
6-2023

Evaluation of Biruh Tesfa (Bright Future) for All: A program for out-of-school girls, migrants, and domestic workers in low-income Ethiopian cities

Annabel Erulkar
Population Council

Eyasu Hailu
Population Council

Henock Markos
Population Council

Getnet Demissie

Tsegahun Tessema

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/focus_adolescents
How does access to this work benefit you? Click here to let us know!

Recommended Citation

Erulkar, Annabel, Eyasu Hailu, Henock Markos, Getnet Demissie, Tsegahun Tessema, and Hana Hailu. 2023. "Evaluation of Biruh Tesfa (Bright Future) for All: A program for out-of-school girls, migrants, and domestic workers in low-income Ethiopian cities." New York: Population Council.

This Report is brought to you for free and open access by the Population Council.

Authors

Annabel Erulkar, Eyasu Hailu, Henock Markos, Getnet Demissie, Tsegahun Tessema, and Hana Hailu

EVALUATION OF BIRUH TESFA (BRIGHT FUTURE) FOR ALL

A PROGRAM FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL GIRLS, MIGRANTS, AND
DOMESTIC WORKERS IN LOW-INCOME ETHIOPIAN CITIES

Annabel Erulkar, PhD
Eyasu Hailu
Henock Markos, MA
Getnet Demissie, PhD
Tsegahun Tessema, ME
Hana Hailu, MA

The Population Council confronts critical health and development issues—from stopping the spread of HIV to improving reproductive health and ensuring that young people lead full and productive lives. Through biomedical, social science, and public health research in 50 countries, we work with our partners to deliver solutions that lead to more effective policies, programs, and technologies that improve lives around the world. Established in 1952 and headquartered in New York, the Council is a nongovernmental, nonprofit organization governed by an international board of trustees.

Population Council

Heritage Plaza
Cameroon Street
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia
Tel: +251 116 631 712

popcouncil.org

Photo credits: Zeleman Productions.

Suggested citation: Erulkar, Annabel, Eyasu Hailu, Henock Markos, Getnet Demissie, Tsegahun Tessema, and Hana Hailu. “Evaluation of Biruh Tesfa (Bright Future) for All, A Program for Out-of-School Girls, Migrants, and Domestic Workers in Low-Income Ethiopian Cities.” New York: Population Council.

This material has been funded by UK aid from the UK government; however the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government’s official policies.

© 2023 The Population Council, Inc.

Table of Contents

Background	4
<i>Biruh Tesfa (Bright Future) Program for out-of-school girls in low-income urban Ethiopia</i>	4
<i>Biruh Tesfa for All, 2018 to 2022</i>	5
Methodology	8
<i>Sample size and sampling</i>	8
<i>Data collection</i>	8
<i>Analysis</i>	9
Results	10
<i>Sample characteristics</i>	10
<i>Characteristics of Biruh Tesfa for All participants, including domestic workers</i>	12
<i>Participation in the program</i>	14
<i>Changes in mental health</i>	17
<i>Changes in literacy and numeracy</i>	18
<i>Parents, guardians, and employers</i>	23
<i>Post-Biruh Tesfa for All transitions</i>	26
<i>Reflections on value for money</i>	28
Discussion	29
Recommendations.....	31
References.....	34

List of Tables

Table 1. Characteristics of Biruh Tesfa for All evaluation respondents, by type of respondent and time of survey	11
Table 2. Characteristics of nondomestic workers and domestic workers in Biruh Tesfa for All (baseline and endline).....	12
Table 3. Participation in Biruh Tesfa for All, by phase of project and type of beneficiary	14
Table 4. Source of information and participation in Biruh Tesfa for All, at endline	15
Table 5. Percent of respondents reporting feelings of anxiety, nervousness, sadness, and depression at least weekly, by domestic worker status and time of survey	17
Table 6. Adjusted odds ratios (and 95% confidence intervals) from logistic regression analysis to identify associations between self-reported anxiety and depression, selected characteristics, and time of survey	18
Table 7. Mean scores, percent of beneficiaries who have not acquired skills and percent who are proficient, by literacy test, category of respondent, and time of survey.....	19
Table 8. Mean scores, percent of beneficiaries who have not acquired skills and percent who are proficient, by numeracy test, category of respondent, and time of survey.....	21

List of Tables (cont.)

Table 9. Adjusted odds ratios (and 95% confidence intervals) from logistic regression analysis to identify associations between proficiency in literacy and numeracy measures, selected characteristics, and time of survey.....22

Table 10. Gender attitudes of parents, guardians, and employers (percent holding gender-equitable attitudes), by time of survey24

Table 11. Attitudes of parents, guardians, and employers toward domestic workers (percent holding gender-equitable attitudes), at endline, by category of respondent25

Table 12. Percent of Biruh Tesfa for All beneficiaries in different forms of schooling and work at endline, by category of respondent27

List of Figures

Figure 1. Percent distribution of test scores identifying letters (possible score 0-100), by time of survey.....19

Figure 2. Percent distribution of math problem test scores (possible score 0-100), by time of survey23

Figure 3. Percent of parents, guardians, or employers who hold gender-equitable views on girls' education and work, by category of respondent and time of survey.....24

Figure 4. Percent of Biruh Tesfa for All beneficiaries transitioning to formal school, by previous number of years of education.....27

List of Annex Tables

Table A1. Number of in-depth interviews conducted, by category of respondents and site.....33

Table A2. Adjusted odds ratios (and 95% confidence intervals) from logistic regression analysis to identify associations between “0” score on math problem tests, by selected characteristics and time of survey.....33

List of Acronyms

ABE	Alternative Basic Education
ALP	Accelerated Learning Program
EGMA	Early Grade Math Assessments
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessments
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office
GEC	Girls' Education Challenge
MOE	Ministry of Education
NS	Not significant

Executive Summary

Biruh Tesfa means “Bright Future” in Amharic and is the name given to a program designed to address the disadvantage of out-of-school girls in urban Ethiopia. The program was originally designed in the mid-2000’s following a large, mixed-method study among adolescent boys and girls in densely populated low-income areas. The study highlighted that out-of-school girls – many of whom are rural-urban migrants and/or child domestic workers – often possess little in the way of education and lack guardianship/caregiving, social support, and friendship networks. As a result of this research, *Biruh Tesfa* was originally designed to address social isolation by bringing girls together in safe spaces groups with adult female mentors and providing them with skills-building activities, including life skills, reproductive health and HIV education, nonformal education, and referrals.

Leave No Girl Behind was launched in 2016 as the second phase of the United Kingdom’s Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office’s (FCDO) Girls’ Education Challenge (GEC). The program was designed to focus on out-of-school girls who are not in school due to harmful gender and social norms. *Biruh Tesfa for All* was supported by Leave No Girl Behind/GEC from 2018 to 2022, allowing program managers to focus on the quality of education, measurement of literacy/numeracy acquisition, and building lessons for providing education to the most disenfranchised urban girls, many of whom are in child domestic work. The project was implemented in four of Ethiopia’s largest cities: Addis Ababa, Adama, Bahir Dar, and Shashamene.

Out-of-school girls aged 10 to 19 were mobilized into safe spaces girls’ groups, convened by locally recruited and trained female mentors and teachers. Mentors undertake recruitment of eligible girls by going house-to-house, which allows them to identify eligible girls and, if needed, negotiate for girls’ involvement in the program, which is especially critical for domestic workers. Following a period of suspension of groups due to COVID, mentors in the four cities recruited 8,450 girls. Once in safe spaces groups, participating girls receive nonformal education, life skills, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship training. Most groups provide nonformal education

for four days a week and life skills/financial literacy on the fifth day.

Because of the extreme levels of need of most beneficiaries, girls were also provided with notebooks, pens, and pencils, as well as sanitary napkins and underwear to prevent absenteeism due to menstruation. Because of the COVID pandemic, additional sanitary supplies were added including soap, face masks, and hand sanitizer, as well as basic foodstuffs, given periodically. After two years, the program was designed to support girls’ positive transitions into either formal education following official certification in alternative basic education (ABE), further educational or training opportunities, or better forms of work.

To measure changes associated with the program, pre- and post-intervention cross-sectional surveys were conducted in the four project sites among participants in the *Biruh Tesfa for All* program as well as a sample of parents, guardians, and employers. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted among key stakeholders to supplement the quantitative data. The baseline sample size for each group was calculated at 841, while the endline sample size was calculated at 693. *Biruh Tesfa for All* beneficiaries were registered upon intake, including basic demographic details, educational background, and residence, with registration periodically updated. This data served as the sampling frame for the study to select respondents at each round of the survey.

This evaluation examines various aspects of the program. We examine characteristics of beneficiaries, including those who are domestic workers; patterns of attendance, absenteeism, and dropout; indicators of mental health such as self-reported anxiety, sadness, and depression; and acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills. Where data allows, we compare the prevalence of factors at both baseline and endline, testing for significant differences between survey rounds. We use logistic regression to model the odds of experiencing selected outcomes, such as self-reported mental health measures and aspects of literacy and numeracy acquisition.

JaRco Consulting was the external evaluator for the study, designing the research design and study instruments, and collecting and cleaning the data. JaRco produced the baseline results, while the Population Council led the evaluation report. The study has received ethical approval from internal and local review boards at the Population Council and the Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers, and Anthropologists review board.

The study demonstrated significant improvements on most literacy and numeracy indicators as well as two indicators of mental health. Improvements were seen among beneficiaries who had never been to school before as well as those who had some foundational schooling. Gains were less apparent among domestic workers in the sample, which could be due to an insufficient sample size or to the resistance and excessive work burdens they faced at the hands of their employers. Indeed, raising awareness of and expanding educational opportunities among domestic workers was seen as one of the most significant contributions of the project to the field of educational programming for marginalized girls.

Fully 42 percent of program beneficiaries were mainstreamed into formal school at endline, including 33 percent of girls who had never been to school before and 20 percent of domestic workers. Because the period of instruction was cut short due to the COVID pandemic, some beneficiaries were able to remain in the program past the end date and attempt to re-enter school after additional months of instruction. Therefore, we expect a higher level of entering formal school in the coming months.

This study resulted in a number of observations, recommendations, and programmatic directions, including:

- **House-to-house recruitment as a promising method to identify and recruit marginalized groups.** The house-to-house recruitment method proved to be effective in identifying and engaging the most highly marginalized and housebound girls including those in domestic work, those with disabilities, and girls who never attended school. This recruitment method should be continued and scaled-up, in particular when programs target highly marginalized and isolated groups.
- **Intensification of efforts to address social norms and attitudes among employers.** Many of the challenges and much of the resistance experienced in the program were in the context of employers preventing domestic workers from attending the program or studying at home. House-to-house recruitment and community conversations implemented by the project appeared to be a good first step in engaging employers and host families in addressing attitudes toward domestic workers and girls' work burdens. Such efforts should be expanded and intensified in the future to facilitate the participation of a larger number of domestic workers in community-based support programs.
- **Strengthen community and government systems to identify cases of illegal child labor and worst forms of child labor.** Biruh Tesfa for All demonstrated that it is possible to engage child domestic workers in education and support programs, provided they are flexible and additional efforts are taken to mitigate absenteeism and dropout. At the same time, the significant number of hours of domestic work undertaken by girls undermines their ability to learn and contributes to absenteeism and dropout. Civil society and government should strengthen policies toward domestic workers as well as on-the-ground identification, referral, shelter, and aftercare services for child domestic workers/girls in illegal and worst forms of child labor, including those in extended family and fostering relationships engaged in domestic labor beyond the legal limit.
- **Ensure maximum program flexibility, extended absences, catch-up strategies, and multiple programmatic intakes.** Beneficiaries of Biruh Tesfa for All were exceptionally marginalized and extremely destitute, and their life stories reflected highly transitory and migratory living conditions. Most of the dropout was due to girls' movement or migration, or employers' and gatekeepers' resistance. Such beneficiaries need programs to be designed with extreme flexibility. This includes the ability to be absent for an extended period and have a mechanism available to catch up on material that was missed. In addition, multiple rounds of recruitment may be necessary to ensure that newly arriving girls have the opportunity to join.

