May 2017 – Solutions brief

ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION TO ADDRESS CHILD MARRIAGE

In this brief, we look at entertainment-education as a strategy to address child marriage and explain what it is, how it is being used, and what we know about its effectiveness.

Introduction

Every year 15 million girls are married before the age of 18.[1] Child marriage cuts across countries, cultures, religions and ethnicities. It exists in every region of the world, from Africa to Asia, the Middle East to Latin America, and in some communities in Europe and North America. Child marriage denies girls their rights and their childhood. It often means the end to a girl's formal schooling and the start of her life as a wife and mother – with profound physical, psychological and emotional consequences.

Ending child marriage requires long-term sustainable efforts by a variety of actors across sectors. Key interlinked strategies include: empowering girls with information and skills to be able to exercise their rights, working with families and communities to understand the risks of child marriage and envisage alternatives for girls, ensuring school, health and child protection services are available for girls, and creating a supportive legal and policy environment.

While efforts to address child marriage have increased, we need to do much more to see results on a wider scale. This requires challenging deeply entrenched attitudes and changing behaviours so that child marriage is no longer the norm. Mass media has long been recognized as a way to prompt large-scale behaviour change. But can it change the norms and beliefs which perpetuate child marriage?

What is entertainment-education and why use it to address child marriage?

Entertainment-education is the intentional use of media – whether that is radio, TV, film, street theatre or even magazines and comics – to spark conversations to help initiate social change.

An increasing number of organisations are using entertainment-education in countries like India and Nepal, to try to tackle child marriage on a large scale. They use carefully designed storylines which address a range of challenges women and girls face in the home and in society – including child marriage. Other organisations in countries like Malawi and Pakistan are using it on a smaller scale through street theatre performances in the communities they work in.

Despite the format and scale of the project, it can be a creative and powerful way to encourage behaviour change and is an important strategy for addressing child marriage for a number of reasons.

Ending child marriage requires changing how people think and feel about the practice; entertainment-education can touch hearts and minds in an entertaining way

By combining entertainment and education, sensitive subjects can be addressed in a non-threatening and entertaining way that resonates with people's daily lives. Entertainment-education can show the harmful impact of child marriage and what girls can achieve if they are educated and empowered to make their own choices.

It uses storytelling to help people understand issues better, reflect on their own behaviour, and motivate them to take action and do things differently. In contexts where sensitive issues are not openly talked about, entertainment-education has the advantage of being able to use drama, comedy and storytelling to start conversations that wouldn't normally surface.

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[1] UNICEF, *Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects*, 2014

Ending child marriage requires work on a much larger scale than what has gone before; entertainment-education can reach large numbers in a cost effective way

Entertainment-education has the potential to reach large numbers of people as access to popular media channels such as TV, radio and social media increase. The more people reached, the more people who will begin to think about alternative roles for girls and women, talk about it and begin to challenge the practice of child marriage. In this sense, the added value of entertainment-education as an approach is its potential to reach a critical mass and create a 'tipping point' of attitude and behaviour change.

Entertainment-education initiatives such as TV series and radio shows require a lot of time, money and people up front. However, because many projects have the potential to reach large audiences, the cost per person is nominal once the project is up and running. For example, Population Media Centre calculated that in Ethiopia, their long running programme 'Yeken Kignit' (Looking Over One's Daily Life) cost four US cents per listener. In Sierra Leone their radio show 'Saliwansai' (Puppet on a String) cost 53 US cents per listener.[2]

How effective is this approach?

Entertainment education has been successful in tackling stigma around HIV/AIDS, encouraging family planning, improving child health and literacy, and raising awareness of domestic violence.

