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Aawaz II

Aawaz II
Inclusion, Accountability, Reducing Exploitation

Fostering Social Behaviour Change

Research Study

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Disclaimer:

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAC	Aawaz Aagahi Centre
ACA	Aawaz change agent
CCAP	Collective community action plan
CEFM	Child and early and forced marriage
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease, 2019
DF	District forum
ERM	Early response mechanism
EWS	Early warning system
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office
GBV	Gender-based violence
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
NADRA	National Database and Registration Authority
NGO	Non-government organisation
OT	Outreach team
PAR	Participatory action research
PF	Provincial forum
PWD	Person with disabilities
RP	Resource person
SAP	Social action project
SIG	Special interest group
SLF	Special Life Foundation
STEP	Special Talent Exchange Programme
SWD	Social Welfare Department
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VF	Village forum
WCLF	Women Community Learning Forum

Executive Summary

Aawaz II works with local communities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Punjab to promote the rights of children, women, youth, and other marginalised groups to strengthen and facilitate their development.

Aawaz II community engagement is delivered through a network of district and provincial partners to provide information referrals, facilitate citizen-state engagement for the uptake of services, and enhance community capacities. To achieve these aims, the programme set up district and sub-district Aawaz Aagahi Centres (AACs) and community-based and led village forums (VFs), district forums (DFs), and provincial forums (PFs). All such forums have government and civil society membership. A major programme component is the inclusion of community youth volunteers or Aawaz change agents (ACAs) aged 18–35, and building their capacities to promote behaviour change through social action projects (SAPs).

The programme facilitates awareness, empowerment, and behaviour change to increase community access to services and rights and decrease the acceptance of harmful and exploitative practices. These include child labour, child and early and forced marriage (CEFM), gender-based violence (GBV), exploitation and intolerance, and the exclusion of the vulnerable and marginalised, specifically women, youth, persons with disabilities (PWDs), minorities, and transgender persons. At the same time, the programme promotes understanding and social cohesion among communities, building their capacities to manage community-based early warning systems (EWS) and early response mechanisms (ERMs). The programme expects to reach two million direct and five million indirect beneficiaries as a result of focused behaviour change communications and information and referral support to communities. This five-year programme (2019–2024) is managed by the British Council with support from the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO).

Lessons Learnt

Each location in which Aawaz II operates is different in terms of its socioeconomic context and social norms, as well as the knowledge, skills, and ability of staff and volunteers. Change processes within each location are, therefore, different. The ten lessons that follow in this report are overarching learnings that are expressed differently in each place and focus on community-level change in the districts. They draw on both participatory action research (PAR) and various quarterly reports. Further research areas/questions have been formulated to address the Aawaz II planning process for additional districts.

Supportive structures

- The VF is the heart of the system, getting the right mix of individuals within it is essential to success. The engagement of both dominant and marginalised people in the VF supports the behaviour change of each and avoids elite capture of the space.
- AACs provide essential early support to VFs. However, over time, there has been growing autonomy of VF members and decreasing dependence on AACs.
- Vertical links from VF to DF to PF, with duty bearers in each forum, provide the forums with their influencing power. It is the added value that these forums bring that gives them influence with duty bearers and communities.
- The EWS and ERM provide referrals and initial action to be taken by VFs or special interest group (SIG) members to address problems. They also introduce new issues that keep VFs relevant.

Engaging the key change agents

- Getting started needs quick, visible wins, such as securing identity

documentation, for potential volunteers to get over the cynicism of engaging with a non-government organisation (NGO) programme.

- Spreading engagement from individual VF members to their families protects the programme because each family member links to a different peer group (women to women, youth to youth, etc.) and argues its credibility to the broader community.
- Inclusion is best facilitated initially through one to two members of marginalised communities as programme volunteers or staff. Tangible benefits, especially those linked to economic incentives, facilitate inclusion, removing children from labour and sending them to school, accessing government benefits, etc.

Behaviour change

- The behaviour change of volunteers is gradual. It starts with the understanding that others have rights, getting to know people from those groups, and seeing others model new behaviours. Volunteers are also motivated to take action as they see their efforts gaining them respect and results.
- Each type of social harm requires a different approach to shift behaviours. As people learn to recognise that something is wrong and resolve issues, these behaviours spread to the broader community to respond to other socially harmful practices.
- Some issues are better pre-empted and resolved by the community without outsider involvement.

Sustainable change

Aawaz II will decrease its engagement in existing locations in the next two years (2022–2024) as it begins to engage in new places and models its approach based on learnt lessons. Learning will now focus on what is the minimum input that can be made to catalyse adequate results and secure sustainability. In particular, it tests the following hypothesis:

If the vertical VF-DF-PF structures and linkages were to be maintained together with light-touch AAC guidance, might they provide, in future, an effective ecosystem for supporting marginalised people and addressing issues of tension or conflict as they arise? What would it take to achieve this? What is the minimum input to support it?



