



# 2018 Research, Monitoring & Evaluation Report: Girls' Education Program

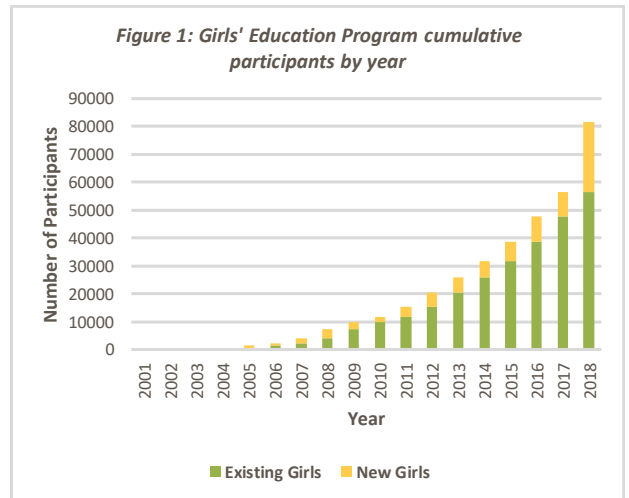


## Thank you for your partnership in advancing gender equality.

Room to Read's Girls' Education Program ensures that girls build the skills to succeed in school and make key life decisions. In eight countries, we equip girls with the tools to self-advocate and chart a path that they choose for themselves. This work would not be possible without involving stakeholders who support our efforts toward the creation of a gender-equal world.

Room to Read measures the effectiveness of our Girls' Education Program through a series of global indicators as well as innovative assessments and evaluations. Our research shows that through our program, participants are gaining the skills needed to stay in school longer, advance to higher education and succeed in their careers and lives.

In 2018, we had our largest cohort of girls in program history. We enrolled **25,300** new girls last year, as seen in **Figure 1**. This represents exponential growth in the scale of our program, with a year-over-year increase of **194 percent** in new girls enrolled. Cumulatively, we have reached more than **81,800** girls since 2001.



We hope you enjoy reading some 2018 highlights below, and we look forward to another impressive year in 2019.

## OUR GIRLS' EDUCATION PROGRAM RESULTS<sup>1</sup>

**25,300**

New girls reached in 2018

**81,800**

Girls reached cumulatively

**2,100**

New secondary school graduates in 2018

**6,900**

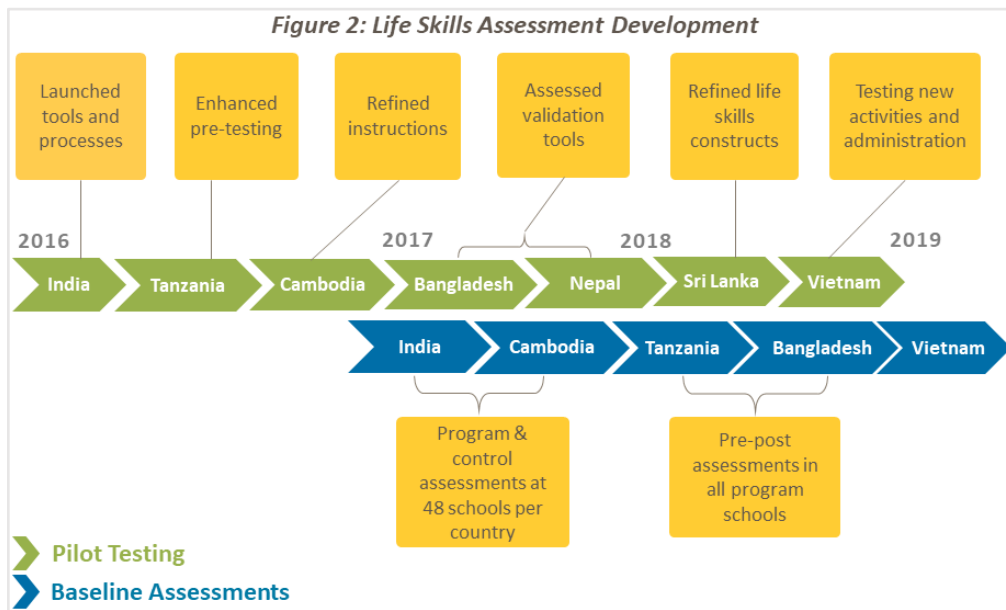
Secondary school graduates cumulatively

<sup>1</sup>Cumulative numbers are since 2001.

