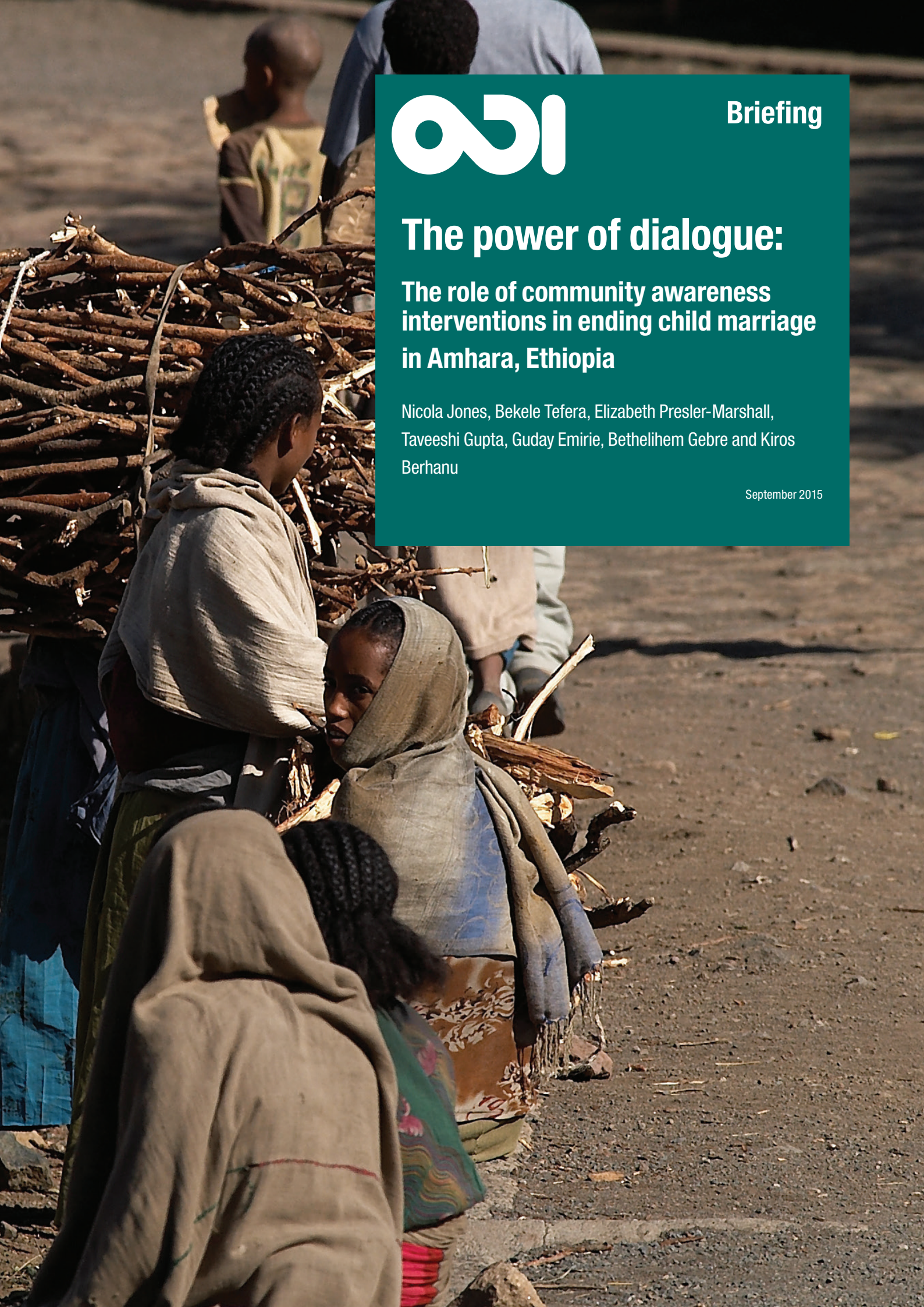

Briefing

The power of dialogue:

The role of community awareness interventions in ending child marriage in Amhara, Ethiopia

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Key messages

- Community awareness interventions need to be tailored to match the local drivers of child marriage and take advantage of the local factors already working to discourage it.
- Community dialogues are an effective intervention, but genuinely transformatory impacts require targeting both girls and their social norm gatekeepers. Accordingly, programming needs to be aimed simultaneously at adolescents (girls and boys) and adults (parents and community and religious leaders) – preferably in an age-segmented manner.
- Opportunities for face-to-face discussion improve uptake of messages delivered via media sources.
- Non-governmental organisation programming can help government structures remain focused on gender issues so they are not lost in broader modernisation themes.
- Where communication interventions are bundled with other programming (such as economic empowerment activities), rigorous monitoring and evaluation is needed in order to disentangle impact pathways and maximise lesson learning.

