

Developing a Girl Research Unit

A planner's guide



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We build mass media brands, with mobile interactivity and the use of 'safe spaces', that engage girls and key influencers in their lives to effect social norm change; breaking down barriers that prevent girls from accessing the services and support they need to progress. By doing this, we enable girls to have a voice in determining their future and make choices that have a direct impact in unleashing their potential www.girleffect.org

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The story of the Girl Research Unit in Rwanda

The Girl Research Unit (GRU) is a group of six young women at Girl Effect Rwanda (GER), who have been trained in conducting qualitative research with adolescent girls in Rwanda.

GER exists to elevate the voice of adolescent girls. Through branded media platforms, catalyzing and convening programmes, and advocating for girls' considerations in national policy change, GER places participatory research and insights at the heart of everything they do. GER's cohort of interest – 10 to 19 year old girls – can be challenging to engage as research respondents. When conducting research with adolescent girls, there is a strong tendency for girls to want to give the “right” answer and to become shy and withdrawn, and reluctant to readily share their experiences, thoughts and opinions. Some of the areas in which GER works, such as adolescent sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence, make the challenge of conducting research with adolescent girls even more acute.

These challenges prompted Girl Hub Rwanda¹ to pilot the Girl Research Unit in 2012. The aim was to train a group of young women in qualitative research methods with a particular focus on developing skills which would enable them to glean insights from vulnerable girls in Rwanda.

To ensure that the GRU came from a variety of different backgrounds, applications were solicited from GER's Girl Ambassadors, which is comprised of one young woman (age 18-25) from each of Rwanda's 30 districts. The Girl Ambassadors were

already familiar with GER's purpose and ethos as they work closely with our staff to distribute Ni Nyampinga, our quarterly magazine, and also represent GER at key community events. All of the Girl Ambassadors were invited to apply to the GRU training programme – twenty of thirty applied and were interviewed and ten were selected to participate in initial training. Ultimately six young women went on to form the GRU.

In partnership with an international, UK-based organization 2CV, and with certification from the world's leading research association, The Market Research Society (MRS), the GRU were trained in research principles, recruitment in the field, facilitation of workshops and research, analysis and interpretation, and presentation of results from the research to clients. Five young women graduated in June 2014 with an international qualification from MRS in qualitative research skills and are now equipped with girl-centred research techniques.

The GRU was originally conceived as a group of researchers who would provide high quality, home-grown feedback on our branded media platforms. As the GRU grew in skills and confidence, however, they have had tremendous impact on research processes within GER. The GRU are now viewed internally as a valued research cadre that consistently brings the voice of the girl into all of our platforms. The unique lens and empathy that they have has transformed our thinking on key areas, such as violence and agriculture.

Kecia Bertermann, *Girl Effect*

¹Girl Hub Rwanda is the former name of Girl Effect Rwanda



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Introduction to the planning guide



What is the 'Girl Research Unit Toolkit: Planning Guide'

This 'planning guide' is a tool for the development community, government planners and other organisations that are aiming to develop a Girl Research Unit (GRU) – a team of girls or young women trained in qualitative research skills - to generate compelling and actionable insights into girls in their country.

It is based on the GRU model that was piloted and developed by Girl Hub Rwanda (GER), and guides practitioners through the steps for creating, training and sustaining a similar programme. This guide also provides actions and recommendations on how to develop an approach and training content that is tailored to the needs of your particular context.

This guide is complemented by the '*Girl Research Unit Toolkit: Trainer's Handbook*', which provides the trainer with tips for training and curriculum overview for training girls or young women in qualitative research skills.

Who can use this 'Planning Guide'

Any NGO, government or community organisation that has an interest in developing insights into girls, can use this guide to develop a GRU to conduct research with this audience. It has been designed to be used by a programme manager or trainer with experience in girl-centred programming and qualitative research.

While this guide is specific to the development of a girl-focused research unit, the techniques are also applicable to the creation of other, similar groups for other vulnerable groups. Many of the techniques in this guide have been developed specifically for training young women, but the participatory principles throughout the toolkit can be modified for other research groups.

Why and how was this guide developed

When developing programmes for girls in resource-limited environments, it is crucial to capture their needs and input, in an authentic, respectful and non-tokenistic way. However, girls can be difficult audience with which to conduct research, and traditional research approaches are often not up to the task. To create an approach that would overcome this barrier, GER embarked on the pilot and development of a GRU. The experience and results of this gave the GER team an understanding of what is needed to make a programme like this work. This planning guide uses the approaches and lessons learned from the GRU in Rwanda to provide a step-by-step guide to designing and delivering a GRU in your context.



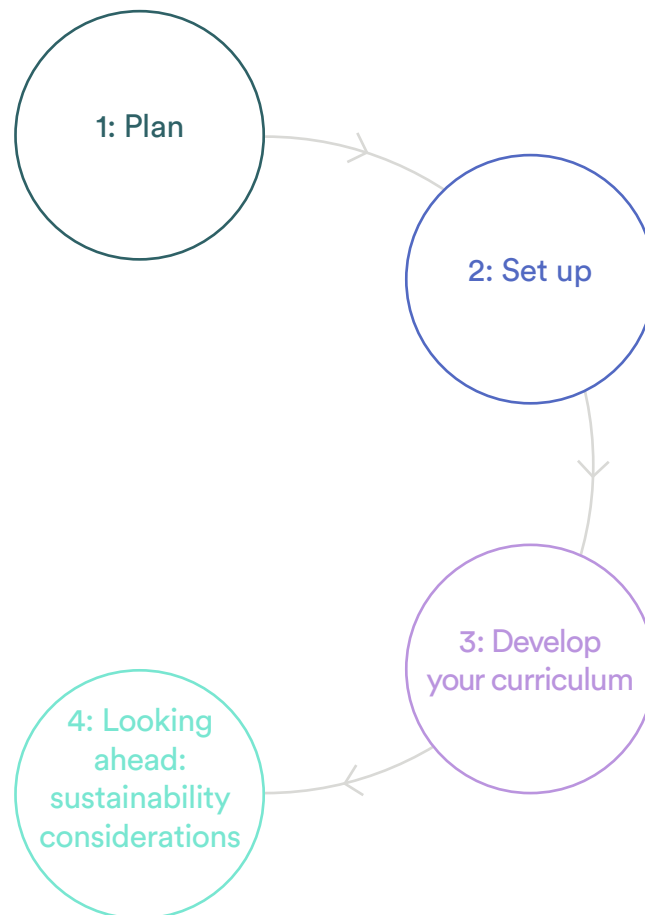
How to use this ‘planning guide’

This planning guide describes a process for developing a GRU that meets the research and insight needs of your organisation.

