miss school. Therefore, RTP's methodologies dedicated to building confidence and other life skills.

Special strategies to include at-risk children were put in place and past evaluations were used to estimate the prevalence of at-risk children and the barriers they faced.

Activities were designed to be inclusive of children with disabilities and this resulted in increased participation according to teachers. Teachers reported that the use of inclusive accommodations in games through GRPBL allowed children with disabilities to feel included and excited about the games. Teachers felt that this allowed them to include everyone.

Children came to school more often as schools reduced the use of corporal punishment and became more child-friendly. Teachers were trained by RTP in positive discipline methods and against the use corporal punishment This decreased the dropout rates, as children *"used to fear seeing teachers holding the cane"*<sup>131</sup>.

Teachers also encouraged parents to allow any child of school-going age to be in school, to have a positive mind-set towards education and to help their children attend school on time. Several parent council members reported that they supported children with school materials when their families cannot afford them<sup>132</sup>. As the government also removed all manner of fees from basic school, this has also helped improve the attendance of children. Additionally, whilst there are

<sup>128</sup> FGD with Girls Aged 8-12 (Mozambique).

<sup>129</sup> KII with DEO Bugesera District\_Male

<sup>130</sup> FGD Parents Council members\_Transcribed

<sup>131</sup> KII with DEO

<sup>132</sup> FGD ParentsCaregivers, odumprala MA#1

students who have passed their exams and endeavor to go to secondary school, some are unable to go due to financial constraints.

GREAT's focus on improving parental attitudes towards girls' education created appropriate conditions for girls to remain in school. The programme reached out to parents who urged their child to drop out, due to reasons like poverty, being illiterate or not understanding the value of education.

Children from low socio-economic backgrounds were especially supported by teachers trained by RTP. The project made conscious efforts to provide exercise books for students coming from low income households.

Special strategies were developed for children with low attendance rates. The RTP Programme outreach to visit parents' home helped greatly to ensure parents sent their children to school in spite of financial challenges<sup>133</sup>.

The programme also supported girls who were mothers or pregnant to remain in school. In Rwanda, parents used to marry their female daughters off for money, however, through training and the changing of parental attitudes, the programme reduced the number of pregnancies and therefore, of female drop-outs.

## **The project was well aligned with national education priorities/policies and systems.**

All countries have included public priorities in their programmatic objectives and consulted with major stakeholders in the education sector to achieve a robust and replicable model.

RTP Ghana has been working closely with national government stakeholders from the GREAT project design stage, throughout the project, and into the current exit and sustainability stages. In addition, the RTP team has worked closely with the MoE through several other partnerships, supporting alignment throughout the period. Numerous requests from government organisations for support give evidence of GREAT's efforts to consolidate learning on teacher training and GRPBL for the wider education sector. The GREAT training for teachers is well aligned and contextualized to the government's new Standard Based Curriculum (SBC).

In Mozambique, the national curriculum for both the continuous professional development for in-service teachers and pre-service teacher training incorporated GRPBL components thanks to the knowledge shared by RTP through technical assistance and support. The technical team from RTP contextualized the COTT training manuals and set out the GREAT impact areas, target groups and the cascade training model in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education (MoE).<sup>134</sup>

In Rwanda, RTP has been working closely with key actors of the education sectors, such as the Rwandan Education Board (REB) and the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC). These and other members from the education sector (such as UNICEF) required technical expertise in the GR-PBL

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<sup>133</sup> FGD with primary school trained teachers E.P Mburabuturo 211

<sup>134</sup> MOZAMBIQUE\_\_Nov-GREAT Research and Policy Uptake Log \_ Feedback - updated

methodology to enhance the national competence curriculum on GRPBL.<sup>135</sup> There was a good level of integration of GRPBL into specific syllabus units of the pre-service curriculum for Foundations of Education, Teaching Methods and Practice and Physical Education and Sports. Teacher guidebooks and students' books now include specific RTP games and 32 learning activities that support curriculum learning objectives. RTPs resources were also declared by teachers in the districts of project operation as a reference book over the past year.

**The project team demonstrated a keen ability to adapt the project and remain relevant throughout the implementation period, especially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The project responded to COVID-19-related barriers affecting quality education in proactive and positive ways.**

District-level officials emphasised that RTP, via the GREAT project, was often the only organisation to stay in communities to support student learning throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. At the validation workshops, participants explained that RTP was often the only NGO that stayed in the districts when the COVID-19 pandemic hit intervention sites and supported students to continue learning.<sup>136</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, RTP also provided soap, tissues, hand sanitisers, writing materials, library books and exercise books with students to facilitate their learning.<sup>137</sup>

Caregivers also detailed the difficulties in persuading children to return to school after the COVID-19 pandemic stabilised, sharing that it brought a lot of confusion amongst children and negatively affected both children and parents.<sup>138</sup> The GREAT project ran back to school campaigns which aimed to support communities and caregivers in getting children back to school after such long closures.

