



**ADOLESCENT
GIRLS** COMMUNITY
OF PRACTICE



H.O.P.E
Haiti Outreach Pwoje Espwa



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Intentional Design Practitioner Report

The Influence of an Intentional Design Approach on WomenStrong International's Work with Women and Girls in Haiti and Washington, DC

By Rose-Marie Chierici, Executive Director, and Dr. Thony Voltaire, Medical Director, Haiti Outreach Pwoje Espwa (H.O.P.E.); Lynda Brown, Director, and Donnie Hampton, Supervisor, WomenStrong DC, Bread for the City, SE; Audrey Anderson, trainer; Dr. Susan M. Blaustein, WomenStrong International

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The Adolescent Girls Community of Practice is a project of the Population Council.

<https://buildcommunity4girls.org/>

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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most economically and socially excluded girls do not come forward to participate in supportive programs; they have to be recruited intentionally through household visits. • Family and community members need to be brought onboard to work against attitudes that pity poor or poorly dressed girls and reject more progressive content due to fear of girls’ gaining more power or freedom. • Mentors are vital and their own pathway—as young women who are getting married and so forth—needs to be considered to ensure that they too have support and resources. • In the US setting, community mapping is helpful in creating an awareness of rights and increasing advocacy for vital services (in this case, basic community infrastructure and affordable, healthier food options). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the US, door-to-door rostering was challenging given the fear that local communities had of being monitored and the prevailing levels of violence.

Introduction

WomenStrong International is a global nonprofit organization that finds, funds, nurtures, and shares women-driven solutions that transform lives in urban communities. Our member organizations start by listening to women, who know best what they need in order to thrive. Then we bring our members together with other women-led and women-driven organizations into a Learning Lab, to develop, test, sharpen, and share solutions. Through our collective learning and sharing, WomenStrong is building a global community of organizations empowering urban women and girls to leave poverty behind. WomenStrong has benefited tremendously from its association and partnership with the Population Council, especially with regard to the Girl Roster.

HAITI: Haiti Outreach Pwoje Espwa (H.O.P.E.)

The Council trained all WomenStrong staff and the leading staff members from our five WomenStrong founding members—Ghana, Haiti, India, Kenya, and Washington, DC. All project staff appreciated the training, which they found clear, concise, collegial in spirit, and practical. They found the Girl Roster tool well designed in its minimalism, discretion, and utility, and readily applicable in the field where they work.

In Haiti, the Girl Roster was conducted in the urban and close-in areas of Borgne, a commune in the region of the country where we were focused. The girls’ clubs were established on the basis of Roster findings, and programming was enabled and mentored through the Haitian Adolescent Girls Network (HAGN), the implementing partner of the Council and an expert in the Roster.

Our initial assumption was that the program would address the needs of the girls at risk in Borgne. The girls we wanted to reach came from poor families or were orphans living with relatives. Life is hard for these girls and their invisibility is heightened by household chores, affecting their ability to attend school; thus, finding them in school is unlikely. They are often victims of physical and sexual violence, either at home or in their environment. Without intentional recruitment, they are unlikely to know about or join programs; also, their relatives are often controlling, so the intercession of an organization like H.O.P.E. is essential to smooth the way for acceptance of their joining a girls' group.

Using the Girl Roster, a team of census workers trained in the use of the tool canvassed the three poorest neighborhoods of town to identify girls aged 10-19 and get an idea of the severity of the problems they faced. Then H.O.P.E. worked with HAGN to select and train the program director and two mentors who would lead girls' groups and put in place a program that would meet their needs.

The coordinator and mentors were supervised by both H.O.P.E. and HAGN. H.O.P.E. staff traveled to Port-au-Prince regularly to attend training meetings with coordinators and mentors in the HAGN network, to whom they submitted their weekly reports.

A total of 135 otherwise-invisible girls were selected and organized into five groups. The program was named *Espas Pa'm* (My Own Space), which was the moniker adopted by the members of HAGN who collaborated closely in framing this work. This title reflects the girls' need for a space of their own, away from the prying eyes of the community and parents. The program started well, weekly meetings were well attended, and the girls enthusiastically participated in lessons and exercises, but local issues interfered in its functioning.