1. Introduction

The context in which Aawaz II is being implemented is complex. Social norms reinforce gender roles and binaries. There are religious divisions in communities, with religious minorities often living in separate communities and not interacting with dominant faiths. There is also a deep acceptance of *the way things are.* Additionally, each location in which Aawaz II operates is different in terms of its socioeconomic context and social norms, as well as the knowledge, skills, and ability of staff and volunteers. For example, demographic indicators, such as literacy rate, quality of education, or rigidity in gender norms, influence how easy it is for women and men to work and learn together. The levels of engagement and critical analysis skills of those involved also influence the pace of behaviour change, it is unsurprising that change processes within each location are different. The lessons learnt, therefore, need to be understood in this light: *they are overarching learnings that are expressed in each location with their own nuances. The lessons learnt provide guidelines for working in new places but are not a blueprint. Each place needs to be supported initially by highly skilled staff who can work iteratively and adaptively as 'change happens' in that location, and it emerges from the process of 'trying things out.'*

The Aawaz II Theory of Change is based on two change pathways, one working towards behaviour change on thematic issues and the other towards citizen engagement processes. From the outset, it was clear that citizen engagement is needed to engage people on the behaviour change pathway and that behaviour change is essential for citizen engagement. The learnt lessons weave between these two pathways, revealing how they mutually reinforce and build on one another. They were drawn from two Participatory Action Research papers generated in 2021 and the final 2021 quarterly review. The learning is divided into three overall areas:

- **Supportive structures** that facilitate the release of an enormous amount of voluntary energy, including that of duty bearers;
- **Key change agents,** who they are and what has been learnt about how to engage and mobilise them;
- **Behaviour change:** What changes are we seeing, and how did they come about?

What we are learning raises questions for scaling up and future sustainability in and after the next phase. These areas are now explored in turn.



2. Supportive Structures

Aawaz II set up voluntary forums at the village, district, and provincial levels that interconnect to address issues of social harm. They are supported by AACs and their outreach teams (OTs). They are also supplemented by the social action activities of young people who engage as ACAs at the district level. Our learning of these structures includes the following:

2.1 Village-level support systems

VFs are at the heart of Aawaz II structures as focal points for community conflict and awareness-raising. They draw on AACs for access to training, advice, and practical support from teams of resource persons (RPs) and OTs. VFs link up with DFs and PFs as needed.

Involving influential families and individuals who are educated and respected, some with a history of service to the community, ensures that VFs themselves are trusted and credible with the wider community. This protects the programme from negative judgements on the thematic topics and helps 'normalise' new attitudes and behaviours towards marginalised people.

The involvement of marginalised people in VFs, and other forums and AACs, is important for the awareness-raising of issues and for securing referrals of support.

In Swabi, for example, one of the OTs was a PWD, and community beneficiaries mentioned feeling understood and seen by the VF because the OT was someone who understood their exclusion and marginalisation. Likewise, in Kasur, a VF focal person was a transgender person who was pivotal in bridging the mistrust between the transgender community and Aawaz II.

The involvement of marginalised people within VFs is also key to shifting the understanding and values of other VF members as it increases their familiarity with marginalised people, thereby fostering empathy and connections of trust when carefully facilitated.

Women's involvement as VF members is essential for facilitating outreach to and engagement by women across broader society. While female VF members have faced the challenge of social norms in establishing engagement within their communities, they are the most likely to secure requests for help. They have proven themselves able to effectively resolve issues considered private, e.g., CEFM or GBV. In some instances, this has led to women forming their own groups on GBV or CEFM.

VFs' practices and ways of working are important to their success. For example, shifts in behaviour between marginalised people and dominant groups do not happen instantly, it is a gradual process that needs to be carefully facilitated. Similarly, VFs' internal procedures and composition are what determine their ability to gain the trust of different stakeholders externally. This is also what prevents the space from being captured by dominant groups. For example, VF members are required to work in consultation and, in some places, in consensus with each other. Hence, elite voices cannot dominate when VFs are a balance of marginalised and dominant group members.

Marginalised people bring their issues to VFs themselves. However, when there is a strong balance of groups, dominant group members working alongside marginalised members begin raising the latter's issues at VF meetings, e.g., the rights of PWDs, women, or minorities. Thus, when elite capture is avoided, dominant groups use their leverage in society on behalf of the interests of marginalised communities.

Lesson 1:

The VF is the heart of the system. Getting the right mix of individuals is essential to success. The engagement of dominant and marginalised people supports the behaviour change of both and prevents elite capture of the space.

2.2 AACs

AACs and their teams, particularly RPs and OTs, provide VFs with an essential initial support package on Aawaz II themes and conflict resolution mechanisms, local forum set-up, cascade training, strengthening and bridging social capital, and accompaniment as VF members take initial steps. This supports VFs through the process of citizen engagement, encouraging members to be fully active in bringing case studies or referring community beneficiaries to different services. They also provide initial practical help by, for example, accompanying community beneficiaries to government offices to file complaints. However, VF members report that it can be time-consuming to help people physically get to AACs. At the start, VFs need a high level of technical support from AACs as they build their confidence. This can mean they are very stretched at times, and new models of support may be needed, such as mobile community AACs. However, over time, VF members depend less and less on AACs, only returning when facing a new problem for which they require guidance.

Lesson 2:

Initial support evolves into agency. AACs provide essential early support to the VFs, but over time, there is a growing autonomy in VF members and decreasing dependence on AACs.

Further research: In what alternative ways (mobile units, virtual provision, localised offices) can AAC services be provided and funded in future? Which AAC roles can be delivered by VFs, DFs, or state service providers?

2.3 Vertically linked voluntary collectives

VFs, DFs, and PFs are effective because those selected to volunteer

within them are knowledgeable and trusted by the local people they seek to serve or influence. Over time, the need for forums comprising vulnerable groups was expressed, and SIGs were formed. These function as village or neighbourhood (in urban areas) forums, with members drawn only from specific communities, e.g., minorities, transgender persons, or PWDs. Thus, each district has at least one SIG focused on a particular vulnerable group. Through training and support from AACs and the Aawaz II team, the different forum levels are equipped and supported to take action to raise awareness on issues, signpost community members to state services, and address issues through their own actions. For example, VF members bring issues they cannot solve to the VF. Together, they identify a strategy through which they can address them.

