

GROWING UP GREAT!

End of Project Scale-up Assessment Report

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ACRONYMS

BMGF	Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
BG+	Bien Grandir Plus
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CHW	Community Health Worker
DEV	Family Life Education Directorate
DUAS	Urban Department of Social Affairs
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EPST	Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Technical Education
FLE	Family Life Education
GUG	Growing Up GREAT!
GUG–TWF	Growing Up GREAT!: The Way Forward
MOE	Ministry of Education (known as the EPST)
MOH	Ministry of Health
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PNSA	National Adolescent Health Program
RECO	Community Relays
RECOPE	Community Networks for Child Protection
SRG	Stakeholder Reference Group
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive health
UCSD	University of California San Diego
VYA	Very Young Adolescent

INTRODUCTION TO GROWING UP GREAT!'S SCALE UP

Growing Up GREAT! (GUG) is an evidence-based gender-transformative sexual and reproductive health (SRH) program for in-school and out-of-school very young adolescents (VYAs) ages 10–14 years, and the important adults in their lives. The program was developed, piloted and scaled in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from 2015–2022.

From program inception, Growing Up GREAT! was designed and implemented in ways that would support the program's long-term sustainability and scale. Over a three-year period (2019–2022), the GUG team collaborated with local implementers and an international and multi-disciplinary Resource Team, to plan and implement activities to scale and sustain GUG in two ways:

1. Vertical scale: institutionalizing GUG in the Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Health (MOH) and local organizational systems, and
2. Horizontal scale: expanding the reach of GUG to include more adolescents, families and communities.

To assess progress towards these two types of scale, the project team developed overall scale-up objectives. These included:

1. reaching at least 10,000 in-school VYAs and 3,000 out-of-school VYAs
2. integrating GUG into relevant programs of the key Ministry partners at the national and provisional levels; and
3. building the capacity of CBOs to support the implementation of GUG activities.

The project team collaborated with local stakeholders via a multi-disciplinary advisory body, the GUG Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG), to develop 24 comprehensive indicators in the domains of institutionalization (vertical scale), expansion (horizontal scale), and ongoing learning to assess progress in achieving overall scale-up objectives. Vertical scale-up efforts focused on strengthening the capacity of community-based organizations in advocacy and resource mobilization and collaborating with the Ministry of Social Affairs to integrate GUG into remedial education centers (known in DRC as *Centres de Rattrapage*) programming to institutionalize GUG for out-of-school adolescents. Horizontal scale-up efforts focused on expanding GUG programming to 38 new *quartiers* and 352 new schools. Scale up progress was not achieved towards the benchmarks for the integration of GUG into the annual budgets of our Ministry partners (MOE and MOH) and the integration into the work plan of the MOE. As the program team learned, budget constraints in DRC are linked to continued needs for funding from bilateral donors. Thus, despite community support for and policies designed to institutionalize GUG, funding for its scale remained out of reach. In total, GUG met 19 of the 24 expansion, institutionalization and scale-up learning benchmarks.

With the aim of documenting the process taken to and progress achieved in the scale GUG over the project life course, the project team has developed a total of three scale up reports. The first was

the Growing Up GREAT! Scale Up Plan published in 2019.¹ The second, developed two years later, assessed the progress made towards GUG's scale up from 2019–2021.² This third and final report summarizes highlights and learnings from the first two reports and describes the expansion and institutionalization efforts and achievements in the last two years of scale up.

FOUNDATIONS FOR SCALE

The GUG team began to lay the groundwork for scale up at the project's inception by prioritizing three approaches deemed essential for establishing local buy-in for the program and promoting its long-term sustainability. In this section, we outline the three approaches that formed the foundation of GUG's scale-up efforts.

Engaging Key Stakeholders and Local Partners

A critical investment made at project onset was engaging local stakeholders to build a foundation for scale up throughout the life of the project. Stakeholders included government bodies, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local community-based organizations (CBOs), many of whom implemented project activities during the pilot. These stakeholders were members of the multi-disciplinary Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG), which was convened in 2016. SRG members were engaged to provide technical guidance throughout the project, and during scale up activities to identify opportunities to integrate GUG learning approaches into broader Congolese policies and existing health and education systems. Congolese Ministry partners and CBOs, shown in Table 1, were involved in the institutionalization (known as vertical scale up) of different components of GUG.

1 Growing Up GREAT! Scale-Up Plan. (2019). Washington, D.C.: Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). https://gehweb.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/gug-scale-up-report-april-2019_final.pdf

2 Save the Children & Center on Gender Equity and Health. (2021). Growing Up GREAT! Scale Up Assessment Report. Washington, D.C: Save the Children for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. https://gehweb.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/gug-scale-up-assessment-report_10.2021.pdf