A famous example is the highly rated telenovela 'Acompáñame' (Accompany me) which was designed to promote family planning in Mexico in 1977 and 1978. It helped to convince half a million Mexicans to visit government family planning clinics and adopt contraceptives; an increase of 32% over the previous year.[3] Acompáñame has been credited with 'being the determining factor in the drop of Mexico's population growth rate from 3.1% to 2.5% during the period it was aired.[4]

Population Media Centre's long running radio serial drama 'Ruwan Dare' (Midnight Rain) in northern Nigeria, aired from 2007 to 2009, addressed maternal and child mortality arising from low contraceptive use. Listeners were 4.5 times more likely to have talked to their spouses or partners about family planning and 67% of new health clinic clients reported seeking services because of the radio drama.[5]

The Mexican telenovela 'Ven Conmigo' (Come with Me) aimed to motivate adults without a primary school certificate to enrol in a national adult education plan. Results showed that viewers were more informed about the national literacy programme and expressed more positive attitudes about helping one another to learn.[6] During the period the show was aired, enrolment in adult literacy classes was nine times the previous year.[7]

On the issues of HIV/AIDS and domestic violence, the South African TV show 'Soul City' showed impressive results. It was particularly effective in helping dispel myths around how people get HIV/AIDS.[8] Audience members who regularly viewed the show were more likely to recognise domestic violence and reflect on how to stop abusive behaviours.[9]

Entertainment-education has the potential to change gender norms underlying child marriage but its impact is hard to assess

In a review of communication programmes on issues that affect adolescent girls, ODI found "strong evidence [...] that communication programmes are an effective way to challenge gender-discriminatory attitudes and practices."[10] Similarly, BBC Media Action found, "with its critical ability to operate at scale, media has the added value of simultaneously being able to influence girls' families, communities and their societies at large."[11]

However, documenting how and why social change takes place is notoriously difficult. It requires complex monitoring and evaluation and even with good systems in place, it can be hard to attribute change to one intervention when many factors can influence why people think and act in a certain way. Many organisations, both big and small,

[2] Population Media Centre: https://www.populationmedia.org/product/serial-drama-impact/ accessed 8 May 2017

[3] Singhal & Rogers, 1989 as cited in Bouman, et al, *Entertainment-Education and child marriage: A scoping study for Girls Not Brides*, 2017

[4] Elkamel, 1995 as cited in Bouman, et al, *Entertainment-Education and child marriage: A scoping study for Girls Not Brides*, 2017

[5] Population Media Centre: https://www.populationmedia.org/projects/ruwan-dare/ accessed 8 May 2017

[6] Bandura, 2004, as cited in Bouman, et al, *Entertainment-Education and child marriage: A scoping study for Girls Not Brides*, 2017

[7] Singhal & Rogers, *Entertainment-Education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change,* 2012

[8] Bouman, 1999 as cited in Bouman, et al, *Entertainment-Education and child marriage: A scoping study for Girls Not Brides*, 2017

[9] Usdin et al, 2004 as cited in Bouman, et al, *Entertainment-Education and child marriage: A scoping study for Girls Not Brides*, 2017

[10] Overseas Development Institute, *Changing discriminatory norms affecting adolescent girls through communications activities: Insights for policy and practice from an evidence review*, 2014. NB. This review looks at a wide range of communication initiatives, not just limited to Entertainment-Education.

[11] BBC Media Action, *Making waves: Media's potential for girls in the Global South*, 2014

struggle to fund and resource these intensive evaluation efforts.

Many evaluations measure understanding of the key messages of the show and attitudes towards the practice; however, this doesn't tell us whether they are leading to changes in how families and communities actually behave. For example, initiatives addressing child marriage may measure how many people know the legal age of marriage (or identify an ideal age of marriage above this). However, it is harder to capture changes around gender norms or the value of girls in a community and whether that translates into changes in behaviours.

We still have much to learn about how these interventions can change behaviours on complex social issues. For instance, what kind of messages are most effective in motivating individuals to change their attitudes and behaviour? How can change be sustained over the long term within a target audience? [12]

Entertainment-education can increase exposure, awareness and understanding of child marriage and in some cases change attitudes and intentions towards it

A 2016 review of entertainment-education initiatives addressing child marriage found that most initiatives have had an impact on the level of exposure, awareness and understanding of an issue within the targeted audience.[13] Some studies also show an impact on attitudes and intentions towards the practice.

