



Rwanda Adolescent Girls' Empowerment Initiative Impact Analysis (2016-2018)

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Introduction

From 2006 to 2014, Firelight was part of the [Grassroots Girls Initiative](#) – a partnership of six funders that believe grassroots organizations are uniquely qualified to deliver solutions for the most underserved girls in the communities where they work. Firelight's focus was originally on deeply marginalized and vulnerable girls in parts of Rwanda and Malawi. Firelight funded local community organizations who mentored young women in financial literacy, business acumen, and building up strong social support. Over time, our work evolved to focus exclusively on addressing the depth of challenges in rural Rwanda only.

This report focuses exclusively on the most recent funding period from 2016 to 2018, during which Firelight worked directly to build the capacity of a local Community Grantmaker, Action pour le Développement du Peuple (ADEPE), which in turn supported a cluster of five small community-based organizations. We have been working with ADEPE to focus on strengthening the capacity of the smaller CBOs in girl-centered programming and in organizational development areas such as financial management and monitoring and evaluation. Our aim with this funding cluster has been to build the capacity of local community-based organizations to run and document effective, replicable, and potentially scalable holistic girls' empowerment programs that will support vulnerable young women and shift their economic, educational, and social outcomes in the long-term.

What were challenges faced by adolescent girls in northwestern Rwanda?

After the 1994 genocide that took the lives of between 800,000 to one million Rwandan people, it was estimated that 60 to 70 percent of the remaining population was female. Prior to the genocide, most of these women were excluded from the same educational and economic opportunities or career expectations as men, with few women owning land or working outside of the home. However, President Paul Kagame, recognizing that men could not rebuild Rwanda alone, declared that 30 percent of seats in Parliament be reserved for women and that it was essential to invest in girls' education. Today, over 60 percent of Rwandan Parliament consists of women.

However, these "leapfrogs" in women's empowerment at the highest levels of government have often not translated into the home or family environment. As American National Public Radio reports, "...A female politician could stand up in parliament, advocating for issues like stronger penalties for sexual violence and subsidized maxi-pads for the poor, but find herself scared to speak out about the oppression in her own home." The idea of "feminism" was often seen as a Western concept, with

no grassroots *Rwandan* women’s movements having had taken place to fight for women’s liberation.¹

In truth, the vast majority of women in Rwanda still face challenges that limit their educational access and development of marketable skills – hindering their full contribution in their communities’ and country’s development. At most levels of society, women remain distinctly vulnerable due to a variety of factors, including low primary school completion rate, high rates of domestic violence, and lower earnings and economic opportunities than men. According to [World Bank data](#), in Rwanda around 2015/2016:

- 61% of girls persisted to the last grade of primary school
- 18% of girls repeated primary school
- 71% of girls who completed primary school transitioned to secondary school
- 37% of girls enrolled in secondary school
- 7% of girls enrolled in tertiary school
- 66% of girls and women aged 15 and above were literate (2014)

In the northern and western provinces of Rwanda (indicated in Figure 1), directly on the border with Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, communities have been scarred not only by the impact of the genocide, HIV, and acute poverty, but also by conflict on their doorstep in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Adolescent girls in this region experience a myriad of vulnerabilities, ranging from teenage pregnancy, to school dropout, to sexual abuse and violence, to physical and learning disabilities, to involvement in sex work, to child marriage, to sexually transmitted infections and HIV, to drug use. At the same time, adolescent girls often experience extremely low expectations from their families, who view them more as burdens than assets to the family and the community.



Figure 1. Northern and Western provinces of Rwanda overlaid on the map of Africa

¹ “It’s the No. 1 Country for Women in Politics — But Not in Daily Life.” NPR. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2016/07/29/487360094/invisibilia-no-one-thought-this-all-womans-debate-team-could-crush-it>

The sharp differentiation in treatment, expectations, opportunities, and access to resources for adolescent girls during childhood and adolescence shapes their life trajectories in numerous ways. Just as adolescent boys are given more freedom and opportunity, the lives of adolescent girls become more constrained and confined in terms of opportunity, resources, mobility, and life choices. As a result, adolescent girls are stuck in a cycle that reinforces a life of poverty, stress, and limitation.

Why are community-based organizations best placed to address these challenges?

Community-based organizations (CBOs) are grounded in their communities and have a strong understanding of the dynamics between the girl, her family, her community, and the local and national systems around her (pictured in Figure 2). As such, CBOs are uniquely positioned to empower adolescent girls in ways that other actors are not. For instance, a community-based organization has the ability to work with local government and village leaders to identify the most vulnerable girls *and* the deep relationships and community trust that allow them to develop and implement their programs effectively. They are ultimately deeply accountable to these same communities, with feedback and program iteration loops occurring constantly. At the same time, with their commitment to listening and learning, CBOs prioritize flexibility, adapting their programs depending on the evolving needs of their beneficiaries. Typically, international or national non-government organizations typically have neither these long-term relationships nor flexibility to act in the same ways.

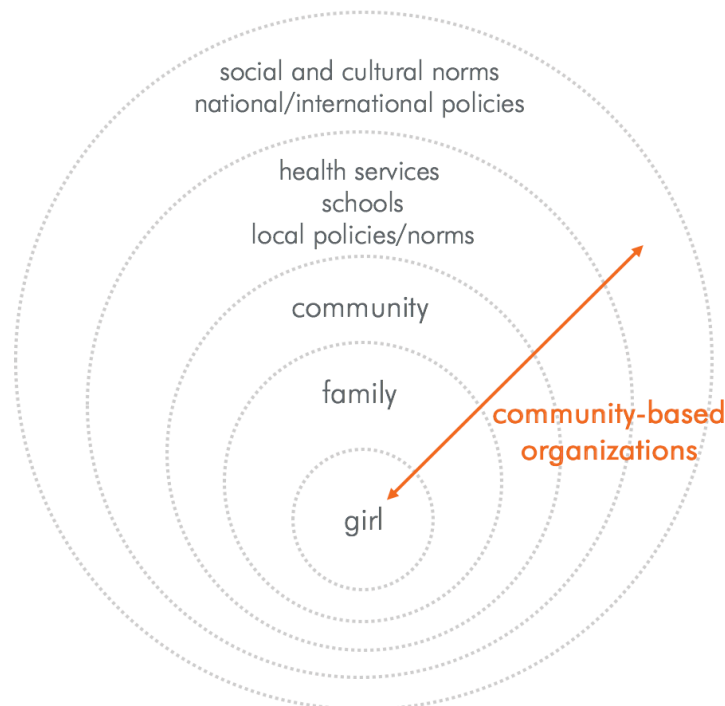


Figure 2. Community-based organizations can act at the nexus of the girl, her family, her community, and the local and national systems around her.

As such, supporting community-based solutions for adolescent girls' empowerment leads to long-term, sustainable, positive impact on the girls and the communities where they live. However, CBOs often face significant challenges in accessing resources and have limited capacity in organizational management and the technical aspects of girls-centered programming. And as Firelight's research into the real capacity building needs of CBOs has confirmed, these organizations are often isolated not only from similar peer organizations, but also from international capital and resources.

In response, in 2006, the Nike Foundation launched the Grassroots Girls Initiative "to support the girl effect: the unique potential of adolescent girls to end poverty for themselves and the world." They brought together a consortium of six funders – American Jewish World Service, the Global Fund for Children, Global Fund for Women, EMpower The Emerging Markets Foundation, Mama Cash, and Firelight – to "design and implement effective solutions for the most underserved girls in the communities where they work."² When Firelight began funding grassroots solutions for girls at this time, adolescent girls were only just beginning to be included in global/international conversations about growing economies and lifting communities out of poverty. In stark contrast, community-based organizations had long since been supporting girls at the grassroots level.

