



Photo: EMPOWER participants from Chimtende Hub, Katete District (Winrock International)

EMPOWER Case Study

UNDERSTANDING VARIATION IN REAL COURSE ATTENDANCE
AND ACHIEVEMENT

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Vulnerable Women in Zambia

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

EDC	EMPOWER District Coordinator
EMPOWER	Increasing Economic and Social Empowerment for Adolescent Girls and Vulnerable Women in Zambia
HCL	Hazardous Child Labor
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
OTC	Outcome Indicator
OTP	Output Indicator
Panos	Panos Institute of Southern Africa
REAL	Rural Entrepreneurship and Leadership Course
RLC	Radio Listening Club
RWEN	Rural Entrepreneurship Network
TPR	Technical Progress Report
USDOL	United States Department of Labor

Introduction

While the Government of Zambia has taken steps to address the prevalence of child labor, it remains a persistent issue in Zambia. As shown by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL) 2018 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor report, children in Zambia are engaged in the worst forms of child labor, with 91.8 percent of working children ages 5-14 working in the agricultural sector.¹ Within Zambia, Eastern Province is a place of particular concern, as 55 percent of children worked in employment there in 2008, as compared with only 16 percent of children in Lusaka.² Recent research carried out as part of a baseline and prevalence survey in the province under the USDOL-funded Increasing Economic and Social Empowerment for Adolescent Girls and Vulnerable Women in Zambia (EMPOWER) project reinforces the notion that it is a region of particular concern. Findings from the 2017 survey indicate that within certain districts, caregivers report that 65 percent of children aged 5 to 17 are engaged in child labor. Furthermore, 91 percent of children in the province aged 10 to 17 self-report being engaged in child labor, with 90 percent of that number involved in hazardous child labor (HCL).³

In response to the continued need for actions to combat child labor in its worst forms, the Government of Zambia, as well as domestic and international organizations, have implemented a variety of measures to pass child labor legislation, improve enforcement of existing laws, and introduce social programs that address child labor and its root causes. Recent examples of such initiatives include the incorporation of anti-child labor text in the 2018 Mosi-oa-Tunya Declaration on Artisanal and Small-scale Mining, Quarrying and Development; the Zambia National Service Skills Training Camps; and the World Bank-funded Girls' Education and Women's Empowerment and Livelihood Project.⁴ The Government of Zambia has also developed a National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labor (2018-2022) that is scheduled to be launched soon, once it is officially approved.⁵

As part of this effort to combat child labor in Zambia, Winrock International, with funding from USDOL, is implementing the EMPOWER project, which began in November 2016 and is scheduled to end in October 2020. Through EMPOWER, Winrock and its partner organization the Panos Institute of Southern Africa (Panos), have implemented activities to address the prevalence of child labor in seven of Eastern Province's nine districts (see Figure 1: EMPOWER intervention areas) as defined by the project's four targeted outcomes of providing:

1. adolescent girls engaged in or at high risk of entering child labor with increased access to acceptable work and high-quality training opportunities;
2. vulnerable women, whose households have children engaged in or at high risk of entering child labor, with increased access to livelihood opportunities;

¹ United States Department of Labor. 2018. 2018 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Zambia., 1.

² Understanding Children's Work. 2012. Towards Ending Child Labour in Zambia: An Assessment of Resource Requirements: Inter-Agency Country Report., 7.

³ Winrock International. 2018. Baseline and Prevalence Survey of Working Children and Child Labourers in Chadiza, Chipata, Katete, Lundazi and Petauke Districts. Prepared by Winrock for USDOL. Zambia

⁴ United States Department of Labor. 2018. 2018 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Zambia.

⁵ United States Department of Labor. 2018. 2018 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Zambia.

3. public awareness on child labor and gender equality increased;
4. collaboration between government, private sector and civil society on the promotion of acceptable work for adolescent girls and vulnerable women strengthened.

Figure 1. EMPOWER intervention areas

Source: IMPAQ International



Progress towards the project's four outcomes has been measured against targets set for the number of participants reached by the project's various activities, as well as other benchmarks of achievement. Relevant targets include:

- 2,500 girls ages 15-17 who are engaged in or at risk of child labor provided with education or vocational training services
- 1,500 women from households with children vulnerable to child labor have access to increased livelihood opportunities
- increased understanding of acceptable work and the importance of gender equality among 950 male adults from the households of participant girls or women
- increased understanding of acceptable work and the importance of gender equality in 20 community hubs
- 40 public, private, and civil society stakeholder coordination bodies established and/or strengthened with EMPOWER's support

To achieve these results, the EMPOWER project has implemented a number of activities, including:

- Offering the Rural Entrepreneurship and Leadership Course (REAL) to adolescent girls, women, and men. The year-long REAL course consists of a six-month training program of applied learning, technical training, and business start-up support divided into a life skills course, technical course, and entrepreneurship course and followed by six months of ongoing mentorship for participant girls and women, in addition to involvement in business groups.
- Increasing community awareness and mobilization through partnerships with local radio stations and discussions at Town Hall meetings, including the training of community radio stations, developing and broadcasting radio programs related to issues of child labor and gender equality, and promoting the formation and operation of Radio Listening Clubs (RLCs) to support community dialogue and debate around project themes.
- Promoting public-private partnerships, which involves collaboration with government, private organizations, workers' groups, media, and civil society organizations to strengthen collaboration on addressing child labor and gender equality through signing memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and forming mentorship programs that will support the Rural Entrepreneurship Network (RWEN).

Despite efforts to achieve the aforementioned targets, the project has encountered several challenges that have hindered progress toward these outputs. As reported in the April 2020 Technical Progress Report (TPR), as of the last period of data collection, the project had enrolled 1,740 of the target 2,500 adolescent girls in life skills training and 1,087 girls in technical/vocational training and entrepreneurship training, of which 878 and 583 completed the courses, respectively. Similarly, 1,216 of the target 1,500 women enrolled in the life skills courses and 938 enrolled in technical/vocational and entrepreneurship training, with 715 and 493 of these respective groups completing. Finally, of the 433 men enrolled in REAL life skills training, only 213 completed, as compared to the target number of 950 men.⁶

While follow-up with participants, as conducted by EMPOWER District Coordinators (EDCs), indicated that participants were learning valuable skills from the REAL courses—such as improved literacy and numeracy as well as increased knowledge of child labor, acceptable work, gender inequality, and decision making—the indicators used to measure project performance in relation to REAL course targets were not met. A review of attendance data demonstrated that a substantial proportion of women and girls had attendance rates between 60-74 percent, which was significant because the project's definitions for completion required a participant to have attended at least 75 percent of REAL course sessions for the life skills, technical, and entrepreneurship class modules. Issues of sub-target attendance persisted in the face of efforts to improve turnout through a variety of methods (adjusting session start times, rescheduling sessions to accommodate for seasonal factors, providing T-shirts and certificates upon graduation, having community representatives follow up with participants after missed sessions,

⁶ One key reason that numbers fell short of targets is that delays in implementation and budget constraints led to the project only enrolling two pilot cohorts and three follow-up cohorts, as opposed to the five follow-up cohorts initially planned.

and creating satellite hubs to reduce distance to classes), indicating that there is room for a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which various factors affected participation in project activities.