The television initiative 'Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon' (I, A Women, Can Do Anything) which promotes gender equality in India, did baseline and endline surveys of the first season of the series. The results showed an increase in knowledge of the adverse consequences of child marriage, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act and the legal age at marriage. There was also a positive shift in attitudes towards the ideal age for a woman to have her first child. The proportion of women exposed to the series who think that the 'ideal age for a woman to have her first child is 21-25 years', increased from the baseline figure of 38% to 46%.[14]

An evaluation of the radio drama 'Ngelawu Nawet' (Winds of Hope) in Senegal, which addressed women and girls' issues, also showed positive results. Listeners were 6.3 times more likely to state that women should be 18 years old or older before marriage. Listeners were 74% less likely to

agree that 'the practice of female genital mutilation is a cultural requirement' than non-listeners.[15]

The serial drama 'Ruwan Dare' (Midnight Rain) in Nigeria also changed attitudes about the ideal age for marriage. Listeners were twice as likely as non-listeners to say that a woman should delay getting married for the first time until she is aged 19 or older. Similar attitudes were also observed for the ideal age of marriage for men.[16]

What makes an entertainment-education initiative successful?

Our discussions with researchers and practitioners have given us a number of insights into what it takes to create and implement a successful initiative:

Rooted in community realities: Understanding why child marriage happens in certain contexts helps to create stories which resonate with people's lives. Who holds the power? Who makes the decisions? What drives them to make these decisions? What stigmas, norms and misconceptions stop them from changing? Answers to these questions help target the right people and encourage them to start talking about and challenging norms related to gender and the value of girls.

Designed by creatives and behaviour change professionals: Getting the right people together from the start is key – both those who understand the context and those who can create something exciting that will capture people's imaginations and hit a nerve with the audience. The more popular and entertaining the initiative is, the more people will engage with the issues. Having a strong behaviour change theory helps articulate a clear vision for change and how it will happen through specific channels and messages.

Designed as part of a holistic approach: By raising awareness and changing attitudes, entertainment-education can create a demand for change, such as better education, health services or legal protection. Anticipating these expectations and collaborating with others on service provision and advocacy helps to ensure alternatives are actually available for girls.

Reinforces key messages: Many projects use a combination of formats and channels to share mutually reinforcing messages. Intensive, consistent and frequent

[12] Overseas Development Institute, *Changing discriminatory norms affecting adolescent girls through communications activities: Insights for policy and practice from an evidence review*, 2014

[13] Bouman, et al, *Entertainment-Education and child marriage: A scoping study for Girls Not Brides*, 2017

[14] Population Foundation India, 2015 as cited in Bouman, et al, *Entertainment-Education and child marriage: A scoping study for Girls Not Brides*, 2017

[15] Population Media Centre: https://www.populationmedia.org/projects/ngelawu-nawet/ accessed 8 May 2017

[16] Population Media Centre: https://www.populationmedia.org/projects/ruwan-dare/ accessed 8 May 2017

messages mean they are more likely to be heard and have an impact.

Uses characters which people can relate to: Characters which resonate with people are more likely to draw viewers or listeners in. Many initiatives use 'transitional' characters (i.e. those who change their attitudes or behaviours during the course of the series) and role models to target specific groups with tailored messages to prompt reflection and change.

Measures impact: There is always the chance that entertainment-education initiatives, especially those reaching large numbers of people, create backlash or have unintended consequences. Tracking progress, popularity and impact allows for adaptation as needed to ensure they reach target audiences through the right channels and with the right messages.

To read the full report commissioned by *Girls Not Brides* on the potential of entertainment-education to address child marriage click here or visit out reports and publications webpage.