

**EVALUATION OF THE
SARA COMMUNICATION
INITIATIVE: FINAL SUMMARY**

Prepared for

UNICEF ESARO

by

Craig Russon, Ph.D.
Russon & Associates

November, 2000

Table of Contents

Executive Summary ii

Introduction 1

Goals and Objectives 1

Project Implementation 1

Purpose of the Current Report..... 3

Implementation Study 4

Quantitative Outcome Study 7

Qualitative Outcome Studies 14

Caveats 22

Executive Summary

In 1999 UNICEF-ESARO commissioned a series of research studies on the Sara Communication Initiative (SCI). In order to help UNICEF determine if the SCI goals were being achieved, the following studies were conducted: an *implementation study* was carried out in several countries by The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University; a *quantitative outcome study* was conducted by the Demographic Training Unit (DTU) at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; and *qualitative outcome studies* were conducted by the Makerere Institute for Social Research (MISR) at Makerere University, Uganda, and the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi, Kenya.

The study of the SCI implementation process was conducted in Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria and some northern countries. This raised a number of key issues including the importance of a strong advocate and internal marketing within UNICEF country offices to move programming forward, as well as the significant role of various contextual factors influencing the implementation process.

To determine outcomes, the DTU conducted a survey of girls 10-18 in 25 of 54 "Child Special Protection Districts" in Tanzania. One of the principal findings of the survey was that 32 percent of the girls surveyed were able to identify a picture of Sara. Such a high brand recognition in such a short period of time (SCI was launched in 1996) is phenomenal. Comic books were the medium that provided the highest exposure (18 percent). This was followed by video (15 percent), radio (10 percent), and posters (9 percent). Posters provided the longest lasting exposure.

To determine the initial impact of the initiative, MISR and IDS conducted qualitative outcome studies in rural, periurban, and urban settings. Two issues that guided the studies were: (1) how SCI influenced gender relationships of girls and boys and, (2) how the life skills that girls learned through SCI fostered their participation in development.

Regarding gender relationships, the data suggested that Sara and Juma were role models for boy/girl relationships. In addition, Sara materials helped some girls to avoid unwholesome relationships with boys. The second issue was somewhat more complex. It was first established that Sara materials taught (or if they did not teach, then strongly reinforced existing) life skills such as problem solving, decision making, assertiveness, communication, negotiation, conflict management, coping with stress and emotion, self-awareness and empathy.

It was then shown that these life skills could foster girls' participation in development. (The term "participation in development" was operationalized as claiming rights set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).) It was found that the girls in the qualitative outcomes studies used a range of life skills to make claim to a number of their rights.

Evaluation of the Sara Communication Initiative: Final Summary

In sub-Saharan Africa many of the rights of children, particularly adolescent females, are not recognized and protected by families and communities. African girls have fewer educational opportunities and are often exploited in the labor force. They lack opportunities to develop psych-social life skills. They are often victims of sexual abuse. These factors have led to a growing incidence of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS.

In an effort to address these issues, UNICEF ESARO is implementing a number of interventions. One of the more innovative is a program called the Sara Communication Initiative (SCI). SCI is an “enter-education” strategy, which seeks to harness the drawing power of popular entertainment to convey educational messages. Animated films, radio broadcasts, and printed materials have been developed around a central character named Sara. This multimedia effort seeks to raise the public’s awareness about themes associated with the Rights of the Child.

Goals and Objectives

The overall goal of SCI is “To promote the Rights of the Child and support their implementation and realization, with special focus on adolescent female children in Eastern and Southern Africa, and in other parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, where the materials are found to be acceptable and appropriate.”

The general objectives are “To research, produce and disseminate a regional communication package on the Rights of the Child in order to

- Create awareness and advocate for the reduction of existing disparities in the status and treatment of girls.
- Support social mobilization processes designed to realize the potential of female children and to foster their participation in development.
- Produce a dynamic role model for girls that will assist in their acquisition of psychosocial life skills that are essential for empowerment.
- Provide a model for improved gender relationships, beginning at an early age.
- Communicate information regarding the survival, protection and development of children, including specific messages on education, health, nutrition and freedom from exploitation and abuse.
- Build the capacity of African writers, researchers, and artists through the development of Sara packages.”

Project Implementation

SCI is a two-phase project with a proposed third phase. During Phase I, the following activities were undertaken:

- During startup, office space was obtained and staff was hired.
- Themes for the series were identified through formative research.
- Episodes 1 to 3 were produced after being researched in 10 countries.

As of October 2000, Phase II is currently being implemented. In this phase, SCI activities focuses on planning, production, dissemination, capacity building, and evaluation.

