



Final Evaluation of the BRiCE Project:

Safe and Quality Education for Girls and Boys in
Displacement Situations in Ethiopia and Somalia

JANUARY 2023

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABE	Alternative Basic Education
BoWSA	Gambella Bureau of Women and Social Affairs
BRiCE	Building Resilience in Crises through Education
CCC	Community Care Committees (Ethiopia in HCs)
CEC	Community Education Committees (Puntland)
CPC	Child Protection Committees
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DDR	Disaster Risk Management
DFID	Department for International Development
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECHO	European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office
EIE	Education in Emergencies
EMIS	Education management information system
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus group discussion
GEC	Girls' Education Challenge
GLN	Girls Leadership Networks
GTEC	Garowe Teacher Education College
IDP	Internally displaced person
KII	Key informant interview
MoE	Ethiopian Ministry of Education
MoEHE	Puntland Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MoWDFAFA	Puntland Ministry of Women's Development and Family Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
PDRC	Puntland Development and Research Centre
PTA	Parent-teacher association
REB	(Gambella) Regional Education Bureau
RI	Relief International
RRS	Refugee Returnee Service
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SSP	School safety plans
UNHCR	United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene

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This research study was conducted by a team of researchers at Samuel Hall, with oversight by Rebecca Frischkorn, PhD and Marion Guillaume, and overall research coordination by David Lefor and Amy Fallon with contributions from Hafsa Ali and Tewelde Adhamon who led the fieldwork and data collection.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

METHODOLOGY & OBJECTIVES

The project, “**Safe and quality education for girls and boys in displacement situations in Ethiopia and Somalia**” (known as the ‘BRiCE project’) was part of the EU Commission’s Building Resilience in Crisis through Education programme, which funded a variety of different projects targeted at children living in crisis situations who are frequently denied access to safe and quality education. Implemented in Gambella, Ethiopia and Puntland, Somalia, BRiCE had two main objectives:

1. to improve access to safe, quality early childhood care and development and basic education in fragile, internally displaced persons and refugee camp settings and host communities and
2. to strengthen data collection for creating and disseminating a strong evidence base of what works to enhance access to quality and safe education in conflict-affected and fragile contexts.

The project – which ran from 2018-2022 – was led by a consortium headed by Plan International UK, including Plan International Ethiopia, Relief International, and the University of Sussex, along with the Puntland Development and Research Centre (PDRC) and Gambella University as research partners in their respective countries.

The final evaluation of the BRiCE project, conducted by Samuel Hall from June to September 2022, used a mixed method design to assess the project in terms of improving access to safe and quality education for children in crisis-affected contexts and meaningfully contributing to the evidence base on the impact of conflict on educational outcomes. To understand the impact of the project in the different contexts of implementation, fieldwork was conducted in five schools and their communities – three in Ethiopia and two in Somalia – with a total of 15 focus group discussions with students and teachers, 12 case studies with students, and 21 key informant interviews with community members, parents and headteachers conducted. The project as a whole was further investigated through an additional 21 key informant interviews with government actors and implementing partners, 121 phone-based surveys with school administrators and community members across all schools involved in the project, and an extensive desk review of project documents.

These methods were used to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence, impact, and sustainability, using the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria,¹ answering the six questions below:

1. **Relevance:** How relevant was the BRiCE project to beneficiaries', stakeholders', and governments' needs and priorities?
2. **Coherence:** How coherent was the BRiCE project with the policies and priorities of other actors in the contexts?
3. **Effectiveness:** To what extent did the BRiCE project attain its stated objectives and its results?
4. **Efficiency:** How well did the project's management, implementation and monitoring approaches, including its partnerships, supported the project's delivery?
5. **Impact:** How did the project contribute to the achievement of its overall objective of creating access to safe and quality education as per the design of the project?
6. **Sustainability:** To what extent to which the net benefits of the BRiCE project continue or are likely to continue, at the school and education system level?

KEY FINDINGS: 10 MESSAGES

1. A FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING APPROACH AND RANGE OF ACTIVITIES ENSURED LOCALLY RELEVANT PRIORITIES

The BRiCE project plan was centred on existing methods and activities conducted by partners in the context of previous programmes and adapted to key needs identified in the baseline assessment. The flexible project design and willingness to adapt the project framework, in consultation with all partners, ensured the continued relevance of the project and allowed it to continue throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. THE BREADTH OF ACTIVITIES ADDED SIGNIFICANT COMPLEXITY TO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

While the wide range of activities was considered one of the project's strengths, ensuring relevance across locations, it did raise two major concerns. By implementing in such distinct project locations, the BRiCE partners could not draw as many generalisable project lessons and were limited in terms of potential economies of scale. Further, implementing such a range of activities runs the risk of creating unmet expectations, as local stakeholders may not understand why additional

¹ OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, “Better Criteria for Better Evaluation Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use,” 2019.

local needs – of which there are many – could therefore not be more directly addressed by the project (for example, economic and food insecurity-related challenges).

3. COHERENCE WAS HIGH WITHIN PARTNER ACTIVITIES BUT MORE LIMITED BETWEEN PARTNERS

With Plan International and Relief International implementing in such different contexts (Ethiopia and Somalia, respectively), opportunities to build on within-project synergies were more limited; RI and Plan teams largely focused on ensuring coherence between BRiCE and other activities ongoing within their areas of operation, as well as government stakeholders such as the Regional Education Bureau (REB) in Gambella and the Puntland Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), maximising their potential synergies at the country / partner level. This was a missed opportunity to draw from technical expertise which partners might have had to reinforce the nexus element of the project in particular.

4. THE PROJECT HAS DRIVEN SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN EMIS SYSTEMS AND PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING MECHANISMS AT THE STRUCTURAL LEVEL

The project's work on education management information systems (EMIS) in both contexts was both relevant and effective, with partners taking adapted approaches to the differentiated challenges in Ethiopia and Somalia. The development of school-level codes of conduct improved relationships between teachers and students, and the project further worked to strengthen holistic safeguarding as a concept, reinforcing this with networks for safeguarding within schools (ranging from complaint mechanisms to peer support mentors) in Somalia and common safeguarding approaches for use in host and refugee communities in Ethiopia alongside referral pathways. The main question raised is on the durability of all of the above, without the support of BRiCE partners to maintaining these.

5. HOLISTIC APPROACHES ARE CRUCIAL TO SAFE AND INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

Creating a safe, gender-sensitive and inclusive school environment requires interventions beyond the classroom level; BRiCE targeted gender and social norms more broadly at the community level, as well as through a range of activities within schools, including the creation of gender clubs and provision of menstrual hygiene products. Teachers were also targeted, to ensure that they could contribute to these safe and inclusive environments through their approaches to teaching. Crucially, students themselves were involved in identifying school hazard mappings to improve their feelings of safety within schools, rather than taking a 'top down' approach solely. The choice to align with existing structures, in particular in Gambella – such as the Mothers in Schools programme – also contributed to the strength of activities.

6. PLANNING FOR ONGOING RESEARCH CAN DELIVER VALUABLE INSIGHTS FOR PROJECT ADAPTATION

An unusual component of the BRiCE project was the degree to which it called for inbuilt, ongoing research running parallel to project implementation, beyond (and removed from) standard M&E approaches. The longitudinal research conducted by the University of Sussex, Gambella University, and PDRC on the education systems in Puntland and Gambella offers valuable insights around teachers, teaching, and pedagogical approaches in each context, which can be used by stakeholders to deliver stronger education in fragile contexts in the future. However, this research component also evidenced some of the challenges of conducting research in such contexts – notably that organisations frequently underestimate the time and cost of statistically sound data collection, in particular in contexts like these where planning for longitudinal research with shifting populations and rapidly evolving contexts. Stronger linkages to local research organisations – and building the capacity thereof – are key to accounting for some of these issues in future research.

7. COMPLEX PROJECTS REQUIRE COMPLEX PLANNING AND BUDGETING

On several fronts, the evaluation found that the project's inception phase was too short for the ambitions and range of the activities planned, leading to implementation delays further along. Notably, clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, partner coordination, contractual issues, and additional time for planning with local communities and ministries were identified as issues which could have benefited from a longer initial planning phase. That being said, overall, the project successfully conducted activities while holding to planned budgeting, even if the timing of the spending was not exactly as planned. The limited inception phase reportedly did lead to some variance in the quality of activity implementation, as did the budget – stakeholders underlined that the range of activities planned in the time frame meant that the resources – financial and human – allocated to them was sometimes more constrained, meaning for example that technical experts were not always available.

8. THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING ON AND COLLABORATING WITH EXISTING SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES

The BRiCE project was aided by the strong relationships that implementing partners cultivated with regional governments. In KIs, government stakeholders showed strong support for the activities of BRiCE teams in both locations. Events such as the secondment of an EMIS expert to the REB in Gambella, and the support BRiCE provided to Puntland's MoEHE government to merge their departments, illustrated the high level of trust BRiCE implementers managed to garner. Strong levels of engagement and support from the local community were driven by building on pre-existing social structures such as Child Protection Committees (CPCs) and parent-teacher associations (PTAs) which the project strengthened, and only grew as the project matured. While the sustainability of the project does pose some open questions, given the limited resources of these bodies in particular, the choice to involve the government and local structures provides a stronger basis for these positive changes to continue.

9. REMOTE IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS ALLOW FOR CRUCIAL FLEXIBILITY

The BRiCE project was able to pivot to remote implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic for several activities, including distance learning for teachers, radio programme campaigns around child protection, positive parenting and more. The project highlights the value of more informal distance communication, as WhatsApp groups for example were used for the Boys and Girls Leadership Networks engagement. While not all activities could be shifted to remote mechanisms, those that could provide crucial continuity for participants.

10. SUSTAINABILITY REQUIRES PLANNING AND PREPARATION FROM DAY 1

Both internally – within project design – and externally – with partners and communities – pathways for sustainability and communication around projects' end needs to be clearly articulated from the start. The likelihood of sustainability should be factored into planning and continuously updated throughout the project's lifetime with adaptations made to increase chances of sustainability over time. Activities not expected to continue must be carefully phased out to avoid reputational risk and community frustrations.

STUDENT VOICES

We're safer here because there is a school fence, classroom, and toilets. But before NGOs implemented their activities in this school, I felt unsafe since there were no learning classrooms, we were studying outside under the tree, and also in the time there was no school fence, unknown individuals would come here and harm students. - FGD, male student, Ethiopia

I was among the students who are used to being taken to hotel halls and given training on child rights and safety. After training we used to come to school and tell other students what we have learnt. - Case study, female student, Somalia

I have many memories but the girls club we attend twice a week in the afternoon is the best one for me. It makes us more excited, and it helps us in many ways to build our confidence. I am really happy, especially last year because my grades were improving and my father was happy about it and he even bought me a bag, a very beautiful one. - Case study, female student, Ethiopia

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations developed through the evaluation specifically seek to build on the good practices and lessons learned from the design and implementation of the BRiCE project to provide guidance to similar interventions. They include suggestions for further improving activities delivered by the project and have been created and separated by project phase.

PROJECT DESIGN

1. Prioritise a project design with a flexible and adaptive approach; in complex contexts such as these, the changing needs of targeted communities require continually monitoring to allow for effective adaptations.
2. Leverage synergies and lessons learned from previous and ongoing projects. Projects like BRiCE bringing together a range of actors have a deep pool of technical and practical experience to bring to bear.
3. Design project consortia through mediated and participatory sessions from the project proposal through inception phase, providing early clarity on roles and responsibility to facilitate smoother implementation.

4. Integrate a gender transformative approach to address issues contributing to low access and retention for girls' education, including targeting household-level positive change in inequitable gender dynamics at all levels (individual, family, community, and policy).

INCEPTION

5. Ensure sufficient time is accorded to the inception phase for planning that aligns with the scope of the project. In the case of projects like BRICE, the development of strong mechanisms and processes to manage the full range of activities is key to timely success.
6. Align project activities with government priorities, when feasible, to create buy-in and opportunities for sustainable impacts.
7. Map and incorporate existing community structures to avoid service duplication and ensure interventions with a better chance of being sustainable by strengthening something already embedded in the community.

IMPLEMENTATION

8. Bring together the necessary technical expertise for successful implementation with both humanitarian and development experts for nexus projects.
9. Use diverse means to ensure community needs are identified and feed into project decisions, engaging with a range of local community stakeholders. For example, BRICE engaged with teachers, students, and caregivers, in addition to school and local authorities.
10. Establish regular communication and coordination mechanisms with core partners, including governmental parties.
11. Invest in teacher professional development as an economical and sustainable method to improve quality education by creating an experienced cadre of teachers who care about educating their own communities.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND RESEARCH

12. Seek out more avenues for the inclusion of research in development/ humanitarian projects to better inform programmatic interventions and the allocation of government and donor financing.
13. Build capacity of and partnerships with local research organisations to both reinforce their ability to conduct research and permit the incorporation of locally-based analysis into projects' design and implementation.
14. Build in monitoring time specifically around project sustainability, to ensure that needed skills and resources are in place and trained as the project is ongoing to allow for a smooth transition at project close.
15. Carry out regular learner assessments to better capture impact of education-focused interventions and as part of regular monitoring learner progress.

PROJECT CLOSURE

16. Develop action plans to which stakeholders commit to the continuation of impactful activities, with specific timelines and financial commitments for each stakeholder's planned activities.
17. Outline phase out plans for activities not intended to continue with a focus on a clear communications strategy from the start, to avoid unmet expectations on the part of communities and allow for smoother project completion.

BRICE worked effectively to strengthen education and safety systems by focused on community structures and strategic partnerships with government and other key stakeholders; the project has effectively instilled strong levels of commitment to and ownership of some key project initiatives within communities, which hold significant promise for future progress.

1. Background

1.1 Introduction

Crises and conflict in countries around the world continuously deprive children within their borders of access to quality education. This is particularly true for children who find themselves internally displaced or living as refugees in fragile contexts with precarious access to services and support.² In these contexts, education systems must be resilient, not only responsive to the learning needs of children, but also actively engaged in protecting their physical and psychosocial wellbeing in the face of extreme adversity.³ It is with this need in mind that the provision of quality education for children in countries affected by fragility, conflict, or violence has become an urgent development priority enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals.⁴

The European Union (EU) Commission's Building Resilience in Crisis through Education (BRiCE) programme funded a variety of different projects all targeted at children living in crisis situations who are frequently denied access to safe and quality education.⁵ The four BRiCE consortia, with embedded research components, are funded by the EU and work in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Niger, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda on projects targeting children living in crisis situations, providing them with education opportunities.⁶ This included the project, "Safe and quality education for girls and boys in displacement situations in Ethiopia and Somalia" (referred to in this report as 'the project' or 'BRiCE'), which focused on two primary objectives to "improve access to safe, quality early childhood care and development (ECCD) and basic education in fragile, internally displaced persons (IDP)/ refugee camp settings and host communities" and to "strengthen data collection for creating and disseminating a strong evidence base of what works to enhance access to quality and safe education in conflict-affected and fragile contexts."⁷ Implemented over four years from 2018 – 2021 and extended through a no-cost extension through 2022, the project was led by a consortium headed by Plan International UK, including Plan International Ethiopia, Relief International, and the University of Sussex, along with the Puntland Development and Research Centre (PDRC) and Gambella University as research partners in their respective countries.

Samuel Hall was commissioned to conduct a final evaluation of the BRiCE project by Plan International. In line with the project's previous evaluations, this final report aims to provide a summative evaluation of the BRiCE project. The primary goal is to assess the **relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence, impact, and sustainability**, using the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria,⁸ with the following three objectives:

1. Assess the success of the project's design, delivery, and results
2. Explore how and why changes occurred for the beneficiaries and other project stakeholders
3. Identify, document, and publish lessons learned and best practices both for accountability towards the donor – the European Commission – and for informing future intervention models, management, and delivery approaches of Plan International and its partners.

The evaluation concludes with the value of the project in terms of improving access to safe and quality education for children in crisis-affected contexts, and the associated research study in terms of meaningfully contributing to the evidence base on the impact of conflict on educational outcomes. The final recommendations provide guidance for similar interventions in the future.

1.2 Project background

Figure 1: Map of Ethiopia (Gambella in red)

² World Bank "Education in Fragile, Conflict, and Violence Contexts. World Bank," 2018.

³ EFA, "Global Monitoring Report 2011: The hidden crisis: Armed conflict and education," 2011.

⁴ UNESCO, "Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4," 2015.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ European Commission, "BRiCE - Building Resilience: education opportunities in fragile and crisis affected environments," 2022. https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/programming/programmes/brice-building-resilience-education-opportunities-fragile-and-crisis-affected-environments_en

⁷ Plan International, "BRiCE Baseline Report," 2019; Meraki Labs, "Mid-Term Evaluation: Safe and quality education for girls and boys in displacement situations in Ethiopia and Somalia," 2021; Plan International, "Building Resilience: Education Opportunities in Fragile and Crisis Affected Environments: Annex A.1 – Concept note", 2017.

⁸ OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, "Better Criteria for Better Evaluation Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use," 2019.

Enduring violence and endemic fragility have presented challenges for education provision in Ethiopia and Somalia, countries which bear the impact of conflict and instability both internally and from neighbouring countries.

1.2.1 Ethiopia Context

Ethiopia hosts one of the largest refugee populations in the African continent, with a projected 896,000 asylum seekers and refugees residing within its borders by the end of 2022.⁹ 65% are children below the age of 18. According to UNICEF, 44% of refugee children are out of school with only 45% of girls and 55% of boys enrolled in early, primary, and secondary education. Most refugees in Ethiopia originate from South Sudan, closely followed by Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan. Refugees in Gambella are predominantly housed in one of the seven camps which hug the border and take in hundreds of new arrivals each week, most often from neighbouring South Sudan, and increasingly from Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan.¹⁰ The camps house approximately 360,000 refugees;¹¹ by contrast, around 435,000 people live in the host community in Gambella.¹² Approximately 66% of the residents of these camps are under the age of 18¹³ and the majority are under 12.¹⁴



As noted by Samuel Hall's 2020 report on the impact of refugees on hosting communities in Ethiopia, displacement has played a crucial role in shaping the social, political, and economic life of the Gambella region.¹⁵ The protracted stay of refugees has not only occupied the centre of Gambella's political economy but it has fuelled conflict and insecurity in the area, involving different ethnic groups, environmental pressures, and historical grievances.¹⁶ In 2017, the Ethiopian government sought to reduce tensions by centring integration initiatives in its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).¹⁷ In 2019, the Government of Ethiopia announced major legal and policy shifts that sought to pave the way for broader integration between refugee and host communities, beginning with the education sector.¹⁸ However, thus far the effects of these intended policies have been slow, stalling following the development of the civil conflict in late 2020.

In Gambella, displaced children typically attend separate schools to host communities with refugee schools primarily located inside camps, but all refugee schools utilise the national Ethiopian curriculum, the Curriculum Framework for Ethiopian Education (2009).¹⁹ A series of wide educational reforms since 2008 called the General Education Quality Improvement Programme has sought to vastly improve the quality of learning in both cycles of primary education (Grades 1-4 and Grades 5-8) and has invested heavily in essential inputs for teaching and learning, resource provision, and a focus on equity, including focusing on education-related challenges facing girls and children with disabilities.²⁰ In Ngunyyiel refugee camp, Plan manages all primary schools; in other refugee camps in the province, Refugee Returnee Service (RRS) manages schools with Plan support.

Refugees who go on to secondary school may attend government schools in the host community.²¹ Ethiopia's refugee education sector is currently run as a 'parallel system of service delivery', and it is overseen by the RRS.²² However, since the introduction of the 2017 CRRF and its increased focus on the integration of the refugee and host communities, there has been a greater involvement of the Ministry of Education (MoE) in harmonising refugee and host community education policies.²³

⁹ UNHCR, "Ethiopia Country Refugee Response Plan: January 2022-December 2022," 2022.

¹⁰ UNHCR, "Flooding across the border: A review of UNHCR's response to the Sudanese refugee emergency in South Sudan," 2013.; UNHCR, "Ethiopia Country Refugee Response Plan: January 2022-December 2022," 2022.

¹¹ UNHCR, "Gambella Region-South Sudan Refugee Population February 2022," 2022.

¹² Carver, F., Gebresenbet, F., Naish, D. "Gambella regional report 2018–2019 refugee and host community context analysis," 2020.

¹³ Plan International, "Lifesaving child protection and education to South Sudanese refugee children: Ethiopia," ND.

¹⁴ Newman, S., "Quality Assessment of Education in Gambella Refugee Camp," 2020.

¹⁵ World Bank Group, "Impact of Refugees on Hosting Communities in Ethiopia", 2020.

¹⁶ Samuel Hall, "Impact of Refugees on Hosting Communities in Ethiopia: A Social Analysis," 2020.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Carvalho, S. "Adolescent Refugee Girls' Secondary Education in Ethiopia: An Empirical Analysis of Multiple Vulnerabilities in Low-Resource Displacement Settings," 2022.

¹⁹ World Bank, "Education for Resilience: Exploring the experience of refugee students in three communities in Ethiopia," 2019.

²⁰ Research on Improving Systems of Education. "Evaluating large-scale education reforms in Ethiopia". 2019.

²¹ Ibid.

²² World Bank, "Education for Resilience: Exploring the experience of refugee students in three communities in Ethiopia," 2019.; RRS is formerly known as the Administration of Refugees and Returnees Affairs (ARRA).

²³ Ibid.

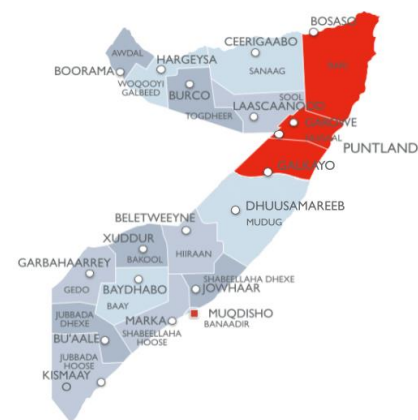
Both refugee and host community children face difficulties accessing education.²⁴ Among the barriers that refugee children face to accessing education, issues around security as well as the lingering effects of traumatic displacement are among the most pressing.²⁵ Displaced children in Gambella are often unaccompanied and many have reported suffering instances of abuse and exploitation.²⁶ The location of the camps at the border of the country places children in close proximity to armed groups leaving them in danger of recruitment as well as general violence. These security threats sometimes discourage parents from sending children to school and gross enrolment rates within the camps are low - standing at 49.9% for early childhood education.²⁷ The attendance rate of girls is lower than that of boys with dropout rates for both genders increasing as they get older.²⁸ Girls (and other intersectional groups) face barriers to education, specifically related to gender and social norms, which increased vulnerabilities to gender-based violence and harmful or exploitative practices. Education provision within the camps is relatively well organised through a consortium of different international actors; however, teacher shortages, overcrowding in classrooms, a lack of resources and language barriers are key challenges to implementing quality education. Research also shows that particularly vulnerable children such as those with disabilities face high levels of exclusion due to infrastructure issues and societal norms.²⁹ Many children who do attend school fail to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills - data collected in the region from 2011 to 2019 has consistently found 52% of 15–17-year-olds to be illiterate which is higher than the national average (46%) pointing to major issues with the quality of education in the region.³⁰

1.2.2 Somalia context

After decades of civil war and natural disasters, Somalia's population is scattered; as of August 2022, there were approximately 3 million IDPs within the country, with a recent protracted drought forcing an estimated 857,000 million displacements between January 2022 and August 2022.³¹ Many of those IDPs reside in the state of Puntland, primarily having fled conflict and natural disasters from the South-Central and South-Western regions, including Mogadishu. At present, an estimated 5% of the state's 3.9 million population are formally considered internally displaced persons.³²

Education provision for the displaced children in Somalia is being slowly rebuilt but on fragile ground. According to UNICEF, over 3 million children in the country currently require education in emergencies (EiE) support.³³ Educational access and outcomes are particularly low for displaced children, less than half of whom currently attend school.³⁴ Girls have particularly low enrolment rates with only 42% in primary education.³⁵ In Puntland, displaced children face unequal or limited access to education compounded by complex situations of acute social and economic marginalisation. Many children in the region are unaccompanied, orphans or members of extremely impoverished female-headed households. Most face psychosocial challenges due to the traumatic experiences faced during displacement which impact their ability to engage with education.³⁶ Girls, in particular, are at risk of a number of vulnerabilities, including child marriage, school-related and home-based gender-based violence, and harmful practices. Girls and other intersectional groups, including children with disabilities, are disproportionately affected by the fragility and instability present in Somalia which can exacerbate existing gender norms, roles, and expectations. Support for the provision of education to these children has been limited both from the national and regional governments, as well as international donors due to chronic underfunding for EiE programming over the years.³⁷ Lack of access to education for children is of particular concern since research has consistently highlighted

Figure 2: Map of Somalia (Puntland in red)



²⁴ Carvalho, S. "Adolescent Refugee Girls' Secondary Education in Ethiopia: An Empirical Analysis of Multiple Vulnerabilities in Low-Resource Displacement Settings," 2022.

²⁵ ibid.

²⁶ UNICEF, UNICEF Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 6 (includes Northern Ethiopia Response)," 2021.

²⁷ UNHCR, "Refugees and asylum seekers from South Sudan in Gambella region: Situational update," 2021.

²⁸ UNICEF, "Situation Analysis of Children and Women: Gambella Region," 2020.

²⁹ Newman, S., "Quality Assessment of Education in Gambella Refugee Camp," 2020.

³⁰ UNICEF, "Situation Analysis of Children and Women: Gambella Region," 2020.

³¹ UNHCR, "Internal displacements monitored by Protection & Return Monitoring Network", 2022.; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. "Global Internal Displacement Database: 2021 Internal Displacement," 2022.

³² Plan International, "BRICE Baseline Report," 2019.

³³ UNICEF, "Humanitarian Action for Children 2022 - Somalia," 2021.

³⁴ Bueno, O., Gill, M., Hovil, L., Genovese, I., Oduma, L., Nidam Adan, K., "Reimagining Migration Responses in Somaliland and Puntland: Learning from migrant children and young people's experiences. Summary Report," 2021.

³⁵ Federal Government Somalia, EMIS Unit, "Education Statistics YearBook, 2015/16," 2016.

³⁶ Barakat et al, "Beyond Fragility: A conflict and education analysis of the Somalia context. University of York," Post-war Reconstruction Unit, UNICEF Somalia, 2014.

³⁷ UNICEF, "Education Strategy Note 2018-2020," 2020.

the links between exclusion from education with the propensity for ‘negative coping behaviours’³⁸ and exploitation, including child marriage and recruitment into violent gangs or armed groups.³⁹

Education in Puntland, overseen by the Puntland Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), is noted to be very different from the federal state of Somalia as a whole. Tensions exist between a national curriculum framework in Somalia and the government of Puntland’s curricula. These tensions have led Puntland state to be significantly underfunded for education, which exacerbates already challenging conditions for families and children.

1.2.2 The BRiCE Project

The BRiCE project sought to respond to the acute need for safe and quality education in both contexts. The project was built upon Plan and Relief International’s work in the region and was designed in collaboration with a range of actors and stakeholders involved in education and child protection, including relevant government ministries and international organisations. It worked within both host and refugee communities in Ethiopia and host and IDP communities in Somalia.

Leading agency: Plan International UK
Consortium Partners: Gambella University, Relief International (RI), University of Sussex, Puntland Development Research Centre (PDRC), Plan International Ethiopia Implemented in: Gambella Region (Ethiopia) and Puntland State (Somalia) Total budget: 5.9 million Euro; 80% Funded by EU Duration: 48 months (March 1, 2018, to February 28, 2022) + No cost extension (until December 31, 2022)
Key project stakeholders: Ethiopia: Refugee Returnee Service (RRS), United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Gambella Regional Education Bureau (REB), Gambella Bureau of Women and Social Affairs (BoWSA), Gambella Teachers Education and Health Science College Somalia: Puntland Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), Puntland Ministry of Women’s Development and Family Affairs (MoWDFAFA), Garowe Teacher Training College (GTEC).

The project’s overall objective was to contribute to community and institutional resilience in Gambella and Puntland by improving access to quality and inclusive education in a safe and secure environment. Within the final iteration of the log frame, the project worked towards this goal through two specific objectives.

- **Specific Objective 1** aimed to improve access to safe, quality pre-school⁴⁰ and primary education by engaging communities, duty-bearers and children themselves, equipping schools with resources, skills and tools to support emotional wellbeing, professional conduct and development for effective and learner-focused teaching.
- **Specific Objective 2** aimed to strengthen data collection for the development and dissemination of an evidence base of effective approaches and pathways to enhance access to safe, quality education in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

There were **28 discrete project activities** serving **29 schools and their surrounding communities** implemented under the BRiCE project in **each country** with the aim to reach 49,750 children (28,000 boys and 21,750 girls). In Gambella, BRiCE supported 24 schools in three refugee camps (14 ECCD centres and 10 primary) and five primary schools in three different host communities. In Puntland, BRiCE supported 29 primary schools covering both IDP and non-IDP populations.

For **Objective 1**, the project implemented activities which were designed to engage and empower local communities, support child protection mechanisms, map community-based psychosocial support and protection services and referral systems to service providers, provide continuous professional development (CPD) training for teachers, strengthen the capacity of school leadership, provide teaching and learning materials, and strengthen the capacity of education officials. Within **Objective 2**, a longitudinal study was carried out by the University of Sussex, which investigated the education systems in varied contexts and aimed to enhance knowledge around education in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. Table 1 highlights key activities.

³⁸ Barakat et al, “Beyond Fragility: A conflict and education analysis of the Somalia context. University of York,” Post-war Reconstruction Unit, UNICEF Somalia, 2014.

³⁹ Ellison, C, “Education and Internally Displaced Persons,” 2012.

⁴⁰ ECCD was covered by the BRiCE project only in Gambella in 14 of the 29 schools served by the project in the country.

Table 1: Key activities of the BRiCE project by country

Objective	Ethiopia	Somalia
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members training in Disaster Risk Management (DRR), gender-sensitive and child protection mechanisms Community dialogues Unified safeguarding policy implemented Staff and student leaders training in child protection Girls and boys training on reporting for child protection Teachers training on psycho-social support Students' gender clubs, students' leadership networks, and peer to peer learning networks Teachers CPD Primary schools with School Improvement Plans Infrastructural improvements to schools Supplementary learning activities Remedial education for students Provision of scholastic resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members training in DRR, gender-sensitive and child protection mechanisms Radio campaigns for social cohesion Child protection policy implemented Staff and student leaders training in child protection Girls and boys taught on reporting for child protection Teachers training on psycho-social support Students' gender clubs, students' leadership networks, and peer to peer learning networks Teachers CPD School staff supported in writing and sourcing funding for School Development Plans Infrastructural improvements to schools Supplementary learning activities Accelerated learning programme for students Provision of scholastic resources
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education officials training in education management information system (EMIS) data collection ECCD centres/ primary schools submit EMIS data Local research partners capacity development Research reports/policy briefs produced and shared Learning events and cross-country research sharing event/presentation at international conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education officials training in EMIS data collection ECCD centres/ primary schools submit EMIS data Local research partners capacity development Research reports/ policy briefs produced and shared Learning events and cross-country research sharing event/presentation at international conferences

Annex 5 outlines the project objectives, outcomes and indicators and Annex 6 has a detailed summary of the project activities.

2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This section summarises the final evaluation design; see Annex 7 for full details, including ethical considerations and data quality assurances. The methodology adhered to the plan outlined in the Inception Report with limitations and challenges faced and mitigated as noted in Section 2.5

2.1 Evaluation design

The final evaluation of the BRiCE project, conducted by Samuel Hall between June through September 2022, used a mixed-methods design to allow for cross-validation and triangulation across data sources. Both primary and secondary data were used to answer the six evaluation questions⁶⁹ along the OECD/DAC criteria (See Box 1). The full list of evaluation questions can be found in Annex 3.

Box 1: High-level Research Questions

Relevance: How relevant was the BRiCE project to beneficiaries', stakeholders', and governments' needs and priorities?

Coherence: How coherent was the BRiCE project with the policies and priorities of other actors in the contexts?

Effectiveness: To what extent did the BRiCE project attain its stated objectives and its results?

Efficiency: How well did the project's management, implementation and monitoring approaches, including its partnerships, supported the project's delivery?

Impact: How did the project contribute to the achievement of its overall objective of creating access to safe and quality education as per the design of the project?

Sustainability: To what extent to which the net benefits of the BRiCE project continue or are likely to continue, at the school and education system level?

The research employed a strong participatory and people-centred design to ensure the participation of direct and indirect beneficiaries and project stakeholders and capture local perceptions and opinions, measuring the impact of a project and understanding how and why changes occurred from beneficiary and stakeholder perspectives. A range of actors were consulted, including implementing partners, local communities, humanitarian and development actors and government counterparts, as well as adequate coverage of diverse profiles and backgrounds.

