

Fighting Harmful Social Norms in Somalia

CHANGES Midterm Evaluation

Background

The Social Norms and Participation Project (SNaP), a four years project co-funded by DFiD and Norwegian Embassy, is a dual approach toward increasing women's participation while challenging harmful social norms. The project exists to create an enabling environment for girls and women to reach their potential and make significant contributions to Somali society, preventing the intergenerational transfer of gender inequality and poverty. SNaP is made up of two components. Component I, which is led by UNDP working with UN Women, aims to support and improve an enabling environment for women's participation creating pull factors to empower individual women to participate in political decision-making. Component II also known as CHANGES (Challenging Harmful Attitudes and Norms for Gender Equality and Empowerment in Somalia) is enduring to eradicate FGM/C, early and forced child marriage (CEFM) and increase women participation in household decision making through economic empowerment.

Following two years of implementation, a midterm evaluation (MTE) of CHANGES project has been conducted to establish how far the CHANGES component has progressed. More so, the MTE envisioned to identify and document major challenges the project is going through in addition to generating learning that will be used to improve project performance and quality in the remaining two years of the project as well as other gender and women empowerment programs in Somalia.

Study Design and Methodology

The midterm evaluation that was conducted between April and July 2019 adopted mixed methods and designs with Dr. Munshi Sulaiman leading on the quantitative methods and JBaungo Consultancy taking the qualitative methods. The quantitative preceded the qualitative and the quantitative report was shared with JB consultant before fieldwork. Using a randomised control trial design, 1,824 (932 from intervention and 892 from comparison communities) of the 2,035 respondents from the baseline were successfully traced and interviewed at the follow-up giving attrition of 21%. The quantitative respondents included three groups, opinion leaders and general male and female. The quantitative data was collected in 10¹ of the 13² CHANGES intervention districts. To measure impact appropriately, districts that were in the baseline and are in intervention were selected.

Using purposive sampling due to budget and time constraints, 6³ of the 10 follow-up districts were covered in the qualitative methods. Separate discussion groups were conducted for men and women, boy and girls. In total, 42 focused groups discussions and 18 (9 male and 9 female) key informant interviews including some programme officers were conducted. In addition to that, the consortium acting director and the former, the finance manager, consortium MEAL and Research coordinator were also interviewed.

Findings

Women's Empowerment and Gender Bias

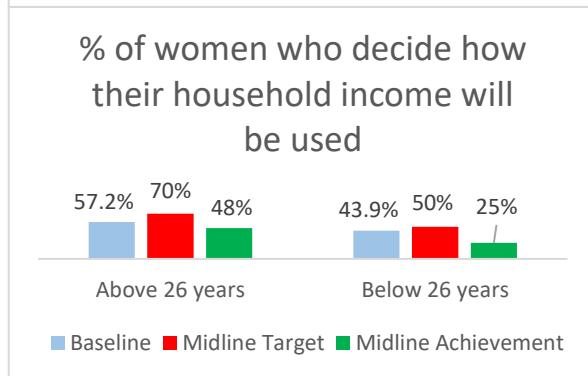
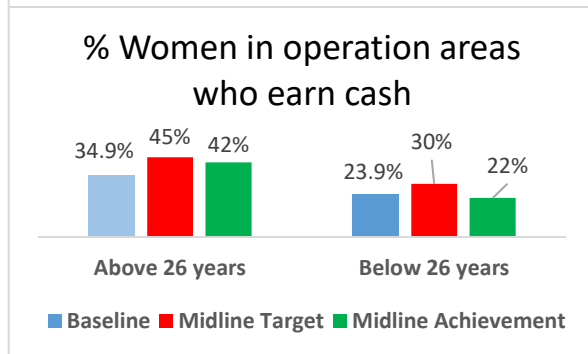
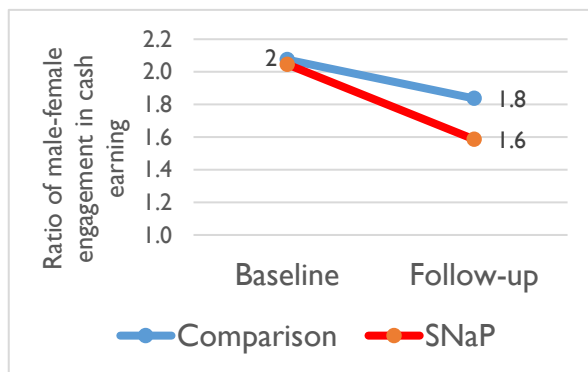
Generally, the project has enhanced women economic empowerment but not necessarily making them as the key income earners at the household. The evaluation findings are that more women now contribute to household income than before. On the other hand the intervention project has led to reduced gender gap of labour participation between men and women. Women in intervention communities are more

