**The World Bank and BRAC**

**Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI) South Sudan**

**Impact Evaluation Concept Note**

**FINAL**

1. **Introduction**

The AGI in South Sudan is part of a Bank-led Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI) to promote the economic empowerment of adolescent girls and young women in five low-income and post-conflict countries (Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal, Rwanda, and South Sudan). All the projects in the AGI offer training and mentorship to facilitate young women’s transition to work and share a number of common characteristics, including modest budgets, designs to sustainably increase women’s economic participation, and rigorous impact evaluations. These programs are seen as pilots in which to experiment with innovative approaches, measure the results, and provide quantitative evidence for possible scaling-up of similar interventions in the future.

Because the evidence on what works in facilitating the transition of adolescent girls and young women to productive work is limited, impact evaluations are an essential part of this initiative. The impact evaluations of all AGI projects will rely on rigorous quantitative methods to measure the effects of the training and life-skills programs on the socio-economic well-being of young women and their households. At the end of the three year initiative, a core set of indicators as well as lessons learned will have been developed across countries, providing invaluable evidence as to what works, and for whom, for promoting the economic empowerment of young women.

1. **Project Design of the South Sudan AGI**

The project will be implemented by the South Sudan branch of BRAC, an international NGO based in Bangladesh. BRAC has extensive experience in promoting poverty reduction through the economic empowerment of women. BRAC’s existing programs for adolescent girls in Bangladesh, Uganda, and Tanzania provide a sound basis for the design and implementation of the South Sudan AGI.

The AGI project will be implemented at the village level. All girls aged 15-24 who reside in one of the project’s villages will be eligible to participate. BRAC staff will conduct community surveys to identify potential beneficiaries and will facilitate sensitization activities to inform parents and community members so that they encourage girls to participate. In each village, it is expected that 25 to 35 participating girls will form their own Adolescent Club. Clubs will be located in close proximity to members’ homes to minimize travel time and mitigate safety concerns. The club will provide a platform for the program’s six components: provision of a safe space for socialization, life-skills training, livelihood training, financial literacy, savings and credit services, and community sensitization. All program components will be provided free of charge to the participants.

Each club will have one Adolescent Leader, who will be trained by BRAC to operate the club and carry out various activities. Livelihood, life skills, and financial literacy training will be conducted by trained professionals. Livelihood training will include skills training useful for both wage and self employment, and the choice of training options will be based on local demand. The following types of courses are expected to be beneficial and appropriate for AGI club members: (i) agriculture training on cultivating local crops; (ii) vegetable cultivation; (iii) poultry rearing; (iv) poultry and livestock vaccinator training; (v) tailoring and other nonfarm businesses; (vi) community health worker training. The program will be implemented over a period of 24 months, and all clubs are expected to be formed within 6 months of project effectiveness, leaving 18 months for project activities and evaluation.

The comprehensive approach to female empowerment employed by BRAC, including its focus on the accumulation of social assets as well as technical skills, provides a sound basis for learning and developing best practices in adolescent girls’ programming. Furthermore, given BRAC’s strong commitment to rigorous evaluation, its ongoing evaluations of similar programs in Uganda and Tanzania, as well as the evaluations in other AGI countries, this project is well placed to contribute to a broad base of cross-country evidence on adolescent girls’ empowerment that can then be applied to other settings.

1. **Evaluation Design**

The proposed design for the impact evaluation is a **cluster randomized design** similar to that used in ongoing evaluations of BRAC’s adolescent girls programs in Uganda and Tanzania, also in collaboration with staff from AFTPM. In this evaluation design, fifteen villages at each of ten BRAC branch offices will be identified as target villages, for a total sample of 150 villages. Of these target villages, two-thirds will be assigned by lottery to be in the treatment group and the remaining one-third will comprise the control group. Villages in the treatment group are those where the AGI program will operate, while villages in the control group will not have any AGI program. The villages will be non-overlapping, so that young women from control villages will not be able to access AGI programs in treatment villages. Staff members from BRAC who are based at the branch and area level will work with the evaluation team to identify a pool of eligible villages from which the treatment and control groups will be drawn. The random selection of villages into treatment and control group ensures that girls in control village are similar observable and unobservable ways to girls in treatment villages, leading to a valid statistical comparison between the groups.

