



Lessons from Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS)

Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) is an initiative of the **Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI)** of the **Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS)**, funded by **UK aid from the UK government**, and GRSS. GESS will transform the lives of a generation of children in South Sudan – especially girls – through education.

In order to realise its strategic objectives of eliminating barriers to girls' education and promoting gender equality throughout the education system, MoGEI is supported by a consortium, led by **BMB Mott MacDonald/Cambridge Education**, and including **BBC Media Action, Charlie Goldsmith Associates** and **Winrock International**. GESS works at the local level through six State-based NGOs, referred to as State Anchors.

Through a national Community Mobilisation (CM) programme, led by BBC Media Action as technical lead of the Social and Behavioural Change component, GESS has supported 1,763 'school communities' as of December 2017 through CM activities. Research suggests that more than 50% of people participating in CM are taking action that is supporting girls' education.

Entrenched social and cultural norms in South Sudan emphasise the role of girls as wives and mothers, placing the burden of domestic work almost exclusively on their shoulders and reducing the time available for girls' education. Over 5 years, GESS Community Mobilisation (CM) has taken the conversation about girls' education to communities across South Sudan, targeting the people that control or influence decisions around the lives of girls. With girls growing up against this backdrop, the burden of domestic work is

placed almost exclusively on their shoulders, diminishing the perceived value, and resulting time and prioritisation given to their education by parents, alongside any support and validation for education provided by communities. These constraints have been exacerbated by economic collapse, food insecurity, and ongoing conflict, which, among other things, increase the risk of underage girls being married in exchange for a dowry. The correlation of early marriage and early pregnancy is contributing to some of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. Such examples help explain why transition into secondary education for female students in South Sudan is so limited.

Using a mass media and communication approach, behaviour change activities are comprised of radio programmes and community engagement.

Over five years, GESS' radio programme, Our School, has been challenging social and behavioural barriers obstructing families sending their girls to school. Rooted in a local approach that engages communities on their own terms with real-life, locally relevant stories and experiences, the programmes have been engaging South Sudanese communities on issues, including those underpinned by unhelpful gender norms, a lack of understanding of the benefits of girls' education, myths about education, and the constructive, and practical role that parents and communities can play supporting their children's education, especially girls.

This local approach has been particularly helpful in identifying creative ways of confronting potentially sensitive issues such as early marriage that resonate with communities

and minimise backlash. A critical characteristic has been to include the voices, perspectives and experiences of ordinary women and girls in regular, mainstream broadcast content, which includes them being voices of authority in a context where this is not the norm.

The overall aim of the radio programmes is to increase understanding of, and belief in, the value of girls' education, to increase practical support to girls' education among those that control or influence the lives of women and girls, particularly parents and community structures, and to fundamentally empower girls themselves. Programmes are produced in multiple local languages by a trained team of South Sudanese radio Producers based across the country. By mid-2016 the radio programmes had reached two million adults (15+), and advanced evaluative analysis showed that regular listeners of Our School were 1.6 times more likely to have a girl in school than non-listeners.

Drawing on the experiences of GESS, this document provides an introduction to the design and implementation of a radio production component for social and behaviour change communication in a fragile and conflict affected state (FCAS).

Designing and Implementing a Radio Programme

When designing and implementing a radio communication in a FCAS, there are multiple factors that need consideration:

- Understanding the audience and their communication needs
- Understanding the operating context
- Designing and strengthening the delivery model
- Delivering and adapting
- Quality assurance, monitoring, and evaluation

Understanding the audience and their communication needs

Audiences or beneficiaries?

To develop an effective radio programming component that is grounded in support to social and behavioural change it is important to think of target populations as audiences with whom we engage, rather than beneficiaries that receive aid. People in developing and FCAS contexts have complex development and often humanitarian needs that need to be unpacked in order to understand underlying causes. What sit behind these however, are often complex communication needs that significantly affect improvements in development and humanitarian outcomes. Populations have diverse media and communication habits; they have preferences around communication sources they trust, or even just enjoy more than others; some have access to a range of different types of mass communication, and many may have none at all.

How do you go about understanding the above? The simple answer is research. This should ideally include primary research alongside desk research. This could be through qualitative 'formative' research, through methods including focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews. If more financial resources are available, this may also include more representative quantitative studies. On GESS, BBC Media Action has used a mixed methods research approach, gathering quantitative and qualitative insights to design a community mobilisation component. Audience insight gives firm grounding to the design, and delivery structure of radio production and broadcast work.



