

SLIDE 1: Education and Community Development

Education and Community Development are one of the three funding streams at ACWW alongside Rural Women's Health and Climate Smart Agriculture. This presentation will focus on highlights from the current Education and Community Development project.

ACWW believes that sustainable change requires building networks of rural women and promoting women-led empowerment projects. We have a long history of providing support to education and capacity building projects which have enabled women to come together and share skills; build entrepreneurship activities for increased income and financial independence; develop financial literacy; establish community-led savings and loan schemes; and life-long learning opportunities.

SLIDE 2: Education and Community Development Part 2

Rural women have faced systemic barriers to education due to traditional patriarchal cultural norms, conflict and a lack of practical access to schooling. UN Women have identified that globally, two-thirds of illiterate adults are women. This means that a high proportion of rural women face struggles in completing basic education, resulting in reduced income potential, poorer health and nutrition outcomes for their families, reduced decision-making ability and community participation.

SLIDE 3: Intro to RUT project

This project was funded in December 2024, and the aim of this project is to promote equitable access to education for girls in the Kondoa district, Dodoma region, Tanzania, by reducing school dropout rates due to teen pregnancy and truancy. The project aims to facilitate the re-entry of girls who have left school in alignment with the Tanzania 2022 School Dropout Re-entry Guideline and provide alternative education pathways, such as vocational education and skills training, for those unable to return to formal education.

SLIDE 4: Aims

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enhance their educational and economic opportunities, and contribute to the overall socio-economic development of the community.

SLIDE 5: Progress against Outputs

The progress report for this project was received in June 2025 and confirms that the project is making significant progress towards its objectives. Key achievements include increased community support for girls' education re-entry, strengthened stakeholders' capacity through workshops and the identification and support of 52 out-of-school girls.

The project has engaged 25 key stakeholders including education officers, school heads, community development officers and local leaders to introduce the projects activities and aims and gain support and commitment to collaborating in supporting girls' re-entry into education. RUT also provided online training for these stakeholders aimed on deepening their understanding of the 2022 Re-entry Guideline and develop practical skills to support the re-enrolment effort.

A successful 1-day launch meeting was conducted in Kondoa District, bringing together 25 key stakeholders. The meeting served as an entry point for stakeholder engagement and provided a platform to align on project goals, objectives, and expected outcomes.

Participants expressed commitment to supporting the project and actively engaging in the implementation process.

A 2-day stakeholder training workshop was conducted, attended by the same 25 participants from the launch. Sessions focused on: understanding the policy framework, mapping out roles of various stakeholders, community-school collaboration, and how to form and operationalize ward-level monitoring committees. Participants developed practical action plans tailored to their areas. This activity also resulted to the establishment of 1 community-led task force.

A dedicated WhatsApp group was established with 30 active members, including teachers, ward officers, and district officials. The group is actively used for: sharing re-entry cases, coordinating follow-ups, exchanging updates, discussing solutions to challenges, and reinforcing accountability. This platform has significantly enhanced information flow and peer learning.

Monthly awareness campaigns were successfully carried out across the targeted wards. The campaigns utilized diverse channels: door-to-door visits, community forums, radio announcements, and Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) material distribution. As a result, the project reached a total of 1,050 community members (630 women, 420 men). These campaigns significantly increased knowledge of girls' right to education and reduced stigma around teenage pregnancy and dropout. During initial outreach, some families especially of teenage mothers expressed scepticism about the feasibility and appropriateness of re-entry into school or training. Social stigma was a key barrier. The

project team responded by organizing small-group dialogues and home visits to engage parents directly. Personal testimonies and success stories were shared to show the impact of re-entry. Religious and local leaders were also mobilized to advocate for acceptance and support.

SLIDE 6: Identified 52 out of school girls + Challenges

Once the key stakeholders became involved and aware of the project aims the next step was to engage with girls in the community. A total of 52 out-of-school girls, including 33 teenage mothers, were identified through a participatory school-community approach involving home visits, parent-teacher associations, and village executive officers. This collaborative process helped ensure comprehensive outreach and community ownership. Of the identified girls, 22 chose to return to formal education-10 have already resumed classes for the 2025 academic year, while 12 are in the process of completing enrolment procedures for the 2026 academic year, which begins in January.

