

Implementing Girls' Scholarship Programs: Guiding Principles



By Nancy McDonald
With Forward by Jane Schubert



Founded in 1946 as a nonprofit organization, AIR is a carefully designed institution motivated by the desire to enhance the human experience. We are committed to contributing to the science of human behavior and the development of man's capacities and potential.

Our work spans a wide range of substantive areas: education, student assessment, international education, individual and organizational performance, health research and communication, human development, usability design and testing, employment equity, and statistical and research methods. The intellectual diversity of our more than 1,100 employees, more than 50 percent of whom hold advanced degrees, enables us to bring together experts in many fields, including education, psychology, sociology, economics, psychometrics, statistics, public health, usability engineering, software design, graphics and video communications—all in the search for innovative answers to any challenge.

We conduct our work within a culture and philosophy of strict independence, objectivity, and non-partisanship, as we tackle society's most important issues.

AIR's International Development Program seeks to enhance the capacity of developing countries to improve the quality of life through education and social development. In collaboration with local partners we work to:

- Ensure children's equitable access to all levels of education;
- Improve the quality and relevance of education; and
- Empower individuals, communities, and institutes as agents of social and behavioral change.

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American Institutes for Research



Forward

Guiding Principles to Manage Scholarship Programs represents an overall approach to implementing scholarship programs so as to maximize the learning opportunities to students and families who receive scholarships. The majority of scholarship recipients endure challenges both inside and outside the formal school environment that preclude full participation in the learning process. Scholarships are important but partial solutions. These guiding principles are practical suggestions based on evidence from a variety of sources: the body of knowledge revealed in the literature on girls' education; the results of specific projects that include scholarships as an implementation strategy; and the direct experience of practitioners who work directly with scholarship recipients. Users may select one or more of the principles to match the needs of participants. The ultimate hope is that by integrating principles such as these in scholarship programs, opportunities for successful completion of schooling through increased participation and achievement, will occur.

The Guiding Principles reflect the collective experience of many activities that span three decades of commitment by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to increasing access, quality and successful participation of both students and adults domestically and internationally in the educational process. These activities began in 1974 with a project to assess and field test career planning and professional development for adults in vocational education. They continue today as AIR works in partnership with local organizations in developing countries to enhance learning opportunities for students throughout an education system. Examples of the range of activities in which AIR has been engaged over the years include:

- A five-year national demonstration project (1979-84) funded by the US Department of Education to work in the schools and at a policy level to change educator and student behavior with respect to discriminatory practices against females;
- A three-year activity (1984-87) to implement a sex-desegregation technical assistance center that served educators at all levels of the education system in three states (USA);
- A five-year activity (1996-2005) girls' education activity implemented in three developing countries to assist host country governments, private sector organizations, and non-governmental organizations to formulate and institutionalize country initiatives that increase educational opportunities for girls

at the primary school level;

- A community-based scholarship activity implemented in seven Governorates in Egypt that strengthens parents and other community members to develop criteria for and support given to qualified students;
- A school-based activity in Haiti in which AIR works with a local foundation to provide scholarships to children affected by political violence and natural disasters; and
- An activity with a local NGO to implement a “minimum scholarship package” prepared by the Ministry of Education/Zambia to orphans and vulnerable children enrolled in grades 10-12.

AIR welcomes expanded application of these principles. By working together as a larger community toward our common goal of improved access and successful school completion of disenfranchised students world-wide.

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Guiding Principles

1. Research is used to identify cultural norms and practices to inform the design of the scholarship program
2. Stakeholders within a community are clearly identified and involved
3. Beneficiaries are clearly identified using transparent, objective criteria
4. Community support for beneficiaries' education is generated
5. Behavior change communication strategies are incorporated
6. Scholarships cover the full cost of schooling
7. Scholarship funds are distributed in an established and timely manner
8. Supportive learning environments are created in and out of school
9. A mentoring scheme is an established component of the scholarship program
10. Local capacity to continue scholarship program beyond the life of donor support is strengthened
11. Criteria are established for retention and continuation of scholarships through completion of a target school level
12. Monitoring and evaluation is an integral component of any scholarship program
13. Successful scholarship recipients are recruited in "give back" community outreach programs

Research is used to identify cultural norms and practices to inform the design of the scholarship program

Importance of research

The ultimate aim of a girls' scholarship program is to get and keep girls in school. The success in achieving this aim is determined by the level of community acceptance of the program (Quisumbing and McClafferty 2006). Hence, the program's ability to understand and address the unique cultural norms and practices within the target community has an enormous effect on the success of girls' scholarship programs. Women and girls play different roles, have different responsibilities, and access different resources dependent upon their culture and community. These location-specific gender roles and responsibilities determine which activities will and will not work in a target community. In many communities, the issue of gender is sensitive subject, particularly when broached by outsiders. Because girls' scholarships directly address gender issues, programs must be aware of local sensitivities and take care to complement and incorporate cultural norms and practices into the program design (World Bank 1996).

Research plays a vital role in identifying norms and practices as well as gender-specific allocation of rights, resources, and responsibilities within a community (Quisumbing and McClafferty 2006). Through research, programs can determine which activities communities will embrace, which activities will conflict with the local culture, and incorporate these findings into the program design. This information is particularly important for girls' scholarship programs. Girls cannot be educated in a vacuum; they must have community support. By understanding the culture in which they practice, programs can better dialogue with the community and secure the community acceptance needed to make girls' scholarship programs a success.

Common strategies

Reviewing assessment data and other research studies. Often, much information about the target community already exists. International organizations like the World Bank, United Nation organizations, and various donor agencies disseminate development-related statistics, surveys and other ethnographic studies (Quisumbing

- 2 and McClafferty 2006). The drawback of depending on existing studies is that the information is often dated and may not provide the exact information needed by program designers. Yet, this information is vital to gaining strong, background knowledge of the target community.



Utilizing external, 'expert' consultants. To gain insight into the local situation, many programs hire outside, expert consultants who have knowledge of the target community. These experts gather information through field visits where they conduct interviews and focus groups with select members of the community (World Bank 1996). The communication between the expert consultant and the community is based on a two-way asymmetric model (Wilcox and Cameron 2006). Although the consultant and the community are communicating with each other, it is not a

dialogue. Rather, the objective of relationship is to help the program understand the community better so that the program can achieve its objectives.

Using participatory methods. Ideally, communities and the program establish a dialogue at the onset and jointly develop the program design. The benefits of this strategy are multi-fold. Community members are well-placed to identify opportunities that an outside consultant may miss (World Bank 1996). In addition, community members have the opportunity to contribute their experience and expertise into the design, which strengthens community ownership over the program. By using the participatory method, communities and the program also discuss what the community can and cannot do within their society, thus identifying program activities that will not gain community support (World Bank 1996).

Project descriptions

Morocco's Girls' Education Activity (GEA). The scholarship program for rural girls in Morocco demonstrated how incorporating research into the program design can overcome barriers. The stated vision of the GEA Activity was, "to rely on local capacities and the use of local resources in order to ensure sustainability and replicability of its actions and activities in support of girls' education" (Rugh and Brush 2002). Aimed at enabling poor rural girls to complete middle school, the first barrier the program encountered was the lack of secondary schools in the target community (Williams 2001). The program decided to overcome this barrier by sending girls to the city to attend established secondary schools. Research informed implementers of the cultural concerns that may have generated opposition to such a move. Families feared for their girls' safety and honor far from home. In addition, families wondered as to the added benefit of education particularly in relation to the traditional role of the women in the community.

The program was able to anticipate and address these concerns by establishing city-based boarding houses for the girls (Williams 2001). These houses, overseen by respectable ladies, housed girls from the same community. Families were reassured that their girls could maintain their respectability and honor while attending school outside of their communities. Many beneficiaries of the program not only completed middle school, but in doing so served as role models for other rural girls—proving that female students could attend school in the city and still become respected members of their communities (Rugh and Brush 2002).

- 4 PROGRESA (Programa de Educacion, Salud y Alimentacion). The PROGRESA program is another interesting example of how research can inform program design. PROGRESA aims to improving the nutritional, health, and educational well-being of rural Mexican families and break the cycle of poverty. PROGRESA targets households instead of individuals, distributing financial stipends directly to families (IFPRI 2001). Through on-the-ground research and evaluation, PROGRESA identified strategies to improve the efficiency of their activities.

Researchers found that the manner in which resources are allocated within the family directly affects the impact of the project (Quisumbing and McClafferty 2006). PROGRESA program designers realized families do not allocate resources equitably. In many cases, women and girls receive less food and monetary support than their husbands and brothers. Research also determined that the health and well-being of children improve when the project distributed financial stipends to mothers (IFPRI 2001). With this information, PROGRESA built in a mechanism which distributed the financial stipends to the female head of household. Not only did this strategy improve the well-being of the household children, but women were empowered and gained new stature within their families, which led to positive effects on girls' education (IFPRI 2001).

Lessons learned

Recognize not all activities can be transported across borders. Many girls' scholarship programs build their design on best practices learned from prior activities and interventions. Although there are many benefits to using field-tested activities, what works in one place may not work or be suitable in another. Activities and the barriers they address are products of their cultural and geographic environment. For example, successful activities such as holding classes under a tree may work in Africa but not in the Middle East. Conversely, chaperones to protect the honor of girls may be necessary in conservative societies but not in others.