Adaptations were also informed by MEL systems. The country project teams created an Evaluation Management Response Plan (EMR) to inform activity implementation for the last year of the project, in response to the midline evaluation report. For example, RTP developed special strategies to address the needs of at-risk children identified at baseline and midline including children with low-attendance, mothers, pregnant girls, children from low-income households and other vulnerable children.

### 3.3 Sustainability

**There is a good level of ownership of the GREAT approach at the family, local, and institutional levels.**

<sup>135</sup> KII with DEO Bugesera District\_Male

<sup>136</sup> District-level officials at the validation workshop 30<sup>th</sup> Jan 2023

<sup>137</sup> FGD with primary school teachers (Males) at Atsiame Heluvi, KII with Headteacher, Keta RC

<sup>138</sup> FGD for Parents/caregivers at Woe Aklobordzi school

Teachers reported that they will keep using GRPBL in their schools and the majority feel that their school leadership supports them to do so. Most teachers in all countries are committed to applying what they learned from RTP in their classes and most also feel supported by their head teachers to integrate GRPBL in their lessons. Teachers also believe their schools are also committed to the continuous professional development of teachers.

Most head teachers from RTP schools will support teachers to integrate GRPBL in their classroom lessons and believe they have good support from district stakeholders to do so. Over 90% of head teachers in all three countries developed actions to support teachers to implement play-based learning in schools and all of them are committed to supporting teachers to integrate GRPBL in their lessons. Head teachers are also confident that the teachers at their schools have sufficient experience implementing GRPBL to delivery curriculum content. Furthermore, 82% of head teachers in Ghana, 92% in Mozambique, and 89% in Rwanda feel supported by district stakeholders to improve teaching quality.

Parents also believe it is now more common than before to send girls to school, that communities have become more encouraging for girls to succeed in school, and that home learning activities can contribute to a child's success in school. Social norms are therefore changing in favor of girls' education and on parental attitudes towards home-learning, demonstrating great prospects for sustainability.

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*"We have the knowledge and ability to continue the work, even if the Right to play contract ends and we have the skills."*

*- Parent (Mozambique)*

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**However, there are limited resources and funding plans in all three countries for the continuous application of GR-PBL pedagogies in schools after the project ends. Most of these will come from school budgets, as the majority of DEO offices have not allocated funds towards GRPBL integration due to limited availability.**

In Ghana, only about a third of DEOs offices have allocated funding to GRPBL integration in teacher training. In Mozambique, it is only 6%. Rwanda had the greatest commitment with 59% of DEOs saying they have allocated funds towards GRPBL. However, it is clear that the majority of District Education Officials are committed to ensure that GRPBL is integrated in teacher teaching and coaching should these activities be funded or scaled up.

The majority of head teachers in the three countries also plan to allocate more funds in the future towards key project objectives such as teacher training, girl-friendly facilities, and girl-focused initiatives. This suggests future investments will come mostly from the school.

In validation workshops, Ministry of Education officials were supportive of GRPBL integration into education policy and expressed a strong interest to fund activities at the national-level.

## 3.4 Learning

*What key learnings from the project should be considered when scaling up GR-PBL approach to other countries?*

1. Supplemental learning activities, parental engagement, and supporting children's participation in class were the most effective mechanisms to support children's learning and literacy. Linkages between GR-PBL and these mechanisms should be enhanced.
2. Teacher training modules that help children feel empowered to participate in classroom activities and activities promoting positive learning environments at home were the most conducive to changes in life skills.
3. Delivering training through cascade teacher training approaches was effective at reaching a large proportion of teachers quickly during the life cycle of the project. For sustained changes, projects in other geographies should continue to utilize a cascade teacher training model based on reports from stakeholders who participated in multiple validation exercises across the three countries. In Rwanda, this was also effective at reaching new groups of teachers including ECD teachers and even caregivers of children in ECD. In Mozambique, some concerns were raised about the content of GR-PBL training being diluted and the need for better quality management in how master teacher trainers deliver associated training.
4. School-based mentors effectively reinforced learning from teacher training and should continue to be supported as effective on the ground supports for teachers implementing GR-PBL. This was particularly emphasized by stakeholders in Rwanda.
5. Institutionalizing GR-PBL in pre-service teacher training is an effective approach to ensure the long-term sustainability of GR-PBL.
6. Working with district officials supported GR-PBL to reach schools beyond the project's immediate catchment area, likely broadening project impact and inculcating support mechanisms at the district level. This was reported as a successful strategy in Ghana.
7. Engaging effectively with the Ministry of Education, steering committees, and technical working groups supports sustainability of GR-PBL. In Ghana, participants reported the benefits of incorporating GR-PBL in resource materials utilized by these wider stakeholder groups.
8. Communities of Practice provided on-going support to teachers in implementing the methodology and created spaces where they could raise concerns and challenges.
9. Some stakeholders reported there needs to be a mechanism to track teacher implementation of GR-PBL more systematically, observing changes over time in a central database. Building this out with district officials may support wider adoption and establish useful accountability mechanisms.

