

# Gender sensitive strategic communications interventions

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## Question

*What evidence and examples are there (in the form of both published literature and other evidence such as websites or media articles) of how considering gender in the design and implementation of strategic communications interventions can: reduce the risk of perpetuating gender inequalities (through reinforcing harmful norms) or doing harm; contribute to the achievement of gender equality objectives; and result in more effective strategic communications/contribute to achieving strategic communications objectives?*

*Please approach the question with a focus on fragile and conflict affected areas, including Eastern Europe and Central Asia, particularly looking for measures and interventions that promote behaviour change in the following areas:*

- *Crisis, stability, conflict transformation and peace building*
- *Radicalisation and countering violent extremism*
- *Migration*
- *Wider security threats, such as corruption, serious and organised crime, trafficking and modern slavery*
- *Countering disinformation*
- *Any gender equality focused interventions in these contexts, including women's participation, gender-based violence and social norm change*

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## 1. Summary

While there is clear evidence to show the impact that communications interventions can have on promoting gender equality and challenging and transforming unequal and harmful norms, there is less evidence to demonstrate the impact that taking a gender sensitive approach to communications interventions that are not specifically gender focused can have on the overall success of the intervention. There appear to be two reasons for this: many interventions have not been evaluated in detail, so their impact in practice is not clear; and many interventions have not explicitly set out to have a gender component or to mainstream gender from the outset, even if they do have positive impacts on gender equality.

It is possible to find some examples of good practice around gender in communications interventions focusing on the majority of sub-themes set out in the research question. In some cases, these interventions have not been robustly evaluated and evidence of impact is anecdotal, but all of the examples included in this report point to learning about the ways that strategic communications initiatives could be planned and implemented in a gender sensitive way so that harmful norms are not reinforced, gender equality is promoted, and the initiative is more effective overall. Key points emerging from the evidence discussed below include:

- Gender equality focused interventions with objectives to change social norms and tackle violence and discrimination against women and girls were most successful when they encompassed both communication and non-communication activities; worked with a range of stakeholders, including men and boys and community and religious leaders; and when they provided opportunities for peer learning, discussion and mobilisation.
- Some non-gender focused interventions were successful in promoting gender equality because they thought about differences in women and men's access to and use of technology at the design and planning stage. Others were successful because they recognised that in some cases women and girls may be prevented from taking part in or benefiting from activities because of environmental factors, caring responsibilities or gendered attitudes, norms and stereotypes. Therefore, they provided extra enabling factors to encourage women's participation.
- In some examples, where gender was not thought about in the planning of the intervention (it was designed in a gender-neutral way), or gender was considered, but in a way that reinforced stereotypes (for example targeting women solely as mothers), the initiative did not have positive gender equality impacts, and risked reinforcing inequalities.
- Some initiatives built on, and engaged with, changes in gender roles that were already occurring in fragile or conflict affected settings, providing a forum for discussion about these changes and strong, positive role models for female listeners to draw strength from.

Much more evidence is available on the impacts on gender equality of communications interventions in the last of the research question's sub-themes: those with a gender equality focus. The examples discussed in relation to that final sub-theme represent only a selection of those available. It was more difficult, however, to find examples relating to the other sub-themes, because this involved trying to identify non-gender focused interventions that had considered gender in their design and/or implementation. For these sub-themes, the examples included are all that could be found in the time available. For these areas in particular, there tended to be more information available in the form of website content, media articles or project descriptions than in the form of published literature. In some cases, it was only possible to find evidence on

policies and programmes that were not primarily communication based. Where this was the case, and learning from non-communications interventions may be useful and relevant for the design and implementation of strategic communications work, this learning has been included.

## 2. Principles of gender sensitive communications

Communications interventions can play a key role in promoting gender equality by challenging and transforming norms, attitudes and behaviours that create and maintain gender inequality and discrimination. They can also build confidence and skills to recognise and demand equal rights and access to resources and opportunities. In addition, gender equality is a key determinant of the realisation of other rights and opportunities, and is a prerequisite to solving a range of broader problems (Sengupta, 2018).

A range of tools and guidance documents exist on integrating gender into communications interventions and ensuring gender sensitivity or responsiveness in communications activities. Some of the key principles or approaches emphasised in these tools include:

- Ensure that gender is included in context analysis, formulation of objectives, identification of target audiences
- Ensure that gender is also considered when designing messages and choosing channels of communication
- Ensure that women and men are represented and visible
- Challenge gender stereotypes and avoid depicting men and women in exclusively stereotypical, disempowering or traditional ways
- Be sensitive to diversity in gender identification and sexual orientation
- Integrate gender into budgeting processes
- Ensure that gender is integrated into monitoring and evaluation processes, and collect and include sex-disaggregated data wherever available relevant

(FAO, 2011 p. 49; IOM, 2015 p. 6; UNDP, 2017).

