Section 1

Which Girls and Why

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Which Girls and Why

Chapter 1

Which girls do you want to work with

Objective

This chapter will help you understand the importance of being intentional about the kind of girls you want to reach and how the kind of girls you work with will affect your program's structure and content. It will also give you the tools to understand who your program currently is and is not reaching.

One of the first questions that you will have to ask yourself when designing a girls program is "Which girls do I want in my program?"

If you are thinking about how to strengthen or expand your girls program, you will need to ask yourself two questions:

"Who am I reaching?" and "Are they the girls I want to be reaching?"

Why is this a critical first step? Not all adolescent girls are the same and the issues that girls face will be specific to their age, where they live, their culture and other life circumstances. Many parts of your program plan will depend on the answer to this question. Let's think for a minute about some of the differences between adolescent girls:

- younger girls, ages 10–14
- older girls, ages 15–19
- young women, ages 20–24
- in-school girls
- out-of-school girls
- domestic workers
- girls with disabilities
- refugees or internally displaced girls
- married adolescent girls
- orphan girls
- migrant girls who are living apart from their family
- young mothers
- lesbians
- commercial sex workers
- nomadic girls/highly mobile girls

Not all adolescent girls are the same. The issues that girls face will be specific to their age, where they live, their culture and other life circumstances.

This is not to say that a program should work with only one, or with all, of these types of girls, but it is important to be aware of the differences, because you will then need to plan your program structure and content accordingly.

What are the program structure components that might change, depending on which girls you want in your program?

- **Times and days of the week the girls are available and for what duration**
  For example, in-school girls likely can meet only after school or on weekends while out-of-school girls might be able to meet during the week; often, domestic workers are available only on Sundays, their off day.

- **Where to meet the girls**
  For example, younger girls might be more restricted in their mobility as it is harder for them to walk long distances to reach the program (see chapter 3).

- **Kind of adults that you will need to talk with to get permission for the girls to participate in the program**
  For example, married adolescents may need the permission of their husband or mother-in-law; domestic workers may need permission from their employer—especially if they are asking to be released during the week to participate (see chapter 6).

- **How you will recruit the girls**
  For example, if you are trying to reach in-school girls, you could go to the school setting; the very vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups will likely need more intensive and direct recruitment methods if they are truly going to be reached (see chapter 4).

- **Who the people are that girls look up to**
  For example, if you are incorporating a mentoring element to your program (see chapter 5), it will be important to understand what characteristics are important for girls; for example, girls that do not have any parental figures in their lives may need someone who is a bit older and can fulfill that parent/advocate role, whereas girls who are living with one or both parents perhaps need someone who is a bit closer in age that they can identify with and with whom they can feel free to discuss their problems and ask questions.

What are some content related issues that might change depending on which girls are in your programs?

Reproductive health/HIV The content in teaching 10- or 12-year-old girls about reproductive health issues will be different from that for 17- or 18-year-olds. Younger girls will likely be most concerned about menstruation, puberty and hygiene. Older, sexually active girls might be more concerned about family planning, emergency contraception and HIV/STD testing.

Economic empowerment For younger girls, it may be more appropriate to focus on financial education and basic savings activities. As girls get older, their needs and interest may lie more in the area of business training, vocational skills building or small loans. Young domestic workers are already earning an income and may need help with money management—or perhaps they want help to explore other employment opportunities.

Age appropriateness Typically, girls prefer being in groups of similar ages. In addition, it makes it easier for you to adapt the content to the right age group. For example, younger girls 10–14 like being together with others their age and feel free to discuss their issues and ask questions without worrying what the older girls think. Sometimes when older girls aged 16–18 are together in groups with younger girls, the older girls get tired of participating with "those little ones". So whenever possible, structure your program to deliver content to groups of girls that are similar in age so that the girls have the most in common as possible.

This toolkit provides you with tools that will help you to build a structure and select content and methodologies that are appropriate for the girls you want to reach—and is based on the assumption that you have decided the profile of girls you are working with. You will see that in the coming chapters there is more information on each of these topics mentioned above—recruitment, working with critical adults, economic empowerment programming, etc. You will be able to make the best use of this information if you are working with a specific profile in mind.

"Who am I reaching?"

"I work with girls 10–24 throughout the Eastlands area of Nairobi."