2.2 Data collection tools

The evaluation employed a range of tools targeting different stakeholders, which are summarised below:

- **Focus group discussions (FGDs):** Two key groups were engaged in FGDs: students (age 14-17) and teachers. Discussions focused on the effectiveness of the project's activities in meeting the specified objectives from the points of view of target groups.
- **Case studies:** Case studies targeted younger students (age 10-13) to understand the impact of changes in pedagogy and attitudes over time, as well as gain further information on the current status, standards, barriers of education and gendered dynamics.
- **Key informant interviews (KIIs):** Two KII guidelines – local and national – were designed to engage with various actors and focus on different programme elements or areas.
- **Phone Survey:** A short phone-based survey was conducted with stakeholders from each BRiCE school, specifically teachers, Headteacher/School director, and members of Child Protection Committee (CPC) and Community Education Committee (CEC) in Somalia and CPCs and Community Care Committee (CCC) in Ethiopia⁴¹ to understand perceptions around safety, education outcomes, EMIS use and application, and social cohesion.
- **Secondary research:** Samuel Hall included secondary research elements, namely literature / desk review and review and analysis of programmatic, monitoring and evaluation data.

Recruited enumerators were selected through Samuel Hall's network and from recommendations from Plan International and Relief International whose experience, particularly with conducting research with children, relevant local language fluency and references, were pre-screened to ensure they met the needs of the study. All enumerators participated in a detailed training on all tools, which included quality-control procedures and evaluation ethics, with extensive opportunities

⁴¹ These community committees are composed of volunteer members who are integral mechanisms for child protection in the community and schools. In Somalia, CPCs play this role, while CECs are part of school management. In Ethiopia, CPCs are in refugee camps, while CCCs are in host communities. These committees benefited from several BRiCE-related activities, described in detail in the findings.

for practice and a real-world pilot. All quantitative tools were administered on smart devices (i.e., phones/ tablets), and qualitative data were verified using audio recording. For details on research ethics and safeguarding, see Annex 7.

Box 2. Samuel Hall and Child Safeguarding

Ensuring that the best interest of the child remains at the core of research conducted with children has been insufficiently acknowledged in the past, particularly in humanitarian contexts. A growing movement pushes for improved safeguarding processes in research. We have aligned our approach with the highest levels on this front. In 2019, Samuel Hall went through a full safeguarding assessment, supported by Child Safe Horizons, based on which we revised internal processes and policies, including whistleblowing, hiring, risk management, governance and accountability, child-specific organisational safeguarding, and Code of Conduct (available on request). All staff are trained on this policy. We have committed to ongoing learning and monitoring specific to child safeguarding in projects, and our organisation.

2.3 Sampling

The Samuel Hall team collected primary data in five schools, three in Ethiopia and two in Somalia. The selection of schools ensured at least one of each “type” to allow for an in-depth exploration of the impact of the project within the different contexts. For Somalia, this approach meant including one IDP and one non-IDP school and for Ethiopia, including one refugee and two non-refugee schools.

Table 2: Sampling breakdown for in-country data collection

	Gambella, Ethiopia	Puntland, Somalia	UK	Total
Selected schools/ communities per region	3	2		5
Local KIIs (parents, headteachers, community members)	13	8		21
Implementing partner KIIs (Plan International, RI, University of Sussex, Gambella University, PDRC)	5	4	1	10
Government stakeholder KIIs	5	5		10
UNICEF KII	1			1
FGDs (students and teachers)	9	6		15
Case study (students)	8	4		12
Phone-based surveys (school administrators and committee members)	61	60		121

Additional information on the sampling methods involved in this study can be seen in Annex 9.

2.4 Analysis

Qualitative analysis was carried out utilising an inductive qualitative analysis approach to draw findings from collected data using thematic coding, using an excel spreadsheet⁴² The research team developed and internally piloted a codebook (including sub-codes for each research question) to ensure the relevance of the coding structure and consistent code application by the analysts. Findings were disaggregated by location and type of data source (i.e., literature, high-level respondent, Ethiopia respondents, Somalia respondents).

⁴² See Annex 5, where the qualitative codebook is outlined

2.5 Limitations and challenges

The study had a number of challenges which led to delays in the fieldwork processes. Some of these challenges and mitigation strategies are highlighted below:

- **Evaluation design:** A fully comprehensive and statistically significant approach, inclusive of large numbers of respondents from the targeted communities, was beyond the defined scope of this evaluation. Findings are indicative only and may not be representative of the lives and experiences of all community members involved in or benefitting from the BRiCE project.
- **Navigating security threats:** In both countries, the evaluation team carried out a security assessment prior to fieldwork. Despite this, and a successful pilot, security risks emerged in Ethiopia prior to data collection, which delayed progress. In Somalia, it was deemed too dangerous for female enumerators to go to the field, so the male team members led the data collection in the selected locations.
- **Limited gender balance between enumerators:** In both countries, there were challenges in recruiting female enumerators, especially those who fit the language criteria and were qualified in both Gambella and Puntland. This was in addition to the evolving security risks mentioned above. To mitigate this, and its potential impact on the quality of data, the Samuel Hall team relied only upon researchers with experience conducting research with girls and the pilot was used to test quality and share experiences to address this dynamic within the research team.
- **School closures:** Fieldwork in Somalia took place after the end of the school year. The team was able to engage the headteachers of target schools and mobilise respondents to come to a venue in the area and conduct interviews outside of the normal school term.
- **Challenges of working with younger participants:** In the pilot, enumerators faced initial challenges with encouraging 10–13-year-olds to open up while conducting the one-on-one case studies. Collectively, the enumerators shared strategies and experiences of making children feel more comfortable through probing and taking more time to conduct the interview in order to give the children time to feel more at ease.
- **Separating the evaluation and project:** In Ethiopia, several teachers were reticent to participate in the research due to outstanding frustrations they associated with the BRiCE project, including concerns over pay (which was not part of the project), a lack of resources, and insufficient infrastructure. These concerns were largely over ongoing problems from within the camps and thus not within Plan's remit. As trained, enumerators made clear that they were conducting independent research, but respondents were not always willing to see the differentiation between Samuel Hall from Plan and the BRiCE project. This impacted their interest in participating in the research.
- **Information gaps:** Interviews were conducted with some stakeholders who were not part of the project for the entire duration (in line with regular staff turnover) and thus knowledge of earlier phases may have been limited among high-level respondents.

In all, the challenges were addressed and mitigated as much as possible during research implementation, resulting in the collection of high-quality data. For more information on the ethical considerations and risk mitigation strategies, please see Annex 7.

3. EVALUATION FINDINGS

The evaluation findings are presented in line with the OECD-DAC Evaluation Criteria, and the corresponding evaluation questions and sub-questions outlined in the methodology. At the start of each section, a key takeaways box has been added to provide a high-level summary of the findings found in the section which follows.

3.1 Relevance

The relevance of BRiCE was explored by considering the extent to which the objectives and design of the project, including the underlying project logic, were valid and whether they responded to the needs, priorities, and policies of a) intended beneficiaries, b) local stakeholders and c) the governments of Ethiopia and Somalia. The following highlights key takeaways from the detailed discussion below.

Table 3: Relevance findings – key takeaways

Relevance	<p>3.1.1 The objectives and design of the project were found to be relevant to the intended beneficiaries and local stakeholders, supporting them in a wide range of thematic areas which were responsive to community needs.</p> <p>3.1.2 Beneficiaries universally described how the project activities were important to them, particularly addressing school-level needs. However, household-level barriers to children's education (including child labour and attitudes toward the responsibility of girls in the home), and challenges faced by disabled students, could have been better targeted.</p> <p>3.1.3 BRiCE worked effectively with local stakeholders, notably local government stakeholders and committee members, to continuously define needs and limit service duplication.</p> <p>3.1.4 Priorities of governments in both Ethiopia and Somalia were directly supported through the provision of technical and financial support in much-needed areas, including the collection of school data, articulation of policies to ensure safety in schools, and building the necessary infrastructure.</p>
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3.1.1 Validity of the BRiCE project objectives and design

The BRiCE project's objectives and design, built on previous projects in the two regions to ensure its approach, was responsive to the immediate, most pressing needs.

The identification of needs within target communities, specifically to improve safety in schools and communities, quality of education, and knowledge on education in conflict-affected environments was done through the consortium's extensive experience in these areas: in Gambella, Plan previously worked on a number of European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO)-funded projects including the relatively short-term *Integrated education and protection refugee response project*. BRiCE both continued and complimented the work started by ECHO, adapting activities from the ECHO grants and using its own activities to benefit ECHO-supported projects, which ensured full complementarity and synergy across projects. In Puntland, RI worked on the Department for International Development (DFID) funded Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) project *Educate Girls, End Poverty* project. These projects served as the original basis for the BRiCE project, incorporating lessons learned and experience in the context of IDP/refugee camps and conflict-affected areas. The BRiCE project replicated and scaled up methods which were proven effective, including incorporating a gender-sensitive approach to teaching and learning, engaging community committee members in school management, civil works and infrastructural improvements, capacity building of teaching and government staff, working with the community leaders and committees already in communities, and adjusting programme approaches to the particular needs and challenges of marginalisation.

The project plan responded to the needs identified in the baseline assessment, specifically low levels of literacy and numeracy, lack of safety in schools, a lack of quality education, and dissatisfaction with teacher training and CPD. It mapped existing interventions to ensure harmony rather than duplication and worked in parallel with other projects in the communities.

Taking these into account, the BRiCE project responded to some of the critical challenges: a need for quality education, high psychosocial needs, corporal punishment, limited capacity of key child protection stakeholders, issues around access and infrastructure, low capacity for education service delivery, community and parent perceptions on education and gender, data management and administration, inadequate school resources, the need for peaceful coexistence, and COVID-19. At the same time, though there was evidence of some coordination among other actors and projects (see Section 3.2), the project was unable to address other challenges which persist in the communities, such as poverty and food insecurity, water insecurity, climate-related emergencies, supporting students with disabilities, conflict and insecurity,

and segregation.⁴³ The project's breadth reflected the extensive challenges faced by beneficiaries in these communities, and it was purposefully designed to be flexible and able to adapt to changing needs in both countries (building on lessons learned on the importance of flexibility from the GEC and *Educate Girls, End Poverty* projects).

Encompassing a flexible design, the project team adapted the project based on incoming information and the specific challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

There have been several iterations of the logical framework for this project since it was first drafted in 2017. Four substantial alterations took place in consultation with consortium partners, with a revision in Year 1 increasing target schools (from 15 to 30) in Ethiopia and removing activities relating to the national curriculum, a reduction of target schools from 30 to 29 in Year 2 along with the removal of evaluations from the University of Sussex, an adjustment to the logical model in response to project monitoring in Year 3 which reduced the number of indicators from 57 to 30 to simplify data collection and accuracy, and the implementation of a COVID-19 adaptation plan in Year 4. The midline evaluation of the project concluded that these changes did not alter the overall intent of the project, rather they "served to contextualise activities, taking into consideration adaptation needs and support improved reporting."⁴⁴

The COVID-19 pandemic also forced the project team to put in place a COVID-19 adaptation plan in the third year. While the log frame had changed targets and indicators, no activities were removed or added, aside from COVID-19-related activities as outlined in the *Special Adaptation Plan Report*. Changes made in the BRiCE project since its inception, including edits to the log frame and programme adaptations on the basis of continuous assessments, were positively regarded by key stakeholders who saw significant improvements in programmatic reach, the quality and scope of services, and overall management.

While respondents generally believed the project was relevant to each context, multiple high-level respondents felt that the project could have selected locations which were more closely aligned to ensure better coordination.

As highlighted in the midline evaluation, the choice of such different, distinct project locations made some elements of the project more complicated and hampered the generalisability of project lessons, approaches, and adaptations. For Puntland, the choice was validated as a means to continue elements of the DFID-funded project GEC and access to mixed communities (IDP and host, both with specific needs). For Gambella, the choice was geared toward a desire to serve both host and refugee communities and address peacebuilding in a fragile context, as Gambella experienced heightened political instability and insecurity. It was also significantly less developed than Puntland. The project was designed to cover two different population groups (Somali and South Sudanese) in two displacement contexts (refugees and IDPs) across two countries. The decision to encompass so many variables added a significant amount of complexity; the added value of this complexity in the project design was unclear.⁴⁵

3.1.2 Relevance of the BRiCE project to needs and priorities of intended beneficiaries

Beneficiaries spoke about the project in a consistently positive light, with children and adults in both countries eager to describe how the project activities were important to them, particularly addressing school-level needs.

Respondents surveyed as part of this evaluation confirmed the need for improved access to resources and access to good quality education: 69% of the respondents noted that the biggest challenge facing children in their community was a lack of access to resources such as books, uniforms, and other educational resources, while 26% claimed that access to good quality education was the biggest challenge. These respondents overwhelmingly viewed the BRiCE project as being relevant to their needs, with 92% of respondents in Ethiopia and 87% of respondents in Somalia believing that the project responded well or very well to the needs of children in their communities.

While the project addresses many of the most pertinent issues, issues such as poverty, food insecurity, climate change and natural disasters, supporting students with disabilities, and prevailing gender roles and norms were touched on but not fully considered in the project's design.

Particularly important issues raised by beneficiaries were household obligations which impact learning (specifically for girls), a need for greater support for children with disabilities, the means to address poverty and food insecurity, and support required for out-of-school children and those needing help from substance abuse. For example, without adequate planning and provision for children with disabilities to participate in school, they were effectively left out of participation in society to a large extent. Without directly addressing the prevailing gender norms which push girls to carry out extensive household work or to leave school when pregnant, girls were unable to continue their education and were vulnerable to

⁴³ For a detailed breakdown of the identified challenges, see Annex 8

⁴⁴ Meraki Labs, BRiCE Midline Report, 2021.

⁴⁵ Meraki Labs, BRiCE Midline Report, 2021.

harmful traditional cultural practices such as female genital mutilation or child marriage, which was repeatedly highlighted by research participants. The project's awareness-raising activities and provision of adult education showed positive steps towards addressing these underlying issues, and BRICE team members were aware of and acknowledged these shortcomings, but in the end, the project was not able to fully address every community need.

Young people do a lot of work. Most mothers go out to work, the children go help them with the work or they stay home and cook and clean. If they have younger siblings, they take care of them and the house. If you go to school, you cook for the family when you come back. - Case study, female student, Somalia

In Ethiopia, BRiCE responded to a need for consistent education programming in refugee schools (rather than short-term projects that are more common in refugee contexts) and programming that could adapt to immediate needs. It also responded to a lack of dedicated services for host community schools.

Beneficiaries in Gambella felt that the BRiCE responded to important service gaps within their communities such as the need for infrastructural improvements to improve school safety and the upskilling of teachers. However, beneficiaries in Gambella were more vocal than those in Somalia in areas where they felt that Plan (and sometimes in confusion with other organisations) could have done more. In particular, they mentioned food security, provision of school uniforms, support for disabled children, gender roles imposed upon girls and corporal punishment as priority issues requiring support.

A clear example of this was the peer-to-peer learning networks for girl students being delayed from Year 1 to Year 2 onwards as it was a new approach in the education system in Gambella, Plan took time to determine the best approach, which delayed implementation. The flexible approach helped it to deliver a programme better suited to the beneficiary population it intended to serve.

Respondents in Ethiopia pointed to there being a need to care for children who left their parents in South Sudan and/or those who are orphaned, whereby teachers and children alike mentioned this as being a gap which the BRiCE project activities were unable to address.⁴⁶

Children who left their parents in South Sudan and who live with their relatives are the ones suffering most for the fact that nobody is taking good care of them. – FGD, teacher, Ethiopia

The establishment of the menstrual hygiene management rooms⁴⁷ was a direct result of the consultation of the Gender Clubs' adolescent girl members during 2019's two Gender Assessments and other club activities in which they expressed their need for support during their monthly period.⁴⁸

In Somalia, the project's focus on IDP schools was critical due to the lack of attention and support that they had previously received.

Project stakeholders described IDP settlements as temporary and rarely integrated into the rest of Somali society, further segregating and contributing to inequalities between IDP and host communities. Government planning and resource allocation were often lacking in schools, and BRiCE responded to this need in Puntland.

There is also the challenge of IDP children. So, the way that IDP settlements work is that they are meant to be temporary, you know, then thereafter people would be integrated into the communities. But this is not the reality on the ground – there are many people who have been IDPs for many years. So, you do find that government planning and resources in terms of conditions, tools, and teachers, to boost schools is quite low especially if you compare with other settlements. So, through the BRiCE project, we were targeting IDPs and surrounding communities and we ended up working with 29 schools. - KII, Relief International, Somalia

Further, the project provided educational resources, distribution of learning materials and teaching materials, provision of sanitary items for adolescent girls and paying school fees for parents who could not afford school fees. Helping to ensure that more qualified teachers were in the classrooms made significant contributions to the provision of quality education in the country, and BRiCE-supported Child Protection Committees (CPCs) and Community Education Committees (CECs) regularly worked within their communities to encourage parents to send their children to school.

The project focuses on education for children, especially the most vulnerable children from the community. Rehabilitation of existing school facilities, provision of teaching/learning materials, teacher training on psychosocial support and child protection, school security and safety interventions and WASH in schools' construction of gender-segregated latrines, provision of feminine hygiene kits, provision of teacher incentives and training support teachers, community mobilisation campaigns of promoting the enrolment of students in schools. - KII, Guardian, Somalia

⁴⁶ There are a considerable number of unaccompanied children and orphans among the refugees in Gambella who are overseen by UNHCR and RRS. There is an ongoing need for further support for these children as they are among the most vulnerable in the camps.

⁴⁷ Menstrual hygiene rooms, also called Menstrual Hygiene Management rooms, are dedicated rooms in schools where hygiene equipment and materials are provided to girls in a safe space separated from male students.

⁴⁸ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

CPC members most often approach these households and talk to their parents to let the children join or stay in school. When they insist that they would starve to death if the children don't work because there are mothers who have more than 10 orphaned children, who are very young, or for some the breadwinner (father) is disabled or bedridden because of injuries sustained during the war, in such a case we ask them to give them (the children) some hours to at least attend school. So basically, the challenge is the children who are the breadwinners for their families wouldn't get time to attend school or would miss most school days and end up repeating the same class because of poor performance. - KII, Community leader, Somalia

3.1.3 Relevance of the BRiCE project to the needs and priorities of local stakeholders

BRiCE worked effectively with local stakeholders, notably local government stakeholders and committee members, to continuously define needs and limit service duplication.

Having worked in the areas for six years in Ethiopia and five years in Somalia, the staff members of Plan Ethiopia and RI in Somalia developed a good relationship with the local communities, helping to ensure that project beneficiaries can take ownership of the various activities.⁴⁹

Since I was among the teachers in that school, I have not seen any projects that failed or were not addressed by the organisation. It fully implemented successfully all the needed projects in our school. - FGD, Teacher, Somalia

BRiCE ensured consistent engagement with other organisations working on the ground through participation in clusters such as the Education and Protection Clusters, along with the Child Protection in Emergencies /Gender-based Violence sub-cluster working groups, and other coordination mechanisms including Plan International's membership of the Refugee Task Force in Gambella.

The main objectives were surrounding access to quality education. Education is not something that exists as a standalone. You talk about basic services, water, food, health. So, by engaging with communities and talking to them, you're not dealing only with students, you're dealing with parents, education authorities, SMCs, school management... by talking to all concerned sides about the education priorities and needs, you also build bridges that lead you to other places. We have a connection with someone in the Ministry of the Interior. That's an office where the IDPs come under, so we share with them their needs. For example, they need food, there's a drought, their wells have dried up, they need solar panels, there's all of that. Whenever there is a meeting between the education partners, that's how they are able to raise their issues. - KII, Research consortium

Local governments showed varying levels of involvement in the project, depending on the project phase. Similarly, reports on consultation with community stakeholders were mixed.

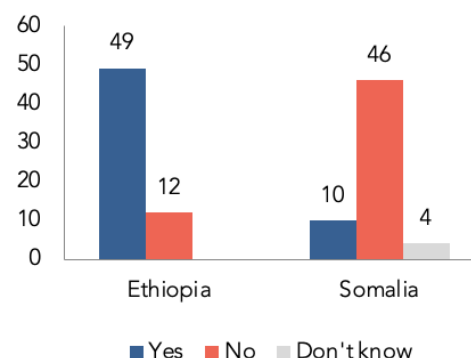
Local governments were involved through initial consultations between the Plan and RI teams and during various education and protection-related cluster meetings along with other non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations, and international organisations. The project's sharing events, including workshops and other learning events, involved local government officials. Through frequent site visits, government stakeholders worked with the implementing partners to ensure the project was being delivered in line with the agreed-upon project objectives. Despite this, there were some high-level stakeholders both from the government and from the consortium who believed there could have been more involvement of local governments in the project's implementation.

They did a very good project that improved the level of education in schools. What I would advise is for them to improve the (government) supervision of the projects in the future because the supervision of this project was minimal. They should have a focal point that could interact with the MoE. For them to also strengthen RI staff and MoE staff, this would also improve the relationship between the two agencies. - KII, MoEHE, Somalia

Figure 3: Consultation in programme design or implementation

⁴⁹ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

When surveyed, teachers, headteachers, and committee members in Ethiopia expressed high levels of consultation throughout the project's lifespan; however, the opposite was true in Somalia (Figure 3). Plan and RI did consult communities in both countries through a series of FGDs in the planning stages, but frequent teacher, headteacher, and committee turnover may have impacted perceptions around consultation. Still, the vast difference between the two countries is significant and points to a possible missed opportunity for deeper and more meaningful consultation in Somalia. The evaluation found no data to suggest that children were consulted in the project's design phase, but ongoing engagement with students, which helped guide the activities during the implementation phase, occurred through the gender clubs, students' leadership networks, and peer-to-peer learning networks.



Developing the capacity of local stakeholders was an important part of the project, as was external knowledge sharing.

By working with the University of Gambella and the PDRC, the project helped to build the research capacity of local stakeholders while ensuring cultural sensitivities were considered throughout the project's activities. The University of Sussex worked with its research team to build capacity around data collection, analysis, and writing, and the project assisted them to support their communities through knowledge generation.

Through the years, the project delivered events which invited EU delegations to Ethiopia and Somalia, as well as stakeholders from Plan UK and Ethiopia, RI, University of Sussex, Gambella University, PDRC, the MoE (Ethiopia), the MoEHE, UNHCR, and different government and non-government stakeholders from both countries. Other knowledge-sharing activities included a blog, a chapter for a book, vignettes for a compendium, and a number of conferences.

3.1.4 Relevance of the BRiCE project to priorities and policies of the governments of Ethiopia and Somalia

Overall, providing technical and financial support towards much-needed areas, including the collection of school data, articulation of policies to ensure safety in schools, and building necessary infrastructure was in line with the needs, priorities, and policies of the governments in both Ethiopia and Somalia.

The BRiCE project worked in harmony with both countries' need to strengthen education data collection and add to the evidence base around promoting quality education for refugee and IDP communities. In Gambella, the BRiCE project was the first long-term, multi-year project on education and the project's successes helped convince the LEGO Foundation to fund a five-year project with a similar approach.⁵⁰

In Ethiopia, the project complemented existing educational programmes and policies.

This included contribution towards Ethiopia's second Growth and Transformation Plan) and Education Sector Development Programme V, particularly relating to teacher development, access and equity, school improvement, primary/pre-primary enrolment, and research on the quality of education.⁵¹ The Ethiopian government was, according to the majority of stakeholders, markedly less resourced than in Somalia, and was more centralised, leading to difficulties in fully aligning with the priorities and needs of the government's federal mandates. This said, Plan worked in close collaboration with the local BoWSA, RRS and UNHCR in Gambella to define the needs, activities, and implementation plan for the project. The Ethiopian government, overseeing RRS through the National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy (adopted in 2019), had limited financial and human resources, and so relied heavily on NGOs and international organisations. Through the BRiCE project lifecycle, the REB and RRS were continuously consulted to ensure that the project activities were appropriate for both host and refugee communities.

With a lack of resources to supply water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities to schools, provide textbooks to children, and train qualified teachers, the project worked to meet the needs of the REB in improving the quality of education in the region. Further, school safeguarding policies existed in refugee schools managed by NGOs including Plan, though the refugee schools managed by RRS and the community schools managed by the REB did not have school codes of conduct and safeguarding policies in place previously. The BRiCE project successfully developed a standardised School Code of Conduct and School Safeguarding guideline, which have now been officially endorsed and applied uniformly in Gambella, both in refugee and host community schools by the Gambella REB.

⁵⁰ KII, Plan International

⁵¹ Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, "Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II) (2015/16-2019/20)". 2016.; The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, "Education Sector Development Programme V (ESDP V)". 2015.

BRiCE responded both directly and indirectly to the priorities of the regional government in Puntland.

The project was particularly aligned with the government's agenda on gender and their strategic direction (as part of the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2017-2021) in terms of gathering education information through the EMIS.⁵² It was also aligned with the existing education strategy outlined in the Somalia Federal Government Return Policy (2014-16/2019), the Somalia Compact, the Somali National Development Plan, and the Somalia Federal Government's Economic Recovery Plan (2014-2018).⁵³ RI engaged government stakeholders in all programme strategy design. As a direct result of BRiCE project work, the MoEHE decided to expand the gender department to include a child protection unit. The project fed into education sector policy plans for the federal and state level. The MoEHE in Puntland has taken over the EMIS activities under BRiCE. The EMIS system had undergone extensive improvements, through the training of local government and community members, as well as the provision of equipment and rehabilitated EMIS offices. This led to the reporting of more timely data with minimal errors as a result of the BRiCE project and will eventually allow all schools to monitor data.

The biggest challenge is that there was no centralised system. We brought it in with regional help. With GPE [Global Partnership for Education] and UNICEF, we wanted to decentralise to the 9 regions and have 9 focal points for EMIS. The system eventually wants to reach the school level. - KII, EMIS expert, Somalia

In particular BRiCE was responsive to the need in Somalia to strengthen the capacities of community-led groups/mechanisms to manage and regulate the schools since the central government did not have the capacity due to continuing instability and institutional weakness. In Somalia (as opposed to Ethiopia) the capacity of the MoEHE had been continuously strengthened by previous interventions and engagements with other international donors (such as the EU, UNICEF, the Global Partnership for Education, and the DFID). BRiCE was able to capitalise on this with the government given clear ownership over certain activities including drafting the code of conduct and strengthening EMIS system operations.

The project also resulted in an unintended positive outcome of the establishment of a Child Protection Unit within the MoEHE which aims to address child protection issues at schools. This occurred through RI's mediation between expected roles and responsibilities between the MoEHE and the MoWDFA, which previously oversaw child protection but had no access to work in schools. Implementation was highly relevant to the work being done by the Ministries relating to child protection.

3.2 Coherence

The coherence of the BRiCE project was explored by considering the extent to which the project was consistent with, complementary to and synergised with other interventions and policies in the same area being implemented by a) the implementing partners (Plan International and RI) and b) external partners and other stakeholders. The following highlights key takeaways from the detailed discussion below.

Table 4. Coherence findings – key takeaways

Coherence	<p>3.2.1 The project benefited from synergies with other interventions in the same area implemented alongside or prior to the BRiCE project by implementing partners, such as RI's building on the GEC project in Somalia.</p> <p>3.2.2 BRiCE interventions aligned with the goals and strategies of the governments of the two target locations, as well as other education-focused international actors working in the space.</p> <p>3.2.3 Coherence with other NGO stakeholders was ensured through membership of sector-specific groups such as the education cluster in Puntland, and strategic partnerships such as with UNHCR and RRS in Gambella, which reduced the possibility of service duplication.</p>
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3.2.1 BRiCE project synergies with other interventions and policies of implementing partners

The BRiCE project benefited from synergies with other interventions in the same area implemented alongside or prior to BRiCE by Plan International and Relief International.

From the very start of the project, both teams showed a high level of awareness that BRiCE would be less effective as a fully standalone project and therefore sought to weave activities into the existing networks in target areas and build the BRiCE response around previous and ongoing experiences of Plan and RI.

⁵² Puntland Government of Somalia Ministry of Education and Higher Education. 2017. Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2017-2021.

⁵³ Federal Government of Somalia. "National Policy on Refugee-Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)". 2019.; The Federal Republic of Somalia. "The Somali Compact". 2013.; Federal Government of Somalia, The Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development. "Somalia National Development Plan 2020 to 2024". 2020.; Federal Republic of Somalia. "Economic Recovery Plan 2014-2015". 2013.

We were not working in silos - in both areas, both organisations were building on previous and ongoing experiences. (...) A lesson learnt is that a standalone project does not exist. Even in a comprehensive project like BRiCE where we tried to include everything, it doesn't work without activities provided by other projects. (...) The idea of the standalone project is something we have to put behind us if we want to get results. What is needed is more coordination, coordination is for free. It's just a matter of mindset. - KII, Plan International

This approach was most visible in Somalia, where BRiCE's activities were explicitly designed as a result of learnings from the implementation of a previous RI project, GEC, which had taken place for four years prior. The continuation and harmonisation with GEC gave Relief International a strategic advantage when it came to implementing BRiCE as they were approaching the project with strong knowledge of and relationships with the local communities. Over the period when the two projects overlapped, BRiCE was able to supplement GEC with an important protection focus which according to project staff it had previously struggled to integrate.⁵⁴ BRiCE also benefitted from lessons learned from the GEC's implementation, leading to more contextually focused activities being planned and implemented. Beyond GEC, in year two of the project, RI was able to integrate BRiCE with the launch of their Cell-Ed app, an app-based learning platform delivering English as a second language training for teachers, demonstrating alignment between BRiCE and RI's global strategy on improving English literacy for learners and teaching competency for teachers.⁵⁵ Although the BRiCE project was conceived as an EiE project, the project capitalised on the opportunity to develop and sustain both countries' education systems, supporting sustainability beyond what typical EiE approaches are able to do. In Gambella, BRiCE also built on existing structures and activities previously adopted by Plan. A key example of this was the project's continuation of 'Mothers in Schools', an initiative first devised by Plan in refugee camps in Gambella in 2017 with the aim of closing the gender gap in primary education by giving girls additional support and mentoring in schools.⁵⁶ Indeed, Plan's long-standing presence in Gambella refugee camps proved to be highly beneficial to the coherence of the BRiCE project due to the existing trust and name recognition enjoyed by the organisation amongst communities in Gambella, particularly refugees, as well as institutions such as the RRS, and the regional government.⁵⁷

While coherence between the BRiCE project and other initiatives implemented was strong, coherence between the two main organisations, as well as with implementers of BRiCE's research arm, was less effective.

As has been highlighted in previous reviews of this project, the decision for BRiCE to focus on two such different contexts, each with its own unique challenges, limited the potential for complementary learning and operations between Plan and RI. However, important lesson-sharing did occur in some areas and communication between partners improved as the project progressed. Colleagues at RI spoke in particular about useful learning they transferred to Plan on the design and delivery of the CPD programme for teachers, and described moments when teams gathered together to share lessons learned regarding the development of School Improvement Plans (SIPs) and various awareness campaigns.⁵⁸ Site visits between the two implementing teams planned for Year 4 of the project had the potential to be highly beneficial to coherence and learning within the consortium yet were postponed due to complications arising from COVID.⁵⁹ Since data collection was completed for this evaluation, additional knowledge exchange and programme/research evidence dissemination activities have also been conducted with more to follow in the months ahead.

The research team showed high levels of coherence by the end of the project, though more autonomy in the project's first years would have served the organisations better.

A number of respondents noted the challenges which arose in the early phases of the project – the University of Sussex team, ideally should have been directly overseeing the PDRC and Gambella University teams due to the nature of their roles and responsibilities. Instead, Plan and RI were responsible for the selection, contracting, and oversight of Gambella University and PDRC, respectively, while the University of Sussex was not in a leadership role in terms of managing the research.⁶⁰ This ultimately led to some complications and decreased efficiency in the project's first years. These power asymmetries among partners were highlighted as challenges which affected the research component. Although initial consultations between the team took place to establish roles and responsibilities relating to governance, the Gambella University team required a longer period of onboarding/capacity building before they were fully able to contribute as expected.

The research partners described governance challenges noting that, for example, an extended inception phase would have benefitted the project, especially among research partners. Research teams were asked to rapidly finalise their plans in the

⁵⁴ KII, Plan International

⁵⁵ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 2), 2020.

⁵⁶ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 1), 2019.

⁵⁷ KII, Plan International

⁵⁸ KII, Relief International

⁵⁹ KII, Plan International

⁶⁰ University of Sussex was part of the project's Steering Committee, the Consortium Coordinating Group, and a Coordinating Group for the research partners, and they were directly liaising with individual country teams, cross-country teams, and international teams on a regular basis. However, as written, they were not involved in the selection of or management of the research teams.

inception phase without being able to fully consult local experts about the needs, priorities, and challenges in place in each context. Solidifying research plans without fully understanding the contexts ultimately had a negative impact on the first year of research. The research team consulted for the evaluation said they could have worked more effectively, coherently, and efficiently in both countries if they had more time. Despite these early setbacks, the research team worked well to build capacity for each other, collaborate on the development of the research, develop a rich understanding of the schooling contexts, and deliver meaningful research products.

