

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY TO ADVANCE GIRLS' EDUCATION

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BACKGROUND

The Girls' Education Unit (GEU) of the Ghana Education Service (GES), with leadership from the State Minister for Primary, Secondary, and Girls Child Education, produced the National Vision and Strategy to advance education for the girl child in Ghana. The Vision and Strategy accounts for the multiple efforts by many NGOs throughout the country and highlights these efforts within a framework for the national advancement of education for all girls. The GEU also initiated community mobilization activities to directly support girls' schooling, along with supporting system improvements at the district, regional and national levels. These improvement initiatives were undertaken with support from the USAID-funded SAGE Project (Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education), implemented by the Academy for Educational Development (AED).

The education of girls is well recognized by many. The value placed on educating girls at the community level, however, is more uneven and varies according to community leadership, socio-economic circumstances, and linkages to their external environment, including media. Increasingly, the success of girls' education also must be seen in the context of girls' reproductive health and well being and how well it is safeguarded in the community and school. It has been documented that for many girls in Africa, their first sexual contact is with male teachers in their schools. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this phenomenon also prevails in Ghana. Consequently, the ability of communities and schools to provide a safe environment for girls must be an integral part of a girls' education program. Girls' life chances will be greatly facilitated or mitigated by their educational, social, and sexual experiences in school.

The experience of the GEU in undertaking these activities, the intermediate results achieved, and the promise that is inherent in the National Vision and Strategy has led the GEU to conclude that more partners can and need to be mobilized. The objective is to achieve sustained change in girls' education, health, and well being. The communication strategy that is proposed by this document will help guide the GEU and the State Minister in engaging these partners for effective support in the behavior change processes to help achieve these goals for all girls in Ghana.

PURPOSE

The Communication Strategy to Advance Girls' Education will be implemented to achieve a number of related goals relevant to SAGE's objectives. These include, (1) adapting a communication framework to guide its implementation, (2) identifying the target audiences (3) determining their role in the behavior change process

and the expected outcomes of their engagement in the promotion of girls' education, (4) articulating the activities to be undertaken by the GEU and the State Minister to implement the communication strategy and a suggested timeline for the activities, and (5) a plan for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the activities to determine the effectiveness of the strategy.

FRAMEWORK: The P-Process

The P-Process is a health communication framework that was developed twenty years ago by a number of staff from Population Communication Services, the Academy for Educational Development, Porter, Novelli and Associates and the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health. It will be adapted here for the purpose of guiding the communication plan for SAGE II. It is a comprehensive, and well-tested, framework for communication strategy development, project implementation, technical assistance, institution building and training. The P-Process includes six steps, listed below, that will be followed in sequence to develop an effective communication strategy.

1. Listen to potential audiences; assess existing programs, policies, resources, strengths, and weaknesses; and analyze communication resources
2. Strategic design: Decide on objectives, identify audience segments, position the concept for the audience, clarify the behavior change model, select channels of communication, plan for interpersonal discussion, draw up an action plan, and design evaluation
3. Development, pretesting and revision, and production: Develop message concepts, pretest with audience members and gatekeepers, revise and produce messages and materials, and retest new and existing materials
4. Management, implementation, and monitoring: Mobilize key organizations, create a positive organizational climate, implement the action plan and monitor the process of dissemination, transmission, and reception of program outputs
5. Impact evaluation: Measure the impact on audiences and determine how to improve future projects
6. Plan for continuity: Adjust to changing conditions, and plan for continuity and self-sufficiency.

AUDIENCES

The "potential audiences" referenced above, have already been identified during SAGE I, and are therefore referred to here as "target audiences" for the purpose of this component of the SAGE project. Some of these audiences have also been included in the activities of SAGE I and are thereby familiar with the project and its goals. The role they will be asked to play in the communication plan, however, is a new one. The overall objective regarding these audiences is to bring them into the status of full partner in the active support of girls' education with the GEU and SAGE. This objective will be addressed through behavior change activities.

