Shifting negative social norms rooted in unequal gender and power relationships to prevent violence against women and girls

Laura Haylock, Rukia Cornelius, Anthony Malunga & Kwezilomso Mbandazayo

To cite this article: Laura Haylock, Rukia Cornelius, Anthony Malunga & Kwezilomso Mbandazayo (2016) Shifting negative social norms rooted in unequal gender and power relationships to prevent violence against women and girls, Gender & Development, 24:2, 231-244, DOI: 10.1080/13552074.2016.1194020

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2016.1194020

Published online: 15 Jul 2016.
Shifting negative social norms rooted in unequal gender and power relationships to prevent violence against women and girls

Laura Haylock, Rukia Cornelius, Anthony Malunga and Kwezilomso Mbandazayo

ABSTRACT
This article explores an ongoing knowledge initiative, co-ordinated by Oxfam’s new Knowledge Hub on violence against women and girls/gender-based violence (VAWG/GBV), which aims to help deepen Oxfam’s effectiveness in work to change attitudes, social norms, and modes of behaviour which cause and perpetuate VAWG. Here, we share some of what we have learned so far, in terms of useful concepts and programme elements, including two case studies from Malawi and South Africa that illustrate these.

KEYWORDS
Violence against women and girls; gender-based violence; social norms; attitudes; gender inequality; Knowledge Hub; Malawi; South Africa

Introduction

Boys will be boys!
She was dressed provocatively!
She shouldn’t have had so much to drink!
Violence is a private affair!
The global statistics on violence against women and girls (VAWG) are daunting: 35.6 per cent of women have experienced either non-partner sexual violence or physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, or both (World Health Organization (WHO) 2013, 20). Behind this global statistic, regional prevalence rates are sometimes higher, approaching 50 per cent in Africa, for instance (WHO 2013, 20). Among girls, one in five is abused in childhood (WHO 2014), 30 million are at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the next decade (UNICEF 2013, 114), and every year, 60 million girls are sexually assaulted either at or going to and from school (Moosa et al. 2010, 7). Given the consistent structural barriers women and girls face in seeking justice after suffering VAWG, we know that statistics only represent a mere tip of the iceberg of the actual violence that happens globally.

Statistics may sometimes seem to dehumanise or cloud the faces of survivors of violence, who are our partners, mothers, daughters, grandmothers, friends, even ourselves. However, they point to the persistence of VAWG, and the persistence of the gender inequality that is its root cause.

Oxfam is currently focusing on ensuring it develops innovative and useful ways of learning from its work and the work of others, and ploughs its knowledge back to improve existing and future programming. This will enable us to respond better to the realities of life for the women and girls, and men and boys, we seek to help. One way of doing this is to set up a range of ‘Knowledge Hubs’ on different issues, including VAWG, which aim to meet the learning needs of Oxfam staff.

Ending violence and the fear of violence is an integral part of Oxfam’s vision to see a safe and just world where women and girls gain power over every aspect of their lives. Currently, Oxfam has a global programme that aims to end VAWG/GBV1 in more than 50 countries. Due to a sense of urgency widely felt amongst staff and partners in these programmes about the need to do more and better, Oxfam established, in 2014, a Knowledge Hub on VAWG/GBV. As a rights-based organisation, Oxfam prioritises ending VAWG, first of all, because it is a gross violation of women’s and girls’ human rights. We recognise that gender inequality is the root cause of VAWG: violence is often justified by attitudes and beliefs about women’s status in relation to men – in marriage, in families, and in public life – and often used as a punishment for failure to conform to gender norms. As well, Oxfam works to end VAWG because it is a fundamental barrier to ending poverty – at the individual level of the women and girls experiencing and at risk of VAWG, and at the levels of family, community, and society.

