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## Hello, I Am

# Using edutainment to end child marriage in Bangladesh

## Introduction

The *Hello, I Am* (HIA) programme (2017 - 2020) aimed to end child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, and school drop-out in Bangladesh. Using a multi-pronged approach that included **positive role modelling**, **intergenerational dialogue**, and **edutainment**, the programme empowered young men and women to take action against child marriage and encouraged parents and community leaders to become more supportive of girls' aspirations. The programme reached nearly 80,000 people through community-based activities and more than seven million people through media efforts. It enabled young people across six *upazilas* (districts) to break harmful social norms and have more say in decisions about their future.

## Key takeaways

- This brief highlights one of three strategies used in the *Hello, I Am* (HIA) programme: edutainment, the use of entertaining content and activities designed to educate.
- HIA used television and radio programmes, community screenings, capacity building workshops, street dramas, and digital media developed by BBC Media Action to educate young people and their parents to question and reshape norms around child marriage and the role of girls in society.
- The innovative approach of integrating high-quality multimedia content with a facilitated community-level discussion created a reinforcing process that engaged community members of all ages and genders.
- The most successful content shared relatable stories, offered multiple and multilayer solutions, and highlighted the consequences of actions.
- It is recommended that future edutainment interventions (1) solicit and incorporate feedback from the target audience to ensure content is tailored to their realities and preferences and (2) specifically target the relationship between children and their fathers, with a focus on increasing parents' confidence in their children's decision-making power and young people's confidence in discussing issues with their fathers.

## Approach

HIA used television and radio programmes, community screenings, capacity building workshops, street dramas, and digital media developed by BBC Media Action to educate young people and their parents, to question and reshape norms around child marriage and the role of girls in society, and to spark conversations within communities. The innovation of integrating high-quality multimedia content with facilitated community-level discussion created a reinforcing process that engaged community members of all ages and genders.

## Activities

**13** episodes of *Hello Check!* television programme reached an estimated **7.24 million** adults (age 15+)

***Hello Check!* television show:** The show ran nationally during primetime on Saturday nights, repeated on Sunday mornings. The 13 one-hour episodes included real life stories, chats with celebrity guests, and discussions with young people and their parents. It focused on role-modelling, dispelling myths, and breaking taboos.

***Hello Check!* radio show:** The show aired on a national station. The 30-minute programme consisted of live and pre-recorded radio packages,

**139** episodes of *Hello Check!* radio programme reached an estimated **4.2 million**

discussions with special guests, and music. It also included public service announcements on sexual harassment, gender stereotypes, family relationships, and career advice.

**Content and training for community groups:** BBC Media Action developed short videos specifically for youth and parent community groups. Clips could be played on mobile phones and were saved to USB drives for easy sharing. BBC Media Action also trained HIA programme staff and volunteers on interpersonal communication, group facilitation, and edutainment materials.

**36** community screenings of *Hello Check!* videos reached an estimated **4,500** people

**Community screenings:** BBC Media Action and implementing partners organized community screenings of the videos. Each screening showed several clips on a big screen to an audience of about 100 people. After the screening, programme staff facilitated group discussions about the topics addressed.

**Street dramas:** Implementing partners organized street dramas, short plays written and performed by young people about issues highlighted in the youth groups. They were particularly useful in demonstrating the consequences of actions and the need to plan ahead.

**Digital media:** The *Hello Check!* Facebook page provided information, engaged young people in discussions, and hosted interactive live videos. The *Hello Check!* television episodes were uploaded to YouTube and project staff developed a website, [uCon](#), that specifically catered to young people's need for accurate information on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in a safe and discreet environment.

## Impact

***Hello Check!* television and radio shows:** The television programme reached an estimated 7.24 million people. Through its 139 episodes, the radio show reached an estimated 4.2 million people. A BBC Media Action evaluation showed that the radio programme advanced young people's understanding, attitudes, and knowledge about gender inequality, particularly harassment, and made them more confident in breaking societal norms and discussing the issues. It informed young people about ways to stop child marriage and gave them the confidence to take action in the future. The Bangladeshi government expressed interest in the *Hello Check!* content and other radio shows sought opportunities for collaboration. Since HIA concluded, BBC Media Action has granted requests to air repeats of the programmes.



**“The first thing I learnt and decided after listening to this [*Hello Check!*] programme is that I have a sister and I will not allow her to be married before 18 years and I will also try to stop child marriage in our area if I see someone is getting married before 18 years of age.”**

**- Young person (18+, male)**

#### **Community screenings:**

According to a BBC Media study in two upazilas, community screenings influenced participants’ knowledge and attitudes towards child marriage, early pregnancy, sexual harassment, and girls’ education.