- **Provision of modest supplies and food support ongoing engagement among our most disadvantaged beneficiaries.** Beneficiaries of Biruh Tesfa for All were among the most disadvantaged, marginalized, and impoverished girls and young women in Ethiopia's urban settings. Their levels of need and lack of support were remarkable and contributed to diminished attendance and dropout. Provision of supplies including school supplies, menstruation management materials (including sanitary napkins and underwear), COVID mitigation material, and basic foodstuffs appeared to incentivize participation and alleviate the opportunity costs of time spent learning. Programs serving the most disadvantaged groups such as Biruh Tesfa for All should consider such modest support as an integral part of programming, acknowledging the very real poverty and desperation experienced by populations served by such programs.
- **Intensified mental health interventions, especially for domestic workers.** A considerable number of girls in the program reported experiencing frequent anxiety, worry, sadness, or depression. Many beneficiaries lack family support systems and many are simply on their own. Given the dire circumstances of girls in the program, we recommend intensifying mental health interventions including group and individual counseling and linkage with mental health providers.
- **Combination of teachers with local women leaders as mentors.** Girls such as those served by Biruh Tesfa for All frequently live away from parents and lack caregivers, guidance, or protection in their lives. Community-based mentors drawn from the communities can be effective in providing support and guidance that girls need. On the other hand, mentors have not received formal training as teachers. Biruh Tesfa for All innovated the model to combine professionally trained teachers working synergistically and in parallel with community-based mentors. Trained teachers help to ensure that education is delivered at the expected level of quality, while mentors are well equipped to provide life-skills training, and social support when needed.
- **Additional support to those with limited facility in the language of instruction.** Literacy tests demon-

strated that beneficiaries whose native language was not the language of instruction – either Amharic or Oromiffa – had diminished performance compared to girls whose native language was the language of instruction. Because many of the Biruh Tesfa for All beneficiaries are migrants, programmatic adjustments should be made to ensure remedial support for such girls, enabling them to reach similar levels of literacy as others in the program.

- **Regular support to mentors and teachers on more difficult subjects.** This project evaluation demonstrated significant improvements in a range of literacy and numeracy outcomes among project participants. However, in one area – solving math problems – girls did not reach a high level of proficiency, on par with other subjects. Anecdotal evidence suggests one reason may be that teachers and mentors are less confident about this topic. We recommend increased review and monitoring of mentors' and teachers' abilities to teach different topics, as well as continued refresher training focused on the areas of greatest difficulties to teachers.

Background

Rates of urbanization in Ethiopia are among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, with populations in urban areas increasing by 4.63 percent per year (UN 2018). Contrary to commonly held assumptions, rural-urban migrants in many sub-Saharan African countries, including Ethiopia, are frequently female (Masanja 2012). According to research by the World Bank, an estimated 69 percent of rural migrants to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, were female (Bundervoet 2018). This study found that these internal migrants were an average age of 22 years, making migrating populations markedly young and female.

Research on migrant adolescents in Ethiopia highlights that the circumstances of boys' and girls' migration differ markedly. Adolescent male migrants to Addis Ababa were significantly more likely to move with parent(s) compared with girls (42 percent of boys and 10 percent of girls), while girls tended to move with friends, neighbors, distant relatives, or on their own. In addition, a significant proportion of girls (23 percent) migrated to escape a forced child marriage in their rural homes (Erulkar et al. 2006). Several studies in low-income urban areas of Ethiopia found that, compared to their counterparts who were urban natives, migrant girls were significantly less likely to have attended school and to currently be in school; they were also significantly less likely to report having "many friends," reflecting their limited social capital and support (Erulkar et al. 2006; Temin et al. 2013).

As migrant girls have less education than urban nonmigrants, they enter the workforce at an educational disadvantage. Armed with little in the way of education, many enter domestic work, which is among the lowest status forms of work and frequently tantamount to modern-day slavery (UNICEF 1999; Population Council 2018). In a study of out-of-school girls in three Ethiopian cities, 49 percent of domestic workers – the vast majority migrants – had never been to school compared to 13 percent of girls who were not in domestic work (Erulkar and Ferede 2009). Domestic workers in Addis Ababa had an average of just over three years of education, compared to five and a half years among nondomestic workers (Erulkar and Mekbib 2007).

Domestic work, including child domestic work, is often considered a form of modern-day slavery. Domestic work keeps girls and young women confined to the home, socially isolated, and burdened with excessive domestic duties (Black 2002). A recent study of child domestic workers in Addis Ababa found that girls work an average of 55 hours per week, with 25 percent reporting over 70 hours of weekly work; many reported not being given a day off during the week nor rest during public holidays (Erulkar, Negeri, and Hailu 2022). Their time and movements are often controlled by employers, and younger domestic workers are thought to be easier to control and demand less pay (Human Rights Watch 2006). Research shows they are highly vulnerable to labor exploitation and sexual abuse, and a considerable proportion transition from domestic work to commercial sex work/commercial sexual exploitation (Erulkar and Ferede 2009; Erulkar, Medhin, and Negeri 2017; Population Council 2018).

Biruh Tesfa (Bright Future) Program for out-of-school girls in low-income urban Ethiopia

Biruh Tesfa means "Bright Future" in Amharic and is the name given to a program designed to address the disadvantage of out-of-school girls in low-income areas of urban Ethiopia. The program was originally designed in 2005 following population-based surveys and in-depth interviews among adolescent boys and girls in low-income Ethiopia. The formative study sought to provide greater understanding of young people's circumstances and living conditions in marginalized, densely populated low-income areas. Our early studies highlighted that out-of-school girls – many of whom are rural-urban migrants and or child domestic workers – often possess little in the way of education and lack social support and friendship networks (Erulkar et al. 2006; Erulkar and Mekbib 2007). The program was originally designed to address social isolation by bringing girls together in girls' groups with adult female mentors from project communities who could be community-based advocates for girls. While they are in the girls' groups, participants are provided with skills-building activities, including life skills, reproductive health and HIV education, nonformal education, and referrals for services. Earlier evaluations of the pro-



gram found positive impacts on HIV knowledge, use of general medical and HIV services, friendship networks, and literacy among girls who had never been to school (Erulkar et al. 2013; Erulkar and Medhin 2017).

Biruh Tesfa for All, 2018 to 2022

Leave No Girl Behind was launched in 2016 as the second phase of the United Kingdom's Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office's (FCDO) Girls' Education Challenge (GEC). The program was designed to focus on out-of-school girls who are not in school due to harmful gender and social norms. Collaboration with FCDO's GEC was an important opportunity for the Biruh Tesfa program to focus on improving the quality of education delivered through the program, improve monitoring and measurement of literacy/numeracy acquisition, and build additional linkages with education experts at the GEC and Ethiopia's Ministry of Education (MOE).

Under GEC's Leave No Girl Behind, Biruh Tesfa for All was implemented for 40 months (October 2018 to March 2022) in poor, densely populated areas of four of

Ethiopia's largest cities: Addis Ababa, Adama (Oromiya region), Bahir Dar (Amhara region), and Shashamene (Oromiya region). The project was a partnership between the Population Council, as the lead implementer, along with Humanity and Inclusion and Plan International. In each of the project regions, the project had agreements with the Regional Bureaus of Education, which included significant participation and oversight by these bodies. Regional Education Bureaus also chaired the Project Advisory Committees that were formed in each project city.

Out-of-school girls aged 10 to 19 were eligible for the program and were mobilized into safe spaces girls' groups, convened by locally recruited and trained female mentors and teachers. Mentors were recruited from the project communities themselves and were, most often, local women's leaders. Many mentors have the same experience as beneficiaries themselves, having migrated to the area or having been in domestic work previously. Mentors undertake recruitment of eligible girls by going house-to-house, which allows them to identify girls who are eligible and, if needed, negotiate for girls' involvement in the program, which is especially critical for domestic workers who otherwise might have limited voice or negotiating power with their employers.

Safe spaces – 61 in total – were established in a variety of places in the project locations, ideally located so that girls do not need to travel far from their homes to attend the groups. Groups meet five days per week (Monday through Friday), usually from about 4pm to 6pm, in safe space facilities that are upgraded to be accessible to girls with disabilities. Led by Humanity and Inclusion, roughly USD \$2,000-\$3,000 was spent per site to improve accessibility of schools/safe spaces, mainly in terms of construction of ramps and modification of toilet facilities. Though there were variations in each project city,¹ generally each girls' group is led by one or two mentors with the support of a female trained teacher. The teacher takes the lead in providing literacy and numeracy classes, ensuring the standard of the Ethiopia Ministry of Education (MOE). The mentors act as teachers' aids, gaining teaching skills through the process, and also take the lead in life-skills education. Mentors were also trained by Humanity and Inclusion in inclusive education

¹ Some sites have a larger number of teachers than others, which was mainly determined by the requirements from the Regional Bureaus of Education.

and basic sign language skills. Mentors are also the connection to the community and beneficiaries' families or employers; mentors follow up girls at the household in cases of extended absences or if they need other forms of support, such as disputes with their employer or nonpayment of salary. A dedicated organization that specializes in financial literacy and entrepreneurship training was contracted to provide this training during the last months of the project.

Once in safe spaces groups, participating girls receive nonformal education, life skills, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship training. Most groups provide nonformal education for four days a week and life skills/financial literacy on the fifth day. With the Ministry of Education and Regional Education Bureaus as key partners in the initiative, the project uses the Alternative Basic Education (ABE) curricula used by the respective regional governments, meaning ABE in Addis Ababa and Oromiya regions, and Accelerated Learning program (ALP) in Amhara Region. Biruh Tesfa beneficiaries came from a diversity of educational backgrounds. Therefore, nonformal classes were categorized by level, depending on the educational foundation of the beneficiaries. One teacher described how beneficiaries with different educational backgrounds are subdivided into three levels:

What we are doing here is that we categorize these students in three different categories: Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3. Those who did not attend any school so far will join Level 1, while others join Level 2 and Level 3 according to their ability. Thus, students learn about the topics that are prepared by Biruh Tesfa for All for each of the three different levels. Of course, there were many fast learners and slow learners. (Mentor, Adama)

Because of the extreme levels of need of most beneficiaries, girls were also provided with notebooks, pens, and pencils, as well as sanitary napkins and underwear to prevent absenteeism due to menstruation. Because of the COVID pandemic, additional sanitary supplies were added including soap, face masks, and hand sanitizers. In all, girls were provided with an average of \$39 of material throughout the life of the project. This amounted to an average of \$9 in school supplies, \$10 in COVID materials, \$10 in sanitary materials (underwear and menstruation management supplies), and \$11 in food per girl over 18 months.

Beneficiaries in the program were highly marginalized and extremely mobile, frequently moving houses (including as domestic workers) or migrating back to rural areas. Many were prevented from attending the program due to the resistance of gatekeepers, domestic work burdens, or other responsibilities in the family/household. Given the marginalization and mobile nature of many of the Biruh Tesfa beneficiaries, mentors and teachers not only took attendance daily in the groups but followed up on beneficiaries who were absent for extended periods. As mentors were from the project communities and well known in those locales, they were tasked with visiting households of girls who were absent for extended periods to understand the reason for absence and attempt to address any barriers to participation, such as resistance by employers of domestic workers.

Given the time period of the project, COVID had a significant impact on the implementation of Biruh Tesfa for All. Following start-up activities, girls' groups were initially formed and began meeting in February 2020. One month later, in March 2020, the girls' groups had to be suspended due to the COVID pandemic. Thereafter, remote activities were organized. Initially, mentors were engaged in continuous professional development to extend and reinforce their training. Later, beneficiaries were given exercises to complete at home and hand back to mentors/teachers for marking and feedback. In addition, due to the long-term economic impact of the pandemic on communities that were already highly vulnerable, the project provided girls with modest foodstuffs (usually cooking oil, flour, and pasta) on three occasions during the life of the project, to allay the economic pressure experienced at the household level. Ultimately, the in-person groups resumed at the end of 2020 and ended in February/March 2022. However, a limited number of groups continued after the end of the project, through support from another donor. In these cases, girls who could not re-enter formal education continued in the project, if they so wished. Additional support in financial literacy and entrepreneurship continued for those who aspired to self-employment.

The project was designed to address the social isolation faced by marginalized girls, including those in domestic work. The safe spaces allowed girls to interact and build friendships with those in similar situations and gave them access to adult female mentors who they could approach for advice and support. Following the resumption

of in-person group meetings – suspended due to COVID – project managers also monitored feelings of well-being among beneficiaries through routine short surveys or questionnaires. The studies found that a considerable number of girls felt not loved or cared about (19 percent) and had trouble sleeping because of so many worries (33 percent). As such, in February 2021, Biruh Tesfa for All sought to engage professional counselors who would hold group counseling sessions periodically to encourage participants to build their voice and share feelings, hopes, and concerns. When counselors identified girls in need of further counseling, they conducted one-on-one sessions or referred cases for additional professional help.

Originally, the project was designed to have only one recruitment or intake of girls. However, when the groups were disbanded due to the COVID pandemic, many girls dropped out, with large numbers moving houses or migrating to other cities or back to rural areas. As such when the groups resumed at the end of 2020, an additional intake of girls was undertaken, with no further recruitment taking place during the project period. During the second recruitment, mentors in the four cities recruited 8,450 girls into the groups, with the program experiencing subsequent attrition due to the mobility and instability of the target girls (See section “Participation in the program”).

The program was designed to support girls’ positive transitions into either formal education following ABE certification, further educational or training opportunities or better forms of work. The latter is particularly appropriate for girls who are older, of legal working age and may be reliant on paid work for their livelihood, such as those in domestic work. As mentioned, some of the groups continued after the project ended, allowing girls who could not re-enter formal schooling to continue in the groups and have more time to acquire skills needed for positive transitions. The addition of time, which was supported by another donor, was critical given the disruption to the program by the COVID pandemic, including the truncated learning time.

