EDUTAINMENT IN THE MARRIAGE, NO CHILD'S PLAY PROJECT

Learning about the process, effects and impact

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OXFAM

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This learning document summarizes the process, effects and impact of developing and implementing edutainment strategies as part of the 'Marriage, No Child's Play' (MNCP) project. This five-year project on ending child marriage was implemented by the More than Brides Alliance (MTBA) in Niger, Mali, Malawi, Pakistan and India, and funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. Oxfam Novib was involved in project implementation in Mali, Niger and Pakistan and lead the work with local partners developing, implementing and evaluating edutainment strategies.

Entertainment education or 'Edutainment' is a positive motivational strategy that uses the power of drama and storytelling to convey messages to a wide audience and challenge social norms, attitudes and behaviour. In the MNCP project, edutainment strategies were expected to contribute to *creating an enabling environment* and, more specifically, to *increased engagement and collective social action against child marriage*.

A combination of strategies
A combination of edutainment strategies was developed in each country, including mobile cinema screenings, interactive theatre and a radio drama series. These were accompanied by additional mobilizing strategies such as community conversations, sports activities, poetry workshops, competitions and rallies, with increased mobilization around important days such as the Day of the Girl Child and International Women's Day. To ensure that the strategies reflected the everyday realities of people's lives, thus optimizing the project results, the development and implementation of edutainment strategies in each country went through the same process. This involved: co-creation with local partners and stakeholders; reflection and adaptation based on the results of qualitative midline surveys; and finally, evaluation of the edutainment strategies' impact and effects. In Pakistan, the evaluation was done through a randomized control trial, while in Mali and Niger it was based on smaller qualitative surveys.

Reach, effects and impact
Our edutainment work reached thousands of people in the three countries. We reached 4,924 people in Pakistan with 235 mobile cinema screenings, and another 114,309 people with our radio messages. In Mali, we held 23 theatre sessions with 400 people per session, and 14 mobile cinema screenings, each attended by 222 people on average. In Niger, 72 interactive theatre sessions were organized, reaching 19,430 people; 62 mobile cinema screenings reached 1,433 people, and 55 youth-led radio broadcasts and 25 radio debates reached 1,639 people.

Reach is important, as edutainment aims to broadly sensitize communities and as such, to start a dialogue among them. Therefore, when we present the results, we also present the extent to which the strategy has increased dialogue in the communities. Only the results of the studies in Pakistan have sufficient scientific validity to allow us to attribute findings with absolute certainty to the project's edutainment activities: positive results in Pakistan are therefore referred to as 'impacts', while positive results in Mali and Niger are described as 'effects'.

In **Pakistan**, 54% of the boys and 56% of the girls surveyed in 2019-2020 discussed the edutainment intervention with a parent. This is a net improvement compared to the midline numbers (14% and 11% respectively).

In **Mali,** nearly all (96%) of the peer educators interviewed in 2020 stated that intergenerational debates take place within their communities. The same assertion was made in the focus groups, with

an emphasis on the edutainment intervention as a trigger. This suggests that more and more communication is taking place between the generations within the community as a result of the project's activities on early marriage.

In **Niger**, in 2020 the vast majority of youth (87%) reported having had discussions about sexuality. This was more common among boys, at 95%, compared to 80% of girls. These discussions generally took place during informal chats. Most of the youth (75%) reported that they had never discussed sexuality with a parent. The few who had done so said that this happened in an informal chat. Fewer than half the youth (44%) said they addressed the topic of sexuality at school; here, girls (51%) were more likely to have broached the subject than boys (38%).

In **Pakistan,** from the 2020 survey we also can see a clear impact of the project in terms of girls and boys being able to delay a suggested marriage. 65% of adolescents who participated in the project's edutainment activities reported that a boy is able to delay a suggested marriage, while 48% believed this to be possible for girls. Both percentages are significantly higher than among adolescents who did not participate in the project. Of mothers who participated in the project's edutainment activities, 75% reported that a boy is able to delay a suggested marriage. Again, this is significantly higher than for mothers who did not participate in the project (67%).

In **Pakistan,** the edutainment activities also had a clear impact on attitudes to girls' education. They had a significant positive effect on what mothers and fathers see as the best age for girls to leave school, at 14.27 years according to mothers who had not taken part in project activities, compared to 15.15 years among mothers who had participated; and 14.89 years compared to 15.56 years, according to non-participant and participant fathers, respectively. The edutainment strategies also had a significant positive effect on what mothers and fathers see as the best age for girls to get married (18.26 years according to mothers who had not taken part in project activities, compared to 18.78 years for those who had participated; and 18.23 years compared to 18.53 years, according to non-participant and participant fathers, respectively). Finally, the edutainment activities had a significant positive effect on what mothers see as the best age for boys to get married (20.79 years among non-participant mothers compared to 21.49 years among participant mothers).

