

Transformational Empowerment of Adolescent Girls in Malawi (TEAM Girl Malawi)



Pre-service teacher training activity

Report to the Medicor Foundation

**Year One Project Report (Year 3 of TEAM Girl Project)
October 2020 – September 2021**

Introduction

Background

TEAM Girl Malawi is a project that aims to empower marginalised out of school girls to access education, training or employment.

The Medicor Foundation, alongside funding from the newly merged Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Department (FCDO) (formerly DFID), supported the delivery of the first two years of this project, enabling 2,326 of the most marginalised girls and boys to improve their sexual and reproductive health and benefit from a high quality, inclusive, relevant education.

Both the FCDO and the Medicor Foundation are jointly funding the next phase of the project over an additional two years. This will see the project engaging with two further cohorts of marginalised girls and boys and support their transition.

TEAM is working with girls facing multiple and complex marginalisation. This includes girls who are married, disabled, pregnant, mothers, orphans and heads of households. All of the girls within the project are experiencing extreme poverty and as a result are at high risk of abuse and exploitation.

Each project activity outlined below contributes to the project's Theory of Change and the journey of each individual girl:

- Pre-service teachers and community facilitators are trained and equipped with the knowledge, attitude and skills to run Complementary Basic Education Centres (CBEs) and Girls' Clubs.
- Marginalised girls are then enrolled into the project with the support of Community Selection Committees who develop and prioritise marginalisation criteria.
- Enrolled girls attend a two-year programme at Complementary Basic Education Centres (CBEs). This consists of academic learning to build literacy and numeracy skills up to Grade 5 equivalent, and Girls' Clubs to improve sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), as well as confidence and self-esteem. CBEs are part-time and offer supportive, safe, inclusive, flexible and participatory learning.
- After completing the CBE programme, girls will be able to choose to return to primary schools or access vocational training and/or business development and loans. Participating primary schools will undergo School Improvement Plans to increase their ability to support girls transitioning from CBE.
- Throughout this process the safety of girls will be prioritised through improved safeguarding and child protection systems at both community and district levels.
- To promote gender equality and inclusion, an additional 20 per cent of each cohort is made up of the most marginalised boys.

The TEAM Girl Malawi consortium is made up of:

- Theatre for a Change (TfaC) - training pre-service teachers, delivering Girls' Clubs, safeguarding lead and training, psychosocial counselling.

- Link International (LINK) - training community facilitators, delivering the CBE academic programme, developing School Improvement Plans.
- Supreme - vocational training to produce school uniforms, reusable sanitary pads and bags.
- Charlie Goldsmith Associates (CGA) - development of monitoring technology.
- CUMO - microfinance institution responsible for offering trainings, micro-loans and micro-insurance to parents/guardians and beneficiaries over the age of 18.

Year three overview

Year three of the TEAM Girl project saw the continuation of adaptations and strategies to ensure continuation of learning for the beneficiaries despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, including the development of take-home materials. Malawi continues to experience the impact of the pandemic and the project has had to adapt to the various guidelines and safety protocols imposed by the government at different points in the year - at times this meant all activities coming to a halt. This greatly affected the academic calendar and delayed both the graduation of cohort 1 and the recruitment of cohorts 2 and 3. This shift in calendar has ongoing implications for cohort 3 in the next year of the project, and they are now only expected to graduate from CBE centres in July 2023. TfaC would like to discuss the implications and strategy for this with Medicor in early 2022.

The project was also affected by cuts in the FCDO budget, although TEAM Girl was not as affected as other projects within the FCDO portfolio. As a result, the FCDO project budget was cut by 1.72% in total. In response to these cuts and the revised academic calendar, the TEAM Girl consortium has chosen to reduce the number of cohort 3 learners it will work with, rather than cut the quality or range of activities they will be offered. This means the project will aim to enrol 1,250 learners in cohort 3 across 25 communities (instead of the original target of 2,000 across 40 communities).

Despite these challenges, the project made significant progress in supporting the learning, rights and protection of the most marginalised girls and boys. Key successes include:

- Continued engagement of 3,820 girls and 712 boys at CBE centres across cohorts 1 and 2, despite two rounds of COVID related national school closure.
- Increased performance of cohort 2 by 9% in comparison to cohort 1 at reaching the same point in their learning programme.
- Cohort 1 midline tests in December 2020 showed that 25% of learners sampled had gained functional literacy skills, and 15% had gained functional numeracy skills.
- Cohort 1 midline tests in December 2020 showed that of those sampled, learners demonstrated an average score improvement of 9% in SRHR knowledge, and 22% in SRHR attitudes, and 3% in SRHR skills. Further improvement is expected at endline.
- Training results for pre-service teachers, Agents of Change and community stakeholders in SRHR, child rights and protection showed positive improvement in knowledge, attitude and skills.

