**The Centre for Girls Education**

**Educating Girls in the Classroom and Beyond**

**Overview of Programs**

**Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI)**

**Focus:** To facilitate the transition from Primary 6 to Junior Secondary 1

**Donor:** UNFPA and the Canadian Government

**Number of Girls:** 30,000 in Bauchi, Gombe, and Sokoto States by the end of the year

AGI is an afterschool educational enrichment program that improves girls’ core academic performance and provide opportunities for them to build trusting relationships and acquire critical life skills not currently offered in secondary education. It is designed to support girls as they progress from primary to junior secondary school and from junior secondary to senior secondary—critical times for school withdrawal and marriage.

Our 2007 baseline survey found that more than a quarter of the girls in collaborating communities dropped out during the final years of primary school, compared to just 5% of the boys. Of those girls graduating from primary school, only a quarter went on to junior secondary. During the ethnographic component of the baseline research, many parents said they see menarche as a sign of readiness for marriage. When asked about secondary school, parents consistently responded that it was an acceptable alternative to early marriage, and expressed an interest in keeping daughters in school if offered modest help.

However, many parents also insisted that, given the poor quality of government schools, it is not worth the investment and opportunity costs to send their daughters to school. “My first daughter graduated from primary school and can’t read a word. I won’t send my second daughter,” said one mother. It is a sentiment that came up often in the CGE in-depth interviews, exploratory ethnographic research and community meetings. When asked what it would take under these circumstances to permit girls to transition from primary to secondary school, parent after parent said, “an opportunity for our daughters to learn to read, write, and do basic math.”

The core components of AGI are designed to address these parental concerns. The mentored girls’ clubs (safe spaces) are led by female teachers from the girls’ own schools.

**Transitions: Bridge schooling and vocational education**

**Focus:** Bridge schooling and vocational training for out-of-school girls (Ages 12-14)

**Donor:** The MacArthur Foundation and the Malala Fund

**Number of Girls:** 443

Out-of-school girls—girls who have never attended school or who have dropped out after just a few years of schooling—are often the most vulnerable girls in a community. They often marry at a younger age, suffer from higher rates maternal mortality, and spend more time selling goods for their mothers outside the home and thus are more at risk for sexual harassment and abuse. The absence of viable alternatives to early marriage for these girls makes it difficult for them and their families to envision a different life path.

*Program Objectives*. The objectives of the program are to delay marriage and thus increase the time available for the participants to: 1) gain the basic academic skills needed to gain admission to a formal government school; and/or 2) greatly enhance livelihoods related skills.

*Core Components*. The core components of the out-of-school pilot project address concerns and suggestions offered by the girls and their parents during the research described above. Given the dominant and pervasive position that early marriage has in the lives of the people in the rural north, interventions meant to enhance the viability of alternatives must provide clear and tangible benefits that are valued by parents and daughters. We have designed this capacity building to attract some of the protective status against early marriage provided to girls by formal education. The participants in the program have been given hijabs resembling those worn by schoolgirls and their safe space clubs and learning spaces meet at least 3 mornings or afternoons per week.

1. Basic literacy and numeracy

2. Financial literacy and concrete business skills

3. Life Skills

4. Savings groups (adashe)

5. Vocational Training

6. Livelihoods Training and Apprenticeships—During the second year of the program the girls are placed in apprenticeships with local business women, female tailors, women raising livestock, and other livelihoods mentors.

**Girls Campaign for Quality Education**

**Donor:** Malala Fund

**Administrative Home:** CGE

**Number of Girls:** 120

*Objectives.*

- To train 120 girls to organize and mobilize an advocacy campaign for education

- To increase government commitment (especially from the Governor of Kaduna) to eliminate senior secondary school fees and improve the teaching of reading and writing in the early years of primary school in Kaduna State

*Core components.* The training and mentoring of 3 cohorts of 40 cascading mentors each as they conduct a direct advocacy and media campaign for the elimination of senior secondary school fees and the improvement of literacy instruction in government primary schools in Kaduna. (Cascading mentors are girls who have completed the CGE program and have graduated from secondary school, and who are now being trained to lead safe spaces themselves.)

The training offers six 2-day workshops for each cohort in which they gain advocacy, radio production, media, and leadership skills. They then apply these skills by planning and implementing the Girls Campaign for Quality Education.

