



Briefing

Communications for social norm change around adolescent girls:

Case studies from Uganda

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September 2015



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ISSN: 2052-7209

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Key messages

- Case study analysis shows that broad-based communications initiatives appear to be effective in raising awareness and provoking discussion of gender-discriminatory norms; however, evidence of actual attitudinal or behavioural change requires assessment over a longer time period.
- Integrated approaches (communications ‘plus’) are emerging as good practice in addressing social norms and supporting behavioural change; these depend on significant investment in coordination among actors at local level.
- Effective communications initiatives take into account gender, age and cultural specificities in both the types of messages developed and their means of transmission: significant time and effort should be invested in preliminary situation analyses and consultations.
- Community-based organisations are key actors in communications for social norm change at local level; significant, ongoing investments in capacity development are critical for sustainability, along with support for and coordination with local government structures.
- Communications interventions require long-term application at all levels – individual, household and community – and should be linked to other measures aimed at empowerment as well as supply-side investments in service provision to create a supportive environment if they are to bring about the desired changes in social norms and behaviours.

1 Overview and context

1.1 A ray of hope for adolescent girls in Uganda

Uganda has made significant progress on overall poverty reduction, the expansion of educational opportunities for young people and the promotion of gender equality. The country has a framework of national laws and policies to address the vulnerabilities of adolescent girls as they make the crucial transition to adult life. The Constitution (1995) prohibits all forms of discrimination and provides for the protection and promotion of women’s rights. The National Development Plan 2010-2015 promotes affirmative action in all spheres and recognises gender inequality and inequity, as well as negative attitudes, cultural practices and perceptions, as some of the most binding constraints on Uganda’s national development.

A number of key sectoral plans, policies, legal provisions and programme initiatives promote gender equality and the capabilities of girls and young women. A raft of interventions is underway to improve women’s access to, and control over, productive resources; implement affirmative action; create training programmes; protect against exploitation; expand access to education and training; protect physical and bodily integrity through the promotion of sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR); and promote participation in politics and civic affairs. Progress in education has been particularly strong, promoted through government policies of Universal Primary Education (1997) and Universal Secondary Education (2007) that highlight national commitment to the empowerment of girls.

1.2 Continuing challenges due in part to discriminatory social norms

Many policies and programmes recognise – either explicitly or implicitly – the negative weight of discriminatory social norms on capacity development and well-being for adolescent girls and women, and some suggest specific actions to address these. Others remain silent on these issues or fail to identify appropriate strategies. Many find their force blunted by weak implementation capacity and corruption, over-arching conditions of poverty or contradictions thrown up by prevailing customs or traditions. Current national debates on law reform to regulate marriage and divorce reveal deep resistance to changing discriminatory practices at the household and family level; progress in education is hampered by challenges in both supply and demand; and ambiguity in understandings and application of adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) policies continues to deprive girls of critical information and services.

Analysis of national survey data reveals high proportions of adolescents still living in poverty, deprived of full educational attainment and – for girls – impelled into child marriage or early pregnancy, with SRH indicators revealing high levels of vulnerability (see Box 1).

Two of the three top policy recommendations of a recent analysis of adolescent girls’ vulnerability in Uganda highlighted the importance of 1) keeping girls in school to raise levels of educational attainment; and 2) targeting social values and cultural norms that promote child marriage and early child-bearing (Amin et al., 2013).

1.3 Enhancing knowledge through multi-year research

A multi-year, multi-country study is exploring the complex ways in which gender-discriminatory social norms, attitudes and practices are shaping and/or constraining adolescent girls' capabilities 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 in partnership with national research teams in Uganda, Ethiopia, Nepal and Viet Nam and has been commissioned by the UK Department for International Development 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 well-being 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, pregnancy and education.

Year 3 research (2014/15) turned to an analysis of specific policy and programme interventions aimed at addressing the social norms that underpin early marriage and pregnancy and undercut girls' education. The focus was on a broad spectrum of different types of communications-based initiatives as identified in a recent global review (Marcus and Page, 2014). This country briefing summarises the findings of the third year of research in Uganda, which reviewed the national programme and policy environment and analysed design features and reported impacts of three projects identified as case studies of promising initiatives for moving forward (for full results see Kyomuhendo Bantebya et al., 2015).

