



Stories from the Field

Tipping Point: Digging up the Roots of Child Marriage to Replant the Future

Positive Alternatives

FORUM THEATER

Designing and conducting forum theater scripts that portray positive alternative futures for adolescents is one method of delivering key messages about topics such as the birth of a baby girl and a baby boy and gender discrimination, social stigma around sports, harms of child marriage, sexual harassment, domestic violence, importance of education for girls and boys, benefits of delaying marriage, and challenging gender and social norms and caste discrimination.

While both country teams have utilized forum theater as one of the approaches for facilitating public discussion about child marriage and girls' rights, who performs the theater shows is distinctive in each country. In Bangladesh a professional theater group has been engaged and is being paid to deliver the forum theater shows and in the past year performed 20 shows. In Nepal, in contrast, adolescent girls and boys from the groups have organized amongst themselves to develop the script and deliver the show and in the past year there has been 18 shows. The opportunity to work on the drama scripts has also created a space for them to explore their creativity and the theater has created a platform through which adolescents can have a voice. Additionally, in some villages, parents too have joined them in playing some of the roles in the drama. The drama has also provided a space for girls to push the boundaries on some existing norms by being a part of the performances and also by wearing saris as part of their role in the drama even though they are not married [unmarried girls are usually not allowed to wear a sari].

Having the girls and boys write scripts and perform together has also demonstrated alternative models to the broader community of ways in which boys and girls can work together, support each other, and be friends and their relationships and interactions need not always be seen as romantic or sexual.



PUBLIC AND CELEBRATORY EVENTS

Both Bangladesh and Nepal teams leveraged existing celebratory or meaningful days to organize public events with the adolescents and other actors in the community. As such there were activities and public events that were hosted by one or both teams for 16 Days of Activism in December, One Billion Rising in February, Girl Child Day in October, and International Women’s Day in March. In Nepal they have also organized around cultural and religious holidays in a creative manner by adding a twist to some traditional celebrations in ways that promote equal rights of girls and boys. Overall organizing public and celebratory events highlighting girls’ abilities and rights and challenging traditional gender roles and norms are a key way in which social norms can be targeted.

16 Days of Activism

Community adults along with adolescents from fun centers came together to campaign against violence against women and children and took part in various activities such as community level talk shows (discussion), and community debates. The public discussions looked at the benefit of investment in girls and during these discussions adolescents had the opportunity to ask questions to adult community members about the rights of adolescents. Partner organizations arranged a drama show on ‘**investing in girls’ leadership**’ in 8 different villages where adolescent girls from the fun centers performed. A number of government officials, local government representatives and local elite were present in the audience. This was an effort to sensitize local officials and influencers to gain their support for the fun center and for the creation of opportunities for girls.



National Girl Child Day 2015

Theme: “Safe and Secure Atmosphere for Girl Children Will Enrich our Future Bangladesh”

Partners arranged activities and art competitions where a total of 42 wall magazines were prepared by adolescent boys and girls at 42 different fun centers. In those magazines, they articulated their dreams, aspirations, perception and imagination.



International Women’s Day 2016

Public competitions were organized in all 90 villages to promote role shifting and positive alternative behaviors. One competition demonstrating role shifting involved a female participant choosing a male partner and asking him to do some household tasks like, cooking, cleaning, fetching water, cutting fish etc. Another competition was a vegetable peeling and bread making challenge specifically for men.

Rakshabandhan

Tippling Point marked Rakshabandhan, a Nepali festival to promote brother-sister relationships, in a unique

way. Following the patriarchal norms, Rakshabandhan symbolizes a brother's promise to protect his sister, for which his sister ties Rakhi (a wristband made up of strings) on his wrist and prays for his long life and wellbeing. Utilizing this occasion, Tipping Point offered all the girls, boys and their parents an opportunity to gather, celebrate, and discuss equitable gender roles. Following the discussion, the brothers came up with commitments to make to their sisters such as helping with daily household chores, standing against different forms of violence, supporting their sisters' mobility outside the home; and encouraging their sisters to go to school. The sisters, in turn, felt good hearing these commitments from their brothers for the first time. Then the brothers and sisters tied Rakhis on each other's hands and committed to support and protect each other.



Father's Day

In Nepal, Father's Day is a celebration honoring fathers and celebrating fatherhood, paternal bonds, and the influence of fathers in society. The Tipping Point project celebrated Father's day by organizing an event where girls could honor their fathers while also sharing their personal dreams and aspirations. During the celebration, some girls asked their fathers to allow them to complete their studies, while others asked not to be married off before turning 20 years old. Some even asked their fathers to send them to a technical skills institute.



“It has begun the inter-generational dialogue among adolescent girls and their fathers. This type of dialogue helps to bring shifts in traditional social norms that promote child marriage” said Manoj Pandey, DSDC Social Mobilizer.