The audiences are listed below followed by a brief description of the characteristics and contributions related to each:

1. Community leaders
2. SMC/PTAs
3. Media
4. Government Organizations
5. Nongovernment organizations (NGOs)
6. Business leaders
7. Political leaders

1. Community leaders: The role of traditional, religious and civic leaders in arbitrating individual and group actions is pivotal in considering changes in behavior regarding girls' education, health, safety, and life choices. Community leaders can lead or mitigate changes in expectations for girls and for those who affect them. The power of community leaders over community behavior ranges from influence (religion), arbitration of conflict (traditional) and actions for antisocial/illegal actions (civic). Each leader uses distinctive **media** for receiving information and each has preferences for using information. A draft questionnaire is attached (See Appendix A) for assessing community leader media preferences for engaging them as active partners to advance girls and their education. Results can be assessed to better match media needs.

2. SMC/PTAs: School Management Committees/Parent Teacher Associations. SMCs and PTAs have been authorized through legislation and many communities have benefited from the active membership of many. The GEU, with assistance from SAGE, has mobilized SMCs/PTAs in 35 communities and will expand mobilization to an additional 35 during SAGE II. Three distinctive aspects of the SMC/PTA support have been (1) action planning to support girls' schooling, e.g., finance, infrastructure, attendance monitoring, (b) the addition of active female members who will advocate for girls and girls' issues, and (c) leadership training for the female SMC/PTA members. A critical role of the SMC/PTA is establishing a link for support and accountability between the community and school. The community link is critical to school responsiveness and quality because the link between the school and the District Education Office (DEO) is not as strong as desired. For example, Circuit Supervisors and other members of the District Girls' Education Team (DGET) often do not have the resources or mandate to visit and supervise schools as often as necessary. The communication strategy will assess these groups to identify current and relevant issues. Assessment instrument to be developed.

3. Media: The national and local media already play a support role in girls' education, health and safety. They periodically carry stories about the speeches of government leaders regarding girls' education, girls' education activities and events, and the misdeeds of male teachers whose predatory sexual practices put girls in harms way, including sanctions against them. National print and broadcast media pick up these stories with some regularity, although there is little informed analysis of the issues and consequences. Local radio has broadcast community success stories and females role

models' stories to support girls' education, although they often prefer to charge a modest fee for running the story from projects such as SAGE or Community-Schools Alliance (CSA). The role of media can be broadened and made more active if media representation are given training through the communication strategy on the issues of girls' education, health and safety and convened by a national leader to be a partner in a national campaign. Materials to be developed.

4. Government Organizations (GOs): As mentioned above, the GEU and the State Minister have mandated roles in promoting education for the girl child. Other GOs also have important roles and can be effective strategic partners in the communication strategy. The Minister for Womens and Social Affairs has spearheaded initiatives to advance womens and girls' economic and training activities and has publicly endorsed the State Minister's work for the girl child. The Minister of Education has publicly stated the MOE's commitment to sanction any male teacher proven to coerce girl students for sex if they are informed. And the National Police have added an officer at each Regional Headquarters to respond to assaults on girls and girl students. These and other GOs can be brought into the communication strategy under the leadership of the State Minister and the GEU to focus their strengths into the overall campaign.

5. Nongovernment organizations (NGOs). There are numerous NGOs and bi-lateral, multi-lateral organizations working throughout the country on behalf of girls' education. The 2001 Symposium conducted the GEU with support from UNICEF and WUSC (World University Services of Canada) demonstrated a vital range of commitment and activities. These organizations shared perspectives, lessons, and geographic and demographic coverage to inform the GEU and improve its standing as the national leader for girls' education. It is expected that the GEU will continue to hold national symposiums annually and to transition its role from that of convener to that of convener + program and technical leader. The continued use, application, monitoring and evaluation of communication techniques to learn from and better inform all partners can enhance this role.