10. In Mozambique, validation workshop participants requested that future projects share the resources for GR-PBL sooner in the implementation life cycle of the project to ensure teachers have sufficient time and resources to fully digest and implement the methodologies.
11. In Mozambique, participants also reported that future projects should consider supporting teachers across all primary school grade levels, as supporting children only in the early years through GR-PBL may not promote lasting change if it is not continued in later years.

***What lessons can be learned in terms of the project's ability to be agile and responsive to the changing context?***

- ✓ The GREAT project was able to be agile and responsive to changing contexts, including the COVID -19 pandemic. The project provided personal protective equipment including face masks, hand sanitizers, temperature guns to school staff and learners<sup>139</sup>, equipping them to continue teaching and learning in a safe way. During school closures, the project put place different mechanisms to support learning to continue.
  - In Rwanda:
    - the GREAT program also distributed megaphones and radios, which enabled learners to access remote learning from home, by tuning in to radio lessons during the pandemic.<sup>140</sup> Teachers who received GRPBL training, facilitated discussions aimed at helping communities prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>141</sup>.
  - In Ghana:
    - According to district-level officials from the validation workshop, GREAT (RTP) was the only NGO that remained in the districts during the COVID-19 pandemic in target regions, providing support for learners learning from March 2020 until January 2021<sup>142</sup>.
    - During the school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service (GES) collaborated to find ways to keep learners engaged in learning.<sup>143</sup> USAID Learning and FHI 360 developed a radio lesson program in English for Primary 1 to 3 learners to support their reading skills, but the program was geographically limited in its scope<sup>144</sup>. [6] To expand the program into GREAT schools, GES sought support from GREAT and requested that the Reflect-Connect-Apply (RCA) questioning technique be integrated into the lessons alongside the GRPBL

<sup>139</sup> FGD with Primary School Teachers who Received GRPBL Training (men)\_ BUGESERA District\_ Musenyi sector \_ EP KIGUSA

<sup>140</sup> FGD with Primary School Teachers who Received GRPBL Training (men)\_ BUGESERA District\_ Musenyi sector \_ EP KIGUSA

<sup>141</sup> FGD with Primary School Teachers who Received GRPBL Training (men)\_ BUGESERA District\_ Musenyi sector \_ EP KIGUSA

<sup>142</sup> District-level officials at the validation workshop 30th Jan 2023

<sup>143</sup> Policy log from RTP office

<sup>144</sup> Policy log from RTP office

approach. This resulted in the development of 360 scripts, which were then validated by primary and JHS teachers in a workshop led by Right To Play<sup>145</sup>.

- In Mozambique:
  - Teachers provided online training via WhatsApp for technicians, teachers, coordinators, and collaborators. To ensure the safety of learners and staff, GREAT provided personal protective equipment such as masks and soap and helped to construct handwashing facilities.
- ✓ The project's work to create creating positive home learning environments equipped parents to better support their children's learning at home during school closures.<sup>146</sup> In Mozambique, for example, They provided parents with knowledge of play-based learning activities to help them support their children's learning at home. According to a member of the school general assembly committee in Rwanda, the project's work during the COVID-19 pandemic helped parents support their children's learning overall.<sup>147</sup> However, the committee member noted that parents had to lend their smartphones to their children to access the internet for homework<sup>148</sup>, which may pose a challenge to those who do not possess smartphones.

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<sup>145</sup> Policy log from RTP office

<sup>146</sup> FGD with parents council mixed GS Gihinga

<sup>147</sup> FGD with parents council mixed GS Gihinga

<sup>148</sup> FGD with parents council mixed GS Gihinga

## 4. Conclusions

The evaluation showed that GREAT delivered an effective intervention that produced impact across all ultimate outcomes, particularly on learners' literacy, life skills, enrolment, and the positive learning environments of learners.

