Lessons from Nigeria on preventing violence towards women and girls through social norm change

Introduction

The DFID-funded Voices for Change (V4C) programme in Nigeria set out to strengthen the enabling environment for gender equality and to empower young women and men (aged 16-25) by changing social norms around three key behaviours, women in leadership, women's role in decision-making and violence against women and girls (VAWG) across four states (Enugu, Kaduna, Kano and Lagos). Working at the levels of the self, society and institutions, programmatic efforts around VAWG were integrated across all programme outputs, rather than forming a standalone component of the intervention.

Conceived as the pilot stage of a twenty-year vision, V4C began implementation in October 2013 and ended in September 2017. At the end of V4C's four year implementation period, the programme has crucially supported a number of key achievements related to the 'enabling environment' for social norm change around VAWG, including legislation to protect women and girls in the form of the passage of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) bill into law, in addition to deepening people's understanding of VAWG and gender equality, and increasing people's confidence to speak up against VAWG. After a number of programme adaptations, results around changes in the acceptability, experience and perpetration of VAWG are complex and mixed, with noted variations in effects (positive and negative) by state and programming area.

Drawing on a wide range of data and lessons generated by V4C, and setting this within the wider, international evidence on VAWG prevention, this learning paper:
- Outlines the programme's broader impact across social norm and behaviour change for gender equality (section 1)
- Provides an overview of V4C's approach to VAWG prevention and outlines the adaptations made during implementation (section 2)
- Discusses evidence-based hypotheses for the programme results, and the challenges and opportunities arising from the programme's data (section 3)
- Concludes with reflections and implications for future programming on VAWG (section 4)

1. V4C impact

Three external annual reviews carried out by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) highlight that V4C was a high-performing, unique and innovative gender equality programme addressing social norms and behaviour change at scale. In addition, the programme generated a significant volume of robust quantitative and qualitative data on its performance and approach, culminating in an endline Attitudes, Practices and Social Norms (APSN) survey in 2017. At the programme's close the following key impacts were achieved:

- **Improved attitudes and behaviours:** between 2014 and 2017, 2.4 million young people aged 16-25 in the four target states (a total of 89% of young people in these states) demonstrate improved attitudes or behaviours in relation to women's role in decision-making, women taking leadership positions and violence against women and girls (VAWG). The actual numbers of people in the four states with improved attitudes and behaviours in these three areas, is likely to be greater since the APSN only tracked 16-25 year olds and we know that V4C has reached a wider age range in our four target states.[1]

- **Attitude and behaviour change has been most impressive in the areas of women's leadership and women's household decision-making.** Between 2014-2017, over 2 million young men and women in the four states have improved their attitudes towards women taking leadership roles. In the same period, over 1.5 million young men and women have improved their attitudes to women's decision-making in the household and 1.2 million young people report women in their household being more involved in decision-making than in 2014.

- **Evidence of V4C's contribution to these results is strong.** Data from the programme's APSN survey finds that young people recognising Purple[2] show stronger, more positive change for all key measures on women's leadership and women in decision making, compared to those who do not recognise Purple programmes. Young men and women who were directly involved in Purple programming (i.e. through their participation in the Purple Academy) also demonstrate stronger willingness to speak up against violence. Brand recognition is important as it unifies the different elements of the programme and it enables young people to feel part of a broader movement for social change (see Legacy Paper on Social Marketing)[3]. A minimum of 1.5 million young people (61% of young people) across the four states recognise V4C's Purple brand.

- **Strengthened legislation:** V4C achieved notable success in its support of better-informed gender responsive legislation and in its strengthening of the enabling environment for change, specifically for VAWG (see Legacy Paper on Legal Reform[4]). For example, V4C specifically supported the passage of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition bill (VAPP) into law at federal level in 2015 along with the collective effort of multiple actors working over a cumulative 12-year period. At state level V4C provided specific support in Enugu and

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[1] V4C communications research found similar levels of Purple brand recognition amongst V4C's target group (16-25 year olds) and the

[2] V4C created a lifestyle brand Purple, designed to reach the 16-25 target audience with inspiring messages about positive new norms and their benefits

[3] http://www.v4c-nigeria.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/1624-V4C-LP-Social-Marketing-2COL.pdf

[4] http://www.v4c-nigeria.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/1624-V4C-LP-Gender-Equality-2-COL.pdf

Kaduna to progress VAPP along legislative stages, which led to securing sponsors for the bill. V4C also helped to revive and strengthen a key 'gender' resource housed within the government – the Gender Technical Unit (GTU) – which was seen to effectively strengthen and enhance the responsiveness of the legislature/National Assembly and its relevant committees.

As discussed in further detail in section 3, whilst there has been significant programmatic success for V4C as a whole, **V4C's contribution to changes in attitudes, behaviours and norms relating to VAWG are more complex and mixed**. In short, in the APSN endline survey in 2017, when results were aggregated across the four target states there were **no significant programme effects (positive or negative) in the area of VAWG**. This holds regardless of whether one looks at physical VAWG or emotional VAWG and silencing women (discussed below). However the results differ considerably by state, making it difficult, based on APSN data alone, to link V4C to a clear story of positive change in the area of VAWG. Other quantitative and qualitative programme data paint a largely more positive picture on change in attitudes and behaviours around VAWG, and when taken with the APSN data, shed some light on the complexity of the findings. The mixed findings from the programme data are presented and discussed in section 3, after an overview of V4C's programmatic approach.

