



How radio can build a more supportive environment for girls' education, learning, and empowerment

Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER)



► Background

Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER) is a UK Aid-funded Girls' Education Challenge (GEC) Leave No Girl Behind (LNGB) programme in Sierra Leone. The LNGB programme is focused on reaching the most educationally marginalised girls: those who are out of school and lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. According to Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2019 (DHS), only 43% of women aged 15 to 49 are literate, compared to 62% of men.

With a population of over 7 million people, Sierra Leone faces escalating poverty and inflation. Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was included in the low human development category in 2019, standing at 182 out of 189 countries and territories.¹ Economic pressures have undermined education outcomes overall and disproportionately affected girls' education and development.

Adolescent pregnancy and early marriage rates are among the highest in the world and are dominant causes of school drop-out rates among girls. Pregnant girls were not allowed to attend school or sit for examinations until 2020, when the government changed this policy. But stigma and discrimination persist for pregnant girls and adolescent mothers attending school.

To counter these barriers to girls' education, the government instituted the National Teenage Pregnancy Reduction Strategy (2013–2015) and its successor, the National Strategy for the Reduction of Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Marriage (2018–2022). Other policies on persons with disabilities, free quality school education, and radical inclusion have also been developed to fulfil government commitments on inclusive and accessible education.

**In Sierra Leone,
39% of females and
29% of males have
no education.**

 **The net attendance
ratio in schools (NAR):**

87% at the primary level
(89% for girls and 85% for boys).
45% at the secondary level
(44% for girls and 46% for boys).

 **21% of females aged
15 to 19 have started
childbearing.**

 **30% of women aged
20 to 24 years were
first married or in a
union before age 18.**

**61% of females aged
15 to 49 reported having
experienced physical
violence since the
age of 15.**

Source: [Demographic and Health Survey 2019](#)

1) [Briefing note for countries on the 2020 Human Development Report Sierra Leone](#)

► Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient Programme

EAGER is a four-year (2019–2023) girls' education and empowerment project that was implemented in 10 districts of Sierra Leone with funding from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), through the LNGB initiative of the GEC.

Through a consortium led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in partnership with Concern Worldwide, Restless Development, and BBC Media Action, EAGER created new learning opportunities for the most marginalised out-of-school (OOS) adolescent girls aged 13 to 19 who lacked basic literacy and numeracy skills — including girls who were pregnant or already mothers, married girls, girls with disabilities, and girls who were heading their own households.

The project aimed to equip these girls with significantly improved learning outcomes and enable their transition into further learning and/or earning opportunities, by building awareness of the challenges they face and encouraging support from their families, caregivers and the wider community.



Through an eight-month integrated learning programme, EAGER aims to significantly improve girls' learning outcomes for functional literacy and numeracy, as well as financial literacy and life skills.

In addition to working directly with OOS adolescent girls, EAGER also interfaced with the wider community through:

- ✓ The EAGER national and local radio programme and drama series: developed and produced by BBC Media Action with 108 radio episodes that show the world through the eyes and experiences of adolescent girls, and discuss key issues and barriers affecting girls.
- ✓ Social media content was produced for BBC Media Action's Sierra Leone Facebook page¹ to amplify themes from the radio shows and to specifically target young people and influencers.
- ✓ A series of seven community dialogues: with leaders and key influencers, as well as with EAGER girls' caregivers, to encourage action related to girls' education, protection, and opportunities.
- ✓ BBC Media Action's mentors provided training and guidance to 18 partner radio stations to produce high quality and localized gender-sensitive content.

This brief presents findings and recommendations from an endline evaluation of the reach, engagement, and impact of the two radio programmes produced by BBC Media Action for EAGER.

1) <https://www.facebook.com/bbcmciactionSL>



► Approach and theory of change

The EAGER project adopted a Social and Behaviour Change Communication ([SBCC](#)) strategy to address the discriminatory attitudes, including those related to gender norms. The approach aimed to impose barriers in girls' lives in order to create a more enabling environment for them, and to contribute to the sustainability of the project outcomes. EAGER's SBCC strategy posits that if caregivers and community influencers engage with gender-sensitive media content, they will know about, discuss, and adopt more enabling attitudes toward girls' education and opportunities.