¹ Hargeysa, Badhan and Erigavo in Somaliland; Beledweyne, Adado, Karan, Hawl-wadag, Galkacyo South and Hobyo in South and Central Somalia; Galdogob in Puntland.

² Hargeysa, Badhan, Burao and Erigavo in Somaliland; Beledweyne, Adado, Karan, Hawl-wadag, Galkacyo South and Galkacyo North, Hobyo and Kismayo in South and Central Somalia; Galdogob in Puntland.

³ Hargeysa and Badhan in Somaliland; Beledweyne, Karan, Hawl-wadag and Galkacyo South in South and Central Somalia

likely to get engaged in earning activities compared to their baseline status and there is decline in female-male gap in labour participation. This gap has reduced by 6% for men and increased by 6% for women.



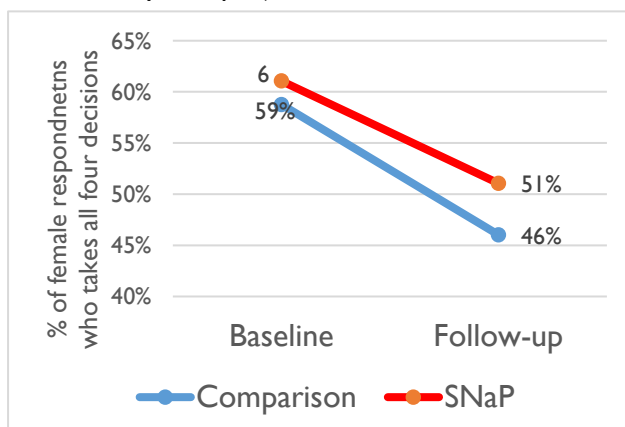
Significant achievement has been observed on women empowerment through village savings and loans association groups (VSLA). The targets have almost been fully achieved for older women (26+ years) compare to their younger counterpart. There is a strong correlation between the female respondents' engagement in earning activities and their participation in the VSLA component of SNaP. While 56% of the women from VLSA participant households reported doing activities for cash income, it is 35% for non-participants.

Despite the significant achievement made in economic empowerment of women, fewer women have control over how their household will be used compared with the baseline. The effect of the drought and the short duration of intervention could be possible players in this reduction. In the follow-up survey, female respondents from the households that are more vulnerable to drought related shocks had lower control over household income at baseline compared to less vulnerable households. On a similar note, women participation in household decision making has declined below the baseline levels.

Attitude towards Intimate Partner Violence

Progressive attitude towards IPV is another area where the project has recorded progress. At the follow-up, majority of the respondents expressed progressive opinion on their attitude towards IPV

