

CASE STUDY

Communication Strategies to Enforce Gender Equality Legislation in Mongolia



This photo was submitted to a national competition that raised awareness on gender equality issues. CREDIT: Battulga Vandandorj
Evidence-based and targeted communication is key to raising awareness of gender equality issues.

Overview

Curiously, women driving motorcycles in Mongolia's cities will attract stares. In rural areas, however, this is the norm. What makes people think that women can ride motorcycles here but not there? How can communication break gender stereotyping?

A project in Mongolia conducted a multimedia campaign at the national and local level for 3 months to raise public awareness of gender equality issues. Communication was crucial in mainstreaming gender issues and improving the capacity and performance of the Government of Mongolia to enforce the gender equality law.

Project snapshot

Dates

- **11 October 2016:** Approval date
- **13 May 2019:** Closing date

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| Cost | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US\$700,000 : Technical Assistance |
| Institutions and Stakeholders | <p>Financing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Asian Development Bank</u>: Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (technical assistance) <p>Executing agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Mongolia <p>Implementing agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secretariat, National Committee on Gender Equality of Mongolia |

Development Challenges

Gender stereotypes are judgments or biases that people harbor about what is considered proper for men and for women based on the perceived characteristics of each sex. Stereotypes are damaging when women's or men's capacity to develop their abilities are curtailed and their activities are predetermined, severely limiting life plans and choices.

Gender stereotypes perpetuate inequality.

In 2017, Mongolia ranked 65 out of 189 countries in the Gender Inequality Index (GII), which measures inequalities in reproductive health, empowerment, and the labor market. Recognizing how gender inequality hinders economic growth, the Mongolian government is fully committed to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment under Sustainable Development Goal 5.

Context

Mongolia has a comprehensive gender legislative framework in place, but enforcement remains inadequate because of three factors:

- the limited capacity and accountability of government institutions to conduct gender analysis and mainstream gender in policy planning and budgeting;
- insufficient cross-sector coordination by government, including with civil society organizations; and
- a lack of sex-disaggregated data in some sectors.

When civil society organizations assessed Mongolia's implementation of the Mid-term Strategy and Action Plan (2013–2016) on the Law on Promotion of Gender Equality, one major constraint stood out—there was low public awareness on gender equality. This added to the challenges in implementing

the law.

Opinions on gender equality occupy extreme ends of the spectrum. The term itself spawns contentious debates as it covers a whole range of personal and political issues. If communication interventions to raise awareness of gender equality were to succeed, it was first necessary to unpack the perception and attitudes of stakeholders toward gender inequality and trace where these were coming from.

Solutions

Use formative research to pinpoint the main gender equality issues, where they start, and who the gatekeepers are

The Asian Development Bank-supported project conducted formative research in nine districts in the capital Ulaanbaatar and six provinces: Selenge, Dornogobi, Orkhon, Bayankhongor, Khentii, and Khovd. The research design used mixed quantitative and qualitative methodologies and was validated by gender and research specialists prior to rollout. A thousand respondents participated in the survey while 92 individuals took part in the focus group discussions and in-depth interviews.

Results showed that the public and private experiences of gender inequality of key stakeholders were directly linked to the pervasiveness of strong gender stereotypes among all social groups in Mongolia. The stereotypes influenced gender dynamics and reinforced traditional gender roles for women and men in the family and social life.

Here are key insights from the formative research:

- The most dominant gender stereotypes find root in child-rearing and family dynamics. Essentially, parents and teachers are the gatekeepers of stereotypes that are established at home and reinforced in school. Results also pointed to the influence of media, as one of the respondents' main sources of information, in shaping perception of gender roles and stereotypes.
- Both male and female respondents said household chores need to be equally shared between spouses. In practice, however, the roles are delineated based on the "nature" of women and men ("Women can do this better than men."), and the suitability of the chores to this nature ("This suits women more."). Daily chores are seen as more suited to women (i.e., cleaning, shopping/marketing, helping kids with homework) while the repair of household items, driving/bringing of children to and from school or daycare, and paying for household expenses are considered more suited to men.
- Both men and women tend to think that they have more decision-making powers in the household. While a big majority of women said they are the decision maker on household issues, almost 80% of male respondents said they assigned this power to their spouses or mothers.
- Technology and automation make household chores easier, particularly in urban areas, and positively influence the distribution of responsibilities in the family.
- Male and female respondents believe that both spouses should be employed to increase the household income. In practice, however, men ask women to stay at home if they earn a sufficient income. While women consider employment as not just for economic gain but also for social involvement, they believe that balancing career and family is a normal obligation.
- Gender stereotypes concerning the role of women in the family are stronger among rural people, 45 years old and older.
- The less education one has, the stronger the perception of predetermined roles of women in the family and society, and the more unwilling to change these roles.
- The roles in the households are carried over to the workplace. Women's nature (i.e., more caring,

cleaner, have more attention to detail) limits their options to positions that require them to implement, such as health care and education.

The research also probed the most preferred and effective communication channels used by the respondents.

- Television enjoys the highest credibility for rural and urban respondents across all age groups.
- Social media platforms, primarily Facebook, was more preferred by urban respondents, 24 years old and younger.
- With more media organizations having an online presence, more people, particularly in the urban areas, get their news through the internet.

Tailor public communication strategies based on research results

A 3-month multimedia communication campaign was designed using the research insights. The national campaign aimed to increase understanding and awareness of gender biases by addressing stereotypes among target groups, primarily parents, teachers, and journalists.