This planning guide is based on the experiences of developing the GRU in Rwanda, and showcases one proposed way of setting up and supporting a GRU for those wishing to follow in GER’s footsteps. However, please note that this is not a prescriptive guide. How you structure and develop your GRU should be determined by a range of factors such as who your target audience of girls are, what

your research needs are and the resources you have to give to this programme; there is no one size fits all approach. Though this guide is not an exhaustive or prescriptive resource for adapting the GRU framework for your needs, it does provide recommendations for tailoring the original approach to the needs of different contexts, so that it meets the needs of your organisation.

The guide is divided into 4 steps, each step describes the actions and decisions that are made in developing your GRU, and is illustrated by examples from the GRU in Rwanda.



Why create a GRU



Introducing a Girl Research Unit

Why a GRU

Qualitative research is a valuable tool for incorporating girls’ viewpoints. It helps us understand the context and helps us uncover not only the ‘what, but also the ‘why’ behind people’s emotions, attitudes and behaviours. In situations where little is known about an issue, it allows us to explore in depth the daily lives of the target audience and gives us a nuanced understanding of their beliefs and needs. In contexts where there is more knowledge of the subject matter (particularly through quantitative studies or data) qualitative research is crucial in providing us with more detailed insights that escape the reach of big data.

For organisations working with girls, good programme design requires the input and participation of the girls you are aiming to reach throughout the programme cycle. They are the experts on their experiences, feelings and needs and therefore whether designing or evaluating a programme for girls, their point of view should act as the point of departure.

Qualitative research is a powerful tool for designing programmes and informing behaviour change work. However, when considering the complex landscape of girls living in poverty, it is crucial that factors such as access to services, cultural sensitivities, low confidence and literacy levels are taken into account. As such, traditional research methods may need to be supplemented with sensitive, context dependent approaches that can meet these unique challenges effectively. Using trained peer researchers such as a GRU can in many ways be considered an ‘ideal’ way to conduct this kind of research. As young women closer in age and experience to the girls they are conducting research with, they are in a unique position to harness the power of qualitative research. Girl researchers understand the local context and culture. They have the ability to forge closer connections and better working relationships with girls to unleash crucial insights

that could help shape the development of a programme and may be missed by someone further removed from the intricacies of the girls’ daily lives.

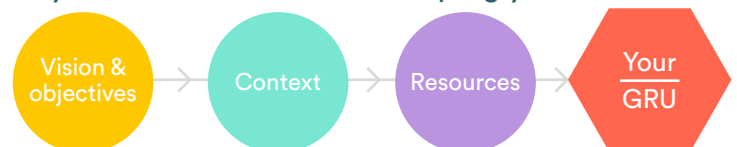
A GRU can, in some cases, also have an impact beyond the programme itself. A GRU can have a positive effect in encouraging the further development of the local qualitative research industry, particularly in contexts where research (specifically qualitative research) is not well established. This can positively impact other fields where this kind of sensitive approach to research is valuable.

Before you embark on this journey

A few years ago we were starting out on our journey to create a GRU within Girl Hub Rwanda. We had a vision and broad plan of action for creating a cohort of junior qualitative researchers and a general framework for steps in the GRU journey. Through this experimental approach and the unexpected challenges and successes we encountered, we learned a lot about planning and implementing a GRU.

While we’d encourage adopting a flexible approach, tailored to your own context, our experience has taught us that there are a few key considerations to take into account before you embark on your journey that are guaranteed to lead to a more successful GRU. Asking yourself these key questions before you start will help you determine and tailor your approach.

Key considerations for developing your GRU



Define your vision and objectives

Before you begin this journey, it is important to have a clear picture of how the GRU will benefit your organisation’s mission. Asking yourself the following questions will help you understand the key criteria for the GRU.



Key questions to ask are:

- What will the GRU do? What challenges, issues or programmes will the GRU provide insight into?
- Will they be performing lighter-touch or more in depth research and insight needs?
- How will having a GRU further your organisational goals and objectives?
- How will the girls themselves benefit from being part of the GRU?

What worked for GRU Rwanda: At Girl Hub Rwanda there was a need for more, and richer insights on girls in Rwanda, and in particular there was a need to gather feedback on the 'Ni Nyampinga' brand and products (magazine and radio show) that girls were consuming, in a more agile way. These are gaps we knew, from the very start, that a team of peer researchers could fill, in a way traditional research agencies could not. At GER there was also interest in training and developing young women, as had been done with the Ni Nyampinga journalists, and awareness of the benefits this training provided to the young women involved.

Consider the context

A fundamental consideration to keep in mind is the context in which you work and there are two key considerations here: 1) the local research context; and 2) the overall research environment. The first is important for understanding how a GRU will fit into the wider industry landscape (i.e. are peer researchers advisable within the local context?). This will be significant in determining how the GRU are perceived in the local context but also have an effect on the long-term sustainability of the GRU. For example, if your goal is to expand the GRU's research beyond your organisation and allow the young women to develop careers in research, it is vital to consider what the potential and appetite for this is locally. Secondly, it's important to consider the overall research landscape e.g. are there security or gov't permission concerns that require young adults rather than adolescent researchers.