EAGER's SBCC approach draws from the socio-ecological model¹ and aims to influence gender-related power dynamics and drivers of change (attitudes, knowledge and understanding, discussion and dialogue, and motivation through role modelling). It is informed by BBC Media Action's understanding of how media and communication can contribute to shifts in attitudes, behaviours and norms, as outlined in its strategies on health communication,² advancing gender equality³ and supporting young people⁴. The socio-ecological model emphasises that multiple levels of social influence (peers, family, community, and wider society) exist around an individual's ability to act and these levels are interactive and reinforcing. Using insights from formative research, BBC Media Action aimed to target these multiple levels of influence around the girls' social network through its SBCC. The radio programming targeted girls and their social network (e.g. family members, peers, and community leaders) and aimed to increase their knowledge about girls' opportunities, and encourage discussion and motivation through hearing how others support girls and the positive consequences of these actions in girls' lives.

1) McLeroy, K, Bibeau, D, Steckler, A, and Glanz K (1988) An Ecological Perspective on Health Promotion Programmes. *Health Education Quarterly*, 15(4): 351-377

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

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

4) BBC Media Action (2019), Young People: Our Approach and Strategy (January 2019) — *available on request*



► EAGER radio programmes

EAGER's SBCC activities included two national radio programmes and partnerships with 18 community radio stations to produce local radio discussion shows based on the national programmes.

Since the SBCC strategy focused on transforming discriminatory attitudes and practices towards adolescent girls, the primary target audience for the radio programmes was the community around girls (caregivers and community stakeholders) that exerts influence on their lives. Adolescent girls formed the secondary audience for the radio programmes as the aim was to bring a community together to discuss and find solutions to the barriers facing girls.

A formative study conducted by BBC Media Action for EAGER in July–September 2019 showed that decisions around an adolescent girl's life are mainly made by her parents/caregivers, and by her partner after she is married. This is significant in a context with high rates of early/forced marriage. The EAGER Baseline evaluation¹ findings on the contextual realities of out-of-school adolescent girls across the 10 districts where the project was implemented reflected this, noting that 44% of enrolled girls were married or living with a partner, and 58% had at least one child. The EAGER Baseline evaluation also confirmed how girls had little decision-making power over their education — 66% of girls enrolled in EAGER at baseline stated that they could not choose their own educational path and were subject to the decisions of others.



Factual radio show

Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap
(When the Girl Child Stands) was a weekly 30-minute, BBC Media Action branded radio magazine show broadcast from July 2020 - November 2022.



Drama radio show

Kotoku Baray (Open Secret) was a short-format, BBC Media Action branded weekly radio drama and discussion show broadcast from May 2022 - November 2022.

1) The EAGER Baseline Evaluation was conducted in March 2020 by IMC Worldwide and Dalan Consultants. [The Baseline Research Policy Brief](https://girleducationchallenge.org/media/j0wfwtbk/eager-lngb-baseline-evaluation.pdf) summarises the key finding. The full report is available at: <https://girleducationchallenge.org/media/j0wfwtbk/eager-lngb-baseline-evaluation.pdf>

► Research, Evaluation and Learning

BBC Media Action conducted an [endline evaluation](#) of the EAGER radio programme documenting the reach and impact of the two national radio programmes. A mixed-method approach was deployed.

Quantitative survey

A nationally representative survey	Additional sample
3,048 individuals aged over 15 in all 16 districts of Sierra Leone.	555 adolescent girls aged between 13 and 19 years who participated in the EAGER project in the 10 implementation districts.

Qualitative research

Focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) were carried out to gain deeper understanding of how the radio programmes had influenced target audiences and to triangulate findings from the quantitative research. These took place in six out of 10 districts in which EAGER was implemented.¹

Target Audience	Methodology	Number of FGDs/IDIs
Caregivers of marginalised girls (Females)	FGDs	6
Caregivers of marginalised girls (Males)	FGDs	6
Marginalised adolescent girls between 13 and 19 years	FGDs	4
Marginalised adolescent girls between 13 and 19 years	IDIs	7
Adolescent boys	FGDs	4
Community stakeholders	IDIs	9
EAGER girls	FGDs	11