The VAWG/GBV Knowledge Hub supports a network of practitioners to access a wide variety of knowledge and evidence to help them improve the quality of the design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and learning of programmes, and influencing efforts. Most crucially, it helps to make the knowledge and insights they have to offer as practitioners visible and accessible to others. The Hub’s key role is facilitating connections between people. We believe this networked approach has enormous potential to unlock knowledge, so that it can be effectively applied where it is needed in the fight to end VAWG.

Recent studies suggest there is very limited evidence globally on what works well in programme interventions on VAWG. What evidence does exist is highly skewed towards
populations in high-income countries\textsuperscript{2} (Ellsberg et al. 2015), and mainly comes from programmes which respond to VAWG, rather than prevent it (\textit{ibid.}). Through its Knowledge Hub, Oxfam hopes to contribute to filling the evidence gap. We also hope to use the knowledge generated to make a case for increased resources for programming on VAWG, which continues to be chronically underfunded.

The first step in creating the Knowledge Hub was to reach out to colleagues to ask which topics they felt to be most important. A critical mass of interest – across countries and regions, and across different types of programmes – was taken as an indicator of possible opportunities for learning within Oxfam, and in the sector overall. One key topic identified was ‘what works to change attitudes, norms, and modes of behaviour’. As a result, the Hub has been supporting colleagues in a two-year initiative with the four following elements:

a. to produce practical syntheses of current academic and other literature;
b. to render practitioner knowledge more visible and accessible;
c. to contribute to the global evidence base on this topic; and
d. to support a range of ways to access and share knowledge.

As part of this initiative, in September 2015 we convened a large face-to-face knowledge exchange event in Pretoria, South Africa. This dynamic three-day event, called ‘The Power to Prevent’, brought together over 70 participants from 40 countries. They included Oxfam colleagues, staff of women’s rights organisations, researchers, and practitioners. In keeping with the principles of the Knowledge Hub, the event supported an active and participatory learning approach: the majority of participants provided shareable content in the form of posters, papers, and presentations which, in addition to being shared at the event, were collated on the event’s website.\textsuperscript{3} Although this approach demanded a lot of effort from participants, it was clear that they felt empowered by the chance to share insights from their work. The result has been an increase in peer-to-peer connections, further strengthening the network.

The Hub team reviewed the many contributions to the event, and other available research and information on changing attitudes, norms, and modes of behaviour. We wanted to uncover areas which will be the focus of future work, and synthesise key insights to turn into a Conceptual Framework to use in the design and assessment of VAWG programmes. Below, we present a few elements of this new framework, as well as two case studies – from Malawi and South Africa – that illustrate the elements. Finally, we will outline a few cross-cutting issues that we have found thought-provoking.

\textbf{Understanding and measuring changes in attitudes, norms, and modes of behaviour}

Globally, there is increasing recognition of the importance of changing negative attitudes, social norms, and modes of behaviour, which cause and perpetuate VAWG. In development and humanitarian work, we need to know how to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate programmes which do this effectively. What do we know, and what do we need to learn?
It seems clear that an end to VAWG means, on one level, an end to violent behaviour towards women. How does one change behaviour? The now well-known Knowledge–Attitudes–Practice (KAP) strategy posits that improved knowledge shifts negative attitudes and then eventually shifts and changes behaviour. But research has shown that improved knowledge and/or awareness does not necessarily lead to new, positive behaviour – what some call the ‘KAP gap’ (Westoff 1988, 225). Rates of VAWG remain stubbornly high, after all, and emerging new forms of violence, such as misogyny in cyberspace, may indeed be an indicator that knowledge alone is not sufficient. Perpetrators of VAWG apparently continue their violence despite social acknowledgements that it is wrong, an abuse of women’s rights, even a crime. Another example is that of women who remain in violent situations, despite having the knowledge that violence is ‘wrong’ and not ‘normal’ (Michau et al. 2015).