VF support reduces some of the dependency on patronage networks, which tend to favour those who are less vulnerable, or intermediaries who mediate on behalf of citizens with duty bearers for a fee. VF members mediate with duty bearers so that citizens gain access to services. When VFs cannot address an issue, they pass it up the vertical structure to an AAC or DF, and in turn, a PF, for members of those structures to address.

Forums and SIGs release a high level of voluntary service to their communities and help release other community resources, such as access to advice, opportunities, help, or equipment. Individuals within them 'go the extra mile' through their own initiatives, drawing on their personal networks and influence. Forums have also activated dormant district-level networks that amplify the voices of excluded groups, e.g., child rights committees in Swabi, Charsadda, and Multan, that focus on child labour and CEFM. They also enhance the impact of initiatives by other organisations. For example, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Special Talent Exchange Programme (STEP) requested support in conducting dialogues between social welfare department (SWD) officials and PWDs, or the training of forum members in safeguarding.

Further research: What is being learnt about the linkages between VFs, DFs, and PFs, their behaviours, and members' interests and incentives? What makes them work best? Is there a role for integrating 'middlemen' into the system with better behaviours in a monitored manner?

The added value brought by these voluntary forums to improve the impact of state service provision is considerable. They bring a complementarity to state action in which each leverages the assets and skills of the other to multiply results on behalf of marginalised people. This leveraged multiplier effect occurs at each level of the hierarchy.

Lesson 3:

Vertical linkages add value from VF to DF to PF, with duty bearers in each forum providing influencing power. It is the added value they bring that gives them influence with duty bearers and communities.

The forums are not merely replacements for intermediaries and patronage systems, many aspects of what forums try to deliver cannot be delivered. Annexe 1 shows the added value brought by Aawaz II structures to increase impact for marginalised people. A summary is shown below.

Summary of the added value brought by Aawaz II structures

- Identifying marginalised people, outreach, and trust-building, including support to state services with a mandate to provide resources to marginalised people, such as wheelchairs.
- Providing training and awareness-raising, including through SMS campaigns, to increase the confidence and capacity of marginalised people and the awareness of others.

- Creating referral directories to guide people on where to go to access services.
- Guidance, mentoring, and accompanying people through their access to state services.
- Identifying resources, services, and training sessions for which marginalised people are eligible.
- Improved access to state services by supporting one-window operations and mobile units.
- Facilitating Learning and Development Forums for volunteers and staff across Aawaz II structures to meet policymakers, share issues, and learn about existing policies.
- Providing inputs or advocacy for changes in policy and practice issues, such as minority land issues.
- Convening or facilitating dialogues between citizens and duty bearers from the local level to the provincial level.
- Delivering projects to address issues. For example, persuading brick kiln owners not to employ children; helping the parents of such children access the government's Ehsaas programme; directly intervening in cases of GBV or CEFM; or securing ramps in public places for PWDs.

2.4 Opportunities for citizen-state engagement

Aawaz II has noticed that local-level duty bearers are inadequately informed about the rights of citizens or the specific laws and entitlements pertaining to the programme's thematic areas. There is potential for duty bearers to play a greater role in identifying vulnerable people and sharing relevant information, as well as signposting to services. However, while behaviour change in duty bearers is key to Aawaz II's success, it is a demand-side programme

and cannot address the behaviours and shortcomings of duty bearers *directly,* it cannot train them (educational institutions, health workers, the police). However, the programme has observed that the following *do* improve the behaviour of individual duty bearers:

- Duty bearers becoming members of VFs, DFs, or PFs, this also strengthens the forums' understanding of duty bearers' challenges;
- Exposure to Aawaz II messaging and participation in provincial and district thematic events;
- Dialogue spaces convened by Aawaz II in which duty bearers meet directly with citizens;
- Involving duty bearers in mobile units or one-window operations brings them closer to communities;
- Duty bearers being asked by VF members to receive and treat referred citizens well;
- Some forums gather evidence of shortcomings in duty bearers' systems and behaviours to influence policy.

Further research: Is there a need for an ongoing structure (to support a VF-DF-PF link) that keeps the momentum going and the learning flowing? What more can Aawaz II do so that local-level duty bearers play a better role in awareness-raising and signposting? Could Aawaz II leverage its positive engagement with duty bearers to develop citizen feedback or social accountability approaches linked to the forums and hence formalise these into the future?

2.5 ERM and EWS mechanisms 'activate' the broader community to take action

The community EWS enables at-risk cases to be identified, while the ERM guides VF members on how to proceed in resolving issues. The training on thematic areas enables VF members to raise families' awareness of the issues so they understand the consequences for the individuals involved, the laws that criminalise certain actions, and how to get help. The EWS has also been effective in addressing conflicts that were not part of thematic areas, e.g., land and resource use disputes and drainage systems construction. One initial barrier was that people did not know about available public services or how to resolve their issues without increased acrimony, even when they knew something was wrong. Increasingly, people within communities know what to do.

Lesson 4:

EWS and ERM work by providing referrals and initial action to be taken by VF or SIG members to address problems. They also introduce new issues, allowing VFs to stay relevant.

Further research: The EWS has relied on AAC or district team support. How is this best provided in the longer term? And how can EWS strengthen existing community dispute mechanisms?



3. Key Change Agents

One of the biggest challenges in all locations is gaining the trust and interest of potential volunteers because many people are cynical about NGOs, expecting them to provide material goods or payments for participation. Those who volunteer often face ridicule from their families and the wider community for engaging in a 'profitless programme.'

Lesson 5:

Getting started needs quick, visible wins, such as securing identity documentation, for potential volunteers to get over the cynicism of engaging with an NGO programme.

