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Integrating Information and Communication Technologies into Communication for Development Strategies to Support and Empower Marginalized Adolescent Girls

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Cover photo: Girls look at a mobile phone at All Children Education (ACE), a private school for immigrant children, in Philipsburg, St. Maarten, in the Caribbean.

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August 2013

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Acknowledgments:
The authors would like to thank the expert panel for their time and for participating in the Fast Talk process, providing much needed guidance and expert feedback:

Chris Fabian, UNICEF
Ramona Liberoff, Movirtu
Trina Das-Gupta formerly of GSMA Association
Dr. Per Helmersen, GSMA Association
Irena Posin, Ministry of Culture, Media and Information Society, Government of Serbia
Susan Schorr, International Telecommunications Union

The authors also extend their appreciation to the 37 adolescent girls who participated in the Girls Fast Talk process, thereby providing invaluable input to this paper.

Special thanks go to Emmanuelle Paris-Cohen, Kathryn Travers, and Marisa Canuto from Women in Cities International (WICI) for sharing the My City, My Safety! case study. Thanks are also due to Alana Livesey from Plan International for her creative input in featuring Yetam case study.

This paper was made possible with the input and contributions of many other people and organizations, including:

Judy Diers, Neha Kapil, Noreen Khan, Erica Kochi, Rafael Obregon and Mima Perisic, UNICEF
Kristen Roggemann and Jacob Korenblum, Souktel
Jamie Lundine, Map Kibera
Ken Banks, FrontlineSMS
Josh Nesbit, Medic Mobile
Guillaume Debar and Gannon Gillespie, Tostan
Tony Roberts, University of London
Soledad Muniz, Insight Share
Mika Valitalo, Plan Finland
Sarah Hendriks, Plan International
Lia De-Pauw, Spark Public Health Group
Evangelia Berdou from the Institute of Development Studies (IDS)
Mirkka Tuulia Mattila, UNICEF West and Central Africa Region
Joachim Theis, UNICEF West and Central Africa Region

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Introduction

In 2011 UNICEF hosted the 12th United Nations Communication for Development Rountable in New Delhi, India, which focused on the role that communication for development strategies play in empowering girls. UNICEF commissioned authors Keshett Bachan and Linda Raftree to conduct a review of case studies and experiences that could illustrate the potential and challenges of ICTs in advancing the rights of girls, and facilitating their engagement and participation for social transformation. This paper is the result of that effort, which also included feedback from young girls. This version of the paper also has benefitted from the inputs of communication for development experts and researchers.

Communication for Development (C4D) is a cross-cutting programme strategy central to UNICEF's efforts to ensure the realization of children's rights, especially of the world's most marginalized and disadvantaged. C4D seeks to empower children, families and communities, enhance their voices through dialogue, consultation and participation, and help individuals, families and communities make important decisions to improve and save lives, and increase civic engagement for long lasting change.

New information and communication technologies (ICTs) have advanced in unprecedented ways over the past decade. They are increasingly driving and supporting community level changes as well as local, national and global economies and international development efforts. ICTs can contribute to Communication for Development (C4D) work in many ways. For example, they can enable adolescents to amplify their voices and ideas, develop skills needed to successfully enter the labour market, build social networks, connect with their peers, and join efforts to end gender based violence, exploitation and abuse. ICTs can also help C4D efforts to improve service delivery and to help build more enabling environments for children and adolescents to realize their rights.

Children and adolescents are often early adopters and drivers of ICTs. Yet a gender gap in access to and use of ICTs still persist, whereby adolescent girls are less likely to benefit from the potential of ICTs. Adolescent girls are generally more vulnerable to a host of issues –from violence to discrimination- that undermine their well-being, negatively affect their development, and impede their ability to reach their full potential. For instance, lack of access to and use of ICTs hinders adolescent girl's access to critical information about their own sexual and reproductive health or to online trainings, skills development, and opportunities in the labour market.

This paper highlights examples of existing C4D programming enhanced by the use of ICT tools. The authors look at the advantages and risks of utilizing ICTs in the context of programming for and with marginalized adolescent girls. They discuss successful initiatives, and they raise points that need further clarity and documentation. For instance, the challenges of adopting ICTs in programming with adolescent girls remain. The digital divide means the most marginalized girls still lack access to mobile devices and computers, and the dangers of trafficking, fraud, sexual harassment, cyber bullying, child pornography and sexting put them at constant risk when using ICTs.

The paper captures a wide range of initiatives in Bangladesh, Kenya, Egypt, Lebanon, Indonesia, Turkey, Mauritania, Tunisia, Nepal, Nairobi, West Africa, India, Nigeria, Malawi, Uganda, Serbia and South Africa, among others, that illustrate how ICTs embedded in broader communication for development strategies can provide the driving power to change and ensure better outcomes for marginalized adolescent girls. The paper highlights many of the benefits of ICT use for adolescent girls, including access to knowledge and information; connection, engagement and agency; involvement in efforts for improved governance and service delivery; increased opportunities for empowerment and voice; greater participation and inclusion; and efforts to overcome violence, exploitation and abuse. In addition, the authors also recognize existing barriers and risks in using ICTs by marginalized adolescent girls, including

access, poverty and discrimination issues, education, social and cultural practices and attitudes, and safety and protection.

Drawing on the analysis of case-studies, risks and trends, this paper offers recommendations for policy and practice for ensuring marginalized adolescent girls are supported to access, own and use ICTs through strategic C4D processes at multiple levels. Key recommendations emphasize the importance of conducting adequate situation assessment and analysis in ICT-driven strategies; develop a policy framework that ensures an equity focus to access the use of ICTs; increased efforts on mainstreaming ICTs into broader C4D programming; a deliberate focus on ICT aspects of C4D programmes for adolescent girls; and strengthened monitoring and evaluation of results of C4D strategies that draw on ICTs.

The rapid expansion and availability of ICTs, especially mobile phones and geo-location tools, require UN agencies, governments and non-government institutions, and other social actors working in this field to take stock of current C4D practices which have already adopted ICT tools and to consider additional ways through which ICTs could support development efforts. Conversely, attention must be paid to the consistency of programme implementation and relevant application of ICTs as one of the many tools available to communication for development practitioners. We hope that this paper will contribute to advocacy and implementation efforts focused on addressing these questions and issues.

The paper also features case studies of C4D strategies developed by Plan International and Women in Cities International (WCI), partner organizations that are using ICTs to empower and improve the lives of adolescent girls. The examples illustrate ways in which voices of adolescent girls are captured, amplified and 'upstreamed' from individual or community to higher levels of influence and decision-making. At the same time, they demonstrate the essential elements of effective C4D strategy development. Initiated in 2008, Plan's Youth Empowerment through Technology, Arts and the Media (YETAM) programme took place in 6 West and East Africa countries: Cameroon, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda and Senegal. Through this programme, youth engaged in the community development process and beyond. They were trained on different forms of communication, which included verbal communication, performance, visual arts, and social media, in order to help them effectively raise their viewpoints and enter into dialogue with families, peers, community members, decision makers, and the general public. Social media and new technology allowed those who formerly did not have a space at the global table to enter into the dialogue directly. Implemented by WCI, My City! My Safety! was funded by Status of Women Canada within their Blueprint Project programme under the theme "Preventing violence against women and girls and improving their security in Canadian cities". My City! My Safety! activities raised awareness and encouraged participants to become active citizens, engaged in the development of safer and more inclusive cities. The goal of this project for participants was to create a media product of their choosing, which will then be broadcast within their community.

C4D programming, principles, and strategies are uniquely placed to challenge the underlying causes of the marginalization of girls and the unequal power dynamics that sustain discrimination against girls. ICTs are providing alternative means of communication and participation, despite institutional and cultural barriers that prevent girls and young women from taking part in decision making processes. C4D strategies that effectively integrate ICTs offer tremendous opportunities to empower adolescent girls build their self-confidence and competence, alongside efforts to facilitate an enabling environment for addressing structural and social barriers that prevent adolescent girls from reaching their full potential.

Executive summary

Social, cultural, economic and political traditions and systems that prevent girls, especially the most marginalized, from fully achieving their rights present a formidable challenge to development organizations. The integration of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to the Communication for Development (C4D) toolbox offers an additional means for challenging unequal power relations and increasing participation of marginalized girls in social transformation. In this paper we examine ways that ICTs can strengthen C4D programming by enhancing girls' connections, engagement and agency; helping girls access knowledge; and supporting improved governance and service delivery efforts. We reflect and build on the views of adolescent girls from 13 developing countries who participated in a unique discussion for this paper and we then provide recommendations to support the integration of ICTs in C4D work with marginalized adolescent girls.

(Left) Rona Qaderi, coordinator of the UNICEF-assisted Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), speaks to a group of young women in a private home in the Eastern city of Jalalabad, Afghanistan. She is encouraging them to participate in a new youth centre in the city that offers Internet access and computer training.

1. Setting the scene and the context

As defined in the 2006 Rome Consensus from the World Congress on Communication for Development, Communication for Development (C4D) is "a social process based on dialogue using a **broad range of tools and methods** [our emphasis]. It is also about seeking change at different levels, including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change".[1]

C4D is an important way of increasing civic engagement and providing a platform for participation and empowerment of both individuals and communities. It promotes dialogue between and amongst communities and decision makers at local, national and regional levels. In this paper we will focus on the ways in which the C4D values of democratization and participation can and do go hand in hand with the democratic and bottom up nature of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs).

Why ICTs?

The past decade has seen mobile phones and the internet become increasingly available in even the hardest to reach or most underdeveloped regions. These technologies are changing the ways in which communication and development are occurring. ICTs are creating demand amongst individuals and communities for new services, better education and broader development outcomes that go beyond poverty reduction to support their chances to join the knowledge economy and to be heard.[3]

ICTs can connect people across the globe for discussion, debate, and joint sharing and learning. They allow broad national or global social movements to form through loose on-line affiliations that connect offline groups and individuals and allow them to find each other and work together. ICTs can allow voices of children and young people to reach national and global decision makers.[4] Behavior change and community mobilization can be supported using new technologies in combination with more traditional social change tools.

C4D: A Values-Based Approach[2]

UNICEF's C4D principles are equity focused and based on the human rights-based approach to programming, particularly on the rights to information, communication and participation as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC – Articles, 12, 13, and 17). Including the following:

- Facilitate enabling environments that:
  - Create spaces for plurality of voices and narratives of communities
  - Encourage listening, dialogue, debate and consultation
  - Ensure the active and meaningful participation of children and youth
  - Promote gender equality and social inclusion
- Reflect the principles of inclusion, self-determination, participation and respect by ensuring that marginalized groups (including indigenous populations and people with disabilities) are prioritized and given high visibility and voice
- Link community perspectives and voices with sub-national and national policy dialogue
- Start early and address the WHOLE child, including the physical, cognitive, emotional, social and spiritual aspects
- Ensure that children are reflected as agents of change - whenever possible, and within all development areas where formative research demonstrates their role as key influencers - and as a primary participant group, starting from the early childhood years
- Build the self-esteem and confidence of care providers and children

What are ICTs?

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) can include the whole range of technologies used for communication[5] They include the Internet, the PC and the mobile phone which enable applications like the World Wide Web, email, blogs, electronic archives, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Orkut and other social networking websites where multi-media content can be accessed and shared. Some definitions of ICT include 'old' or 'traditional' electronic media, such as radio and television, because digitization provides opportunities for various media to work together as a suite of media channels to achieve a particular information and communication objective.[6] Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and digital Geographical Information Systems (GIS) or digital mapping can be included in the list of ICT tools as well.

