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# RETAINING GIRLS IN LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND INCREASING THEIR LEARNING OUTCOMES

## Project Gambella and Somali Regions 2013-2016



## Retaining Girls in Lower Secondary Schools and Increasing Their Learning Outcomes

In Somali and Gambella Regional States of Ethiopia

Project Brief

The project "Retaining Girls in Lower Secondary Schools and Increasing their Learning Outcomes in Ethiopia", funded by the Japanese Government, was launched on 1 October 2013. The project was implemented in six pilot schools in Somali and Gambella Regional States, namely Metar, Pginido, Tinishu Mite, Ahmed Gurye, Degehabur and Seyid Mohamed Secondary and Preparatory Schools. Somali and Gambella Regional States are two of the four emerging regions where the Ethiopian government gives priority to education since they are at a relatively lower stage of development compared to the others. Access to education in the regions is comparative lower for both sexes, with girls even more disadvantaged than boys, especially when transitioning from primary to secondary.

The project aimed to reduce the dropout rate of girls in the pilot schools by 20% by the end of the project period. It was also expected that the girls in the pilot schools would show an improvement in their learning achievement by 15% as attested by the Ethiopian General Secondary Education Certificate Examination (EGSECE).

## Challenges of Girls Education in Somali and Gambella Regional States

In Ethiopia where patriarchal system is dominant, most of communities perceive that it is unnecessary to invest in the education of a girl. She is the possession of her husband due to the traditional practices such as early marriage, marriage by abduction and/or dowry. Girls' economic contributions at the household in terms of engaging in income generating activities (IGAs) and on the traditional division of labor in home (caring for siblings and family members) burdens girls and increases their chance of being pulled out from schools.

Girl-specific challenges in the school environment is the other barrier to their education. This includes lack of gender responsive learning environment, teachers' attitude towards girls' education, lack of properly trained teachers, lack of female role models in the school and long home-school distance that exposes them to gender based violence.

Girls' self-perception emanating from inconvenient family and social environment also affects their education. The low socio-cultural status of women and girls in the communities leads to their low self-esteem.

In Somali and Gambella Regional States, the above challenges are particularly significant due to:

- **Family law:** The national law of minimum age for marriage is not implemented in these two regions, encouraging early-marriage become the major factor of girls' dropout;
- **Lack of institutional coordination:** Various sectors such as health, education and social protection, are not working in a coordinated manner.

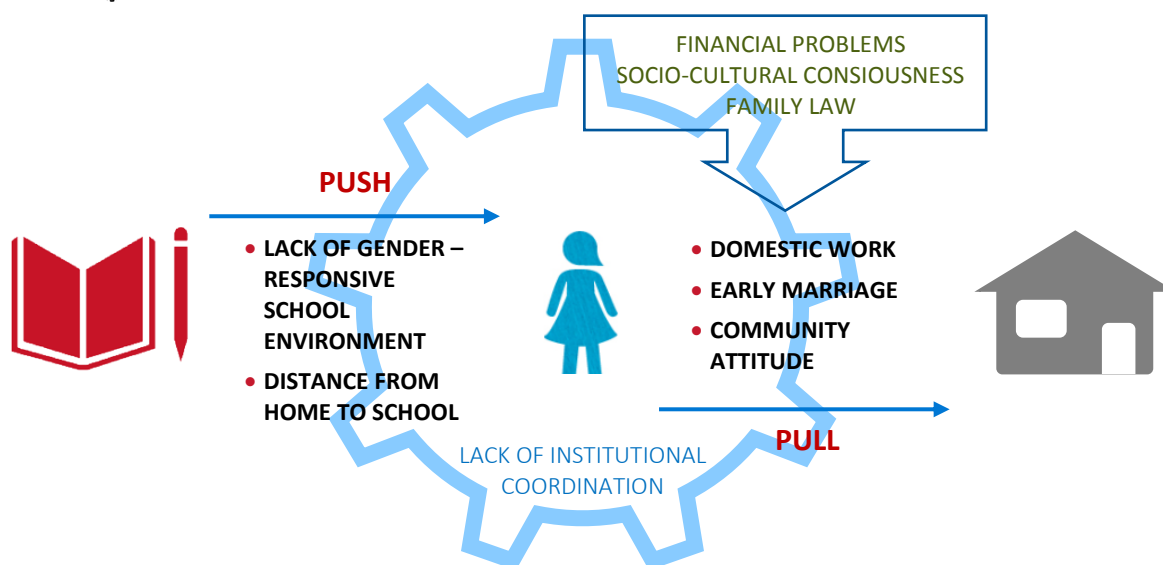


Diagram 1: Girls' dropout and poor-performance causing factors in Somali and Gambella Regional States

## Intervention and Achievements of the Project

The baseline survey conducted for the project indicated that most teaching and learning taking place in schools does not consider gender-related challenges of girls, including lack of trained teachers on gender responsive pedagogy (GRP). The survey also indicated that the challenges of girls' education are not limited within the school, but extend to girls' families and the community at large, hence there is a need to advocate and support girls within the family and community. In addition, economic difficulties force girls to drop out of school and engage in income generating activities.