1. Overview

Ethiopia has seen strong economic growth over the past decade and was one of the top performers in terms of Millennium Development Goal (MDG) achievement (IMF, 2013). Nevertheless, the country remains one of the world's poorest, with almost the entire population reliant on subsistence agriculture (Moges, 2013; Rahmato, 2013) and a ranking of 173rd (out of 186 countries) on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2013).

While there have been recent improvements in terms of reproductive health and education, thanks to the concerted efforts of both the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Ethiopian women and girls remain particularly disadvantaged. The Gender Inequality Index (GII) [1] ranks Ethiopia 121st out of 151 countries [2] and the Social Institutions and Gender Index rates it 'high' in terms of gender-discriminatory institutions, largely because of pervasive violence against women and women's lack of access to assets. [3] Notwithstanding recent and accelerating progress towards eliminating child marriage, which is outlawed under the Ethiopian Criminal Code – with significant penalties since 2005, the country continues to have one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world. The median age at which Ethiopian women aged 15-49 were married is only 16.5 years, and 40% of all women in their early 20s were married before they turned 18 (CSA and ICF International, 2012). Given the array of consequences that stem from early marriage and childbearing, ranging from interrupted schooling to maternal death to intergenerational poverty, the Ethiopian government and development partners are directing considerable programming investments to eliminating the practice by 2025.

This briefing summarises the findings of a Department for International Development (DFID)-funded three-year programme of work on adolescent girls and the social norms that preclude gender justice in developing country contexts. Working in Amhara regional state in Ethiopia, in Year 1 we began by mapping adolescent girls' intersecting capabilities, capturing the complex interplay between gender and poverty in girls' educational, physical and psycho-emotional wellbeing. We identified the cultural premium accorded to female 'purity' and 'virginity', along with daughters' complete obedience to parental demands, as key to understanding adolescent girls' vulnerabilities (Tefera and Pereznieto, 2013). In the second year, we focused on the social norms shaping girls' educational opportunities and vulnerability to child marriage (Jones et al., 2014). Our research identified the ways in which social norms that see girls as little more than symbols of family honour and a critical source of domestic labour too often preclude investment in their broader capabilities. For the third round of research, in 2014, we focused on community-based communication initiatives aimed at shifting the entrenched social norms that constrain girls' futures. We sought to identify examples of good practice and to ascertain the external and internal programming factors contributing to programme success. After presenting our three primary research case studies, we conclude the report by offering overarching policy and programming recommendations.

1 The GII is a composite measure reflecting inequality in achievement between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market.

2 http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-4-gender-inequality-index

3 http://genderindex.org/country/ethiopia

2. Engaging with theory

Recent advances in understanding the processes that drive changes in social norms in general, and gender norms in particular, indicate that both large-scale social and economic trends and smaller-scale programmatic activity can lead to change in social norms (Bicchieri, 2012; Boudet et al., 2012; Mackie and LeJeune, 2009). However, there is limited synthesised evidence on how different policies and programmes lead to changes in the social norms that affect adolescent girls' capability development as they make the transition from childhood to adulthood. In particular, little is known about the effectiveness of different communication approaches to promoting more egalitarian gender norms (Marcus and Page, 2014).

In order to address this gap, as part of the UK DFID-funded flagship programme on Transforming the Lives of Girls and Young Women, the Overseas Development Institute conducted a review, based on systematic review principles, of evidence on the effectiveness of communication programmes in terms of changing the norms affecting adolescent girls in low- and middle-income countries. The evidence from the review showed communication programmes could be an effective way to challenge gender-discriminatory attitudes and practices and had reached a variety of stakeholders with both broad pro-gender equality messages and messages on specific discriminatory norms. While no single approach was found to be clearly more effective than others, programmes with more than one communication component were found to have achieved a higher proportion of positive outcomes (Marcus and Page, 2014). Identified impact pathways included creating opportunities for reflection and helping people shift both attitudes and practices, face-to-face communication with target groups and generating the ability to address issues of concern directly and to reframe local thinking. Even so, the review recognises no social change is linear or mechanistic: providing information or encouraging people to think about an issue in a different way does not necessarily lead to changes in attitudes or behaviour.