6. Business leaders: The business sector in Ghana is receiving significant policy support from the current government, to issue in "a new golden age of business." It is known from the literature that business leaders will support education if they have confidence in the leaders and it is believed that the Kufuor government, and its representatives, has established that confidence. It is also known that the business sector will contribute to such social investments without demanding to manage the funds themselves (preferring to use their time for their own businesses). It is expected that business leaders will be willing to contribute advertising space with wide coverage and financial contributions for local community and school initiatives if requests are convened by a recognized and respected political leader and provide a legitimate and transparent means for doing so. The communication strategy is integral to approaching the community leaders in a manner appropriate to their expectations, e.g., business-like presentation including briefing papers with succinct and accurate statistics. (See Appendix B) Business Solicitation Document.

7. Political leaders: The number of political leaders who actively and regularly speak out and mobilize others on behalf of girls' education, health and safety has, to date, been primarily relegated to the few who have girls and women prominently referenced in their title or portfolio. It is believed that this "compartmentalization" of girls' and women's issues reinforces their marginalization in society. It is also believed, however, that there can be a broader political will to support and protect girls and their education if political leaders can be convened, informed, and engaged as communication partners. It is recognized that this may be a challenge to a peer, a minister or Parliamentarian, for example, and may require leadership or sponsorship from the Vice President or President, with support from the State Ministry who also is a Parliamentarian. If political leaders are informed of the issues and initiatives for girls' education, they can be more effective leaders for girls at the national level and with their respective constituencies. The communication strategy can provide the basis to present the materials and data to these political leaders so they indeed can make informed choices and commitment regarding the girls' education issue.

BEHAVIOR CHANGE COMMUNICATION

The behavior change process, from unawareness to sustained behavior change varies depending on numerous variables, such as audience, context, perceptions, need, etc. The target audiences described above are all already involved to some degree in girls' education. The level of commitment varies, however, due to a large degree on the audiences' understanding of the issues and the benefit accrued to the audience for its commitment. Change is difficult. Often a group or sector of population is committed to a particular issue but the strength of the commitment is lacking due to other pressing needs, e.g., limited resources, lack of information, and so on. It is the role of the Communication Strategy component of SAGE II to aid in strengthening the commitment of all target audiences through behavior change communication activities. By understanding the impact that girls' education, health and safety have on the well being of Ghanaian society as a whole, the audiences can make informed decisions about their commitment with conviction.

As noted in Appendix C the first step in the communication behavior change process is to understand the target audiences in terms of their commitment. GEU and SAGE have a head start in this regard, as they already have a good understanding of the audiences and their commitment. The second step in the process is to move from information dissemination and awareness-raising to address motivation to change and ability to assess benefits of practicing the new behavior, in this case the strengthened commitment. Instruments and plans for gleaning information from the target audiences, mentioned above, are designed to address the issues of motivation to change and benefits of practice. Specific activities will be addressed below. The third step, which has also been addressed in this strategy, is to identify the different communication channels to be used to influence the audiences' commitment about girls' education. In general, these will include mass, meso, and micro communication. With regard to Behavior Change Interventions, Step four, simply put, emphasizes that behavior change communication is

only one component in the behavior change process. It is, however, the necessary “connective tissue.”

GEU ENGAGEMENT OF COMMUNICATION AUDIENCES

The potential contributions of the audiences, described earlier, are distinctive according to their respective characteristics and relationships to girls, their communities, and other relevant stakeholders and actors. The communication strategy strives to focus on the target audiences’ contributions to specific behavior change stages, or a range of stages. This serves to articulate their role in the overall strategy and to demonstrate how, collectively, the GEU communication audiences can, in turn, help achieve sustained behavior change for girls’ education, health, safety, and ultimately life choices.

In the overview presented in Appendix D, the audiences are shown to support the range of stages from awareness to sustained change. The overview also implies that political leaders and media will contribute most to awareness through motivation to change. Audiences closer to girls in the community will contribute most to motivating, trialling and sustaining change. The business leaders can support the efforts of those closest to girls in their behavior change efforts.

The GEU will undertake five types of activities to enable their communication audiences to be effective in their behavior change efforts: (1) training, (2) training of trainers (TOT), (3) round table discussions and related actions, (4) symposia, and (5) field pilot activities. Each of these activities is described below including the expected contributions of each audience as a result.