A related concern is the low pass rate on the post-test for the REAL life skills course module. The test asks participants to demonstrate their knowledge of material from the course, including questions on topics such as child labor, gender equality, and the technical skills required for acceptable work, by scoring at least a 75 percent on a written exam. According to the numbers reported in the October 2019 TPR, across 20 hubs for cohort two participants and 17 hubs for cohort three participants, only 13 percent of those taking part in the post-test met the 75 percent minimum score threshold.⁷ Given the frequency of post-test scores that fell below the established standard for demonstrating learning, research into the potential explanations for the consistently low pass rate may be of use in both designing more appropriate testing tools as well as establishing more practical expectations of participant achievement.

Feedback has also indicated that the project may be impacting participants and those in their networks in ways that are not explicitly captured by the indicators used to track EMPOWER's progress. As reflected in prior discussions with participants, involvement in REAL courses has been tied to improved literacy levels and feelings of higher self-esteem, both of which are impacts that may not be readily apparent upon review of the existing metrics.

Case Study Objective

To address the discrepancy between target outputs and the actual results as measured by indicators assessing attendance and knowledge measured through test scores, as well as to provide a more nuanced understanding of the project's operations and impacts in Eastern Province, Winrock selected two districts as focal points for investigation: Chasefu and Petauke. We selected these locations based on their relative performance with respect to indicators measuring attendance and post-test scores as part of a research approach that compares cases representing the extreme ends of success in reaching target outputs (this "extremes approach" is discussed further in the following section). Using data available at the time of writing, Winrock chose Petauke as the site representing districts with better performance and Chasefu as the site representing those that were less successful in meeting targets. Within these regions, the case study researcher sought perspectives from a variety of stakeholders on three central questions:

1. What were the main barriers to attendance and why was variation in attendance rates observed across different districts?
2. What factors affected post-test scores and why was variation in post-test scores observed across different districts?
3. What alternate measures of project impacts may contribute to understanding the role EMPOWER has played in target communities?

⁷ Because travel restrictions imposed as a result of COVID-19 prevented EMPOWER from retrieving data on post-test scores for the last three cohorts for the April 2020 TPR, more recent statistics on post-test pass rates were unavailable at the time of writing.

Through the above questions, the researcher attempted to understand the reasons and context for the project's unexpected results by highlighting patterns that may help to explain these observations in several ways. First, the questions seek to provide a better understanding of the factors that contributed to REAL course results falling below targets. By investigating the reasons why REAL course attendance rates and post-test scores fell below expectations, we offer potential explanations for the discrepancies between goals and reality. Second, the guiding lines of inquiry explore the divergence in results between districts that seemed to perform better and those that were less successful in reaching targets in an attempt to elucidate some of the underlying causes for the observed differences among target communities. Finally, Winrock adopted an exploratory approach in the hopes that research will highlight underreported facets of the project and its impacts.

Through these findings, Winrock attempts to make sense of why, in some key areas, actual results fell short of what was intended. By knowing more about the factors that limited results, future projects can take steps to address similar issues, either by approaching implementation in a different way or by adjusting expectations for target outputs and outcomes. Winrock also intends to expand the scope of understanding for the ways in which EMPOWER has affected communities by learning about impacts as described by those experiencing them. In doing so, the case study offers greater insights into the project's influence. Insights from these findings will be of use to Winrock, other implementing organizations, USDOL, and host country governments in both improving project design and implementation.

Methodology

The case study is composed of both explanatory and exploratory elements. The explanatory components of the research are those that focus on posing how and why questions to investigate the patterns that have been observed in outtake data.⁸ The exploratory components, on the other hand, have a more open-ended function as they seek to expand the scope of project research beyond the already-defined categories. In this case study, an explanatory approach is used to address the first and second research questions, while an exploratory approach is used to address the third research question.

Because the first and second research questions, which examine regional variation in attendance rates and test scores, involve comparing between project implementation sites, the case study focuses on districts on the extreme ends in terms of performance against project indicators. This extremes approach serves multiple functions within the study. First, focusing on extremes allows the study to avoid redundancy by not duplicating the approach of other closeout evaluations that are often focused on understanding the "typical" case. Second, because the study aims to explore the *how* and *why* causes that may help expose the reasons that some districts fared better than others, choosing sites that represent both ends of the spectrum of success is more likely to highlight some of the potential explanations through contrast. Finally, because the exploratory elements of the study attempt to investigate some of the project's unknowns, looking at two sites

⁸ Baškarada, Saša. 2014. Qualitative Case Study Guidelines. The Qualitative Report, 1-18. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol19/iss40/3/>

that already have been shown to be different may allow for a greater variety in kinds of responses to exploratory inquiries.

Winrock purposively chose the study's focus sites through analysis of quantitative outtake data from EMPOWER's seven target districts. Following review of the available data using Microsoft Power BI software, Winrock identified possible candidates for both extremes, with Petauke, Katete, and Chadiza selected as representing districts with more successful performance in terms of attendance rates and average post-test scores, and Chasefu, Kasenengwa, and Chipangali selected as representing districts with less successful performance. Winrock ultimately selected Petauke and Chasefu due to both their status as representing extreme cases as well as their accessibility and population levels, which we determined to be vital to facilitating data collection.

Figures 2, 3, and 4 below illustrate differences in REAL course completion rates and post-test achievement between Chasefu and Petauke based on reported project data.

Figure 2. Variation in demonstration of knowledge required for acceptable work as reported under EMPOWER outcome indicator (OTC) 1.

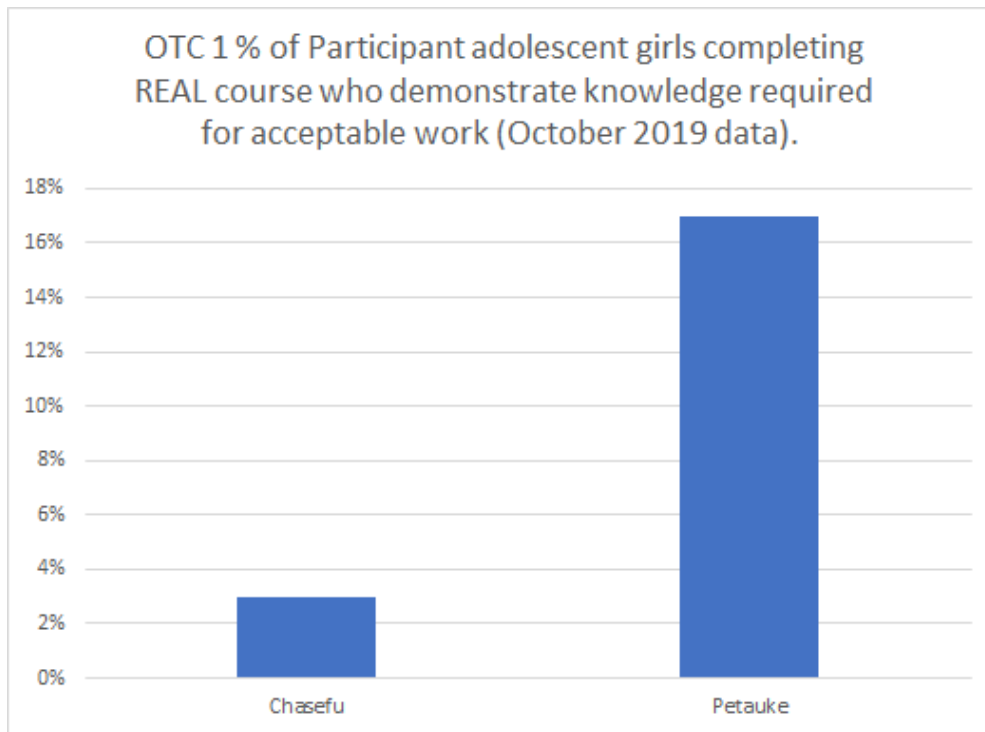


Figure 3. Variation in REAL course completion numbers as reported under EMPOWER output indicator (OTP) 2 and OTP 3