Which CBOs did Firelight partner with?

Firelight was part of the [Grassroots Girls Initiative](#) (GGI) from 2006 to 2014, focusing on deeply marginalized and vulnerable girls in parts of Rwanda and Malawi, but our work evolved to focus exclusively on addressing the depth of challenges in rural Rwanda. Through the most recent phase, from January 2016 to December 2018, Firelight worked directly to build the capacity of a GGI grantee-partner, Action pour le Développement du Peuple (ADEPE) as a Community Grantmaker. In this role, ADEPE made sub-grants and built the capacity of a cluster of five small community-based organizations³ – mapped in Figure 3 below – as well as implemented its own activities directly as a Firelight grantee-partner. A description and analysis of the capacity building received by both ADEPE and the smaller CBOs is detailed in a later section. However, in this section, we profile each of the program models of the six community-based organization supported through the initiative.

² *Where the Girls Are: Findings, Funding, and Fueling Grassroots Girls Solutions*. June 2014. http://www.firelightfoundation.org/files/4314/2204/7852/Grassroots_Girls_Initiative_Where_the_Girls_Are.pdf

³ ADEPE had served as a Community Grantmaker prior to 2015 – expertise upon which Firelight wanted to build. ADEPE led a "learning circle" for four CBOs under the Nike Grassroots Girls Initiative from 2014 to 2016, and they made grants to 12 additional CBOs under a grant from Search for Common Ground.

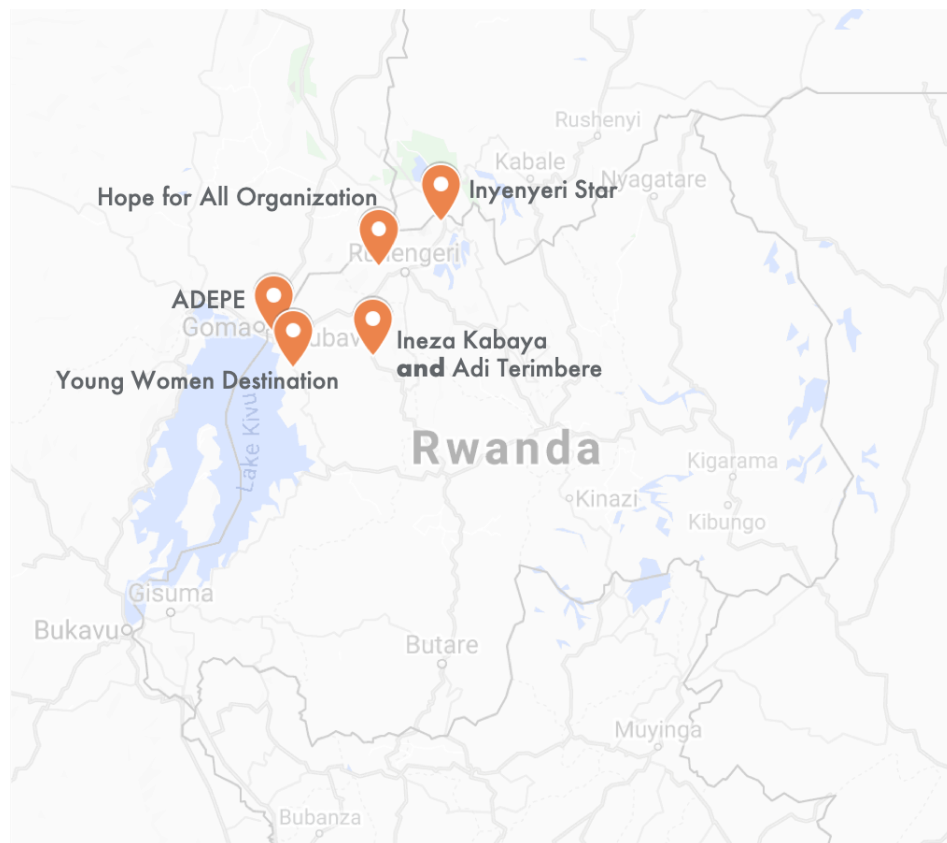


Figure 3. Firelight’s six Rwandan community-based organization grantee-partners are located in northern and western Rwanda.

When we began to support ADEPE as a Community Grantmaker, they sought out nearby organizations⁴ that were *already* working with some of the most vulnerable girls in their communities – those suffering from extreme poverty, those with disabilities, those who lived on the street, those who had been forced into sex work, and those who were very young mothers – to develop these girls’ confidence, agency, and skills, to open them up to new opportunities, and to link them to resources and networks which enabled success. In fact, for the girls (ages 11 to 24) our grantee-partners worked with, over 60% were mothers, about 98% had not completed secondary school, and over 80% did not have more than one proper meal a day. Grantee-partners worked with two cohorts of women – one cohort of 250 girls starting in 2016⁵ and another cohort of 251 girls added in 2017. Girls were selected through a variety of community-led processes – working often directly with local

⁴ ADEPE placed adverts in newspapers and online portals in Rwanda, asking for concept notes from community-based organizations that were already working with vulnerable girls but that needed capacity in organizational management and girls-centered programming. ADEPE’s relationship with the Joint Action for Development Forum level – at the sector level – also helped them to identify CBOs that they could visit as part of their scoping visits. Next, ADEPE analyzed these concept notes, making subsequent field visits to the most promising CBOs to understand their work and focus on girls, as well as to their capacity and organizational gaps. The short-listed CBOs were then welcomed to submit full proposals for funding, and five of these CBOs were chosen. Grant agreements were signed between ADEPE, the local government, and the community-based organization.

⁵ For each cohort, each sub-grantee of ADEPE was able to select 34 girls (68 total over two cohorts), and ADEPE selected 161 girls (80 in the first cohort and 81 in the second). Girls in the first cohort remained part of the program until 2018, though with less intensive support after the first year. In 2017, “up-front” investments such as livestock and start-up capital were prioritized for the girls in the second cohort, as those in the first cohort had already received these.

leaders, parents, local authorities, and girls themselves to select the most vulnerable girls in their communities.

Each organization was tasked with selecting 34 beneficiaries⁶ for the first cohort of the program, with ADEPE selecting 80 beneficiaries. The selection of these beneficiaries involved deep involvement of local authorities, community leaders, parents, and girls themselves. For example, Inyenyeri Star first visited local government authorities to understand how many girls in the community were young mothers. From this long list of adolescent girls, Inyenyeri Star staff created a shortlist of those who were the *most* vulnerable – those experiencing extreme poverty, those who had dropped out of school, and/or those crossing the border to earn an income. After discussion with the sector officers, Inyenyeri Star visited village and community leaders to understand what kind of programs and support girls really needed, and to confirm which girls most needed to be in the program. After finalizing this list, CBO staff called all of the girls to discuss their challenges, whether they would benefit from an empowerment program, and what kind of help they needed (help earning an income, returning to school, etc.). Afterwards, CBO staff then visited each girl’s home in order to understand her familial context and whether her parents would be supportive of her participation in the program. In this way, identification of beneficiaries – as well as program design – was created to be a highly participatory process.

Our grantee-partners operated on the principle that when young women are empowered, they can rely on themselves to take care of their own needs and the needs of their children and families. Using the assets-based, girls-centered programming model (outlined in the section “Increasing technical capacity in asset-based, girls-centered programming” below), our partners focused on increasing girls’ financial, physical, personal, and social assets.