Some leading thinkers[7] see ICTs as more than simply tools, but as a new dimension in human history, one that is creating a new social paradigm – 'the network society'. Although this paper, and C4D approaches more generally, recognize and even harness this process of social mobilization that occurs within the 'Network Society', in our analysis we will approach ICTs as individual tools. This will allow us to look closely at the components that make up a C4D toolbox using both new and traditional communication platforms.

As the world experiences a 'youth bulge',[8] with over 600 million adolescent girls in the developing world (between the ages of 10-19),[9] duty bearers at all levels are realizing how investing in this dynamic cohort can encourage sustainable social transformation. A generalized phenomenon of strong youth movements in 2011, spilling over into 2012, has reminded the world that young people present a huge political force.[10] These and other events in countries across the globe have also demonstrated how social media and mobile technologies, if used and applied in a systematic and organized way, can spark behavioral and social change.

The existing prevalence of mobile phones[i] and the Internet allows institutions to directly engage with and support girls and young women in advocacy, social mobilization and behavior change. By providing access to information and enabling more rapid, multi-way and extensive communication and sharing of information, ICTs can support grounded, "bottom up" community based mobilization[11] that increases the impact of C4D. Traditional media, broadcast media and print media remain critical tools for advancing C4D objectives, but ICTs are an increasingly critical part of the cultural and social rituals embedded in people's daily lives and are therefore an important addition to the C4D toolbox.

Although each communication channel and practice provides a different advantage, the unique nature of ICTs allows them to mix and 'host' other communication outlets. Television and radio that are streamed online can be accessed through computers or mobile phones, allowing advocacy messages to reach a much wider audience across countries and regions. For instance, it is estimated that 27 per cent of radio listeners in Kenya tune in via their phones.[12]

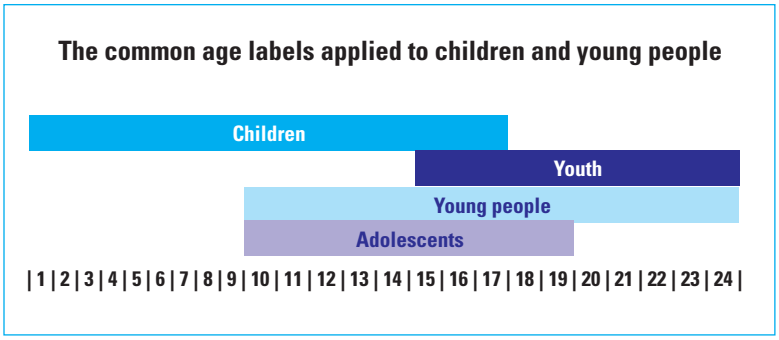
Along with this great potential come barriers that can prevent the most marginalized groups from accessing ICTs including: age, gender, disability, literacy, capacity, cost and connectivity. As we will explore in section 3, levels of access to technology tools should influence whether or not they are chosen as appropriate tools for reaching C4D objectives, especially in programs aimed at reaching the most marginalized.[13] An analysis of how marginalization and unequal power dynamics further limit girls' access to and use of ICTs is critical during the program design phase to ensure an accurate picture of how these tools and platforms can be utilized and to avoid further exclusion.

In this paper, we discuss the ways in which ICTs can enhance C4D efforts with and for marginalized adolescent girls (between the ages of 10 and 19). We had hoped to provide a majority of examples of programs working with early adolescent girls (10-14 years of age), however these programs are scarce. Some examples include young women up to the age of 24 or even up to 35 years old, depending on the legal definition of the term 'youth' in a given country. Because there is no clear distinction made for the most part at the programming level, in this paper we use the terms 'adolescents' and 'youth' interchangeably. The authors do recognize the ways in which these categories are distinct and the fact that they often overlap.[4]

i It is estimated that a quarter of the world's 6.8 billion people have access to the internet, and 86 per cent can connect to communication networks through mobile devices.

2. On the margins: adolescent girls

Adolescent girls in many societies are perceived both as women and as youth[ii] [iii] which presents "an interface between the agenda on women's rights and children's rights".[14] Other categories of exclusion or marginalization might also include adolescent girls such as disability[iv] and vulnerability to sexual violence, exploitation and abuse.[v] Thus we find that marginalized adolescent girls can often face multiple, intersecting or compounding forms of disadvantage, in addition to their gender and age.



Age labels for girls and young women overlap[15]

Especially during puberty, other forms of discrimination and exclusion, such as those listed below; intersect with these factors to cause further marginalization. At the same time, interventions aimed at adolescent girls have the most transformative potential[16] as they can significantly alter a trajectory of vulnerability by reducing the prevalence of various forms of discrimination such as early marriage and early pregnancy. Girls themselves recognize the importance of investing in their futures. As one 15 year old girl noted during a consultation process facilitated by Plan International: "If the girls are not getting further education their parents marry them".[17]

ICTs can be integrated into C4D programming that works *with and for* marginalized adolescent girls to help address different types of marginalization, including:

- **Girls affected by harmful practices** including female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), early and forced marriage and early and unattended child-bearing;
- **Girls belonging to socially excluded and vulnerable groups** of the poor – ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities; indigenous and nomadic communities; populations living in remote areas and urban slums; female prisoners; and female migrants;
- **Girls living in insecure** areas vulnerable to natural disasters, the effects of climate change, HIV/AIDS, armed conflict and gender-based violence;
- **Girls without adequate protection** such as girls in institutions, girls living apart from both parents, girls in violent households, girls in domestic labor, girls who are trafficked or living on the streets, girls without families in IDP and refugee camps, and girls who are heading households;
- **Girls denied access to quality education** because of poverty, geographical location (remote rural areas and urban slums), being part of ethnic minorities, lack of safety and security, disability, and religious conventions or traditional practices which force them to leave school early.

ii The World Health Organization and other UN agencies define adolescence as between 10 and 19 years old, youth as 15 to 24 years old and children as 0 to 18 years old. The fact that these categories overlap reflects the ways in which young people's lives and their physical and emotional development vary hugely, not just according to age but in relation to their sex, where they live, their family and community, their economic status and many other factors.

iii Article 1 of the CRC defines a child as a person below the age of 18 years, which includes adolescence. CEDAW contains some provisions that deal with adolescent girls, such as article 10 on girls' education and article 16 on the minimum age of marriage for girls and registration of marriage.

iv The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 4 (g) explicitly calls for the promoting the availability and use of new technologies, including information and communications technologies.

v See the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography: http://www.unicef.org/crc/index_30204.html

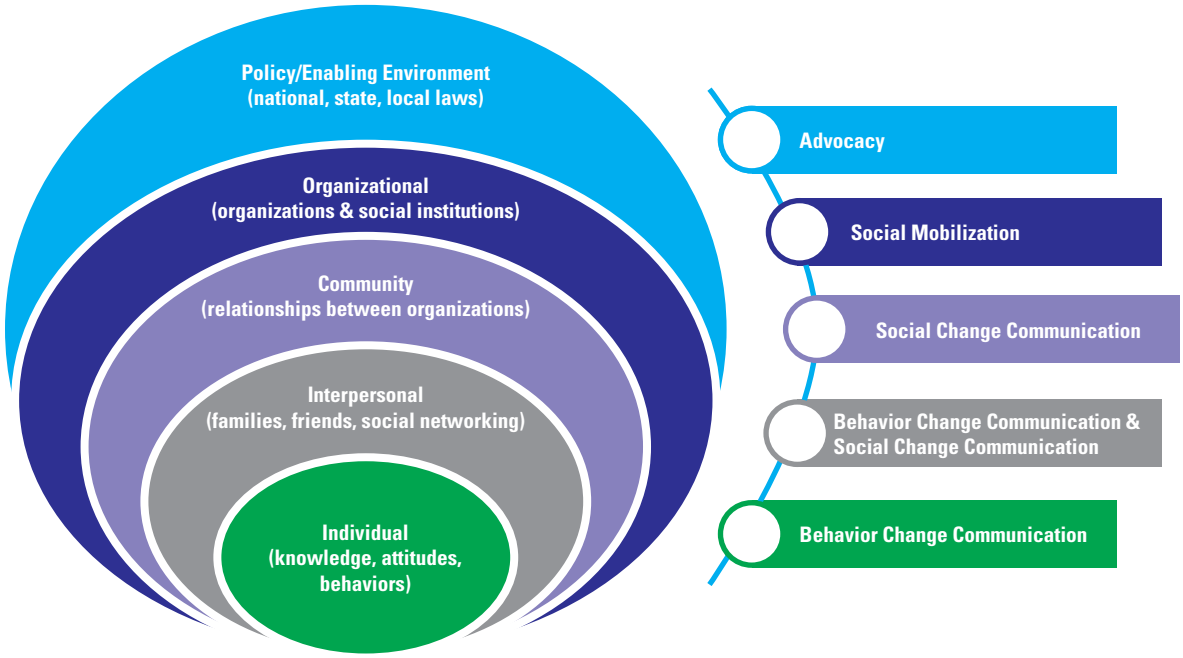
The root causes of marginalization, violations and on-going discrimination against adolescent girls stem from harmful norms and practices embedded in social, cultural, religious and traditional value systems as well as structural and institutional discrimination. Thus the process of transforming unequal power relations requires a holistic approach that seeks to engage all orbits of influence, including the individuals and institutions that surround adolescent girls, such as the family and peers. Transforming these systems of relations allows girls to develop and exercise their agency in a supportive environment.

C4D programming that seeks to empower marginalized adolescent girls must influence the systems, institutions and societies which sustain these inequalities. Taking a socio-ecological[18] approach to empowering marginalized adolescent girls and mapping out the orbits of influence that surround them further confirms the need for engaging and mobilizing stakeholders at various levels.

ICTs can play a role both in empowering adolescent girls and in reaching or engaging those around them to create enabling environments for girls.

Female youth volunteers receive computer education at a UNICEF supported computer literacy training centre at the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) in the city of Herat.

Social Ecological Model



Shefner-Rogers, Corinne, 2013, Regional Communication Strategy Development Guide for Newborn Care and the Prevention and Control of Childhood Pneumonia and Diarrhoea in East Asia and the Pacific Region, UNICEF HQ, New York.

3. ICTs: Girls' access and ownership

ICTs hold great potential for ensuring that the C4D principles of inclusion, participation, dialogue and empowerment are built into development programming from the beginning. But the question remains whether they are the right channel for working with marginalized adolescent girls and their communities, given that the most marginalized may also be the least likely to access ICTs.

Two core ICTs that can be used in C4D programming are the Internet and the mobile phone, with mobile phone access far outpacing that of Internet. According to the ITU's 2011 report,[19] mobile-cellular network coverage already stands at nearly 90 per cent of the world's population, and it is quite possible that it will rise to almost 100 per cent by 2015. On the other hand, in 2011, the ITU reported that only 20 per cent of the population in developing countries is using the Internet, and an even lower percentage accesses the Internet via a broadband connection.

