

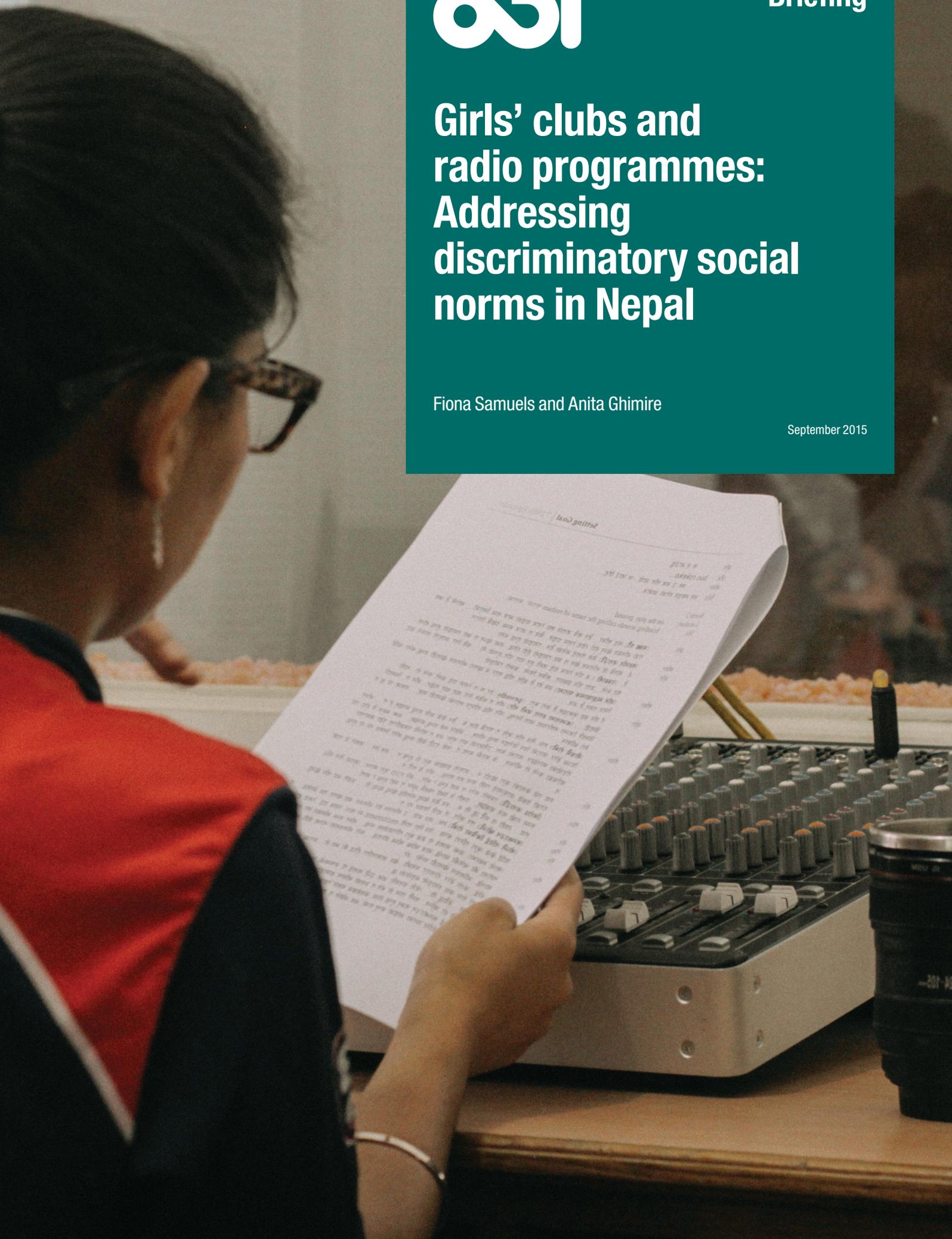


Briefing

Girls' clubs and radio programmes: Addressing discriminatory social norms in Nepal

Fiona Samuels and Anita Ghimire

September 2015



Overseas Development Institute

203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ

Tel. +44 (0) 20 7922 0300
Fax. +44 (0) 20 7922 0399
E-mail: info@odi.org.uk

www.odi.org
www.odi.org/facebook
www.odi.org/twitter

Readers are encouraged to reproduce material from ODI Reports for their own publications, as long as they are not being sold commercially. As copyright holder, ODI requests due acknowledgement and a copy of the publication. For online use, we ask readers to link to the original resource on the ODI website. The views presented in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of ODI.

© Overseas Development Institute 2015. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial Licence (CC BY-NC 3.0).

