

Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER)

Social and Behaviour Change Communication Strategy



Introduction

Sierra Leone's population of over 7 million people is faced with endemic poverty and escalating inflation, which have worsened due to the Covid-19 pandemic and external factors such as the Ukraine war and its impacts on global markets. In 2021, the country was included in the low human development category, standing at 181 out of 195 countries and territories.ⁱ The country will hold Presidential, Parliamentary, and Local Council elections in June this year amid sharp polarisation along ethnic and regional lines. A steady increase in the cost of living with rising food and fuel prices, set against high rates of corruption and unemployment, have deepened tensions across the country.ⁱⁱ

The country's development challenges have had a disproportionately adverse impact on girls, causing significant disparity in educational and learning outcomes by gender. The country ranks at 150 out of 160 countries on the Gender Inequality Index, with this inequality widening later in the education systemⁱⁱⁱ as more girls than boys drop out of the education system. Adult literacy rates are at 52% for men and 35% for women; among youth, literacy rates are at 71% for boys and 63% for girls.^{iv}

This difference in girl's access to and retention in education begins in adolescence, when social and gender norms position them for domestic roles, rather than learning and employment. Adolescent pregnancy and marriage rates in Sierra Leone are among the highest in the world, and are dominant causes of high school drop-out rates among girls. According to the 2019 Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey, 30% of women aged 20 to 24 were first married or in union before age 18. Only 24% of girls aged 15 to 19 who were unmarried and sexually active or were married used a modern form of contraception.^v Pregnant girls were not allowed to attend school or sit for examinations until 2020.

Against this backdrop, Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER) was a four-year project (2019-2023) that improved learning outcomes for over 27,000 marginalised out-of-school adolescent girls and supported their transition to education, training or employment. It was implemented in 10 districts of Sierra Leone with funding from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) through the Leave No Girl Behind phase of the Girls Education Challenge. The project was led by the International Rescue Committee in partnership with Concern Worldwide, Restless Development and BBC Media Action.

EAGER engaged girls aged 13-19 who had never been to school or had dropped out of school in a Learning Programme to improve their functional literacy, numeracy, financial literacy and life skills. This was followed by a Transition period in which girls prepared and implemented self-directed Empowerment Plans to enable their transition into further learning and/or earning opportunities within a context of increased support from their families and community. In addition, EAGER adopted a Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) Strategy to foster and sustain a supportive environment for girls' education on a national level. Two radio programmes, one a factual show and another a drama-discussion show, and social media content were produced to address underlying discriminatory attitudes, including those resulting from harmful social and gender norms, that impose barriers in girls' lives. EAGER's SBCC Strategy worked in tandem with the project's Community Engagement Strategy, aiming to catalyse changes in the attitudes and behaviours of parents, caregivers and other stakeholders toward girls empowerment so that the project's impacts would sustain in the future.

i) [Human Development Report 2021/2022](#)

ii) [Sierra Leone overview, World Bank](#)

iii) [WFP Sierra Leone Country Brief, December 2020](#)

iv) [World Bank](#)

v) [Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2019](#)

Context: Barriers and risks for adolescent girls

To formulate EAGER's SBCC Strategy, formative research was conducted at the inception stage of the project. The study revealed the following barriers that undermine the rights of adolescent girls in Sierra Leone. Many of these same challenges were identified in EAGER's Baseline Evaluation, thereby establishing the need to address these core issues under the project's community engagement and SBCC strands of work in order to realise sustainable impact.^{vi}

- ▶ Poverty is a systemic barrier that prevents girls from achieving their goals and exacerbates unsupportive attitudes toward them. Gender norms that position boys and men as providers and decision makers make boys' education preferable to that of girls, especially in times of economic hardship. At baseline, 72% of girls reported that they were previously unable to attend school because their families lacked the money to pay fees and 23% said this was because they needed to work at home. Girls also reported that they lacked key resources for daily living: 46% were food insecure, 43% were impoverished and 9% were their own head of household.
- ▶ The high prevalence of early pregnancy across Sierra Leone leads to social stigma and the loss of family and community support for girls. Girls who get pregnant face higher social sanctions than boys, including being forced to drop out of school. At the time of the baseline evaluation, 56% of girls were mothers, 7% were pregnant and 19% of girls reported that they were previously unable to attend school because they had a child or became pregnant.
- ▶ Early/forced marriage is a cause and a consequence of girls dropping out of school. Marriage of girls under 18 is still prevalent despite being prohibited by law and people increasingly recognising its negative impacts on girls. As many as 44% of girls were married and exposed to the risk of intimate partner violence during the baseline evaluation.
- ▶ Girls with disabilities face family shame, social stigma and fear. Parents consider girls with disabilities to be a burden on household finances and do not consider it necessary to educate them. Misconceptions about the causes of disability lead parents to hide or abandon children with disabilities. At baseline, 15% of girls self-reported to be living with a disability and 60% of these were in whole or in part due to daily experiences of anxiety or depression
- ▶ There is limited involvement of girls in household discussions and decision-making. During the baseline, girls reported that they had little decision-making power over their education: 66% stated that they could not choose their own educational path and were subject to the decisions of others. Even when some level of discussion takes place within families, girls are rarely able to exercise their agency to influence decisions on their lives.
- ▶ Formal education is considered important for girls, but it is mostly associated with financial security and a higher social status for families. Men, especially male partners, support education as a means to generate household income, but baseline qualitative data presented the nuance that many did not approve of changes that would alter traditional gender norms. Beyond formal education, social and gender norms define the skills that are appropriate for girls to pursue, such as tailoring, soap-making and hairdressing. Girls often do not have information on skills development choices.
- ▶ Parents, caregivers and partners are major decision makers in a girl's life. Peers are also key influencers. Girls fear mockery from their peers if they return to school after pregnancy. They are also motivated when they see their friends going to school. Prominent community influencers include chiefs, religious leaders and mammy queens. Positive female role models, such as women who are financially independent, can inspire adolescent girls to achieve their goals.
- ▶ There is support for girls to enjoy different opportunities and succeed in life. However, gender disparity remains entrenched in norms such as boys being more deserving of support than girls because they will be responsible for taking care of their families. At baseline, only 4% of girls demonstrated awareness of gender norms, suggesting that these norms are largely internalised through socialisation and the absence of female role models.