Pay specific attention to gender roles, responsibilities, and resources. Dependent upon culture and socio-economic background, women play different roles in society. Programs should identify how gender roles and responsibilities can support or impede project interventions. Programs must also be aware of the limitations on the responsibilities women and girls can assume dependent upon cultural norms and practices, and incorporate this knowledge into the program design.

Engage the community in dialogue. Often, programs are under time constraints when developing the program design which makes it difficult or impossible to engage the community in a participatory manner. Despite this missed opportunity, it is never too late to utilize cultural research to inform other aspects of the program. As the program moves forward, implementers should identify how their activities complement or conflict with culture norms and practices. Implementers can then use this information to adapt and improve program activities.

6 Stakeholders within a community are clearly identified and involved



Importance of identifying and involving stakeholders

Girls' scholarship programs are participatory by nature and as such cannot function separate and removed from the community in which they work. Through research, programs gain vital information on cultural norms and practices to inform program design. Research also serves another role, identifying groups who the program affects both directly and indirectly. These groups are the stakeholders, specifically, "community groups or categories of people concerned with a given problem or with a given development action" (Besette 2004).

Girls' scholarship programs cannot reasonably target the community as a whole. Communities are comprised of different groups with special needs, issues, and concerns (Besette 2004). For scholarships, these groups are usually the girls

themselves, the girls' family, Ministry of Education officials, school teacher and administrators, religious representatives as well as local business leaders. By targeting stakeholders, scholarship programs streamline information gathering, community awareness raising, community acceptance, and, finally community involvement and sustainability, all of which contribute to a successful girls' scholarship program (Bessette 2004).

Common strategies

Working directly with the community. To gain important insights into community needs, capacities, and concerns, some programs decide to dialogue directly with the community via open forums such as town meetings. These meetings provide a forum where the program and the community at large can discuss program design, implementation, and outcomes and determine what the community will or will not do (World Bank 1996). Besides gaining valuable insights into the local situations, working directly with the community also reinforces community perception of program transparency, which is an important step towards community ownership.

Forming representative committees. Representative committees give programs access to key members of the community who represent stakeholder groups. To ensure the success of representative committees, programs must make sure the committee is truly representative of all the stakeholders. In the case of girls' scholarships, many programs form educational committees attached to existing NGOs or other civil society organizations. The advantages of using this strategy is that the committee is dedicated to a particular subject or outcome, such as girls' education, and can concentrate their activities on this issue.

Accessing the community through locals NGOs, Community Development Associations (CDAs), and other grassroots organizations. Many programs have enjoyed much success by utilizing existing local organizations to gain entry into the community. Local organizations such as NGOs and CDAs are grassroots organization and as such have in-depth knowledge of the community as well as being a known and trusted commodity in the community. By allying themselves with local organizations, programs are able to build upon established trust and relationships in support of program implementation.¹ This relationship is mutually beneficially, programs are able to start-up quickly with community support and local organizations gain experience and build capacity by working with different programs.

¹ In some countries, most notably Egypt, programs cannot work unless they first establish a relationship with the local community development association.

Project descriptions

Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED). CAMFED focuses on girls' education as a tool to combat the spread of AIDS in the African countries of Zimbabwe, Zambia, Ghana, and Tanzania (CAMFED 2006). CAMFED's strategy to mobilize the community in support of girls' education relies on the support and participation of stakeholders. Specifically, CAMFED works directly with girls and their parents by providing them with the materials needed to attend school. CAMFED also works to bridge the gap between parents and the school by encouraging close partnerships between the two (CAMFED 2004).

Keeping with their strategy of community participation, CAMFED girls' scholarship program in Zambia provides a strong example of how to involve stakeholders in the program implementation. Using a representative committee approach, CAMFED organizes school-based committees that are then charged with selecting scholarship beneficiaries. To ensure community buy-in, the committee then submits the list of chosen girls to the community for approval. This strategy empowers the community and generates community support for the chosen girls' education success (Anderson 2005). Beyond selection, CAMFED has established a stakeholder committee at the district level consisting of Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, members of the judiciary, and police representatives. The mandate of this group is to oversee the scholarship program within the district and ensures the girls' safety, well-being and development (Anderson 2005). By actively identifying and involving interested stakeholders, CAMFED has successfully supported 246,520 beneficiaries and enjoyed wide-spread community support (CAMFED 2006).

Asociacio Guatemalteca de Educion Sexual (AGES). A good example of stakeholder involvement is the Asociacio Guatemalteca de Educion Sexual (AGES) project in Guatemala. Using scholarships and community support assistance for girls, AGES targeted Mayan girls between 7 - 15 years old who had never attended school. Specifically, AGES provided monthly stipends to girls who maintained school attendance in school and whose families set aside time for girls to study.

The four main components of the program were carefully selected communities; community selection of candidates and program implementation; volunteer visits to the girls; and human development and sexual education training. Under the AGES project, a local committee comprised of local leaders and government authorities

elected members to a selection committee. This selection committee, working with the school staff, chose the scholarship beneficiaries. AGES designed the committee to be inclusive, membership rotates on a yearly basis to promote community participation. In addition, AGES engaged parents and other stakeholders in monthly meetings, site visits, and other program activities (Prather et. al. 1996). The results stemming from this involvement include improved school enrolment, higher graduation rates, and a decrease in drop-out rates (Prather et. al. 1996).

Lessons learned

Identify stakeholders early. Girls' scholarship programs should identify stakeholders as early as possible, preferably during the design stage. By early identification, programs are able to incorporate stakeholders' ideas and expertise into project activities. Early identification and involvement also lead to community participation and ownership.

Address each stakeholders' special needs and concerns. Not all stakeholders have the same capacity, needs, and concerns. In order to fully benefit from stakeholder involvement, programs should study the characteristics of each group to determine the best way to engage, communicate, and address the needs of individual members. Programs should consider stakeholders': physical characteristics (age and gender), ethnic background, geographic location, language, economic status, traditional beliefs, and customs (Bessette 2004).

Ensure the disenfranchised, in many cases women and girls, have a voice. Often times, the most vulnerable of society, the precise people development programs wish to reach, do not have a voice in their community. Cultural norms and practices may preclude the most vulnerable in society from taking part in community focus groups or other forums. In this case, girls' scholarship programs must ensure through persuasion or directives that the voiceless have a place in the dialogue between the program and the community.

10 Beneficiaries are clearly identified using transparent, objective criteria

Importance of transparent, objective criteria

At the heart of any girls' scholarship programs are the beneficiaries. In the case of girls' scholarships, the direct beneficiaries are the girls who gain access to an education through scholarships, and in turn, better the communities where they live (Rugh 2000). Determining who will be a beneficiary is no easy task. For one, confronted with the sheer number of needy children, programs are often overwhelmed with choices and can find themselves selecting the most visible rather than the most-needy children. The situation is further complicated by the financial nature of girls' scholarships. Because scholarships disburse money and goods to the community, the community stakeholders naturally want to know how and why the program chose certain beneficiaries.

Programs have much to gain by developing transparent, objective criteria to identify beneficiaries. Transparency provides communities the information needed to judge the fairness of choosing one beneficiary over another. In addition, transparency encourages communication and trust (Wilcox and Cameron 2006). If communities see that the program has nothing to hide, they can easily discuss any concerns they may have. Objectivity builds upon the transparency. Objectivity ensures that program has guidelines to select the most deserving and well-suited beneficiaries and insulates the program from charges of favoritism. Most importantly, thinking through the beneficiaries criteria ensures that the needs of the beneficiaries fit program activities and allows the program to move forward with its activities.

Common strategies

Selecting individuals as beneficiaries. The most common strategy in implementing a girls' scholarship program is to select individuals as beneficiaries. Selecting individuals, in the case of girls' scholarship – girls – allows programs to address issues of poverty at the family level. Programs address the barrier of poverty by supplying material goods (uniforms, fees, books) that students must have in order to attend school. Programs also commonly provide free meals which allow beneficiaries to focus on learning rather than on hunger.

Targeting schools as the beneficiary. In order to build a strong environment in support of girls' education, a few programs have embarked upon the new strategy of selecting schools as beneficiaries. Using this strategy, programs can address the issue of educational quality by targeting the school as a whole with the aim of retaining children in school by providing relevant and quality education. Activities targeting the school can include teacher training, infrastructure improvements such as girl-friendly bathrooms, and curriculum revisions to address gender sensitivities and issues.

Working with the community as the beneficiary. In some cases, the community as a whole is so poor that programs need to address macro-level problems at the community level in order for scholarships to succeed. In these instances, programs work with the community as the beneficiary by supporting activities that build the local capacity to support girls' education.

Program descriptions

EQUIP1 Haiti. Started in 2004, the EQUIP1 Haiti program provides educational scholarships to children affected by political violence and strengthens the capacity of local NGOs to administer these scholarships past project completion. As with all scholarship projects, the student is the ultimate beneficiary of the scholarship but in the case of EQUIP1/Haiti, the project has embarked on a unique strategy to ensure educational opportunities by targeting the school as a whole. The rationale behind this strategy is that the quality of education is equally as important as access to education. The project selects the participating schools using a rating system measuring teacher experience, teacher training, student teacher ratio, administrative capabilities, and building infrastructure such as on-site libraries, playgrounds, and building conditions (Habib 2006). Only schools that score a certain number of points are eligible to participate in the project.