Adolescent boys and fathers experienced the biggest shift in attitudes. They realized the negative impact that harassment could have in a girl’s life; many reported that they stopped doing it since the screening and would tell others to stop as well. Because men generally hold the decision-making power in a family, these shifts have the potential to change community norms.

Mothers learnt how they could support their daughters. Girls realized that they could inform their parents and even seek help from the authorities if they experienced harassment. Parents

also recognized the importance of continuing their daughters’ education, along with their sons. Many parents said the screenings made them understand they should not marry their daughters off young.

The screenings were also successful in sparking discussion between young people, parents, and other community members. Participants reported discussing what they learnt with others with the intention of raising awareness and influencing others’ attitudes and behaviours. Adolescent girls and especially mothers communicated the health risks of child marriage and early pregnancy, while fathers and boys informed others about the punishment for child marriage. Through these discussions, information from the screenings was diffused beyond those who attended.

**“I did not think that girls could also do business. But in the show and videos, girls were doing business and earning money and supporting their families. I realized girls can also earn and they will not be [a] burden for the parents anymore. So, parents will not pressure girls for marriage also.”**

**- Adolescent girl**

**Street dramas:** The dramas were very popular, drawing audiences of up to hundreds of people. Community members and programme staff viewed them as an influential edutainment tool.

**“I’ve realized not everyone has the ability to think ahead, about the future. These plays help people chart their lives – if I study, I have opportunities, if I don’t study, I won’t have opportunities. It’s a really simple way of explaining to people!”**

**- Street drama attendee**

#### **Training for community groups:**

BBC Media Action staff trained 19 HIA programme staff and more than 50 community volunteers in overcoming communication challenges. Programme staff learnt how to use edutainment materials, initiate and engage people in discussion, and ask follow-up questions. Community volunteers became more confident in using multimedia and laptops and there was better communication between programme staff, adolescents, and the community. Community members acquired skills to sustain the campaign beyond the intervention.

## **Lessons learnt**

**Choose appropriate media formats:** The national *Hello Check!* television and radio programmes did not penetrate communities as much as expected. Research is recommended to ensure that media-based content is placed in the formats that best reach the targeted audience.

This led to the development of more local, and successful, interventions. The programme repurposed and adapted the television content to distribute across multiple platforms, including community screenings and social media. The edutainment content enhanced some of the community-based activities by adding an audio-visual component, furthering the return on investment.

In 2020, the digital aspects of HIA allowed for some project activities to continue, despite COVID-19. The *Amate Ami* curriculum for youth groups (see intergenerational approach brief) became a Facebook Live show and BBC Media Action hosted webinars for community radio stations online.

**Manage logistics:** It was difficult to ensure communities had sufficient resources and hardware, such as laptops and projectors, to hold the community screenings. Knowing what equipment is available and what needs to be supplied is an important first step for community-based edutainment efforts.

## Recommendations

**Review and adapt content:** The programme consistently reviewed and adapted content by talking directly to adolescents, soliciting their feedback, and incorporating their insights and preferences. The most successful content:

- Shared relatable stories depicting situations people had faced themselves or witnessed someone else face. Stories of positive deviance (see positive deviance brief) or role models were inspiring to young people and parents, seeing people like them do something against their community's norms.
- Offered multiple and multilayer solutions to everyday problems. For example, to stop child marriage or harassment, one can talk to their parents, seek support from a trusted community leader, or call the police.
- Highlighted the consequences of actions, as it was sometimes hard for adolescents and parents to imagine positive and negative outcomes.



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Edutainment provided a soft entry point to talk about other issues related to early marriage, including SRHR, puberty, girls' empowerment, and mutual respect. Fictional and humorous videos were well-received by adolescents, while stories focused on ordinary people's successes worked well for both parents and young people. It is recommended that future interventions solicit and incorporate feedback from the target audience to ensure content is tailored to their realities and preferences.

**Build parent-child relationships:** After the interventions, BBC Media Action research found that although adolescents generally felt more confident about negotiating and influencing their parents' decisions, parents were still not supportive of children, particularly girls, making decisions independently. Adolescents, particularly girls, were not comfortable discussing issues featured with their fathers because of the nature of their relationship. It is recommended that future edutainment interventions specifically target the relationship between children and their fathers, with a focus on increasing parents' confidence in their children's decision-making power and young people's confidence in discussing issues with their fathers.



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HIA built upon the **Unite for Body Rights** programme that had been operating in Bangladesh since 2010. Rutgers led on grant management, technical advice, operational research, and evaluations. **BBC Media Action** Bangladesh developed educational media content and created communications training materials. Implementation partners **Population Services and Training Center** (PSTC), **RHSTEP**, and **Dustha Shasthya Kendra** (DSK) delivered community-facing interventions. The programme was funded by the **IKEA Foundation**.