Particularly successful were spaces that enabled people, often for the first time, to access duty bearers and government services, especially those that led to people securing citizenship papers or PWD registration. One-window operations or mobile units, which brought duty bearers into communities, were highly valued. Even prominent awareness-raising campaigns helped secure the credibility and attention of volunteers. Volunteers' family members became more supportive as these successes became evident.

Despite Aawaz II's success in helping citizens access services, it is recognised that previously, such services were provided by patronage networks or intermediaries, so simply replacing this with the services of a VF member is not a particularly significant improvement. It is better to build the confidence of citizens to use official channels themselves. This is a key behaviour change sought by Aawaz II.

What works to increase the confidence and skills of citizens in accessing services?

- Dialogue spaces in which citizens meet duty bearers;
- Referral directories, especially if they are up-to-date and include information on costs, timeframes, steps, and required documentation;
- One-window operations and mobile units;
- Guiding, mentoring, and accompanying people as they try to access services or secure documentation, or offering real-time telephone support;
- People with successful experiences of accessing services spreading the word through their networks, and offering practical support to others;
- Reminders to not give up, as many procedures have several bureaucratic steps, so encouragement to proceed to the next stage is often required;
- Transporting PWD to their appointments;
- Making calls to contacts ahead of scheduled appointments.

Aawaz II has noted that once a citizen has been able to obtain a particular piece of documentation or access a service, they are more confident in approaching duty bearers on their own. However, people's confidence can be quickly shattered by the many bureaucratic and time-consuming processes involved, by the disrespectful or indifferent behaviours of duty bearers, or by inaccurate information in referral guidance. *Behaviour change in duty bearers in the delivery of those services is, therefore, critical, or citizens' behaviours will slip back.*

Identity documents are a gateway to other benefits like social security, wheelchairs, and training opportunities. For PWDs, these benefits lead to greater mobility or independence and can improve their standing within their family and local community, eventually mitigating harmful behaviours towards them. Additionally, such documentation can be used as evidence of a child's age and support evidence-based interventions in CEFM and child labour.

There are many practical obstacles to securing these documents. People tend to put this off until it becomes essential, e.g., for a child to go to school.

Yet, despite securing documentation, *some individuals do not follow the acquisition of documentation with access to associated benefits*. So, we have learnt that PWDs and transgender persons need to be reminded of available services.

Additionally, streamlining the process of securing documentation is a challenge that the programme aims to achieve in all Aawaz II communities. In some instances, state actors have agreed to mobile units and one-window operations with close support from Aawaz II structures to facilitate the effective delivery of the service in communities.

Further research: At the national level, Aawaz II and duty bearers can explore how each can leverage their own advantages and resources to streamline documentation access for marginalised people.

3.1 Linking ACAs to their communities

ACAs are recruited by district partners and form a core mass of young change agents in each district. They have been quite active and resourceful, focusing not only on their SAPs but on volunteering to visit other communities for programme activities. In addition to facing similar criticisms from their peers and families (the purposelessness of volunteering), they also face the challenge of being taken less seriously due to their younger age. However, parents, teachers, and peers were their greatest supporters. Many ACAs describe how their worldview shifted through the training they received, giving them a new sense of their identity as Pakistani citizens. After implementing their SAPs, many remain engaged through provincial exchanges and learning forums and continue to share awareness-raising materials in communities. They are linked to their local communities through VFs and AACs, and there is cross-collaboration on SAPs. In some districts like Multan, ACAs have formed youth forums. In Kasur, ACAs recruited friends for ACA training sessions, utilising their peer networks. In Peshawar, an ACA project resulted in an informal collective of women connecting with each other within their community. It seems there is potential to leverage the engagement of many ACAs into the future through a strategy for more sustained ACA engagement in conjunction with VFs (and with DFs/PFs).

Further research: What is the value of and potential for keeping ACAs activated? Is it best to support them as a youth network at the district or provincial level, link them with thematic groups, or support their integration into local VFs or SIGs?

3.2 From individual volunteers to households

The Aawaz II strategy for engaging across communities entailed not only establishing contact with and training one individual within a selected household but also encouraging them to share learnings with household members. Volunteers were deliberately selected from both dominant and marginalised households, so when the broader community pushed back on the programme, both types of households argued for the programme's importance. Engaging family members actively with invitations to VF activities not only spreads awareness of the activities but also gains their support for the programme.

Lesson 6:

Spreading engagement from individual VF members to their families protects the programme because each family member links to a different peer group (women to women, youth to youth, etc.) and argues for its credibility in the broader community.

Thus, behaviour change grows from individual to household to community. It is showing the first signs of shifting community behaviours towards new social norms, such as committing to putting children in school, delaying child marriages, and being inclusive and tolerant towards minorities, PWDs, and transgender persons.

Further research: To extend impact, is it more effective to train individuals from the same families, hence consolidating 'influential family households.' Or is it more effective to find volunteers from new families so they can 'convert' new family networks?

3.3 Engaging with marginalised people: Inclusion

Marginalised people tend to be close-knit communities and do not easily trust outsiders. They are likely to be poor, with little time to engage in voluntary activities. So, as expected, trust-building with marginalised people took time and was most effective if approached through key people they already knew, e.g., by bringing members of their communities into VFs and AACs as trained outreach volunteers.

Lesson 7:

Inclusion is best facilitated initially through one or two members of marginalised communities as programme volunteers or staff. Tangible benefits, especially those linked to economic incentives, facilitate inclusion.

The involvement of marginalised people grows through safe spaces in which they strengthen their awareness of rights. Tangible benefits, such as help in securing identify cards, access to existing benefits schemes, or involvement in income-generating programmes (such as sewing training courses), were important for incentivising the engagement of those who were most marginalised and poor. In some instances, the payment of honoraria was also deemed necessary. However, once they saw the direct usefulness of engaging, they become involved. Encouraging those who have received support to identify and refer other people who might benefit from such assistance helps spread these practices organically. Some marginalised people resisted joining VFs as volunteers or ACAs because they feared prejudice from more dominant people. They only engage in roles when they know they will be treated respectfully by other VF members or ACAs.