While successful thus far in connecting with the 52 girls, some challenges did arise.

1. Families were often reluctant to disclose dropout cases, especially involving teenage mothers, due to fear of community judgment or shame.
2. The project started in December, just weeks before the academic year began in January. This left insufficient time to identify and process school re-entry for many girls. As a result, the majority of the girls were identified only after the academic year had already started, making it too late for them to enroll in 2025 academic year. Consequently, these girls will have to wait until the start of the 2026 academic year to resume formal schooling, what the project team do currently is to register them and get ready for next academic year to start schooling.
 - a. Due to constraints of the academic year, in terms of reporting, RUT will complete the final report on all activities up to the end of the project implementation and if at this time the 2026 has not yet started, they will supply an additional follow up report once the girls have started in school.
3. In remote areas, access to households was challenging due to poor road infrastructure and long travel distances.

To address these challenges, the team partnered with trusted local leaders to conduct discreet home visits and facilitate trust. Regular counselling and follow-up meetings were held to reinforce the value of education. For girls facing logistical challenges, the project began exploring community-based support and referrals to local service providers.

To address the delay in school re-entry, the project team worked closely with families, local leaders, and education officers to ensure that the identified girls completed all necessary enrolment procedures in advance for the 2026 academic year. Meanwhile, the girls have

been actively engaged in life skills sessions, mentorship, and psychosocial support to keep them motivated and prepared for reintegration into school when the new academic year begins.

SLIDE 7: Financial Literacy Training

To address the financial barriers that often lead to dropouts, financial literacy training was provided to 30 girls and some of their caregivers. In addition, five (5) girls were successfully linked with local government loan programs for women hoping to receive startup capital to begin small businesses in areas such as tailoring, vegetable selling, and hairdressing which is most common in these wards

To support the long-term reintegration and well-being of the girls, 30 out of the 52 identified were guided toward alternative pathways through vocational training in areas such as tailoring, cooking, and hairdressing. Over the past months, efforts have focused on assessing the individual interests and aspirations of each girl, and on identifying suitable vocational and skills training centers for their placement. These centers have now been secured, and the girls are scheduled to begin their training in the coming months. At the same time, these girls, including teenage mothers have been engaged in financial literacy sessions and economic empowerment activities to strengthen household resilience and create a more supportive environment for the girls' development.

Peer support groups were also established to build solidarity among the girls and ensure continued mentorship and accountability.

The project has implemented a robust monitoring and evaluation system to assess progress and inform continuous improvement. Monitoring tools include key informant interviews, and case tracking to document the girls' journeys. Regular reflection meetings with stakeholders allow for adaptive management and ensure that all actors remain aligned with project goals. These efforts have yielded critical insights into the barriers girls face, the effectiveness of interventions, and the areas requiring further support.

SLIDE 8: Overall Progress

As seen from the previous slide, the project has made significant progress toward achieving its objectives within the initial implementation period. The evaluation to date indicates that the project is both relevant and impactful in addressing the barriers faced by out-of-school girls, particularly teenage mothers, in Kondo District. The use of community engagement, capacity-building, and tailored support has contributed to increased awareness, strengthened local stakeholder collaboration, and tangible results in girls school re-entry and empowerment.

Key achievements include:

1. Increased community support for girls' education re-entry, with over 1,000 people sensitized.
2. Strengthened stakeholders capacity through targeted workshops and an online coordination platform.
3. Identification and support for 52 out-of-school girls, with more than half already re-engaged in education or training.

The evaluation also revealed strong levels of stakeholder engagement, community responsiveness, and evidence of changing attitudes around the stigma of early pregnancy and school dropout. The WhatsApp-based monitoring and follow-up mechanism has proven to be a low-cost but highly effective coordination tool.

Most planned activities have been executed effectively. These activities have resulted in tangible progress, especially in community attitude shifts and the re-engagement of out-of-school girls.

However, it is important to note that the project is currently halfway toward achieving its core target of empowering at least 100 out-of-school girls. As of now, 52 girls have been identified, supported, and are in various stages of re-entry into formal education or alternative vocational training pathways. This represents substantial progress, but it also signals the need to intensify efforts in the second half of the project to reach the remaining target of girls.

While most project components are running as expected, a few challenges have influenced the pace of progress:

1. Stigma and reluctance among some families to disclose dropouts, especially those related to early pregnancy.
2. Economic vulnerability in families that hinders sustained support for girls' education.

