



Link Community Development Interventions in Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Uganda, and Rwanda

Review of evidence 2008-2018

Report commissioned by Link Community Development International Ltd. For any questions regarding this document, please contact: link@lcd.org.uk.

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Introduction

This evidence review was commissioned in April 2019 by Link Community Development International in response to internal dialogue within the organisation about the strengths, relevance and appropriateness of previous and current evaluation practices. Link Community Development (Link – here taken to mean the wider group of organisations using this name) implements interventions to support education in Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Uganda, and Rwanda and has done so for a number of years. Over this period a range of project evaluations have been commissioned as well as carried out by Link staff. This report reviews and assesses available evidence from past evaluation work, in order to identify the scope and merit of established evaluation practices. Moreover, this review will inform subsequent research on the impact sustainability of Link's work. The background to this report is that in preparation for a large funding bid to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, input was solicited from the Robert Owen Centre (ROC) on design of evaluation research for subsequent project activities. As part of these discussions Link and the researchers formulated 4 objectives for preliminary evidence review, which ROC was then commissioned to implement in collaboration with Link staff. These are:

1. Map available evidence
2. Compare available evidence with Link's desired evaluation objectives to identify data gaps
3. Identify approaches that can be used in future research to address data gaps
4. Map key contacts and Link institutional structure to aid subsequent qualitative research

The objectives and the scope of the research were jointly developed through a series of meetings and correspondence in late 2018 and early 2019.

The report is structured as follows. The next section explains the process used to map available evidence within Link. The third section examines and classifies selected evaluation reports in terms of international best practice. The fourth section discusses opportunities for strengthening existing evaluation practice. The fifth concludes and offers recommendations for further research.

1 Mapping of available evidence

The mapping methodology for this evidence review is based on the format proposed for the first of 3 work packages of evaluation research to be conducted as part of a larger project funded by the Hewlett Foundation. The overall aim of Work Package 1 is to assess how far existing data sources held by Link can support the aim of Work Package 2: to investigate the long-term impact of Link's School Performance Review work in engaged schools and its residual impact in past schools across Malawi and Uganda¹. For details of initial work package design see Appendix.

The methodology for Work Package 1 is adapted from Jones et al.'s (2008) Data Audit Framework designed for organisations to identify research assets and facilitate ongoing data management. The steps involved for Work Package 1 are as follows:

Stage 1: Review existing documentary sources;

¹ A third work package was considered to identify the social rate of return to Link's Girls Education Challenge projects in Ethiopia. However, due to budget constraints it was decided not to pursue this.



Stage 2: Conduct interviews and/or email questionnaires with relevant individuals/organisations;

Stage 3: Prepare data asset inventory; and,

Stage 4: Approve and finalise asset classification.

This evidence review comprises some initial work towards Stage 1 of Work Package 1, the review of existing documentary sources; and also some preparatory work towards Stage 3, the preparation of a data asset inventory. At the end of Stage 3, we envisage that a complete inventory of all relevant documentary resources produced and possessed by Link will be available in table format, providing details of the nature and type of resource, whether it exists in electronic format or hard copy, where it can be accessed, and an evaluation of the utility of the resource in ascertaining the longer-term impact and sustainability of each project. We anticipate that this work will continue in parallel with the work of Work Package 2, and after completion we will work with Link to finalise any changes/amendments necessary before the inventory is finally approved (Stage 4).

The process of identifying and classifying key documents greatly benefitted from the activities of Mr Chris Martin, Link's Knowledge and Impact Manager. An initial tranche of evaluation documents and dataset was provided by Mr. Martin via e-mail. On the basis of 17 initial documents, a document classification grid was developed. This was then greatly expanded by Mr. Martin's subsequent search effort. In the end, this search activity identified nearly 60 evaluation documents, which were produced within the last decade. These documents include baseline studies, endline evaluations, case studies and data files, and use mixed-methods and qualitative approaches. Mr. Martin also produced a timeline of key projects implemented by Link since 2008 and generated a list of key contacts.