I think that it was one of the best teams that I've seen working together. I appreciate all of the time and effort from everyone. (...) We had regular meetings, we know what's going on elsewhere, we have learning events, we are in constant touch, sharing plans, ideas. I think that was wonderful, a wonderful journey, a lot of people were really committed to this. - KII, PDRC, Somalia

The programme itself suffered from a lack of internal coherence in some instances, with a lack of clarity noted by staff within implementing agencies and highlighted in previous reviews of the project.

In particular, this stemmed from the realities of implementing a nexus project - a development approach in a humanitarian context. This clearly posed challenges conceptually - leading to the project design which attempted to be all-encompassing of both short-term needs, especially in education, as well as long-term goals, specifically those related to protection. For external parties, the outcome was often a perception of BRICE's mission being scattered. This also led to practical issues within implementing agencies, mainly due to the fact that some felt they lacked access to the necessary technical expertise internally to implement certain longer-term parts of the project, particularly those related to peace-building and social cohesion.

I think probably one of the internal challenges we've had was very much around the fact that this is a four-year programme, very much designed in with a developmental head-on - it's longer term and that sets the expectations and the approach. Yet it was being delivered in a far more humanitarian context, shall we say? So, it is a Nexus programme, but we don't actually look into the realities of what it means to deliver a Nexus programme. And I think you know some of the tensions at the beginning or some of the challenges were very much around; how do we implement a longer term more development programme within a humanitarian context with a primarily humanitarian team. - KII, Plan International, Ethiopia

3.2.2 Complementarities with goals and strategies of government and other stakeholders

In Puntland, RI developed a close working relationship with government stakeholders, particularly the Ministry of Education at the state level and district level to ensure the BRICE project activities were implemented in line with government priorities.

The priorities of BRICE were designed to meet needs outlined in the existing education strategy outlined in Somalia Federal Government Return Policy (2014-2016), the Somalia Compact (2014-2016), the Somali National Development Plan (2020), and the Economic Recovery Plan (2014-2018).⁶¹ The goals and strategies of government were particularly clear across four key BRICE initiatives:

- **Girls Leadership Networks (GLNs) as part of BRICE's broader work on gender:** Collaborating closely with the MoWDFA and the Gender department of the Ministry of Education, RI strengthened GLNs by providing regular mentoring support during school visits; assessing the functions of the network and providing support where possible (See section 3.3.2 for additional details).⁶²
- **Development of the Alternative Basic Education (ABE) programme:** The methodology of the ABE programme, a remedial education programme in 24 accelerated learning centres (highly valued by learners as discussed in Section 3.3.2), was created in partnership with the Nonformal Education department of the MoEHE to ensure it was sufficiently in line with their priorities.⁶³
- **Decentralisation of the EMIS system:** MoEHE implemented a strategy to strengthen the decentralisation of the EMIS department from a central to district and regional level through continuous training of head teachers in project regions and hiring regional EMIS staff to perform functions previously undertaken by the central government.⁶⁴ RI provided technical and financial support for this process, building the capacity of government staff and school administration for data collection.
- **COVID-19 Adaptation:** RI also supported the Sub-Task Force for COVID-19, developing a strategy for COVID-19 preparedness and response plans and technically supporting the ministry to lead the developed strategy.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Meraki Labs, BRICE Midline Report, 2021.

⁶² Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 2), 2020.

⁶³ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

⁶⁴ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

⁶⁵ Plan International, Covid-19 Response Report, 2021.

In Gambella, Plan maintained a positive working relationship with the Education Bureau to ensure coherence between BRiCE activities and the goals and strategies of the government of Ethiopia.

The Education Bureau was required to approve all activities in advance of Plan's implementation.⁶⁶ Plan maintained a relationship with the Education Bureau which was described by Bureau staff as 'smooth' and complementary to policy objectives as well as ongoing activities implemented by other stakeholders operating in Gambella.⁶⁷ Plan's membership in the Education Sector group provided a continuous feedback loop between the project and the government which allowed Plan to adapt BRiCE activities accordingly.

The platform was in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, every time they have presented their government policies, priority areas in directives and based on that we know we were responding on the high-priority areas with the government. - KII, Plan International, Ethiopia

Linkages between BRiCE and government priorities were particularly clear in four key initiatives:

- **Development of School Improvement Plans (SIPs):** SIPs in Ethiopia are legally mandated by the Federal MoE and guided by the School Improvement Program Guidelines (2010) of the MoE. Yet, prior to BRiCE many schools in marginal areas of Gambella had failed to comply. BRiCE supported schools to develop and implement their SIPs. Importantly the project also lobbied RRS, UNHCR and other key education partners to create simpler SIP templates for the ECCD centres in Gambella to ensure higher and easier compliance in the future.⁶⁸
- **Creation of Continuous Professional Development (CPD):** The CPD programme offered long term support and training to refugee teachers, once completed allowed for diploma holders to be employed in the Ethiopian education national system, giving 'substantive options for integration'.⁶⁹ Such options are highly aligned with the 2017/19 CRRF for Ethiopia as well as Ethiopia's 2020 Growth and Transformation Plan.⁷⁰
- **EMIS:** The focus on capacity building and system strengthening of EMIS aligned with previous efforts and was a key priority for the government. EMIS is one of the result areas under the General Education Quality Improvement Program for Equity with the Ministry of Education in Gambella.⁷¹ A comprehensive planning phase was conducted alongside MoEHE and UNICEF in Year 1, followed up in Year 2 with assessments on gaps and barriers in EMIS action in consultation with RRS, UNHCR, REB, Gambella Teachers' Education and Health Science College, and the Plan education team.⁷²
- **COVID-19 Adaptation:** Plan became an active member of the Committee organised by the WHO for COVID-19 response and adapted project activities in coordination with government counterparts and other stakeholders as discussed in Section 3.⁷³

In both locations, the BRiCE team showed similarly strong coherence with the activities of other stakeholders in the education sector.

In Somalia, other NGOs and international organisations were involved in the review process of certain project activities such as the Code of Conduct-related activities, which established child protection and safe programming policy codes of conduct in schools.

We were engaging with the relevant education players; UNICEF was informed for example. Then we also distributed the final copy [of the Code of Conduct] to the committee who worked on the education sector group - so we had all the education NGOs together with the Ministry of Education approve this, and after that, we were able to do the training for the BRiCE schools. - KII, RI, Somalia

RI also made a concerted effort to share learnings from BRiCE with stakeholders, including through national and regional sharing events inclusive of relevant government stakeholders and other actors. The BRiCE team pushed to create a child education and child protection integrated framework, which was adopted at the national level by the education authorities.⁷⁴

The learnings that came from the BRiCE project were shared with the education cluster and our experiences and learning and experiences in terms of integration of child protection and education in emergencies broke forth a child education and child protection integrated framework which is adopted at the national level by the education platform and has indicators which partners act on. So, we have heavily influenced the existence of that document. - KII, RI, Somalia

⁶⁶ KII, Education Bureau, Ethiopia

⁶⁷ KII, Education Bureau, Ethiopia

⁶⁸ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 2), 2020.

⁶⁹ ibid

⁷⁰ Annual Report Year 2; Meraki Labs, BRiCE Midline Report, 2021.

⁷¹ The World Bank. Ethiopia General Education Quality Improvement Program for Equity, 2022. <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P163050>

⁷² Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 1), 2019; Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 2), 2020.

⁷³ Plan International, Covid-19 Response Report, 2021.

⁷⁴ KII, Relief International

In Ethiopia, strong engagement in joint stakeholder working groups, such as the education cluster led by UNICEF and the Education Technical Working Group led by UNHCR, ensured coordination and coherence between stakeholders. It also helped the Plan team develop personal relationships with individuals in other organisations, asserting reliable channels of information flow and trust which can be critical in contexts such as these. As one key informant from UNICEF said of the Education Cluster:

We share ideas, we contribute our own share in those meetings and in fact, we also call each other you know, we are living together within one town. So yeah, we're working together. - KII, UNICEF, Ethiopia

Importantly, coherence with and knowledge of the strategic advantages and strengths of other education stakeholders in Gambella allowed the BRiCE team to be adaptive and recognise when they were not the best placed to perform a certain activity. A primary example of this came in Year 2 of the project when BRiCE decided to abandon plans for Activity 1.3.3: Development of a gender-sensitive guidance programme after wider consultations brought out that other actors including IMC, MSF, and Oxfam had stronger expertise and a greater mandate to implement sexual and gender-based violence prevention and or sexual and reproductive health and rights education activities in the refugee camps in Gambella.⁷⁵

3.3 Effectiveness

The effectiveness of BRiCE was explored through 1) the extent to which the project strengthened the education system, 2) the extent to which the project improved the quality of teaching and learning, 3) the extent to which the project created a safe, inclusive, gender-sensitive school environment, 4) major drivers and systemic and structural barriers influencing the achievement of the objectives and results, and 5) the extent to which the project was effective in developing and implementing the longitudinal study. The following highlights key takeaways from the detailed discussion below.

Table 5. Effectiveness findings – key takeaways

Effectiveness	<p>3.3.1 The project's work on EMIS and on creating and improving protection and safeguarding mechanisms at the regional and school level was considered major successes. However, the longevity of these initiatives was dependent on government ownership and funding, and respondents in both countries cast doubts on this.</p> <p>3.3.2 The quality of teaching has marginally improved in both countries through improved capacities in targeted schools resulting from BRiCE project activities. More indirect influences on learning outcomes included parental education, community support and referral mechanisms, infrastructure improvements, and the provision of resources.</p> <p>3.3.3 School-level activities increased student safety and inclusivity. Teachers benefited from training and clearer availability of child referral pathways and codes of conduct. Infrastructural improvements have made a big impact on child safety already but there remained significant gaps. The project has been slightly less effective in enhancing community-level safety for girls and children with disabilities and social insecurity continued to threaten all children's access to education.</p> <p>3.3.4 The longitudinal study has proven to be mostly effective in attaining its main objectives and results, though more could have been done to ensure that the learnings more directly benefited the targeted communities.</p>
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3.3.1 Strengthening the education system

Major successes of BRiCE were the project's attention to strengthening the EMIS in both Gambella and Puntland, and its work on creating and improving protection and safeguarding mechanisms at the regional and school level. The following table highlights the most effective efforts in strengthening the education system in each country, followed by a more detailed discussion in the sections below.

Table 6: Key achievements in strengthening the education system

Somalia	Ethiopia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decentralising and strengthening EMIS systems alongside the Puntland MoEHE Developing an easy-to-read code of conduct to enhance child protection processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building the capacity of the REB's EMIS unit Creating a unified code of conduct across host and refugee settings Refreshing and creating referral pathways specific to refugee and host communities

⁷⁵ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 2), 2020.

- Carrying out highly responsive school level safeguarding training
- Creating new networks for safeguarding including CPCs, teacher mentors and peer support mentors
- Creating / strengthening networks for safeguarding including CPCs and CCCs, teacher mentors and peer support mentors

However, open questions remain now that the project has concluded as to a) whether the more functional EMIS system will lead to change at the policy and school level to improve teaching and learning practices in the long term, and b) whether protection policies and safeguarding measures will be maintained without the BRICE project's support and monitoring.

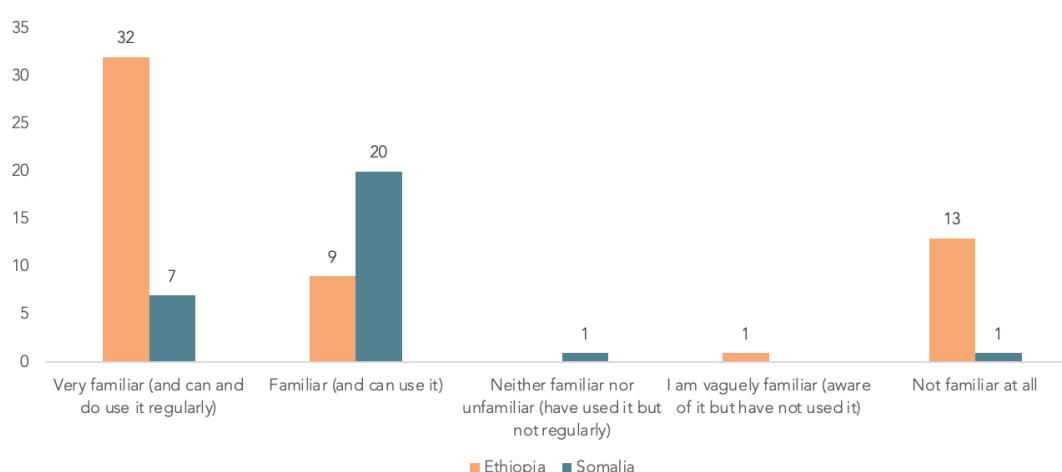
Somalia: Strengthening the education system

Strengthening EMIS systems was identified early on in both contexts as an area in need of capacity building yet approaches differed between countries. In Somalia attention was on decentralising responsibility for EMIS monitoring to a school level with capacity building targeted at teachers.

The MoEHE in Puntland saw the decentralisation of EMIS as a means to improve communication and coordination with schools at regional and district levels.⁷⁶ In response, the BRICE project supported the Puntland MoEHE in hiring regional EMIS staff to perform jobs previously covered by the central government, and provided comprehensive training to head teachers to enable higher standards of EMIS data collection and system usage.⁷⁷ Over the lifespan of the project, three rounds of training sessions were held, benefitting a total of 452 teachers (409 men, and 43 women) in the three project regions. When surveyed, 33% of the respondents from Puntland who did answer the question felt that they were familiar with the EMIS system and how to use it and 30% felt that support had been made available to them in submitting EMIS data.⁷⁸

As illustrated by Figures 4 and 5, school-level administrative staff were moderately comfortable in collecting and submitting EMIS data. By the end of the project, EMIS specialists in both countries noted that the rate of errors in submitted EMIS data had reduced over the timeframe in which BRICE was active. According to MoEHE staff, the collected data has given the Ministry a more comprehensive overview of school dynamics which they hope to feed into future policymaking.⁷⁹ Respondents emphasised that every decision made in the education sector references this data, including statistics, number (and demographics) of students, teachers (qualified v. unqualified), classrooms, and more.⁸⁰ This information feeds into five-year planning processes where the MoE, all regional officers, and supporting agencies work together on the education policy.⁸¹ Despite improvements, respondents noted that there was still an identified need for future programming to consider how data collected through EMIS can provide benefit not only for policymakers but also for those at a school level.⁸²

Figure 4: Familiarity in use of EMIS systems for collecting school-level data



⁷⁶ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

⁷⁷ *ibid*

⁷⁸ NB: Over half respondents did not answer this question

⁷⁹ KII, Ministry of Education

⁸⁰ KII, EMIS expert, Somalia

⁸¹ KII, Regional education officer, Somalia

⁸² KII, Relief International

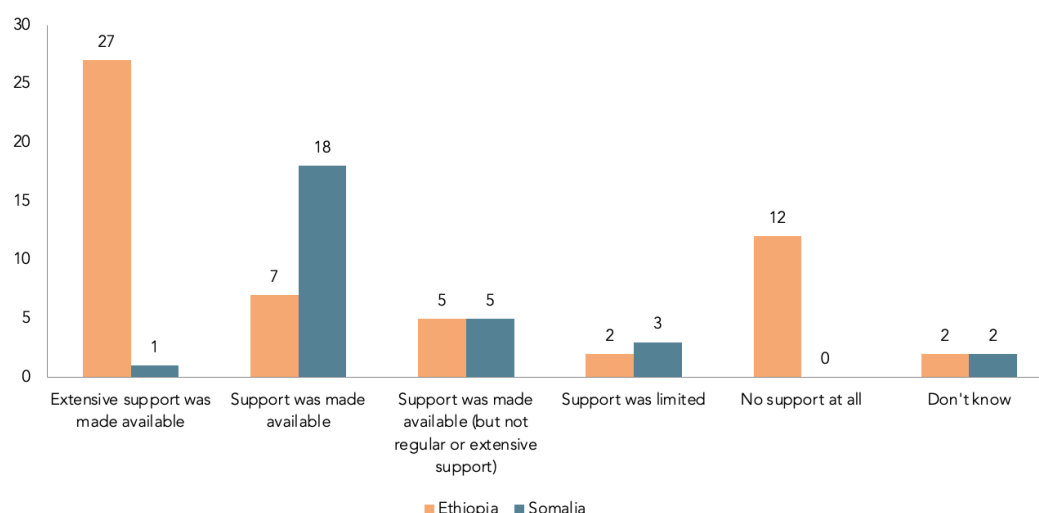
The development of a standardised school safeguarding system, including codes of conduct, was a core focus of the BRiCE project's school-level work and resulted in state adoption of the policy.

The BRiCE team created a synthesised, reader-friendly version of the 2011 Teachers Code of Conduct, which was developed by the MoEHE. They reviewed and condensed the document from 22 to five pages of easy-to-read information while also increasing the scope to include non-teaching staff in schools since they are also adults with a responsibility to keep children safe.⁸³ Through cooperation among a variety of actors (including government officials and non-state actors like UNICEF), this Code of Conduct had the potential to be a critical success of the project with long-term impact at the state level. Since Year 4, it had strong ownership by the government and included school-based trainings for 377 school staff in 2021 and the establishment of staff trained in Training of Trainers to provide future induction and training, which should support its sustainability.⁸⁴

Key informants highlighted that the code of conduct has improved how teachers relate to students as well as how they discipline students, with a greater understanding of issues with corporal punishment, though it was noted that this has not been eradicated completely.⁸⁵ According to survey respondents, codes of conduct are being used in the schools of 82% of respondents.

Figure 5: Support made available on EMIS use

There is a code of conduct of teachers as well as child



protection policies that are put in place. (...) This has improved how the teachers deal with children and the teachers have understood a positive way of disciplining children, of course, it has not eradicated this 100% but has significantly improved child protection. - KII, GTEC Principal, Somalia

The code of conduct that was shared in schools has improved how a teacher relates to students and it has eradicated corporal punishment - KII, MoE, Somalia⁸⁶

BRiCE conducted assessments and safeguarding training to effectively target existing capacity gaps among local stakeholders.

Whilst schools in both countries had some pre-existing systems in place, the concept of holistic safeguarding was something relatively new to many project beneficiaries.⁸⁷ Responding to this, BRiCE began with a comprehensive mapping of protection needs and the existing safeguarding systems in place. This helped inform training on child protection and safeguarding in Year 1 and onwards to government staff from MoWDFA. This training was then effectively cascaded to the school level with child protection focal points and MoWDFA staff facilitating school-based training for members of the

⁸³ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 2), 2020.; Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 3), 2021.

⁸⁴ KII, MoE; Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

⁸⁵ KII, GTEC Principal, Somalia & KII, MoE, Somalia

⁸⁶ While the government respondent alluded to the eradication of corporal punishment, and the data in this evaluation certainly points to a reduction in corporal punishment, this opinion is not fully validated.

⁸⁷ KII, Plan International

girls' and boys' leadership networks. Training for these groups continued throughout the course of the project and mechanisms for sustainability were implemented to ensure the training continues.⁸⁸

Teacher training on safeguarding standards and referral mechanisms proved to be effective, with teachers reporting a greater understanding of how they might address safeguarding issues. Several respondents mentioned the serial book that RI brought to the schools in which teachers were required to record concerns confidentially to share with the principal.⁸⁹

Teachers were trained on how to address when they come across issues that might be harmful to the child. Mentors were trained on issues that these children might face, these mentors come together with students every Thursday, their concerns are then recorded and then shared with the teacher in charge who in turn shares them with the principal and the issue is addressed. (...) RI brought a serial book where any issues of concern are recorded, a child is given a serial number that gives confidentiality to him/her, also whoever addresses the matter is recorded in the book. - KII, Teacher, Somalia

Within schools, new networks for safeguarding were created, including complaint mechanisms, CPCs, teacher mentors and peer support mentors with respondents highlighting the positive impact on schools.

Complaint mechanisms (suggestion boxes) were established by RI in each school whereby the community could provide feedback on the implementation of RI's action. One respondent mentioned these mechanisms and noted that the suggestion box and a hotline implemented by RI were strategically placed and used but now, with the withdrawal of the project, they felt unsafe in the community without these systems.⁹⁰

Designated teacher mentors were assigned to provide children with a clear point of contact within the school with whom to raise concerns - having male and female teacher mentors was a particularly positive decision in a previously male-dominant education sector.⁹¹ Further, the creation of student mentors from the Girls and Boys Leadership networks also proved a very effective referral mechanism. In focus groups and case studies, students spoke glowingly of their experiences with peer mentors as highlighted in the student vignettes below.



STUDENT VOICES

There are some children who tell the mentors during our discussions that they do not have food at home, those children should be given food at school, or their parents should be given rice and sugar like before. - Case study, male student, Somalia

Yes, girls generally feel safe just like boys, we also have in our school male and female teachers who are mentors, who we go to whenever we have issues and share our issues with them. The teachers were trained by Relief. - FGD, female student, Somalia

Yes, both girls and boys feel safe at school, we are both taught the same way, and no one mistreats the girls at school, we also have female teachers who the girls go to whenever they have issues in class or at school. - FGD, male student, Somalia

Also, we have female and male leaders among the students, this makes the students comfortable in discussing their problems with them. - Case study, male student, Somalia

Finally, the formation of CPCs contributed to building community ownership over child safeguarding with positive results. Focus groups discussions highlighted that involving parents in CPCs as members have had the unintended positive effect of improving parents' confidence and willingness to send their children to school.⁹²

Earlier most schools were very far from the settlements and parents were afraid of sending their girls to school where they would have to walk for close to 5 km or 7 km. These parents feared for the safety of their girls. What if they're molested on the way, what if somebody kills them on the way, what if somebody elopes with them? All these were genuine fears and genuine concerns that their parents had. But over time these concerns and challenges have reduced because there was a lot of sensitization, awareness, and training that was given by Relief International on child protection. They also developed child protection mechanisms like CPC committees, which were enforcing and following up on child protection and safeguarding matters. - FGD, Teacher, Somalia

Ethiopia: Strengthening the education system

⁸⁸ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 1), 2019.

⁸⁹ KII, Teacher, Garowe; FGD, Teachers, Garowe

⁹⁰ FGD, male student, Galkayo

⁹¹ KII Relief International Staff; KII Community Member Garowe; FGD Male students, Galkayo

⁹² FGD, Teacher, Garowe.

BRiCE successfully built EMIS capacity at a regional level by funding the secondment of an EMIS expert to the REB's EMIS unit, holding internal training to district and regional education officers, and providing resources.

BRiCE supported the REB staff through capacity development and a change from hard (paper) copy data collection to the use of software. Feedback from the Education Bureau on EMIS capacity building was extremely positive, with early indications that the improved data has been used to inform policy and decision-making.⁹³ EMIS data, including the number of students in each school, the gender composition among students, the number of qualified teachers and more, helped government stakeholders to budget and launch programmes and strategic plans, as well as distribution of scholarships. However, government stakeholders confirmed that there were challenges in school-level adoption, with school administrators/directors not always effectively using the EMIS system. Resources provided by BRiCE were also highly appreciated by stakeholders who had previously lamented about the inadequacy of office supplies⁹⁴

The reason the EMIS system is effective in this area is because we are working with Plan International together. As I told you earlier last year, we were on the verge of missing data because of a lack of budget from the government but Plan International covered everything and collected data successfully. Not only that, the EMIS expert they hired to support us, helps us a lot with things associated with the EMIS system. (...) Yes, the data has been used at the government and school levels, for example, last year the government released 10 million birr for students based on the data we collect from each school and I believe the education ministry is using our data for policy and decision making because we send them real data always, and at the regional level, we are using the data for decision making and any programs to be launched at school with educational partners together. - KII Education Bureau, Ethiopia

The Education Bureau had very, very limited capacity in the country, among all regions, there is no laptop within the EMIS units. So, there was an effort to support this component. - KII, UNICEF, Ethiopia

However, informants raised concerns that despite improvements, the project failed to set up adequate data quality control checks for collected data and one informant from RRS expressed concerns that the government will use any data they receive, no matter the quality, pointing to a serious need for continuous monitoring and follow up post project completion.⁹⁵

I believe that if data is corrupted, fluctuated, or done by an unskilful person, they (the government) would use the data. And the only problem I observe from all schools and education partners is that there is no EMIS expert in schools or partners at all apart from the Plan International office and Regional Education Bureau. - KII, RRS, Ethiopia

After many attempts over the lifetime of the project, the BRiCE team managed to work collaboratively with actors including UNHCR and the Plan UK safeguarding team to develop a common safeguarding approach for use in host and refugee communities.

This filled an important gap in services as, at the start of the project, there was no unified code of conduct across the 29 BRiCE target schools.⁹⁶ The development of the safeguarding measures posed challenges for the project, mainly stemming from the fact that the team were required to incorporate a decade-old professional code of conduct created at the federal level into the new version. However, through effective coordination with other stakeholders such as RRS and those within the Education Working Group, the new draft was formally acknowledged in regional systems. Survey results showed early signs that school-level actors were aware of the existence of the new safeguarding policy and that it was being effectively implemented (Figure 6). However, government stakeholders raised concerns that there was a lack of internal government capacity to follow up to ensure the implementation of newly drafted policies.⁹⁷

⁹³ KII, Education Bureau Staff, Ethiopia

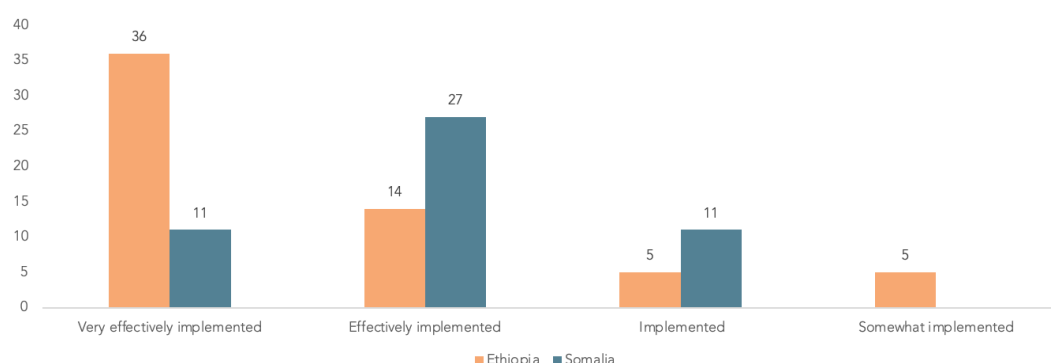
⁹⁴ KII, UNICEF, KII, Plan International

⁹⁵ KII, RRS

⁹⁶ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

⁹⁷ KII, Education Bureau, KII, Women Affairs Bureau

Figure 6: Safeguarding policy implementation status among survey respondents



BRiCE built a more visible support network in both host and refugee communities through the establishment of referral pathways.

The creation of referral pathways was particularly important in host community settings where services were not as visible or easy to access as in refugee contexts.⁹⁸ The team struggled to locate specialised providers working in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, disabilities and other services in the host community.⁹⁹ However, through the extensive strengthening of the existing referral pathways and capacity building for community members, “581 (301 girls, 280 boys) students have been referred throughout the 29 target schools for various age and sex appropriate protection specialized services provided by various agencies. The major services accessed by the children were the provision of non-food items (i.e., sanitary pads, mosquito nets, blankets, etc.). In addition, based on needs, children have also received structured psychosocial support in the respective and adjacent child-friendly spaces, through the help of trained case management workers.”¹⁰⁰ While BRiCE made a start in drawing attention not only to available services but also to existing service gaps, it will be important for future projects and organisations to fill these gaps using the mapping accomplished under BRiCE.

The network of safeguarding support at a school and community level comprised of three key groups:

- **Teachers** were given training on child protection policies and case identification and referral mechanisms.¹⁰¹
- **Parent-teacher association (PTA) Members** were financially supported to engage with student problems and provide awareness raising on issues such as early marriage and substance abuse.¹⁰²
- **Mothers in Schools** were trained throughout the project in different elements of child protection, including childcare and development, case handling, counselling, and community mobilisation.¹⁰³

Feedback from students showed a particularly strong appreciation for Mothers in Schools, who they feel safe speaking to about their problems. Students also spoke highly of female teachers who they trust more than their male counterparts.¹⁰⁴ Parents expressed considerable support for PTA groups, which they felt created a greater level of ownership amongst parents for the safety of their children at school.¹⁰⁵



STUDENT VOICES

For our learning to improve, people like our parents headed by the parent teacher association work closely with the headmaster to advise us to come to class and tell parents to stop giving daughters to men who have many cows. School is 100% better for girls. This helps our school progress well. - FGD, female student, Ethiopia

It has gotten much better now because students are safe in school. We have school mothers who look after us here in the school. - FGD, female student, Ethiopia

I like school because we have enough female teachers who are teaching in the school. They help us whenever we ask them something that puzzles us which we cannot go to male teachers with. - FGD, female student, Ethiopia

3.3.2 Improving the quality of teaching and learning

⁹⁸ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

⁹⁹ KII, Plan International

¹⁰⁰ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022. P.59

¹⁰¹ Telephone survey respondent, Gambella

¹⁰² KII, Headteacher, Gog, FGD, Female Student, Nguenyiel

¹⁰³ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 2), 2020.

¹⁰⁴ FGDs with female students in Itang, Gog and Nguenyiel

¹⁰⁵ KIIs with Guardians in Itang, Gog and Nguenyiel

Key achievements include supporting over 400 teachers through different CPD and capacity development activities conducted in partnership with the Teachers' Colleges of Gambella and Puntland, including 178 teachers (37 women, 141 men) involved in multiyear teaching trainings.¹⁰⁶ In addition, construction activities of new school blocks and gender disaggregated latrines (among other infrastructural work), school management training on SIPs, protection activities, and the provision of scholastic and WASH materials further contributed to the project results.

Somalia: Addressing teacher capacity

In Somalia, one of the most effective project activities geared toward improving teacher quality was CPD framework, created in partnership with the Garowe Teacher Training College (GTEC).

The CPD led teachers (78 men, 12 women in the first cohort; 36 men, 22 women in the second cohort) through training, coursework and a mentorship programme over the course of two years.¹⁰⁷ Staff from the GTEC and RI observed a clear difference in the confidence, motivation and quality of teachers following involvement in the programme through classroom observations.¹⁰⁸ In particular, GTEC staff noted the effectiveness of classroom observations, self-learning components and coaching mechanisms embedded in the long-term plan of the CPD. RI conducted monthly coaching visits and classroom observations and noted improvements in child-centred learning as a result of the CPD. Teachers similarly appreciated the accountability mechanisms built into the programme such as the peer review process.¹⁰⁹ The involvement of headteachers in the monitoring process for the CPD also proved instrumental. In fact, an unintended positive outcome of the CPD was that it built more positive relationships between teachers and headteachers within schools.¹¹⁰

The head teacher was involved in the process as a supervisor and this helped us able to demystify because at the beginning, we found that a tough educational challenge was that the teachers felt like headteachers were policing the teachers, but over the years, we're able to demystify this and build an opinion of the headteacher as someone who is a support as opposed to someone who will police you. And we saw teachers really opening to this. - KII, Relief International

Classroom observation guides us to know any gaps present. We also had groups where the coaches interact with the teachers and share knowledge with each other. (...) Teachers started to do self-learning in order to improve their skills and knowledge. Offer certificates to the schools and this give the teacher the motivation to do better and look for more learning opportunities to gain more knowledge and get more certifications. The teachers feared being assessed and observed and now they started developing confidence. - KII, GTEC Principal

Cooperation with Puntland MoEHE was another important feature of this activity, evident in the decision taken to convert the CPD into a recognised certification course for the career development of government teachers.¹¹¹ According to project monitoring, both the federal and Puntland MoEHE are now advocating for other international organisations to employ the same CPD model to support teaching quality.¹¹²

Teacher training provided by the BRiCE project was largely successful in improving teaching standards according to teachers and students from each BRiCE target school.

In FGDs, teachers spoke highly of the training they had received from BRiCE about different teaching methods and also showed evidence of having a good level of understanding of different pedagogies beyond rote learning.¹¹³

The training they gave the teachers, especially on the teaching methodologies that should be used in the classroom, was good. For example [we learned that] in numeracy lessons there is a difference between a teacher just saying $1 + 1 = 2$ and a teacher demonstrating $1 + 1 = 2$ by using two pens. The students would grasp the content when you use experiments and objects to demonstrate what you are talking about. The younger kids would learn by experiment, by observing rather than just theory and writing on the board. - FGD, Teacher, Garowe

When asked whether the quality of teaching in their school had improved, gotten worse or stayed the same over the past 4 years, 71% of survey respondents in Somalia said it had improved. Student focus groups and case studies also revealed high levels of satisfaction among students with the quality of their teachers. Interestingly, students spoke about teaching methods they appreciated such as 'telling jokes while learning' and asking questions rather than practising purely rote memorisation, showing evidence of the implementation of some advanced teaching pedagogies.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁶ Plan International, BRiCE Workshop PLAN Presentation (7 June 2022). 2022.

