Intentional Design Practitioner Report

Implementation of the Girl Roster in Ezbet Khairallah, Egypt

By Audrey Anderson, Emy Yanni, and Laura Brazee, Plan International USA

With thanks to Community Development Associations El Nour (based in Khairallah) and Kheir we Barka (based in Asmarat)

About

The Intentional Design approach has been foundational to the Population Council's work since 2000, when on-the-ground programs to reach the most excluded girls in the poorest communities greatly expanded. This practitioner report is part of a series of 20 reports reflecting work in sites around the world from 2000 to 2020. The Intentional Design approach was implemented in these sites with nongovernmental and governmental partners who explored the question: Why invest in girls? Once that was understood, the Council offered learning tools to navigate the questions: Where do we work? With whom do we work? When, chronologically, in the girls' life cycles are the most crucial moments? Which content is meaningful and realistic and builds girls' protective assets? What does success look like for different segments of girls?

In 2013, the Girl Roster tool was added when it was clear that many partners lacked the technical and scientific resources to establish the "universe" of girls in the places they had selected to work. Intentional Design tools—with the Roster being the most known and catalytic learning aid—have been utilized in South and East Asia; the Middle East; Central, East, and West Africa; North America; Latin America; and the Caribbean.

The Roster has been adapted for use in an array of sociodemographic contexts including dispersed rural villages, poor urban neighborhoods, conflict zones, refugee camps, densely packed informal/migrant-receiving settlements, high-risk HIV zones, before and after epidemics, as a rebuilding tool, and in Native American reservation communities. In every context, the Roster provided a transformative opportunity to see girls' lives more systematically, drawing both quantitative and qualitative information. The efforts to estimate and segment the universe of girls has challenged initial assumptions about girls, families, safe and unsafe zones in communities, and the accessibility and relevance of services, even among those who felt they knew their community, including longstanding program staff. Across the board, practitioners report that on-the-ground application of the learning tools generates surprising and useful knowledge vital to shaping their work, assessing its reach, and articulating plans for expansion.

In the 20 reports that comprise this series, our partners share their experiences applying Intentional Design tools and principles. The reports represent just a few on-the-ground projects, but most of our partners report that the Intentional Design approach has taken root. We honor our partners for their honesty and dedication. They inspire us.

Judith Bruce and Sophie Soares

Authors, *Intentional Design: Reaching the Most Excluded Girls in the Poorest Communities—A Guide for Practitioners and Advocates*, from which these reports were excerpted.

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Findings and Decisions	Implementation Observations and Adaptations
• The Girl Roster identified married girls 15–19 years old as a neglected segment; they were grouped together, and childcare was provided. • All out-of-school girls with little or no education, across ages, were brought together whether they were working or not, at a time when the "working girls" could also join. • Out-of-school literate girls, working or not, were grouped together with community schoolgirls, as they had a similar level of functioning and self-identification. • The Community Resource Scan, combined with the information on the "universe" of girls, indicates the importance of advocacy for constructing a secondary school in the community; the lack of access was both distance and also the perceived lower security for girls in the urban areas. Therefore, the Community Development Associations (CDAs) affiliated with Plan advocated for safer transportation to and from school for girls, employment options for parents (to help offset their demand on girls and provide support for noncovered schooling fees), and the creation of secondary school options in Ezbet Khairallah. • The CDAs that are part of Plan Egypt's Urban Program are, as of 2019, all involved in the follow-up project, known as Safer Cities. Girls from the Urban Program are involved in the design of the Safer Cities program and also contribute to ongoing adaptations. Some are also program participants. The program focuses on safer transportation, and at the request of girls the project includes components/modules focused on life skills, advocacy, sports, art therapy, and self-defense. At this time there is no economic empowerment focus. Programming is delivered by the CDAs.	• The GPS portion was removed because the population was so dense that it was meaningless. • We added a question about the job status of girls as indicating work outside the home (regardless of age), which is quite common in the poor parts of Cairo. • We added to "unmarried" and "married" a category called "engaged." Girls would often have lengthy engagements in Egypt because of the difficulty of finding suitable housing and the desire of the couple to establish a separate home. (In addition, females are expected to bring some resources, e.g., the marital bed), thus extended engagements are not uncommon. • The schooling status question was changed to include one-room, nongraded classrooms, which were established across Egypt around 1995. • During implementation, most Plan staff were able to work as individuals after they tested rostering in pairs.

