

Secondary Education Study Tour

23-26 April - Uganda

Reflection Report





Welcome to the Reflection Report for **GSF's Secondary Education Study Tour**. This 4-day engagement in Uganda was led with the support of our anchor partner **BHP Foundation**. We are also indebted to our incredible host organisations - **Building Tomorrow**, **PEAS** and **School for Life Foundation** - who graciously welcomed us inside their wonderful learning spaces.

This report sets the context for the study tour, introduces the amazing 22 participants who joined from across 8 countries, share key learnings and invites collaboration to take the journey of collective learning forward.

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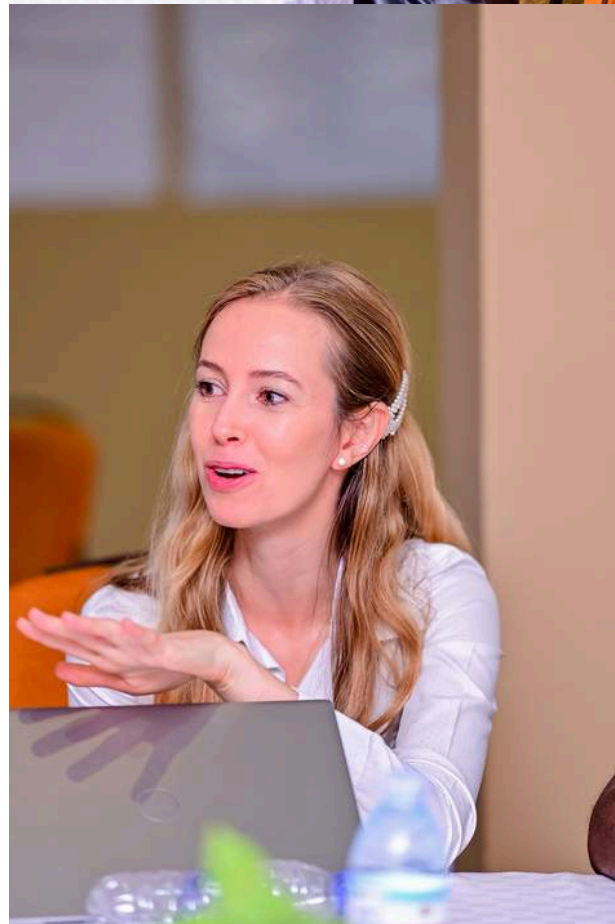
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Day 4 Munyonyo Resort

Strengthening secondary schooling is key to fulfilling the promise made to young people

Why Secondary Education?

Today, young people represent 25% of the world's population, and almost 90% of them are living in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). In many of these countries, access to and completion of secondary education is dismal. Out of the 244 million children and youth between the ages of 6- 18 reported to be out of school, nearly 178 million drop out at the lower and upper secondary levels.

Three critical gaps exist

Access

Shortage of secondary schools fuel an access gap.

Value

Effective transition from primary schools, and distinctive value of secondary education is missing.

Agency

Many graduates are unprepared to transition to work

We organised the Study Tour to

allow participants to immerse themselves in the education context of Uganda; learn from key decision makers and organisations who are implementing programmes in that context. We experienced the power of a learning network and collectively strengthened our resolve to navigate programmatic and systemic challenges across diverse contexts.