If more knowledge about a problem does not necessarily change people’s ways of behaving, what might? This is where norms come in. ‘A social norm is a perception of where a social group is or where the social group ought to be on some dimension of attitude or behavior’ (Paluck and Ball 2010, 9). That is, an important part of sustaining attitude and behaviour change is the ‘deeper’ change of social norms: not just changing what I believe or do, but whether I think my group (my family, my community, my nation) condones these new beliefs and ways of behaving. Social norms are so critical because they set up strong expectations for thinking and behaviour, which are backed up by sanctions and rewards (Alexander-Scott et al. 2016).

Can norms be changed by introducing new knowledge and new ideas for permitted behaviour? The ‘KAP gap’ appears to suggest it is not that easy. In addition to raising awareness about, say, the right women have to live free from violence, or on VAWG’s myriad negative effects, it seems to be essential to introduce programme components that raise awareness of the role norms play in shaping attitudes and behaviours, and surfacing group norms and how they might be changed.

Programmatic work aimed at social norm change is extremely complex, and it is similarly difficult to measure the effectiveness of strategies and attribute outcomes. The issues around building evidence are numerous and daunting (Majury et al. 2015). New knowledge and attitudes are often not sufficient to ensure sustained, positive changes in behaviour or norms (Lockett and Bishop 2012). Yet evidence to date suggests that individual attitudinal change is the most commonly studied. (And, it should be noted, assessments of attitude change tend to over-rely on self-assessment data, with little or no triangulation with other sources; ibid.). Although more difficult to measure and achieve, programmes aiming to bring about changes in wider social norms have produced promising – albeit limited – results in reducing VAWG (Jewkes et al. 2015). These are well worth exploring further.

Achieving an end to VAWG requires social norm change at scale – but how much change is needed, to what scale? While there is no exact answer to this question, the tipping point (Mackie and LeJeune 2009) can be a helpful concept in designing and assessing programmes – indeed, it could even be considered central to any understanding of how social norms change. A tipping point occurs when a new norm has become more
widespread than an old one. For example, it can occur when an influential or sizeable group of early adopters of new behaviour can persuade a critical mass of others to emulate them, leading to challenge to the social norm governing the way one ‘should’ behave in a community. Once a tipping point has occurred, people whose attitudes are not yet in alignment with the new social norm may choose to adjust their behaviour for fear of disapproval from others (Marcus and Harper 2015). This has important implications for development organisations focusing on changing social norms which can work to support mass changes at the individual attitudinal level, to bring about change to a society (Heise 2011).

Three strategies to influence norm change

As stated above, Oxfam’s Knowledge Hub is working on a conceptual framework to help in VAWG programme design. Its key concepts and ideas for programme components have emerged from our review of research and programme evaluations, including Oxfam’s own programmes. Here, we present three strategies that are commonly used in programmes to achieve norm change, two of which are illustrated in more detail in the case studies below.

Programmes may support social movements to effect norm change. Social movements can be incredibly influential in recasting alternatives to specific social norms or promoting entirely new social norms. Rachel Marcus and Caroline Harper (2015) have shown how a social movement created change by reframing social norms linked to FGM and early, childhood, and forced marriage in a mass campaign. Oxfam employs this type of strategy often, as an international non-government organisation which sees collective action as key to a range of changes, based on ideas of agency: boosting the ‘power-to’ of individuals, via the ‘power-with’ of collective action. For example, in El Salvador, Oxfam’s long-term development programme focuses on supporting women to find and expand opportunities to put VAWG on the political agenda, using the spaces available. They use mass public campaigning and target government officials, the police and judiciary, service providers, and the school system (Roper 2011). The case study from South Africa, below, is an example of the social movement strategy.