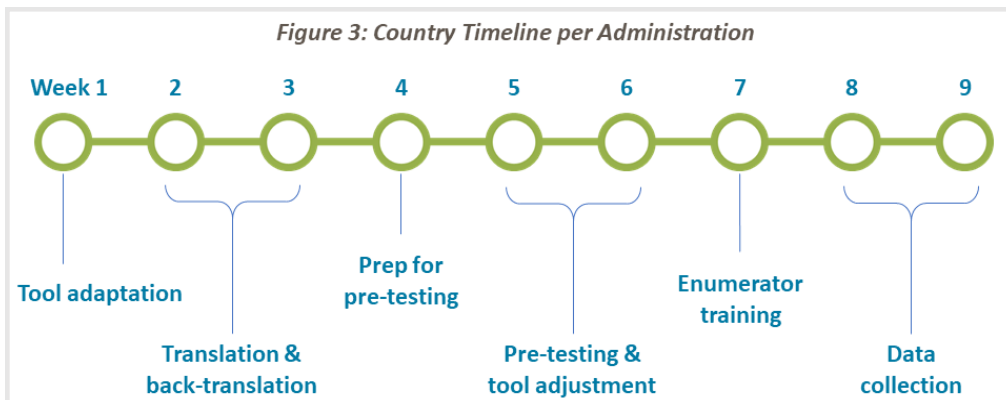
## LIFE SKILLS ASSESSMENT WORLDWIDE

In addition to tracking critical indicators such as school drop-out and completion, we measure changes in our participants' life skills competencies using our recently developed Life Skills Assessment (LSA). The assessment measures nine life skills: self-confidence, expressing and managing emotions, empathy, self-control, decision-making, perseverance, communication, creative problem-solving, and relationship building. We gather data from non-participants at the end of lower secondary school (typically Grade 8 or Grade 9) before we launch our program in a school, and then again with program participants after the program is fully established in the school. The data gathered enables us to understand the effectiveness of our program and learn how changes in life skills are associated with other outcomes such as school completion, successful transitions from secondary school and agency over life decisions.

To date, we have finished testing the LSA in seven of our eight Girls' Education Program countries, and we have completed baseline assessments in six of these, as shown in **Figure 2** below. Collecting comparable data across these diverse contexts has enabled us to reflect on our program design and make continuous improvements to the LSA tool and process.



The country teams' timeline for administering the LSA is as follows in **Figure 3**:

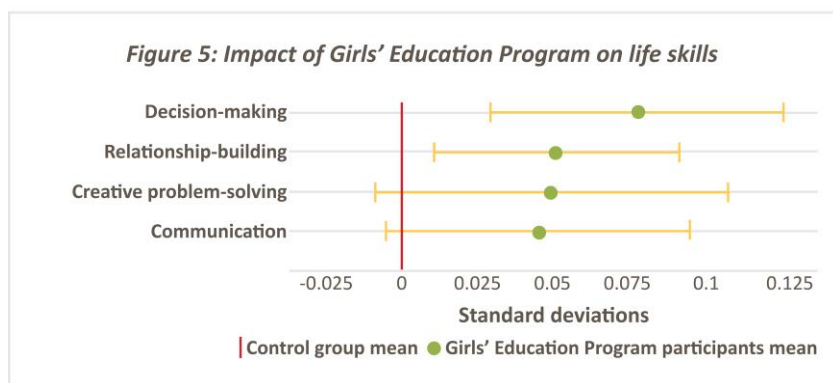
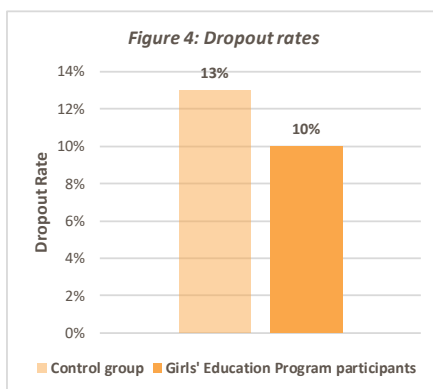