ISSN: 2052-7209

Cover photo: Clare Price, 2015

Key messages

- Street dramas, girls' groups/clubs and radio programmes are an effective means of communication for ending discriminatory social norms.
- Economic activities, whereby adolescent girls engage in entrepreneurship, are one of the most effective means to empower them. This in turn establishes a sound base from which to communicate messages about discrimination and gender-based violence.
- Combining life skills education with livelihood-centred activities that are locally acceptable and doable by adolescent girls is critical.
- Communication activities that respect local norms and values, such as those around age, gender and other cultural hierarchies, are more successful than others.
- Communications that are focused not only on the girls themselves but also on other reference groups are critical to ending gender discriminations

1. Introduction

'We learn new things about the world that we cannot learn from books. We get knowledge about the things that help us a lot in our life. I want to encourage more girls to take part in such trainings' (focus group discussion, adolescent girls, Geta).

Ever since issues of social development and human rights came to the fore in Nepal in 1990-1995 with the Eighth Development Plan, the agenda for women started receiving attention, including in various plans, policies, programmes and institutional structures. These instruments and processes, however, viewed women as a homogeneous group and did not distinguish the special needs of, among other things, different age groups, including adolescents. In the past few years, though, some programmes on health and education have taken adolescent girls as a focus, and in 2013 the National Action Plan on the Holistic Development of Adolescents was developed. This plan is moving towards addressing issues of adolescents not only in matters related to health and education but also in those to do with employment, skills development and civic participation. It also recognises that adolescents are a heterogeneous group and that their needs are different based on their gender, age (younger and older adolescents), religion, culture, caste and ethnicity and a range of other factors, such as their physical and mental health and social and geographic placement.

Despite this relatively forward-looking policy, national-level indicators (such as those related to education, early marriage, mental health, career and employment) reveal that adolescent girls lag far behind in comparison with adolescents globally and in comparison with their male counterparts in Nepal. Thus, for instance, while there is increasing enrolment of girls in primary school, gender disparity becomes more pronounced as girls get older and a significantly higher portion of older adolescent girls (22% vs. 16% boys) (CBS and NPC, 2012) drop out from secondary education, largely because of the burden of household work that they start taking on at that age. Moreover, when resources are limited, families tend to invest more in boys' education than that of girls', and restriction on the mobility of girls means their careers and higher education opportunities are severely limited (Ghimire et al., 2013; Samuels and Ghimire, 2013). Furthermore, social norms around purity, chastity and family honour have led to persistent harmful practices that have lasting impact on girls. Child marriage, pressure for early pregnancy and to give birth to sons, son bias in nutrition and care, the *deuki* system,¹ *chhaupadi*² and the trafficking of girls remain prevalent. These practices not only affect adolescent girls more than adolescent boys but also have a detrimental impact on girls' physical wellbeing (Ghimire et al., 2013, Goonesekere, 2006; Joshi and Kharel, 2008; Work, 2006).

Drawing on two earlier rounds of fieldwork (see Box 1), this qualitative study explores the policy and programme environment for adolescent girls in Nepal, with a particular focus on communication activities. Communications-based initiatives in this research are defined relatively broadly and include mass media and social media programming/engagement; information,

1 The *deuki* system prevails in Far-West Nepal, where parents offer girls to temples in the hope of obtaining merit or favour from God. Girls are not given financial assistance by the parents and have to depend on monetary offerings or to sell sex to survive. Additionally, there is a belief that sex with *deukis* cleanses a man of his sins and brings good luck. The system was abolished by the national Constitution of 1990 but persists in some communities.

2 *Chhaupadi* is a system prevailing among people following Hindu beliefs whereby girls are isolated during menstruation as they are deemed impure; among other things, they have to sleep in a shed outside the main house.

Box 1: About this study

This is a part of a multi-year, multi-country study exploring the complex ways in which adolescent girls' capabilities are shaped and/or constrained by gender-discriminatory social norms, attitudes and practices and under what conditions changes may be brought about, particularly around norms and practices related to early marriage and education. The study is being conducted by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in partnership with national research teams in Ethiopia, Nepal, Uganda and Viet Nam and has been commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) as part of a flagship programme on Transforming the Lives of Girls and Young Women.

Year 1 field research (2012/13) mapped out the complex and often intersecting domains that shape adolescent girls' capabilities, highlighting challenges in education, household and family relations, economic empowerment/ access to resources, physical safety and health, psychosocial wellbeing and political/civic participation. Year 2 research (2013/14) provided more in-depth analysis of factors contributing to change and persistence in discriminatory gendered social norms, with a focus on those connected to the pivotal issues of early marriage and education.

education and communication (IEC) provision through the dissemination of materials, billboards, stickers and educational videos or events such as street theatre; and non-formal education approaches, including life skills training, community dialogues and peer education (Marcus and Page, 2014). The study explores the effectiveness of a number of these communications-based initiatives, which are targeting adolescent girls, through examining in depth two programmes in Kailali district:³ 1) a World Vision (WV)-funded programme; and 2) a Women and Children's Development Department (WCDD)-funded programme.