2. V4C's approach

2.1. Social norms approach

Voices for Change (V4C) was not a VAWG programme per se, but a broader gender equality programme that sought to create an enabling environment for the empowerment of young women and men. It attempted to do this by addressing social norms around three key gendered behaviours – including VAWG. VAWG was therefore integrated across the five programme outputs to capitalise on opportunities within the programme to transform attitudes and behaviours. The programme sought to empower women and girls at risk of violence and transform social norms on the acceptability of the use of violence. It also supported the passage and implementation of anti-violence laws and policies which help shape what is acceptable behaviour in society. The following were key elements of the approach:

Communications-led
Guided by social norms theory, social marketing expertise and lessons from prevention work globally, V4C developed VAWG messages and communicated them through the Purple brand through a radio drama (Purple Tinz), the Purple website, a branded campaign (50:50), online videos, and TV adverts.[5] V4C developed a communications strategy for its VAWG messaging, which specifically focused on developing the audience's understanding about different types of violence (i.e. not solely physical violence), breaking the silence around the acceptability and reporting of VAWG, and highlighting positive messaging around masculinity (e.g. *'real men don't beat'*). Significantly, communications components were developed under the unifying brand of 'Purple' to create the impression of a movement for change as a deliberate social norms strategy.

Working across the ecological model

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[5] http://www.v4c-nigeria.com/v4cs-approach/communicating-changes/

V4C's communications component was central to the changing social norms approach, but V4C also recognised that communications alone are insufficient to catalyse change. The V4C theory of change therefore hinged on change occurring, including on VAWG, as a result of a relevant mix of interventions happening simultaneously or sequentially at the levels of the self, society and policy/formal institutions. As part of this, V4C focused on addressing legal reform and norms as demonstrated through the programme's success around the VAPP Bill. Advocacy around the VAPP Bill brought together young 'Purple' people, V4C trained religious and traditional leaders, men's networks and radio stations to support the women's rights movement that had been campaigning on the bill for the previous 12 years.

V4C also integrated VAWG into the curriculum of the physical 'safe spaces' group work with young women and young men in post-secondary institutions and the online safe space – Purple Academy; developed online content to support both the 'safe spaces' and communications work; and worked with religious and traditional leaders and men's networks to support new positive norms around zero-tolerance of VAWG. Communications interventions were coupled with interventions which created opportunities for individuals to reflect on and enact new positive norms through promoting self-transformation and interpersonal communication. Trainings and workshops with religious and traditional leaders were found to be highly effective in this regard.

Choosing partnerships to advance programme goals
Understanding the importance of engaging multiple partnerships for effective social norms change particularly in relation to VAWG, V4C adopted a multi-pronged engagement strategy. V4C worked collaboratively with various actors, including civil society organisations (CSOs) Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative[6] (WRAPA), the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), and the Legislative Advocacy Coalition on Violence against Women (LACVAW) on legislation. The programme also worked with media and marketing professionals to create and promote the 'Purple' brand identity that could be adapted to resonate across different contexts. V4C also found partnerships with radio stations to be particularly impactful.[7]

Building a movement for change
The programme's theory of change conceptualised movement building as a vital element in catalysing change. In the latter stages of the programme, and under the 'Purple' brand, V4C encouraged the formation and coalescence of 'micro communities': of young people, religious and traditional leaders and men's networks. Evidence from our research into the coalescence of micro communities in Kano and Enugu, verifies that in both states micro-communities came together and are starting to form 'Purple Movements.' These movements are in the early stages of *convergence* but they show strong signs and ambitions to continue and *coalesce*. For example in Lagos during the '16 days of Activism' in 2016, men's networks, young people from Physical Safe Spaces and partners working on VAWG related legislation organised a march through the streets under the theme of 'No Excuse' for Violence. The march ended at the state sponsored TV and radio station, with the station manager addressing the campaigners, sharing their commitment to increasing effective coverage of VAWG's related news items on their shows.

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[6] V4C consortia member

[7] V4C Case Study on Radio Stations in Enugu and Kaduna found that where V4C had trained radio station managers and presenters this had resulted in more progressive programming on gender, more call ins on gender, an increase in female presenters and increased audiences –resulting in attraction of higher advertising revenues

2.2 VAWG specific programme adaptations during implementation

As a complex, multi-level, multi-stakeholder initiative working on sensitive social issues, V4C built in strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms to ensure that the suitability and effectiveness of programme content was assessed on an ongoing basis. To support these efforts, and to provide an effective foundation from which to monitor progress, V4C commissioned an APSN panel survey to provide baseline, midline and endline data across the three areas in which the programme intended to shift norms and behaviours, and across the four implementation states. The APSN panel survey targeted Nigerian youth aged 16-25 at the programme's outset, and was conducted four times over the programme's lifespan. The panel nature of the survey (re-contacting the same young people each year) allowed V4C to track estimates of exposure and change while minimising sample bias.