Figure 1: Focus group discussion with adolescents, GREAT project, Lira district



Source: Uganda field research team

Box 1: National statistics reveal continuing challenges for adolescent girls in Uganda

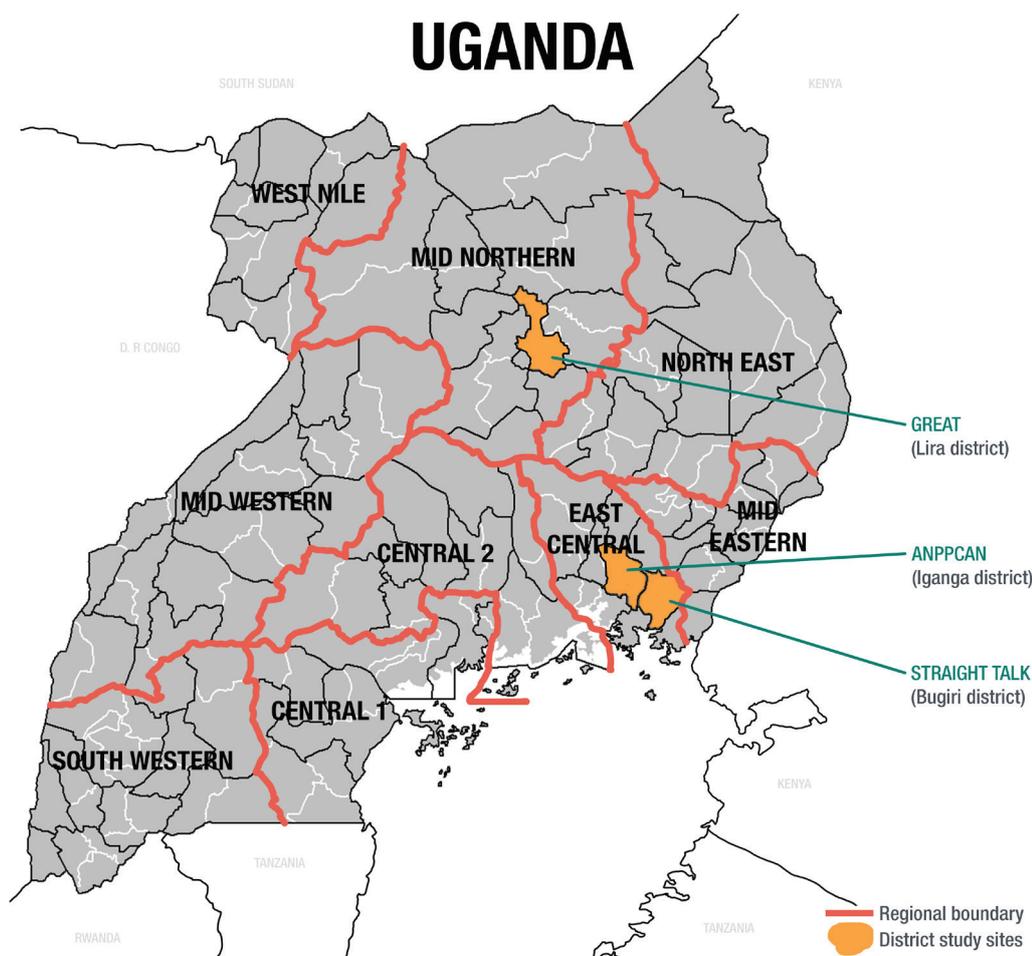
- Primary completion rates for girls (66%) continue to lag behind those for boys (68%); fewer than half of all girls (46.6%) enrol in secondary (compared with 53.4% of boys); and only a third of those enrolled (34%) actually complete secondary school (compared with 52% for boys) (MOES, 2012).
- Over a third (35%) of girls who drop out of school do so because of marriage, and a quarter (23%) because of pregnancy. Over 15% of ever-married women aged 20-49 are married by the age of 15 and nearly half (49%) by the age of 18. Teenage pregnancy rates are high, at 24% nationwide (UBOS, 2012).
- Being poor and rural heightens the likelihood of teen pregnancy and child-bearing: 34% of teenage girls from the poorest households and 24% of rural girls become mothers (compared with 16% of wealthier teenagers and 21% of urban girls). Regional and sub-regional variations are also apparent, with rates in the study sub-regions of East Central (30.6%) and Mid-Northern (25.6%) higher than the national average (UBOS, 2012).
- Available data indicate high levels of gender-based violence (GBV), with over a quarter of young women (29.1%) reported to have experienced physical and sexual violence (UNICEF, 2013).
- Economic discrimination against girls and women persists, including as a result of the complexities arising from attempts to combine productive and reproductive roles – with reproductive responsibilities for household and children continuing to fall solely on the shoulders of women and girls.

2 Diverse communications approaches by multiple actors to address critical issues

2.1 National programme environment

Within the wide variety of programmes underway in Uganda to promote girls' empowerment, a number include communications components designed to address child marriage or change social norms contributing to child marriage. Others seek to mobilise partnerships around girls' education. Key actors include government departments, international agencies and local non-governmental, community-based, or faith-based organisations, often working through complex partnership frameworks or consortia.