22 Individuals

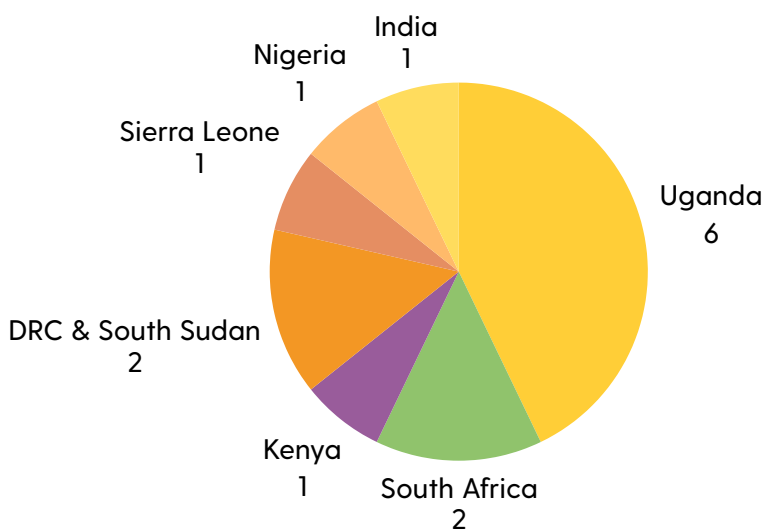


8 Countries

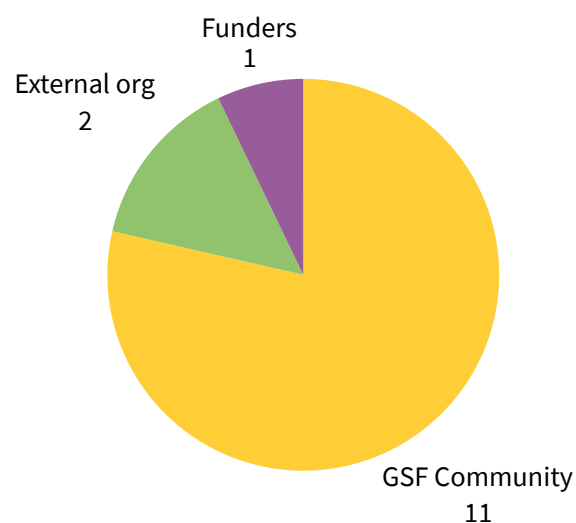
To learn more about each individual/organisation and the incredible work they do in secondary education, read [here](#)



