How Foundations and Service Clubs Can Support

Girls' EDUCATION

Project Design No. 7

USING GIRLS' CLUBS TO PROMOTE GIRLS' EDUCATION

Why work for girls' education?

Education promotes a country's social and economic development. Through schooling, children acquire skills that are fundamental to their success in life. Educated children are able to acquire new skills, solve problems, make informed decisions, join the workforce, and become productive members of society and life-long learners.

Although it is important to educate all children, educating girls has a particularly strong impact on a country's development. Women who complete primary school have fewer children; are healthier and have healthier families; send more children to school for longer periods of time; are more productive in their field of work; and participate more in the democratic process. Although primary school enrollments have increased worldwide, girls are still less likely than boys to enroll in school, to achieve in school, and to stay in school. Traditional, formal schooling is not enough to ensure that girls are educated. A concerted effort is needed to increase girls' educational opportunities and performance both in and out of school. Societal leaders from private foundations, service clubs, or women's groups can be important contributors to that effort.

Why isn't formal schooling sufficient?

To succeed in school, some children, especially girls, often benefit from special support and encouragement. Teachers and parents may not be able to offer the support the children need. Teachers usually instruct many students, often working both morning and afternoon shifts. Many of these teachers have been trained in authoritarian teaching methods and do not know how to give students individual attention. Unschooled parents may not appreciate their children's need to attend classes regularly, to have appropriate school supplies, and to do homework. Parents are often unable to help their child with homework assignments and may not consider success in school to be important. Moreover, parents often expect girls to spend time on household chores instead of homework.

How do girls' clubs support girls' education?

Girls' clubs supplement formal schooling by providing girls with the encouragement they need to succeed and by teaching skills not taught in formal education. They reinforce the goals of formal education by providing mentoring, tutoring, or help with homework. They offer instruction in important topics that are not covered in the school curriculum such as reproductive health and life or income-producing skills. Some clubs can offer incentives or scholarships to promote retention and achievement.

Girls' clubs can also serve as an adjunct to an organization's efforts to advocate for girls' education. Club members can be asked to deliver messages about the importance of sending girls to school and to the clubs. This is a strategy used by the Ghana Chapter of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), a nongovernmental organization (NGO), that sponsors girls' clubs called Junior FAWE Clubs. Members of these clubs are expected to:

- Support the ongoing advocacy campaign to enhance the enrollment of girls at all levels of the education system through debate, drama, song, and discussions.
- Serve as role models to their peers or to the girls through persistence and higher achievement.
- Initiate discussion on global, national, and local issues that affect the education of girls at home, at school, and in the community, and ensure that attention is paid to issues that impede girls' education.
- Keep girls out of trouble after school.

A Success Story... FAWE's chapter in Ghana adopted a poem, "The Time is Now," written by a 12-year-old Kenyan girl, for use by FAWE Junior Clubs to deliver the message that there is a need to change the stereotyped perceptions of women in society. A group of 8- to 10-year-old primary-school pupils recited the poem before an audience of policy makers, members of parliament, the media, professional women and men, representatives from local donor agencies, and NGOs. Because the girls were young and energetic, they delivered the message dramatically. The response was appreciative. Derisive comments that sometimes punctuate discussions of women's empowerment were absent. On other occasions the girls use traditional and modern dance to emphasize the importance of girls' education in social development for the area.

Why are foundations, women's groups, and service organizations ideally suited to sponsor girls' clubs?

Foundations interested in girls' education may want to support clubs because they can help many girls at a relatively low cost. Service clubs, such as associations of professional women's auxiliaries or women's groups, may be attracted to this intervention for its effectiveness and because girls' clubs are an activity with a personal touch. Most organization members have the skills and experience necessary to start clubs and may enjoy developing personal relationships with the girls they support. The size of a program and the investment needed to start and sustain a girls' club are flexible. An organization can form a chapter of an existing organization such as Girl Scouts, Girl Guides, 4-H or FAWE. Established organizations have

methods for starting and running girls' activities that can be useful in initiating a girls' club. A link to an international or even a national organization can be useful, but it is certainly not required. Girls' clubs succeed only when they have enthusiastic local support.

