

Formative Evaluation Summary 2021-2023



Girl Rising Education Programs Pakistan, Kenya, India



2021–2023 Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Summary

US-based non-profit organization **Girl Rising uses the power of storytelling to change the way the world values girls and their education**. Now delivering programs in six countries, Girl Rising creates media content and educational curricula which helps young people address gender norms and build life skills so that girls can learn, thrive, and rise. The Girl Rising curriculum includes appealing, real-life stories, engaging multi-media films, and creative, learner-centered activities. In 2021, Girl Rising partnered with Miske Witt & Associates International (MWAI), with funding from Echidna Giving, to develop a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Framework to measure the outcomes of its adolescent-focused educational programming across different geographical contexts. A description of the evaluation and key findings are detailed in the sections below.

Description of the evaluation

From 2021 to 2023, Girl Rising and MWAI co-created a MEL Framework to measure whether and how participation in the Girl Rising curriculum changes the lives of students and teachers. The MEL Framework was designed to measure the student and teacher outcomes defined in Table 1.

Table 1: Student and teacher outcomes of the Girl Rising MEL Framework

Student outcomes – After participating in the Girl Rising curriculum, students . . .
. . . gain confidence as well as believe in their abilities (positive sense of self) to articulate their aspirations and interests or needs (voice);
. . . can identify their rights and their personal support system to help them achieve their goals, and they are able to take action in the face of resistance (agency); and,
. . . have knowledge of gender concepts and believe that girls or women and boys or men have equal rights; and they should be treated in ways that enable them to exercise their rights and opportunities equally (gender-equitable and gender-responsive attitudes).
Student Education Outcome – Survival Rate: Survival rate is the percentage of a cohort of students who were enrolled in school in a given school year (Year 1) and who were also enrolled in school the subsequent year (Year 2), regardless of repetition.
Teacher outcomes – After implementing the Girl Rising curriculum, teachers . . .
. . . believe in their ability and are able to take practical actions to equip students to (i) identify voice; (ii) pursue their personal strengths, aspirations, and rights; and (iii) develop gender-equitable beliefs. Teachers feel confident about incorporating their learning from the Girl Rising program into their teaching beyond the Girl Rising curriculum (self-efficacy).
. . . have confidence in addressing gender bias and discrimination within the classroom, and they promote the equal participation of all students (gender-responsive teaching approaches);
. . . have knowledge of gender concepts and believe that girls or women and boys or men have equal rights; and they should be treated in ways that enable them to exercise their rights and opportunities equally (gender-equitable and gender-responsive attitudes).

In 2022, Girl Rising added Parent and Guardian Engagement Sessions to complement the curriculum as a way to further create an enabling environment for adolescents. The MEL Framework was thus adapted to measure the outcomes for parents and guardians defined in Table 2.

Table 2: Parent and guardian outcomes of the Girl Rising MEL Framework

Parent outcomes – After participating in the Girl Rising Parent Engagement Sessions, parents . . .
. . . believe that both girls and boys should have an equal right to education;
. . . know specific strategies to support the dreams and aspirations of their children despite difficult circumstances;
. . . use strategies to support their children’s education and foster their dreams and goals; and,
. . . know basic gender concepts.

The MEL Framework was designed to measure these outcomes and explore how participation in Girl Rising helped move girls, boys, and the adults close to them along the roadmap to change (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Girl Rising Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Roadmap for Change



To measure the roadmap for change and the outcomes for students, teachers, and parents or guardians, Girl Rising collected data before and after the curriculum was taught. Using a mixed-methods design, the MEL Framework allows Girl Rising to look at changes over time in student and teacher outcomes, as well as to explore how and why their approach was effective. Through surveys, focus group discussions, interviews, and narrative methods the data showed how and why the Girl Rising curriculum helped participating students, teachers, and parents or guardians to deepen their gender-equitable beliefs and to increase their support for girls’ and boys’ education. In addition, mixed methods also highlighted teachers’ improved self-efficacy and gender-responsive teaching approaches, and the ways in which all participating adults supported adolescents to further develop their voice and agency (see Table 3).