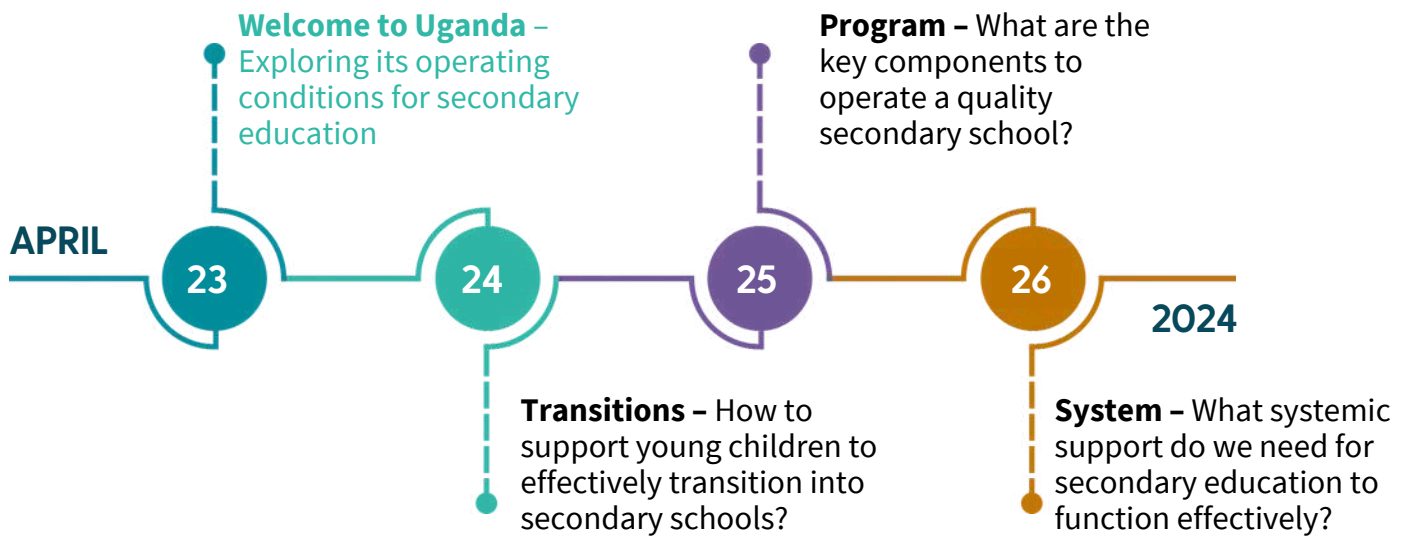
14 Organisations



Countries Represented



Attendees



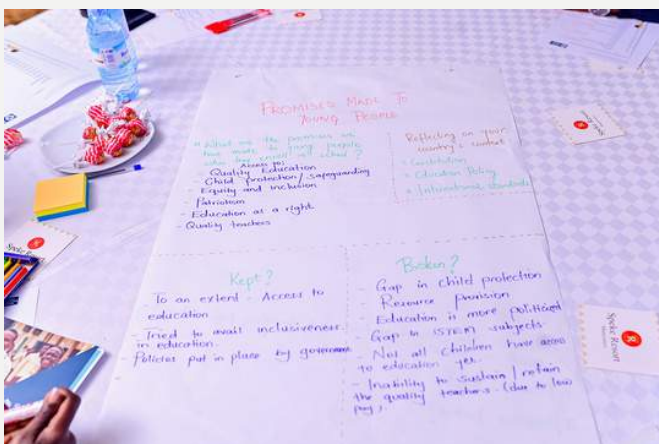
Day 1



Our space



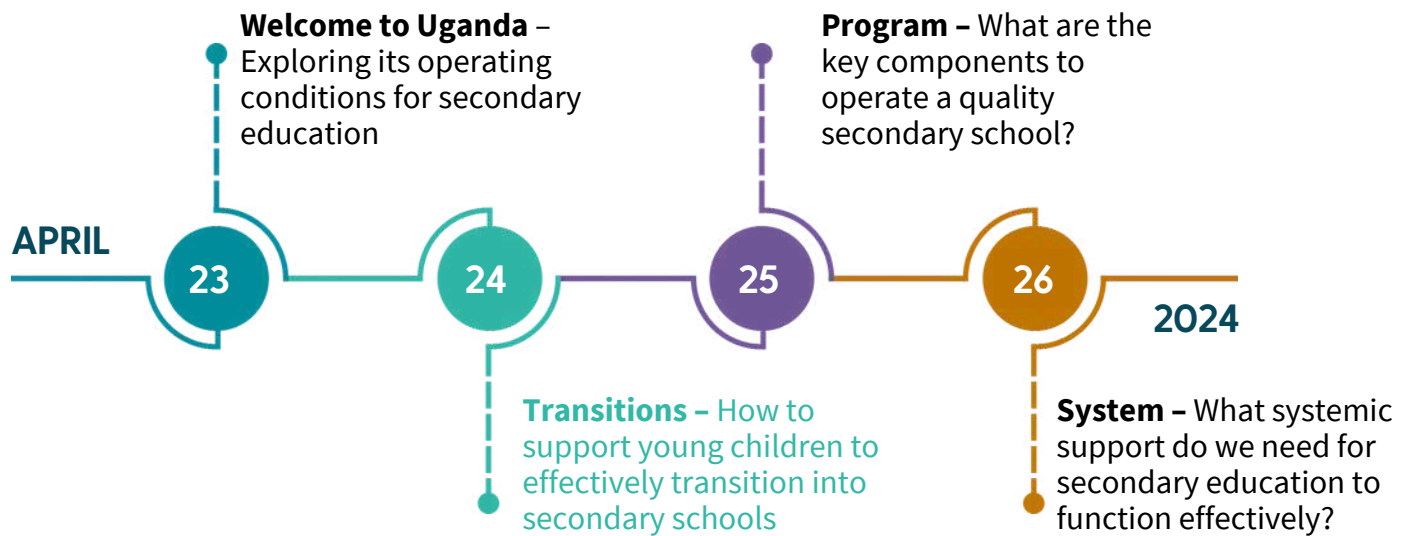
Grace - the energiser expert



Promises made to young people - kept & broken



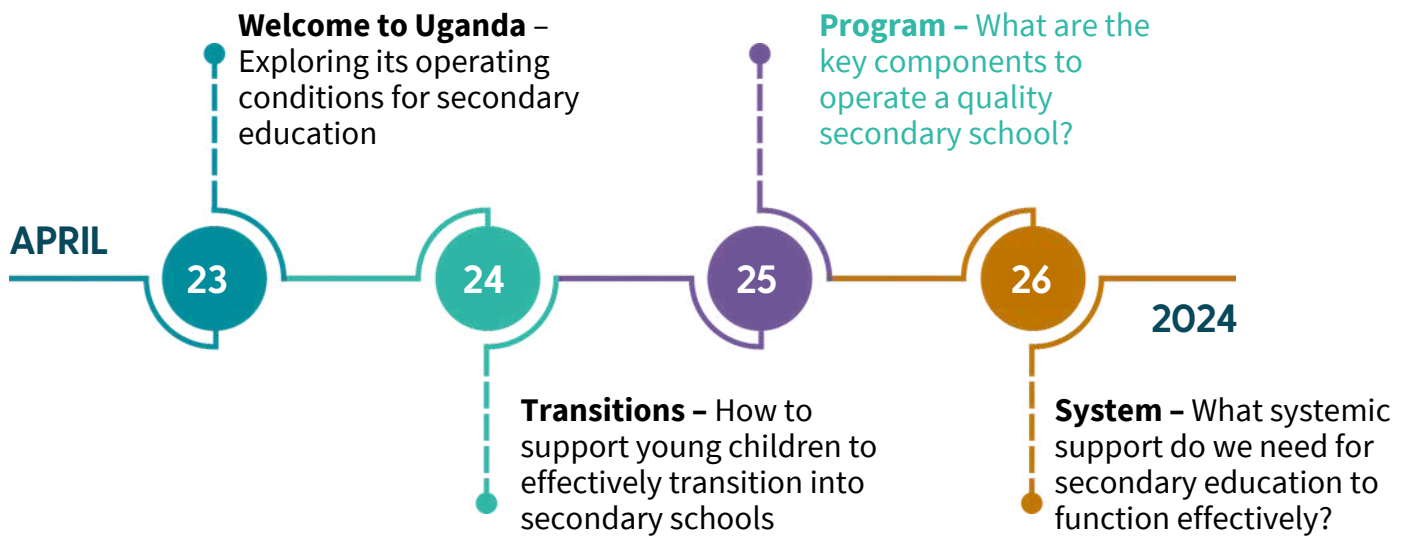
Panel - Uganda's operating conditions



Day 2

Visit to Building Tomorrow School & engaging with the Roots to Rise Fellows





Day 3

Visit to schools of PEAS and School for Life



PEAS



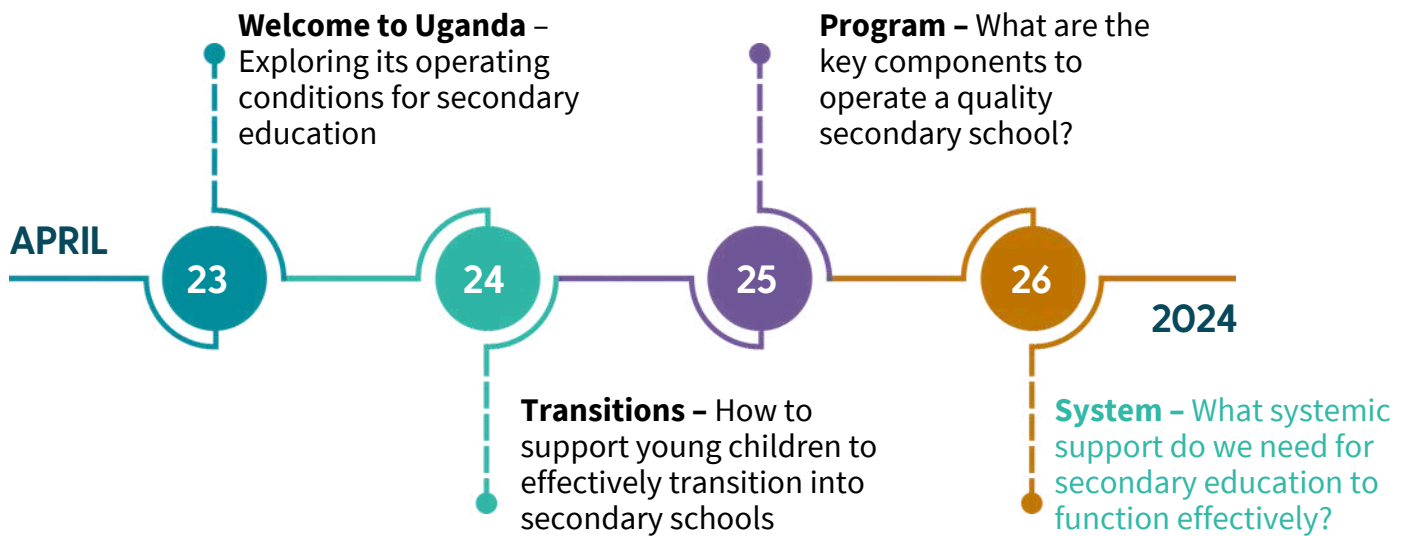
PEAS



School for Life



School for Life



Day 4



Critical Features for Secondary Education



Panel - Influencing systemic change



Body and mind flow



Commitments

Building skills & agency through secondary education



The challenge is far greater than any single organisation can tackle on its own.

Out of the 244 million children and youth between the ages of 6- 18 reported to be out of school, nearly 178 million drop out at the lower and upper secondary levels.



Cross alignment and collaboration across different stages of schooling is paramount.

