Project Impact & Endline Evaluation Report

Project: Building a Brighter Future (BBF) and Ensuring the Right to Sustainable Quality Learning for Girls' Education projects

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Table of Contents

1. *Executive Summary: Impact and Endline Results* 2
2. *Objectives of the Assignment* 2
3. *Methodology* 3
4. *Respondent Profile* 4
5. *Project Impact Analysis-OECD Criteria* 5
   - 5.1. Relevance 5
   - 5.2. Effectiveness 5
   - 5.3. Efficiency 6
   - 5.4. Impact 6
   - 5.5. Sustainability 7
   - 5.6. Coherence 7
6. *Outcome Level Analysis (Achievement of Project Goals)* 7
7. *Enrollment and Barriers* 9
8. *Academic Support and Aspirations* 9
9. *Impact of Girls' Clubs on Peer Support and Life Skills* 10
10. *Protection and Social Norms* 11
11. *Wellbeing and Dignity* 11
12. *Institutional and Community Support* 12
13. *Feedback* 13
14. *Conclusion* 13
15. *Key Lessons Learnt* 13
16. *Recommendations for Future Programming* 14

Annexes 16

1. *Executive Summary: Impact and Endline Results*

Building a Brighter Future and Ensuring the Right to Sustainable Quality Learning for Girls' Education projects, implemented by ELiDA and financed by the Malala Fund, have successfully catalyzed a transformative shift in the educational landscape of South Wollo Zone. Spanning across the conflict-affected districts of Tehuledere, Dessie Zuria, and Worebabu, the initiative addressed the multifaceted barriers that keep adolescent girls out of school, achieving significant milestones in enrollment, academic performance, and community-led protection.

Key Achievements in Enrollment and Retention: The project served as a vital lifeline for educational recovery following regional instability. The Her Back-to-School campaign and strategic mobilization efforts resulted in a 26% re-enrollment rate among previously out-of-school girls. Beyond initial enrollment, the project secured long-term retention by removing economic barriers, providing 95.16% of students with essential scholastic materials. Consequently, 87.1% of beneficiaries express a definitive commitment to completing Grade 12, marking a major departure from previous dropout trends.

Academic Excellence and Institutional Strengthening: Academic support was a cornerstone of the project's success. Through targeted tutorial programs, 94.09% of girls reported a significant improvement in their mid-term results, with nearly 90% of students rating the quality of instruction as highly useful. This academic success was supported by institutional shifts; 74.73% of schools now utilize formal attendance tracking systems, allowing for rapid intervention when girls are at risk of dropping out.

Empowerment and Social Norm Transformation: The project fostered deep-seated behavioral change by empowering girls and engaging community gatekeepers. 89.25% of girls are now active members of school-based clubs, where they developed the confidence (reported by 85%) to speak up and lead. This internal empowerment was mirrored by external support: 70.97% of respondents reported a significant improvement in their father's attitude toward their education, and 91.4% of customary and religious leaders have become active advocates for the project. Furthermore, the project achieved a 72.58% reduction in the perceived prevalence of FGM, creating a safer community environment. By addressing period puberty, ELiDA ensured that biological factors did not impede academic progress. Dignity kit distribution reached 93.55% of girls, resulting in a 96.77% success rate in keeping girls in school during their menstrual cycles.

Conclusion The project implemented by ELiDA with financial support from Malala Fund has moved the needle from access to quality and agency. By aligning material support with social advocacy, the initiative has not only returned girls to the classroom but has redefined their status in society as future professionals and community leaders.

2. *Objectives of the Assignment*

The primary purpose of this assignment was to conduct a comprehensive, evidence-based evaluation of the Building a Brighter Future (BBF) and Ensuring the Right to Sustainable Quality Learning for Girls' Education projects. The evaluation measured final progress against baseline indicators, validated the causal links between project interventions and improvements in girls' education (enrollment, retention, and learning), and assessed the transformation of systemic barriers and social norms to provide a scalable national blueprint.

The specific objectives achieved were to:

- Measure the endline status of all project indicators against baseline data using the OECD-DAC criteria to determine the extent of project contribution to enrollment and

transition.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the project in addressing the unique socio-cultural contexts of South Wollo and dismantling discriminatory traditions.
- Assess the success of the project in transforming deep-rooted social norms and institutional practices within the community and local government.
- Examine the lasting technical and administrative capacity built within schools and local education offices to ensure functionality without external support.
- Document evidence-based lessons and what works insights to inform future adaptive management and national policy scaling

3. Methodology

The analysis employed a mixed-method, participatory, and context-driven approach. This methodology integrated both qualitative and quantitative lenses to capture secondary data and primary lived experiences from a diverse range of stakeholders.

3.1 Assessment Design

The team utilized a robust design that ensured scientific precision and cost-effectiveness by triangulating quantitative survey results with qualitative insights.

3.2 Sources of Information

Both primary and secondary sources were utilized. Primary data was gathered through structured questionnaires, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). Secondary sources included government policies, educational directives, project reports, and academic literature relevant to girls' education in conflict-affected areas.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

- 3.3.1 Quantitative Data: A detailed questionnaire was administered to 186 respondents to measure project impact, which was subsequently analyzed using statistical software to identify trends in enrollment and academic performance.
- 3.3.2 Qualitative Data: * Desk/Document Review: A critical review of government studies, CSO reports, and project frameworks informed the design of primary tools and provided a foundation for triangulation.
    - Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Six participatory FGDs were conducted with Girls' Clubs, PTA members, and community leaders using purposive sampling to ensure equal opportunities for reflection.
    - Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Six semi-structured KIIs were held with government officials, school principals, and focal persons. These interviews continued until data saturation was reached.
    - Case Stories: Exemplary cases, such as the successful intervention against forced migration in Werebabo, were documented to uncover unique success stories and innovative practices.