Table 3: Key components of the MEL data collection

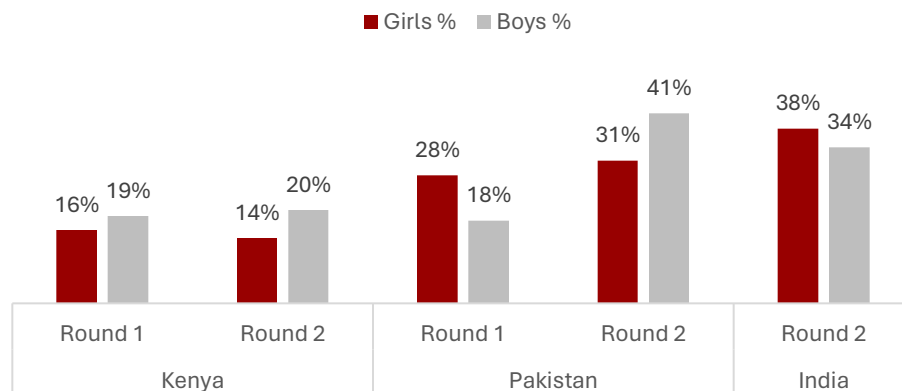
Participant	When to collect	Quantitative methods	Qualitative methods
Students	Before the program (baseline)	Student survey	
	Throughout the program	Girl Rising attendance	
	End of the program (endline)	Student survey	Student focus group discussions
	Following school year after Girl Rising program participation	Education status via survey	
Teachers	Before the program (baseline)	Teacher survey	
	After teacher training (post-training)	Teacher survey	
	End of the program (endline)	Teacher survey	Teacher interviews
Parents	At each parent engagement session	Parent demographics	Parent engagement session observations and transcripts
	End of the program (endline)		Parent focus group discussions

This report presents an overarching summary of the findings from the first and second round of data collected for the MEL Framework, implemented from 2021–2023, based on data from the sample size of 1,109 female and 794 male students, 123 teachers, and 650 parents and guardians, who participated in the Girl Rising program evaluations in Kenya, India, and Pakistan.ⁱ The initial implementation of the MEL Framework took many unexpected turns as schools, communities, and countries emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic. Originally intended to include three rounds of implementation in Pakistan, Kenya, and India, the delayed and interrupted school calendars and uncertain working environments limited the rollout of the MEL Framework to two rounds in Pakistan and Kenya, and to one round in India. Further, student attendance and engagement during this time period was often shifting when families from these vulnerable communities moved to pursue better economic opportunities. As the COVID-19 disruptions began to ease, Girl Rising’s partner organizations and their students faced other challenges from election disruptions and extreme climate events. Despite these challenges, the teachers, partner staff, and Girl Rising staff worked tirelessly to reach adolescents and to influence change in girls’ education. Analysis from the two rounds of data collection on the curriculum and MEL Framework highlight the following key findings:

Finding: Girl Rising reached vulnerable youth at risk of dropping out of school.

From 2021 to 2023, Girl Rising partnered with local civil society organizations in Kenya, India, and Pakistan to engage youth at risk of dropping out of school. Girl Rising specifically targeted adolescents from marginalized backgrounds, since they are the most likely to face multiple barriers to schooling and achieving their dreams. In this evaluation, it was found that Girl Rising succeeded in attracting vulnerable adolescents to their programs in all three countries, as many Girl Rising students felt pressure to leave school on different occasions (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Percentage of Girl Rising girls and boys at endline who agreed or strongly agreed that they had felt pressure to leave school*



*There was no statistically significant difference between girls and boys for any country at endline in Round 1 or Round 2.

Girls, boys, teachers, and parents in all three countries described challenges to school for girls and boys, including cost and distance to school. They also acknowledged that girls faced additional pressures, such as a lack of support for girls' education, lack of girls' schools, and/or coercion to marry early or help at home and care for others. Boys faced additional pressures to work for money to help their families; and they experienced corporal punishment at school, which discouraged them from attending.

