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Learning outcomes, transition, & retention

Stories of change from AGES project in Somalia

The Adolescent Girls' Education in Somalia (AGES) project aims to **improve learning outcomes and positive transitions for 82,975 extremely vulnerable girls and female youth in South Somalia. In 2019-2022, AGES enrolled a total of 62,288 girls** in formal primary education (including regular and special needs schools), accelerated basic education (ABE), and non-formal education classes (NFE). Each learning pathway is adapted to girls' age range and needs, including flexible delivery and content. The project works with Ministries of Education (MOEs) to coach teachers on delivering subject content, adopting inclusive and gender-responsive practices, and providing remedial education where applicable. AGES also trains teachers and Community Education Committees (CECs) to routinely follow up on cases of absenteeism and dropout. Through AGES, girls who are frequently absent or facing temporary school closures due to attacks and natural disasters are provided with remote learning materials and remedial support. As of November 2022, 49% of the students reported receiving remedial support from teachers.

AGES uses an integrated approach to build skills and conditions for positive youth development. Aside from enrolling girls in education, the project (i) develops financial literacy and business management skills; (ii) engages girls in savings groups and facilitates access to banking services; (iii) provides mentorship to develop girls' individual and collective agency, and engagement in civic action; and (iv) works with community members and religious leaders to facilitate shifts in negative social and gender norms affecting girls' education.

The impact



Learning outcome:

AGES increased girls' average literacy score by 30 percentage points



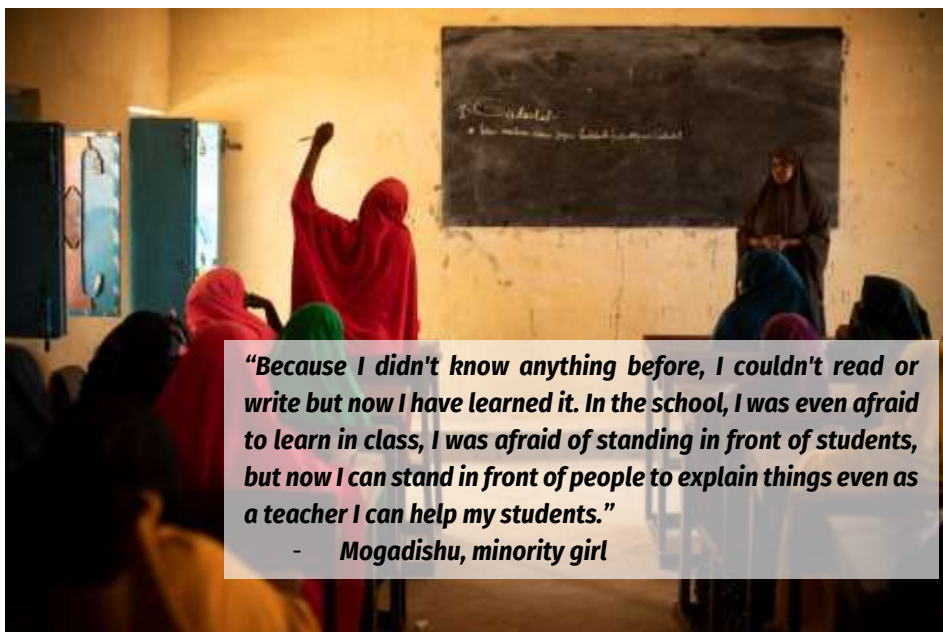
Transition:

73% ABE students transitioned into formal education



Retention

92% (NFE), and 94% (ABE) students attending final and level-1 exams respectively



“Because I didn't know anything before, I couldn't read or write but now I have learned it. In the school, I was even afraid to learn in class, I was afraid of standing in front of students, but now I can stand in front of people to explain things even as a teacher I can help my students.”

- Mogadishu, minority girl

In a qualitative study conducted by AGES, girls highlighted the transformative power of being able to read, write, and perform maths calculations. Girls described learning as ‘life changing’, enabling them to become more independent, self-confident and engage in business, and contributing to enhance their social standing. Girls are not just learning for themselves: they have repeatedly explained how they are

passing on the skills learned to others, including their siblings, parents, children, and other girls. For young mothers, acquiring basic literacy and numeracy is also enabling them to engage in their children’s education. Their initial exposure to education has increased their ambition for further education.

AGES worked with religious scholars and CECs to shift social and gender norms hindering girls’ access to education. Community mobilization efforts led by CECs and religious scholars are changing parents’ practices, including distributing household chores to reduce the burden on girls; supporting them through supplies and moving closer to schools; and prioritizing regular attendance. CECs and teachers are also making classrooms more inclusive and welcoming to the most vulnerable. Girls with disabilities described how their teachers adjust the pace of lessons to help them to learn and ensured that they feel supported and are treated well by other students.

Girls have described how community mobilization has contributed to a shift in parents’ attitudes towards their role at home. Parents are reportedly taking pride in girls’ enhanced voice, achievements, and new position as a role model for others at home and within the community.

AGES’ evaluation identified key changes contributing to learning. For example, the proportion of caregivers who believed it was **acceptable to keep their daughter out of school for household chores decreased from 36% at the baseline to 12% at the midline**. Girls have stated that their parents sought to help them during the COVID-19 enforced school closure by setting time aside for learning, and encouraging them to continue with lessons.

*The Adolescent Girls’ Education in Somalia (AGES) project is an ambitious six-year initiative (2018-2024) funded by FCDO and USAID, which seeks to **enable 82,975 ultra-marginalized girls and female youth** living in conflict-affected areas of Somalia **to access quality education responsive to their needs**. AGES combines the provision of three education modalities with financial literacy, youth savings groups, life skills, mentorship, and girl-led civic action. In 2019-2022, the project enrolled a total of 62,288 girls in formal primary schools (including regular and special needs schools), accelerated basic education (ABE), and non-formal education classes (NFE).*

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