The key research findings identified the most prevalent stereotypes.

- Boys, and consequently men, don't cry.
- Women and girls are responsible for caregiving duties and household chores.
- Men and boys are naturally naughty and messy.
- Girls are more studious than boys.
- Boys can survive whatever circumstances, so they do not need higher education.
- Women and girls need to take care of their physical appearance.

The stereotypes were initially packaged into 11 messages, nine of which were later validated through pre-testing with the key audience. The messages were tailored depending on the audience's specific contexts and circumstances. A flyer was developed for parents and teachers to recognize behavior and language at home and in school that perpetuate stereotypes.

To reach more parents with young children, the nine messages were translated into graphics for posting on a dedicated Facebook page. To maximize on the audience's preference for multimedia formats, a video explainer on gender equality was produced for online posting and for television.

Kids unpack gender equality in Mongolia. Video clip simplifies the concept of gender equality based on how children understand it.

The national campaign also aimed to strengthen the gender-sensitive communication capacity of government, civil society organizations, and journalists to reinforce non-stereotypical attitudes of target communities. Representatives of stakeholder groups that work in the areas of gender and education were trained to reinforce approaches for parents and teachers, and initiate interventions for creating an enabling environment for non-biased gender attitudes. A podcast featuring popular journalists was

produced to expand the network of journalists trained on gender-sensitive reporting. Another podcast targeted government officials to bring attention to gender issues in the workplace. Story and photo contests were launched to engage journalists further and provide them with a channel to apply their learning.

A website was created to aid in branding and act as a repository of communication materials, which are freely accessible for dissemination among parents, teachers, government, civil society organizations, and journalists.

Conduct local campaigns to reinforce national efforts and strengthen buy-in on the ground

The local-level campaigns aimed to support local government officials and civil society organizations in two pilot provinces, Selenge and Dornogobi, to hasten the enforcement of gender equality legislation and operations. The campaigns also sought to reinforce the national campaign among parents and teachers in the locality.

Training modules were developed according to the needs of government officials, civil society organizations, teachers, and journalists to unpack local issues that cause gender inequality and constrain the enforcement of gender laws. The modules were used in the workshop for each stakeholder group to facilitate discussions on how to address gender stereotypes concretely and ways to communicate these to the community.

Since the timing of the local campaigns coincided with national communication activities, the same set of communication materials were disseminated using the local Facebook pages of civil society organizations, parents, and teachers. Accompanying each graphic on particular gender stereotypes were calls for parents and teachers to share stories and pictures about how they concretely recognized and addressed stereotypes in their households and schools. They were also encouraged to frame their profile pictures using the campaign branding (see sample below).



Actual outcomes

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has supported the Government of Mongolia in adopting the Law on Promotion of Gender Equality in 2011. To ensure effective law enforcement, ADB has been providing technical support since 2014. The project, Gender-responsive Sector and Local Development Policies and Actions in Mongolia, directly supported one of the six objectives of the National Program on Gender Equality to raise awareness and advocacy in support of gender education and to address gender stereotypes nationwide.

Public Communication Highlights

National Level

191,000 people reached by the 3-month multimedia campaign

857 people showed support and positive reactions, and 708 people shared the campaign's messages

95% of comments on campaign messages supported the national campaign

90% expressed intention to use newly obtained knowledge and skills in their work

1,500 people (an average of 500 per month) visited the project website during the 3-month campaign

Local Level

At least 2,000 people received campaign messages in the provinces of Dornogobi and Selenge

Local government, NGOs, and media practitioners signed the MOU on stakeholder collaboration

28 media professionals, including executives and editors of the print, broadcast and online media were trained on gender-sensitive and rights-based journalism approaches

Lessons

1. Communicating complex concepts like “gender equality” or “gender stereotypes” need to be based on formative research to unpack key issues and pinpoint the most relevant ones that can be linked to stakeholder experiences.
2. Using TV and social media channels are effective for awareness-raising, but these need to be reinforced by more tailored community-based communication and stakeholder workshops. This ensures that local stakeholders do not just sustain the discussions about the most relevant gender stereotypes that impact on them, but that there is concrete action to recognize and address them in the areas where stereotypes are perpetuated—households, schools, and workplaces.
3. Messages and communication materials disseminated through social media channels are more effective if there are parallel efforts to moderate online discussions and encourage audiences to share their experiences.
4. Development communication practitioners need to develop robust measurement and evaluation frameworks to generate in-depth analysis of online and social media campaigns beyond “likes, loves, sad, or angry” and positive or negative comments.
5. Through the communication campaign, the project directly contributed to awareness-raising and advocacy objectives of the National Program on Gender Equality, 2017–2021. To sustain the campaign momentum, succeeding projects need to build on the project gains, particularly in engaging local stakeholders to design communication campaigns for their respective communities where the impact can be most felt.

Resources

Asian Development Bank and National Committee on Gender Equality. 2018. Public Communication Strategies for Awareness Raising on Gender Equality: (i) National Multi-media Campaign Strategy; and (ii) Local level Communication Campaign Strategy. Ulaanbaatar.

ADB and National Committee on Gender Equality. 2018. Completion Reports of Public Communication Campaigns on Gender Equality: (i) National multi-media campaign report; and (ii) Local level campaign report. Ulaanbaatar.

ADB. [Mongolia: Gender-Responsive Sector and Local Development Policies and Actions.](#)



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Pinky Serafica has been a practitioner of development communication and behavior change in international development projects for the last 2 decades. She specializes

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