



Knowledge hub

Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

The CAMFED Learner Guide Model

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

CAMFED Ghana, CAMFED Malawi, CAMFED Tanzania, CAMFED Zambia and CAMFED Zimbabwe

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

girls, secondary school, Africa, life skills, learning, school completion, gender-transformative, role models

6. What makes it a best practice? *

The Learner Guide model has been evaluated in multiple contexts in sub-Saharan Africa and has been proved to positively impact marginalized girls at the secondary school level. It is associated with a reduction in school dropout numbers, and improvements in learning outcomes and academic self-esteem. It also has a significant positive impact on the educated young women trained as Learner Guides by developing their status and political capital within their communities and enabling them to transition into post-school employment and other opportunities.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

Less than one in 20 girls in rural sub-Saharan Africa complete secondary school (Education Commission, 2016). Many girls are nominally 'in school', but erratic attendance undermines their opportunity to learn, with girls in rural areas being consistently the poorest performing constituency. While there have been significant improvements in school access in the early years, education systems in sub-Saharan Africa are not translating substantial gains in school access among girls into improved learning and life outcomes. Not only that but efforts to dismantle barriers to equitable, quality secondary education are continually failing to target the needs of marginalized girls.

Academic performance and school completion are interlinked: CAMFED's surveys found that the second highest cause of secondary school dropout among girls, after poverty, was linked to low academic self-esteem. Girls, and particularly marginalized girls, lack relatable role models in the school environment: the majority of teachers in rural schools are male and from urban areas (e.g. only one third of teachers in rural Zambian schools are female). At the very point when adolescent girls are vulnerable to premature marriage and pregnancy, they encounter a predominantly masculine environment and an increased risk of SRGBV.

When girls do complete school, they graduate into communities where there is a dearth of jobs. Unemployment rates for young women are 1.26 times those of men, and worse for those in rural areas and from the lowest economic quintile (World Bank, 2017). Ill-prepared by a narrow academic curriculum, they lack the life skills (such as the ability to analyze, reason, think critically) required to navigate challenges beyond school and pursue independent livelihoods. Early marriage or urban migration in search of low-paid/informal employment are often girls' only perceived options after school, placing them at risk.

The CAMFED Learner Guide program was introduced to provide support and mentorship to marginalized girls in school to overcome these barriers. Trained, female school graduates volunteer in their local secondary schools as Learner Guides to support marginalized girls to complete, and deliver a life skills curriculum. In return, they gain an accredited qualification recognized by employers and teacher training colleges, and access to interest-free finance to pursue further education or enterprise. The Learner Guide role creates a nexus for cross-sectoral innovation to improve education outcomes among marginalized girls, facilitates responsive local solutions to girls' needs, and fosters gender-transformative leadership in school communities.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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The Learner Guide model was introduced in 2013 in Tanzania and Zimbabwe and has since expanded to all five countries where CAMFED operates, including Zambia, Malawi and Ghana.

The Learner Guide role fosters participation, learning and completion of secondary school among marginalized children with a focus on girls. Learner Guides are recent female school graduates who sign up to an 18-month commitment to volunteer in their local secondary schools, and are trained to identify girls who have dropped out of school or are at risk of doing so. They engage with school/community authorities to support girls' school attendance and wellbeing; mentor girls to help them navigate the challenges they face in school; and deliver a life-skills curriculum designed to complement the academic curriculum.

Learner Guides bring two important dimensions of understanding to support students: (1) their knowledge of local language, customs, and community power dynamics; and (2) their personal experience of poverty, which underpins their empathy and dedication.

Learner Guides provide girls with targeted, individualized mentorship, and link them to local authority support and services. Learner Guides function as part of a school-level support structure alongside teaching staff and school leadership. The commitment undertaken by Learner Guides creates a structure for their own post-school progression, which not only builds their social capital in communities, but also includes incentives such as training opportunities, access to business start-up finance and an internationally recognised vocational qualification. Learner Guides also acquire political capital through their new-found status in communities and the opportunity to exercise their agency, and social capital as a connected peer network of young women leaders and important role models for girls. This creates an 'outsize' impact by addressing marginalized girls' progression through secondary school while simultaneously opening up opportunities for young women in the post-school transition, ultimately fostering gender transformative leadership in school communities.

The Learner Guide program is implemented in collaboration with governments at all levels - implemented in government schools, with support from teachers and heads of schools and provincial and district education officers. Governments have provided in-kind contributions to the program by providing community and government spaces for training and the contribution of personnel time among several government officials, demonstrating the integration achieved to date.

The budgeted cost of this program across the five countries from 2021 to 2025 is USD 63.5 million. The program has received funding from several bilateral and multilateral organizations including FCDO, NORAD, Irish Aid and several private foundations and individuals including Greater Share, the Yidan Prize Foundation, ELMA Philanthropies and King Philanthropies.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

By 2022, CAMFED trained 17,447 young women as Learner Guides who have worked in 3,424 schools across its five countries. Implementations of CAMFED's education program, with a focus on the Learner Guide intervention, have been rigorously studied in large-scale external evaluations using quasi-scientific methodology. Those studies found that marginalized girls in intervention schools were significantly more likely than their counterparts in comparison schools to have completed school to the end of lower secondary education. They also demonstrated significantly larger learning gains than their counterparts in the comparison schools in both English and Mathematics. Evidence also showed an improvement in girls' enjoyment of school, confidence in their academic progress and feeling more integrated in society.

