



## Learning Brief

# Endline Evaluations of the Breaking Barriers for Girls' Education Project in Chad and Niger

### PURPOSE

The Breaking Barriers for Girls' Education project was a joint initiative implemented by WFP, UNICEF, and UNFPA from 2019-2022 that aimed to mitigate barriers preventing girls from accessing education in vulnerable areas of Chad and Niger. The project was funded by Global Affairs Canada with a total budget of \$30 million CAD.

From 2022 – 2023, an evaluation of the project was conducted by an independent firm, American Institutes of Research (AIR), to investigate the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of the project in both countries. Specifically, the evaluation aimed to

better understand the strengths and weaknesses of the joint approach, generate lessons learned for gender responsive approaches to school feeding and school feeding in crisis contexts, inform government actions in Chad and Niger, and inform future joint approaches amongst the partners.

The purpose of this document is to summarize lessons learned across the Chad and Niger evaluation reports to share this knowledge more broadly amongst the partners and with other stakeholders interested in similar approaches. These lessons may be used to shape current gender-responsive projects and influence partners and governments to implement multi-sectoral

approaches in Chad, Niger, and elsewhere.

## Key findings

This section summarizes key findings across the two country evaluations. For an in-depth analysis of the findings, full description of the project, timeline, evaluation approach, and methods, please refer to the individual reports, which are publicly available on WFP's [website](#).

### RELEVANCE

#### **BBGE addressed relevant barriers to girls' education in Chad and Niger, but some barriers were missed.**

The BBGE project was designed to address six key barriers to girls education:

1. Poverty and food insecurity
2. Health, WASH, and nutrition services
3. Attitudes towards girls' education
4. Sexual and reproductive health rights
5. Gender-based violence
6. Institutional capacity to support girls' education

The evaluation found that these barriers were relevant in both Chad and Niger, but it highlighted that girls in these countries faced other barriers to education beyond the scope of the project. In both countries, **safety and security** presented a barrier to girls' participation in school. For example, over the course of the project's implementation in Niger, 900 schools (including project and non-project schools) closed in the three target regions due to armed attacks. As schools closed, girls faced longer walks to attend schools further from their homes, which increased risk of exposure to violence. In Chad, adolescent girls cited the presence of Boko Haram and fighting with the regular army as dangers affecting their access to education. Girls were cautioned to stay home from school due to instability and nearby fighting.

Both evaluations also found that the **timing of the cash grant distribution during the first year**,

one of the key activities of the project, lacked relevance to some of students' needs. Scholarships, given in the form of cash grants conditional to attendance, were given after the school year began. While scholarships were meant to incentivize attendance their distribution later in the school year prevented their use for school expenses at the beginning of the year. Parents and teachers also expressed concerns about the security of girls traveling to and from the grant distribution points with cash. Respondents in both Chad and Niger raised concerns about the perceived inequity of **excluding boys from cash grants** in a context where both girls and boys face barriers to education. While in Chad, some boys had received cash grants despite intended targeting of girls, the evaluation in Niger recommended that boys also be targeted in future iterations of this activity.

In both Chad and Niger, the evaluation found evidence of **insufficient infrastructure** for learning in schools, a barrier to education which was not directly addressed by the project. Only 44-65% of schools in Niger and 28-48% of schools in Chad (depending on the region) had enough space or furniture for students to comfortably use books or work materials. In Chad, respondents perceived educational quality was poor and lacked resources. This reduced motivation to send children to school.



Typical classroom in BBGE project area in Niger. Source: Evaluation of the Breaking Barriers for Girls' Education Project in Niger 2019-2022

## COHERENCE

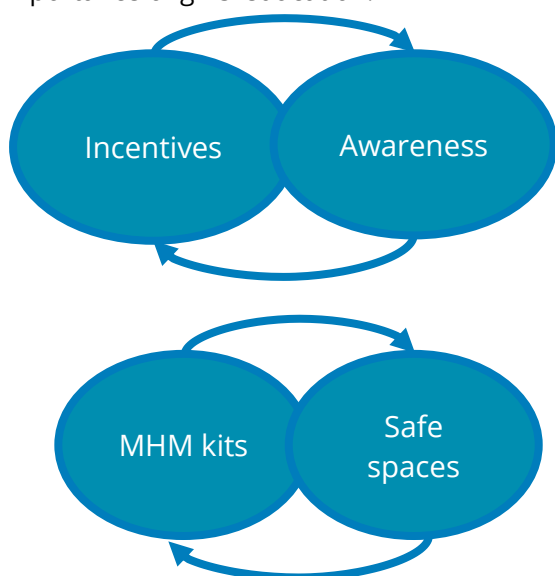
### BBGE aligned with policies and strategies of the governments and the three partner organizations.

