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GABLE SMC

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.

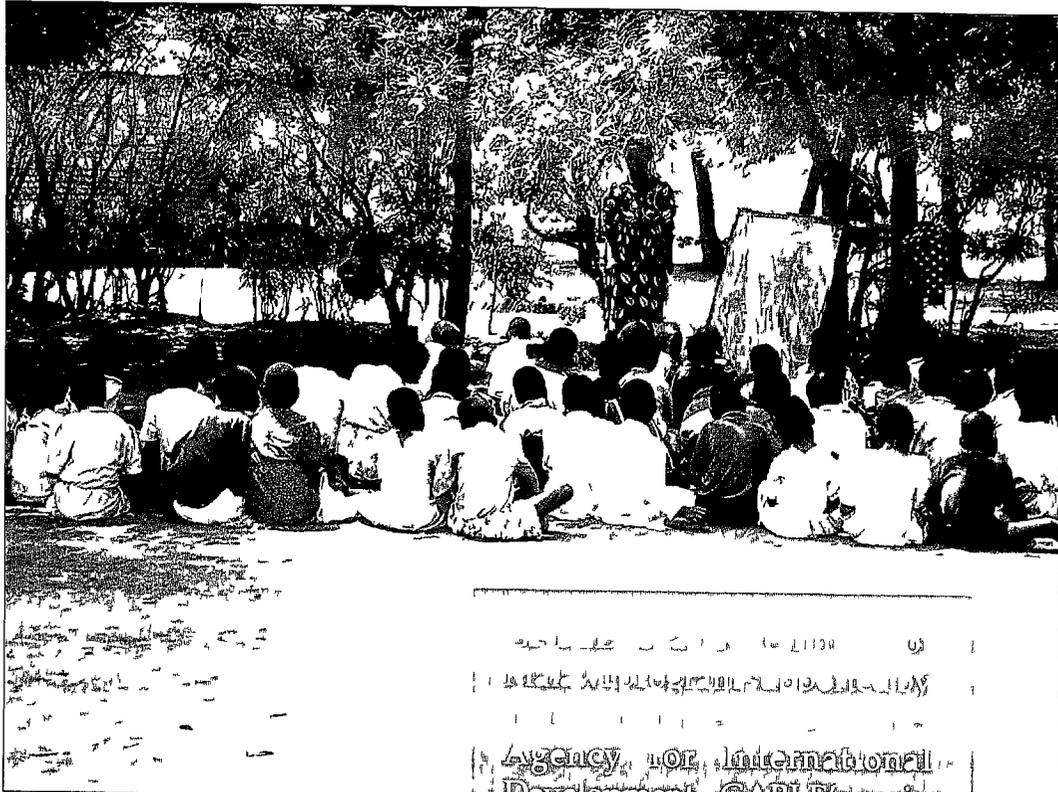
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Agency, for International Development. GABLE's main purpose is to draw more girls into primary school and to keep them there until they complete the primary cycle. A major component of Malawi's GABLE program was to develop, test, and implement a national campaign to change attitudes about the importance of girls' primary education. To achieve that task, a Social Mobilization Campaign project was designed and contracted.



Creative Associates International, Inc. (CAII) was contracted to implement the campaign. CAII is a women-owned, technical services firm with a demonstrated history of a commitment to girls' education worldwide. CAII has been a consistent advocate of girls' education based on the fact that higher rates of girls' education correlate positively with socio-economic progress for the individual, the family, the community, and the country. CAII, through its Education and Training Division, has been an active partner with government agencies, international donors, private sector institutions, and communities to develop and implement policies and strategies to facilitate basic

education for girls in Malawi.





When Malawi's GABLE was conceived and designed

- most girls in Malawi were not attending school,
- over half of the girls attending school left school during the crucial early primary classes,
- late entry into primary school impeded girls' progress, and
- social constraints placed girls in the role of an adult before their schooling was complete



Malawian girls, more often than not, repeated standards more than once and had consistently mediocre to low achievement records. Family obligations, school expenses, and a dearth of post-primary opportunities discouraged girls from persisting in the school system.