3. Study sample and methodology

In Ethiopia, we focused our good practice assessment on Amhara regional state, which has the country's lowest median age at first marriage – 15.1 years (CSA and ICF International, 2012) – and, with 56% of all women in their early 20s having been married before their 18th birthday, its second highest rate of child marriage (UNFPA, 2012). In order to complement ongoing work the research team is undertaking for the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the National Alliance to End Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) – a governmental/donor/NGO initiative to end both by 2025 – we selected programmes not already included in that research. Of the three programmes we assessed, two were broadly aimed at improving girls' sexual and reproductive health (SRH) practices. The first, run by the local NGO Hiwot Ethiopia, includes a community dialogue initiative designed to sensitise communities to the risks of child marriage. The second, under the local NGO Amhara Development Association (ADA), relies primarily on girls' clubs and a menstrual management scheme – both of which aim to keep girls in school and thereby delay marriage and motherhood. For our third assessment, we chose the DFID/Girl Hub-funded social marketing initiative Yegna, in particular the community radio component.

Our assessment of these programmes included a review of internal documents, including prior evaluations where possible, and stakeholder interviews. Specifically, we consulted key informants at national and subnational levels and, in each location, programme beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Focus group discussions were held with adolescent girls, adolescent boys, mothers, fathers and teachers – and also included community mappings. We also interviewed individual adolescents, primarily girl beneficiaries, local officials who worked for the *woreda* and *kebele*, the Women's Association and the Youth Union and programme implementers.

4. Key findings

Overall, our findings suggested communication initiatives involving school- and community-based opportunities for dialogue and reflection constituted important avenues to start shifting discriminatory gender norms, but more strategic, multi-pronged approaches would be required to achieve more transformatory change.

Hiwot Ethiopia: community dialogue and peer-to-peer education

Since 2009, Hiwot Ethiopia has been implementing a project funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation to address the SRH needs of young people in North Shoa zone of Amhara region. Hiwot Ethiopia's approach has three key distinctive elements. First, while its goals are to eliminate child marriage and delay first pregnancies, it recognises the centrality of gender norms and includes boys and men in all programming elements. Second, it builds on Ethiopia's Women's Development Army (WDA) structure and works through the WDA's 1-to-5 groups to which all women across the country belong. The 1-5 groups are a channel for disseminating health and other development-related information down to community level and also in theory at least for feeding back up to officials any grassroots concerns about

programme or policy implementation. Third, community members are allocated to groups on the basis of their age and stage in life and are targeted for either peer-to peer, mother-to-mother or house-to-house education.

Overall, our research in Yesamamba *kebele* found Hiwot Ethiopia's various modalities (including an innovative pair of safe houses for girls to live in while they are attending secondary school) are functioning well. Moreover, positive results stem from strong coordination between various government offices and Hiwot Ethiopia, which has created an integrated awareness service to improve knowledge around health services and child marriage. Our fieldwork found that, by understanding the needs of the community so as to better tailor its programming efforts, Hiwot Ethiopia has effected ground-level change on a number of fronts. The most noteworthy include, for both girls and parents, increased awareness about the harmful effects of child marriage, the importance of girls' education and the legal consequences of child marriage. In addition, adolescent girls reported increased awareness of SRH services. This said, Hiwot Ethiopia faces a number of sustainability hurdles. These include meeting fatigue, internal management challenges and a need to more effectively include elders and local leaders.

Key lessons learnt from Hiwot Ethiopia are:

1. Programming that is segmented by age and life stage makes it possible to carefully tailor messages. This can be critical given the different roles of mothers and fathers in perpetuating child marriage and the different developmental needs of adolescents of different ages.
2. Peer-to-peer training can be very powerful if facilitators receive adequate training.
3. Strong coordination between government structures and NGOs is crucial for success, especially now NGOs are unable to work directly at community level following the Ethiopian Charities and Societies Proclamation of 2009.
4. Awareness-raising about the law against child marriage is a necessary but insufficient condition for combating child marriage.
5. Local elders, especially the men who generally uphold social norms, should be included more systematically in community conversations and awareness-raising efforts.
6. Improving incentives (including low-cost items such as t-shirts or tea/coffee) to engage in community dialogue initiatives may motivate more community members to attend.