There are large differences in access within and among countries, including a digital gap between urban and rural areas and between rich and poor.[20] Although the emergence of a new generation of mobile devices, such as tablet computers or 'smart phones' which connect to the Internet, is accelerating the process of bringing people on-line, these devices are expensive and still out of reach for the majority of the population in developing countries. In addition, mobile network *coverage*, mobile phone *ownership* and mobile phone *access* are three very different things.

It is generally accepted that the biggest adopters of ICTs are young people under the age of 30, however updated statistics about adolescent girls' access to mobile phones or the Internet at country or global levels are difficult to find.[21] We do know, however, that in many developing countries, women and girls have less access and control over ICTs than men and boys and less training on how to use them.[22]

According to a 2010 Cherie Blair Foundation and GSM Association (GSMA) study, women and girls are using mobiles in increasing numbers. The study surveyed more than 2,000 women over the age of 14 in four countries and found that 61 per cent of girls and young women in the age bracket of 14 to 20 own mobile phones, the second highest rate of mobile phone ownership among women surveyed (see Table 1). Twenty-nine per cent of 14- to 20-year old girls surveyed who did *not* have a mobile phone were willing to borrow one,[23] indicating that almost 90 per cent of girls in those countries can likely access a mobile phone in some way.[24]

Female ownership and usage of mobile phones by age in Bolivia, Kenya, Egypt and India[25]

Age	Own %	Borrow %	Yet to make use %
14-20	61	29	10
21-27	65	27	8
28-36	65	20	15
37-49	60	20	20
50-74	50	25	25

Although these numbers are encouraging, the most marginalized adolescent girls often live in areas that do not have Internet coverage or in some cases mobile coverage. They may not be able to afford to go on-line or cover the cost of sending SMS messages. They may not be literate or they may only speak their local language, meaning their ability to participate in on-line discussions is limited since these are usually managed in official languages. Their mobile phone's operating system may not support their local language for texting, or their language may be an oral language that does not lend itself to texting. They may not have their own phone, meaning they have to resort to borrowing one from a family member, or use a call box or other means.

Fabiola and Lil Shira, two teen-aged girls from rural Cameroon noted[26] that lack of mobile devices, high costs, unsupportive parents who don't allow girls

to learn about ICTs, lack of computers at school and broken computer equipment make it difficult for them to access ICTs. Girls' lower literacy rates due to their truncated schooling places an additional barrier on their ability to use ICTs. The girls commented that "the boys are very powerful and they fight us to occupy the computers." Boys also question girls' need to be on a computer. Fabiola commented, "When a girl succeeds to sit on a computer lab, a boy will raise his voice on her, saying 'why should you be holding a computer mouse when at the end of the day you will hold a baby's napkin'".[27]

In addition to attitudes, other unfavorable conditions such as employment, education and income impact on girls' access and use of ICTs. C4D initiatives should account for the digital gaps within and among regions and countries as well as between boys and girls and address the broader development processes that can enable girls' access and use of these communication devices.

Many of the causes for girls' low access to ICTs can be resolved only through long-term changes in areas such as education, gender equality and poverty alleviation, which C4D principles and strategies already support.

To ensure girls' experiences with ICTs were adequately reflected in this paper and our analysis, a unique "Fast Talk"[vi] process was conducted by Plan International in October 2011 with 37 girls from 13 countries.[28] When asked directly, adolescent girls recognized how gender discrimination hinders their ability to achieve their goals and that change is needed at the community level to ensure they can realize their rights.

> *"Girls are still treated as second priority... in our community. Once both males and females will get (the) same opportunity to get (a) good education this problem will be solved forever,"* Minaskhi, 15 years, India

Participating girls also noted the importance of ICTs in their lives to seek information, campaign, find work, build social networks and even as a tool to respond to emergencies. 16 year old Katherine from the Philippines said: "*Using the internet allows us to see the world more. We see a lot of new things, we discover more and this discovery is what we share to others.*"

At the same time girls expressed concern that they are unable to take advantage of the benefits these technological tools offer due to underlying barriers, such as low rates of schooling, early pregnancy, sexual violence, availability of ICTs in schools and communities, poverty, discrimination and the heavy burden of household chores.

They also identified areas where they would like to have more support such as challenging gender inequality in their communities, providing relevant equipment and building their capacity to use ICTs.

> *"... [P]arents and duty-bearers... must be aware that it is highly needed to have equality among sexes. They must change the status quo so that girls are not of lower status and not regarded as weaker sex. They must recognize that girls are important in nation building. If this will happen, girls will be able to realize that the sky is not the limit, that they can reach the moon and stars above."* Janice, 17 years, the Philippines

vi Fast Talk is a concept developed by the Department of Foreign Affairs Canada (DFAIT) to create a timely and flexible means of accessing high quality policy relevant research with the objective of tackling new or emerging issues lacking established background materials; refreshing thinking on existing files; or enhancing the effectiveness of conferences and workshops by developing a preconference dialogue which helps to frame issues, focus discussion, and build expert consensus. This methodology was used during the development of this paper to consult with a group of experts as well as with a group of adolescent girls in order to provide the authors with expert input and the opinions and experiences of adolescent girls in developing countries. The Girls' Fast Talk was conducted by Plan International with 37 girls who participate in ICT, youth-led advocacy and participatory media projects in 13 countries where Plan works. It should be noted that the girls who participated in the Fast Talk were likely not the 'most marginalized' girls in their communities, given that most attend secondary school and all have been allowed to participate in extracurricular activities such as those that Plan International runs. The situation for more marginalized girls living in these same communities may be even more difficult.

4. ICTs: New tools in the C4D Toolkit

As girls noted in the 'Fast Talk', access to ICTs can be a challenge, especially for adolescent girls. And these challenges and barriers should be taken into consideration before selecting an ICT tool for a C4D intervention at any level. However it is inevitable that as ICTs (and mobile phones in particular) become more ubiquitous, marginalized populations, including marginalized adolescent girls, will increasingly gain access to new ICTs. These tools hold potential to reach and engage wider population segments and therefore need to be explored as additional tools in the C4D toolbox.

Girls are powerful voices and key agents of change who have a critical role to play in delivering C4D program objectives and should benefit from them as well. Their views are encouraged and enshrined in the core principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),[29] and agencies recognize that children have the unique ability to cut across the various boundaries at community, family, school and other levels to influence change.[30] Children, adolescents and youth are often early adopters of new technologies and thus seen as the experts in this area over and above adults,[31] meaning that ICTs can offer them a way to stand out and demonstrate leadership in their communities.

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) notes that young people have played a major role in the success of social networking and social media sites.[32] Indeed, both girls and boys have become major drivers of Internet adoption and will continue to do so in the future, as 47 per cent of the population in developing countries is under the age of 25.[33] It should be acknowledged that whilst young people continue to drive early adoption of ICTs, existing inequalities are still dividing ownership and use of ICTs along economic, social and gender lines.

The growth in the population segment under the age of 29 in many developing countries[34] and the increasing numbers of adolescents who are using ICTs and social media, combined with the current and predicted growth in access to ICTs, most notably the mobile phone,[35] make ICTs an important C4D tool. Harnessing the prevalence of mobile phones amongst young people, including marginalized groups, can provide an impactful and cost-effective means of fostering social mobilization and behavior change. ICTs can also help drive C4D objectives such as ensuring plurality of voices by prioritizing and giving visibility to marginalized and vulnerable groups, linking community perspectives to policy dialogue and building self-esteem, confidence and self-efficacy.[36]

In our review and analysis of C4D programs that used new ICTs with a focus on marginalized adolescent girls, we found that information and communication technologies (ICTs) can be an important addition to C4D work for three main reasons:

- Connection, engagement and agency
- Access to knowledge
- Improved governance and service delivery

The following case-studies expound on these three dimensions, and provide evidence to the efficacy of integrating ICTs in C4D programming with and for marginalized adolescent girls.

Although the aim of this paper is to look at the integration of ICTs in C4D programming with marginalized adolescent girls, the number of programs which purposefully combine all of these elements are few and far between. Therefore, we have also considered programs that only focus on some of these elements in an effort to draw out applicable learning.[vii]

vii Due to the scarcity of C4D programs that work with both the most marginalized adolescent girls and incorporate new technologies as a C4D tool, examples of work with young women (over the age of 14), less marginalized populations or children, adolescents and youth without a specific focus on girls were also reviewed in order to identify and apply learning across programs.

4.1 Connection, engagement and agency

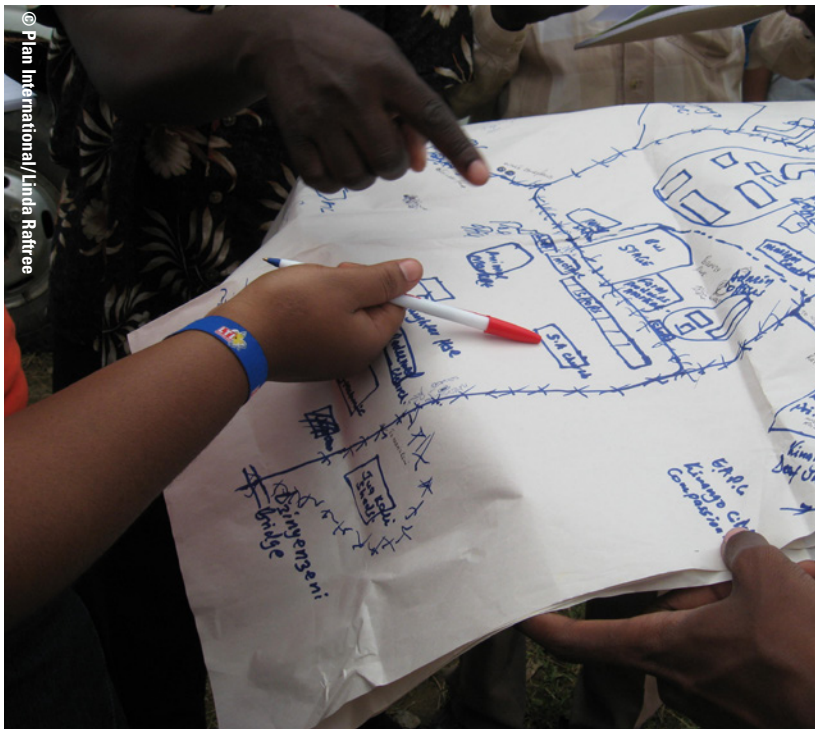
Through the use of ICTs, the voices and ideas of marginalized adolescent girls can be captured, amplified and 'upstreamed' from individual or community levels to higher levels of influence and decision making. A painting, photo, socio-drama, song, video or other participatory communication piece made in the community can be digitized and shared via the mobile phone network or the Internet, thereby reaching a wider group and contributing to social mobilization and advocacy efforts. Using tools such as digital mapping, video and web discussions, adolescent girls can play a lead role in identifying priority issues and actions at the community level and engaging local leaders and the broader public in a shared agenda for social change.

By and large, the political dynamics of social exclusion systematically deny marginalized groups the opportunity to participate in the collective decision-making processes of their communities and societies.[37] This is doubly so for many adolescent girls who suffer from multiple forms of discrimination that can severely limit their opportunities for civic participation and curtail their entrance into the public sphere. However, ICTs can offer girls an opportunity to connect with peers, engage in political processes, and increase their sense of agency which will allow them to make informed decisions and choices. Girls who participated in the 'Fast Talk' acknowledged these benefits.