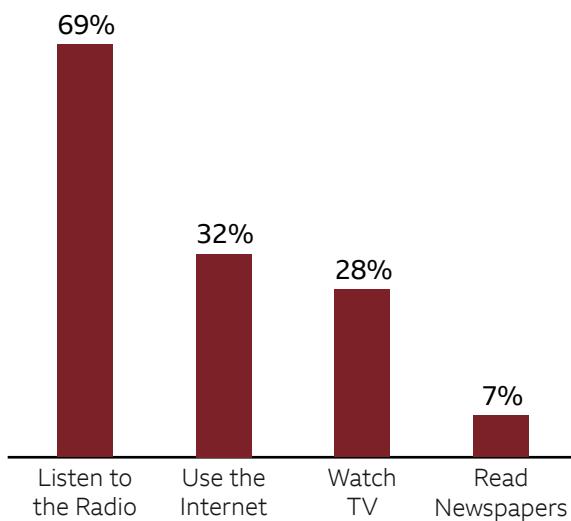
1) According to EAGER's definition of sub-groups, marginalised girls were categorised for this evaluation as those who are married or living with a partner, or have some form of disability, or have not attended or dropped out of school, or have children or were pregnant during the time of interview. Community stakeholders included a community chief, female leader, youth leader, health worker, religious leaders (Muslim/Christian), partner of an adolescent girl, and teachers (formal and vocational).

► Findings

Reach: Radio is an effective platform for reaching audiences at scale — EAGER radio shows were listened to by almost a third of the population (31%)

Radio remains the most used platform in Sierra Leone. A total of 69% of respondents reported listening to the radio at least once a week.¹ This compares to 32% who reported using the internet, 28% who had watched television, and just 7% who had read newspapers.

Figure 1: Media platforms accessed²



Source: BBC Media Action EAGER Endline Survey October & November 2022 (base = 3,048)

Males are significantly more likely than females to listen to the radio on a weekly basis (74% compared to 65%). Urban respondents in this survey were also significantly more likely to be regular radio listeners compared to their rural counterparts — 73% of urban respondents reported listening to the radio at least weekly, compared with 66% of rural respondents.

This makes radio an ideal vehicle to address socio-cultural barriers affecting girls in Sierra Leone.

This evaluation found that 21% of the population aged 15 and above in Sierra Leone were regular listeners (listening to at least every other episode) of either of the EAGER radio shows, approximately 1.1 million people.

Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap achieved a larger audience than *Kotoku Baray*, with 27% of the population (1.5 million people) who had listened to at least one episode ('reached') and 17% (0.9 million people) who had listened to at least every other episode ('reached regularly'), compared to 16% of the population (900,000 people) reached by *Kotoku Baray*, and 11% reached regularly (600,000 people).

This was likely due to *Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap*'s longer broadcast span (July 2020–November 2022) compared to *Kotoku Baray*'s shorter broadcast (May 2022–November 2022).

Table 1: Reach of EAGER radio programmes

	Reach	Regularly Reached
Total Combined Reach	31% (1.7 million)	21% (1.1 million)
<i>Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap</i>	27% (1.5 million)	17% (900,000)
<i>Kotoku Baray</i>	16% (900,000)	11% (600,000)

Source: BBC Media Action EAGER Endline Evaluation Survey October & November 2022, (n=3048).

1) The Media Landscape Data: <https://rescue.app.box.com/s/2gtngvh6z6i4up1ysxwyhko7sfvyyuzz/folder/198918804681>

2) 'Use the Internet' includes respondents who use the Internet, including platforms such as Facebook or Instagram.

Reach: EAGER radio programmes regularly reached a quarter of caregivers, its key target audience

The radio programmes were successful in reaching a diverse audience, where the proportion of regular listeners amongst key target groups (caregivers and girls), was similar to the population overall.

- ▶ Nearly a quarter of caregivers (23%) were regularly reached by *either* of the radio shows.
- ▶ Almost a fifth of marginalised girls (19%) were regularly reached by *either* of the radio shows.¹
- ▶ Target audiences who are typically harder to reach were represented relatively strongly among those regularly reached by the programmes. For example, 23% of people living with a disability were regularly reached by either of the radio shows.²



GETTY

The radio programmes reached EAGER girls both via national broadcast radio and through targeted girls listening groups. Four in five (80%) of EAGER girls who had attended the listening groups, listened to at least one episode, and 56% had listened to every other episode (regularly reached). EAGER girls frequently mentioned how they liked that the programmes educated them, that they learned new skills to improve their lives, and that the programmes addressed issues that concern them.

