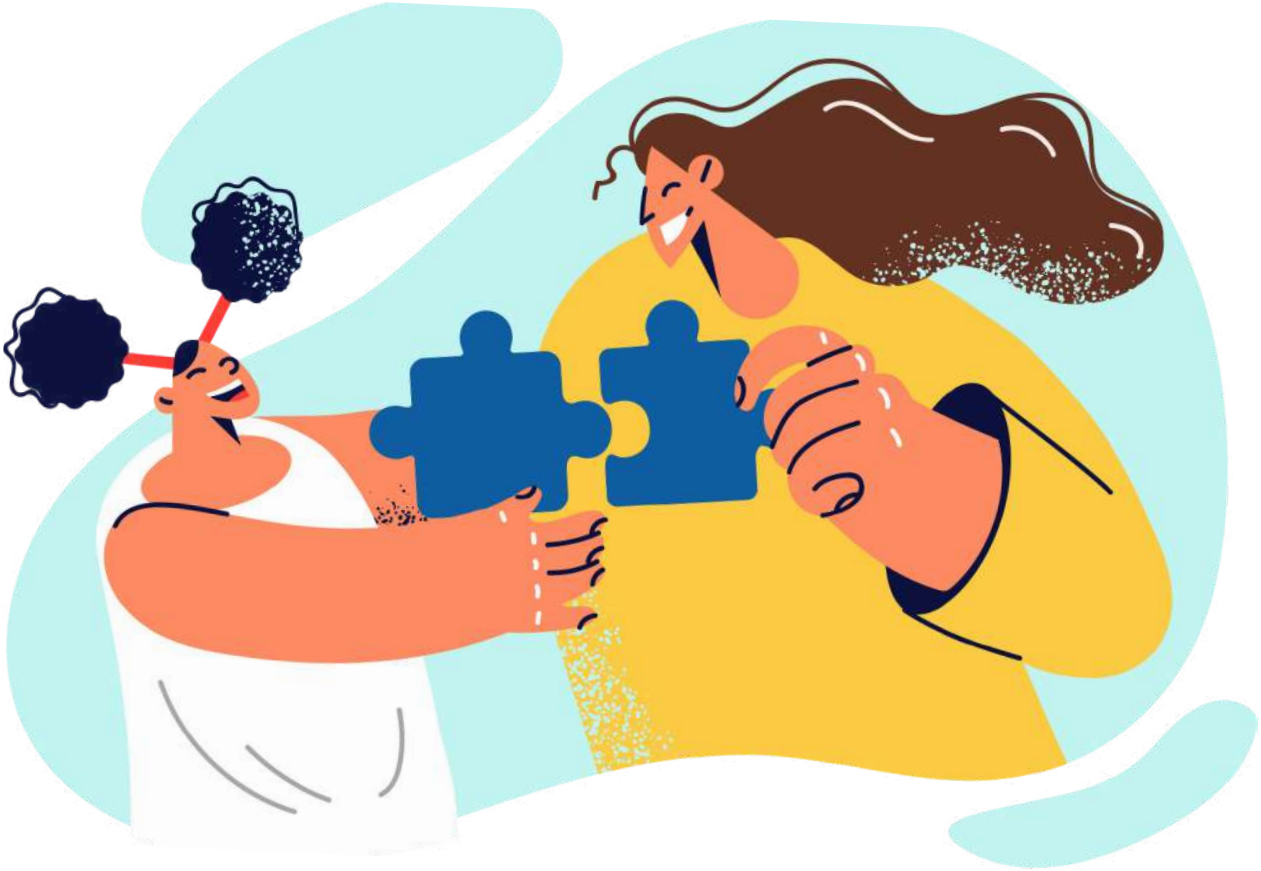
Mentoring Adolescent Girls

A Manual for Mentors

Written By: SEGEI & SWAG Initiative

A Quick & Easy Guide on How to Mentor Adolescent Girls



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About the Organizations

Strong Enough Girls' Empowerment Initiative (SEGEI) is a non-profit organization led by women and focused on youths. They aim to IGNITE, NURTURE, and HARNESS the intellectual and social strengths of young women and adolescents through education, mentorship, and life skills development. Their goal is to promote strong character, excellence, good health, and a better community for all.

