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### End of Project and Partnership Evaluation

*End of project evaluation of the Kenya Inclusive Quality Education Project and evaluation of partnership between Aidlink and the Girl Child Network*

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASALs	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
BoM	Boards of Management
CF	Community Facilitator
CBO	Community-based organisation
CWD	Children with disabilities
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EARC	Early Assessment and Resource Centre
EGIS	Every Girl in School
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GCN	Girl Child Network
KIQEP	Kenya Inclusive Quality Education Project
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NACONEK	National Commission for Nomadic Education in Kenya
NDMA	National Drought Management Agency
PAD	Partnership Approach to Development
PIs	Performance Indicators
RoC	Rights of the Child
SDP	School Development Plan
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

## Executive Summary

The Kenya Inclusive Quality Education Project (KIQEP) was implemented from July 2018 to June 2021 in partnership with the Girl Child Network (GCN). This evaluation of KIQEP and of the partnership between Aidlink and GCN had two purposes; to provide an independent assessment of performance for accountability and to deepen learning and inform future decision-making by Aidlink.

Two key frameworks were applied to the evaluation: the OECD-DAC Evaluation Criteria and Aidlink's own criteria and targets as outlined in its organisational policies and project documents, especially its *Partnership Approach to Development*. The evaluation was largely qualitative in nature and delivered through a blend of physical and online methods. Sampling of key informants was purposive and included Aidlink and GCN staff, management and board members, and local government officials. Discussion groups and interviews in Turkana and Kajiado included representatives of school Boards of Management, Rights of the Child Club students and patrons and Community Facilitators. Ten school communities were visited out of a total of 57 targeted by the project. Interviews were complimented by a detailed review of documentation, a financial analysis and risk review.

## Evaluation of KIQEP

### Relevance:

KIQEP targets heavily disadvantaged communities that lag far behind the Kenyan national average in terms of development, education and gender equality indicators, and that are highly vulnerable to humanitarian shocks including drought and food insecurity. With Turkana County registering the highest level of inequality and of absolute poverty in all of Kenya, the move there under this project was distinctly justified, reflecting Aidlink's strategic focus and Irish Aid's policy emphasis on *reaching the furthest behind first*. The project was highly aligned to the Kenyan policy framework and its design was informed by lessons from previous Aidlink / GCN projects and evaluations.

Education officials fully endorsed the project design's relevance to local needs, policies and priorities. Students, teachers and Boards of Management (BoM) confirmed the relevance of the project to their lived realities and the necessity of the training provided. Community Facilitators (CFs) stressed the relevance of the community-based component of the project, stressing the centrality of social norms and harmful cultural practices that commodify, and discriminate against, women and girls. The KIQEP model is comprehensive, incorporating interventions across four levels: the school, the community, the individual and civil society. This conforms with best practice in the field of social norm change, which stresses the importance of multi-layered, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approaches. However, addressing negative social norms ordinarily calls for in-depth, long-term engagement in targeted communities, whereas KIQEP focused on a different set of school communities each year.

A strength of the project design is the emphasis on local ownership, participation and leadership. KIQEP is inherently rights-based, placing a central focus on issues of poverty, inequality, inclusion and vulnerability, identifying girls and children with disabilities (CWD) as its focus. The targeting of CWD is both justified and indeed necessary within a rights-based framework. However, the challenges around improving CWD's access to inclusive, equitable and quality education and to addressing negative social norms that limit their participation are so pronounced that a mainstreamed approach is inadequate.

KIQEP was highly adaptive in response to COVID, successfully combining adaptation of planned interventions and introduction of new interventions in response to the pandemic. KIQEP demonstrated an adaptive management approach that spanned beyond COVID. New interventions were introduced (i) in response to learning, (ii) to mitigate risk, (iii) to strengthen the achievement of results, (iv) to maximise efficiencies and (v) to strengthen sustainability. The flexible and adaptive nature of the project was enabled by several factors. These include (i) the close and trusted partnership between Aidlink and GCN, facilitating fast feedback loops and adaptive programming; (ii) the programme's embeddedness within community structures, allowing it to use the same structures

to pivot; (iii) a responsive and supportive approach by Irish Aid in approving project amendments and budget reallocations after COVID struck; and (iv) Aidlink's ability to raise funds from other sources.

**Coherence:**

KIQEP was fully aligned with national and county-level education priorities and plans. The policy and political context were largely conducive to delivery of the project and the move in to Turkana was timely and opportune. There is evidence of effective coordination and collaboration with stakeholders in the education and child rights sectors, especially government at national, county and village level. GCN has established strong links and relations with the Ministry of Education over many years, has a strong track-record in Kajiado and has managed to create a firm foothold in Turkana in a relatively short space of time. GCN is seen as a trustworthy, honest and respectful partner in the school setting. An inclusive and collaborative approach to working with institutional stakeholders allows GCN to access and influence policy fora at both national and sub-national level.

**Efficiency:**

KIQEP delivery was timely and efficient. The project fully delivered against its work plan and budget in years 1 and 2 and over-delivered in year 3. KIQEP demonstrated capacity to deliver, adapt and to get things done, in spite of the challenging operating context caused by COVID.

Through effective coordination and planning, duplication was avoided, resource allocation was responsive and efficiencies were gained. KIQEP utilised cost-efficient modes of procurement and further efficiencies were obtained - and local ownership fostered - through 'community social contracts'. Delivery costs were kept low, due to the partnership model employed and the fact that such a high proportion of the budget flows to GCN and is spent in-country. KIQEP displayed value for money as a result of its partnership and procurement model and its adaptive management approach.

Aidlink and its board are proactive and vigilant in monitoring and managing risk, exercising close oversight. These practices would yield better results if small but important improvements were adopted. The approach to risk management during COVID was very strong and should be emulated.

**Effectiveness:**

The evaluation looks at the extent to which each of the project objectives was achieved and the factors that affected delivery of results. By the end of year three, almost all performance indicators had been achieved at output level, demonstrating effective programme management and use of project funds. At objective level the performance is also strong, if a little more mixed, reflecting the challenges posed by COVID and their impact on the delivery of project results. The closure of schools for a 9-month period had a very significant impact on learning, student enrolment, early pregnancy, child marriage, FGM and GBV. It is inevitable that project delivery would be challenged as a consequence. In spite of this, KIQEP adapted and worked hard to deliver.

The project surpassed its target (57 vs 46) of *public primary schools meeting the UNICEF standards of a child-friendly, gender-sensitive and disability-friendly school*. Stakeholders perceive WASH facilities to have had an immediate effect on children's cleanliness, hygiene, safety and attendance. The provision of food at school was highly valued by stakeholders, with more children attending and remaining in school when they were assured of a meal.

Strong progress was made against the result of *'children, particularly girls and those with disabilities, in target schools are informed and empowered to defend their rights and engage in education'*. Children interviewed in ROC clubs were largely confident, well informed, freely talked about their rights and had clearly benefited from the training provided. Some children have intervened where they have felt either their rights or those of others were being infringed. Patrons and BoMs were also

well informed and understood the importance of defending child rights. Over the course of the project 915 out-of-school children (of which 604 girls) were identified and supported to re-enrol in school.

The objective on improving education access for CWDs was highly challenging, warranting a more in-depth, specialised intervention than the project could provide. That said, important headway was made in a difficult and neglected area, laying the ground for future interventions.

As a key risk to the project, drought is another area that necessitated inclusion in the project. Some progress was made but proved difficult to sustain. School gardens were unsuccessful but lessons have been learned and the concept has been adjusted.

CFs have been instrumental in outreach and efforts to address harmful social norms. The success of this is driven by CFs and school-based structures (i.e. BoM and RoC Clubs) collaborating, supporting and re-enforcing each other. Community Conversations allowed communities to discuss issues and reach solutions in an acceptable and non-confrontational way.

The body of work around GCN / local NGO capacity strengthening and policy advocacy is more long-term in nature. Despite this, it is an area where the value added of the Aidlink / GCN partnership can be seen as it provided GCN with resources to strengthen its capacity and to engage in policy fora.

#### **Impact:**

KIQEP delivered strong results at outcome level, with targeted schools assessed as achieving higher rates of re-enrolment post COVID closures than non-project schools. It is due to the efficacy of the project that such high numbers returned to school, although the full impact of COVID and the prolonged school closure could not be assessed. Aidlink is forthright in reporting that official re-enrolment data may hide the stark reality of COVID-related setbacks, whose impacts will be felt over decades to come.

Stakeholders interviewed spoke of the positive impacts that the project brought to their communities. They spoke of increased enrolment and a gradual shift in attitudes around the value of education which has resulted in families sending children (or some children) to school. Aidlink and GCN pride itself in working with the most in-need communities and building self-sufficiency and local leadership. The model of ROCs, BoMs and CFs working collaboratively is compelling and holds great potential.

Behaviours and practices, particularly those that are propelled by social norms are neither easy nor quick to shift. Shocks and setbacks often cause communities to revert to pre-established behaviours. Whilst the principal of self-sufficiency is sound, the evaluation finds that community structures need longer-term support to remain motivated and skilled in their roles. Aidlink/GCN need to consider a longer-term engagement with communities, with deeper monitoring and evaluation of norm change.

Whilst school feeding is hugely valued by communities and has an immediate impact, it creates its own set of challenges. Almost all stakeholders expressed concern that once the food stops, progress is reversed. Food in schools needs to be considered as a recurrent need and a social safety net. There are a series of strategic questions around provision of food that Aidlink will need to carefully consider.

#### **Sustainability:**

Assumptions that community structures will be self-sustaining have not proven to be correct: In most schools visited, RoC clubs are no longer active and patrons no longer in post. Undoubtedly, this has been aggravated by the effects of COVID, school closures and the knock-on effect on the delivery of certain programme interventions .

Some project benefits will be sustained but the challenge is to maximise this so that the gains are not eroded over time. The report contains a series of recommendations in this regard, including longer-term engagement with communities, revisiting of exit strategies and a more systematic approach to monitoring progress in communities after the project exits. As resources are limited, there are hard choices and trade-offs to be made between deepening engagement in one area and broadening out to reach new areas with tremendous needs.

KIQEP annual reports demonstrate a good approach to lesson learning, highlighting key lessons learnt in the course of implementation and measures taken in response to these. Monitoring visits and annual forums have been used to ensure that lessons are generated and utilised and that the learning is generated and shared among a broad range of stakeholders.

### **Performance of the Aidlink & GCN partnership**

Aidlink believes that working through partnership with local organisations is the most sustainable and effective way to bring about lasting, positive change for the world's poorest and most marginalised people. The key principles of Aidlink's partnership approach are defined in its *Partnership Approach to Development (PAD)*. The evaluation found evidence of these principles manifested in the KIQEP programme, demonstrating consistency between intent and practice.

Aidlink has partnered with GCN since 2003. The Aidlink / GCN partnership has evolved and matured over the years. It is now perceived as a partnership of equals, with each partner playing to its strengths and benefiting mutually. There is a strong basis of trust and respect, founded in shared values, goals and approaches to community development. Aidlink's PAD states that 'exit strategies are built in to all partnership arrangements'. However, neither party wishes to see an exit strategy, because of the value and mutual benefits of the partnership.

Aidlink's partnership approach is ambitious, yet also realistic: It establishes a standard to aim towards, whilst also recognising the challenges that are likely to be experienced. In practice, the partnership has evolved to a point where the two organisations can challenge each other, and feel jointly accountable for successes and failures. The partnership allows for considerate risk taking, though the confines of donor funding often do not.

Flexibility is a key factor in success of the Aidlink and GCN partnership and programmes, allowing adaptation and testing of new interventions, which ultimately result in more effective programming. The partnership model helped Aidlink and GCN to be agile and adaptive during lockdown and to apply strong adaptive management techniques in the delivery of KIQEP. Other key factors underpinning the successful partnership include leadership, relationships and networks.

The partnership model enabled KIQEP to deliver value for money due to low delivery costs, efficiencies gained through adaptation and the procurement model. The emphasis on reflection and learning leads to adaptation, resulting in efficiencies and more effective programme delivery.

Aidlink recognises that partnership carries inherent risk and actively analyses this. The most pertinent risks to the partnership include the risk of over-dependence and key personnel risk. These risks are proactively monitored and managed by Aidlink and its Board, with evolving mitigation strategies.

Aidlink's PAD commits to providing capacity building support to partners in a number of ways, from flexible funding to training to mentorship support. During the KIQEP project, and as GCN has grown organisationally, the type of capacity building has evolved. The current focus is on support to strategic planning, Results Based Management and fundraising, with GCN leading and Aidlink supporting and facilitating. KIQEP enabled GCN to expand its role to capacity building of local civil society

organisations, in line with recommendations from Aidlink's 2015 External Evaluation and 2016 Partnership Review.

Since its establishment in 1982, Aidlink has placed local participation and locally designed and managed responses at the centre of its approach to development, building relationships with its key partners over long periods of concentrated work on specific issues. There is currently a thrust towards increased *localisation* in the international aid sector – principles which are already routinely practiced by Aidlink. Aidlink's well-documented and comprehensive approach to partnership, combined with extensive, practical experience render it an important source of expertise in this area. The benefits and value added of Aidlink's partnership approach were amplified during COVID, when Aidlink and GCN were able to adjust, adapt and maintain pace in delivering the KIQEP programme.

**The report sets out a series of programmatic, operational and partnership recommendations for consideration by Aidlink as it continues to enhance its programmes and partnerships and embarks on the process of developing a new strategic plan.**

## Introduction

*Aidlink is an Irish charity working to educate, enable and empower individuals, families and communities in Kenya, Uganda and Ghana to become the leaders of their own development. We believe the key to long-term, sustainable development is a strong and vibrant African civil society, whereby local people are empowered to tackle poverty and catalyse change. [...]*<sup>1</sup>

This evaluation of the Kenya Inclusive Quality Education Project and the partnership between Aidlink and the Girl Child Network was commissioned in December 2021 and concluded in February 2022. Its purpose is twofold: First, to provide an independent assessment of performance to ensure accountability for the programme investment, as per Aidlink's Monitoring and Evaluation policy. Secondly, to deepen learning and inform future strategic and programmatic decision-making by Aidlink and its partners.

In 2018, due to changes in its funding situation<sup>2</sup>, Aidlink developed a targeting policy<sup>3</sup> identifying the focus and direction of its work over the following four years. It prioritised Education and a focus on the poorest communities and geographic areas in Kenya and Uganda populated by traditionally nomadic pastoralist communities. It further prioritised working with a small number of lead partners, including The Girl Child Network (GCN), Kenya<sup>4</sup>.

For the remainder of Aidlink's strategic plan period (up to end 2021), the Kenya Inclusive Quality Education Project (KIQEP) was Aidlink's flagship programme, accounting for approximately 70% of organisational expenditure. An evaluation of this programme, and of the partnership between Aidlink and GCN, is therefore of strategic importance to the organisation as it moves in to a new phase of programming and begins to develop its new strategic plan.