Findings

Challenges quickly surfaced and strained the program's efforts to meet the girls' needs:

1. Securing safe meeting places was difficult. Originally, the group met in a Protestant church ideally located in reach of three neighborhoods. Soon, however, the pastor objected to the girls' poverty, reflected in their attire; he also found the curriculum too progressive and refused to continue hosting the program. Another location was secured briefly, and then we moved on to the ultimate site—H.O.P.E.'s ASB hospital campus, where there was more security, space, and flexibility.
2. *Espas Pa'm* was isolated from HAGN's other partner groups, which were in Port-au-Prince or areas close to Port-au-Prince—rather far for attending meetings and training.
3. Attendance started going down, prompting the coordinator and mentors to try to understand the reasons why. They visited families to speak with the girls and parents about the reasons for their absence and learned that parents or guardians were often reluctant to let the girls attend meetings because they didn't understand the program. Their assumption was that the program was to teach girls work skills and get them jobs. Some girls didn't have shoes or proper clothes, while others claimed to be sick.
4. Finally, we had staffing issues. The program coordinator was also a nurse in our women's health program. She was passionate about her role in the program and had the right qualifications and skills to lead it. The mentors were willing to work, but it was difficult to keep them motivated. The coordinator left when she got married, and we had a void to fill.
5. We used a similar model with mixed adolescent groups in the rural communities, with a lot more success. Several reasons explain the difference: the rural

communities in the commune of Borgne are more cohesive, and adolescents were engaged in projects that benefited their communities. These communities wanted their teens in the program and were willing to lend a hand, and the teens themselves were eager to learn. Groups of girls and boys met to discuss issues of concern for both sexes and learned to behave appropriately with adolescents of the opposite sex. In this setting, this has proved a good model so far. What we have not yet discerned is whether mixed-sex groups serve girls fully; this may be something to explore.

Given the constraints listed above, we did not have capacity to take the program further as had been designed.

Southeast Washington, DC: Bread for the City SE

In southeast Washington, DC, where WomenStrong worked only with an adult population of women, our participants made creative use of the Community Resource Scan to map the safety and health assets (e.g., ample street lighting, social service agencies, healthy food stores) and deficits (e.g., broken curbs, payday lenders, countless liquor stores) for girls and women in their community. These were distinct from the health and safety assets and deficits in a higher-income part of town, so the intent was to advocate before the relevant local public officials on behalf of their own unjustly neglected neighborhood.

Although the women, who had other priorities, including lack of access to safe and affordable housing and health care, for example, were at that point unable to advocate on their own behalf, their awareness of the inequity in the delivery by their local government of functioning public infrastructure and services marked an important moment in building their sense that: 1) they have a right to these public goods and services, and

2) they are not only entitled, but obliged, and also able to speak up and fight for that right. This sense of empowerment gained by our women participants, particularly after gaining greater knowledge about their own community's risks and deficits as compared to those in a higher-income community, was unanticipated and illustrates the promise of the Community Resource Scan in helping women and other community members deepen their understanding of their own local contexts and their own rights.

The women in our program did feel strongly that there were innumerable invisible girls in their community who deserved and needed targeted programming (they could each name a niece, grandchild, or neighbor who fit that description), but they simply felt too vulnerable in their neighborhoods—even in their own buildings—to carry out the Girl Roster, which would entail asking basic questions of neighbors and acquaintances to identify those girls.¹ This caution should be considered not only for the use of the tool in unsafe impoverished urban settings, but also in acute crisis zones; whether due to conflict, post-conflict, chaos, a natural disaster, or a climate emergency, girls may find themselves in hastily assembled shelters or displaced persons camps.

Summary, Outcomes, and Conclusion

In sum, we can see that the Intentional Design approach's commitment to reaching, serving, and empowering the "last girl," along with practitioner-friendly learning tools, has expanded the thinking, awareness, and sense of mission of our entire WomenStrong staff, as well as of those among our member organizations' program officers who were trained in the use of the Girl Roster.