The majority of all schools in Haiti are private. To encourage these schools to enroll disadvantaged children affected by violence, the project provides chosen schools with: school supplies (chalk, pencils, pens, and other supplies) to students. In addition, EQUIP1/Haiti supports the school as a whole by providing support for after school tutoring for at-risk students, school kits, and school improvement projects for infrastructure projects which are disbursed only when schools are collaborating with PTAs. In addition to the school-centered support, EQUIP1/Haiti also disburses scholarships to children affected by violence so that they can attend school.

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Through these scholarships, disadvantaged students gain access to education. In support of the emphasis on quality, the project conducts student assessments of scholarship recipients and a corresponding number of non-scholarship students. The project uses the results of student assessments to determine how much financial support each school will receive. The better the children do, the more money schools receive. By tying student achievement with financial support, the project encourages school administrators and teachers to improve learning outcomes and educational quality. Currently, EQUIP1/Haiti implements this model in approximately 228 schools, 80% private schools, 20% public, and has disbursed over 15,500 scholarships (Habib 2006).

EQUIP1/Zambia Community Health and Nutrition, Gender and Education Support 2 (CHANGES2) Program. CHANGES2 provides a good example of working with selection criteria to address specific project objectives. The mandate of CHANGES2 is to work closely with the Ministry of Education to strengthen basic education with a special emphasis on HIV/AIDS prevention. An integral component of this project is the disbursement of approximately 3,500 scholarships each year over a three year period to support children through high school education (EQUIP 2006).

Using MOE objectives as the basis, CHANGES2 developed a criteria for selection that focused on the importance of supporting the most vulnerable children, specifically those who: are HIV positive, demonstrate a positive attitude towards learning, live in an impoverished female headed household, live in a child-headed household, has special needs, or is an at-risk female student who is excelling in secondary school. Under the CHANGES2 program, community members identify the scholarship beneficiaries through School Selection Committees comprised of relevant community stakeholders. In order to ensure transparency, the project developed procedures that emphasize the importance of public access to selection information. CHANGES2 also incorporates objectivity into this process by holding selection committees accountable to their decisions.

Lessons learned

Don't ignore boys. Often times, parents do not send their girls to school even when programs offer families an incentive to do so. One of the primary reasons for keeping girls home is the status of the brother. When given a choice, parents prefer to send their sons to school over their daughters. If parents do not see an opportunity for their sons to go to school, they would rather both children stay home rather



than allow the daughter to have access to additional opportunities. Programs can neutralize this problem by providing opportunities to both boys and girls, hence, removing one barrier to girls' education.

Ensure those best suited to select beneficiaries conduct the selection. Dependent upon

the type of scholarship interventions, different stakeholders have the best vantage point to determine beneficiaries. For example, if the mandate of the program is to identify and support out-of-school children, teachers and school administrators may not be the best source of information as they do not come into daily contact with these children. Instead, local community members who know their neighbors are better suited to identify which children are out of school and why, information crucial for identifying the most-needy and appropriate beneficiaries.

Involve the community in developing criteria. Local concerns and participation brings openness and transparency to the process. By involving community in the development of selection criteria, programs reinforce not only transparency but community responsibility and ownership over the program. In addition, community members are in the best position to determine the barriers to education and identify the selection criteria for girls most at-risk of dropping out of school.

Avoid pressure to select beneficiaries based on political considerations. The lack of transparent, objective criteria can allow outside groups to pressure the program to select certain children. For example, cases exist where scholarship administrators distributed funds to friends or to children of local politicians, rather than to the most-needy (Rugh and Brush 2002). Not only do the intended beneficiaries suffer in these situations; community support for scholarship programs (and thus program integrity) weakens.

Develop clear criteria. When developing the selection criteria, programs must word the criteria so it is not contradictory or open to large interpretation. Misinterpretation of criteria will lead to selecting girls unsuited to scholarship programs.

14 Community support for beneficiaries' education is generated

Importance of community support

Girls' scholarships are more than incentives that focus solely on the individual girl. Successful scholarship programs seek to address a broad range of issues and barriers to girls' education (CEDPA 2006). Identifying these issues and barriers means engaging the community, identifying cultural norms and issues, and encouraging communities to take an active role and provide support to the program (Quisumbing and McClafferty 2006). While education is, ideally, a government-provided service, throughout the developing world, many governments are unable to provide the necessary educational services to meet demand (World Bank 2006). The lack of government resources particularly affects girls' education as girls have special needs inside the classroom that often times, further stretch government resources. In addition to the in-school needs of girls, girls must have support outside the classroom as well, whether that support is in the form of safe study spots, mentoring, or improved employment opportunities (Herz and Sperling 2004).

Through generating community support, programs take the first step towards community action to fill the void left by the government. The desired outcome from the generation of community support is to create an environment – both in and out of school – supportive of girls' education. Hence, community support not only addresses immediate project needs, but, is the basis for sustainability past project completion.

Common strategies

Sharing information with the community. Projects should always share relevant information with the community such as the number of scholarships, how to apply for scholarships, and the selection process. Sharing information with the community builds the trust needed to open the dialogue between the project and the community. By sharing information, programs raise awareness of program goals, establish transparency, and begins building a relationship of trust with the community.

Consulting and collaborating with the community. Programs can build upon the support generated through the sharing of information by consulting with the community regarding local needs and concerns. As mentioned in previous principles,

projects have much to gain by eliciting community input. Through collaboration, programs can design locally relevant activities which generates local support as the community witnesses the benefits the program can provide.



Empowering the community. A common strategy to generate community support and empower the community is for programs to directly involve community organizations -such as parent teacher associations (PTAs) and community development associations (CDAs) - in the project implementation (Rugh and Brush 2002). Using this strategy, the local community is responsible for select project activities such as monitoring student attendance and contributing to school renovations.

Project descriptions

Community Support Program (CSP) in Balochistan, Pakistan. The mandate of CSP was to “increase primary enrollment for girls.” Working in rural Pakistan, the program was originally challenged by many of the most common barriers to girls’ education specifically, cultural attitudes, fear for girls’ safety during travel to and from school,

16 and the lack of female teachers to teach the girls. The latter barrier was particularly important as Pakistani parents were loath to send their girls to school where they would interact with males who were not members of their family. This barrier was further compounded by the inability of female teachers, who were already in short supply, to travel due to cultural norms that frowned upon female travel (Kim et. al. 1998). Yet despite these barriers, CSP was able to successfully implement their project by creating community support for establishing girls-only primary schools (Kim et. al. 1998).

Specifically, CSP addressed these barriers by encouraging a government –community partnership to establish girls' only schools staffed by female teachers from the local community. Realizing the importance of community support, CSP sought to gain acceptance and support by directly involving parents in program implementation through establishing village education committees. These committees were tasked with identifying local solutions to barriers to education, including raising community awareness and support of girls' education, identifying female members of the community who could serve as teachers, and monitoring the schools' progress (Kim et. al. 1998). By generating community support and empowering parents to take charge of their daughter's education, CSP was able to directly address local concerns. The end result was an increase of girls' enrollment by 22%. The community support generated by the project benefited the boys of the community as well. The World Bank study found communities with a CSP school experienced a 9% increase in boys' enrolment (Kim et. al. 1998).

The New Horizons/New Visions Programs. The New Horizons Program was a pioneering program that educated out-of-school girls and women about reproductive health, life skills and literacy. Developed in India and adapted to Egypt during the early 1990s, New Horizon's worked in a social environment marked by religious conservatism and male dominance. The environment was particularly challenging due to the program subject matter. Early on, the program found that in order to fully realize the program's aim – "to increase self-confidence and demystify and communicate essential information on basic life skills and reproductive health" – they had to address the issue of gender sensitivity in the community at large, particularly among young men.

CEDPA, the implementing organization, addressed this barrier by creating a partner program to New Horizons. The new program, New Visions, aimed to change the way boys view girls and women by "increasing gender sensitivity and reproductive

health knowledge of young men.” By directly addressing this issue, CEDPA was able to generate community support for the aims of New Horizons. Girls who graduated from the New Horizons found support from boys who graduated from New Visions. With this support, slowly, community attitudes changed as people saw the benefits of the program. As the attitudes changed, communities began actively supporting the program. As a result, New Horizons/New Visions is now a sustainable activity with local NGOs implementing the program. An added benefit of community support under New Horizons/New Visions is that previously taboo subjects such as Female Genital Mutilation are now openly discussed and debated in public. CEDPA has successfully applied the lessons of New Horizons/New Visions to new contexts, having expanded this activity internationally.

Lessons learned

Gain community support early. Girls’ scholarship programs can best generate community support by engaging the community as early as possible. Early community support allows the community to influence the program at all stages of the implementation cycle, building a strong sense of community ownership. Early community support will also decrease potential conflicts with the community in the future which can lead to lost time and potential community rejection of program activities.

Move from individual support to community support. By focusing on community support rather than select individuals, programs build a strong and sturdy base for sustainability.