Based in social learning theory, role models are seen as being key catalysts for changes in individual attitudes and, potentially, social norms. Through their own attitudes, actions, and practices, influential role models such as celebrities, religious and community leaders, and duty bearers may persuade people to adopt new attitudes and norms (Marcus and Harper 2015). The underlying premise is that abusive behaviour is learned through observation, most commonly from the family of origin, and it can be unlearned or replaced when positive alternatives are modelled (Ricardo et al. 2011). There is some apprehension about this method in the literature. In particular, Rachel Jewkes et al. warn against trying to ‘flip’ hegemonic masculinity, by using it to promote positive messaging about VAWG. For example, this occurs when masculinised adjectives used to describe what it means to be a man – like ‘strong, warrior, leaders’ – are then used to describe how men can be ‘strong warrior leaders in the non-violent movement’ (Jewkes et al. 2015, 1582). In programmes with a role model
component, it is essential that the role models demonstrate a positive version of masculinity which undermines existing gender power relations, rather than reinforcing them.

In an Oxfam anti-violence programme in Bolivia, civil society leaders were promoted as role models in media campaigns (Oxfam 2011), while in Uganda, local religious and political leaders have been brought into anti-violence programmes as allies, to model new positive social norms, and to influence the broader public and their peers (Harvey et al. 2012). The Malawi case study, below, shows the role model strategy in action.

Modelling of positive behaviour is a variation of a role model approach which does not rely on key influential individuals, but on the skills and confidence of any individual to pursue positive behaviours they see modelled by those around them, or in social marketing, the media, and edutainment (entertainment that carries an educational message). Importantly, individuals have to believe in their own ability to change, in order to be capable of changing and willing to do so. Programmes focusing on modelling positive behaviour therefore help participants to develop the skills and confidence they need to change the ways they behave (Majury et al. 2015). This is the rationale behind Oxfam’s ‘edutainment’ programmes in countries like El Salvador, Bangladesh, China, and Nigeria. For example, in El Salvador, a school-based programme recreated and dramatised well-known stories like ‘Little Red Riding Hood’, bringing out the elements in the story supporting girls’ empowerment (Movimiento Salvadoreño de Mujeres 2011). These dramas were then integrated into the school curriculum.

Increasingly, Oxfam is using this type of design in its programming. While explicitly targeting social norm change, more research and evaluation is required to determine if evidence of change remains mainly at the individual attitudinal level, or if broader negative social norms have also been changed by programmes like our edutainment programmes.

Case studies from southern Africa

The southern Africa region has some of the world’s most progressive constitutions and legislative advances on gender equality and ending VAWG. Countries have over the years signed up to several protocols and declarations, both regional and global, such as the Southern African Protocol on Gender and Development, aligned with the Millennium Development Goals. Most recently, in November 2015, the SADC (Southern Africa Development Community) region’s Gender Unit and Ministries signed off a Post-2015 SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which aligns the Protocol to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This makes SADC the first region in Africa to integrate the SDGs into a gendered response. Civil society and government vigilance will be required to ensure that the implementation of the Post-2015 Protocol is effective and accountable (Razavi 2016).

However, despite these and many other signs of progress in the region on upholding women’s rights, violence – and specifically VAWG – is a fact of life in the region. Violent histories of colonial oppression, extraction, and exploitation, the social and economic legacies of apartheid (both within and beyond the borders of South Africa), and other brutal denials of economic, social, and political rights, have created high levels of violence in both the public and private spheres. These realities, combined with gendered structural
inequalities and the persistence of patriarchal norms and attitudes, shape the lives of women and girls in the region. Recent prevalence studies in six southern African countries show that a high proportion of women experience VAWG, particularly intimate partner violence (Gender Links 2015).

Almost all southern African countries have developed National Action Plans on Ending VAWG. These plans are being implemented with varying levels of success. In spite of this, the vast majority of women and girls find themselves unable to protect themselves from various forms of VAWG, or to seek redress when violations of their rights have occurred. According to the same Gender Links study cited above, the majority of women who experienced violence did not seek help or support, due to family and societal pressure or lack of trust in the system. Police statistics are highly contested because of under-reporting of violence and inadequate data collection tools (ibid., 185). This points to the hard reality that good intentions expressed at a national level and in legal frameworks are simply not enough. The region needs to see real transformation in recognising the underlying root causes of VAWG, including transformation to the negative social norms which underpin violent ways of behaving.