While this briefing focuses on findings from the programmes, it is important to note the influence the national policy environment has had on these and in particular the long history of acts and amendments. The latter has seen a gradual move from a protection-based approach to women, in the series of amendments of the *Muluki ain* – the country's national law, to the interim Constitution and gender-focused acts and regulations. The full study report (Ghimire et al., 2015) provides a review of all these policy instruments.

2. Overview of Kailali district

Kailali district (in Seti zone), with its headquarters in Dhangadi, has a population of 775,709. There are 42 Village Development Committees (VDCs) (seven in the Hills and 35 in the Terai, or plains) and two municipalities. The majority of people (94.91%) are Hindus; in terms of caste and ethnicity distribution, the majority (43.7%) of the population is Tharu (an ethnic group indigenous to the plains of Nepal), followed by 17.43% Chhetri and 10.73% Hill Brahmin.⁴

There are a total of 599 primary schools, 324 lower-secondary schools, 143 secondary schools and 81 higher-secondary schools in Kailali, and the district literacy rate is 66.3% (male 63.1% and female 40.41%) (DDC Kailali, 2014). The net enrolment rate is 94.3% for primary education and declines to 75.4% for lower-secondary, 58.3% for secondary and 8.8% for higher-secondary education. There is significant gender disparity in education. According to the district profile (ibid), 36% of girls (age 10-14) do not graduate from primary to secondary school, resulting in more than 50% of girls age 15-19 not being enrolled in school.⁵

Geta VDC has a total population of 12,224, with 5,960 females and 6,264 males. While no data exist on the number of adolescents exclusively, there are 2,079 girls between the ages of 10 and 24 in Geta (MPRC, 2013). Sahajpur VDC has a total population of 7,151 (3,514 female and 3,637 male) and there are 1,198 girls in the 10-24 age group (ibid.). Chaumala VDC has a total population of 18,698, out of which 9,496 are female and 9,202 are male. There are an estimated 3,308 girls between the ages of 10 and 24 (ibid.).

In all three study sites, though to varying degrees, there are elopement marriages – where a young couple run away to get married without the consent of their parents – and suicides among adolescents. Additionally, lured marriages – where a girl is 'lured' by a relative of the man to marry him – were observed to be occurring. However, in all the sites parents were also actively encouraging girls to go to school, there is an increasing tendency to marry daughters at a later stage, untouchability is no longer in practice among the younger generation and inter-caste marriage is slowing gaining acceptance (see Ghimire et al., 2015).

3 Kailali district was chosen for fieldwork based on the programmes of interest, similarities in contexts to the earlier years of research, a significant level of maturity and ease of access. Three Village Development Committees (VDCs) in Kailali district were selected: Sahajpur, representing the Hills, and Geta and Chaumala, representing the Terai. In terms of programming, Geta has programmes both from WV and WCDD, Sahajpur has a programme run by WV and Chaumala has one run by WCDD.

4 <http://flagship4.nrrc.org/vdc-names/kailali>

5 http://cbs.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2012/District%20Profiles/District%20profile_71.pdf



Photo: Claire Price, 2015

3. The WV and WCDD programmes

3.1 Overview of programmes

WV set up in Nepal in 2001, and Kailali was one of the first districts where its programme was implemented. Its objective is the empowerment of vulnerable children by working for the wellbeing of their families and the community in which they live. It works under four broad thematic areas: Livelihoods, Education, Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition (MCHN) and Child Protection and Care. Cross-cutting themes include gender, disaster and disability. It also has a communication and advocacy component. For programme implementation, WV selects geographical areas with vulnerable communities and implements Area Development Programmes (ADPs) through local partners. In Kailali, the Dhangadi ADP works in six VDCs – three in the Hills and three in the Terai – with four different implementing partners. Each partner works in different thematic areas, for example Digo Bikash in education in Geta and Ekta Samaj in MCHN in Sahajpur. One of the main programmes of the ADP is the sponsorship of children, known as a Registered Children (RCs), for their education and other needs. There are 2,030 RCs in Dhangadi ADP sponsored by families in Australia.

For the Dhangadi ADP, the main theme is Livelihoods. Generally, the ADP works with children up to 18 years of age, although specific projects focus on different age groups. For example, in maternal and child health, children under five years are a priority; for RCs, WV takes children from three to seven years. Besides this, WV has also supported 64 child clubs – where it trains children and young adolescents on issues such as leadership, drama and anchoring skills (hosting/running radio programmes) – and 108 early childhood development centres – where it supports schools with early childhood development activities such as teacher trainings and making child-friendly learning environments in schools.

WCDD, which is a part of the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Affairs, implements the Adolescent Development Programme for dropouts. Dropout adolescent girls are defined for this programme as those who have never been to school, who left school in the middle of their studies or those who frequently have to stay back home to carry out domestic chores and hence miss their classes regularly. The programme started in 2005/06 as ‘Choose Your Future’, funded by the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF). WCDD itself continued the programme from 2007/08, using funds from the central government budget. WCDD first implemented the programme in two districts by establishing one or two adolescent groups in each. Later, it extended the programme to all the 75 districts but only in a few VDCs in each district.