1) Training: The GEU will provide trainings to representatives of the national and local print and broadcast media on (1) the issues of girls’ education health, and safety, (2) current demographic and incidence data, and (3) the stages of behavior change and the contributions of media* and other partners to it. Training should be opened by high level officials to give it importance and conducted by GEU/SAGE to provide credibility.

2) TOT: The GEU will train NGO trainers on the issues of motivating, trialling and sustaining behavior change. The GEU also will base the training on its experience and lessons on working with the community leaders and SMC/PTAs and their role in creating and sustaining change. Lessons on working with media and other government organizations and leaders also may be included.

*Media are defined as mass media, e.g. TV, radio; meso media, e.g. street theater, drama, posters; micro media e.g. discussion groups, interpersonal persuasion. The expected outcome is that the media will be more attuned to the issues and actions by the various audiences and report them with more regularity and analytic capability

3) Roundtable discussions: Government organizations, business leaders and political leaders can be productively engaged through roundtable discussions, convened and chaired by a senior leader and facilitated to introduce new information on girls' education, health and safety . The objective is to share what they can achieve, individually or collectively. These roundtables can be conducted separately, by sector, given the different outcomes expected of each group:

- GOs: authorizing or creating mechanisms to remove barriers to girls' education, protect their health and safety, and sanction those who put them in harm's way.
- Business Leaders: advertising (social marketing) and financial support for local initiatives on behalf of girls and their education.
- Political leaders: espousing girls' education as a national priority, cooperation with State minister in Parliamentary affairs, and educating their constituencies for awareness and motivation to support change.

4) Symposia: The GEU should continue to convene the Girls' Education Symposium on an annual basis. The forum provided a rich and valuable sharing among LNGO and other partners on issues, activities and coverage. The symposium also can be a valuable tool for informing government and political leaders about grassroots perspectives and lessons. In addition, due to more informed broadcasters, the general public will become more informed through their mass media channels.

5) Field pilot activities: The GEU, in conjunction with SAGE assistance, will continue mobilization activities in 35 communities while adding 35 more in 2002-2004. The interventions should be closely articulated with the communication strategy to maximize their impact and lessons, especially regarding the role of community leaders and SWC/PTAs to local behavior change and the roles of other partners in supporting it.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The overall goal of SAGE II is to increase the number of girls enrolling in, and attending school, as well as completing their schooling. The overall goal of the communication strategy component is to bring formerly identified target audiences into the status of full partner in the active support of girls' education with the GEU and SAGE, to complement GEU and SAGE's goal. This objective will be addressed through behavior change activities. As previously described, the communication objective is to be achieved by utilizing the P-Process framework, identifying relevant audiences, determining the role of behavior change among the audiences with regard to girls' education, and articulate the activities that are necessary to implement the strategy. As mentioned above, SAGE I has already begun certain activities outlined in the P-Process, such as identifying and engaging target audiences. The systematic application of the framework to the communication strategy will be important during SAGE II in order to measure and assess

the effectiveness of the strategy, as well as to address mid-program revisions, if necessary.

It is suggested that the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan be developed in close consultation with the GEU and relevant partners once SAGE II is engaged. The first step will be to assess where the project stands in relation to communication activities that have already occurred and the status of these activities. It will then be up to this team to determine which instruments need to be developed and for what purpose, e.g. qualitative assessment of target audiences, Appendix A. These kind of qualitative assessments need to be conducted among the audiences to develop appropriate materials for the more structured activities, i.e. trainings, TOT, roundtables, symposia, field pilot activities. Once GEU and the SAGE II team have agreed on their communication objectives, e.g., types of messages, appropriate channels, media organizations to be included in trainings, number of businesses to approach and types of commitment, groups to be included in symposia, and how many, where, etc., the monitoring and assessment can be designed, along with the necessary materials.

ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: Draft Questionnaire for Chief
- Appendix B: Business Solicitation Document).
- Appendix C: Behavior Change Communication
- Appendix D: Stages of Behavior Change
- Appendix E: Timeline