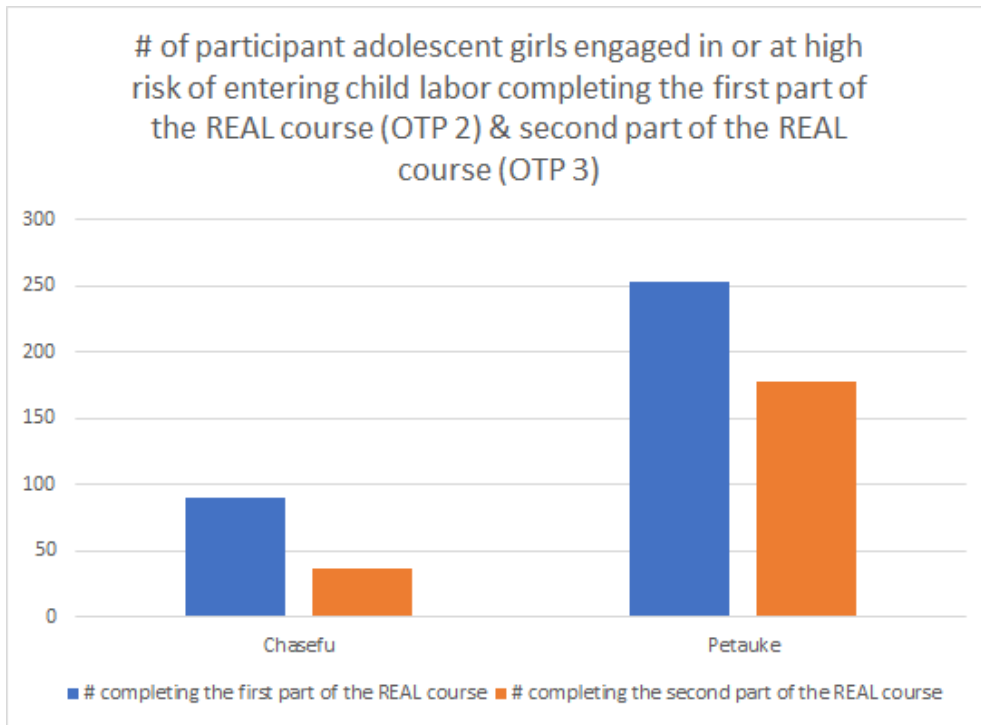
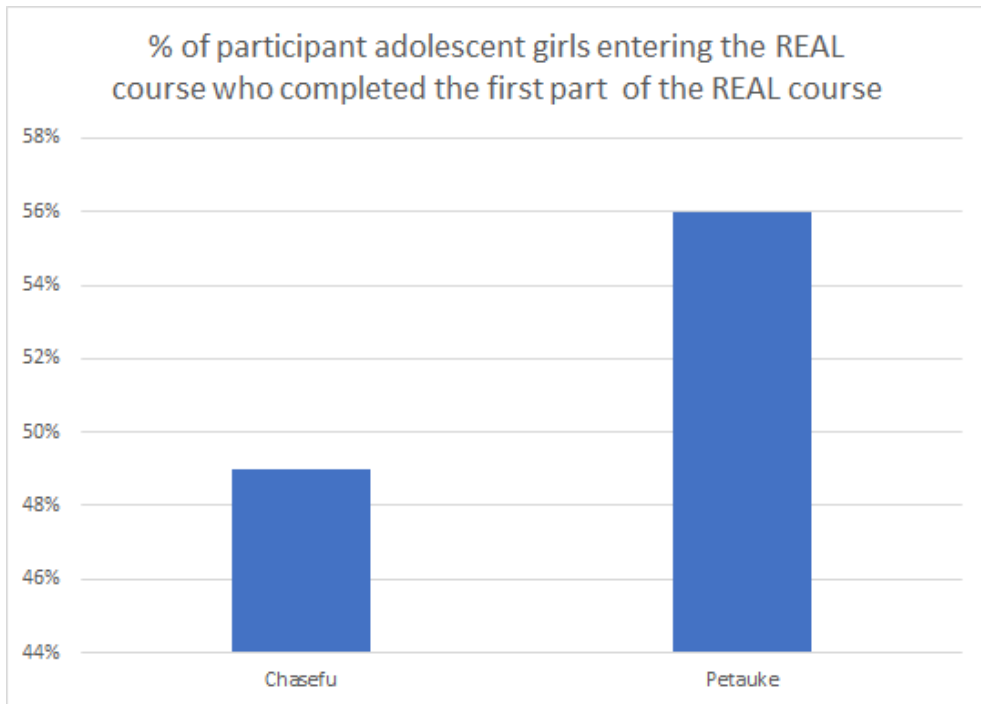


Figure 4. Variation in REAL course (part one) completion rates as reported using data reported EMPOWER OTP 1 and OTP 2



Winrock purposively sampled individuals based on a number of factors, including participant category and convenience. Winrock selected specific project staff as respondents were chosen based upon their familiarity with the topics of focus and the chosen districts. Winrock chose all other respondents, including project participants, community representatives, and community volunteers, through convenience sampling within defined stakeholder categories. EDCs identified these respondents according to their status as a member of the group targeted to be interviewed and other factors at the discretion of the EDC. These included, but were not limited to, proximity to the interview site and familiarity with project staff.

The Winrock researcher collected data through both semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions using a base set of questions centered around the study's three core lines of inquiry, which he modified to fit each interview or focus group. The researcher developed the base tool with input from EMPOWER and Winrock home office staff, following a period of literature review designed to generate lines of questioning based on the case study's objectives as well as past research into related topics. This literature review process highlighted the relevance of household characteristics,⁹ pupil-teacher classroom ratios,¹⁰ student group dynamics,¹¹ and classroom facilities¹² to issues of school attendance and test scores. Though Winrock initially designed the case study with the intent of having the researcher perform interviews and focus groups in-person, the onset of the coronavirus pandemic rendered this impossible. In response, Winrock elected to conduct research remotely via Microsoft Teams voice chat.

Semi-structured interviews consisted of conversations lasting forty minutes to one hour and involved the respondent, the case study researcher, and at times an interpreter. In instances where the respondent spoke fluent English, the researcher interacted with them directly by asking questions about areas of interest using the research tool. In cases where the respondent spoke limited or no English, EDCs acted as interpreters by translating questions and comments from English into the local language, and responses from the local language into English. During the interviews, the researcher actively took note of the content of participant responses as well as the manner in which respondents spoke. Because the interviews required a stable internet connection, respondents living in more remote areas traveled to a central location where connectivity could be ensured. In total, as noted in Table 1 below, the researcher conducted interviews with 22 individuals.

⁹ Arunatilake, Nisha. 2006. Education Participation in Sri Lanka—Why All Are Not in School, *International Journal of Educational Research*, 137–52. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2006.11.001>.

