



# EDUCATING NIGERIAN GIRLS IN NEW ENTERPRISES

A summary of findings from the programme's evaluations



# Summary of Evaluation Findings

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## Background

Mercy Corps has been running programs in Nigeria since 2012, focusing its interventions on adolescent girls' empowerment, economic and market development, conflict mitigation and humanitarian relief. Between 2017 and 2020, Mercy Corps, with support from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) through the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC), implemented the programme "Educating Nigerian Girls in New Enterprises" (ENGINE) phase II in Kano, Kaduna and Lagos States and in the Federal Capital Territory. The ENGINE II programme was aimed at transforming the future of marginalised girls (identified in ENGINE phase I) between the ages of 17 to 23 by fulfilling their potential in education and work. Over 18,000 Nigerian girls participated in the programme in 79 schools (14 in the FCT, 30 in Kano, 35 in Kaduna) and 194 communities across 18 Local Government Areas.

The programme was implemented by a consortium, which includes Mercy Corps, an external evaluator (Oxford Policy Management) as well as local Civil Society Organisations who are responsible for implementing the programme at the state level. These partners are Action Health Incorporated (AHI) in Lagos State; Tabitha Cumi Foundation (TCF) in the Federal Capital Territory; Kindling Hope Across Nations (KHAN) in Kaduna State and Society for Women Development and Empowerment of Nigeria (SWODEN) in Kano State.

ENGINE II is structured around three main outcomes: i) improve functional literacy, numeracy, and financial literacy for girls enrolled in the program; ii) support girls' transition to the next phase of education, work or to expand/diversify business options; and iii) sustain initiatives for continued education and empowerment of marginalised girls beyond the life span of the project. The program implementation supports a two-fold theory of change;

- In-School girls (ISG) will successfully transition to the next phase of education, or complete their current education cycle and enter the workforce through enhanced learning experiences and an improved enabling environment.
- Out of School Girls (OSG) will have the opportunity to build their functional literacy and numeracy, while building assets and diversifying income sources through the right support mechanisms in place.



## Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Approach

The objectives of the evaluation of the ENGINE II Program are to understand the **impact** and **relevance** of the activities conducted for the program participants, to verify if the program **objectives** have been achieved and how **efficiently**, and to certify the **sustainability** of the proposed approaches. The ultimate purpose being to improve the effectiveness of programming and capitalize on best practices, challenges and lessons learned.

In order to do so, Mercy Corps has adopted a theory-based mixed-method approach, employing a quantitative panel survey complemented by qualitative research to evaluate the programme across the four states of intervention. The quantitative panel survey was composed of two rounds of survey including a baseline (2018) and midline (2019). It is important to notice that due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 global pandemic and the resulting school closures; the original evaluation design for the endline evaluation was no longer viable. The endline evaluation was therefore adjusted to accommodate remote data collection and analysis of secondary data. Hence, the endline evaluation does not report on the impact that ENGINE II has had and will not quantify the impact on key outcomes (learning outcomes and transition) in comparison to a control group. **It focuses by necessity on a qualitative assessment of the factors that stakeholders perceive to be influential in driving change in outcomes**, and on understanding how ENGINE II activities are perceived to contribute to any perceived changes in outcomes. The Endline evaluation was built around 6 main research questions:

1. Has ENGINE II contributed to improvements in learning for ISGs and OSGs?
2. Did ISGs and OSGs attend the learning centre sessions regularly?
3. Has ENGINE II contributed to LCFs' use of learner-centred pedagogy (LCTM)?
4. Has ENGINE II contributed to improvements in ISGs' and OSGs' goal setting, and assertiveness and communication skills?
5. Has ENGINE II contributed to the implementation of policies and practices to support CVAP?

# Key Findings

## Learning outcome findings

ENGINE II established 688 learning centers across communities (169 learning centers) and schools (519 learning centers) in 18 Local Government Areas. The programme also trained 1035 volunteer teachers on the learner centered teaching methodology to provide lessons on Literacy, Numeracy, Life Skills and Financial Education. **The midline evaluation was able to identify a statistically significant improvement in numeracy for both in-school (ISG) and out of school girls (OSG),** as well as in literacy for OSG, as a result of the programme’s intervention. This is a significant achievement for the programme.