In addition to the safe spaces girls’ groups, activities were conducted at the community level in order to address social norms and attitudes that undermine the health and welfare of marginalized girls. Led by Plan International, community conversations were conducted

at the project sites, bringing together a cross section of community members to discuss girls’ rights to education, with a focus on domestic workers and girls with disabilities. Sixty-one community conversation groups were established, composed of 1,612 community members spanning different genders, age groups, religions, ethnic groups, and socio-economic backgrounds. In all, 159 community conversation sessions were conducted over the life of the project.

Methodology

Pre- and post-intervention cross-sectional surveys were conducted in the four project sites among participants in the Biruh Tesfa for All program as well as a sample of parents, guardians, or employers. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted among key stakeholders to supplement the quantitative data. In-depth interviews were conducted among beneficiaries and parents/guardians as well as mentors, teachers, school leaders, and administration officials.

Sample size and sampling

The sample size was calculated to enable researchers to detect a 5-percentage point change in an indicator of interest between baseline and endline. As researchers possessed no estimates at baseline, they conservatively chose the baseline estimate of 50 percent to maximize the sample size needed to detect the anticipated change. The baseline sample size for each group – beneficiaries and parents/guardians/employers – was calculated at 841. The endline sample size was calculated based on selected baseline values and calculated at 693.

Biruh Tesfa for All beneficiaries were registered upon intake including basic demographic details, educational background, and residence. Registration was periodically updated to remove those who had dropped out. This data served as the sampling frame for the study to select respondents at each round of survey (8,450 at baseline and 4,065 at endline). An equal number of beneficiaries were selected in each of the four project sites, with simple random sampling applied at each round.

In-depth interview participants were selected purposefully to reflect diverse characteristics of respondents, based on age, sex, education, ethnicity, and language of instruction (Amharic or Oromiffa). Sixty-two qualitative interviews were conducted with girls, parents and guardians, teachers, school directors, and administration officials (See Annex Table A1).

Interviewers worked with project mentors and teachers to locate the sampled respondents, as they were familiar

with the location of girls and other stakeholders selected for study. At the same time, at both baseline and endline, some sampled respondents could not be located, principally because of movement to other households or migration to other cities or back to rural areas. In such cases, those who were not located for interview were replaced from the registration database, applying the same random sampling technique.

Data collection

Baseline data collection commenced in February 2021 while endline data collection took place in March 2022. At each round of data collection, training was provided to interviewers and supervisors for five days prior to data collection. Training included basic data collection and ethical procedures such as informed consent, assent, and permissions. The training included item-by-item review of the tools including discussion of local language translations. Only female interviewers were included in both survey administration and in-depth interviews of project beneficiaries. Both male and female interviewers conducted the in-depth interviews with other stakeholders, such as parents, guardians, and employers.

Survey data was collected through tablets, with the data automatically uploaded to a server. Supervisors and team leaders reviewed data collected by interviewers daily, in addition to the data quality checks embedded in the data collection program. In-depth interviews were tape recorded and audio files were transcribed verbatim.

In order to measure acquisition of literacy and numeracy, Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA) and Early Grade Math Assessments (EGMA) were administered. To measure literacy, the following tests were administered: 1) identification of letters, 2) reading familiar words, 3) reading “made-up” words (phonics), 4) reading passages, 5) reading comprehension, 6) listening comprehension. Literacy tests were administered in the language of instruction in the particular project site that the respondent attended, either Amharic or Oromiffa. Numeracy tests were composed of: 1) number identification, 2) quantity discrimination, 3) identifying missing numbers,



4) addition, 5) subtraction, 6) written number problems, and 7) word problems. Tests were timed for two minutes and scored as to the number of correct responses in each of the EGRA and EGMA subsections. In analysis, scores were normalized on a scale of 0-100. Based on accepted scoring conventions for EGRA and EGMA, we considered scores of 81 to 100 to reflect proficiency and a skill that had been acquired.

Analysis

This evaluation examines various aspects of the Biruh Tesfa for All program. We examine characteristics of beneficiaries, including those who are domestic workers; patterns of attendance, absenteeism, and dropout; indicators of mental health such as self-reported anxiety, sadness, and depression; and acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills. Where data allow, we compare the prevalence of factors at both baseline and endline, testing for significant differences between survey rounds. We use logistic regression to model the odds of experiencing selected outcomes, such as self-reported mental health measures and aspects of literacy and numeracy acquisition.

JaRco Consulting was the external evaluator for the study, designing the research design and study instruments, and collecting and cleaning the data. JaRco produced the baseline results, while the current report

is jointly authored by the Population Council and JaRco due to limitations of time and funding. The study has received ethical approval from internal and local review boards at the Population Council and the Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers, and Anthropologists.

Results

Sample characteristics

In all, 1,517 beneficiaries and 1,517 parents/guardians/employers were interviewed over two evaluation rounds: 824 at baseline and 693 at endline (Table 1). The baseline and endline samples were not comparable on a number of characteristics, some due to the aging of the cohort of girls, some resulting from differential dropout of girls from the program, and some due to random fluctuation inherent in sampling. Multivariate analysis allowed us to adjust for many of the characteristics that differed between samples (for example, years of education and domestic worker status). The average age of survey respondents who were beneficiaries was 15 years, with baseline respondents being an average of 14.7 years and endline respondents 15.3 years, probably reflecting the passage of time between baseline and endline and aging of participants. Between baseline and endline a larger proportion of beneficiary respondents reported being married and/or having children at endline, which, again, is a likely reflection of the aging of respondents.

Only about one-third (32 percent) live with both parents, and fully 48 percent of respondents live with neither parent. Over half of the respondents (53 percent) were migrants to the area. Eight percent of beneficiary respondents reported themselves as having a disability, with the most common disabilities being motor disabilities/ability to walk unaided (3 percent), trouble concentrating (2 percent), and trouble controlling one's behavior (2 percent). Nine percent of respondents reported that their mother tongue was neither Amharic nor Oromiffa. Given that these were the two languages of instruction used in Biruh Tesfa for All, this could have negatively impacted on the ease with which they acquired literacy skills (See section "Changes in literacy and numeracy").

A significant proportion of respondents had never been to school before attending Biruh Tesfa for All (35 percent). Between baseline and endline there appeared to be a shift in the educational profile of participants. At baseline, 28 percent of respondents had never been to school and 53 percent had had 1 to 4 years of schooling.

At endline, the proportion not having attended school was 43 percent and 43 percent had had 1 to 4 years of education. This could reflect evolving patterns of participation, such as those with higher levels of education more likely to drop out and/or re-enter formal schooling.

Similarly, at baseline, 29 percent of girls reported themselves to be engaged as domestic workers. However, at endline only 16 percent of participants worked as domestic workers. The decline in the proportion of participants who are domestic workers from baseline to endline could represent random fluctuations in sampling or could reflect actual trends in dropout among domestic workers. Service statistic data and reports by mentors do reflect particularly high dropout rates among domestic workers – especially in Addis Ababa – between initial intake of beneficiaries and the end of the project (See section "Participation in the program").

Within our endline sample, 60 percent were recruited before COVID suspension of the girls' groups, and 40 percent were recruited at the second intake of participants. Therefore, exposure time to the project differed among the endline sample. At the same time, girls recruited pre-COVID took part only in limited, remote learning activities and under constrained circumstances, including virtually no in-person teaching, variable support in the home, and competing demands during the COVID pandemic. Once groups resumed and teaching and learning took place in person, exposure time to the project – assuming one remained in the program, throughout – was roughly 18 months. Actual mean exposure time among endline participants was slightly less than this – 16 months – due to dropout (See Table 4).

Among parents, guardians, and employers interviewed, over half (56 percent) were parents, 23 percent were other relatives of the beneficiary, 12 percent were nonrelatives, and 10 percent were employers. In order to gauge the household's economic situation, respondents were asked if they, or any member of their household, had gone to bed hungry in the last month. Between baseline and endline, there was a significant increase in reports of household members going hungry, from 39 to

TABLE 1. Characteristics of Biruh Tesfa for All evaluation respondents, by type of respondent and time of survey

	Baseline (n=824)	Endline (n=693)	All (n=1,517)
Characteristics of beneficiary respondents			
Mean age***	14.7	15.3	15.0
Age category***			
10 to 14	51.1	49.8	50.5
15 to 19	48.9	39.0	44.4
20 to 21	0.0	11.3	5.1
Parental co-residence			
Live with both parents	31.9	32.5	32.2
Live with mother	16.9	19.9	18.3
Live with father	1.9	2.2	2.0
Live with neither parent	49.3	45.5	47.5
Mean years of formal education***	2.5	1.9	2.2
Educational attainment (formal schooling)***			
No education	27.9	43.3	34.9
1 to 4 years of education	52.8	42.7	48.2
5 to 12 years of education	19.3	14.0	16.9
Migrant to the area*	55.0	49.8	52.6
Native language			
Amharic	55.0	55.6	55.2
Oromiffa	35.8	36.1	35.9
Other	9.2	8.4	8.8
Currently married***	2.2	11.7	6.5
Has children***	3.5	16.6	9.5
Domestic worker (self-identified) ***	29.1	16.3	23.3
Has a disability	7.6	9.3	8.4
City of residence			
Addis Ababa	25.1	24.2	24.7
Adama	23.9	24.5	24.2
Bahir Dar	25.5	23.7	24.7
Shashamene	25.5	27.6	26.4
Characteristics of parent/guardians/employers			
Relationship to the Biruh Tesfa for All beneficiary			
Parents of beneficiary	56.3	54.8	55.6
Other relatives of beneficiary	21.2	24.5	22.8
Other nonrelatives of beneficiary	12.8	10.7	11.8
Employers of beneficiary	9.7	10.0	9.8
Respondent or household members have gone to bed hungry (in last month)***	39.2	57.9	47.8

Note: Differences between groups significant at *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001.

TABLE 2. Characteristics of nondomestic workers and domestic workers in Biruh Tesfa for All (baseline and endline)

	Nondomestic workers (n=1,164)	Domestic workers (n=353)
Age (mean)	14.9 years	15.1 years
Years of education (mean)	2.2 years	2.3 years
Migrant to the area***	49.7	62.0
Lives with at least one parent***	55.0	44.2
Currently married	6.0	8.2
Has children**	8.3	13.3
Has a disability	8.5	7.9
City of residence***		
Addis Ababa	20.7	38.0
Bahir Dar	25.2	22.9
Shashamene	29.0	18.1
Adama	25.2	21.0

Note: Differences between groups significant at *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001.

58 percent (p < 0.001). This probably reflects the severe economic impact of a prolonged COVID pandemic as well as other hardships in the project communities.

Characteristics of Biruh Tesfa for All participants, including domestic workers

Biruh Tesfa for All participants reflected exceedingly low levels of education, with many living away from parents and having migrated to the urban areas. Indeed, in-depth interviews with beneficiaries reflected exceedingly disadvantaged backgrounds.

When I was in a village, my family was poor and they couldn't send me to school. My family had been expecting help from me rather than schooling me. So, before Biruh Tesfa for All, I didn't have the chance to get an education. But now, I am getting education given through the help of this project. I also want to continue my education in the future. (Beneficiary, Adama)

I had taken classes up to grade 4. However, my father's sickness – he couldn't see and was in pain – disrupted my childhood. We were trying to treat my father at the hospital but we couldn't afford 50 thousand birr for his treatment. I also always worried about buying school supplies such as pens, exercise books, and pencils, and was discouraged. So, I decided not to stay at home [migrate] and not be a burden to my family. (Beneficiary, Addis Ababa)

I have been working since I was a child. When my mother passed away 6 ½ years ago, the responsibility for the family fell upon me. I was working around Merkato selling plastic bags. Life was challenging. I was living in a rented house but I couldn't afford to pay. Finally, I started to live and work at her house [as a domestic worker]. (Beneficiary, Addis Ababa)

Those living with disabilities also described migrating because of stigma in the rural area and lack of opportunities for people with disabilities:

I was born and raised in a rural village around Shashamene. In the area where I was born, there are no job opportunities for people living with disabilities, like me. I was also angry about my disability because I was the only one with this disability in the village. That is why I decided to move here. It is around seven years since I came. (Beneficiary, Shashamene)

Biruh Tesfa for All engaged significant numbers of domestic workers and we included specific analysis of this subgroup in order to expand our understanding of the experience of domestic work. Table 2 shows the characteristics of domestic workers compared to girls who were not in domestic work, across both survey rounds.

Compared to girls who were not in domestic work, domestic workers were significantly more likely to be migrants to the area (62 vs. 50 percent; p < 0.001) and

to be living away from parents (56 vs. 45 percent; $p < 0.001$). They are also significantly more likely to have children of their own (13 vs. 8 percent; $p < 0.01$). In terms of locations, the project site in Addis Ababa had a larger number of participants who reported being in domestic work, compared to the other three cities.