The transition from primary to secondary to tertiary education and the world of work is significantly influenced by the foundational learning and nurturing in the lower years of education. Proper child development and safety at the secondary level therefore creates a basis for effective transitions beyond secondary education.



There are incredible pockets of innovative solutions available across diverse contexts, which should be widely shared and contextually adapted.

Some of these have been highlighted in the GSF Secondary Education Practice Brief - many more need lime light.



The absence of systemic checkpoints, such as end-of-primary high-stakes examinations and mandatory pass marks has significantly promoted transitions from primary to secondary education.

South Africa enables primary to secondary education, compared to countries like DRC and Sierra Leone, where transition to secondary is high stake.



Active engagement and partnership with the local and national government paves the path for creating sustainable and scalable pathways towards strengthening secondary education.

Prioritising system strengthening - the schools and the leadership at local ministry of education were strongly engaged across all three organisations visited during the study tour.



Building skills & agency through secondary education



Impact of Community-Powered Learning: effective organisations recognise that they cannot influence the community, without involving the community.

Building Tomorrow engages Community Education Volunteers to bridge learning gaps and strengthen their remediation program. PEAS and School for Life also demonstrated active engagement with the parents and community.



Shift in mindset and optimisation of locally available resources go a long way in improving quality education at the grassroots.

The visit to Building Tomorrow demonstrated how simple techniques such as use of string syllables on the classroom floor, used as the writing board promoted learning and engagement in the classroom.



Skill-based learning prepares students for the world of work and entrepreneurship, towards solving real-life problems.

Students from PEAS and School for Life demonstrated innovative projects such as crop and animal farming, soap making, tailoring, electrical skills, and artwork, which are practical skills replicable after school.



Young people are not only at the receiving end but can be passionate givers. Engaging them early on through fellowships and volunteer programs – they acquire leadership skills and provide a helping hand in bridging learning gaps in foundational years.

