



TIPPING POINT SOCIAL NORMS INNOVATIONS SERIES

Brief 6: Intergenerational Dialogues
NEPAL



TIPPING POINT SOCIAL NORMS INNOVATIONS SERIES

BANGLADESH

Amader Kotha

Adolescents use street drama and dialogue to challenge existing social norms and show positive alternatives.

Football for Girls

Read about how girls participation in sports is changing social norms in some parts of Bangladesh.

Amrao Korchi

Girls and boys switch roles to challenge gendered social norms, where boys do household work usually done by girls (cooking, doing laundry, etc).

Tea Stall Conversations

Men gather to drink tea and discuss gender roles, girls rights, and child, early, and forced marriage with each other.

NEPAL

Cooking Competition

Boys compete in a cooking competition and girls judge their food.

Intergenerational Dialogue

Communication gap between adolescents and their parents is bridged in order to better understand adolescent's aspirations.

Raksha Bandhan

The traditional ritual of a sister tying a thread around a brother's wrist and asking him for protection is modified where brothers also tie a thread around their sisters' wrist and both vow to practice gender equality and pursue their dreams.

Street Drama

Girls and boys perform street dramas to challenge social norms around dowry and early marriage, and introduce the benefits of investing in girls.





BACKGROUND

Research and experience show that social change toward gender justice requires more than supportive attitudes and awareness among individuals.¹ People do not exist as islands; they make up a social system that is interdependent and built on tacit conventions of behavior. What people believe others do, what they think others expect from them, and what people believe the consequences of nonconformance to be—these are dimensions of social norms that play a tremendous part in determining people's actions and choices, even when an individual has knowledge and attitudes that would suggest a different choice.

Change for gender justice requires more than sharing knowledge and promoting equitable attitudes of individuals. It also requires a society in which people's support for gender justice becomes as normal and accepted as removing your shoes indoors or paying respect to your elders is in many parts of Asia. So then, how does one engage with social environments to shift what is considered 'normal'?

The Tipping Point² initiative, which aims to promote positive alternatives to child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM) for girls in Bangladesh and Nepal, has taken up this question as a core part of its work. From 2015 to 2017, the project built on findings from its **Community Participatory Analysis (CPA) Study** to identify ways to drive social norms change that transforms the root causes of CEFM. This brief is part of a series highlighting Tipping Point programming innovations based on key design principles for social norms work, which CARE developed based on the existing academic and gray literature.³ These innovations complement a broader suite of activities to facilitate the agency and options of adolescent girls, working with girls, boys, parents, key formal and informal influencers, and local decision makers.⁴

1 Heise, L. & Manji, K. (2016). Social Norms. GSDRC Professional Development Reading Pack no. 31. Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham

2 For more information on Tipping Point and partners, visit https://caringpoint.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/care_tipping-point_web.pdf

3 Bicchieri, C. (2006). *The Grammar of Society: The Nature and Dynamics of Social Norms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.; Bicchieri, C., Lindemans, J., & Jiang, T. (2014). *A structured approach to a diagnostic of collective practices*. *Front. Psychol.* 5:1418;. Mackie, G., Moneti, F., Shakya, H. & Denny, E. (2015). *What are social norms? How are they measured?* California, USA: UNICEF/Centre on Global Justice, University of San Diego

4 See the full Theory of Change for the programming of Tipping Point here: <https://caringpoint.org/innovation/theory-of-change-2/>

DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR SOCIAL NORMS PROGRAMMING

To guide and inform its work, Tipping Point distilled 8 design principles for engaging with social norms change, drawing from academic and gray literature on the topic. These include:

- 1. Find early adopters:** Often, people are already living their lives in positive ways that support girls' choices and opportunities. Find them.
- 2. Build support groups of early adopters:** It can be hard to embody positive, rights-based change alone. Groups help individuals support, encourage and trouble-shoot.
- 3. Use future-oriented positive messages:** Help people imagine positive alternatives. Change is possible.
- 4. Open space for dialogue:** Get people talking to each other about new ideas. Challenge the implicit assumptions that everyone holds the same views, experiences and preferences.
- 5. Facilitate public debate:** Engage publicly with community members to debate on what is OK in this context.
- 6. Expect by-stander action:** Move from envisioning possibilities of justice to action. This involves building community and accountability, so that people show up for girls' rights in their words and actions.
- 7. Show examples of positive behavior in public:** Demonstrate that the positive shift we hope for already exists. And it is totally normal.
- 8. Map allies and ask for their support:** Identify the resources and networks we need to support positive change for individuals, families and communities.