The combination of project activities as part of a joint approach to improve girls' access to education was in line with the objectives of UNICEF, UNFPA, and WFP, as well as with the goals of the governments of both Chad and Niger. Country level staff appreciated the collaboration, noting that it provided an opportunity to truly practice a multisectoral approach. There was a perception that the BBGE approach could serve as a model for replication elsewhere.

## EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS

### Although the joint approach created synergies that enhanced the project's effectiveness, challenges with joint coordination reduced efficiency.

Respondents perceived that the implementation of a complementary approach by the three agencies as part of a **comprehensive package strengthened activity effectiveness**. For example, safe spaces provided a platform to reinforce the use of menstrual hygiene kits, and cash grant incentives for girls to attend school reinforced awareness activities to promote the importance of girls' education.



<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that in the case of Niger, some schools

Each organization brought expertise in specific areas, which strengthened the project's comprehensiveness.

Despite advantages, the **joint approach created coordination challenges**. Activities did not begin concurrently as originally planned. Stakeholders perceived that the impact of activities would have been greater if they would have been simultaneously initiated.

In Niger, the Ministry of Education (MoE) perceived that implementation of project activities was disparate.<sup>1</sup> In addition, staff cited examples where UNICEF carried out activities and UNFPA established safe spaces in schools without a canteen.

**Activities were implemented to varying degrees** across Chad and Niger. School meals and cash grants were the most commonly received interventions in both countries. In Chad, students received an average of five school-based activities (out of six activities planned), whereas in Niger, students only received an average of three activities (out of six activities planned). The evaluation suggested that the lower number of schools targeted in Chad may have allowed for the higher level of activity convergence.

**Key barriers to coordination** across the three organizations in both Chad and Niger identified by the evaluation were:

1. **Lack of joint planning missions and poor functioning of coordination structures at regional level.**
2. **The large number of NGOs involved in project delivery.** The multitude of stakeholders involved in implementation has made it difficult to achieve convergence on key communities. In Niger, nine NGOs were involved in service delivery. This complicated horizontal

were not intended to receive all components of the BBGE project to avoid overlap with existing initiatives.

coordination between the NGOs, who were all coordinating vertically with their respective organizations.

3. **Complex processes for releasing funds.** Funds were released from WFP HQ to the respective agency headquarters, then to the country office level. Stakeholders perceived the process to be confusing and complicated. Initial payments in many cases were delayed until quarter three of the first project year of a two-year project.
4. **Short inception period.** Respondents in both countries identified that more time was needed for joint site targeting, development of communication processes, establishing funds, and coordinating with the regional bureau.

The project was further **delayed by the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the security context**, which both caused school closures and delays in the start of activities. Challenges with supply chains also delayed iron and folic acid supplementation in Niger. In Chad, road closures in the rainy season and teacher strikes also delayed project activities.

While the delays were not abnormal for a pilot project, they had implications for the project's ability to achieve certain results.

**The evaluation found evidence that the project effectively addressed key barriers to girls' education, but gaps remain.**

The evaluation found evidence of improvement in attitudes about girls' education amongst students and their families. Girls desired to attend school for longer and get married later than the average educational attainment and age of marriage in both Chad and Niger. Parents also reported high aspirations for their daughters' education.

The evaluation also found evidence of improved

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<sup>2</sup> Quantitative data also support this finding, but changes in

educational outcomes. Teachers and school directors in Chad and Niger perceived there had been an increase in girls' enrolment due to BBGE.<sup>2</sup> In Niger, **girls were more likely to take end of primary school exams** following the BBGE project (20% in 2019 vs. 36% in 2022).

**"Now that the project is here, people are studying a lot more than before because there is help coming all the time. When you have a friend who doesn't go to school, the money she sees being distributed motivates her to want to go to school. This has resulted in many girls' enrolling in school because of this project"**

*Female student, Niger*

In interviews and focus groups, **parents perceived that their daughters had more motivation to go to school** because of the BBGE project and there were reports of parents actively encouraging their daughters to attend class. On the day of the school survey, there was no statistical difference between the attendance of enrolled boys and girls in Chad, which suggests BBGE had a positive effect on attendance. In Niger, there were qualitative reports that girls were more likely to arrive to school on time following the BBGE project.

The **attendance-based cash grants were perceived to be a strong motivating factor** in improving girls' and families' attitudes towards education.

enrolment were not statistically significant, primarily due to small sample size from incomplete school records.

**“They are so happy with the 10,000CFA they get, they always leave for school at 7:00 am. So, it really encourages them.”**

*Father, Chad*

In fact, in Niger, the attendance rate for cash grant recipients was over 90%, whereas that of non-recipients was 72%. Dropout rate was also lower amongst cash recipients (7% vs. 18%).

**The project overestimated its ability to reconnect out-of-school girls with the education system.** In Niger, the project introduced remedial education activities for out-of-school girls. However, government procedures require additional processes for re-enrolling students who had dropped out which limited the effectiveness of this activity. The project in Chad did not provide direct support to out-of-school girls, and respondents anecdotally confirmed that some girls who had left school during COVID-19 did not return.

