



The African Women's
Development and
Communication Network



TEENAGE GIRLS ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



The African Women's Development and Communication Network

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Acknowledgments

This engagement strategy is a culmination of a series of consultations and desk-top reviews. FEMNET acknowledges all African teenage girls who took time to participate in the consultations and reflection meetings in Nairobi, Kenya and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The girls provided context analysis as well as priority areas of focus which enabled FEMNET to identify issues of concern to teenage girls in Africa i.e. voice/representation, bullying, sexual harassment in schools, sexual and reproductive health education, child marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual and gender based violence, child labor and poverty.

Many thanks to FEMNET members across Africa and partners who provided insight and unwavering support.

The management and staff team at the FEMNET secretariat for their contributions towards developing this engagement strategy including individual consultations, editing and fine tuning the draft.

We are grateful to the team of consultants including Nebila Abdulmelik, Agazit Abate and Basil Ibrahim who were extremely instrumental in leading the consultations and consolidating the conversations with teenage girls and content in this engagement strategy.

We believe that this engagement strategy is a great resource for different stakeholders across Africa and will greatly contribute to ensuring that teenage girls are meaningfully and sustainably engaged in every development discourse.



Foreward



I am **Nancy Auma Barasa**, born and raised in the beautiful Kibera informal settlement in Nairobi Kenya. My experience as a teenager has formed my passion on SRHR advocacy and community service.

This Teenage Girls' Engagement Strategy for women's right organizations paints a clear picture of teenage girls thought process and how we seek to be understood from our point of view. It is amazing how adolescent girls are able to let loose and speak from the heart without fear of intimidation.

This engagement strategy seeks to bring out the voice of the adolescents in the most natural form and show the beauty of adolescent girls. A lot has been said about the challenges that are faced by teenage girls. However, policy makers, civil society and development actors need to acknowledge that adolescent girls thrive in their spaces hence the need to support them. This engagement strategy represents the real situations and the views of the teenage girls in all their diversity.

What has been a dream is becoming a reality. Teenage girls have been sidelined in decision making and policy frameworks. My heart is full of joy because this engagement strategy is a mark of a new dawn and a new era. WE adolescents are LEADING!

Nancy Auma Barasa

SRHR Advocate



Introduction

"I know my life. Nobody knows my life like me... we teenage girls, we know our lives. If you want to know about us, listen to us... you cannot tell me about me." -

Mama Sampy, a 17-year-old girl's rights advocate and member of the Children's Parliament of Mali.

Listening to teenage girls is at the heart of the creation of this teenage girls' engagement strategy for women's rights organizations. FEMNET chooses to intentionally work with teenage girls because, *"we don't want to wait until they are women and get inducted into a patriarchal structure that they will work for and perpetuate."*¹ FEMNET has created this strategy for that reason and also because teenage girls have experiences, challenges and modes of negotiation particular to them. Additionally, teenage girls have the potential to influence, inspire and transform the women's rights movement in Africa.

This strategy is based on the belief that working with teenage girls is not necessarily about bringing them into an already structured women's movement, but more about seeing the potentials for learning on the part of the women's rights movement and for shifting the movement to align to the needs and visions of teenage girls. This strategy is an attempt at understanding the needs, aspirations and priorities of teenage girls in Africa and creating engagement modes for learning, supporting and working with teenage girls in rights movements. It is an attempt to be in their language, to speak to their experiences, their needs, desires, resources, and ways/modes of communication.

This strategy was created by FEMNET, in order to guide its engagement with teenage girls, but we hope that it can also be of use to women's rights organizations who work or desire to work with teenage girls.

IF YOU WANT TO
KNOW ABOUT US,
LISTEN TO
US...