Impact on literacy was confirmed by the DID model for Ghana and Mozambique and was driven by learners' participation in supplemental learning activities as well as by having parents or caregivers who engage with the education of their learners, for example, by discussing their child's progress at school with teachers. In turn, caregivers who know about RTP and have attended its events, were members of parent councils, or have positive parental attitudes addressing child-gender specific needs, were more likely to be engaged with the education of their learners. Therefore, supplemental learning activities and activities that promoted positive learning environments through parental engagement at home (such as RTP-organized out-reach activities), were the most conducive to changes in oral reading fluency.

While the DID model could not show differences in literacy gains between treatment and control children in Rwanda, GREAT still produced impact across most of its ultimate outcomes, particularly on life skills, enrolment, and on creating positive learning environments for children. There are several accounts provided by project stakeholders on how the project has increased the confidence of girls to participate in education and supported positive normative change and gender transformation. This impact was strongly driven by teacher training and parental awareness raising activities. According to regression models, these were the two significant predictors of life skills. Therefore, teacher training and activities promoting positive learning environments at home were amongst the most conducive mechanisms to changes in life skills in Rwanda.

Cross-country evidence also demonstrates that GREAT's theory of change was also valid. Ultimate outcome results were driven by an increased integration of gender responsive play-based learning (GRPBL) by teachers into teaching practice. This results from improvements in the preparedness of teachers to use the skills taught in COTT in their classrooms as well as the support that teachers have received as part of a school-level network of coaching and mentoring working with- and helping establish Communities of Practices (CoPs) across schools.

At home, there is an increased engagement of parents and caregivers in addressing gender specific learning needs of girls and boys, including at risk learners and this was found to be highly significant to impact results. This is largely the result of a change in attitudes stemming from parental outreach activities organized by GREAT.

As a result of Pillar 1200 activities, schools are also more welcoming spaces to girls and boys due to construction and rehabilitation work that responded to the gender-specific needs of girls and boys. This work was overseen by Parent Councils who ensured school plans remained responsive to these needs. However, while most teachers make use of positive discipline methods after GREAT

training, there is still room for improvement as corporal punishment is still used in schools across the three countries.

Through key engagements, education officials at all levels have recognized these advancements and promoted the integration of gender-responsive play-based learning in in-service and pre-service teacher training.

By responding to the needs and priorities of project stakeholders, GREAT also delivers a **relevant** intervention. Using MEL data, the project adapted the intervention to the needs of children from low-income households, low attendance, children with disabilities, young mothers, and pregnant girls. Teachers trained by the project were also increasingly able to identify and address potential vulnerabilities. The project was also well aligned with national education priorities, policies, and systems and demonstrated a keen ability to adapt, especially throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Thanks to the project, many children could still access learning opportunities while schools were closed.

In terms of **sustainability**, there is a good level of ownership of the GREAT approach at the family, local, and institutional levels. Teachers, head teacher, children, parents, and DEOs remain committed to GREAT approaches, including GRPBL and positive learning environments, both at the school and at home. However, there are limited resources and funding plans at the district-level for the continuous application of GR-PBL pedagogies in schools after the project ends. Most of these will come from school budgets, as most DEO offices have not allocated funds towards GRPBL integration due to limited availability. Funding emerging from the national level would greatly help sustainability prospects and national-level officials demonstrated a strong interest to support GRPBL integration through public funding.

# 5. Recommendations

Recommendations included in the first section are aimed at future RTP projects with related content. These are understood to be contingent on future project budgets. Recommendations combine content from qualitative participants, validation workshop participants, and the evaluation team based on quantitative and qualitative data.

Recommendations under ‘Sustainability’ should be integrated into the GREAT project’s sustainability plan to increase the likelihood of GREAT-instigated actions continuing once project funding is no longer available to school, community and district-level participants.

Underlining indicates additions by validation workshop participants. All recommendations were validated by participants unless otherwise specified.

## Recommendations for future related RTP projects

1. **Continue to include work at this intersection of gender equality and academic performance in future projects.** Participants linked GREAT-instigated gender-transformative behaviors within the classroom to positive literacy results.
2. **Provide students with evidence-based literacy materials written specifically for their literacy development.** This was added by validation workshop attendees, saying that student-tailored literacy materials could support GREAT’s work which focuses more on teacher capacity building.
3. **Investigate including activities to improve caregiver literacy levels in future literacy-focused programming.** Validation workshop attendees suggested this could be run by retired teachers, PTAs or literacy-related CBOs. A barrier to children’s academic performance that was still referenced at endline was their caregivers’ inability to help with homework. This is a qualitative finding, therefore, at the start of a future project, we recommend RTP to ascertain to extent of caregiver literacy levels with the view to including activities to improve these levels if seen as an effective way to support children’s literacy.
4. **Include elements of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), including sexual and reproductive health (SRH) education<sup>149</sup>, in future young people-centred programming.** Pregnancy, and the subsequent need for childcare, of young adolescents was cited as a continued barrier to girls’ education and wellbeing. Becoming involved in crime and/or alcohol was also cited as a reason for student dropouts. Sensitization should target children, caregivers and teachers, within professional learning community sessions (PLCs) and school clubs.