THE INNOVATION: INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUES

The CPA research findings indicated that in the Terai region of Nepal, marriages are arranged by extended family members, who undertake a search for an appropriate match and negotiate dowry payment and other matters. In some groups, children are betrothed at very young ages, and the actual union begins later, when the girl reaches puberty. Over the last generation, the steps of this process have become more fluid but also compressed in time; betrothals happen at later ages and co-habitation not long after.

What does not seem to have changed is the very minor role that children and adolescents play in determining when and who to marry. They are rarely consulted during the process of matchmaking or asked for their approval of the spouse selected for them. A boy who is already earning his own income may be more influential, but a girl's opinion, or indeed the possibility that a girl would have an opinion, is scarcely acknowledged. The consensus is that children need major decisions to be made for them by those with greater experience in life and a better understanding of what lies ahead.

Tipping Point's CPA study also found that there is a significant gap between the aspirations of adolescent girls and their parents' aspirations for them. While everyone imagines futures that include marriage, girls want to develop their livelihood skills and marry later. Parents primarily hope for good suitors for their daughters, and girls' education and professional development are less important. Like girls, boys express a desire to work longer and become financially secure prior to wedding. Unmarried adolescent girls and boys alike say they want to marry a spouse of their choice, or at least one that meets their own criteria.

So, girls do have preferences for marriage; yet, they are often silent and resigned to knowing that others with more power are planning their futures without their input. Girls and boys alike said that they do not communicate openly with their parents or other adults about their hopes for the future. Communication barriers between adolescents and adults exist in the public sphere, too. Teachers, local officials, religious leaders, and other community actors do not seek the opinions of young people, and young people do not express their views on services, opportunities, problems, or concerns they may have.

The Tipping Point team saw the potential in opening up communication between adolescents and adults—parents in the home and key figures in the community—about their aspirations in life and what support they need. To foster parent-adolescent dialogue, the team started bringing together the project's adolescent groups with the parent groups once every three months for joint activities and discussions. When Mother's Day approached, they set up special games and conversation starters for mothers and daughters to do in pairs, which they did again for fathers and sons on Father's Day. Parents talked about their own childhoods, adolescents shared their hopes and dreams, and each pair discussed their expectations of one another. These intergenerational **dialogues** provided the chance for parents and children to learn new things about each other and **challenge their assumptions** about each other's thoughts and feelings (**Design Principle 4**).

The project also set up public forums for adolescents to interface with adult community figures. The girls prepared in their groups by studying the role and function of a government department or public service and drafting questions and comments about how it was working to fulfill their rights. The girls' **groups generated the solidarity** they needed to try such a new behavior—speaking directly to duty-bearers in public (**Design Principle 2**). Forums took place at village, municipality, and district levels and produced **dialogue in the community** about barriers to girls' education, early marriage and health risks, law enforcement, and other key topics (**Design Principle 5**). Some of the adolescents even traveled to Kathmandu for the Girl Summit, a national event, and spoke to national government representatives. The girls' comments were often provocative and **called for greater action from public figures** on behalf of adolescent girls (**Design Principle 6**)— **demonstrating to communities that adolescent girls can be powerful advocates** for themselves (**Design Principle 7**).

The implementation guide at the end of this brief provides more details about the intergenerational dialogues with parents and community stakeholders.

CARE SOCIAL NORMS ANALYSIS PLOT (SNAP) FRAMEWORK

SNAP was developed to measure the nature of specific social norms and their influence, and offers a useful framework to examine the initial reactions to a social norms focused activity. Specifically, it examines any preliminary effects on:



What are the initial reactions of community members?

Although parent-adolescent dialogues took place privately, many people were present for public events that brought together adolescents and community figures such as local government representatives and police officers. The idea that adolescents should be heard by adults, and in particular that girls be heard in public, runs against predominant norms of social interaction between generations. How did the community respond to seeing young people express their views and direct their concerns to powerful members of the community, and were there ripple effects?

