Communications to change discriminatory gender norms affecting adolescent girls

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Knowledge to action: Effective action on gender norms that affect adolescent girls

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Acknowledgements

Cover photo: Adolescent girl, Ethiopia © ODI/David Walker, 2015

Key points

Can communications programmes help to change discriminatory gender norms and improve adolescent girls' wellbeing? The short answer is yes.

- Of the programmes examined in our recent systematic review, most (71%) had positive impacts on norms, attitudes and practices.

- Effective programmes often use more than one approach to reach different audiences, and to reinforce messages. For example, a radio show plus stickers and billboards, or street theatre plus dialogue and booklets that audiences can keep after the event.

- TV and radio-based messaging can reach very large audiences and make a significant contribution to norm change. But bear in mind that many adolescent girls and boys can't listen to the radio or watch a TV without their parents' (typically father's) permission, and that radios are often too expensive for the poorest households.

- The greatest change often comes from approaches that build in opportunities for people to discuss and reflect on messages about changing gender norms, and then do things differently as a result – for example, community dialogue, non-formal education classes or interactive radio.

- Materials aimed at adolescents need to be tailored to different age groups, use simple language and be visually engaging, with good use of pictures and diagrams.

- The combined effects of communications activities alongside improvements in service delivery or livelihoods support can be greater than the impact of stand-alone communications activities.

Setting the scene

Gender norms are created, reinforced and changed through communication – of accepted or new ideas, knowledge, opportunities, and ways of doing things. Much of this communication happens informally, within families and among peer groups in the wider community. But messages about the kinds of behaviour that a society expects from boys, girls, men and women come from a range of other sources, including schools, religious organisations, government policies, and popular communications channels such as the media. While these are outside the realm of family life, they have a strong influence on it.

There are now a wide range of communications programmes that use popular media and community-based campaigns to challenge discriminatory gender norms and to promote gender equality (Ball Cooper and Fletcher, 2012). Many of these focus on giving adolescent girls the information and skills they need to change their lives and negotiate with duty-bearers (those in positions of power) to claim their rights; others seek to change the views of people who influence and make decisions about girls' lives.

This Research and Practice Note brings together key insights from our systematic review of different types of communications programmes (see Box 1), and from

Box 1: What kinds of communications activities did we study?

We conducted a systematic review of the evidence on 'what works' in changing gender norms, attitudes and behaviour. We examined 61 programmes that involved communications components designed to promote change in the gender norms affecting adolescent girls and young women. Just over half the programmes were implemented in sub-Saharan Africa and nearly a third (31%) in South Asia.

Activities included: mass media programmes (such as 'edutainment' through dramas, factual content and call-ins); production and dissemination of information, education and communication (IEC) materials; community dialogues; providing information through non-formal education/ life skills classes; and one-to-one communication such as peer communication and mentoring. Half the programmes targeted girls and young women, while 11% focused on changing the attitudes and practices of boys and young men. The remainder targeted the broader public through radio and TV shows or community dialogues.

Box 2: Programmes with communications activities included in field research (Uganda and Viet Nam) for 'Transforming the Lives of Adolescent Girls'

The Gender Roles, Equality and Transformation (GREAT) project is a joint initiative by the Institute for Reproductive Health, Pathfinder International and Save the Children, implemented by their Ugandan partner organisations, the Straight Talk Foundation and Concerned Parents Association. Designed as a five-year pilot (2010-2015), it aims to promote gender-equitable attitudes and behaviour among adolescents and their communities with the ultimate goal of reducing gender-based violence and improving sexual and reproductive health outcomes in post-conflict communities in northern Uganda. The project targets 10-19-year-olds and newly married adolescents or those already with children, as well as adults in roles as key stakeholders.

The project package is built around a community action cycle, whereby community leaders and mobilisers work closely with local communities to work out where they are now in terms of gender norms, what changes they want to achieve, and how to make change happen. Other components include a radio drama series ('Oteka') based on a fictional village and broadcast in local languages. The drama tells how families deal with problems linked to relationships, parenting, alcohol, sexuality and violence. There's a discussion guide to accompany the series, which can be used in group work to encourage adolescents of different ages to think about how the themes in the radio drama relate to their own lives. Another component supports village health teams to make sexual and reproductive health services more accessible to adolescents, including reducing stigma associated with seeking such services.