A landscape analysis of the research industry in country is key to understand:

1. Where the GRU fits – what are the skill gaps (girl-focused, youth-focused, gender-focused, qualitative, etc) in the context, where might the GRU add value
2. What partnership opportunities might there be: Especially from youth focused, participatory research organisations as it will be important if the girls were to be linked to others in any way that they are given the same mandate and respect as they are by their founding organisation
3. Career opportunities for the trainees post-GRU (especially where GRU are being trained in more depth)

This may involve speaking to key industry players and local agencies - a good place to start is to contact the local/regional market research association in country and speaking to current research delivery partners for contacts.

What worked for GRU Rwanda: We learned of the challenges that many girl-focused NGOs and government institutions faced in finding high calibre, insightful researchers locally, and the strong desire in Rwanda to foster local talent. As the programme was being developed we spoke to several partner organisations that we discovered were hungry for deeper and more compelling insights on girls. This gave us a clearer picture of the important role girl-centred peer researchers could play in the longer term.

Assess your resources

The next crucial step is to think about what resources are required for developing a GRU, and what resources your organisation can invest.



People and skills

We see two key roles or skill sets required for developing a GRU.

First, the GRU needs to be successfully designed and managed: this requires someone that knows the organisation, audience/programmes and objectives and is able to ensure the GRU ties into these.

Second, the GRU needs a trainer: this requires someone with experience in qualitative research and, ideally, experience running workshops or training sessions with young women. While training is a collaborative process, especially at more advanced levels where the trainees help adapt approaches to the specifics of the local context, we believe it is paramount that the trainer has experience researching in a similar context and with a similar audience.

What worked for GRU Rwanda: For the GRU in Rwanda, GER partnered with research partner 2CV a UK based, international research organisation with a shared interest in behaviour change amongst young people, and exploring the impact of powerful brands. 2CV provided a training and research expertise, with 2CV researchers designing and running regular training with the GRU and mentoring them on live projects.

In addition to this there are a range of other people and skill sets that will come into play:

- Facilitators: especially for large cohorts of trainees and translators (if required) for the training session
- Girl Mentors: knowledge and skills to ensure emotional and broader life needs are being met. For example, with the GRU in Rwanda we discovered that as the training programme advanced the trainees expressed a desire for broader skill development outside of research (e.g. English language, professional development). Additionally, mentoring to support with emotional needs (e.g. being away from home, resolving issues within the team) are important for well-being. This need was met with a GRU mentor, someone other than the trainer, who could provide mentoring on broader issues in 1 to 1 sessions.

Time

Time is a crucial resource. It is important to be clear and honest about the amount of time your organisation has available to dedicate to the programme. The primary consideration for training level should be what the organisation needs the GRU for as this will help determine the level to which the young women can be trained. However this will also allow you to ensure the young women selected have the time to participate in the programme (e.g. this may help refine your recruitment criteria for the trainees).

Physical resources

There are a number of physical resources required to run training sessions and conduct 'live' research with the trainees:

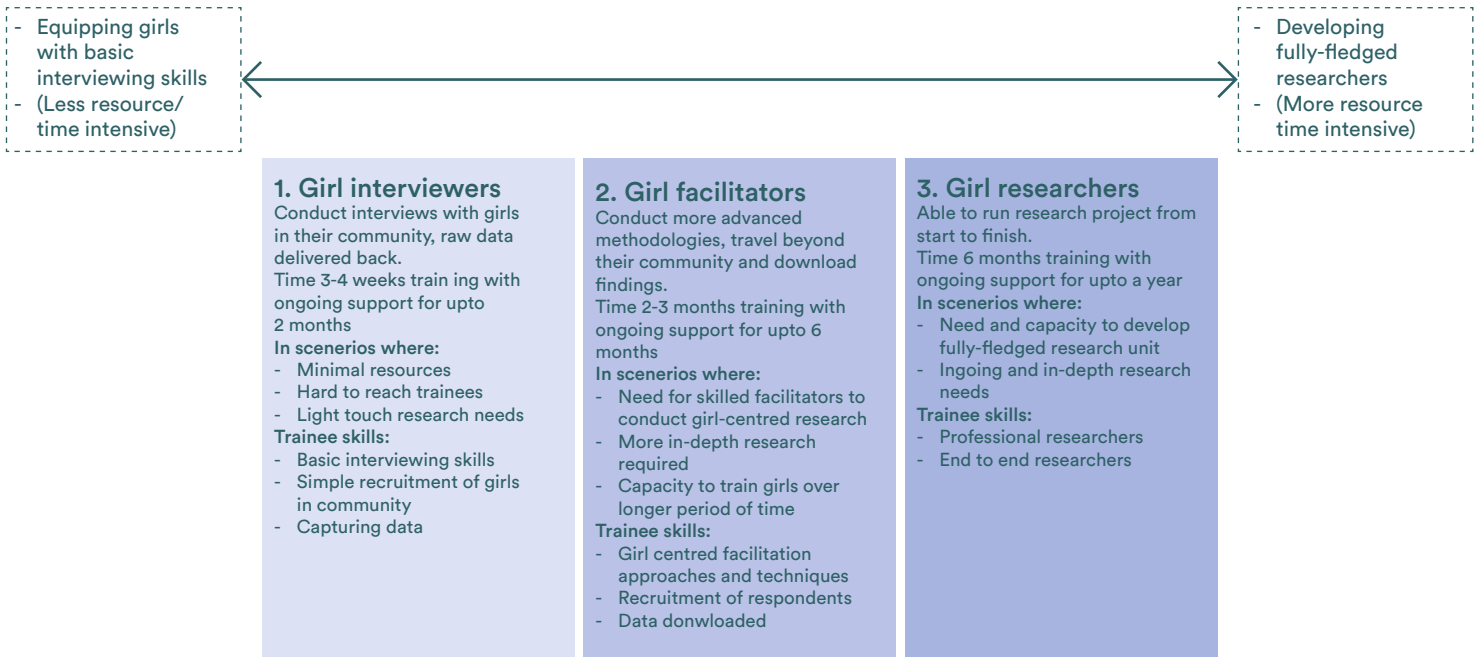
- Venue to hold training
- Pens, notebooks, printing of discussion guides, activity sheets, etc.
- Laptops may be required
- Dictaphones
- Photo or video cameras
- Transport to field research locations