Table 1. | *Growing Up GREAT! Ministry and CBO Partners Involved in Scale Up*

<p>Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Technical Education, Family Life Education Directorate (EPST/DEVC)</p>	<p>The EPST was a partner since project inception and led the scale up of school-based activities. The scale up included integration of the GUG toolkit into classroom-based lessons of the Congolese Family Life Education (FLE) program. In addition, Save the Children and EPST/DEVC partnered in advocacy efforts to develop a policy that formalized the GUG very young adolescent (VYA) club approach within schools.</p>
<p>Ministry of Public Health, National Adolescent Health Program (MOH/PNSA)</p>	<p>The PNSA, part of the National Reproductive Health Program (PNRS) at the Ministry of Health (MOH), was the official government sponsor of GUG and led the scale up of health exchange activities for school and community-based clubs to facilitate activities with parents and community members. PNSA also collaborated on a number of health system strengthening activities, including trainings and joint supervision visits with provincial-level officials and health zone supervision teams.</p>
<p>Ministry of Social Affairs, Urban Department of Social Affairs (MOSA/DUAS)</p>	<p>This Ministry supported GUG from project inception as a member of the SRG, but intensified collaboration in the second year of scale up and supported integration of GUG into the educational programming for out-of-school adolescents via remedial education institutions centers (<i>Centres de Rattrapage</i>).</p>
<p>Community-based Organizations (CBOs)</p>	<p>Two CBOs, Réseau des Adolescents et Jeunes Congolais en Population et Développement (RAJECOPOD) and the Association pour le Bien-Etre Familial (ABEF-ND), served as Lead CBOs during scale up. These CBOs have experience implementing intervention activities during the GUG pilot or Bien Grandir Plus (sister project of GUG) implementation. They provided direct support for school-based activities while also assisting two new user organizations – Alliance Communautaire pour la Promotion des Droits Fondementaux (APDF) and Union Féminine du Millénaire (UFEM) – to implement the community-based activities with VYAs, parents and community members.</p>

In the final years of the project, key members of the SRG joined representatives from two CBOs to form the Resource Team—a continuation of the SRG focused specifically on guiding scale-up efforts. This decision was made to leverage the SRG’s technical and operational expertise and their active participation in technical oversight and joint supervision since the project launch. An updated Terms of Reference described the shifted roles and responsibilities of the Resource Team during scale up, including participating in quarterly learning meetings, helping scale-up implementers solve persistent challenges, liaising with provincial and district level health and education officials as necessary, and

facilitating clear communication loops for sharing/reporting monitoring and supervision data. The Resource Team members included representatives from the following institutions and organizations:

- The Ministry of Health, represented by the PNSA and the National Reproductive Health Plan (PNSR)
- The Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Technical Education (EPST), represented by the Director of Family Life Education (FLE)
- The Ministry of Social Affairs
- The Ministry of Women, Families and Children
- The Ministry of Youth
- United Nations Agencies, including representatives of UNFPA and UNICEF
- International non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with related programming
- Local resource CBOs (RAJECOPOD and ABEF)

Developing a Scalable Intervention

The GUG intervention package was intentionally designed to include a set of intuitive, flexible, and simple-to-use complementary materials. The prioritization of simplicity in material design means that teachers and community leaders using the GUG toolkit can attain mastery of the intervention materials after only a basic orientation, without extensive training or ongoing support.

Generating Credible and Actionable Evidence for Continuous Learning and Adaptive Management

From the inception of GUG, the team made efforts to continuously engage key stakeholders and partners in data analysis, interpretation and learning. Data from various sources, including monitoring data and observations from front line workers, were analyzed on a quarterly basis allowing the team to address scale-up challenges and identify revisions to the GUG approach. A series of small, rapid qualitative investigations and scalability assessments, outlined below, were conducted as part of the continuous learning efforts.

1. The first study examined the feasibility and effectiveness of the parent/caregiver sessions and provided information on how to increase caregiver participation and improve session effectiveness.
2. Study two was conducted with teachers and school leadership to gain a deeper understanding of the frequency and quality of activities in school clubs versus classroom lessons and furnished information on how teachers used the GUG materials to complement the national FLE curriculum.
3. The third examined the feasibility, utility, and potential for scaling-up GUG's health system-level activities.

Finally, adaptive management approaches allowed the team to pivot quickly in the first few years of scale up. This proved especially useful during unforeseen delays caused by political instability in advance of the 2018 national elections and the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

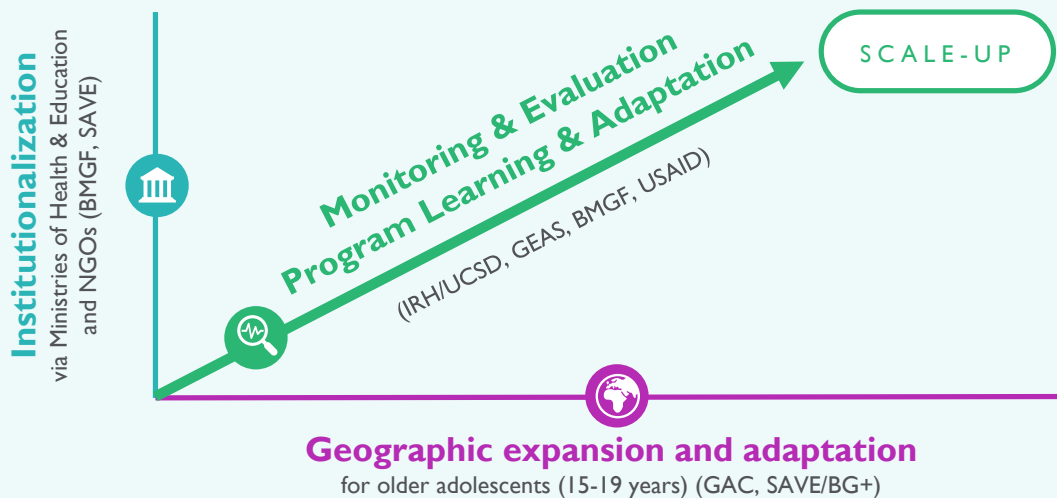
SCALE-UP STRATEGY: INSTITUTIONALIZING AND EXPANDING GUG'S REACH

Scale-up efforts were guided by the ExpandNet Framework³—a detailed process for developing a scale-up strategy, and for systematically identifying and evaluating actions or conditions that lead to successful scale up. The GUG Consortium aimed for two types of scale:

- Vertical Scale Up: institutionalizing GUG in the MOE, MOH and local organizational systems;
- Horizontal Scale Up: expanding the reach of GUG to include more adolescents, families, and communities.

This two-pronged scale-up strategy is depicted in Figure 1 and described in more depth below.

Figure 1. | *Institutionalization and Expansion for Sustainable Scale Up*



3 World Health Organization & ExpandNet. (2010). Nine steps for developing a scaling-up strategy. Geneva: World Health Organization. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/44432>

Growing Up GREAT!'s scale-up strategy,⁴ finalized in 2019, aimed to support institutionalization and expansion concurrently and equally. Expansion efforts increased intervention coverage to reach new geographic areas and age groups. Horizontal scale-up efforts were carried out via Bien Grandir Plus (BG+) – a complementary project implementing the GUG approach among both VYAs and older adolescents – funded by a three-year investment from Global Affairs Canada through Save the Children Canada. These efforts included:

- Reaching new schools and communities in Kimbanseke, Masina and Ndjili;
- Adapting the GREAT Toolkit (from which the GUG VYA Toolkit was adapted) for older adolescents (15-19 years), and launch activities with in-school older adolescents through secondary schools and with out-of-school older adolescents through community-based clubs;
- Strengthening the health system and reinforcing the capacity of health providers to bridge the gap between adolescent demand for and limited access to comprehensive and youth-friendly contraceptive and gender-based violence response services; and
- Improving capacities of CBOs to mobilize resources and pursue GUG expansion efforts.

With investments from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and USAID, Growing Up GREAT!: The Way Forward (GUG-TWF), led institutionalization efforts with a focus on:

- Building capacity within key scale-up partners to train and mentor others to implement the GUG approach;
- Aligning with government platforms/initiatives and integrating GUG activities into existing programs;
- Collaborating with the Ministries to develop or adapt monitoring and supervision tools and integrate supportive supervision visits into existing processes/schedules; and
- Advocating for GUG inclusion in key Ministry policies, budgets, and work plans.

The complementary use of vertical and horizontal scale-up efforts was designed to result in greater impact and sustainable scale up. Additionally, concurrent learning between all three projects, GUG, GUG-TWF, and BG+, and documentation of the scale-up process and approach provided important insights about the most appropriate approaches for institutionalization in the DRC context as well as the quality and impact of this dual-pronged scale-up approach.

The scale-up strategy included four key objectives including:

1. Reach at least 10,000 in-school and 300 out-of-school VYAs with the GUG intervention
2. The MOE integrates the GUG approach within relevant government-led programs at the national and provincial levels
3. The MOH integrates the GUG approach into relevant programs at the national and provincial level in Kinshasa (in 4 health zones)
4. CBOs have sufficient capacity to support the implementation of GUG activities by Ministries and/or other local NGOs

⁴ Growing Up GREAT! Scale-Up Plan. (2019). Washington, D.C.: Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). https://gehweb.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/gug-scale-up-report-april-2019_final.pdf

A series of indicators — scale-up benchmarks — were developed in collaboration with the SRG to track scale up progress and accomplishments towards meeting these objectives. The scale-up benchmarks covered three domains:

- **Expansion:** reach more VYAs and key adults to expand impact.
- **Institutionalization:** integrate GUG within MOE, MOH and CBO systems to sustain GUG.
- **Scale-up learning:** increase understanding of scale up and adaptive management of gender-transformative SRH programs.