Planning

- Time bound action planning took place in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Botswana, and Mozambique.
- Action plans were prepared in Angola, Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Formative Research and Production

- Post-production field testing of Episode 1 conducted in 11 countries.
- Episodes 2-7 developed through formative research in up to 13 countries in East and Southern Africa, and also verified in field testing in 2 countries in West Africa. Over 8,000 respondents from communities across the region participated in focus groups to develop concepts, storylines and character designs. (Formative research process and findings fully documented in a separate report.)
- Multimedia packages were completed for 5 episodes. Each package consists of a comic book with users guide, poster, and video. All materials were translated into four languages: English, Swahili, French, and Portuguese. The themes and rights highlighted in the series of 7 Sara episodes are as follows:
 - **The Special Gift** on girls' retention in school; rights to education and to non-discrimination
 - **Sara Saves her Friend** on sexual harassment & HIV/AIDS; rights to protection from sexual exploitation, abduction, violence and the rights to health and education
 - **Daughter of a Lioness** on FGM; right to health and to protection from harmful traditional practices and the right to health
 - **The Trap** on 'Sugar Daddies' and HIV/AIDS; right to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
 - **Choices** on teenage pregnancy and continuing education & positive adolescent relationships avoiding HIV/AIDS; rights to education and health
 - **Who is the Thief?** on domestic child labour; right to protection from harmful and exploitative labour and right to education (currently under production)
 - **The Empty Compound** on breaking the silence about HIV/AIDS and care of orphans; rights to life and maximum survival and development (currently under production)
- *The Special Gift* was translated and dubbed in 4 Ugandan languages, 1 Mozambican language, and 1 Rwandan language.
- Print packages for the final two episodes were completed, and videos are being finalized.
- Print packages for two stories on early childhood care and development and one story on children in conflict are being developed. A story on malaria is under consideration.
- A regional life-skills manual is in the final stage of development.
- A resource book on FGM to accompany *Daughter of a Lioness* is near completion.
- An artist guidebook that was developed to help country offices develop local materials is ready for printing.

- With the assistance of the BBC, a 13 part radio series was produced in English, Swahili, French, Portuguese, and Hausa. Countries subsequently produced their own local language versions.
- An 8-minute video on SCI was prepared for advocacy purposes.
- Advocacy materials (e.g., T-shirt, caps, bags, and diaries) featuring the Sara logo were produced and distributed during major media events. Some of these materials were adapted (e.g., Sara in Hijab head covering) for use in Zanzibar.
- Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe produced popular theater dramas around Sara themes.
- In Uganda, Sara radio jingles were composed and promotional materials such as T-shirts, cups, and calendars were produced. Tanzania produced a cassette of Sara songs.
- Sara was serialized in national newspapers and magazines in Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

Capacity Building

- Training of trainers (TOT) for SCI programmers took place in Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.
- Artist/writers workshops were conducted in Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda.
- On-the-job training for artists is regularly undertaken in Kenya.
- Sara Core Group meetings were held in Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zanzibar.
- Researcher training was conducted in Cote d' Ivoire, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Republic of South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Implementation

- Extensive implementation activities in 13 countries across Africa have been detailed in a separate summary report produced by UNICEF ESARO.

Evaluation

- An implementation study was carried out in Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria, and some northern countries by The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University (WMU), USA.
- In collaboration with The Evaluation Center, a quantitative outcomes study was carried out by the Demographic Training Unit, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
- Qualitative outcome studies were carried out by the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Nairobi, Kenya and Makerere Institute for Social Research at the University of Makerere, Uganda.

Purpose of the Current Report

The purpose of the current report, prepared by Russon & Associates, is to summarize the results of the evaluations conducted by The WMU Evaluation Center, the Demographic Training Unit, the Institute for Development Studies, and Makerere Institute for Social Research into one succinct report to be submitted to UNICEF ESARO to assist decision makers in determining the initiative's future.

IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

The first component of the SCI evaluation was a study of the regional and country level implementation process. This study was carried out in July-November 1999 by Craig Russon, Ph.D. of The Evaluation Center, Western Michigan University. The implementation study was conducted in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Nigeria and Mozambique. Zimbabwe and South Africa were also included for comparisons with national communication initiatives. UNICEF National Committees in the UK, Canada and the Netherlands were consulted to identify in what ways SCI materials are being used for development education. The study focused on four issues:

1. How have UNICEF policies influenced the implementation of SCI?
2. How has the UNICEF country programme's acceptance of SCI influenced its implementation?
3. How has UNICEF worked with inter-sectoral social partners to implement SCI?
4. How have contextual factors (economic, social, political, cultural, religious, historical) influenced the implementation process?

To address the issues listed above, the following methods were used for data collection: direct observation, interviews, and document analysis. The data were subjected to content analysis in an attempt to identify patterns, categories, taxonomies, and/or themes. The validity and reliability of the results were ensured through the use of several methods, including triangulation, member checking, and peer examination. A summary of the results can be found below.