In qualitative research, students reported that Learner Guide-led sessions addressed their pressing problems and completely turned around their challenges, especially their attitudes towards their futures. Qualitative evaluators reported that the impact of the life-skill curriculum was less impactful without delivery by Learner Guides. Students were less able to make clear connections between the curriculum and their real-life challenges. Students also reported having closer and more open communications with Learner Guides than with teachers.

The Learner Guide program was also found to be transformative for Learner Guides. Qualitative research highlighted the community status gains achieved by Learner Guides. Previously regarded as marginalized girls, they were now seen as valuable contributors in schools and the wider community. Stakeholders (including government officials) stated that Learner Guides provided excellent role models for girls. Learner Guides stated that participation in the program enabled them to build relationships with people in positions of authority.

The cost effectiveness of CAMFED's program has also been evaluated by the REAL Centre at the University of Cambridge. Results of this study stated that every \$100 spent results in an improvement that translates into two additional years of schooling for all girls and boys, including the most marginalized.

Across all countries of operation the Learner Guide program has received letters of support from governments with exploration of potential integration of the model into government education systems underway in several countries.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

The CAMFED Learner Guide model is centred around a decentralized approach that enables a high level of community engagement, including training young women from local communities as Learner Guides. The shared background of the Learner Guides and the marginalized girls enables girls to connect with the Learner Guides. Learner Guides have been through these schools and experiences and are thus able to mentor young girls, enabling them to return to school and navigate gender specific barriers (including GR-SBV, early marriage and child pregnancy).

The My Better World life-skills curriculum also plays a multi-pronged role. It enables both girls and boys to learn about life-skills and values, ensuring that the attitudes of boys change towards girls, enabling a shift in mindset and attitudes. These sessions also give Learner Guides the confidence to take on new challenges as a result of an increase in their own self-esteem. Systemically, this is helpful as young women from marginalized backgrounds who then go on to take leadership roles within the education system.

The delivery of the Learner Guide program by local young women is integral to the impact of the program, especially for marginalized girls. Therefore, as the program is implemented at a larger scale, it will become more important to ensure that the curriculum is taught to students such that they are able to connect the values taught through the program to their real-life experiences. As the program is scaled to geographies where CAMFED does not have a large presence, understanding and supporting the role of a Learner Guide by education authorities is crucial. Without a clear appreciation of the role by teachers and school officials, Learner Guides are less likely to be fully accepted and their full potential to assist students not fully realized.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”.

What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

CAMFED's Learner Guide model aligns with SDG4 goals. Aligning with government goals for education and youth development/volunteerism holds stronger potential for government adoption. In addition to achieving better educational outcomes for students, the model catalyzes post-school transition and citizenship development through the impact upon Learner Guides.

The program ensures that the young women who train as Learner Guides are provided with meaningful incentives for their participation, including interest free loans and a vocational qualification to enable young women to start their own business and enhance their employability.

CAMFED's program is decentralized and ensures that the government and leaders are engaged at all levels. This includes ensuring that community leaders, district and provincial education officers and more central functions such as the Ministries of Education are all engaged effectively. To ensure effective implementation and wider collaboration with the Government, CAMFED has Memorandums of Understanding with the Ministries of Education in each country of operation.

In adopting this intervention, it is critical to ensure government engagement at all levels such that the life-skills curriculum is effectively embedded within education systems. Furthermore, it is also critical to ensure that the intervention and its associated incentives are adapted to the relevant context. For example, young women in urban areas may need to be incentivized differently to those in rural settings.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

GEC-T 5101 - Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe -

https://girlseducationchallenge.org/media/qychqurs/camfed-5101_endline-report-web.pdf

GEC-T 5276, Tanzania

https://girlseducationchallenge.org/media/wkvp0iy1/camfed-5276_endline-report-web.pdf

Improving learning and life skills for marginalized children - Scaling the Learner Guide Program in Tanzania, Centre for Universal Education, Brookings Institution, Summary findings October 2021

https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Summary-findings_Tanzania_FINAL.pdf

Sabates, R., P. Rose, M. Delprato, and B. Alcott. (2018) Cost-effectiveness with equity: Raising learning for marginalized girls through CAMFED’s program in Tanzania. Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre, University of Cambridge.

https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/centres/real/downloads/REAL%20Policy%20Brief%20Costeffectiveness%20Camfed%20A4_FINAL.pdf

CAMFED’s Learner Guide program wins the 2017 WISE award recognizing high impact projects for innovative solutions to 21st century education challenges

<https://www.wise-qatar.org/project/the-learner-guide-program-tanzania/>

Marian Morris with Dan Hardy and Laurie Zivetz, “A new equilibrium for girls: Camfed International 5101 endline report,” External Evaluation Institution SQW, (30 March 2017, version 2.0)