Promoting zero tolerance

A key area of contention identified by the APSN baseline survey (2014) related to messaging around VAWG; specifically the baseline survey found that more than two out of every five young women experienced violence in their household within the month preceding the survey, despite almost universal public disapproval of VAWG. In addition, analysis of the baseline data suggested that the private nature of VAWG was likely contributing to the disconnect between public attitudes and private practice, with data also revealing that both men and women may still justify and/or rationalise VAWG under certain conditions.

Drawing on these findings, the baseline recommended that communicating the harms of VAWG would be redundant given the widespread knowledge and agreement within the population. As such the report advised that more successful programming could include targeted information campaigns promoting zero-tolerance for VAWG (dispelling beliefs that it is sometimes justifiable), as well as creating community networks that would more effectively translate social disapproval of VAWG into targeted sanctions of men continuing the practice. In addition, the baseline highlighted that having a heavy focus on VAWG ran the danger of reinforcing the normality and acceptability of violence. There were examples in almost every episode of Purple Tinz at this stage of programming, covering a wide range of VAWG scenario's from lecturers exploiting students to date rape.

Based on these findings, V4C reviewed and adapted the programme's communication storylines to be more nuanced and show the complexities of relationships between men and women, for example highlighting the psychological and economic challenges for women to stand up against violence. Secondly V4C developed a focus on zero tolerance messaging that there is 'NO EXCUSE' for VAWG.

Strengthening referral mechanisms

In addition, the programme responded to a number of key areas identified by DFID's Annual Review in 2015. The Annual Review team noted that the programme encouraged young people to 'speak up and speak out' but had not adequately addressed the issue of where young people affected by violence could go for advice. The review team recommended that the programme provide counselling training and strengthen referral guidance for Safe Space facilitators on how to handle reports of VAWG; provide clearer referral information, and develop protocols for surveys and research touching on VAWG-related areas. Other recommendations went beyond the remit of the

programme (for example supporting government to strengthen their response to VAWG) that were not taken up (on agreement with DFID). V4C responded to the relevant recommendations by training male and female Safe Space facilitators; adapting programme guidance; mapping and publishing a list of referral organisations in the four states on the V4C website; and distributing leaflets and discussion of referral facilities on air during Purple Tinz.

Being a Man
An important dimension of the V4C programme from the outset was working with men and boys to support change. This is seen in the parallel physical and online 'safe spaces' work with young women and men, and training and engagement of religious and traditional leaders and men's networks. The programme's work with men and boys took was strengthened following the findings and publication of the 'Being a Man in Nigeria' landmark research report[8]. The research report catalysed extensive debate about masculinities and male gender roles helped by high profile launch events and social media coverage. Post-launch tracking of this research report indicates that not only has it generated wide debate, but furthermore, it is being used by a range of groups including government agencies, media and religious and traditional leaders to inform their actions, for example redesign training curricula, shape sermons and speeches and develop programmes. By connecting discussions on gender, including VAWG, with debate on positive and negative masculinities proved an effective strategy across the programme.

3. Discussion of programme data and results on VAWG

As outlined, V4C's programming around attitude, behaviour and norm change has been most impressive in the areas of women's leadership and women's household decision-making, with more mixed and complex results around the programme's VAWG 'story'. Understanding the differences in the way change has happened across the different target behaviours provides crucial learning for VAWG programming, and for programming at scale for societal level change. As a largely 'private' experience, driven and exacerbated by a number of different pathways (see for example, Ellsberg et al, 2014), **norms around VAWG are potentially more complex and difficult to influence and measure over short programming periods** when compared to gains around women's leadership and decision-making more broadly.

In addition to the APSN, V4C undertook a number of qualitative and quantitative research pieces in order to capture broader learning and results across the programme. These included a Purple Academy study (quantitative study), media and communications surveys, case studies, and a qualitative research study on 'How Change Happens'[9]. These data sources crucially highlight increases in people's understanding and nuancing around what VAWG is, coupled with a deeper understanding of the related concepts of gender equality and gender identity.

Evidence from across V4C's wider qualitative and quantitative data sources demonstrates that the programme has achieved significant steps around establishing a 'foundation for change' around VAWG acceptance and perpetration. At the endline, exposure to V4C programmes is associated with higher contemplation, with both men and women reporting that they are more likely to think about gender now compared to two years previously. In this respect, whilst the programme has

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[8] www.v4c-nigeria.com/resources/researchreports/
[9] How Change Happens – A light touch study on the theory of change, www.v4c-nigeria.com/resources/researchreports

limited evidence to show that V4C has directly impacted areas such as the perpetration of VAWG, evidence suggests that the necessary reflection and contemplation is underway to support future behaviour change.

3.1 Thinking about VAWG and gender in new and different ways

There is strong evidence that V4C has brought about significant change amongst individuals who engaged in physical and virtual Safe Spaces, targeted trainings and mass media communications. Young women and men who have been involved in V4C interventions report having a **deeper appreciation of gender issues, including violence against women and girls**, feeling more **self-confident** and believing in one's potential, more able to **speak out to assert women's rights**, and more supportive of women taking leadership roles and participating in important household decision-making, as a result of the programme.