All six of these partner organizations focused on girls’ financial and physical assets through economic empowerment, including vocational training, financial and business management, start-up loans, and sustainable farming for the young women in their communities. Some of our partner organizations provided seed funding for women to start their own businesses, while others prioritized the formation of business collectives – which allowed girls to care for the basic materials of themselves, their children, and their families. Some organizations, such as ADEPE, took an especially collaborative approach to protecting girls’ economic assets, such as sewing machines – ensuring that the girl, a family member, a community leader, and a government representative signed an agreement stating that the girl was the owner and user of the machine.

For those adolescent girls who wished to return to formal school, our grantee-partners supported their school fees and monitored their academic performance. The programmatic weight of vocational training versus educational support often depended on the ages of the girls chosen.

To strengthen girls’ personal assets, all six organizations ensured that the young women they worked with were well-educated about sexual and reproductive health issues in order to help prevent HIV, sexually transmitted infections, and unplanned/early pregnancies. Firelight’s grantee-partners likewise connected them with nearby health centers to provide voluntary counseling and testing and reproductive health services to the young women.

Our partners also increased girls’ social assets by ensuring that they received counseling and social support in the form of support groups and community mentors. Community mentors were identified

⁶ Due to budgetary restrictions, the five CBOs were only able to select 34 girls each for the first cohort of the program in 2016, with Lead Partner ADEPE able to select 80 girls. The same restriction applied for the second cohort of girls chosen in 2017, with ADEPE was able to choose 81 girls. Because CBOs continued to work with both cohorts of girls from 2017 to 2018, there were 501 total direct girl beneficiaries of the program.

by girls as trusted, reliable men and women in their communities and were trained by CBOs to prepare them for their roles. Many of these young women had experienced great difficulties in their early lives, including losing parents to the Rwandan genocide or to AIDS. Our grantee-partners not only worked to help young women realize their inner strength, resiliency, and potential, but also worked to build their outer strength by linking them to each other and to other support systems in the community.

A brief summary of each CBO sub-grantee's model is outlined below:

Action pour le Développement du Peuple (ADEPE)

ADEPE works with some of the most vulnerable girls in Gisenyi – those who have dropped out of school, are young mothers, are HIV-positive, or are orphans. Many of these girls, with no intervention, become more likely to engage in sex work in the Lake Kivu area or to cross the border to sell goods in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – increasing their likelihood of contracting HIV or becoming pregnant. After identifying and listening to what each girl wants and needs from the program, ADEPE provides livestock and/or start-up capital and brings the girls together with community mentors to discuss issues of sexual and reproductive health. At the same time, they invest in girls' leadership skills, enabling them to lead group meetings and to become advisors to younger girls in the program.

Young Women Destination

Started by a young mother herself, Young Women Destination – located close to the popular Lake Kivu tourist area – works with girls who are vulnerable to and/or have experienced school dropout, teenage pregnancy, sex work, drug use, and/or sexual violence. Acknowledging that adolescent girls with babies often experience intense stigma and isolation from their families and communities, Young Women Destination creates pathways for girls to actively contribute to their societies. They have started a handicrafts collective that trains girls to make handbags, rugs, and clothes which are sold both to hotels and tourist shops in the area – profits then come back to the girls themselves and allow the program to continue. In tandem with this vocational program, Young Women Destination runs savings and loans groups, dance lessons, and literacy training, both for girls in the program and other community members, in order to reduce girls' isolation from each other and their communities.

Ineza Kabaya

Ineza Kabaya works primarily with girls living with physical and mental disabilities, who are often deeply marginalized in society and suffer from high rates of school dropout. Ineza, in response, provides special needs education to girls with intellectual disabilities, vocational training in knitting and tailoring to girls who are vulnerable and/or living with physical disabilities, and educational assistance to girls who have dropped out of school but wish to re-enroll. In addition, they form business cooperatives for girls in the program, teach them about sexual and reproductive health, connect them with specialized health services and physiotherapists, and help them elect community mentors with whom the girls discuss their daily challenges. Ineza Kabaya is also reducing the isolation of girls living with disabilities, bringing them together with able-bodied girls to play games and activities such as "sit ball" – a game similar to volleyball that is played with girls seated on the ground.

Associatiton pour le Développement Intégré (ADI) Terimbere

ADI Terimbere, located near Ineza Kabaya, focuses primarily on girls who are young mothers and/or are suffering from extreme poverty. Addressing these challenges and depending on the needs and wishes of each girl, ADI Terimbere trains certain girls in different vocations (tailoring, hairdressing, food processing, knitting of baskets with decoration skills), gives some girls start-up business capital and livestock (pigs and goats), and helps other girls return to and succeed in secondary school. At

the same time, they connect all of these girls with a community mentor, who brings them together on a monthly basis to discuss their challenges, their hopes, and ways forward. ADI Terimbere also trains girls in sexual and reproductive health and helps them register their children when the children's fathers are not present. All of these activities enable girls to plan for their futures, to increase their self-empowerment and self-reliance, and to meet their needs and those of their children.

Hope for All Organization

Hope for All, located in the Musanze district of Rwanda, focuses on older adolescent girls ages 18 to 24. Working with girls who have experienced or are vulnerable to teenage pregnancy, school dropout, and extreme poverty, Hope for All imagines a future where girls are more self-efficacious and better able to care for themselves and their families. They provide girls with training in income-generating activities, with livestock, and/or with small business capital. With the money girls earn from these activities, they are then able to contribute to savings and credit groups that are organized by Hope for All. On a weekly basis, Hope for All also brings these girls together with community mentors, creating a strong sense of community and belonging for girls who have previously been marginalized. During some of these meetings, girls are taught by local nurses and medical professionals about sexual and reproductive health, which enables them to make the right reproductive choices for them.

Inyenyeri Star

Inyenyeri Star, located on the border of Uganda at the foothills of Volcanoes National Park, works with girls who are vulnerable to sexual abuse, drug use, sexually transmitted infections, sex work, school dropout, and teenage pregnancy as a result of crossing the border to sell goods in Uganda. Though founded and run by a member of the Catholic church, the organization does not evangelize to girls in the program or community, instead using the church as a meeting point to bring community members together. Inyenyeri Star's program focuses primarily on re-enrolling girls in secondary school or training them in vocational professions (especially for those who have given birth before marriage and/or at a very early age). Many girls are also given livestock as a way to boost their economic livelihoods, as part of a pig pass-on programs that then distributes the piglets to other vulnerable girls. At the same time, all girls are brought together on a weekly basis for discussions with their community mentors, for lessons around sexual and reproductive health, and then dance training. Inyenyeri Star's dance program is particularly innovative, as girls have learned dances that they now perform at weddings and celebrations in the community, both raising awareness about the value of adolescent girls and earning money that contributes to the sustainability of the program.

How did Firelight build CBO capacity, and what were the results?

Empowering ADEPE as a Lead Partner and Community Grantmaker

Firelight believes that by empowering a local mentor organization – a “Lead Partner” – and likewise enabling them in a dual role as a Community Grantmaker, we can provide tailored capacity building and lived experience to CBOs in a way that external sources are unable to provide. Under the Grassroots Girls Initiative, ADEPE had been identified by Firelight as an organization with high capacity to undertake this elevated Community Grantmaker and Lead Partner role. After the end of the GGI, from 2014 to 2015, ADEPE used the skills gained from training in girls-centered programming (detailed in the section below) to lead a “learning circle” of four smaller Rwandan CBOs,⁷ guiding them in designing and implementing programs to support adolescent girls.