The African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) works in 18 districts of Uganda. One of its projects aims to provide a secure and protective environment for vulnerable children, empowering them by equipping them with skills and promoting access to income-generating activities. Primary targets include orphans and other vulnerable children, child mothers, as well as guardians, parents, community members and officials. As well as working through community dialogue, advocacy and capacity-building activities, ANPPCAN runs interactive radio talk shows on district radio stations. One show is aimed at a general audience, the other is aimed at children (Emiti Emito), and talks about the big problems facing children, including early marriage. Other project components include: apprenticeship training for out-of-school child mothers; life skills education; financial support for orphans and vulnerable children; and promoting school attendance. ANPPCAN also distributes posters and information booklets on issues such as the importance of schooling for vulnerable children, and child sexual abuse.

Straight Talk Foundation (STF) runs the Unite for Body Rights programme in Busoga, Uganda. Working with primary school children in 10 schools, the programme delivers information on sexual and reproductive health to children and young people aged 10-19 and 20-24 (either in school or out of school), through popular media such as newspapers, radio programmes, outreach and training. STF's main behaviour change communication tools are newspapers and a radio show. The multilingual Straight Talk radio shows is mainly aimed at older and out-of-school adolescents and young adults; the multilingual Straight Talk newspapers are targeted at secondary school students, and there is an English-language newspaper (Young Talk) aimed at primary school students.

Plan's Because I am a Girl project in Ha Giang province, Viet Nam, aims to support girls' development by providing safe spaces and education about girls' rights, at the same time working to improve girls' access to key services such as health and education. Project interventions include: TV and radio broadcasts (in Hmong) on safe motherhood; distributing posters at health facilities; girls' clubs; and giving out information on children's rights at events held in commune centres on the International Day of the Girl.

Sources: Jones et al., 2015b; Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2015

in-depth case studies from Ethiopia, Nepal, Uganda and Viet Nam (see Box 2). We highlight programmes (or programme components) that have contributed to progressive change in gender norms. We also outline some limitations of communications programmes and identify knowledge gaps for further attention. The Note concludes with a Resources section that summarises key documents.

Which types of communications approaches are most successful in contributing to gender norm change?

Our fieldwork and literature review highlighted some of the more successful approaches. They include approaches with relevant content and engaging formats; those that involve dialogue and interaction, and encourage people to act on new knowledge; and those that are delivered in local

Box 3: Fictional and real-life role models

In **India, Taru** – a radio soap opera that featured a young woman health worker – led to more supportive attitudes among listeners towards girls' rights to education and to reduced support for sex-selective abortion. Girls who listened to the programme reported feeling more confident to challenge gender norms and conventions by talking with boys in public and engaging in community discussions to solve key problems.

In **India** (and other South Asian countries), **the Meena Communication Initiative** developed by UNICEF featured the cartoon character Meena – a feisty nine-year old girl who challenged numerous aspects of gender inequality that affected her life. Core materials in the Meena package were available in five languages. They included comic books, more than 20 animated films, posters, discussion and teachers' guides, and a radio series. The stories were found to be entertaining and fun, while reflecting the realities of girls' lives in South Asia. They told the adventures of Meena, her brother Raju, her pet parrot Mithu, and other members of her family and community.

Meena persuading her father to let her attend school

An evaluation in India found that girls who had seen some Meena stories felt inspired to do things previously seen as 'masculine', such as repairing hand pumps. The stories had also made some adult viewers challenge accepted practices, such as giving boys more or better food than girls. Viewers also reported changed attitudes towards giving a dowry, and girls' education.

In the **Democratic Republic of Congo,** *Vrai Djo* (Real Man) – a mass media campaign to improve the way men treat women – featured Celeo Scram, a well-known and respected pop star. He starred in a series of four radio sketches and five short TV films showing that when men treat women and girls equally and with respect, it can have a big impact on girls' and women's lives. For example, in one sketch he played a father who arranged tuition for his daughter who was doing badly at school, rather than pulling her out of school to get married; in another, he played a soldier who decided to help a vulnerable woman rather than rape her. An evaluation found that men who saw the films or heard the sketches were more likely to support gender equality after watching the films.

Lead character Celeo Scram asks 'Are you a real man?'