¹ These are the words of Mwanahamisi Singano, FEMNET's Head of Programmes



Context

It is well known that African women in Beijing 25 years ago, recognizing the specific oppressions that they face, fought for the inclusion of the girl child in the Beijing Platform for Action. However, while the rights of girls have hardly been ignored within the women's rights movement in Africa, girls themselves have not been leading that cause. Girls have neither been integrated in an impactful manner in the women's rights movement, nor have their voices been leading or adequately represented in these spaces. The underrepresentation of teenage girls in the women's rights movement in Africa is not necessarily due to a lack of want, but can also be understood as a consequence of a lack of resources, time and adequate strategies to properly engage girls in a way that works for them. Teenage girls not only have specific challenges facing them, but most importantly, for the purpose of engagement strategies, there are specific challenges with relation to engaging teenage girls. That is, finding them (they are not usually working with women's rights organizations nor are they visible online), working with them (how to negotiate with families, schools, etc), working around their schedules and needs, and challenging norms (how to ensure that ageism doesn't creep into the process and that girls lead).



In recent years, it looks as though women's rights movements globally are looking into including the voices, challenges, experiences and leadership of teenage girls with funds and programs specifically targeting that demographic. More and more teenage girls are seen not just as victims of a patriarchal structure, but as actors negotiating their rights, as young people with the potential to dismantle patriarchal structures and to change the women's rights movement for the better. Africa is a young continent according to population statistics and with the adolescent demographic rising, the time is now to engage with and learn from the people who will soon be leading the continent and the women's rights movement.



Objectives

This engagement strategy hopes to inform and guide FEMNET's engagement of teenage girls. By speaking to the lived experiences of teenage girls and through their voices, the strategy hopes to:

1. Assess the manner in which teenage girls are currently being engaged.
2. Identify challenges of teenage girls, which they themselves outline.
3. Provide practical, easy to use, teenage-friendly tools for engagement with teenage girls.

Methodology

FEMNET created this strategy after reviewing organizations working with teenage girls, interviewing teenage girls, holding a workshop with teenage girls, and by assessing FEMNET's present engagement with teenage girls. The bulk of the information in this strategy has been taken from the words, opinions and views of teenage girls themselves.

In terms of our interaction with teenage girls, we adopted a flexible and informal mode of communication. We outlined interview questions, but made space for deviation and we created time for informal conversations where we were neither taking notes nor sticking to a program. We centered being present and relationship building, we tried to use language that they could identify with and we encouraged more inputs from them and less inputs from us. We listened.



Girls Profile

The teenage profile that we are addressing in this strategy document is 14-18 year old African girls in all of their regional, class, ethnicity, religious, sexual orientation, and ability diversity. This includes girls who are familiar/not familiar with the women's movement, women's rights and development issues, pan-African feminist principles, and who have/have not worked with women's rights organizations; and those in urban and rural settings.

While FEMNET hopes to work with teenage girls in all of their diversity, some of the suggestions in this strategy document focus on girls in schools. Processes of engagement are challenging and varied and require focused attention. The hope is that by engaging girls in schools, the movement will widen and strategies will vary to include tools specific to girls outside of school. This strategy is a starting point and as such is a dynamic, living document subject to regular updates.



Assessment

FEMNET carried out an assessment of the needs, desires and experiences of teenage girls with relation to engagement in the women's rights movement spaces. Below is a brief summary of the most vital highlights of the assessment:

1. Engagement Spaces

❁ **Policy Spaces versus Trainings and Campaigns:** it was important for us to understand what kind of engagement girls wanted with women's rights organizations and in international spaces. Almost all of the girls suggested trainings, support for advocacy campaigns, and mentorships as necessary tools for engagement. The girls also saw the need to be present in international policy making spaces (such as ICPD), but that came secondary to the above spaces of engagement.

2. Processes

❁ **Meet Them Where They Are:** for engagement to be meaningful, it must begin where the girls reside (space, place and experience). That is, engagement should always feel familiar to the girls, so that it is not coming from the outside, but that it is building on what the girls know as experts in their own lives. This can happen outside of their communities and outside of their countries as long as the basis for engagement is based on their lived experiences and most importantly that they lead the engagement processes.