Using inquiry questions based on **CARE's Social Norms Analysis Plot (SNAP) framework**¹ Tipping Point project staff interviewed eighteen² community members—eleven women and seven men. Most of the respondents knew someone involved in project activities, such as a relative or a neighbor, and they associated the project with adolescent groups, girls' education and CEFM prevention. One respondent identified as Muslim, fifteen as Hindu, and two did not identify their religion. Their ages ranged from 22 to 63 years; one respondent did not provide his age.

1 Stefanik, L. & Hwang, T. (2017). *Applying theory to practice: CARE's journey piloting social norms measures for gender programming*. <http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/file/view/care-social-norms-paper-web.pdf>.

2 Note the number of respondents is higher than in other innovation briefs in this series due to some overlap in interview questions for this SNAP analysis and those used in the analysis of other innovations.

The adolescent girls were speaking openly and confidently, which surprised me the most. They were sharing their thoughts on not getting married before 20. They didn't have this type of opportunity before. It's good that they're talking openly on these issues.

22-YEAR-OLD WOMAN



SURPRISING BEHAVIOR

People were pleasantly surprised to see that adolescents, especially girls, were talking confidently in the open. Respondents reported feeling particularly intrigued to hear girls asking questions of police and other authority figures.

The girls were asking questions, which I found good. They are being aware and gaining knowledge. They were asking questions even with the police, which surprised me.

MAN, NO AGE GIVEN

The thing that surprised me and I found interesting was that the adolescent girls and boys were asking questions to the VDC secretary [a local government leader] and political parties.

40-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

For some, even the idea of young people having strong opinions was new:

The thing that I learned from the dialogue is that it is the right of adolescents to have their own opinions and thoughts.

28-YEAR-OLD MAN

Everyone said that the dialogues were worthwhile activities, some stressing the benefits to adolescents and others valuing the dialogues for what they themselves learned about their children:

If we go and participate in this type of program, we also get the opportunity to learn new things... This kind of dialogue event will help us know our children better.

55-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

This dialogue helped me to understand my children more. I have given more importance to their education and schooling.

30-YEAR-OLD MAN

Children in our community feel very hesitant to speak and use their voices and present their thoughts in front of their parents, but this type of platform gives an opportunity for adolescents to open up with their parents.... It is important to provide space to adolescents to share their thoughts and value them.

29-YEAR-OLD MAN

When asked more about adolescents communicating openly with parents, some respondents' answers balanced the rights of adolescents to choose their own paths in life with a continued need for children to obey their parents and work hard within the constraints of gendered roles and poverty:

Girls should listen to what parents say, wash the clothes, and do household work.

25-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

It's good for girls to progress further in life. They need to talk and move around [outside the home] when work is concerned, but it is not good without any work.

40-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

One man felt that adolescents should be assertive more often:

They demand their rights, but not as much as they need to.

32-YEAR-OLD MAN

Adolescents should express their desires and aspirations in front of their parents. In case the parents do not agree, they should be doing what the parents say.... If the parents are not able to fulfill their dreams because of not being able to afford it, then they should stay at home.

26-YEAR-OLD WOMAN



IS THIS BEHAVIOR COMMON?

Empirical expectations are what we think others in our communities are doing or thinking. In social norms theory, empirical expectations influence our behaviors and are primarily formed by what we see or hear around us. Change becomes possible when we perceive changes in others. The Tipping Point team asked community members whether and how things were changing, or had changed, in the community related to respecting the viewpoints of adolescents, especially girls, and what people thought about those changes.

Most respondents said that the community supports adolescent girls and boys raising their voices on issues important to them, and that, when it comes to girls, it was not always this way.

People used to think that girls should not speak and express their thoughts, but now they are expressing it.

26-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

After this dialogue, they are giving space to their children to share their thoughts and voices.

28-YEAR-OLD MAN

There is a realization among girls that they need to come forward and use their voices and talk about their rights and issues.

