GIRLS Inspire is a partnership between the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and community organisations in Bangladesh, India, Mozambique, Pakistan and Tanzania to address the barriers keeping girls and women from full participation in society.

Girls are a critical agent for social change and global development. Closing the gender gap during adolescence in education, economic activity and health will significantly increase national economic growth and well-being. But barriers such as child, early and forced marriage (CEFM), distance to school, security concerns, cultural values and the costs of schooling all prevent girls and women from participating in educational opportunities.

GIRLS Inspire’s three-year project, funded by the Government of Canada, focuses upon preventing CEFM in Tanzania through open, distance and technology-based education. Ending CEFM is crucial to Tanzania achieving eight of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In partnership with the Institute of Adult Education (IAE) and Kiota Women’s Health and Development (KIWOHEDE), the GIRLS Inspire project is being implemented in three regions where the prevalence of child marriage is 40–51%.


A baseline study determined that 66% of participants did not know of an institution in or near their community that offered open, distance and technology-based education to girls. In an effort to begin addressing this gap, the IAE and KIWOHEDE are working directly with communities to shift perspectives on CEFM and girls’ education, paving the way for the IAE to reintegrate women and girls into education through open and distance learning. At least 360 women and girls have registered for schooling and skills training.
RAISING AWARENESS AND MOBILISING COMMUNITIES

Thirty-six workshops and other events have addressed CEFM and the importance of girls’ education. So far, these have reached at least 500 key stakeholders, including government officials, community leaders and elders.

LAYING FOUNDATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

Fifty-two staff have been trained in technology integration, multimedia development, monitoring and evaluation, children protection policies and CEFM issues. In addition, a support group called Community Champions for Change has been trained to build sustainability at the grassroots level.

The IAE and KIWOHEDE each developed an organisational gender policy, as well as gender-sensitive learning materials, which had not existed prior to the GIRLS Inspire project. Beyond their own organisations, they engaged in 12 consultative meetings with national, regional and local stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, UNESCO and the Prime Minister’s Office – Local Government Authority. Recent press coverage indicates the project has gained attention amongst key stakeholders.

BUILDING ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

The IAE and KIWOHEDE have established new social media presences through the use of multimedia on Twitter and Instagram. They have also used capacity-building exercises to train staff in multimedia development and topics such as child protection and the reunification of vulnerable children.

Three advocacy videos were developed and are in use. In addition, ceremonies and celebrations were held in Bunju, Dar es Salaam and Shinyanga on International Day of the Girl Child (2016) and in Dar es Salaam on International Women’s Day (2017).