STRONG ENOUGH GIRLS
Empowerment Initiative

Stand With A Girl (SWAG) Initiative 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 potential. The goal is to promote a safe and supportive environment for the social, economic, academic and healthy development of Girls in Nigeria.

STAND WITH A GIRL
SWAG
INITIATIVE

Motto: When the society invests in girls, everyone wins.

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Preface

Between April 2021 and April 2022, the Stand With a Girl (SWAG) Initiative and Strong Enough Girls' Empowerment Initiative (SEGEI) collaborated on the Girl Advocates for Gender Equality (GAGE) project. This project received funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and aimed to empower 36 adolescent girl advocates (ages 10-19) from all six geopolitical zones in Nigeria to become champions of gender equality. The project was implemented to support the multigenerational Generation Equality campaign, a global movement for gender equality organized by UN Women.

One of the key takeaways from the GAGE project was that adolescent girls require structured mentorship to support them in their transition from childhood to adolescence and into womanhood. As a result, this mentorship manual has been developed to guide female adults in providing valuable mentorship to adolescent girls. We would like to express our gratitude to all GAGE project participants and mentors who participated in the discussions that contributed to the content of this manual. A list of all contributors is provided on page 6.

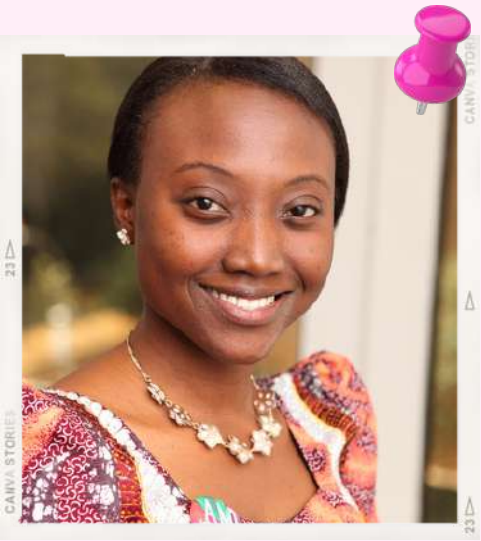
Purpose of Manual

This manual is for women who want to serve as mentors and create a safe space for teenage girls to learn about navigating their adolescent years and promoting gender equality. Adolescence is a crucial time in a girl's life when she explores and defines her values and makes lifestyle decisions. It's a transition from childhood to womanhood, and girls need evidence-based, relevant information and skills to navigate this period successfully.

This manual provides practical guidance and resources for female mentors and adolescent mentees to build meaningful and impactful relationships. It is easy to use and can be used as a personal resource or in girls' clubs in schools and communities for mentorship. This manual is adaptable based on the mentor's expertise, the girl's needs, and the environmental context, and is not intended to be prescriptive.

A Word From Us

Onyinye Edeh
Founder, SEGEI



Margaret Bolaji-Adegbola
Founder, SWAG Initiative

Kathy Calvin, the former President of the United Nations Foundation, once emphasized the significant role of girls in driving positive change in the world. She said "Girls are one of the most powerful forces for change in the world: when their rights are recognized; their needs met, and their voices heard, they drive positive change in their families, their communities and the world." At Strong Enough Girls' Empowerment Initiative (SEGEI) and Stand With a Girl (SWAG) Initiative, we firmly believe in this statement.

We are committed to supporting girls in their development by providing access to quality education, life skills, and appropriate mentorship. This manual is based on our experience mentoring girls in Africa. Although not exhaustive, we hope it offers an adaptable template for working with adolescent girls in their diversities to help them reach their full potential. Thank you forjoining us to help girls thrive.