GABLE-SMC was designed to utilize sound community participation techniques in the research, generation, and dissemination of messages focused on girls' education. The social idea that was being promoted was that primary education is useful to individual girls, as well as to society. The target groups reached with that message were all those individuals or groups of individuals who exhibited influence over a young girls' life — parents, peers, teachers, initiation counselors, school committee members, local leaders, etc.





Many campaigns dealing with issues requiring a change in social attitudes rely heavily on mass communication methodologies. However, in Malawi, TV was non-existent, radio did not reach 100% of the population, newspaper circulation was mostly limited to urban areas, and print materials only effectively reached the percentage of Malawians who can read. It was determined that a social mobilization campaign in Malawi would have to employ grassroots level methodologies, using person-to-person communication at the community level.

GABLE SMC was designed to cover all of Malawi. Initially, a pilot district was chosen to test approaches, strategies, and methodologies in a smaller, more controlled environment before they were launched nationwide.

A number of criteria were used to select the pilot district:

- percentage of girls enrolled in primary school
- percentage of girls/women who had never attended school
- religious diversity
- diverse cultural/traditional practices
- representation of both easily accessible and remote communities, and
- close proximity to SMC project office.

The district of Machinga, in the southern region of Malawi, was chosen as the pilot district. At the time of selection it had the fourth lowest female literacy rate in Malawi; 77% of all females in the district and 87% of girls ages 5-9 had never attended school.





The pilot phase activities validated the premise that the success of a social mobilization campaign focusing on attitudinal change depends greatly on person-to-person interaction

The overall feeling, as a result of the pilot experience, was that village-level, person-to-person activities must be replicated in other districts throughout Malawi in order for the campaign to be successful

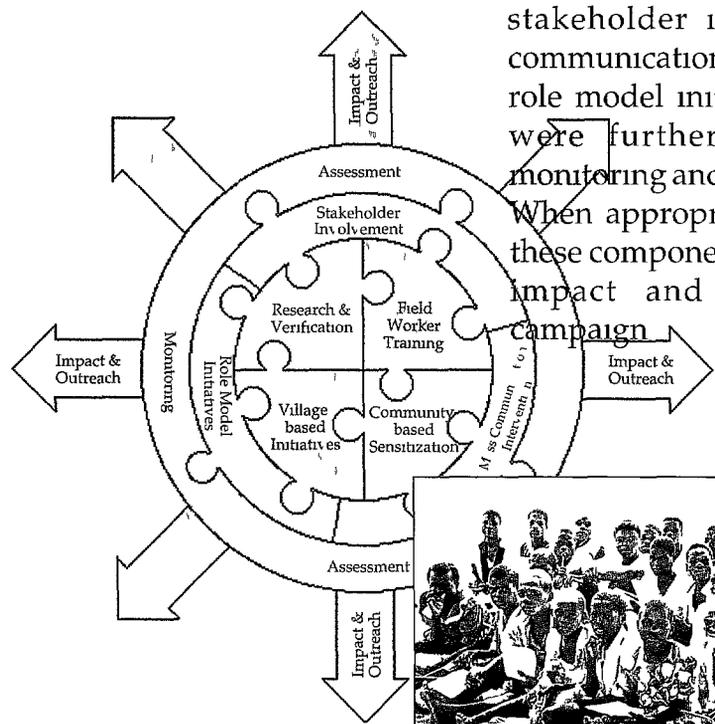




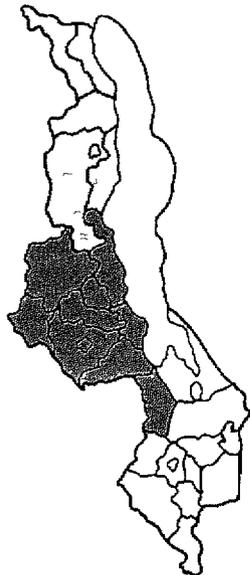
Achieving to the following set of guidelines allowed the national expansion to progress with a minimum of unforeseen difficulties:

- identify essential campaign components,
- select and order expansion based on verifiable criteria,
- utilize established patterns and practices, and,
- ensure that the expansion is done.

There were four key components essential to the success of the campaign — research & verification, field worker training, community-based sensitization, and village-based initiatives. In addition, there were three support components — stakeholder involvement, mass communication interventions, and a role model initiative. All of these were further supported by a monitoring and assessment scheme. When appropriately implemented, these components led to the desired impact and outreach of the campaign.



