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Support Components

GABLE SMC
A Government of Malawi Project
Funded by USAID
Contracted to
Creative Associates International Inc

GABLE is a Government of Malawi program supported by funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). GABLE is an acronym for Girls Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education and is designed to support Government of Malawi efforts to address constraints to girls' educational attainment.

A major component of Malawi's GABLE program is the Social Mobilization Campaign (SMC). The major objective of the SMC is to develop, test, and implement a national campaign to change attitudes about the importance of girls' primary education. The SMC is funded by USAID and contracted to Creative Associates International, Inc.

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In general, the GABLE Social Mobilization Campaign was one of person-to-person, village-based interventions. These interventions were implemented in every district throughout the country in a phased-in approach. However, GABLE SMC also felt it extremely important to have interventions that are not just person-to-person but sector based, not just village-based but country wide. In order to achieve that goal, select nationwide activities were also implemented.

Introduction



These nationwide activities were used to reinforce the main components of the campaign and could be grouped into three main categories: stakeholder involvement, role model initiatives, and mass communication interventions. Together, these support components served to keep the entire nation and the different sectors involved in the campaign. The different sectors were quite diversified and represented the government, media, academia, nongovernmental agencies, and the private sector.





The stakeholder involvement component of the campaign was established to ensure that influential people and organizations, both political and social, government and private sector, were kept abreast of GABLE SMC activities and were consulted for advice and support. Activities involving stakeholders provided an opportunity for members of various organizations to meet and exchange thoughts and ideas concerning girls' education and to lend their expertise to the planning and implementation of the GABLE SMC project.

A Project Coordinating Committee (PCC) was formed to bring together representatives with an interest in girls' education from donor, education, government, and research organizations to help plan and review the project's activities. Quarterly PCC meetings provided the most important forum for stakeholder involvement in the project. Issues as diverse as project staffing, dissemination strategies, project workplans, and project field approaches were discussed.

The PCC's advisory role was important in the planning and structuring of many of the project's activities—from the pilot phase TFD field approach, to message dissemination, the mobilization of support, the national launching activities, the adopted phased-in approach, and district involvement.



Annual briefing meetings were conducted for a select group of policy makers throughout the country. These meetings targeted higher ranking officials who were not otherwise directly involved in the implementation activities of the project: directors of key institutions such as the Centre for Social Research and the Malawi Institute of Education, the principals from the various colleges of the University of Malawi, executive directors of organizations such as Women's Voice, the National Association for Business Women, Forum for African Women Educationalists/Malawi, project directors from UNICEF, UNDP, World Bank, and others, and principal secretaries and chief planning officers from various government ministries.



These briefing meetings provided a forum whereby completed project activities could be reviewed and plans for future activities presented. They provided an opportunity for participants to ask questions about the project's achievements and voice support or concerns about future plans. These meetings helped to instill a sense of involvement in the participants and broadened the support base for the project activities.



GABLE SMC also played a very active role in other development initiatives taking place throughout Malawi. Displays were exhibited and presentations given at nearly every major development event in the country—from Poverty Alleviation Day to AIDS awareness activities and the 1997 Southern African Development Community Summit.



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A Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) study conducted at the start of the GABLE SMC project revealed that “girls lack role models in and outside of their communities.” The study also revealed that both parents and their daughters felt that career choices for women were limited to those of nurse, teacher, or secretary. They also expressed the belief that girls were not expected to perform academically at the same level as boys nor achieve at the same rate.



GABLE SMC chose to tackle this discovery on a national scale so that the impact of a role model initiative could be realized as expediently as possible.

Field workers from both the Ministry of Women, Youth, and Community Services and the Ministry of Education were trained to work with communities in the identification, selection, and utilization of appropriate role models for primary school-age girls. They were also trained in interviewing techniques so that each selected role model’s “story” could be learned, verified, and used in a variety of media.



Calendars were produced for the years 1996 and 1997 that introduced some of the women selected as appropriate role models. Each calendar featured twelve Malawian women representing all regions of the country, a variety of career opportunities, and different levels of educational attainment. The 1996 calendar focused on the life stories of each of the women featured, while the 1997 calendar highlighted the twelve different careers held by the women presented. The descriptive text for each calendar was written in both English and Chichewa. Ten thousand calendars were printed each year and were distributed to all schools and government agencies throughout the country.