WHAT PROGRAMS DO GIRLS' CLUBS PROVIDE?

Girls' clubs address many of the barriers to girls' education. Clubs work with parents and students to emphasize the importance of girls' school attendance and achievement. They teach girls how to earn funds to support their education, and they work with girls on the medical and social knowledge that will protect them from getting pregnant at a young age.

- **Support of school attendance, persistence, and achievement**. School registration, preparation for classes, and monitoring of school achievement should be a priority in girls' clubs. Some clubs recognize the beginning of the school year with a special ceremony, accompanied by the gift of a pencil or a small notebook. Other clubs give members "back-to-school" motivational packages containing basic school supplies: a pencil, pencil sharpener, pen, colored pencils and a few notebooks.

  To monitor and support achievement, members can be asked to bring in their quarterly grade reports, and small awards can be given to those with improved grades. Club representatives can establish relationships with school personnel and ask to be advised about club members' attendance and achievement.

- **Income-producing skills**. Lack of family resources is one of the primary barriers to girls' education. School supplies and uniforms are expensive. Club members (and parents) are usually interested in learning skills that will give them some earnings to help defray school costs. Sewing, embroidery, and crochet are often popular classes for girls. They like learning how to make handicrafts that can be sold for a profit. Sometimes a club's classes in manual skills lead to a level of production sufficient to begin a small business.

- **Reproductive health**. Early pregnancy frequently ends a girl's school career. Although reproduction may be taught as part of a science curriculum, it usually does not touch on how to manage sexuality in social relationships. Girls' clubs have the flexibility to teach, with the permission of the girls' parents, not only reproductive health, but the social skills needed to postpone pregnancy.

- **Empowerment**. While girls are always interested in learning more about topics related to women's traditional roles such as nutrition, cooking, and childcare, girls' clubs are an important forum for examining broad issues of gender roles. It is appropriate in a club that supports girls' education to focus on postgraduation opportunities and on girls' and women's role in the community.

- **Mentoring**. Leaders of girls' clubs can serve as mentors to help girls rise to their potential. To do so effectively, leaders should have a higher-than-average education or possess some characteristic that girls can respect and admire. Leaders' conduct in club meetings should provide a model of how to take leadership roles. Specific mentoring programs, such as work place visits, can be another aspect of a club's mentoring function.

- **Tutoring**. Extra help with school classes can be an important club activity. Tutoring in school subjects can be provided by leaders or by older girls in the club.

- **Celebrations**. It is important to celebrate special occasions in the life of the club such as the inauguration of the activity or the beginning and end of the school and club year. Club activities can also be planned to coincide with special holidays like mothers' day or religious celebrations.

How can you start a girls' club?

Like any new undertaking, there will be many issues to resolve. Success and satisfaction will be greater if there are not too many issues to be dealt with simultaneously. For a small organization, one girls' club may be a sufficient challenge. Larger organizations may be able to start with three or four clubs. It is desirable to start small, with only one club, before starting others.

- **Select a geographic area and potential target communities**. The three most important considerations in selecting a site are need, geography, and community interest. A girls' club will have maximum impact on girls' education in areas where girls have low completion rates in elementary school. Such rates are not hard to find in rural areas in most developing countries. Data on graduation rates are available through the Ministry of Education, regional departments of education, or as anecdotal reports from local teachers.

  Although rural areas often present even greater poverty and need than urban ones, ease of access must also be a consideration. For purposes of mentoring or monitoring, sponsors must be able to reach the activity site without spending too much time traveling to the site. Volunteer groups that desire personal involvement in the project will want to consider locations that require no more than 1 to 1-1/2 hours' travel.

  To maximize coverage, it sometimes makes sense to form a club that includes girls from several nearby villages or communities. The activity should be planned to fit with local customs and patterns of association and community interest.

How One Girls' Club Works... In El Salvador, one club includes girls from six small communities located outside of a market town. Women customarily go to the market on Saturdays. A mother-daughter club takes advantage of this local practice. Meetings are on Saturday mornings. Mothers make their purchases before the meetings start and then attend classes with their daughters until the trucks leave the town at midday to return to the communities.