Sincerely,
Onyinye & Margaret

"As an Adolescent girl, I want to learn what it means to be female. What defines it? Is it defined? I want to learn to be the best of myself. Empowerment. The skill to empower others. To learn to make the best of my voice in such noisy world."

DEBORAH OGBONNA, 18

"There are a lot of very young girls who don't know about their sexual and reproductive health so I feel they should know this at that young age. They should also be empowered about their career choices and to know more about it."

ENE NAOMI OKPE, 15

"As adolescents, we are always confused because we are not kids anymore and we're trying to navigate our way into adulthood. So having a mentor, having someone to look up to, to tell you what to do, what not to do, and guide you through that [phase], I think is very essential."

RUKAYYA IDRIS, 19

Our Contributors

We would like to express our gratitude to the participants and mentors of the GAGE project who contributed to the development of this manual. A list of all contributors is provided below.

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Core Principles

The principles guiding the content of this manual include:

- **Safe Space:** Girls should have the assurance that they won't encounter discrimination, critique, harassment, or any form of emotional or physical harm.
- **Equity:** All girls are powerful, and their voices matter.
- **Inclusion:** Girls of all abilities and diversities should have equal opportunities to express their thoughts and skills.
- **Empowerment:** Girls should be given access to information and opportunities that will help them succeed in national, regional, and global events and reach their full potential.
- **Inspiration:** Inspiring female mentors should guide girls in finding and using their voices.
- **Authenticity:** Girls are experts in their own lives and should be empowered to express themselves and shape their own future.

Glossary

- **Adolescent:** a person between 10-19 years
- **GAGE:** Girl Advocates for Gender Equality
- **Gender Equality:** equal access to resources regardless of gender, including economic participation and decision-making
- **SEGEI:** Strong Enough Girls' Empowerment Initiative
- **STEM:** Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
- **SWAG:** Stand With a Girl Initiative

Chapter One:
What is Mentorship?

Mentorship is a relationship where an experienced and knowledgeable individual (the mentor) guides and supports a less experienced person (the mentee). It is a two-way relationship where both mentors and mentees gain new knowledge and friendship.

Who is a Mentor?

- A mentor is a role model who has the skills, experience, and willingness to support a mentee.

Who is a Mentee?

- A mentee is a person who receives guidance from a mentor to develop skills, achieve goals, and broaden their social network.

Key Skills for a Mentor and Mentee:

The following are essential skills for a successful mentorship experience:

- Confidentiality
- Active listening
- Trust building
- Time management
- Commitment and Consistency

The goal of mentoring an adolescent girl should be **to build her up**, understand her issues and goals, and offer guidance through conversation.

Chapter Two:
Structuring the Mentorship

SEGEI and SWAG Initiative have discovered the importance of both one-on-one and group mentorship for teenage girls. Group mentorship provides a sense of community and support to girls, helping them connect with and learn from each other. One-on-one mentorship, on the other hand, allows the girl to receive customized guidance based on her unique needs and interests.

In the current post-COVID era, virtual mentorship has become more popular in place of in-person gatherings. However, it is crucial to ensure that virtual programs are engaging and interactive. Platforms such as Zoom that allow for video engagement should be considered to achieve this goal. As one GAGE Mentee shared when asked about her preference:

"I didn't like that it was on WhatsApp. Less engaging. The energy wasn't as present."

Group Vs. Individual Mentorship

"Both group mentorship and one-on-one mentorship have their own advantages. Group mentorship allows for diverse perspectives, collaborative learning, and networking opportunities. One-on-one mentorship offers personalized attention, guidance." - GAGE Mentee

"One-on-one mentorship is cool for people who want something more private based on what they want to share. On the other hand, group mentorship makes it easy to connect with like minds and learn from other people." - GAGE Mentee

In the GAGE project, we adopted a group mentorship approach where girls attended one-hour sessions with skilled female professionals twice a month for six months on WhatsApp. These sessions focused on different topics that are relevant to girls. The girls found the group format beneficial as it enabled them to engage and learn from their peers. However, they also acknowledged the importance of individual one-on-one sessions when they need guidance.

