



GENDER ROLES, EQUALITY AND TRANSFORMATIONS PROJECT

Phase 1: Using Evidence to Inform The GREAT Project Program Design

Evidence suggests that gender norms—social expectations of appropriate roles and behaviors for men (and boys) and women (and girls), and the transmission of these norms by institutions and cultural practices—directly influence sexual and reproductive health (SRH) related behaviors and incidence of gender-based violence (GBV). Sustainable, widespread change of gender norms that discourages GBV and promotes positive SRH-related behaviors depends on harnessing the processes through which social norms and attitudes about gender, family planning, RH, and violence are transmitted within a society. Adolescence—early adolescence in particular—represents a window of opportunity to promote positive attitudes and behaviors: it is during these life stages that gender norms and identities begin to coalesce.



Save the Children/Susanna Klauke

The GREAT Project aims to identify opportunities to promote the formation of gender equitable norms and attitudes among adolescents and the significant adults in their lives, and ultimately improve sexual and reproductive health and decrease gender-based violence in Northern Uganda.

The Gender Roles, Equality and Transformations (GREAT) Project, led by Georgetown University's Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH) in collaboration with partners Pathfinder International and Save the Children, aims to improve gender equity and RH in Northern Uganda by facilitating the formation of gender equitable norms and the adoption of attitudes and behaviors which positively influence health outcomes among boys and girls ages 10 to 19.

Guided by four principles, the GREAT Project interventions will be:

1. Evidence-based and will draw on formative research findings;
2. Differentiated, yet complementary for specific age groups living in the same communities to achieve synergies;
3. Based on the ecological model, and will apply a gender relational perspective; and
4. Designed for scale.

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH: Findings & Actionable Results

Forty life history interviews with adolescents and 40 in-depth interviews with adults who significantly influence adolescents were conducted in Phase I of the project to provide a contextualized understanding of: 1) how gender norms and attitudes are formed; 2) what these norms and attitudes are; and 3) how they are related to SRH and GBV. Actionable findings from the ethnographic research include:





FINDINGS

Communities in the aftermath of social disruption and violence are striving to rebuild cultural and family structures, many of which socialize youth into adult roles as productive community members.



Mothers, peers, elders, and neighbors were identified as influential in shaping gendered attitudes and behaviors in children and adolescents.



Boys and girls reported feeling embarrassed or being teased by peers for bodily changes during puberty. As a result, they preferred talking about puberty with adults rather than peers.



An “ideal” man was described as one who protects and provides for his family by study participants of all ages and sexes. Likewise, participants agreed that an “ideal woman” is obedient and nurturing.



Study participants reported that contraceptive use was infrequent in their communities, citing lack of male partner support, perceived negative side effects, and concern that use will cause marital discord.



Participants reported that multiple forms of violence—verbal, emotional, physical and sexual—were common, and often linked to alcohol abuse. Violence is viewed as unacceptable or questionable when its primary purpose is not to teach or discipline, and when it is excessive, uncontrolled or causes physical harm.



ACTIONS The GREAT Project Interventions will...

Revitalize Culture

...support the efforts of leaders and communities in the Acholi and Lango sub-regions to revitalize positive elements of cultural traditions in a gender-equitable way.

Influence Gender Norm Formation

...engage these individuals by harnessing existing socialization processes—such as role modeling, teaching and advice-giving—found to be central in shaping gender norms in the Acholi and Lango societies.

Use Puberty as a Gateway to Gender Equity

...encourage dialogue about gender in discussions of puberty among very young adolescents and their parents and guardians.

Talk about Gender Roles

...encourage reflection of how some norms and attitudes regarding gender roles may contribute to GBV and poor SRH.

Improve Sexual and Reproductive Health

...address underlying attitudes and beliefs related to SRH and build on favorable attitudes towards pregnancy and HIV prevention among youth.

Address Violence

...work with influential community members to model non-violent attitudes and behaviors.

PROGRAM REVIEW: Key Findings

Phase I also included a program review that aimed to identify evidence-based approaches and promising interventions that address adolescent SRH, gender norms, and GBV, and that have the potential to be adapted and scaled-up in Northern Uganda. The review focused on projects implemented in Northern Uganda and other post-conflict settings. In total, 61 projects were identified through 28 key informant interviews in Uganda and elsewhere and through a review of existing literature. Key findings from the program review are organized according to three topic

areas: program design, gender and violence, and scale-up. As described, the results and principles distilled from the program review will inform the design and implementation of pilot interventions in Phase II.

Program Design. Programs that work with adolescents on issues related to sexuality and gender should use approaches that account for different stages of cognitive development and the diversity of adolescent experiences. Operationally, programs should employ age and life-stage tailored activities and use cohort-specific materials and curricula. One particularly successful approach is to use radio or television dramas complemented by radio listening groups, peer education, and advocacy to improve government policies and services. Additionally, programs with intentional strategies to engage adult and youth gatekeepers (e.g., parents, teachers, community leaders, religious leaders, and young people) have been successful in shifting gender norms and improving SRH outcomes. Each of these recommendations is incorporated into the design of the GREAT Project interventions.

