



Strategy for encouraging research uptake

Background

Voices for Change (V4C) believes that for research-based evidence to be used by practitioners and policymakers seeking to improve the enabling environment for adolescent women and girls, it must be inclusive, high quality, well packaged and properly targeted.

V4C's approach

- Inclusiveness is a key principle in V4C's approach to research uptake, improving the quality and authenticity of the research, thus facilitating a wider uptake. We aim to ensure that the voices of adolescent girls, women, boys and men are included in all stages of the research cycle - the qualitative research study on young people was driven by young people from V4C project sites. With each piece of research we involved a wide range of respondents including groups of young people, members of religious groups, government agencies, policy and research institutions and the media to ensure that their experiences and expertise were sought to bear on the research process, and to engage in them in the process from early on capturing their attention and interest in the forthcoming research.
- Local ownership has been built through on-going consultation with potential research users and the creation of a Research Advisory Group (RAG) – a group made up of religious and traditional leaders, policymakers, legislative officers, academics and civil society advocates and lobbyists. Their role was to contribute to the prioritisation and framing of research themes, participate in quality assurance and peer review, as well as provide endorsements and opportunities for dissemination and uptake among their colleagues and peers.
- Gender and religious sensitivity and responsiveness have been a key principle for us. The different needs of girls, women, boys and men were considered at every stage of the research. Aspects of our research included questions of a sensitive and personal nature, and as such we ensured that data collectors only collected data from respondents of the same sex. All enumerators were sensitised in gender sensitive interviewing and child protection. It was important also to ensure we adhered to religious sensibility, as we were exploring specifically beliefs and culture from among Nigeria's two main religions. For example, V4C partnered with Christian Aid and Islamic Relief to conduct the study on masculinity and religion in order to leverage their experience and expertise in working with religious groups. Religious institutions and scholars were engaged in the research process which added to the validity and credibility of the research.
- Promoting a culture of research use: V4C generated excitement around the research from the outset by engaging stakeholders in the setting of the research questions and themes before the research was commissioned. We also promoted and shared the findings intensively before and after the official national and state launches of our first landmark report 'Being a Man in Nigeria' using a combination of traditional and online communication

tools to promote the research findings. On the day of launch, the report was the second highest topic to 'trend' on social media in Nigeria.

V4C's experience

The process of consultation with potential research users and respondents helped V4C to identify research themes that were relevant, widely accepted and endorsed. Paying attention to gender, cultural and religious sensitivities and involving religious and traditional leaders has also enabled V4C to address and mitigate any potential risk of a backlash. The level of ownership and promotion of the research findings pre and post launch of the 'Being a Man in Nigeria' report resulted in high uptake of the report findings by various stakeholders. Follow up through our post launch and feedback tracking has shown that hundreds of people have fulfilled their promises to use and embed the findings in their personal, community and professional lives.

The challenges and V4C's response to them

Due to the nature of V4C's research to challenge restrictive social norms that may inhibit women's opportunities, there was always a risk that some of our findings would be met with opposition. Our report on Masculinity and Religion, for example, was met with some negative reactions, due to a perceived misinterpretation of some Islamic quotations. In order to address these comments we engaged a respected religious scholar with Arabic expertise to review the draft report and support us to make some clarifications, they were also able to participate in the dissemination meetings to add their authority to the report.

We did not adequately anticipate how long would be needed to produce the research such as the selection and contracting of the research team and the quality assurance of all the different research reports, both of which took considerable time. In order to alleviate the quality challenges we implemented a process of peer review with additional support for more detailed critical analysis of the data and report writing.

Conclusions and practical implications

Engaging and getting buy-in from relevant stakeholders, and potential users of the research at an early stage of the process enriched the outcome and ensured greater uptake of the findings once produced. The wider range of stakeholders involved at different stages of the process was on the one hand challenging to manage, but on the other hugely enriched the quality of outputs. Research uptake requires potential research users to be engaged in the research theme from the beginning, to be anticipating the findings and already thinking through how they can use these. V4C ensured these potential users were brought along through the process.

Once findings and statistics emerged they were 'drip-fed' to these identified stakeholder clusters over a period of weeks and months, both designed to build interest and anticipation in the final report but also to ensure that relevant findings were available at opportune moments. This proved a very effective way of maximising the research evidence and ensuring it was used effectively and at relevant moments in the programme lifecycle.

Stakeholders were also supported in the process of using the evidence through a series of 'evidence mining workshops', which engaged targeted groups of stakeholders to practically work through the research reports and supported them to draw out the relevant findings and agree how they would use and disseminate the findings. These workshops had the dual

purpose of giving space to individuals to engage proactively in the research and also built their capacity in how to make the most effective use of research findings, coming up with practical suggestions for policy briefs, news stories, lecture series and training sessions, for example.

It is important to anticipate and build in sufficient time for the full research cycle from initial concept to the published report, which always takes longer than you think. In addition it is important to ensure that adequate resourcing for quality assurance and editing, as it is not always a given that good quality researchers have the skills required to write a report of publishable quality.

Key results

- Five quality assured, peer reviewed, research reports produced on a fresh theme of gender and masculinity: Being A Man In Nigeria: Perceptions and Realities, Sept. 2015, Nigeria Men and Gender Equality Survey NiMAGES, Sept. 2015, Media and Masculinities Report, July 2015, Masculinities, Conflict and Violence Report, March 2015, Masculinity and Religion in Nigeria, July 2015
- Over 20,000 copies of the Being a Man in Nigeria report were downloaded and distributed; four times over the dissemination target
- Over 40 Newspaper / magazine articles and media commentaries on the reports
- 1,955,434 people re-tweeted messages from Being a Man, and 5,600,358 impressions on twitter¹ were made during the week of the official report launch
- Three evidence-mining workshops were organised for relevant stakeholders from religious and traditional institutions, the media (traditional and social media), academia, government institutions, civil society, young people and the legislative aides and clerks of the national assembly. This initiative facilitated the collaborative mining of findings and better use of relevant statistical data, quotes and insights by various participants from various sectors, enabling them to select from the reports key messages that would aide them in their professional settings.
- Over 200 positive feedbacks were received on how the insights and findings from the reports have been used
- Respondents were asked how they pledged to use the report. 87 per cent responded that they did make a commitment to share and use the report. Some examples of how the report findings have been used are illustrated by the quotations below:
 - *I have used it in my programme in our radio station " Dandalin lyali" This book has help changed the perception of a greater audience especially the Hausa community to see that equal right be given to women, also with my family. (Female)*
 - *From my experience, it has really improve my family by involving everyone on the activities in the home and has united the family especially in terms of freedom of speech from children to parent and has increase understanding in carrying out the house chores. (Male)*
 - *I have applied it during my engagement with participant in training on leadership and gender on the project of women political participation. (Male, Abuja)*
 - *I shared some content of the report with my students: Kaduna State university we had about 300 students in attendance. We picked some of the issues and threw them out to*

¹ Impressions are how many times your tweet has been seen. If someone searches the hashtag that is in a tweet, then they will

questions. At the end students commended the initiative behind the report. (Male, Kaduna)

- I (now) involve younger female academics in the department/faculty in decision making about budgeting while delegating administrative responsibilities to younger staff to help enhance their familiarity with administrative duties in the directorate I head. (Female, Abuja)