3.4 Sampling

The sampling strategy for this assessment followed a multi-stage approach, combining quantitative rigor with targeted qualitative depth across the project areas of Werebabo, Tehuledere, and Dessie Zuria.

- ❖ **Quantitative Sampling** A total sample of 186 respondents was achieved for the quantitative survey. While the initial target was determined using the Cochran sampling formula to ensure a representative margin of error, the final reach of 186 provided a robust dataset for descriptive and trend analysis. Participants, primarily project-targeted girls and teachers, were selected through simple random sampling to ensure unbiased representation.

- ❖ **Qualitative Sampling (FGDs and KIIs)** To provide administrative and lived-experience depth, the study utilized purposive sampling to conduct 12 distinct qualitative sessions, distributed as follows:
  - Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): A total of 6 FGDs were facilitated (2 per woreda). These included 3 FGDs with Gender/Girls' Club members (5 members per group) and 3 FGDs with Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), involving between 3 to 4 members per session depending on local availability.
  - Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): A total of 6 KIIs were conducted (2 per woreda) with stakeholders selected for their specialized roles and oversight. These participants included 3 Woreda Focal Persons (one from each district) and 3 School Principals who are supporting ELiDA project activities.

This structured approach ensured that every geographic cluster was equally represented, providing a balanced triangulation of data from student leaders, community representatives, and government administrators.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data was organized and interpreted using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying patterns and underlying trends within the narratives. Findings were used to construct an action plan to address identified gaps and maximize future effectiveness.

3.6 Data Quality Assurance (DQA)

To ensure the integrity of the findings, the following controls were implemented:

- Regular Debriefs: The team conducted frequent data spot-checks and debriefing sessions to gauge quality and address issues collaboratively.
- Recruitment and Induction: High-level professionals were recruited and provided with specialized training on the endline survey tasks to ensure consistency.
- Triangulation: Data was cross verified across various sources (students, parents, and officials) to ensure compliance and reliability.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The assessment strictly adhered to international safeguarding policies and ethical conduct:

- Confidentiality and Anonymity: Responses were treated with the utmost respect. Participant names were excluded from tools, and data was stored securely.
- Consent: Participation was entirely voluntary; all participants provided verbal and written consent after being informed of the study's purpose.
- Risks and Benefits: The assessment presented minimal risks. While no monetary benefits were provided, participants gained insights into local educational strengths and needs.

❖ Key Impact and Endline Evaluation Findings

4. Respondent Profile

The demographic data collected during this evaluation provides a clear snapshot of the project's reach and the vulnerability of the target population. Out of the 186 primary respondents, an overwhelming 96.24% are female, confirming that the intervention successfully maintained its focus on the primary beneficiaries: adolescent girls and young women. The age distribution highlights a critical window for intervention, with 78.49% of respondents falling within the 16–24 age brackets a group often at risk of dropping out due to economic or social pressures.

Additionally, 18.82% of respondents are below 15, indicating the project's success in reaching girls at the transition point between primary and secondary education.

Geographically, the assessment was concentrated in three specific Woredas in the South Wollo Zone, which have been historically affected by conflict and instability. Tehuldere Woreda represented the largest share of participants (60.75%), followed by Dessie Zuria (24.73%) and Worebabu (12.9%). This distribution reflects the project's strategic focus on areas where educational infrastructure and social services were most disrupted. Notably, the evaluation identified a significant inclusion of marginalized households; 9.14% of respondents reported that at least one member of their household lives with a permanent disability. This underscores the project's commitment to an inclusive approach, ensuring that educational support reaches families facing compounded vulnerabilities. The profile indicates that the respondents are primarily young women residing in conflict-affected rural and semi-urban settings, many of whom navigate complex household dynamics while pursuing their education.

5. *Project Impact Analysis-OECD Criteria*

5.1. RELEVANCE

The project demonstrated exceptional relevance by aligning its design with the specific socio-economic and protection needs of adolescent girls in South Wollo Zone. In a region where 40.86% of respondents identified Economy and 31.72% identified Conflict and Instability as their primary barriers to education, the project's focus on removing financial hurdles and rebuilding a sense of safety was perfectly targeted. By focusing on the 16–24 age brackets a group historically most at risk of dropout and early marriage in Amhara, the intervention addressed the most critical transition point in girl's educational journey.

The relevance is further underscored by the project's coherence with the Malala Fund's global mission and Ethiopia's national recovery efforts. Instead of providing a generic educational package, the project tailored its Her Back-to-School campaign to influence community gatekeepers. The fact that 91.4% of customary and religious leaders now support girls' education shows that the project recognized the cultural context of the region. Furthermore, the provision of dignity kits was a highly relevant response to period poverty, which was identified as a silent but significant driver of absenteeism. By addressing the actualized needs of the beneficiaries rather than perceived needs, the project ensured that every dollar spent directly counteracted a specific barrier to enrollment or quality learning. Hence, there is supportive evidence that the two interventions addressed the educational needs and priorities of adolescent girls from the three target woredas of which most stakeholders were supportive of it.

5.2. EFFECTIVENESS

The effectiveness of the project is visible in the tangible achievement of its primary objectives: re-enrollment, academic success, and empowerment. The Her Back-to-School campaign was a clear success, with 17.74% of girls re-enrolling directly because of the mobilization and another 8.06% being influenced by it. This represents a significant reversal of dropout trends. More impressively, the project's academic interventions proved highly effective; 94.09% of girls reported that their mid-term results significantly improved after participating in the tutorial sessions. These tutorials were rated as highly useful by 89.25% of respondents, proving that the project effectively bridged the learning gap created by conflict-related school closures.