Your GRU

Asking yourself these key questions is crucial to planning your GRU and leads you to a clear idea of what kind of GRU approach might be, given your organisational needs and available resources. While there are numerous ways to adapt and tailor your GRU, we believe there are three broad 'scenarios of use' for your GRU. These scenarios outline the different possible ways to set up your GRU depending on your vision, context and resources. As such, we have outlined three 'levels' of GRU programme, with accompanying skill levels and resource requirements: 1. Girl Interviewers; 2. Girl Facilitators and; 3. Girl Researchers. These are outlined in the diagram below:

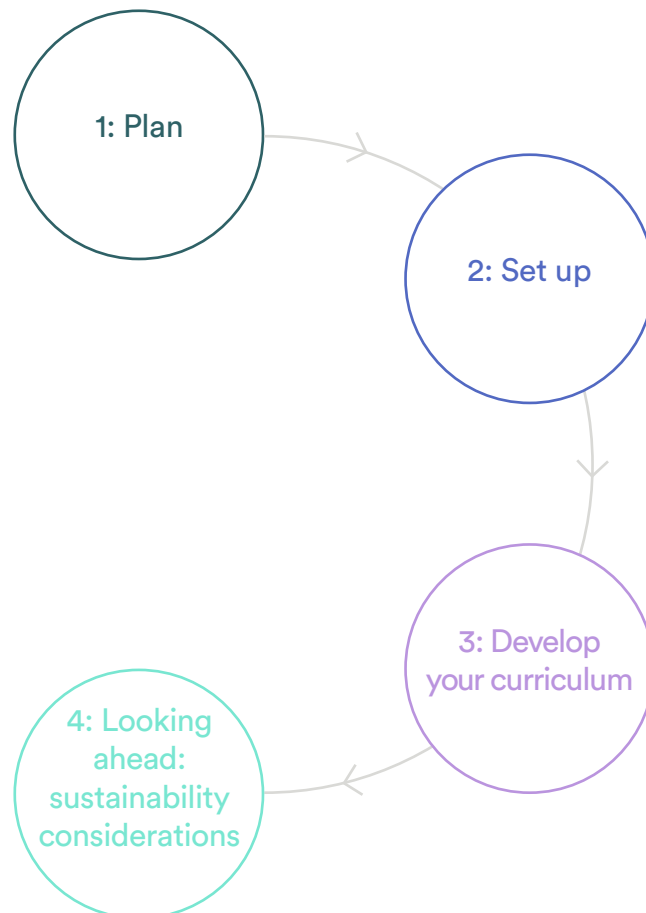


Deciding what fits best: three levels of GRU



Step-by-step planning guide to developing a GRU

This toolkit includes into four main sections:



Phase 1: Plan

This chapter will help you plan your GRU approach. The first important decision you have to make when setting up a GRU is thinking about how the GRU will contribute to your participatory M&E needs

There are many ways to approach developing a GRU, and the approach you choose should be tailored to your goals and outcomes. This will affect your programme’s structure, content and level of training which you provide the trainees. We think there are three broad ‘scenarios of use’ for your GRU. These scenarios outline the different possible ways to set up your GRU.

To make this important decision, you need to spend time thinking about WHY a GRU will assist your organisation and what the VISION is for the future. It is crucial to consider these aspects in the planning phase.

The scenario assessment tool (next page) is designed to help you plan your GRU and make the most for the programme. This tool takes you through a number of steps: You firstly you need to clarify your vision for the GRU and the resources you have available for its development. Taking these into account, you can then begin to identify which GRU option aligns most strongly with your vision and resources. This preferred option will need to be strength tested before you decide on your final approach.

Three GRU scenarios (overview)



Vision

What is your vision from your GRU?

- What will it do for your organisation?
- What is the long-term vision?
- What is sustainability to you?

Resources

What resources do you have available?

- Time
- Budget
- People/skills
- Physical resources

Consider your options:



1. Girl interviewers

Conduct interviews with girls in their community, raw data delivered back.

Time: 2-4 weeks training with ongoing support for up to 2 months

In scenarios where:

- Minimal resources
- Hard to reach trainees
- Light-touch research needs

Trainees skills:

- Basic interviewing skills
- Simple recruitment of girls in community
- Capturing data

2. Girl facilitators

Conduct more advanced methodologies, travel beyond their community and download findings.

Time: 2-3 months training with ongoing support for up to 6 months

In scenarios where:

- Need for skilled facilitators to conduct girl-centred research
- More in-depth research required
- Capacity to train girls over longer period of time

Trainees skills:

- Girl centred facilitation approaches and techniques
- Recruitment of respondents
- Data downloaded

3. Girl researchers

Able to run research project from start to finish (with support).

Time: 6 months training with ongoing support for up to a year

In scenarios where:

- Need and capacity to develop fully-fledged research unit
- Ongoing and in-depth research needs

Trainees skills:

- Professional researchers
- End to end researchers

Strength test your preferred option against:

Trainee life needs

- Accommodation /subsistence
- Other skills (language, IT, communication)

Research requirements

- Is sufficient demand for research?
- Do you have the capacity to provide additional training support for analysis and report writing?

