



Radio station staff start to believe in gender equality

Radio station staff and management are more aware of gender issues, believe in the value of gender equality, and take action to support gender justice within their organisations and in other parts of their lives. As a result, radio stations encourage dialogue on gender equality and broadcast more gender sensitive programmes.

What was the situation before V4C's support?

V4C aims to reach a broad audience with compelling messages that convey the benefits of new norms around gender equality. The programmes of the radio stations V4C supports used to be entertainment focused, with little emphasis on young people or gender-related issues. Listeners were largely treated as passive participants, with no real opportunities to make their voices heard in the debates being aired. If gender was raised at all, it was regarded as a 'woman's issue' and discussed in programmes that targeted men and women separately.

What did V4C do?

Since 2014, V4C has been working with 11 radio stations in four target states to provide new ideas, perspectives and knowledge on gender. This includes providing capacity building, as well as the introduction of the radio drama series 'Purple Tinz'. This case study brief explores the influence that V4C's support has had on a sample¹ of the targeted radio stations based in Enugu and Kaduna states.

What happened as a result of V4C's involvement?

Since V4C's support, there have been a number of significant changes in radio stations staff's awareness, behaviours, relationships, actions and practices.

¹ Solid FM and Dream FM in Enugu; Karama Radio and Liberty Radio in Kaduna.

Radio station staff have a better understanding of what gender equality is about.

V4C's training provided clarity on the definition of gender equality and participants understood that it is not just about women, that gender roles are assigned by society and that they can change over time. Only a few reported that they already believed in gender equality before the trainings. For example, at Solid FM a staff member explained that she was brought up in a way that made her believe she could achieve everything she wanted.

Radio station staff have learnt how to refer to gender issues, are more open to talking about them, and are mindful of using gender sensitive language.

V4C's training has paid attention to cultural aspects and sensibilities of listeners, particularly in the northern region. In both states, radio station staff learnt how to tailor messages around gender equality in a way that does not generate resistance from their audience.

"[...] the ladies were called demonic for bringing in a foreign culture. Our female co-anchor [...], was much more controlled knowing there are much better ways to handle it and that she wasn't in a battle ground which wasn't the case before." (Manager, Solid FM)

It has also become easier and more acceptable to talk about gender equality among radio station staff and male staff have become more respectful of female colleagues because of the behaviour that is modelled in Purple Tinz.

Male and female radio staff are convinced of gender equality and take action to promote women's rights. Female radio station staff have gained confidence and express their opinions more openly.

"It [the gender training] helped me to push for what I want irrespective of who I am dealing with." (Female radio staff, Dream FM)

In both states, radio station staff have influenced their colleagues, husbands and religious leaders on gender equality. Female staff changed the way they engage with their husbands and in public life to express their opinion. These changes were predominantly attributed to the learning from V4C's training, as well as the influence Purple Tinz has had on them.

New radio programmes that focus on gender have been developed and the content of existing programmes has changed to reflect more on issues of gender equality.

"I set scenarios such as 'how would you feel if your wife works in the same organisation with you as the Boss'? These topics usually generate exciting and sometimes heated debates from both male and female callers." (Female radio staff, Karama Radio)

The targeted radio stations have introduced a total of 12 new programmes and changed the content of a total of 27 programmes to reflect on gender equality. Radio programmes have become more participatory and actively bring men and women together in discussions on gender equality.

What are the reasons for these changes?

Radio presenters, who are key influencers, have experienced V4C's transformative methodologies and undergone personal change in attitudes and behaviour, which has led to supporting gender equality in their private and professional lives.

These changes have been predominantly attributed to the influence of V4C's gender awareness trainings, which provided clarity that gender equality is not just about women, that gender roles are assigned by society and that they are not static. This has helped radio station staff understand why gender equality is valuable and that there are opportunities for change. The fact that the radio drama Purple Tinz portrays real-life stories helped radio programme staff relate to it. They think that there is 'truth' in V4C messages and this is what influenced them to change the content of their radio shows.

By interacting with and influencing individuals in their reference groups (family members, colleagues, and religious leaders), as well as by acting as role models who demonstrate new social norms to their audiences, radio station staff are contributing to changes in attitudes and behaviour at a wider level.

What lessons have been learned?

1. There are a few examples where it appears that V4C messages may have been misinterpreted. At Solid FM a programme called 'Girly Girl Show' raises questions of how gender stereotypes are reinforced in the language radio staff use and episodes of the programme 'Soul Sistaz' did not seem to encourage a positive and constructive debate between men and women. It is therefore important to closely monitor what is being communicated is truly empowering women and girls.
2. The enthusiasm and conviction the radio presenters expressed suggests that the radio stations' debate around gender equality has potential to be continued. Yet, introducing strategies and processes to formalise this commitment may be needed to ensure sustainability.
3. V4C's involvement of the radio stations' management has led to their active support of the content change of radio programmes. In all of the consulted radio stations, the management encouraged staff to step down the V4C training to other colleagues. Yet, there did not seem to be any structure or strategy in place that ensures this is done systematically. This may be necessary to ensure staff who have not been part of the trainings, as well as new staff, are given the same opportunity to learn what gender equality is about, why it is valuable, and how they can communicate this to their audiences.