Background

In August 2014, Plan launched the Because I Am a Girl (BIAGG) Urban Program in Cairo, Egypt. The Urban Program is a global initiative in five cities around the world (Cairo, Egypt; Delhi, India; Lima, Peru; Kampala, Uganda; and Hanoi, Vietnam) that aims to make urban areas safer and more inclusive spaces for girls. This was the first application of the Girl Roster and the experience in Cairo was formative, both regarding our learning approach and the special conditions of urban girls (early exposure to work in the public space and using the question "Does she have a job?")."

The Urban Program aimed to increase girls' active and meaningful participation in urban development and governance, with the following specific outcomes:

• Increase girls' safety and access to public spaces;

• Increase girls' autonomous mobility in the city;

• Improve girls' access to quality city service.

The program worked with transportation systems and authorities, local government, and institutions to make public spaces safer and more inclusive for girls. The program also worked directly with girls aged 13–18 who face particular risk factors, such as being out of school, married, or engaged in child labor.

To learn more about the girls in the community, we collected information on 568 girls in six communities in Ezbet Khairallah using the Girl Roster.

Location: Ezbet Khairallah, Greater Cairo

Ezbet Khairallah is an informal settlement on the outskirts of Cairo, roughly 12 square kilometers (4.5 square miles) in area. This area, which includes six urban communities of

Entrance to Ezbet Khairallah. (Photo: Plan International.)

informal settlements (averaging 140 houses each), was selected because of levels of school dropout and higher-than-average (for urban areas) child marriage and labor outside the household. It is a very densely populated region that had a population of about 650,000 as of 2014. It is bordered by Masr El Kadima to the North, Dar Al Salam to the South, the Nile to the West, and El Basateen to the East.[1] When the Ring Road was constructed around Cairo, it cut straight through the region of Ezbet Khairallah, creating tunnels underneath the freeway throughout the area. Several other NGOs were already working in the area doing basic programs such as distributing medicine. Plan had the strongest NGO presence in the area.

For logistical purposes, Plan had already organized the region into three CDA areas, each including 8–12 communities.

Rollout of the Girl Roster in Ezbet Khairallah

Given the densely populated, urban context of Ezbet Khairallah, as well as the security situation in Egypt at the time, several modifications were made to the Girl Roster tool:

• Removed the GPS portion of the survey;

• Clearly introduced the intent of the survey to each household and asked for consent;

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[1] Based on data collected by the NGO Peace and Plenty.

- Added "engaged" to the formal answers about marital status;

- Added a question about work: "Does she have a job?"

- Added a list of options for school grade, including "no school" and "community school"—this was very helpful in analysis to double-check girls who had no schooling as well as to group girls by those who were most likely literate/illiterate.

The Girl Roster was piloted in one community in the Nahdet Khairallah region of Ezbet Khairallah, with the following methodology:

- The rosterers were all Plan field officers who would be community workers throughout the project;

- At the beginning, the field officers went out in pairs, and each pair implemented the tool in five households and then returned to share their experiences. They then decided to continue working as individuals to save time, so for the remainder of the information collection there were ten field officers working at once;

- During the pilot, 144 households were completed in about three hours of active information collection;

- Field officers started collecting information around 10:30 a.m., and many people were still asleep, so it was decided to delay the start time moving forward.