¹⁰⁷ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 1), 2019.; Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 2), 2020.

¹⁰⁸ KII, GTEC Principal; KII, RI Staff Member

¹⁰⁹ KII, GTEC Principal

¹¹⁰ KII, Relief International

¹¹¹ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

¹¹² *ibid*

¹¹³ FGD, Teacher, Somalia

¹¹⁴ FGDs, Students, Somalia



STUDENT VOICES

I like my school because I have the best and qualified teachers in the school, I have a lot of great teachers and a lot of subjects. I have to say that my favourite subject is science. Not only do I love the subject, but I love my science teacher, he's so nice. I also like my mathematics teacher. He makes concepts easy and fun to remember and tells us jokes and funny things about anything we are learning. And when it came to tests and examinations, all I had to do was remember his jokes and his way of doing equations. P2 my school Head teacher always supports teachers and builds teacher leaders, thus creating a good environment for both students and teachers. The importance of my teachers is they are not bullies and they don't present any danger to the school. The best thing about my school is that the teachers are more lenient with assignments considering everything that is going on. - FGD, male student, Somalia

Unfortunately, issues related to teacher retention, mainly due to external factors, have the potential to derail or reverse progress made by BRICE.

During FGDs teachers, guardians and community members consistently highlighted issues with pay as a barrier to effective teaching. As one community member pointed out that due to low or sporadic salaries teachers are sometimes forced to work multiple jobs leaving little time or energy to dedicate to their profession.¹¹⁵ The issue of lack of teacher pay is something that even students acknowledge and spoke about in several FGDs conducted.¹¹⁶ Concerningly, many informants implied that training by BRICE may have actually led to higher teacher turnover, since teachers whose qualifications have been improved through BRICE training have been recruited by better paying private schools and ministries.¹¹⁷ This was not a BRICE-specific occurrence, however, and retention challenges in newly-trained teachers were noted sector-wide. The project aimed to mitigate these impacts in the last two years of implementation by issuing a commitment letter for teachers to sign, working with the MoEHE to review the selection criteria for CPD participation, and monitoring teacher retention and progress through the MoEHE.

Most of my teachers don't get paid. Some teachers aren't paid for months at a time. Many have no choice but to quit their posts. (...) Without qualified teachers in the classrooms, children suffer a lot. - FGD, male student, Somalia

We cannot afford to pay teachers a good income, and this is a big challenge for us because they cannot stay for a long time, they are poached by better paying schools and ministries. - KII, Teacher, Somalia

Ethiopia: Addressing teacher capacity

Mirroring Somalia, the CPD for teachers in Ethiopia proved to be a key project success, due to its focus on certification of refugee teachers and broader teacher training in targeted schools.

The CPD enrolled 30 refugee teachers (3 female and 27 male) in a 4-year part-time teaching diploma for professional development. The course was built and applied in partnership with the Gambella Teachers Education and Health Science College.¹¹⁸ Importantly, the CPD was unique in its offering of a long-term teaching programme at the end of which participants received a Teaching Diploma Certificate which allows them to be employed in the formal Ethiopian education system.¹¹⁹ In this way, the CPD was truly transformational for the 30 participants. However, as an extremely resource-intensive programme, it will require concerted efforts and dedicated funds (only likely to be provided by another NGO) to repeat.¹²⁰

We only provided for 30 diploma trainees who are refugees but there are many more who need to be trained. We didn't manage to train as many as we wanted - there are 500 in the region! This should be scaled up. (...) There are many other NGOs who could take this project on in Gambella - since it has been successful, we are in discussions with other NGOs who could take this aspect on under those. - KII, Plan International, Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, teachers benefitted from a range of capacity development activities, including on gender sensitivity, in all centres in target communities, bringing together participants from both host and refugee communities, with different ethnic groups including both Nuer and Anyuak, represented and trained together.¹²¹ This was significant as it allowed for the integration of teacher training and peacebuilding objectives. Feedback from the trainings was highly positive, with parents commenting that teaching had improved in their school as a result¹²² and teachers in FGDs demonstrating

¹¹⁵ KII, Community Member, Somalia

¹¹⁶ FGD, Male Students, Somalia

¹¹⁷ KII, Headteacher, Somalia

¹¹⁸ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

¹¹⁹ ibid

¹²⁰ KII, Plan International Staff

¹²¹ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 1), 2019.

¹²² KII, Guardian, Ethiopia

evidence of improved teaching capacities; they described changes in their teaching styles over the past 4-5 years with an emphasis on encouraging participation and lesson planning.¹²³ As a result, teachers felt that students were becoming more active learners.¹²⁴ Gender-sensitive components were introduced, under the supervision of Plan's global team and Plan UK, to school SIP templates, and head teachers were trained on gender transformative approaches in the development and implementation of the SIPs.¹²⁵ Embedding a gender-sensitive approach was key to the BRICE project approach, and gender was included in a number of output indicators in the project log frame.

BRICE's work with school PTAs have also helped reinforce teacher training efforts with several respondents speaking about how PTA monitoring of teachers has been effective in meeting the issue of teacher absenteeism and incentivising higher-quality teaching.¹²⁶ Students spoke highly of their teachers with evidence of positive reinforcement being used in the classroom.¹²⁷

However, despite improvements, respondents continuously mentioned large class sizes as a remaining barrier to quality teaching and learning, particularly within refugee schools. One stakeholder from RRS pointed out the challenges of limited teachers being forced to teach a large number of students, noting that in some schools, 15 teachers are expected to teach around 900 students, negatively impacting educational outcomes and creating safety issues for both children and teachers alike.

One of the biggest problems we face is having enough classrooms to accommodate all children for an effective teaching-learning process. The current classrooms are overcrowded. In one class a teacher teaches more than 150 children. This makes the teaching and learning process in the school very difficult. - FGD, teacher, Somalia

Somalia: Providing school resources

In Puntland, the distribution of teaching and learning materials had a positive effect on student enrolment and teacher and student morale.

Over the course of the project, a total of 10,030 students (4,980 girls and 5,050 boys) in the 29 target schools in Bosaso, Garowe and Galkayo, received teaching and learning materials with distribution overseen by the Formal Education department of the MoEHE.¹²⁸ According to respondents, the provision of these materials effectively encouraged student enrolment and built student and teacher morale.¹²⁹ Resources had a particularly strong impact on IDP communities, where children tend to have a greater need for resources.¹³⁰ The extract below from a case study discussion with a male student in Galkayo illustrates the transformative impact resource provision had on his experience of school.



STUDENT VOICES

[Question: Please describe your best memories from school over the past four years]

There was a day when I woke up and prepared myself as normal for a day of school, but when I entered the school compound, I saw all the students assembling outside class together with teachers and other staff from Relief International ready to distribute learning materials for the students. That day I was very happy since I was lacking schoolbooks and my parents could not afford them! - Case study, male student, Somalia

By incentivising the creation of SIPs, communities were able to articulate the physical needs of schools and channel funding toward making necessary school improvements.

In Puntland, the creation of SIPs was legally mandated; however, BRICE identified that schools needed guidance and support on how to develop them. To do so, the project trained CEC members on how to create comprehensive SIPs.¹³¹ In some schools, CECs involve the children in the SIP creation process; running sessions to map hazards¹³² This approach helped build community ownership over school improvements. In some instances, community members went beyond the creation of SIPs and contributed to carrying out identified school improvements, in some cases even contributing their own resources, skills, time and funds.¹³³

¹²³ FGD, Teacher, Ethiopia, KII Guardian, Ethiopia

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

¹²⁶ KII, Guardian, Ethiopia

¹²⁷ FGD, Male student, Ethiopia

¹²⁸ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 2), 2020.; Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

¹²⁹ KII, Community Member, Somalia; Case Study, Male Student, Somalia; FGD, Teachers, Somalia

¹³⁰ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

¹³¹ KII, Relief International

¹³² KII, Relief International

¹³³ Ibid

They were given money and the school used it to build a stone fence for the school. They were given \$2800 to repair the school but the parents came together and added an extra \$1400 and instead of repairing the school, they built a new classroom with it. The classroom holds up to 70+ pupils. - KII, Teacher, Somalia

The resulting infrastructural improvements that occurred in schools were a key area of project success from the view of beneficiaries. Respondents noted that the building of classrooms was particularly transformational, having a huge impact both on their individual motivation to teach and on improving the chances of children attending school.

We get lots of very positive stories when you go to the schools. Like once in Galkayo, the teachers were very demotivated because the school had only one classroom. It was just dusty and dark so with the project, we added classrooms and some desks, and you know the teachers felt motivated and the enrolment shot up. Those are just some positive examples in the school which impacted the learners. KII, Relief International, Somalia

While infrastructural improvements made under the BRiCE undoubtedly improved the learning environments of target schools, many communities felt that there was far more to be done. In particular, respondents spoke with frustration about the depreciation of classrooms and the lack of water supply in schools.¹³⁴ With this in mind, the project could have benefited from having a focal point that was able to link schools with other organisations/partners/private sector stakeholders to provide funding and/or in-kind materials when the project's financial contribution was insufficient in covering the entire cost of infrastructural improvements.

Ethiopia: Providing school resources

In Gambella, the provision of resources was similarly effective in improving the readiness of children for learning.

Despite this activity being delayed and suspended in Years 1 and 2 of the project, by Year 3, 10,000 school material kits were provided for 3,500 students in refugee and host communities, with priority given to students with disabilities and other vulnerable categories.¹³⁵ Much like in Puntland, resource provision was among the elements of the BRiCE project most mentioned by students themselves; every FGD with students mentioned the positive impact of school resources on their learning.¹³⁶

Children's lives in our community are getting better because NGOs help students with learning materials, especially orphan students. So, I believe things are getting better. - FGD, Male student, Somalia

Improvements to school infrastructure have had a transformational effect on student learning in Gambella for both host and refugee communities.

Improvements in Gambella included the building of new school blocks and classrooms, gender-segregated latrines and perimeter fences for schools in host communities.¹³⁷ Renovation of existing school infrastructure including in-place WASH facilities in target schools was also an area of focus. These improvements, particularly ones supporting WASH, are in line with best practices in terms of gender-responsive school infrastructure.¹³⁸ The impact of these improvements on student learning was highlighted in the vast majority of FGDs and KIIs conducted with BRiCE target population, particularly students, but also government officials.

Plan International is doing unbelievable work to address these challenges. The schools they built in different woredas help children to access education easily because in the past students studied under the trees. - KII, Education Bureau, Ethiopia

Annual monitoring from Year 3 of the project concluded that the construction of new school blocks has been particularly effective in improving school attendance, with a 9.3% increase in student enrolment noted from the beginning of 2020/21 compared to 2019/20.¹³⁹ This correlation was positively reflected in testimony from key informants which showed students were more willing to attend school now they can study inside a classroom rather than outside, and teachers felt more able to teach effectively due to smaller classroom sizes.¹⁴⁰ Respondents for this evaluation did not reveal whether or not the smaller class sizes resulted in a need for more teachers or if more teachers were trained/provided to the schools.

Infrastructural improvements accounted for nearly 20% of all project spending in Gambella, and almost 5% of the total budget of the project.¹⁴¹ This showed the importance placed by the project team on ensuring that host communities were

¹³⁴ KII, Community Leader, Somalia

¹³⁵ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 3), 2021.

¹³⁶ FGD, Male Students, Ethiopia; FGD, Female Students, Ethiopia

¹³⁷ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 2), 2020.

¹³⁸ Sphere. The Sphere Handbook. 2018.

¹³⁹ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 3), 2021.

¹⁴⁰ FGD, Male Students, Ethiopia; KII, Community Leader, Ethiopia

¹⁴¹ Figures reported by Plan International staff via written correspondence

supported, and thus was an integral aspect of building trust and a stronger relationship between host communities and refugees.

Generally, infrastructural improvements were reported to have a lasting impact on the schools, with walls and school blocks being largely permanent and fences protecting children from outside harms (and in some cases, from children being exposed to dangerous situations such as rivers).



STUDENT VOICES

The world is less than perfect. There are good and bad things which people encounter in their lives. One thing which made my life good is that now I could see improvement in our school in terms of infrastructure. Before, three years ago, the school compound was very muddy during the rainy season and during the dry season. Now the school compound is built, and children have a good playground both in the dry and rainy season as well. Another positive development is that we have more classrooms which are built, and students are learning in very normal classrooms, where you have 50 students in class. Before, it was not like that five years ago. Five years ago, there used to be 80 students in a class. Now more classrooms are built. These are very good things for children to learn in a relaxed school environment. - FGD, male student, Ethiopia

Compared to the last five years, teachers' teaching style is much improved because five years ago it was difficult to manage the students because of a lack of classrooms. The number of students in a class was high and there was too much noise, even if the teacher was in the class. Now I can tell you that things are getting better since Plan International assisted Gilo Bethel primary school. I think teachers are impressed by the support they are getting from this project. - KII, Community Leader, Ethiopia

Similarly, to the response in Puntland, respondents in Gambella noted serious concerns about continuing infrastructure challenges, particularly related to the lack of classroom space and clean water.

The sustainability of the infrastructural improvements appeared to be challenged in some cases, however, with issues arising due to inadequate management after the project ended. For example, in Gilo Bethel Primary School in Gog, a host community, community members, including a PTA member and a headteacher, discussed how the newly built water tank had its pipes stolen and thus the water tank was not working, leading to the toilet facilities and menstrual hygiene rooms being non-functional. Without a person or organisation responsible for the prompt fixing of the water tank has led to students being absent from school for up to four months or longer.

In particular, amongst refugee communities, respondents felt that even more classrooms are necessary in order to keep swelling class sizes at bay. As one informant from RRS noted; "the number of children is increasing and yet the infrastructure remains the same." In Nguenyiel refugee camp, parents and teachers raised that children are currently taught in shifts due to a lack of appropriate classroom space.¹⁴² A lack of clean water was also a frequently raised concern amongst participants. Most notably, in one FGD in Gog, every student mentioned the need for clean water access at their school,¹⁴³ leading to the conclusion that while BRiCE has made important strides toward ensuring schools are better places for teaching and learning, constant upkeep and further future investment is necessary.



STUDENT VOICES

P#5. If I got a chance to run this school, I would treat all students equally, provide clean water and make the compound clean. // P#3. If I got the chance, I would build a good football field in our school, (ensure) clean toilets and classrooms always, and provide clean water. // P#1. I would work to make students feel happy by fulfilling all their needs. I would build fields for them and provide clean water. - FGD, male students, Ethiopia

Somalia: Supporting learners

To target lower performing students and students who missed out on education for a variety of reasons, the project introduced remedial education classes (ABE) in Puntland with positive effects.

These classes targeted disadvantaged students, including vulnerable students who were unable to afford remedial classes, had never gone to school, had dropped out due to poverty, conflict or other reasons, or had performed poorly on exams, to help them improve in Literacy and Maths. Over the course of the project, classes reached 4,000 students and integrated a teacher training element throughout.¹⁴⁴ In Year 3 of BRiCE, this activity was particularly well adapted for the context

¹⁴² KII Guardian, Nguenyiel

¹⁴³ FGD Male Students, Gog

¹⁴⁴ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

presented by COVID-19. The BRICE team quickly responded to provide remedial classes virtually through WhatsApp, Telegram, and phone calls, managing to support 1,560 learners through the end of the school year.¹⁴⁵

Amongst project beneficiaries and communities, the ABE was strongly supported and showed a particularly positive impact on girl students in Puntland. The programme helped to include girls who never went to school before and may have been hesitant to share a classroom with younger students and focused on changing the mindset of parents through education campaigns carried out by the CPC members which led to many girls being enrolled in ABE classes.

ABE content was developed collaboratively in Year 1 of the project with GTEC and the non-formal education department of the MoE. It was designed as a 'flexible, age-appropriate means to promote access to education in an accelerated time frame for disadvantaged students'¹⁴⁶ and was run for three years in 24 accelerated learning centres across Puntland. The co-created aspect of the programme established strong buy-in from these stakeholders from the offset, and teachers were trained at regular intervals through a Training of Trainers model which allowed for rapid expansion.¹⁴⁷ Community members engaged with CECs showed particularly strong support of the programme - in KIIs several spoke about having recommended the programme to parents in their community.¹⁴⁸ Teachers engaged in the programme spoke specifically about the effectiveness of the programme on girl students who had previously been at risk of dropping out of school.¹⁴⁹ For students, an important part of the ABE was that the classes were not mixed-age, which allowed students to feel more comfortable and confident participating.

To be honest, earlier, girls were not allowed to attend school so most of them just remained at home and were later married off at a very young age. Right now, in the ABE programs that were introduced by Relief in our school, the majority are girls because they were never taken to school. Before the older girls would refuse to join the school because they were too shy to share the same class with the younger ones, but right now because of this programme for youths who were out of school or who never joined school they feel free and are learning very well and the majority are girls. - FGD, female student, Somalia

Project reporting shows that attendance and pass rates for ABE classes were consistently high throughout the first years of the programme. In year 3 for instance, all 785 learners that attended ABE classes of Level 2 Class 3 successfully passed their Class 3 final examinations.¹⁵⁰ Unfortunately, COVID had a severely detrimental impact on the effectiveness of the ABE programme; affecting the number of students able to attend classes (over 30% of the 1,164 students who had completed ABE Level 1 and were eligible to return to complete ABE level 2 did not do so)¹⁵¹

Ethiopia: Supporting learners

Remedial education increased learning opportunities for girl students in both host and refugee communities in Gambella.

It responded to the need for subsidiary education, particularly among female students and made several important adaptations over the project's lifetime. Notably in Year 2, informed by the findings of the BRICE research arm, the team reduced the number of students involved in the classes, extended the support for each student from 4 to 8 weeks and targeted classes only at girl students.¹⁵² The success of these adaptations was reflected in project monitoring data as well as discussions with project beneficiaries. Data collected in Year 4 of BRICE showed that 100% of students who participated in remedial education have improved their grade scores.¹⁵³ FGDs highlight that the classes were particularly well received by girl students for the simple fact that attending the classes after school gave them much needed physical space and time to remain in school to catch up on homework, time and space they lack at home due to the expectations placed upon them to do household chores and take on caring responsibilities.¹⁵⁴ There was some animosity from boy students about their inability to participate in the remedial education classes, suggesting a need to ensure that programmes are not isolating boys and are responding to the intersecting needs of all students involved. This also points to a need for greater awareness raising with boys about gender inequality, gender transformative programming and engaging them as allies for girls education and agents of change.¹⁵⁵

One of the activities that Plan International has done for us in our school is that the school has introduced an after-school teaching programme for all children to improve their learning. This is very good for us as girls

¹⁴⁵ COVID-19 Adaptation Plan

¹⁴⁶ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 1), 2019.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid*

¹⁴⁸ KII Community Member, Garowe

¹⁴⁹ KII Headteacher, Galkayo

¹⁵⁰ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 3), 2021.

¹⁵¹ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

¹⁵² Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 2), 2020.

¹⁵³ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

¹⁵⁴ FGD, Female students, Ethiopia

¹⁵⁵ Case Study, Male student, Ethiopia

because when we go home from school, we have very little time for study. We are made busy by our mothers with house chores. FGD, female student, Ethiopia

Compared to previous academic results of girls, they are now significantly different - there has been a significant improvement in the academic performance of girls who have had this remedial education. - KII, Plan International, Ethiopia

3.3.3 Creating a safe, gender sensitive, inclusive school environment

The BRICE project recognised that creating a safe, gender-sensitive and inclusive school environment requires interventions that target actions both within and beyond the classroom to address harmful gender and social norms that negatively impact girls and other vulnerable groups. In both locations, the project took a broad approach to target safety and discrimination issues, which included:

- At the community level, BRICE cultivated and strengthened community protection bodies and organised community dialogues. At the school level, BRICE incentivised the creation of school improvement and child protection plans and trained school-level actors including teachers and mothers in schools.
- BRICE contributed to a more gender-sensitive and inclusive school environment through direct actions, including the establishment of gender clubs and the provision of menstrual hygiene structures and resources. Through gender assessments and consultation with project beneficiaries, gender concerns were integrated into project activities such as SIP and teacher training.

Somalia: after school environment

Across the project lifetime, BRICE focused on creating, mobilising and strengthening community-based structures in order to improve child safety at school.

80% (48/60) of survey respondents in Somalia felt that the community was ‘involved’ (32) or ‘very involved’ (13) in helping to make the school a safe place for children to learn. CPCs, composed of community volunteers, including parents, were formed for schools in the regions of Nugal/Garowe, Mudug/Galkayo, and Bari/Bosaso. Over the course of the project, 261 CPC members were given training on topics including child protection and creating safe learning environments, knowledge from which they were able to cascade to other CPC members at the school level.¹⁵⁶ Feedback from parents and teachers on the role of CPCs was highly positive - respondents mentioned that since the formation of CPCs, more child protection concerns and violations are being reported in the area.¹⁵⁷ CPCs also played a vital role during COVID in mobilising the community to protect vulnerable children.¹⁵⁸

BRICE organised community dialogue sessions to improve social cohesion, recognising that the safety of school environments was a direct reflection of the safety of the wider community. Sessions occurred throughout the lifetime of the project and included both in-person dialogue events and radio programming awareness campaigns. Dialogues were led primarily by the CPC/CEC members, and topics of discussion were on improving the school environment and learning experience, child protection (including inter-gender dialogue), advocacy for increased enrolment, sexual and gender-based violence awareness, and social cohesion and support for vulnerable groups in the community, among others.

The children are very safe within the community and in school. There was a lot of awareness and advocacy on child protection that was done by Relief international. There were community dialogue days where the community members were engaged in discussions on child protection. We the CPC members were doing the monthly dialogue days. - KII, community member, Somalia

Discussions with project beneficiaries highlight some key instances where community dialogues have led to tangible reductions in insecurity.¹⁵⁹

It has become safer, and insecurity has reduced. Five years ago in 2017, there were pirates who came and settled on the other side of our village, armed with all kinds of weapons. Part of the elders within the community had been supporting them. Schools were closed as a result of that. Later on, the community members had a dialogue and discussion on the disadvantage of allowing this group to settle in our neighbourhood. They later agreed on moving to another place and the school was reopened. - FGD, teacher, Somalia

The monitoring of the dialogues through the project’s frequent reporting highlighted some best practices to better magnify their effect on the community:

¹⁵⁶ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

¹⁵⁷ FGD, Teacher, Somalia

¹⁵⁸ COVID-19 Adaptation Plan

¹⁵⁹ FGD, Teacher, Somalia

- Securing community buy-in for tangible activities that address protection risks (e.g., school improvement plans) through awareness-raising events.
- Working with community stakeholders to include topical issues from community dialogues in religious services and broadcasting them to local radio stations to ensure messages have a wider reach.
- Ensuring CPCs monitor discussions to note key issues and allow them to define future priorities for training and programming.¹⁶⁰

However, project staff reflected on the positive, but less likely transformative effects of these dialogues because of the fact that tangible change would require longer-term investment and more specialised staff trained in social cohesion than the project was able to offer.¹⁶¹ Social norm change takes time, and the project supported the foundation for these changes to occur through these conversations and actions.

CECs were also mobilised to conduct risk mapping and co-create School Safety Plans (SSPs) which were funded through the project, resulting in infrastructural improvements and additional school facilities.

An important best practice from this activity was that children were highly involved in the school hazard mapping and general creation of the SSPs ensuring a high level of student satisfaction with school safety improvements resulting from the SSPs.¹⁶² In particular, students mentioned elements such as the introduction of solar lights and fences around the school perimeter as additions to their school which have improved their feelings of safety.¹⁶³ This has been echoed by teachers and community members; 88% feel that student safety at school has improved compared to 4 years ago.¹⁶⁴ Anecdotally, some community members even implied that school safety improvements have encouraged parents to transfer their children to BRiCE schools.¹⁶⁵

The perimeter wall was also security for children, even parents felt their children would be very safe in school, and some even transferred their children to our school. - KII, community member, Somalia

Ethiopia: Safer school environment

In Gambella, community-led child protection structures already existed in both host and refugee communities prior to the project; BRiCE focused on supporting and strengthening existing structures rather than creating new ones.¹⁶⁶

School protection and safeguarding structures/mechanisms had previously been established through a number of actors and organisations in Gambella, including the REB, UNHCR, and UNICEF, yet the mechanisms were independent and not standardised in their approach. The BRiCE project facilitated the various actors working on child protection to unify their approach, standardising school safeguarding guidelines and codes of conduct across Gambella.¹⁶⁷

A training plan for CPC members in the refugee context and the CCC members in the host community context in Gambella was designed collaboratively, based on the existing needs of the communities. This training proved successful throughout the course of the project lifetime in Year 4 for instance, training on issues related to school safety and child protection was provided to 492 CPC and CCC members with test results showing a 28% improvement in understanding amongst participants.¹⁶⁸ The community was also engaged in school safety with the provision of Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction and conflict management training. This programme was developed with the DRR department of Gambella, the Regional Education Bureau and the DRR regional office and 227 regional officers were trained in Year 2 of the project.¹⁶⁹ Results from these actions are positive; when asked, 91% of survey respondents felt the community was ‘very involved’ (47) or ‘involved’ (9) in helping to make the school a safer place for children.¹⁷⁰

BRiCE expanded the pre-existing Mothers in Schools programme to cover both refugee and host communities to address school safety and child well-being.

The programme, which was operational in refugee camps prior to BRiCE, included payment of and training for school mothers.¹⁷¹ Students, teachers and community stakeholders were highly enthusiastic about Mothers in Schools citing their

¹⁶⁰ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

¹⁶¹ KII Plan International Staff

¹⁶² Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

¹⁶³ FGD, Students, Somalia; FGD, Students, Somalia

¹⁶⁴ Quant Survey

¹⁶⁵ KII, Community member, Somalia

¹⁶⁶ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 2), 2020.

¹⁶⁷ Plan International, BRiCE Project achievement Presentation: Final learning Event (31.10.2022), [PPT] 2022.

¹⁶⁸ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

¹⁶⁹ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 2), 2020.

¹⁷⁰ Telephone survey respondent, Ethiopia

¹⁷¹ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 1), 2019.

important contributions to improving child wellbeing. School Mothers also played a particularly important role when it came to helping girls feel safe during menstruation.¹⁷²

Shyness and feeling shame about menstruation can also be a big challenge because a girl cannot tell anyone about her menstrual period unless her mother. But now in this school, we have mothers /caretakers in this school. If something happens to any girl, they can be informed in order to prepare the room for this girl to spend some hours until the bleeding stops. – FGD, teacher, Ethiopia

The development of SIPs for ECCD centres and primary schools in Gambella included social cohesion components, focused on bringing both refugee and host communities together, along with efforts to address school safety.

In year 1 of BRiCE, a high number of trainings took place on SIP development which brought together target communities, including participants from a number of ethnic groups (including Nuel and Anyuak). Report documentation states that “this approach was designed to promote the peaceful coexistence of the communities, through a mutual understanding and recognition of common needs.”¹⁷³ The SIPs themselves also had positive implications for the safety of schools. Over the course of the project, the 15 primary schools were supported with infrastructural improvements including the building of fences and toilets, improvements which many students highlighted as having increased their feelings of safety at school.¹⁷⁴ Overall, 93% of respondents feel that student safety has improved over the past 4 years, with changes to the infrastructure of the schools cited by many as a determining factor.¹⁷⁵

Complementing this work, over the course of the project, BRiCE organised a variety of community-wide events and dialogues, often aligning with Internationally recognised ‘days’ such as the Day of African Child, International Women’s Day, 16 days of activism for No Violence against Women and Children Campaign, and International Refugee Day. The events encouraged and recognised women’s and girls’ equality, talents, views, ideas and thoughts, and some, such as the International Day of the Girl Child, focused on raising awareness on the prevention of child marriage and the importance of girls’ education.¹⁷⁶ Community dialogues were also organised following a basic conflict resolution and peacebuilding approach.¹⁷⁷ While such events and dialogues effectively included high numbers of community members in both host and refugee contexts – for example in Year 4 alone an estimated 41,786 community members participated in different activities and campaigns¹⁷⁸ - there was an acknowledgement within the project team that peaceful coexistence programs require more time and expertise than BRiCE had access to, much like in Puntland; the project's efforts in creating community level safety were positive but not highly effective.¹⁷⁹

We’re safer here because there is a school fence, classroom, and toilets. But before NGOs implemented their activities in this school, I felt unsafe since there were no learning classrooms, we were studying outside under the tree, and also in the time there was no school fence, unknown individuals would come here and harm students. - FGD, male student, Ethiopia

Somalia: Gender sensitivity and inclusion

In Puntland, girls have benefited from targeted activities such as GLNs and the provision of menstrual products to address issues of inclusion.

Observations made by project staff and key stakeholders highlighted the effectiveness of the leadership networks in increasing girls' confidence with public speaking and heightened awareness of issues targeted in life skills training.¹⁸⁰ Several examples were shared during KIIs where Girls Leadership members took decisive action to engage with the community for the benefit of their peers inspired by the GLN’s, which points to encouraging and sustainable results. However, GLNs did suffer in some schools from a lack of female teachers to run them.

¹⁷² FGD, Teachers, Ethiopia

¹⁷³ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 1), 2019.

¹⁷⁴ FGD, Male Students, Ethiopia

¹⁷⁵ Telephone survey respondent, Ethiopia

¹⁷⁶ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid*

¹⁷⁸ *ibid*

¹⁷⁹ KII, Plan International Staff

¹⁸⁰ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 2), 2020.



STUDENT VOICES

I was among the students who are used to being taken to hotel halls and given training on child rights and safety. After training we used to come to school and tell other students what we have learnt. - Case study, female student, Somalia

Relief used to train us on children's rights, and they used to tell us that a child should not be beaten, like a child should have a right to good health, family, education, protection from corporal punishment, psychological abuse, and war. – FGD, female student, Somalia

If there's one component of the BRiCE project that did wonders in schools, it is the Girls Leadership Network. There were girls for example that went to local banks advocating, saying that we have ten girls who are not coming to school because they don't have school fees. And we have one bank in one of the locations in Galkayo that responded and paid for a group of girls. They were also out, going into the community, engaging in radio advocacy on protection of girls and the importance of girls going to school, and focusing on school tissues of safety, also for issues affecting boys as well. So, this was one of the, you know, outstanding pieces of work that we did in the BRiCE project - empowering girls and getting them to be you know, to be agents of change within the school but they also went outside in the community to advocate and got some good results. - KII, Relief International, Somalia

The provision of menstrual hygiene products also had a transformative impact on girls' attendance and participation in school, particularly considering the fact that stigma and a lack of access to menstrual hygiene products had been significant barriers for girls to access education. This action was one of the most highly spoken of in FGDs, with several community members drawing a relationship between the availability of menstrual hygiene products in schools and increases in girls' attendance.¹⁸¹ There was even evidence that the focus on supporting girls through their periods had an effect on sensitising boy students to the struggles girls can go through at this time.

Now the girls are provided with tampons, innerwear and they can come to school without thinking about staining their uniforms. They can take part in any kind of activities they want while in school. Now even the boys in school are empowered and they support the girls and do not laugh at them when they see their stained clothes. - KII, community member, Somalia

As well as supporting directly gender-focused actions, BRiCE aimed to mainstream a gender transformative approach into activities, including SIP creation and training sessions.¹⁸²

A gender lens was mainstreamed into activities surrounding SIP creation, including training head teachers, school management members and PTA members on the importance of incorporating more gender-sensitive components into the plans. This would have been more effective if it had started at the beginning of project implementation rather than part-way through. By Year 4 of the project, only 22/29 (76%) of BRiCE project schools had met the School Development Plan criteria for gender considerations which were slightly below the overall project target (80%).¹⁸³

Training for teachers, school management and community stakeholders included gender-sensitive and inclusive teaching pedagogies among many others. Stakeholders such as CPC members were able to cascade that training to members and utilise learning to create wider community awareness on issues such as sexual and gender-based violence prevention and safeguarding responses. Positive outcomes of these trainings included an increase in the number of sexual assault reports being shared with CPCs in IDP settlements, and responsive action from CPC members; holding meetings with the police, legal service providers and government representatives to settle cases.¹⁸⁴ In conversation with teachers and community members, it was highlighted that training conducted under BRiCE has had a positive effect on parental attitudes towards girls' education. Of survey respondents, 87% (52/60) felt that attitudes toward girls' education have improved compared to four years ago.

Before, the parents thought that there was no value in educating a girl because the girls were supposed to stay and help their mother in the household chores. Relief organisation partnered with the government and PTA committee in creating awareness about the importance of educating the girls. They went to villages, cities, and schools where they educated everyone about gender equality (that a girl is as important as a boy) and ensured

¹⁸¹ KII, Community member, Somalia

¹⁸² According to Plan's Gender Marker assessment carried out in April 2022, the BRiCE project, in both countries, scored as reaching a 'Gender Transformative' level throughout the project's planning and implementation – this score is determined as an aggregate across the six elements of gender transformative and inclusive work and five project processes to support gender transformative and inclusive work.

