

Impacts of a whole-family support program on violence against girls in emergencies

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Sibling Support to Adolescent Girls in Emergencies (SSAGE)

Sibling Support for Adolescent Girls in Emergencies (SSAGE) Partner Consortium

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Why the Family-Based Approach?

- Women and girls are most likely to experience violence at the hands of **someone they know**
- Violence is **learned, internalized, and reinforced** within families.
- Adolescent boys who witness violence in the household **are more likely to perpetrate violence** themselves.
- Attitudes and behaviors that reinforce gender inequality are demonstrated at the **household level**



Male Siblings as Allies to Girls

- Male siblings can act as **power brokers** in their sisters' lives — positively or negatively
- Importance of **influencing boys' attitudes** when they are young and **more open to positive change**
- SSAGE aims to cultivate empathy and **positive interpersonal bonds** between brothers and sisters



SSAGE Program Background

- Recruited households with:
 - Adolescent girls
 - **Older adolescent male siblings**
 - Male caregivers
 - Female caregivers
- Four distinct curricula were delivered in **age and gender-specific sessions** to better foster peer-support and self-reflection
- Simultaneous, synchronized curriculum delivery to each participant group to create a '**layering effect**' within the family
- Participatory, **human-centered design** strategies were used to contextualize the curricula to each context
- Research and evidence generation to inform implementation and design



CHART: THEMATIC ROADMAP FOR ORIGINAL SSAGE CURRICULA PILOTED IN NIGERIA

ADOLESCENT GIRLS	MALE SIBLINGS	FEMALE CAREGIVERS	MALE CAREGIVERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing trust/ground rules for the girl group • Healthy relationships • Positive communication skills • Sound decision-making • Gender socialization • Understanding power • Understanding violence • Keeping safe from violence • Bodily knowledge and health (including avoidance of substance abuse) • Puberty (including menstruation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing trust/ground rules for the boy group • Healthy relationships • Positive communication skills • Sound decision-making • Gender socialization • Understanding power and discrimination • Understanding violence • Preventing violence and GBV • Bodily knowledge and health (including avoidance of substance abuse) • Puberty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing trust/ground rules for the women's group • Social and emotional skills and relationships • Gender socialization • Power and discrimination • Keeping safe from violence • Healthy families and parenting • Understanding adolescent girls • Keeping girls safe from violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing trust/ground rules for the men's group • Social and emotional skills and healthy relationships • Gender socialization • Power and discrimination • Violence and its impacts on families and communities • Preventing violence and GBV • Healthy families and parenting • Understanding adolescent girls • Keeping girls safe from violence



Evaluative Research

Qualitative Methods

METHOD	NIGERIA	JORDAN	NIGER	TOTAL
Focus group discussions with parents and caregivers	36	65	73	174
In-depth interviews with parents and caregivers	6	28	24	58
Participatory group activities with adolescent girls and male siblings	35	72	101	208
Paired interviews with adolescent girls and male siblings	8	37	46	91
TOTAL	85	202	244	531



Qualitative Findings

Theme 1: Male siblings report less tolerance for and perpetration of violence against their adolescent sisters

JORDAN

“I used to come from school very hungry and enter the house without showing any respect or even saying hello. I used to start shouting the moment I entered the house and give orders to bring me food quickly. After the course, I enter the house respectfully and I listen to my sister and talk to her respectfully.”

-Adolescent boy from a focus group

NIGER

“He left a lot of things. He beat me up, humiliated me, but he doesn't do that anymore because of this SSAGE program he's had. He does things right.”

-Adolescent girl from a paired interview

NIGERIA

“I used to force her to wash all my clothes, and I would send her to buy me soap even though she had places to go. I would forcefully stop her from going out, but after this Mercy Corps program I realized that all what I was doing was wrong.”

- Adolescent boy in focus group



Theme 2: Decreased acceptability and use of corporal behavioral control methods within families

NIGER

"The problem with children is to know that it is not the fact of hitting the children that will come to their senses. No, you have to approach them calmly, give them advice, cherish them, and little by little they will understand that what they are doing is not good."

- Female caregiver from an in-depth interview

NIGERIA

"And our husbands too have really changed. Some husbands will go out and if they come back home when he gets angry outside, he will come pour the anger on you. But all this has changed when the program started."

- Female caregiver from a focus group



Theme 3: Interrogation of attitudes related to masculinity, gender equity, and girls' rights

JORDAN

“Participant 1: The brother has changed. He trusts his sister and shares his worries with her. If he faces a problem, he will tell her. Sometimes, a girl faces trouble in the street. A guy follows her, and someone sees that. The brother knows and he doesn't trust his sister anymore. He suspects her and she doesn't leave the house without him. The program teaches him that if something like this happened, he shouldn't suspect his sister. He should trust her.

Participant 2: Yes, before the program, if someone talked to him about his sister he wouldn't trust her anymore. After attending the program, a brother started to trust his sister and believes her, and not others.”

- Adolescent girls in a paired interview



Pathways of change

- Increased **self-awareness** and **self-reflection** by participants
- **Improved communication** within households, and within specific relationship dyads
- **Peer support**
- **Diffusion** of ideas within households



Unintended Consequences

Aspects of normative, patriarchal practices governing the treatment of adolescent girls were maintained by some participants

NIGERIA

A desire to shield girls from violence and increase protective parenting practices was interpreted by some caregivers and male siblings as **increased restrictions on girls' mobility in public.**

NIGER

Like that found in Nigeria, some male caregivers, in particular, interpreted SSAGE teachings in a way that may have resulted in **increased restrictions and monitoring of the movements of the girls.**

JORDAN

While SSAGE impacted individual and familial attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge on gender equity and VAWG, **community-level norms governing girls' restricted mobility were not addressed.**





Implications for Practice and Research

- Dedicate **sufficient** time and effort to **community-led contextualization** of program content, including the mapping of adolescent girls' social spheres and influences
- Implement contextualized, evidence-driven programming with **adequate resources to collect and utilize data** in ways that **meaningfully informs programming**
- Include **shorter-term** and **easier-to-measure outcomes**, such as changes in knowledge, to assess whether a program is on track to address more deeply rooted attitudes and behaviors.
- Humanitarian actors must have **realistic expectations** of what can be achieved and what can be measured in a short period of time.





A special thanks to the adolescents and caregivers who participated in SSAGE and generously offered their time to support our evaluation.