… and memorable villains

In Tanzania, the Fataki campaign that ran from 2008 to 2011 aimed to lower the spread of HIV by changing people's attitudes and empowering communities to intervene if older men approached younger girls wanting sex in exchange for gifts or money. The campaign included a radio soap opera based on a fictional 'sugar daddy' (called Fataki).

An evaluation found that people with higher exposure to the programme had a lower likelihood of being engaged in cross-generational sexual relationships After listening to the programme, people who had talked with others about 'Fatakis' in their communities or about sex between young women and older men were more likely to report others and try to prevent them from engaging in cross-generational sex relationships. One evaluation team member heard men cautioning each other: 'Don't be a Fataki!'

Source: Marcus and Page (2014)

languages and tailored to specific groups or audiences. We give some good examples below.

Communications with relevant content and engaging formats

Giving people access to new information. Our research found a real hunger for information, particularly among adolescents. People often said they had changed their views based on knowledge gained from school, at clinics or through the media. For example, giving families information about the health risks of child marriage (Ethiopia, Nepal and Viet Nam), the economic benefits of delaying parenthood (Viet Nam), and the legal minimum age of marriage (all four countries) contributed to changing perceptions about the best time for girls to get married. The combination of information about the negative health impacts of child marriage and the positive health (and economic) benefits of delaying marriage appeared to motivate people to change their views.

'Instead of loitering around the school compound we go to the Straight Talk corner to read Young Talk magazines. I also share the knowledge acquired from Straight Talk with peers and with the out-of-school peers as a member of the Young Talk club.'

Adolescent boy, eastern Uganda
(Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2015)

Engaging people emotionally through street theatre, TV or radio shows. Emotionally engaging messages and formats tend to have greater impact because they grab people's attention and are enjoyable and memorable (Rimon, 1994; Government Communications Network and COI, 2009). For example, community action groups associated with the GREAT project in Uganda performed a number of short comedy sketches (skits) that showed what can happen when gender roles are reversed. These prompted much laughter and discussion, showing that it is possible for men and boys to do domestic chores such as cooking or cleaning while girls can be entrusted with the family herds. Our research found that these skits played a key role in helping shift gender norms: '*Before, domestic chores were only for girls and women; now they [men and boys] have learned to share*' (Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2015).

Using real-life or fictional characters as role models (or villains). Four programmes examined in our systematic review – in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), India, Nepal and Tanzania – used real-life or fictional role models to good effect (see Box 3) (Marcus and Page, 2014).

Distributing visual printed materials linked to TV or radio shows. Our systematic review found that visual and print materials can help to reinforce broadcast messages. Our research in Uganda suggests that adolescent boys and girls found print materials very valuable as they were able to refer to them repeatedly. The young people interviewed appreciated the simple language, colourful pictures and

Box 4: Sathi Sanga Man ka Kura (SSMK, Nepal) – 'Chatting with my best friend'.

SSMK, an interactive radio show, is broadcast weekly for 45 minutes on more than 40 different FM stations in Nepal. It started in 2001 and has reached over 8 million regular listeners. It is one of the two most-listened to radio programmes in the country.

Its format has changed over time and now has five main components: it opens with the presenters' chat, followed by a drama on a chosen theme. This is followed by reading out letters or texts from listeners, discussing the issues raised. The next section is called Jada Jadai (as we end the programme), which is an information section; it ends with Aalo Palo(turn), short audio recordings made by youth community reporters.

The programme aims to give information to Nepal's adolescents to equip them with knowledge and life skills to reduce their chances of engaging in risky behaviour and to promote discussion and debate on issues that affect adolescents' lives. Issues discussed include how to manage menstruation and hygiene, school sanitation facilities, natural disasters, how to handle love and relationships (including same sex love, sibling rivalry and long-distance/internet relationships), physical and mental health, financial literacy and livelihoods, child protection and so on. Listening groups have also been set up in some communities in rural areas.

So far, SSMK has received 40,650 responses from people talking about how listening to SSMK has changed their lives and relationships. Responses typically mention stopping the practice of dowry, child marriages, and sexual abuse of children by guardians, as well as support for adolescent-friendly infrastructure in public places.

Source: SSMK, Equal Access, March 2015

useful information in materials produced by Straight Talk and the GREAT project.

Communications that use dialogue and interaction, and give people the chance to act on new knowledge

Providing opportunities for community reflection and discussion. Of seven studies in our systematic review that looked at the added value of a dialogue-based component, six found that dialogue led to more gender-egalitarian attitudes and outcomes. This may be because dialogue helps to personalise messages and helps people work out how they can translate those messages into action, making real changes in their own lives (Paluck et al., 2010; Rogers, 1995).