> *"Everything's on internet! I can make a change in my own life and my community by telling the issues around me through internet for example through my blog. Most of times, my headmaster will repost my article on education or school to his blog."* Asri, 16 years, Indonesia[38]

Community mobilization around girls' security risks and vulnerabilities via digital mapping

In 2010, UNICEF funded "Map Kibera"[39] to work with girls in Kibera, a large slum area outside of Nairobi, to create digital maps around girls' safety. According to UNICEF, participatory mapping enables young people to gain new awareness about their surroundings and empowers them to amplify their voices on critical issues. Girls were equipped with Geolocation devices, taking an active part in the mapping process, identifying safe and unsafe spaces and providing contextual information to raise awareness and offer advocacy opportunities.[40]



Youth mappers from the Map Kibera project trained youth mappers in the Kwale District of Kenya to geocode their community as part of the Youth Empowerment through Technology, Arts and Media (YETAM) project supported by Plan.

The 'Girls Security Mapping initiative' identified places where drugs and alcohol were consumed, safe spaces such as girls' groups, community centers and well-lit areas; and resources such as clinics that support victims of gender-based violence. As the project advanced, girls developed a different perspective on their lives in the Kibera slum. The girls mapping showed a spatial correlation between levels of violence against girls and women and HIV/AIDS rates leading to increased community engagement on the topic of safety.[41]

To date, the map is the most detailed child protection, public safety, and girls' vulnerability mapping of Kibera available and provides an important tool for identifying physical and psychological areas of risk or vulnerability and patterns of risk perception. The public nature of this type of project can help encourage community leaders, policy planners and grassroots advocates to be more accountable to adolescent girls.[42] The initiative allowed a correlation to be made between girls' safety and the incidence of HIV.

To extend the use of the digital map information and engage the wider public, the Voice of Kibera (VoK) project and website were created. A printed version of the map was also shared with the community, to make up for low Internet use. The digital map was displayed on the VoK website, and a tool called Ushahidi[43] was integrated, allowing Kibera residents to report on different events in the community by SMS. Young people were also trained on citizen journalism, and they created and published news pieces about the community, which are posted both on YouTube and the VoK website.

Although the project is considered an overall success and has fueled much innovation in the ICT4D sector, some have criticized the project for being technology-led and have suggested that interest from the international community in the innovative nature of the project fueled its expansion at a pace that the work on the ground could not keep up with, and questioning community buy-in and sustainability of the effort.
Following participation in a research project in partnership with the Institute of Development Studies the Map Kibera team took a second look at their approach and adjusted their methodology to include a stronger participatory development approach.

Literacy efforts via mobiles enable better communication, social mobilization and empowerment

Mobile phones can encourage literacy, as discovered by Tostan,[44] an organization that has been supporting long-term human rights-based education work with rural women and girls in several African countries since 1991. Staff noted that community members had mobile phones but did not know how to take full advantage of them. In conversing with community members, they realized that the ability to communicate by text message was a motivating factor in encouraging literacy.[45] Consequently, together with UNICEF in 2009, Tostan launched the Jokko Initiative[46] in which mobiles serve to catalyze both literacy and social mobilization and help build consensus around local development initiatives by providing a platform for exchanging ideas, information and advocacy efforts, and amplifying the voices of woman and girls in community decision-making processes.

Tostan developed simple ways to train community members on standard mobile phone functions. Although the entire community participated, with no special focus on girls, a large number of adolescent girls took part. Program Specialist Guillaume Debar in Senegal[47] noted that youth are quicker to pick up on use of new technologies than adults. As a result, Tostan works with youth as replicators and tutors for adults. Often adults comment that they could not text before but thanks to their daughter they learned. According to Debar, mobile phones can be used to complement traditional communication methods in order to increase the scope of community-led events and more efficiently diffuse innovations and collective decisions, while amplifying the voice of traditionally marginalized individuals.[48]

In addition to the use of mobile phones for basic text messaging, an "SMS Community Forum" was developed based on UNICEF's RapidSMS.[49] It enabled community members to send a text messages to a phone number that is free of charge, and the message is then dispersed to everyone who belongs to the mobile peer-to-peer network.[50] In one instance, the forum was used to alert community members that a father was planning to have his daughter excised. Female genital cutting (FCG) is a severe type of harmful practice that is prohibited by international conventions and is outlawed in many places though it is still widely practiced.
The communities in the area had resolved to end the practice and the rapid report sent out to the SMS Community Forum alerted community members who put a stop the father's plans.

Debar cautions that new technology is not a silver bullet. It can be a catalyst or enhancer of impact but the process must involve comprehensive groundwork beforehand. "You can't just parachute technology into a village and think it's going to fix things.... You need to create a positive environment and then if correctly implemented and used, the technology can enhance positive social change."

Communication and outreach helps address violence against girls in cities

The 'My City, My Safety! Blueprint Project'[viii] [51] was established by Women in Cities International (WICI) with the aim of engaging adolescent girls, between 12-17

viii See full description of this case study on page 27.

years of age to encourage their participation in urban planning and promoting safer cities for girls in Canada. The first group consisting of 15 teenage girls works in the city of Montréal. The safer city program includes outreach, capacity building and policy engagement. After participating in workshops to learn how to conduct a women's safety audit walk and focus group discussions on building safe and inclusive cities, girls choose a media tool, in this case photography and video making, and engage in a process of building a media product.

The girls have engaged other girls and the wider public on the issues of girls' safety in cities through the use of YouTube videos, social media sites and blogging. The issues girls have raised through these media platforms include: risks in urban spaces due to lack of participation by girls and young women in decision making processes at municipal levels, lack of engagement and awareness of the issue amongst girls and the potential of ICTs to both reach and empower girls to take action.

Interactive Voice Response, SMS and radio increase engagement

As part of the Rural Voices of Youth Program in Nepal, UNICEF and the Nepali radio program Saathi Sanga Man Ka Kura (SSMK), run by the non-governmental organization Equal Access Nepal, joined forces to help children and adolescents to engage in UNICEF's Voices of Youth (VOY) initiative via SMS.[52] The project goal was to increase children's voices on issues that impact their lives. SSMK responded to low levels of Internet connectivity by allowing responses from listeners via mobile phone and making the service free. Every week, the radio team frames a topic or a question and invites listeners to respond via a free text message to an established short code. The responses are then posted in a forum on the UNICEF Voices of Youth (VOY) website, or the "Freedom Express" debate platform. Listeners can text "VOYQ" to 4400 to receive a text message with that week's topic, in English. A key to success in the program was engaging FOCUSONE,[53] an intermediary company that was well acquainted with local context and ICT use patterns.

Equal Access also uses Interactive Voice Response (IVR) which allows listeners to call a number and navigate a menu of options, leave comments, questions and responses or get information.[54] IVR is available through basic phones, and is helpful for those who are not literate or who do not feel comfortable using SMS. IVR can encourage direct feedback from participants or the general public, allowing community input to shape content in "real time," e.g., almost immediately. IVR and SMS have allowed Equal Access to get a sense of how listeners respond to their radio programs, what messages are most relevant to the audience and which ones are having an impact on listeners and their behavior. Input collected from the audience results in modifications to the programming so that radio hosts can be responsive to what the audience wants and address questions or confusion about the information that was presented.[55]

Recognizing that the cost of texting or calling can reduce response rates for those with little disposable income, Equal Access offered a toll-free number to Nepalese listeners and saw use rates rise to over 20,000 messages in just one day.

Although this project is not aimed directly at adolescent girls, using this type of multi-channel feedback option and providing this service free of charge can exponentially increase the levels of participation by populations who cannot normally participate due to cost or literacy barriers, such as marginalized adolescent girls,. In these types of programs, a gender analysis may be useful to further delve into the aspects that reduce the participation of adolescent girls in some settings.

Girls Fast Talk input

Many of the girls who participated in the Fast Talk process[56] for this paper discussed the potential of ICTs to facilitate participation in their own development and amplify their voices. They described the potential of the Internet for conducting research, participating in discussions, connecting with other girls on relevant issues, finding out how other girls and their communities are resolving similar issues, and raising funds to support their community's development. Many of the girls participate in programs that use ICTs such as radio, print, art and video to share the realities of their daily lives and solutions to problems that confront them.

"Together with other media kids..., [I] produced public service announcements and mini-documentaries that talk about societal issues like physical abuse of teachers to his/her pupils, child trafficking, child labor and the likes. After we showcased our output, some duty-bearers gave us assurance and said that they will work on issues that we presented in our work but several of them were shocked and denied that what we presented exists." Janice, 17 years old, the Philippines

Some talked about the potential of social media to amplify the reach of their stories while others mentioned how mobile phones allow them to contact local leaders to invite them to events. A couple of the girls who had Internet access mentioned using social media to mobilize their peers and the importance of social networking sites to share thoughts, stories, and photos.

"... I went to Germany to attend International youth workshop 'Girls Go for Goals'. I shared my experiences... my blog and twitter also sharing the photos on Facebook so my friends and people can see and read my stories and able to know how fun it is to be involved in such great event." Asri, 16 years old, Indonesia

4.2 Access to knowledge

ICTs allow information to be shared and provide access to knowledge in a way that may be faster, easier, more tailor-made, and able to reach larger audiences than other forms of communication. As more marginalized adolescent girls gain access to mobile phones, their access to information of importance to them will also grow, which is of particular importance in the context of excluded groups, such as girls, who reside in remote and challenging rural terrains or overcrowded slum neighborhoods or are otherwise difficult to reach.[57]

Not only can ICTs allow marginalized adolescent girls to access information, but they can also help girls link with peer to peer support networks. This is especially critical at adolescence when the onset of puberty marks a girl's livelihood choices, diminishes her mobility and reduces her ability to access information and services.[58] In addition, via the mobile phone, girls and women can be reached with different types of C4D messaging, which can contribute to education, knowledge, behavior change and social mobilization. They can also join in on discussions around topics that are considered taboo or private, such as relationships, sexuality and reproductive health.

Mobile phone platform opens discussion on love, sex, relationships, gender and cultural issues

Young Africa Live (YAL)[59] is a joint initiative of Praekelt Foundation and Vodafone, launched on World Aids Day in 2009. The entertainment-based mobile platform has created a space where young South Africans can talk about topics such as love, sex, relationships, gender and cultural issues and HIV/AIDS. YAL aims to address the fact that although South Africa has the largest HIV/AIDS pandemic in the world, there was no mobile portal in the country which provided information about the pandemic, about where to get tested, how to practice safe sex, and how to avoid contracting HIV. Praekelt wanted to create a platform that "would not simply state the facts and 'lecture' young people about the do's and don'ts, but rather create a space where young South Africans could talk about hot topics that affect their daily lives...."[60]

The permanent content on YAL covers essential facts around HIV and AIDS and provides helpline numbers for referral organizations and links to voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) centers. A dynamic content section offers daily news and celebrity stories that users can 'like' and comment on. Live chats with doctors and relationship experts help create dialogue between the portal and its users. A gender-specific blog (i.e. a male and female writer write daily blogs from their perspective) on topics such as love, sex, dating, cultural dilemmas, and gender stereotypes generates discussion on issues that are not normally touched upon in other spaces in young people's lives. Praekelt considers that, "if we conservatively say that 20 per cent of the South African population is HIV-positive, that means 20 per cent of the users on this mobile portal will be HIV-positive, but might not know their status and might continue practicing risky behavior and putting themselves and their loved ones at risk of infection. It is therefore crucial that we use this platform to, through

interactive discussion, create enough peer pressure that young people will test themselves for HIV."[61]

According to Marcha Neeling, Head of Operations for the Foundation, mobile technology is the best way to reach people in poverty at scale. The Foundation's mission is to work with the technology that people have in their hands. "If that's a really basic cell phone then we work with things like SMS and USSD technologies. If it's a feature phone we can deliver far richer experiences. But we don't want to throw new devices and hardware at people in order to enable them to access a service."[62] By using the tools that are already accessible to young people, offering specific angles on the issues for males and females, designing specifically for a mobile platform, partnering with a large mobile service provider with an existing user base, and making the content engaging, relevant and fun, sexual and reproductive health information that would not be otherwise accessible is now directly in the hands of a population that desperately needs it. This type of project holds great potential for reaching marginalized adolescent girls, providing them with lifesaving reproductive health information, and engaging them in conversations around these issue.