- 100% of all 317 reported protection and safeguarding concerns were followed up.
- Identification and creation of transition pathways into education, vocational skills and business training for cohort 1 leaners.
- TEAM Girl was awarded an A+ rating (exceeded outputs) by the FCDO Fund Manager in August 2021.

This report covers the progress made and activities conducted within the third year of the TEAM Girl project. Please see in addition, the attached monitoring table.

Monitoring Table Narrative Update

Objective 1:

- **ER 1.1, 115 teachers (60 female) trained by TfaC operating in 50 Complementary Basic Education Centres - overachieved:** 176 (106 female) facilitators trained by TfaC - with 160 (99 females) operating in 56 CBE centres. Due to moving to 16 new and additional communities for cohort 2, the project had to recruit and train additional teachers as Agents of Change.
- **ER 1.2, 3,000 (2,490 girls) highly marginalised children enrolled in Complementary Basic Education Centres and complete the school year successfully (1,500 in 20/21 and 1,500 in 20/22) - data pending:** 1,802 cohort 1 learners completed their CBE programme this year. Exams have just been held and results are pending. This phase of the project was originally due to primarily serve cohort 2 and 3 learners. However, due to delays in the academic calendar and disruption to learning as a result of COVID-19, cohort 1 completion of the CBE programme was delayed until November 2021.

Objective 2:

- **ER 2.1, 480 pre-service teachers understand and support the needs of marginalised children (240 in 20/21 and 240 in 21/22) - overachieved:** 448 students were trained across IPTE 14 and IPTE 15. The target was significantly exceeded due to the revised academic calendar as a result of COVID-19. This meant the education system had to accommodate the two cohorts running concurrently in the colleges.
- **ER 2.3, see ER 1.1.**
- **ER 2.4, 50 Girls' Clubs operating in CBE centres led by 115 Agents of Change teachers (40 clubs in 20/21; 50 in 20/22) - overachieved:** Girls' Clubs are operating in 56 CBE communities. The number of communities was increased in year three of the project from 40 to 56, as for Cohort 2 there were not sufficient eligible participants in the existing communities. 24 of these communities have two Girls' Clubs operating to reduce distances for participants to travel, and to manage increased numbers for Cohort 2 while adhering to COVID 19 prevention rules. As a result there were 80 Girls' Clubs delivered by 160 Agents of Change.

Objective 3:

- **ER 3.1, 80 national/district/community sensitisation meetings held (40 in 20/21; 40 in 21/22) - underacheived:** Community sensitisation meetings were conducted in 26

communities. Fewer meetings were held as they were put on pause to reduce the risk of COVID-19 within large gatherings.

- **ER 3.2, 40 schools adopting and implementing Improvement Plans with targets to make schools more inclusive for marginalised adolescent girls (20 in 20/21; 20 in 21/22) - underacheived:** As a result of COVID-19, this activity has been delayed. Prioritisation was instead given to restructuring of CBE programming and curriculum content with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) to fit within the adjusted and reduced academic calendar. In preparation, 285 headteachers and Primary Education Advisors were trained by our partner Link in inclusive education, and school data was gathered to feed into the creation of School Improvement Plans.

Objective 4:

- **ER 4.1, 240 community members, school staff and statutory agencies trained by TfaC on child protection and reporting mechanisms (120 in 20/21; 120 in 21/22) - overachieved:** 285 community members were trained. We exceeded the target due to reprofiling of budget underspends to this priority area.
- **ER 4.2, 50 Mother Groups operating Community Listening Clubs (40 in 20/21; 50 in 21/22) - overachieved:** 56 Mother Groups operated Community Listening Clubs (CLCs). Due to moving to 16 new and additional communities for cohort 2, the project had to establish additional CLCs.
- **ER 4.3, 50 TfaC Interactive Radio Dramas broadcast (25 in 20/21; 25 in 21/22) - underacheived:** 19 radio broadcasts were made and broadcasted. As a result of the first COVID-19 lockdown there was a period where recording and broadcasting was not possible. New innovations have been put in place moving forward to avoid postponements of our broadcasts as a result of COVID-19.
- **ER 4.4. 200 survivors of sexual abuse and their families supported by psychosocial activities annually (100 in 20/21; 100 in 2021/22) - overachieved:** We provided psychosocial counselling support services to 156 beneficiaries and their families. The additional numbers reached was supported by the recruitment of an additional counsellor.