Discussion: EAGER radio programming encourages more frequent discussion of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues

The formative research for EAGER highlighted **early pregnancy** as one of the major issues affecting young girls in Sierra Leone. Participants in the formative research study, including girls, referred to early pregnancy as the key reason for girls to drop out of school. The EAGER baseline found that 57.5% were mothers, and 7% were pregnant at the time of the baseline assessment.

In response, EAGER radio programmes aimed to provide trustworthy information and shift harmful attitudes around these issues. *Kotoku Baray* was the main radio programme that dealt with SRHR attitudes. The drama was a suitable format for exploring these sensitive issues and ensured that adolescent girls were not exposed to any harm by relating their stories on the factual show, *Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap*.

 According to the 2019 Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), only **24%** of girls and women aged 15 to 19, who are unmarried and sexually active or are married, use a modern form of contraception.

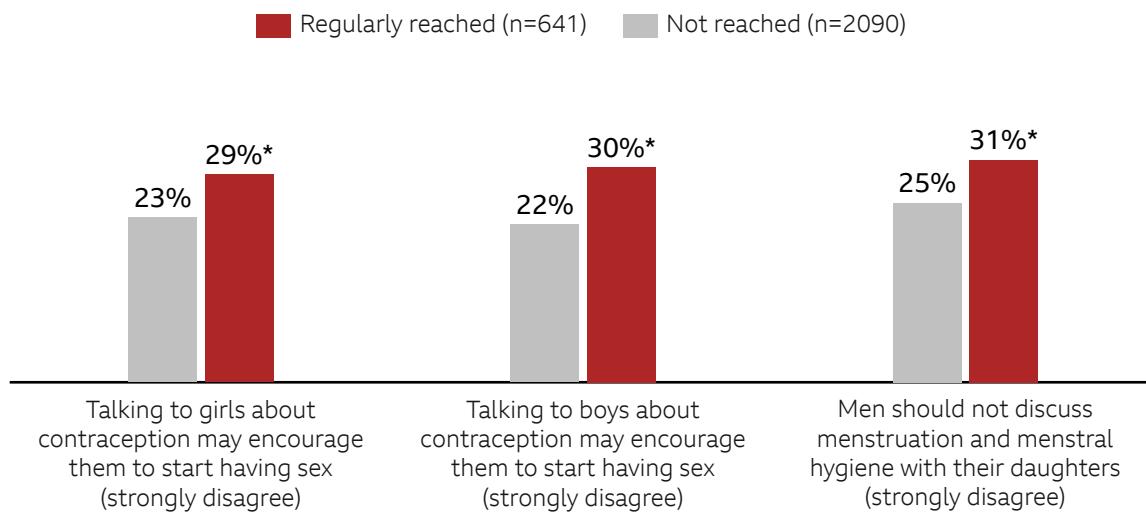
1) The base size of marginalised girls for this survey is small — only 200 girls were marginalized in this sample and only 37 were regularly listeners of either show.

2) Survey respondents were identified as living with a disability and/or marginalised adolescent girls based on answers to a series of survey questions (i.e., respondents did not self-identify as this), and were subsequently grouped for analysis purposes.



Analysis showed that regular exposure to EAGER radio programming is linked with significantly more positive attitudes to SRHR. As depicted in Figure 2 below, regular listeners were significantly more likely to strongly disagree with a range of statements around SRHR:

Figure 2: Attitudes towards sexual and reproductive health (regularly reached v not reached)



Source: BBC Media Action EAGER Endline Evaluation Survey October & November 2022, (n=3048).
(*) indicates that the results are significantly different between not exposed and regularly reached at p<.05.

Findings from the qualitative research support these results, **with caregivers saying that the programmes' coverage of 'sensitive' subjects such as sex, contraception, and menstruation was helpful in making them more comfortable to discuss such issues with their children.**

Corroborating these findings, **adolescent girls felt more supported by their mothers, after they both listened to the programmes.** Adolescent girls who took part in the qualitative research consistently reported that listening to the programmes, and the fact that their parents had also listened to the programmes, has helped them to have more open discussions with their parents on SRHR. Girls reported that they felt more comfortable seeking guidance on menstrual hygiene and pregnancy prevention from their mothers, and no longer had to rely only on advice from their friends.