Chapter Three:
Strategies For Effective Mentorship

An effective mentorship experience can only be developed when the right environment is created. Whether in a group format, one-on-one, in-person or virtual session, the following suggestions will help make for an effective session:

Set Clear Goals:

- Begin each session with a clear understanding of the goals and objectives you want to achieve.

Create a Safe Environment:

- Set up a space that is comfortable, private, and guarantees confidentiality.

Start with an Ice-Breaker:

- Set the tone for open communication by beginning with a question/prompt that allows the mentee to share about herself or how she is feeling.

Discuss the Objectives:

- Share information about what will be covered in the mentorship session and the expectations for the time together.

Encourage Questions and Feedback:

- Allow time for questions and feedback after mentorship session to assess effectiveness and make improvements.

Chapter Four:
Essential Topics For Adolescent Girls

Mentoring adolescent girls presents an opportunity to positively influence their lives. It is important to discuss critical topics with them, such as:

1. Body Image and Self-Esteem (including self-confidence, self-awareness, and resilience)
2. Gender, Gender Role, Stigma, Stereotypes, and Inclusion
3. Puberty, Menstruation, and Hygiene
4. Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
5. Healthy Relationships
6. Gender-Based Violence and Violence Against Girls (and where to find help)
7. Mental Health Awareness
8. Life Skills: Communication, Conflict Management, Negotiation, Assertiveness, Emotional Intelligence, Setting Boundaries, Decision Making, Goal Setting, and Refusal Skills
9. Understanding Gender Equality and Equity
10. Girl-Led Advocacy and Leadership
11. Pursuing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)
12. Financial Literacy

Chapter Five:

Dos and Don'ts Of Mentorship

- **DO**: be flexible, open-minded, and age-appropriate.
- **DO**: know the girls' parents so that you understand their family values/ know what works in their home and what doesn't.
- **DO**: set clear boundaries to ensure appropriate and respectful interactions.
- **DO:** encourage support system, interaction with positive-minded youths, and networking.
- **DO**: ask questions to understand her perspective.
- **DO**: appreciate improvement and progress.
- **DO**: understand that the mentor is not responsible for the mentee's financial needs.
- **DON'T**: make promises you cannot keep.
- **DON'T**: get involved in mentee's personal issues unless she shares that information with you.
- **DON'T**: be judgmental.
- **DON'T**: make assumptions.

Chapter Six:
Advice to Mentors

Mentors serve as role models to girls, and as such, they must represent positive values and practice healthy lifestyles. Below are some of the advice shared by the GAGE project mentors:

- Make the girls your friends while you remain professional with them.
- Be accessible to the girls (leave your WhatsApp available for them to reach out at any time).
- As a mentor, you must be disciplined on certain issues (do not ask your mentee for a favor); do not overwork your mentee; understand that your mentee is not your domestic staff. Even when your mentee offers to do certain things, you can say "No"; this helps her set boundaries.
- Inspire your mentee to be who she is, not try to become someone else.
- Be the model for who you want your mentee to be.
- Your mentee should not accompany you to your events or events that are not age-appropriate.
- Understand the goal of the mentorship and the demands required from both ends. Agree on terms and most importantly guide and link mentees to opportunities that will launch them into achieving their goals.