In many instances, SIGs for minorities were formed. Asking such individuals to spread their new knowledge (rights, how to engage with service providers) to others in their networks is required because minorities usually form small percentages of populations and are not always found in Aawaz II VF catchment areas. Hence, VFs and neighbourhood forums have been formed in each district to extend outreach to minorities and provide them with safe spaces to raise issues. When marginalised people themselves spread their learning and provide such guidance and mentoring to one another, sustainable behaviour change is hypothesised to have been activated.

> *"I didn't know I had any rights. I felt like I was a burden on my family and society. But through the programme, I learned how to make my disability my strength."*

VF members were, as anticipated, often initially reluctant to engage directly with marginalised people in the same space. The usual location for VF meetings would have been people's homes. However,

that felt like too big an imposition on people from the outset. Creating inclusive spaces in which marginalised and dominant people can mix is an incremental process that requires sensitisation and time, overcoming deeply embodied prejudices and the physical act of sharing the same space does not happen instantly. To overcome prejudice and mistrust, the first few meetings between VF members and people from marginalised groups need to be held in neutral spaces like AACs. Then, through training sessions on thematic issues and by sensitising people to minority rights, people gradually get used to meeting people from other groups. This 'humanises' them in one another's eyes. Over time, people from marginalised groups engage in dialogue spaces with duty bearers, which increases their confidence in engaging in public spaces. This decreases their isolation, which is a key characteristic of marginalisation.

Further research: How can beneficiaries be turned into actors? How can the programme catalyse a 'beneficiary cascade' of actors bringing on new actors?



4. Behaviour Change

Before Aawaz II can support behaviour change in a thematic area at the community level, it needs to successfully support behaviour change within its cadre of volunteers. In VFs, these volunteers represent professionals (teachers, community health workers, others), local-level government functionaries, elected local government representatives, members of community-based organisations or mandated structures, students (youth), homemakers (women), and representatives of vulnerable groups.

4.1 How are individuals 'activated' to take action on community issues?

People first need to realise and accept that something is socially harmful before they can be ready to take action to address it. To 'activate' VF members, they need training in thematic topics and in building acceptance and tolerance as a mindset. They also then need to grow their sense of agency and see the personal benefits of this to consolidate behaviour change. This is a longer process than simply imparting knowledge on a thematic focus area. Aawaz II observed that the behaviour change of its volunteers takes place through the following:

- Training raised individual volunteers' understanding of the issue and, in some instances, changed their attitudes and behaviours on the issue. For example, Kausar realised that her intention to marry her fifteen-year-old daughter off was not in the girl's interest.
- Exposure to people who have experienced social harm as well as the building of relations that help generate empathy.
- Taking action showed volunteers the results they were achieving in terms of benefits to individuals. They also noticed that others in society began to see them as role models. This raised their opinions of themselves.

- Ongoing exposure to successes led to others starting to see their work as useful. It attracted others to get involved.
- Modelling behaviours: Some volunteers modelled the values espoused in training through new behaviours, such as sharing food or crockery with religious minorities despite the social norms that make it taboo. It is particularly powerful when influencers, such as religious clerics, model such behaviours.
- Growing initiative and sense of agency: As volunteers gained experience and took on more action, they learnt to take more initiative. This increased their sense of agency, self-worth, and commitment to action.
- Growing understanding of injustice: Volunteers began to notice things related to social harm, unfairness and prejudices beyond what they had learnt in training. They began to think about how to address them, they were becoming change agents.
- Sustained behaviour change communication products: Aawaz II developed a series of products about the thematic areas ranging from simple phone/SMS messages to graphic media messages, audio messages, animation videos, and radio programmes. For example, a mobile-based SMS campaign through a cellular provider led to 87.52% of 2,592 respondents reporting a significant change in opinion.

Engaging with insider allies and influential people

- Engaging community influentials was the most effective strategy for raising awareness and building trust in some places. In Haripur, religious leaders spoke on thematic topics during Friday sermons. In Swabi and Peshawar, religious leaders counselled community members on how practices like CEFM or conflict went against Islamic teachings. As authority figures within communities, local nazims and numberdars are less likely to be challenged than VF members or ACAs when they speak on sensitive issues.

- School principals proved to be effective at enrolling at-risk children or children involved in child labour. Teachers supported ACAs in SAPs, and healthcare providers counselled people on the impacts of CEFM. These actors got involved organically, and there is potential to increase impact by reaching out to such professionals who can then exercise influence amongst communities to promote positive behaviour. While Aawaz II is a demand-side programme, these professionals are members of their communities and so straddle the sphere of demand and supply as VF members or influential people who can provide significant support to help change behaviours.

Lesson 8:

The behaviour change of volunteers is gradual. It starts with the understanding that others have rights, getting to know people from those groups, and seeing others model new behaviours. Volunteers are also motivated to take action as they see their efforts gaining them respect and results.