“I explain early pregnancy and preventing early pregnancy to my children. There is much more awareness of early pregnancy than in the past.”

– Female caregiver of marginalised adolescent girl, Bo, urban, *Kotoku Baray* listener

Understanding the risks of early marriage

According to the 2019 DHS, a total of 30% of women aged 20 to 24 years were first married or in union before age 18. The EAGER Baseline Evaluation¹ further highlighted these contextual realities, indicating that 44% of enrolled girls were married or living with a partner at baseline, and programme monitoring indicated that more girls were married during COVID-19 disruptions.

Within this context, the EAGER radio programmes aimed to increase knowledge and understanding of the negative impacts early and forced marriage can have on a girl's life, and to shift attitudes that supported early or forced marriage.

Parents and caregivers, and community stakeholders who took part in the qualitative research, talked about how early/forced marriage was not acceptable, reporting that the EAGER radio programmes had made them recognise its negative impacts on girls' lives.

It was generally noted among respondents that early/forced marriage was still common in their communities, however, a combination of government policies and community-based interventions such as EAGER were contributing to reduce the practice. This reflects findings from the overall EAGER Endline Evaluation² which also reported that various stakeholders interviewed expressed that early marriage is on the decline in their communities, due in part to the EAGER programme.

Results indicate that EAGER radio programming, alongside the project's community-based activities, have contributed to improved awareness and understanding of the negative impacts of early and forced marriage on women and girls, and contributed towards shifting attitudes away from acceptance of this practice as a suitable pathway out of poverty.

 **49%** of regular listeners compared to 43% of non-listeners of EAGER programmes were significantly more likely to strongly agree that a girl/woman at any age should always have the right to choose who they want to marry, and

 **40%** of regular listeners compared to 33% of non-listeners were significantly more likely to strongly agree that a girl/woman at any age can say no to marriage.

“ The drama teaches us that some parents push their daughters into early marriage because they want financial support [...] This is the norm in most areas, but it is not right.”

– Male caregiver of marginalised adolescent girl, Kono, rural, *Kotoku Baray* listener

- 1) The EAGER Baseline Evaluation was conducted in March 2020 by IMC Worldwide and Dalan Consultants. [The Baseline Research Policy Brief](https://girleducationchallenge.org/media/J0wfwtb/eager-Engb-baseline-evaluation.pdf) summarises the key finding. The full report is available at: <https://girleducationchallenge.org/media/J0wfwtb/eager-Engb-baseline-evaluation.pdf>
- 2) The EAGER Endline Evaluation was conducted in May 2022 by IMC Worldwide and DT Global with data collection support from Dalan Consultants. [The Endline Research Policy Brief](https://girleducationchallenge.org/media/qv5b3mwy/irc-sl-eager-endline-report_public.pdf) summarises the key finding. The full report is available at: https://girleducationchallenge.org/media/qv5b3mwy/irc-sl-eager-endline-report_public.pdf

The EAGER radio programmes encouraged supportive attitudes towards girls' education/skills development

In Sierra Leone, gender disparity in educational outcomes begin in adolescence, when more value begins to be placed on girls' domestic roles, rather than their education. This is evident in the widening gender inequality later in the education system, with more girls than boys dropping out as they move through junior secondary and senior secondary school.¹

EAGER baseline findings highlighted multiple barriers to education experienced by girls. For example, 72% of girls reported that they were unable to attend school because their families did not have enough money to pay fees, 23% because they needed to work at home, and 19% because they had a child or became pregnant.

With this backdrop, EAGER radio programming aimed to inform listeners about girls' education opportunities, and the choices available to achieve these; and to encourage and support discussion and the exchange of information and ideas on the challenges and solutions to girls' accessing education.

