



## Helpdesk Research Report

# Integrated programmes supporting adolescent girls

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## Question

*Please identify examples of integrated programmes that support adolescent girls.*

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## 1. Overview

This rapid review provides examples of integrated programmes that support adolescent girls. These are programmes which provide integrated support across multiple sectors or activities at once, e.g. covering aspects such as health, education, economic empowerment, preventing violence, forced marriage, etc.

The rapid review uncovered more programme reports than independent programme evaluations, although most programmes appear to have ongoing monitoring or preliminary evaluations. There was very little engagement with programmes' cost and cost effectiveness; the methods of programme scale-up; and concrete lessons learned. This information is provided where available in the literature.

Most programmes did not just target adolescent girls, but extended their support to young women too (ranging from a start age of 10 to an end age of 30). Some programmes focused on very specific groups of girls, such as married or out-of-school girls, while others targeted girls more generally. Some programmes catered to hundreds of girls, while others met the needs of hundreds of thousands.

All the programmes included take an integrated approach and address a variety of economic, educational, health and social skills. They often include a safe space for social activities, where girls can learn economic, health and social skills. Some of the programmes consisted of a set training period, while others were ongoing for as long as the girls were eligible. Many programmes are implemented at the ground level by

adolescent girls themselves, who work as peer educators. A number of the programmes were scaled up, either within the country or to other countries, and so were incorporated into government programmes. The programmes have positive **impacts** on girls' empowerment, livelihoods, health and education. Evaluations found that girls especially appreciated having a nearby safe space of their own and being educated by their peers.

The **effectiveness of the integrated approach** is only examined in a number of reports. One evaluation finds that an integrated approach seems to be more effective than single-focus interventions in improving social and economic empowerment of adolescent girls. Another finds that there appears to be little difference in outcomes compared to a single focus programme. However, that evaluation concludes that girls who participated in the integrated programmes may have experienced the greatest overall gains from programme participation.

The literature suggests that a number of factors contribute to a programme's success and sustainability. They include:

- **Community and parental involvement:** The evidence strongly highlights the importance of gaining the support of parents and the community for the programme's success and long-term sustainability. A number of programmes took the time to explain the programme to parents and had regular meetings with parents/community. The livelihood training component was found in some cases to win parents over to the programmes other aims. A number of programmes went on to include boys and carry out advocacy activities in the local community.
- **Government involvement:** Having a relationship with local and national government was found in some cases to be beneficial to the scale-up and sustainability of programmes.
- **Programme design:** Some programmes found that elements of successful programme design include: a long and thorough design process; thorough needs and opportunities assessments; a focus on contextual and relevant skills and information for girls' everyday lives; programme flexibility in terms of scheduling; support for girls' participation (e.g. transport allowance and free childcare); and fun activities to motivate participation in awareness raising activities.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** One programme evaluation felt that rigorous evaluation of the programme allowed for effective learning and was critical for making the case for scale-up.

A number of programmes also highlight that it is important to specifically target the most vulnerable girls to ensure their participation. Continued support for girls who have left programmes is important for ensuring the long-term effectiveness of the programmes aims.

## 2. Country programmes

### Bangladesh: Adolescent Peer Organised Network (APON)

**Goal/purpose:** Empowerment of adolescent girls through peer education.

**Rationale:** Bangladeshi girls face barriers to their empowerment and are often unaware about matters relating to sexuality and reproductive health.

**Target group:** Adolescent girls. The preferred target group for peer educators are girls who have attended a BRAC basic education school, or who are divorced, belong to an underprivileged minority, or are from a particularly poor family.

**Sectors/activities covered:** Economic, health and social skills.

**Description:** The APON project is part of the 'Adolescent Development Programme' (ADP) and is run by BRAC Bangladesh. It was started in 1998 and continues today. It aims to empower girls, develop their life skills, encourage them to continue their education, as well as changing traditional rural perceptions of the capabilities and values of girls. It provides girls with a network of peer support, education and skills development, employment opportunities, and increased awareness of sexual and reproductive health and gender issues. Girls acquire knowledge and life skills in Reading Centres. They do so using a set of 20 booklets, which were developed in collaboration with adolescent girls. The grassroots level implementation of the programme is carried out by the adolescent girls. Over 5,000 adolescent girls were trained as peer educators to teach learning exercises based on the booklets. Peer educators are paid a small sum for their work which promotes their standing, as well as their loyalty to the programme. They receive regular support and supervision. APON members are encouraged to share their new knowledge with their peers and communities. To encourage girls to stay in school, the project pays Tk 700 for girls' Senior School Certificate examination if they do not get married before the age of 18.

**Scale-up:** Started in 1998-99 in 25 regions and scaled up to 58 regions with 6,000 Reading Centres, reaching about 200,000 adolescents, mainly girls, by 2002.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Focus group discussions and interviews about the programme have occurred as part of ongoing monitoring. Ongoing monitoring has enhanced the programme by involving adolescent girls in its decision-making processes.

**Impact:** 200,000 adolescent girls attended APON training courses. Girls reported that they have increased their social skills and self-confidence; know more about sex, sexuality, health, particularly sexual health, and women's rights. They have been able to use their knowledge and social skills to successfully influence important decisions affecting themselves and their families. Family and societal attitudes towards girls have changed. As a result of girls bringing money, information and social skills into the home, they are valued by their parents as competent, knowledgeable individuals and the pressure for early marriage has decreased. In one project review, 319 girls trained were successful in starting a business or getting a job. Nearly 100 other trained girls did not find employment.

**Lessons learned:**

- Parental support is important. BRAC staff went door-to-door, explaining the benefits to families, and organised monthly parent's meetings to answer questions and address concerns.
- Participants felt it would be useful if boys also acquired the knowledge. This occurred as the programme scaled up.
- Participants preferred being taught by their peers.
- The knowledge gained must be applicable to girls' every day and future lives in order for the programme to continue to be effective.