Activities Update

Objective 1: to support Complementary Basic Education (CBE) Centres linked to Primary Schools that provide high quality, inclusive and gender responsive learning environments

1.1 Facilitator (Agents of Change) training

This year we recruited and trained 176 AoCs, of which 106 were female to deliver to cohort 2 learners. The number of communities was increased in year three of the project from 40 to 56, as for cohort 2 there were not sufficient eligible learners in the existing communities. This meant moving to 16 new and additional communities for cohort 2, and the recruitment and training of more teachers than originally planned.

The training this year was extended to 10 days to allow more time for skills practice and to include new topics such as Psychosocial First Aid. The training also covered core topics on

TfaC's methodology, effective communication, child protection and safeguarding, facilitation skills, family planning and menstruation. As a result of the training, there was an average score increase of 27% in knowledge, attitudes and skills demonstrated by the AOCs (from 43% at baseline to 70% at endline). An online refresher training was conducted for cohort 1 AoCs and online fortnightly meetings are ongoing with both cohorts.

1.2 CBE development and delivery

COVID-19 caused the government to close CBE centres from January to March 2021. This meant cohort 2 learners did not start the CBE programme until April 2021. Cohort 1 learners faced more disruption and delay and as a result their programme was extended until November 2021 to ensure core areas of curriculum and learning were covered. As a result of COVID-19, the government was also forced to amend the academic calendar, resulting in a reduced learning period for both cohort 2 and the upcoming cohort 3 learners. As a mitigation, our partner Link worked closely with the MoEST to revise the curriculum, reducing the required core modules from seven to four: English, Mathematics, Chichewa and Livelihoods. However, cohort 3 learners are now not due to graduate CBE until July 2023.

Take home materials and weekly home visits were distributed during closure of centres to support the continuation of learning. When CBE centres reopened, sessions were done in smaller study circles of 15 each to avoid overcrowding and risk of infection. Exams were held for cohort 1 learners in November 2021 and results are pending. However, tests in December 2020 showed that 25% of learners sampled had gained functional literacy skills, and 15% had gained functional numeracy skills. Successful adaptation and learning in the project is also reflected by a 9% improvement in cohort 2 performance results in comparison to cohort 1 at the same stage of the learning programme.

159 additional CBE facilitators were recruited and trained to deliver the academic programme for cohort 2. In response to the smaller study circle approach and the need for even more facilitators, all learning assistants were promoted and trained to facilitator level. In addition, the project delivered refresher training to 161 facilitators from cohort 1.

Extensive consortium preparation took place over the last nine months for cohort 1 graduation and transition. The consortium has recruited a new project partner, CUMO, to provide entrepreneurial training and group-based loans. Cohort 1 learners are currently enrolling on their chosen transition path - including enrolment at school, vocational training and business development and loans.

Objective 2: to empower girls with positive knowledge, attitudes and skills related to their sexual and reproductive health rights

2.1. Pre-service teacher training at Teacher Training Colleges (TTCS)

448 pre-service teachers were trained across IPTE 14 and 15 this year at Teacher Training Colleges. The target was significantly exceeded due to the revised academic calendar as a result of COVID-19. This meant the education system had to accommodate the two cohorts running concurrently in the colleges.

Pre-service teachers were trained in two phases. The first covers topics in TfaC methodology, behaviour change and sexual and reproductive health (SRH). The second phase prepares them to become the Agents of Change (AoC) who can support learners in different aspects of their lives, including child rights, safeguarding and wellbeing. In addition, the project held single sex sessions, with topics chosen by pre-service teachers themselves, as well as workshops on how to hold School Radio Listening Clubs. The project also supported the SRH of the pre-service teachers themselves, distributing 147,487 condoms over the year and referring or supporting 638 students to access SRH services. TfaC delivered nine SRH Open Days, where 1,679 pre-service teachers accessed HIV testing and counselling, 590 accessed additional sexually transmitted infection screening, and 358 accessed family planning services.