⁷ Note: these are four different CBOs than the ones supported in the most recent phase of funding from 2016 to 2018: Association Ubumwe Saint Kizito, Special Education Center of Janja, Association Inkoramutima za Kristo, and Commission Chrétienne de Lutte contre le SIDA.

Near the end of 2015, upon seeing their success in this Lead Partner role, Firelight knew that ADEPE had the ability to take on even more responsibility. ADEPE was asked to form a cluster of five CBO grantee-partners who were already working with girls but who could benefit from capacity building. After an in-depth exploratory process that involved site visits, staff interviews, and written proposals, ADEPE identified five CBO grantee-partners with whom they would work from 2016 to 2018. While partners were brought together in December 2015 to meet each other and review the goals of the initiative, the first grants to the CBOs were made in early 2016.

Assessing the performance of ADEPE as Lead Partner

In order to assess the performance of ADEPE in its role as Lead Partner, Firelight conducted a survey with all five sub-grantee-partners in July 2017 to understand the level and quality of support provided by ADEPE. It was noted that ADEPE engaged with grantee-partners over e-mail or phone most frequently, with all five partners reporting support via e-mail or phone on a weekly (or more frequent) basis. Joint training, peer learning, networking, or advocacy activities occurred monthly, across all CBOs. The CBOs were asked about the quality of support they received from their ADEPE. Three of the respondents felt that the quality of support was excellent, with the remaining two groups rating the quality of support as good.

The CBOs indicated a high level of overall satisfaction with ADEPE's approach to capacity building. Strengths included:

- Learning Circles, field visits, and workshops/networking with all CBOs
- Trainings in beneficiary identification, community mapping, mentor recruitment, monitoring and evaluation, financial management, girls' programming, and leadership skills

The CBOs also described areas where ADEPE could strengthen its approach to capacity building. Recommendations from the CBOs included:

- To help with fundraising strategy, networking, and proposal development as well as program planning and management
- To advocate on behalf of CBOs for international donor funding due to lack of resources for girls' empowerment programs
- To support the community mentorship program each year

The CBOs were asked to give feedback on the community grantmaking process and rate the ease of the grantmaking process on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being "very difficult" and 7 being "very easy." Grantee-partners found communication (average score = 6.8) and reporting to ADEPE (average score = 6.8) the easiest areas of the grantmaking process, though the process of writing proposals to ADEPE was similarly easy for partners (average score = 6.2). All scores indicated a high level of ease of ADEPE's overall grantmaking process. Partners also specifically noted the collaborative spirit between the CBOs and ADEPE, appreciating ADEPE's editorial support and feedback in the proposal writing process, as well as support in the subsequent reporting process.

Increasing capacity in organizational development

Firelight worked with ADEPE to focus on strengthening the capacity of the smaller CBOs in girl-centered programming and in organizational development. While capacity building in girls-centered programming is detailed in a section below, ADEPE worked with the CBO grantee-partners on areas such as financial management, monitoring and evaluation, finance and narrative reporting systems, leadership and management, organizational sustainability, and communication and sharing of

information. Regarding financial management, partners were assisted to develop simple tools to record transactions and enter these using a manual system. ADEPE collected reports from partners on a quarterly basis in order to help them keep on track with their objectives and flag any areas of persistent challenge. In addition, Firelight Program Officer Tomaida Banda visited all six partners on a quarterly basis in order to monitor their progress, to build technical programmatic capacity, to review and strengthen financial record keeping, and to link partners with opportunities to apply for external funding. For instance, Tomaida helped Ineza Kabaya and Inyenyeri Star apply for funding from the Tsadik Foundation, and the two organizations were consequently awarded grants.

In terms of CBO outcomes, significant progress was made in strengthening organizational capacity, particularly in the area of financial management. Partners have developed financial management policies and have developed systems to manage and report on the funds that they receive. Even though the partners are mostly using manual systems to manage their finances, they have clear processes in place for separating duties so that there are stronger internal controls systems. They have proper filing systems for all their transactions and are keeping supporting documents on record. ADEPE has also worked with CBO grantee partners to develop systems for managing volunteers and staff, which has included developing formal written job descriptions and conditions of services. This has resulted in reduced staff turnover in four out of the six CBO grantee partners.

Moreover, Firelight conducted organizational development assessments in both 2015 and 2017 in order to more quantitatively understand the improvements in organizational capacity. On average, we found great progress from baseline (2015) to endline (2017) on every domain indicated in the tool.

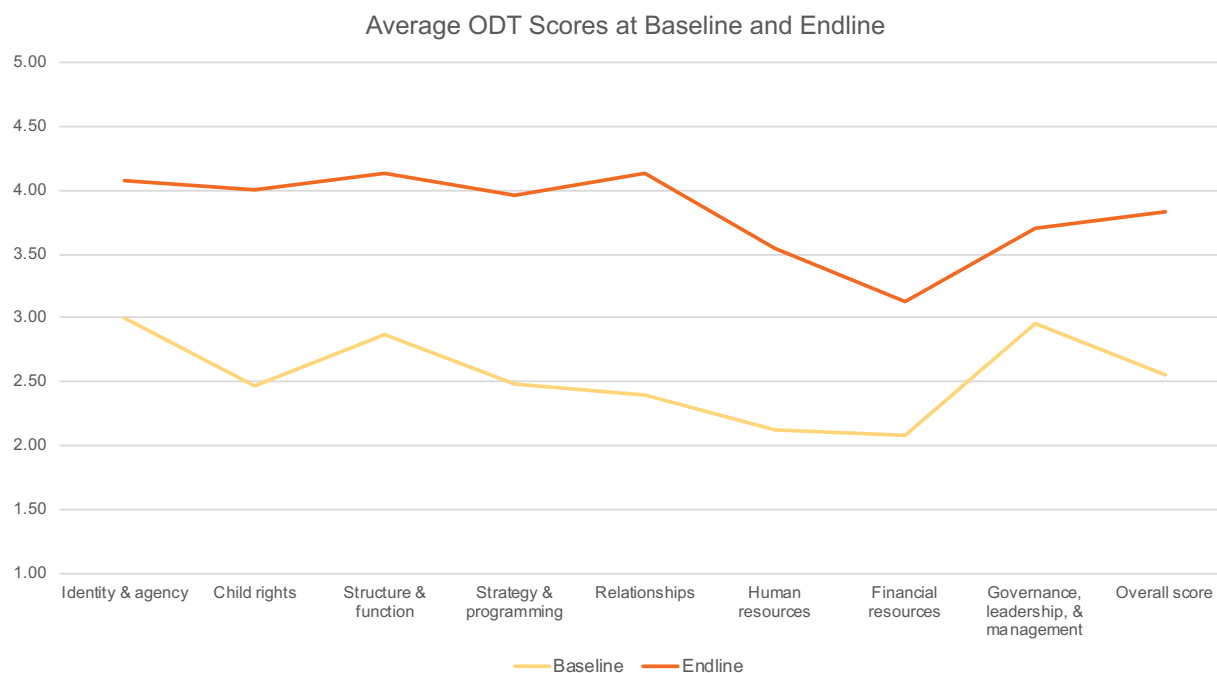


Figure 4. On every domain of the ODT, CBOs' average scores increased from baseline to endline. *Analysis does not include Lead Partner ADEPE.

In addition, each organization individually saw progress in its score on the Organizational Development Tool, as shown in the table and figure below. An organization with an overall score between 1.00 and 2.33 is categorized as Emerging. An organization with a score between 2.34 and 3.66 is categorized as Expanding, and an organization with a score between 3.67 and 5.00 is

categorized as Established. While all organizations began in either the “emerging” or “expanding” categories at baseline in 2015, they had all achieved status as either “expanding” or “established” organizations by 2017.