**Links:** Mariam, E. (no date). *Adolescent Peer Organised Network - BRAC, Bangladesh*. BRAC. Retrieved from: [http://www.aidsdatahub.org/sites/default/files/documents/adolescent\\_peer\\_organization\\_bangladesh.pdf](http://www.aidsdatahub.org/sites/default/files/documents/adolescent_peer_organization_bangladesh.pdf)

Khan, K.A., Nath, S.R., & Kabir, M. (2003). *Adolescent-to-Adolescent Development: A Pilot Assessment of Adolescent Peer Organised Network*. Research and Evaluation Division, BRAC. Retrieved from: [http://research.brac.net/reports/adolescent\\_to\\_adolescent\\_development\\_apon%20assessment\\_pdf.pdf](http://research.brac.net/reports/adolescent_to_adolescent_development_apon%20assessment_pdf.pdf)

## **Bangladesh: Employment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA)**

**Goal/purpose:** Create empowering opportunities and choices for adolescent girls. Support them in defining and implementing their own agenda for changing their situations.

**Rationale:** Help break the traditional lifestyle which characterises adolescent girls' lives (e.g. early marriage).

**Target group:** Girls/young women aged between 10 and 24 years. Villages have to have at least 35 girls to be selected for an intervention.

**Sectors/activities covered:** Economic, health and social skills.

**Description:** With financial assistance from Nike Foundation, BRAC started combining financial and social interventions in 2005 by setting up ELA (Employment and Livelihood for Adolescents) Centres. The Centres were added to the original ELA microfinance groups. In addition to credit, ELA Centres provided skill based training on income generating activities, books for extracurricular reading, equipment for indoor games and a space for socialising. A specific issue is selected each month for focused discussion. Issues include health, child marriage, dowry, girls' rights, her role and responsibilities towards family and society. Periodic meetings are held between the Programme Supervisor and parents and the local community. These meetings are designed to create a positive attitude towards girls' participation in the programme.

**Scale-up:** The programme was scaled up by turning even more ELA microfinance groups into ELA Centres.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** An evaluation was carried out to assess the usefulness of the combined approach. It compared participants of the ELA Centres (the combined approach), participants of the ELA microfinance groups, and non-participants. There were two rounds of surveys carried out in 2005 and 2007. By the second survey most of the ELA microfinance group participants had joined ELA Centres as they expanded.

**Impact:** The programme reduced the chances of early marriage, engaged the participants in economic activities, and increased girls' mobility and involvement in extracurricular activities. There was a positive change in attitudes towards the girls' activities amongst parents, boys and the local communities. The evaluation led to the decision that more needed to be done to empower adolescent girls both socially and financially and a new initiative was set up named Social and Financial Empowerment of Adolescents (see below).

### **Lessons learned:**

- Girls who are disadvantaged in terms of education and parents' openness to girl's empowerment need to be specifically targeted in order to ensure their participation.

- Providing livelihoods training gave initially reluctant parents faith about the suitability of the centres' intentions.
- The holistic nature of the intervention could have gone further with more information needed on financial literacy and health issues.
- There was a need to address the sustainability of the centres and increase community involvement and participation.

**Links:** Shahnaz, R., & Karim, R. (2008). *Providing Microfinance and Social Space to Empower Adolescent Girls: An Evaluation of BRAC's ELA Centres*. Working Paper no. 3. Research and Evaluation Division, BRAC. Retrieved from: [http://research.brac.net/workingpapers/REDWP\\_3.pdf](http://research.brac.net/workingpapers/REDWP_3.pdf)

## **Bangladesh: Social and Financial Empowerment of Adolescents (SoFEA)**

**Goal/Purpose:** Empower adolescent girls socially and financially to enable them to conduct themselves in their communities with confidence and independence and lead dignified lives.

**Rationale:** A holistic programme will better empower girls both socially and financially. Ensuring the strong development of the adolescent female population is a fundamental component in ensuring the long-term empowerment of women.

**Target group:** Rural girls aged between 11 and 21.

**Sectors/activities covered:** Economic, social and health skills.

**Description:** The Social and Financial Empowerment of Adolescents (SoFEA) programme has been designed using the lessons learnt from other BRAC programmes. It was launched in 2009 and is run by BRAC with financial support from the Nike Foundation. SoFEA has six complementary components designed to create a strong support structure for adolescent girls. These components include a clubhouse providing a safe place for girls to socialise and share their stories. Training on life skills provides the girls with knowledge to make informed decisions. The life skills training is provided by peers and covers topics that include human rights, importance of education, adolescence, menstruation, early marriage, early pregnancy, family planning, prenatal care, child nutrition and development, STIs and HIV/AIDS, dowries, domestic violence, trafficking, and acid violence. Livelihood training is provided so girls can learn a skill they could use to earn a living. There is a course to improve girls' financial literacy. Savings and credit facilities are provided as a source of seed capital for the girls to start small businesses. Community sensitisation is an important component to make the community more aware of the role that adolescents could play in the development of their communities. The clubs are open six days a week, with mandatory attendance on Thursday.

**Scale-up:** The programmes aimed to reach 15,000 girls in five years in five sub-districts of Bangladesh. The programme report suggests that if the integrated programme is successful in creating a model that attains higher and more sustainable outcomes, then the programme will be mainstreamed within BRAC.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** A monitoring system has been put in place to ensure that the loans reach the intended beneficiaries. A baseline survey was carried out in 2010.

**Impact:** 360 clubs have been established, reaching over 13,000 girls in five sub-districts in rural Bangladesh. Further information on impact is not yet known, although initial signs look positive.

**Lessons learned:**

- Engaging the community helps with the sustainability of the programme and in changing attitudes and practices which impede girls' potential (such as early marriage, dowry, etc.).
- Girls appreciate having a space dedicated to them to express and enjoy themselves.