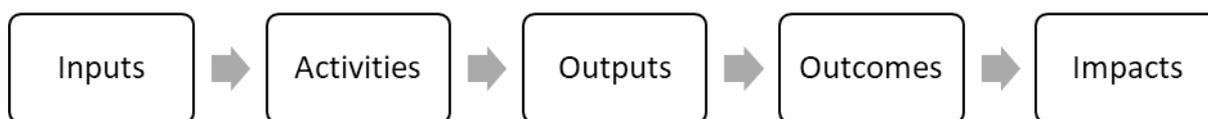
2 Comparison (analysis) of evaluation objectives and evidence

2.1 Evaluation criteria

Through consultation meetings between Link and the ROC team, key criteria were identified that are important for the future work of Link. These are: Effectiveness, Impact, Sustainability, and Efficiency. These in turn were used as benchmarks to evaluate the information content of the existing evidence base and identify data gaps. While Relevance (or Appropriateness) is also considered a standard evaluation criterion, for the purposes of this review, this was not included as Link sought to focus limited resources on the other four criteria.

Whilst these terms are frequently applied in evaluation research, their specific definition varies by usage and can be somewhat loose. We define these terms in relation to a logic model of program implementation (see below). A logic model identifies specific stages as part of a project's theory of change. Inputs in this context refer to the resources available to implement a project, such as people, facilities, budget, etc. Activities refer to tasks undertaken to transform inputs into outputs, while outputs refer to services delivered. In this model there is a crucial distinction between outcomes as the immediate effects of outputs on beneficiaries, and impacts as the long-term impact on beneficiaries.

Figure 1 A logic model of project implementation



- **Effectiveness:** The extent to which inputs and activities were transformed into outputs and outcomes (whilst the logic model can clearly define effectiveness in the abstract, this in turn relies on a project's aims being clearly identified as otherwise it is impossible to determine what outputs, outcomes and impacts demonstrate effectiveness)
- **Impact:** The extent to which project outcomes resulted in longer term changes in beneficiaries' lives
- **Sustainability:** The extent to which project practices continued and project outputs led to lasting benefits after the cessation of activities (e.g. increase in school effectiveness)
- **Efficiency:** The amount of inputs required per unit of output, outcome or impact

Focussing on these criteria the research team searched the documents to gauge the extent to which evidence contributed to each evaluation criterion. Based on this initial coding the ROC team identified strengths and weaknesses of the existing evidence base.

2.2 Effectiveness

The school improvement work of Link focusses mainly on systems level indicators, i.e. the purpose of the projects is to improve learner outcomes, by improving school and local level governance and management, teaching and learning practices, learning environments, community participation, and supporting more equitable access to education. For these projects a range of criteria are observed that allow the evaluators to judge whether the activities of the project have been implemented. An example of this approach that the authors examined is the Woreda School Improvement Terminal Report (see Table 1 in the project report for an overview of indicators). The examination of these projects is more accurately described as monitoring, rather than evaluation completed after the project has concluded. This is indeed recognised in Link's own assessment of the experience of these projects and is articulated in a series of reports on the Education for Girls: Malawi (EFGM) project. Written in 2012-2014, the reports' authors reflect that limited evidence was available on the impact of the implemented projects on communities or students at the time of writing the reports. We echo those thoughts. Whilst recognising the importance of maintaining input and activity monitoring, we encourage Link to identify longer-term impact and sustainability evaluation criteria for these projects based on their overall theory of change and to implement evaluation approaches that reflect these higher order project objectives.

The Improved Girls Learning in Rural Wolaita project (A DFID Girls' Education Challenge Innovation Window project) in Ethiopia follows a more outcome oriented approach in its evaluation strategy. A comprehensive baseline of data is collected for an intervention group and a comparison group. These exploit both primary and secondary approaches, drawing on administrative data from schools, literacy and numeracy assessments, individual, household, and teacher surveys, complemented with interviews with key informants. When followed up in



subsequent rounds of evidence gathering this dataset enables a 'difference in differences' quasi-experimental research design. Whilst both groups are expected to improve over time, by only focussing on the difference between the two groups, it is possible to eliminate the influence of confounding effects, which would bias a straightforward before/after comparison.