Using interactive elements in radio or TV programmes. Radio and TV programmes increasingly combine factual content with opportunities for listeners/viewers to get in touch by writing or calling in to say what they think about the show, get advice about problems, etc. Our fieldwork in Nepal and Uganda found that this approach has proved effective in engaging adults as well as adolescents (see Box 4). Where live two-way interactions are not possible, radio programmes discuss real dilemmas raised by adolescents who have contacted them – for instance, 'I am 15, I haven't begun menstruation, am I normal?' (Uganda); or an adolescent asking for information and advice on what to do about sexual harassment by relatives (Nepal).

Linking messages on gender norms with opportunities to do things differently. Communications programmes (or programme components) are more likely to lead to changes in gender norms when they give people opportunities to put their new knowledge into practice (Paluck et al., 2010). For instance, Straight Talk, in Uganda, found that dramas were an effective way to raise community awareness of issues affecting adolescents, and to promote greater uptake of relevant activities and services. Also in Uganda, ANPPCAN's community dialogue sessions give information about what constitutes child abuse and what people can do about suspected cases of child abuse (e.g. calling a dedicated ANPPCAN phone number). The organisation observed an increase in reports of child abuse after community dialogue sessions (Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2015).

'I told (my mother), when I came back from the club, that I would not work beyond my strength. They teach me to do good things for myself.'

Girl participant from Plan girls' club, Northern Viet Nam (Jones et al., 2015a)

Giving girls the information and negotiation skills they need to change their lives. Our systematic review and fieldwork in the four research countries show how working directly with girls can change how they think, what they do, and what they can achieve. One study found that combining information with training in negotiation skills was more effective in improving girls' wellbeing than providing information alone (McGinn et al., 2013). Our research in Hmong communities in northern Viet Nam found that some girls were making use of new knowledge and confidence to negotiate over housework and education (Jones et al., 2015). Our systematic review found that taking part in clubs and non-formal education classes had led to notable changes in girls' ideas and hopes, on things ranging from the best age to marry, attitudes towards domestic violence, and (in communities where FGM/C was practiced) their intentions about having any girl children they might have circumcised (Marcus and Page, 2014).

Making public commitments (formally or informally). Our systematic review found that making public commitments could help to promote changes in gender norms, as they introduced a moral pressure on people to 'keep their word'. These commitments could either be formal (e.g. a declaration to abandon a harmful practice such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)) or informal (e.g. a commitment between peers or a married couple, such as not behaving violently towards each other). As one women's group chairperson in Senegal said: *'I simply say to myself that when an ass gorr [honourable person] stands before everyone and declares that she has abandoned FGM/C, she must keep her word … We would be really ashamed if people said Diabougou declared that it was abandoning FGM/C, but people are still doing it'* (Diop et al., 2008: 21). ANPPCAN's community dialogues on child abuse in Uganda generated similar evidence: *'In most cases, the duty bearers make commitments and pledges during these communication interventions and dialogues that we have … We see an increase in the number of cases [of abuse] being reported, cases involving girl children after we do these dialogues'* (ANPPCAN programme representative, Uganda, in Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2015).

Reaching the right people with the right strategies

Tailoring materials to different groups. Messages should be tailored to the target group in question, whether children, adolescent boys and/or girls, their parents, teachers, community leaders, or others (see Box 5 for an example from Uganda). Given that younger and older adolescents have very different experiences and levels of maturity, materials may need to be tailored to different age groups (and possibly to boys and girls separately).

Engaging family members who make decisions about girls' lives. Parents, parents-in-law, grandparents and, in some

contexts, adolescent brothers usually make decisions about girls' lives. So to be effective, communications programmes that aim to change gender norms need to target and engage these groups too. For example, women exposed to activities by the GREAT project in northern Uganda reported how their attitudes and practices changed: *'I used to feel that when money was not enough, I should send my son to school first; now I feel they are both equal so I try to save money for both'*. Another woman said: *'Before, I would not let my son cook at home. Now he cooks better than my daughter does'* (focus group discussion with members of Community Action Groups, Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2015). Our research among Hmong communities in northern Viet Nam showed how important it is to target adolescent boys too, as they typically initiate marriages and have a major role to play in ending child marriage.

