

How
BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS
CAN PROMOTE



EDUCATION

Girls'

Project Design No. 4

USING INCENTIVES TO PROMOTE GIRLS' EDUCATION

WHY INVEST IN GIRLS' EDUCATION?

Education, especially primary schooling, promotes democracy, economic growth, and social development. Education of all children is important, but the education of girls has a particularly strong impact on a country's development. Female literacy and schooling have been linked to improvements in agricultural productivity and family, maternal, and child health. Despite these benefits, girls are far less likely than boys to participate in education. Many barriers limit girls' access to education, including cultural beliefs that place a greater value on educating boys over girls, family needs and resource levels, a lack of facilities available for girls at schools, and uncertainty about how male classmates or teachers will treat girls. This situation requires a concerted effort to increase educational opportunities for girls as a development imperative.

Many of the impediments to girls' enrollment and persistence in school are specific to girls and not to boys. To overcome these impediments, a community's leaders must become active participants in determining the causes and implementing solutions to specific problems in educating girls. Many girls would like to attend school, but barriers often prevent or discourage parents from enrolling their girls in school and sustaining their enrollment. Incentives can provide a response to these problems.

WHAT ARE INCENTIVE PROGRAMS?

The term "incentive" is often used to describe monetary or nonmonetary compensation used to fulfill a need, overcome a barrier, or minimize a cost so that a desired educational goal can be achieved. Scholarships, books, uniforms, and meals are often considered incentives and are used separately or with other interventions to motivate parents and communities to send girls to school. Incentives can have positive effects on enrollment and attendance in school.

HOW DO INCENTIVE PROGRAMS SUPPORT GIRLS' EDUCATION?

The cost of educating girls is a major obstacle for low-income families who must pay for tuition, books, materials, and clothing for their daughters as well as their sons, especially in societies where boys are favored. Moreover, girls' participation in school has indirect costs for the family, since girls assist in the domestic work of caring for small children, gathering wood, and carrying water; thus these tasks would need to be done by others. In rural communities girls are typically incorporated into their families' productive work at an early age. Girls are given responsibility for weaving, tending livestock, making pottery, or selling in the market. They represent a major economic value to their families. Alleviating some direct or indirect costs can significantly increase girls' participation in education. Incentives can improve the daughters' and parents' motivation for the daughter to attend school.

Incentives can take many forms. Financial aid or other monetary assistance to affect school costs can be used to attract children to school and to keep them there. For example, scholarships can be used for tuition and other related costs such as registration, activity or examination fees, or the cost of transportation. In several countries food is provided for students' meals during the day or as supplements for the families whose children participate. In addition to food, other material incentives can include books, book bags, school uniforms, or school supplies, such as pens and pencils. Although it is desirable to provide incentives to as many children as need them, incentive programs need not be large. Promoting educational opportunities for even a few girls can improve their lives and the lives of their families.

WHY SHOULD THE PRIVATE SECTOR INVEST IN INCENTIVE PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT GIRLS' EDUCATION?

Business leaders and organizations, because of their role in determining human resource requirements for the future, influencing public opinion, and mobilizing rapidly to confront strategically important issues can play a vital part in strengthening their country's resource base by promoting girls' education.

The business sector benefits from its investment in incentive programs. Incentive programs provide high visibility. They can be targeted to geographical areas where a business operates. The programs build relationships with new and traditional market segments, and offer the potential for new partnerships with government. Ultimately, strengthening girls' education helps to create a better skilled, more flexible workforce.

Businesses can invest easily and quickly in incentive programs, adapting successful models to local needs. There are many ways – requiring varying levels of time or financial commitment – through which businesses can invest in incentive programs. Businesses can scale an intervention program to their resources – and do not necessarily have to contribute a lot of money to make a difference. In addition to funding, a business and its leaders can contribute time, ideas, personal contacts, manpower, goods and services.

WHAT ISSUES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN ESTABLISHING AN INCENTIVES PROGRAM?

First, choose the geographical area and the target communities. Incentives work best when communities are motivated to educate their children but unable to do so because of economic barriers. Incentive programs should be used in areas where a business has experience and is comfortable engaging in a

new endeavor. A local nongovernmental organization (NGO) or parent-teacher association may be able to provide assistance in identifying barriers to target and potential beneficiary communities.

Second, decide what incentive(s) to provide. The incentives should be sufficient to motivate the desired behavior — attendance and persistence — but not so large that other potential beneficiaries are excluded from the program. Decide whether the incentive should go to the family or to the student, and why.

Third, determine how long the incentive will be provided and the duration of the investment. Under ideal circumstances an incentive program would encourage completion of at least a primary education, but research has shown that even a few years of schooling have positive social and economic effects. Support must continue for several years to have a lasting impact. Incentive schemes are not intended to be permanent, and those sponsoring them should think about developing other strategies that address the underlying reasons that prevent or discourage girls from attending school.

HOW CAN A BUSINESS DEVELOP AN INCENTIVE PROGRAM?

Implementing an incentive program is time consuming and expensive when the sponsoring organizations are inexperienced. In contrast, the financial experience of businesses makes them ideal organizations for the administration of an incentive program, although some businesses may prefer to fund programs, with an outside organization responsible for actual implementation. Regardless of who implements the program, the following questions should be asked before the implementing organization is selected:

- Does the implementing organization have experience with the delivery of services?
- Does it have staff in the target areas or is it planning to put some there?
- Do these staff members have relevant experience or can they be trained to administer an incentive program?