- **Use community resources**. Using community members to serve as leaders and instructors in girls' clubs empowers and trains the adults as well as the girls.

  Recruiting leaders and trainers. If possible, recruit local residents as leaders, trainers, and facilitators. School teachers or retired educators are likely to be good candidates. Another strategy to identify leadership is to target natural leaders willing to take on new challenges.

  After program planning, seek local residents with special expertise to work as trainers. A local dressmaker can teach sewing; a local chapter of the Red Cross/Red Cresent can give first aid

or reproductive health classes; a beautician can teach a class on grooming. Local residents are believable role models. Their teaching fees are lower than those of outsiders, and they may be willing to work as volunteers.

Recruiting members. Members are usually easily recruited. A community leader can be asked to talk about the program or a club representative can discuss the idea with religious groups, schools, or traditional groupings to create awareness about the benefits of girls' clubs and how they support girls' education. An initial meeting can be convened with the help of local civic, religious, or school personnel.

- **Use participatory program planning and organization**. The club's sponsors should present a general overview of what a girls' club is but as much as possible encourage the club members, whether they are girls or girls and mothers, to create their own club. Rural residents have few social and educational opportunities. For this reason, initial planning meetings should carefully determine what participants would like to do and learn in a club before the sponsors explain their ideas. This approach will empower participants as creators of the club.

  In organization, as in planning, club members should assume as much responsibility as possible. When the group has been meeting for several months and the membership has stabilized, election of a board can take place. The board officers can then assume most of the club's responsibilities, and the sponsors can serve as advisors rather than as implementers.

In consultation with participants, resolve the following issues:

- **Time and day of meetings and annual calendar**. Initially, weekly or semiweekly meetings are advisable. To be educational and enjoyable, meetings must be well structured. It is better to start with fewer meetings and increase the number than to offer poorly organized activities.

  Let the group choose the days and hours that are convenient for them, the holidays when meetings should be canceled or celebrations held, and the weeks that should be reserved for agricultural work.

- **Location**. A meeting place can usually be borrowed with ease as long as the location is respected and kept clean. School rooms, churches, and homes can be used for girls' clubs. The location should have enough chairs and tables for all participants. A cabinet with a lock for storing equipment and materials is desirable and should be purchased if not already available.

- **Type of club**. The sponsor and the community should decide whether the club should be a girls' club or a mother-daughter club. Women who live in rural or marginal urban areas have as few opportunities as their daughters. Clubs that offer social and educational opportunities are just as attractive to mothers as to daughters. Mother-daughter clubs have some advantages. Mothers "chaperone" their daughters, thus alleviating any concerns about their daughters' safety. When the club includes mothers, they often begin to take on leadership roles and then serve as role models for their daughters and the daughters' peers.

- **Refreshments**. Clubs always have a social function in addition to other goals. The social interaction enhances all other activities. Serving simple refreshments at meetings can facilitate positive social interactions. Sponsors can model this function initially and quickly turn the responsibility over to club members.

WHAT IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY SHOULD BE USED?

Effective implementation of girls' clubs requires knowledge and experience in community development, participatory planning, training, and evaluation. A sponsoring organization may recruit members to serve as volunteer leaders, hire advisors, or train mothers to serve as leaders. The costs associated with administering a girls' club will depend on the implementation strategy employed. Administering a new club can be time consuming when an organization is not experienced in the program area. Questions to ask about the organization's capacity for in-house administration include these:

- Does the organization provide services?
- Does it have volunteers or paid personnel in the target areas?
- Do the volunteers or personnel have relevant experience? If not, can they be trained to administer a girls' club?
- Do the volunteers have an interest in administering a girls' club?

If the answer to these questions is no, the program might be contracted to an organization that has the requisite experience, or specific expertise sought to help with establishing clubs.

HOW CAN THE CLUB BE MONITORED?

The club should use a registration form that collects basic information about the girl, her family, her education, and interests. The form will enable club sponsors to know more about the members and provide baseline data for evaluating the club's effectiveness in keeping girls in school. It is efficient to have different forms for new and returning members.

An attendance record of all meetings should be maintained. The system should be developed in collaboration with the members and managed, with appropriate help, by them. This is not as simple a task as might appear, but it is an essential one.