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 LEARNING ABOUT THE ROLE OF EDUTAINMENT IN THE MNCP PROJECT

This learning document summarizes the process, effects and impact of developing and implementing edutainment strategies in the 'Marriage, No Child's Play' (MNCP) project. The aim of the five-year project was to reduce child marriage and its adverse effects on young women and girls in India, Pakistan, Malawi, Niger and Mali. The project was implemented by the More than Brides Alliance (MTBA), initiated in 2015 by Save the Children Netherlands (lead), Oxfam Novib, Simavi and Population Council, in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

Oxfam Novib and partners were involved in project implementation and the co-creation of 'edutainment' strategies in three countries: Mali, Niger and Pakistan. Edutainment is an abbreviation of entertainment education and uses the power of storytelling and drama to challenge existing norms and attitudes, and to change behaviour on multiple, complex issues.

To measure and understand the effects and impact of the edutainment strategies in the MNCP project, various methods were used. In all three countries, a midline survey was carried out in 2018; this reached 72 respondents in Mali, 70 in Niger and 115 in Pakistan. In Mali and Niger, an endline survey was carried out in 2020, reaching 24 and 81 respondents, respectively. In Pakistan, the edutainment activities began later and were evaluated later, as part of a much larger study: a randomized control trial (RCT) was conducted in 2019 (baseline data collection) and 2020 (endline data collection), with a total sample size of 5,148 respondents.

Due to the size and nature of the studies, only the results of the RCT in Pakistan have sufficient scientific validity to allow us to attribute findings with absolute certainty to the project's edutainment activities. Positive results in Pakistan are therefore referred to in terms of the 'impact' of the edutainment activities, whereas positive results from the midline and endline surveys in Mali and Niger are referred to as 'effects'. More detail about the study samples – and a breakdown of results by country and topic – is provided in section 5.

Please note that this document does not aim to present all of the survey results in a scientific manner. It is intended for an audience who wish to learn more about implementing edutainment as one of the strategies of a comprehensive programme. It therefore describes the process of creating, implementing and adapting the MNCP edutainment activities as much as it describes the results.

2.2 THE 'MARRIAGE, NO CHILD'S PLAY' PROJECT

The main objective of the Marriage, No Child's Play (MNCP) project was to:

Enable young people – especially girls – to decide if and when to marry, and to pursue their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in a supportive environment.

To make this happen, the project wanted to ensure that girls can make informed decisions about their SRHR, and have access to viable alternatives to child marriage in an enabling environment.

The expected results of the project were as follows:

1. 1.2 million adolescents are better informed about SRHR, including the adverse effects of child marriage, and empowered to voice their needs and rights.
2. Increased access to formal education for girls at risk of and affected by child marriage.
3. Increased access to economic opportunities for girls at risk of and affected by child marriage, and their families.
4. Increased access to child protection systems for girls at risk of and affected by child marriage.
5. Increased utilization of SRHR services that are responsive to the needs of young people, particularly girls at risk of and affected by child marriage.
6. Increased engagement and collective social action against child marriage and in support of adolescent SRHR.
7. A supportive rights-based legal and policy environment against child marriage.

Edutainment strategies were expected to contribute in particular to *creating an enabling environment* and, specifically related to result 6, to *increased engagement and collective social action against child marriage*.

2.3 WHAT IS EDUTAINMENT?

Edutainment is an abbreviation of entertainment education. Edutainment engages audiences through the power of attractive, persuasive media, popular culture and arts, and combines this with on-the-ground and virtual community mobilization. Edutainment can provoke changes in attitudes, beliefs and behaviour on complex and multi-layered themes, such as values and norms around gender, social roles, sexuality, gender-based violence and child marriage. Edutainment can take multiple forms, ranging from television and radio soap series to mobile phone messaging, street theatre and talk shows, or a combination of these.

Over the past decade, Oxfam Novib has supported edutainment expert organizations, invested in linking and learning on edutainment in different countries, and developed and implemented edutainment strategies together with local partners. Edutainment strategies at Oxfam are always part of a larger influencing strategy that includes lobbying and advocacy work as well as other interventions to shift norms and attitudes at individual and community level. Also, and of equal importance, edutainment strategies are always combined with facilitated dialogues, as conversations with people are key to understanding their realities as well as the obstacles to and opportunities for change in the context.