**Links:** Kashfi, F. (2009). *Case Study No.5: Youth Financial Services: The Case of BRAC & the Adolescent Girls of Bangladesh*. Youth-Inclusive Financial Services Case Study Series 2009. Making Cents International. Retrieved from:

[http://www.youtheconomicopportunities.org/sites/default/files/uploads/resource/BRAC\\_CaseStudyNo%205\\_September2009.pdf](http://www.youtheconomicopportunities.org/sites/default/files/uploads/resource/BRAC_CaseStudyNo%205_September2009.pdf)

Bhattacharjee, A., & Das, N.C. (2011). *Profile of the Adolescent Girls: Findings from the Baseline Survey for Social and Financial Empowerment of Adolescents (SoFEA) Programme*. Research Monograph Series No. 46. Research and Evaluation Division, BRAC. Retrieved from:

[http://research.brac.net/monographs/Monograph\\_46.pdf](http://research.brac.net/monographs/Monograph_46.pdf)

Website: <http://education.brac.net/social-and-financial-empowerment-of-adolescents>

## Egypt: Ishraq (“Sunrise”)

**Goal/purpose:** Improve the educational, health, and social opportunities of adolescent girls.

**Rationale:** Adolescent girls in Egypt remain at risk for never enrolling in school or dropping out after only one or two years. Girls who are not in school are more vulnerable to early marriage, sexual violence, and poverty. As a result of restrictive social and cultural norms, these girls are likely to have limited mobility, to be socially isolated, and to lack peer networks.

**Target group:** Out-of-school girls aged 12–15 years old.

**Sectors/activities covered:** Educational, health, and social skills.

**Description:** In 2001, the Population Council developed a holistic programme – Ishraq – for out-of-school girls aged 12–15 years old. In collaboration with the Center for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), Save the Children, Caritas, and local NGOs, Ishraq combines literacy training, life skills, and nutrition and health education with sports and financial education. The programme establishes girl-friendly “safe spaces” where girls can gather, make friends, and learn from female high school graduates from their communities. The programme encourages continued schooling, greater mobility for girls and their civic involvement. Young women are recruited from the community and trained to serve as teachers and mentors.

At the same time, related interventions were aimed at parents, boys, and community leaders. These were designed to change community norms and beliefs about the capacities and roles of girls in society. As the programme has expanded, a companion programme was developed to provide boys with training on gender equity; civil and human rights; and responsibility to self, family, and community.

In 2008, in response to the needs of graduates from the programme, the Population Council established Girls' Clubs in two villages in el-Minya targeting close to 70 graduates from the pilot phase. These Girls' Clubs were led by former Ishraq promoters who have since become leaders in their communities. Each

Girls' Club is comprised of 20 Ishraq graduates who meet twice a week at the youth centre. The Girls' Clubs provide: 1) financial support to the graduates to continue their formal education in middle and secondary schools; 2) a new financial education curriculum, microfinance opportunities; and 3) legal rights awareness training to raise girls' awareness, legal understanding, and capabilities, and increase linkages to other community services. The legal rights training includes discussion of official documents (birth certificates and ID cards), personal status laws (engagement, marriage, divorce, and custody), the new Egyptian child laws and family justice project, and violence against girls/women, including female genital mutilation and cutting.

**Scale-up:** The pilot intervention was launched in four rural villages of el-Minya governorate in Upper Egypt in 2001. Based on the successful pilot, Ishraq began moving into the next phase, which included recruiting younger girls into the programme and strengthening the programme content to include financial literacy. In 2009, the successful Ishraq pilot programme began an ambitious scale-up effort to reach girls living in 30 villages in Fayoum, Sohag, and Qena. 120 secondary school graduates were recruited and trained as Ishraq programme leaders to serve as teachers, role models, and advocates. Each phase built upon the lessons of the previous one and capitalised on prior investments in social and human capital. The development of mechanisms and structures to institutionalise Ishraq at the national and local levels was critical to the scale-up phase. In order to do this, Ishraq formed committees at the village, governorate, and national levels to provide ongoing support to institutionalise the program at the local and national levels. It has also coordinated efforts with the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood and partnered with Egypt's Ministry of Youth to train teams from the ministry, NGOs, and youth centres to create new Ishraq classes using local resources.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Rigorous evaluation has been a critical component of the programme.

**Impact:** The programme has directly reached 3,321 girls and 1,775 boys in 54 villages, as well as over 5,000 girls' parents, boys, and community leaders across five of the most disadvantaged governorates in Upper Egypt. Programme participation has improved literacy, developed life skills, increased self-confidence, led to greater mobility and community participation, changed attitudes and behaviours, and built solidarity and social support among girls who have traditionally been socially isolated. 81 per cent of participants who took the national literacy exam passed. Around 74 per cent of all programme participants attended school after their graduation from Ishraq. Most of the Ishraq participants reported that the legal rights training they received was extremely valuable.

**Lessons learned:**

- The involvement of local communities through the village committees / community contracts and as champions (e.g., parents and other key community leaders) is critical to the effective implementation, ownership, and sustainability of the programme.
- Programme flexibility in terms of scheduling is important for avoiding high absenteeism and drop-outs (e.g. adjusting for seasonal absences).
- Rigorous evaluation of Ishraq has allowed for effective learning and provided a basis for course correction of the existing programme as well as the design of additional programme elements to address critical needs that emerge. Evaluation has also proved critical to making the case for the need to scale-up Ishraq.
- Achieving sustainability requires a multi-pronged approach/strategy, which involves working with communities, government, and CSOs. Buy-in and engagement of senior officials in the higher level

of government are critical to effective implementation and support from other elements of local government.

- It is important to continue to support the girls in order to ensure the long-term effectiveness of the programme's aims.