For example, in the programme's 'How Change Happens' study, a selection of respondents talked about having a **better understanding of different types of violence**[10], and **information on how to refer and address cases of VAWG**, in addition to **successfully influencing others to stop VAWG**. In addition, as highlighted in a case study of V4C's Purple E-Spaces (August 2017)[11], there was "abundant evidence" from all user types, of both sexes, and in both states that their **views on gender had changed as a result of their engagement with the Purple E-Spaces**, and that this had given them a framework with which to make sense of many aspects of their lives. This included changed opinions on gender relations, gender division of labour, educating girls, gender-based violence, and women in leadership and decision-making.

One of the most commonly reported changes was increased awareness that VAWG is a violation of human rights and that it is widely acknowledged as unacceptable globally. This was also frequently presented as a realisation, with both women and men expressing their conviction that it should be eliminated from society. Further, nearly all the young men and women interviewed for the Purple e-Spaces case study said they agreed with the 50:50 concept and a clear majority of respondents, including those in the respondent group which did not use the online spaces, expressed "a distaste for VAWG and a belief that it was wrong in terms of fundamental human rights". In addition, respondents were more cognisant of the components of happier and healthier relationships, including concepts such as mutual respect.

3.2 Speaking up and intended action

In a survey of users of the **Purple Academy online course** (covering issues such as gender roles, communications, relationships, violence against women, sexual health, leadership and decision-making) **results significantly demonstrate increases in the willingness and confidence respondents had to report VAWG**. For example, 81% strongly agreed and 17% agreed that the course had made them feel more willing to speak up against violence against women. Further, amongst these individuals, the most common 'follow-up spontaneous response' on how people felt they could act, i.e. what people felt more willing to do, included raising other people's awareness about VAWG – 45 per cent mentioned this in some way (including the use of social media and

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[10] Beyond physical violence, to include emotional, sexual, economic violence.
[11] www.v4c-nigeria.com/resources/results

advertising), 18 per cent mentioned educating people about violence, and 15% campaigning or participating in a rally.

3.3 Findings from the endline survey

The **2016 APSN survey** (the third round of survey data) found evidence of mixed results associated with attitudes and behaviours associated with **physical VAWG and emotional VAWG**, including evidence of potential dampening as compared to data collected in 2014[12]. As a result V4C developed a series of quantitative and qualitative questions to include in the APSN[13] to better understand the data trends.

In the endline survey in 2017, when results were aggregated across the four target states there were no overall significant programme effects (positive or negative) in the area of physical VAWG. However, these average results mask **variation in effects (positive and negative) in some states and programming areas**, for example:

- In Enugu State, Purple is associated with a decrease in VAWG reported by men and women.
- In Kaduna and Kano States, Purple is marginally associated with an increase in VAWG reporting by men (significant only with 90 per cent confidence). This same effect is not reported by women.
- In Kano, V4C programming is marginally associated with increased support for physical VAWG among men but not women (significant only at 90 percent confidence).
- Women's expectations that others approve of VAWG decreased with Purple exposure in Kano but increased in Kaduna. No significant correlation is observed for men between Purple and changes in their expectations about others.

As with physical violence, programme effects on personal attitudes and behaviour for **silencing women** vary by region, gender, and also by programme type. For example, overall Purple is not associated with any change in women's experience or approval of being silenced. However, there are positive effects associated with radio (lower rates of reported silencing by women), and negative effects on women's approval of silencing associated with the Purple logo. For men, there is a dampening effect on positive behaviour and attitude change associated with overall Purple exposure. This relationship is linked specifically to exposure to billboards and the Purple logo. Yet, at the same time, men exposed to V4C radio programming ('PurpleTinz') and the physical Safe Spaces programme show significant positive change (decreased approval and reporting of silencing) as well. Purple associations with positive attitude and behaviour change were found for both men and women in the Enugu, and for women only in the north where men's behaviour remained unchanged, but were associated with negative attitude and behaviour change in Kano and Lagos. The following sub-sections try to unpack why such variations in results are notable at the programme's endline stage.

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[12] Where positive change is smaller for people who have engaged with Purple, than for people who have not
[13] To assess impact of the intensive, targeted components of V4C, a supplemental survey was conducted among young people who specifically had participated in one of the following programmes: Purple Academy, Safe Spaces, Gender Hub, Brand Ambassadors, Men's Network, and Listening Panels.

Regardless of Purple exposure, on average respondents who at programme baseline opposed VAWG most strongly, experienced it least, and/or supported it least show some dampening[14] in terms of attitudes and behaviours, whereas positive change is seen on average for all other respondents. There are a range of external factors likely to be contributing to the overall positive changes recorded in attitudes and behaviours around VAWG although these were not associated with Purple exposure; however, as the programme did not capture data on external changes in context it is difficult to point to individual factors likely to be driving change. Drivers might include a high profile case of domestic violence, high profile social media activity around women's experience in Nigeria in which women were disclosing incidents of violence, and a well-publicised state government initiative in Lagos on violence against women.[15] Drivers might also include the diffusion effect of V4C activities which were not branded as Purple, such as activities by radio producers, media houses and religious and traditional leaders who underwent intensive training with V4C and then took self-motivated actions to diffuse positive messages.

3.4 Hypotheses to explain APSN data

Increases in perpetration versus increases in reporting
Whilst there were no overall programme effects on attitudinal and behavioural change related to VAWG, either in terms of physical VAWG or silencing of women, it is still important to look at the specific conditions under which Purple is associated with positive and negative effects in order to understand why and how change is happening.