Field officers responded positively to the methodology of the Girl Roster and found that most families were very open to the questionnaire, with a few exceptions:

- "I felt the importance of this before even going out, and I was afraid some families would stop me and wouldn't want to reply. But the families want a better life for their children. I didn't promise anything, like we talked about, but families really wanted the girls to participate."

Field officer practicing with mobile survey. (Photo credit: Plan International.)

- "Although Ezbet Khairallah is one community, any time we go to a different subcommunity it's different. So, I'm sure that today we'll have even more surprises."

- "One family refused and said, 'We've heard a lot of promises and haven't seen any results, so we're not interested in answering your questions.'"

- "Some Christian families were afraid to let us in."

- "I found the opposite—Christian families let me in, but Muslim families did not."

- "We've realized the importance of knowing the numbers of girls who were out of school and such. Before the project begins, we now have a better idea of what success will be."

Results Overview

In six days, the field officers collected information on six communities, with a total of 840 households. Information was recorded on 1,227 girls aged 0–18 years, with 568 girls in the target age range of 13–18 years. The results of the rostering can be found in Table 1.

TABLE 1. OVERVIEW OUTPUT TABLE OF GIRLS IN NAHDET KHAIRALLAH REGION (SIX COMMUNITIES) OF EZBET KHAIRALLAH*

Age group	Unmarried				Married		Total
	In School		Out of School		Has a child	Does not have a child	
	Living with both parents	Living with just one or neither parent	Living with both parents	Living with just one or neither parent			
6–9	217	12	43	6	0	0	278
10–14	301	26	48	12	0	0	387
15–17	95	18	59	20	3	4	199
18–20	19	3	22	8	6	13	71
TOTAL	632	59	172	46	9	17	935

*Note: The contemporary Overview Output Table has since been modified in a number of ways: 1) it distinguishes "Living with one parent" from "Living with neither parent"; 2) it includes girls who are "Unmarried" and "Have a child"; and 3) it distinguishes the age cohorts of 10–12 years and 13–14 years.

> *"In one case a girl was trying to go take her exams, and the grandfather chased her to stop her because she had to take a bus and walk to get there and it's not safe."*
>
> —Field officer observation from field experience

Results: Education

There is only one primary school in Ezbet Khairallah and no secondary school. To attend a secondary school outside the community, extra fees are required. Upon further analysis, poverty, safety, and early marriage were all given as reasons for the low levels of girls' education in Ezbet Khairallah, which are nearly half that of national data reported for Cairo (Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2005). A breakdown of education findings based on the Roster can be found in Figure 1.

Community Schools: About 3% of the girls 13–18 years captured by the Roster information attended community school, a one-classroom nonformal education program under the Ministry of Education for children who had dropped out of school or for children aged 9–12 who had never been to school.

In community schools, children attend school for three days and work for three days. Some NGO-sponsored community schools pay the students for the three days of work they do. This results in an interesting phenomenon of some parents keeping their children out of school until age nine so that they can both go to school and earn money.

Safety and Mobility: Many parents reported that they would not let their daughters go out alone due to safety issues as well as responsibilities at home. Girls as young as seven years old were tasked with looking after younger siblings at home.

Results: Marital Status

The rate of early marriage among girls in Ezbet Khairallah is nearly twice as high as the rate for Cairo (Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2005). Several girls as young as 12 were already engaged, and girls as young as 15 were already married. A breakdown of marital status findings based on the Roster can be found in Figure 2.
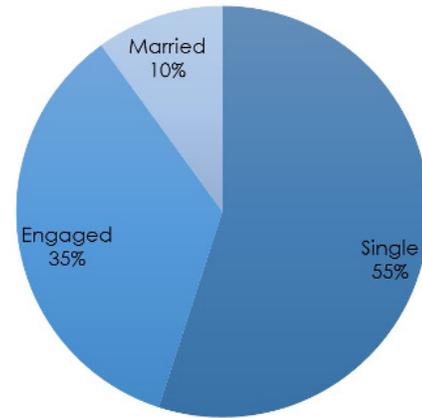
Results: Employment Status

Roughly one in four girls in Ezbet Khairallah is involved in paid work, such as factory work.