SMS based job listings link older girls to job information

Souktel's Job Match[63] allows young women and men, age 16 and up, to create a short job resume via text and to sign up to receive job alerts for particular types of jobs that they are interested in and qualified for. Young people sign up via SMS and answer a series of questions on age, location, skills, education level and career interests. By texting "match me" to a short code, the searcher can get a list of jobs that match his or her mini-CV data with contact numbers to call to set up a job interview.

According to Souktel's Jacob Korenblum, many of the young women who use Souktel's services come from traditional families that would not allow them to go door-to-door to find employment. "They are not allowed to go around town to find job opportunities. So their ability to find jobs is limited. But since many young women have mobile phones, within the household, as a young woman via Souktel you can start looking for work and even secure a job interview from home. Your family is comfortable with how you are doing this but you are still asserting yourself, you are taking that step to get a job."[64]

Souktel's Job Match does not currently focus specifically on adolescent girls. However, C4D initiatives that support girls to access career opportunities could partner with Souktel or similar companies to increase the labor force participation of young women,[65] by allowing them to access employment information without openly challenging the restrictions on their mobility.[66] Becoming an adolescent can broaden the digital divide for young women, as this is the age when male peers begin accessing Internet cafes, while females are often discouraged (either actively or passively) from frequenting these male-dominated spaces. However, mobile phones have helped close this gap by allowing young women to send and receive information in a discreet and safe manner and making it easier for them to stay informed, even while sitting in their own house. Mobile phones can help close the gap of technology access, and support girls to stand on equal footing with their adolescent male peers.[67]

Girls Fast Talk input

Girls who were part of the Fast Talk process see potential for ICTs to increase access to social support systems and health information and for warning the population of impending climate-related disasters. Some also mentioned the use of radio to conduct outreach on topics of importance to the community.[68]

> *"…[L]ast year the attorney general for human rights gave a report on children and youth suicide…and we realized that our town had one of the highest rates…I asked the director of the community radio to give us a space on the radio the town and created….a program that…talks about education issues, self-esteem, the importance of youth and children and many other issues important. A year later were significantly reduced cases of suicide, we now almost a year that no youth suicides take place in municipalities."* Ana Lucrecia, 17 years old, Guatemala

4.3 Improved governance and service delivery

ICTs can support better transparency accountability, and governance. They can support service delivery efforts for marginalized adolescent girls by improving efficiency, effectiveness, and increasing access to information about services.[69] Through mobile phones, adolescent girls, even the most marginalized, can more easily link with available services in their local area. Service providers can use mobiles to reach out to their target population as well as respond to their information needs.

New technologies are also increasingly being used to engage users of a service in providing feedback on its quality. This input can be collected by program implementers such as in the example of the radio program in Nepal, and used to make immediate changes in their services. It can also be used to advocate to governments to allocate more resources or provide improved responses or services to their populations at a local or even broader scale to identify needs or issues that had not been vocalized before or to denounce corruption. New technologies are playing an increasingly important role in communication with and among disaster affected populations, enabling beneficiaries to express their satisfaction or vocalize their complaints and seek a response, and these types of mechanisms need to be increasingly available for marginalized adolescent girls.[70] Digital mapping and data collection can help identify where resources are being allocated and call into question discrepancies between need and response by decision makers.

Programming with and for marginalized girls, especially with regards to service delivery, requires an understanding of their unique vulnerabilities and needs. Using ICTs to gather feedback and opinions from girls who participate in or are benefiting from different kinds of C4D interventions and programs can improve program effectiveness. Through ICTs marginalized adolescent girls can participate in decision making process and influence outcomes that will have a direct impact upon their lives. They can also make their opinions and demands heard more directly and play a greater role in holding duty bearers accountable.

UReport collects and shares 'real-time' feedback on topics of importance to youth

UReport[71] is a free SMS social monitoring platform developed by UNICEF Uganda and designed to identify and address issues that children and youth in Uganda care about. By texting "join" to 8500, a person can become a Ureporter. Via SMS, the project's o 221,218 Ureporters (almost two-thirds female),[72] receive questions and collect real-time information in their communities. Some of the issues that children have been polled on include gender violence, water, inflation, early marriage, HIV/AIDS, and justice for children. Use of SMS allows qualitative data to be analyzed and quickly acted upon. One poll, for example, asked "What effect has the heavy rain had on the health of children and youth?" A high frequency of the word "mosquitoes" in responses prompted project organizers to send out a second question asking "Last time you had malaria did you take medicine? Answer YES or NO." These responses were immediately mapped on the UReport website, and shared with the Ministry of Health for follow up.

Project organizers suggest that UReport could help to create community dialogue around local needs and priorities, identify attitudes to particular topics, support advocacy work with data from a particular population, and help verify the impact and quality of donor and government projects.[73] This type of communication set-up, which engages young people using simple means and relatively accessible devices could enable marginalized adolescent girls to express their views on a wide variety of issues.

uReport takes a 'viral' and 'trainingless' approach, and people tend to hear about the project through word-of-mouth. By collecting information from participants (age, sex, community groups they're active in, health facility they report to, school they go to) project staff can tag demographic, location-specific data to a phone number, essentially "turning a dumb phone into a smartphone."

An important approach for engaging so many children and youth has been working with local partners like the Scouts Association and faith-based organizations which have been key to the growth and response rates. Partnering with organizations who work with a high percentage of marginalized adolescent girls also helped UNICEF to reach this population. Another aspect of the

projects successful outreach is that the short code works across all five major telecoms in Uganda, so participants can answers polls and receive messages for free regardless of which network carrier they use."[74]

Barriers to participation identified in a review of the program included accessibility issues for children and youth who do not speak English or do not own a mobile phone and the demand for more concrete action to be taken based and more change to happen based on the reports and surveys submitted. These aspects are being addressed in the second phase of the project.

Digital mapping, video and arts create a space for dialogue with local authorities around development budgets

The Youth Empowerment through Technology, Arts and Media (YETAM) project[ix] was implemented in 6 countries in Africa by Plan International.[75] The project used participatory methods to empower young people to learn about their rights, analyze their realities and advocate for change in their communities using new technologies, arts and media as tools. A special focus was placed on including girls and addressing issues of importance to girls.[76]

In Cameroon, the project worked with 150 adolescents, both boys and girls. Youth make up over 60 per cent of the total population in Cameroon, however, adolescent and youth participation in decision-making in the country is weak, especially in rural areas. Girls especially are not given space to speak out in their homes or communities. The areas where Plan Cameroon works have restricted access to both formal and informal channels for participation. Staff initially struggled to engage youth in community development processes because the youth had no interest in the adults' agendas and meetings, and were not generally asked for views or allowed to voice opinions.[77]

Despite the enactment of a decentralization policy in 2004 which gives municipal councils the mandate and responsibility for local development and service delivery in their areas, municipal mayors, often do not have enough information to make good decisions on resource allocation and service delivery to ensure balanced and sustainable development.[78]

In 2011, in addition to traditional hand-drawn participatory mapping, digital mapping was tried as a new tool in the project for identifying local needs, priorities and tracking resource distribution. Groups discussed what information would be useful for mapping their key concerns. The topics of violence and gender-based discrimination had emerged strongly from youth across all the participating countries over the past 2 years and were a key focus for the project. After learning more about what mapping could to, however, participants decided to collect information about their existing resources so that they could bring the maps to their local service providers, municipal councils and traditional authorities and discuss allocation of resources.[79]

Working with a local geographic information systems (GIS) expert, the adolescents together with community adults and traditional councils identified the points to map and the data to attach to the points. Then with support from local partners and the GIS expert, the youth created digital maps of 3 council areas[80] using the Open Street Map platform.[81] The maps were analyzed with the youth to see where the needs were and where resources were being allocated and used as a catalyst for discussing resource allocation with local councils. As a result, councils approved funding for some of the projects that the young people had identified.[82] A second stage of the project in 2012-2013 will expand the use of the maps as advocacy tools around a specific issue that the youth identify and community councils will be involved in training on how to better use digital maps for decision making and budget allocation.[83]

Although a specific focus on girls' issues was not achieved in the first stage of the digital mapping process, impact on girls was still noted. During the project evaluation, one girl said that at school "We girls could not even speak publicly. The boys used to tell us that the girls must always remain behind. The project was a great help to change attitudes because here even there are girls who are leaders and there was even a girl president. The YETAM project has awakened consciences primarily from people who thought that the girl must always remain behind. But in our meetings, where they find out that we are exposing the injustice that we live in our homes, they also begin to speak up. They come to share their experiences with the group."[84] As a result of the wider YETAM program advocacy, one of the Cameroonian community councils created a

ix See full description of this case study on page 30.

decree banning early marriage and mandated female participation in the traditional council, formerly only open to men. Inclusion of community adults, teachers and local authorities in all activities helped to build trust in the process and in the youth themselves and to show girls in the forefront, using a variety of tools and technologies and leading important processes.[85]

SMS reporting and digital mapping help prevent, track and respond to violence against children

New technologies are being utilized in C4D and protection initiatives that seek to end Violence against Children (VAC), an especially pertinent issue for adolescent girls. UNICEF West Africa notes that reporting violence against children using mobile technology can effectively engage and mobilize communities and civil society around child protection issues.[86]

Plan Benin integrated two tools (FrontlineSMS[87] and Ushahidi)[88] into an existing program that was already supporting youth media groups in two districts to raise awareness with families, teachers and local authorities on VAC through comics, theatre, and radio.

The introduction these tools has allowed victims and witnesses to send an anonymous text report of violence to a local phone number. The number belongs to a mobile phone attached to a laptop at the Plan Benin office that uses FrontlineSMS, software that collects and stores the messages as well as automatically sends them to a local system administrator. The administrator reviews the messages and forwards them to the relevant local Child Protection Services who are responsible for verifying and following up on the case. The administrator then categorizes the reports by age, gender, type of violence and location, and strips messages of any identifying information before 'geo-locating' them onto a map powered by Ushahidi. The Ushahidi system allows the information from the SMS report as well as on-going notes on response to the case to be privately stored, analyzed and managed. Once scrubbed of identifying information, incidents are visualized on a map.

The data, in addition to helping resolve individual cases, can provide information for advocacy efforts and help develop further child protection interventions, including impact assessments of awareness raising campaigns. Collected cases and their geographic information can be utilized to press government to improve its poorly resourced child protection system.

