

Winter, 2024

# Multi-Family Healing Spaces Benishangul- Gumuz



## Project Summary

# Project Highlights

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## Target Group

**Girls aged 15-25, their families and teachers**

## Location

**Benishangul-Gumuz**

## Purpose

**Empowering girls & families via evidence-based and contextually sensitive mental health and psychological support interventions**

## Duration

**January 2024 and December 2025**

## Partners

**Implemented by CUSO International, Interpeace and SeeD, funded by the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada**

# Context and Rationale

Cuso International is undertaking a project in Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, Ethiopia, aimed at enhancing university access for up to 1,000 economically disadvantaged or special needs schoolgirls and their families in Assosa and Bambasi. Employing a holistic, multi-sectoral approach, the project seeks to eliminate barriers to girls' education in Benishangul-Gumuz. Its objectives include fostering community and familial support for girls' enrollment in formal education, enhancing academic performance, leadership skills, and autonomy among girls, and improving governance and delivery of gender-equitable education at regional, zonal, and woreda levels.

Several challenges must be addressed to achieve these objectives, including reduced educational aspirations among girls and their families, entrenched social stereotypes and stigma, cultural expectations for adolescent girls to contribute to household livelihoods or caregiving, insufficient individuation leading to deficient self-motivation, and learning difficulties due to cognitive deficits. Additionally, the quality of schools and teaching can demotivate students, while conflict in Western Ethiopia exacerbates barriers to education by causing mental health issues and distracting adolescents from their studies.

Recognizing the need for cross-sectoral strategies, Cuso International's U-GIRLS 2 program aims to address familial, communal, cognitive/educational, and institutional risk factors to remove barriers to girls' education. The program includes impactful activities such as teacher training for providing psychosocial support to conflict-exposed students, life skills training for adolescents, and tutorial classes for struggling students. However, these efforts primarily focus on the school setting and may not adequately address family or community-based obstacles to education.

To optimize intervention effectiveness, additional empirical research is recommended to inform interventions at various levels, including individual, teacher, school, family, and community, thus ensuring a comprehensive response to the diverse challenges impeding girls' education in Benishangul-Gumuz.

# Project Objectives

The successful implementation of Multi-Family Healing Spaces (MFHS) projects under the U-GIRLS 2 programme will achieve the following three main objectives:

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①

Conduct **Conflict Analysis and Qualitative Research** with the targeted population group in Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State to empirically **identify barriers to girls' education**, in ways that can inform further programming.

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②

Design and implement **family- and community-based approaches**, utilising the versatile framework of multifamily healing spaces, to strengthen girls' commitment while **removing overt or hidden barriers** to education.

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③

**Empower** girls, parents and teachers in Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State and **foster resilience** on individual, family and community levels while fostering life skills among participants, facilitators and volunteers.

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# Main Deliverables



## DELIVERABLE 1

Participatory Research & Calibration

Setting up the coordination team

1st mission to Ethiopia & Qualitative research preparation

Qualitative research material development

Multi-stakeholder meetings & workshops



## DELIVERABLE 2

Design of Protocols & RMEL Framework

Deliberative process on the MFHS adaptation

Design of MFHS intervention protocols including screening manual & RMEL framework

Recruitment of facilitators & building the facilitator roster

Translation of protocols

Training of Trainers on MFHS intervention



## DELIVERABLE 3

Implementation of Protocols and Research, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (RMEL) Framework



DELIVERABLE 3.1.  
Pilot Testing Protocols

Pilot testing the intervention operationally, content wise and technically

Preparation of Randomised Control Trial tools & materials

Impact assessment of the pilot based on the RMEL framework

Revision of the intervention protocols based on the pilot



DELIVERABLE 3.2.  
Full Implementation

Implementation of the protocols with 100 groups

Baseline data collection & data analysis

Evidence review & interpretation

Endline data collection & data analysis

Qualitative phase to distill story telling & process of change

Evidence review & interpretation



DELIVERABLE 4  
Visibility & Dissemination

General Visibility (leaflets, comms, social media, banners etc.)