vi) The EAGER Baseline Evaluation was conducted in March 2020 by IMC Worldwide and Dalan Associates. The [Baseline Research Policy Brief](#) summarises key findings.



Theory of Change

Learnings from the formative research and baseline evaluation confirmed the need for strategic engagement with the people who had influence in girls' lives and informed the project's multiple approaches to community engagement at local and national levels. The SBCC approach drew from the socio-ecological model of social and behaviour change and sought to influence gender-related power dynamics and drivers of change. This model emphasises that multiple levels of social influence, including peers, family, community and the wider society, exist around an individual's ability to act and these levels are interactive and reinforcing.

EAGER's SBCC work was led by BBC Media Action and based on the organisation's understanding of how media and communication can contribute to shifts in attitudes, behaviours and norms, as outlined in its strategies on health communication^{vii}, advancing gender inequality^{viii} and supporting young people^{ix}. Insights from formative research undertaken by BBC Media Action in 2019, which focused on understanding barriers, facilitators and power dynamics, helped to prioritise the overarching SBCC objective for EAGER as: "Increased support for education, learning and skills development opportunities for marginalised girls." The drivers of change that media and communication could influence at different levels of the socio-ecological model were identified as knowledge and understanding; discussion and dialogue; and attitudes. By targeting these drivers, EAGER's SBCC interventions were designed to establish an enabling environment for girls and to bring the community and girls closer together to find solutions.

Informed by this approach, EAGER's SBCC theory of change assumed that:

IF adults and girls had the facts and information about girls' education or skills' development opportunities, and the choices available to achieve these;
AND had talked to each other to exchange information, ideas, problems and solutions;
AND had learned or been motivated by watching or hearing how other people like them support girls, or how other girls have overcome barriers;

THEN support toward girls' education and empowerment will increase.

The SBCC approach was integrated into the overall EAGER theory of change with the assumptions that:

IF national and local radio programmes exploring the barriers and norms related to girls' education were broadcast;
AND if there were opportunities and resources to promote discussion and dialogue within communities that explored the barriers and norms related to girls' education and empowerment;
AND community members regularly listened to and/or engaged in dialogue surrounding issues relating to girls' education and empowerment;

THEN communities that participated in such discussions and received trusted and impartial information will experience a shift in attitudes and understand and support adolescent girls in navigating barriers to education and their transition to adulthood; and marginalised girls will have significantly improved learning outcomes and will transition to education, training or employment.

vii) [BBC Media Action \(2017\), Health: Strategy and Approach \(2017-2010\)](#)

viii) [BBC Media Action \(2017\), Gender inequality: Our Approach and Strategy \(July 2017\)](#)

ix) [BBC Media Action \(2019\), Young People: Our Approach and Strategy \(January 2019\) – available on request](#)

Key audiences

Since EAGER's SBCC theory of change focused on shifting discriminatory attitudes toward adolescent girls, activities were designed to target the community around a girl that exerts influence on her life. Based on the formative research, in Sierra Leone, this comprises parents, caregivers, partners and community and religious leaders who make decisions around an adolescent girl's life. Families were found to be the strongest influencer for an adolescent girl, both financially and emotionally. Adults in the community are key gatekeepers of information for girls, as well as instigators of discussions with them. Community leaders like chiefs, religious heads and mammy queens were seen as important stakeholders due to their influence over parents and the enforcement of laws. Thus, **parents, caregivers and community stakeholders closest to adolescent girls formed the primary target audience** for SBCC activities.