¹⁸³ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*

that the girls were given opportunities to education so as to have a bright future. Now the parents have seen the value of educating the girls and have brought them to schools. - KII, headteacher, Somalia

However, in FGDs, girl students spoke frequently of being asked by parents to prioritise household chores over education. This was particularly true of lower-income families in IDP settlements, where the pressure for girls to take care of the house while all parents find work was higher and more detrimental to girls' educational achievement.



STUDENT VOICES

I don't like house chores, I love studying. My older siblings tell me this is my chance to create a good future for myself. I would like to be a teacher. They are in high school. Being a teacher helps you to teach kids and motivate them to become whoever they want. – FGD, female student, Somalia

Many children in this community do not have the opportunity to learn, especially if they are girls, many children living in poverty face many barriers to education, especially high for girls, most parents in the area find it difficult for them to keep up with the costs of transportation, textbooks, or uniforms for the girl's education. Parents also often rely on girls' income to support the household and sending a girl to school means they spend less time helping in the home. If families can't afford the costs of school, they're more likely to send boys than girls. Families will also allow their girls to enter child marriages if they can no longer afford to provide for them. - KII, guardian, Somalia

Ethiopia: Gender sensitivity and inclusion

In Gambella, BRICE pursued a similar mixture of direct and integrated actions related to improving school environments for girls, including Gender Clubs, which addressed confidence and learning in girls.

When asked, 95% (58/61) of respondents felt that attitudes towards girls' education had improved over the past 4 years. Of note, Gender Clubs were established in 15 schools across host and target communities with 549 (412 girls and 137 boys) participants overall. Guiding the methodology of these clubs, BRICE used the 'Champions of Change' approach pioneered by Plan International previously. The effectiveness of the clubs' focus on female empowerment was evident in multiple instances. For example, the establishment of menstrual hygiene rooms in schools came as a result of a consultation with Gender Club members during a BRICE project Gender Assessment along with other club-level activities in which girls articulated their need for support.¹⁸⁵ Students were incredibly positive about their experiences of the clubs, with students articulating links between their involvement in the clubs and increases in their confidence levels and grade attainment.



STUDENT VOICES

I have many good memories [of school] but the girls club we attend twice a week in the afternoon is the best one for me. It makes us more excited, and it helps us in many ways to build our confidence. I am really happy, especially last year because my grades were improving and my father was happy about it and he even bought me a bag, a very beautiful one. - Case Study, female Student, Ethiopia

The building of the menstrual hygiene rooms inspired by the Gender Club members, also proved transformative for project beneficiaries. Teachers noted that hygiene rooms had improved girl students' ability to focus on their schoolwork, and students valued the opportunity the rooms provided to get space from boy students during this time. However, some feedback from students hinted that girls still struggled to deal with the attitudes of their male classmates about menstruation, with many noting instances of teasing and bullying during use of the rooms. It was therefore important that activities around menstrual hygiene were accompanied by efforts to sensitise boys to this issue, showing that more social and gender norm work could likely benefit project activities.



STUDENT VOICES

My worst memories till now, we still face it, there is a room here for girls in our school where when we [the girls] are on our time of the month, any girl who is a part of the girl club can go there to take a rest or take a nap with pain killers and pads provided for us by Plan International. This is very helpful, but the thing is that because the boys know about that room, they will make fun of you when they see you going to the room or coming out of the room. They will sit next to that room to see who is in or out to laugh at you because it's so sad and many girls have already stopped using or going to it because they are embarrassed. - Case study, female, Ethiopia

¹⁸⁵ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

As in Somalia, BRiCE effectively ensured that gender concerns were integrated into mainstream activities by conducting Gender Assessments throughout the project to ensure activities were adapted appropriately.

The findings from these Gender Assessments were shared with the Education Sector group in Gambella. An important area of adaptation was teacher training efforts, which were run with an increasingly sensitive focus on gender as the project developed.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, by the final year of the BRiCE, project staff had begun to start working with the REB to advocate for the incorporation of specific gender aspects in the SIPs, however, it was an area that needs further engagement and a longer-term approach to come up with expected results.¹⁸⁷

3.3.4 Major drivers and systemic structural barriers to objectives and results

The project's drivers and barriers to objectives and results were largely found to be aligned with the existing drivers and barriers as found in the project's proposal, annual reports, and the Midline evaluation. These are summarised below:

Table 7: Summary of drivers and barriers to objectives

Major drivers of objectives and results	Systemic structural barriers to objectives and results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged and supportive communities Pre-existing relationships with governments Strong mechanisms for continuous monitoring and assessment Effective coordination with other NGOs/ International Organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deeply rooted social attitudes Socio-economic context Limited financial capacity of governments High turnover of project staff/project associated staff

Table 8: Major drivers of objectives and results

Engaged and supportive communities	Strong levels of engagement and support from the local community. was evident in the pre-existing social structures such as CPCs and PTAs which the project strengthened, and only grew as the project matured. Quantitative survey results from Ethiopia in particular showed high levels of satisfaction within the community regarding the extent to which they were involved BRiCE activities: 80% of respondents reported having been consulted on the implementation of the project. ¹⁸⁸
Pre-existing relationships with governments	The BRiCE project was aided by the strong relationships that implementing partners cultivated with regional governments. In KILs, government stakeholders showed strong support for the activities of BRiCE teams in both locations. Events such as the secondment of an EMIS expert to the REB in Gambella, and the support BRiCE provided to Puntland MoEHE government to merge their departments, illustrated the high level of trust BRiCE implementers managed to garner.
Strong mechanisms for continuous monitoring and assessment	The project design necessitated a high number of monitoring visits, assessments, and annual reports. Integrating continuous assessment effectively drove key objectives by creating moments for reflection and adaptation. Examples of best practices include the re-design of gender clubs in Gambella following project-level gender assessments, and adaptations to ABE (slimming class sizes, limiting to just girl students) in Puntland.
Effective coordination with other NGOs/ International Organisations	BRiCE benefitted from the wider operational contexts in which they operated by engaging with other NGOs and international organisations in both locations through sector groups and working committees. The project was able to utilise sector groups as sounding boards and strategic partners to drive project objectives. This was highly evident in Gambella during the COVID-19 pandemic where actors including Plan International under BRiCE, worked efficiently to mobilise resources while avoiding service duplication/loss. In Puntland, RI drew extensively on the expertise and clout of the education sector group to review and implement the new Code of Conduct in schools across the region.

¹⁸⁶ KII Education Bureau, Gambella

¹⁸⁷ KII Plan International Staff

¹⁸⁸ Telephone survey

Table 9: Systemic structural barriers to objectives and results

Deeply rooted social attitudes	The BRiCE project operated in communities with some deeply rooted social norms antithetical to the objectives of the project. This includes attitudes toward gender roles in the home, early marriage, and child labour. While the BRiCE project made important steps to address the impacts of these attitudes on equal access to quality education, they were systemic and deeply rooted, and therefore impacted the overall effectiveness of the project. Conversations with female students in both locations revealed that even with the strides made by BRiCE, many still face enormous pressure to prioritise household chores and marriage over education.
Socio-economic context	The BRiCE project was implemented during a delicate time in both Gambella and Puntland. Supporting systems - political, economic, and social - faced massive challenges including drought, conflict, and COVID-19. The project adapted well to respond to such situations, but it was impossible to negate all impacts of these structural issues on project effectiveness. Examples included drought in Puntland, which left communities, particularly IDP communities, with lower income levels increasing the potential for families to take their children out of school to work or seek profitable marriages for their daughters.
Limited financial capacity of governments	The BRiCE project effectively garnered the support of government bodies in both Puntland and Gambella. However, both governments operate with minimal resources. This systemic issue lowered the possibility that the governments will be able to spearhead the continuation of many activities and best practices put in place by BRiCE, limiting overall effectiveness from a sustainability angle. Lack of government finances also trickled down to teacher and school-level commitment to carrying out the objectives of the project. This was most clear around the issue of teacher pay, the lack of which, was mentioned frequently by project beneficiaries in Puntland as a deterrent to providing quality education.
High turnover of project staff/ project associated staff	The propensity of the humanitarian/development sector to have high staff turnover proved a barrier to project success in some cases. Most notably, high staff turnover within the project team hampered effective communication between different consortium actors and reduced the availability of institutional knowledge about the project.

3.3.5 Enhancing evidence and understanding through the research component

While the research component, in which the University of Sussex implemented a longitudinal study into the education system in Puntland and Gambella, was resource-intensive and experienced delays and minor issues, it uncovered valuable insights which were expected to inform future studies and provide the governments and other humanitarian/development actors with information on much-needed interventions.

At the time of writing, Phase 1 and 2 reports had been produced and presented at the country level, along with stakeholder meetings and learning events. The research component also contributed to three conference presentations, a blog post, a book chapter, and a vignette in a compilation, which highlighted key findings. The Phase 3 report will be completed by December 2022, with corresponding learning events for dissemination.

Key research learnings from the longitudinal, purposively sampled, mixed methods research¹⁸⁹ by the research teams¹⁹⁰ showed that teachers in both countries were young career professionals with relatively low years of teaching experience, and they generally wished to continue teaching for their career and were satisfied with their working conditions generally, though salaries were a frequent area of dissatisfaction. CPD was generally well-received by teachers, though many teachers report there being inadequate support after training to implement what was learned. Training did not reach all teachers, and formal recognition of their accomplishments in attendance should be provided. The academic potential of learners was generally viewed negatively by teachers (45% of teachers in Ethiopia and 47.5% of teachers in Somalia believed that the learners in their class have a bright future ahead of them, while teachers in both countries strongly believed that poorer learners were unable to do as well as the richer learners in class), and they generally did not believe education was equally important for girls as it is for boys (31% of teachers in Ethiopia and 42.5% in Somalia believe schooling is equally important for girls and boys, while the majority of teachers in both countries believe that girls are

¹⁸⁹ Using research tools including a learner questionnaire, a teacher questionnaire, teaching and learning case studies, and COVID-19 case studies.

¹⁹⁰ From the results of the Phase II reports

unable to do as well as boys in school). Teachers were also overwhelmingly male in both countries – 70% of teachers in Gambella and 86% of teachers in Puntland.¹⁹¹

Rote learning was found to be common, and logic in maths learning was not always evident; memorisation appeared to be more common. Learners were nearly all taught about respecting others, irrespective of their nationality or language; thus, social cohesion was being taught in schools. Languages (English and Nuer) in Ethiopia showed learners scoring high; in Somalia, learners scored low in literacy. Maths in both countries showed low performance from learners. While students generally responded positively about their teachers and education, some students were afraid of being hit by their teachers and many were uncomfortable asking questions of their teachers. Teacher data reinforced this with 16 of 40 (40%) teachers interviewed in Somalia believing it was fine to hit learners who were naughty and 47 of 178 (26.4%) in Ethiopia believed the same; 90.9% of students who were asked were not hit by teachers. The overwhelming majority of learners' families (86.6%) moved into the camps specifically to access schools.

This research provided insights into education in fragile contexts, and for the targeted communities, has the potential to contribute to the shaping of education policy going forward. The Phase 3 report and future dissemination efforts will be key for the research component's impact.

Challenges in contracting, context and COVID-19 were offset in many ways through an adapted approach but affected the effectiveness of the research component.

The research component was initially stalled due to contracting issues, as those were directly handled by Plan and RI. With little decision-making power and no understanding of budgets, the research component met frustrations through third-party negotiations. Qualitative respondents also pointed to there being a lack of information about the target communities prior to fieldwork, amplified by the lack of researchers familiar with the contexts. This left the research team less informed about the way that education works in the camps and among target communities. Research team respondents suggested that a pre-research mission to validate research methods and samples would have helped the teams to familiarise themselves with the work and potentially avoid sampling challenges.

Mobility of the targeted populations was also a challenge as the original research design followed a cohort over a number of years, which ended up not working as planned. For example, a respondent noted how "In year two, half of them (teachers and students) went back to South Sudan. And you lose half your sample. Simple, and there is nothing you can do about it."¹⁹²

Further, University of Sussex team members were unable to go in-country during the pandemic, which limited the methodological aspects of data collection and impacted the inability to meet colleagues. This limitation on the research impacted the team's ability to collaborate and share learnings as effectively as planned and was frequently raised by consortium team members as a project limitation.

University of Sussex staff faced challenges in their chosen research modalities, impacting the efficiency of the data collection. Gender representation among respondents in the research was unequal, pointing to deeper systemic challenges.

The research component utilised a multistage purposively selected sample which, even as written within the study's limitations, was unable to be generalised for all refugees in Gambella or all IDPs in Puntland (or all learners in either country for that matter). However, despite the Midterm Review criticizing the research component's sampling, representation was not necessarily the purpose; rather, it was to gain insight into the education systems in these contexts. With COVID-19 and the inability to access the same sets of students in subsequent years due to school closures and dropouts, research was moved from primarily quantitative means in the first year to largely qualitative means afterwards. Qualitative data was added in Phase II alongside the introduction of digital data collection tools which supplemented Phase I findings. The addition of qualitative data helped the research component to collect information which situates the quantitative data within important local perceptions on education, such as by the inclusion of policymakers and school administrators.

The research component did not adequately consider the equal representation of gender among its respondents. For example, in Ethiopia, girls constituted 20% of learners in the sample ranging from a low of 15.4% in one school to a high of 24.3% in another. These rates of gender representation contradict the gender balance described by respondents in this study and in the literature, which suggests a much more equal balance between boys and girls. This should have a significant impact on the data and should be explained in the third research report.

3.3.6 Building research capacities in target locations

¹⁹¹ University of Sussex, University of Gambella, *Safe and quality education for girls and boys in displacement situations in Ethiopia and Somalia: Findings from the Second Phase of research in Gambella, Ethiopia*, 2022.; University of Sussex, Peace and Development Research Centre (PDRC), *Safe and quality education for girls and boys in displacement situations in Ethiopia and Somalia: Findings from the Second Phase of research in Puntland, Somalia*. 2022.

¹⁹² KII, Research consortium

The BRiCE project directly led to significant improvements in research capacity through collaborations with local partners.

The capacity of Gambella University and PDRC staff was strengthened through collaboration with the University of Sussex, due to the specific focus on research methods, fieldwork (including the use of technology), and writing reports. On top of this, cross-country sharing on overcoming research obstacles took place. Building the capacity of the research partners in Somalia and Ethiopia provided each country with local researchers who could enact change within their communities. With sharing opportunities present, they were able to learn from each other and inform best practices.

A strong relationship developed between the University of Sussex, Gambella University and PDRC as a result of comprehensive training and collaboration. That said, the relationship between the University of Sussex and PDRC was reported as more strongly developed than the relationship between the University of Sussex and Gambella University. Plan staff noted that the relationship with and capacity of Gambella University was slow to develop (particularly in the first two years) is due to a lack of commitment from the University and ineffective focal persons at Gambella University, both of which improved as the project progressed.¹⁹³

3.3.7 Disseminating research and knowledge to key stakeholders

The research component was only somewhat effective in its ability to share and influence, specifically among the consortium staff to improve the project's implementation and through a series of broader learning events.

There has been some sharing of research findings to inform important changes required in the BRiCE project through the research coordinating group, the consortium coordinating group, and country-level and cross-country-level coordinating groups and steering committees. Research findings were used to inform programmatic decision-making on a few occasions, for example, with the adjustment of the English language in the Somali CPD programmes. Additionally, the BRiCE project helped to expose the research teams to programmes they were not originally aware of, leading to greater depth in the sampling and data.

Dissemination workshops helped to showcase the research; annual learning events were also important and took place among education actors, donors, and ministry officials. The MoE in Puntland has become a key partner of the PDRC supposedly as has RRS with Gambella University and Plan.¹⁹⁴ A number of sharing events have taken place and relationships have been established, with the governments taking an interest in the research. However, missed opportunities for sharing were described by respondents, particularly due to the impact of COVID-19 on in-person dissemination. Respondents note that while behind the scenes there are hints that governments and other stakeholders are listening to the results, no concrete successes have come as a result of the dissemination of the research.

Respondents noted that greater sharing could have benefitted the BRiCE project, as both the programmatic interventions and the research component could have harnessed each other's strengths more to make greater programmatic and research shifts to improve the outcomes. Although output indicators under Output 3.3 (*Dissemination of learning*, which was focused on evidence and knowledge from the research component particularly) did not directly target sharing learnings from the research component among the consortium, this was noted as a potential missed opportunity to better embed the research component within the broader project. The research would have needed to be designed with this in mind –knowledge feeding into continual improvements in the BRiCE project. Without such, the research component was limited in its ability to influence and create impact.

With enhanced evidence on education in these varied and fragile contexts the research team has begun dissemination and has an excellent opportunity to share findings in the coming months.

The research component of the BRiCE project was a novel approach to better understanding education in crisis-affected environments and uncovered a range of findings which should be of high interest to education providers and policymakers in both countries. These messages have been shared at a number of conferences (UKFIET 2021, CIES April 2022, BAICE September 2022), a blog post for NORRAG, a chapter for the book 'Continuous professional teacher development in sub-Saharan Africa: mapping recent theories, models, and practices', through vignettes contributed to the book titled 'Teaching and learning resources for navigating ethical dilemmas during Education in Emergencies fieldwork: Compendium of Vignettes', and through the Phase I and II reports and their corresponding stakeholder presentations and learning events at country level.

While this evaluation was unable to document the effectiveness of these dissemination efforts, plans were in place for more regional, country-level, and international sharing of the findings, and these can be avenues for further partnerships to be formed.

¹⁹³ Email correspondence, Plan International staff, November 2022.

¹⁹⁴ Plan International, BRiCE Project achievement Presentation: Final learning Event (31.10.2022), [PPT] 2022.

3.4 Efficiency

The efficiency of the BRiCE project was evaluated through 1) the extent to which the chosen implementation mechanisms were conducive to achieving the project results, 2) how well the project modalities adapted to changing contexts over the course of the project, and 3) the extent to which the project was efficient in utilising the project budget. The following highlights key takeaways from the detailed discussion below.

Table 10. Efficiency findings – key takeaways

Efficiency	<p>3.4.1 The project's chosen implementation mechanisms were efficient, though a more carefully planned inception phase may have helped to avoid contractual issues and challenges in planning with local communities and ministries.</p> <p>3.4.2 Despite the challenges that COVID-19 presented and the complex security situations in both target areas, the BRiCE project adapted fairly well to the changing contexts through comprehensive adaptation strategies aimed at mitigating risks.</p> <p>3.4.3 Overall, the project utilised the project budget according to plan but spending levels differed year on year with significant under-utilisation in year one due to delays in the implementation timeline. The project's budget was otherwise used conservatively and efficiently, with detailed records of spending kept.</p>
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3.4.1 Efficiency of chosen implementation mechanisms

Despite the implementation modalities being fairly developed, the project faced considerable difficulties and delays, which ultimately impacted reaching planned targets.

In the beginning, agreements with implementing partners had long delays and there were initial misunderstandings with the University of Sussex around roles and obligations. Challenges presented themselves in Ethiopia, where obtaining permission to work in Gambella refugee camps was protracted; in Somalia, RI was following on from an existing project which facilitated progress. The project generally relied upon strong and amicable relationships with key partners (government, RRS, UNHCR etc.) to move implementation along.

The project had a variety of complications; some of which were expected, including environmental challenges such as drought, a high staff turnover rate for non-research project activities, intermittent conflict, and working in fragile contexts, and some unexpected, such as COVID-19 and contracting issues. The project did well to mitigate the delays, with a no-cost extension until December 2022 allowing for the completion of all targeted activities. With this, the remaining activities were on track to be completed by the end of the contract.

I would say that our project was basically a successful project because we are almost finished now. Mostly we finished on time, and by the end of February, we conducted almost 90% of the activities and we spent about 83-84% of the budget.¹⁹⁵ Now we are completing activities, are busy with activities, have already concluded 99% of them, and the budget is on the way to be spent at 100%. But if we are going on what I would consider the successful level of all our activities, as a percentage, let's say that it's probably around 65-70% of what we intended to do. It's still very successful, but it's not 100%. – KII, Plan International, Ethiopia

The limited timeframe compounded by early delays lead to some activities not reaching their intended impact. One example was the Gender Clubs initiative in Ethiopia. While Plan had worked on gender clubs in other projects under the Champions of Change approach in the BRiCE project, it was estimated to take about three years to see the results through the programme.¹⁹⁶ Having experienced initial delays in setting up the foundation for the project in schools meant that the gender clubs could not fully reach their targets and “it also proved that it takes time for these structures to form and function.”¹⁹⁷

The consortia staff in each country made continued improvements which led to both monitoring systems and implementation mechanisms improving over time, contributing to the success of the project.

Prior reports noted that the project had weaknesses in the internal monitoring systems and the implementation mechanisms, leading to the project being less efficient overall than it could have been. Positive changes can be attributed, at least in part, to the expertise of the individual experts and managers engaged in the project. These monitoring systems were different between Plan and RI, and though the quality assurance systems were in place to track and measure

¹⁹⁵ Around 95% of the project budget, at the time of writing, has been utilised

¹⁹⁶ KII, Plan.

¹⁹⁷ Plan International. Year Four Annual Report. 2022. p. 13.

activities, outputs, and resources that the project uses, a common approach would have increased the efficiency of the monitoring.

A clear internal weakness at the start of the project was related to not enough time being given to building relationships among the consortium and understanding the consortium as a whole.

One issue raised by a number of respondents was the short inception phase, which was a funder requirement for the project deliverables. Having a short inception phase limited the BRiCE team in terms of deeply understanding their own and their colleagues' roles on the project, as well as the context within which they were working. Respondents noted that there could have been increased efficiency should the University of Sussex team have been directly overseeing the PDRC and Gambella University teams, and this is one way where efficiency was lacking. In addition, there was a lack of local expertise brought into the project from the start, which would have helped the project teams to better understand the contexts and work more effectively together. These relationships matured over time but led to some frustrations in the early years.

Further, the wide focus of the programme was challenging to tackle the nexus areas effectively and efficiently in refugee and IDP contexts. With 29 activities in each country, the BRiCE project was a complex and multifaceted endeavour. Over the implementation period, an estimated 23-24 activities were completed to a high standard, as per project staff, with the other ones having been carried out but not as efficiently as possible.¹⁹⁸ Consortium respondents pointed to the project having ambitious targets, short timeframes, and unpredictability through the project timeline, as well as a lack of a strong start as hindering factors for the activities which were not as successful.

While the research team had strong and stable staffing, with efficient capacity building and development through the project's lifecycle, the rest of the BRiCE project had only a few staff members who were with the project for its entirety, including a limited number of needed specialists.

High staff turnover was commonly cited as one of the project's biggest challenges. Efficient delivery could have been improved through stronger turnover protocols and procedures, ensuring smooth transitions between staff as they leave and join. Further, a number of project staff identified the lack of specialists as a concern for the project, for example, around child protection and supporting students with disabilities. For child protection-related activities, there were still positive impacts seen through the actions of the project, but relating to supporting students with disabilities, there was minimal impact though the project proposal explicitly called for targeted interventions for children with disabilities, such as community training on the importance of education and targeted teaching interventions and training.¹⁹⁹ As project designs emerged from funder stipulations on staffing, staffing models should be presented at the application stage and then negotiated when the funding contract is agreed to support the broadest reach.

The staff we had in this project was limited, you know, we don't have a specialised education supervisor or community mobilisers supporting this project, we don't have a technical child protection officer, we were borrowing from other projects. If I were going to redo this project, one of the things I would consider would be having dedicated child protection technical staff to support the project. - KII, Plan International, Ethiopia

Implementation of some project elements was unclear due to lack of clarity in roles and approach and limited allocated resources.

Role overlap between the CEC/CPC/CCC members occurred in both countries, and this led to confusion among community members and project staff alike. The committees lacked clarity on their expected roles and the differences between committees were not articulated. Though the committees were defined by their government counterparts (for example, in Ethiopia, the CCC role was defined by the BoWSA and the CPC role was defined by UNHCR and RRS), the BRiCE project engagement modalities were less clear. This was especially true in Somalia, where the CECs and CPCs were working in both IDP and host communities, while in Ethiopia, the CCCs were in host communities and CPCs in refugee communities.

Firstly, I would integrate the community structure into one so for example the child protection committee and child education committee, I would have those as one structure- to build the capacity together. Would have been easier in terms of not getting confused about CECs, CPCs, and the differences between them. - KII, Relief International

Social cohesion exercises were highly ambitious but often outside the stated scope of BRiCE and the stated focus on young learners' safety and education. In Gambella, these activities were done in person through events, dialogues, and community gatherings, and were fairly successful in promoting meaningful peaceful coexistence. The participants were able to provide feedback through their participation in the events, leading to an understanding by the project staff that the events led to successful outcomes. However, in Puntland, these activities typically took place through radio programming, noted by project stakeholders as not being particularly effective. However, reaching over 500,000 people through radio

¹⁹⁸ KII, Plan

¹⁹⁹ European Commission. ANNEX A.2 – Full application form: Reference: EuropeAid/154521/DH/ACT/Multi. 2016.

campaigns was arguably an efficient mechanism for reaching approximately one-third of the population. The difference in programming decisions was not made clear to the evaluation team. In the BRICE project, these activities were not provided adequate resources or energy to be highly effective.²⁰⁰ Further, the planning for these activities was not done in an efficient manner, with Gambella having planned and rolled out the activities in a much more systematic way, and consortium respondents noting that Puntland's approach used learnings from the Gambella team to some extent.

As the midline report noted, the research component was complex and required a high investment in time and expertise, along with financial resources.

The research component required significant efforts in capacity building, training, and very lengthy analysis and writing periods. While the midline found the research component non-generalisable, the mixed methods nature of the research, as adapted in Phases II and III, was successful in producing learnings on these fragile contexts which were in line with research best practices, despite being unable to track students through their progression in primary school.

For a project of this size and magnitude, the research partners expressed frustrations over the lack of efficiency in budget utilisation and tightly managed budgets for the project. Plan staff clarified that Plan follows strict budgetary management procedures in line with funder requirements and best practices. This caused frustrations at the University of Sussex level; the university subsidised the project at times and allowed a staff member to travel on school credit cards. Research team members did not know if they had a budget for dissemination events, nor how to access this budget. Establishing an efficient system for handling project finances across teams was essential and did not appear to have been set up appropriately, especially at the start of the project.

Although the consortium had regularly scheduled meetings at a variety of scales (i.e., country-level, across both countries, and inclusive of the EU and UK teams), and acknowledging the fact that these primarily online meetings did take place more often in the later years of the project, these meetings were, according to respondents, insufficient to fully share productive exchanges outlining strategic learnings from the varied contexts. Still, through a large number of reviews, reports, and evaluations, including internal quarterly and semi-annual reports, the BRICE project managed to enable sharing frequently.

3.4.2 Utilisation of the project budget

The project's budget was utilised efficiently and generally according to the project plan (despite the impact of COVID-19 on the project's original plans), with implementing partners able to carry out the planned activities. However, challenges were noted by respondents around the limited budget for a large number of activities, opaque budget lines among consortium members, and a focus on some activities more than others.

An overall summary of spending can be seen in Box 3 below.

Box 3: Project spending summary

The project underutilised the project budget in year one, with only 9% spending due to a longer than expected inception phase, extended three months beyond the planned inception length, and security problems causing delays in the start of project activities. In the second year, project spending was sustained and coordinated well, with 30% utilisation. Year three saw a decrease in spending due to COVID-19-related delays and a devaluation of the Ethiopian Birr, with 21% utilisation. Finally, year four brought 26% spending, leaving the project with 86% spent after four years. The remaining 14% has been reallocated for the no-cost extension period to be used to increase team capacities and continue work on some activities in Ethiopia.²⁰¹

In 2019, the budget underwent a significant change of more than 25% to the budget subheadings. These changes were to align the budget with the changing situations in the target areas and to accommodate support activities which were insufficiently resourced in the previous budget, such as monitoring, evaluation, and research costs.²⁰² With adaptive management techniques, the project's changing budget ultimately served the project well, with tactical changes to the logical framework and activities happening throughout the project.

The budget, as can be seen above, was not fully utilised at the planned rates. Significant initial delays and the onset of COVID-19 forced the project spending to adapt to the realities faced by the implementing partners. To some staff, funding was found to be inadequate to cover the project's needs, with multiple project staff noting the challenges a limited budget had on such an ambitious project, while for others, particularly in Ethiopia, the budget was adequate. Overspend occurred

²⁰⁰ KII, Plan

²⁰¹ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

²⁰² Plan International UK. Request for a Budget Amendment. 2019. (internal document)

in year three, particularly linked to salaries of staff and rental payments for the Plan International office in Gambella, and there was no evidence to suggest that the teams spent any further budget on non-expected costs.²⁰³

At the end what has been one of the big pros in our project, is the holistic approach in which we have combined education protection, gender transformation and peaceful coexistence. But that also it was a con that all these activities that we tried to put in place, it was absorbing part of our limited budget. And for not all of them, we have enough resources based on what we instead understood we needed. - KII, Plan International, Ethiopia

According to the funding, it was very low somehow as per the needs of the community and as well for the area that you will operate in. And as an example, in Puntland, we have been experiencing a frequency of droughts. And people are suffering with lack of water, lack of food, and even the reason that parents are sending their children to get something from the town is because of money, isn't it? So, if there were activities such as feeding programmes or water tracking programmes included in this programme, it may have been able to support these people to remain in their location and continue their education. - KII, Relief International, Somalia

A number of consortium staff suggested that the project was more ambitious than the resources could cover, which weaken the impact of certain activities.

In particular, the budget did not allow for engaging the range of experts that would have helped certain activities (e.g., peacebuilding/community cohesion and supporting students with disabilities). Respondents also said that the project aimed to cover too many activities in too short a timeframe. Project staff experienced regular turnover, leading to further challenges in human resources and institutional memory. Financial, human, and time constraints did play a role in the project's missed opportunities. The project was thus unable to adapt to meet all of the competing needs the people in the targeted communities faced, and the scope and budget for the project did not allow for these.

We understood that the lack is not the lack of resources, but the lack of time, because resources are not only in terms of money; they could be funds, could be expertise, could be time. And sometimes we were lacking expertise, sometimes we were lacking funds, sometimes we were lacking time. – KII, Plan International, Ethiopia

Further, some respondents felt funding allocation was not in line with community needs and voices. When describing how challenges in schools evolved over time, for example, the lack of a concrete fence around schools and the subsequent impact on the quality of teaching and control of children, teachers were not satisfied with Plan's response, as one respondent explains:

Yes, the school authorities informed Plan International about these challenges, but they told us that there is no budget and that we must wait for the budget when it is planned for the next year. - FGD, teacher, Ethiopia

The project's co-funding commitments, as regulated by the EU, whereby the implementing partners committed to ensuring that other donors contributed 20% of the funding to the project, impacted the project's efficiency in various ways.

As noted in the Midline report, Plan in Ethiopia had a much more linear plan, building on shorter-term projects in the area and using the BRICE project to build upon previous work done. This helped Plan to establish co-funding, for example, by having BRICE follow on from projects that were ending, and utilising staff funded by other humanitarian activities. In Somalia, BRICE was designed to build upon the DFID/FCDO-funded GEC project. However, with that project ending in 2020, staff positions were eliminated, and staff turnover took place, resulting in a significant loss of knowledge. The co-funding efficiency was lost for the most part in Somalia, leading to overstretched project teams.

University of Sussex staff faced a number of issues with the contractual modalities, leading to frustrations.

Further, University of Sussex staff were not in any control of the project's budget, with zero oversight over budgets, and were said to be utilising university resources to complete their activities. As an example, Plan and the EU were reported to have had negotiations and the research component's budget had immediately been cut by 30%.²⁰⁴ There was noted to be limited autonomy in terms of managing the research budget, and this is a significant oversight at the project's outset - the research team would have known best what is required in terms of budgeting and leaving this to RI or Plan to reach agreements and an MoU and payment plan on was an inefficient way to manage project budgets.²⁰⁵ The delays in arranging an MoU lasted nearly a year, and because of these challenges, the University's first trip was paid for initially by the school's credit card. The university team was not provided with budgetary information relating to expected spending for learning events and thus had no sense as to whether there was a budget for it or not. Greater transparency among the project consortium with regard to the budget, for example, with the clarification of the sub-to-prime relationship at the bid development stage, could have led to the project being run in a more efficient manner.

²⁰³ Plan International, ROM Report II, 2022

²⁰⁴ KII, University of Sussex

²⁰⁵ KII, University of Sussex

3.4.3 Adaptation of project modalities: COVID-19 & evolving security threats

Despite the challenges that COVID-19 presented and the complex security situations in both target areas, the BRICE project adapted fairly well to the changing contexts through comprehensive adaptation strategies aimed at mitigating risks to safety and education for children. However, differences between Ethiopia and Somalia were found, with Ethiopia being impacted less so than Somalia in terms of student education and protection, with a significant number of students dropping out of school due to school closures and being forced into labour or marriage. As well, in Somalia, many teachers who had not been paid for up to eight months (by external organisations but who were part of the ABE programme) were forced to discontinue teaching, leading to learning gaps.²⁰⁶

The COVID-19 pandemic was perhaps the most significant challenge faced throughout the lifecycle of the BRICE project, requiring project adaptation.