Figure 2: Map of project study sites in Uganda



Source: Adapted from UBOS

Programme interventions range from sensitising families and communities through a variety of communication channels, providing education to girls on life skills, non-formal and formal education and strengthening livelihood and vocational skills, among others. Community dialogues and debates, use of mass media (radio and TV talk shows), production and use of information, education and communication materials, capacity-building and promotion of peer education are among the commonly used communications approaches. Other interventions focus on mentorship, school talks, social media (Facebook and Twitter), public ceremonies in commemoration of international days for children and women, print media (newspapers, newsletters, reports) and music, dance and drama.

Issues of child marriage and teenage pregnancy are broadly addressed within the general programming around SRH and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) or violence against children as a child rights issue. Given the Ugandan context, many of the SRH programmes have a particular focus on HIV awareness and protection, while child protection programming often includes a focus on orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). Messaging on girls' education is linked

to both child rights and gender empowerment, while interventions in schools often focus on strengthening gender-sensitive learning environments and promoting SRH information.

While a number of programmes have a specific focus on a particular thematic sector or area, many in fact touch on a variety of sectors, combining different elements or interventions linked to health, education, gender and development and empowerment. A few include a broad-based focus on gender equality issues, addressing socio-cultural norms and beliefs around womanhood and motherhood, gender roles and stereotypes, power relations and gender identity. Others include a strong economic empowerment component. Some of the above programmes seek explicitly to strengthen girls' agency and voice, focusing on building girls' capacity through mentorship and school or out-of-school clubs; providing information and skills-building in areas of SRH; and promoting confidence-building activities to boost self-esteem.

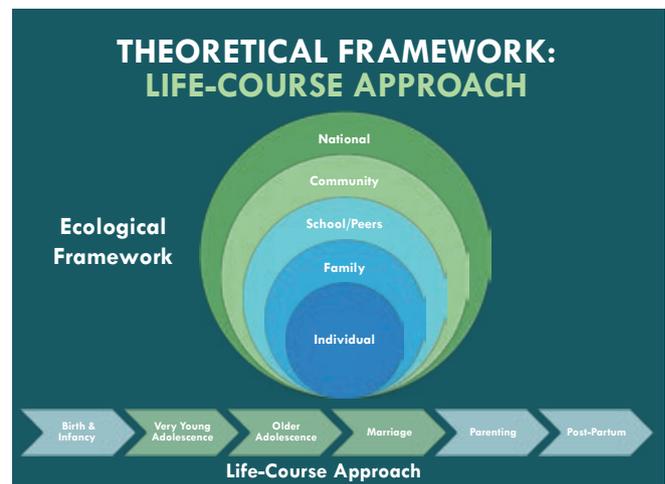
2.2 Case studies of promising project initiatives

Our three case study projects reflect the diversity of approaches described above. Two are embedded in larger programmes that emphasise either SRHR or child protection; the third is a stand-alone project focused particularly on gender equality, but with links to SRH promotion and girls' education.

The first two are being implemented in the East Central sub-region of the country, where Years 1 and 2 research took place; the third is sited in the Mid-Northern sub-region. All three were designed to address specific problems related to adolescent girls' well-being and capacity development as identified through initial studies or baseline surveys.

- The *Unite for Body Rights* project is implemented by Straight Talk Foundation (STF) and its local partner, Youth Efforts in the Fight against HIV and AIDS and Poverty, in Bugiri district in the East Central sub-region of Uganda's Eastern region. It is part of a larger SRHR Alliance programme that aims to provide good-quality in- and out-of-school SRHR education to empower young people to make healthy and well-informed decisions and increase demand for youth-friendly and maternal health SHR. It also implements community sensitisation, participation and mobilisation activities to create an environment that accepts and supports adolescent SRHR. The core of the activities of the Alliance focuses on individual empowerment in combination with the realisation of conducive and enabling conditions and policies for the promotion and protection of SRHR.
- The *Child Protection and Development* project in Iganga district, East Central sub-region of Eastern Uganda, is implemented by the Uganda Chapter of the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN). It derives from a child rights perspective whose main objective is to provide a secure and protective environment for children. The project seeks to increase the availability of protection, psychosocial, legal, and other essential services for orphans and other vulnerable children (OVC) and their household members and to strengthen advocacy for implementation of child protection laws and policies. A particular focus on child mothers aims to empower them with skills and income generating activities to be able to sustain and take care of their children and also of their siblings. Broad-based communications, awareness-raising and sensitization efforts focus on fostering positive attitudes toward and support for child rights, including the right to education and protection from gender-based violence.
- The *Gender Roles Equality and Transformations (GREAT)* project, implemented in two districts in the Central North sub-region of Northern Uganda, represents a coalition between Georgetown University's Institute for Reproductive Health, Pathfinder International and Save the Children, working with their respective implementing partners in Uganda –STF and Concerned Parents Association (CPA). This project combines a broad focus on gender equality with more specific messaging around reproductive health, GBV and education. Our research focused on the work of CPA in Lira district.