Yes, people do say don't educate a girl in comparison to boys since she doesn't even have to go out.
(Female parent or caregiver, Pakistan)

Girls are lagging behind in terms of education, but this is not because they do not have the potential. It is because the society does not give them opportunities.
(Parent or caregiver, India)

Finding: Girl Rising films and curricula were engaging and relevant to different contexts.

77% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that because they participated in the Girl Rising program, they changed their classroom interactions to help both girls and boys stay in school.

Overall, parents, teachers, and girl and boy students appreciated the Girl Rising program. Nearly all (over 90%) students in the Pakistan and Kenya focus groups named the films, activities, or lessons they learned as something about Girl Rising that they valued or liked. All interviewed teachers in all three countries appreciated the Girl Rising program for the engaging films and found the stories relevant and relatable, although a few (15%) wanted stories from their own contexts. All (100%) of the parents and guardians who participated in focus group discussions also felt that the films were memorable. Parents in each country reported that the parent engagement sessions were an important opportunity to focus on their children and to see how caregivers in the films supported their daughters. Teachers also reported that the training and curriculum guides were highly supportive, though some teachers expressed a need for ongoing support during implementation.

We liked it all because we got to learn new things and it was interesting. We learnt that we should not give up even if we initially fail, and we should dream. We should try to win. We should help others and encourage them too. (Girl student, Pakistan)

Finding: Girl Rising reinforced and helped girls, boys, parents, and teachers understand the importance of education, particularly for *girls*.

82%

At the end of the Girl Rising program, **82% or more** of surveyed girls and boys, and female and male teachers, strongly agreed that they believed education *should* be a right for all girls and boys (77% had agreed at baseline).

Survey data showed that a newfound belief in the importance of girls' education was a shift for some students, as there was a significant¹ increase in the percentage of girls and boys from all countries who *disagreed or disagreed strongly* that educating boys is more important than educating girls. Girl Rising

Students disagreed or disagreed strongly that “Educating boys is more important than educating girls”
(Significant change over time)

Pakistan Girls (Round 1)	38% → 59%
Pakistan Boys (Round 1)	14% → 71%
Kenya Girls (Round 2)	90% → 96%
Kenya Boys (Round 2)	72% → 81%
India Girls (Round 2)	41% → 67%
India Boys (Round 2)	33% → 63%

¹ In this report, “significant” means that findings were statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. Only comparisons (e.g., change over time, or comparing girls to boys) that were statistically significant are included in this report.

programming also highlighted new ways for girls and boys to think about *why* girls' education is important, and it also helped change some students' beliefs about the *value* of girls' education. Parents also described how participating in Girl Rising helped them **believe that girls' education was more important now** than they had previously thought.

While all teachers, in principle, initially believed in the importance of education for girls, more than 80% of interviewed teachers credited Girl Rising with sensitizing them to the gendered challenges that girls face when compared to boys with respect to pursuing education. Furthermore, the program motivated the teachers to speak to parents, and to collaborate with them to help girls continue schooling (e.g., speaking to school principals and/or NGOs for financial support). The remaining 20%, while continuing to believe in the importance of girls' education, also believed that boys from these communities face unique challenges in pursuing education, and their needs should not be ignored.

I used to think that boys were the best in education and even that boys are the best when it comes to co-curricular activities. Now I think that both of them can do better, both in education and in co-curricular activities. I think that we should not consider boys more than girls or girls more than boys. (Girl student, Kenya)

I used to think, what will girls do by studying? I believed that boys are smarter than girls. Now I think that education is essential for everyone; and girls can fulfill their dreams by studying. (Boy student, India)

Changes in beliefs about girls' education

I used to think that to educate a girl, is a waste of time. That was my belief, from the word, from the start, and now I think that all girls and boys are equal in our society. Education belongs to both boys and girls, to uplift them to their dreams. I have learnt a lot and the Girl Rising program has opened up my mind. (Male teacher, Kenya)

Let me tell you, before [the parent engagement sessions] we never had any interest about our children's education. After 2nd grade, we used to ask our daughters to stay at home. Now after having three sessions here, I think that I should allow my daughters to get an education till 10th grade. (Male parent, Pakistan)

Finding: Girls and boys further developed voice and agency in Girl Rising, as students created new goals, identified support networks, and demonstrated increased perseverance.