Behavior change communication strategies are incorporated

Importance of behavior change communications

Many girls encounter behaviors and attitudes - in and outside of the classroom - that discourage and prevent their participation in education (Howard 2001). Inside the classroom, teachers' attitudes can hamper girls' education by favoring boys' participation in activities and assigning girls to the periphery. Outside of the classroom, community norms may place less prominence on girls' education, depriving girls of safe study spots and opportunities to utilize their education. These behaviors and attitudes form a discriminatory learning environment, an environment that counters the mandate of girls' scholarships programs - to get and keep girls in school. By changing the behavior that creates a discriminatory environment, programs can foster a positive learning environment in support of girls' education.

Behavior change communications is a process that promotes dialogue among the stakeholders and the project. Through this dialogue, behavior change communication strategy aims to modify and influence behavior - and practices and environmental factors related to that behavior - that indirectly or directly promote a project's objective (Kenya Ministry of Health). Results of successful behavior change communication strategies are more than cosmetic. They promote community ownership over the project and ensure that messages remain relevant to the target community (O'Sullivan et. al. 2003).

Common strategies

Utilizing behavioral change communications. Many health programs have successfully used behavior change communications to address issues as diverse as HIV/AIDS to smoking. The success of this strategy lies in its ability to change the way people think about and act towards a particular issue. Because of the attitudinal change brought about by success behavior change communications, the effects are not merely a result of incentives but are long lasting.

Using social change communications. Although behavior change strategies are effective in changing individual actions, education programs have started focusing on the collective. To build the nurturing environment so necessary for girls' education,

programs can focus their activities on social norms and policies rather than on individual behaviors. Using this strategy, programs focus upon the individual and community as agents of change rather than objects of change (The Communication Initiative 2006). The strategy of social change is more of a dialogue rather than a one-way conversation (Figueroa 2002).



Using social mobilization strategies. Social mobilizations strategies incorporate many of the methodologies used in both behavior change and social change strategies. UNICEF's definition of social mobilization is, "a broad scale movement to engage people's participation in achieving a specific development goal through self-reliant efforts." The effectiveness of social mobilization stems from its emphasis on integrating communications activities through comprehensive strategies and frameworks, in short, programs implement activities to complement one another rather than in isolation (The ICEC and Global Social Mobilization 2006).

Project descriptions

Girls' Attainment of Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE). One example of an effective communication strategy is the Social Mobilization Campaign implemented in Malawi under the auspices of GABLE. This USAID-funded project sought to increase female enrollment in basic education by developing a social environment conducive to and supportive of girls' education. The projects' success stemmed from its adherence to five core principles: participation, collaboration, partnership, equity and quality.

Participation took place at all levels from the community to NGOs and up through the government. The project placed particular emphasis on person-to-person contact at the community level. The rationale was to engage the community at all levels of project implementation (from research onwards) to promote community ownership over the project, and, ultimately, empower the community to take charge of their development. The project also encouraged the participation of government officials and NGOs. This participation created an open atmosphere of dialogue which in turn created support on the policy level for changes taking place within the target community.

Dialogue among stakeholders was an integral part of the strategy at all levels. The project was flexible and responded to stakeholder concerns. As such, stakeholders did not feel that the project was telling them to do something but rather felt that they were engaged in a dialogue. Most importantly, the project followed up on its messages with actions.

Better Life Options Program. Implemented in India, the Better Life Options Program provides a good example of how to effectively use behavior change communication strategies to empower youth. The Better Life Option Program sought to, “break gender stereotypes and change the gender balance between boys and girls, develop life skills; and build self-esteem, confidence and feelings of self worth in young people” (CEDPA 2006). The focus was on the individual, specifically, the project aimed to empower young people to make educated decisions about their lives. Towards this end, the project used a combination of behavior change materials, participatory trainings, and non-formal education.

Because of Better Life Options' emphasis on individual empowerment, the project chose to utilize behavior change communications strategies. At the outset, the project targeted girls empowering them through vocational training, tutoring, and sports. Further into the project, CEDPA found, much like with its New Horizons/New Visions, that empowering girls alone was not enough. Without the support of their husbands and brothers, the newfound sense of empowerment did not move past the individual. To address this barrier, Better Life Options' embarked on a second strategy to change the way men think about female roles. Better Life Options' succeeded in empowering women and working with men to support women in their new roles. Better Life Options has been successful in that women who have participated in the project are more likely to be literate, attend secondary school, and hold discussions with their husbands concerning family planning.

Develop a communication strategy. An effective communication strategy is not simply producing communications products such as a brochure, a poster or website but rather is a plan used to influence behaviors by understanding community concerns, providing information to the community and soliciting feedback from the community. Communication plans should be firmly rooted in behavior change, social change, and community mobilization methodologies. Communication plans will guide project communications activities throughout the project. In the development of this plan, projects must actively engage the community, work towards community buy-in, identify problematic messages before message launch, and bring coherence to the project message to avoid any misinterpretation.

Scholarships cover the full cost of schooling

Importance of covering the full cost of schooling

Overwhelmingly, parents identify the cost of school as a determining factor in their decision to send or not send their daughters to school. Education is never free, even when governments pay for much of it. Parents pay direct costs such as school tuition fees, books, and uniforms. Compounding these costs are indirect and opportunity costs. Indirect costs come from the price of transportation, safety, and tutoring (Herz and Sperling 2004). Opportunity costs come from the money families must pay to replace children's contribution to their families' well-being through tasks such as working in the fields, babysitting younger siblings, or collecting water (UNICEF 2002). Because tasks that make up opportunity cost are historically the domain of girls, families feel the financial burden more when they send a girl to school (USAID 2000).



Without money to cover the full costs of schooling, families are hesitant to send their girls to school. Numerous studies have found that when parents have the financial resources to send their daughters to school, they do so. As scholarships play an important role in addressing the barrier of cost, it follows that the success of a scholarship

project lays in its ability to cover the full cost of schooling.

Common strategies

Giving stipends to families. Historically, scholarship projects have distributed financial stipends directly to families to address the financial barrier schooling. Although this

strategy did produce immediate positive results, research showed that direct financial support was not sustainable. In addition to issues of financial accountability, families began to view financial support as entitlements rather incentives (Prather et. al. 1996).

Providing services to address financial shortfalls. Programs have found that providing services to families is an effective method to support families in sending their children to school. Common practices include purchasing books and uniforms, and distributing these to families rather than giving money to families to pay for these items; providing transportation to and from school; supplying tutors and mentors; and defraying opportunity costs by placing water wells close to the school so girls can carry water home after their classes.

Project descriptions

Bangladesh's Female Secondary School Assistance Project (FSSAP). FSSAP is a good example of a comprehensive scholarship project successful in enrolling and retaining girls in school. Started in 1992, FSSAP consisted of six components addressing out-of-school and in-school constraints to enrolling girls in secondary education. Important to the success of this project was the emphasis on promoting positive community values regarding educating girls. The ultimate goal of FSSAP was to close the gender gap in secondary education and prepare females to participate in social and economic development. The main intervention was scholarship money to provide for fees, books, supplies, uniforms, and transportation.

In addition to alleviating the financial costs to parents, FSSAP incorporated support systems that enabled girls to receive quality education and attend girl-friendly schools. These components included: teacher salaries (with an emphasis on female teachers); job training for girls; public awareness campaigns to foster support for girls education; school infrastructure improvements (bathrooms, etc.) that allow girls to take care of gender-specific needs during the school day; and capacity building at the local and national level to build policy support for girls' education. By the end of the project, FSSAP was responsible for raising both girls and boys enrollment by 55-60%, with girls' enrollment outpacing that of the boys (Herz and Sperling 2004).

One challenge encountered during the course of the project was that – despite its positive outcomes – the financial support was not enough to cover the full cost of schooling. This deficit had an adverse effect on access particularly for many of the

poorer, most-vulnerable girls in the target communities (Mahmud 2003). FSSAP reacted to this problem by doubling the stipend given to girls. Still, the direct costs were not fully covered. One reason for the continued deficit between direct costs and stipend was donor resistance to raising the stipend again. Donors had the legitimate concern about the lack of information as to why some girls did not have access. Without information and evidence about specific financial barriers, donors were hesitant to fund a strategy that may not address the needed constraint (Mahmud 2003).

Access to Primary Education and Literacy (APEAL). APEAL is another program that aimed to increase primary school enrollment by providing access through financial stipends to girls from low-income families. APEAL was implemented by Save the Children Federation in Egypt from 1998 – 2004 in four communities: Minya, Sohag, Qena, and Giza (Marzouk 2004). These target communities all suffer from high levels of poverty and child labor, illiteracy, poor educational quality, and concerns over female safety, which is particularly heightened in religiously conservative communities.

APEAL first addressed the financial burden parents must bear in the form of school fees and supplies. APEAL paid money directly to schools to cover the cost of school fees and books, thus eliminating direct monetary incentives to families. APEAL also hired community members to monitor scholarship beneficiaries. The monitors met with families to ensure girls were attending school and had a safe place and time to study. APEAL developed awareness campaigns to lend support to girls' education in the target community and paid for medical check-ups for the beneficiaries to identify any health problems that may adversely impact the children's learning. The success of the APEAL students was credited to these support programs that surrounded the scholarships. As a result, APEAL beneficiaries were successful students - 98% of primary school beneficiaries and 90% of the preparatory beneficiaries passing a grade each year.

