

HELPDESK RESPONSE 39

Guidance on Community Mobilisation for Girls' Education

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Notes

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Contents

1. Document purpose	5
2. Education and e-learning in Sudan	6
3. Points to consider	7
3.1. Overarching considerations for community mobilisation	7
3.2. Crafting messages	8
3.3. Addressing social and cultural gender norms	10
3.4. Enabling girls' and boys' participation in decision-making	11
Bibliography	12

Abbreviations and acronyms

GESS	Girls' Education South Sudan
IDP	Internally displaced person
MoE	Ministry of Education
OOSC	Out-of-school children
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

1. Document purpose

This document was produced in response to a request from the UNICEF Sudan team that was submitted to the EdTech Hub Helpdesk in November 2021. The UNICEF Sudan team requested the development of three guidance documents to foster gender equity in a 2022 e-learning initiative:

1. **Guidance on Pre-Assessment for Establishing E-Learning Centres**

This guidance can be used by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and UNICEF prior to the implementation of the e-learning initiative to assess locations and communities where e-learning centres will be established for out-of-school children (OOSC), and to determine how to establish the centres in an effective and context-sensitive manner.

2. **Guidance on Community Mobilisation for Girls' Education** (this document)

This guidance focuses on how to engage with community members, with particular attention to social norms that may inhibit girls from enrolling in the e-learning initiative.

3. **Guidance on Facilitation of E-Learning**

This guidance addresses technical and programmatic considerations for facilitators.

As the second of the three guidance documents on e-learning, this checklist is meant to be a tool that spurs UNICEF and MoE staff to reflect on and adapt their interactions with the community members.

2. Education and e-learning in Sudan

Almost three million children, or around a third of the children between the ages of six and thirteen, do not go to school in Sudan. Girls, children affected by conflict, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), children in rural areas, and children from poor households constitute the most vulnerable groups in Sudan, with high drop-out rates for girls and children living in rural areas ([UNICEF Sudan, 2021a](#)). According to the 2018 National Learning Assessment, the overall quality of education in Sudan is poor (Ministry of Education, 2018, as cited in [UNICEF Sudan, 2021a](#)), and there continues to be a shortage of basic school infrastructure and qualified teachers across the country ([UNICEF Sudan, 2021a](#)).

In light of the current situation, a promising opportunity exists for e-learning to provide a sustainable approach to providing children with access to a quality education. Both children enrolled in formal schools and OOSC can benefit from e-learning initiatives; different approaches to e-learning have been established for these two groups. For children enrolled in formal schools, an online platform that contains a digitised curriculum, e-books, videos, and interactive quizzes and games was launched in October 2021 ([UNICEF Sudan, 2021b](#)). For OOSC, e-learning will take place through centres established in rural communities that provide tablets, supporting equipment, and support from facilitators.

Evidence indicates that “networking, advocacy, and meaningful interactions between community and school may contribute to improving access, learning conditions, and academic achievements for girls” ([Ndiaye, 2015](#)). This guidance document aims to support UNICEF and MoE staff in constructing these meaningful partnerships and engagements in an effort to address the reasons that prevent girls from participating in and benefiting from the e-learning centres.

3. Points to consider

Points to consider on community mobilisation and engagement are organised into the following categories:

1. Overarching considerations for community mobilisation
2. Crafting messages
3. Addressing social and cultural gender norms
4. Enabling girls' and boys' participation in decision-making

Please also refer to the categories of community support and community resources in the document on [pre-assessment guidance](#).

3.1. Overarching considerations for community mobilisation

- Who are the key decision-makers at the community level (e.g., parents, grandparents, wali, imam, MoE officials)?
- How will messages and outreach be targeted to key decision-makers?¹
- What barriers were identified in the pre-assessment guidance (e.g., early marriage, household chores, distance from home to e-learning centres)?
- How can these barriers be mitigated, in partnership with the community?
 - For example, if the primary barrier to girls' participation in e-learning is early marriage, you may wish to set up and promote an e-learning centre where girls can bring their babies. You may also need to engage with husbands to address any concerns or fears about their wives attending an e-learning centre (e.g., issues with travel and safety).
 - Alternatively, if household chores are a barrier, discussions with parents can take place to determine their preferred timing of the e-learning sessions.