> *"I never thought about other people. I only focused on my parents and my own livelihood. Now, I've learned to be more aware of the community I live in, and I think about other people like PWDs, how they deserve rights and respect. I try to find ways to help them."*

4.2 How behaviours and social norms start to shift on specific thematic issues

Significant shifts in behaviour change have been observed in marginalised groups and the broader community once volunteers in forums, SIGs, or ACAs begin engaging in action on thematic topics. These changes are gradual, but the following approaches have been noted to be particularly effective in bringing about these changes:

Behaviour change approaches that work across all thematic issues

- Insider allies secure the trust and support of community members. They include numberdars, local nazims (influentials), health workers, and teachers (professionals).
- Engaging with marginalised groups increases their awareness of their rights, as well as their confidence and networks, giving them a sense of agency.
- Including the marginalised at multiple levels, e.g., as forum members, experts, RPs, staff, trainees, and participants in Aawaz II activities.
- Social norms are helped in shifting through the recognition that behaviours like CEFM, GBV, and child labour are abusive, exploitative, and criminal. The same applies to the abuse of the human rights of PWDs, transgender persons, and religious minorities.
- Each successful VF intervention helps raise awareness of issues and deters others. Sharing these stories in communities helps families change their attitudes and behaviours.
- Where there is a root cause of a harmful practice (poverty or abuse by a teacher), communities may be able to provide alternative ways to address the issue (help with securing employment or school uniforms).
- Referral directories that guide people through the process of accessing state services, including helplines and shelters.
- While these core approaches are relevant to all Aawaz II thematic areas, each topic brings challenges shaped by local social norms that perpetuate negative behaviours on specific issues. Approaches to each issue have to be tailored to the context. Annexe 2 outlines some additional approaches that work for specific thematic areas.

Lesson 9:

Each type of social harm requires a different approach to shift behaviours. As people learn to recognise that something is wrong and resolve issues, these behaviours spread to the wider community to pre-empt and respond to socially harmful practices.

4.3 Where only voluntary efforts can work

For some specific thematic areas, Aawaz II has found that individuals are reluctant to engage with formal duty bearers but welcome support from neighbours or other organised community actors.

Case study: Community interventions as preferred approaches to harmful practices

VF members who have intervened in cases of domestic GBV noted that survivors/victims usually prefer not involving duty bearers because they do not seek punitive action against their abusers, nor do they want to move out of their homes. Instead, they want the abuse to stop and to be reconciled with their husbands or families. They feel that getting the police involved would diminish the chances of reconciliation, make them targets of social stigma, and even escalate the abuse. VF members often seek to stop the abuse by involving extended family members and local community leaders. However, Aawaz II members have successfully engaged duty bearers in cases where there has been a threat to the victim's life and/or if family members have refused to support the victim.

Even the mere possibility of involving the police, violence against women centres, or NGOs that work on domestic violence can deter abuse. Similarly, for CEFM, potential victims and their allies prefer preventing marriages without involving duty bearers. However, where needed, the option of police action has proved effective in discouraging CEFM.

For cases of child labour, VFs have been able to resolve most cases through dialogue with parents and employers. In some cases, they have had to resort to laying out the legal actions available, such as police reports and filing complaints with labour departments. At times, they have even done so.

For all thematic areas, laws and reporting mechanisms are effective in deterring harmful practices but are called into effect only when persuasion fails, or the harm is serious enough to warrant such action. In all cases, the safety of the victim is paramount.

Aawaz II noticed that the SIGs, SAPs, and collective community action plans (CCAPs) run by community volunteers are important initiatives as they involve practical actions by fellow community members to help marginalised people address their own issues. A voice and accountability approach that only sought to raise awareness and mobilise state service delivery would be insufficient: marginalised people need their own communities to engage in helping address certain issues.

Following on from training in conflict pre-emption skills and the identification of drivers of conflict, VF members and ACAs implemented CCAPs in their communities to address issues of conflict. This helped alternative, mutually respectful, and inclusive means of addressing low-level conflicts through dialogues and duty bearers. In the long run, it is expected to help develop resilience in communities against insecurity and conflict. The training taught community members to not wait for outside 'experts' to address issues for them, they now actively participate in conflict pre-emption processes themselves and only look outside when the situation requires escalation to district structures.

Lesson 9:

Some issues are better pre-empted and resolved by communities without outsider involvement.

5. Conclusion: Towards Sustainable Change

Given how much is dependent on the actions of volunteers and networks of influencers and allies, the change process is unpredictable from place to place. Locations, therefore, work adaptively in how they evolve their approach. They build out from their current reality and those of their initial networks of supporters, moving iteratively and adaptively towards desired behaviour changes, learning about how change takes place on specific topics in their locations as they progress. Each step in this process of behaviour change needs to be consolidated, or gains could be swiftly lost.

A key component that could make a location slip back from its positive behaviour change trajectory is the behaviours of duty bearers - since their negative behaviours can stop effective citizen engagement in its tracks, whilst positive ones can oil the wheels for engagement. This area of influencing the behaviour change of duty bearers is an area of opportunity that, while outside the current Aawaz II framework, can be leveraged further by collaborating more closely with programmes working with government actors.

Meanwhile, Aawaz II is at a key moment in its development. In the coming six months, it will be reducing or ceasing involvement in some communities and seeking to engage in new, more challenging locations. As it does so, it will draw on these lessons to shape its interventions. A key aspect of this is how to create the sustainability of behaviour change in the longer term. For this purpose, it will be observing and reflecting on the progress of the Aawaz II communities it is exiting. In particular, it would be instructive to see what is sustained within a location when Aawaz II decreases its support and how this happens, as well as what is not sustained and why. This will enable the programme to define what sort of ecosystem is the minimum input needed to support sustained behaviour change within communities in future.