Girl Rising programming helped girls and boys develop voice and agency in a variety of ways. For instance, some girls credited Girl Rising programming with helping them identify and articulate *new* goals. Pakistani girls articulated their aspirations to be doctors or lawyers, to learn how to drive, to travel for Umrah (a pilgrimage to Mecca), or to build a *madrassa*, thus diverging from more traditional gendered roles and careers. Girls in Kenya shared their aspirations about becoming doctors, judges, engineers, pilots, and veterinarians.

Students strongly agreed that “I know how to set goals for my dreams”

(Significant increase over time)

India Girls (Round 2) 50% → 72%
 India Boys (Round 2) 56% → 69%
 Pakistan Girls (Round 2) 58% → 62%

(Significant decrease over time)

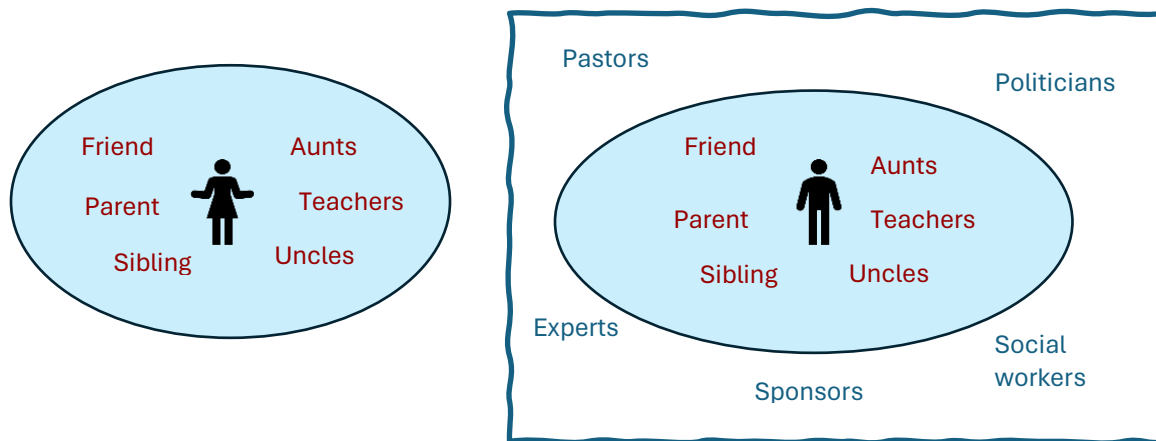
Pakistan Boys (Round 1) 84% → 61%

Girls in Pakistan (Round 2), and girls and boys in India, reported significantly greater agreement over time that they knew how to set goals for their dreams after participating in the program (yet the percentage of boys in Pakistan significantly decreased, possibly suggesting that boys may have expanded their dreams for their future, but felt less certain about the pathways).

In addition to creating new goals, students also described how they identified support networks in Girl Rising. For instance, after participating in the Girl Rising program, most students recognized their mothers, fathers, family, and teachers as members of their

support network to help them achieve their dreams and education. *“I didn’t think that my parents would be able to help and support me. However, ever since the Girl Rising program, I think that I can depend on my parents.”* (Girl student, Pakistan) Both boys and girls credited Girl Rising with helping them to identify people who could help them achieve their goals. In Kenya, while most girls named people who were in close social proximity to them (i.e., parents, teachers, aunts or uncles, siblings, or friends), boys mentioned those in their families but also frequently talked about people beyond their immediate social networks (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Kenya girls’ and boys’ social supports