FIGURE 1. EDUCATION STATUS OF GIRLS AGED 13–18 YEARS IN THE GIRL ROSTER

Never went to school 18%
Dropped out 27%
Community school 3%
In formal school 52%
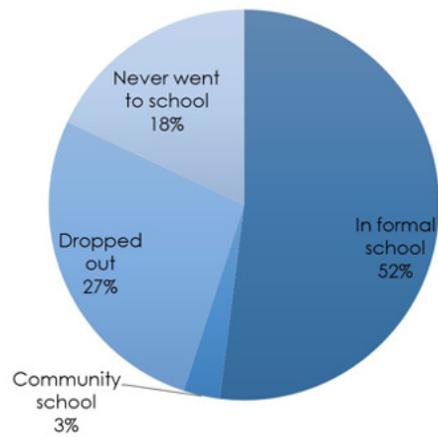
FIGURE 2. MARITAL STATUS OF GIRLS AGED 16–18 YEARS IN THE GIRL ROSTER

Married 10%
Engaged 35%
Single 55%

TABLE 2. PROFILE OF WORKING GIRLS IN EZBET KHAIRALLAH

Age group (years)	In school	No school	Community school	Dropped out in primary	Dropped out (but finished primary)	Total
13–15	11 (23%)	9 (19%)	11 (23%)	6 (13%)	11 (23%)	48
16–18	6 (7%)	29 (34%)	4 (5%)	12 (14%)	35 (41%)	86

TABLE 3. EXPECTED SEGMENTS OF GIRLS

Age group (years)	Out of school and single/engaged	Married (in or out of school)	Working/ Community school
13–15	11 (23%)	9 (19%)	11 (23%)
16–18	6 (7%)	29 (34%)	4 (5%)

Several girls as young as seven years old were already involved in paid labor. A breakdown of employment status findings based on the Roster can be found in Figure 3.

Most of the girls who were engaged in paid labor were out of school, but not all. Of married girls who were working, the majority had never been to school. The profile of girls who are working can be found in Table 2.

Results: Living Situation

Of the 17% of girls living with just one or neither parent, most live with their mother only. These

girls are at much higher risk of school dropout, early marriage, and child labor. A breakdown of living situation findings based on the Roster can be found in Figure 4.

## Recommendations for Program Learning and Design

In a community in Ezbet Khairallah with about 100 girls between the ages of 13 and 18, we would expect roughly the same segments of at-risk girls as found in Table 3.

These segments can be grouped together for girls' clubs as outlined in "Recommendations."

FIGURE 3. EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF GIRLS AGED 13–18 YEARS IN THE GIRL ROSTER

Working 24%

Not working 76%
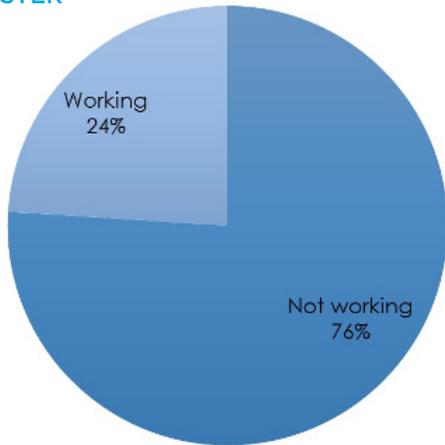
FIGURE 4. LIVING SITUATION OF GIRLS AGED 13–18 YEARS BASED ON THE GIRL ROSTER