Enabling environment. In order for SCI to be implemented, there must be a supportive, enabling environment at the country level. UNICEF country administrators are responsible for setting the tone of the enabling environment. In an organization such as UNICEF, where administrative changes occur every few years, it may be difficult to maintain the continuity of the enabling environment. Sometimes changes have a positive effect on SCI implementation; other times the effect is less than positive.

Advocate. The emergence of a strong advocate is necessary for SCI to move forward at the country programme level. While a strong advocate is a necessary condition, it is not always sufficient. One country has a strong advocate, but the enabling environment has slowed down implementation. There are those who think that a country must hire a full time SCI coordinator to have a strong advocate. However, several countries with staff who work on SCI part-time are successfully implementing the initiative. The key appears to be that the coordinator must have a passion for Sara. This passion is exemplified by one Focal Point's reference to himself as "Uncle Sara."

Ownership. Eastern and Southern Africa Region (ESAR) country programmes have diverged widely on this issue. One country held a formal ceremony in which Sara was "given away" to government ministries and NGOs. Another country decided to retain Sara in the UNICEF programme for a period of time. The rest of the countries lie somewhere in between. Analysis shows that countries in which UNICEF has tried to promote broader ownership with national partners have been very successful at implementing the initiative. The reason for the

success appears to be that partners are more committed to working on an initiative that they feel belongs to them. Sara should belong to those who implement the initiative.

Internal marketing. Before UNICEF can be successful marketing SCI to its external audience, UNICEF must successfully market Sara to its internal audience (i.e., country representatives, section heads, programme officers). In several cases, programme officers were reluctant to try to apply the materials to their programme. Part of the reason for this is that some programme officers view SCI as a stand alone project—one more thing to do, rather than as a tool that can enhance the projects that they have already undertaken.

Brand management. Several countries expressed a strong desire to create local Sara materials. Proponents think that the themes of such materials would be better adapted for local situations. Some people think that the regional office has not supported their creative efforts. The regional office, on the other hand, has a strong concern for quality assurance. Staff members worry that many different local renderings of Sara and the other characters may confuse the public. Which one is the REAL Sara? (In the world of marketing, this phenomenon is known as brand dilution.) For this reason, the regional office has been cautious in its support of efforts to create local materials.

Production scheduling. Because of the time involved in taking stories from concept to finished product, new episodes have been released on a semiregular basis. This situation has caused some difficulties for some country programmes that must undertake on-again, off-again marketing campaigns. Country offices report that the production schedule makes it hard to sustain the public's enthusiasm for Sara. In addition, production scheduling also contributed to overuse of episodes in some countries early in the initiative. The regional office staff say that the production schedule allows the country offices to achieve a maximum amount of market penetration with each individual episode.

Funding. In several countries, the funding for SCI has not been constant. In one country, general funds arrived late. In another, there was an audit freeze. In yet another, dispersal of funds was a problem. In all cases, lack of funding has slowed down implementation. A few countries have successfully competed for outside funding. These funds have permitted the implementation to scale up more quickly than might otherwise have been possible.

Implementation process. There seems to be general agreement that SCI could only have begun as a regional initiative. This is because, in most cases, the country programmes did not have the creative or production expertise to carry out such an initiative on their own. Thanks to the capacity-building efforts of the regional office, most countries have now developed core groups of writers and artists. Several countries have a strong desire to take on a larger role in the development of new episodes. Some think that SCI should enter a new, country-centered stage of implementation in the near future.

Contextual factors. Contextual factors were found to play an important part in SCI implementation. Below are some examples:

- For a variety of reasons, some people had a hard time accepting Zingo, Sara's pet monkey.
- Some countries are decentralizing their political power. Therefore, implementation in these countries is taking place at the district level.
- Sara episodes are done in such a manner that they are not offensive to the religious organizations that support some NGOs.

QUANTITATIVE OUTCOME STUDY

The outcome study was conducted by the Demographic Training Unit (DTU) located within the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The principal investigators were Maurice Mbago, Ph.D. and Francis Sichona, Ph.D. The WMU Evaluation Center assisted UNICEF in identifying, contracting with and providing technical support to the DTU. The contract called for the DTU to conduct a survey to gather data on the outcome indicators. Females between the ages of 10 and 18 who live in areas where SCI implementation has taken place were to be the population of interest.

The DTU conducted a survey using a multi-stage cluster sampling design (region, district, village, household). In the first stage, the DTU drew a sample of 25 out of 54 Child Special Protection Districts (CSPD) in which SCI activity had taken place, based on probability proportional to size. In the second stage, the evaluators obtained a list of all the villages in each district. From this list, the evaluators randomly selected the village(s) in which to conduct the interviews. The evaluators obtained the number of households in each of the villages and calculated the number of households to be visited using probability proportional to size. The households in the village were selected using the random walk method.