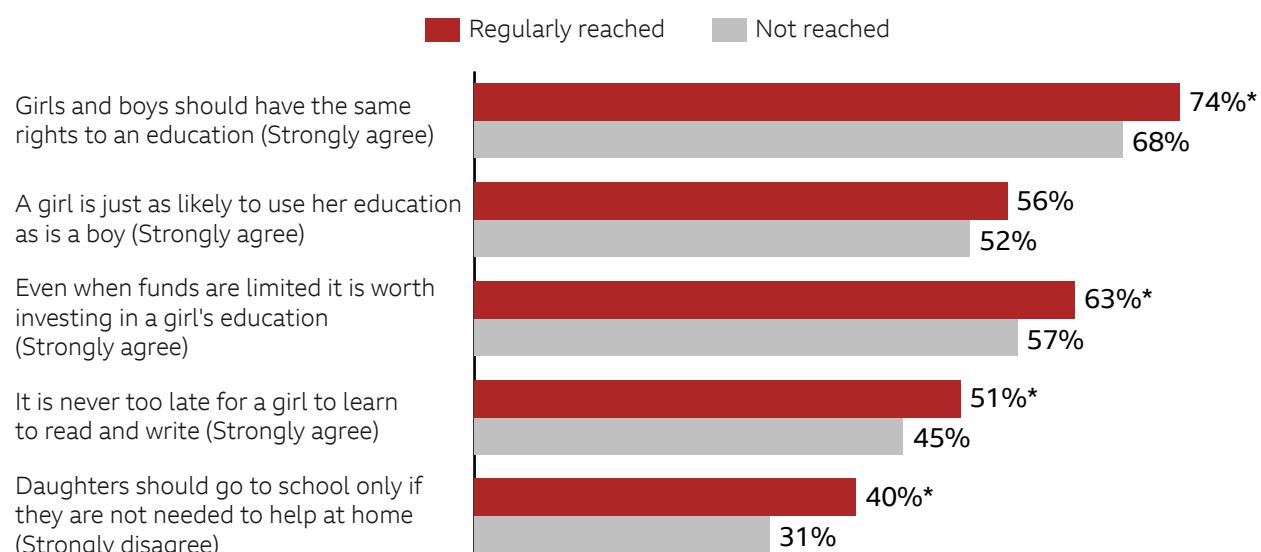
When exploring the impact of EAGER radio programmes on attitudes towards equal opportunities in education for girls, results show significant differences between regular listeners and non-listeners.

As compared to non-listeners, regular listeners of EAGER programmes were significantly **more likely to strongly agree** that:-

- ▶ girls and boys should have the same rights to an education²
- ▶ even when funds are limited it is worth investing in a girl's education

And **more likely to strongly disagree** that daughters should go to school only if they are not need to help at home

Figure 4: Share of positive attitudes towards to girls' education (regularly reached v not reached)

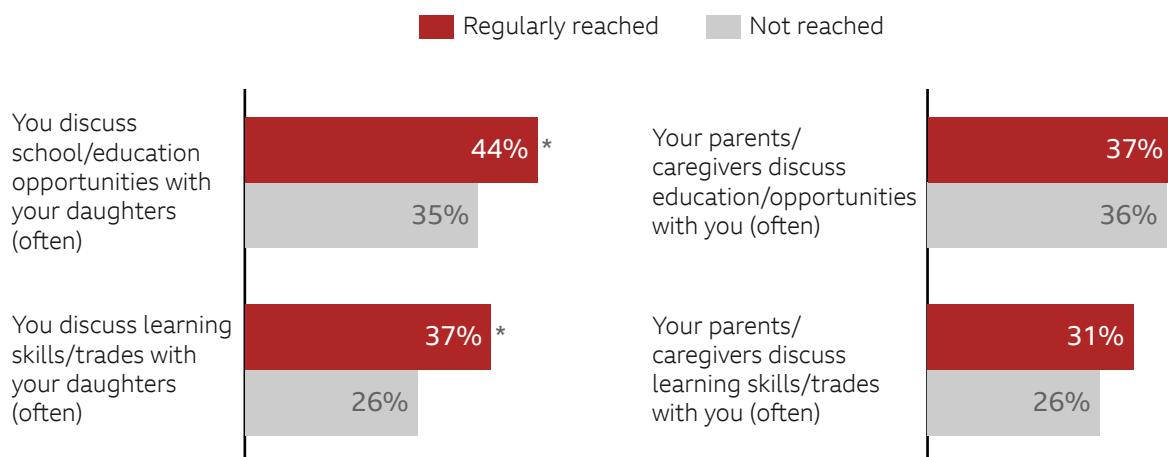


Source: BBC Media Action EAGER Endline Evaluation Survey 2022, October & November (n=3048). (*) indicates that the results are significantly different between not reached and regularly reached respondents at p<.05.