Radio Producer, Catherine, interviews a girl at Juba Day Secondary School

Understanding the operating context

Mass media content can be produced in many different ways, but real-life stories involve engagement with individuals and communities. While designing creative and engaging radio programmes it is important to think about how these stories and experiences will be gathered while mitigating risk to, and ensuring the utmost duty of care to personnel and programme contributors.

Effort should be made to engage with relevant networks to understand the factors organisations have to consider when mobilising and during delivery. This is particularly important with media programming where relationships between the authorities and media in FCAS contexts may often be tense. Strict risk management systems and protocols should be in place to help identify the diverse risks and mitigation measures involved in producing media content in FCASs.

While it may be possible to gather interviews in diverse locations with radio producers at times, in fluid environments it is important to be as agile as possible, having secondary plans in place and to potentially find creative ways to gather

material when mobility is restricted, while maintaining quality. Similarly, when recruiting personnel it is important to understand the labour market related to the intended scope of work, and therefore the potential skill base that will be available to meet requirements.

Designing the delivery model

Research insights to understand the media context in which the radio programmes exist are an effective starting point when designing a delivery model. In South Sudan, an understanding of the complex and extremely diverse linguistic environment and the importance of local voices drove the decision to design decentralised, local language radio programmes telling stories from different locations. Understanding of the operating context guided decision making on how local producers were recruited, where they would be based, how the editorial decision making and quality assurance process would be set up and managed and how content for programmes would be gathered.

Thinking about how content will ultimately be broadcast should also be considered. Understanding of the broadcast landscape i.e. where broadcasters are located; their coverage; the kind of content they produce and broadcast; and their audience profile will help to identify preferred broadcast partners.

Delivering and adapting

Building the right delivery team at all levels of implementation is critical for effectiveness of radio programming in FCAS. Strong team players, flexibility, adaptability and resilience are important for any working environment, but particularly invaluable in a fluid, complex environment where things may often not go to plan. While personnel that possess the requisite technical skills are incredibly useful, these can arguably be taught more easily than some of the important 'softer' skills.

The GESS radio team included individuals with years of radio experience to those with none, but in-house support levelled out this initial imbalance and support and trainings were built into the project cycle. Cultivating a working culture that draws on softer skills in the team to overcome delivery challenges has been extremely important to the ongoing delivery of Our School.

Adaptable radio programming that can flex to accommodate evolving issues and changing needs is paramount in FCAS contexts. This is not only to ensure continued audience engagement with the content, but to ensure that it continues to meet the communication and development or humanitarian needs of target populations.

While Our School content was first and foremost designed to coalesce around social and normative barriers to girls' education, the implementation phase was disrupted twice by civil conflict that threw up additional issues affecting both access to, and delivery of education. The thousands displaced to Protection of Civilian sites (PoCs) following December 2013 were locked out of the formal education system, and in the immediate aftermath of both the 2013 and July 2016 crisis, parental fears surrounding sending children outside of the home, as well as inter-tribal tensions, affected whether children were going to school. Following both events, Our School adapted the style of content and issues discussed to address these evolving needs, and to support audiences to find a way through to constructive, realistic solutions.

Quality assurance, monitoring, and evaluation

In FCAS contexts, getting the job done is often a challenge, but getting it done well remains of equal importance if intended outcomes are to be achieved. To that end, considerable thought was put into setting up and continuously strengthening an editorial and production quality assurance structure that could uphold the highest editorial standards.

This entailed ensuring that field producers were provided with intensive training at the outset, followed by regular refresher training, that a central editorial management team was set up structurally to cope with the volume of content being generated and was equipped with the requisite editorial decision making and leadership and production skills to maintain standards and sign-off content for broadcast.

To sense check that outputs were having the intended impact with target audiences, ongoing monitoring and evaluative research that gathered, analysed and fed back insights to the content and programme management teams was built into the programme design. Such activities were predicated on routinely testing whether initial assumptions in the theory of change are still holding, and whether anything needs to be adapted or changed.

You can find all of our research on social and behaviour change on our website, as well as a selection of Our School radio programmes.¹

¹ <http://girlseducationsouthsudan.org/research-reports-2>

INSPIRE

EDUCATE

TRANSFORM



AIM

Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) is a programme that will transform the lives of a generation of children in South Sudan – especially girls – through education. South Sudan, the newest country in the world, has some of the lowest educational indicators, with education of girls being among the lowest. Very few girls who begin primary education continue to secondary school; in 2016, 128,000 girls started primary school, but only 2,700 completed secondary school. GESS is determined to change this, so that all girls can go to school, stay in school and achieve in school.

MANAGEMENT

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The programme began in 2013, and will last until 2018.