Beyond the classroom, the effectiveness of the Girls' Clubs in building agency was profound. 81.18% of the girls now feel completely empowered to speak up and lead within their schools. This effectiveness in building soft skills is critical for the project's protection goals. Additionally, the project was nearly 100% effective in its menstrual hygiene management (MHM) component, with 96.77% of girls stating that the dignity kits directly allowed them to stay in school during their periods. By achieving high scores across these diverse indicators, the project proved that its multi-sectoral approach was the most effective way to secure the right to education.

5.3. EFFICIENCY

The fact that all the major respondents in the three woredas responded that they achieved planned project outcomes/outputs on time, and used available resources with minimum cost implies ELiDA's interventions were efficient in their project implementation. Besides, in terms of operation, it was realized that the projects had no underspending or overspending of budget. That is, the project utilized its resources with high efficiency by leveraging existing local structures to deliver a wide range of services. Instead of building new, separate facilities, the project empowered existing school-based Girls' Clubs to serve as the hub for life-skills training, material distribution, and peer advocacy. This hub-and-spoke model allowed for a high delivery rate, with 95.16% of the girls receiving their scholastic materials despite the logistical challenges of a post-conflict zone. The efficiency of the tutorial program is also noteworthy; by using existing school classrooms (found to be conducive by 86% of students), the project maximized its budget for human resources and instructional quality.

While the data noted minor logistical bottlenecks specifically the 2.15% of respondents who mentioned delays in material delivery the overall conversion of inputs into high-impact outputs was rapid. For example, the one-time university exposure visit participated by 72.04% of the girls resulted in an 88.17% increase in long-term motivation, representing a very high return on investment in terms of student morale. The project also displayed administrative efficiency through the formalization of attendance tracking in 74.73% of targeted schools, creating a low-cost, sustainable system for school administrations to monitor student retention without requiring continuous external funding.

5.4. IMPACT

The impact of the project extends far beyond the immediate academic scores of the 186 survey respondents; it has begun to shift the deep-seated social fabric of the South Wollo Zone. The most profound impact is the transformation of gender norms within the household. With 70.97% of respondents reporting a significant improvement in their father's attitude toward their education, the project has successfully broken down the primary patriarchal barrier to girls' advancement. This shift in the domestic sphere is mirrored in the community, where 83.33% of girls who stay in school until Grade 12 are now highly respected, rather than being viewed solely through the lens of domestic labor or early marriage.

The impact on community protection is equally significant. The reported reduction in FGM (72.58% stating it has increased greatly) and the near-universal knowledge of GBV reporting pathways (94.62%) indicate that the community is becoming a safer space for young women. Long-term impact is also found in the aspirations of the girls themselves; by raising their horizons through university visits and tutorials, the project has shifted their self-identity. These girls no longer see themselves as victims of conflict, but as future doctors, engineers, and

teachers. This generational change in mindset is the project's most lasting legacy, ensuring that these young women will contribute to the economic and social reconstruction of their region.

5.5. SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is built into the project through the institutionalization of its successes within local systems. By training and empowering female teachers who 78.49% of girls now feel very comfortable consulting the project has created a permanent support structure within the schools. The formalization of attendance tracking by school administrations (74.73%) ensures that the mechanisms for monitoring girls' education will persist beyond ELiDA's direct involvement. Furthermore, the empowerment of the Girls' Clubs has created a self-sustaining peer-mentorship model; as 89.25% of girls are now very active members, they are likely to continue advocating for the cohorts that follow them.

Community-level sustainability is anchored in the broad support of customary and religious leaders (91.4%). Because these local gatekeepers have become champions for girls' education, the cultural shift is less likely to revert when the project funding concludes. However, the evaluation highlights that physical infrastructure (specifically WASH facilities) remains a challenge for long-term sustainability. While behavioral change is high, the 76.34% of latrines that need improvement and the inconsistent water access represent a risk to the long-term hygiene and dignity of the students. To ensure total sustainability, future cycles must match the project's high social sustainability with improved physical sustainability through infrastructure rehabilitation.

5.6. COHERENCE

The implemented thematic areas (key outputs) were aligned with the donor's and government priorities in targeted Regions and woredas, for providing critical support for rural girls (through training, provision of scholastic materials, tutorials, campaigning, institutional strengthening, and others) were identified as some of the priority areas in the six Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP-VI, 2021, p. 95)[1]. The project achieved high coherence by working in synergy with both local government education offices and international humanitarian standards. By operating within the South Wollo Zone, the project complemented the Amhara Regional Education Bureau's efforts to rebuild schooling in conflict-affected areas. The intervention did not operate in a vacuum; it integrated GBV protection standards from the Protection Cluster and aligned with the Women, Peace, and Security agenda by empowering girls to speak up in their communities. This internal and external coherence ensured that the project avoided duplication and instead added value to the existing educational landscape.

The project also maintained strong coherence between its different components. For instance, the MHM support (dignity kits) was not just a health intervention; it was explicitly linked to the academic outcome of reduced absenteeism. Similarly, the university visits were coherent with the tutorial programs, as the visits provided the why (motivation) while the tutorials provided the how (academic ability). This integrated approach meant that every project activity reinforced the others. The high level of coordination with school administrations (formal tracking) and parents (who were the most influential encouragers) further demonstrates that the project was a coherent part of the social ecosystem, rather than an isolated NGO activity.

6. Outcome Level Analysis (Achievement of Project Goals)

[1] MoE (2021). The Education Sector Development Plan VI (2020/21-2024/25).