The workshops include instruction in advocacy planning, shaping public debate through strategic framing, creating news that reaches decision makers, and targeting audiences with new communication tools. The workshops emphasize interactive approaches to learning, including skills rehearsal, open discussion, role-play, and small group activities. The Berkeley Media Studies Group (BMSG) has provided technical support and helped us adapt its “Communicating for Change” curriculum to prepare the adolescent girl leaders to strategically engage media and key policymakers.

The cascading mentors then put the skills they learn into practice by leading the Girls for Quality Education media and advocacy campaign in Kaduna State using radio, newspapers, blogs, and meetings with key local and state-level stakeholders (especially the governor) as they work to improve educational access and quality for girls. Our advocacy targets are the Governor of Kaduna State, the Commissioner of Education, State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), and the Zonal Education Directors.

*Achievements so far:*

* A strengthened base of support among opinion leaders and CSOs for the improvement of the teaching of reading and writing in the early years of primary school.
* Elimination of girls school fees—Governor El Rufai eliminated school fees for all girls up to the completion of Senior Secondary School. While the Girls Campaign for Quality Education cannot claim credit for this important step forward, the girls participating in the campaign were a vocal part of the larger coalition supporting the Governor.
* The 120 girls leading the campaign have dramatically increased their capacity to engage in advocacy and policy change
* Production of radio spots, drama, and talk shows
* Publication of newspaper articles on the key themes of the girls campaign

**Girls for Health (G4H)**

**Focus:** To facilitate the transition from Senior Secondary to Schools of Midwifery, Medicine and Nursing, and Pharmacy

**Donor:** The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

**Administrative Home:** Federal University Birnin Kebbi

**Number of Girls:** 1800

**Implementing organizations:**  CGE, Kaduna State (25% of girls), POTHE, Jigawa, State (25% of Girls), Nana Women and Girls Empowerment Initiative Sokoto, State (25% of girls) Nana Women and Girls Empowerment Initiative Kebbi State (25% of girls)

**Contact Hours with Girls:** 500/year for two years

Girls for Health (G4H) promotes the economic empowerment, agency, and voice of rural adolescent girls by supporting their transition from secondary school to tertiary training in midwifery, medicine, nursing and other health careers, and in so doing, is addressing the acute shortage of female health workers in rural Northern Nigeria. G4H integrates proven girls’ education strategies with innovative vocational interventions to build 1800 girls’ career aspirations and academic achievement and significantly increase the number of rural girls entering health-training institutions in four northern states. The program includes: 1) a bridge program offering accelerated academic instruction in science, math and English; 2) vocational counseling and practicums at local health facilities; 3) safe spaces to enhance critical life skills; 4) four month science immersion courses for girls accepted for admission to a health training institution; and 5) HTI capacity building to cultivate a rural female-friendly learning environment. G4H works towards sustainability from the start by using existing secondary school and health infrastructure, and feeding into government rural health worker employment schemes.

# **Pathways to Choice: Delaying Age of Marriage through**

# **Education and Vocational Training for Out-Of-School Girls in Northern Nigeria**

**Number of Girls:** 600

**Administrative Home:** CGE

**Implementation partners:** Isa Wali Empowerment Initiative, Kano State (33% of girls), Hallmark Initiative, Borno State (33% of girls)

**Donor: Ford Foundation**

**Number of Safe spaces/Mentors:** 30

**Contact Hours with Girls:** 760/year

**Objectives:**

1. Enhance the agency and transition rates to formal education of 600 out-of-school girls aged 12-16 in the northern Nigeria states of Kaduna, Kano and Borno or Adamawa through accelerated literacy, numeracy and life skills training
2. Increase economic autonomy (productive employment and increased earnings) of a self-selected subset of these girls through training in vocational skills, job placements (apprenticeships) relevant to their communities and micro-enterprise support;
3. Contribute to the body of evidence on the role of education and vocational training in preventing child marriage in northern Nigeria and use of this evidence by governmental stakeholders in their efforts to mainstream gender in state education, health, and youth development policies and programs
4. Increase community support for girls' education, work, and delayed marriage and first childbearing through advocacy and community engagement.