UNICEF, in an assessment of the gender responsiveness of its communication for development initiatives, sets out the following key steps to follow:

- Include the perspectives of women, men, girls and boys in the programme
- Ensure that the design of materials, messages and interventions considers and challenges negative gender norms and the approaches facilitate discussion and dialogue that promote more equitable norms
- Take into account differences in access (related to education, mobility, workload or social practices) to products and services during planning and implementation
- Assess differential impact based on gender through sex disaggregated or gender sensitive data, and specifically examining gender transformation resulting from the intervention (Sengupta, 2018 p. 87)

UNICEF's assessment in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan reported differing levels of gender integration into the initiatives considered (Sengupta, 2018).<sup>1</sup> For example, in Nepal, a radio drama series on child-centred disaster reduction used gender sensitive language, gave equal air time to both women and men and included specific appeals around the importance of keeping girls in school, delaying marriage and giving adequate nutrition to girls. In Afghanistan, a project that partnered with local media to promote awareness of cord care after birth focused on mothers and female caregivers but did not address fathers and male caregivers, thereby risking reinforcing gender norms around women as primary carers and missing opportunities to transform gender roles and relationships (Sengupta, 2018 p. 27).

Finally, while much of the literature talks about gender sensitive or gender responsive communications, some suggests that a gender transformative approach – one that seeks not just to recognise and consider social norms around gender, but also to challenge and change them – is what is needed in the design of communications interventions. This may involve engaging men as allies and advocates for the creation of alternative masculinities based on the values of equality and non-violence (Khosla et al, 2013 p. 2091).

### **3. Communications interventions focusing on crisis, stability, conflict transformation and peace building**

A review of C4D interventions found that in order for such interventions to be effective in post-conflict environments, new approaches should be developed that provide women and girls with safe spaces to talk about their experiences of violence and engage them in empowering communication and media activities. They should also set up communication platforms that enable women to take part in reconstruction processes (Bau, 2015 p. 807).

One example of a communication intervention providing a space for discussion around gender roles and conflict is BBC Media Action's radio drama *Hay El Matar*. The drama follows the lives of a range of residents in one community in Syria. There are several female characters facing a range of challenges as their country experiences prolonged conflict. Some were taking on leadership roles and increased economic responsibility in the absence of their husbands. Evaluation of the drama found that women listeners identified with the strong female characters and saw them as empowering role models. Listeners were also prompted to reflect on changes in women's roles in Syrian society as a result of the conflict (BBC Media Action, 2018).

Another BBC Media Action output, the *Open Jirga* radio and TV debate programme in Afghanistan, aimed to reach a mixed gender audience of all age groups. However, by ensuring that women and men were represented in equal numbers in its studio audiences, *Open Jirga* created a space where women could engage with and challenge leaders and decision makers in the same way as men. Those watching and listening to the programmes said they had learnt about more violence against women and girls and women's rights as a result (Godfrey et al. 2017).

A systematic review of 26 studies covering communications for development (C4D) interventions in fragile states (Skuse et al, 2013 p. 115) found that C4D initiatives that target aspects of gender equality can positively affect collectively held social norms leading to increased empowerment,

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<sup>1</sup> This assessment focused on an examination of programme documents, and did not look at impact or outcomes

such as electoral participation. The review also noted that the development of gender strategies can help more broadly focused C4D initiatives to address any gender inequalities that they may face or inadvertently create.

For example, as part of the *Sada* initiative in Afghanistan, 40,000 solar-powered digital audio devices were distributed, each containing 15 hours of civic education material designed to promote peace, national unity and democracy. Women were a particular focus of this initiative as a result of their lack of access to alternative communication technologies. Evaluation of *Sada* showed that by recognising that women's access to ICTs is constrained by a variety of factors including time constraints, economic constraints, and illiteracy, it demonstrated that technology is not gender neutral and that in order to address rights issues, it is essential to conduct a gender analysis of C4D interventions. Results of the evaluation indicated that the *Sada* device became a vehicle for collective listening and engagement between neighbours and communities, demonstrating that C4D interventions that target gender inequality can help increase social mobility and promote women's rights in conservative societies (Skuse et al, 2013 p. 25).

Another initiative in Niger and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) provided support to local organisations to set up community listeners' clubs on a range of governance issues. The FAO-Dimitra project brought together radio listeners, in mixed or single sex groups, identify and discuss their priorities for change on the basis of what they have heard on radio programmes. One participant was chosen by the group to facilitate the discussions, and was trained for this role. The clubs then contacted community or rural radio stations (who are also trained to take part in the initiative) to give their opinions on the information broadcast and take decisions for action. Evaluation showed that the listeners' clubs, while not set up with specific gender equality objectives in mind, had an impact on women's participation and on norms around gender. In South Kivu (DRC), women listeners no longer saw information and communication as the sole preserve of men, specialists and journalists; they were speaking more in public and had greater self-esteem and self-confidence. In Katanga (DRC), radio stations were broadcasting more and more programmes aimed at and featuring women as well as men, and in Borobon (Niger), men's perceptions of women's abilities had changed since they started talking on the radio. The traditional chief has invited women to attend village meetings, from which they were previously excluded. (FAO, 2011: p. 51).