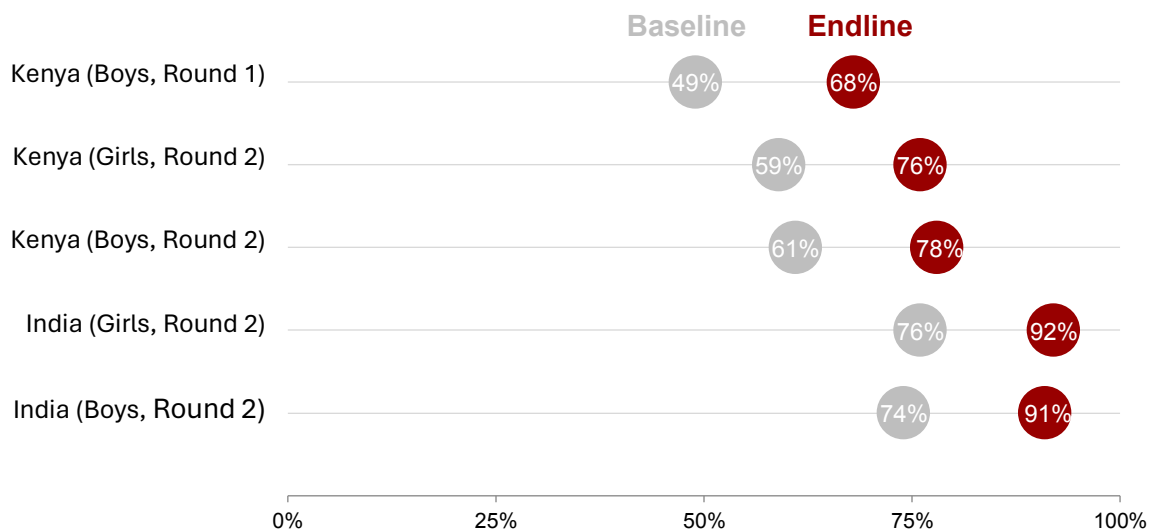
Teachers encouraged students to share their problems with parents and teachers (as members of their support network) so that they could intervene on students’ behalf to support students’ rights. In addition, girls and boys in Kenya and in India (Round 2) were significantly more likely to agree strongly over time that they could name three people to whom they could go for advice to help them achieve their goals. Yet in Round 1, girls and boys in Kenya were significantly *less likely* to agree over time, suggesting that some students may not have fully known how to draw on supports over time as they worked toward their goals.

Students strongly agreed that “I can name three people I can ask for advice to help me achieve my goals”

(Significant increase over time)		(Significant decrease over time)	
Kenya Girls (Round 2)	64% → 83%	Kenya Girls (Round 1)	73% → 56%
Kenya Boys (Round 2)	71% → 78%	Kenya Boys (Round 1)	77% → 59%
India Girls (Round 2)	58% → 72%		
India Boys (Round 2)	54% → 75%		

Surveyed girls and boys in Kenya and India also had significantly *greater* agreement at endline (compared to baseline) that they had **shared a goal with a classmate** (see Figure 4), suggesting that Girl Rising programming was an opportunity to draw on peers for support.

Figure 4: Statistically significant increase from baseline to endline in student agreement with the statement “I have shared one of my goals with a classmate,” by gender



Teachers also reported helping students develop voice and agency. After facilitating the Girl Rising program, **83% or more** of surveyed teachers in Kenya, Pakistan, and India reported that they helped girls and boys in their classes develop their voice and pursue their personal strengths and aspirations most of the time.

We encourage the students to stand up for themselves and fight for what they want and deserve. Sometimes it would mean going against their parents and defying them, but despite all, they must get their education. (Female teacher, India)

I told my students that if there is something that is bothering them, they should speak up and tell their parents. This is their right. If their parents think that they are being reasonable, they will respond positively. I also told them that if their parents don't do so, they should not give up and talk to them again and again. I told my students that if they want to study further, it is their right and they should speak up. (Female teacher, Pakistan)

**Students strongly agreeing that
“When I try something and it
doesn’t work, I try again”
(Significant increase over time)**

India Girls (Round 2)	62% → 80%
India Boys (Round 2)	68% → 79%
Pakistan Boys (Round 2)	75% → 100%

In addition to identifying support networks, students demonstrated increased perseverance. For instance, girls and boys in India, and boys in Pakistan (Round 2), reported statistically significant greater perseverance over time. After participating in Girl Rising, **79% or more** strongly agreed that when they try something and it doesn’t work, then they try again. *“Girl Rising helped me to be courageous and never to give up, even if I face many challenges.” (Girl student, Kenya)*

Finding: Gender-equitable beliefs strengthened from baseline to endline, but some inequitable gender beliefs persisted, showing that this work must continue.