**Table 1: Literacy scores at midline**

	Intervention Group Mean	Control Group Mean	Standard Deviation in the intervention group
<b>ISG (cross-sectional sample) (SeGRA<sup>1</sup>)</b>			
JSS3 (SS1)	21.2	15.7	20.578
SS1 (SS2)	27.2	22.9	23.464
SS2 (SS3)	16.0	16.5	16.245
Overall	23.0	18.04	21.662
<b>OSG (panel sample) (EGRA<sup>2</sup>)</b>			
Overall	31.5	26.6	24.268

**ISG and OSG literacy levels at baseline were low,** with ISG in the intervention group scoring on average 17.9 on the SeGRA and OSG scoring on average 25.6 on the EGRA literacy assessment.

At midline, the average literacy scores in the intervention group improved significantly for both ISG and OSG. Literacy scores in the control group did not improve significantly between baseline and midline.

**ISG, numeracy levels at baseline were very low,** with an average score of 5.7 on the SeGMA, while OSG numeracy levels at baseline were moderate with an average score of 60.5 on the EGMA.

At midline, the average numeracy score in the intervention group for both ISG and OSG has improved significantly, reaching a score of 11.6 for ISGs and 66.2 for OSG.

**Table 2: Numeracy scores at midline**

	Intervention Group Mean	Control Group Mean	Standard Deviation in the intervention group
<b>ISG (cross-sectional sample) (SeGMA<sup>3</sup>)</b>			
JSS3 (SS1)	10.5	4.3	13.604
SS1 (SS2)	13.0	8.5	17.437
D SS2 (SS3)	9.9	6.1	15.718
Overall	11.6	5.9	16.159
<b>OSG (panel sample) (EGMA<sup>4</sup>)</b>			
Overall	66.2	61.3	18.758

<sup>1</sup> SEGRA – Secondary Grade Reading Assessment: this was administered to in-school girls to test their literacy ability

<sup>2</sup> EGRA – Early Grade Reading Assessment: this was administered to out of school girls to test their literacy ability

<sup>3</sup> SEGMA – Secondary Grade Mathematics Assessment: this was administered to in-school girls to test their numeracy ability

<sup>4</sup> EGMA – Early Grade Mathematics Assessment this was administered to out of school girls to test their numeracy ability

## **Endline Q 1: Has ENGINE II contributed to improvements in learning for ISGs and OSGs?**

Overall, respondents reported that they had observed improvements in girls' performance in literacy and numeracy within the past year. This was demonstrated by improved scores in continuous assessments, success rates at WAEC<sup>5</sup> exams, and increasing knowledge transfer among peers and family. In literacy, girls reported being able to speak better, construct sentences, write letters, and read words. In numeracy, girls reported that their understanding of basic calculations, algebra, logarithm, and geometry, among others, had improved.

**These improvements are largely attributable to the learner centered teaching methodology adopted by the Learning center Facilitators (LCFs) at the ENGINE II learning centres.** Girls and LCFs worked together to identify the best ways to improve girls' learning experience. LCFs dedicated time to explain topics multiple times and focused on students who got the wrong answers to help them arrive at the correct solution. **Group work and peer-to-peer learning approaches encouraged girls to learn from each other.** Some girls also reported their own increased commitment to learning and receiving extra help through paid tutorials.

**Girls reported having increased confidence in learning,** even in subjects they were previously afraid of. LCF's approach to teaching has improved girls' understanding of different subjects and has created a classroom environment where girls feel comfortable and free to actively participate, without the fear of being reprimanded, punished or embarrassed for any mistakes.

### **Improved attendance**

ENGINE II has a multi-pronged approach to improving the attendance of ISG at school and OSG at learning centres. These include building girls' motivation through mentors, peer-to-peer support, and positive role models; addressing specific barriers to education including financial and community attitudes; improving school governance in the use of MIS; and reaching out to girls in danger of drop-out.

The results of the midline round of evaluation presented a mixed picture of performance against the Logframe attendance targets. **At midline, it was expected that at least 48% of girls would attend learning centres at least 75% of the time. This was met** when considering the full sample of girls (ISG and OSG), though it should be noted that this was achieved for OSG but not for ISG. It was also expected that at least 60% of ISG would have good school attendance (100% of the time). 57% of ISG met this standard, just marginally missing the target. The evaluation did not find evidence of any statistically significant impact of ENGINE II on attendance of ISG.

