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GIRLS** COMMUNITY
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Intentional Design Practitioner Report

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

By Habiba Mohammed, Made George, Joy Ochai, David Cao, and Daniel Perlman

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<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.

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

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Findings and Decisions	Implementation Observations and Adaptations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful variation of northern Nigerian communities in the proportion of girls off-track—ranging from 7% in one urban community to 28% in one rural community—indicating more off-track girls in rural rather than urban communities. • Disaggregation sharpens contrasts among girls 15-19 years; more than 70% of girls were married in the rural settings compared to 25% in the more urban settings. • Numerically, there are more married girls in absolute numbers in the rural community, even though it is half the size of the urban community. • Two groups stand out as exceptionally underserved: 10-14-year-old unmarried girls out of school; and 15-19-year-old married girls. • Girls who completed the CSAGE program were able and eager to serve as mentors to other girls in their communities. • The program grew far more effective, socializing the community to girls’ rights and preparing them for school; a preschool program was established for a very young segment of girls 4-7 years old. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on segment and setting, the program’s contact with participants was never less than 80 hours and rose to 400 hours in some cases. • The program has served over 50,000 girls with two years of programming each over the last four years.

Background

Since 2007, the Centre for Girls Education (CGE) has worked to advance adolescent girls’ education and empowerment in northern Nigeria through innovative programming, advocacy, applied research, and strategic partnerships. CGE has been a pioneer in the adaptation of the safe spaces methodology to rural adolescent girls’ need for core academic competencies, vocational training, mentored support, and acquisition of crucial life skills. The core components of CGE’s programming—community engagement, collaboration with religious leaders, safe spaces (mentored girls’

groups), training of female teachers, and the nurturing of girl advocates—have evolved over a decade of community-based research with girls, their parents, and community members.

CGE utilized two Intentional Design tools—the Girl Roster and the Community Resource Scan—in three communities in Northern Nigeria in January 2014. CGE had been working with adolescent girls in two of the three communities using a safe spaces approach, focused on in-school girls principally, for a number of years, and a project partner was considering working in another community. This report demonstrates using the Girl Roster both to assess the full

“universe” of girls to inform the planning of a new program and to assess coverage of an ongoing program.

The Community Resource Scan and Girl Roster were implemented with the Population Council, Nigeria, and partners as part of a larger formative research project to identify adolescent girl segments and communities in several focus states for the Community Spaces for Adolescent Girls' Empowerment (CSAGE) project.¹

CGE—which had developed and implemented safe spaces for school-going adolescent girls in Kaduna State since 2008—partnered with CSAGE as a learning hub to support learning, training, and dissemination for civil society organizations on the safe spaces model and approach. The CSAGE project aimed to improve the sexual and reproductive health of poor and vulnerable adolescent girls in northern Nigerian states using community-based, girl-only safe spaces to enable them to acquire key health, social, cognitive, and economic assets across six northern states.²

CSAGE's vision was to bring together all key adolescent girl subpopulations in segment-specific safe space platforms that would be tailored to the specific needs of that girl segment. However, there was no clear picture of the different segments of girls nor of the community resources that could be designated as safe spaces in the different program catchment areas. CSAGE/CGE used the Girl Roster and Community Resource Scan tools to:

- Roster the universe of adolescent girls in the project communities (by age, schooling, marital and childbearing status, and adult sponsorship status);
- Identify segments of girls for priority targeting and recruitment;
- Conduct an in-depth inventory of community resources including programs that could reach girls but do not currently

do so, and assess their reach and accessibility to girls;

- Begin to identify how the project can link different segments of adolescent girl segments with critical human, health, and financial services.

The Roster and Scan would thus allow CSAGE to maximize impact and value for money through enhanced targeting of at-risk subpopulations and efficient delivery of services.

At the same time, CGE and other project partners sought to use these tools to better understand how their own programs have been reaching their intended beneficiaries in their catchment areas. CGE had thus far only focused on working with school-going adolescent girls aged 10–14 years but intended to expand its work to other vulnerable adolescent girl segments, including out-of-school and married girls.

The first part of this practitioner report details the mapping exercise in three communities in Kaduna state in which CGE was involved in its partnership with CSAGE.

Tool Modification

The Girl Roster was modified in one important way. A question was added to clarify if the school a girl attends or attended teaches “Western”-style or secular education. In Northern Nigeria, almost all Muslim children, including girls, attend some form of religious school (called an Islamiyah or Qur’anic school). While children often attend these schools before or after their formal schooling hours, for others these religious schools may be the only form of education they receive. Recent efforts have been made to introduce secular subjects such as mathematics, social studies, integrated science, and/or English into these religious schools. Thus, by asking if the school teaches “Western”-style or secular subjects,

¹ Community Spaces for Adolescent Girls' Empowerment (CSAGE) was formed by the Population Council with funding from the UK Department for International Development in 2013.

² Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Yobe, and Zamfara.

TABLE 1. TIME-FRAME SUMMARY

	Days	Households	HH/EPair/Hr	Minutes/HH
Biye	3.5	370	3.5	17.1
Dakace	7	869	4.2	14.3
Rafin Guza	6	761	4.2	14.3

religious schools that included academic subjects were also appropriately classified as “formal” schooling. The initial pilot testing of the unmodified Roster in other communities failed to take this into consideration and led to an incorrect assessment that there were few out-of-school girls in those communities. Based on this previous experience, the Girl Roster was modified for further implementation in Kaduna State.

Training

CGE staff were trained by CSAGE (with the Population Council’s assistance) for two days, which included orientation to the mapping tools and practice using the mobile phones as information-collection tools in a nearby community. All staff members had enumeration experience with pen and paper surveys but were new to the use of mobile phones for this sort of exercise. The two full days allowed the staff members to become fully comfortable administering the tools in the field.

Location

CSAGE implemented the Roster and Scan in three contrasting communities in Kaduna State. Two of the three communities, Biye and Dakace, surround the town of Zaria and are rural and peri-urban communities, respectively, in which CGE has created safe spaces programming since 2008. The third community, Rafin Guza, is located within Kaduna City and is an urban community where a CSAGE partner organization was planning to but had not yet worked.

Fieldwork

Using maps from the Population Census of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and provided by the National Population Commission, a pair of rosterers was assigned to map specific census enumeration areas (EAs). Nigerian localities are subdivided into census EAs. These geographic units are demarcated by easily identifiable features such as streets as well as administrative boundaries such as city and municipal limits. The EAs are nonoverlapping, cover the entirety of a given locality, and are small with an average of 48 households. These maps greatly aided in ensuring that rosterer pairs did not visit the same household twice.

The five rosterer pairs mapped the three communities in 16.5 days at 5 hours a day of active information collection (see Table 1). On average, each pair took 17 minutes to locate and list each household in the first community, but this decreased to 14 minutes per household after the rosterers became more comfortable administering the tools.

In each community, each pair initially interviewed three to four households and then regrouped to review the information collected, share experiences, and receive feedback. Pairs then returned to check in with the field supervisor two to three times each day to have their information reviewed for any errors. The Roster did not incorporate redundancy error checks, so rosterers had to ensure that: 1) the stated number of girls was consistent with the stated number of household members minus adults and boys; and 2) that the number of girls for which information was collected matched the stated number of girls in the household.

TABLE 2. UNIVERSE OF GIRLS AGED 6-25 YEARS IN BIYE (RURAL) LOCALITY, GIWA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KADUNA STATE

Age group	Unmarried						Married		Total
	In School			Out of School			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	157	8	5	39	4	3	—	—	216
10-11	59	4	4	18	0	1	—	—	86
12-14	83	6	0	38	1	0	1	4	133
15-17	16	1	0	10	0	1	26	32	86
18-19	8	1	0	1	0	0	31	5	46
20-25	0	0	0	3	0	0	75	9	87
Total	323	20	9	109	5	5	133	50	654

Such errors were common during the two-day training but were minimized during the actual fieldwork, particularly due to constant check-ins with the field supervisor.

Rosterers spent the majority of time in pairs. However, some pairs ended up, once confident, continuing to roster individually; this was especially helpful as it accelerated rostering. Two field officers conducted the Community Resource Scan in 3 to 5 hours for each community.

Rosterers were well received by the communities and reported strong positive reception. Few households refused to take part in the listing; in the majority of these cases the reason stated was that no appropriate adult was present. CGE has worked in Biye and Dakace since 2007 and has forged strong relationships with community leaders and members. For communities in which CGE has not worked, an additional two days is recommended for community engagement. CGE would also advise adding several minutes at each household to provide families more time to answer any questions they may have about the potential or existing program and/or the mapping process.

The key here, especially in communities in which you do not currently work, is to not overpromise what will happen as a result of the rostering, but rather frame it as a step to learn more to help design programs.

Results

See Tables 2 and 3 for illustrative results. (For Rafin Guza, illustrative results are not shown.) Because CSAGE's stated aim was to improve the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls aged 10-19 years, the following summary only focuses on this group.

Brief Summary of Adolescent Girls Aged 10-19 Years (2014 Findings)

Across all three communities we see important variation among girls 10-19 years old: In Biye, 52% of all girls are unmarried and school-going; in Dakace, it is 74%; and in Rafin Guza, it is 65%.

Tightening the age range in analyses from 10-19 to 15-19 reveals more important contrasts in percentages and numbers of different segments and across rural, peri-urban, and urban settings.