40-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

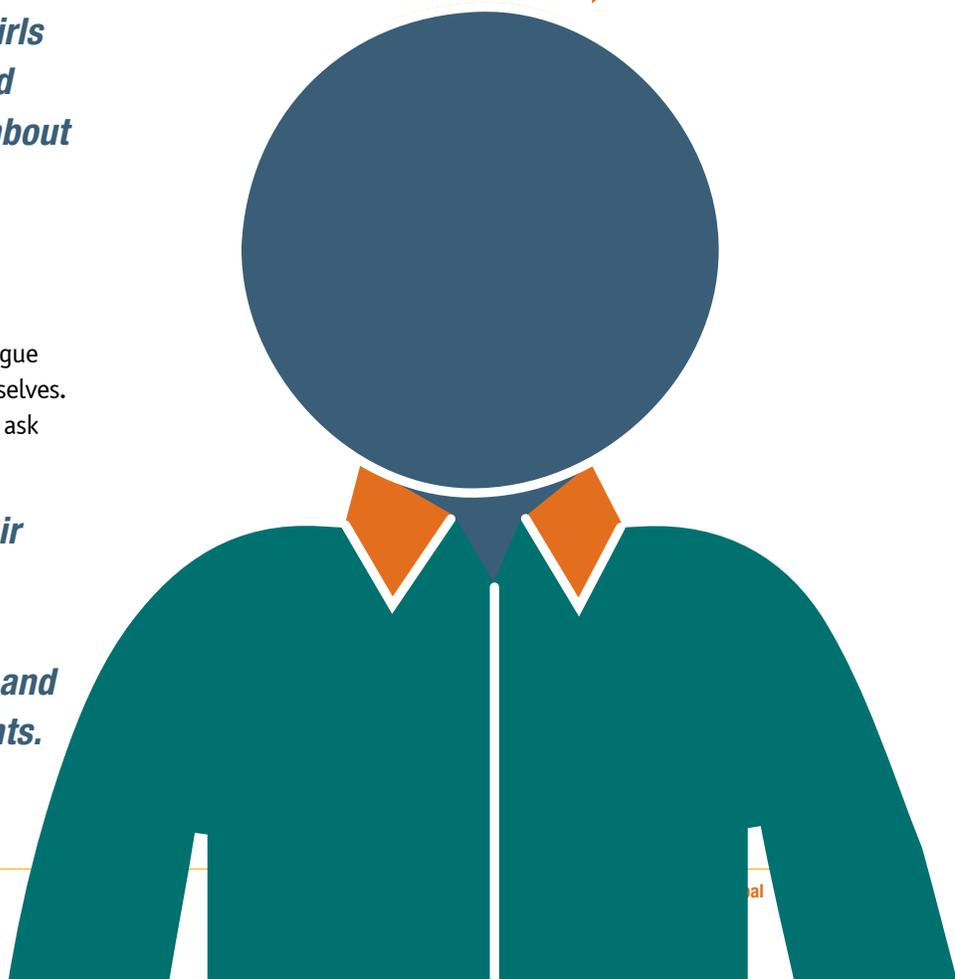
Yet more notable to respondents than the community's reaction to intergenerational dialogue were the changes they see in adolescents themselves. This is remarkable because interviewers did not ask specifically about adolescent behavior.

The adolescents have built their capacity to speak up. They are exploring, learning about their rights and raising their voices and thoughts in front of their parents.

55-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

The people think that it's good that adolescents can share their problems and talk about it. The girls that were hesitant to go out of the house are now speaking publicly. ... They found it good that there's a change from one generation to another.

MAN, NO AGE GIVEN



The adolescents are fearless and confident now. Before they used to run away, but now they share and express their feelings and problems.

26-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

They protest against unnecessary pressures, like by complaining to the police. If teachers do not teach properly, they also question their teachers.

32-YEAR-OLD MAN

[An adolescent girls' group member and neighbor of his] has been advocating against the practice of marrying at an early age.

MAN, NO AGE GIVEN

Two respondents had different views, but it is important to note that neither of them had observed any of the intergenerational dialogues.

The adolescents have not been able to demand their rights.... I have not seen such intergenerational dialogue with stakeholders.