Adolescent girls were identified as the secondary audience because the aim of the SBCC Strategy was to bring girls and communities together to discuss challenges and solutions to accessing education, learning and other opportunities. EAGER's radio and social media content were girl-led and girl-centered, and created to role model girls' agency. The aim was for girls to feel seen, heard, involved and represented, thereby changing the dynamics between girls and those in their social networks from 'power over' to 'power with' and building an environment which enabled girls to have 'power to' shape their lives, supported by those around them.^x

Media platforms and formats

A **multi-platform and multi-format approach** was used in EAGER to leverage media in different but mutually reinforcing ways. This approach was anchored in evidence from BBC Media Action's work in Sierra Leone and other countries that shows how such a combination effect can transform attitudes and norms because it not only reaches audiences at scale but also impacts them in multiple ways.^{xi}

Radio was selected as the main platform for sharing information to influence target audiences. This choice was informed by the formative research, which established radio ownership and listenership to be high across age groups and regions in the country. Radio was also found to be the most trusted platform in Sierra Leone. The **two radio formats** used for EAGER were a factual programme (national and local versions) and a drama- discussion programme, both of which were broadcast on 64 stations in all 16 districts of Sierra Leone.

The **factual programme**, Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap (When the Girl Child Stands), was a weekly 30-minute show that was broadcast from July 2020-November 2022. It showcased real-life stories of adolescent girls through interviews and discussions. The programme's design was driven by the formative research, which found that peer and role model stories attract high levels of engagement from adolescent girls, and parents, caregivers and community stakeholders. The programme was topical and relevant as it highlighted foundational topics on girls' empowerment, such as girl's voice and agency, alongside reinforcing the importance of education, learning and support networks. It often took an issue of national importance, such as the severity of the rainy season or the rising cost of living, and explored it through the eyes of girls. This helped to reinforce the idea of girls' participation and value in discussion, decision-making, public and family life. The show also included girls as co-presenters, showcasing the role that girls can play in public discourse. Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap was aligned with EAGER's Life Skills curriculum to fortify its messages in the communities where EAGER's learning and transition activities were being delivered and to amplify the same messages to nationwide audiences (See Annex). Ideas for the programme were also drawn from audience research, production teams and their experiences in the field, and from partner stations.

x) <https://www.powercube.net/other-forms-of-power/expressions-of-power/>

xi) BBC Media Action (2020) Life in Lulu: How can radio drama shift peoples' perceptions around violence and support women to resolve disputes?; BBC Media Action (2017) Can a health drama and discussion show affect the drivers of behaviour change?

EAGER directly supported 18 radio stations in its 10 implementation districts to produce local versions of Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap, which added value to the national programme by lending more context to the content. The programmes were produced under the guidance of four BBC Media Action mentors, who provided structured in-person and online guidance to the stations to improve their capacity to produce gender-sensitive content. At each partner station, the mentor worked closely with a producer and a presenter as their mentees. The mentees were chosen on the basis of their production skills and previous experience in producing gender-sensitive radio programming. Along with regular mentoring support, partner station staff were trained on BBC editorial values, safeguarding standards, SBCC, girls' agency and gender-sensitive reporting, and diversity and inclusion, to be able to continue producing high-quality content beyond the life of the project.

A weekly **drama-discussion programme**, Kotoku Baray (Open Secret), was also produced under the EAGER project and broadcast from May 2022–November 2022. According to the formative research, it was critical to include SRHR subjects in a holistic SBCC Strategy since such issues pose some of the biggest difficulties for adolescent girls in exercising their education and other fundamental rights. Moreover, audiences wanted these topics to be discussed on the radio to help role model ways for them to then talk about these issues in their homes. Based on BBC Media Action's experience in media and communication for development, drama was identified as the ideal format to focus on sensitive questions around sexual health, relationships and consent, early pregnancy, early/forced marriage, and gender-based violence. Drama could present the lived experiences of girls through fictional characters while mitigating protection and safeguarding risks associated with using real girls' voices and experiences of violence and sex, including risks of backlash towards girls within their communities, and causing further harm to girls should contributors be identified and hence exposed to additional distress through reliving traumatic experiences.

Each 15-minute instalment of the drama was followed by a 15-minute pre-recorded discussion segment. The discussion component provided a safe way to engage audiences on the issues represented in the drama by inviting them to comment on the stories of the fictional characters, and not their own personal experiences. Each discussion segment was driven by a key question or talking point around the relevant drama episode and a discussion guide was created for it. BBC Media Action's production team used this guide to lead a moderated listening group with community members and experts, after they had heard the linked episode. Participants for the listening group were often family members of EAGER girls. Questions were carefully selected and framed to minimise risks such as disclosures of gender-based violence or other forms of abuse, stigmatisation and reinforcing harmful gender norms and practices, and developed in consultation with EAGER's thematic experts on safeguarding, protection and SRHR. Where relevant, referral information from the EAGER service directory was shared during the segment. The discussions were pre-recorded and edited to ensure the protection of contributors and the elimination of mis/disinformation.