Gender and Violence. The program review found that programs that seek to shift norms around gender and GBV should begin with staff reflection on their own gender-related attitudes and behaviors. By looking inward first, staff are able to understand their own perspectives and address them prior to working with communities. The GREAT Project will incorporate this important step at the beginning of Phase II. The review found that successful gender and GBV programs in Uganda focused on a more universally understood concept of power, who has power over whom, and positive and negative uses of power. Interventions, especially those targeting boys and young men, which focus on positive uses of power were more effective because rather than blaming or punishing men, they encouraged them to become part of the solution. The GREAT Project will incorporate these principles into Phase II interventions.

Scale-up. Scaling up is a challenge for gender programs because of the need for reflection and dialogue, which typically require skilled facilitators and intensive contact with program participants. However, the program review identified that programs can be expanded through existing structures, such as public sector health services, schools, Girl Scouts/Guides, religious groups, and sports teams. By integrating interventions into platforms that exist across communities, districts, and countries, programs can increase their usability, replicability, and scalability. This recommendation has been applied in designing the project's interventions, which will build on existing structures in the communities of Northern Uganda.

INTERVENTION DESIGN

The GREAT Project partners, in collaboration with local stakeholders (representatives from NGOs, local government, and community and cultural leaders), used findings from the ethnographic research and program review to design approaches that will resonate positively with communities in Northern Uganda. The GREAT Project's intervention design model, pictured in Figure 1, emphasizes that each intervention is cohesive and mutually reinforcing. In other words, each intervention is designed to build off another to foster normative change. To create a common thread to unite the interventions, the GREAT Project will ensure that all products have similar overarching themes and tones, use the same characters, and address the same topics.

The program review demonstrated the power of radio drama in catalyzing discussion and change at scale. As such, the pilot interventions will center on a serial radio drama (see brown arrow in Figure 1) that: 1) presents a nuanced and intergenerational story; 2) poses challenging dilemmas; and 3) generates reflection, questions, and dialogue

among listeners. The story line will incorporate key lessons from the formative research, such as the value of addressing the concept of rebuilding community and revitalizing culture in a more gender-equitable way. It is intended that the radio drama will draw young people and adults alike into the series of interventions that will be implemented in the communities.

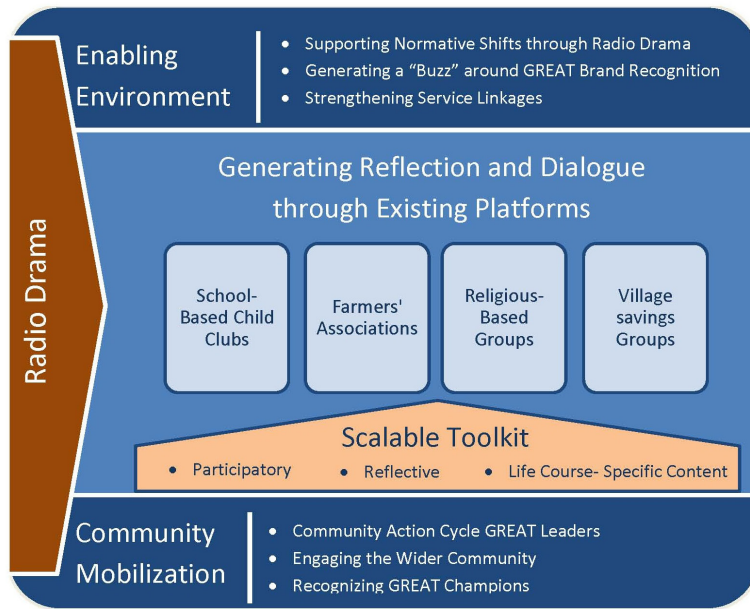


Figure 1: Intervention Design Model

The GREAT Project partners will also develop a “Toolkit of Scalable Products” (see orange arrow in Figure 1) to promote dialogue and reflection among adolescents. The toolkit will use the same characters and themes as the radio drama – thus linking the two. The toolkit will be rolled-out among small groups of adolescents in platforms common across Northern Uganda, such as those listed in Figure 1. Use of the products in the toolkit will enable groups to reflect and dialogue on the radio drama plot, extrapolate the themes to their own life experiences, and move into action. Note that the toolkit will be designed to stand alone so that it can be used beyond the life of the radio drama.

At the foundation of these efforts is community mobilization (see bottom of Figure 1). The momentum around the radio drama and small group reflection will be reinforced by collaboration with community, religious, and clan leaders. The project will utilize a participatory process to engage key community and cultural leaders in generating change. Cutting across these activities, the project will recognize and celebrate people who demonstrate commitment to gender-equitable behaviors and ensure linkages with SRH services.

Throughout the pilot phase, data will be collected to regularly assess project progress, make mid-course changes in strategies, document processes and lessons learned for scale up, and report results.

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