Those who self-identified as domestic workers were asked a series of questions about their working conditions.² Among domestic workers reporting full-time work, they reported an average of 63 hours of work per week. Twenty-four percent reported not having a day off during the week, which is in contravention of the Ethiopian Labour Law.³ On average, domestic workers were paid 883 Ethiopian Birr per month (equivalent to UK £16/USD \$22 per month⁴). Some girls in domestic work reported late payment⁵ (20 percent) and also reported that their pay was deducted (24 percent) often for a mistake in the household or breakage. Girls and other community members described the very difficult conditions of domestic work:

I am working as a domestic worker here, doing different housework such as washing clothes, cooking food, and cleaning house. There is nothing to like about being a domestic worker. Before I came here, I used to work with another employer and my time in that household was very ugly – their behavior was totally uncomfortable for me. (Beneficiary, Bahir Dar)

There are situations where girls of 12 or 13 years work as domestic workers. I have seen this in our community – this is common. Their age is enough for doing some work in the household, but some employers give them work that is too difficult for them to do. I think the employers should give them work that matches their age. (Employer, Shashamene)

While some beneficiaries reported themselves as being domestic workers, others did not consider themselves as domestic workers, even if their work burdens and living conditions would reflect as much. Indeed, one of the distinct challenges related to identifying domestic work-

ers is the ambiguous relationship that commonly exists between the child and host family/employer. In many settings, fostering is common and children from poor families are moved to live with better-off families, usually in urban areas. Girls are moved to urban families under the guise of fostering, being cared for, or being educated. In reality, many are subjected to domestic work that can be hidden, exploitive, and hazardous – especially as it is within the confines of a private house and under the pretense of an act of charity for an underprivileged girl.

A substantial number of beneficiaries and caregivers in the in-depth interviews described girls living with distant relatives and doing domestic work in exchange for being housed in the urban area or being given the chance to take classes. They were not considered domestic workers because they had familial relations or were reportedly treated like other children in the household:

I am living here with her by doing housework. She does not consider me like a domestic worker. She treats me like her child. Her children also treat me as if I am their sister and I look at them in a similar way. So, no payment is given to me. (Beneficiary, Adama)

I am living here by doing housework, but no payment is given to me. Instead, she allowed me to learn. So, I will get an education by doing housework. I like my education as I came here from Arsi to learn. (Beneficiary)

She is living with me through helping me with housework. I just consider her like my child so there is nothing that I can pay her. (Employer, Adama)

She is almost my child. I don't see her as a domestic worker. She is my child. I knew her mother before, and she was poor and couldn't raise her children. I requested her to take and raise [the girl] and she said, "Okay." That is when I brought her to my home when she was one year old. (Guardian, Shashamene)

² Questions included are from the baseline study only.

³ To note, domestic work does not fall under the Labour Law in Ethiopia, but currently falls under the Civil Code.

⁴ Using exchange rate £1 = 55 Birr and \$1 = 40 Birr (February 2021).

⁵ Those reporting late pay or deductions "Always, often, sometimes."

TABLE 3. Participation in Biruh Tesfa for All, by phase of project and type of beneficiary

	Number of participants
Direct beneficiaries	
Number of girls targeted in project proposal	10,500
Pre-COVID intake of participants (December 2019 – January 2020)	7,084
Suspension of groups due to COVID (March – October 2020); remote learning where possible	
Second round intake of participants (October – November 2020)	8,450
Number of girls in program at end of project (March 2022)	4,065
Number of girls transitioning to formal education	1,645
Number of girls receiving training on entrepreneurship and financial literacy	639
Indirect beneficiaries	
Number of mentors and teachers trained to support marginalized girls and provide inclusive education (indirect beneficiaries)	228
Number of community conversation facilitators trained (community members and government officials)	315
Number of community members reached with community conversations on girls' education and supporting domestic workers, girls with disabilities, migrants	1,685

Another respondent described that characterizing a girl as a child in the family or family member is often used as a ruse or cover for child domestic work.

There are situations when families hire a 12- or 13-year-old girl as a domestic worker. But they do not tell others that she is a domestic worker. If asked, they say she is my kin or relative and I brought her from the village. (Guardian, Adama)

Beneficiaries were not only engaged in domestic work, but in other forms of paid and unpaid work. Many girls came to the city to be housed by relatives and were put to work in exchange for their accommodations and sustenance:

Yes, I'm working with my aunt. Since I came here – around four years ago – I have been working at a restaurant owned by my aunt. Somehow, I'm not comfortable doing this job, but I don't have a choice. It is heavy duty. We start early morning at 5 am, [and work] until around 9 pm or 10 pm. (Beneficiary, Addis Ababa)

Participation in the program

Participation in the program was interrupted by the COVID pandemic, during which many girls moved from one house to another or returned to their rural areas. An initial intake of girls was undertaken in three project

sites in late 2019 and early 2020, after which the groups disbanded due to COVID. Groups resumed in October 2020, with COVID mitigation measures in place (Table 3). Dropout between intake and the end of the project was due to high levels of mobility and unstable living situations among the girls targeted for the program, described later in this section.

At endline, respondents were asked how they heard about the program when they joined the program, as well as their length of participation and reasons for absence (Table 4). It is noteworthy that the endline sample is biased toward girls who remained in the program during the second round of the survey and who were reachable/traceable by the survey team. As such, figures for absences or extended dropout are likely to be underestimated.

Forty-nine percent of participants heard about the program through outreach by the mentor, as described by one respondent below:

I heard about the project from mentors. They asked me if I was going to school and I told them I couldn't go to school because I don't have anyone helping me. They registered my name and we started the program. I was interested because I couldn't even write my name and I thought education was important. (Beneficiary, Shashamene)

TABLE 4. Source of information and participation in Biruh Tesfa for All, at endline

	All respondents at endline (n=693)
How heard about Biruh Tesfa for All (BTA)	
BTA mentor or teacher	48.9
Friend/neighbor	15.7
Community leader	15.2
Family member	12.0
Name of person (unspecified)	8.2
Indirect beneficiaries	
No. of months attended program (mean)	16.2
No. of sessions attended (mean)	65.9
Ever absent for two+ consecutive sessions	45.3
Reason for absence (most recent)	
Personal sickness	36.3
Household chores/domestic work	33.8
Sickness of family member	17.5
COVID (unspecified)	16.2
Parent/guardian/employer forbade	7.0
Security issues	2.5
Other	7.6
Dropped out for extended period	
Mentor came to household to follow up after absence	41.7
Sought help from the mentor	42.3
Know how to contact mentor	56.4

In addition, mentors' door-to-door visits were also seen as an important strategy to engage girls with disabilities:

It is similar with the case of domestic workers. Almost all girls living with disability were identified during home-to-home visits before the beginning of the project. (Mentor, Shashamene)

On average, beneficiaries spent 16 months in the program. A considerable number reported extended absences of two or more consecutive sessions (45 percent). When asked about the reason for the most recent absence, the most common reason was personal sickness (36 percent), followed by household chores/domestic work (34 percent). Self-identified domestic workers were significantly more likely to report domestic work as a reason for absence; 59 percent of domestic workers reported their last absence as due to the work burden at home, compared to 28 percent of beneficiaries who did

not report themselves as domestic workers, a difference that was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

There were times when I was absent from the classes. Because I do much work, sometimes I couldn't finish it before school time and I was absent from class so many days. There are times when I go to school only two or three days because I am busy with the house stuff. (Beneficiary, Shashamene)

Yes, there were times when I was absent. When I wash a lot of clothes I have to wait for them to dry, because I have to iron the clothes and give them to the customers. Sometimes the clothes are not dry and I can't leave the clothes outside and go. I don't have anyone who can watch the clothes. Therefore, the school time [Biruh Tesfa for All] passes while I wait for the clothes to dry. (Beneficiary, Shashamene)

Of note, 7 percent of beneficiaries reported that the reason for their last absence was that parents/guardians/employers forbade them from attending, though this might have been underreported or reported as another reason, such as domestic work burdens:

I used to miss classes frequently, because my previous employer was not happy with my education and would overburden me with lots of work in the house, and sometimes she didn't allow me to go to school. (Beneficiary, Bahir Dar)

Nearly 20 percent of respondents reported dropping out of the project for an extended period, with no significant differences between beneficiaries in domestic work and those not in domestic work. However, this reflects only the number of beneficiaries who dropped out for an extended period and subsequently rejoined. Permanent dropouts are not included in the endline sampling frame, largely because of the high level of mobility among those who left the program permanently and many not wanting to be located, especially in the case of domestic workers changing jobs and not wanting their former employers to know their whereabouts.^{6,7} However, tabulations of initial registration data suggested that 58 percent of domestic workers who initially registered for the program dropped out, compared to 35 percent of nondomestic workers, a statistically significant difference and commensurate with the differentials found between the baseline and endline samples.

To understand more about the reasons that girls permanently drop out of the program, beneficiaries at endline were asked about the dynamics of other girls they know who dropped out. Respondents described dropout as mainly driven by moving back to rural areas, moving one's place of residence away from the program, and personal sickness:

Some of my classmates dropped out from the program. One started another job around Kera [in Addis Ababa]. One dropped out and moved to a rural village. Another one is sick and went to church to treat herself with holy water. (Beneficiary, Addis Ababa)

I know two girls who dropped out but I only know the reason for one of them. She came from a rural area and used to work as a domestic worker. One day, her father came and took her with him [back to the rural area]. The reason I heard was due to a disagreement about payment between the girl and her employers. (Beneficiary, Bahir Dar)

Indeed, when girls in the program described their lives, many described a great deal of movement and migration, often due to situations in the family or due to work:

I was born in a village in Arsi zone. I grew up there until I was eight years old. Then after the death of my mother, my father brought me to Diksis woreda to work in someone's house. After living there for some time, I came here to Adama to live with my aunt, at around age 17 or 18. Again, after living for some time with my aunt, I was hired as a domestic worker in another person's house. Right now, I am living with my son and working in this school. (Beneficiary, Adama)

Many mentors and parents/guardians also described resistance from employers, who needed girls who were domestic workers to be at home to take care of children and other family members or to maintain the security of the household. Others feared that domestic workers would build networks and share information that could undermine the work arrangements that had been established:

There were so many sad girls. They were students who came to class late. When we asked them why, they told us they couldn't get permission from the family/guardians. For example, one guardian told us, "Who should I give my child [to be cared for by]? So, you insist that I send her to your school?" I have also an experience, during house-to-house visits, that they let the dog out [on me]. Another guardian said, "How can I let her go [to Biruh Tesfa for All] when my mother is sick?" However, we insisted that the girl is 11 years old, so what's wrong with studying for one hour or two? (Mentor, Addis Ababa)

⁶ Domestic workers not wanting to be located were frequently reported by project mentors.

⁷ Based on attendance data from January 2022, 4,065 girls were actively participating in the groups. Most of the dropout between recruitment and January 2022 was experienced in the Addis Ababa site, where a substantial number of participants were domestic workers.

TABLE 5. Percent of respondents reporting feelings of anxiety, nervousness, sadness, and depression at least weekly, by domestic worker status and time of survey

	All respondents		Nondomestic workers		Domestic workers	
	Baseline (n=824)	Endline (n=693)	Baseline (n=584)	Endline (n=580)	Baseline (n=240)	Endline (n=113)
Feels anxious, nervous, or worried at least weekly	26.0	21.8NS	28.4	20.2**	20.0	30.1*
Feels very sad or depressed at least weekly	26.6	20.8**	28.8	19.8***	21.7	25.7NS

Note: Differences between groups significant at *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001. NS = Not significant.

Learning is very important to them. However, employers are resisting to send domestic workers to school [Biruh Tesfa for All] because they say, “I am paying you for your housework and service, not for your education.” (Parent, Addis Ababa)

Most communities are not supportive of education for their domestic workers because they fear that if they send them to school, it will put the household at risk of theft. In addition, if they send them to school, they [employers] think that they will discuss with their friends about payment-related issues and, if their payment is lower than others, employers fear that they would leave them. (Employer, Bahir Dar)

Mentors mentioned the support given to girls in the way of school supplies, menstruation kits, and, occasionally, food, as motivation for attending the sessions:

When we give school supplies, all the girls start to come. But as the time goes on, they start to become absent. When we ask them why, they tell us many different things like I was sick. So, in the first place, we monitor our students not to be absent from the class. (Teacher, Adama)

There were students who want to come to school [Biruh Tesfa for All] so as to get the aid that is given. (Teacher, Adama)

Such motivations underscore the extreme disadvantage faced by girls in the program and in the communities served by it.

Changes in mental health

At each round of the survey, respondents were asked about the frequency of feelings of anxiety or nervous-

ness, as well as sadness and depression. We examined the percent of respondents who reported anxiety, sadness, or depression at least weekly, broken down by whether or not the respondent was a domestic worker and the time of survey (Table 5).

Across all respondents at baseline, one quarter (26 percent) reported feelings of anxiety at least weekly, while at endline 22 percent reported such feelings. However, examining domestic workers compared to those not in domestic work revealed differing patterns in reporting anxiety. Compared to baseline, nondomestic workers were significantly less likely to report anxiety (28 percent at baseline; 20 percent at endline; $p < 0.001$). In contrast, domestic workers reported higher levels of anxiety at endline (20 percent at baseline; 30 percent at endline; $p < 0.05$).