However, Skuse et al's review also highlights examples that were less successful in terms of promoting gender equality and changing harmful norms. For example, evaluation of a project using theatre and radio to promote non-violent conflict resolution in Guinea found that more men than women took part, and that the project failed to take into account the ways that women's caring responsibilities may prevent them from taking part in C4D activities. It also did not consider different understandings of conflict as experienced by men and women (Skuse et al, 2013 p. 27). The review argues that it is essential for C4D initiatives to recognise that audiences and stakeholders are diverse and have different needs based on factors including gender, age and ethnicity, occupational category and socio-economic standing, if they are to succeed in their objectives (Skuse et al, 2013 p. 103).

## **4. Communications interventions focusing on radicalisation and countering violent extremism**

A recent study of the roles of women in countering terrorism and violent extremism found that much of the available literature in this area does not address the gender nuances at work and

that there is only a small body of literature that investigates the different roles that women play in violent extremism and terrorism (Fink et al, 2016). The study notes the importance of communications channels (namely media and social media) to recruit and build support for extremism and radicalisation. These have particular gender dynamics; for example, the Taliban uses messages aimed at mothers, convincing them to encourage their sons to join the insurgency and calling on mothers of insurgents to be proud of their son's sacrifices (Fink et al, 2016 p. 112). ISIS has used gendered messages to call for women to join their 'sisters' as both fighters and state builders (mothers, nurses and teachers) in the caliphate it has declared (Fink et al, 2016 p. 148).

A global mapping of research on youth, violent extremism and social media found that evidence on gender, radicalisation and social media is very limited (Alava et al. 2017, p. 21). The authors of the mapping point out that it is therefore difficult to design effective communications strategies to counter violent extremism and radicalisation as the mechanisms by which young women are being radicalised are not fully understood.

A GSDRC review on women and countering violent extremism conducted in 2017 found that few programmes focus specifically on women. Far more common are wider countering violent extremism programmes in which women are participants and beneficiaries or, to a lesser extent, wider programmes to counter violent extremism with women-centric components (Idris and Abdelaziz, 2017 p. 3). There was a lack of evaluations of these programmes. The authors note that one study, which looked at the experiences of Morocco and Bangladesh between 2000 and 2014, pointed out that the best deterrent against terrorism and radicalisation is educated, prosperous, safe, resilient and empowered communities. Therefore, promoting gender equality within these communities should be a key component of initiatives to counter violent extremism (Couture, 2014 in Idris and Abdelaziz, 2017 p. 12). In addition, one briefing outlining policies and programmes related to women, gender and terrorism notes that many do more harm than good by neglecting to integrate a gender perspective and by reinforcing gender stereotypes. Women may be depicted as helpless victims and/or seen only as mothers, and this failure to recognise their wider roles limits the scope and impact of initiatives to counter violent extremism (Haynie and Oudraat 2017, in Idris and Abdelaziz, 2017 p. 13).

Idris and Abdelaziz summarise some key recommendations on promoting the role of women in countering violent extremism from several reports and studies. Some of these that might be of interest when designing and implementing strategic communications interventions include: build the capacity of women and girls to contribute safely and productively to countering violent extremism efforts in a manner tailored to local contexts; engage girls and young women through education, which as well as enhancing resilience and reducing radicalisation, can also address gender inequalities and gender specific factors that may drive violent extremism; in contexts where gender dynamics play an important role in recruitment and radicalisation to violent extremism, introduce initiatives specifically focused on women; and avoid using women's groups solely for counter-terrorism purposes, as this can lead to negative consequences for those groups (2017, p. 10-14).

One promising initiative that is still a work in progress is the *Farar Tattabara* (White Dove) radio platform in Nigeria. It is an emerging Hausa language radio platform set up by Equal Access in northern Nigeria with a focus on countering violent extremism. Equal Access undertook participatory research within communities in northern states in order to design the platform with strong contextual knowledge. From this research six priority areas emerged, one of which was

gender equality. Respondents felt that gender equality was slowly improving, with, for example, more women in leadership positions. But they talked about factors – such as domestic violence and unequal access to education – that could contribute to women feeling undervalued, and possibly more prone to radicalisation. Having conducted this initial, participatory research, the findings and priorities identified will be incorporated into scripts and storylines for the radio platform. For the gender equality priority, Equal Access proposes radio content that addresses women's empowerment, including discussions with influential community and religious leaders. It will also look at the need for men to examine their own contribution to gender inequality by openly discussing perceptions and standards of masculinity, equity, and access to opportunities (Dietrich, 2017 p.14).