If the answer to any of these questions is “no,” working with another organization to administer the program is likely to be the most cost-effective implementation strategy. Effective implementation of incentive programs requires knowledge and experience in community development, management, training, and evaluation. Organizations working in development and education (particularly girls’ education) at national and local levels must be identified and enlisted to provide support.

As with any new undertaking, there will be many issues to resolve. It is useful to establish a committee to formulate policies and to oversee the level of investment, implementation strategy, and monitoring and evaluation of the incentive awards. A program’s goals, scope, and partners also need to be defined. For some businesses, a small incentive program may be a sufficient challenge. Other organizations may be able to implement a larger scale program.

SUCCESSFUL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS

Guatemala: Promoting School Attendance among Rural Girls (PROESA)

Guatemala's PROESA program promotes girls' education by offering economic incentives that assist parents to keep their daughters in school. Among the incentives are competitive business loans. Women, many of whom are already receiving loans or making deposits in village banks, are given an opportunity to obtain loans and save money for their daughters' education by establishing an Educational Savings' Group (ESG). Money for the loans was provided initially by CARE/Guatemala and later by the women themselves as they repay outstanding loans and build the ESG account through their deposits. Loans are available to support productive, income-generating activities so that women can pay girls' school fees. Interest rates are comparable to those of the village bank. Women can deposit money into the ESG account and withdraw money from it to pay for their daughters' school expenses. In exchange for these privileges, women agree to keep their daughters in school, repay each loan by the agreed-upon date, and withdraw savings only for educational expenses.

Since PROESA's inception, six communities have established ESGs. Almost \$20,000 has been borrowed. No defaults have occurred. Women seem appreciative of the opportunity and work diligently to improve the possibilities for a more successful future for their daughters. Equally important, girls are prospering educationally as a result of the program. Drop-out rates have declined and completion rates have increased.

El Salvador: La Nueva Esperanza

La Nueva Esperanza began in El Salvador as a part-time program to provide women with income-producing skills such as sewing and embroidery. It became a multigenerational organization, however, when members brought their daughters and granddaughters to classes. The women soon realized that many of these girls did not or could not attend school. The organization offered to provide the out-of-school girls with supplies and a uniform if they would enroll in school. The cost was low — about \$3 per girl. Although anecdotal, the program reports positive results from the supplies' program. One interesting facet of this program is that it was implemented within the context of a national educational reform program, and as part of several activities carried out at the local level with the intent of keeping girls in school.

Uganda: The Promotion of Girls' Education Scheme

In Uganda, the Promotion of Girls' Education Scheme is intended to reduce girls' dropout rate and increase their academic performance. The scheme focuses on the country's poorest districts. Schools that make improvements in girls' persistence and/or performance, as compared with persistence and performance during the previous year, are rewarded financially by the government and private sector. Schools that perform the best receive the largest awards, but all schools in the districts receive some money. The rewards must be used to benefit girls in the community.

Key questions in designing incentive programs include these:

- What will be the program’s goals and purposes?
- Who will serve as liaisons between the community and the incentive program?
- How will recipients be selected?
- Who should implement the incentive program?
- What will be the program’s duration?
- How much will the program cost, and how should these costs be allocated?
- How will you know whether the incentive program has made progress towards its goals?

These questions are in no specific order. In fact, many questions can and should be answered simultaneously.

WHAT SHOULD THE BUDGET BE?

The costs for an incentive program will vary greatly depending on the nature of the program as well as the number of beneficiaries. The costs will also be contingent on availability and cost of local resources. Businesses can design incentive programs to fit the funds available. Incentives can be given only to the most needy children, or a low-cost incentive can be used for a larger group of children. Nonetheless, it is possible to offer an illustrative budget that allocates resources among tasks typically associated with incentive programs. Costs for personnel will vary, but between 40 and 60 percent of the total investment should go to incentives. Salaries and wages for a program coordinator and administrative support should not exceed 25 to 30 percent of the budget; travel, other direct costs and evaluation may require another 15 to 25 percent of the budget. Other administrative costs should not exceed 5 to 10 percent.

Illustrative Budget

Category	Estimated percentage
Incentives	40 - 60
Salaries and wages	25 - 30
Travel and transportation	5 - 10
Other direct costs	5 - 8
Monitoring and evaluation	5 - 7
Administrative costs	5 - 10

HOW LONG SHOULD THE INCENTIVE PROGRAM TAKE TO IMPLEMENT?

Once the decision is made to fund an incentive program to support girls' education, it can be implemented within six months. A suggested time line for activities is as follows:

Suggested Time Line for an Incentive Project

Activities	Month					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Establish stakeholder committee	x	x				
Determine level of investment	x	x				
Establish implementation strategies and evaluation criteria	x	x	x			
Select implementing organization		x	x	x		
Select communities			x	x		
Hold orientation and training workshops			x	x		
Determine numbers and amounts of awards				x	x	
Launch program in first community						x
Conduct monitoring and evaluation activities	Ongoing					
Revise projects	Ongoing as needed					

SUMMARY

Investments in incentives can make a tremendous difference in girls' lives. All children are capable of doing well in school, but many cannot afford to enter or stay. Imagine the contribution that you can make and the joy you will experience when you know that your efforts have allowed many girls to learn how to read, to improve their knowledge of health and nutrition, and to contribute to your country's development. In fact, your commitment and investment will reap benefits for many generations. When educated girls become mothers, they typically ensure that their daughters also receive an education.

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 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

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