

Sustaining attitudinal and behavior change at scale

Mona Mehta, Oxfam

We Can End All Violence against Women (We Can) campaign started in Sept.2004 as a regional 6 country campaign to change social attitudes and practices that perpetuated and normalized all forms of VAWG in South Asia. The campaign aimed to mobilise 5 million change makers (ordinary people from all walks of life to change themselves and mobilise 10 other people to do the same). It helped people recognize the everyday forms of VAWG as part of the continuum of more extreme violence and addressed the underlying attitudes that are based on low value of women and systemic inequalities. It used simple, easy to follow language and called upon people's agency and ability to influence in their own circles of influence- to set up a chain process to reach scale while enabling in depth and sustained interactions for lasting change. The campaign relied on an extensive alliance to reach scale. It was flexible in its mobilization of change makers and relied on the agency of change makers to bring changes in their own and others' lives. Yet it had centralized communication materials that reached the 4 million individual change makers (over seven years) to avoid distortion of key messages. It relied heavily on print and pictorial materials to enable change makers in rural areas to have access and control over the materials and use them repeatedly. In more remote locations of Nepal, radio was another key media. The overall We Can campaign was evaluated in 2010 and results shared. A summary version is available here https://www.thoughtshopfoundation.org/Download.htm?WC_MeasuringChange.pdf ;

In Bangladesh, the We Can campaign (Amrai Pari) continues to flourish 13 years later. It is now a registered organization but continues to as an extensive alliance. It has a presence in all 64 districts of the country and continues to keep in touch with change makers via voluntary district committees. It has also set up a national Youth Forum for young change makers. And along with its huge million strong change maker base, it has been actively working to influence institutional changes and strengthen the voice of ordinary women and men against all forms of VAWG. It has been in the forefront of the Civil society movement to advocate for the Domestic Violence Bill and protest against the regressive amendments to the Child Marriage Restraint Act.

We Can will share its experience of developing, implementing, scaling up and sustaining a social and behavior change communication based campaign. The presentation will touch up core issues re. quality implementation at scale: fidelity to core principles and components; assuring safety especially in the context of extremist violence, extensive alliance building, self-propelled community involvement in making change happen and sustaining their engagement over 13 years. A key issue will be the popular identity not just of the campaign but of the 'Change Maker' and how it sustains the change.