2.3 Impact

In the case of School Performance Review and Improvement Planning work, impact would relate to second order effects where improvements in school governance, systems, teaching and learning, environments, community relations, and equitable access lead to better children's outcomes. For example, in the context of Link's projects within the Girls Education Challenge, this would refer to the effect of improved learning outcomes on subsequent life outcomes. However, rarely is it possible for provisions made within the evaluation design to capture these impacts due to the need for additional time and resources to capture these after the project has concluded. There are however perceived positive impacts regarding increased (a) parental engagement with schools, (b) teachers' agency and (c) participation of marginalised groups in most evaluations of Link's projects (e.g. Onse studies, see perceived impacts across 60+ documents in the Excel file enclosed with this report). The above perceived impacts, captured by both internal and independent evaluators, are evidence of the broad community support in many of the Link projects.

2.4 Sustainability

While sustainability is not part of the evaluation design for School Performance Review and Improvement Planning work, it should be possible to design studies to assess sustainability effects. Some of the existing projects conducted by Link explicitly focus on improving aspects of education for girls and women, and many others contain gender-related objectives. It would be highly beneficial for any post-evaluation research to explore the potential sustainability/ long-term broader impact of any Link project work in terms of a change in outcome for girls and women, and other under-represented or marginalised groups. Any demonstrable impact of Link projects may be hard to establish quantitatively after projects have finished. It may however be possible to find out, through qualitative methods such as interviews with stakeholders and/or ex-participants in interventions, instances where girls or women who have taken part can attribute positive changes due to this participation, e.g. in relation to further opportunities/activities; gain in knowledge or skills; increase in self-confidence or motivation. However, this involves a practical challenge in identifying interview subjects that have been affected by Link programmes in the past. How best to approach follow-up or tracer studies is likely to be context specific and may need to be part of a project's design from the outset (e.g. an alumni society or a social network).

It would also be highly beneficial to ensure the collection of evidence relating to gender-specific outcomes (and other facets of identity and position such as disability and ability, age, ethnicity, etc.) is embedded in the design of projects going forward, whether or not the specific project focuses directly on gender. It has been recommended by specialists in gender-sensitive project design and evaluation (see e.g. De Waal, 2006; Fletcher, 2015) that this can be most effectively done by including a gender-related needs assessment during the design of any project that focuses not just on parity issues (e.g. ensuring that equal numbers of girls and women and boys and men have access to an intervention activity) but that explores 'gender as a process.' This is understood as the particular constellations of norms, values, and perceptions contributing to the power relations that create more advantaged and less advantaged groups in any particular community in relation to accessing, participating in and benefiting from a particular initiative. This



then can inform the role that any intervention may be able to play in terms of challenging such norms and values.

A gender-sensitive evaluation would then include an assessment of the success of the project in relation to any change in perceptions and would use targeted questions as part of interviews or focus group schedules. Link is also concerned to include a focus on other relevant aspects of identity that may advantage or disadvantage people in a particular community (e.g. age, marital status, disability or ability, etc.) We would agree on the importance of looking at the experience of women or men not as homogenous groups, but looking at the ways in which gender intersects with other aspects of identity and positioning such as these. Such work of course is context-specific and needs to be led by those familiar with the communities involved, and Link may already have such aspects of design and evaluation embedded – however the ROC team can provide extra advice in relation to this as needed.

2.5 Efficiency

There is little explicit mention of efficiency in evaluation reports. Accounting information on overall costs such as total grant received is available in some reports and more detailed attribution of costs could be carried out using Link's accounting systems. Therefore, identifying detailed costs of activities seems to be possible. However, the challenge is to disentangle the effects of different activities on final outcomes, as projects are usually comprised of a range of different, complementary activities. Therefore, efficiency would have to be gauged at the level of entire projects. Moreover, efficiency has limited information value as a stand-alone indicator and therefore is more likely to be useful if derived consistently and regularly so that efficiency can be compared across different projects. Whilst the technical challenge of estimating efficiency indicators is not to be underestimated, a more important question is what would the purpose of deriving efficiency indicators be? They should be produced purposefully to support decision-making processes about how Link best achieves its mission.