GABLE SMC enhanced their role model initiatives with the production of six role model storybooks. Each storybook highlighted a female role model in Malawi and included information on her career, her background, the people who influenced her, and the people whom she influences. The stories included those of a nurse, farmer, game scout, police chief, driver, architect, quantity surveyor, and building contractor and highlighted examples of supportive parents, inclusion of the handicapped, and respect for the environment and cultural practices.



Role model storybooks were produced in both English and Braille and were made available to every primary school throughout the country. The readers were used as supplementary reading material in the classrooms and were also taken home and shared with parents and siblings.



At the local-level, field workers were encouraged to identify women who could serve as role models to both school-age children and their parents. These women were invited to speak at the local schools as well as at community meetings and focus group discussions. In many cases, these visits provided the first opportunity for parents, teachers, and girls to hear about the struggles and triumphs that successful women in Malawi had faced to reach their present positions. Understanding the reality of the role model's background helped assure that others were aware of the situations girls would likely encounter on their way toward achieving their goals.



A variety of mass media were used in an effort to ensure that GABLE SMC's messages reached as many people as possible—parents and children, urban and rural, literate and illiterate, and male and female This multimedia approach was particularly desirable because of the limited coverage which could be achieved in Malawi by only using any one medium

The mass communication interventions of the campaign consisted of four major components—radio, print, artistic representations, and rallies