Lessons learned

Account for opportunity costs. To identify opportunity costs to schooling before they affect families' decisions to send or remove their children from schools, scholarship programs must speak to parents and community leaders to identify all of the costs related to schooling. This dialogue is particularly important for identifying location-specific indirect and opportunity costs. Programs can identify many creative solutions

to address barriers to school. For example, some girls' do not attend school because they are collecting water. One scholarship program addressed this problem by digging a well on the school grounds, thus allowing girls to gather water and attend school.

Account for indirect costs. As with opportunity costs, indirect costs go beyond the direct cost of schooling but are an important element to cover in order to keep girls in school. Programs can defray extra costs to the family by providing services that address indirect costs. Again, indirect costs differ from community to community. In some school systems, tutoring is a necessity needed to pass a grade. In this case, programs can provide free mentoring and after-school support.

Scholarship funds are distributed in an established and timely manner

Importance of distributing scholarships in an established and timely manner



Getting girls into school is one of the primary activities of a scholarship program. For parents whose financial situation makes it impossible for them to pay for fees, books, and uniforms, scholarships are the lifeline that makes schooling possible. Because scholarship funds pay for mandatory costs, target communities grow impatient with delays particularly when services have been promised, communication campaigns have successfully secured community support, and girls are poised to go to school. If procedures and processes are not in place to distribute scholarships, progress in securing community support can be lost, and once lost, hard to regain (Ventimiglia and Walusiku 2004).

In order to maintain hard earned community support, programs must distribute scholarship funds in an established and timely manner. Communities must know how and where the program distributes funds. An established system allows the community to track how programs disburse funds and strengthens program transparency, and hence, community trust. For scholarships funds, timeliness is paramount. Schools have set start dates each year. Programs must plan their disbursements around the start date to guarantee schools receive the money in time to enroll girls for the promised school year. Through established and timely procedures, programs ensure that they can meet community expectations.

Common strategies

Disburse scholarship funds through local partners. Programs have found that local organizations are much better placed to disburse and manage scholarship activities because of their geographical proximity to both the beneficiary families and to the participating schools (Symposium on Girls' Education 2000). Using this strategy, programs also build the capacity of local partners and sustainable structures.

Increase the capacity of local partners. Many girls' scholarship programs work with and through NGOs to implement their activities. Successful programs have built upon local strengths and have continued to build capacity by analyzing the effectiveness of both financial and administrative capabilities. Programs can best complete this analysis by breaking down organizational capacity into five separate but equally important capabilities such as management, human resources, communications, finance, and capacity to deliver program objectives (Symposium on Girls' Education 2000).

Project description

The Ambassadors Girls' Scholarship Program (AGSP). AGSP is a large-scale program disbursing scholarships throughout Africa. As in many cases with Girls' Scholarship programs, the lead organization has trusted the implementation of the Zambia portion of this program to a local NGO, FAWEZA (Forum for African Women Educationists in Zambia). FAWEZA was chosen to implement this program due to its administrative strengths and strong connections to local communities. Both of these strengths stem from FAWEZA's organizational structure specifically, the use of executive committees

at the national, provincial and district level. This structure allows FAWEZA to “identify priority education issues at the national level and conceptualize solution to these challenges,” and at the same time, build local relationships in schools and classrooms through their district executive committees (FAWE 2006). It is this local capacity to deliver program coupled with communication and management strengths that distinguishes FAWEZA. For example, FAWEZA’s ability to establish Student Alliance for Female Education (SAFE) clubs and other forums to support scholarship recipients have fostered positive feelings on part of the beneficiaries, their peers, and school staff. FAWEZA has also been praised for their dedication in fighting HIV/AIDS through life skills classes and the connection between FAWEZA presence at a school and school community support and stronger monitoring ability.

Despite such success, FAWEZA’s implementation also encountered problems in disbursing funds promptly. Due to the timing of the disbursement, many schools were unable to incorporate the gains from scholarship funds into the budgeting (Ventimiglia and Walusiku 2004). In addition, beneficiaries were put in the uncomfortable position of not knowing if their scholarships would be available for their next term (Ventimiglia and Walusiku 2004). The problems in disbursement also affected the ability of FAWEZA to adhere to a proper selection process. Due to the pressure to distribute the funds as quickly as possible, the selection of recipients was undertaken by school administrators and teachers rather than the community.

Lessons learned

Know the school year. Programs need to plan their activities around the local school year and ensure there is ample time to disburse school fees to the schools. Programs should also plan for the time it takes to order and receive uniforms, receive birth certificates, and other documents necessary for enrolment.

Establish strong financial systems. In order to manage and distribute funds effectively, girls’ scholarship programs must build strong financial systems. Programs need not start from scratch, and numerous other development interventions have developed guidelines and procedures for use in micro-finance and other grant-giving mechanisms. These systems can last beyond the life of the project and serve as the basis for local partners to build their financial capacity.

Supportive learning environments are created in and out of school

Importance of creating supportive learning environments

Providing access to school is an important first step to increasing girls' enrollment. But getting girls into school is only a part of the struggle. In order for girls to stay in school, they and their families must see a benefit to education (Prather et. al. 1996). Often times, girls enter schools only to find a learning environment that does not meet their needs – teachers who favor boys, irrelevant curriculum and classroom activities, and lack of proper bathroom facilities (Herz and Sperling 2004). Outside of school, many girls do not receive the material and emotional support they need to complete their studies as they are pressured to complete household duties rather than homework and have parents who lack interest in their education. Although financial assistance is an effective way to encourage parents to send their girls to school, without the proper supportive learning environment, many of these girls give up and drop out of school before their fourth year.



To keep girls in school, programs must identify measures that will move girls' scholarships from access to retention. One key measure is for programs to provide a supportive learning environment in and out of school. By providing these supportive environments, programs provide safe and encouraging places for girls to study and learn. The result is that instead of feeling intimidated, girls feel encouraged and are apt to stay in school longer and do better thus, realizing and enjoying the benefits education can bring to their lives.

Common strategies

Encouraging flexible school schedules. Time is a major barrier to education. Many girls must do household chores and other work (Prather et. al. 1996). The time needed to work on these chores may conflict with school hours. Programs can address this barrier by encouraging schools to have flexible schedules that permit double shifts and more efficient use of facilities. Evidence suggests that this intervention has been effective in China as well as in India where schools instituted night classes.

Providing child care in schools. Girls and young women who take care of children are often unable to attend school. Girls' scholarship programs can provide an alternative to babysitting by supporting schools to set up child care center that will allow older sisters, or young mothers to attend class.

Developing gender sensitive and relevant curriculum. One strategy to develop better and more relevant school lessons is to support governments in curriculum revisions. By revising or developing new curriculum, programs can build critical skills for life-long learning, eliminate biases, and focus on relevant learning materials.

Recruiting female teachers. This strategy is particularly relevant in conservative countries where the intermingling of the sexes is restricted, such as the Middle East and South Asia. Evidence suggests that the presence of female teachers can draw more girls into school.

Providing a safe environment for girls. Girls often drop out of school because of safety and sanitary reasons. Many parents are hesitant to send their children to school far from home. Girls' scholarship programs can alleviate this concern by establishing schools close to the community to cut down on travel time, thereby ameliorating the risk girls face traveling to and from school. Programs have also renovated schools,

specifically bathrooms, to ensure that girls have a clean place to wash and take care of sanitary needs.

Project descriptions

Jesuits' and Brothers' Association (JBA) for Development in Minia. JBA's establishment of study halls is a good example of how supportive environments can make the difference in girls' education. In Egypt, girls are expected to undertake many household chores and duties such as working in the fields, taking care of siblings and collecting water. Because of the time needed to work on these chores, girls find that they have little or no time to study out of school. Moreover, many girls come from families with illiterate parents who are unable to help girls study and complete their homework compounding the lack of a supporting environment inside the classroom.

The JBA is a religious, community-based organization working in the Upper Egyptian governorate of Minia. The JBA's mandate is to empower the underprivileged in both urban and rural areas with an emphasis on education and training to improve educational outcomes (Jesuits' and Brothers' Association). Through their ongoing projects, JBA found that many children were unable to study at home for a variety of reasons. Some children had to complete chores. Others lived in homes that were not conducive to studying due to lack of space and/or light. In order to support girls and other children in the community and address this need, JBA in Minia has established study halls to provide a supportive environment out of school where children can study. In addition to providing this space, JBA study halls address the issue of educational quality. Tutoring is common in Egypt. Students who cannot afford tutoring are at a distinct disadvantage for passing the major exams needed to promote to the next school level. To support children academically, JBA study halls are staffed with 'pedagogical mentors' who tutor students in their studies. As an indication of the success of this model, other projects and NGOs have established study halls in their communities.

UNICEF Community Schools. UNICEF's joint initiative with the Egyptian Ministry of Education to establish community schools throughout Egypt is another example of communities building a supportive learning environment in and out of school. In 1992, UNICEF responded to local requests to find a way to get girls into school. In Upper Egypt, the launching pad of the community schools initiative, as many as 30 – 50% girls were not attending school. The reasons behind this high percentage were

multi-fold: cost of schooling, distance to school, and educational quality (Zaalouk 2006). In response, UNICEF, in partnerships with the Ministry of Education, embarked upon a new strategy to provide safe learning environment for girls. This strategy was the community school.