Appendix A

Mentorship Lesson: Building A Healthy Self Esteem

- Welcome & Mentor Introduction - 3 minutes
- Ice-Breaker - 5 minutes (depending on number of mentees)
  - Ask "What does Self Esteem mean to you?" and listen to responses.
- Discuss the session objectives - 2 minutes
  - To understand the meaning of Self Esteem; To know the types of Self Esteem; To know the causes of low Self Esteem; To know the importance of a healthy Self Esteem to an adolescent girl; To know how to build a healthy self esteem
- Interactive presentation on "Building a Healthy Self Esteem" - 30 minutes
  - Provide context on Building a healthy Self Esteem (including how it affects a girls confidence, her ability to set boundaries, cope with peer pressure, her friendships/relationships and dreams of the future, Highlight family influence on a girls self esteem, her decision making skills, her choices and ambitions. Discuss challenges to a healthy Self Esteem)
- Reflection time - 10 minutes
  - Prompt: What steps will you be taking daily to build a healthy self esteem? What habits would you like to change to achieve a healthy self esteem?
- Questions & Answers - 5 minutes (depending on number of mentees)
- Wrap Up - 3 minutes

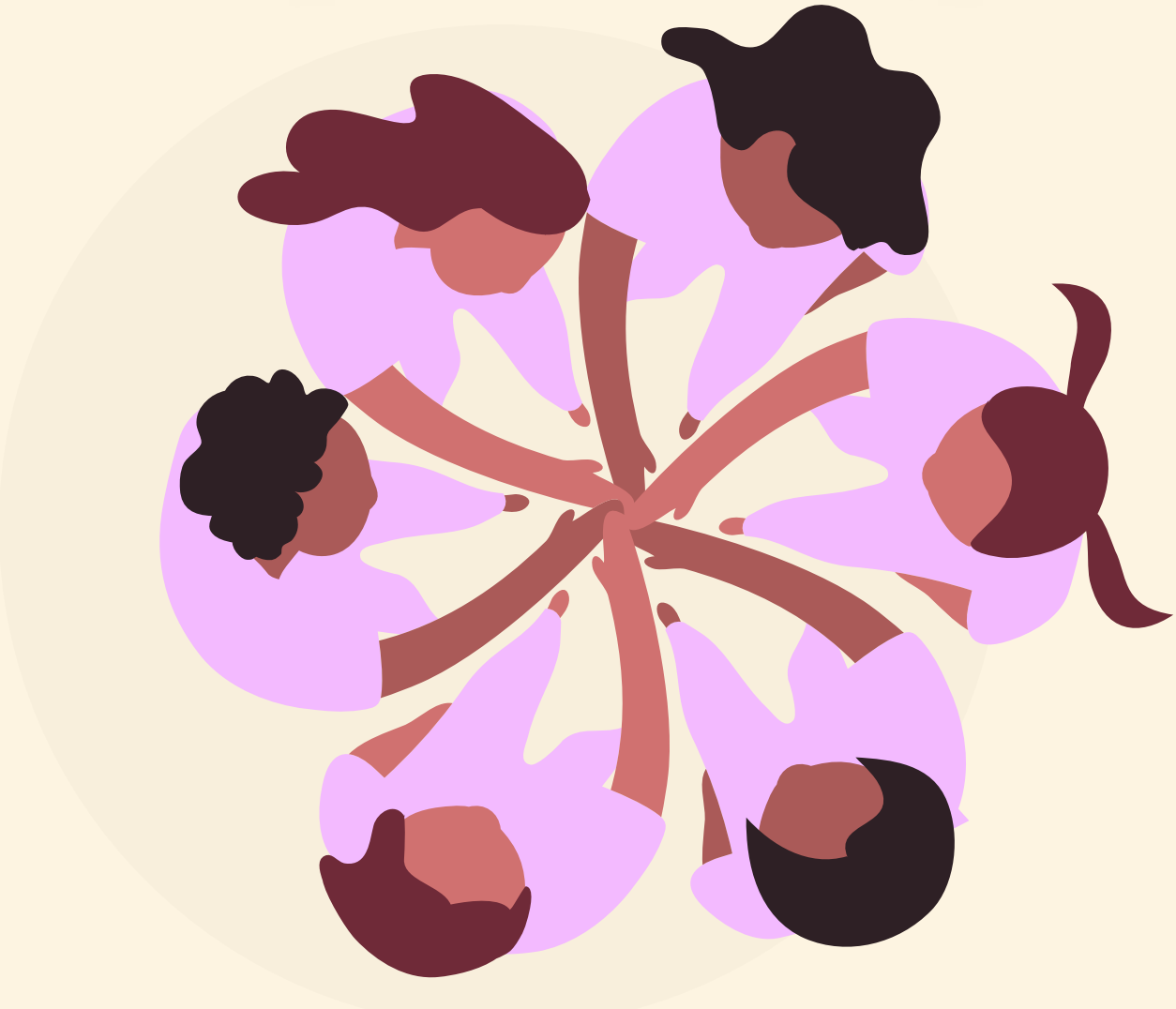
Appendix B

Mentorship Lesson: Female Leadership

- Welcome & Mentor Introduction - 3-5 minutes
- Ice-Breaker - 10 minutes (depending on number of mentees)
  - Ask "Who is your favorite female leader and why?" and listen to responses
- Discuss the session objectives - 2 minutes
- Interactive presentation on "Female Leadership" in the country/world - 25 minutes
  - Provide context on female leadership (including history, statistics, current events, etc)
  - Highlight community, national, and global female role models
  - Discuss challenges to female leadership
- Reflection time - 5 minutes
  - Prompt: What kind of leader would you like to be? What things would you like to change in your community?
- Questions & Answers - 10 minutes (depending on number of mentees)
- Wrap Up - 3 minutes

Appendix C
Girl-Friendly Activities

It's important to include interactive activities that engage all five senses during mentorship sessions with adolescent girls. Here are some suggestions:



- **Role-Playing:** Practice life skills like assertiveness, negotiation, and handling conflicts through role-playing.