The strategic objective of KIQEP is to ensure that *children, especially girls and those with disabilities, from the Masai and Turkana communities, attain a quality primary education that supports the achievement of healthy and fulfilling lives*. The KIQEP was implemented in partnership with the Girl Child Network (GCN) and builds on the partners' experience and learning from 16 years implementing rights-based education projects in Kenya. Targeting public primary schools and communities in Mashuru (Kajiado) and Loima (Turkana) sub-counties, the project addressed barriers to education for children, especially girls and those with disabilities, from nomadic pastoralist communities. The project was framed around three outcomes, five objectives and sixteen outputs<sup>5</sup> (see table 1), working simultaneously at family, community and systems- levels. Indicators and targets were established for each level, and monitored through a project results framework / results report.

KIQEP was funded by Irish Aid's Civil Society Fund (64%) and through other sources of funding generated by Aidlink (34%) and GCN (2%). It was implemented over a period of three years, from July 2018 to June 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> Aidlink website [Aidlink – Enabling Communities in Africa tackle poverty](#)

<sup>2</sup> See Annex 4 with information on funding trajectory

<sup>3</sup> Aidlink Targeting Policy 2018-2021

<sup>4</sup> GCN is an independent Kenyan NGO and membership network, with the mission to protect and promote the rights of children, youth and women in Africa through advocacy, networking, research and enhancement of community participation. See: [Overview – Girl Child Network](#)

<sup>5</sup> Three additional outputs were added in response to COVID 19. These are asterisked in Table 1

Table 1: Project Framework (Outcome – Objectives – Outputs)

<b>Outcome 1: Children, especially girls and learners with disabilities, from the Masai and Turkana communities have improved access to an inclusive, equitable and quality primary education</b>	
Objective 1.1: Target public primary schools meet the UNICEF standards of a child-friendly, gender-sensitive and disability-friendly school	
	1.1.1: Inclusive, gender and disability-friendly WASH facilities (latrines and water tanks) constructed/installed in target schools
	1.1.2: Teachers in target schools trained on gender and disability-responsive pedagogy, participation and inclusion
	1.1.3: Target school Boards of Management and teachers trained on policies and legal frameworks which protect children and support the right to education
	1.1.4: Gender and disability-sensitive and child-centred School Development Plans (SDPs) developed
	1.1.5: School feeding programme established in 16 schools (3 months)
	1.1.6 COVID-19 Response Handwashing stations installed in 17 school communities (Turkana) YR 2*
Objective 1.2: Children, particularly girls and those with disabilities, in target schools are informed and empowered to defend their rights and engage in education	
	1.2.1: Rights of the Child (RoC) clubs established and trained in target schools
	1.2.2 COVID-19 Response: Sanitary pads distributed to vulnerable girls in response of COVID-19 crisis using existing structures and targeting girls in KIQEP Year 2 schools*
Objective 1.3: Target schools and communities have enhanced knowledge, capacity and skills to manage the effects of drought and reduce its impact on access to education, particularly for girls and learners with disabilities	
	1.3.1: RoC club members trained on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and supported to introduce tree planting and gardening in schools
	1.3.2: School BoMs and community gatekeepers trained on DRR including early warning signs of drought, response and mitigation
	1.3.3: Community forums held quarterly with County government officials to ensure that DRR and drought mitigation are built into County Development Plans and annual budgets
<b>Outcome 2: Target communities support access to education and are addressing negative social norms which limit (girls' and learners with disabilities') participation</b>	
Objective 2.1: Target communities are better informed and empowered, individually and as a collective, to realise and protect human rights (including the right to education) with an emphasis on the rights of women and girls and people living with disabilities	
	2.1.1: Village Development Committees established and trained on human rights and negative social norms, and facilitated to host monthly 'community conversations'
	2.1.2: Training of community facilitators on surveillance, monitoring and messaging on the coping mechanisms of communities during COVID-19 YR2*
<b>Outcome 3: GCN and local NGOs are engaged in promoting education, child rights and gender equality through programming and targeted lobbying and advocacy, with and on behalf of target communities</b>	
Objective 3.1: GCN and local NGOs have developed and demonstrated their capacity as efficient, effective and sustainable organisations with the capacity to deliver quality, sustainable development programmes and hold duty-bearers to account	
	3.1.1: Organisational capacity building of GCN and local NGOs build in line with Aidlink's Capacity Building Approach
	3.1.2: Aidlink annual training forum held with GCN and local NGOs YR 1 & 3
	3.1.3: Meetings held with National and County government to review policy implementation in education, child rights, gender equality and disability

## Evaluation objectives and methodology

The key objectives of the evaluation, as outlined in the Terms of Reference (Annex 1), are:

- 1) To examine the impact of Aidlink’s flagship project between 2018-2021, the Kenya Inclusive Quality Education Project (KIQEP), reviewing all project documents, results frameworks, and budgets to identify if the project was delivered to sectorial best practice standards and what value, if any, did Aidlink add.
- 2) To examine the partnership between Aidlink and the Girl Child Network (GCN), reviewing how the two organisations work together and how Aidlink has performed as a donor/partner throughout the project life cycle.
- 3) To provide strategic recommendations for Aidlink to enhance the implementation of projects and partnerships going forward.

Two key frameworks were applied to the end-of-project evaluation: the OECD-DAC Evaluation Criteria and Aidlink’s own criteria and targets as outlined in its organisational policies, the KIQEP project document, results framework and partnership agreement with GCN. The evaluation also examined how Aidlink responded to the COVID 19 pandemic, both in delivery of the programme and in its management of the partnership with GCN.

Central to Aidlink’s way of working and its approach to development more broadly is a comprehensive Partnership Approach<sup>6</sup>. The evaluation reviews the partnership with GCN, assessing the extent to which the partnership *in practice* reflects the intentions outlined in the Partnership Approach. Particular attention was paid to (i) the key principles of Aidlink’s partnership approach, (ii) the commitment to capacity building through partnership and (iii) sustainability. An understanding of the challenges, complexities and power dynamics inherent to partnerships, particularly those involving the transfer of funds, was essential to this exercise.

The evaluation objectives were translated in to a series of evaluation questions, outlined in Table 2, and structured around the six OECD DAC criteria. Questions pertaining to the partnership were woven in to the OECD DAC criteria. However, for the purposes of this report these question areas are handled in a stand -alone section on *performance of the partnership*.

Table 2: Key Evaluation Questions

AREA OF ENQUIRY	KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS
<b>RELEVANCE:</b> The extent to which the intervention objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How responsive is the KIQEP programme design to national and community needs and priorities?</li> <li>2. How has the programme adapted to contextual changes, including the COVID 19 pandemic?</li> </ol>
<b>COHERENCE:</b> The compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in the country, sector or school system. The extent to which other interventions and policies support or undermine the intervention.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. How does the project link with national and local plans and priorities?</li> <li>4. Is there evidence of effective coordination and collaboration with other actors in the education / child rights sectors?</li> </ol>
<b>EFFICIENCY:</b> How well are resources being used? The extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Does the programme and its partnership approach deliver Value for Money or other efficiencies?</li> <li>6. How efficient is the risk management system and what improvements could be made?</li> </ol>
<b>EFFECTIVENESS:</b> The extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve,	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. To what extent have project objectives been achieved? (with attention to the focus on girls and children with disabilities)</li> </ol>

<sup>6</sup> Aidlink Partnership Approach to Development, Feb 2010 (updated May 2021)

its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.	8. What are the main factors (positive and negative, contextual and organisational) that have affected the achievement of results (or not)? 9. How is the partnership functioning in practice? What makes it successful, or not?
<b>IMPACT:</b> The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects. Impact addresses the potentially transformative effects of the intervention.	10. Can longer term impacts (intended and unintended) be seen? Is there evidence that the KIQEP contributed to this change? 11. Is there evidence of the programme / partner addressing the fundamental drivers of gender inequality and/or social norms? 12. How has the partnership impacted on capacity within GCN?
<b>SUSTAINABILITY:</b> The extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.	13. How was sustainability promoted? Since the programme ended, is there evidence of components / approaches / results being sustained? Can or will the programme and partnership be replicated in some way? 14. Were lessons learnt and how have these been subsequently utilised? 15. What is the <i>value added</i> of the partnership model employed?

The evaluation was largely qualitative in nature and delivered through a blend of physical and online methods. All interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) in Turkana and Kajiado were conducted face-to-face by the Kenyan consultant, ensuring that the researcher brought a deep understanding of the culture, context and gender norms within participant communities. Safeguarding and public health protocols were maintained throughout.

Sampling of key informants was purposive and included Aidlink and GCN staff, management and board members, and a small number of local government officials. Discussion groups and interviews in Turkana and Kajiado included representatives of Boards of Management (BoM) in selected schools, Rights of the Child (RoC) Club students, RoC Club patrons and Community Facilitators (CFs). Interviews were semi-structured and detailed topic guides were developed.

Given timeframe and budget constraints, the number of interviews and FGDs in Turkana and Kajiado were limited: 10 schools were reached (5 per county), out of a total of 57 schools targeted under the project. The consultants identified the sample schools against a set of criteria (see Annex 5), in close communication with GCN. The schools were the focal point for meeting all other project stakeholders. GCN assisted with introductions and provided logistical support to the researcher.

The KIQEP project ran for a period of three years, targeting different schools each year. The interviews attempted to achieve a balance in terms of schools targeted in years 1, 2 and 3 of the project, as indicated below.

Table 3: Sample schools and year in which they were targeted by the project

Turkana / Loima	School	Year	Kajiado / Mashuru	School	Year
	Kospir	1		Eselenkei	1
	Locher Emeyan	1		Endoinyo Enkerr	1
	Natwel	2		Ilmejoole	2
	Kang'alita	2		Kalembwani	3
	Nataparkakono	3		Emashini	3

The evaluators conducted a total of 41 interviews / discussion groups and met with a total 148 individuals from the following project stakeholder groups. In Turkana, due to organisational challenges, the consultant met with fewer ROC club patrons and Community Facilitators (CFs) than planned.

**Table 4: Interview Summary Table**

<b>Project Stakeholders - FGDs and KIIs</b>	<b>Mashuru</b>	<b>Loima</b>
ROC clubs	5	5
.....of which, number of children	44 (40 f / 4m)	39 (26f/13m)
ROC Patrons	4 (3f, 1m)	1 (1f)
BOMs	4	4
....of which number of individuals	19 (14 m, 5 f)	20 (8f/12m)
Community Facilitators	5 (1f, 4m)	2 (2m)
Ministry officials	2 (1f, 1m)	2 (2m) + 1 (f) national level
CSO representatives	1 (1f)	
<b>Total number of interviews / discussion groups</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Total number of individuals</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Interviews with Aidlink &amp; GCN</b>		
GCN	3	
Aidlink	2	
Aidlink Board	3	
<b>Total number of interviews</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>Total number of people interviewed</b>	<b>8</b>	

The interviews were complimented by, and triangulated with, a detailed desk review of documentation, including Aidlink policy documents and annual reports, GCN annual reports and KIQEP project documents and reports (see Appendix 3). A detailed financial analysis and risk review were conducted, based on the project narrative and financial reports and risk registers.

## Findings – KIQEP evaluation

### 1. Relevance of the intervention: is it doing the right things?

Under this criterion we have examined the extent to which KIQEP objectives and design respond to beneficiaries, global, country, and partner/institution needs, policies, and priorities, and continue to do so if circumstances change.

#### How responsive is the KIQEP programme design to national and community needs and priorities?

Kenya has committed to free primary education and is striving to deliver its SDG commitments to inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all<sup>7</sup>. Nationally, the completion rate at primary school level increased from 84 per cent to 85.4 per cent from 2017 to 2019, with government emphasizing 100 per cent transition rate from primary to secondary level. The gender parity index in primary schools has remained constant in recent years at .97 (2019). Various policies and targeted measures have been introduced in an effort to address regional (and other) disparities and barriers to inclusive education. These include, amongst others:

- Implementation of free primary education and subsidised day secondary education;
- Provision and enforcement of re-entry policy for girls who drop out due to pregnancy / childbirth;
- Ring-fenced grants directed to students in arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) as well as pockets of poverty across the country;
- The enactment of the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Act 2011, the Presidential Declaration to End FGM by 2022 and regional initiatives such as the Kajiado County Government policy for the eradication of FGM

KIQEP targets heavily disadvantaged communities that lag far behind the Kenyan national average in terms of development, education and gender equality indicators, and that are highly vulnerable to humanitarian shocks including drought and food insecurity. Turkana and Kajiado counties experienced alarming increases in inequality between 1994 and 2015/6<sup>8</sup>. With Turkana County registering the highest level of inequality and of absolute poverty in all of Kenya, the move in to Turkana by Aidlink & GCN under this project was distinctly justified.

KIQEP is highly complementary to Kenya's SDG commitments, national policy goals as well as the policy framework on Nomadic education<sup>9</sup>. Both Turkana and Kajiado fall in the bottom 20<sup>th</sup> percentile of Kenyan counties in terms of net enrolment in primary education (2018 data)<sup>10</sup>. KIQEP supported the efforts of government by targeting some of the most hard-to-reach and disadvantaged primary schools and communities in the country, plugging gaps that government fails to finance and reaching communities where few NGOs go. The choice of locations also reflects Aidlink's strategic focus and Irish Aid's policy emphasis on *reaching the furthest behind first*.

In 2018, the Kenyan government took over the provision of school meals in Kenya from the World Food Programme. Under this scheme, targeted schools are due to receive a cash allocation each term

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<sup>77</sup> Republic of Kenya, 2019. Second Voluntary National Review Report of the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

<sup>8</sup> Inequality trends and diagnostics in Kenya. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2020

<sup>9</sup> 2015. Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education, Science & Technology. Revised Policy Framework on Nomadic Education in Kenya

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

from the Treasury to buy food for school children from local markets<sup>11</sup>. However, the programme is inadequately resourced. The KIQEP baseline study found that two thirds of sampled schools had a feeding programme while just over a third did not. However, 70% of those with a feeding programme indicated that it was not adequate to last throughout the year and it was also lacking nutritionally<sup>12</sup>. Following the needs assessment, the project targeted the most in-need schools that were not receiving support from other external actors.

Sub-county education officials interviewed fully endorsed the project design's relevance to local needs, policies and priorities. The provision of WASH facilities (latrines, water tanks and handwashing stations) responds to an acute gap with multiple recognised benefits including improved school attendance, dignity for girls and protection of girls from sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The provision of food in schools is recognised by officials and community members as a key factor in improving student attendance and retention, which the government is under-resourced to provide.

Children interviewed via the ROC clubs confirmed the relevance of the project to their lived realities. Girls' school attendance drops during menstruation, in the absence of latrines, water and sanitary pads. Drop out is triggered by early pregnancy and marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and lack of parental support for education. The project is also relevant to boys, many of whom are forced to leave school early to work in sand harvesting (Kajiado). Whilst communities spoke of a slow but steady shift in terms of support for education, it remains the case (particularly in Turkana) that only some children in the family will be selected to go to school. Interestingly, rather than boys attending and girls staying home, there were numerous mentions of alternate children being selected to go to school, with others being assigned different roles in the household. Training of students, teachers and Boards of Management on rights, gender-responsive pedagogy and drought management are all highly relevant to achievement of the first project outcome on improved access to education.