Parents, teachers, girls, and boys recognized that gendered social norms existed and persisted in their communities to varying degrees. *“Where I was brought up . . . we separated between the work of women and of men. . . but as you grow up, we come to realize that we are supposed to do all these things.” (Male parent, Kenya)*

I used to think . . . that girls were not supposed to go to school because they didn't have value to our community. Now I think . . . that girls are good assets; and if you educate the girls, you have educated the whole community in a given area. All girls are valued, and they should be supported and educated to bring change in the community. (Male teacher, Kenya)

In Round 2 of data collection, girls and boys in Kenya and India significantly increased their beliefs that **girls can be leaders at school**. Yet in both countries, girls also held significantly stronger beliefs about this than boys. In addition, girls in Kenya were significantly more likely than boys to agree with the statement “girls can dream about pursuing any profession.” More work is needed with some boys concerning their beliefs about girls’ abilities.

While data showed that some beliefs related to girls’ abilities and opportunities became more equitable, other inequitable beliefs persisted. For instance, when asked about the importance of education, a common theme among boys in Pakistan was the belief that *girls* needed education to *support their fathers, future husbands, or future families*, but they (Pakistani boys) needed education

to fulfill their dreams. In addition, prior to Girl Rising,

over 70% of girls and boys from all three countries agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “To be a man, you need to be tough.” While the percentage of students who strongly disagreed with this statement significantly increased over time for many young people, over 40% of girls and boys from all countries still agreed or strongly agreed with this statement after Girl Rising participation. Changing gender beliefs takes time, and prolonged engagement with communities will be needed to effect consistent changes.

Students strongly agreeing to “I believe that girls can be leaders at school”

(Significant increase over time)

Kenya Girls (Round 2)	79% → 92%
Kenya Boys (Round 2)	51% → 73%
India Girls (Round 2)	60% → 84%
India Boys (Round 2)	39% → 78%

Students strongly disagreeing with the statement “To be a man, you need to be tough”

(Significant increase over time)

Kenya Boys (Round 1)	7% → 18%
Pakistan Girls (Round 1)	10% → 27%
Kenya Girls (Round 2)	17% → 22%
Kenya Boys (Round 2)	11% → 22%
India Girls (Round 2)	4% → 29%
India Boys (Round 2)	5% → 20%
Pakistan Girls (Round 2)	23% → 38%

Finding: Parent and guardian engagement contributed to closer relationships among caregivers, girls, and teachers.

Students, particularly girls, and several teachers reported that their communication with parents and guardians increased after the Girl Rising parent engagement sessions. A key emphasis in these sessions was parents’ and guardians’ knowledge and use of strategies to support their children’s education, goals, and dreams. Post-program analysis of parent and guardian focus group discussions and observation data from parent engagement sessions indicate that in Pakistan and Kenya, girls and parents and guardians reported having more conversations about girls’ dreams and aspirations. Findings on the strategies caregivers use to support their children showed the following:



In Pakistan, parents described strategies such as giving their children verbal encouragement, providing school supplies, or checking homework; and some reported putting these strategies into practice.



In Kenya, parents reported an increase in their use of strategies such as visiting school, talking with their children, and providing various forms of homework support. They reported learning in the parent engagement sessions how to interact more constructively with their children.



