



**ADOLESCENT
GIRLS** COMMUNITY
OF PRACTICE

haiti adolescent
girls network

Intentional Design Practitioner Report

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

By Myriam Narcisse, Rachelle Fleurimond, Yvenique Bathard, and Sophie Soares

Acknowledgment to HAGN's many senior and junior mentors, community members, and HAGN members

Excerpted from: Bruce, Judith and Sophie Soares. 2021. *Intentional Design: Reaching the Most Excluded Girls in the Poorest Communities—A Guide for Practitioners and Advocates*. New York: Population Council.

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.

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

By Myriam Narcisse, Rachele Fleurimond, Yvenique Bathard, and Sophie Soares

Acknowledgment to HAGN's many senior and junior mentors, community members, and HAGN members

Findings and Decisions	Implementation Observations and Adaptations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elite capture (attracting better-off girls where there is no intentional recruitment of the disadvantaged) is inevitable even in densely settled, very poor communities; even where high numbers of girls are participating, these numbers are deceiving as they may represent less than 10% of the eligible girls. • Importantly, there is a systematic exclusion of those at highest risk; educated girls have far more access, so young and out-of-school girls, and the youngest married girls or first-time mothers are rarely found in programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tool was easy to use and especially practical in a dense, urban setting.

Background and Lives of Haitian Girls

Haiti is a Caribbean country, neighbored by the Dominican Republic, that spans 10,714 square miles (World Factbook 2020). The country is comprised of ten departments, and much of the country's infrastructure, industry, and governance is centralized in the capital, Port-au-Prince—which is in the department of Ouest. Although Haiti has large swatches of rural land, over half of the population resides in urban environments (World Factbook 2020)—particularly in Port-au-Prince's major metropolitan area.

Haiti's human development is extremely low, reinforced by the fact that out of 189 countries, Haiti is ranked 168th on the UNDP's GII—placing it in the bottom 15% of countries for gender inequality. This indicates that the reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status of adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) under the age of 24 are eclipsed by that of their male peers. Access to education is particularly

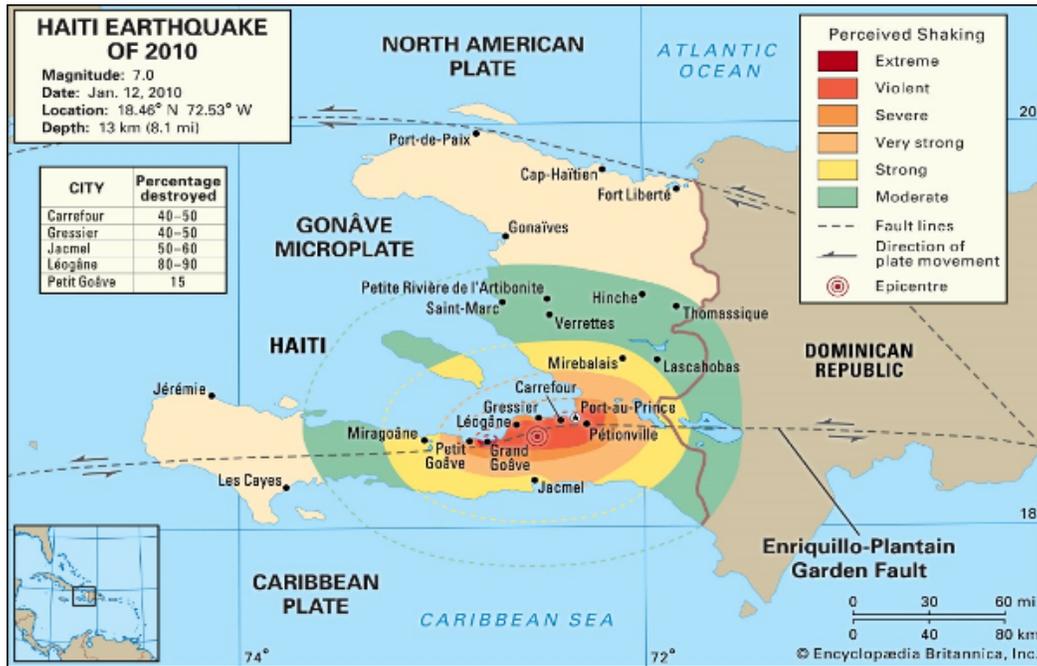
problematic in Haiti where more than 80% of its primary schools are managed by private organizations, almost all of which charge tuition. Further, the UNDP estimates that Haitians aged 25 years or older have received an average of only 4.9 years of schooling, and only 29% make it to secondary school. With AGYW making up 15–16%¹ of Haiti's population of 10.9 million, this schooling disparity compromises AGYW's safety, education, security, well-being, and—ultimately—their potential. Moreover, this differential prohibits AGYW from becoming active actors and changemakers in the economic, academic, or political sectors—causing their plight to go unspoken and unnoticed often by those within the country.

The 2010 Earthquake

It is well documented that despite an uptick of violence and restricted access to protective resources—like schooling—adolescent girls are not currently categorized as a high-risk group in

¹ Calculations from DHS (16%).