Box 2: Street drama

The adolescent girls and boys selected for the street drama get together and decide on a topic that is relevant to their community. They then prepare a script based on the group discussion. The topics are usually around child marriage, taking care of women during pregnancy, alcoholism and gender-based discrimination. Once the script is ready, they discuss it with the trainers. A final script comes out of this discussion. The groups themselves decide on the roles and rehearse in their leisure time. They then select a holiday and invite community members to the local school to see the drama.

The girls and boys of Sahajpur are popular when they perform the drama in the district. They have also won several drama competitions. Their most memorable moment was when the district superintendent of police cried after watching their drama. The district police office now hires this group to perform drama in various communities both inside and outside the district in order to disseminate information about the challenges facing their communities.

In a drama the research team observed in Geta, a young adolescent girl is pregnant. The mother-in-law makes her wash clothes and carry heavy pots of water and bundles of firewood. While coming back from washing the clothes, the girl complains of severe stomach pain. She falls unconscious and starts bleeding. The mother-in-law does not pay attention, saying this is normal during pregnancy. A few neighbours gather around and scold the mother-in-law. Finally, after much coercing from the neighbours, she calls the female community health volunteer. But, by the she arrives, the girl is dead. The message of this drama was to stop child marriage and early pregnancy, as well as negligence in caring for pregnant women, which is a common problem in their community. The girls explained how traditional practices of making pregnant women do physically challenging work and not letting them undergo regular health check-ups may prove fatal to those who are pregnant at an early age.

Source: Fieldwork, 2015.

The main objective of the programme is to increase the self-confidence and awareness of adolescents who have dropped out of school. This is done by forming them into groups and giving them training on livelihoods and life skills and providing them with seed money. After the trainings, the adolescents are required to form adolescent saving groups.

The programme has been running in Kailali for the past seven years. By 2014, Kailali had 42 adolescent saving groups consisting of 211 participants; 111 girls have undergone trainings on life skills and 140 on livelihoods. All the 140 girls who attended trainings on livelihoods have started small businesses with the seed money. There are seven adolescent girls' information and counselling centres; 45 girls have taken medical support and 75 girls have taken support for education. In Geta, the Women's Cooperative has also created a child club from the budget given by WCDD.

3.2 Communications activities

The main aim of the communications activities of WV is to raise awareness about sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and other issues related to adolescent girls and boys. Activities consist of SRH trainings for adolescent girls, life skill trainings, peer-sharing to disseminate information among peer groups and street dramas to disseminate information to other reference groups in the community.

The reproductive health training is three days and centres around issues such as adolescents and sexual activity, early marriage and pregnancy, use of contraceptives and so on. It started in 2013 and has so far trained about 300 adolescents. The local implementers (thus Ekta Samaj in Sahajpur and Digo Bikash in Geta) select both girls and boys for the training from the RC community. In addition, there is a life skills training for three days that contains modules on anchoring, positive thinking, conflict resolution and drama and locally important issues such as child marriage.

The topics for the trainings are selected based on consultation with child club members, adolescent groups and trainers. A yearly plan of activities outlining topics to be covered is made at the start of the year. This plan is revised every six months to include lessons learnt and new topics identified during the course of training as being of relevance to adolescent girls. In all the above-mentioned trainings there are 30-40 trainees (both male and female) in each group, and among them 10-15 people who are called 'trained volunteers' and who are chosen to perform the drama.

After the trainings, the trainees are required to gather their friends in schools and disseminate information gained. In both Geta and Sahajpur, the trainees have held meetings with their peers in the school premises after school and disseminated the information. Besides this, each girl is allocated a specific village where she has to gather adolescents and disseminate the information.

Another important part of the adolescent reproductive health programme is street drama (see Box 2). Street drama gives new knowledge to the reference groups and influences them to change harmful traditional practices. Training volunteers generate the topics for the dramas and the scripts with help from members of the implementing partner/non-governmental organisations. The topics are usually related to gender issues of relevance to the community. So far, they have covered



Photo: Claire Price, 2015

domestic violence, alcoholism, child marriage, early pregnancy and dropping out of school. Ekta Samaj, which implements in Sahajpur, has so far trained 210 adolescents and produced around 30 dramas.

The WCDD communications activities consist of trainings on livelihoods, peer-sharing, formation of adolescent groups and provision of information through counselling centres. All the activities are implemented by the Women's Cooperative, which WCDD formed. The Women's Cooperative identifies the girls for the training based on selection criteria set by WCDD in Kathmandu, but it can also adapt these selection criteria according to local needs.