#### **Links:**

Selim, M., Abdel-Tawab, N., Elsayed, K., El Badawy, A., & El Kalaawy, H. (2013). *The Ishraq Program for Out-of-school Girls: from Pilot to Scale-up*. Population Council. Retrieved from: [http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2013PGY\\_IshraqFinalReport.pdf](http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2013PGY_IshraqFinalReport.pdf)

Zibani, N., & Brady, M. (2011). Scaling up asset-building programs for marginalized adolescent girls in socially conservative settings: The Ishraq program in rural Upper Egypt. *transitions to adulthood, Brief no. 12*. Population Council. Retrieved from: [http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/TABriefs/12\\_Ishraq.pdf](http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/TABriefs/12_Ishraq.pdf)

Website: <http://www.popcouncil.org/research/ishraq-bringing-marginalized-rural-girls-into-safe-learning-spaces-in-rural>

## **Ethiopia: Towards Economic and Sexual Reproductive Health Outcomes for Adolescent Girls (TESFA)**

**Goal/purpose:** Mitigate the effects of child marriage.

**Rationale:** Child brides often drop out of school and are at greater risk of experiencing intimate partner violence. They are isolated, with little or no power in household decisions. They often have little or no access to reproductive health information or services and there are greater risks to early pregnancy. Improving their lives is likely to improve their children's prospects and thus reduce intergenerational patterns of poverty and poor health. Ethiopia has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world.

**Target group:** Married girls aged 10-19 years old.

**Sectors/activities covered:** Health, social and economic skills.

**Description:** The programme was implemented by CARE-Ethiopia in two districts in the South Gondar region of Amhara in 2009-2013. It provided information and services on sexual and reproductive health; how to save and invest money; and broader life skills lessons, from how to care for a new-born to how to communicate in a relationship. Participants were divided into four main groups: Economic Empowerment (EE) – girls who received economic empowerment information and guidance, based on an adapted Village Savings and Loan Association model; Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) – girls who learned about issues related to their sexual and reproductive health; Combined – girls who received both EE and SRH programming; Comparison – girls who received a delayed version of the Combined curriculum and served as a comparison group. The community was engaged with the programme.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** An evaluation was carried out by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) to test whether providing economic empowerment and sexual and reproductive health programming together or individually was more effective.



**Impact:** The programme reached 5,000 child brides ages 10 to 19 years old. There were large gains in communication between the young wives and their husbands. There were decreased levels of gender-based violence. The mental health of participating girls improved. There was increased investment in productive economic assets. Girls improved their knowledge and use of sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning. Some husbands took on responsibilities traditionally reserved for wives, including childcare and cooking. Some girls returned to school to continue their education. Community members in the TESFA intervention area prevented more than 70 child marriages from taking place.

**Lessons learned:**

- Community engagement in the programme contributes to its success.
- There was little evidence indicating that combining economic empowerment and sexual and reproductive health programming results in even better outcomes than when offering these curricula separately.
- However, girls receiving the combined package may have experienced the greatest overall gains from programme participation, benefiting significantly in terms of both economic and health outcomes.

**Links:** Edmeades, J., Hayes, R. & Gaynair, G. (2014). *Improving the Lives of Married Adolescent Girls in Amhara, Ethiopia: A Summary of the Evidence*. ICRW. Retrieved from: <http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/140314%20ICRW%20ChildMarriage%20Report%20Web.pdf>

## **Guatemala: Abriendo Oportunidades (“Opening Opportunities”)**

**Goal/purpose:** Provide the most vulnerable Guatemalan girls with skills and support to improve their lives and break the cycle of poverty.

**Rationale:** Mayan girls are particularly disadvantaged. They generally marry early, drop out of school, are often socially isolated and live in chronic poverty.

**Target group:** 8–18 year-old Mayan girls.

**Sectors/activities covered:** Education, economic, and social skills

**Description:** The Population Council, in collaboration with local and international partners, launched Abriendo Oportunidades in 2004. The programme increases indigenous Mayan girls' social support networks, connects them with role models and mentors, builds a base of critical life and leadership skills, and provides hands-on professional training and experience. The programme engages community leaders and trains girl leaders to run community girls' clubs, safe spaces where they learn practical skills and assume leadership roles. The programme has expanded to include tutoring and a weekly educational radio programme in Mayan languages (which is especially useful for out-of-school pregnant girls/girls who are mothers). As the programme expands, it is integrating a greater focus on building girls' financial skills and help them develop strategies for saving. Girls in the programme are divided into age cohorts (8–12 and 13–18) and participate in a life-cycle-specific programme of activities. Workshops conducted with girls and their mothers include sessions on self-esteem, life skills, developing aspirations and planning for the future, sexual and reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS prevention. The programme has connected the rural girls' clubs by establishing the Guatemalan Indigenous Girls Resource and Empowerment Network (GIGREN).

This serves as a platform for indigenous girls to advocate for their needs and rights at both the community and the national level.

**Scale-up:** The programme began in a handful of rural communities and has since expanded nationwide. Graduates have been hired to take up supervisory positions in the programme expansion. In order to aid the programme's expansion and sustainability, the Population Council trains professionals from local governments and organisations in programme planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. The Abriendo Oportunidades curriculum guide has been standardised and is now being adapted for boys, and for girls in urban areas. The programme is also being expanded to other Latin American countries.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Programme evaluation carried out in 2007.

**Impact:** Since 2004, more than 6,000 girls, 100 youth leaders, and 45 interns have been trained and supported by the programme. Others have benefited from the effects of the programme in their communities or through listening to the radio show. 100 per cent of Abriendo girl leaders had completed sixth grade, compared with 82 per cent nationally. 97 per cent of Abriendo girl leaders remained childless during the programme cycle, compared with the national average of 78 per cent for girls their age. 94 per cent of Abriendo girl leaders reported experiencing greater autonomy and feeling more comfortable expressing their opinions. 88 per cent of girl leaders opened a bank account. 44 per cent had obtained paid employment by the end of the programme. Girls' access to positive role models in the community is increasing, their sources of social support are growing, they are gaining confidence and self-esteem, and they are learning new skills. In addition, community attitudes about girls' social status, education, and involvement in public activities have become more positive and supportive.