Another interesting project in this area is Sisters Against Violent Extremism's *Witness of History*. The project is creating a network of eyewitnesses of terrorism, with the aim of promoting reconciliation rather than revenge. Women are involved in the project as mothers, educators, journalists, and activists. Video testimonies are collected from victims and those affected by violent extremism as soon after the event as is possible. The project intends to help these voices to be heard in activities to develop new strategies to combat radical ideologies and consolidate peace and security in unstable regions (Sisters Against Violent Extremism, online). Unfortunately, evaluations of the initiative do not appear to be available yet.

## 5. Communications interventions focusing on migration

A review of the impact of communication activities to deter irregular migration (informing of the risks and dangers of irregular routes, smuggling or trafficking), reported a dearth of evidence on the impact and effectiveness of such campaigns, largely because irregular migration is very difficult to track (Browne, 2015). The evidence that was available contained contradictory messages, with one study recommending that communication interventions should focus on particular at risk groups (EMT 2012, quoted in Browne, 2015) whereas another advised that entire communities should be involved (UNHCR 2011, quoted in Browne, 2015). Anecdotal evidence suggests that poverty, inequality, conflict and lack of economic opportunities at home, and reports from trusted social networks about conditions abroad, play a much stronger role in migrant decision making. The review found that where activities had a gender focus, this tended to be around trafficking of women and girls, but gender was not generally considered when looking at irregular migration (Browne, 2015 p.2).

Research from Seefar demonstrates that migrants in refugee camps or government centres feel they have insufficient information to understand the processes they are in and the decisions they need to make (Seefar, online). Multi sectoral rapid assessments conducted by UNICEF had similar findings, so in collaboration with NGO partners, UNICEF established *Information Feedback Centres* to ensure consistent and coherent dissemination of key lifesaving messages across Rohingya settlements in Bangladesh. Almost 75 per cent of visitors to the centres are women, one third are between 18 and 29 years of age, and close to 90 per cent of the queries are related to health issues. The key areas discussed include a range of child wellbeing issues including the safety of women and girls to ensure they are protected from sexual abuse, child marriage, violence and other harmful social norms. It was essential therefore that the initiative was designed in a gender responsive way. This meant understanding and addressing the unique and contextual needs and barriers to accessing information or services for girls and women. Examples of how this is done in practice include organising home visits as well as drop in events, peer group discussions conducted with separate groups by community mobilisers, and radio



programmes focusing on gender norms and differences in families and in accessing services (Sengupta, 2018 p. 36-37).

## **6. Communications interventions focusing on wider threats such as corruption, serious and organised crime, trafficking and modern slavery**

### **Trafficking and modern slavery**

A review conducted by Seefar (2018) of 19 strategic communications interventions in Vietnam conducted over the last 15 years on the subject of trafficking and modern slavery found that because interventions had not been designed with monitoring and evaluation systems to track and measure impact and progress, little evidence exists to show if or how the initiatives have contributed to positive change. Gender equality and norms are not explicitly discussed in relation to the interventions reviewed, however when looking at communications activities conducted by the Asia Foundation to combat human trafficking in Vietnam, the review found an anecdotal mention that the activities had resulted in “a drop in incidents of trafficking, with many women actually avoiding potentially suspect foreign marriage and job offers due to their enhanced knowledge and awareness” (The Asia Foundation, quoted in Seefar, 2018 p.11). However, because this was not included as an indicator in relation to the activities, it was difficult to show exactly how this change had happened. The review also discusses an initiative by the Pacific Links Foundation and the English football premier league, which used “traditional gender stereotypes” about men and football to try to dispel myths that migrating to Britain would bring fortune to young males (Seefar, 2018 p. 6). The impact of this initiative is unclear.

In Romania, *PIP*, an anti-trafficking campaign, was conducted in 2014 with the aim of raising awareness in young people about the risk posed by the trafficking in human beings, and informing Romanian women and girls about trafficking in persons for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The campaign included the dissemination of leaflets, flyers and other materials in schools, shopping centres, airports and on public transport, as well as a short film featuring a well-known actor. The campaigns messages were disseminated across traditional and social media channels. The campaign looked at trafficking in the context of human rights violations, gender discrimination and discrimination of minorities. Evaluation showed that 85 per cent of young people surveyed after engaging with the campaign felt they had a better understanding of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, and 81 per cent said they knew where to get information on preventing trafficking (however it is not clear whether this question was also asked in the pre-activity evaluation) (Swiss-Romanian Cooperation Programme, 2014).

One example that is considered a success is *MTV Exit* in the Asia Pacific region. *MTV EXIT* was a large-scale multimedia programme developed by MTV, USAID and the Australian government. It ran from 2004 until 2014 and was designed to raise awareness of trafficking in persons with the objective of promoting behaviour change and driving social action. The project had four domains: media content, live events, youth engagement, and strategic communications. Gender equality was a key component of the project, with strategic acknowledgement that effective results would not be achieved without explicit attention being paid to the gendered dynamics of trafficking in persons, and the different views, needs, interests and roles of women, men, girls and boys.