Where the data measures increases in negative behaviours we have to be aware of the possibility that both perpetration of and reporting of VAWG is increasing, or that reporting is increasing, but levels of perpetration remain unchanged. In the latter case it is possible that programming has led to an increased awareness of what constitutes VAWG, as was found by the 'How Change Happens' study, which has in turn led to an increase in reported violence. It is equally possible that by increasing visibility of VAWG issues Purple programming has made it easier for people to talk about and report existing behaviours that were already occurring but went unacknowledged. This is borne out for example by data collected from Purple Academy participants who reported increased willingness and confidence to report VAWG.

These hypotheses can provide a partial explanation for the data relating to VAWG behaviour, but are less salient when looking at positive and negative changes in attitudes towards VAWG.

Reinforcing descriptive norms
Assessments of social norms programming demonstrate that **descriptive norms (i.e. what people think other people do) may be a more powerful driver of VAWG than prescriptive norms** (i.e. what people think other people expect them to do). This can result in individual attitudes which condone intimate partner violence (IPV) and violence/harassment in public spaces, whilst IPV and violence/harassment in private spaces remain "normalised behaviours" (see Alexander-Scott et al, 2016). Global evidence reveals that harmful social norms, which are not replaced with more positive norms are likely to return (Paluck and Ball, 2010; Watts el el, 2014; Abramsky et al, 2016), and the

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[14] 'dampening' of the positive effects that are observable in wider society
[15] The death of Ronke Shonde at the hands of her husband in Lagos in 2015 was widely reported and condemned; the closed Facebook group 'Female in Nigeria' has been used by women to disclose domestic violence, and the hashtag #BeingFemaleinNigeria has been used to share experiences of gender discrimination including violence; Lagos state government introduced the 'Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team' in 2014 to provide a comprehensive response to individual cases of domestic and child abuse http://dsvrtlagos.org/index.html

benefits of these new behaviours should be visibly and clearly demonstrated so that people feel they will "gain something" from taking on new norms (Alexander-Scott et al, 2016). In worst case scenarios, **interventions that focus on 'awareness raising' communications can sometimes do more harm than good** by making harmful behaviours more salient and reinforcing a negative norm, without providing nuance and clarity around messaging, or providing clear positive alternatives or the value of taking new norms on – for example, the case of billboards with the message 'Rape is a problem in Kinshasa' were seen to perpetuate the notion that it was normal (see Heise, 2011; Paluck and Ball, 2010).

In a 'worst case scenario' for V4C, despite an intention to focus on promoting positive norms as a way of avoiding reinforcing descriptive norms at the design phase, the programme's shift towards a singular focus on **'zero tolerance' messaging** and the increased visibility of VAWG as a result of V4C radio and TV shows, **may have inadvertently reinforced descriptive norms**, thus making VAWG more acceptable and normalising its perpetration. This may have encouraged participants to disclose both their experiences and acceptance of violence at endline, which was not the case at baseline.

Empowerment and backlash
A selection of studies have highlighted that **interventions, which do not engage men and secure their support**, or which challenge patriarchal structures and traditional male roles without providing positive alternatives, **may threaten men and increase the acceptability and perpetration of VAWG** (see Silberschmidt, 2001). The potential for backlash was identified by V4C in early qualitative data generated through an assessment of the 50:50 campaign, where women indicated that they did not want an even distribution of power between themselves and their husbands as this would potentially lead to tensions at household level. In response to this, the V4C team put in place a number of mitigation strategies, including promoting positive new norms through positive communications messaging, and working directly with male influencers and gatekeepers – religious and traditional leaders – to pre-empt condemnation of the programme.

Qualitative research undertaken by V4C in 2017 identified that the messages, which received the strongest support from the target audience were around the concept of *'real men don't beat'*. The research emphasised that this was seen as 'aspirational' for young men and that the idea of being a 'real man' was appealing. V4C directly promoted narratives which engaged their male audience members and specifically looked to re-shape norms around masculinity in a positive way. In addition, the qualitative research helped to shape popular messaging that specifically engaged religion and religious and traditional leaders i.e. 'no religion condones violence against women'.

Even so, qualitative evidence from the Communications Survey and qualitative APSN research suggests that at times the larger role of women may be seen as a threat. For example, one female Communications Survey participant observed that they would prefer 40/60 to 50/50 because it would mean peace in the household. This suggests that sequencing of programme communications and interventions is important. For example, if the idea of a 'real man' doesn't change first, concurrent programming around women's empowerment may put women at risk. Due to time constraints within the programme V4C put out messaging on positive masculinity and women's empowerment concurrently, so there is a likelihood that men, particularly those in the north, may not have had time to change their attitudes before encountering challenges to the status quo in the household.

Also point out that effects of increased approval of silencing in both Kano and Lagos are driven by logo exposure, while radio and safe spaces have desired effects. So it may be that deeper conversations rather than soundbites are more effective for changing perceptions around being a man, etc. in a way that is supportive, safe, non-threatening, etc.