Figure 3: GREAT ecological life-course model of behavioural change



Source: Institute for Reproductive Health (2014)

3 Key findings from the case studies

3.1 Comparative design features and programme approaches

Theories of change both explicit and implicit

Two of the projects were designed according to a specific theory of change.

STF follows an ‘ecological’ model of behaviour change, addressing individual adolescents within the context of their families/schools set within the overall community and political environment through information activities designed for each level.

GREAT combines a similar ecological model with a ‘social constructionist’ perspective that views individuals as active agents in constructing and reconstructing gender norms over the life-course based on shared expectations and understandings (see Figure 3).

ANNPCAN does not have an explicit theory of change, but its philosophy holds that a society prepared to care for

‘We do not have batteries for our radios, and most people in the villages cannot read posters so community trainings/meetings are the best medium so far’ (focus group discussion, women community members, ANPCCAN project).

Figure 4: An interested reader of Young Talk



Source: STF (2014)

Figure 5: Example of GREAT visual



Source: GREAT (n.d.)

and protect its children requires a foundation of awareness, influence and direct action to change. ANPPCAN therefore emphasises research, advocacy, training, education and participatory approaches towards child protection in order to create an appropriate enabling environment.

A variety of communications interventions and materials

All three projects adopt a variety of communications interventions, spanning the broad spectrum identified for our study purposes. Each uses some form of community dialogue or conversation, seen as essential in mobilising awareness in communities in an interactive, dynamic and face-to-face manner. Such community dialogues, which beneficiaries highly appreciate, are often combined with media or drama as a means of actively engaging attention. In the GREAT project, one form of community dialogue has built on traditional fireside chats through which elders impart knowledge to youth.

Use of mass media has most commonly taken the form of radio dramas and talk shows in local languages. Written and/or pictorial communications materials have been most highly developed by STF (including its flagship *Young Talk* and *Straight Talk* newsletters) and by the GREAT project (through interactive games and learning materials) (see Figures 4 and 5 for examples).

Innovative, ‘bottom-up’, communications channels include – for ANNPCAN – a toll-free ‘hot-line’ established by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development that has been used as an effective link for follow-up on reports of child abuse, and ‘letter-link’ suggestion boxes and notice boards established in schools for children’s anonymous reporting of abuse. All three projects use interactive radio call-ins to channel young people’s voices and concerns.

Diverse target populations and facilitation structures

All three projects have targeted adolescents of different age groups as primary beneficiaries but have also developed communications activities designed to sensitise the significant adults in their lives. ANPPCAN has focused certain of its activities on child mothers, but within a wider programme focus on OVC in communities. The GREAT project has distinguished between very young adolescents, older adolescents and newly married or parenting young people and developed gender-specific communications materials for each age group: this has been considered essential to programme success.

Each of the projects has undertaken both community- and school-based activities. In addition to community activities for out-of-school children, STF has trained teachers to support young people in school, facilitated the formation of school clubs supporting SRH information and activities and organised school health fairs where young people can come together in a one-stop shop for needed health information. ANPPCAN has trained teachers to act as counsellors. The GREAT project has established activities around sexual maturation and gender roles in selected schools. The peer education model has been most explicitly used by GREAT (through its ‘platforms’ such as youth groups, church associations and the like).

The use of combined approaches

The STF project has embedded its communications activities within the wider service provision interventions of the Alliance; it also specifically promotes practical activities such as teaching girls to make reusable sanitary pads out of local materials, thus addressing menstrual hygiene issues identified as a key limiting factor in adolescent girls’ school attendance.

The ANPPCAN model has explicitly combined service delivery and empowerment with communications *per se*; its community case workers have actively intervened in cases of child abuse, linking victims to legal recourse and providing counselling; OVC are provided with scholastic materials and adolescent girls given sanitary pads to enable them to stay

‘The programme affected our time use, worries, family relations and friends positively. 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 to peers and to the out of school peers as a member of the Young Talk club.’ (Individual interview, 15-year-old boy, STF project).

Table 1. Most significant individual changes reported by project beneficiaries

Enhanced self-confidence	<p>‘I didn’t know we had a right to bark at older boys who try to force us. I now know I can say no, without fear even if they are old’ (adolescent girl, STF project)</p> <p>‘This programme has helped me become bold. I’m no longer as shy as I was before. I can now stand before my peers and speak without fear’ (18-year-old teenage mother, ANPPCAN project)</p> <p>‘I used to be afraid when there were many people around and would feel like just staying inside the house, but now I have gained confidence and can interact freely among people without fear’ (older adolescent girl, GREAT project)</p>
Increased knowledge/skills	<p>‘The programme has provided the children with information that most parents were shy to talk about’ (male parents and teachers, STF project)</p> <p>‘I take myself to be among those with some education because I have studied and I have my certificate [in hair dressing] so I am not at the same level with that person with no training at all’ (17-year-old teenage mother, ANPPCAN project)</p> <p>‘We have learned about child spacing and I am now practising it’ (newly married or parenting adolescent girls and young women, GREAT project)</p>
Changed attitudes	<p>‘We have learned that one should get married at about 18 years and above – after finishing school, when you have a house and a job’ (adolescent girls, STF project)</p> <p>‘If I find a man to marry in future, he has to accept and allow me to keep working in my salon or else I won’t marry him’ (17-year-old teenage mother, ANPPCAN project)</p> <p>‘We now see menstruation not as a sickness but as signifying some changes in life’ (very young adolescent girls, GREAT project)</p>