2.3.1 EDUTAINMENT THEORY

Edutainment has no fixed gold standard. There is, however, a combination of communication and behaviour change theories that have proven effective over the past decades when developing and implementing edutainment strategies. The Mexican theorist, writer and producer Miguel Sabido was the first to use existing communication and behaviour change theories to analyse a Peruvian television series, *Simplemente Maria.* The series was a nationwide hit in the 1960s and had substantially increased literacy rates among the entire population. Sabido used his analysis of the series and a combination of theories to produce a range of soap series in his home country in the 1970s. These soaps were very effective in getting messages across and changing attitudes, norms and behaviour around topics such as family planning, gender and literacy. This is how 'entertainment

with social benefits' or later, 'edutainment' came into being[1]. And although the media sector has completely changed since then, as has engagement with audiences, the main elements of this combination of theories are still relevant and were employed in the MNCP project. These are: social learning, positive motivation and realism.

Social learning theory proposes that new behaviours can be acquired by observing and imitating others. In addition to the observation of behaviour, learning also occurs through the observation of rewards and punishments – a process known as 'vicarious reinforcement'. When a particular behaviour is rewarded regularly, it will most likely persist; conversely, if a particular behaviour is constantly punished, it will most likely cease.

If we create an edutainment product on the basis of social learning theory, we therefore include characters who serve as role models – positive and negative – who are facing positive or negative consequences of their attitudes and behaviour. For example, a character who marries off a daughter early is confronted with the negative consequences of this decision when the daughter dies during complications of pregnancy or delivery.

Ideally the story also includes a 'transitory' person, who moves from negative to positive attitudes and behaviours and has to overcome realistic obstacles in the process. For example, in a story on child marriage, a girl who is about to be married would go against the existing norm that a girl can't broach the topic of child marriage with her parents. Or a father or mother would disregard what others in the community might think or say about them if they don't marry off their daughter at what is widely seen as the 'normal' age of 16.

In addition to including these key ingredients in our stories and their characters, we also wanted make sure that the messaging in our campaigns and social mobilization were based on **positive motivation**, as this has proven to be more effective than a negative approach. So, for example, instead of saying in a campaign or rally, "You should stop marrying your children at an early age", it is more motivating to say, "Make sure your daughter is able to finish her education, as it will increase her chances of living a healthier life and earning an income."

Realism is the third key element of edutainment strategies: these can only be effective when they reflect the everyday reality and context of people's lives. Therefore, they need to be constructed by these people, or by a creative team working together with them, or based on the reflections they share in a survey or study.

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[1] Entertainment-Education and Social Change -History, Research and Practice, Arvind Singhal, Michael J Cody, Everett Rogers, Miguel Sabido, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates publishers, 2004 London

3 EDUTAINMENT STRATEGIES IN THE MNCP PROJECT

3.1 STRATEGIES AND REACH, PER COUNTRY

Throughout the project, each of the three countries used a different combination of edutainment formats. All of our partners had sound experience in 'participatory theatre' in Pakistan or 'theatre forum' in Mali and Niger. These theatre plays formed a solid base for our edutainment work. We also wanted to innovate by collaborating with others or developing alternative edutainment formats. The project therefore combined these interventions with gameshows, sports activities, poetry workshops and photo exhibitions, with increased mobilization around important days such as The Day of the Girl Child or International Women's Day. In Mali, we were also able to partner with the edutainment organization RAES and broadcast its *C'est La Vie!* radio series.

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic we had to adapt all of our activities, including the edutainment work.

Below is an overview of the edutainment interventions in each of the three countries, the additional campaigning and mobilization activities, the numbers of people reached (when we were able to monitor this) and how we adapted to the Covid-19 restrictions.

3.1.1 PAKISTAN

Photo 1: Signs for the door-to-door campaign. Photo credit: Raffat Shuja

In Pakistan, our edutainment activities were led by the NGOs Indus Resource Centre (IRC), Baahn Belli and Bedari, and organized in close collaboration with established child protection committees and Gender Action Learning System (GALS)[2] champions. We organized 235 mobile cinema screenings and reached a total of 4,924 people, of whom 2,373 were men and boys and 2,551 were women and girls. The mobile cinema sessions were each followed by a facilitated discussion with the audience and a session around the topic of gender, held within a month of the mobile screening. In addition, campaigning and mobilization activities took place in communities, with campaign 'spikes' (intensive activity) around important days such as the Day of the Girl Child and International Women's Day.

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit, we organized door-to-door and rickshaw campaigns. These reached entire communities with messages on child marriage but also on the impacts of Covid-19, including awareness-raising on domestic violence and hygiene measures to prevent the spread of the disease. Radio messages

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[2] Gender Action Learning System (GALS) is a community-led empowerment methodology based on underlying principles of social and gender justice, inclusion and mutual respect. In particular, it promotes women's rights.

strengthened these campaigns and were aired in the districts of Larkana and Shikarpur (Sindh), reaching 114,309 listeners in total.