The 10-day life-skills training includes components on reproductive health, gender-based violence and child marriage. The topics are selected based on training material provided by WCDD and its modification based on local needs. Depending on the focus of the training, it is carried out by trainers from different ministries, local stakeholders and social mobilisers trained for the purpose. There are 30 trainees in each group and they are all adolescent girls. After the trainings, the girls are required to form adolescent groups and meet once a month to discuss the application of the new knowledge in their own life as well as in that of other adolescent girls in their community. They are also required to share it with girls in their neighbourhood so peers too learn from them and endorse the change. At the time of the research, the programme had been running for one year.

The livelihoods training, which also runs for 10 days, consist of subjects of the adolescent girls' choice; so far, trainings have been on vegetable farming, chicken- and goat-rearing, tailoring, knitting, pig-rearing, weaving, making packed foods and toy, incense-stick and candle-making. After the training, the girls are given seed money (Rs 4,500, or \$45) to start up a business of their choice. They are then formed into adolescent saving groups. These saving groups are registered in the local Women's Cooperative. Girls in the adolescent saving groups in both Chaumala and Geta save Rs 25 (\$0.25) per month.

Additional communications-related activities carried out through the WCDD programme include an information centre that provides counselling and information to adolescent girls if/when the trainings are insufficient. A centre was established this year for both Geta and Chaumala and, although it is not yet functional, when it is girls will be able to receive counselling on issues such as education, gender-based violence and health. The Women's Cooperative has already started inviting relevant people, such as nurses from the local health office, to provide lectures to the group as a part of counselling. The Women's Cooperative has also developed a library where it keeps information materials such as books and flyers, which girls who come to the regular meetings can use.

Box 3: A girl retaliates after the training

A boy had been harassing Sneha [name changed] for a few months. He was from the neighbourhood and often travelled with her on the bus when she went to and returned from school. He would harass her verbally. She felt very disturbed but could not share it with anybody for fear her parents and friends would blame her instead of the boy. One day when she was going home, as usual the boy sat next to her in the bus and started harassing her. Sneha had by now taken the WV life skills training and knew this was sexual harassment and an offence in the law. She slapped the boy in his face. The boy slapped her back and started touching her body. On seeing this, the people in the bus caught the boy and took him to the police. The boy apologised to Sneha in front of the police and stopped harassing her thereafter.

Source: Fieldwork, 2015.

4. What changes were brought by the communications activities?

4.1 Impact on adolescent girls

'I have learnt a lot of things from this training that I had no clue about before. Things like how sexual harassment can take place anywhere. It can even happen to us. After this, I became more and more aware about such cases. We can control such problems and take actions against such people' (in-depth interview, adolescent girl, Geta).

Besides learning new things, as the quote above shows, girls in all the three study sites shared that, since joining the programme, they had been much happier. They felt the reason for this happiness was that now they were able to share their feelings and difficulties and find solutions, while at the same time also being aware that other girls of their age had also faced the same problems. Learning about issues not usually taught about in schools, such as gender-based violence, life skills and livelihoods, is also critical for the girls.

'Yes there are changes. These girls know what counts as gender-based violence and discrimination; they know where to go in case of gender-based violence and can now fight for their rights. They have stopped child marriages in the villages. We have also used them to communicate about open defecation' (key informant interview, supervisor of implementing partner, Dhangadi).

As Box 3 shows, girls expressed confidence to apply their learning to fight against harmful practices such as child marriage, violence and discrimination in their community as another significant outcome.

The formation of adolescent groups after the training is an important strategy developed by WCDD to help girls continue discussing what they have learnt in the training and build agency to act on it. Similarly, as the trainee volunteers develop dramas with support from WV and show them in the community, they not only continue to discuss gender discrimination and prevalent harmful practices but also encourage other members of the community to reflect on discriminatory social norms.

A more observable outcome are the girls who had dropped out of school who have now returned as a result of being able to earn pocket money to finance their educational needs. They are also now more confident in entrepreneurship and feel the training they get from the programme has increased their chances of getting a job. Table 1 summarises the impacts of the programmes on the girls.

4.2 Impacts on family and other members of the community

Regarding impacts on family members, there were mixed reactions. Training was found to have an impact on siblings the most but not significantly on parents, except for the fact that they have gradually started thinking the trainings are good for their daughters and some who did not allow their daughters/sisters to participate now allow them to do so (Table 2).

Parents in Chaumala are appreciative of the fact that, instead of spending their leisure time watching television, their daughters are engaged in tending goats and other animals or tending the vegetable garden they have prepared using the seed money and are now able to pay for their own education.

Among parents, it is the mothers whose understanding has changed if it ever does. As girls share the information with them, they have become more aware of or are reminded about the importance of issues such as girls' education, child marriage and so on.