Young people in the community play a strong role in advertising the system and phone number by engaging in outreach work and hands-on demonstrations, and promoting it on local radio stations. Boys and girls talk about violence prevention and the harm that violence, abuse and other rights violations bring to children and adolescents. Since the project began around 2 years ago, 164 cases of violence have been reported and 92 per cent of them received some type of follow up from Benin's government child protection services. Of the reported cases to date, 73 per cent were of violence against girls, and 38 per cent were reports of sexual violence. The reports also indicate a high number of early marriages. Cases of child labor and child trafficking have been reported, as well as violence in schools.[89] A notably high number of child marriages has been reported as well, but it's not clear if this is due to a high incidence of this practice in the community or an increased awareness at community level to the practice of early and forced marriage, and a growing sense that it should be stopped.[90] In either case, having a reporting system can indicate processes at the community level that can then be addressed with an appropriate response or additional research.

Challenges have included the low response capacity of the government authorities who are responsible for child protection in Benin, and the potential for discouragement if those who report the abuses do not feel that they are being addressed. In addition, it is suspected that literacy rates, access to mobiles and the cost of an SMS are hindering some from reporting. The team in Benin has recently secured a free short code and will also investigate voice options and additional reporting channels in order to lower this barrier. Child protection guidelines and privacy issues have also been a potential concern, and this aspect is being reviewed to ensure that the system does not place children at additional risk.

Mobile calls and SMS reminders support better links to social services

In areas where mobile phone coverage is high, mobiles can be a tool for helping the most marginalized adolescent girls access information and services. In Nikolaev, Ukraine, UNICEF supported UNITUS to develop

an innovative service delivery model. Nikolaev is one of the cities in Ukraine with the highest levels of HIV. Almost all adolescent female sex workers (A-FSW) surveyed there said they had engaged in unprotected sex in the past year and 16 per cent reported that they had injected drugs.[91] Legal and social support systems for the most at-risk adolescents (MARA) are weak, including those related to HIV/AIDS.[92] The Nikolaev model aims to support the MARAs through behavioral change and risk reduction interventions. Work is also undertaken to support the health and social services to adapt to A-FSWs' needs, make legal and livelihood skill-building services available, and advocate for policy and legislation changes.

Several communication channels were utilized in the program, including outreach and information leaflets developed by and for A-FSWs, training sessions, group counseling, telephone counseling, a hotline and a drop-in center. In addition to these, mobile phones were used for communication between adolescent female sex workers and UNITUS staff. During social service outreach to girls, social workers and girls exchanged mobile numbers. Social workers then used mobiles to contact them and set up meetings, remind them of appointments, and conduct telephone counseling. Mobiles were also used for emergency calls in the case of detention, abuse, or conflict. Phone counseling did not replace face-to-face counseling but was an effective way to encourage girls to access additional services. The use of mobiles was rated almost unanimously successful by girls and staff. Although the community center has a "hotline," most of the girls preferred to contact their social worker directly through their personal mobile phone.

As with other initiatives that increase reporting, limited response capacities have restricted scale-up of the services. Other challenges included failure to confront cases of rights violations and delays in policy and legislation reviews. The program was not able to extend services beyond health care to ensure that socio-economic and protection needs were met. Potential risks exist and ethical concerns including protection of A-FSWs were identified, especially in terms of informing of STI test results by phone, as A-FSWs tend to self-medicate and engaging by phone may cause them to avoid follow up visits for treatment.

Girls Fast Talk Input

Though ICTs can help girls access services, during the Fast Talk process,[93] girls highlighted the burden of chores that leave many girls with little free time to use or learn how to use ICTs, especially computers and the Internet.

> *"I think when girls are not always kept busy with household chores they will get adequate time to easily access the computer, the mobile phones and the internet."* Abigail, 16 years old, Ghana

Girls also mentioned intimidation and even violence when attempting to access computers in schools which are seen as the privilege of boys.

> *"…Girls especially hardly use the computers because the boys overpower them and control the access to the computers…"* Patience, 17 years old, Cameroon

In addition, finding the money for airtime was mentioned as a critical difficulty for many girls.

> *"…[M]ost of the girls in my community cannot use those ICTs because they cannot afford to buy gadgets or pay the cost in accessing it. Others are engaged in child labor as a result of poverty, so they don't have time using those ICTs."* Janelle, 15 years, the Philippines

The barriers and benefits that adolescent girls face are a critical component in program design and implementation. Girls' views, perspectives and experiences, along with the analysis of the program case studies in this section, were used as a basis to formulate cross-cutting recommendations for integrating ICTs into C4D programming with adolescent girls.

5. Recommendations

As seen in the examples above, ICTs can be key tools in the C4D toolkit. At the same time, large gaps still exists with regard to knowledge on how marginalized adolescent girls should and are interacting with ICTs, and how ICTs can and should empower marginalized adolescent girls and their communities. Few projects focus exclusively on adolescent girls and use ICTs in C4D programming, and fewer still focus specifically on marginalized adolescent girls. However several lessons and recommendations can be drawn from the cases analyzed above.

These recommendations aim to provide UN agencies, development agencies and others working in this sector, such as partners, government ministries and civil society organizations with suggestions that can support the implementation of quality C4D programming with marginalized adolescent girls that involves ICT tools.

5.1 Program Design

- **Understand local context.** Organizations need a good understanding of individual program participants, the wider audience and the socio-cultural context. In addition, it is important to ensure a nuanced understanding of local access and use of ICTs and a good understanding of the different barriers that marginalized adolescent girls may face in terms of access, e.g. language, literacy, education levels, disability, discrimination, cultural influences, time, age, available resources, isolation and remoteness. Local service providers and partners often understand this context better than outside organizations and companies. New technologies are context sensitive and must be carefully chosen based on availability, cost, and existing infrastructural support.

- **Make sure communication channels are accessible** for marginalized adolescent girls who face greater barriers to access. For example, using toll free calling, short codes, and voice-based channels such as interactive voice response. Tools and communication channels need to be carefully chosen in terms of simplicity and access. Starting with tools that girls already have access to can make for a more replicable, sustainable, and scalable initiative. Consulting with girls to garner their feedback and design input can help determine the relevance, preferences and feasibility of using mobiles and other communication channels.

- **Use multiple platforms and channels** to reach and engage marginalized adolescent girls who will have different levels of access depending on their individual situations. Adolescent girls who are marginalized will likely have less access to new technology tools, and therefore more traditional methods should be combined with new tools and special emphasis placed on ensuring that new divides are not created by programs that rely on ICTs as a key communication channel. Combining and mixing several communication channels can make an approach more effective as can the integration of new communication channels into an existing program. Ensuring that other program aspects such as outreach, engagement, off-line networks and response capacity are supported is critical to success.

- **Ensure programs are community-driven** and that donor and media interest or preference for new technologies and innovation do not become more of a driving force in a program than the girls' own experiences and the communities' own processes and pace.

- **Use real-time feedback from girls** to adjust programs to their needs and preferences. When developing programs that use real-time reporting and feedback, it is critical to also pay attention to response capacity and show that concrete action is being taken based on incoming reports or beneficiaries may feel frustrated or become apathetic. Crowd-sourced reporting is a useful to

School girls in Rajasthan, India learn to use the computer during an activity class.

identify patterns and gather individual feedback, but should be supported by additional research methods before drawing final conclusions.

- **Conduct a gender analysis** during program design and ensure that from the very start programs are specifically designed and implemented in ways that consider and ensure inclusion of the most marginalized adolescent girls.

- **Provide girls with inspiring mentors and opportunities to lead** to help show that they too can participate and use ICTs. Gaining support for girls' participation continues to be a slow process in some places where social norms work against girls' participation. A holistic approach in these cases can help individual girls feel empowered to participate as well as show the wider community that girls can be leaders and have something valuable to contribute.

- **Use an ecological framework to assess circles of influence and program effectiveness.** Programs that hope to engage adolescent girls must acknowledge local context and design programs together with girls to ensure they address the social norms, attitudes and power relationships that sustain discrimination against girls. By starting with adolescent girls, rather than technology, encouraging open and high-quality participation of families and communities in C4D strategies with ICT tools and mapping of information and communication flows in the community, programs can holistically challenge all aspects, including social and structural ones that sustain discrimination against girls.

5.2 Privacy and protection

- **Conduct a strong risk analysis of proposed approaches** to avoid placing girls at further risk of privacy loss, online abuse or any form of retaliation for reporting rights violations or sharing their personal information. This is a relatively new area and it is not yet fully clear where and how information communicated or collected via mobile phones can expose marginalized adolescent girls to additional vulnerabilities or risk.

- **Establish additional protection measures for adolescent girls** and those who agree to be featured in new media pieces.[94] Risks to marginalized adolescent girls who use new technologies for filming, interviewing or reporting rights violations (against themselves or others) or others must be considered. It is critical that the voices of marginalized adolescent girls be captured and their abilities to act as agents of change in their own

A disabled adolescent girl sits in a wheelchair in front of a computer, speaking on a telephone. She is working at a UNICEF-assisted crisis help line centre, run by disabled adolescents, for children in difficulty, in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan.

communities be fostered.[95] And yet, the Internet and mobile phones mean that what is filmed in a community not only goes global – it also quickly comes back to the local level. Thus, using ICTs for social mobilization and behavior change, especially around social norms on gender equality and other sensitive issues, should ensure the safety of all those involved. Additional training on new media literacy, privacy, protection and consent as it applies in these new spaces,[96] [97] may be needed.

- **Build conditions for girls to become self-reliant, independent and aware of the risks** of sharing their information so that they can make informed choices. Through a participatory process that includes raising girls' awareness to risks, getting girls' input into additional vulnerabilities in their local context that organizations may not be aware of, encouraging girls to share safety information with their peers and equipping girls with the skills to navigate online dangers, girls can build the resilience required to mitigate some of these risks independently . Work on risk mitigation with girls must be complemented by engaging and influencing other stakeholders. Considering the orbits of influence that surround girls, advocacy measures should link risks to girls with existing protection measures and seek to address any structural and systematic capacity gaps.

5.3 Program Research

- **Establish an evidence base for the use of ICTs in C4D strategies with adolescent girls.** Current program research is sparse. Programs with ICT components should be fully documented and evaluated to provide evidence of any added value of ICT in C4D strategies with adolescent girls as well as lessons learned for future efforts. Further research should be undertaken on adolescent girls' access to, control over, and use of ICTs in a variety of countries and contexts, including the most marginalized girls.

- **Develop robust indicators that can be measured against program results to determine impact.** It can be difficult to determine a causal link between the individual ICT tools or devices used and the impact of a certain project. Developing clear indicators to measure individual and social transformation as well as shifts in more gender equitable social norms and attitudes should improve the links between results and the application of specific ICT tools.

- **Evaluate, learn and share.** Very little is known about the impact of C4D programs that use ICTs and work with marginalized adolescent girls. Few programs start with baseline research, and documentation on processes, implementation challenges and longer-term outcomes is weak or difficult to find. This needs to be addressed in order to improve learning in this field. ICTs and multimedia tools can support data collection processes, capture nuances and qualitative information, and be used to share good practice, challenges and results.

5.4 Capacity Building

- **Improve management, staff and partner capacity.** Programming with ICTs as a C4D tool is a relatively new field that lacks a consistent methodological framework. Organizations should improve their capacity, skills and knowledge through a comprehensive training process including both the practical application of new tools and good design of programs that effectively use these tools with adolescent girls in a C4D framework, with attention to risk mitigation.

