



External Evaluation of the Engaging Communities and Schools in Support of Adolescent Girls in Malawi (ECSSAGEM) Program

Final report

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Executive Summary

The *Engaging Communities and Schools in Support of Adolescent Girls' Education in Malawi* (ECSSAGEM) is a two-year program implemented between 2015 and 2017 in Thyolo district, the Southern region of Malawi, by the Creative Center for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM) in partnership with Miske Witt and Associates Inc. (MWAI) and the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The program was co-financed by Dubai Cares and Echidna Giving with a grant of USD 1 million (\$500,000 from each funder) and implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), and the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare.

Purpose and audience

The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an independent assessment of the program's Theory of Change and approach, as well as provide advice to CRECCOM and its partners in relation to how outcomes achieved during the implementation can be built on for continuing work and improving current programs.

The primary audience of the evaluation findings is CRECCOM management and staff, Dubai Cares staff and other actors involved in the implementation of the program such as local and national Ministry of Education officials, as well as members of the targeted communities. The MasterCard Foundation, who is funding the next phase of the program, may also find the lessons learned from this evaluation relevant.

Approach and methods

At the core of the evaluation is this question: *How do lessons learned from the ECSSAGEM program inform and guide CRECCOM's continued work and current programs for enhancing adolescent girls' education in Malawi? How has the program changed CRECCOM's way of working?* To answer this overarching question, we used a contribution analysis approach, to enable a rigorous analysis of the CRECCOM program's contribution to improving adolescent girls' education in participating schools and communities. This approach allowed the evaluation team to distinguish between the different interventions of the program and their relative effectiveness, as well as between the design of the program versus the quality of its implementation.

Data collection methods included an in-depth review of program documentation, stakeholder interviews with CRECCOM staff and MoEST, key informants interviews/group discussions in schools, communities and key local institutions, and in-depth qualitative discussions with girls, boys and their care givers.

Findings

Generally, the evaluation team found that the ECSSAGEM holistic model proved successful, demonstrating that the root causes for girls to drop out should be addressed through interventions that take place both inside and outside of the school environment. Aligning peer, school and community ecologies to improve girls' access to quality education creates positive and long-lasting changes for girls, communities and schools.

With regards to the validity of the Theory of Change, some pathways of change did not take place as expected or failed to materialized. For instance, the village savings and loans groups provided small loans to parents, who invested in farming or small businesses, and sometimes bought school material or a school uniform. But it is unclear whether the VSL groups had a substantial and lasting impact on parents' living conditions and girls' ability to go to school and transition to secondary school. The inability to pay for school fees and related costs remains a major hindrance to girls continuing their education, despite the ECSSAGEM interventions.

Working with teachers proved difficult as teachers moved to other schools or did not attend the different sessions of the training as head teachers kept sending different teachers to each session. Without systematic follow-up and mentoring of trained teachers, the academic training component of the Theory of Change had difficulties delivering its full potential.

In addition, cultural practices remain a barrier. Girls are still facing risks of early pregnancy and/or HIV infection as a result of sexual initiation ceremonies. Despite ECSSAGEM's work with initiation counsellors, the ceremonies are still common, although initiation counsellors report that they have adapted their message to the girls and tell them to refrain from harmful cultural practices.

Lessons learned

Readmission of students who had dropped out of school highlighted constraints for schools that ECSSAGEM had not anticipated such as more crowded classrooms, fewer textbooks per student and higher student-teacher ratios – potentially contributing to an overall decline in education quality. Similarly, the ECSSAGEM program revealed that secondary schooling in Thyolo district suffers from a lack of infrastructure and funding. With CDSSs already running over their student capacity, the increase in students graduating from primary school did not always lead to an increase in students admitted in CDSSs – due to lack of space. This highlights the limitations of interventions in an education system facing internal pressures and funding limitations.

Community mobilization has played a solid part in improving the support and resources available for girls (and boys) to return to school. However, CRECCOM recognizes that communities cannot carry this responsibility alone and that the ECSSAGEM program presents limitations in this regard, especially in terms of general education infrastructure needs.

Recommendations

The evaluation team made the following recommendations to CRECCOM:

- Revise the strategy for engaging with the government and mobilizing resources.
- Develop a sustainability plan with local government authorities to follow up on the interventions started by ECSSAGEM and assess if the results have been sustained after the pilot program ended.
- Develop and communicate an exit strategy to government authorities, head teachers and community leaders before the end of the project/ program.
- Engage in discussions regarding improved funding for secondary school infrastructure at the central level.

- Continue working both inside and outside the school environment.
- Continue working with both boys and girls, but anticipate possible resentment and rethink the design of interventions that pose problems as soon as these problems emerge.
- Rethink the cascade training model in light of the constraints experienced by teachers.
- Plan for consistent support to teachers through systematic follow-ups and provision of teaching materials.
- Rethink the objective of VSL groups.

In addition, the evaluation team provided these recommendations to Dubai Cares:

- Develop or consolidate a country and/or sector strategy to provide a framework Dubai Cares can use to justify the funding of projects versus others and to create impact beyond the scope of a single project.
- Articulate the objectives of the strategy and define how funded projects aim to achieve these objectives.
- Clarify the ways in which Dubai Cares create impact more generally.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

AL	Adult Literacy
CBE	Complementary Basic Education
CDSS	Community Day Secondary Schools
CRECCOM	Creative Center for Community Mobilization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECSSA-GEM	Engaging Communities and Schools in Support of Adolescent Girls' Education in Malawi
ESIP	Education Sector Implementation Plan
FY	Financial Year
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoM	Government of Malawi
IEQ-CDSS	Improving Educational Quality in Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi
MGDS III	Third Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science & Technology
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate Examination
MWAI	Miske Witt and Associates Inc.
NEP	National Education Policy
NESP	National Education Sector Plan
NGES	National Girls' Education Strategy
PSIG	Primary School Improvement Grants
PSIP	Primary School Improvement Program
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMC	Social Mobilization Campaign
SMC	Schools Management Committee
TEVET	Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training
ToR	Terms of Reference
VSLA	Village Savings and Loans Agents
WASH	Water and Sanitation for Health

1 Background and context

The *Engaging Communities and Schools in Support of Adolescent Girls' Education in Malawi* (ECSSAGEM)¹ is a two-year program implemented between 2015 and 2017 in Thyolo district, the Southern region of Malawi, by the *Creative Center for Community Mobilization* (CRECCOM) in partnership with *Miske Witt and Associates Inc.* (MWAI) and the *University of Wisconsin-Madison*. The program was co-financed by Dubai Cares and Echidna Giving with a grant of USD 1 million (\$500,000 from Dubai Cares) and implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare.

ECSSAGEM's goal is to empower and improve the lives of adolescent girls and boys, families, communities, and teachers by **improving girls' and boys' educational achievement and transitions from primary to secondary school**. The program has adopted a holistic approach to address constraints to girls' and boys' successful educational transitions and has worked with school leaders, community leaders and members, and with government officials and private partners to implement program activities. The ECSSAGEM program focus on three main interrelated components:

- **Girls mentoring** aiming at a robust mentoring programme through the involvement of the Mothers groups, girls' retreats, boys' and girls' forums.
- **Community engagement** aiming at mobilizing communities in support of girls' education; training of change agents in the community; training of mother groups; establishing village forums that identify and modify cultural practices that harm girls; establishing village saving and loan programs to improve livelihoods and increase household income to cover school costs; establishing and monitoring GBV reporting structures and school anti-GBV campaigns.
- **Academic skills** aiming at enhancing girls' educational experiences and outcomes through establishment of English clubs and study circles, gender-responsive teacher professional development materials, and training of trainers on English, gender responsiveness and assessment.

Thyolo is one of the most marginalized districts in Malawi socially and economically, and in terms of education and health. As noted in the end-of-program report, the ECSSAGEM program was developed against the background that *"adolescent girls in Thyolo like most of the rural districts in Malawi, suffer high dropout and low retention and transition rates due to socio-cultural and economic norms that often begin to strongly encourage girls toward wife and mother roles and away from roles like student and professional. Girls also tend to struggle academically more than boys, in part because of higher labor burdens at home and also due to less familiarity with English, the language of all instruction in Malawi. Coupled to these*

¹ ECSSAGEM is also a program of the Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE), a multi-donor collaborative that aims to accelerate innovation in secondary education, programming, research, and development in Africa and Southeast Asia.

challenges is low educational quality of most rural primary schools and Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS), where the majority of girls in Malawi attend school” (p.4).

With this in mind, the ECSSAGEM program has defined a Theory of Change grounded in the belief that **gender equality improvements in education will occur when individual girls, their families/communities, and their schools are simultaneously supported** in transforming relationships and social norms, institutional practices, and official policies (refer to **Annex 7**).

Learning improvements are expected to result from:

- a) girls’ increased self-esteem and empowerment as a result of girls’ clubs, retreats, and mentoring;
- b) increased support from girls’ families and communities for their educational achievement as a result of improved financial stability and increased gender sensitization and responsiveness;
- c) gender-responsive school staff and environments; and
- d) increased and improved opportunities to learn English in and out of school.

ECSSAGEM’s result framework was defined in terms of the following **three main outcome-level results**:

- Girls equipped with skills, resources and support networks they need to successfully transition from primary to secondary school and to empower girls to pursue this educational path;
- Mobilize communities and key local institutions (including cultural, religious, sexual and reproductive health, and agricultural) in support of girls’ improved learning; and
- Improve girls’ educational experiences and outcomes by improving gender equality (including leadership, school culture, management, instruction, learning materials, and classroom practices) in upper primary and lower secondary schools.

ECSSAGEM’s approach reflects the **Social Mobilization Campaign (SMC) model** that CRECCOM has used since 1999 as a methodology to bring about policy, normative, and behavioral change among district official, schools, and community members.

The SMC is an approach to mobilize and empower rural communities to fully own their development. The model employs a combination of participatory methodologies, rights-based approaches, results-based management, collective action and policy advocacy tools to enhance individual capabilities. Central to this model is the STAR Circles (**Village Forums**), which are aimed at mobilizing, gathering and encouraging community members to discuss, deliberate and propose solutions to the collective problems they face. The model is largely comprised of four major components, namely: research and verification, field worker training, community-based sensitization and village/community-based initiatives.

In addition to these key components, there are supporting components such as stakeholder involvement, the role model initiative, mass communication interventions and monitoring and evaluation at each stage of the process.²

Key activities of the ECSSAGEM program

- **112 girls' and boys' forums** were established, creating spaces for dialogue on critical issues affecting girls' and boys' lives – such as sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and gender-based violence.
- **Mothers Groups** were established in 12 CDSSs; and existing Mothers Groups were strengthened and supported in the 100 targeted primary schools.
- **2,128 community and cultural gatekeepers**, including chiefs, community leaders (987), initiation councilors (23) and village forum facilitators (1,118) were trained to address issues that affect girl's access to quality education and were empowered as change agents to identify challenges and create locally-sustainable solutions.
- **64 village savings and loans (VSL) agents** received training from ECS-SAGEM and then reached 499 VSL groups with financial literacy skills and training to help mothers increase their economic support for their daughters' education, and to increase community support for girls' education.
- **8 tea estates and 8 private commercial companies** were engaged to support quality education in targeted schools.
- **903 registered villages** participated in ECSSAGEM community meetings.
- **454 teachers and head teachers** were trained in new English teaching strategies and gender-responsive pedagogies.
- **English clubs** were established at each of the 112 schools.
- **Study circles** were strengthened in the twelve Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs).

The ECSSAGEM program ended in December 2017. Following the end of the program, **CRECCOM launched the MasterCard Foundation funded-program 'Improving Educational Quality in Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi (IEQ-CDSS)'**. The CRECCOM team refers to this program as the second phase of the ECSSAGEM program – activities being relatively similar and in some instances, a scale-up from the ECSSAGEM program. The MasterCard Foundation funded-program aims to improve Malawian Community Day Secondary Schools by developing school leadership, teaching effectiveness, and employability and life skills. A multi-stakeholder working group will document and disseminate promising approaches

² <http://www.creccommw.org> <https://participedia.net/en/methods/social-mobilisation-campaign-model>

to inform evidence-based policymaking for improved access, quality and relevance of learning. The overall funding for the program is USD 1.3 million.

2 Purpose, approach and methods

2.1 Purpose

The Terms of Reference (refer to **Annex 1**) describe the purpose of the evaluation as *providing an independent assessment of the program's Theory of Change and approach*, as well as *providing advice to CRECCOM and its partners* in relation to how outcomes achieved during the implementation can be built on for continuing work and improving current programs.

As such, this assignment focused on both *accountability* (what has been achieved in relation to activities, outputs and outcomes) and *learning* (what worked and can be applied going forward).

The overarching objectives of the evaluation were:

1. **Provide an independent verification of the ECSSAGEM program** outputs and achieved outcomes against expected results.
2. **Identify and assess key internal and external factors** (positive and negative) that have contributed, affected or impeded the achievements, and how CRECCOM has managed these factors.
3. **Derive key lessons learned and achievements from the program**, identify how earlier program outcomes are relevant and inform the current program and capture key recommendations for continued development of CRECCOM's programs.

During the inception phase, Dubai Cares provided a detailed explanation of the overarching objective of the evaluation, which is to support CRECCOM in their **programmatic thinking and approach going forward**, based on the lessons learned during the implementation of the ECSSAGEM program.

CRECCOM is currently implementing the second phase of the ECSSAGEM program, funded by the MasterCard Foundation. While the assessment of the second phase is beyond the scope of this evaluation, the incorporation of lessons learned during Phase 1 (2015-2017) into Phase 2 (2018-onwards) and *how the program changed CRECCOM's way of working* were critical aspects of the evaluation.

Dubai Cares was also interested in the level of attention that CRECCOM gained during the first phase of the ECSSAGEM program, especially with district and national government authorities, and whether there is an **intention to scale up** programs like ECSSAGEM at the national level in the future.

To respond to these learning needs, the evaluation team amended the evaluation approach compared to the approach presented in the technical proposal.

Finally, in line with the ToR, the five OECD-DAC evaluation criteria retained for this evaluation were:

- **Relevance** of the program in terms of beneficiaries' needs and reaching the most marginalized, education sector policy priorities and national development objectives;
- **Efficiency** of the interventions in terms of use of resources and capacity;
- **Effectiveness** of the program in terms of achieving planned results by carrying out the planned activities;
- **Impact** of the program in terms of improving the transition to secondary school and learning outcomes of girls (and boys) in participating schools; and
- **Sustainability** in terms of continuation of the positive effects of the program, including its integration into the overall development and education reform context in Malawi, as well as its complementarity with initiatives undertaken by other development partners.

2.2 Users

The primary audience of the evaluation findings is **CRECCOM** management and staff, **Dubai Cares** staff and other actors involved in the implementation of the program such as local and national Ministry of Education officials, as well as members of the targeted communities. The **MasterCard Foundation**, who is funding the next phase of the program, may also find the lessons learned from this evaluation relevant.

We understand that Dubai Cares and CRECCOM may communicate evaluation findings to the following groups:

- National/decentralized government education planners and managers, school inspectors/quality assurance officers;
- Community leaders and local institutions members;
- Participants in program interventions such as teachers and head teachers; and
- Parents and adolescent girls and boys.

2.3 Evaluation questions

As part of the inception phase, the evaluation team discussed and reviewed the list of guiding questions included in the ToR, helping to outline the scope of the evaluation.

Following a preliminary desk review and further consultations with key stakeholders during the inception phase, the revised questions are presented in the evaluation matrix (**Annex 3**). Questions have been reorganized by categories to reflect the OECD DAC criteria.

2.4 Overall approach

To optimize the *learning dimension*, the evaluation team used a utilization-focused approach where the evaluation is done *with* and *for* specific intended primary users, *for* specific intended uses.

At the core of the proposed approach is this question: *How do lessons learned from the ECSSAGEM program inform and guide CRECCOM's continued work and current programs for enhancing adolescent girls' education in Malawi? How has the program changed CRECCOM's way of working?*

To answer this overarching question, we used a **contribution analysis approach**, to enable a rigorous analysis of the CRECCOM program's contribution to improving adolescent girls' education in participating schools and communities. This approach allowed us to distinguish between the *different interventions of the program* and their relative effectiveness, as well as between *the design of the program versus the quality of its implementation*.

This approach is particularly suited to understanding the extent to which CRECCOM has learned from the design and implementation of the ECSSAGEM program, and how this has contributed to shaping current and future CRECCOM programs.

2.5 Data collection methods

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, as outlined below.

- (i) **In-depth review of program documentation** (program rationale, theory of change, baseline report, monitoring reports, etc.) and available secondary data (data generated by the program) was a critically important starting point, enabling the evaluation team to refine the list of key questions, elaborate these via further sub-questions, and ensure that the toolkit design responds to national and local context in Malawi. The desk review primarily served to provide *an independent verification of the program outputs and achieved outcomes against its expected results*, as well as to identify the gaps in the evidence base that were addressed during the data collection phase.
- (ii) **Stakeholder interviews with CRECCOM staff and MoEST** took place via Skype. The aim was to probe and follow-up on the independent review of program outputs and outcomes carried out by the evaluation team as part of the desk review. Specific attention was given to the efficiency of implementation, the sustainability of outcomes and the lessons learned by CRECCOM staff during the program. The list of stakeholders interviewed can be found in **Annex 6**.
- (iii) **Key informants interviews/ group discussions in schools, communities and key local institutions** targeted stakeholders from a sample of schools in the district among participating schools and communities (sample presented in **Annex 4**). A questionnaire was developed for each category of respondent (e.g. head teachers, teachers, school managers, community leaders, district education officers), with the aim of capturing the effects of the program within the overall education environment in the Thyolo District.
- (iv) **In-depth qualitative discussions with girls, boys and their care givers** were key for the evaluation team to understand the extent to which

the ECSSAGEM program influenced community practices and learning processes for girls in participating schools and communities. In particular, we identified the factors that enable a smooth transition to secondary schooling as well as higher retention rates in upper primary and lower secondary grades. To achieve this, a **Most Significant Change approach** was used to determine which interventions proved most useful at removing barriers for girls to effectively access, stay and learn at school. Special attention was placed on assessing the *effects of the program on boys* and their interactions with girls, to determine how effective the mixing of boys and girls in the interventions has been. Both adolescent girls and adolescent boys' perspectives were included in the evaluation.

The evaluation team visited 15 schools (out of 112 schools; the selection included 10 primary schools and 5 secondary schools; refer to list presented in **Annex 4**). **Table 1** presents our sampling strategy and data collection methods.

Table 1. Data collection levels and sampling strategy

<i>Data collection level</i>	<i>Sampling strategy</i>	<i>Sample size (achieved)</i>
National and district levels	→ Thyolo district → National government, Ministry of Education	9 interviews with district education officers and MoEST officials
School level	15 schools selected from list of benefitting schools provided by CRECCOM → 10 primary schools → 5 secondary schools	15 group discussions with head teachers, teachers, and/or school managers → 10 primary schools → 5 secondary schools
Community level	Catchment area of selected schools	13 group discussions with community actors, such as community leaders, leaders of Mothers groups, Village Forum groups, VSLA groups and school management committees <i>Note: In two cases, the primary and secondary schools were located in the same community, therefore we only carried out one group discussion with community actors for both schools.</i>
Individual level	At the school, or catchment area of selected schools	Group discussions with 15 groups of 2 girls and 2 boys; Group discussions with 15 groups of 3-6 care givers

Data collection tools for the above methods were developed during the inception phase, and are presented in **Annex 5**. The field work started on 1st July and ended on 11th July 2019. The list of stakeholders interviewed can be found in **Annex 6**.

2.6 Limitations

The following limitations were encountered and addressed by the evaluation team.

Limitations to the approach and methods

- Access to secondary data including ECSSAGEM's baseline and endline data, attendance data and exam results was instrumental for the evaluation team to confidently assess learning improvements and increases in transition rates from primary to secondary education brought about by the ECSSAGEM program. In a number of schools visited during field work, the absence of enrolment and attendance records, and the lack of gender-disaggregated data meant that the verification was confined to a reduced number of schools.
- The risk of lost institutional memory was fairly high with this evaluation being commissioned almost two years after the program ended. However, the staff from CRECCOM who was involved in the implementation of ECSSAGEM was still working for the organization and the evaluation team managed to interview all involved, either in person or by phone.
- The evaluation team benefited from committed in-country support from the implementing partner, CRECCOM. In particular, access to information about students taking part in the different activities of the ECSSAGEM program was important to ensure that the evaluation team selected relevant respondents during the evaluation.