The midline evaluation results highlighted potential barriers faced by both ISG and OSG in attending schools or the learning centres. **For ISG a relatively common reason for non-attendance was related to responsibilities to their households** whether this was hawking, domestic chores or farming, which caused girls to be late for morning school sessions. **For OSG, the farming season negatively impacted on attendance,** as noted in the midline qualitative research where some girls declared that household obligations to support during key periods such as harvesting took priority over their participation in the programme.

Findings from the Endline evaluation below corroborates the findings from the midline on girls' attendance.

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<sup>5</sup> WAEC – West African Examination Council; this body are responsible for setting transitional exams for students in their final year at junior secondary school or senior secondary school.

## **Endline Q 2: Did ISGs and OSGs attend the learning centre sessions regularly?**

Attendance at the learning centre sessions was poor throughout the programme duration, particularly for OSGs. Programme monitoring data show that between April 2019 and March 2020, about 40% – 50% of registered OSGs were attending learning centre sessions, and attendance rates did not improve throughout the programme. The key reason for poor attendance among OSGs was **that girls were expecting to receive financial benefits or economic empowerment through ENGINE II, and were less interested in the educational aspects of the programme.** There were two key underlying themes in this regard.

Firstly, in many cases, the financial benefits provided during **ENGINE I had set specific expectations** from the second phase of the program. Better communication with beneficiaries about the purpose and design of ENGINE II might have helped to address and manage expectations. Secondly, **many girls were burdened by pressing economic needs and had to look after the wellbeing of their families.** Therefore, irrespective of any expectations that had been created, what was important for these girls was to learn something that could translate into the ability to earn an income for their family within a short period of time. This explains why the program participants considered vocational skills and business trainings the most relevant. The delays in linking girls to VTIs are likely to have contributed to the loss of motivation from girls to take part in the program activities, as girls believed they would not receive any benefits in terms of economic empowerment.

It also needs to be pointed out that **OSGs frequently have duties to attend to and competing time schedules,** so even OSGs who were interested in attending the learning centre sessions found it difficult to be present regularly. Among other things, OSGs were not able to get time off work to attend sessions, had to look after their businesses, had to work on farms during the farming season, or had childcare responsibilities, which all led to irregular attendance. In addition, many OSGs conceived a child during the course of the programme implementation, which necessarily meant that they could not participate in class for several weeks. While household sensitisations were effective at improving attendance for some cases where support from parents or a husband was lacking, awareness-raising efforts were not able to overcome completely these barriers.

**ISGs had higher rates of attendance at the learning centres; however, these vary in each state.** In Kano, approximately 70% of registered girls attended learning centre sessions, compared to 60% in the FCT and only 40% – 50% in Kaduna.

**For ISGs, the main barrier to attendance was the timing of the learning centre sessions and household duties.** Girls missed learning centre sessions because they clashed with other school activities, or because they had to help in the household. After-school learning centres session posed a different challenge, since girls were hungry and tired, and potentially faced an insecure journey home. In many cases, these challenges could be resolved by moving the sessions to a more convenient time.

## **Improved teaching quality**

Out of 1035 volunteer teachers trained at the beginning of the programme 907 were retained as learning center facilitators (LCFs). ENGINE II applied a training-of-trainers model to improve the pedagogical practices of teachers, and specifically to increase the proportion of teachers who are practicing learner-centred, as opposed to teacher-centred teaching approaches. In order to assess the quality of teaching, **the midline evaluation applied the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS)** to assess teachers against 7 factors including learner-centred activities; personalising instruction; relating to experience; assessing student needs; climate building; participation in the learning process; and flexibility for personal development.

The midline round of evaluation found that **despite a marginal increase in the proportion of ISG who perceived that the teaching quality of their teachers had increased, according to the PALS index no teachers in schools or LCFs at learning centres were using a learner-centred approach to teaching.**

However, the midline evaluation did find evidence of some improvements. For teachers and LCFs **there has been some improvement in the learner-centred activities domain** which provides some evidence of teachers and LCFs gearing instruction around the needs of students. However, scores against this domain remain low. There is also evidence of a marginal increase in the performance of teachers of ISG in the *relating to experience* domain, which relates to teachers relating instruction to the lived experience of their students. However, the evaluation finds no evidence of improvements in any other domains on the PALS index.

Findings from the Endline evaluation below provides more contextual information about the gradual adoption of the Learner Centered Teaching Methodology (LCTM) amongst LCFs.

