



Technology Enabled Girl Ambassadors (TEGA)

Lean Research Case Study
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Motivation for Incorporating the Lean Research Principles into TEGA Research

‘TEGA’s ambition is to create a better, more respectful and meaningful research experience for researchers, respondents and communities. Lean Research is the best framework we have encountered that not only shares this vision but catalyses TEGA’s path to achieving it. We hope this case will inspire others to join us on this journey’.

Laura Scanlon, Director of TEGA, Girl Effect

Introduction

TEGA is a mobile based, girl operated research approach designed to provide rapid access to authentic insights from communities in the Global South. It’s Girl Effect’s solution to recognising that traditional Global South research approaches are sometimes intrusive and intimidating and, because of this; sometimes do not gain honest responses. Strangers arriving on doorsteps, asking for intimate information can create a dynamic where respondents feel uncomfortable speaking candidly about their lives. This is particularly true when the respondents in question are adolescent girls. TEGA is borne out of the understanding that an adolescent girl is more likely to feel comfortable speaking truthfully about her life to another girl like her. She is more likely to respond openly to someone who understands her background and the culture in which she lives, as opposed to an adult stranger who does not share her experience.

TEGA employs girls living in poverty from the areas of research interest, to become qualified researchers. By involving girls with a shared identity, TEGA is proven to increase propensity for authentic responses. By equipping these girls with bespoke mobile technology, TEGA can access the data they collect faster and more cost efficiently than ever before.

Beyond collecting data, TEGA has a proven positive impact on the TEGA researchers. Girls living in poverty with no or little economic opportunity are given skills to become qualified TEGA researchers. During this journey, their value, voice, visibility and connections increase significantly, making TEGA a powerful girl empowerment intervention in itself.

“TEGA picked up those themes that perhaps we would not otherwise have found – it’s not a surprising finding that kids will mostly say that education / school issues are important (you would get that wherever you go) but some of other the comments on drug use (for example) are more informative to us because they tell us things we might not otherwise have assumed”.

Stuart Martindale, Results and Statistics Advisor | Department for International Development

Research Background

In February 2016, the Department for International Development (DFID) commissioned TEGA to ensure the issues and key priorities affecting disadvantaged young people in Nigeria were reflected in the 2015 - the 2021 DFID Nigeria business plan.

As a secondary objective, DFID wanted to identify new research approaches to have on-going, meaningful and honest conversations with young people. TEGA’s ability to deliver this was piloted during the project.



DFID used TEGA to:

1. Understand the key challenges facing Nigerian youth and Nigeria more broadly over the next 5 years
2. Assess how these challenges may be addressed and what role DFID should play in addressing them
3. Consider the role young people should play in addressing them
4. Plan for how DFID can ensure young people are engaged with their work in the future

The TEGA research approach

TEGA collects both qualitative and quantitative data:

- Qualitative - video, audio and photo
- Quantitative - single code, multi-code, sliding scale and yes/no.

TEGA's mobile tech enabled, peer-to-peer approach allows instant access to data, creating the opportunity for agile, authentic and non-invasive research, with each survey designed based on rapid analysis of themes raised in initial first round fieldwork.

Overall, the project was deemed a success by TEGA and DFID.

The Lean Research Practices Used

TEGA conforms to the principles of Lean Research, an initiative established in 2014 by MIT D-Lab, Feinstein International Center and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University and Root Capital that promotes more rigorous, relevant, right-sized, and respectful field research across sectors and disciplines. Outlined below are key highlights from each of the four principles. Please refer to the supporting document for a comprehensive overview of how TEGA conforms to Lean Research principles.

Rigor

Validity of TEGA data collection

TEGA's ambition is to create a new economy for girls with little or no economic opportunity. To achieve this, the TEGA technology and research methodology are designed so any girl, no matter her education level, background or tech knowledge can easily become a Technology Enabled Girl Ambassador (TEGA).

TEGA's approach of recruiting girls with no research experience created a risk that findings could be dismissed as invalid, based on doubt surrounding the capability and credibility of the TEGA. Prior to beginning the DFID research, TEGA mitigated this risk by partnering with a leading authority for research, The Market Research Society (MRS). MRS created a bespoke curriculum and qualification designed to build the capacity of girls from communities in the Global South to become qualified digital interviewers. This curriculum was predominantly disseminated via mLearning and was "gamified" to increase engagement and motivation. This was a new and unproven innovation. All Kano TEGA researchers passed their research certification, 7 with distinction. Not only does this qualification increase the validity of the DFID research, but it gives TEGA researchers employable skills for the future, beyond their life as a TEGA.