3 Opportunities for reinforcing existing evidence gathering approaches

Having reviewed previous Link evaluations we have identified opportunities to strengthen existing evaluation practices along two dimensions. The first has to do with how data are collected under established evaluation designs. The second relates to revising the scope of evaluations to place more emphasis on community and sustainability. We shall discuss each point in turn.

3.1 Data collection practices

Building on the comprehensive evaluation work commissioned and carried out by Link in the last decade, future research **designs** would need to be **driven by** the **aims** of each particular evaluation. For example, if the aim of a particular evaluation is to outline good practice and better understand any barriers faced by participants, the research design may need to be prescriptive at the tendering stage with what Link directs external evaluators to look for, e.g. more illustrations from transcripts.

Following the above, the practice of carrying out a large number of relatively short interviews and focus groups, predetermined in advance of data collection, may not be always the optimal process to collect qualitative data. This process is useful if the aim is to assess the prevalence of perceptions across a large number of interviewees through data saturation (meaning, the same



ideas keep appearing during interviews), however it is less useful if the aim is to better understand any barriers to project participation. For the latter it may be better to have repeated interviews with a smaller number of interviewees over a period of time. For example, document 53 of project 21, the Onse baseline study from 09/2017, included a survey of 175 one-to-one stakeholder interviews and 40 focus group discussions with 540 participants from the identified target groups: young people (girls, orphans and child heads of household), people living with a disability, people living in extreme poverty, and people living with albinism. In the Onse endline study from 08/2018, document 54, the same survey was carried out with 209 stakeholders, enabling a comparison of results with the baseline. And in document 55, three cases studies from the project were presented from schools in Dedza District, including interviews with Headteachers and 25 - 45min focus groups with learners, parents, and teachers brought together to engage in a guided discussion. The overall approach of the Onse studies above was very thorough for a project that lasted less than two years and perhaps not all interviews would have been required. At the same time, interviews and focus groups were not fully transcribed, due to resource constraints, making it difficult for the authors to elaborate rich illustrations of good practice that were identified.

3.2 Scope of evaluation

Building on the extensive work by Link in Malawi and Uganda in the last decade, and being mindful of other organisations, future evaluations would benefit from focussing on **sustainability** and interaction with other projects.

Given broad community support in many of the projects (e.g. Onse) it would be valuable to investigate Link's sustainability, as well as interaction with any other programs. This will be addressed in Work Package 2 of the next collaboration between ROC and Link. To avoid influencing the respondents' opinions on sustainability - i.e. on the influence of particular Link projects - indirect questions should be used, e.g. 'What activities do you remember as particularly useful from the time you started working with Link?', 'Why?', 'Are they still being used?', followed by 'Why/why not?' Indirect questioning would be more accurate than naming and asking for the respondents' opinions on a particular project or activity. However, this may need to be followed up with further probing as experience from previous evaluations suggests that where multiple organisations are working in an area, beneficiaries may not remember or be aware of which organisation implemented which activities.

4 Conclusions

From reviewing past evaluation documents we have seen a high volume of diligent evaluation work. This evidences that Link is committed to evaluating the results of its work. However, it is not clear how Link's mission and its evaluation practices are related. In order to design an evaluation strategy that suits the organisations' needs it should establish what evaluation criteria it values and develop evaluation designs from there. For instance, how can evaluation criteria be used to guide which aspects of a project's logic model are of strategic importance – processes, outputs, outcomes, impact, sustainability or a combination of these.

What is the right evaluation strategy for Link is not for the authors of this report to determine. However, by reviewing previous evaluations we have been able to identify some themes in established practice. At present there is a strong focus on whether projects were well implemented (which is important). Historically, there has been less focus on collecting data from the children and communities. There was, however, a clear awareness of the issue, which is being



addressed in recent projects within the Girls' Education Challenge, the Family Literacy Project (FLP), Integrated School Performance Improvement Review and Engagement (INSPIRE), and Onse projects in Malawi, and the Tullow Oil and Link Community Development School Improvement Project (TOLSIP) and Early Learning Education Programme (ELEP) projects in Uganda (see document table for details). Moreover, there is limited evidence on subsequent impacts for children or for communities after a project concludes coming from primary data. Given Link's strong presence on the ground in the areas where it operates there may be opportunities for doing follow up work on sustainability through interviews with key informants and possibly tracer-type studies, where former beneficiaries are identified for follow up interviews.