### **Endline Q3: Has ENGINE II contributed to LCFs' use of the LCTM?**

At the end of the program, LCFs and girls strongly felt that LCFs at the learning centre were now applying a learner-centered approach using group work, role play, research and presentations, and peer-to-peer learning.

Girls and LCFs indicated that the **new teaching methods have increased girls' active participation in the learning centre sessions**. Programme monitoring data also show how the teaching methods mentioned above encourage girls to actively participate during the sessions. In particular, LCFs and girls felt that group work and peer-to-peer learning approaches were very helpful in encouraging slow learners to participate, because they can learn from their peers, and have the space to ask questions when they do not understand something.

One aspect the girls pointed out was that **LCFs created an environment where girls could make mistakes without fear of punishment or embarrassment**. Girls reported that disciplinary measures were taken only for being disruptive in class, but not for answering questions incorrectly. Instead, when they made a mistake, the LCF would explain the concept again or would patiently work with the student to help her arrive at the correct answer. As noted above, this approach gave the girls confidence in their ability to learn, as well as assurance in their ability to communicate effectively.

**LCFs did not use corporal punishment at the learning centre sessions and most LCFs made use of some positive discipline practices**, such as giving additional learning activities to disruptive students and rewarding good behavior. However, many reported that they asked students to stand or kneel as corrective measures for being disruptive, in some cases for up to 30 minutes. Girls were motivated not to be disruptive both by the rewards for their good behavior, but also because they wanted to avoid the corrective measures.

**All respondents indicated that LCFs had changed their teaching methods because of ENGINE II**. The cluster level peer to peer mentoring sessions, capacity building sessions (trainings) and the distribution of teachers' guides built the capacity and motivated LCFs to change their practices.

Despite these improvements, some master trainers noted that **some LCFs were still using teacher-centered approaches, and that there was further room for improvement in the use of some learner-centered techniques**, such as group work. This is in line with the programme progress reports, which indicate that LCFs were slow to adopt the LCTM, and continued to struggle with some aspects of the methodology, including the use of group work and the use of improvised materials.

For LCFs, the main challenges are applying the LCTM without sufficient textbooks and teaching aids, and lacking a sufficient space at the learning center.

### **Increased access to economic opportunities**

ENGINE II seeks to increase girls' access to economic opportunities to create better futures, build assets, and reach financial independency. To reach this goal, ENGINE II has developed a range of activities specifically targeted at OSG, including training sessions supported by a Financial and Business Education manual, linkages to savings groups and microfinance institutions, and complementary life skills and job readiness trainings.

The midline evaluation found mixed evidence on the performance of ENGINE II against this intermediate outcome. For those girls that have successfully maintained an active business, **the midline qualitative research indicated that OSG found particularly supportive the trainings received, in particular on financial literacy, the linkages to financial institutions, and the peer and mentoring support offered through the girls' fora**.

At midline, **37% of girls who were active in business reported that their income has increased as a result of business training.** This low percentage likely reflects the harsh environment in which small businesses have to operate in Nigeria. ENGINE II established partnerships with 190 local businesses, institutes and artisans to provide vocational training to 2,502 Out of School Girls. The programme also facilitated loans and equipment grants for girls to address some of the major barriers small business have to face, including a lack of financial support, low financial literacy, and poor management practices. However, other major obstacles are outside of the control of the programme, such as an inadequate and low-quality infrastructure system, high corruption levels and recent low economic growth.

## **Increased life skills and menstrual hygiene management**

ENGINE II has designed a life skills curriculum to support girls to acquire knowledge and skills in a variety of domains. At midline evaluation, two domains have been specifically observed. Firstly, ENGINE II supports girls to be more confident in making decisions that affect their lives. Secondly, girls are supported to acquire knowledge related to menstrual hygiene and management (MHM).

The midline evaluation provides mixed evidence on the performance of ENGINE II in building the capacity of girls to make decisions related to their lives. Respondents to the qualitative research suggest that **the programme has supported girls to become more confident and to be less afraid of voicing their opinions.** This appears to be expressed through different channels, including negotiations with their parents about educational choices, as well as being more confident to speak out in communal settings, such as community or religious gatherings.

