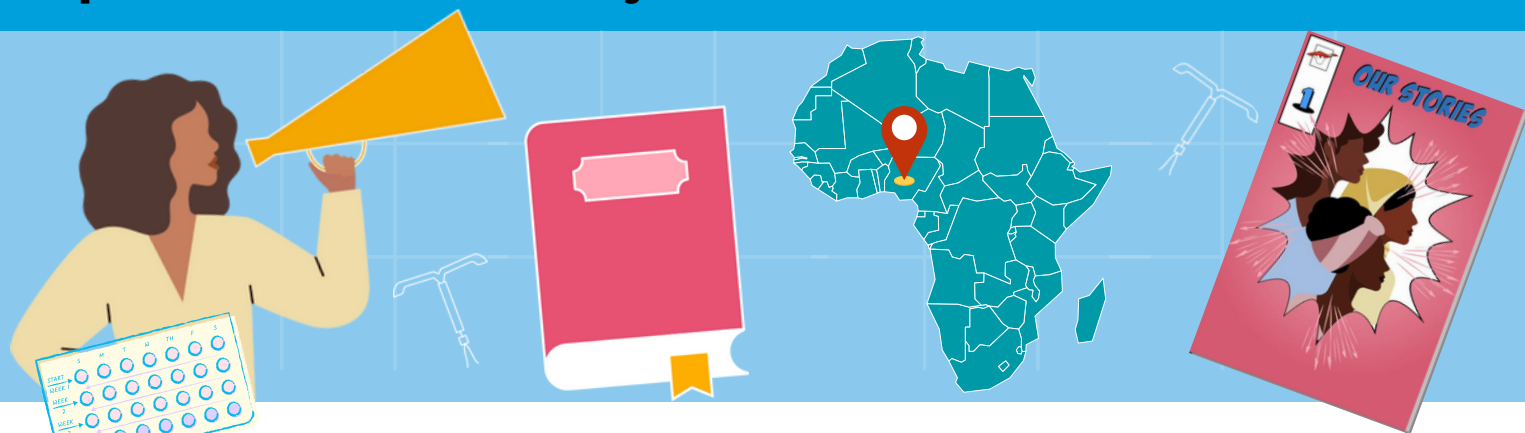


When Is a Storybook More Than a Story? When It Is Designed by Young People to Serve as an Advocacy Tool



STAND WITH A GIRL
SWAG
INITIATIVE

Motto: When the society invest in girls, everyone wins

<https://standwithagirl.org/>

Stand With A Girl Initiative Nigeria

SWAG is a youth-led organization dedicated to ensuring that every girl in Nigeria, no matter where she is born or found, is empowered to fulfill her maximum potentials. Its goal is to promote a safe and supportive environment for the social, economic, academic, and healthy development of girls in Nigeria.

Knowledge Management Challenge

Progress toward collecting data on adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health (AYSRH) in Nigeria has been slow and insufficient. However, some relevant AYSRH data does exist at national and subnational levels. The data should be analyzed, interpreted, and presented in a simplified format to support decisions that will address the low modern contraceptive prevalence rate (mCPR) among young people in Nigeria. Although young people are often the most passionate and engaging advocates for AYSRH, materials and data available for their use are often unnecessarily complex and difficult to use. That leaves them without many data-based materials to use for advocacy efforts with policy makers and with other young people.

The Innovation: Data Made Simple

The project worked with Youth Data Advocates (YDAs) to create five storybooks depicting AYSRH data. They are available in English, Yoruba, and Hausa. They contain animated images and infographics using existing data in five states in Nigeria: Edo, Niger, Ogun, Plateau, and Taraba. These storybooks were used to engage subnational policy makers, community gatekeepers, development partners, and donors to promote young people's access to sexual and reproductive health information and services. The project focused on strengthening the capacity of young people to explain the data's importance to key audiences.



The storytelling format translated data and experiences in catchy photos, doodle arts, storybooks, and infographics. This enabled young people to develop tools that use their own strengths and points of view that are underpinned by data. Finally, each book ends with specific calls to action for different stakeholders to address AYSRH in their communities.