**Lessons learned:**

- Girls especially appreciate having safe spaces near their homes.

**Links:** Catino, J., Colom, A., & Ruiz, M.J. (2011). Equipping Mayan girls to improve their lives. *Transitions to adulthood, Brief no. 5*. Population Council. Retrieved from:

[http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/TABriefs/05\\_MayanGirls.pdf](http://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/TABriefs/05_MayanGirls.pdf)

Website: <http://www.popcouncil.org/research/abriendo-oportunidades-opening-opportunities>

## **Liberia: Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women (EPAG)**

**Goal/purpose:** Increasing the employment and income of 2,500 young Liberian women.

**Rationale:** Young women's unemployment in Liberia is double the rate than among young men. They face many barriers to entering the labour market.

**Target group:** Young women who: i) were aged 16 to 27 years old, ii) possessed basic literacy and numeracy skills, iii) were not enrolled in school within several months prior of the programme initiation, and iv) resided in one of nine target communities in and around Monrovia.

**Sectors/activities covered:** Economic and social skills.

**Description:** The Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women (EPAG) programme was launched by the Liberian Ministry of Gender and Development in 2009. It is part of a larger Adolescent Girls

Initiative (AGI) administered by the World Bank (for more information, see Section 3 below). The programme was implemented by six Liberian NGOs. It provided livelihood and life skills training and facilitated the transition of young women to productive work. The programme combined six months of classroom-based technical and life skills training, with a focus on skills with high market demand, followed by six months of follow-up support to enter wage employment or start a business. There were two tracks of training, a Job Skills track and a Business Skills track. The programme was designed around the girls' needs, with morning and afternoon community-based training sessions and free childcare. Financial incentives to participate and make the most of the training were given to the trainees.

**Scale-up:** The programme has served as a role model to seven subsequent pilot projects in Rwanda, South Sudan, Nepal, Afghanistan, Haiti, Jordan, and Lao PDR.

**Cost:** The unit cost of training in Round 1 was roughly US\$1200 for the Business Skills track and US\$1650 for the Job Skills track.

**Cost efficiency:** Preliminary cost-benefit analysis indicates that given the large gains in earnings as a result of the programme, the cost of the Business Skills training is recouped in three years.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** An evaluation was carried out by the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, Africa Region and the Social Protection and Labour Unit, Human Development Network. Data was collected during two rounds of quantitative surveys in 2010 and 2011 and a control group of non-participants was used.

**Impact:** There were 1,200 young women in the first round of the EPAG. The EPAG programme increased employment by 47 per cent and earnings by 80 per cent. There were also positive effects on variety of empowerment measures, including access to money, self-confidence, and anxiety about circumstances and the future. The evaluation found no net impact on fertility or sexual behaviour. At the household level, there was evidence of improved food security and shifting attitudes toward gender norms. There was very little evidence of spill overs on non-participants. Impacts were not uniform across all the communities in which the programme occurred. The programme had a greater impact on girls from the middle wealth classes than among the very poorest and very wealthiest. It also had a greater impact on younger participants (15-19 years old). The programme had a greater impact among those with more education than less. The second round of training has added a preliminary basic literacy training component as a result.

**Lessons learned:**

- Successful skills training programmes are responsive to local market conditions; provide life as well as technical skills; and include additional services that alleviate other constraints preventing successful labour market integration (e.g. access to credit).
- Strict criteria can place programmes out of reach for many of the most vulnerable young women.
- The transport allowance and free childcare facilitated girls' full participation.

**Links:** Adoho, F., Chakravarty, S., Korkoyah, Jr., D.T., Lundberg, M., & Tasneem, A. (2014). *The Impact of an Adolescent Girls Employment Program: The EPAG Project in Liberia*. Policy Research Working Paper 6832. The World Bank. Retrieved from: [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2014/04/03/000158349\\_20140403112059/Rendered/PDF/WPS6832.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2014/04/03/000158349_20140403112059/Rendered/PDF/WPS6832.pdf)

## Sierra Leone: The Building Skills for Life programme

**Goal/purpose:** Empowered adolescent girls.

**Rationale:** Adolescent girls are particularly susceptible to sexual violence in schools. Girls from poor households are particularly susceptible.

**Target group:** Adolescent girls just starting or in junior secondary education, their peers, the schools they attend, and their communities.

**Sectors/activities covered:** Economic, educational, health, and social skills.

**Description:** The Building Skills for Life programme is part of a wider Plan UK programme focusing on supporting the empowerment of adolescent girls through a life-cycle approach. It focuses on four core areas: the attainment of a quality basic education, freedom from violence, economic empowerment, and the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights. In Sierra Leone, the Building Skills for Life project specifically focuses on girls' transition to, and completion of, quality junior secondary education in 21 schools in the Bombali district. Spaces are created in which adolescents can talk about issues that affect them, build supportive relationships with peers, and build their confidence to advocate on such issues in their communities. The programme works closely with communities and schools and engages with men and boys to prevent and respond to school-related gender-based violence.

**Scale-up:** No scale-up of the Sierra Leone programme is mentioned in the evaluation.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Mid-term evaluation of the whole Building Skills for Life programme carried out in 2013.

**Impact:** In Sierra Leone, only 65 per cent of girls and 71 per cent of boys in the project schools said they felt safe (compared to over 80 per cent on average in the other countries). However, there has been a reduction in corporal punishment. Parents, students and school staff have also reported that there is less sex for grades now in project schools, and a reduction in pregnancy rates. Sexual exploitation continues to occur, even if it is to a lesser degree. Some girls feel that after the programme they would be more likely to report cases of abuse or violence.