Enabling people to see things from other people's point of view can be powerful. Humaqadam, a programme in Pakistan that we examined as part of the systematic review, worked with adolescent boys and men. They met regularly in groups to discuss gender equality issues and the effects of norms around masculinity on women and girls' wellbeing and opportunities for development. The programme also worked with parallel groups of women and girls, and brought these groups together from time to time, which led to discussions that proved revealing for all participants.

Engaging religious leaders. Where discriminatory gender norms are closely linked to religious traditions and values, tailoring communications to religious leaders can also be a very effective strategy (Mackie and Le Jeune, 2009). Our systematic review found limited evidence of such initiatives though leaders: only one programme involved direct discussions with religious leaders, though two other programmes invited religious leaders to take part in ceremonies signalling a commitment to end FGM/C – their presence implying that they endorsed such changes.

Engaging with individuals and institutions in the wider community. Programmes aiming to change gender norms must also engage with duty-bearers and individuals or institutions in the wider community. The Straight Talk Foundation in Uganda has applied this approach in its work with children schools: *'We address the whole school covering the teachers, students, cooks, gate keepers and cleaners … the gate keeper because he knows which child is dropped off and by whom. The gatekeeper sees which boda boda [local motorcycle taxi] driver is talking to which girl'* (Straight Talk representative, Uganda, in Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2015). Similarly, an evaluation of one of the studies included in our systematic review – the Teenage Mothers Project, also in Uganda – concluded that one reason for its success in changing norms about teenage mothers' right to return to education was the *'intensive, laborious process of participation and persuasion of influential community leaders'* (Leerloijer et al., 2013: 12, in Marcus and Page, 2014).

Be realistic about what communications initiatives can achieve…

Many projects have short time frames of less than five years. Given that it can take many years to change deep-rooted norms, these time frames are often insufficient for change to take root. Although there is no strong evidence about the optimum length of communications initiatives, those with longer durations or more intensive activities typically achieve more than less intensive programmes.

Also, new cohorts of adolescents will continually come through, who need access to information and support if they are to confront and try to change gender norms. Longer project time frames may be one option, together

with more sustained efforts to integrate adolescent-friendly communications materials into school curricula, and make them available to youth groups and other community organisations that will be around long after one-off projects have ended. Without refresher training, new information and materials, and other resources, there will be limits to what these efforts can achieve. Successful long-running 'edutainment' programmes such as Soul City in South Africa (Usdin et al., 2005) or Puntos de Encuentro in Nicaragua (Solórzano et al., 2008) typically maintain people's interest by changing the issues they focus on, or introducing new characters or storylines with each series.

… and what they can't

The evidence suggests that communications initiatives can make an important contribution to changing the gender norms that affect adolescent girls' lives. But they cannot do so alone, so there need to be realistic expectations of what can be achieved.

Communications are usually most effective when part of a 'package' of support

Of the 61 programmes we looked at in our systematic review, only 30% combined communications activities with other development inputs. These were mainly activities designed to support people's livelihoods, such as vocational training, cash or in-kind incentives, or small loans. Programmes that 'bundled' communications work with other components were slightly more likely to have positive outcomes and slightly less likely to have negative outcomes than those that involved communications activities alone. This probably reflects the fact that programmes with vocational training or other incentives are likely to be more appealing to girls and their families.

Our research in Uganda found that people very much appreciated programmes that combined communications activities with practical or material support (such as showing girls how to make sanitary pads), vocational

> *'This [changing gender norms] is a continuous task – it is not just a matter of a day.'*
> *Community Action Group members, GREAT project, Uganda (Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2015)*

training, livelihoods support, and equipment to start small businesses. This suggests it is important to remain focused on poverty and livelihoods, alongside messaging to change gender norms within the family and the wider community.

If messages about changing gender norms are not backed up with continued investment in the quality and availability of services, then those messages are not likely to be acted on. For example, giving adolescent girls more information about their sexual and reproductive health rights will be unlikely to improve outcomes unless there is a parallel expansion of adolescent-friendly services. Similarly, messaging on the importance of education for girls needs to be accompanied by investment in good-quality primary and secondary schools (Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2015).