WomenStrong's model has now expanded to enable the learning and cross-learning of those on the ground: those smaller, women-driven grassroots organizations identifying and working with each "last woman and girl," to

¹ Another partner—Safe Hands for Girls, operating in both The Gambia and Clarkston, Georgia (the most diverse square mile in the US)—found that paper and pen was more acceptable than Android phones when deploying the Roster in the US, as individuals associated these devices with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

ensure their safety, improve their health, and help them gain access to the educational and employment opportunities that will enable them to thrive. This broad content, including livelihoods, is reflected in our Girls' Club handbook, *Strong Girls Make Strong Women*,² and is based on the work with girls of our founding members in Ghana, Haiti, India, and Kenya. The content has been deeply informed by what we have learned from the Girl Roster and the Population Council—particularly about building girls' protective assets, which we speak about often, and which we have shared with our new Girls' Education and Empowerment Lab³ members as the Council's own invaluable guide.

For more information:

Haiti

WomenStrong's partnership with the Haiti Outreach Pwoje Espwa (H.O.P.E.)-S.E.E.-Famn project, which includes stories about the people and progress there:

<https://www.womenstrong.org/projects/haiti-outreach-pwoje-espwa-hope-see-famn>;

Haiti Outreach Pwoje Espwa (H.O.P.E.):

<http://www.hopehaiti.org/>

Washington, DC

WomenStrong DC, WomenStrong's project in partnership with Bread for the City SE, which includes stories about the women and the progress there:

<https://www.womenstrong.org/projects/bread-for-the-city>

Bread for the City:

<https://breadforthecity.org/>

² For more information visit: <https://www.womenstrong.org/publications/stronggirls>.

³ For more information visit: <https://www.womenstrong.org/news/womenstrong-launches-new-learning-lab/>.

Intentional Design on the Ground: Complete List of Practitioner Reports in This Series

IMAGEN: Shifting Native American Youth Programming to a Gender Focus through Intentional Design Methods

Intentional Design as a Catalyst for Change in Belize Migration Zones and Later Yucatán, Mexico

An Assessment of Plan International El Salvador's GAD (Gender and Development) Programming—Using Evidence for Redirection after the Initial Implementation

A Network of Intentional Design Adopters Working for Adolescent Girls' Futures in Post-Earthquake Haiti and Beyond

Fine-Tuning the Batonga Foundation's Approach to Reaching Girls: Mapping, Targeting, and Training Benin's Future Leaders

Implementing Intentional Design Tools in CSAGE (Community Spaces for Adolescent Girls Empowerment), Northern Nigeria, to Build a New Program and Assess Coverage of an Ongoing Program

Implementing the Girl Roster and Community Resource Scan in Sierra Leone: The Foundation of the Sierra Leone Adolescent Girls Network

Intentional Design in Homa Bay, Kenya, in the Context of the DREAMS Partnership

Global Communities' Use of Intentional Design to Implement the DREAMS Program—Getting the Correct Value for Money in Highly HIV-Affected Settings in Kenya

Lessons from DREAMS Interventions in Matutuine and Namaacha, Mozambique

Investing in Girls in Northern Mozambique

Implementing the Girl Roster in South Sudan

Turning a School into the Center of a Movement Using Intentional Design Tools: The SEGA Girls School, Tanzania

Intentional Design Builds Up and Coordinates an Existing Community of Practice in Mwanza, Tanzania

The Girl Power Project (Just Like My Child Foundation) Moves Forward with Intentional Design to Intensify Regional Impact, Central Uganda

Implementation of the Girl Roster in Ezbet Khairallah, Egypt

Beginning with the Girl Roster Results from West Bekaa, Lebanon, to Reach the Unreached Girls

Proactive Engagement with the Intentional Design and I'm Here Approaches to Ensure Programming Responds to the Needs of the Most Vulnerable Adolescents in Gaziantep, Turkey

Implementation of the Girl Roster in Dompou and Sikka, Indonesia

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