- **Journaling and Reflection:** Encourage mentees to keep a journal to reflect on experiences, goals, and personal growth.
- **Arts and Crafts:** Engage mentees in activities such as painting, drawing, poetry, or music to foster creativity and self-expression.
- **Vision Boards:** Have the girls create vision boards to represent their short-term and long-term goals, aspirations, and dreams visually.
- **Guest Speakers:** Invite successful women to share their stories and insights with the girls.
- **Small Group Discussions:** Encourage girls to share personal stories, which fosters self-expression and bonding.
- **Dance**: Incorporate activities/games with song or music that allow the girls move their bodies.

Appendix D
Helpful Resources

1. Action Health Incorporated. Family Life and HIV Education for Junior Secondary Schools Students' Handbook 2nd Edition. http://www.actionhealthinc.org/publications/docs/FLHE%20STUDENTS%20HANDBOOK%202nd%20ed.pdf. Accessed October 9, 2023.
2. International Rescue Committee. Girl Shine Training Manual. https://gbvresponders.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/IRC-Girl-Shine-Part-4-Digital.pdf. Accessed October 9, 2023.
3. Alberta Advanced Education and Technology. High School Teen Mentoring Handbook. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED506100.pdf. Accessed October 9, 2023.
4. Girls Leadership. https://girlsleadership.org/
5. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. https://www.bbbs.org/
6. Mentor National. https://www.mentoring.org/
7. Girls Inc. https://girlsinc.org/
8. Girls Empowerment Network. https://www.girlsempowermentnetwork.org/

About the Manual

This manual is designed to be a helpful resource for anyone who wants to provide mentorship to a teenage girl. Our focus is on mentorship provided by female professionals because we believe that there is a powerful transformational impact when girls receive mentorship from women. If you are interested in using this manual or getting in touch with us, please email info@strongenoughgirls.org.

About the Project

The Gates Foundation Generation Equality Forum Youth Grant was awarded to SWAG Initiative and SEGEI to implement the Girl Advocates for Gender Equality project in Nigeria from 2021-2022.