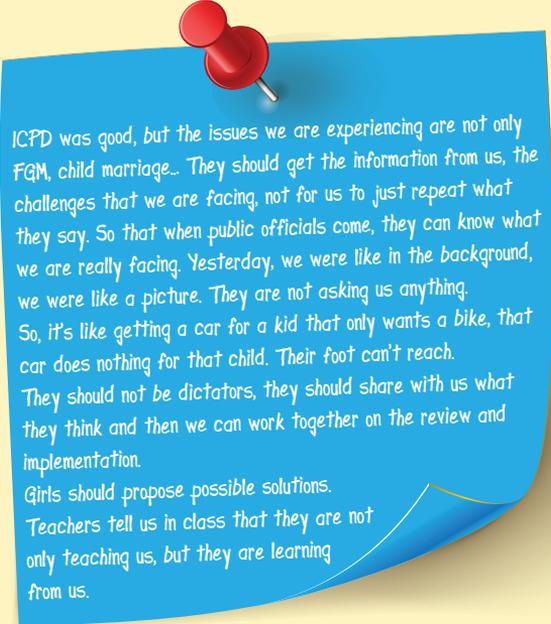


❁ **The Personal is Political:** the feminist mantra, the personal is political, takes on extra significance for teenage girls. Engagement must begin on the basis of their lived experiences. Storytelling and experience sharing becomes central to the understanding of their needs and modes of being and to the introduction of larger structures of dismantling patriarchy, solidarity and feminism.

❁ **Language:** we realized early on, that the language that we speak in the wider women's movement has to shift when working with teenage girls. Beginning discussions with words like feminism or patriarchy don't work as many are unfamiliar with these terms. It is best to start with what they know. They are experts in their own lives. Once they start speaking of their experiences, it is easy to then build on those experiences in order to understand the larger concepts and language of the movement.

❁ **Voice:** most of the girls that were interviewed mentioned the feeling of not having their voices heard and not being taken seriously. "Girls are not supposed to have opinions or be intelligent or question adults. They are supposed to be beautiful... something to look at," one of the girls said. Engagement should not mirror what girls have already experienced, but should look like co-creation, as girls should lead in workshops and in movement spaces; their voices should be heard, respected and acted upon.

❁ **Girls Run Things:** many of the girls that we spoke to had the experience of being brought into spaces, meetings and campaigns that were organized without their input. At the same time, the one on one's with the girls revealed that that their ideal meeting or workshop would be one facilitated by girls



ICPD was good, but the issues we are experiencing are not only FGM, child marriage... They should get the information from us, the challenges that we are facing, not for us to just repeat what they say. So that when public officials come, they can know what we are really facing. Yesterday, we were like in the background, we were like a picture. They are not asking us anything. So, it's like getting a car for a kid that only wants a bike, that car does nothing for that child. Their foot can't reach. They should not be dictators, they should share with us what they think and then we can work together on the review and implementation.
Girls should propose possible solutions.
Teachers tell us in class that they are not only teaching us, but they are learning from us.



and one where they have a say in the program. In the workshop that we facilitated with the girls, we realized that we created the program and ran the facilitation. The girls should have been doing both of those things. Thus, engagement should never look like girls are in these spaces to tick a box; they should be leading and co-creating programs, discussion topics, and movement processes. Engagement should ensure that girls are not just used for supplying content, but that they determine the path that their resistance takes.

- ❁ **Informal/Unstructured Spaces:** teenage girls have a lot of structure in their lives, processes and schedules of which they have no control over. Spaces in the women's movement that are for teenage girls should be informal and unstructured to allow for flexibility, creativity and dynamism.



❁ **Get to Know Each Other:** when setting up workshops or trainings with teenage girls, it is necessary to spend a lot of time in the beginning doing “getting to know each other” exercises where experience sharing and storytelling is the leading goal of the sessions. Because of deeply entrenched patriarchal norms and mindsets, it takes time for some girls to open up and for them to feel comfortable speaking in groups as well as in one on ones. Creating spaces for discussions around their lives is important for understanding commonalities and larger structures of inequality, but also for relationship building, which is at the center of engagement.