Table 1: Impacts of the WV and WCDD programmes on girls

Change as a result of programme	Referred programmes	Site differences	Quotes
Now able to speak in front of people	WV and WCDD	Girls from all the sites talked about this but it is likely this impact is greater in Geta and Sahajpur as they put on dramas and also disseminated information in different villages.	'She used to talk less but now, after attending trainings, she has started speaking more [...] Earlier she had no brain but these days she uses it' (IDI with brother of adolescent girl, Geta).
Now able to express feelings in front of people without fear of being ridiculed	WV and WCDD	Similar to the above, in general we found girls in Sahajpur and Geta who had been in the WV programmes were more confident and exposed than those from the WCDD programme.	'Previously, we thought that, if we spoke, people would backbite us because what we say is silly. Now we do not think so' (FGD with adolescent girls, Sahajpur).
Increased out-of-textbook knowledge	WV and WCDD	While girls from Sahajpur went for 3-day trainings, those from Geta and Chaumala with the WCDD programme went for 10-day training. Hence, girls in the second case may have increased their knowledge more.	'We learn new things about the world we cannot learn from books. We get knowledge about the things that help us a lot in our life. I want to encourage more girls to take part in such trainings.' (FGD, adolescent girl, Geta).
Increased knowledge about livelihoods strategies	WCDD	Knowledge about livelihoods strategies increased especially in the WCDD programme, hence girls from Chaumala and Geta benefited from it. This was not the case in Sahajpur, although there could have been trickle-down effects of the livelihoods programme targeted towards the parents.	'We know how to sow vegetables in a proper way and what to do when the crops are ailing' (IDI, adolescent girl, Geta).
Increased self-confidence to fight against minor injustices and harassments	WV and WCDD	Girls in the WV programme in Geta had fought to stop the 'lured marriages' of their peers. A girl from the WCDD programme had slapped a boy for misbehaving with her. Such cases did not come out in Sahajpur and Chaumala.	'I have learnt a lot of things from this training that I had no clue about before. Things like how sexual harassment can take place anywhere. It can even happen to us. After this programme I became more and more aware about such cases. We can control such problems and take actions against such people' (IDI with adolescent girl, Geta).
Ability to both solve and regularly share problems	WCDD	This came out strongly in Geta and Chaumala for girls who had been in the WCDD programme and not much in Sahajpur. This may be because, in Geta and Chaumala, once the girls form groups they meet regularly.	'Previously, I was scared what others would think rather than doing what was right for me. Now I know when people do wrong and can speak, take action or avoid such situations' (FGD, adolescent girls, Chaumala).
Increased happiness	WV and WCDD	This came out in all the case study sites.	'We have so many new friends and know some problems are not only ours; other girls too face them. We share and we are happy' (FGD, adolescent girls, Geta).
Increased social network	WV and WCDD	This came out in all the study sites.	
Broadened chance of getting job	WV and WCDD	Girls in Sahajpur were already working as trainers in other programmes in the community; girls from Geta and Chaumala were not employed so far.	'After this training has your chance of getting good job broadened?' 'Yes, I hope so. I have built up confidence in myself but I hope someone helps me as well' (IDI, adolescent girl, Geta).
Increased self-confidence for entrepreneurship	WCDD	In Chaumala and Geta, some girls from the WCDD programme were already entrepreneurs. This did not come out much in Sahajpur.	'Yes, now I think I don't have to rely on anyone for money. In future, I can do something myself to earn my living' (FGD, adolescent girls, Chaumala).
Ability to ask questions when do not understand things	WCDD	This came out in Chaumala but not much in Geta and Sahajpur.	'Yeah, there have been changes [...] I can ask things that I do not know. This has even made me confident that I can speak well now. It used to be difficult earlier but now it is not' (IDI, adolescent girl, Chaumala).

Table 1: Impacts of the WV and WCDD programmes on girls (continued)

Change as a result of programme	Referred programmes	Site differences	Quotes
Economic independence/ability to fund education	WCDD	This came out very strongly in Chaumala and Geta. In Sahajpur it was not the case because there was no livelihoods component and no seed money.	'I learnt tailoring and will now buy a machine from my own money' (IDI, adolescent girl, Chaumala).
Economic benefits for family	WCDD	This was the case with girls in Chaumala and Geta who took the livelihoods training and not so much in Sahajpur.	'My daughter has been doing good, she sometimes give us Rs 200, Rs 400 that is helpful for us to buy oil, vegetables' (IDI, father of adolescent girl, Geta).
Broader outlook	WV and WCDD	Girls in all the three sites expressed that they had wider exposure and a broader outlook.	'No, if there were no training then she would not have ideas about the external environment. She would have to depend on the school environment only. Because of the training, she understands the environment, and makes me understand it as well' (FGD, mothers of adolescent girls, Chaumala).
Going back to school	WCDD	In Chaumala and Geta, it was unmarried girls who joined the WCDD programme who were going back to school. In Sahajpur, we did not find cases of the girls involved in programmes not going to school. It was rather married woman who were planning to go back to school.	'I dropped out after failing the School Leaving Certificate but I have filled up my forms for the coming examination this year' (IDI, adolescent girl, Geta).