Complementing the production and broadcasting of the two radio shows, **community outreach** was conducted to take this content to audiences who would have found it difficult to listen to the programmes on the radio. Field reports showed that several EAGER communities were media dark with zero or low radio signal reach. Moreover, household chores made it challenging for EAGER girls and their families to listen to the programmes during regular broadcasts. BBC Media Action's journalism mentors and EAGER's community-based Mentors facilitated radio listening sessions for Girls' Clubs in a selected sample of communities, where they played and discussed episodes of the factual and drama-discussion programmes. The full series of episodes for both programmes was distributed to all Girls' Clubs on USB drives fitted with Bluetooth speakers. EAGER Mentors were also encouraged to play the content for girls when there was time or particular relevance during Life Skills' sessions. Radio listening guides were produced describing what the programmes were about, and the topic and main discussion point of each episode, in simple language and in a user-friendly format that took into account girls' literacy levels acquired at the end of the EAGER Learning Programme. The listening guides were distributed to all the Girls' Clubs to further motivate girls to listen to the radio shows on their own.

Radio content was provided to BBC Media Action's radio monitors, who were community members recruited to report on broadcasting schedules and quality during the project. The radio monitors, including teachers, students and public health officers, played the programmes at community events and in schools. Furthermore, a special series of the factual show on the topic of "two-way discussion" was recorded with community members in 10 of the most remote areas where EAGER's activities were implemented. These communities also received all the radio content, speakers and listening guides with the aim of encouraging communal listening and discussion.

Despite its limited reach in Sierra Leone, EAGER used **social media** to share stories celebrating the achievements of girls with influencers and with decision-makers in government and other organisations. BBC Media Action’s Sierra Leone Facebook page, which has the largest following of any Facebook page in the country, was used to disseminate clear, brief and focused ideas, rather than trying to explore complex or sensitive issues. Social media stories, in the form of video, audio and graphics, were planned in sync with radio content. Analytics tools available within Facebook were used to monitor audience behaviour and engagement. Tools like CrowdTangle were also harnessed to listen into Facebook conversations and get insights about trending topics of interest related to the project.

Communication approaches

Radio and social media content for EAGER was **girl-centred**, showing and not just telling audiences about girls’ agency. The strapline for programming was: “Seeing the world through the stories and experiences of girls.” Stories were told in the voices of and from the perspectives of girls. On the factual programme, girls were interviewed as contributors and frequently appeared as co-presenters together with a BBC Media Action producer-presenter, coming up with ideas for content, conducting interviews and introducing items on the programme. Many episodes included EAGER girls as participants. With this girl-centred approach, the programmes sought to encourage inter-generational discussion between adolescent girls, their families and communities. Girls’ lived experiences were shared with audiences for them to recognise their right to be seen, heard and involved in decision-making. Content was built around talking with girls and not just about girls; it featured adults alongside girls not instead of girls; and it always enabled girls to speak for themselves.

The radio programmes were designed to increase knowledge on problems but also to **present solutions** for them. Positive, inspiring and empowering stories helped audiences to see what girls are capable of and what they can achieve when they are supported and valued. Girls who are doing unusual things that challenge gender norms and stereotypes or have overcome challenges were celebrated as **role models**.

Both the programmes were developed to be entertaining and **engaging** with the aim of making an impact on a large cross-section of people. The programmes involved rich stories that audiences could relate to, instead of feeling that they were being lectured to. Through such storytelling, parents, caregivers, community stakeholders, and adolescent girls and boys, were prompted to think, discuss and question their attitudes and behaviors on girls’ empowerment.

The two radio programmes were produced in a manner so as to take audiences on a journey through the life of the EAGER project. In alignment with EAGER’s Life Skills curriculum, which advanced from foundational subjects to more sensitive materials, content for the factual and drama-discussion programmes was developed to **build trust** with audiences and take them from **gender-sensitive toward more gender-transformative content**. With the aim of increasing knowledge, discussion and supportive attitudes toward girls’ learning and skills development, the factual programme covered foundational topics such as two-way discussion, positive parenting and trusting and listening to girls. These conversations paved the way for more complex discussions around SRHR, including sex, relationships and consent, early/unwanted pregnancy and gender-based violence, on the drama-discussion programme.

EAGER’s protection principles, including the core principle of **Do No Harm**, and the BBC’s **editorial guidelines and child protection and safeguarding policies**, were strictly adhered to during content production. It was recognised that audiences, particularly children and adolescents, can be frightened or distressed by the portrayal of violence and the risk of imitation is real. iDue to these risks and the BBC’s policy to never use fear as a driver of change, the drama in particular did not portray any scenes of violence. This was also in line with Sierra Leone’s media regulations around child protection. Care was taken that complex issues such as forced marriage and sex were never portrayed in a graphic or gratuitous way. Thematic experts from BBC Media Action and EAGER advised on language, framing and presentation to mitigate risks. The EAGER service directory was used to inform audiences about support services, when applicable.

Creative process

The editorial process for the **factual programme** was run jointly for the national and local versions, and for accompanying social media content. The production teams worked closely together to produce content that was complementary and reinforcing. Thematic specialists from EAGER participated in the production process, without infringing on the BBC's editorial independence.

Broad topics and objectives were set at quarterly review and planning meetings, following which more detailed creative briefs were written for each topic ahead of fortnightly planning workshops. Draft versions of these briefs were shared with EAGER's thematic experts, as well as relevant thematic advisers at BBC Media Action where applicable, ahead of the workshop. Feedback from the EAGER team often included links to relevant documents or contacts that could aid the team's understanding of the issue being explored. The planning workshops were held every two weeks, with two episodes discussed each time (90 minutes for each episode). Working in such a fortnightly cycle made travel and resourcing more efficient. EAGER's thematic experts were invited to participate in this process, along with all members of BBC Media Action's factual radio production team, social media production team, and relevant research and project staff.