As Room to Read has developed and tested our LSA, we have shared our work extensively with experts and peer organizations in the sector through conference presentations, working group meetings and webinars. This sharing enables us to check our own assumptions against the best thinking of others working on the same topics and provides insights to fuel more rapid innovation across the sector. We will maintain our commitment to collaboration as we further refine our tool and process in the coming years.

## INDEPENDENT IMPACT EVALUATION IN INDIA

Room to Read partnered with independent researchers from American University, the University of Illinois at Chicago and Dartmouth College, to evaluate the effectiveness of our program through a rigorous, randomized controlled trial (RCT) study in Rajasthan, **India**. Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Atlassian Foundation International, Echidna Giving, and other private investors, the study spanned 119 schools over two years and surveyed a total of 2,400 girls and their parents – half of whom were enrolled in our program and half of whom were not.

The Life Skills Evaluation found that girls who participated in our program had a **25 percent lower dropout rate (Figure 4)** and showed **higher levels of grade progression** than girls in control schools. Furthermore, the evaluation used an extensive range of questions and compiled these into indices to measure key life skills. As shown in **Figure 5**, the program made a positive and statistically significant impact on certain life skills, including decision-making, relationship-building, creative problem-solving and communication, ultimately giving participants greater agency over their lives. These results reaffirm that our program has a measurable impact on its two primary goals: helping girls to stay in school longer and developing the skills that enable them to thrive.



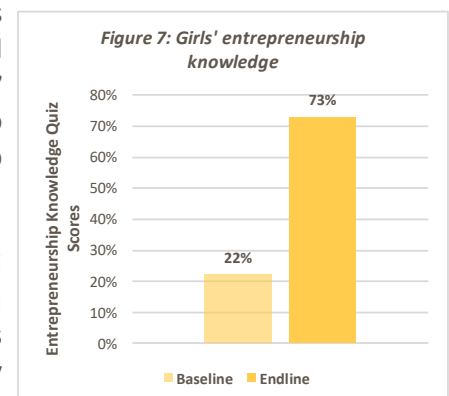
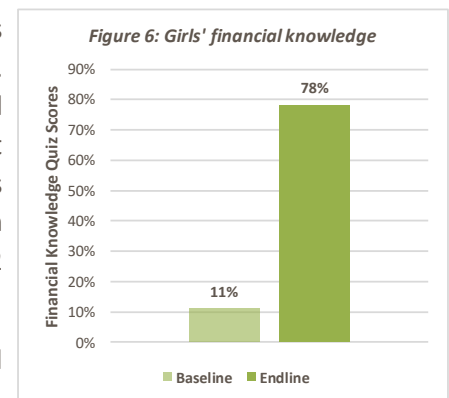
To read the full Rajasthan Life Skills Evaluation, visit our website at <https://www.roomtoread.org/lead-with-life-skills>.

## FINANCIAL EDUCATION LIFE SKILLS CLUBS

Thanks to the support of Credit Suisse, we implemented Financial Education Life Skills (FELS) clubs as part of our Girls' Education Program in **Sri Lanka** and **Tanzania** in 2018. Building from our life skills education programming, Room to Read developed a financial education curriculum in partnership with Aflatoun International, the leading expert in financial skills programs for children and youth in developing countries. FELS clubs focus on financial empowerment, financial inclusion and financial literacy for girls. In 2018, we reached 3,706 participants in 18 schools in Sri Lanka, and an additional 2,722 participants in 10 schools in Tanzania.