Annex 1: The Added Value of Aawaz II Structures That Increase State Impact for Marginalised People

Provided by VFs and/or SIGs

- Identifying marginalised people, outreach, and trust-building, including in support of state services (like SWDs), such as identifying marginalised people eligible for stipends or services.
- Creating, distributing, and updating referral directories that guide people on where to go to access services or secure documents.
- Guiding, mentoring, and accompanying people through their access to state services, including real-time telephonic guidance or introducing them to contacts within state entities.
- Identifying resources and training sessions for which marginalised people are eligible and linking them with those resources.
- Training and awareness-raising, e.g., meeting the heads of households to raise their awareness of CEFM and its negative consequences, gathering evidence on issues and problems faced by marginalised people, and pitching ideas on how to address them.
- Delivering projects directly, e.g., persuading brick kiln owners not to employ children, helping the parents of child labourers access the government's Ehsaas programme, and enrolling minority children in school so they do not engage in janitorial and sanitation services.
- Setting up dialogues between citizens and duty bearers, e.g., the police, to discuss protection against the harassment of transgender persons.
- Supporting the delivery of state services through one-window operations and mobile units. In Battagram, one group helped widows obtain government-supported financial assistance.
- Promoting female leadership through Women Community Learning Forums (WCLFs).
- Promoting social cohesion and interfaith harmony through dialogues and collective actions and pre-empting low-level community conflicts.

Provided by DFs using their influence to advocate on behalf of VFs

- Accessing resources for marginalised individuals, e.g., wheelchairs.
- Convening dialogues, e.g., district-level dialogues in Aawaz II districts and provincial consultations in KP and Punjab to facilitate interactions between religious minorities and key stakeholders.
- Including women and minorities in Swat's dispute resolution committee, established under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Alternate Dispute Resolution Act, 2020.
- Recommending to the Human Rights Committee to consider transgender persons' right to inherit property.
- Requesting public service departments, local medical boards or the National Database and Registration Authority's (NADRA) mobile registration vans, to provide services at an appropriate standard level, and requesting access for marginalised people like PWDs and transgender persons.
- Addressing issues pertaining to specific communities, e.g., ramps in public places for PWDs or land availability for minority communities' graveyards.
- Addressing community conflict that has implications for the wider community.

Provided by PFs, receiving issues from DFs and using their influence

- Addressing policy and practice issues, such as minority land issues. For example, provincial-level consultations were held on the 'Bill for Persons with Disabilities in Punjab' and advocacy was done for a reserved seat in the district council for special persons under the new Local Government Act.
- Facilitating dialogue sessions, such as the one linked to the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV in Peshawar, in which participants made concrete recommendations to the government.
- Facilitating Learning and Development Forums at the provincial level for volunteers and staff across Aawaz II structures to meet policymakers, share issues, and learn about existing policies.
- Partnering with provincial actors, such as the Special Life Foundation (SLF), which has a network of 800 members in 11 districts of KP and is involved in drafting legislation to protect PWD interests.

Provided by AACs

- Space for training services and meetings with duty bearers and community members.
- Supporting VF members and marginalised people so they can be provided information on available services and secure access to their rights through referral services for documentation, etc.
- Supporting government department officials so that information on new initiatives can be disseminated among communities.

Annex 2: Thematic Area Behaviour Change

The following is what has been learnt about behaviour change on different thematic topics.

When marginalisation is in the private domain: CEFM, GBV, and child labour

CEFM and GBV: Initially, CEFM and GBV were the most taboo issues for discussion in communities. They were perceived as private family matters. For CEFM, the norms in support of the practice are strong, so outside involvement is often seen as interference. Men also regard them as 'women's issues' and question why NGOs only consider women's needs and not theirs. They do not want to prioritise engagement on such issues. Yet, the shifts Aawaz II has seen in social norms and behaviours have taken place on GBV and CEFM. How was this achieved?

- Insider allies: CEFM and GBV are such sensitive issues that it is necessary to enter carefully with help from supportive, influential people, such as numberdars or local nazims. Teachers and health service providers are useful 'insider allies' for enabling VFs to conduct additional awareness-raising sessions and signposting VFs towards cases of violence or abuse.
- In many communities, VF members did not engage directly on CEFM because they did not want to be alienated within their communities. Instead, they referred families to AACs, which are higher level and less local.
- Multiple meetings with family members, using persuasive arguments and evidence, proved to be important. Learning about the impact on a girl's health and her life was the most persuasive argument for behaviour change on CEFM.
- CEFM and GBV being legally recognised as crimes: This was a strong argument for changing attitudes. Additionally, this recognition is a social norm change being observed in communities. These practices had previously been widely accepted.

- The EWS is key to referring specific cases of GBV and CEFM to VF members.
- GBV intervention starts with understanding the nature of the violence and the root cause. Wider family members are engaged where possible to support mediation between the parties or to build on positive community norms, such as respect for one's elders and creating an inclusive and gender-sensitive process. Multiple VF members engage together.
- Those engaged in GBV will be counselled on how to be more supportive of one another.
- Where there is a root cause of the harmful practice, such as financial hardship, the community may address the issue by helping secure employment.
- Where violence does not stop, VFs will support the victim in moving to a safe place.
- Collective action and intervention in cases increase awareness of the issue, and successful interventions act as a deterrent for others.
- Where awareness of CEFM has been raised, practices begin changing, and the girl's consent is sought.
- Action by neighbours, such as a neighbour applying the 'knock-on-door' technique to intervene in GBV situations, can help. However, it may need to be supplemented with additional interventions. These are usually undertaken in consultation with VF participation to avoid any harm to the person or household taking action. For example, providing information about legal punitive action to the perpetrator can have an impact.
- Actions by influential leaders: Nikah khwans have refused to solemnise marriages without first seeing a bride's birth certificate, thus verifying her age.
- Referral directories are extra important for GBV victims: They guide VF members through the process of accessing helplines and shelters for GBV victims. This provides women who do not wish to bring their case to their broader family, community, or the

authorities with a chance to maintain confidentiality and privacy while still seeking help. PWDs also report a sense of empowerment from the directories. It not only educates them on their rights but also identifies a pathway for asserting those rights.