❁ **Be Present:** it is common that women’s rights movements are over-worked and overburdened. It is necessary though, especially with teenage girls, that programmers are present and engaged when working with teenage girls. It is most important that girls are given spaces to be able to speak freely and that only happens when they feel comfortable with the people around them. It is only when the girls felt comfortable with us, that we got a deeper understanding of their lives.



❁ **Segmentation:** during the workshop, girls were segmented, some went to ICPD, others didn't, some were involved in a dance routine and others weren't, and some of the icebreaker activities did not work for girls with disabilities. We see these as mistakes that shouldn't be repeated. Hearing from the girls during the one-on-one sessions and in their exit card evaluations, we saw that they felt these exclusions deeply and that any engagement with teenage girls cannot and should not replicate processes of exclusion.

❁ **Leisure is Political:** workshops, trainings, and other programmings should always leave ample time for leisure. It was revealed to us that a normal day for girls would include waking up early in the morning (sometimes as early as 4:00am), doing chores around the house, going to school, doing homework, cooking dinner, going to sleep and then starting the day all over again. Programs with teenage girls should not replicate the same busy days and burdens that these girls experience at home. They should have ample time for leisure, games, music, and storytelling, as those are also spaces for engagement, relationship and movement building.



3. Logistics

- ❁ **Communication:** not all girls or their parents have access to social media (including whatsapp, facebook, viber), the Internet or email which means communication in terms of reaching teenage girls has to be based on phone calls, emails of chaperones/mentors, partnerships with local organizations and the like. In order to engage with teenage girls, it is important to create communication channels that are specific and work for them.
- ❁ **Administrative Adjustments:** logistically, working with teenage girls has different requirements and procedures. The process of working with teenage girls means taking into account school schedules, chaperones, parental or guardian approval or permission, travel and accommodation preferences, insurance, and other logistical considerations when holding workshops or meetings.



Identified Issues

The assumption when beginning this work was that identifying the challenges faced by teenagers would be an easy task. We thought, review the work of organizations working with teenage girls, create activities designed for girls in the workshop and ask direct questions during interviews to get the answer to this foundational question. What we found was the need to dig deeper, which required more one-on-one time with the girls as well as more getting to know each other sessions. Many of the girls we interviewed were affiliated with organizations that worked on specific issues including advocacy to end female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage, which meant initial attempts at discussing challenges circled around these two issues. It was not until later, during the one-on-ones-mostly, that the girls spoke about other issues that affected them or their friends or girls in their community. When I asked one of the girls about why these issues didn't come up earlier, she said, *"sometimes we feel like we have to represent the whole, all teenage girls, and maybe issues like bullying aren't as serious as the others."*

It is important that when working with girls, there is no prioritization of issues, that FEMNET works to ensure that girls are free to determine what is important in their lives, outside of the issues prioritized by others.

The issues identified by the girls include:

- **Voice/Representation:** all the girls, in one way or another, mentioned the issue of not feeling that their voices were heard at the household, school, community, national and/



or international levels. This issue, we realized, is an underlying one that should guide the understanding of the challenges and experiences facing teenage girls as well as the way women's rights organizations engage with teenager girls to ensure that they lead in their own voices. *"We have things to say, we know our lives... if organizations want to work with teenage girls, they have to listen to us, they can't just include us in a program that they create,"* one of the girls said.

❁ **Bullying:** bullying in schools also came up numerous times as a challenge that girls face around class, ability, sexual orientation, and menstruation. Some girls spoke to excessive bullying that resulted in depression, dropping out of school and even suicide. The girls suggested that combatting bullying through sensitivity training for students, teachers and staff and creating solidarity amongst girls is an important step in ensuring safe and enriching spaces in schools.