At the planning workshops, the production team discussed the journey of change for audiences, using the draft creative brief as a guide. The briefs detailed the background to the topic and objective. In the workshop, the team brainstormed barriers to achieving the desired behaviour change objective – and motivators for audiences in achieving that change. This inspired discussions around the detailed content for covering the topic, including profiles of contributors, main questions for each interview and the approach to covering these. These content ideas were weighed against BBC editorial values, safeguarding principles and the concept of girls' agency to make sure that the programmes were role-modelling girls shaping their own lives and adults supporting them in doing so. Risks and mitigations were also discussed for each topic and formed an important part of the planning process for each programme. Each planning workshop resulted in a finalised creative brief on the topic and a draft programme plan, which the production team then developed further with details of contributors who met the agreed profile or focus. These planning workshops were replicated by the journalism mentors at their partner stations.

Once the material had been gathered, all media content was reviewed along with a draft script of the programme. This review was led by BBC Media Action's head of production for the national programme and by the journalism mentor for the partner station. After appropriate edits had been made, the presenter's script was recorded and the show was put together. A final review of the content by the head of production and country director was required before the material was signed off for broadcasting. For the local shows, the journalism mentors and station managers reviewed the content prior to broadcast. The head of production listened to at least one programme from each partner station each month and provided detailed feedback.

To design a **drama** that not only delivered on EAGER's objectives but also resonated with audiences across Sierra Leone, the production team began by conducting immersive research. Field immersion consisted of the creative team exploring spaces where girls live, interviews with marginalised girls and organisations who support marginalised girls, and visits to health clinics or other service providers to understand processes.

Workshops were then held to develop the drama universe or the creative frame for the drama, including the setting, characters and overarching story. These workshops included inputs from experts and audience members, and adolescent girls, to sense check the creative direction. Before the team started writing, but in line with the formative and immersive research, 24 discussion points were devised to act as a roadmap for the series. Each episode would drive towards a discussion around one point. The topics and talking points were discussed with EAGER's thematic specialists. The drama universe, characters, episode synopses, discussion talking points, and risks and mitigations, were compiled into a single document that set the foundation for the series.

Dialogue was written in a manner to give audiences actions and statements to which they could react. Throughout the drama, characters were faced with different choices and challenges. Alongside each script, a guide was developed for the discussion segment in order to provide questions to which audiences could react. The discussion segment gave audiences the chance to explore the consequences of the actions of different characters and to relate what they heard in the drama to their own lives.

Production began once the entire series had been written and scripts had been reviewed and signed off. Recording took place at an outdoor location to lend authentic sounds to the programme. Recorded episodes of the drama were then played to community groups to produce the discussion segment of the programme, with experts invited to be part of the recordings when relevant. The discussions were pre-recorded to prevent the dissemination of any misinformation and/or community conflicts. The drama and discussion segments were edited together as a half-hour programme for broadcast.

EAGER's **social media** content was distributed through BBC Media Action's Facebook page from August 2021–September 2022. Social media outputs were produced with the same editorial, production and safeguarding standards that were followed for radio content. Posts were aimed at creating awareness and empathy with the theme of the project, and to engage decision-makers and influencers with the topics.

The social media team reviewed the content being planned for radio and adapted it for social media, for instance by doing video interviews with radio contributors who consented to this. While obtaining informed consent, contributors were explained that social media content could be seen by anyone in any location and that this was beyond BBC Media Action's control. Not all radio contributors consented to appear on social media, and not all topics explored in the factual radio programme were deemed suitable for social media. The Facebook account was moderated seven days a week, according to the BBC Editorial Guidelines, thus creating a safe space for audiences to engage with the content. Filters were also set up to prevent the publication of any comments which included offensive language.

Research and learning

In addition to monitoring the number of episodes produced and broadcast, BBC Media Action conducted a series of studies to understand the effects of the radio programmes in promoting supportive attitudes towards girls' education and empowerment, and to adapt media content for better impact. These SBCC-specific studies complemented the wider baseline, midline and endline evaluations of the EAGER project.

SBCC activities were evaluated against the following indicators:

- ▶ Listening and engaging with EAGER radio programmes result in more positive attitudes towards girls' education and empowerment amongst the wider population.
- ▶ Community members regularly listen to and/or engage in dialogue surrounding issues relating to girls' opportunities, education and safety.
- ▶ Community members, including caregivers of girls, demonstrate more supportive attitudes and/or behaviours toward girls' opportunities, education and safety.

Formative research was carried out at the inception phase of the project to identify drivers and barriers around girls' empowerment, and to inform the design of SBCC activities. The qualitative study sought to answer research questions on attitudes, behaviours and norms around girls' education and empowerment; decision-makers and influencers in girls' lives at the family and community levels; and audience preferences in relation to girl-centered media content. Findings from the SBCC formative research and EAGER's Baseline Evaluation were used to develop a detailed SBCC communication framework, which described the connections between attitude change objectives, target audiences, barriers and motivators, media formats and channels, and risks and mitigations. The communication framework stood as the basic architecture on which the radio programmes and social media content were built.