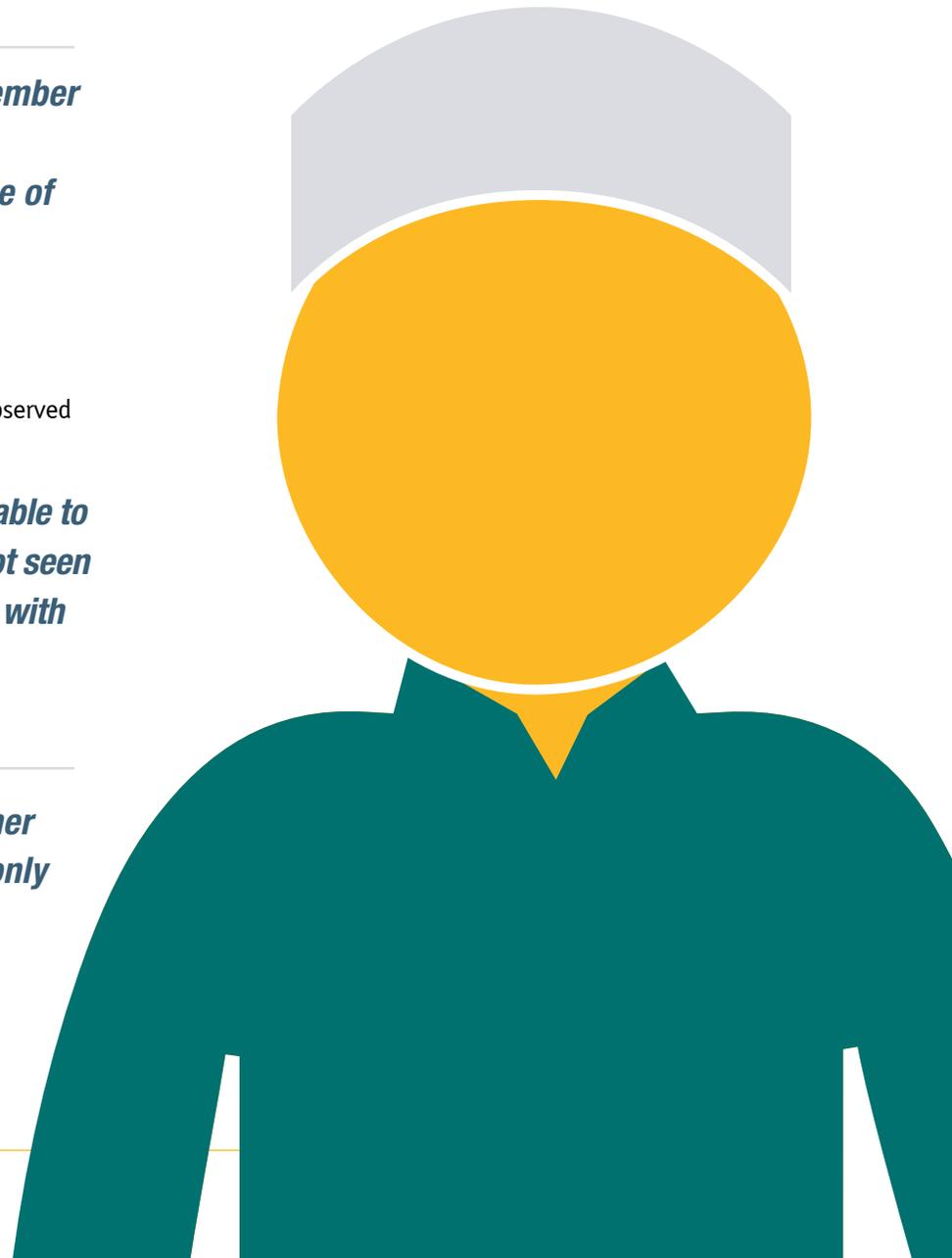
25-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

Adolescents can't speak to other people about their rights, but only with their parents.

24-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

After the adolescents have been involved in the group and they participate in different discussions, there seems to be a change in them.... The adolescent girls didn't used to talk much, unlike now where they are confident to speak even in public.... They not only talk to their parents about it [child marriage], but also convince other parents.

30-YEAR-OLD MAN



OKAY, IT'S COMMON NOW. BUT IS IT 'GOOD'?

Community members were surprised by the intergenerational dialogues and emphasized a growing assertiveness among adolescents advocating for their rights. But was this being viewed positively or negatively? Normative expectations are what we think others expect us to do. This is informed by the types of behaviors and individuals we see being sanctioned positively (celebrated or rewarded) versus those that are sanctioned negatively (publicly denounced, ostracized, or punished). To gauge sanctions related to adolescent outspokenness, the Tipping Point team asked what consequences there had been for adolescents in the intergenerational dialogues.