Altered behaviours	<p>'The programme has helped me use my time well, attend classes instead of hiding in bushes or escaping, and make decisions and stand by them' (17-year-old boy, STF project)</p> <p>'The programme has led to a reduction in throwing new-borns into latrines as child mothers feared telling their fathers and were worried about how they would care for them' (adult women, ANPPCAN project)</p> <p>'I have really cut down on drinking and smoking – there is big difference between me and my peers' (older adolescent boy, GREAT project)</p>
New aspirations	<p>'Before, I wanted to drive a bodaboda [local motorcycle taxi] or be a rasta with braids [...] I admired such people because I thought they had a lot of money. But after joining STF, I got to know that there is something better. I now want to be a smart policeman to help many, or an engineer or a successful footballer' (17-year-old boy, STF project)</p> <p>'Ever since I got the skills to survive, I feel less strained psychologically in the hope and knowledge that I can now make some money for survival' (18-year-old mother, ANPPCAN project)</p> <p>'Before GREAT came, I thought education was all talk and only messed up people's brains, so I dropped out early, but now I have started regretting this and I have plans to go back to school' (older adolescent boy, GREAT project)</p>
Empowerment/ income generation	<p>'The Straight Talk programme has encouraged peer clubs in schools that have developed entrepreneurial activities like canteens, which have helped in keeping these girls in school' (adolescent girls, STF project)</p> <p>'I earn a living out of the skills got from this programme. They also provided us with a start-up kit containing a hair dryer and a tin of hair cream' (18-year-old teenage mother, ANPPCAN project)</p>

in school, while the child mothers' project has provided vocational skills training for income generation and livelihood support.

The GREAT project also found – after the initiation of project activities – that it was not enough to raise awareness of SRH issues without some attention to strengthening services; this was done through an additional project component focusing on training existing Village Health Team (VHT) volunteers to provide support with referrals.

3.2 Reported changes, benefits and effects of the project

Study participants at all levels – adolescents, adult community members, local government staff and project implementers – reported clearly positive benefits derived from the project interventions. Most significant change analysis points to changes at individual, household and school/community levels.

At *individual level*, adolescents reported, on the whole, more knowledge of SRH issues, with the projects filling an important gap in this regard; they also valued the new knowledge and understanding of sexual maturation processes in adolescence and – particularly for girls – both knowledge about and reassurance of the social acceptability of menstruation, as well as – in some projects – the provision of sanitary pads or instruction on local fabrication, which has liberated them to attend school during their periods. Attitudes towards early marriage and – among older or newly married adolescents – family planning have changed, particularly among GREAT project beneficiaries, where strengthened referral services through volunteer VHTs trained through the project has backed up heightened knowledge. Adolescent boys and girls in all projects expressed a sense of heightened self-confidence gained through project activities, as well as new-found skills in leadership and public speaking.

Both boys and girls expressed a heightened sense of the importance of education and clearer aspirations for the future; parents and adult community members also professed greater understanding of the importance of education for their children. For ANPPCAN child mothers provided with vocational training and income generation support, the empowerment derived from being able to provide for themselves and their children boosted both self-esteem and their sense of how they were viewed in the community.

At *household level*, study participants – adolescents and adults alike – pointed to a variety of positive changes. Some spoke of project activities helping open up channels of communications between parents and children about sensitive topics such as sexual maturation and health that had previously been taboo. In the GREAT project, which emphasised GBV as a theme, many study participants pointed to a reduction in domestic violence. GREAT project beneficiaries also highlighted a transformation in the expectations of the gender division of labour in the household – many of the skits they enacted in the course of the project depicted a reversal of gender roles, leading to much laughter and discussion as well as an awareness that it was acceptable for men and boys to do domestic chores such as cooking or cleaning, while girls could also be entrusted with the family herds.