Qualitative data suggest perceived reductions in gender-based violence (GBV) due to the BBGE project. In Chad, students in 77% of schools received training on GBV prevention. Girls and parents in Chad perceived that GBV in households reduced, suggesting that parents also learned tactics for managing inter-partner conflict.



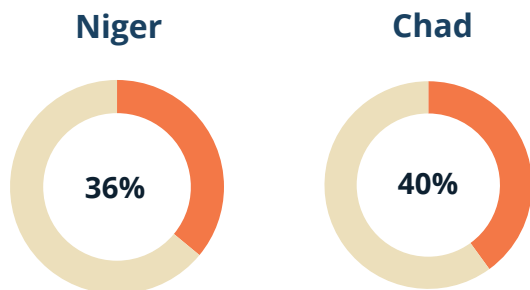
An adolescent girl writes on a blackboard in a BBGE school in Chad

Despite these positive signs, the evaluation highlighted gaps in girls education and the continued need to address barriers identified by the project. **Girls are still expected to provide significant help with household chores and parents still prefer for male children to complete more education than female children,** on average. While there was evidence that the project increased girls' enrolment, enrolment for boys was still higher than for girls in both Chad and Niger.

The project also aimed to improve health and nutrition outcomes. While BBGE effectively improved school WASH infrastructure and provided deworming and micronutrient supplementation, significant gaps in health and nutrition knowledge remain in both Chad and Niger.

**Less than half of the interviewed students were able to correctly describe how and when to wash their hands** (36% Niger and 40% Chad), but the project successfully built latrines and distributed hand-washing kits in most schools. In Chad, it was observed that student health clubs existed more for latrine facility upkeep than for behaviour change.

Figure 1: Percentage of students able to identify appropriate handwashing behaviours



The evaluation also found gaps in sexual and reproductive health (SRH) knowledge, however they cautioned that the data may not be representative due to low response rates on SRH questionnaires. In both Chad and Niger, **most youth were not aware of family planning methods** (71% and 87%, respectively). While adolescents in both countries perceived sanitary napkin kits as useful, adolescents identified that more training was needed on how to use them.

### BARRIERS AND FACILITATORS

There were several barriers and facilitators which impacted project effectiveness in both Chad and Niger, including factors outside of the project and internal factors. Key barriers and facilitators are outlined in the table below.

## OVERALL IMPACT AND LESSONS LEARNED

The evaluation found evidence that the project successfully removed or reduced multiple barriers to girls' education.

While the evaluation could not attribute impact to the project due to the lack of baseline data, existing evidence suggests that the project contributed to removing or reducing multiple barriers to girls' education.

In Chad, there were reports of parents actively encouraging girls to attend school and girls shared that they were more eager to attend school.

**"[The project] made the girls love school so much. For example, if tomorrow is a school day and the girl couldn't get soap to do the laundry, she will cry because she doesn't want to miss school."**

Mother, Niger

	Internal	External
Facilitators	Relevant barriers targeted in project design	High educational aspirations (students and parents) Parental support for canteens
Barriers	Lack of fidelity to design Administrative delays Lack of engagement with local actors (beneficiaries, communities, local leaders)	School closures Conflict and insecurity Short project timeframe COVID-19

Figure 2: Project barriers and facilitators in Chad and Niger

The cash grants were perceived as especially effective in helping girls attend school regularly.

In Niger, monitoring reports cited that the project led over 6,000 girls in BBGE zones to refuse a marriage request. The evaluation reported that there was a perception that the project reduced financial burden on families of girls attending schools and that school meals encouraged students to attend school on time.

Some key country-specific lessons were highlighted by the evaluation. In Chad, host communities targeted by BBGE perceived that they were worse off since refugee populations arrived. The evaluation identified that the project should take these tensions into account and ensure that future activities benefit the most vulnerable without making either host or refugee groups feel excluded.

In Niger, security risks led to high beneficiary mobility and challenges in safely monitoring project implementation. Implementers anecdotally suggested the need to continue monitoring beneficiary movements more rigorously. They also identified a need to better coordinate support for local actors in monitoring activities. In Niger, it was also concluded that for a joint, multi-sectoral

approach an implementation period of two years is limited to achieve tangible results.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

**There are concerns that resource-intensive activities will not continue after the project ends, potentially losing gains in girls' access to education.**

The evaluation found that resource-intensive activities like cash grants and school meals are unlikely to continue without additional funding. Some activities that require few non-human resources and that are well established are most likely to continue. In both countries, this includes sensitization on the importance of girls' education and activities institutionalized by schools, such as school health clubs and water management committees. In Niger, the government passed a policy allowing girls to return to school following pregnancy, which may support the sustainability of girls' education access.

The evaluation commented that as the project was intended to be a pilot approach, implementers perceived that less attention had been paid to sustainability at this stage.