Younger siblings are keen to follow in the footsteps of their older sisters in the programme. They notice visible changes in their elder sisters. In a few cases, particularly in Dalit households, younger sisters of beneficiary adolescent girls have also participated in multiple programmes after an elder sister is actively involved in a group.

Respondent: 'My middle sister tells me she will follow in my footsteps and do work like I do.'

Interviewer: 'Does she participate in such programmes?'

Respondent: 'Yes, she participates in such events more than me. I am only a part of this, but my sister is a part of a Dalit programme too. She took part in youth awareness in the Dalit group and also in a women's violence programme' (IDI, adolescent girl, Geta).

There seems to be a lesser impact in the community regarding practice and norm change. Community members are still not convinced of the positive impact the trainings bring. While the dramas help them think about existing harmful practices and gender-discriminatory norms that exist locally, limited attitude and behavioural change is in evidence. However, there are some variations by site: in Sahajpur and Geta, members of the community are still sceptical about the mobility of girls and about girls and boys going out together for training for the WV programme; in Chaumala, however, the community sees the entrepreneurship of girls as a positive sign and is now more appreciative of adolescent girls.

'Here, people blame trainings that have allowed children to roam here and there. They attend the training where they are taught about child marriage and its consequences, but those who participate in such training have eloped. Here, some parents have raised these issues. Even some parents do not send their children to such trainings because of this' (IDI, ex- beneficiary, Sahajpur).

On the other hand, some of the girls have themselves being able to stop child and forced or lured marriages in the wider community (see Box 4).



Photo: Claire Price, 2015

Box 4: Girls stop 'lured marriages'

A woman had asked for Shanti's hand in marriage for her brother a few months previously. She told her a lot about the man, saying he was a migrant in India, very rich and good-looking, and would make her very happy and comfortable. She often encouraged Shanti to run away with him. Shanti did not agree but the women did not stop trying to coerce her to marry her brother. This continued for some time; the woman, who was her neighbour, kept on pestering her and telling her not to tell her parents.

One day, she told Shanti she had done *bhokal* and this meant Shanti would change her mind and eventually marry her brother. Shanti did not tell anybody what had happened, not even her parents or her elder sisters. She was scared that, if she opened her mouth to speak, the boy's family would do something to her family as they had threatened her. It seems that the fact that the sister had done *bhokal* had a deep effect on Shanti and she said she too started taking interest in the boy: 'I don't know what they gave to me, but after that I too started liking it when they talked about the boy'. So her rejection grew weaker.

One day, when she was alone at the tap, the woman and her brother took her forcibly to the marketplace. They threatened her, saying that, if she did not go with them, they would take her sister and marry her off instead. They then took her to a temple, married her and took her to house of the boy's relative. The man she 'married' was about 35 years old; she was just 14. The next day, her friends, who were part of the WV training, found out about the incident. Because of the training, they knew such a marriage was illegal and went to ask for help. A few girls got together and reported it to the police. After police action, Shanti was brought back to her house. The girls have been able to stop three such incidents of child marriages this year.

Source: Fieldwork, 2015.

5. What lessons can we draw from the case study communications initiatives?

Involve other members of the community in developing and disseminating information

One of the challenges the programmes faced lay in convincing key and influential members of the community, or reference groups, to listen to their messages and change their practices. Involving them in developing the messages as well as disseminating them would increase the effectiveness of the communications activities. For example, in the WCDD programme, which indirectly involved mothers, the activities had a greater impact. Thus, when parents and community members are involved in developing and disseminating messages, they access a common space to discuss locally acceptable ways of making gender norms more egalitarian. Changes brought about by such methods are more likely to be endorsed by local people and to be more sustainable.

Raise the awareness of parents and other community members

Linked to the above, in order to bring community members together and to increase their awareness of the needs of adolescent girls as well as harmful traditional practices, it is first necessary to design training for parents, and in particular for fathers and other male members of the community. This was expressed by local leaders as well as girls in all the communities.

'Now we have these various programmes for adolescents but what I would like to suggest is that you involve the parents as well in these programmes and make them understand about these things. We should teach the parents what the behaviour of good father should be like and what the behaviour of a good mother should be like' (KII, local leader, Sahajpur).

Adapt targeting mechanisms according to local needs

The WCDD programme targets out-of-school girls, who are often the most vulnerable, but it does so to the exclusion of girls who are going to school but have difficulties sustaining their education for economic reasons. This is the case, for instance, for adolescent girls from polygamous households who do not get support from their father. Thus, understanding the different local contexts of girls is critical and should influence how they are selected for training. In Kailali, the implementers are aware of this issue and have started to address it. For example, in the case mentioned below, the officer from the Women's Cooperative who was responsible for implementing the programme overruled the criteria and included school-going girls facing economic hardship in the training.