The project has achieved a transformative outcome in restoring educational access and quality for adolescent girls in conflict-affected districts of South Wollo. The central outcome of increased enrollment and retention is evidenced by the fact that nearly 26% of respondents were directly brought back to the classroom by ELiDA's mobilization efforts (17.74% directly and 8.06% influenced). Beyond mere presence, the project achieved a significant outcome in academic performance and student agency. A remarkable 94.09% of girls reported significant improvements in their mid-term results, shifting the project from a protection intervention to a quality education success.

The outcome of increased protection and social safety is reflected in the 54.84% of girls who feel much safer walking to school compared to two years ago. This suggests that the project successfully influenced the broader ecosystem of the school environment. Perhaps the most sustainable outcome is the shift in parental and patriarchal attitudes; with 70.97% of girls reporting a significant improvement in their father's support for their education, the project has successfully addressed a root cause of dropout. These combined factors have fostered a resilient educational environment where 87.1% of girls now definitely plan to complete Grade 12, representing a profound shift in the long-term life trajectories of young women in Tehuldere, Dessie Zuria, and Worebabu.

6.1. Output One: Strengthened Agencies, Systems, Structures, and Coordination

Output One focused on building the backbone of the educational environment by strengthening the institutional and community structures that protect and promote girls' education. This was achieved through a multi-tiered coordination strategy involving school administrations, local agencies, and community leaders. The data reflects a robust institutionalization of support, with 74.73% of school administrations adopting formal attendance tracking systems. This systemic change ensures that girls at risk of dropping out are identified early. Coordination extended to the community level, where the project successfully aligned with Customary and Religious leaders (91.4% support) to advocate against harmful practices.

The structure of the Her Back-to-School campaign served as a primary vehicle for this coordination, engaging parents as the most influential change agents (61.83%). This output also strengthened the reporting and response systems for protection, with 94.62% of girls knowing immediate reporting pathways for GBV. By building these structures, ELiDA ensured that the school is not just a building, but a coordinated protection and support network. The effectiveness of these systems is mirrored in the enhanced safety felt by 54.84% of girls, proving that coordinated agency results in tangible community safety.

6.2. Output Two: Improved Quality of Girls' Education in Targeted Secondary Schools

Output Two addressed the internal classroom environment, ensuring that once girls returned to school, they received high-quality, gender-responsive education. This was primarily driven by the provision of scholastic materials to 95.16% of students and the delivery of highly effective tutorial programs. These tutorials acted as a vital pedagogical intervention, with 89.25% of girls rating them as highly useful for bridging learning gaps. The quality of education was further bolstered by creating conducive learning spaces, which 86% of students found adequate or excellent.

Beyond academics, the quality of education was improved through the integration of Life Skills and Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM). The distribution of dignity kits to 93.55% of girls directly improved the quality of their educational experience by eliminating the 3–5-day

monthly absence period. Moreover, the University exposure visits (72.04% participation) raised the bar for educational quality by linking secondary school efforts to higher education aspirations. The availability of female role models (78% comfort rate in discussing health issues) ensured that the quality of education included holistic personal development. Consequently, the output successfully transformed targeted schools into high-performing, girl-friendly environments where academic success is the norm.

7. Enrollment and Barriers

The evaluation reveals a complex landscape of educational access in South Wollo. Before ELiDA's intervention, the barriers to enrollment were formidable and multifaceted. Economic constraints were cited as the primary obstacle by 40.86% of respondents, illustrating how poverty remains the greatest gatekeeper to education. Conflict and instability followed closely at 31.72%, reflecting the localized impact of recent unrest in the Amhara region, which led to school closures and safety concerns. Distance to school was also a notable factor (16.13%), highlighting the logistical challenges girls face in remote areas.

The Her Back-to-School campaign acted as a vital catalyst for change. While 72.58% of respondents were already enrolled, the campaign successfully re-integrated 17.74% of girls who had previously dropped out, with an additional 8.06% stating that the campaign heavily influenced their decision to return. This speaks to the high *effectiveness* of the mobilization efforts. The ripple effect of the intervention is evident in the community, with 56.99% of participants noting that between 1 and 5 girls in their immediate neighborhood returned to school this year, and 27.42% reporting more than 10 girls returning.

Social dynamics have shifted significantly. Parents emerged as the most influential figures (61.83%), followed by Girls' Club leaders (36.02%) and ELiDA staff (31.18%). This indicates that the project's strategy of engaging families was successful. Crucially, the *impact* on gender norms is highlighted by the fact that 70.97% of respondents reported a significant improvement in their father's attitude toward their education. Furthermore, the feeling of safety has improved, with 54.84% feeling much safer walking to school than they did two years ago. This suggests that the project did not just provide materials but helped rebuild the social fabric and safety of the learning environment.

The FGD Participants mentioned that the campaign's success is best illustrated by a landmark case at Werebabo Secondary School, where an 11th-grade girl faced forced migration. In a display of peer leadership, a fellow student hides the girl for eight days and coordinated with school authorities to mediate with the parents. This intervention unthinkable before the project resulted in the girl staying in Ethiopia to resume her education. KIIs with school principals highlighted that such proactive measures prove girls are now willing to challenge cultural and religious practices to exercise their right to learn. This case serves as a powerful testament to the project's success in fostering a community mindset where students lead the defense of their own rights.

8. Academic Support and Aspirations

The transition to and retention in secondary school is a central objective of the project. Currently, the physical distance to school remains a challenge, with 41.4% of girls traveling 2–5km and 28.49% traveling between 5–10km. Despite these distances, educational aspirations are exceptionally high; 87.1% of respondents stated they definitely plan to complete Grade 12,

showcasing a strong commitment to their futures.