One or more clusters of up to 26 girls were identified in 25 (out of 54) CSPD districts in Tanzania. A grand total of 635 respondents were included in the survey. One can be 95% confident that statistics contained in the tables below are correct within ± 5 percentage points. The findings of the survey can be generalized to 10-18 year old girls who live in the 54 CSPD districts. The findings can not be generalized to the entire country of Tanzania.

One of the principal findings of this study was that 32 percent of the girls surveyed were able to identify a picture of Sara. Such high brand recognition after only two years of programming is remarkable.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Table 1. Social-Demographic Profile of Girls in the Sample.

Age		
	10-14 years old	71%
	15-18 years old	29%
Education		
	Primary	90%
	Secondary	6%
	None	4%
Occupation		
	Student	88%
	Farmer	7%
	House Keeper	3%
	None	2%
Religion		
	Moslem	39%
	Catholic	38%
	Protestant	19%
	Other	4%

Table 2. Brand Recognition and Comic Book Outcome Indicators.

Girls Who Correctly Identified a Picture of Sara		32%
Girls Who Read Comic Books		18%
Comic Book Episodes to Which the Girls Were Exposed.		
	The Special Gift	11%
	Sara Saves Her Friend	6%
	Daughter of a Lioness	1%
	The Trap	1%
Location of Exposure to Comic Book		
	School	14%
	Home	4%
Time of Exposure to Comic Book		
	Afternoon	10%
	Morning	7%
	Evening	3%
	Night	1%

Table highlights: (1) multinational corporations pay millions of dollars to attain small increments in brand recognition. Sara has achieved a 32 percent brand recognition for a modest investment after only two years of programming; (2) more girls were exposed to Sara through comic books than through any other media.

Table 3. Radio Programme Outcome Indicators.

Girls Who Read Heard Radio Programme		10%
Radio Programme Episodes to Which the Girls Were Exposed		
	The Special Gift	3%
	Sara Saves Her Friend	1%
	Daughter of a Lioness	1%
	The Trap	1%
Location of Exposure to Radio Programme		
	School	10%
	Home	1%
Time of Exposure to Radio Programme		
	Evening	5%
	Morning	3%
	Afternoon	3%
	Night	1%

Table highlights: (1) contrary to the general expectation of achieving wider coverage through radio than video, girls' exposure to Sara through radio, a tried and true method of mass communication, was lower than their exposure through video, and almost at the same level as their exposure through posters.

Table 4. Video Outcome Indicators.

Girls Who Watched Video		15%
Video Episodes to Which the Girls Were Exposed.		
	Sara Saves Her Friend	9%
	The Special Gift	6%
	Daughter of a Lioness	3%
	The Trap	1%
Location of Exposure to Video		
	School	10%
	Home	3%
	Civic Centre	3%
Time of Exposure to Video		
	Evening	5%
	Afternoon	5%
	Night	4%
	Morning	1%

Table highlights: (1) girls' exposure to Sara through video was relatively high. This refutes much of the argument that video is not available in rural areas.

Table 5. Poster Outcome Indicators.

Girls Who Saw Poster		9%
Poster Episodes to Which the Girls Were Exposed.		
	The Special Gift	13%
	Sara Saves Her Friend	11%
	Daughter of a Lioness	6%
	The Trap	3%
Location of Exposure to Poster		
	School	17%
	Home	2%
	Health Centre	2%
	Civic Centre	2%
	Work	1%
Time of Exposure to Poster		
	Morning	17%
	Afternoon	17%
	Evening	5%
	Night	2%

Table highlights: (1) time of exposure suggests that posters provide the longest lasting exposure to Sara. It is likely that the audience were exposed to posters along with comic books or video.

Table 6. Favourite Episodes, Story and Moral Identification

Favourite Episodes Named by the Girls		
	Sara Saves Her Friend	12%
	The Special Gift	12%
	The Trap	2%
	Daughter of a Lioness	1%
Girls Who Correctly Narrated Story of Favourite Episode		8%
Girls Who Identified a Moral of the Story		5%
Girls Who Shared the Story With Someone		15%

Table highlights: (1) 27 percent of the girls could identify an individual episode, in order to cite their favourite; the favourite episodes were the ones to which the girls received the most exposure; (2) even though there was a 32 percent brand recognition, only 8 percent of the girls could recount the plot of their favourite episode and only 5 percent could identify the underlying moral of the story. This is a strong argument for the necessity of exposure through group learning processes; (3) a high percentage (15%) of the girls told someone about Sara's story.