TABLE 3. UNIVERSE OF GIRLS AGED 10-19 YEARS IN DAKACE (PERI-URBAN) LOCALITY, ZARIA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KADUNA STATE

Age group	Unmarried						Married		Total
	In School			Out of School			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			
10-14	346	31	14	47	3	3	0	3	447
15-19	156	16	15	46	5	3	58	32	331
20-25	42	6	5	22	7	5	136	27	250
Total	544	53	34	115	15	11	194	62	1,028

- For all adolescent girls 15–19 years old, we see that only 29% of girls are unmarried in Biye, as compared to Dakace’s 73% and Rafin Guza’s 75%.
- The unmarried school-going segment only comprises 20% of all girls in Biye, as compared to 57% in Dakace and 45% in Rafin Guza. This is not surprising as Biye is a primarily rural community, and poverty is acute and widespread.
- Though Biye is just half the size of Dakace and Rafin Guza, Biye has more married adolescent girls in absolute numbers than the other communities.
- Furthermore, it appears that the smallest segments in Biye and Dakace are the out-of-school unmarried girls, whereas in Rafin Guza this segment is slightly larger in size than the married group.
- For adolescent girls aged 10–14, girls were more likely to be out of school in Biye (71%) than Dakace (88%) and Rafin Guza (65%).
- Also in Biye, we find that 2.3% of girls were married compared to 0.7% in Dakace and none in Rafin Guza.

Using the Findings (2014 Onward) to Reorient the General Direction of the Program

Having completed the mapping exercises, CGE had an updated view of the universe of girls in its project communities. The findings helped to reinforce CGE’s priority to target in-school adolescent girls aged 10–14 years in rural walkable communities like Biye. CGE will continue to work with this segment as it has found that increasing demand for, access to, and retention in secondary schooling may be the most effective strategy in delaying marriage and reducing related adverse maternal and child-health outcomes in the region.

CGE staff were struck by the relatively high numbers of unmarried out-of-school adolescent girls aged 10–14 years as well as married adolescent girls aged 15–19 years in Biye and began thinking more seriously about targeting these sizable and neglected segments through new interventions. This new Intentional Design focus was reflected in CGE’s subsequent proposal submitted to the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation requesting support for expanding the safe spaces program to unmarried out-of-school adolescent girls aged 10–14 years in rural communities like

Biye. The Roster results gave substance to the request. Similarly, CGE developed a safe spaces program for married adolescent girls aged 15–19 years.

Technical Insights and Observations

Although CGE had an updated view of the universe of girls in its project communities, it missed an opportunity to identify which services (including its own programs) adolescent girls were already accessing through an inquiry into program participation. Future mapping exercises will have staff members conduct the in-depth inventory of community resources and participation in the days prior to the Girl Roster exercise. If it were to use the Roster again, CGE would adapt the tool to include a question on access to community assets and services (including existing programs aimed at girls) to better assess the reach and accessibility of these assets and resources.

Conclusion (CGE Work from 2015 to 2019)

Since this initial rostering, CGE continues to use the Roster when engaging with new communities. Combining the Roster with community-based research, participant observation, and in-depth interviewing has given CGE thorough assessment of girls' lives and risk scenarios in their communities, not only telling us how many girls there are per segment facing specific risk factors (such as how many girls are not in school) but why this is likely the case. Today, the segments served are:

- Preschool girls from the poorest rural families (based on the Montessori method³ that undergirds CGE's work)—effectively girls 4–7 years old—to prepare the girls and acclimate their families early to the value of an education;
- Out-of-school girls aged 10–14 years;

- In-school girls aged 10–14 years;
- Out-of-school girls aged 15–18 years;
- In-school girls aged 15–18 years;

The graduates of the program, having completed school and being above the age of 18, now serve as our mentors in a model of cascading leadership. They participate in many aspects of information collection from the beginning as well as program implementation.

Depending on the context, the dose of the program ranges from 80 to 400 hours per year. Over the last four years of the program, CGE has served 50,000 girls who received two years of the program each.

References

Lillard, Angeline S., Megan J. Heise, Eva M. Richey, Xin Tong, Alyssa Hart, and Paige M. Bray. 2017. "Montessori preschool elevates and equalizes child outcomes: A longitudinal study," *Frontiers in Psychology*.

For more information:

Please view a short introductory video for the CGE program at: <https://centreforgirlseducation.org>.

Here you can also find highlights from our seven programs, which include written and radio productions done by the girls themselves.

Please visit our publications on this site as well.

Finally, please see a story featured in *Sierra*, the Sierra Club's magazine, about the Center: <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/2019-6-november-december/feature/educating-girls-may-be-nigerias-best-defense-against-climate>

³ The Montessori method was developed by a physician in the first half of the 20th century. The educational method stemmed from close observation of children in relatively free environments. It provides a complex and interrelated set of hands-on materials and lessons across major topic areas and is designed for children aged 0–12+ years. There are no grades or extrinsic rewards, and learning is situated in real or simulative contexts. Montessori education is aimed at development of the whole child, integrating social and cognitive growth for healthy independent functioning (Lillard et al. 2017).

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