One of the participants in Punjab shared that he comes from a very strong tribal family where there is no concept of girls' education; however, after watching the mobile cinema, he said he now understands the role that education plays in everyday life.

Photo 2: Mobile cinema screening, Punjab. Photo credit: Raffat Shuja

Photo 3: Rickshaw campaign with messages on ending child marriage. Photo credit: Raffat Shujas

3.1.2 MALI

In Mali, edutainment sessions took place in five districts or so-called 'cercles' of the Ségou region. They were organized by the Malian alliance, which was comprised of the NGOs WALE, FAWE and A. SORO, each contributing their respective expertise. The edutainment sessions were of a very different character to those in Pakistan, as they were held in public spaces and attracted large crowds. Also, the sessions were run by the youth peer educators trained as part of the MNCP project, whereas in Pakistan they were run by project staff.

We organized 23 youth-led interactive theatre sessions, which reached 400 people per session on average: 165 girls and 130 boys, and 93 women and 73 men. Some of the sessions were part of school theatre competitions, with an award ceremony for the best play. In addition to the theatre sessions,

the MNCP project organized 14 mobile cinema screenings, which were attended by 222 people per session, on average: 100 girls, 64 boys, 36 women and 22 men.

Photo 4: Mobile cinema screening, Mali, 2018. Photo credit: Karim Kemeni

In addition, 22 photo exhibitions were held in each of the five project areas. The photos featured role models from the communities – younger and older people, who each in their own way contribute to a more gender-just society by setting an example or working on education, safety or governance. The exhibitions were visited by 3,645 girls and 2,913 boys, and 2,063 women and 1,062 men.

Immediately before the pandemic, Oxfam in Mali and the project partners established a partnership with RAES to broadcast its *C'est la Vie!* radio series on various FM stations in the communities of Bla, San and Ségou. Produced in French and in local languages (Bambara, Hausa, Wolof), the drama is an adaptation of a television series of the same name. *C'est la Vie!* immerses listeners in the universe of Ratanga Health Centre, where the evolution of the characters over the course of the series promotes awareness on issues related to sexuality, maternity and gender-based violence.

Photo 5: Radio listening group tuning in to *C'est La Vie!* Photo credit: Lassine Diarra

To further engage young people and their communities during the broadcasts of *C'est la Vie!*, we organized 30 'listening groups' involving 150 girls and 150 boys (in- and out-of-school peer educators and members of girls' groups) and women and men members of the different grassroots structures. We made sure the listening groups were Covid-safe, respecting social distancing and hygiene measures. In this way, they provided a safe space for people to discuss and engage on the different topics raised by the series.

We also organized radio debates connected to the various episodes, engaging young people, especially girls, on the issues raised and on Covid-19. We provided mobile phones and SIM cards to ensure that girls, boys and their communities could connect with each other, ask questions and raise their voices on their own issues. In this way, the *C'est la Vie!* series enabled us to continue the MNCP project activities despite the Covid restrictions, while also raising awareness of Covid-19 and related health and hygiene measures to prevent its spread.

3.1.3 NIGER

In Niger, as in Mali, interactive youth-led theatre was the main edutainment strategy developed and implemented by the MNCP project. The edutainment strategies were led by the NGOs SOS and FEVVF, with the support of Oxfam Niger. Once the youth actors had been recruited and their capacities strengthened, they helped to develop scripts around child marriage, education, HIV and SRHR. Overall, 72 theatre sessions were held, reaching a total audience of 19,430 people: 9,432 girls and women, and 9,998 boys and men.

Photo 6: Youth-led theatre session, Niger. Photo credit: Grace Saul

In addition to the theatre sessions, 62 mobile cinema screenings were held, mainly on the topic of child marriage and education, followed by a facilitated dialogue. With these sessions, we reached a total of 1,433 people: 635 girls and women, and 797 boys and men.

We also collaborated with community radio stations and organized 55 youth-led radio broadcasts and 25 debates, in total reaching 592 women and girls, and 1,047 boys and men.

When Covid-19 and security restrictions prevented project mobilizers from working directly with the communities, we distributed mobile phones among the youth leaders, who acted as a focal point for communication in their communities. We continued our edutainment work on child marriage and education by developing short videos, which also included information on Covid-19 and related hygiene measures. The videos were circulated through WhatsApp with the youth leaders, who then shared them with a wider group of young people. In total, this reached 3,150 girls and 4,872 boys, and 374 women and 126 men.