¹ The information needs and preferences for girls, boys, women, and men will differ. For example, if the father controls the budget for the family, campaigns and conversations around girls' education may need to be focused on how financial barriers will be mitigated.

- How have you engaged with the community to date (e.g., establishing a community forum, parent-facilitator committee, etc.)? What are the successes and challenges, and how might you address these?
- What communication channels are available to reach households (e.g., radio, television, paper pamphlets, theatre, house-to-house campaigns)?

For a case study of how to conduct a successful community mobilisation campaign, see Case Study 1 below.

Case study 1. *The ‘Take the Girls to School’ campaign in Kenya.*

‘Take the Girls to School’ is a campaign organised by the Girls Club at Loima Girls’ Secondary School in Kenya’s Turkana County. It utilised theatre to spread awareness and information about the benefits of educating girls. The Girls Club organised meetings with elders in the community where club members performed various skits. Girls impersonated different community members and showed their different concerns and beliefs about girls’ education. After the skits, dialogues with community members allowed parents to voice their concerns and needs. The Girls Club could then attempt to alleviate these concerns and address the community’s various needs.

As a result of the Girls Club’s efforts, school attendance for girls increased, their academic performance significantly improved, and teenage pregnancy rates were reduced by 83% compared to the year before ([FAWE, 2018](#)).

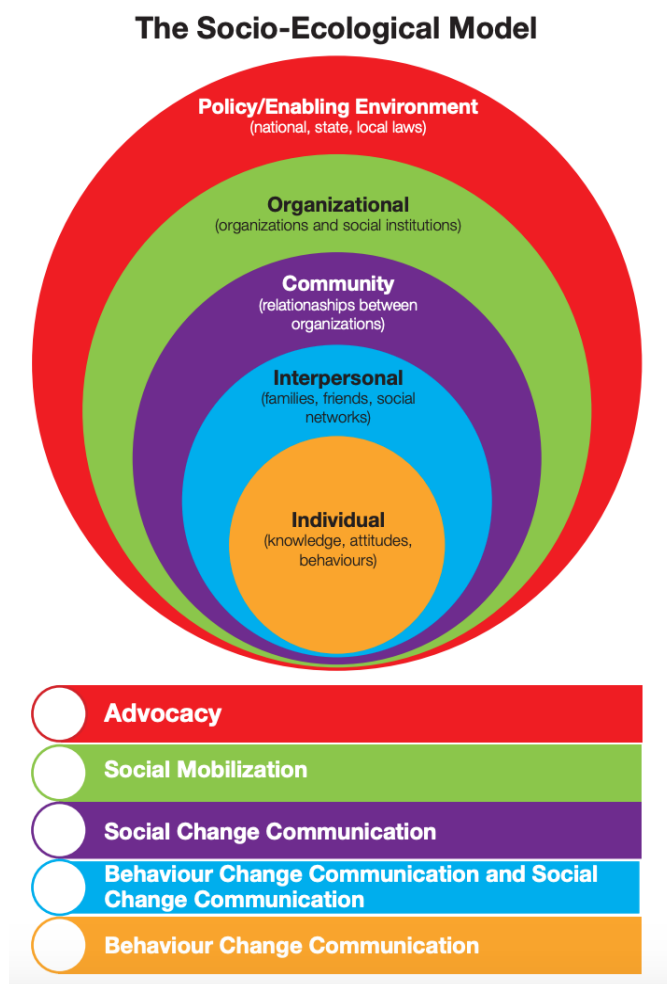
3.2. Crafting messages

- Have you considered the socio-ecological model² (see Figure 2) to help identify factors underlying a problem and which communication approach will be most effective in addressing the problem?
Communication approaches include:
 - Advocacy: working with policymakers and community leaders to develop policies
 - Social mobilisation: uniting community groups and partners for a common purpose

² This model provides a conceptual framework for Communication for Development (C4D) in education, “an approach that uses research to identify existing barriers and opportunities in knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and socio-cultural practices and norms” ([UNICEF ESARO, 2016](#)).