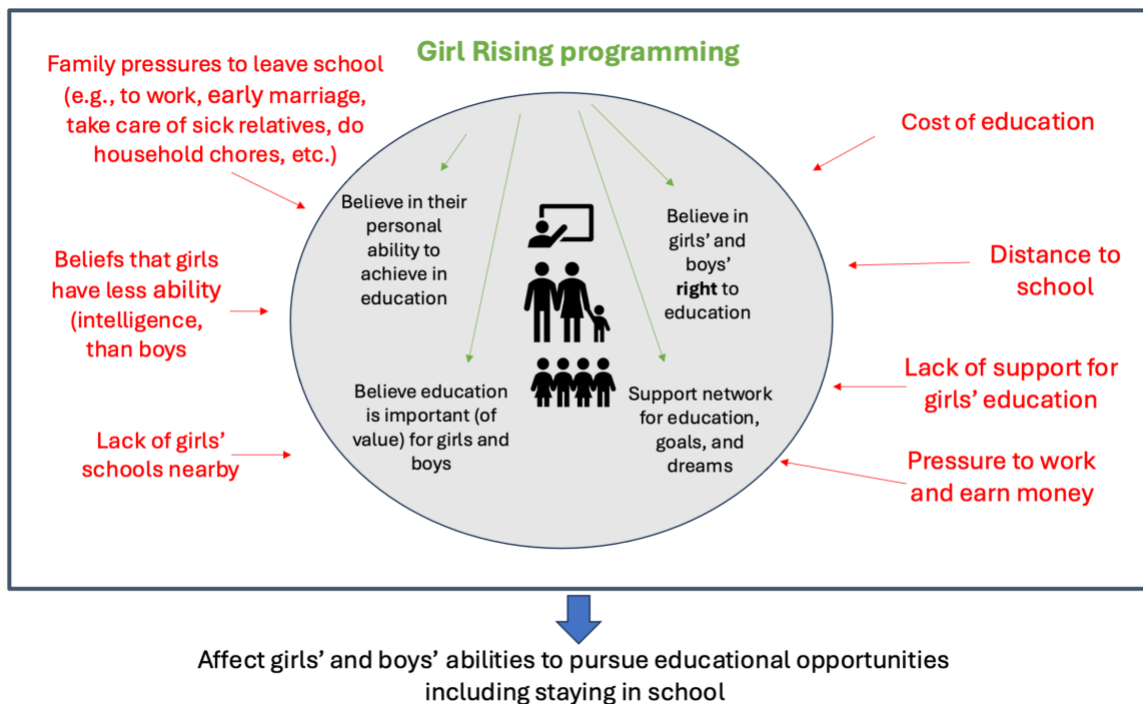
In India, parents' awareness and use of support strategies were limited. Parents felt that their daughters and sons could pursue the same careers and dreams, but they did not feel comfortable talking with their children about their dreams and education.

Finding: Continued work and MEL are needed.

This evaluation has shown that Girl Rising is reaching girls and boys who are at risk of dropping out of school. Girl Rising programming helped girls, boys, parents, and teachers understand the importance of education, particularly for girls. Girls and boys were able to further develop voice and agency while participating in Girl Rising; and gender-equitable beliefs became stronger over the course of the program. Yet, some inequitable gender beliefs persisted, such as beliefs related to girls' leadership abilities and boys' beliefs about the nature of masculinity. Parent and guardian participation in Girl Rising helped them to develop closer relationships with their adolescent children and their teachers. Girl Rising prompted teachers and adolescents to think about girls and boys equally, enabling them to rethink many of the restrictive gender norms that girls face especially around pursuing their dreams and aspirations. However, stakeholders occasionally justified certain gender norms based on biological differences, such as physical strength, or on socialization, such as girls' superior skills in domestic chores. This suggests that they conflated the right to equal opportunity with equal ability. These are complex ideas for participants to internalize in the duration of the Girl Rising program. More work over time is needed to deepen stakeholders' gender-equitable beliefs.

While gender-inequitable beliefs and attitudes are important program components, these data also showed that other factors were central in girls' and boys' lives and affected their abilities to continue education and fulfill their dreams. As the data above show, for many young people Girl Rising was one positive influence supporting their education. However, for some, the competing pressures on girls and boys working *against* education were also great. Figure 5 demonstrates Girl Rising's areas of influence in the complex environment in which schooling takes place.