Limitations during field work

- The distance between the schools and the remoteness of certain parts of Thyolo district where ECSSAGEM was operating led to delays in reaching some of the schools. In some cases, students had already left the school and gone home when the evaluation team arrived for the interviews. This prevented the evaluation team from achieving the planned sample of student interviews – to remedy this, the team interviewed additional students in the schools where students were available at the time of field work. The specific departures from the original sample are detailed and explained in **Annex 6**.
- The evaluation team visited one school during field work which had not benefited from the ECSSAGEM program. The school had originally been selected to receive the intervention, but the District Executive Committee in charge of discussing selected schools with CRECCOM deemed that this school should be replaced with another one in stronger need of the ECSSAGEM activities. Therefore, the evaluation team interviewed teachers, students and the community from the school that had not received the interventions, which provided interesting insights into the workings of non-ECSSAGEM schools, in contrast with schools who had benefitted from the program.
- Issues arose during field work regarding the size of the community groups that showed up for the interviews – sometimes as large as 40 people. In such cases, the evaluation team divided the group into smaller groups and conducted several group discussions instead of a single one with community

members. The number of participants in each group discussion is detailed in **Annex 6**.

- As expected prior to field work, some respondents had difficulties remembering the trainings they benefited from during the ECSSAGEM program. Some of the trainings took place more than two years prior to this evaluation. As far as possible, the evaluation team probed about the timing of the training, the content and the benefits, using examples to jog the respondents' memory. Specific questions were asked to make sure that participants referred to trainings delivered by ECSSAGEM, and not trainings delivered by other NGOs active in the area.
- Related to the above point, with a two-year period between the end of the program and this evaluation, some of the teachers had been transferred to new schools and therefore not available for interviewing. We highlight the few schools where this was an issue in **Annex 6**.

3 Findings

3.1 Relevance and program design

How relevant is the program design for addressing the factors preventing girls from transitions from primary to secondary school? ...the establishment of mentoring and support initiatives outside the schools themselves? ...the efforts taken to mobilize community and key local institutions? ...the activities with regards to improving the classroom teaching practices and the learning opportunities? ...and the Public Private Partnership (PPP) strategy for resource mobilization?

The Theory of Change developed during this evaluation using the ECSSAGEM documentation is presented in **Annex 7**. It posits that girls' educational retention and transition will improve if all the ecologies that affect girls' education are aligned in support of girls' educational success. These ecologies include: individual girls and their peers, their families/communities, their leaders, their primary schools, their secondary schools, and local and national education policies.

The relevance of program activities is assessed based on the extent to which the different activities responded to the challenges faced by girls with regards to access to education and transition to secondary school.

Based on the interviews conducted during this evaluation and in line with the program design documentation, the key challenges expressed were as follows: (1) inability to pay secondary school fees and difficulties paying for the school development fund at primary school level³; (2) prevalence of early pregnancies and early marriages leading to drop-out; (3) lack of female role models to showcase the benefits of going to school, and girls lacking motivation due to low support from parents and the community; and finally, (4) not enough secondary schools

³ While primary school is free in Malawi, parents are required to pay into the school development fund, which can be seen as a *de facto* school fee. The amount is around Kwacha 700 per term per student.

to absorb all the students who pass the final examination at the end of primary school.

The ECSSAGEM program had a **strong focus on addressing the factors leading to drop-out**, namely early pregnancies and early marriage, the inability to pay school fees/ the school development fund and the lack of support within communities and schools. As such, the establishment (/strengthening) of mentoring and support initiatives outside the schools themselves – such as mother groups, girls' retreats, the intervention of role models, VSL groups – was highly relevant to ensure that the community and key local institutions were mobilized to support girls' access and transition to secondary school. In this regard, the ECSSAGEM program design was strongly oriented towards girls, their families and communities and the local institutions, rather than focusing solely on the school environment. However, a key limitation of this model is the weight placed on the different community structures to participate in supporting girls' education and transition to secondary school, as discussed in the **Sustainability section** of this report.

As shown later in the **Effectiveness and Impact sections**, this holistic model proved successful, demonstrating that the root causes for dropping out should be addressed both inside and outside of the school environment. The activities organized at the school level with regards to improving classroom teaching practices and learning were focused on teaching quality, specifically targeting English teaching techniques and gender responsive teaching methods. This ensured a very deliberate use of resources towards well-defined aspects of teaching quality, rather than attempting to work with all aspects of teaching and learning within the school. However, the relevance of the cascade training model is less clear – requiring trained teachers to train their peers increased the responsibilities of teachers already dealing with poor teaching conditions, as discussed in the **Efficiency section**.

Despite the strong relevance of the ECSSAGEM program design to respond to the main challenges faced by girls with regards to access to education and transition to secondary school, the limitations of school infrastructure have not been addressed as part of the program and the **insufficient number of secondary schools** to absorb all the students who pass the final examination at the end of primary school remains a key bottleneck.

Similarly, poverty remains a key barrier for the targeted communities, who have to prioritize survival over education in some instances. The VSL group trainings were a relevant activity to provide temporary relief and support parents to pay school fees or buy school uniforms when necessary, but these do not provide a long-term solution to endemic poverty in Thyolo district. As explained by community members part of the Mother Group in Nkoma:

Parents are sometimes rude when we encourage them to bring their children back to school. They tell us they need their children's help during the market days to earn a living. Looking at the poor parents, we sometimes understand their situation and it is hard for us to say otherwise.

The Public Private Partnership (PPP) strategy was also a relevant activity designed to strengthen resource mobilization – however, it did not result in equipping the government and community stakeholders with skills in resource mobilization due to changes in local government staff and low prioritization in the political agenda.

To what extent were beneficiary communities and local/central education authorities consulted with regards to the program design and implementation, monitoring and alterations or improvement? Did the use of Design Research and Learning promote participation and involvement and showed sensitivity to context? What mechanisms were in place to ensure accountability and how well did it work?

The level of involvement from beneficiary communities and local/central education authorities in the design and implementation of the program varies considerably.

At the central level, the education authorities interviewed at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and at the Ministry of Civic Education, Culture and Community Development expressed that they have been involved through meetings and consultations in all stages of the program.

At the local level, the district education management office (DEM) indicated that they were very much involved. They were part of the initial research (baseline survey) and selection of schools, they participated in the dissemination of information during community meetings, facilitated opening of workshops, conducted follow-ups, and shared lessons learned regarding the setting-up of bylaws. However, the district education office does not seem to have a plan or capacity to sustain the results of the program. There was neither an accountability mechanism in place. As explained by the DEM, *"the meetings (with CRECCOM) were not done in a formal or systematic way"*.

Based on the interviews, **parents in general were not involved in designing, improving or evaluating the project**, but were briefed by the community leaders about the program. For instance, the Luchenza CDSS parents did not know that the project ended in 2017 and that the next phase of the program, IEQ CDSS, had started. Even the teachers said they were just informed that the program ended and CRECCOM was waiting for new funding. This shows a break in communication and possible lack of a proper exit strategy for the programme.

The majority of the interviewed teachers and head teachers were not involved in the program design. Some reported feeling that the program used a top down approach. As expressed by the teachers at Luchenza CDSS, *"supervisors came to school to observe (some teachers from the clusters self-evaluated the methodologies and gave opinions). But there was no follow-up of the actual training"*. A few teachers were involved in the follow-up whereby they assessed the improvement and successes in the application of the new acquired methodologies: *"We had classroom observations and feedback. Then we could evaluate how good the training was and how it should be done next time"*.

Students were not involved with the exception of students in Thunga primary school, who said they were **consulted about their needs and set-up of the clubs**: *"we were asked what we wanted to do in the clubs and our opinions were taken into account in the program"*.

On the contrary, **community actors⁴ were consulted about the design of the program** and that is where stronger involvement in the program is found. As stated by the community actors in different communities:

ECSSAGEM had ideas, but the community too. We blended them together and had the flexibility to do this. To do what we wanted to do as a community. (Thunga CDSS community)

We were involved in the design of the program. ECSSAGEM came with ideas about how to organize the mother groups but the community gave input in the content and on how to teach the girls and develop the content of the bylaws. (Mpenda CDSS and primary school community)

The existing structures within the communities⁵ are influential and have action plans that address issues affecting girls' dropout and transition in the area and have follow-up mechanisms in place. In comparison to F olupensi community where the actors observed that they were not involved in any stage of the program implementation, their opinion was rather critical: *"it is important to put in place follow-up mechanisms, and [...] there is need for logical project exiting as the program ended abruptly"*.

It seems that the *Design Research and Learning* component was more of an **internal learning tool** used to inform the program based on evidence, **rather than a participation or accountability tool**. As reflected in the interviews with CREC-COM staff, the *"design research allows for direct contact with community groups and discuss needs to be addressed, and we get as much learning as we can"*. From the interviews with beneficiaries and local and central education authorities, it appears that there were large differences in the level of participation and involvement, so it is likely that the Design Research and Learning tool was not purposively and systematically used to promote participation.

How is the program tied to the overall education environment in Malawi, specifically in regards to girls' transition into secondary school?

The ECSSAGEM program was developed very much in line with the overall education environment in Malawi and **sought to address major challenges identified by the national policies and strategies** (refer to Annex 7). For instance, the Government of Malawi developed gender related laws such as Gender Equality Act of 2013. The law encourages equality of participation of boys and girls in education and training by reinforcing a quota of 40:60 when selecting students to secondary and tertiary schools. The law also eliminates harmful practices such as sexual harassments. The government through Ministry of Education and Departments of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare in collaboration with CREC-COM has been raising awareness about this law. In an interview with government representatives, the Chief Community Development Officer at the Department of Community Development pointed out that:

We have been sensitizing policy-makers and managers on Keeping Girls in School initiatives by providing bursaries, teaching girls and mother groups on

⁴ Community leaders, members of mother groups, village forums and VSL groups.

⁵ Already existing groups and structures such as mother groups, VSL groups, village forums and community leaders.

resource mobilization and making of sanitary pads. Also we have been mobilizing chiefs and school committees to improve the quality education and to learn English.

With regards to the implementation of the readmission policy, one of the trainings conducted by the ECSSAGEM program consisted in working with the community leaders to define bylaws regarding readmission and to train them and the mother groups to enforce the laws. As confirmed by the communities visited, this is working well:

We have a low dropout rate thanks to the local leaders who are applying the bylaws. (Luchenza primary school community)

If there is a case of early marriage, we have the bylaws. Parents are called, there is a chief court and they have to pay a fine. (Nansato primary school community)

Also linked to the government policies and strategies to address the issue of low transition rates from primary to secondary school, the ECSSAGEM program has **pushed for new English teaching methodologies and gender sensitive approaches** in the training of teachers and head teachers. Despite these efforts, constraints like school fees, lack of CDSSs, inadequate teaching learning materials among others remain.

3.2 Efficiency of implementation

Generally, were the activities carried out in line with the original plans? If not, were the changes adequately discussed, documented, and justified? To what extent did the program activities contribute to the success/failure of the program expected outcomes? Was the program implemented based on the best use of existing resources/capacity? To what extent could CRECCOM develop improved practices and introduce efficiencies in its program operations?

Based on the bi-annual reports shared with Dubai Cares over the course of the project, the activities were **generally carried out in line with the original plans**. The difficulty to obtain government approvals for some of the activities and the school holidays did however cause a few implementation delays, requiring a three-month no-cost extension.

Changes were documented and adequately justified, based on observations during program implementation. For instance, as mentioned in one of the bi-annual report prepared for Dubai Cares:

ECSSAGEM learned [...] that fieldworkers typically do not use project manuals in implementing community activities for different reasons such as unfriendly materials for training, language problems due to lack of translated materials, bulky manuals, lack of orientations to the manuals, etc. The project therefore adopted the approach of having mini-manuals for each activity to facilitate usage of materials by fieldworkers during meetings and workshops. Additional mini-manuals will be provided to the fieldworkers over the course of the project, in an on-demand fashion that addresses fieldworker needs more effectively.

The design research approach (refer to **Relevance section**) also greatly contributed to the success of the program, as it allowed an in-depth understanding of the

community structures, current roles and responsibilities, and gaps. This was a crucial step in enabling the best use of communities' institutions as well as the existing staff and systems of MoEST. Limitations were also highlighted during the design research phase. An important lesson in this regard was that "government stakeholders need financial support from project implementers for effective implementation of activities such as monitoring at the grassroots level [...] because significant constraints [such as] transportation currently stop the stakeholders from conducting their planned activities in more geographically distant communities and schools" (Bi-annual report to Dubai Cares).

Regarding the internal capacity and expertise of CRECCOM itself, the delivery of the ECSSAGEM program was organized from a local office in Thyolo and with the help of local program officers. CRECCOM reports having to deal with turnover of staff during the two years; however, this did not significantly hinder the implementation of the program. The key staff members in charge of the ECSSAGEM program are still working for CRECCOM and now involved in the next program, IEQ-CDSS.

The efficiency of ECSSAGEM operations was improved on several occasions during the lifetime of the program, using an **incremental approach to change** with a focus on small but crucial aspects of implementation. For instance, CRECCOM wrote in a bi-annual report to Dubai Cares:

Mentoring of girls should be done after classes as very little time is given to the Mother Groups when it is during class time. Mother Groups should be provided with reference materials for mentoring and counselling, and these materials should be shared with the Head Teacher to ensure continuity.

What were the major obstacles in the process of implementation of ECSSAGEM at school, community, stakeholder and national policy levels? To what extent did the key contextual changes, threats and opportunities that arose during implementation influence and inform program implementation? How appropriate were the alternative solutions/changes proposed and/or implemented by the team to overcome the challenges faced during the program implementation?

Various obstacles were encountered by CRECCOM during the implementation of the ECSSAGEM program. First, the selection of target schools for the program was done in collaboration with the District Executive Committee, which helped identify the most vulnerable areas and schools in Thyolo district. While this collaboration enables more coordination at the district level between the different NGOs operating in the area, it also means that **the District Executive Committee selects the schools which are harder to reach** and where no other organization is providing support. In terms of impact on the process of implementation, this means that the ECSSAGEM program had to work in some of the most remote and disadvantaged schools in the area, leading to difficulties accessing some schools on a regular basis during rainy weather and periods of flooding. This also meant working with communities affected by periods of famine, during which survival matters most than education.

Related to these difficulties working with remote schools, the ECSSAGEM team faced some **issues with the implementation of teacher trainings**. While the

team tried to have a common approach to the trainings (length, number of participants, process for the selection of teachers), it proved difficult to implement a common blueprint for the trainings as the trainers (from the Teacher Development Centre in Blantyre) sometimes changed the number of days for the training based on their availability. Regarding the selection of teachers attending the trainings, the head teachers in the schools sometimes decided to send different teachers to the trainings although the training was designed as a series of trainings that the same teacher would attend over the course of several months.

The cascade training model also turned out difficult to implement in practice. CRECCOM explained that this was a way to ensure that the trainings were delivered in a short period of time, taking into account the limited availability of the trainers and the short duration of the ECSSAGEM program. As discussed in the **Effectiveness section**, teachers complained that their peers refused to be trained by the teachers who were trained directly and who had received a travel allowance. Rather than creating a strong mentoring system, directly trained teachers were left to use the skills they acquired during the training without passing them on to other teachers in the school. In addition, some teachers were transferred to other schools during the implementation of the program, which meant the skills transfer became hard to monitor for the ECSSAGEM team.

Finally, CRECCOM mentioned some difficulties working with politicians in Thyolo, which is considered a political district due to the fact that the sitting president of Malawi is from the area. As part of the strategy to engage and secure buy-in from the government, CRECCOM initially invited political figures to participate in their events around supporting girls' education, only to find that the politicians attempted to use these platforms to promote their political agenda. CRECCOM eventually stopped inviting them to make sure they could control the narrative during these events.

Was the agreed monitoring and evaluation framework relevant for the program and how and to what extent have monitoring and evaluation findings been used to inform decision-making and the improvement of program implementation?

CRECCOM designed a monitoring and evaluation framework using the Monitoring and Evaluation for Quality Improvement approach, which involved an initial phase of design research and continued monitoring and evaluation activities during the program. The emphasis is primarily on collecting data that have evident implications for activities and processes improvement. The design research aspect of the framework is discussed in the **Relevance section**.

Based on the documentation reviewed and the interviews conducted with CRECCOM and the program participants, the approach taken towards monitoring and evaluation during the ECSSAGEM program was effective and led to **enhanced decision-making and improvements in the way the program was implemented**. The process is adequately captured in the bi-annual reporting to Dubai Cares, which included a regular review of lessons learned from other projects operating in the area and deciding how to course correct the ECSSAGEM program activities as a result.

During an interview with CRECCOM, the Executive Director mentioned that:

[During the ECSSAGEM program,] we paid particular attention to the lessons we were learning. We did regular monitoring and asked ourselves what we need to change to make it work.

Finally, the burden related to data collection was not something communities, schools, parents or girls complained about, which is remarkable considering the wealth of data collected during the ECSSAGEM program. According to CRECCOM, the team “developed low-stress data collection templates, improved processes for feeding data back into quality improvement efforts, and carefully documented the changes that had occurred to activities and processes. [...] As a result, the team could provide evidence of effects before endline data collection, and also enriched the data collected during the endline process by triangulating many of the results with monitoring and qualitative data” (ECSSAGEM endline report). Data collection tools and templates are included in the ECSSAGEM endline report.

3.3 Effectiveness

How effective were CRECCOM staff and the trainers in delivering the trainings, workshops and mentoring efforts to the different target groups and in supporting the trainees regularly? What were the successes/challenges when improving the teaching practices and learning process of girls and boys in the 112 schools?

One of ECSSAGEM’s objectives was to increase English teachers’ learning skills and capacity to create a gender-responsive environment. New teaching strategies introduced during the trainings delivered by instructors from the Teacher Training Colleges included the “Story Star” and “Character Map” that could be used with all students.

According to the English language assessment conducted by ECSSAGEM as part of the baseline and endline evaluations, the percentage of teachers who scored “above average” increased from 26% at baseline to 43% at endline. Another aspect of the ECSSAGEM trainings conducted with teachers dealt with gender awareness, and similarly, the endline report written by CRECCOM highlights that the percentage of girls who said that their teachers treat girls as fairly as boys increased from 54% at baseline to 78% at endline.

While these results are satisfying, the interviews conducted with teachers, girls and boys during this evaluation point out at potential **areas for improvement in the way the trainings were designed and conducted**. For instance, the ECSSAGEM program documentation states that teacher trainings were “designed to create a cohort effect, with head teachers and teachers coming to work together closely to support each other’s goals for improving girls’ education, and a longitudinal effect, as teachers learned how to deepen their own practice and support other teachers in theirs” (ECSSAGEM endline report). In practice however, teachers reported that the trainings were either too short or too intense with regards to the amount of information shared during the sessions, with little or no follow-up. As explained by Mpenda CDSS teachers:

These are important teaching strategies. We apply some of them but not all because we don't feel confident yet. We were taught too many teaching strategies in a short period of time.

The **cascade training model** used in the ECSSAGEM program is also questionable and does not appear to have led to the *cohort effect* described in the ECSSAGEM documentation quoted above. As reported by the teachers in Luchenza and Thunga primary schools:

Going to the training means that you get an allowance, so when you go back and try to train the other teachers, they are jealous because you got the allowance and they didn't. So they say you should do the work yourself because you were trained, and you should not train them.

[...] not all of us teachers were trained, so we then needed to train the other teachers in our schools and that didn't work so well.

We would recommend that ECSSAGEM trains all the teachers in the future, not just one or two per school. Trained teachers are expected to train other teachers, but this doesn't always work.

A difficulty that CRECCOM encountered with their model during the ECSSAGEM program relates to the turnover of teachers and to the fact that head teachers kept **sending different teachers to each training**, when the trainings were meant to be attended as a series of sessions by the same teachers.

Another aspect of the trainings that could have been dealt with differently relates to the use of trainers from the Teacher Training Colleges in Blantyre. Teachers from a primary school in Thyolo mentioned that:

For the training, ECSSAGEM could have used local secondary school teachers instead of bringing the teachers from the Teacher College in Blantyre. They don't know our context. They could have provided more hands-on and regular follow up if they were from Thyolo and not Blantyre. We have a teacher development centre nearby that could have been used.