These issues were anticipated to some extent and have been actively addressed through increased community engagement, home visits by local leaders, counseling, and economic empowerment initiatives. The stakeholder collaboration platform established via WhatsApp has also improved coordination and tracking of cases.

SLIDE 9: Case Study 1 - Amina

In Bereko Ward, teen pregnancy is often seen as a signal that a girl is ready for marriage. For 17-year-old Amina Bakari, becoming pregnant while in Form II in 2023 was not unusual by

community standards in fact, some of her neighbors advised her parents to marry her off immediately, both to preserve family honor and to receive bride price (mahari).

“My aunt said I was already a woman now,” Amina recalled. “She told my parents to find me a husband quickly before the baby was born.”

Her parents, already burdened by poverty, were conflicted. “We didn’t know how we would afford her school and a baby,” said Amina’s father. “Some relatives said marrying her off would help us solve two problems.”

As a result, Amina stayed home for nearly a year, raising her child while her education seemed like a thing of the past.

Intervention:

During awareness-raising campaigns led by Reaching the Unreached Tanzania (RUT), community leaders, trained task forces, and project staff began challenging these deeply held norms. The project introduced the Tanzania 2022 School Dropout Re-entry Guideline, emphasizing that girls who become pregnant have the right to return to school and that early marriage is not a solution but a violation of their rights.

RUT’s outreach team visited Amina’s family several times, engaging her parents in respectful but persistent dialogue. “At first, they were unsure,” a community volunteer said. “But once they saw that other parents were supporting their daughters to return, their mindset slowly shifted.”

As part of the project, Amina’s mother received business training and support to expand her vegetable stall. The new income helped cover childcare expenses and reduced the pressure to marry Amina.

Outcome:

In April 2025, Amina re-enrolled at Bereko Secondary School. Her parents, once resigned to early marriage, now walk with her to school meetings and speak openly about the importance of second chances for girls.

“I didn’t know I could go back,” Amina said. “Now I’m back, and I will never stop.”

SLIDE 10: CASE STUDY 2 - NEEMA

In Bereko Ward, poverty often drives decisions about girls’ education. For 16-year-old Neema, school became harder and harder to manage not just because of economic hardship, but because of cultural expectations that girls should help at home and, once mature, consider early marriage to ease the family's burden.

“My father always said school was for boys,” Neema shared. “He told me that after Standard Seven, a girl should help the family or find a husband.”

With her mother absent and her father doing daily labor, Neema was expected to contribute. She began working in a local food kiosk and stopped attending school.

Intervention:

Neema's story was uncovered during the March 2025 community awareness campaign, where trained outreach volunteers engaged families door-to-door and at community gatherings. They spoke not only about education rights, but also addressed harmful gender norms and the risks of early marriage.

Her father was reluctant at first he said, 'She's a woman now. What does she need school for?'" a community officer recalled. But through follow-ups by local leaders and sensitization workshops, he began to rethink his views, especially after learning about government support and the national re-entry guideline.

The project enrolled Neema's stepmother in a financial empowerment program, supporting her to start a tailoring business using a small loan. The increased household income helped relieve pressure and made it easier for Neema to return to school.

Outcome:

In May 2025, Neema returned to school with renewed hope. She received learning materials and sanitary supplies from the project. Today, she speaks in girls' clubs about bodily dignity, gender equality, and why marriage should never be a girl's only path.

Her father, once skeptical, now says:

"I thought I was helping her by looking for a husband. But now, I see that school is a better future for her and for us."

SLIDE 11: Implementing the second part of the project

To ensure the successful achievement of project goals in the second half, particularly the empowerment of 100 out-of-school girls with the necessary support for re-entry into education or alternative pathways, the following key recommendations are proposed:

A. Intensify Identification and Outreach Efforts

- Expand the mapping of dropouts by working closely with more schools, community leaders, health workers, and local women's groups to identify remaining out-of-school girls.
- Increase door-to-door outreach and community dialogues in underserved or remote areas where dropout cases may be underreported due to stigma or lack of awareness.
- Leverage community events, churches, and youth gatherings to spread information and encourage reporting of dropout cases.