Long term plan

- Will GRU be in-house or external entity?
- Career prospects
- In house vs. External unit
- Rolling vs continued training

Decide on your approach:

1. Girl interviewers

Conduct interviews with girls in their community, raw data delivered back

2. Girl facilitators

Can conduct more complex methodologies such as workshops and ethnography. Travel beyond their community. Download findings with support from trainer

3. Girl researchers

Able to run research project from start to finish. Takes research briefing, designs methodology, conducts analysis, writes up the findings and presents the results.



When weighing the decisions on your GRU approach it’s important to consider the gaps your organisation or trainer will have to fill in the research process to ensure quality research, even when young women have reached training targets. This is described for each option in the diagram below:

Gaps your organisation will have to fill

1. Girl interviewers

Design discussion guides and approach, conduct analysis and presentation of results

2. Girl facilitators

Support trainees in designing discussion guide and approach, run download session, conduct further analysis and presentation of results

3. Girl researchers

Coach and mentor trainees through research project, additional and more long term support will be required for analysis and presentation as trainees hone their skills in this more complex area

What worked for GRU Rwanda:

At the GRU we planned to develop a team of fully fledged qualitative researchers. There was a need for trained researchers to provide deeper and richer insights on girls, and we decided that equipping girls with the full range of abilities was the best approach to achieving this.

There was also the need internally for ongoing, in-depth research with girls, given desire to gather periodical and ad-hoc feedback on the Ni Nyampinga brand across the country. Developing girl researchers that would be able to design and run these projects on a regular basis, while accumulating knowledge on the subject was critical.

Finally, there was a consideration of the wider gap of insights in the country amongst NGOs and Government institutions. For the GRU researchers to be able to communicate insights to, and work with, these stakeholders, they would need to be trained to a higher standard. This would also allow for future career opportunities and development of research practice in the long term.



Phase 2: Recruit

This chapter will help you decide which girls are right for your GRU with the key criteria to consider, and give you the tools for recruiting and inducting young women into your programme.

Selecting the right young women for your programme is crucial to the success of your GRU. This is a critical step and there are a number of different criteria to consider.

Size

Firstly it's important to consider the number of researchers to recruit in your GRU. Overall this can range from 5 to 25, but this depends on the level to which you would like to train researcher. For the top researcher level it is best to focus on a smaller number of trainees so you can provide depth and quality in training.

Criteria

These include Demographic recruitment criteria and Researcher traits or Personal recruitment criteria.

- Demographic recruitment criteria include age and level of education level
- Personal recruitment criteria include key personality traits and qualities of researcher that are important to consider

The demographic criteria you select to recruit your young women should be considered in the context of your approach. For example, if you are training GRU members to be full-fledged researchers (Girl Researchers) who analyse findings and produce reports, it's important they have higher levels of literacy and education compared to young women who might be recruited as Girl Interviewers, where the focus is more on developing basic research skills. However, it is important not to get too hung up on demographic criteria or educational levels – it is often the softer, personal recruitment criteria that define the quality of a researcher.

Demographic recruitment criteria

A variety of backgrounds can allow for multiple perspectives and a more dynamic team; however, we would suggest considering the following recruitment criteria:

Age: the ideal age group is 18-24. At this age, the young women are still close and relatable to the girl, but also old enough to have a level of responsibility and authority. If a country context allows for peer research (working with girls under the age of 18), this age bracket could be lowered to match your target research audience

Education level: this depends on the level you are training your GRU to. For the top researcher level, it may be best to find well educated young women who have competent literacy skills as they will need to be competent in writing up research findings and carrying out secondary research. Additionally, their particular interests in school might point towards the most appropriate candidates, with researchers tending to have a background in social sciences. For Girl Facilitators and Girl Interviewers, emphasis on education level is less critical.

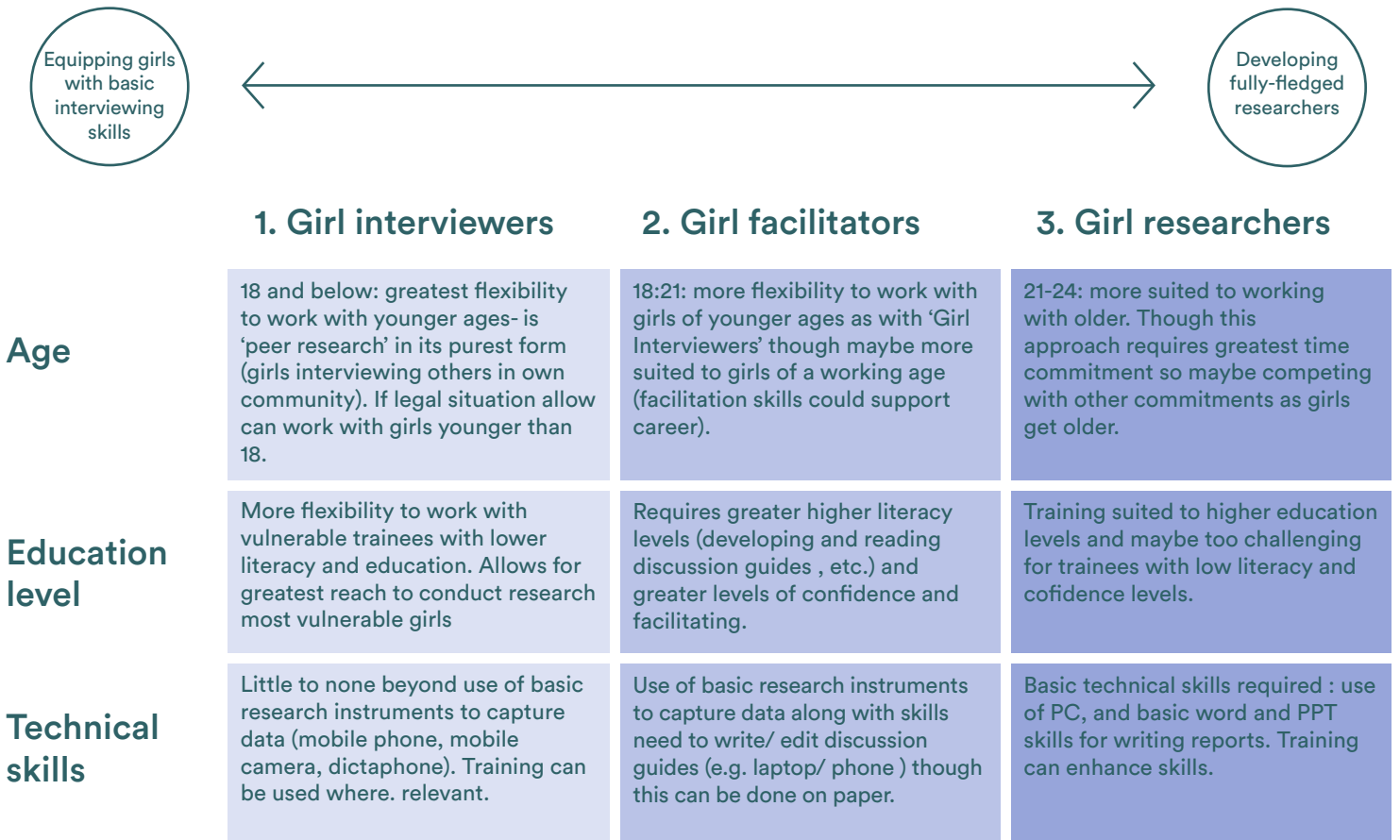
Technical skills: if training GRU to more advanced levels (GRU Researchers), trainees would also need to have core technical skills, for example, how to type, using Microsoft Word or PowerPoint. These basic skills can be built upon as the training advances