Despite the inefficiencies regarding how the trainings were conducted, the evidence points towards improvements in teacher practices and learning processes in ECSSAGEM schools, and the majority of teachers report **using and applying the teaching strategies they learned about** during the training more than two years after the end of the program. A positive aspect relates to the suitability of the teaching strategies to large classrooms.

Finally, the **gender awareness aspects of the training** were overall less present in the teachers' memory compared to the English teaching strategies, although most teachers reported treating boys and girls evenly in the classroom, avoiding negative comments and encouraging girls to participate while making sure boys do not intimidate them. In this regard, boys and girls' clubs appear to have more successfully contributed to raising gender awareness among students and to some extent among teachers.

How effective were CRECCOM and the program at large in raising awareness and commitment of communities/school staff for girls' education and transition into secondary school? Did the program manage to get communities/government (national and local) buy-in regarding the program? What are the best practices that have evolved from the community engagement processes?

Raising awareness around girls' education and ensuring commitment/ buy-in from the community regarding the ECSSAGEM program was **achieved successfully through an effective mobilization model**⁶ and the use of *existing* community groups. The commitment of the community is still clear two years after the end of the program (refer to **Sustainability section**).

Working with various groups and at various levels has led to a strong coordination and complementarity between the different program activities, which in turn have enabled the Theory of Change to unfold as expected (refer to **Annex 7**). In particular, the parallel training of Mother Groups, Village Forums, VSL groups and community leaders led to **solid community structures and processes** in support of girls' education and transition to secondary school. As explained by community members in Masambanjati and Thunga, reflecting a common narrative collected during the interviews conducted as part of this evaluation:

All the ECSSAGEM activities were most effective to bring about the change. For instance, the Village Forum will go around the communities mobilizing the girls, Mother Groups would counsel them and encourage the parents to keep a place for their girls at school. The Mother Groups would also give regular counseling to the girls once they are re-enrolled and organize retreats with them. The benefits of these retreats and counselling sessions have been reduction of pregnancies and early marriage. The VSL group comes in to support the girls with any school materials or basic needs. The local leaders and initiation counsellors make sure they talk to parents whose girls have dropped out because of pregnancy, marriage or any other reason to bring their children back to school, and the local leaders also enforce the by-laws against early pregnancies and marriage. The local leaders have the biggest role of empowering all the groups to work hard.

The child is being supported by all groups at the same time. The mother group finds the child, then the village bank [VSL group] provides funding, the village forum monitors the community and parents, and the local leaders enforce the by-laws. Before ECSSAGEM, these groups were not working together.

According to the ECSSAGEM endline report, 97% of communities had by-laws⁷ or action plans in place to address early marriage and early pregnancy and 83% of village forums were tracking and responding to girls' school dropout and transition issues in 2017. In 2019, at the time of this evaluation and two years after the end of the program, most communities whom we interviewed mentioned the establishment of by-laws or action plans together with ECSSAGEM facilitators with the aim

⁶ CRECCOM conceived and uses a social and behavioural change communication model called Social Mobilization Campaign (SMC) Model to both reach out and impact marginalized groups and communities, and engage duty bearers to influence policy. The SMC model empowers community members, governance and development structures, extension workers, cultural and other institutions, community leadership, policy-makers, men, women, girls and boys in problem identification and coming up with effective and sustainable solutions. <http://www.creccommw.org/>

⁷ By-laws stand both for regulations enacted by decentralized authorities or "local conventions" binding village community groups.

to reduce early marriages and pregnancies. **The by-laws are still implemented** to this day, as expressed by the community in Nansato and Mpenda:

If a girl is pregnant, the village forum identifies her and talks to the parents with the community leader to make arrangements so that the girl can return to school. The marriages are broken down by the local leaders and if not, parents are brought to the police. Our by-laws were set after the ECSSAGEM training. There is a fine to pay in case of an early marriage/ pregnancy, and everyone agrees that the faulty parents have to pay the fine.

Before ECSSAGEM, there was no enforcement of the laws. Now the mother group and the leaders know their role in the community and have been given guidance. We feel empowered because we know we can do something about the situation.

Mother Groups also **created a link between the community and the school** by accompanying re-enrolled girls and organizing girls' retreats, which is seen as valuable by both community members and teachers.

The trainings for VSL agents was seen as relevant and informative, helping trainees understand the mechanisms of such groups, the distribution of shares and loans/ interest rates. CRECCOM had also discovered that over 250 VSL groups existed in the target communities prior to the start of the program, but that only 30 of these groups had a trained VSL agent. The ECSSAGEM program therefore worked with the existing groups, training VSL members to make the groups functional. The endline report indicates that ECSSAGEM trained 499 VSL agents, which is an average of two agents per village.

However, with a starting capital of Kwacha 50,000 per VSL group provided by ECSSAGEM, the **size of the loans was small and did not lead to major changes for parents and girls**. Parents take out loans to invest in farming or small businesses. Some parents buy school material or a school uniform but it is not very common. While successful in some ways for providing small loans, it is therefore unclear whether the VSL groups and the loans they provide had a substantial and lasting impact on parents' living conditions and girls' ability to go to school and transition to secondary school.

Overall, community members complained that the trainings they received were too short and did not extend to all group members but to only one or two members, leaving them to train the rest of the groups with more or less success. In Masambanjati and Thunga, community members highlighted this:

ECSSAGEM only trained a selected few within the groups and this resulted into creating commotions as some were not very active, leaving the work to those who received training. If there would be another phase [of the ECSSAGEM program], we would recommend that the trainings involve all the group members e.g. VSL, Village forum, Mother Groups. Also, the community leaders and initiation counsellors need a refresher course, being trained once was not enough.

The training for the mother group was useful. We understood our role as counsellors, became more confident and established trust with the girls. The training could have been longer, too much to take in in 2 days – it would be better to do a full week. Also we don't get transportation allowance to visit the girls' families, so we cannot monitor as well as we want.

Finally, getting government buy-in at the district level proved less straightforward than with the communities. Despite interactions between government extension

staff/district departmental managers and community members during key stages of the ECSSAGEM program, **it is unclear to what extent the district education manager and officers have changed their approach to addressing education issues.** No sustainable communication was established between district managers and the communities as a result of the ECSSAGEM program, and the government's focus on community needs regarding education could not be evidenced during the interviews. In addition, the signing of an MoU between private companies, local leaders and district officials has not led to any concrete activities in support of quality education in schools in Thyolo district.

How effective or ineffective was the mixing of boys and girls in the interventions? Could the program have been implemented differently?

The gender dimension in the ECSSAGEM program is mentioned in the proposal as part of the description of boys' and girls' forums, which provides the rationale for mixing boys and girls in the intervention (emphasis added by the evaluation team):

*Boys' forums provide a venue for deliberate efforts to ensure that **boys, an essential component of girls' environment**, are supportive of girls' academic and social advancements and attainments. CRECCOM's Promotion of Girls' Education (PROGE) Project proved the **importance of support from boys** in improving girls' educational outcomes. Gender equality promoting interventions have a greater chance of success when men and boys are involved in addressing gender inequalities. ECSSAGEM takes particular advantage of studies that show that younger men are far more flexible in their gender role expectations, and hence targeting them makes a huge difference. Through Forum gatherings, **boys will learn to appreciate the challenges faced by girls**, reflect on how they tend to perpetrate gender based violence against girls, and decide jointly on what they can do to safeguard girls' environment in a brother-sister relationship. They will thus learn to proactively respond to issues like fondling, bullying or teasing, and negative attitudes that dwarf girls' ambitions, willpower, and actions. They will respect girls' sexual and reproductive rights and learn to recognize the connections between girls' improved health and wellbeing and their own.*

Using the Gender Responsive Assessment Scale⁸ developed by UN Women and WHO, the intention with the ECSSAGEM program can be qualified as **gender-specific** (*Considers women's and men's specific needs*) and to some extent **gender-transformative** (*Includes ways to transform harmful gender norms, roles and relations*).

While the mixing of boys and girls in the forums appears to have been successful, the CRECCOM staff members we interviewed nevertheless acknowledged that they

⁸ **Gender-unequal:** Perpetuates gender inequality by reinforcing unbalanced norms, roles and relations; Privileges men over women (or vice versa); Often leads to one sex enjoying more rights or opportunities than the other.

Gender-blind: Ignores gender norms, roles and relations; Very often reinforces gender-based discrimination; Ignores differences in opportunities and resource allocation for women and men; Often constructed based on the principle of being "fair" by treating everyone the same.

Gender-sensitive: Considers gender norms, roles and relations; Does not address inequality generated by unequal norms, roles or relations; Indicates gender awareness, although often no remedial action is developed.

Gender-specific: Considers women's and men's specific needs; Intentionally targets and benefits a specific group of women or men to achieve certain policy or programme goals or meet certain needs; Makes it easier for women and men to fulfil duties that are ascribed to them based on their gender roles.

Gender-transformative: Addresses the causes of gender-based inequities; Includes ways to transform harmful gender norms, roles and relations; The objective is often to promote gender equality; Includes strategies to foster progressive changes in power relationships between women and men.

had to deal with **boys' resentment towards girls because they were the main beneficiaries** of most ECSSAGEM activities (except for the boys' and girls' forums), and that this was not something they had anticipated. Evidence from our interviews with the communities and teachers in Thyolo district confirms the difficulties encountered by ECSSAGEM regarding the limited mixing of boys and girls in the interventions:

In the future, CRECCOM should balance the support provided to boys and girls. They should maybe work with 15 girls and 5 boys for instance, to raise awareness about boys. Otherwise there is exclusion. It make girls feel vulnerable and boys ask "why not us?".

This is nonetheless a difficulty CRECCOM had experienced in the past, according to the interviews we conducted. As an organization, CRECCOM first started by giving out scholarships to selected girl recipients identified as the poorest of the poor. Eventually, girls receiving a scholarship bought nice clothes, shoes and school bags. As such, they became a target for the boys, who sought to marry them or engage in sexual activities with them. The subsequent early marriages and pregnancies led to an increase in drop out for these girls, and CRECCOM decided that there was a need to involve the community and the boys in supporting girls' education in future programs.

To address issues related to boys' resentment experienced during the ECSSAGEM program, CRECCOM has worked towards including a **definition of masculinity in the training manual** for the IEQ-CDSS program, and ensures that male teachers discuss masculinity with the boys.

3.4 Impact

How successful was the program in terms of eliminating or decreasing existing obstacles to girls' education and transition?

The main obstacles to girls' education and transition identified in the ECSSAGEM proposal were as follows: socio-cultural and economic norms (that strongly encourage girls toward wife and mother roles), labor burdens at home, limited familiarity with English, distance to school, lack of safety on the way to school, teacher and peer sexual harassment and parents' inability to pay school fees. In addition to these challenges, the low educational quality of rural primary schools and Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS) is seen as limiting girls' (and boys') educational achievement.

Based on the evidence presented in the endline report and the fieldwork conducted as part of this evaluation, the ECSSAGEM program has **successfully influenced socio-cultural and economic norms** towards encouraging and seeing benefits in girls' education. The decline in dropouts due to early marriage and/or early pregnancy⁹ can be attributed to ECSSAGEM's trainings and sensitization to the value of girls' education, with the community and school environments working

⁹ At endline, 41% of girls' dropouts were due to pregnancy (decrease of 4% compared to baseline) and 33% were due to marriage (decrease of 5% compared to baseline).

closely together to end early marriages and promote readmission after early pregnancies. Teacher and peer sexual harassment has also been reduced and familiarity with English has improved (refer to the **Effectiveness section**).

However, many obstacles are still present, especially structural barriers to girls' education such as poverty, parents' inability to pay school fees, labor burdens at home, distance to school and lack of safety on the way to school. Inability to pay secondary school fees particularly hinders girls' access to secondary schooling, as well as the lack of places at Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS) which operate over their capacity and are unable to offer quality education to the rising number of students reaching secondary school level.

In addition to structural obstacles that tend to affect both boys and girls, girls face **risks of early pregnancy and/or HIV infection as a result of sexual initiation ceremonies**. Organized for girls aged between 10 and 16, the ceremonies still take place despite ECSSAGEM's work with initiation counsellors. Initiation counsellors encourage the girls to have unprotected sex with a man (called a "hyena") after the ceremony as part of a rite of passage called "kusasa fumbi" (sexual cleansing). Based on the evidence collected during fieldwork, the ceremonies are still common, although initiation counsellors report that they have adapted their message to the girls and tell them to refrain from harmful cultural practices such as sexual cleansing.

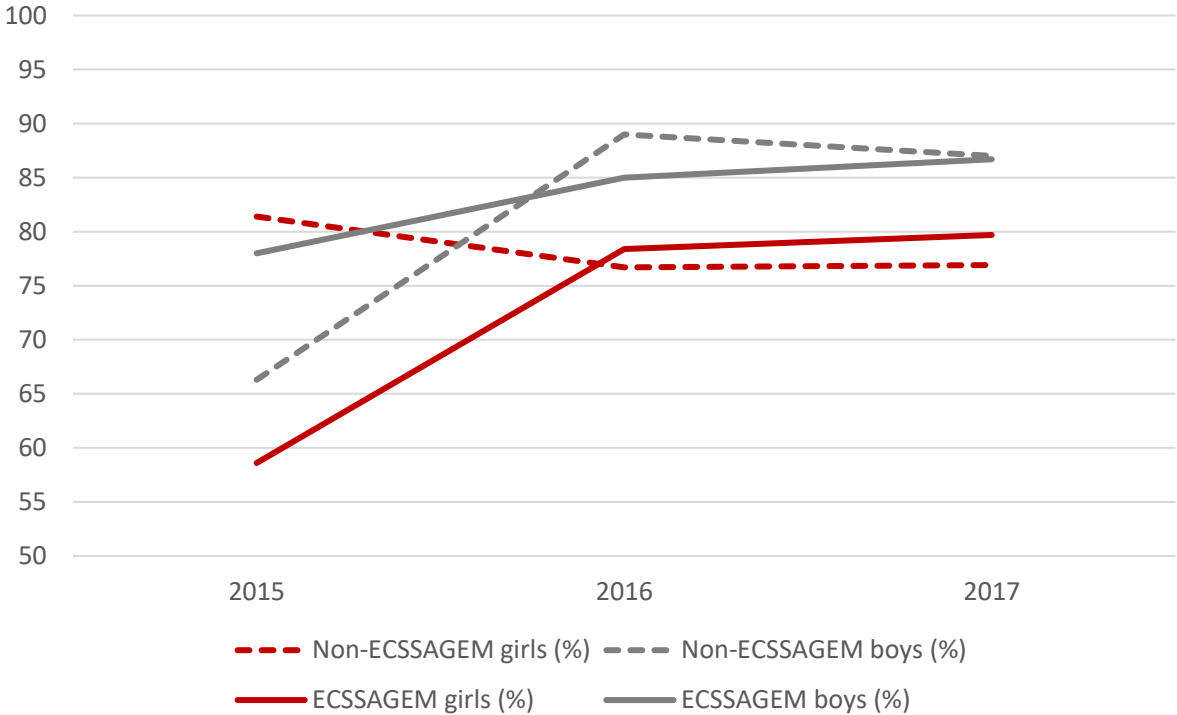
How successful was the program in terms of improving learning outcomes for boys and girls?

Boys' and girls' learning outcomes are measured using administrative data from Thyolo district primary schools, collected between 2015 and 2017. The pass rate for the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examination (PSLCE) is shown on **Figure 1**, disaggregated by sex and ECSSAGEM schools/ non-ECSSAGEM schools.

While it is difficult to say if the increase in ECSSAGEM girls passing the PSLCE between 2015 and 2017 (from 58% to 80%) is *solely attributable* to the ECSSAGEM program, the decreasing trend (from 81% to 77%) in non-ECSSAGEM schools suggests that the program was a key contributor to the **positive change in learning outcomes for girls**. The data also indicate that the schools ECSSAGEM worked with included schools more marginalized than average in the district.

By contrast, boys' PSLCE results in ECSSAGEM and non-ECSSAGEM schools followed the same increasing trend between 2015 and 2017, without a clear indication that ECSSAGEM school boys performed better (or worse) than non-ECSSAGEM school boys.

Figure 1. Percentage of Standard 8 students who passed the PSLCE in ECSSAGEM schools and non-ECSSAGEM schools between 2015 and 2017

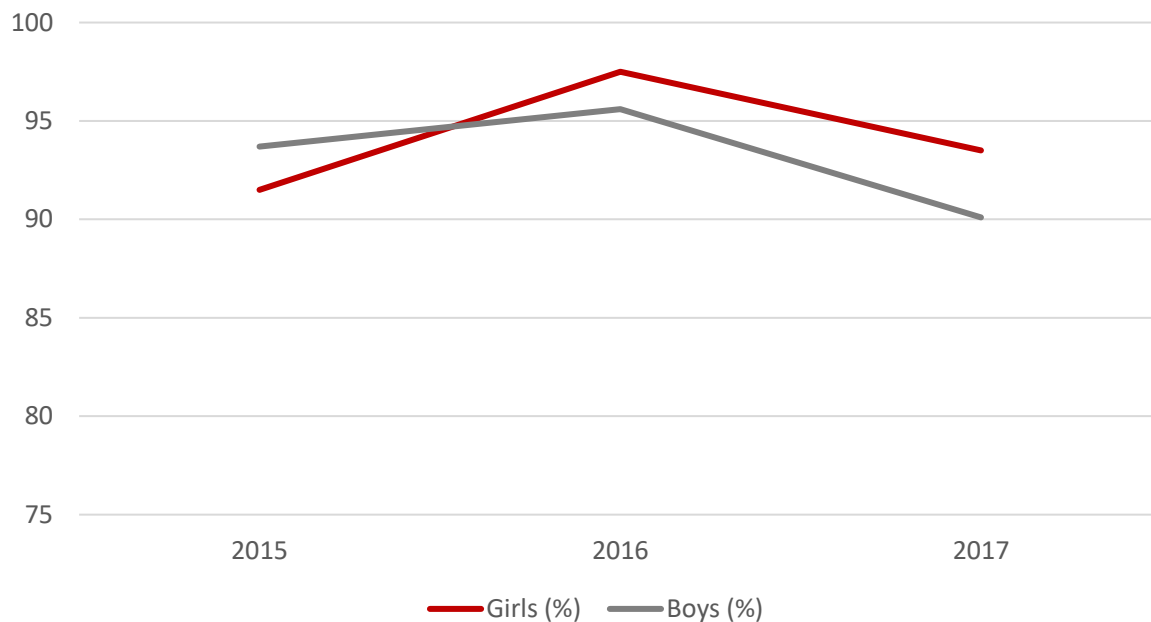


Source: Administrative data from all Thyolo district primary schools. The data table is available in **Annex 8**.

Has the program led to better quality education in the 112 targeted schools? What is the effect on transition rates of girls into secondary education?

While there is a clear increase in the percentage of ECSSAGEM girls passing the PSLCE between 2015 and 2017 (from 58% to 80%), the transition rate from primary to secondary school for girls benefiting from the ECSSAGEM program follows a less clear trend, with an **increase between 2015 and 2016** (from 91% to 97%) **followed by a decrease between 2016 and 2017** (from 97% to 93%). The pattern is similar for boys, and data is not available for non-ECSSAGEM schools to understand if the trend is similar for all students in Thyolo district.

Figure 2. Transition rate from primary to secondary for students benefiting from the ECSSAGEM program between 2015 and 2017



Source: Administrative data collected in 12 ECSSAGEM schools during project start (2015), baseline (2016) and endline (2017). The data table is available in **Annex 8**.

An explanation for this might be the **lack of secondary schools and the limited capacity of existing secondary schools**. As reported by community members in Luchenza:

The problem is that secondary schools cannot accommodate for the number of students who pass the test. So one student for instance had to repeat three times before he got admitted in a secondary school. [...] They want to study but the school is not letting them.

When you get selected to secondary school, there is not enough space and you have to go to a private secondary school instead. It is expensive and far away, we cannot afford this. As a community we are also worried about the quality of education in the CDSS because of the number of students. CDSSs have to do a double-shift, morning and afternoon, and teachers have to split themselves between classes. This is not ideal.

Organizations [such as CRECCOM] come and ask for girls to go back to school but we need school structures and resources to support this.