Given an evaluation approach that already places a strong emphasis on effectiveness combined with Link's rigorous financial accounting systems, cost-effectiveness analyses would be a straightforward accounting exercise. However, it is important to think about what the purpose of efficiency analysis would be and what it would be used for. Is the ultimate-aim cost benefit analysis or is it more about internal comparison to better manage a portfolio of projects? This distinction is important as cost benefit analyses would require additional effort to derive monetary estimates of benefits, whereas cost-effectiveness analysis provides an estimate of the cost per outcome.

Reflecting on past work, there are opportunities for improving robustness of data collection through more purposeful use of qualitative research methods. For example, if the aim of future evaluations is to better understand barriers to participation and illustrate good practice, repeated interviews with a relatively smaller number of participants during a period of time may provide richer illustrations than single short interviews with a large sample. Using indirect questions during interviews/focus groups and verbatim transcription would allow for more elaborate illustrations in reports.

The quasi-experimental evaluation design in Link's GEC projects provides good example of rigorous quantitative evaluation. This approach can be augmented with follow-on elements to better address the needs of Link for impact and sustainability evaluations. This moreover opens opportunities for cost-benefit analyses where benefits can be quantified based on earnings associated with attainment levels and costs can be obtained from accounting data. However, it is important to bear in mind that this approach requires extensive primary data collection which can impose on research subjects. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain the trust and support of the communities involved. The endline evaluation report of the Innovation Window of the GEC highlights the problem of research fatigue and particularly attrition from comparison group surveys, which undermine robustness. To resolve this, it is crucial to work with comparison group communities to identify ways in which they can benefit directly from being selected for comparison. For instance by offering to include survey elements that would be provide relevant information for the community in question.



5 References

De Waal, Maretha (2006) Evaluating gender mainstreaming in development projects, *Development in Practice*, 16:02, 209-214

Fletcher, Gillian (2015) *Addressing Gender in Impact Evaluation: What Should be Considered? A Methods Lab publication* (London, Overseas Development Institute).

Jones, Sarah, Ball, Alexander & Ekmekcioglu, Çuna. (2008). The Data Audit Framework: a First Step in the Data Management Challenge, *The International Journal of Digital Curation*, 2, 3, 112-120.



6 Appendix: Research Proposal

This draft proposal is presented to Link Community Development for explorative discussions following up on meetings between representatives of the Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change (ROC) and Link Community Development (Link). This proposal responds to previously supplied terms of reference, discussions in a meeting at the University of Glasgow on 6/11/2018 and various background documents supplied subsequently.

We propose analyses grouped together in three distinct work packages, which can be implemented on a stand-alone basis, but are likely to provide synergies if implemented jointly.

This work has not been accurately costed. Final costing will be carried out by the CoSS Research Office at the University of Glasgow. The overall amount will depend on the scope of the work, the nature of the inputs required and travel arrangements. Indicative estimates of labour costs have been provided for discussion but no estimates have been undertaken for travel and accommodation or commissioning input from sub-contractors.

6.1 Work Package 1 – Mapping Exercise of existing data assets that can be utilised to assess the long-term impact of Link’s portfolio of Projects in Malawi, Uganda and Ethiopia

The focus of WP1 is to ensure that the full range of data assets relevant to WP2 and WP3 for each of Link International’s past and present projects are identified and classified. This will enable them to be utilised effectively to help answer the research questions identified for WP2 and WP3 and to underpin any additional fieldwork conducted for these work packages.

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In order to do so the following questions will be addressed:

- I) To what extent can existing *school-level* data sources be identified and analysed to support WP2 and WP3
- II) To what extent can existing *project-level* data sources be identified and analysed to support WP2 and WP3?
- III) To what extent can existing *project evaluation* data sources be identified and analysed to support WP2 and WP3?
- IV) To what extent can other relevant data sources at *broader system levels* (e.g. district and national level) be identified and analysed at to support WP2 and WP3?
- V) To what extent can further potential sources of data be identified that will need to be collected or collated during the course of the project?