Worldwide, refugees and displaced people faced further vulnerabilities because of the pandemic, and in Ethiopia and Somalia, reduced availability of basic goods and medicines, reduced access to work and an acute loss of income, a lack of mobility, and increased stress were cited by refugees as issues of concern.²⁰⁷ With heightened impacts for refugee and IDP children, including increases in learning gaps, gender-based violence, psychosocial impacts, and additional vulnerabilities, particularly to girls and children with disabilities, the project planned a response which carefully considered these impacts and prioritised the preparation for school reopening.²⁰⁸ The project adapted fairly well to the changing needs despite a significant challenge with schools closed for much of 2020-2021 in both countries. A fully developed COVID-19 response plan was created by the consortium which outlined project-level adaptations in light of the restrictions in place and the need for COVID-19-related response measures. The project had three particularly successful COVID-19 adaptations:

- **Teaching Diploma programme** for 30 refugee teachers in Ethiopia continued via distance learning and residential face-to-face activities²⁰⁹
- **Radio programme campaigns** with radio spot messages and live shows on child protection, positive parenting, social cohesion and inclusion, and COVID-19 were aired through one local radio station, Somalia Broadcasting Corporation. These shows reached over 500,000 people²¹⁰
- **Community-based support** was provided via existing technologies such as WhatsApp, particularly in Puntland. This was used to monitor activities such as community-based psychosocial support, Boys and Girls Leadership Networks, provision of remedial education and community-led child protection mechanisms²¹¹

Other measures which particularly supported girls and women during the COVID-19 pandemic included CCC-led outreach awareness-raising activities to caregivers of children at risk in Ethiopia and shifting the engagement of the GLNs in Somalia to WhatsApp groups to ensure continued support throughout the pandemic, with lessons about COVID-19 awareness, life skills, and other skills.

The COVID-related adaptations were seen to be efficient in their actions and intended outputs, leveraging the strengths of implementing teams and working towards beneficiary needs. In total, 13 activities were suspended or delayed, and 9 activities continued as planned during COVID. Still, the impact on students and schools was significant, with little truly being able to be done by the BRICE project.

I can say that my experience at this school over the past few years was bad because the learning was not appropriate for some reasons such as COVID-19 and



Figure 7: Plan providing COVID-19 protective items for community members



²⁰⁶ KII, Teacher, Garowe

²⁰⁷ Mixed Migration Centre. *Impact of COVID-19 on Ethiopian refugees and migrants in Puntland*. 2021. https://mixedmigration.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/176_snapshot_impact_of_COVID-19_on_refugees_and_migrants_in_Puntland.pdf; Joint Data Center on Forced Displacement. *Monitoring COVID-19 Impact on Refugees in Ethiopia*. 2021. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/192031614923330049/pdf/Monitoring-COVID-19-Impact-on-Refugees-in-Ethiopia-Results-from-a-High-Frequency-Phone-Survey-of-Refugees.pdf>

²⁰⁸ Plan International. *BRICE Ethiopia and Somalia COVID-19 Contingency Plan*. 2020.

²⁰⁹ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

²¹⁰ *ibid*

²¹¹ Plan International, Covid-19 Response Report, 2021.

security problems. From this scenario, I could not study hard to get a high average, but last year when Plan International split classes into morning class for some students and noon class for other students, I engaged myself to study hard in order to score a good average. Now this year I think my experience in this school is getting better than the last few years. - Case study, male student, Ethiopia

COVID's challenges affected all schools in both countries: with all schools closed in Ethiopia, some schools were used by RRS as food distribution centres. Remedial education support was put on hold until Dec. 2021. 250 (27 girls) Grade 8 students had remedial catch-up classes, and all passed their examinations. In Somalia, radio programming was used for remedial classes, with 20 lessons airing between May and June 2020. Upon school reopening, back-to-school campaigns took place, mobilising the CPC and other community members, including student leadership networks and teaching staff, to get students back to school. Teacher CPD was delayed, but the overall objectives stayed the same.

Figure 8: Students in Daryeel school engaged in the back-to-school campaign

Despite the inability to meet in person during the pandemic, the consortia held regular meetings at a variety of scales to ensure efficient communication about the project and to implement flexible changes in response to the changing needs of the project stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Communities also turned to online means to carry on with project activities wherever possible, with virtual meetings being held for the CPCs and online training for the CPD.

During the period when COVID-19 forced significant changes to the project modalities, there were other projects operating in the refugee communities in Ethiopia concurrently with BRICE. As such, some overlap was noted in terms of COVID-19 response between these organisations, for example, in the distribution of hygiene materials and activities supporting the promotion of COVID-19 prevention. In host communities, BRICE was the only project able to provide support in these areas. In Somalia, no overlap was noted throughout the evaluation. BRICE provided valuable support to the governments of both countries with these COVID-19 response and adaptation mechanisms.

During the difficult times of COVID-19, Plan International was with us until today and they didn't stop supporting us. They did incredible work in our schools which we (the government) couldn't do in a short period because of budget shortages. So, I would like to thank Plan International for what they did during COVID-19. Besides that, during lockdown Plan International supported the regional educational bureau with radios to help students to study while they are in their home. And we provided those radios to all schools in this region. And because of COVID-19 protocols, schools needed to prepare water for students to wash their hands and provide face masks, sanitisers, and other protective materials for students. And again, Plan International supported us with all of these protection materials like face masks, and sanitisers and they prepared water in every school. - KII, REB, Ethiopia

Security challenges were present in both contexts, and the project was able to work on both prevention and response to these challenges to some extent.

Sharing of security-related intelligence took place between all project stakeholders in order to keep communities aware of evolving challenges and threats. This helped students to avoid going to school when active threats were present. The survey shows that security in local communities was strong in Ethiopia, with fences built and security guards recruited as part of the BRICE project. In Somalia, safety in the region had improved in recent years, and schools are noted to be safe for students. Safety at school was the least reported issue among all respondents from both countries. These adaptations to the situations mitigated risks to children and other community members.

On top of this, serious security challenges arose during the project, including incidents of kidnapping in Ethiopia and conscription and Merle gang attacks and kidnappings in Somalia. These security threats disrupted the provision of education as children were instructed to stay home whenever risks presented themselves.

At the time, there were security issues just like you would imagine in Somalia though Puntland was relatively calm but during the time there were issues and sometimes people were not able to go out or activities were postponed. However, one of the ways we were coping with this is that we had good informants on the ground who gave excellent intel about the security situations, and we also had security staff advising us at a regional level. We used police escorts when necessary. Security SOPs were used to ensure we could continue operations. - KII, Relief International, Somalia

The various security situations in both countries coincided with the project period and sometimes impacted the research activities and as well the travel of international research partners to Puntland. These security challenges were unavoidable, and the research team did well to work coherently with one another to still carry out the research activities in an efficient manner despite not being able to be physically present in the research locations. A number of mitigation strategies were employed, including regular virtual meetings for enhanced team understanding and capacity building.

3.5 Impact

The project's impact was explored by 1) considering how the project contributed to the achievement of its overall objective of creating access to safe and quality education as per the design of the project and 2) considering what the unintended effects of the project interventions were. The following highlights key takeaways from the detailed discussion below.

Table 11. Impact findings – key takeaways

Impact	<p>3.5.1 Through well-designed and managed activities, the BRiCE project contributed to improvements relating to access to safe and quality education in Gambella and Puntland, attaining many of its desired outcomes.</p> <p>3.5.2 The project led to a number of unintended effects, notably including stronger connections being built between communities and local authorities, stronger coherence between government offices, and increased sharing between the government of Puntland and the Federal Government of Somalia.</p>
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3.5.1 Achievement of overall objectives

Overall, the project had positive progress towards the project's overall objective of creating access to safe and quality education.

The following table consolidates the key impacts of the project, as well as the remaining challenges. The section following the table elaborates on the table's summary points.

Table 12: Summary of key impacts and remaining challenges of the BRiCE project

Key impacts	Remaining challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child protection codes of conduct adopted in both countries, setting forth government commitments to child protection and school safety Enrolment amongst students has increased due to a range of BRiCE actions: community-based committees, provision of resources, physical infrastructure improvements, awareness raising Teaching quality has improved, and despite some teachers moving to new workplaces, teacher retention is also improving with the addition of commitments required for trained teachers. Parents and communities are more engaged in children's learning Communities better understand the value of educating girls (leading to increases in girl's enrolment) Girls are treated more equitably in schools and their learning outcomes have improved Parents and community members feel involved in ensuring their children are protected at school Communities better understand the dangers of child marriage, early pregnancy, and the need to educate girls/boys about menstruation Communities are more empowered to take on responsibility for tackling social cohesion Governments have a greater capacity to collect reliable EMIS data Research study has grown the evidence base around EiE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teaching quality will remain a perpetual issue unless teachers are fairly remunerated Children continue to face significant household level barriers to education, especially in times of hardship, leading to child labour, dropout, early marriage, and particular challenges for girls and children with disabilities. Community-level awareness of the importance of education, particularly among IDP populations in Somalia, but also among all other targeted populations Corporal punishment persists, though at a much lower level than before the project There is a significant need for female teachers Girls continue to struggle with classroom participation, though remedial classes are having impacts on their confidence Schools still require significant infrastructural improvements to be child-friendly and safe Children with disabilities require tailored support to receive quality education EMIS data needs to be collected widely, consistently and should be fed back to schools to improve teaching and learning. It should also be used to help mitigate learning loss as students and their families migrate to other regions.

The following reflects on the detailed progress towards each of the three result areas.

Result 1: Girls and boys feel safe in the schools and surrounding community

Students described safety improvements in place, owing to the provision of latrines, female menstruation rooms, better teaching (leading to fewer instances of dropout), infrastructure improvements such as fences, and less conflict within communities.

Teachers and community members as well attributed male and female enrolment and reductions in student absenteeism to improvements in safety.



STUDENT VOICES

We're safer here because there is a school fence, classroom, and toilets. But before NGOs implemented their activities in this school, I felt unsafe since there were no learning classrooms, we were studying outside under the tree, and also in the time there was no school fence, unknown individuals would come here and harm students. - FGD, male student, Ethiopia

The quantitative survey respondents reported that student safety had improved in the last 5 years - 91.8% in Ethiopia and 88.3% in Somalia. This was despite the drastic effect of COVID-19 on the safety of young people in the targeted areas. During the pandemic, along with learning loss and rates of dropout, respondents described significant increases in harmful traditional practices, including child marriage. With schools being closed, many children were put to work. Increased rates of violence within communities were described by many, typically domestic and inter-family, but also including organised gangs and kidnappings. An increase was also described in the use of alcohol and tobacco among young people. This aligned with data previously documented by the BRiCE team and highlighted critical safety issues which can present themselves despite the best efforts of the project.

The implementation of Codes of Conduct and improved referral systems were seen as core components in improving safety at schools.

BRiCE worked closely with schools to enact the Codes of Conduct and supported the government to monitor them. Headteachers were highly supportive and committed to promoting the school Codes of Conduct. From the quantitative survey with teachers, school administration, and committee members, 81.9% of respondents in Ethiopia believed that codes of conduct/safeguarding policies have been effectively or very effectively implemented. In Somalia, that number was quite a bit lower, with 63.3% expressing that they are effectively implemented. 15% of respondents in Somalia did not know if their school had a code of conduct, pointing to issues with embedding policies into the education and community systems. The continued monitoring of the implementation/adoption of the policies was an area of concern, however, with stakeholders describing the government in both countries as having inadequate funding and capacity to do so.

I see elements like the issue I raised about the costs of the CPD programme and the ability of the ministry to manage the accountability, so for example for the code of conduct, can they keep the teachers accountable for the implementation of the policies? I see those as elements where there are still gaps. - KII, Relief International, Somalia

In Ethiopia, over 300 girls were referred through the 29 target schools for child protection services.²¹² In addition, the communities were better empowered and actively involved in safety: in response to being asked about the level of community involvement in helping to make schools a safe place for children to learn, 78.7% of survey respondents in Ethiopia and 75% of respondents in Somalia say that the community was involved or very involved. These networks of involved community members have shown to be perceived by respondents as highly impactful and another success of the project.

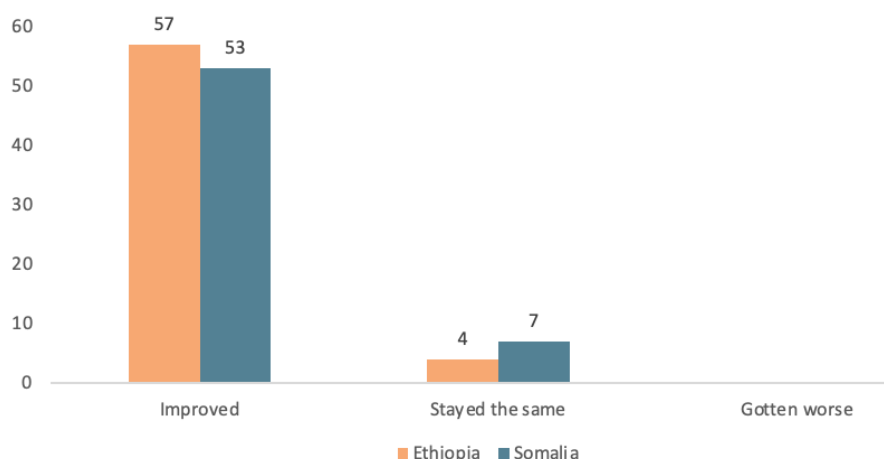
All students in the school are safe, Parental involvement is active and ongoing participation of a parent or teachers in the education process of the children hence making them safe, emergency preparedness measures are in place with strong violence prevention and intervention programs. Along with a well-disciplined and positive school climate. My children are safe in the community despite some external security issues occurring, sometimes the community gets external threats due to robbery of shops. - KII, Guardian, Somalia

At the community level, respondents reflected on improved feelings of safety despite the challenges of ongoing conflict, insecurity, and poverty.

As seen in Figure 9, most respondents across both countries feel that safety in the communities has increased because of the BRiCE project. In line with the qualitative findings, these showed the project had a fairly large impact on community members relating to safety, not only in schools.

Figure 9: Perceptions of safety in the project communities by survey respondents

²¹² Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.



However, social cohesion was an area where the impact was challenging to capture, and the evaluation found little evidence, particularly with a range of small-scale safety concerns emerging throughout the project’s life cycle. That said, it appeared that in Ethiopia, the actions towards peaceful coexistence were more impactful than in Somalia, where there was a greater focus on building up community dialogues and discussions.

It is also the project we know that contributed a lot in strengthening the relationship between the refugee and the host community. In fact, statistically, I do not have accurate statistical data. But we know that through our meetings, it's contributed a lot. Now that you know, the social cohesion between refugees and hosts is now good. - Telephone survey respondent, Ethiopia

Activities have supported parents and community members to help children who have been abused, creating an empowering support system within communities.

[In the last five years, the community has become] Safer. Because even the world is becoming one big market. There is more awareness, sensitization and advocacy being done. There is a lot of training, mentorships, and empowerment of knowledge regarding child protection. Before we did not even know how to handle a child who was molested or how to talk to them. Right now, we can even tell a child is not okay just by looking at them. Before it was taboo in my community to talk about anything related to sex, molestation, rape, or even reproductive health issues, like menstruation. People discuss such issues now even with women, so there is more empowerment. There was even mentorship for Duksi teachers to not beat the children because it would lead to more psychological, physical, and emotional damage and these issues have reduced. - KII, Community leader, Somalia

However, better coordination in relation to the various committees likely could have helped encourage a shared sense of responsibility and accountability among the members to improve safety. In relation to how the committees worked together in Ethiopia, a respondent notes: “There is no strong relationship between community members, teachers, and PTA committee members. They do not discuss issues regarding safety at school.”²¹³

While respondents in the survey generally had training on child protection policies and mechanisms in both countries, other types of training which were planned were less effective and well attended

For example, referral mechanisms, which were to be developed in each project community, were generally not understood by survey respondents. However, gender-based violence training in Ethiopia was seen to be very well developed. For teachers, the training sessions had a large impact on their teaching (discussed below) and would have benefited from more opportunities. Table 13 below shows the training attended by respondents to the survey in each country.

Table 13: Trainings attended by community members (survey respondents)

	Ethiopia (n=61)		Somalia (n=60)	
	Count	%	Count	%
Training attended by community member				
a. Child protection policies and/or mechanisms	45	74%	48	80%
b. Psychosocial support	30	49%	1	2%

²¹³ Telephone survey respondent, Gambella

c.	Gender-sensitive teaching methods or gender sensitiveness	31	52%	17	28%
d.	Teaching pedagogy/teaching support	30	49%	23	38%
e.	Disaster risk reduction	28	46%	0	0%
f.	Inclusion	33	54%	8	13%
g.	Gender-based violence	50	82%	8	13%
h.	Case identification and referral mechanisms	13	21%	0	0%
i.	Other, please specify	3 (Adult literacy, Early Marriage, Psychosocial first aid)	5%	0	0%
j.	No training	3	5%	5	8%

Result 2: Improved access to quality education through effective school management, skilled teachers and an improved physical learning environment

Nearly all respondents described a vastly improved education system from before the project was implemented.

Students, along with parents and teachers, spoke very highly of the various impacts on education relating to improved teacher quality, increased safety, improved gender sensitivity, provision of remedial support, provision of learning materials, access to peer learning networks, infrastructural improvements, and improved confidence and attainment among girls.



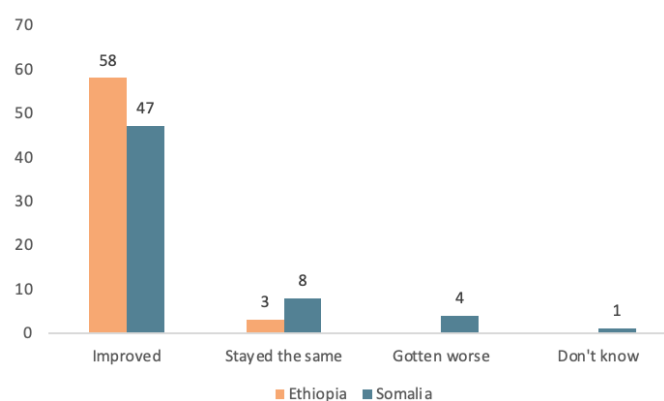
STUDENT VOICES

Yes, I like my school, I like coming to school and working hard to acquire knowledge to have a better future and accomplish my goals. There are enough chairs, tables. We are given books and other materials for free. Our teachers are good, and they teach very well and work voluntarily. We don't pay school fees. I have made friends with my fellow classmates, and I love coming to school because of that. Of our teachers, we have the best teachers because they are kind to us and teach us well. They are friendly to us and keep us busy. – Case study, male student, Somalia

Student attainment had anecdotally increased, and the Phase 3 research report should likely shine some light on these improvements. Quantifying the extent to which the BRiCE project was directly responsible for these improvements was beyond the scope of this evaluation. However, respondents identified ways that BRiCE had contributed to the improvements in education quality through targeted work at three levels: teachers' capacity building, learner support and community sensitisation.

Through a variety of actions including CPD, monitoring/mentoring systems, psychosocial training, developed capacity to lead on SIP, training on accelerated learning programmes, EMIS training and more, teachers and headteachers in both Ethiopia and Somalia have improved in education service delivery.

Qualitative findings highlighted an increase in teaching quality and improvement in learning outcomes, particularly amongst female students; these improvements were found to be more significant in Ethiopia than in Somalia. This was in line with the quantitative findings, which showed that 93.4% of respondents in Ethiopia believed the quality of teaching had improved because of the BRiCE project, while 75% of



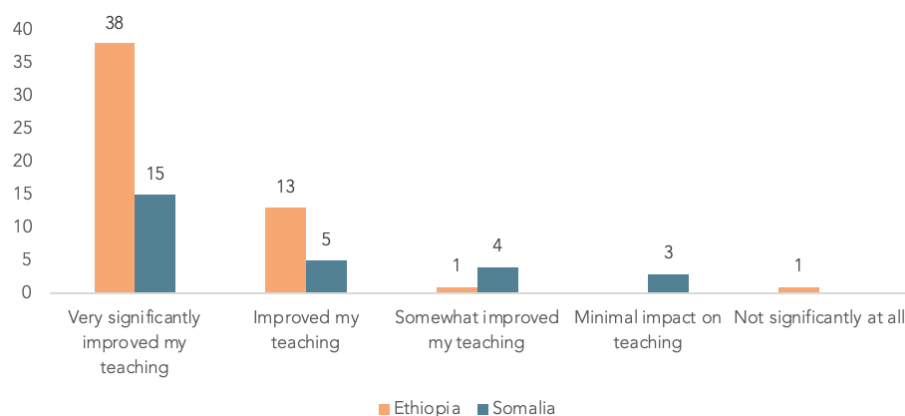
respondents in Somalia noted the same (Figure 10).²¹⁴ The teaching improvements aligned with the administrative improvements found in the evaluation, with a more developed, professional education system in place where accountability, peer learning, and sharing of good practices were encouraged.

The changes of the quality of teaching and learning that our children received has really improved in the last five years, the reason being through collective social mobilisation activities, Relief International works with community groups to support education programs and increase engagement among parents, elders, and religious leaders. - KII, community leader, Somalia

This teacher training was widely noted as one of the project's biggest areas of impact by implementing staff, community members, and teachers themselves. Though there were issues with teacher retention once trained, CPD had a significant impact in both countries (Table 11). Governments in both countries showed an interest in the continuation of these programmes, and while the funding appeared to be insufficient to continue them, especially in training refugee teachers, the foundation may have been laid for governments to pick up the CPD when larger budgets can be allocated to teacher development.

Yes, the improvement came as a result of 86 teachers who were trained in Gambella Health science and teacher's college in the year 2018-2019. Plan International in collaboration with other organisations facilitated this training programme. - Telephone survey respondent, Ethiopia

Figure 11: Teacher perceptions on whether CPD improved their teaching



An emphasised impact at the community level was improvements in attitudes toward education and its value among beneficiaries and their communities, as well as greater awareness of issues barring access such as early marriage and child labour.

Attitudes towards girls' education in both countries have improved because of the BRiCE project, with the majority of respondents describing how parents and community members have become more aware of the importance of education for girls. This was validated with the quantitative data, which showed that 95% in Ethiopia and 86.7% in Somalia believe that attitudes towards girls' education improved as a result of the BRiCE project.

Before there was a gender gap but in the last five to six years this gap has narrowed. Girls and boys in Puntland are getting the same access to education. - KII, MoEHE, Ethiopia

Yes, they [girls and boys] have equal access to quality education, but before some years back girls had no chance for education or to learn in school. According to our culture, girls are to follow in the footsteps of their mothers. Their duties are helping their mothers with some activities such as washing plates, fetching water, and cooking food while boys are the target for education. Therefore, nowadays girls and boys are learning together in school. - KII, Community leader, Gog

Students' gender clubs, students' leadership networks, and peer-to-peer learning networks, including the GLNs were frequently raised as impactful activities, leading to students, and especially girls, having greater self-awareness, self-esteem, and confidence.

²¹⁴ The difference between countries with regards to this is significant, and while impossible to define any causal attributions, the survey responses from respondents in Somalia were generally found to be more negative, with teachers and community members particularly unhappy with the lack of attention received recently with the ongoing drought and with teachers not being paid, something unrelated to the BRiCE project.

Young people were engaged beyond the classroom through actions such as girls being encouraged through activities showcasing women's leadership and activism, students encouraged to share anti-bullying messages in schools, discussions on early marriage and teen pregnancy, and training on child rights, safety, and wellbeing.



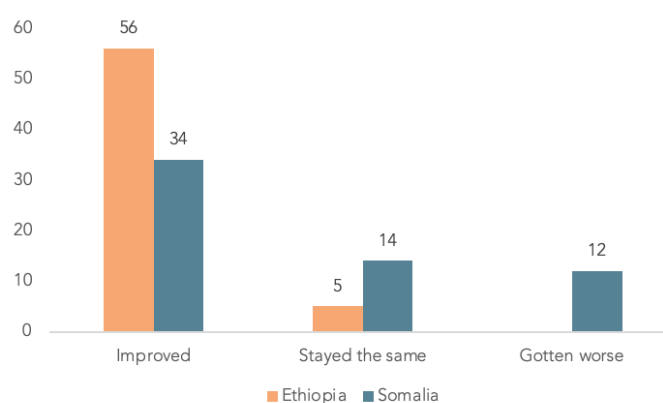
STUDENT VOICES

I have many memories but the girls club we attend twice a week in the afternoon is the best one for me. It makes us more excited, and it helps us in many ways to build our confidence. I am really happy, especially last year because my grades were improving and my father was happy about it and he even bought me a bag, a very beautiful one.
– Case study, female student, Ethiopia

Key to improvements in enrolment and retention were initiatives such as the ABE, which facilitated hundreds of learners to catch up on syllabus content and receive certification, the remedial education support, the Mothers in Schools, and the student leadership networks.

Improvements in enrolment and retention, particularly among girls, were highlighted as a success of the project by government stakeholders in both countries. To build on this, the amount of support available for children struggling with their learning was found to have increased in Ethiopia, with 56% of those surveyed noting it as such. However, in Somalia, only 34% of respondents perceived the support for struggling learners to have improved (Figure 12). The reason for the difference between countries was unclear. However, the qualitative data painted a different picture, with a unanimously positive perception of the work that RI and all stakeholders involved did to improve education in the target areas.

Figure 12: Perceived levels of support available for struggling learners



Yes, there is a change. For example, before Plan International started working with us only a few students passed the grade eight national examination. However, when Plan International started working with us, it provided a remedial class from grade five to grade eight. As a result, many students passed the grade eight national examination. For example, last year three hundred students took the grade eight national examination. Among them, only twenty-five students failed the grade eight national examination. – KII, headteacher, Ethiopia

However, despite significant progress, community-level efforts were not able to adequately address underlying issues preventing access to schools.

While the project showed great impact in areas related to gender sensitivity at the school level, issues around inclusion and access, including household and community level barriers to enrolment and attitudes toward students with disabilities remained. The study found a large gap in these elements, with traditional beliefs around gender and a lack of understanding of and provision for persons with disabilities found in both contexts.

Something needs to be done about education in the region. Children don't go to school for many reasons. The government should make school compulsory for children. – Telephone survey respondent, Somalia

Result 3: Evidence-based education practice and strategy informs national-level and programme-level initiatives that improve access to quality basic education in crisis-affected environments

The BRICE project targeted improvements to the EMIS systems in both countries, building the capacity of regional education officers and school administrators to carry out the EMIS monitoring and data acquisition at a decentralised level.

It supported training to education officers and EMIS focal points (including headteachers), provision of offices and equipment, training in terms of the questionnaires used in monitoring, and assistance with data analysis, which has generally increased the quality of data collected in both contexts. This has helped the education system to log more accurate information on students and teachers across the regions. In Ethiopia, the project team signed an MoU with the REB for the secondment of the EMIS expert, assisting the government in its collection of data. In Somalia, the project notably trained head teachers across all schools in the three target regions (and not only the BRICE-supported schools),

ensuring greater levels of ownership and recognition of the importance of good EMIS data and leading to data being shared which surpassed the project team's goals. While positive across both contexts, only 55.7% of headteachers in Ethiopia and 31.7% in Somalia surveyed as part of this study believed they have extensive or regular support with regards to EMIS.

Although progress has been made as a result of the BRiCE project, the regional governments' lack of funding and capacity to provide adequate human resources for the EMIS monitoring to continue in time.

Both countries had EMIS in place before BRiCE but EMIS experts in both countries are doubtful that EMIS systems will continue to work as well as they had with BRiCE funding. One expert in Ethiopia noted that in 2021, the data for the year was almost not captured due to a lack of government budget, but the BRiCE project was able to support²¹⁵ Further, government stakeholders frequently discussed the transient nature of the positions with EMIS officers shifting to other positions. An RRS staff member also raised concerns about the quality of data and a significant lack of reporting of EMIS data to the MoE in Ethiopia. For example, they described how school directors, while trained, did not show adequate understanding of the systems and raised enrolment numbers without reason. The EMIS-related actions of the BRiCE project were therefore potentially impactful, but only so if the training and equipment provided continue. Without sustainability through financial commitments from the governments, there was a high likelihood that the EMIS actions were temporary, though helpful.

We are always planning because we know that without EMIS data nothing can be done, but we need sustainability of the project because this project helps us with many things related to the EMIS system. And if the project ends, we would use the small budget bureau, but the regional education system would be in danger. - KII, EMIS officer, Ethiopia

Although it's painful to not have the BRiCE project, the government has a plan to continue it and to fill the gap. Because, previously, we trained every year with the new headteachers from the regions. So now, the government also plans to, but not the number that was trained in the BRiCE project. They trained the new headteachers and gave them support for the offices to continue their activities. So, we will continue. - KII, EMIS officer, Somalia

The research component is found to be moderately impactful, though more concentrated efforts should be made to share the findings from it through partnership building and advocacy in the coming months.

The project's dissemination efforts were well underway, as evidenced in Section 3.3.7, at the time of this evaluation. These efforts showed potential reach but have yet to fully inform and/or push for lasting change or more funding for projects. With plenty of data on learners and learning, COVID-19, teachers, and teaching, and with the identification of issues worth future research and consideration at the policy level, the research study has the potential to inform future long-term funded projects. Advocacy with the aim to secure government commitments and as well to inform funding organisations could happen more regularly, using the results of the study.

Collecting research priorities of the MoE in Puntland and RRS in Ethiopia could have helped the research component to deliver outputs more in line with the needs and wants of local governments and stakeholders. Respondents raised this as a potential way to improve the impact of the research component.

3.5.2 Unintended effects of the BRiCE project

The project's interventions led to a range of unintended positive effects, including stronger connections being built between communities and local authorities, stronger coherence between government offices, and increased sharing between the governments of Puntland and Somalia.

One of the most impactful unintended effects of the BRiCE project was the establishment of new government structures in Somalia, the Child Protection Unit within the MoEHE, which now deals with child protection issues in schools. This initially caused disputes between MoEHE and the MoWDFA over the roles and responsibilities but resulted in better collaboration, networking and sharing between the ministries.²¹⁶ The authorities' capacity was enhanced and relationships between RI and the line ministry at central and regional levels have been strengthened. A stronger and more positive relationship was also found to have been developed between teaching staff and administrative staff because of coaching and mentorship.

On the other hand, some activities which were set up under the BRiCE project were being continued with other organisations, and this runs the risk of negatively impacting the consortium's reputation and image among local communities. For example, RRS in Ethiopia, which is responsible for the education in the camps, has not continued the actions of the project, though communities believed BRiCE was still active and attribute several recent challenges, including

²¹⁵ KII, EMIS officer, Ethiopia

²¹⁶ Plan International, Interim Narrative Report (Year 4), 2022.

broken water pumps, a lack of resources in classrooms, and lack of quality teachers, to the BRiCE project and Plan International. In some communities, the presence of BRiCE-supported schools was a pull factor for internal migration, according to qualitative respondents. The project's support to communities was not planned to spur further migration in the areas.

3.6 Sustainability

The project's sustainability was explored through 1) the extent to which the programme enhanced local ownership and capacity to influence policy, 2) the extent to which the project's activities were designed and implemented in a participatory and empowering manner with the key stakeholders and the extent to which the project enabled sustainable change at the school and education system level. The following highlights key takeaways from the detailed discussion below.

Table 14. Sustainability findings – key takeaways

Impact	<p>3.6.1 Overall, the BRiCE project has instigated a number of significant changes; however, the sustainability of some project activities after the project closure is in question.</p> <p>3.6.2 Local ownership has developed in project communities, with a number of actions being taken up by local committees and individuals. There was a mixed view of whether or not communities could influence policy.</p> <p>3.6.3 The project was carried out in a fairly participatory manner though many stakeholders, especially children themselves, were not consulted in the design of the project.</p> <p>3.6.4 The school and education system levels now have the building blocks for sustainable change, though it is too early to know whether the education system will be supported to continue the previous improvements brought by the BRiCE project.</p>
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3.6.1 Enhancing local ownership

Community members spoke very highly of the BRiCE project in enabling them to work collaboratively and ensure quality education and safety are in place, creating strong levels of ownership over project activities.

The quantitative survey showed that the local communities were, for the most part, very involved in Ethiopia and involved to a lesser extent in Somalia in ensuring school safety. This was validated by the qualitative data which showed communities in Ethiopia were more positive about the sustainability of learning and other activities than communities in Somalia. This said, stakeholders interviewed in Somalia showed great determination to continue the various networks, committees, and work on the SIPs.

Even after Relief stopped their programme, most children remained in school, because Relief International has been training parents, sensitising during community dialogue days and even providing adult learning for those willing. A few parents did take their children out of school though. - FGD, Teachers, Somalia

Relationships between communities and local governments were fostered through various project activities including meetings, awareness-raising sessions, parent-teacher committees, CPCs and CECs supported sustainable change at the community level. The community-level respondents emphasised a belief that the onus was on them to ensure the sustainability of results from the project, making it clear that messages related to the importance of quality education and safety for children permeated the targeted communities, and structures such as the CECs/CCCs/CPCs are promising vehicles for action to be driven after the project's closure.