❁ **Sexual Harassment in Schools:** sexual harassment from boys at school, teachers and administrative staff seem to be a common occurrence for the girls that we engaged. Many of the girls shared stories of sexual harassment that was either at the hands of adults in their schools or condoned by adults in their schools. *"In my biology class, there was a girl who was pressured by the teacher and he threatened her grades. She always sat in the back and we didn't know why... and then another girl said it to everybody that he was pressuring her and that he said that he would mess up her grades if she didn't agree... then my friend spoke up as well. We told the discipline master and he said he would do something, but he didn't. Nothing happened."*



❁ **Sexual and Reproductive Health Education (In particular Menstrual Health):** again, many of the girls had stories about other girls in their schools who began their menstrual cycles without knowing it, who were shamed for bleeding through their clothes, or who were condemned by their families for starting their period before marriage. The girls agreed that education around SRHR is an important step in removing shame and also in girls understanding their bodies and preventing unintended pregnancies. They also spoke about advocacy and campaigns around making sanitary pads free and available in schools. *"If condoms can be given out for free, why not menstrual pads?"* one of the girls said.



Things to Keep in Mind

As referenced in the assessment section of this strategy, there are processes specific to teenage girls that can guide the work to ensure that open dialogue, learning, relationship building, and horizontal engagements are centered in the work.

1. Language

It is important to meet teenage girls, to engage them, in their own language. Their language, even those already engaged with women's rights organizations, may not include terms like feminism, patriarchy, solidarity and the like. Many times, they can speak about those issues without using the terms. Storytelling is a great meeting point for engaging teenage girls. When they are given space to speak to their own experiences, it becomes clear that they are the experts and that

those stories can lead to an introduction to wider issues and terms common in the women's rights movement. Additionally, while it is important to introduce women's rights movement language to the girls, working with teenagers allows for the opportunity to change the language through their experiences. Being open to that possibility is something to keep in mind when engaging with teenage girls.

Along with a change in the language, is a change in presentation. Working with teenage girls also makes for the possibility of more creative modes of communication, including illustrations, slogans, poems, spoken word, singing, creative graphic designs and the like. FEMNET, in all of its communication geared towards teenage girls should keep in mind presentations that speak to their aesthetics.



A side conversation:

"One day, my friends and I were hanging out at school and we heard that a girl was crying in the yard. We went down and we saw boys surrounding her laughing. We pushed them away and circled her to protect her. She had bled through her clothes and she didn't know what was happening to her. Nobody ever told her. We took her to our room and gave her a menstrual pad. We told her about menstruation and showed her how to use the pad. Her mother actually put some in her suitcase, but didn't tell her what they were for..."

"Perhaps what you and your friends did by protecting her, pushing the boys away and telling her what you knew is an act of solidarity."

"I think it was..."



2. Partnerships and Solidarity Networks

"Just to know that someone is there, that someone cares. It's important to know that you are a part of something," said one of the girls when speaking about what FEMNET can do to engage with teenage girls. It was evident in the assessment process that the challenges facing the work include finding girls, sustaining communication with them and expanding the network. If engagements rely solely on teenage girls who are already affiliated with organizations that FEMNET is partnered with, the profile will be limited and girls without access to these organizations will be left out. One way to do this is to focus on creating and strengthening partnerships with schools. Girls in school spend possibly 8 hours a day, 5 days a week at school, and more than that if we are speaking about boarding schools, and slightly less when sick days and other reasons for absenteeism is taken into account. Many of the organizations that were already known to the girls or to which the girls were affiliated were introduced to them through their schools. Therefore, engaging with girls must mean engaging with schools as one of the girls said, *"find us at school, help us create clubs, educate our teachers..."* Creating partnerships at the continental level is difficult but necessary and can be aided by working with FEMNET members, particularly those who have extensive experience engaging teenage girls, local organizations and girls already engaged with FEMNET.



"If FEMNET has money, they should do a lot of trainings for girls from every region, and teach them so when they return to their country they will teach girls from their communities, in their schools, and she will teach more and more and it will get bigger and bigger." This idea of building solidarity and peer networks, expanding through commitments – that when one girl is invited to a space, she commits to passing on the knowledge that she has gained and that goes on and on – should be centered in the work. Thinking about engagement and expansion of networks in a way that doesn't center FEMNET or any other organization, but puts the responsibility and the power in the hands of all engaged, including the girls, is not only practical, but mirrors the kind of horizontal engagements that FEMNET desires.