¹⁰ Sherman, Joel D. 2008 Regional Disparities in Primary School Participation in Developing Countries. *PROSPECTS*, 305–23. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-009-9087-0>.

¹¹ Kiwanuka, Henry Nsubuga, Jan Van Damme, Wim Van Den Noortgate, Dickson Nkafu Anumendem, Speranza Namusisi. 2015. Factors Affecting Mathematics Achievement of First-Year Secondary School Students in Central Uganda. *South African Journal of Education* 35, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v35n3a1106>.

¹² Spreen, Carol Anne, and Jillian J Knapczyk. 2017. Measuring Quality Beyond Test Scores: The Impact of Regional Context on Curriculum Implementation (in Northern Uganda). *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education*, 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.18275/fire201704011110>.

Table 1. Semi-structured interview respondents and their base location

Base Location	Respondents
EMPOWER office, Chipata	Project Director
EMPOWER office, Chipata	Community/Business Development and Livelihoods Specialist
EMPOWER office, Chipata	Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist
Chasefu	District Coordinator
Munyukwa, Chasefu	Community Representative
Egichikeni, Chasefu	Participant girl
Egichikeni, Chasefu	Participant girl
Egichikeni, Chasefu	Participant girl
Egichikeni, Chasefu	Participant woman
Egichikeni, Chasefu	Participant man
Petauke	District Coordinator
Mwanza, Petauke	Community Representative
Nyamphande, Petauke	Community Representative
Nyamphande, Petauke	Community volunteer
Nyamphande, Petauke	Participant girl
Nyamphande, Petauke	Participant girl
Nyamphande, Petauke	Participant girl
Nyamphande, Petauke	Participant girl
Nyamphande, Petauke	Participant woman
Nyamphande, Petauke	Participant woman
Nyamphande, Petauke	Participant man
Nyamphande, Petauke	Participant man

Focus group discussions consisted of conversations lasting approximately one hour and involving three to six participants, an EDC acting as interpreter, and the case study researcher. In order to facilitate interactions that would lead to unique insights, the researcher encouraged participants to converse with one another and to share their thoughts even if they diverged from perspectives that had already been offered. The researcher presented discussion questions in English before the EDC translated them into the local language. The EDC then reported participant responses to the researcher in English and identified the respondent to the researcher by name. During the discussions, the researcher kept notes of participant responses and made observations of participant behavior. In total, the researcher conducted two focus group discussions in Chasefu, and one additional focus group in Petauke (see Table 2 below).

Table 2. Focus group discussion respondents and their base location

Base Location	Participants
Egichikeni, Chasefu	6 participant girls
Munyukwa, Chasefu	3 participant girls
Nyamphande, Petauke	6 participant girls

Following data collection, the researcher carried out a staged analysis. The first step was a systematic examination of the notes generated over the course of the interviews and focus group discussions in order to draw out patterns and to discern key relationships. This process consisted of identifying common themes in responses by reviewing research notes and creating a list of codes and subcodes used to categorize respondents' comments. Using these categories, the researcher then entered data from respondent answers into sheets designed for each research question, with each response tagged to a code and possible subcode. With all interview and focus group responses coded, the researcher utilized the dataset to isolate patterns in response content and to highlight relationships between stakeholder groups and corresponding responses, all in reference to the study's guiding questions. Through this iterative process, the researcher was able to draw out the insights that have been developed into the case study's main findings.

It should be noted that all names present in this case study are pseudonyms used to preserve respondent confidentiality.

Findings

ATTENDANCE IN REAL COURSE

Barriers to attendance

Seasonality

One of the most remarked upon topics when discussing challenges to attendance was the impact of the different seasons, particularly during the rainy season months from November to April. When asked how attendance may have varied throughout the year, stakeholders across the board, including EMPOWER staff and participants from both Petauke and Chasefu, commented on the drop in attendance during the rainy season, citing multiple explanations for this effect. One reason commonly alluded to was the need to attend to farming duties, with the result being that participants either missed classes due to timing conflicts or because of becoming tired after working in the fields. One REAL course participant woman from Petauke, Halima,

even explained that some of her classmates have farms located some distance from the hubs and that they may move away for up to a month during the rainy season, during which time they wouldn't attend REAL course classes. Another common explanation was the increased difficulty of travel during times of high rainfall. In response to the increased challenge in getting to classes during the rainy season, some respondents suggested that the project provide participants with umbrellas, boots, or raincoats to help improve their ability to attend classes.

During the rainy season there were times when [girls] would be preparing to go to a session, but when rain began to fall, they would instead decide not to attend.

-Paraphrased interpreter summary of Chasefu focus group participants' experiences

Class length

Another common response touched on the impact of class length on attendance. When asked what changes Winrock could make to improve attendance rates, several respondents suggested reducing the amount of time spent in class sessions. According to one participant, although students got tired after one to one and a half hours, class sessions generally took two to three hours, a situation that was exacerbated by the fact that when students arrived late the classes could take even longer. As Jika, a participant girl from Petauke, observed, sometimes lessons could be long and numerous and “some girls got fed up”.¹³ Another respondent alluded to the tradeoffs some women face in choosing to attend class sessions, remarking that because they have many responsibilities, shortening class times would take less time away from their ability to attend to household tasks and might improve attendance.

Marriage

One further relevant finding relates to the perceived effect of marriage on participants' attendance in the REAL course. When describing reasons that their classmates dropped out of the REAL course, stakeholders from both the districts and EMPOWER headquarters in Chipata (four girls, one woman, and four project staff), indicated that marriage was the cause. These observations are consistent with research into the prevalence of child marriage in Eastern

¹³ Quote translated to English by EDC interpreter.

Province, as a 2018 study found that 13.2 percent of the surveyed women in the three focus districts of Petauke, Chadiza, and Katete aged 18-24 were married or in a union before the age of 18.¹⁴ As for the relationship between early marriage and absence from REAL course classes, one of the chief reasons described in the case study research was the fact that many girls relocated after getting married, restricting their ability to continue attending classes. Another common reason that was given for marriage interrupting attendance of the REAL course was the influence of husbands over their wives. Megai, a woman from Chasefu, noted that some of her peers dropped out of the project because they had husbands who wanted them to stay home to work. These perspectives may indicate that the attitudes toward the project held not just by participants themselves, but also by those in their greater social networks played a role in impacting overall attendance of the REAL course. Other key barriers to attendance relate to distance, maternal status, and illness. As discussed below, these factors each contributed to the perceived challenges to class attendance, though their impacts on the two districts of focus demonstrate some notable differences.

Some participants had husbands who stopped them from attending [the REAL Course] because they thought their wives were shirking their household responsibilities.

- Participant girl from Chasefu (paraphrased)

Themes by district

Distance

One of the more intriguing patterns to arise from comparing conversations between stakeholders of the two focus districts concerns the perceptions of what factors inhibited attendance of REAL courses. When asked what made attending classes more challenging, participants in Chasefu were more inclined than their counterparts in Petauke to attribute drops in attendance to challenges associated with the distance between participant homes and the hubs where classes were held. Of the 14 Chasefu participants who took part in interviews and focus groups, four individuals—two girls, one woman, and one man—referenced distance in discussions about the factors that negatively influenced attendance, including two participants who did not complete the courses. Conversely, while stakeholders from Petauke did broach the topic of distance as an influential factor, it was only local EMPOWER staff who did so. In light of these patterns in responses, it is worth noting that according to EMPOWER documents, the village to hub radius for Petauke was a range of one to five kilometers, whereas the radius for Chasefu was a range of one to six kilometers.¹⁵ Considering the greater tendency of Chasefu respondents to point to distance as an important barrier, the fact that participants were drawn from a larger radius may be pertinent in understanding the relatively lower performance on attendance seen in the district.