At *school and community levels*, many study participants pointed to contributions to broad-based changes in terms of school attendance and retention rates, teenage pregnancy and GBV in the project communities; however, these would need

Table 2. Most significant household-level changes reported by project beneficiaries

Improved family relations/communication	<p>'The silence that used to exist between girl children and their parents has been broken. Straight Talk lessons give us a starting point to educate our children' (female teachers, STF project)</p> <p>'My elder siblings used to laugh at me because I got pregnant while still at home. Now that I have studied hairdressing, I am ahead of them. Even the way they used to treat me has changed – they now treat me well [...] My parents also seek my advice on certain things' (17-year-old mother, ANPCCAN project)</p> <p>'I can teach things back at home. I talk with my mother and sisters about the things I am learning through GREAT – before I didn't talk with them about these at all'(14-year-old girl, GREAT project)</p> <p>'Our husbands even give us transport to come to these meetings for the development of the family'(newly married adolescent girls and young women, GREAT project)</p>
Decreased domestic violence	<p>'I used to go drinking with my father and come home drunk and violent – fighting with my sisters; but this has changed' (older adolescent boy, GREAT project)</p> <p>'We can begin to see some of the effects of programmes like GREAT at the health facilities where we are not getting as high a level of domestic violence' (education official, GREAT project)</p>
Changed gender roles, expectations, behaviours	<p>'We actually share household responsibilities among ourselves now [...] and we feel respected in one way or the other. Under Straight Talk, we have had a chance to move around and learn more like am doing now' (adolescent girls, STF project)</p> <p>'I used to think cooking was just for women; now I cook with my sisters at home and am sometimes even better than them!' (older adolescent boys, GREAT project)</p>
Enhanced parental support for girls' education	<p>'Before, parents were negligent in fulfilling their responsibilities like paying school fees but now they do' (adult men, ANPCCAN project)</p> <p>'Before I thought girls' education was useless; but now I am struggling to pay for my daughter's schooling at Senior 3 level' (adult men, GREAT project)</p>

verification through more rigorous evaluation and quantitative assessment. Teachers involved in STF project activities were particularly clear on how the project had contributed to increased enrolment, reduced absenteeism and reduced dropout as a result of pregnancy (see page 9)

Different project participants overall expressed a greater awareness and understanding of the issues affecting boys and girls in the community; for some, this was coupled with a determination to strengthen and enforce laws protecting girls from early marriage and defilement, or to ensure parents send children to school. In the ANPPCAN project area, a local bylaw on education was developed and caseworker counselling skills on child abuse were strengthened. Through GREAT, community customs such as the 'fireside gatherings' whereby elders interact with young people to transmit knowledge and values were revived in a new form to foster continued communication around critical issues.

3.3 Challenges and constraints

All projects experienced a number of challenges and constraints– linked both to factors external to the project and to features of project design or implementation.

Some community resistance to the types of messages transmitted was found, particularly around adolescent sexuality, for example, or transformed gender norms. This was in turn linked to an underlying backlash among some segments of the community against promotion of 'children's rights' and 'women's rights', which was seen as contributing to 'spoiling' children and disrupting the household: such backlash had been a prominent feature of communities in our previous years of research as well. Other constraints were found to arise from the sheer scale of the issues to be addressed at different levels, which the projects, with limited personnel and restricted geographic scope, could not fully cover.

The essential limitations of communications-type interventions, which act on the side of 'demand', were clearly apparent in all project settings, where similar interventions were sorely needed on the side of 'supply'. Increasing knowledge and understanding of the importance of adolescent SRH, for example, would ideally need to be accompanied by an expansion of the availability of adolescent-friendly services.

'Some community members are concerned that our children are getting spoiled because of these organisations coming up promoting the rights of children as "edembe" [freedom to do what they want]' (key informant interview, ANPCCAN project staff).

Table 3. Most significant school/community-level changes reported by project beneficiaries

<p>Strengthened community interaction/ engagement/ role modelling</p>	<p>'My other "Straight Talker" friend and I are the leaders of the choir at church. We sing messages for parents about the need to keep girls in school' (adolescent girls, STF project)</p> <p>'The club peer leaders have acted as role models in their respective communities, leading others to admire them' (adult community members, STF project)</p> <p>'People in the village now see me as someone of value - those who used to look down on me because I have a child don't do so anymore' (17-year-old teenage mother, ANPCCAN project)</p> <p>'We have become popular in society; people make reference to us in admiration of our work. We have made friends out of the work we do' (teenage mothers, ANPCCAN project)</p> <p>'The community sees us with respect because of the training we have had. We can talk with our husbands and take care of our children better. The community sees our husbands have stopped drinking and we have a peaceful home' (newly married/parenting adolescents and young women, GREAT project)</p>
<p>More positive/ supportive peer relations</p>	<p>'Before Straight Talk, there was a poor relationship between girls and boys at school, but now this has improved through our peer clubs where we often meet' (adolescent boys, STF project)</p> <p>'Being a peer educator, I share with friends and counsel them when they are doing wrong which has helped me consolidate my relationship with them' (adolescent girls, STF project)</p> <p>'I sometimes chat with my neighbour on issues of personal development; that is how I socialise. I now belong to some women's groups where we save and learn other things' (18-year-old mother, ANPCCAN, project)</p> <p>'Now, if I see someone who has not been part of GREAT laughing at a girl who has had a [menstrual] accident in school, I will intervene and tell them not to laugh. I am appreciated for this' (14-year old girl, GREAT project)</p>
<p>Diminished early marriage</p>	<p>'If it weren't for GREAT, some of us girls would have already been married' (older adolescent girls, GREAT project)</p>
<p>Increased girls' education</p>	<p>'Before the STF programme, this primary school had a lot of school dropout cases for girls; about 40 per term; but after the programme only about 10 girls drop out of school in a term' (project staff, STF project)</p> <p>'Community members have since understood that child-bearing does not mean an end to a girl's education' (adult men and women, ANPCCAN project)</p> <p>'Girl child education has strengthened. Now people at LCI (village level) monitor if children are going to school or not [...] Peer groups created by GREAT also help' (sub-county officials, GREAT project)</p>
<p>Better service provision</p>	<p>'Before GREAT, we didn't know how to talk freely with young people and their parents and young people did not talk to us freely. We have gained counselling experience' (VHTs, GREAT project)</p>