- **Create an "ICT for C4D Tool Box"** to support and guide every stage of program research, design, planning, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The tool box should contain templates, terms of reference, flowcharts, risk mitigation tools and assessments, decision trees and other types of hands-on tools and examples that can help practitioners conduct a participatory information and communication assessment with participants and local partners to identify the tools and approaches that will best suit the local context and to capture and share learning on what does and does not work.

5.5 Policy

- **Use open source software**. Use free and open source software that can be adapted and modified by local developers to suit local contexts and which does not incur high fees for purchase, upgrades and maintenance.

- **Update child protection measures and guidelines.** ICTs offer specific child protection challenges, especially with regard to adolescent girls and more so for those who are impacted by additional forms of discrimination that increase their marginalization. Existing guidelines can be adapted and updated, and dedicated training courses should be offered to all staff. Girls should also be involved in identifying risks and developing mitigation strategies to minimize them.[x] These guidelines should be implemented across all UN agencies.

- **Acknowledge failures and learn from them.** UN agencies and partners should establish formal and informal mechanisms to encourage learning from programs and policies that have encountered challenges and document outcomes that draw on these challenges to recommend immediate and longer-term adjustments and changes.[xi]

- **Encourage partnership** with the private sector and all levels of government. Private sector ICT company (especially local companies) involvement in program design, planning and implementation can help ensure that tools chosen are market relevant and sustainable.. These collaborations can reduce program costs, for instance when securing low cost airtime or short codes from providers. The private sector can also benefit from these initiatives through improved brand awareness, access to markets at the base of the pyramid and strengthened social responsibility. Working with all levels of government is critical to ensure buy-in, sustainability and supportive policies, and to avoid creating parallel processes.

x For existing guides that could serve as a basis for developing guidelines for adolescent girls' protection and risk mitigation, see: The ITU Child Online Protection Guidelines for Children, parents, industry and policy makers: (http://www.itu.int/osg/csd/cybersecurity/gca/cop/); Tactical Tech's Security in a Box Toolkit (http://www.tacticaltech.org/securityinabox); Frontline SMS's Data Integrity User Guide (http://www.frontlinesms.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/frontlinesms_userguide.pdf); Mobile Active's Guide to Mobile Security Risk Assessment (http://www.mobileactive.org/risk-assessment) and Safer Mobile (https://safermobile.org/)

xi 'Fail Faire' events have become increasingly popular to allow allow individuals and organizations to share their programming challenges publicly in a safe space, and more importantly to share learnings. The idea was first established by Mobile Active. More information: http://failfaire.org/about/

6. Conclusion

The rapid expansion of technologies, especially in developing regions, coupled with recent trends in C4D which aim to leverage these new tools to reach and engage broader audiences, provide rich grounds for analysis. The intersection of new technologies and old forms of discrimination against adolescent girls provides a unique prism through which to analyze the relevant application of ICTs for challenging unequal power relations and increasing participation of marginalized groups in social transformation.

Recognizing that adolescent girls are marginalized by their gender, their age and a host of intersecting discriminatory practices that stem from cultural, social and institutional bias compels us to look closely at how C4D can challenge these underlying issues. At the same time, ICTs are by and large uniquely placed to offer innovative methods for increasing girls' voice and participation in advocacy and have been shown to effectively provide girls with tools to confront their exclusion. As the case-studies in this paper show, there are not enough programs utilizing ICTs to empower adolescent girls. But where good practice exists, it has proven its effectiveness in increasing girls voice, confidence, knowledge and choices.

Girls have told us that they want to access and use technology, for their own benefit, and to promote broader equality goals.

"If we create (a) community which makes a movement for girls in technology those stereotypes and paradigms will be changed… We can create (a) cyber community with our social networks and make a forum chat where girls can share and ask many things about technology, they can even access it from their smart phones and computer. So, let's make the community and the movement J". Asri, 16 years, Indonesia

Considering ICTs within existing C4D frameworks rightly places them within a wide ranging toolbox of C4D tools which include other channels of communication. The advantages that ICTs offer in delivering C4D objectives must be tempered with an in-depth understanding of the existing drawbacks and risks posed by these technologies; for the most marginalized and excluded access to and ownership of ICTs remains a challenge. As suggested in the recommendations, the added value of implementing C4D aims with ICTs must be firmly established, otherwise programs run the risk of utilizing inappropriate means for delivering results or attempting to engage marginalized adolescent girls.

Interest in programming with ICTs will increase, not just amongst C4D specialists, but across many agencies and work streams. Keeping ahead of the game and planning towards both the expansion of technology available in various settings and the importance of technology in delivering established goals will be critical. Training and capacity building should be rolled out and relevant technical materials should be developed as soon as possible. The increase in programming should also involve robust analysis to allow measurement of results and to learn from experience. Finally, the focus on the most marginalized, and especially girls, should be kept as a core aim of any programming which uses ICTs, to ensure those who can benefit the most from the advantages of communication technologies are empowered to access and control these tools.

CASE STUDY

My City, My Safety
Canada

Background

Women in Cities International (WICI) received funding from Status of Women Canada for a two-year project (2011-2013), to implement the *My City, My Safety!* Blueprint Project within the greater Montréal area, with girls and boys aged 13-17. The participants took part in workshops, focus group discussions and training sessions, the final goal of which was to create a media product meant to raise awareness and make adolescent girls' voices heard on issues of safety and inclusion in the city. In total, over 40 workshops were organised over the two years, and each group participated in a minimum of 10 workshops. Adolescent girls participating used ICTs to broadcast the issues they identify as important in their neighbourhoods, to encourage positive community dialogue to change attitudes, and engage all relevant stakeholders. The methodology supports participants in shaping their own project and influencing urban development which in turn has an impact on their safety, mobility, and inclusion.

This particular project not only built leadership skills, confidence and knowledge for the participants, but also validated their expertise as users of public space, and recognised and celebrated their ideas and opinions for planning safer and more inclusive cities for girls and women.

For WICI, this served as an occasion to apply its extensive international experience in building safer and more inclusive cities in Montréal, the city where it is based. Local high schools and community and youths centers were approached to engage interested students in the *My City, My Safety!* project, as partners and hosts for the implementation of activities. WICI then adapted and applied some key methodologies to be used by adolescent girls and boys in Montréal, including the women's safety audit walks that have been widely used internationally both in WICI's work and by others.[1] Over the two years, WICI worked with a core group of 27 girls and 8 boys, who in turn reached out to over 400 youths and 1,000 community members through their interventions.

After participating in workshops to learn how to conduct a women's safety audit walk and focus group discussions on building safe and inclusive cities, the girls and boys embarked on the process of building their media products, for which they picked photography and video making as their chosen media.

Local artists and experts were involved to support the youths in this process, which also served to build additional community links and establish a local network to support them in getting their messages out. This artist engagement and support helped the girls and boys to increase their leadership skills in the process.

An integral element of the project strategy was to have participants use creative media to share their knowledge and experiences of urban safety and inclusion with their communities through a mix of communication channels, including print material, Facebook, YouTube and blogs.

Project Objectives

To ensure that everybody's voice – including members of society who are typically excluded from decision making – is heard and taken into account in the development of cities. This was also an opportunity to action some of the elements of Plan International's *8-Point Call to Action on Girls' Rights in the City*[2], endorsed by WICI and UN HABITAT, that emphasises the importance of including adolescent girls in urban development and governance processes.

Participant Audience

Girls and boys aged 13-17

C4D Approach

Throughout the project, various ICTs have been used to engage girls, in addition to the video making and photography mentioned earlier. For instance, Facebook was used as a communication platform, to exchange information about activities, but also to gather feedback on the project itself, while encouraging participants to engage with the community at large. Beyond providing an efficient communication tool to reach out to youth, Facebook served as a platform to connect the various community groups who established links or partnerships with the project with the participants, thereby adding another level to the engagement of participants with local development stakeholders in Montréal.

> *"My friends and I are always using and creating new Facebook groups to communicate amongst each other or to share interesting information. I really liked having our own group for this project, it made communicating so much easier" – Girl participant, 15 years old (original quote was in French).*

The project relied on YouTube to broadcast messages recorded by the girls, in which they shared why they are engaged in the project and what they hope to achieve, in short vox pop format. The creation of the short vox pop videos was very useful tool in allowing the girls to make their voices heard in a creative way, while learning about video editing and filmmaking. Please see WICI's YouTube channel to access the videos produced: http://www.youtube.com/user/Femmesetvilles.

Finally, a blog was maintained throughout the project as a means of sharing information about the project, chronicling the workshops in a way that allowed WICI to simultaneously archive information (www.biendansmaville.org). The blog was public and was shared with project participants, key stakeholders and project partners, and with the larger public all at once. Blogging proved to be a very cost-efficient way to share knowledge and ideas with a wider audience, and to engage adolescent girls and boys by selecting videos, pictures or articles more relevant to them. It was also found to be a very useful means of getting information through to teens (e.g. on the positive impacts of adolescent community engagement) who use ICTs everyday to communicate, share with friends, and access information. In particular, it was a way of reaching those who might be less receptive in workshop settings.

Why have girls use ICTs to effectively speak out about safe cities?

The needs of adolescent girls have not been taken into account in traditional city planning and development. The result has been the development of urban space in a way that can be unsafe for women and girls, which may impede their movements throughout the city, and bring about obstacles in fully participating and taking advantage of public life.

Interventions/ Strategies

1. Involving girls in their communities: WICI has been using its experience working with women and girls to involve them in local decision-making, urban development, and be active in increasing safety in their communities.

2. Building strategic partnerships: WICI has been creating new partnerships while building on past ones to reach out to a greater number of girls, to capitalize on best practices in youth programming, and to make use of media and ICTs.

3. Participant-led project development: The workshops and trainings developed have been in accordance to the needs and interests of the participants, making it as participatory a process as possible. This approach aims to develop their leadership skills and sense of accomplishment, and therefore engagement in the project. At the outset, a first group of adolescent girls participated in the development of a needs assessment tool to gather data on the different obstacles that exist between the sexes when it comes to security and inclusion in urban spaces. Baseline data was gathered, and a gender based analysis drafted.

4. Participatory M&E: Further, the adolescent girls and boys were involved in the ongoing participatory monitoring and evaluation of the project. After every activity, they were asked the fill out a short questionnaire to assess their appreciation of the workshop, how the project is contributing to their confidence and leadership skills, whether they feel like they can have an impact within their community, among other things. Their answers were consistently very positive and indicated an increase in perceived leadership, creative and communication skills. A final publication bearing the project's name, *My City, My Safety!,* has been produced and features more details about the implementation of the project. The publication is available on WICI's website, http://www.femmesetvilles.org/index.php/en/publications.

5. Using media and ICTs to engage youth: Engaging adolescent girls and boys via ICTs and media creation workshops has proven to work well in other youth engagement projects.

6. Mentoring: The first year project participants were engaged as mentors and youth advisors to develop the second year of the project. This way, we hoped to ensure the activities offered would increase the sustainability of the project and its development in response to the needs identified by adolescent girls themselves, and to further develop participants' self-confidence.