Motherhood

Similarly, stakeholders from Chasefu made more reference to factors related to motherhood, including both pregnancy and caring for children, as influencing attendance when responding to the same question. Whereas none of the respondents from Petauke made direct reference to

¹⁴ Menon, J. A., T. Kusanthan, S. O. C. Mwaba, L. Juanola, and M. C. Kok. 2018. 'Ring' Your Future, without Changing Diaper – Can Preventing Teenage Pregnancy Address Child Marriage in Zambia? PLOS ONE, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0205523>, 6.

¹⁵ Winrock International. 2018. EMPOWER Project Document. Prepared by Winrock for USDOL. Zambia.

motherhood as a reason for participants not attending classes, both EMPOWER staff and participant girls from Chasefu cited motherhood as leading to absences from the courses, with specific reasons including having to stay home to care for children and feeling ill during pregnancy. However, while an EMPOWER staff member observed that girls with babies frequently missed classes, a girl participant remarked that her colleagues with babies were able to bring them into the sessions and that doing so didn't present much of an issue.

Illness

For their part, stakeholders from Petauke were more inclined to attribute absences from class to illness. Though stakeholders from both districts did point to sickness as being a factor that caused attendance to drop, of the 11 respondents who did so, eight were from Petauke. To this point, one participant from Petauke asserted that illness was the primary reason for participants not attending REAL classes, while another noted that personal illness as well as illness in the household were some of the few reasons that would cause a participant to miss classes. Furthermore, when asked about changes to attendance during different times of year, only respondents from Petauke remarked on the connection between seasons, illness, and attendance. For example, one participant noted that during the rainy season a number of people became sick and were consequently unable to join classes. Though participants didn't specify which kinds of illnesses were connected to the onset of the rainy season, research has shown increases in malaria¹⁶ and cholera¹⁷ during these periods.

Other key findings

Conversations with EMPOWER staff and REAL course participants also revealed telling trends as to factors that attracted members of the community to participate in the project and helped encourage continued attendance after enrollment. When asked what made participants decide to take part in the project, several participants, including one man, one woman, and five girls, suggested that they were attracted by the promise of improved literacy, with participants from both Chasefu and Petauke indicating that they looked forward to learning to read and write while in the course. Additionally, several girls commented that they saw the REAL course as complementing or taking the place of formal schooling. For example, Lynn, a participant from Petauke, remarked that she had never been to school before, but that she wanted to learn to read and write and thought that the project could be her school.

As for factors that respondents reported as helping to facilitate retention of REAL students, one commonly discussed topic was the perception of future benefits that would be realized after completing the classes. For one girl from Petauke, certain milestones helped to reinforce her belief that she would develop new skills through the project, as she reported feeling hopeful after receiving the initial learning materials from the life skills course and again after receiving the startup kits in the technical course. Similarly, the promise of future benefits kept focus group respondents from Chasefu interested, as shown by the group's consensus that they never

¹⁶ Masaninga, Freddie, Emmanuel Chanda, Pascalina Chanda-Kapata, Busiku Hamainza, Hieronymo T Masendu, Mulakwa Kamuliwo, Wambinji Kapelwa, John Chimumbwa, John Govere, Mac Otten, Ibrahima Soce Fall, Olusegun Babaniyi. 2013. Review of the Malaria Epidemiology and Trends in Zambia. *Asian Pacific Journal of Tropical Biomedicine*, 89–94. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2221-1691\(13\)60030-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2221-1691(13)60030-1).

¹⁷ Cholera in Zambia. 2020. <https://www.outbreakobservatory.org/outbreakthursday-1/1/18/2018/cholera-in-zambia>.

considered dropping out because they knew of the help that they would receive in the business groups.

Research also touched on the unique experiences of men involved in the project. As a group, male respondents reported feeling that one of the main obstacles to enrolling more men in the project was the impression that the project was not designed with them in mind. In response to a question asking about the characteristics of EMPOWER project participants, a man from Chasefu commented that the project was mainly talking about girls and women and that it didn't focus on men; another man from Petauke asserted that some men found the project difficult to accept because no part of it was focused on them. When asked what changes the project could make to improve male attendance rates, all three male participants remarked that allowing men to participate in the technical course could lead to more men joining the project.

TEST SCORES

Factors influencing test scores

Educational background

In terms of common themes among respondents regarding testing, stakeholders from both districts, as well as EMPOWER staff, touched on the importance of a person's educational background in impacting test scores. In discussions about the kinds of students who performed better or worse on tests, several respondents observed that those who performed better on exams tended to have spent more years in school, while those who struggled often had less school experience.

According to Landisa, a girl from Munyukwa Hub in Chasefu, some of the students who had more difficulty in tests were those who had never been to school and had little experience in test-taking. Women and men, too, made reference to the influence of prior schooling on testing; one man from Chasefu said that educational background was the only factor he could point to that really affected exam scores, while a woman from Petauke commented that those who did well on tests were mostly participants who went to school before the project and engaged in sessions by asking questions.

Those who scored better had dropped out of school later, those who scored more poorly had dropped out earlier.

- Participant girl from Egichikeni Hub, Chasefu on the role of prior education in testing (paraphrased)

Study habits and classroom engagement

Another common refrain in respondent observations on what influenced scores concerns the study habits of test-takers. One such habit that was observed to improve performance was frequent class attendance, while absence from classes was associated with lower scores. Another factor was access to materials and opportunities that could improve studies outside of class; as a community representative from Petauke noted, factors that may have led to lower scores include difficulty studying at home, a lack of study materials, and inability to join study groups with other students. Other respondents associated student behavior in classes with subsequent test scores, such as one male participant who noted that some students failed to respond to test questions because they didn't pay attention in class or ask questions when they didn't understand class content. These observations, along with those made about the impact of participants'

history of schooling on test scores, raise questions about the impacts that organizing classes based upon experience with and attitudes toward education may have on developing more effective teaching methods for students with different needs.

Themes by district

Comfort with test content

Conversations with respondents also revealed some telling differences between Chasefu and Petauke regarding perceptions of the testing process. One notable trend emerged when respondents were asked how they felt while taking the test. In response, eight of the total 14 respondents from Petauke attributed their comfort during the test to its content. For some, this sense of assuredness was a result of the relevance of test questions to their everyday experiences. As described by one man, he felt good while testing because most of the questions related to his life; likewise a participant girl said she was happy because the test questions were related to reality and things that were happening to her. Other participants related their comfort in testing to a sense that the material on the exams had been covered during REAL sessions, as with Lynn who felt at ease in the tests because questions came from what they had learned in class. In contrast, only one of the 14 participant respondents from Chasefu remarked on the content of test questions, saying that she felt the test was okay because the material from classes was very simple.

Test administration process

Another pattern that appeared in discussions with respondents regards the impact of the test administration process on participants' perceptions of the exam. According to respondents from Petauke, facilitators played an important role in influencing their test-taking experience by helping to clear up points of confusion and offering assistance to students who confronted challenges. For example, a girl from Nyamphande Hub, Petauke observed that the facilitators were friendly and helpful to those who couldn't write, providing assistance to help them pencil in their answers. Similarly, a woman from the same hub remarked that, although there were students who had encountered difficulties with the test, facilitators would talk to them to make sure that they understood the questions.