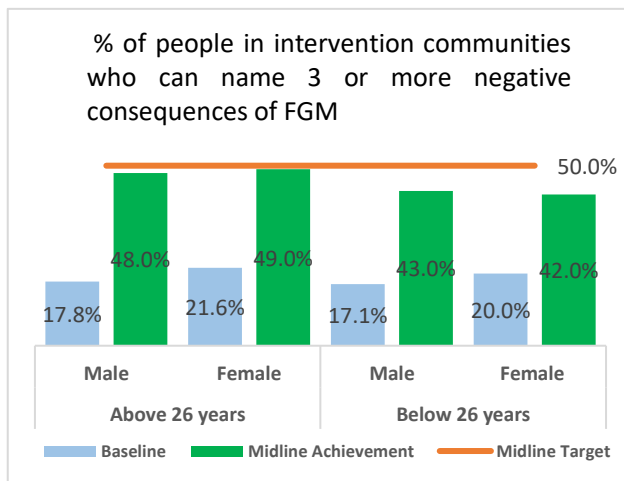
with higher share of general male respondents expressing progressive attitude (70%) than female (43%) and opinion leaders (61%) which indicates 8.9% impact for the pooled sample. Good to note is that the economic empowerment of women has not led to negative association between the increases in economic activities of women with changes in IPV attitude. In fact, there is a weak positive association between these two changes. For the project, there also an indication that the improvements in attitude towards IPV is higher at all level of women's economic empowerment in the intervention communities compared to comparison communities. This essentially reflects that at all levels of women's economic engagement in a community, the project interventions have influenced a higher improvement in attitude towards IPV.



Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting

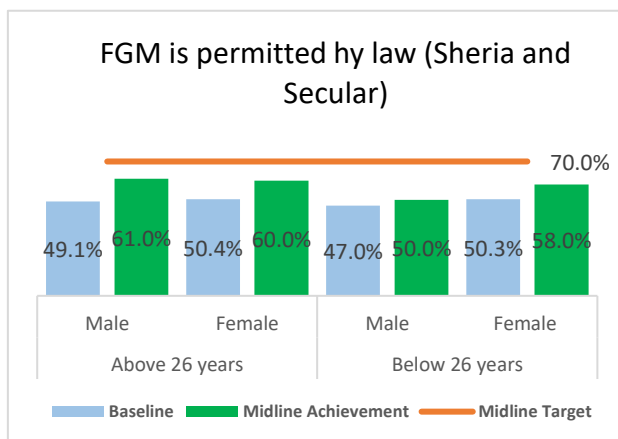
Awareness creation of harmful consequences of FGM such as transmission of infectious diseases, bleeding, and difficulty during delivery, excessive pain during intercourse and reduction in sexual feelings for the girl has made significant progress. From a baseline of 60%, 80% of the community members can now name at least three of these harmful consequences. The increase in awareness in intervention communities is about 20 percentage

points (from 58.7% to 80.7%) compared to 14.6 percentage points (from 61.8% to 76.4%) in comparison communities.



Generally, it appears that the percentage of girls undergoing any form of circumcision has not declined at the targeted rate. However prevalence of Pharonic as the most common form of FGM has reduced from 35% to 22% among the intervention communities. An increase has been reported in Sunna kabeer (45% to 47%) and Sunnah saker (14% to 28%). At the moment, more people approve Sunnah circumcision than Pharonic contrary to the baseline. This change can be because of concern since sunnah FGM/C is more embedded in religious beliefs than pharonic, and it can be harder to correct people's perceptions when the root is in

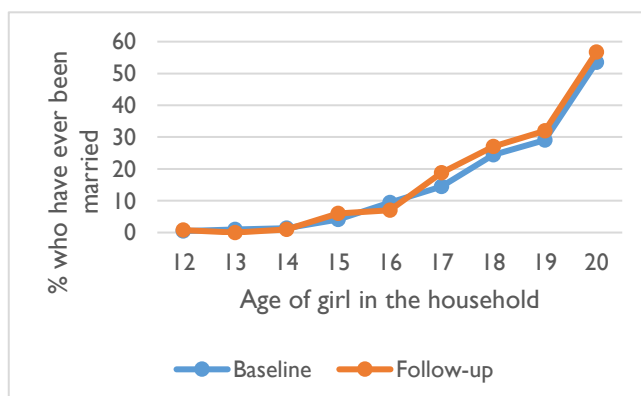
religious beliefs in a highly religious society like Somalia. Significant to report also is the decline in circumcision among younger girls which can potentially lead to decline if some of them remain uncut up to when they will be 17 as parents who want to cut their girls declines from 79.5% (baseline) to 66.5% (midline). More people in the target communities now report that FGM/C is not permitted by Islamic and Secular laws up. Despite this positive achievements in the fight against FGM/C, it also worrying to discover that health professionals are involved in cutting girls.