**Evidence generated by the midline evaluation shows that relatively few girls (12%) had good MHM knowledge,** the progress is measured by the percentage of girls who can name at least 3 key facts about menstruation. The extent to which girls display positive attitudes towards menstruation is moderate, with 39% of girls believing in one or no myths about menstruation. The evaluation finds that while the vast majority of girls believe that menstruation is a natural and normal process, many girls continue to believe that there are certain types of food that should be eaten during menstruation and that exercising during menstruation is bad.

### **Endline Q4: Has ENGINE II contributed to improvements in ISGs' and OSGs' goal setting, and assertiveness and communication skills?**

**Respondents strongly felt that ENGINE II had positively contributed to girls' communication and assertiveness skills.** Parents also noticed their daughters developed a stronger self-confidence after attending ENGINE II classes. Throughout the programme, girls had learned to communicate with others respectfully and had become more confident in expressing their own opinions, two key qualities of an assertive communication style. This improvement in girls' communication skills has influenced their ability to speak up and stand up for themselves and others.

ENGINE II built girls' communication and assertiveness skills using teaching methods at the learning centre that encouraged active participation of the girls, such as role-play, peer-to-peer learning, and group work.

**Girls found the life skills sessions on goal setting useful, but most girls were not able to recall specifically what they had learned.** Some girls reported having learned that it is important to put in place a plan for achieving your goal that breaks the goal down into smaller tasks.

Many girls, particularly OSGs, had expected that they would receive direct financial support from ENGINE II to help them to achieve their goals. The fact that this support was not available discouraged girls from attending the learning centre sessions.

## Improved school governance

ENGINE II is seeking to enhance school management and school governance to support the implementation of programme activities. In order to achieve this objective, ENGINE trained SBMC<sup>6</sup> or CAC<sup>7</sup>/CBMC<sup>8</sup> members on gender and child protection issues and engaged them in facilitating enrolment and attendance, as well as resource mobilisation for the implementation of school improvement plans to make schools safer for children.

**The midline evaluation found evidence that a considerable proportion of SBMCs have taken actions to create an enabling environment in schools**, with over two-thirds of SBMCs reporting this to be the case. In addition, many SBMCs have reported that they have taken specific actions to improve attendance as well as in taking direct action in support of girls who have dropped-out to return to school, including discussions with parents or guardians and the provision of financial support. Furthermore, a high proportion of SBMCs (63%) report that they have developed and are enforcing codes of conduct to address child protection and gender-based issues in school.

The midline evaluation also found **that 54% of SBMCs and 32% of CBMCs have good knowledge of barriers faced by marginalised girls**, measured as the percentage of SBMCs/CBMCs who were able to name at least two barriers to girls' education and report at least two activities that the committee has taken to address these barriers.

**The vast majority of girls (97%) demonstrate positive attitudes and knowledge towards gender issues.** On the other hand, only 41% of girls have good knowledge of their rights. This strategy is complemented by efforts to support the sensitization of key members of surrounding communities through trained Gender Champions. Gender Champions are individuals within communities who have volunteered to champion the cause of girls' education within their communities. ENGINE II trained these individuals on gender and CVAP. Findings from the Endline below provides more insights:

### **Endline Q5: Has ENGINE II contributed to the adoption and implementation of policies and practices to support Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection (CVAP)?**

**ENGINE II has led to the adoption of child protection policies at the state, community, and school level. A substantial achievement of the ENGINE II programme is the adoption of the Child and Vulnerable Adults Protection (CVAP) referral protocol by all four state governments for use across the state.** The CVAP protocol details the responsibilities and enhances coordination among case management agencies, as well as additional support services, such as health services, legal support, and mental health and psychosocial support in handling CVAP issues.

ENGINE II has also contributed to the adoption of a Code of Conduct that provides guidelines for the behavior of teachers and students. A code of conduct has been adopted for schools in the FCT, Kaduna, and Kano, as well as for non-formal education centres at the federal level for national use. In addition, **schools have developed or updated their codes of conduct to include zero-tolerance policies on bullying, harassment, and abuse.**

Trainings and community sensitization have been crucial in promoting child protection policies. ENGINE II trained SBMC members, gender champions, and girl ambassadors on gender as well as child and vulnerable adult protection issues. Respondents reported that this training increased their understanding of child protection issues and helped them to understand their roles in the implementation of the child protection policies.