FIGURE 1. MAP OF HAITIAN EARTHQUAKE IMPACT BY REGION, 2010



humanitarian efforts (Atkinson and Bruce 2015) exacerbating their risk and vulnerability to a myriad of adverse and dangerous circumstances and outcomes. Haiti was no exception to this observed pattern when faced with its own emergency.

In 2010, Haiti experienced a devastating earthquake creating (as can be seen in Figure 1) a particularly extreme impact in the Ouest and Sud-Est departments of the country, specifically in Port-au-Prince, Leogane (the epicenter of the earthquake), Jacmel, and Archaie.

Whereby prior to the earthquake, a portion of girls lived without at least one parent, the earthquake aggravated the problem, leaving an increasing number of very young adolescent girls parentless and responsible for caring for their younger siblings and earning an income. As a result, many girls were at risk for not finishing school—in a country that already has very low rates of school attendance—and being caught up in a cycle of poverty. These girls, now

living in slums, IDP camps, and other relocation sites—even several years post-earthquake (and in light of other stressors such as political violence and Hurricane Matthew [2016])—remain vulnerable to violence, sexual exchange for food and/or shelter, and innumerable other risk factors.

The Haiti Adolescent Girls Network

In response to reports of a dearth of humanitarian programming for girls and young women on the ground, a number of national NGOs, INGOs and their Haitian affiliates, camp committees, and local women’s groups, led by the Population Council and AmeriCares, formed the Haiti Adolescent Girls Network (HAGN). From the first meeting, in June 2010, the Network sought to increase coverage with quality to the most-in-need girls. HAGN’s commitment was to increase awareness among humanitarian responders and service providers about the distinct and critical needs

TABLE 1. OVERVIEW OUTPUT TABLE WITH PROGRAM PARTICIPATION FOR ONE WALKABLE COMMUNITY OF CARREFOUR

Age group	Unmarried						Married			Total
	In School			Out of School			Has a child	Has a child	Does not have a child	
	Living with both parents	Living with one parent	Living with neither parent	Living with both parents	Living with one parent	Living with neither parent				
6-9	0/270	0/98	0/27	0/30	0/19	0/5	—	—	—	0/449
10-12	23/206	11/87	3/36	4/15	3/13	6/9	—	—	—	50/366
13-14	10/80	7/28	4/11	3/11	0/3	5/9	0/0	0/0	0/2	29/144
15-17	36/107	13/65	9/37	4/10	1/10	3/10	0/2	0/6	0/7	66/254
18-19	24/69	5/34	7/27	5/10	3/6	2/5	0/25	0/12	0/4	46/192
20-24	0/99	0/45	0/45	0/16	0/30	0/25	0/69	0/84	0/28	0/441
Total	93/831	36/357	23/183	16/92	7/81	16/63	0/96	0/102	0/41	191/1,846

of adolescent girls in post-earthquake Haiti, leading a movement to bring groups of at-risk girls together at least weekly in dedicated girls-only safe spaces with mentors to build their protective assets and skills.

The Network was and is, as of 2020, designed for collaborative learning with 15 local implementing partners and 16 senior mentors supported by dedicated staff to carry out work on the ground inside 5 of Haiti's 10 departments. In commitment to coverage with quality, a first step was taken to facilitate a learning process, including the implementation of the Girl Roster. As of 2020, the Roster was implemented in 15 communes, across 5 departments, and in 75 walkable communities in total; rostering was initially focused on the epicenter of the earthquake, though it was expanded into the West later, due to a focus on low-income or densely populated communities, the worsening economic situation, and geographies where new pressures were being faced as a result of the 2016 hurricane.

The Girl Roster in Action

At the Network's outset, many participating organizations had preexisting youth programs that engaged mixed groups—boys and girls, or girls and women. In many cases these programs skewed to those who had greater access to them. In Table 1, results from the rostering of one walkable community of the commune Carrefour are shared.

Carrefour is a densely packed urban commune on the edge of Port-au-Prince. The participating organization was implementing an energetic if conventional reproductive health, HIV, and gender-based violence program and was reaching a little under 200 girls, which was within itself an achievement. The Roster was applied to assess the coverage of the existing program and design the next stages of the program in the context of a persistent HIV epidemic affecting young females differentially.²

Not only is the overall prevalence of HIV in the country high—160,000 people were living with

² Haiti was identified as a DREAMS country in the DREAMS Partnership's third year of implementation in 2018. The investment focused in four geographic areas of Haiti: Cap Haitian, Dessalines, Saint Marc, and Port-au-Prince. For more details, visit <https://www.state.gov/pepfar/>.

HIV in 2018—but the incidence of infection among females is a little less than twice as high as that of men. In 2018, new HIV infections among young women aged 15–24 were 1,600 compared to 1,000 among young men of the same ages (UNAIDS 2020).

Interested in knowing what kind of coverage it was achieving and with whom, HAGN asked the additional question: “Is this girl participating in Organization X’s program?”³ In the Key Observations list, below, the denominator indicates the total number of girls in each cell, or segment, of the table, whereas the numerator indicates the number out of that segment who were participating in Organization X’s program at the time.

