

BLENDDED LEARNING, THE WAY TO GO...



By

Annah Tusiime

For over 6 years of implementing the Girls' Education Challenge Project (GEC), Children at Risk Action Network (CRANE)'s Creative Learning Centres have been and continue to help schools and communities develop their capacity to use creative approaches and digital technologies to support learning of critically vulnerable children.

CRANE runs 15 creative learning centres set up in 15 local communities. 2 of these 15 centres are specifically supporting children living with Special Education Needs (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZdE-iaUfu8M&list=PLkmjQBKkMBOjRm1i_lFx10TDWFWllBB4Y&index=12).

At the inception of the GEC project in 2013, CRANE appointed over 30 Mentors who live in these local communities whose major role was the targeted recruitment of girls considered likely to fail in education. Our Creative Learning Centres (CLCs) approach provides targeted high-quality teaching that helps girls to go into or continue in school.

Over the past 6 years, CRANE through this approach has helped

9890 girls get back into school. A good number of these girls have graduated out of school and are now in formal employment.

<http://blog.viva.org/2021/05/21/samanthas-story/>

The years 2020 and 2021 were heavily defined by the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. This led to global social and economic disruption, worldwide lockdowns and in addition an economic recession in most countries. The lockdowns left schools in Uganda closed for several months. Many children countrywide were not able to continue learning because they had no access to education resources or people to offer them the support they needed.

However, children in communities where CRANE works have a different story to tell. After Ugandan schools closed due to coronavirus pandemic, it was unclear how and when in-person learning could happen safely. CRANE with support from its network partners opened learning hubs across communities to offer in-person and safe spaces for small groups of children to continue learning during lockdown.

Our teachers who are trained to deal with a diverse and ever-changing world were able to navigate a distance learning model together with the CLC model to offer support to learners bringing the number of girls reached to 9908. The increase in number follows several months of lockdown as many children were stuck at home. We saw many learners embrace the use of technology.

The location of project staff, particularly the Mentors and Learning Support Teachers (LST), in these local communities where GEC Girls were based made it possible to respond to school closures and lockdown restrictions with a range of activities that allowed some form of contact with the Girls to continue.

Our CLC model works really well and as proof CRANE recently sampled 1,098 out of 9908 Girls and their Primary Care Givers

to assess the progress the girls are making in school. The girls and their caregivers were interviewed separately using a household survey. The Household Survey was based on the same surveys carried out at Baseline and Midline 1 two years ago. Most of the Girls also carried out short learning assessments in Numeracy and Literacy.

When the caregivers were asked what the most useful intervention had been for the GEC Girls during lockdown, meeting a teacher was the most popular response with a big majority (over 50% of all responses mentioned meeting a teacher).

Also, recent findings show that the project through this model has been very effective since Midline 1 despite the difficulties imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost of all (96%) Girls who were in both the Midline 1 and Midline 2 surveys have increased their scores in Learning.

And as schools begin to reopen this year, our teachers will continue to provide support for the deep academic and emotional needs of the children who are returning to school after the coronavirus threw their lives into disarray.

CRANE thanks all its partners working tirelessly to support and keep critically vulnerable girls motivated to keep on learning.