3. Co-Learning/Co-Creation

Engagements with teenagers should work under the assumption that every engagement is an opportunity to learn and to teach, that every engagement is a chance to change processes. Again, during our workshop with the girls, we realized that our process was not in line with our intention. That is, we had a program designed that was not co-created by the girls and we facilitated discussions instead of giving them the space and support to run the workshop themselves. Processes of engagement must have, at its center, co-learning and co-creation. Engagements should begin with discussions, they should be flexible and dynamic and respond with the potential for constant reimaginings and recreation.



"We shouldn't be given any program, we should create the program. If they want us here, they should listen to what we have to say and how we want to say it."



4. Deep Listening

"It's good to find someone who can listen to me," one of the girls said in a private one-on-one. Deep listening includes being present, giving ample time for discussions; it includes processes of understanding and hearing the silences (things unsaid). Deep listening is an important practice when working with teenage girls in particular because of the time it takes for them to open up, the personal nature of the discussions, and because so many times, girls are being spoken at and not listened to, in process and practice. Centering deep listening works to ensure that girls are heard, that they own their space, that relationships are built, that stories are told and that the work is done in line with the experiences of the girls.



5. Inclusivity

We realized in our interactions with them, that the lives of girls and their interaction with adults, fellow students/fellow age mates and society as a whole can sometimes be characterized by exclusion. It is important when engaging with girls, that there is no segmentation, hierarchy, or exclusion based on ability, class, knowledge, age, or any other factor. Spaces should be inclusive and groups should work as a whole for the whole, with everybody's roles as equally important.



How to Engage

The issues outlined by the girls, referenced earlier in this strategy [voice/representation, bullying, sexual harassment in schools, sexual and reproductive health education, child marriage, female genital mutilation, sexual and gender based violence, child labor and poverty] are crosscutting and can be tackled through various engagement processes. The options for engagement below, suggested by the girls, are not issue specific, in that they can be used to confront any or sometimes all of the identified issues. Additionally, all of the spaces - household, schools, civil society, regional and international - are potential spaces for change regarding all issues concerning girls whether it is a change in mindset, educational opportunity, relationship building, documentation, and/or policy change.



1. Trainings

When asked how FEMNET can engage with teenage girls, most of the girls suggested trainings around knowing their rights, local and international policies and laws, campaign and awareness raising processes, and movement building.

“There are things that we need to know first and there are things that you need to know too, so training first,” one of the girls said. Again, these trainings should be co-created and co-facilitated/facilitated by teenage girls themselves and should be designed in a way that can be replicated so that they can then run the trainings in their own communities and expand the network and the impact.



2. Parent/School Administration/Teacher Trainings

"Even if you train us, it doesn't make any difference if our parents tell us we can't leave the house or we can't do these projects or we have to dress a certain way or get married... If I had to choose between us and our parents, I would say train our parents first." Many of the girls agreed that parents and school administrators need training on how to engage, relate and communicate with teenage girls and without that, girls can't be free or safe. Unless these trainings take place, the lives of girls will not be changed.



3. School Clubs

"Some of us have clubs in our schools and some of us don't, but everybody should have at least one club that is just for girls to talk about their problems," one of the girls said. The girls suggested that organizations like FEMNET help their schools to start clubs on their campuses. They suggested that their mentors could also help them to start clubs as many spoke about the bureaucracy involved at the school level.

4. Counseling Programs in Schools

Again, girls in school spend most of their time in schools, nearly all of their time for those in boarding schools. Many of the issues that they deal with come from that space or can be dealt with in that space. Some of the girls suggested trainings for their guidance counselors so that there can be counseling programs in schools that support girls, provide safe spaces, and create systems for filing complaints and ensuing accountability with regards to the well-being of girls on school campuses. Another option would be to train teens to do teen-to-teen counseling.



5. Mentorship Programs and Intergenerational Exchange

The girls suggested that it's important for girls to have, in their lives, mentors to talk to, to guide them and support them. Some suggested starting mentorship programs in schools or through organizations to ensure that girls have women in their lives who can mentor them, but also who can share knowledge and information and make for intergenerational exchange.



