



Learning outcomes, transition, & retention

Results from the AGES project in Somalia

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The Adolescent Girls' Education in Somalia (AGES) project aims to **improve learning outcomes and positive transitions for 83,925 extremely vulnerable girls and female youth in South Somalia. AGES enrolled a total of 90,698 girls** in education, including 21,945 in primary education; 1,244 in special needs schools, 13,276 in accelerated basic education (ABE), and 54,233 in 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 the Federal Member States 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 informed by formative assessments.

AGES uses an integrated approach to build skills and conditions for positive youth development.

Aside from enrolling girls in education opportunities responsive to their needs, 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.

Impact



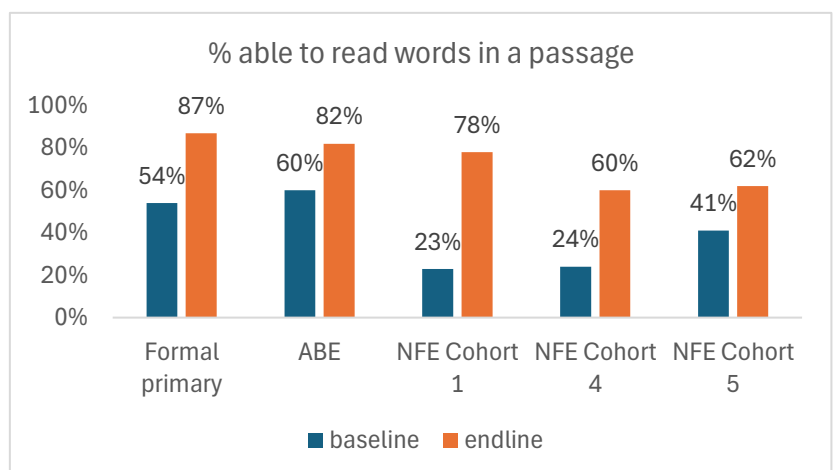
Learning outcomes: *three years after the intervention, formal education and ABE students have had major learning gains and surpassed benchmarks set pre-COVID*



Transitions: *80% of the formal education students retained, 67% promoted*

68% positive transitions among ABE students: 26% in employment, 23% continued in ABE, 20% in primary education

Employment: 47% cohort 1 (2020), 35% cohort 4 (2022), 28% cohort 5 (2023)





“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. 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: 49% of ABE students transitioned into primary or continued ABE, and 26% of the girls who completed NFE in 2020 (now ages 20-24) have continued their education, challenging traditional gender norms.

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.

AGES’ evaluation shows that girls who have continued their education have had particularly large learning gains, despite coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. Additionally, girls living with disabilities and those facing food insecurity had particularly large learning gains, showing that the project’s approach of fostering inclusive practices and investing in remedial education and blended learning models for students at risk of dropping out was effective in reaching the ultra-vulnerable.

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.

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 ultra-marginalised 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.

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