Despite the work of ECSSAGEM with teachers, the quality of education has been questioned, in both primary and secondary schools. With higher enrolment rates, there is not enough secondary schools for students to attend, and the alternative is to send boys and girls to private secondary schools, which are usually more expensive than CDSSs¹⁰. Another way secondary schools have found to accommodate more students is to introduce a **double-shift system**, which means that the first group of students comes early in the morning but leaves at mid-day, and the second group arrives at mid-day and leaves in the late afternoon. In practice,

¹⁰ School fess for Community Secondary Day Schools (CDSSs) are around Kwacha 7500 per term per student.

teachers and parents have reported that reduced learning time for students is a challenge, as teachers have to teach the students at a faster pace than usual, with less time for questions to discuss issues students do not understand.

With the structural lack of secondary schools affecting transition rates for both boys and girls, it is hard to conclude **whether the ECSSAGEM program had a positive impact on the quality of education** in the 112 schools, if one only considers the changes in the transition rate. Nonetheless, as explained in the **Effectiveness section**, the quality of teaching (English teaching) appears to have improved as a result of the ECSSAGEM program.

How has the initiative influenced the attitudes of parents, communities, school staff and Ministry officers with regards to the importance of girls receiving secondary education? Is the program impacting positively on girls' perception regarding continuing education?

According to a CRECCOM staff member interviewed during the evaluation,

[...] there has been a change in mindset [during the ECSSAGEM program]. Before mothers wanted to marry their daughters and then they left the village. The daughters couldn't take care of the mothers. But now mothers prefer to educate the girls instead of the boys because the girls stay in the community while the boys leave. Mothers want educated girls in the community, able to get a job and contributing to the wealth of the village.

More generally, parents, local leaders and teachers interviewed during the evaluation reported a **positive attitude to girls receiving secondary education**, referring to the ECSSAGEM trainings and awareness raising activities around support to girls' education. In 2017, the endline evaluation conducted by ECSSAGEM found that 63% of parents, leaders, district officials and initiation counsellors expressed positive attitudes towards girls' education against 52% in 2016¹¹.

With regards to girls' perception regarding continuing education, the percentage of girls who say they believe they can succeed academically increased from 43% in 2016 to 54% in 2017¹². Impressively, 91% of girls reported that they receive support from their community to continue in school in 2017, against only 64% in 2016¹³.

From the interviews conducted during this evaluation, we note that other NGOs are active in the ECSSAGEM former target areas, some of which also focus on promoting girls' education. As such, while ECSSAGEM activities were mentioned by respondents as one of the reasons they consider girls' education valuable, it is possible that other projects or programs also contributed to raising awareness and positive attitudes towards girls' secondary education. Finally, **actual support to girls is often limited in a number of ways** due to poverty, inability to pay for school fees or long distances to school – regardless of the prevalence of positive attitudes towards secondary education.

¹¹ Baseline and endline data from ECSSAGEM, based on interviews conducted in 8 primary schools and 4 CDSSs.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

What other range of outcomes (intended and unintended) has the program contributed to?

The ECSSAGEM program appears to have led to more unity and **solidarity within target communities**. Community members pointed out that “*nowadays groups work together for the benefit of the community*”, supporting others during hardship periods and supporting not only their children but all the children in the community. The community from Nansato primary school reported that:

[...] we know now that early pregnancy is not the end of life. When the girl goes back to school she is even more motivated.

One community also reported that they collectively funded the establishment of a kinder garden to support Early Childhood Development in the area, as a result of awareness-raising around the importance of education.

How has the program contributed to informing policy reforms or changes in secondary education?

As mentioned above, **the design of the ECSSAGEM program takes into account the overall education environment in Malawi** and addresses crucial challenges that have been identified in the national policies and strategies including the National Girl’s Education Strategy, ESIP II, and the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy III. For example, these challenges include socio-cultural beliefs that impact girls’ attendance and attention in schools, such as community pressures towards marriage and early pregnancies or teacher behavior of investing less time and effort into girls.

The ECSSAGEM program outcomes have been **shared with relevant ministries, though not in a systematic way**. The dissemination aimed to inform policy decision making for improved access, quality and relevance of learning. As captured in the ECSSAGEM endline report, during the implementation of the program, the ECSSAGEM team participated in national meetings on girls’ education such as review of the Readmission Policy. ECSSAGEM also conducted two learning conferences aiming at sharing best practices to inform policy and participated in two meetings with the national girls education networks. In addition to this, the report states that “*the project was instrumental in shaping new or revised Readmission and Repetition policies¹⁴, both of which significantly impact girls’ educational access, as was evident in the 297 girls who returned to school after giving birth following the ECSSAGEM intervention*”.

Even though the level of buy-in from the government remains unclear, from the interviews with government officials at the central level it seems that some aspects of the program interventions are **being mainstreamed in existing government**

¹⁴ The Malawi government has had a Readmission Policy since 1994. The policy allows girls to return to school one year after giving birth the first time. Girls must attend a different school than the one where they became pregnant, and they do not have the right to return if they become pregnant again. The Repetition Policy is a current proposal that aims at reducing repetition of learners, especially in the lower classes of primary school. The policy intends to pinpoint causes of repetition and develop mitigation strategies. One of the mitigation strategies includes removal of final assessment in standards 1, 3 and 5 so that learners are allowed to proceed to the next class without being assessed. Exams in all classes are to be standardized at the cluster and district level. In so doing, the policy will reduce the power of class teachers by removing control over assessment from the classroom teacher and having exams formed at cluster level instead.

programs like district development plans, school improvement plans and English teaching methodology. As stated by the Chief Community Development Officer, “the line Ministries (MoEST and the Ministry of Civic education, culture and Community Development) are already working to retain the program interventions and discussions have been held at Steering Committee levels”. It is unclear whether this will lead to substantial changes at the local level (refer to **Sustainability Section**).

From the beneficiaries' and stakeholders' perspective, what other complementary interventions/activities could enhance the results of the program?

CRECCOM's use of research allowed for flexibility in the design of the program, helped to establish a foundation that responded to the needs of the program, and led to continuous improvement of the program. The ECSSAGEM program has attained positive results and contributed to behavioral changes, to building various capacities of community members, community ownership, and to a steady increase in boys' and girls' interest in their studies.

From the perspectives of the beneficiaries and stakeholders as expressed in the interviews, **to enhance these results, CRECCOM would need to:**

- Substantially increase the provision of teaching materials;
- Provide additional training to all teachers;
- Provide further training for the initiation counsellors;
- Provide further training for the various forums;
- Provide top-up funds for the VSL group;
- Provide transport allowance for follow-up meetings and trainings;
- Provide bicycles for mother groups;
- Have in place robust follow-up mechanisms; and
- Have good exit strategy to ensure sustainability.

Some of these proposals are highlighted in the quotes below:

VSL training was very good because that's where the money for the books and the uniforms comes from. But we need more business skills training. Everyone is a small business owner (fish, tomato, banana, soap, charcoal, buns). Also the revolving fund for the VSL was too little (50 000 kwacha). Need more. (Nansato Primary School community)

We needed more training for the initiation counsellors; received a light touch training that was not enough to change the harmful practices. The practices have reduced but not totally disappeared. (Mpenda primary and CDSS community)

We would recommend that ECSSAGEM trains all the teachers in the future, not just one or two per school. Because trained teachers are expected to train other teachers, but this doesn't always work this way. (Thunga primary school teachers)

3.5 Sustainability

What is the level of ownership of the program approach and outcomes by target groups? To what extent have groups been capacitated to manage to continue operating independently? To which extent are the different entities set up for boys and girls, for communities and for government able and motivated in continuing their work to support girls' education in the target areas?

The level of ownership of the program approach and outcomes varies greatly across target groups. While the interviews conducted two years after the end of the program suggest that the different community groups (Mother groups, Village Forum, Community Leaders, VSL groups) have **sustained the activities and the benefits from the ECSSAGEM activities**, it is less clear whether the district education office has followed up on any of the interventions started by ECSSAGEM (MoU with private companies, communication with the communities).

While this may be due to a lack of resources at the district level, it seems that the ECSSAGEM model might have been more suited to work with communities and schools rather than with government authorities at various levels. By contrast, the success of the community mobilization is evident and can be illustrated with the 'nickname' the program was given among community members: *Tepetepe*, meaning 'flexibility' in Chichewa, demonstrating how the communities have approached the ECSSAGEM program as "a flexible project that let community processes unfold at their own rhythms, using their own practices and structures" (Nansato community). **Using existing groups within the community instead of establishing new structures** is a key explanatory factor for the longevity of these groups and their activities.

Regarding the sustainability of the different entities set up during the program, we found evidence of Mother Groups continuing their monitoring visits to girls and their parents, organizing girls' retreats and mentoring, and finding various ways to fund these activities locally. As reported in Masambanjati and Thunga:

The parents and the Mother Group contribute funds to support the retreats. Initially ECSSAGEM gave the mothers Kwacha 50,000 to conduct the retreats, and ever since, the school management also supports them with Kwacha 50,000 when they want to conduct a retreat. So far the school management have supported the retreats twice.

We [Mother Group] ask the community for a small contribution, and if we cannot gather enough resources, we have shorter retreats.

The youth forums and English clubs are also still running in the schools visited during this evaluation. As explained by a parent in Nansato:

Because community members – that is, parents, children, local leaders and education authorities – have been empowered with knowledge about the power of education, it makes it easier to sustain the initiative even after the end of the project.

The question remains **whether parents, teachers and communities can reasonably sustain these activities in the long term**, without provision of external support and resources. As indicated by CRECCOM during the interviews, without further engagement from the district office or at the national level in places

where CRECCOM has ended its support, continuing the program's activities presents a substantial responsibility for these groups, which are primarily occupied with surviving in a context plagued by poverty.

What is the possible scalability of such student mobilization, community and classroom teaching and learning strategies? What are the existing and potential levels of policy support and financial resources provided for the scaling of such intervention? To what extent has the program's successes, challenges and findings been shared with relevant ministries and policy makers? To what extent has program outcomes attracted additional support?

From the interviews with the government officials at the central and district levels, there was a general impression that **some program activities can be replicable and scaled up**, but this will depend a lot on resources, timeframe and actual capacity of CRECCOM and government structures.

The interviewees indicated that government structures are in place all over the country – such as training to primary education advisors (PEA) which is offered throughout the country and the existence of government field workers in all districts who works with mobilizing communities – **factors that could possibly facilitate a scale-up**. But there are important bottlenecks to take into account, including the fact that government structures capacity and mobility may be limited and community dynamics differ from one community to the next. As pointed out by the Secondary Education Methodology Advisor, “*most communities are willing to do something for their schools, but those communities with people with higher levels of education are usually more engaged*”.

Yet, the interviewees identified that it would be possible for districts to **use the school improvement grants (SIGs)** and scale up ECSSAGEM program components such as the continuous professional development for the teachers (English); community mobilization in support of girls' education; and mother groups training.

In addition, as reported by the Chief Community Development Officer at the Department of Community Development, some measures have been taken in terms of mainstreaming and scaling up a few activities:

Local schools have easily adopted the practice as if it is a cultural teaching practice. Line Ministries have slowly begun to embrace the teaching model and most of the features of the best practice are community based and is generating results such that pass rate has improved. Already with support from Ministry of Education and Department of Community Development amongst other stakeholders we have scaled up the methodology in other schools across the country especially community day secondary schools. [...] We anticipate continued mainstreaming of other project interventions in existing government programmes in the development of the District Development plans and the review of the National Strategic Plan especially for Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture where Community Development Department has been placed following the announcement of the new Cabinet in Malawi late hours of 20 June 2019.

Regarding the dissemination of program's successes, challenges and findings, the interviewed government officials have expressed that they have received the information, but in different ways: some through reports, some shared through meetings. It also appears that the information did not reach all the people concerned. For instance, the Director of Department of Community Development at the Ministry of Civic Education, Culture and Community Development explained that "CRECCOM did not share the findings and the Ministry has requested them to send the report". This lack of consistency makes it a risk that key stakeholders do not receive the needed information.

Finally, the program outcomes have attracted the **support of the MasterCard Foundation to the CRECCOM program** 'Improving Educational Quality in Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi (IEQ-CDSS)'. The CRECCOM team considers this program as the second phase of the ECSSAGEM program because some activities are relatively similar and in some cases, a scale-up from the ECSSAGEM program based on lessons learned. Nonetheless the MasterCard Foundation funded-program is a different program in scope, reach and objectives (refer to **Table 2** Comparison between ECSSAGEM program and IEQ-CDSS program).

4 Lessons learned

This evaluation, as well as the endline and monitoring data of the program, indicate that aligning peer, school and community ecologies to improve girls' access to quality education (refer to Theory of Change in **Annex 7**) produces positive and long-lasting changes for girls, communities and schools. It is the **combination of activities at different levels and their coordination** that fosters positive change, ownership and sustainability after the end of the program. However, re-admission is a temporary outcome unless more structural factors such as poverty and inability to pay school fees are addressed. ECSSAGEM reported students dropping out following their first year of readmission due to the difficulty to cover the school fees, but also due to the long distances to school.

Readmission of students who had dropped out of school however highlighted constraints for schools that ECSSAGEM had not anticipated such as more crowded classrooms, fewer textbooks per student and higher student-teacher ratios – potentially contributing to an overall decline in education quality. Similarly, the ECSSAGEM program revealed that secondary schooling in Thyolo district suffers from a **lack of infrastructure and funding**. With CDSSs already running over their student capacity, the increase in students graduating from primary school did not always lead to an increase in students admitted in CDSSs – due to lack of space. This highlights the limitations of interventions in an education system facing internal pressures and funding limitations.

Community mobilization has played a solid part in improving the support and resources available for girls (and boys) to return to school. However, CRECCOM recognizes that **communities cannot carry this responsibility alone** and that the ECSSAGEM program presents limitations in this regard, especially in terms of general education infrastructure needs.

Table 2 presents a comparison between the activities funded under ECSSAGEM (2015-2017) and its successor program IEQ-CDSS (2017-2020), to illustrate the extent to which lessons learned were incorporated. In addition to the focus being solely on secondary schools, the comparison shows that IEQ-CDSS has a stronger focus on activities at national and district levels compared to ECSSAGEM, which reflects the lessons learned around the need for more regular engagement with district officials and national level actors. Trainings for teachers have been strengthened with a mentoring component compared to the training model under ECSSAGEM, to provide more continuity and depth in the support provided to teachers.

At the policy level, CRECCOM reflected another lesson learned from the ECSSAGEM program in the design of IEQ-CDSS. In order to draw attention to their English teaching methodology beyond simply advocating for its use with education service providers, CRECCOM chose to partner with the Domasi College of Education as part of IEQ-CDSS, with the aim to work with them directly towards changing the curriculum and incorporating new teaching methods. Finally, the establishment and training of secondary school boards is a new component under IEQ-CDSS. This reflects the intention to involve government officials and the MoEST. IEQ-CDSS provides an approach and process for the setting up of these boards which, by law, should exist in every secondary school in Malawi. CRECCOM works jointly with the MoEST in the hope that they will replicate the IEQ-CDSS model of establishing school boards in other districts in the future.

Table 2. Comparison between ECSSAGEM program and IEQ-CDSS program

	<i>ECSSAGEM program</i>	<i>IEQ-CDSS program</i>
Objectives	<p>1) Girls mentoring: Aimed at a robust mentoring programme through the involvement of the Mothers groups, girls’ retreats, boys’ and girls’ forums.</p> <p>2) Community engagement: Aimed at mobilizing communities in support of girls’ education; training of change agents in the community; training of mother groups; establishing village forums that identify and modify cultural practices that harm girls; establishing village saving and loan programs to improve livelihoods and increase household income to cover school costs; establishing and monitoring GBV reporting structures and school anti-GBV campaigns.</p> <p>3) Academic skills: Aimed at enhancing girls’ educational experiences and outcomes through establishment of English clubs and study circles, gender-responsive teacher professional development materials, and training of trainers on English, gender responsiveness and assessment.</p>	<p>1) Youth-level: Empowering girls and boys through in-school and extracurricular activities that provide them with leadership opportunities, sexual and reproductive health knowledge, employability skills, life skills, and peer-and teacher-led practice in the English concepts with which they struggle the most.</p> <p>2) Teacher-level: Improving the quality of teaching through support for teachers’ professional development in English and gender-responsive pedagogies, and improving the school environment through programmatic support for building a safe, inclusive and high-quality campus culture.</p> <p>3) Community/School/District-level: Improving school governance through Head Teacher leadership training, introduction and support of School Boards, Mother Groups, and School Improvement Plans, and community mobilization in support of CDSSs.</p>
Scope and reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 100 primary schools in Thyolo district → 12 CDSSs in Thyolo district → 454 teachers and head teachers → 15 887 girls → 14 874 Standard 6-8 girls and 1 013 Form 1-2 girls → 112 girls’ and boys’ forums → 112 Mothers Groups → 2,128 community and cultural gatekeepers → 64 village savings and loans (VSL) agents → 8 tea estates and 8 private commercial companies → 903 registered villages → 112 English clubs → 12 study circles in CDSSs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 36 CDSSs in four districts across Malawi (Thyolo, Mulanje, Ntchisi and Chitipa) → 36 head teachers → 410 classroom teachers → 7200 girls and boys (students) → 1440 students from Form 3 and 4 for employability skills → 15000 parents and the community → 20 working group members → 20 policy-makers in MEST
Implementing partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Miske Witt and Associates Inc. → University of Wisconsin Madison 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → AGE Africa → Domasi College of Education → University of Wisconsin Madison → Mathematica
Duration and size	<p>2015 – 2017 USD 1 million</p>	<p>2017 – 2020 USD 1.3 million</p>

Activities at national and district levels

- **Meetings organized** between government extension staff/district departmental managers and community members
- **Tea estates and private commercial companies** engaged to support quality education in targeted schools

- **Establishing a Working Group on CDSS** that will enhance coordination among many educational stakeholders and their efforts to support creating high-quality, inclusive and empowering Community Day Secondary Schools in Malawi
- **Learning visits across districts and a national symposium** to share learnings emerging from the various project components at community as well as national level
- Bringing together **private and public sector actors** to sign MOUs and reach agreement on action plans that aim at supporting quality education in targeted schools

Activities at school level

- **Girls' and boys' forums** established, creating spaces for dialogue on critical issues affecting girls' and boys' lives such as sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and gender-based violence
- **Teachers and head teachers trained** on new English teaching strategies and gender-responsive pedagogies
- **English clubs** established at each of the 112 schools
- **Study circles** strengthened in Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs)

- **Establish 36 youth forums** for life skills, employability skills and English language skills training
- **Train student leaders** on Forum management
- **Conduct remedial English classes** – once per academic year
- **Provide leadership and management skills** to head teachers
- **Review CPD manual** on English language content
- **In service teachers' trainings**
- Conduct learning and coaching visits
- Establish and train **secondary school boards**
- Develop and implement **School Improvement Plans**
- Train **Parent-Teacher Associations**

Activities at community level

- **Mothers Groups** established in 12 CDSSs; and existing Mothers Groups were strengthened and supported in the 100 targeted primary schools
- **Community and cultural gatekeepers**, including chiefs, community leaders, initiation councillors and village forum facilitators trained to address issues that affect girls' access to quality education and were empowered as change agents to identify challenges and create locally-sustainable solutions
- **Village savings and loans (VSL) agents** received training from ECS-SAGEM and then reached VSL groups with financial literacy skills and training to help mothers increase their economic support for their daughters' education, and to increase community support for girls' education

- **Establish Mother Groups** and organize meetings once a fortnight to support girls' education

5 Conclusions and recommendations

Generally, the evaluation team found that **the ECCSAGEM holistic model proved successful**, demonstrating that the root causes for girls to drop out should be addressed through interventions that take place both inside and outside of the school environment. Aligning peer, school and community ecologies to improve girls' access to quality education (refer to Theory of Change in **Annex 7**) creates positive and long-lasting changes for girls, communities and schools.

In terms of **relevance**, the establishment of mentoring and support initiatives outside the schools themselves – such as mother groups, girls' retreats, the intervention of role models, VSL groups – was highly relevant to ensure that the community and key local institutions were mobilized to support girls' access and transition to secondary school. The activities organized at the school level specifically targeted English teaching and gender responsiveness. This ensured a very deliberate use of resources towards well-defined aspects of teaching quality, rather than attempting to work with all aspects of teaching and learning within the school. However, key limitations of this model exist with regards to:

- the important responsibility placed on the different community structures to participate in supporting girls' education and transition to secondary school; and
- the limitations of school infrastructure and the insufficient number of secondary schools to absorb all the students who pass the final examination at the end of primary school.