6. Awareness Campaigns

When speaking about creating change, the girls suggested awareness campaigns to combat the challenges facing them. They suggested that women's rights organizations should help them to enlist the media, religious leaders, and community elders to educate their communities, their parents, schools and government officials.

7. Storytelling Campaigns

Documentation is also important when working in movement building and change making. Much like the awareness campaigns, there are creative ways of documenting challenges and movements. Examples of storytelling campaigns include:

- ✿ Publishing illustrated, visually appealing posters or an anthology of "a day in her life"
- ✿ Publishing a book for teenage girls, written by teenage girls
- ✿ Creating a magazine for and by teenage girls – doing skills training in order to make this happen
- ✿ Creating teenage girl radio programs/podcasts again for and by teenage girls – doing skills training in order to make this happen

8. Engagement in International Policy Spaces

While the girls suggested that trainings, school programs and awareness campaigns were most important in terms of engagement possibilities, they also said that bringing the voices of girls into international policymaking spaces and meetings is necessary to *"let the world know that we are here and we know our lives and they should respect us."* Again, girls should have an understanding of the meetings before going, and they should have leading voices in the processes of engagement and topics of discussion in terms of their contributions.



Tools

If you Want to Engage Girls in your Work Checklist

- Engage girls from the beginning, co-create and learn with them
- Build relationships with girls, hang out with them, know them, and sustain your relationships with them
- Partner with, learn from, ask questions of organizations (FEMNET members) who work with or are run by teenage girls
- Create communications materials that are engaging, creative, and colorful (use illustrations, graphic design, audio and visual materials)
- Learn the modes of communication for teenage girls (including social media tools and the language of teenage girls)
- With limited resources and time, target your engagement, be deliberate and focus on the needs and desires of teenage girls
- Keep in mind that teenage girls are not a homogenous group, that programs should align with the needs and experiences of the specific group that you are working with
- Be open to listening and learning and adapting along the way

Event Administrative Checklist

There are a lot of moving pieces administratively/logistically when engaging teenagers in workshops, trainings and meetings. In order to ensure that everything is taken into account, here is an event administrative checklist:

- Check general school schedules to make sure that events don't collide with testing schedules
- Chaperons for all girls (some chaperons will be responsible for more than one girl) to guide the process of travel and to stay with the girls during the event
- Contact information for chaperons, parents/guardians and the girls
- Information email or fax or whatsapp message for first time flyers that includes what to expect during travel
- Information packet that explains what the organizers are covering and what is not covered by the organizers (ensure that extra hotel expenses are explained clearly)
- Supporting documents for travelling and passport processes



- Single rooms or double rooms (ask girls if they want to share a room or have their own)
- Schedule enough time for passport and visa application processes
- Check for food allergies
- Check for any chronic illnesses and any procedures to be aware of
- Translators if needed
- Personnel needed for the girls with disabilities in the group
- Trained counselors and adult facilitators on stand by for any girls who may need one-on-one attention, who may be dealing with trauma
- At the beginning of the event, dedicate one hour to logistical information including a note that explains the extra expenses at the hotel (phone, room snacks, room service etc)
- Define and share processes for reporting complaints so that girls know who they can go to if they are not comfortable with something or are experiencing harassment or bullying of any sort
- Legal Waivers/insurance forms?
- At least one fun excursion!

Event Content and Process Checklist

There are certain questions to keep in mind to ensure that in-person engagements with teenage girls work for them and mirror processes of inclusivity and co-creation. Questions to ask yourself during the process include:

- Do the girls have a good understanding of the purpose of the meeting [especially if it relates to international policy spaces]
- Are the girls co-creating the program?
- Are the girls facilitating the sessions?
- Are the girls choosing the music for the break sessions?
- Are the girls choosing the icebreaker/energizer activities?
- Are the activities sensitive to everybody's abilities? Can everybody get involved? [Do the activities work for girls with mobility limitations, girls who are blind or deaf or have different learning abilities]
- Is there a good amount of time dedicated to the girls getting to know each other? Do the girls know each other's names?
- Do I know the girls names?