Location/background: it is highly advantageous for GRU members to come from different areas of a country or region so they can bring in multiple perspectives of areas where your programmes are active and different backgrounds and experiences (rural/urban/different cultural or other identity



groups). However, regional languages will need to be taken into account.

As mentioned above, the key is to tailor these criteria to your approach. The diagram below expands on the key ‘demographic criteria, matched to GRU approach:



Soft recruitment criteria

In our experience, all of the previous criteria are important, but equally important for finding the right trainees are the soft recruitment criteria. These are the criteria that help you find passionate and talented researchers-to-be.

The C.O.R.E. model:

The core attributes for a brilliant GRU member are:

- Curiosity: A curious, open mind – an intrinsic interest and curiosity about people and willing-

ness to learn about people from different backgrounds is what drives researchers. For example, some may display more eagerness to follow up answers with more question and express a desire to ‘get to the bottom’ of something

- Objectivity: candidates will need to differentiate their personal views and feelings from those of the girls they are conducting research with. Ability to empathise and withhold judgement and be respectful are key indicators of objectivity
- Responsible: the ability to carry out projects in a way that meet the standards of quality and timelines will be essential
- Encouraging: they will need to engage with



girls, put them at ease and hold both individual and group discussions. Candidates that have strong interpersonal skills or have experience meeting and talking to strangers will be ideally suited

What worked for GRU Rwanda

Keeping in mind our goal of developing fully-fledged Girl Researchers, we recruit 6 trainees to participate in the programme. Trainees were in their early 20s, a few years older than the girls they would be conducting research with, and all in some form of tertiary education. We also selected trainees for their desire and passion to become girl-researchers, considering the C.O.R.E. model of attributes above.

Advertise

First you need to advertise the position and recruit suitable candidates. This step can be very context-dependent. We have used multiple methods in the past with success. The following avenues might be appropriate for your context, or you might find that another method(s), unique to your context, is even more effective:

- Churches/mosques/temples can put up posters to advertise the position or recommend bright young women who may want to be involved
- Work with community leaders, such as civic authorities and school teachers, to spread the word about a GRU opportunity
- Media: Radio and newspapers can be a great way to get the message out to a large number of people

Recruitment process

There are four key stages to the recruitment process:



Applications

As you create a plan to spread the word, you need to consider how you will give applicants an avenue to apply. The method you choose may depend on what type of GRU you are creating and what education level you are after.

Text: applicants to text in their name, number, and answer one question, such as why they think they would be perfect for GRU. You can then follow this up with a phone call.

Email: if you are after a tech-savvy GRU this can be a good way to filter those with higher digital literacy. Ask them to email you a CV or a description of their experience and why they want to be a part of GRU.

Phone: If you have enough time resource and are only advertising to a small number, then asking them to call in can work well, as you can conduct a mini-interview with them on the spot.

Paper: traditional pen and paper applications can also be suitable.

After considering all the applications or conducting interviews with the candidates, you have to decide on a shortlist of candidates to participate in an initial workshop. The recruitment criteria should act as your guide for selecting the best candidates for your programme.

Workshops

From the application process shortlist about double the number that you want in the GRU (so if a GRU of 6, shortlist 12). A great way to identify the final members is to run a workshop. During the initial workshop you can allow the trainees to put their



ambition to be researchers into practice, holding a short session introducing them to qualitative research, and allowing them to get a better idea of what it is and what they would be doing. This helps you to get to know the applicants and see what they are like in group situations and what their natural skillset and interpersonal skills are like.

Introducing GRU members to the programme

Once you have your final selection, it is important to confirm a working agreement with each of the GRU members. This should include:

- A clear description of the training to be given to the GRU
- A description of additional support available, such as computer training, etc.
- Weekly/daily working hours
- Length of contract (e.g. 1 year/2years – depending on which option you have selected and the length of your programme)
- Payment/stipend
- MRS Code of Conduct and Girl Safeguarding

Recruitment watch-outs and challenges:

In our experience recruiting the GRU we found that there can be a number of ‘watch-out’ areas for you to consider as you develop your own recruitment plan and put it into action.