Halima, a participant woman from Petauke, was happy to take the test, because she had learned ways to develop herself that changed her life.

Translated materials

Another aspect of test administration that was observed by multiple respondents from Petauke was the effect of translating test materials. As noted by two girls, one woman, and one man from Nyamphande Hub, translating the questions into the local language made the test easier, facilitated quicker responses, and increased test-takers' comfort levels. It should also be noted that, while respondents from Chasefu did touch on similar topics—mentioning that facilitators guided students through the tests from one question to the next, addressing each question in English and the local language—they did not directly attribute this process to test results.

Together with the above findings on participant satisfaction with test content in Petauke, these trends offer some intriguing insights into patterns seen in test-related outcome data. According to

data from the October 2019 TPR, the percent of participant adolescent girls completing the REAL course who demonstrated knowledge required for acceptable work was 17 percent in Petauke, as compared to three percent in Chasefu.¹⁸ In light of this, the factors cited by case study respondents, (i.e. comfort with test content, the role of facilitators, and the value of translated materials) may hint at some of the reasons for the documented disparity in test scores between the two districts.

Test length

One other intriguing finding from the conversation about testing is the divergence in the reported length of the test based upon the respondent's district. Of the five respondents from Chasefu who separately reported the lengths of the tests they took, four noted that the test took about one and half hours, with the fifth recalling that it took about one hour forty-five minutes. In contrast to this, the respondents from Petauke generally reported a larger range of test times, with two respondents saying the test took from one to one and a half hours, and six other respondents observing that the test took between two and three hours. While these estimates are the result of subjective recollections of past events, the variance in times reported between the two districts may be indicative of a difference of experience for participants in these regions. This discrepancy in test lengths may be connected to the divergence in test scores. For example, tests in Petauke tended to take longer because facilitators there were more inclined to ensure a thorough testing process that took into account the needs of participants who were struggling with exam materials. Alternatively, it could be that test-takers in Chasefu saw shorter test times because they grew discouraged and started putting less effort into answering questions, thereby leading to a quicker exam process.

Alternative testing methods

When the conversation turned to ways the test might be improved, both participants and EMPOWER staff offered suggestions that they believed could lead to higher test scores. One theme that emerged from the suggested changes to the existing test sought to address the length of the test and its impact on participants. In response to this, some stakeholders recommended reducing the number of questions, such as a member of the EMPOWER staff in Petauke who recalled hearing complaints that the number of questions was too high and the test took too long. Another suggested change put forth by a girl from Chasefu was to simplify the testing process by replacing complex open-ended questions with more straightforward multiple-choice ones, a change which could help cut down of the amount of time required to administer the exam. Another participant, a girl from Petauke, rather than suggesting a method of shortening the length of the test, instead proposed that test-takers could be given refreshments, as in her experience some of the students lost interest in the test because of hunger.

Another recurrent theme in the discussion surrounding improved testing methods addressed the perception of student discomfort in group settings. EMPOWER staff from both districts, as well as a girl from Chasefu, each proposed that the tests be administered one-on-one to help alleviate the problem of participants feeling uneasy taking tests in larger groups. Additionally, according

¹⁸ Winrock International. 2020. EMPOWER Technical Progress Report. Prepared by Winrock International for USDOL. Zambia.

to a staff member from Chasefu, the levels of learning within cohorts can vary widely, so one-on-one testing could help facilitators adapt test administration to each individual's needs.

When asked about alternate methods of assessing participant learning, respondents offered a number of intriguing propositions. One suggestion brought forth by EMPOWER staff at the provincial and district levels, and that was echoed by a woman from Petauke, was that of evaluating accumulated knowledge through group discussions. One reason given was that these discussions would create an environment where participants would be able to express themselves more freely. Another argument was that periodic group discussions would be effective at both spurring the memories of those participating as well as reinforcing knowledge from class sessions.

A more hands-on approach was another recommended alternative testing method proposed by several participants. One girl advised balancing the theory-based nature of the tests with assessments of participants' practical know-how, like poultry raising procedures. This proposal was mirrored by Ruth, a participant girl from Petauke who thought that the tests were appropriate for the life skills courses but argued that for technical courses it may be more fitting to test practical knowledge by going to the poultry houses with participants and allowing them to show what they had learned.

PROJECT IMPACTS

Common patterns

Community interest

When it came to the project's impacts in the community, respondents from both districts noted the effect that the project had on those who hadn't directly participated. When asked if the project had any effect on members of the community who were not involved in EMPOWER, respondents from Chasefu and Petauke reported a high level of interest in joining future project activities. Examples include a participating man from Nyamphande Hub, Petauke who recalls several community members asking him when future enrollment for the project would occur, as well as a woman from Egichikeni Hub, Chasefu who has been approached by peers asking how participants were able to join the project. In one instance, there was even reported interest from communities outside the project catchment area: a member of the EMPOWER staff from Chasefu recalls that he received calls from other communities asking when the project would be coming to their areas. Furthermore, when prompted to ask any remaining questions of their own during interviews, respondents frequently inquired as to why the project was ending so soon when there were a number of individuals still very much interested in taking part.

When the project was starting a lot of people didn't have faith in it and felt that it wouldn't work. Now, they have indicated they would have more trust in future projects.

- Participant man from Petauke on community attitudes toward EMPOWER (paraphrased)

Business skill development

Another commonly referenced effect of the project was the development of skills that opened new doors for participants. One of the more talked-about impacts was the development of new skills related to doing business. For some participants this meant establishing a new business, such as Lynn from Petauke, who has begun making and selling fritters in addition to participating in her poultry raising business group. For others, the project has allowed them to improve existing businesses, as with Ruth, who expanded her baking ventures and began to diversify her income by selling mobile service minutes with her husband. For still others, one of the more significant impacts has come through learning budgeting skills. According to Yolán from Petauke, prior to the REAL course she never used to budget and spent her money freely, but now she has started to accumulate savings from her businesses.

Literacy

Participants have also reported improvements in school-related skills, especially those tied to literacy. When asked to describe their feelings about the project after finishing or dropping out, REAL participants from Egichikeni and Munyukwa Hubs in Chasefu, and Nyamphande Hub in Petauke each reported that they had learned to read and write. This was documented by EMPOWER staff as well, who observed that following the course some participants had developed the newfound capacity to read, write their names and signatures, and do simple calculations.

Awareness of child labor and gender equity

Conversations with stakeholders also revealed common patterns regarding learning about child labor and gender equality across districts. When asked if the REAL course had impacted their understanding of issues related to child labor, participants from both regions reported learning about which kinds of work are appropriate for children to participate in, with many respondents also listing examples of work that children should not be engaged in, including heavy lifting, use of chemicals, and being sent into the bush alone to collect firewood or care for cattle. Similarly, respondents indicated common understandings of REAL course content related to gender equality. In both districts, participants expressed sentiments that women and men should enjoy equal rights and that household roles and responsibilities can be shared. As an example, a girl from Chasefu proposed that if a woman were busy cooking at home, her husband could clean the house; likewise, a man from Petauke remarked that men can help women prepare meals after returning home instead of just waiting around. This uniformity of responses suggests a common sense of the REAL course's key messages and may hint at the efficacy of project activities in delivering knowledge of target material. It should be noted, however, that while these observations may indicate new developments in participant knowledge and attitudes, corresponding changes in behavior cannot be assumed to take place. Establishing these links between trainings like the REAL course and actual participant behavior changes could be the focus of future research endeavors.