"TfaC has helped me to know more about how to handle cases of child abuse in communities, [and how to] deal with sexual and reproductive health, for example...how to prevent unplanned pregnancies through the use of different contraceptive methods. It also helped me on effective communication, how to interact with others and how to solve problems that I am facing in life." Pre-service teacher, Kasungu TTC

As a result of the training, there was an average score increase of 18.5% in knowledge, attitudes and skills demonstrated by the pre-service teachers (from 81% at baseline to 99% at endline). The high baseline and endline scores are attributed to each cohort of pre-service teachers receiving two phases of training which bolsters and embeds knowledge.

This year, TfaC worked closely with lecturers, pre-service teachers and the MoEST to identify gaps in the Life Skills curriculum and the available SRH teaching resources for lecturers. The MoEST has now endorsed TfaC to create materials for lecturers on SRH topics that align with the curriculum. Sample resources were piloted and will be completed and finalised for use in 2022. TfaC is exploring on-line accessibility for these resources to ensure future use and adaptation - promoting the sustainability of TfaC's work within the Teacher Training Colleges.

2.4. Girls' Clubs

Despite the disruption of COVID-19 to delivery of Girls' Clubs, Agents of Change successfully delivered the full programme of planned workshops in all CBE centres. The consortium continued to identify and implement mobilisation strategies to encourage attendance, with 3,804 individual girls attending Girls' Clubs over the year across both cohort 1 and 2. Attendance at Girls' Clubs remains slightly lower than at the academic CBE activities. This may be due to how SRH is valued within the communities in comparison to academic studies. Also, in response to government guidelines on COVID prevention, the project adopted a study circle approach. However, as Girls' Clubs are delivered by in-service teachers and have restricted availability, the CBE academic activities and Girls' Clubs are delivered in a different format and sometimes a different location - this may have affected attendance further.

Endline results for cohort 1 who completed the programme in November 2021 are pending. However, of those sampled in December 2020 average scores increased from baseline in SRH knowledge from 57% to 66%, in SRH attitude from 45% to 67% and in SRH skill from 3% to

9%. The low skills result is primarily based on learners' ability to demonstrate correct condom use. TfaC will conduct a full review to understand the challenges in delivering this skill and create an action plan for cohort 2 and 3.

Take home materials and small-group catch-up workshops were developed and are now ready and available for use, both as ongoing learning aids but also for continuation of self-study learning if and when CBE centres close as a result of COVID-19.



Girls' Club Activity

Objective 3: to establish improved leadership at national, district and local level to support the education of marginalized girls

3.1 Community Sensitisation Meetings

Community sensitisation meetings were conducted in 26 communities before another partial COVID-19 lockdown was imposed by the government. The meetings focused on challenges in attendance, the role of community members and stakeholders in ending child marriage, and the identification and enrolment of cohort 2 beneficiaries. As a COVID-19 preventative measure, the project decided not to hold further community sensitisation meetings for the remainder of the year. The project was able to use termly food distribution sessions to provide key project updates, COVID-19 advice and reminders on how to report any concerns of child abuse.

3.2 School Improvement Plans

Due to COVID-19 this activity was delayed and preparatory work began in the latter part of the year. Prioritisation was instead given to restructuring of CBE programming and curriculum content with the MoEST to fit within the adjusted and reduced academic calendar. However our partner Link are leading on delivery and have now trained 285 headteachers and Primary

Education Advisors in inclusive education and supervisory skills to prepare them for project learners who would transition to their primary schools. The project also collected school performance data against the National Education Standards, which will be analysed and fed into a school performance score card from which primary school stakeholders will develop school improvement plans.