ELiDA's provision of scholastic materials (bags, pens, notebooks) reached 95.16% of the target group. In the past, the lack of these basic items led to frequent absences and a profound lack of confidence among the girls. By removing these economic barriers, the project significantly improved daily participation. The academic Outcome is most visible in the success of the tutorial programs. An impressive 89.25% of respondents rated the tutorials as highly useful for improving their exam scores. This perception is backed by tangible results: 94.09% of girls reported that their mid-term results had significantly improved since joining the tutorial sessions.

The learning environment was also assessed for quality. 86.02% of students described their tutorial classrooms as very conducive for learning. This suggests that the project successfully created a focused, supportive space for academic growth that contrasted with the often overcrowded or resource-poor standard school day. The combination of material support and targeted academic intervention has not only improved grades but has effectively boosted the morale and confidence of the students, transforming their academic identity from at-risk to aspiring graduates.

KIIs with Woreda Focal Persons and school principals revealed that the tutorial program's impact extends far beyond grade improvement. Participants noted a visible shift in classroom dynamics; female students who were previously hesitant now express themselves freely and ask questions in larger, regular classes. This newfound confidence is attributed to the smaller, more supportive environment of the tutorial sessions. While the commitment to sustain these tutorials is highly supported by dedicated volunteer teachers' informants at Logo Haik Secondary School noted that infrastructure and teacher selection criteria require further refinement. Overall, the tutorials have successfully transformed the academic identity of the students, fostering a culture of active participation rather than passive listening.

9. Impact of Girls' Clubs on Peer Support and Life Skills

The Girls' Clubs have become the heartbeat of the project's empowerment strategy. A staggering 89.25% of respondents identified themselves as very active members, indicating that these clubs provide a much-needed platform for social connection and self-expression. The frequency of engagement is high, with 53.23% meeting weekly and 37.1% monthly. This consistent engagement is critical for long-term behavioral change and leadership development.

The impact on self-perception is profound. 85.48% of participants rated the club sessions as highly effective in building their confidence. This is not just a soft skill; it translates into agency within the school community. 81.18% of the girls reported that they now feel completely empowered to lead or speak up in their school, a significant shift from traditional roles where girls are often sidelined in academic or leadership discussions.

However, there are still areas for institutional growth. While 59.14% of the clubs have a dedicated room or space, 38.71% still lack a private area for their activities. Having a Safe Space is a core tenet of the Malala Fund's global strategy, and the lack of a dedicated room can limit the depth of discussions, particularly regarding sensitive health or protection issues. Despite this, the clubs have succeeded in creating a psychologically safe space. The life skills acquired ranging from public speaking to peer mentorship represent a sustainable output that will serve these young women long after the project concludes. Qualitative insights from Girls' Clubs and PTAs confirm that these forums have become essential safety nets for students. Club

members emphasized that the transition to a safe space model allowed for transparent dialogue regarding domestic pressures and early marriage. Girls are now equipped with knowledge of legal reporting mechanisms and referral pathways, significantly boosting their individual agency. PTA members noted that this peer-to-peer support, combined with community sensitization, has successfully challenged traditional norms. The consensus across all three woredas is that the clubs have shifted the culture from one of silence to one of proactive protection, where students actively intervene to prevent harmful practices among their peers.

10. Protection and Social Norms

The project has made significant strides in the domain of protection and the shifting of harmful traditional practices. Awareness is the first line of defense; 94.62% of respondents now know exactly where to report cases of forced marriage or rape immediately. This high level of literacy regarding Gender-Based Violence (GBV) pathways is a direct result of the project's advocacy and training. Furthermore, 79.57% of girls rated their school's response to GBV reports as very responsive, indicating that the institutional culture is becoming more protective.

On the community level, the data suggests a major shift in social norms. 72.58% of respondents reported that the reduction of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has increased greatly in their community, while 24.19% noted a slight increase in reduction. This suggests that the project's engagement with community gatekeepers is working. The support of Customary and Religious leaders is overwhelmingly positive, with 91.4% of girls stating that these leaders now actively support their education.

The community's valuation of educated girls has also been elevated. 83.33% of respondents feel that girls who stay in school until Grade 12 are highly respected by their neighbors and elders. This shift from viewing girls as domestic assets or early marriage candidates to respected community members is a fundamental long-term impact. By aligning the project with local leadership and focusing on protection literacy, ELiDA has created a safer community environment for girls' education to thrive.

Key informants emphasized that standardized reporting pathways now link school administrations directly with the District Women and Children's Affairs Office and local police, ensuring a multi-sectoral response to abuse. FGD participants from Girls' Clubs highlighted that Safe Spaces fostered the agency required to challenge domestic pressures and hidden marriage practices. Furthermore, a flourishing trend of embracing female leadership was noted among male teachers and students, driven by the academic and professional competence demonstrated by girls throughout the project.

11. Wellbeing and Dignity

Health and hygiene are critical determinants of school attendance for adolescent girls. The evaluation shows that ELiDA has addressed the silent barrier of period poverty with great success. 93.55% of the girls received dignity kits (sanitary pads) through the project. The impact of this is undeniable: 96.77% (nearly 100%) of respondents stated that the availability of sanitary pads helped them stay in school during their menstrual period. This is a direct victory for retention and academic consistency.

The qualitative reflection on health was overwhelmingly positive regarding the dignity restored

to students. Girls expressed that the provision of dignity kits removed the psychological burden and embarrassment previously associated with their menstrual cycles. KIIs with principals reflected that this intervention alone was responsible for a visible increase in consistent attendance. While infrastructure challenges were noted, the primary reflection was one of gratitude for the biological equality the project provided, allowing girls to compete academically without the interruption of period poverty.