**The WoW! project in Malawi**

Oxfam in Malawi’s anti-violence programmes ensure survivors have access to essential services, as well as challenging and changing negative social norms. This reflects the fact that changing knowledge cannot be the only goal when poverty and lack of choice often constrain women from leaving violent marital relationships. Thus a holistic approach is needed. From 2014 to 2015, Oxfam worked with a number of partners, including the Coalition of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (COWHLA), to implement the ‘Women and Men for Women’s Rights (WoW!)’ project. This project’s aim was to reduce the levels of violence that women and girls were experiencing in two districts. These are Mangochi, a district in southern Malawi with a matrilineal traditional culture, and Chitipa, a traditionally patrilineal district in the north of the country. The project worked with women and girls, and also men and boys, to evolve activities that would lead to transformation in the attitudes, social norms, beliefs, and practices that trigger VAWG.

In Malawi, women’s rights are constrained by a dualist legal system, where a formal legal system co-exists with a customary legal system. Differences between ‘modern’ individualistic and ‘traditional’ community-focused land tenure systems, and changes and challenges to traditional arrangements, create tensions and have implications for gender relations (Berg et al. 2013). Matrilineal descent and devolution of land rights is the traditional norm for a majority of the population in Malawi, while the formal legal system is modelled on the patrilineal English legislation (ibid.).

When Oxfam started the WoW! programme in the matrilineal district of Mangochi, a number of challenges for women were noted. For example, the customary practice of women controlling land is still intact, but the bargaining power this often affords women in the household does not necessarily protect them from domestic violence. As well, ongoing social and economic changes threaten traditional family forms: for instance,
because of infidelity, seasonal migration, and neglect of familial roles on the part of some men, Mangochi is home to many female-headed households with high levels of poverty. High levels of functional illiteracy among women and girls are still present, which disempowers them from participating equally with men in various initiatives. In Mangochi, although traditional matrilineal views of gender relations continue, they exist alongside practices which render women more vulnerable to VAWG.

A second example, from Chitipa, the other – patrilineal – area where WoW! worked, is the practice of brideprice (lobola), a custom widespread in southern Africa (Wadesango et al. 2011), which reduces and undermines women’s role in marriage, turning women into a man’s property. It has practical implications for women’s choices in marriage, making them more vulnerable to physical, intimate, and economic violence, breeding submissiveness, and silencing their voice at the family level.

To combat these misogynistic, deeply rooted social norms, the WoW! project included a significant ‘role model’ strategy, aimed at creating male buy-in and engagement. Man-to-Man clubs were formed, made up of men who were ‘role models’ and ‘early adopters’ of the anti-VAWG social norms within their district. The Man-to-Man clubs were created with men who understood the benefit of gender-equitable societies and embodied gender-equitable attitudes, both within their families and with women community leaders. They became gender champions in their communities. While these men were willing to act as women’s rights allies, a process of sensitisation and role mentoring took place over a period of eight months to ensure that these ‘role models’ and ‘early adopters’ shared the same vision, and understood why negative social norms perpetuate VAWG. It was of strategic interest to include traditional and faith leaders in some of the Man-to-Man clubs, as they were well-respected, influential, and seen as key norm-setters within the districts. Oxfam staff and partners working with the Man-to-Man clubs reported slow but steady progress in the creation of critical masses of men who were advocates of gender equality and anti-VAWG messages in the two districts (COWLHA 2015) – by some accounts reaching a ‘tipping point’, as regards social norms in some communities.

Part of the project strategy also included the creation of STAR Circles. These are community-led discussion groups of 15–25 women, men, and youth, who focused on issues of violence, gender roles, sex and sexuality, and economic empowerment. Just like discussions in the Man-to-Man clubs, STAR Circles enabled communities to create the open and honest dialogue needed to deconstruct the deep-rooted social norms that not only breed gender inequality within the districts, but also permit VAWG.