*MTV EXIT* developed a gender strategy, the components of which included building capacity for gender analysis and planning, promoting and facilitating the use of sex disaggregated data, establishing accountability, and building partnerships across a wide range of stakeholders. Gender equality was integrated across the four domains of the project from conceptualisation and developed through to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. *MTV EXIT* also worked with a wide range of key stakeholders to draw on their knowledge about effective tools and guidelines for integrating gender into its media operations and content and to ensure that consultations and participatory processes included diverse gender perspectives.

Women and men engaged with the project in roughly equal numbers. Long term change was assessed using a framework to measure knowledge, attitudes and practices of groups thought to be at risk of trafficking. Positive results were noted in all project countries, with the Philippines, Vietnam and Myanmar recording most change. The end of project report states that the intervention was successful in increasing anti-trafficking in person knowledge and attitudes among targeted groups, strengthening regional capacity to campaign and use social media for public education, strengthen government level advocacy around anti-trafficking, strengthening national and mass media and social media dissemination of anti-trafficking messages, and reaching over 1.8 million people through live events (MTV Exit Foundation, 2014).

## Corruption

UNDP's *Global Thematic Programme on Anti-corruption for Development Cooperation* ran from 2008 to 2011, and included some communications elements. Entry points for integrating gender into the programme included: supporting the development of gender disaggregated, nationally owned corruption measurement and diagnostics tools; capacity development of civil society and media, such as supporting women journalists' networks and women's networks against corruption; gender balanced awareness raising campaigns against corruption; and developing and disseminating knowledge products on how corruption affects women and men differently (Hossain, et al. 2010 p. 28).

One example of how this was done is the *Organising Women Against Corruption* project in Argentina. With funding provided by the UNDP, UNIFEM partnered with the Fundación Mujeres en Igualdad to organise and mobilise women in order to raise public awareness of their rights to access public information. A toolkit was produced that included materials on the Access to Information Law, along with a road map for individuals and non-governmental organisations on requesting information about the financing and enforcement of gender policies. In addition, a documentary film titled 'Gender and Corruption' was created to educate the public on this rarely discussed subject. The project achieved significant results in decreasing corruption and in ensuring greater accountability in the provision of gender sensitive public services, with funds that had been diverted away from actions to support gender equality being returned to their original purpose (Hosseini, et al. 2010 p.29).

## Organised crime

A GSDRC research review notes the importance of considering sociocultural issues as part of strategies to tackle organised crime, including subcultures of young people living in peri-urban and destitute areas of cities, and women and girls who, while not figuring in large numbers among the hierarchies of organised criminal groups, are at risk of becoming victims of gender based criminal violence and other abuse (Schultze-Kraft, 2016 p. 15). The review discusses three types of interventions used to help prevent the spread of organised crime in a development

context: direct interventions that directly weaken organised crime groups or networks by reducing their ability to operate; indirect interventions targeted at building the capacity of community and state actors to be resilient to the risks posed by organised crime; and interventions that mitigate the impact and harm of crime in different sectors, including reducing violence and enhancing social and environmental protection (Schultze-Kraft, 2016 p. 23). Unfortunately, the review did not find any systematic evaluations of the impact of such interventions, and whether they include a gender perspective is not discussed. However, the review recommends greater attention in future research towards gender issues in the analysis of organised crime and in the design of interventions to reduce its negative effects on development.

## **7. Communications interventions focusing on countering disinformation**

There does not appear to be, as yet, published evidence on the gender dimensions of disinformation and what could be done to counter it. For example, a recently published research report on countering information influence activities (Pamment et al, 2018) has no mention of gender, sex or women, even in the section on trolling, which is known to have particularly gendered and misogynistic dimensions. However, there is anecdotal evidence of the ways that gendered narratives are being used in disinformation, with female politicians and other high profile women appearing to face a growing threat. For example, Ukrainian MP Svitlana Zalishchuk became a target for fake, sexualised tweets after she spoke about the effects on women of her country's war with Russia. Female politicians and journalists in Georgia were also been victims of sexualised disinformation campaigns prior to the country's elections in 2016 (Jankowicz, 2017).

Recent research on the ways that new technologies and online spaces are being used to try and silence women's rights activists in Zimbabwe, Nepal and Kenya found that new forms of violence and abuse against women in online spaces are underpinned by the same unequal power relations and discriminatory social norms as other forms of abuse faced by women and girls. The attacks experienced by the women activists in the research were often highly sexualised and focused on their body, appearance or sexuality. They involved: unwanted sexualisation (including altering images on social media platforms to make them sexual in nature); non-consensual sharing of intimate videos and images; cyber stalking; threats of violence; and cyber bullying. The results were that women were less willing to engage in public debate and withdrew from certain conversations entirely (Womankind, 2018). Research conducted by Amnesty International found that online violence and abuse is often targeted at those who don't conform to traditional male and female gender norms (Amnesty, 2018), and research by the Association for Progressive Communications and Hivos found that prominent women in areas where men have traditionally dominated are particularly open to online abuse (APC, 2013). These gendered dimensions of online abuse will clearly be of importance in developing effective strategies to counter disinformation.