Grantee-Partner	2015 Baseline ODT Assessments		2017 Endline ODT Assessments		% Change from Baseline
	Overall Score	Capacity Level	Overall Score	Capacity Level	
Adi Terimbere	2.98	Expanding	4.18	Established	+40.2%
Hope for All Organization	2.52	Expanding	3.08	Expanding	+22.0%
Ineza Kabaya	3.27	Expanding	3.90	Established	+19.3%
Inyenyeri Star	1.80	Emerging	4.30	Established	+139.1%
Young Women Destination	2.16	Emerging	3.72	Established	+72.0%
Average	2.55	Expanding	3.83	Established	+50.6%

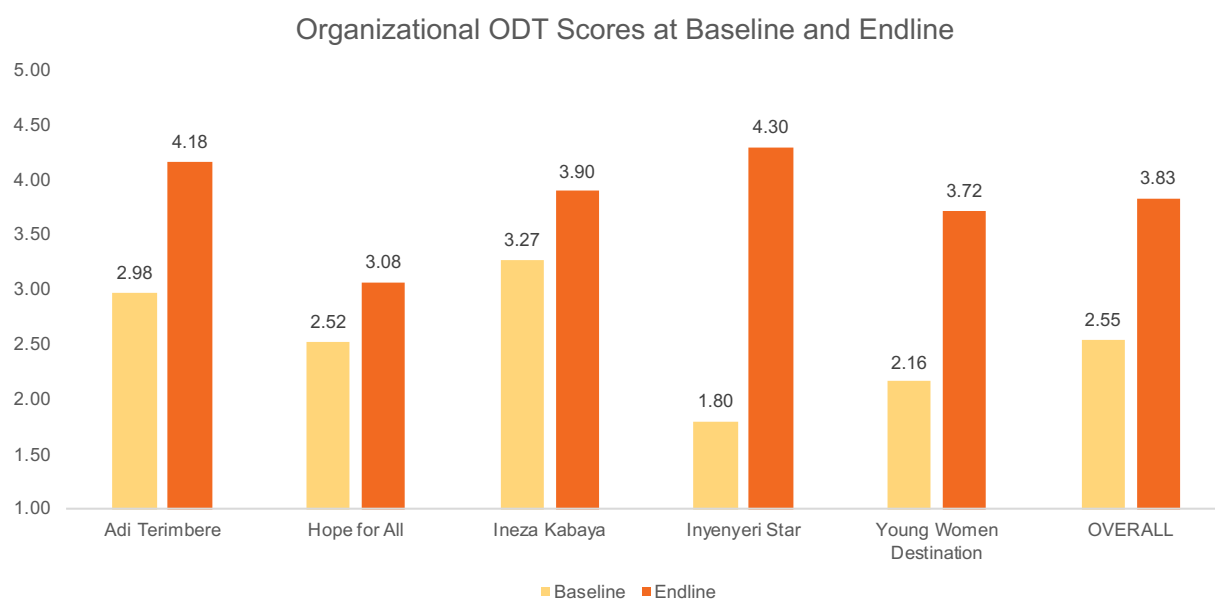


Figure 5. Each CBOs’ overall score on the ODT increased from baseline to endline. *Analysis does not include Lead Partner ADEPE.

Notably, Inyenyeri Star had a remarkable increase in organizational capacity from a score of 1.80 to 4.30 on the Organizational Development Tool. Inyenyeri Star was a particularly motivated partners, taking extra initiative to set up meetings, learning visits, and phone calls with Firelight, ADEPE, and other partners in the cluster in order to build up their organizational skillsets.

Building local and national networks and communities of practice

Firelight’s model involves building communities of practice at the local, national, and international level. The first network – at the local level – was coordinated by the Firelight Program Officer and

ADEPE in the form of our quarterly “Learning Circles.” These Learning Circles allowed the cluster to come together to share information, best practices, challenges, and learnings and to coordinate their work with other stakeholders such as local and district officials. These frequent meetings – as well as the geographic and thematic proximity of all partners to each other – created a collaborative, familial spirit within the cluster. All partners noted that when they experienced challenges, they were able to call or WhatsApp any other member of the cluster. In fact, the entire cluster stayed in touch on an almost daily basis through their WhatsApp chat group. Partners also organized in-person exchange visits within the cluster. For example, one exchange visit was arranged and hosted by Hope for All, during which all partners were able to look at the financial system of Hope for All against what they had been taught at the workshops and support visits. Partners were able to provide each other with positive criticism and suggestions for improvement.

Moreover, partners established networks with government, with other civil society organizations, and with private sector actors. Networks with government departments have ensured that partners’ programs are in line with government guidelines and provisions. Networks with the district sector have resulted in tangible benefits for the girls. For example, Ineza Kabaya and Adi Terimbere have ensured that girls starting businesses were exempted from paying usually compulsory business taxes for the first year, so that the girls’ businesses could stabilize and grow. Ineza has also received 46 sewing machines from the Kabaya sector for use by the girls after the vocational training. Similarly, district authorities gave office space to Hope for All in order to solidify a safe convening space for the girls in the program. Partners typically reported to local/district authorities on a monthly basis, which helped keep district officials apprised of all activities and challenges in the program.

Firelight believes that it is critical to share learnings inside Rwanda in order to enable coordination with existing government efforts and to allow for the possibility of replication, scale, or policy change. All partners attend monthly meetings organized by the Joint Action for Development Forum at the district level. These forums were attended by CBO grantee-partners working in the district, as well as government officials who track information that is then reported to the President. Partners have been using this forum to share information about their work.

All CBO grantee-partners have similarly made linkages with the government’s Gender Monitoring office, a government department that is in charge of monitoring programs addressing gender issues. Firelight Program Officer Tomaida Banda initially made a visit to the Gender Monitoring Office in the capital in order to share the work being done by the CBOs, and a result, officials from this department carried out visits to all the partners and witnessed the issues that were affecting the girls. Of note was the challenge of registering children born out of wedlock, as many of the fathers of the children were denying paternity. The office intervened and registered the children in the absence of the fathers. In addition, after understanding CBO programs and meeting many of the girls in the program, the Gender Monitoring Office invited many of these girls to attend meetings at the national level, to advocate for the community-based solutions that were actually changing girls’ outcomes.

At the national level, ADEPE, as the Lead Partner, networked with the Rwanda Governance Board that formally registers community-based organizations. As a result of this, three CBO grantee-partners (Adi Terimbere, Ineza Kabaya, and Hope for All) were able to get registration certificates, meaning that they are now able to apply for funding from other partners who require formal registration as a pre-requisite for funding.

At the international level, Firelight facilitated the participation of two CBO grantee-partners to present their work at the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative Conference in September 2017 in Arusha, Tanzania, where they jointly presented on their models of innovation and lessons learned from girl-centered programming in Rwanda.

In 2017, a network analysis was conducted in which CBOs completed a networking report form to provide information regarding their current relationships with government, civil society, and private sector. By category, government agencies made up half of the stakeholders reported by CBOs. CBOs generally reported that these government relationships were useful, with relationships with *local* government entities being the most useful. CBOs hoped that connections with national government agencies would give them a larger voice in advocacy efforts and in shaping national policy discussions.

Following government, CBOs reported about a third of their total reported relationships were with civil society organizations. CBOs noted that relationships with other civil society organizations were useful for developing programs, technical support, networking, sharing advocacy efforts, connecting on mutual experiences, and joining together to mobilize funds. Relationships CBOs hoped to establish with other civil society organizations centered around collaboration on program implementation and technical support to beneficiaries. CBOs also noted that they would like to invite potential civil society partners to their events more frequently.