To examine whether the factual and drama-discussion programmes would resonate with target audiences, **pilot episodes were pre-tested** in 2019 and 2022 respectively. The pre-testing studies looked at the appeal and relevance of the formats, content, storylines and characters by asking parents and caregivers of adolescent girls and boys, community stakeholders such as healthcare workers and teachers, and adolescent girls and boys if the content was engaging and how it could be improved. Rapid feedback was provided to the production teams to refine the programme design and material ahead of broadcasting.



Key results

After two years of production and distribution, EAGER's radio programmes and social media stories were successful in reaching a large proportion of the population and contributed to supportive attitudes towards girls' empowerment.

Some of the key results of SBCC activities were:

- ▶ Around 1.7 million people (31% of the 15+ population in Sierra Leone) listened to at least one episode of Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap or Kotoku Baray; around 1.1 million (21% of the 15+ population) listened to at least every other episode of either programme (defined as regular reach).
- ▶ BBC Media Action's Sierra Leone Facebook page reached over 716,000 unique users, with EAGER content achieving the highest figures, averaging over 50,000 reach per month. The content generated over 340,000 total engagements, with EAGER posts producing the most engagements as well, with an average monthly engagement figure of 31,000.
- ▶ Among target audiences, 23% caregivers, 19% marginalised girls and 23% of people living with disabilities were regular listeners of either radio programme.
- ▶ 56% of EAGER girls were regular listeners of either radio programme. 20% of people living in EAGER districts were regular listeners of the factual programme; 12% of people living in EAGER districts were regular listeners of the drama-discussion programme.
- ▶ 54% of regular listeners reported that they had taken an action in support of girls as a result of listening to the radio programmes. Among them, 61% reported that they had enrolled a girl in school; 48% said they had enrolled a girl in school after having a child.
- ▶ 74% of regular listeners were significantly more likely to strongly agree that girls and boys should have the same right to education, compared with 68% of non-listeners.
- ▶ 66% of regular listeners strongly agreed that the programmes had made them realise the importance of supporting girls to make their own choices.
- ▶ 58% of regular listeners strongly agreed that the programmes had made them realise the importance of listening to girls' views and ideas.
- ▶ 31% of regular listeners were significantly more likely to strongly disagree that men should not discuss menstruation and menstrual hygiene with their daughters.
- ▶ 29% of regular listeners were significantly more likely to strongly disagree that talking to girls about contraception may encourage them to start having sex, compared with 23% of non-listeners.
- ▶ 49% of regular listeners were significantly more likely to strongly agree that a girl/woman of any age should have the right to choose who they want to marry (compared with 43% of non-listeners); and 40% of regular listeners were significantly more likely to strongly agree that a girl/woman has the right to say 'no' to marriage (compared with 33% of non-listeners).

Three rounds of qualitative **audience research** were completed to track shifts in attitudes as a result of listening to the factual programme. Conducted in the form of a longitudinal panel at relatively equal intervals during the factual show's production (November-December 2020, June-July 2021 and April-May 2022), the study followed a set of eight families with adolescent girls and boys to gather feedback on how they had engaged with the show, whether the topics were relevant and had sparked discussion in their families, how effective the programme had been in influencing supportive attitudes toward adolescent girls, and the challenges that prevented them from acting on what they had heard on the programme. Following an adaptive programming approach, research findings from the audience panel were used to provide ideas and feedback to the production team to develop upcoming radio and social media stories.



A qualitative **midline study** was undertaken in November-December 2021, which was an approximate mid-point for the factual programme, to document its emerging impacts and to produce recommendations for future episodes and activities. The evaluation assessed audience engagement and discussion around the show, as well as evidence of changes in knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and norms on girls' education. Research participants included regular listeners of the programme who were based in six out of the 10 districts where EAGER was implemented.

A mixed-methods **endline evaluation** was carried out in September-November 2022 after the completion of the factual and drama-discussion programmes. The endline explored associations between exposure to the radio programmes and changes observed in knowledge, discussion and attitudes on girls' education among target audiences. In addition, the endline interrogated the impact of radio programming as part of the EAGER project to demonstrate if the SBCC strand had made any additional impact on adolescent girls reached through the project. It presented learnings from EAGER radio programming and made recommendations for future girls' education, empowerment and/or SBCC programmes.

Conclusion

EAGER's SBCC strategy reinforced its messages on girls' empowerment among adolescent girls, and their family and community members, in the project's implementation areas, while also amplifying these themes at the national level. Radio and social media content addressed different levels of the socio-ecological model on which the SBCC strategy was built, positively influencing knowledge and understanding; discussion and dialogue; and attitudes around girls' education, learning and development.

By harnessing the combination effect of a factual radio programme produced at the national and local levels, a drama-discussion programme, social media content and community outreach, SBCC activities reached a large audience base of parents and caregivers of adolescent girls and boys, community stakeholders and adolescent girls themselves.