Popular media (radio, TV, internet) still do not reach everyone

Our fieldwork confirmed that gender and age barriers prevent many adolescents accessing radio, TV and other media – something that has long been recognised (e.g. Myers, 2009). Some of the adolescents we interviewed in Uganda and Ethiopia reported that they could only listen to the radio if their father agreed; he decided whether the radio was switched on, and what to listen to. In Nepal, 57% of listeners to the popular SSMK radio programme (targeting adolescents) are male (Equal Access, 2015). Some women interviewed in Uganda also reported a lack of money to buy radio batteries, and not having time to listen to radio programmes.

Bear in mind that target populations for communications initiatives may have low levels of literacy, which may limit the impact of written messages (such as leaflets, posters or billboards). Printed materials also need to be appealing to the target group. In Uganda and northern Viet Nam, for instance, adolescent girls said they really appreciated materials with colourful pictures.

Even the best communications programme won't change everyone's attitudes and behaviour

Changing gender norms is likely to be a long-term, gradual process. Some people will oppose progressive changes in gender norms because they go against strongly held personal or religious beliefs. Others might absorb and agree with messages on gender equality and girls' rights but not act on them, or only act on them sometimes. Others still may agree but not act because they are unable

TIP

Work out the best way to reach different audiences

Find out who decides what a family watches or listens to. Where men control radio or TV use, these media can be less effective in reaching women or children.

Where school attendance rates are high, school-based information campaigns can reach many children and, often, their siblings and other family members. If out-of-school children and women have little access to the media, non-formal education and community-based dialogue or public events can be the best way to reach them.

to do so – more powerful people or institutions (e.g. representatives of organised religion) prevent them. Poverty and lack of access to appropriate services can also prevent people adopting new ways of doing things. In other situations, limited change is sometimes a result of inertia, which means people easily fall back on old habits, even where they might wish to change things (GCN and COI, 2009). Recent experience in behavioural science suggests that people are more likely to make behaviour changes if they are jolted out of familiar thinking, if changes are broken down into small, easy steps, and if they can be persuaded that other people are changing how they behave too (GCN and COI, 2009).

Even small changes can be changes in the right direction

So can communications initiatives really help bring about progressive change in gender norms? Despite some knowledge gaps (see Box 6), the evidence suggests they can, and many programmes are making a real difference to adolescent girls' lives. But have realistic expectations of what you can achieve through these programmes, and by when. Don't expect 'miracles'. But even small changes will make a difference. As a participant in one programme working with boys and young men in Pakistan put it:

'There are some changes and in some other areas they are not many changes … there are things that we still do … It's not that we have completely left those, but yes before the sessions we used to tease (harass) girls and now it has decreased … And I don't behave violently with my young brother and sister at home now.'

Young man in Pakistan (Rozan, 2012: 36)

Box 6: Addressing research gaps

How long does it take to bring about change? Longer programmes or those with more intense activities typically lead to greater change but it is unclear exactly how long or intense a programme needs to be to achieve significant change. Project time frames typically range from three to five years, but it is likely that longer-term programmes are needed for gender norm changes to take root.

Which packages work best? Most programmes try to change gender norms by using several channels at the same time – for example, face-to-face dialogue, mass media, and IEC materials. But there are few evaluations looking at which combinations of activities are most effective with a given audience. There is also limited evidence on the kinds of messages that are most powerful in motivating people to change. (Though messages and formats are typically pre-tested in formative research, this is often unpublished and so not widely available.)

How important is informal communication? Many programmes rely on informal communication between peers or within families. But none of the studies we looked at in our systematic review focused on this type of communication, and its role in either cementing existing norms or leading people to adopt new norms. The experience of one programme in India – We Can End All Violence Against Women – suggests that harnessing the power of informal communication can be very effective. But more evidence on this is needed, looking at the role of girls as peer communicators and the potential of informal communication to change gender norms.

Can social media, mobile/text and internet-based tools promote gender equality and help change gender norms? Probably because these approaches are relatively new and have tended to be used for health promotion messaging rather than changing gender norms, we found no evaluations of their effectiveness. But even among adolescent girls and their families in low-income communities and countries, internet and mobile phone access continues to grow, so these communications channels are likely to become much more important in sharing new ideas and the possibilities for social change.

Are there longer-term impacts? There are very few studies on the extent to which changes in gender norms arising from communications programmes have taken root. There is therefore limited evidence on two key issues: whether norm changes have lasted beyond the end of relatively short programmes; and how far girls (and boys) have been able to carry new knowledge and attitudes forward into adult life: into marriage, how they treat their sons and daughters, and their relationships with other adults.