4 THE EDUTAINMENT CYCLE: CO-CREATION, REFLECTION AND ADAPTION

In each of the three countries, the development and implementation of edutainment strategies went through more or less the same phases of co-creation, reflection and adaptation. The co-creation and adaptation phases were kicked-off with in-country workshops held with local partners and, whenever possible, other key stakeholders such as youth representatives and religious and community leaders.

4.1 CO-CREATION PHASE

This first phase of the cycle is co-creating an effective edutainment strategy based on the available budget, opportunities and expertise in country.

During the first edutainment workshop with local partners, as a first step we would look at **the theory behind edutainment strategies** and consider what the process of development and implementation would look like.

We would then work together to **analyse existing or newly developed research** to define the root causes of child marriage and the opportunities for change in the context. This was to ensure that the stories we developed were based on the actual obstacles people faced, such as norms and attitudes around gender and sexuality, rather than only relating to the 'symptom' of child marriage. In all three countries, existing values around girls' sexuality and the fear of pregnancy out of wedlock – and its related reputational damage for the family – emerged as important drivers. In the case of Pakistan, girls' limited mobility was discussed as an area/opportunity for change, in addition to girls' education. In Mali and Niger, the focus was also on girls' education: ensuring that girls can access education beyond the age of 12, and keeping girls in school.

The next step involved **developing a draft influencing strategy** on the basis of the key obstacles identified. During this process, it becomes clear which key stakeholders will be targeted through the edutainment strategies and the related mobilization and/or campaigning strategies.

With the key obstacles and key stakeholders in mind, **key messages** were then developed for these different stakeholders. Some of these key messages would form the basis of the theatre scripts, while others would be used in the campaigning or mobilization strategies. An activity plan was then formulated, specifically linking the edutainment strategies and the associated mobilization and campaigning work. Local partners would work together with the (youth) theatre groups to develop scripts based on the key messages.

The co-creation phase also involved visits to or learning from experienced edutainment practitioners. In the case of Niger, for example, a visit to Alternatives Espaces Citoyen (AEC), which has a track record in working on edutainment on the topic of child marriage, started the capacity-strengthening trajectory of local partners and selected youth.

Formative research in Pakistan and the development of edutainment strategies (2018)

As explained above, our edutainment strategies were based on existing or newly developed research. In Pakistan, we had the opportunity to undertake new research as part of the MNCP learning agenda, with a focus on social norms. During the first two years of the project, we sought to understand the process of decision-making around marriage practices. In a qualitative formative research, girls, boys and parents were asked to respond to fictional stories ('vignettes') about a girl who got married at a young age. In an open conversation, they reflected on how they thought community members would respond, and what was typically happening in communities. Through their responses to the fictional stories, we gained first-hand insights into the norms at play in communities, while ensuring a safe environment for research participants (by not requiring them to reflect on real-life scenarios). Moreover, we obtained vital insights into which individuals were the key players in setting the norms ('reference people'), and which positive or negative sanctions were used to keep norms in place (for example gossiping about or shunning someone for ignoring a norm, or increasing your own status by following a norm).

The formative research, combined with the large-scale quantitative project baseline survey, highlighted the distinct norms at play around marriage decision-making processes and how they influence actual behaviour. Together with local partner organizations we reflected on the findings: what was surprising about them and what they meant for project implementation, specifically in terms of the edutainment strategies.

One example of how the findings influenced the development of the edutainment strategies relates to the role of mothers in marriage decision-making. The project initially assumed that fathers make the final decision on marriage and steer the full process leading up to the decision. However, the formative research highlighted the role of mothers, who – often behind the scenes – played a key role in brokering relations between families and setting up an engagement. As such, it was clear that mothers could play a strong role in influencing the age at which their daughters get married. The edutainment scripts were therefore adapted to allow a bigger role for the mother, and the stories included ways for mothers to influence the marriage decision – basically, by delaying the marriage. The idea was that this would inspire mothers in communities to act on this and start using their influence.

4.2 REFLECTION AND ADAPTATION PHASE

The reflection and adaptation phase occurred roughly halfway through the project; in Mali and Niger it began in 2018, after partners and young people had already developed and implemented many theatre sessions and other mobilization activities. In Pakistan, this phase took place at the end of 2018, when partners were still starting up the mobile cinema screening sessions. In each of the countries we carried out midline surveys, followed by a workshop to analyse the results.

Through the midline surveys, the project teams aimed to find out whether edutainment participants were discussing the topics of the edutainment intervention with others, and whether girls and boys were claiming their rights as a result of the intervention. Through this data collection and reflection midway through the project, the project teams aimed to learn from what was working or not working – and adapt their strategy accordingly to maximize the project's impact.