Accordingly, three major components were designed in this project:

- **Capacity building** of school teachers and school management staff in the pilot schools and teacher educators in the teacher training colleges (TTCs) of the two regions in GRP and gender responsive school environment (GRSE);
- **Establishing a Girls' Education Support Structure (GESS)** in the towns where the schools are located in order to advocate girls' education in the locality;
- **Setting up viable and sustainable income generation schemes** for needy girls in the pilot schools.

**TRAINING**

185 teachers,

55 teacher educators,

17 technical assistants for

SIP from MOE were trained on GRP, GRSE and life skills.

1200 students,

112 schools benefited.

**COMMUNITY**

60 members of the GESS were trained on advocacy and gender responsive education.

**INCOME GENERATING**

100 girls were supported by provision of sanitary pads;

20 girls were supported economically.

The sustainable income would support

200 girls in 2017.

**Teaching Learning Process and School Environment Improved**

- Library and playground were arranged for girls' use, as well as separate toilets and special rest-rooms;
- Female students' involvement in tutorial program was increased;
- Female students' class room participation was enhanced.

**Coordination between MOE, TTCs and Schools Improved**

- With the coordination of MOE Gender Directorate, a Gender Indicator Guideline for School Improvement Programs (SIP) was prepared; a training was provided at national level for curriculum developers and text book writers of basic education;
- Trained TOTs became focal persons for GRP in respective TTCs;
- MOE assigned technical assistants at regional and district level to provide supervision and supports for pilot schools;
- MOE advised other agencies to follow the approach of this project.

**Capacity of Teachers and TTCs Strengthened**

- Teachers were introduced to different pedagogies;
- GRP training module for secondary school teachers developed;
- Tutorial program on STEAM strengthened.

**Females' Life Skills Enhanced**

- Girls' clubs were strengthened;
- Female students became assertive;
- Different sectors developed plan of action on cascading life skills for girls and female.

**Community Strengthened through School Partnership and Advocacy on Girls' Education**

- GESS took full ownership on the implementation of income generating activities;
- Awareness raising programs on early marriage, gender based violence (GBV) and on the importance of girls' education were provided.

**The income generating schemes ensured the sustainability of the project.**

Schools can use the profit to support their gender programs and economically deprived girls to continue their education. The income generating activities were based on assets and to provide services, such as running tricycles, cafeterias and shops, and renting houses. Houses and shops were built on the land given by district municipality.

*"We are involved in matters concerning us which gives us confidence and a feeling of belonging. Things in our school are improving, we find a forum to discuss on our issues and help our female friends,"* said by a girl from Degehabur High school who is a GESS.

**Successful Income Generating:**  
One school bought two tricycles and started transport business, earning \$1,100 per month



## Difficulties Encountered and Measures Taken

**One of the main challenges in this project was the location of the pilot schools.** The three pilot schools in Gambella were especially difficult for frequent visits because they were in different remote areas with high security issues. As a result, the review meetings were conducted in the regional towns. However, in order to maintain the effectiveness and quality of the project, the MOE technical assistants at regional and district level conducted supervision and provided supports for the schools.

**In 2016, due to the security condition and state of emergency declarations, movement was restricted.** This had affected the implementation of the project in relation to training delivery and IGAs. Trainings then were delivered in the regional towns, such as Addis Ababa and Adama. For the IGAs, the Regional Education Bureaux of Gambella and Somali assigned a team respectively to support schools on the purchase and transportation of IGAs items.

**Another challenge was the high turnover of teachers, school principals and education personnel at regional and district level.** In order to mitigate this, orientation and refresher trainings were organized.

## Feedbacks

**In the Training on GRP and STEAM Teaching for Secondary Education Teachers held in Addis Ababa, 30 participant teachers were asked to fill the questionnaires about training outcomes.** All of the teachers believed that the workshop improved their awareness and skills on GRP and GRSP. *"I got so many things from the training. Male and female are equal but it's not practiced yet, especially in education. Males generally get higher score than females. The reason behind this is both environmental and cultural. So our mission is to make males and females equal by teaching females more and in a way that respects their differences,"* said by a female mathematics teacher.

**Encouraging females to become teachers and increasing the number of female teachers in STEAM subjects is believed to make a difference in girls' performance.** In the meantime, the changing of teaching attitudes and methods of male teachers will also encourage girls to achieve more. As one male physics teacher mentioned that, *"Enhancing and endorsement of female students in natural science education, increasing participation of female students in educational management and leaderships and adapting to GRP such as arranging girls in group discussions, allows them to have more opportunities to express themselves."*

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**"My students thought that HIV and AIDS only attack black people but not white people. This is a misunderstanding. The science proved that HIV and AIDS attack CD4 in a white blood cell. Girls should have the knowledge to protect themselves and become more confident and stronger,"** said by a female biology teacher from Gambella pilot school

Training on GRP and STEAM Teaching for Secondary Education Teachers held in Addis Ababa, December 5-9, 2016