The first year of implementation produced remarkable increases in both financial and entrepreneurial knowledge. We asked girls a series of attitudinal and knowledge-based questions on topics related to money management, entrepreneurship and small business management. For Grades 11 and 12 girls in Tanzania, respondents on average started with a low baseline level of financial knowledge and experienced a dramatic **67 percentage point** improvement after participating in FELS (**Figure 6**). These girls also made statistically significant improvements from baseline to endline in entrepreneurship knowledge, increasing their average test scores by **51 percentage points (Figure 7)**.

The knowledge and skills gained will benefit girls significantly in both countries. In Sri Lanka, local community stakeholders expressed that it is important to society for children to learn how to save and manage their money. In Tanzania, community members emphasized that these skills are particularly important to help girls build a life once they graduate.



## INCLUSION OF BOYS IN GENDER EQUALITY PROGRAMMING

We are currently conducting qualitative research to support the incorporation of boys into our Girls' Education Program activities. Based on international research and our own experience, we know boys can be negatively affected by social norms about manhood and masculinity. We also know that adolescence is a critical time to educate and engage boys around gender equality, as well as the roles they can play in creating a more equal world. We cannot expect girls to fix gender inequality problems on their own; to truly achieve gender equality, boys must be active stakeholders and challenge the norms and attitudes that perpetuate inequality.

As an initial step in this process, we implemented a mixed-methods formative research study in **Cambodia**. Our team conducted focus group discussions with boys, girls, mothers and fathers about gender norms and the challenges faced by both adolescent boys and girls. We also tested an adapted version of our Life Skills Assessment, with additional content specifically focused on boys' understandings of masculinity and the roles of men and boys in school and at home. Highlights from the discussions are outlined in **Table 1**.

**Table 1: Focus Group Discussion Results**

<b>Finding</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Respondents voiced a mix of egalitarian and non-egalitarian attitudes toward gender</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grade 7 boys said that boys and girls had equal rights to education, equal rights in society and that it was unfair when girls or women did most of the household chores.</li><li>• When asked what qualities they desired in their future wives, Grade 7 boys overwhelmingly said they wanted someone who knows how to cook, manage the household, raise children, wants to stay at home and has no interest in going out or talking with friends.</li><li>• These types of contrasting opinions were frequently expressed by a single respondent.</li></ul>
<b>Attitudes toward gender did not seem to differ much between boys and girls, or between men and women</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regardless of age or gender, participants tended to voice respect for girls' and women's equal rights in the abstract.</li><li>• Most also seemed to support the idea of unequal roles for men and women in the workplace (in terms of what types of jobs were acceptable for each) and in the household (where most agreed that men were the proper decisionmakers in important matters).</li><li>• Girls and women were less likely to agree that husbands should be considered the "head of the family."</li></ul>
<b>The adolescent challenges faced by boys and girls were quite different</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Boys were understood to be at risk of violence, drug and alcohol abuse, car accidents, etc., which were attributed to their own risk-taking behavior.</li><li>• The primary concern cited for girls was romantic relationships, which put girls at risk of pregnancy, dropping out of school for early marriage or running away with their boyfriends.</li></ul>

