SAGE: Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education

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In 1990, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, and the World Bank, together with the international community, pledged to work toward achieving universal primary education by the year 2000. In particular, the Education for All (EFA) movement called for ensuring girls' full enrollment and completion of a quality primary education. Although girls' enrollment rates and access increased worldwide between 1985 and 1995, a number of countries made little or no progress toward reducing gender inequality. Given the persistent low enrollment and retention rates in some countries, there is a need to reexamine current approaches and, as necessary, reformulate them, while remaining aware that education initiatives take time to bring forth changes in society.

THE SAGE APPROACH

Implemented by the Academy for Educational Development (AED), the Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education (SAGE) Program is a long-term initiative under the WIDTECH project funded by USAID's Office of Women in Development (G/WID). SAGE provides targeted technical assistance to USAID missions and partner organizations in both the public and private sectors to create and fund girls' education programs. SAGE also sponsors workshops, undertakes research studies at the national and international levels, and disseminates information on successful strategies used to improve girls' education.

SAGE uses an innovative approach to alleviating persistent constraints to girls' education. By strengthening partnerships among stakeholders, SAGE encourages locally driven strategies to increase rates of girls' schooling and improve the quality of educational and teaching practices. Traditional actors, such as teachers and principals, and non-traditional actors, such as business, media, and religious leaders, are brought together to discuss the challenges that exist and to create sustainable activities in support of girls' education. The overall goal is to build a conducive and sustainable environment for advancing girls' education not only in the local community but also nationally. This bulletin highlights SAGE programs in Guinea and Mali to illustrate community-sponsored strategies for improving girls' education.

On June 21, 2000, Guinea celebrated its first Girls' Education Day. The celebration included speeches, performances, and an exhibition of regional food and arts in Conakry. Festivals were organized by local alliances. In Guendembou, a district show sponsored musical events, and nearly every community gave awards to girls with the highest school grades.

GUINEA

A subcontractor to the AED, Plan International Guinea implements the SAGE program in Guinea. SAGE staff work hand in hand with local stakeholders to identify constraints and solutions to support girls' education. This interactive

process builds ownership, commitment, capacity, and

GUINEA INITIATIVES	
Strategy	**Action**
Mobilize Constituents at National Level	• Create a "national alliance" representing various sectors • Establish a national media task force • Mobilize key religious leaders • Create a national fund to facilitate the participation of the business sector • Celebrate Girls' Education Day
Mobilize Constituents at Community Level	• Establish local alliances in six sub-prefectures • Develop action plans for local radio stations
Define and Implement Education Strategy for Girls	• Create a national forum on girls' education involving community and national-level stakeholders from both the private and public sectors (September 1999)
Strengthen National- and Community-Level Capacity for Action	• Mobilize communities to raise local funds and resources to implement locally designed initiatives • Develop the capacity in partners to administer a national fund for girls' education
Monitor and Evaluate Implementation Process	• Establish a monitoring system to evaluate and revise programs • Disseminate findings and lessons learned

enthusiasm among the various partners not only to implement activities but also to contribute resources for advancing girls' education.

WHAT IS A LOCAL ALLIANCE?

Composed of key community, school, business, and religious leaders, local alliances serve as the community's representative to the SAGE program, the National Alliance, and the Girls' Education Working Group. Together, stakeholders have created action plans to help communities devise low-cost, feasible solutions to overcome some of the constraints girls face in accessing and completing primary schooling. These action plans identified the responsibilities of key players and sectors within the community for implementing activities. Lastly, a monitoring and evaluation system has been developed to assess progress and measure program results.

The Lélouma Local Alliance is an illustration of an alliance that raised both in-kind and financial resources to support girls' education. The local alliance collected funds and opened a bank account for the construction of a high school, latrines for girls and boys, and housing for two teachers in the village of Dialakadie. It also arranged for school supplies to be sold at a reduced rate from a local distributor.

MALI

The Mali strategy consists of a school-level initiative to improve the quality and relevance of education for girls. A group of Malian educators worked closely with SAGE consultants to develop the *Life Skills Curriculum.* Ninety-seven modules (teacher guides, student reading passages, and posters) were developed, and more than 100 copies were distributed in community schools.

Teachers, nongovernmental organization (NGO) staff, and Ministry of Basic Education officials were then trained on using interactive approaches in teaching the modules. This training was essential in ensuring that teachers fully understand, take ownership, and are committed to the approach. In particular, "girl friendly" classroom practices were reinforced for both community and public school teachers. These skills help teachers in assessing their own behaviors, diagnosing problems, and adopting appropriate pedagogical approaches and classroom management practices that encourage equal treatment of girls and boys. Moreover, once these NGO staff and teachers are trained, they will then train new teachers on the methodology during and after the SAGE program is

The Life Skills Curriculum consists of modules to enhance basic knowledge of hygiene, nutrition, first aid, environment, children's rights, sex education, and reproductive health issues for students in upper primary grades (fourth, fifth, and sixth).

"Mother giving Fatou school supplies for the first day of school."

MALI INITIATIVES	
Strategy	**Action**
Life Skills Curriculum	• Provide training for the Ministry of Basic Education's Central Curriculum Group to develop modules, plan integration, and prepare supplementary materials • Ninety-seven modules (teacher guides, student reading passages, and posters) developed and 100+ copies made for use in community schools
Leadership Training for Female Association des Parents d'Eleves Members	• Enable greater participation of female members in the decision-making process • Equip female members with the knowledge and skills to better support girls' participation in local schools • Train the trainers, or *animateurs*, of private voluntary organizations and NGOs sponsoring and supporting community schools
Community School and Equity: Planning-for-Action Seminar	• Organize an action-oriented seminar about the replicability and integration of community schools • Create a plan of action detailing the roles and responsibilities of the Ministry of Basic Education and the sponsors of community schools
Girl-Friendly Classroom Practices	• Design and train a group of carefully selected teacher trainers from the central and regional levels in the theories and practices of equity in the classroom
Female Teacher Support	• Organize two workshops to better understand the situation of women teachers in Mali • Train a selected group in the methodology of operation research to conduct a situational analysis study
Girls' Mentoring and Life Skills Program	• Create an enabling environment to encourage and permit girls to enroll, persist, and achieve good results in school • Provide a support group to turn to for positive female role models, advice and guidance, assistance, and tutelage

finished. In addition, SAGE offered leadership training courses to female Parent-Teacher Association members to enable greater participation of female members in the education decision-making process.

RESEARCH AND DISSEMINATION

Creating Multi-sectoral Partnerships. (H. Williams, draft)

Educating Girls: A Map to Context Analysis. A poster illustrating the key aspects surrounding girls' education—policy, planning, delivery, and community. (2000)

Girls' Education, HIV/AIDS and Poverty: Impacts and Alternatives for Development. (M. Rihani, draft)

Multisectoral Support of Basic & Girls' Education. (K. Tietjen, 2000)

Proceedings from the December 1 USAID Forum on Girls' Education. "Forum on Girls' Education: Evidence, Issues, Actions."(2000)

Proceedings from the May 17-18 USAID Symposium on Girls' Education. "Symposium on Girls' Education: Evidence, Issues, Actions." English, with French, Spanish, and Arabic translations available. (2000)

SAGE Guinea: Operational Procedures for the Girls' Education Funds. (F. Agueh, 2000)

Starting Now: Strategies for Helping Girls Complete Primary. (A. Rugh, 2000)

Life Skills Modules: "Matériels en Compétences Essentielles." Teacher's Guide, Student Reading Passages and Posters. (French)

Community Action Planning Guide: "Formulation de Plans d'Actions Communautaires." (French, Bamanan)