SCALE-UP ACTIVITIES

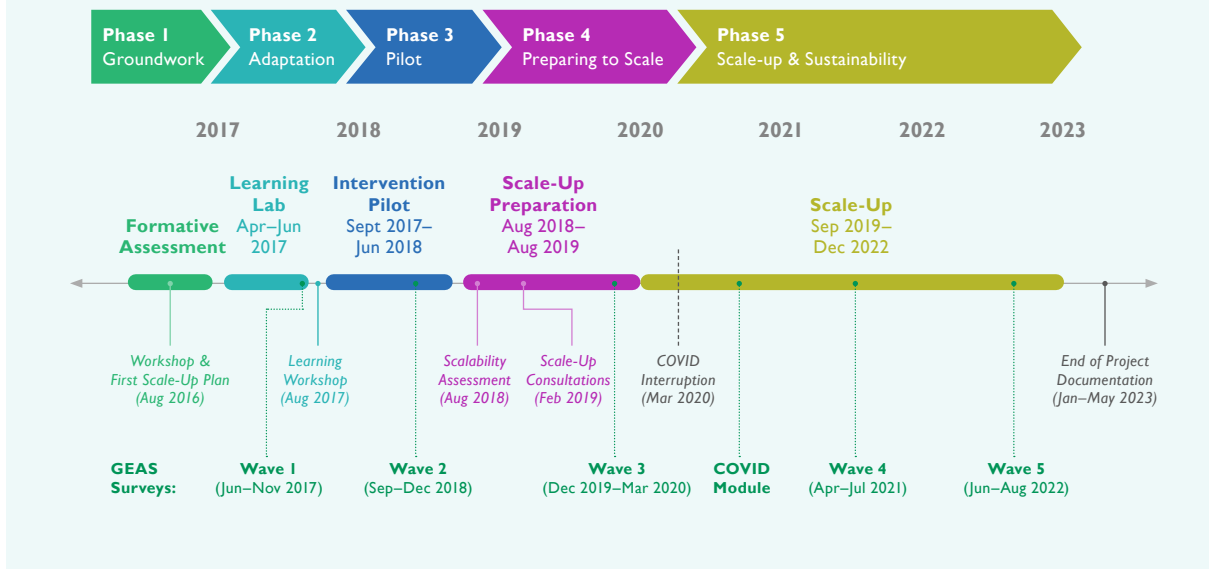
Initial Scale-Up Activities

Growing Up GREAT!'s scale up activities occurred over a period of three school calendar years (2019-20; 2020-21; 2021-22) — see the GUG project timeline in Figure 2 below for reference. In the initial years of scale up, the team expanded programming in Kimbanseke, Masina and Ndjili, three of the five communes of Tshangu District, one of the largest districts in Kinshasa and one with a disproportionately large population of urban poor. Activities in Kimbanseke and Masina were concentrated in limited *quartiers* (neighborhoods) and schools that had not participated in the GUG pilot. Work under Bien Grandir Plus (BG+) expanded GUG programming within 38 new *quartiers* and 352 new schools in Kimbanseke, Masina and Ndjili. GUG continued to support the 80 pilot schools, with a focus on reestablishing school clubs according to the new MOE policy for greater sustainability, and also expanded to 20 new schools. Other efforts included integrating GUG program components into existing government policies and platforms, and strengthening the capacity of expert trainers within the EPST, MOH, Ministry of Gender and Family, and CBOs.

Planned scale-up activities were adapted in the first two years in response to changing events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic halted GUG programming efforts in the second year of scale up and GUG made notable adaptations, including shifting to radio and TV broadcasts, adjusting the timeline of scale-up activities, and revising program materials. In addition to the intentional scale-up strategy, GUG had informal and locally driven scale up by projects in different provinces of the DRC. These projects adopted various components of GUG's programmatic approach and activities. More details on scale-up activities from 2019-2021 can be found in the [2021 Growing Up GREAT! Scale Up Assessment Report](#).⁵

5 Save the Children & Center on Gender Equity and Health. (2021). Growing Up GREAT! Scale Up Assessment Report. Washington, D.C: Save the Children for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. https://gehweb.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/gug-scale-up-assessment-report_10.2021.pdf

Figure 2. | *GUG Project Lifecycle*



Final Scale-Up Activities

In the sections below, we highlight GUG scale up implementation activities that took place in the final years of project scale up.

Horizontal Scale Up: Expanding GUG to Reach More Adolescents

Once schools re-opened and restrictions on in-person activity were lifted, Growing Up GREAT! programming resumed as intended in all schools and communities. GUG continued supporting intervention activities in 99 of the 100 targeted schools and BG+ continued working in the 38 new *quartiers* and 352 new schools that were added in the first two years of scale up.

Intervention Activities

Growing Up GREAT! is a multi-level intervention designed to improve sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender equity among very young adolescents (VYA) and the important adults in their lives. As such, key intervention components include working with VYAs in schools and community clubs, and holding learning sessions with parents and caregivers. More information about the GUG intervention can be found in the GUG Implementation Guide.⁶ In this section, we report on activities directly implemented by Save the Children under GUG. Information about BG+ activities is reported elsewhere.^{7,8}

6 Gayles, J. 2020. Growing Up GREAT! Implementation Guide. Institute for Reproductive Health : Washington, DC.

7 Justus, R. 2022. Bien Grandir Project Summary (in French). Social Norms Learning Collaborative. Available: <https://www.alignplatform.org/resources/bien-grandir-bien-grandir-plus>

8 Save the Children Canada. 2020. Growing-up in Kinshasa, DRC, with the help of BG+. Save the Children Canada: Toronto, ON. Available: <https://www.savethechildren.ca/growing-up-in-kinshasa-drc-with-the-help-of-bg/>

- *VYA School Clubs.* The 2021 school year commenced in October 2021 due to the COVID-19 school disruptions that extended the previous school year. From the start of the new school year through the end of March 2022, a total of 2,846 adolescents were reached through 1,055 school club sessions. Additionally, a total of 74 provider lessons were held with school clubs.
- *VYA Community Clubs.* Community clubs established during scale up held regular weekly meetings and reached 270 out-of-school VYAs and all clubs completed health exchange visits. Additionally, the Ministry of Social Affairs worked with Save the Children to map the GUG intervention to curricula for students at remedial education centers and subsequently established nine clubs for students at these centers.
- *Parent and Community Sessions.* A total of 292 parent sessions were organized from October 2021 to March 2022, reaching 1,306 parents of VYAs. Additionally, 74 community sessions reached 2,083 community members.