Community Facilitators (CFs) stressed the relevance of the community-based component of the project (outcome 2), stressing the centrality of social norms and harmful cultural practices that commodify, and discriminate against, women and girls. Stakeholders recognised the long-term nature of social change and the importance of long-term engagement with communities. The inclusion of objective 2 on informing and empowering communities to realise and protect human rights (with an emphasis on the rights of women and girls and people living with disabilities) was fully justified.

KIQEP is inherently rights-based, placing a central focus on issues of poverty, inequality, inclusion and vulnerability, identifying girls and children with disabilities (CWD) as its focus. CWD are highly neglected, excluded and subject to discrimination. Their inclusion is both justified and indeed necessary within a rights-based framework. However, the challenges around improving CWD access to inclusive, equitable and quality education and to addressing negative social norms that limit their participation are so pronounced that a mainstreamed approach, such as that adopted in the design of KIQEP, was inadequate. We will return to this point in later sections of the report.

The third project outcome and its underlying objective recognises the importance of GCN and local civil society actors engaging in promotion of rights and targeted lobbying and advocacy in the areas of education, child right and gender equality. It recognises the role of civil society in shaping policy, monitoring its implementation, and in demanding accountability (at national and local levels). It also recognises the challenge in building up effective local civil society in Turkana and Kajiado. Whilst this third outcome constitutes the smallest share of the project expenditure (6%), it allows the project to

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<sup>11</sup> [Government takes over school meals in Kenya from the World Food Programme | World Food Programme \(wfp.org\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> KIQEP 2017. Baseline report on status of public primary schools in Kajiado county

take a more comprehensive approach by including a focus on the systems-level. It is also modelled on Aidlink's partnership and capacity building approaches.

Interviews confirmed that KIQEP was designed iteratively, based on successes and lessons learned from previous projects implemented by both Aidlink and GCN (together and in partnership with others). It incorporated successful elements from other GCN projects in to the KIQEP design, such as the use of community facilitators and community conversations. It also responded to the consequences of drought and the risk this poses towards realisation of project results, by integrating components on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and drought management in to the design of KIQEP. The expanded role of GCN in capacity building of other partners (i.e. local CSOs), as well as the attention to assisting GCN to secure funding from alternative sources, respond to recommendations from Aidlink's 2015 External Evaluation<sup>13</sup> and 2016 Partnership Review<sup>14</sup>. The project was designed jointly by Aidlink and GCN, a testament to the nature of the partnership.

The model or approach employed by KIQEP is centred on the learning that school drop-out, particularly at upper primary level, is primarily caused by harmful cultural norms including FGM and early marriage. The 2018 CSF Application (KIQEP project document) states that: *'This strengthens our thesis that the most significant barriers to girls' education (FGM, child marriage, pregnancy, child labour and negative attitudes) are at the community level, highlighting the need for increased engagement with the community outside of the school environment...'*. Consequently, KIQEP adopts a comprehensive approach, incorporating interventions across four levels: the school, the community, the individual and civil society. This conforms with best practice in the field of social norm change, which stresses the important of multi-layered, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approaches. It is also underpinned by the UNICEF's Child-Friendly Schools Approach that has been promoted by the Kenyan government since the early 2000s.

The model described above and employed by KIQEP deviates from other social norm models in one fundamental way: KIQEP works with a sub-set of schools in any given year of the project, and moves on to a new set of schools in subsequent years. Whilst some engagement continues with schools targeted in previous years, this is limited. This approach *could* be deemed appropriate to the first project outcome, due to the fact that construction and training can be completed in a one-year period, but jars with the second outcome area on support for education and addressing negative social norms, which ordinarily calls for in-depth, long-term engagement in targeted communities. We re-visit and examine this point in subsequent sections of this report.

A strength of the programme design is its emphasis on local ownership, participation and leadership. GCN sees its role as 'walking with communities', stating, for example, 'we start with messaging that circumcised girls should go back to school, later we go on to discuss ending FGM and its impacts'<sup>15</sup>. KIQEP aimed to establish inclusive, community-driven structures (ROC clubs, Community Facilitators, Community Conversations and more effective School Boards of Management) that would collaborate and function independently of external engagement. Whilst we see this as a strength of the project, there are a number of assumptions underpinning this approach (or theory of change) which require further scrutiny and are examined in subsequent sections of this report.

#### How has the programme adapted to contextual changes, including the COVID 19 pandemic?

KIQEP was implemented over a period of three years, from July 2018 to June 2021. The devastating impact of the COVID pandemic, and the consequent closure of schools in Kenya from March 2020 to

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<sup>13</sup> Aidlink Evaluation, 2015. Mary McKeown.

<sup>14</sup> 10-year Review of Aidlink's Partnership and Capacity Building Approach (2004 – 2014). Summary Document, 2016

<sup>15</sup> GCN interview

January 2021 became key features of the programme that could not have been predicted when the project was designed and established.

Aidlink responded swiftly to the crisis, agreeing a series of programme adjustments with Irish Aid by April 2020. The 'Aidlink KIQEP proposed project adjustment' document (2020) notes that: *'The unusual nature of this COVID-19 crisis puts local NGOs and local leadership centre stage in terms of response and Aidlink's key partner GCN is well placed to respond to the immediate needs of communities in Turkana and Kajiado while at the same time protect[ing] KIQEP gains made to date'*. This evaluation finds that KIQEP was highly adaptive in response to COVID. Two main strategies were employed: adaptation of planned interventions and introduction of new interventions in response to the pandemic.

In terms of adaptation, the programme adopted innovative ways of delivering against planned outputs. School feeding was moved from the school to the community; Community Conversations were broadcast on radio rather than taking place face-to-face; programme monitoring and partner capacity building took place virtually.

In terms of new interventions, three new project outputs were adopted in year two, whilst none of the pre-existing outputs were discontinued. This shows a high level of ambition despite the challenging working context. The new outputs were:

- 1.1.6 COVID-19 Response Handwashing stations installed in 17 school communities (Turkana)
- 1.2.2 COVID-19 Response: Sanitary pads distributed to vulnerable girls in response to COVID-19 crisis using existing structures and targeting girls in KIQEP Year 2 schools
- 2.1.2: Training of community facilitators on surveillance, monitoring and messaging on the coping mechanisms of communities during COVID-19

A sum of €40,539 was allocated to specific COVID response measures, though this is higher if adapted measures are included (e.g. community feeding). Interventions included:

- Community conversations and COVID information transmitted through local radio in partnership with the Ministry of Health, the National Drought Management Authority and the Turkana Task Force on COVID-19.
- Community handwashing facilities installed in 17 target communities and soap provided.
- School feeding transferred to household level
- Sanitary pads and underwear distributed to girls for a three-month period
- Distribution of surgical face masks to 3 health centres and 24 dispensaries.
- Mobilisation (and training) of community facilitators to assist in Ministry of Health surveillance of COVID-19 and in identifying at-risk children. This included provision of mobile phones to CFs to allow real-time data sharing. Door-to-door campaigns were conducted in year three to get more children back to school after the long period of closure.

Members of BOMs expressed their appreciation for the COVID response activities implemented under KIQEP, particularly the provision of handwashing facilities and food. There was a high demand for facecoverings (masks) when schools re-opened, which stakeholders wished the project could have met.

Aidlink's Monitoring and Evaluation policy was updated in response to COVID, ensuring that monitoring continued and was *fit-for-purpose*, whilst ensuring a *Do No Harm* approach. Whereas Aidlink ordinarily visited the project twice a year to conduct monitoring and training, virtual monitoring methods were adopted.

KIQEP demonstrated an adaptive management approach that spanned beyond COVID. New interventions were introduced (i) in response to learning, (ii) to mitigate risk, (iii) to strengthen the achievement of results, (iv) to maximise efficiencies and (v) to strengthen sustainability. In year three, these included:

- Targeting of 8 additional schools that received the full package of interventions over a condensed timeframe of 3 months (WASH facilities; training for ROCs and BOMs including development of SDPS; DRR training and activities; community activities including CFs and CCs);
- Bi-annual BOM forums to enhance cross-learning and sustainability;
- Young mothers' packages comprised of a food supplement for babies and a stipend for caregivers in response to increased teenage pregnancy during the period of school closures and to incentivise young mothers to return to school;
- Development of two community farms in Turkana to enhance the sustainability of the school feeding programme (the farms are shared by 4 school communities as opposed to the school garden implemented in the preceding years of the project);
- Ongoing mentorship to the 10 community-based organizations (CBOs) supported in years 1 and 2, (rather than targeting new CBOs in year 3 as originally planned), to strengthen their capacity to carry on the education and child protection agenda when the project closed.

The flexible and adaptive nature of the project was enabled by several factors. These include:

- The close and trusted partnership between Aidlink and GCN, facilitating fast feedback loops and adaptive programming;
- The programme's embeddedness within community structures, allowing it to use the same structures to pivot. For example, in moving the feeding programme from the school to the broader community;
- A responsive and supportive approach by Irish Aid in approving project amendments and budget reallocations after COVID struck;
- Aidlink's ability to raise funds from other sources. The year three budget was increased by €48,721 versus the original planned budget to enable additional activities to be implemented.

## 2. Coherence of the intervention: how well does it fit?

Under the area of coherence, we looked at the compatibility of the project with other interventions in the country, sector or school system and the extent to which other interventions and policies support or undermine the intervention.

### How does the project link with national and local plans and priorities?

KIQEP was fully aligned with national education policy, with county-level education priorities and with the policy framework / strategy on Nomadic Education in Kenya. More specifically:

- KIQEP's strategic focus on access to education and addressing the barriers that limit inclusive education are fully aligned with the Government of Kenya Free Primary Education programme and policy on 100% transition to secondary school;
- The Young Mothers' Packages – as well as the project more broadly – are aligned with the national re-entry policy for pregnant girls and young mothers, which provides for unconditional re-admission for girls after delivery.
- The investment in WASH facilities (latrine blocks and water tanks) included disability-access consisting of a ramp, wide door, and grab bars. This is, in line with the Kenyan Government's Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities (2018)<sup>16</sup>.
- In response to Kenyan government guidelines for reopening of schools post Covid-19 closures, 57 schools were equipped with two handwashing facilities in adherence with public health protocols.

The policy and political context were largely conducive to delivery of the project. The move in to Turkana was timely and opportune, given the momentum created by decentralisation, a broadening recognition of the potential benefits of education and a readiness within communities to engage (notwithstanding entrenched social norms).

### Is there evidence of effective coordination and collaboration with other actors in the education / child rights sectors?

GCN operates nationally and has established strong links and relations with MoEST over many years. GCN has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with MoEST that sets out a framework for collaboration on child rights and education programming throughout Kenya. Aidlink and GCN are considered key partners by the Kajiado County government, while Aidlink's history of working in Turkana (combined with GCN's national reputation) has enabled successful expansion of the project to this county.

The KIQEP supported the government to address gaps in policy implementation. The National Council for Nomadic Education Kenya (NACONEK) confirmed its involvement in design of the project, ensuring that KIQEP captured key gaps in the ASAL regions. Targeted schools were identified in consultation with local MoEST officials. Water and sanitation packages were agreed on a school-by-school basis to ensure that all schools achieved Child-Friendly School status but also to ensure there was no duplication with other actors.

Local education officials interviewed were largely complimentary of the collaboration between GCN and their offices, and the fact that the project enabled them to monitor schools within their remit, which they would not otherwise have had the resources to do. They consider GCN to be a strong partner. An official in Kajiado suggested that higher level officials might have been better engaged in the project, enabling better uptake by the Ministry when the project ceased.

*In our absence in the schools, KEEP project filled in the gaps. Also, we accompanied them when we could and this created a partnership in the implementation. May be*

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<sup>16</sup> [kenya\\_sector\\_policy\\_learners\\_trainees\\_disabilities-1.pdf \(udpkenya.or.ke\)](https://www.udpkenya.or.ke/kenya_sector_policy_learners_trainees_disabilities-1.pdf)

*KEEP needed to work more on involving more government officers especially at the higher levels to align them to take over the activities they [GCN] were undertaking. (Kajiado official)*

The project also established good collaboration with the National Drought Management Agency (NDMA) on the drought management, DRR and school garden / farm components of the programme. NDMA was positive about the cooperation with GCN in delivering training on drought resilience and in supporting the development of community DRR action plans.

Early Assessment and Resource Centres (EARCs) are mandated by the Kenyan Government to carry out assessments, early identification, and placement of children with disabilities in schools but have limited resources and capacity. Aidlink and GCN work in cooperation with the EARC in Mashuru identifying and assessing needs of CWD. The absence of an EARC centre in Turkana hindered such progress in Loima. Project reports acknowledged this as a challenge and incorporated efforts to lobby for establishment of an EARC in Turkana. As it did not materialise, this has been incorporated and financed under Aidlink / GCN's new Every Girl In School (EGIS) project 2021/2024.

KIQEP incorporates County and National Government in decision-making throughout the cycle of the project. In Year 3, a total of 25 meetings were held with County government officials reviewing policy implementation in education, child rights and gender equality. In an effort to promote greater collaboration, coordination, and coherence, a stakeholder meeting was held virtually in June 2021, co-facilitated by Aidlink and GCN. This brought state, semi state and key NGO actors together to examine the impacts of Covid 19 and to explore strategies to build back better<sup>17</sup>.

In an effort to ensure transparency and coordination, work plans and project reports were routinely shared with project stakeholders, including:

- At national level, information is shared with the MoEST during its Annual stakeholders' meetings.
- Through the County stakeholders forum, reports are shared with line ministries such as the MoEST, the Teachers Service Commission, Ministry of Water, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, the Department of Children Services, and Department of Social Services.
- Through the Monthly Meetings of the County Steering Committee that involves Civil Society Organizations, UN agencies, National and County line ministries.
- During community-based activities such as the community conversations, DRR forums, during training of teachers, BOMs and students.

An inclusive and collaborative approach to working with institutional stakeholders allows GCN to access and influence policy fora at both national and sub-national level. Recognising that policy influence requires participation over many years, it is beneficial that GCN engages at an organisational level (i.e. policy engagement is not limited to the project parameters or timeframe) and that education, child rights and empowerment are central and primary to GCN's organisational strategy.

Finally, but most importantly, School BoMs highly appreciated the partnership with GCN. GCN is seen as a trustworthy, honest and respectful partner in the school setting. GCN has managed to create a strong foothold in Turkana in a relatively short space of time.

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<sup>17</sup> Organisations in attendance included: Ministry of Education, National Drought Management Authority-Turkana, National Council for Nomadic Education in Kenya (NACONEK), Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE), SAPCONE, Kenya National Commission for UNESCO NATCOM, Pelum Kenya and Friends of Lake Turkana.

### 3. Efficiency of the intervention: how well does it use resources?

The evaluation examined how well resources were used, in other words, the extent to which the intervention delivers, or is likely to deliver, results in an economic and timely way.

#### Did the programme deliver Value for Money or other efficiencies?

A review of KIQEP annual progress reports and results reports (Performance Monitoring Framework) illustrates that the project was delivered in an efficient and timely manner. A baseline assessment was completed in February 2017 in Kajiado and during the early months of the project in Turkana. Hence, there were no delays at the start of project implementation. The project fully delivered against its work plan and budget in years 1 and 2 (98% and 100% respectively) and over-delivered in year 3. Overall, the project spent €37,271(2.7%) more than planned<sup>18</sup>. Whilst there can be many reasons for a project overspend, in the case of KIQEP we find that this is testament to the project’s capacity to deliver, adapt and to get things done, in spite of the challenging operating context caused by COVID.