### Lessons learned:

- It is important to consider the long-term safety of girls participating in the programme.
- Safe spaces such as school clubs are valued by the participants.
- It is important to engage with communities, particularly men and boys.

**Links:** Reilly, A. (2014). Adolescent girls' experiences of violence in school in Sierra Leone and the challenges to sustainable change. *Gender & Development*, 22:1, 13-29, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2014.902239>

## Uganda: Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) programme

**Goal/purpose:** Improve the lives of adolescent girls through greater economic and social empowerment.

**Rationale:** Targeting adolescents is key to empowering women. Interventions targeted towards girls at this stage of their life cycle might have higher returns than later interventions.

**Target group:** Adolescent girls and young women between 13 and 30 years old.

**Sectors/activities covered:** Economic, health and social skills.

**Description:** The programme began in 2008 and is run by BRAC Uganda. It provides (i) vocational skills to enable adolescent girls to start small-scale income generating activities; (ii) life skills to build knowledge, enabling girls to make informed choices about sex, reproduction and marriage. There is also a new microfinance component that offers older adolescents in some clubs credit to capitalise on their newly acquired skills. In addition, the clubs also host popular recreational activities such as reading, staging dramas, singing, dancing and playing games. The clubs serve as a protected local space in which adolescent girls can meet, socialise, privately discuss issues of concern and continue to develop their skills. Activities take place five times a week in designated 'adolescent development clubs' outside of school hours to ensure they also reach girls who are out of school. Club activities are led by a slightly older, local female mentor. The clubs are open to all girls, regardless of income and education levels. Previous experience of BRAC's work in the community helped improve the support of parents for their daughters' involvement.

**Scale-up:** Up to the end of 2012, BRAC had started 1,200 clubs in Uganda which have reached 50,000 girls<sup>1</sup>. BRAC has also started the programme in Tanzania, South Sudan and Sierra Leone and it has been emulated by other NGOs in other African countries.

**Cost:** In year one, the programme cost US\$365,690. This fell to US\$232,240 in year two as some set-up costs were not recurring. Per eligible girl the yearly cost dropped from US\$28.1 to US\$ 17.9 in year two. Per participating girl, the cost is US\$85. This somewhat overestimates the total programme costs because some of these resources would have been put to another overlapping use in the absence of the programme.

**Cost efficiency:** The combined ELA intervention appears to improve outcomes at least as well as single-focus interventions that focus on classroom based education courses designed to reduce risky behaviours, or exclusively on vocational training designed to improve labour market outcomes among youth.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** A team from LSE, UCL, BRAC, and the World Bank used a randomised control trial to evaluate the programme. 4,800 adolescent girls were surveyed at baseline (2008) and two years later (2010). A follow up survey of the intervention and control villages was carried out in 2012 by a team from the Youth Employment Network, LSE and BRAC.

**Impact:** 21 per cent of eligible girls in communities attended the clubs. Compared to adolescents in control communities, after two years the intervention raised the likelihood that girls engaged in income generating activities by 72 per cent (mainly driven by increased participation in self-employment), and raised their monthly consumption expenditures by 41 per cent. There was no spill-over effect on non-participating girls. Teen pregnancy fell by 26 per cent, and early entry into marriage/cohabitation fell by 58 per cent. Girls

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<sup>1</sup> The programme was originally developed in Bangladesh. Between 1993 and 2013 BRAC Bangladesh started almost 40,000 clubs that have reached one million adolescent girls.

reporting sex against their will dropped from 14 per cent to almost half that level and preferred ages of marriage and childbearing both moved forward. Both participating and non-participating girls demonstrated greater awareness of sexual health issues. The programme had no adverse impact on the educational investments of participants.

#### **Lessons learned:**

- Combined interventions that simultaneously tackle economic but also social and health related challenges seem to be more effective than single-focus interventions in improving social and economic empowerment of adolescent girls.
- Components aiming to boost social empowerment can yield indirect positive effects among non-programme participants within a treatment community as well as on the community as a whole. Components seeking girls' economic empowerment provided direct benefits only to participants.
- Successful implementation of an intervention and its long-term sustainability rely on the community acceptance and reputation of the implementing agency.
- Communities respond better to inclusive programmes that are open to adolescent girls from all socio-economic backgrounds.

**Links:** Bandiera, O., Buehren, N., Burgess, R., Goldstein, M., Gulesci, S., Rasul, I., & Sulaiman, M. (2014). *Women's Empowerment in Action: Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial in Africa*. Working Paper. Retrieved from: <http://www.homepages.ucl.ac.uk/~uctpimr/research/ELA.pdf>

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### **3. Multi-country programmes**

#### **Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI)**

**Goal/purpose:** Promote the economic empowerment of adolescent girls and young women.

**Rationale:** Facilitating the transition from school to productive employment will further the economic empowerment of adolescent girls, with positive long-term effects on the economic and social wellbeing of girls and their families.

**Target group:** Liberia: adolescent girls and young women with some education and functional literacy from 16 to 27 years old. Nepal, South Sudan, Rwanda, and Afghanistan: poor/vulnerable adolescent girls and women with some education and functional literacy from 15-27 years old (18-30 in Afghanistan). Haiti: disadvantaged girls and women from 15-20 years old. Jordan: female community college graduates only. Lao PDR: both female and male youths (the majority are female). Difficult decisions were made over

whether to target the most vulnerable girls, or less vulnerable girls who had better chances of being able to take full advantage of the programme. In some contexts it was difficult to focus only on girls.