"Our program is for all girls of ages 10–19—in-school and out-of-school."

These are commonly heard descriptions of program reach because programs often describe themselves and honestly aim to reach many of the girls in the specific place where they are working. However, on close examination, more often than not, their reach is not as wide as what they describe. Therefore, "who are we reaching?" is a question you should ask periodically to validate that the structure and content of your program is reaching and retaining the profile of girls you intended it for.

This is also a larger problem of the general "youth" programs that were thought to be a good place for girls. However, after documenting which girls, if any, were served by general "youth" programs, the answer revealed—not many.

So even in our own girls programs, we must be careful to understand who we are reaching and who we are not reaching so that we can responsibly report our target group and make adjustments to our programs so that we can indeed reach the profile of girls that we want.

CASE STUDY

The **Binti Pamoja Centre** is a program for adolescent girls in the Kibera slum of Nairobi, Kenya, that wanted to reach girls from the 12 or more villages in Kibera. Binti Pamoja also described their program as one that reached girls from all Kibera villages. However, they had never actually tracked which villages the girls came from. When a systematic survey was done of girls who were members of the program, it turned out that the majority came from only a third of the villages. This information allowed Binti Pamoja to make a special effort to recruit girls from new villages and now there is a more equal distribution of girls.

Do
- Decide which kinds of girls you are trying to reach in your program
- Use the coverage exercise tools to find out who you are currently reaching

Don't
- Assume who you are reaching, in terms of gender, age and other profile elements

The Coverage Exercise Tool

Purpose

This tool will help your program document who is being reached and how to use that information to assess if you are reaching your target goals.

This tool can be used to do a quick scan of your current participants or a new group of participants that have just joined. It is important because it can help you to understand the basic characteristics of who is and is not coming to your program. As in the case study above, after Binti Pamoja conducted a similar coverage exercise, it became clear that girls from several villages in Kibera were not being reached. This tool has also been used with youth programs to better understand the breakdown between boys and girls and then make adjustments after understanding that they are not reaching the profile of adolescent girl that they want.

Directions

Step 1. Pick the critical elements of the girls' profile that you would like to collect.

- For example, if you are working with only school-going girls, you want to ask, "What grade are you in at school?" However, if you are working with a mix of in-school and out-of-school girls, it might be better to ask, "Are you in school?"
- Another example—if you are working with teenage mothers, maybe you want to ask, "How many children do you have?" but if you are working with a mix, you can ask, "Do you have children?"
- If you are trying to reach a certain geographical range—such as four neighbourhoods in one area—you can ask, "Where do you live?"
- If you work with both boys and girls, you may want to note if they are a boy or a girl. But if your program is all girls, clearly you wouldn't ask this question.

Step 2. Create a simple questionnaire that captures all the critical profile elements that you'd like to ask (sample attached).

Step 3. Add up the results in a chart (sample attached).

Step 4. See what you have learned and make program changes accordingly.

Note The coverage tool as presented here is a tool to analyse a program. It can also be used in a whole community with all the youth-serving organizations, or in an entire city or even country. The larger analysis of these results would provide an understanding of what profile of youth is being reached by the "youth-serving organizations"—and the youth that are not. This can be helpful for planning at a range of levels from neighbourhood to nation.

Sample coverage exercise

Remember, you must choose the profile information that is important for your own program.

	Male/female	Age	In school/out of school	Neighbourhood that you live in	Do you live with one or both of your parents?
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					
21					
22					
23					
24					
25					
26					
27					
28					

In this coverage exercise tool you will learn about boys vs. girls, age, if they are in or out of school, where they live and with whom they live. You will not learn at what level they are in school, if they work, if they have children, and more. If you want to get different information, you will have to change the characteristics listed in this table.

Sample coverage exercise—summary sheet

This table can be used to summarize the information collected with the coverage tool.