12:30 - 2:00: Lunch

2:00 - 2:15: Energizer

2:15 - 4:30: A Day In Her Life

[Girls get into groups and discuss, in more detail, their lives - similarities and differences and challenges in school and at home. One girl in each group should be taking notes in order to present to the rest of girls in the full group].

4:30 - 4:45: Exit Cards

[Give all of the girls an index card where they write down what worked and what didn't work during the day]

From this time to dinner, girls should be free to listen to music, watch a movie, play games or sleep. These activities should be available in their space of engagement. In fact, the program should ideally be infused with creative mediums and various methodologies to ensure they don't get bored throughout the day (they don't have to be included in a formal program, but should be available at anytime throughout the day) – including showing video clips, having open mic spaces for them to sing, perform poetry, act out a skit, or play games.

This is one day that can be built upon throughout the time together. One surprising thing for some of the girls was how similar their issues are even though they live in different countries. This activity is a way to build on and later present wider issues like patriarchy [to show why they have the same issues] and solidarity and feminism [to show alternatives] Additionally, this whole day is in effect a getting to know each other exercise as everything is based on sharing personal experiences.

Other sample activities include:

- Acting out the challenges facing girls
- Acting out possible solutions to challenges facing girls
- Acting out a “what would you do” situation
- Creating a position paper on the demands for teenage girls
- Creating an awareness campaign
- Doing a mock radio program to speak to the issues of girls
- Creating a magazine for teenage girls



- ✿ Playing games that teach themes such as solidarity
- ✿ Watching a movie like Solo Modo to understanding themes around community, creativity, solidarity, and feminism

Other Tools

Other tools that can be developed for teenage girls engagement include:

- ✿ **Manifesto for commitment and accountability** – this manifesto or pledge can be used as a signed commitment that all girls involved in the FEMNET trainings will then pass on the knowledge that they learn to at least 5 more girls in an effort to build the solidarity network. This manifesto should be created with teenage girls accountability in place so that the work continues and expands at the local level.
- ✿ **How to engage with schools** – a toolkit on best practices for how women’s rights organizations can engage schools at the pan-African level that is based on research and experience in practice.

There are also tools that can be developed by teenage girls and used by teenage girls in advocacy and movement building. These include:

- ✿ **How to start a club** – this toolkit can be made by girls based on their varied experiences in starting a club on their campuses. The issues will vary by school, but this toolkit can give other girls an idea of what it takes and inspiration to do the same.
- ✿ **How to run a training program** - a toolkit to guide the girls on how to follow up on their solidarity network commitment and pass on the training that they get to other girls in their community.
- ✿ **Storytelling campaigns** – toolkits on how to start a small publication or radio program with little funding again as a how to, but also as inspiration.



Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Workshops/Trainings/Meetings

- ✿ Constant verbal check in's throughout the days
- ✿ Exit cards at the end of each day. What worked? What didn't work?
- ✿ Questionnaire at the beginning and end of the event
- ✿ Self evaluation questions in the Event Content and Process Checklist

Overall Programming

There are questions that you can ask yourself and the girls engaged to get an idea of what is working and what is not:

- ✿ Follow up with girls regarding the manifesto for commitment and accountability.

Did they train up to five girls? If so, how? What did it look like?

How did it go? Did they give the manifesto to those girls so they pass on their knowledge? If not, why? What inhibited them?

How can we help?

- ✿ Follow up with parents and the girls to see what has changed, if anything, post parents training?
- ✿ Follow up with school administrators and girls to see what has changed, if anything, post administrators training?
- ✿ It is important to also think about more informal change processes with girls as change doesn't always happen in formal ways (starting a club, creating a training program, starting an awareness campaign). Sometimes change happens in smaller ways, a story of solidarity at school against a bully, speaking out in the classroom, starting a relationships, stopping a relationship. These are all stories that can help us understand the work and the lives of teenage girls; these are also stories that can be told only after building strong relationships with the girls.





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