EAGER's media content put a national spotlight on adolescent girls, showcasing their voices, ideas, solutions and aspirations. Despite the sensitivity of some topics such as sex, relationships and consent; early/forced marriage, early pregnancy and contraception; and menstruation and menstrual hygiene, target audiences continued to listen to the programmes and found them to be educational. Audience feedback and research continuously informed SBCC activities, keeping the content relevant and engaging.

Through its SBCC strategy, EAGER sought to build and sustain a supportive environment for girls' education and empowerment by shifting the discriminatory attitudes, including those related to social and gender norms, that limit the lives of adolescent girls. After two years of radio broadcasting and social media dissemination, research findings showed that positive attitudes on girls' rights to education and SRHR had strengthened among parents and caregivers, and also among adolescent girls. But it was also evident that SBCC activities had led to only limited changes in attitudes around underlying gender norms that assign girls and women to household roles, while privileging the education of boys. This result emphasised the challenge of transforming norms, which is a gradual process and requires more programmes like EAGER that combine learning, transition and SBCC programming in an integrated approach toward girls' empowerment.

Annex: Alignment of EAGER’s radio content and Life Skills curriculum

Many topics covered in the factual and drama-discussion programmes were aligned with EAGER’s Life Skills curriculum. The grid below maps episodes of the shows against relevant Life Skills sessions.

#	Session	Objectives	Skills	Relevant episodes -Factual programme	Relevant episodes -Drama-discussion programme
1	Welcome to EAGER!	Girls learn about the EAGER Life Skills programme Girls create their own Group Promise	Good communication, teamwork, creativity	Episode 42 – New and second chances	
2	Our Safe Space	Girls reflect on emotions and body language Girls discuss how to create a safe space for each other	Good communication, emotional awareness, positive body language		
3	People We Trust	Girls reflect on what it means to trust someone else Girls recognise the qualities of people they can trust, and people they should not trust	Teamwork, good communication, identification of safe people, critical thinking	Episode 65 – People we trust	Episode 1 – Trust and responsibility
4	Seeing Our Strengths	Girls understand how high or low self-esteem can affect us Girls see and name their own strengths and positive qualities	Self-reflection, good communication, confidence, giving encouragement	Episode 52 – Girls and leadership Episode 59 – Speaking out Episode 78 – Girls and advocacy	
5	Listening Skills	Girls learn about active listening Girl’s practice using active listening skills	Focusing, active listening, good communication, teamwork	Episode 9 – Two-way discussion	
6	Being a Good Friend	Girls think critically about the qualities of a good friend Girls reflect on how they can be a good friend to others	Good communication, relationship-building, building trust, teamwork	Episode 10 – Girls’ friendship Episode 24 – Friendship between girls and boys Episode 87 – International Friendship Day 2022	



7	Different Abilities	Girls develop greater empathy for people living with disabilities Girls reflect on how they can value and support girls living with disabilities	Empathy, kindness, being a good friend, observation, reflection	Episode 2 – Valuing all girls Episode 18 – Celebrating our differences Episode 41 – Disabilities not holding girls back	
8	Expressing Emotions	Girls learn how to identify and express strong emotions Girls practice listening to their body and focusing on their breath	Building trust, managing emotions, body awareness, breath awareness	Episode 9 – Two-way discussion Episode 29 – Listening to Girls Episode 59 – Speaking out	
9	Managing Stress	Girls know how to recognise the signs of stress Girls practice different ways to manage stress	Stress management, emotional awareness, managing emotions, body awareness	Episode 66 – Girls and stress Episode 90 – Girls and mental health Episode 91 – Girls and drug abuse	
10	Assertive Communication	Girls see the difference between passive, aggressive, and assertive communication Girls practice using assertive communication	Good communication, asserting choices, managing emotions	Episode 59 – Speaking out Episode 69 – Girls and power Episode 78 – Girls and advocacy	
11	Managing Disagreements	Girls learn how to use “I” statements Girls learn and practice: stop, think, and act	Managing disagreements, teamwork, managing emotions, mindful reactions	Episode 10 – Two-way discussion Episode 11 – Making decisions together	
12	Negotiation Skills	Girls reflect on the value of a win-win situation Girls practice communicating their choices	Negotiation skills, assertive communication, resolving disagreements	Episode 78 – Girls and advocacy	
13	Making Smart Decisions	Girls learn steps for making smart decisions Girls practice using these steps to make decisions	Decision-making, reflection, non-reactive behaviour, managing emotions, teamwork	Episode 23 – Healthy relationships Episode 30 – Girls’ choices	
14	Protecting Each Other	Girls understand how sickness can spread from person to person Girls learn and can communicate the critical times for handwashing	Good hygiene practices, safe food preparation, smart decision-making	Episode 7 and 25 – COVID-19 through the eyes of girls Episode 34 – Malaria through the eyes of girls	