Documentary

Scholarly Manuscript

Policy Brief

Project "wrap up & next steps" including participatory stakeholder engagement

# Main Activities

## Deliverable 1



Under **Deliverable 1 Participatory Research & Calibration**, activities will be organised in three stages:

1.1. A Conflict Analysis would be conducted to understand and unpack educational challenges, mental health and psych-social traumas, conflicts and security threats, conflict prone areas, and precaution measures

1.2. Qualitative research based on interviews and focus groups with the participation of at least 30 girls and at least 20 adults that are supporting them (e.g., parents, educators, social workers) would be designed and implemented to complement the Conflict Analysis.

1.3. The research insights will be discussed with programme and community stakeholders, to inform all U-GIRLS 2 activities and broader local policies to support girls' education. More specifically, the results will be utilized as inputs for the design and contextualisation of the multifamily healing spaces.

# Main Activities

## Deliverable 2



**Deliverable 2 Design of Protocols & Research, Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Framework (RMEL)**, draws from successful practices in Rwanda, and calibrates it to the specific context of BGR to address specific barriers to girls' education that were identified during the research stage. The activities under this objective include:

2.1. Design and calibration of the MFHS, complete with a RMEL, and its validation with local experts and key stakeholders

2.2. Translation of the protocols and RMEL framework into local languages for transfer of know-how.

2.3. Training of trainers (ToT) with. facilitators, counsellors and volunteers covering counselling basics, family dynamics, gender sensitization, trauma awareness, and protocol specifics.



# Main Activities

## Deliverable 3

Under **Deliverable 3 Implementation of Protocols and RMEL Framework**, activities are broken down into two stages, the pilot stage and full implementation stage:

### 3.1. Pilot testing the MFHS Protocols

3.1a. Piloting the intervention operationally, content-wise, and technically with 10 to 15 families

3.1b. Preparation of Randomised Control Trial (RCT) tools and materials for the RMEL framework

3.1c. Impact assessment of the pilot and fine-tuning of the protocols before full scale implementation

3.1d. Pilot feedback loop to the facilitators, counselors, and volunteers via a ToT lessons and insights session.

### 3.2. Full scale implementation

3.2a. Implementing 16 MFHS sessions to 100 groups made up of 4-7 families each over an 8 month period via various formats, like separate parents' and youth groups, individual family discussions, and inter-generational dialogues, will target specific obstacles.

3.2b. Conducting base-line and end-line assessments based on the RMEL framework and RCT tools.

3.2c. Evidence review, reflection and interpretation sessions with experts and key stakeholders after base-line and after end-line analysis to draw lessons for scale-up, policy and programme recommendations as well as analytical and scholarly publications.

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# Main Activities

## Deliverable 4

Last but not least, Deliverable 4 is about products that would enhance the visibility, dissemination and hence support, uptake and impact of the project. This deliverable would be made up of various activities from producing and disseminating content via leaflets, brief reports, social media and stakeholder engagements.

# Timeline

## Project Start

January 2024  
- March 2024

### 1. CALIBRATION (MONTH 1-3)

Inception & Kick off meeting  
Conflict analysis and qualitative research  
Evidence review & interpretation  
Multi-stakeholder meetings & Workshops  
In country Mission 1 for Kick off



April- June 2024

### 2. DESIGN (MONTH 4-6)

MFHS adaptation and deliberation  
Design of MFHS Intervention protocol with screening manual & RMEL framework  
Recruitment of facilitators



July 2024 -  
January 2025

### 3. TRAINING (MONTH 7-13)

Protocol translation  
Training of Trainers (ToT) on MFHS pre-pilot  
Training of Trainers (ToT) on MFHS post-pilot  
In country Mission 2 for ToT



August - December  
2024

### 4. TESTING & PILOTING (MONTH 8-12)

Intervention pilot testing  
RCT tools & materials prep  
Pilot impact assessment via RMEL framework  
Intervention protocol revision post-pilot (incl. translations)



December 2024 -  
August 2025

### 5. FULL IMPLEMENTATION (MONTH 12-20)

Protocol implementation with 100 groups  
Baseline data collection & data analysis  
Evidence review & interpretation  
Endline data collection & data analysis  
Qualitative phase for storytelling & process of change  
Evidence review & interpretation



January 2024 -  
September 2025

### 6. COMPLETION & DISSEMINATION (MONTH 0-21)

Visibility (leaflets, social media, banners etc.)  
Project wrap-up & next steps  
Scholarly manuscript & policy briefs



## Project End