Criteria had to be established that would determine the order in which districts were selected, criteria that were free of political and personal influences. The 1987 Malawi Population Census had determined literacy rates by gender and by district. Districts were selected according to the percentage of literate females.



The country of Malawi is divided into three regions — northern, central, and southern. Based on population density, the government has an established practice of selecting districts in a ratio of 1 (northern) 2 (central) 3 (southern). This same practice was followed in selecting districts for the various phases of the campaign.

Many questions had to be answered. Are the existing personnel sufficient? What are the implied transportation needs? What time frame is necessary to carry out the intended tasks? Can activities take place in all the selected districts at one time or must we determine an order for coverage? Will the existing financial resources be sufficient? Can all activities be administered from the central project office?

GABLE SMC expanded to six new districts in Phase I of its national campaign, nine in Phase II, and eleven in Phase III. Because GABLE SMC utilized existing government personnel and community organizations, the necessary increase in district-level personnel was accommodated once field workers from each district were trained.





The intent of the research and verification was to

- identify the constraints to girls' primary education,
- create ownership among the various target groups who influence a young girl's life, and
- provide the impetus for the implementation of plans made to alleviate the identified constraints



A combination of results from a knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) study, existing knowledge from district-level field workers, and action research through Theatre for Development (TFD) activities formed the basis for information about each district. The KAP study gathered information through questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. The field workers provided information based on their knowledge and experiences with community members within their district work areas.



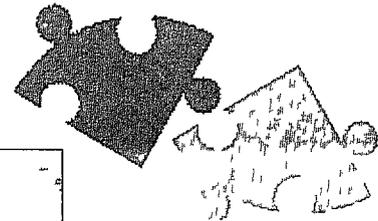
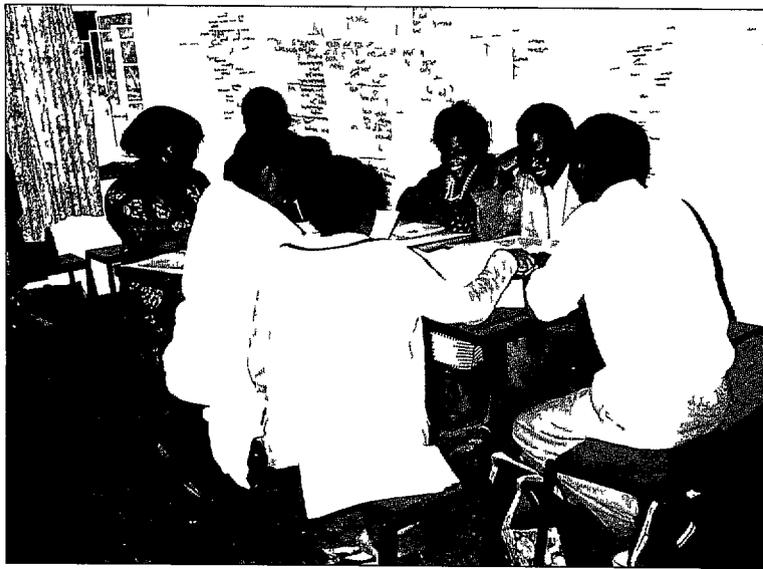
The most dynamic of these methods, Theatre for Development, is a methodology for identifying areas of critical need or concern and motivating others to work toward resolution of those concerns or satisfaction of those needs. This is not a methodology that begins and ends with a stage performance. It is a process of gathering information, analyzing the collected information, developing an appropriate drama script, performing the drama to elicit dialogue, and following up with facilitated discussion groups resulting in plans of action for change.



Performances reflected the conditions, attitudes, and behaviors in the lives of villagers as they related to issues concerning girls' education. In turn, villagers recognized their own situations, as well as that of their neighbors, throughout the various scenes of the plays. The participatory nature of the performances allowed troupe members to enter into dialogue with the audience, serving as a means to verify their research.