With regards to **efficiency**, the activities were generally carried out in line with the original plans. Changes were documented and adequately justified, based on observations during program implementation. The efficiency of ECSSAGEM operations was improved on several occasions during the lifetime of the program, using an incremental approach to change with a focus on small but crucial aspects of implementation.

The most salient implementation issue arose with the training of teachers. While the team tried to have a common approach to the trainings (length, number of participants, process for the selection of teachers), it proved difficult to implement a common blueprint since the trainers sometimes changed the number of days for the training based on their availability. Regarding the selection of teachers attending the trainings, the head teachers in the schools sometimes decided to send different teachers to the trainings even though the training was designed as a series of trainings that the same teacher would attend over the course of several months.

Looking at **effectiveness**, despite the inefficiencies regarding how the trainings were conducted, the evidence points towards improvements in teacher practices and learning processes in ECSSAGEM schools, and the majority of teachers report using and applying the teaching strategies they learned during the training more than two years after the end of the program.

At the community level, working with various groups has led to a strong coordination and complementarity between the different program activities. In particular, the parallel training of Mother Groups, Village Forums, VSL groups and community leaders led to solid community structures and processes in support of girls' education and transition to secondary school.

However, getting government buy-in at the district level proved less straightforward than with communities. Despite interactions between government extension staff/district departmental managers and community members during key stages of the ECSSAGEM program, it is unclear to what extent the district education manager and officers have changed their approach to addressing education issues.

In addition, while the mixing of boys and girls in the clubs appears to have been successful, the CRECCOM staff members interviewed acknowledged that boys resented that girls were the main beneficiaries of most ECSSAGEM activities (except for the boys' and girls' forums), and that this was not something they had anticipated.

In terms of **impact**, the ECSSAGEM program has successfully influenced socio-cultural and economic norms towards encouraging and seeing benefits in girls' education. The decline in dropouts due to early marriage and/or early pregnancy can be attributed to ECSSAGEM's trainings and sensitization to the value of girls' education, with the community and school environments working closely together to end early marriages and promote readmission after early pregnancies.

However, despite the work of ECSSAGEM with teachers, the quality of education has been questioned, in both primary and secondary schools. With higher enrolment rates, there is not enough secondary schools for students to attend. Further pressure is exerted on an education system that was already underfunded, thereby limiting the potential effects of the ECSSAGEM program on transition rates.

Regarding **sustainability**, the level of ownership of the program approach and outcomes varies greatly across target groups. While the interviews conducted two years after the end of the program suggest that the different community groups (Mother groups, Village Forum, Community Leaders, VSL groups) have sustained the activities and the benefits from the ECSSAGEM activities, it is less clear whether the district education office has followed up on any of the interventions started by ECSSAGEM (MoU with private companies, communication with the communities).

While this may be due to a lack of resources at the district level, it seems that the ECSSAGEM model might have been more suited to work with communities and schools rather than with government authorities at various levels. The question remains whether parents, teachers and communities can reasonably sustain these activities in the long term, without provision of external support and resources.

With regards to the validity of the Theory of Change (refer to **Annex 7**), **some pathways of change did not take place as expected** or failed to materialize. For instance, the village savings and loans groups provided small loans to parents, who invested in farming or small businesses, and sometimes bought school material or a school uniform. But it is unclear whether the VSL groups had a substantial and lasting impact on parents' living conditions and girls' ability to go to school and transition to secondary school. The inability to pay for school fees and related costs remains a major hindrance to girls continuing their education, despite the ECSSAGEM interventions.

Working with teachers proved difficult as teachers moved to other schools or did not attend the different sessions of the training as head teachers kept sending different teachers to each session. Without systematic follow-up and mentoring of

trained teachers, the academic training component of the Theory of Change had difficulties delivering its full potential.

In addition, cultural practices remain a barrier. Girls are still facing risks of early pregnancy and/or HIV infection as a result of sexual initiation ceremonies. Despite ECSSAGEM's work with initiation counsellors, the ceremonies are still common, although initiation counsellors report that they have adapted their message to the girls and tell them to refrain from harmful cultural practices.

As such, while the ECSSAGEM Theory of Change **generally held true** and was based on assumptions that ended up verified, some parts or components could be strengthened, as highlighted by the CRECCOM team during the evaluation.

As part of this evaluation, Dubai Cares was also interested in the level of attention CRECCOM gained during the ECSSAGEM program, especially with district and national government authorities, and whether there is an **intention to scale up** programs like ECSSAGEM at the national level in the future. The evaluation team concludes that at the time of writing, there is little evidence that the ECSSAGEM model will be adopted at the district or national level, despite organizing various events and conferences during which the CRECCOM team shared lessons learned and best practices, inviting government officials, lecturers from the Teacher Development Centre and Teacher Colleges, CSO representatives and education experts. The likelihood of such a program (or components of the program) to be scaled up in the future will largely depend on human and financial resources, and the actual capacity of CRECCOM, communities and government structures to develop and support a scale-up plan.

Finally, the extent to which the ECSSAGEM program changed CRECCOM's way of working was a critical question in this evaluation. The evaluation team concluded that **the CRECCOM team actively reflected on the lessons learned** from the ECSSAGEM program as they designed their next program, IEQ-CDSS. IEQ-CDSS, has a stronger focus on activities at national and district levels compared to ECSSAGEM, which reflects the lessons learned around needing more regular engagement with district officials and national level actors. In addition, teacher trainings have been strengthened by including a mentoring component, to provide more continuity and depth in the support provided to teachers.

However, this is not a new way of working for the organization. CRECCOM was operating as a learning organization prior to the ECSSAGEM program and prior to receiving a grant from Dubai Cares. The ECSSAGEM program itself was the result of several decades of 'learning lessons' through previous project implementation. As such, *CRECCOM's way of working* remains largely unchanged after the ECSSAGEM program, as the organization simply adds to the knowledge and experience it has acquired since 1999 to refine its programs and initiatives. CRECCOM's vision and mission as an organization is informed by a thorough understanding of the local context and strong capacity to engage stakeholders in a participatory and sustainable manner – a model developed by learning from trial and error and refined using incremental changes over the past 20 years.

Recommendations to CRECCOM

- Revise the **strategy for engaging with the government** and mobilizing resources. Acknowledge this is a long-term process beyond the scope of a pilot program. Engage different actors at different levels to avoid the risk of losing interlocutors due to turnover.
- Develop a **sustainability plan with local government authorities** to follow up on the interventions started by ECSSAGEM and assess if the results have been sustained after the pilot program ended. Going forward, make time and allocate resources to devise a sustainability plan with the government at central and local levels at the start of the program/ project.
- Develop and communicate an **exit strategy** to government authorities, head teachers and community leaders before the end of the project/ program. Discuss when the support ends and plan for how to sustain the benefits once the program resources have come to an end.
- Engage in discussions regarding improved funding for **secondary school infrastructure** (including dormitory facilities) at the central level. Advocacy activities are needed to ensure that infrastructure needs are met and that the government takes responsibility for adequate funding of secondary schooling in Malawi. This responsibility cannot rest with civil society or communities.
- Continue working both inside and outside the school environment. Support communities and devise ways to **facilitate the involvement of community members** (e.g. providing bicycles for members of the mother groups if resources are available for such support).
- Continue **working with both boys and girls**, but anticipate possible resentment and rethink the design of interventions that pose problems as soon as these problems emerge. Generally, CRECCOM has been very proactive when it comes to adapting the program to respond to challenges encountered during implementation. We recommend that further lessons learned regarding the mixing of boys and girls in interventions are included in the next programs.
- Rethink the **cascade training model** in light of the constraints experienced by teachers. To support this, deepen the consultation process with teachers at the start of the project/ program to hear the problems they face and their proposed solutions. CRECCOM is well aware of the difficulties experienced with the cascade training model and is already adapting the model in IEQ-CDSS.
- Plan for **consistent support to teachers** through systematic follow-ups and provision of teaching materials. Similarly, this is a recommendation that CRECCOM has already taken on board as part of IEQ-CDSS. Lessons learned from IEQ-CDSS should inform the work of CRECCOM in the future.

- Rethink the objective of **VSL groups**. If the ambition is to have larger loans and enhance income-generating activities, devise specific interventions to this end (e.g. training on income generation, increased seed money for the start-up VSL fund, etc.). If not, make sure to communicate to the communities the expected scope and contributions of VSL groups to their livelihoods (i.e. support limited to school material, uniforms, etc.).

Recommendations to Dubai Cares

- Develop or consolidate a **country and/or sector strategy** to provide a framework Dubai Cares can use to justify the funding of projects versus others and to create impact beyond the scope of a single project. Such a strategy should clearly outline the rationale behind the funding of each project or program and its contribution to the overall strategy. At the country level (or sector level), projects should be funded to either support one another or complement their objectives with regards to the strategy.
- Articulate the objectives of the strategy and define **how funded projects aim to achieve these objectives**. Define learning objectives in the strategy to make sure the projects or programs that present an interest to the learning of Dubai Cares are properly resourced (e.g. M&E activities) and evaluated. Establish priorities as to which sectors or countries are most important to Dubai Cares and why.
- Clarify the **ways in which Dubai Cares create impact more generally**. Does the organization aim to fund and learn from pilot projects? For what purpose? Is Dubai Cares aiming to broker partnerships between long-term funders and small civil society organizations (e.g. CRECCOM and Mastercard Foundation)? Does Dubai Cares intend to support scale-up processes? Is the aim of the organization to invest in the organizational development of non-profit organizations? Articulating the ways in which Dubai Cares aims to create impact will serve as a basis for a solid and clear strategy.

Annex 1. Terms of Reference

Programme Title:	Engaging Communities and Schools in Support of Adolescent Girls in Malawi (ECSSAGEM)
Location:	Thyolo District, Southern Malawi
Activity:	External Final Evaluation
Timeframe:	1 Nov. 2015 – 31 Dec. 2017
Commissioned by:	Dubai Cares

1. About Dubai Cares

Dubai Cares, part of Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives, is a UAE-based global philanthropic organization working towards providing children in developing countries with access to quality education through the design and funding of programs that aim to be integrated, impactful, sustainable and scalable. Education is more than a human right, it is an irrevocable asset. Yet, 124 million children and young adolescents around the world don't go to school and a further 250 million cannot adequately read and write. Education is one of the most effective tools to break the cycle of poverty, a belief held by our founder His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai. It was from this belief and the desire to give children - regardless of their gender, nationality, race or religion - the opportunity to become positive contributors to society, that His Highness established Dubai Cares on September 19, 2007.

Focus Areas

Our mission to increase children's access to quality education is realized through integrated programs that eliminate the underlying obstacles that prevent children from going to school and learning. This is achieved through building and renovating schools and classrooms, improving water, sanitation and hygiene in schools, providing school feeding, deworming activities, early childhood education, as well as teacher training, curriculum development, literacy and numeracy. Gender equality is a cross cutting theme in all Dubai Cares' education programs with an approach that aims to secure equal access for boys and girls to safe learning environments with adequate facilities, materials and academic support from gender sensitized teachers and communities. Central to Dubai Cares approach is a focus on monitoring, evaluation and learning. This ongoing process enables the organization to gather evidence collected during regular field visits, relevant reports by implementing partners, as well as reports by academic institutions that Dubai Cares appoints to independently evaluate its programs. Dubai Cares uses this knowledge to design and fund innovative and stimulating programs that test alternative models and hypothesis to increase the impact of its interventions.

2. Evaluation Purpose

Engaging Communities and Schools in Support of Adolescent Girls in Malawi" (ECSSAGEM) works to empower adolescent girls while building support for their educational journey among girls' schools and communities. The program approach aims to address the multitude of factors that result in the low transition rates of girls between primary and secondary schools in Thyolo district, Malawi. CRECCOM (Creative Centre for Community Mobilization) is the main implementing partner. The main purpose of this final evaluation of the "Engaging Communities and Schools in Support of Adolescent Girls in Malawi" – a 2 year long program - is to provide an independent assessment of the program's theory of change and program approach. The evaluation also aims at providing advice to CRECCOM and its partners how outcomes achieved during the implementation phase can be built on for continuing the work to improve current programs for enhancing adolescent girls' education in Malawi.

3. Background & Context

Malawi is a small, landlocked country in Central Eastern Africa. Malawi's population is estimated at 15 million people, about 47% of whom are under 14 years of age. Malawi is one of the world's ten poorest countries (as measured by annual Gross Domestic Product); most families live in rural areas and are heavily dependent on rain-fed subsistence agriculture and remittances, both of which have been impacted by climate change and HIV/AIDS. Malawi is also rich in many ways, including its control and use of Lake Malawi, Malawians' strong work ethic and desire to develop the country further, and the resilient extended family and clan structures that constitute the basis for socio-cultural organization.

In 1994, Malawi became one of the first African countries to declare Free Primary Education (FPE). FPE attempted to democratize the education system and build the capacity of all Malawian youth, in a context where education historically served only the country's elite and heavily favored Christian boys. The government acknowledged that rural girls in particular had few opportunities to access school and to reach their full potential in Malawi, and that this failure to develop their potential had significantly affected girls and their children's life courses, and the entire country's prospects for development.

Twenty years later, enrollment data (EMIS, 2013) and research (Kendall and Silver, 2013) indicate that parents now consider it the norm for all children—girls and boys—to enroll in and attend at least a few years of primary school. This is a remarkable achievement, made more so by the deeply resource-constrained environment in which it was achieved. While social norms concerning girls and boys entering school have changed radically, this norm does not extend past puberty, and so the majority of girls and boys leave school before gaining basic literacy and numeracy skills (SACMEQ, 2007; Visser and Samati, 2014). For example, in the recent Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) assessments administered to a sample of students in Standards 2, 4, and 7, 83% of Standard 7 learners scored at Level 1 (no achievement). The gender difference was statistically significant, with Standard 7 boys scoring higher than girls. Only 59% of girls who enter primary school continue past Standard 5, and only 35% of girls and 41% of boys complete Grade 8 in Malawi (EMIS, 2012).

Upper primary school (Standards 6-8), the transition to secondary school, and lower secondary school (Forms 1 and 2) are particularly hazardous times for girls, who consistently drop out at each of these phases at higher rates than boys (EMIS, 2013). Socio-cultural and economic norms often begin to strongly encourage girls toward wife and mother roles at these ages, and away from roles like student and professional. Girls also tend to struggle academically more than boys, in part because of higher labor burdens at home and also due to less familiarity with English, the language of all exams in Malawi. Further, in the transition to secondary school, girls tend to face more challenges than boys, including in terms of: walking safely to school, parents less willing to pay school fees, ability to raise fees individually, teacher and peer sexual harassment, and unfamiliarity with English. These challenges are compounded by the low educational quality of most rural primary schools and Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS), where the majority of girls attend school. Given these constraints, it is not surprising that girls have not benefited as much as boys from the government's declaration of FPE, the later expansion of community-based secondary education access (from 5% in 1994 to 32% in 2014), and the social, economic, and intellectual benefits of attaining a secondary school degree.

4. Program Details

The Engaging Communities and Schools in Support of Adolescent Girls in Malawi (ECSSA-GEM) program started in October 2015, and it extended for 2 years and 3 months till the end of 2017. It was implemented in 112 school in Thyolo district, Southern Malawi. The

main implementing partner for this program is CRECCOM (Creative Centre for Community Mobilization). CRECCOM is a local Malawian NGO based in Zomba City in the Southern Region of Malawi. They have over 17 years of experience in social empowerment and community mobilization on a variety of issues.

The program had three major program components:

1. To equip upper primary and lower secondary female students with the skills, resources, and support networks they need to successfully transition from primary to secondary school, and to empower girls to pursue this educational path
2. To mobilize communities and key local institutions (including cultural, religious, sexual and reproductive health, and agricultural) in support of girls' improved learning
3. To improve girls' educational experiences and outcomes by improving the gendered quality (including leadership, school culture, management, instruction, learning materials, classroom practices and transition processes) of 112 upper primary and lower secondary schools.

5. Evaluation Objectives & Scope

Dubai Cares is committed to an evidence based approach; an approach where monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) is an integral part of every program. Final program evaluations conducted by external entities aim to provide an unbiased opinion on the programmatic achievements or shortcomings in order to raise awareness of activities/approaches that yield results to the concerned stakeholders as well as guide future decision making. As such, the overarching objectives for the evaluation are to:

1. Provide an independent verification of the program outputs and achieved outcomes against its expected results;
2. Identify and assess key internal and external factors (positive and negative) that have contributed, affected, or impeded the achievements, and how CRECCOM has managed these factors; and
3. Derive key learnings and achievements from the 2015 – 2017 program, identify how earlier program outcomes are relevant and inform the current program and capture key recommendations for continued development of CRECCOM's programs

Primary users of the evaluation findings are; CRECCOM management and staff, Dubai Cares, and other actors directly involved in the implementation of the project such as local and national Ministry of Education officials, as well as members of the targeted communities.

6. Evaluation Criteria & Key Evaluation Questions

In alignment with the evaluation objectives, the scope for examination is determined using the five OECD- DAC criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact. For each of these criteria the following evaluation questions shall be answered:

Relevance & Program Design

- How relevant is the program design for addressing the factors preventing girls from transitions from primary to secondary school?
- How relevant are the establishment of mentoring and support initiatives outside the schools themselves – such as Girls' and Boys' Forums, Girls' Retreats, role modelling and Village Savings and Loan Groups, for equipping female students and their caregivers with the required support to increase the likelihood of transitioning from primary to secondary school?
- How relevant are efforts taken to mobilize community and key local institutions for supporting girls' improved learning and transition rates?

- How relevant are the activities with regards to improving the class room teaching practices and the learning opportunities of both boys and girls in the 112 targeted schools?
- What is the possible scalability of such student mobilization, community and classroom teaching and learning strategies as interventions to enhance learning opportunities for both boys and girls?
- To what extent were beneficiary communities including girls, parents, school staff, district In-Service teams and local/central education authorities consulted with regards to the program design and implementation, monitoring and alterations or improvement?
- To what extent did the use of Design Research and Learning promote the participation and involvement of communities, stakeholders, target groups and showed sensitivity to context and adaptive space for self-organization in order to address disparities and barriers, particularly around gender equality and school retention and transition?
- To what extent did the key contextual changes, threats and opportunities that arose during implementation influence and inform program implementation?
- How appropriate were the alternative solutions/changes proposed and/or implemented by the team to overcome the challenges faced during the program implementation?
- Was the agreed monitoring and evaluation framework relevant for the program and how and to what extent have monitoring and evaluation findings been used to inform decision-making and the improvement of program implementation?
- How relevant was the Public Private Partnership (PPP) strategy and how did it help in equipping the government and community stakeholders with skills in resource mobilization?
- How is the program tied to the overall education environment in Malawi, specifically in regards to girls' transition into secondary school? Were there any notable linkages/disconnects?

Efficiency of Implementation

- Was the program implemented based on the best use of existing resources/capacity; e.g. the internal capacity and expertise of CRECCOM itself, the communities' institutions and the existing staff and systems of MoEST? What key limitations exist on this front?
- To what extent were the program processes, procedures and structures in place capable of delivering program activities and targets on schedule?
- To what extent could CRECCOM develop improved practices and introduce efficiencies in its program operations? E.g. How effective were the use of the expert trainers in capacity building of the existing field workers and community structures
- What were the major obstacles in the process of implementation of ECS-SAGEM at school, community, stakeholder and national policy levels?

Success & Effectiveness

- How well was the program able to achieve its planned objectives across all the three main program components?
- How effective were CRECCOM staff and the trainers in delivering the trainings, workshops and mentoring efforts to the different target groups and in supporting the trainees regularly?
- How effective were CRECCOM and the program at large in raising awareness and commitment of communities/school staff for girls' education and transition into secondary school?

- Did the program manage to get communities/government (national and local) buy in regarding the program?
- Has the program led to better quality education in the 112 targeted schools? What is the effect on transition rates of girls into secondary education?
- How has the project contributed to informing policy reforms or changes in secondary education?
- What were the successes/challenges when improving the teaching practices and learning process of girls and boys in the 112 schools?
- What are the best practices that have evolved from the community engagement processes?
- Generally, were the activities carried out in line with the original plans? If not, were the changes adequately discussed, documented, and justified? To what extent did the program activities contribute to the success/failure of the program expected outcomes?
- How effective or ineffective was the mixing of boys and girls in the interventions? Could the project have been implemented differently?
- What system and mechanism were in place to ensure accountability to the beneficiaries and how well did it work?