Vertical Scale Up: Institutionalization of GUG Approaches into National Policies and Systems

Training and Capacity Building

Throughout the scale-up period, partners received trainings in advocacy and resource mobilization, which had been identified as areas where improvement was needed. The advocacy section included a review of the national SRH laws and policies and identification of specific areas where CBO action may be most meaningful or successful, while the resource mobilization focused on practical steps to prepare for and submit proposals to mobilize additional external funding for the expansion and continued implementation of GUG. As a result of these efforts, the DRC's EPST requested financial support from a number of donors and received funding to extend GUG activities in two communes and provide trainings on GUG as part of the FLE program for teachers in the communes of Plateau and Masina. The last set of trainings were conducted in May 2022, during which CBOs participated in a three-day refresher training on these two areas.

The Growing Up GREAT! toolkit was formally approved by the Ministry of Education in September 2022. Thereafter, it was printed and distributed to schools in catchment areas and some of the materials were reserved as replacement stock.

Monitoring, Supervision, and Evaluation

Save the Children facilitated an Integrated Technical and Organizational Capacity Assessment with CBOs. The CBOs were invited to complete the self-assessment and engage in discussion with Save the Children and other partners about any gaps,

Additionally, as part of efforts to institutionalize GUG for out-of-school adolescents, Save the Children supported the Ministry of Social Affairs to integrate GUG into remedial education centers (*Centres de Rattrapage*) programs. The approach was piloted from February to June 2022, and both parties jointly evaluated the value and feasibility of the approach.

SCALE-UP BENCHMARKS

Initial Progress Towards Meeting Scale-Up Benchmarks

Achievements in initial scale up are summarized here and documented in more depth in the [2021 GUG Scale-Up Assessment Report](#).⁹ Key achievements in this initial period include: 1) reaching more than 10,300 VYAs; 2) integrating GUG into relevant programs of the key Ministry partners at the national and provisional levels; and 3) building the capacity of CBOs to support the implementation of GUG activities. Due to COVID-related challenges in early-to-mid 2020 which limited community activities and the availability of health facility staff for non-urgent health matters, GUG did not achieve certain horizontal scale up benchmarks related to community and health facility engagement. Growing Up GREAT! achieved more than half of the institutionalization benchmarks, including training master trainers, health facility staff, community health workers and teachers. Selected institutionalization achievements are summarized below in Figure 3. The project also supported scale-up activities not evaluated by benchmarks, such as training adolescents as school club leaders and developing supervision tools for use by Ministry representatives.

Figure 3. | *Overview of Growing Up GREAT! Institutionalization Achievements in the First Two Years of Scale Up*

MOE/ EPST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating and rolling out formal protocol for the creation and maintenance of school-based clubs (The Guide for Establishment and Operation of School Clubs)• Integrating GUG into the Family Life Education program
MOH	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuing to support the health exchange activities with facility-based providers• Training of master of trainers, health facility staff and community health workers• Citing GUG as the seminal approach for engaging VYA in two consecutive PNSA Strategic Plans (2019–2022; 2021–2025), and including GUG key activities in both the national and provincial level MOH work plans for 2021
CBOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting the MOE and schools in rolling out the school-based clubs• Supporting smaller NGOs to implement community-based clubs and parent and community sessions
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training over 3,000 adolescents as school club leaders in addition to teachers• Developing three supervision tools for use by Ministry representatives during nearly 400 supervision visits completed during scale-up• Training master trainers and developing of age and life-stage counseling tools for improved provision of adolescent-friendly health services

9 Save the Children & Center on Gender Equity and Health. (2021). Growing Up GREAT! Scale Up Assessment Report. Washington, D.C: Save the Children for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. [Lhttps://gehweb.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/gug-scale-up-assessment-report_10.2021.pdf](https://gehweb.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/gug-scale-up-assessment-report_10.2021.pdf)

Final Progress Towards Meeting Scale-Up Benchmarks

This section summarizes the scale-up achievements in the final project period (2021-2022). A detailed description of the expansion and institutionalization benchmarks can be found in the Appendix.

Expansion and Reach

Growing Up GREAT! met five of the six benchmarks for expansion, of which four were achieved in the first two years of scale up. As shown in Table 2, the project continued to exceed the goals set for reaching VYAs and by the end of scale up, over 37,000 in-school, 657 out-of-school adolescents and 6,858 community members were reached. After a delayed start due to COVID-related challenges with the availability of health facility staff for non-urgent health matters, GUG partially fulfilled the benchmark measuring GUG's engagement with health facilities. Fourteen health facilities participated in GUG activities (goal=15).