There appeared to be little negative backlash, such as gossip or rumors, for the adolescent participants.

I have not heard anyone saying negative things about the dialogue.

40-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

I haven't seen any issue arising when adolescents demand their rights.

24-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

There doesn't seem to be any negative consequences on them speaking openly.

22-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

However, respondents noted that girls and boys are not treated equally and mentioned negative things they might expect to hear in response to girls expressing their opinions.

The things that the boys say are listened to, unlike the girls.

30-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

The daughter trying to convince her parents is not taken positively as compared to sons. The people think that being a (female) daughter she is trying to convince her parents... The community perceives it negatively when the adolescent girl uses her voice freely in public.

63-YEAR-OLD MAN

I have not heard of any incidents where issues have been created when adolescents have demanded something.

30-YEAR-OLD WOMAN



If I agreed to what my girls said, [people] would say that she [the daughter] is teaching her parents.... If they express themselves, they are termed shameless.

28-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

There was one example given of a negative response to girls in an intergenerational dialogue.

When the girls were speaking in a public space, everyone was laughing because they couldn't speak properly, but the Social Mobilizer of the [Tipping Point] project said that it is because girls are deprived of opportunities to speak openly and go to school. She also said that you all laughed because they couldn't speak—just think of the same situation if it were your own children.

30-YEAR-OLD WOMAN

The laughter was interpreted not as a reaction to girls speaking in public or the content of what they were saying; rather, it was about the girls' skills in public speaking. In response, the Social Mobilizer provided a model for defending girls in public spaces and engendered the respect for girls' dignity that we hope is becoming the norm.





पाँचौ अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय बालिका दिवस Fifth International Day of the Girl Child

Potential of Intergenerational Dialogues as a Tactic for Social Norms Change

Intergenerational dialogues not only created space for adolescents to practice interpersonal and citizenship skills but also challenged the absence of youth voices in public and family spheres. Onlookers were surprised to see girls questioning community leaders and government representatives; yet, by and large, people seem supportive of girls who do. It may be that what stopped girls from expressing their viewpoints was not a prohibition but rather an assumption about their capabilities that they have now proven wrong.

It is more difficult to examine any early signs of normative shifts in family decision making patterns. Respondents suggested that adolescents should be able to voice their wishes but that, ultimately, parents have the final say in important matters. Tipping Point is considering ways to strengthen the social norms approach to intergenerational dialogues, such as activities to:

Stimulate **public dialogue about girls' autonomy** in making decisions about school, marriage, and employment, and find **examples of families that have empowered girls** in this way (**Design Principles 5 and 1**).

Use creative techniques to **continue opening lines of communication** between parents and children, such as father-daughter dialogues, art and photography projects, or storytelling events (**Design Principle 4**).

Solicit **stronger commitments of action** from government and public servants for fulfilling girls' rights (**Design Principle 6**).

Network with other **organizations doing policy advocacy** to support better legislation and implementation for girls (**Design Principle 8**).

Implementation Guide: Intergenerational Dialogues

NEPAL

Tipping Point sponsored two kinds of intergenerational dialogues:

1. **Parent-adolescent dialogues**
2. **Public dialogues with community and government leaders**

Parent-adolescent dialogues

During a gender, equity and diversity (GED) training for all project staff, the team was asked to reflect on what and who had supported them in their greatest achievements and personal development. The most common answer was support from parents, particularly mothers. The Community Participatory Analysis revealed that adolescents and parents do not communicate openly about issues important to them. Mothers and daughters, for example, worked together at home in close proximity to each other but seldom discussed their feelings. The team started bringing together the parents' groups and adolescent groups every three months for joint sessions and discussions. When Mother's Day approached, the team proposed structured dialogues between mothers and daughters.

Facilitators posed the following questions for the pairs to discuss:

- What do you like about your mother? / What do you like about your daughter?
- Do you know what your mother's dreams were when she was your age? / Do you know your daughter's dreams? Have you ever talked about them?
- How do you feel about your daughters' dreams? What is your role in helping your daughter get closer to her dreams?
- Do you share your feelings with your daughter? Is it a good practice for mothers to share their feelings with their daughters? Does anybody want to share an experience?
- Do you help your daughter in her studies? / Do you help your mothers in household work or other work they do?