Table 5 : KIQEP budget vs expenditure

Project budget (revised)	€1,407,100
Total project expenditure	€1,444,371

The higher spend was enabled by Aidlink securing funds from other sources. This also reduced IA share of the budget from 66% (planned) to 64% (outturn). This is an important indicator for Irish Aid who has a cap of 70% on their contribution to any project funded through the CSF grant.

As mentioned previously, GCN collaborated with MoEST and other institutional stakeholders in the identification of schools and planning of other hardware. As a result, duplication was avoided, resource allocation was responsive and efficiencies were gained. Examples of this include:

- The baseline survey in Turkana found that another donor-funded project had provided water tanks / borehole pipes to some of the targeted schools. As a result, KIQEP adjusted its plans, reducing the number of water tanks provided from 7 to 3; the savings allowed for one extra school to be added to the project in Turkana
- The project document anticipated providing food to 8 schools in Turkana and 4 schools in Kajiado. However, the baseline established that schools in Turkana had some food supplies whilst none of the schools in Kajiado had any. Consequently, the amounts to be supplied were adjusted, allowing all 8 year-one schools in Kajiado to receive food. It was reported that this support ensured a hundred percent of the children sat for their end of year exams.

The highest share of the project budget was allocated to outcome 1, specifically objective 1.1. This is logical given its emphasis on hard inputs to schools. Given the importance and success of the work at community level on outcome 2 / objective 2.1, there may be potential to increase resource allocation to this area of work in future projects, allowing this area to be expanded and extended.

Table 6: Breakdown of project spend

Outcome 1	80%	Objective 1.1	62%
		Objective 1.2	9.6%
		Objective 1.3	8.6%
Outcome 2	14%	Objective 2.1	14%
Outcome 3	6%	Objective 3.1	6%

Over half (52%) of the KIQEP budget was allocated to the provision of hard inputs – this included:

<sup>18</sup> Based on the revised approved project budget of €1,407,371

- Construction / installation of WASH facilities (33% of direct programme budget);
- Handwashing facilities in schools in response to COVID, including soap, masks and PPE;
- Young mothers' packages;
- Sanitary kits;
- Seeds and inputs for school gardens and school farms;
- School feeding programme (14.5% of direct programme budget).

Consequently, procurement becomes essential in ensuring VFM in project delivery. KIQEP utilised local procurement, managed by GCN with oversight by Aidlink. Tenders for the construction of latrines in schools were conducted in clusters at county-level, favouring local contractors / service providers. Although one BoM complained about this, stating that they could have exercised better quality control of the construction if they had managed the tender, it is invariably a more cost-efficient mode of procurement as it facilitates bulk buying of materials. An in-depth review of procurement practices was beyond the scope of this evaluation but given the high proportion of spend on inputs, it would be worthwhile for Aidlink to conduct a procurement audit / review of similar (current / future) projects.

Further efficiencies were obtained through the approach of 'community social contracts', whereby communities are expected to contribute basic materials (sand, water etc.) and the BOM supervises the construction (with support from the Ministry for Public Works). This saves money but also creates local ownership. Food was procured at bulk by GCN to ensure VFM and trucked to schools. Schools took responsibility for storing food, cooking and managing the feeding programme. 'Sitting allowances' (stipends to attend meetings) were not allowed, even though this created some pushback and challenge with local government officials.

Direct project costs were comprised of 39% direct support costs and 61% direct activity costs. A total of 13 staff were financed by the project (at various levels, ranging from 100% for core GCN project staff to 55% for Aidlink staff and as low as 10% for GCN HQ management). Costs for delivering the project were kept low, primarily due to the partnership model employed and the fact that such a high proportion of the budget flows to GCN and is spent in-country. Aidlink HQ related costs are kept low, partly due to the small size of Aidlink but also due to Irish Aid's cap of 10% of the budget to indirect project costs (administration, MEL etc). Whilst this ensures efficiency, it also constrains a small organisation like Aidlink from building its organisational capacity.

KIQEP financial reporting, was transparent and detailed with variances and reallocations highlighted and explained. The project was audited as part of Aidlink's annual organisational audit, receiving clean audits each year. In line with Aidlink's M&E Policy, GCN's accounts were reviewed by Aidlink Senior Management. In future, it would be advisable for Aidlink Board to exercise oversight of GCN's audit, given board members' expertise in financial management and the risk to Aidlink operations were a fraud or serious financial mismanagement to occur in GCN.

Aidlink's Anti-Fraud Policy (updated December 2020) complies with relevant legislation and sets out clear procedures, outlining the steps to be taken if fraud is suspected or discovered including reporting concerns to management and the Board, initiating an investigation and reporting to donors. Fraud was reported on each year as part of annual report: no fraud or gross financial mismanagement was registered during the project timeframe.

Our conclusion is that KIQEP displayed value for money as a result of the partnership model, adaptive management approach and the procurement model used.

#### How efficient is the risk management system and what improvements could be made?

In order to analyse risk management practices, the evaluator reviewed the KIQEP final proposal, KIQEP project reports and Risk Registers (years 1-3) and GCN project reports (years 1-3). We also interviewed

Aidlink's board. Our objective was to analyse: comprehensiveness of the Risk Register and risk reporting, how changes to risks are acted upon (mitigated / managed) and reported on, and how integrated risk management is in to broader programme management (e.g. described in main narrative of reports as well as risk section, visible in work plans).

### **Key findings:**

#### **Identifying and monitoring risk**

- There is evidence of active and regular risk management by Aidlink Board. Risks are considered in terms of effect on both Aidlink and the programme partner, GCN, which is good.
- Aidlink has made strong efforts to improve its risk management practices. Year 3 report states that:
  - o Given the critical context of the global pandemic reviewing of Aidlink's risk register has become more frequent with a biannual review.
  - o Currently Aidlink's risk policy and risk register are under formal review and redevelopment by the Audit and Risk Subcommittee using the Charities regulator template framework
- More attention should be paid to programme-level risk in both the Risk Register and progress reports.
- Introduction of a structured mechanism for discussion of risk between Aidlink and GCN would be beneficial. We could not see evidence of such a process existing.

#### **Risk register**

- The Risk Register is comprehensive, identifying all categories of risk, though more attention should be paid to programmatic risk.
- Risks should be articulated in more detail. Good practice is that the risk should be articulated in terms of its potential impact on the programme, so that the corresponding mitigation actions are relevant and within the organisation's sphere of control. This would allow more accurate scoring, more realistic prioritisation of risks and more tailored mitigation actions. For example, 'Political environment' risk is rated red because, hypothetically, this could pose a very serious risk. But, in reality, it was not a particularly acute risk for the project. Also, loss of Irish Aid programme grant is a risk in all three years, whereas this had already occurred before the project started).
- There is evidence that risks are reviewed and updated, with new risks incorporated. It would be useful if the Risk Register showed the direction of travel of risk from one period to the next. The narrative report should focus on risks that have become more acute (e.g. changed from yellow to red), rather than the same risks being discussed each year.

#### **Reporting on risk**

- **GCN:** GCN reports have a specific section on risk and mitigation strategies but this is scant and the risks are too broad (e.g. 'drought').
  - o In GCN year one report, risk is reported on but is not well integrated within the main narrative report (i.e. within the progress sections). It feels siloed.
  - o Risk reporting improves in year 2. GCN did a strong COVID risk assessment that resulted in a contingency plan. The risk section of year 2 GCN report is more expansive but risks remain very macro and inadequately related back to the programme.
  - o Year 3 reports show an improved integration of risk in to the project report, particularly in the lessons learned section. However, the risk section remains broad and macro, with limited link to the project. For example, Elections are identified as a risk but without an assessment of the impact they may have on the project and what should be done in response (e.g. community meetings may not be permitted in advance of elections. In response, they may need to be moved to earlier in the year, or done in a different way).
  - o It would be helpful if GCN thought about risk by project objective and as being time-bound / contextualised (e.g. FGM 'season' in xxxx may lead to increased....., or Accelerated

Learning Programme in schools post COVID may lead to suspension of RoC training....). This would allow a more adaptive approach to risk management (versus a fairly static approach).

- **Aidlink:** In the risk section of the KIQEP reports, the same three risks are reported on for each year of the project. They are all fiduciary (income, funding and fraud).
  - o In Aidlink's year 2 report: The risks that have arisen due to COVID are fully integrated throughout the report and comprehensive: i.e. they are discussed in terms of the context, risk to delivery of results, risks to the target audiences, programmatic responses to risk and so on. A much more comprehensive approach is demonstrated, with a strong child protection angle. However, the risk section is largely unchanged.
  - o Again, in the year 3 report there is little change to the risk section or to the risk register.

Overall, it is clear that Aidlink and its board are proactive and vigilant in monitoring and managing risk. They exercise close oversight, monitoring the most serious risks on a monthly basis. The board has established sub-committees, including a sub-committee on risk. These practices would yield better results the improvements identified above were adopted.

Risk management improved significantly when COVID struck. Risks were more specific, relevant, with tailored mitigation actions, and risk management became more integrated and adaptive. There would be value in considering how this approach can be used permanently, perhaps by adopting a vulnerability / protection lens throughout the programme cycle.

#### 4. Effectiveness of the intervention: is it achieving its objectives?

The evaluation examined the extent to which the intervention achieved, or is expected to achieve, its objectives, and its results, including any differential results across groups.

-To what extent have project objectives been achieved?

-What are the main factors (positive and negative, contextual and organisational) that have affected the achievement of results (or not)?

Aidlink maintained a comprehensive results report tracking the delivery against performance indicators at all level of the project<sup>19</sup>. For the purposes of this section, we will focus on delivery at objective and output levels (outcomes will be discussed under the section on impact).

By the end of year three, almost all performance indicators (PIs) had been achieved at output level. Many of these are process indicators relating to the completion of an activity such as training, delivery / establishment of inputs, households reached etc. They are within Aidlink/ GCN's sphere of control and demonstrate effective programme management.

Table 7: Summary of delivery against Performance Indicators

	Rating of Performance Indicators				Rating of Performance Indicators		
	Green	Yellow	Red		Green	Yellow	Red
Objective 1.1	1			Outputs 1.1.1-1.1.6	9		
Objective 1.2		2		Outputs 1.2.1-1.2.2	4		1
Objective 1.3		2		Outputs 1.3.1-1.3.3	8		
Objective 2.1	1	1		Outputs 2.1.1-2.1.2	5		
Objective 3.1	1			Outputs 3.1.1-3.1.3	5		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>			<b>31</b>		<b>1</b>

At objective level the performance is also strong, if a little more mixed, reflecting the challenges posed by COVID and their impact on the delivery of project results. The KIQEP year 2 and 3 reports are open in stating that project delivery was fully on track until COVID hit. The closing of schools for a period of 9 months had a very significant impact on learning, student enrolment, early pregnancy, child marriage, FGM and GBV. It is inevitable that project delivery would be challenged as a consequence. In spite of this, KIQEP adapted as best it could and worked hard to ensure delivery. In the following sections we take a closer look at each objective. The shaded boxes represent the objective-level PI and its rating by Aidlink in the final project report.

#### **Objective 1.1: Target public primary schools meet the UNICEF standards of a child-friendly, gender-sensitive and disability-friendly school**

Proportion (%) of target schools who rank 'Satisfactory' (B) or above on Kenya's Child-Friendly Schools Monitoring Tool

Stakeholders were unanimous about the value of the investments in this area – this included the provision of WASH facilities, the school feeding programme, training of teachers on gender and disability sensitive pedagogy; training of BoMs on child protection and the right to education, and

<sup>19</sup> Green = Achieved; Yellow = On track; Red = Not achieved.

facilitation in development of SDPs. The project has an initial target of 46 schools but reached 57 schools by the end of year three.

Children, patrons and BOMs were aware of the activities undertaken under the project. The latrines and other WASH facilities were unanimously appreciated and deemed to have an immediate effect on children's cleanliness, hygiene, safety and attendance. The provision of sanitary pads was also highly appreciated. The sole concern is that the toilet for children living with disabilities is not in use in all schools because children with disabilities are not in school.

The food component was also highly valued by stakeholders. It allowed children to concentrate and was a source of motivation for joining and remaining in school. Children would attend and remain in school because they were assured of a meal. Without this, some children either drop out or absenteeism increases.

*Food made the difference between staying at home and going to school. When the school had food, all children attended school. When there was no food, some children dropped out (Patron Kajado)*

All schools sampled had developed School Development Plans and most referenced these. However, implementation is a challenge due to lack of resources and limited capacity to lobby for county government resources.

Teachers enjoyed and benefited from the training, recommending that more teachers in each school would be able to benefit from this and that refresher training would be given. Given the turnover in terms of teaching staff (due to rotation, amongst other issues), it is particularly important to train a pool of staff in each school.

### **Objective 1.2: Children, particularly girls and those with disabilities, in target schools are informed and empowered to defend their rights and engage in education**

#### **Proportion of students in target schools able to demonstrate knowledge of child rights**

Children in ROC clubs were confident, well informed, freely talked about their rights and had clearly benefited from the training provided. The ROC clubs play an important role in bring the children together and imparting knowledge. Some children have intervened where they have felt either their rights or those of others were being infringed and others feel that they have the courage to defend their rights if need be. They frequently spoke about reporting violations of child rights to adults in authority. Patrons noticed the difference in their students but also benefited from the training provided.

*Personally, I have benefited from the KEEP project by way of learning about children's rights. I count myself knowledgeable about children's issue. I also think the children have learnt and some are practicing what they have learnt. For example, by the way they talk, I can tell they know their rights. Some approach me for advice or to report issues like being harassed by parents or other community members. Others freely discuss their sexuality issues like telling me that they do not have pads. This is a great achievement and an assurance that they cannot be easily tricked into sex. I think the training especially for teachers should include all the teachers. (RoC patron, Turkana)*

BoMs are also well informed and understand the importance of defending children's rights. A BoM in Turkana spoke about their decision to lead by example by sending all of their children to school. They have internalised the message that *change starts with themselves*.

# of out-of-school children (boys/girls) in community identified by RoC clubs (proportion (%) supported to re-enrol in school)

Over the course of the project 915 out of school children (604 female/311 male) were identified and supported to re-enrol in school. When schools re-opened after COVID closures, 322 students (168 male/154 females) were identified and 80% re-enrolled (KIQEP year 3 report). It is due to the efficacy of the project that such high numbers returned to school, although the full impact of COVID and the prolonged school closure could not be assessed.

The objective around improving education access for children with disabilities (CWD) was probably the most challenging aspect of the project. Interventions in support of this area included provision of disability-friendly (accessible) latrine blocks, as well as training, awareness raising and community outreach in an effort to incentivise communities to enrol CWD at school. GCN also lobbied for enabling policies at county and national level.