Table 2. | *Benchmarks for expanding the reach and impact of GUG within intervention zones*

Expansion Benchmarks	Total (cumulative)	Goal	Status
# in-school VYAs exposed to GUG	37,901	10,000	●
# in-school VYAs enrolled in school clubs	8,800	4,500	●
# out-of-school VYAs enrolled in community clubs	657	300	●
# community members (including parents reached by GUG activities)	6,858	5,500	●
# neighborhoods (<i>quartiers</i>) reached by GUG (out-of-school VYAs, parents and community reached by GUG)	18	18	●
# health facilities participating in GUG activities	14	15	●

Institutionalization

Growing Up GREAT! developed institutionalization benchmarks for each project partner, and as shown in Table 3, the project achieved 12 of the 15 institutionalization benchmarks throughout the four years of scale up.

Ministry of Education

Growing Up GREAT! met an additional benchmark for institutionalization within the MOE/EPST during the last two years of scale up, thus achieving four out of the six benchmarks. The project recently reached the training benchmarks for teachers after training an additional 27 teachers in 2022, thus training a total of 317 teachers. All 100 planned schools were reached, fulfilling the benchmark in 2021; however, from January 2022, two of these schools could no longer be reached.

The MOE/EPST also completed its validation process for using GUG materials at a national scale. They approved, printed and distributed most of the GUG toolkit materials to schools in catchment areas. Some of these printed materials were saved as replacement stock. Unfortunately, there was no progress against the benchmarks for integration into MOE/EPST work plans or budgets because the MOE/EPST does not yet include FLE in its regularly funded programming.

Ministry of Health

After a delayed start due to COVID-related obstacles, GUG met the benchmark for engagement of health zones during the last two years of scale up. In total, GUG achieved six of the seven benchmarks for institutionalization within the MOH. Complementing these activities, BG+ worked in a total of 65 health facilities and trained: 284 health facility staff, 38 community health workers and 7 community animators. Five (of four anticipated) health zones conducted health exchange visits.

Community-based Organizations

Growing Up GREAT! made progress during the last two years of scale up and met both benchmarks for institutionalization through CBOs. The project achieved the first benchmark of having six CBOs supporting scale up with the capacity to provide technical assistance to other organizations. This achievement aligns with the results of a CBO capacity assessment that Save the Children developed and implemented in 2022. CBOs reported they fully met organizational capacities, human resource criteria, and the technical capacity to train, coordinate, supervise, monitor, and evaluate program activities. Overall, these results suggest CBOs have high capacity to continue the implementation of GUG, although additional training may be needed to increase capacity for community engagement. The second benchmark was met as CBOs secured funding to implement GUG within new or existing funding.

Ministry of Social Affairs

A new partner, the Ministry of Social Affairs, developed scale-up strategies and work plans during the last two years of scale up. Since implementing its work plan in February 2022, the Ministry has supported the establishment of nine clubs at educational remediation centers (*Centres de Rattrapage*) as part of efforts to institutionalize GUG for out-of-school adolescents.

Table 3. | *Benchmarks for Institutionalizing GUG within the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, and Community-Based Organizations*

Ministry of Education (MOE) Benchmarks	Total (cumulative)	Goal	Status
# schools implementing GUG through the MOE	100	100	●
# GUG Master Trainers within the MOE	43	43	●
# teachers trained on GUG by Master Trainers	317	300	●
# MOE annual work plans including GUG (central or provincial level)	0	2	●
# MOE annual budgets including GUG (central or provincial level)	0	2	●
# policy, strategy or training documents including GUG. <i>Specifically: 1) Teacher training on the Family Life Education Program; 2) Guide to setting up and operating school clubs</i>	2	2	●
Ministry of Health (MOH) Benchmarks			
# health zones conducting GUG health exchange visits	5	4	●
# GUG Master Trainers within the MOH	20	20	●
# health facility staff trained on GUG by Master Trainers	62	50	●
# community health workers trained on GUG by Master Trainers	22	20	●
# MOH annual work plans including GUG (central or provincial level)	8	2	●
# MOH annual budgets including GUG (central or provincial level)	1	2	●
# policy, strategy or training documents including GUG	2	2	●
Community-based Organizations (CBOs) Benchmarks			
# CBOs with the capacity to provide support for GUG implementation (independent/external technical support)	6	6	●
# CBOs that have integrated or proposed to integrate GUG into existing or new projects with their own funding	2	2	●

Scale-Up Learning

GUG scale-up learning focused on rapid but rigorous data collection and careful and participatory application of results to shape and refine implementation and scale-up strategies. Throughout the project lifecycle, the project team held frequent learning meetings with the SRG to review GUG’s monitoring and evaluation data. This allowed the project team to understand what worked and what didn’t during scale-up and to adapt the intervention and guide scale-up management decisions. To structure the data and decisions, the project team used the Implementation Mapping Tool (IMT), a tool developed by ExpandNet to facilitate the process of monitoring, implementation and scale up, and documenting significant changes.¹⁰ Scale-up learning benchmarks focused on learning and reflection meetings, rapid learning studies, and GUG adaptations (see Table 4).