Box 1: Intensive training in small group formats reaps high dividends

Hiwot Ethiopia has forever changed the lives of Tsige and her daughters by helping them understand the value of educating girls and eliminating child marriage in their community.

Tsige is 30, has been divorced for 15 years and was married young enough that her oldest daughter is in late adolescence. Afraid to remarry, she supports her family by selling *areke* (an alcoholic beverage). Once a week, Tsige meets with dozens of other women to learn about topics ranging from harmful traditional practices to sanitation. She explained that they had come to understand not only that girls should not marry as children but also that they should only marry men they choose. '*We learned child marriage is not good for the lives of the female children, they should be married after the age of 20. They have to show interest to marry a person whom they want to marry*,' she said. '*Child marriage is greatly reduced in all the communities, owing to the efforts made by Hiwot Ethiopia*.' The intensive trainings take time, she concluded, but they lead to '*changes in the attitude of the people*'.

Another way Hiwot Ethiopia has changed lives is through the focus it puts on girls' education. Tsige never had the opportunity to go to school. She is, however, determined, because of the '*discussion held at the kebele level*', her daughters will complete their educations. When her elder daughter failed to pass to Grade 11 in the national exam, Tsige decided to enable her to continue to learn in a private college. Now she is taking technical and vocational training in Alem Ketema, the *woreda* town.

Tsige's daughter attends Hiwot Ethiopia's girls' club, which has helped her put schooling first. 'After she started to engage in the discussions […] she has focused on her education. She does not want to miss classes.' She also 'tells me she does not want to marry before she completes her education and gets a job'.

Tsige especially likes the way Hiwot Ethiopia has helped the community integrate the new trainings into the 1-to-5 governmental structure, which brings neighbours together in small groups so they can discuss what they have learned. She says that, while some people cannot come to the larger meetings, or do not understand in so large a group, '*People can well understand things in small group such as 1-to-5 structure*'.

When asked how she might improve the programme, Tsige said Hiwot Ethiopia was working well the way it was. However, thinking of her own daughter, who '*felt so sad*' when she failed her exams, she added, '*Most of the time, our children do not pass to Grade 11 preparatory class. It is good if the government can revisit its policy on this*.'

Note: Names have been changed to protect the privacy of our respondents.

Amhara Development Association: girls' club initiative

ADA, also with support from the Packard Foundation, has invested nearly five years in a project entitled Improving SRH Practices of Young Girls in Amhara Region through Retention of Girls and Mainstreaming SRH Activities in the School System. The project, which aims primarily at improving girls' educational outcomes but ultimately also at delaying both marriage and motherhood, was launched as a pilot in 2010 and taken to scale in 2012. According to ADA, by 2013 it was working in over 180 schools, directly reaching nearly 100,000 adolescents and had prevented nearly 650 child marriages (ADA, 2013). Past evaluations of the programme have found ADA's work, which is based on a conceptually grounded theory of change, is largely positive.

Our assessment, in Woreilu *woreda*, found slightly more mixed results – with both strong positive outcomes and missed opportunities. On the one hand, ADA's chosen modalities, especially girls' clubs and menstrual management,[4] are helping keep girls in school, bolstering their self-esteem and confidence and improving their understanding of reproductive biology – as well as promoting more gender-equitable relationships with male classmates. Furthermore, trainings for parents, both in the school and in the broader community, have helped some families prioritise girls' education over child marriage. Similarly, at the official level, strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E), regular training and good collaborative relationships with local government structures (such as the WDA) have led to an overall positive impact of the programme on the community.

On the other hand, our research also identified several programme weaknesses. Specifically, ADA is not targeting adults – particularly parents and religious officials – with enough direct education, meaning that, even when girls' aspirations are transformed, they are often not given the opportunity to pursue different trajectories.

Key lessons learnt from the ADA programme are:

1. Well-managed girls' clubs can provide emotional support and role models for girls, both crucial ingredients in empowerment.
2. Continuous programme M&E can build strong – and responsive – programming.
3. Menstrual management schemes can improve both girls' school attendance and their academic performance. It can also reduce the risk of school dropout.
4. Parents and communities need to be directly targeted through programming efforts rather than relying solely on the spill-over effects of school-based programming if social norm change is to be a reality.