Interventions were implemented as planned with some effect: infrastructure was installed and a number of CWD were identified and supported to enrol in school. However, all stakeholders, Aidlink and GCN included, felt that project did not meet expectations in this area, largely because the extent of the issue warrants a much more in-depth engagement than the project could provide. One interviewee noted: 'the latrines are there but children with disability did not come'. The school-level barriers to CWD accessing quality, inclusive education are significant and span from the lack of specialised training for teachers, an unfriendly school culture where CWD are bullied, lack of resources to buy specialist equipment to meet the particular needs of CWD. All those CWD who were enrolled in school had learning disabilities or mild mental disabilities, rather than physical disabilities. Children with physical disability can presumably not access school, plus the community-level barriers to education for CWD are even more entrenched than they are for other children. All stakeholders spoke of the fact that CWD are hidden in the community. In Mashuru, GCN managed to work with the EARC centre to identify and screen CWD, whereas the absence of an EARC in Loima made this extra challenging.

Stakeholders interviewed recommended that a much more specialised, targeted and in-depth project was required to make any meaningful headway in this area. However, some also commended the project for trying, acknowledging that few other education projects integrate disability.

**Objective 1.3: Target schools and communities have enhanced knowledge, capacity and skills to manage the effects of drought and reduce its impact on access to education, particularly for girls and learners with disabilities**

Proportion (%) of households in target communities demonstrating enhanced disaster preparedness and mitigation strategies:

Water is the most pressing issue facing communities in Mashuru and Loima and drought has become a more frequent occurrence. It is a threat to livelihoods that spills over in to many other areas, including children's ability to attend school and to avoid early marriage. As a key risk to the project, it is an area that necessitated inclusion in the project.

KIQEP focused on training ROC club members on DRR. BOMs and community gatekeepers were trained on DRR including early warning signs of drought, response and mitigation. Community forums were held with county government to try to ensure that DRR and drought mitigation was built in to county Development Plans and annual budgets. It also introduced tree planting and school gardens to schools in an effort to enhance sustainability of the child feeding programme.

Some progress was made – school gardens were planted, awareness was increased and there was some shift in budget allocation, but none of these were sustained. With school closures due to COVID, compounded by periods of drought /water shortages, school gardens dried up or were destroyed by livestock. According to GCN they became ‘expensive and unsustainable’. From year three of KIQEP, the intervention was adapted to trial community farms instead (and this is being continued in the new Aidlink / GCN project ‘Every Girl in School’). We have no evidence as to the efficacy of these but suggest that they are monitored closely.

#### County budget allocation (%) to DRR and drought mitigation:

Community forums and lobbying by stakeholders / GCN resulted in some shift in budget allocation to DDR. However, many other factors influence this process, not least food insecurity and the COVID 19 response. This is a highly ambitious indicator that that arguably lies beyond the project’s sphere of control.

#### **Objective 2.1: Target communities are better informed and empowered, individually and as a collective, to realise and protect human rights (including the right to education) with an emphasis on the rights of women and girls and people living with disabilities**

Proportion (%) of community members able to identify at least 2 human rights and the respective duty-bearers:

#### # of out-of-school children (boys/girls) in target communities supported to (re-)enrol in education

Community Facilitators – together with BOMs - have been instrumental in community outreach and efforts to raise awareness and address harmful social norms. They actively followed up on out-of-school children and sought their return to school. Others helped to rescue children who were going through FGM and early child marriages.

KIQEP’s model of engaging Community Facilitators and conducting monthly Community Conversations is perceived to be very successful. There are several reasons for this:

- The model of CFs collaborating with school-based structures (i.e. BOMs and ROC clubs) is highly appreciated. These different actors collaborate, support and re-enforce each other, benefiting from shared objectives.
- CFs and CCs were effective in reaching communities in a non-threatening and non-confrontational way, allowing them to discuss issues and reach solutions. Two CFs noted that it helped to soften the government directive on mandatory school attendance and to gradually change attitudes. This *‘requires initiatives like the CCs to first soften the hearts of those who oppose it by convincing them through relatable information’* (CF Turkana) and gives community members *‘an opportunity to express their thoughts, fears and worries’* (CF #2 Turkana).
- The CFs themselves held the project in high regard and felt they had gained through participation. However, some expressed concern that since the project ended, and without the presence of GCN, they have now lost this confidence and standing in the community.
- Programme adjustments in response to COVID saw the CF role expand in to surveillance, monitoring and messaging around COVID-19. Using the Ministry of Health guidelines on Covid-19, the CFs tracked and reported Covid-19 cases to the health facilities, managed and reported on the community handwashing stations and the number of girls in need of sanitary pads. They tracked and reported child abuse cases to the local administration (area chief) and the Department of Children Services. They also undertook household assessment on food insecurity and supported the distribution of food to households severely affected by drought.

**Objective 3.1: GCN and local NGOs have developed and demonstrated their capacity as efficient, effective and sustainable organisations with the capacity to deliver quality, sustainable development programmes and hold duty-bearers to account**

GCN and local NGOs have:

- BoM in place:
- Strategic Plan:
- Appropriate and proportional financial management systems:

This objective included a focus on organisational capacity building of GCN and local NGOs in line with Aidlink's capacity building approach; an annual training forum; and meetings with national and county governments to review policy implementation in education, child rights, gender equality and disability.

Although this area of work is more long-term in nature, with results from policy advocacy and capacity building often taking many years, it is deemed to be important by both GCN and Aidlink. In many respects, it is where the value added of the Aidlink / GCN partnership can be seen, as it provided GCN with resources to strengthen its capacity and to engage in policy fora, that were related but not always specific to the KIQEP project. It strengthens the base of all of GCN's work. The partner forums are highly appreciated by GCN and provide a real opportunity for cross-learning.

The 10-year Review of Aidlink's Partnership and Capacity Building Approach recommended growing GCN's role and evolving the partnership. KIQEP responds to this by providing GCN a leadership role in the Capacity Building of smaller organisations. GCN maintains that this body of work is important for sustainability, that there are few CSOs with capacity (in Turkana especially) and that it is important to build strong, local civil society that can continue to push for child rights. But capacity building of this nature can be slow and transaction heavy. KIQEP adapted by evolving its approach – in year 3 it didn't engage additional CBOs and concentrated on those it had worked with in years one and two (in the EGIS project it took the decision to only work with 5 NGOs). This rationalisation would appear to be sensible and appropriate. Ultimately, there is a balance to be struck between organisational capacity building and building a network for collective advocacy and lobbying in Turkana and Kajiado . Aidlink and GCN will need to assess where the balance of their efforts should lie.

## 5. Impact of the intervention: What difference does it make?

**This section analysed the** extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects.

Can longer term impacts (intended and unintended) be seen? Is there evidence that the KIQEP contributed to this change?

At outcome level the following progress was recorded against the KPIs in year 3:

**Outcome 1: Children, especially girls and children with disabilities, from the Masai and Turkana communities have improved access to an inclusive, equitable and quality primary education**

**Transition rate (%) from primary to secondary education in target schools (amongst boys/girls):**

Under new government rules, all primary students are eligible to transition to secondary school. By year three of the project, although **enrolment rates declined following prolonged COVID closures, 100% of enrolled students transitioned to secondary school.**

**Outcome 2: Target communities support access to education and are addressing negative social norms which limit (girls' and learners with disabilities') participation**

**Proportion (%) of target community members who say they support education**

Support for education increased from 40% (baseline) to 80% in Mashuru and from 35 to 42% in Loima.

**Proportion (%) of girls in target schools who say they feel supported to attend**

This represents an increase from 35 to 50% in Mashuru and from 25 to 29% in Loima

**Annual Dropout rate:**

When schools re-opened after COVID there was a sharp drop in enrolment. Based on county government data of 78% reenrolment rate across the two counties that leaves 4,400 children enrolled in 2020 who have yet to return to school.

**Outcome 3: GCN and local NGOs are engaged in promoting education, child rights and gender equality through programming and targeted lobbying and advocacy, with and on behalf of target communities**

**Demonstrable evidence of child rights programming and targeted lobbying and advocacy by GCN and local NGOs.**

Evidence of significant policy engagement and influencing by GCN and local NGOs.

KIQEP delivered against 4 out of 5 PIs at outcome level: a strong result. KIQEP targeted schools were assessed (by Aidlink / GCN) as achieving higher rates of re-enrolment and lower drop-out than non-project schools. Nevertheless, the final project report is open and cautionary about the impacts of school closures in terms of loss of learning, school enrolment / drop-out, violence against children and reversion to harmful social norms. Aidlink can be commended for delivering, but is only too aware that some results hide the stark reality of the setbacks that have occurred and the impacts that will be felt over decades to come<sup>20</sup>.

Stakeholders interviewed spoke of the positive impacts that the project brought to their communities. They spoke of increased enrolment and a gradual shift in attitudes around the value of education

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<sup>20</sup> Schools closed for 37 weeks. 152000 Kenyan teenage girls became pregnant over a 3-month period during lock-down, a 40% increase. In Turkana and Kajiado there was a 78% reenrolment after lockdown. It was estimated that more than 2000 children did not return to school. Only 12 out of 29 CWD identified in 2019 returned to school.

which has resulted in families sending children to school. They recognised that this shift is still in process and that for many families this means selecting some children to go to school, whilst others herd, find other means to support the family, or are married off. School children in ROC clubs echoed this, often stating that they are supported to go to school but that their friends and neighbours are not. As mentioned before, Children with Disabilities are not yet benefiting from this shift.

It is important to understand that for communities grappling with continuous cycles of poverty and vulnerability, education is not necessarily considered as a 'human right' per se (in the manner in which children have begun to perceive it). Rather they consider it as an economic investment or a livelihood strategy. Some girls will benefit, in the hope that their families will see a double return (dowry plus potential income stream from employment). Community Facilitators were confident and yet realistic about the progress that has been made, and the potential to bring other families on board as the positive benefits of education are witnessed by communities. They all cautioned that attitude change takes time and that engagement with communities needs to be long-term. The literature on social norm change concurs.

Aidlink and GCN pride itself in working with the most in-need communities and building self-sufficiency and local leadership. The model of ROCs, BoMs and CFs working collaboratively at various levels is compelling and holds great potential. However, Aidlink/GCN needs to consider a longer-term engagement with communities, with deeper monitoring and evaluation of social norm change. All stakeholders felt that the project was too short and that, as a consequence, the impact would be short-lived. Whilst the principal of self-sufficiency is sound, the reality is that community structures (such as CFs, BoMs and RoCs) need longer-term support to remain proactive, motivated and skilled in their roles.

*GCN should design projects that last longer considering that the issues they are dealing with require more time. One year in a school is not enough. At least they should think of 5 years or more to change behaviour. This is true not forgetting they are working in pastoral communities and it takes a long time to change them. (Special Needs Educator, Kajjado)*

Whilst school feeding is hugely valued by communities and has an immediate impact, it creates its own set of challenges. Aidlink / GCN focuses on public primary schools where responsibility for provision of food, sanitary towels and other inputs sits with government. In response to the government's failure to properly provide food to schools, the project provided food for limited periods to boost enrolment / retention (and to respond to food insecurity) and then ceased. No matter how well communicated, it is hard to manage expectations. Almost all stakeholders expressed concern that once the food stops, progress is reversed. Food in schools needs to be considered as a recurrent need and a social safety net<sup>21</sup>. Yet, donor funded projects are unable to fund this over long periods, at the risk of creating dependence or diminishing government responsibility. This creates a conundrum: should NGO projects provide food at all in this context? What is being done to find sustainable national solutions embedded in national planning processes? Are the immediate benefits of providing food in combination with other 'pull' factors (community outreach etc) sufficiently catalytic – i.e., many of the children than attend school because of the incentives provided through the project may continue? When we throw a crisis like COVID in to the mix these questions become even more complex. These are strategic issues that Aidlink needs to consider in its future strategy and programme design.

*You see when I was creating awareness of children's rights through the community conversations, I was encouraging even the very poor to take their children to school because they would be supported. Now the support has stopped. I do not know how to go*

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<sup>21</sup> World Bank. Rethinking School Feeding. Social safety nets, child development and the education sector. 2009.

*about this. I fear some will drop out of school this time not because parents don't see the value of education but because they cannot afford to keep the children in school (CF Turkana)*

Is there evidence of the programme / partner addressing the fundamental drivers of gender inequality and/or social norms?

KIQEP incorporated interventions to address gender inequality and to address harmful social norms including child marriage, beading and FGM. The focus on social norms and to identifying and addressing the underlying causes of gender inequality in target communities are in line with Aidlink's Gender Policy (2016) and its Education Policy (2019).

Training was conducted for BoMs and patrons on gender and disability-responsive pedagogy. Community Conversations allowed sensitive topics on human rights and harmful social norms to be discussed at community's pace and in a non-confrontational manner. The effectiveness and impact of these interventions has been discussed in the preceding sections.

The indicators used to measure social norm change included community members saying they support education and children saying that they feeling supported to attend. Recent, in-depth social norm studies have found that what gatekeepers say does not necessarily translate in to what they do – in other words there is often a disconnect between adults' claimed beliefs and their actual actions as perpetrators of harm.<sup>22</sup> As Aidlink expands its work at community level especially in the area of addressing harmful social norms, it would be beneficial to build in capacity building for programme staff on the principles and measurements of social norm programming.

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<sup>22</sup> : McAlpine, K; Dennis, R; Semwene, J; (2021) Tanzanian students' experience of safety and inclusion in school, Citizens 4 Change.

## 6. Sustainability of the intervention: Will the benefits last? How sustainable are the approaches employed?

In this section, we examine the extent to which the benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue.

How was sustainability promoted? Since the programme ended, is there evidence of components / approaches / results being sustained? Can or will the programme and partnership be replicated in some way?

The field work for this evaluation took place more than 6 months after the project ended. This enabled the researcher to assess sustainability of the project approaches and results. Amongst the ten schools visited, we verified how many SDPs exist, how many RoC clubs are active, how many RoC patrons are still in post, and how many school gardens are still functioning.

Table 8: Status of SDPs, RoCs and School gardens

	Kajiado					Turkana				
	Elesenkei Primary School (yr 1. NI)	Endoinyo Enker Primary school (Yr 1, S)	ILMejooli day and boarding primary (yr 2. S)	Kalembwani Primary School (yr 3NI)	Emashini Primary School (Yr 3. S)	Kospir Primary School	Lochar Emeyan	Kang'alita Primary School	Natwel Primary school	Nataparko Primary School
School Development Plan exists	Y	Y	?	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	?	?
ROC club still active	X	X	Y	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
ROC club patron still in post	Y	X	X	Y	Y	X	X	X	X	Y
School garden still functioning	X	X	?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Although the ROC clubs are embedded in the schools they are no longer active. Out of ten schools visited only one has an active ROC club today. Most club patrons have been transferred (out of 7 year 1 and 2 schools only 1 patron remains in post).

Whilst we assess this to be partly a consequence of the limited length of project engagement with communities (as per the project design), it has undoubtedly been aggravated by the effects of COVID, school closures and the knock-on effect on the delivery of certain programme interventions. GCN's capacity to engage with school communities was limited over the project timeframe, which resulted in these structures losing momentum and missing out on opportunities to meet and develop further which would have had an impact on their capacity to continue when the project ended. Furthermore, the de-localisation of teachers by the Teachers Service commission resulted in large number of teachers being transferred.