At each level attention will be placed on potential sources of data that may possibly be collected at the time of the project, for example interviews with key individual educators or policymakers at school, district or national level. Particular attention will be placed on the identification and utilisation of data sources that maximise the possibility for multi-dimensional analysis in relation to gender, socio-economic status and other aspects of differentiation including disability.



7.1.1 WP1: METHODOLOGY

The methodology for the mapping exercise is adapted from Jones et al.'s (2008) Data Audit Framework designed for organisations to identify research assets and facilitate ongoing data management. A full implementation of this methodology is beyond the scope of this work package, however we will be drawing on the methods outlined for identifying and classifying data assets. The steps involved for the exercise are as follows:

- Review existing documentary sources;
- Conduct interviews and/or email questionnaires with relevant individuals/organisations;
- Prepare data asset inventory; and,
- Approve and finalise asset classification.

Stage 1: Link have already identified and have available in electronic format a certain proportion of relevant data assets, for example project evaluation reports, and other key assets have already been identified such as the Performance Monitoring Test Database for grade 4-7 pupils in Ethiopia. An initial review will be undertaken of all such existing data to identify relevance and importance in relation to the research questions, aims and objectives of WP2 and WP3.

Stage 2: Email questionnaires and, if feasible, skype interviews will be conducted with relevant individuals/organisations at NGO, school, project, district or national level to assess potential further existing sources of data that can be sent electronically to the team or otherwise retrieved and collated.

Stage 3: Data sources identified in stages 1 and 2 will be classified according to their likely degree of relevance, importance, quality and accessibility for either WP 2 and/or 3.

Stage 4: In consultation with the rest of the project team the final results of the mapping exercise will be approved and any further collection of written materials or face-to-face interviews to be conducted during WP2 and 3 fieldwork identified.

7.1.2 WP1: OUTPUTS

A brief summary report will be prepared detailing the results of the WP1 mapping exercise.

7.1.3 WP1: TIMETABLE/ ESTIMATED WORK DAYS

Stage 1: An estimated 4 days of work by one researcher

Stage 2: An estimated 4 days of work by one researcher over the course of a month (1 day to devise email questionnaire; 2 days to identify and contact relevant participants, 1 day total to conduct/monitor email questionnaires)

Stage 3: An estimated 1 day of work by one researcher

Stage 4: An estimated 1 day of work by one researcher

Overall: 10 days of work



6.2 Work Package 2 – Long-term and residual impact of Link’s School Performance Review work in Malawi and Uganda

Link has worked in Malawi since 2006 and in Uganda since 2000, in several districts and with a long-standing relationship with government partners and schools. In some districts, Link implemented projects in the past but no longer has operations. The aim of WP2 is *to investigate the long-term impact of Link’s School Performance Review work in engaged schools and its residual impact in past schools* across Malawi and Uganda. WP2 will address the following questions in engaged schools:

- (i) To what extent has School Performance Review and improvement planning become embedded?
- (ii) Has the accountability process produced sustainable, lasting changes in the quality of schools?
- (iii) What is the cost-effectiveness of these longer-term processes?

WP2 will address the following questions in schools/communities where Link has implemented projects in the past but no longer has operations:

- (iv) What happens to the School Performance Review process and community engagement and accountability processes when Link’s activities cease?
- (v) Are there any elements of Link’s work that are sustained by communities after ceasing operations? Why? (e.g. what is their value to the communities that have continued them?)

The methodology employed will be mixed-methods, including fieldwork - interviews, focus groups, observations -, and cost-effectiveness measurements of changes in schools, where feasible. The extent School Performance Review and improvement planning has become embedded (question i) will be evaluated comparing the results from WP1’s comprehensive review with fieldwork data. Fieldwork will include interviews with school/community/district/national leaders, focus groups with teachers and students, and school observations in up to 20 schools in Malawi and Uganda, 10 in each country (six schools working with Link and up to four schools of similar size and characteristics not working with Link, for comparison). Lasting changes in the quality of schools will be evaluated (question ii) from available review and fieldwork data, once the indicators are agreed with Link, e.g. improved school results, desired accountability processes. Cost-effectiveness evaluation of changes in schools (question iii) will be carried out where feasible, depending on available data.