## 8. Communications interventions with a gender focus

### Communications interventions designed to change norms, attitudes and behaviours around gender

A review conducted in 2011 by GSDRC on communications initiatives to change attitudes and behaviours summarised some key lessons learnt from evaluations of communications initiatives, which included: conducting formative research when conceptualising communications strategies; using mixed methods; building on tradition and popular culture; and reaching out to community leaders (Haider, 2011 p. 2-3).

Analysis undertaken in 2017 by K4D on interventions to change gender norms and wider attitudes and behaviours includes several examples of communications interventions aiming to change norms in order to improve outcomes around health, hygiene, sanitation and gender equality. Activities included community dialogue, mass media and edutainment (Haider, 2017). Common findings were that engaging men and boys, as well as community leaders, is especially important when trying to change gender norms, and that there is evidence to show that focusing on specific groups within communities who act as change agents, diffusing messages more broadly, can be a successful approach.

A 2014 review of 61 communications interventions aiming to change the norms around gender affecting adolescent girls in low and middle income countries found that communications programmes are an effective way of promoting change in gender norms, and can reach a variety of stakeholders with both specific messages about gender norms and broad gender equality messages (Marcus, 2014 p. 2). Key findings from the review included:

- Longer or more intense exposure to communications interventions tends to lead to greater and more sustainable changes.
- Interventions focusing on multiple areas of gender equality tend to achieve greater change on the issues they address in more depth than on those they address in less detail.
- Broader interventions, encompassing both communications and non-communications activities, have been slightly more effective than those that focus on communications alone.
- The most successful activities work with multiple stakeholders (for example girls, family decision makers and community influencers).
- Greater changes were achieved in attitudes than in practice. The gap between attitude and practice change was greater for media-based interventions, and lowest for non-formal education-based approaches that stimulated discussion within peer groups (Marcus, 2014 p. 2).

However, the review found little evidence focusing on specific approaches or challenges in conflict affected or fragile settings.

Some success stories highlighted by Marcus' review include *Taru*, a radio soap opera in India that featured a strong young female character. Evaluation found that listening to *Taru* led adolescent girls to challenge traditional conventions and norms by talking to boys in public and engaging in community problem solving. Similarly, girls who listened to programmes made by the *Meena Communications Initiative* in South Asia said they had been inspired to do 'masculine'

tasks such as repairing hand pumps. Adult listeners reported changing their views on practices such as giving boys more or better food than girls (Marcus, 2014 p. 6). Also in India, the *We Can End All Violence Against Women* campaign, which ran between 2004 and 2010 and was part of a wider campaign across six South Asian countries, aimed to inspire people of all ages and genders to sign up as 'change makers', taking an oath to practice gender equality in their own lives and encourage at least ten other people to do so too. Change makers were provided with communications materials to help them in this task. Evaluation of the campaign showed that the approach had had some success; in West Bengal 21 per cent of people in change makers' circles of influence had taken the pledge, and in Rajasthan 25 per cent of people in these circles had pledged not to marry off young women in their families before age 18 (Marcus, 2014 p. 13).

## **Engaging men and boys in communications interventions to change gender norms**

Recent years have seen an increased understanding that if initiatives are to avoid perpetuating unequal and harmful gender roles and stereotypes, and if they are going to achieve gender transformation, they need to engage men and boys as well as women and girls. Focusing solely on women and girls without gaining buy-in from others in communities can increase the risk of doing harm or provoking backlash against women and girls (Edstrom, et al. 2015).

A range of examples exist of initiatives with communications components that aim to challenge and transform harmful gender norms and practices, and engage with men and boys as part of this. One example is *Kembatti Mentti Gezzimma's* initiative in Ethiopia which works to encourage communities to abandon the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting. A community conversations approach is used, engaging women and men community members as well as community and religious leaders. One of the initiative's activities involves publicly celebrating and supporting men who marry uncut women, including televising the marriages. Feedback on the initiative indicates a phenomenal reduction in FGM/C in its areas of focus, as well broader changes such as attitudes around women's access to property inheritance and political participation, and improvements in more equitable household decision making and reducing women's care burdens (BRIDGE, 2015b).