So, too, the emphasis on attitude change around the importance of education for girls needs to be accompanied by investment in quality schools at both primary and secondary levels. Changing attitudes and behaviours around early marriage requires not just strengthened capacity to enforce existing laws but also investment in education as a viable alternative to marriage that will contribute to both social and economic empowerment.

Project organisers clearly recognised the dilemma and were trying – to various degrees – to deal with it. The STF project was set within a broader programme initiative seeking to strengthen SRH services; ANPPCAN included service provision (vocational schools and livelihood start-ups; counselling services; strengthened legal enforcement and case management follow-up; sanitary pad production) as part of its project; and GREAT added on a component of training for VHT to provide referrals for older and newly married adolescents seeking family planning information and services. Nevertheless, it was clear that ongoing and focused interventions on the

'These programmes are really good but they have not provided any solution – they only stop at counselling. For example, if a girl is to drop out of school owing to poverty in the home, there's no solution to that problem' (focus group discussion, female teachers, STF project).

supply side would be needed to support, encourage and accompany the knowledge, attitude and behavioural change stimulated by the projects.

4 Key lessons learnt and implications for policies and programmes

Early marriage and teen pregnancy are persistent problems in Uganda that combine with a host of other factors to diminish adolescent girls' capabilities, including their capability development through education. Underlying social norms embedded in gender-discriminatory attitudes, values, expectations and practices combine with other factors such as poverty, poor or limited service provision and limited opportunities to maintain the *status quo*.

Some changes, as identified in our earlier fieldwork, are being brought about through macroeconomic and social forces in operation in our study areas as well as through national laws and policies and their applications at local level. Specific programme and project initiatives undertaken by a variety of actors are bringing about other changes, as this year's research has shown. Key lessons learnt and recommendations arising from the analysis of such projects are as follows.

- ***Investment in initial situation analysis is critical and should be coupled with ongoing monitoring and evaluation***
All three projects demonstrated good practice in being based on initial situation analyses and/or assessments undertaken as a means of understanding the critical issues affecting adolescent girls in the communities and informing the design of appropriate interventions. Two of the projects (ANPPCAN and GREAT) conducted specific baseline studies as a means of measuring the effectiveness of project interventions: these in turn need to be accompanied by strong monitoring and evaluation activities (as in the GREAT project) that will enable programme implementers to identify key project elements that merit scale-up and expansion.

- ***Knowledgeable and experienced community-based actors are key to successful programme implementation***
All three projects relied on local actors to engage with communities and facilitate project implementation. For STF and GREAT, this entailed entering into partnerships with local community-based organisations; for ANPPCAN, it was done through decentralised project personnel. For all three, significant investment in community-based structures was an important feature of programme design (STF's community resource volunteers; ANPPCAN's child protection committees and case workers; the GREAT project's 'platforms') and links with established structures such as VHTs were important for successful programme implementation.

- ***Working with local government structures is essential for sustainability but requires ongoing capacity-building***

The decentralised governance structure in Uganda offers great potential for local government leadership and initiative in local development processes and the programme and project partners who support these. All three projects recognised this and included local government structures as key partners in project implementation and follow-up so as to foster ownership and promote sustainability. STF coordinates

its activities through District Management Committees; ANPPCAN draws in district departments most closely involved in child protection activities, including the police and probation officers; GREAT established a reference group at district level, involving the health, education and community development sectors. Such coordination efforts are essential and need to be further accompanied by continued capacity-building and support so local government can take on responsibility for project activities even after the projects themselves are over.