Inside vs. outside of organisation: your organisations may already have a cohort of young women in mind that they want to train in research (e.g. from an existing programme). We believe this has many benefits, as the cohort might have the advantage of already working with young girls or participating in girl programming. However, it is important to consider the implications of this for objectivity of the research. Trainees who are too close to the programmes may have difficulty separating the research from their own opinions, or for external partners this could bring into question the credibility of findings

Confidence levels: when recruiting less educated or more vulnerable cohorts of young women, training may need to include confidence building as much as research training. Having trainees from less advantaged backgrounds can have a number of benefits for the research the GRU produce, especially if this audience is the focus of the research questions your organisation has. However it is important to consider the implications this will have on training content, programme needs and resources (e.g. time)

Time and financial commitment: it's important to consider this commitment carefully and how it may progress over the course of the training

What worked for GRU Rwanda – lessons on recruiting from within the organisation

At the GRU in Rwanda this was a key learning for us. We decided to recruit the trainees from within the organisation, through the Girl Ambassador programme. This choice had a number of clear benefits: the trainees had experience working with the target audience of girls around the country and were familiar with the goals, programmes and spirit of the organisation. Having trainees with this embedded knowledge was a definite advantage over selecting entirely fresh recruits.

However, this did provide some difficulties in the training. Teaching the GRU when it is okay to use this embedded knowledge from their past experience to inform the research, and when to set this aside and take a more objective stance proved quite difficult. It was something we had to give special attention to in the training.

Based on this experience, if you do decide to recruit trainees from within your organisation, there are a number of things you can do to help overcome this challenge:

- Create some space or distance between the GRU and the organisation to allow researchers to adopt a more neutral stance (i.e. an objective ‘agency’ within a broader organisation)
- Train GRU members in techniques to watch out for bias (e.g. ‘spotting’ one another during fieldwork to look out for bias, teaching them to question themselves during analysis)



Phase 3: The GRU Curriculum

This chapter contains the GRU curriculum outline. It provides structure for running the training and essential content in key areas, along with some training inspiration and materials – however it is the starting blocks for users to amplify and expand on.

The training curriculum is made up of seventeen modules. The number of modules covered will depend upon the level of training you are offering.



What worked for GRU Rwanda: we covered the full qualitative research training curriculum with the GRU in Rwanda to develop Girl Researchers. More information on how to design and deliver training for your GRU, can be found in the GRU Trainer's Handbook document of the toolkit.



Phase 4: Sustainability

This chapter will help you plan for the future of your trainees and programme. It contains tips, watch-outs and thought-starters on the sustainability of your GRU.

While some organisations might develop a GRU for a discrete, stand-alone research project or two, our conversations with stakeholders – along with our own experience – suggest that most organisations would invest in building a GRU for long-term organisational research needs. Thus, considering the sustainability question from the get go is crucial. This helps ensure:

- The interests and development of the GRU members are upheld – it is vital that girl researchers are clear on what the longevity of the GRU is likely to be, what skills they will attain and what happens once/if the GRU finishes/or a new cohort is recruited
- Your organisation will benefit from the GRU – unless a clear plan is in place, the GRU may not be embedded into your organisation's work
- The GRU has a multiplier effect, catalysing ongoing impacts such as advancing the qualitative industry in that context

The following are a set of considerations/thought-starters for an organisation to consider when developing their programme:

Opportunity for partnerships

Partners can not only share the financial and resource commitment of having a GRU but also by working together can create an ideal environment for greater sharing of research and insight.

Potential partners:

- Fellow NGOs/third sector organisations
 - Those engaged in girls/children's programming
- Research Agencies
 - Those engaging in policy and third sector

- work prioritised but also more general market research e.g. recruiters/moderators
- Universities/schools
 - Departments in gender/research methods/social sciences
- Government/public sector
 - Departments for gender, statistics, family

Partnership models:

Resource partnership: GRU is established and run collaboratively, fully sharing resource responsibilities and sharing capabilities

Knowledge partner: sharing expertise as appropriate e.g. a potential partner here might be a university who is willing to give a PHD student's time to train the GRU or share best practice

Output partner: Once trained the GRU are promoted as a service to other organisations and their time and expertise is outsourced on a project by project basis for a fee. For example, another NGO may be keen for the GRU to act as moderators for a girls research project due to their expertise in speaking to vulnerable girls

Engaging partners

These relationships are ideally explored in the conception phase of the GRU however once the GRU has been established they can act as incredibly powerful tool and spokespeople for the organisation.

Having the GRU speak at public events to present their findings or simply talk about their experience speaking to girls and training in research is not only a great development tool for the trainees but is also a way of attracting partnerships and really ensuring the girls voice is heard.

Potential opportunities to explore:

- Presenting to funders
- Engaging local universities
- Ensuring the GRU have a presence at key industry conferences/events



What worked for GRU Rwanda: GER has many partners across the development, academic and governmental domains. From the outset we engaged these partners in the programme. In particular, we found most interest and traction with fellow research agencies (private sector) and research institutions (public sector). These partners were invited to GRU trainings and results presentations to see how the programme worked, and meet the trainees themselves. This sparked further interest and to these organisations hiring GRU trainees for short engagements.

Legacy Planning

Having a clear and transparent dialogue with girl trainees which clearly sets out what their expectations of the GRU experience should be is vital. This should include; the length of programme and skills they will attain

Additionally, organisations must have a clearly defined exit strategy that supports girls in their transition leaving the GRU. This will partly be met through the development of partnerships and opportunities for the trainees in the research industry but must also fully acknowledge the financial and emotional impact on girls of leaving the GRU. For example; girls may come to rely on income/expenses received from the programme, they also may be supporting family members – what transitional support will be in place to ensure their economic livelihood?