To evaluate what happens to Link processes when its activities cease (questions iv and v) fieldwork will be carried out in eight additional schools across Malawi and Uganda, four in each country, at the end of country visits. Data collection will include observations and interviews with relevant teachers, school/community/district/national leaders, as well as former students and staff present when Link ceased operations, if appropriate.

7.2.1 WP2: ACTIVITIES

Three days to develop data collection instruments (interviews, focus groups, observations) once WP1 is finalised in 2019. A total of 28 days of school fieldwork in early 2020, at one school per day



per researcher (14 schools in Malawi and 14 in Uganda). To allow collaboration two researchers will do fieldwork simultaneously, i.e. 14 days of fieldwork at two schools per day per two researchers. Seven days of data analysis and report writing. Two days of knowledge exchange/dissemination. TOTAL: 40 days work by senior researchers.

7.2.2 WP2: OUTPUTS (WITH MILESTONES IN BRACKETS)

Data collection instruments which can be adapted to other countries for similar Link evaluations (August 2019); interim multi-dimensional analysis which accounts for gender, the inclusion of marginalised groups and changes at multiple levels of intervention, e.g. individual, school, community, district, and/or national (May 2020); final report with an analysis of findings which include relevant, practical recommendations both for Link and the wider development sector, and lessons learned (October 2020). This will include how findings can be made more relevant and useful to communities Link works with, particularly marginalised groups.

The emphasis of WP2 would be on understanding how long term and residual impacts came about. To measure the extent of the impact more accurately a number of fieldwork trips would be needed over a longer period, e.g. repeating WP2 fieldwork in 2023 and 2026. An added focus of WP2 would be on understanding the importance of power dynamics, including who defines improvement indicators and impact, and who is affected by the impact. This is important as the impact on one socioeconomic group may affect other groups differently

6.3 Work Package 3 – Identifying the social rate of return to the girls education challenge in Ethiopia

7.3.1 WP3: CONTEXT

Link Community Development, with financial backing from the Department of International Development (DFID), implemented a Girls Education Challenge programme in Ethiopia over the years 2013 to 2017. The project was carefully evaluated and generated a wealth of qualitative and quantitative data. This demonstrated clear additional educational benefits in intervention areas vis-à-vis control areas. Specifically, literacy and numeracy scored improved, girls retention improved, gender disparity in educational outcomes decreased and grade attainment improved. This was the result of a package of diverse social and educational interventions and therefore additional intangible benefits are likely to have materialised. Whilst the project clearly made a positive contribution, it remains open to subjective assessment to what extent it provided a return on the resources invested, a vital concern in the context of severe scarcity of financial resources and urgent competing demands, such as is the case for rural Ethiopia. Whilst the economy of Ethiopia has registered an impressive growth rate over the last 15 years, this is from a low base and the country is still classified as one of the Least Developed Countries on the OECDs DAC List of ODA Recipients.

7.3.2 WP3: OUTLINE

We propose developing a Social Rate of Return Analysis based on Link's GEC project in Ethiopia. SRRAs evolved in the early years of the 21st century at the confluence of government and the third sector. This is particularly the case in the UK, where there's a strong tradition of public sector evaluation, informed by traditional economic approaches such as Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA). SRRAs build on the technical methodology of CBA to identify economic contribution, but allow a more prominent role for community voices and emphasise using stakeholder engagement to identify benefits that are valued by society.



7.3.3 WP3: ACTIVITIES

1. Existing qualitative evidence will be used to identify an initial range of social benefits
2. Consultation with stakeholders will be used to identify priorities for the economic evaluation of benefits
 - a. Need to think about gender sensitivity/balance
3. Existing quantitative data will be used to derive direct impacts of intervention
4. Ethiopian social survey data² will be used to derive economic value of benefits. For harder to identify benefits surrogate estimates from existing literature will be adopted.
 - a. Benefits will be classified in line with Walter McMahon's 4 quadrant taxonomy of the economic impacts of education, which follows two dimensions: public-private and market – non market.
 - b. For salience and relative analytical ease we anticipate prioritising private market benefits i.e. impacts on livelihoods
 - c. We will also explore public and non-market benefits, using surrogate estimates from the literature as appropriate.
5. Findings will be fed back to stakeholders with the aim of improving the appropriateness of subsequent data collection for producing SRRAs for other projects
 - a. Moreover, SRR indicators from this exercise can be applied to other similar projects where evidence on first round effects is available, e.g. attainment/lifetime earnings coefficients.
6. Cost estimates will be produced with the assistance of Link accountants to derive full SRR estimates.