Reports of sadness and depression also varied between domestic workers and nondomestic workers. Overall, there was a significant reduction in reports of weekly sadness or depression from 27 percent at baseline to 21 percent at endline ($p < 0.01$). Nondomestic workers exhibited a more significant change between survey rounds with 29 percent of nondomestic workers at baseline reporting frequent depression compared to 20 percent at endline ($p < 0.001$). At the same time, levels of self-reported sadness and depression did not change significantly for domestic workers between baseline and endline (baseline 22 percent; endline 26 percent; NS).

Table 6 shows summary results from the multivariate model where the outcome is self-reports of anxiety and depression at least weekly, controlling for various background factors and time of survey. Among all respondents and those not in domestic work, age, years of education and being a migrant to the area are all sig-

TABLE 6. Adjusted odds ratios (and 95% confidence intervals) from logistic regression analysis to identify associations between self-reported anxiety and depression, selected characteristics, and time of survey

	All respondents (n=1,515)		Nondomestic workers (n=1,162)		Domestic workers (n=353)	
	Odds ratio	P value	Odds ratio	P value	Odds ratio	P value
Feels anxious, nervous, or worried at least weekly						
Age	1.108 (1.062, 1.156)	0.000	1.100 (1.048, 1.155)	0.000	1.081 (0.984, 1.189)	NS
Years of education (formal)	0.931 (0.881, 0.985)	0.013	0.921 (0.863, 0.982)	0.012	1.003 (0.892, 1.128)	NS
Migrant to the area	0.675 (0.521, 0.875)	0.003	0.633 (0.469, 0.855)	0.003	0.807 (0.463, 1.406)	NS
Time of survey (ref: baseline)	0.699 (0.546, 0.894)	0.004	0.576 (0.439, 0.766)	0.000	1.409 (0.785, 2.622)	NS
Feels very sad or depressed at least weekly						
Age	1.144 (1.096, 1.194)	0.000	1.129 (1.075, 1.186)	0.000	1.189 (1.077, 1.312)	0.001
Years of education (formal)	0.945 (0.895, 0.999)	0.047	0.935 (0.877, 0.996)	0.038	1.009 (0.897, 1.134)	NS
Migrant to the area	0.658 (0.506, 0.854)	0.002	0.589 (0.435, 0.798)	0.001	1.053 (0.596, 1.857)	NS
Time of survey (ref: baseline)	0.625 (0.487, 0.802)	0.000	0.557 (0.421, 0.737)	0.000	0.712 (0.374, 1.356)	NS

NS = Not significant

nificantly associated with the odds of reporting frequent anxiety or depression. After controlling for these factors, nondomestic workers at endline were nearly half as likely to report being anxious or depressed compared to those interviewed at baseline. However, among domestic workers, there was no significant change in levels of anxiety and depression between survey rounds.

Changes in literacy and numeracy

As mentioned, beneficiaries' acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills was measured at baseline and endline using timed EGRA and EGMA tests. Scores in each subsection were tallied and normalized on a scale of 0 to 100. Given the diversity in educational background of beneficiaries – with some having never been to school and many others having completed lower primary education – the distribution of virtually all of the test scores was U-shaped, with most scores at the extreme upper or lower end of the scale. For example, Figure 1 shows the percent distribution of scores related to identifying letters. As is evident, over 60 percent of the test scores for this literacy skill are in the extreme tails of the distri-

bution (those scoring 0 or those scoring 90 percent and above). As such, we focused on the percent achieving proficiency, with scores of 81 to 100, to reflect literacy/numeracy acquisition.

Tables 7 and 8 show the performance (mean scores, percent achieving proficiency, and percent scoring 0) by literacy and numeracy skill. Analysis is stratified by school experience (never been and ever been to school) and domestic work status.⁸

Between baseline and endline, both beneficiaries who had never been to school and those who had some schooling improved significantly on three key literacy skills: letter identification, reading words, and reading passages. For example, across the entire sample the percent who were proficient in number identification increased from 40 to 53 percent ($p < 0.001$), and the percent who were proficient at reading passages increased from 37 to 48 percent ($p < 0.001$). Respondents described benefiting from the teaching and learning activities:

⁸ The category “domestic worker” is not mutually exclusive of those who have never been to school or ever been to school.

FIGURE 1. Percent distribution, of test scores identifying letters (possible score 0-100), by time of survey

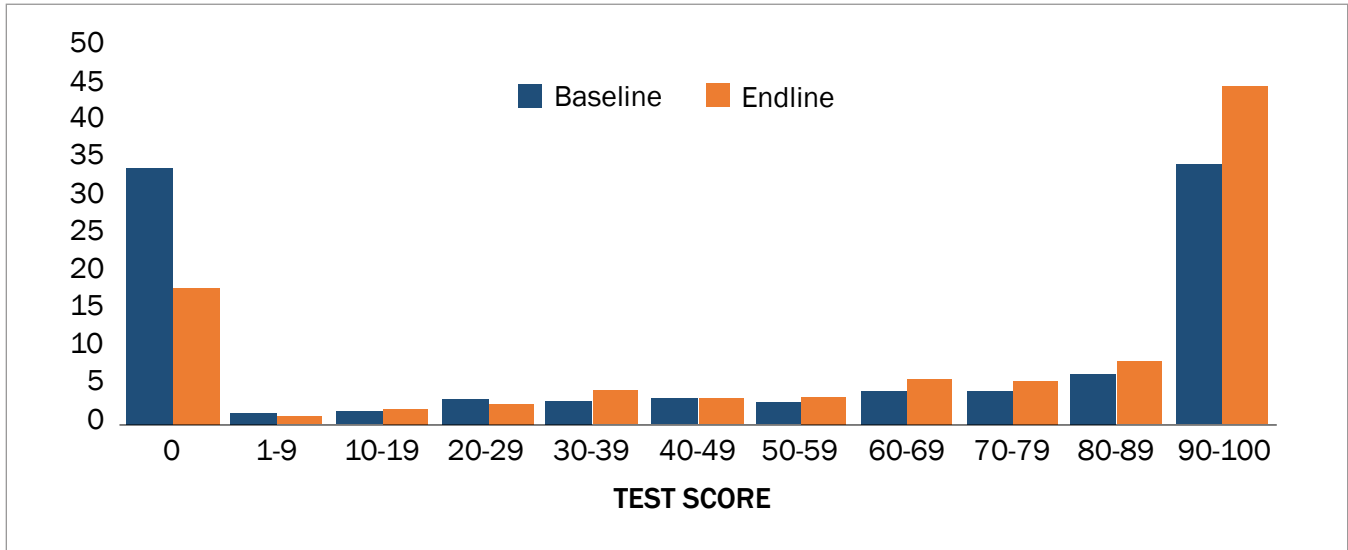


TABLE 7. Mean scores, percent of beneficiaries who have not acquired skills and percent who are proficient, by literacy test, category of respondent, and time of survey

	Never been to school (0 years) (n=529)		Been to school (1+ years) (n=1,986)		Domestic workers (n=353)		All beneficiaries (n=1,517)	
	BL	EL	BL	EL	BL	EL	BL	EL
Ex1 Identification of letters (Mean score 0-100)	33.1	52.2***	57.8	74.7***	53.3	57.1 NS	50.8	64.9***
Ex1 Unable to identify letters (Score 0)	48.5	27.7***	28.3	10.4***	30.8	22.1 NS	34.0	17.9***
Ex1 Proficient letter identification (Score 81-100)	22.7	38.3***	47.0	63.6***	40.8	41.6 NS	40.2	52.7***
Ex2 Reading words (Mean score 0-100)	27.5	44.5***	51.8	67.2***	46.3	56.2 NS	44.9	57.4***
Ex2 Proficient reading words (Score 81-100)	21.4	38.0***	46.9	57.3***	40.4	48.7 NS	46.9	57.3***
Ex3 Invented words (Mean score 0-100)	21.6	41.8***	45.4	60.9***	37.7	47.7*	38.7	52.7***
Ex3 Proficient invented words (Score 81-100)	16.2	34.3***	38.3	45.5*	30.8	31.9 NS	32.0	40.7***
Ex4 Oral passage reading (Mean score 0-100)	25.5	41.1***	46.0	64.8***	45.5	52.0 NS	40.2	54.5***
Ex4 Proficient oral passage reading (Score 81-100)	22.7	36.0***	43.2	57.0***	43.3	43.4 NS	37.4	47.9***
Ex5 Comprehension (Mean score 0-100)	25.6	51.0***	43.6	61.4***	37.4	59.0***	38.7	57.0***
Ex 5 Proficient comprehension (Score 81-100)	7.9	24.7***	21.6	36.9***	13.8	32.7***	17.8	31.6***

Note: Differences between baseline and endline significant at ~p<0.1 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001
 BL= Baseline EL= Endline NS = Not significant

I obtained many new skills from my education. We learnt the subjects very well and the lessons were easy for me. I also like the advice that is given to us. Of all the activities of the project, I like both the material support as well as the education that is given to us. (Beneficiary, Adama)

In the school, we learn subjects like Afan Oromo, English, mathematics, and environmental science. I like mathematics. I can understand what the teacher is teaching easily. This might be because it relates to my work. Somehow, English is difficult for me. On the other hand, it is good if we learn Amharic also. (Beneficiary, Adama)

However, the scores reflected by domestic workers in the sample did not reflect significant improvement between baseline and endline. This could have been because of a smaller sample size that limited our ability to detect significant change or because of resistance and limited support by employers for girls to study, especially at home. As one domestic worker described:

I have been working as a domestic worker. I do everything in the house. I cook food, wash clothes, care for children, clean the house, clean the compound, wash utensils, and bake injera. I don't like this work. I just work because I have to get money to support my life - that is it! I don't have enough time to read and do my homework. My free time is only the time that they allow me to go to school [Biruh Tesfa for All]. That is why I can't study or do homework; I don't have time for that. If I sit down and open my book, they call me and give me some work to do. (Beneficiary, Shashamene)

Significant improvement was also documented in numeracy skills: number identification and addition (Table 8). Domestic workers in the sample improved significantly in both of these domains. However, improvement in the ability to complete math problems was not apparent. Beneficiaries did not improve their mastery of this skill between baseline and endline and some subgroups performed worse at endline compared to baseline.

Table 9 shows the results from logistic regression analysis modeling the odds of proficiency in letter identification, passage reading, number identification, addition, and math problems. Inability to identify letters is also included to reflect beneficiaries with no apparent literacy gains. The multivariate models controlled for age, years of formal education, domestic worker, disability status, and having a mother tongue other than Amharic or Oromiffa, the languages of instruction in the program. On five of the six tests examined, beneficiaries achieved significantly higher levels of proficiency at endline compared to baseline, after controlling for background variables. For example, the odds of scoring a proficient level of letter and number identification (OR 2.2 and 2.4, respectively), oral passage reading (OR 2.1), and addition (OR 2.1) were more than two times the odds at baseline in all cases, after controlling for background factors. This reflects overall effectiveness of the model in engaging and improving the literacy and numeracy skills of the marginalized girls in the program.

Those acquiring proficiency on the math problems test, scoring 81 to 100, remained significantly lower at endline, even after controlling for years of education and other background factors. The odds of achieving a proficient math problem score were one-third less likely at endline compared to baseline (OR 0.66; $p < 0.003$). It is possible that beneficiaries' lack of acquisition of this skill is related to teacher/mentor discomfort with the subject and therefore less time devoted to this skill. Program managers observed, during training and refresher training with mentors, that mentors and teachers appeared least confident with the subjects of English and math problems.⁹ A review of pre- and post-training assessments among mentors does reflect limited improvement in the subjects of English and mathematics, even after refresher training was provided (analysis not shown). In addition, this could be a reflection of learning loss which is increasingly documented in a number of settings (see, for example, Soler-Hampejsek et al. 2018).

However, in multivariate analysis there was a significant improvement at endline in those scoring at the lower end of the scale on the math problem tests. The odds of

⁹ Personal communication, Senior Program Manager, Population Council, August 2022.