A review of 'education entertainment' media programmes to engage men in ending violence against women notes the success of some well-known initiatives, including *Soul City* in South Africa, an advocacy campaign involving television and radio dramas, and Breakthrough's *Bell Bajao* media campaign in India (Lapsansky and Chatterjee, 2013). The review also includes examples of initiatives that were less successful; one programme in Zimbabwe promoting family planning led to an increase in the use of modern contraception, but there was also an increase in men making family planning decisions without involving their partners. Similarly, in Nepal, another family planning intervention didn't pay enough attention to the patriarchal hierarchies that allow and maintain men as household heads. This meant that the intervention could not be successful in supporting women to get involved in decisions around family planning (Lapsansky and Chatterjee, 2013 p. 39).

Lapsansky and Chatarjee's review notes five ways that men have been portrayed in education entertainment campaigns: invisible men; men as perpetrators; men as allies; men as agents in challenging hegemonic masculinity; and men as agents in redefining manhood (2013, p.45). The authors recommend that initiatives should aim to employ the latter three approaches. However, they stress the importance of striking a balance between giving increased agency to men in

challenging unequal and harmful gender roles and norms, and ensuring that women's voices are not relegated to the margins as a result.

## **Interventions that address gender-based violence and harmful norms in fragile and crisis affected settings**

A review of 75 communications initiatives designed to address gender-based violence, harmful traditional practices and resulting health issues in Liberia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, southern Sudan, Uganda, East Africa, Thailand, Myanmar, Pakistan and Afghanistan reported a dearth of evaluations of communications interventions in crisis affected settings. However, the review did uncover evidence of the importance of taking a participatory approach to communications interventions, working with local communities to determine their needs and design activities that match their priorities, with the overall objective of achieving gender equality related change (Cooper et al, 2010 p. 3).

Successful examples include the UNDP funded *Community Conversations* initiative in Ethiopia, which brings women and men of different generations together in facilitated discussions, with the aim of encouraging communities to design and implement their own locally driven plans for action on subjects such as HIV/AIDS and harmful practices. Guiding principles for the discussions are sensitivity to local experiences, facilitation rather than intervention, gender sensitivity and inclusion of women and girls, mutual learning, mutual trust, and building on locally existing strengths (Cooper et al, 2010 p. 13). The *SASA!* initiative in Uganda uses local activism, media and advocacy (small-scale media and street theatre), communication materials, and training of community activists to prevent violence against women and HIV. It was designed to address a core driver of VAWG and HIV – the imbalance of power between women and men. *SASA!*'s approach of unpacking both positive and negative power in order to create social norm change has yielded a range of positive results, including a significant reduction in women reporting having experienced intimate partner violence in the targeted areas and helping to foster a broader community non-tolerance of violence against women (Haidar, 2017 p. 10).

The *Stepping Stones* communications programme has been adapted for use in over 40 countries, including many that are deemed fragile and conflict affected. It is a gender transformative community training programme designed to address gender roles and promote equitable relationships, with the aim of reducing HIV transmission. It uses a participatory learning approach to empower women and men to enhance control over their sexual and emotional relationships. Activities include drama and role play, which help communities communicate about subjects that are not normally spoken about. Evaluations of *Stepping Stones* have found that it is successful in changing men's attitudes and behaviours, and in particular, in generating realisations that violence against women is wrong. It has encouraged greater equality, mutual respect and empathy, increased respect for women's rights, sharing of household work, and improved gender relations, although it is important to note that its impacts vary by country and context (Cooper et al, 2010 p. 15; Haidar, 2011 p. 2).

The *Living Peace* intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo worked with the male partners of women who had experienced conflict related rape and intimate partner violence, with the aim of reducing stigma against women victims, involving men in reconstructing their identities in non-violent, gender transformative ways, and building social cohesion. It combined psychological therapy with strategic campaigns and information dissemination (BRIDGE, 2015a). A qualitative impact evaluation of *Living Peace* was carried out in 2016. It found that the majority

of male participants reported that taking part had helped them to adopt more equitable, non-violent attitudes and behaviours. This included reducing alcohol consumption, changes in household roles and relationships, greater communication and trust between partners, better and more consensual sexual relationships and increased acceptance of women who had been raped and children born out of rape (although it is important to note that relapses in violent and abusive behaviour were reported by some men). Partners of the participants reported that they felt healthier, happier and less stressed, and that their children felt safer and more involved with their fathers. Wider community members spoke positively of the men's behaviour and attitude changes and said this had encouraged them to make changes themselves (Tankink and Slegh, 2017 p. 8).

The *Safe Age of Marriage* programme in Yemen aimed to end child marriage and improve the poor health and social outcomes of girls by changing entrenched social/gender norms about the value of the girl child and the importance of girls' education. The programme involved a range of outreach and communication activities, including discussions, role-plays, storytelling, poetry recitations, debates, mobile clinics, information booths, radio messages, newsletters and film screenings. The programme achieved an 18 per cent increase in awareness about the benefits of delaying marriage; the postponing/prevention of 53 early girl and 26 early boy marriages; and buy in from leaders when the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Amran asked all religious leaders to disseminate messages on the health and social consequences of child marriage in their sermons. Lessons learnt from the programme included the importance of working through local and national organisations to counter local suspicion and actively engaging religious leaders, the main gatekeepers in rural communities. It was also important to build the capacity of local educators delivering the activities, and as part of this recognise and address the gendered attitudes and barriers that they might hold and face (Haidar, 2011 p.14).