Table 4. | *Benchmarks for Scale-up Learning*

Scale-up Learning Benchmarks	Total (cumulative)	Goal	Status
# learning and reflecting meetings held by GUG staff and stakeholders	8	6	●
# learning studies (completed) exploring a topic/ issue relevant to possible adaptations	3	1	●
# adaptations made to GUG (documented in IMT) based on implementation experience and/or results	5	12	●

Learning Meetings

The learning meetings were established to ensure program implementers met regularly to review monitoring and observational data, reflect on challenges and successes, and apply learning and recommendations for improved programming throughout the scale-up period. Two learning meetings were held with scale-up implementers in March and August 2022. The August meeting, which was held over three days, brought together representatives at different levels of the EPST, MOH, and Ministry of Social Affairs to discuss the process of transitioning GUG activities from the CBOs to the government and reflect on the measures needed to ensure continuity of GUG activities. In addition to the learning meetings, the Youth Advisory Council met in June 2021 to discuss the steps and recommendations needed to ensure sustainability after the project ends.

¹⁰ Simmons, R., Fajans, P., Finkle, C., Ghiron, L., & Lundgren, R. (2020). The Implementation Mapping Tool: A tool to support adaptive management and documentation of scale up. ExpandNet. <https://expandnet.net/PDFs/ExpandNet-IMT-Updated-Oct-2020.pdf>

Learning Studies

The initial learning study (2019) assessed GUG’s proposed approach to support parent video sessions using community health workers (*relais communautaires, or RECO*). The study found that RECO involvement was feasible and acceptable; RECOs continue to facilitate community sessions. The second learning study (2021) documented and assessed the process and feasibility of providing Family Life Education through distance learning on TV and radio—an initiative started by DRC’s Ministry of Education during COVID-19 school closures.¹¹ The results suggested that TV and radio broadcasts on FLE topics are a feasible and acceptable mode of education in the DRC context. This distance learning approach may be a useful mode of education not only in times of crisis-related school closures, but also potentially to complement material students are learning in school.

In 2022, the project’s third and final learning study was conducted to improve understanding of the process of transferring skills to focal point teachers implementing the GUG school-based activities and assess the transfer of skills from CBOs currently implementing GUG activities to community health workers (RECO) and community networks for child protection (RECOPE). Overall, the findings suggest that engaging focal point teachers in school-based activities and RECO/RECOPE as facilitators of community-based sessions was acceptable. Agreement was divided on the capacity of supervising ministry partners, such as the EPST and PNSA, to provide needed financial and technical resources to sustain GUG. Finally, respondents believed sustaining GUG required technical and financial partnerships between national, governmental and community-level entities and international organizations. Additional details on the findings can be found in the final study report, *Sustainability of GUG! Institutionalization in the Ministries of Health and Education: A Rapid Qualitative Learning Study*, available in English and French.^{12,13}

Adaptations

The benchmark tracking scale-up adaptations was not met; only five adaptations were made during scale-up implementation versus the 12 anticipated. This does not necessarily mean that scale-up adaptation was inadequate, but rather that GUG’s scale-up design was fit-for-purpose. Adaptations noted in the IMT included minor changes: relaxing requirements for gender balance in club composition when classes were heavily skewed to one gender; allowing a period between VYA leader candidate registration and elections by peers; dividing VYA clubs into smaller groups to respect COVID-19 restrictions; and engaging a member

11 Center on Gender Equity and Health & Save the Children International. (2021). A Case Study from DRC: Integrating Family Life Education into Distance Learning during COVID-19 Closures. La Jolla, CA: University of California San Diego. https://gehweb.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/eng-learning-study-i_final-1.pdf

12 Experts SARL, Save the Children, Center on Gender Equity and Health. (2022). Sustainability of GUG! Institutionalization in the Ministries of Health and Education: A Rapid Qualitative Learning Study. La Jolla, CA: University of California San Diego for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

13 Experts SARL, Save the Children, Center on Gender Equity and Health. (2022). La durabilité de l’institutionnalisation de BG ! au niveau des Ministères de la Santé et de l’Education : Etude qualitative d’Apprentissage rapide. La Jolla, CA : Université de Californie San Diego pour la Fondation Bill & Melinda Gates

CONCLUSIONS

Of the 24 benchmarks that the Growing Up GREAT! project team identified as goals for program expansion, institutionalization, and learning, the project met 19 benchmarks. Notable achievements included the **inclusion of GUG into the MOH/PNSA 3-year strategic plan** as the DRC's flagship approach for engaging and supporting adolescent reproductive health among VYAs. The GUG approach for reaching VYAs was also fully **integrated into the MOE/EPST's Family Life Education program** and in the final year of scale up, GUG was also **integrated into programming supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs**.

To foster long-term sustainability of GUG, the project team convened ongoing learning meetings with key stakeholders and representatives from the MOE/EPST, MOH/PNSA, and Ministry of Social Affairs to reflect on program impact, implementers' experiences with the approach, and to identify any barriers or challenges foreseen for transition from Save the Children's teams to government stakeholders. During these institutionalization consultations, the stakeholders developed road maps outlining the steps to ensure GUG's continued institutionalization and implementation. The road maps identified timelines for the activity planning, systems improvement, and implementation strategies.