1) MBSSE 2019 Annual School Census Report

2) Regression analysis showed a positive significant association ($p<0.05$) between regular exposure to EAGER radio programmes and agreement that girls and boys should have the same rights to an education, even when controlling for potentially influential factors like gender, age, level of education, level of income, and urban/rural location.

Figure 5: Discussion of education and learning in the household (regularly reached versus not reached)



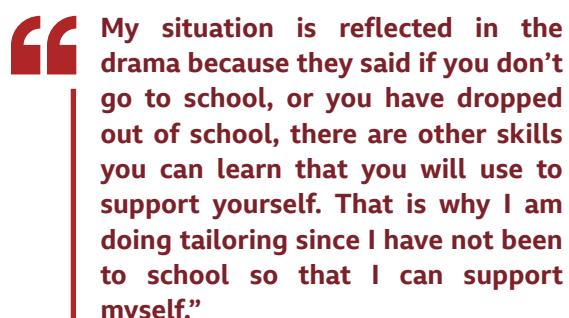
Source: BBC Media Action EAGER Endline Evaluation Survey October & November 2022, (n=3048). Base includes unexposed adults: with boys (n=913); with girls (n=1002), and unexposed adolescents (n=347), Regularly Reached adults: with boys (n=300); with girls (n=334), and regularly reached adolescents (n=92) (*) indicates that the results are significantly different between not reached and regularly reached respondents at $p < .05$.

Response options included: 'often, rarely, sometimes, or never'

These positive findings were consistently reflected in qualitative interviews. Adolescent girls were resolute around the idea of girls being capable of learning any skill/trade. They were able to point to many examples in their own communities where girls had been successful in starting businesses. Girls reflected on how similar situations being portrayed in the drama, and examples shared through *Wae Gyal Pikan Tinap*, inspired them to take up learning a new skill. Many of the girls mentioned their own plans to train and/or start a business in the future, while others were already engaged in training or business, mostly as petty traders.

In the context of Sierra Leone, one of the barriers to women and girls participating fully and equally in society is a lack of economic independence,¹ and is further impacted by the economic stresses noted above. This apparent shift in attitudes and behaviour around uptake of trades is a strongly positive step towards the empowerment of women and girls. This is supported by findings from the EAGER Endline² that indicate the percentage of girls that were not working or going to school at Baseline decreased from 59.6% to 9.7% at endline. Similarly, the percentage of girls who were working for an income increased from 39% at Baseline to 85.7% at endline, with 14% of girls reportedly returning to school at endline.

 **Respondents who were regularly reached by EAGER radio programming were significantly more likely to report discussing school/education and learning skills/trades with their girls and boys often, compared with adults who had not listened to the radio programmes.**

 **“ My situation is reflected in the drama because they said if you don't go to school, or you have dropped out of school, there are other skills you can learn that you will use to support yourself. That is why I am doing tailoring since I have not been to school so that I can support myself.”**

– Marginalised adolescent girl, Kono, rural, *Kotoku Baray* listener

1) See Gender Inequality Index <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>

2) The EAGER Endline Evaluation was conducted in May 2022 by IMC Worldwide and DT Global with data collection support from Dalan Consultants. The *Endline Research Policy Brief* summarises the key finding. The full report is available at: https://girleducationchallenge.org/media/qv5b3mwy/irc-sl-eager-endline-report_public.pdf



Strong gendered roles within the household remain harder to shift

One practical barrier to girls achieving equality in education and learning, as well as other spheres of life, in Sierra Leone is the unequal burden of household chores they carry. Gender norms assign women and girls a disproportionate share of domestic duties and that means girls often miss or drop out of school in order to support the household.

Qualitative discussions, while underpinning the finding of limited impact in this area of gendered roles at the household level, did indicate that some people are willing to challenge some restrictive gender norms. For example, some participants reported that they had been inspired by the radio programmes to share household chores among other members of their family, including with boys and men. However, the prevailing attitude was that domestic duties were primarily the domain of female members of the household, and that the community (particularly in rural settings) would frown on men who did domestic chores such as cooking.

Shifting gender norms such as these is likely to be a long-term, gradual process and would require continued broadcast of SBCC radio programming in coordination with other targeted interventions over a longer period of time. The EAGER evaluations point to early signs of promising practices to support these efforts.

Results suggest that these gender roles remain deeply entrenched, and were not significantly impacted by the radio programmes.