Economic stress
Emerging evidence on what works for VAWG underlines the efficacy of programming which addresses the **multiple drivers of violence** (see Ellsberg et al, 2014), and as such the multiple and interacting pathways of change, including individual factors (e.g. attitudes, agency factual beliefs, self-efficacy), structural forces (e.g. conflict dynamics; laws; ideologies; globalisation), social factors (e.g. norms and networks), and material realities (e.g. access to resources; existing infrastructure) – discussed in Heise and Manji (2016).

Analysis of the APSN endline data found that irrespective of V4C exposure, **poverty appears to play a role in physical and emotional violence**[16] that warrants consideration. For example, when asked to first reflect on their household financial stresses, women were subsequently more likely to report experiences of physical violence (compared with those women who were asked the questions in a different order). This is also shown to vary for men's experiences at state level – in the South, men who had more unstable incomes were often more likely to show higher levels of perpetration of physical violence over time (regardless of programme exposure). This tallies with the broader understanding that factors around material realities may drive VAWG (see Weiser et al., 2007; Kamndaya et al., 2014; Dunkle et al., 2004). While this suggests that economic stress may be a factor influencing the overall APSN findings relating to VAWG, economic factors alone cannot explain the results, as the APSN analyses on the relationship between Purple and VAWG outcomes controlled for respondents' socio-economic wellbeing.

Programming intensity and mode
Evidence around the necessary 'dosage' of exposure to communications interventions that is needed to change attitudes and behaviours highlights that **single-component communications interventions around VAWG are rarely effective as they are unlikely to be intensive enough**. Whilst there is limited evidence on the level of effective 'dosage' for VAWG related social norms programming, there is a body of evidence which demonstrates the importance of multi-layered interventions. For example, an evaluation of the Bell Bajao VAWG prevention programme in India, found that the greater intensity of the intervention or exposure to messaging through more than one activity appeared to increase the effectiveness of campaign interventions. Individuals exposed to both media and on-the-ground training components of the intervention, as opposed to individuals exposed to only the media component were proven to be less impactful (Heise, 2011). This highlights the need to integrate communications interventions for VAWG with more comprehensive programming, including, for example, safe spaces.

V4C sought to work across the ecological model to ensure depth of programming. Data from the APSN show that those who had more intensive exposure to the programme showed stronger willingness to speak out against VAWG and a stronger perception that their willingness to do so had strengthened over time. As such, APSN data supports the notion that **participants who underwent the most intensive and sustained programme exposure, were more likely to demonstrate**

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[16] Emotional violence was captured in the survey by measuring how often women are told to be quiet, or silenced.

positive behaviour change. Specifically, people who were directly involved in Purple activities (physical Safe Spaces and Purple Academy) showed greater changes in personal attitudes and practices, including a stronger willingness to speak up against violence against women compared with those young men and women who just recognised one or a number of Purple activities.

Beyond the level of dosage and intensity, the specific type and mode of communications platform appears to have played a significant role in influencing behaviour change. For example, APSN data highlights that there is a **difference in attitude and behaviour associated with hearing the media talk about violence against women versus seeing violence portrayed in the media.** For example, some of the most positive effects seen on emotional VAWG[17] in the APSN are around exposure to Purple Tinz (the radio show), whereby both men and women who listen to the radio programme report less silencing of women now in their households compared to 2014 and compared to non-listeners. These positive effects exist for women only in the North and for both men and women in the South.

In addition, whilst the results are not clear-cut and there is more to learn about how to effectively use mass communications, communications platforms which specifically created **space for discussion and interrogation were shown to be particularly effective**. For example, analysis of APSN data suggests that seeing more scenes of violence against women portrayed on TV/radio corresponds with higher VAWG (perceptions and behaviour), whereas **discussion of VAWG on TV and the radio correlates with a decline in VAWG at home**. This hypothesis is consistent with findings from V4C's qualitative surveys where interviewees credited **discursive spaces** as being particularly influential in the development of new ideas and shifting personal attitudes and behaviours (see for example case studies on Purple e-spaces, traditional leaders and radio stations[18]).

There appears to be a particularly mixed story related to V4C's online programming presence and whether this is associated with a negative, 'dampening effect' on VAWG. Evidence generated by V4C finds that **individuals participating in the Purple Academy and Purple online (Purple E-Spaces) felt more willing to speak up against violence**. Yet, a comparison of our panel APSN results and supplemental APSN survey of V4C-engaged youth shows evidence both of very different results from light versus intensive web engagement, and also non-panel evidence that Purple Academy's online programming did have a positive effect on how young people think about gender issues. People with intensive Purple Academy exposure (completion of a module) reported four to eight times greater change in their support for gender equality, including their willingness to speak up against VAWG, compared to those with general Purple Academy recognition. Analysis of the APSN results suggest that people who had only light exposure to online Purple content are consuming digital media from a much broader range of sources as well – and this wider online engagement is different from people who have no exposure to online Purple content.[19] This matters because, simultaneously with Purple programming online, there were many other spaces and forums where gender was being discussed in unmoderated, and often negative, ways.

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[17] Measured as 'silencing women'
[18] www.v4c-nigeria.com/resources/results
[19] Other endline documents from V4C present in-depth analysis of Purple Academy outcomes (sentiment analysis, completion surveys, etc.)