Data will be collected on a random sample of girls from all treatment and control villages using household surveys at baseline (before villages are assigned to treatment and control groups) and again 12-18 months after the clubs have been formed. In addition to program participants (residing in treatment villages), the evaluation will include respondents from both treatment and control villages who do not participate in the AGI program. Based on BRAC's previous experience of adolescent girls programs, it is expected that a significant portion of the eligible girls in a village will choose to participate in the AGI program, so that the random sample of girls in treatment villages will contain a significant number of program participants. If this does not turn out to be the case, program participants may be randomly sampled to participate in the evaluation.

Two types of comparisons will be conducted. First, program participants from treatment villages will be compared to a matched sample of girls with similar characteristics from control villages. Note that because girls self-select into the program, program participants cannot directly be compared to a random sample of girls from the control villages, as girls who choose to participate likely have different underlying characteristics than girls who choose not to participate. The matched comparison will allow identification of the causal effect of the AGI program, conditional on participation. Second, girls in treatment villages will be compared to girls in control villages, which will identify the causal effect of residing in a village in which the AGI program participates even if the girl herself does not participate in the program. Such girls may be affected through demonstration effects of the program, or through the diffusion of information from other village residents.

1. **Evaluation Questions and Indicators**

The goal of the evaluation is two-fold: to identify the impact of the AGI on the well-being of program participants, and to identify the impact of the AGI on the well-being of all young women in treatment villages. The subjective and objective well-being of young women will be measured through specific indicators of interest using household surveys.

As the program consists of a package of interventions (e.g., technical skills training, life skills training, access to microfinance and the entire package will be provided to all program participants, it will not be possible to identify the impact of each component as a stand-alone intervention. The evaluation will instead seek to quantify the benefits (if any) and cost-effectiveness of the program as a whole. In addition, by comparing the results to those of other job training programs (including those in other AGI countries), it may be possible to measure the relative cost-effectiveness of the comprehensive approach used in the AGI.

The key research questions for the impact evaluation are:

How does the provision of the AGI program improve the economic well-being of young women in South Sudan?

What is the impact of the AGI program on the socioeconomic behaviors and outcomes of its participants? Specific outcomes to be students include as marriage and fertility, time use, control over household resources, aspirations for the future, experience of gender-based and other violence, and attitudes toward risk?

What is the impact of residing in a village in which the AGI program is offered even if the adolescent girl does not herself participate in it?

Data on the indicators of interest will be collected both before and after the program through individual interviews using structured questionnaires. BRAC will also be responsible for collecting data on some of these indicators (particularly those related to attendance and course completion). The key indicators of interest for the AGI program include the following:

* At the level of the adolescent girl: Basic demographic and social characteristics, including age, living arrangements, and childhood circumstances; Employment status and income; Job sector, wages, income; Knowledge and access to microcredit; Assets, Savings, Loans; Social assets (friends, social networks); Empowerment measures such as physical mobility, control over spending; Marriage and fertility preferences.
* At the household level: Financial and physical assets of the household; Income-generating activities of all household members; Household-level self-assessed food security; Time allocation by household members to domestic tasks; Household expenditures on health and education; Educational enrollment of all household members, particularly school-age children.

1. **Impact Evaluation Methodology**
2. ***Identification of villages.***

As described in section 3, staff from BRAC’s area and branch offices will work with the AGI project staff to identify a pool of eligible villages from which the treatment and control groups will be drawn. It is expected that the staff will identify 200 villages in total, which will then be surveyed by BRAC to determine the feasibility of establishing a club. [[1]](#footnote-1) Based on these community surveys, BRAC staff will identify 150 feasible villages. This list of 150 villages will be shared with research staff, who will then randomly assign 100 villages to the treatment group and 50 villages to the control group.

Based on the community surveys conducted by BRAC staff, which includes a census of girls from the target age range, the research team will construct a study population by selecting a random sample of 40 girls aged 15-24 from each treatment and control village. This leads to an overall study population of 6000 women: 4000 from treatment villages and 2000 from control villages. These 6000 women will be visited for the baseline and follow-up surveys and will comprise the study sample for this impact evaluation, regardless of whether or not they participate in the AGI program.