TEGA data protection

Given the high-risk nature of the Northern Nigerian landscape, particularly for adolescent girls, data protection was a key concern. Prior to the DFID project beginning, TEGA identified three points of data vulnerability:

Data disclosed via TEGA researcher

Data disclosed via misplaced/stolen TEGA device

Data disclosed via the TEGA Content Hub (the online platform housing all TEGA data).

TEGA implemented the following features to mitigate against these risks:

Data disclosed via misplaced/stolen TEGA device

TEGA devices were password protected and data was encrypted to government level standard (128 bit). Taking inspiration from Snapchat, data was erased from the TEGA device the moment the data was sent. To ensure identity protection, TEGA borrowed the approach of online banking security - only the first three letters of a respondent's name visible on the TEGA device.

Data disclosed via TEGA Content Hub hack / leak

The TEGA Content Hub was only accessible via a two-password access - the first via a unique certificate. To protect the data housed on the TEGA Content Hub, it was penetration-tested to identify vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities were reinforced, minimising chances of data violation.

To prevent respondents being recognised by translators, all video files uploaded to the Content Hub were programmatically converted to audio files for the translation process. This ensured the translator could not see the faces of the respondents. Once translated, the files were programmatically converted back to video in a secure area of the Content Hub inaccessible to translators.

Data disclosed via TEGA researcher

A core focus of TEGA's capacity building journey was focused on the importance of being a confidential, trustworthy researcher.

At the point of recruitment, TEGA researchers pledged their commitment to this by reciting The TEGA promise:

My name is _____ and I am a TEGA.

This is my TEGA promise to the girls of Nigeria.

I promise to be kind.

I promise to listen.

I promise never to give advice.

I promise never to pass judgment.

I promise to be trustworthy.

I promise to be courageous.

I promise to give, and earn respect.

I am committed to having the voices of the girls of Nigeria heard and listened to.



To further reinforce the importance of confidentiality, just before the DFID interview started, TEGA researchers received an automatic notification prompting them to reassure their respondent that everything they tell her will remain confidential, unless a safety concern that puts her at risk is raised.

Upon project conclusion, no data protection incidents had been identified or reported.

Increasing rigor in the future

Ensuring quotas are met and the right respondents have participated is a tough challenge when conducting research in hard-to-reach communities. TEGA previously relied on traditional analogue approaches deployed via local partners to recruit respondents. Whilst the video responses provided visual evidence, the interview had taken place and the right type of respondent had been interviewed, TEGA didn't have total confidence that the respondent interviewed was the respondent recruited.

Moving forward, TEGA is increasing recruitment transparency and quota confidence by digitising the recruitment process and adding new features that allow easier identification of respondent. These include:

- Taking a photo of the recruited respondent standing in front of his / her home
- Pinpointing the interview location through a Google Maps dropped pin
- Creating a location statement e.g. 'Meet outside the community centre at 2pm on the 12th August'

This information is used by TEGA researchers at point of interview to verify respondent and location, and at point of analysis to validate quota accuracy.

Respect

Respondent comfort

From reviewing respondent video footage, TEGA's external quality assurance partner 2CV, concluded that respondents appeared relaxed and confident throughout the TEGA interviews, with responses being forthright and honest. Respondents appeared to enjoy sharing their opinions and reported 'feeling heard' as a result of their experience with TEGA research.

Recognising the importance of creating a meaningful interview experience, TEGA now includes mandatory questions at the end of each survey to ascertain respondent comfort and enjoyment. In a recent round of research with 100 respondents in a community hosting Internally Displaced People in Maiduguri, Nigeria, 100% of respondents said they would be interviewed again by a TEGA. 69% of girls interviewed by TEGA researchers scored 5/5 for how comfortable they felt being interviewed, with the remaining 31% scoring 4/5.

Creating a comfortable environment can have a positive effect on the quality of the data. DFID frequently conducts this type of research using traditional approaches (professional adult researchers) and 'education and career' are consistently cited as the prevalent issues concerning young people. Using the TEGA methodology, 'drug abuse' emerged as a key issue for the first time. DFID cited TEGAs shared identity methodology as the reason for this new disclosure.

TEGA confidence

To retain a natural, comfortable interview dynamic, it is imperative that both respondent and TEGA researchers are comfortable and confident. This is something TEGA was particularly interested in monitoring for the DFID project that required TEGA researchers to interview adolescent boys, in addition to girls.



To ascertain this, TEGA researchers submit a confidence rating upon survey completion. The average TEGA confidence rated 9/10 for survey 1 and 10/10 for survey 2. This indicates TEGA confidence in creating an optimal interview dynamic and TEGA's efficacy as a youth peer to peer research tool, not just girl research.

The TEGA consent approach

Dissatisfied with existing consent methods in the sector, and recognising that most approaches do not ensure that respondents with low literacy fully comprehend what they are consenting to, TEGA designed a brand new method for obtaining informed consent. TEGA refers to this as 'Engaged Consent'.