Themes by district

Self-esteem and leadership

One standout difference in the conversation about project impact in the two districts was the relatively greater inclination of respondents from Petauke to bring up the topic of attitude

change, especially with regards to changes in self-esteem for girls and women and participants' views on female leadership. In response to questions about their feelings toward the EMPOWER project and its impacts, one participant woman and two participant girls reported having much higher feelings of self-esteem as compared to their time before joining the project. This transformation was also documented by a community volunteer with the project in Nyamphande Hub, Petauke who said that most participants who had low self-esteem now have higher self-esteem, especially women who joined leadership positions after finishing the courses. This change in attitude associated with women in leadership positions was also reported by two participants from Petauke, including a man who commented that he'd learned the benefits of having women leaders, and a woman who observed that women can take part in leadership roles just like men, citing the female vice-president of Zambia as an example.

Business group participation

Another unique pattern that emerged from these discussions was the tendency for beneficiaries from Chasefu to reference their participation in business groups when talking about project impact. Of the REAL course participants who, in separate conversations, initiated discussion about business groups when asked about their feelings toward the project and its impacts, all four were based in Chasefu, including three girls and one woman. Within this group, one girl, Lynn, reported that she is glad to be a part of a business group and to have learned skills through the project as she's married and doesn't want to be begging her husband for help at home. The impact of these groups in Chasefu was also addressed by a member of the local EMPOWER staff, who recalls that one group that started with 300 chickens has since expanded to 800 and opened a new bank account.

Results

While many of the barriers to attendance were experienced by both groups, knowing that the districts saw different rates of attendance and REAL course completion can give new meaning to the factors that were discussed in each district. As a whole, stakeholders from Chasefu were more inclined than their peers from Petauke to reference complications relating to distance from the hub and motherhood when discussing reasons for participants not attending classes. Stakeholders from Petauke, meanwhile, made more allusions to illness as inhibiting attendance. Though these observations represent only the specific experiences of the respective respondents, they may offer insight into the underlying explanations for the disparity in attendance between the regions of focus. Although illness is indeed a serious issue and clearly presented challenges to facilitating participation in EMPOWER activities, it may be that it is more prone to cause periodic or short-term absences as compared to the more chronically active factors of distance and the responsibilities of motherhood. These observations, combined with reports of routine absences during the rainy season, demonstrate that, for projects like EMPOWER, there may be value in categorizing different kinds of obstacles to participation, as the solutions and resources needed to address intermittent barriers may be very different from those required for more enduring challenges.

With respect to the divergence between Petauke and Chasefu in attendance and testing results, another relevant factor may be the role of REAL course facilitators. As the people responsible

for conveying target knowledge to participants, facilitators serve an instrumental function in working toward project goals. It is noteworthy, then, that there were observable differences between districts in respondent comments about facilitators. Whereas participants from Petauke directly associated the efforts of facilitators with their feelings of comfort about the test, their peers in Chasefu did not. The disparity in reported test length may provide further insight into this process. It could be that the tendency of participants from Petauke to report longer testing times is correlated to a more thorough and rigorous test administration process. Additionally, respondents from Petauke made connections between comfort in testing and the pertinence of examination content to course material. While they did not explicitly tie facilitators to their familiarity with class content, it may be that the personalities and instruction methods of the teachers helped to cement learning in their minds. As one girl from Petauke described it, facilitators made sessions more interesting for participants because they would encourage participants about the benefits of the classes, and some would even sing and dance during class warm-ups. Bearing in mind the role that facilitators appear to have played in EMPOWER, care when selecting facilitators at the start of similar initiatives and routine assessment of participant attitudes toward them could be instrumental in achieving project objectives. It is also worth noting that, while indicators showed that a small minority of participants were passing the tests,¹⁹ in conversations respondents largely demonstrated a degree of comfort in testing and infrequently referred to the test as difficult or the content as unclear.

What complaints the respondents did have generally related to the number of questions and the overall length of the testing process. While these concerns tended to come more from Petauke than Chasefu, they may indicate that low pass rates had less to do with test content and more to do with the actual volume of the testing and the related exhaustion of test-takers. More research into the effects of exam length on participant results may provide further insights into these observations and could be valuable in future efforts to plan evaluation methods. Such research could look into the possible effects of taking steps to reduce the amount of time spent in any given test, such as by administering multiple low-stakes tests as opposed to one high-stakes test, as well as alternate evaluation methods like more informal group discussions designed to facilitate participant discussion and review of what was learned.

Research participants also demonstrated the role of word of mouth and second-hand appreciation of project activities in generating interest and buy-in to the project. The recurrent theme of respondents reporting that they received regular inquiries from other members of their communities about when and how to enroll in the project, paired with the tendency for participants themselves to ask in the interviews why the project was coming to an end when so many people around them have a clear interest in joining, could have two important implications. First, it points to the importance of designing a project that is responsive to local desires and able to generate a natural momentum through a positive reputation in target communities. Second, it reveals that projects like EMPOWER may do well to account for the need to build up community support and buy-in during planning stages, as more widespread acceptance of a project may need

¹⁹ At the time of writing, the most recently available data from the October 2019 TPR showed that 13 percent of all participant girls met the minimum passing score threshold for the life skills portion of the course, though updated data may affect the final statistics.

to be preceded by demonstrations of tangible impacts. Awareness of these factors could be of use in forecasting project implementation timelines and establishing target output numbers.

LIMITATIONS

The value of these conclusions notwithstanding, findings must be interpreted with an understanding of the limitations to the research process. The insights and inferences discussed in this case study are the result of research conducted within constraints related to sampling, research methods, and the necessary compromises associated with time-sensitive research performed in the midst of a global pandemic.

With regards to sampling, limitations include the narrow number of respondents for each stakeholder category, the fact that participant respondents were identified and recruited through project staff, and the range of project sites represented in sampling. In light of these constraints, any findings should be recognized not as evocative of experiences common to all associated stakeholders, but rather as insights derived from individual perspectives that can provide nuance to the understanding of project activities and impacts.

Similarly, limitations to the research methodology affected the kinds of data collected and the way that this data was presented. Such constraints include the participation of EDCs as interpreters for interviews and focus groups involving participants, as the EDCs choices about what information to convey to the researcher and in what manner will have influenced the end data pool. Additionally, the need to conduct research via voice chat meant that the researcher was unable to observe and react to visual cues, impacting his ability to build rapport and establish trust with respondents. Thus, while the above research findings offer insight into the project's function and impact in the affected communities, these conclusions must be presented in the context at which they were arrived.

Conclusion

Over the course of its operations, the EMPOWER project grappled with numerous challenges and uncertain circumstances in its efforts to deliver a valuable and meaningful service to the communities of Eastern Province. Though progress was offset by unforeseen setbacks, the project's impacts in the lives of participants were, by participants' own accounts, readily apparent. This case study has demonstrated that understanding a project's implementation and outcomes as experienced by those immediately involved in it can not only illustrate what impact it had, but also add nuance to the conversation about how and why those results came to be. In order to further the lessons learned from this research, recommendations for future project design, project implementation, and research are included below.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For future research:

- Look into the value of multiple or combined evaluation methods when assessing participant knowledge, as standard evaluation methods may not necessarily reflect actual learning. New approaches could target evaluating participant knowledge in ways that account for factors

like participant age, reading comprehension, and educational background to develop assessments that maintain rigor while reducing unnecessary obstacles.