Sustainability

- What is the level of ownership of the program approach and outcomes by target groups ((i.e. national and local government staff, District In-Service teams, teachers, communities, parents, etc.)?)
- To what extent have the In-Service teams, schools and communities been capacitated to manage to continue operating independently in order to support and commit to promoting girls education and more broadly to quality education?
- To which extent are the different entities set up for boys and girls (such as the mentoring and retreats) and for communities (such as the village forums, school management committees, etc) and for government (district level change agents, and grassroots field workers) able and motivated in continuing their work to support girls' education in the target areas?
- What are the existing and potential levels of policy support and financial resources provided for the scaling of such intervention (external or internal to CRECCOM)?
- To what extent has the program's successes, challenges, and findings been shared with relevant ministries and policy makers?
- To what extent has program outcomes attracted additional support?

Impact

- How successful was the program in terms of eliminating or decreasing existing obstacles to girls' education and transition? `
- How successful was the program in terms of improving learning outcomes for boys and girls?
- What other range of outcomes (intended and unintended) has the program contributed to?
- How has the initiative influenced the attitude of parents, communities, school staff and Ministry officers with regards to the importance of girls receiving secondary education?
- Is the program impacting positively on girls' perception regarding continuing education?
- From the beneficiaries' and stakeholders' perspective, what other complementary interventions/activities could enhance the results of the project?

7. Methodology

The evaluation should represent a mixture of methods, both qualitative and quantitative for data collection and analysis.

Desk review: The consultant/consultant team will review key program documents and reports provided by Dubai Cares and other stakeholders. Such documents shall include, but not limited to the background program documents, grant proposals, program revisions, progress reports, and other documents related to the program.

Field visit: In addition to the review of relevant literature related to the task, the consultant/consultant team is also expected to carry out data collection in Thyolo District using different methods such as: key informants, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions with relevant respondents in order to enrich the program review with both qualitative and quantitative information. The consultant is expected to provide the detailed methodology to be used to deliver the stipulated scope of work and review questions.

8. Outputs and Deliverables

The consultant is expected to prepare and submit to Dubai Cares a set of key reports in the course of undertaking this evaluation. The following have been identified as key reports to be submitted:

1. Inception Report

To be prepared and submitted within two weeks after the signing of the contract. Based on the literature review and discussions with Dubai Cares, the inception report should focus on:

- i. the understanding of the Terms of Reference and scope,
- ii. the relevant methodology to be adopted,
- iii. the evaluation design and key questions,
- iv. the work-plan for the assignment and evaluation matrix.
- v. Note: The inception report must be approved by Dubai Cares before proceeding to the next phase.

2. Initial findings presentation

- To be prepared and presented upon the finalization of the field visit to CRECCOM and communities in Malawi, with Dubai Cares participating via Skype, outlining the initial findings emerging from the desk review and field level data collection

3. Draft Report

- To be prepared and submitted for Dubai Cares' feedback, comments, questions and inputs.
- In addition, the consultant may also be required to present the Draft Report to a wider audience for validation.

4. Final Report

- To be prepared and submitted to Dubai Cares on, or before the expiry of the assignment contract. Any valid extension may be mutually agreed between the consultant and Dubai Cares, provided it carries no extra cost to the latter.
- The final report shall be no more than 30 pages and must include an executive summary of the key findings, conclusions and actionable recommendations. Please note the Executive Summary shall also be translated into the relevant local language at the cost of the evaluation contract holder.

- Additional requirements are delineated on the Final Report Template attached as ANNEX 1

9. Timeframe and work-plan

Please provide a realistic time table to include the following key activities:

1. Development of the evaluation design; finalization of the evaluation matrix; sampling strategy
2. Development of research instruments (questionnaires, interview guidelines, etc.)
3. Data collection at the program sites & analysis
4. Meeting with project staff and stakeholders on the initial findings and recommendations
5. Preparation of the draft report
6. Incorporation of comments and finalization of the evaluation report.
7. Final presentation to Dubai Cares and partner staff

10. Qualifications of the Evaluation Consultant/Team

Dubai Cares will select the consultant team based on their proven past experience, complementary qualifications and ability to deliver a quality product in the time allotted. This evaluation should be led by a person (or persons) with the following qualifications:

- At least 10 years of relevant experience, preferably with a PhD in Social Sciences / Economics / Education, including a demonstrated experience in conducting in-country program evaluations in the field of education, with experience of evaluations of girl's education programs, child development, child health and social services
- At least 10 years in planning and conducting both qualitative and quantitative research (field work, data collection, validation, analysis)
- Demonstrated ability and experience in working in Malawi, including proficiency in at least one of the relevant local languages (preferred)
- Demonstrated analytical skills
- Excellent English writing skills (previous publications)
- High levels of interpersonal skills; facilitation and interviewing skills

11. Proposal Template

The proposal should include:

- A detailed elaboration of issues to be addressed/covered;
- A description of the evaluation approach including details of the proposed methodology, sampling, study design; major stages and milestones for the evaluation and a timetable of activities.
- Detailed budget The consultant team shall be required to submit a budget breakdown, in the form of a financial proposal. The budget presented should include professional fees, travel and subsistence, reproduction charges, courier costs (if applicable) and unit costs should be calculated as a per day tariff (e.g. fees).
- Past performance summaries (at least three brief descriptions of past or current contracting mechanisms for efforts similar in size, scope and complexity) and list of references that demonstrate performance in conducting similar evaluations.
- CVs conforming to the qualifications listed above for all persons to manage and conduct the review

12. To Apply

Qualified consultants with the requirements detailed above are invited to apply:

To: Abdulrahman Bader Alzuebi
Programs Officer
Abdulrahman.bader@dubaicare.ae
By: COB of 22nd of Feb, 2019

ANNEX 1

Final Report Template

Title Page including: project name, date of report, authors and their affiliations.

1. Executive Summary (1-4 pages)

- Brief project description and context
- Purpose and expected use of the evaluation
- Objectives of the evaluation
- Summary of the evaluation methodology
- Principle findings and conclusions, especially relating to project goals / targets
- Key recommendations
- Summary of lessons learned

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

2. Purpose of the evaluation

3. Audience for and use of the evaluation

4. Objectives of the evaluation

5. Evaluation methodology, including: rationale for choice of methodology, data sources, methods for data collection and analysis, participatory techniques, ethical and equity considerations, major limitations of the methodology

6. Composition of the evaluation team, including any specific roles of team members

7. Project description, including: context, underlying rationale, stakeholders and beneficiaries, conceptual model, results chain or logical framework, and project monitoring system

8. Evaluation findings

9. Conclusions: insights into the findings; reasons for successes and failures; innovations

10. Recommendations (based on evidence and insights)

11. Lessons learned with wider relevance and that can be generalized beyond the project

Annexes to the evaluation report:

- Terms of Reference for the evaluation
- Evaluation matrix
- Timetable
- List of individuals interviewed and of stakeholder groups and/or communities consulted
- List of supporting documentation reviewed
- Research instruments: questionnaire, interview guide(s), etc. as appropriate
- Project logical framework
- Specific monitoring data, as appropriate
- Summary tables of progress towards outputs, targets, goals – referring directly to the indicators established for these in the project log frame
- Short biographies of the evaluators.

Annex 2. Documentation reviewed

Documents received from Dubai Cares:

Official Documents

Approved Documents

- Memorandum of Understanding Dubai Cares and Creative Centre for Community Mobilisation, 2015
- Program Budget Approval, ECSSAGEM, December 2014
- CRECCOM Budget, October 5 2015
- CRECCOM Schedule 1
- Logframe Analysis for ECSSAGEM, September 21 2015

Change Request – No Cost Extension

- Programs Change Request Approval, November 1 2017
- Cover Letter, No Cost Extension
- Gaant Chart ECSSAGEM No Cost Extension
- Update of Initial Budget, CRECCOM ECSSAGEM

Draft versions of budgets

Draft versions of proposal

ECSSAGEM Final Proposal June 22 2015

ECSSAGEM Logframe June 23 2015

Program Budget Approval ECSSAGEM

Revised CRECCOM Budget

Official reports

1st report

- Semi-Annual Report, ECSSAGEM, (November 2015-April 2016) June 2016
- CRECCOM ECSSAGEM Financial Report October 15 2015 to April 30 2016

2nd report

- ECSSAGEM 2016 Narrative Report
- CRECCOM Consolidated Financial Report 2016

3rd report

- Case story: Chiguma Mother Group: A good Example of ECSSAGEM Theory of Change on Improved Girls Learning
- Case story: GVH Kachimanga
- Case story: Traditional Authority Khwethemule
- ECSSAGEM Consolidated Financial Report to May 31 2017
- ECSSAGEM December 2016-May 2017 Report

Final report

- Communication Strategy, May 2016
- CRECCOM ECSSAGEM Final Financial Report, March 2018
- ECSSAGEM Brochure, letter size
- ECSSAGEM End of Project Report, Final report March 2018
- ECSSAGEM Magazine Newsletter
- ECSSAGEM Endline Evaluation Report, March 2018
- Endline tools (including Body Mapping Exercise, Head teacher interview guides, individual teacher and student questionnaire and interview guides, village forums group discussions, Village Saving Loan Association tools)
- English Club/Study Circle Activities
- National School Readmission Policy, Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), Republic of Malawi, December 2017
- Modified Practices Against Boys And Girls During Initiation In Thyolo

- Lessons Learnt summary paper
- Program Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Plan, 2015
- Public Private Partnership in Girls Education: CRECCOM ECSSAGEM
- Transition Card
- Memorandum of Understanding among Thyolo District Council And Thyolo Tea Estates Association, Thyolo District.

PMP

- Proposed ECSSAGEM Indicators
- Program Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Plan

Financial Reports

- Financial Report as of July 31 2017
- September 2016 Report
- Consolidated Financial Report to September 30, 2016

Supporting Data

- Payment schedules for 1st, 2nd and 3rd payment
- ROM data visits September 2017
- Success Story: Engaging Communities and Schools in Support of Adolescent Girls in Malawi (ECSSAGEM), November 2017
- CRECCOM Organisation Structure July 2014
- CRECCOM Proposal Narrative
- Dubai Cares Partner Registration Document
- ECSSAGEM Final Proposal 2015

Documents received from CRECCOM:

ECSSAGEM End of Project Report, March 2018
 ECSSAGEM Monitoring data, labels 2017
 ECSSAGEM Monitoring data, labels 2018
 ECSSAGEM Report Baseline, November 12 2017
 ECSSAGEM Report Endline, March 26 2018
 ECSSAGEM Schools and Contacts for Key government Officials, May 2019
 National Girl's Education Strategy, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Government of Malawi, January 2014
 MasterCard Foundation project proposal

Documents consulted during the school visits (when available):

Enrollment lists
 Teacher lists
 Academic performance and MSCE results
 Drop-out rates including reasons for drop-out
 Attendance lists
 Teaching materials used in the school (books, exercise books and lessons plans)

Annex 3. Evaluation matrix

<i>Evaluation questions</i>	<i>Methods, indicators and 'domains of change'</i>	<i>Data sources</i>
Relevance and program design		
<i>How relevant is the program design for addressing the factors preventing girls from transitions from primary to secondary school?</i>	Comparison of the program components' contribution to preventing girls from transitioning from primary to secondary school	Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; All interviews
<i>How relevant are the establishment of mentoring and support initiatives outside the schools themselves - such as Girls' and Boys' Forums, Girls' Retreats, role modelling and Village Savings and Loan Groups, for equipping female students and their caregivers with the required support to increase the likelihood of transitioning from primary to secondary school?</i>	Comparison of the establishment of mentoring and support initiatives outside the schools to other program components' contribution to preventing girls from transitioning from primary to secondary school	Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; Interviews with girls; Interviews with boys; Interviews with community actors
<i>How relevant are efforts taken to mobilize community and key local institutions for supporting girls' improved learning and transition rates?</i>	Comparison of the initiatives to mobilize community to other program components' contribution to preventing girls from transitioning from primary to secondary school	Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; Interviews with girls; Interviews with boys; Interviews with community actors
<i>How relevant are the activities with regards to improving the classroom teaching practices and the learning opportunities of both boys and girls in the 112 targeted schools?</i>	Comparison of the activities to improve teaching practices and learning to other program components' contribution to preventing girls from transitioning from primary to secondary school	Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; Interviews with girls; Interviews with boys; Interviews with head teachers, teachers, school managers
<i>To what extent were beneficiary communities including girls, parents, school staff, district In-Service teams and local/central education authorities consulted with regards to the program design and implementation, monitoring and alterations or improvement?</i>	Mentions of having been involved in consultations	All interviews
<i>To what extent did the use of Design Research and Learning promote the participation and involvement of communities, stakeholders, target groups and showed sensitivity to context and adaptive space for self-organization in order to address disparities and barriers, particularly around gender equality and school retention and transition?</i>	Pros and cons of using Design Research and Learning, as experienced by program staff	Interviews with CRECCOM staff and implementing partners

<p>What system and mechanism were in place to ensure accountability to the beneficiaries and how well did it work?</p>	<p>Existence of an accountability mechanism and examples of use of the accountability system, from the CRECCOM staff and from beneficiaries (girls, boys, care givers)</p>	<p>Interviews with CRECCOM staff and implementing partners; Interviews with girls and care givers; Interviews with boys</p>
<p>How relevant was the Public Private Partnership (PPP) strategy and how did it help in equipping the government and community stakeholders with skills in resource mobilization?</p>	<p>Relevance of PPP strategy in resource mobilization as viewed by CRECCOM staff</p>	<p>Interviews with CRECCOM staff</p>
<p>How is the program tied to the overall education environment in Malawi, specifically in regards to girls' transition into secondary school? Were there any notable linkages/disconnects?</p>	<p>Extent to which the program documentation and CRECCOM staff reference the overall education environment in Malawi</p>	<p>Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; Interviews with CRECCOM staff and implementing partners</p>
<p>Efficiency of implementation</p>		
<p>Generally, were the activities carried out in line with the original plans? If not, were the changes adequately discussed, documented, and justified? To what extent did the program activities contribute to the success/failure of the program expected outcomes?</p>	<p>Desk review of progress reports and work plan; extent to which changes were documented as per CRECCOM staff's experience</p>	<p>Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; Interviews with CRECCOM staff and implementing partners</p>
<p>Was the program implemented based on the best use of existing resources/capacity; e.g. the internal capacity and expertise of CRECCOM itself, the communities' institutions and the existing staff and systems of MoEST? What key limitations exist on this front?</p>	<p>Experience from staff involved in program implementation; Perception of use of existing resources by local and national authorities</p>	<p>Interviews with CRECCOM staff and implementing partners; Interviews with district education officer(s); Interview with MoEST</p>
<p>To what extent were the program processes, procedures and structures in place capable of delivering program activities and targets on schedule?</p>	<p>Reflections on processes, procedures and structures from program staff</p>	<p>Interviews with CRECCOM staff and implementing partners</p>
<p>To what extent could CRECCOM develop improved practices and introduce efficiencies in its program operations? E.g. How effective were the use of the expert trainers in capacity building of the existing field workers and community structures?</p>	<p>Flexibility and gains in efficiency realized by program staff</p>	<p>Interviews with CRECCOM staff and implementing partners; Interviews with community actors; Interviews with head teachers, teachers, school managers</p>
<p>What were the major obstacles in the process of implementation of ECSSAGEM at school, community, stakeholder and national policy levels?</p>	<p>Barriers to implementation as reported by CRECCOM staff</p>	<p>Interviews with CRECCOM staff and implementing partners</p>

<i>To what extent did the key contextual changes, threats and opportunities that arose during implementation influence and inform program implementation?</i>	Barriers to implementation as reported by CRECCOM staff	Interviews with CRECCOM staff and implementing partners
<i>How appropriate were the alternative solutions/changes proposed and/or implemented by the team to overcome the challenges faced during the program implementation?</i>	Review of changes made to program implementation; reflections and lessons learned from program staff	Interviews with CRECCOM staff and implementing partners
<i>Was the agreed monitoring and evaluation framework relevant for the program and how and to what extent have monitoring and evaluation findings been used to inform decision-making and the improvement of program implementation?</i>	Extent to which CRECCOM staff has awareness of the monitoring and evaluation framework; extent to which framework was used to support decision-making	Interviews with CRECCOM staff and implementing partners
Effectiveness		
<i>How effective were CRECCOM staff and the trainers in delivering the trainings, workshops and mentoring efforts to the different target groups and in supporting the trainees regularly?</i>	Rationale and set-up of the activities (trainings, workshops, mentoring) as described in the proposal; quality of the trainings delivered; process for establishing the mentoring efforts; changes to activities over the course of the program; feedback from beneficiaries	Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; All interviews
<i>How effective were CRECCOM and the program at large in raising awareness and commitment of communities/school staff for girls' education and transition into secondary school?</i>	Rationale and set-up of the activities (to raise awareness) as described in the proposal; quality of the activities delivered; changes to activities over the course of the program; feedback from beneficiaries	Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; Interviews with community actors; Interviews with girls; Interviews with boys; Interviews with care givers
<i>Did the program manage to get communities/government (national and local) buy in regarding the program? What are the best practices that have evolved from the community engagement processes?</i>	Extent to which the different levels (local, district, national) are aware of the program; efforts from CRECCOM team to get buy-in, as reported by CRECCOM	Interviews with CRECCOM and implementing partners; Interviews with community actors; Interviews with district education officers; Interviews with MoEST
<i>What were the successes/challenges when improving the teaching practices and learning process of girls and boys in the 112 schools?</i>	Analysis of the Theory of Change presented in the program documentation; results and lessons learned from the endline report; reflections from CRECCOM staff; reflections from teachers and parents; reflections from girls	Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; All interviews

<p><i>How effective or ineffective was the mixing of boys and girls in the interventions? Could the program have been implemented differently?</i></p>	<p>Rationale for mixing of boys and girls, as described in the program documentation; experience from boys and girls; reflections from CRECCOM staff and from care givers</p>	<p>Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; Interviews with CRECCOM and implementing partners; Interviews with girls; Interviews with boys; Interviews with care givers</p>
<p>Impact</p>		
<p><i>How successful was the program in terms of eliminating or decreasing existing obstacles to girls' education and transition?</i></p>	<p>Most Significant Change approach with CRECCOM staff, girls, parents, community actors and teachers; comparison with impacts presented in the endline report</p>	<p>Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; Monitoring data; All interviews</p>
<p><i>How successful was the program in terms of improving learning outcomes for boys and girls?</i></p>	<p>Most Significant Change approach with CRECCOM staff, girls, parents and teachers; comparison with impacts presented in the endline report</p>	<p>Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; Monitoring data; All interviews</p>
<p><i>Has the program led to better quality education in the 112 targeted schools? What is the effect on transition rates of girls into secondary education?</i></p>	<p>Most Significant Change approach with CRECCOM staff, girls, community actors and teachers; comparison with impacts presented in the endline report</p>	<p>Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; Monitoring data; All interviews</p>
<p><i>How has the initiative influenced the attitudes of parents, communities, school staff and Ministry officers with regards to the importance of girls receiving secondary education?</i></p>	<p>Most Significant Change approach with CRECCOM staff, parents, community actors and education officers; comparison with impacts presented in the endline report</p>	<p>Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; Monitoring data; All interviews</p>
<p><i>Is the program impacting positively on girls' perception regarding continuing education?</i></p>	<p>Most Significant Change approach with CRECCOM staff, girls, parents and teachers; comparison with impacts presented in the endline report</p>	<p>Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; Monitoring data; All interviews</p>
<p><i>What other range of outcomes (intended and unintended) has the program contributed to?</i></p>	<p>Most Significant Change approach with CRECCOM staff, girls, community actors, parents and teachers; comparison with impacts presented in the endline report</p>	<p>Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; Monitoring data; All interviews</p>
<p><i>How has the program contributed to informing policy reforms or changes in secondary education?</i></p>	<p>Extent to which the different levels (district, national) are aware of the program and its results; efforts from CRECCOM team to disseminate findings and influence policy-making</p>	<p>Interviews with CRECCOM; Interviews with district education officers; Interviews with MoEST</p>
<p><i>From the beneficiaries' and stakeholders' perspective, what other</i></p>	<p>As expressed by beneficiaries and stakeholders during interviews</p>	<p>Interviews with head teachers, teachers, school managers; Interviews with community actors; Interviews with girls;</p>

<p><i>complementary interventions/activities could enhance the results of the program?</i></p>		<p>Interviews with boys; Interviews with care givers</p>
<p>Sustainability</p>		
<p><i>What is the level of ownership of the program approach and outcomes by target groups (i.e. national and local government staff, District In-Service teams, teachers, communities, parents, etc.)?</i></p>	<p>Degree of ownership as reported by different stakeholders; comparison between level of ownership at endline and level of ownership two years after the end of the program</p>	<p>All interviews; Endline report</p>
<p><i>To what extent have the In-Service teams, schools and communities been capacitated to manage to continue operating independently in order to support and commit to promoting girls education and more broadly to quality education?</i></p>	<p>Support provided during the program with a view to empower and capacitate schools and communities to continue operating after the end of the program; review of sustainability strategy</p>	<p>Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; Interviews with CRECCOM and implementing partners; Interviews with teachers and school managers; Interviews with community actors</p>
<p><i>To which extent are the different entities set up for boys and girls (such as the mentoring and retreats) and for communities (such as the village forums, school management committees, etc) and for government (district level change agents, and grassroots field workers) able and motivated in continuing their work to support girls' education in the target areas?</i></p>	<p>Support provided during the program with a view to empower and capacitate schools and communities to continue operating after the end of the program; review of sustainability strategy</p>	<p>Program proposal; Baseline and endline reports; Interviews with CRECCOM; Interviews with teachers and school managers; Interviews with community actors; Interviews with district education officers; Interviews with MoEST</p>
<p><i>What is the possible scalability of such student mobilization, community and classroom teaching and learning strategies as interventions to enhance learning opportunities for both boys and girls?</i></p>	<p>Extent to which strategies are in place for scaling-up; analysis of the different actors who would be carrying out the scaling-up (suitability, availability and financial resources available)</p>	<p>Interviews with district education officers; Interviews with MoEST; Interviews with CRECCOM</p>
<p><i>What are the existing and potential levels of policy support and financial resources provided for the scaling of such intervention (external or internal to CRECCOM)?</i></p>	<p>Extent to which policy support exist and can lead to the scaling of CRECCOM's model</p>	<p>Interviews with district education officers; Interviews with MoEST; Interviews with CRECCOM</p>
<p><i>To what extent has program outcomes attracted additional support?</i></p>	<p>Extent of funding leveraged by CRECCOM</p>	<p>Endline report; Interviews with CRECCOM</p>
<p><i>To what extent has the program's successes, challenges, and findings been shared with relevant ministries and policy makers?</i></p>	<p>Dissemination and communication strategies; extent to which stakeholders are aware of the program's outcomes, challenges and lessons learned</p>	<p>Interviews with district education officers; Interviews with MoEST; Interviews with CRECCOM</p>

Annex 4. List of ECSSAGEM schools and selected sample

The selection of schools was based on the review of MIS data and data from the endline report and reflects the following selection criteria:

- Challenges encountered as reported by school managers, teachers and community actors based on MIS data (selection to reflect diversity of challenges);
- Distance between primary and secondary schools (far/ close);
- Characteristics of the zone (demographics, remoteness); and
- Distance from CRECCOM offices in Zomba and from Blantyre (for logistical purposes).