TABLE 8. Mean scores, percent of beneficiaries who have not acquired skills and percent who are proficient, by numeracy test, category of respondent, and time of survey

	Never been to school (0 years) (n=529)		Been to school (1+ years) (n=1,986)		Domestic workers (n=353)		All beneficiaries (n=1,517)	
	BL	EL	BL	EL	BL	EL	BL	EL
Ex6 Unable to identify numbers (Score 0)	27.9	17.3**	16.2	2.5***	13.8	9.7 NS	19.5	8.9***
Ex6 Proficient number identification (Score 81-100)	40.2	59.3***	68.5	83.5***	63.3	75.2*	60.6	73.0***
Ex7 Quantity discrimination (Mean score 0-100)	44.1	69.6***	70.4	85.6***	68.8.1	80.1**	63.0	78.8***
Ex7 Proficient quantity discrimination (Score 81-100)	26.6	53.3***	58.7	70.7***	52.1	63.7*	49.8	63.2***
Ex8 Missing numbers (Mean score 0-100)	27.9	46.2***	47.8	55.0***	49.0	49.4 NS	42.2	51.2***
Ex8 Proficient missing numbers (Score 81-100)	6.1	14.6**	18.0	16.5 NS	17.9	13.3 NS	14.7	15.7 NS
Ex9 Addition (Mean score 0-100)	38.5	59.6***	61.4	80.1***	60.0	71.4**	55.0	71.2***
Ex9 Proficient in addition (Score 81-100)	24.9	44.7***	49.7	64.6***	43.8	54.9~	42.8	56.0***
Ex10 Subtraction (Mean score 0-100)	30.0	49.0***	53.1	64.9***	50.0	57.4 NS	46.7	58.0***
Ex10 Proficient in subtraction (Score 81-100)	14.0	31.3***	35.9	42.2*	28.3	31.9 NS	24.7	37.5**
Ex11 Math problems (Mean score 0-100)	25.4 NS	30.1 NS	40.6	41.3 NS	37.5	33.9 NS	36.4	36.4 NS
Ex11 Unable to perform math problems (Score 0)	59.0	50.7 NS	35.6	28.5*	37.1	38.9 NS	42.2	38.1 NS
Ex 11 Proficient in math problems	16.2	13.3 NS	22.6	15.0**	19.6	10.6*	20.9	14.3**
Ex12 Word problems (Mean score 0-100)	43.4	62.8***	63.9	69.4 NS	65.6	72.3 NS	58.2	66.7***
Ex12 Proficient in word problems	21.4	46.0***	48.7	50.9 NS	46.7	59.3*	41.1	48.8**

Note: Differences between baseline and endline significant at ~p<0.1 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001
BL= Baseline EL= Endline NS = Not significant

attaining a zero score on the math problem test was one-third lower at endline (OR 0.69; p < 0.001) compared to baseline (results in Annex Table 2). This suggests that, while the program was not successful in helping beneficiaries achieve high-level proficiency in math problems, it

was instrumental in lifting girls out of complete inability to solve math problems. Figure 2 shows the distribution of math problem test scores, by time of survey, illustrating this conclusion.

TABLE 9. Adjusted odds ratios (and 95% confidence intervals) from logistic regression analysis to identify associations between proficiency¹⁰ in literacy and numeracy measures, selected characteristics, and time of survey

	Cannot identify letters (Score 0)			Proficient in letter identification			Proficient in oral passage reading		
	OR	95% CI	P value	OR	95% CI	P value	OR	95% CI	P value
Age	0.955	(0.918, 0.994)	0.024	0.931	(0.897, 0.967)	0.000	1.008	(0.971, 1.046)	NS
Years of education	0.745	(0.696, 0.797)	0.000	1.407	(1.330, 1.489)	0.000	1.393	(1.317, 1.472)	0.000
Domestic worker	0.936	(0.702, 1.250)	NS	0.864	(0.663, 1.071)	NS	1.191	(0.914, 1.552)	NS
Has a disability	1.383	(0.909, 2.105)	NS	0.705	(0.464, 1.071)	NS	0.631	(0.410, 0.969)	0.035
Mother tongue not Amharic or Oromo	2.020	(1.365, 2.989)	0.000	0.349	(0.245, 0.587)	0.000	0.418	(0.270, 0.648)	0.000
Time of survey (ref: Baseline)	0.341	(0.262, 0.444)	0.000	2.245	(1.780, 2.831)	0.000	2.055	(1.629, 2.593)	0.000
	Proficient in number identification			Proficient in addition			Proficient in math problems		
	OR	95% CI	P value	OR	95% CI	P value	OR	95% CI	P value
Age	1.109	(1.066, 1.154)	0.000	1.056	(1.018, 1.096)	0.003	1.014	(0.969, 1.062)	NS
Years of education	1.517	(1.414, 1.626)	0.000	1.343	(1.271, 1.419)	0.000	1.131	(1.055, 1.202)	0.000
Domestic worker	1.152	(0.866, 1.534)	NS	0.987	(0.761, 1.279)	NS	0.853	(0.615, 1.183)	NS
Has a disability	0.418	(0.276, 0.633)	0.000	0.589	(0.392, 0.886)	0.011	0.905	(0.538, 1.523)	NS
Mother tongue not Amharic or Oromo	0.777	(0.519, 1.116)	NS	0.773	(0.526, 1.136)	NS	0.205	(0.089, 0.472)	0.000
Time of survey (ref: Baseline)	2.437	(1.897, 3.130)	0.000	2.108	(1.680, 2.644)	0.000	0.656	(0.495, 0.870)	0.003

¹⁰ Proficiency refers to a score of 81 to 100.
NS = Not significant

It is noteworthy that those whose mother tongue was not the language of instruction – Amharic or Oromiffa – displayed significantly lower achievement on the literacy scores compared to those whose native language was one of the languages of instruction. After controlling for other factors, those whose mother tongue was not Amharic or Oromiffa were twice as likely to be unable to identify letters (OR 2.02; $p < 0.000$) and over half less likely to be able to read a passage (OR 0.42; $p < 0.000$). This would suggest that additional efforts should be given to beneficiaries who do not speak the language of instruction, such as additional tutoring or after-session support.

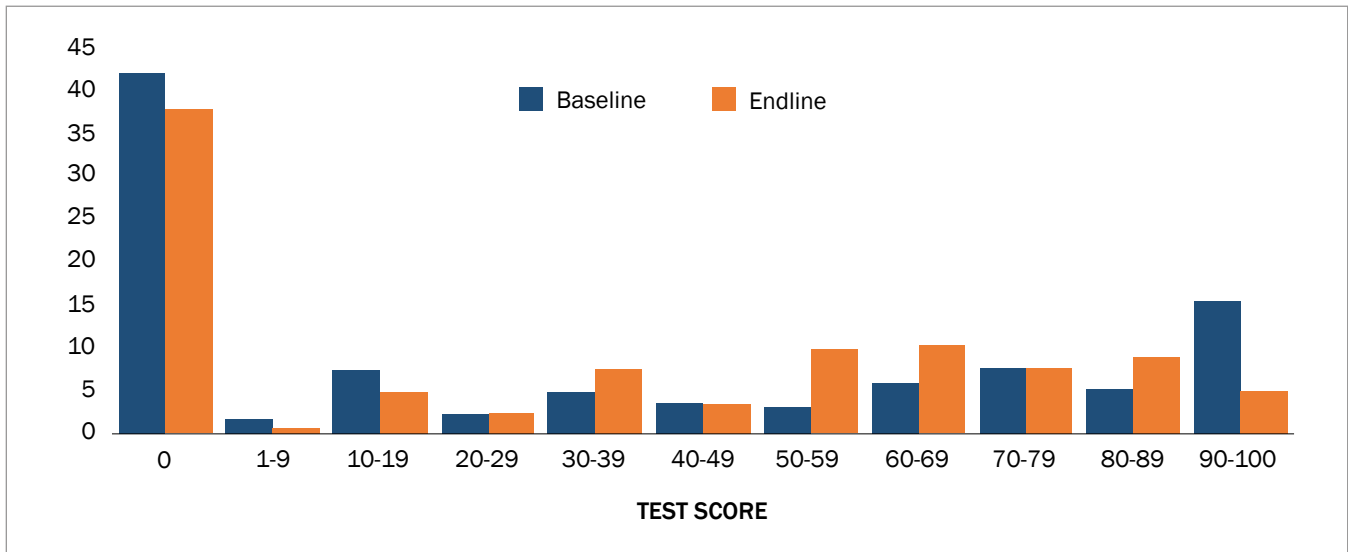
Beneficiaries, guardians, and teacher/mentors all remarked on significant improvements that girls expe-

rienced through the program. Respondents not only described gaining the ability to read and count, but also described the impact on their daily lives:

I got skills like when you are going to shop it's easy to calculate money. And I can read any notice board easily. We also have group homework on life skills.
(Beneficiary, Addis Ababa)

This project helped me to start my education. I was happy to join this project. Before I started this program I couldn't read or even write my name. If I wanted service at the bank, I had to beg someone to write my name for me. But now I can write my name by myself. I am so happy to get this opportunity.
(Beneficiary, Shashamene)

FIGURE 2. Percent distribution of math problem test scores (possible score 0-100), by time of survey



For example, domestic workers working in their employers' home receive monthly pay from their employers. This project helped them to understand adding, subtracting, division, and multiplication and this skill helps them to receive money from their employer. They can't be fooled because they know this basic skill and can ask for the correct amount of pay from their employer. I think having this skill is the most important thing the girls got from this project. The students also got advice to open bank accounts and save money they receive from the employers. (Beneficiary, Shashamene)

She has learned how to use her [mobile] phone since she joined the project. Before Biruh Tesfa for All, she didn't know how to save numbers or read and write text messages. But now she has been able to do these things. In addition, she has been able to read Amharic messages that appear on TV as a result of the project. (Employer, Bahir Dar)

In particular, beneficiaries described gaining voice and confidence as well as expanding their social networks. Some noted that the program resulted in a changed outlook for the future:

It's totally different. Now I'm more fluent in Amharic than before. I was also afraid to ask questions and scared to talk to my friends. But now, I ask questions

freely and interact with teachers and classmates as well. (Beneficiary, Addis Ababa)

I am confident because at least I can do the basic things an educated person can do – that is reading and writing. Because I met with friends in this program it also increased my communication and helped me to clear my mind. The school time is not only education time, it's also my recreation time because I am busy all day with housework. (Beneficiary, Shashamene)

The project helped me start education again and now I am thinking about my future. Before this project, I was hopeless. I stopped thinking about education or my future. But now I see the future as bright. For the future I want the project to continue to help poor girls like me. (Beneficiary, Shashamene)

Parents, guardians, and employers

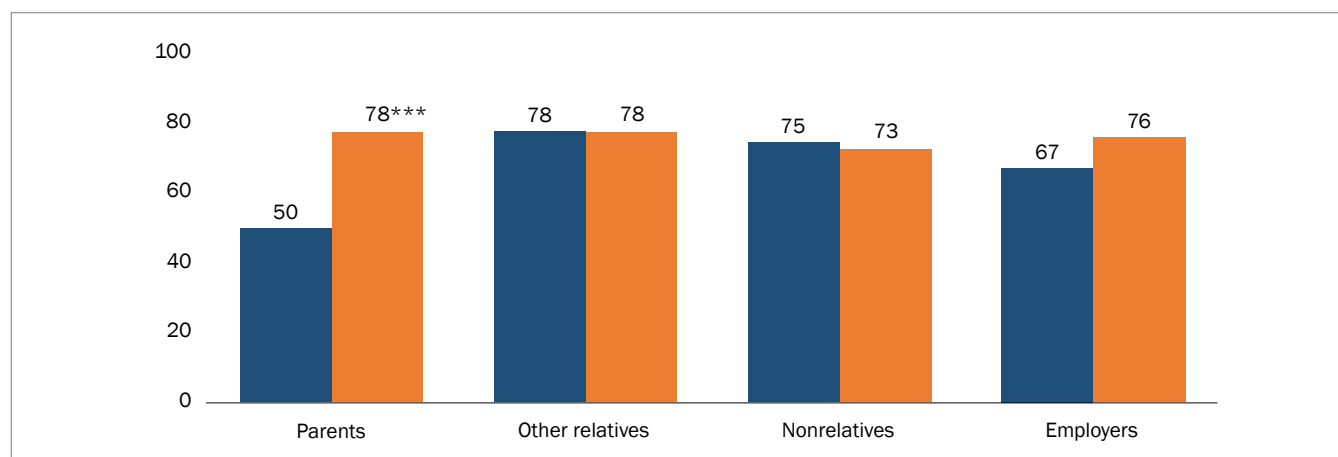
Parents, guardians, and employers were interviewed to understand attitudes about gender issues, education, and views of domestic workers, as well as perceptions of the Biruh Tesfa for All program. Table 10 shows selected views on education and work for girls and boys, held by parents, guardians and employers at baseline and endline. At baseline, 82 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement “Girls should be sent to school only if

TABLE 10. Gender attitudes of parents, guardians, and employers (percent holding gender-equitable attitudes), by time of survey

	Baseline (n=788)	Endline (n=681)	All (n=1,469)
DISAGREE WITH: “Girls should be sent to school only if she is not needed to help at home”	82.3	91.5***	86.6
DISAGREE WITH: “If money is limited for schooling, boys should be sent before girls”	79.7	85.3**	82.3
AGREE WITH: “Girls should have the same chance to work outside the home as boys”	85.9	94.3***	89.0

Note: Differences between baseline and endline significant at ~p< 0.1 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

FIGURE 3. Percent of parents, guardians, or employers who hold gender-equitable views on girls’ education and work, by category of respondent and time of survey



she is not needed in the home.” At endline, 92 percent disagreed with the statement – a significant increase between survey rounds ($p < 0.001$). Similarly, at baseline, 80 percent agreed with the statement “If money is limited for schooling, boys should be sent before girls,” while at endline 85 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement ($p < 0.01$).