4.2.1 MIDLINE SURVEY AND ADAPTATION

The midline surveys reached the following numbers of respondents:
- Mali: 72 respondents (18 girls, 18 boys, 18 parents, and 18 others: teachers, elected officials, village chiefs, etc.)
- Niger: 70 respondents (17 girls, 23 boys, 13 parents, 2 teachers, 7 religious people/leaders, and 8 representatives of local authorities)
- Pakistan: 115 respondents (60 women/girls and 55 men/boys).

This sub-section is concerned with process rather than results; as such, it describes the top-line findings and how the project teams adapted the edutainment activities in response to these. More detailed results by country and project topic are provided in section 5.

The first question the project teams looked at was how many girls/boys discussed child marriage, which was a topic of the edutainment intervention, with friends. The results were very positive in Mali, mostly positive in Niger, but relatively low in Pakistan (where the edutainment activities were only starting to get underway).

The second question looked at how many girls/boys discussed child marriage with a parent, a schoolteacher and/or several people. In all countries, the numbers were low to very low.

Given these low numbers (especially for girls and boys discussing child marriage with parents), the project teams in Mali and Niger convened in March and October 2018 respectively, to carry out an analysis of the actors and identify new strategies. For Mali, campaigning and mobilizing activities around International Women's Day were adapted to promote intergenerational dialogue, with messages like "Parents, listen to your children." In Niger, the session resulted in the development of an action plan which included the specific objective of "making at least 50% of parents engage in an interactive dialogue with their girls". In addition, a recommendation was formulated to "raise awareness (through forum theatre as well as film projections) with homogeneous audiences (single women, youth or men) in order to reduce inhibitions and encourage each other's participation."

In Pakistan, together with the partners, we evaluated the mobile cinema screenings. Organizing these sessions was logistically challenging, especially when confronted with electricity problems or when communities were unexpectedly involved in more pressing activities. We also reflected on community members' feedback on the sessions. Despite the challenges, audiences appreciated the mobile screening sessions as an innovative and entertaining way to engage on the topic of child marriage. The fact that the screenings took place indoors ensured a private and safe space for people, especially women and girls, to more openly discuss the topics portrayed in the video. We also evaluated the quality of the products, and concluded that in one of the videos the female actor playing the child bride was too old, and therefore not convincing.

5 PROJECT EFFECTS AND IMPACT

At the end of the MNCP project, we conducted studies in all three countries to assess the effects and impact of the edutainment activities. In Mali and Niger, an endline survey was carried out in 2020, with sample sizes as follows:

- Mali: 24 respondents (12 women and 12 men, all peer educators)
- Niger: 81 respondents (39 women and 42 men).

In Pakistan, a randomized controlled trial (RCT) was conducted in 2019 (baseline data collection) and 2020 (endline data collection). The total sample included 5,148 respondents from 1,716 households in 177 villages of Sindh and Punjab provinces; 832 boys, 822 girls and 1,632 male and 1,656 female adults were interviewed.

As explained in the introduction, only the results of the RCT in Pakistan have sufficient scientific validity to allow us to attribute findings with absolute certainty to the project's edutainment activities. Positive results from Pakistan are therefore referred to in terms of the 'impact' of the edutainment activities, whereas positive results from the midline and endline surveys in Mali and Niger are referred to as 'effects'. Nevertheless, we believe the 'effects' in Mali and Niger are strong indicators of the changes the project's edutainment activities have brought about in the lives of participants.

The studies in Mali and Niger specifically assessed the effects of edutainment through a survey that assessed both our Gender Action Learning System (GALS) work as well as the peer educator work. Peer educators mostly used edutainment to mobilize communities. It became clear from the surveys that edutainment, especially theatre, is very popular and was considered to have contributed substantially to the sensitization of the community at large.

The overall impacts and effects of the MNCP project's edutainment activities are summarized below (section 5.1) and a more detailed breakdown of results for each country, including midline results, is provided in section 5.2.

5.1 OVERALL EFFECTS AND IMPACT

- In Pakistan, 54% of boys and 56% of girls who participated in the RCT in 2019-2020 said they had discussed the edutainment intervention with a parent. This is a net improvement compared to the midline numbers.
- In Mali, nearly all (96%) of the peer educators interviewed in 2020 stated that intergenerational debates take place within their communities. The same assertion was made in the focus groups, with an emphasis on the project intervention as a trigger. This suggests that more and more communication is taking place between the generations within the community as a result of the project's activities on early marriage. Indeed, it is through communication that attitudes can be changed and people can advocate for the elimination of early marriage.
- In Niger, the vast majority of youth (87%) interviewed in 2020 reported having had discussions about sexuality. This was more common among boys (95%) than girls (80%). These discussions generally took place during informal chats, such as discussions over tea or during the awareness sessions. A large proportion of the youth (75%) said that they had never discussed sexuality with a parent. The few who had discussed the subject with their parents did so in an informal chat. Fewer than half the youth (44%) said they address the topic of sexuality at school; here, girls

were more likely to have broached this subject than boys (51% versus 38%). Girls were most likely to have discussed the subject with their (always female) home economics teacher.