Box 2: School clubs as a vehicle for transformative change

Kidist is a 14-year-old Grade 8 student who is an active participant in a girls' club run by ADA. Club participation, she says, has fostered her ambition and capacity to be the first in her family to pass the Grade 10 grade exams. She wants to be a doctor.

Kidist joined the girls' club in Grade 6. 'That was the time I started to menstruate for the first time,' she explained, adding, 'I felt shame as if it was my personal problem.' The club not only taught her about personal hygiene but also made her 'feel free' about being a girl.

In addition, she explained, the club 'helped me improve my speaking skills'. She is no longer afraid 'to raise questions and give answers in the classroom lesson'. Having learned the importance of 'choosing our friends with great care', Kidist is also a mentor for other girls, 'encouraging them to be self-confident to speak out their view'.

Recognising boys are a key part of the solution, Kidist's club has worked hard to foster a feeling between boys and girls that they are 'as brothers and sisters'. Kidist explained, 'The male students who are members of the girls' club have been educated about the appropriate relationship between male and female students.' Now, she added, there is 'no problem based on differences in sex'.

The girls' club also works closely with parents, helping them recognise 'females are equal with males in all aspects of life'. Because girls in Ethiopia tend to be responsible for a far greater share of domestic labour, which impacts their ability to complete their schoolwork, the club emphasises to parents the 'equal distribution of household chores among girls and boys at home'.

Kidist says that, because of ADA's interventions, her community is a much better place to be a girl. 'The practice of early marriage has reduced,' she said, and 'The community realised the value of girls' education.'

Asked whether anything could be done to improve programming, Kidist had two suggestions. First, noting that in rural areas people are often unwilling to attend training, 'I recommend the use of house-to-house visits.' Second, because 'there is a shortage of trained teachers, I recommend the number of teachers be increased'.

She ended enthusiastically, 'Let female harassment be halted!'

Yegna: a social communication platform

Yegna: a social platform

Our third case study focused on Yegna. Funded by DFID and part of Girl Hub's broader international effort to improve the lives of girls in developing countries, Yegna was started in 2013 and is a branded social communications platform developed as an initiative to encourage behavioural change among girls and the wider community. In its current form, it is Girl Hub Ethiopia's flagship radio programme and includes dramas, a talk show and music – all of which champion girls and aim to create a national conversation about their potential. The radio drama and talk show address issues such as violence against girls, forced marriage, teenage pregnancy and school attendance.

While Yegna evaluations suggest relatively positive effects overall, our Amhara fieldwork found more mixed impacts. On the one hand, in *kebeles* with electricity, and where girls' listening groups allow girls to listen – and discuss – together, Yegna has not only introduced girls to new ideas but also strengthened the WDA's role in tackling gender-discriminatory social norms. Working in schools through girls' clubs and fostering community dialogues, Yegna has helped communities focus on girls' education and harmful traditional practices such as child marriage and FGM/C. On the other hand, in *kebeles* without electricity – and where girls are left to listen alone – impact has been more muted. Furthermore, since Yegna relies heavily on WDA to transmit programming, it excludes boys and men from the target audience (although they can listen to the radio programme at home). It also struggles to sufficiently tailor the content of the programme for both urban and rural populations.

Key lessons learnt regarding Yegna are:

1. Strong coordination with the Amhara Women's Association has improved grassroots uptake.
2. Creative and innovative mediums – such as drama – are generating community dialogues around the value of girls, often for the first time.
3. Good M&E between programme implementers and coordinators has promoted positive impacts in sites where there is a face-to-face programming component.
4. Yegna's use of WDA is an effective way to transmit messages, although care needs to be taken to avoid meeting fatigue by applying innovative media tools.
5. Programming should proactively target boys/men and encourage them to support the emergence of more equitable gender norms.

5. Conclusions

Drawing on the extensive primary research evidence base we have developed over the past three years, we now have an in-depth understanding of the complexities of Amharan adolescent girls' lives and how the gendered social norms that influence their life trajectories are evolving unevenly over time – allowing some girls to effectively substitute education for child marriage but restricting most to some combination of the two.