For example, regularly reached respondents were only slightly, but not significantly, more likely to *strongly disagree* that

- ▶ a woman's most important role is being a good homemaker (12%, compared with 10% of non-listeners) and
- ▶ girls should do more household chores than boys (11%, compared with 9% of non-listeners).

► Taking action in support of girls

The EAGER radio programmes aimed to inspire parents/caregivers and community stakeholders to change discriminatory attitudes toward girls by showcasing role models who have supported girls, given them the space to make their own choices, and included them in decision-making at home.

The radio programmes highlighted positive parenting through the stories of girls who had been supported by their parents/ caregivers. Role models were identified from different communities so that audiences could relate to them and learn from them.

This data was supported by the qualitative research, which showed that the programmes encouraged caregivers to take a more supportive and inclusive approach to parenting, discussing sensitive issues with their children more often, and adopting family planning measures.

Female caregivers and community stakeholders mentioned that they have started using measures to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) as a result of what they had learned from listening to the programmes, as well as providing guidance to girls on family planning to prevent early pregnancy.



The findings from the qualitative research show that the radio programmes have helped foster an enabling environment for girls' empowerment, such as

- ▶ taking a more supportive and inclusive approach to parenting,
- ▶ discussing sensitive issues with their children more often, and
- ▶ adopting family planning measures.



Audiences reported taking actions in support of girls' access to learning opportunities as a result of listening to the programmes, including enrolling a girl in school or discussing education with their girls.

- ▶ Over half (54%) of regular listeners of the EAGER radio programmes reported that they had taken an action in support of girls' education.
- ▶ Among those, 61% reported that they had enrolled their daughter/ girl in school,
- ▶ While 48% said they had enrolled their daughter/girl in school after having a child.
- ▶ Speaking with their daughters/ girls about their education was also frequently mentioned (41%).



In the past years, our parents wouldn't allow us to give our own opinion during family meetings or anywhere they hold family discussion. But since we started listening to *Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap*, parents have begun listening and have got some understanding of these topics, so that everyone especially girls have the right to make their own decision."

– Adolescent girl, Koinadugu, urban,
Wae Gyal Pikin Tinap listener



I advise my daughter about teenage pregnancy, and I ensure that my daughter concentrates on her education. Therefore, early marriage is out of the agenda. She will choose the right man at the right time. That's her right to consent."

– Female caregiver of a marginalised girl,
Western Area urban, Kotoku Baray listener





▶ Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings and conclusions above, as well as on consultations with the BBC Media Action EAGER project and production teams. These recommendations are made with a view to inform potential future programming aimed at improving the lives of adolescent girls in Sierra Leone or in other countries.

- ✓ Targeting the community and influential adults in a girl's life — the 'ecosystem' approach — is a successful strategy in encouraging supportive attitudes amongst parents/caregivers and community stakeholders who play an influential role in girls' lives. In particular, radio programmes can inspire more inclusive, open discussion between parents/caregivers and their children, which is the foundation on which transformative social and behaviour change will develop.
- ✓ Future radio programming should harness the overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards the concept of girls' equal rights to education and skills development, and take steps to inspire girls and other listeners to think about how girls can realise these rights in their own lives.
- ✓ Future programming and SBCC outcomes should continue to target discriminatory gender roles and norms, leveraging the gains of EAGER and placing a particular focus on raising awareness of underlying unequal structures and power relations that frame household responsibilities, family and community life.
- ✓ A multi-pronged approach with a blend of radio programming and outreach activities, such as community discussions and girls' listening groups, can maximise impacts on shifting attitudes towards girls' education and empowerment. This approach was used to amplify the EAGER radio programme. An integrated community engagement model with SBCC, complemented by a strong outreach component at the community level, enables deeper reflection and discussion between community members, and may ultimately support greater transformational shifts in social and gender norms.
- ✓ Radio programming could be used more extensively to enhance out-of-school and school programmes, especially on subjects such as life skills or comprehensive sexuality education. The popularity of EAGER's radio programmes, which were aligned with its Life Skills curriculum, indicates that information on complex and sensitive subjects can be communicated effectively through engaging media content.
- ✓ Radio drama is an effective tool to achieve strong levels of engagement among audiences, while sensitively addressing challenging topics and doing no harm. Future SBCC projects, particularly those seeking to address sensitive issues, should consider a drama component.

▶ Acknowledgements

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