The Committee will continue working as we are part of the school. Projects are temporary, schools will continue. Our work won't stop. – Telephone survey respondent, Somalia

For a school to be safe, the community must own the school first; the community should have good knowledge about the school and own everything in school. Look at whatever you construct in a refugee setting and during construction, thieves would come and rob construction properties. This problem will occur because no one would take care or give more attention to community property. – FGD, teacher, Somalia

The local community joined forces with the project in creating awareness about the importance of education to the families that were against it. It is usually good to include the local community because without their support, there will be no peace in the school; they are the reason as to why a school succeeds. – KII, teacher, Somalia

The project made significant efforts to ensure that programmatic activities were implemented in a participatory and empowering way and were successful on several fronts, though perhaps more so in Somalia than in Ethiopia.

In Ethiopia, some community members felt that they played a role in the design and implementation of the project, this was particularly true for those involved in CPC/CCCs and PTAs. Many teachers felt that they were unable to bring up concerns with Plan directly, however, they note that headteachers were more likely to have had a direct interface with the project and thus were more influential. Community members in Somalia were far more positive about their role in the design/implementation of the BRICE project. Many described RI as responsive, and community leaders have continued to grow their ownership over the project as it has gone on, leaving community structures in a strong position to take certain actions forward.

Despite these commitments, many respondents highlighted the limitations of local ownership without the project in place.

At the time of data collection for this evaluation, it was unclear as to whether Plan has articulated a clear exit strategy to beneficiaries and there was a fair bit of confusion around what activities (if any) the project would continue to fund/support going forward. Since then, Plan staff have expressed that there are exit and sustainability activities initiated after the data collection and which will continue until December 2022, but these have not been shared. Several respondents noted how with the project's withdrawal, many of the previous issues were surfacing, including decreased quality of teaching and learning, decreased safety and adequacy of infrastructure (for example latrines and water pumps), and an increased rate of teachers leaving due to lack of consistent pay. These changes do not appear to have been accounted for in the BRICE project's planning.

When we were with Plan, the quality was very good but now we are working with RRS. It's not like before. One teacher can teach up to four sections. But at that time of Plan, there were a lot of teachers. The work was very good. Training was given. - Telephone survey respondent, Ethiopia

Well-experienced teachers moved to government offices and some teachers have moved to other schools. - Telephone survey respondent, Ethiopia

(When asked if the level of education has improved because of the BRICE project) If not worse I think it has stayed the same, because parents here are poor and there is no other support that the school gets from external parties. - Telephone survey respondent, Somalia

3.6.2 Building local capacity to influence policy

Community-level feelings of being able to influence policy are divided.

Many respondents across both countries felt like they were unable to use their voices to influence community or regional policy. In both countries, there appeared to be tension between those who did have their voice heard and those who did not, with some community members feeling strongly that their voices were heard, and others feeling that they have no access to government whatsoever.

When I see children who are not able to attend a school or drop out of school because of a lack of safe and quality education then I can be able to stand up and advocate for better service delivery, right now I am empowered and I believe can influence a lot, especially in our region. - KII, Community leader, Somalia

Oh no, I do not think so. An individual like me cannot influence regional policy. If I can, it may be through a representative. I can tell the representative to forward my concern to the government and the government gives feedback through that representative. All in all, I cannot influence their policy by myself. I have been raising a lot of concerns regarding quality education, but they do not seem to listen. I have been telling them to build recreational centres and playgrounds in the school so that the students can have fun and enjoy themselves while in school, but they do not listen yet. - KII, Guardian, Ethiopia

A significant project strength was the buy-in that the teams were able to create within the government bodies of each country, as well as with key stakeholders.

A desire to positively pass ownership over planning and implementation where possible to local actors was clear in many elements of the project and led not only to effective implementation but also to capacity-building outcomes for partners, including local government, local researchers, etc. In addition, collaborative relationships were built between local governments and communities, who now work better together than before. The CECs, for example, work hand-in-hand with the regional education officers in Somalia.

Every school has a CEC. The headteacher is also a member of the CEC and we definitely work with them daily. If we need any information with regard to the school, we contact the headteacher who is part of the CEC. - KII, MoEHE, Somalia

As previously mentioned, the research partners have developed significant capacity and were able to confidently carry out research activities. PDRC staff described how they were being approached by local governments for independent research projects, for example.

3.6.3 Sustainability in the design of programme activities

In general, the BRiCE project's design was purposeful and considered with regard to sustainability, but the continuation of resource-heavy elements was in doubt.

The BRiCE project used participatory design and implementation, with all aspects of the project being created in collaboration with persons highly knowledgeable about the local contexts, and in many cases, involving community members in the design of programmatic activities. The project's activities across both countries purposefully developed strong community-level and government accountability mechanisms, ensuring that all stakeholders have an important part to play in the functioning of the project activities.

Programme activities which were particularly sustainable focused on strengthening existing networks, such as work related to the committees, whereby community members became better equipped to carry out their roles because of the project. This includes government-level actions, such as the EMIS capacity building, which theoretically should be sustainable, unless there is inadequate funding for continued monitoring or if there are job posting changes, both of which are likely.

Sustainability concerns in the design of the programme activities primarily fall under the successful but resource-intensive activities, such as the ABE, CPD, Mothers in Schools, etc. These activities, while successful and recognised by the governments as having potential, were not successfully transitioned off to other actors, and thus are likely to not continue. The project team could have likely done more to ensure the sustainability of these actions through their extensive networks, especially considering the impact that these actions have had on the communities.

We spent a lot of money on the accelerated learning plan, ABE (alternative basic education), in Somalia. We spent a lot of money, and we were successful in the end. 700+ teenagers were able to catch up on the first six grades over three years, it was successful. But it's not sustainable without having the money or resources. – KII, Plan International, Ethiopia

3.6.4 Enabling sustainable change at the school and education system levels

BRiCE targeted sustainable change at both the education system and school levels in the following main ways:

1. BRiCE supported community networks that are both sustainable and scalable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A desire to positively pass ownership over planning and implementation where possible to local actors was clear in many elements of the project. • This approach has meant that community structures such as the CPCs and CECs are self-sustaining and likely to remain so after the project concludes.
2. BRiCE laid the groundwork for potentially transformative approaches to teacher development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher training and the development of the innovative CPD course paved the way for improvements to teacher capacity which will outlive the project. • In particular, the CPD programme has the potential to be continued and scaled since it proved highly effective in enhancing the skills of teachers
3. BRiCE inspired and supported changes in government policy and operations which should have a long-term effect on education management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project worked in alignment with government priorities on issues such as EMIS data collection, safeguarding systems and teacher development. • Resulting changes to policy and practice have transformative potential if followed up with requisite monitoring and support.
4. BRiCE raised the profile of IDP educational needs within Puntland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An important contribution of the BRiCE project was directing resources and attention to IDP communities in Somalia. • Researchers at PDRC in particular highlighted that they felt BRiCE had given an important platform for awareness raising about the dire needs of this community to governments and other key stakeholders which they hope to continue.
5. BRiCE built the capacity and profile of local research partners setting them up to continue to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research component of the BRiCE project made an important contribution in strengthening the capacities and building the profile of local research partners PDRC and the Gambella University.

provide high-quality research on this issue post BRiCE.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from researchers highlighted the importance of raising their profile with their respective governments, and prospects for future engagement seem likely.
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6. Increased research capacity and knowledge on education in fragile contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The research teams at PDRC and Gambella University have developed capacity through the longitudinal study and are now equipped with the skills and technology to carry out more meaningful research in their local communities going forward. Knowledge of education in fragile contexts is invaluable and will likely contribute to the planning of future development/humanitarian work in the contexts, and as well, to the planning and budgets of the governments in both countries.
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However, a number of factors challenged the sustainability of project activities:

1. Resource intense activities have little chance at being sustained.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some successful activities/initiatives under the BRiCE project are unsustainable due to their reliance on capital and human resources. Notable examples include the CPD and ABE / remedial education classes. The transition of the project to the government was unclear, particularly, considering limited government funding.
2. Monitoring and follow up of project level activities is needed to ensure long term change and sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies and frameworks introduced by the project (including safeguarding systems, the code of conduct and EMIS processes) required follow-up in order to ensure follow-through. However, project staff were not confident in the ability of governments and other associated stakeholders to carry out such monitoring effectively.
3. Some advances made by the project are vulnerable to contextual challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural issues such as lack of teacher pay and increasing poverty in target communities put at risk the sustainability of advances made by the BRiCE project.
4. Research requires audience and time for lasting impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The research component has the potential to be impactful, should its messages be condensed and shared with people with decision-making power. Change from this will not likely be something which will happen quickly, so the uptake of recommendations from the research will be important to monitor in time.

Further, sustainability at the school and education system level depended on a variety of factors. Funding was the most important factor, and a lack of funding to schools since the project's withdrawal had already shown that it has an impact on teaching and learning as well as school enrolment. Parents across both contexts had begun taking their children out of schools because of a lack of motivated (and in many cases, paid) teachers, disruptions to the water supply, and respondents were upset about having a lack of money to purchase pens and books. Governments were unable to commit to funding to continue the level of education service delivery as when the schools were supported by Plan and RI. It was up to the committees and the SIPs to obtain adequate funding going forward, and it seemed that while some of them can find this funding, not all schools were able to.

It (the education system) is no longer functioning. Under RRS, everything changed." - Telephone survey respondent, Ethiopia

For teachers, a challenge which many children in this community face, is they used to receive learning materials from Relief International but since the project has stopped the number of drop out students has increased due to lack of those materials. - FGD, Teacher, Somalia

First, I would be happy if there is another project that can replace the BRiCE project if it could not be extended because the Regional Education Bureau has a shortage of budget to continue the activities of BRiCE project effectively. Since the shortage of budget is the main challenge for us, we can't plan alone without Plan International. Meanwhile, the education system would be in danger, and because of this, we need the sustainability of BRiCE project." KII, REB, Ethiopia

Communities and governments were largely positive about taking ownership of project activities after the BRiCE project's withdrawal, particularly relating to policies such as the school code of conduct and child safeguarding policies, which were adopted by government officials and implemented across all areas, not only project areas. Respondents in Somalia were a lot less positive in relation to learning and other activities, but it was noted by respondents that the committees will continue despite a lack of funding. Other activities requiring funding such as storytelling may not continue after the BRiCE project, but the dedication of the community will be the deciding factor.

Of course, some activities like storytelling, it's a method that needs facilitators, volunteers, motivation... We have trained a lot of people and they may continue these groups in the future, but we can't really say that this will be an activity that will be continued, because it depends more on the different support from the project. - KII, Plan International, Ethiopia

Though sustainability may not be evident in the continuation of some activities, the development of the resources used in the activities are of long-term value.

The CPD programme and teacher training was one example where a comprehensive programme was developed, materials adapted, locally contextualised, and implemented into training for teachers. Early issues of teacher turnover were mitigated to some extent through work with the MoEHE in Somalia, for example, by reviewing the selection criteria for the CPD programme, working with central and regional education officials to ensure the right teachers were selected, requesting head teachers to monitor teacher retention and progress and report this to MoEHE each month. While the CPD is not likely to continue to the extent that it was functioning during the project activities (for example, in Somalia, the CPD curriculum contents and materials were adopted by the teacher training institute, but the coaching approach may not continue fully without funding), governments of both countries were interested in them, and they will likely be of use to the regions when funding is made available again.

Safety in schools had the potential for continuation through commitments by governments in both countries. With school protection focal points identified and aware of the policies and procedures in activating the needs-based linkages with service providers, along with a stronger community understanding of protection and referral mechanisms, this component has a high likelihood of sustainability. As mentioned before, monitoring the implementation of the policies and the commitment levels of the government counterparts is important, going forward.

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study has evaluated the “Safe and quality education for girls and boys in displacement situations in Ethiopia and Somalia”, a project under the EU-funded BRiCE project, as it neared its completion. This Conclusion section provides a summary of the report’s findings to preface the discussion of recommendations in the following Section 5. In line with the overall aims of the research, this conclusion summarises findings along the following objectives:

1. **Assess the success of the project’s design, delivery, and results**
2. **Explore reasons why change occurred for the beneficiaries and other project stakeholders**
3. **Identify, document, and publish lessons learned and best practices**

4.1 Assessing success of the project’s design, delivery, and results

The BRiCE project had an ambitious goal of, over the course of project implementation, contributing to the community and institutional resilience in Gambella and Puntland by improving access to quality and inclusive education in a safe and secure environment. Implemented with a humanitarian-development nexus approach in two significantly different contexts, the BRiCE project was innovative and ambitious. It was conceived as an EiE project and designed to mainly achieve a transition to more long-term solutions in fragile contexts. As described further below, through long-term engagement and systems strengthening efforts – by supporting the management capacity of schools, responsibilities of community committees, mechanisms for student engagement, instruction skills of teachers, quality EMIS data and more – the BRiCE project clearly became part of systematic change, contributing to this transition and outlining pathways for development solutions in contexts of migration and displacement. The BRiCE project capitalised on opportunities to develop and sustain the education systems in both countries, going beyond the EiE infrastructure.

Within such it also explored, beyond the original design by the donor, innovative approaches to building social cohesion and touching on elements of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, highlighting possibilities that education projects bring to the triple nexus.

Under **Objective 1**, which aimed to improve access to safe, quality pre-school and primary education, clear outcomes pathways defined a holistic approach. The project’s attention to strengthening the EMIS in both Gambella and Puntland, and its work on creating and improving protection and safeguarding mechanisms at the regional and school level, are both major successes. Teaching and learning improved through the direct impact of the BRiCE project on CPDs and ABEs and indirectly through parental education, community support and referral mechanisms, infrastructure improvements, and the provision of resources. The project was successful in utilising school-level activities to increase student safety and inclusivity – which had strong ownership and potential to be sustained in the long-term. Through the integration of a gender transformative approach,²¹⁷ girls have benefited from activities such as gender clubs, leadership networks, peer mentoring and menstrual hygiene education/resource provision which proved highly effective in building their confidence and improving academic performance. Finally, infrastructural improvements have made a big impact on child safety already.

The project was slightly less successful in enhancing community-level safety – girls and children with disabilities still report facing a great deal of stigma in the home, and social insecurity continues to threaten all children’s access to education. Further, open questions remain now that the project has concluded as to whether a) the more functional EMIS system will lead to change at the policy and school level to improve teaching and learning practices in the long term, and b) protection policies and safeguarding measures will be maintained without the BRiCE project’s support and monitoring.

Objective 2 aimed to strengthen data collection for the development and dissemination of an evidence base of effective approaches and pathways to enhance access to safe, quality education in fragile and conflict-affected settings. The longitudinal study uncovered valuable insights which are expected to inform future studies and provide the governments and other humanitarian/development actors with information on much-needed interventions. The success of this component centred its strong collaboration with local research partners in Ethiopia and Somalia with the potential for even more integration for project and research elements.

4.2 Exploring reasons for change among beneficiaries and other project stakeholders

The BRiCE project sought broader effects on the community and institutional structures, aiming to enact long-term change within the communities. Its range of activities was broad and yet targeted some of the communities’ most pressing needs. The intersection between community priorities and implementation modalities, which prioritised existing community, school and governmental structures, high-level of collaboration and a gender-transformative lens, fed strongly into the

²¹⁷ Plan International: Getting it right – Gender transformative programming and influencing

overall highly positive view of the BRiCE project, and the changes instituted in their communities. Communities reported being more likely than before to use their voices to influence policy.

A strong level of commitment and ownership was built around a number of key initiatives, which will be essential to their continuation beyond the project, including the CPD, the use of new safeguarding pathways, school-level clubs for students and functioning of community networks (CECs/CCCs, CPCs, PTAs). These commitments came out strongly in interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders. However, understanding more normative changes was beyond the scope of this evaluation.

The school and education system levels now have the building blocks for sustainable change, though it is too early to see whether the education system will be supported in other ways to continue the previous improvements brought by the BRiCE project. The sustainability of the increases in child enrolment, quality of teaching and learning (and possibly school administration), access to resources, and teacher professional development are in question; some communities where activities had halted already noted some weakening on these fronts.

Overall, this evaluation found that BRiCE worked effectively to strengthen education and safety systems by focusing on community structures and strategic partnerships with the government and other key stakeholders. While not all of the activities initiated have the potential to outlive BRiCE, the project has effectively instilled strong levels of commitment to and ownership of some key project initiatives within communities, which hold significant promise for future progress.

4.3 Identifying lessons learned and best practices

The project has produced many lessons learned and best practices and a number of these have been identified by the consortium in their regular monitoring and dissemination activities. In addition to these lessons learned, the evaluation has identified the following as lessons learned and best practices. These have been grouped according to the OECD/DAC criteria for the evaluation.

Table 15: Lessons learned and best practices from implementation

Lessons learned and best practices from implementation	
Relevance	
<p>1. The BRiCE project is successful in its building on past projects and activities done in the targeted communities.</p> <p>Institutional expertise and experience of implementing partners - building on past projects, repurposing methodologies used in other contexts and utilising thematic experts - is foundational for relevant design and lasting impact. The project's successes are attributable to several reasons – a primary one was the suitability of the project activities to effectively address the project objectives. The activities chosen represented an application of activities which have been refined through the years in Plan and RI's extensive experience with targeted communities in fragile contexts.</p>	<p>2. Specific and sustained technical support is needed to bring together the humanitarian and development aspects of a nexus project, as well as to address more challenging components such as social cohesion and supporting students with disabilities.</p> <p>When implementing nexus projects, having a mix of staff with humanitarian and development experience is key to ensure that the logic of both sectors can be effectively merged. In BRiCE, significant efforts to move from a more humanitarian-oriented approach to a more long-term, sustainable one took place, though there was, at times, a lack of development experience among the key project staff. Further, the progress on BRiCE project's social cohesion and disability elements in particular suffered from the lack of technical expertise.</p>
Coherence	
<p>3. The large size, scope, and diverse locations of the project require more time in planning phases to ensure consortium members had a clear understanding of project goals, priorities, and activities in each location.</p> <p>It is important to set significant time aside in the project planning phase to ensure implementing partners in each context understand the aims and objectives in each project location, not just their own. Given the large size, scope, and diverse locations of BRiCE, consortium members expressed that they would have appreciated more time to ensure that all groups involved had a clear understanding of project goals, priorities and activities in each location.</p>	<p>4. Processes and mechanisms for coordination across members need to be defined during the inception phase to minimise any divergent, conflicting, or non-complementary work which runs the risk of confusing project staff.</p> <p>The BRiCE consortium worked harmoniously by the end of the project, however, initial teething problems (particularly between the research partners and project implementers) could have been avoided if more time was taken at the beginning</p>

of the project to ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities, including co-creating strong MoUs and building ample discussion, debate and relationship building into early phases of the project.

Effectiveness

5. Strengthening existing structures within a community and building on previous activities in the same locations spearheaded by other stakeholders is a highly effective approach.

The most effective BRiCE project activities strengthened existing structures within a community and/or built on previous activities in the same locations spearheaded by other stakeholders. Project design phases should include time to map the existence of both in target areas in order to 1) avoid service duplication and 2) design interventions with a better chance of being sustainable by strengthening something already embedded in the community.

6. Aligning project objectives with government priorities (the best examples of this are activities related to strengthening the education system with EMIS support and the creation of safeguarding measures and codes of conduct) ensures government support throughout the project's lifetime and improves chances for sustainability.

BRiCE benefitted from aligning project objectives with government priorities – the best examples are activities related to strengthening the education system with EMIS support and the creation of safeguarding measures and codes of conduct. This alignment not only ensured government support throughout the project's lifetime but also improved chances for sustainability. Conversations on creating such alignment should happen early on to increase government buy-in from the outset.

7. Creating or participating in networks of practice, sector clusters and other groups which bring together wider stakeholders operating in crisis affected areas was key to project success.

Coherence with other NGO stakeholders was ensured through membership in sector specific-groups such as the education cluster in Puntland, and strategic partnerships such as with UNHCR and RRS in Gambella. BRiCE benefitted from engagement with education sector groups and clusters, creating partnerships and reviewing activities. Such networks should be continuously drawn upon for collaboration on the ground as well as sense-checking project activities where possible. Implementers should put considerable effort into feeding lessons learned back into stakeholder communities to ensure these groups can be leveraged for higher-level advocacy where appropriate.

8. Integrating research into a long-term project is successful if: 1) a means for project adaptation based on research is built into project design, 2) project and research teams are given the chance for moments of learning throughout the project lifetime and 3) project level relationships with key stakeholders are leveraged effectively to aid the dissemination and impact of the research component.

The longitudinal study has proven to be mostly effective in attaining its main objectives and results, though it could have done more to ensure that the learnings were used to benefit the targeted communities more directly. Further, increased sharing could have taken place between the research teams and the project teams in order to adjust the programming in line with the findings.

9. Developing the capacity of the local research partners has a broader effect by putting them in positions to produce knowledge on the contexts which can attract donor or organisational attention.

One of the biggest success stories of BRiCE was the developed capacity of the local research partners. With a strong affinity to helping their local communities, they are in a better position than ever now to produce knowledge on the contexts which can attract donor or organisational attention. The local partners involved in all aspects of the project will undoubtedly benefit their communities through lasting means, and while a challenge to quantify and report to the donor, this should be an area of focus in future projects.

Efficiency

10. Agility and adapting to the changing needs of the communities through evidence-based approaches is critical for project success.

Despite the challenges that COVID-19 presented and the complex security situations in both target areas, the BRiCE project adapted fairly well to the changing contexts through comprehensive adaptation strategies aimed at mitigating risks to the safety and education of children. Using lessons learned, the project developed and acted on a series of recommendations built up through the project's early years, ensuring that the implementation mechanisms were adaptable and robust.

11. High staff turnover results in a loss of institutional memory and extensive time onboarding and building the capacity of new staff, affecting efficiency.

The BRiCE project was notable for its longevity, a rare thing for education projects in emergency settings. However, staff turnover throughout the four years was high resulting in a loss of institutional memory and necessitating extensive time onboarding/building the capacity of new staff. In a project such as this, staff turnover should have been foreseen, and in order to mitigate any chance of negative project impact, clearer handover processes should have been established in order to retain institutional memory and ensure project continuity.

12. Regularly seeking feedback from teams on the ground and from the beneficiary populations is a key piece in responsive, participatory project management.

BRiCE, though having a large number of studies and reports on its actions, did not appear to regularly seek feedback from its teams on the ground or from the beneficiary populations. Feedback, both internal and external, should be regularly sought. Mechanisms for feedback should be sketched out early to avoid confusion and keep lines of command and communication clear and open and feedback should be acted on where necessary.

13. Innovative knowledge management approaches should be required on projects with high levels of M&E to keep staff aware of monitoring conclusions without overwhelming them with too many reports and recommendations.

Projects with high levels of M&E built-in or required should explore more innovative ways to share information to ensure staff are continuously kept abreast of monitoring conclusions, rather than being overwhelmed with too many reports and recommendations. M&E carried out within a project's lifetime should be oriented around providing practical, actionable guidance and accompanied by discussions in which staff can consider how to implement recommendations day to day.

Sustainability

14. Pathways for sustainability need to be clearly articulated within the project design, and sustainability at the action level measured frequently throughout a project.


The likelihood of sustainability should be factored into planning and continuously updated throughout the project's lifetime with adaptations made to increase chances of sustainability over time. The likelihood of sustainability at an action level should be measured regularly, with mitigation strategies in place.





5. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section outlines a set of key recommendations grounded in the evaluation findings. They specifically seek to build on the good practices and lessons learned from the design and implementation of the BRiCE project to provide guidance to similar interventions.

The recommendations are organised by project phase, considering elements of adaptability and sustainability, while acknowledging some inherent overlap of these recommendations across phases. Responsible stakeholders are identified for each recommendation.

Table 16: Summary of Recommendations by project phase

Project Phase	Recommendations
 PROJECT DESIGN	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prioritise a project design with a flexible and adaptive approach 2. Leverage synergies and lessons learned from previous and ongoing projects 3. Design project consortia through mediated and participatory sessions from the project proposal through the inception phase 4. Integrate a gender transformative approach to address to girls' education

 INCEPTION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Ensure sufficient time is accorded to the inception phase for planning that aligns with the scope of the project. 6. Align project activities with government priorities, when feasible, to create buy-in and opportunities for sustainable impacts 7. Map and incorporate existing community structures
 IMPLEMENTATION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Bring together the necessary technical expertise for successful implementation 9. Use diverse means to ensure community needs are identified and feed into project decisions 10. Establish regular communication and coordination mechanisms with core partners 11. Invest in teacher professional development as an economical and sustainable method to improve quality education
 MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND RESEARCH	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Seek out more avenues for the inclusion of research in development/ humanitarian projects 13. Build capacity of and partnerships with local research organisations 14. Build in monitoring time specifically around project sustainability 15. Carry out regular learner assessments to better capture impact of education-focused interventions
 PROJECT CLOSURE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. Develop action plans to which stakeholders commit to the continuation of impactful activities 17. Outline phase-out plans for activities not intended to continue with a focus on a clear communications strategy from the start

5.1 Project design

Recommendation 1: Prioritise a project design with flexible and adaptive approaches

Responsible: Donors, implementing partners

The BRiCE project had a budget of around \$6 million USD to carry out 29 long-term activities in two challenging contexts across 4+ years. As evidenced through the BRiCE project, a key lesson learned is the importance of adaptable, flexible approaches, especially within complex, fragile contexts. The changing needs of targeted communities require continual monitoring so that projects are able to adapt accordingly. However, with so many activities, implementing partner expertise, spending, and the impact was at times less focused than it could have been. Respondents from the consortium pointed to the challenges caused by this as one of the project's biggest lessons learned. Project proposals should demonstrate anticipated flexibility and the means by which they will continually monitor the situation to maintain their relevance to project communities in light of contextual changes.

Recommendation 2: Leverage synergies and lessons learned from previous and ongoing projects

Responsible: Donors, implementing partners

The BRiCE implementing partners brought with them a wide number of institutional elements and activities which proved to be highly successful as they were iterations of proven approaches rather than novel ones (i.e., Code of Conduct). Building on existing projects was key to allowing the project to successfully implement a wide range of activities and increased their impact by complementing and reinforcing existing work by partners.

Recommendation 3: Design project consortia through mediated and participatory sessions from the project proposal through the inception phase

Responsible: Implementing partners

An early lack of clarity on roles, lines of communication and management, and budgets brought confusion to consortium team members. Initial challenges could have been avoided through a better design and planning process that clarified roles and responsibilities and clear processes to work coherently between Plan and RI.

Future project consortia should be designed carefully – from proposal design through the inception phase – through a mediated and participatory session whereby all roles, responsibilities, finances, etc. are able to be discussed and adapted to meet the needs of consortium members. Doing so would significantly decrease any issues within a consortium and would serve to establish a stronger, more coherent approach which would ultimately improve the project's likelihood of success.

Recommendation 4: Integrate a gender transformative approach to address to girls' education

Responsible: Implementing partners, donors

The BRiCE project was highly successful in integrating a gender transformative approach into its planning and implementation, and through its careful planning, reduced the gender barriers to education in two very diverse contexts. However, the project also revealed further opportunities to enhance its gender transformative impact, specifically in relation to household-level components, which were not always directly targeted.

Future projects should aim to incorporate activities which target household-level positive change in inequitable gender dynamics at all levels, for example, in addressing the prevailing gender norms which disproportionately burden girls with chores. By leveraging targeted gender-focused interventions at all levels (with individual, family, community, and policy levels being highly relevant to targeted communities within projects like BRiCE) deeper, normative changes can be sought which will benefit communities, and especially girls, in the long-term.

5.2 Inception

Recommendation 5: Ensure sufficient time is accorded to the inception phase for planning that aligns with the scope of the project.

Responsible: Donors

The BRiCE project incorporated a number of ambitious elements. Though the BRiCE consortium worked harmoniously by the end of the project, the BRiCE project's initial three-month inception phase was insufficient for conducting all the necessary steps before starting project implementation. For the BRiCE project, an inception period of six months or more would have better provided the project teams with enough time to establish all mechanisms required for successful project implementation.

Dependent on the scale and ambition of the project activities, time needs to be adequately allocated to align processes and mechanisms more closely across partners to minimise any divergent, conflicting, or non-complementary work, as well as to delays which could impact the implementation of activities.

Recommendation 6: Align project activities with government priorities, where feasible, to create buy-in and opportunities for sustainable impacts

Responsible: Implementing partners, governments

BRiCE benefitted from aligning project objectives with government priorities; some of the best examples are the activities related to strengthening the education system with EMIS support and the creation of safeguarding measures and codes of conduct. This alignment not only ensured government support throughout the project's lifetime, but also improved chances for sustainability.

Such alignment does require ensuring government's capacity to take ownership of activity continuation if that is the plan. Continued approaches and discussions with government counterparts should be documented and tracked, and follow-up and support for a smooth exit strategy should be planned accordingly.

Recommendation 7: Map and incorporate existing community structures

Responsible: Implementing partners (primary); donors, governments (secondary)

Many BRiCE project activities strengthened existing structures within a community and/or built on previous activities spearheaded by other stakeholders. This was clear a sustainable outcome of the project, which ensured strong levels of ownership over project components. Building from the project design phase and in collaboration with local governments, mapping the existing community structures and partners will 1) avoid service duplication and 2) ensure interventions with a better chance of being sustainable by strengthening something already embedded in the community.

5.3 Implementation

Recommendation 8: Bring together the necessary technical expertise for successful implementation

Responsible: Implementing partners

The multi-sectoral approach adopted in this project was highly effective and can be looked at as best practice. Working towards long-term solutions, the project saw achievements through these efforts aimed at the transition between humanitarian and development. When implementing nexus projects, having a mix of staff with humanitarian and development experience is key to ensure that the logic of both sectors can be effectively merged.

The example of the inclusive education activities in BRiCE underlines the need for such expertise, as in this, case the limited technical expertise in working with children with disabilities hampered their effectiveness. Similarly, the social cohesion activities, beyond the initial scope of the project, would have been strengthened by a more technical approach.

Recommendation 9: Use diverse means to ensure community needs are identified and feed into project decisions

Responsible: Implementing partners, governments

The BRiCE project was designed to support education systems owned by local governments, working through education government offices and schools. Engagement with teachers, students, and caregivers, the main groups involved in the project, was conducted through the schools and the local authorities. In doing so, one of the main achievements of the BRiCE project was strengthening school management who were involved in every major decision of the project. That said, the project found ways some ways to involve students, such as work directly with elected representatives of Student Leadership Networks in Somalia, and parents through PTAs. However, the target communities and students did not feel consultant in the project design or implementation, even as that may be mediated through various community structures. More visible ways to acknowledge engagement of the community in decision-making can further empower and create stronger senses of civic engagement, particularly by the government.

Recommendation 10: Establish regular communication and coordination mechanisms with core partners

Responsible: Donors, governments, implementing partners

The BRiCE project benefited from a well-coordinated set of actors working interdependently rather than independently. The project showed great adaptation mechanisms and flexibility in its actions through log frame changes and COVID responses, in large part due to its close collaboration with key partners. Particularly as duty bearers of the interests of the communities, governments should regularly work with donors and implementers to highlight changes in needs and participate in the development of adaptation measures where appropriate.

Recommendation 11: Invest in teacher professional development as an economical and sustainable method to improve quality education

Responsible: Governments, implementing partners, donors

Most education projects working in the nexus focus heavily on immediate learner outcomes and resource provision; BRiCE has helped to shine light on the importance of teacher training for long-term outcomes. Its targeted CPD approaches, in collaboration with local governments, were some of its most successful activities and hold the potential to lead to wide-reaching and sustainable impacts across contexts.

Future education projects, especially in EiE, should prioritise investments in teacher professional development in order to provide targeted communities with an experienced cadre of teachers who care about educating their own communities. Governments should work to open up these funding pathways while also collaborating with implementers (and donors, by proxy) to support CPD for long-term impact.

5.4 Monitoring, evaluation, and research

Recommendation 12: Seek out more avenues for the inclusion of research in development/ humanitarian projects

Responsible: Implementing partners, donors, governments

Integrating research into the BRiCE project has proven to be highly successful. In the months following the project's end, the research team has had the opportunity to produce knowledge materials attracting attention from governments, donors, and implementing organisations alike. The learnings from these materials can pave the way for sustained concentration on gaps and weaknesses within a system, for example in this case, the education systems in Puntland and Gambella.

Broader efforts to advocate for the inclusion of research into long-term projects have the potential to better inform programmatic interventions and the allocation of government and donor financing. A research component should be considered for all projects where a consortium is desired, and research partners should begin to actively seek out and initiate discussions with development/humanitarian agencies to incorporate research into projects.