In the 1970s, the government of Egypt sought to increase the enrolment of girls in school by establishing multi-grade schools, or schools that teach a range of grades in one classroom. These schools taught students basic literacy and numeracy skills to increase their knowledge base and hopefully integrate them back into the formal system. Unfortunately, multi-grade schools faced much of the same problems as the formal school system: overcrowding and educational quality. The community school sought to improve upon the idea of the multi-grade school. To do so, UNICEF and the MOE addressed the local barriers keeping girls from school: cost, quality, and distance. Communities donated land to establish community schools. As a result, children could attend class within a safe distance from their home. To address the barrier of costs, UNICEF and MOE did not mandate school uniforms and book bags. And finally, the community schools were careful to address the issue of quality by providing their teachers with training and adopting an active learning teaching methodology. The results have been overwhelmingly successful, girls graduate literate and informed. Currently, UNICEF has 200 schools operating in Egypt.

Lessons learned

Identify local barriers in order to develop local solutions. The first step to building a girl-friendly environment in school is to identify barriers that keep girls from coming and staying in school. Barriers are location specific. In order to build a supportive environment, programs must identify the specific, community-level factors that prevent children from learning. Based upon these barriers, programs then can develop effective activities that overcome these barriers.

A mentoring scheme is an established component of the scholarship program

Importance of establishing a mentoring scheme

For many scholarship beneficiaries, scholarship programs are their first entry into the formal school system. To these girls, formal schooling is a new and intimidating process due to a variety of reasons: teacher favoritism towards boys, an overwhelming and irrelevant curriculum, and school buildings that lack private places where girls can address their feminine needs (Herz and Sperling 2005). As scholarship programs move from access to retention, scholarship programs must identify support systems to overcome the feelings of intimidation and other emotional challenges girls face in school. Mentoring schemes are one such method that can support girls through difficult times and retain them in school.

The importance of mentoring schemes stems from their one-on-one nature. Mentors provide crucial, personal support to girls both academically and emotionally. Academically, mentors tutor and guide girls through these challenging subjects, giving



- 34 girls the extra support they need to succeed in school. Emotionally, mentors coach and advise girls on how to perceive and react to new and intimidating situations and give girls the extra encouragement they need to stay in school.

Common strategies

Encouraging parents as mentors. Ideally, parents are the best mentors for their children. Unfortunately, too often girls who are in need of scholarship come from homes with illiterate parents, or parents who do not recognize the importance of education. Even in these cases, parents can mentor their children by providing time and space for study, as well as providing encouragement to complete school. Educated parents can also serve as tutors, assisting their children in their homework and answering questions (Behrman et. al. 1999).

Utilizing adults as mentors. In the absence of a parent who can fill this role, a trusted adult can serve as a mentor who helps and guides a girl's development. Commonly in girls' scholarship programs, this mentor maybe somebody who has graduated from a previous scholarship program and is aware of the challenges and barriers these girls face.

Establishing peer to peer mentoring. Scholarship programs can also establish mentoring schemes within the school environment by establishing peer-to-peer mentoring. Peer-to-peer mentors have the advantage of having daily contact with mentees as well as having personal knowledge of the mentee's school. Common peer to peer mentoring strategies include Big Sister/Little Sister programs or pairing girls of the same age together to help each other with their studies.

Project descriptions

Reading Circles in Zambia. The establishment of Reading Circles in Zambia, under the auspices of Students' Alliance for Female Education (SAFE) clubs, provides a good example of how to establish a peer-to-peer mentoring scheme. FAWEZA embarked upon the Reading Circle experiment in 2001 when it became apparent that the policy of social promotion in Zambian schools did not translate into students attaining literacy and numeracy skills. This challenge was further compounded by the fact that, for the majority of children in Zambian schools, English was not their first language which affected their ability to learn other subjects taught in English. To provide girls with the literacy and numeracy skills needed to excel in and out of school, FAWEZA

established Reading Circles.

Using SAFE clubs as a staging ground, FAWEZA established the Reading Circles with the stated aim to “develop the culture of reading in schools, to improve girls reading skills, to enhance understanding and use of the English language, and to reinforce the role of peer mentors in schools” (FAWE 2006). The Reading Circle is comprised of approximately five girls and one mentor. The SAFE clubs organizes the girls by their reading level, with each group reading at the same level. The mentor is two to three grades higher than the mentees and excels at writing, reading, and speaking in English. The reading mentor assumes the role of “Big Sister” to the girls in her circle, providing advice and guidance. In turn, the mentors receive support and guidance of teachers who are members of FAWEZA who also serve as the managers of the project. The Reading Circles meet once a week for one to two hours. During this time, the girls also cover issues including sexual abuse and harassment, HIV/AIDS, and other challenges girls encounter in school.

The Valuable Girl Project in Egypt. The Valuable Girl Project, implemented by the Coptic Orphans, established a mentoring activity to support young girls attending primary school in impoverished areas throughout Egypt. The stated goal of the project is the: “empowerment of girls and young women through the creation and provision of role models” (Coptic Orphans 2006). Many of the communities where the Coptic Orphans work are socially conservative as well as impoverished. These dual characteristics work against girls’ education in two ways. One, girls are expected to work to help support the family, whether the work was outside the home or in support of the home in the form of babysitting and household tasks. Two, due to the socially conservative nature of these communities, many in the community do not view girls’ education as a priority, instead, placing more importance on the education of boys. The Valuable Girl Project realized they had to address these environmental barriers in order to keep girls in school. In response, the project embarked upon a mentoring scheme to provide girls with one-to-one support in the form of mentoring and tutoring (Coptic Orphans 2006).

Using the Big Sisters/Little Sisters model, the project trained high-school and college girls to become role models and academic mentors to girls attending primary school. Through this one-on-one contact, the project aimed to give girls the “...academic support in an environment that, unlike their school environment, encourages them, respects them, and recognizes their immense value as girls who deserve access to all opportunities” (Coptic Orphans 2006). Specifically, mentors helped their ‘little sisters’

36 with their homework, read stories, and provided other academic support. In return, the mentors, or big sisters, received a monthly stipend to spend as they see fit. The Valuable Girls Project has been a success. As of August 2006, approximately 700 girls have benefited from this project. The project foresees graduates becoming active in their communities, continuing their education, and furthering the cause of girls' education.

Lessons learned

Utilize graduates of prior scholarship programs. Girls who have experience the same trials and tribulations are in a unique position to provide advice, guidance, and mentoring to current girls' scholarship recipients.

Differentiate between mentoring and tutoring. Try to break the cycle of mandatory tutoring using teachers. Mentors by definition should not profit from mentoring. As such, teachers who are paid for tutoring are not mentors. Scholarship programs must be wary of paying teachers to tutor or mentor as this incentive will encourage teachers to focus on building their tutoring and mentoring business to the detriment of their classroom activities.

Ensure mentoring is sustainable. To achieve sustainability, mentoring needs to be lodged in an existing structure that will continue beyond the life of the project such as local NGOs or other civil society organizations. In addition, scholarship programs can employ staff at the central and regional level to manage and maintain a cadre of mentoring volunteers to make this practice viable.

Local capacity to continue scholarship program beyond the life of donor support is strengthened

Importance of strengthening local capacity

Donor support plays a critical role in establishing solid foundations on which to build local support and capacity for girls' education. Through donor support, scholarship programs often see increased enrollment and positive educational outcomes. But donor support does have an end. When this support stops, many communities see a drop in girls' enrollment and overall support for girls' education. Ideally, girls' scholarship programs have built a sustainable supportive environment and mobilized the community to actively contribute to girls' education past program completion. Realistically, in order to sustain the gains made by scholarship programs, local organizations need to continue targeted scholarship activities. Towards this end, scholarship programs should build local capacity to implement these targeted activities beyond the life of donor support.

Strengthening local capacity has several advantages. Donor support is largely a foreign intervention and scholarship programs are an extension of that intervention. By strengthening local capacity, programs build upon the identification of stakeholders and moves if further towards stakeholder ownership of the program, hence changing scholarships from foreign interventions to community owned activities. This move towards local ownership encourages community members to become involved particularly when they are rewarded by the benefits girls' education brings and can see the potential for local sustainability.



Common strategies

Eliminating the barriers that make scholarships necessary. In order to achieve true sustainability, scholarship programs need to directly address and, hopefully, eliminate the barriers to education that make scholarships necessary. Monetary incentives are

not sustainable by nature and although programs can leave behind administrative and financial capabilities to distribute funds a program best serves the community by providing localized services to support education rather than handing financial stipends.

Increasing the capacity of local partners. Increasing the capacity of local partners is a participatory process as local partners must be willing and committed to identifying areas in need of improvement in order for capacity building to be successful. When looking at the strengths of local partners, programs should analyze the effectiveness of both financial and administrative capabilities. Programs can best conduct this analysis by breaking down organizational capacity into five separate but equally important capabilities. These capabilities are: management, human resources, communications, finance, and capacity to deliver program objectives (Hashweh and Awartani 2002).