BOMs continue to exist and benefit from the training received. However, members rotate periodically and, in the absence of refresher training, it is highly likely that this learning will be lost over time. SDPs exist but BoMs need further support in implementation, including guidance on how to access county funds and in evolving their plans over time.

GCN expressed the view that community level interventions are sustainable because they use community resources / structures and that once communities consciously accept the concept that *education is a gamechanger* they will be motivated to continue on their change journey, even when the project withdraws. There are numerous critical success factors underpinning this: – that CFs will continue to do their work in communities (without a stipend, training etc.), that BOMs will remain active and put their training in to practice, that children will continue to engage in ROC clubs, and that ROC patrons will remain in post (amongst others). As the table above illustrates, this has not transpired.

There is no question that some of the project benefits will be sustained. The challenge is to ensure that this is maximised, and that the gains are not eroded over time. The following strategies should be considered:

- 1) Longer-term engagement with communities is likely to create more sustainable and permanent community structures, behaviours and practices in support of inclusive, equitable and quality education. This could be at a less concentrated level. For example, semi-annual refresher training for BoMs, establishing a sub-county network of CF and ROC patrons that meets every few months, initiating a mentorship programme for students in ROCs, media programming to reinforce messaging on social norms etc.
- 2) Exit strategies need to be re-thought. The KIQEP practice was to hold close out meetings, to try to build sustainability in to project interventions (e.g. training on resource mobilization for BoMs) and to rely on continuity through local resource persons such as the Community Facilitators. Again, it assumes that structures can function without external support. Given the paucity of government services in primary education, a better approach would be to engage (and if necessary, train) other actors, be they governmental or NGOs, so that they can take over certain strands of the project when Aidlink/GCN exits, or replicate project approaches.
- 3) GCN claims to remain active in communities after exit, to monitor and to assist them where issues arise. However, a more systematic approach is required to monitoring progress in communities after the project exits, including tracking school enrolment / completion data. This would allow a fuller assessment of trends over time and an analysis of which factors enhance or inhibit sustainability.

Aidlink and GCN pride themselves in working in areas of greatest need, where few other external actors operate, reflecting the partners' poverty focus and a commitment to efficiency and non-duplication. As project resources are limited, we recognise that there are hard choices and trade-offs to be made between deepening engagement in one area and broadening out to reach another area that has tremendous needs. Such choices will require careful consideration and in-depth analysis.

#### Were lessons learnt and how have these been subsequently utilised?

KIQEP annual reports demonstrate a good approach to lesson learning, highlighting key lessons learnt in the course of implementation and measures taken in response to these. In the final report, lessons from all three years are included, which is a very useful practice. We also found solid evidence of lessons from previous Aidlink/GCN projects and evaluations informing the design of KIQEP, and of lessons from KIQEP informing the design of EGIS (Aidlink's new Irish Aid funded project). Monitoring visits and annual forums have been used to ensure that lessons are generated and utilised and that the learning is generated and shared among a broad range of stakeholders.

Many of the lessons from KIQEP are visible in the design of EGIS: more focus on livelihoods, continued trialling of community farms, support to young mothers, and an expansion of the work on social norms. There is also a very positive focus on mentorship and cross-stakeholder learning. Although the project targets new counties in Turkana and Kajiado, it also provides some support to KIQEP schools (food programme for KIQEP year 3 schools for one year and maintenance of the care package for young mothers).

## Findings - Performance of the Aidlink / GCN partnership

The second objective of this evaluation was to examine the partnership between Aidlink and GCN with a view to understanding the added value and long-term benefits of the partnership model. We did this by focusing on four specific questions, as documented below.

### How is the partnership functioning in practice? What makes it successful, or not?

Aidlink’s approach to development is based on the interlocking and complementary concepts of building capacity and working in partnership. It believes that working through partnership with local organisations is the most sustainable and effective way to bring about lasting, positive change for the world’s poorest and most marginalised people. Since its establishment in 1982, Aidlink has worked through a partnership approach to development (PAD)<sup>23</sup> that it defines as:

*Partnership involves a shared vision and a commitment to work together to bring real and sustainable benefits to the poor and marginalized. It requires a long-term commitment, clearly defined expectations and shared responsibility for achievements. It values the unique contribution and strengths of all partners and is based on partners working in an open, accountable and transparent manner.*

Aidlink has worked with GCN since 2004. We examined the performance of the partnership by reviewing Aidlink policies (particularly its PAD) and comparing these with evidence from practice, including KIQEP documentation, Aidlink/GCN MOU 2018-21 and interviews with key stakeholders.

The key principles of Aidlink’s partnership approach are defined as:

- Partner-centred – local communities and the partners are placed at the centre of the development process;
- Mutual benefits - benefits for all partners and particularly for the poorest people in the communities its partners support;
- Promoting participation – participation of communities and capacity building so that people can manage and control their own development programmes;
- Joint ownership – joint planning and design; joint responsibility for problems and potential failures;
- Investing in innovative local solutions: encouraging a culture of innovation and willingness to take risk. Best practice in research, design and testing;
- Sensitivity and flexibility - adaptive and responsive, not rigid;
- Accountability and transparency – at all levels of the partnership. As set out in programme and project documents;
- Providing synergy and added value – the partners bring unique insights, assets and approaches to the development process. Aidlink bring added value to the funds it accesses by providing capacity building support;

We found evidence of all of the partnership principles outlined above manifested in the KIQEP programme. We also asked Aidlink and GCN interviewees to spontaneously describe the Aidlink-GCN partnership in 3 words. When bundled together the most commonly used words were:

Trust, Open, Transparent;	Effective, Works, Delivering results;
Respect, Equal, Shared, Supportive;	Mature, Evolving, Learning;

<sup>23</sup> Aidlink Partnership Approach to Development 2010, Updated 2021

These coincide closely with the values and principles outlined in the Aidlink/GCN MoU and the PAD<sup>24</sup>. This demonstrates consistency between intent and practice. The inclusion of values such as *respect for difference/diversity* and *solidarity* is progressive as it encompasses an understanding that there is no 'right' way to do things, that one partner does not know better, and that working in volatile environments carries risk. These are all values that enable honesty and learning to flourish.

The Aidlink / GCN partnership has evolved and matured over the years. It is now perceived as a partnership of equals, with each partner playing to its strengths. There are always power dynamics where the transfer of funds is involved – this is acknowledged in Aidlink's PAD. But both partners feel that the partnership has moved beyond this, with a genuinely strong trust basis and mutual respect, founded in shared values, goals and approaches to community development. New proposals are designed together, and then funding is sought. The partnership is considered to have mutual benefits and to be much more than a donor/client relationship; it is about a dialogue, exchange, mutual learning (all intentions stipulated in the PAD). Both Aidlink and GCN have stood by each other during challenging times, demonstrating a commitment to the partnership over the long-term.

Aidlink's PAD states that 'exit strategies are built in to all partnership arrangements and envisages five partnership phases from identification to exit<sup>25</sup>. The phase that each partnership is in will 'determine the nature and extent of support provided by Aidlink'. Although GCN is a very capable organisation, neither party wishes to see an exit strategy, because of the value and mutual benefits of the partnership. *'We are not looking at how we can get out of it, rather how we can make it even better'* (Aidlink interview).

Aidlink's partnership approach is ambitious, yet also realistic: It establishes a standard to aim towards, whilst also recognising the challenges that are likely to be experienced. In practice, the partnership has evolved to a point where the two organisations can challenge each other, and feel jointly accountable for successes and failures. They are capable of overcoming challenges and working through differences because they both feel secure in the continuation of the partnership and are both contributing to, and gaining from, the partnership in numerous, valuable ways.

The partnership allows for considerate risk taking, though the confines of donor funding often do not. Examples include trialling school gardens / farms and Community conversations under KIQEP, and constructing dormitories under EGIS.

Flexibility is a key factor in success of the Aidlink and GCN partnership and programmes. Aidlink is one of the most flexible donors that GCN has. This flexibility is important because it allows for adaptation, and testing of new interventions, which ultimately results in more effective programming. The partnership model helped Aidlink and GCN to be agile and adaptive during lockdown and to apply strong adaptive management techniques in the delivery of KIQEP.

Leadership in both organisations has been an additional key asset and factor in the success of the partnership. Both organisations' Executive Directors have been in post from the time the partnership began up to the present and have demonstrated deep commitment to the partnership.

Finally, each partner's relationships and networks are key to the success of the partnership. This includes Aidlink's relations and networks with its funders and within the development community in

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<sup>24</sup> These values are: Trust, equality, honesty, respect for difference/diversity, solidarity; accountability.

<sup>25</sup> (i) Partner identification stage; (ii) Partnership development phase; (iii) Project planning phase; (iv) partnership management and implementation phase; (v) Exit strategy.

Ireland, and - as seen when we examined KIQEP - the strength of GCN's relations with government institutions as well as with local communities and leaders in Turkana and Kajiado.

### Does the partnership approach deliver Value for Money or other efficiencies?

The section on efficiency found that the partnership model enabled KIQEP to deliver value for money because of the low delivery costs, efficiencies gained through adaptation and the procurement model. The emphasis on reflection and learning leads to adaptation, which, in turn, results in efficiencies and more effective programme delivery.

According to Aidlink's Education policy (2019), 'at least two site visits are conducted to each partner each year to verify the implementation of activities and assess reported outcomes. These visits also include an assessment of the lessons learnt from each project in order that future planning can be improved'. Whilst physical visits could not take place during 2020 and 2021, remote monitoring methods were amplified in order that monitoring and learning could continue.

Aidlink recognises that partnership carries inherent risk<sup>26</sup>. It actively analyses partner risk and monitors 'programme - partner risk' in its risk framework, treating this as a distinct category of risk. The most pertinent risks to the partnership include:

- Risk of over-dependence. Whilst the risk register defines this as a risk of GCN being overly-dependent on Aidlink, the risk actually applies to both partners. On the one hand, that Aidlink becomes overdependent on GCN as its primary implementing partner and fails to develop new partnerships. This could restrict Aidlink's ability to expand its funding and programmes but would also pose a serious risk to Aidlink's reputation and operations were a serious issue to arise within GCN. Whilst Aidlink is keen to develop and grow other key partners, the challenges of a drop in funding compounded by COVID have made this difficult during the last few years.

On the other hand, there is a risk of GCN becoming over-dependent on Aidlink funding and / or technical support. Aidlink works to mitigate this risk by providing capacity building support to GCN on strategic planning, results-based management, proposal writing and fundraising, in order that GCN can expand its programmatic and funding base. Despite this, GCN is increasingly reliant on Aidlink funding, with the proportion of its total income that comes from Aidlink increasing from 29% in 2018 to 57% in 2021<sup>27</sup>. Whilst this may be a reflection of the challenges of COVID, it will require careful monitoring. In the last three years, however, GCN received new funding from the European Union and *Servizio Volontario Internazionale* (SVI) Italy.<sup>28</sup> Whilst the grants are small in size this is an important indicator of GCN's capacity to secure new funds and diversify its funding base.

- Key person risk: As mentioned, both Aidlink and GCN's Executive Directors have been in post from the time the partnership began up to the present. This poses a risk in the event that either individual leave their organisation. Progress has been made in strengthening the institutional basis of the relationship. GCN have initiated a succession plan and key relationships have been established with other key members of staff. MOUs and project agreements are documented, with clear roles and responsibilities outlined. Reciprocal visits to Ireland by key GCN staff, that include meetings with key stakeholders including Aidlink board, donors etc., also contribute to a strengthened institutional relationship.

We found that Aidlink is conscious of these risks and that they are being proactively monitored and managed by Aidlink and its board, with evolving mitigation strategies.

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<sup>26</sup> Partnership Approach to Development pg. 20

<sup>27</sup> 29% in 2018, 22% in 2019, 43% in 2020 and 57% in 2021. Source GCN Financial Statements.

<sup>28</sup> € 34,582 from the European Union for Organizational Capacity Building and €19,800 from SVI Italy for 'Be Free' Project targeting Youth on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights

### How has the partnership impacted on capacity within GCN?

Aidlink's PAD commits to providing capacity building support to partners in a number of ways;

- Provision of funding towards core organisational costs;
- Provision of training, advice and support through field visits by Aidlink personnel;
- Provision of ongoing 'distance' advice and support;
- Development and funding of networking opportunities for partners both in Africa and in Ireland;
- Provision of support and funding for partners to source capacity building support in country.

During the KIQEP project, GCN benefited from all of the above, to varying extents. Aidlink sees GCN as being a very different organisation today than from when the partnership began. Consequently, the type of capacity building required has evolved. Whereas the partnership used to have a very detailed and comprehensive Capacity Building Plan for GCN, this has now been rationalised to a limited number of activities within the Internationale KIQEP (and now EGIS) programme plan and budget. Results reports show that this included GCN investing in its Board of Management, developing a new strategic plan, improving financial management systems, rebranding and reviewing its communication policy, and training staff on photography, child rights programming and M&E. Aidlink noted that the focus of capacity building is now more around accountability and mentoring, with support from Aidlink focused on strategic planning, Results Based Management and fundraising. GCN particularly values Aidlink's expertise in these areas. In turn, GCN is considered to have strong expertise in rights-based approaches, policy engagement, as well as local knowledge and connections.

Importantly, the partner capacity building plan is self-managed: this strengthens sustainability and internal ownership<sup>29</sup>. Aidlink's intention is to facilitate development of the plan, provide targeted capacity building support and to accompany, monitor and support partners in managing their plans.

As discussed previously, KIQEP saw GCN's role expand in capacity building of local civil society partners, in line with recommendations from Aidlink's 2015 External Evaluation<sup>30</sup> and 2016 Partnership Review<sup>31</sup>. This included GCN assessing local partners' capacity requirements and supporting them in implementation. By building this in to KIQEP, the project supported GCN to evolve in to this role, with backstopping from Aidlink if needed.

### What is the value added of the partnership model employed?

*The relationship between Aidlink and its existing and future partners in Africa is at the heart of its work and it is these relationships which must be nurtured and managed if Aidlink's contribution and work is to be sustainable. This is the primary aim behind its twin track approach of building capacity through partnership (PAD).*

Since its establishment in 1982, Aidlink has placed local participation and locally designed and managed responses at the centre of its approach to development. Aidlink's relationships with its key partners were built up over long periods of concentrated work on specific issues. Aidlink's partnership approach is fully embedded within its strategic plan (2016-2021).

Presently, the concept of localisation has become a key agenda in the international aid sector. Whilst not a new concept, there is increased impetus to move beyond the rhetoric of localisation<sup>32</sup>. For

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<sup>29</sup> Aidlink Organisational Capacity-Building Plan 2014

<sup>30</sup> Aidlink Evaluation, 2015. Mary McKeown.