**Sectors/activities covered:** Economic and social skills.

**Description:** The World Bank's Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI), launched in 2008, promotes the economic empowerment of adolescent girls and young women by supporting their transition from school to productive employment. The initiative currently includes pilot projects in eight countries, five of which were under implementation in 2011<sup>2</sup>. The pilot projects have adapted to the different contexts through slightly different target groups and activities. However, some key decisions about the pilots' design were supply-driven and top-down rather than needs-based and results oriented. The programmes include: demand-driven technical and vocational skills training; business development skills training; life skills training; and mentoring, apprenticeship, job placement or business development assistance. Other components in different countries include: childcare and daily stipends; pairing/small groups of trainees; girls' clubs as secure places for recreational activities; community involvement through club committees; and psychosocial support. The programmes are implemented by partners from government ministries or NGOs. Implementation has benefited from highly dedicated Task Teams and effective and reliable implementing partners.

The core idea of the initial pilot in Liberia was to foster girls' economic empowerment through traditional employment skills training (vocational and business oriented) coupled with life skills training and longer term support such as mentoring. The designs of the subsequent four pilots were strongly influenced by this model, although with some degree of adaptation to the national contexts and the needs of national government partners, in particular in Afghanistan, South Sudan and Nepal.

**Scale-up:** AGI developed from a single project in Liberia supported by the government of Liberia, the World Bank and the Nike Foundation. This initial investment attracted the attention and support of World Bank senior management and new donors. It was then spread to a further eight countries. The AGI is rigorously testing innovative interventions in selected pilot countries, with a view to scaling-up and replicating successful approaches/models. However, the AGI has only recently begun to clarify and define what scaling-up the pilot projects means, to identify a strategy and action plan, and address resource constraints for scaling-up.

Opportunities for country ownership or country-driven scale-up or replication of AGI programming are limited in many AGI pilot countries due to the political and socio-economic context and weak government capacity.

**Cost:** Liberia has a project budget of US\$4.9 million. Nepal, South Sudan, Rwanda, and Afghanistan have budgets ranging from US\$2.2-3.2 million. Jordan, Lao PDR, and Haiti have budgets ranging from US\$400,000 to US\$2 million. Insufficient financial resources were considered a challenge for most AGI pilots (Liberia, Southern Sudan, Lao PDR, Jordan, Haiti and Afghanistan).

AGI donors include the Nike Foundation and the governments of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Australia. It has total funding of US\$23 million until 2015.

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<sup>2</sup> The first AGI project was initiated in Liberia in 2008. In 2009, AGI pilot projects were launched in Afghanistan, Nepal, Rwanda, and South Sudan, and in 2010 in Jordan and Lao PDR. In October 2010, Haiti and Yemen were also announced as new AGI countries.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Independent mid-term evaluation carried out by Universalia in 2011. It did not explore impacts on the ground. Monitoring and Evaluation investments have focused mainly on individual pilots rather than on the AGI overall. There is a strong emphasis in the programme on impact evaluations.

**Impact:** The AGI has contributed significantly to raising awareness inside and outside the World Bank of the importance of the economic empowerment of adolescent girls and young women. The AGI pilot projects, most of which operate in difficult environments, took longer than expected to become operational and most are at relatively early stages of development and implementation. However, the five pilot projects currently implemented are making positive progress in short-term results. Liberia, Nepal, South Sudan, and Jordan have some limited or anecdotal evidence of progress towards intermediate results (e.g., completed trainings, short-term employment, increase in income, empowerment). The pilot projects are currently a collection of loosely connected pilots rather than a coherent initiative. This, coupled with limited financial and human resources, limits the programme's ability to work towards its overarching objectives systematically, and to fully operationalise a strategy for scaling-up and mainstreaming AGI results and lessons within the World Bank in the immediate and longer term.

**Lessons learned:**

- A long and thorough design process and thorough needs and opportunities assessments contributed to the success of the Liberia pilot.

**Links:** Universalia. (2011). *Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI) - Mid-Term Evaluation: Final Report*. Universalia. Retrieved from: [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTGENDER/Resources/AGI\\_Mid-Term\\_Evaluation\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTGENDER/Resources/AGI_Mid-Term_Evaluation_Final_Report.pdf)

## Program M

**Goal/Purpose:** To empower young women to feel a sense of agency and control over their lives.

**Rationale:** Gender norms are constructed and therefore can be changed. This can be done by working with young women and men to help construct and reinforce positive ideals of masculinity and to engage men as allies in the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality.

**Target group:** Young women aged 15-24 years old.

**Sectors/activities covered:** Health, and social skills.

**Description:** Program M (aimed at young women) was developed in 2003 to work together with Program H (aimed at young men) to engage youth in critical reflections on gender and help them build skills to act in more empowered and equitable ways. The interventions are complementary and use educational workshops, community outreach strategies and a multi-media campaign, including a radio-based soap opera. It draws on the experiences of young women in low income communities in Brazil and Mexico, their attitudes about gender norms and roles, and their perceived capacity to achieve agency in their lives and relationships. The Program M manual includes activities on sexual and reproductive health, violence prevention, motherhood and care-giving, and HIV/AIDS, among other related topics. It engages young women in questioning rigid and non-equitable stereotypes about masculinity and how they affect both women's and men's lives and relationships. The test group consisted of 176 young women ages 15-24 in four countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (Brazil, Jamaica, Mexico and Nicaragua).



**Scale-up:** Program H and Program M have been carried out in diverse contexts in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and the Balkans. Program M was developed in 2003 out of the experiences of Program H (set up in 1999), by the four Latin American NGO partners<sup>3</sup> who set up Program H, together with an international NGO. In 2008, Program H and Program M partners in Brazil and India launched an initiative to integrate and scale-up the implementation of the educational curricula and campaign strategies in the public education sectors in the two countries. In Brazil, scale-up efforts are being carried out by Promundo, in collaboration with the State Education Secretariats and schools in the states of Bahia and Rio de Janeiro. In India, the scale-up efforts are being led by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), CORO, and TISS. Previously built relationships with governments and local authorities responsible for education and health policy-making have served as an important foundation for the scale-up of the programmes.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** Partner agencies measured the impact of Program M activities with the Gender-Equitable Women Scale in Brazil and India. This included similar items to the evaluation of the Program H activities as well as ones specifically relevant to the experiences of young women. In addition, an index was developed to measure young women's belief in their ability to deal with violence prevention and response, condom use, peer pressure, and enlisting social/community resources.