An aggregate score was constructed for respondents who held gender-equitable attitudes on the three statements in Table 10. We examined changes in the aggregate gender score between baseline and endline, separated by category of respondent. Figure 3 shows the percent of respondents who held gender-equitable attitudes on all three issues, by time of survey. Respondents who were guardians of girls – either relatives or nonrelatives – held relatively similar levels of gender-equitable attitudes between baseline and endline. For example, at both baseline and endline, 78 percent of guardian-relatives of Biruh Tesfa beneficiaries held gender-equitable views on

all three statements, with no change between baseline and endline.

Among parents in the sample, however, level of gender-equitable attitudes increased significantly between baseline and endline, with 50 percent holding equitable attitudes on all three issues at baseline and 78 percent holding equitable attitudes on the same issues at endline ($p < 0.001$). Likewise, the proportion of employers holding gender-equitable attitudes increased between survey rounds, from 67 to 76 percent, though the change was not statistically significant, possible due to low numbers of employers in the sample.

Parents, guardians, and employers were read three statements to assess their attitudes about domestic workers. Table 11 shows the percent of respondents holding equitable attitudes about domestic workers concerning their workload, their right to schooling, and their trustworthiness. On the statement “Domestic workers

TABLE 11. Attitudes of parents, guardians, and employers toward domestic workers (percent holding gender-equitable attitudes), at endline, by category of respondent

	Parents (n=368)	Other relatives (n=155)	Other nonrelatives (n=72)	Employers (n=61)	All (n=656)
AGREE WITH: “Sometimes domestic workers are given too much work” ***	86.1	79.4	80.6	63.9	81.9
DISAGREE WITH: “Domestic workers do not need schooling because it is more important for them to work” NS	77.6	79.8	69.0	81.8	77.6
DISAGREE WITH: “Most domestic workers cannot be trusted” NS	59.0	66.2	56.3	51.9	59.8

Note: Differences between groups significant at ~p< 0.1 *p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001
NS = Not significant

are sometimes given too much work,” 86 percent of parents agreed with this statement, and 79–81 percent of other relatives or nonrelative guardians as well. However, among employers, only 64 percent agreed with the statement, a percentage significantly lower than the other groups. Overall, there was considerable disagreement with the statement “Domestic workers do not need schooling because it is more important for them to work.” Seventy-eight percent of respondents disagreed with this statement, with no significant differences between subgroups of respondents. However, only 60 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement “Most domestic workers cannot be trusted,” with a relatively smaller proportion of employers disagreeing (52 percent), though differences between groups were not significant.

It should be noted that many attitudinal questions such as those related to gender, education, or domestic workers may be subject to desirability bias or the tendency to underreport attitudes that might not be socially accepted. This would result in an over-estimation of the extent of gender-equitable attitudes among the sample. In addition, a significant proportion of employers did not believe that domestic workers are sometimes given too much work and many held views of distrust toward domestic workers. This may suggest that intensified efforts are needed to address social norms related to societal views of domestic workers, especially among employers.

Few girls’ programs have reached large numbers of domestic workers at scale (Kyegombe et al. 2021). In in-depth interviews, a number of respondents described that Biruh Tesfa for All was instrumental in bringing educational opportunities to domestic workers:

If this organization had not helped them, no one would remember them. Biruh Tesfa for All played a crucial role in creating a conducive learning environment for these girls. (Teacher, Adama)

Previously, no one had worked on educating domestic workers. It is this project that is working to fix the gap on educating such girls. There was no other NGO that has worked on this issue. (Teacher, Adama)

However, they described intensive efforts that were needed to convince employers to allow girls to participate:

A major educational challenge of domestic workers has been alleviated by Biruh Tesfa for All. Before the project, many domestic workers were denied a chance for education. At first, they [employers] were insulting us and some of them were trying to intimidate when we asked them to send their [domestic] workers to school. Different government offices were helping us to bring these girls to school. Their employers told us their worry that they [domestic workers] will misbehave if they go to school and meet with different girls. With repeated conversations with the employers, we convinced them that it is the girl’s right to get education. This major challenge was alleviated by the project. (Mentor, Shashamene)

After I received the training [from Biruh Tesfa for All], I was able to convince many employers that education is equally important for domestic workers, just like other girls. They agree with this idea and allow their domestic workers to come to school and start education. (Mentor, Shashamene)

The mentors and their door-to-door visits, in combination with the community conversations on the rights of marginalized girls, were seen to be instrumental in starting to evolve community attitudes about domestic workers and the rights of marginalized girls to an education.

The program has been effective in making education accessible to domestic workers. I can say this project has opened the eyes of many domestic workers in this area. At first, employers were resistant to send them to [the program]. However, after this organization implemented Biruh Tesfa for All, the resistance was not the same. I think the attitude of the community has also improved gradually after this project. (Mentor, Shashamene)

Post-Biruh Tesfa for All transitions

Biruh Tesfa for All project managers envisioned two types of successful transition pathways for girls once the program ended: 1) registration into formal schooling, with the project initially supporting girls with school supplies and uniforms or 2) transition into safe forms of work such as self-employment and small businesses. Toward the end of the project, project staff and mentors devoted considerable time to assist girls with school registration, which was done on a case-by-case basis. This is because many girls lacked the documentation necessary to enter school such as any form of official government identification or records of previous schooling. Successful registration and school attendance was schooling transition, while being self-employed or employed outside of domestic work was considered a successful livelihoods transition.

As mentioned, Biruh Tesfa groups were able to continue to meet following the end of the GEC funding, due to support from another donor. This was critical because of the disruption to the program by COVID, the diminished learning time during the project period, and because some girls had not attained the literacy and numeracy levels required to re-enter formal school, thereby requiring additional time in nonformal education. As such, a third transition was defined as girls who continued with the program in order to attain sufficient skills for a successful transition, as reflected in their registration and

regular attendance. All girls who did not make successful transitions were invited to continue in the ongoing project in three sites.

A significant percentage of beneficiaries (71 percent) remained in school or other classes at the end of the project period (Table 12). Overall, 42 percent had transitioned to formal schooling and 52 percent continued with the Biruh Tesfa classes.¹¹ Those who were most likely to transition to formal schooling were beneficiaries who had at least a few years of education before they entered Biruh Tesfa for All; 49 percent of beneficiaries who had previously been to school were able to mainstream back into the formal schooling system. Those least likely to re-enter formal school were domestic workers, which is probably due to constraints on time and lack of support from employers. Nonetheless, 20 percent of domestic workers in the endline sample were able to re-enter formal schooling, which is a significant accomplishment.

As mentioned, those with some years of schooling were more successful in transitioning into formal schooling. This is probably due to the limited instruction time in the Biruh Tesfa for All groups which was curtailed by the COVID pandemic.

Figure 4 shows the percent of beneficiaries who transitioned into formal schooling at endline, by the number of years of education they had when they entered the Biruh Tesfa for All program. Beneficiaries who had never been to school were less likely to have transitioned to formal schooling by the time of the endline survey. Only 33 percent of girls who had never been to school were able to make this transition, probably due to a shortened instruction time. However, a considerable percent of girls who had one year of schooling (66 percent), two years (57 percent), or three years (52 percent) were able to successfully transition into formal schooling.

Girls and young women in the program aspired to continue their education, seeing it as a means to get a good job. However, older girls were seen as not being as keen on education, presumably feeling that they had aged out of the school-going years:

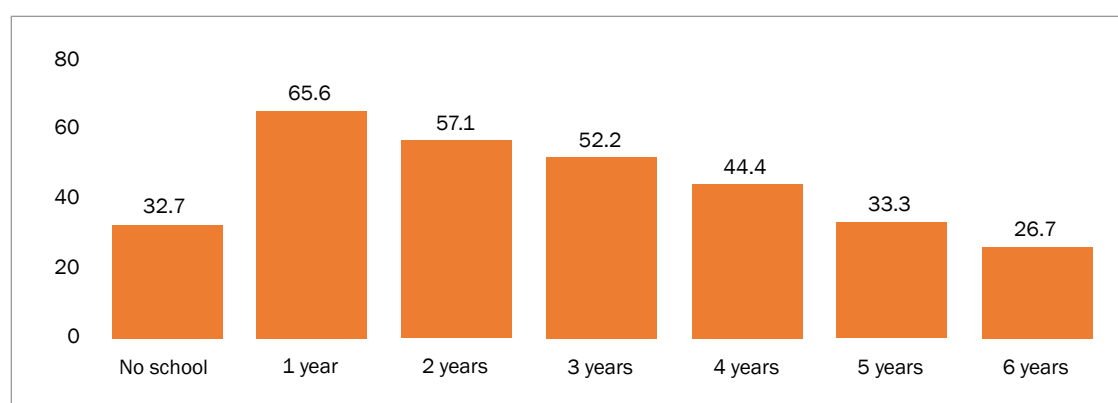
¹¹ These are not mutually exclusive estimates as those in formal school were also permitted to continue with the Biruh Tesfa sessions.

TABLE 12. Percent* of Biruh Tesfa for All beneficiaries in different forms of schooling and work at endline, by category of respondent

	Never been to school (0 years) (n=300)	Been to school (1+ years) (n=393)	Domestic workers (n=113)	All beneficiaries (n=693)
Attending classes of any kind	66.7	73.5	55.8	70.6
Attending formal school	32.7	48.9	20.4	41.8
Attending continuation of Biruh Tesfa for All	56.0	49.1	57.5	52.1
Engaged in self-employment	4.3	3.8	7.1	4.0

Note: *Percentages are not mutually exclusive, as respondents can participate in more than one activity.

FIGURE 4. Percent of Biruh Tesfa for All beneficiaries transitioning to formal school, by previous numbers of years of education



On the other hand, girls who are around 20 years may not want to continue their education, as their age has passed. Such girls want to get a job somewhere or they might want to start their own business. For instance, one of our girls was learning here and working in a school cafeteria. (Teacher, Adama)

Some respondents – especially parents who were interviewed – viewed the material support of school supplies as critical to ensure continued education. Some said that girls would be able to continue in school as long as the supplies were provided:

At the end of Biruh Tesfa for All sessions, the project provided her with school materials such as a bag, pens, exercise books, pencils, and erasers, and things like underwear and face masks. These will be used for the coming one year. (Guardian, Bahir Dar)

If I get support, she can continue her education. Otherwise, I don't have the means to educate her without this support. (Guardian, Addis Ababa)

I cannot say that the support that is given to these students can change the lives of these girls, but I can say that the support given to them can play a positive role in these girls' lives. Overall, the support has some good impact on these girls' lives. (Teacher, Adama)

One mentor mentioned that the financial literacy/entrepreneurship training should be extended, which was ultimately made possible through the extension of the program through another donor.

Two girls already joined the regular or formal classes. In addition to academic knowledge, the project also trained around 16 girls on business skills that

could lead to future endeavors. After the training, they certified them. This is very useful for them to move to safe employment or start their own business. But it is good to give them training for a longer period of time rather than only for a month. They may not become skilled at what they trained them in, in this very short period of time. (Teacher, Adama)

Reflections on value for money

Biruh Tesfa for All was designed to make maximal use of existing resources including meeting spaces and human resources. Existing local facilities – mainly primary schools or community halls – were used as meeting spaces after modest upgrades focused on making the spaces accessible to people with disabilities. Mentors were recruited from local communities and teachers were recruited from local teachers training colleges. Mentors and teachers were paid based on government rates for similar classes of workers, which ensured pay rates were commensurate with local conditions. Beneficiaries received an average of \$39 in provisions during the in-person teaching and learning activities, which helped to allay hardships experienced by extremely destitute girls in the program. All in all, the program strived to contain costs and demonstrate that the most marginalized urban girls can be reached with modest programmatic inputs. At the same time, the levels of dropout, especially among domestic workers, may warrant increased investment in manpower to intensify follow-up, given high levels of disadvantage, poverty, and instability among the beneficiaries targeted.

Discussion

The Biruh Tesfa for All program was designed to reach the most disadvantaged girls in poor urban environments, many of whom have been left behind in terms of access to education. Participation of girls in the program does reflect that the program reached girls with severe levels of disadvantage. Roughly 35 percent of girls had never been to school and nearly half were living with neither their biological mother or father. Our examination of the beneficiaries' characteristics suggests that the program was successful at engaging the most disadvantaged and marginalized girls, which is a positive reflection of the house-to-house recruitment methods using locally recruited women leaders as mentors. Likewise, that 49 percent of girls found out about the program from the mentor herself also supports the efficacy of community mentor outreach.

Beneficiaries described being engaged in significant amounts of work – both domestic work and other forms of paid work. Self-identified domestic workers described working an average of 63 hours per week, with a considerable number not being given time off during the week. In in-depth interviews, a substantial number of girls who were engaged in domestic work described not being paid, either because they were being fostered or housed by distant relatives, or because they were considered as a child in the family. Such arrangements may mask the reality for some girls – being in conditions of illegal child labor and/or modern slavery.