<sup>31</sup> 10-year Review of Aidlink's Partnership and Capacity Building Approach (2004–2014). Summary Document, 2016

<sup>32</sup> [Localisation of Aid: Are INGOs Walking The Talk? - World | ReliefWeb](#)

example, in 2019, a number of international humanitarian organisations committed to an 8-point charter for change by 2020<sup>33</sup>. These include:

- ✓ Increase direct funding to national and local NGOs for humanitarian action, to 25%
- ✓ Reaffirm the Principles of Partnership (Equality, Transparency, Results-Oriented Approach, Responsibility and Complementarity);
- ✓ Increase transparency around resource transfers to national and local NGOs using the Interagency Standing Committee definition and the International Aid Transparency Initiative standard;
- ✓ Stop undermining local capacity, through fair recruitment policies;
- ✓ Emphasise the importance of national actors in partner frameworks and calls for proposals;
- ✓ Address subcontracting: local partners participate as equals in programme design and partnership policies;
- ✓ Robust organisational support and capacity strengthening, including capacity strengthening for local partners and adequate administrative support;
- ✓ Communication to the media and the public promotes the role of local actors and acknowledge their work

Unlike many other INGOs, Aidlink practices all of the commitments above and has been doing so for many years. Aidlink's well-documented and comprehensive approach to partnership, combined with extensive, practical experience render it an important source of expertise in this area. The benefits and value added of Aidlink's partnership approach are deemed to have been better understood during COVID, when Aidlink and GCN were able to adjust, adapt and maintain pace on KIQEP programme. Aidlink's valuable, practical knowledge of localisation can be shared with others in the sector, as well as with key donors for learning and replication.

An interesting finding is that Aidlink board members are committed to and motivated by Aidlink's partnership model, which they consider to be Aidlink's strength and point of difference. In many respects, this has allowed Aidlink to strengthen organisational governance, by expanding its board and making it *hard-working*, through the establishment of sub-committees.

A final but essential value-added of the model is its rootedness in partnership with local communities as well as with local (implementing) partners. The PAD is grounded on an approach of promoting local ownership and reaching the poorest and most marginalized groups.

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<sup>33</sup> [charter4change-2019.pdf](#)

## Conclusions

### Relevance:

- KIQEP was highly aligned to the Kenyan policy framework and supported government efforts by targeting some of the most hard-to-reach and disadvantaged primary schools and communities in the country. The choice of project locations also reflects Aidlink's strategic focus and Irish Aid's policy emphasis on *reaching the furthest behind first*.
- The design of KIQEP was informed by lessons from previous projects and evaluations. KIQEP adopted a strong approach to learning during implementation and lessons from the project went on to inform Aidlink/GCN's successor project, *Every Girl in School*.
- A strength of the project design is the emphasis on local ownership, participation and leadership. GCN sees its role as 'walking with communities' and KIQEP adopts a rights-based approach.
- The KIQEP model is comprehensive, incorporating interventions across four levels: the school, the community, the individual and civil society. This conforms with best practice in the field of social norm change, which stresses the importance of multi-layered, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approaches. However, addressing negative social norms ordinarily calls for in-depth, long-term engagement in targeted communities, whereas KIQEP's approach was to focus on a different set of school communities each year.
- The inclusion of CWD is both justified and indeed necessary within a rights-based framework. However, the challenges around improving CWD's access to inclusive, equitable and quality education and to addressing negative social norms that limit their participation are so pronounced that a mainstreamed approach is inadequate.
- KIQEP was highly adaptive in response to COVID, successfully combining adaptation of planned interventions and introduction of new interventions in response to the pandemic. KIQEP demonstrated an adaptive management approach that spanned beyond COVID. New interventions were introduced (i) in response to learning, (ii) to mitigate risk, (iii) to strengthen the achievement of results, (iv) to maximise efficiencies and (v) to strengthen sustainability.

### Coherence:

- KIQEP was fully aligned with national and county-level education priorities and plans. The policy and political context were largely conducive to delivery of the project and the move in to Turkana was timely and opportune.
- There is evidence of effective coordination and collaboration with stakeholders in the education and child rights sectors, especially government at national, county and village level. GCN has established strong links and relations with MoEST over many years, has a strong track-record in Kajiado and has managed to create a firm foothold in Turkana in a relatively short space of time. GCN is seen as a trustworthy, honest and respectful partner in the school setting.
- An inclusive and collaborative approach to working with institutional stakeholders allows GCN to access and influence policy fora at both national and sub-national level.

### Efficiency:

- KIQEP delivery was timely and efficient. The project demonstrated capacity to deliver, adapt and to get things done, in spite of the challenging operating context caused by COVID.
- Through effective coordination and planning, duplication was avoided, resource allocation was responsive and efficiencies were gained. KIQEP utilised cost-efficient modes of procurement and further efficiencies were obtained - and local ownership fostered- through 'community social contracts'.
- Delivery costs were kept low, due to the partnership model employed and the fact that such a high proportion of the budget flows to GCN and is spent in-country.
- Our conclusion is that KIQEP displayed value for money as a result of the partnership model, adaptive management approach and the procurement model used.

- Aidlink and its board are proactive and vigilant in monitoring and managing risk, exercising close oversight. The approach to risk management during COVID was very strong and should be emulated.

#### **Effectiveness:**

- The KIQEP project is considered to have effectively used programme funds from Irish Aid and other funders. By the end of year three, almost all performance indicators had been achieved at output level, demonstrating effective programme management. At objective level the performance is also strong, if a little more mixed, reflecting the challenges posed by COVID and their impact on the delivery of project results.
- The closure of schools for a 9-month period had a very significant impact on learning, student enrolment, early pregnancy, child marriage, FGM and GBV. It is inevitable that project delivery would be challenged as a consequence. In spite of this, KIQEP adapted and worked hard to deliver.
- The objective on improving education access for children with disabilities (CWD) was highly challenging, warranting a more in-depth, specialised intervention than the project could provide.
- As a key risk to the project, drought is an area that necessitated inclusion in the project. Some progress was made but proved difficult to sustain. School gardens were unsuccessful but lessons have been learned and the concept has been adjusted.
- Community Facilitators have been instrumental in outreach and efforts to address harmful social norms. The success of this is driven by CFs and school-based structures (i.e. BOMs and ROC clubs) collaborating, supporting and re-enforcing each other. Community Conversations allowed communities to discuss issues and reach solutions in an acceptable and non-confrontational way.

#### **Impact:**

- KIQEP delivered strong results at outcome level, with targeted schools assessed as achieving higher rates of re-enrolment post COVID closures than non-project schools. Aidlink is forthright in reporting that some results hide the stark reality of COVID-related setbacks, whose impacts will be felt over decades to come.
- Aidlink and GCN pride itself in working with the most in-need communities and building self-sufficiency and local leadership. The model of ROCs, BoMs and CFs working collaboratively at various levels is compelling and holds great potential.
- Behaviours and practices, particularly those that are propelled by social norms are neither easy nor quick to shift. Shocks and setbacks often cause communities to revert to pre-established behaviours. Aidlink/GCN need to consider a longer-term engagement with communities, with deeper monitoring and evaluation of social norm change. Whilst the principal of self-sufficiency is sound, the reality is that community structures (such as CFs, BoMs and RoCs) need longer-term support to remain proactive, motivated and skilled in their roles.
- Food in schools should be considered as a recurrent need and a social safety net. There are a series of strategic questions around provision of food which Aidlink will need to carefully consider in its future strategy and programme design.

#### **Sustainability:**

- Assumptions that community structures will be self-sustaining have not proven to be correct. In most schools visited, RoC clubs are no longer active and patrons no longer in post, a situation that has undoubtedly been aggravated by COVID and the knock-on effect on the programme. The timeframe of engagement in a given community is assessed to be too short and exit planning should be more comprehensive.
- Some project benefits will be sustained but the challenge is to maximise this so that the gains are not eroded over time. As resources are limited, there are hard choices and trade-offs to be made between deepening engagement in one area and broadening out to reach new areas with

tremendous needs. Such choices will require careful consideration and in-depth analysis by Aidlink.

**Performance of the partnership:**

- Aidlink's partnership with GCN is a strong, practical manifestation of the partnership principles outlined in Aidlink's PAD. The Aidlink / GCN partnership has evolved and matured over the years. It is perceived as a partnership of equals, with each partner playing to its strengths, enjoying mutual benefits and long-term commitment. The two organisations feel secure to challenge each other and work through differences. They are jointly accountable for success and failures. The partnership allows for considerate risk taking, though the confines of donor funding often do not. Flexibility, leadership and relationships and networks are key factors underpinning the successful partnership.
- The partnership model enables programmes to deliver value for money because of low delivery costs, efficiencies gained through adaptation and the procurement model. This emphasis on reflection and learning leads to adaptation, which, in turn, results in efficiencies and more effective programme delivery.
- Aidlink recognises that partnership carries inherent risk, actively analyses partner risk and monitors 'programme - partner risk' in its risk framework. We found that Aidlink is conscious of these risks and that they are being proactively monitored and managed by Aidlink and its board, with evolving mitigation strategies.
- Aidlink's capacity building support is appropriate to GCN's organisational needs. Whereas the partnership used to have a very detailed and comprehensive Capacity Building Plan for GCN, this has now been rationalised. GCN has clearly strengthened its organisational and programmatic capacity over the years. KIQEP saw GCN's role expand in capacity building of local civil society partners, enabling GCN to evolve in to this role, with backstopping from Aidlink, if needed.
- Aidlink actively practices the principles of localisation and has been doing so for many years. Its well-documented and comprehensive approach to partnership, combined with extensive, practical experience of localisation render it an important source of expertise in this area.
- Aidlink board members are committed to and motivated by Aidlink's partnership model, which they consider to be Aidlink's strength and point of difference. This has allowed Aidlink to strengthen organisational governance.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to enhance the implementation of Aidlink projects and partnerships going forward.

### Programmatic

1. Aidlink currently has an organisation-wide Theory of Change. It is recommended that future projects would develop a project-level Theory of Change (or Theory of Action), clarifying assumptions and critical success factors so that these can be tested over the course of implementation.
2. Given the importance and success of the work at community level (outcome 2 / objective 2.1), there is potential to increase resource allocation to this area of work, thereby allowing it to be expanded and extended. Aidlink should consider this when designing new projects.
3. As Aidlink expands its work at community level especially in the area of social norms, it would be beneficial to build in capacity building for programme staff on the principles and measurements of social norm programming.
4. Given the high proportion of project spend on inputs, it would be worthwhile for Aidlink to conduct a procurement audit / review of similar (current / future) projects managed by GCN.
5. Given the high propensity of teacher transfers, future projects need to take contingency measures around this. This would include training multiple teachers in each school, incorporating a handover process so that patrons that are transferred can handover to a colleague and carry their role in to their new school. A mentorship system for patrons would be a useful way of connecting patrons and enabling continuity.
6. Aidlink and GCN have many years of experience working in Turkana and Kajiado. There is huge potential to test different models and to generate in-depth learning on what works. Aidlink should consider deepening its focus on research and learning. This would require a higher investment in MEL, including external research partnerships.
7. Food in schools needs to be considered as a recurrent need and a social safety net. There are a series of strategic questions around provision of food which Aidlink will need to carefully consider in its future strategy and programme design.
8. In order to strengthen sustainability in future projects Aidlink should consider:
  - a. Longer-term engagement with targeted communities. This is likely to create more sustainable and permanent community structures, behaviours and practices in support of inclusive, equitable and quality education.
  - b. Re-thinking exit /handover strategies, with caution around assumptions that community structures will continue to function without external support. Aidlink should seek to engage (and if necessary, train) other actors, be they governmental or NGOs, to take over certain strands of the project or to replicate project approaches.
  - c. Instituting a more systematic approach to monitoring progress in communities after the project exits, including tracking school enrolment / completion data. This would allow a fuller assessment of trends over time and an analysis of which factors enhance or inhibit sustainability.

### Operational

9. Aidlink Board is advised to exercise oversight of GCN's audit, given board members' expertise in financial management and the risk to Aidlink operations were a fraud or serious financial mismanagement to occur.
10. To strengthen risk management, it is recommended that:
  - a. More attention should be paid to programme-level risk in both the Risk Register and progress reports.

- b. Risks (in the Risk Register) should be described in more detail, in terms of their potential impact on the programme. This would allow more accurate scoring, more realistic prioritisation of risks and more tailored mitigation actions.
- c. The Risk Register shows the direction of travel of risk from one period to the next and the narrative report discusses key movements.
- d. Risk should be integrated more comprehensively in to programme reports.
- e. A structured mechanism is introduced for discussion of risk between Aidlink and GCN.

### **Partnership**

11. Aidlink's approach of providing capacity building support alongside direct programme support has been highly relevant and should continue. Aidlink should maintain its focus on partnership and capacity building as a core objective and priority in its new strategic plan.
12. Aidlink should continue to expand GCN's role in the partnership, through GCN having responsibility for capacity building of local organisations. Other means of evolving the partnership should be explored in partnership meetings.
13. Aidlink should continue to provide flexibility in the organisational strengthening support provided to GCN. Whilst it remains important to have a number of concrete results and performance indicators related to capacity building in the project results framework<sup>34</sup>, flexibility allows GCN to use the resources as best required and is a measure of the maturity of the partnership.
14. Aidlink should continue to build adaptive management practices in to its programmes and partnerships and to measure the effect of this.
15. It remains important for Aidlink to prioritise investment in its own internal capacity so that it remains capable of supporting partners to implement their capacity building plans to the highest standard, as per intentions stipulated in Aidlink's Organisational Capacity-Building Plan 2014.
16. Aidlink should look at documenting and sharing its partnership model as well as its practical knowledge of localisation. This may be of interest to other actors and funders in the sector for learning and replication purposes.
17. The risks that are inherent in the partnership model should continue to be assessed, monitored and managed by both parties.
18. Aidlink should continue and intensify efforts to develop new partnerships, including with smaller, less capable organisations that share its organisational values and goals.

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<sup>34</sup> As per the recommendation of the 2015 partnership review

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Terms of Reference



#### Call for Tender End of Project and Partnership Evaluation

*Aidlink is inviting tenders to conduct an end of project evaluation for its flagship programme, the Kenya Inclusive Quality Education Project along with and evaluation of the partnership with key implementation partner, the Girl Child Network.*

##### Overview

An end of project evaluation is to take place for Aidlink's flagship programme the Kenya Inclusive Quality Education Project, co-funded by Irish Aid and other donors. In line with Aidlink's [Monitoring and Evaluation Policy](#) and Capacity Building Plan this evaluation is to ensure that Aidlink is fully accountable for the delivery of all project activities and objectives; and to ensure Aidlink and its partners learn from the implementation of the project and utilise that learning in seeking to improve or enhance the implementation of programmes and Aidlink, on an on-going basis. The evaluation also seeks to examine the partnership between Aidlink and key implementing partner the Girl Child Network, Kenya, to ensure sufficient support and capacity building is provided as outlined in Aidlink's [Partnership](#) approach.

The OECD-DAC [Evaluation Criteria](#) of Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability should provide the framework for the evaluation. In addition to Aidlink's own criteria for success and impact as outlined in its programme documents, benchmarks, results frameworks, and agreements with its partners, as well as best practice within the sector. The evaluation will, in particular, examine Aidlink's performance and added value, the relevance of its programmatic approach and its contribution to change at the micro, meso and macro levels.