5.2 EFFECTS AND IMPACT PER COUNTRY, PER TOPIC

Through the edutainment interventions in Mali, Niger and Pakistan, the MNCP project aimed to catalyse a change process in three phases. In the first phase (sub-sections i. below), the people who participated in the edutainment activity were expected to discuss the topic(s) of the activity with others. In the second phase (sub-sections ii. below), boys and girls were expected to speak up to influence the decision about their marriage and claim their rights by saying no to an arranged marriage. Parents were expected to find it acceptable that children speak up about their rights, and also to agree to a delayed marriage or, ideally, to be sensitized not to arrange an early marriage in the first place.

5.2.1 MALI

i. Discussing the topics of the edutainment intervention
In Mali, 89% of the girls and 78% of the boys surveyed in 2018 indicated that they had discussed the topic of child marriage with friends; 17% of the girls and 28% of the boys indicated that they had discussed the topic of child marriage with parents, while 11% of the girls and 22% of the boys had discussed it with teachers.

ii. Speaking up and claiming rights
In Mali, 56% of the girls and 50% of the boys surveyed in 2018 indicated that girls/boys are allowed to say no to an arranged marriage; 67% of the parents and 72% of the others (teachers, elected officials, village chiefs, etc.) indicated the same. 25% of the peer educators interviewed in 2020 reported that parents agreed with delayed marriage. According to one of them: "*After our awareness-raising on early marriage, some parents say they are not going to agree to marry their children before they reach maturity.*"

5.2.2 NIGER

i. Discussing the topics of the edutainment intervention
In Niger, 65% of the girls and 39% of the boys surveyed in 2018 indicated that they had discussed the topic of child marriage with friends; 6% of the girls but none of the 23 boys indicated that they had discussed child marriage with parents. None of the girls and 4% of the boys had discussed it with a teacher; 18% of the girls and 43% of the boys said they had discussed it with several people.

ii. Speaking up and claiming rights
In Niger, 24% of the girls, 30% of the boys, 23% of the parents, 29% of religious leaders, 50% of teachers, and 25% of the local authority representatives surveyed in 2018 indicated that girls/boys are allowed to say no to an arranged marriage. Some of these respondents provided additional information, as follows:
- Girls/boys can have their say in the marriage;
- They can refuse;
- It's their right to be consulted;
- Islam requires the consent of spouses;
- Girls must be consulted, not forced to marry;
- Girls' opinions are always sought.

12% of the girls, 13% of the boys, 15% of the parents, 14% of respondents qualified as 'religious', 50% of the teachers, and 13% of the authorities who were surveyed in 2018 indicated that girls/boys are *not* allowed to say no to an arranged marriage. Some provided additional information, as follows:

- They are not allowed to say no, but they may refuse;
- They must respect the parents, but the parents must ask their opinion;
- Boys can (say no to arranged marriage), girls cannot, but all must be consulted;
- No (they cannot say no), but they must be consulted;
- We inform them of the decision we have made;
- Sometimes they can oppose (the marriage), especially when the girl is older;
- When it (the marriage) is in the same family, it's hard to say no. The boy accepts, but he can remarry later with a girl of his choice.

5.2.3 PAKISTAN

i. Discussing the topics of the edutainment intervention

In Pakistan, 34% of female respondents and 23% of male respondents surveyed in 2018 said they talked about child marriage with a friend; 11% of female respondents and 14% of male respondents talked about child marriage with parents; 3% of female respondents and 9% of male respondents talked about it with an educator; and 4% of female respondents and 2% of male respondents said they talked about it with others.

ii. Speaking up and claiming rights

In Pakistan, 65% of adolescents who participated in the project's edutainment activities and who were surveyed in 2019-2020 reported that a boy is allowed to delay a suggested marriage, while 48% reported that this is the case for girls (Table 1). Both percentages are significantly higher among project participants than for adolescents who did not participate in the project (57% of whom said boys can delay marriage and 39% of whom said this is the case for girls). 75% of mothers who participated in the project's edutainment activities reported that a boy is able to delay a suggested marriage. This is also significantly higher than for mothers who did not participate in the project (67%). In terms of agreeing that girls can delay a suggested marriage, there is no significant difference between mothers who participated in the project (53%) and those who did not (47%). For fathers, there is no significant difference between project participants/non-participants in terms of their attitudes towards boys and girls delaying a suggested marriage. Around 61% of both participant and non-participant fathers said that boys can delay a suggested marriage, while 51% of fathers who participated in the project and 44% of non-participant fathers said that girls can delay a suggested marriage.