For example; girls form close bonds with other trainees and the GRU can be a big build for their self-esteem, how can this emotional support be maintained? e.g post-GRU meet ups

Another consideration must be whether the GRU will be a rolling programme with cohorts graduating and new cohorts being brought on board. The benefits of this approach are:

1. More girls are trained and impacted
2. There is the opportunity to have the previous cohort support with training the new one
3. Opportunities for mentorship/support

However, this approach requires more resource due to training needs and the standard of the research delivered will become cyclical as a new cohort gets to grips with new skill, plus a legacy plan becomes even more vital as girls experience the transition of leaving and seeing a new cohort start.

Competing responsibilities: as in any programme you can expect that some trainees may have to leave the programme because of other commitments and life changes. This is why it is important to consider the age and life-stage/life factors of young women participating and plan ahead for contingencies.

What worked for GRU Rwanda: the initial vision of the GRU was to create a rolling programme with cohorts graduating and new trainees being brought in. However, as the initial cohort gained experience and developed their skills, they become an increasingly valuable asset to GER. This meant the focus was shifted towards retaining these trainees and recruiting a new cohort of trainees to work alongside them. The new trainees were brought to build up their research skills while gathering feedback on the Ni Nyampinga brand and products. The first set of trainees were graduated to Junior Researchers, to begin working on more complex research brief (more contextual or issue-focused briefs, e.g. girls and agriculture or education). These Junior Researchers also now play a key role in fostering the development of the new cohort, imparting their knowledge and experiences to mentor the trainees towards graduation.

When considering these options, it is important to consider the level of support required if a full time long term research unit is your approach: who will be responsible for leading on giving any needed support? Will there need to be a plan for a staff member to lead on this support? With time, the level of support evolves and may increase as trainees' expectations change and they become part of the programme.





Accreditation/Certification

You may want to consider external accreditation of your GRU, to provide both the programme and the trainees with official accreditation. This has number of advantages, for your trainees it provides them with an official certification of their qualitative research knowledge and skills, thus adding a level of professionalism. Furthermore, it provides recognition of their competence, hard work and achievement. For the programme itself, accreditation can add weight to the initiative, particularly in the eyes of other organisations and potential clients.

What worked for us: The Market Research Society (MRS)

We decided to provide accreditation for our GRU programme in Rwanda, as we felt in our country context, having an official stamp of approval was important for the programme, and recognition of trainees’ skills for other organisations they may work with in the future.

We chose to engage and work with MRS, the world’s leading research association, given their international reach, and their focus on training and certification of research skills. With MRS we tailored one of their existing qualifications to the girl-centred research approach that the GRU had been conducting. This led to the development of a bespoke qualification, MRS Certificate in Qualitative Research (MRS Certificate), based on the GRU syllabus and training topics.

The MRS Certificate recognises the range of knowledge, skills and behaviours required by qualitative researchers to conduct effective interviews with participants in market and/or social research projects.

In order to achieve the MRS Certificate the trainees were required to demonstrate appropriate levels of competence across all the syllabus areas. Development and assessment of competence took place in the field, as the GRU worked on live

projects, combining formal training with work-based learning.

Each trainee completed a detailed portfolio whilst they worked on live projects. The evaluation was conducted by 2CV and Girl Effect, and required an experienced researcher to undertake this activity. MRS moderated the portfolios and provided certification to those trainees that successfully completed the MRS Certificate.

For further details on accreditation and certification of your GRU please contact:

The Market Research Society
The Old Trading House
15 Northburgh Street
London EC1V 0JR

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7566 1805
Email: qualifications@mrs.org.uk
Website: www.mrs.org.uk



FAQs from GRU Rwanda experience

Should you employ and pay girl researchers from the outset?

It is important to compensate trainees for their time from the outset, though salary and employment will depend on what is appropriate for your context. Moreover, it is crucial to set clear expectations from the start and communicate this to the trainees. Paying girls too much initially increases the likelihood that they become less active in searching for other opportunities and may put pressure on the organisation to keep up its support and commitment.

In Rwanda, the girls were compensated on an hourly rate with costs covered and only upon graduation from the training programme were they employed and given a salary.

Were all your girl researchers highly literate?

All our trainees were in some form of tertiary education and were recruited from across Rwanda (not just Kigali). This was important in this context as the aim was to develop the girls into fully equipped researchers.

However, when developing a GRU, trainees do not necessarily have to be highly literate, particularly if the intention is to train them to girl interviewer or girl facilitator levels.

What kind of research did your GRU conduct?

We started off with relatively basic research skills, where we tasked the trainees with gathering feedback on the radio show and magazine and reporting back to us. As the trainees grew more confident in their skills, we moved onto more exploratory research, asking the trainees to report on girls' attitudes and issues in their lives such as agriculture, education and domestic matters. We would recommend this order be followed.

What types of challenges might a GRU face in going out to new communities to conduct research? How can these be overcome? Challenges are likely to be unique in each context. However, in many places, as was the case in Rwanda, the trainees had to manage and liaise with local authorities for permission to go into communities and conduct research. As young women, they were well received by the communities in which they worked.

What is the benefit of using a GRU over a good group of female enumerators? Are the GRU respected in the local communities?

The GRU is closer in age to the girls they're researching. This means they can relate to them and put them at ease, making the girls more comfortable sharing their stories. This level of comfort is hard to attain by female enumerators who are often further removed from girls in both age and background.

How did you build the GRU's confidence?

Building up confidence and skill set is a slow but steady process. There are a number of factors to keep in mind:

- Giving girls the responsibility to work on live projects from the get-go
- Ensuring they understand the value of their research to Girl Hub Rwanda and girls in their communities
- Ensuring a deep understanding of how their research is being used in a tangible manner, to improve the products and programmes so they can better reach girls and improve their lives.