A few key observations:

- Out of the total of 1,846 girls aged 6–24 in the defined walkable community, only 191—as Organization X reported—were participating.
- The target population, by age only, of girls was 6–17 years old; the organization was only reaching 8.7% of girls in that age range (145 of the total 1,662 girls 6–17 years old).
- Second, of those 191 girls participating, 129 of them—or approximately 68%—are girls 6–19 years old who were in school and living with one or both parents. That is to say, the majority of girls being reached were the most “well-off,” indicating to HAGN and Organization X that the program was facing the challenges of elite capture of participants and proper, more intentional reach was needed to reach most-in-need girls.
- Third, and most important, of the 143 girls under exact age 24 who were married and/or had children in this commune, none of them were attending the program. Special attention is owed to this cohort; girls carrying the cost of childbearing alone are at especially high risk of poverty-

driven sexual exchanges which, in turn, bring elevated risk of HIV and other bad outcomes.

Findings such as these encouraged not only Organization X but also HAGN’s other member organizations to rethink many facets of their approach to programming, noting that girls-only groups have a powerful protective effect—igniting friendships, connecting young girls with mentors, fostering a sense of belonging and solidarity, and giving girls a sense of safety in times of trouble. These platforms also, as HAGN and its members learned, served as a place to deliver critical new skills, and because HAGN’s members were keen on a coordination of efforts, several of them collaborated to develop an open-source, age-graded financial-literacy program in Creole, with the input of the girls themselves, which was tested in HAGN’s first year in 2010 and firmed up in 2011.

Mentors were a key component of the program’s driving force. HAGN espoused a model at the time by which a cadre of peer mentors aged 18–35 who are from the same communities as their younger counterparts (the program participants) are engaged and fostered. Peer mentors were and are volunteers under HAGN’s approach; they receive a stipend for transportation, communication, and miscellaneous. In 2011, as HAGN continued to grow, mobile payments to mentors were explored to guarantee swift and timely payment, encouraging continued mentor commitment.

Conclusion

In the last several years, HAGN has continued to grow and establish itself as a leading force of change in girls’ lives in Haiti. In 2016, the Network—already independently staffed, overseeing its safe spaces program through each member organization, and in possession of independent funding—became incorporated.

³ The organization’s name has been excluded for privacy.

As of 2020, the Network engages 15 active members, with each organization acting as “home” to a field coordinator or senior mentor, typically a contractor of HAGN, who is dedicated to overseeing the implementation of the safe spaces programming with assistance and support from the HAGN staff to whom she reports. The Intentional Design approach has taken hold in a number of ways, from the manner in which the program is implemented and the type of content that is provided. A total of 116 community-based mentors are dispersed in a highly coordinated, organized system to manage at least two safe spaces groups. Mentors range from 18–35 years of age; the mentors who are younger manage the younger girls’ groups of 10–14-year-olds because they can relate to these girls and are only slightly older. Those mentors who are older manage both the older and young girls’ groups, because they possess enough agency to manage the potentially more energetic older girls but can relate to both the younger and older girls. As of 2020, there were over 230 active girls’ groups on the ground, with 5,800 girls enrolled. In every group, the financial literacy and social/emotional learning assets have been adapted to the particular community contexts with, for example, girls in agricultural areas gaining agricultural skills while others in more urban areas learning commercial cooking or cosmetology. All settings benefit from starter savings.

In Our Experience

The Girl Roster and other Intentional Design tools proved to be effective in helping HAGN determine how to:

- effectively engage community members from the very start of implementation;
- promote girl-centered programming within HAGN intervention communities.

By 2018, the Roster exercise was fully integrated into HAGN’s work, specifically in new intervention areas.

The results have also helped prioritize segments of girls and guide door-to-door participant recruitment. As a way to strengthen local engagement and buy-in, and given that communal councils do not have access to population figures at such a sublocal level, the Roster information, in addition to Coverage information, is shared with local authorities, including the communal councils and the representatives of line ministries, such as the Ministry of Public Health and Population at the departmental level.

As HAGN moves forward, in 2020 and beyond, it intends to continue to use the Intentional Design approach to deepen understanding of the lived experience of different girl segments in its intervention areas. It will continue to build internal capacity and it aspires to more strongly document the work being done on the ground.

At a programmatic level, HAGN continues to expand girl programming priority areas, extending capacity building to local organizations that have a desire to utilize the Intentional Design approach (and the resulting HAGN curriculum) for their own girl programs. HAGN seeks to develop cascading leadership and youth networking, engagement, and civic participation at the local, national, and international level.

References

- Atkinson, Holly G. and Judith Bruce. 2015. “Adolescent girls, human rights and the expanding climate emergency,” CUNY Academic Works.
- UNAIDS. 2020. Country Overview: Haiti. <https://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/haiti>.
- World Factbook. 2020. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2020. <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/>.

For more information, please visit HAGN’s website at: <https://hagn.devhaiti.org/>.

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

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