Table 1 Pakistan survey respondents (2019-20) reporting that boys/girls can delay a suggested marriage

	BOYS			GIRLS	
	Control	Treatment	*p-value*	Control	Treatment
Adolescents	57.14%	64.80%	*0.026*	39.25%	48.42%
Fathers	60.75%	61.25%	*0.823*	44.1%	50.75%
Mothers	67.34%	75.0%	*0.032*	47.03%	53.26%

The 'control' columns show responses of the comparison group, i.e. people not involved in the MNCP edutainment activities. The 'treatment' columns show responses of surveyed participants.

Of adolescents who participated in the project's edutainment activities and who were surveyed in 2019-2020, 34% reported that a boy is able to refuse a suggested marriage while 38% said this is the case for girls (Table 2). While the numbers are relatively low overall, it is interesting that more respondents considered it possible for girls than boys. Only the former percentage (i.e on boys) is significantly higher among project participants than for adolescents who did not participate. For mothers, there is no significant difference between participants and non-participants in terms of their attitudes towards boys and girls refusing a suggested marriage: 61% of participating and 55% of non-participating mothers said boys can refuse a suggested marriage, and 42% of participating and 36% of non-participating mothers said girls can refuse a suggested marriage. Around 45% of fathers who participated in the project's edutainment activities reported that a boy is able to refuse a suggested marriage; this is significantly higher than for fathers who did not participate in the project (35%). In terms of fathers who said that girls can refuse a suggested marriage, there is no significant difference between fathers who participated in the project (29%) and those who did not (24%).

Table 2 Pakistan survey respondents (2019-20) reporting that boys/girls can refuse a suggested marriage

	BOYS			GIRLS	
	Control	Treatment	*p-value*	Control	Treatment
Adolescents	27.55%	33.72%	*0.081*	31.72%	37.65%
Fathers	35.48%	44.64%	*0.023*	23.73%	28.92%
Mothers	55.28%	61.11%	*0.156*	36.22%	41.62%

The edutainment intervention had a significant positive effect on what mothers and fathers see as the best age for girls to leave school (14.27 years according to mothers not participating in the project's edutainment activities compared to 15.15 years according to participating mothers; and 14.89 years according to non-participant fathers, compared to 15.56 years according to participant fathers). It also had a significant positive effect on what mothers and fathers see as the best age for girls to get married (18.26 years according to mothers not involved in project activities, compared to 18.78 years in the participant group; and 18.23 years according to non-participating fathers, compared to 18.53 years according to participant fathers). Finally, the edutainment intervention had a significant positive effect on what mothers see as the best age for boys to get married (20.79 years according to non-participant mothers, compared to 21.49 years according to participating mothers).

6 CONCLUSIONS

Edutainment strategies were appreciated by a wide range of people – young and old – participating in the project, as a fun way to engage on the topics of child marriage, education and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Theatre was most appreciated in Niger and Mali, as it took place in the midst of the communities and was dynamic and interactive. In Pakistan, the mobile cinema screenings were welcomed as a new way of engaging people, and here the more private spaces allowed for more intimate discussions. It is now recommended to assess whether it is better to hold the follow-up discussions in mixed or homogenous groups, as this influences to a great extent people's willingness to discuss a topic with other group members.

In Mali and Niger, all activities were youth-led. This has increased the visibility of youth and may have contributed to the fact that parents are now more accepting of girls starting discussions around continuing their education and delaying their marriage. In this way, edutainment is not only contributing to the mobilization of communities, but also to young people's empowerment.

Edutainment led to more discussions in the communities in general: these were taking place across generations to a lesser extent in Niger, but more so in Pakistan and even more in Mali. The MNCP project's edutainment strategies did have substantial effects on parents' acceptance of delaying a marriage. It is interesting to see that while in Mali and Niger parents accepted this being initiated by either a girl or a boy, in Pakistan there is wider acceptance of this being initiated by a boy. We can conclude from the randomized control trial in Pakistan that parents were agreeing to girls staying in school longer, which is a very positive impact on girls' education and, as we know from research, an effective mechanism against child marriage.

While in Niger and Mali the edutainment work began fairly early on in the project, this was unfortunately not the case in Pakistan, where the massive scale-up of the activities was a logistical challenge. In future projects it is recommended to start edutainment work as early as possible, as this will contribute to the acceptability of discussing sensitive topics, and therefore to the impact and effects of other strategies in the project.