'I wanted to attend that training. Devkota Sir from that training knew me and my household condition. When I came here from Dhangadi, they did not let me attend the training as I was studying and not out of school. Then Devkota Sir put me in the training so I got to attend' (IDI, adolescent girl, Geta).

Build on existing resources and infrastructure

Several existing resources and structures at the local level could be used both in the implementation of communications activities and in monitoring. School clubs, child clubs, youth clubs and women's development centres are some of these. In addition, decentralised structures and their branches in villages, such as VDCs, ward citizen forums, mothers' groups and adolescent and youth groups, could be used as resources not only to disseminate information but also to monitor outcomes.

Share resources beyond immediate programme beneficiaries, including with boys and men

Existing counselling centres set up by WCDD are now open only for members of its female adolescent groups. Making them accessible to other adolescents and young women would extend the benefits to also reach those who have not attended the trainings. Additionally, men and boys would benefit if they were allowed to visit the centres at certain times of the week – if adolescent girls and their guardians were comfortable about it.

Provide spaces to take up local burning issues in communications activities

While it is possible to modify the content of the training based on local needs, issues like suicide among adolescents, which came up very strongly in the narratives of study respondents, have not yet been tackled. Thus, along with livelihoods and reproductive health, modules on psychosocial health and emotional wellbeing, including ways of dealing with rejection in love affairs, peer pressure, suicide and gaps in communication with parents, should be developed. These issues could also be included in the street dramas.

Implement complementary career-oriented activities alongside with communications activities

In addition to communications activities, supportive career development activities, such as extra courses in English, mathematics and computing, which are important to get a job and into higher education, were in high demand among adolescents. This would not only fulfil the target of increasing girls' self-confidence but also help them through higher education, since English and mathematics are subjects girls commonly fail in their exams. Additionally, our study shows livelihoods trainings and seed money for adolescents themselves have a critical empowerment impact. WV's programme, which already has a livelihood component but this targets only parents, could learn from WCDD's achievement.

Extend outreach and networking between communications programmes to help increase sustainability

Given that both programmes have had a visible impact on adolescent girls, extending outreach and geographical coverage would benefit others who have not had the same opportunity. Keeping in mind that the WV programme is ending soon and the WCDD programmes receives very little funding each year, one way of doing this is to establish some form of coordination and planning mechanism between the two programmes so they can jointly consider how to continue, scale up and replicate. Additionally, encouraging more girls to participate and improving information dissemination so more girls get to know when the training opens would be beneficial to girls.

References

- CBS and NPCS (Central Bureau of Statistics and Nepal Planning Commission Secretariat) (2012) 'National Population and Housing Census 2011: National Report'. Kathmandu: CBS.
- District Development Committee Kailali. 2013. District Profile. Kailali: DDC Kailali
- Ghimire, A., Samuels, F. and Wagle, S. (2013) 'Understanding Key Capability Domains of Adolescent Girls and Gender Justice: Findings from Nepal'. London: ODI.
- Ghimire, A., Samuels, F. and Adhikari, P. (2014), 'Change and Continuity in social norms and practices around marriage and education in Nepal'. London: ODI.
- Ghimire, A. Samuels, F., Giri, I. and Adhikari, P. (2015) 'Communications for Addressing Discriminatory Social Norms in Marriage and Education for Adolescent Girls in Nepal'. London: ODI.
- Goonsekere, S. (2006) 'Harmful Traditional Practices in Three Countries of South Asia: Culture, Human Rights and Violence against Women'. Gender and Development Discussion Paper 21. Bangkok: UNESCAP.
- Joshi, S.K. and Kharel, J. (2008), 'Violence against Women in Nepal: An Overview'. <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Violence>
- Marcus, R. and Page, E. (2014) 'Changing Discriminatory Norms affecting Adolescent Girls through Communication Activities: A Review of Evidence'. London: ODI.
- Mega Publication and Research Centre. 2013. District profile. Kathmandu: Mega Publications.
- Samuels, F. and Ghimire, A. (2013). Social Norms for adolescent girls in Nepal: Slow but positive progress. Country Briefing. London: ODI.
- Work, B.R. (2006), 'The Impact of Harmful Practices on the Girl Child'. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.



ODI is the UK's leading independent think tank on international development and humanitarian issues.

Readers are encouraged to reproduce material from ODI Reports for their own publications, as long as they are not being sold commercially. As copyright holder, ODI requests due acknowledgement and a copy of the publication. For online use, we ask readers to link to the original resource on the ODI website. The views presented in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of ODI.

© Overseas Development Institute 2015. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial Licence (CC BY-NC 3.0).
ISSN: 2052-7209

All ODI Reports are available from www.odi.org

Overseas Development Institute
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
Tel +44 (0)20 7922 0300
Fax +44 (0)20 7922 0399

odi.org