



## Improving learning outcomes in English and Mathematics in primary education in Rwanda



## Understanding girls' clubs

### Q: *What is a girls' club?*

- » A girls' club is a group or association of young girls dedicated to a particular interest or activity.
- » The mission of girls' clubs is to provide club members and other young girls with a safe, supportive and inspiring environment to bring their life and learning experiences together and address barriers hindering girls' & boys' enrolment, continuation and performance.

### Q: *Why are girls' clubs important for Rwandan schools?*

- » Supporting girls' education remains a global and national priority.
- » Girls in Rwanda – particularly those of adolescent age – continue to face barriers to achieving their full potential, including less time, support and confidence to study. This has implications not only for individual girls and communities but for social and economic progress in Rwanda.
- » Although gender inequalities become more pronounced as girls move through the school system, the roots of cultural stereotypes and biases are formed early.
- » A combination of general and girl-targeted interventions proves to bring tangible results for girls' learning.
- » The findings from BLF's baseline assessment indicate the need to design girl-targeted interventions aimed at raising awareness about and tackling gender inequalities that hinder the full realization of the right to education for girls.
- » The safe space environment of girls' clubs has the potential to counteract and dismantle damaging gender dynamics.

### » *Desired outcomes*

**Practically, girls' clubs will help to achieve the following outcomes:**

- » Girls remain in school
- » Increased knowledge about Sexual Reproductive Health Rights
- » Recognition of best performing girls
- » Life and learning skills enhanced
- » Sustainment of girls' gains and achievements.



### Q: *Who participates?*

- » Mixed clubs of 25-30 members.
- » Clubs comprise 80% girls and 20% boys.
- » Focus on over-age girls in P.4 and P.5.
- » Other vulnerability criteria for consideration: girls at risk of drop-out, with absenteeism or repetition records, those from very poor or single-parent households, and those with disability, among others.

### Q: *Who leads the club?*

- » The girls' club is facilitated by two gender focal teachers, one female and one male.
- » Gender focal teachers should be selected based on how well they get along with students, how approachable they are, and their confidence speaking about the club topics. Gender focal teachers should be able to serve as confidants to students.

### Q: *When do club activities take place?*

- » Clubs may tap into the Wednesday afternoon slot for club activities in schools, but this may vary from school to school or the facilitators and peers' set plan.

### Q: *In which schools do we find the clubs?*

- » Pilot girls' clubs were launched in 20 schools from January to July 2022.
- » All schools are encouraged to begin planning for girls' clubs in a similar fashion. Trainings for the club facilitators and distribution of materials will be considered in the upcoming academic year.

# Curriculum and content of girls' clubs

The clubs provide space for the following:

- » Challenging negative social norms and stereotypes that perpetuate violence against children, especially girls and talk about their issues in a safe and conducive manner.
- » Listening and responding to the needs of young girls (both practical and strategic needs are addressed and initiatives taken to combat school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV), delay pregnancy and end early marriages).
- » Uniting girls and boys to address life challenges and developing learning skills that enable them to achieve at the same standard of performance as boys.
- » Building confidence and boosting self-esteem; supported by role models, girls can address conscious and unconscious biases and stereotypes about women and girls in STEM.



A fun, inspiring and informative curriculum is organised by weekly topics:

No	Unit	Content
1	Unit 1: Me, my school and education	<p>Four sessions:</p> <p>1.1. My education aspirations</p> <p>1.2. Confidence building and self-esteem boosting</p> <p>1.3. My role models</p> <p>1.4. Love for STEM</p>
2	Unit 2: Me, my mind and body	<p>Five sessions:</p> <p>2.1. My right to my body</p> <p>2.2. Understanding puberty</p> <p>2.3. Positive menstrual hygiene management</p> <p>2.4. Violence and abuse</p> <p>2.5. Pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).</p>

Clubs should also involve a community engagement element component. Gender focal teachers should work with school leaders to bring parents and caregivers of club participants and relevant local officials, including Inshuti z'Umuryango, into schools for a meeting. Specifically, the following issues should be discussed with both caregivers and students:

- » The purpose of girls' clubs & promoting learning
- » Strategies for building a support system for our learning at home & in the community
- » Equitable distribution of household chores to ensure girls have enough time to dedicate to schoolwork
- » Mitigating against exposure to violence & reporting lines
- » Supporting girls to positively manage menstruation & reduce absenteeism.

## Q: What if support is needed?

If you require support, you can reach out to the BLF Gender & Safeguarding Specialist Jean Marie Vianney Munyaneza at [jmunyaneza@educationdevelopmenttrust.com](mailto:jmunyaneza@educationdevelopmenttrust.com).

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