With regard to child marriage:

- Social norms that focus on girls' sexual purity push both parents and girls towards child marriage, with marriage considered prestigious for girls' parents and unmarried girls facing stigma.
- **Local elders and religious leaders are often gatekeepers** of these norms, in some communities holding them in place and in others encouraging change.
- **Overall, girls' education helps delay marriage,** in part because schooling locates girls as children and in part because it empowers them to make better decisions about their own lives.
- With tailored education, **fathers and brothers can be critical allies,** helping girls stay in school and unmarried.
- **Marriage is often merely a default option.** In many cases, girls marry solely because they have left school, do not have access to either land or their own paid employment and are resented by their parents for their 'idleness'.
- **While in most communities 'good' girls are those who listen to their parents,** there are nascent shifts in decision-making, with parents allowing girls to choose their own partners and time their own marriages.
- **Health extension programming – and the 1-to-5 community groups that have ultimately grown out of it – have been vital** to expanding community awareness about the risks of child marriage because of their effective grassroots penetration.
- **Both legal awareness (about the age of marriage) and legal enforcement are patchy.** In many communities, the marriage of 15 year olds is not considered child marriage. In others, an increasing reliance on 'hidden' marriages means child marriage continues unabated.

Photo: Claire Price, 2015

With regard to education:

- Uptake of primary education is increasing rapidly, although, owing to both costs and parents' concerns about girls' sexual purity, access to secondary school remains very limited.
- **Parents' reliance on girls' domestic labour limits their schooling.** Girls are made to miss school more than boys and are not given sufficient time to study school lessons or do homework.
- **Girls' interest in education and employment is expanding.** While migration and marriage continue to attract many girls, especially in communities without strong role models, most girls now aspire to high school.
- **Parents' and men's interest in girls' education is expanding,** with parents wanting to foster their daughters' self-reliance and men preferring to marry educated girls and women.
- **School clubs can transform girls' lives.** They build confidence and voice and can radically alter girls' aspirations, especially when they are combined with programming that reaches parents and other social norm gatekeepers – and do not exclude boys.
- **Adolescent girls need more educational options.** Those who do not attend high school, or who fail their Grade 10 exams, need training opportunities that will help them achieve the independence that will allow them to delay marriage.

6. Policy and programming implications

As resourcing is scaled up to meet the government's 2025 deadline for the elimination of child marriage, we offer a number of policy and programming recommendations. Some of our suggestions grow directly out of our programme case studies and are aimed explicitly at communications approaches. Others flow more organically out of local realities and are accordingly broader.

Policy recommendations

With regard to child marriage:

- Given how quickly the patterning of child marriage is shifting, with rapid declines seen in some regions and increases in others, it is important to **collect better data** about how many girls are married and at what age they marry. Moreover, in light of the diversity of marital forms, even within Amhara, it is also important to track what those marriages actually entail.
- Develop **more effective systems for enforcing the laws on child marriage.** This should include attention to developing consistent reporting chains, so girls know where to turn for help, and providing *kebele*-level officials with the support they need in order to consistently enforce the law.

With regard to girls' education and employment:

- Given that girls who become pregnant, whether within or outside of marriage, are shamed into leaving school, **schools need to ensure students have access to comprehensive SRH information and contraceptives.**
- **Compulsory schooling should be enforced** for all children through the end of Grade 8 – even if they are married. Thereafter, there is a need for systems to **ensure rural children are better prepared for national exams.**
- **All schools need gender-segregated toilets** – to provide girls with adequate privacy, especially for menstrual management, given related cultural taboos.
- **Families need support in order to send their children to secondary school**. The government and donors should strongly consider cash transfers that incentivise girls' education, as these would simultaneously address the need for better poverty programming and restrictive gender norms. Girls would especially benefit from dormitories at secondary and tertiary levels as onsite living arrangements would help allay parents' fears about sexual violence.
- **Adolescent girls need employment options** if they are to remain unmarried and in control of their own lives. To this end, there is a critical need for vocational training programmes and non-migratory employment for adolescent girls. Globally, the evidence base on good practice remains relatively limited in this area. Thus, we suggest an investment in pilot initiatives to test what sorts of approaches are more effective in which local contexts.