However, the school infrastructure remains a challenge. While 76.34% of schools have functional latrines for girls, the majority of respondents noted that these facilities still need improvement regarding cleanliness and privacy. Only 18.28% described their school latrines as very clean. Similarly, water access is inconsistent; 61.29% of girls have access to clean water sometimes, but only 29.03% have it always.

These findings highlight a gap between the software (kits and knowledge) and the hardware (infrastructure). While the dignity kits have solved the immediate problem of attendance during menstruation, the lack of reliable water and high-quality latrines poses long-term health and dignity risks. To ensure the sustainability of the health gains made, future programming must prioritize the rehabilitation of water and sanitation (WASH) facilities to match the high level of reproductive health awareness achieved among the students.

12. Institutional and Community Support

The institutionalization of support for girls is evident in the school administration's practices. 74.73% of schools have moved toward formal tracking of girl students' attendance, which allows for early intervention when a girl is at risk of dropping out. When absences do occur, the response is relatively swift; 60.22% of teachers contact parents after three days, and 28.49% do so immediately. This accountability mechanism is a crucial output for maintaining enrollment in conflict-affected areas.

Beyond the classroom, the project provided high-level motivation through university exposure visits. 72.04% of the girls participated in these visits, and 88.17% reported that the experience increased greatly their motivation to succeed. Seeing a university environment firsthand transforms higher education from a distant dream into a tangible goal.

Representation also plays a key role. While 51.61% of respondents feel there are adequate female teachers to serve as role models, a significant 33.87% feel there are too few. This suggests a need for systemic advocacy to increase female representation in the teaching workforce. Nonetheless, the existing female teachers are highly trusted; 78.49% of girls feel very comfortable discussing reproductive health and personal challenges with them. This rapport is essential for the Safeguarding of students and ensures that girls have a trusted adult to turn to in times of crisis.

The visits to Wollo University were described by FGD participants as life-changing experiences that redefined their professional horizons. Hearing firsthand accounts from female doctors and professors convinced the students that women can achieve high-level success through hard work. This has fundamentally changed how girls talk about their futures with parents and elders, shifting conversations from domestic roles to career goals. School principals reported that the motivation gained from these visits was shared with the entire student body during flag ceremonies to amplify the impact. However, KIIs highlighted that these visits are currently project-dependent and not yet accessible to all schools, suggesting a need to integrate such

exposure visits into regional educational policy.

13. Feedback

The overall sentiment toward the ELiDA project is overwhelmingly positive, with 87.63% of respondents rating the support as excellent and 11.29% as good. When asked to identify the most helpful components, participants cited a holistic mix: skill training, the back-to-school campaign, university visits, tutorials, sanitary pads, and scholastic materials. This suggests that the project's multi-sectoral approach was its greatest strength, as it addressed economic, academic, and social barriers simultaneously.

Feedback regarding the least helpful parts of the project was minimal, with the vast majority stating none. However, a small but important segment of the population (2.15%) mentioned delays in material delivery. This provides a clear area for logistical improvement in future cycles to ensure that students have their supplies at the very start of the academic term.

The project has fostered immense hope. When asked about their dreams, the girls consistently pointed toward professional paths: Doctor, Teacher, and Engineer. The recurring theme of helping my community indicates that these girls see their education not just as a means of personal escape, but as a tool for communal development. The final suggestion from the beneficiaries was a call for expansion; they urged the project to reach more schools and, importantly, to start supporting younger girls in primary school to prevent dropouts before they even reach the secondary level.

14. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Malala Funded Building a Brighter Future and Ensuring the Right to Sustainable Quality Learning projects have achieved remarkable success across the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, and impact. By targeting the South Wollo Zone, an area uniquely burdened by both historical poverty and recent conflict, the project was highly relevant to the needs of the most marginalized girls. The intervention moved beyond the simple provision of supplies to address the root causes of educational exclusion, including safety, social norms, and gender-based violence.

The project's effectiveness is demonstrated by the 94% improvement in academic scores and the successful re-enrollment of nearly 18% of out-of-school girls. The Girls' Clubs and Her Back-to-School campaigns have not only returned girls to the classroom but have equipped them with a newfound sense of agency and leadership. The impact of the project is perhaps most visible in the transformation of household and community attitudes. The significant improvement in fathers' support and the overwhelming endorsement by customary and religious leaders suggest that the project has begun to dismantle the patriarchal barriers that have traditionally restricted girls' opportunities.

While the project has been a resounding success, the evaluation also points toward the need for continued investment in school infrastructure, particularly WASH facilities, and the importance of expanding these successful models to younger age groups and neighboring districts. The high aspirations of the girls aspiring to be doctors, teachers, and engineers are a testament to the project's success in shifting the horizon of possibility for a generation of young women in Amhara.

15. Key Lessons Learnt

1. Holistic Barrier Removal: The project proved that addressing academic needs (tutorials) without addressing economic needs (supplies/pads) or social needs (campaigns) is insufficient.

The most significant gains occurred because the intervention was multi-layered.