QUALITATIVE OUTCOME STUDIES

The Evaluation Center also assisted UNICEF in identifying and contracting with the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) at the University of Nairobi in Kenya and the Makerere Institute for Social Research (MISR) at Makerere University in Kampala in Uganda to carry out the qualitative outcome studies. The studies focused on two issues: (1) how SCI influenced gender relationships among girls and boys, and (2) how the life skills that girls learned through SCI fostered their participation in development. (The term “participation in development” was operationalized to mean claiming rights set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.)

Data was collected using direct observation, interviews, and document analysis. Evaluators observed at schools, churches, homes, social events, youth activities, etc. The evaluators conducted interviews with key informants. Key informants may include girls, parents, siblings, friends, teachers, or community leaders. The methods described above were supplemented with analysis of school enrollment records, health clinic records, and other similar documents. Once sufficient data were collected, final analysis took place. Qualitative data analysis involved conducting content analysis of the data looking for patterns, categories, taxonomies, and/or themes.

SUMMARY OF QUALITATIVE OUTCOME STUDIES

This section of the report summarizes the following reports:

- (1) Qualitative outcome study of Sara Communication Initiative in Uganda: The Case of Kampala District by Abby Sebina-Zziwa, Ph.D. and Samuel Tindifa, Ph.D.
- (2) Research Report on UNICEF-Sara Communication Initiative in Kapchorwa District (Uganda) by Augustus Nuwagaba, Ph.D.
- (3) Qualitative Outcome Study: The Sara Communication Initiative (Kenya) by Patrick Alila, Ph.D. and Mary Omosa, Ph.D.
- (4) Evaluation of Sara Communication Initiative: The Case of FAWE Schools (Uganda) by Augustus Nuwagaba Ph.D. and Stella Neema, Ph.D.

Discussion of findings draws on the four different studies in relation to the themes of Sara episodes and the Children's Rights which they promote.

Episode 1: The Special Gift. In this story Sara is told that her family can only afford to keep her brother in school. Sara negotiates with her family to be allowed to continue her education. The episode deals principally with children's right to **education**, their right to **non-discrimination** and their right to **express their opinion**. In this episode Sara demonstrates a range of inter-related life skills, including problem solving and negotiation skills.

Education: Girls in the MISR Kampala, MISR FAWE, and IDS Nairobi studies used Sara life skills to claim their right to education. In the Kampala and FAWE studies, girls' parents were unable to pay their school fees and so the girls negotiated with other members of their extended families to obtain the fees. One girl stated,

My father refused to pay fees for me. Fortunately my step brothers are working and I have begged them to pay my fees . . . but you see if you want them to pay, you also have to be well behaved and good to them. In the holidays, I go to their place and do both housework and other tasks.

In the Kampala study, one girl described confronting her father who paid school fees for some of his children, but not for others. She also described coping with the negative feelings caused by discrimination. Below is an excerpt from an interview:

Cg: . . . my father has many wives and many children. I feel bad about that.

Interviewer: Why?

Cg: Because he is not capable of pay for us all, he only pays for a few. Our father has many plots but he always says he will build and when he gets the money he does not build; he keeps on extending. We often talk to him about it but he does not listen.

Interviewer: Who always talks to the father?

Cg: Me.

Interviewer: So you have a good relationship with your father.

Cg: Not that, even sometimes we talk to him all of us. But most of the time it is me to begin the story. Our father discriminates because he only pays school fees for some and not others. There is another woman who has even younger children; she lives in the area near our home.

Access to education is linked to children's right to develop to their fullest potential. The MISR Kampala study highlights Sara's function as a role model, in encouraging girls to persevere in education, and particularly in science subjects:

Lisa feels that she has benefited from Sara. She has felt encouraged to be more principled. She has also learnt that even if one is young, they can help the community and even teach them new ways of doing things. Lisa's younger sister has read *'The Special Gift'* and this has helped her not to make hurried decisions. The Sara materials have also been of assistance to Lisa's school mates. The girls now feel free to talk about their problems, even to their teachers. Sara has also taught them to be principled as long as they know that they are doing the right thing. They have also learnt that girls too can be good in science subjects and they can be good examples to others, including the boys.

Nondiscrimination: A girl in the FAWE study used critical thinking and negotiation to end discrimination in her family. She stated,

For me I have to do the tasks which should have been done by my brothers e.g., splitting firewood. My aim has been to show that there is no work which should be naturally done by either girls or boys. All the work at home can be done by either boys or girls. My brothers have started participating in washing plates and other household utensils because I first challenged them by demonstrating that I can effectively do their work. So why can't they do mine?