The evaluation team first selected 5 secondary schools, and followed with the selection of 10 primary schools in the zones of the selected secondary schools. The selected sample of schools we visited during fieldwork is highlighted in **bold**. One school had to be replaced (Chipho primary school; replaced by Thekerani primary school) due to the field work car breaking down.

<i>Community Day Secondary Schools</i>	<i>Zone</i>	<i>Primary Schools</i>
Bvumbwe CDSS	Mt. View Chawani	Bvumbwe Chiriza Kankhomba Mphedzu Machemba Nyambalo Primary Chisawani Primary Ntundama Naphiyo Kalimbuka Nahache Nyambalo Namachira Chinguluwe Ligowe Gombwa
Luchenza CDSS	Luchenza Nansato	Nansato Mwitere Lomola Luchenza Gunda Kadzuwa Mikombe
Mtambanyama CDSS	Ntambanyama Mulenga	Nsuwadzi Mulenga Mulemba Milongera Njale Ntambanyama Chilengo Nampati

Chikolombe CDSS		Kumadzi Mberenga Kapichi M'Methiwa Chikolombe
Thunga CDSS	Thunga	Thunga Chamasowa Chinthebe Namachila Namaona Chimkwende Chitengu Mankhamba Wilson Namaona Nkaombe Mulambala Chisinkha
St. Anthony Henry CDSS	Khonjeni	Chididi Namfukwe Mitengo Khonjeni Chilewani
Lipho CDSS	Lipho	Kamba Mzimбири Mulonda Lipho Primary Chipho (replaced by Thekerani) Mabuwa Mitembo Ngomani
Mpenda CDSS	Mpenda	Puteni Didi Folopensi Mpenda Nkwali Chiguma Mantimba Mapanga
Masambanjati CDSS	Masambanjati	Malosa Masambanjati Mulolo Sambambidzi Mwalo Nkoma Chikumba Motheriwa

Thekerani CDSS	Thekerani	<u>Thekerani</u> <u>(replacement for Chipho)</u> Mwabvi Nsabwe Minguni Namvula (GOMBE CLUSTER) Gombe primary Bwalizo Nsanje Mathiya
Nagwengwere CDSS	Nagwengwere	Nagwengwere Nangwegwere F.P Chisamba Mapingo Mchenga Nandife
January CDSS	January	Chisoka Nang'ombe Nthulo Makande Milonga Likwezembe January Chimbewa

Annex 5. Evaluation tools

In this annex, we present the semi-structured interview guides for:

1. Interviews/ group discussions with head teachers, teachers, and school managers
2. Interviews with district education officers and MoEST
3. Interviews/ group discussions with community actors
4. Interviews with girls
5. Interviews with boys
6. Interviews/ group discussions with care givers
7. Interview with CRECCOM staff and implementing partners

1. Interviews/ group discussions with head teachers, teachers, and school managers

Interviewer name:

Interviewee name:

Date of interview:

Name of the school:

Type of school (primary; secondary):

Zone (primary) or cluster (secondary):

Sex (M; F):

Position in the school:

Years of experience (teacher):

Years of experience (head teacher):

Questions for teachers trained by CRECCOM

Have you participated in a training organized by CRECCOM/ ECSSAGEM during 2015-2017? (*English training; Creating inclusive or safe schools and classrooms training; Gender pedagogy training*)

If so, by whom, for how long, and what were the topics covered?

Do you think the training(s) was useful? Why? Why not? What was the most useful part of the training? What was the least useful part of the training?

Have you changed your approach to teaching/ school management as a result of the training(s)? Could you give a practical example?

Do you integrate gender-sensitive approaches in your teaching/ school management? Could you give a practical example?

Gender Responsive Assessment Scale – Guidance

Gender-unequal: Perpetuates gender inequality by reinforcing unbalanced norms, roles and relations; Privileges men over women (or vice versa); Often leads to one sex enjoying more rights or opportunities than the other.

Gender-blind: Ignores gender norms, roles and relations; Very often reinforces gender-based discrimination; Ignores differences in opportunities and resource allocation for women and men; Often constructed based on the principle of being “fair” by treating everyone the same.

Gender-sensitive: Considers gender norms, roles and relations; Does not address inequality generated by unequal norms, roles or relations; Indicates gender awareness, although often no remedial action is developed.

Gender-specific: Considers women’s and men’s specific needs; Intentionally targets and benefits a specific group of women or men to achieve certain policy or programme goals

or meet certain needs; Makes it easier for women and men to fulfil duties that are ascribed to them based on their gender roles.

Gender-transformative: Addresses the causes of gender-based health inequities; Includes ways to transform harmful gender norms, roles and relations; The objective is often to promote gender equality; Includes strategies to foster progressive changes in power relationships between women and men.

Do you feel more confident teaching English as a result of the training(s)?

Do you think girls and boys are learning better as a result of changes in your teaching approach?

During the ECSSAGEM program (2015-2017), in your opinion, what was the most significant change that took place for...

...yourself?

...girls?

...boys?

...other teachers?

Why is this change significant? More than any other changes?

Probe about changes related to: changes in the way that people are able to improve their lives; and/or the lives of the family; changes in the way that people are empowered (e.g. participation in development activities; ability to make decisions; positive attitudes toward the future); changes in people's attitude toward children's schooling, in particular girls; and/or toward women's decision-making power; changes in the way that people work together as a community; and/or how they will continue community development activities after support from CRECCOM.

Were you involved in designing the program? Improving the program? Evaluating the program? How?

Questions for head teachers/ school managers

What are the main reasons for school drop out for students at your school? Do the main reasons differ for girls and boys?

What do you think are the main challenges for girls to transition to secondary school/ completing secondary education?

Are challenges similar for boys? Why, why not?

What are you currently doing as a school to improve retention at primary/secondary levels?

Do you promote collaboration/information exchange between primary and secondary school teachers?

What role do you think teachers and schools can play in supporting girls' transition to secondary school? What about community leaders?

2. Interviews with district education officers and MoEST

Interviewer name:

Interviewee name:

Date of interview:

Place of interview:

Sex (M; F):

Position in government/ civil service:

Questions

What are the main challenges girls face when it comes to going to secondary school in Malawi? In Thyolo district?

Are challenges similar for boys? Why, why not?

How is the government responding to these challenges? Which actors are you working with? (NGOs, private sector, etc.)

Have you heard of the ECSSAGEM program? CRECCOM? If so, what do you know about it?

Were you involved in designing the program? Improving the program? Evaluating the program? How?

Did CRECCOM share the program's successes, challenges and findings? In what ways? With which outcome?

Which activity do you think was most effective in bringing about that change? Was it...

...delivering the trainings, workshops and mentoring efforts?

...raising awareness and commitment of communities/school staff for girls' education and transition into secondary school?

...improving the teaching practices and learning process of girls and boys in the 112 schools?

...the mixing of boys and girls in the interventions?

Are the different activities set up for government (district level change agents, and grassroots field workers) able to continue without project support? What is the level of ownership?

Would you say the program is replicable and scalable at the regional/ national level? Does the design take into account the overall education environment in Malawi? If not, why?

What is the possible scalability of such student mobilization, community and classroom teaching and learning strategies?

3. Interviews/ group discussions with community actors

Interviewer name:

Interviewee name:

Date of interview:

Place of interview:

Sex (M; F):

Role in community (Village Forum facilitator, VSL agent, etc.):

Community actors = Community leaders, village forum facilitators, leaders of Mothers Groups, village savings and loans (VSL) agents, government field workers, role models

What is your opinion on girls' retention/transition as a community leader?

How do community members in your area feel about girls' retention and transition?

What do you think are the main challenges for girls to transition to secondary school/ completing secondary education?

Are challenges similar for boys? Why, why not?

Do you have an action plan that address issues that affect girls' drop out and transition in your area?

What are the current actions and responses of the community on issues related to child marriage and pregnancies?

During the ECSSAGEM program, in your opinion, what was the most significant change that took place for...

...girls?

...boys?

...yourself?

...other community actors?

Why is this change significant? More than any other changes?

Probe about changes related to: changes in the way that people are able to improve their lives; and/or the lives of the family; changes in the way that people are empowered (e.g. participation in development activities; ability to make decisions; positive attitudes toward the future); changes in people's attitude toward children's schooling, in particular girls; and/or toward women's decision-making power; changes in the way that people work together as a community; and/or how they will continue community development activities after support from CRECCOM.

Which activity do you think was most effective in bringing about that change? Was it...

...the Village Forums? Why, why not?

...the Mothers Groups? Why, why not?

...the parents participating in VSLA? Why, why not?

...working with government field workers? Why, why not?

...girls' and boys' forums? Why, why not?

...the mixing of boys and girls in the interventions? Why, why not?

Were you involved in designing the program? Improving the program? Evaluating the program? How?

Are the different activities set up for boys and girls (such as the mentoring and retreats) and for communities (such as the village forums, school management committees, etc.) able to continue without project support? How?

What were the major barriers and opportunities during the implementation of the program? What recommendations do you have for CRECCOM?

How did the program influence other aspects of the community life, outside of education? Which challenges do you face otherwise, and how can these be solved according to you?

4. Interviews with girls

Interviewer name:

Interviewee name:

Date of interview:

Name of the school:

Type of school (primary; secondary):

Zone (primary) or cluster (secondary):

Sex (M; F):

Age:

Class:

Questions

Do you enjoy school? Why, why not?

Until what class would you like to continue in school? Why do you want to continue until this level?

Do your parents agree with how long you should stay in school?

What do you think might prevent you from staying in school as long as you hope?

Do you have any friends who have dropped from school? If so, why? Do you think this could happen to you too?

Do you feel safe at school? Safe from abuse, bullying? Why, why not?

In your school, do you feel that girls and boys are treated/respected the same? Why/why not?

Do you know about any youth clubs in your school? Which ones do you participate in?

Did you participate in girls' and boys' forums organized by ECSSAGEM between 2015 and 2017? If so, what did you learn? Was it useful? How did you feel about the mixing of boys and girls?

What about English clubs? Study groups? Did you participate, and why? Were they useful?

[IF GIRL PARTICIPATED IN ACTIVITIES] During the ECSSAGEM program (2015-2017), in your opinion, what was the most significant change that took place for...

...yourself?

...boys? Did you notice changes in their behaviors?

...teachers? Did you notice changes in how the teacher teaches?

...your parents? Did they change their views about your education?

Why is this change significant? More than any other changes?

Probe about changes related to: changes in the way that people are able to improve their lives; and/or the lives of the family; changes in the way that people are empowered (e.g. participation in development activities; ability to make decisions; positive attitudes toward the future); changes in people's attitude toward children's schooling, in particular girls; and/or toward women's decision-making power; changes in the way that people work together as a community; and/or how they will continue community development activities after support from CRECCOM.

Were you involved in designing the program? Improving the program? Evaluating the program? How?

Are the different activities set up for boys and girls (such as the mentoring and retreats) in your school continuing since 2017 (end of program)?

5. Interviews with boys

Interviewer name:

Interviewee name:

Date of interview:

Name of the school:

Type of school (primary; secondary):

Zone (primary) or cluster (secondary):

Sex (M; F):

Age:

Class:

Questions

Do you enjoy school? Why, why not?

Until what class would you like to continue in school? Why do you want to continue until this level?

Do your parents agree with how long you should stay in school?

What do you think might prevent you from staying in school as long as you hope?

Do you have any friends who have dropped from school? If so, why? Do you think this could happen to you too?

Do you feel safe at school? Safe from abuse, bullying? Why, why not?

In your school, do you feel that girls and boys are treated/respected the same? Why/why not?

Do you know about any youth clubs in your school? Which ones do you participate in?

Did you participate in girls' and boys' forums organized by ECSSAGEM between 2015 and 2017? If so, what did you learn? Was it useful? How did you feel about the mixing of boys and girls?

What about English clubs? Study groups? Did you participate, and why? Were they useful?

[IF BOY PARTICIPATED IN ACTIVITIES] During the ECSSAGEM program (2015-2017), in your opinion, what was the most significant change that took place for...

...yourself?

...girls? Did you notice changes in their behaviors?

...teachers? Did you notice changes in how the teacher teaches?

...your parents? Did they change their views about your education?

Why is this change significant? More than any other changes?

Probe about changes related to: changes in the way that people are able to improve their lives; and/or the lives of the family; changes in the way that people are empowered (e.g. participation in development activities; ability to make decisions; positive attitudes toward the future); changes in people's attitude toward children's schooling, in particular girls; and/or toward women's decision-making power; changes in the way that people work together as a community; and/or how they will continue community development activities after support from CRECCOM.

Were you involved in designing the program? Improving the program? Evaluating the program? How?

Are the different activities set up for boys and girls (such as the mentoring and retreats) in your school continuing since 2017 (end of program)?

6. Interviews/ group discussion with care givers

Interviewer name:

Interviewee name:

Sex (M; F):

Date of interview:

Name of the child (cared for):

Type of school child goes to (primary; secondary):

Zone (primary) or cluster (secondary):

Questions

Did you have a son/ daughter in school between 2015 and 2017? Which class?

Do you have a son/ daughter currently in school? Which class?

How far is the school from your home?

Has he/she missed school during the last month? If so, what were the reasons?

How long do you think your son/ daughter should be in school? Primary school? Secondary school?

What is your son/ daughter's view about continuing education?

What are the main challenges in supporting your son/ daughter in school? How do you address these challenges?

What did the Village Forum do in order to improve education in this community? How?

What did you think about the Mothers Groups? Why?

What did you think of VSLA in addressing issues related to girls' retention and transition in your community? Were/are you a member of a VSL group? If so, what did/do you use the payout for?

What do you think of the value of having mentoring and support initiatives outside the schools? Why?

What do you think about the efforts to mobilize the community and key local institutions? Why?

What do you think about the mixing of boys and girls in after-school clubs? Why?

During the ECSSAGEM program (2015-2017), in your opinion, what was the most significant change that took place for...

...yourself?

...girls?

...boys?

...community actors?

Why is this change significant? More than any other changes?

Probe about changes related to: changes in the way that people are able to improve their lives; and/or the lives of the family; changes in the way that people are empowered (e.g. participation in development activities; ability to make decisions; positive attitudes toward the future); changes in people's attitude toward children's schooling, in particular girls; and/or toward women's decision-making power; changes in the way that people work together as a community; and/or how they will continue community development activities after support from CRECCOM.

Were you involved in designing the program? Improving the program? Evaluating the program? How?

Are the different activities set up for boys and girls (such as the mentoring and retreats) and for communities (such as the village forums, school management committees, etc.) able to continue without project support? How?

7. Interviews with CRECCOM staff and implementing partners

Interviewer name:

Interviewee name:

Date of interview:

Place of interview:

Sex (M; F):

Organization and role:

Program design and relevance

What are the main challenges girls face when it comes to going to secondary school?

To what extent has the ECSSAGEM program responded to these challenges?

Which part of the ECSSAGEM program was most successful at getting girls to transition to secondary school?

...the establishment of mentoring and support initiatives outside the schools themselves? Why, why not?

...the efforts to mobilize the community and key local institutions? Why, why not?

...the classroom and teaching practices improvements? Why, why not?

How were participants (girls, parents, school staff, government authorities) involved in designing the program? Improving the program? Evaluating the program?

What were the benefits and challenges of using Design Research and Learning? Did it alter the program design? In what ways?

What are the best practices that have evolved from the community engagement processes?

What did you learn from having a Public Private Partnership (PPP) strategy? Pros and cons? Did it help with resource mobilization?

What other range of outcomes (intended and unintended) has the program contributed to?

Would you say the program is replicable and scalable at the national level? Does the design take into account the overall education environment in Malawi? If not, why?

Implementation

What challenges did you face during implementation? Were the activities carried out in line with the original plans? If not, were the changes adequately discussed, documented, and justified? What did you learn from the implementation process?

Did anything happen – contextual changes for instance – that influenced the ECSSAGEM program and its implementation?

Was the agreed monitoring and evaluation framework relevant for the program? How did you make use of the information collected? Give an example.

How much did the implementation rely on the internal capacity and expertise of CREC-COM staff itself? On the capacity of partners? On the capacity of communities? On the capacity of MoEST staff? How did you address the limitations in capacity?

Would you say CRECCOM developed improved practices and introduced efficiencies in its program operations, as a result of implementing ECSSAGEM?

What would you do differently if you were about to implement the ECSSAGEM program again?

Changes

During the ECSSAGEM program, in your opinion, what was the most significant change that took place for...

...girls?

...boys?

...teachers?

...community actors?

Why is this change significant? More than any other changes?

Probe about changes related to: changes in the way that people are able to improve their lives; and/or the lives of the family; changes in the way that people are empowered (e.g. participation in development activities; ability to make decisions; positive attitudes toward the future); changes in people's attitude toward children's schooling, in particular girls; and/or toward women's decision-making power; changes in the way that people work together as a community; and/or how they will continue community development activities after support from CRECCOM.

Which activity do you think was most effective in bringing about that change? Was it...

...delivering the trainings, workshops and mentoring efforts?

...raising awareness and commitment of communities/school staff for girls' education and transition into secondary school?

...improving the teaching practices and learning process of girls and boys in the 112 schools?

...the mixing of boys and girls in the interventions?

Sustainability

What has been put in place (activities, meetings, strategy) to ensure the sustainability of effects?

Are the different activities set up for boys and girls (such as the mentoring and retreats) and for communities (such as the village forums, school management committees, etc.) and for government (district level change agents, and grassroots field workers) able to continue without project support? How?

Going forward

What is the possible scalability of such student mobilization, community and classroom teaching and learning strategies? How would you go about it?