2. The Father Factor: Engaging male heads of household was a critical turning point. The 70% improvement in fathers' attitudes suggests that men in the community are open to change when engaged through respectful, advocacy-based approaches.
3. Tutorials as Retention Tools: Academic failure is a leading cause of dropout. The tutorials did more than improve grades; they provided a sense of competence that acted as a protective factor, keeping girls in school.
4. Peer Support Power: The Girls' Clubs showed that peer-to-peer influence is often more potent than top-down instruction. The clubs provided the emotional resilience needed for girls to navigate the challenges of a conflict-affected area.
5. Dignity is Attendance: The near 100% correlation between sanitary pad availability and period-related attendance underscores that menstrual hygiene management is not a luxury, but a fundamental requirement for educational equity.
6. Most Humanitarian and DOs are not interested to invest on education. Thus, the interventions implemented by ELiDA were considered as a role model to others including LCSOs, INGOs, Agencies and Donors. Participants acknowledged the effort of ELiDA and the source of fund (Malala) witness as a best example for others' future engagement,
7. Being adaptable helps to shift some activities to the top priorities that students have which has helped a lot to improve performance of girls even after the project period,
8. Students participated in experience sharing visits to the nearby higher institutions, changed their negative attitude towards education and set their future wishes/careers, increased their motivation and decreased classroom absenteeism.
9. ELiDA learned that active engagement of key stakeholders (establishing strong partnership and relationship) starting from planning to the implementation stage played a significant role for the success of the project even under conflict situations. In addition to this, it is possible to know and address the crucial problems and hindering factors on girls' education.
10. ELiDA learned that active engagement of key stakeholders (establishing strong partnership and relationship) starting from the planning to the implementation stage played a significant role in the success of the project, even in savior conflict situations.
11. The Malala funded project activities have positive implications and are promising in resolving deep-rooted problems of girls' education in a sustainable manner within short period of time and which alerted ELiDA to focus on looking for additional donor funded projects.

16. Recommendations for Future Programming

1. WASH Infrastructure Integration

A critical takeaway from the evaluation is the disconnect between high health awareness and the physical reality of school facilities. While the project achieved nearly 100% success in keeping girls in school during their periods through dignity kits, the sustainability of this success is threatened by inadequate infrastructure. Over 76% of respondents noted that latrines require significant improvement, and clean water access remains inconsistent. Future programming must adopt a Hardware-plus-Software approach, where a dedicated budget is allocated for the physical rehabilitation of girl-friendly latrines ensuring privacy, locks, and disposal bins and the installation of sustainable water points. By integrating WASH infrastructure with health training, the project can move beyond the provision of consumable supplies to create a permanent, dignified environment that supports girls' reproductive health and long-term school attendance.

2. Early Intervention (Primary Level)

Current project data indicates that 18.82% of beneficiaries are already below the age of 15, yet many of the current interventions target secondary-level challenges. Feedback from both students and community members strongly suggests that the transition from primary to secondary school is where the highest risk of dropout occurs. Future programming should expand its scope to include Grades 5–8. Intervening at the upper primary level is significantly more cost-effective than trying to re-enroll girls once they have already left the system or entered early marriages. By establishing Girls' Clubs and providing academic support earlier, the project can build a pipeline of resilient students, ensuring they have the academic foundation and self-confidence required to enter and succeed in secondary education before high-risk pressures peak.

3. Strengthening Advocacy Forums on Girls' Education Policy Change and Implementation

While local successes are vital, systemic change requires formal integration into government policy and budget frameworks at the Zonal, Regional, and National levels. This recommendation focuses on elevating ELiDA's grassroots evidence to influence broader educational governance. Future programming should prioritize the establishment or strengthening of Girls' Education Advocacy Forums that bring together civil society, education bureaus, and policymakers.

The goal is to move from project-based interventions to ensuring that gender-responsive pedagogy and protection protocols are mandatory components of the regional development blueprint. By participating in regional education forums, the project can advocate for the enforcement of existing laws against early marriage and the allocation of specific government resources for girl-friendly school infrastructure. These forums will serve as a platform to transform raw data from the Malala Fund projects into National Blueprints, ensuring that the successful models implemented in South Wollo are scaled and sustained through formal government policy and rigorous implementation monitoring.

4. Support Girls- and Women-Led Movements for Social and Behavioral Change

Sustainable change in girls' education and the reduction of Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs) such as FGM and GBV must be rooted in the community. This recommendation focuses on empowering the human engine of the project: the girls and women who live in the targeted Woredas. Future efforts should provide direct technical and financial support to grassroots, women-led movements and student-led activism.

These movements should be equipped to lead local campaigns that challenge deeply ingrained social norms and promote positive behavioral change. Unlike top-down institutional advocacy, these movements work through peer-to-peer influence and community dialogue to shift the collective mindset. By supporting these organic leadership structures, the project ensures that the reduction of GBV and the promotion of girls' education are seen as community-owned values rather than external mandates. Empowering girls to lead their own advocacy not only reduces HTPs but also builds a generation of confident female leaders who will continue to protect and advocate for the rights of the next generation long after the project cycle concludes.

5. Expansion of University Exposure Visits

The university exposure visits were identified as a primary driver of motivation, with 88% of participants reporting a massive increase in their academic aspirations. To maximize this impact, these visits should be formalized into a structured mentorship program. Future iterations should pair secondary students with a shadowing day, where they follow a female university student through her lectures and daily life. This experiential learning demystifies higher education and allows girls to envision themselves in professional roles. By formalizing these links between secondary schools and local universities, the project creates a tangible goal for the girls to

strive for, transforming the tutorial sessions from a requirement into a steppingstone toward a clear and attainable professional future in fields like medicine, engineering, or teaching.