	Schooling status		Living status		Location*			
	In school	Out of school	One or both parents	Neither parent	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4
Girls 10–14								
Girls 15–19								
Girls 20 +								
Boys 10–14								
Boys 15–19								
Boys 20 +								

* Personalize this based on the area where you are working

Sample completed coverage exercise

	Male/ female	Age	In school/out of school	Neighbourhood that you live in	Do you live with both of your parents?
1	M	19	Out	Area 1	No
2	F	17	In	Area 1	Yes
3	F	18	In	Area 3	No
4	M	24	Out	Area 3	No
5	M	20	Out	Area 1	No
6	M	14	In	Area 2	Yes
7	F	15	In	Area 1	Yes
8	M	16	In	Area 3	Yes
9	M	18	Out	Area 4	No
10	M	19	Out	Area 1	No
11	F	16	In	Area 4	Yes
12	M	22	Out	Area 3	No
13	F	20	Out	Area 3	No
14	M	17	In	Area 2	Yes
15	M	18	Out	Area 1	Yes
16	F	13	In	Area 1	Yes
17	M	21	Out	Area 4	No
18	M	18	Out	Area 1	No
19	M	18	In	Area 3	Yes
20	F	18	Out	Area 3	Yes
21	F	16	In	Area 3	Yes
22	M	22	Out	Area 4	No
23	F	20	Out	Area 1	No
24	M	14	In	Area 1	Yes
25	M	15	In	Area 1	No
26	F	14	In	Area 3	No
27	F	15	In	Area 3	Yes
28	M	17	In	Area 2	Yes

Remember, you must choose the profile information that is important for your own program.

Note—this is a program that aims to reach youth 10–24 who are living in all four neighborhoods that make up a particular municipality. The mandate is to reach in-school and out-of-school youth, with a special focus on younger, vulnerable adolescent girls who are out of school.

In this coverage exercise tool you will learn about boys vs. girls, age, if they are in or out of school, where they live and with whom they live. You will not learn at what level they are in school, if they work, if they have children, and more. If you want to get different information, you will have to change the characteristics listed above that you are collecting information on.

Sample coverage exercise—summary sheet

This summary reflects the information collected from the chart in the page 20

	Schooling status		Living status		Location*			
	In school	Out of school	Both parents	One or neither parent	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4
Girls 10–14	||		|	|	|		|	
Girls 15–19	卌	|	卌 |	|	||		||||	|
Girls 20 +		||		||	|		|	
Boys 10–14	||		||		|	|		
Boys 15–19	卌	卌	卌|	||||	卌	||	||	|
Boys 20 +		卌		卌	|		||	||

* Personalize this based on the area where you are working

If this was your program, what would you learn?

- there are a total of 17 boys and 11 girls—over 60 % of your participants are boys
- very few (only 2 girls and 2 boys) are under the age of 14
- most of your participants are boys age 15 and above (15)
- you have a mix of in-school and out-of-school youth
- almost all of your school-age girls are in school
- you are not reaching many youth from area 2 or area 4
- most of your girls (7) live with both their parents

What questions would this raise for you?

- how can I reach more girls? what changes do I need to make to my program so girls feel safer?
- do I want to reach more younger girls or boys?
- why aren't out-of-school girls ages 10–19 coming to my program?
- why aren't youth from areas 2 and 4 coming to my program? what can I do to reach out to them?
- what can be done so that we can do a better job of reaching the youth in our mandate, especially the younger, very vulnerable out-of-school girls—or does our mandate need to be changed?

Chapter 2

Needs assessments—Understanding the girls you are working with

Objective

This chapter will help you decide what information is necessary to understand the community and context of the lives of girls in your program and provide you with the tools to gather this information. This information will help you design both the structure and the content of your program.

Once you have clarified which girls you will be working with, the next step in designing your program is to understand the needs of those girls and the community that they live in.

While girls do face common challenges, if you do not ask the girls themselves what are the critical issues that they face, you will likely make incorrect assumptions that will set your program back. As covered in the last section, not all adolescent girls are the same; the issues facing the girls you work with will be specific to their age, where they live, what cultural context they are living in, and their life-cycle stage. For example, if you are working with girls who are mothers, income generation and child care might be a priority. If you are working with married adolescents, they may be concerned about how to engage with their mothers-in-law. If you are working with younger, in-school girls, basic information about puberty and menstruation might be their top concern.

Conduct needs assessments You need to ask the right questions to find out what current issues are a priority for the girls you work with. These questions are an important first step towards getting your program content and structure right.

Needs assessments can be done to develop both structure and content:

Structure How your program should be delivered—location, days of the week, hours, what adults in the community need to be engaged, etc.