Building Tomorrow engages recent graduates through their Roots to Rise fellowship, each supports four schools to develop school improvement plans, establish policies, set up clubs, ensure a safe and conducive learning environment, provide training to School Leaders and Teachers.

Understanding the unique context of Uganda and its operating conditions in the education sector



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Henry Senkasi
Country Director
PEAS



Ntakamaze Nziyovira
Executive Director
CIYOTA



Mugoya Musa
Program Officer - Initiative
for Social Economic Rights



1 Access to and completion of secondary school is unequal in Uganda, with girls being at highest risk of dropping out.

2 Transition rates for refugees are notably lower from primary to secondary and secondary to university in Uganda, which hosts over 1.9 million refugees.

3 Systemic issues like hidden costs (transportation costs, examination fees etc) that parents may not be aware of, impacts access to government secondary schools.

Policy efforts & Systemic change focusing on Non-state and Government Partnerships



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Henry Muyanja
Country Director
Street Child Uganda



Nabbuye Hawah
Managing Director
Educate! Uganda



1 The Government is keen on partnering through grant aiding for non-state schools with a provision of teachers, to increase access to secondary schooling. It aims to identify schools as 'Centres of Excellence' in different regions that can offer support to the entire district.

2 Conducting research and collection of data for stronger decision-making should be done in partnership with the government and relevant ministries. This furthers trust and collaboration, and advances on policies to implement change within the schools.

3 Digitisation of monitoring tools has been a positive step, and critical for measuring transition from primary to secondary schooling. The non-state sector needs to understand how to compliment this, and support the government.

4 Enrolment levels for secondary education in refugee contexts is dismal, and lack of infrastructure and over-congested classrooms inhibits quality learning. Affirmative action such as more support to non-state organisations is required to construct and operate schools in refugee settings.

5 Alternate models to strengthening access to quality secondary education in the most remote rural contexts must be nurtured, by practicing models like the ones created by Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciencias (FUNDAEC), that guarantee not only the success of economic projects but also the sustained progress of the communities. Its' curriculum was adapted by 'Kimanya-Ngeyo' to the Ugandan context for the teacher training in the late 2010s, with significant positive outcomes.



How to support young children to effectively transition into secondary schools?

One of the central questions we undertook during the study tour, was to identify key enablers that act as a bridge for students transitioning from primary to secondary years. These are some elements that were highlighted. It is a starting point and not an exhaustive list.

Beyond the Classroom

- Infrastructure
- Proximity to school
- School feeding programme
- Safe space
 - Encouragement
 - Sense of belonging
 - Safeguarding learners
 - Zero tolerance to corporal punishment
- Active parental engagement
 - Clear communication channel to raise issues
 - Participation in school management
- Favorable government policies + autonomy to act

In-classroom Teaching & Learning

- Gradual transition from familiar to unfamiliar language
- Valuing the significance of remediation, and adopting the Teaching at the Right Level approach to improve literacy
- Shift in mindset is a key motivator – optimising different avenues present in the classroom as a resource
- Assessment that is neither discouraging nor labeling



What are the key components to operate a quality secondary school?

The most significant question that remained with us throughout the study tour, was to carve out critical features to build and run a quality secondary school under less resourceful conditions. These are some elements that were highlighted. It is a starting point and not an exhaustive list.



Themes & Principles

- 1 Equitable access** – no child is left out
 - an inclusive admission policy that ensures no child is discriminated against prior performance
 - actively creating low-fee payment and boarding facilities.
- 2 Relationship** – in the best interest of all stakeholders
 - Active engagement with the community
 - Curating and upholding relationship with respective government functionaries
- 3 Safety** – zero tolerance to corporal punishment
 - Positive behavior management practices
 - Policies in place for norm change
- 4 Leadership** – servant leadership for greater good
 - ability to fit in with community's cultural norms
 - practicing active listening and mutual respect
- 5 Up-skilling teachers** through visible and measurable indicators
 - encouraging adaptive learning
 - CPDs that are relevant to their current needs and encourages/ accounts for practice
 - creating meaningful pathways for them
- 6 Data and evidence** – supporting evidence-based interventions
 - Redefined and contextualized innovation
 - Adopting information management systems
- 7 Learner and life outcomes** – embracing a sense of excellence
 - Enabling a strong student culture
 - Providing opportunities for skill development including non-academic skills are key to growth and creativity.