THE OBJECTIVES OF INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUES

1. **Initiate discussions between two generations, adolescents and adults, and create a safe environment for adolescents to discuss issues that concern them.**
2. **Create opportunities for adolescents to practice negotiating for their rights with their parents and stakeholders at village, district, and national levels.**
3. **Foster bonding of adolescents and their parents and other elders within the community to act as mentors for adolescents.**
4. **Create opportunities, especially between adolescent girls and their mothers, to share knowledge and skills and support each other.**

- How much time do you spend together? Do you sing songs together? Folk songs? Movie songs? What are your favorite foods and places to visit? Do you like the same or different things? What do you like to do during your free time?
- Do you tell your mother what the girls do in the group activities? Does she like hearing about school activities and group activities? What does she like about it? What suggestions does your mother give related to group activities?
- Have you benefited through your daughter's knowledge? Do you feel that your daughter can stand up for her rights? / Do you feel that your mother can stand up for her rights? Is there any example you want to share?

On Father's Day, the groups held similar dialogues between fathers and sons with questions such as:

- When are father and son together in the household? What activities do you do together? Do you help your son in his studies? / Do you help your father in household work or other work? How much time do you spend together?
- Do you know about each other's interests? Do you know what color or food the other likes? Or favorite songs and places to visit?
- What do you expect of your son? / What do you expect from your father? Have you ever spoken to each other about this?
- Do you hear about what the boys do in group activities? Do you like hearing about school activities and group activities? What do you like about it? What suggestions do you give related to group activities? Have you benefited through your son's knowledge? Do you feel that your son can stand up for his own rights and that of their sisters? Is there any example someone wants to share?

Some of the adolescents took the initiative to communicate with their parents in other ways. One girl wrote a letter to her father, who worked abroad, expressing her desire to continue her education. The father then purchased a bicycle for her to travel back and forth from school.

Public dialogues with community and government leaders

Intergenerational dialogues were effective at the interpersonal level for mother-daughter and father-son pairs to have meaningful conversations. Intergenerational dialogues were also organized in the public sphere with local and district health, education, police, religious, and other officials.

The adolescents prepared for each dialogue by discussing the function of each agency or group that would be represented in the event and which rights they were responsible for fulfilling. They prepared questions for the adult decision-makers, who included parents, village council members, religious leaders, district level government officials, media, political parties, and police. The adolescents' questions

focused on their rights and duties and how legal provisions meant to promote gender equality would be strictly enforced. Some examples:

District Health Office: What is the link between early marriage and poor health? How is the District Health Office working to reduce child marriage?

District Police Office: If the parents as well as the adolescents consent to an early marriage, what is the role of the police?

Parents/ Guardians: Why do you still practice child marriage when you have been through it yourself and know of the harm that an early marriage invites? Why is it that the girls in the family are more responsible for the household chores and bound by a lot of restrictions, whereas the boys do not have the same restrictions? What could have been different in your life if you did not have child marriage?

Women Development Office: What role does your office play to empower adolescent girls and boys? I live very far away from your office, so I am curious to know, how can people like me benefit from the programs you run?

Religious Leaders: What proof does religion have that child marriage is holy? Have you carried out a child marriage?

District Education Office: My village is not very well connected, and I live quite far away from many of the government schools; how do you suggest I access education? My friends and I usually skip five days of school every month when we get our periods because there aren't proper toilets nor does our school have provisions to give out sanitary pads; how can you ensure that girls like me don't have to miss out on school because of our periods?

A small group of girls was supported by the project to travel to the capital to attend the Girl Summit, a national event that convened agencies and actors working with adolescent girls. With leadership from the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare, and in collaboration with other likeminded civil society organizations, a dialogue session was held with national stakeholders. This was the first time in the project that the adolescents came together as representatives of those who could not be present, as advocates on behalf of their respective villages and districts. Some of the girls' teachers who attended said they were surprised to hear the girls' questions and that they did not realize how equipped they were despite them being in their classes. They reflected on the need to support them more.



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Founded in 1945 with the creation of the CARE Package, CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. CARE places special focus on working alongside poor girls and women because, equipped with the proper resources, they have the power to lift whole families and entire communities out of poverty. Last year CARE worked in 87 countries and reached 82 million people around the world. To learn more, visit www.care.org.

This initiative is funded by