The 2011 *Use Your Voice* campaign in Papua New Guinea used radio, television and mobile phones as platforms to reach audiences with messages encouraging speaking out against violence against women and girls and displacing associations between violence and masculinity. The key campaign objectives were knowledge and awareness raising, attitude change and behaviour change. Kholisa et al (2013) evaluated the impact of the campaign via a national survey and focus groups. The campaign had reached 42 per cent of survey respondents, but 41 per cent said they knew little or nothing about domestic violence. Of those who said they had received, seen or heard information about violence against women in the last six months, 89 per cent of men and 87 per cent of women said they would intervene if they witnessed an incident. However, 63 per cent of men and 55 per cent of women agreed with the statement that "violence against women often happens because the women is asking for it or nagging her partner". Therefore, the authors argue that future phases of the campaign need to take a gender transformative approach which not only disseminates messages, but also promotes interpersonal discussions to identify, consider and begin to challenge the deeply rooted social norms and gender roles behind violence against women and girls (Kholisa et al 2013).

## **Interventions that promote women's participation in fragile and crisis affected settings**

One of the recommendations made by Cooper et al (2010, p. 16) as part of their review of communications initiatives in crisis affected settings is that initiatives should include a focus on capacity building and acquisition of new skills among community members, and the provision of new opportunities for women and girls.

The *International Women's Tribune Centre* (IWTC) uses community based radio and local language print materials to raise awareness of women's rights in conflict situations. Its Women Talk Peace radio productions have been broadcast across Africa, Asia and the Pacific and part of their development includes 'write shops' with local communities. IWTC has had success in improving awareness of UNSCR 1325 through these activities. In addition, ITWC's *Speak for Peace* cyber dialogue programme allows women to be involved in global peace processes and to network with other peace activists across the globe (Teeple et al, 2010).

In Cameroon, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's *Information Campaign on UNSCR 1325*, which included awareness raising workshops and a partnership with national media outlets, resulted in increased confidence among key institutions and stakeholders about the value of having women at peace tables, and increased support for the development of a national 1325 action plan (Ndongmo and Kumskova, 2015).

*Be 100 Ragl* (Worth 100 Men) is a radio fiction series that aims to engage listeners in constructive debate on women's social and economic empowerment, participation in public life and family relationships. It was broadcast in 2014 in nine countries in the Arab world. The broadcasts were accompanied by radio talk shows on the topics raised, conversations on Facebook and Twitter, public debates and group listening sessions. Despite many challenges including the re-establishment of a military government in Egypt, the worsening of the security situation in Iraq and Syria, and a new armed conflict in Gaza, the initiative was successful in terms of reach. Womanity, the organisation that commissioned the series, estimates that it was heard by three million listeners, seen on social media by 140,000 and debated in listener clubs and debates by more than 600 people. However, while in-depth evaluation has taken place of the listener clubs (among this evaluation's findings is a growth in support for women's equal roles in all parts of life), it has not yet been conducted relating to other areas of the initiative (Di Felice, 2015). An evaluation conducted by Oxfam of the initiative's listener club in Tunisia notes that changes in attitudes and opinions around gender roles and relationships were produced through engaging in the discussions, rather than exposure to the radio series alone. For this reason, the evaluation recommends that similar initiatives should be accompanied by social mobilisation components (Hodges, 2016).

Analysis of BBC Media Action's efforts to empower women through media includes examples of initiatives to identify barriers to women's participation in public life and devise ways to overcome these barriers. It found that in Kenya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Tanzania, both men and women who watch or listen to BBC Media Actions' governance programmes are much more likely to participate in politics than those who do not. In Bangladesh and Nepal however, men who watch or listen are much more likely to participate, but women are only slightly more likely (Casserly, 2016 p.16). The analysis notes that this is because in these countries, political participation can depend more on freedom of movement outside of the home as well as confidence to effect change. It is possible, the author argues, that where women are a small minority in the audience, and/or the programmes are having a lesser impact on women's political participation than men's, there is a danger that BBC Media Action projects could actual worsen inequalities between women and men's political participation. It is therefore vital to work with and alongside other interventions to address gender inequalities. In Nepal, changes have been made to the radio and TV debate programme *Sajha Sawal* to make it more engaging and impactful for women. The programme has a powerful female presenter who is a positive role model, and a wider range of issues are now covered. Research shows that women are finding *Sajha Sawal*



increasingly relevant. In Tanzania, a male and female co-presenting team was introduced to the *Haba Na Haba* radio magazine programme, and more governance issues deemed to be of interest to women have been discussed (Casserly, 2016 p. 20-21).

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