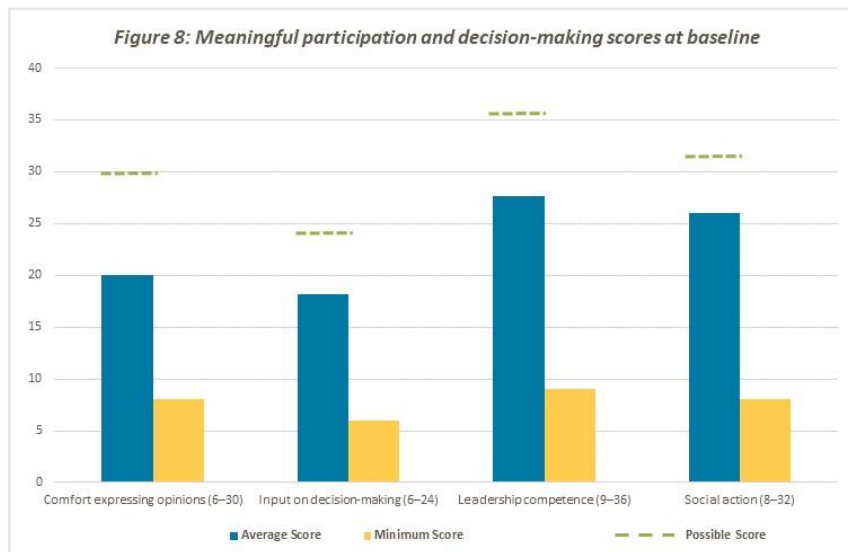
These discussion results are helpful to understand boys' current knowledge and attitudes about gender. Specifically, we gain insight into areas they believe to be harmful to themselves versus harmful to girls and women. This will help us develop curricula that meet boys where they are and guide them to a more informed and positive understanding of gender and masculinity. For girls, this knowledge can be impactful as well, because they are often living in communities mostly controlled by boys and men. For girls and boys to reach their full potential, both must be educated and shift behavior and ways of thinking.

We plan to continue our research with two additional rounds of data collection in Cambodia in 2020, which will guide our decisions about future curriculum development and inform our measurement approach going forward.

## NEW INDEPENDENT EVALUATION IN NEPAL

We are excited to be partnering with the Gender and Adolescent: Global Evidence (GAGE) initiative, hosted by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London, to evaluate our Girls' Education Program in **Nepal**. GAGE's research partners, Emory University and the Center for Research on Environmental Health and Population Activities (CREHPA), have led the evaluation design and recently completed a comprehensive baseline assessment in the Nuwakot and Tanahun districts of Nepal. Girls in these districts face many challenges to stay in school and pursue their goals, with roughly only 65 percent of 12-year-old girls completing primary school (Grades 1-5) across the two districts (Nepal Census, 2011).

Baseline data were collected from a sample of 571 Grade 6 girls participating in the Room to Read Girls' Education Program across 24 schools, as well as from a control group of 1,126 girls not participating in the program. Data were collected from school leadership, adult caregivers and adolescent girls for both treatment and control groups and were found to be well-balanced at baseline.



This quasi-experimental evaluation will measure Room to Read's program impact in areas such as: school retention, progression and performance; life skills; health and sexual and reproductive health; bodily integrity and freedom from violence; voice, agency and mobility; and economic empowerment.

Baseline findings illustrate the importance of our programming across a range of outcomes, including meaningful participation and decision-making as illustrated in **Figure 8**.

An executive summary of the baseline findings can be found at

<https://www.gage.odi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/GAGE-Nepal-Room-to-Read-ES-v4.pdf>.

## GIRLS' EDUCATION AT SCALE IN INDIA

2018 marked the launch of our first Girls' Education Program technical assistance project, thanks to the support of the IKEA Foundation. After years of demonstrating impact with our direct implementation model across various states in **India**, we began rolling out our first Girls' Education Program scale-up model in the states of Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan (**Figure 10**). This three-year project spans from July 2018 to March 2021 and focuses on training teachers to deliver life skills to a projected 30,000 secondary school girls. This work is being done primarily in boarding schools, attended by lower-caste girls from the most vulnerable backgrounds.

This project represents a new implementation approach for our Girls' Education Program, and one that, if successful, has enormous potential to reach girls at a larger scale than ever before. As such, we have established a comprehensive evaluation approach that includes:

- Three separate **Life Skills Assessment-based evaluations** (one for each combination of state and school type), for which baseline assessments have been completed in a total of 72 schools, with 1,800 participants.
- A **Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP)** survey of 374 teachers that measures how the program builds the capacity of teachers to deliver a participatory life skills curriculum focused on gender roles, health and hygiene, sexual and reproductive health, leadership, financial literacy, and other critical topics.

*Figure 10: Girls' Education Program in India*



This evaluation strategy will provide evidence about the effectiveness of this new implementation model, enable us to improve our technical assistance approach and provide recommendations for further scaling.