Father only 2%

Neither parent 2%

Mother only 13%

Both parents 83%
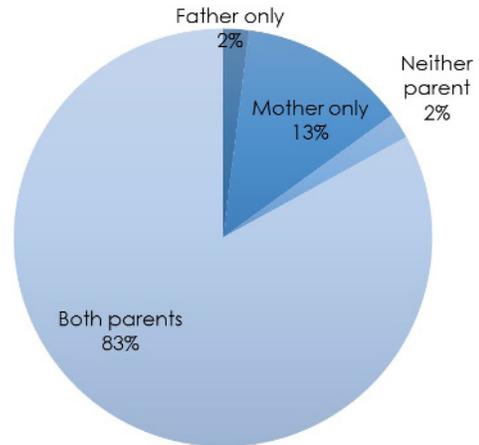
Recommendations

- Group all married girls aged 15–19 together (perhaps one club for two communities);

- Provide childcare for married girls;

- Group all out-of-school girls with little or no education together (working or not);

- Group all out-of-school, literate girls (working or not) together with community schoolgirls;

- Target advocacy on the following issues:

  - Construction of a secondary school in Ezbet Khairallah;

  - Safer transportation to and from school for girls;

  - More employment options for parents.

Challenges

- Married girls and working girls living with just one or neither parent will be difficult to mobilize.

- Poverty and low employment opportunities are overarching problems in the region that

"In one area, many men were involved in drug dealing, and even the children are getting involved. Poverty is also very high here. Many girls are working and out of school, and many mothers are single moms because the husbands are in prison or have left to work in another country or region."

—Field officer observation from field experience

prevent participation in social programs and increase dropout and child labor.

- A culture of early marriage is pervasive, with marriage emphasized as the top priority for a girl's life.

- Only one primary school and no secondary school increases dropout and leads to the use of unsafe transportation for girls going to school.

- Families reported the following reasons for keeping girls out of school:

  - Early marriage;

  - Poverty and school fees, particularly for secondary school;

Girl passing a trash heap in Ezbet Khairallah. (Photo: Plan International.)

> *"Many times, the father isn't there, so the girls have to stay at home while the mom works, or the girl must go out and work. Sometimes the family will have three children and send two to school and keep the other one home to keep house while the mom works."*
>
> —Field officer observation from field experience

> *"Girls should insist on their own opinions and not just listen to whatever others say. They should look to what's right and be bold and move forward."*
>
> —Mona, age 16, Ezbet Khairallah

- Safety going to and from school;

- Low quality of schooling—many girls who go to school are still illiterate;

- Preference for educating boys over girls.

Conclusion

Plan's global Safer Cities for Girls project is the follow-up to the BIAAG Urban Program, and the Safer Cities for Girls model was designed before Plan conducted the Girl Roster in Egypt. As a result, the Girl Roster was not a tool included in the program model. However, the notions of Intentional Design—centering all program plans on the lived experiences of specific segments of girls—was vital to Plan's process and led to strategic investments to ensure girls were part of the planning process as Safer Cities was adapted in follow-up programs. As a result of careful consultations and input from the girls themselves, Safer Cities, as of 2019, includes program components/modules focused on life skills, advocacy, safety walks, and training of the government transportation agency. At the girls' behest, there are also activities focused on sports, art therapy, and self-defense. The CDAs from the Urban Program are still involved as local partners and are using the evidence-based, girl-informed methods they learned through the first project. As of 2019, there is no economic empowerment component of the project in Cairo.

The rostering done in the first phase helped to inform Plan's programmatic approach in

terms of reaching Safer Cities participants and prioritizing certain areas of the catchment zone.

As of 2019, the project is working in Ezbet Khairallah and El Asmarat. The total direct beneficiaries reached are:

- 1,693 girls;

- 588 boys;

- 636 parents;

- 270 drivers;

- 263 community leaders/government officials/local authorities: 194 female, 69 male.

The project continues to engage girls and boys in Champions of Change clubs and has been working with numerous local NGOs on advocacy campaigns promoting girls' rights and safety. The project has also begun working closely with transportation workers as girls cite transportation as one of the risky areas for their safety in the city. The project is training transportation workers on keeping girls and children safe and setting up a media campaign on public buses.

For more information on this project, please visit: https://www.planusa.org/egypt-safer-cities-for-girls.

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