The overall purpose of the evaluation is to provide accountability to partners, donors, and stakeholders, while contributing to learning by making practical recommendations that can inform Aidlink's projects and partnerships going forward. The final report will be shared widely among Aidlink's current and potential partners, stakeholders, key donors, and the wider supporters.

The Evaluation should examine and analysis the impact of project activities on targeted communities (direct and indirect), tracking the entire project cycle; assess its suitability in delivery of objectives, and what lessons can be learned for the GCN as well as for Aidlink. The performance of the Aidlink / GCN partnership is to be included in the evaluation, examining roles and responsibilities, effectiveness and added value of both parties, providing targeted recommendations.

##### Kenya Inclusive Quality Education Project:

The strategic objective of the Kenya Inclusive Quality Education Project (KIQEP) is to ensure that *'children, especially girls and those with disabilities, from the Masai and Turkana communities, attain a quality primary education that supports the achievement of healthy and fulfilling lives'*. The project has three desired outcomes:

1. Children, especially girls and those with disabilities, from the Masai and Turkana communities have improved access to an inclusive, equitable and quality primary education.

2. Target communities support access to education and are addressing negative social norms which limit (girls' and children with disabilities') participation.
3. GCN and local Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are engaged in promoting education, child rights and gender equality through programming and targeted lobbying and advocacy with, and on behalf of, target communities.

Targeting public primary schools and communities in Kajiado and Turkana Counties, the project addressed barriers to education for children, especially girls and those with disabilities, from the nomadic pastoralist Masai and Turkana communities. A number of strategies were employed at the school, community and individual level including direct support, sensitisation and awareness creation, social mobilisation, capacity building and lobbying and advocacy. Key elements of the project included:

- The provision of accessible, gender and disability-friendly water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities in schools.
- Training of students, teachers, and Boards of Management to support a more child-friendly learning environment, and
- Sensitisation and mobilisation of parents and the wider community to build support for education and address negative behaviours and attitudes including FGM (among the Masai) and early marriage.

The KIQEP was implemented in partnership with the Girl Child Network (GCN) and builds on the experience and learning from 16 years implementing rights-based education projects in Kajiado County, Kenya.

#### Key Objectives of Evaluation

- Examine the impact of Aidlink's flagship project between 2018-2021, the Kenya Inclusive Quality Education Project (KIQEP). Reviewing all project documents, results frameworks, and budgets to identify if the project was delivered to sectorial best practice standards and what value, if any, did Aidlink add.
- To examine the partnership between Aidlink and the Girl Child Network (GCN). Reviewing how the two organisations work together and how Aidlink has performed as a donor/partner throughout the project life cycle.
- To provide strategic recommendations for Aidlink to enhance the implementation of projects and partnerships going forward.

#### Timeline

It is expected that the evaluation commenced before the end of Quarter 1, 2022 and final report to be presented by end of February 2022. Evaluators are invited to submit tenders by 26 November 2021. This should include.

- i. **Cover letter** (maximum 1 page) indicating availability during proposed timeframe.
- ii. **Technical proposal** highlighting understanding of proposal, objective, and purpose. Proposal should include proposed methodology, timeline and workplan.
- iii. **Financial proposal** providing a detailed cost estimate including daily rates and VAT
- iv. **Current CV** this should include a contact number and email address of consultant(s)
- v. **Examples of relevant projects**, two pieces of work are requested.

#### Qualification of the Consultant

The consultant should have experience in gender and development, more specifically on education, water and sanitation and evaluation. Understanding of rights based programming approach in development must be a key component of the main consultant's work and experience. Further to this they should demonstrate ability to work with groups from diverse backgrounds and is sensitive to cultural dynamics. Previous assignments and recommendations by other partners working with children and in the development, sector will be an added advantage. Consultant can be located in Ireland or Kenya.

### About Aidlink

Aidlink is an Irish charity working to educate, enable and empower individuals, families and communities in Kenya and Uganda to become the leaders of their own development. At Aidlink, we believe the key to long-term, sustainable development is a strong and vibrant African civil society, whereby local people are empowered to tackle poverty and catalyse change. From a small HQ in Dublin, Aidlink works through partnership, meaning there are no Aidlink staff or Aidlink offices located in Africa. Instead, Aidlink links with local, African community based organisations to collectively deliver our work. Aidlink is also committed to the development and capacity building of our local partner organisations; training staff, training boards of management and funding their organisational development to become strong, sustainable, and independent, organisations.

## Appendix 2: List of Interviewees

1. GCN Executive Director, Mercy Musomi
2. GCN Deputy Head of Programme, Peris Mootian and MEL Officer, Rose Theuri
3. Aidlink Board Members: John Lynch (Chairperson), Eoghan Caffrey, Aishling Lennon
4. Aidlink Programme Officer, Grace Kennedy
5. Aidlink Chief Executive Officer, Anne Cleary
6. David Naumo, former Curriculum Support Officer, sub-county director Loima
7. Richard, Community Facilitator, Loima
8. Epodo Naitang'or, Community Facilitator and BOM member, Loima
9. Dorothy Moit, ROC patron, Loima
10. Virginia Sapuro, Teacher Service Commission Mashuru
11. Martin Kinyanjui, Mashuru sub-county Quality Assurance Officer
12. Pastor Richard Mosonik, teacher / ROC patron Mashuru
13. Eunice Dunda, teacher / ROC patron Mashuru
14. Mary Kala, teacher / ROC patron Mashuru
15. Florence Peshut, Community Facilitator, Mashuru
16. Lawrence Antiyie, Community Facilitator and BOM chair, Mashuru
17. George Kimani & David Ng'otiek, Community Facilitators, Mashuru
18. David Kerenge, Community Facilitator, Mashuru
19. Gloria Nosim, One Child (NGO), Kajiado
20. Emis Njeru, NACONEK
21. Josaphat Eyanae Lotwel, Assistant Director Drought Contingency Planning and Response, National Drought Management Agency (NDMA), Turkana

### Appendix 3: List of documents reviewed

The following project-related documents were reviewed by the evaluation team. Additional reference documents (e.g. policy documents) are cited in the main body of the report.

1. Aidlink Strategic Plan 2016-2021
2. Aidlink Partnership Approach
3. Aidlink M&E policy
4. Aidlink Child Protection Policy and Procedures 2019
5. Aidlink Anti-Fraud Policy
6. Aidlink Targeting Policy 2018-2021
7. Aidlink Gender Policy 2016
8. Aidlink Organisational Capacity Building Plan 2014-16
9. Aidlink Education Policy 2019
10. Aidlink Annual Report 2019
11. Aidlink Annual Report 2020
12. Aidlink Evaluation, 2015. Mary McKeown.
13. 10-year Review of Aidlink's Partnership and Capacity Building Approach (2004 – 2014). Summary Document, 2016.
14. Aidlink CSF Grant Application (KIQEP Project Proposal)
15. KIQEP Annexes – Results Framework, Budget, Flow of Funds
16. Aidlink Theory of Change (TOC) graphic
17. GCN partnership MOU
18. GCN Baseline report on status of public primary school in Kajiado county
19. GCN Implementation Plan KEEP 2018-2020
20. Aidlink KIQEP proposed project adjustment 2020
21. Project implementation reports and Annexes KIQEP year 1, 2 and 3, CSF feedback
22. GCN KEEP reports years 1-3
23. Activity schedule and proposed budget for additional 8 schools. Aidlink 2021.
24. EGIS project document and annexes (CSF application 2021), IA feedback and conditions

## Appendix 4: Chronology of key organisational milestones and funding

1982	Established as a voluntary organisation to support smaller-scale, local development organisations operating at the grassroots level in Africa. During this phase, Aidlink supported multiple projects in a total of 17 countries across the world.
1997	appointed its first staff professional (the current Executive Director)
Early 2000s	developed processes, policies and procedures to strengthen Aidlink's capacity for effective organisational governance.
2003	Began partnership with GCN working in Kajiado
2004	Aidlink becomes the Spiritan Fathers' agent for deploying Misesan Cara funding from Irish Aid
2007	Strategic planning resulted in the development of a revised partnership model that involved more intensive collaboration with a smaller number of NGOs
2007	Awarded an annual <b>block grant from Irish Aid</b> , followed by a multi-annual block grant for the period 2008-2011.
2010	Aidlink clarified its 'Partnership Approach to Development'
2010-2011	Review of Aidlink's development policy: shift in emphasis from a needs-based approach to a rights-based approach. Arrangement with the Spiritan Fathers in relation to Misesan Cara funding was discontinued
2012	Awarded Irish Aid programme grant for the period 2012-15 (extended to 2016)
2014	Organisational Approach to Partner Capacity-Building developed
2014	Irish Aid monitoring review of the Aidlink programme
2015	Independent evaluations of Aidlink's Integrated Rural Community Development Programme and of its support work with its partners
2016	Aidlink Strategic Plan 2016-2021 published
2017/8	Expanded programme with GCN in to Turkana
2018	Awarded CSF grant for KIQEP project 2018-2021
2021	Awarded CSF grant for Every Girl in School Project 2021-2024
2021	External Evaluation of KIQEP and of Aidlink /GCN partnership
2022 (forthcoming)	Development of new organisational strategy / strategic plan

## Appendix 5: Interview plan, schedule and selection of schools

### Sampling criteria:

In selecting schools, our objective will be to balance:

- (i) A mix of stronger and less strong sites (e.g. leadership, strength of the club, engagement of the management board etc);
- (ii) A mix in terms of timeframe - i.e. some schools that have been part of the project for longer, others that are newer;
- (iii) logistics - clustering sample sites so that driving time is not excessive.

Once mapping and other requested information on schools has been shared the selection will be made.

### Sample size:

57 schools have been reached under the project (28 Kajiado and 29 Turkana. The original project target was 48 but 1 school was added in Year 1 and 8 in Year 3.) We will aim to cover between 10 schools (5 per county). This is a small sample size but we believe it will be adequate when supplemented with primary data, project progress reports and monitoring reports.

The researcher will spend three full days in each county. Conscious of time and budget constraints, our aim is to interview a selection of stakeholders at each school site and to bring clusters together, where feasible (e.g. club patrons from several schools).

### Logistics:

A GCN staff member will be assigned to accompany and support the researcher in each county and will provide logistical support including local transport, scheduling meetings, providing refreshments to participants etc. They will also be a great source of information on the project and local context. We are very grateful to GCN for this vital support.

### Safeguarding and public health protocols during data collection:

All necessary COVID public health protocols will be observed by the evaluation team, such as wearing a face covering, hand washing and social distancing. Participants coming together for group discussions will be asked to adhere to the same.

As per child safeguarding standards and Aidlink Safeguarding policy, the researcher will interview children: (i) With the consent of guardians (ii) In an open and observable space (iii) Ensuring the dignity of, and respect for the child, at all times (iv) In accordance with the code of conduct outlined in Aidlink Safeguarding policy. Any additional safeguarding protocols used by GCN will also be adhered to provided these are clearly communicated to the evaluation team. Photographs will only be taken and used in the report with the written consent of the school and the concerned students.

### Selection of schools:

**Kajiado / Mashuru** selection criteria:

- 2 from year one. One with strong structures, one needing improvement.
- 1 from year two. Strong structures.
- 2 from year three. One with strong structures, one needing improvement.

Other considerations included distance from GCN field office (FO). Then randomly selected.

	Year	Schools	Distance from GCN field office (KMs)	RoC clubs/BoM (strong / need improvement)
Day 1 AM	1	Eselenkei	10	Need improvement

Day 1 PM	1	Endoinyo Enkerr	12	Strong
Day 2 AM	2	Ilmejoole	35	Strong
Day 2 PM	3	Kalembwani	25	Need improvement
Day 3 PM	3	Emashini	18	Strong
<b>Turkana/Loima selection criteria:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 from year one. One with strong structures, one needing improvement.</li> <li>• 2 from year two. One with strong structures, one needing improvement.</li> <li>• 1 from year three. Strong structures.</li> </ul> Other considerations included distance from GCN field office (FO). Then randomly selected.				
	<b>Year</b>	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Distance from GCN field office (KMs)</b>	<b>RoC clubs/BoM (strong / need improvement)</b>
Day 1 AM	1	Kospir	52	Strong
Day 1 PM	1	Locher Emeyan	65	Need improvement
Day 2 AM	2	Natwel	63	Need improvement
Day 2 PM	2	Kang'alita	62	Strong
Day 3 PM	3	Nataparkakono	4	Strong

#### FIELD RESEARCH SCHEDULE

DATE	AM – 3 hours	PM – 3-4 hours	LED BY
16 Jan	<b>Travel to County 1 - Turkana</b>		Rutere
17 Jan – Day 1	<b>School site T1</b> -FGD: Rights of Child club students* -FGD: School Boards of Management	<b>School site T2</b> -FGD: Rights of Child club students -FGD: School Boards of Management -FGD: Rights of Child club patrons** - FGD Community Facilitators **	Rutere
18 Jan – Day 2	<b>School site T3</b> -FGD: Rights of Child club students -FGD: School Boards of Management	<b>School site T4</b> -FGD: Rights of Child club students -FGD: School Boards of Management -FGD: Rights of Child club patrons - FGD Community Facilitators	Rutere
19 Jan – Day 3	<b>County-level interviews (TC)***:</b> KIs: the Sub County Directors for the Teachers Service Commission; Ministry of Education; Quality Assurance Officer, Curriculum Support Officers.	<b>School site T5</b> -FGD: Rights of Child club students -FGD: School Boards of Management	Rutere

	-FGD: Local NGOs supported under KEEP		
<b>Travel to County 2 - Kajiado</b>			
24 <sup>th</sup> Jan – day 4	<b>School site K1</b> -FGD: Rights of Child club students -FGD: School Boards of Management	<b>School site K2</b> -FGD: Rights of Child club students -FGD: School Boards of Management -FGD: Rights of Child club patrons - FGD Community Facilitators	
25 <sup>th</sup> Jan – day 5	<b>School site K3</b> -FGD: Rights of Child club students -FGD: School Boards of Management	<b>School site K4</b> -FGD: Rights of Child club students -FGD: School Boards of Management -FGD: Rights of Child club patrons - FGD Community Facilitators	
26 <sup>th</sup> Jan – day 6	<b>County-level interviews (KC):</b> KIIs: the Sub County Directors for the Teachers Service Commission; Ministry of Education; Quality Assurance Officer, Curriculum Support Officers.  -FGD: Local NGOs supported under KEEP	<b>School site K5</b> -FGD: Rights of Child club students -FGD: School Boards of Management	Rutere

\*Each student group will include a sample of 8-10 students aged between 10-17 years. In each county, 3 of the 5 student groups will be girls only and 2 will be boys only

\*\* Approximately 5 RoC patrons and 5 CFs from each region to convene for each FGD. For FGS with BOMs, CFs, Patrons: GCN to strive for a good gender balance in participation within these groups

\*\*\*County officials: Our preference is to conduct separate interviews rather than a joint FGD with these stakeholders. From experience this is more productive. The meetings can be shorter: 45 mins each (allow 60 mins to be on the safe side).

We also need to build some time in to the schedule to see the hard inputs funded to each school: latrines, changing rooms, handwashing stations, water points etc.

NACONECK and National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) interviews to be conducted virtually (Rutere).