Express Opinions: Girls in the MISR Kapchorwa and MISR FAWE studies used Sara life skills to express their opinions. In the FAWE study, girls wrote and performed one act plays based on Sara characters. This activity enabled them to exercise their right to freedom of expression, to communicate their views and experiences, and to advocate for their rights, in this case, to education. Below is an excerpt from a focus group:

Our main objective in staging these plays is to raise consciousness about the plight of girls. You see many people do not know the problems girls pass through . . . [interjection] . . . when you stage a play, like the one we staged in Lugazi (a nearby town in Mukono district where the school is located), people get to see what exactly goes on in our homes and how the girls are suffering. We hope that the people can change their attitude and support girls in their education especially.

The FAWE study provides abundant examples of poems, songs, and one-act plays that were written by girls participating in the Sara program.

Episode 2: Sara Saves her Friend. This episode continues to build on the theme of girls' right to education, but also deals with issues of sexual harassment and HIV/AIDS. Sara's friend, Amina, an orphan, is duped by some truck drivers into going to the city, with promises of work. Sara recognises the risks Amina faces and saves her from rape. The episode focuses principally on the child's right to **protection from sexual exploitation** and **violence** and the rights to **education** and **health**. Sara demonstrates a range of life skills, with an emphasis on critical thinking and empathy.

Protection From Sexual Exploitation: A focus group discussion at the GOAL drop-in center for street children in the MISR study shows how children are beginning to apply Sara's experiences and behaviour directly to their own lives, although they were also acutely aware of the realities of their own difficult circumstances. Their discussion illustrates a range of life skills being developed, including risk assessment and critical thinking.

They were also able to relate the Sara materials to real life situations. They talked about their own encounters with lorry drivers. They advised that girls should learn to say no to the advances from men who want to exploit them sexually. They recommended that girls should learn to be sly whenever they feel cornered. In spite of having spent much of their lives on the streets, these children were able to enumerate some of the things that they consider necessary for a child's development. These included education, love, respect and good moral conduct.

Nevertheless, some of the girls were not as well equipped. When asked what they would do if they were to find themselves in Amina's situation, some responded rather desperately. Some said that they would have given in to the demands of the truck drivers. And, while Sara emerged as a favourite person in the episodes, there was a feeling that she is rather 'green', whereas, in reality, most of the girls living on the streets are sexually active and experienced.

One of the teachers at GOAL noted that the major achievement of the Sara project is that the majority of the girls at the GOAL centre are especially encouraged by the character of Sara and the stories constantly reassure them of their abilities.

This debate amongst the street children illustrates how identification with Sara was enabling these most marginalised of children to start reflecting on their needs from their particular perspective, making their own claims for their right to "education, love and respect".

The FAWE study describes an incident in which a girl used problem solving, critical thinking, decision making, and communication to avoid sexual abuse.

I was in S.2. and there was a teacher who (I am sure) was interested to make love with me. He started by looking at me and smiling. At first, I could also smile a bit but I did not know the intentions. Then he extended his emotions and started giving me some exercises so that I remained alone in class. I did this about two times and then (smelt a rat). One day, the same teacher touched me and said that he loves me. I was shocked because I could not see how somebody who teaches you every day could develop such relations with you. I asked myself, then how will he teach me in his class. I thought of reporting the teacher to the school authorities but I feared because the teacher could deny and I fail to provide enough evidence. So I contacted my friend who told me that I ignore the teacher and avoid talking with him. So what I have done is to avoid him. I do not come close to him and I put on an unwelcome (gloomy) face if he suggests anything that we should remain behind to do. I am happy because these strategies are apparently working. The man is slowly retreating.

Protection from Violence: Girls in the MISR Kapchorwa, MISR FAWE, and IDS Nairobi studies have used Sara life skills to deal with violence. A girl in the Nairobi study used communication skills to avoid danger.

From the Sara videos, Faith has learnt to run away and call for attention when in danger so as to save herself. She pointed out that some of the girls at GOAL (a drop-in center for street children) also apply these skills. For example, when one of them, Rimu, went on the street as usual and the bigger boys started abusing her, she ran away saying she wanted to be like Sara.

Health: Proper nutrition is essential to good health. Girls often are discriminated against in terms of food distribution. Girls in a focus group in the MISR FAWE study demonstrated critical thinking in analysing this problem:

When it comes to food, the girls exhibit extreme shyness. When the bell for meals goes, the boys move very fast. On the other hand, the girls move to get their meals as if they are going for a wedding . . . interjection . . . also boys eat more food than girls do. When it comes to the serving hatch, the boys negotiate for more food, but the girls feel shy to do such a thing . . . whatever food they give us girls, we go away. It is known that a girl should not be seen negotiating in such a situation like asking for more food. Interjection . . . I think girls need a lot of courage to start negotiating for more food . . . prolonged laughter . . . But do we really need to develop such behaviour like negotiating for more food? one girl asked.