Here is a list of the key structure-related questions that you need to answer for your program:

- Where in your community is a safe place to meet?
- Where in your community is a place to meet that is safe to get to?
- At what hours is it safe for girls to meet?
- At what hours are girls able to meet?
- On what days of the week can girls meet?
- How many times a week and for how long do girls realistically have time to meet?
- From which adults in girls' lives do they need permission to come to group meetings?
- To whom do girls go for advice and support in times of difficulty?

Content What are the topics that you will cover in your program.

Following are some of the key content-related questions that you need to answer for your program:

- What are the most common challenges facing the girls you are working with?
- What are some of the topics that the girls want to talk about?
- What are key topics that interest girls that they are not already receiving information on (especially if you are thinking about how to improve your program)?
- What are the kinds of activities that are most engaging for the girls you want to work with?
- What do you want to build up within the girls themselves (such as self-esteem, knowledge on different topics, certain skills)?

Often, the easiest way to find out the answers to some of these questions is *to talk to the girls themselves!* Many of the tools included in this chapter are designed so that you can get many of these answers from the girls directly, and often in a more creative and interactive way than simply sitting and asking them (although that works sometimes too!). That information, combined with your knowledge and experience of working with girls, or other similar programs, should give you a strong base from which to develop, or make changes, to your program.

Girls can be your researchers

If you are looking to get information about or from the community, consider engaging the girls in your program as research assistants. With some training and simple survey tools, they can go out into the community and collect information about a range of resources—including health services, schools, safety and youth programs. There are multiple advantages to this: 1) the girls in your program will have access to their community and knowledge about it that outsiders will not have; 2) the girls will feel stronger ownership of the program that results from the information they collect; and 3) it will develop important leadership and technical skills in the girls.

CASE STUDY

The **Binti Pamoja Centre** in the Kibera slum has engaged girls as researchers. Before starting an expansion phase of the program, the alumni members (girls ages 16–21) gathered information about existing youth-serving programs in Kibera, whether there were girls in those programs, and if the places where activities were held were safe for girls. Ten alumni, working in pairs, were able to collect information on over 125 groups. That information was used to create a map of where there were programs for girls in Kibera—and also areas that had no programs. This newly created map was used to guide Binti Pamoja's expansion. The same alumni who conducted the research used the map to determine where to establish new girls groups in the unreached communities.

Ongoing needs assessments

While it is critical to conduct various kinds of needs assessments at the start of a program, there will also be times during its course that it will be wise to gather information about a certain topic or situation. In general, conducting a needs assessment about once a year (unless unique circumstances arise) will keep you up to date with the current issues for the girls in your program without overburdening your staff.

The nature of adolescence is transitory. As girls grow through adolescence, they are constantly changing in terms of their needs and their priorities. A 10-year-old is different from a 15-year–old, who is different from a 19-year-old. As girls grow through your program, or new girls come in and go out, you might have to make adjustments to its content and structure.

Living in volatile situations or locations tends to make girls vulnerable. Dynamics like political violence external to your program, or changes in the lives of individual girls like migration, schooling or marital status, might also require you to adapt the content and structure of your program.

CASE STUDY

In late December 2007, post-election violence raged in Kibera for over a month. Many girls in the **Binti Pamoja Centre** program were displaced, their guardians lost their source of income, and ethnic tensions were high. The program decided to conduct a needs assessment in January 2008 to understand the most critical issues for the girls at that moment. Binti Pamoja used the findings to temporarily adjust their focus to relief and conflict resolution work.

Also within Binti Pamoja, for several months there seemed to be an increase in the number of members getting pregnant. A needs assessment was conducted to better understand the causes of the trend, as well as to develop a plan for how to re-integrate the young mothers back into the program. The needs assessment resulted in an adapted program design with slightly different content and structure specifically for girls who were mothers so that they could get together to discuss their issues and provide support for one another.

Do

- Conduct a needs assessment at the start of a program and at critical turning points (current events, when a problem arises in the program or community)
- Conduct ongoing needs assessments about once a year
- Engage girls in your needs assessments, as both collectors and providers of information, and make the sessions as interactive as possible (see tools below)

Don't

- Assume you know what girls need or think
- Assume what the priority issues and concerns are for girls and their communities

Community Safety Mapping Tool

Purpose

This tool will help you understand the community where the girls you work with live, including where are the safe and unsafe locations, what determines safety and how those locations compare relative to one another.