7.3.4 WP3: MILESTONES AND OUTPUTS

- Researcher in post (1/8/2020)
- Preliminary desk bases analysis completed (1/9/2020)
- Stakeholder focus groups in Ethiopia (15/9/2020)
- Assessment plan completed (1/10/2020)
- Recoding of household surveys completed (1/11/2020)
- Cost estimates completed (15/11/2020)
- 1st draft of SRR presented to Link (1/12/2020)

² In particular the 2015-16 World Bank and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Socioeconomic Survey. Possibly complemented by the CASE Ethiopian Rural Household Survey.



- Final results presented to stakeholder workshop in Ethiopia (15/2/2021)
- Final report with tables of education output valuations presented to Link.

7.3.5 WP3: COSTS

- Senior researcher time 24 days
- Junior quantitative researcher 6 months

6.4 Proposal References

Jones, S., Ross, S., & Ruusalepp, R. (2008). The Data Audit Framework: a toolkit to identify research assets and improve data management in research led institutions.

McMahon, W. (2002). Education and development: Measuring the social benefits. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Google Scholar]

McMahon, W. (2004). The social and external benefits of education. In G. Johnes, & J. Johnes (Eds.), International handbook on the economics of education (pp. 211–260). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.



7 Bios

Dr. Barbara Read is currently Reader in Gender and Social Inequalities at School of Education, University of Glasgow. Barbara has over 18 years' experience as an educational researcher on international projects, ranging from elementary education to higher education sectors. She is particularly interested in issues relating to gender inequalities in education. She currently leads an international network, [Examining Gender in Higher Education \(EGHE\)](#), which is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. The EGHE network consists of researchers and activists based at Glasgow and at universities in the following African countries: Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda and The Gambia. Although the main focus of the network is on access to, and experience of, higher education for women students (including an identified focus on STEM subjects), the network also encompasses factors at elementary and secondary level that affect students' educational journeys.

Dr. Kristinn Hermannsson is Senior Lecturer in Educational Economics at School of Education, University of Glasgow. An expert in applied economics and quantitative methods, he has published widely on the economic impact of education in both high and low income countries. He currently leads a research consortium of academics based in the UK, Malawi and South African examining the role of language of instruction in skills formation, funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund via the Scottish Funding council. He recently concluded a SFC GCRF research [project](#) on the inequality in access to education at different stages of economic development, which brought together academics from the UK, Swaziland, Chile and Malawi.

Dr. Michele Schweisfurth, senior technical expert, is Professor of Comparative and International Education, DFID Senior Advisor and past Director of the Robert Owen Centre at the School of Education, University of Glasgow. She has expertise in qualitative research methods, especially interviews and classroom observation, and exceptional expertise in comparative methods in multi-country studies. She has researched and published widely and is an international expert on pedagogical change in lower- and middle-income countries, especially where critical and creative thinking, and school performance review strategies are being promoted. She has been engaged in a range of relevant work including a review of UNESCO's Associated Schools Project Network of 7,000 schools globally, an evaluation of the Economic and Social Research Council's international fellowship and networking schemes, and a UNICEF study of Education and Emergencies in South-East Asia.

Dr. Oscar Odena, Reader in Education at the School of Education and the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Glasgow, has conducted educational research in a range of contexts nationally and internationally. He has a strong background in evaluation and impact studies in school education, including reading and inclusion programmes, using qualitative research approaches (focus groups and interviews). Globally, he recently completed an impact evaluation of the British Council's Connecting Classrooms programme. He has expertise in international development, having worked in Africa for research initiatives on ethnic divisions and international education funded by Atlantic Philanthropies and British Council. He currently leads an international network, [The Arts of Inclusion \(TAI\)](#), which is funded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council.