Episode 3: Daughter of a Lioness. This episode addresses the issue of female genital mutilation (FGM). In this story, Sara's grandmother wants her to be circumcised, but Sara uses problem-solving, critical thinking, assertiveness and negotiation skills to resist. The episode makes a clear claim for the right of girls to health and to **protection from harmful traditional practices** and from forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse. This episode has been used in mixed communities, such as Nairobi, where some groups practice FGM. It has also been used intensively in Kapchorwa, where there is a major initiative on eliminating FGM.

Protection from harmful traditional practices: The Kapchorwa study describes an incident in which a girl, like Sara, used assertiveness and negotiation skills to avoid FGM.

I visited my aunt during the season of circumcision and she suggested it to me. I told her that maybe you produce your own children and then you circumcise them if they want. But for me, leave me alone. I cannot accept to be circumcised. Even I threatened to cut short my stay but she pleaded to me and promised never to say such a thing to me again.

In a similar incident, a girl from the Kapchorwa study used decision making skills to avoid FGM. Like Sara, she had finally managed to gain her mother's support for her right to make her own decision.

At one time, I was going to the market with my mother and I overheard some women saying that I was not circumcised. These women were my mother's friends. They were trying to convince her that I should undergo FGM. But my mother told them that the decision to undergo FGM was entirely mine since there were many changes currently going on in children's rights. When I overheard my mother, I felt very happy because I thought she would support them.

Later the girl used critical thinking, coping with emotions, and conflict management to deal with the negative repercussions of her decision.

Whenever I am going in a public place—market, mosque, people especially old mothers start jeering at me. One time I met a women (our neighbors at home) who invited me by what I can call physical attack. They said that how will I get married if I am not circumcised. I became so angry and was almost busting. I thought of abusing them but I said how will this be interpreted. Anyway, I said to myself let me forgive them, but if they repeat it again, I vowed to answer them and they will not like it.

Further:

Another time, I was coming from school and I met women (our neighbors) who seemed to be coming from their gardens. I passed by them and I had left them when they started talking among themselves that I was not circumcised.

When asked how she reacted to such gossip the girl stated:

You see it is not good to start confronting such old women even if you hear them talking at you whether good or bad. A well behaved girl must compose herself but not confront people. If they jeer at you and you reply in the same way, you just worsen the situation. So, you ignore them, keep quiet and they will get embarrassed and cool down.

Another girl from the Kapchorwa study described how Sara's example encouraged her to stand up to pressure and to communicate with others.

When I was at school, REACH (an initiative against FGM) brought us a video film (Sara) and a seminar. It was on the dangers of FGM. So when I went back home, I heard that Chebet Mary was going to be circumcised. Immediately, I went and told her about the dangers of FGM like: over bleeding, risking to catch AIDS and opening yourself naked for all the community members to see you.... Sara teaches us not to let anybody force one into female circumcision. Sara encourages us to always stand firm against all odds, regardless of the amount of pressure from parents or relatives.

Another girl stressed how Sara helps to strengthen girls' ability to resist pressure from their peer group:

Sara teaches us never to give up. Not to think that because a friend has accepted to circumcise, so you should also follow.

Again, another girl in the Kapchowra study reflected on Sara's determination and assertiveness:

Sara suffered so much but she managed to succeed from not being circumcised. So, I learn to always remain honest to myself and be firm against FGM even if all my friends have deserted me.

Episode 4: The Trap. This story deals with the issue of sexual harassment in the form of 'Sugar Daddies', linked to the risk of HIV infection in adolescent girls. In this episode, a local man tries to seduce Sara with offers of gifts. Spurned by Sara, he then attempts to blackmail her into sex. Sara manages to outwit him and bring the community to recognise their responsibility to protect young people from sexual harassment. The episode focuses on the child's right to **protection from sexual exploitation** and abuse.

Protection from Sexual Exploitation: Girls in the MISR Kapchorwa, MISR FAWE, and IDS Nairobi studies used Sara life skills to avoid sexual abuse. The FAWE study describes an incident in which the girl used problem solving, critical thinking, and decision making, to avoid sexual abuse.

A man trapped me and started buying small gifts as handkerchiefs, watches and necklaces and sending them to me through his sister. The man is our neighbour at home. I refused his gifts because I knew that these gifts were being given not in good faith. I knew that this man will reach a point when he will demand them....There is no such a thing as gift. What this man calls a gift is only a means of coming closer to you. For me what I do in such a situation is first of all not to accept gifts from men. Girls should learn how to be contented with what our parents give us. You have to decide between good behaviour and conduct or accept such cheap gifts and you risk getting led astray.

A girl in the Kapchowra study also related how she used critical thinking skills, learned from Sara, to deal with an older man.