On the other hand progress has been made as more people reported that FGM/C is not permitted by law except for young male. However, one important challenge in the interpretation of this indicator is the fatwa that was issued that banned Pharonic and reinforced Sunnah, especially in the districts from Somaliland. In Somaliland, 54% of have reported FGM/C is not permitted by law compared to 63% in the other districts. The difference in this indicator between intervention and comparison communities is 2 percentage points

Child Early and Forced Marriage

During the baseline, there was high and wrong perception among people that early marriage is highly common in their villages which is now corrected at midline. At baseline more than half of the respondents reported that majority of the girls in their communities marry before the age of 18. A massive correction has now taken place as the reality is that majority of the girls get married after 18. The junk of this

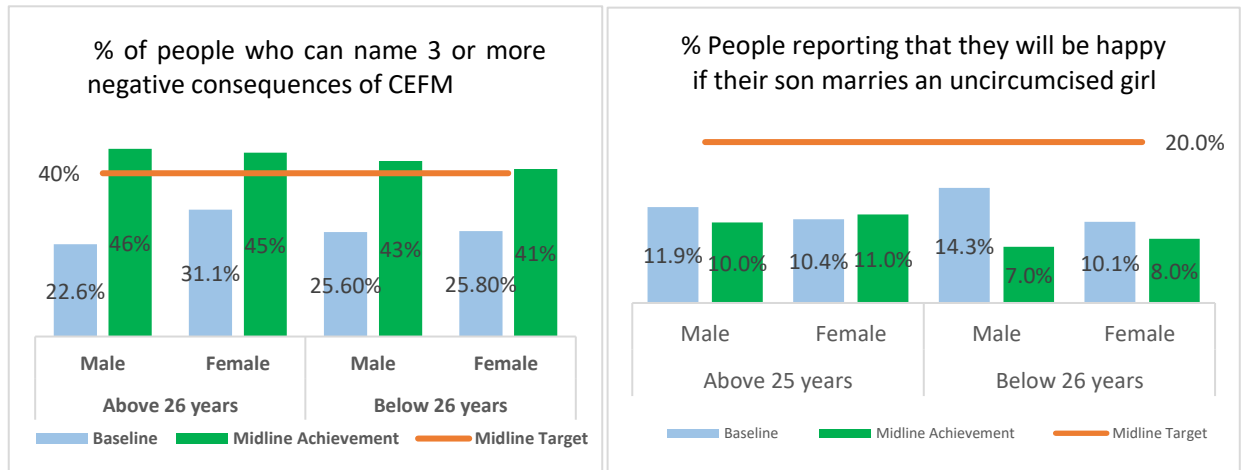


correction has taken place among opinion leaders.

Though not statistically significant, there is a slight drop of the proportion of people reporting the ideal age of marriage for girls is 'as soon as they reach puberty', which is potentially related to Islamic interpretations of ideal age of marriage.

However, majority of the girls get married after 18 years. Among all respondents, the share of opinion leaders, between baseline and follow-up survey, who are in favour of child marriage has declined by 25% in intervention communities. Significant to learn is the drop for preference of early marriage which has reduced by 16-24%.

Incidence of early and forced child marriage rate among children (15-19 years) has declined to 12.7% from 13.9% with a midline target of 11%, but not statistically significant from baseline. In communities where SNaP activities were more intensively done (more participants) the rate is lower (11.9%) compared to the comparison communities where fewer people participated (13.4%). The targets for early marriage awareness have been achieved. As shown below, more people can name 3 or more negative consequences of CEFM as stipulated in the theory of change.



As shown above, preference for circumcised girls in marriage has not reduced as was targeted. This was measured by parent's desire to have their sons marry uncircumcised girls. The decline is driven by decreased unacceptability of bride not undergoing Sunnah. Percentage of respondents who reported being happy with their son marrying NOT Pharonic circumcised increased from 48% to 58% while it has declined from 22% to 18% if bride is NOT Sunnah circumcised. Overall, there is very small difference (1.5 percentage points) between intervention and comparison communities in this indicator indicating low impact.