Being part of a Government of Malawi program provided GABLE SMC the entree to work with two government ministries — The Ministry of Education (MOE) and The Ministry of Women, Youth, and Community Services (MWYCS) Each of these ministries have a cadre of people assigned to work within a district, directly with schools and/or communities



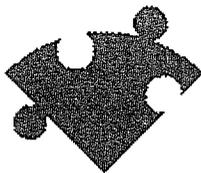
At the district level, the MOE has a District Education Officer (DEO) and a number of Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) in place to support the needs of primary schools. The MWYCS has a District Community Development Officer (DCDO) and a number of Community Development Assistants (CDAs) assigned to facilitate and monitor the development initiatives of the various communities within a district.



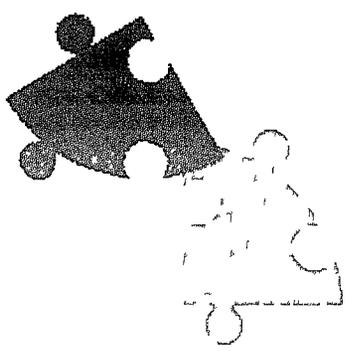
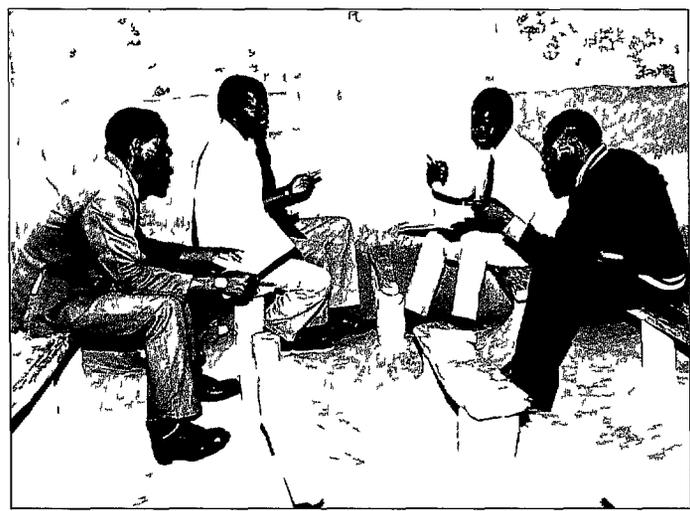


In order to assure that everyone facilitating GABLE SMC initiatives at the community/school level were well prepared and skilled in a variety of participatory facilitation techniques, GABLE SMC provided training for all DEOs, PEAs, DCDOs and CDAs in the districts in which they worked. Training of district-level field workers took place in initial 10-day training workshops and through a variety of follow-up visits and meetings.

The field workers were trained utilizing a participatory methodology that allowed them the opportunity to practice the techniques they were learning. The result was a motivated, skilled cadre of knowledgeable, action-oriented facilitators of change.

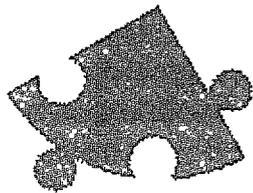


Once district-level field workers were trained, they planned a series of activities designed to sensitize the communities to the local, district, and national constraints to girls' education



Community-based workshops were designed to train participants in participatory techniques for mobilizing communities. The three key target groups to receive such training were local leaders, primary school committees, and teachers

“Special Interest” target groups, such as initiation counselors, religious teachers, and adult literacy instructors, received workshop training when they surfaced as influential in a young girl’s life due to cultural, traditional, and/or religious reasons



Community-based workshops were most often followed immediately by a series of focus group discussions facilitated by those who had undergone the workshop training. The intent of these focus group discussions was to actively involve as many members of the community as possible in recognizing the constraints to girls’ education and developing strategies to alleviate those constraints



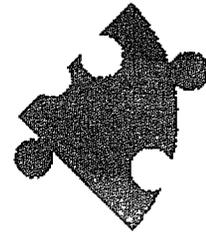


The types of action taken by the various village-based groups were as diverse as the communities, the target groups, and the constraints involved



The various groups all shared the same objective — to get more girls into primary school and to keep them there until they completed the primary cycle. The means to achieve that objective were what varied from community to community, school to school, girl to girl.





Since GABLE SMC did not have any “set plan” for how change would take place, nor in what form that change would occur, it was up to the individual target groups or communities to recognize the obstacles that existed to girls’ education and to devise ways of alleviating those constraints





Key components of GABLE SMC were reinforced by a support component. This included involvement, people and other initiatives, and various communication activities.