- ***Investing in young people as project facilitators and peer educators offers a promising pathway to empowerment***
All projects showed significant impacts in terms of building confidence among the adolescents reached; this was further fostered by enlisting adolescents as either formal or informal peer educators involved in dispensing information, offering advice, enacting role plays and the like. Study participants recommended strengthening and expanding such efforts to develop young people's capacities to implement project activities and serve as role models in their communities. Support for the development of children's rights clubs and youth groups was seen as particularly important for the promotion of young people's participation in activities of importance to them and for the amplification of their voice and perspectives on critical issues.

'Using existing groups as platforms has been a strong feature of the programme – for example, women's groups and rotating funds. GREAT has also been successful at calibrating information to these different groups' (key informant interview, female cultural leader, GREAT).

‘We learned adolescents learn better from their peers [...] As peers, they educate each other but in a fun way because these are young people – they play’ (key informant interview, GREAT programme manager).

‘We should develop a culture of identifying children who can advocate on behalf of other children and involve them in matters that concern them’ (key informant interview, district official, STF project).

This demonstrates a clear need for government officials (at both national and local levels) and project personnel to continue to engage around critical programme thrusts.

- ***Diverse communications interventions are needed to reach different audiences***

All of the projects have adopted multiple communications methods (including community dialogues, radio broadcasts, written materials and interactive games and dramas, one-on-one communications and counselling, peer education and ‘bottom-up’ communication forms) in the understanding that no one method can reach all target audiences and that a combination is essential to ensure a critical mass achieves understanding and internalisation of key messages. All projects have also targeted both adolescents and the influential adults in their lives, in the understanding that attitude and behavioural change requires both individual knowledge and information and a transformation of the enabling environment.

- ***The sustainability of reliance on volunteers for social mobilisation and project support needs to be carefully assessed***

All projects have drawn in one way or another on the voluntary work of community members, organised into existing groups or groups stimulated by the projects, such as child protection committees, ‘platforms’ such as youth groups or women’s groups and social mobilisers. They also link up with one of the key voluntary structures in Uganda – the VHTs – which provide a vital link between communities and the government’s health service structures. While the ethos behind such an extensive use of volunteer community workers may be laudable in one way (denoting clear community ‘ownership’ and commitment to different project goals), it is arguable whether this in fact presents a viable model for sustainability once the project ends.

- ***Social norm change is a long-term process that demands a significant time commitment***

All three projects have been implemented under a clear timeframe of between three and five years, and have been dependent on external funding sources that were not automatically foreseen to extend beyond that period. Yet social norm change, entailing as it does both individual attitude and behavioural change and changes in the enabling

- ***Linking project-specific initiatives with national laws and policies is essential for scale-up and sustainability***

The review of the national setting revealed a number of progressive laws and policies that promote gender equality in general and focus specifically on issues related to adolescent girls, including around marriage, reproductive health and education. Some of these laws and policies explicitly mention the importance of dealing with underlying social norms; others are more implicit. All projects are in line with the national legislative framework and key national policy thrusts, and all strive to translate these into practice at community level, working – as we have seen – through the district authorities and community structures.

Some efforts, however, have been hampered by a lack of clear national guidelines – for example on the integration of SRH education into the national school curricula; others have been hindered by a lack of investment in local enforcement of national laws (e.g. on the age at marriage).

Figure 6: Using the community conversation model to address GBV



Source. ANPPCAN Uganda (2013)

‘For us as an organisation, what has worked has been a combination of many different communication approaches’ (key informant interview, STF, Kampala).

environment, is a long-term process; ‘directed’ change of the type promoted through our case study projects, that seeks transformation of gender roles, expectations and relations, requires continued, long-term support and encouragement to enable it to take root and flourish in communities. Moreover, local communities do not exist in isolation of each other, so the critical mass needed to embed such changes in local practice would require continued efforts to expand effects into surrounding communities, all of which calls for sustained, committed support beyond the project cycle.

- *Combining communications with other interventions such as training or empowerment is a promising emerging model*

The three projects are distinct in the degree to which they have focused on communications *per se* or included other interventions aimed at material support or empowerment. While there is much to be said for a focus on communications as an awareness-raising and social mobilisation tool essential for attitude and behavioural change objectives, project beneficiaries in our case studies seemed particularly pleased when this was combined with some sort of material assistance (for school attendance; in the supply or production of sanitary pads; in terms of vocational training and livelihood support). This implies a comprehensive social norms change model that aims to address both strategic and practical needs and objectives.

- *Investments in demand-side interventions from a communications perspective need to be matched by similar investments in supply-side service provision*

While communications interventions may have admirable – and even transformative – effects on the knowledge and attitudes of local populations, support to actual behavioural change may demand additional investment in the services that support such change. Strengthened health services welcoming adolescents; quality primary and secondary schools with girl-friendly environments and within reach of communities; reliable legal enforcement agencies that focus on the protective aspects of existing legislation (around early marriage, GBV and the like), coupled with effective counselling services and case management – all are critical in supporting the changes that are being promoted.

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ISSN: 2052-7209

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