6. Private Spaces for Girls' Clubs

While 89% of girls are active in their respective clubs, a significant gap remains regarding where these clubs meet, with nearly 40% lacking a dedicated room. For a Girls' Club to function as a true Safe Space, privacy is non-negotiable, especially when discussing sensitive topics like reproductive health, GBV, or personal trauma. Future programming should provide financial and technical support to schools to renovate or construct permanent, private clubrooms. These rooms should be equipped with locks, comfortable seating, and perhaps a small library of empowering literature. A physical space validates the importance of the club within the school structure and provides a sanctuary where girls feel safe to disclose protection concerns and build peer support networks without fear of intrusion or judgment.

7. Formal Male Allyship Programs

The evaluation highlighted a breakthrough in male attitudes, with over 70% of girls reporting improved support from their fathers. This momentum should be institutionalized through formal Male Allyship groups. Future programs should move beyond general community meetings to create structured groups for fathers, male teachers, and religious leaders who are committed to championing girls' education. By training these men to act as advocates within their peer groups, the project can effectively dismantle patriarchal resistance from the inside out. These allies can lead community dialogues on the dangers of early marriage and the economic benefits of educated daughters. Engaging men as active partners rather than passive observers creates a protective social shield around the girls, ensuring that the community's domestic and social structures actively favor their education

8. Digitized Monitoring and Evaluation

To modernize school administration and improve the Early Warning System for potential dropouts, the project should introduce digitized attendance tracking. Currently, tracking is a mix of formal and informal methods that can be slow to trigger action. By utilizing simple, mobile-based tools like KoboToolbox, teachers can report daily attendance in seconds. Real-time data allows for immediate follow-up if a girl is absent for two days, the system triggers a notification for a home visit by ELiDA staff or a Girls' Club leader. This digital transition supports school administrations with data-driven proof of impact and ensures that no girl disappears from the system during times of instability. Strengthening this structure through technology ensures faster response times, higher accountability, and a more resilient MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning) system.

Annexes

Annex one: A Case Story of the Project

Name of the CSO	**Empathy for life integrated Development Association(ELiDA)**
Project name	**Building Bright Future of Girls**
Impact theme(s)	**Academic Performance**

Situation: Setting the Context

Hermela, a former student at Logo Haik General Secondary School, demonstrated low academic performance prior to 2018 (E.C.). Although she possessed a strong desire for self-improvement and the motivation to achieve better results, she lacked the conducive environment necessary to realize her full potential. Consequently, before becoming a member of ELIDA, she was ranked 32nd out of 32 students in her class.

Several key challenges hindered Hermela's academic progress. Primarily, she struggled with chronic absenteeism, characterized by inconsistent school attendance and frequent absences from her lessons. This lack of consistency was further compounded by a total absence of academic support, as she had limited access to supplementary or tutorial classes. Furthermore, severe time management constraints prevented her from dedicating sufficient and suitable time to private study. Finally, communication barriers at home, specifically a lack of open dialogue and meaningful engagement with her parents, left her without the necessary domestic support system to improve her results.

Response: Engagement with the Project

The student was selected for membership in accordance with the established recruitment criteria and her voluntary consent. Following her enrolment in the club, the school facilitated a transparent consultation and dialogue platform with her parents, which effectively ensured her regular school attendance. Furthermore, the organization provided essential scholastic materials including school bags, shoes, and hygiene kits while also offering consistent psychosocial counselling and tutorial support. These integrated interventions provided a comprehensive solution to her previous challenges, specifically addressing her lack of academic motivation, chronic absenteeism, and limited access to supplementary education.

Results: Emerging Impact

Key Achievements and Outcomes

Following the implementation of the aforementioned holistic support and consistent monitoring, the following encouraging results have been documented:

- **Significant Academic Progress:** While the student previously held the lowest rank in her class (32nd out of 32 students), she has demonstrated extraordinary improvement during the current academic year, securing the 4th rank out of 33 students.
- **Active Participation and Leadership Excellence:**
    - Positive Peer Influence: She plays a vital role in peer counselling and advocacy, actively encouraging her classmates to remain in school and prevent dropouts.
    - Behavioral and Attendance Transformation: She has achieved a record of perfect attendance, serving as a role model for her peers through her consistency and dedication to her education.
    - Leadership and Responsibility: She currently demonstrates exceptional leadership skills in her capacity as the head of the Girls' Club.
    - Initiative and Engagement: She takes a leading role in the club by generating innovative ideas and executing assigned tasks with a high level of excellence.

Sustainability and Future Impact

Future Focus Areas and Strategic Recommendations

To replicate these successful outcomes across the student body and further assist students in need of support, it is imperative to implement intensive efforts and comprehensive awareness-raising initiatives. Accordingly, the school should identify community members with proven track records of success to facilitate the sharing and scaling of best practices within the educational environment.

Furthermore, the following actions should be prioritized:

- Institutional Support Systems: Establish permanent and consistent tutorial programs specifically designed to provide tailored academic support for female students.
- Parental Engagement and Accountability: Organize dedicated consultation forums to empower mothers to take an active role in their daughters' education, ensuring they provide the necessary domestic support and oversight for academic success.
- Sustainability of Supplies: Ensure the uninterrupted and sustainable provision of essential scholastic materials and personal hygiene products to prevent any disruption in learning.

Insights to share with others

Empowering female students through targeted support and dedicated mentorship is essential for building the resilience required to overcome life's obstacles. The provision of vital resources ranging from educational supplies to personal hygiene kits does more than facilitate learning; it restores dignity and boosts psychological well-being. This empowerment creates a positive feedback loop, leading to consistent classroom attendance and a renewed commitment to academic excellence. By investing in the potential of the girl child, we move beyond individual achievement to fulfil the timeless proverb: 'To educate a girl is to educate a nation.' Her journey from struggle to success represents a transformative investment in the future of society at large.

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Annex II: Consent Form

Annex three: Data Collection Tools