Strategies were put in place to ensure that influential people and organizations, both political and social, governmental and private sector, were kept apprised of GABLE SMC activities and were consulted for advice and support



A Project Coordinating Committee (PCC) was formed to advise and communicate the design, structure, and activities of GABLE SMC. In attendance at these meetings were representatives of key government ministries, the donor community, the press, and members of the Malawi parliament.





The KAP study conducted in 1994 stated, "It is clear from the data collected in this study that girls lack role models in and outside their communities " Peoples' expectations of career choices for women were limited to those of nurse, teacher, or secretary and girls were not expected to perform academically at the same level as boys nor achieve at the same rate

GABLE SMC decided to tackle the issue of role models for school-age girls in a systematic and intentional manner CDAs were trained to work with communities in the identification, selection, and utilization of appropriate role models for primary school-age girls



Six story books and two calendars were developed featuring some of the identified role models Copies of all six readers were distributed to every government primary school in Malawi The calendars were distributed to every government primary and secondary school, distance education center, government ministries, NGOs, donor agencies, and Members of Parliament



Although village-by-village interventions were found to be the most effective in facilitating change in attitudes and behavior, a series of mass communication techniques were employed to reinforce that change



*Tsogolo la Atsikana (For the Girls Future)*, GABLE SMC's weekly radio program, served as a reminder to all Malawians that girls' education can lead to better life prospects for the girl and her family



T-shirts were produced for distribution to all district-level field workers and traditional authorities, school children, parents, and community members participating in GABLE SMC activities, and radio quiz competition winners

Comic books were developed that featured a variety of issues surrounding girls' education. The series consisted of nine volumes written in Chichewa and geared toward standard four pupils



Postcards featuring the works of Malawian artists in support of girls' primary education were produced and distributed among Malawian policymakers and used as invitations to upcoming GABLE SMC events

One page fliers were printed and inserted into daily and weekly newspapers to announce major activities

*The Field Reporter*, GABLE SMC's quarterly newsletter of national-, district-, and village-based initiatives, was produced and distributed to schools, district development committees, ministries, donor agencies, and select NGOs. Copies were produced in both English and Chichewa and distributed accordingly.



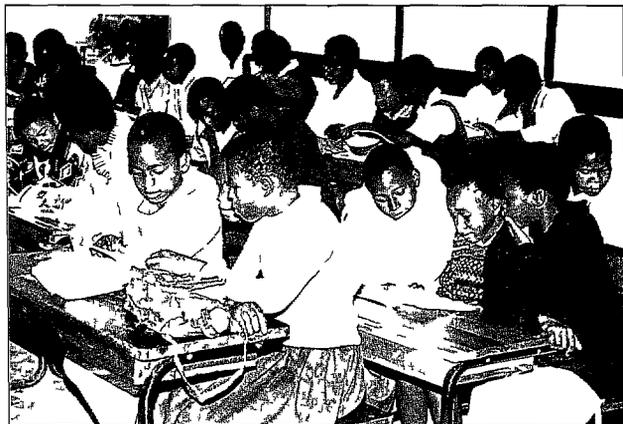
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Monitoring and assessment were ongoing processes throughout the life of the project. During the pilot phase of the project, nearly daily dialog took place between the GABLE SMC professional staff and the district field workers as they visited community-based workshops and focus group discussions and observed village-based activities.

A second KAP study was conducted to determine what changes, if any, were taking place in the pilot district. Data was collected from every school with regard to enrollment over a three year period. Utilizing a variety of assessment techniques provided understanding of the types and level of change.



Field workers from the pilot district (and eventually from other districts) assisted in the monitoring process. Teams of monitors were deployed to the various districts to observe scheduled activities and to assist when their fellow field workers encountered difficulties. Monitoring teams reported both in writing and through oral reports to the GABLE SMC professional staff.



District level field workers were encouraged to be transparent with the plans of action for their working area. An approved plan was filed with the SMC project office and their district, regional, and ministry headquarters. Having these plans available in each of the offices enabled supervisory officials to plan monitoring visits to the various activity sites. It also prevented groups and activities targeted on the plans of action from being sidelined due to unexpected events or circumstances.



In all districts after the pilot, school-based data was also collected from a random sampling of 30 - 50% of all schools to compare enrollment before and after interventions. This data analysis allowed GABLE SMC to quantify the changes.