Recommendation 13: Build capacity of and partnerships with local research organisations

Responsible: Local governments, donors, research teams

One of BRiCE's successes came in building the capacity of local research partners. This has put them in a position to better produce knowledge on the contexts where they are which can take a much more nuanced and locally situated approach – given local expertise – to proposing answers to key questions. Incorporating such activities into projects more consistently can help to reshape research landscapes and promote more evidence-driven approaches supporting local communities.

Recommendation 14: Build in monitoring around sustainability planning

Responsible: Donors, implementing partners, local governments

While the project's target areas include activities aiming for structural impacts, such as the EMIS improvements, teaching improvements in the target communities, and embedding codes of conduct in schools, the longevity thereof is uncertain. For example, in Gambella, a lack of human resources to work on EMIS and a lack of follow-up from the government on the code of conduct has rendered the management to be less effective than desired. In Puntland, respondents pointed to there not being enough time after the adoption of the code of conduct to effectively monitor its implementation.

BRiCE had a comprehensive monitoring system which captured essential data throughout the project's lifespan, but this is not designed to incorporate questions around sustainability. Future projects should identify key indicators which would strengthen activity sustainability and incorporate them into M&E processes.

Recommendation 15: Carry out regular learner assessments to better capture impact of education-focused interventions

Responsible: Governments, research organisations

The BRiCE project's research component was an innovative approach to better understand education in the contexts of migration and displacement. Its results have the potential to establish a standard in terms of the understanding of the existing and supported education systems for project work going forward. It as well highlighted the importance of the element of regular learner assessments which are typically missing in EiE situations, as establishing causal impacts of an intervention on teaching and learning has proven to be challenging without significant baseline data to compare results with.

Governments have a significant role to play in ensuring that regular learner assessments are taking place so as to provide implementing partners the requisite data for their own monitoring of programme implementation and impact. They should collaborate with local research organisations to capture this data on a regular basis and this data should be provided to organisations interested in carrying out education-focused projects.

5.5 Project closure

Recommendations 16: Develop action plans to which stakeholders commit to the continuation of impactful activities

Responsible: Governments, implementing partners

Regular meetings should be held between key stakeholders to learn about which activities show the most promise and have the biggest impact, and wherever possible, the governments should aim to seek funding and identify action plans for these activities to continue upon project end.

Some of BRiCE project's biggest successes, specifically related to school Codes of Conduct and EMIS, are reliant on governments for long-term sustainability. In addition, CPD is an area where continued investment will reap extensive dividends in the future, supporting not only teachers with a professional avenue for employment but the building of a foundation for long-term economic and social success within communities. Respondents interviewed cast significant doubts on the financial (and technical) capacity of the governments to continue their implementation and monitoring of them.

Implementing partners should work with governments to not only commit to the continuation of project activities but to draw up action plans with timelines and clear financial earmarking. These action plans should sufficiently describe the relevant Ministry's commitment through detailed accounts of what, when, who, and how the commitment will be upheld. These should be shared with the implementing partners and relevant communities.

Recommendation 17: Outline phase-out plans for activities not intended to continue with a focus on a clear communications strategy from the start

Responsible: Donors, governments, implementing partners

Implementing partners should also ensure that project activities which have little to no prospects of continuing after project completion should be phased out gradually in communication with donors and beneficiaries involved to avoid creating sharp service gaps. Communicating project closure should be clear to the communities, by most relevant parties, to avoid reputational damage to the implementing partners and to ensure that service delivery completion is well understood by beneficiaries.

ANNEXES

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Annex 2: Research tools

Research tools for the study can be viewed at the following link:

[Research Tools](#)

Annex 3: Evaluation matrix

Evaluation questions		Tool
RQ1. Relevance: How relevant was the BRiCE project to beneficiaries', stakeholders', and governments' needs and priorities?		
1.1	To what extent were the objectives and design of the project , including the underlying project logic, valid and did they respond to the needs, priorities and policies of a) intended beneficiaries, b) local stakeholders and c) the governments of Ethiopia and Somalia?	KIIs - Stakeholders, government officials KIIs/Case Studies/FGDs - Intended beneficiaries
RQ2. Effectiveness: To what extent did the BRiCE project attain its stated objectives and its results?		
2.1	To what extent has the project been effective in strengthening the education system in the two target regions of Gambella (Ethiopia) and Puntland (Somalia)?	KIIs - Project stakeholders, government officials, teachers.
2.2	To what extent has the project been successful at improving the quality of teaching by improving capacities in targeted schools?	KIIs, Case Studies, FGDs - Teachers, parents, children
2.3	To what extent has the project been successful in creating a safe, gender sensitive and inclusive school environment ?	FGDs, case studies - focus on children
2.4	What were the major drivers and systemic and structural barriers influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives and intended results?	Desk Review (base/mid/annual reports) KIIs - project staff
2.5	To what extent has the project been effective in developing and implementing the longitudinal study that should contribute to a) building an understanding of education experiences of refugees and IDPs in conflict and fragile contexts; b) building research capacity and c) disseminating research/knowledge generated to key stakeholders including policymakers to support their work.	KIIs - Research staff, policy makers, project staff
RQ3. Coherence: How coherent was the BRiCE project with the policies and priorities of other actors in the contexts?		
3.1	To what extent was the project consistent with, complementary to and synergised with other interventions and policies in the same area being implemented by a) the implementing partners (Plan International and Relief International) and b) external partners and other stakeholders?	Desk review KIIs - Plan, Relief, 'external partners and other stakeholders'
EQ4. Efficiency: How well did the project's management, implementation and monitoring approaches, including its partnerships, supported the project's delivery?		
4.1	To what extent did the chosen implementation mechanisms (including choice of implementation modalities, entities, and contractual arrangements) conducive for achieving the expected results?	Desk review, KIIs, FGDs, Case Studies
4.2	How well did the project modalities adapt to changing contexts over the course of the project (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic; security situation) and utilise lessons learned from implementation of the interventions?	Desk review, KIIs - project staff, implementing partners, people at the schools.
4.3	To what extent was the project efficient in utilising the project budget during implementation of project activities?	Desk review, KIIs - project staff, implementing partners, people at the schools.
EQ5. Sustainability: To what extent to which the net benefits of the BRiCE project continue or are likely to continue, at the school and education system level?		
5.1	To what extent did the programme enhance local ownership and capacity to influence policy?	KIIs, FGDs - project staff, implementing partners, people at the schools.
5.2	To what extent were programmatic activities designed and implemented in a participatory and empowering manner with the key stakeholders?	KIIs, FGDs - project staff, implementing partners, people at the schools.
5.3	To what extent and in what ways did the project enable sustainable change at the school and education system level?	KIIs, FGDs - project staff, implementing partners, people at the schools. Desk review
EQ6. Impact: What positive or negative, unintended, and intended impacts has the BRiCE project generated?		

6.1	How did the project contribute to the achievement of its overall objective of creating access to safe and quality education as per the design of the project?	All
6.2	What, if any, were the unintended effects of the project interventions, both positive and negative?	All

Annex 4: Documentation reviewed

In carrying out the final evaluation of the BRiCE project, the research team has reviewed the following key documents:

- BRiCE Annex A.1 – Concept note
- BRiCE Proposal
- COVID-19 Adaptation Plan
- BRiCE Annex C – Logical Framework (along with revised logical framework, log frame amendment request and log frame amendment for Annex 1 & 2)
- Budget amendment request (Jun 19)
- No-cost extension – signed addendum and annexes (Feb 22)
- Baseline report (including country reports)
- Midline report
- 2019 ROM visit report
- 2021 ROM visit report
- Year 1 Annual Report
- Year 2 Annual Report
- Year 3 Annual Report
- Year 4 Annual Report
- COVID-19 Adaptation Report
- General Research Plan (2018)
- Country Research Plans (Ethiopia and Somalia)
- Phase one (2020) Research Reports (Ethiopia and Somalia)
- BRiCE Gender Marker Assessment tool (Ethiopia and Somalia)
- Plan International: Getting it right – Gender transformative programming and influencing

Annex 5: Log frame outcome indicators

PRIMARY IMPACT OBJECTIVE:					
To contribute to community and institutional resilience in Gambelia and Puntland by improving access to quality and inclusive education in a safe and secure environment.					
INDICATORS OF PRIMARY IMPACT OBJECTIVE:					
Impact 1a:	Impact 1b:		Impact 2:		
% of girls and boys in research sample show improvement in literacy proficiency	% of girls and boys in research sample show improvement in numeracy proficiency		% of trained teachers in research schools that show awareness of inclusive, gender responsive teaching practices		

OUTCOME 1:			
To improve access to safe, quality ECCD and basic education in fragile, IDP/refugee camp settings and host communities.			
INDICATORS OF OUTCOME 1:			
Outcome 1.1:	Outcome 1.2:	Outcome 1.3:	Outcome 1.4:
# girls and boys (disaggregated by gender) accessing pre-primary and basic primary educational opportunities in project target schools	% of girls and boys reporting a sense of safety in project target schools	% of girls and boys accessing basic educational opportunities through project	% of trained community members (caregivers, PTA, community leaders, etc.) that report being satisfied with the quality of learning in project targeted schools

EXPECTED OUTPUTS OF OUTCOME 1:					
Output 1.1:	Output 1.2:	Output 1.3:	Output 1.4:	Output 1.5:	Output 1.6:
Communities are engaged in guaranteeing safe and protected learning environments	Child protection mechanisms are strengthened in school	Girls and boys have access to appropriate gender-sensitive (psychosocial) support services	Teachers access professional development opportunities and adopt child centred and gender responsive learning approaches to support all learners	School management has the capacities to undertake gender sensitive school improvement plans	Girls, boys and communities access complementary learning opportunities

INDICATORS OF EXPECTED OUTPUTS					
Output Indicator 1.1.1:	Output Indicator 1.2.1:	Output Indicator 1.3.1:	Output Indicator 1.4.1	Output Indicator 1.5.1:	Output Indicator 1.6.1:
# of trained community members in DRR, gender-sensitive and child protection mechanisms	# Project target schools that have a Child Protection Code of Conduct in place (Somalia), and are implementing a Safeguarding / Safe Programming policy (Ethiopia)	# of teachers and education stakeholders trained PFA and psycho-social support trainings	% of teachers in project target school research sample and supported by the project who indicate satisfaction with the professional support they are able to access	% of project target primary schools with SIPs/SDPs in place that include gender-sensitive and inclusive activities	# of boys and girls and other community members in project target schools that have access to supplementary learning and education opportunities (including student clubs, peer-to-peer learning/networks, adult learning hubs, Storytelling, Life Skills)
Output Indicator 1.1.2:	Output Indicator 1.2.2:	Output Indicator 1.3.2:	Output Indicator 1.4.2:	Output Indicator 1.5.2:	Output Indicator 1.6.2:
# of campaigns and initiatives (community dialogues, youth engagement events, radio awareness campaigns, etc.) held in target countries promoting social cohesion and peaceful coexistence	# of school staff and student leaders trained in government child protection policies	# of clubs/leadership networks which provide gender-sensitive activities in project target primary schools	# of teachers in project target schools who are supported in continuous professional development (CPD) by the project	# schools (IDP, ECCD, HCs) that have been supported to improve their physical access and school environment	# girls and boys in project target primary schools (disaggregated by gender) enrolled in remedial support classes
	Output Indicator 1.2.3:				Output Indicator 1.6.3:
	% of girls and boys in project target school research sample who report that they would feel comfortable to report child protection incidents in schools				# of girls and boys in project target primary schools who completed Accelerated Learning (AL) programme that enrol in age-appropriate classes (Somalia only)
					Output Indicator 1.6.4:
					# of schools that have been supported by the provision of education and other scholastic materials

OUTCOME 2:

To strengthen data collection for creating and disseminating a strong evidence base of what works to enhance access to quality and safe education in conflict-affected and fragile contexts.

INDICATORS OF OUTCOME 2:

Outcome 2.1:	Outcome 2.2:	Outcome 2.3:
% of government and education officials (e.g. Head Teachers) trained that report increased capacity in EMIS data collection	# of target local administrations (regions, sub administrations, districts, States, etc) supported by the project are using a standardised approach for inputting to, or generating EMIS data	# reports, and policy briefs produced which provide knowledge and evidence about equitable quality and inclusive education for children in conflict affected and fragile context

EXPECTED OUTPUTS OF OUTCOME 2:		
Output 2.1:	Output 2.2:	Output 2.3:
EMIS systems to collect gender and age disaggregated data are strengthened	Evidence and knowledge base is developed	Evidence and learning from the programme is disseminated locally and internationally
INDICATORS OF EXPECTED OUTPUTS:		
Output Indicator 2.1.1:	Output Indicator 2.2.1:	Output Indicator 2.3.1:
# education officials (e.g. regional and district education officers, Head Teachers) trained in the management of gender and age – disaggregated data	# of local research partner staff trained in data collection and research skills	# of learning events in Ethiopia and Somalia and cross-country research sharing events
Output Indicator 2.1.2:	Output Indicator 2.2.2:	Output Indicator 2.3.2:
% of project targeted ECCD centres and primary schools submitting data that meets standards set by the MoE in a timely manner	# of research reports and policy briefs produced and shared at learning events with policy -makers and stakeholders in Ethiopia and Somalia	# presentations at international conferences presenting research evidence emerging from the project to inform research and practice

Annex 6: Project activities

The following list was drawn from annual project reports.

OUTPUTS	ACTIVITIES	DETAILS
Output 1.1: Communities are engaged in guaranteeing safe and protected learning environments	<p>Activity 1.1.1. Support to /Establishment of community-led child protection mechanisms</p> <p>Activity 1.1.2 Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR) and conflict management training in Early Child Care and Development (ECCD) Centres and schools (Ethiopia only)</p> <p>Activity 1.1.3 Community engagement and dialogue/discussion platforms for safety, peaceful coexistence and child protection</p> <p>Activity 1.1.4 Creation of mother champions for safety in schools ("Mothers in School") (Ethiopia only)</p>	Activity concluded during year 2
Output 1.2: Child Protection mechanisms are strengthened in Schools	<p>Activities 1.2.1 Review of school-based child protection policies and procedures, with training in child rights and gender-sensitive child protection</p> <p>Activity 1.2.2 Community and children-led school risk mapping & mitigation activities</p> <p>Activity 1.2.3 Establishment and validation of code of conduct in and around schools</p>	
Output 1.3: Girls and boys have access to gender-sensitive (psychosocial) support services	<p>Activity 1.3.1 Mapping of community-based psychosocial support and protection services and needs-based linkages/ referral with service providers</p> <p>Activity 1.3.2 Establishing and strengthening referral mechanisms and training for teachers, teaching assistants, PTSA members and 'Mothers in School' on psychosocial first-aid and referral mechanisms; where needed.</p> <p>Activity 1.3.3 Support to in-school gender clubs through the development of gender-sensitive guidance programme, awareness in menstrual hygiene, gender-based violence and SRHR</p>	
Output 2.1: Teachers access professional development opportunities and adopt inclusive child centred and gender responsive learning approaches to support all learners	<p>Activity 2.1.1 Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and other identified training for teachers in fragile and IDP/refugee camp settings (including ongoing psychosocial support) with focus on quality, inclusive, gender responsive teaching methods that are appropriate to age, development level, language, culture and capacities of learners, as well as transparent and ethical assessment of learning outcomes</p> <p>Activity 2.1.2 Adapting national curriculum for protracted displacement context and build-in gender-responsive, inclusive, learner centred pedagogy</p> <p>Activities 2.2.1 Strengthening capacity of school leadership to lead gender-sensitive and inclusive School Improvement Plan</p> <p>Activity 2.2.2 Development and implementation of gender sensitive ECCD Centre / School Improvement plans</p>	<p>Activity cancelled in year 1</p> <p>Activity completed in Ethiopia in year 1</p>

	Activities 2.2.3 Construction of classrooms and pedagogical blocks (Ethiopia only)	Activity completed end of year 1
Output 2.3: Girls, boys and communities access complementary learning opportunities	<p>Activity 2.3.1 Provision of teaching and learning materials</p> <p>Activity 2.3.2 Establish and strengthen peer-to-peer learning networks for girl students according to competency to support each other in learning</p> <p>Activity 2.3.3 Provision of remedial education support</p> <p>Activity 2.3.4 Provision of certified accelerated education programme for out-of-school children (including mother-tongue language) based on IAWG Accelerated Education principles.</p> <p>Activity 2.3.5 Establishment of community learning hub, providing life skills, adult literacy and conflict management (Ethiopia only)</p> <p>Activity 2.3.6 Strengthening existing in-school and out-of-school clubs including child-led story-telling and life skills circles</p>	Activity cancelled for Ethiopia in year 2
Output 3.1: EMIS systems to collect gender and age disaggregated data are strengthened	<p>Activity 3.1.1. Assessment of current EMIS and identification of gaps</p> <p>Activity 3.1.2 Strengthen the capacity of education officials to monitor and manage gender- and age-disaggregated data</p> <p>Activity 3.1.3 Strengthen capacity of ECCD centres / schools and Ministry of Education for real-time data collection/reporting</p>	Activity completed in Somalia in year 2
Output 3.2: Partnership with research institutions to conduct longitudinal study	<p>Activity 3.2.1 Longitudinal study on impact of conflict on educational outcomes of marginalised groups and mitigation</p> <p>Activity 3.2.2 “Baseline, midline, and end line studies”</p> <p>Activity 3.3.1 Sharing of knowledge and lessons learnt at state level, federal level, and international level for sharing best practice.</p> <p>Activity 3.3.2 Organisation of annual learning events with other education actors, key donors and ministry officials</p>	Ended reporting in year 2

Annex 7: Ethical considerations and data quality assurances

Ethics and safeguarding concerns are in all research a primary consideration. In this study, given the circumstances of risks related to COVID-19 and associated ethical challenges, as well as the involvement of children and youth in the data collection, these considerations were at the forefront of decision making, planning and research development. As noted in the initial research proposal, Samuel Hall upholds the highest possible ethical standards and embeds ethical considerations at all stages of research from design to field research and data handling.

This is of particular relevance for in-person field research during the COVID-19, and considerations on how to undertake such research ethically are central to our fieldwork planning and are regularly re-evaluated.

Ethical research in the time of COVID-19

Samuel Hall is committed to carrying out its research and analysis services within a comprehensive ethical framework and our values reflect this commitment. In undertaking any research project, Samuel Hall strives to do positive good and strictly abides by the ‘Do No Harm’ principle of humanitarian action and key principles of ethical research and action (Samuel Hall’s relevant guidelines including child safeguarding and PSEA policies can be provided upon request.) In practice, this will mean ensuring that research design and field implementation do no harm – implementing and embedding guidelines for health and safety under COVID-19, such as provision and use of PPE, social distancing, limited interactions, and the consideration of ongoing impacts of COVID-19 on the research population. Samuel Hall has already begun utilising such measures in ongoing fieldwork. Samuel Hall will draw on its own ethical guidelines, as well as forthcoming and newly developed guidelines from academia and research, such as the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre’s Ethical Considerations for Evidence Generation Involving Children on the COVID-19 Pandemic.²¹⁸ We will collaborate closely with our partner Mindset to ensure these guidelines are closely followed in the in-person data collection phase.

Ethical Challenges in Research

There are a range of ethical issues that can be considered in relation to undertaking research in challenging contexts with potentially vulnerable participants. Three critical risk areas were identified for this research, as detailed in the table below:

Table 17: Critical risks for this research

Area of Concern	Description of Risk	Mitigation
Research during COVID-19	Research in-person presents risk of transmission of COVID-19 and subsequent illness or death.	The data collection was subject to a risk assessment immediately prior to the start of fieldwork to understand levels of risk associated with in-person fieldwork. Mitigation strategies such as use of PPE, distancing during research activities, outdoor research, and reduction of numbers of participants in group activities were utilised to reduce risk.
Research with children	Research with children involves engaging with minors requiring additional safeguarding measures.	All research activities were designed in light of Samuel Hall’s Safeguarding Policy. Research activities undertaken with children were in all cases adapted to the specific age group of those being interviewed. For all interviews with children, the informed consent of adult parents or guardians was required prior to the interview, as well as the assent of children themselves. Identifying information was not collected and any participant data was used only for verification purposes and deleted after the data collection. Data security protocols were applied during and after data collection. Teams were thoroughly trained not only on the tool but appropriate safeguarding measures for research with children.

²¹⁸ UNICEF, IRC, “Ethical Considerations for Evidence Generation Involving Children on the COVID-19 Pandemic,” 2020.

Research with vulnerable participants	Research with vulnerable participants may present risk of re-traumatisation, generate additional burdens on participants (time or financial), or result in backlash in some scenarios.	In all cases, informed consent was given prior to participation. Identifying information was not shared and any participant data was used only for verification purposes. Data security protocols will be applied during and after data collection. Research will take place in safe, private, and accessible locations, and will be conducted with the approval of Plan International and local authorities. Food and drink will be provided for longer research sessions. The training offered prior to research to the enumerators will cover how to appropriately pose research questions, and ensure respondents are able to stop the interviews at any point in time.
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These represent critical areas for research to address through design, methodology and implementation. As noted above, not only have these ethical considerations informed the design of research, but, as the following section outlines, they were addressed through a comprehensive internal risk assessment prior to fieldwork through our Comprehensive Planning Process (CPP). The CPP represents a documented plan of action that addresses all aspects of operations, while remaining dynamic and subject to change based on the situation.

Research permission process

Research permission was sought prior to any fieldwork. All fieldwork was carried out with the assistance of in-field teams, notably RRS in Ethiopia and district education officials in Somalia. Plan International and its partners helped to ensure needed permissions were in place and fieldwork could proceed in a timely manner.

Risk Assessment

Samuel Hall has a full internal risk management process and policy implemented across all projects and applying to fieldwork components, which assesses risk at various levels and for all actors involved, both research participants and research staff. This risk assessment was carried out prior to fieldwork.

Confidentiality and Data Security

As per its internal data collection policy, data which is provided to Samuel Hall was used in accordance with Data Protection legislation. This principle means that Samuel Hall staff and research participants were made aware of who is collecting the research data, where it will be kept, and what will be done with it. Privacy notices were included on consent forms or associated documents so all parties are aware of how data will be processed. Data was processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction, or damage, using appropriate technical and organisational measures ('integrity and confidentiality'). Personal data was kept securely so that no unauthorised access can occur. To ensure the security and quality of its data, Samuel Hall utilises a dedicated data management system (DMS) on its own proprietary cloud, hosted on Google's cloud architecture. All Samuel Hall software and collected data reside in Frankfurt, Germany, subject to German and EU privacy laws. The DMS will remain isolated from all other Samuel Hall systems by default. Protocols to the data collection include:

- Password protection of data collection tablets or phones
- Regular deletion of survey data from phones during fieldwork (once uploaded)
- Backing up of data
- Secure storage (physical or digital) of data collected, esp. where identifying information is included

Safeguarding Processes

Samuel Hall has developed a full set of contextualised safeguarding protocols governing not only research with children but including organisational level code of conduct and framework. These include guidelines for hiring, for interaction with children, and for mechanisms to ensure adherence and to support referrals as needed and involve training of all necessary staff including elements in training for research enumerators.

As part of this research, children (defined here as those under 18) were interviewed in order to gather information about their lives. Samuel Hall follows the ethical principles and considerations highlighted by UNICEF in its working paper '*What We Know about Ethical Research Involving Children in Humanitarian Settings: An overview of principles, the literature and case studies*'. All enumerators involved in the project received an orientation on Plan International's specific safeguarding policies.

Annex 8: Contextual challenges which the BRiCE project respond to

Table 18: Contextual challenges to which the BRICE project aims to respond to

Thematic challenges	Specific challenges
Child protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan International and Relief International have worked with displaced populations and host communities in Gambella and Puntland on increasing safety, including child protection and prevention of violence, exploitation and abuse against girls and boys, since 2014 and 2006, respectively. Psychosocial needs are high among IDP and refugee populations Corporal punishment (in 2015, 31% of students surveyed in Somalia indicated that they were subject to a beating by their teachers²¹⁹) Capacity building of CEC, CPC, teachers, community groups, and local civil society organisations on child protection and their rights were highlighted as needed in the 2017-2021 ESSP. Child protection policies and systems strengthening were also highlighted as needed in Puntland's ESSP. Physical and sexual violence against girls and violence associated with recruitment by armed groups persist as issues in Puntland.²²⁰ Children in Gambella are more likely to suffer from deprivations than elsewhere in Ethiopia.²²¹ Child marriage continues to be of concern in Gambella, with 47% of girls married at a young age.²²² Children in Gambella are at heightened risk of abuse, abduction, exploitation, and child labour exploitation.²²³ Girls are often married off from the age of 14 with low education completion rates in Gambella.²²⁴
Quality education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Puntland and Gambella, conflict and displacement put children at risk of being left behind in education. Marginalised girls not enrolled in school is of significant concern in Somalia and Ethiopia Somalia's primary education situation is dire: there is an average 33-58% enrolment in primary school, with 64% transitioning to Grade 5.²²⁵ Quality assurance systems are weak and there are limited resources allocated for education.²²⁶ ECCE in Somalia is a key challenge, with very low enrolment rates and awareness. In Gambella, Primary NER is above 100%, though girls are less enrolled than boys.²²⁷ Pre-primary enrolment is 40.7% nationally, though this ranges between 7.9% and 97.6% depending on the region, with Gambella data unavailable. Only 30.2% of teachers in Ethiopia are qualified.²²⁸
Access and infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Somalia has insufficient access to schools in rural and IDP locations, and poor infrastructure for education.²²⁹ Only 52% of schools are permanent structures, and only 61% have wash facilities.²³⁰ Gambella has the lowest proportion of toilets available for students with special needs and young children, with 14% for both.²³¹ Schools are largely structurally inadequate.
Capacity for education service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School provision across both contexts have weak leadership, management, and accountability of education and school systems. The Somalia national action plan points to teachers being underqualified, with fewer than 30% of teachers having professional qualifications.²³² Teacher recruitment is a challenge with teacher salaries low (in Somalia, as low as \$20-\$50 USD per month).²³³

²¹⁹ Puntland Government Of Somalia Ministry Of Education And Higher Education. "Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2017-2021". 2017.

²²⁰ World Vision International. "Child Protection and COVID-19: Somalia Case Study". 2022.

²²¹ UNHCR. "Gambella region information brochure." 2021.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ The Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development. "Somalia National Development Plan 2020 to 2024". 2020. p. 261; Puntland Government Of Somalia Ministry Of Education And Higher Education. "Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2017-2021". 2017.

²²⁶ Puntland Government Of Somalia Ministry Of Education And Higher Education. "Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2017-2021". 2017.

²²⁷ The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. "Education Sector Development Programme VI (ESDP VI)". 2021.

²²⁸ Ibid. p. 15.

²²⁹ The Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development. "Somalia National Development Plan 2020 to 2024". 2020. p. 261

²³⁰ Ibid. p. 262

²³¹ The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. "Education Sector Development Programme VI (ESDP VI)". 2021.

²³² Ibid. p. 261

²³³ Puntland Government Of Somalia Ministry Of Education And Higher Education. "Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2017-2021". 2017.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher training and school leadership training were seen as priority areas for UNICEF in recent interventions.²³⁴
Community and parent perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents in Somalia enrol their children in Qur'anic schools before formal primary education, and parents do not perceive ECCE as essential, enrolling children later on in life.²³⁵
Data management and administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collection has been an issue in both contexts, though despite systems in place for data collection, the quality of coordination, implementation, and act on the data is highly variable. More data is needed, especially to understand what works in terms of increasing learning levels among target groups. The Somalia National Development Plan and ESSP point to the EMIS being a priority, with data availability and tracking lacking and needing improvement and inspection/supervision.
Inadequate school resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gambella has the lowest textbook ratio per student in Ethiopia, at 6 textbooks per pupil in primary, compared to a national average of 10.9.²³⁶ Schools in Puntland are financed through community financing means and through help by international development agencies²³⁷
A need for peaceful coexistence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In both contexts, a clear need for peaceful coexistence was present between IDP/refugee and host communities. Conflict and insecurity persists in both contexts, with refugees/IDPs facing some degree of segregation/lack of social cohesion with the host communities.
COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19 limited education provision in both countries, with limited household learning, especially for the most disadvantaged. Children previously benefiting from school feeding programmes have suffered, widening inequalities, and increasing school dropouts.²³⁸
Needs of the intended beneficiaries which the project did not cover	
Poverty and food insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents struggle to take care of their children, especially in terms of feeding and provision of school fees/uniforms/resources in both contexts.
Water insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While water was provisioned at some BRiCE supported schools through wells, respondents in Somalia pointed to the fact that the Plan-supported pumps were broken, and their village had a lack of water.
Climate-related emergencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to poverty, food insecurity is high in Somalia due to drought and locust invasion, and this is linked directly to lower levels of education enrolment.²³⁹
Disabled children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the project did work towards building some ramps and toilets for children in wheelchairs, a gap in the BRiCE implementation is addressing the needs of children with disabilities, particularly for their participation/access to school.
Gender roles and teen pregnancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Girls are forced to spend more time on chores and domestic work than boys, and this can lead to reduced school attendance. Early pregnancy, while likely discussed in communities through the project lifespan, was not a focus point of the project and respondents felt that there should have been more focus on it.
Conflict, insecurity, conscription, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both Gambella and Puntland are contexts which are prone to conflict-related issues. While the BRiCE project worked to build in peaceful coexistence, the underlying insecurities involved with conflict were not able to be addressed, including conscription of boys, missed classes when fighting breaks out, etc.

²³⁴ UNICEF. "Ethiopia Education Sectoral and OR+ (Thematic) Report". 2019.

²³⁵ The Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development. "Somalia National Development Plan 2020 to 2024". 2020. p. 262

²³⁶ The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. "Education Sector Development Programme VI (ESDP VI)". 2021. p. 16.

²³⁷ University of Sussex and the Puntland Development Research Centre, Findings from the Second Research Phase in Puntland, Somalia, 2022.

²³⁸ UNHCR. "Gambella region information brochure." 2021.; World Vision International. "Child Protection and COVID-19: Somalia Case Study". 2022.

²³⁹ World Food Programme. "Reducing Malnutrition and Strengthening Resilience to Shocks for a Food Secure Somalia". 2019.; World Food Programme. "Somalia Annual Country Report 2021". 2021.

Segregation

- While work was done to bring communities together through BRiCE, protracted segregation, particularly in Somalia where, even after 30 years, IDPs are seen as guests living in separate camps, remains an insurmountable underlying issue. In Ethiopia, young refugees described how they were thought of as criminals by the host communities - these deeply set and long-held beliefs are challenging to dispel.

Annex g: Sampling details

Table 19: Summary sampling criteria for tools

Somalia Schools	FGDs	Case study	KIIs	Survey
Students: 13-17	✓			
Students: 10-13		✓		
Teachers	✓			✓
Guardians (esp. PTA Leads)			✓	✓
Community Leaders			✓	✓
Project consortium staff (Plan International, Relief International etc.)			✓	
Research Partners			✓	
Other key stakeholders (including government, camp administrators, etc.)			✓	

Table 20: Data collection locations

Somalia Schools	IDP/Non IDP	Region	District
Samawade Primary School	IDP	Nugal	Garowe
Yasin Artan Primary School	Non IDP	Mudug	Galkayo
Ethiopia Schools	Refugee/Host	Region	District
Gilo bethel Primary school	Host	Gambella	Gog District
Itang No 2 primary school	Host	Gambella	Itang Special District
Mat Primary school (Centre – B)	Refugee	Gambella	Ngyunyriel Refugee Camp

Table 21: Sampling breakdown for in-country data collection

	Ethiopia			Somalia		
	Refugee	Host community	Totals	IDP	Host community	Totals
Case study	2 (2 boys)	6 (3 girls, 3 boys)	8 (3 girls, 5 boys)	1 (1 boy)	3 (2 girls, 1 boy)	4 (2 girls, 2 boys)
FGD	15 (5 mixed teachers, 5 boys, 5 girls)	30 (10 mixed teachers, 10 boys, 10 girls)	45 (15 girls, 15 boys, 45 mixed teachers)	0	23 (12 mixed teachers, 5 boys, 6 girls)	23 (12 mixed teachers, 5 boys, 6 girls)
KII	3 (2 male, 1 female)	9 (6 male, 3 female)	13 (5 females, 8 males)	2 (2 females)	6 (3 female, 3 male)	8 (5 female, 3 male)

Table 22: Telephone survey respondent primary role by country

	Ethiopia	Somalia	Totals
Teacher	36	5	41
Headteacher/School Director	15	24	39
CPC	10	12	22
CEC/CCC	0	19	19
Total	61	60	121

ABOUT SAMUEL HALL

Samuel Hall is a social enterprise that conducts research, evaluates programmes, and designs policies in contexts of migration and displacement. Our approach is ethical, academically rigorous, and based on first-hand experience of complex and fragile settings.

Our research connects the voices of communities to changemakers for more inclusive societies. With offices in Afghanistan, Germany, Kenya, and Tunisia and a presence in Somalia, Ethiopia, and the United Arab Emirates, we are based in the regions we study. For more information, please visit www.samuelhall.org.



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