Methodological challenges
The consistent finding across V4C data sources is that **VAWG messaging had less of an impact than messaging around other norms, possibly in part because existing levels of disapproval of VAWG were high**. For example, the How Change Happens study found attitude and behaviour change on VAWG is not perceived as a strong change pathway as almost all actors claim prior anti-VAWG attitudes and behaviour. In the APSN baseline study, 88 percent of young people somewhat or strongly disapproved of VAWG, whereas baseline approval for the other target behaviours was significantly lower. Not only is actual disapproval of VAWG high, but many people's responses to the baseline survey gave the highest level of disapproval, which meant that even if their attitudes became *more* progressive, there was no more space on the scale to capture that, so instead it was measured as 'no change'.

4   Reflections and implications

Drawing on V4C's experience, a number of areas emerge which require further reflection and analysis, and which are likely to be relevant for future programming around social norms and behaviour change in the area of VAWG, and for VAWG and wider gender equality programming in Nigeria.

What is driving VAWG?
There is more to be learned about why attitudes and behaviours around VAWG appear more complex and difficult to influence, particularly over short programming periods. V4C's baseline survey data in 2014 showed that the large majority of Nigerian youth disapproved of VAWG and expected others to disapprove of the practice as well. At the same time, two out of five young women reported still experiencing VAWG occasionally. This marked difference between approval and practice at the beginning of the programme suggested that **VAWG itself is not a social norm, and that therefore public disapproval of what is predominantly a private practice rather than a norm would be insufficient to prevent VAWG, as in many cases it takes place behind closed doors**. To some extent this may elucidate why the endline data showed mixed results on VAWG, as other factors beyond social norms may be holding VAWG in place.

The social norms 'journey' must be tailored to the context
Much has been written about the importance of context in designing programmes to tackle social issues. The significant differences in APSN findings on state level VAWG results show that interventions to prevent violence require an in depth understanding of the contextual factors that impact on VAWG programming. Factors that might be at play include the different legal environments in each state, and different levels of response services available. What may have been equally important is the wider gender environment in each state and the nature of relationships between women and men and 'readiness for gender justice interventions'. The evidence suggests that a key contextual difference between states is in existing levels of attitudes, behaviours and social norms around VAWG. Results on physical VAWG and silencing of women were both consistently more positive in Enugu compared to other states, suggesting that Enugu was more receptive to V4C messaging – perhaps because the State's young people were already farther on the continuum of change when programming started. Meanwhile, results in the Northern states are more mixed, but we see evidence in the APSN that V4C exposure corresponds with increased contemplation of gender norms, even where we do not observe actual changes in attitudes or behaviours. This suggests that young people in these states first needed time to consider existing gender roles before changing their attitudes or behaviours. In short, the target

populations (16-25 year olds) in each state were at different starting points and the interaction of state-level contextual factors may have affected how V4C interventions were received, and ultimately how effective they were.

This finding has implications for programmes designed for 'at scale' national implementation and the importance of space within programme design and roll-out for adaptation to contextual nuances.

The balance between working at scale and working with adequate intensity
V4C was designed to be communications-led, with a social norms theoretical underpinning, complemented by multiple level interventions to create 'saturation' of messaging for behaviour, attitude and social norm change. These complementary components worked more intensively with individual young women and men, religious and traditional leaders, and institutions in the four states. V4C was designed and implemented 'at scale' from the outset, both in terms of reach and numbers. It was deliberately designed to test cost effective approaches to bring about cross-societal change. Although operating at scale from the beginning it was essentially a pilot, conceived as the beginning of a 20-year vision of national level generational change. What the programme appears to have demonstrated is that a well-designed communications-led programme can shift social norms at scale – shown by the results on shifting norms around women's leadership and women in decision-making – but the combination with more intensive engagement is critical. The best results on VAWG in particular, have emerged either where there has been intensive engagement with young people through Purple Spaces – either physical or virtual, and where radio programming has enabled Purple to effectively reach larger numbers of people while also fostering discussion around gender issues.

What the evidence is unable to tell us at this stage, is the optimal mix or 'saturation' needed to bring about lasting changes in social norms around VAWG. Value for money considerations also need to be taken into consideration. The need for tailoring combinations according to state context is another factor. We know from the 'How Change Happens' study and case study material, that individuals that go through a personal transformation can be expected to start influencing those around them, suggesting that **the personal transformation part of the social norms journey is key. More intensive engagement is likely to trigger this**.

Understanding the online effect
As outlined above, the endline programme data reveals mixed results across V4C's different communications platforms, and one of the questions that the APSN data presents is whether there is a negative, dampening effect on VAWG associated with online spaces. Although hearing about VAWG on any social media correlates with an increase in support for VAWG over time, we also see evidence that with Purple online content specifically, once young people engage with Purple Academy's learning modules, results are positive. In our view, **this finding merits further investigation into the effectiveness of online tools, particularly for future programmes planning to use online and social media for tackling social norms around VAWG** (and tackling VAWG more broadly).