**However, awareness of child protection policies is not yet universal.** Some respondents were not aware of the CVAP protocol, and some had not observed any changes in child protection measures at the community

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<sup>6</sup> SBMCs – School Based Management Committees

<sup>7</sup> CAC – Community Action Committees

<sup>8</sup> CBMC – Community Based Management Committees

level. While schools reported making the code of conduct visible and discussing it during assemblies, students seemed to be less aware of these developments than the school leadership.

**The available evidence suggests that while some progress has been made, it is likely that systemic issues around the reporting and prosecution of cases of abuse will continue to dissuade people from reporting cases when they occur.** Some state-level respondents reported that through ENGINE II's efforts and the introduction of the CVAP referral protocol the reporting of abuse cases had increased. At the community level, however, while respondents were aware of the protocol, they had not used it yet. This might be in part due to a reduction in the number of such cases as a result of the awareness raising activities and preventing actions undertaken by the programme.

## Transition outcome findings

Transition has been defined separately for ISGs and OSGs. For ISGs successful transition refers to in-school progression, i.e. successfully progressing from one academic grade to the next. For OSGs transition refers to those girls who continue to have an active business, those who return to an appropriate level of formal education, or those who engage in TVET.

Whilst ISG transition rate could not be identified by the quantitative component of the midline evaluation. The qualitative research conducted indicated that **mentoring in combination with more intensive support, and in particular reduced class sizes, had enabled girls to better understand the content of lessons and in some cases had encouraged girls to remain in school when they might have otherwise dropped out.**

At midline, the evaluation was not able to quantitatively assess the impact of ENGINE II on the transition status of OSGs. However, the evaluation finds that the proportion of OSGs who are actively involved in business has decreased significantly in the intervention group between baseline and midline. This reflects, in part, the harsh reality that many small businesses do not survive their first year of operation, particularly in the context of Nigeria, which has recently witnessed poor economic growth.

## Sustainability outcome findings

ENGINE II's approach to sustainability is centred on engagement with stakeholders at the school, community and system level.

At school level, the midline assessment revealed a good progress in activities geared at addressing gender and child protection issues, **which has resulted in the adoption and implementation of a Code of Conduct and School Charter in the schools of Kano, Kaduna and FCT as minimum behavioural standards to ensure the safety and protection of learners.** Considerable progress has been also observed in implementing the training-of-trainers (ToT) model in support of learner-centred teaching. After the initial training of teachers, identified teachers 'master trainers' carried out different refresher trainings in all implementation states with support from Mercy Corps staff.

Strong progress against sustainability has been made at the community level, with sustainability being rated as 'becoming established' at the midline round of evaluation. Qualitative research indicates that **SBMC<sup>9</sup>s have played a crucial role in sensitising and mobilising communities in support of girls' education and economic empowerment.** This reflected in a significant engagement of community members, including faith leaders, traditional leaders and parents into community sensitization and support activities. These stakeholders have come up with context-specific mechanisms, such as household visits, scholarship for ISGs, grants and donation of resources to OSGs in training or business and have actively supported in mitigating the barriers that marginalised girls face within in their communities. In general, communities are seen to be taking the lead in implementing programme-related activities and demonstrating full ownership of the initiatives.

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<sup>9</sup> SBMCs – School Based Management Committees

Strong progress towards sustainability has also been made at the system level, which is rated as a 'becoming established' level at midline. Real commitment to and ownership of ENGINE II activities is evidenced by the level of engagement demonstrated by a range of system level stakeholders. This includes:

- I. **The adoption of ENGINE II teaching methodology** by the NYSC community development service in all 4 states;
- II. **The adoption of the ENGINE II Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection (CVAP)** protocol and referral mechanism in all states, except FCT (where it is awaiting approval by the Department of Education);
- III. **The creation of the State Advisory Group** which has contributed to the visibility and acceptance of the programme at the highest levels of state government.

Overall, ENGINE II has made significant progress towards achieving the sustainability of programme activities beyond the span of the ENGINE II programme implementation.

# Lessons learnt and Recommendations

This section draws out some lessons that have been learnt from the endline evaluation about the implementation and the design of future programmes to support marginalized girls to improve their learning outcomes and to help them transition successfully.