Project descriptions

Education Reform Program: Building the Capacity of Community Development Associations. Through the use of community development associations, the Education Reform Program (ERP) in Egypt builds local capacity to manage a girls' scholarship program past project completion. ERP distributes approximately 120,000 scholarships to girls in nine governorates throughout Egypt. In order to reach the village level, ERP works through community development associations or CDAs as the entry point into Egyptian villages. Without CDA support, programs cannot generate the trust needed to discuss the sensitive topics surrounding girls' education. Yet, despite the importance of CDAs, many are understaffed, under equipped, and unable to continue on with scholarship programs without outside support.

To meet the administrative needs of CDAs, and to build capacity towards sustainability, ERP carries out extensive trainings with staff of CDAs. ERP focuses on two capabilities: financial management and activity tracking. In support of financial management, ERP begins work with CDAs before ERP signs an agreement. ERP staff conducts a financial assessment to ensure that there are financial capacity and procedures in place to undertake scholarship activities. This assessment also serves to identify weak areas where ERP can lend support and build local capacity. Once these areas are identified, ERP field staff work closely with the CDAs, training financial staff and developing checklists and systems to build a strong financial capability. Because the success of scholarship programs depends upon the learning

of the individual, ERP has also identified tracking as another area to build capacity. In support of this area, ERP developed a tracking system specific to local needs, installed databases into CDAs, and provided training and technical support to CDA staff to manage the database. Because of the transfer of knowledge, CDAs can continue to track girls and their progress in and out of school past the end of donor funding. Both the financial and tracking trainings focused upon transfer of knowledge.

Asociacion Guatemalteca de Educacion Sexual (AGES): Moving from USAID funding to host-government funding. AGES worked in Guatemala starting in 1986 to provide “scholarships and community support assistance for girls in primary school” (Prather et. al. 1996). Specifically, AGES provided a monthly stipend to young Mayan girls to attend primary school. The program targeted the most-needy identifying girls who had never attended school or could not afford to stay in school. The program worked with these girls and their family to provide a safe learning environment and academic support. During donor support, AGES emphasized the importance of transparency and community participation. AGES delivered upon these goals by establishing selection committees among community members to choose the beneficiaries of the scholarships (Prather et. al. 1996). Program evaluations found many successes stemming from the AGES program: primary school enrollment was higher for both girls and boys; girls drop-out rate declined; and girls stayed in school longer (Prather et. al. 1996).

Originally, USAID provided the funding to AGES. Later, the Embassy of the Netherlands provided donor support to continue the program. When foreign donor support concluded, the project became a government-funded activity and both beneficiaries as well as community-participation levels changed. An ensuing lack of transparency and the lack of local capacity to regulate and administer financial incentives led to new problems with the program. Without the proper oversight, administrators distributed funds to friends, rather than the most-needy (Rugh and Brush 2002). The resulting loss of transparency and clear articulation of stakeholders undermined the community’s trust and support of the program.

Lessons learned

Identify which activities should be sustainable and which should not. Scholarship programs should identify target activities to sustain past the life of the project. This targeting will allow the program to identify the appropriate stakeholder in the

- 40 community to carry-on work after program completion. This task is not an easy one, although, barriers to girls' education will remain, not all program activities are meant to be sustainable.

Beware of activities becoming entitlements. Scholarship programs are best served by focusing their energy on capacity building rather than investigating ways to continue financial incentives. Financial incentives are not sustainable and in the long run, may come to be viewed as entitlements rather than incentives.

Criteria are established for retention and continuation of scholarships through completion of a target school level

Importance of establishing criteria for retention and continuation of scholarships

Getting girls into school is the first priority of any girls' scholarship program. Of equal importance in terms of managing a quality program is ensuring girls complete a target level of learning. Multiple studies have shown that the longer a girl stays in school the more likely: the country as a whole will have stronger GNP; beneficiaries will send their daughters to school, extending the benefit of education to the next generation; and beneficiaries will raise healthier families with fewer children, lower infant mortality, and who are better nourished (UNICEF 2002). In short, in order for a community to feel the full effects of girls' education, every effort should be made to retain girls through completion of a target school level (Prather et. al. 1996).



For a scholarship program, the task of supporting beneficiaries beyond a single academic year requires establishing academic support structures, ensuring funding is available to support beneficiaries throughout the cycle, and remaining informed regarding the changing barriers to education as girls get older. For beneficiaries, criteria for continued receipt of scholarship support might include school attendance and achievement. This effort not only impacts girls' education but empowers the girls as individuals, as they learn to advocate the benefits of education to their community for themselves (Herz and Sperling 2004).

Common strategies

Supporting girls through the completion of primary school. Most scholarship programs focus upon access and retention through primary school. This strategy has many benefits as at this schooling level children learn basic numeracy and literacy skills, skills which are critical to improving the lives of women and their children. In addition, focusing on primary school has the added advantage of government support; in most countries primary school is compulsory.

Continuing support through the completion of secondary school. Recently, scholarship programs have begun to focus their attention on the completion of secondary school. The rationale behind this strategy is that as girls receive more education and knowledge, they build upon the advantages they gained from a primary education and, in the future, become role models, mentors, and teachers to other girls.

Project descriptions

Female Education Scholarship Program (FESP). The FESP is one example of a scholarship program focusing on supporting girls through secondary education. The FESP was an USAID financed scholarship program located in Nepal. The mandate of FESP was to, "motivate parents to send their girls to secondary school, with the ultimate objectives of delaying the early age of marriage and child bearing, lowering the average number of children born per women, and encouraging girls to be more economically independent" (Prather et. al. 1996). Because of the age-specific objectives of the program, FESP realized its mandate was best realized by targeting and supporting girls through the secondary level.

Given that FESP targeted older girls, the program developed age-appropriate activities and criteria to support girls through secondary school. One such activity was the opening of bank accounts for scholarship beneficiaries. FESP opened accounts for each girl taking part in the program. The aim of this activity was to empower girls by allowing them to manage their own money as well as change community perception of girls by showing girls as active members with purchasing power. In exchange for the scholarship, FESP established criteria or guidelines for girls to follow in order to stay in the program. For example, girls had to attend at least seventy-five percent of their classes (Prather et. al. 1996). FESP was successful on many levels: through the bank accounts, evaluations found girls had a new and improved sense of self-worth; parents voiced a new appreciation for girls' education; and during the program, the drop-out rate was less than 10% compared to a previous rate of 30-45% (Prather et. al. 1996). One reason for FESP's success was its ability to support girls through a complete target level of schooling. FESP was active from 1991 through 1995, giving the program 5 years to support girls from grade 6 through grade 10 (Prather et. al. 1996). In addition, FESP was able to identify girls who were willing to learn by making attendance a mandatory criterion for further enrollment in the program.

U.S. Ambassador's Girls' Scholarships Program (AGSP). The USAID funded Ambassador's Girls' Scholarship Program also successfully used scholarships to retain girls in school through a target level. AGSP is a response to issues of educational quality, inequity, and enrollments as they relate to girls' education in Africa. Working under the auspices of EDDI, AGSP provides financial and academic support to girls at-risk of dropping out of school (USAID Guinea 2006). AGSP mostly focuses on retaining girls through primary school but in some instances, AGSP supports girls through the completion of secondary school.

In Senegal, AGSP distributed scholarships to 425 tenth, eleventh, and twelve graders to continue and complete their high school education. Realizing financial incentives are not enough to retain girls in school, AGSP complimented the financial support with mentoring and various trainings in computers, leadership, and science skills. Of the girls who benefited from the scholarships, 82% passed the baccalaureate exam in July 2004 allowing these girls to continue on to higher education. Based on this success, USAID is continuing the scholarships, establishing a five year program which will benefit 300 girls as they seek to complete their studies. (USAID/Senegal – accessed September 18, 2006) With girls now completing secondary and higher education, they become role models and perpetuate the benefits of girls' education to the next generation.

Lessons learned

Front-ending rather than back-ending scholarships. In order to gain the most out of scholarships, programs should support a girl as long as possible, ideally through an education cycle (Prather et. al. 1996). Most scholarship programs are contracted to distribute a set number of scholarships. In order to reach the pre-ordained number, some programs have found themselves giving many scholarships in the last year of the program. This causes problems as girls are only supported for one year and find themselves in the same position at the end of the year.

Weigh the different challenges between primary and secondary. As girls get older, scholarship programs must be aware that they experience different barriers and constraints to their education. For example, older girls are much more likely to drop out of school because of early marriage, be kept home due to concern over her honor, and be unable to pay for school as secondary schools is for the most part not compulsory (Prather et. al. 1996).

Focusing on the student level. Scholarship programs should focus on the student level, specifically, what are the characteristics of a good learner and how to support scholarship beneficiaries in becoming good learners (UNICEF 2006). Characteristics of a good learner include: healthy, well-nourished, open to learning; and supported by family and the community in their quest for education. A workshop held in 2005 with local Egyptian NGOs supported these characteristics finding specifically, that many girls needed eyeglasses, hearing aids and a safe, orderly place to study in order to fully take advantage of their educational opportunity (Habib 2005).