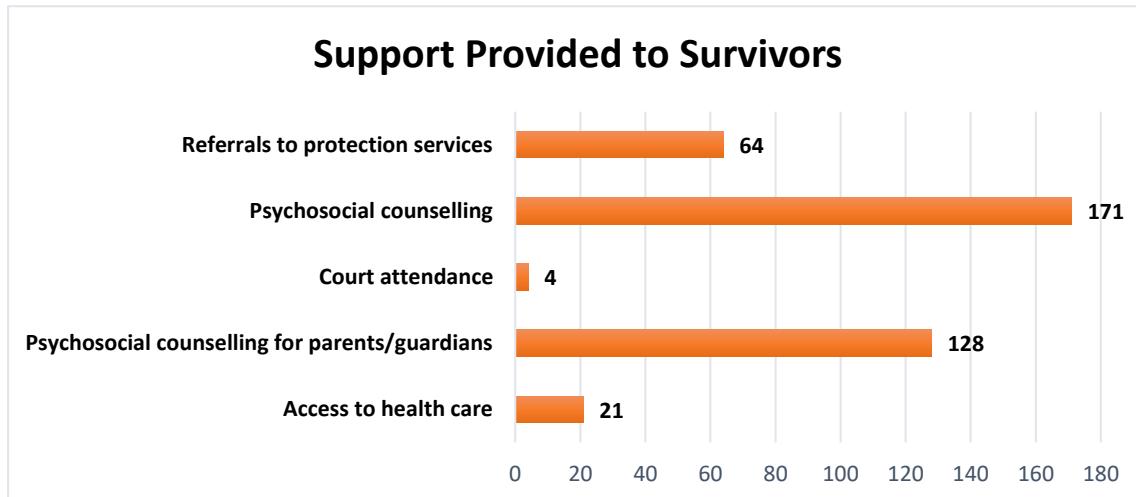
Interactive Radio Drama broadcast

Objective 4: to provide for and undertake that marginalised girls are safe, supported and protected

Across the year a total of 317 protection and safeguarding concerns were received concerning beneficiaries of the project. Sexual abuse was the most prevalent with 228 reports received (consisting predominantly of child marriage and sexual exploitation cases). 100% of the cases reported to the project were followed up by the safeguarding team. Actions included: a) reporting cases to local authorities, b) supporting survivors to access emergency health care c) making referrals to other support services d) conducting home visits with the Department of Social Welfare, f) providing psychosocial counselling, and e) case management, including seeking updates or pressing for responses from local authorities.

"It is a healthy and supportive relationship as we are complementing each other's efforts in eliminating violence against children" District Social Welfare Officer, Dedza (on working in partnership with TfaC)

A summary of support and outcomes provided to survivors of abuse is shared in the charts below:



4.1 Child protection training

To ensure that community stakeholders who respond to disclosures or concerns of abuse are equipped with the right knowledge, attitudes and skills, the safeguarding team organised and conducted training in child protection. This targeted Child Protection Workers, Health Surveillance Assistants, Mother Group members, Community Development Officers and Community Policing Forums. The workshops were delivered over two days, delivered in clusters of up to 15 people, reaching 240 stakeholders in total. The training covered child rights, child abuse and reporting, as well as understanding the additional support services in their community and how they can work together to increase the prevention and protection of children from abuse. As a result of the training, there was an average score increase of 15% in knowledge and attitude demonstrated by the community stakeholders (from 65% at baseline to 80% at endline). Training was also delivered to 45 CBE facilitators for our partner Link.

As an additional activity, meetings were held with 274 chiefs and community leaders from all project communities to reflect on and discuss ways in how they can support the enforcement of by-laws to prevent child marriage and other forms of abuse. This activity was a recommendation from the community stakeholders who attended the child protection training. Chiefs developed action plans which included conducting awareness meetings with parents and encouraging learners to attend CBE classes.

4.2 Mother Groups and Community Listening Clubs

Community Listening Clubs (CLCs) were active in all 56 communities with over 1,400 attendees. Broadcasts were briefly disrupted as a result of COVID-19 and when resumed, group sizes were monitored and splinter groups created to reduce infection risk. Interviews were held with 19 CLC members, with 95% of them reporting that they felt incidents of abuse had reduced within the community, and 81% indicating they had reported abuse as a result of the project - citing radio broadcasts as a key factor in increased understanding and awareness.

4.3 Interactive Radio Drama Broadcasts

19 Interactive Radio Drama (IRD) broadcasts were aired in total, receiving 102,238 interactions (calls or messages) from listeners. The storyline of the drama this year focused on improving knowledge and changing attitudes of community members in recognising and reporting child abuse. Experts across Malawi in child protection, policy, law, advocacy and prevention were featured throughout the weekly broadcasts to strengthen the key messages of each broadcast. These included the Principal Child Rights Officer from the Malawi Human Rights Commission, and the Health Promotion Officer from the Ministry of Health. The majority of radio poll question responses demonstrated positive attitudes (77%) towards child protection and related SRH issues.