With regard to fostering cooperation between NGOs and the government:

- Because drama can be a powerful teacher, we suggest the government (which controls the media) and NGOs (which have media expertise) work together to **develop national-level media programming for TV and radio** that addresses child marriage specifically and gender inequality more generally.
- Because in the long run government programming is both the broadest and the most sustainable at scale, we suggest the development of systems to **ensure community-based programming is integrated into and complements government programmes.**
- In order to support learning, it is important to **develop robust M&E systems** that link indigenous NGOs such as ADA and Hiwott Ethiopia to funding and ministerial-level support.

Programming recommendations

Design for better communications-focused interventions

- **Participatory design builds stronger programmes.** Where communities are involved in selecting messages and modalities, they tend to select the ones they will be most likely to hear.
- **Community dialogues can be an effective intervention,** but work best when they target both adolescents and adults in an age-segmented manner.
- **Community and religious elders** need to be prioritised for child marriage and gender equality messages as they are often the ultimate gatekeepers of social norms.

- **Boys and men** need to be targeted for programming aimed at encouraging new masculinities that support their sisters and daughters to reach adulthood before they become wives.
- **Face-to-face discussion encourages local ownership** and should be combined with top-down or media approaches for best effect.
- **Girls' clubs can bring transformatory change** to girls, helping them build their confidence and voice while learning about their rights (and serving as critical venues for reporting planned marriages).
- **Peer-to-peer education** can be effective, but requires that facilitators be carefully trained.
- While the 1-to-5 groups and other government structures can ensure grassroots penetration and facilitate bottom-up ownership of messages, complementary **NGO programming is often required to keep groups focused** on gender-related themes. This will require not only content support but also financial resources: in most communities, WDA leaders are already stretched too thin.
- **Preventing meeting fatigue** is a challenge that should be planned for from inception.
- A reliance on **volunteer labour** risks burnout and encourages high turnover. Adequate provisioning for programme coordinators and creative approaches to incentive structures need to be prioritised.
- **Programming should build on local role models where possible –** and afford them public recognition. Educated women, including teachers, should be recognised for their accomplishments. Similarly, parents who have supported their daughters to stay in school, and marry as adults, should be encouraged to share their experiences – both through girls' clubs and in the broader community.
- **Because known faces tell powerful stories,** it is also important for programmes to work with local girls and women to help teach the risks of child marriage.

Messages for better communications-focused interventions

- Messages need to help communities understand **girls are children until they are 18** and the marriage of any child under that age is a child marriage.
- **Messages regarding the health risks of child marriage** are pervasive and well understood. Accordingly, such messaging should be continued.
- Especially in areas where child marriage has become a hidden practice**, it is necessary to balance presenting the *risks* of child marriage** (such as fistula) **with the *benefits* of adult marriage** (such as a lower risk of poverty).
- It is important that messages **directly address gender inequality** in order to shift the broader norms that drive child marriage.
- It is important to invest in messaging aimed at balancing domestic workloads between girls and boys and men and women.

Complementary programming

- As school enrolments climb, **schools should be supported to become the key agents in keeping girls in school and preventing child marriage.** Each should have a professional counsellor who is paid for monitoring and guiding students.
- **Married girls need programming** aimed at helping them return to school, delay their first births and negotiate with their husbands for more equitable relationships.
- Given that girls' school attendance and homework time is compromised by their parents' demands on their time, further efforts to **provide girls with additional tutorial support** in schools should be considered.
- **Menstrual management programming should be offered in all schools** as a way of improving girls' attendance and reducing their risk of school dropout.
- **Safe houses** can provide girls with a safe place to live while they are attending secondary school or avoiding an unwanted marriage.

Programme monitoring, evaluation and learning

- Programme design and implementation should be informed by a **theory of change** and have an **iterative design** and **rigorous M&E** in order to encourage continuous improvement and disentangle impact pathways.
- Given variation in the incidence and patterning of child marriage, individual **programmes need local baseline data** in order to be able to **tailor programming.** It is not enough to collect data solely for donor tick-boxes; data must be used. If programmes are to be sustainable, regular and longer-term data need to be evaluated with an eye towards **ascertaining impact and proving cost-effectiveness.**

- **Opportunities for shared learning are vital**. Some programmes create enormous change. Others create change very cost-effectively. Most do neither. In order to maximise impact, it is important that NGOs have opportunities to share what works, for whom and why.
- Quality M&E is critical to **supporting government agencies to become better consumers of evidence** – and ultimately take the strongest programme approaches into existing ministries. The Tigrayan government's child marriage programming provides a case in point in terms of how successful government programming can be.

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