The ‘We are Revolting’ campaign in South Africa

This second case study, from South Africa, explores the critical role of social movements in changing negative attitudes and social norms, leading to altered modes of behaviour. It explores the differentiated discrimination that young, black women face. This comes from formal institutions, as well as the informal and persistent social norms that continue to subjugate them.
South Africa is currently experiencing a moment of radicalisation. South Africa has the third highest youth unemployment rate in the world – over three million young South Africans between the ages of 15 and 24 are ‘not in education, employment or training’ (South Africa Department of Education and Training 2013, 3). Young black women have some of the highest levels of unemployment, but they are the least likely to benefit from social grants to the unemployed. They suffer from a combination of structural and interpersonal acts of violence that often go unnoticed and unpunished (Norman et al. 2010).

Commentators on South Africa have argued that South Africa has failed in its ‘transformation project’ in the two decades since apartheid officially ended. This perception of failure is linked to current high levels of interpersonal violence, both in households and on the streets; and the fact that the failure of state institutions and structures to protect South African citizens enables this injustice and repression to continue. Young women are used as scapegoats for perceived social problems, and high rates of VAWG are ‘justified’ by this.

Political leaders in South Africa and the region all too often fail young black women, by joining in the culture of blaming the victims and survivors of VAWG and GBV for bringing this on themselves. For example, in December 2015, Grace Mugabe, consort of Robert Mugabe, made a ‘survivor-blaming’ statement, suggesting that women should expect violence if they dress provocatively (cited in Mthathi 2015). South Africa’s President, Jacob Zuma, is on record as stating that teenage mothers should be sent off to a secluded island and separated from their children (ibid.).

Oxfam South Africa is developing interventions which seek to reduce and end VAWG, which are embedded in its work to support feminist movement building. These interventions are rooted in understanding and challenging how society’s negative attitudes, social norms, and modes of behaviour fit into the narrative of blaming young women. In partnership with social movements, the ‘We are Revolting’ campaign aims to disseminate positive social norms through the media. It has also established spaces for women to take action. In a safe story-telling space created for young women titled #Our Revolt, women tell of their own experiences of disempowerment, discrimination, and violence, and work together to build common strategies of healing and connecting. The campaign has developed a calendar to identify upcoming key engagement moments – that is, opportunities offered through planned events and anniversaries for activists to draw attention to the campaign. Through continued actions to place women’s own experiences at the centre of narratives about VAWG, the intention is to shift the imbalances in power which perpetuate VAWG, while shifting the negative attitudes, norms, and modes of behaviour that are at play.

Reflections from our learning journey so far

The two case studies from the southern Africa region demonstrate the importance of having strategies that directly challenge the negative attitudes, social norms, and modes of behaviour that create strong imbalances in power for women and girls in programmes which aim to end VAWG. They are two small snapshots into programmes which are designed to respond to the realities of VAWG in specific contexts; they do not represent
the diversity of Oxfam’s programmes in 50 countries. They illustrate the fact that effective strategies need to be partner-led and community-based, drawing on a variety of approaches, and open to adaptation and adjustment as we go along. It may seem too obvious to say, but a guiding star to programming on VAWG is ensuring it is developed through a gender transformative lens. This ensures that women and girls and their organisations continue to lead this important struggle and remain front and centre in finding the necessary solutions to end VAWG.

We end this reflection with a few cross-cutting themes that have emerged in our learning journey, which we feel are worth exploring.

**Backlash, resistance, and ‘negative’ outcomes**

Backlash, resistance, and seemingly negative outcomes often surface in programmatic work that aims to challenge and change gender (and other) power relationships. However, the stakes are often much higher in anti-violence work. Shifting and deeply rooted ideologies, practices, and social norms that are inherently connected to individual identities and power relations often result in increased violence, resistance, and backlash. As noted by Sheela Patel, ‘it’s two steps forward – and at least one step back. And those steps back are … often evidence of your effectiveness; they represent the threat you have posed to the power structure, and its attempt to push you back’ (as quoted in Batliwala and Pittman 2010, 7).