Monitoring and evaluation is an integral component of any scholarship program

Importance of integrating monitoring and evaluation

During implementation, scholarships programs may find that activity inputs are not producing the foreseen program outputs. Monitoring and evaluation are complementary tools that can address this discrepancy by identifying the effectiveness of program activities. Monitoring is “the periodic oversight of the implementation of an activity which seeks to establish the extent to which input deliveries, work schedules, other required actions, and targeted outputs are proceeding according to plan, so that timely action can be taken to correct deficiencies detected” (UNICEF 2006). Evaluation is “a process which attempts to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of activities in the light of specified objectives” (UNICEF 2006). As an integral component of a scholarship program, monitoring and evaluation can build all-important community support by demonstrating accountability and applying past lessons to future activities.

Monitoring and evaluation supports program implementation by measuring and analyzing progress and effectiveness. This important information allows scholarship programs to identify problem areas during implementation giving time and opportunity to adjust activities to better meet targets and improve effectiveness. With this information, programs can improve program management and outcomes, build local capacity to monitor and evaluate their own activities, reassure donors about the effectiveness and efficiency, and advocate to stakeholders the benefits of girls’ scholarships (UNICEF 2006).

Common strategies

Conduct regular field observations. One method to monitor program progress is to conduct regular field observations. Through field observations program staff can witness first hand the pros and cons of activities and adapt implementation and schedules as needed.

Review progress reports. Progress reports are a good source of information that provides staff with the opportunity to compare the actual work undertaken with those outlined in the work plan. Ideally, the review of the progress report is coupled with field observations.

Conduct assessments. To gain understanding of the effectiveness of program activities, programs can conduct assessments. Assessments go beyond measuring whether programs are implementing their activities. Assessments evaluate how effective program inputs are in causing the desired program output.

Project descriptions

Girls' Education Monitoring System (GEMS). The GEMS project provides a good example of monitoring and evaluation at the country level. GEMS' stated mandate is to "work with interested countries to develop procedures and consistent measures of the aggregate effects of girls' and women's education efforts supported by USAID." To further this mandate, GEMS used monitoring and evaluation to assist countries in identifying their information needs, designing effective methods for collecting information, and analyzing information to enhance program outcomes (Educate Girls 2006).

GEMS is unique in that, unlike the majority of programs, it focuses solely on monitoring and evaluation for girls' education. Commonly, monitoring and evaluation is an integrated part of a development programs. GEMS is an external monitoring resource that targets state governments as its primary users. GEMS provides assistance in "developing appropriate indicators to measure the results of girls' education initiatives, training personnel to carry out monitoring of program progress, disseminating information on the results of their girls' education initiatives, participating in an international forum for the exchange of information and continued dialogue on girls' education monitoring and evaluation" (Educate Girls 2006). The importance of GEMS stems from its success in disseminating the outcomes of their country studies. Through a website, interested parties can review the evaluation of girls' education programs which in turn they can use to inform their own program design and implementation. In this case, GEMS provides valuable, hard to find material on lessons learned.

PROGRESA (Programa de Educacion, Salud y Alimentacion). PROGRESA, as reviewed in the research section, also provides another best practice for monitoring and evaluation. PROGRESA started by using research to inform the design of their program (IFPRI 2001). The program built upon the strong design by integrating

a strong monitoring and evaluation component to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of program interventions. PROGRESA dedicated program funds and time to field observations and assessments to identify way in which to improve the efficiency of their activities. PROGRESA was awarded for its diligent research, monitoring and evaluation. A randomized evaluation of the effect of the program demonstrated clear gains in enrollment and completion rates. Such strong evidence helped to motivate the government's decision to expand the program (Herz and Sperling 2004).

Lessons learned

Clearly define a program's indicators of effectiveness. Identification of program impact is challenged by the fact programs most often implement scholarships along with other school improvement projects, making isolation of scholarship effects difficult (UNESCO 2004). By clearly defining indicators, programs can target the information they need to measure program effectiveness. Scholarship programs can use this information to present successes to donors and other stakeholders. The lack of clear indicators of effectiveness can jeopardize future funding. For example, participants in projects funded by USAID's Girls' Education Activity suggest that the diversion of funds suffered by the scholarship programs might have been prevented, had better monitoring structures been used to ensure accountability (Rugh and Brush 2002).

Allocate funds for baseline and other studies. Baseline studies provide the foundation to which all future measurements will be based. In order to accurately measure impact, resources need to be allocated for baseline measurements, as well as a host of later evaluation activities. While certain indicators such as enrollment and attendance are relatively easy to measure, other indicators such as achievement, long-term health and economic benefits demand more sophisticated studies. The value of investing in rigorous research practices such as randomized and longitudinal studies is that results from these studies often provide a clearer answer to the important questions of "what works?" and "why?".

Publicize findings. By publicizing findings, scholarship programs provide an important service to other scholarship programs and interested parties. Cross-country reviews of scholarship programs studies, such as Kane's analysis of African initiatives and Herz and Sperling's global survey, find too few sources that could benefit the implementers of scholarship programs (Kane 2004; Herz and Sperling 2004).

Successful scholarship recipients are recruited in “give back” community outreach programs

Importance of recruiting scholarship recipients

Successfully reaching the community with activities and messages determine public perception, acceptance and, hence, success of scholarship programs. To gain this support, scholarship programs must actively engage the community through outreach programs. Communities may be wary of messages and program results. Trust is paramount. By recruiting successful recipients to “give back” through community outreach, scholarship programs put a human and local face on the benefits scholarships provide, work towards sustainability, and further develop the skills and local standing of graduates by providing them with an opportunity to become a role model.

The importance of ‘give back’ community outreach is both social and economic. For one, girls need strong role models and mentors to guide them through the challenges of education. Successful scholarship recipients are uniquely qualified to provide this support as they can bring their own personal experiences to the relationship. Another benefit of “give back” community outreach is the additional opportunity for local people to witness the benefits of girls’ education as graduates prove their ability to positively affect their community through continued participation in scholarship programs.

Common strategies

Volunteering as facilitators and mentors. Mentoring and tutoring is a vital component of any scholarship program. One strategy to leverage past success is for programs to recruit successful scholarship recipients to work with current recipients. These previous recipients have the added advantage of personally experiencing the trials and tribulations their mentees are currently experiencing. Another added advantage of recruiting past recipients is working toward sustainability, as these volunteers in turn encourage their mentees to ‘give back’ upon their graduation.

Receiving training to work as teachers or health workers. Scholarship programs can also support their program by encouraging graduates of scholarship programs to become teachers and health workers. Using this strategy, programs are able to address the demand for more female teachers as well as the health problems that prevent girls from attending school.

Learning business skills and establishing civil society organizations. Another strategy scholarship programs can take is to encourage graduates to establish small businesses and civil society organizations. In this way, girls become role models and



community leaders, making their contribution to the community visible as they work on issues that affect girls and the community at large such as the protection of the young from HIV/AIDS or the education of children from poor families.

Project descriptions

Girls' Attainment of Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE). Building upon the success of their communications' campaign, the GABLE project made a major contribution in developing staff and beneficiaries for community give-back in the course of program implementation. In the case of GABLE, this 'community give-back' took the form of an NGO, the Creative Center for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM) (Center for Development Information and Evaluation 1999).

Realizing that more work needed to be done in support of girls' education in Malawi

past program completion, GABLE took deliberate steps towards sustainability by training a group of young university students in community mobilization to sustain the research and communication components past donor funding. This training, provided for Theater Development staff, helped them organize themselves into a NGO, the "Creative Center for Community Mobilization" (CRECCOM). Through encouraging "give back" in community outreach, GABLE was able to provide a level of sustainability through the establishment of CRECCOM, which in turn, continued to socially mobilize the community in support of girls' education.

Yemen Educational Quality Improvement Program. One example of a project that promotes civic responsibility and "give back" is the EQUIP1 Program implemented in Yemen by a partnership between American Institutes for Research and the Academy for Educational Development. The project supports seeks to improve basic education, especially for women and girls by working in both the formal and non-formal sector. The program focuses its efforts on three of Yemen's most impoverished governorates specifically, Amran, Mareb, and Shabwah (EQUIP 2006).

Like many other programs, Yemen found that one of the barriers to educating girls was cultural. In this case, families were uncomfortable sending their daughters to school where male teachers were present. Unfortunately, the lack of female teachers, particularly in these rural governorates, meant that many girls were unable to receive an education. To address this need, the project began providing incentives to encourage rural girls who had completed primary education to gain teaching skills. The programs aim was to create a pool of female teachers to work in rural areas. Thus, providing girl learners with a culturally acceptable teachers and providing graduates with a job that "gives back" to the community by providing a much-needed service (Kirk 2005).

Lessons learned

Develop program staff. Scholarship programs have a limited life span. In order to sustain mentoring and other support past done funding, programs can professionally develop a cadre of staff member who have the skills to continue work past project completion. Programs can support this endeavor by including activities staff development in the program design. Key areas programs should concentrate on are finance, management, and leadership skills.

Utilize existing local structures. By lodging the organization in existing institutions,

programs avoid duplicating efforts and infrastructures and provide programs with an opportunity to merge with established offices past donor support. Another benefit is the opportunity to establish linkages to share information, experience, and lessons learned which will build the capacity of both the local organization and the program staff.

Create a cadre of volunteers to continue support of girls' education. Scholarship programs can also professional development and encourage volunteers to maintain involved in girls' education past program completion. Establishing a system where volunteers gain valuable experience as they work with the girls, redefines volunteerism as an opportunity for professional growth rather than a moral obligation to give something back to society.

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