Domestic work burdens, sickness of oneself or household members, and migration/movement were the main causes of absenteeism and dropout. Beneficiaries mainly described their colleagues as dropping out of the program due to relocation back to rural areas or, at times, change of residence due to change in employment. Mentors and guardians also described resistance on the part of employers to allow girls to attend. Not only was the labor of domestic workers needed in the home and their presence needed to keep the house secure, employers also reportedly feared that girls networking in the groups would share information about salaries, resulting in demands for more pay and/or domestic workers looking for households offering better pay. Notably, between

baseline and endline, attitudes about girls' education improved considerably among parents, but not among employers and other guardians, who are likely benefiting from girls' labor in the household.

Between baseline and endline, girls who were not in domestic work experienced significant declines in self-reported levels of anxiety, sadness, or depression. Many participants reported that the girls' groups resulted in increased confidence and communication skills, as well as much needed time for recreation and social interaction. It is possible that these opportunities led to the decreases in anxiety and depression. However, domestic workers in the sample did not reflect similar improvements in mental health. This could have been because the sample of domestic workers was too small to detect any changes or because the respite offered in the groups was not sufficient to address other stressors in their lives. Such findings are suggestive of the need for more targeted mental health content in the groups, in particular for domestic workers.

Similarly, beneficiaries in the program exhibited significant improvements in most literacy and numeracy skills between baseline and endline, including number and letter identification, reading words and passages, and performing addition. This brought about changes in self-confidence, with girls describing a newfound confidence, self-reliance, and ability to “do things like other people.” Likewise, life-skills training and regularly being in groups with other girls improved girls' ability to express themselves and develop relationships with other girls and mentors/teachers. In some situations, girls considered Biruh Tesfa for All to be schooling as well as recreation, as it was the only time during the day that they were freed from work burdens and other responsibilities.

There was not a significant increase in those who were highly proficient in math problems, but there did seem to be improvement in moderate acquisition of math-problem skills. As with outcomes, domestic workers' literacy and numeracy acquisition was not as strong as other subgroups of girls. This would be due to a number of factors such as an insufficient sample size of domestic



workers to detect such changes; less regular attendance at the groups; less ability to concentrate because of fatigue due to long hours of work¹²; or less support in the home to study and do homework.

The study had a number of limitations. There was significant dropout from the program due to migration, movement, domestic work burdens, employer resistance, and instability/vulnerability of the target population. This resulted in the baseline and endline samples not being comparable on several dimensions such as school experience and domestic worker status. Such dimensions were adjusted for in the multivariate models, though there may have been other differential factors that were not captured in the survey, for which we would be unable to control. The study did not include a control group, which was the research design recommended by the Fund Manager for the project. However, inclusion of a control group would have strengthened our confidence in the findings presented here.

¹² As reported by mentors and our training partner, Digital Opportunities Trust – Ethiopia.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this evaluation, we highlight the key lessons learned and recommendations for future programs for highly marginalized girls in poor urban settings:

- **House-to-house recruitment as a promising method to identify and recruit marginalized groups.**

The house-to-house recruitment method proved to be a promising strategy to identify and engage the most highly marginalized and housebound girls including those in domestic work, girls living with disabilities, and those who had never attended school. Previously, common methods of recruiting these marginalized groups have been through community-based association memberships, such as Disabled People's Associations (DPOs). However, this strategy tends to reach only those with access to such groups, i.e. the "low-hanging fruit" or easier to reach populations. Home visits allow mentors to engage with gatekeepers and understand better the living situation of girls in the program. This recruitment method should be continued and scaled-up, in particular when programs target highly marginalized and isolated groups. As well, regular home visits should be encouraged, so that mentors can keep abreast of girls' welfare and help address challenges in their lives, when appropriate.

- **Intensification of efforts to address social norms and attitudes among employers.** Many of the challenges and much of the resistance experienced in the program were in the context of employers preventing domestic workers from attending the program or studying at home. Among domestic workers in the program, the main reason for absenteeism was domestic work burdens. Indeed, this, and other studies of domestic workers, reflected extremely long hours of work performed by domestic workers, which impacted their participation. In addition, girls living with relatives or in fostering situations seemed to be in conditions of domestic work but unpaid due to their familial relationship with the host family. During the suspension of groups in the early phases of the COVID pandemic, many girls in such situations were

not given time or support for remote learning, which is important messaging to include for employers and other caregivers. The house-to-house recruitment and community conversations implemented by the project appeared to be a good first step in engaging employers and host families in addressing attitudes toward domestic workers, girls' work burdens, and the value of supporting girls' education. Such efforts should be expanded and intensified in the future to facilitate the participation of a larger number of domestic workers in community-based support programs.

- **Strengthen community and government systems to identify cases of illegal child labor and worst forms of child labor.**

Biruh Tesfa for All demonstrated that it is possible to engage child domestic workers in education and support programs, provided they are flexible and additional efforts are taken to mitigate absenteeism and dropout. At the same time, the significant number of hours of domestic work undertaken by girls undermines their ability to learn and contributes to absenteeism and dropout. Civil society and government should strengthen policies toward domestic workers as well as on-the-ground identification, referral, shelter, and aftercare services for child domestic workers/girls in illegal and worst forms of child labor, including those in extended family and fostering relationships engaged in domestic labor beyond the legal limit.

- **Ensure maximum program flexibility, taking into account extended absences, catch-up strategies, and multiple programmatic intakes.**

Beneficiaries of Biruh Tesfa for All were exceptionally marginalized and extremely destitute, and their life stories reflected highly transitory and migratory living conditions. Most of the dropout experienced in the program was due to girls' movement or migration or employers' and gatekeepers' resistance. Such beneficiaries need programs designed with extreme flexibility. This includes the ability to be absent for an extended period and have a mechanism available to catch up on material that was missed. In addition, multiple

rounds of recruitment may be necessary to ensure that newly arriving girls have the opportunity to join and those who disengage can re-engage, if they so wish. Classes should be structured, not only to offer ABE material at various levels, but also to ensure that girls who join at various stages are supported so they can catch up with those who started previously. Finally, intensified messaging to participants may be needed to support reporting of impending migration, allowing program managers to attempt to place girls in alternative programs in their destination sites, following their movement or migration.

- **Provision of modest supplies and food support ongoing engagement among our most disadvantaged beneficiaries.** Beneficiaries of Biruh Tesfa for All were among the most disadvantaged, marginalized, and impoverished girls and young women in Ethiopia's urban settings. Their levels of need and lack of support were remarkable and contributed to diminished attendance and dropout. Provision of supplies including school supplies, menstruation management materials (including underwear), COVID mitigation material, and basic foodstuffs appeared to incentivize participation and alleviate the opportunity costs of time spent learning. Programs serving the most disadvantaged groups such as Biruh Tesfa for All should consider such modest support as an integral part of programming, acknowledging the very real poverty and desperation experienced by populations served by such programs.
- **Intensified mental health interventions, especially for domestic workers.** A considerable number of girls in the program, especially domestic workers, reported experiencing frequent anxiety, worry, sadness, or depression. Many beneficiaries lack familial support systems and many are on their own at a very young age. Given the dire circumstances of many girls in the program, we recommend intensifying mental health interventions. Biruh Tesfa for All has already started to expand upon and systematize group counseling, individual counseling, and linkage with mental health providers in the hopes of addressing this need among beneficiaries in the program. Similar programs for extremely marginalized young people should regularly measure and monitor mental health and include such measures in monitoring and evaluation of programs.
- **Combination of teachers with local women leaders as mentors.** Girls such as those served by Biruh Tesfa for All frequently live away from parents and lack caregivers, guidance, or protection in their lives. Community-based mentors who were drawn from the project communities understand the local living situations and can be instrumental in providing support that girls need in their local communities. On the other hand, mentors have not benefited from formal training as teachers. Biruh Tesfa for All innovated the model to combine professionally trained teachers working synergistically and in parallel with community-based mentors to lead the groups. Trained teachers help to ensure that education is delivered at the expected level while mentors are well-equipped to provide social support when beneficiaries need additional assistance at home or in the community.
- **Additional support to those with limited facility in the language of instruction.** Literacy tests conducted in this evaluation demonstrated that beneficiaries whose native language was not the language of instruction – either Amharic or Oromiffa – had diminished performance compared to girls' whose native language was the language of instruction. As many of the Biruh Tesfa for All beneficiaries are migrants to the area, language backgrounds and abilities are highly variable. Programmatic adjustments should be made to ensure remedial support for such girls, enabling them to reach similar levels of literacy as others in the program. Strategies could include a dedicated mentor for girls who speak different languages, or after-session or weekend tutorials.
- **Regular support to mentors and teachers on more difficult subjects.** This project evaluation demonstrated significant improvements in a range of literacy and numeracy outcomes among project participants. However, in one area, solving math problems, girls did not reach a high level of proficiency, similar to other subjects. Anecdotal evidence suggests one reason may be that teachers and mentors are less confident on this topic, thus being reflected in girls' performance on math problems. We recommend increased review and monitoring of mentors' and teachers' abilities to teach different topics, as well as continued refresher training focused on the areas that prove to be of greatest difficulty to teachers.

Annex Tables

TABLE A1. Number of in-depth interviews conducted, by category of respondents and site

	Addis Ababa	Adama	Bahir Dar	Shashamene	Total
Beneficiaries	6	6	4	4	20
Mentors/teachers	6	6	2	6	20
School directors	0	0	2	1	3
Parents, caregivers, and employers	5	6	4	4	19
Total	17	18	12	15	62

TABLE A2. Adjusted odds ratios (and 95% confidence intervals) from logistic regression analysis to identify associations between “0” score on math problem tests, by selected characteristics and time of survey

	Scored 0 on math problems		
	OR	95% CI	P value
Age	0.946	(0.913, 0.982)	0.003
Years of education	0.726	(0.684, 0.770)	0.000
Domestic worker	0.841	(0.646, 1.096)	NS
Has a disability	1.584	(1.069, 2.348)	0.022
Mother tongue not Amharic or Oromo	1.218	(0.833, 1.781)	NS
Time of survey (ref: Baseline)	0.687	(0.547, 0.863)	0.000

NS = Not significant

References

- Black, M. 2002. "Child Domestic Workers: Finding a Voice." London: Anti-Slavery International.
- Bundervoet, Tom. 2018. Internal Migration in Ethiopia: Evidence from a Quantitative and Qualitative Research Study. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Erulkar, A. and Ferede, A. 2009. "Social exclusion and early, unwanted sexual initiation among poor urban females in Ethiopia," *International Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health* 35(4): 186–193.
- Erulkar, A., Ferede A., Girma W., and Ambelu W. 2013. "Evaluation of 'Biruh Tesfa' (Bright Future) HIV Prevention Program for Vulnerable Girls in Ethiopia," *Vulnerable Child and Youth Studies* 8(2): 182–192.
- Erulkar, A. and Medhin, G. 2017. "Evaluation of a girls' safe spaces program to improve educational outcomes and health service utilization in Ethiopia," *Girlhood Studies* 10, No. 1: 107–125.
- Erulkar, A., Medhin, G., and Negeri, L. 2017. "The Journey of Out-of-School Girls in Ethiopia: Examining Migration, Livelihoods and HIV." Addis Ababa: Population Council. August.
- Erulkar, A. and Mekbib, T. 2007. "Invisible and vulnerable: Adolescent domestic workers in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia." *Vulnerable Child and Youth Studies* 2(3): 246–256.
- Erulkar, A., Mekbib, T., Simie, N., and Gulema T. 2006 "Migration and vulnerability among adolescents in slum areas of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia," *Journal of Youth Studies*, 9(3) July: 361–374.
- Erulkar, A., Negeri, L., and Hailu, E. 2022. The Prevalence of Child Domestic Service in Ethiopia: Baseline Report. London: Freedom Fund and Addis Ababa: Population Council.
- Human Rights Watch (HRW). 2006. "Swept under the rug: Abuses against domestic workers around the world," *Human Rights Watch* 18(7).
- Kyegombe, N., Pocock, N., Chan, C., et al. 2021. "Evaluations of Interventions with Child Domestic Workers: A Rapid Systematic Review," *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18(19): 10084.
- Masanja, G. 2012. "The female face of migration in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Huria* 9 July: 80–97. Dar es Salaam: Department of Geography St. Augustine, University of Tanzania.
- Population Council. 2018. Child Domestic Work and Transitions to Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Evidence from Ethiopia. Addis Ababa: Population Council Research Brief. January.
- Soler-Hampejsek, E., Mensch, B., Psaki, S., Grant, M., Kelly, C., and Hewett, P. 2018. "Reading and numeracy skills after school leaving in southern Malawi: A longitudinal analysis," *International Journal of Educational Development* 59: 86–99.
- Temin, M., Montgomery, M., Engebretsen, S., and Barker, K. 2013. "Girls on the Move: Adolescent Girls & Migration in the Developing World." New York: Population Council.
- UNICEF. 1999. "Child domestic work," *Innocenti Digest*. Florence, Italy: UNICEF.
- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2018. World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision. Custom data acquired via website.