From a programmatic perspective, we are learning that we must anticipate these types of outcomes and have the accompanying strategies to ensure that partners, activists, and staff can safely continue this type of work. We also are turning more to feminist monitoring and evaluation methods (Miller and Haylock 2014) to support us in capturing this evidence of challenging power structures and more effectively nuance these data that may appear as ‘negative outcomes’ in our monitoring data.8

**Bias and unintended consequences: the importance of ethics**

In all development work, we must keep front and centre that our work must ‘do no harm’, but this is particularly acute in anti-violence work to change social norms. Oxfam is committed to using the WHO (2001) guidelines, *Putting Women First: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women*. Problems of bias and unintended consequences can have profound effects in anti-VAWG work. For example, engaging with men, boys, and faith and traditional leaders carries the risk that patriarchal norms may be reinforced as a result of well-intentioned anti-VAWG work. For example, if men’s role as leaders in families and communities goes unquestioned, anti-VAWG work may stress their role to be good leaders, rather than challenging gender roles and power relations and promoting equality. In monitoring and evaluation work, even the best crafted surveys used to measure women’s and men’s attitudes about VAWG can contain wording that reinforces the very gender stereotypes we are trying to transform. Getting anti-violence work right from a gender transformative perspective is very difficult, and requires space for reflection, mindfulness, nimbleness, and readiness to engage in course-corrections.
Change ‘in here’: transforming our organisation, ourselves

A much discussed topic at our Power to Prevent conference was the importance of internal transformation. There was broad consensus that Oxfam’s added value as an advocate and convener, and our credibility as an ally in the collective struggle to end VAWG, in many ways hinges on our ability as individuals to both change our own attitudes and modes of behaviours, and encourage and support our own organisation’s transformation (of its structures, policies, practices, and, indeed, norms) to be more gender-just. The network supported by the Knowledge Hub is committed to supporting and strengthening Oxfam’s ongoing efforts for internal transformative change. In particular, the network is keen to advance efforts to integrate methods of analysing intersectional power relations, and evolve strategies to combat oppression, in both our development programmes and our organisational culture.

ICT and social media can both drive and impede violence

Our final insight in concluding this article is that the context and strategies of our work are currently changing due to rapidly evolving information and communication technologies (ICTs) and, in particular, the potential offered by social media. Even in the remotest parts of the world, technology plays an instrumental role in access to information, in speaking up against violations of rights, and enabling users to take political action, including action against VAWG. Technology assists us in telling our stories, hearing those of others, and spreading mass messaging on positive social norms, but can also be used to silence. As we mentioned earlier, the world is currently witnessing the development of new forms of VAWG, including vicious attacks on VAWG activists and other feminists using social media. As seen by the South African case study, more and more feminist and women’s rights organisations are asking how we can use ICTs as a support to our movement building, but also, how we can minimise danger, to communicate safely and securely in a world that has become increasingly risky for activists and women’s rights activists online and offline? JUST Associates (2015) has produced an activist toolkit on ICTs for feminist movement building. The toolkit is also about feminist practice and how to use tools to communicate in ways that amplify women’s voices, including those that challenge stereotypes and discriminatory social norms. These types of tools are critical to building movements that need to scale up to challenge the social norms that make VAWG acceptable internationally, in all the forms these manifest themselves – both old and new.