An external evaluation of the project was conducted. The evaluation report highlighted several key results from the project and noted that it yielded particularly positive impacts on the adolescent girls and boys who participated directly in the project. These include:

- Increased awareness about the different issues affecting women and girls in their communities and knowledge about how to effect positive change;
- Increased involvement in their community;
- Development of their leadership skills;
- Ability to harness their creativity to speak out on issues that matter to them;
- Increased ability to express and assert their views.

The *My City, My Safety!* participants gained knowledge and received training on different thematic areas such as violence against women and girls, girls' safety, discrimination, women's and girls' rights, etc. The girls and boys acknowledged the importance of being actively engaged in their communities with a view of building safer and more inclusive cities. Moreover, they now have the tools, skills and expertise required to carry out initiatives that bring about change. Several participants have expressed clearly wanting to continue to be involved in their community.

The project has had significant impact on young people, especially on a personal level, in terms of increasing their confidence, building their leadership skills and increasing their ability to express their opinions. It was a new, exciting, and different experience that put adolescent girls' and boys' voices at the centre where their ideas were valued and where they became aware of their talents and skills and what they are able to accomplish. All of these factors contributed to the participants becoming leaders and becoming engaged in solving problems in their communities, thereby ensuring the sustainability of the project.

Endnotes

1 *The Gender Inclusive Cities Programme: Increasing women's safety by identifying and disseminating effective and promising approaches that promote women's equal access to public spaces"* carried out in: Delhi, India; Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Rosario, Argentina; and Petrozavodsk, Russia. The action research project *Women's Access to Water and Sanitation in Asian Cities*, in New Delhi, India, etc.

2 The 8-Point Call to Action shows how important it is to engage adolescent girls in meaningful, strategic and substantive ways when building and running cities. This Call to Action was featured in Plan International's 2010 *Because I am a Girl Report*.

CASE STUDY

Youth empowerment through technology, arts and media (YETAM) *Cameroon*

Background

Plan International has been working for and with children for more than 75 years. We work in 50 low and middle income countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas. We focus on the inclusion, education and protection of the most marginalised children in partnership with communities, local and national government and civil society. Our starting point is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and our approach is child rights-centred community development.

Plan's Youth Empowerment through Technology, Arts and the Media (YETAM) programme took place in 6 West and East Africa countries: Cameroon, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda and Senegal.

Plan Cameroon was established in 1996, and works with approx 25,000 children in 736 communities. The YETAM programme ran in 3 of Plan's 6 rural programme areas as a partnership between Plan, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Finland) and Nokia between 2008 and 2011.

Project Objectives

Youth participant is generally seen as weak within rural areas[1] and youth in Plan's programme areas have limited access to formal and informal channels of participation. The aim of the programme was to use participatory methods to empower young people to learn about their rights and to analyse their realities and advocate for change using digital technology, social media and the arts. To strengthen the capacity of youth, particularly girls, to lead, communicate, negotiate, network, mobilize and advocate around gender issues and violence at various levels through a variety of communication channels.

Participant Audience

Girls and boys 12 to 21 years. Literacy was a requirement of participation. At least 50% of the participants were girls, and boys were also included in the project to raise their awareness and engagement with gender issues.

C4D Approach

- Use of a participatory approach involving the arts, media, mapping and new ICT tools to engage young people in community-level identification of community assets and vulnerabilities, with a focus on child rights, child protection and gender.
- Hands-on learning and media production to engage youth and community leaders in exploration of core topics and community issues.
- Use of the media products to advocate with community leaders for change and budget allocation to address issues identified.
- Communication technologies used included video, audio (dictaphones), radio, computers, internet, digital mapping equipment (GPS handsets, Open Street Map).
- Communication channels: school and community meetings, YETAM-led community newspapers, community showings of films, local radio stations, audio CDs, national television opportunities, maps available through the Open Street Map site.

Interventions

- Engagement of community leaders at different levels, including community development officers, town councilors, village leaders, opinion leaders and parents.
- Identification and enrollment of youth leaders (boys and girls) by community leaders and schools.

- A one-week training of trainers on participatory media and child rights/child protection for Plan local staff, community leaders, and local arts and media partners
- A three-week "summer camp" style workshop with youth, teachers, community volunteers and community leaders, including a) community resource and risk mapping, including gender analysis; b) prioritization by youth of core topics and issues (both resources and risks) to explore using arts and media; c) hands-on training and production of arts and media by youth, supported by adults, including audio, video, GIS/mapping for governance, radio as well as journalism, dramatic arts and music; d) community showcase and discussion; e) action plans for follow-up advocacy by youth with support from local partners; f) budget allocation by Plan and/or district officials to carry out actions; g) continued support for youth groups for arts and media production; h) uploading of arts and media to YouTube and a website.
- A follow-up workshop on digital mapping to identify resource allocation and engage mayors in 3 districts in a discussion on where resources were being allocated and exact commitments from councils to provide funding for programs youth deemed necessary.

Evaluation

IMPACT:

Participation of girls in local decision-making increased and their contributions were valued:

"In our villages, the child did not have a meaningful role to play but with the project, they have the opportunity to express themselves everywhere, to say everything they see and to show everyone what is not going [on] in the community." (local decision-maker)

"I was surprised to see young girls accompanied by my daughter come to me in the fields … to submit their grievances … and then show me where I was not right" (community leader, Ndop)[2]

The independent evaluation of the YETAM project stated that the activities undertaken by the YETAM project "put young people at the heart of development and gave them a position of leverage which can build their community … young people are no longer passive subjects, a pretext for intervention of NGOs in rural, vulnerable areas, they have the change to trigger the process that can lead to institutional and socio-cultural change."

The results of the mapping project showed increased engagement and involvement (for example around budget allocation) with decision makers in Ndop and Pitoa, where the maps and associated socio-economic information were presented to councilors and local leaders.

The involvement of boys and parents helped to raise their awareness of gender issues in their community, and to change their perceptions of girls.

Girls assumed the role of group leaders and they developed the confidence and skills to use technology and speak out publically. The value of boys involved in the projects where girls were the leaders highlighted the positive benefits of seeing girls in action.

Before the project,

"Girls [found it] especially hard to use the computers because the boys overpower them and control the access to the computers".[3]

After the project:

"The project was a great help to change attitudes because here are girls who are leaders and there was even a girl president." (girl participant)[4]

".. the respect for the freedom of expression is a notable success of the project … [girls] have the ability to identity and develop community projects .. express their concerns [about] the community without encountering resistance from adults."[5]

This also benefited the parents who did let their daughters attend.

"My mother and my father were very proud of me. They are the ones who motivate me to participate to the workshops at school."

"Young people have developed the arguments that made us see our responsibility in relation to early marriage". (community leader)[6]

High awareness and support of the programme from community leaders provided the best results. The programme built on previous community capacity building between Plan and the localities. The local partner NGOs chosen were well established in the sector, and had previously worked with Plan on youth media projects.

"I am chief of village and the YETAM project is taking place with the young people of my village. It is a project in which people took the initiative to give children the place that should be theirs."[7]

Use of the technology benefited the wider community

The girls and boys involved in the digital mapping work mapped three communities – Okola, Ndop and Pitoa. They collected information about local publically funded resources (schools, health clinics, early childhood care and education services) and uncovered a bias towards allocation of resources to more accessible communities, and those with influential leaders. The decision makers valued the information to support strategic planning.

Several of the YETAM groups, for example in Okola, set up community newspapers, often the first to serve their local area and well adapted to local realities and resources.

The programme gave the children the opportunity to interact with the technology that they'd only heard about previously, although the girls in particular had a good understanding of the importance of being able to use ICTs….

" … young people in rural areas do not have the same chance that the young people in urban areas have. The youth in the rural areas hear about these [communication] tools but don't see them. The fact that they see those tools is very important to them. Not only do they want to take control but it also allows them to broadcast messages." (trainer)

"… there has been a great contribution which will certainly produce changes in the future because to be competitive in life of today, it is not enough only to produce graduates; they must also be able to use the new technologies. " (girl participant)

The evaluation showed that the skills obtained by participating in the YETAM programme benefited school performance, by increasing grades in subjects such as English and Maths. One of the participants stated "I want to be like the [peer] leaders so I try to get good grades."[8]

LEARNING POINTS:

Even where Plan was well-embedded within the community and village leaders were receptive, parental attitudes and tradition were a limiter to girls actively participating in the project. For example in Okola, where there was less buy-in by local leaders and parents, the evaluation found that girls wer[9]e still excluded from or passive partners in the groups. In Bamenda, girls found it hard to break the taboos of girls speaking out (although the project had notable successes around discouraging early marriage, and raising awareness of domestic violence).[9]

In some parts of the project, for example digital mapping, equipment was dominated by older members of the group. However, as younger members gained in confidence, they were able to demand access. But group coordinators needed to be aware of this issue.[10]

Language and literacy were limiters. For example, the 10 out-of-school youth that participated in the digital mapping project 'felt their role was limited due to their educational level'[11]. The most successful groups were those led by schools, where the young people had a good level of literacy and could see a direct benefit to their educational attainment from attendance at the group.

In rural areas, physical distance from school/youth groups was a barrier for some girls, where the sessions took place after the school day, although the rural girls that were allowed to attend did benefit.

Although the groups produced high quality communications materials, there were limited opportunities to share them "youth complained about the non-distribution and broadcasting of their [materials] in their communities."[12]

Wariness about the continuation of the project after Plan's funding was withdrawn, and project sustainability. One village leader commented:

> *"My role in the project is to enable the children to participate fully and supplement their ideas. As head of a community, I also play the role of liaison between the children and the YETAM agents. We all see what this project can bring us and I think we must do everything we can continue with this if Plan decides to withdraw. We are 100% behind Plan and behind YETAM but if Plan decides to withdraw, we will have some problems to continue because we have not yet acquired all the skills necessary to drive this kind of project. We still need the coaching and my desire is to see Plan accompany the children in my community until the end of what it has started."*

Limitations to technology:

> *"the internet is really slow and the school has limited computers … the YETAM project [in my school] has just one laptop giving a total of 7 computers [with those in the school lab] to be used by 60 YETAM youth …"*[13]

Endnotes

1 Digital mapping: a silver bullet for enhancing youth participation in governance? Linda Raftree and Judith Nkie, Participatory Learning and Action 64 p3 - 14

2 Assessment of the impact of the youth empowerment through technology, arts and the media project. Groupes Strategies et Leadership (GSL), Senegal 2011.

3 Patience, 17 years old, Cameroon. Cited in Girls Speak Out: Girls Fast-talk on the potential of ICTs in their empowerment and development. Plan International 2011.

4 Ibid.

5 Assessment of the impact of the youth empowerment through technology, arts and the media project. Groupes Strategies et Leadership (GSL), Senegal 2011.

6 Ibid.

7 Interview with community leader for final evaluation. Unpublished.

8 Assessment of the impact of the youth empowerment through technology, arts and the media project. Groupes Strategies et Leadership (GSL), Senegal 2011.

9 Ibid.

10 Digital mapping: a silver bullet for enhancing youth participation in governance? Linda Raftree and Judith Nkie, Participatory Learning and Action 64 p3 - 14

11 Ibid.

12 Assessment of the impact of the youth empowerment through technology, arts and the media project. Groupes Strategies et Leadership (GSL), Senegal 2011.

13 Patience, 17 years old, Cameroon. Cited in Girls Speak Out: Girls Fast-talk on the potential of ICTs in their empowerment and development. Plan International 2011.

Endnotes

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August 2013

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