This is an example of a participatory tool and an activity that you can do with the girls that you want to join your program, or at the very start of your program to learn more about the community the girls come from and to help answer some of the structural questions listed above.
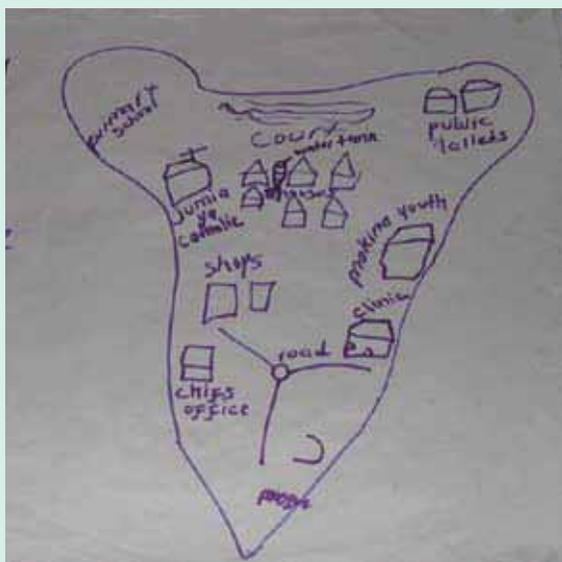
Directions

Step 1. Divide girls into groups of 4–5 each. Give each group a sheet of flip chart paper and a marker. Give them 15 minutes to draw a map of their community. Tell them to start with drawing the outline, and then to fill in with all of the major landmarks (schools, churches, mosques, markets, clinics, bus stages, railroad tracks, roads, etc.).

Step 2. Give each group nine note cards and tell them to write the name of one location in the community on each note card.

Step 3. Hand out another sheet of flip chart paper to each group. Ask the girls to prioritize each place in the community according to safety for girls like themselves. They should put the cards in a diamond shape, with most safe on the top and least safe on the bottom.

Step 4. Have each group present their map, describe the locations in the community they identified, and then have them share their safety ranking diamond.
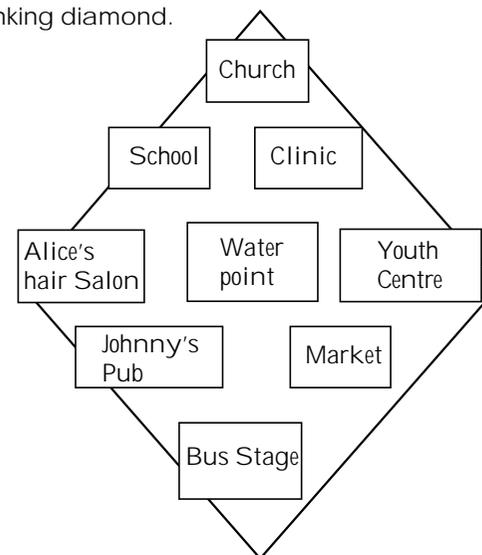
Step 5. Probe for discussion, asking the following questions:

- What makes "xxx" safe?
- What makes "xxx" unsafe?
- What would make "xxx" safer?
- Are there certain times of the day when a place is safe and other times when the same place becomes unsafe? When? Why?
- Are there certain times of the week/ seasons/ years when a place is safe and other times when the same place becomes unsafe? When? Why?
- In which of these places can we have our group meetings?

If groups had different safety rankings for the same places, ask them to defend their positions.

Step 6. Continue to meeting logistics. Transit the conversation to a discussion in which you agree on meeting and program logistics. For example, "Given these different safe and unsafe locations, for your specific program, where is a good place to meet? When, at what hours? How many times a week?" Alternatively, you could discuss with the girls what their strategies are for avoiding unsafe locations or for being safe at the unsafe locations they identified.

In summary, this exercise is helpful in two areas:

1) it allows you to gain an understanding of the geography of the community in terms of safety for girls, and also their reasoning behind what makes places safe or unsafe, and

2) it helps you gain critical information about the ideal operating location, days and times for the program.