CBOs reported the fewest current and desired relationships with the private sector, mentioning that these connections are most useful for offering internships/jobs to girls in their program. Existing private sector relationships build a strong pipeline from the CBOs' programs to sustainable jobs for the girls; for instance, Young Women Destination builds linkages with hotels and tourist shops to sell the rugs, clothes, and handbags crafted by girls in their program. In addition, many CBOs created linkages with local private veterinarians to help girls care for sick livestock and connected girls to HIV testing and physiotherapy services (for girls living with disabilities) at private medical clinics.

Increasing technical capacity in asset-based, girls-centered programming

In January 2013, as part of the Grassroots Girls Initiative, Firelight funded ADEPE to attend a Population Council training in girls-centered programming⁸ in Nairobi, Kenya. The training brought together four CBO grantee-partners from three different countries including: WEM Integrated Health Services (WEMIHS) of Kenya, Association Tuvuge Twiyubaka (ATT) of Rwanda, Nkhotakota AIDS Support Organization (NASO) of Malawi, and Action pour le Développement du Peuple (ADEPE) of Rwanda. There were 10 participants who gathered to learn more about how to improve programs and services for adolescent girls. The Population Council focused on helping each partner to use country-level data and demographics to review their programs, and develop skills in rapidly assessing the outcomes and overall impact of their activities.

The objectives of the training were to:

- 1) Discuss country-specific data and demographics in order to help identify the needs of the most neglected adolescent girls
- 2) Develop skills in rapidly assessing how well participating organizations are reaching adolescent girls in their communities
- 3) Exchange best practices when reaching and supporting adolescent girls with other participants
- 4) Develop action plans to address gaps and improve the overall quality of grantee-partner programs

⁸ During this training, ADEPE was also trained in digital storytelling, which empowers adolescent girls by giving them the support and technical training to document their own stories using cameras and phones. Girls who participate in the digital storytelling sessions collect and share their own stories in order to capture the changes in their lives, and they also train other girls who are new to digital storytelling. After the initial training, a Population Council visited ADEPE in order to provide further coaching and support on this methodology.

After the Population Council training, these four community organizations gathered together at WEMIHS in Kenya. The exchange visit to WEMIHS allowed all the participants to see concrete examples of activities that reach adolescent girls. As a Community Grantmaker, WEMIHS provided valuable insights and expertise on the best practices when funding and mentoring smaller grassroots organizations. During the exchange visit, staff and beneficiaries had an opportunity to share experiences, challenges, and see program activities first-hand.

As part of ADEPE's implementation of lessons learned during the training, they trained all 10 of their staff members on how to use the Population Council toolkit ("Girl Centered Program Design") and how to integrate holistic girls programming into their existing efforts to promote girls' financial independence.

ADEPE was also responsible for cascading this training to others. After the end of the GGI, from 2014 to 2015, ADEPE used the skills gained from training in girls-centered programming to lead a "learning circle" of four smaller Rwandan CBOs,⁹ guiding them in designing and implementing programs to support adolescent girls. Near the end of 2015, upon seeing their success in this Lead Partner role, Firelight knew that ADEPE had the ability to take on even more responsibility and expand their expertise in girls-centered programming to even more CBOs. Firelight asked ADEPE to select a cluster of five community-based organizations who were either already engaging with or showed great promise to engage with girls in their communities.

While each of the five selected CBO partners had actually been working on girls' issues in their community, none had received any *formal* training in girls-centered programming. In early 2016, ADEPE held a training for the group using the Population Council toolkit on girls' programming. The training focused on why to invest in adolescent girls, beneficiary selection, key components of programming for adolescent girls, and monitoring and evaluation.

Program design focused on an assets-based model that aimed to build girls' financial, physical, personal, and social "assets." This model provided a framework for implementing multiple activities that responded to the many challenges and risk factors that affect girls – for instance, focusing not just on avoiding unplanned pregnancy but *also* on helping girls re-enroll in school and earn an income. In this way, not only could risk behaviors be actively avoided, but girls would also be able to build up their personal "assets" to produce positive outcomes for themselves, their families, their children, and their communities.

A selection of techniques CBOs used to build girls' assets in each of these domains is shown in the figure below. It is important to note that girls' ability to increase their physical assets was typically addressed through improvements in their financial and personal assets through increases in their ability to earn an income through skills or direct economic inputs. Summaries of our CBO grantee-

⁹ Note: these are four different CBOs than the ones supported in the most recent phase of funding from 2016 to 2018: Association Ubumwe Saint Kizito, Special Education Center of Janja, Association Inkoramutima za Kristo, and Commission Chrétienne de Lutte contre le SIDA.

partners' program models are detailed in a prior section.



Figure 5. CBOs used a variety of techniques to build up girls' financial, physical, personal, and social assets.

ADEPE conducted ongoing refresher trainings in girls-centered programming throughout the duration of the funding period, taking advantage of site visits and quarterly meetings in order to do so. The six partners used the training and ongoing learnings to strengthen their programs, with many establishing savings groups for girls as a result of the training in improving girls' financial assets. For instance, recruitment of girls was more rapid in the second year, primarily because partners had closer collaboration with the district Ministry officials who were key players in the selection of beneficiaries. To ensure that the right girls were targeted, home visits were carried out as part of the verification process. This helped to reduce the dropout rate of the girls from the program. CBOs also more actively involved their communities in the implementation of the program, engaging them further in the beneficiary identification and monitoring processes. For instance, Inyenyeri Star created a committee of parents who periodically followed up with the girls in the program and advised the CBO of any issues or areas of concern. This helped to ensure that the girls did not improperly use the business start-up grant funds that they received.

In addition, the Firelight Program Officer made frequent visits to partners to monitor their programs and provide technical assistance. For example, during one support visit at a quarterly meeting, the Program Officer advised the partners to more actively involve girls' families, so as to ensure the support and sustainability of the program. As a result, Inyenyeri Star invested in coordinating income-generating activities for the families whose girls are attending school, so as to create a pathway for the families to take over payment after the funding period ends. The Program Officer had also advised that girls form vocational cooperatives in order to ensure mutual group benefit of the program. For instance, while Ineza Kabaya used to give one sewing machine per girl in the vocational program (with not enough machines for the girls), they began to bring the girls together to share the machines and to create a supportive environment for one another. Over the course of the initiative, after receiving nine months of training on tailoring and knitting, 28 girls were brought together in two cooperatives to sell their products and earn money to purchase basic necessities for themselves, their children, and their families.

How did outcomes change for adolescent girls?

Our greatest achievements have been the changes that the girls and those around them have seen in their lives. Thanks to their mentors and their peers, who they met in safe spaces in their communities, the girls now have a network of support that has helped them regain their self-confidence and recognize that they have the power to change their lives for the better. Many of the girls now have a skill set that contributes to their livelihoods and enables them to earn an income to look after themselves and their children. Girls are making informed choices because of the information provided to them on sexual and reproductive health. Some of the girls who were at risk of or had dropped out of school have returned to formal schooling, and are looking forward to completing their studies and earning professional qualifications.