However, changes in attitudes are not always about increases in numbers. GABLE SMC also collected human interest stories from field workers and villagers about issues and activities dealing with girls' education. These "stories" helped to put the changes that were occurring in context and provided insight into just how deeply the commitment to girls' education had been inculcated into the lives of Malawians.





The impact and outreach of the GABLE Social Mobilization Campaign proved to be as diverse and as far-reaching as Malawi itself. In quantitative terms:

- GABLESMC worked in every district in the country;
- research was conducted in 210 villages;
- all the district field workers from two ministries were trained;
- 17,846\* local leaders, 10,469\* school committee members, 11,628\* teachers were sensitized, and numerous village-based initiatives were implemented;
- 12,000 t-shirts, 30,000 calendars, 1,800,000 comic books, 600,000 role model readers, 36,000 newsletters, and 6,000 postcards were produced and distributed; and
- 156 weekly radio programs were produced and broadcast.

*\*Totals do not include numbers from phase III activities*



GABLESMC collected enrollment data from a random sample of schools in every district in the country. It is important to note that GABLE SMC was not the only variable contributing to change in enrollment patterns. A number of other school-based interventions were taking place throughout Malawi after the establishment of a democratic system of government in 1994. The most significant of the interventions being the introduction of free primary education for all children. Therefore, GABLE SMC found it important to collect enrollment data at least one full year after free primary education was introduced.

In the pilot district, school-based data collection revealed a 17.7% increase in girls' enrollment after the introduction of GABLE SMC and boys' enrollment showed an 11.5% increase. After GABLE SMC interventions took place in Phase I districts, data revealed an average of an 18.3% increase in girls' enrollment and an 8.9% increase in boys' enrollment. For the first time, statistics were showing a greater increase in girls' enrollment than that for boys. GABLE SMC, and other school-based initiatives, were making an impact even after education was free for everyone at the primary level.



GABLE SMC was fully aware that merely tracking numbers would not necessarily verify changes in attitudes. Therefore, additional indicators of change were noted. Political leaders began taking a greater interest and showing more overt support for the encouragement of girls' education. Members of Parliament were often showing up at district-level events to encourage continued cooperation between schools and communities, and GABLE SMC was invited to present and/or display materials at nearly every major development event in the country — poverty alleviation, AIDS awareness, women's empowerment, etc. The cause for increasing girls' enrollment and retention at primary school was being heralded by many groups and organizations.



At the district level, field workers were provided with *Project Outreach Diaries* for recording written accounts of activities and events indicative of the types of changes taking place in specific work areas. Examples of change took place in home, community, school, and classroom environments. Probably the most significant impact can be highlighted in the interaction and cooperation among school personnel, local leaders, parents, and the children themselves.



Namwawa school suffered from a shortage of qualified teachers. Following GABLESMC activities, the community built two temporary staff houses, and in response, a qualified teacher was posted (by the government) to the

saying they will not drop out of school because they want to become nurses, radio personalities, lawyers, etc. and they also asked their fellow girls who are out of school to go to school in next session.

*Kate Machinga*





GABLE SMC activities have also impacted on a number of individual lives. The fifty students from Chancellor College who comprised the research and performance team for GABLE SMC have become "owners" of the cause to see more girls enrolled in primary school and retained until they complete a basic education. They have had the rare opportunity to see and learn about all parts of Malawian culture, beliefs, and practices, and they continue to exhibit their commitment and pride in being a part of a movement that they believe is "changing their country."

Community Development Assistants and Primary Education Advisors have become consistent advocates of change to a more equitable approach to educational opportunities for both boys and girls.



Young boys are now speaking out in favor of their "sisters'" education and are pledging their assistance. Girls, themselves, have become proud of their achievements and are exhibiting a new "I can do it" attitude. This is witnessed repeatedly at school "open days" where poems, songs, and plays are performed to speak out in favor of education.





The momentum that has been put in place to see more girls entering and completing a primary education will not lose steam. With every field worker from both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Women, Youth, and Community Services trained to work with community members and teachers, and with community members and teachers working cooperatively with each other and developing plans to involve all sectors of the community, it seems the outreach potential is nearly unlimited and the potential for impact will continue long after the life of the project.