Has CRECCOM attracted additional support? If so, would you say it's a result of the ECS-SAGEM program and its achievements?

Did you share the program's successes, challenges and findings? In what ways? With whom? Did you discuss with relevant ministries and policy makers? With which outcome?

Annex 6. List of interviewees

Number of interviews/ FGD participants by category of respondent

	Total	Male	Female
CRECCOM staff	5	1	4
University of Wisconsin Madison	1	0	1
MoEST and District Education Officers	9	7	2
Community members	244	91	153
Head teachers/ teachers	48	39	9
Parents	54	9	45
Students	47	19	28

CRECCOM staff

Madalo Samati, Executive Director

Zione Musa, former ECSSAGEM program coordinator

Levison Lijoni, Director of programs

Linice Sanga, Program manager for MasterCard program (IEQ-CDSS)

Grace Chinkhandwe, M&E officer

MoEST and District Education Officers

Ronald Phiri, Chief Community Development Officer

Clotilda Sawasawa, Director, Department of Community Development, Ministry of Civic Education, Culture and Community Development

Chikondano Mussa, Director, Secondary Education, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

Sam Hobbe Tempo, Secondary Education Methodology Advisor (School Inspection), Education Division Office at Mulange (covering 4 districts including Thyolo District)

Gossam Mafuta, Director of Basic Education, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

Godfrey Kubwense, District Education Manager (DEM)

Kenneth Dumbula, Coordinating Primary Education Advisor (CDEA)

Chauluka Muisare, Senior Inspector

Elizabeth Mlate, Principal Social Welfare Officer

Luchenza CDSS

Community actors – 12, of which 8 were women

Head teachers/ teachers – 4, of which 1 was a female teacher

Parents – 4, of which 3 were female parents

Students – 2, of which 2 were girls

Luchenza primary school

Community actors – 37, of which 25 were women

Head teachers/ teachers – 1, of which 0 were female teachers

Parents – 6, of which 4 were female parents

Students – 4, of which 2 were girls

Nansato primary school

Community actors – 15, of which 9 were women

Head teachers/ teachers – 4, of which 1 was a female teacher

Parents – 5, of which 5 were female parents

Students – 2, of which 1 was a girl

Thunga CDSS

Community actors – 19, of which 12 were women

Head teachers/ teachers – 4, of which 1 was a female teacher

Parents – 3, of which 3 were female parents

Students – 4, of which 2 were girls

Thunga primary school

Community actors – 8, of which 5 were women

Head teachers/ teachers – 3, of which 1 was a female teacher

Parents – 4, of which 4 were female parents

Students – 4, of which 2 were girls

Chisinkha primary school

Community actors – 12, of which 8 were women

Head teachers/ teachers – 4, of which 0 were female teachers

Parents – 3, of which 3 were female parents

Students – (students had left before the team arrived)

Mpenda CDSS

Community actors – 18, of which 11 were women

Head teachers/ teachers – 5, of which 1 was a female teacher

Parents – 1, of which 1 was a female parent

Students – 4, of which 2 were girls

Mpenda primary school

Community actors – (same community as Mpenda CDSS)

Head teachers/ teachers – 3, of which 0 were female teachers

Parents – 4, of which 2 were female parents

Students – 4, of which 2 were girls

Masambanjati CDSS

Community actors – 18, of which 16 were women

Head teachers/ teachers – 0, of which 0 were female teachers (*all teachers are new; the teachers who were trained by CRECCOM were transferred*)

Parents – 2, of which 2 were female parents

Students – 4, of which 2 were girls

Nkoma primary school

Community actors – 16, of which 8 were women

Head teachers/ teachers – 5, of which 1 was a female teacher

Parents – 3, of which 3 were female parents

Students – 4, of which 2 were girls

Lipho CDSS

Community actors – 46, of which 32 were women

Head teachers/ teachers – 1, of which 0 were female teachers

Parents – 2, of which 1 was a female parent

Students – 6, of which 4 were girls

Lipho primary school

Community actors – (same community as Lipho CDSS)

Head teachers/ teachers – 4, of which 0 were female teachers

Parents – 5, of which 4 were female parents

Students – 1, of which 0 were girls

Thekerani primary school (replacement for Chipho primary school due to car breakdown)

Community actors – 5, of which 4 were women

Head teachers/ teachers – 5, of which 1 was a female teacher

Parents – 4, of which 4 were female parents

Students – 4, of which 3 were girls

Masambanjati primary school

Community actors – 13, of which 11 were women

Head teachers/ teachers – 5, of which 2 were female teachers

Parents – 5, of which 3 were female parents

Students – 4, of which 2 were girls

Folopensi primary school

Community actors – 7, of which 4 were women

Head teachers/ teachers – 0, of which 0 were female teachers (*all teachers are new; the teachers who were trained by CRECCOM were transferred*)

Parents – 3, of which 3 were female parents

Students – 4, of which 2 were girls

Annex 7. ECSSAGEM’s Theory of Change and the education context in Thyolo district

ECSSAGEM’s Theory of Change posited that girls’ educational retention and transition would improve if **all the ecologies that affect girls’ education were aligned in support of girls’ educational success**. These ecologies include: individual girls and their peers, their families/communities, their leaders, their primary schools, their secondary schools, and local and national education policies.

The Theory of Change below has been color-coded to reflect the areas which appear to be verified by this evaluation (green) and the areas which have not taken place as expected or failed to materialized (orange).

	Sphere of control	Sphere of direct influence	Sphere of indirect influence	Sphere of interest
	<i>ECSSAGEM activities and outputs</i>	<i>ECSSAGEM engagement with stakeholders</i>	<i>ECSSAGEM influence on changes in stakeholders and systems</i>	<i>ECSSAGEM higher level and long term impacts</i>
Girls’ empowerment	112 girls’ and boys’ forums established	Spaces for dialogue on critical issues affecting girls’ and boys’ lives such as sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and gender-based violence	Changes in behaviors of boys and girls towards gender-based violence, early pregnancies and early marriage	Girls equipped with the skills, resources, and support networks they need to stay in primary school and successfully transition from primary to secondary school
	Mother Groups established in 12 CDSS and supported in 100 primary schools	Mother Groups equipped with girls’ mentoring skills training	Mother Groups providing one-on-one mentoring to girls at risk of dropout and organizing girls’ retreats	
Community engagement	Community actors trained to address issues that affect girls’ access to education	Community actors empowered to identify challenges and create locally-sustainable solutions	Community actors engaged in promoting girls’ education and supporting them through the different community structures	Communities and local institutions mobilized sustainably to support girls’ access to education and learning
	Village savings and loans agents trained with financial literacy skills	Village savings and loans agents equipped with the skills to reach out to VSL groups	Village savings and loans agents supporting parents through VSL groups to support their daughters’ education	

Academic skills

Meetings organized between government extension staff/district departmental managers and community members	Interactions between government extension staff/district departmental managers and community members during which critical developmental issues are discussed	Sustainable communication established between district managers and the communities and government focus on community needs regarding education	
Tea estates and commercial companies engaged to support quality education in schools	Companies, local leaders and district officials discussing the District Council's first MoU with private companies	Adoption of the MoU with private companies and concrete activities in support of quality education in schools	
Teachers and head teachers trained on English teaching strategies and gender-responsive pedagogies for lesson delivery	Teachers and head teachers equipped to teach English and apply gender-responsive pedagogies	Teachers and head teachers sustainably use and apply English teaching strategies and gender-responsive pedagogies for lesson delivery	Girls' educational experiences and outcomes improved by enhancing the gendered quality of education in primary and secondary schools
English clubs established in the 112 schools and study circles in the 12 CDSS to create a forum where students can practice and improve their English skills	Students equipped with a space where they can further their study of English and receive peer-to-peer support	Students with improved English skills and increased confidence using English	

Structure of the education system in Malawi

The education system in Malawi is guided by the National Education Policy (NEP) and the National Education Sector Plan 2008-2017 (NESP)¹⁵. The system is structured according to the following sub-sectors:

- (i) Basic Education includes Early Childhood Development (ECD), Early Childhood Education (ECE), Primary Education (Standards 1 to 8), Out-of-School Youth Education, Adult Literacy (AL), and Complementary Basic Education (CBE);
- (ii) Secondary Education (two year junior secondary and two year senior secondary), and after the four years, the students sit for a Malawi School Certificate Examination (MSCE);
- (iii) Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET);
- (iv) Teacher Education (primary certificate – 2 years; secondary diploma – 3 years; or secondary degree – 4 years); and
- (v) Higher education, which includes universities and colleges.

¹⁵ NESP 2008-2017 aims to ensure better access and equity, relevance and quality, and good governance and management in all institutions from basic education to higher education. The Plan is expected to fit in the overall national development strategy, the Malawi Growth Development Strategy (MGDS), and support the realization of the global agenda Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Public spending on basic education is predominantly concentrated in primary education, with ECD and CBE largely delivered by non-governmental organizations with little or no public funding.

In 2004, a national policy authorized primary education provision by private institutions; however, private schools play a small role in the provision of primary education (currently less than 10%). **The government remains the main provider of education.** Over 91% of primary schools are publicly financed, of these some are run by the government while others are managed by religious institutions using government grants.

The Government of Malawi (GoM) adopted a **National Decentralization Policy** in 1998 with the aim to improve the targeting of resources to those most in need, and to devolve decision-making closer to the schools. Enabling legislation, in the form of the Local Government Act of 1998, established 34 education districts (each district is divided into 10–20 zones) responsible for the delivery of primary education. **Primary Education Advisors** were appointed and made responsible for supervision of and support to primary schools and the continuing professional development of teachers. However, the national Ministry of Education, Science & Technology (MoEST) retains the overall responsibility for the education sector.

Context of the education sector

Malawi has a population of 17.6 million, of which 53 percent are below 18 years of age. As a landlocked nation with an economy characterized by a narrow export base and significant dependence on imports and foreign aid, its young population is one of Malawi's most precious assets. Malawi has been able to make important economic and structural reforms and sustain its economic growth rates over the last decade. Nevertheless, poverty remains widespread, and the economy undiversified and vulnerable to external shocks¹⁶. In 2018, per capita income in Malawi was USD 486, and it ranked 171 of 189 countries surveyed by the United Nations Human Development Index.

Education and skills development is essential for the socio-economic development of Malawi. For Malawi to reap the demographic dividend and lift itself out of poverty, the country needs to improve the quality of learning and invest more in children and young persons, of which secondary education is the foundation. The government has committed itself to improving access, equity, quality and relevance of pre-primary, basic, secondary and tertiary education through the **Third Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS III)**, the national strategic framework for implementing the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development. This is reflected on the relatively high education spending – 23.5% of government total budget and 6% of gross domestic product (GDP) in FY 2018-2019¹⁷.

Yet the budget allocation is insufficient to meet the growing demand for education services. The system faces severe challenges in delivering quality education for all. Since **primary education was made free in 1994**, there has been a huge increase in primary enrolments which has led to a shortage of classrooms and qualified teachers. This large increase has also put pressure on places for secondary education which has not expanded at the same rate as the primary education sub-sector. Most primary schools in Malawi today have poor infrastructure, are under-staffed, under-resourced, and under-funded, creating extremely challenging teaching and learning conditions for teachers and students alike¹⁸.

The majority of children of primary school age are currently in school, with a net enrolment rate of 88% (87% for boys, 89% for girls). The pupils per qualified teacher ratio in primary school has decreased compared to 2015/16 and is currently at 76.9. The shortage of classrooms in most schools has resulted in a high pupil-permanent classroom ratio of 116:1.

¹⁶ Malawi has been experiencing multiple shocks including not only financial crisis but also floods and drought.

¹⁷ <https://www.unicef.org/esa/sites/unicef.org/esa/files/2019-04/UNICEF-Malawi-2018-Education-Budget-Brief.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.rippleafrica.org/education-in-malawi-africa/general-education-in-malawi-africa>

Only 38.4% of children who enroll achieve primary school transition to secondary school (40.9% for boys and 35.8% for girls), and of those that do, only 8% move on to tertiary education. Net enrolment rate for secondary school is very low, estimated at 16% in 2017 for both boys and girls (EMIS, 2017). Total enrolment in secondary school in 2017 was 372,885, against total primary school enrolment of 5,073,721. One of the biggest challenges of enrolment is the limited number of secondary schools. For the entire country, there are only 1,411 secondary schools compared to 6,065 primary schools. The high drop-out rate is also affecting the efficiency of the system. Among the reasons for dropping out, first is child marriage (currently at 42%), inability to pay levies or transport costs, early pregnancy, family responsibilities, long distance to schools and lack of teachers.

In an effort to address widespread and persistent challenges with regard to high repetition and dropout rates, low completion rates (particularly for girls), poor rates of transition from primary to post-primary levels of education, and steadily worsening examination results, the government of Malawi has prepared an **Education Sector Implementation Plan** for 2013/14–2017/18 (ESIP-II). The plan integrates a significant emphasis on improving learning achievement in lower-primary education and on expanding access to secondary education (refer to **Box 1**).

Given considerable uncertainty regarding future levels of external donor support for the education sector, ESIP-II presents three education financing scenarios for the 2013–2018 period, corresponding with “low,” “medium,” and “high” levels of donor assistance, with expenditure for each education subsector and major components tailored in line with the three scenarios.

Box 1. Education Sector Implementation Plan (ESIP II) Strategies

The following outlines key policies and operational strategies that are of relevance to the ECSSAGEM program in Malawi.

Policy 2. Attain a motivated, high –performing teacher staff

Relevant Strategy: *A comprehensive teacher motivation strategy* shall be adopted to ensure more comprehensive and transparent teacher promotion routes and offer clearer disciplinary measures, especially related to teacher attendance. ESIP II will ensure teachers are deployed where needs are highest and introduce a one-off redeployment of teachers from urban to rural areas. To incentivize placements in rural areas and hard-to-fill posts, more teachers’ houses will be built.

Policy 3. Increase Internal Efficiency

Relevant Strategy: *To drastically reduce repetition rates:* ensure that primary school repetition rates are reduced from 22% to a mandated cap of 10% per standard. Schools will be incentivized to become more efficient through support, for example, abiding schools receive providing ‘top-ups’ to their PSIP grant and for remedial teaching.

Policy 4. Improved management/resource delivery through higher school funding and decentralized procurement of teaching and learning materials

Relevant strategies:

- *School-based management* will be strengthened through additional funding for the Primary School Improvement Programme (PSIP) and improving the capacity of Schools Management Committees (SMCs), and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) on management, finance and procurement.
- *School-level Procurement of primary textbooks:* Under ESIP II a pilot will start to fund textbooks through PSIP bank-accounts. Schools can purchase books directly

following Malawi's tried-and-tested model of 'district book fairs' used in secondary education.

Source: GoM, 2014

For secondary education, the main focus lies with improving access by increasing the total number of places available. To address the issue of very low transition rates from primary to secondary school, a number of policies have been adopted to increase access, improve quality and equity, and improve secondary school management. As outlined in ESIP-II, the plan was to double secondary enrolment from a current 350,000 to almost 700,000 by 2017/18¹⁹ which would be achieved through a number of inter-related strategies – including by drastically expanding double-shifting in all possible schools, upgrading the facilities in CDSSs and integrating small neighboring schools into these institutions. Ensuring that all **CDSSs meet general standards** is expected to significantly improve quality, while additional efficiency gains are made through increased cost-sharing and school-level textbook procurement²⁰.

Improving girls' education

Improving girls' access to high-quality education is a global priority articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)²¹. It is also a national priority in Malawi, which is reflected in the vision outlined in Malawi's **National Girls' Education Strategy (NGES)**: "All girls in Malawi access, participate in, complete and excel at all levels of education that empowers them to effectively contribute to the country's sustainable social, economic development by 2018" (MoEST 2014, p. 9).

Addressing the wide range of factors (socio-cultural, economic, school infrastructure and facility) that impact on girls' education has been a priority of the Malawian government, along with many donors and civil society organizations (CSOs). The NGES was launched in 2014 and is a key strategy document that outlines the Government of Malawi's priorities. It played a central role in the development of ESIP-II and has informed many of its key reforms.

The Malawi Girls' Education Strategy identifies three main factors that explain the gender-disparity in education outcomes. First, socio-cultural beliefs around the **traditional role of a girl** in Malawian society often have a direct impact on girls' attendance and attention in schools; for instance through community pressures towards marriage, early pregnancies or household duties. Indirectly, these beliefs also influence **teacher behavior** to invest less time and effort into girls and to make them more likely to repeat a year due to cultural bias.

Despite the achievement of gender parity at primary level in Malawi, there are widespread gender disparities at upper levels of primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Female students drop out at higher rates and complete school at lower rates than their male counterparts.

In an attempt to improve girls' education and ensure gender parity and equality ESIP-II also includes various measures in support of adolescent girls, including upgrading school

¹⁹ The number of secondary schools in 2015/2016 was 747 public (government and religious); 383 private; 323 open day secondary schools (CDSS). GoM Statistical yearbook 2017

²⁰ ESIP II. GoM

²¹ Gender equality in education is re-emphasised in Goals 4, 5 and 10 of the UN's SDGs.

Goal 4 is to "ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning" and includes targets around ensuring that both boys and girls have access to high quality and equitable primary and secondary education; Goal 5 is to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls"; and Goal 10 is to "reduce inequality within and among countries".

facilities (such as WASH) and building hostels for girls in community secondary day schools to **limit the distance they must travel**, and instituting a 50:50 enrolment quota system for girls and boys in all government secondary schools. ESIP-II also envisions providing economic support through primary school improvement grants (PSIG) to cover essential items such as **female hygiene or learning materials, bursaries and cash transfers** to ensure poorer girls are still able to attend secondary education and fund their required education expenditures.

Annex 8. Impact indicators at baseline and endline

	2015 (project start)			2016 (baseline)			2017 (endline)		
	Female	Male	Total	Female % change	Male % change	Total % change	Female % change	Male % change	Total % change
Increased retention in upper primary (Year 1 ECS-SAGEM schools)				64	75		65 (1% ↑)	88 (13% ↑)	
Increased retention in upper primary (Year 2 ECS-SAGEM schools)				58	67		79 (21% ↑)	87 (20% ↑)	
Increased retention from Form 1 to Form 2 ²²							93.4	95.6	
PSLCE pass rate (of those students who sat the exam, baseline/ endline schools)	45.8	73.6	61	84.9 (39.1% ↑)	90.8 (17.2% ↑)	88 (27% ↑)	74.7 (10.2% ↓) 28.9% ↑ from 2015	79.1 (11.7% ↓) 5.5% ↑ from 2015	77 (11% ↓) 16% ↑ from 2015
% of Standard 8 girls and boys who passed the PSLCE (in all 100 target schools)	58.6	78	69.4	78.4 (19.8% ↑)	85 (7% ↑)	82 (12.6% ↑)	79.7 21.1% ↑ from 2015	86.7 8.7% ↑ from 2015	83.6 14.2% ↑ from 2015
% of Standard 8 girls and boys who passed the PSLCE (in non-ECSSAGEM schools)	81.4	66.3	74.7	76.7 (4.7 ↓)	89 (22.7 ↑)	83.8 (9.1 ↑)	76.9 (0.2% ↑) 4.5% ↓ from 2015	87 (2% ↓) 20.7% ↓ from 2015	82.7 (1.1% ↓) 8% ↓ from 2015
Transition rate from primary to secondary (of those selected from baseline/ endline schools)	91.5	93.7		97.5 (6% ↑)	95.6 (1.9% ↑)		93.5 (4% ↓) 2% ↑ from 2015	90.1 (5.5% ↓) 3.6% ↓ from 2015	
Dropouts reported from early marriage				38			33		5% ↓
Dropouts reported from pregnancy				45			41		4% ↓

Source: ECSSAGEM Endline Report 26.03.18

²² Data on enrolment in lower secondary in 2017/2018 were not available at the time of analysis. Furthermore, there is good reason to believe that these data do not reflect retention of individual students, but instead indicate a lot of movement in and out of CDSSs.

Notes: Enrolment data were collected from 98 schools in 2015, 2016, and 2017. PSLCE data shows PSLCE Pass Rates in Non-ECSSAGEM schools, in all 100 ECSSAGEM schools, and in the ECSSAGEM Baseline/Endline Schools. It is also worth noting that ECSSAGEM began implementing most community-based interventions before the 2016 'baseline' study. Some social indicators were therefore already affected by these interventions by the time the baseline data were collected.