- **Consider how barriers to learning centre attendance for ISGs can be addressed at the start of the programme:** ENGINE II was able to address some issues around the timing of the learning centre sessions by working closely with schools, LCFs, and girls themselves. For future programming, it would be worth considering whether making some provision for food could reduce barriers related to girls feeling hungry.
- **Continue to identify supervisors who are close to the learning centres where possible:** Involving head teachers as supervisors for the learning centres was a positive adaptation that overcame the barriers that master trainers faced in regard to carrying out their supervision visits, i.e. long distances to the centres and combining visits with other responsibilities. In addition, it meant that school management was more engaged in the programme and could become a greater collaborator in the delivery of the learning centre model.
- **Reconsider how to provide access to learning and vocational training opportunities to marginalised OSGs:** The findings show that the current learning centre model is not accessible to many marginalised OSGs because they need to earn an income and look after their families. Evidence from other programmes suggests that providing girls with stipends and providing childcare opportunities while girls attend training or learning centre sessions may be effective ways to address these barriers (Stavropoulou, 2018).
- **Consider condensing the learning centre curriculum by identifying which skills OSGs are likely to need or value in future:** The evaluation found that OSGs have limited time available to spend on their skills development. In addition, many OSGs are mobile and may not stay in the same location for 18 months, which was the duration of the ENGINE II programme. Therefore, the current expectation that OSGs would be able to attend learning centre sessions for six hours a week for 18 months, in addition to concurrently attending vocational skills training organised by the programme, is therefore likely not achievable for most girls. As a result, it may be beneficial to conduct further research to identify which particular skills girls are likely to need or to value (and which can be taught in the duration of the programme), and to develop a shortened curriculum focusing on these skills.
- **Establish partnerships with VTIs and understand their selection criteria early in the inception phase to avoid delays:** A Matching Interest to Work (MIW) assessment could have been carried out at the time of tracking the beneficiaries. This would have allowed the programme to identify earlier on which types of skills they needed to identify vocational training providers for, and understand earlier on where these types of training institutes might not be accessible because of the entrance requirements. This would also have allowed the programme to clearly identify before the start of the learning centre sessions which skills there would be no VTIs available for, so that girls could be offered alternative choices based on the skills for which VTIs were available.
- **Reconsider how to provide support to girls on business expansion:** For the group of marginalised girls targeted by ENGINE II, accessing loans does not seem to be a feasible strategy at the moment. While the informal savings groups created during ENGINE I were reported to be valued by the girls, it would be useful for future research to establish whether they lead to increased savings, and whether and how girls are able to expand their businesses based on these savings. Similarly, the strategy that ENGINE II introduced of providing girls with access to business expansion grants and equipment would require further evaluation to determine whether it leads to sustained business expansion over time.

## Promising areas for further research and implementation:

- **Continue to provide teacher professional development that involves a strong focus on a learner-centred teaching pedagogy but that combine this with a focus on subject matter competency.** This evaluation was unable to provide evidence on whether ENGINE II has had an impact on learning and teaching quality at endline. However, the midline evaluation demonstrated some initial impacts on learning outcomes. In addition, perceptions at endline show that LCFs and girls greatly value the LCTM and feel that it has contributed to improvements in girls' learning. For future programming, it would be beneficial to combine this approach with a focus on subject matter competency, which programme monitoring revealed to be low amongst LCFs. Whilst focused on primary schools rather than secondary schools and non-formal education, other evaluations in northern Nigeria that have measured subject matter competency directly have also pointed to low levels of subject matter competency amongst teachers, for example the evaluation of DFID's Teacher Development Programme.
- **Continue with a learning centre approach to build girls' confidence, assertiveness, and communication skills:** Perceptions from all stakeholders strongly indicate that girls became more confident, more assertive, and better communicators as a result of the learning centre sessions, and in particular as a result of the LCTM, which encouraged them to actively participate and share their opinions during the sessions. Once again, while the evaluation was unable to measure impacts on life skills outcomes, this appears to clearly be a positive benefit arising from the learning centre sessions.
- **Continue to involve a broad range of stakeholders at state, community, and school level on child protection issues:** The adoption of child protection-related policies at the state level, and subsequent implementation at a community and school level, are a key success of the ENGINE II programme. Engaging a broad range of stakeholders on these issues, as well as identifying key actors within the community to act as gender champions, appeared to be a strategy that worked well to raise awareness of child protection issues. Further research would be needed to understand to what extent this approach also leads to better child protection outcomes, and how some of the structural barriers that are likely to emerge during further implementation of the CVAP protocol could be overcome.

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### About Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.



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