Figure 5: Factors affecting girls' and boys' abilities to pursue educational opportunities, including staying in school



Thus, while girls, boys, teachers, and families described how Girl Rising programming helped change their beliefs and attitudes, continued work is needed to reinforce this progress and to ensure behavior change.

Future considerations from this evaluation include the following:

1. Drawing out the **storyline of boys as allies** in films may help boys and men feel included in the program, and it may help them reimagine meanings of masculinity and what equitable gender relations can look like.
2. Girl Rising has the potential to create a safe space for girls, boys, teachers, and parents to **reflect on power relations** in the family, school, and community. Gender often intersects with other characteristics, such as location, poverty, religion, and caste, to create unequal educational circumstances and challenges for girls and boys. Expanding and reinforcing Girl Rising programming, with its unique storytelling approach, is one way to help reach the *most* marginalized, and to create more equitable opportunities for girls and boys.
3. Girl Rising has the opportunity to add **“booster doses” of the training or other continuous professional development for facilitators**, in order to to reinforce concepts such as equity and equality and to create spaces for continuous reflection and learning.
4. Girl Rising has the potential to use its curriculum and approach in **partnership with other NGOs and civil society organizations** whose mission is to support education for all. For example, in partnership with other groups that are building girls' schools, giving cash transfers, and/or working to change discriminatory norms, Girl Rising can work even more effectively to combat the rising pressures that are competing to keep girls away from education.

5. **Mixed-methods data collection, analysis, and interpretation is necessary** to learn the extent to which girls, boys, parents, and teachers are *changing* their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, and to learn why changes are or are not occurring. Continuing to use the MEL Framework will help Girl Rising understand the ways in which the organization is achieving its mission and vision, and whether or how Girl Rising needs to adapt its programming to be more effective.

This three-year pilot of the MEL Framework has shown that **Girl Rising has helped girls, boys, teachers, and parents and guardians change their beliefs and attitudes, and some behaviors, related to education in important ways**. These newfound or strengthened gender-equitable beliefs and this increased commitment to schooling are the foundation needed to support girls’ and boys’ education in the long term. Girl Rising also successfully worked to strengthen relations among teachers, girls, boys, and families in order to support girls’ and boys’ education. Continuing to use the MEL Framework alongside its programming will help Girl Rising understand more deeply which aspects of the program have the most impact in different contexts, and what other factors influence girls’ and boys’ abilities to succeed in schooling and achieve their dreams. The combination of using storytelling as a programming tool to spark movement towards gender-equitable beliefs, and as an MEL strategy to elicit participants’ reflections on these beliefs, illustrated powerfully the complexity of social change. In so doing, it highlighted the gains as well as the continued work that still needs to be done so that all girls can learn, thrive, and ris

ⁱ In 2021–2022 (Round 1) and in 2022–2023 (Round 2) Girl Rising participants—girls and boys, teachers, and parents and caregivers—completed pre-program and post-program surveys; and they participated in post-program focus group discussions and interviews to explore whether and how participation in the Girl Rising programming changed attitudes and beliefs related to girls’ education in order ultimately to help girls and boys persist in school. Table 4 provides details on the number of participants in the evaluation sample by gender, round, country, and type of participant.

Table 4: Student, teacher, and parent or guardian sample by round, country, and gender (2021–2023)

Round	Country	Students		Teachers		Parents or Guardians		Sub-total
		# of girls	# of boys	# of females	# of males	# of females	# of males	
Round 1	Kenya	102	100	13	7			222
Round 1	Pakistan	61	51	16	10			138
Round 2	Kenya	143	119	5	5	61	10	343
Round 2	India	230	229	24	29	248	141	901
Round 2	Pakistan	76	29	13	1	117	63	299
Sub-total		612	528	71	52	426	214	1903

*Note: The parent component was added in the second year

More detailed descriptions of the measures and/or tools, sample, analyses conducted, and findings can be found in the Girl Rising Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework Round 1 and Round 2 reports.

GIRLRISING

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