

MID-TERM REVIEW: 'SPEAK UP, SPEAK OUT: GIRLS LEADING CHANGE IN FIJI'

EVALUATION PURPOSE

The mid-term review aimed to strengthen the shared understanding between International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) and Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) of the 'Speak Up, Speak Out: GIRLS Leading Change in Fiji' (GIRLS) program implementation and outcomes. It also assessed the partnership between IWDA and FWRM in its delivery.

The evaluation assessed the extent to which program interventions have achieved their objectives for key target groups and provides analysis of how the current model and interventions might be strengthened or adapted to address identified gaps.

METHODOLOGY

The review involved two methods:

- A desk based review of key documents (e.g. AD plans, reports, theatre script, feedback recordings/forms)
- 2 day reflective workshop with key FWRM staff that used participatory activities and discussions to respond to the evaluation questions.

KEY FINDINGS

- The program is progressing well in all outcome areas. There is evidence of successful impact on individual girls and their parents and carers in both informal and formal ways. The GIRLS Program staff should be commended on this.
- Participation in the program is improving the girls' self-confidence and knowledge of their human rights.
- The partnership between IWDA and FWRM is healthy and working well.
- Access to professional psychosocial support is an integral part of the program.
- Parents and carers are changing their behaviour as a direct result of the program.
- The program is flexible and adapts well to topical issues.
- The program has been successful in recruiting and retaining a diverse group of girls. However, this has brought greater challenges in engaging parents and carers.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Speak Up, Speak Out: GIRLS leading change in Fiji (GIRLS) is a non-traditional educational program that trains and develops girls between the ages of 10 and 17 to become leaders. The program uses interactive methodologies, such as theatre and storytelling, to build confidence in girls and teach them how to clearly articulate their concerns around safety and security and human rights issues. Girls have the opportunity to engage with their families, communities, women leaders and duty bearers, as they develop to become a fundamental part of an intergenerational women's rights movement.

The three year program (2016-2019) includes:

- GIRLS Theatre, a program that uses theatre as a platform for girls aged 10 to 12 to explore and share their issues and concerns
- GIRLS Club, which provides physically and intellectually challenging adventures to continue engage girls aged 13 to 17 who are alumni of the theatre group.
- Information Sessions for the girls and their parents and carers focusing on human rights issues and safety and security concerns.

For over 30 years, FWRM has been advancing the human rights of women, and since 2003 they have been working specifically with young women and girls aged 10 to 25 years.

FWRM are pioneers of young women's leadership programs in the Pacific. FWRM recognises that women's civil and political participation interlinks with women's safety and security, and that developing and enhancing young women and girls' leadership can lead to positive change for women in Fiji

“Before I used to be really shy, but now I am quite bold. I can speak, before I used to shiver a lot, but now I have a smile on my face. Before I didn’t know that I had this many rights. By joining this program, I got to know I had rights. I can speak, I can give my opinions and I can also make decisions”

- Akansha, 15 years old.

“For me as a mother and a grandmother it sends a message that I need to be more careful about the way I speak to the children and treat them, the tone that I use is very important”

- Grandmother/guardian of participant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Long-term counselling should be provided to ensure ongoing support for girls and their families where needed

Many of the girls have experienced trauma for extended periods of time. Therefore longer-term ongoing counselling and intervention with family is needed to provide them with adequate support. This is also important for ensuring the girls are able to benefit as much as possible from the activities. While it is not within the scope or resources of the program to offer this, a referral system could potentially be developed. FWRM should discuss this option with the counsellor.

- The program should factor in contingency budget to accommodate for logistical challenges

In future the program should have a buffer for unexpected logistical arrangements factored into the budget. IWDA and FWRM should work together to include this into future budgets. Going forward, FWRM should ensure these activities are not scheduled during the cyclone season.

- FWRM should aim to expand their monitoring to include feedback from teachers and others in participants’ wider communities

Despite having some clear examples of how the program is positively affecting the girls and those around them, there is still a lot we do not know in relation to the impact of the program outside of the home. The program has good connections with some teachers but not at all of the schools the girls attend, so it is not possible to know exactly how participation in the program is affecting the way the girls behave in school or with the wider community. Going forward FWRM should continue to cultivate existing relationships with teachers/schools and look to create new ones where the girls are students.

- Maximise and streamline opportunities to gather and use data

The majority of data being collected is qualitative in the form of feedback forms and peace circles. IWDA should work with FWRM to incorporate quantitative data collection into existing processes.

- The program should continue to create opportunities for girls to engage in intergenerational spaces
FWRM should look to find more opportunities to bring the GIRLS Club and the GIRLS Theatre group together with the Emerging Leaders Forum, as FWRM observations show that this was highly valued in the International Women’s Day event and could establish more consistent mentorship and strengthen intergenerational relationships across FWRM’s programming.

- The program should continue to include parents in the design of the information sessions and adapt topics in response to identified issues or current events

FWRM should continue to take parent interests into consideration when designing information sessions. The program should engage parents further in advance of the sessions to gauge prior knowledge and gaps.



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