How it was implemented

Stand With a Girl Initiative was named one of two champions for The Pitch: Africa. They collaborated with Youth Data Advocates (YDAs) and local Monitoring and Evaluation Officers to develop the storybooks and with a communications/marketing consultant to develop messaging and products that promoted the innovative nature of Data Made Simple.



Preparation & Design

Twenty-one stakeholders were invited to a kickoff meeting to build strong relationships to sustain the project. Stakeholders represented USAID, government representatives, youth-led organizations, young people, and family planning/AYSHR partners. SWAG strengthened the capacity of Youth Data Advocates, Adolescent Health Desk Officers, and Monitoring and Evaluation officers to interpret existing AYSRH data and turn them into storybooks.

Strengthening the capacity of everyone involved in the innovation was key to its success. Ten SWAG Initiative staff attended a two-day workshop on knowledge management, storytelling, data visualization, and graphic design. These master trainers then supported the development of the storybook model in the five states. The storybooks were collaboratively developed by FP/RH Coordinators, AHDOs, state M&E Officers, YDAs, LGA M&E Officers, and representatives from youth-led organizations during a three-day workshop in each state that covered data use, knowledge management, data visualization, creative design tools, and SMART Advocacy. The stories were then illustrated by two illustrators to ensure the objective of 'fewer words and catchy images' that represent the storyline.

Ensuring the Storybooks Were Used

The storybooks were officially launched by the Deputy Director, Family Health Department of the Federal Ministry of Health during a national virtual launch event and through various state-level dissemination meetings.

Impact

- More than 80 decision makers made commitments to promote AYSRH as a result of the project, most addressing contraceptive needs of adolescents and youth during dissemination in the five states.
- Executive Secretary of the Plateau State Primary Health Care Board committed to ensuring prioritization of the capacity of service providers on AYSRH Services.
- The Chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria Niger State committed to breaking the parent-child barriers on sex education by educating parents on AYSRH monthly with the storybooks.
- The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Communication and Orientation, Edo State, committed to using quarterly bulletins to spread information on AYSRH in the state.
- The family planning coordinators in Edo, Plateau, and Niger states committed to use the storybooks to advocate for improved SRHR services for young people.
- The Adolescent Health Desk Officers and M&E Officers committed to supporting simplification of subsequent AYSRH data into storybook formats to promote data use.

Looking Ahead

- SWAG Initiative has been awarded a new grant by the Stars in Global Health program at Grand Challenges Canada to scale up the Data Made Simple project in seven additional states.

- SWAG Initiative will provide continued technical support – mostly virtual – to Youth Data Advocates who are committed to sharing their knowledge and skills with other young people.
- YDAs committed to cascade the knowledge and skills to additional young people in their organizations and networks with SWAG Initiative's continued support. SWAG also created a "how to" guide to enable these cascade trainings and a simple reporting template to report trainings when conducted.

Lessons Learned

- While the focus was on telling compelling stories in a simple, friendly, catchy, and responsive format, data was at the center. It was essential to work with data experts familiar with AYSRH data and relevant data sources to ensure the youth advocates were working with the best, validated information.
- It was important to partner with each state to set criteria for, and select, Youth Data Advocates, to ensure ownership and sustainability.
- The Values Clarification Exercise on AYSRH during each workshop was important because it enabled participants to identify root causes and beliefs for their actions and behaviors.
- All Youth Data Advocates were members of existing state technical working groups and youth-led civil society organizations. This gave them the background to provide rich content supported by data and paved the way to leverage existing platforms for dissemination. They will continue to support active data use for decision making after the initiative ends.

Resources

- Website: <https://standwithagirl.org/>
- Instagram: @swag.initiative
- Twitter: @swag_initiative
- 'Data Made Simple' Storybooks:
 - <https://standwithagirl.org/dms/>
- 'How To' guide:
 - <https://standwithagirl.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/How-to-guide.pdf>
- 'Data Made Simple' is back again:
 - <https://standwithagirl.org/2022/02/18/data-made-simple-is-back-again/>