Notes

1. While VAWG is the focus of this article to fit into the focus of this issue of Gender & Development, the Knowledge Hub and Oxfam’s wider work focuses also on gender-based violence (GBV), a term for violence that results from power inequalities that are based on gender roles or norms. This includes, but is not limited to, violence against women; it encompasses a wide range of forms of gendered and sexualised violence against men, boys, and non-gender-conforming people.
2. An estimated 80 per cent of the strong quality evidence globally comes from six high-income countries, home to approximately 6 per cent of the world’s population (Ellsberg et al. 2015, 1556).
3. See Oxfam’s Power to Prevent website for more information.
4. Westoff provides one of the earliest references to this term, based on research on contraceptive practices.
5. Oxfam’s ‘We Can’ campaign is based on this idea (Raab 2011).
6. ’I take this moment to congratulate the Heads of State of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) for having the foresight in 2008 to adopt a Protocol on Gender and Development. SADC is one of the few, if not only sub-regions that has taken all the global and continental commitments to gender equality and wrapped them into one instrument with ambitious, time-bound targets’, Anders Pedersen, UN in Botswana Resident Coordinator, on behalf of the UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka at the GenderLinks SADC Gender Protocol@Work Summit, 10 August 2015 (http://botswana.unfpa.org/news/un-women-executive-directors-opening-statement-sadc-gender-protocolwork-summit-2015#sthash.d5fdZsUM.dpuf, last checked 4 May 2016).
7. Contrary to popular belief, matrilineality does not actually necessarily mean land is female-controlled. In Malawi, matrilineality can mean de facto male control over land, even though it is passed down the female line – that is, land is passed between men, but from maternal uncle to son rather than from father to son as in a patrilineal model. However, this is not always the case: there are other instances of communities in which land is female-controlled, in that daughters inherit land from their mothers (for a full discussion on these different inheritance patterns, see Berge et al. 2013).
8. In the perspective of feminist monitoring, evaluation, and learning, there are many ‘ways of knowing’ that are socially, culturally, and contextually driven; the ‘ways of knowing’ of programme beneficiaries should be seen as starting points for understanding programme ‘reality’ (Miller and Haylock 2014).

Acknowledgements

The learning journey explored in this article was made possible by the generous support given by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada (see www.idrc.ca). We would like to thank our Knowledge Network colleagues who have taken the time to enthusiastically explore this incredibly challenging theme that is key to ending VAWG permanently. In particular, Caroline Marrs and Christine Hughes contributed substantially in the final editing of the article.

Notes on contributors

Laura Haylock is a Women’s Rights Knowledge Specialist, who focuses on gender equality and monitoring, evaluation, and learning. She is one of the members of the co-ordination team for Oxfam’s Knowledge Hub on ending VAWG/GBV. Postal address: Oxfam Canada, 39 McArthur Avenue, Ottawa, ON K1L 8L7, Canada. Email: laura.haylock@oxfam.ca

Rukia Cornelius is the Regional Gender Justice Lead for Southern Africa. Email: Rukia.Cornelius@oxfam.org.za

Anthony Malunga is Oxfam’s Gender Justice Coordinator in Malawi. He has worked with Oxfam for the past two years and has approximately seven years of experience in gender programming. Email: amalunga@oxfam.org.uk

Kwezilomso Mbandazayo is a Women’s Rights and Gender Justice Programme Manager in South Africa. She leads the women’s rights and campaigning work in Oxfam South Africa. Email: kwezilomso.mbandazayo@oxfam.org.za
References


Gender Links (2015) SADC Gender Protocol Barometer, Johannesburg: Gender Links


Majury, Diana, L. Pauline Rankin, and Deborah E. Conners (2015) Working with Men and Boys to De-Normalize Violence Against Women and Girls: The State of the Field, Ottawa: Carleton University, https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B32L1rvawYKl3VDRwSUV1dDVDeVk/view (last checked by the authors 4 May 2016)


Movimiento Salvadoreño de Mujeres (2011) Campaña de Prevención de la Violencia de Genero, http://www.mujeresmsm.org/proyectos-ejecutados/30-campana-de-prevencion-de-la-violencia-de-genero.html (last checked by the authors 4 May 2016)