Survey Result

100%

I was able to build and deepen my relationships and networks. (Strongly Agree and Agree)

100%

Through the GSF Study Tour on Secondary Education, I was able to access new ideas and perspectives to help strengthen my organisation and work. (Strongly Agree and Agree)

77%

Net Promoter Score

9.3/10

I found the Study Tour on Secondary Education a safe space to express views openly and communicate challenges.

100%

The GSF Study Tour was very useful to me. (Strongly Agree and Agree)

Participants' Commitments

Organise virtual reunion

Create mentorship prog.

Organise in-country meet

Grow the learner network

Conduct a scoping study

Adopt entrepreneurship clubs

Lead a virtual **Communities of Practice (CoP) on Secondary Education** that

- **Invite members** engaging with secondary education across GSF community to join
- Bring **highlighted principles into action** through examples & case studies
- Bring together **resources & evidence repository** for strengthening
 - transition from primary to secondary
 - quality provision of secondary education
 - transition beyond secondary education
- Bring researchers on board – **cross-learning between researchers and practitioners**
- **Hearing from external organisations** beyond the GSF community working on
 - upskilling of students and teachers
 - creating pathways for transition beyond secondary education
- Curate **Mentor-Mentee relationships** across practitioners to learn from each other



More information on the dates and specific engagement within the CoP will be shared soon. Meanwhile if you have questions/comments, kindly reach out to ajay.pinjani@globalschoolsforum.org



A STEP.

Connecting with other people
across the world,
My eyes have been opened.

My eyes were opened to things
unseen before.

The beauty that lies in collaboration
Collaborating to lay a foundation for
the young generation to build a
tomorrow they will be proud of.

We want to be proud of you
So we will do what it takes to:
enhance the education path, monitor
and follow through.
To ensure you achieve better excellence

We value you!



THEIR CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

PRINCIPLES: Zero tolerance to
Corporal punishment

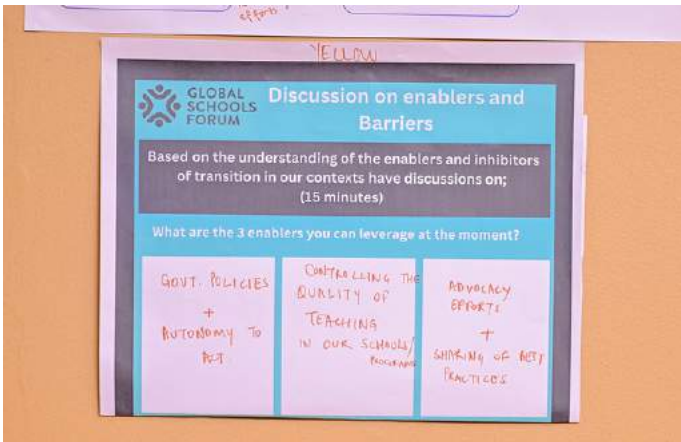
- Adherence to policies; child
Safeguarding and protection

EXECUTION

- Language change in policies i.e.
(What, when, why): Creating platforms
for discussion
- Guidance and Counselling (Get experts
in schools, plan to integrate this in daily
plans)
- Community involvement in mentorship
and monitoring the children's behaviour

MINIMUM CRITERIA TO OPERATE
A SECONDARY SCHOOL (IN A REMOTE
CONTEXT)

1. Feeder Primary Schools - to ensure good
Population of learners
2. Nature/type of already existing secondary
schools in the area.
3. Operational cost + start-up cost + CAPEX
4. Accessibility - eg. road network
5. Availability of Labour (skilled & unskilled)
6. Transition rates from Primary to Secondary
- 7.





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