Variations on the tool

With parents and community members If you are having a meeting with parents or other stakeholders before beginning a program, you can have them do the same exercise, leading to an agreement on where would be an appropriate place in the community for girls to meet.

Safety for girls vs. boys You can do the ranking a second time, focusing on the safety for boys instead of girls. Alternatively, you can give out circle stickers in four different colours and have them label the locations:

1—safe for girls
2—unsafe for girls
3—safe for boys
4—unsafe for boys

Ranking Tool

Purpose

This tool can be used on a diverse range of topics to understand to what degree a certain topic is important or common. For example, not only can you use this tool to understand what locations are the safest and the least safe but also which challenges are most common for the girls or which people they talk to the most about their problems.

This diamond-shaped ranking that was done in the community mapping tool above can also be used as a tool on its own when ranking of any sort would be helpful to gather information—such as most common v. least common, most important v. least important, most acceptable v. least acceptable.

For example, there was a program that struggled to get married girls to attend, and although they were reaching out to the parents, they began to realize that perhaps there were other adults in these girls' lives that needed to be engaged. They used the ranking tool with girls to understand, first, who are the types of important adults in their lives, and second, which ones have the most influence. For married girls, it turned out that the mothers-in-law were more influential than their own mothers.

Directions

Step 1. Distribute cards to girls and have them write one answer on each card for any topic that you would like to learn more about. Then have them arrange the cards in the diamond shape with regard to a particular priority.

Questions that can be used with the ranking tool (this is by no means all of them, be creative!):

- Where do girls get information about HIV and AIDS?
- Who do girls like yourselves talk to about sexual and reproductive health?
- What do girls do between 4 pm and 6 pm?
- What kinds of worries are common for girls your age to have?
- What kinds of adults have influence on girls' lives?

Example: What kinds of adults influence girls' lives?
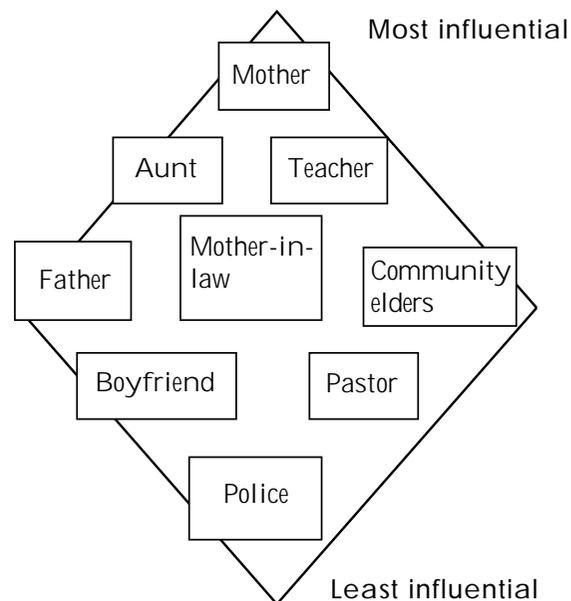
You might want to do several rounds, each round asking about a different kind of girl—in-school, out-of-school, 10–14-year-olds, 15–19-year-olds, 20–24-year-olds, married, teenage mothers, domestic workers, etc. Then you can compare the similarities and differences.

"In and Out" or Cash Flow Tool

Purpose

This tool allows you to understand where girls get their money and what they spend it on. It can also be used to understand other behaviours that involve resources coming in and going out, such as what kind of support girls need to become leaders and what they can give as leaders.

This tool can be used to gather information about a particular issue in girls' lives. It typically asks girls to think about two elements of an issue and can be used on a variety of topics. Examples include where girls get their money and what they spend it on; the kind of support girls need and what they can give back to their community or program; challenges that girls face and behaviours that they engage in to respond to those challenges. The tool can also focus on specific topics like financial responsibilities, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse.

Directions

Step 1. Ask for a volunteer to draw on a flip chart a picture of a typical girl in their community.

Step 2. Ask for another volunteer to give the girl a name.

Step 3. Pass out note cards to the girls (preferably cards of two different colours). Assign a colour of card to each category or question (for example, where do girls get money? = yellow card; what do girls spend their money on? = blue card). Pose the first question and ask them to start by writing their answers, one answer on each card. You can limit the number of responses or answers by giving each girl only three cards of each colour.