Are some approaches more cost-effective than others? Only 2 of the 66 studies in our systematic review included any discussion of cost-effectiveness. There needs to be more research on the cost-effectiveness of different communications activities, and of communications programmes compared with other interventions designed to change gender norms.

Resources

ODI Programme outputs

Jones, N., Presler-Marshall, E., Tran, T.V.A., Thuy, D., Le, D. and Thao, N. (2015) *'You must be bold enough to tell your own story': Programming to Empower Viet Nam's Hmong Girls.* This report draws on primary research to explore how selected communications initiatives translate policy commitments to address discriminatory norms around early marriage, pregnancy and girls' education in Viet Nam. It looks at non-formal education programmes (in-school and out-of-school) implemented by Plan as part of its 'Because I am a Girl' programme, as well as other locally initiated communications programmes, highlighting their transformative power and setting out recommendations to improve efficacy.

Kyomuhendo Bantebya, G., Muhanguzi, F.K. and Watson, C. (2015) *'This is not the work of a day': Communications for Social Norm Change around Early Marriage and Education for Adolescent Girls in Uganda.* This report presents key findings about the approach and efficacy of three communications programmes in Uganda, run by Straight Talk, the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) and the Gender Roles, Equality and Transformation (GREAT) project. Each was designed to raise awareness and bring about change in social norms through activities such as radio and TV shows, magazines, public events and non-formal education programmes.

Marcus, R. and Page, E. (2014) *Changing Discriminatory Norms affecting Adolescent Girls through Communications Activities: A Review of Evidence.* This report details findings from a systematic review of evidence from 61 programmes about the effectiveness of communications programmes in changing gender norms that affect adolescent girls. It covers: mass media programmes; information, education and communications (IEC) activities; communications through non-formal education initiatives and school-based clubs; mentoring; and peer communications. An increase in the number of communications activities increased the number of positive outcomes recorded; integrated programmes with communications and non-communications activities also had a higher proportion of positive outcomes than communications-only initiatives. A summary paper is available **here**.

Other key literature

Burke, A. (1999) *Communications and Development: A Practical Guide.* London: Department for International Development. This guide explains how to plan, run and evaluate effective communications for development initiatives, with key pointers for good practice. It highlights effective approaches for working with different stakeholders, and sets out the strengths and weaknesses of different media and approaches.

Government Communications Network and COI (2009) *Communications and Behaviour Change.* London: UK government. This is a clear and accessible guide to understanding behaviour change, different models of behaviour change, and effective behaviour change communication and programming.

Haider, H. (2011) *Communication Initiatives to Change Attitudes and Behaviours.* Helpdesk Research Report. Birmingham: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre, University of Birmingham. This report reviews experiences of communications interventions in developing countries that aim to change gender norms, attitudes and behaviour, either as part of sector programmes (e.g. in health) or programmes explicitly designed to promote gender equality. It highlights some key lessons: conduct formative research when developing communications strategies; use multiple communication channels; build on traditional and popular culture to ensure local resonance, and engage with community leaders.

Sugg, C. (2014) *Making Waves: Media's Potential for Girls in the Global South.* London: BBC Media Action. This report explores the positive ways in which media can shape girls' prospects. It highlights some of the systemic barriers that may limit the ability of the media to improve girls' lives, and suggests ways in which media could fulfil their potential for girls. It showcases effective media interventions, such as the Taru TV soap opera in India and the Samajhdari (Mutual Understanding) radio programme in Nepal.

UNICEF (2012) *Report of the 12th UN Round Table on Communication for Development: The Role of C4D in Empowering Adolescent Girls, 14-17 November 2011.* New Delhi: UNICEF. This report presents the proceedings of the 12th UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development. It presents examples of communication

methodologies that support the participation and empowerment of adolescent girls and examines proposed actions to strengthen advocacy, capacity development, and the monitoring and evaluation of such programmes.

Websites

The Communication Initiative Network convenes organisations and programmes from across the world that focus on communication and media for development, as well as social and behavioural change. The site provides a platform to share knowledge and encourage debate about issues relating to adolescent development and participation, including sexual health, education, violence, and gender. It also has links to publications, reports and toolkits for communications work.

Other works cited

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