Although it is not necessary to prepare formal, written summaries of meetings, it is often desirable to use a form that records the topic of each meeting, the number of attendees, the names of the trainers, and the cost.

An annual participatory evaluation and planning process should be considered.

WHAT SHOULD THE PROJECT BUDGET BE?

Costs are flexible and are usually low. They depend on the availability and prices of local materials and equipment, meeting space, as well as whether facilitators are compensated for their services.

Members should make a nominal contribution to the organization’s budget. The amount should be within the means of all potential members. For clubs in areas so impoverished that even a small cash contribution is impossible, members may be able to contribute refreshments for the meetings in lieu of a membership fee.

Illustrative Annual Budget

Category	Cost
Salaries and Wages (if personnel are not volunteers) Leaders (2 @ $15/wk for 32 wks.) Instructors: Sewing ($6/wk for 24wks.) Embroidery($3/wk for 24wks) Empowerment($10/wk for 8wks)	 $960 $144 $72 $80
Subtotal	**$1,256**
Materials (generally purchased in bulk and sold at cost to participants)	$300
Travel and transportation (if leaders live outside the community)	$320
Refreshments (25 members/32 meetings)	$80
Monitoring and evaluation	$50
Administrative costs	$50
Total	**$2,056**

How long does it take to implement a girls' club?

Once the decision is made to sponsor a girls' club, it can be initiated within two or three months. Sponsors should expect that membership will increase as word spreads about the activity. Activities might follow the schedule suggested below:

Project Time Line

Activities	Month					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Make initial plans Visit potential target communities	✗					
Select target communities Identify local leaders and instructors Continue planning		✗	✗			
Recruit members		✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Begin holding meetings using preplanned activities				✗	✗	
Begin program planning with club members, determine topics of interest and calendar.				✗	✗	
Finalize program for the rest of the year, based on the first several months of experience.						✗
Identify additional instructors, if needed.					✗	
Plan and hold an inauguration (if desired)				✗		

SUMMARY

Worldwide growth of youth clubs, such as scouting, 4-H , and girls' clubs during the last century demonstrates the value and sustainability of clubs for youth. Clubs provide girls with education different from what can be received at home, at school, or in a religious group. Girls' clubs are an important reinforcement for formal education and an important arena for teaching life skills not covered in the formal system.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, contact your ministry or department of education for a list of schools and organizations working in education in your region.

This paper is one of a series of project designs on activities to promote girls' education. The series includes:

1. *Enhancing Girls' Education through Community Schools*
2. *Improving the Physical Environment in Support of Girls' Education*
3. *Investments That Yield High Returns: Scholarships for Girls*
4. *Using Incentives to Promote Girls' Education*
5. *Using Mentoring to Promote Girls' Education*
6. *Using Special Programs as a Strategy to Educate Out-of-School Girls*
7. *Using Girls' Clubs to Promote Girls' Education*

You can obtain copies of any of these reports from the Girls' and Women's Education Activity, American Institutes for Research, 1815 N. Ft. Myer Drive, Suite 600, Arlington, VA 22209, USA. Tel: (703) 527-5546; Fax: (703) 527-4661; e-mail: girls_education@air-dc.org

The Institute for International Research, a fully owned subsidiary of the American Institutes for Research, implements the Girls' and Women's Education Activity under contract to the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office for Women in Development in collaboration with Abt Associates, CARE, Management Systems International, Plan International, and World Learning under contract #HNE-5848-C-00-6046-00.

You can obtain copies of these reports from the Girls' and Women's Education Activity, American Institutes for Research, 1815 N. Ft. Myer Drive, Suite 600, Arlington, VA 22209, USA. Tel: (703) 527-5546; Fax: (703) 527-4661; e-mail: girls_education@air-dc.org

The Institute for International Research, a fully owned subsidiary of the American Institutes for Research, implements the Girls' and Women's Education Activity under contract to the U.S. Agency for International Development's Office for Women in Development in collaboration with Abt Associates, CARE, Management Systems International, Plan International, and World Learning under contract #HNE-5848-C-00-6046-00.