I was approached by a man for sex. Can you imagine somebody coming to you for the first time and claims that he loves you! Anyway, I told the man that I am not opposed to his love, but that he should come and tell my parents how he loves me. I could tell that the man hated me... I encourage the girls to use the same tricks in order to beat off such men and save their lives like what I did. And I had learned that from the story of Sara.

Episode 5: Choices. This episode deals with teenage pregnancy and the girl's right to continue education. It promotes a vision of positive **adolescent relationships**, in which mutual respect and responsibility protects against pregnancy and HIV. In this story Sara helps a friend cope positively with her pregnancy. Sara also confronts her own emotions and develops a positive relationship with a boy. Once again, Sara demonstrates a range of inter-related life skills, principally empathy, decision-making, and coping with emotion and stress. Focusing on the rights to education and health, this episode also deals with children's **right to information**. At the time of the studies, this episode had not been widely utilised, so there is little data on this issue.

Adolescent Relationships: The FAWE study describes an incident in which a girl used assertiveness, communication, and conflict resolution life skills to resolve a problem of harassment from a boy her own age.

There is a time here at school when a boy touched me. *Omanyi bano abaana bamanyira manyira*. Literally meaning you know these boys like unnecessarily familiarizing and disturbing girls. A boy used to touch me and I would feel irritated. I told him to leave me alone and when he insisted, I pushed him. I warned him not to do it again lest I report to the headmaster and the consequences of course would be his dismissal.

Right to Information: Girls in all four studies used Sara life skills to help them collect information. Girls in the Kampala, Kapchorwa, and Nairobi studies described receiving Sara and other materials such as posters, comic books, and videos. In the FAWE study, one girl related how she supported a pregnant friend, providing information to help her make an important decision. She stated,

One major source of information is counselors. What I have found useful is consulting counselors for making right decisions. There is a time my friend got pregnant. I told her directly as a friend that there were two options; to attempt an abortion and risk both her life and that of the baby or to accept the situation as it is, give birth, and then afterwards, resume her education. I advised her to confide in one other counselor and she went there and was advised in exactly the same way as I told her. The girl continued with her pregnancy, gave birth, and as we speak now, she is completing her ordinary level education.

Issue 1: How SCI influenced gender relationships among girls and boys

The qualitative outcome studies suggested that gender relationships are not good. Boys are not trusted “because some pretend to be good, yet they are not. They only destroy girls by cheating them into sex and hence pregnancies.” SCI seems to have influenced the situation in two ways. First, it has provided a role model for boy/girl relationships. For example, Faith, from the IDS study, stated that she would prefer the type of relationship like Sara and Juma, where they assisted one another with homework and whenever there were problems.

Second, Sara materials helped some girls to avoid unwholesome relationships with boys. A strategy that several girls employed was to avoid playing or mixing with boys, altogether. For example, one girl from the FAWE study stated, “In most cases I avoid boys. I am normally in the company of girls. I hardly laugh or joke with boys. If you laugh back or smile then they think you are easy going and you like boys. If you smile back they think you enjoy it.”

If they must mix with boys they do not go alone. For example, one girl from the FAWE study stated, “When visiting such a friend I have to go with my sister or any other friend of mine. I do not accept to put myself in such a tempting situation where I find myself alone with a boy. Even

I have to make sure that while going home, I walk in the company of other girls even if I am not friendly to them.”

Issue 2: How the life skills that girls learned through SCI fostered their participation in development

The second issue was somewhat more complex. The studies first established that Sara materials taught (or if they did not teach, then strongly reinforced existing) life skills such as problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, creative thinking, self awareness, assertiveness, communication, negotiation, coping with stress and emotion, conflict management, empathy and interpersonal relationship skills. It was then demonstrated that these life skills could foster girls' participation in development. (The term “participation in development” was operationalized as claiming rights set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.)

The narrative above summarises how girls in the four studies were influenced by SCI to develop and use various life skills in laying claim to their rights. The analysis examines in what ways the girls in the studies were able to translate Sara's life skills into action in their own lives. The theory of behavioural change that underpins SCI states that development of life skills in relation to one context affects people's sense of self-efficacy to act in other situations. In some cases, the link between Sara's example and the girls' behaviour is stated explicitly; in others, an influence may be inferred, but may require further investigation.

It should be noted that in most cases the girls in these studies were not just exposed to the Sara stories, but were facilitated through a process of discussing the stories, relating the issues to their own lives, and thereby reflecting on the development of their own life skills. The studies also illustrate that, while life skills may strengthen girls' ability to act effectively, in many cases their rights can only be fully realised within a supportive environment, where others take responsibility to meet and protect their rights.

Caveats

Sara life skills have enabled some girls to claim rights set out in the CRC. However, it must also be acknowledged that there is still much work to be done. The qualitative outcome studies also contain stories about kidnapping, missed educational opportunities, sexual abuse, and girls that have no say in decisions affecting their lives.