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<sup>149</sup> SRH should include how to say no to unwanted sex, reporting abuse, contraception and safe motherhood including basic childcare and parenting.

5. **Include training on children's rights including how to protect and support these rights, as well as how to report and identify violations of rights.** Sensitisation should target caregivers, PTAs, CBOs and children's clubs. This could support community awareness of the right to education for girls and boys, as well as reducing other rights-related barriers to education such as gender-based violence in schools.
6. **Include a strong emphasis on the abolition of corporal punishment at community and school levels from the start of future projects.** While quantitative and qualitative participants described GREAT activities leading to reductions in corporal punishments, 14% of head teachers remain either indifferent to the use of corporal punishment or accept its use and 15% of learners had seen a teacher physically punish a student in the previous week at school.
7. **Where possible, support districts to re-assess and strengthen child protection referral pathways.** This recommendation was added by validation workshop participants.
8. **Integrate activities into GRPBL methodology that have been proven to improve specific learning outcomes.** This could include children's literacy skills, for example, increase children's access further to varying levels of age-appropriate reading materials in each class. Or life skills, for example, activities to strengthen children's self-esteem. [Added post Ghana validation workshop.]
9. **Continue to provide physical materials such as manuals and books, in easy-to-understand languages and formats, including as soft copies.** Appreciation was reported across student, caregiver and teacher groups for physical items that would last after the project such as teachers' manuals and students' reading books. One group of teachers requested a language that was easier for them to understand.
10. **We recommend including income-generating activities (IGAs), a Village Savings and Loans (VSL) element, or non-monetary economic support** such as domestic animals to support families to purchase necessary school materials and food for students.
11. **Introduce an element of capacity building for district and/or national-level stakeholders in accessing domestic and/or international funding streams, for example, advocacy financing, and proposal writing.** This could support the continued financial needs of maintaining GRPBL activities.
12. **Negotiate with the donor to have indicators that allow the project room for statistically significant improvement.** For example, the baseline for attendance was so high it was not possible to achieve statistically significant improvement even when project targets were exceeded.
13. **Explore the idea of partnering with other organizations who have the expertise to tackle specific barriers to education such as poverty reduction and financial literacy, reproductive health, media access etc.** This could support RTP's work across its four impact areas.

## Sustainability

1. **Maintain some form of regular contact with key stakeholder groups directly influencing the use of GRPBL in the classroom to maintain motivation.** Validation workshop participants confirmed that SMS would be best for one-way communication as it's free to receive; and WhatsApp would be best for two-way communication, with Zoom as potential channel in areas with accessible internet network. Teachers should be asked to use their professional allowance to buy data to enable them to interact in this way. Communications should aim to maintain teachers' motivation to use GRPBL in the classroom. Content could include updates on national-level GRPBL-related progress; a new activity for play-based learning; or success stories from another RTP project that uses GRPBL.
2. **District-level officials should use the following pre-existing structures to ensure GRPBL continues to be integrated in the classroom:** cluster-based inset meetings, teacher networks, regular Headteacher meeting at district-level, and school performance appraisal meetings (SPAMs) where parents come to the schools to communicate the performance of the children – can engage parents on need to sensitize on corporal punishment, visit schools, provide books etc.
3. **Include gender-responsive play-based learning in the district-level school monitoring tool to ensure PBL is included in the essentials for the teachers' professional practice.** This is possible to do at the district-level without national-level approval and will support the continuation of GRPBL-specific coaching and mentoring.
4. **Create a sharing, learning and networking platform to connect teachers interested to share practice and collectively find solutions to GRPBL challenges.** This should further maintain motivation of teachers to implement GRPBL in classrooms. Ask teachers which communication platform would be most practical for teachers considering RTP will not be able to fund access.
5. **Provide platforms for the voices of some of the student participants who spoke out or campaigned** strongly against gender inequality or other discriminatory behaviors within the project, for example, a young mother who spoke with other girls on waiting to get pregnant until later in life.