**Impact:** The programme led to an increase in the test group's knowledge of issues related to prevention and sexual and reproductive health. Participants realised that gender stereotypes are social and not biological constructions. After participating in activities, young women reported increased knowledge and communication with partners about sexual health, increased self-efficacy in interpersonal relationships, increased condom use and decreased drug use.

**Lessons learned:**

- Sustainability can be achieved through a focus on advocacy and capacity-building and adapting the programme to the specific context.
- Prior relationships with governments and local authorities are important for helping to scale-up programmes.
- Incentives such as opportunities to participate in sports or vocational training can help motivate adolescents to participate in workshop and campaign activities.

**Links:** Ricardo, C., Nascimento, M., Fonseca, F., & Segundo, M. (2010). *Program H and Program M: Engaging young men and empowering young women to promote gender equality and health*. Pan American Health Organization and Promundo. Retrieved from: [http://www.promundo.org.br/en/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/OPASINGLES\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.promundo.org.br/en/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/OPASINGLES_WEB.pdf)

## UNFPA's Action for Adolescent Girls

**Goal/purpose:** Protect adolescent girls' rights, in particular increasing their age at marriage and childbearing, and empower the most marginalised girls.

**Rationale:** Investing in girls and giving them health, social, and economic assets empowers them, allows them to exercise agency, builds their resilience to overcome the many threats to their rights, and expands their choices.

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<sup>3</sup> Promundo (coordinator of the initiative, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), ECOS (São Paulo, Brazil), Instituto PAPAÍ (Recife, Brazil) and Salud y Género (Mexico) together with World Education, an international NGO with experience working with girls' empowerment.

**Target group:** Adolescent girls, especially the youngest adolescents (10 to 14 years old) as well as married adolescents. The focus is on areas where there are high proportions of girls who are face risks to their education, health, and human rights.

**Sectors/activities covered:** Health, social, and economic skills.

**Description:** The programme will support governments in 12 countries over 5 years (2013-17) to make targeted investments in sub-national districts to reach thousands of girls at risk of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy. The programme will provide focused capacity development, technical assistance and financial resources to governments to jump-start girl-centred programming. There will be targeted interventions that delay marriage and prevent early/unintended pregnancy. A major part of the programme will be the creation of local safe spaces and community platforms for girls to gain life skills, expand their social networks and have access to female mentors/role models. Girls will be able to access local resources and health services (including for sexual and reproductive health), and be connected to non-formal education and safe livelihood opportunities.

**Scale-up:** The programme aims to scale-up past work in this area in Ethiopia and Guatemala by the Population Council and UNFPA and expand it to several more countries. Seven countries have been identified for the first wave of investment. They include Ethiopia, Mozambique, Niger, Sierra Leone, Zambia, India, and Guatemala. The remaining five will be selected on the basis of need and interest.

*Ethiopia* – UNFPA will support a programme for 20,000 girls a year, reaching 80,000 girls in three years in one or two regions.

*Guatemala* – UNFPA will support a programme in 50 communities every year, reaching a total of 15,000 girls over 4 years in 200 communities.

*India* – UNFPA will support a programme in one block in the Udaipur district of Rajasthan, home to approximately 30,000 adolescent girls. The initiative will directly reach the poorest 50 per cent of girls, thus serving 15,000 girls over three years.

*Mozambique* – programme report indicates that targets for numbers of girls to support are still under development.

*Niger* – The number of girls reached by UNFPA's programme is expected to triple every year (1,600 in 2013 + 4,000 in 2014 + 12,000 in 2015 + 36,000 in 2016 + 108,000 in 2017) to reach approximately 161,600 girls over five years in four to six regions.

*Sierra Leone* – The number of girls to be reached is calculated on the assumption that the initiative should reach at least 25 per cent of girls in 5 districts with the worst indicators, totalling 38,000 girls in 75 catchment areas within these districts.

*Zambia* – Based on the target of reaching 30 per cent of key groups of at-risk girls in intervention areas, UNFPA's programme would reach 48,000 girls over four years in four provinces.

**Estimated cost:** Total estimated budget is US\$21 million. Estimated budget for country programmes and regional support: US\$ 17,595,000. Estimated budget for headquarters programme support: US\$ 3,525,000.

**Cost efficiency:** UNFPA suggest that concentrating investment on adolescent girls at risk in sub-national areas will help change norms, elevate the status of all adolescent girls, and catalyse a reduction in child marriage and adolescent pregnancy not only in those geographic areas but nationally as well.

**Monitoring and Evaluation:** The programme will be monitored to measure the: per cent of participating girls aged 10-14; per cent of participating girls aged 15-19; per cent of participating girls not in school; per cent of participating girls whose highest level of educational attainment is less than primary; per cent of participating girls married; and the per cent of participating girls attending at least 75 per cent of total number of sessions. Programmes will also have evaluation components attached to them. Selected sites will be used for rigorous impact evaluation by using experimental and quasi-experimental methodologies.

**Links:** UNFPA. (2014). *UNFPA Action for Adolescent Girls – Programme document*. UNFPA. Retrieved from: [https://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/youth/UNFPA%20AAG%20programme%20document\\_31jan2014.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/youth/UNFPA%20AAG%20programme%20document_31jan2014.pdf)

## 4. Additional information

### Key websites

- Population Council – Adolescent girls’ empowerment: <http://www.popcouncil.org/research/adolescent-girls-empowerment>
- Population Council – Designing for Scale: Video Toolkit: building evidenced-based and targeted adolescent girls programs: <http://designingforscale.popcouncil.org/>

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