- Victim support helplines provide a safe space for victims and deter perpetrators, as their personal lives can become known to the community, public services, or NGOs.
- Sharing stories in the community helps some families change their attitudes and behaviours without themselves having to become the recipients of an intervention.

Child labour: Successful tactics for shifting the social norms around child labour are different from CEFM and GBV in some ways.

- Engaging with parents and employers to *raise awareness of child labour* is important. Awareness of the impact of child labour on child health works as a deterrent, as does identifying how education helps prevent child labour.
- *Insider allies:* VFs who have engaged with health service providers and teachers, who are influential members of the community, are effective in bringing about change in mindsets.
- VF intervention tended initially to have families telling them to not interfere in family matters, or requests that they contribute to paying their household expenses, given that the reason for child labour was poverty. So, it is essential to *understand and address the underlying reasons* for families' engagement in child labour. These are different from place to place. Even time can be a factor, e.g., COVID-19 increased child labour in certain places as some parents were concerned about children being stuck at home or falling into bad company.
- Families often cited poverty as the main challenge. However, VF members noted other root causes that warranted the *creation of alternative solutions,* e.g., identifying civil society organisations to help with the provision of school uniforms or schoolbooks; employers shifting work times and work conditions to accommodate a child going to school (when parents and employers were reluctant to stop the practice); dialogue with

teachers to address their abusive behaviours towards children (which leads to school dropouts); and setting up evening schools for children. *The least effective strategy was to try to convince parents to remove their children from work. Alternative solutions were more impactful.*

- On the whole, it has been observed that families are more resistant to changes than employers, who are more receptive to changing working conditions, if not eliminating child labour entirely.

When marginalisation is in the public domain: PWDs, transgender persons, and religious minorities

The realm of prejudice is different for PWDs, transgender persons, and religious minorities. The discrimination they experience has a public face, others look down on them. For PWDs and transgender persons, even their own families can be prejudiced against them. This can be due to the perception of them bringing shame to the family, or it can be because they are not seen to be productive members of society or their families.

PWDs: VF and community members have been the most responsive to the social inclusion of PWDs, showing increasing interest in addressing the issues they face by finding ways to make their physical environments more accessible.

- PWDs first needed to change their attitudes towards themselves. This happened when they acquired citizenship or PWD registration documents, which then enabled them to register with the SWD to receive welfare benefits or access to physical help, such as wheelchairs. These benefits increased their mobility and access to spaces. These changes come not only to how PWDs perceive themselves but also to how their families perceive them.
- Knowing that the government had created mechanisms to support them increased their self-worth.
- Involvement in activities with VFs built their self-worth as contributing citizens and changed the attitudes of VF members and AACs who had undervalued PWDs' capacity to contribute.

- Engagement in the citizenship actions of PWDs created role models for other PWDs.
- VF members started to see PWDs differently, to notice how the physical environment was not accessible to them, and to discuss ideas to address the issue. VF members have helped PWDs find employment, and tech-savvy ACAs have helped train PWDs to work online. Securing wheelchairs can also increase people's access to work, e.g., one such PWD was able to become a teacher.

Religious minorities: Religious minorities experience considerable discrimination, to the point that different religious groups may not speak to one another, nor sit together. Some eateries refuse to serve religious minorities, or owners throw away the cutlery and plates they use, as they are deemed unclean. Discussions around beliefs can lead to conflict and prejudice, such as accusations of 'playing the victim' to secure benefits. These social norms were also visible in the behaviours of VF members. Efforts to include minority religions have seen some progress: community members who previously ignored them have formed friendships, assisted them with problems, and even shared meals despite norms that forbid this. Change took place through:

- The inclusion of religious minorities in VFs and as RPs and OTs created connections between different religions.
- *Insider allies:* Friendly religious clerics who agreed to speak about interfaith harmony and peace.
- Awareness-raising on the importance of respecting human rights and dignity and countering religious narratives with human rights-based ones.
- *Working together* built friendships, or at least cordial relations, between minority and majority religion VF members.
- *Continued meetings together* allowed each to learn about the other's issues, and gradually, different religious groups started *helping each other with the issues their communities* faced.
- *These shifts in attitudes extend beyond VFs or AACs to include community members:* In Peshawar, for example, a Hindu OT

member was approached by a community attendee during an awareness-raising session and told, *"I learned as a child that Hindus are unclean and that we, as Muslims, should stay away from them. But after meeting you, I realise that religious minorities are just like us, and what we have learned since childhood is wrong."*

Transgender persons: The inclusion of transgender persons has met with the most resistance, with a persistent 'otherisation' that impacts transgender communities the most. However, there has been some progress. Community members who initially objected to their inclusion have gradually accepted their presence. Some transgender communities have even agreed to engage in VFs. 'Otherisation' is more intense and virulent towards the transgender community and appears to be rooted in their perceived association with commercial sex work. Unfortunately, the success achieved in other thematic areas by raising awareness of equal rights for all citizens has not been enough to counter prejudices towards transgender persons. So, what has worked?

- Transgender persons involved as RPs or OT members have been able to bridge connections between VFs and the transgender community.
- VFs, DFs, and PFs have transgender persons as members, and there has been a growing relationship between transgender persons and other VF members.
- One or more VF members have taken steps to engage with transgender persons or communities in challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Meetings with transgender leaders (gurus) to sensitise them to the rights of transgender persons and include them in VF meetings to highlight issues faced by their communities.
- In addition to including them as VF and DF members, some places have created SIGs specifically for transgender persons to help them learn and mobilise together. These groups have been more effective in providing safe spaces for the community.

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