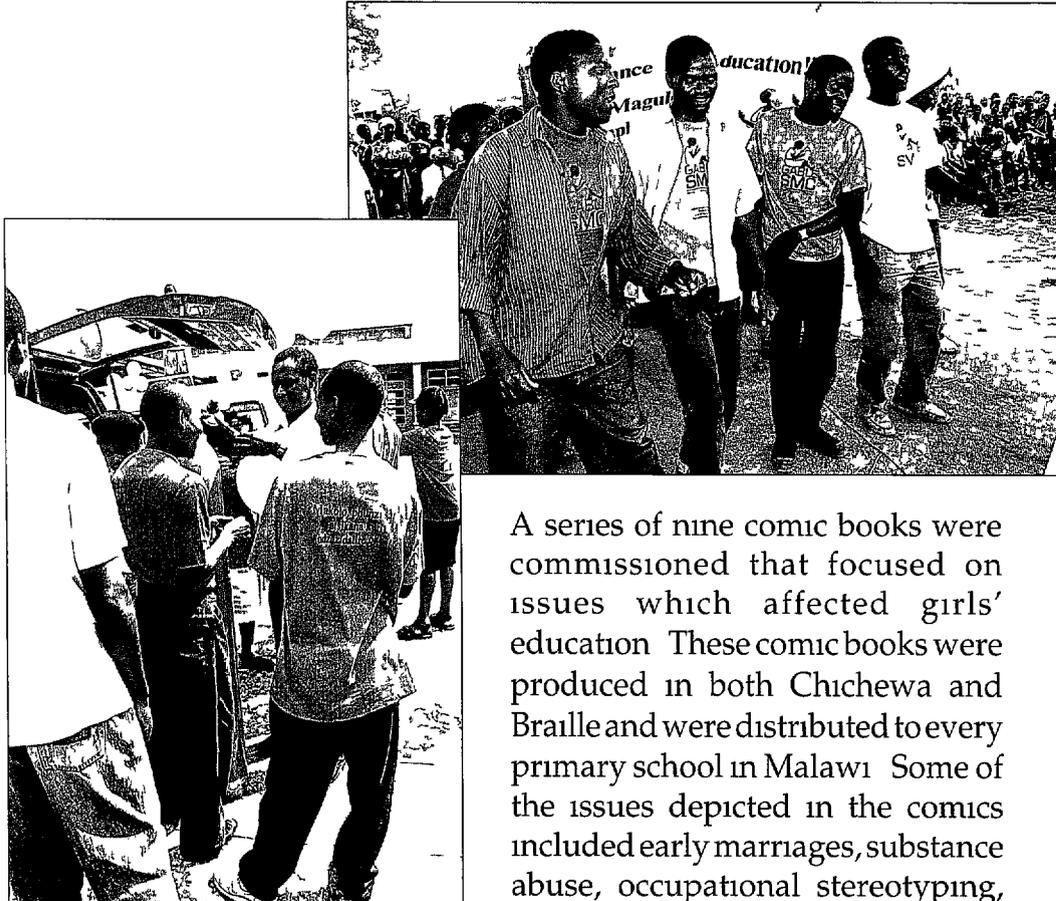


“Tsogolo la Atsikana” (“For the Girls’ Future”) was a 15-minute weekly radio program designed to capture the interest of as many of the GABLE SMC’s target groups as possible. A steering committee was used to determine the focus of each program and the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) provided the technical expertise in production and broadcasting. The show featured interviews, dramas, songs, coverage of district- and community-level events, and a weekly quiz competition. The popularity of the program could be corroborated by the 1,000 plus letters received weekly at MBC addressed to the announcers and people featured in the program.

In addition, GABLE SMC activities were also featured on other radio programs and frequently highlighted on news and sports spot announcements. Special GABLE SMC rallies, workshops, and/or drama performances were at times covered live on MBC when deemed of significant importance to the entire nation.



GABLE SMC t-shirts were designed with the project logo on the front and pro-educational messages on the back. The messages such as "Education is the light of your future," "Parents, the future of the girls is in your hands," and "Girls, promiscuity is the enemy of education" prompted lively dialogue and interest among those wearing the shirts and those seeing the shirts be worn.



A series of nine comic books were commissioned that focused on issues which affected girls' education. These comic books were produced in both Chichewa and Braille and were distributed to every primary school in Malawi. Some of the issues depicted in the comics included early marriages, substance abuse, occupational stereotyping, the effects of education on family health, and career opportunities.

GABLE SMC also produced quarterly newsletters that highlighted activities taking place at the national-, district-, and local-levels. These were printed in both English and Chichewa and were distributed to traditional leaders, schools, school committees, and government offices throughout the country. Newsletters helped to keep everyone informed of the unique and significant interventions taking place in other districts. They helped create a healthy sense of competition among the districts and communities to see that more girls were enrolling and staying in school.



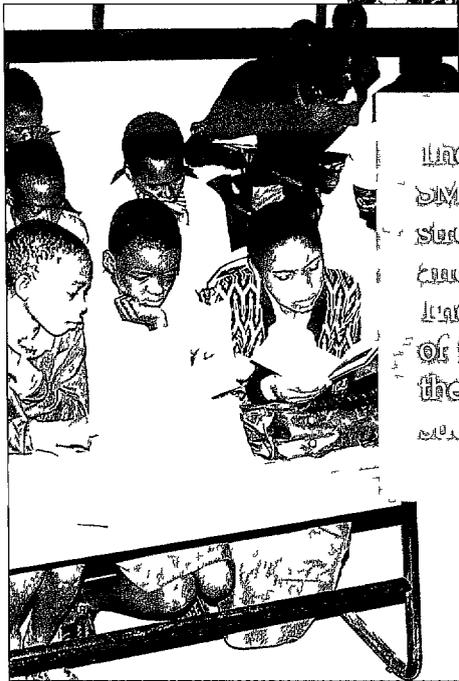
Artists throughout Malawi were also invited to play a part in the campaign. Once briefed on the identified constraints to girls' education, they began designing posters, writing drama scripts, songs, and poetry, and producing wood carvings all in support of girls' education. The result was widely distributed messages, delivered in an enjoyable format, and ranging from radio spots to local performances, from posters to postcards.



District launching ceremonies were used to communicate the arrival of GABLE SMC into a specific district. These were designed to reach a large portion of the district population at one time and to foster and display support and cooperation among district ministry officials, local leaders, district commissioners, and project staff.

Launching ceremonies were announced on the radio and through newspaper inserts, as well as posters and flyers distributed throughout the district. The rallies included a project vehicle parade with balloons and a PA system blaring pro-education songs, poems, and testimonials. At the rally site, drama performances were given, along with speeches by local and project officials. The launching of GABLE SMC activities into a new district was symbolized by the release of over 100 GABLE SMC balloons by government officials and project staff.





The diverse nature of the GABLI SMI support component is a help to strengthen the entire health care community network. It is a provision for the inclusion of the country to be involved from the inception of the project to its