Step 4. Invite the girls to tape their cards about the first question on the left side of the girl in the picture.

Step 5. Repeat step 3 for the second category or question (for example, what do girls spend their money on? = blue card).

Step 6. Have the girls tape their second set of responses on the right side of the girl.

Step 7. As the facilitator, work with the girls to move the cards on the left side into common categories.

Step 8. Depending on the topic, work with the girls to rank the categories from most common to least common, or along another characteristic based on the topic.

Step 9. Repeat steps 7 and 8 with the categories on the right side.

For example, before developing a savings product for adolescent girls, the Population Council and *MicroSave* used this tool as part of a broader market research assessment to understand from girls of different ages and profiles the different ways they got money and what they used their money for. Further, they looked at which were the most common and least common in each category. This information was helpful in designing the savings product and accompanying financial education correctly, as well as to reassure the banks and parents that girls did indeed have money to save and it was not going to influence their behaviour in a negative direction.

Materials needed: Flip chart paper, markers, notecards, tape.
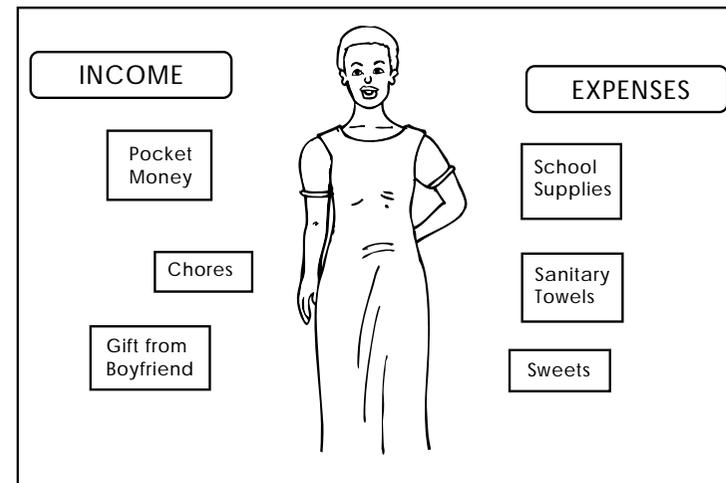
"A Day in the Life" Tool

Purpose

This tool will help you understand the typical life of a girl in your program, including how her time is spent, the challenges she faces, and her likes and dislikes. Once you know what logistics or structure will work for the girls in your program, it is important to start to understand the context of their lives. Doing so will help you to better understand the girls and create appropriate content for your program. Having a good understanding of the girls' lives helps you understand who you might need to engage in the program, indicates examples you can use in your teaching, and lets you anticipate some of the challenges that may come up. Also, as adults, we often tend to make assumptions about what is most important to girls. For example, while the core content of many youth programs is on HIV prevention, for many girls (not all!), an unwanted pregnancy is a much more present and pressing worry. Understanding the priorities of girls and how they see the wide range of issues before them can help you decide how and in what order to present the different topics.

"A Day in the Life" is a tool you can use to guide your initial conversations with girls.

Directions

Step 1. Start by asking girls to describe a typical day in the life of a girl (it is best to give her a name) in their community. Splitting girls into small groups to come up with a daily schedule will probably get girls engaged and talking. Also, it is important to do this exercise in the third person so that girls talk about a "typical girl," not themselves. This helps them to open up and speak freely.

Step 2. Probe using the following questions:

- What does she like about her day?
- What does she dislike about her day?
- How is her day different from her brother's? Older sister's? Younger sister's?
- Where does she go during her day, and who is she with?
- What are some of the typical problems or challenges she might come across in that day?
- If she could change one thing about her day, what would it be? How could she change it?

Variation

If your program has funding to support this, you can buy disposable cameras and have the girls go out into the community and take pictures of "A Day in the Life" of a typical girl in that community. Then you can use the photos to discuss, asking what issues are shown in the pictures, why they are problems, what the girl in the picture can do about them.

Note Community members are often sensitive about having their photos taken, so make sure that girls are prepared to explain why they are taking photos and that they do not take photos of people who do not agree.

Listen carefully to what the girls are telling you, as the information is based on their own lives and lives of girls they know. The challenges they raise are likely those you should try to address in the course of your program.