- Social change communication: enabling groups of individuals to engage in dialogue about norms and inequalities
- Behaviour change communication: focusing on individual attitudes, motivations, and behaviour change.

Figure 1. *Socio-ecological model.* Source: [UNICEF ESARO, 2016](#).



- Is the messaging focused on what is most relevant and important in a community's particular context?
- Is the messaging child-focused (e.g., highlighting the benefits of e-learning for children)?
- Does the messaging inspire action from its audience? ([Save the Children & The Open University, no date](#))
- Does the messaging convey the intended meaning in a simple and culturally sensitive manner? Are there any unintended interpretations of messages?
- Are social norms and stereotypes challenged or reinforced through these messages? ([UNICEF ROSA, 2018](#))

Figure 2. *Tips on crafting messages* ([↑Save the Children & The Open University, no date](#)).

1. **Know your audience.** This will impact your choice of language, tone, and examples.
2. **Decide on your key message.** What are the key take-aways for the audience?
3. **Be clear about your objective.** Consider how to motivate the audience to achieve this objective (e.g., increasing girls' participation in e-learning).
4. **Organise your thoughts.** Ensure your points are consistent and coherent.
5. **Avoid jargon, acronyms, and technical terms.** Make sure your message is easy to understand.
6. **Write simply and concisely.** Use short words and sentences.
7. **Focus on the positive.** Highlight the benefits that girls can obtain through access to e-learning.³
8. **Use quotes and reliable sources.** Quotes and trustworthy sources add credibility to your campaign.

3.3. Addressing social and cultural gender norms

- Have you reached out to the media to broadcast gender-positive messages (e.g., representations of domestic chores being shared between men and women)? ([↑UNICEF, 2020](#))
- Have you reached out to faith organisations to coordinate sharing gender-positive messages, especially messages about girls' right to learn? ([↑UNICEF, 2020](#))
- Have you conducted any activities or campaigns with the goal of empowering boys and men to speak up for the rights of girls, especially their right to education? ([↑UNICEF, 2020](#))
- Have you identified and worked with community role models and public influencers to promote girls' education? ([↑UNICEF, 2020](#))
- Have you engaged with female role models in the community (e.g., women in community organisations)? ([↑Jessee, 2011](#))

³ Some of these benefits include: career entry and advancement, more employment opportunities, and longer life expectancy ([↑Allier-Gagneur & Moss Coflan, 2020](#); [↑FAWE, 2018](#); [↑McMahon & Oketch, 2013](#); [↑Naylor & Gorgen, 2020](#)).

- Have you received feedback about your messaging from girls and women in the community before and after spreading messages? Have you included girls' and boys' voices as part of your messaging? ([↑UNICEF, 2020](#))
- Have you publicised and celebrated girls' success stories, especially around girls' achievements that are related to learning? ([↑UNICEF, 2020](#))

For a case study of how to work against harmful social norms in contextually appropriate ways, see Case Study 2 below.

Case study 2. *Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) and working against harmful social norms.*

In South Sudan, social and cultural norms tend to emphasise girls' roles as wives and mothers. This places the overwhelming burden of household chores on their shoulders, reducing girls' available time for education. To counter these norms, the programme Girls' Education South Sudan (GESS) launched community mobilisation efforts to promote girls' education. Based on insights gathered about target audiences, GESS developed radio programmes that broadcasted creative and locally relevant messages about the benefits of girls' education for their families and communities. GESS also organised listening clubs where registered community members could listen to the radio programmes and engage in discussions about them ([↑GESS, 2020](#)).

3.4. Enabling girls' and boys' participation in decision-making

- Have you engaged girls, women, and youth organisations to understand their concerns and gather recommendations for the e-learning centres? ([↑UNICEF, 2020](#))
- Have you established accessible channels to ensure that girls and boys can voice their opinions about the e-learning centres? ([↑UNICEF, 2020](#))
- How will these concerns, recommendations, and opinions be actioned and reported back on? ([↑UNICEF, 2020](#))
- Have you created ways to ensure that girls' and boys' leadership of and participation in planning and decision-making are documented and promoted? ([↑UNICEF, 2020](#))

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