- Examine the impacts that non-content-related aspects of testing (e.g. test length, individual vs. group administration, test question format, etc.) can have on evaluations of participant learning.
- Investigate the possibility of incorporating health services into projects that may not have health-related objectives. As indicated by participants in this case study, illness can impede participation in project activities, so taking steps to mitigate this threat may help projects reach target outcomes.

For project design and implementation:

- Examine ways to adapt instructional design to account for participant fatigue and challenges studying outside of class. This could include designing shorter classes and/or incorporating more frequent breaks; establishing study groups and two-way SMS groups to facilitate participant communication outside of class; and creating additional materials and tools for home study.
- Make efforts to recruit and equip effective educators and take time to assess participant views on educators and their role in communicating key material to allow for needed adjustments and learning from emerging best practices.
- Consider the role of word of mouth in generating project interest. Intentionally planning for a longer project runway may allow for skeptical community members to see first-hand the impacts of project activities in ways that generate greater community buy-in down the line.
- Build in opportunities to reflect on and respond to new learning over the course of project implementation. Setting aside time for deeper dives into casual observations and anecdotal evidence may reveal previously unknown or underappreciated elements of the project that warrant greater focus.

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Annex 1

BASE RESEARCH TOOL

Questions for Interviews/Focus Group Discussions

Introduction

1. Interviewer introduction
2. Overview of EMPOWER project:

EMPOWER, the name given to the US Department of Labor funded project for Increasing Economic and Social Empowerment for Adolescent Girls and Vulnerable Women in Zambia, is a project designed to reduce the prevalence of child labor in rural areas of eastern Zambia. Its goals are to ensure that: adolescent girls engaged in or at risk of entering child labor have increased access to acceptable work and high-quality training opportunities; vulnerable women whose households have children engaged in or at high risk of entering child labor have increased livelihood opportunities; public awareness of child labor and gender equality is increased; and there is greater collaboration between the government and private sector on the promotion of acceptable work for adolescent girls and vulnerable women.

3. Overview of case studies:

Case studies are a research method of in-depth and detailed examination of a specific unit (an area, a group of people, a social trend) that provides insight into individual perspectives on the research subject.

4. Case study objectives: conduct case study research in Eastern Province to better understand trends related to REAL course attendance and test scores across different districts as well as develop a more holistic picture of the project's impacts among target populations.
5. Asking for consent: Y/N, requires confidentiality: Y/N

Interviewee Introduction

1. Can you introduce yourself very briefly? (*name, position, institution/organization, location*)
2. Can you describe how you are involved in the EMPOWER project? (How long have you been involved in the project? What activities have you participated in and in what capacity?)

3. What are your general thoughts on EMPOWER? (Are there any thoughts on the project you'd like to share now?)

Topic I: Attendance Variance

Core question:

Why was there variation in attendance across districts/hubs?

a. What were barriers/facilitators for attendance?

Interview Questions:

1. How did you first learn about the REAL courses?
2. Did community outreach impact your understanding of REAL and desire to attend?
 - a. If so, how?
3. What was your understanding of the REAL course schedule?
 - a. How did you learn about scheduling?
4. From your perspective, what kinds of people took part in the REAL courses?
 - a. Did you notice any trends in the kinds of participants who were more likely to attend vs those who were less likely to attend?
5. What was your understanding of the benefits of regular REAL attendance?
 - a. What gave you this impression?
 - b. Did this perception affect attendance, and, if so, how?
6. In your opinion, what factors affected attendance of REAL courses and other related activities?
 - a. Were there factors that encouraged attendance? Why do you think so?
 - b. Were there factors that made attendance more challenging or less appealing? Why do you think so?
7. Did attendance vary throughout the year?
 - a. How and why?
 - b. How could the REAL course better account for seasonal factors in order to improve attendance?
8. Did attendance vary over time?
 - a. How and why?
 - b. How could the REAL course be adjusted to maintain consistent attendance throughout?
9. Did classroom factors affect attendance?
 - a. What factors affected attendance?
 - b. How did they affect attendance?
10. What changes to the REAL course would have made you more likely to attend?

Topic II: Test Scores

Core question:

Why was there variation in posttest scores across districts/hubs?

- a. What were barriers to passing?**
- b. What are other ways to assess knowledge derived from program activities?**

Interview Questions:

1. What was your understanding of the role of testing?
2. Did you notice any trends in the kinds of students who scored better or worse on posttests?
 - a. Why do you think this was the case?
3. Did you notice any differences between the pretest and the posttest?
 - a. How did this affect testing?
 - b. Do you have any thoughts that might explain pretest scores being higher than posttest scores in some cases?
4. Were there any factors that may have affected posttest scores?
 - a. What are they?
 - b. How did they affect scores?
 - c. Were there factors that led to higher scores? Why do you think so?
 - d. Were there factors that made performing well on the test more difficult? Why do you think so?
5. In your opinion, did the testing environment (classroom facilities, location of test, presence of colleagues or teachers) impact test performance?
 - a. How and why did the environment have this impact?
6. Were you motivated to perform to the best of your ability?
 - a. What do you think could have been done to improve motivation?
7. Could any changes have been made to improve test scores?
 - a. How would these changes improve test scores?
8. Do you think that the posttest was a good assessment of your knowledge?
 - a. How could the test have been adjusted to better reflect participant knowledge?
9. What alternate assessment measures could be used to evaluate your knowledge?

Topic III: Program Impact

Core question:

What are alternative ways to understand program impacts? (e.g. businesses formed despite participants not “passing” REAL Course)

Interview Questions:

1. Why did you choose to participate in REAL?
 - a. Would you make the same choice now that you know more about it?
 - b. Why or why not?

2. What are your overall feelings about the impacts of the REAL course and EMPOWER activities?
 - a. What changes would you make to REAL and other activities to improve their impact?
3. Has the REAL course impacted your life?
 - a. If so, how?
 - b. Were these impacts expected?
 - c. Were there any impacts that you didn't expect to see?
4. Has the REAL course impacted your understanding of child labor?
 - a. In what ways?
5. Has the REAL course impacted your understanding of issues related to gender equity?
 - a. In what ways?
6. Has your involvement in the REAL course improved your economic prospects in any way?
 - a. If so, how?
7. Has the REAL course affected your local community?
 - a. If so, how?
8. Would you recommend the REAL course to others?
 - a. Why or why not?
9. Do you know anyone who took part in REAL did not complete the course?
 - a. Why didn't they complete the course?
 - b. Did they receive any benefits from participating although they didn't finish?
 - c. How did they receive these benefits?

Concluding questions:

1. Is there anything you would like to add about the topics we've discussed?
 - a. EMPOWER
 - b. Attendance variation
 - c. Test scores
 - d. Program impacts
2. Do you have any questions you'd like to ask regarding EMPOWER or this case study?

Ending remarks:

Thank you for taking the time to discuss these topics with me/us. Your perspectives and insights will be instrumental in helping us better understand how EMPOWER has impacted the community and will be valuable as Winrock continues to address issues of child labor and gender equity. If you are interested in reading the final case study report, please feel free to say so and we will ensure that you have access to it upon it is approved and publicly available.



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