In 2016 and 2017, Firelight conducted a girls' empowerment survey and corresponding focus group discussions to understand the status of girls with regards to the personal, social, financial, and physical assets in their lives, and their sense of empowerment and wellbeing. The data gathered at the start of the initiative were intended to inform program design and implementation, as well as serve as a baseline for where girls are at prior to participating intensely in programming provided by the CBO. However, the Year 1 survey¹⁰ ended up being conducted about four months after programming had begun (in May 2016); thus, it does not serve as a true baseline. However, it does give an indication of where girls were generally at near the start of the initiative. The Year 2 survey was conducted in July 2017, about one year after the first survey, with the same cohort of girls surveyed in Year 1. This survey was not conducted for the second cohort of girls enrolled in the program in 2017. Unfortunately, due to resource constraints, we were unable to conduct a formal survey of girls' progress in 2018.

The survey showed incredible evidence that this program has made impactful, deep changes in the lives of the participating girls. According to survey and focus group discussion results, significant changes were observed in participation in savings groups, employment-related activities, household items, community support, personal money, personal items, number of meals per day, and business ownership. In addition, CBOs provided additional qualitative evidence of impact on girls. These changes – and many more – are detailed below.

Financial assets

All CBOs prioritized the increase in girls' financial assets, often because girls in their communities did not have marketable skills or a steady source of income. In the past, this had led them to become involved in transactional sexual activities and intergenerational relationships in order to raise income to look after themselves and their children. All six grantee partners worked with the girls to encourage them to recognize that they have the ability to generate income on their own. The outcomes of these activities are detailed below:

¹⁰ Interestingly, the survey was translated into Kinyarwanda and administered using mobile technology. The translated survey was uploaded into mobile data collection application, Magpi, for use on mobile phones. Skip logic was built into the mobile version to exclude unnecessary questions based on the participants' responses (for example, if the participant responded that she did not have children, then the follow-up question asking about the number of children would be skipped). On the Magpi app, questions are displayed one at a time on the screen. Once the respondent answers the question, she swiped right to continue to the next question. Respondents can swipe left at any time to return to a previous question and a summary of all responses are provided at the end of the survey for the respondent's review. Each survey can be submitted once it is completed; however, if internet access is not available at the time of survey completion, responses can be stored on the devices and uploaded once internet becomes available. Tecno mobile phones, which are commonly used in East Africa, were prepared with the Magpi app for data collection.

- **Savings groups:** There was significant change in the number of participants who indicated they were a member of a savings group, with 45.3% for Year 1 and 68.4% for Year 2. In addition, there was a significant change in the number of girls who indicated that they knew how to save and use their money well, with 65.2% in Year 1 and 87.0% in Year 2.
- **Employment-related activities:** Statistically significant differences were found among the number of girls employed in different kinds of employment activities. For agricultural, wage/in-kind employment, and non-farm business employment-related activities there was an increase from Year 1 to Year 2 (up 5%, 27.9%, and 20.2%, respectively). Although there was not a statistically significant change from Year 1 to Year 2 for apprenticeships/internships, there was still an increase in Year 2 (7.2%).
- **Personal money:** A survey was conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant change in the number of participants who indicated they owned their own money. The result was statistically significant with 18.4% ($n = 16$) in Year 1 vs 41.4% ($n = 36$) in Year 2. Additional analyses were conducted to explore whether there is statistically significant change in the number of participants who indicated their money came from a specific source (for example, from mother, father, boyfriend, etc.). "My own work" was the only option for which there was a statistically significant difference ($p = .000$) with 13.5% ($n = 5$) in Year 1 and 59.5% ($n = 22$) in Year 2.
- **Business ownership:** Due to CBO grantee-partners' contribution to girls in the form of business start-up loans, there was a noticeable increase in the number of participants who indicated they owned a business jointly, a very slight increase in those who own a business alone and a decrease in those who did not own a business. In Year 2, 1 more girl owned a business alone than in Year 1, while 11 more girls jointly owned businesses in Year 2 than in Year 1. In Year 2, only 65 girls stated that they did not own businesses, compared to 77 girls in Year 1. Businesses started by girls included livestock rearing, tailoring, hairdressing, handicrafts, and/or small scale stores.
- **Business cooperatives or associations:** Girls were asked to indicate whether they were a member of a co-operative or association ($n = 100$). There was a statistically significant difference with 69.0% ($n = 69$) in Year 1 vs 91.0% ($n = 91$) in Year 2. A similar analysis was also conducted for those in Year 1 or Year 2 who indicated that the co-operative or association was their main source of income ($n = 56$). A statistically significant difference ($p = .029$) was also found with 66.1% ($n = 37$) in Year 1 vs 87.5% ($n = 49$) in Year 2.

Physical assets

As a consequence of girls' increased financial assets, they were better able to provide physical, material assets for themselves and their families.

- **Household items:** Over the course of the program, girls' households increased their ownership of household items. 11 more households owned land, 13 more owned a building/house, 29 more owned livestock, 3 more owned bicycles, 13 more owned radio/CD player/iPod, 11 more owned sewing machines, and 11 more households owned televisions.
- **Personal items:** A series of tests were conducted to determine if there was a statistically significant change in items owned alone or jointly by girls. The results show a statistically significant difference for the following: 9 more girls owned land, 20 more girls owned livestock, 14 more girls owned at least two sets of clothes, and 7 more girls owned sewing machines.
- **Number of meals per day:** There was a shift in the response to the number of meals per day where in Year 2 no participant indicated they did not have at least one proper meal per day. Also, there was a decrease in the number of participants at Year 2 who indicated they had one meal per day (from 83% in Year 1 to 65% in Year 2) and an increase in the number

indicating they had two meals per day. Unlike Year 1, a few indicated they had three or more than 3 meals per day.

Personal assets

All six organizations ensured that the girls they worked with were well-educated, more skilled, and had more self-confidence to advocate for themselves and the changes they wanted to see in their communities.

- **Access to health information services:** All of our CBO grantee-partners supported girls to learn about sexual and reproductive health issues, often partnering with local health facilities to provide information on sexual and reproductive health and access to HIV testing to the girls. 71.3% of the girls who participated in the Girls Survey noted that their access to health services had increased because of the program and 67.3% reported increased knowledge in the area of personal health.
- **Formal schooling:** While many girls had dropped out of school due to unwanted or early pregnancy, they were eager for the opportunity to go back to school and complete their formal education. Throughout the program, more than 115 girls were supported to re-enroll in formal education (including 58 from Inyenyeri Star and 14 from Ineza Kabaya). One girl, who completed her formal secondary education with support from CBO grantee-partner Inyenyeri is now even in her first year of university, studying management. As she notes:

“I thank you for your sponsorship which enabled me to continue my studies and to overcome loneliness. My response to that kindness is to be a good person so that I give a good testimony to all who rejected me. They will learn that even in any strange and difficult situation, we can say yes to life, we can remain self-confident. I cannot forget in any case the situation where you took me from! I will use all my energy in order to be helpful to my children even to my mother so that those who were cursing me may see that there is nothing impossible before God. I did well national ixam and I got a very good mark that allowed me to go to university.”