KEY LEARNINGS

The process of scaling up GUG highlighted the nuances of scale up and sustainability efforts. Final insights of the scale up process include the need for:

- **Meaningful and ongoing stakeholder engagement at multiple levels.** Growing Up GREAT! was successful in part because the project was able to garner strong acceptance and ownership among health and educational authorities at national, provincial, and local levels. Engaging stakeholders allowed the project to develop approaches and materials that aligned with existing programs and services.
- **Continuous learning and adaptive management. Growing Up GREAT! faced several unanticipated challenges such as civil unrest and COVID-19-related school closures.** Use of adaptive management strategies allowed the project team to pivot as needed during these times. The strategies also facilitated necessary program adaptations before scale up activities were conducted to ensure community support and program sustainability.
- **Stronger advocacy efforts for allocation of governmental resources (Ministries' financial budgets).** Although GUG was included in national policies and strategy documents, the annual budgets of the MOH and MOE did not include line items for GUG as of June 2022, and no funding source has been identified to continue GUG/BG+ health linkage and service provision activities. Future work should include earlier on advocacy efforts among stakeholders for the inclusion of a line item in Ministry budgets and/or to make connections to bilateral donors.

APPENDIX

Key Indicators and Benchmarks for the Scale Up of Growing Up GREAT!

Table of Key Indicators

Scaling up targets (to be achieved by 2023):

- The Growing up GREAT! (GUG) approach affects 10,300 VYAs (in-school and out-of-school).
- The Ministry of Primary, Secondary, and Technical Education (EPST) integrates the GUG approach into relevant programs at the national and provincial in levels in Kinshasa.
- The Ministry of Health (MOH) integrates the GUG approach into relevant programs at the national and provincial level in Kinshasa (in 4 health zones).
- CBOs have sufficient capacity to complement and support GUG activities implemented by Ministries and/or other local NGOs (without the support of Save the Children).

Population : 1,431,000 (Masina : 485,000 and Kimbanseke: 946,000)

EXPANSION Benchmarks # 1.1

Increase participation of VYAs and key adults to expand reach and impact within intervention zones

GUG's approach reached 10,300 VYAs (in-school and out-of-school) and 5,500 parents and community members	January	June	January	June	January	June	Total	Goal
	2020*	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022	(cumulative)	
# in-school VYAs exposed to GUG	0	18,330	7,487	5,345	3,282	3,457	34,444	10,000
# in-school VYAs enrolled in school clubs	0	2,880	3,000	3,000	2,940	0	8,880	4500
# out-of-school VYAs enrolled in community clubs	0	313	387	387	0	270	657	300
# community members (including parents reached by GUG activities)	0	407	1,848	1,221	2,089	1,293	2,255	5,500
# neighborhoods (<i>quartiers</i>) reached by GUG (Out-of-school VYAs, parents and community reached by GUG)	18	0	18	18	18	18	18	18
# health facilities participating in GUG activities	0	0	0	0	14	14	14	15

INSTITUTIONALIZATION Benchmarks # 1.2

Institutionalize GUG! within the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, and community-based organizations for the sustainability

Institutionalization within the Ministry of Education (MOE)	January	June	January	June	January	June	Total	Goal
	2020*	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022	(cumulative)	
# school implementing GUG through the MOE	0	96	100	100	98	98	100	100
# GUG Master Trainers within the MOE	43	0	0	0	0	0	43	43
# teachers trained on GUG by Master Trainers	290	0	0	0	0	27	317	300
# MOE annual work plans including GUG (central or provincial level)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
# MOE annual budgets including GUG (central or provincial level)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
# policy, strategy or training documents including GUG. Specifically: 1) Teacher training on the Family Life Education Program; 2) Guide to setting up and operating school clubs	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	2

Institutionalization within the Ministry of Health (MOH)	January	June	January	June	January	June	Total	Goal
	2020*	2020	2021	2021	2022	2022	(cumulative)	
# health zones conducting GUG health exchange visits	0	0	0	0	0	5	5	4
# GUG Master Trainers within the MOH	20	0	0	0	0	0	20	20
# health facility staff trained on GUG by Master Trainers	62	0	0	0	0	0	62	50
# community health workers trained on GUG by Master Trainers	22	0	0	0	0	0	22	20
# MOH annual work plans including GUG (central or provincial level)	0	0	8	0	0	0	8	2
# MOH annual budgets including GUG (central or provincial level)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
# policy, strategy or training documents including GUG	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	2

Institutionalization within community-based organizations (CBOs)	January 2020*	June 2020	January 2021	June 2021	January 2022	June 2022	Total (cumulative)	Goal
# CBOs with the capacity to provide support for GUG implementation (independent/ external technical support)	4	0	1	2	4	4	6	6
# CBOs that have integrated or proposed to integrate GUG into existing or new projects with their own funding	0	0	1	2	0	0	2	2

LEARNING Benchmarks # 1.3 <i>Generate increased understanding of scale-up and adaptive management of gender-transformative SRH programs through implementation of GUG</i>								
Document the GUG implementation approach and adjustments made to improve the sustainability of the project.	January 2020*	June 2020	January 2021	June 2021	January 2022	June 2022	Total (cumulative)	Goal
# learning and reflecting meetings held by GUG staff and stakeholders	0	2	2	1	0	1	6	6
# learning studies (completed) exploring a topic/ issue relevant to possible adaptations	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
# adaptations made to GUG (documented in IMT) based on implementation experience and/or results	0	4	1	0	0	0	5	12

*Note: Growing Up GREAT!'s scale up activities began mid-2019. The first reporting period reflects the period of July 1, 2019-January 1, 2020.