4.4 Psychosocial activities

156 learners and their families were provided with psychosocial counselling services. This was delivered either face to face or through the phone when government imposed COVID-19 travel restrictions. The team recruited an additional counsellor, in addition to existing counsellor to support with provision of services to our beneficiaries and their families across cohorts 1 and 2. Counselling was prioritised for survivors of sexual violence and abuse or complex cases. Positive parenting workshops were delayed due to COVID-19 restrictions, but commenced in October 2021.

"As a parent I am happy to know that our children are protected. Thank you for visiting and encouraging us." Parent of a beneficiary after a counselling session - Mchinji.

Project learning and actions

- Attendance of learners is affected by complex and multiple barriers. However, even with average weekly CBE attendance at 57%, learners are still demonstrating learning.
Action: the consortium will continue to analyse attendance trends and adapt

mobilisation strategies to motivate learners. The consortium will also analyse data to examine the relationship between attendance and learning over the project duration.

- Improved strategies are required for teaching learners how to use condoms - this is evidenced by the low scores achieved for cohort 1 at midline. *Action: TfAC will conduct a full review to understand the challenges faced and to map out a clear action plan for cohort 2 and 3.*
- Community training, mobilisation and use of Interactive Radio in safeguarding and protection is showing promising results - with reports of reduced incidents of abuse within targeted communities, and a high reporting rate compared to other projects within the FCDO portfolio. *Action: the project's sustainability plan will incorporate activities that work with communities and the District Welfare Office to identify strategies for sustainability as the project exits cohort 1 communities.*
- The project's network of trained and supported trusted adults within the community has proven valuable in reporting and responding to abuse during COVID-19. However, regularly changing contact numbers of community members can provide a barrier for follow-up. *Action: the safeguarding team will ensure the trusted adult database is regularly updated and identify solutions for this issue as part of the sustainability strategy.*



Pre-service teacher training activity

Conclusion

Despite a very challenging year with COVID 19 and two rounds of national school closures, the project has continued to monitor and teach learners, while implementing a reduced curriculum and mixed methodology learning. This has enabled the project to prioritise continuous learning despite the difficult context, and there is steady progress in the performance of girls and boys. The project is confident the upcoming exam results for cohort 1 will be positive and look forward to tracking and sharing their transition routes.

The project's dedicated initiatives for reporting and preventing abuse have achieved evidenced results for both learners and their families. Communities have improved reporting and response mechanisms, with stakeholders reporting reduced incidents of abuse and learners feeling safer. The project has an active sustainability plan which is now being implemented. Positive developments include the support of the MoEST in TfAC's review of the Life Skills curriculum and development of resources. COVID-19 remains an ongoing risk, however the project has tested mitigations that can be quickly introduced in response to any further lockdowns or restrictions.

Medicor's contribution to TEAM Girl Malawi remains vital. In addition to supporting the long-term development of Agents of Change at Teacher Training Colleges, the additional psychosocial support provided to learners provides a service crucial to their recovery, safety and ability to re-engage with project activities.

Case Study

*Vera^{*1} who hails from Mchinji, is a girl with concentration and mobility challenges. One evening, towards the end of last year, her mother sent her to buy a household item from a nearby shop. On her way, an adult male grabbed her and dragged her to a forest where she was raped. One villager saw this happen and ran to the village to get people to search for her. They later found her, visibly distraught and the perpetrator had fled. He was later apprehended by police.*

When the project was alerted of the incident the next day, the Safeguarding Officer immediately followed up with the survivor and her family to support in psychological first aid and facilitate provision of protection services. The incident was at this time not reported to authorities and the survivor had not accessed medical care. The Safeguarding Officer therefore engaged with the survivor and their family to get consent to report the incident to the Social Welfare Office and check progress with the police. With coordination from Social Welfare, Vera was assisted to access health care at a nearby hospital and gave a statement to police for investigations. Vera and her guardian were later referred for psychosocial counselling.

When the court proceedings started, the project supported her with funds to attend the sessions at the boma (district). Throughout the process, the Safeguarding Officer informed and prepared Vera for the next steps. In May this year, the perpetrator was found guilty of sexual assault and sentenced to four years in prison.

The project did a post-care follow up to check on how the survivor and their family are coping. The family were relieved that the incident had been concluded by the courts and were pleased with the support from the project throughout the process. Importantly, Vera was supported to safely access the CBE centre and continue to learn.

¹ Real name of the survivor has been withheld