Combine prevention and response
V4C worked to change discriminatory gender norms and create a more enabling environment for adolescent and young women to realise their potential. It did not implement response interventions, although it increased its signposting to service provision over time. The available evidence on best practice suggests that interventions designed to prevent VAWG are likely to cause a rise in women

and girls seeking help or being identified as VAWG survivors. As such, links to response mechanisms such as social, health, security and justice services, and child protection authorities are vital (see Fulu et al, 2014). In addition, an evaluation of Madhya Pradesh's Safe Cities Initiative found that ineffective local VAWG response may significantly limit effectiveness of VAWG prevention, stating "[w]herever possible, prevention programmes should engage in strengthening VAWG response as a key strategy to ensure sustained social change and adhere to do no harm principles" (Holden et al, 2016: 13).

V4C programme activities, particularly 'safe spaces' group work with young men and women, resulted in disclosure of VAWG and necessitated creating links with services and incorporating service information into prevention communications over time. As the Annual Programme Review in 2015 highlighted, there were very limited response services available in the four programme states and those that did exist were of varying quality. V4C was not set up to be able to supplement the support available or to ensure the quality of what was already being offered. This may have compromised the effectiveness of the programme and in **future, interventions like V4C might be more effective in tackling VAWG if designed as part of a suite of interventions**.

Backlash and 'do no harm'

Despite a robust approach to engaging men and boys including work with male religious and traditional leaders, and with men's networks (see V4C Legacy Paper – Engaging Men and Boys for Gender Equality[20]), and campaigns positively received by men, it is possible that V4C could have put more measures in place to plan for backlash at the individual level. Such measures could include allocating programme resources to assessing and responding to backlash; ensuring that basic care and support services of decent quality were available in the four states covered by the programme; establishing and supporting community mechanisms to monitor violence; or providing emergency funding to women and girls for transport to access support. **However, going down this route would have led to a different type of programme and required V4C to have been designed from the outset as part of a suite of interventions that included both prevention and response**, which as suggested above may have been beneficial.

Whilst it is not conclusive from the quantitative results that backlash is responsible for the increased disclosure of VAWG perpetration and experience, it still raises ethical questions for VAWG prevention programming, and for programming on other aspects of women's empowerment – including women's economic and political empowerment initiatives. Lessons from VAWG programming in other settings show that backlash should be expected and planned for in all VAWG programming.[21] The V4C experience suggests that this is also true of interventions working on other aspects of women's empowerment, such as leadership and decision-making.

Mainstreamed or integrated issues need dedicated resources

Integrating VAWG across the programme brought great benefits in terms of a holistic approach, but it also meant the VAWG agenda was without dedicated leadership and technical expertise, which made it harder to get traction in promoting and analysing progress and requirements and to drive results in this area. To focus more effectively on VAWG, the programme tried a couple of times to have cross-output working groups, which worked for a short time but this was not sustained beyond

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[20] www.v4c-nigeria.com/resources/v4c-legacy-papers
[21] DFID Theory of Change on VAWG; DFID Guide on Community Programming on VAWG

dealing with particular issues. It was the classic mainstreaming case of being everyone's responsibility but nobody's accountability. Thus, even within a gender equality programme appropriate technical leadership on specific gender issues is necessary and expertise cannot be assumed. With further VAWG specialist resource, greater strategic gains may have been made.

Timelines and the pitfalls of measuring long term change over a short period

The direction of social change is not always linear, and is a long-term endeavour. Recognition from the outset of the long-term nature of both social norm change and legal reform, meant that V4C looked to show steps in the right direction rather than achieve full normative change in a four-year timeframe. The change process may mean unexpected results, such an increase in violence as reporting increases in line with understanding, especially over the initial years of programming. In addition, endline results which show an increase in contemplation in relation to violent attitudes and behaviours may indicate a positive direction of travel in the longer term. Though designed as a generational change programme, the V4C programme will not be continued beyond its piloting phase. This means that the programme will not be able to build on the gains, nor measure evidence over time. In future programming that seeks to bring about long-term change must engage with the question of how to secure long term support and financial sustainability from the outset, to avoid policy and programming shifts.

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About V4C

Voices for Change (V4C) is a £29 million programme funded by UK Aid, working to strengthen the enabling environment for gender equality in Nigeria. The programme targets young women and men aged 16–25 years old. It operates in four states in Nigeria: Enugu, Kaduna, Kano and Lagos and for some activities, at federal level. V4C is a unique example of a programme applying social norms theory at scale and is addressing the structural barriers to gender equality; in particular, discriminatory and harmful attitudes, behaviours and social norms. The three normative areas that V4C seeks to change are women's voice and leadership, women's role in decision-making and violence against women and girls.

V4C recognises that for young women to be better supported, change needs to happen at scale – not only at the individual level but also within wider society.

- At the individual level, V4C works with adolescent women and girls to provide them with the skills, knowledge and confidence to challenge, together with men, boys, religious leaders, traditional leaders and networks of men and women, discriminatory social norms, and create change in their colleges, homes, workplaces and communities;
- At the community level, V4C works with men and boys, religious and traditional leaders, and networks of women and girls to create a critical mass of support for gender equality, accelerating change and shifting negative norms;
- At the social-structural level, V4C works to change discriminatory laws, create better policies, and direct assets towards women and girls, sending a message about changed social norms through political and legal structures.

Conceived as the pilot stage of a twenty-year vision, V4C began implementation in October 2013 and will end in September 2017.

Credits

This paper is a V4C learning papers that has been written to share practical guidance and learning on the different approaches and strategies used by the programme. For more information, visit www.v4c-nigeria.com.

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