1. ***Identification of participants***

Within each treatment village, BRAC staff will be responsible for advertising the AGI program, conducting community sensitization, and recruiting 25-35 girls to participate in the Adolescent Club. All girls residing in treatment village are eligible to join. If more than 35 girls express interest in joining the club, BRAC may impose selection criteria to determine participation in particular training areas. The selection criteria will be uniform across clubs and branch staff will be trained in the participant selection process. Each club will ideally consist of a mix of young women from different religious and socioeconomic backgrounds, thereby contributing to the dilution of social disparities within the club and the community. In addition, the evaluation will be able to identify heterogeneous program impacts on women from different backgrounds.

Because not all girls in the treatment villages will choose to participate in the Adolescent Club, the treatment population will include girls who participate as well as girls who were offered a chance to participate. Once the clubs are formed, baseline data will be analyzed to determine the characteristics of girls in treatment villages who choose to participate. Girls with similar characteristics who reside in control villages and hence were not offered a chance to participate will then be identified. As described above, two types of comparisons will be conducted: treatment villages versus control villages, and program participants (from treatment villages) versus a matched group of girls from control villages who *presumably* *would have participated* if offered the chance.

1. ***Statistical power***

The paucity of individual or household level data from Southern Sudan prohibits a detailed analysis of sample size and statistical power. However, the large number of respondents for this evaluation (4000 treatment, 2000 control) ensures that the evaluation will be well-powered to examine most indicators of interest. Furthermore, the sample size for this evaluation is the same as those used in the ongoing evaluations of BRAC programs in Uganda and Tanzania for which more rigorous power calculations were conducted.

1. ***Data Collection and Analysis***

This study will consist of two rounds of household surveys: baseline and endline. A contracted survey firm will have the primary responsibility for the design and implementation of the survey, in close collaboration with the World Bank team.

* + **Baseline Questionnaire.** The baseline questionnaire will be based on those used in evaluations of BRAC programs in Uganda and Tanzania, modified for the Sudanese context. The questionnaire collects information on a variety of areas, including household composition, earnings, employment, and income, time use, financial literacy, attitudes and aspirations for the future, savings, borrowing, and lending, health status, and risky behaviors. It is essential that these baseline interviews *be conducted before villages are assigned to treatment and control groups,* so that the responses are not colored by knowledge of whether or not a program will be established.
  + **Follow-Up Questionnaire.** The follow-up questionnaires will resemble the baseline questionnaire as closely as possible. This will enable the comparison of changes in attitudes and behavior over time. In addition, the follow-up surveys will include questions on the business and employment experiences of the young women since the completion of their training.

1. ***Timeline***

This AGI project will be conducted over approximately 2 years, beginning in early 2010. Within the first month of project effectiveness, the survey firm will revise and field-test the questionnaires to be used in the survey. Selection of villages will begin shortly thereafter, with the baseline survey in each village implemented immediately following the feasibility studies.

The follow-up survey will be scheduled approximately 12 to 18 months after the formation of each club. A longer time frame allows the program more time to work; however, a shorter time frame increases the chances of finding the girls for the endline survey. Given the very high levels of mobility in South Sudan, a relatively high level of attrition should be expected. The research team will do its best to track all respondents, even if they have moved, for the follow-up survey.

1. **Expected Outputs**

The impact evaluation will first lead to a baseline data report to examine the characteristics of participants in the first and second stages. A set of analytical reports, to be prepared after follow-up data collection, will be the central output of this evaluation. Impact evaluation reports and academic articles will be disseminated to a wide policy and academic audience, including representatives from the relevant ministries of the Government of South Sudan (GOSS). In addition, policy briefs and newsletter articles will be written to share the evaluation findings. At least one workshop will be held with staff from GOSS to share the evaluation findings.

1. **Impact Evaluation Team**

The Impact Evaluation Team will consist of staff from the World Bank (Markus Goldstein, AFTPM, and Shubha Chakravarty, AFTPM) a team of researchers from the London School of Economics (LSE) and University College London (UCL), and an independent survey firm (to be contracted). The researchers will work closely with the implementation team so that the evaluation aligns with all aspects of the project implementation.

1. The feasibility of establishing a club will depend on various community characteristics, including: the population of girls aged 15-24, the ability to identify and rent an appropriate space to serve as the clubhouse, safety and access to the clubhouse for the participants, and level of interest from the community to support the club’s activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)