15	Staying Healthy	Girls have a better understanding of malaria and fever Girls see the value of sleeping under a bednet and know how to use it properly	Smart decision-making, planning ahead, critical thinking, teamwork	Episode 34 – Malaria through the eyes of girls	
16	Changing Bodies	Girls reflect on their changing bodies Girls learn good menstrual hygiene practices	Good hygiene, body awareness, confidence, solidarity, good communication	Episode 22 – Talking to girls about periods Episode 37 – World Menstrual Hygiene Day 2021	Episode 1 – Trust and responsibility Episode 2 – Talking about sensitive issues Episode 13 – Menstrual hygiene and rights
17	Sex and Pregnancy	Girls learn the facts about sex and pregnancy Girls understand that they can protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy	Body awareness, critical thinking, smart decision-making, teamwork	Episode 70 – Talking to adolescents about sex relationships Episode 97 – Sex education in schools	Episode 3 – Safe sex Episode 11 – Access to services Episode 15 – Contraception
18	Sex and Consent	Girls understand that they have the right to say NO to sex Girls practice smart decision-making skills and assertive communication	Smart decision-making, critical thinking, setting boundaries, assertive communication	Episodes 31 and 32 – Mutual consent Episode 68 – Love relationships Episode 70 – Talking to adolescents about sex and relationships	Episodes 22 and 23 – Consent
19	Safe Sex	Girls see the value of safe sex Girls learn how to use a condom properly to prevent pregnancy and STIs	Body awareness, safety planning, assertive communication, critical thinking	Episodes 31 and 32 – Mutual consent Episode 68 – Love relationships Episode 70 – Talking to adolescents about sex and relationships	Episode 3 – Safe sex Episode 11 – Access to services Episode 15 – Contraception
20	Modern Contraceptives	Girls learn about 3 methods of modern contraception Girls understand they can make choices between contraceptives	Critical thinking, smart decision-making, planning ahead, asserting choices	Episode 70 – Talking to adolescents about sex and relationships	Episode 3 – Safe sex Episode 11 – Access to services Episode 15 – Contraception

21	Safety Planning	Girls see the value of safety planning Girls exchange ideas and think about their own safety plans	Critical thinking, planning ahead, smart decision-making, safety awareness, solidarity	Episode 16 and 17 – Safer world for girls Episodes 60 and 61 – Ending violence against women and girls	
22	Violence Against Girls	Girls understand that sex without consent is never okay, and girls are never at fault Girls understand the risks and what to do if this ever happens	Recognising violence, seeking support, empathy, kindness, emotional awareness	Episodes 31 and 32 – Mutual consent Episode 53 – A peaceful world for girls Episodes 60 and 61 – Ending violence against women and girls	Episodes 8, 9, 10 and 12 – Violence against women and girls
23	Early/Forced Marriage	Girls reflect on the realities and responsibilities of marriage Girls understand they have a right to delay marriage until after the legal age of 18	Assertive communication, assertive rights, recognising violence, seeking support		Episode 17 – Maturity Episodes 18 and 19 – Early and forced marriage
24	Responding to Violence	Girls are aware of different ways to respond to violence Girls reflect on how they can support each other in difficult situations	Critical thinking, safe responses, assertive communication, empathy, solidarity	Episode 93 – Identifying abuse in relationships Episode 94 – Violence and the law Episode 88 – Cyber bullying through the eyes of girls	Episodes 8, 9, 10 and 12 – Violence against women and girls
25	Exploitation and Abuse	Girls are more aware of exploitation and abuse Girls can identify warning signs to look out for	Knowing who to trust, asserting rights, recognising violence, teamwork, solidarity	Episode 93 – Identifying abuse in relationships Episode 94 – Violence and the law Episode 88 – Cyber bullying through the eyes of girls	Episodes 8, 9, 10 and 12 – Violence against women and girls
26	Trafficking	Girls understand the risks and warning signs of trafficking Girl's practice using their life skills to stay safe from trafficking	Critical thinking, safety planning, assertive communication, knowing who to trust	Episode 38 – Living with relatives Episode 81 – Human trafficking through the eyes of girls	

27	Gender	Girls understand the difference between Gender and Sex Girls understand that Gender rules are created by people, and can change	Critical thinking, observation, reflection, creative thinking	Episode 6 – Girls as well as boys	
28	Goals	Girls understand the difference between short-term and long-term goals Girls understand how to set a goal and take steps toward it	Setting goals, visioning, planning, creative thinking, critical thinking, problem-solving	Episode 14 – Our future through the eyes of girls Episode 20 – New Year 2021 through the eyes of girls Episode 50 – Finding opportunities Episode 63 – New Year 2022 through the eyes of girls	
29	Power With Others	Girls can identify negative peer pressure Girls understand the value of positive peer power and working together	Critical thinking, good communication, teamwork, solidarity, self-esteem, confidence	Episode 10 – Girls' friendship Episode 87 – International Friendship Day 2022 Episode 96 – Social life through the eyes of girls	
30	Using Our Power	Girls reflect on all they have learned in Life Skills, and on their power inside Girls think about different Learning, Household, and Community goals Girls think about collective action they can take for positive change	Self-esteem, reflection, confidence, teamwork, solidarity, visioning	Episode 11 – Learning for life Episode 89 – Girls making a difference	