Engaged Consent comprises 3 steps:

Step 1) An audio file verbalises the required consent using simple and clear language via the TEGA device.

Step 2) The respondent (and if required) guardian is presented with a multiple choice question with various answer options of consent types. The respondent / guardian demonstrates their comprehension of the consent by selecting the corresponding option. The interview can only progress when the correct consent type has been selected.

Step 3) TEGA captures respondent (and if required) guardian consent via an audio recording, which is instantly uploaded and stored on the TEGA Content Hub.

This approach maximises propensity of consent comprehension on the part of the respondent. The approach also eliminates the unreliable consent paper trails of previous methodologies.

Relevance

TEGA research findings

Research conducted in the Global South is rarely used to affect change where it is most needed. Too often, following a long and expensive 3-6 month wait, research findings are dismissed as invalid due to lack of rigor, credibility or new insight. In comparison, the TEGA DFID project, from brief to report delivery was executed in 6 weeks - a huge improvement on the typical lengthy turnaround time for research projects delivered in the Global South.

The unengaging research finding format, typically a 100-page document, hinders engagement and subsequent propensity for action. TEGA strives to overcome this by ensuring its research findings are perceived as credible and presented in a way that captivates, motivates and inspires the relevant stakeholders. TEGA's DFID research debrief comprised two parts - a document report and a film created from the TEGA video content.

The 17-page document allowed us to demonstrate the rigor, credibility and validity of our approach and concisely articulate research findings. The film brought the respondents to life as real people, beyond a statement or a statistic.

The findings, presented in a concise and engaging format, gained global awareness with DFID and influenced DFID's 5 year, \$1bn business plan.



Increasing relevance in the future

The lack of open source secondary video and audio data from the Global South means that organisations often duplicate primary research. TEGA is striving to tackle this sector-wide issue by designing a desk research resource hosting thousands of audio and video files from hard-to-reach communities in the Global South. Since all TEGA data is programmatically sent to the Content Hub, TEGA is organically accumulating a wealth of data. The Content Hub already houses over 80,000 individual pieces of data on Northern Nigerian girls and their communities. As TEGA rapidly scales to new geographies (6 countries by the end of 2016, 20+ countries by the end of 2020), TEGA will quickly become one of the world's richest and largest video data sources on girls and their communities.

To overcome the repeat mining for data of communities, TEGA is evolving its Content Hub functionality into a desk research search tool for Girl Effect and partners to use as the first port of call for conducting desk research. TEGA believes this tool has the potential to create a live gateway to developing world communities for Girl Effect, NGOs, governments and the private sector. In doing so, it can reduce the overall amount of intrusive primary research required.

Right-sized

TEGA research design

TEGA intentionally designed its research to be implemented quickly, with minimal burden on TEGA researchers and participants. Conforming to this, and a short project turnaround time, TEGA designed the sampling framework to allow them to first gauge the issues that were important to young people, and then return to explore these in more depth with a smaller sample once preliminary analysis was used to design a follow up survey.

TEGA followed a rapid and iterative 3-stage approach for the DFID Nigeria youth research, executed over 2 weeks:

Stage 1: Sizing the challenge: 66 quant interviews with adolescent girls and boys aged 10 – 24 to collect the general issues that young people found important.

Stage 2: Interim analysis: identifying the most prevalent / dominant challenges.

Stage 3: Deep dive: 24 x qualitative interviews with adolescent girls and boys aged 10 - 24 focusing on challenges raised during stage 1

The interviews

To ensure TEGA gains authentic insight, it is imperative that the interview feels like a natural, enjoyable and relevant conversation - not a formal interview. To achieve this, TEGA researchers participated in DFID survey design, advising on survey length, questions to ask, how to ask them and questions to omit based on cultural sensitivities and relevance.

Outcomes from TEGA survey design participation include:

- Based on perception of respondents' available time and ability to focus, TEGA researchers advised that survey length should be 30 mins.

- TEGA listed a number of options that they thought might be a concern to young people. These included education, health, jobs, finances, water and sanitation. On reviewing our survey, TEGA researchers added



more options that they thought youth respondents might also select:

1. Declining economy
2. Discrimination
3. Lack of infrastructure

- TEGA researchers also gave feedback on the language TEGA used to talk about girls, advising them that, irrespective of age, traditionally married girls are viewed as 'women'. As such, TEGA amended the language they used to describe a married female's status.

Why TEGA included these practices

All practices deployed and every aspect and feature of TEGA technology, methodology and approach have been created and included based on its potential or proven efficacy to:

1. Deliver the most authentic insights possible
2. Create an enjoyable and meaningful interview experience
3. Ensure the safety of the TEGA and the respondent.

As TEGA expands its work, it plans to evolve its research and incorporate more Lean Research practices in the future.

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