B. Strengthen Community and Family Engagement

- Continue and intensify awareness campaigns with targeted messaging that addresses stigma around teenage pregnancy and dropout.

- Use local role models or previously re-enrolled girls to share their stories publicly, which helps normalize re-entry and inspire others.
- Engage more fathers and male guardians in the conversation about girls' education, as their support is crucial in household decision-making.

SLIDE 12: Sustainability

During the implementation stage of your project, it is still important to be thinking about how the impacts of the project will benefit participants and community members in the long term. What are you doing to ensure the success of your project long term?

To ensure the long-term success and continued impact of the project, we have implemented sustainability strategies that emphasize **local ownership, institutional integration** and **resource mobilization**. These efforts are designed to ensure that the support for girls' re-entry into education continues well beyond the project's life span, particularly through alignment with the Tanzania 2022 School Dropout Re-entry Guideline, a nationally recognized and endorsed policy framework.

1. Strengthening Local Stakeholder Ownership and Capacity

Stakeholder Training and Committees:

A 2-day capacity-building workshop was held with 25 key stakeholders including district education officers, ward leaders, and school representatives focused on the national Tanzania 2022 School Dropout Re-entry Guideline. This workshop empowered them with practical knowledge and tools to take ownership of re-entry implementation efforts. Stakeholders are now more aware of their roles and responsibilities under the policy and are actively engaging in follow-up activities such as identifying dropouts, providing counseling, and supporting re-enrollment efforts.

Ongoing Engagement Platform:

A dedicated WhatsApp group of over 30 active members was created to maintain continuous communication and coordination among stakeholders. This platform facilitates real-time problem-solving, peer learning, and sharing of data and progress updates ensuring that collaboration and accountability remain strong even after the project period ends.

2. Institutionalizing Re-entry Processes in Local Systems

The project has partnered with ward education offices and school leadership teams to integrate dropout identification, follow-up, and re-engagement strategies into existing school-community partnership structures. This ensures that dropout monitoring becomes a routine part of school operations, and not a stand-alone or temporary activity.

Efforts are also underway to encourage local education authorities to include re-entry tracking and support as a formal part of district and school-level planning and budgeting

processes. This will help sustain momentum and resource allocation even after donor funding concludes.

The Tanzania 2022 School Dropout Re-entry Guideline provides a national policy backbone for these efforts, increasing the likelihood that local government authorities will continue to support and enforce re-entry mechanisms as part of their mandated educational priorities.

3. Resource Mobilization:

We are actively seeking additional funding from other development partners and donors to scale up the project, expand its reach, and ensure continuity beyond the current funding cycle.

SLIDE 13: Why is this important? (link to broader advocacy)

This project connects to many of the UN SDGs, but for the sake of time will focus primarily on SDG 4 – inclusive and equitable access to quality education.

Education 2030 devotes considerable attention to technical and vocational skills development, specifically regarding access to affordable quality Technical and Vocational Education and Training; the acquisition of technical and vocational skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship; the elimination of gender disparity and ensuring access for the vulnerable. In this context, as seen in the project with RUT, they focus on developing vocational and technical skills as alternative pathways to education.

TVET can equip youth with the skills required to access the world of work, including skills for self-employment.

It is important to note that socioeconomic disparities are evident in many education indicators. Disparities based on location and household wealth are even more pronounced, showing that rural and poorer families experience greater disadvantages. This was addressed by RUT in the development and implementation of the project – acknowledging the challenge of accessing remote and rural communities and finding locally relevant intervention methods to combat the challenge.

Connecting to World Youth Skills Day – this day acknowledges the strategic importance of equipping young people with skills for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship. World Youth Skills Day provides a unique opportunity for dialogue between young people, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, firms, employers' and workers' organizations, policy makers and development partners. Participants have highlighted the ever-increasing significance of skills as the world is embarking on a transition towards a sustainable model of development.

SDG 4 and World Youth Skills Day are both prime examples of how closely linked advocacy is to ACWW projects – projects are rooted in our 3 main funding streams which ultimately

come from the understanding that there is a global need to address local challenges such as accessible and relevant education and equipping young people with skills they need to improve their lives and communities. While the UN poses what challenges and goals need to be addressed, it is through the work of NGOs and charities such as ACWW where we see these goals in action in creating sustainable development for the future.

Final slide: Donate!