# The first 9 months of the Pathways to Choice program focuses on accelerated learning implemented in safe spaces (for life skills) and learning spaces (for literacy, numeracy, financial literacy and business and vocational skills). At the end of the first 9 months, those girls who are interested and able to enter/re-enter government schooling are offered additional year of academic support and life skills in their safe space and learning spaces. Those girls who do not enroll in school after the first 9 months are offered intensive vocational training and apprenticeships in repairing gas run generators or electronics (especially phones), animal husbandry, micro businesses, and other livelihoods.

Both the safe spaces and learning spaces employ activity-based pedagogic methods, with the mentors determining the speed at which they present the curriculum based on their continuous assessment of students. The curriculum and non-formal nature of the learning spaces greatly facilitates the student-centered teaching methods, including problem solving, role-playing, singing, games, and other active approaches. The students spend a significant amount of time working in small groups. Parental and community engagement and collaboration with Local Education Authorities and the headmasters are also key components of the program.

In addition to overseeing the program, CGE serves as the Learning Hub for the project and is responsible for training, monitoring and evaluation, and facilitating a collective learning process with consortium partners, program beneficiaries, state and local government and the Ford Foundation to reflect on program successes and challenges and to adapt implementation design and strategies accordingly.

***Ci Gaba*** (Moving Ahead)

The most marginalized girls in a northern Nigerian community rarely enrol in school. If they do, they face stigma due to their families’ extreme poverty. The Ci Gaba pilot program provides preschool spaces for 147 girls in early childhood development circles in their own communities. The curriculum is based on the Montessori method. We have found that the Montessori method is ideal for girls facing the challenges these young girls are encountering. The method uses mixed age learning circles, is to encourage discovery as students learn concepts from working with materials made out of natural, aesthetic materials such as wood made in Nigeria rather than by direct instruction

CGE’s *Transitions* and *Pathways* programs help out-of-school girls between the ages of 10 to 14 gain the basic academic skills needed to transition to government school. However, by that age acquisition of basic academic skills such as literacy and numeracy are more difficult, and it is more of a challenge to then place the girls in an age-appropriate class.

*Objectives.* Our overall goal is to dramatically improve school enrolment, retention, and graduation rates of the poorest and most vulnerable rural girls in northern Nigeria.

Our specific objectives are to:

1) enhance cognitive, fine motor and socio-emotional skills, and levels of school readiness of the most vulnerable girls (ages 3-5) in rural communities;

2) increase their primary school enrolment rates; and demonstrate the efficacy of this model of low-cost early childhood development.

We aim to have at least 90% of the participating girls enrol in primary school at the end of the year. We have found in our programs for primary and secondary school girls that when parents see tangible evidence of learning and growth in their daughters, they are more willing to pay education-related expenses and let their daughters proceed further in their studies.

*Staffed by former CGE participants.* 15 of CGE’s former graduates—who began with us at the age of 12 and who have now advanced to the Federal Teachers’ College—serve as the pre-kindergarten mentors in their communities. Griselda Kondo, who is a Montessori teacher with 20 year’s experience, has volunteered her time in extended visits to Nigeria to train introduced the team to the Montessori methods.

The findings from our monitoring and evaluation of the pre-kindergarten program will provide rapid feedback for the timely adaptation and refinement of the program components.

**Hilin Mu**—Our Space

**Focus:** To facilitate the transition from Primary 6 to Junior Secondary 1

**Implementation partners:** OASIS Niger and Venture Strategies for Health and Development

**Donor:** Venture Strategies for Health and Development

**Number of girls:** 200

The Centre for Girls Education—in partnership with the OASIS Niger and Venture Strategies for Health and Development—focuses on the transition from primary to junior secondary school as it is a critical time for school withdrawal and early marriage. The program has adapted CGE’s curricula to the challenges rural girls face in rural southern Niger. Hilin Mu recruits girls in the last year of a primary school and organize safe spaces for them over the next two years.

The overall goal of Hilin Mu is to promote the delay of marriage, nurture the agency and voice of rural adolescent girls, and help them realize their fundamental human and reproductive rights. Hilin Mu is located in rural Maradi Province just a few hours across the border from CGE. Hilin Mu serves adolescent girls in in Hausa communities with the same language and culture as those served by CGE.