- **Specialized education for girls living with disabilities:** CBO grantee-partner Ineza Kabaya worked with girls with disabilities who were socially excluded and had limited interaction with the outside world. Through the program, they were integrated into mainstream society: 20 of these girls were enrolled in special schools, where they were taught basic literacy and sign language. Three of these girls are also now studying Education at Mount Kenya University, and Ineza Kabaya reports that the girls are performing well. In addition, 12 girls with intellectual disabilities, who previously were unable to care for themselves, have regained their autonomy (now able to feed, wash, and dress themselves).
- **Vocational training and skills:** A primary focus of CBOs' programs was improving vocational training for girls and their ability to earn an income to meet their needs and those of their children. From Year 1 to Year 2, there was an increase in the percentage of girls who reported having the skills to earn an income, with 55.7% in Year 1 and 77.3% in Year 2. In terms of training, 148 girls received vocational training in tailoring, hairdressing, and food processing; and 104 girls received training on entrepreneurship and business management, as well as startup grants for projects of their choice. Many of these girls no longer rely on handouts for survival, which is, in itself, dignifying and increasing their sense of self-worth. During focus group discussions, one teenage mother working with CBO grantee-partner Young Women Destination said, *“We don't beg from people anymore. We don't get hurt whilst crossing the border to do sex work because now we have stability in what we do, we are making good money in our communities in a respectable way.”*
- **Self-confidence:** From Year 1 to Year 2, there was an increase in the percentage of girls who reported being able to speak up for themselves if somebody was not treating them well

or speaking to them unkindly, with 77.8% in Year 1 and 90.0% in Year 2. In addition, 71.3% of girls reported increased self-confidence as a result of the program. The social assets that the girls now possess have enabled them to gain confidence in themselves and their abilities. One of the girls working with CBO grantee partner Inyenyeri is now the Head Girl at her school. She had dropped out of school due to pregnancy and gave birth to twins. Despite what she has gone through in life, she now has confidence in herself and is determined to finish school and get a formal education so that she can be able to look after her children and mother.

- **More positive feelings about themselves and their lives:** Girls were asked to report about their general feelings towards themselves and their lives. Fewer girls reported negative feelings towards themselves:
 - Fewer were inclined to feel like a failure in Year 2 (9.3%) than in Year 1 (20.6%)
 - Fewer reported to feel useless at times in Year 2 (17.0%) than in Year 1 (31.9%) and
 - Fewer reported to think they were no good at all in Year 2 (20.4%) than in Year 1 (36.3%)
- Similarly, more girls reported positive feelings towards themselves:
 - More were happy about the relationship they had with their friends in Year 2 (98.0%) than Year 1 (88.8%) and
 - More were happy about their earnings/income in Year 2 (31.2%) than in Year 1 (21.5%).

Social assets

Our CBO grantee-partners prioritized social assets as the entry point to the girls accessing other forms of support. The girls in the program came from challenging backgrounds – often characterized by staggering poverty and sociocultural practices that resulted in low self-esteem and a lack of hope for the future.

- **Community mentorship:** Focus groups were carried out as part of Firelight's Girls Survey, and participants indicated that the girls see their weekly mentorship and peer meetings as the area of greatest value in the program. Of the 185 girls who took part in the Girls Survey, 88.6% of girls indicated that they met with their mentors on a weekly basis. The change in the percentage of participants who indicated they had someone in their community, not a family member, who they can turn to for advice (e.g., a mentor) on family or work-related matters was statistically significant ($p = .003$) – with 79.8% ($n = 79$) at Year 1 and 93.0% ($n = 93$) at Year 2.
- **Community support:** In terms of support received from the community, there was a significant increase in the number of girls who stated they received a variety of types of support in Year 2 compared to Year 1: 35 more girls stated that there was someone outside of their family they could borrow money from in case of an emergency, 21 more girls stated that they have someone outside of their family to stay with if they have a problem, 24 more girls stated that there is someone in the community outside of their family who would assist them in case someone was harassing or bothering them, 28 more girls stated that they have someone they can turn to in the community for legal support if they have a problem, and 3 more girls stated that there is someone in the community they can turn to for health advice (including reproductive matters). CBO grantee-partners reported that communities testified that girls who had previously engaged in sex work have gone from being socially ostracized to being role models in the community.
- **Peer support:** All the partners arranged regular meetings for the girls, who have noted this as one area of support that has benefitted them immensely. During the focus group discussions, girls shared how having a space to meet with other girls who have been through similar challenges has strengthened them psychologically. Girls report that they now have

hope for the future, in spite of the difficult circumstances they face. One girl who was tested positive for HIV through the program noted the following:

“I’m HIV positive, and before joining this program I was hopeless. I felt like I would die anytime as a result of stigma. Every person ignored me and I hated living with people who were HIV negative. It’s only after I joined Ineza that I regained my hope once again and I started living again. I have hope for the future. I live peacefully with my neighbors and I’m no longer a burden on anyone.”

- **Inclusion for girls living with disabilities:** This inclusive peer support was especially impactful for girls living with disabilities, as breaking social stigma and exclusion is key to securing the girls’ rights. One girl living with a disability and working with CBO grantee-partner Ineza noted:

“Before I was recruited for this program, I was always at home locked up in a room. I did not know that there were other girls with disabilities out there. When I came to Ineza and met with other girls who embraced me, I felt complete. Everyone was eager to learn sign language so they could communicate with me. I have made many friends and I look forward to all our meetings.”

What is the future of the initiative?

From this initiative, we have learned that CBOs, even with limited resources and scope, community-based organizations are able to make real, long-lasting impact on vulnerable adolescent girls in their communities. However, because the girls chosen for the program were the most vulnerable in their communities, they had multifaceted, complicated needs that required more support and intervention than CBOs were equipped to provide, even with considerable capacity building provided by Firelight, the Lead Partner, and external experts. In addition, given the relatively short funding period, limited resources, and intense need for girls programming in many Rwandan communities, many CBOs created initial lists of hundreds of girls who qualified for the program – then tasked with reducing this number to 68 total girls over three years.

However, because of CBOs’ grounding in and deep understanding of their communities, they were better able to navigate these requirements. For instance, Ineza Kabaya resolved this issue by asking all of the girls who qualified for the program to prioritize among themselves who should benefit from the program first. While Ineza did not originally conceptualize focusing primarily on girls living with disabilities, girls themselves made this a priority. Also, because girls were chosen in two cohorts, they have not received the same duration of support, and in the future, CBOs noted that it would be better to recruit all girls within the first year of the initiative so there is more time to support them, and so that outcomes are more manageable to evaluate over time.

In addition, many girls were supported with start-up capital and livestock, but because it often takes years for businesses to fully launch and become profitable and/or for livestock to grow and produce offspring, CBOs noted that the impact measured from the project was largely underestimated in the long-term. However, because Firelight and the Lead Partner invested in helping CBOs build their monitoring and evaluation skills, they have the ability to track girls over time – though with the end of funding, this might prove to be challenging. In addition, because CBOs such as ADEPE often used a repayment scheme in their start-up loans, these funds can continue to be used to give more loans to other girls in the community – yet this depends on the ability of girls to continue to pay back these loans and the success of their businesses.

The same challenge applies to girls who have been supported to enroll in school. For girls who have been enrolled in secondary school, they have been able to complete up to three years of schooling.

As thirteen of the girls in the program will complete their secondary school by 2020, it is important to ensure that have the opportunities to continue their education. However, with the ending of funding, many girls will likely have no option to continue until their last year, and/or to move on to a university education. In order to address this issue, grantee-partners are using small grants in 2019 to allow a small number of girls to continue on to university. Yet there is a real need to strengthen linkages with other government and private sector support systems to ensure that the girls who are still at lower levels are able to complete school and proceed to tertiary and university level education. Some organizations, such as Inyenyeri Star, are already working with the Rwandan Gender Monitoring Office to see if they can provide girls with the loans they need to enroll in university – as student loans are usually difficult for these girls to obtain on their own.

Led by Lead Partner ADEPE, our CBO grantee-partners are starting to more actively engage in advocacy and lobbying efforts to encourage the national government, Gender Monitoring Office, National Children’s Council, local/district authorities, and private foundations (such as the Girl Effect and the Imbutu Foundation, run by the First Lady of Rwanda) to support the girls’ programs, especially to sponsor low-income girls to continue their studies at the university level.